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DIRETTORE RESPONSABILE: Gian Biagio Conte (*Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa*)

Abbonamento annuo (2002): Italia € 45,00 (privati); Italia € 60,00 (enti). Estero U.S. $ 90 (individual subscribers); estero U.S. $ 120 (academic institutions). Un fascicolo: € 35,00

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FOR DAN -
ALL BEST,
L

Laurel Fulkerson

Writing Yourself to Death: Strategies of (Mis)reading in Heroides 2[1]

For many years the standard interpretation of Ovid's *Heroides* was that they were an undifferentiated mass of female misery, tiresome to read and partaking of Ovid's besetting sins[2]. Critics have done an excellent job in recent years of showing that the corpus is, in fact, a poetic *tour de force*; the process of rehabilitation (begun by Jacobson in the 1970's) has been greatly facilitated by examining the ways in which the *Heroides* are imbued with prior literary sources. This focus on intertextuality marked a significant advance in the sophistication of work on the *Heroides*; another useful tool for studying the letters is intratextuality[3] – the ways the individual poems of the *Heroides* relate to one another – and this tool in fact better explains the surface monotony of the corpus. Without ignoring issues of intertextuality, I will concern myself in this study with the ways Phyllis' letter – indeed, her story – models itself on several of the 'foundational tales' of abandoned women[4].

1. The following works will be cited by author's name only: A. Barchiesi, *P. Ovidii Nasonis Epistulae Heroidum 1-3*, Florence 1992 (a treatment, as will be clear, very influential on my own); F. Della Corte, *Perfidus hospes*, in *Opuscula IV*, Genoa 1973; H. Dörrie, *P. Ovidii Nasonis Epistulae Heroidum*, Berlin and New York 1971; H. Jacobson, *Ovid's Heroides*, Princeton, NJ 1974; P.E. Knox, *Ovid: Heroides – Select Epistles*, Cambridge 1995; S. Lindheim, *Voices of Desire: the Ventriloquized Letters of Ovid's Heroides*, Brown University dissertation 1995; A. Palmer, *P. Ovidi Nasonis Heroides*, Oxford 1898 (introductory chapters and final editing by Louis Purser).

2. Among many examples, the most entertaining is L.P. Wilkinson, *Ovid Recalled*, Cambridge 1955, who refers to the *Heroides* as «a uniform plum pudding» that grows «colder and less digestible» with each bite (106).

3. A theoretical framework for the concept of intratextuality in classics has now been provided by the introduction to A. Sharrock and H. Morales, *Intratextuality: Greek and Roman Textual Relations*, Oxford 2000.

4. I am not the first to see these connections; Della Corte posited Phyllis as a model for Ariadne, Medea, and Dido, and Barchiesi suggests that Dido, Medea, Hypsipyle, and Ariadne each serve as models for Phyllis' letter (109, 165, and

Phyllis, the author of Ovid's *Heroides* 2, is a mythical character about whom little is securely attested. She is a Thracian princess, seduced and abandoned by Demophoon, her faithless Athenian guest. In every version of the tale known to us she kills herself: the story is a not untypical tale of unhappy love, similar in outline to the stories of other women in the *Heroides*. It is, in fact, precisely Phyllis' similarities to other women that form a key feature of her poem, and her empathetic familiarity with these other stories causes her to refashion her own story.

Critics and commentators view Ovid's Phyllis as naïve in both outlook and poetics[5]. Her unworldliness in trusting Demophoon in the first place is only augmented, in the traditional view, by her wait of a full three months beyond the date of his promised return before she begins to despair (and write). Phyllis' compositional principles indicate her unfamiliarity with elegiac writing and simultaneously cause her destruction. Her (ingenuous) sophistication arises from her status as an 'overclever' reader, since she reads the pattern of female abandonment into her own story. Like many avid (and empathetic) readers, she is seduced into a fictional world. She is not a victim of her lover Demophoon, but rather a victim of her own belief in the potential of poetry to serve as a model for life. Phyllis, like one of Bloom's «weak poets,» creates a derivative story through her reading and rewriting of previous poetry; in her case it is deadly[6]. It is here that her naïveté manifests itself.

Ovid's Phyllis is the only Phyllis abandoned by a Demophoon who (she says) never intended to return to her. In other versions of the myth, Demophoon actually did return

passim). He sees this reworking of *topoi* as a characteristic of the genre (which it is), but not as specifically imagined by Phyllis. My reading suggests that both here and throughout the *Heroides*, the parallels between the stories stem not solely from generic convention but from the heroine's inability to disentangle herself from the influence of previous (and contemporary) literature. See too Knox 112 and 122.

5. Barchiesi 132 notes a «*carenza di ars*» in Phyllis' writing; cf. Jacobson 65. I thank referee A of this journal for clarifying my thinking about this point, particularly by drawing my attention to the «nenia-like» style of *Heroides* 2.

6. H. Bloom, *The anxiety of influence: a theory of poetry*, Oxford 1973, passim.

to Phyllis, but she had already killed herself. We have few extant sources for the myth, but it seems to have been very well known in antiquity[7]. It cannot be absolutely established what sources Ovid used, since no literary treatment of the story is extant, but Callimachus' treatment of the story in the *Aetia*[8] is likely to have had a significant influence on Ovid[9]. The *Aetia* story has even been claimed as an influence for Catullus' Ariadne (Barchiesi 110) and Vergil's Dido[10].

Phyllis' story survives in three sources, all variants on the same basic theme. Demophoon came to Thrace and married the princess Phyllis, receiving the kingdom as a dowry (Apollod. *Epit.* 6.16-7). Demophoon then left for Athens, his home, swearing to return (Hyg. 59). Phyllis walked with him to the Nine Ways[11], gave him a casket that she said held a sacrament of Rhea, and instructed him not to open it until her had abandoned hope of returning to her, which was to happen by a specified day. (The detail is especially interesting because Phyllis already behaves as if she believes Demophoon intends to desert her; this excessive pessimism is a characteristic that

7. Cf. Persius *Phyllidas, Hypsipylas, vatum et plorabile siquid* (1.34). Cf. Jacobson 58, n. 1 on the popularity of the story, and cf. too Knox 134, quoting from Procopius *Epist.* 47 Garzya-Loenertz = 86 Hercher.

8. R. Pfeiffer, *Callimachus*, Oxford 1949 lists fragment 556 as *incertae sedis*; it seems likely, however, that it belonged in the *Aetia* because the *Aetia* are full of love stories (*viz.* Phyllis' traditional metamorphosis into an almond tree).

9. Ovid's use of Callimachus in *RA* 597-8 demonstrates that he was familiar with the Callimachean story. Barchiesi 123 notes that the one line we *do* possess of the Callimachean version (556 Pfeiffer: νυμφίε Δημοφόων, ἄδικε ξένε «bridegroom Demophoon, unjust guest») is paralleled in the first line of *Heroides* 2. The use of the vocative interestingly suggests that the Callimachus fragment is also the lament of an abandoned woman. Barchiesi 125 and Knox 114 note that *Actaeus* («Athenian», 2.5) does not appear in extant Greek poetry before Callimachus' *Hekale*. Cf. Barchiesi 109 and Knox 113 on other uses of Callimachus by Ovid.

10. Pfeiffer (note 8) 395; cf. *Aen.* 4.323 ff. and Knox 112. See too Della Corte, passim, who, in a structural analysis of the stories of the four women treated in this article, persuasively argues that Callimachus' Phyllis was the model for the other three. It is impossible to substantiate this connection, although it is a tempting speculation, and makes Ovid's rendering of Phyllis as derivative all the more amusing. Cf. Barchiesi 110.

11. Phyllis' story provides the aetiology of the Nine Ways. Generally they are so named because she went to the water to wait for Demophoon's return nine times. Ovid seems to provide a variant, collapsing Phyllis' nine trips to the sea into a single day.

Ovid's Phyllis takes to even further extremes.) When the appointed time for Demophoon to arrive had passed, Phyllis cursed Demophoon and hung herself (Serv. *ad Ecl.* 5.10). The sources differ after this, and in an important way. One version says that Demophoon later opened the casket, was struck with fear and accidentally impaled himself on his sword. In the other version, he returned to Phyllis, but too late; she had already commited suicide in despair[12].

If it is this second version that *Heroides* 2 presupposes (an assumption on which my reading is based), we get a very different picture of Phyllis, one who is predisposed to be too credulous – not of Demophoon but of her own irrational fears – and to assimilate too quickly her own story to other stories of abandoned women that superficially seem like hers. It is significant that no extant version of this story (besides *Heroides* 2, according to most scholars) features a Demophoon who unambiguously abandons Phyllis; he generally wants to return but is prevented by circumstances. His deliberate abandonment has been taken as an Ovidian innovation; perhaps it is rather an innovation of Phyllis[13].

As her letter will show, Ovid's Phyllis kills herself because she has *never* believed in Demophoon's return; her saturation in stories of tragic desertion cause her, at precisely the moment he is late, to envision herself as a suicidal heroine. Within this single day, all of her misgivings leap to the front of her mind, and she becomes convinced that she has been betrayed. Phyllis is impressionable, and she lets other women's

12. See *schol. Pers.* 1.34, which tells the story in detail: she asked him to marry her; *ille autem ait ante se ordinaturum rem suam et sic ad eius nuptias reversurum. Profectus itaque cum tardaret, Phyllis amoris impatientia, quod se spretam credebat, laqueo vitam finivit et conversa est in arborem amygdalum.* This version of the story may well have derived from *Heroides* 2. Serv. *ad Ecl.* 5.10 notes that Phyllis killed herself, turned into a leafless almond tree, and, «*postea reversus Demophoon, cognita re, eius amplexus est truncum, qui, velut sponsi sentiret adventum, folia emisit*». This event provides an aetiology for leaves from her name. As Barchiesi 124 notes, *AA* 3.38 (*Depositis silvas Phyllida flesse comis*) makes clear that Ovid knew this tree version. It has generally but, I think, incorrectly, been assumed that Ovid used the other version in *Heroides* 2. Tuscus wrote a Phyllis (Ov. *EP* 4.16.20) of which we know nothing save its subject.

13. In *Am.* 2.18.32, Ovid indicates that Sabinus wrote a reply from Demophoon, *si modo vivit*, if she only lived. This suggests that Ovid himself may have expected Phyllis to be read as dying prematurely.

stories persuade her that she has been deserted when precisely the opposite is true. Many of Ovid's heroines see reality differently from the canonical versions of their myth, but Ovid's Phyllis sees her reality in a way that is so different as to belong to someone else. One of the trademarks of Latin elegy is a focus on traditionally ignored characters, many of whom create new incarnations of themselves. Yet most of these characters want different, better stories; Phyllis is unique in making her story like other stories[14]. Before exploring the ways in which Phyllis fashions herself as Dido, Medea, and Ariadne, a key textual issue must be resolved.

Phyllis portrays herself as keeping careful track of time during Demophoon's absence:

> Hospita, Demophoon, tua te Rhodopeia Phyllis,
> Ultra promissum tempus abesse queror.
> Cornua cum lunae pleno quater orbe coissent,
> Litoribus nostris ancora pacta tua est.
> Luna quater latuit, toto quater orbe recrevit
> Nec vehit Actaeas Sithonis unda rates.
> Tempora si numeres, bene quae numeramus amantes,
> Non venit ante suam nostra querela diem.
> Spes quoque lenta fuit: tarde, quae credita laedunt,
> Credimus: invita nunc es amante nocens.
> Saepe fui mendax pro te mihi; saepe putavi
> Alba procellosos vela referre Notos. (1-12)
>
> 3 *quater* Gronovius et Mediceus: *simul* Go: *semel* alii

The dramatic moment that this poem portrays is immediately complicated by a textual problem, and its interpretation is crucial to an understanding of the way Phyllis writes. The issue centers around Demophoon's promise to return within a specified amount of time, and the question is how much time has elapsed between his promised return date and Phyllis' composition. Modern editors print *semel*, the reading of the majority of manuscripts, for the *quater* of line 3 and explain thus: Demophoon was pledged to return to Thrace within a

14. Cf. Lindheim, passim, who suggests that the women of the *Heroides*, given starring roles for the first time, persist in deflecting attention from themselves and back to the men in their stories. Phyllis is like the other heroines in this respect, but she also focuses attention on other women.

month, and three months later, Phyllis writes to remind him of his still-unfulfilled promise.

It is likely that editors choose *semel* because they find the three-fold repetition of *quater* within three lines distasteful. But such repetition is entirely Ovidian and especially characteristic of this poem[15]. Further, *semel* begs the question why, after Demophoon is three months late, Phyllis now begins to despair. The detail, particularly given the stress Phyllis lays upon it, is peculiar and seemingly without point. Curiously, commentators retain the reading *semel* even as they note that *quater* would make more sense[16]. If, however, the text in l. 3 reads *quater*, as appears in other manuscripts, Phyllis writes on the very day after Demophoon is due back to remind him of his promise. Burmann long ago defended *quater*:

> Non videtur tempus mihi satis longum, ut Athenas ire, ibique res suas componere, & rursus in Thraciam redire potuerit. Gronovius et Mediceus *pleno quater orbe*, quod verum puto, & sequentia confirmant... Convenit etiam melius puellae impatientius amanti, ut ad ipsum tempus pactum promissa exigeret, non ut tres menses ultra constitutum cessaret, antequam scriberet.
>
> (ad loc.)[17]

Once we take Burmann's arguments into account, *quater* makes perfect sense: Demophoon promised to come back in four months. Once those four months have passed and he has not appeared, Phyllis writes *Heroides* 2, immediately assuming herself abandoned. Indeed, Phyllis' stress in line 8 on the fact that as a lover, she has been counting the days (so she knows how much time has passed) reinforces this interpretation. The fact that Phyllis writes *now*, after the full four months have passed, suggests that Demophoon has just become late, or she would not lay such stress on her justification. Ovid's Phyllis is a nervous lover and conceives of herself as abandoned without any evidence beyond Demophoon's slight tardiness, and so she writes this letter immediately after Demophoon has failed to arrive. Finally, Jacobson, who accepts the reading *semel*, observes that the delay of three months makes Phyllis seem overly credulous (71). In fact, three months, while a long time for a lover, is not an unreasonable time for a trip of this length in the ancient world. Casson's work on ancient seafaring supports Burmann's defense of *quater*; to attempt to sail to Athens and back in a month would be impractical on Demophoon's part[18].

Mythical tradition gives no help in resolving this issue since the variants are vague on the time by which Demophoon promised to return. Hyginus alone notes that Phyllis killed herself *eo die*, on the very day Demophoon was supposed to return, although he does not specify the length of time stipulated for Demophoon's journey (59)[19]. By accepting the reading *quater*, we can assume (as in Hyginus) that Ovid portrays Phyllis as intending to die immediately after Demophoon's promised and unfulfilled return. Given that in the second version of the myth outlined above, Demophoon returns to Phyllis after she is dead, there may be an unnoticed irony in this poem: Phyllis has perhaps killed herself prematurely, despairing for no reason. Instead of believing Demophoon, Phyllis is seduced into killing herself by what she thinks she knows, by the weight of literary parallels that press upon her.

15. Cf. lines 98-101: «*Phylli, fac expectes Demophoonta tuum.*» / *Expectem, qui me numquam visurus abisti!* / *Expectem pelago vela negante data!* / *Et tamen expecto*... and Barchiesi's note on the quadruple repetition of *credidimus* in 49-53 (111).

16. Palmer notes, «If the better MSS permitted I would gladly read *quater*» (289); in the case of the *Heroides*, however, there is no such thing as a «better manuscript». Cf. R.J. Tarrant, *Heroides*, in L.D. Reynolds, *Texts and Transmission: A Survey of the Latin Classics*, Oxford 1983 on the troubled manuscript tradition of the *Heroides*. Barchiesi notes that *quater*, if correct, «verrebbe così attribuita a Fillida (cfr. v. 7) un'impazienza da vera innamorata, che esplode alla scadenza esatta delle promesse» (125). Knox takes no notice of *quater* at all, printing *semel* and noting, «Phyllis wishes to illustrate her restraint» (114). I agree; yet much of the irony of *Heroides* 2 derives from that fact that, to Phyllis, waiting this long to write *does* show restraint.

17. P. Burmann, *Publii Ovidii Nasonis Opera Omnia*, vol. 1, Amsterdam 1727.

18. L. Casson, *Ships and Seamanship in the Ancient World*, Baltimore 1995, pp. 270-1. Phyllis tells us that there were storms during Demophoon's absence (*procellosos Notos* 12; cf. 35 ss.); this suggests that returning may have been more difficult than she is willing to admit, even given a full four months. On sailing in the ancient world as dangerous and unnatural, particularly in poetry, cf. Hor. *Odes* 1.3 with R.G.M. Nisbet and M. Hubbard, *A Commentary on Horace: Odes Book 1*, Oxford 1970, ad loc.

19. As Knox 92 notes, Ovid was a source for Hyginus. Perhaps Hyginus thought Phyllis killed herself *eo die* because of this poem.

Phyllis' rewriting of her story is a complex phenomenon, since she is herself a fictional character as well as an author. It is common in modern works to find characters who explicitly reflect on their own relation to previous literature; this is seen as a peculiarly postmodern concern with the nature of 'truth' or storytelling. In antiquity, on the other hand, it is a less generally recognized device. Yet, as several critics have suggested, post-Ovidian authors such as Apuleius and Petronius concern themselves precisely with the truth of the stories their characters tell and with issues of interpretation internal to the text[20]. Ovid's Phyllis is similarly literary; issues of internal readership and authorship are not so modern as they may seem.

Restat et altera Dido[21]

Several literary figures influence the way Phyllis views her story; the most obvious is Dido (both Vergil's and Ovid's)[22]. The parallels between Dido and Phyllis have therefore received significantly more scholarly attention than those between Phyllis and other women. Phyllis' letter is, as many have shown, carefully modeled on Vergil's Dido – but *not* on Phyllis' own story as other sources report it. Critics cite among Ovid's innovations in the myth the following: Demophoon's shipwreck, Phyllis' status as queen instead of princess and consequent freedom to select her own husband, her offer of Thrace to Demophoon, and her statement in ll.

20. J.J. Winkler, *Auctor and Actor: A Narratological Reading of Apuleius' Golden Ass*, Berkeley 1985, suggested that internal audiences in the novel provide their own conflicting interpretations of events and are often shown to be wrong (212 ss.), and G.B. Conte, *The Hidden Author: An Interpretation of Petronius' Satyricon* (Elaine Fantham, trans.), Berkeley 1996, reads Encolpius as a «victim of his own literary experiences, who naively exalts himself by identifying with heroic roles among the great mythical and literary characters of the past» (2). In Phyllis' case, the situation is made even more disturbing by the fact that there is no alteration in genre, as Stephen Hinds points out (private communication).

21. *Her.* 7.17.

22. Jacobson 62 sees *Heroides* 2 as a sophisticated game Ovid plays with Vergil's *Aeneid*, and critics writing after him agree (Barchiesi 108; Knox 130; Lindheim 131).

81-84 that she needs to be married to preserve authority over her subjects[23]. In fact, the innovations are precisely those that tend towards making Phyllis' story into Dido's:

> Nec moveor, quod te iuvi portuque locoque:
> Debuit haec meriti summa fuisse mei.
> Turpiter hospitium lecto cumulasse iugali
> Paenitet et lateri conseruisse latus.
>
> (55-58)

The approach of the two women is similar: Phyllis, like Dido, lists the help she has provided, and both women promise royal power in an attempt to make themselves more attractive (Barchiesi 108; Lindheim 132 and passim). Critics point also to the similar tone of each heroine's self-portrayal. The guilt Phyllis expresses about her relationship with Demophoon, as Jacobson notices, is significantly more appropriate to Dido, who has broken her vow to Sychaeus by becoming involved with Aeneas (63; cf. Barchiesi 108; Knox 118-9). Vergil's Dido provides for herself a quasi-epitaph (*Aen.* 4.655-656), which, as Knox notes, becomes a staple of the elegiac heroine's lament, appearing not only in *Heroides* 2 but also in 7, 14 and 15[24]. The lines immediately following the epitaph express the wish that Dido had never met Aeneas, another *topos* of elegiac lament (*Aen.* 4.657 ff.). Dido, then, provides a specific example for Phyllis even as she establishes many of the *topoi* for later laments of abandoned women.

There are numerous specific verbal parallels between Phyllis and Vergil's Dido[25] including the fact that Phyllis calls herself *infelix* (103; cf. Knox 130; *Aen.* 4.68, 450, 596, 6.456, etc.).

23. *At mea despecti fugiunt conubia Thraces, / quod ferar externum praeposuisse meis,/ atque aliquis 'iam nunc doctas eat' inquit 'Athenas: / armiferam Thracen qui regat, alter erit.* Cf. Jacobson 60 and 62; Barchiesi 138 and 149; Knox 112. Jacobson 63 cites *Aen.* 4.36-8, 320-1, 534-6 as parallel passages.

24. As well as at Tib. 1.3.55-6, 3.2.29-30; Prop. 2.13.55-56, 4.7.85-86; Ov. *Am.* 2.6.61-62, *Trist.* 3.3.73-76 (Knox 139). I do not agree with Knox that the epigram in *Heroides* 15 is an epitaph.

25. Cf. Jacobson: «Citations are unnecessary to establish that in both *Heroides* 2 and *Aeneid* Four there is much emphasis on and repetition of the notions embodied in the words *amans, fallo, dolus, perfidus, spes, crimen, dextra* (as oath), *pudor*» (64). He also cites *remigium, turicremis*, and a number of less-convincing (to my mind) parallels (ibid.).

Critics list phrases common to the two women's stories, including mention of wanderings[26], hospitality and assistance each woman has given the hero[27], the use of *fides*[28], the marriage bed[29], the mention of a harbor[30], and the phrasing of a death wish with *iuvat*[31]. There are also numerous verbal echoes between *Heroides* 2 and 7, which suggests that the two stories can usefully be read together[32]. Jacobson (62-64) astutely compares the final distichs of each letter: *Phyllida Demophoon leto dedit, hospes amantem;/ ille necis causam praebuit, ipsa manum* (2.7-8) is much like *Praebuit Aeneas et causam mortis et ensem./ Ipsa sua Dido concidit usa manu* (7.197-198). Phyllis' address to Demophoon as *perfide* (2.78) is paralleled in Dido's letter (7.79, 120) and of course elsewhere. Each woman suggests that her perjured lover will suffer divine retribution, Phyllis at 43-44: *si de tot laesis sua numina quisque deorum/ vindicet, in poenas non satis unus eris* and Dido, more forcefully, at 7.87: *nec mihi mens dubia est,*

26. 2.107 *longis erroribus acto* ~ *Aen.* 1.755-756 *erroresque tuos; nam te septima portat/ omnibus errantem terris et fluctibus aestas,* 599 *omnibus exhaustos iam casibus, omnium egenos* (Knox 132).

27. 2.55 *te iuvi portuque locoque* ~ 7.89 *tuta statione recepi,* 2.109-110 *cuius opes auxere meae, cui dives egenti/ munera dedi multa datura fui* ~ *Aen.* 1.571, *auxilio tutos dimittam opibusque iuvabo,* 4.373-374 *eiectum litore, egentem/ excepi et regni demens in parte locavi.* See Jacobson 64-65; Knox 132; and W. Stroh, *Heroides ovidianae cur epistulas scribant,* in G. Papponetti (ed.), *Ovidio poeta della memoria,* Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi Sulmona, 19-21 ottobre 1989, Sulmo 1991, 206 # 24.

28. 2.21, 26, 31, 102 ~ *Aen.* 4.373, 552, 597 (Jacobson 62-63).

29. 2.57 *lectus iugalis* ~ *Aen.* 4.496 *lectumque iugalem.*

30. 2.92 *cum premeret portus classis itura meos* ~ *Aen.* 4.582 *latet sub classibus aequor* (Barchiesi 152).

31. 2.140, 142 ~ *Aen.* 4.660 sic, sic iuvat ire sub umbras.

32. 2.89 *nec te mea regia tanget* ~ 7.11-12 *nec nova Carthago nec te surgentia tangunt / moenia nec sceptro tradita summa tuo.* 2.25 *ventis et verba et vela dedisti* ~ 7.8: *venti vela fidemque ferent.* 2.55-58 *nec moveor, quod te iuvi portuque locoque. / Debuit haec meriti summa fuisse mei! / Turpiter hospitium lecto cumulasse iugali / paenitet* ~ 7.91-92 *his tamen officiis utinam contenta fuissem, / et mihi concubitus fama sepulta foret!* 2.27-28 *dic mihi, quid feci, nisi non sapienter amavi? / Crimen te potui demeruisse meo.* ~ 7.164 *quod crimen dicis praeter amasse meum?* 2.45-46 *at laceras etiam puppes furiosa refeci, / ut, qua desererer, firma carina foret.* ~ 7.175-176 *et socii requiem poscunt, laniataque classis / postulat exiguas semirefeta moras.* Many of these parallels derive from J.N. Anderson, *On the Sources of Ovid's Heroides I III, VII, X, XII,* Johns Hopkins University dissertation 1896 51 ff. and Stroh 1991 (note 27), 206 and nn.

quin te tua numina damnent. Like Phyllis, who repeatedly looks for Demophoon at the shore (121-130), Ovid's Dido goes four times to the grove she has built for Sychaeus (7.101)[33]. It is at this point that each woman makes clear her determination to die and her lover's responsibility for that death.

There is another verbal similarity that bears out Phyllis' inability to distinguish herself from others. «Sidonian» is an epithet naturally used to describe Dido because of the Phoenician city of Sidon[34]. Phyllis is from Thrace (*Her.* 2.1, 81, 84, etc.; Hyginus 59). In line 6, she refers to *Sithonis und*. «Sithonian» is not unattested as a synonym for «Thracian»[35], but the similarities in sound between «Sidonian» and «Sithonian» are such as would appeal to Ovid (and Phyllis?). Each is of course correct in its own context, but the choice of «Sithonian» for Phyllis' shoreline – even if it is 'merely' a patronymic[36] – may well allude to Dido's Sidonian identity[37].

33. The difference, however, is significant – Dido goes to the grove of her previous husband, with whom she will be reunited in the underworld. Perhaps here Phyllis reads less carefully than she might?

34. Cf. *Aen.* 1.446 – the first time Dido sees Aeneas, 1.613, 1.619, 1.677 of Tyre, 4.75 of her wealth, 4.137 of her cloak, 4.545 of her city, 4.683 of her people, 5.571 of her horse, 9.266, 11.74. Ovid uses it in the *Heroides* only in 9, of an *amictus* worn by Hercules (9.103).

35. It refers to the middle of the three Chalcidicean peninsulas. Both *Sithonis* and *Sithonius* are used with some frequency; poetic occurrences of *Sithonius* are Verg. *E.* 10.66 (apparently its first use: cf. Barchiesi 126, who finds significant its appearance in the «Gallus poem»); Hor. *C.* 1.18.9 and 3.26.10; Ov. *Her.* 11.13 (of the wind Aquilon), *RA* 605, *M.* 6.588 and 13.571, *F.* 3.719, *EP.* 4.7.25. *Sidonius* appears (in addition to the citations above) at Hor. *Epod.* 16.59, *Ep.* 1.10.26, Ov. *AA* 3.252, *M.* 2.840, 3.129, 4.543, 4.572, 10.267, 14.80 (of Dido), *F.* 3.108, 3.649, 5.610, 5.617, *Tr.* 4.2.27, 4.3.2, *EP* 1.3.77, *Ib.* 444; Prop. 2.16.55, 2.29.15, 4.9.47; Tib. 3.3.18.

36. Palmer attributes the name of the peninsula to «Sithon, father of Phyllis» but provides no source (290). A.A.R. Henderson, *Remedia Amoris,* Edinburgh 1979 (following Servius *ad Ecl.* 10.66) says that it received its name from Phyllis' father Sidon (115). Knox, on the other hand, asserts that it is not a patronymic at all (114). There is no evidence of Phyllis' father being named Sidon except Servius.

37. Additionally, *Sithonis* is a rarer form than *Sithonius.* Henderson (note 36) notes, «Ovid uses *Sithonis, -idis* (adjectival at *Her.* 2.6) as the feminine of *Sithon, -onis,* a rare alternative to *Sithonius* (115). Knox posits «an earlier Greek source» for Ovid (114 with citations). Perhaps Ovid uses the rare form to draw attention to the similarities between Sidonian Dido and Sithonian Phyllis.

Phyllis' marriage prospects are also viewed in the light of (Vergil's) Dido's. According to Phyllis, Demophoon is her fiancé; according to Dido, Aeneas is her husband. Because in the *Aeneid* there is considerable doubt as to whether Dido's characterization is correct, most commentators assume that Phyllis is similarly incorrect in thinking she is betrothed. Barchiesi thinks Phyllis is deluded in this belief but later notes that they are in fact affianced (108, 123). The phrase Phyllis uses to describe their relationship, *sponsor coniugii,* is treated by Servius as the step immediately prior to marriage[38]. In the *Aeneid*, the legal aspects of the relationship are unclear for an obvious reason: the reader hears both Dido and Aeneas' arguments, and must then choose between them. Dido assumes they are married; Aeneas contradicts her only as he is leaving, noting that no marriage ceremony occurred (*Aen.* 4.338-339). Is Phyllis once again misled by Dido's story?

There is another significant parallel between the stories of Demophoon and Aeneas: according to Hyginus (108), Demophoon had to rush back to Athens to help his father Theseus regain his kingdom[39]; duty similarly calls Aeneas away from the woman he loves. It may be significant that, like Vergil's Dido, Phyllis sees no legitimate reason for her lover to depart; each prefers to focus on her lover's treachery. Further, while Demophoon's willingness to help his father bespeaks filial piety, it may alarm Phyllis by suggesting that father and son are fundamentally in sympathy, and Theseus, as will be discussed, is notoriously forgetful about women. Finally, Aeneas and Demophoon have each met their respective lovers because of a shipwreck. Phyllis worries that Demophoon may be shipwrecked again, while Ovid's Dido threatens Aeneas with shipwreck (53 ff.)[40].

Phyllis, then, is not similar to Dido only because Ovid sees

38. *ad Aen.* 10.722, «pactae coniugis»; cf. *Her.* 7.180 *spe coniugii* and S. Treggiari, *Roman Marriage: Iusti Coniuges from the Time of Cicero to the Time of Ulpian*, Oxford 1991, 138 ss.

39. Euripides (*Her.* 213) and Hyginus (48) attest to Demophoon as the son of Theseus.

40. Perhaps Phyllis even fears another shipwreck and another princess for Demophoon to abandon, since her mental world is overpopulated with them.

her that way[41], but because Ovid has constructed a Phyllis who sees *herself* that way. Ovid has of course supplied the background story, making her a queen instead of a princess and creating Demophoon's shipwreck, which is reminiscent of Aeneas'. Yet within the story created by Ovid, his character Phyllis chooses the salient facts. For instance, she does not need a husband, and certainly not a foreign one, although she worries that her kingdom will be taken away from her without Demophoon (81-84). Phyllis also suggests that guilt attaches to her behavior, but does not explain why. Phyllis is too empathetic a reader of Dido's story, and, given a few external similarities, cannot help but insert herself into it. That is why she uses vocabulary similar to Dido's, and that is why she so easily convinces herself to commit suicide. This is a brilliant variation on the kind of situational irony so common in the *Heroides*, in which the heroine somehow seems to have read a previous version of her own story. Phyllis does not read her *own* story, but other people's, and bases her reading – and writing – of the events in her own life on them.

Medea forem![42]

As noted above, critics have been quick to point out the parallels between Phyllis and Dido; traditional scholarship views Ovid as competing with Vergil in both *Heroides* 2 and 7. While this interpretation is surely correct, it is also quintessentially Ovidian to let the obvious parallels between Dido and Phyllis obscure the less obvious – but more important – parallels that Phyllis draws between herself and Medea, and between herself and Ariadne[43]. Here I discuss the ways Phyllis' reading habits cause her to assimilate herself to Medea's story despite few apparent similarities:

> Dic mihi, quid feci, nisi non sapienter amavi?
> Crimine te potui demeruisse meo.

41. He does, of course, as evidenced by *RA* 55 ff., which notes that Phyllis, Dido, and Medea all died because of erotic ineptitude.

42. *Her.* 6.151.

43. Barchiesi notes that the «confronto tra Fillide e Medea lascia perplessi» (128). Cf. *Her.* 6.91; *Am.* 3.7.80.

Unum in me scelus est, quod te, scelerate, recepi;
Sed scelus hoc meriti pondus et instar habet.
Iura, fides ubi nunc commissaque dextera dextrae,
Quique erat in falso plurimus ore deus?
Promissus socios ubi nunc Hymenaeus in annos,
Qui mihi coniugii sponsor et obses erat?
(27-34)

Not only does Phyllis think of herself as Dido, but she also sees herself in the role of Medea. She refers to her *crimen* and then confesses that she has done nothing wrong (28-29, see too Palmer ad loc.). Although Phyllis seems here to appropriate the story of Medea, the only charge that could be made against her, loving Demophoon, is comparable to Medea's crimes (betraying her father, stealing, running away from home and, most egregiously, killing her brother) in her imagination but not in reality. Phyllis' sole crime, as she says, is to love foolishly (27). She does in fact love foolishly but not in the way she thinks; her foolishness is to be overly suspicious of Demophoon, for in one of the versions of her story he *will* return to her. Her suspicion has led her to misconstrue language, and also to be too impressionable a reader of stories 'like' hers. Overly conscious of the fact that love is a transitory phenomenon, Phyllis ends her relationship tragically soon. Her appropriation of a *crimen* compares ironically to *Heroides* 12.119-120, in which Medea says her only wrong was *credulitas*; in that letter Medea seeks to portray herself as an innocent (like Phyllis), while Phyllis attributes to herself the negative elements of Medea's story.

In l. 31-32, Phyllis claims that she and Demophoon are bound by *iura, fides*, and *dextera dextrae: iura, fides ubi nunc commissaque dextera dextrae,/ quique erat in falso plurimus ore deus.* The assertion that Demophoon not only promised Phyllis to return to her but swore an oath is of course reminiscent of the Euripidean formulation (*Med.* 20-23, etc.), but the specific gesture is also found in *Heroides* 12: *dextrae dextera iuncta meae* (90); these are the only places in the *Heroides* in which hands clasped together sanctify an oath[44].

Medea is traditionally a powerful witch; perhaps Phyllis' curse of Theseus (13, discussed at greater length below) parallels Medea's attempt to destroy Theseus once she reaches Aegeus in Athens[45]. Yet Phyllis chooses precisely the wrong aspects of Medea to imitate – Medea can certainly be seen as a woman who has loved and lost, but generally it is her supernatural powers and brutal revenge that characterize her. Phyllis seems only to have learned from certain portions of Medea's story – those in which she is a victim and not an agent. By cursing Theseus, not Demophoon[46], Phyllis rejects a happy ending while simultaneously assuming for herself one of Medea's enemies. Significantly, too, Medea's attempt to kill Theseus is one of her few heinous deeds in myth that is not successfully accomplished. Had Phyllis assimilated Medea's whole story, rather then merely the unsavory and failed parts, she might have become a very different character.

44. In *Heroides* 12.73, Jason himself asserts that Medea holds ius and arbitrium over him.

Thesides Theseusque duas rapuere[47]

The final model for Phyllis is Ariadne, who is not only one of poetry's most influential abandoned women (in Catullus' 64 *and* in the *Heroides*[48]) but is also an obvious choice for Phyllis to model herself on, given that she was abandoned by Demophoon's father Theseus[49].

De tanta rerum turba factisque parentis
Sedit in ingenio Cressa relicta tuo.
Quod solum excusat, solum miraris in illo:
Heredem patriae, perfide, fraudis agis.

45. In one of the versions cited above, Phyllis curses Demophoon; commentators often note the oddity of the switch here to Theseus. Medea is generally said to have tried to poison Theseus (Call. *Hek.* 232-233) or to have tricked him into going off to kill the bull of Marathon.

46. Cursing Demophoon would have guided Phyllis' story more firmly into the version in which she is deserted but also revenges herself on her faithless lover.

47. *Her.* 4.65.

48. Cf. *Her.* 10.79-80, *ego non tantum, quae sum passura, recordor,/ sed quaecumque potest ulla relicta pati:* Ariadne becomes, as I intend to show elsewhere, the self-appointed prototype of the women in the *Heroides*.

49. This family connection is also noted by Propertius at 2.24.43-44, who calls Theseus and Demophoon *hospes uterque malus*, and appears at *AA* 3.459.

Illa, nec invideo, fruitur meliore marito,
Inque capistratis tigribus alta sedet;
(75-80)

The character of Ariadne is clearly a vital presence in Phyllis' thoughts. She accuses Demophoon of taking only his father's treatment of Ariadne as an *exemplum*, and of ignoring the rest of his father's life[50]. *Heroides* 2 is obsessively (and here explicitly) concerned with Ariadne; Phyllis only raises suspicion when she insists that she does not begrudge Ariadne her divine husband (79). Yet Phyllis is wrong: it is not Demophoon who is fixated upon his father's dastardly behavior toward women, but Phyllis herself (Barchiesi 108). Phyllis, not Demophoon, lists a catalogue of Theseus' deeds[51], and Phyllis fashions Demophoon as a fitting son to his father. We know nothing of Demophoon; we have only Phyllis' portrait. Theseus is traditionally addressed as *perfidus*; the transferral of this epithet to Demophoon suggests that Phyllis may not be able to distinguish between the two men[52]. Ovid's Phyllis has read enough poetry to know not to trust men[53] but not how to distinguish one who might be truthful. Phyllis, after all, mentions little about Demophoon besides his genealogy: to her, he is the like-minded son of a man who abandoned a woman.

Ariadne (Cat. 64.177 ff., *Her.* 10.63 ff.) realizes that she has nowhere to go if not Athens because she has betrayed her people. Like her, Phyllis imagines that the Thracians would like her to follow Demophoon to Athens, giving up her kingdom and letting someone else reign in her place (83 ff.). Each woman sees Athens as her only hope, but each has no way to get there and little confidence in her welcome upon arrival. Yet whereas Ariadne is truly deserted on an island, and has no

50. This is especially ironic as it mirrors Phyllis' own way of reading, as shown above in the case of Medea.

51. 69 ss.; they include Sciron, Procrustes, Sinis, the Minotaur, Thebes, the Centaurs, and his trip to Hades.

52. See Knox 127 and H. Hross, *Die Klagen der verlassenen Heroiden in der lateinischen Dichtung: Untersuchungen der Motivik und zur dichterischen Form*, Munich dissertation 1958, 114-115 on *perfidus/periurus* as used by Phyllis, Ariadne, Dido, etc.

53. Cf. Cat. 64.143, *nunc iam nulla viro iuranti femina credat.*

sanctuary even if she finds a rescuer, Phyllis is still a powerful queen, if an embarrassed one, and has done nothing that necessitates her departure from Thrace.

Theseus left Ariadne for no discernible reason; Phyllis similarly offers no reason for Demophoon's departure[54]. The lack of motive given for either man's action makes both seem arbitrary and cruel. Why, Phyllis thinks, would Demophoon return when his father did not? Again, however, there is a key distinction. Theseus and Ariadne were on their way to Athens; their stay on Dia was merely temporary. Demophoon, on the other hand, was Phyllis' guest and wanted to visit his home. Phyllis, instead of wondering whether Demophoon's return is plausible, immediately envisions him with another woman:

Quid precor infelix? Te iam tenet altera coniunx
Forsitan et nobis qui male favit, Amor.
Utque tibi excidimus, nullam, puto, Phyllida nosti;
Ei mihi, si, quae sim Phyllis et unde, rogas!
(103-107)

This passage, which immediately precedes Phyllis' statement of her identity, expresses her fear that when he receives her letter Demophoon will not even remember her. Her reaction is surely irrational, but it has a psychological motivation: Demophoon is the son of Theseus, who left a woman on an island and remarried, having, according to the dominant (Catullan) tradition, entirely forgotten her existence. Thus Phyllis suspects that Demophoon will forget her because this kind of amnesia «runs in his family». It is, significantly, unclear who Demophoon's mother is; she is variously named as Antiope, Phaedra, or Ariadne[55]. If Theseus is Demophoon's father and Ariadne is his mother, it is no wonder that Phyllis thinks of Ariadne's story as she attempts to make sense of her own.

The situations of Phyllis and Ariadne seem similar enough

54. According to Hyginus, he had to return to Athens to help his father fight against a usurper, but Phyllis makes no mention of this.

55. Antiope: Pind. fr. 176; Phaedra: Apollod. *Epit. Vat.* 1.18W, Diod. 4.62; Ariadne: Tib. 3.6.39 and *schol. Od.* 11.321 (which adds Akamas as another son).

to justify comparison despite the dearth of specific verbal parallels between *Heroides* 2 and Catullus 64. *Tarde, quae credita laedunt/ credimus* (9-10) is similar in meaning to *necdum etiam sese quae visit visere credit* (64.55); Catullus' Ariadne asserts that *ostentant omnia letum* (187); Phyllis too seems to see no choice but to die[56].

Both Ovid's Ariadne and his Phyllis tend to repeat a few characteristic rhetorical gestures: Phyllis is fond of *tricola*, while Ariadne indulges in a great deal of wordplay (*nullus erat* 11, *nisi* in 17 and 18, *voce voco* 34, *verbera cum verbis* 38, *acceperat, acceptos* 51-2, *duo, duos* 56, *ambo* 57, etc.). Each poem has an ecphrasis involving cliffs and mountains, and each heroine looks out over the sea using the same verb (*prospicio* 2.124, *prospiciens* 10.49). Each uses the word *adamanta* to refer to the harshness of the man who has abandoned her (2.137 and 10.109); the word appears only here in the *Heroides*. Knox notes that the *alba vela* of 2.12, while a conventional phrase, may suggest the story of Theseus' forgotten white sails (115). Each woman mentions Theseus' accomplishments only by contrast with his abandonment of Ariadne; Phyllis characteristically expands the idea (2.67-78, 10.130). Finally, Ariadne's *pereundi mille figurae* are wholeheartedly adopted (and elaborated) by Phyllis (10.81 and 2.133-142). Even the landscape that the two women see is similar, for each woman wanders the shore in search of her lover[57].

Like Ariadne, Phyllis too curses Theseus:

> Thesea devovi, quia te dimittere nollet:
> Nec tenuit cursus forsitan ille tuos.
> Interdum timui, ne, dum vada tendis ad Hebri,
> Mersa foret cana naufraga puppis aqua;
> Saepe deos[58] supplex, ut tu, scelerate, valeres,

56. Barchiesi notes a «particolare densità di analogie o allusioni» between *Heroides* 2 and Catullus 64 at 2.121-130.

57. 2.121-122 *maesta tamen scopulos fruticosaque litora calco / quaeque patent oculis aequora lata meis* ~ 10.26-30 *nunc scopulus raucis pendet adesus aquis: / ascendo, vires animus dabat, atque ita late / aequora prospectu metior alta meo. / Inde ego, nam ventis quoque sum crudelibus usa, / vidi praecipiti carbasa tenta noto.*

58. Palmer emends to *deo*, which does not restore sense. I have here adopted the manuscript reading *deos* from Dörrie's text; other manuscript readings are *diis* and *deis*.

> Cum prece turicremis sum venerata focis;
> Saepe videns ventos caelo pelagoque secundos[59],
> Ipsa mihi dixi «si valet ille, venit».
>
> (13-20)

Phyllis' words could well be Ariadne's, since the latter most famously curses Theseus[60]. Phyllis' curse on Theseus draws attention to the fact that she has not cursed Demophoon, as she does in one variant of the myth[61]. It was suggested above that Medea's hatred of Theseus might have influenced Phyllis; here it becomes obvious that, given both Ariadne and Medea's presence in Phyllis' story, the impetus to curse Theseus is overwhelming.

Phyllis notes that public inscriptions of Theseus' accomplishments will be read (*lectus*, 69), along with his abandonment of Ariadne; this will, in Phyllis' view, inevitably cause Demophoon to abandon her. Phyllis' here makes explicit her belief that the impressions formed by reading have an exceptionally powerful influence on the conduct of the reader. Once Demophoon has read about the actions of his father, he *must* do likewise. Because Phyllis passes over Theseus' other famous deeds to focus on Ariadne, she fears that Demophoon will read similarly (i.e. in an elegiac manner). She thus illustrates the way *she* reads – to know about Ariadne necessitates recreating her story. Phyllis is doomed to be abandoned and she dooms Demophoon by extrapolating his behavior from her own.

Phyllis' programmatic and dangerous misreading is highlighted by the fact that her story is not similar – to Dido's, to

59. Palmer omits 18-9 because he thinks they are spurious (290). The lines included are from Dörrie. Knox notes, «at least two lines of similar content would have to be posited as a supplement for the lacuna between 17 and 20. Accordingly, they might as well stand in the text» (117). Cf. Barchiesi 120 and 128 and A.E. Housman, *Ovid's Heroides*, «Class. Rev.» 11, 1897, for bibliography and discussion.

60. Barchiesi 128 too notes Ariadne's curse of Theseus in Catullus 64.135, observing that Theseus «è già 'abituato' a maledizioni scagliate da donne tradite e abbandonate».

61. In Apollodorus 6.17, Demophoon is cursed by means of a κίστη. Cf. Knox 115 and above.

Medea's, or to Ariadne's. Phyllis, unlike Ariadne, is alone in only one sense – she still has a home and kingdom. Phyllis and Medea, in truth, have very little in common; their stories share only the fact that each loves a man who is not physically present. Finally, it is not clear that Phyllis has been abandoned by Demophoon; he promised to return when he left. By contrast, Aeneas left after making it clear that he would not return to Dido, and Theseus set sail while Ariadne was sleeping. Jason seems in most versions to have simply disappeared, and only upon hearing the news of his new wedding did Medea realize that she was deserted. A more fortuitous source to take as a model would have been Penelope, the patient author of *Heroides* 1, who waits twenty years for Odysseus to return to her and, although she expresses despair, does not take any action that would endanger herself or her husband. Phyllis overlooks her nearest neighbor to her detriment[62].

* * *

The *Heroides* deliberately provoke the reader by telling essentially the 'same story' over and over. What is the reader to do with an endless catalogue of female abandonment? One strategy is to read like Phyllis, to conclude that the stories – and the women – are interchangeable[63]. While it is easy to view this as an immature strategy and Phyllis as an unsophisticated reader, we are nevertheless cast into her mold in the very process of reading *Heroides* 2. Phyllis gains her knowledge about 'reality' from previous literature; the external reader of the *Heroides* is tricked into adopting the same strategy. How else *can* one read this poem, which is so steeped with other stories? And yet, this feature of the *Heroides* is of a piece with Ovid's view of reading in other places in his corpus, where he suggests that literature *is* a reliable source of information[64]. While Phyllis is simplistic, she writes in a style that bears close affinities to Ovid's own obsessive focus on literature, particularly in his 'autobiographical' exilic poetry, in which he fashions himself as various abandoned heroines[65]. Yet this way of reading is precisely why great art is compelling: it pulls its audience into an imaginary world of its own making. Ovidian irony is here at its finest: reading Phyllis, a character who writes herself to death, we show ourselves to be frighteningly like her[66].

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62. I will explore the unnoticed similarities between Penelope and Phyllis in a later study. As referee B suggests, both women write «ai loro uomini credendoli lontani, mentre invece essi sono vicini.» I do not, of course, suggest that Phyllis could have altered the literary tradition of which she is a part to achieve a happier ending. My intent is merely to show the ways in which the power *Heroides* 2 gives to its author is only illusory – Phyllis is destined to relive the story of abandonment and suicide *ad infinitum*; her choice is merely in the details. Referee B also draws attention to the similarities between Phyllis' premature suicide and Canace's in *Heroides* 11 (as outlined by G.D. Williams, *Ovid's Canace: Dramatic Irony in Ovid's Heroides 11*, «Class. Quart.» 42, 1992, pp. 201-209 and with refinements by S. Casali, *Tragic Irony in Ovid's Heroides 9 and 11*, «Class. Quart.» 45, 1995, pp. 509-511.

63. In Phyllis' case, of course, the tendency of the reader to assimilate Phyllis' story to those of other women is exacerbated by the accident that we have so little of her own story from antiquity.

64. I think particularly of the ways in which the *Ars* refer to 'real life' situations known from the *Amores* (Kristina Milnor, private communication).

65. See P.A. Rosenmeyer, *Ovid's Heroides and Tristia: Voices from Exile*, «Ramus» 26, 1997, pp. 29-56.

66. My thanks to G.D. Williams, A. Barchiesi, S. Hinds, J. Tatum, J. Marincola, and the referees for this journal for many and varied improvements along the way. This article forms part of a larger study, in which the intratextual aspects of the *Heroides* will be explored.

Sommario

Materiali e discussioni per l'analisi dei testi classici

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