SIGLA

P = Parisinus Latinus 8242 (Puteaneus), saec. ix
E = Coll. Etonensis 150 (Bl. 6.5), saec. xi
G = Guelferbytanus extrav. 260, saec. xii
F = Francofurtanus Barth. 110, saec. xii/xiii
Plan. = Metaphrasis Planudis

ω = codices recentiores omnes uel plures
ς = codices recentiores aliquot uel pauci uel unus
codd. = codicum omnium consensus

*** lacuna
[ ] delenda

P. OVIDI NASONIS EPISTVLAE HEROIDVM SELECTAE

I
PENELOPE VLIXI

Haec tua Penelope lento tibi mittit, Vlixe;
nil mihi rescribas attinet: ipse ueni.
Troia iacet certe, Danais inuisa puellis;
uix Priamus tanti totaque Troia fuit.
o utinam tum, cum Lacedaemona classe petebat,
obrutus insanis esset adulter aquis!
non ego deserto iacuissem frigida lecto,
nec quererer tardos ire relicta dies,
nec mihi quaerenti spatiosam fallere noctem
lassaret uiduas pendula tela manus.
quando ego non timui grauiora pericula ueris?
res est solliciti plena timoris amor.
in te fingebam uiolentos Troas ituros,
nomine in Hectoreo pallida semper eram.
siue quis Antilochum narrabat ab hoste reuictum,
Antilochus nostri causa timoris erat;
siue Menoetiaden falsis cecidisse sub armis,
flebam successu posse carere dolos.
sanguine Tlepolemus Lyciam tepefecerat hastam;
Tlepolemi leto cura nouata mea est.
denique, quisquis erat castris iugulatus Achiuis,
frigidius glacie pectus amantis erat.
sed bene consuluit casto deus aequus amori:
uersa est in cinerem sospite Troia uiro.

1 1 haec *Palmer*: hanc *codd.* 2 attinet *Apthonius* (*GLK* VI 109.33, 111.24): attamen *G*ω: sed tamen *E*ς 15 ab hoste reuictum *Housman*: ab Hectore uictum *codd.* 24 cinerem *E*ς: cineres *G*ω

COMMENTARY

1 Penelope Vlixi

The first of the *Heroides* serves as an introduction to the entire collection, illustrating by example both the major themes of the following epistles and the manner of treatment. Its primary reference is to a single literary model, Homer's *Odyssey*, and O.'s selection of Homeric epic for eroticized treatment in the introductory elegy should be regarded as an implied statement of his own literary principles. O.'s epistle is the earliest surviving example of a trend towards romanticizing the story of Ulysses' return to Penelope (Stanford (1963) 143); but he was surely not the first poet in antiquity to read the *Odyssey* as a love story, as he himself characterized it several years later in a defence of his poetry to Augustus: *Trist.* 2.375–6 *aut quid Odyssea est nisi femina propter amorem, | dum uir abest, multis una petita procis?* Poets for centuries had treated Penelope as an *exemplum pudicitiae* (*RE* XIX 483–4), but there are traces of a reaction against this tendency in Horace's suggestion of an erotic treatment of the *Odyssey* as a subject for a music girl in an invitation to a symposium: Hor. *Carm.* 1.17.17–20 *hic in reducta ualle Caniculae | uitabis aestus et fide Teia | dices laborantes in uno | Penelopen uitreamque Circen.* Prose summaries by the Greek poet Parthenius of two stories of the amorous escapades of Odysseus with Polymele (*Erot.* 2) and Euippe (*Erot.* 3) offer further evidence of an inclination by Hellenistic Greek writers to focus upon the erotic conquests of the Homeric hero. An interesting twist is provided later by Lucian, who produces the text of an epistle from Odysseus to Calypso (*Ver. hist.* 2.35) expressing regret for his decision to leave her for Penelope. Our evidence for the role of Penelope in post-Homeric accounts of the story is scanty (Jacobson (1974) 245–6), but it seems clear that it was O. who took the imaginative step of representing the events of the *Odyssey* from her point of view. In so doing, he has taken her character far beyond the traditional role of a paradigm of fidelity.

Penelope's epistle is not simply a prolonged lament for her unfortunate position; more than in any of the other poems O. sustains the fiction that this is a real letter. Penelope aims at persuading

Ulysses to return, with the implied reproach that return lies within his power if only he wishes it (1, 7–10, 81–96nn.). This tone is sustained by the sophisticated interplay of references to the text of the *Odyssey*, against which O.'s reader will test the 'facts' as presented by Penelope. The imagined time of composition is fixed within very narrow limits by references to events described by Homer. The opening section of the poem makes it clear that Penelope writes after the fall of Troy and the return of the Greeks, but three references to Telemachus' mission to Pylos and Sparta (37–8, 63–5, 99–100) place the epistle after her interview with Telemachus, which in the *Odyssey* (17.107–65) takes place the day before the suitors are killed. The epistle's many ironic references to the text of the *Odyssey* are further emphasized, as Kennedy (1984) 417–18 suggests, by the fact that the intended carrier of the letter would therefore be none other than Ulysses himself, recently arrived in Ithaca in the guise of a Cretan stranger. Thus conceived, O.'s epistle of Penelope is not simply a rhetorical reworking of a Homeric theme, but a masterly exploration of character, making new the material of the oldest literary tradition available to him.

1–22 Penelope follows the salutation of the opening line with a recapitulation of all her former fears for Ulysses while he was fighting at Troy. This part of the epistle avoids any overt note of reproach, although it contains some hints of her present state of mind; e.g. the suggestion that her fears were worse than the reality (11 *grauiora pericula ueris*) or the coy description of herself at the loom with no mention of the celebrated ruse used to put off the suitors. As a whole this section serves to evoke the atmosphere of the Trojan war, the epic backdrop against which this domestic drama is played.

1 Haec: sc. *uerba*, as in 10.3 *quae legis*; cf. *Pont.* 4.14.1 *haec tibi mittuntur*, 2.10.2 *haec ... scribere uerba*, 3.4.1 *haec ... uerba*. Palmer's correction of *hanc*, the reading of the MSS, removes the awkward ellipse of *epistulam* or *salutem* postulated by editors. Such an ellipse is too harsh for O. and it is not defended by Cic. *Att.* 15.20.4, where modern editors read *haec putaui mea manu scribenda*, referring not to the entire letter but only to the preceding passage. In Cicero's letters ellipse of *litterae* is common (see Shackleton Bailey on *Att.* 13.12.1), but there is only one example of ellipse of *epistula*, and none of *salutem*. The error perhaps arose through a scribe's recollection of other Ovidian

epistolary openings such as *Trist.* 5.13.1 *hanc ... salutem*, *Pont.* 1.3.1 *hanc ... salutem.*

lento: not simply 'slow', but 'tarrying'. The adjective forms a standard component in the elegists' arsenal of reproachful epithets for the less amorous partner in a love affair. Numerous examples in Pichon (1902) 186; cf. 2.23, 6.17, 19.70. Here it introduces the theme, elaborated throughout the epistle (cf. 66), that Ulysses' absence is not entirely involuntary.

Vlixē: vocative. This form is supported by Priscian (*GLK* II 277 and 288), although it is anomalous in the Latinized name of Odysseus, which draws its forms from the fifth and later the third declensions; see Leumann (1977) 458 and Housman (1910) 259–60 (= *Class. pap.* 834–5). Some MSS read *Vlixes*, the regular vocative in early Latin, as in Pacuvius, *trag.* 256; cf. *Met.* 13.83 where some MSS also have *-es*, and for further details, see N–W I 447–9.

2 nil ... attinet 'it is no good your writing me a reply': the subjunctive *rescribas* should be construed with *attinet*, a unique example of this construction that may be explained by analogy with *oportet*, *necesse est*, and *opus est*. *attinet* is not found in any MSS of the *Heroides*, the majority of which offer *attamen* or *sed tamen* here, but the verse is quoted four times in this form in the fourth-century metrical treatise of Aelius Festus Apthonius, *GLK* VI 109.3 and VI 111.24. As Housman (1922) 88–91 (= *Class. pap.* 1052–4) demonstrates, this must have been what stood in the text known to the grammarian and *attinet* is thus attested by a witness at least seven centuries older than E or G.

3 iacet 'is fallen': no special point is intended by the repetition of the verb in 7 *iacuisset*. Such casual iteration is more common in Latin poetry than critics are often prepared to admit. As Housman notes in the preface to *Lucan*, p. xxxiii: 'Each author has his own principles and practice. Horace was as sensitive to iteration as any modern ... Virgil was less sensitive, Ovid much less; Lucan was almost insensible.' For further discussion, see Austin on Virg. *Aen.* 2.505, Shackleton Bailey (1956) 9, and, with special reference to O., Kenney (1959) 248. Examples of repetition without point in this poem are 12 *timoris* ... 16 *timoris*; 40 *dolo* ... 42 *dolo* (but see 40n.).

certe 'to be sure', anticipating the pentameter.

Danais 'Greek': cf. 21 *Achiuis*, 25 *Argolici.*

puellis includes, presumably, Penelope herself, now some 20 years older than when Ulysses left for the Trojan War. Although Penelope takes pains in this letter to portray herself as a desirable young woman, she is none the less conscious of the passage of time, as indicated by the pointed contrast in the final couplet of the poem (see 115–16n.).

4 uix ... tanti ... fuit 'Priam and all of Troy were hardly worth so great a cost': i.e. your long absence. *tanti* is genitive of price; cf. *Am.* 3.6.37–8 *nec tanti Calydon nec tota Aetolia tanti, | una tamen tanti Deianira fuit*, Prop. 3.20.4 *tantine, ut lacrimes, Africa tota fuit?* The pentameter restates and amplifies the idea expressed in the hexameter, a common manner of exposition in elegy.

5–6 A wistful complaint, framed as a wish in highly stylized language. Penelope's complaints against Paris are the subject of a fragment (1st cent. BC) of Greek hexameter verse (*SH* 952). O. may be reworking a familiar topos.

5 o utinam: a poetic combination for introducing a wish; cf. *Am.* 2.5.7, Hor. *Carm.* 4.5.37. Likewise, *tum cum* is a combination of particles largely limited to poetry (H–S 619); cf. 3.23, 5.109. Because they are taken closely together, they can stand before the third-foot caesura, where O. otherwise avoids a monosyllable; cf. *Fast.* 5.625 *fama uetus, tum cum Saturnia terra uocata est.* The hiatus after *o* and other interjections is very common in elegy; cf. Platnauer (1951) 57.

Lacedaemona: the Greek form of the accusative singular is regular in proper names. In the *Her.* we find: *Thesea* (2.13), *Demophoonta* (2.98), *Phyllida* (2.105, 2.147), *Agamemnona* (3.83), *Brieseida* (3.137), *Troezena* (4.107), *Hectora* (5.93), *Iasona* (6.77), *Simoenta* (7.145), *Phasida* (16.345, 19.176), *Cnosida* (*ES* 25).

6 insanis: not simply a reference to the conventional wildness of the elements (for which cf. 7.53 *insana ... aequora*, 18.28 *insani ... freti*), but suggestive of the madness of Paris and his enterprise.

adulter is a commonplace word, avoided by Tibullus and Propertius, who prefer the more discreet *amans* or *amator*. O., however, is less circumspect in his portrayal of illicit affairs and employs it often in his elegies. In the high style it refers almost exclusively to the celebrated miscreants of mythology: it is found only twice in the *Aeneid*, of Paris (10.92) and Aegisthus (11.268); so, too, of Paris in

the only occurrence in Propertius (2.34.7). In Helen's epistle to Paris the subject of adultery is much on her mind and the word is often used: cf. 17.18, 17.46, 17.217.

7–10 Penelope's complaint that she must sleep alone and pass the night in weaving echoes Cynthia's complaint in a particularly well-known Propertian elegy: 1.3.41 *nam modo purpureo fallebam stamine somnum*. O. neatly reverses a common motif in Hellenistic epigram where the male lover, alone at night, laments the faithlessness of his mistress; cf. e.g. Meleager, *AP* 5.191 (= *HE* 4378). For Horace this theme is a commonplace: *Epist.* 1.1.20 *nox longa quibus mentitur amica*. The note of reproach in *deserto* (7) is reiterated in *relicta* (8) and *uiduas* (10).

7–8 O. recasts in elegiac terms as a complaint the description given by Homer's Penelope of her days and nights in her secret interview with the disguised Odysseus (*Od.* 19.513–17): 'The day times I indulge in lamentation, mourning | as I look to my own tasks and those of my maids in the palace. | But after the night comes and sleep has taken all others, | I lie on my bed, and the sharp anxieties swarming | thick and fast on my beating heart torment my sorrowing self' (Lattimore).

7 deserto ... lecto: perhaps an unconscious reminiscence of Cat. 68.29 *frigida deserto tepefactet membra cubili*; cf. 81 below, 5.106, and *Met.* 7.710 *primaque deserti referebam foedera lecti*.

frigida frequently refers to 'one who spends the night alone, abandoned by her lover' (Pichon (1902) 156), but it is also a term for the chilling of affections; cf. *Am.* 2.1.5, 2.7.9, *Rem.* 492.

8 quererer: the switch to the imperfect tense implies that the complaint is continual. The theme of complaint, signalled by *queri, querela, et sim.*, is a leitmotiv of the *Her.*, especially appropriate in light of the ancient view that elegy originated in lamentation; cf. *ES* 7n.

9–10 O.'s reader has heard of Penelope's weaving before, but in a different context. In the *Odyssey* one of the suitors complains (2.93–110) about the ruse that she had used to put them off, when she claimed that she could not remarry until she had woven a funeral shroud for her husband's father, Laertes. In the daytime she worked at her loom, at night she secretly unravelled what she had done. Penelope later describes this trick to Odysseus in his disguise as a beggar (19.137–55). There is only the faintest allusion to this scene here, and as Barchiesi (1992) 24 notes, the absence of a reference to this deception at a point where it would be appropriate is deliberate. A Roman sensibility would instantly have responded to this depiction of a faithful wife at her loom, a scene which typified for them all the essential feminine virtues; see Ogilvie's comments on Livy's portrayal of Lucretia at 1.57.7.

9 spatiosam fallere noctem 'to beguile the spacious night': the adjective *spatiosus* is a favourite with O., who introduced a great many such formations in *-osus* into Latin poetic diction (Knox (1986b) 99–101). Its application to time is O.'s innovation: cf. *Am.* 1.8.81, *Met.* 8.530, 12.186, 13.206, 15.623. With *fallere* (*TLL* s.v.188.1ff.) it makes a striking phrase, but one that is an easy step from Propertius' *purpureo fallebam stamine somnum* (1.3.41): with *fallere noctem*, i.e. to make the night seem less long, cf. *Trist.* 4.1.13–14 *cantantis pariter, pariter data pensa trahentis, | fallitur ancillae decipiturque labor*. There is perhaps also a touch of irony by O. in using this verb: Penelope's weaving is still a trick, but one used only to while away the time.

10 lassaret ... manus 'nor would the hanging web continually [imperfect] wear out my widowed hands': O. perhaps hints at other associations as well; in Greek epigram weaving is often portrayed as a concomitant of unwanted chastity: cf. Nicarchus, *A.P.* 6.285 (= *HE* 2737), Anon. *A.P.* 6.48 (= *HE* 3812), 6.283 (= *HE* 3818), 6.284 (= *HE* 3822), and in Latin poetry, 19.16, *Am.* 1.13.24, *Ars* 1.689, 2.219, *Med.* 14, Tib. 1.3.85–92, Prop. 3.6.9–14. The homely image is further enhanced by the use of *lassare*, apparently, like the adjective *lassus*, a word of colloquial tone (10.145n.). *delassare* is attested in Plautus, but the simplex is first found in Tib. 1.9.55, and is much favoured by O., who uses it almost as often as the synonymous *fatigare* (14:16). From O. the word spread to later poetry and after the elder Seneca to prose.

uiduas agrees grammatically with *manus* though in sense it refers to *mihi*, a trick of style known as enallage or a 'transferred epithet'. It is quite common in Latin poetry: cf. Bell (1923) 319, H–S 159–60.

pendula tela: on the ancient loom, the warp (*tela*) hung down from a cross-beam.

11 grauiora pericula ueris implies at least that Penelope's fears were out of proportion to reality and suggests another note of

reproach: perhaps Penelope suffered more than Ulysses; cf. Jacobson (1974) 251.

12 res est: an idiomatic phrase, favoured by O. in the more conversational style of the poetic epistle: cf. 6.21 *credula res amor est*, *Pont.* 2.7.37, 2.9.11, 3.9.23, 4.15.31.

13 in te ... ituros: sc. with hostile intent, a common usage of *eo* with this prepositional phrase.

Troas: a Greek form of the accusative plural.

14 nomine in Hectoreo 'at the mention of Hector's name': cf. *Am.* 2.1.5 *in sponsi facie* 'at the sight of her betrothed's face', Goold (1965) 30. The personal adjective takes the place of a genitive, a common feature of Latin poetic style, developed partly in imitation of Greek epic and tragic diction, but chiefly representing a development of an early feature of the Latin language by writers, including prose authors (K–S 1 209–12) seeking to avoid the more familiar usage: cf. Löfstedt (1942) 107–24, Austin on *Aen.* 2.543, H–S 60–1. The possessive *Hectoreus* is first attested in a fragment of Cicero's verse (*Hom. fr.* III.2 Soubiran) translated from Greek.

semper should be construed (ἀπὸ κοινοῦ) with both *fingebam* and *pallida eram*.

15 ab hoste reuictum 'laid low by the enemy': i.e. Memnon, leader of the Ethiopian allies of Troy and slayer of Antilochus, the son of Nestor (*Od.* 4.187, 11.52). The MSS are unanimous in offering a reading, *ab Hectore uictum*, which contradicts this well-established tradition. It is highly unlikely that O. is relying upon a variant unknown to us. Hyg. *Fab.* 113, which refers to Hector as his slayer, is probably corrupt, but in any event, since O. is one of his sources, may only show that the corruption in this passage is ancient. Nor is it probable that O. deliberately portrays Penelope in error on this trivial point. The corruption is also betrayed by the feeble repetition of *nomine in Hectoreo ... Hectore*. Housman (1897) 102–3 (= *Class. pap.* 381–2) restores the sense of the passage, if not perhaps O.'s exact words. The three examples cited by Penelope in 15–20 thus refer to the three great champions of Troy: Memnon, Hector, Sarpedon.

17 Menoetiaden: Patroclus, son of Menoetius.

falsis 'deceptive', not simply = *alienis*. Patroclus led the Greeks into battle wearing the armour of Achilles in order to deceive the Trojans into believing that Achilles himself had returned to the fight, and was in that sense a 'false Achilles'. O.'s transference of the epithet is bold; the line was subsequently reinterpreted by Seneca in imitation at *Ag.* 618 where Patroclus is called *falsus Achilles*.

18 posse carere dolos: indirect statement dependent upon *flere*, a construction limited to poetry; cf. *TLL* s.v. 900.57–8. For Ulysses these words carry a special meaning, since *dolus* was a fixed feature in the characterization of Odysseus as a wily trickster in literature, although δόλος is not a pejorative word in Homer; cf. Stanford (1963) 249 n.17. In Hor. *Serm.* 2.5.3 the epithet *dolosus* is used alone to identify Ulysses.

19 Tlepolemus: a son of Heracles, slain by Sarpedon, king of Lycia (*Lyciam ... hastam*), who fought for the Trojans (*Il.* 5.627–62).

sanguine ... tepefecerat: the periphrasis gives the line a heroic tone; cf. Virg. *Aen.* 9.418–19 *hasta ... haesit tepefacta cerebro*, 9.701, 10.570, adapting a Homeric phrase (*Il.* 16.333, etc.).

21 denique 'in sum'.

quisquis erat ... iugulatus 'whoever had had his throat slit': *iugulare* is a harsh word, avoided by the poets and in prose by the historians (*TLL* s.v. 634.75). It is found at *Am.* 3.8.21, where O. uses it with deliberate crudeness to refer to a competitor: *forsitan et quotiens hominem iugulauerit ille | indicet*. In his other works it occurs only once in 14.11, five times in the *Met.*, and once in the *Ibis*.

22 frigidius glacie: the result of fear; cf. 10.32.

23–56 O.'s Penelope now passes to the immediate aftermath of the war and the return of the Greeks, a happy theme that she uses to point the contrast between her circumstances and the fortunate women whose men have already come home.

23 bene ... amori 'a sympathetic god took good care of my chaste love': the dative *amori* should be construed with both *consuluit* and *aequus*, a usage known as amphibole (Bell (1923) 293–303), which is often impossible to render succinctly into English. *bene* is redundant with *consulere*, a colloquial combination found in O. otherwise only at *Pont.* 2.9.34. In *casto ... amori* O.'s Penelope perhaps points a contrast between herself and Helen who was punished for her adulterous love.

24 cinerem: most MSS have the plural. In this idiom (*in cinerem uertere*), the singular seems to have been preferred; cf. *Met.* 2.216, Tib. 1.9.12, Hor. *Epist.* 1.15.39. It is likely that O. would avoid *cineres* be-