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The Erotic Dreams of Penelope ('Epigr. Bob.' 36 Sp.)

Abstract The 'Epigrammata Bobiensia' is a poetry collection, probably written between the fourth and fifth century. After the *editio princeps* by Munari in 1955 and the Teubnerian edition by Speyer in 1963, the '*Epigrammata Bobiensia*' were not edited until the 2016 edition by F.R. Nocchi.

In this analysis, I attend to the many problems of interpretation of the epigram on Penelope ('Epigr. Bob.' 36 Sp.), where Ulysses's wife proclaims her love for a mysterious man, and freely confesses her nocturnal torments due to her chastity caused by Ulysses's long absence. During her sleep, these torments become erotic dreams at the height of an uncontrollable passion.

The purpose of this epigram seems to be one of questioning the traditional version of the image of Ulysses's wife, chaste and faithful to her distant husband. On Penelope, indeed, there are two very different traditions: the first one, transmitted in particular by Homer, exalts the figure of the heroine as the greatest example of conjugal fidelity and modesty; the other one, handed on, among others, by Pausanias, Herodotus and Cicero, and most certainly adopted by the anonymous author of 'Epigr. Bob.' 36 Sp., turns the bride of Ulysses into an impudent woman in love, who breaks the laws of modesty and is unable to resist an overwhelming new amorous passion.

Zusammenfassung Die ‚Epigrammata Bobiensia' sind eine Kollektion von Epigrammen, die vermutlich zwischen dem 4. und 5. Jahrhundert n. Chr. geschrieben wurden. Nach der Erstveröffentlichung 1955 (Munari) und der Teubner'schen Ausgabe 1963 (Speyer) wurden sie erst 2016 von F.R. Nocchi neu ediert.

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Die vorliegende Analyse ist der Versuch, die vielfältigen Probleme bei der Interpretation des Epigramms über Penelope (‚Epigr. Bob.' 36 Sp.) zu lösen. Diese gesteht darin ihre Liebe zu einem mysteriösen Mann und bekennt freimütig, dass sie wegen der erzwungenen Keuschheit aufgrund der langen Abwesenheit ihres Mannes von erotischen Träumen heimgesucht wird, die sich zu unkontrollierbarer Leidenschaft verstärken.

Offensichtlich hat der Autor des Epigramms auf zwei unterschiedliche Narrative zu Schicksal und Charakter Penelopes reagiert: Neben der homerischen Tradition, welche die Heldin zu einem Vorbild für Keuschheit und Treue stilisiert, existiert eine zweite Erzählung, die unter anderem durch Pausanias, Herodot und Cicero überliefert ist. Hier ist Penelope eine schamlose Frau, die sich in Abwesenheit ihres Ehemannes neu verliebt und mit den herkömmlichen Vorstellungen einer treuen Ehefrau bricht. Dieser zweiten Tradition ist auch der anonyme Autor dieses Epigramms zuzuordnen.

After the *editio princeps* by Munari[1] in 1955 and the Teubnerian edition by Speyer[2] in 1963, the 'Epigrammata Bobiensia' collection were not further edited until the 2016 edition by F. R. Nocchi, who provided the anthology with a full commentary.[3] The 'Epigrammata Bobiensia' is a poetry collection of great importance in the field of late-ancient epigrammatic production. It includes 70 epigrams and 71 poems and probably dates back to the end of the fourth or the beginning of the fifth century. It was likely written by a single compiler belonging to the circle of Symmachus, or somehow linked to it.[4] The original manuscript, today lost, was found in 1493 in the library of Bobbio Abbey, founded by the Irish monk Columbanus in 614, not very far

1 Epigrammata Bobiensia, detexit Augusto Campana, edidit Francesco Munari, Roma 1955.

2 Epigrammata Bobiensia, edidit Wolfgang Speyer, Leipzig 1963.

3 Francesca R. Nocchi, Commento agli Epigrammata Bobiensia, Berlin, Boston 2016. In 2011 Francesca R. Nocchi and Luca Canali really edited a critical edition based on that one by Wolfgang Speyer (Epigrammata Bobiensia, a cura di Luca Canali e Francesca R. Nocchi, Soveria Mannelli 2011), and even before, in 2008, Angelo Luceri, in collaboration with Orazio Portuese as part of the research unit of the University of Catania directed by Rosa M. D'Angelo, edited the digitised edition, now available at: http://www.mqdq.it (29 October 2021).

4 Scevola Mariotti, Scritti di Filologia classica, a cura di Mario De Nonno and Leopoldo Gamberale, Salerno 2000, p. 228; see also Luca Mondin, La misura epigrammatica nella tarda antichità, in: Alfredo M. Morelli (ed.), Epigramma *Longum*. Da Marziale alla tarda antichità / From Martial to Late Antiquity. Atti del Convegno internazionale (Cassino, 29–31 maggio 2006), vol. 2, Cassino 2008, pp. 397–494, here pp. 416–418; Fabio Nolfo, Epigr. Bob. 45 Sp. (= Ps. Auson. 2, pp. 420–421 Peip.). La palinodia di Didone negli Epigrammata Bobiensia e la sua rappresentazione iconica, in: Sileno 41 (2015), pp. 277–304, here pp. 282–283.

from the town of Piacenza, in northern Italy. The above-mentioned modern editions are based on a copy of the original code accidentally discovered in the Vatican Library by Augusto Campana in the middle of the twentieth century.

This paper will discuss the many problems of interpretation of the epigram on Penelope ('Epigr. Bob.' 36 Sp.), in which Ulysses's wife reveals her love for another man and confesses her nightly torments due to her long chastity because of the continued absence of her husband. During her sleep, these inner torments change into erotic dreams at the height of an uncontrollable passion. The purpose of the composition is likely to be one of disputing the traditional version of the image of the chaste wife, loyal to her distant husband.

On Penelope, there are two different traditions: the first one, dating back to Homer, exalts the figure of the heroine as the maximum example of conjugal fidelity and modesty; the second one, handed down by Apollodorus and Pausanias, makes Ulysses's bride into a shameless and lovesick woman, who breaks the laws of modesty and cannot resist an overwhelming new amorous passion.[5] However, even in the Odyssey, the paternity of Telemachus, and consequently Penelope's fidelity, is questioned (1, 215–216; 3, 122–123; 16, 300). In the Odyssey, indeed, Penelope probably does not only reveal her desire for a new marriage, but she also seems to appreciate the kindness and flatteries of her suitors;[6] when she confesses that she had a dream, that perhaps reveals her real desires (19, 535–550). The interpretation of this dream is apparently simple: the swooping eagle killing twenty geese under the sad glance of Penelope, clearly forebodes the return of Ulysses and the massacre of the suitors. What seems to be less understandable is the behaviour of the queen, who in a completely unexpected way decides to organise a competition and marry the winner. Why after waiting so long would Penelope have decided to remarry just when signs foretell her husband's return? Apollodorus says that, as soon as Ulysses returned to his homeland, he heard of Penelope's betrayal with Antinous. Then he immediately sent the queen back to her father Icarius. Afterwards, the queen had a sexual encounter with Hermes and gave birth to Pan. According to other ancient writers, Ulysses probably killed his wife Penelope because she wanted to let herself be seduced by Amphinomus.[7] Pausanias reports that Ulysses, on his return to Ithaca, banished the queen from the

5 On the reception of the character of Penelope from the Middle Ages to the modern age see Anna Stenmans, Penelope in Drama, Libretto und bildender Kunst der Frühen Neuzeit, Münster 2013. On the manifold appearances of medieval epigrams see also: Wolfgang Maaz, Lateinische Epigrammatik im hohen Mittelalter. Literarhistorische Untersuchungen zur Martial-Rezeption, Berlin 1992.

6 Marie-Madeleine Mactoux, Pénélope. Légende et mythe, Paris 1975, pp. 8–15; Joseph Russo, Interview and Aftermath. Dream, Fantasy, and Intuition in Odyssey 19 and 20, in: American Journal of Philology 103 (1982), pp. 4–18; Marylin A. Katz, Penelope's Renown. Meaning and Indeterminacy in the Odyssey, Princeton 1991, pp. 145–148.

7 Apollod. 7, 38 *τινὲς δὲ Πηνελόπην ὑπὸ Ἀντινόου φθαρεῖσαν λέγουσιν ὑπὸ Ὀδυσσέως πρὸς τὸν πατέρα Ἰκάριον ἀποσταλῆναι, γενομένην δὲ τῆς Ἀρκαδίας κατὰ Μαντίνειαν ἐξ Ἑρμοῦ τεκεῖν Πᾶνα·ἄλλοι δὲ δι' Ἀμφίνομον ὑπὸ Ὀδυσσέως αὐτοῦ τελευτῆσαι.* Also Herodotus (2, 145, 4) and Cicero (nat. 3, 56) confirm that Pan was the son of Hermes and Penelope, and Servius ad

island. So Penelope would be sheltered first in Sparta and then in Mantinea, where she was probably buried after her death.[8] From all these sources, therefore, we can deduce a certain ambiguity in Penelope's behaviour and her loyalty to her absent husband. As it has been rightly observed, more than once Penelope appears different from her centuries-old, well-established, lasting image of extremely loyal wife in spite of the unshakeable faith of scholars in the myth of her chastity.[9]

Among all these different above-mentioned interpretations of Penelope's myth, which question the extolled virtues of the queen, the Bobbian epigram 36 with the title 'De Penelope' is inserted. The text below belongs to the Speyer edition, apart from a few exceptions that I am about to talk about:

> *Intemerata procis et tot servata per annos,*
> *oscula vix ipsi cognita Telemacho.*
> *Hinc me virginitas facibus tibi lusit adultis,*
> *arsit et in vidua principe verus amor.*
> *Saepe ego mentitis tremui nova femina somnis*
> *lapsaque non merito sunt mihi verba sono.*
> *Et tamen ignotos sensi experrecta dolores*
> *strataque temptavi sicca pavente manu.*
> *Nam tibi anhelanti supremaque bella moventi*
> *paruit indulgens et sine voce dolor;*
> *dente nihil violare fero, nihil unguibus ausa:*
> *foedera nam tacita pace peregit amor.*
> *Denique non quemquam trepido clamore vocavi,*
> *nec prior obsequio serva cucurrit anus.*
> *Ipsa verecundo tetigi pallore tabellas,*
> *impositum teneri fassa pudoris onus.*[10]

Aen. ww2, 44, besides this version, adds another one, according to which Penelope and the suitors begot Pan.

8 Paus. 8, 12, 5 ff. *Μαντινέων δὲ ὁ ἐς αὐτὴν λόγος Πηνελόπην φησὶν ὑπ' Ὀδυσσέως καταγνωσθεῖσαν ὡς ἐπιστατοὺς ἐσαγάγοιτο ἐς τὸν οἶκον, καὶ ἀποπεμφθεῖσαν ὑπ' αὐτοῦ, τὸ μὲν παραυτίκα ἐς Λακεδαίμονα ἀπελθεῖν, χρόνῳ δὲ ὕστερον ἐκ τῆς Σπάρτης ἐς Μαντινείαν μετοικῆσαι, καὶ οἱ τοῦ βίου τὴν τελευτὴν ἐνταῦτα συμβῆναι.*

9 For the original quotation, see Eva Cantarella, Itaca. Eroi, donne, potere tra vendetta e diritto, Milano 2002, p. 6: "più di una volta, Penelope appare diversa dalla sua plurisecolare, consolidata, inossidabile immagine di moglie incorruttibilmente fedele nonostante la granitica fiducia degli studiosi al mito della sua castità."

10 For the English translation see James L. P. Butrica, Epigrammata Bobiensia 36, in: Rheinisches Museum für Philologie 149 (2006), pp. 310–349, here p. 349: "Kisses unsullied by the suitors and held back so many years, scarcely known even to Telemachus. Hence virginity made game of me with torches kindled for you, and a genuine love burned in a prominent unwed lady. Newly a woman, I often trembled when my dreams lied [5], and my words slipped out with a sound not deserving. And yet, on being awakened, I felt an unfamiliar pain, and with fearful hand tested the dry bedding, for as you panted and began the final battle, my love obeyed, indulgently and wordlessly [10], I dared to violate nothing with savage tooth, nothing

Firstly, it should be clarified which literary genre the composition belongs to. According to Giordano Rampioni, it is an ekphrastic epigram, in which the poet is inspired by figurative art, and describes the climax scene of the meeting between Penelope and Ulysses.[11] This hypothesis looks somewhat unlikely because of the lack of deictic elements in the poem.[12] The same can be said of Butrica's hypothesis,[13] not supported by irrefutable elements. According to Butrica, the above-mentioned verses, in which Penelope is brought into play as a paradigm of modesty, have to be attributed to Sulpicia and make up a fragment of a longer composition, in which the poetess tells her love story with her husband Galenus. On the contrary, Mariotti's opinion appears more likely. Mariotti considered the poem to be an epistle in the same kind as Ovid's 'Heroides', and in particular a short epigrammatic epistle, just like the majority of the compositions of the whole collection.[14] Therefore, I agree with Nocchi, according to whom the Bobbian epigram belongs to the epistolary genre and presents all the characteristics of a rhetorical exercise following "i moduli tipici di un'etopea epistolare proginnasmatica".[15]

The topic of the immodest Penelope during Ulysses's absence was common in rhetoric schools and had numerous followers in the scholastic debates and exercises of rhetorical composition, as Seneca recalls in letter 88, 8 where he criticises the liberal arts as an end in itself and wonders: *Quid inquiris an Penelope impudica fuerit, an verba saeculo suo dederit?*[16] In this sense the rhetorical structure of the poem[17] is

with nails, for Love negotiated his treaty in peace and silence. Afterwards, I did not summon anyone with quavering shout, nor did an elderly slave woman come running first to serve me: I myself picked up the tablets with becoming paleness [15], confessing the imposed load of young modesty."

11 Anna Giordano Rampioni, Ep. Bob. 36. De Penelope, in: Siculorum Gymnasium 42 (1989), pp. 241–252, here pp. 243–244.

12 Epigrammata Bobiensia, Einführung, Text, Übersetzung und Kommentar von Wolfgang Kofler, Habilitationsschrift, Innsbruck 2007, p. 203.

13 Butrica (note 10), p. 313.

14 Scevola Mariotti, De Penelope (Epigr. Bob. 36), in: Ugo Criscuolo and Riccardo Maisano (eds.), Synodia. Studia Humanitatis Antonio Garzya septuagenario ab amicis atque discipulis dicata, Napoli 1997, pp. 639–648, here pp. 640–641. Otto Weinreich (rec. Francesco Munari, Epigrammata Bobiensia, in: Gnomon 31 [1959], pp. 239–250, here pp. 246–247) has a different opinion. According to him, this is a mutilated composition both at the beginning and at the end, of which a fragment *einer ovidianisierenden Heroide* remains. See also Munari (note 1), *ad l.*; while on the other hand Speyer (note 2), *ad l.*, finds the gap only at the end.

15 Nocchi (note 3), p. 231.

16 English translation by Richard M. Gummere, Seneca, Epistles vol. II: Epistles 66–92, Cambridge MA 1991, p. 358: "Why try to discover whether Penelope was a pattern of purity, or whether she had the laugh on her contemporaries?" Polybius (Historiae 12, 26b) also recalls young people attending the rhetoric schools and upholding absurd theories both when singing Thersites' praises and when enumerating all Penelope's faults.

17 Nocchi (note 3), p. 231.

not surprising: the first two verses are dedicated to the nostalgic memory of the long wait for her husband and have the function of preparing and justifying what is said in the following verses (3–14), which describe in detail the current condition of the queen, sincerely and deeply fallen in love with another man. At the end, in the last two verses of the lyric, the woman resolves to declare her love through a letter with the secret hope of having her feelings reciprocated by the man. However, the poet denies all the well-codified tradition and presents us with an immodest Penelope, surprisingly unmindful of her husband and ready to give in to a new passion of love. The opposite situation can be found in the Bobbian epigram 45, in which Dido protests against Virgil being guilty of disgracing her modesty by inventing her love story with Aeneas.[18] The queen of Ithaca, mostly famous for her chastity and loyalty, unexpectedly shows herself to be a lustful woman when she lets herself indulge in a scene of intense eroticism. In a similar way, the unfortunate queen of Carthage, made the protagonist of an unhappy love story by the Virgilian *fabula*, also acknowledged by scholastic exegesis,[19] reacts by turning into a model of *pudicitia* and marital fidelity. Dido defends herself from Virgil's defamatory accusations by denying any relationship with Aeneas, who would never have arrived in Libya and whom she would never meet. The Carthaginian queen now can re-establish the truth by affirming in first person that her suicide was not due to the *furor or crudus dolor* ('Epigr. Bob.' 45, 10) of an outraged love, but to her firm will to preserve her chastity, after escaping the fury and weapons of Iarba. Therefore, I agree with Mariotti's view when he notes that the two different images of the immodest Penelope and of the modest Dido would not be random in their respective epigrams. Rather, the two images would correspond to the same taste for the unconventional overturning of the common opinion by the collector of the Bobbian collection.[20]

Returning to the reading of the poem, James Butrica also questioned the title 'De Penelope'. According to him, the woman referred to in the poem is Sulpicia and not Penelope, brought into play simply as *exemplum pudoris*.[21] Moreover, Butrica added that the title 'De Penelope' would seem to be inappropriate, because the female

18 See Sabina Tuzzo, La castità di Didone (Epigr. Bob. 45 Sp.), in: Bollettino di Studi Latini 48 (2018), pp. 93–104.

19 According to Servius Danielinus Dido's love is *contra dignitatem susceptus* (ad Aen. 4, 1), a *stuprum* (4, 29) rightly punished by death: *videtur et post amissam castitatem etiam iustus interitus* (4, 1). Moreover, Servius charges the queen with hypocrisy when she is given to believe that she nurses for Aeneas the same love feelings she nursed for her late husband: *bene inhonestam rem sub honesta specie con tetur, dicens se agnoscere maritalis coniugii ardorem* (ad Aen. 4, 23), with the meaningful explanatory note of Servius Danielinus: *nam erat meretricium dicere 'in amorem Aeneae incidi'*. See Luca Mondin, Didone hard-core, in: Incontri triestini di filologia classica 3 (2003–2004), pp. 227–246, here pp. 236–237.

20 The original Italian text quotes: "allo stesso gusto per l'anticonformistico rovesciamento dell'opinione comune da parte del raccoglitore della silloge bobbiese", see Mariotti (note 14), p. 642 n. 12; Scevola Mariotti, Epigrammata Bobiensia, in: RE, Suppl. 9 (1962), cols. 37–64, here col. 46.

21 Butrica (note 10), pp. 312–313.

protagonist tells her love story in the first person. Therefore, it is not certain whether the title is to be attributed to the author or more likely to the person who edited the Bobbian collection, as suggested by Nocchi,[22] because the formula 'De Penelope' is surely not accidental for the story of a dream and the torments of the awakening.

In the first six couplets of the poem, Penelope confesses her innermost feelings and is proud to have remained chaste in spite of the prolonged absence of her husband. Her status as single and forsaken woman led her to fall in love with another man, whose love Penelope was not able to resist, as shown by some dreams, which the queen believed she lived as if they were true. In the last two couplets, as she was about to wake up from the dream, Penelope looks to be conscious and self-confident, and claims that she did not need to ask anyone for help. Now she is ready and decided to send a letter to her lover in order to confess her love to him and so rid herself of that load on her conscience due to her adulterous relationship.

The poem opens as a *prosopopoeia*, a rhetorical device in which a speaker or writer communicates to the audience by speaking as another person. This figure of speech was often used to give another perspective on the action being described. Just so at the beginning of this epigram, where Penelope describes herself as a chaste and modest woman, so much so that she often does not even kiss her son Telemachus. The opening past participle *intemerata* has called the attention of some critics, who considered the poem to be a mutilated composition. In the first couplet, the subject is indeed not expressed, but it cannot be anyone other than Penelope, as the reference to the suitors and Telemachus leads us to believe without any doubt. As proposed by Bernardini,[23] the problem may be solved by moving the third couplet (vv. 5–6) before the second one (vv. 3–4), and considering *intemerata* and *servata* as appositions of *ego* of v. 5. However, as Mariotti has already pointed out,[24] the actual order of the verses cannot be changed at all, because vv. 5–6 cannot be separated from vv. 7–8: the first verses talk about the false dreams, followed by the awakening in the second verses. Mariotti had hypothesised a *nominativus pendens*[25] – furthermore that such a use of the nominative is certainly not unusual in the Bobbian collection[26] – with *intemerata*[27] and *servata* referring to Penelope, as confirmed by a passage from Ovid, well known to the Bobbian poet: *Penelope mansit [...] / inter tot iuvenes intemerata*

22 Nocchi (note 3), p. 234.

23 Rossella Bernardini, Ricerche, annotazioni e osservazioni sul c. 36 'De Penelope', Epigrammata Bobiensia, in: Quaderni dell'Istituto di Lingua e Letteratura Latina 1 (1979), pp. 7–15, here pp. 12–13.

24 Mariotti (note 14), p. 644; see also Nocchi (note 3), p. 235.

25 Scevola Mariotti, Adnotatiunculae ad Epigrammata Bobiensia et Anthologiam Latinam, in: Philologus 100 (1956), pp. 323–326, here p. 324; Mariotti (note 14), p. 640.

26 'Epigr. Bob.' 5, 5; 38, 3; 52, 3; 67, 2.

27 The use of *intemeratus* is actually frequent especially in late Latin, see Giordano Rampioni (note 11), p. 247.

procos (‘*amor.*’ 3, 4, 23 f.)[28]. Thus, if we consider v. 2 as a parenthesis, where the poet intended to emphasise the purity of the queen who barely kissed Telemachus, v. 1 might be linked directly to v. 3, which probably represents the direct consequence of *intemerata* and *servata*: the forced abstinence, to which Penelope would have been compelled, would have produced as a reaction the outburst of an overwhelming new amorous passion due to a sense of loneliness caused by Ulysses’s long absence. Besides, the principle of cause and effect is marked by the adverb *hinc* (= *ideo*) with the meaning of origin, which directly links v. 3 to v. 1. Therefore v. 3, in fact, is perfectly consistent with what we read in the Bobbian code, and so the lesson *mea* in place of *me* is not necessary. It should be noted, however, that this substitution of *mea* in place of *me* was transmitted by the two oldest editions *A* and *V*, and adopted by Cazzaniga[29] and Speyer in their respective editions (*ad l.*). Furthermore, and by the same premise, the substitution of the conjecture *luxit*[30] in place of the transmitted *lusit* is also not necessary. On the other hand, Mariotti’s opinion[31] cannot be fully shared. While accepting the link *me lusit* – with the same meaning of Ovid[32] and Claudian[33] – Mariotti explained it wrongly: *mea ipsius simplicitate decepta tuo amore flagravi* and considered *tibi* as a *dativus commodi*. Indeed, if we attribute the meaning of “naivety” to *virginitas*, it is then hard to understand the expressive effectiveness of the thought process, which is instead clear and coherent if *virginitas* keeps its proper sense.[34] Moreover, the interpretation of this verse is also corroborated if we imagine that in these verses Penelope states that virginity, preserved for such a long time, mocked her, unable to withstand the birth of a new love.[35]

Whom Penelope addresses with *tibi* remains to be seen. Certainly not Ulysses, as hypothesised by some critics,[36] who actually based their hypothesis on another one already put forward by Marx.[37] According to Marx, the theme of the dream dates back to Homer’s Odyssey (‘Od.’ 20, 87–90). Here Penelope confessed to have

28 English translation by Grant Showerman, Ovid in Six Volumes, vol. 1: Heroides and Amores, Cambridge MA, London 1971, p. 461: “Penelope […] remained inviolate among so many youthful wooers.” Cf. also Prop. 2, 9, 3 f. *Penelope poterat bis denos salva per annos/vivere.*

29 Ignazio Cazzaniga, Note marginali agli Epigrammi Bobbiesi, in: Studi italiani di Filologia classica 32 (1960), pp. 146–155, here p. 154.

30 Canter *ap.* Munari (note 1); Cazzaniga (note 29), p. 154; Giordano Rampioni (note 11), p. 248.

31 Mariotti (note 25), p. 324.

32 Amor. 3, 7, 77 *quid me ludis*?

33 Paneg. de VI cos. Hon. praef. 21: *additur ecce fides nec me mea lusit imago.*

34 About the meaning of *virginitas* referred to woman keeping or regaining it also after marriage, cf. Tert. virg. vel. 9.

35 Nocchi (note 3), p. 236.

36 Weinreich (note 14), p. 246; Wolfgang Speyer, Addenda zur Editio Teubneriana der Epigrammata Bobiensia, in: Helikon 3 (1963), pp. 448–453, here p. 451; Giordano Rampioni (note 11), p. 243.

37 Friedrich Marx, Ausonius, in: RE, 2,2 (1896), cols. 2562–2580, here col. 2578.

dreamt she was sleeping with a man like her husband. However, as Mariotti[38] has already rightly observed, "il tono di acceso erotismo e il senso del peccato che percorrono tutto il carme non si accordano con una dichiarazione di conservata fedeltà". Furthermore, in the Homeric epic Penelope enjoys the dream, imagining that she really slept with her husband; on the contrary, in the Bobbian poem the erotic dream deeply upsets Penelope's modesty (v. 15 *verecundo pallor*) and lays heavy on her conscience (v. 16 *tener pudoris onus*).[39] Moreover, at v. 7 Penelope speaks of *ignotos dolores*, that is, she had already experienced previous feelings probably for a man other than Ulysses. Therefore, in this poem it can perhaps be supposed, in contrast to the situation presented, that the poet recalled Dido's confession to her sister Anna in book IV of the Aeneid, which comes to a climax in the tremendously meaningful expression: *adgnosco veteris vestigia flammae* (v. 23). Here *adgnosco* probably has to be translated "I recognise", as this verb means the recognition, *agnitio,* that puts an end to the dramatic events. Dido feels the emotions already felt for her husband, and recognises the fire of the first love from *vestigia*, the signs which still remain in her mind and have now become more intense. The value of these metaphors (*vestigia* as "love signs", and *flamma* as "burning love") likely allude to some old healed scars of love, which are now opening again, and which Dido can at once recognise because she had already experienced them in the past. Penelope reveals an uncontrollable new passion for another man instead.

The Bobbian poet, like Virgil, uses a well-known erotic *topos: facibus adultis*, that is fire as a metaphor for the passion of love. This *topos*, of Hellenistic origin,[40] was already well known in Archaic Greek lyric.[41] The image, repeated both in v. 3 *facibus adultis* and in v. 4 *arsit verus amor*, functions as a description of the new overwhelming passion of Penelope,[42] as suggested by the link *verus amor* dating back to Propertius, who states: *verus amor nullum novit habere modum* (2, 15, 30), and as also stylistically emphasised by the emphatic position of the keyword (*amor*) at the end of the verse, by the hyperbaton and the double alliteration *arsit/amor* and *vidua/verus*, and finally by the expression *vidua principe*,[43] placed in the middle between *arsit* and *amor*, which represents the queen's natural reaction to her condition of *vidua*.

38 Mariotti (note 14), p. 642.

39 Nocchi (note 3), p. 236.

40 Josef Svennung, Catulls Bildersprache, Uppsala, Leipzig 1945, pp. 16–17; Giuseppe Giangrande, Trois épigrammes de l'Anthologie, in: Revue des Études Grecques 81 (1968), pp. 47–66, here pp. 53–54; Dante Nardo, La sesta satira di Giovenale e la tradizione erotico-elegiaca latina, Padova 1973, p. 36 n. 59; Paola Pinotti, Presenze elegiache nella V Satira di Persio, in: Alfonso Traina (ed.), Satura. Studi in memoria di E. Pasoli, Bologna 1981, pp. 47–72, here p. 61.

41 Giuseppe Spatafora, Il fuoco d'amore. Storia di un topos dalla poesia greca arcaica al romanzo bizantino. 1: L'immagine del fuoco nella poesia di età arcaica e classica, in: Myrtia 22 (2007), pp. 19–33.

42 Butrica (note 10), p. 319.

43 The same *iunctura* referred to Penelope is in Plaut. Stich. 1 ff.: *credo ego miseram/fuisse Penelopam/[…]/quae tam diu vidua/viro suo caruit*.

With reference to vv. 5–8, in which Penelope recounts the frequent dreams deeply upsetting her senses, the Bobbian poet drew inspiration from some Ovidian female dreams.[44] I refer in particular to '*her.*' 15, 123 ff., where, while dreaming, Sappho is talking to Phaon. Her words: *veris simillima verba/eloquor* (v. 131 f.), can be compared with Penelope's words in v. 6: *lapsaque non merito sunt mihi verba sono.*

In v. 8 of the Bobbian epigram, the adjective *sicca*, with reference to the lack of pleasure experienced by Penelope, recalls v. 134 of the Ovidian epistle: *siccae non licet esse mihi*, which alludes to the pleasure experienced by the poetess of Lesbos in her dream. According to Mariotti,[45] instead the the 'Metamorphoses' author of the Bobbian epigram was probably also influenced by the tale of Byblis in of Ovid (9, 450–665). Here the female protagonist sends a letter to her brother to reveal her love for him. Both Penelope and Byblis are guilty: Penelope is guilty of adulterous love, while Byblis, madly in love with her twin brother Caunus, is guilty of incest. Awakened, Byblis does not let herself be overwhelmed by carnal thoughts, but when asleep she often dreams of being embraced by her twin brother: *spes tamen obscenas animo demittere non est/ausa sua vigilans; placida resoluta quiete/saepe videt quod amat; visa est quoque iungere fratri/corpus et erubuit, quamvis sopita iacebat* (9, 468–471).[46] The two women are flooded with conflicting sensations and feelings such as dismay and modesty, love and reason. Both of them are aware of their sinful behaviour, but neither of them wants to give up on their own amorous passion, despite the fact that they feel remorse, as revealed by Penelope's pallor of shame (v. 6 *lapsaque non merito sunt mihi verba sono; v. 15 verecundo […] pallore*) and Byblis's blush (v. 471 *erubuit quamvis sopita iacebat*), explicitly called *putibunda* in v. 568. Just as the queen of Ithaca unconditionally yields to the embraces, even if only in the dream – *paruit indulgens et sine voce dolor* (v. 10) – so Byblis hopes that she will soon go back to dreaming of joining her brother: *saepe licet simili redeat sub imagine somnus/testis abest somno, nec abest imitata voluptas* (9, 480–481)[47].

About the expression *nova femina* of v. 5, I think that the interpretation of Munari does not work.[48] According to him, the attribute *nova* should be interpreted as *rudis, imperita.* From the first verses, indeed, Penelope appears to be a self-confident woman, capable of resisting the flattery of her suitors. Since Penelope is a married woman, her reputation of *virginitas* cannot definitively refer to her inexperience. *Nova* probably

44 Mariotti (note 14), p. 643.

45 Bernardini (note 22), p. 9; Mariotti (note 14), pp. 643–644.

46 English translation by Frank Justus Miller, Ovid in Six Volumes, vol. 4: Metamorphoses, Cambridge MA 1984, p. 37: "Still in her waking hours she would not admit impure desires to her mind; but when she is relaxed in peaceful slumber, she often has visions of her love: she sees herself clasped in her brother's arms and blushes, though she lies sunk in sleep."

47 English translation by Miller (note 46), p. 37: "still may sleep often return with a dream like that! A dream lacks a witness, but does not lack a substitute joy."

48 Munari (note 1), *ad l.*

better refers to the present situation of the queen,[49] who, after many years of chastity spent with her husband absent, regains her femininity and feels the need to rekindle her sexual drives at last. This can explain her trembling experienced during the night, caused by new erotic drives imagined in the dream, as well as the words that the queen utters with an undignified sound. The expression *non merito* evidently refers to the sound of Penelope's words, not to the meaning of her words themselves. Therefore, Penelope does not deny what she said, but she regrets the way she said it.

I entirely agree with Nocchi's opinion that "Penelope confessi con un certo imbarazzo di essersi abbandonata a sensazioni di una tale intensità da non essere più riuscita a controllare le espressioni del proprio piacere".[50] The queen is living her dream experience as a real event, as proved by the link *tamen [...] experrecta*, which has to be interpreted as suggested by Mariotti, namely in the meaning of *quamvis experrecta*.[51] In vv. 7–8 she interrupts the description of her dream, and states that even when awake she experienced unknown love pains, the same *dolores*[52] which we find in v. 10 as a synonym of *amor*.[53] Thus, the attribute *sicca* in v. 8 refers to Penelope, who, now awake, but troubled by dreams, fingers the bed-clothes with a fearful hand. The queen looks for some signs of sexual excitement[54] in order to check whether what she has just dreamt was mere imagination or truth.[55] Giordano Rampioni links *sicca* to *strata* in reference to the empty bed, where Penelope and the mysterious man of her dreams probably had not had intercourse.[56] This image recalls a similar situation in Ovid ('*her.*' 15, 134 *siccae non licet esse mihi*).

In vv. 9–12 Penelope once more addresses the receiver of the poem with *tibi*, linked to *tibi* of v. 3, in order to tell him her dreams, which even after she has awakened, bring her anxiety and upset. In this sense, the transmitted *nam*, introducing v. 9, evidently has an explanatory value and is very appropriate. In this case, therefore, the emendation *nunc*, suggested by Giordano Rampioni,[57] who gives her

49 Giordano Rampioni (note 11), p. 248; Nocchi (note 3), p. 238.

50 Nocchi (note 3), p. 239.

51 Mariotti (note 14), p. 642 n. 13.

52 Mariotti (note 14), p. 642 and n. 14.

53 Munari (note 1), *ad l.*

54 On the erotic significance of *sicca* cf. Mart. 11, 81, 2 *iacet in medio sicca puella toro*. More generally cf. Ov. her. 1, 7, where Penelope says the same thing: *non ego deserto iacuissem frigida toro*.

55 Although in a different context the image of the hand fingering the bed-clothes is in Ov. her. 10, 53 f. *et tua, quae possum pro te, vestgia tango, / strataque quae membris intepuere tuis*, where Ariadne fingers the bed-clothes in the fruitless search for her lover Theseus, while being clearly aware of having been abandoned by him. Moreover, in Auson. ephem. 8, 14–15 (Roger P. H. Green, The Works of Ausonius, Oxford 1991) *totum [...] lectum/pertractat secura manus*, the woman fingers the bed-clothes with a *secura* not *pavente* hand, even though well aware of unhappy love affairs and night-time pleasures: see Mariotti (note 14), p. 643.

56 Giordano Rampioni (note 11), pp. 242–243. Nowhere else does the attribute *sicca* refer to *strata*.

57 Giordano Rampioni (note 11), p. 250.

loose interpretation of the poem, is unnecessary. According to Giordano Rampioni, Penelope may first have reminded Ulysses, just returned home, of his long absence, and then immediately spent the night with him. This hypothesis obviously seems quite unlikely. Indeed, it is not clear why the queen should have reported to Ulysses what he should have already known by having personally taken part in that night. In these verses, the love quarrels transform into total abandonment to the man, and Penelope's femininity shows itself through the force of repressed passion, which causes an unexpected tenderness and transport. The feelings of the two lovers are expressed through the language of erotic lexicon: the military metaphor *bella moventi* refers to the battles of love, as already described in Tibullus[58] and Ovid;[59] the participle *anhelanti* is indicative of the physical attraction of the man for the woman, as if he were overwhelmed by passion. Even in this case we can find the participle *anhelanti* with the same sense as in Tibullus: *dare anhelanti pugnantibus umida linguis/oscula et in collo figere dente notas* (1, 8, 37 f.).[60] Moreover, the attribute *suprema*, referring to *bella*, is indicative of how the ever stronger passion of the man certainly does not leave the woman insensitive, in her turn victim of her inner torments, and unable to resist the final insistences of the man, to which she gives in, yielding and speechless. The intensity of Penelope's passion recalls a refined literary echo, referred to in some well-known motifs of the Latin elegy. The poet uses these motifs dear to the Latin elegy to tell a love story, where there is nothing unreal or awesome. The queen thus feels powerless against the man and is not even able to pretend resistance by defending herself tooth and nail, because love has negotiated a treaty between them. The mention of the extramarital *foedus* firstly recalls Catullus, who, in order to remedy a love affair configured as adultery, changes the symbolic image of the conjugal bond into the *foedus amoris*.[61] Catullus has always respected the *foedus amoris* without ever violating the *fides*, as solemnly declared in carme 76 (vv. 3 f. *nec sanctam violasse fidem, nec foedere nullo/divum ad fallendos numine abusum homines*).[62] From this point of view, true love cannot exist if not outside of marriage, for within the bond of marriage husband and wife have precise duties towards each other, and the daily familiar routine might weaken the intensity of strong emotions and feelings due to unsatisfied passion and desire. The elegiac poet therefore feels the need to make a new

58 Tib. 1, 10, 53 f. *sed Veneris tunc bella calent, scisoque capillos/femina perfractas.*

59 Ov. ars. 2, 146.

60 *Dare anhelanti pugnantibus umida linguis/oscula et in collo figere dente notas* (1, 8, 37 f.). English translation by John Percival Postgate, Tibullus, Cambridge MA 1988, p. 235: "for giving wet kisses with quickened breath and struggling tongue and printing the teeth's marks on his neck". This couplet recalls Lucr. 4, 1108 f. *adfigunt avide corpus iunguntque salivas/oris et inspirant pressantes dentes ora.*

61 Paolo Fedeli, Poesia d'amore latina, Torino 1998, p. XVII.

62 *Nec sanctam violasse fidem, nec foedere nullo/divum ad fallendos numine abusum homines.* English translation by Francis Warre-Cornish, Catullus, Cambridge MA, London 1988, p. 155: "and that he has not broken sacred faith, nor in any compact has used the majesty of the gods in order to deceive men".

foedus, which upholds the laws of love despite not having legal value.[63] While on this subject, it is useful to recall Propertius' elegy 2, 7, where the poet welcomes the repeal of a law against celibacy, which would force him to abandon Cynthia because of her lower social class. The two final lines of the poem are very interesting. Here Propertius reiterates the power of his *foedus* with Cynthia, and the exclusive feelings he has for the *puella*, who inspires in him a more intense and deeper love than feelings towards fatherhood: *tu mihi sola places: placeam tibi, Cynthia, solus: / hic erit et patrio nomine pluris amor.*[64] The double poliptoto and chiasmus are useful to emphasise the reciprocity and intensity of the passion between the poet and his beloved woman.

In vv. 13–14, Penelope's state of enjoyment is described. The oldest two editions, *V* and *A*, as well as Munari[65] and Speyer,[66] transmit the lesson *aviam*, while the Bobbian code has *animam*, which is clearly wrong. According to Mariotti[67] *aviam* may be an adjustment by Ugoletus, the editor of *V*, instead. Even Gazzaniga's[68] amendment *famulam*, which recalls *anus* of the following line, seems excessive. The conjecture *quemquam*, proposed by Traina,[69] might be more appropriate, at least coherent with the logical train of thought. *Quemquam* indeed might disclose the mood of Penelope, who, while dreaming, did not offer any resistance to the man's passion. Thus, now awake, well aware of her new passion and self-confident, she does not feel the need to call anyone for help, not even her old female slave, always ready to rush to her call.

The last two lines of the poem have some interpretation problems. The meaning of the expression *tetigi puellas*, transmitted by the two oldest editions *V* and *A*, is hard to grasp. In Munari's[70] opinion, *tetigi puellas* means "*movi [...] iuvenes ancillas*", but Munari, sceptical of the meaning of *tetigi*, suggested *didici* with the meaning of *docui*. Mariotti,[71] however, rightly wondered: "che cosa c'entrano le giovani ancelle [...] dopo che Penelope ha stretto il silenzioso patto con l'uomo senza nemmeno rivolgersi ad alcuno per aiuto"? The presence of the young maids does not make any sense in this context, after Penelope has negotiated a silent treaty with the man without even addressing anyone for help. So, instead of the transmitted *puellas*,

63 Antonio De Caro, Si qua fides. Gli amores di Ovidio e la persuasione elegiaca, Palermo 2003, p. 51.

64 English translation by H.E. Butler, Propertius, Cambridge MA, London 1967, p. 83: "Thou only pleasest me; let me in like manner, Cynthia, be thy only pleasure: love such as this will be worth more to me than the name of father."

65 Munari (note 1), *ad l.*

66 Speyer (note 2), *ad l.*

67 Mariotti (note 14), pp. 645–646.

68 Cazzaniga (note 29), p. 154

69 Traina (*ap.* Giordano Rampioni [note 11], p. 246 n. 21).

70 Munari (note 1), *ad l.* The transmitted lesson *tetigi puellas* is also accepted by Speyer (note 2), *ad l.*

71 Mariotti (note 14), p. 647.

Mariotti conjectured *tabellas*, which matches the interpretation of considering the composition as a letter sent by Penelope to her lover in order to sincerely confess her love to him. The same situation can be found in the above-mentioned letter of Byblis to her brother, in which the woman confesses her love to him: *miserere fatentis amorem/et non fassurae, nisi cogeret ultimus ardor* ('*met.*' 9, 561 f.).[72] In the myth of Byblis, moreover, the noun *tabellae* is often used and even in the same position at the end of the hexameter.[73] Therefore, Penelope, despite the paleness of her face because of the embarrassment of shame, "picks up" the tablets to confess her feelings directly to the man, and to share a long-hidden secret that disturbed her conscience.[74]

At the beginning of v. 15 we have also to observe the emphatic pronoun *ipsa*, followed by the alliteration *tetigi/tabellas*, which works to underline the impatience of Ulysses's bride, who cannot wait to open her heart to her lover. Furthermore, Penelope's confession sounds still more meaningful thanks to the use of *fateor,* a particularly solemn verb, as attested by the term *fatum*, indicating generically what is said and in particular the immutable oracle response. Tiberius Donatus clearly distinguishes *fateor* and *for*. He states that *fateor* has especially to be used for reporting something to be kept hidden or confessing something.[75]

Conclusion

Finally, it can be said that this composition is a monologue, a short speech presented by a single character most often to directly address the audience. During her speech Penelope expresses her thoughts aloud, and her emotions and feelings play an important role here. Through the words uttered by the queen herself, the poet conducts a detailed psychological analysis of Penelope's attitude and describes every single aspect of it. The female protagonist of the poem admits a very strong attraction towards the man and, overwhelmed by passion, has no intention of giving him up. The woman's sense of frustration and resignation turns into enthusiasm, and she feels as though she was almost waking up to a new life. Dreams reveal a new reality to Penelope, who becomes aware of her unspeakable passion and her most hidden desires, in which now she indulges without any hesitation. In order to describe Penelope's mood at that time exactly, the poet makes use of the lexicon, which

72 *Miserere fatentis amorem/et non fassurae, nisi cogeret ultimus ardor* (met. 9, 561 f.). English translation by Miller (note 46), p. 43: "Pity her who confesses to you her love, but who would not confess if the utmost love did not compel her."

73 Ov. met. 9, 523; 571; 575; 587; 604.

74 In the last line of the composition, instead of the transmitted *opus* that does not make much sense here, Sebisius assumes *onus*, accepted also by Mariotti (note 14), p. 647 n. 28 and by Nocchi (note 3), p. 243. This conjecture is confirmed by Ov. trist. 3, 4, 62 *impositumque sibi firma tuetur onus.*

75 Gabriella Focardi Monami, Fateor, in: Enciclopedia Virgiliana, vol. 2 (1985), pp. 472–473, here p. 472.

refers to that of Latin erotic poetry. While sleeping, Penelope's unconscious lets go of everything that reason holds back, and releases disturbing thoughts and desires, just like those of the Virgilian Dido. The same dreams and nightmares trouble the Carthaginian queen (*Anna soror, quae me suspensam insomnia terrent!*).[76] The oath of loyalty to her husband Sychaeus and her condition as a queen prevent Dido from admitting her new passion for Aeneas. Precisely thanks to the *insomnia,* Dido becomes aware of her unconfessable passion and ends up breaking the oath and the laws of modesty. Virgil comments: *his dictis impenso animum inflammavit amore/spemque dedit dubiae menti solvitque pudorem* (*'Aen.'* 4, 54 f.).[77]

Returning to Penelope's epigram, the real climax of the story can be perceived only in the last two verses, when the woman, pale with shame, declares her love for her beloved man in a letter. In this way, Penelope abandons herself unreservedly to her new love. Her doing this represents the final seal of a love monologue, started in her imagination, very far from reality, and described with constant references to the classical tradition.

76 English translation by Henry Rushton Fairclough, Virgil in Two Volumes, vol. 1: Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid I–VI, Cambridge MA 1967, p. 397: "Anna, my sister, what dreams thrill me with fears?"

77 English translation by Rushton Fairclough (note 76), p. 401: "With these words she famed into flame the queen's love-enkindled heart, put hope in her wavering mind, and loosed the bonds of shame."