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HPLA 7004
Non-Assessed Assignment 1
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Translation, *Heroides* 1. 41-52

41-42 *Ausus es — o nimium nimiumque oblite tuorum! —
Thracia nocturno tangere castra dolo*

It was daring, oh too, too forgetful of your own, to strike the Thracian camp by night,

43-44 *Totque simul mactare viros, adiutus ab uno!
At bene cautus eras et memor ante mei!*

**to slay so many men at once, with help from one. But you were first very careful and mindful
of me!**

45-46 *Usque metu micuere sinus, dum victor amicum
Dictus es Ismariis isse per agmen equis.*

**All the while, my heart fluttered with fear until I was told the victor drove Thracian horses
through the friendly camp.**

47-50 *Sed mihi quid prodest vestrīs disiecta lacertis
Ilios et, murus quod fuit, esse solum,
Si maneo, qualis Troia durante manebam,
Virque mihi dempto fine carendus abest?*

**But what does it benefit me that Ilium is torn to pieces by your strength, and that what was a
wall is level ground, if I remain as when Troy existed?**

51-52 *Diruta sunt aliis, uni mihi Pergama restant,
Incola captivo quae bove victor arat.*

**Destroyed for others, to me alone Pergamum stands firm, in which the victor, an inhabitant,
ploughs with captive bull.**

Commentary. *Heroides* 1.81-100

81 *Me pater Icarius viduo discedere lecto*
 Cogit et immensas increpat usque moras
83 *Increpet usque licet — tua sum, tua dicar oportet;*
 Penelope coniunx semper Ulixis ero.
85 *Ille tamen pietate mea precibusque pudicis*
 Frangitur et vires temperat ipse suas.
87 *Dulichii Samiique et quos tulit alta Zacynthos,*
 Turba ruunt in me luxuriosa proci,
89 *Inque tua regnant nullis prohibentibus aula;*
 Viscera nostra, tuae dilacerantur opes.
91 *Quid tibi Pisandrum Polybumque Medontaque dirum*
 Eurymachique avidas Antinoique manus
93 *Atque alios referam, quos omnis turpiter absens*
 Ipse tuo partis sanguine rebus alis?
95 *Irus egens pecorisque Melanthius actor edendi*
 Ultimus accedunt in tua damna pudor.
97 *Tres sumus inbelles numero, sine viribus uxor*
 Laertesque senex Telemachusque puer.
99 *Ille per insidias paene est mihi nuper ademptus,*
 Dum parat invitis omnibus ire Pylon.

In this passage, we find sad Penelope pleading for Ulysses' return as she relates the dire situation at home, but reiterating her unwavering faithfulness in spite of the circumstances. Ovid uses *Odyssey* 15 as the backdrop for this passage, where Athena tells Telemachus of Penelope's plight, and using Athena's warning as the subject of Penelope's urgent plea. Her father, Icarius, drives her (*cogit*) to abandon 'her deserted bed' (*viduo discedere lecto*). Knox translates *viduo* as 'deserted' but we could also translate this as 'widowed.'¹ Here Ovid may be conveying Penelope's feeling of hopelessness, having waited twenty years for Ulysses' return, as if he has died and left her a widow.

¹ Knox 1995: 105; Gould 2014: 19 translates 'widowed.'

Penelope is feeling pressure from Icarius' (*cogit* and *increpat*) to surrender to what he believes a fact, that she is either widowed or abandoned. Ovid has her repeat this again (*increpet usque*) as if to sound exacerbated by her father's endless chiding.² She mentions her 'immeasurable delay' (*immensas...moras*) to taking another husband. But that is her father's view of things, not her's. She is determined to wait, forever if necessary, saying she will always be his wife (*coniunx semper ero*). Ovid has her convey this emphatically by the repetition, *tua sum, tua dicar oportet*. Knox points out the rarity of the word *oportet*, used here chiefly for its usefulness to the metre.³ Ovid means for Penelope to communicate her steadfast fidelity, even though Ulysses' faithfulness is doubtful as she mentions in line 76, he may have already succumbed to another's love (*peregrino captus amore*) alluding to the influence of Calypso and Circe in the *Odyssey*.

Ovid's Penelope goes on to complain about the suitors, and about others in Ithaca who are troublesome to her and take advantage of Ulysses' absence. Here again, the point is that she is nearly alone trying to stand firm against these perceived adversaries. She stresses the urgency of Ulysses' return, saying that without him it is only she, an old man, and a boy (*senex...puer*), all without strength (*sine viribus*) to protect his interests. She complains of the men of Dulichium, Samos, and of 'high Zacinthos,' saying these men have not only taken Ulysses' property but *viscera nostra*. Ovid uses a word usually meaning the internal organs of the body, but here used to convey the taking of her livelihood. Knox points out *viscera* is

² Knox 1995: 105.

³ Knox 1995: 105.

sometimes used in ancient literature as a metaphor for 'resources of the state' or those of a household.⁴ But another meaning, I believe, could be to convey the plight of Penelope's spirit, her essence, or state of being, perhaps suggested in Showerman's translation of *viscera as*, 'my very life.'⁵

⁴ Knox 1995: 106.

⁵ Gould 2014: 17, revision of Showerman's translation.