Ovid *Heroides* 1.1-58: notes

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General points:
First poem of single *Heroides* collection (which was possibly arranged as three pentads, books of 5 poems): important for establishing themes and approach; programmatic. See e.g. Baca 1969
Epistolarity: possibility of sending and receiving letters for Penelope. Explores epistolarity and engages with conventions (important to establish epistolary context for first one)
Epic character to elegiac context
See Knox on reading the *Odyssey* as a love story (86).
Homer's *Odyssey* includes emotional interest (Penelope longs for her husband: cf. e.g. Hom. *Od.* 19.513-7 "For by day my one relief is to weep and sigh as I go about my tasks and supervise the household work; but when night falls and brings all other asleep, I lie down on my bed, and care comes with a thousand stings to prick my heavy heart and turn dejection into torture.")
BUT hints; plot concentrated on masculine action...
Elegiac perspective: "It is only in elegy that the poet and the lover coincide: elegy's horizon becomes drastically restricted and the text ends up seeing only what its protagonist sees. I would suggest that, fundamentally, elegy is born from just this loss of full vision: the greater the closure of the world represented, the greater the effort the language must make to reduce to its model all that would remain excluded from it, recuperating and converting it in any way it can." (G. B. Conte, 'Love without Elegy', *Genres and Readers* (1991), tr. Glenn W. Most (1994)p.39)
Mythical tradition: other versions: cf. Jacobson: e.g. tradition in which Pan was born to Penelope and Hermes; tradition where Penelope is not chaste exemplum of wifely devotion (with many suitors)
Main background text: Homer's *Odyssey* (significance of this as first intertext? Canonical; well-known…).
Here female voice; not in epic context (but see Fulkerson: e,g, Penelope manages to preserve herself as an epic heroine, despite being placed into an epic poem; utilizes only those elegiac conventions she deems suitable).
How typical is Penelope? (note forthcoming reunion; her position as wife).
Penelope: tradition e.g. paragon of fidelity in the ancient world (her husband falls prey to temptations but she remains unmoved by the suitors). Simplistic view disturbed? Penelope faithful but perhaps not immune? (complaint of loneliness in bed hints at suppressed sexuality? NB possible resentment at Odysseus' dallying with Calypso, *Her*. 1.75-6)
Challenging/ altering perspective? more active than appears in Homer (e.g. *Her*. 1.37-8). Now Ovid is now giving her the chance to tell her side of the story. Perhaps Homer unfairly belittles the female sex, dismissing their contribution in order to magnify his male characters.

Timing: “The poetics of the *Heroides* suggest ... that new windows can be opened on stories already completed. Ovid’s narrative prowess is evident in the respect he shows for the traditional script. Each epistle is written in the ‘blank space’ of a narration already fully and densely composed, sometimes also dramatically fast-paced and action-packed. The spectacular ability of the poet has something surgical about it. It selects the most favourable point, cuts into it, then closes it back up without leaving a trace.”(Barchiesi, ‘Narrativity and Convention in the *Heroides*’ p.31)
For the timing of *Heroides* 1, see Kennedy.
cf. 1.2 Penelope wants Odysseus back immediately but she doesn’t expect him to poke his head round the door that minute. She’s sending him a letter in the belief that he’s miles away. Moreover, she’s presumably sceptical about him receiving it. She’s in the habit of giving out letters to passing strangers (59-62). She’s been desperately trying to get information without result (*Her*. 1.63-4). In line 99 we hear that this trip, Telemachus’ visit to Menelaus at Pylos, was recent
> clues to pin down the timing. In the *Odyssey*, Telemachus tells Penelope about his trip to Pylos in Book 17, by which point in the plot Odysseus is on his way to the palace, although disguised as a beggar. So the seer Theoclymenus informs her, contrasting Menelaus’ lack of information with his prophetic knowledge: “I swear by Zeus before all the other gods, and by the board of hospitality, and by the good Odysseus’ hearth, which I have reached, that Odysseus is actually in Ithaca at this moment, at rest or afoot, tracing these crimes to their source and scheming revenge on the Suitors” (Hom. *Od*. 17.155-9). Penelope is rather doubtful that her husband will come: it is perfectly plausible that she should write to a letter to give to the next stranger she sees, and a brilliant twist on Ovid’s part that, according to Homeric chronology, this must be Odysseus. Reader has contextual knowledge heroine lacks.
NB Emphasis on stories Penelope has been told and idea of distance. Distance/absence theme in play in very idea of letter.

1-2: see Farrell 1998, 323-4 on epistolary form and sexual politics.
1 *haec*: sc. *uerba*
tua: cf 84.
Odysseus is called *lentus*: “tarrying” (cf. 66); 20 years! His fault. Reproach from beginning; Fear (1993) argues for elegiac connotation of uninterested lover
2 “it is no good your writing me a reply” (Knox ad loc); urgency of imperative; contrast between letter and presence. Programmatic: single *Heroides* do not receive replies and do not require replies to be understood (cf. Barchiesi).
ueni: singular imperative.
3 *puellis*: elegiac perspective
4 *tanti*: genitive of price
6 *adulter*: Paris' lust has led to enforced chastity for Greek women
7-10 Penelope’s speech in *Odyssey* 19 retold in elegiac terms (e.g. focus on a cold, lonely bed and complaint)
7 *deserto*: reproachful. See Bolton 2009 for Penelope’s positioning.
Knox 7-8 recasting Hom. *Od*.
Knox 7-10: reversal of motif whereby male lover laments faithfulness of his mistress
frigida: also reference to chilling of affections? (Knox)
8 *quererer … relicta*: complaint/elegy link; imperfect tense; see Fear p14 (sees herself as abandoned woman). Penelope asserts her own fidelity.
9-10 weaving trick fleetingly evoked (cf. Barchiesi 1992: 24). Here deceiving time not suitors (writing in the context of a woman missing her husband, not as the crafty wife of epic). Lindheim (p47) suggests only cunning she can muster is an attempt to fool herself.
9 elegaic character is further highlighted: reworking Prop. 1.3.41(Cynthia weaving, waiting for lover, adopting for herself the role of faithful and devoted wife: Prop. 1.3.39-41 “Villain, O how I wish you could endure such nights / As you always inflict on wretched me! / Sometimes I cheated (*fallebam)* sleep with crimson thread”. Cynthia paints herself as a respectable Roman matrona, with

shades of Homer's Penelope. Ovid picks up on Propertius' point and aptly echoes the passage. Cynthia assumes Penelope's part: Ovid builds on the potential for overlap and has his Penelope adopt Cynthia's role).
9 *mihi*: dative of reference (refering to hands of me as I seek).
10 *uiduas*: enallage (transferred epithet)
11 understand "dangers" again with "true"; ablative of comparison.
13ff. Jacobson observes that (aptly) hexameter about war, then pentameter concerning P's personal reaction.
13: sc. *esse* (indirect statemen).
15 *ab hoste reuictum*: "laid low by the enemy"; (assuming mss' *ab Hectore uictum* wrong) reference to Memnon, leader of Ethiopians. 115-6: Green (2004 369-372) argues 15 has something to say about Penelope's characterisation: deliberate error on Penelope's part to suggest her ignorance and the need for Odysseus to come home.
16 *nostri*: i.e. "my"
17 patronymic (Patroclus, son of Menoetius); deceptive armour as wearing Achilles'.
18 *dolos*: for which Odysseus famed. Indirect statement.
19 Tlepolemus (son of Hercules!) killed by Sarpedon, king of Lycia
22 *frigidius*: continuing cold idea. Takes ablative of comparison.
23 dative *amori* taken with *consuluit* and *aequus*; "chaste" (contrast Helen/Paris)
24 suggestion that Odysseus' preservation (ablative absolute: *sospite … uiro*) is linked with Penelope's chastity which leads to divine favour.
25 *rediere*: i.e. *redierunt*.
28 *illi*: i.e. the husbands,
28 "the fate of Troy has yielded to their own" (Knox); *Troia* here an adjective.
29 *que ...que*: polysyndeton.
30: recalling *Aen*. 4.79 *pendet … narrantis ab ore* (of infatuated Dido). Framing *narrantis* and *uiri* agree.
31 *posita… mensa*: ablative absolute.
32 word order reflecting sense (Knox ad loc); see Fear p31 for relaxed atmosphere.
33 the "Sigean land" = Troy (Sigeum was the promontory).
33-6 Knox on echo of *Aen.* 2.29-30.
35: sc. *tendebat* in first half too.
37-8: Penelope taking credit for Telemachus' mission, contrary to the *Odyssey* (sent by Athena). Lying, trying to demonstrate her commitment by showing effort? (Homeric Penelope lies at *Iliad* 18.257-73 when she relates Odysseus command to her to marry) OR speaking the truth: Ovid setting record straight?
Nb no long report from Telemachus to Penelope about what Nestor has said in Odyssey. Nb no mention of Doloneia. Fear notes that contrast to uncertainty of information during Trojan war – but still indirect gradual chain of information, rather than wives hearing from husband
37 *misso … nato*: dative of indirect object (reported to your son sent..); infinitive after verb of motion to indicate purpose.
38 rettulerat : from *refero*, "report".
39-46: cf. *Il*. 10.331-502; see Knox ad loc for authenticity of 39-40 (he puts in square brackets).
39: indirect statement dependent on "reported"; sc. *esse*.
40 *utque*: "and how".
41 conjugal pride (or sarcasm?) and reproachful? Elegiac perspective on major incident. Nb Diomedes has the major part in *Iliad* 10. Does Penelope misrepresent Odysseus' role (Knox)? Or heard it differently? How was Odysseus seen in the Trojan war (Homeric poems and epic cycle)?
40ff.: *ausus es* BUT how heroic is killing by trickery and sleep (cf. *Aen.* 1.470 *prodita somno*)?
42 *nocturno … dolo* used elsewhere of P's weaving (see Knox ad loc). Husband and wife matched.
43 *tot*: exaggeration!
44 *memor*: takes genitive.

45 miscuere:i.e. *micuerunt*. Knox translates “my heart fluttered with fear”.
46 *dictus es*: indirect.
47 *disiecta … Ilios*: i.e. the destruction of Troy, subject of *prodest* (as is a different construction, accusative subject and infinitive construction, *esse solum* i.e. what does it profit me that what was a wall is ...). Note *solum* is the noun “soil”/”level ground” (Knox), rather than the adjective *solus*.
47-50 Elegiac perspective: the fall of Troy is without point if Odysseus does not return...
47-50: Fear p37 discusses effect of variation in tenses.
48 wall>ground.
49 *Troia durante*: ablative absolute.
50 “and I must forever submit to my husband's absence” (Knox). *mihi*= dative of agent.
51 echo of *Aen*. 11.279-80 (Knox); *aliis / uni* juxtaposition emphasizes contrast between the way the situation has improved for others but not her.
52 change to peace and farming (though worth the effort?); *captiuo* points up war legacy
53-6: see Knox for evocation of V. *G*.1.491-7 .
54 common idea of blood fertilizing soil but sinister (cf. 55 bones, which emphasise time passed); instrumental ablative.
55 *uirum = uirorum* (gen plu).
57 *uictor*; *nec scire mihi*: *uictor* “though victorious” (Knox). NB lack of knowledge.
morandi: delay theme (nb an elegiac concern, viewed negatively, as well as an epic one). Here sexual dalliance?
58 *in quo ...orbe*: “in what part of the world” (Knox).
58 *lateas*: as if deliberate! Fear p43 sees allusion to Greek etymological derivation of Calypso.
58 *ferreus*: elegiac.