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Francis Sydney Muschamp's *Penelope*

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Then during the day, she wove the large web, which at night she unraveled.
Homer, *The Odyssey*.

This essay examines Francis Sydney Muschamp's depictions of the Penelope myth during the Victorian era. The Penelope myth, a significant narrative in the Victorian era, was popularized by the Pre-Raphaelite painters Thomas Seddon (1821-1856), Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), John Roddam Spencer Stanhope (1829-1908), Frederick Sandys (1829-1904), and John William Waterhouse (1849-1917). Their interpretations of this epic poem from Homer's *Odyssey* (800 BCE) inspired Muschamp (1851-1929). He often depicted Penelope's unwavering fidelity and patience as female virtuosity and a cunning perception of family values during her husband Odysseus's long absence. Historically, Penelope was the Queen of Ithaca and the loyal wife of King Odysseus (Ulysses). During her husband's 20-year absence while fighting in the Trojan Wars, Penelope was pursued by suitors competing for her affection and insisting that Odysseus was dead. Despite their advances, Penelope refused to believe that she had been widowed or abandoned. She devised various tricks to keep the suitors at bay. For example, she told them she would choose one of them to marry after completing a woven funeral shroud for her father-in-law, Laertes. Every day, she worked diligently on the tapestry, a shroud, while the impatient suitors watched her progress, but she secretly unraveled the day's work at night when they were asleep. The tapestry became known as *Penelope's Web*.

Keywords: Pre-Raphaelite art, Francis Sydney Muschamp, symbolism, mythology, Penelope, Egyptology

Introduction

This essay consists of two parts. The first deals with some artistic biographical sources regarding Francis Sydney Muschamp, and the second part focuses on his two paintings of *Penelope*, a Greek heroine and Queen of Ithaca, as a protagonist in Homer's *Odyssey*.

There is limited biographical and historical data about Muschamp, a Victorian genre painter often confused with his father, Francis Muschamp (active 1865-1881), a landscape painter. Sydney Muschamp was his preferred appellation to avoid being confused by his father's first name, Francis. Sydney painted some landscapes, portraits, and mythological paintings but mostly intimate domestic scenes in fanciful parlors, living rooms, and flowery verandas. These invented interior and exterior settings were designed with elegantly dressed figures from the classical and English Renaissance eras, e.g., *The Broken String*, *A Musical*

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Interlude, *The Music Lesson*, *In the Library*, *Daydream*, *Reading the Letter*, and *The Clumsy Suitor*.[1] His quest for natural details extended to cultivated and rural landscapes, e.g., *An Afternoon Stroll by the River*, *The Letter*, *Mountain Lake*, *Tennis Players*, *Summer Days*, *Threading Beads*, and *Fisherwoman Looking at the Sea*.[2] These rural landscape scenes often involve a figure partaking in scenic areas while drawing, fishing, or walking, with some portraiture. The cultivated landscapes include panoramic sea views from elaborate classical architectural settings of marble porches, benches, floors, statues, and friezes that decorate Pompeian terraces with blooming, exotic, scented flowers, e.g., *Young Ladies Playing Draughts* and *Festival*.[3]

Artistic Biographical Data

Muschamp's father, Francis, was an artist active in London between 1865 and 1885. He resided with his wife, Harriet, and his son and daughter on 52 Fitzroy Road, Regents Park. His fascination with nature included rural landscapes with rivers, falls, exotic trees, mountainous hills, and turbulent storms.[4] He often exhibited at the British Institution on Suffolk Street and the Royal Hibernian Academy.

Undoubtedly, his son, Francis Sydney Muschamp, was trained in painting by him. He was born in 1851 in Hull, Yorkshire, and relocated to London with his parents and sister in 1870, residing at St. Pancras. Records show that in 1881, Sydney Muschamp married and lived in the same household with his parents in St. Pancras. From 1891 until 1900, he resided in Hampstead, London, with his wife, Harriet, who had the same name as his mother. He had a son, Frederick, who later became a painter. His sister and brother-in-law lived with them in Hampstead. Later, in Hampstead, from 1901 to 1911, he resided only with his wife and son.

Between 1870 and 1903, his artwork was exhibited in prestigious salons, including the Royal Society of British Artists—of which he was an established member—the Royal Academy in London, the Royal Hibernian Academy, the Royal Institute of Oil Painters, Dudley Gallery & New Dudley Gallery, Suffolk Street, the Sheffield Society of Artists, the Manchester City Gallery, and the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool. He died in Earls Court Square in 1929.[5]

Newspaper reviews from the period provided information about the reception of his work and the status of his artistic accomplishments. Unfortunately, many of the reviewed paintings exhibited at these galleries are untraceable; therefore, some suggestions are made to those we know today according to these descriptions.

In 1883, Muschamp was reviewed in *The Sheffield Daily Telegraph* following an exhibition by the Sheffield Society of Artists. The reviewer noted:

> Going back to *At the Fall of the Leaf*, we have a picture by Sydney Muschamp, whose work is not surpassed in the exhibition and who paints in a style that at once shows his keen knowledge and delight in the varying moods of nature and an influential faculty for adapting the highest forms of life, especially rustic life, to the purposes of art. The woodland and the rough and stony foreground are ideally treated. At the same time, it would seem no uncommonly marvelous performance if the older adult, walking along an uneven pathway, were to commence kicking the fallen leaves about, so natural is the

[1] A shorter version of this essay will appear in the Pre-Raphaelite Society Review in 2025. Several of Muschamp's works are mentioned but not discussed here. For some of Muschamp's images, see http://19thcenturybritpaint.blogspot.com/2013/05/francis-sydney-muschamp.html.

[2] For some of Muschamp's images, see http://19thcenturybritpaint.blogspot.com/2013/05/francis-sydney-muschamp.html.

[3] For the images, see https://www.artnet.com/artists/francis-sydney-muschamp/a-game-of-chess-cotqo7xMqvfW8ymUQervxA2 and https://www.invaluable.com/auction-lot/francis-sydney-muschamp-festival-oil-on-canvas-1028-c-0a14b58a12.

[4] For a landscape image of Francis Muschamp's *Falls of the Conway*, 1871, oil on canvas, see https://www.artnet.com/artists/francis-muschamp/falls-of-the-conway-6RPFczadnnC0kEXxsKlc9w2.

[5] For some of Muschamp's images, see http://19thcenturybritpaint.blogspot.com/2013/05/francis-sydney-muschamp.html.

> effect. The figures of the older man and the maiden, seated in the foreground, are exquisitely drawn. *The Midday Meal* is an equally clever picture by the same artist, who also contributes. *In the Chequered Shade*, two young ladies seated on a lawn lazily whiling away the hours of a "perfect day" surrounded by a mass of floral beauty arranged with all that symmetrical precision that gardener's pride. The subject is complex and treated with consummate ability, even to the slightest detail.[6]

In 1889, he was praised in the *Glasgow Evening News*:

> Several commendable pictures in the Collection are being disposed of today, tomorrow, and Wednesday by Messrs. M'Coll Brothers & Co. in their rooms at 52 Renfield Street. One of the best is entitled *Exchange Is No Robbery*, a work by Sydney Muschamp, depicting a country bumpkin changing his tattered chapeau for one which is in a better condition adorning the pole of a scarecrow. The humor of the little incident is well brought out.[7]

In the same year, following the Sheffield Society of Artists exhibition, he was again noted and reviewed in the Sheffield Daily Telegram and Rotherham Independent.

> Sydney Muschamp, an admirable artist whose work is always clever and practical, is represented by three pictures. Two of these are delightful scenes on the Thames, painted with true artistic feeling and with much executive skill. The other, *A Roman Amateur*, is, as its name implies, a work of a different kind. It is the interior of a Roman villa, with a girl in the foreground playing a couple of pipes. The figure is splendidly drawn; in this respect, it is perhaps the best in the exhibition. Note how cleverly and delicately the artist has painted the fingers as they fall on the holes in the instruments and how carefully and effectively all the details in the room are rendered. The color, too, is excellent. This is a work fit for any exhibition.[8]

Ten years later, *The South Wales Daily News* commented:

> A good opportunity presents itself this week in Cardiff to purchase some first-class oil paintings and watercolors at reasonable prices. At 15 High Street, Mr. Morris L. Cohen, the well-known dealer in works of art in Brighton, shows a collection of about 150 frames. These include works by such notable artists as Muschamp, Schafer, Niemann, Horace Hooper, T. R. Miles, and Stoiloff, and all are for sale by private treaty. Among the more conspicuous works is a magnificently executed interior by Sydney Muschamp, showing a wonderfully reproduced tapestry in the background and four well-drawn, naturally posed, classically draped female figures in the foreground.[9]

Muschamp's fascination with ancient archeology, mythology, literature, and English writings, Shakespearean and Arthurian, is evident in his work, noted by the titles of his paintings: *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Sonnet*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Juliet and Her Nurse*, *The Fool and Maria: A Scene for Twelfth Night*, *The Winning of the Golden Fleece*, *Ivanhoe*, and *Penelope*.

His mythological paintings, which draw inspiration from Orientalism (Sasso, 2019),[10] William Morris's

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[6] Cited in https://bravefineart.com/blogs/artist-directory/muschamp-rba-francis-sydney-1851-1929. Unfortunately, many of Muschamp's original titles have changed name today, e.g., *In the Chequered Shades* is known today as *A Game of Chess*; for the image, see https://www.artnet.com/artists/francis-sydney-muschamp/a-game-of-chess-cotqo7xMqvfW8ymUQervxA2. In the same way, the painting *The Midday Meal* could be referred to as the *Afternoon Tea*; for the image, see https://www.mutualart.com/Artwork/Afternoon-tea/1C649715DA6EBA537E034DE74ED9ABA0. Also, *At the Fall of the Leaf* could be considered *The Thinker*, signed and dated 1884; for the image, see https://priory-fine-art.co.uk/fr/products/francis-sydney-muschamp-british-1851-1930.

[7] Cited in https://bravefineart.com/blogs/artist-directory/muschamp-rba-francis-sydney-1851-1929.

[8] Cited in https://bravefineart.com/blogs/artist-directory/muschamp-rba-francis-sydney-1851-1929.

[9] Cited in https://bravefineart.com/blogs/artist-directory/muschamp-rba-francis-sydney-1851-1929. A type of this subject can be seen in *Serenade*; for the image, see https://www.invaluable.com/auction-lot/francis-sydney-muschamp-oil-a-serenade-316-c-4c148b98e6.

[10] Eleonora Sasso, *The Pre-Raphaelites, and Orientalism: Language and Cognition in Remediations of the East* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019). In the 19th century, Orientalism was the term used to describe the Western depiction of the exotic, erotic, and mysterious elements of the East, including Egypt, Turkey, North Africa, and Asia Minor. This interpretation involved elaborate ornamentation, vibrant colors, and luxurious textures in painting, as seen in Pre-Raphaelite and Victorian art.

Arts and Crafts (Moss, 1989),[11] and the Aesthetic Movement (Aslin, 1982),[12] are a testament to the diverse influences that shaped his artistic vision. Muschamp's work was greatly inspired by artists who followed these artistic and aesthetic movements, such as Frederic Leighton (1830-1896), Lawrence Alma-Tadema (1836-1912), and Edward John Poynter (1836-1919), further enriching his artistic repertoire of architectural settings and elaborate ornamentation.

Muschamp integrated aspects of these artistic movements and their followers into his work, such as beauty, exoticism, and magic. He was enamored of mysterious settings. His depictions of exterior settings include landscapes and cultivated flowers. In contrast, his interior is filled with luxurious furniture, carpets, musical instruments, vases with flower arrangements, exotic tapestries, collections of paraphernalia, and tropical aviaries. His fascination with nature expanded to include narrative scenes in cultivated and rural landscapes filled with trees, wildflowers, and Mediterranean seascapes. His architectural settings recall Pompeiian and Roman villas, vistas of the sea, and seaports from porches and verandas with marble benches decorated with blooming exotic flowers.

Penelope

The Greek etymology of the name Penelope combines at least two meanings (Kapach, 2022; Beekes, 2009, p. 1186).[13] One derives from the word *pḗnē*, which refers to the weft, a weaving filling thread, or a loom, alluding to her activities as a weaver. The second derives from the association of loom to loon, referring to the aquatic bird or duck, recalling Penelope's perplexing childhood experience when her parents threw her into the sea and ducks or loons rescued her (Beekes, 2009, p. 1186; Chantraine, 1974, Vol. 3, p. 897).[14] The fusion of the symbolic meaning of the loom as a waterbed and the loon as a solitary bird signifies a condition of tranquility and hope. Hence, Penelope's name alludes to these psychological and spiritual significations.

Historically, Penelope was a beautiful princess from Sparta who married Odysseus (Ulysses), King of Ithaca, and had a son, Telemachus (Bell, 1991, pp. 348-351).[15] She was left alone to rule over Ithaca with her son for 20 years while Odysseus fought in the Trojan War. During his absence, suitors came to desire and pursue Penelope for her beauty, money, family possessions, and power. Valiantly and cunningly, she refused all their advances by stipulating that she would select one of them after weaving a tapestry, a shroud, for her father-in-law, Laertes. During the day, she wove, and at night, she unraveled her work. Her tapestry became known as *Penelope's Web* (Reid, 1993, Vol. 2, pp. 850-854).[16] Finally, after many perils and divine curses, the wandering

[11] During the 1860s, industrialization in England led artists such as William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones, Walter Crane, William de Morgan, and Phillip Webb to emphasize the natural qualities of materials in their work, producing ceramics, illustrated texts, textiles, metalwork, and furniture. This natural approach to art and design expanded the language of decorative arts, as discussed in Gillian Moss's *William Morris and the Art Crafts Movement* (London: Studio Editions, 1989).

[12] The Aesthetic Movement emphasized "art for art's sake", creating art for the senses' visual delight and pursuing physical and metaphysical beauty in art, as seen in Edward Burne-Jones, Albert Joseph Moore, and Evelyn Pickering de Morgan. See Elizabeth Aslin, *The Aesthetic Movement* (London: Stackpole, 1982).

[13] See Avi Kapach, "Penelope", 8 December 2022 in https://mythopedia.com/topics/penelope and Robert S. P. Beekes, *Etymological Dictionary of Greek* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), p. 1186.

[14] Beekes, *Etymological Dictionary of Greek*, p. 1186; and Pierre Chantraine, 3 vols., *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1974), 3, p. 897.

[15] Robert E. Bell, *Women of Classical Mythology: A Biographical Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 348-351.

[16] Jason Davidson Reid, Ed., *The Oxford Guide to Classical Mythology in the Arts, 1300-1900s*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 2, p. 850, on Penelope, and for the reproductions in art, pp. 850-54, esp. 852, column 2, and p. 853, column 1, citing the Pre-Raphaelite painters Rossetti, Stanhope, Muschamp, Sandys, and Waterhouse.

husband arrived home to rescue his wife and son, killing the suitors, who had established their welcome permanently in his house and restoring honor and tranquility to his family.

A. Visualization of the Ancient Saga: Classical and Renaissance

In *The Odyssey*, Homer recounted the mysterious saga of Penelope, particularly in the second part of the epic (1.329, 2.121, 11.447, 17.103, 21.158, 25.205, and 24.192).

> Then, day by day, she would weave at the great web, but by night, she would unravel it when she had let place torches by her. So for three years, she was secret in her design… Young men, my wooers, since goodly Odysseus is dead, be patient, though eager for my marriage, until I finish this robe—I would not that my spinning should come to naught—a shroud for the lord Laertes, against the time when the fell fate of grievous death shall strike him down; lest any of the Achaean women in the land should be wroth with me, if he, who had won great possessions, were to lie without a shroud.

Ancient art often visualized the Homeric saga in vase paintings and marble sculptures (Hausmann, 1994, 7, pp. 291-295). 17 At the Museo Civico in Chiusi (Italy), a Red Figure Vase from 430 BCE, known as an attic skyphos—a two-handled deep cup carried by women in religious processions and usually containing libations for sacrifice—is attributed to an ancient artist named Penelope painter.

Figure 1. Penelope painter, attr. *Penelope at her Loom*, 430 BCE, attic skyphos, Red Figure Vase. Museo Civico, Chiusi, Italy.

The frieze of the vase represents a scene of *Penelope at her Loom* (Figure 1). In the scene's background is a large loom with a partially woven tapestry representing the mythical figures Mercury or Perseus in flight and a

flying Pegasus. In the scene's foreground, Penelope is seated before the loom, dressed in her himation and chiton. She is seen in the profile. She has fallen asleep while working, resting her veiled head on her right arm while her left arm rests on the chair, supporting her in a peaceful posture. A man, perhaps her son Telemachus, holding a staff or spear, is standing before her, watching her sleep and protecting his mother.

Classical sculpture frequently represented Penelope's seated pose, veiled head, clothing, and sandals, as well as her contemplative state. This is evident in the terracotta relief of *Penelope Seated between her Attendants*, dated 50-100 BCE, at the British Museum (Figure 2), and the *Seated Penelope* of the first century CE, a marble Roman copy of the Greek original from 450 BCE, now in the Gallery of the Statues in the Pio Clementine Museum at the Vatican (Inv. 754, Figure 3).

Figure 2. Penelope Seated between her Attendants, 50-100 BCE, terracotta relief.
British Museum, London.
Photo courtesy: ©The Trustees of the British Museum.

Figure 3. Seated Penelope, first century CE, marble Roman copy of the Greek original from 450 BCE.
Gallery of the Statues, Pio Clementino Museum, Vatican.
Photo credit: ©Kspartiatis.

The statue was discovered at Persepolis. It was considered a diplomatic gift of peace from the Greeks to the Persian Achaemenid King after Alexander the Great conquered the Persian Empire between 331-334 BCE.[17] Today's statue might be composed of two different sculptures found at Persepolis (Olmstead, 1950).[18] The head may belong to another statue of Penelope added to another of Penelope's body. The veiled and clothed female figure alludes to her pudicity and virtuosity. Her thoughtful expression, the gesture of her right hand, her fingers moving as if counting or keeping track of her thoughts, and the band across her forehead all symbolize her active thinking, as visualized in prophetesses. In Penelope's case, they represent her cunning plot to unravel her daily work at night while her suitors are asleep.

In the visual tradition, Sibyls, ancient female prophetesses and personifications of prophecy and mystical revelations, wore a veil, symbolizing concealing and revealing meanings (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1994, p. 1064),[19] and a headband (*taenia*), a connection to magical powers. This connection refers to a passage in Virgil's *Aeneid*, where the poet narrates the journey of Aeneas and the Cumean Sibyl, Priestess and Prophetess of Apollo's oracle at Cumea, a Greek colony near Naples, to the Fields of Elysium-a paradise of perfect happiness for mortal heroes,

[17] For the articles on this topic, see https://www.scribd.com/document/523339340/The-Penelope-Sculptures.
[18] It has been suggested that the head is part of another Penelope's statue. See Cleta Margaret Olmstead, "A Greek Lady From Persepolis", March 1950, https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.2307/500637?journalCode=aja.
[19] Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrant, *A Dictionary of Symbols* (London: Blackwell, 1994), p. 1064.

who achieved immortality granted by the gods. In this paradise, brave and noble souls wore white headbands, a sign of their angelic spirit and eternal life (Fagles, 2006).[20]

The ancient saga became a famous tale about a virtuous wife and her loyalty to her husband and family values during the Italian Renaissance. Although the story was well known in the medieval period as an example of a wife's loyalty, it was not until around 1360 that the tale combined the virtuous quality of a wife and the cleverness of a woman protecting her virtue and family honor. The Italian writer and poet Giovanni Boccaccio's (1313-1375) writing, *Concerning Famous Women* (*De mulieribus claris*), was the first account of merging the Greek and Latin versions of the Penelope from the Homeric saga (Guarino, 1964, p. ix; Amendola, 2014, esp. p. 1).[21] Following Boccaccio's footsteps, the Italian Cristina de Pisan (1364-1431), known as Christine de Pizan, who then became a court writer and poet for King Charles II of France, praised Penelope for her being a "wise and prudent" woman in her *The Book of the City of Ladies* (*Le Livre de la Cit édes Dames*, 1405) (Richards, 1998, p. 152).[22]

Literary sources about this story were assimilated into the Italian Renaissance visual arts. For example, influenced by the fresco decorations in the Roman vault of Emperor Nero's *Domus Aurea*, Bernardino Pinturicchio (1454-1513) composed a fresco cycle along with Luca Signorelli (1441-1523) and Girolamo Genga (1475-1551) on *Scenes From Odyssey* for the Palazzo del Magnifico in Via Pellegrini in Siena. In 1509, Pandolfo Petrucci (1452-1512) commissioned them for the decoration of these Homeric scenes for one of the largest rooms and its vault in his palace to celebrate his son Borghese's marriage to Vittoria Piccolomini, niece of Pope Pius III (Francesco Todeschini Piccolomini, 1439-1503). Between 1842 and 1844, these frescoes were detached from the wall and sold. The fresco *Penelope With Suitors* was purchased by the National Gallery of London (Inv. 911) and transferred to canvas (Figure 4). This ancient cycle represents a moral tale of a loyal and unwavering defender of family honor, mirroring the virtues of the Petrucci family of Siena.

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[20] *The Aeneid by Virgil*, Trans. Robert Fagles (New York: Penguin Classics, 2006), Book Six.

[21] *Giovanni Boccaccio, Concerning Famous Women*, Trans. Guido A. Guarino (London: Allen and Unwin, 1964), p. ix; Natasha Amendola, "Praise for Female Deceptiveness: Boccaccio's Penelope", *Eras* Edition, 15 March 2014, https://www.monash.edu/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/1675926/copy-of-art.amendola-boccaccio-.pdf, esp. p. 1, n. 3, on the bibliography of Penelope's symbol of female virtues in the Italian Renaissance.

[22] Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, Trans. Earl Jeffrey Richards (New York, NY: Persea Books, 1998), p. 152.

Figure 4. Bernardino Pinturicchio, *Penelope With the Suitors*, 1509. Fresco transferred to canvas. National Gallery, London.

B. Visualization of the Saga by British Painters

The Pre-Raphaelite painters Rossetti, Sandys, Stanhope, and Seddon were all intrigued by the saga of Penelope, assisted by the literature of the time (Smith, 1844-1849; Joshua, 2024).[23] Although Rossetti and Sandys preferred to represent a single image of the protagonist Penelope (Figures 5 and 6), the other painters opted to represent Penelope in a narrative scene, such as Stanhope, who situated Penelope with one of her maidens in an apple orchard (Figure 7). In contrast, Seddon, Muschamp, and Waterhouse focused on the narrative scene of Penelope and her suitors (Figures 8, 9, 10, and 11).[24]

Rossetti's beautiful drawing of *Penelope*, in primarily red chalk, is in the Lord Andrew Lloyd-Webber Collection (Figure 5).

[23] For significant lexicography, see William Smith, *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology*, 3 vols. (London: Taylor, 1844-1849); Essaka Joshua, *Myth and Victorian Literature*, 21 June 2024, https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/obo-9780199799558/obo-9780199799558-0147.xml.

[24] Although Waterhouse's Penelope is mentioned here, it will not be discussed because it was painted after Muschamp's work, see Figure 11.

Figure 5. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Penelope*, 1869, chalk drawing. Private Collection.

The monogram and date of 1869 are in the lower right corner, while the name *Penelope* is inscribed in the upper left corner (Benedetti, 1984, pp. 277-278).[25] The model for the figure of Penelope was the sensual Ellen Smith (Surtees, 1941/1980, pp. 38, 45).[26] She sits pensively in front of her unraveled loom, where the scene depicts the ship of Odysseus. While one hand supports her head as she cunningly plans to delay the completion of the tapestry, the other hand holds a shuttle for weaving, referring to her web's dilemma.

Another beautiful Pre-Raphaelite portrayal of Penelope is Sandys's mint green and white chalk drawing, dated July 1877, now in a Private Collection. It is assigned as *F. Sandys* on the lower right. At the top of the drawing, a small scroll on the right contains a Greek inscription of *Penelope* (Figure 6). The protagonist of the ancient heroine is the exotic gypsy, Keomi Gray, Sandys's favorite model (Cheney, 2001, pp. 294-295).[27] She is depicted in profile in front of a background of flowering orange blossom, a traditional ornament for a bride, symbolizing purity in marriage (D'Ancona, 1977, p. 272).[28] According to the historical writings of the antiquarian Athenaeus (c. 170-230 CE), a Greek-Egyptian living in Rome, the Goddess of Earth gave Zeus and Hera orange blossoms to celebrate their marital union (Gulick, 1927).[29]

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[25] Maria Teresa Benedetti, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (Florence: Sansoni, 1984), pp. 277-278.

[26] She was a laundress with striking features and beautiful curly brown hair. In the early 1860s, she was unfortunately disfigured by a brutal soldier who lashed her face, and she could no longer model for Rossetti. See *The Diaries of George Price Boyce*, Ed. Virginia Surtees (London: Old Watercolor Society's Club, 1941, rep. Norfolk: Real World, 1980), pp. 38 and 45.

[27] Liana De Girolami Cheney, "Biographical Entry: 'Keomi, Gray'", in Jill Berk Jiminez, Ed., *Dictionary of Artist's Models* (Chicago, IL/London: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 2001), pp. 294-295.

[28] Mirella Levi D'Ancona, *The Garden of the Renaissance: Botanical Symbolism in Italian Paintings* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1977), p. 272.

[29] *Athenaeus, The Deipnosophists* (*Sophists at Dinner*), Trans. Charles Burton Gulick (Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library, rev. ed., 1927), Book 3.5.

Figure 6. Anthony Frederick Augustus Sandys, *Penelope*, 1877, colored chalk. Private Collection.

The renowned Pre-Raphaelite painter John Roddam Spencer Stanhope, who lived most of his summers in Florence due to his asthmatic condition, was associated with the British Symbolist and Aesthetic movements and also became enamored with the magic subject of Penelope. The artist's sister, A. M. Stirling, owned and donated the painting *Penelope* to the De Morgan Foundation. Christie's London auctioned it on 18 November 2001, Lot 3; later, Sotheby's London auctioned it on 4 December 2017, Lot 8, to a private collector (Figure 7).

Stanhope's *Penelope* was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1864 and was highly praised for its treatment of colors, textiles, facial features, and dramatic background.[30] A dawn light on the horizon announces the beginning of a new day. Two female figures are in the foreground in a rich orchard filled with apple trees and fruits.

The space of the composition is divided into horizontal bands; the background depicts an extended meadow; the middle ground is separated by a large hanging drape sustained by threads attached to two large apple tree branches; in the foreground, the two females are in front of a loom with a woven tapestry displayed vertically. The upper part of the textile is unwoven, extending horizontally to partially hang on a large tree branch. This design motif functions as a canopy for the seated Penelope. The intricate design inside the tapestry is complex regarding the textile technique and the subject matter. The tapestry's top exhibits an array of fibers or yarn threads used in weaving, where threads are assembled and knotted together. The design's intricacy of the knots indicates

[30] https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2017/victorian-pre-raphaelite-british-impressionist-art-l17133/lot.8.html?locale=en.

the complex bond of love (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1994, pp. 575-378).[31]

Figure 7. John Roddam Spencer Stanhope, *Penelope*, 1864, oil on canvas. Private Collection.

In the distance, a medieval castle is surrounded by a moat, adding a romantic touch to the scene. In the lower part of the loom are two woven male figures, one standing and the other sitting. In the tapestry, a large orange scroll with Greek inscriptions recounting the argument between Achilles and Agamemnon about the Trojan War is wrapped around the male figures. Curiously, this scene is from Homer's *Iliad*, not from a citation of Homer's *Odyssey*. Stanhope is duplicating the poses of two males in the loom with the females in the landscape. On the lower side of the tapestry frame is a projected pole, a yarn holder that displays several colored yarns employed to weave the textile.

[31] Chevalier and Gheerbrant, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, pp. 575-378.

Penelope's resting action indicates that she is tired after unpicking the weaving all night and has paused to rest. Not surprisingly, she unravels sections of her work by pulling one of the black threads from which she has woven the name Ulysses.

One of her maidens, Melanthon, in a blue chiton, stands beside her, picking apples from a tree in the landscape. Her active standing and reaching up contrasts with Penelope's passive seated and resting posture. Penelope's pose, resting her head on her hand, and the treatment of the drapery in her attire are motifs that recall classical imagery. In contrast, Melanthon's gestures and movements in the landscape bring to mind the biblical Eve reaching for and eating apples (fruit) from the Tree of Knowledge in Eden (Gen 3:1-24). In this incident, Eve's betrayal of God is compared to Melanthon betraying Penelope. Melanthon informs her lover, Eurymachus, one of Penelope's suitors, of her mistress's plan to unravel her woven work at night. Similarly, Eve alienates and mistrusts God by listening to the snake's plan to gain wisdom from the apples on the Tree of Knowledge.

In his painting, Stanhope shows that Melanthon has eaten and discarded some apples—there are half-eaten apples at her feet—metaphorically alluding to her broken trust. Unaware of her maid's deception, Penelope is depicted with her back turned. Stanhope's placement of the apple trees in the meadow evokes many positive associations with the apple's signification because of its delicious taste and spherical shape; the apple is a metaphysical symbol of love and knowledge. Also included are negative associations with alienation, temptation, and the failure of human conduct. In the ancient, biblical, and Celtic folklore literature, the apple is a fruit of learning, magic, and prophecy associated with knowledge and wisdom in the Tree of Knowledge (Garden of Eden) in Genesis (2: 17); with immortality in the Golden Apples (Garden of the Hesperides) in Apollodorus and Hyginus (Frazer, 1921, Book 2, Chapter 5, Section 11; Grant, 1960, Preface, p. §0.2);[32] with judgment and strife in the Apple of Discord (Mount Olympus) in Stasinus and Apollodorus (Evelyn-White, 1914b; Frazer, 1921, Epitome, Section 3.2);[33] with race contest for love (Melanion and Atalanta) in Hesiod and Ovid (Evelyn-White, 1914a; Mahaffy & Smyly**,** 1905, Pl. III. 3; Frazer, 1931, Book 10, Line 560);[34] with a mythical resting place (Celtic's Orchard); and with learning (Merlin's Apple Tree) (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1994, pp. 35-36).[35]

Stanhope's design of the figures and landscape of the apple trees recalls a later painting of his friend Edward Burne-Jones, *The Garden of the Hesperides* of 1869, oil on canvas at the Kunsthalle Museum in Hamburg.[36] William Waters noted that Burne-Jones created drawings and studies of the apple trees in the early 1860s while producing drawings to illustrate William Morris's *Earthly Paradise*.[37] At the same time, he was also composing drawings of the biblical story about the Tree of Knowledge. Hence, Stanhope was probably influenced by Burne-Jones's early drawing of the apple myth.

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[32] *Apollodorus, The Library*, Trans. James George Frazer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press and London: William Heinemann Ltd., Loeb Classical Library, 1921), Book 2, Chapter 5, Section 11; *The Myths of Hyginus*, Trans. and Ed. Mary Grant (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1960), *Fabulae*, Preface, p. §0.2.

[33] *Stasinus of Cyprus, Greek Epic C7th or C6th BCE*, Trans. Hugh Evelyn-White (London: William Heinemann, Loeb Classical Library, 1914b); and *Apollodorus, The Library*, Epitome, Section 3.2.

[34] *Hesiod, Homeric Hymns, Epic Cycle, Homerica*, Trans. Hugh Evelyn-White (London: William Heinemann, Loeb Classical Library, 1914a), citing Fragment 4, *Atalanta*; *The Finders Petrie Papyri*, Ed. J. P. Mahaffy and J. G. Smyly (Dublin: The Academy House, Cunningham Memoirs XI, 1905), Pl. III. 3, https://archive.org/details/coo.31924032402236/page/n7/mode/2up; and *Ovid, Fasti*, Trans. James George Frazer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann Ltd. Loeb Classical Library, 1931), Book 10, Line 560.

[35] Chevalier and Gheerbrant, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, pp. 35-36. The myth of eating an apple and its consequences was extended to children's stories, such as *Snow White.* This theme is not pursued in this essay.

[36] For the image, see https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Edward_Burne-Jones_-_The_Garden_of_the_Hesperides,_1869-1873.jpg.

[37] https://www.eb-j.org/browse-artwork-detail/MjA0ODg=.

The apple myth metaphorically recalls several Greek myths, such as the golden apples Zeus gave to Hera as a wedding gift for her orchard; these apples granted immortality. To ensure protection, the nymphs of sunset (Hesperides) guarded the apple trees. But untrusting, Hera added another guardian, Ladon, a multi-headed dragon, to further guard her gift. This myth was traditionally associated with the semi-god Hercules, who, among his labors to achieve divinity and immortality, stole a golden apple from Hera's orchard.

Pre-Raphaelite painters also linked this myth with the Apple of Discord. It tells of the Goddess of Disagreement, Eris, feeling resentful for not being invited to a wedding feast. She caused chaos among the most beautiful goddesses by throwing a golden apple to be claimed by "the fairest". Zeus, King of the Gods, unwilling to judge, selected a young mortal, Paris, the Prince of Troy, to judge. He chose Aphrodite, the Goddess of Beauty and Love, because she bribed him by offering him a beautiful mortal, Helen, who was married to the King of Sparta. The forbidden relationship between Helen and Paris led to the war between the Greeks and the Trojans. Paris's decision prompted the Greek hero Odysseus to defend Greece against the Trojans. When the Greek heroes Hercules and Odysseus are compared, their respective chores are associated with the consequences of a magic fruit, the apple. Hercules's difficult task is to obtain a golden apple from Hera's forbidden sacred garden. Odysseus engages in battle because the mythical apple is meant to be given to "the fairest". Both acts of bravery, known as *arete*, were examples of human heroism, embodying the same courage and virtue associated with Penelope and her weaving web.

Seddon's paintings evolved the imagery of the ancient saga of Penelope. Muschamp and Waterhouse followed, adding the depiction of the suitors in the scene, Diodalsas of Bithynia, as seen in Italian Renaissance art (Figure 4). In Memoir and Letters of the Late Thomas Seddon, published in 1859, the artist's brother, the architect John Pollard Seddon, described the painting in detail. It was first exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1852.

> The first thing he undertook was completing a picture, which had commenced sometime before. The subject is Penelope. She is represented sitting by the side of her web at early sunrise, near an open window, and resting after her night of unraveling what she has done on the preceding day. She is dressed in a loose purple robe, resting her feet on a leopard's skin. Suspended from a loom is the web, showing the heads of Ulysses and his companions. Her damsels are asleep in an adjoining apartment, separated partly by a curtain and lighted by a lamp, the rays paling before the morning beams.
>
> His pains to secure truthfulness in a subject that seemed to preclude it by its very nature were extraordinary. He constructed a model of the apartment in which the heroine is represented, with an opening for the window, the curtain partition, and the loom itself. He hung up a taper to study the effect of the double light, and at the British Museum and elsewhere, he learned most carefully the costumes and manners of the Greeks. There is considerable simplicity in the composition, but it has a fine breadth and harmony of rich colouring; and many of the accessories, such as the leopard's skin, are painted elaborately and powerfully. (Artnet, 2020, Lot 25, pp. 16-17).[38]

Curiously, Seddon/Brown depicted Penelope's "damsels asleep" rather than the dormant suitors, also seen in Muschamp's paintings (compare Figures 8 and 9-10).

[38] *The Joe Setton Collection: From Pre-Raphaelites to Last Romantics* (London: Christie's, 10 December 2020), Lot 25, pp. 16-17, https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-6290743. The painting initially was in the collection of George Wilson of Redgrave Hall in Suffolk.

Figure 8. Thomas B. Seddon, completed by Ford Madox Brown, *Penelope*, 1852, oil on canvas. Private Collection.

In the background of the painting, in the alcove where the "damsels are asleep", another sizeable tapestry shows a group of figures standing, perhaps a family portrait. The tapestry on the loom that Penelope is weaving is located behind her and in the foreground of the painting. It depicts a military scene. In the background, her husband's naval ship is visible, while in the foreground, Odysseus is portrayed mainly in profile and at bust length. He is wearing a fanciful Greek Spartan Hoplite helmet. In contrast, the soldiers next to him are wearing Greek Hoplite helmets.

Seddon has divided the composition of his painting vertically in terms of physical and metaphysical coloration of light and darkness and the human body states of wakefulness and sleepiness. The dim lamp inside the bedroom contrasts with the dazzling aurora light penetrating from the window into the porch, brightening the area where Penelope is seated and meditating, heralding a new, challenging, and hopeful day for Odysseus' return. On the right of the painting, inside the room, the sleeping maidens are visible, contrasting with the left of the

painting, where Penelope sits, poised and daydreaming. She holds the threads of an unraveled tapestry, her nocturnal work.

The upper section of the window frame is decorated with ivy leaves; the evergreen plant symbolizes marital fidelity and devotion. Penelope's seated and in profile position recalls classical representations. Seddon/Brown skillfully paralleled the profile poses of Odysseus on the tapestry and Penelope on the canvas, highlighting different levels of reality within the artwork: the imagined (Odysseus) and the actual (Penelope). In doing so, the artist invites the viewer to contemplate the meaning behind the narrative and the protagonists.

Seddon/Brown effectively contrasts the different uses of colors and textures in the painting, especially the impasto quality of the tapestry's woven surface, which contrasts with the flat pattern of Penelope's cotton clothing. The colors of her clothing signify her physical and moral status: The purple himation indicates her royal birth, while her white chiton sleeves suggest her purity of heart.

Muschamp painted two versions of *Penelope*. The first version, *Penelope I*, painted in oil on canvas around 1884, signed in the lower left, is now in a Private Collection. It was auctioned in 2016 by the Material Cultural Auction House in Philadelphia, PA (Figure 9).[39]

Figure 9. Francis Sydney Muschamp, *Penelope I*, 1884, oil on canvas.
Material Culture Auction House, Philadelphia, PA.
Private Collection.
Photo courtesy: Material Culture Auction House, Philadelphia, PA.

[39] According to Jim Robison, Specialist in Fine Arts from the Material Culture Action House, the painting was cleaned and relined, and there were minor restorations before the sale. See Material Culture Auction House, Philadelphia, PA. Lot 89, 5 December 2016, https://www.invaluable.com/auction-lot/francis-sydney-muschamp-british-1851-1929-89-c-3ff4dfbacb.

The second version, *Penelope II*, was painted between 1884 and 1891 and is currently in the Lancaster City Museum in the UK (Figure 10).

Figure 10. Francis Sydney Muschamp, *Penelope II*, 1891, oil on canvas.
Lancaster City Museum, UK.
Photo credit: Lancaster City Museum, UK.

The *Penelope I* version was a study for the second version. The loose painterly technique adds a tapestry surface effect to the whole surface of the painting. The composition is cleverly divided into an exterior and interior setting. The background is visualized through a series of steps that lead to a colonnaded porch where a seascape and a skyscape are seen. The very suggestive spotted light effects guide the viewer through the dark scenery from the foreground to the background of the painting. The bright bluish color of the skyline emerges through the grey clouds, dissipating through the sky at dawn, announcing the new day.

Meanwhile, in the interior setting, the walls are covered with tapestries and the floor with animal furs, accentuating the exotic nature of the scene. In his textile design and textures, Muschamp follows the taste found in Orientalism, as seen in the engravings and paintings of *The Lady of Shallot* by William Holman Hunt (1827-1910)[40] and *In My Studio* and *The Way to the Temple* by Lawrence Alma-Tadema (1836-1912).[41]

As a visual transition from the porch area to the interior room, Muschamp placed sleeping figures horizontally on the porch sofa; he continued the same motif by putting two maidens resting on animal furs on the

[40] For the images, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Lady_of_Shalott_%28William_Holman_Hunt%29 and https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/becoming-modern/victorian-art-architecture/pre-raphaelites/a/william-holman-hunt-the-lady-of-shalott.

[41] For the images, see https://www.topofart.com/artists/Alma-Tadema/art-reproduction/80/In-My-Studio.php and https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/art-artists/work-of-art/the-way-to-the-temple.

floor but displaying them perpendicularly to the porch. These maidens helped Penelope during the day, but now, at night, exhausted from laboring, they have fallen asleep. The composition with foreshortened figures and extended arms is reminiscent of Hunt's reclining figure on the floor in the 1848 paintings of *The Eve of Saint Agnes*, which are oil on canvas. These paintings are housed in the City of London Corporation and at the Guildhall Art Gallery in London, respectively (Figure 12).

Muschamp depicted Penelope seated on a fancy stool covered by an intricately woven cloth in front of a loom. She anxiously looks toward the viewer as if suspecting someone is noticing that she is unraveling the web. One hand gathers a section of the woven textile, and the other pulls out the threads. The partially visible scene in the web is Odysseus with his army holding shields. Next to the loom is a large woven basket containing colorful yarns employed by Penelope to weave her web. The upright loom, whose wooden frame is carefully decorated with trees and foliage, particularly with ivy branches, symbolizes everlasting devotion and fidelity, alluding to her love for her husband. Not by accident, Muschamp also selected this evergreen plant further to emphasize his fascination with Egyptian culture (Orientalism) because, in ancient times, this hedera vine, whose natural function is to climb toward the sunlight—the sky—was dedicated to Osiris, the Egyptian God of Life, Death, and Rebirth (Biedermann, 1994, p. 187; Wilkinson, 1847).[42]

Figure 11. William Waterhouse, *Penelope and the Suitors*, 1912, oil on canvas. Aberdeen Art Gallery, UK.

[42] Hans Biedermann, *Dictionary of Symbolism: Cultural Icons and the Meanings Behind Them* (New York, NY: Meridian Books, 1994), p. 187; and John Gardner Wilkinson, *The Manners and Customs of Ancient Egyptians* (Boston, S.E.: Cassino & Co., 1847, rep. London: J. Murray, 1878, 2 vols.).

Figure 12. William Holman Hunt, *The Eve of Saint Agnes*, 1848, oil on canvas. Second version. Guildhall Art Gallery, London.
Photo credit: Guildhall Art Gallery, London

Penelope is beautifully attired as the Queen of Ithaca, contrasting with the plain garments worn by her maidens. Her flowery and colorful chiton reflects the colors found in the yarns and loom's frame design. Her jewelry of dangling earrings and a large armlet or armband wrapped around her arm testified that she had made an oath of love. According to the classical tradition, the armlet was worn by women who made an oath of bond or vow of marital loyalty, as seen in the sculpture of Aphrodite, the Goddess of Love, for example, the marble statue of *Lely's Venus*, who is wearing an armband, a token of love from Ares, the God of War. Muschamp undoubtedly saw this marble statue of nude Aphrodite crouching in the bath at the British Museum in London. The statue is a marble Roman copy from the 2nd century CE of the original marble statue carved by Diodalsas of Bithynia during the Hellenistic period (Figure 13).[43]

[43] For the image, see https://www.meer.com/british-museum/artworks/58928 and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lely_Venus. An Italian Renaissance painting, Raphael's *La Fornarina* of 1519, oil on wood, now at the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica in Rome, depicted his lover, Margarita Luti, wearing an armlet with his name incised. For the image, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_Fornarina#/media/File:Raffaello_Sanzio_-_La_Fornarina_(ca._1519-1520).jpg.

Figure 13. Lely's Venus. Hellenistic marble statue by Diodalsas of Bithynia.
British Museum, London. On loan from the Royal Collection.
Photo courtesy: ©His Majesty The King Charles III.

Muschamp's *Penelope II*, an oil on canvas painting from 1891, is now at the Lancaster City Museum (Figure 10). Although it derives in composition and symbolism from his previous version, *Penelope I*, it is a more complex painting regarding space, color, texture, and ornamentation (compare Figures 9 and 10). Skillfully, Muschamp clarifies the view of interior composition and design through a more linear, using a flat brushstroke application of colors onto the canvas. This effect distinctly represents the decor, details, and patterns, creating dramatic depth and perspectival illusions on a flat surface with its linear approach. In this later version, Muschamp is more inclined to assimilate the style of Alma-Tadema as seen in *A Roman Emperor* (*Claudius*) of 1871 in oils on canvas, signed on the altar socle, *L Alma Tadema 71*. The painting is housed at the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, MD (Figure 14).

Figure 14. Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *A Roman Emperor (Claudius*), 1871, oil on canvas.
Signed on the altar's socle, *L Alma Tadema 71*.
Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, MD.
Credit Line: Acquired by William T. Walters, 1882.

In his earlier version of *Penelope*, Muschamp used a painterly brushstroke technique, with a loose application of paint showing daubs on the surface of the canvas. This is probably because it is a study where the rendition of paint is done quickly for experimentation and improvisation purposes.

Muschamp's compositional space for *Penelope II* is the most inventive. He created two vertical halves to emphasize Penelope's dilemma. He learned this format from Hunt and Alma-Tadema's paintings, which highlight the protagonist and the pregnant moment of the scene by dividing the composition in half (compare Figures 12 and 14 with 9 and 10). On the right side of the painting, for example, the participants, or the onlookers, are portrayed as experiencing the dramatic event; they are the viewers within the scene. Their action parallels a horizontal movement in the picture plane, similar to the layout of a narrative scene in the relief of a marble frieze.

In contrast, on the left side of the painting, the rest of the narrative unfolds, but it is composed from the viewer's perspective, who sees the protagonist's action to the event in three dimensions, moving into the picture place. In looking at the scene in the painting, the viewer partakes in both perspectival viewing: the onlookers' actions and the protagonist's response. The vertical separation or division of the composition is composed with some artistic props associated with the narrative. Longstanding Shakespearean theatrical presentations inspire this compositional format in British paintings (Trowbridge, 2014).[44]

In Muschamp's *Penelope II*, the viewer sees this artistic division in two ways: through the treatment of the light and the architectural props or spatial devices. The contrast between light and dark primarily forms the division within the interior. The morning light that filters through the open areas on the porch announces the beginning of a new day. A tinted blue and purple atmospheric skyline and the extended seashore are visible

[44] https://www.apollo-magazine.com/art-diary/shakespeare-in-art/?map=active and Serena Trowbridge, "No Writing About Shakespeare", 14 June 2014, https://cultureandanarchy.org/2014/06/24/not-writing-about-shakespeare/.

through these openings. The sea and its oscillating wave movements symbolize Odysseus's long journey, the challenges of his voyage, and his absence.

In contrast, no natural light is inside the chamber—visibility is achieved through a small burning lamp next to the loom. This burning light has kept Penelope awake all night to unravel the web as she sits before the loom and holds the pulled threads in her hand. The flames allude to physical fire and metaphysically to Penelope's fiery spirit, which is used to accomplish her cunning action and passion for a loyal marriage. This burning light illuminating the threads in Penelope's hand also refers metaphorically to destiny or fate—the cyclical passing of time—as night will follow the day (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1994, p. 992).[45] As the burning lamp functions to illuminate and keep time, the threads she holds function as part of a creative design that is now being modified, a pentimento due to circumstantial vicissitudes. In contrast, threads that are a part of the balls of yarn found in the basket have not evolved into a product of design, allegorically, as the light of day will replace the burning night light.

The second construct for the left/right division is composed of architectural elements-columns, steps, open windows, and décor marble designs on the pavement, reliefs on the columns, animal furs on the marble pavement, and other display textures, including recumbent clothed figures on the floor. On the left of the composition, the chamber is framed by hanging tapestries over the wall and the columns; a large standing loom completes the cubical design.

Muschamp unified the overall composition by bathing the surface with a bronze tonality, as seen in the columns, chair, rug, hanging tapestries, and marble floor geometric decoration. He interplays geometric patterns throughout his composition. The ornamentation consists of geometric designs on the marble floor, displayed in the registry format of the tapestries and the horizontal rectangular steps. These geometric patterns are repeated in the columns' design. Squares are incorporated into the porch, window, bench, chair, and loom, while circles are found in the yarn's basket and the marble floor design.

Muschamp was greatly influenced by the reliefs of Egyptian and Mesopotamian cultures, including the Mesopotamian cylinder seals at the British Museum. The fascination of Pre-Raphaelite and Victorian painters with Egyptian (Orientalism) culture stemmed from Queen Victoria's historical and political involvement with Egypt and Asia Minor and the Egyptomania of British architects, designers, and ornamentation theorists. For instance, in 1856, the British architect and designer Owen Jones (1809-1874) published *The Grammar of Ornament*, which focused on Egyptian design patterns and motifs in architectural edifices. In it, he introduced his theory of color, geometric, and flat patterning designs in decorations.[46] The Scottish artist David Roberts (1796-1864) made a significant impact with his book *Sketches in Egypt and Nubia* (1846-1849), which portrayed his travels to Egypt.[47] His work, along with Owen's, contributed to the creation of a design language that influenced textiles, furniture, and interiors. This design language was adopted by artists and the general British public for their households.

In the interior decoration of the painting, Muschamp used designed motifs found in Jones's *The Grammar of Ornament*; for example, the geometrical designs on the floor of the painting recall the Persian ornament of a wheel shape seen in Plate XIII 47 and the Greek ornament seen in Plate XV 48. Curiously, Edward John Poynter also employed a marble floor decoration for the music performance area in the *Ionian Dance*. Still, the geometric

[45] Chevalier and Gheerbrant, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, p. 992, as the Fates spin the thread of life.
[46] For the text, see https://archive.org/details/grammarornament00Jone/page/n41/mode/2up and Victoria and Albert Museum in London, see https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/owen-jones-and-the-grammar-of-ornament#slideshow=7716019588&slide=0.
[47] For the text, see https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47d9-6328-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99.

design relies on motifs from Pompeian floors, while Greek columns and marble benches surround the performance area. Poynter painted this scene in 1895 in oil on canvas and signed and dated it on the recto bottom left as *18EJP85*. The painting is now in a Private Collection (Figure 15).

Figure 15. Edward John Poynter, *The Ionian Dance*, 1895, oil on canvas.
Signed and dated recto bottom left, *18EJP95.*
Private Collection.

Under the influence of the arcade in the Egyptian Court at Crystal Palace at Sydenham in the south-east of London (Figure 16) (Ossian, 2017),[48] Muschamp represented Egyptian columns covered with bronze relief in registry format as a divisional device. Each narrative inside the relief of the column is framed with an Oriental design; for example, the base of the column has an Egyptian floral pattern that can be seen in Plate VIII of Jones's book.[49] The register divider motif comprises a Persian chain of circles, illustrated in Plate XII of Jones's book.[50]

[48] Clair Ossian, "The Egyptian Court of London's Crystal Palace", https://www.researchgate.net/publication/348134886_The_Egyptian_Court_of_London's_Crystal_Palace (October 2017).
[49] For the image, see https://archive.org/details/grammarornament00Jone/page/n33/mode/2up.
[50] For the image, see https://archive.org/details/grammarornament00Jone/page/n53/mode/2up.

Figure 16. The Egyptian Court at Crystal Palace at Sydenham, London, 1860.
Photo credit: RIBA.

The narrative scenes between the registry of the columns are challenging to individualize. They are derivative of reliefs found in Egyptian and Mesopotamian friezes and cylinder seals in the British Museum—a museum often visited by Pre-Raphaelite and Victorian painters. The decorative foliage as a fan plumage in the Muschamp's column friezes recalls Egyptian and Mesopotamian reliefs (Figure 17). In *Painting Antiquity*, Stephanie Moser discussed one of the Egyptian decorations representing palm designs, such as the palm frames in the fragments of wooden panels carved on both sides with the names Queen-King Hatshepsut, c. 1450 BCE (compare Figures 10, 17, and 18) (Moser, 2020).[51]

Other imagery of Assyrian-Persian reliefs at the British Museum are examples of this floral subject, such as the Assyrian Tree of Life (860 BCE).[52] Muschamp depicted figures riding on a chariot in the narrative scenes on the columns. This recalls the Assyrian ruler's hunting relief and Babylonian chariot riders in battle scenes. Other figures are portrayed standing between griffins or mythical animals, symbolizing moral courage, vigilance, and spiritual wisdom (Biedermann, 1994, p. 159).[53]

[51] Stephanie Moser, *Painting Antiquity: Ancient Egypt in the Art of Lawrence Alma-Tadema, Edward Poynter, and Edwin Long* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2020). In 1887, Jesse Haworth purchased this fragment and donated it to the British Museum in honor of Queen Victoria's jubilee.

[52] For the image, see https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W_1849-0502-15 and others https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Assyrian_military_campaign_in_southern_Mesopotamia,_beheaded_enemies,_7th_century_BC,_from_Nineveh,_Iraq._The_British_Museum.jpg.

[53] Biedermann, *Dictionary of Symbolism: Cultural Icons and the Meanings Behind Them*, p. 159.

Figure 17. Palm, fragment, Queen-King Hatshepsut, c. 1450 BCE.
British Museum, London.
Courtesy: ©The Trustees of the British Museum.
Photo credit: Matt Dodd, The Atkinson

Figure 18. A Neo-Assyrian frieze with date palms, Palace in Nineveh, 640 BCE.
British Museum, London (Inv. No. 124955).
Photo credit: ©The Trustees of the British Museum.

The right side of the painting depicts Penelope's emotional turmoil—her drama. Muschamp has chosen a cubic space that evokes ancient chambers, but more poignantly, it represents Penelope's psychological state of confinement and frustration. She is shown slumped over, holding the unraveled threads, a single tear, and looking distraught. Curiously, the loose, curly threads parallel her long, waving red hair. Her seated pose recalls the type of classical statues and vases in which Penelope is portrayed seated in profile. The chair is decorated with Oriental motifs of geometric patterns on the cushion and the wooden frame. Her chiton attire emphasizes her ancient origin. Muschamp is always conscious of uniting the pictorial imagery with the emotional outcome.

Penelope's cubical space is formed by tapestries hanging on the wall and the Egyptian columns, and one being weaved on a loom. The narrative scene depicted in the hanging wall textile behind Penelope represents a family gathering in a garden with trees and blooming flowers. It may also portray Penelope as a seated figure in this floral garden, receiving her son accompanied by her maidens. Above the fringes, another frieze represents galloping riders. In contrast, it is difficult to decipher the second tapestry in front of the columns. The bright and vivid colors juxtapose with the somber atmosphere of the area. A group of figures is represented in the scene's center; a frieze with Egyptian ornaments is below them. Under this frieze is a large area displaying an ivy floral pattern, the traditional symbol of true love. At its end, another exotic configuration concludes the design.

Seated facing the tapestry, Penelope is the third arras being woven on the loom. This type of upright loom recalls Morris's design and making of looms, as seen in the pencil drawing of *Morris's Weaving Demonstration at the Loom* of 1888, now in the collection of the William Morris Society. His miniature carpet loom was made of wood and metal, once in Merton Abbey in Surrey and now at the Victorian and Albert Museum.[54]

In 1771, the British textile industry flourished at Cromford Mill in Derbyshire. However, during the Industrialization period, this active center declined, and the architectural complex with its spacious buildings, arched windows, and large gateways was left empty and fell into ruins. However, textile spinning and weaving and the textile industry in Britain expanded during the Victorian period (Griffin, 2010, pp. 86-104; Dokou, 2017; Russell, 2021).[55] In 1872, with the patronage of Queen Victoria, William Morris led the Royal Institute of Needlework, providing another impetus for his Arts and Crafts movement, which spread through England in the 1880s. The Pre-Raphaelites and Victorian painters found Penelope's saga significant at the time, as it aimed to revive traditional crafts like embroidery, weaving, and tapestry.

Muschamp's *Penelope II* is the most moving imagery of this theme in the Victorian period. At the same time, the visualization of the interior setting is remarkable in inventiveness, exotic ornamentation, and coloration influenced by British aesthetics. The psychological portrayal of the protagonist, Penelope, is distinct. Muschamp depicts a beautiful woman constrained by life's challenges, agonizing with restraint over her predicament, as evidenced by the single tear on her cheek. The artist effectively conveys a visually compelling moment and creates a suspended sense of time, evoking emotion and contemplation in the viewer.

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[54] For the image of the drawing, see https://www.eb-j.org/browse-artwork-detail/MTIwMg, and loom, see https://www.vandaimages.com/2006AT7000-Miniature-tapestry-loom-by-William-Morris-England.html.

[55] Emma Griffin, *A Short History of the British Industrial Revolution* (London: Palgrave, 2010), pp. 86-104; C. Dokou, "'Fruit of the Loom:' New Spins on Penelope in Walcott and Marquez" (2017), https://core.ac.uk/download/518108519.pdf. Other mythical sagas are associated with weaving, but this essay focuses on Penelope's Web. See Eugenia Russell, "Weaving Stories in Greek Myth: Arachne, Ariadne, & More", 10 October 2021, https://www.thecollector.com/weaving-stories-greek-mythology.

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