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TREVOR FEAR

CRITICAL STUDIES IN OVID'S *HEROIDES* 1, 2, 7.

M.LITT., 1993

ABSTRACT

The thesis consists of three full-length studies of individual poems in Ovid's *Heroides*. A preface establishes the current trend of modern scholarship (particular attention is paid to the book-length studies of Howard Jacobson and Florence Verducci) and suggests the basis of my own critical approach. Chapter One is a study of *Heroides* 1 (Penelope to Ulysses). Stress here is placed on how Ovid has adapted the Homeric epic figure to his own elegiac context. Penelope appears not as the magnanimous heroine of epic but as the peevish lover of elegy. We are presented with a Penelope who finds her sexual deprivation hard to endure, who alludes disingenuously to Calypso and who is not above using Ulysses' family as a means of emotional blackmail. Chapter Two deals with *Heroides* 2 (Phyllis to Demophoon); emphasis here is placed upon the problems arising from our ignorance of Ovid's source material and how the poet has adapted the myth to the exigencies of the epistolary form. In this instance the letter format will be seen to be admirably suited to the reflective character of the heroine. The Phyllis of the Ovidian epistle is not so much the precipitate lover as the ruminant moralist. Chapter Three concentrates upon *Heroides* 7 (Dido to Aeneas). The discussion here centres upon how the poet has allowed his heroine a free hand rhetorically to adapt the details of the Virgilian text. The possibility of this epistle being a political diatribe on Augustanism is denied. A short postscript suggests the direction that future studies of the *Heroides* may take and expresses the hope that the poetry of Ovid will continue to be read as something more significant than mere verbal display.

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CRITICAL STUDIES IN OVID'S HEROIDES 1, 2, 7.

A thesis submitted by Trevor Marc Fear  
for the degree of Master of Literature.

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PREFACE  
APPROACHING OVID'S HEROIDES.

The revival in Ovidian studies has been continuing for some thirty years. Recently, however, the poet's works have received even more intense attention. This situation, its motivation and aims, has been neatly summarized by Joan Booth:

'Much recent scholarship has made a determined assault on Ovid's lingering reputation for showy brilliance, but little subtlety or intellectual depth. The new Ovid is a complex poet who uses his flippancy as a smoke-screen for profound artistic and cultural aspirations (M. Myerowitz, *Ovid's Games of Love* (Detroit, 1985)), who is committed to intricate and creative echoing of his own and other poets' work (S. Hinds, *The Metamorphosis of Persephone. Ovid and the self-conscious Muse* (Cambridge, 1987) and 'Generalizing about Ovid', *Ramus* 16 (1987), 4-31), and who constantly indulges in learned 'etymologizing', i.e. play on the alleged derivation of words (J.C. McKeown, *Ovid, Amores*; Vol. I, *Text and Prolegomena*, ARCA 20, (Liverpool, 1987), pp. 45-62'.<sup>1</sup>

As this quotation demonstrates, scholars have been increasingly concerned to rid Ovid of his reputation for witty superficiality and to rehabilitate him into a poet of intellectual significance. This critical stance is apparent in the two book-length studies of Ovid's *Heroides* that have appeared in the last twenty years, Howard Jacobson's *Ovid's Heroides* (Princeton 1974) and Florence Verducci's *Ovid's Toyshop of the Heart: Epistulae Heroidum* (Princeton 1985). Both these scholars have taken pains to stress the poet's serious intentions. Jacobson sees the significance of the *Heroides* as residing in their apprehension of individual psychology:

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<sup>1</sup>Joan Booth in her 'Addenda' (1991) to *Ovid* by John Barsby, *Greece and Rome, New Surveys in the Classics*, No. 12.



'The *Heroides* are not rarely praised as acute portraits of the female psyche ... That they are, indeed studies, so to speak, in psychology cannot be reasonably denied'.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, the poems are seen as a comment on the relative nature of reality:

'But in the *Heroides* Ovid radically transformed it [elegy] into a mirror of the relative nature of reality. The world of myth is no longer reality or a symbolic reflection of reality, but to a large degree projections or extensions of individual minds.'<sup>3</sup>

Florence Verducci also views the *Heroides* as convincing psychological studies:

'Perhaps the greatest, and surely the most original achievement of Ovid's letters is the impression they create of psychological authenticity, of convincing fidelity to the private perspective of a speaker caught in a double process of intentional persuasion and unintentionally revealing self-expression'.<sup>4</sup>

Yet the two scholars in their attempts to elucidate the value of the poet's work come to somewhat different conclusions over Ovid's habitual use of wit. Jacobson finds the wit of the *Heroides* an unequivocal failing:

'The faults which detract from the achievement of the *Heroides* are generally those which seem, one might say, congenital to Ovid and are recurrent in most of his work. ... The wit and the humor that now and

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<sup>2</sup>Jacobson, *Ovid's Heroides* (Princeton 1974) 371.

<sup>3</sup>Jacobson, 349.

<sup>4</sup>Florence Verducci, *Ovid's Toyshop of the Heart: Epistulae Heroidum*, (Princeton 1985) 4.

then are present in the *Heroides* degenerate at times into little else than cleverness, sometimes rather ludicrous cleverness'.<sup>5</sup>

'But when points of language take precedence over points of sense, when plays on words prove no more than a substitute for substance, then his failure is manifest.'<sup>6</sup>

Verducci, however, attempts to incorporate the wit inherent in the poems into her over-all interpretative position. She sees wit as the agency through which the poet forces upon the reader an awareness that s/he is being compelled into sympathy for an idiosyncratic perspective:

'The women of Ovid's *Heroides* are convincing as psychologically "real" characters precisely because they are not indentured to Classical Decorum. The sensibilities they reveal are convincing insofar as their characters become coherent but autonomous forces defiant of the categories to which tradition assigns them. They are convincing sensibilities insofar as their utterances force us to deviate from our own preconceptions of them, to endure the dissolution of their conventional "meaning." ... The rule of Ovid's *Heroides* is the rule of indecorum, of wit in conception no less than in language, a wit which is not his heroine's own but the token of the poet's creative presence in the poem. Its dispassionate, intellectual, emotionally anaesthetizing presence is a constant reminder of how far we, in our sympathy for a heroine, have departed from the traditional view of her situation, and it is a constant goad to the dissociation of emotional appreciation from formal articulation.'<sup>7</sup>

According to Verducci the poet induces us to sympathize with a portrait of the heroine that is quite different from her usual presentation in the classical tradition. However, to enable the reader to be cognizant of how their preconceptions are being defamiliarized,

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<sup>5</sup>Jacobson, 7-8.

<sup>6</sup>Jacobson, 8.

<sup>7</sup>Verducci, 31-32.

the poet intrudes his own presence through the medium of verbal wit. In this instance wit is seen not as frivolous verbiage but as a means of keeping the reader informed of the poet's intentions.

Thus we can see how these two scholars have reacted quite differently to L.P. Wilkinson's famous criticism of the *Heroides*, 'The heroines are not too miserable to make puns'.<sup>8</sup> Jacobson concedes that the use of wit in the *Heroides* is a failing, whilst vigorously maintaining the worth of the work as a whole, whereas Verducci attempts to confront the habitual criticism of the poet's wit by assigning to its practice a serious intention. Both scholars, therefore, in their own way, have reacted against a strand of scholarship that insists on seeing only the frivolity in Ovid's work. For instance, Oliver Lyne, when reviewing Jacobson's book, commented on scholars 'assiduously unburying' Ovid and on how 'over-reaction has sometimes led to absurdities of over-estimation'.<sup>9</sup> Galinsky in his study of the *Metamorphoses* makes a similar point; he states that the 'scholarly mentality' produces a tendency 'to make the *Metamorphoses* and Ovid more profound than they are. Making a writer profound often is confused with profound criticism'.<sup>10</sup>

The studies presented in this thesis will side with Jacobson and Verducci in so far as they promote the belief that the *Heroides* amount to something more than the sum total of their instances of verbal

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<sup>8</sup>L.P. Wilkinson, *Ovid Recalled* (Cambridge 1955) 98.

<sup>9</sup>Oliver Lyne, 'Ways of resurrecting Ovid,' *Times Literary Supplement*, March 7th 1975, 254.

<sup>10</sup>G.K. Galinsky, *Ovid's Metamorphoses: an Introduction to the Basic Aspects* (Oxford 1975) ix.

wit. Yet whilst being committed to the opinion that the *Heroides* are poems of considerable merit, it must also be acknowledged that they are poems which present a degree of interpretative difficulty. This difficulty is most readily apparent in a poem such as *Heroides* 2 where the source material from which Ovid must have worked can only be re-constructed on the basis of pure speculation. In such instances critics must acknowledge the inevitably provisional status of their interpretation. This type of problem points to the necessity of a close reading of the text as an aid to explication, and to the difficulty of responding to each poem within the limits imposed by a single interpretative position. The studies presented in this thesis, therefore, try to respond to the text of each poem individually in an attempt to unravel its idiosyncratic significance. Thus the study of *Heroides* 2, whilst acknowledging the problems presented by our lack of sources, concentrates on what can still be done with the text as we possess it and explores the adaptation of the parent myth to the epistolary form. The studies of *Heroides* 1 and 7, where the source-material is in little doubt, take a different approach. In the study on *Heroides* 1 stress is placed on how Ovid has adapted the epic figure of Penelope (as contained within the text of the *Odyssey*) into his own elegiac format. This process of generic transference demonstrates the stereotypical construction of character within specific literary genres. Thus Penelope, within the confines of her new setting, is forced to concede her epic identity and act in the typical manner of the elegiac lover. The final study on *Heroides* 7 concentrates more specifically on Ovid's use of intertextuality. Using the details of Virgil's account of Dido and Aeneas in Books 1 and 4 of the *Aeneid*, Ovid provides his heroine with a full knowledge of the

Virgilian text and the ability to adapt rhetorically the details to form new arguments designed to prevent Aeneas' departure. The three studies are designed to demonstrate the spectrum of approaches that can be used to interpret the *Heroides*. Emphasis is placed upon a close and thorough reading of the texts and the need to respond to the poems individually in accordance with their idiosyncratic nature.

CHAPTER ONE

HEROIDES 1: PENELOPE TO ULYSSES.

## INTRODUCTION:

### (1): Ovid's Penelope: Across The Generic Divide: Epic Heroines and Elegiac Lovers.

The source material for some of Ovid's *Heroides* remains problematic. As we shall in the following chapter on *Heroides* 2 identification of a singular, authoritative source is not always possible. Nevertheless, there can be little doubt that the first of Ovid's *Heroides* is intended to be read against the background of Homer's *Odyssey*. Recognition of the source of a poem, however, should only be a starting point. The question still remains as to the means the poet has employed to produce a distinctive treatment of his own.

Although Penelope receives her most famous literary manifestation in the genre of epic, she is not a character who is entirely alien to the elegiac tradition. Her characterization in the *Odyssey* makes her a ready-made example of feminine fidelity and virtue. It is in this stereotypical capacity in which she appears in a number of poems of Propertius:<sup>11</sup>

'felix Admeti coniunx et lectus Ulixis  
et quaecumque viri femina limen amat'  
(2.6.23-24).

'Penelope poterat bis denos salva per annos  
vivere, tam multis femina digna procis;  
coniugium falsa poterat differre Minerva,  
nocturno solvens texta diurna dolo;  
visura et quamvis numquam speraret Ulixen,  
illum exspectando facta remansit anus'  
(2.9.3-8).

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<sup>11</sup>In addition to the examples quoted the reader may also consider Propertius 3.12, at lines 22ff. and 4.5, at lines 5ff.

Penelope's unparalleled virtue provides the perfect foil for the often less than perfect behaviour of a Cynthia. Her undemanding dutifulness can be placed in an elegiac context as an example to the often venal, fickle lovers of that genre. Nevertheless, to use Penelope in the limited manner of a paragon is one thing, but to create an elegiac poem where Penelope herself is the central character is quite another. The problem of full-scale generic transference would have been a challenge eminently suited to Ovid's idiosyncratic talents. By making Penelope the leading character in an elegiac poem he presented himself with the opportunity of refracting her 'epic' experience through the particularity of an elegiac perspective. We may view the Ovidian poem, seen in this way, as an attempt to appropriate the 'epic' Penelope into her new 'elegiac' context. The poem then works by inviting the reader to see how the poet has differentiated his Penelope from her Homeric manifestation. Instead of being an extra in an epic plot Penelope becomes the main protagonist in a specifically erotic conflict. The new context will evidently produce a Penelope who will not merely be the mirror-image of her epic predecessor. The following analysis of the text of *Heroides* 1 seeks to explore the ways in which Ovid has adapted the Homeric character to his own purpose.

HEROIDES 1: Penelope to Ulysses.

(1): Initial Complaint: The Trojan War and Greek Women.

'Haec<sup>12</sup> tua Penelope lento tibi mittit, Ulixee  
nil mihi rescribas attamen; ipse veni.'  
(1-2).

In the opening line of the poem Penelope refers to her husband as *lentus*. The term is well selected for there is a gap of no less than twenty years between Ulysses' departure for Troy and his return home to Ithaca. Thus when Palmer speaks of *lentus* as conveying 'reproach of deliberate tardiness',<sup>13</sup> we may wonder at the moderation of his expression. 'Tardiness' will hardly do to express an absence of this magnitude. In the circumstances we must suspect that *lentus* is a deliberately ironic piece of understatement. Ulysses is not merely a little slothful, he is extremely late indeed. The probable irony of *lentus*, then, immediately alerts us to Penelope's reproachful tone.

We must also remember when we read the *Heroides* that we are in the realm of elegiac poetry and that we are reading the communication of one lover to another. *Lentus* is an adjective that has certain

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<sup>12</sup>An alternative reading of 'hanc' supposes an ellipse of 'epistulam'. As Palmer has pointed out, (*P. Ovidi Nasonis Heroides*, [Oxford 1898] 278) this is an ellipse which does not occur elsewhere in Ovid. It can, however, be supported from several instances in Cicero (e.g. 'Hanc putavi mea manu scribendam itaque feci', *Att.* 15.20). Nevertheless, 'haec' meaning 'these lines' would seem a more likely reading. This can be supported by *Heroides* 10.3, 'quae legis, ex illo, Theseu, tibi litore mitto'. 'Haec' may also be defended as introducing an idea of plurality that provides an effective rhetorical contrast with the singularity of 'nil' in the following line.

<sup>13</sup>Palmer (1898) 278.

ramifications within elegy. In this genre the adjective is used to denote the lover who is unattentive or uninterested:

'a pereat, si quis lentus amare potest!  
(Propertius, 1.6.12)

'lentus es et pateris nulli patienda marito;  
(Ovid, *Amores* 2.19.51).

Consequently, it may also refer to a lack of sexual energy. Thus the insatiable Cynthia rebukes her lover in the following fashion:

'illa meos somno lassos patefecit ocellos  
ore suo et dixit "Sicine, lente, iaces?"  
(Propertius, 2.15.7-8)

In the *Remedia* Ovid recommends tardy absence as an excellent cure for erotic involvement:

'Nec satis esse putes discedere; lentus abesto  
dum perdat vires sitque sine igne cinis.'  
(*Remedia* 243-244)

It is not difficult to see that the elegiac meanings of *lentus* may also be applicable in the opening line of this poem. The adjective indicates that from an elegiac viewpoint Ulysses' behaviour is highly reprehensible. His very absence makes it probable that the intensity of his feelings for Penelope will have dimmed. Absence, according to the *Remedia*, does not make the heart grow fonder. Moreover, if Cynthia can call Propertius *lentus* because he has discontinued his lovemaking for a few hours, we can begin to understand some of the irony of the adjective's application to Ulysses. Penelope is addressing a man who last made love to her some twenty years ago. As a lover Ulysses

clearly leaves a lot to be desired. The elegiac context of the *Heroides* places a particular erotic significance on Ulysses' absence. The twenty years that he is away represent (for Penelope) two decades without carnal knowledge. Within the genre of elegy *lentus* appears as appropriate an epithet for Ulysses as do 'πολύμητις', and 'πολυτλήμων' in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Ulysses stands transformed from the resourceful and hardy hero of epic into the negligent and inattentive lover of elegy.

The second line of the poem continues to promote erotic considerations:

'Nil mihi rescribas attamen: ipse veni.'

Penelope stresses that she is not writing in order to obtain a reply, but to secure his immediate return. She emphasizes a basic difference between a letter and a person's physical presence. This differentiation is understandable in the circumstances. Penelope has been without a sexual partner for twenty years. The last thing she wants to do is to enter into a correspondence. What Penelope needs is Ulysses' physical presence (hence the urgent imperative of line 2 'ipse veni'). Letters will not keep her warm at night. She is primarily concerned with the re-activation of her sex-life. Unfortunately for Penelope, the prime requisite for this re-activation is Ulysses himself and he seems to be in no hurry to oblige.

Line three introduces the real basis of Penelope's complaint, 'Troia iacet certe'. The reason for Ulysses' absence is introduced, but it is introduced in such a way as to suggest that it is now redundant. There is not the slightest doubt that the Trojan War has

ended. Its conclusion should herald his return. But this has not been the case: years after Ulysses should have returned, he has not done so (this is why he is *lentus* in a temporal sense). The urgent imperative of line 2 is a natural response to Ulysses' seemingly inexplicable delay.

But, for the moment, Penelope chooses not to stress the incongruity between the conclusion of the Trojan War and her husband's failure to return. Instead, mention of the war leads her into a digression on the past consequences of this conflict:

'Troia iacet certe, Danais invisa puellis;  
Vix Priamus tanti totaque Troia fuit.'  
(3-4)

Penelope refers to Troy as 'Danais invisa puellis' (3). This does not in itself appear strange. After all, the war removed their men for a decade and placed them in imminent danger. But *lentus* in the poem's opening line reminds us that we are in the realm of erotic elegy and that we should be alert to events being refracted through a specifically sexual perspective. Hence, within this context, the real significance of the Trojan War is in depriving the women of Greece of their sexual partners for a decade. This is the reason why Troy was hateful to the women of Greece, and this was the cost that was so high, and for which the destruction of Priam and his city could be no adequate compensation, 'Vix Priamus tanti totaque Troia fuit' (4). The consequences of the war are thus narrowed and defined in a way appropriate to the genre (elegiac poetry) within which they appear.

It is not, therefore, accidental that Penelope sees the instigator of the Trojan War in terms that refer to the specifically sexual nature of his misdemeanour:

'o utinam tum, cum Lacedaemona classe petebat,  
obrutus insanis esset adulter aquis!  
(5-6)

It is Paris' adultery that precipitates the whole conflict. There is, of course, a certain bitter irony in this sequence of events. The excess libido of Paris has led to the enforced chastity of the women of Greece (and of Penelope in particular). His excessive sexual zeal finds its reciprocation (rather unfairly) in her sexual abstinence.

Lines 7 to 10 relate the direct consequences of Paris' actions upon Penelope:

'non ego deserto iacuissem frigida lecto,  
nec quererer tardos ire relictas dies;  
nec mihi quaerenti spatiosam fallere noctem  
lassaret viduas pendula tela manus.'

A sexual crime has sexual repercussions. However, it is Penelope, and not Paris, who suffers the consequences. She is the one who is 'frigida' and sleeps in a 'deserto ... lecto'. Both *frigidus* and *desertus* are words associated, within an elegiac context, with the lapse of sexual activity:

'frigidus in viduo destituere toro'  
(Ovid, *Amores*, 3.5.42).

'frigida deserta nocte iacebis anus'  
(Ovid, *Ars* 3.70).

'desertum in lecto caelibe perpetitur'  
(Catullus 68A.6).

That Penelope views not only Paris but also Ulysses as being responsible for this situation is demonstrated by the force of

'deserto'. She is not just on her own, she has been wilfully abandoned. This reproach amplifies the already impatient tone of the opening couplet ('lento ... Ulixē' [1], 'ipse veni' [2]). Remonstrance is also carried further by the 'relicta' of line 8 and the use of the verb *queror* in line 8 ('quererer'). *Relictus* and *queror* are also words that are commonly associated with the lover's complaints in elegy:

'interdum leviter mecum deserta querebar'  
(Propertius, 1.3.43).

'queritur nullos esse relicta deos'  
(Propertius, 1.6.8).

Penelope, then, sees herself quite specifically as the abandoned lover. She is caught up in a sequence of ironically vindictive events. Her husband joins an expedition to punish the sexual transgression of one Trojan male but this leads (quite unfairly) to the sexual deprivation of Penelope and the whole race of Greek women.

We should also notice that Ulysses' slowness in returning is reflected in how slowly time passes for Penelope. Her days are 'tardos' (8) and the night is 'spatiosam' (9). His sluggishness imposes upon her an existence that creeps painfully along. Yet at the same time as Penelope censures Ulysses, she is also emphasizing the propriety of her own conduct. Paris' status as 'adulter' is matched by her exemplary conduct as Ulysses' faithful wife. Although the situation is one which she does not appear to embrace with the utmost good grace, nevertheless her state of being 'frigida' in a 'deserto ... lecto' (7) makes it quite clear that her own sexual behaviour is perfectly proper. She, therefore, suggests that the correctness of her

actions merits Ulysses' immediate attention. This leads us neatly into the motif which is most commonly associated with Penelope's fidelity:

'nec mihi quaerenti spatiosam fallere noctem  
lassaret viduas pendula tela manus.'  
(9-10)

Yet the story of Penelope's weaving does not appear in the usual manner. There is no mention of a stratagem designed to deceive the suitors. This should perhaps alert us to the possibility that this motif is also being adapted to its new elegiac context.

To consider the significance of weaving within elegiac poetry we might take Propertius 1.3 as an example. In this elegy the complaining lover describes how she whiled away the hours in the futile hope that her lover would appear:

'nam modo purpureo fallebam stamine somnum'  
(1.3.41).

Clearly, in this elegy weaving is a means of coping with the long frustrating hours spent waiting for a lover's arrival. It thus stands as an unsatisfactory substitute for erotic activity. We can see how the elegiac motif of weaving is directly applicable to Penelope's situation. She too is awaiting the arrival of her overdue lover. Penelope, as she appears in this poem, is using weaving (as her counterpart does in Propertius 1.3) to cheat the length of the night ('spatiosam fallere noctem' [9]), not the suitors. The new elegiac context produces a motive for, and an attitude towards, weaving which supersedes the original Homeric context. For Ovid's Penelope weaving represents not so much a technique for staving off the unwanted advances of the suitors as a method of coping with her own excess, and

unfulfilled sexual energy. Thus the Homeric motif has been appropriated. The activity which keeps erotic attention away from her in the Homeric account appears in this elegy as the method with which she deals with her own frustrated sexual desire.

But although the motif has been altered to suit the more sexually orientated nature of elegy, nevertheless the detail still serves to emphasize Penelope's faithfulness. The fact that she is spending her nights weaving is an indication that she is not finding sexual satisfaction with anyone else.

We might also consider that the reason why Penelope does not introduce the motif in connection with the suitors is that it is linked to the possibility of her remarriage. In the *Odyssey* when Laertes' shroud is complete Penelope is supposed to make her choice. But in this letter Penelope, wishing to promote her unequivocal commitment to Ulysses ('Penelope coniunx semper Ulixis ero' [84]), does not wish him to know of any such arrangement. She may therefore be adapting the motif in the interests of rhetorical persuasiveness. Jacobson, however, takes an opposite viewpoint:

'One concludes that she does not relate her act of guile to Ulysses because she does not want to establish and confirm her faithfulness toward him; she does not want to give Ulysses the impression that she has been totally and absolutely devoted to him.'<sup>14</sup>

But this would seem to contradict Penelope's explicit profession of fidelity in line 84, 'Penelope coniunx semper Ulixis ero'. She also introduces herself as 'tua Penelope' in the very first line of the

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<sup>14</sup>Jacobson, *Ovid's Heroides*, (Princeton 1974) 264.

poem.

Attention should also be paid to Penelope's reference to her hands as 'viduas' (10). The primary meaning here must be 'widowed'.<sup>15</sup> Of course, Penelope is not a widow but she is evidently implying that she may as well be. Ulysses' very absence forces her into this role. One obvious consequence of widowhood is the cessation of erotic activity. So Penelope is once more hinting at the physical deprivation which the Trojan War and Ulysses have forced upon her.

The opening lines of the poem, then, place a specifically sexual gloss on the details of the myth. This is only what we might expect within an elegiac context. Penelope's main concern appears here to be to secure the return of her long lost sexual partner. The Trojan War is seen in terms of a period of enforced celibacy brought on by the excess libido of an aberrant male. Yet at the same time as sex is pushed to the foreground Penelope is careful to present her own actions during this period as the epitome of fidelity. She sleeps alone ('frigida' [7]) in a deserted bed. She spends her nights weaving. Thus at the same time as Ulysses is reproached, Penelope presents herself positively. There has been nothing wrong with her behaviour and she deserves her husband's immediate consideration.

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<sup>15</sup>As noted above Penelope in the *Odyssey* is employed in weaving a shroud for Laertes.

(2): Real Fears and Imaginary Dangers.

In line eleven Penelope moves away from the physical deprivations caused by the Trojan War on to the mental anguish that the same event forced upon her:

'Quando ego non timui graviora pericula veris?  
res est solliciti plena timoris amor.'  
(11-12)

Here, again, we may see that Penelope is continuing to present herself positively. The fear that she experienced during the war was a reflexion of her devotion to Ulysses. She suffered endlessly under the uncertainty that surrounded Ulysses' fate. The connection between love and fear is made quite explicit by the twelfth line of the text.

The sense is reinforced by a quite obvious similarity in sound between 'timor' and 'amor'. Assonance helps to suggest a thematic connection. Love and fear are intimately connected. The point of this elegiac maxim is evidently once more to allow Penelope to stress the intensity of her own afflictions. Fear (proved retrospectively to be unnecessary) was her predominant emotion during the Trojan War. Her own imaginary fears were (she alleges) far greater than those which Ulysses actually encountered, 'graviora pericula veris' (11). This profession of her imaginary fears stands as a gauge of her feelings towards Ulysses. Yet at the same time as her expression demonstrates that she played the part of the concerned lover, it simultaneously suggests that the dangers which faced Ulysses were not really so terrible. We may suspect that Penelope is hinting that she has suffered unnecessarily. Lines 13ff. are designed, therefore, to support the proposition that her imaginary fears were disproportionate

to the dangers that Ulysses actually encountered:

'in te fingebam violentos Troas ituros;  
nomine in Hectoreo pallida semper eram.'  
(13-14)

It is perhaps not immediately clear why line 13 represents an imaginary fear. Presumably, even a suspicious Penelope cannot believe that Ulysses was never subject to attack. The word order here is the clue, 'in te fingebam violentos Troas ituros'. She imagined Trojan aggression being specifically channelled against Ulysses, 'in te'. In her mind, he became (quite unrealistically) the centre of the enemy's violent intent. Her love for Ulysses naturally means that all possible perils are focussed upon him. But we can also see that 'fingebam' (although mollified by the attendant 'in te') continues the negative undercurrent of these lines by implying that the only dangers Ulysses faced were the ones which emerged from Penelope's imagination. Clearly Penelope is at pains to suggest that the worse fate was not actually to be in the war but to be back at home enveloped in the unendurable anxiety of uncertainty.

Lines 11-22 are evidently designed to reinforce this point:

'in te fingebam violentos Troas ituros;  
nomine in Hectoreo pallida semper eram.  
sive quis Antilochum narrabat ab Hectore victum,'<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>In the *Odyssey* (4.187f.) the killer of Antilochus was not Hector but Memnon. Various emendations have been suggested 'Amphimachum' (Politan), 'Anchialum' (Muncker), and 'Archilochum' (Schoppa). Yet none of these heroes would seem to be of sufficient standing to fit in with the illustrious names in lines 15-22. The possibility of this being a reference to Antilochus' flight from Hector (*Iliad* 15.585ff.) would seem to be ruled out by 'quisquis erat iugulatus' (21). Perhaps the 'error' could be attributed to the fact that this section of the poem is set in the midst of imagination and secondhand report,

Antilochus nostri causa timoris erat;  
 sive Menoetiaden falsis cecidisse sub armis,  
 flebam successu posse carere dolos.  
 sanguine Tlepolemus Lyciam tepefecerat hastam;  
 Tlepolemi leto cura novata mea est.  
 denique, quisquis erat castris iugulatus Achivis,  
 frigidius glacie pectus amantis erat.'  
 (13-22)

Lines 13-14 emphasize the remorselessness of her past vexation, 'in te fingebam violentos Troas ituros;/ nomine in Hectore pallida semper eram' (13-14). She constantly imagined the Trojans advancing with hostile intent upon her husband and the mention of Hector's name (the enemy's most prolific killer) was always sufficient to turn Penelope's complexion into a pallor. The use of the imperfect tense ('fingebam' [13], 'eram' [14]) reinforces the unremitting nature of her worry (a point also stressed by the 'semper' of line 14). Then in lines 15-20 we see how Penelope's care was constantly intensified by the information that filtered back from the war. So the death of Antilochus in line 15 causes a renewal of alarm in line 16, 'Antilochus nostri causa timoris erat'. Patroclus' demise in line 17 is of particular concern for Penelope as it involves the failure of *doli* which are Ulysses' particular speciality. Tlepolemus' death in line 20 serves to re-activate her worry further, 'Tlepolemi leto cura novata mea est' (20). Thus everytime Penelope heard of the death of a Greek leader she was forced into a renewal of her fear for Ulysses, 'denique, quisquis erat castris iugulatus Achivis,/ frigidius glacie pectus amantis erat' (21-22).

The examples which Penelope chooses demonstrate quite pointedly

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'fingebam' (13), 'quis ... narrabat' (15).

the manner in which her fears outstripped reality, 'graviora pericula veris' (11). There is one undeniable similarity, all these heroes are dead. Penelope's fears were activated specifically by death, 'quisquis erat ... iugulatus' (21). Naturally the deaths of other Greek heroes led Penelope to suspect the worst. The killing of any Greek hero 'quisquis' (21) is sufficient to feed Penelope's specific fear, 'in te fingebam violentos Troas ituros' (13). Lines 15-20 with their succession of dead Greek heroes suggest that Penelope was constantly subjected to this barrage of dread inspiring information. For her, the war with its mixture of indubitable death and uncertainty was a protracted form of mental and emotional torture. Yet Ulysses fails to equal her pessimistic expectation. He does not die, he survives. Therefore Penelope feels justified in promoting her suffering over his. Her imagination has entertained fears that his reality has failed to equal. Ulysses seems (rather humorously) to be censured for not dying and thus subjecting Penelope to unnecessary anxiety.

Lines 13-22 aptly demonstrate the maxim which Penelope has put forward in line 12, 'res est solliciti plena timoris amor'. It is her love for Ulysses which inspires her profound anxiety. So the section begins in line 12 (quoted above) with a generalization about love's capacity to inspire fear. Then to prove Penelope's status as a lover we find her in a succession of disquieted poses, 'pallida semper eram' (14), 'nostri causa timoris erat' (16), 'flebam' (18), 'cura novata mea est' (20) which appropriately concludes with herself described as an *amans* in line 22, 'frigidius glacie pectus amantis erat'.

We may also note how the adjective 'frigidus' has twice been employed to stress Penelope's fidelity. In line 7, 'non ego deserto iacuissem frigida lecto', the adjective denoted Penelope's sexual

abstinence. In line 22, 'frigidus glacie pectus amantis erat', Penelope's 'chill' is due not to the loss of her sexual partner but to the gelid effect of fear. On both occasions her state of being 'frigida' is a testimony to, but also a pointed reproach against, her love for Ulysses.

(3): Sex And War: Homecomings and Absence.

The Trojan War, as viewed by Penelope, comes to an abrupt end in lines 23-24:

'Sed bene consuluit casto deus aequus amori.  
versa est in cineres sospite Troia viro.

'Versa est in cineres ... Troia' (24) returns us to the situation of line 3, 'Troia iacet certe'. Now, however, not only has the war ended but Ulysses has survived 'sospite ... viro' (24). Ulysses' survival, though, is not mere chance for Penelope insists upon her own importance. A divinity with a sense of fair play ('aequus') had regard for her *castus amor* (which has been demonstrated by both her chastity in lines 7ff. and her mental anxiety in lines 11ff.) and kept her husband safe. Yet it seems that Penelope is also attempting to implicate herself in the conclusion of the war itself. The war has ended so Ulysses is safe. But Ulysses is safe because of Penelope's devotion. This appears to lead to a viewpoint where the end of the Trojan War is seen as the incidental by-product of Penelope's love for Ulysses. His safety can only be guaranteed by the conclusion of the hostilities at Troy and so in due deference to the exemplary conduct of Penelope this is precisely the outcome that a *deus aequus* procures. The links between the end of the war and Ulysses' safety, and the implication of Penelope in both is displayed (with a degree of rhetorical finesse) by the sentiment of line 23 finding its conclusion in the interlocking word-order of line 24. Penelope's argument seems suited to the demands of her generic surroundings. As the Trojan war appears within an elegiac framework it is seen in expressly sexual

terms. The cause of the war was a sexual misdemeanour (a point made clear by the reference to Paris in line 6 as 'adulter'). If, then, an improper sexual act can cause a war, then a regime of strict sexual propriety can end one. Hence the Trojan war (from Penelope's viewpoint) appears as the clash of conflicting sexual mores. Penelope's *castus amor* ultimately triumphs over Paris' *improbus amor*. Thus the controlling force of the universe is found to be just, 'aequus deus' (and within an Ovidian context surprisingly imprudent).

We may also infer from the imagery which Penelope has applied to herself in the previous section (*pallidus* and *frigidus* are adjectives that are closely linked to the appearance of death) that if anyone has died it is not Ulysses, but herself. Ulysses' survival appears to have been dependent upon Penelope's continual mortification. She died figuratively each time she heard of the demise of another Greek hero. It is the fidelity which such a reaction demonstrated that has helped to secure her husband's safety.

We must note the idiosyncrasy of Penelope's perspective. In this epistle the Trojan War is a conflict brought about by a sexual crime (Paris' adultery) that has a sexual consequence (enforced chastity) and is resolved by proper sexual conduct (Penelope's celibacy). The enormity of the conflict is thus reduced to the narrowness of a certain viewpoint (sex, as befits the elegiac genre). Moreover, Penelope is not so much concerned with the common fate of the Greek women as with her own specific deprivation. Thus although she initially presents the conflict as a common source of suffering, 'Danais invisā puellis' (3), she soon concentrates upon her own particular situation, 'non ego ... iacuissem' (7), 'nec quererer' (8), 'nec mihi' (9). The most important thing for Penelope is her own

suffering and the fate of her own husband. The success of the Trojan expedition is subordinated to the safety of Ulysses. The only point of interest that the war has for Penelope is the removal of her husband and her sex-life. Just as the general purpose of the expedition is subordinated in her mind to her personal concern, so the end of the war is of interest only in that it might precipitate the return of her husband. As her husband's safety can only be achieved by the end of the war, Penelope is happy to see the war end. There is, however, no reason to suppose that she would not have accepted a situation which produced a safe Ulysses and a continuing Trojan war (her earlier assertion, 'Danais invisā puellis' being dependent on a sexual rather than patriotic meaning).

Penelope, then, celebrates the end of the war not out of patriotic fervour but because it promises an end to the period of her personal suffering. The conclusion of the war should naturally be followed by the return of her husband. Thus the period of her mental anxiety and sexual abstinence promises to be terminated shortly. Lines 24f. demonstrate that the war is indeed succeeded by return:

'versa est in cineres sospite Troia viro.  
Argolici rediere duces, altaria fumant'  
(24-25)

These lines display a neat and pointed interlocking pattern. The smouldering ashes of Troy, 'versa est in cineres' at the beginning of line 24 are logically followed by the smoke of the Greek altars at the end of line 25. The war has finished and the Greek chieftains have returned home to be welcomed with thanks offerings to the gods. The progression is logical and inevitable. But what is surprising is that the end of the war, which is accompanied specifically by the survival

of her husband in line 24 ('sospite ... viro'), is followed not by an account of his particular homecoming but by a generalized description of the returning veterans:

'Argolici rediere duces, altaria fumant;  
ponitur ad patrios barbara praeda deos.  
grata ferunt nymphae pro salvis dona maritis;  
illi victa suis Troica fata canunt.  
mirantur iustique senes trepidaeque puellae;  
narrantis coniunx pendet ab ore viri.  
atque aliquis posita monstrat fera proelia mensa,  
pingit et exiguo Pergama tota mero:  
"hac ibat Simois; haec est Sigeia tellus;  
hic steterat Priami regia celsa senis.  
illic Aeacides, illic tendebat Ulixes;  
hic lacer admissos terruit Hector equos."  
(25-36).

The generality of this scene obviously hints at a specific absence. Thus the logical progression from the destruction of Troy to the homecoming of the hero appears to be a pattern that applies to virtually everyone except Penelope and Ulysses. So the Greek leaders return (25) but not Ulysses. Similarly the wife in line 30 attends raptly to her husband's stories of the war but Penelope is denied the same opportunity. She obviously presents here a generalized picture. This is a scene populated with the stock figures and events of the triumphal homecoming. The Greek leaders return home, there are offerings to the gods (25); the foreign spoils of war are offered to native gods (26); gifts are offered too on behalf of safe husbands (27); the conquering heroes relate their adventures (28), to an admiring audience (29-30); and a racy narrative (33-35) is accompanied by illustrations drawn in wine (31-32). Thus Penelope manages to contrive a sequence of felicitous events which are presented as widely applicable. This impression of universality is reinforced by the use of nouns in a collective sense, 'Argolici ... duces' (25), 'nymphae'

(27), 'pro salvis ... maritis' (27), 'iustique senes trepidaeque puellae' (29), 'coniunx' (30), 'viri' (30). In this way Penelope presents a picture of a multiplicity of happy homecomings throughout the Greek world. Yet at the same time as the generality of this description suggests its almost universal application, it also emphasizes Penelope's specific exclusion. She is forced into a generalized narration because she has no individual details to tell.

Despite the link between the ending of the war and her own proper behaviour Penelope appears to be excluded quite unfairly from the felicitous conclusion which she has helped to determine. The illogicality of Ulysses' non-appearance is stressed by how 'pro salvis...maritis' (27) recalls the latter part of line 24, 'sospite...viro'. In the earlier line 'safety' is the particular province of Ulysses. It is the deserved consequence of Penelope's actions (line 23). Yet paradoxically it is not Ulysses who returns, but the other Greek leaders, 'Argolici rediere duces' (25). The other Greek heroes unfairly reap the benefits that were intended for Ulysses. Perhaps the gods are truly capricious after all.

#### (4): Nestor and the Doloneia.

As Penelope is not herself privy to these scenes of returning jubilation she needs some source of information to justify her knowledge. So in lines 37-38 we are introduced to Nestor:

'Omnia namque tuo senior te quaerere misso  
rettulerat nato Nestor, at ille mihi'.

In the *Odyssey* Telemachus makes no lengthy report to Penelope of what Nestor has told him. In fact, all that he says is:

‘αὐτὰρ’ Οδυσσῆος ταλασίφρονος οὐ ποτ’ ἔφασκεν  
ζωοῦ οὐδὲ θανόντος ἐπιχθονίων τευ ἀκοῦσαι.’

(*Odyssey*, 17.114–115).

We should perhaps conclude that the poet has introduced Nestor at this point only as a means of justifying Penelope’s access to information with which she could not otherwise be credited. Ovid, obviously, did not feel obliged to shackle himself to a precise representation of the ‘facts’ of the *Odyssey*. Rather, he wished to give himself and his character the scope to develop the material best suited to the immediate purpose. This point is validated by the introduction of the Doloneia in lines 39ff. Penelope says this too was a story heard from Nestor, ‘rettulit et’, but there is no mention of the incident in any meeting between Nestor and Telemachus in the *Odyssey*. The story is clearly introduced by the poet and by Penelope for its immediate impact and relevance. Penelope’s knowledge, we must conclude, is controlled by the poet’s convenience and not by the Homeric text.

We might also consider that the introduction of Nestor and the apparent certitude which it places upon her knowledge of the returning veterans is designed to contrast rhetorically with the vagueness and uncertainty of her information during the war. In the period of the Trojan War the source of her knowledge was indefinite and anonymous, ‘sive quis ... narrabat’ (15). The potential unreliability of her information naturally served to intensify her anxiety. But with the introduction of Nestor we suddenly find that Penelope has obtained a

source of wide-ranging knowledge ('omnia'). Yet the relative reliability of her new source does not improve her situation. For this merely emphasizes to Penelope that other wives, unlike herself, are now happily reunited with their husbands.

But at the same time as the naming of Nestor appears to bestow on her information an aura of certitude, we can also see that it, in fact, indicates her removal from any original source. Unlike the 'coniunx' of line 30 who hears the tales of the Trojan War straight from the lips of her husband, 'ab ore viri' (30), Penelope is still dependent on a chain of information that reaches her only gradually. She is removed from the intimacy of a direct audience. The tale of the returning veterans is attributed to Nestor (who presumably heard it from somewhere else), he in turn reports it to Telemachus, and finally the son tells his mother. This, perhaps, does not endow Penelope's information with quite the reliability she believes.

The 'Doloneia' is not related in the *Odyssey*. Nevertheless, as it is the principal military event with which Ulysses is associated in the *Iliad* it is perhaps not surprising that Ovid wishes to include it in this epistle. The appearance, then, of the exploit receives some form of justification; but how is the event fitted into its immediate context?:

'rettulit et ferro Rhesumque Dolonaque caesos,  
utque sit hic somno proditus, ille dolo.<sup>17</sup>  
ausus es - o nimium nimiumque oblite tuorum!-  
Thracia nocturno tangere castra dolo  
totque simul mactare viros, adiutus ab uno!

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<sup>17</sup>There is surely a pun here on the appropriateness of Dolon being killed 'dolo'. The unfortunate man meets his correct etymological fate.

at bene cautus eras et memor ante mei!  
usque metu micuere sinus, dum victor amicum  
dictus es Ismariis isse per agmen equis.'  
(39-46).

As we have seen this whole section is based upon events that have been related by Nestor to Telemachus. These primarily concern the return of the surviving veterans (25-36). This picture of jubilation concludes with the heroes relating their martial exploits (28-36). The appearance of Ulysses in this narrative, 'Ulixes' (35), reminds Penelope of this other tale involving her husband's martial prowess. The story is thus naturally ushered in by the theme of the preceding lines. But if the tale is prompted by similarity to the prior narrative, its function is also to stress the dissimilarity between Penelope's position and that of the wives of the returned veterans. In this sense it serves as the culmination of a process of differentiation which is already apparent in lines 25-36.

For the Greek wives who are now reunited with their husbands the Trojan War is reduced to little more than a series of striking narratives. The returning heroes relate their own participation in the downfall of Troy, 'illi victa suis Troica fata canunt' (28). The personal bond between narrator and narratee is something from which Penelope is excluded. The picture she envisages of husband and wife joined in narrative bliss, 'narrantis coniunx pendet ab ore viri', is one that does not apply to herself.<sup>18</sup> Consequently, Penelope is also

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<sup>18</sup>This line surely also has a sexual implication. The motif implies not only admiration for the story, but also the hint of infatuation. The phrase triggers an allusion to Dido in *Aeneid* 4, 'pendetque iterum narrantis ab ore' (4.79) This cross-reference suggests the engrossed lover. The mind of the wife in line 30 (like Dido's) is not entirely on the story. The eroticism is telling. It is once more an indication of Penelope's resentment and sexual frustration. For, unlike this

placed in a different position with regard to her response to such stories. Whilst the war was still in progress, her anxiety at the reports filtering homewards would have been no different to that of any other Greek wife. But with the end of the war the situation is different. The heroes that have survived return home. For their wives and dependants the worry is over; any anxiety that remains is produced only through narrative empathy. The 'puellae' in line 29, are 'trepidae' not because of any real anxiety but only through their total involvement in the narrative presented to them. Their real anxiety has ceased with the return of the hero in question, just as their induced suspense will end with the conclusion of the story. There is no longer any question of actual danger, or of the narrative actually revealing the demise of one's nearest and dearest. This is made quite clear by the relaxed and convivial atmosphere in which these events take place:

'atque aliquis posita monstrat fera proelia mensa,  
pingit et exiguo Pergama tota mero'  
(31-32).

The content of the narrative, 'fera proelia', stands in sharp contrast to the setting, 'posita ... mensa'. The Trojan War is reduced to a series of entertaining after-dinner speeches. So the whole of Troy, 'Pergama tota' can be encompassed in a brief outline of wine, 'exiguo ... mero'.<sup>19</sup>The horrors of Troy have disappeared, and only their

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other wife Penelope has no prospect of immediate sexual activity.

<sup>19</sup>Perhaps 'exiguo' also suggests that most of the wine has been drunk and hence reinforces the impression of conviviality.

entertainment value remains. But the absence of Ulysses means that Penelope is still very much subject to anxiety. Her husband is not the narrator, but only part of the narrative, 'illic Aeacides, illic tendebat Ulixes' (35). For although the narrative appears to confirm that Ulysses survived the war, nevertheless his continued absence suggests perils encountered subsequent to the Trojan conflict. She, therefore, does not have the indubitable proof of Ulysses' safety in front of her eyes. The fact that he is not the narrator himself means that there is still the possibility of actual danger. He appears inextricably tied to the past, to topographical features of the Trojan landscape, 'Simois', 'Sigeia tellus', and to dead heroes, 'Aeacides', 'Hector'.

The relation of the Doloneia helps to emphasize the essential difference that has now developed between Penelope and her female compatriots. For Penelope, deprived of the reassuring presence of Ulysses, any narrative that contains her husband's name is still a potential source of tragic revelation. Although the war has concluded, Penelope is still subject to the fear with which she received information whilst it was in progress, 'denique, quisquis erat castris iugulatus Achivis,/ frigidius glacie pectus amantis erat' (21-22).

The inclusion, then, of this narrative is to demonstrate the continuation of Penelope's suffering. Her lot is far worse than that of her compatriots. Instead of Ulysses presenting his exploits to her personally, Penelope is forced to relate Ulysses' deeds back to him. This peculiar state of affairs is the natural complement of Ulysses' inexplicable failure to return.

At the same time as Penelope uses the Doloneia to emphasize the unaltered nature of her general suffering, she also uses it as a

specific means of reproach. Thus Ulysses is censured for an undertaking which involved him in peril. He is blamed for being too bold, 'ausus es' (41), and not having firmly enough in mind those he left behind, 'o nimium nimiumque oblite tuorum' (41). Penelope, however, seems quickly to adopt a more conciliatory tone, 'at bene cautus eras et memor ante mei' (44). But this line comes hard on the heels of its predecessor with its aura of prodigious martial achievement, 'totque simul mactare viros, adiutus ab uno' (43). This certainly does not suggest that Ulysses was cautious or had Penelope in mind. We must suspect, therefore, that Penelope's remark is sarcastically censorious. He ought to have put her first but he did not. Consequently she was subjected to the ordeal of having to listen to the narrative of this exploit. As these narratives do not emanate from Ulysses himself (which would of course be a guarantee of his survival) Penelope is forced to listen in awed suspense with a real anxiety for her husband's welfare.

Penelope, then, uses the Doloneia as a means of reproaching Ulysses. He is berated for indulging in actions which placed him in peril. His first thought should have been for those he left behind and for her in particular. In this way Penelope continues to promote herself as the concerned lover. Although she reproaches Ulysses, her motivation for doing so should endear her to him.

Yet it is also possible to detect in these lines a depreciatory undercurrent.<sup>20</sup> The event seems to be filtered through a particularly Roman perspective. This viewpoint is perhaps most readily attributable

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<sup>20</sup>For a good discussion of this aspect the reader is referred to Jacobson, 256-257.

to Virgil's *Aeneid*. Naturally, in this epic the Trojans receive a more sympathetic press than the Greeks. Greek treachery is summarized by Laocoon's famous maxim, 'timeo Danaos et dona ferentis' (*Aeneid* 2.49). The Doloneia is one of the scenes which appears on the temple of Juno at Carthage and is characterized as little more than a bloody slaughter:

'nec procul hinc Rhesi niveis tentoria velis  
agnoscit lacrimans, primo quae prodita somno<sup>21</sup>  
Tydides multa vastabat caede cruentus'.  
(*Aeneid* 1.469-471).

Ulysses appears here in a typically prejudicial manner. He is a cowardly schemer butchering his enemies in their sleep. It is possible to see a similar characterization in the lines of this epistle. The manner in which Dolon and Rhesus are killed seems rather underhand, 'utque sit hic somno proditus, ille dolo' (40). To kill one man in his sleep and another by a trick hardly seems heroic. There is maybe a suggestion of incongruity between 'ausus es' (41) and 'Thracia nocturno tangere castra dolo' (42). Ulysses sneaked into the Trojan camp at night and butchered men ('mactare') while they were sleeping. Is this really an exploit of heroic daring? Does line 44, in fact, represent Penelope's sarcastic suggestion that Ulysses was 'bene cautus' for his own sake rather than her's? It is possible, then, that the event is being characterized quite differently from its appearance in Homer, where the exploit is seen as indubitably meritorious. Moreover, apart from this general change in emphasis there also seems

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<sup>21</sup>The verbal parallel here with line 40 of *Heroides* 1 surely emphasizes that Ovid had this Virgilian characterization in mind.

to be an alteration to one significant detail. In line 43 Ulysses is cast in the primary role, 'totque simul mactare viros, adiutus ab uno'. But in the Homeric account it would seem that Diomedes is the main protagonist. He is the one who does all the killing while Ulysses merely holds the horses and drags away the bodies (*Iliad* 10.488ff). In the lines of this epistle the roles seem to be reversed and Ulysses is promoted to the role of killer. We can possibly view this alteration in one of two ways. Either Penelope is relating the story as she herself has heard it, or she has deliberately altered the detail herself.

It is possible that the chain of narrators (Nestor, Telemachus) is in some-way responsible for the alteration of details. The story has been redesigned specifically to promote Ulysses. Obviously, if Nestor was relating the story to Ulysses' son it would have made sense to foreground the activity of that particular hero. Thus from what Penelope may have heard Ulysses might truly have taken considerable risks. So her expression of reproach, 'ausus es - o nimium nimiumque oblite tuorum' (41) may not be overtly sarcastic, but an appropriate response to the 'facts' as she knows them. We might, then, see Penelope as the victim of narrative distortion. However, it is also possible that Penelope (being endowed by the poet with a precise knowledge of the event) has altered this detail to flatter her husband. So the whole story is redesigned as a testimony to his prowess. This is particularly apparent in line 43, 'totque simul mactare viros, adiutus ab uno', where 'totque' at the beginning of the line stands in approbative contrast with 'ab uno' at the line's conclusion. Penelope's use of the motif is therefore highly rhetorical. The flattering alteration of the Doloneia aids her to

posit a more pronounced response of fear and censure which serves to emphasize the extent of her own suffering and to stress the image of herself as the devoted and deserving wife. But at the same time we can see that Penelope in her desire to secure her husband's return is suppressing a very different viewpoint. The Doloneia is no heroic exploit at all, it is merely a massacre effected by deceit. Moreover, it is a cowardly undertaking in which Ulysses did not even have the nerve to take the primary role. Thus we can see that the pejorative undercurrent of these lines connects to Penelope's earlier aspersion in line 11, 'timui graviora pericula veris'. She had no need to be concerned for Ulysses during the war, for even the exploits in which he was involved were characterized by a cowardly timidity. Nevertheless, openly to state as much would hardly be an effective means of precipitating her husband's return. Instead she reproaches him for his reckless daring which has led her into paroxysms of fear. In this way she works upon Ulysses by flattery and by continuing to present herself as the devoted, concerned lover.

As noted earlier, the section of the poem dealing with the return of the Greeks from the war (25-46) concludes with a reaction of fear (at the end of the Doloneia [45-46]), that is analogous to the conclusion of the previous section which dealt with events contemporaneous with the war (21-22). This is a conclusive demonstration of how the end of the war has not altered Penelope's particular position. She is still subject to the same anxiety and fear. This becomes the basis of her complaint in lines 47-50.

(5): 'omnia vertuntur'?

'Sed mihi quid prodest vestris disiecta lacertis  
Ilios et, murus quod fuit, esse solum,  
si maneo, qualis Troia durante manebam,  
virque mihi dempto fine carendus abest?'  
(47-50).

These lines continue to express Penelope's pessimistic realisation that the end of war has not been an entirely fortuitous event for herself. Thus the 'sed' of line 47 serves as a pessimistic counter to the 'sed' of line 23. Whilst the earlier occurrence of the word indicated optimism for the near future, the latter use of the word (following the intervening section) indicates Penelope's realization that the end of the war has not, after all, changed her own situation. Her husband has participated in this event 'vestris disiecta lacertis/Ilios' (47-48) but unlike the heroes of the previous section he has not returned to tell the tale personally, 'illi victa suis Troica fata canunt' (28). Penelope's husband is still absent, 'virque ... abest' (50). This *vir*, unlike the *vir* of line 30, 'narrantis coniunx pendet ab ore viri', is not in the close proximity to his wife that the natural sequence of events demands. The Trojan War is given a definite conclusion, but the absence of Ulysses is extended indefinitely, 'virque mihi dempto fine carendus abest' (50). The war may have ended with her husband safe, 'sospite viro' (24), but this leads not to blissful reunion but to further absence. The 'abest' of line 50 conflicts in its theme and singularity with the 'rediere' of line 25. How can the destruction of Troy be seen as advantageous, if she remains in the same miserable state, 'si maneo, qualis Troia durante manebam' (49)? The tense of the verbs here helps to emphasize Penelope's point. The imperfect 'manebam' points to the monotony of

her past existence, whilst the present tense of 'si maneo' indicates the pessimistic assumption that this state is set to continue in the present. The tenses of these verbs contrast with the tenses that denote the fall of Troy, 'disiecta' (47), 'versa est' (24). The perfects stress a past completed action. The undeniable completion of this action should find its reciprocation in a change in Penelope's situation. But quite incongruously Penelope's existence looks set to continue as before.

Lines 48-49 also help to mark the monotony which envelops Penelope's life by contrasting it with the abrupt changes that have overtaken Troy:

'Ilios et, murus quod fuit, esse solum  
si maneo, qualis Troia durante manebam'

Troy is first referred to in past terms, 'murus', and then in terms of the present, 'solum'. The contrast between the two is emphatic and pointed. A wall has become level ground. The vertical has returned to the horizontal, the man-made to the natural. A certain phase has definitively ended. But the radical change that has overcome Troy has failed to produce a similar change in Penelope's situation. Hence she is perfectly justified in constructing a dichotomy between her own experience and that of everyone else, 'diruta sunt aliis, uni mihi Pergama restant' (51). The juxtaposition of 'aliis' with 'uni' and the positioning of 'diruta' and 'restant' at opposite ends of the line help to emphasize this radical difference. As Ulysses has not returned Penelope is entitled (in a fashion) to assume that Troy is (for her at least) still standing. Personal experience is foregrounded in a markedly selfish manner. The Trojan War may well have ended, but given

that Ulysses has not returned, and that her own situation has not changed, Penelope remains essentially unimpressed, 'Sed mihi quid prodest' (47).

Lines 51ff. lead us into an an imaginative description of the present topographical state of Troy. These lines can be seen as an expansion of Penelope's comment on Troy in line 48, 'murus quod fuit, esse solum':

'diruta sunt aliis, uni mihi Pergama restant,  
incola captivo quae bove victor arat.  
iam seges est, ubi Troia fuit, resecandaque falce  
luxuriat Phrygio sanguine pinguis humus;  
semisepulta virum curvis feriuntur aratris  
ossa, ruinosas occultit herba domos.'  
(51-56).

Line 52 shows the reversion from martial to peaceful activity. The victorious soldier now plays the role of the indigenous farmer, 'arat'. Only the fact that his ox is *captivus* is a reminder of the recent violent background to this pastoral scene. The transition from battlefield to ploughland is swift and seemingly effortless, 'iam seges est, ubi Troia fuit' (53). This is the culmination of the process begun in line 48, 'Ilios et, murus quod fuit, esse solum', the wall becomes earth, and the earth becomes farmland. The negative image 'solum' (the razed city) becomes a positive image, 'seges' (the fertile farmland). Yet this imagery of natural renewal has an undertone of the grotesque. For nature's cycle appears to be accelerated by the consequences of the war. This point is made explicit in line 54, 'luxuriat Phrygio sanguine pinguis humus'. Human blood serves as a horribly effective form of fertilizer. This accounts for the swiftness of the transition, 'iam' (53). But at the same time as there is emphasis on the rapidity of change, there is also stress

on the passage of time. The bones of the fallen are already 'semisepulta' (55) and grass is already creeping over the ruins of the fallen city, 'ruinosas occulit herba domos' (56). The war is no longer of any consequence. Apart from providing an outstanding source of fertilizer, it is merely a source of occasional inconvenience and curiosity to the farmer as his plough is fouled by bones, 'semisepulta virum curvis feriuntur aratris ossa' (55-56). These lines emphasize both the essential futility of the war (Ulysses ought not to have gone in the first place) and the time that has elapsed since the war's conclusion (Ulysses should have been home long since).

Penelope continues by berating Ulysses for his continued absence:

'victor abes, nec scire mihi, quae causa morandi  
aut in quo lateas ferreus orbe, licet!  
(57-58).

She makes her point by emphatic juxtaposition. Logically, there is no way that 'victor' and 'abes' should be associated. If Ulysses is a 'victor', then he should be back home. The other Greek heroes adhere to the natural sequence of events (25). But Ulysses' behaviour unfortunately deviates from the norm. Although he has survived, 'sospite ... viro' (24), he is still absent 'virque ... abest' (50). Although he is victorious, 'victor' (57), he is still not back home 'abes' (57).

The problem now (subsequent to the destruction of Troy) is not merely that Ulysses is not at home, but that Penelope no longer knows where he is, 'nec scire mihi, quae causa morandi,/ aut in quo lateas ferreus orbe, licet' (57-58). Clearly what Penelope would really like is a reason for his absence. Thus lines 57-58 are an exclamation of exasperation. It is just as though Ulysses were hiding from her in

some remote corner of the world, 'in quo lateas ferreus orbe' (58).

We should perhaps again note (as in the opening lines of the poem) how elegiac imagery takes on a particular poignancy within this context. In elegiac poetry *ferreus* denotes the hard-hearted lover:

'illa tamen numquam ferrea dixit "Amo"  
(Propertius, 2.8.12).

Ulysses can easily be viewed as the ultimate *ferreus*, he has kept away from Penelope for twenty years. The elegiac lover's usual complaints fade into insignificance next to Penelope's particular grievance. Similarly within the confines of elegiac poetry *mora* is also a negative term. Delay, in elegiac terms, is the enemy. For delay signifies a postponement of sexual activity. Thus Cynthia in Propertius 2.15 toys with her lover by now leading him on, and now checking his advances:

'nam modo nudatis mecum est luctata papillis,  
interdum tunica duxit operta moram'  
(2.15.5-6).

In Propertius 1.3 the situation is reversed, and Cynthia is the one to complain:

'interdum leviter mecum deserta querebar  
externo longas saepe in amore moras'  
(1.3.43-44).

Interestingly, in this latter example *morae* signify not only the retardation of sexual activity but also sexual activity itself. The lover (with a lover's natural suspicion) supposes that a delay can be accounted for by their partner indulging himself/herself elsewhere.

Penelope takes over the lover's suspicion of *morae*. Why is she not permitted to know the 'causa morandi'? If a *mora*, in elegiac terms, can suggest an erotic *faux pas*, then a delay of the magnitude of Ulysses' may indicate a lengthy affair. Hence Penelope's language points allusively to Calypso (in anticipation of lines 75ff.). Perhaps she is the reason that Penelope is not permitted to know the whereabouts of Ulysses.

The use of elegiac terminology is particularly apt. For it not only emphasizes Ulysses' general antipathy to elegiac criteria (the very length of his absence carrying the ideas of *mora* and *ferreus* to an extreme), but also suggests that his absence may be directly attributable to a sexual reason (an affair with someone else). We can see that (as is appropriate in an elegiac poem) the erotic element is being foregrounded. Penelope rebukes Ulysses in the terms of a petulant lover and she assumes (with the self-importance of a lover) that his failure to return is attributable to a desire to avoid her personally, 'lateas' (58). We might also see in 'lateas' a covert allusion to Calypso using the meaning of the Greek verb *καλύπτω* from which her name is derived.

(6): The Quest for Information.

Lines 59-62 seem to be a curious reference to Penelope's own writing activities:

'Quisquis ad haec vertit peregrinam litora puppim,  
ille mihi de te multa rogatus abit,  
quamque tibi reddat, si te modo viderit usquam,  
traditur huic digitis charta notata meis.'

Apparently, Penelope sends off letters with every passing sailor. Her hope is that somewhere in their travels they may encounter Ulysses. This particular letter, then, represents just one of these random epistles. If these lines are intended merely as a justification of the epistolary format (e.g. as an explanation of how Penelope can write to Ulysses when she does not know where he is), then they are rather weak. But it is better to approach these lines within the immediacy of their own context. Penelope has just berated Ulysses in lines 57-58 for his continued absence, and for his inability to keep her informed (57-58). She then introduces her own attempts to get in touch with him. Although it is implausible that she will ever reach him this way, nevertheless an effective contrast is manufactured. Penelope has virtually no chance of contacting Ulysses but she still tries. Conversely, Ulysses, who can have no doubt as to where Penelope is, does not make any effort to communicate. Penelope stresses the strenuousness of her efforts, and her personal concern, 'ille mihi de te multa rogatus abit', 'digitis charta notata meis'. She has little hope of success, 'si te modo viderit usquam', but her feelings for Ulysses force her to grasp every chance (however tenuous). Penelope is prepared to use anyone 'quisquis' (59) that will afford her the slightest opportunity. She, therefore, continues to present herself as the devoted lover and Ulysses (by implication) as her opposite.

Penelope swiftly moves from this reliance on passing strangers to an attempt to obtain information from reliable sources:

'nos Pylon, antiqui Neleia Nestoris arva,  
 misimus; incerta est fama remissa Pylo.  
 misimus et Sparten; Sparte quoque nescia veri.  
 quas habitas terras, aut ubi lentus abes?'  
 (63-66).

Yet the result of both the unlikely and the plausible methods of securing knowledge is the same. There is no definite information (64-65). This leads to a question which reiterates the theme of lines 57-58, 'quas habitas terras, aut ubi lentus abes?' (66). 'Quas habitas terras' stands as an amplification of 'in quo lateas ... orbe'. The former verb may indicate a notion of deliberate concealment, but the latter plainly stresses a more permanent problem. Perhaps Ulysses has settled somewhere other than Ithaca, perhaps his home is now elsewhere. After an absence of twenty years this is not an entirely unreasonable assumption. Lines 57-66 are also neatly framed between the parallel expressions 'victor abes' and 'lentus abes'. Perhaps we can see some significance in the progression from the one to the other. 'Victor abes' primarily promotes the illogicality of Ulysses' absence, his failure to return plainly contradicts his status as a victorious warrior. Yet 'lentus abes' apart from stressing Ulysses' general sloth ('quae causa morandi' [57]) also links back via 'ferreus' in line 58 to the elegiac imagery at the very beginning of the poem, in particular 'lento' in line 1. The implication may be that Penelope believes his absence is linked to a lapse in feeling towards her (*lentus* as was demonstrated with reference to the first line indicates in elegiac terms the unresponsive lover). She may be beginning to suspect that Ulysses has not returned because he has lost interest in her.

Evidently lines 63-66 take up the theme of lines 37-38, 'omnia namque tuo senior te quaerere misso/ rettulerat nato Nestor, at ille mihi'. But they also conflict with the account given in the *Odyssey*. In the Homeric poem Telemachus is prompted by Athene to sail to Pylos

to seek information of his father. This is done with neither the knowledge nor the consent of Penelope:

ἄλλ' ὄμοσον μὴ μητρὶ φίλῃ τάδε μυθήσασθαι,  
πρίν γ' ὅτ' ἂν ἐνδεκάτῃ τε δωδεκάτῃ τε γένηται,  
ἢ αὐτὴν ποθέσαι καὶ ἀφορμηθέντος ἀκοῦσαι,  
ὥς ἂν μὴ κλαίουσα κατὰ χροῶν καλὸν ἴαπτῃ."  
(*Odyssey*, 2.373-376).

Yet there can be no question but that in this poem Penelope is implicating herself in these actions. The repeated use of the first-person plural, 'nos ... misimus ... misimus' (63-65) demonstrates that this is to be viewed very much as a joint venture. Presumably, the reason why Penelope does this is to stress further her own role in attempting to track down Ulysses. This is therefore a natural progression from lines 59-62. In those lines Penelope contrasts her own strenuous efforts to locate Ulysses with his apparent inactivity. Lines 63ff. then serve to re-iterate this pattern. Penelope is doing all that she can to locate Ulysses. The negative results of her attempts are presented as further evidence of her hopeless and pitiable situation. In spite of her best efforts Penelope remains in complete darkness as to why Ulysses has not returned and where he might be. Jacobson comments on these lines:

'In taking direct action, she has effectively marked a break with her past. No more waiting, no more dutiful sitting till Ulysses returns. She has taken a decisive act. She has actively sought Ulysses out, failed, and now ... Now what? Perhaps she can now feel free to marry again. At any rate, that is what Penelope wants Ulysses to believe, that she has taken an action which represents, in effect, a last resort. Anything may happen now.'<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Jacobson, 266.

But surely Penelope's failure to obtain information does not mean 'a break with her past'. It rather confirms that her immediate future will be exactly the same as her immediate past. She has tried to break from the past by obtaining new knowledge of Ulysses' whereabouts but her failure to do so will force her back into a resumption of her painfully monotonous existence. It is not, therefore, the case that 'anything may happen now', it is rather that there is nothing more that Penelope can do. She therefore confirms that she has done everything which a dutiful wife might do in the circumstances. Her efforts deserve some reciprocation on his part. To introduce the possibility of remarriage at this juncture would clearly be counterproductive and rather curious in the light of her statement in line 84, 'Penelope coniunx semper Ulixis ero'.

More needs to be said on Penelope's characterization of the reports from Pylos and Sparta (64-65). The first part of this report tallies with the Homeric account. Nestor, in the *Odyssey*, has no knowledge of Ulysses' whereabouts:

ἄΩς ἦλθον, φίλε τέκνον, ἀπευθής, οὐδέ τι οἶδα  
κεῖνων, οἳ τ' ἔσάωθεν Ἀχαιῶν οἳ τ' ἀπόλοντο  
(*Odyssey*, 3.184-185).

Presumably the apparent definitiveness of Nestor's earlier information and its paucity in the present context point to the different rhetorical emphasis of each passage. In lines 37-38 Penelope wishes to stress how her situation differs from everyone else's. It is in her interests, therefore, to establish a canonical source for her picture of the happily returned veterans. Then she can contrast her own desperate plight with the certain happiness of others. But in these

later lines, where emphasis needs to be laid on her ignorance of Ulysses' whereabouts, she can redeploy Nestor as an unfruitful source of information (in accordance with the strict limits of the Homeric text).

Yet if Nestor is easily dealt with, Menelaos poses more of a problem. For in the *Odyssey* he gives considerable information to Telemachus. Menelaos has been informed by the 'old man of the sea':

“νῆϊός Λαέρτew, Ἰθάκη ἔνι οἰκία ναίων·  
τὸν ἴδον ἐν νήσῳ θαλερὸν κατὰ δάκρυ χέοντα  
νύμφης ἐν μεγάροισι Καλυψοῦς. ἧ μιν ἀνάγκη  
ἴσχει· ὁ δ' οὐ δύναται ἦν πατρίδα γαῖαν ἰκέσθαι.”  
(*Odyssey*, 4.555-558).

Telemachus, in turn, tells the story to Penelope:

‘φῆ μιν ὃ γ’ ἐν νήσῳ ἰδέειν κρατέρ’ ἄλγε’ ἔχοντα,  
νύμφης ἐν μεγάροισι Καλυψοῦς, ἧ μιν ἀνάγκη  
ἴσχει· ὁ δ’ οὐ δύναται ἦν πατρίδα γαῖαν ἰκεσθαι.  
οὐ γάρ οἱ πάρα νῆες ἐπήρητμοι καὶ ἑταῖροι,  
οἳ κέν μιν πέμποιν ἐπ’ εὐρέα νῶτα θαλάσσης.’  
(*Odyssey*, 17.142-146).

In the *Odyssey* there is no doubt that Penelope is aware of the substantial information received from Menelaos.

What, then, is the reader to make of her statement ‘Sparte quoque nescia veri’ (65)? Does ‘nescia veri’ suggest an unwillingness to accept the veracity of a tale emanating from a reluctant polymorph, or is Penelope being deliberately disingenuous? The latter option seems the more likely. Penelope knows somewhat more than she is saying, but she chooses not to let Ulysses learn this. Instead of directly confronting her husband, and running the risk of irremediable alienation, she concentrates on trying to stimulate his shame and guilt by emphasizing the misery to herself that his delayed return

causes.

(7): The Usefulness Of Troy.

After relating her unsuccessful attempts to locate Ulysses, Penelope proceeds to add a postscript to her earlier thoughts on the downfall of Troy in lines 47-50:

'utilius starent etiamnunc moenia Phoebi-  
irascor votis, heu, levis ipsa meis!  
scirem ubi pugnares, et tantum bella timerem,  
et mea cum multis iuncta querela foret.  
quid timeam, ignoro - timeo tamen omnia demens,  
et patet in curas area lata meas.  
quaecumque aequor habet, quaecumque pericula tellus,  
tam longae causas suspicor esse morae.'  
(67-74).

Penelope's initial observation in these lines, 'utilius starent etiamnunc moenia Phoebi' (67), is the culmination of a series of viewpoints concerned with the destruction of Troy. The war first appears as a *fait accompli* in line 3, 'Troia iacet certe'. Although the outcome was hardly worth the cost, 'vix Priamus tanti totaque Troia fuit' (4), nevertheless there was at least the hope of something positive (the return of the Greek veterans). In this initial section of the poem Penelope's sexual deprivation and mental anxiety, though elaborated in personal terms, are seen as part of a common experience, 'Danais invisae puellis' (3). Gradually, however, a dichotomy evolves between Penelope's experience, and that of the other Greek wives. The other Greek leaders return to their wives (25), but Ulysses, although safe (24) and triumphant (57), does not come back (50). Penelope is thus excluded from the benefits which are generally available to others. This leads her to conclude that the fall of Troy is a matter

of indifference to her personally, for her own experience has not changed (49). In a sense, her Troy is still intact (51).

Penelope then takes this viewpoint one step further in lines 67ff. She now decides that it would be to her advantage if Troy's walls were actually (rather than figuratively) standing, 'utilius starent etiamnunc moenia Phoebi' (67). If the end of the Trojan War brings benefit to everyone but herself, then she would just as soon have the situation reversed.

Penelope is now angry 'irascor' (68) that her prayers 'votis ... meis' (68) may have worked against her own interest. Presumably her prayers were for an end to the war. Now, however, in the light of subsequent events, Penelope realises that her real interest lay not in ending the war, but in having it continue. Presumably, she refers to herself as 'levis ipsa' because she has changed her mind. Because her suffering consequent to the war is even more pronounced, she wishes she had prayed for the war's continuation, rather than its conclusion. We should also consider that 'levis' is particularly ironic when applied to Penelope. For Penelope is usually the very paradigm of constancy and singlemindedness. *Levis* also has certain ramifications within the elegiac genre. It is not infrequently used to denote the 'fickle' lover. The lover in question will typically provide no commitment, and be deliberately deceitful and unfaithful:

'sed precor exemplo sit levis illa tuo'  
(Tibullus, 1.9.40).

'Cynthia forma potens: Cynthia verba levis'  
(Propertius, 2.5.28).

' si memini, solet illa leves culpae puellas'  
(Propertius, 2.1.49).

Thus Penelope, the definitive example of fidelity within her epic setting, here, in keeping with her new generic surroundings, refers to herself in terms that signify the capricious lover of elegy. But surely there is also some logical connection between lines 67-68 and lines 23-24. If (as Penelope attempts to assert) the conclusion of the war is related to her chaste devotion, then a wish for the war's continuation must be linked to fickleness.

Penelope sets out several reasons why a continuation of the Trojan War would have been to her advantage. She would have known where Ulysses was, 'scirem ubi pugnares' (69). This state of affairs would contrast favourably with her present ignorance as to his whereabouts (57-58, 66). Her suffering would also have been joined with that of many others (70). For the war was a common source of suffering and hatred amongst the women of Greece (3). The continuation of the war would erase the radical dichotomy that has developed between her situation and that of the wives of other veterans (51). A trouble shared is a trouble halved. Penelope's idiosyncratic perspective seems to hit here a peak of selfishness. She would prefer to revoke the happiness of others and renew the potential death and destruction of the war if this could ameliorate her own situation. Penelope it would seem is not much of a philanthropist.

Penelope's expression 'et tantum bella timerem' (69) would appear to be incongruous with her earlier narrative (11-22) which emphasizes her fear during the war and concludes 'denique, quisquis erat castris iugulatus Achivis, / frigidius glacie pectus amantis erat' (21-22). But Penelope soon makes it clear why she now rates the anxieties of the war so lightly:

'quid timeam, ignoro - timeo tamen omnia demens,  
et patet in curas area lata meas.  
quaecumque aequor habet, quaecumque pericula tellus,  
tam longae causas suspicor esse morae.'  
(71-74).

Although the events of the war were bad enough they did at least limit the scope of her anxiety. But now that the war has ended, Penelope no longer has the relative luxury of being certain of the type of peril that faces Ulysses. The definitiveness of 'bella' in line 69 ('et tantum bella timerem') contrasts favourably with the vagueness and uncertainty of 'omnia' in line 71 ('timeo tamen omnia demens'). The absence of any particular object on which to focus her anxiety means that all possibilities must be entertained. The singularity of the concept of 'bella' contrasts sharply with the plurality and vagueness of her present fears. Her ignorance as to Ulysses' whereabouts (66) leads inevitably to her ignorance as to the particular form her anxiety should take (71). Ulysses' removal from his habitual setting means that the potential scope of Penelope's fears is broadened immeasurably (72). The *curae* of these lines thus contrasts with the 'cura' of line 20, 'Tlepolemi leto cura novata mea est' which represents Penelope's regular fear during the war (that Ulysses may be killed by the enemy). Now Penelope has not this limited anxiety to cope with but the whole spectrum of peril that the world has to offer, 'quaecumque aequor habet, quaecumque pericula tellus' (73).

We can see, therefore, how Penelope is continually upgrading the rhetorical efficacy of her case. At the beginning of the poem when discussion was centred upon the period of the war (11-22), she was at pains to stress the immensity of her fear. This was achieved by emphasizing how the alarms conjured up by her imagination outstripped the perils that faced Ulysses in reality. But in the present context

even this past suffering is seen as minimal. The scope for her past imaginary fears was quite diminutive when compared to the current situation.

(8): Calypso, weaving and adultery.

Penelope naturally posits a connection between the potential perils that face Ulysses and the length of his absence (73-74). A plurality of dangers naturally means long delays. The 'causa morandi' (57) still remains unknown, but Penelope, working on the basis of probability assumes that there must have been many significant dangers to have produced a delay of this magnitude. The singular 'causa' of line 57 has appropriately become plural in line 74, 'causas', just as the one 'cura' of line 20 has multiplied in line 72, 'curas'. Yet it soon becomes clear that Penelope has one particular *cura*, and one specific *causa morandi*, in mind:

'haec ego dum stulte metuo, quae vestra libido est,  
esse peregrino captus amore potes.  
forsitan et narres, quam sit tibi rustica coniunx,  
quae tantum lanas non sinat esse rudes.  
fallar, et hoc crimen tenues vanescat in auras,  
neve, revertendi liber, abesse velis!'  
(75-80).

What Penelope particularly fears (appropriately in an elegiac poem) is that Ulysses' protracted absence is due to his involvement with another woman (76). We have already seen in line 65 that Penelope states she has had no definite information from Menelaos, 'Sparte quoque nescia veri'. Yet it is also clear in the Homeric account that information is brought back to Penelope via Telemachus that Ulysses is

being held on Ogygia by Calypso. We might then consider that lines 75-80 are not in fact a mere suspicion. Penelope knows about Calypso, but rather than blunder into outright accusation she lets the concept arise naturally from the lover's heightened sense of anxiety. She therefore veils her accusations behind the facade of the concerned, irrational lover. By concealing her knowledge in an aura of naive erotic anxiety, she can effectively project her true feelings and motivate Ulysses' shame. Her suspicions are presented almost apologetically, but behind this false self-depreciation lurks her true knowledge. By referring to Calypso only through vague, generalized irrationality, rather than by outright accusation, Penelope stimulates Ulysses' guilt without running the risks that a more vehement denunciation may entail. She does not wish to force him into Calypso's arms by appearing too shrewish.

We might consider here how the Homeric detail of Calypso is transferred from its original epic setting into the new elegiac context of this epistle. In the Homeric poem Calypso keeps him on Ogygia for some seven years (*Od.* 7. 259).<sup>23</sup> Ulysses, though, does not want to stay. He is distressed (*Od.* 4.556) and he is kept there by force (*Od.* 4.557-558). It is Calypso who wishes to make him her husband and confer immortality upon him, although he has no desire for such a gift (*Od.* 7.256-257). Ulysses no longer takes any pleasure in her company (*Od.* 5.153). He still sleeps with her but with reluctance (*Od.* 5.154-155). For Ulysses, then, Calypso would seem to represent an erotic dalliance that he wishes were long since past. But Calypso

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<sup>23</sup> Calypso, then, rather than the perils of land and sea proves to be the source of the 'longae ... morae' of line 74.

feels more strongly and keeps him there in the hope of marriage. There does not seem, however, to be any hint of a sexually jealous Penelope in the *Odyssey*. Nor is there any suggestion that Ulysses' sexual involvement with Calypso is in any way reprehensible or significant.

When we move into the elegiac world of the *Heroides*, however, things are bound to be somewhat different. In this setting there is no possibility of Penelope treating the knowledge of Ulysses and Calypso with the apparent magnanimity of her Homeric counterpart. Thus in this poem Calypso becomes the lover's special fear, the other woman. Blind Homeric trust is replaced by thinly concealed elegiac jealousy. Penelope has learned that Ulysses is with another woman (an immortal no less): it is little wonder that she should be a little concerned at this state of affairs (the Homeric text lends credence to her anxiety, Ulysses has been sleeping with her, she has been attempting to bribe him with immortality). We can see how the Calypso narrative of the epic text naturally lends itself to a more specifically elegiac interpretation. Penelope is now the anxious woman who suspects (or knows) that her absent lover is subject to temptation elsewhere. Her real fear as to the reason for Ulysses' delay proves not to be the various perils of land and sea but the prospect of another woman. Penelope's true anxiety is thus made to tally with her new elegiac surroundings.

Penelope also imagines a depreciatory conversation, concerning herself, passing between Ulysses and his new lover (77-78).<sup>24</sup> The terms

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<sup>24</sup>These two lines take the place of the dialogue that occurs between Calypso and Ulysses in Book 5 of the *Odyssey* where he is forced to defend his preference for a mere mortal (*Odyssey*, Bk. 5.211ff.). But in these lines Ulysses merely concedes that immortals are necessarily more attractive than mortals. There is certainly no slight intended to

in which Penelope believes Ulysses derides her are also particularly suited to an elegiac context. She is ridiculed for being a 'rustica coniunx' (77) who spends all her time dressing wool (78). Evidently, these lines are laden with irony. For weaving is precisely the means Penelope employs, in the *Odyssey*, and in lines 9-10 above, to maintain her fidelity to Ulysses. It should therefore deserve his respect rather than his ridicule. Nevertheless, when Penelope's weaving is posited in an elegiac context her actions are found to be less acceptable. The imaginary conversation between Ulysses and Calypso suggests that the poet has allowed his heroine some insight into how her habitual epic activities are of little import in her new elegiac setting. A Ulysses who is now a character in an Ovidian elegy rather than the main protagonist in an epic poem may look upon her old-fashioned morality and behaviour less than favourably. Within Ovidian elegy *rusticus* denotes the opposite of *urbanus*. Therefore, it suggests the boor as opposed to the sophisticate. The contrast between the two is particularly apparent in their respective attitudes to sex. In *Amores* 2.4. a girl is found sexually stimulating ('procax') precisely 'quia rustica non est' (2.4.13). The girl who is 'procax' gives the promise of good sexual performance, 'spemque dat in molli mobilis esse toro' (2.4.14). The assumption is not only that she will be willing to go to bed with the poet, but that she will be sexually adept. Conversely, a girl who is *rustica* will be neither inclined

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Penelope. Nevertheless, in this epistle Penelope playing the part of the jealous elegiac lover is rather suspicious about what her husband might be saying. She suspects that Ulysses' lengthy absence can be attributed to his finding Calypso more stimulating company than herself.

towards, nor skilled in, lovemaking. We may also note that in the *Ars Amatoria* Ovid vindicates the adultery of Paris and Helen whilst referring to Paris as 'non rusticus hospes' (2.369). This contrasts sharply with Penelope's characterization of Paris as 'adulter' in line 6. In the passage of the *Ars* Helen is a much more laudable figure than her husband, who takes her adultery with a boorish seriousness:

'Quid faciat? vir abest, et adest non rusticus hospes,  
Et timet in vacuo sola cubare toro.  
Viderit Atrides: Helenen ego crimine solvo:  
Usa est humani commoditate viri.'  
(*Ars* 2.369-372).

Helen takes the opportunity of her husband's absence to associate with a sophisticated lover. Unlike Penelope, Helen is not prepared to put up with an empty bed. 'Et timet in vacuo sola cubare toro' contrasts with 'non ego deserto iacuissem frigida lecto' (7). Ovid quite expressly endorses this behaviour. Penelope, however, again proves her *rusticitas* by referring to Ulysses' affair as 'hoc crimen' (79). The sophisticate would blush to have such an opinion, 'Rusticus est nimium, quem laedit adultera coniunx,' (*Amores* 3.4.37).

In these lines *rusticitas* is denoted by weaving. The one signifies the other, as Penelope makes clear in lines 77-78, 'quam sit tibi rustica coniunx,/ quae tantum lanas non sinat esse rudes'. To spend one's nights weaving as Penelope has professed to do in lines 9-10 is evidently to act in a manner that no true modern lover would countenance. The use of *rudis* also serves to reinforce the impression of 'rustica' in the previous line. *Rudis*, like *rusticus*, is used to denote the primitive and the unsophisticated:

'Tanta rudis populo cura pudoris erat'.  
(*Ars* 2.624).

'Simplicitas rudis ante fuit: nunc aurea Roma est,'  
(*Ars* 3.113).

The implication is that the 'civilizing' effect that Penelope has upon the raw wool is not matched by any similar improvements in herself. Penelope remains a boor, she does not match upto the habitual sexual mores of Ovidian elegy.

Penelope, then, in her new elegiac surroundings is somewhat concerned that her 'epic'-style behaviour may count against her and drive Ulysses into the company of a more sophisticated lover. In this sense *Heroides* 1 appears as a 'self-aware text' in which Penelope is clearly conscious of her former literary manifestation. Nevertheless, Penelope has good reason for maintaining her old-fashioned outlook and being committed to her own perspective:

'fallar, et hoc crimen tenues vanescat in auras,  
neve, revertendi liber, abesse velis!'  
(79-80).

Penelope's suspicions about Ulysses represents the unacceptable face of the male sexual drive, 'quae vestra libido est' (75). Penelope has good cause for taking a severe moral stance which contrasts markedly with Ovid's more permissive view in the *Ars Amatoria*. We must remember that the whole Trojan War was precipitated by Paris' act of adultery with Helen. Adultery, therefore, is the root of all her suffering. She is naturally a little aggressive about the participants in such activity as is made clear by her wish in lines 5-6. In opposition to this shameless and destructive sexual behaviour, Penelope is a paradigm of chaste devotion. She has been sexually abstinent (7), her nights have been spent not in someone else's bed but in weaving

(9-10). She sees her morally correct actions as being implicated in the end of the war (23), just as the improper behaviour of Paris and Helen precipitated the war's commencement. Penelope's antipathy, then, to adultery is natural enough in the circumstances. But we might also suspect that Penelope is beginning to see that her own pitiable condition is the tale of two acts of adultery. Just as the first ten years of her suffering is caused by the adultery between Paris and Helen, so the second ten years of her torment may be attributable to her own husband's adultery with Calypso (Ulysses does spend some seven of his ten years subsequent to the destruction of Troy on Ogygia with Calypso). Thus Penelope is once more the innocent victim of the sexual drive of the male 'quae vestra libido est' (75). She is caught up in a web of sexual misdemeanours, none of which is hers, but all of which affect her directly. Naturally, Penelope is not happy with the thought that her virtuous chastity during the war (caused by the improper sexual conduct of Paris) should be repaid by Ulysses' adultery with Calypso which forces her into a second period of tormented waiting. After all this time Penelope is eager not to be passed over for someone else. She wishes Ulysses' own libido to be at her particular disposal.

(9): Icarus, old men and young.

Penelope has just concluded with the worst possible scenario, that Ulysses should be free to return but does not want to do so (80). This state of affairs could be produced by his infatuation with another woman (76). The woman in question, of course, is Calypso. She now moves on to describe her own current situation in Ithaca:



spite of pressure to remarry whilst she suspects that he though free to return chooses to be unfaithful, 'revertendi liber, abesse velis' (80). There appears to be a pointed double reference in 'immensas ... moras' (82). Icarius blames Penelope for continually delaying her remarriage. But these are *morae* which count to Penelope's credit, for they demonstrate her fight to maintain fidelity. However, her meritorious *immensae morae* are the opposite of Ulysses' negative *morae*, 'nec scire mihi, quae causa morandi, ... licet' (57-58), 'tam longae causas suspicor esse morae' (74). His delays, which she suspects are wilful and unnecessary, 'revertendi liber, abesse velis' (80), are the direct cause of her own *morae*. So by presenting Icarius' reproaches of her, she is also able to point the finger at Ulysses. She is, therefore, in a position to blame simultaneously Ulysses and suggest her own merit.

Penelope, then, presents a picture of unshakeable, committed devotion (84). This image is evidently designed to contrast with the adulterous behaviour of Ulysses which has been alluded to in lines 75-80. The contrast between their behaviour should serve to stimulate Ulysses' shame and guilt and spur on his return. Penelope also works at precipitating Ulysses' homecoming by suggesting the mounting pressure that is being brought on her to remarry. If he does not hurry, he may lose her. Icarius' attitude is vigorous and compelling. Nevertheless, she uses the threatening posture of her father only initially to emphasize her own determined commitment. Her father is a force that she can cope with:

'ille tamen pietate mea precibusque pudicis  
frangitur et vires temperat ipse suas.'  
(85-86).

He is won over by his daughter's display of devotion. The use of *pietas* and *preces pudicae* further reinforces her standing as the paradigm of wifely devotion. *Pudicus* is a particularly apt adjective in the circumstances. Her *preces* are doubly *pudicae*, demonstrating her sexual purity (her commitment to Ulysses) and also being designed to prevent unwanted sexual attention from being forced upon her (in the form of another husband). Naturally, the adjective also provides a contrast with the the behaviour of Ulysses, 'esse peregrino captus amore potes' (76).

Icarius, then, as we might expect, is won over by his daughter's demonstration of chaste devotion. But beneath the surface of the image of his relenting (86), we can also detect sexual allusion which points to the essential difference between this source of compulsion and the one that is about to be introduced (the suitors). *Frango* is a verb which is associated with unmanliness and effeminacy. Not uncommonly it is found in contexts relating to literary style. John Bramble explains that there was an attempt to equate the style with the man:

'Seneca's one hundred and fourteenth *Epistle* displays at 6 the expected process of inference from style to man: a perusal of the work of Maecenas reminds the reader that his constant companions were two eunuchs, *spadones duo, magis tamen viri quam ipse*. Effeminate style suggests effeminate *modus vivendi* ... Sexual overtones load the vocabulary of the critics: *tener, mollis, fractus, effeminatus, enervis*, their opposite epithets like *fortis* or *virilis*.'<sup>26</sup>

Bramble further refers to Quintilian VIII. 3.57, *corrupta oratio in*

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<sup>26</sup>John Bramble, *Persius and the Programmatic Satire*, (Cambridge 1974) 44.

*verbis maxime impropriis, redundantibus ... compositione fracta ... consistet*; Quintilian I. 10.31, *effeminata et impudicis modis fracta*, and Seneca *Suas.* II. 23, *nimius cultus et fracta compositio*. A line of Statius also uses the phrase 'frangere sexum' to refer to castration:

'nunc frangere sexum atque hominem mutare nefas'  
(Statius, *Silv.* 3.4.74).

There is also a discussion of the phrase 'fracta virtus' (Horace, *Carmina* 2.7.11) by John Moles which re-emphasizes the associations of *frangere* discussed above:

'But there is still more to the words *fracta virtus*. *Virtus* basically means "manliness" and this basic meaning is rarely forgotten in Latin, whatever the context. ... But the manliness of both groups was *fracta*. *Fractus* is a very common Latin term for "unmanly". To Roman ears, therefore, *fracta virtus* would be a striking oxymoron: "manliness was unmanned".<sup>27</sup>

The 'sexuality', then, inherent in Penelope's description of Icarius underscores the essential difference between him and the suitors. He is an old man with no sexual motivation toward Penelope, they are young men in their prime looking for a wife. This contrast is also foreshadowed by the language of line 82 where the 'moras' of Penelope could be read as the stereotypical hesitations and delays of the bride which by implication cast Icarius in the role of a suitor.

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<sup>27</sup>John Moles, 'Politics, Philosophy, and Friendship in Horace *Odes* 2,7', *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica*, NS 25, No. 1, (1987) 65.

(10): The Suitors: Sex and Materialism.

Penelope appears to be aware of the dangers of suggesting to Ulysses that she is confronted only with opposition that she can deal with herself. Too much determination to remain Ulysses' wife ('Penelope coniunx semper Ulixis ero' [84]) and not enough overpowering opposition would leave Ulysses with a free-hand to indulge himself elsewhere. She, therefore, uses Icarius only as a foil against which to display her own fidelity before moving on to a description of much more compelling and threatening forces.

The suitors present a quite different proposition from Icarius. Penelope's ability to resist one sexually inactive old man is opposed to her implied inability to oppose a mass of forceful, erotically motivated, young men:

Dulichii Samiique et quos tulit alta Zacynthos,  
turba ruunt in me luxuriosa proci,  
inque tua regnant nullis prohibentibus aula;  
viscera nostra, tuae dilacerantur opes.  
quid tibi Pisandrum Polybumque Medontaque dirum  
Eurymachique avidas Antinoique manus  
atque alios referam, quos omnis turpiter absens  
ipse tuo partis sanguine rebus alis?  
Irus egens pecorisque Melanthius actor edendi  
ultimus accedunt in tua damna pudor.'  
(87-96).

The singularity of Icarius, 'ille' (85), is rapidly replaced by the plurality of the suitors, 'turba' (88). Emphasis is placed upon their very number, as the eligible male population of three islands is packed into one hexameter (just as their persons are packed into Ulysses' palace). One of the aims of these lines is clearly to motivate Ulysses' sexual jealousy (this being a strategy to entice him away from Calypso). Ulysses' wilful absence, which may indicate an

indifference to Penelope, is matched by the presence on Ithaca of a whole host of men who are very eager to take his place. The implication is surely that the number of suitors that Penelope has attracted is a clear indication of her worth. Ulysses will be the loser if he does not hurry back and assert his prior claim. A closer examination of the language of these lines also reveals a degree of sexual innuendo. The fact that these men are *proci* naturally points to their sexual interest, and an accompanying allusive undertone helps to suggest that Ulysses' sexual prerogative may already be being usurped. In this light we may see the double entendre in the phrase 'ruunt in me' (88). (*In*) *ruo* seems to be used elsewhere in a sexual sense:

'magis iam lubet in Casinam intruere'  
(Plautus, *Cas.* 889-890).

'aequare nec tauri ruentis  
in venerem tolerare pondus'  
(Horace, *Carmina*, 2.5. 3-4).

'putas te moechum non esse, si non palam in feminas  
irruis' (ps. Acron on Horace, *Serm.* 2.7.72).

'nec inruentium in se iuvenum carebat infamia'  
(H.A., *Comm.* 5, 11).

This suggestive undercurrent is reinforced by the expression of line 90, 'viscera nostra, tuae dilacerantur opes'. The sense of this line is difficult. Evidently the phrase is constructed so as to form an elegant syllepsis. 'Dilacerantur' is applied to different concepts, 'viscera nostra' and 'tuae ... opes'. The juxtaposition of 'nostra' and 'tuae' points to a deliberate antithesis. But the problem remains as to what is the precise nature of the contrast. It is far from easy

effectively to translate 'viscera'. Palmer produced two quite different readings in his two commentaries. First of all he translated, 'My heart is rent, your wealth is squandered.'<sup>28</sup> Then in his second edition he changed to, 'our son (Telemachus) is tortured, your wealth is pillaged'.<sup>29</sup> Jacobson offers the following observations on Palmer's second suggestion:

'Palmer, citing parallels from Ovid, argues that it means "our son." Yet, in every case that Palmer cites (and in the one other example I know, Quint. 6. proem. 3) the context establishes beyond a shadow of a doubt that *viscera* = child. The inference is that *viscera* could not be used randomly = *filius* and be understood as such. This makes one hesitate to understand it here in the sense of "son," for context gives no indication this way at all.'<sup>30</sup>

Certainly there seems to be no reason why Telemachus should be specifically brought in at this point. Jacobson concludes his discussion by foregrounding the sexual meaning of *viscera*:

'I suppose that the problem's solution abides in the sexual connotations of *viscera*, which sometimes denotes the sexual organs. I am not quite sure what the primary meaning of *viscera* is here; perhaps it is close to the colloquial American "guts," or, as Palmer translates but rejects, "my heart is rent." But not far below the surface lies a secondary level: "I am being sexually assaulted." Here the contrast: Penelope is losing control over her sexual life, Ulysses is losing control of his material possessions.'<sup>31</sup>

Jacobson is surely correct in drawing our attention to the

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<sup>28</sup>Palmer (1874) 7.

<sup>29</sup>Palmer (1898) 285.

<sup>30</sup>Jacobson, 269-270.

<sup>31</sup>Jacobson, 270.

sexual undertones of 'viscera'. The use of 'viscera' to denote the female genitalia can easily be supported:

'vestra quid effoditis subiectis viscera telis,  
et nondum natis dira venena datis?'  
(Ovid, *Amores* 2.14.27-28).

'quarundum viscera longa sterilitate praeclusa'  
(Seneca, *Nat.* 3.25.11).

'neve daret partus, ictu temeraria caeco/ visceribus crescens  
excutiebat onus' (Ovid, *Fasti* 1.623-24).

This produces a sexual allusion of considerable force. 'Viscera ... dilacerantur' coming hard upon the heels of 'turba ruunt in me luxuriosa proci' suggests nothing less than violent mass rape. Penelope is quite literally being worn out by the sexual attentions of the suitors.

The message, then, that is being sent out to Ulysses is quite clear. A hoard of rapaciously sexually orientated males are on the rampage through Ulysses' palace. They have specific designs on Penelope and they have the run of the place with no effective opposition, 'inque tua regnant nullis prohibentibus aula' (89). With some well-designed pointers from Penelope, Ulysses is left to draw his own conclusions as to the likely result of such a situation. He is encouraged to return and protect his sexual prerogative.

At the same time as Penelope engages in this form of sexual blackmail she also uses the syllepsis of line 90 as a means of material persuasion. Emphasis has already been placed upon the number of the suitors ('turba', 88) and their dissolute, extravagant nature ('luxuriosa', 88). As there is no-one to stop this riotous onslaught of high-living males, 'inque tua regnant nullis prohibentibus aula'

(89), the consequences for Ulysses' worldly wealth are predictable, 'tuae dilacerantur opes' (90). If Ulysses is unwilling to return for Penelope, he should at least return to protect his possessions. Penelope, then, constructs a parallel between the dissolution of Ulysses' wealth and her own sexual organs. Hence she encourages him to view her as a sexual possession. The syllepsis, then, is clothed in an aura of dark sarcasm and sexual innuendo.

Lines 91-96 offer us a further introduction to the suitors:

'quid tibi Pisandrum Polybumque Medontaque dirum<sup>32</sup>  
 Eurymachique avidas Antinoique manus  
 atque alios referam, quos omnis turpiter absens  
 ipse tuo partis sanguine rebus alis?  
 Irus egens pecorisque Melanthius actor edendi  
 ultimus accedunt in tua damna pudor.'

Now instead of appearing under the general headings of their respective islands, 'Dulichii Samiique et quos tulit alta Zacynthos' (87), the suitors are presented as individuals. This change may be to impress upon Ulysses that she is not merely contriving this situation. Also by giving the *turba luxuriosa* a more personalized form, by particularizing the 'proci', she may the more effectively stimulate Ulysses' jealousy. After cramming some five names into two lines and creating a suitable impression of plurality, Penelope concludes 'atque

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<sup>32</sup>The inclusion of Medon appears to be awkward, for in the *Odyssey* he is consistently faithful to Ulysses and his family. He first notifies Penelope of the suitors plot to murder Telemachus (*Odyssey* 4.675-678). Yet here he not only appears amongst the suitors but is also characterized as *dirus*. Medon's behaviour in the *Odyssey* (he hides under a chair whilst Ulysses is on the rampage in Book 22 [362-363]) hardly suggests he deserves this particular epithet. How, then, do we explain this reading? Is it a simple error? Although this remains a possibility, we might also consider that 'Medonta' is likely to be correct simply because it is interpretatively challenging.

alios referam' (93) and thus emphasizes the near infinity of her ardent admirers. We may also see in the descriptive phrase 'avidas ... manus' (92) another double entendre of a sexual nature.

There is also a continuing emphasis on shameful material destruction. This is made quite clear by lines 93-94, 'quos omnis turpiter absens/ ipse tuo partis sanguine rebus alis?'. 'Absens' is tellingly juxtaposed with 'turpiter'. His absence is shameful because it is precisely the reason why the suitors are on Ithaca at all. He himself is effectively nurturing their presence through his absence, 'quos omnis turpiter absens/ ipse... alis'. He is virtually acquiescing in the destruction of his own property. This is all the more shameful since his substance, which he is now handing to the suitors on a plate, was acquired at the cost of his own blood, 'ipse tuo partis sanguine rebus alis?' (94). Can Ulysses really let go so easily what has been acquired with such hardship?

Lines 95-96 further stress the shame that has resulted from his absenteeism. It is not merely the suitors, who after all represent the upper classes of the surrounding islands, who are taking advantage but even the underlings of Ithaca. There is a beggar, 'Irus egens', and a shepherd, 'pecorisque Melanthius actor edendi'. That such riff-raff are also helping themselves at Ulysses' expense is the ultimate disgrace, 'ultimus accedunt in tua damna pudor' (96). Can he really stand idly by in such circumstances? We may note here how Penelope manipulates the use of the concept of 'pudor' to promote herself and denigrate Ulysses. Hence in line 85 Penelope's 'precibusque pudicis' are an indication of an approbative *pudor* whereas the presence of Irus and Melanthius in the palace demonstrate a *pudor* that reflects badly on Ulysses.

(11): A Question Of Family Responsibilities.

Having emphasized that the suitors and their menials are firmly in charge in Ithaca and that this state of affairs hardly counts to Ulysses' credit, Penelope now develops, in more detail, the theme of the family's dependence on him. The suitors' control is naturally due to the general incapacity of his family to resist:

'Tres sumus inbelles numero, sine viribus uxor  
Laertesque senex Telemachusque puer'  
(97-98).

The family number only three, 'tres sumus ... numero' (97); the suitors are virtually innumerable, they are a riotous, dissolute horde, 'turba ... luxuriosa' (88). The suitors are aggressive, 'ruunt in me' (88); his family are for various reasons 'inbelles' (97). Penelope is a woman and therefore lacks the necessary physical strength to be of much use 'sine viribus uxor'; Laertes has past his prime, 'senex' (98), and Telemachus has not yet reached his, 'puer' (98). This assessment of their capacity demonstrates why the suitors are in control with no effective opposition, 'inque tua regnant nullis prohibentibus aula' (89). The fact that his family is incapable of resistance (added to the obvious assumption that they wish to resist) places them in imminent peril. This leads Penelope into a brief digression concerning Telemachus:

'ille per insidias paene est mihi nuper ademptus,

The presence and designs of the suitors pose a threat to the security and even lives of Ulysses' family. This has been recently demonstrated by the attempt of the suitors to kill Telemachus. The immediacy of the event is stressed by 'nuper' (99) and its near success by 'paene' (99). This information is further designed to stimulate Ulysses' shame. For it is Ulysses' absence which causes this perilous situation. Both the suitors, and Ulysses' family, realise that the return of the hero would materially affect the situation. This is why the family seek to locate him, 'te quaerere misso ... nato' (37-38), 'misimus ... misimus' (64-65). Naturally, the suitors are equally anxious that Ulysses is not found. This is what leads to the dangers that face Telemachus. The threat to his life is linked to his attempt to locate his father. He is attempting to solve the thorny questions which surround Ulysses' delayed return. Penelope is at pains to demonstrate that Ulysses is ultimately responsible for the danger that confronts his son. While he dallies with Calypso, Telemachus is almost

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<sup>33</sup>'Dum parat ... ire Pylon' contradicts the Homeric account where the suitors clearly attempt their ambush on Telemachus' homeward journey, 'οἴκαδε νιόσμενον' (*Od.* 4.701). On these grounds Bentley suggested that the lines were spurious. This letter generally, however, does not demonstrate a strict adherence to the details of the Homeric text. Nevertheless, if this is a deliberate alteration of the poet, then the point of the change is not obvious. Possibly the Ovidian Penelope is attempting to present the situation as even more perilous than it appears in the *Odyssey*. In the Homeric text the suitors fail to take seriously Telemachus' professed intention to go to Pylos (*Odyssey* 2.255-256). They are shocked when they learn that he has actually gone (*Odyssey* 4.638-639). The suitors, then, in the *Odyssey* are forced to ambush Telemachus on his way home because of their failure to take him seriously earlier. The Ovidian Penelope, by stating that the suitors tried to accost Telemachus even as he was attempting to leave Ithaca, is able to present them as a more ominously efficient opposition force.

murdered for trying to find him.

She further attempts to shame Ulysses by stressing their son's valiant precocity. In line 98 he was described as 'puer'. This was to emphasize that he, like the rest of Ulysses' family, is 'inbellis' (97). He is therefore practically defenceless. Yet in spite of his tender years he undertakes to locate his father even in the face of universal opposition, 'invitis omnibus' (100). Hence Telemachus is undertaking actions that are beyond the capability of his years. This is to Telemachus' credit, but hardly to Ulysses'. The son faces imminent peril and this is a sign of his devotion to his father. But the father demonstrates his lack of concern for his son through his protracted absence which is shamefully the very source of the danger that confronts Telemachus.

Penelope continues to enforce her point in lines 101-102:

'di, precor, hoc iubeant, ut euntibus ordine fatis  
ille meos oculos conprimat, ille tuos'

This sudden impassioned prayer is evidently designed as the natural complement to the attempted ambush that Penelope has just described. Penelope prays that Telemachus' death may not be unnaturally premature. She hopes that their lives will follow a normal sequence and that the deaths of the parents may precede Telemachus' rather than vice versa. She hopes that Telemachus will survive the perils that beset his youth ('puer' [98]) and will live to minister the last rites to both of his parents. The picture is decidedly sentimental and deliberately affecting. There is the pointed repetition of 'ille ... ille' (102), which reinforces her impassioned concern for Telemachus and the desire to replace the possibility of her son's untimely

violent demise with an image of death that is contained within a tranquil, natural domestic setting. But it is the absence of Ulysses which threatens to disrupt this natural pattern of events by exposing his son to perils that may remove him prematurely from the natural cycle of family life and death.

The fact that the suitors have nearly succeeded already in removing Telemachus is a clear demonstration of the immediate peril that faces Ulysses' family. This situation is accentuated not only by their own incapacity effectively to oppose the suitors, 'tres sumus inbelles numero' (97), but also by the inadequate nature of their own support:

'hac faciunt custosque boum longaevaque nutrix,  
Tertius inmundae cura fidelis harae;'

This is not a picture to inspire confidence. These three characters match Penelope, Laertes and Telemachus not only in number, but also in martial inadequacy. Can Ulysses really leave his family's safety in the hands of a cowherd, an elderly nurse, and a swineherd? In these circumstances a successful attempt on Telemachus' life can hardly be postponed for long.

The final section of the poem consists of a repeated rhetorical expansion of the various epithets attributed to Ulysses' family in lines 97-98, 'sine viribus uxor' (97), 'senex' (98) and 'puer' (98). This is achieved in two consecutive sections, each character receiving one couplet, twice; the order being Laertes (105-106), Telemachus (107-108), Penelope (109-110), Telemachus (111-112), Laertes (113-114), Penelope (115-116). In each sequence Penelope holds the emphatic final position.

Laertes is introduced first:

'sed neque Laertes, ut qui sit inutilis armis,  
hostibus in mediis regna tenere potest-'  
(105-106).

His status as a 'senex' is now defined specifically in terms of military incapacity, 'inutilis armis' (105). This accounts for his inability to maintain power, 'neque ... regna tenere potest' (106). At the same time his position in the midst of hostile elements, 'hostibus in mediis' (106) makes his safety questionable.

Next there is Telemachus, whose bravery has already been indicated in lines 99-100:

'Telemacho veniet, vivat modo, fortior aetas;  
nunc erat auxiliis illa tuenda patris -'  
(107-108).

Telemachus is full of promise, but he needs time to reach his full potential. It is made quite clear that his own best years lie in the future, 'Telemacho veniet ... fortior aetas'. It is simultaneously emphasized that the prospect of his being able to reach his prime is in doubt, 'vivat modo' (107). This reminds us of the recent attempt on his life in lines 99-100 and of Penelope's prayer in lines 101-102 that the lives and deaths of the family may follow a natural sequence. But to ensure Telemachus' smooth transition from boy to man there is an immediate need for a father's protection, 'nunc erat auxiliis illa tuenda patris' (108).

Penelope is not herself in a position to provide such support, 'nec mihi sunt vires inimicos pellere tectis' (109). This line relates to 97, 'sine viribus uxor'. Penelope as a woman lacks physical

strength, *vires*. Hence there is a need for Ulysses' prompt reappearance, 'tu citius venias, portus et ara tuis' (110). He is the true safe haven for his family, 'portus et ara tuis' (110). These are not, as we might expect, objects that are fixed on Ithaca but must be imported by Ulysses himself. This is the inevitable conclusion of the continual emphasis upon the contrast between the inadequacy of the forces loyal to Ulysses, 'inque tua regnant nullis prohibentibus aula' (89); 'Tres sumus inbelles numero' (97); 'sed neque Laertes, ... hostibus in mediis regna tenere potest' (105-106); 'Telemacho veniet ... fortior aetas' (107); 'nec mihi sunt vires inimicos pellere tectis' (109), and the aggressive intentions of the suitors 'turba ruunt in me' (88); 'inque tua regnant nullis prohibentibus aula' (89), 'ille per insidias paene est mihi nuper adeptus' (99); 'hostibus in mediis' (106); 'nec mihi sunt vires inimicos pellere tectis' (107).

Ulysses' prompt return from the Trojan war would have prevented this whole situation. He ought to have been home long since. He must hurry, 'tu citius venias', to undertake the obligations to his family which are long overdue, but which are now imperative. The use of *venio* here reinforces the urgent imperative in the second line of the poem, 'ipse veni'.

Penelope continues to elaborate upon his obligations to his family. First there is his son Telemachus:

'est tibi sitque, precor, natus qui mollibus annis  
in patrias artes erudiendus erat.'  
(111-112).

The formulation here tends towards a tone of reproachful sarcasm. 'Est tibi ... natus' suggests that Ulysses seems to have forgotten, whilst 'sitque' implies that it may soon be too late for him to remember.

This reinforces the general impression of imminent danger that Penelope has created in the preceding lines of the epistle, 'ille per insidias paene est mihi nuper ademptus' (99), 'di, precor, hoc iubeant, ut euntibus ordine fatis/ ille meos oculos conprimat, ille tuos' (101-102), 'vivat modo' (107). 'Mollibus annis' (111) reaffirms Telemachus' standing as a 'puer' (98) who has yet to attain his full potential, 'veniet ... fortior aetas' (107). It also points to the fact that Ulysses is not fulfilling his obligation to help instruct his son during his formative years. The continuing use of the imperfect, 'erat' (108), 'erudiendus erat' (112) stresses that past obligation has not been fulfilled and this means that present aid is all the more imperative 'nunc' (108), 'tu citius venias' (110).

Penelope now moves on to Laertes:

'respice Laerten; ut tu sua lumina condas  
 extremum fati sustinet ille diem'  
 (113-114).

The paternal obligation that he owes to Telemachus is now replaced by his filial duty to his father. There is a propriety of behaviour that links together grandfather, father and son. Ulysses' absence threatens this propriety. The correct temporal progression may be broken. This is the point of Penelope's prayer in line 101. Telemachus may die before his father or even before his grandfather, or Laertes may die without his son. The last rites of the parent should be carried out by their children. This is also emphasized by Penelope in line 102. Hence Laertes clings on to life in the hope that Ulysses will return and minister his last rites (113-114), just as Penelope hopes that Telemachus will live to do the same for his parents. Both these eventualities are naturally connected to the necessity for Ulysses'

immediate return.

Finally Penelope turns to herself:

'Certe ego, quae fueram te discedente puella,  
protinus ut venias, facta videbor anus'  
(115-116).

We have just seen in the preceding lines that Penelope has argued that speed is of the essence, 'nunc' (108), 'tu citius venias' (110). But there are also constant reminders that he may be too late, 'vivat modo' (107); 'nunc erat' (108); 'erudiendus erat' (112). For Telemachus time as a 'puer' is running out, both because he is maturing (107) and because he risks being cut down before manhood (109). Similarly, Laertes cannot remain a 'senex' forever, his life is slipping away despite his tenacity (114). This situation also applies to Penelope. Time is passing for her too, and no matter how quickly Ulysses now returns things will not be the same. This is made quite clear by the fact that the 'citius' of line 110 turns into the 'protinus' of line 116, but to no positive effect. Physical transformation cannot be halted. As Telemachus has virtually changed from boy into man, and Laertes has nearly moved from the world of the living to the dead, so too Penelope has progressed from a young into an old woman. From this point of view Ulysses is already too late. The lapse of time since Ulysses' departure is quite clearly demonstrated by the rapid succession of 'puella' (115) and 'anus' (116) at the ends of their respective lines. When Ulysses departed she was a mere girl, 'quae fueram te discedente puella' (115) but now even his immediate return will find her transformed into an old woman, 'protinus ut venias, facta videbor anus' (116). There is also a certain bitter sarcasm in the expression 'facta videbor anus'. Penelope will appear

to Ulysses as though she has been instantaneously transformed from a 'puella' into an 'anus'. But the rapidity in the change of her physical appearance is entirely due to the fact that there will be a twenty-year gap between his sightings of Penelope. The transformation may appear sudden to him but for her it represents two decades of a painfully slow, joyless but remorseless process. We find, then, that Ulysses is finally indicted for being responsible for forcing Penelope to squander the best years of her life. Penelope's prime has been taken away from her by Ulysses' reprehensible behaviour. The lost years are something that even his immediate return cannot rectify. So the urgent imperative that concludes Penelope's opening address in line 2, 'ipse veni', is reciprocated in a rather negative fashion in the poem's concluding line, 'protinus ut venias' (116).

We might finally consider how Penelope's negativity in the final couplet is connected to a specifically sexual perspective. Penelope has concluded that even Ulysses' immediate arrival will find her an old woman. The period of his absence has coincided with her progression from a 'puella' into an 'anus'. Within an elegiac context this is a change of considerable significance. For sexual activity is the province of the young. It must be indulged when there is the chance:

'Venturae memores iam nunc estote senectae:  
 Sic nullum vobis tempus abibit iners.  
Dum licet, et vernos etiam nunc educitis annos,  
Ludite: eunt anni more fluentis aquae;  
 Nec quae praeteriit, iterum revocabitur unda,  
 Nec quae praeteriit, hora redire potest.  
Utendum est aetate: cito pede labitur aetas,  
Nec bona tam sequitur, quam bona prima fuit.'  
 (Ovid, *Ars Amatoria* 3.59-66).

Old age follows on swiftly and the opportunity for such indulgence

will be diminished or non-existent:

'Tempus erit, quo tu, quae nunc excludis amantes,  
Frigida deserta nocte iacebis anus  
Nec tua frangetur nocturna ianua rixa,  
Sparsa nec invenies limina mane rosa  
Quam cito (me miserum!) laxantur corpora rugis,  
Et perit in nitido qui fuit ore color.'  
(Ovid, *Ars Amatoria* 3. 69-74).

We can see, then, that from an elegiac point of view Penelope's situation is unenviable. She has had no opportunity to use the 'vernos ... annos' in an appropriate fashion. For Ulysses' absence and her own faithful chastity have denied her. Penelope has been forced into the role of an *anus* before her time as is revealed by a comparison between line 7 of this poem, 'non ego deserto iacuissem frigida lecto', and *Ars Amatoria* 3.70, 'frigida deserta nocte iacebis anus'. But now time has moved on and Penelope's sexual inactivity is now appropriately suited to her age. Her arrival at the age of an 'anus' means that there can no longer be any hope for the reactivation of her sex-life. This is why the transition from 'puella' to 'anus' in the final couplet of the poem is so disturbing, and why even the immediate return of Ulysses, 'protinus ut venias' will make no difference. For Penelope the *verni anni* are gone for good. She has been denied the opportunity to follow the Ovidian imperative, 'utendum est aetate' (*Ars Amatoria* 3.65). Her life has been one of sexual unfulfilment and her realization that she has become an *anus* during her long wait means that such fulfilment is no longer available to her.

In this manner the poem seems to have come full circle. At its beginning the imperatives are urgent 'ipse veni!' (2), and Penelope is still classified amongst the *puellae*, 'Danais invisae puellis' (3). There still appears to be hope that her years of sexual abstinence,

'non ego deserto iacuissem frigida lecto' (7) may come to fruition, 'sed bene consuluit casto deus aequus amori./ versa est in cineres sospite Troia viro' (23-24). But it is the other Greek leaders (25), that return and not Ulysses. These other women are given the opportunity to be reunited with their husbands while they are still in their sexual prime, but Penelope is forced to continue on her lonely progression towards old age without the comfort of a sexual partner. The passage of the narrative mirrors the passage of her life itself. So by the time she has traced the twenty years of her life from the beginning of the Trojan War to the present, she is convinced of the futility of her sexual aspirations. Seen in this light, Ulysses' return is now of little interest or consequence.

## EPILOGUE: Summary and Final Thoughts On Format and Characterization.

The Ovidian treatment of the myth produces a Penelope who is markedly different from her Homeric counterpart. Much of this difference may be attributed to the fact that the poet has presented a characterization of Penelope that is more in accord with her new elegiac surroundings. Thus Penelope stands transformed from the magnanimous heroine of epic into the peevish lover of elegy. In her new setting Penelope is not prepared to display the high-minded altruism of her epic counterpart. Thus Ovid's Penelope does not use her letter to offer her husband moral support and encouragement but to attempt to coerce him by all means at her disposal into a speedy return. To this end Penelope simultaneously promotes her own character and conduct, and hints darkly at Ulysses' less than perfect behaviour. She has been chaste (7-10), he has been fooling around with Calypso (75-80). Her continual anxiety both during and after the war displays her concern for him (11-22; 45-46; 71-74) but his reckless activity in the war (41, 43-44) and his failure to return since (57) demonstrate his indifference toward her. Thus Penelope strives to create a contrast between their respective conduct which is specifically designed to shame Ulysses and make him feel guilty. Nor is Penelope above slyly depreciating Ulysses' supposedly heroic deeds. Her account of the Doloneia is full of underlying derogatory irony and there is the suspicion that the perils Ulysses actually confronted were relatively minimal (11, 13). Nevertheless, such suspicion and irony is not allowed to break cover entirely, for her aim is still to persuade him to return, not to alienate him totally. Thus Penelope displays the ingenuity of the lover in her rhetorical strategy. She hints

sufficiently to prick his conscience but never so overtly as to estrange him. This is particularly evident in the case of Calypso where Penelope although touched with natural elegiac jealousy, is nevertheless content to cloak her knowledge in an aura of groundless suspicion (75-76). By professing that it is hardly credible that Ulysses would do something so dastardly and following this swiftly with a statement of her own unequivocal fidelity (83-84), she works on what she hopes will be a guilty conscience. In the final section of the poem Penelope also tries to arouse Ulysses' jealousy by introducing the suitors in a way that has suggestive undertones (88, 90). This is backed up with arguments that his hard-earned wealth is being shamelessly dissipated (90, 93-94) and that the status of some of his antagonists does little for his *kudos* (95-96). Penelope finally concludes her arguments with a pronounced piece of emotional blackmail. His family are 'inbelles' (97) and the support they have is hardly worth listing (103-104). Thus Ulysses' absence places them in immediate danger. Telemachus has nearly been killed already (99) and the future for him does not look rosy (107). Thus Ulysses is virtually abandoning his son to be killed. Moreover, there is poor old Laertes who is at death's door and only holds on in the hope of one last glimpse of his son (113-114). We can see, then, that Penelope's letter (at least up to its rather pessimistic conclusion) constitutes an active attempt at persuasion. The cunning which Penelope employs to fend off the suitors in Homer seems to be re-employed in Ovid to secure her husband's return. This Penelope, true to the image of the jealous elegiac lover, is prepared to do whatever is necessary to secure the return of her lover. If this involves disingenuity, distortion of the truth and rather unpleasant moral and emotional

blackmail, then so be it. For elegy is truly the world of ego. Love raises selfishness almost to a matter of principle. Penelope, then, is forced to surrender to the erotic selfishness of her generic surroundings.

It is also plain to see how Penelope's attempt at persuasion is closely linked to an emphasis on the sexual aspect of the myth which the elegiac context naturally produces. So in this letter we find that Penelope's situation as a woman who has been deprived of a sexual partner for twenty years is foregrounded. Unlike her Homeric counterpart who bears this loss with a remarkable composure, Ovid's Penelope displays a pronounced twenty year itch. In fact, as we might expect within an elegiac poem, the re-activation of her sex-life seems to be Penelope's prime motivation for wishing to secure the speedy return of her husband. Sex seems to inform this letter to a remarkable degree. The Trojan War is seen as an event caused by a sexual crime (6); it imposes sexual restrictions (7); its conclusion is linked to Penelope's proper sexual behaviour (23-24); its aftermath produces a reunification of husband and wife which has erotic overtones (30); Ulysses' failure to return to her is due to his sexual involvement elsewhere (75-76); and the rather negative anticlimatic conclusion to the poem seems to be governed by the fact that the period of Ulysses' absence has transformed Penelope from a *puella* into an *anus* and so removed any realistic possibility of the re-activation of her sex-life. Thus we can see that the myth has been refracted through a specifically sexual filter.

But at the same time as Penelope has been adapted into her new elegiac context, we can also see that she does not entirely suit her new surroundings. So although she is possessed of elegiac jealousy and

is ruthlessly single-minded in attempting to secure the return of her husband, nevertheless her behaviour and conduct is still somewhat incongruous in an Ovidian elegiac context. She is faithful to her husband throughout his long absence despite the fact that she is surrounded by sexual opportunity in the form of the suitors. She regards adultery with severe distaste wishing that Paris had been drowned (6) and hinting darkly at Ulysses' involvement with Calypso (79). So although her new elegiac setting places sexual considerations at the forefront of her mind, nevertheless her over-all outlook seems incongruously old-fashioned as can be demonstrated by Ovidian passages from elsewhere (*Ars Amatoria* 2.369-372). The poet even seems to allow his character some insight into the incongruity of her conduct within her new sophisticated generic surroundings (77-78). Perhaps her Homeric-style devotion will find little appreciation within an elegiac context.

Yet although traces of the 'old' Penelope survive in this letter, the sum total of her characterization is very different from her Homeric manifestation. The quiet, unobtrusive sufferer of the epic is replaced by a woman who in keeping with her new generic surroundings ostentatiously flaunts her pain in front of Ulysses in the hope of motivating him. Not only does she exploit her torment but she deliberately exaggerates it in order to place her pain on a higher level than that of her husband (11). Penelope, in this epistle, is characterized by the shameless egocentricity of elegiac rhetoric. What is most important to Penelope, is Penelope herself. Her feelings are centred not upon others but upon herself. Penelope's letter is entirely self-centred (even her family are only introduced to bolster her rhetorical case).

Moreover, this essential elegiac selfishness is pushed by the poet to an almost absurd extreme. This perhaps reaches its most piquant moment when Penelope decides that she would prefer the Trojan War to be still continuing (67). The fundamental egocentricity of this position is typical of the whole letter. Her concern for Ulysses is concern for herself. Her retrospective attitude to the Trojan War is not one of relief at Ulysses' survival, but disapproval that her worries were ultimately unnecessary. Penelope begins with herself, 'Haec tua Penelope lento tibi mittit, Ulixē' (1), and concludes with herself, 'Certe ego, quae fueram te discedente puella' (115). The letter is thus framed by a ring-structure of egocentricity.

The ultimately pessimistic ending is also constructed in keeping with the generic expectations of elegy. Penelope finally realises that her wait for Ulysses has transformed her from a *puella* into an *anus*. Thus within the essentially youthful parameters of elegy, Penelope's life is as good as over. There is no room here for the happy, timeless reunion of the *Odyssey*.

The poet, then, has created a successful poem by drawing on the reader's knowledge of the epic characterization of Penelope in the *Odyssey* and contrasting this figure with a Penelope contained within a new elegiac context. At the same time this process of generic transference allows the poet to explore and push to their extremes some of the distinctive motifs of his own favoured elegiac genre.

CHAPTER TWO

HEROIDES 2: PHYLLIS TO DEMOPHOON.

## Introduction:

### (1): The Critic's Problem.

No major literary treatment of the myth of Phyllis and Demophoon survives from antiquity. The consequent uncertainty which surrounds the poet's source-material may seem to accentuate the problem of interpretation. Deprived of any definitive version with which to make comparison, we may forever be in the dark as to the distinctive 'nuances' of the Ovidian version. It is also possible that any innovations we might attribute to the poet may merely be the reflection of a lost source. Howard Jacobson summarizes the problem in the following manner:

'Theoretically, perhaps, the critic should be dependent on the substance of the poem, without recourse to anything external. But, in fact, having a second treatment greatly facilitates the discrimination of highlights, emphases, techniques, shadings, and nuances, which might otherwise be missed. With Phyllis, however, no such work exists'.<sup>34</sup>

In those instances of the *Heroides* where no definitive source can be identified, critical practice faces something of a crisis. This can lead to what we may term 'source anxiety'. A definitive source is recognised, if not as exactly a *sine qua non*, then as immensely desirable. In its absence the critic must do his/her best to collate and assess the various scattered sources which we do possess. This leads to the establishment of a general background against which the

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<sup>34</sup>Jacobson, *Ovid's Heroides*, (Princeton 1974) 58.

specific treatment of the Ovidian version can be evaluated. In short, a canonical model is replaced by an interpretative backdrop created from an integration of disparate sources. The particularities of different versions are reduced to their general similarities and Ovid's poem can then be judged by its deviation from, or adherence to, this created norm.

This would seem to be a reasonable assessment of the position of Jacobson, who after spending several pages in a thorough and scholarly investigation of the material available to us concludes:

'With no more than this we can see how and to what end Ovid reshaped the very skeleton of the myth.'<sup>35</sup>

But perhaps he is a little disingenuous in suggesting that the various sources which we possess can amount to a picture of over-all coherence. In particular, his choice of 'skeleton' is misleading, for it implies a state of fragmentation that is autonomously coherent. Even after the loss of the 'flesh' we are left with an absolute form, a concrete definitive framework. But the metaphor of decomposition is applied inaccurately, for a skeleton exists in a state of transitional decay and not in one of perfect preservation. It would be more natural, in fact, to conclude from Jacobson's analysis that what we actually possess is a curious assortment of odd decomposing bones. Since our sources are fragmentary and to some degree inconsistent, we must be aware that our constructed norm (or skeleton) is unlikely to be complete. We may unfortunately be missing an arm or a leg, or we

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<sup>35</sup>Jacobson, 61.

may, quite misguidedly, have put the head on back to front. However hard we try, there will always be the possibility that we are judging Ovid by a faulty yardstick.

The radical alternative to the hunt for sources is to dismiss their relevance entirely. In this method of approach the text of the poem (raised to the level of what the New Critics would call a 'verbal icon') would be seen as self-sufficient and any external criteria would be rendered entirely superfluous. The approach of Fränkel is perhaps the closest to this:

'In contrast to most of the other epistles, the subject of the Phyllis letter (II) was taken from some rather obscure source. But the tradition from which it came is irrelevant, because the story is essentially an everyday occurrence and it is treated in a simple, direct, and unaffected manner.'<sup>36</sup>

Yet it is difficult to accept that the *Heroides* can be readily understood in a manner which separates text and source so completely. The writers of Ovid's epistles are, generally speaking, canonical figures of the literary tradition. The very choice of character makes inevitable a certain amount of interaction with earlier texts. Can we really interpret *Heroides* 1 without reference to Homer's *Odyssey*, or *Heroides* 7 without considering Virgil's *Aeneid*?

It seems unlikely, then, that a purely hermetic reading will be satisfactory within the context of the *Heroides*. But it also seems that an exploration of specific sources will fall short of establishing a definitive background to the poem. What, then, is the

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<sup>36</sup>H. Fränkel, *Ovid: A Poet Between Two Worlds*, Sather Classical Lectures, Volume 18, (London 1945) 41.

critic to do? All we can do is to recognize our limitations and do the best that circumstances will allow. Inevitably, it must be realized that our interpretation will be perpetually provisional. We must finally be content to base our analysis of Ovid's particular version on the broad outlines of the myth which are available to us. Such an outline can be established by the quotation of those sources that we do possess.

(2): Sources:

The source which we would perhaps most like to possess in its entirety is a poem of Callimachus. Unfortunately we are left with a mere four words:

ἄνυμφίε Δημοφῶν, ἄδικε ξένε'  
(Callimachus, *Fragmenta Incertae Sedis* 556, Pfeiffer).

Perhaps our most extensive reference is from Apollodorus:

Ἄνυμφῶν δὲ Θραξὶ Βισαλταῖς μετ' ὀλίγων νεῶν προσίσχει, καὶ αὐτοῦ ἔρασθεισα Φυλλίς ἢ θυγάτηρ τοῦ Βασιλέως ἐπὶ προικὶ τῇ Βασιλείᾳ συνευνάσεται ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς. ὁ δὲ βουλόμενος εἰς τὴν πατρίδα ἀπιέναι, πολλὰ δεηθεὶς ὁμόσας ἀναστρέψειν ἀπέρχεται· καὶ Φυλλίς αὐτὸν ἄχρι τῶν Ἑννέα ὁδῶν λεγομένων προπέμπει καὶ δίδωσιν αὐτῷ κίστην, εἰποῦσα ἱερὸν τῆς μητρὸς ῥέας ἐνεῖναι, καὶ ταύτην μὴ ἀνοίγειν, εἰ μὴ ὅταν ἀπελπίσῃ τῆς πρὸς αὐτὴν ἀνόδου. Δημοφῶν δὲ ἐλθὼν εἰς Κύπρον ἐκεῖ κατώκει. καὶ τοῦ τακτοῦ χρόνου διελθόντος Φυλλίς ἄρας θεμένη κατὰ Δημοφῶντος ἑαυτὴν ἀναιρεῖ· Δημοφῶν δὲ τὴν κίστην ἀνοίξας φόβῳ κατασχεθεὶς ἀνεισιν ἐπὶ τὸν ἵππον καὶ τοῦτον ἐλαύνων ἀτάκτως ἀπόλλυται· τοῦ γὰρ ἵππου σφαλέντος κατενεχθεὶς ἐπὶ τὸ ξίφος ἔπεσεν. οἱ δὲ σὺν αὐτῷ κατώκησαν ἐν Κύπρῳ.' (Apollodorus, *Epitome*, 6.16.6-7)

There is a long comment on the myth in Servius:

'Phyllis, Sithonis filia, regina Thracum fuit. haec Demophoontem, Thesei filium, regem Atheniensium, redeuntem de Troiano proelio, dilexit et in coniugium suum rogavit. ille ait ante se ordinatum rem suam et sic ad eius nuptias reversum. praefectus itaque cum tardaret,

Phyllis et amoris impatientia et doloris impulsu, quod se spreto esse credebat, laqueo vitam finivit et conversa est in arborem amygdalum sine foliis. postea reversus Demophoon, cognita re, eius amplexus est truncum, qui velut sponsi sentiret adventum, folia emisit: unde etiam φύλλα sunt dicta a Phyllide, quae antea πέταλα dicebantur. sic Ovidius in metamorphoseon libris.' (Servius, apud Virgil's *Eclogue* 5.10)

There is another version which appears in Hyginus:

'Demophoon Thesaei filius in Thraciam ad Phyllidem in hospitium dicitur devenisse, et ab ea esse amatus. Qui cum in patriam vellet redire, fidem ei dedit se ad eam rediturum. Qui die constituta cum non venisset, illa eo die dicitur novies ad litus cucurrisse, quod ex ea Enneados grece appellatur. Phyllis autem ob desiderium Demophoontis spiritum emisit. Cui parietes cum sepulchrum constituissent arbores ibi sunt natae, quae certo tempore Phyllidis mortem luget, quo folia arescunt et diffluunt. Cuius ex nomine folia graece Phylla sunt appellata'. (Hyginus, *Fabulae* 59)

Apart from these various references the myth appears briefly in Propertius:

'credo ego non paucos ista periisse figura,  
credo ego sed multos non habuisse fidem.  
parvo dilexit spatio Minoida Theseus,  
Phyllida Demophoon, hospes uterque malus.  
iam tibi Iasonia nota est Medea carina  
et modo servato sola relicta viro.  
(Propertius, 2.24B.41ff)

The myth also seems to have been particularly attractive to Ovid and it occurs in several other places:

'Saepe viri fallunt: tenerae non saepe puellae,  
Paucaque, si quaeris, crimina fraudis habent.  
Phasida iam matrem fallax dimisit Iason:  
Venit in Aesonios altera nupta sinus.  
Quantum in te, Theseu, volucres Ariadna marinas  
Pavit, in ignota sola relicta loco!  
Quaere, novem cur una viae dicantur, et audi  
Depositis silvas Phyllida flesse comis.  
Et famam pietatis habet, tamen hospes et ensem  
Praebuit et causam mortis, Elissa, tuae.'  
(Ovid, *Ars Amatoria*, 3.31ff)

'Utile propositum est saevas extinguere flammās,  
 Nec servum vitii pectus habere sui.  
 Vixisset Phyllis, si me foret usa magistro,  
 Et per quod novies, saepius isset iter.'  
 (Ovid, *Remedia*, 53-56)

'Quid, nisi secretae laeserunt Phyllida silvae?  
 Certa necis causa est: incommitata fuit.  
 Ibat, ut Edono referens trieterica Baccho  
 Ire solet fuis barbara turba comis,  
 Et modo, qua poterat, longum spectabat in aequor,  
 Nunc in harenosa lassa iacebat humo.  
 "Perfide Demophoon!" surdas clamabat ad undas,  
 Ruptaque singultu verba loquentis erant.  
 Limes erat tenuis longa subnubilus umbra,  
 Quo tulit illa suos ad mare saepe pedes.  
 Nona terebatur miserae via: 'viderit!' inquit,  
 Et spectat zonam pallida facta suam,  
 Aspicit et ramas; dubitat, refugitque quod audet  
 Et timet, et digitos ad sua colla refert.  
 Sithoni, tum certe vellem non sola fuisses:  
 Non flesset positis Phyllida silva comis.  
 Phyllidis exemplo nimium secreta timete,  
 Laese vir a domina, laesa puella viro.'  
 (Ovid, *Remedia*, 591-608)

### (3): Towards Interpretation.

The basic story of the Phyllis/Demophoon myth does not appear to be too complex. Demophoon arrives in Thrace (according to Servius he was returning from the Trojan War, 'redeuntem de Troiano proelio'). Phyllis, queen of Thrace (although in Apollodorus' version her father is still the ruler) receives him hospitably, 'in hospitium dicitur devenisse' (Hyginus). A relationship develops between the two. This seems to involve marriage actually taking place, 'ἐπὶ προικὶ τῆ βασιλείᾳ συνευνάζεται ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρός' (Apollodorus), or being promised upon Demophoon's return from Athens, 'in coniugium suum rogavit. ille ait, ante se ordinaturum rem suam et sic ad eius nuptias reversum' (Servius). There seems to be little question that Phyllis was deeply

in love with Demophoon, 'haec Demophoontem ... dilexit', (Servius), 'et ab ea esse amatus' (Hyginus), 'καὶ αὐτοῦ ἐρασθεῖσα Φυλλίς' (Apollodorus). It is equally clear that Demophoon does not generally reciprocate Phyllis' feelings or trust. Demophoon promises to return, 'ὁμόσας ἀναστρέφειν' (Apollodorus), 'fidem ei dedit' (Hyginus), but he does not do so.<sup>37</sup> His betrayal inevitably leads to Phyllis' despair and suicide, 'ἑαυτὴν ἀναιρεῖ' (Apollodorus), 'laqueo vitam finivit' (Servius), 'spiritum emisit' (Hyginus).

The myth, therefore, is stereotypical of an interaction between the deceiving seductive male and the credulous, loving and trusting female. How, then, does Ovid propose to work upon this basic storyline to produce a distinctive version of his own?

One feature of *Heroides* 2 that is immediately apparent is that the more grotesque and fantastical elements which appear in our sources are omitted. There is no mention of Phyllis' sinister revenge which appears in Apollodorus. The tale of her metamorphosis which occurs in Servius ('conversa est in arborem amygdalum sine foliis') is also omitted. Nor is there any mention of the aetiology of the 'Nine Ways' which appears to have been a staple ingredient of the myth ('καὶ φυλλίς αὐτὸν ἄχρι τῶν Ἐννέα ὁδῶν λεγομένων προπέμπει' [Apollodorus], 'illa eo die dicitur novies ad litus cucurrisse, quod ex ea Enneados grece appellatur.' [Hyginus]), and one which occurs in all the later Ovidian references. It may seem surprising that Ovid should choose to avoid these details, for they might seem to afford the best opportunity to inject interest into what seems a fairly routine (by

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<sup>37</sup>Except in Servius, 'postea reversus Demophoon'.

mythical standards) sequence of events.

But we must remember that Ovid is constrained by the epistolary format which he himself has chosen. Such motifs as aetiologies and metamorphoses which may give the narrative added complexity and interest are essentially incompatible with the letter form. Phyllis, obviously, is not in a position to relate events which are subsequent to her demise. The poet, therefore, is left in the unenviable position of giving the myth interest while being unable to use the story's seemingly more entertaining motifs.

Nevertheless, if the epistolary format has its limitations, it also has its compensations. The nature of letter-writing itself may have suggested to Ovid the direction his own version of the myth must take. Letters are the product of a unique individual consciousness. As such they are not so much concerned with the supernatural as with the workings of the human mind and the causes of human motivation. They are not the place for aetiologies and metamorphoses and we should not be surprised at the absence of such details from the poem. Ovid endows his version with particularity by viewing events through the idiosyncratic perspective of Phyllis. Instead of the focus of events being upon Demophon the *malus hospes*, it is placed upon Phyllis the *anxia hospita*. But the poet's originality does not seem simply to consist in placing emphasis on the woman rather than the man. Ovid also appears to have complicated and problematized the emotions of his heroine. Phyllis' 'problem' in this letter will not simply be the unrequited love which appears generally to cause her suicide, 'amoris impatientia et doloris impulsu, quod se spretam esse credebat, laqueo vitam finivit' (Servius), 'Utile propositum est saevas extinguere flammam, / Nec servum vitii pectus habere sui. / Vixisset Phyllis, si me

foret usa magistro' (Ovid, *Remedia* 53-55). As we might expect in a format which encourages reflection and introspection, Phyllis' emotions and motivation are rendered in a more complex and intricate fashion. There are questions of morality and conscience to be explored. Phyllis is not only a woman and a lover, but also a queen. What happens to a woman in a position of responsibility who through the power of *amor* has acted in a manner which seems to go beyond the socially justifiable boundaries of *hospitium* and *coniugium*? How do actions committed in the throes of passion appear when that passion has cooled? The Ovidian letter explores some of these issues through the viewpoint of Phyllis, a woman who is at once a 'regina', a 'hospita', an 'amans' and a would-be 'coniunx'. This plurality of roles is not the least of her problems.

Heroides 2: Phyllis to Demophoon:

(1) The 'Hospita'.

'Hospita, Demophoon, tua te Rhodopeia Phyllis' (1).

Phyllis introduces herself as *hospita Rhodopeia*. Why does she choose to refer to herself in this rather cool and formalistic manner? If her intention is to persuade Demophoon to return, then we must suppose that Phyllis considers an appeal to *hospitium* rather than to *amor* to be the most effective strategy. Undoubtedly Demophoon has a certain obligation to her at this level. He has received *hospitium* and she is therefore *promerita*.<sup>38</sup> Phyllis, therefore, can establish an irrefutable basis of obligation. She may be hoping that by forcing Demophoon to concede this much, he may then concede much more. We might, then, suppose that Phyllis is engaging in a rhetorical strategy to establish immediately an aura of obligation that will force Demophoon into a specific form of acquiescence.

But this is to suppose that Phyllis' letter is an active attempt to persuade. This is by no means certain. Although the letter is occasionally punctuated by the hope that Demophoon will return (for this appears to be the only way Phyllis can redeem herself), there is, however, little to show that she expects him to do so, or that her letter is written in the expectation that it may influence him. The

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<sup>38</sup>Even Aeneas, in an analogous situation, is willing to concede as much to Dido, 'numquam regina, negabo/ promeritam' (Virgil, *Aeneid* 4.334-335).

letter is more convincing as an internal dialogue (Phyllis' struggle with her own conscience) than as an external piece of persuasion.

If, then, Phyllis' introduction does not aim at persuasion, what is its function? The language of the opening lines, 'queror' (2), 'querela' (8), indicates a formal complaint. This also involves some ironic and bitter re-assessment of the situation between Demophoon and herself. By referring to herself as a *hospita*, Phyllis suggests that she recognizes her involvement with Demophoon was no more than casual and transitory. In short, she appears to imply that her aspirations to an intimate relationship (*coniugium*) must be ceded to the reality of a largely impersonal office (*hospitium*). 'Hospita' would appear to nip in the bud any hope of *coniugium*. The one must mean the exclusion of the other. So when Dido (in the *Aeneid*) realizes that Aeneas is departing forever she exclaims, 'o cui me moribundam deseris - hospes/ (hoc solum nomen quoniam de coniuge restat)?' (*Aeneid* 4.323-324). Similarly, in *Heroides* 9 Deianeira complains that Hercules is away so often that their relationship is more in the nature of *hospitium* than *coniugium*, 'vir mihi semper abest, et coniuge notior hospes' (9.33). In *Heroides* 7 Ovid's Dido (notably more flexible than her Virgilian counterpart) offers to be called Aeneas' 'hospita' rather than 'nupta', 'si pudet uxoris, non nupta, sed hospita dicar' (7.167). All this surely indicates that there is a considerable difference in the way the two are perceived.

Phyllis, then, seems to open on a note of bitter recognition. In spite of her hopes of *coniugium*, she is forced retrospectively to acknowledge that her role was little more than that of a 'hospita'. Thus her opening form of self-definition is also an indictment of the extent of Demophoon's treachery. Because he has not returned and made

her a *coniunx*, she is left as only a *hospita*. A title that she hoped would be merely transitory looks like becoming permanent (unlike her relationship with Demophon). The manner in which Phyllis further defines herself as 'Rhodopeia' may also be intended as a bitter piece of irony. The adjective may be intended to differentiate her from a suspected sequence of other 'hospitae' whom Demophon has strategically placed around the Aegean.

But if 'Hospita' is a rebuke to Demophon, we might also consider that it is a front to maintain respectability. By referring to herself as 'Hospita ... Rhodopeia' Phyllis is able to clothe herself in an aura of official propriety. If she can convince herself and others that her relations with Demophon were merely such as might naturally pass between a *hospita* and a *hospes*, then there will be no need for a guilty conscience. Yet we shall see that this first reference to *hospitium* will only serve to initiate a dialogue which runs throughout the letter. This dialogue concerns how far Phyllis' conduct can be seen as compatible with socially acceptable categories (*hospitium* and *coniugium*), and how far her *amor* for Demophon has led her to transgress their limits.

The terms of Phyllis' complaint in line 2, 'ultra promissum tempus abesse queror', seem immediately to contradict her professed status as a 'hospita'. For if she truly was a 'hospita', then talk of an arranged return ('promissum tempus') and a general sense of urgency make little sense. Clearly this is the perspective of a lover or a wife and not that of a *hospita*. Present perspective (her status as a 'hospita') cannot be coherently projected backwards, because it is clearly inconsistent with any idea of romantic pacts. Yet maybe Phyllis is quite aware of this inconsistency. The introduction of

herself as a 'hospita' may be intended to serve as a prelude to the explanation of how she has arrived at this definition of herself. We might, therefore, see line 1 as the recognition of her true status and the subsequent lines as a justification of her new perspective.

(2): The Movement to Disillusionment.

'cornua cum lunae pleno semel orbe coissent,  
litoribus nostris ancora pacta tua est -  
luna quater latuit, toto quater orbe recrevit;  
nec vehit Actaeas Sithonis unda rates.'  
(3-6)

A certain amount of debate has surrounded the reading of lines 3ff. Jacobson has neatly summarised the problem and suggested a solution:

'Burman's argument, that it makes sense for Phyllis to write immediately when the appointed day passes, not to wait three months, and his suggestion to follow two manuscripts in reading *quater* for *semel* (so too N. Heinsius) are to the point - but misguided. Rather than involve ourselves with the logic of the situation, better to consider what the strange text does for the poem .... By delaying the letter for three months Ovid magnifies her plight and her credulousness; even now that Demophoon is three months late and evidently not about to return, Phyllis retains an element of hope.'<sup>39</sup>

It is difficult, however, to agree with Jacobson's own solution. We may admit that something is being said about Phyllis' 'credulousness', but does this apply to her present or past perspective? The last three months have been marked by naïveté. But does this same naïveté extend

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<sup>39</sup>Jacobson, 71.

to the writing of the letter itself? There are reasons to suspect that it does not. Phyllis' introduction of herself as 'hospita' demonstrates a change in perspective. This letter is intended as a re-assessment of past behaviour. The very act of writing is significant. Phyllis has begun to question past assumptions and to doubt the honesty of Demophoon's intentions. This epistle is not so much concerned with continuing credulity as with increasing suspicion.

The gap between the passing of the deadline and the writing of this letter corresponds to an alteration Ovid has made in the psychological basis of the myth. In other versions of the myth there does not seem to be a significant gap between the passing of the deadline and Phyllis' suicide, 'καὶ τοῦ τακτοῦ χρόνου διελθόντος Φυλλίς ἀρὰς θεμένη κατὰ Δημοφῶντος ἑαυτὴν ἀναιρεῖ' (Apollodorus, *Epitome* 6.17), 'praefectus itaque cum tardaret, Phyllis et amoris impatientia et doloris impulsu, quod se spretam esse credebat, laqueo vitam finivit' (Servius, *apud Virgil Eclogue* 5.10). As we might expect in a 'love' story, it is the uncontrollable nature of Phyllis' passion which initiates her death. Love will admit no delay. But by postponing the writing of the letter until some three (lunar) months after the deadline we are moved into a different situation. Phyllis is not so wildly in love with Demophoon that she kills herself immediately he is overdue. Instead, as time passes, and she is removed from the object of her infatuation, Phyllis is increasingly able to analyse her own past feelings and behaviour in a rational manner. After a cooling-off period of three months Phyllis is in a position to express her doubts. The letter is the means by which these doubts are given voice and in which the consequences of the past are explored.

It is for these reasons that I would question the idea of 'an

element of hope' in the opening lines of the poem. For instance, on line 6 Jacobson comments, 'we are struck by the present tense, *nec vehit* (6); she is still waiting'.<sup>40</sup> But this need not be evidence of hope. After all, it does not signify so much that Phyllis is still waiting as that Demophoon is still absent. This is not at all the same thing. Demophoon's absence is a continuing static state, and Phyllis' realisation of this stasis implies not hope but despair.

The imagery of lines 3 to 5 requires further examination. There is more here than a simple impression of time passing by. Jacobson comments:

'The modified epanalepsis, *Cornua cum lunae pleno semel orbe coissent,/ Luna quater latuit, toto quater orbe recrevit* (3-5), effectively communicates a sense of the inexorable roll of time, impervious to external intervention: Demophoon does nothing to break its - for Phyllis - monotonous movement.'<sup>41</sup>

Lines 3-5, however, present us with a change of perspective, not with a unified view. That is to say, there is an obvious contrast between the viewpoint of line 3, and the viewpoint of line 5. Line 3 reflects the expectation and excitement of an anticipated return. But after the first moon has passed, each subsequent one is merely a painful reminder of the past deadline. Time only becomes 'inexorable' and 'monotonous' after Demophoon fails to return, as anticipation is replaced by disillusionment.

This still leaves us with the question of why this particular

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<sup>40</sup>Jacobson, p. 71-72.

<sup>41</sup>Jacobson, 72.

imagery is employed. There is an element of the picturesque here. Phyllis' apprehension of the passage of time is romantic. Her aesthetic awareness of this particular natural phenomenon was heightened by her peculiar perspective as a lover. Maybe 'cornua cum lunae pleno semel orbe coissent' represents the actual words of Demophoon's promise to return. This would be consistent with what we later learn of his overtly deceitful nature, 'credidimus blandis, quorum tibi copia verbis' (49). Demophoon's use of the romantic had been pragmatic, Phyllis' grasp of it unfortunately idealistic. But, after the significant event has occurred four times, even Phyllis' rose-tinted gaze is becoming blurred.

Phyllis, then, quite naturally measures the length of Demophoon's tardiness in the terms of his agreed return. This slavish adherence to a lover's perspective forms the basis for the transition to the next two lines:

'Tempora si numeres - bene quae numeramus amantes -  
Non venit ante suam nostra querella diem'.  
(7-8)

Phyllis assures Demophoon that her complaint is not premature. A problem of interpretation raises its head here. Is Phyllis being sarcastic or is she being hopelessly tentative? If Phyllis retains an element of hope, maybe we can see in these lines some still lingering doubts about the justification of her reproach. Even now, we may say, after some three months of waiting Phyllis retains such a degree of credulity that she is still worried about offending Demophoon. But surely it is more reasonable to see the lapse of time as corresponding to an increasing scepticism on Phyllis' part. Although she may still wish to believe in Demophoon's fidelity, nevertheless the long months

of waiting are straining even her romantic credulity.

Lines 7-8 set up an important dichotomy which gives point to Phyllis' expression. An obvious distinction is made between 'tempora si numeres' and 'bene quae numeramus' and more specifically between 'si' and 'bene'. This evidently corresponds to a difference which Phyllis perceives between herself and Demophoon. The deadline actually meant something to Phyllis, apparently not to Demophoon. She is entitled to inclusion in the generic 'bene quae numeramus amantes' because the passage of time has been for her an intense (visual) experience. Demophoon, on the other hand, must be excluded by the fact of his continuing absence which marks his wilful innumeracy. Lovers count well, Phyllis has been counting, but she doubts if Demophoon has, 'si numeres'.

The tenor of the opening lines is quite clear. Phyllis acknowledges her status as 'hospita' and justifies her statement by pointing to the continued absence of Demophoon (lines 2-6) and by the recognition of the disparity between her own and Demophoon's emotional commitment (7-8). This is not a section where hope or optimism is particularly prevalent.

Lines 9 to 24 continue this pattern. Past behaviour is re-assessed in the cool light of present reality. Optimism and hope are reluctantly but firmly confined to the past, 'Spes quoque lenta fuit' (9). 'Quoque', at first sight, appears a little peculiar: 'as well as what?' A moment's reflection, however, soon provides the answer. First of all, we have seen that Phyllis' letter (her 'querela') has been despatched long after the deadline for Demophoon's return (8). So there is an expressed link between the lateness of her letter and her slowly subsiding hope, 'spes quoque lenta fuit' (9).



But at the same time it is also possible to see the connection Phyllis is making between her own past behaviour and Demophoon's non-appearance. So her 'spes' was 'lenta' as well as ('quoque') Demophoon; as is made clear by line 2, 'ultra promissum tempus abesse queror' (2), and later in line 23, 'at tu lentus abes'. 'Lentus' when applied to Demophoon is peculiarly appropriate. For the word not only has implications of general tardiness but also of a lover's particular shortcomings.<sup>42</sup>

This pattern of inverted imagery continues into the next couplet, 'tarde, quae credita laedunt,/ credimus' (9-10). Once more we can see the appropriateness of applying 'tardus' in the first instance to Demophoon. This reverse application stresses the difference in their respective 'lateness'. Demophoon's tardiness demonstrates his infidelity and lack of emotional commitment, whereas Phyllis' slowly dying hopes emphasize her true devotion and reluctance to vilify her lover.

Phyllis' unwillingness to accept Demophoon's treachery is made

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<sup>42</sup>Consider,

'a pereat, si quis lentus amare potest!  
(Propertius 1.6.12)

'illa meos somno lassos patefecit ocellos  
ore suo et dixit "Sicine, lente, iaces?"  
(Propertius 2.15.7-8)

Also when Ovid recommends not merely going away but staying away as an excellent cure for love he uses the following expression, 'Nec satis esse putes discedere; lentus abesto/ dum perdat vires sitque sine igne cinis,' (*Remedia Amoris* 243-244). The relevance of the elegiac term 'lentus' to the specific situation of the *Heroides* is perhaps made clearest in the very first line of *Heroides* 1 'Haec tua Penelope lento tibi mittit, Ulixee'.

clear in line 10, 'invito nunc et amore nocēs'.<sup>43</sup> Although the balance between love and doubt has shifted over the past three months, nevertheless there is a residue of *amor* which would still like to believe in Demophoon's sincerity. Yet, the import of her words is clear. She is unwilling to suspect him, but she does.

All of lines 11-22 deal with the same topic, Phyllis' behaviour during her period of waiting, a period marked by credence in Demophoon's good intentions. Phyllis has already formally renounced hope, 'Spes quoque lenta fuit' (9), and has moved towards recognition of Demophoon's betrayal. The consequences of such recognition are, however, complex. For they involve not only a cognizance of Demophoon's indifference but also a reappraisal of her own conduct. If Demophoon does not and did not love her, then the alteration of perspective makes her own actions seem not only misplaced but ludicrous. Thus Demophoon threatens not only her romantic aspirations but also her self-respect.

There is a tightly knit unity in these lines based upon the complementary ideas of unreciprocated love and awareness of past delusion. So the section begins 'saepe fui mendax ... mihi' (11) and concludes 'et ad causas ingeniosa fui' (22). Phyllis acknowledges her own complicity in her delusion. This is pointedly demonstrated by the further use of reverse imagery. So we find that Phyllis has been a 'mendax' (11) on behalf of Demophoon 'pro te', the real *mendax*. There is considerable irony in that both Demophoon and Phyllis have been

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<sup>43</sup>This is the reading of manuscript G; the meaning of the line remains problematic. An alternative reading is 'invita nunc et amante nocent'; Merkel suggested 'invito nunc es amore nocens' and Heusinger 'invita nunc et amante nocēs'.

lying to the same person. Similarly she was 'ingeniosa' on Demophoon's behalf, eloquent, that is to say, in pleading the case for a smooth-talking philanderer. So too she has been a 'supplex' (17) and has prayed to the gods, 'sum venerata' (18) on behalf of a *sceleratus* (17).

Emphasis, then, is placed on the ironically misplaced actions of Phyllis. This impression is strengthened by the frequency and strenuousness of Phyllis' actions, as contrasted with the continuing inactivity of Demophoon. Hence a succession of first person verbs, 'fui' (11), 'putavi' (11), 'devovi' (12), 'timui' (15), 'sum venerata' (18), 'dixi' (20), 'fui' (22), and their accompanying adverbs, 'saepe' (11), 'interdum' (15), 'saepe' (17), 'saepe' (19), are all rendered ineffectual by the simple but incontrovertible fact of Demophoon's absence, 'at tu lentus abes' (23), which re-emphasizes the 'ultra promissum tempus' of line 2 and links with 'spes quoque lenta fuit' in line 9. So we find a simple but emphatic contrast between the long sequence of first-person verbs and the conclusive 'at tu'.

Phyllis, then, displays an almost masochistic thoroughness in exposing the incongruity of her past actions. For her conduct, when viewed from the perspective of disillusionment, is patently ridiculous. To the objective reader her actions are humorously ironic but to Phyllis they must seem humiliatingly ludicrous. As Phyllis' capacity to analyse her past behaviour in a coolly rational manner increases, so the full extent of her past delusion becomes apparent. Present perspective illuminates past behaviour in a distinctly unflattering light.

Once again the question of latent optimism must be addressed. For in the midst of this emphatically negative section, Jacobson still

detects some vestiges of hope. On lines 13-14, 'Thesea devovi, quia te demittere nollet;/ nec tenuit cursus forsitan ille tuos', he comments:

'Regard that superb *forsitan* which discloses hope in the midst of hopelessness, which subtly reverses the tenor of the whole sentence.'<sup>44</sup>

Then with regard to lines 21-22, 'denique fidus amor, quidquid properantibus obstat,/ finxit, et ad causas ingeniosa fui', he states:

'*Properantibus*, not merely, e.g. *venientibus*; we detect below the surface of her professed despair, a faint persistent hope in Demophoon's good faith'.<sup>45</sup>

Let us turn first to lines 13-14. We are presented here with Phyllis' original reason for cursing Theseus, 'quia te demittere nollet' (13), and with a modification of that assessment, 'nec tenuit cursus forsitan ille tuos' (14). The point is, does this modification suggest that Phyllis believes Demophoon may already be in the process of returning? There is good reason to reject such an interpretation. This section of the poem is marked (as shown above) by a contrast between Phyllis' effort and Demophoon's inactivity, between her naive past actions and her present realistic assessment. It is therefore natural to read the lines in question in the light of this specific context, rather than as clashing with it. Phyllis cursed Theseus for detaining Demophoon, but now she realises that this was probably a mistake. Not because Demophoon may be on his way back, but because he never had any

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<sup>44</sup>Jacobson, 66.

<sup>45</sup>Jacobson, 66.

intention of returning. Demophoon did not need anyone to detain him. Phyllis, through misplaced love, has cursed the innocent father instead of the guilty son.

This same line of reasoning can be extended to lines 21-22. 'Properantibus' is chosen rather than 'venientibus' not to demonstrate (or rather let slip) hidden optimism, but to reveal the extravagance of Phyllis' own self-deceit. The immediate context of the word makes this interpretation quite certain. At the end of line 22 we have the phrase 'et ad causas ingeniosa fui'. Now, can we not see 'properantibus' precisely as a case of Phyllis' capacity to be 'ingeniosa'? Demophoon is not coming at all, but Phyllis was deluded to such an extent that she imagined not only that he would return but that he would return with enthusiastic rapidity. The reason for such delusion is evidently the lover's capacity to manufacture his/her own reality. This is demonstrated by the phrase 'denique fidus amor ... finxit' (21-22). It was 'fidus amor' that allowed Phyllis to imagine 'properantibus', rather than 'venientibus', and to explain Demophoon's non-appearance by any number of imaginary obstacles, 'quidquid ... obstat'. Love produces delusion, and the cursing of Theseus and the choice of 'properantibus' are the proof of this hypothesis. Love may cause Phyllis to imagine that Demophoon is returning, but it will not actually cause him to do so, 'nec nostro motus amore redis' (24).

Phyllis concludes this section with the elegant couplet:

'Demophoon, ventis et verba et vela dedisti;  
vela queror reditu, verba carere fide.'  
(25-26)

Evidently these lines run the risk of being seen as superfluous verbal elegance. Nevertheless, there is a case here to regard these lines as

rather more than a mere demonstration of verbal dexterity. Jacobson, whilst attempting to accommodate this couplet into a serious meaning, passes the following judgment:

'We should not condemn (as e.g. Wilkinson, 89, does) the glib rhetorical wit of 25-26. Far more than being a momentary display of surprising sophistication, it is a reminder to us that the reliance which Phyllis, with rare exception, places on wind and water throughout the poem betrays a grim paradox, for it is these two forces of nature which are traditionally the poet's metaphor for falsehood, fickleness and perfidy.'<sup>46</sup>

But surely these lines are not so much concerned with the unreliability of wind and water as with the unreliability of Demophoon himself. Phyllis' problem is not so much her 'reliance' upon fickle natural phenomena but her trust in a treacherous male. He set sail but this was to be a positive, not a negative action. For Demophoon's departure was supposed to be merely the prelude to his return (as the reference to 'vela referre' in line 12 reminds us). Phyllis was encouraged to view this departure favourably precisely because of his promises to return. In line 98 she reports his very words as he departs, "Phylli, fac expectes Demophoonta tuum". But his failure to re-materialize proves the falseness of his words, 'ventis et verba ... dedisti'. The likelihood that Demophoon was lying changes everything. His act of setting sail must now be re-cast in a negative light. False words are allied to negative and not positive actions. Because of the suspicion that Demophoon was lying his departure must be viewed not as a mere prelude to his return but as an irrevocable event. Hence this syllepsis rightly suggests that the correct interpretation of action

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<sup>46</sup>Jacobson, 68.



Phyllis' precise meaning in these lines is far from clear. She answers her own question 'quid feci?', with the answer 'nisi non sapienter amavi'. But what exactly does Phyllis mean by 'nisi non sapienter amavi'? An inadvisable emotional attachment? But it is easy to detect here a degree of euphemism. For if Phyllis' error is supposedly so slight, then why does she go on to speak in the next line of a 'crimen'? Surely this is rather harsh language for so apparently trivial an offence? Phyllis then further complicates the picture by also mentioning a 'scelus' in line 29. Is this 'scelus' the same as the 'crimen' of line 28? Moreover, both the 'crimen' and the 'scelus' are qualified by positive aspects ('demeruisse' [28], 'meriti pondus et instar' [30]), which would appear to contradict their very status as 'crimen' and 'scelus'.

The statement 'nisi non sapienter amavi' remains ambiguous. 'Amare' can refer to the emotional condition of being in love or to the physical activity of making love.<sup>48</sup> Phyllis' initial expression suggests the former meaning but her subsequent use of 'crimen' and 'scelus' tend to the latter. 'Crimen' would seem to make better sense here if it is a reference to illicit sex.<sup>49</sup> But the ambiguous way in which Phyllis refers to 'love' suggests she is deliberately smudging

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<sup>48</sup>Latin will allow both meanings. For the former, consider Cicero, *Fam.* 7.15.1:-

'quam sint morosi qui amant',

and for the latter, Plautus, *Poen.* 1230:-

'postea hanc amabo atque amplexabor'.

<sup>49</sup>This is clearly the word's meaning at *Heroides* 1.79, 'et hoc crimen tenues vanescat in auras'.

the issue. 'What have I done except love unwisely', obviously stops short of saying 'what have I done except engage in illicit sex'. Phyllis evidently paraphrases the situation to her own advantage. This is also apparent in the way in which Phyllis tries to justify her own past conduct. What exactly does she mean by 'crimine te potui demeruisse meo'? Presumably she means that her 'love' for Demophoon ought to count for something. So although 'crimen' designates her action as of no objective merit, nevertheless Phyllis argues that it deserves recognition from Demophoon specifically.

When we move on to lines 29-30 we are faced with a similar problem. Phyllis' sole 'scelus' resides in the fact that she received Demophoon 'quod te, scelerate, recepi'. But this 'scelus' too, is intrinsically meritorious 'sed scelus hoc meriti pondus et instar habet'. Presumably this is because 'te ... recepi' must refer to Phyllis' extension of 'hospitium' towards Demophoon.<sup>50</sup> This is evidently an action that should count to Phyllis' advantage. But if this is the case, then why does this action constitute a 'scelus'? The reason must be because Demophoon has proved to be a *sceleratus*. A *meritum* bestowed upon a *sceleratus* is a *meritum* badly wasted. Demophoon's dubious character takes the gloss off Phyllis' good intentions. He is the real *sceleratus*, so much so that he even manages to transform Phyllis' deserving action into a *scelus*.

Phyllis, then, tries hard to counter a rising sense of moral guilt, which manifests itself in the terms 'crimen' and 'scelus'. She attempts to stress that her actions were really meritorious in their

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<sup>50</sup> 'ut tibi hospes aliquis sit recipiendus', Cicero, *Div. Caec.* 50; 'recipe me in tectum', Plautus, *Rudens* 574.

own fashion (her love of Demophoon deserves his consideration and her provision of *hospittum* is objectively admirable). It is Demophoon's true status as a *sceleratus* which places her deeds in a bad light. He is the one to blame, not Phyllis. Nevertheless we sense that she is battling to hide a mounting sense of moral culpability. Naturally to maintain a sense of her own innocence she launches into a vitriolic attack upon Demophoon (self-reproach, it is hoped, will be suppressed by external anger).

Lines 31-44 display a bitter tirade at Demophoon's profuse and shameless perjury. The repeated pattern of 'ubi nunc ... ubi nunc'<sup>51</sup> in lines 31-34 emphasizes the ubiquity of Demophoon's treachery, 'iura fidesque ubi nunc, commisaque dextera dextrae,/ quique erat in falso plurimus ore deus?/ promissus socios ubi nunc Hymenaeus in annos,/ qui mihi coniugii sponsor et obses erat?' (31-34). Typically, in the case of the seducer, Demophoon's promises centre upon future commitment, 'promissus socios ... Hymenaeus in annos'. Phyllis was induced to trust Demophoon by the apparent propriety of his intentions. In addition to these promises Phyllis relates a whole sequence of oaths which she previously interpreted as an indication of his commitment, but which must now be viewed differently:

'per mare, quod totum ventis agitatur et undis,  
per quod saepe ieras, per quod iturus eras,  
perque tuum mihi iurasti - nisi fictus et ille est-  
concita qui ventis aequora mulcet, avum,  
per Venerem nimiumque mihi facientia tela-

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<sup>51</sup>The use of 'nunc' here links to that in line 10, 'invito nunc et amore nocet'. In the earlier line 'nunc' demonstrates how the force of *amor* lingers even into the present. But the repetition of 'nunc' in these later lines shows how incompatible the present is to the persistence of this feeling.

altera tela arcus, altera tela faces-  
Iunonemque, toris quae praesidet alma maritis,  
et per taediferae mystica sacra deae.'  
(35-42)

Demophoon's first oath was by the sea. A natural choice, we may suppose, considering that he will have to entrust himself twice to its perils before he can return to Phyllis. The relative clause which accompanies the oath is rather more curious, 'quod totum ventis agitatur et undis'. The reason for this formulation only becomes clear in lines 37-38 when Demophoon also swears by Neptune. This god is Demophoon's ancestor and he possesses the particular ability to soothe the stormy sea, 'concita qui ventis aequora mulcet' (38). Demophoon, therefore, can afford to swear by the stormy sea, 'quod totum ventis agitatur et undis' (35). For his ancestor gives him the ability to overcome such problems. The fact that Demophoon has not returned obviously leads Phyllis to doubt (rather sarcastically, note the ironic force of the 'et') the veracity of his alleged descent, 'nisi fictus et ille est' (37). The irony, of course, is that Demophoon's lineage seems to be the only truth in the whole of the oath.

In the next part of Demophoon's oath three more divinities are invoked, 'per Venerem' (39), 'Iunonemque' (41), 'et per taediferae mystica sacra deae' (42). In 'per Venerem' and 'Iunonemque' we can see the two strands of love, the physical and the institutional. 'Venerem' represents the unadulterated appeal of eroticism and 'Iunonemque' the accommodation of passion within marriage. Phyllis' comments bear further examination. Venus is qualified by 'nimiumque mihi facientia tela - / altera tela arcus, altera tela faces' (39-40). Phyllis' physical attraction to Demophoon was the root of her problems; the past strength of her own feelings is reflected by the imagery of

'tela'. These weapons are specifically defined in the following line as 'arcus' and 'faces'. Both are attributes of Cupid.<sup>52</sup> Phyllis' passion, however, has also been encouraged by the prospect of its being legitimated in marriage, 'Iunonemque, toris quae praesidet alma maritis' (41). It is clear that Demophoon's oath was a clever piece of rhetoric that gave due consideration to what Phyllis wanted to hear. Demophoon's oaths are full of the prospect of a lasting marriage, 'quique erat in falso plurimus ore deus?/ promissus socios ubi nunc Hymenaeus in annos,/ qui mihi coniugii sponsor et obses erat?' (32-34). Phyllis was deceived into believing that this was the beginning of a lasting relationship and not merely a casual fling. The extent of Demophoon's perjury was quite astounding:

'si de tot laesis sua numina<sup>53</sup> quisque deorum  
vindictet, in poenas non satis unus eris.'  
(43-44)

His crimes are almost beyond the possibilities of punishment. The plurality of Demophoon's crimes ('tot') contrasts emphatically with Phyllis' earlier assertion of the singularity of her own culpability, 'unum in me scelus est' (29). Phyllis' only fault, it would appear, was in being deceived by Demophoon (which of course is primarily his fault). She attempts to make her own singular fault pale into

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<sup>52</sup>Consider, 'per mea tela, faces, et per mea tela, sagittas', Ovid, *Pont.* 3.3.67.

<sup>53</sup>The use of 'numina' connects to the earlier reference in lines 23-24, 'nec te iurata reducunt/ numina'. Clearly, in the earlier lines Phyllis must have had in mind the oaths which are fully enumerated in lines 31-44.

insignificance beside the myriad of Demophoon's evil intentions. Thus Phyllis strives to establish a simple dichotomy between her own naive faith and Demophoon's worldly perfidy.

However, perception of Demophoon's treachery continues to place her own actions in a ridiculous light:

'Ah, laceras etiam puppes furiosa refeci -  
ut, qua desererer, firma carina foret! -  
remigiumque dedi, quod me fugiturus haberes.  
heu! patior telis vulnera facta meis!'  
(45-48)

Phyllis ironically sees herself as the assistant in her own betrayal. She was 'furiosa' because *amor* inspired her to such a pitch of generosity, but also because she was 'mad' in carrying out actions that were so obviously contrary to her own interests. Phyllis actually helped him to desert her. She provided the means for her own betrayal, 'ut, qua deserer firma carina foret!/ remigiumque dedi, quod me fugiturus haberes' (46-47). Phyllis can now see that she has provided a rod for her own back, 'heu! patior telis vulnera facta meis!' (48). Hence 'meis ... telis' by its link to line 39, 'per Venerem nimiumque mihi facientia tela' suggests the recognition of her own culpability.

Lines 31-44 place the emphasis on Demophoon's perfidy, lines 45-48 indicate Phyllis' awareness of her own responsibility and lines 49-54 stress the extent of her own credulity:

'credidimus blandis, quorum tibi copia, verbis;  
credidimus generi nominibusque tuis;  
credidimus lacrimis - an et hae simulare docentur?  
hae quoque habent artes, quaque iubentur, eunt?  
dis quoque credidimus. quo iam tot pignora nobis?  
parte satis potui qualibet inde capi.'  
(49-54)

Each of Phyllis' acts of credence ('credidimus') corresponds to a deceitful stimulus from Demophoon; persuasive words 'blandis ... verbis' (49), good family background 'generi nominibusque tuis' (50), tears 'lacrimis' (51), oaths by the gods 'dis' (53).<sup>54</sup> Clearly, the guilt, as Phyllis sees it, rests not with her naïveté but with the comprehensiveness of Demophoon's deception, 'tot pignora' (53). The extent of his deceit is contrasted with the minimal amount of deception which her naive nature required, 'parte satis potui qualibet inde capi' (54). This continues a pattern which contrasts the plurality of Demophoon's crimes ('tot' [43], 'tot' [53]), with the singularity of Phyllis' misdemeanour ('unum in me scelus est' [29]). Phyllis, then, presents herself as easy prey, Demophoon as an experienced seducer. She had no idea of the nature of erotic deception, 'credidimus lacrimis - an et hae simulare docentur?' (51). Hence her 'capture' was inevitable. In this way she attempts to diminish her culpability by stressing her incapacity to resist and the enormity of his crimes.

Phyllis now proceeds to further self-analysis:

'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)

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<sup>54</sup>We should note the contrast between the use of *credo* in these lines and the verb's earlier appearance in lines 9-10, 'tarde, quae credita laedunt, / credimus'. Phyllis was slow to believe anything which would cause disillusionment, but she was unfortunately all too ready to believe in Demophoon's sincerity at the time. Thus the use of *credo* neatly demonstrates the lover's habitual perspective, which Phyllis has had to struggle to overcome: ready to believe in blandishment and reluctant to accept the possibility of deceit.

She professes not to regret her acts of *hospitium*. ('Quod te iuvi portuque locoque' presumably makes this a reference to the initial act of *hospitium*, 'te ... recepi' [29], rather than to her more elaborate provision in lines 45-48). These were actions of merit and should have stood as the apex of her benefaction, 'debut haec meriti summa fuisse mei' (56). But the key word here is 'debut'. Phyllis, retrospectively, considers that she ought to have limited her relations with Demophon to this sort of formal impersonal generosity. This would have meant that she could legitimately view herself simply as 'Hospita ... Rhodopeia' (1). Her actions would be contained within the proper limits of *hospitium*. She would thus have no need for shame or remorse. But Phyllis did not stop where she believes she ought to have. Her great mistake was in transgressing the boundaries of *hospitium* to include actions that should properly be the province of *coniugium*, 'turpiter hospitium lecto cumulasse iugali/ paenitet, et lateri conseruisse latus' (57-58). Physical love (in Phyllis' view) is the province of *coniugium* and should not be included in *hospitium*. Now that Phyllis wishes she had stuck to the formal limits of *hospitium* she regrets her sexual involvement. By making love with him, she has (so she believes) excluded herself from a social institution (*hospitium*) which would otherwise have vindicated her conduct.

The theme of these lines is obviously closely allied to that of lines 27-30:

'Dic mihi, quid feci, nisi non sapienter amavi?  
 crimine te potui demeruisse meo.  
 unum in me scelus est, quod te, scelerate, recepi;  
 sed scelus hoc meriti pondus et instar habet.'

We see that previously Phyllis' *crimen* was defined rather vaguely, 'quid feci, nisi non sapienter amavi' (27). Her 'crime' was in having 'loved' Demophoon. Lines 57-58 make it quite clear that this *crimen* consists of her illicit sex with Demophoon, 'paenitet, et lateri conseruisse latus' (58). In these later lines Phyllis does not seem so concerned to defend her actions and consequently lets slip the defence of ambiguity. Sex is not now seen as a *crimen* that obligates Demophoon to her, 'crimine te potui demeruisse meo' (28), but as a shameful violation of the proper bounds of *hospitium*. Phyllis, therefore, seems to abandon any pretence that her sexual involvement was in any sense justifiable.

Lines 29-30 were similarly smothered in an obscurity of expression. Phyllis had committed a single *scelus*, 'unum in me scelus est' (29), which is defined as 'quod te, scelerate, recepi' (30). But this *scelus* Phyllis insisted was the very likeness of a *meritum*, 'sed scelus hoc meriti pondus et instar habet' (30). It was previously suggested that 'te ... recepi' refers to Phyllis' initial act of *hospitium*. Clearly this was a *meritum*. What changes her *meritum* into a *scelus* is the fact that Demophoon was a *sceleratus*. It is not difficult to suppose that Phyllis in her desire to exonerate herself is rather vague as to why Demophoon is a *sceleratus* and how he has converted her deserving deed into a *scelus*. Lines 55-58 help us to clarify the situation. These later lines make it evident that Phyllis regards her real error as indulging in sex whilst a 'hospita' and not a *coniunx*. Nevertheless, her initial acts of *hospitium* were meritorious and not to be regretted, 'Nec moveor, quod te iuvi portuque locoque-/ debuit haec meriti summa fuisse mei' (55-56). Therefore her *scelus* should not be viewed as her initial reception of

Demophoon, 'te ... recepi' (though it is easy to see 'te ... recepi' as an unconscious reference to sex which demonstrates the latent force of Phyllis' moral conscience), but as her subsequent sexual activity with him. It is this physical involvement which retrospectively converts her *meritum* into a *scelus*. By suggesting that her *scelus* was her reception of Demophoon, Phyllis is obviously able to defend herself more easily. For clearly *hospitium* within itself is meritorious. Phyllis is being a shade disingenuous to cover her own tracks. In these lines, then, she seems to reach conclusions that are rather distressing to her personally. Phyllis is unable, as she was in lines 27-30, to rehabilitate her actions.

Naturally these thoughts leave Phyllis somewhat distraught and remorseful:

'quae fuit ante illam, malle[m] suprema fuisset  
nox mihi, dum potui Phyllis honesta mori.'  
(59-60)

Yet no sooner has Phyllis apparently condemned her own actions and taken a decisive step towards the suicide which the myth demands, than she launches into a further attempt to justify her conduct:

'speravi melius, quia me meruisse putavi;  
quaecumque ex merito spes venit, aequa venit.'  
(61-62)

Phyllis hoped for a better outcome and thought she had deserved one. Since her expectations were grounded in meritorious action she argues that they were reasonably entertained.

But what was the better outcome that Phyllis hoped for? Presumably, that Demophoon would return and that her involvement with

Demophoon would lead to a lasting marriage, 'promissus socios ubi nunc Hymenaeus in annos,/ qui mihi coniugii sponsor et obses erat?' (33-34). Phyllis, therefore, appears to be arguing that her decision to have sex with Demophoon was entirely dependent on the prospect of her relationship being legitimated within *coniugium*. It is not merely the outcome of events which must be considered but the expectations with which actions are entered into.<sup>55</sup> Phyllis' intentions were honourable and it is only Demophoon's treachery that prevents a respectable outcome. We may note how 'lateri conseruisse latus' (58) mirrors 'commissaque dextera dextrae' (31). This shows that Phyllis' physical involvement was inspired by what she believed to be Demophoon's sincerity. The first person verbs, 'speravi', 'putavi', however, demonstrate the partial nature of this perspective.<sup>56</sup> Phyllis hoped for this, and thought this, but crucially Demophoon did not.

It is, therefore, relatively clear how Phyllis believes her actions were justified by her future expectations. But this still leaves us with the problem of what exactly 'me meruisse' (61) refers to, and what precisely is the *meritum* of line 62. Phyllis, we must remember, has just stated that the total of her *meritum* ought to have been the initial acts of *hospitium*, 'Nec moveor, quod te iuvi portuque locoque-/ debuit haec meriti summa fuisse mei' (55-56). This viewpoint

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<sup>55</sup>Phyllis will re-state this position more fully in lines 85-86, 'exitus acta probat." careat successibus, opto,/ quisquis ab eventu facta notanda putat!'

<sup>56</sup>Similarly in lines 11-22 the sequence of verbs 'fui' (11), 'putavi' (11), 'devovi' (13), 'timui' (15), 'dixi' (20), 'fui' (22), suggest how Phyllis' past actions were guided by a misapprehension of Demophoon's character.

quite clearly dismisses any notion of sex being a *meritum* and firmly relegates it to the status of a *crimen* and a *scelus*. Nevertheless, just as lines 27-30 demonstrate a desire to ameliorate the culpability of her physical involvement, so too the stricture of lines 55-58 is not quite so conclusive as it might seem. When Phyllis says 'debut haec meriti summa fuisse mei' (56), the implication must be that her other actions (specifically the sex which is condemned in lines 57-58) are also *merita*. Phyllis' point, in this context, is that they are *merita* which are inappropriate to *hospitium*. We seem, therefore, to be returned to the viewpoint of lines 27-28 where sex, although viewed as a *crimen*, is also seen as deserving of some recognition, 'Dic mihi, quid feci, nisi non sapienter amavi?/ crimine te potui demeruisse meo'. Phyllis, then, would seem to be implying that sex is, after all, a *meritum* of some description. The point is made clear by the correlation between the 'te ... demeruisse' of line 28 and the 'me meruisse' of line 61. She argues in the earlier lines that although making love with Demophoon was a *crimen* (because it involved sex out of wedlock), nevertheless through this activity she has 'earned' his consideration. *Demereo* can also suggest the sense of earning money through the granting of sexual favours (i.e. prostitution).<sup>57</sup> We might,

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<sup>57</sup>The following are examples of the verb being used in this sense:

Bal. Quid mercedis petasus hodie domino demeret?

Har. Quid domino? quid somniatis? mea quidem haec habeo omnia,  
meo peculio empta.

Bal. Nempe quod femina summa sustinent.  
(Plautus, *Pseudolus*, 1186ff.)

"Lais," inquit, "Corinthia ob elegantiam venustatemque formae grande pecuniam demerebat'  
(Gellius, *A. Gellii Noctium Atticarum*, 1.8.3).

then, consider that Phyllis is using this economic imagery in a slightly different sense. She believes she has 'earned' Demophoon by sleeping with him. Sex was a downpayment on marriage. This meaning would also apply in line 61 'speravi melius, quia me meruisse putavi' and continue into the sentiment of line 62, 'quaecumque ex merito spes venit, aequa venit'. Phyllis thought she had 'earned' a better outcome (*coniugium*) by sleeping with Demophoon. The sacrifice of her virginity should have ensured her future status as a *coniunx*. Sex, in this instance, was a *meritum* because it was a deed committed only for the sake of a honourable outcome. We may, then, suppose that to Phyllis sex with Demophoon truly was a *meritum*. For it involved a degree of self-sacrifice which Phyllis only tolerated in the belief that it was a required part of the respectable institution of *coniugium*. These lines, therefore, demonstrate a rather confused and sophistical attempt by Phyllis to defuse her own sense of moral culpability.

Phyllis continues in her endeavour to smother her own guilt by further emphasizing her own naïveté and the manner in which she has been cynically manipulated by Demophoon:

'Fallere credentem non est operosa puellam  
gloria. simplicitas digna favore fuit.  
sum decepta tuis et amans et femina verbis.  
di faciant, laudis summa sit ista tuae!  
(63-66)

Phyllis portrays herself as a female stereotype of the most hopelessly vulnerable type, trusting, naive and in love. Her status as a *credens* has already been proved beyond question by the repetition of

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'credidimus' four times in lines 49-53. Demophoon's capacity for verbal deceit has already been noted in line 49, 'credidimus blandis, quorum tibi copia, verbis' and in the syllepsis of line 25, 'ventis et verba et vela dedisti'. Whereas Phyllis has already proved her 'simplicitas' (64) by confessing in lines 53-54 that one *pignus* would have been quite sufficient to deceive her, 'quo iam tot pignora nobis?/ parte satis potui qualibet inde capi'; moreover, there is the fact that she is unaware of the propensity of lovers to shed deceitful tears, 'credidimus lacrimis - an et haec simulare docentur?' (51). Phyllis, then, attempts to reinforce an impression of herself as an honest, simple woman who has been misused. Conversely, Demophoon is vilified as a shameless seducer. Her 'capture', as her characterization stresses, was hardly an arduous task, 'Fallere credentem non est operosa puellam/ gloria' (63-64). We may also sense some irony in the phrase 'simplicitas digna favore fuit' (64). Phyllis means, of course, that her 'simplicitas' should have merited Demophoon's respect. But, in fact, this is precisely the quality which inspired his attempt at seduction.<sup>58</sup> Line 66, 'di faciant, laudis summa sit ista tuae', contrasts with the earlier 'debut haec meriti summa fuisse mei' (56). Whereas Phyllis' actions (certainly as regards 'hospitium') had at least some objective merit, Demophoon's were despicable both in intent and in practice. Consequently, Demophoon's 'gloria' is mere ignominy.

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<sup>58</sup>Hence in *Heroides* 20, Cydippe views her 'simplicitas' as the reason for her erotic 'capture', 'visa simplicitas est mea posse capi' (*Heroides* 20.104).

(4): A Question Of Masonry.

Phyllis now proceeds to a piece of quite remarkable melodrama. The thought (or rather wish) just expressed (that Phyllis' seduction may ironically stand as the pinnacle of Demophoon's achievement) is expanded into a piece of imaginative ephrasis:

'inter et Aegidas, media statuaris in urbe,  
magnificus titulis stet pater ante suis.  
cum fuerit Sciron lectus torvosque Procrustes  
et Sinis et tauri mixtaque forma viri  
et domitae bello Thebae fusique bimembres  
et pulsata nigri regia caeca dei -  
hoc tua post illos titulo signetur imago:

HIC EST, CUIUS AMANS HOSPITA CAPTA DOLO EST.'  
(66-74)

There is a textual problem here. Some debate surrounds the reading of 'illos' (73). It is not immediately apparent exactly what 'illos' refers to. N. Heinsius suggested emending to 'illum', i.e. meaning that Demophoon's statue will stand behind/after Theseus'. Jacobson, also dubious about the reading of 'illos' (as the equivalent of *titulos*), offers a more lengthy explanation:

'Further *post titulos* is strange, since *titulus* is the inscription, not the statue. I suggest that *illos* here recapitulates all the aforementioned villains whom Theseus has overcome. The implication ("You Demophoon come right after them") is that Demophoon is being enlisted in a rogue's gallery - where he indeed belongs. We must observe that the wrongdoers whom Phyllis enumerates are, with perhaps one exception, like Demophoon violators of the laws of hospitality: Sciron, Sinis and Procrustes, the traditional trio; the Thebans who rejected the common right of burial, the centaurs who violated the sanctity of the wedding-feast, Pluto himself, the over-tenacious host who keeps all his guests (in this case, Pirithous whom Theseus cannot liberate). It is among these malefactors that Demophoon belongs and it

is among them where Phyllis implicitly sets him.<sup>59</sup>

The preoccupation with *hospitium*, in this context, seems a little misplaced. The essential point of these lines is to contrast the number and type of Theseus' 'tituli' with the singular 'titulus' of Demophoon. The achievements of Theseus contrast starkly with those of Demophoon. The life of the father is one of remarkable distinction, that of the son, the story of a single deceit. The father stands first ('ante'), pre-eminent and 'magnificus' in his plurality of achievement ('titulis .. suis'). In other words, Theseus' statue is covered with the *tituli* of his heroic deeds.<sup>60</sup> Demophoon comes later and lower ('post'), his *imago* can boast only a single ironic *titulus*. Theseus' deeds are uniformly those of vigour and daring, 'domitae bello Thebae'; 'et pulsata nigri regia caeca dei'. Demophoon's consists of one very unmartial conquest.

Phyllis' reference to Theseus may also be seen as a strategy designed at self-vindication. She has already said that Demophoon's pedigree was one of his features in which she placed blind trust, 'credidimus generi nominibusque tuis' (50). The career of the father (as these lines demonstrate) might have led Phyllis naturally to suppose that Demophoon would have been a respectable partner. Hence her mistake is seen as admissible. She could not be expected to foresee such a glaring disparity between the character of father and son.

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<sup>59</sup>Jacobson, 72.

<sup>60</sup>This notion of plurality, 'de tanta rerum turba' (75), must support the reading of 'illos' as a reference to *tituli*.

We must now consider the inscription which Phyllis would like to place on the pedestal:

'HIC EST, CUIUS AMANS HOSPITA CAPTA DOLO EST.'

This is also intended as an indictment of Demophoon's behaviour. Phyllis was ensnared ('capta') by a trick ('dolo').<sup>61</sup>It therefore reinforces her earlier scathing assessment of Demophoon's 'achievement' in lines 63-64, 'Fallere credentem non est operosa puellam/ gloria'. Phyllis' seduction was accomplished by Demophoon's shameless exploitation of a naive and trusting nature. Demophoon, it would appear, is doubly culpable, for he has both betrayed a woman who loved him ('amans') and wronged his 'hospita' to whom he should be obligated. By juxtaposing 'amans' and 'hospita' Phyllis hopes to emphasize the totality of Demophoon's crimes. But at the same time as she does so, she also seems to re-open the question of her own guilt. For prior to this passage in lines 55ff. Phyllis was greatly concerned to separate the province of *hospitium* from that of *amor*. Love, at least in its physical form, was a source of profound regret, 'quae

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<sup>61</sup>*Doli* in elegiac poetry are the wiles the lover employs to gain access to the beloved:

'deficiunt artes, deficiuntque doli'  
(Tibullus, 1.4.82).

'est deus, occultos qui vetat esse dolos'  
(Tibullus, 1.9.24).

'... mea nocturnis trita fenestra dolis'  
(Propertius, 4.7.16).

Demophoon's use of a *dolus*, therefore, further characterizes him as the artful seducer.



redeemed, but for Phyllis, the casual victim of a worthless philanderer, there can be no similar compensation. Ariadne sits aloft in splendour, 'inque capistratis tigribus alta sedet' (80), but Phyllis is looked down upon by her compatriots, 'at mea despecti fugiunt conubia Thraces' (81). Phyllis, salvaging what pride she can, claims not to be envious of her more fortunate counterpart, 'illa - nec invideo' (79).

(5): Thracians, Contempt and Departure.

Phyllis now turns in another direction, as her behaviour is imaginatively viewed from the perspective of the native Thracians:

'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.  
exitus acta probat." careat successibus, opto,  
quisquis ab eventu facta notanda putat!'  
(81-86)

The Thracians' hostility to Demophoon bears some similarity to the Africans' objections to Aeneas in the *Aeneid*.<sup>62</sup> The Africans object to

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'despectus Iarbas'  
(*Aeneid* 4.36).

'te propter Libycae gentes Nomadumque tyranni  
odere, infensi Tyrii;  
(*Aeneid* 4.320-321)

Consider also Iarbas' prayer to Jupiter:

'cuique loci leges dedimus, conubia nostra  
reppulit ac dominum Aenean in regna recepit.  
et nunc ille Paris cum semiviro comitatu,  
Maeonia mentum mitra crinemque madentem  
subnexus, raptu potitur: nos munera templis

Aeneas partly because of his effeminate appearance, the Thracians' objection to Demophoon seems to be based upon the anachronism 'doctas ... Athenas' (83) which sets up an uneasy contrast with 'armiferam Thracen' (84). Learning is obviously not a quality which is much appreciated in Thrace, and it would seem that Phyllis' susceptibility to 'the Athenian bookworm' has only confirmed the Thracians' suspicions that a woman is an unsuitable ruler for this robust country (as confirmed by line 112, 'nomine femineo vix satis apta regi'). Thracian character is appropriately manifested in a bluntly down-to-earth *sententia* which Phyllis imagines being levelled against herself: 'exitus<sup>63</sup> acta probat' (85). Phyllis responds to the criticism by stating, 'careat successibus opto/ quisquis ab eventu facta notanda putat!' (85-86). Her wish is obviously reminiscent of lines 61-62, 'speravi melius, quia me meruisse putavi;/ quaecumque ex merito spes venit, aequa venit.' Her actions were justified by a certain expectation of events (marriage to Demophoon). Her intentions were honourable and it is these intentions which should be judged rather than the unfortunate way in which events have turned out. Though the argument is not without point, Phyllis evidently does not succeed in convincing herself, because she rapidly entertains a situation (Demophoon's return) which would counter the Thracians' criticism:

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quippe tuis ferimus famamque fovemus inanem.'  
(*Aeneid* 4. 213-218)

<sup>63</sup>'Exitus' can also denote death. We may therefore see an allusive link forwards to the final section of the poem where Phyllis believes that only her death can rectify the situation.

'at si nostra tuo spumescant aequora remo,  
iam mihi, iam dicar consuluisse meis.'  
(87-88)

If Demophoon would only return, then Phyllis could once more stand proud amongst her people, and the allegation of spurning her people, 'quod ferar externum praeposuisse meis' (82), would be alleviated by the appearance of having consulted their interests, 'iam dicar consuluisse meis' (88). If Demophoon returned, Phyllis could argue that she had secured a useful dynastic marriage.<sup>64</sup> In the version of Apollodorus where Phyllis is given away to Demophoon by her father we must consider that he at least thought it was a useful match. Yet 'dicar' (88) implies that Phyllis was not really concerned with such considerations and she soon abandons the possibility of justification from this quarter:

'sed neque consului, nec te mea regia tanget  
fessaque Bistonia membra lavabis aqua!'  
(89-90)

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<sup>64</sup>The advantages of an alliance with the Trojans is one of the arguments that Anna uses to induce Dido to become involved with Aeneas:

'nec venit in mentem quorum consederis arvis?  
hinc Gaetulae urbes, genus insuperabile bello,  
et Numidae infreni cingunt et inhospita Syrtis;  
hinc deserta siti regio lateque furentes  
Barcae. quid bella Tyro surgentia dicam  
germanique minas?  
dis equidem auspibus reor et Iunone secunda  
hunc cursum Iliacas vento tenuisse carinas.  
quam tu urbem, soror, hanc cernes, quae surgere regna  
coniugio tali! Teucrum comitantibus armis  
Punica se quantis attollet gloria rebus!'  
(Aeneid 4. 39-49)

This line of argument, given that Carthage is a new city surrounded by potentially hostile neighbours, would seem to be more appropriate in Dido's case than Phyllis'.

The optimistic whimsy of the conditional sequence 'at si ... consuluisse meis' (87-88) is suppressed by the pessimism of the definite 'sed neque consului' (89).

Phyllis now turns to a recollection of the departure scene:

'Illa meis oculis species abeuntis inhaeret,  
cum premeret portus classis itura meos.  
ausus es amplecti colloque infusus amantis  
oscula per longas iungere pressa moras  
cumque tuis lacrimis lacrimas confundere nostras,  
quodque foret velis aura secunda, queri  
et mihi discedens suprema dicere voce:  
"Phylli, fac expectes Demophoonta tuum!"  
(91-98)

Why does Phyllis choose to recall this scene at this particular moment? Although Phyllis is becoming increasingly aware of the probability of Demophoon's treachery, nevertheless she is naturally reluctant to accept it. We have just seen how Phyllis has allowed herself some brief moments of optimism before reluctantly resigning herself to pessimism. No sooner, however, has she apparently accepted Demophoon's perfidy than she launches into the recollection of an event which she believed to be the epitome of Demophoon's devotion. We may, then, suppose that Phyllis hopes to counter the mounting gloom by bringing to mind an image of Demophoon's love and sincerity.

His actions towards her at the moment of departure have become indelibly printed on her mind, 'Illa meis oculis species abeuntis inhaeret' (91). He dared ('ausus es') openly to display his feelings toward her in a series of embraces, kisses, and tender complaints. This public display of emotion had encouraged Phyllis to believe in his sincerity and in the prospect of his return, "Phylli, fac expectes Demophoonta tuum!" (98).

But it is also possible that Phyllis is subjecting this scene (like the rest of Demophoon's actions) to pessimistic scrutiny. In this case 'species' (91) may be interpreted more negatively. The word contrasts outward appearance with inner reality.<sup>65</sup> Appearances can be deceptive and Demophoon's actions may have been no more than a show designed to disguise his truly treacherous nature. In this instance 'ausus es' would refer not so much to the boldness of a public display of personal feelings but to the audacity of counterfeiting such tender emotions. There is also a certain irony in the expression of line 97, 'et mihi discedens suprema dicere voce'. It seems now as though Demophoon really did speak with 'suprema ... voce', for these will probably be the last words that Phyllis ever hears from his lips. There is also the allusion in 'suprema ... voce' to one's dying words. Therefore Demophoon's parting remarks to Phyllis are equivalent to a dying address. But ironically his 'final' words will not anticipate his death but Phyllis'.

Thus Phyllis' recollection of the departure scene displays a tension between a desire to believe in Demophoon's sincerity and depth of feeling and a suspicion that he deliberately feigned his emotions to deceive her. This manifests itself in an alternation between residual optimism and mounting scepticism.

Scepticism appears in the form of two questions which play on the wording of Demophoon's parting injunction:

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<sup>65</sup>For example, Cicero speaking of the supporters of Catiline contrasts their appearance with their true intentions, 'horum hominum species est honestissima ... voluntas vero et causa impudentissima', (*Catiline*, 2.18); Seneca expands the whole concept into a philosophical maxim, 'fallaces ... sunt rerum species, quibus credimus', (*Ben.* 4.34.1).

Expectem, qui me numquam visurus abisti?  
expectem pelago vela negata meo?  
(99-100)

Obviously, the questions anticipate a negative answer. They appear to be motivated by an indubitable sense of Demophoon's treachery. But Phyllis chooses to defy expectations:

'et tamen expecto - redeas modo serus amanti,  
ut tua sit solo tempore lapsa fides!  
(101-102)

Temporarily dismissing a negative interpretation of the departure scene, Phyllis chooses to indulge in another burst of sudden optimism. Demophoon's only fault may be his timekeeping. He may merely be 'serus', rather than *sceleratus*. His 'fides' may be reprehensible only in its inability to manifest itself at the correct time. It becomes clear, therefore, that Phyllis is unable to maintain a persistently negative outlook. She is unable to relegate her *amor* and trust entirely to the past. We are reminded of her confession in line 10, 'invito nunc et amore nocēs'. In spite of increasing suspicion and doubt there is still a residual amount of *amor* which battles against the odds to maintain faith with Demophoon (though perhaps this is not so much a question of *amor* as a desire to ease her conscience which can only be effected by Demophoon's return).

Yet optimism and pessimism alternate very rapidly in these lines and Phyllis rapidly questions her judgment, 'Quid precor infelix?' (103), and passes on to more gloomy considerations:

'Quid precor infelix? te iam tenet altera coniunx  
forsitan et, nobis qui male favit, amor;  
iamque tibi excidimus, nullam, puto, Phyllida nosti.'  
(103-105)

The expression of lines 103-104 deserves further consideration. The inclusion of the term 'coniunx' is clearly vital. For, as we have seen earlier, Phyllis' hope for *coniugium* was the prime motivating force for her relationship with Demophoon. Her illicit sex with him was in the expectation of a legalised marriage (this is the whole point of lines 61-62), and Demophoon, it seems, had given her to believe that such a relationship would be confirmed. It must, therefore, be particularly galling for her to entertain the thought that the marriage which would have helped to ease her moral conscience may have taken place elsewhere.

Precisely how we read these lines depends largely on how we choose to punctuate. The line usually appears in the following form, 'te iam tenet altera coniunx/ forsitan et, nobis qui male favit, amor', and is accordingly translated as 'It may be you are already won by another bride, and feel for her the love that favoured me but ill'.<sup>66</sup> Obviously when 'altera' and 'coniunx' are run together to produce 'altera coniunx' we must suppose that Phyllis is viewing herself as the original 'coniunx'. Is she thus engaging in a piece of Didonian self-deceit, believing that sex is sufficient grounds for marriage, 'coniugium vocat, hoc praetexit nomine culpam' (*Aeneid* 4.172) ? It would, however, be surprising if Phyllis were saying this. For in spite of the fact that Phyllis would dearly like to see herself as Demophoon's wife, it seems clear that she does not. This is why Phyllis introduces herself as a 'hospita', this is why she angrily

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<sup>66</sup>This is the punctuation and the translation from the second edition of the Loeb, *Ovid, Heroides and Amores* (London, 1986), pp. 28-9.

recalls Demophoon's promises in lines 32-34, and this is why she is racked by guilt at having made love with Demophoon when she was a *hospita* and not a wife (57-58). It would, then, be an amazing *volte face* for Phyllis suddenly to see herself as a *coniunx*. This problem, however, can be removed by a simple alteration of punctuation, 'te iam tenet altera, coniunx/ forsitan, et, nobis qui male favit, amor'. We can see that the line, punctuated in this way is characterized by mounting pessimism. Perhaps Demophoon has another woman, and even worse perhaps she is his wife too. The use of 'forsitan' is thus analogous to its earlier occurrence in line 14, 'nec tenuit cursus forsitan ille [Theseus] tuos'. In each instance 'forsitan' represents a new and disconcerting possibility.

The use of 'iam' in these lines contrasts with the expression of the immediately preceding lines, 'redeas modo serus amanti,/ ut tua sit solo tempore lapsa fides' (101-102). Phyllis' optimism (Demophoon may only be late) is replaced by pessimism (he may have already found someone else and forgotten her). Her hopes have been slow to fade, but her tardy reluctance contrasts with the rapidity with which she supposes Demophoon may have forgotten her.<sup>67</sup> His speed in this respect is the natural complement of his sloth in returning, 'at tu lentus abes' (23).

'Nullam ... Phyllida' (105) looks like the imagined response of Demophoon to the question of 'Phyllis?' Demophoon will answer (so Phyllis believes) that he does not know any Phyllis. If he should care

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<sup>67</sup>Demophoon's projected memory loss ('tibi excidimus' [105]) clearly contrasts with the intensity of Phyllis' recollection as demonstrated in the departure scene, 'Illa meis oculis species abeuntis inhaeret' (91).

to enquire further, 'si quae sim Phyllis et unde, rogas' (and the conditional 'si ... rogas' perhaps implies that he may not even be sufficiently interested) Phyllis will undertake to refresh his memory (cf. lines 107ff. below). But Phyllis, of course, has already delivered the answer to this question in the very first line of the poem, 'Hospita, Demophoon, tua te Rhodopeia Phyllis'. Why, then, does she choose to ask an apparently redundant question? Jacobson comments:

'Phyllis identifies herself precisely, because she fears that Demophoon may no longer even remember her. This of itself is not unusual, but *et unde* is strange and is clearly answered in anticipation by the *Rhodopeia* of the first verse and by the geography lesson at 113-114 (which I suspect derives from some Atthidographer's account of the extent of the kingdom). The reason may be simple. Phyllis worries that Thrace may seem like the end of the world to a Prince of Athens. Therefore she must be exact in recalling it and herself to his mind.'<sup>68</sup>

Yet this seems to miss the very obvious bitterness of Phyllis' tone. Jacobson writes, 'Phyllis identifies herself precisely, because she fears that Demophoon may no longer even remember her. This of itself is not unusual', but surely it is unusual. Phyllis is entitled to expect Demophoon to remember: after all, he is supposed to be returning to marry her. Even Phyllis cannot be so naive as to imagine that the only thing preventing Demophoon from returning is a decent travel plan. She is clearly being sarcastic and enforcing the point that, after all she has done for him, he has no excuse for treating her in this shameful manner:

'quae tibi, Demophoon, longis erroribus acto  
Threicos portus hospitiumque dedi,

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<sup>68</sup>Jacobson, 71.

cuius opes auxere meae, cui dives egenti  
munera multa dedi, multa datura fui;  
quae tibi subieci latissima regna Lycurgi,  
nomine femineo vix satis apta regi,  
qua patet umbrosum Rhodope glacialis ad Haemum,  
et sacer admissas exigit Hebrus aquas,  
cui mea virginitas avibus libata sinistris  
castaque fallaci zona recincta manu!  
(111-116)

We are given here the first reference to Demophoon's state on his arrival, 'longis erroribus acto'. This would retrospectively explain the actions of lines 45-48. Yet we seem to have little evidence that Demophoon's being a shipwrecked sailor was part of the usual basis of the myth.<sup>69</sup> This characterization of Demophoon may have been invented by the poet or was more probably inspired by the similar motif in the *Aeneid*. The inclusion of this detail allows Phyllis to stress her generosity and Demophoon's treachery. But the motif does not seem out of place within the general context of the myth and may well have been a habitual detail.

Phyllis proceeds to enumerate the extent of her generosity. The 'quae' of line 106 ('si, quae sim Phyllis et unde, rogas') is picked up by the 'quae' of line 107 (which in turn prefigures the 'quae' of line 111). She was the one who provided him with the succour of *hospitium* after he had been long wandering on the sea (107-108). She was the one who helped him financially (109-110). It was she too who ceded her kingdom to him (111),<sup>70</sup> and bestowed the gift of her virginity

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<sup>69</sup>Unless we can read 'μετ' ὀλίγων νεῶν προσίσχει' (Apollodorus, *Epitome*, 6.16) as a reference to depletion of numbers through storm.

<sup>70</sup>Is Phyllis' description of her kingdom ironically at her own expense? Is this part of her 'dowry' really all that attractive? Certainly her kingdom is big, 'latissima regna' (111), but it seems to consist of largely woods, ice and water, 'qua patet umbrosum Rhodope glacialis ad

upon him (115).

This section is characterized by a vigorous emphasis on Phyllis as the active benefactor, 'quae (107) ... dedi (108) ... dives (109) ... dedi (110) ... fui (110) ... quae (111) ... subieci (111)', and Demophoon as the essentially passive recipient, 'tibi (107) ... cuius (109) ... cui (109) ... tibi (111) ... cui (115). The stress, therefore, is clearly on Phyllis' generosity. This is emphasized not only by the number of benefactions listed, but also by such verbal devices as the juxtaposition 'dives egenti' in line 109 and the elegant assonance of line 110, 'munera multa dedi, multa datura fui'. Phyllis' past generosity is matched by her present indignation, the whole point of this section being to expand upon the iniquity of Demophoon's failure to recollect her, 'iamque tibi excidimus, nullam, puto, Phyllida nosti' (105). But at the same time as Phyllis vents her righteous wrath, she is also forced to recognize how Demophoon has manipulated her. Thus her indignation is bound to re-activate her own sense of remorse. However angry Phyllis gets, she will ultimately be the loser. For her whole future depends on Demophoon's correct conduct. The more deeply Phyllis pries into his perfidy, the more deeply she is digging her own grave.

It is notable that Phyllis' list of benefactions begins with *hospitium*, ('Threicios portus hospitiumque dedi' [108]), and concludes with *sex*, ('cui mea virginitas avibus libata sinistris' [115]). We

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Haemum, / et sacer admissas exigit Hebrus aquas' (113-114). It is a veritable Northern wasteland. Also the Thracians are warlike and troublesome, 'armiferam Thracen' (84). Such a kingdom could hardly be attractive to the (anachronistically) learned Athenian. We might, however, understand why Phyllis considers it to be a kingdom unsuited to a female ruler, 'nomine femineo vix satis apta regi' (112).

might speculate that this progression represents, for Phyllis, a crescendo of seriousness. The relation of these details returns her to the terms of self-reproach in lines 55-60. In attempting to reproach Demophoon, Phyllis is once more brought up against her *bête noire*.

Phyllis lingers on the description of her 'wedding night' with Demophoon in suitably macabre fashion:

'cui mea virginitas avibus libata sinistris  
castaque fallaci zona recincta manu!  
pronuba Tisiphone thalamis ululavit in illis,  
et cecinit maestum devia carmen avis;  
adfruit Allecto brevibus torquata colubris,  
suntque sepulcrali lumina mota face!'  
(115-120)

There is no suggestion here of a legitimate marriage, only of an ill-omened and inappropriate physical union. The significance of the moment is emphasized by the choice of 'libata': Phyllis' virginity is poured out like an offering to a god. Unfortunately this 'libation' was doomed to a miserable outcome because the divinity in question was Demophoon. The ill omens and unpleasant ogres which accompany this act are a reflection of the ill intent and treachery of the pseudo-god at the centre of the action. Instead of the more usual *Juno pronuba*, there is attendant 'pronuba Tisiphone', whose response to Phyllis' marriage is suitable, 'thalamis ululavit in illis' (117). She is accompanied in this gruesome dirge by the screech-owl, 'et cecinit maestum devia carmen avis' (118). To complete this picture of infelicity, there is Allecto in her usual attire, 'brevibus torquata colubris' (119), and funereal rather than wedding torches (120).<sup>71</sup>The

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<sup>71</sup>Torches were used at both weddings and funerals and so Phyllis' new gloomy perspective can be neatly demonstrated by the

inappropriateness of Demophoon as Phyllis' 'marriage'-partner is shown by the incongruous juxtaposition of 'castaque' with 'fallaci' in line 116, 'castaque fallaci zona recincta manu'. This is further evidence of how a naive woman has been misused. This section, then, motivated by her indignation at the prospect that Demophoon has abandoned her, moves Phyllis increasingly towards morbid pessimism. The grounds for her anger at Demophoon also, unfortunately, coincide with the basis of her self-reproach. So Phyllis is ultimately unable to shake off the strictures of her conscience through her denunciation of Demophoon.

(6): Towards Suicide?

As we enter the final section of the poem, Phyllis' emotional state 'maesta' (121) is a reflection of the negative imagery of the immediately preceding lines.<sup>72</sup> But at the same time as 'maesta' points backwards to gloom and pessimism, 'tamen' would appear to point forward to lingering optimism, 'Maesta tamen scopulos fruticosaque litora calco'. The construction we have here is presumably that of a 'tamen' with a suppressed 'quamvis'. Thus we could restore the thrust of the sentence by paraphrasing as 'quamvis maesta ... tamen calco'. 'Tamen' would therefore indicate a further resurgence of hope in an apparently negative context. We are naturally reminded of the similar

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suggestion that her 'wedding' took place with funeral torches.

<sup>72</sup>Particularly the 'maestum ... carmen' (118) of the screech-owl.

switch of feeling in lines 99-102, where a sudden surge of optimism is likewise signalled by a 'tamen', 'et tamen expecto' (101). The hope in this earlier instance is similarly contrary to the pessimistic thrust of the immediately preceding lines, 'Expectem, qui me numquam visurus abisti?/ expectem pelago vela negato meo?' (99-100).

Phyllis, then, seems to have a real problem in coming to terms with her negative assessment of Demophoon's past actions and character. Although she seems to be able to reach an understanding of the 'real' situation, she is apparently unwilling to accept her own conclusions. This is not in itself surprising, for acceptance of Demophoon's treachery will force her to confront her own feelings of shame and guilt. Her precarious and intermittent belief in Demophoon is no longer motivated by her *amor* but by the necessity to block her own capacity for destructive introspection.

In this final section of the poem Phyllis describes a sequence of apparently hysterical actions:

'Maesta tamen scopulos fruticosaque litora calco  
quaeque patent oculis litora lata meis.  
sive die laxatur humus, seu frigida lucent  
sidera, prospicio, quis freta ventus agat;  
et quaecumque procul venientia lintea vidi,  
protinus illa meos auguror esse deos.  
in freta procurro, vix me retinentibus undis,  
mobile qua primas porrigit aequor aquas.  
quo magis accedunt, minus et minus utilis adsto;  
linquor et ancillis excipienda cado'  
(121-130)

That Phyllis watches for sails is not surprising, but her watch appears to have become a twenty-four hour vigil, she surveys the sea by day and by night (123-124). The repetition and monotony of her activity is reminiscent of the imagery of the very opening of the poem and her counting of the lunar months (3-8). Phyllis' life is a

continuum of frustrated expectation. She suspects that Demophoon has cheated her and will not return. But she still waits and hopes because his return is the only event which can restore her equilibrium. The establishment of *coniugium* with Demophoon is a necessity for her to be able to clear her conscience. But as the prospect of this outcome fades, her hopes become increasingly desperate and irrational. In an attempt to forestall her own sense of shame and guilt she continues to hope and act optimistically, even though she acknowledges that there is no basis for any such feelings. As time progresses we can see that Phyllis' convictions have weakened and consequently her actions become increasingly less composed. An assured wait is turning into frantic anxiety which produces the hysterical actions of this final section of the poem.

Any distant sail which Phyllis spots during her vigil is enough to precipitate immediate and dynamic action. The uncertainty which surrounds the identity of the ship, 'quaecumque procul ... lintea' (125), is incongruously matched by the immediacy of Phyllis' expectation, 'protinus' (126). Phyllis is so eager that she hurls herself into the waves, and the sea itself can hardly restrain her momentum. But the nervous excitement of this exercise proves too much for her and the *ancillae* are left to retrieve her insensate body, 'linquor et ancillis excipienda cado' (130). Her desperation seems to have reached such a pitch that she almost drowns herself everytime a sail is sighted. We might surmise that the phrase 'minus et minus utilis adsto' (129) is not only an accurate description of Phyllis' wavering posture in the waves but also a sound analogy of her declining mental state.

Phyllis' account of the actions engendered by her desperate

anxiety slide neatly into her intent to commit suicide as the account of her fall into the water in line 130 is replaced by the image of a much more permanent plunge in lines 131-134:

'Est sinus, adductos modice falcatus in arcus;  
ultima praerupta cornua mole rigent.  
hinc mihi suppositas inmittere corpus in undas  
mens fuit; et quoniam fallere pergis, erit.'  
(131-134)

If Demophoon will not return, then suicide is the only way in which Phyllis will be able to assuage her increasingly guilty conscience. Her perspective has reverted to that of lines 59-60. In spite of her attempts to convince herself of the propriety of her actions, Phyllis has proved unable to satisfy herself completely. Thus the unattainable wish (59-60) that she should have died before she slept with Demophoon is replaced with the available alternative of subsequently killing herself to atone for her transgression.

It seems, however, as if Phyllis' decision to commit suicide is not a new one, 'mens fuit' (134). She has apparently already decided upon a place and a method. We must assume that such a resolution corresponded to a moment of intense pessimism when Phyllis was convinced of Demophoon's treachery. But it is also clear that this past decision was not acted upon. Presumably this was because (as the letter itself demonstrates) Phyllis is unable to maintain a consistent belief in Demophoon's perfidy. She swings between optimism and pessimism and these fluctuations prevent her crossing the great divide between decision and action. We are alerted to this situation by the expression of line 134, 'mens fuit; et, quoniam fallere pergis, erit'. Phyllis claims that if Demophoon does not cease to play her false (i.e. if he does not return), then she will re-activate her decision

to take her life. But the fact that this resolution has been made before (and not acted upon) and that even now she postpones it for future completion (dependent on Demophoon's non-appearance) does not convince us of its efficacy. Will Phyllis ever be able to reach a position where she is able to maintain the consistent belief in Demophoon's treachery that will make her suicide possible?

The macabre aftermath which Phyllis attaches to her demise does little to dispel our doubts:

'ad tua me fluctus proiectam litora portent,  
occurramque oculis intumulata tuis!  
durtia ferrum ut superes adamantaque teque,  
"non tibi sic," dices, "Phylli, sequendus eram!"  
(135-138)

This is a terribly Gothic scene. Her death is pictured as a rather grotesque means of access to Demophoon, her corpse will reach him if she cannot. Her 'revenge' is imagined in terms that are obviously fantastical. To reach Demophoon her floating corpse must be endowed with an unerring sense of direction. The recognition scene is short and inevitably one-sided. It is natural to suspect that, the more Phyllis indulges her melodramatic imagination, the less likely is she actually to perpetrate the deed. The image, rather than the actuality, seems to be pre-eminent.

Phyllis rapidly moves on to other suicide methods:

'saepe venenorum sitis est mihi; saepe cruenta  
traiectam gladio morte perire iuvat.  
colla quoque, infidis quia se nectenda lacertis  
praebuerunt, laqueis implicuisse iuvat.'  
(139-142)

The plurality of methods that are entertained here contrasts with

lines 131-134 which stress a determined singularity of method and intention. The repetition of 'saepe' suggests that Phyllis' decisions are rather fluid and unstable. Every alternative seems to have crossed Phyllis's mind. Her problem is that she is spoilt for choice. There also appears to be a degree of hyperbole in these lines which matches the melodrama of lines 135-138. She not only considers poison, but has a positive thirst for it, 'venenorum sitis est mihi' (139). It would actually be pleasing ('iuvat' [140]) to suffer a *cruenta mors* with the sword, and she shows a similar eagerness ('iuvat' [142]) to submit her neck to the noose. In fact this last alternative is particular suitable, for her neck should pay the price for having been entwined in Demophon's arms, 'colla quoque, infidis quia se nectenda lacertis/ praebuerunt, laqueis implicuisse iuvat' (141-142). It is difficult not to suppose that these lines (like 135-138) are more concerned with imaginative gratification than with a serious consideration of suicide. By the very entertainment of these graphic methods of suicide Phyllis is able partially to ease her conscience and indulge her anger at Demophon. In this respect thinking about suicide seems almost as valuable as the act itself. Nevertheless, Phyllis insists that she is not merely play-acting:

'stat nece matura tenerum pensare pudorem.  
in necis electu parva futura mora est.'  
(143-144)

'Stat' appears to restate the resolution of 'mens fuit ... erit' (134). But once more the action which the decision prefigures 'nece matura tenerum pensare pudorem' is postponed, 'in necis electu parva futura mora est', although Phyllis does now suggest that there will not be a lengthy delay between resolution and enactment. Thus the

indefiniteness of 'erit' (134) is replaced by the relative certainty of 'parva ... mora' (144) as Phyllis attempts to stress the imminence of her death. Phyllis' reason for delay also appears to have altered. In line 134 her death is dependent on Demophoon continuing to play her false ('quoniam fallere pergis'). The gap between the past resolution ('mens fuit') and its subsequent re-activation ('erit') seems to leave some leeway for Demophoon to return and remove the necessity for death to take place. But in line 144 Phyllis does not appear to entertain this prospect and so her only excuse is the difficulty of which suicide method to employ. Such a tenuous reason (although lines 139-142 perhaps suggest a real problem!) alerts us to the probability that Phyllis is not nearly as enthusiastic as she attempts to appear.

Phyllis views her death as an attempt to balance the scales ('pensare'). Her early demise will compensate for the shameful loss of her 'tenerum ... pudorem'. Thus her suicide, here, appears primarily as an act of retribution against herself. Yet it is Demophoon who has contrived this unfortunate situation. The manner in which Phyllis describes her 'act of justice' is designed simultaneously to stimulate pathos (for herself) and arouse guilt (in Demophoon). 'Matura' is juxtaposed with 'nece' to emphasize the untimely nature of her demise and 'pudorem' is qualified by 'tenerum' to stress once more her youth and inexperience before her ruthless male seducer. We might, then, consider that Phyllis is using the suicide motif as a last desperate attempt to stimulate enough guilt in Demophoon to persuade him to return (and so ease Phyllis' own guilty conscience and remove the need for her death). If he does not return, he will have to bear the burden of the responsibility for her death. He will have to endure the remorse that Phyllis imagines him feeling on seeing her floating

corpse in line 138, "non tibi sic," dices, "Phylli, sequendus eram!"".

Phyllis will also ensure that Demophoon is damned for all time by the inscription on her epitaph:

'inscribere meo causa invidiosa sepulcro.  
aut hoc aut simili carmine<sup>73</sup> notus eris:

PHYLLIDA DEMOPHOON LETO DEDIT HOSPES AMANTEM  
ILLE NECIS CAUSAM PRAEBUIT, IPSA MANUM.'  
(145-148)

It appears, however, as if Phyllis' indecision (already visible in her irresolution over the choice of suicide method) also extends to the wording of her inscription: 'aut hoc aut simili carmine notus eris' (146). Her particular choice seems as provisional as her intention to kill herself. Presumably this is because it is also entirely dependent upon Demophoon's future actions. If he were to return, the requirement for an epitaph (like that for suicide) would be removed.

Phyllis' epitaph is evidently designed as a complement to the derogatory inscription which she imagines adorning the pedestal of Demophoon's statue in line 74: 'HIC EST, CUIUS AMANS HOSPITA CAPTA DOLO EST'. This earlier inscription was intended as a sarcastic assessment of Demophoon's achievement. The pinnacle of his glory ('laudis summa sit ista tuae' [66]) was to have taken advantage of a woman who loved him ('AMANS'), and who was his hostess ('HOSPITA'), by a trick ('DOLO'). This later inscription is an intensification of this

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<sup>73</sup>Phyllis' own *carmen* is an appropriate counterpart to the 'maestum ... carmen' of the screech-owl in line 118.

position. For Demophoon's *dolus* is seen as ultimately responsible for Phyllis' death. The point of the epitaph will be to make sure that the link between his treachery and her death is established for all to see. Demophoon will be viewed as the 'causa invidiosa' (145) of her premature demise. Phyllis will ensure that he becomes 'notus' (146) in a way that he might not wish. Instead of her epitaph being a celebration of her own achievement, it will be a lasting monument to Demophoon's perfidy. He caused her death 'leto dedit ... ille necis causam praebuit' (147-148), but left Phyllis herself to carry out the execution, 'ipsa manum' (148). 'Necis causam' by linking to 'in necis electu' (144) reinforces this point. Demophoon has provided the reason, but Phyllis herself must decide on the means.<sup>74</sup>

The myth of Phyllis invariably concludes with her death. So too this letter ends with a section in which Phyllis states her intention to end her life. Yet although the suicide of Phyllis is a constant in the versions of the myth that we do possess, nevertheless there seems to be nothing conclusive in her contemplation of death in these final lines. Phyllis' apparent resolution, 'mens fuit' (134), 'stat' (143), is continuously undercut. Completion of the deed is persistently postponed, 'erit' (134), 'parva futura mora est' (144). Her consideration of how to enact the deed seems to be more concerned with melodramatic detail than practicality. Hence she indulges in an image of her lifeless body floating before Demophoon's eyes and pictures his remorseful address to her corpse. She considers hanging for a rather

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<sup>74</sup>We might suppose that 'ipsa manum' ironically reflects the problem inherent in 'in necis electu'. What will Phyllis' hand finally be clutching, a bottle of poison, a sword, or a noose?

ridiculous reason, 'colla quoque, infidis quia se nectenda lacertis/  
praebuerunt, laqueis implicuisse iuvat' (141-142). Phyllis also seems  
to be using the motif as a persuasive device. Her suicide is dependent  
on his failure to return, 'mens fuit, et, quoniam fallere pergis,  
erit' (134). Her death, she argues, will make him infamous. For she  
will ensure that he is defamed for all time by the inscription upon  
her epitaph. The message is clear. Demophoon should return and prevent  
her death and his own condemnation. There is little here to suggest  
that Phyllis has reached a point of irrevocability. The poem concludes  
with the motif of suicide, but consideration of the act is certainly  
not contemporaneous with its execution. We are left with the  
impression that the struggle will continue long after the poem has  
ended.

## Epilogue:

### (1): The Epistolary Format.

We should not forget that the *Heroides* are letters. To succeed as such they must meet certain expectations of the reader:

'If the epistolary form is to be adopted as the vehicle for telling a story without straining the reader's belief that what he is reading is a letter, then it is imperative that the motivation for the writing of a letter at any particular stage in that story should be felt to arise naturally out of the events depicted, and, ideally, the resulting letter should be seen to be itself an agent in the forward movement of those events.'<sup>75</sup>

In the case of *Heroides* 2 Ovid has aptly fitted his narration of the myth to the format that he has chosen. As stated earlier in the introduction, the poet has removed all the elements of the story (aetiologies, metamorphoses) which are incompatible with the epistolary genre. Instead the emphasis is placed upon the portrayal of the individual consciousness of Phyllis and her struggle to come to terms with the problems of her situation. Moreover, it seems that Ovid has altered the temporal scheme of the myth to suit the letter form better. Phyllis' letter is dated to some three months after the passing of the deadline (3-6). There is, therefore, no question of immediate suicide upon the passing of the deadline. We are not presented with a volatily passionate Phyllis. By granting her this 'cooling-off' period, the poet allows Phyllis a greater opportunity

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<sup>75</sup>Duncan F. Kennedy, 'The Epistolary Mode And The First Of Ovid's *Heroides*', *Classical Quarterly* 34 (1984) 413.

for self-analysis and introspection. This, in turn, culminates in the writing of the letter itself. Self-analysis, therefore, produces the letter, but the letter also permits such introspection to find its fullest expression (letter-writing being necessarily a solitary and self-absorbing activity). The poet, then, has produced a reflective character for a reflective medium. There is a reciprocal relationship between characterization and literary medium.

*Heroides* 2 can also be seen as very much 'an agent in the forward movement' of the myth (as the poet has chosen to portray it). The letter is set between two pivotal moments of its parent myth, Demophoon's departure from Phyllis and the latter's subsequent suicide. In bridging the gap between the two events the letter offers some explanation as to how Phyllis has progressed from expectant lover to potential suicide.

(2): Sex, Guilt And Social Propriety.

Phyllis' problem in *Heroides* 2 is not so much love as sex. As a public figure (*regina*) she is intensely aware of the limits of social propriety. Unfortunately for Phyllis her sole encounter with the emotion of *amor* has placed her in a situation which compromises her heightened sense of moral integrity. In the grip of her love for Demophoon she slept with him. Although the letter stresses that she committed this act only in the expectation of marriage between herself and Demophoon, nevertheless, this was sex out of wedlock. This minor transgression, however, can soon be rectified by Demophoon's return. Unfortunately, as time passes, it seems less and less likely that

there is any prospect of this event. Phyllis, then, is left with a moral stigma which has little probability of being removed. The Ovidian letter enacts a battle of conscience as Phyllis attempts to justify her past conduct and lay the basis for being able to cope with the present. The question here is not one of unquenchable passion. Phyllis, we suspect, in the Ovidian version of the myth, would very much like to resurrect a life without Demophoon. But unhappily for Phyllis she seems to see Demophoon's return and the legitimacy of *coniugium* as the only way in which her life can be established on an even keel. Phyllis cannot live without Demophoon (but not for the habitual romantic reasons). The reason why Phyllis entertains suicide in this letter is not because of unrequited love, but because of a mounting sense of shame and guilt. But as we might expect intense passion to produce sudden suicide, so a cumulative process of self-recrimination will only gradually reach the same solution. Passion, it would seem, has greater urgency than morality.

Phyllis is clearly not in any hurry to put herself to the sword. She views it as an evil necessity rather than as a form of euphoric release. She fights hard to counter this idea of suicide as essential. To this end Phyllis employs a number of strategies to justify herself. One of these is to try to posit her actions within the boundaries of socially accepted institutions (*hospitium* and *coniugium*). There are basically two alternatives available to Phyllis in this respect. She can either suggest that she was never anything more than a 'hospita' and that her actions can be seen as merely conforming to the beneficence of this office. Or she can argue that she is a virtual *coniunx* (the status having been promised to her, if not yet having been actualised) and that the form of her relationship with Demophoon

was vindicated by the propriety of the projected outcome. Unfortunately, although conformity with either of these institutions would be sufficient for Phyllis to justify her behaviour, nevertheless she becomes increasingly aware that her own actions fall somewhere in the grey area in between. Thus although both options offer her an escape route, it is equally difficult to reach the safe haven of either.

Aside from the question of Phyllis as a *coniunx*, there is a recurrent tension between Phyllis as a 'hospita' and Phyllis as an 'amans'. This is a crucial antithesis, for *hospitium* (as noted above) is a means of rehabilitating her behaviour but *amor* is the force which has led her into transgression. Whether, therefore, Phyllis finally judges herself to have been primarily a 'hospita' or an 'amans' will be instrumental as to her decision on whether her life has a future or not.

The three key definitions of the poem are symmetrically placed at beginning, middle and end. In line 1 Phyllis appears as 'hospita', seventy three lines later, in line 74 she is defined as 'AMANS HOSPITA', and finally, after another gap of seventy three lines, she is 'AMANTEM' (147). Conversely, Demophoon does not receive any particular title until the penultimate line of the poem. He is 'Demophoon' in line 1, simply 'HIC' in line 74 but finally 'HOSPES' in line 147.

There may be various reasons for Phyllis initially defining herself as 'hospita' (1). She may be hinting sarcastically that she has been forced into a grudging acceptance of this term by Demophoon's failure to return and upgrade her status to that of *coniunx*. But it is also possible that Phyllis actually wants actively to embrace the

definition. Yet she only wishes to have been a 'hospita' in the restricted sense of lines 57-58, 'Nec moveor, quod te iuvi portuque locoque- / debuit haec meriti summa fuisse mei'. If her role as a 'hospita' could be viewed as simply conforming to an established social and moral norm, then she could dispense with the need for remorse. But at the same time as Phyllis yearns for this situation she simultaneously acknowledges that she has passed irrevocably beyond it, 'turpiter hospitium lecto cumulasse iugali / paenitet, et lateri conseruisse latus' (57-58). She cannot cancel out the shame of her lost innocence, 'quae fuit ante illam, malletm suprema fuisset / nox mihi, dum potui Phyllis honesta mori' (59-60), by hiding behind the mask of *hospitium*. The motivation for her physical involvement with Demophoon was obviously not *hospitium* but *amor*. She has, therefore, not only been a 'hospita' but also an 'amans' (65). This fact is acknowledged by the juxtaposition 'AMANS HOSPITA' in line 74. This acknowledgment is in itself a transitory stage which is finally resolved in the definitions of the final couplet. There Phyllis eventually appears as simply 'AMANTEM' and instead of her being a 'hospita' Demophoon is a 'HOSPES'. Phyllis must finally acknowledge that in her past relationship with Demophoon she played more of the the role of the lover than the 'hospita'. It was her *amor* for Demophoon which has led to the desperateness of her situation. It was her *amor* which led to her blind trust in him that induced her sexual involvement. She must face the fact that she was primarily an 'amans' and only nominally a 'hospita'. This recognition of her true status is accompanied by a similar assessment of Demophoon's. Her *amor* was encouraged by the belief that her feelings were reciprocated (he did, after all, promise to return and marry her). But Phyllis comes to

realize that Demophoon was really only ever a 'hospes' and only fraudently an *amans*.

Phyllis, then, has enough intellect to understand the true nature of her past motivation. She does not spare herself in her assessment of what has occurred but she does work hard to deflect culpability from herself. The obvious way to do this is to load as much blame as possible on to the shoulders of Demophoon. He is characterized as a perjurer, 'nec te iurata reducunt/ numina' (23-24), 'si de tot laesis sua numina quisque deorum/ vindicet, in poenas non satis unus eris' (43-44); as she was trusting, 'credentem ... puellam' (63) and naive 'simplicitas' (64) she had no defence to combat this barrage of deceit, 'quo iam tot pignora nobis?/ parte satis potui qualibet inde capi' (53-54). Phyllis, therefore, attempts to establish herself as the essentially innocent target of Demophoon's manipulative seduction. She also insists that although she may have transgressed, her intentions were honourable, 'speravi melius, quia me meruisse putavi;/ quaecumque ex merito spes venit, aequa venit' (61-62). Her actions were in anticipation of the legitimate relationship which Demophoon had promised her. She therefore strenuously resists any simplistic notion that actions should be judged only by their outcome, 'exitus acta probat." careat successibus, opto,/ quisquis ab eventu facta notanda putat!' (85-86). Phyllis is reluctant to be condemned for doing the wrong thing for the right reason. As noted above Phyllis also attempts to sublimate her activities as a lover ('*amans*') by stressing her role as a '*hospita*'. But unfortunately she is unable to convince herself that sex can properly be the province of *hospitium*; it is rather that of *coniugium*, 'turpiter hospitium lecto cumulasse iugali/ paenitet, et lateri conseruisse latus' (57-58). Unhappily,

Demophoon's treachery also prevents Phyllis from rehabilitating sex within the confines of *coniugium*. Thus Phyllis is frustrated at every turn.

Phyllis' letter, therefore, appears to swing abruptly between attempts to exonerate herself (taking the form of anger directed at Demophoon) and an awareness of her own culpability (manifesting itself in the form of self-reproach). Destructive introspection is balanced by an attempt to palliate her own guilt at Demophoon's expense. These two opposing forces (internal and external anger) reside in uneasy tension, alternating and modifying each other throughout the poem. This alternation mirrors the conflict in Phyllis between the desire to live and the belief in the necessity of her death. Although Phyllis may be able to suggest that Demophoon is the real villain and that she is the essentially innocent victim, nevertheless such protestations cannot entirely assuage her guilty conscience. Her culpability may be limited, her motivation justified but the events themselves cannot be revoked. Unless Demophoon returns and her illicit sex can be rehabilitated within *coniugium*, then Phyllis sees suicide as the only solution. But naturally she is reluctant to accept this conclusion. The poet leads the myth up to this point and leaves the conclusion hanging. The last line is not simplistically equivalent to Phyllis' last breath. We are presented with a conflict which is set to continue beyond the confines of the poem. Ovid, then, has taken a stereotypical story of erotic deceit and turned it into a melodramatic morality play.

CHAPTER THREE

HEROIDES SEVEN: DIDO TO AENEAS.

## INTRODUCTION:

### (1): The Challenge to Virgil?

*Heroides* 7 is perhaps the most ambitious of Ovid's literary epistles for it involves interaction with maybe the most prestigious work that was ever written in Latin, Virgil's *Aeneid*. By taking as his model a contemporary poem of considerable standing,

'cedite Romani scriptores, cedite Grai!  
nescio quid maius nascitur Iliade.'  
(Propertius, 2.34.65-66)

Ovid was obviously laying himself open to invidious comparison. Certainly, over the years, *Heroides* 7 has been received with less than rapture. Dryden, who was not entirely averse to the merits of Ovidian poetry, had little time for this particular poem:

'Mr. Dryden makes a very handsome observation on Ovid's writing a letter from Dido to Aeneas, in the following words: 'Ovid (says he, speaking of Virgil's fiction of Dido and Aeneas) takes it up after him, even in the same age, and makes an ancient heroine of Virgil's new-created Dido; dictates a letter for her, just before her death, to the ungrateful fugitive; and, very unluckily for himself, is for measuring a sword with a man so much superior in force to him on the same subject. ... The famous author of the Art of Love has nothing of his own; he borrows all from a greater master in his own profession, and, which is worse, improves nothing which he finds: nature fails him, and, being forced to his own shift, he has recourse to witticism.'<sup>76</sup>

Moreover, this critical opinion is far from being confined to the

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<sup>76</sup>John Dryden, quoted by Joseph Addison in the 'Spectator' (No. 62, eleventh of May, 1710).

eighteenth century. In the latest full length critical study of the poem we find similar disparaging sentiments:

'A statistic leads the way. In the climactic section of Book Four, from Dido's awakening to the end (about 400 lines) Dido's many brilliant and memorable speeches encompass approximately 170 lines. Ovid's Dido, in one monologue, goes on and on for over 190 lines, a length attained, by the way, in only two other poems (*Heroides* 12 and 15). Length alone does not necessarily mean a fiasco, but it helps, especially in this poem where tedium and weariness for the reader set in long before the poem happily draws to an end.'<sup>77</sup>

'*Satis superque*. Over and over Ovid modifies Vergil to achieve some rhetorical play, often to outdo his predecessor, and almost each time shows himself inferior.'<sup>78</sup>

It is perhaps not too surprising that the Ovidian poem has engendered such reactions. After all Virgil's *Aeneid* is ranked amongst the world's great literary masterpieces. Therefore when another poet chooses to interact with this canonical text there is a certain inevitability in an adverse critical response. The witty idiosyncrasy of Ovidian poetry only serves to exacerbate this situation. For it may well be assumed that the poet is deliberately attempting to undermine the grandeur of his epic predecessor. This indeed is the motivation which Jacobson attributes to Ovid:

'Ovid was congenitally averse to the Vergilian world-view and quite unable to sympathize with a Weltanschauung that could exalt grand, abstract - not to mention divine - undertakings over simple individual, human and personal considerations, and could dictate the sacrifice of the self for "higher ends." In this poem we hear not simply Dido struggling with Aeneas, but Ovid waging war with Vergil.'<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup>Howard Jacobson, *Ovid's Heroides* (Princeton 1974) 77.

<sup>78</sup>Jacobson, 84.

<sup>79</sup>Jacobson, 90.

But this seems to be taking things too far. Surely we would not similarly say that *Heroides* 1 was motivated by outrage at the values of Homer's epic society. The fact that *Heroides* 7 is based upon a contemporary poem does not necessarily indicate that Ovid's motivation must have been in any sense political. Rather Dido and Aeneas, just like the other couples of the *Heroides*, are two lovers who can naturally be accommodated into the collection's over-all framework. Ovid, who certainly does not seem to have been the sort of man to shy away from a challenge, must have relished the opportunity to adapt this famous section of Virgil's epic poem into his own elegiac format.<sup>80</sup> The point of the poem is not to make a political statement, but to demonstrate how the Virgilian material could be elegantly re-deployed within the new setting of his own *Heroides*. The poem, then, does not represent a conflict between two political pamphleteers but the appropriation of an episode from an epic poem into an elegiac setting. In a sense we can see that Ovid has allowed Virgil's Dido to be resurrected. After her demise in *Aeneid* 4 Ovid gives Dido a second chance. This time, however, she is to attempt to persuade Aeneas not in the manner of an epic queen but in that of an elegiac lover. So the poem represents the way in which an elegiac Dido, afforded the same material as her epic predecessor, would go about her attempt to persuade Aeneas.

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<sup>80</sup>A process perhaps readily suggested by Virgil's portrait of Dido being obviously indebted to the elegiac tradition (for a thorough discussion of this aspect of Virgil's Dido the reader is referred to Chapter 4 ["Dido and the Elegiac Tradition"] of Francis Cairns' *Virgil's Augustan Epic*, [Cambridge, 1989]).

HEROIDES 7: DIDO TO AENEAS.

(1): The Opening.

The opening couplet of this epistle, as preserved in several manuscripts, has not found favour with the various editors of the collection:

'Accipe, Dardanide, moriturae carmen Elissae;  
quae legis a nobis ultima verba legis.'<sup>81</sup>

The reason for their rejection, however, seems nowhere to be clearly stated. In his 1874 edition Palmer merely states:

'Two prefatory lines are to be found in a few late MSS. These introductory distichs will not be noticed in future in this edition.'<sup>82</sup>

In his later edition the couplet is not mentioned at all and appears only in the apparatus. In Dörrie<sup>83</sup> the lines are printed at the head of the poem but are placed between asterisks. The couplet is also omitted by W.S. Anderson in his discussion of the *Heroides*<sup>84</sup> and finds no place

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<sup>81</sup>Owing to the fact that these lines do not appear in most editions I have not counted them as lines one and two in the interests of clarity.

<sup>82</sup>Palmer (1874) 56.

<sup>83</sup>H. Dörrie, *P. Ovidii Nasonis Epistulae Heroidum* (Berlin 1971).

<sup>84</sup>W.S. Anderson, "The *Heroides*", included in *Ovid*, edited by J.W. Binns, (London 1973).

in the Loeb edition.<sup>85</sup> Nevertheless, in spite of this scholarly consensus there is good reason to suppose that these lines are genuine. In the first instance, we can see that they establish the basis for a close intertextual relationship between this poem and the fourth book of Virgil's *Aeneid*. *Elissa* does not seem to have been used to denote Dido before Virgil and *moritura* is strikingly Virgilian.<sup>86</sup> Therefore the opening line of the poem immediately establishes that Ovid's treatment of the myth of Dido and Aeneas is to be intimately connected with that which appears in Virgil's *Aeneid*. We are also alerted to the way in which Ovid has integrated this letter into the temporal scheme of *Aeneid* 4. In the Virgilian poem Dido's last appeals to Aeneas are carried out through the agency of Anna. The request to her sister is preceded by the line, 'ne quid inexpertum frustra moritura relinquat' (*Aeneid* 4.415). Therefore the reappearance of *moriturae* in the opening line of the Ovidian poem may suggest that this epistle is intended directly to replace the appeals of Anna in the *Aeneid*.

Apart from these considerations we can also see that the 'carmen' of line 1 links directly into the succeeding imagery of lines 3ff:

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<sup>85</sup>G. Showerman, *Ovid I Heroides and Amores*, second edition revised by G.P. Goold (London 1986).

<sup>86</sup>'nec moritura tenet crudeli funere Dido'  
(*Aeneid* 4. 308).

'ne quid inexpertum frustra moritura relinquat'  
(*Aeneid* 4. 415).

'Sic ubi fata vocant, udis abiectus in herbis  
ad vada Maeandri concinit albus olor.'  
(3-4).

Thus the 'moriturae carmen Elissae' leads naturally into the figurative imagery of the song of the dying swan. The opening couplet, then, establishes an immediate sense of intertextuality with Virgil's *Aeneid*, suggests how the epistle has been integrated into the temporal scheme of *Aeneid* 4, and leads us into Dido's initial strategy.

(2): Dido's Swan song.

The swan sings only in the moments that immediately precede its death. Its song, therefore, is in recognition, and acceptance, of its impending demise. It stands as a figurative equivalent to a person's dying words. So the image is appropriate to Dido's profession that this letter represents her 'ultima verba' (2). But if the allusion is to be strictly accurate, we must also assume that the image heralds Dido's own passive acceptance of her fate. Her letter is presented simply as the precursor to her inevitable demise.

Now let us consider how such an attitude compares to that of Virgil's Dido. We have already suggested that this letter takes the place of Anna's appeals in the *Aeneid*. We have also seen that this substitution is confirmed by the appearance of *moritura* in both the opening line of this epistle and in the Virgilian line which immediately precedes the despatch of Anna. But we should also note that in the Virgilian poem the sending of Anna is associated with a vigorous attempt to make Aeneas change his mind, 'ne quid inexpertum frustra moritura relinquat' (*Aeneid* 4. 415). The passive acceptance of Dido in this epistle would seem to clash with her much more vigorous

attitude in the *Aeneid* (and also later in this letter). Jacobson makes the following observation:

'In addition, Ovid has undercut the element of persuasion right at the beginning. Following upon the Vergilian *moritura*, his Dido, unlike Vergil's, appears set on suicide from the start. But to declare one's resignation and realization that persuasion is impossible and then to proceed with attempt after attempt of persuasion is damaging to the rhetoric of the situation, no matter what it may contribute to the psychological characterization of the writer.'<sup>87</sup>

But perhaps instead of concentrating upon the apparent inconsistency of Dido's stance we should rather see the opening lines of this poem as a rhetorical strategy that is specifically designed to counter Aeneas' intransigence. We must remember that Dido ultimately fails in the Virgilian poem. It therefore makes sense when she is presented by Ovid with a second opportunity for her to attempt a different strategy to the one that has already proved unsuccessful in the *Aeneid*. So instead of trying initially to sway Aeneas by emotion she instead adopts a fatalistic stance which is designed to mirror that of Aeneas in the epic. In the Virgilian poem Aeneas counters Dido's emotional outbursts by insisting that he is not the master of his own fate. It is no use Dido reproaching him for he is not free to stay even if he should wish to:

'me si fata meis paterentur ducere vitam  
auspiciis et sponte mea componere curas,'  
(*Aeneid* 4.340-341)

'desine meque tuis incendere teque querelis;  
Italiam non sponte sequor.'  
(*Aeneid* 4.360-361)

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<sup>87</sup>Jacobson, 84.

By this account Aeneas is merely the pawn of fate. Now we can see that when Ovid's Dido comes to begin her letter she seems to have taken note of her predecessor's failure. She (initially at least) obeys Aeneas' imperative ('desine meque tuis incendere teque querelis') and refrains from emotional argumentation. For such an attempt by Anna at this stage in the *Aeneid* was met by the same fatalistic intransigence as had greeted her own earlier pleas:

'Talibus orabat, talisque miserrima fletus  
fertque refertque soror. sed nullis ille movetur  
fletibus, aut voces ullas tractabilis audit;  
fata obstant placidasque viri deus obstruit auris.'  
(*Aeneid* 4.437-440)

The Ovidian Dido knows with the benefit of intertextual hindsight that Aeneas will immediately shut out any attempt to move him emotionally. Therefore her best chance of ultimately persuading Aeneas is initially to pretend that she has no inclination at all in this direction. Hence she constructs an image of herself as the dying swan. This demonstrates that she is quite as ready as Aeneas to accept the dictates of fate. By immediately identifying herself with his fatalism she thus manages to pre-empt much of his initial objection as presented in the Virgilian epic. Ovid's Dido has learnt from the painful experience of her predecessor. So in this letter Dido's resolve to die precedes her argument, whereas in Virgil her belief that death is inevitable is a consequence of the failure of her direct confrontations with Aeneas. The Ovidian Dido has inverted the motif so as to promote a more effective rhetorical strategy. The only way to begin to persuade Aeneas is immediately to confess that it is an impossibility. By equating herself with the dying swan she is thus

able initially to stress that she has no intention of trying to make Aeneas change his mind.

This point is made explicit in lines 3-4:

'Nec quia te nostra sperem prece posse moveri,  
adloquor - adverso movimus ista deo;'

Dido here states quite clearly that she is not addressing Aeneas in the hope that she will be able to change his mind. For she realizes that such an attempt is already blocked, 'adverso movimus ista deo'. These two lines have presented two particular problems. First of all how to translate 'movimus' (particularly in the light of 'moveri' in the preceding line); and secondly the identification of the *adversus deus* in line 4. Palmer translates 'movimus ista' as "I begin this letter" and cites various parallels.<sup>88</sup> Anderson, however, chooses to integrate the meaning of 'movimus' into that of the prayer in the preceding line:

'Ovid has repeated the verb *movere* and evoked a second time the prayer context, and we ignore the echo at our peril. My suggested translation clarifies the context: "the prayer I have set in motion."<sup>89</sup>

This is an interpretation that deserves consideration. Yet if 'ista' is a precise reference to 'prece' it surely is not very clear. We should rather view this phrase as yet another instance of intertextual

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<sup>88</sup>Palmer, *P. Ovidi Nasonis Heroides*, (Oxford, 1898) 339. The examples he cites are Ovid, *Fast.* 1.19; *Fast.* 1.268; *Am.* 3.1.6; *Met.* 14.21; Horace, *Carm.* 3.7.19; Virgil, *Aeneid* 7.45.

<sup>89</sup>W.S. Anderson, 50.

allusion. In this case 'adverso movimus ista deo' would refer to Dido's previous failure to sway Aeneas in Virgil. This would further emphasize that Ovid's Dido realizes that she must attempt to avoid the errors of her previous literary incarnation. A reference to the *Aeneid* proves this point and also suggests a solution to the problematic 'adverso ... deo':

'Talibus orabat, talisque miserrima fletus  
fertque refertque soror. sed nullis ille movetur  
fletibus, aut voces ullas tractabilis audit;  
fata obstant placidasque viri deus obstruit auris.'  
(*Aeneid* 4.437-440)

The use of *oro* here relates to the context of prayer at the beginning of the Ovidian epistle. But such an appeal has proved ineffective. Therefore, when Ovid's Dido states 'nec quia te nostra sperem prece posse moveri, / adloquor' (3-4), we hear the voice of chastened experience. We might also consider that 'fata obstant placidasque viri deus obstruit auris' gives us a clue as to the identity of the *adversus deus* of the fourth line of this epistle. In Virgil Aeneas is prevented from responding favourably to Dido by the dictates of fate, 'fata obstant'. These fates are associated with a 'deus' who similarly stops Aeneas from being swayed by Dido, 'placidasque viri deus obstruit auris'. Surely it would be correct to associate this deity with the god who controls the fates, Jupiter. Now since the opening of Ovid's epistle seems to be concerned with an intertextual manipulation of the notion of fate in the *Aeneid*, it would not be unreasonable to suppose that the *adversus deus* of the Ovidian epistle could be

identified with the 'deus' of the Virgilian text.<sup>90</sup>

We can see, then, that lines 3-4 continue to emphasize the grasp that the Ovidian Dido has of the Virgilian text. She stresses that she recognizes the imperatives of fate and that her words (in line with the allusion she has constructed) are not designed to influence Aeneas. But having appropriated the imagery of the dying swan to suggest her own compliance with Aeneas' fatalism, Dido then develops the motif in a somewhat more sarcastic and deliberately persuasive manner:

'sed merita et famam corpusque animumque pudicum  
cum male perdiderim, perdere verba leve est.'  
(5-6)

Dido, it seems, is prepared to waste words because that is all she has left to waste. Their loss is a slight matter compared to the far more significant things that have already been squandered, 'merita et famam corpusque animumque pudicum'. We can see here that in spite of a stance that is deliberately designed to mask any attempt at active persuasion, nevertheless Dido is already attempting to influence Aeneas. For clearly Aeneas is intended to be implicated in Dido's shameful losses. The suggestion is that it is his fault that Dido finds herself in a situation analogous to that of the swan, on the point of death with only *verba* between herself and her imminent doom. So at the same time as Dido professes not to have any hope of making

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<sup>90</sup>In the light of this poem's obvious intertextuality this would be a more reasonable assumption than that the *deus* is 'Love' as Palmer and Loers suggest, or Aeneas himself as Anderson thinks (50-51).

Aeneas change his mind, she is already trying to stimulate in him a sense of remorse and guilt.

(3): Perils past and trials to come.

'certus es ire tamen miseramque relinquere Dido,  
atque idem venti vela fidemque ferent?  
certus es, Aenea, cum foedere solvere naves,  
quaeque ubi sint nescis, Itala regna sequi?'  
(7-10)

Having hinted at Aeneas' culpability, Dido continues in her attempt to affect him. We can see here how the 'tamen' of line 7 looks back to the content of lines 5-6. After Aeneas has already reduced Dido to such a pitiable state, can he still go even further and desert her altogether? Dido elaborates upon the perfidy of such a course of action through the use of two parallel questions, 'certus es ... certus es', which each reproach Aeneas through the elegant device of syllepsis, 'atque idem venti vela fidemque ferent' (8), 'cum foedere solvere naves' (9). Each instance of this rhetorical figure neatly suggests Aeneas' treachery, which, if pursued to its logical conclusion, will lead to Dido's shameful abandonment, 'miseramque relinquere Dido' (7). Aeneas' resolutions, then, are shameful both in their intention and in their consequences. But by referring to his decisions within the form of questions Dido is clearly leaving Aeneas the option of rescinding these reprehensible courses of action.

We should also be aware that the use of *certus* further promotes intertextuality. For the word appears with emphatic resonance at several key moments during the Dido episode in the *Aeneid*:

'Tantos illa suo rumpebat pectore questus:  
Aeneas celsa in puppi iam certus eundi  
carpebat somnos rebus iam rite paratis.'  
(*Aeneid* 4.553-555)

'illa dolos dirumque nefas in pectore versat  
certa mori, variosque irarum concitat aestus.'  
(*Aeneid* 4.563-564)

'Interea medium Aeneas iam classe tenebat  
certus iter fluctusque atros Aquilone secabat  
moenia respiciens, quae iam infelicis Elissae  
conlucent flammis.'  
(*Aeneid* 5.1-4)

There is a logical connection between Aeneas' departure and Dido's death. The certainty of one will result in the inevitability of the other. Thus 'iam certus eundi' is reciprocated by 'certa mori'. This connection is repeated in the Ovidian text where the repetition of 'certus es' follows on from Dido's initial acceptance of fate. But at the same time as Ovid's Dido recognizes the link between these two events, she is already attempting to undermine the necessity and wisdom of Aeneas' resolution. This is done not only by an emphasis on Aeneas' perfidy (as stressed by the syllepses of lines 8 and 9) but also by contrasting the certainty of his intention to leave with the uncertainty that surrounds his destination. Thus the 'certus es' of line 9 is rather incongruously associated with the 'nescis' of line 10, 'certus es ... quaeque ubi sint nescis, Itala regna sequi'. The uncertainty that surrounds the Trojans' destination is also a motif that is taken from the *Aeneid*. For although Creusa has informed Aeneas as early as the end of Book Two (2.780ff.) that he must seek 'Hesperia' and the waters of the Tiber, nevertheless in Book Three an oracle of Apollo is misinterpreted as referring not to Italy but to Crete (3. 103ff.). This mistake is only rectified after the Trojans

have reached Crete and Aeneas is corrected by the appearance of the Penates in a dream (3.147ff.). The Trojans, then, do not give the impression of knowing what they are doing. They, after all, have been journeying for seven years and still seem to be no nearer their goal. In these circumstances the rather dry assessment of Ovid's Dido does not seem to be misplaced.

Dido, then, with a touch of disingenuous exaggeration suggests the degree of uncertainty that surrounds the object of Aeneas' mission. Having done this she immediately takes the opportunity to contrast the indefiniteness of the future Rome with the actuality of the rising Carthage:

'nec nova Carthago, nec te crescentia tangunt  
moenia nec sceptro tradita summa tuo?  
facta fugis, facienda petis; quaerenda per orbem  
altera, quaesita est altera terra tibi.'  
(11-14)

We can see here again that Ovid's Dido appears to be basing her arguments upon a close reading of Virgil's *Aeneid*. She seems to recall the initial impact that the sight of Carthage's construction has upon Aeneas:

miratur molem Aeneas, magalia quondam,  
miratur portas strepitumque et strata viarum.'  
(*Aeneid* 1.421-422)

'o fortunati, quorum iam moenia surgunt!'  
(*Aeneid* 1.437)

Clearly the rising walls of Carthage do have a striking effect on Aeneas. The establishment of a new city is after all the very object of his own mission. Dido's means of persuasion therefore is well-founded. She is offering him the chance to have his dream here

and now, 'moenia nec sceptro tradita summa tuo' (12). It seems that some of Jacobson's observations on these lines misrepresent the situation:

'First, the city is *crescentia* (perhaps an echo of *Aen.* 1.366: *moenia surgentem novae Karthaginis arcem*), then becomes *facta*, an exaggeration at the least. Recollection, however, of the *Aeneid* may compel us to suspect even *crescentia*:

non coeptae adsurgunt turrets, non arma iuventus  
exercet portusve aut propugnacula bello  
tuta parant: pendent opera interrupta minaeque  
murorum ingentes aequataque machina caelo.  
(4.86-89)

(4.260 scarcely speaks to the contrary).'<sup>91</sup>

There is no reason at this stage in the *Aeneid* to doubt that the building of Carthage will progress. The interruption portrayed in the lines quoted by Jacobson merely represents a hiatus while Dido and Aeneas indulge their passion. But by the time Mercury arrives this hiatus is evidently over and work has now recommenced. Moreover, it is now Aeneas himself who is leading the operations. If we return to the passage in *Aeneid* 1 where the Trojan leader first views the Carthaginians at work, we can see how fully Aeneas has been accommodated to their perspective:

'instant ardentes Tyrii: pars ducere muros  
molirique arcem et manibus subvolere saxa,  
pars optare locum tecto et concludere sulco;  
iura magistratusque legunt sanctumque senatum.  
hic portus alii effodiunt; hic alta theatri  
fundamenta locant alii,  
(*Aeneid* 1.423-428).

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<sup>91</sup>Jacobson, 78-79.

When we find Aeneas in the later passage engaged in the very same activity as the Carthaginians, *fundamenta locans*, we may assume that his emotional commitment to Carthage is also similar. Clearly, in Virgil, Aeneas has become so attached to Carthage and Dido that he eagerly participates in the building of the wrong city. This is the whole point of Mercury's rebuke in *Aeneid* 4:

'continuo invadit: "tu nunc Karthaginis altae  
fundamenta locas pulchramque uxoris urbem  
exstruis? heu, regni rerumque oblite tuarum!"  
(*Aeneid* 4. 265-267)

Evidently, in the *Aeneid*, Carthage's walls are being built and Aeneas is leading the construction. The argument, then, of the Ovidian Dido is not gratuitous but has a sound basis in the background of the Virgilian poem. Dido is trying to rekindle in Aeneas his past attitude towards Carthage and herself before the censorious intervention of Mercury.

As well as trying to recall Aeneas to his former perspective Dido continues to stress the advantages of a decision to stay in Carthage and to abandon his mission to Italy:

'facta fugis, facienda petis; quaerenda per orbem  
altera, quaesita est altera terra tibi.'  
(13-14)

Carthage is a virtual *fait accompli* ('facta') but the attainment of Italy and the establishment of a proto-Rome remains to be accomplished, 'facienda petis'. Carthage is a land that has already been won, 'quaesita', whereas Italy is still to be sought out, 'quaerenda per orbem'. An effective contrast is manufactured between the gerundives which denote the future effort that will be required to

found Rome, and the past tenses ('facta', 'quaesita est') which suggest the ease of opting for the already founded Carthage.

Moreover, even should Aeneas reach Rome, his problems will hardly cease there:

'ut terram invenias, quis eam tibi tradet habendam?  
quis sua non notis arva tenenda dabit?'  
(15-16)

The potential optimism of 'ut terram invenias' is soon crushed. Even if Aeneas should reach his objective, who in their right mind would simply hand over their territory to a stranger. We can see how this argument is related to the Sibyl's prophecy in *Aeneid* 6:

"o tandem magnis pelagi defuncte periclis  
(sed terrae graviora manent), in regna Lavini  
Dardanidae venient (mitte hanc de pectore curam),  
sed non et venisse volent. bella, horrida bella,  
et Thybrim multo spumantem sanguine cerno.  
non Simois tibi nec Xanthus nec Dorica castra  
defuerint; alius Latio iam partus Achilles  
natus et ipse dea;' (*Aeneid* 6.83-90)

In both instances (the Sibyl's prophecy in the *Aeneid* and lines 15-16 of this epistle) the concession that Aeneas will reach Italy is immediately followed by the fact that this will be only the beginning, and not the end, of his problems.

But at the same time as the questions in lines 15-16 point forward to the likelihood of Aeneas' less than friendly reception in Italy, we can see that they also point retrospectively to Dido. For Dido herself has already carried out the magnanimous gestures of the anonymous 'quis' in lines 15-16. She has already handed over her lands to him. This point has been made clear in line 12, 'moenia nec sceptro tradita summa tuo'. In the *Aeneid*, in fact, Dido immediately offers

the Trojans a share in her kingdom:

'vultis et his mecum pariter considerare regnis?  
urbem quam statuo, vestra est; subducite navis;  
Tros Tyriusque mihi nullo discrimine agetur.'  
(*Aeneid* 1.572-574)

After Dido has alluded to her own past, spurned generosity, we can see that lines 17-18 are her own rather sarcastic solution to Aeneas' impending problems in Italy:

'alter amor tibi est habendus et altera Dido:  
quamque iterum fallas altera danda fides'.

He must find himself another Dido, another woman whom he can exploit and play false. But having suggested this possible scenario Dido immediately points to the improbability of either Carthage or herself being replicated:

'quando erit, ut condas instar Carthaginiis urbem  
et videas populos altus ab arce tuos?'  
omnia ut eveniant, nec te tua vota morentur,  
unde tibi, quae te sic amet, uxor erit?'  
(19-22)

That the future (Italy and the 'altera Dido') will be able to match the undeniable promise of the present (Carthage and the real Dido) is hardly credible. Moreover, there is also the point that any such replacement must lie in the future (lines 19-22 are framed between 'quando erit' and 'uxor erit') whereas he is already in possession of the delights of Carthage and Dido. Her arguments are acute when considered in the light of the *Aeneid*. We may see how 'altus ab arce' (20) compares to the position from which Aeneas views the construction of the city in *Aeneid* 1:

'Corripuere viam interea, qua semita monstrat.  
iamque ascendebant collem, qui plurimus urbi  
imminet adversasque aspectat desuper arces.'  
(*Aeneid* 1.418-420)

Thus the reference further reminds Aeneas of his earlier emotional attachment to Carthage. But the reader is also reminded of the fact that Aeneas never will be in a position to look down from the citadel of Rome. Ironically, his early demise before he has time to enjoy his newly won kingdom is one of the terms of Dido's curse in *Aeneid* 4:

'funera; nec, cum se sub leges pacis iniquae  
tradiderit, regno aut optata luce fruatur,  
sed cadat ante diem mediaque inhumatus harena.'  
(*Aeneid* 4.618-620)

That he shall not live long after his conquest of Latium has already been confirmed by Jupiter in *Aeneid* 1:

'bellum ingens geret Italia populosque ferocis  
contundet moresque viris et moenia ponet,  
tertia dum Latio regnantem viderit aestas,  
ternaque transierint Rutulis hiberna subactis.'  
(*Aeneid* 1.263-266)

So Dido's observations in this epistle are proved to be quite accurate. Aeneas never will found a city like Carthage nor have the opportunity to look down on his people from a lofty citadel (19-20).

Similarly, it is true that Aeneas will never again find anyone to love him as Dido does. For although he will find another wife (as is predicted by Creusa at the end of *Aeneid* 2, 'illic res laetae regnumque et regia coniunx/ parta tibi' [783-784], and later confirmed by the Sibyl in *Aeneid* 6 [93-94]) she will not match the passionate Dido. The marriage between Aeneas and Lavinia is not a love-match. The two never meet in Virgil, let alone fall in love. We might then

suspect that Ovid's Dido (again with the advantage of having read Virgil's *Aeneid*) is pointing to the acknowledged colourlessness of Lavinia in the Virgilian poem.

(4): Dido the lover.

Having, then, suggested that Aeneas will not find anyone else to love him as she does, 'unde tibi quae te sic amet, uxor erit' (22), Dido naturally proceeds to elaborate upon the strength of her feelings:

'Uror'<sup>92</sup>, ut inducto ceratae sulphure taedae,  
ut pia fumosis addita tura focis.'  
(23-24)

The imagery of burning as related to the pangs of passion is commonplace in elegy:

'uror, io, remove, saeva puella, faces.'  
(Tibullus, 2. 4.6)

We can see that the use of 'faces' in the example above is mirrored by Dido's gloss in line 23, 'ut inducto ceratae sulphure taedae'. The elegiac imagery of line 24 can also be supported by a Tibullan reference:

'uritur, ut celeres urunt altaria flammae'.  
(Tibullus, 3.12.17)

Fire imagery, of course, is omnipresent in the *Aeneid*. Fire is used to represent the erotic forces which Venus and Cupid unleash on Dido in Book 1, 'donisque furentem/ incendat reginam atque ossibus implicet ignem' (*Aeneid* 1.659-660). Book 4 opens with Dido in the grip of

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<sup>92</sup>We also might suspect that Dido's use of 'uror' is a pun on 'uxor'.

passion's flame, 'At regina gravi iamdudum saucia cura/ vulnus alit et caeco carpitur igni' (*Aeneid* 4. 1-2). Similar imagery accompanies many of Dido's more distracted moments:

'uritur infelix Dido totaque vagatur  
urbe furens,' (*Aeneid* 4. 68-69).

'saevit inops animi totamque incensa per urbem  
bacchatur,' (*Aeneid* 4. 300-301).

'luminibus tacitis et sic accensa profatur:'  
(*Aeneid* 4. 364)

But if in the *Aeneid* the imagery of fire represents a destructive and unwelcome force, in the Ovidian letter Dido turns this violent imagery to her own advantage. She can now employ it to emphasize the strength of her love for Aeneas. Dido gives further evidence of her passion in lines 25-26:

'Aeneas oculis semper vigilantis inhaeret;  
Aenean animo noxque quiesque refert.'  
(25-26)

Aeneas is constantly on her mind (a point emphasized by the repetition of his name at the beginning of successive lines): whether she is awake, or asleep, she cannot escape from his image, 'Aeneas ... semper ... inhaeret'. We might see here allusion to two Virgilian passages:

'sola domo maeret vacua stratisque relictis  
incubat. illum absens absentem auditque videtque,'  
(*Aeneid* 4. 83-84).

'terribili monitu horrificant. agit ipse furentem  
in somnis feras Aeneas, semperque relinqui  
sola sibi, semper longam incommittata videtur  
ire viam et Tyrios deserta quaerere terra.'  
(*Aeneid* 4. 465-468)

Again we can see how Ovid's Dido has adroitly manipulated details from the *Aeneid*. In Virgil the dream is disturbing, Aeneas is pursuing her and she pictures herself deserted and alone. The dream, in other words, is far from promoting an idea of blissful erotic attachment. It rather indicates the growing imbalance in Dido's mind. But in the Ovidian version Dido redeploys the motif to illustrate the strength of her passion.

Dido continues by promoting herself as the committed lover and Aeneas as her unresponsive partner:

'ille quidem male gratus et ad mea munera surdus,  
et quo, si non sim stulta, carere velim;  
non tamen Aenean, quamvis male cogitat, odi,  
sed queror infidum quæstaque peius amo.'  
(27-30)

He is ungrateful and is not swayed by her gifts. Clearly, we are here in the world of elegy where *munera* are used to gain access to, and the favour of, the beloved (though not always with success):

'victa meis numquam, ianua, muneribus'  
(Propertius, 1.16.36).

'ergo muneribus quivis mercatur amorem?'  
(Propertius, 2.16.15)

Aeneas is hardhearted and Dido declares that if she were sensible she would wish to be without him. But Dido is playing the part of the infatuated lover and so she cannot help but feel the way she does:

'non tamen Aenean, quamvis male cogitat, odi,  
sed queror infidum quæstaque peius amo.'  
(29-30)

There are strong echoes of Catullan paradox here. It is noticeable that successive lines of the Ovidian poem end with the words 'odi' and 'amo'. This obviously reminds us of one of Catullus' best known epigrams:

'odi et amo. quare id faciam, fortasse requiris?  
nescio, sed fieri sentio et excrucior.'  
(Catullus, 85)

The compressed *sententia* of the earlier poet is expanded into a rather more lengthy paradox contained in the sequence 'non tamen ... quamvis ... sed'. Ovid's Dido, then, appears to be caught in a typical lover's dilemma. She recognizes the shortcomings of the beloved, 'male gratus' (27), 'surdus' (27), 'infidum' (30) and complains 'queror' (30) but her complaints only serve to increase her passion, 'questaque peius amo' (30). This is a state of affairs that is analogous to that found in other Catullan poems:

'nunc te cognovi: quare etsi impensius uror,  
multo mi tamen es vilior et levior.  
qui potis est, inquis? quod amantem iniuria talis  
cogit amare magis, sed bene velle minus.'  
(Catullus 72.5-8)

'ut iam nec bene velle queat tibi, si optima fias,  
nec desistere amare, omnia si facias.'  
(Catullus, 75.3-4)

So Dido portrays herself as the hopelessly infatuated lover, who is quite incapable of resisting her passion. The whole point of these lines is to prove the validity of line 22, 'unde tibi, quae te sic amet, uxor erit'.

(5): Aeneas and the elegiac connection.

As Dido is presenting herself as the committed lover, she naturally appeals to the appropriate divinities.

'parce, Venus, nurui, durumque amplectere fratrem,  
frater Amor, castris militet ille tuis!'  
(31-32)

But there is an added twist here, for both deities are directly related to Aeneas. Venus is his mother and Cupid is his brother.<sup>93</sup> A general appeal, therefore, takes on an ironic particularity as Cupid is asked to work his influence upon his own brother. Venus, we should notice, is referred to not as Aeneas' mother but as Dido's mother-in-law. Perhaps she recalls how Venus looked after her last *nurus* (Creusa) at the end of *Aeneid* 2:

'non ego Myrmidonum sedes Dolopumve superbas  
aspiciam aut Graeis servitum matribus ibo,  
Dardanis et divae Veneris nurus;  
sed me magna deum genetrix his detinet oris.'  
(*Aeneid* 2. 785-788)

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<sup>93</sup>Cupid is referred to as Aeneas' brother in the following passage of the *Aeneid*:

'nate, meae vires, mea magna potentia, solus,  
nate, patris summi qui tela Typhoea temnis,  
ad te confugio et supplex tua numina posco.  
frater ut Aeneas pelago tuus omnia circum  
litora iactetur odiis Iunonis acerbae,  
nota tibi, et nostro doluisti saepe dolore.'  
(*Aeneid* 1.664-669)

We must also remember, however, how these two deities conspire in the *Aeneid* to cause Dido's destruction:

'tu faciem illius noctem non amplius unam  
falle dolo et notos pueri puer indue vultus,  
ut, cum te gremio accipiet laetissima Dido  
regalis inter mensas laticemque Lyaeum,  
cum dabit amplexus atque oscula dulcia figet,  
occultum inspires ignem fallasque veneno."  
paret Amor dictis carae genetricis, et alas  
exuit et gressu gaudens incedit Iuli.'

(*Aeneid* 1. 683-690)

'nunc qua ratione, quod instat,  
confieri possit, paucis, adverte, docebo.  
venatum Aeneas unaque miserrima Dido  
in nemus ire parant, ubi primos crastinus ortus  
extulerit Titan radiisque retexerit orbem.  
his ego nigrantem commixta grandine nimum,  
dum trepidant alae, saltusque indagine cingunt,  
desuper infundam, et tonitu caelum omne ciebo.  
diffugient comites, et nocte tegentur opaca:  
speluncam Dido dux et Troianus eandem  
devenient. adero, et, tua si mihi certa voluntas,  
conubio iungam stabili propriamque dicabo.  
hic hymenaeus erit.' non adversata petenti  
adnuit, atque dolis risit Cytherea repertis.'

(*Aeneid* 4.115-128)

Perhaps Ovid's Dido is suggesting that the powers that oversee love should be helping her in her love-affair, rather than Aeneas in the pursuit of his imperial destiny. In this manner Dido manages to appropriate the Virgilian text to support her own rhetorical strategies.

Dido continues to stress the unreserved nature of her feelings towards Aeneas:

'aut ego, quae coepi, (neque enim dedignor) amorem,<sup>94</sup>  
materiam curae praebeat ille meae!  
(33-34)

She fell in love with Aeneas, and she is not ashamed of the fact. She is the initiator of this affair. The choice of 'dedignor' is well-considered. It alludes to Dido's attitude in the *Aeneid*, where she has rejected all her potential suitors until Aeneas:

'experiar, Nomadumque petam conubia supplex,  
quos ego sim totiens iam dedignata maritos?'  
(*Aeneid* 4. 535-536)

But there is a marked difference between the manner in which Dido readily embraces her passion in this epistle and her struggle to come to terms with sexual involvement in the *Aeneid*:

'si non pertaesum thalami taedaeque fuisset,  
huic uni forsan potui succumbere culpae.'  
(*Aeneid* 4. 18-19)

'sed mihi vel tellus optem prius ima dehiscat  
vel pater omnipotens abigat me fulmine ad umbras,  
pallentis umbras Erebo noctemque profundam,  
ante, pudor, quam te violo aut tua iura resolvo.'  
(*Aeneid* 4. 24-27)

Line 34, 'materiam curae praebeat ille meae' seems to suggest that Dido does not necessarily need Aeneas to reciprocate her feelings. She only asks that he allow her the chance to indulge them. Presumably, this means that he need not love her but he must stay to allow her to love him.

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<sup>94</sup>'Amorem' is the reading suggested by Madvig; the MSS reading of 'amare' produces a nonsensical text.



*relinquere.*<sup>95</sup>

Although it would be impossible to deny that Ovid's Dido exploits the conceit of Aeneas' lineage in a humorously exaggerated manner, nevertheless we should recognise that the Ovidian lines are not entirely divorced from the sense of their Virgilian counterpart. The erotic element is not entirely 'alien to the tradition' both because Dido is a lover and because she harangues Aeneas (in Virgil) for having failed to display specifically the tell-tale signs of erotic commitment, 'num fletu ingemuit nostro? num lumina flexit?/ num lacrimas victus dedit aut miseratus amantem est?' (*Aeneid* 4.369-370). As is usual in this letter the fluent rhetoric of the Ovidian Dido is not without a starting point in the Virgilian text.

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<sup>95</sup>Jacobson, 81.

(6): Winter. Shipwreck and Ghosts.

Dido uses her final example of Aeneas' possible parents, 'mare' (39), to pass smoothly into the next section of her argument. The stormy sea, 'agitari ... ventis' (39), is a natural complement to the other phenomena listed in lines 37-38 but it also provides a link to the immediate situation. For the sea is even now stormy, 'quale vides agitari nunc quoque ventis'. Yet in spite of this Aeneas is preparing to go, 'qua tamen adversis fluctibus ire paras' (40). We can see how once more Dido is suggesting a reason for Aeneas to stay. If lines 15-22 imply long-term reasons for the abandonment of his mission, then these lines state a reason for immediate postponement. Dido expands upon this idea in the following lines:

'quo fugis? obstat hiemps. hiemis mihi gratia prosit!  
adspice, ut eversas concitet Eurus aquas!  
quod tibi malueram, sine me debere procellis;  
iustior est animo ventus et unda tuo.'  
(41-44)

The Winter stands in his way, 'obstat hiemps', he only has to look to see the nature of his problem, 'adspice, ut eversas concitet Eurus aquas' (the 'adspice' of line 42 links to the similar theme of 'vides' in line 39). Naturally, since the Winter aids her case, Dido sees the season as her ally. Nevertheless, she would rather Aeneas was staying of his own accord than being forced into compliance. The fact that nature is more willing than Aeneas that he should stay leads Dido to the following conclusion, 'iustior est animo ventus et unda tuo'. Inanimate nature, it seems, has more feeling than Aeneas and so perhaps even the objects of lines 37ff. are too sensitive to be his parents.

The theme of winter travel is also one that occurs in the *Aeneid*. At the very beginning of Book 4 Anna suggests that Dido take advantage of the season's opportunities:

'indulge hospitio causasque innecte morandi,  
dum pelago desaevit hiems et aquosus Orion,  
quassataeque rates, dum non tractabile caelum.'  
(*Aeneid* 4. 51-53)

The Virgilian Dido, like her Ovidian counterpart, berates Aeneas for considering departure during the Winter:

'quin etiam hiberno moliris sidere classem  
et mediis properas Aquilonibus ire per altum  
crudelis? quid, si non arva aliena domosque  
ignotas peteres, et Troia antiqua maneret,  
Troia per undosum peteretur classibus aequor?  
mene fugis?' (*Aeneid* 4. 309-314)

The argument, then, of Ovid's Dido is taken from that of her Virgilian predecessor, but she also uses it as the basis for her own particular treatment. In the *Aeneid* Dido concludes that if Aeneas is leaving in the winter, the reason must be that he is desperate to be free from her. In the Ovidian version, Dido takes this essentially egotistical position and develops it further and with a more detached sense of irony. Instead of losing control and wishing for Aeneas' untimely demise in the waters, as Virgil's Dido later does (*Aeneid* 4. 381-384), her Ovidian counterpart constructs a more self-effacing but potentially more useful argument:

'Non ego sum tanti - quid non censeris inique?-  
ut pereas, dum me per freta longa fugis.  
exerces pretiosa odia et constantia magno,  
si, dum me careas, est tibi vile mori.'  
(45-48)

Aeneas overrates her 'non ego sum tanti', she is not worth dying for. He is indulging his distaste at too high a cost if he is prepared to die simply to be without her. Soon the Winter will be past and the seas more favourable:

'iam venti ponent, strataque aequaliter unda  
caeruleis Triton per mare curret equis.'  
(49-50)

So Ovid's Dido masks her attempt to persuade Aeneas to stay in a haze of rather sarcastic common-sense. He should not let his hatred precipitate his early death. She rather disingenuously looks to her own interests (having Aeneas stay) whilst appearing to look out for his. This strategy contrasts with the situation found in the *Aeneid* where a delay is requested as a last favour for a lover:

'quo ruit? extremum hoc miserae det munus amanti;  
exspectet facilemque fugam ventosque ferentis.'  
(*Aeneid* 4. 429-430)

The idea that the winds can change leads Dido to wish that Aeneas could display a similar degree of flexibility:

'tu quoque cum ventis utinam mutabilis esses!  
et, nisi durtia robora vincis, eris.'  
(51-52)

But we should remember that Dido has already expressed the belief that the wind is rather more fair minded than Aeneas, 'iustior est animo ventus et unda tuo' (44). Nor does the way in which Dido states her hope inspire confidence. For this should remind the reader of the famous simile in Virgil where Aeneas displays precisely the ability to equal the oak in hardness, 'ac velut annoso validam cum robore

quercum/Alpini Boreae nunc hinc nunc flatibus illinc/erueret inter se certant' (*Aeneid* 4.441-443). So in this instance the Ovidian Dido, rather than manipulating the Virgilian text to her advantage, is manipulated by it.

Dido continues by further emphasizing the perils of the sea:

'quid, si nescires, insana quid aequora possint?  
expertae totiens tam male credis aquae?  
(53-54)

We can see how this argument is designed to appeal to Aeneas' specific experience. For he truly does know the perils of the sea. The first time we meet Aeneas in Virgil he is engulfed in a storm at sea (*Aeneid* 1.84ff) and when he makes his first appearance before Dido he describes himself as 'Troius Aeneas, Libycis ereptus ab undis' (*Aeneid* 1. 596). Dido's argument, then, is not without point. We can also see how in the next couplet (55-56) Dido attempts to advance her own position further. She has already established that Aeneas should not leave during the winter while the seas are potentially hazardous. But if she wishes to gain more than a temporary respite she must also put forward reasons for delay even when the seas appear passable. This she begins to do in lines 55-56:

ut, pelago suadente viam, retinacula solvas,  
multa tamen latus tristia pontus habet.'  
(55-56)

Even the sea which invites the sailor to be on his way has many perils below its apparently benign surface. Storms, after all, occur suddenly out of tranquil conditions. The Trojans know this well as Ilioneus'

description of the storm in *Aeneid* 1 demonstrates, 'cum subito adsurgens fluctu nimbosus Orion' (*Aeneid* 1.535). Dido then follows up this general argument with a more specific reason as to why Aeneas should be wary of venturing onto the waters:

'nec violasse fidem temptantibus aequora prodest;  
perfidiae poenas exigit ille locus,'  
(57-58).

Aeneas is *perfidus*; he would be unwise to entrust himself to a potential source of righteous retribution. We can see how this theme is related to the expression of the syllepses in lines 8-9, 'atque idem venti vela fidemque ferent?/ certus es, Aenea, cum foedere solvere naves'. But there is also an additional reason why the sea may be particularly antagonistic to Aeneas:

'praecipue cum laesus amor, quia mater Amorum  
nuda Cytheriacis edita fertur aquis.'  
(59-60)

Aeneas has opposed himself to love, and Venus the goddess of love, was born from the waves. Needless to say this argument is a little tenuous and Jacobson points out some of its obvious shortcomings:

'To the long-standing notion of the sea as punisher of sinners (57-58) he appends an erotic twist: [quotes lines 59-60] which appears ludicrous in the light of the kinship mentioned at 31-32 and 35-38 (the later passage, by the way, vitiating the point of the former). The *mater Amorum* is *mater Aeneae* as well. Is she to punish her own son? (consider the role of Venus in the *Aeneid*).'<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>96</sup>Jacobson, 81.

But it would perhaps be unwise to look for consistency in the arguments of Ovid's Dido. She is merely concerned to advance as many arguments as possible regardless of whether they contradict themselves. Desperate times call for desperate measures.

Dido now professes that she is afraid of indirectly bringing destruction upon Aeneas:

'Perdita ne perdam, timeo, noceamve nocenti,  
neu bibat aequoreas naufragus hostis aquas.'  
(61-62)

Since the sea will take vengeance on perjurers and unfaithful lovers, there is the possibility that Aeneas' betrayal of Dido will be the cause of his own destruction. The damage he has done to her may rebound on to his own head hence the paradoxical expression of line 61, 'Perdita ne perdam, timeo, noceamve nocenti'. We can see here that Dido is once more presenting herself (cf. lines 29-30) as the hopelessly committed lover. She does not wish destruction upon her lover even though he has destroyed her. So although he is her enemy ('hostis') and although shipwreck would be an appropriate wish, nevertheless she does not want this outcome, 'neu bibat aequoreas naufragus hostis aquas'. In fact, she prays for his survival, 'vive precor' (63). But before we are lulled into a false sense of remarkable generosity we should note that this prayer is merely the prelude to a more sinister thought:

'vive, precor! sic te melius quam funere perdam.  
tu potius leti causa ferere mei.'  
(63-64)

Paradoxically, Dido wishes Aeneas to live so that she may destroy him

the more completely. Death is too good for Aeneas, he must face a more savage penalty. He must bear the ignominy of the responsibility for her death. But having voiced this thought, Dido immediately returns to the possibility of Aeneas' shipwreck:

'finge, age, te rapido - nullum sit in omine pondus!  
turbine deprendi; quid tibi mentis erit?  
protinus occurrent falsae periuria linguae,  
et Phrygia Dido fraude coacta mori;  
coniugis ante oculos deceptae stabit imago  
tristis et effusis sanguinolenta comis.  
quid tanti est ut tum "merui! concedite!" dicas,  
quaeque cadent, in te fulmina missa putes?'  
(65-72)

Dido quickly emphasizes that this situation is purely hypothetical (and thus remains technically consistent with her perspective in lines 61ff). Nevertheless, she is not going to lose the chance of frightening Aeneas into compliance with her own wishes. These lines further promote the idea of the sea as the avenger of the deceived lover. For at the very moment of his doom Aeneas will realize the validity of Dido's arguments. He will see the exact connection between his treachery ('falsae periuria linguae', 'et Phrygia Dido fraude coacta mori') and his imminent death. This realization will be dramatically reinforced by the appearance of Dido's ghost (whose pitiable state will validate Aeneas' destruction). Then, too late, he will be forced to concede that he has deserved it all, "merui".

Aeneas' shipwreck is also a possibility entertained by the Virgilian Dido:

'spero equidem mediis, si quid pia numina possunt,  
supplicia hausurum scopulis et nomine Dido  
saepe vocaturum.' (*Aeneid* 4.382-384)

But here there is no attempt at persuasion. This is simply a case of 'go and be damned'. In Virgil the motif is occasioned by Dido's failure to persuade Aeneas, it does not in itself constitute part of that attempt. Ovid's Dido, however, is more alert to the rhetorical possibilities of her predecessor's words and she incorporates them into her own strategy of persuasion.

Dido continues with a couplet that makes it quite clear that the whole point of the gruesome imagery of the preceding lines is to induce Aeneas to postpone his imminent departure:

'Da breve saevitiae spatium pelagique tuaeque;  
grande morae pretium tuta futura via est.'  
(73-74)

Although she has been at pains to stress reasons why Aeneas should not depart at all, nevertheless her immediate aim must be to prevent him leaving now. Line 74 points back to the theme of lines 49-50, and the prospect of better nautical conditions in the near future. Dido stresses the advantages of delay through a sharp antithesis, a *breve spatium* will produce a *grande pretium*. We may also note how Dido's expression (*saevitia* is applied equally to Aeneas and the sea) elides the ferocity of the sea with the intransigence of Aeneas. This reinforces her earlier observations on his likely progenitors in lines 37-40.

We should also note that the use of 'spatium' in line 73 is reminiscent of *Aeneid* 4:

'tempus inane peto, requiem spatiumque furori,  
dum mea me victam doceat fortuna dolere.'  
(*Aeneid* 4.433-434)

But now instead of requesting a respite from her own *furor*, Dido asks Aeneas to pause from his *saevitia*.

Dido swiftly finds additional arguments to support her case:

'haec minus ut cures, puero parcaturo Iulo!  
te satis est titulum mortis habere meae.  
quid puer Ascanius, quid di meruere Penates?  
ignibus ereptos obruet unda deos?'  
(75-78)

If Aeneas is not concerned for his own safety, then he should consider his son. Dido adds ironically that it is sufficient for Aeneas to be responsible for her death (linking back to the theme of line 64). Then the fate of the *di penates* must also be borne in mind. They represent the imperial destiny that lies in the future so they must be protected. It would be senseless for Aeneas to rescue them from the flames of Troy only to lose them in the waters of a wild sea. Again these are arguments which gain validity from their Virgilian background. In Virgil, Aeneas counters Dido's objections to his departure by explaining that he is ordained to reach Italy and that he cannot cheat Ascanius of his destiny:

'sed nunc Italiam magnam Gryneus Apollo,  
Italiam Lyciae iussere capessere sortes;'  
(*Aeneid* 4.345-346)

'me puer Ascanius capitisque iniuria cari,  
quem regno Hesperiae fraudo et fatalibus arvis.'  
(*Aeneid* 4.354-355)

Such considerations have been impressed upon him by Mercury:

'si te nulla movet tantarum gloria rerum  
[nec super ipse tua moliris laude laborem,]  
Ascanium surgentem et spes heredis Iuli  
respice,' (*Aeneid* 4.272-275).

So in the *Aeneid* destiny and the claims of Ascanius are put forward as reasons for Aeneas' immediate departure. But Ovid's Dido sees the possibility of reversing this argument. If his son and the *di penates* are really of concern to him, then he should not subject them to the dangers of sailing during the winter.

(7): Lies. Missing Wives and Dead Husbands.

But having introduced the *di Penates* Dido immediately casts doubts upon the veracity of what Aeneas has been telling her (in the *Aeneid*):

'sed neque fers tecum, nec, quae mihi, perfide, iactas,  
presserunt umeros sacra paterque tuos.'  
(79-80)

Perhaps Aeneas has been lying all along. Maybe he fabricated the story of his dramatic rescue of Anchises and the *di Penates* from the burning ruins of Troy. This leads Dido into some scathing observations on the fate of Aeneas' last wife, Creusa:

'omnia mentiris, neque enim tua fallere lingua  
incipit a nobis, primaque plector ego.  
si quaeras, ubi sit formosi mater Iuli -  
occidit a duro sola relictā viro!  
(81-84)

Maybe Dido is not the first woman that Aeneas has shamefully abandoned. Where is Creusa? Perhaps Aeneas was tired of her too, and deliberately left her behind in the carnage of Troy. Of course, this contrasts with the picture that is presented in the *Aeneid* where a distraught Aeneas rushes back into the blazing city (*Aeneid* 2.743ff.) and is only persuaded to leave by the appearance of Creusa's *umbra* (*Aeneid* 2.772ff). But we must remember that the source for this version of events is Aeneas himself and this is what Ovid's Dido finds suspicious. His whole narrative could have been a pack of lies ('omnia mentiris') and he might really have callously left Creusa to die. Dido, then, suspects that history is about to repeat itself and Aeneas

will again prove faithless to his 'wife' (Dido) and leave her to an untimely fate. She now reproaches herself for not seeing this earlier:

'haec mihi narraras: at me movere: merentem  
ure: minor culpa poena futura mea est.'<sup>97</sup>  
(85-86)

The clues were all there in Aeneas' narrative. The fate of Creusa ought to have alerted Dido to Aeneas' propensity for abandoning women in fatal circumstances. She therefore deserves her fate, 'merentem ure'. Dido failed to see through Aeneas' story because she was too much affected by the narrative. Aeneas played the part of the storyteller well and Dido was unable to detect the danger. We certainly may detect here an allusion to the way Dido dotes over Aeneas' narrative in Virgil:

'infelix Dido longumque bibebat amorem,  
multa super Priamo rogitans, super Hectore multa:  
nunc quibus Aurorae venisset filius armis,  
nunc quales Diomedis equi, nunc quantus Achilles.'  
(*Aeneid* 1.749-752)

'nunc eadem labente die convivia quaerit,  
Iliacosque iterum demens audire labores  
exposcit pendetque iterum narrantis ab ore.'  
(*Aeneid* 4.77-79)

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<sup>97</sup>Cupid is referred to as Aeneas' brother in the following passage of the *Aeneid*:

'nate, meae vires, mea magna potentia, solus,  
nate, patris summi qui tela Typhoea temnis,  
ad te confugio et supplex tua numina posco.  
frater ut Aeneas pelago tuus omnia circum  
litora iactetur odiis Iunonis acerbae,  
nota tibi, et nostro doluisti saepe dolore.'  
(*Aeneid* 1.665-669).

observation on Aeneas' blighted progress:

'Nec mihi mens dubia est, quin te tua numina damnent.  
per mare, per terras septima iactat hiemps.'  
(87-88)

Dido points out, quite reasonably, that it is difficult to believe that Aeneas and the Trojans are divinely favoured. After all, seven years have passed and they have not yet even made the transition from Troy to Italy. Jacobson makes the following, pertinent observation:

'The logic is unassailable. Is she to believe that Aeneas is guided by the gods when all he has met with is suffering, wandering, catastrophe? It might be more reasonable to assume that Aeneas is persecuted by wrathful deities!'<sup>98</sup>

But the manner in which he distances the Ovidian from the Virgilian version is less convincing:

'Dido's cynical remarks at *Aen.* 4.376-380, superficially similar, reflect a totally different perspective and attitude.'<sup>99</sup>

Yet an examination of the Virgilian lines will reveal an attitude that is not so dissimilar. The Virgilian Dido is also sceptical about the whole question of a divine mission. The emergence of its sudden imperatives are just a little too conveniently simultaneous with his decision to leave her:

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<sup>98</sup>Jacobson, 89.

<sup>99</sup>Jacobson, 89.

'(heu furiis incensa feror!): nunc augur Apollo,  
nunc Lyciae sortes, nunc et Iove missus ab ipso  
interpres divum fert horrida iussa per auras.  
scilicet is superis labor est, ea cura quietos  
sollicitat. neque te teneo neque dicta refello.'  
(*Aeneid* 4. 376-380)

Evidently, Dido is not convinced: the repetition of 'nunc' makes it clear that she regards all this talk of a divine mission as nothing more than an excuse for Aeneas to abandon her. 'Scilicet is superis labor est, ea cura quietos/ sollicitat', betrays a thinly concealed tone of virulent sarcasm. Why should the gods have such a great interest in Aeneas? She stops short of directly refuting Aeneas, 'neque dicta refello', but what she thinks is clear enough. It is not, therefore, unreasonable to see that the argument of Ovid's Dido takes its cue from the Virgilian text.

Aeneas' seemingly habitual state of torment gives Dido the opportunity to mention how she helped him in his hour of need:

'fluctibus eiectum tuta statione recepi  
vixque bene audito nomine regna dedi.'  
(89-90)

It was Dido who rescued him from the waves and gave him safe refuge. Yet she did much more than this, for she had no sooner heard his name than she turned her kingdom over to him. The expression of this line helps to emphasize the spontaneity and magnanimity of Dido's action. She is therefore attempting to induce in Aeneas some sense of obligation. We must remember, however, that in the *Aeneid* the offer of a share in the kingdom is not simply a question of disinterested generosity. There are sound reasons for a dynastic alliance as Anna points out:

'quam tu urbem, soror, hanc cernes, quae surgere regna  
coniugio tali! Teucrum comitantibus armis  
Punica se quantis attollet gloria rebus!'  
(*Aeneid* 4.47-49)

It is with these considerations in mind that she offers the Trojans a share in her kingdom in *Aeneid* 1:

'vultis et his mecum pariter considerare regnis?  
urbem quam statuo, vestra est; subducite navis;  
Tros Tyriusque mihi nullo discrimine agetur.'  
(*Aeneid* 1.572-574)

At this point she does not know whether Aeneas is alive or dead. So there can be no question of her offer being inspired by personal rather than practical reasons. Nor is the reason for her offer disinterested. The Virgilian Dido is also well aware of who Aeneas is:

'quis genus Aeneadum, quis Troiae nesciat urbem,  
virtutesque virosque aut tanti incendia belli?'  
(*Aeneid* 1.565-566)

'tunc ille Aeneas quem Dardanio Anchisae  
alma Venus Phrygii genuit Simoentis ad undam?'  
(*Aeneid* 1.617-618)

Ovid's Dido, therefore, is deliberately distorting when she says, 'vixque bene audito nomine regna dedi' (90). Needless to say, it is not in her interests to go into these details and she indicates that the offer was simply a profoundly magnanimous gesture. But now she regrets that she had not limited herself to such laudable *officia*:

'his tamen officiis utinam contenta fuisset,  
et mihi concubitus fama sepulta foret!  
illa dies nocuit, qua nos declive sub antrum  
caeruleus subitis compulit imber aquis.  
audieram vocem; nymphas ululasse putavi-

Eumenides fati signa dedere mei!  
(89-96)

She wishes that she had been content with the acts of generosity referred to in lines 89-90, and had not progressed from them to sexual favours <sup>100</sup>(this sudden sense of remorse would appear to contradict her earlier unabashed stance, 'quae coepi (neque enim dedignor) amorem' [33]). Dido now wishes that the whole episode could be forgotten.<sup>101</sup> Evidently these lines of the Ovidian epistle interact with the description of Dido's and Aeneas' union in Virgil:

'speluncam Dido dux et Troianus eandem  
deveniunt. prima et Tellus et pronuba Iuno  
dant signum; fulsere ignes et conscius aether  
conubiis, summoque ulularunt vertice Nymphae.  
ille dies primus leti primusque malorum  
causa fuit; neque enim specie famave movetur  
nec iam furtivum Dido meditatur amorem:  
coniugium vocat, hoc praetexit nomine culpam.'  
(*Aeneid* 4.165-172)

In both passages there is the detail of the cave, 'antrum' (93),

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<sup>100</sup>There is an obvious intertextual reference here to *Heroides* 2 and Phyllis' sentiments:

'turpiter hospitium lecto cumulasse iugali  
paenitet, et lateri conseruisse latus.  
quae fuit ante illam, mallem suprema fuisset  
nox mihi, dum potui Phyllis honesta mori.'  
(*Heroides* 2.57-60)

<sup>101</sup> We can certainly see here an ironic allusion to the role of *Fama* in *Aeneid* 4, which is unfortunately anything but 'sepulta'; far from going underground this *Fama* takes to the skies:

'nocte volat caeli medio terraeque per umbram  
stridens, nec dulci declinat lumina somno;'  
(*Aeneid* 4.184-185)

In both passages there is the detail of the cave, 'antrum' (93), 'speluncam' (4.165); 'illa dies' (93) picks up the 'ille dies' of Virgil (4.169); the motif of the storm, 'caeruleus subitis conpulit imber aquis' (94) is a parallel of *Aeneid* 4.160-161, 'Interea magno misceri murmure caelum/ incipit, insequitur commixta grandine nimbus'; 'signa dedere' (96) is reminiscent of 'dant signum' (4.167); and there is the identical detail of the sound of the nymphs, 'nymphas ululasse' (95), 'summoque ulularunt vertice Nymphae' (4.168).

However, in this epistle the description is not the responsibility of the epic narrator but of Dido herself. In the *Aeneid* the author informs the reader of the disaster ahead, 'ille dies primus leti primusque malorum/ causa fuit' (*Aeneid* 4.169-170), but Dido herself is left in ignorance. In this epistle, however, it is Dido herself who retrospectively realizes the doom-laden undertones of the incident. Ovid gives his Dido the chance to pass her own pessimistic judgement. She heard a voice and at the time she thought it was the sound of nymphs celebrating her marriage. But the way that events have turned out she can see that she was mistaken and that what she actually heard was the Eumenides signalling her doom.

Dido now passes on to another reason why her relationship with Aeneas should have remained at a 'platonic' level. She has violated her obligations to her former husband, Sychaeus:

'Exige, laese pudor, poenas! umbraeque Sychaei  
ad quas, me miseram, plena pudoris eo.'<sup>102</sup> (97-98).

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<sup>102</sup>These lines are problematic as the manuscripts are corrupt. Usually line 97 appears as 'Exige, laese pudor, poenas! violate Sychaei' and a lacuna is placed before line 98. Two additional lines are preserved in

The Virgilian text makes it quite clear that Dido views her commitment to her former husband as a serious obstacle to any involvement with Aeneas:

'vel pater omnipotens abigat me fulmine ad umbras  
pallentis umbras Erebo noctemque profundam,  
ante, pudor, quam te violo aut tua iura resolvo.  
ille meos, primus qui me sibi iunxit, amores  
abstulit; ille habeat secum servetque sepulcro."  
(*Aeneid* 4.25-29)

Virgil's Dido reproaches Aeneas that her 'pudor' has been 'exstinctus' (*Aeneid* 4.322) because of him. She also later argues that she deserves to die, 'quin morere ut merita es, ferroque averte dolorem' (*Aeneid* 4.547) because she has not kept faith with Sychaeus' memory, 'non servata fides cineri promissa Sychaeo' (*Aeneid* 4.552). Ovid's Dido takes over this perspective; so we can see that the vocative 'laese pudor' (97) corresponds to the vocative 'pudor' of *Aeneid* 4.27; the Ovidian 'laese' can also be seen as the equivalent of the Virgilian 'exstinctus' (the change in intensity indicates the greater moral flexibility of the Ovidian character); and Ovid's Dido repeats the belief of her Virgilian counterpart that the loss of her 'pudor' must result in her death. The Ovidian Dido, then, closely follows the theme of her Virgilian predecessor.

Dido continues with another motif that is taken from the *Aeneid*:

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some manuscripts, 'violata [que lecti] iura neque ad cineres fama retenta meos! Vosque mei manes animaeque cinisque Sychaei', but they are generally regarded as spurious. The reading I have adopted is suggested by Vahlens and Merkel. 'Umbraeque' suits the context and provides a reasonable antecedent for 'ad quas' in line 98.

'est mihi marmorea sacratus in aede Sychaeus-  
oppositae frondes velleraque alba tegunt.  
hinc ego me sensi noto quater ore citari;  
ipse sono tenui dixit "Elissa, veni!"  
Nulla mora est, venio, venio tibi debita coniunx;  
sum tamen admissi tarda pudore mei.'  
(99-104)

'praeterea fuit in tectis de marmore templum  
coniugis antiqui, miro quod honore colebat,  
velleribus niveis et festa fronde revinctum:  
hinc exaudiri voces et verba vocantis  
visa viri,' (*Aeneid* 4. 457-461).

In the Virgilian text the voice of Sychaeus is merely one in a series of disturbing phenomena. There are unpleasant special effects at sacrifices (*Aeneid* 4.453-455); the screech-owl wails through the night (4.462); there is an uncanny fulfilment of old predictions (4.464-465); there are macabre dreams involving Aeneas himself (4.465-473). But in this epistle Dido isolates the incident of Sychaeus' voice and expands upon it in more detail. So although the 'sensi' (101) of Ovid is a reflection of the indefiniteness of the Virgilian 'visa' (4.461), nevertheless the Ovidian Dido has a much more tangible idea of what Sychaeus is actually saying to her, "Elissa, veni", how many times he has said it, 'quater', and with what sort of voice, 'sono tenui'. The detail of Ovid's Dido contrasts with the impressionistic quality of the Virgilian account. The *Aeneid* is concerned to give the impression of an increasingly unbalanced woman whose morbid thoughts seem to be reciprocated by disturbing events around her. The Ovidian Dido, however, is not interested in psychological verisimilitude. She simply takes one detail of the Virgilian text and rhetorically expands upon it. Her greater expansiveness is presumably to impress upon Aeneas the profound

suspect that Dido is contrasting her conjugal devotion with the alleged destructive fickleness of Aeneas.

Dido proceeds by stressing that now Aeneas has proved false there will be no hesitation in her rejoining her former spouse:

'nulla mora est, venio, venio tibi debita coniunx;  
sum tamen admissi tarda pudore mei.'  
(103-104)

Dido's repeated 'venio' is an appropriate response to Sychaeus' curt imperative, 'veni' (102). Coupled with a promise of immediate action, 'nulla mora est', this gives an appropriate effect of wifely devotion and obedience. Her only reason for not yet responding to his call has been the shame of her sin, 'sum tamen admissi tarda pudore mei' (104). Line 104 reinforces the point of the earlier 'plena pudoris eo' (98). Thus it appears (somewhat paradoxically) that *pudor* is both the reason why Dido must go to Sychaeus, and why she feels unable to (for there are two sorts of *pudor*, the 'good' which prevents wrong-doing and the 'bad' which is consciousness of wrong-doing). It is the very loss of *pudor* ('laese pudor' [97]) which ironically constitutes both her betrayal of Sychaeus and the reason why she now must rejoin him. But how can she face a man whose memory she has just defiled by sleeping with Aeneas? This provides Dido with an excuse for not dying. She then attempts to persuade Sychaeus that her error was excusable:

'da veniam culpae! decepit idoneus auctor;  
invidiam noxae detrahit ille meae.  
diva parens seniorque pater, pia sarcina nati,  
spem mihi mansuri rite dedere viri.  
si fuit errandum, causas habet error honestas;  
adde fidem, nulla partem pigendus erit.'  
(105-110)

Dido argues that the pedigree of Aeneas led her to believe that he would act in a respectable manner. She did not involve herself with Aeneas merely for the sake of a casual fling but in the expectation that he would stay with her as a proper husband, 'spem mihi mansuri rite dedere viri' (108). Therefore her 'error' has 'causas ... honestas'. The only obstacle to a propitious outcome was Aeneas' unfortunate lack of *fides*. Dido, then, attempts to convince Sychaeus that her own conduct was justifiable. The villain of the piece is not herself but Aeneas. We may note how the argumentation of these lines modifies her earlier stance in lines 35ff. She earlier argued that Aeneas' heartless conduct proved he could not be related to Venus. So she dismissed his illustrious pedigree and suggested more suitable relations. However in these lines, when the quality of Aeneas' parents is important to the effectiveness of her case, she has occasion to restore them. Ovid's Dido proves to be a competent opportunist.

Yet we can also see that the attitude of the Ovidian Dido is rather disarmingly casual when compared to the anguish of her Virgilian counterpart. 'Si fuit errandum' (109) suggests a rather nonchalant fatalistic approach to her sexual involvement with Aeneas. The *gerund* implies necessity (thus reducing Dido's choice in the matter), and the 'error' (as noted above) is neatly counterbalanced by 'causas ... honestas'. This whole approach contrasts sharply with Dido's fanatical determination (in the *Aeneid*) not to err:

'sed mihi vel tellus optem prius ima dehiscat  
 vel pater omnipotens abigat me fulmine ad umbras  
 pallentis umbras Erebo noctemque profundam,  
 ante, pudor, quam te violo aut tua iura resolvo.'  
 (*Aeneid* 4. 24-27)

We must feel that Ovid's Dido is not quite as remorseful as she

pretends to be. 'Nulla parte pigendus erit' (110) hardly suggests that Dido has an irrevocable commitment to her former spouse.

(8): Exile. Wars and Women. and Pregnancy.

Dido continues her narrative by indicating how her misfortune with Aeneas is merely the latest episode in a life full of tragic torment:

'Durat in extremum vitaeque novissima nostrae  
prosequitur fati, qui fuit ante, tenor.  
occidit internas coniunx mactatus ad aras,  
et sceleris tanti praemia frater habet;  
exul agor cineresque viri patriamque relinquo,  
et feror in dubias hoste sequente vias.'  
(111-116)

Her husband was murdered by her own brother. She is compelled to abandon her homeland and her husband's ashes and is forced into exile. She is confronted by both the perils of the sea, 'in dubias ... vias' and the threat of her pursuing brother, 'hoste sequente'. Nor do her troubles cease when she reaches Carthage (a fact that is emphasised by the use of the present tense in these lines):

'adplicor his oris fratrique elapsa fretoque  
quod tibi donavi, perfide, litus emo.  
urbem constitui lateque patentia fixi  
moenia finitimis invidiosa locis.  
bella tument; bellis peregrina et femina temptor,  
vixque rudis portas urbis et arma paro.  
mille procis placui, qui me coiere querentes  
nescio quem thalamis praeposuisse suis.'  
(117-124)

She escapes from the twin clutches of her brother and the sea and purchases land on which she establishes a city. But the establishment of Carthage causes resentment, its 'moenia' are notably 'finitimis invidiosa locis'. Thus wars swell up around her and she is tested by violent conflict. She is both a woman ('femina') and a foreigner

('peregrina') and thus doubly a target for contempt. She has to contend with hostility with makeshift defences. Moreover, by becoming involved with Aeneas she has stirred up the resentment of her numerous suitors. They are unimpressed with her preference for a nonentity (obviously the pedigree of Aeneas counts for little amongst the native Africans). A thousand spurned suitors are a thousand potential enemies. Aeneas, then, has placed her in a position of the utmost peril.

'quid dubitas vinctam Gaetulo tradere Iarbae?  
praebuerim sceleri bracchia nostra tuo.  
est etiam frater, cuius manus in pia poscit  
respergi nostro, sparsa cruore viri.'  
(125-128)

These lines are an obvious play for sympathy. Dido attempts to move Aeneas both by relating her previous tribulations and by stressing how he has helped to exacerbate the perils of her present situation. We can see here how in this epistle Dido is concerned to present herself rather differently from the way she is characterized by Venus in *Aeneid* 1. In the Virgilian lines there is a sense of wonder that Dido, being a woman, should have been able to accomplish the flight from Tyre and the foundation of Carthage:

'his commota fugam Dido sociosque parabat.  
conveniunt quibus aut odium crudele tyranni  
aut metus acer erat; navis, quae forte paratae,  
corripiunt onerantque auro. portantur avari  
Pygmalionis opes pelago; dux femina facti.  
devenere locos ubi nunc ingentia cernes  
moenia surgentemque novae Karthaginis arcem,  
mercatique solum, facti de nomine Byrsam,  
taurino quantum possent circumdare tergo.'  
(*Aeneid* 1.360-368)

The Dido we initially meet in Virgil is a resourceful achiever. She is

quite capable of holding her own in a man's world. But when in the Ovidian epistle she wishes to coerce Aeneas into remaining, it is obviously in her interests to persuade him of her inability to survive alone. So instead of the examples of Pygmalion, the flight from Tyre and the foundation of Carthage being employed to present an image of a woman equal to the challenge, they are rather used to promote a picture of a woman tested beyond her meagre resources, 'bellis peregrina et femina temptor'. This Dido is at pains to indicate that a man's presence is very much required.

Although the Ovidian Dido is attempting to exploit circumstances to her best advantage, nevertheless it is clear that the basis of her arguments has some foundation in the Virgilian text. She is surrounded by potential hostility:

'nec venit in mentem quorum consederis arvis?  
hinc Gaetulae urbes, genus insuperabile bello,  
et Numidae infreni cingunt et inhospita Syrtis;  
hinc deserta siti regio lateque furentes  
Barcaei. quid bella Tyro surgentia dicam  
germanique minas?' (*Aeneid* 4.39-44)

These are a set of circumstances and neighbours which would seem to make an attack highly likely, if not imminent. Carthage is not yet in a state of completion as is made clear by the activity which Aeneas views in *Aeneid* 1,

'instant ardentis Tyrii: pars ducere muros  
molirique arcem et manibus subvolvere saxa,  
pars optare locum tecto et concludere sulco;  
iura magistratusque legunt sanctumque senatum.  
hic portus alii effodiunt; hic alta theatris  
fundamenta locant alii, immanisque columnas  
rupibus excidunt, scaenis decora alta futuris.'  
(*Aeneid* 1.423-429)

and in which he himself participates in *Aeneid* 4:

'Aenean fundantem arces ac tecta novantem  
conspicit.' (*Aeneid* 4.260-261)

We might note at this point how Dido adapts her material to suit her particular rhetorical point. Previously the incomplete walls of Carthage were introduced as a means to persuade Aeneas that Carthage is a better option than Rome:

'nec nova Carthago, nec te crescentia tangunt  
moenia nec sceptro tradita summa tuo?  
facta fugis, facienda petis;' (11-13)

A partially constructed Carthage is infinitely preferable to a non-existent Rome. But in line 122 when Dido wishes to stress the immediacy of the perils that confront her the incompleteness of the city is presented negatively. Similarly, at an earlier stage in the epistle Carthage is seen as a stable territory that has been already won. This contrasts with Italy which must yet be sought out and which no-one will hand over lightly:

'quaerenda per orbem  
altera, quaesita est altera terra tibi.  
'ut terram invenias, quis eam tibi tradet habendam?  
quis sua non notis arva tenenda dabit?'  
(13-16)

In these lines the stability of Carthage is contrasted with the perils that lay ahead in Italy. But in this later passage when Dido is attempting to emphasize that Aeneas is abandoning her in the midst of abundant danger Carthage is suddenly beset by peril.

If Dido exaggerates somewhat by her reference to 'mille'

suitors, it is nevertheless true that in the *Aeneid* there a number of African wooers,

despectus Iarbas  
ductoresque alii, quos Africa terra triumphis  
dives alit.' (*Aeneid* 4.36-38)

and that her preference for Aeneas does cause threatening resentment.

This is the theme of Iarbas' prayer to Jupiter in *Aeneid* 4:

'femina, quae nostris errans in finibus urbem  
exiguam pretio posuit, cui litus arandum  
cuique loci leges dedimus, conubia nostra  
reppult ac dominum Aenean in regna recepit.  
et nunc ille Paris cum semiviro comitatu,  
Maeonia mentum mitra crinemque madentem  
subnexus, raptu potitur: nos munera templis  
quippe tuis ferimus famamque fovemus inanem.'  
(*Aeneid* 4.211-218)

Although Ovid's Dido is exploiting the situation, nevertheless there is some point to her assertion that her involvement with Aeneas has a deleterious effect on the security of Carthage. For as long as the surrounding chieftains are potential suitors, then Dido's position is relatively secure. They may all resent the fact that they have not been chosen but there is still the possibility that any one of them may be. Thus Dido is able to exploit her femininity in order to maintain an uneasy tension. This will afford a breathing space until Carthage can be sufficiently secured. But once it is clear that she is involved with Aeneas, then obviously her other suitors can unite in their common resentment as lines 123-124 suggest, 'mille procis placui, qui me coiere querentes / nescio quem thalamis praeposuisse suis'.

Dido concludes this section of her argument by suggesting that

Aeneas has placed her in so untenable a position that he may as well hand her directly over to her enemies:

'quid dubitas vinctam Gaetulo tradere Iarbae?  
praebuerim sceleri bracchia nostra tuo.  
est etiam frater, cuius manus in pia poscit  
respergi nostro, sparsa cruore viri.'  
(125-128)

These lines are evidently reminiscent of *Aeneid* 4.325-326:

'quid moror? an mea Pygmalion dum moenia frater  
destruat aut captam ducat Gaetulus Iarbas?'

Ovid's Dido expands upon the Virgilian details in order to present a more graphic image. Instead of enumerating the consequences of Aeneas' desertion she actually invites him personally to oversee her destruction. Therefore the first person singular of 'quid moror' (4.325) is replaced by the second person of 'quid dubitas' (125). Dido suggests that Aeneas might as well do the job properly and personally hand her over to her enemies. He has the choice of two options: he can either pass her on to Iarbas, or leave her to the tender mercies of her brother. Dido, of course, is not expecting Aeneas actually to pursue these options, she merely wishes to impress upon him that he has committed her to one of these grisly fates.

The image of Aeneas being associated in such delinquent activity leads Dido into her next biting reprimand:

'pone deos et quae tangendo sacra profanas!  
non bene caelestis in pia dextra colit.  
si tu cultor eras elapsis igne futurus,  
paenitet elapsos ignibus esse deos.'  
(129-132)

Aeneas' actions mark him out as unsuitable for the transit of sacred cargo. He is profaning, by his presence and by his touch, the very objects which he professes to be so concerned to preserve. In these lines we find that an earlier conceit is re-employed. In lines 77-78 Dido argued that it was pointless to save the *di Penates* from the flames of Troy, only to lose them in the stormy waters of winter. Now she adds a twist that is designed to indict Aeneas further. She argues that if they had known that Aeneas was to be their future 'cultor' they would have preferred to burn.

Dido now turns to another matter:

'Forsitan et gravidam Dido, scelerate, relinquas,  
parsque tui lateat corpore clausa meo.  
accedet fati matris miserabilis infans,  
et nondum nato funeris auctor eris,  
cumque parente sua frater morietur Iuli,  
poenaque conexos auferet una duos.'

(133-138)

Maybe she is pregnant. This idea is an adaptation of *Aeneid* 4. 327-330:

'saltem si qua mihi de te suscepta fuisset  
ante fugam suboles, si quas mihi parvulus aula  
luderet Aeneas, qui te tamen ore referret,  
non equidem omnino capta ac deserta viderer.'

In Virgil Dido wishes for a 'parvulus ... Aeneas' to remind her of his father and to alleviate the pain caused by his departure. Ovid's Dido, however, takes this consolation motif and turns it into a form of emotional blackmail. She seems to be trying to take advantage of Aeneas' familial devotion (as it appears in the Virgilian poem). We might remember that one of the reasons Aeneas presents to Dido for the necessity of his departure is that he must not cheat Ascanius of his

destiny. Ovid's Dido hopes that he may have a similar paternal regard for their imaginary child. She stresses Aeneas' obligation to this child by describing it as 'parsque tui'. But because this baby (if it were to exist) would be enclosed in Dido's body naturally its fate would be linked to hers, 'accedet fatis matris miserabilis infans'. So if Aeneas departs and precipitates Dido's suicide, then he might be responsible for the death of his own unborn son. Dido stops short of unequivocally stating her pregnancy but she attempts to sow unpleasant seeds of doubt in the mind of Aeneas.

(9): Troy, Imperialism and Suicide.

Dido now moves on-to another reason Aeneas uses to justify his departure, 'sed iubet ire deus' (139). This is a theme taken from *Aeneid* 4.345-346:

'sed nunc Italiam magnam Gryneus Apollo,  
Italiam Lyciae iussere capessere sortes.'

Ovid's Dido typically adds a sarcastic aside:

'Vellem, vetuisset adire  
Punica nec Teucris pressa fuisset humus.'  
(139-140)

Why did Aeneas' guiding divinity let him arrive in the first place? In fact his Olympian protectors seem to be remarkably inept:

'hoc duce nempe deo ventis agitaris iniquis  
et teris in rabido tempora longa freto?'  
(141-142)

If a *deus* is overseeing his progress, then why are the Trojans tormented by stormy seas and condemned to years of fruitless wandering? This argument restates the theme of lines 87-88, 'Nec mihi mens dubia est, quin te tua numina damnent./ per mare, per terras septima iactat hiemps.' Aeneas' experience since leaving Troy points to hostile, not propitious divinities.

Judging by the difficulties Aeneas has encountered, his present task would hardly seem to be more difficult than returning to Troy itself:

'Pergama vix tanto tibi erant repetenda labore,

Hectore si vivo quanta fuere forent.'

(143-144)

These lines allude to part of Aeneas' speech to Dido in *Aeneid* 4:

'me si fata meis paterentur ducere vitam  
auspiciis et sponte mea componere curas,  
urbem Troianam primum dulcisque meorum  
reliquias colerem, Priami tecta alta manerent,  
et recidiva manu posuissem Pergama victis.'

(*Aeneid* 4.340-344)

In Virgil, Aeneas confesses that if his fate were in his own hands, then he would return and rebuild Troy. Only divine obligation prevents Aeneas (in Virgil) from pursuing this course of action. Italy is not Aeneas' first choice, but Jupiter's. The reader may suspect that in these lines of the Ovidian epistle Dido is attempting to exploit Aeneas' attachment to the past. Maybe his efforts would be worthwhile if he could return to his homeland, but he is seeking Italy, not Troy, 'non patrium Simoenta petis, sed Thybridis undas' (145). In this instance such effort can hardly be justifiable, for even if he should reach Italy he will be no more than a stranger (as opposed presumably to his status as native royalty in Troy), 'nempe ut pervenias quo cupis, hospes eris' (146). 'Quo cupis' is perhaps used disingenuously by the Ovidian Dido, for the Virgilian text makes it clear that at this point Aeneas' own desire is not so much to go to Italy, as to return to Troy.

But the very possibility of Aeneas reaching Italy still seems remote at this point:

'utque latet vitatque tuas abstrusa carinas,  
vix tibi continget terra petita seni.'

(147-148)

Italy is so elusive one might suspect that it was actively avoiding him. At his present rate of progress, Aeneas has little chance of arriving before he is an old man. This represents a reversal of the theme of Dido's curse in *Aeneid* 4, where she hopes that if Aeneas must reach Italy he will suffer an untimely death:

'et nostras audite preces. si tangere portus  
infandum caput ac terris adnare necesse est,  
et sic fata Iovis poscunt, hic terminus haeret:

.....

sed cadat ante diem mediaque inhumatus harena.'

(*Aeneid* 4.612-614, 620)

Instead of wishing for Aeneas' early demise in Italy, Ovid's Dido argues that he may well be an old man before he even reaches his destination.

Aeneas could make life so much easier for himself by simply opting to remain in Carthage:

'Hos potius populos in dotem, ambage remissa,  
accipe et advectas Pygmalionis opes.

Ilion in Tyriam transfer felicius urbem  
iamque locum regis sceptraque sacra tene!'<sup>103</sup>

(151-154)

The uncertainties of the future could be exchanged for the present advantages of Carthage. In fact, Aeneas could pursue his dream of rebuilding Troy by transferring the work to Carthage, 'Ilion in Tyriam transfer felicius urbem'. Carthage could become the new Troy. Aeneas

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<sup>103</sup>Unfortunately only the 'que' of the first word is readable in the most generally reliable manuscript (P). The version I have adopted is the reading used by Dörrie and one favoured by Palmer and Ehwald. 'Iamque' has the advantage of stressing the present advantages that Aeneas could be enjoying as opposed to those that may or may not be experienced some time in the future in Italy.

is invited once more (as in line 12, 'nec sceptro tradita summa tuo') to assume the reins of power. Carthage, in this context, has once more become a desirable place to be (unlike in lines 121ff., where a different characterization supports a different argument).

Dido proceeds to argue that her own city can provide everything that Italy can:

'si tibi mens avida est belli, si quaerit Iulus,  
unde suo partus Marte triumphus eat,  
quem superet, nequid desit, praebebimus hostem;  
hic pacis leges, hic locus arma capit.'  
(153-156)

There is no need to go to Italy for the sake of wars and laws. Carthage can provide plenty of scope for these particularities. We may see here how Ovid's Dido continues to re-employ details to suit her particular point. So in line 121 the possibility of conflict, 'bellatument' was viewed negatively. Dido was a woman tested beyond her measure, 'femina temptor' (121) and the city was unprepared for conflict, 'vixque rudis portas urbis et arma paro' (122). Dido attempts to sway Aeneas by stressing the enormity of the perils that he has abandoned her to. But now she takes the same motif and presents it positively. The wars that threaten Carthage will provide ample scope for his own martial prowess and a suitable arena for Ascanius to distinguish himself.

The notion that Rome's destiny can be readily transferred to Carthage, conflicts, of course, with the emphasis on the specificity of Roman achievement in the *Aeneid*:

'tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento  
(hae tibi erunt artes), pacisque imponere morem,  
parcere subiectis et debellare superbos.'  
(6.851-853)

There is no possibility here that the Roman destiny could be fulfilled at Carthage (after all Rome's destiny includes a long enmity with Carthage which results in the destruction of the Punic city).

Dido now appeals to Aeneas more directly:

'tu modo, per matrem fraternaque tela, sagittas,  
perque fugae comites, Dardana sacra, deos -  
sic superent, quoscumque tua de gente reportat  
Mars ferus, et damni sit modus ille tui,  
Ascaniusque suos feliciter inpleat annos,  
et senis Anchisae molliter ossa cubent!-'  
(157-162)

She implores him by his mother and brother (Venus and Cupid), by his fellow travellers and by the sacred relics and gods of Troy that he should preserve all those that the Trojan War has spared. This naturally will mean opting for the relative safety of Carthage rather than attempting to pursue his Italian mission. In this way he might guarantee that Ascanius will not come to an untimely end, 'Ascaniusque suos feliciter inpleat annos' (161) and Anchises might rest easily in his grave, 'et senis Anchisae molliter ossa cubent' (162). There is perhaps a slight incongruity in this argument following on from lines 153ff where Dido stresses that Carthage will provide ample scope for military activity (though perhaps Dido is implying that Carthage will provide war if he wants it whereas Italy will present him with no choice).

Following this appeal to his family and friends Dido also implores Aeneas to spare Carthage and herself:

'parce, precor, domui, quae se tibi tradit habendam!  
quod crimen dicis praeter amasse meum?'  
(163-164)

Line 163 introduces a motif which is reminiscent of *Aeneid* 4.318, 'miserere domus labentis'. Aeneas should have some regard for a city that has generously proffered its leadership to him, 'quae se tibi tradit habendam'. This argument recalls the theme of line 12, 'nec sceptro tradita summa tuo', and that of line 152, 'iamque locum regis sceptraque sacra tene'. What has Dido done to deserve such treatment? What can Aeneas possibly accuse her of except loving him, 'quod crimen dicis praeter amasse meum'?<sup>104</sup> The argument is designed to be affecting. She implies that loving Aeneas cannot really be a 'crimen' but should endear him to her. The Ovidian Dido here conveniently overlooks the perspective of the Virgilian Dido who, on occasion, does see her involvement with Aeneas as a shameful violation:

'vel pater omnipotens abigat me fulmine ad umbras,  
pallentis umbras Erebo noctemque profundam,  
ante, pudor, quam te violo aut tua iura resolvo.  
ille meos, primus qui me sibi iunxit, amores  
abstulit; ille habeat secum servetque sepulcro."  
(*Aeneid* 4.25-29)

'non licuit thalami expertem sine crimine vitam  
degere more ferae, talis nec tangere curas;  
non servata fides cineri promissa Sychaeo."  
(*Aeneid* 4.550-552)

To the Virgilian Dido her affair with Aeneas is a *crimen* for it involves a betrayal of her former husband. Ovid's Dido has been quite prepared to adopt this viewpoint on a previous occasion (lines 97ff.)

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<sup>104</sup> This is highly reminiscent of Phyllis' sentiment in *Heroides* 2, 'Dic mihi, quid feci, nisi non sapienter amavi?/ crimine te potui demeruisse meo' (27-28), which is itself (of course) Didonian.

where she could employ it to good rhetorical effect. However, in line 164, where she wishes to impress upon Aeneas that her love for him is not a matter for accusation but rather approbation, she drops her former perspective as being rhetorically ineffective (in these particular circumstances).

Dido continues with arguments that are further designed to illustrate why Aeneas should have no particular animosity towards her:

'non ego sum Pthias magnisque oriunda Mycenis,  
nec steterunt in te virque paterque meus.'  
(165-166)

This is once more an argument culled from the *Aeneid*:

'non ego cum Danais Troianam excindere gentem  
Aulide iuravi classemve ad Pergama misi,'  
(*Aeneid* 4. 425-426).

Dido is not a Greek; she took no part in the destruction of Troy; her relatives did not stand opposed to Aeneas; so Dido and Aeneas are not natural enemies. There is a degree of irony here. Either the Ovidian Dido does not recall the curse of her Virgilian counterpart or she chooses to suppress it. For in Virgil Dido ensures that the Carthaginians will be implacable enemies through the centuries:

'haec precor, hanc vocem extremam cum sanguine fundo  
tum vos, o Tyrii, stirpem et genus omne futurum  
exercete odiis, cinerique haec mittite nostro  
munera. nullus amor populis nec foedera sunt.  
exoriare aliquis nostris ex ossibus ultor  
qui face Dardanos ferroque sequare colonos,  
nunc, olim, quocumque dabunt se tempore vires.  
litora litoribus contraria, fluctibus undas  
imprecor, arma armis: pugnent ipsique nepotesque.'  
(*Aeneid* 4.621-629)

Ovid's Dido appears more willing than her Virgilian equivalent to make radical concessions:

'si pudet uxoris, non nupta, sed hospita dicar;  
dum tua sit, Dido quidlibet esse feret.'  
(167-168)

If Aeneas is ashamed to have her as his wife, then Dido is quite willing to be called his 'hospita'. She can put up with anything ('quidlibet') just so long as she might be his ('dum tua sit'). In the *Aeneid*, however, there seems to be little possibility of Dido accepting such an arrangement. In fact these Ovidian lines seem to be a reversal of the sentiments expressed by Virgil's Dido. She calls her relationship with Aeneas a marriage ('coniugium vocat' [*Aeneid* 4.172]) and grudgingly describes Aeneas as a 'hospes' only after things have turned sour:

'cui me moribundam deseris, - hospes  
(hoc solum nomen quoniam de coniuge restat)?'  
(4.323-324)

Acceptance that Aeneas is no more than her 'hospes' means that her hopes of marriage are dashed. There is, however, no indication in Virgil that Dido will be content with this less intimate relationship.

Dido now turns to another reason why Aeneas should at least postpone his departure temporarily:

'Nota mihi freta sunt Afrum plangentia litus;  
temporibus certis dantque negantque viam.  
cum dabit aura viam, praebebis carbasa ventis;  
nunc levis eiectam continet alga ratem.  
tempus ut observem, manda mihi; certius ibis,  
nec te, si cupies, ipsa manere sinam.'  
(169-174)

As we have seen the opposition of winter weather to travel is a theme common to both Virgil and Ovid. In the Ovidian epistle, however, Dido manages to take the argument that one step further. The waters around Africa are known to her. There are times when passage is possible and times when it is not. Now, it appears, is not a good moment. But if Aeneas will only entrust Dido to watch the weather, then his future departure will be the more certain, 'certius ibis'. Indeed, Dido will not let him remain then, even if he should want to. Aeneas, therefore, is requested to trust to Dido's judgment. When the moment is right she will send him on his way with a show of selfless alacrity. In this way Ovid's Dido appears to take the advice of Anna in Virgil one step further:

'indulge hospitio causasque innecte morandi,  
dum pelago desaevit hiems et aquosus Orion,  
quassataeque rates, dum non tractabile caelum.'  
(*Aeneid* 4. 51-53)

In this letter Dido sees the opportunity of not only plying Aeneas with *hospitium* while the winter lasts, but also of being able to decide exactly how long the stormy season will continue. There are other reasons too why a delay at present is desirable:

'et socii requiem poscunt, laniataque classis  
postulat exiguas semirefecta moras;  
(175-176)

Aeneas' companions and his fleet require some breathing space. The argument is on a practical level. Dido conceals her real motivation and instead urges him to consider his men and the state of his fleet. This attitude is not one that the 'socii' themselves seem to share in

the *Aeneid*:

'classem aptent taciti sociosque ad litora cogant,'  
(*Aeneid* 4.289).

'ocius omnes  
imperio laeti parent et iussa facessunt.'  
(*Aeneid* 4. 294-295)

'fugae studio', 'laeti nautae'  
(*Aeneid* 4.400, 418).

In Virgil the Trojans initially desired a respite from the sea and a chance to repair their fleet:

'quassatam ventis liceat subducere classem  
et silvis aptare trabes et stringere remos,'  
(*Aeneid* 1.551-552).

But by the time Aeneas is ordered by Mercury to depart his men seem more than eager to be on their way. In fact in *Aeneid* 4 it is not the Trojans who seek 'requies' but Dido herself:

'tempus inane peto, requiem spatiumque furori,'  
(*Aeneid* 4.433).

So Ovid's Dido attempts to mask her own desire for a delay by dishonestly projecting such a wish on to Aeneas' travelling companions. She soon, however, reverts to a more personal appeal:

'pro meritis et siqua tibi debebimus ultra,  
pro spe coniugii tempora parva peto-  
dum freta mitescunt et amor, dum tempore et usu  
fortiter edisco tristia posse pati.'  
(177-180)

These lines recall a number of Virgilian passages. Line 177, 'pro

meritis et siqua tibi debemus ultra' is reminiscent of *Aeneid* 4.317, 'si bene quid de te merui'; the appeal to marriage 'pro spe coniugii' (178) is similar to the sentiments of Virgil's Dido at *Aeneid* 4.316, 'per conubia nostra, per inceptos hymenaeos'; and the whole of lines 179-180 is related in its theme to *Aeneid* 4.433-434:

'tempus inane peto, requiem spatiumque furori,  
dum mea me victam doceat fortuna dolere.'

Dido here returns to the apparently stoical attitude of her predecessor. She only wishes a brief delay in order to become used to her new situation. Her hopes must be renounced and she asks merely for a little time to regain her composure. But if Aeneas will not agree, then she is determined to take her own life:

'Si minus, est animus nobis effundere vitam;  
in me crudelis non potes esse diu.'  
(181-182)

She will circumvent his cruelty by killing herself. Dido next presents an image of herself in her final moments:

'adspicias utinam, quae sit scribentis imago!  
scribimus, et gremio Troicus ensis adest,  
perque genas lacrimae strictum labuntur in ensem,  
qui iam pro lacrimis sanguine tinctus erit.'  
(183-186)

She wishes that Aeneas could only see her as she sits writing this letter. The sword is in her lap and the tears roll down her cheeks onto the blade. But presently the sword will be dripping not with tears but blood. Evidently, the Ovidian Dido hopes to influence Aeneas by this affecting image. She proceeds by mentioning how appropriate

Aeneas' gift (the sword) has turned out to be:

'quam bene conveniunt fato tua munera nostro!  
instruis inpensa nostra sepulcra brevi.'  
(187-188)

These lines constitute a clever reversal of *Aeneid* 4. 646-647:

'conscendit furibunda gradus ensemque recludit  
Dardanium, non hos quaesitum munus in usus.'

In Virgil, there is an emphasis upon tragedy and on how the sword is put to inappropriate usage. Ovid's Dido, however, with a typical blend of sarcasm and irony, can only see the gift as entirely opportune. Aeneas has given her precisely what she required. He has considerably provided her with the instrument of her own doom.

Dido also adds that this will not be the first time that her heart has been struck for she has already been wounded by love:

'nec mea nunc primum feriuntur pectora telo;  
ille locus saevi vulnus amoris habet.'  
(189-190)

The use of 'vulnus' here may remind us of the imagery of wounding that is prevalent in the *Aeneid* (and especially in book 4):

'At regina gravi iamdudum saucia cura  
vulnus alit venis et caeco carpitur igni.'  
(*Aeneid* 4.1-2)

'interea et tacitum vivit sub pectore vulnus.  
uritur infelix Dido totaque vagatur  
urbe furens,' (*Aeneid* 4.67-69).

Aeneas is the cause of her erotic injuries, he has already wounded her

figuratively, so it is appropriate that he should also provide her with the sword that will afford a real and fatal blow. Dido now apostrophizes her sister Anna:

'Anna soror, soror Anna, meae male conscia culpae,  
iam dabis in cineres ultima dona meos.'  
(191-192)

These lines allude to the prominent role of Anna in the fourth book of the *Aeneid* (she appears as 'Anna soror' in the ninth line of the book). The phrase 'meae male conscia culpae' reminds the reader of how Dido's sister has colluded in her downfall:

'His dictis impenso animum flammavit amore  
spemque dedit dubiae menti solvitque pudorem.'  
(*Aeneid* 4.54-55)

'tu lacrimis evicta meis, tu prima furentem  
his, germana, malis oneras atque obicis hosti.'  
(*Aeneid* 4.548-549)

In the *Aeneid* Dido appears to blame her sister for precipitating her involvement with Aeneas. She is therefore, as the Ovidian Dido suggests, an appropriate minister of her last rites.

Dido does not forget that her suicide is primarily intended as an indictment of Aeneas:

nec consumpta rogis inscribar Elissa Sychaei,  
hoc tantum in tumuli marmore carmen erit:

PRAEBUIT AENEAS ET CAUSAM MORTIS ET ENSEM;  
IPSA SUA DIDO CONCIDIT USA MANU.'  
(193-196)

She is careful to emphasize therefore that she will not appear on her

epitaph as Sychaeus' wife. Aeneas will not so easily avoid the blame for her death. Rather she will use the opportunity afforded by the epitaph to fulfil the strategy she envisaged in lines 63-64:

'vive, precor! sic te melius quam funere perdam.  
tu potius leti causa ferere mei.'

The epitaph itself is specifically designed to denigrate Aeneas:

'PRAEBUIT AENEAS ET CAUSAM MORTIS ET ENSEM;  
IPSA SUA DIDO CONCIDIT USA MANU.'  
(195-196)

Aeneas has furnished everything necessary: both a reason and a sword. The task itself, however, is left to Dido. He causes her death but abandons her to conclude the business herself.

Jacobson notes (with reference to 'carmen' in the opening couplet) that, 'the echo of *carmen* in 196 (*hoc tamen in tumuli marmore carmen erit*) may stamp this whole poem as one long epitaph'.<sup>105</sup> This is a good point and should alert the reader to the rhetorical ring structure that frames this epistle. Dido begins by comparing the words she writes ('ultima verba') to the song ('carmen') of the dying swan. Just as the swan dies after the conclusion of its song, so Dido's letter concludes with an image of her suicide. Hence the figurative 'carmen' of her lament will be replaced by the actual 'carmen' of her epitaph.

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<sup>105</sup>Jacobson, 83.

EPILOGUE: Ovid's Dido.

By the time the reader has concluded *Heroides* 7 s/he will be left in little doubt that the Dido encountered in these lines is radically different to her Virgilian manifestation. If Virgil's Dido is generally perceived as a figure of emotional spontaneity, then Ovid's Dido appears as the enthusiastic rhetorician. Drawing on the material of the *Aeneid*, the Ovidian Dido leaves no stone unturned in her quest for arguments to persuade Aeneas to stay. If the Virgilian Dido confronts her lover in the *Aeneid* with elemental emotion, Ovid's Dido attempts to bamboozle Aeneas with a constant stream of disputation. If Virgil's Dido is all naked emotion and tragic intensity, then Ovid's Dido is immersed in her own disingenuous argumentation.

Yet it is difficult to conclude that this poem can be usefully employed to support the assumption of an anti-Augustan poet. Jacobson concludes his analysis of *Heroides* 7 in the following manner:

'In sum, Ovid has tried to create a new Dido out of his feeling of outrage at the *Aeneid*, out of, if you will, a moral stance quite different from Vergil's, a Dido whose "case" is promoted in the most advantageous ways and whose position is justified while Aeneas' is blackened. Vergil vindicates Aeneas, Ovid vindicates Dido. In *Heroides* 7 all Aeneas' positions seem untenable. In contrast, Dido is reasonable, loving, sensible, and without malice. There can be no question here as to who is right and who is wrong. The conflict is drawn in black and white.'<sup>106</sup>

According to Jacobson the 'failure' of the poem can be attributed to Ovid's over-zealous desire to identify with Dido and champion her

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<sup>106</sup>Jacobson, 93.

cause:

'I suspect that Dido's attitude [in *Heroides* 7] is essentially Ovid's and that the inability to separate out his personal feelings from the mythical situation is one reason why this poem fails.'<sup>107</sup>

But does this poem really consist of a serious attempt to promote Dido and denigrate Aeneas? If this was the poet's intention, then we must conclude that he was remarkably inept in its execution. For although the Ovidian Dido shows a considerable finesse in marshalling the details of the Virgilian text into effective argumentation, nevertheless there are a number of points which are hardly compelling; such as when she states that Aeneas is not the true son of his mother (35-36), for Venus is the goddess of love and he is no lover (27-30), or when she advises that Aeneas ought not to venture onto the water because the sea is hostile to unfaithful lovers as Venus was born from the waves (59-60). Moreover, her shameless adoption of any possible position to advance her case hardly promotes sympathy. The reader may find it difficult to side unequivocally with a woman who states that she may be pregnant and that her suicide will prove fatal to Aeneas' unborn son (133-138). Her arguments, although not without point, appear coolly rational and are formulated in such a way as to suggest that elegance of expression is not the least of her priorities:

'facta fugis, facienda petis; quaerenda per orbem  
altera, quaesita est altera terra tibi.'  
(13-14)

'Perdita ne perdam, timeo, noceamve nocenti,'  
(61).

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<sup>107</sup> Jacobson, 90.

Such factors combine to tell against any notion of this epistle being seriously intended to fill the reader with sympathy for Dido and thus expressing anti-Augustan or anti-Virgilian sentiments. The point of this letter is rather to draw a portrait of a Dido removed from her Virgilian context and given a second chance to confront Aeneas within the setting of an Ovidian elegiac poem. Here we do not find a majestic queen full of elemental emotion and high moral sentiment but a cunning lover who is prepared to use every opportunity afforded her by the Virgilian text to work upon her aberrant paramour. If her arguments, at times, appear somewhat forced, then the reader must remember that the character, at the prompting of the poet, is forcing elegiac conventions and motifs to breaking point in order to gain an effective contrast between Dido in her old Virgilian guise and in her new elegiac manifestation.

POSTSCRIPT: Where to from Here?

As the relatively unstudied work of an author who is currently enjoying a good deal of critical attention, the *Heroides* will surely be subject to an increasing number of sophisticated interpretations in the years ahead. Indeed it is not difficult to see that the poems readily afford themselves to a plurality of critical approaches. For instance, they could be approached as studies in narratology, where we might view the heroine as a constructed narrator manipulating the 'facts' of her myth to her own advantage. We might view them as proto-studies in feminism where the heroines are allowed to present their mythic narratives through the particularity of a female perspective. We could also see the *Heroides* as studies in aberrant psychology, why does Medea kill her children, why is Briseis so attached to a man who has ruthlessly butchered her family? Any one of these approaches may yield valuable results and help to replace an image of the poet as merely a talented exponent of verbal pyrotechnics.

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