

Heroides 2: class notes

Select Bibliography (in addition to Knox's commentary)

Fear, T. *Critical studies in Heroides 1, 2, 7* (Durham thesis), 94-155

Fulkerson, L. *The Ovidian heroine as author: reading, writing and community in the Heroides* (Cambridge, 2005), 23-39

Fulkerson, L. 'Writing Yourself to Death: Strategies of (Mis)reading in Heroides 2' *MD* 48 (2002)

Lindheim, S. H. *Mail and Female: Epistolary narrative and desire in Ovid's Heroides* (2003), 92-106

letter from Thracian princess Phyllis to Athenian Demophoon (note background of Demophoon's father as Theseus); In Am. 2.18.32, Ovid indicates that Sabinus wrote a reply from Demophoon. Read esp. with *Her.* 1 (ought to have taken patient Penelope as model) and 7 (Dido); see also the Vergilian Dido (cf. Fulkerson 2005)

Other heroines to have in mind= Medea (nb who hates Theseus), Hypsipyle, Ariadne

Fulkerson sees her as modelling self on foundational tales of abandoned women (eg Dido, Medea, and Ariadne): limiting narrative. See also Lindheim on links to heroines

Fulkerson 2002: Ovid's Phyllis is the only Phyllis abandoned by a Demophoon who (she says) never intended to return to her. In other versions of the myth, Demophoon actually did return to Phyllis, but she had already killed herself.

Difficulty faced by critics due to poor sources for this tradition (esp. loss of Callimachus), despite it being well-known in antiquity (cf Persius 1.34) : for sources see e.g. Fear 88ff.; Knox; Fulkerson 2002: Demophoon came to Thrace and married the princess Phyllis, receiving the kingdom as a dowry (Apollod. Epit. 6.16-7). Demophoon then left for Athens, his home, swearing to return (Hyg. 59). Phyllis walked with him to the Nine Ways, gave him a casket that she said held a sacrament of Rhea, and instructed him not to open it until her had abandoned hope of returning to her, which was to happen by a specified day.

"When the appointed time for Demophoon to arrive had passed, Phyllis cursed Demophoon and hung herself (Serv. ad Ed. 5.10). The sources differ after this, and in an important way. One version says that Demophoon later opened the casket, was struck with fear and accidentally impaled himself on his sword. In the other version, he returned to Phyllis, but too late; she had already committed suicide in despair. If it is this second version that *Heroides 2* presupposes (an assumption on which my reading is based), we get a very different picture of Phyllis, one who is predisposed to be too credulous - not of Demophoon but of her own irrational fears - and to assimilate too quickly her own story to other stories of abandoned women that superficially seem like hers. It is significant that no extant version of this story (besides *Heroides 2*, according to most scholars) features a Demophoon who unambiguously abandons Phyllis; he generally wants to return but is prevented by circumstances. His deliberate abandonment has been taken as an Ovidian innovation; perhaps it is rather an innovation of Phyllis. As her letter will show, Ovid's Phyllis kills herself because she has never believed in Demophoon's return; her saturation in stories of tragic desertion cause her, at precisely the moment he is late, to envision herself as a suicidal heroine. Within this single day, all of her misgivings leap to the front of her mind, and she becomes convinced that she has been betrayed. Phyllis is impressionable, and she lets other women's stories persuade her that she has been deserted when precisely the opposite is true." (Fulkerson 2002)

No mention of revenge tradition or tradition of her metamorphosis in this poem.

nb identities of Phyllis: competent (Lindheim 99) and vulnerable queen (feigning?? just princess?), lover, wife, hostess..

Questions raised of what is time scale in relation to her suicide (still wavering here in this, as in other things? Optimistic and pessimistic) and whether we are meant to think that D is coming back (but will be too late, given suicide). Loss of sources makes it hard to be sure

What is function of letter? Prompt her lover to come back (reproach, making him feel guilty)? Psychological aspect? Working through her feelings and suicide options? How rational/mad? Is she

acting out naïve persona (Lindheim)? Fear sees Phyllis as now able to analyse and express doubts after three month cooling-off period. Fear suggests intermittent belief in D now motivated by attempt to block her own capacity for destructive introspection. Again, loss of sources makes it hard..

Possible parallels with Canace's premature actions in *Her.* 11.

Backstory: Knox ad loc. on changes eg not chance; predetermination to commit suicide; "exploration of the process of despair"

Callimachean version known to Ovid (which may have influenced Vergil; note Ovid's evocation of Dido; also poss model for Catullus' Ariadne, another lit predecessor for P. See e.g. Fulkerson)

1 epistolary feel. *Hospita* cf. Dido, Callimachean presentation as faithless guest; Knox: amphibole.

Importance of geography: distanced. Fear wonders if to suggest other hospitae around the Med!

Also > propriety.

2 complaint (cf elegy), as 8, 26. Now seems more than hostess

3 modern ed prints *semel* (so Knox) not *quarter*: if *quarter* Phyllis writes on the very day after Demophoon is due back to remind him of his promise (Fulkerson). Jacobson (who reads *semel*) thinks the delay of three months makes Phyllis seem overly credulous (71). Fulkerson comments that three months, while a long time for a lover, is not an unreasonable time for a trip of this length in the ancient world. attempt to sail to Athens and back in a month would be impractical on Demophoon's part. See Lindheim's view p95; also Fear 97ff. (reassessment, increasing suspicion?)

Hyginus *Fab.* 50 says that when D didn't come on the appointed day, P rushed to shore x 9 and killed herself. Here haunting the shore generally

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

4 "it was agreed that you would drop anchor on our shores" (Knox)

pacisco – suggestive as term for betrothal

5: indication of time scale 4 months gone (waits 3 months after she thought he was going to before despairing)

6 but not

7-22 patience, foolish to believe

7-8 "if you were to add up the days, as we who are in love do with care, my complaint does not come before its appointed time" (Knox)

9 *lentus* like D 23

10 "your lover is reluctant to believe you guilty now" (Knox)

11 rep of *saepe*

12 *alba*: Knox suggests evokes Theseus; S wind would bring D back from Athens to Thrace, word play.

13 strong; cf Knox- shows Ov change

15-20 fear of shipwreck, D already suffered probs (Knox 45 n)

16 *cana*: "foaming" (Knox); *naufraga*: "drowned in shipwrecked" (Knox)

18 "I begged the gods as I prayed" (Knox)

23-62 *at* and change to present: realizes fooled. Thinks back-and 23 *lentus abes*

23-4 *iurata* / *numina* "the oaths you swore by the gods" (Knox)

24 "moved by any love for me" (Knox: possessive adjective used for objective genitive)

25 “the winds carried off your words and your sails” (Knox) : syllepsis. Familiar complaint from abandoned woman.

27-30: P protests her innocence.

27-34 cf Medea; oath cf Med and *her.* 12

27 “but loved unwisely” (Knox); Fear sees P as trying to counter a sense of rising guilt in 27ff.

28 “by my very fault I might well have won you for my own” (Knox)

29 *in me*: abl. “in my case” (Knox)

30 *pondus et instar* “equal weight” (hendiadys) (Knox)

31 “Where now is your promise of faith?” (Knox); see Knox on tricolonate structure

32 *deus* = Amor; “ever on your lying lips” (Knox)

33 “promised for years of life together” (Showerman). Marriage-god Hymenaeus stands for bond of marriage

34 Hymenaeus, invoked by D, becomes for P guarantor of marriage contract (Knox ad loc.); legal terminology

35ff See Knox ad 35-44 for artful structure. rep of *per.*

35 Knox adopts conjecture *totiens* in place of mss *totum*; emphasis on changeableness of sea > ironic for Demophoon to swear by

36 Knox adopts *nempe* in place of mss *saepe*

36 variation in tenses

37 casting aspersions; see Knox ad loc. for unusual rhythm which emphasises *iurasti*

37-8 Demophoon's grandfather was Neptune (alleged paternity for Theseus); Knox notes enclosing word-order

39 “the weapons that are all too well fitted to wound me” (Knox)

40 word order; Cupid has bow and torch

41 “And Juno, who graciously presides over the marriage couch” (Knox)

42 Demeter associated with bearing torch due to carrying them in her search for Persephone; secret rites i.e. Eleusinian mysteries. As Knox observes, common oath (esp. for Athenian like Demophoon)

43-4 “If each of the many gods you have wronged should avenge himself, you by yourself would not satisfy the penalty” (Knox): i.e. leaves gods to punish (contrast tradition by which she cursed him); *tot* / *unus* contrast

44 “to pay the penalty” (Knox)

45 “Moreover, I was actually mad enough to repair your shattered ships” (Knox): only here in extant tradition

45ff. cf. Dido [cf Knox on Callim. portrayal of Phyllis as influencing Dido]

45 *furiosa* “in my madness” (Knox)

46 *qua desereret* : final subjective “by which I might be abandoned” (Knox)

47 Knox adopts *quo ...abires* over the variant *quod ... haberes* (“by which you were to leave, intending to run away from me”; nb *abire* verb in *Heroides*)

49-51 *credidimus* at start of line x 3: emphasis on her credulity

49 cf. Cat. 64, 139-40 (Ariadne) “at non haec quondam blanda promissa dedisti / uoce mihi”

50 hendiadys “your distinguished ancestry”; nb Theseus lineage. Sign of P's naivety? (as well as glorious deeds listed later on is the abandonment of Ariadne and Theseus' forgetting of promise to father)

51 Knox ad loc cfs *Ars* (later/roughly contemporary). Phyllis' naivety stressed by fact she doesn't know that (elegiac) lovers fake tears

53-4 Knox prints Kenney's conjecture “his nos”

53 Understand verb. “Why make all those pledges to me?” (Knox). Phyllis' credulity underlined.

54 *capi*: “be deceived” (Knox)

55 *nec moveor*: adversative *nec*: “but I am not upset” (Knox)

56 “This ought to have formed the limit of my kindness” (Knox)

57-8 “I regret the disgrace of having crowned my act of hospitality by marrying you” (Knox);

lectum iugale previously at Aen.4.496 (arguably significant in light of evocation of Dido)

59-60 “I could wish that the previous night had been my last, when I could have died in possession of my good name” (Knox); regret for her loss of virginity; Knox suggests her use of proper name adds dignity

61-2 see Fear p120f.: 55-6 initial acts of *hospitium* ought to have been total of *meritum* (not including sex which is a *crimen*) but implication in 55-8 that *merita* includes sex: through sex she has earned his consideration. Fear notes a use of *demereo* for earning money from sex: image of sex as downpayment for marriage. Phyllis saw sex as a *meritum* and tolerated as she believes it was part of the marriage

62 *aequa venit* i.e. “is just”; *merito* “deservedly”

63-90 see Knox ad loc for addition of Ariadne abandonment (only parallel) to conventional list

63-4 “it is a cheaply earned reputation” (Knox)

64 *simplicitas*: “guilelessness” (Knox), something desirable in a lover (and attractive to D). Fear cfs *Her.* 20.104 (Cydippe sees her *simplicitas* as the reason for her erotic capture)

65-6 “I was deceived by your words, because I was in love and because I am a woman. May the gods grant that this be the sum total of your praise!” (Knox; see his comments ad loc.); *ut* omitted

67 Aegeus was D's grandfather; “let a statue of yourself be put up” (Knox)

68 “resplendent in his titles” (Knox)

69ff. List of characters who have violated hospitality (so Jacobson) (Sciron, Procrustes, Sinis; Thebans who denied burial, Pluto who keeps Pirithous). Fear contrasts singular/plural nature of titles (where D. has unmartial, inglorious deed)

69 “when the name of Sciron has been read”; robber Sciron killed by Theseus on road near Megara; Procrustes tortured victims using bed

70 Sinis (tied victims to pine trees); Minotaur (hybridity reflected in word-order? Knox)

71 Theseus's attack v Creon to ensure burial

72 i.e. Dis (underworld and inhabitants typically black)

73 referring to inscriptions on statue; D's betrayal will be memorialized. NB writing of a different kind. See Knox 147-8 n for motif of incorporating inscriptions into elegy and cf. *Her.* 7.195-6. *illos* is a potential textual problem (see Fear p 123f.)

74: *dolus*: wiles characteristic of elegiac lover, suggesting D as artful seducer (Fear p125); Fear argues that before P had tried to separate love and *hospitium*; following rehabilitation of sexual act, uses *amans hospita*

75-6 like father here...

75 “of the multitude of great deeds of your father” (Knox); one emulated out of so many great deeds and an unfortunate one of abandonment of a lover

76 *sedit*: “deeply impressed itself” (Knox)

Cressa i.e. Cretan Ariadne.

77 “The only act he tries to excuse is the only one that you admire in him” (Knox); pointed repetition of *solum*

78 legalistic diction; *perfidie*: Knox cfs. Callim fr. 556, and laments of Ariadne (Cat. 64.132-3) and Dido (*A.* 4.305-6)

agis: “you act the part” (Knox)

79 *illa* i.e. Ariadne (for whose future with Bacchus, see e.g. Cat. 64)

80 *capistratis*: “haltered” (Knox) of tigers associated with the god's chariot. Ariadne had better fate so D worse than father. Fear contrasts *alta* with *despecti* (81): Phyllis looked down on

81-6 no others will consider her marriage material now (cf. Dido, *A.* 4.534-6; 4.320f., Iarbas' prayer, 4.213-8): isolation

81-2 “But the Thracians whom I rejected refuse to marry me on the grounds that I am rumoured to have preferred a foreigner to my own people” (Knox); for subjunctive, see Knox; *externum/ meis* contrast

83 evidence of Phyllis' active imagination; Knox notes anachronistic aspect of *doctas*, inserted to convey contempt of the imagined Thracian speaker for sophisticated foreigner Demophoon

84 idea of rule evokes Dido (Queen; in Apollodorus, father rules)

85 moralizing maxim “the outcome is the measure of our action” (Knox); Fear p125 notes *exitus* can be used for death (foreshadowing suicide?)

85-6 cf. 61-2

86 “are to be branded in accordance with their results” (Knox)

87-8 “And yet if our seas should foam beneath their oars, then they would say that I counselled well both for myself and for my people” (Knox)

87 *nostra/ tuo* juxtaposition

88 *mihi / meis*: variation. Fear contrasts *praeposuisse* with 88 *consuluisse*. Apollodorus version father gives away which would suggest dynastically useful marriage (Fear p129). Dido considers benefits of marriage with a foreigner *A.* 4.39-49: there certain amount of self-deception but makes more sense given vulnerable situation of Carthage than seemingly xenophobic Thrace

89 i.e. you will not care for my palace; cf. 7.11-12. D is perceived of as ungrateful

90 i.e. come to Thrace

91-120 moves to memory of dept “She no longer pretends to persuade Demophoon to return: the epistle has become an undisguised monologue” (Knox ad loc); Fear p130 discusses the question of why she goes back to this moment now.

91 *inhaeret*: hints at obsession

92 *premeret portus* “crowded the harbour” (Knox)

93ff overt public display encourages P, as does D's words. P bitterly echoes his *expectes*

93 *ausus es*: Knox suggests conjures callousness. Q of whether recent feelings colours the scene (Fear p131 suggests tension). “hanging on your lover's neck” (Knox)

94 “to kiss me close and long” (Knox)

95 mingling suggested in word-order?

96 word patterning (Knox p33); *queri* (cf 2 *queror* and elegiac origins); subjunctive suggests reporting/non-factual

97 in her view, these are final.

98 sc. *ut*

99-101: see Knox ad loc for disappointed rising tricolon

99 “with no intention of ever seeing me again” (Knox); she believes he never intended to return but is she right?

100 “sails denied return to my sea” (Knox)

102 optimistically hoping for a temporary lapse in fidelity

103 *coniunx*: but P had wished for *coniugium*

105 *tibi excidimus* “you have forgotten me” (Knox)

112: even before hooking up with bookish foreigner, P. faced hostility

113-14: description perhaps suggestive of how hard for a woman to manage; for geographical details, see Knox

114 *admissas* “headlong” (Knox)

115: see Knox 105-16 for lines missing before this couplet; *libata* “was offered up” (Knox): sacral imagery. See Fear p138: P made D into a god

116 *zona*: taking of girdle shows loss of virginity. Knox cfs *Remedia amoris* 602 (becomes means of suicide)

117 *pronuba*: anachronistic: matron conducting bride in Roman marriage ceremony. Fury Tisiphone as *pronuba* is ominous. Links with warped marriage ceremony of Dido-Aeneas in *Aen.* 4 (where Juno *pronuba*: cf 4.168 *ulularunt* with *ululauit*), plus cf *A.* 7.319 (Juno's curse) *Bellona manet te pronuba*

118 *deuia* “hunting remote spots” (Housman); i.e. *bubo*, screech-owl (ill-omened cry: cf. *A.* 4.462 Dido). Cf her carmen later

119 Fury Allecto, with characteristic serpentine decoration

120 *mota* “kindled” (Housman); common idea of marriage torches from funeral procession as ill-omen: cf. Prop. 4.3.13-14 (Arethusa)

121-48: anxious days watching for sight of ship: see Knox for indications that scene was famous and possibility of debt to Callimachus. "Nine roads": cf. *Ars* 3.37-8 for link with 9 trips made by Phyllis

121 "though unhappy, still I walk the shores" (Knox); *fructicosaque* "covered in thickets" (Knox)

122 "Where the sea opens far and wide before my eyes" (Knox)

123 *laxatur* "is thawed" after evening's frosts (Knox)

123-4 looking to see if wind bringing ship north from Athens. Obsessive: even cold night.

125 i.e. D= answer to her prayers; cf. *Am.* 2.11.43f.

127-8 "Scarcely restrained by the waves, I run ahead into the sea, where the shifting sea first extends its waters" (Knox)

127ff. obsessive/deranged behaviour! Lack of care for self portending suicide?

129 *magis/minus* contrasted; understand correlative *eo*

utilis: "capable of standing" (Knox)

130 *linquor* "I faint away"

131 "There is a bay curving gently into the shape of a drawn bow" (Knox)

132 *ultima ... cornua*: the furthest points of the promontory (Knox); "rises stiffly in a precipitous crag" (Knox); descriptive abl.

133f cf Theseus' father

134 decisive; sure of his deceit. *Mens fuit* "I intended" (Knox) + infin; *pergis* "persevere" (Knox)

136 burial should be of great concern.

137 hardness assoc with elegiac mistress in elegy; concessive *ut*

138 proper name again.

Teque "harder than iron, steel ... and you" (Knox, who observes unexpected climax)

139ff. Other suicide options: disturbing (bloody death welcomed, death pleasing); morbid. Question of how serious P is at this point and time scale in relation to her actual suicide.

140 *gladio* more colloquial word for sword: Knox argues thus makes more vivid

141-2 "My neck too, because it yielded to the embrace of your faithless arms, I would gladly entangle in a noose" (Knox)

141 neck: cf. previously; infidelity

143 *stat* "I am determined" (Knox) "to atone for modesty which proved frail" (Housman); concern with *pudor*

144 *in necis electu*: "in choosing the manner of my death" (Knox)

futura ... est = erit (periphrasis for future)

mora: motif

145 *inscribende*: voc. "your name will have to be inscribed" (Knox); *invidiosa* "calculated to draw hatred upon you" (Shuckburgh, cit. by Knox)

145ff. Inscription, complementing previous (nb shared metre and origins of elegy); even though P admits won't be not exact, question of who will hear (maids, 130?). Immortalized in elegiac verse at least

147 *hospes amantem*: roles of host and lover should have been separate. Knox observes mirroring with juxtaposition of *Phyllida Demophoon* in 147. See Lindheim p98 on 147-8

148 see Knox ad loc for construction of *causam* and *manum* with *praebuilt* and the syllepsis: "he provided the cause, I the hand to do it" Knox)