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Female Agency in Atwood's *The Penelopiad*

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in the Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled "Female Agency in Atwood's *The Penelopiad*" submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Ganga Kumari Limbu has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Abstract

Margaret Atwood's novella *The Penelopiad* retells the story of Homer's *Odyssey* from the point of view of Odysseus' wife, Penelope. Atwood emphasizes the female experiences and ideas especially occurred upon the life of Penelope and the twelve maids. In the process of retelling the story, she looks back at the violence, justices and experiences from a female eye. Atwood makes an interesting connection between literature and social process. Penelope, in the novel, redresses the falsely flawless image of Helen and judicious heroic figure, Odysseus. The story has been told in retrospection and the advantage of retrospection is Penelope's narrative is also self-reflexive as it reveals both her own biases and her involvement in the murder of her Suitors and her twelve maids. It is the voices of the murdered maids in particular that provide the chorus of the text and offer a further revision to Penelope's story. The narrative sheds a light on the loopholes of the original Homeric epic and questions the judicial processes. The thesis, thus, argues that the author brings narrative justice by foregrounding the female characters and their experiences which remain in the margin in Homeric epic. Atwood foregrounds the agency of women characters; and politics is to undermine and subvert the original *Odyssey* in which women remain mute.

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