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FUTURE REFLEXIVE: TWO MODES OF ALLUSION AND OVID'S *HEROIDES*

ALESSANDRO BARCHIESI *

IN recognizing an allusion the reader moves backwards in time from the text she is reading towards an earlier tradition, already familiar: but I would say that there is a particular fascination in this process because it repeats and — simultaneously — reverses the original direction of the stream of literary 'creation'. Where the writer has worked from the old towards the new, the reader finds his way by means of clues that send him back from the new towards the old. In other words, allusion and literary self-consciousness are not easily detachable entities. In some texts, often narrative or dramatic works, this use of allusion has certain self-referential characteristics that enhance its effect on the reader.

If the text is asked to provide an analogy for its intertextual origins, one could say that the *past* is the most natural site for any form of intertextual recall. When Aeneas recognises his own past in the temple at Carthage, and the reader recognises the Epic Cycle in these images, a feeling of analogy, of natural following-on, is created: the reader, the character who is the focus of the action, and the Roman poet, are all in the same line, and together acknowledge the epic tradition as the background against which the new narrative has to be visualized. (What reader, character, and poet have in common, is also that they need, each in his own way, to break free from this tradition. The inclusion of epic memories in the temple of Carthage discharges a debt and prefaces a way out from the epic past). But this is a 'smooth' kind of effect,

*Different versions of this paper have been read at Harvard, Columbia, Rutgers and Milano (Cattolica) in April 1992: I thank the audiences there, and Wendell Clausen, Leslie-Ann Crowley, Marco Fantuzzi, Stephen Hinds, Richard Hunter, for help and advice.

which comes about so naturally that at times it can be noticeable without being intentional. Any reader who also knows the *Iliad* can hardly read the *Odyssey* without being conscious of references to the story's glorious antecedents, and it is extremely difficult to make a distinction between what is remembered by the characters of the *Odyssey* and what might be deliberate allusions to the *Iliad* as a literary text.

But what happens when the older tradition enters a new text as a view of the *future*? The idea that the characters can have a future that has already been written down is much less natural, and calls for constant negotiation between author and reader. A certain alignment is now broken. The literary tradition—a source of power, control, and anxiety, a perfect analogy for the past in everyone's life—is now displaced, and a potential for irony opens up. Unless the characters are gifted with a second sight, the effect approaches what we usually call dramatic irony: the information that the author shares with the audience tends to create a sort of complicity between them directed against the characters. This is the starting point of my analysis; but I want to keep an eye also on the issue of 'reflexivity', literary self-consciousness. A combination of these two ways of reading has, or at least ought to have, a strong influence on our way of interpreting certain Alexandrian and Augustan poets.

Readers of Theocritus's Cyclops can remember the feeling of delicate irony that arises from seeing through the eyes of that strange young lover:

νῦν μάν, ὦ κορίον, νῦν αὐτόγα νεῖν μεμαθεῦμαι
αἶ κά τις σὺν ναὶ πλέων ξένος ὧδ' ἀφίκηται
ὥς εἰδῶ τί ποθ' ἀδὺ κατοικῆν τὸν βυθὸν ὕμνιν.

(11,60–62)

"Now in truth, my girl, now I should really like to learn to swim: somebody might arrive here in a ship, a stranger, to teach me how sweet it is to live in your deep-sea dwelling". The Cyclops' ingenuousness is in dramatic contrast with what the reader already knows: that a Stranger will really come from the sea, one day, but that he will not be Somebody (τις) but Nobody (οὐτις) and that he will not teach the Cyclops to swim.¹ This knowledge of the future, from the *Odyssey*, is an obvious

¹ S. Goldhill, *The poet's voice*, Cambridge 1991, 249 f.

source of irony; but it also forces the reader to enter into discussion with the text he is reading: who is this new young Cyclops, and how is his idyllic setting related to the desert island that the earlier epic has made familiar? Are concepts like 'genre' and 'fiction' relevant and brought into play? Our concept of literature as a logically cohesive continuum of texts undergoes an identity crisis, caused by the fact that traditional characters are to be seen in a new light: this lovable young Cyclops comes 'before' Homer's solitary monster, but at the same time hints at the prospect of a parallel world, still open to different possibilities and deaf to the claims of the tradition. Many other displacements could be relevant to this strategy: young and infant heroes, some infant gods in Callimachus, the Argonauts travelling 'before' the Odyssey with Medea 'before' her tragedy ... The Alexandrians have a preference for children and young people, which is often discussed in terms of realism, or of anti-heroism, but could be seen also in this light: the characters are caught in the process of becoming 'themselves', of becoming traditional; their innocence provokes a reading which is absolutely not innocent. Readers of Apollonius, for instance, experience a recurring bifurcation: are we reading a new version of the traditional construct 'Medea', or the early biography (and aetiology) of Euripides, Medea? When this strategy is successful, the narrator is free to combine independence and allusivity.

Writing is dangerous

We are frequently struck by a feeling of foreknowledge while reading Ovid's *Heroides*, and modern analyses often seem to undervalue this dimension. The missing element may or may not be of great importance, and our first case study is fairly innocuous. Penelope concludes the first letter in the collection with a sad forecast:

protinus ut venias, facta videbor anus

(1, 116)

in which she sees herself as an elegiac poet would have described her. This is not just a vague impression, since the line is actually a clear allusion to Propertius' Penelope:

illum exspectando facta remansit anus

(2,9,8).

Ovid masterfully turns two slow spondei (*illum exspectando*) into quick dactyls (*protinus ut venias*), as endurance yields to impatience. This allusion has something of the manifesto, and is highly suitable for the opening of a collection of letters in which elegy writes again traditional characters. We see, precisely, a Homeric situation through elegiac spectacles. But the first epistle (as Duncan Kennedy has shown in a brilliant study)² also carries a further type of implication: the situation in which Penelope is writing is richly ironic because, according to the model of the *Odyssey* and its internal time-scheme, at this very moment—while she writes, and wonders where he is—a stranger is already knocking at the gates of her house. If we look at this verse from the Homeric point of view—so different from that of the elegiac poets—our vision of it becomes bifocal. Penelope and her husband are certainly about to see each other again but—inside the epic world—she isn't the one who will look old. It is Odysseus, on the contrary, who returns home in the guise of an "old, old man" (*Od.* 13,432) and will be even compared to a γράυς (18,27), an *anus*.

This method of conjugating an allusion in the future tense, if recognised, can also offer some more significant results, not least in the field of textual criticism. Briseis writes to Achilles: "ill fortune never releases the unlucky,"

nec venit inceptis mollior hora meis?

(3,44)

Recent editors have found no difficulties in this line, which comes down to us without textual variants, and interpret Briseis's meaning as "a sweeter time for my plans does not arrive". But Planudes's translation indicates that some lost witness read *inceptis ... malis*, and *malis* in the place of *meis* was also independently conjectured by Karl Lehrs and approved of by Housman. Both are silent about their motives, but if they were objecting to the use of *incepta* as a noun in this context, I agree: Briseis has no 'plans' or 'enterprises' to be frustrated by destiny, she is nothing but a victim. Torn away from native land and family, widow, slave, slave to love, property of Achilles carried off by Agamemnon, what Briseis intends to say is "there has been no sweeter hour for me, since my ills began". Ovid's heroine has a single hope

² "Class. Quart." n.s. 34, 1984, 413–22.

left for the future, the friendship of Patroclus, who has always treated her with kindness and tried to comfort her. After the letter has been written, her future in the *Iliad* is the death of Patroclus: “for me an evil always follows an evil” she will complain once more, κακὸν ἐκ κακοῦ ἀεί she will lament again (Hom. *Il.* 19,290). Κακὸν ἐκ κακοῦ is a cruel motivation for reading *malis* in her previous, Ovidian lament.³

The next letter opens in softly seductive tones as Phaedra invites Hippolytus to read her wooing missive:

Perlege, quodcumque est. Quid epistula lecta nocebit?

(4,3).

“Read it all, for what it is worth: what harm can come from reading a letter?”. Commentators do not speak of this lightly-suggested topos of invitation to the reader, which may be addressed not only to Hippolytus but also to the “hesitating purchasers” of the *Heroides*. But the readers of Euripides are invited to connect, and indeed dub, this innocent invitation with Theseus’s inhuman, rending cry on reading another letter by Phaedra, Phaedra’s letter to him:

Βοᾷ βοᾷ δέλτοσ ἄλαστα . . .
οἶον οἶον εἶδον ἐν γραφαῖς μέλος
φθεγγόμενον τλάμων

(Eur. *Hipp.* 877–80)

The handwriting of this harmless love letter is the vehicle of a powerful weapon that can also kill: the trustful Theseus had said “Come, let us open the seal, let us see what this message wants to tell me”.⁴ If Ovid’s readers continue to look out for danger signals, his Phaedra frustrates them.⁵ The elegy runs its own course, deliberately avoiding any reference to the tragic code, until, in the very last line, another apparently innocent touch reminds us that yes, after all Phaedra is a product of the tragic stage:

³ I discuss the text with more details in “MD” 16, 1986, 78–82.

⁴ Writing as a danger is a central theme in recent discussions of Euripides’ *Hippolytus*, e.g. C. Segal, *Interpreting Greek tragedy*, Ithaca and London 1986, 93 sg.; B. Goff, *The noose of words*, Cambridge 1990.

⁵ Apart from jokes like 4,166 *eris tauro saevior ipse truci?*; cf. Eur. *Hipp.* 1214 ταῦρον, ἄγριον τέρας.

Verba precantis
qui legis, et lacrimas finge videre meas!

(4, 175 f.)

If Hippolytus, the reader, follows her suggestion literally, and pictures to himself the heroine in tears, he will find himself sharing the exact viewpoint (*finge videre*) of a spectator of the Euripidean tragedy — his own tragedy, which could still be commuted if he allows himself to be seduced ‘out’ of the tragic world. Late in the tragedy Hippolytus will utter the impossible wish of becoming a spectator (1078 f.), to look at his own tears from the outside.

Intertextual irony depends on the play between different codes of reference, which give rise to contradictory expectations. The nymph Oenone writes to Paris to regain his love, and, at the same time, to remove him from the dangers of the Trojan war. By returning to Oenone and abandoning the dangerous Helen, Paris will be safe:

Non ego cum Danais arma cruenta fero

(5,156)

Commentators have little interest in this emphatic negation, and some translator even misunderstands *cum* — “I do not bear arms *against* the Greeks”, perhaps because a Phrygian nymph should be on the Trojan side anyway. A heroine who speaks in this way to a Trojan hero is no novelty in Roman poetry: the first hemistich en bloc, with the general idea, comes down in direct line from Dido’s negation when she tries to regain Aeneas’s love:

Non ego cum Danais Troianam excindere gentem
Aulide iuravi classemve ad Pergama misi

(4,425 ff.)

The reader who recognises this model can feel reassured, just as the addressee of this letter should: Dido did not take the part of the Greeks against Troy, therefore Paris has no dangers to fear from Oenone. But Oenone’s life history does not end with this letter: our sources,⁶ which draw material from the Trojan cycle and surely also from more recent

⁶ T. C. W. Stinton, *Euripides and the judgment of Paris*, London 1965, 40 ff.

poetry, tell us that Oenone will give important assistance to the Greek invaders in revenge for being abandoned. So, even with a bare outline of the main sources for this letter, we are in a position to understand that Paris's future is written in reverse in Ovid's Vergilian model.

Sometimes the future implies a new reading of past experiences. The letter written by Dido contains a dire prediction: if Aeneas abandons her, she will come back to haunt him as a wretched ghost (7, 69 ff.). This prediction of the future tallies nicely with its Vergilian model: Vergil's Dido had also said, in a more tragic and threatening tone, *omnibus umbra locis adero* (*Aen.* 4,386). What Ovid's text invites us to notice is a simple echo, an alignment. But his exact choice of words—*coniunx*, *ante oculos*, and *imago*—the new words which he introduces as a variation on the Vergilian model, produces a supplementary effect which is somewhat disturbing. In the second book of the *Aeneid* Aeneas has narrated (and to Dido herself) the sad story of Creusa: *coniunx ... erepta Creusa* (2,738); *visa mihi ante oculos et nota maior imago* (2,773). The future that Dido envisages is not so different from the past. What is in store for Aeneas is an unbearable replay, a *second* encounter with *another* pitiful ghost of a lost bride.⁷ He could even have problems in distinguishing the two revenants.

Deianira writes to Hercules *Her.* 9 because rumour has brought bad news: her husband is in love with the captive Iole. This is an apt beginning for a letter which is centered on acts of communication and on impediments and interferences in communication. Deianira receives vague *news* about her husband, then writes a *letter*, but a new *rumour* informs her (by means of a messenger) that Hercules is dying because of Nessus's tunic: her letter to Hercules thus becomes the *announcement* of a suicide. In fact, even the tunic that Deianira sends to her husband is a message, and an ambiguous one at that: she sees it as a love magic, but the Centaur had programmed it as a death philter. Thus far it is clear that the letter is an intriguing meditation on a leading theme of Sophocles' *Trachiniae*.⁸

⁷ In this perspective, as Richard Hunter points out, Dido is not even sure about her role as a ghost. Ovid plays a similar trick in *Am.* 3,9,58 (explained by G. A. Cornacchia, "Mnemosynum. Studi in onore di A. Ghiselli," Bologna 1989, 101 sg.): Tibullus is dead and, as everybody knows, he had two mistresses. Delia says to Nemesis: "I was a happier love than you"; Nemesis replies *me tenuit moriens deficiente manu*, an imitation of Tib. 1,1,60 *et teneam moriens deficiente manu*: she 'steals' a line that Tibullus had dedicated to his former mistress, Delia. Nemesis is (as her name promises) avenged.

⁸ Again (see n. 4), Ovid focuses on the theme of communication and distortion which

There is strong dissent on the authenticity of *Her.* 9, and scholars tend to neglect its ironical effects even when they are well in evidence. (As is well known, authenticity can be best proved through small details, formal patterns which escape the full consciousness of an artist: since I will be busy with narrative structure and intertextuality, that is not my province. On a different tack, I tend to show that the epistle is much more clever, ironical, and implicated with its Sophoclean model than it is often thought: as a consequence, those who think that the imitator is always an inferior poet should, in my view, accept Ovidian paternity.) Some critics find it absurd that a large part of the letter should be given over to the re-evocation of Hercules's love-affairs with Iole, and earlier with Omphale: a piece of erotic padding which clashes with the end of the letter and only serves to reiterate the trite elegiac motif of the "conqueror conquered": even invincible heroes are captured by a woman. (Of course, this long erotic section accounts for the inclusion of *her.* 9 in the collection: a very incompetent move, if that is the only function which is perceived by readers). Yet, it is this very topos, however trite it may be — and the fact that it is very elegiac and very trite adds piquancy to the Ovidian context — that Sophocles's Heracles uses to describe his own downfall. The hero who has overcome so many monsters has now been destroyed by a woman (*Trach.* 1058 sqq.). This time the victorious woman is Deianira herself: it is she, and not Omphale or Iole, who is the real dark lady of the piece, with that embarrassing name of hers ("destroy the male", glossed in 9,144 *virum ... perire*).

The critical handling of a line like 141

semivir occubuit in letifero Eveno

in lernifero(que) veneno: in lorifero eveneno: lernei tabe veneni: in lotifero Eveno *Bentley*: in lentifero Eveno *Madvig*: tibi letiferoque veneno *Lehrs*

shows that low estimation of this text can even creep into the domains of textual criticism. Modern conjectures are purely decorative and dilute the significance of the line: the "lotus-producing" and even the "lentil-producing" Evenus. Some ancient variants, even if impossible,

is so important for modern readers of the tragedy; on the *Trachiniae*, C. Segal, op. cit., and *Tragedy and civilization*, Cambridge Mass. 1981, 94 ff.

are suggestive and point in the right direction: *in lernifero veneno, lernei tabe veneni*. The name of the river, the Evenus, should be restored, and combined with the epithet *letifero*. A precious metrical effect (spondaic hexameter with hiatus) and a striking metrical anomaly (the final syllable of *occubuit* used as a *longum*) are not wasted if one pauses to think about the narrative effect of this line. It is important to notice that the couplet 141 f. will be immediately followed (in line 143!) by the arrival of the news of the tunic's deadly message for Hercules. In a sense, writing *letifero Eveno* brings about Hercules's doom: *scribenti nuntia venit / fama ...* (143 f.). This is not only tragic irony: this is tragic irony laid bare, a self-conscious exaggeration. Mention of the deadly river sets the stage for the hero's death: Deianira unconsciously 'writes' his death. Nessus's death in the river Evenus is, unknown to Deianira, the cause of this disaster, and her words play on the edge of this hidden truth. *Letifer* in Ovid often has the meaning not only of 'lethal, deadly' (the place of Nessus's death) but also of 'poisoned': the tunic smeared with poison is called *letiferam ... vestem* in *met.* 9,166. In the waters of the river Evenus, in fact, the blood of the dying Centaur had formed a lethal mixture with the venom of the Lernean Hydra (*Trach.* 717). So the Centaur's blood has not only stained, but infected the Evenus (the two meanings are simultaneous in *infecit sanguis equinus aquas*, 142). The very name of the river is in tension with the key-word *veneno*, which is deferred to line 163 when the truth becomes clear: *illita Nesseo misi tibi texta veneno*. After her casual mention of the death of a *semivir*—"half-man", that is the Centaur⁹—Deianira will discover that this far-off event is the reason while she is losing her own *vir*: the Centaur had promised her a charm possessing *vires amoris* (162) but it is actually a deadly poison, a *virus*. The same dangerous alchemy of puns is in the parallel version of the *Metamorphoses*: 9,155 *vires*; 157 *viro*; 158 *virus*; 161 *vis*, an intertwining of virility and poison.

A major puzzle in this letter is emphasized by the line which is repeated four times, as a sort of refrain:

⁹ *Semivir* has a further shade of irony: Nessus is of course a half-man (half-beast), and his action is dictated by an excess of masculinity—but this adjective, before Ovid starts to use it in our passage of the *Heroides*, evokes a lack of virility ("effeminate", "eunuch": Verg. *Aen.* 4,215). See also G. Rosati, "MD" 24, 1990, 161–65, who has good arguments for keeping *letifero*, but explains the passage without accepting any form of foreshadowing.

impia quid dubitas Deianira mori?

(9,146 = 152 = 158 = 164)

Why should Deianira continue writing what had begun as a letter to her husband? After all, we are quite sure that she is going to kill herself—if for no other reason than because we have read ‘The Women of Trachis’. The letter now looks like a dramatic monologue, and the author is indifferent, to say the least, to reconciling his strategy with the poetics of the collection. Some critics have seen this hybridisation as evidence that the letter is spurious. In effect, the repetition of this gloomy line puts us in mind of a tragic lament; more exactly, of a tragic *form* of lament, *ephymnion*.¹⁰ Tragedy enters this text with a powerful marker: after a hyperbole of tragic irony, we discover that the tragic model has become form, not just material for the content of this epistle.

The formal irruption of tragedy into the elegiac texture directs us to the Sophoclean model—only to discover that the Deianira of the ‘Women of Trachis’ utters no lament, either for Hercules or for herself. With an exceptional dramatic solution, she vanishes wordlessly (*Trach.* 813) from the scene and immediately kills herself on the marriage bed. Ovid has his Deianira speaking in this blank of the Sophoclean model. The Ovidian refrain “What is keeping you from dying, Deianira” sounds like an implicit self-reproach—not only because she is crushed by shame and guilt, but because by her delay she is swerving from the path laid down by the official model for this letter, the *Trachiniae*.¹¹ Once again we see, and I shall come back to this later, how inter-textual irony could be linked to a kind of self-referentiality. The text sees its future reflected in the mirror of its model, and at the same time sends its reader backwards to that model. Her repeated lament identifies Deianira as a character born for the tragic scene, opens a play

¹⁰ For a good survey of attested ephymnia see W. Schmid, *Geschichte der griech. Literatur* I.2, München 1934, 144 n. 8. Wilamowitz, for example, was fond of recovering repetitions skipped by the transmission of the text, so the number of refrains is liable to considerable oscillations, according to editorial choices. It was, anyway, a striking feature of tragic diction for readers of any age; Ovid could have profited from the hexametrical recycling of tragic ephymnia (G. Pasquali, *Orazio Lirico*, Firenze 1964², 245; M. Fantuzzi, *Bionis Smyrnaei Adonidos Epitaphium*, Liverpool 1985, 158) attempted by the author of the *Lament for Adonis*.

¹¹ Suggested by Sergio Casali, a pupil of G. B. Conte at the Scuola Normale di Pisa, who will articulate this interpretation in his forthcoming doctoral dissertation on *her.* IX.

of difference with the elegiac medium, and finally sends her back to a kind of intertextual order of things.

A brief consideration of Medea's letter (*Her.* 12) is rewarding in the same perspective. The authenticity is, again, controversial, but for my limited purpose it would be enough to show that the letter is very rich in literary self-consciousness. Some of the main facts have been neatly established by Peter Knox: the letter starts with a dramatic stylization, "which derives from tragic monologue"; the end "looks suspiciously like a preliminary to further action"; the structure entails "a powerful influence exerted on the author of this epistle by a dramatic representation of Medea".¹² Indeed, the final threat in aposiopesis, *quos equidem actutum* ... (12,219), stops on a word which clearly derives from Roman tragic lexis, *actutum*.¹³ Medea is passing from letter-writing to action—to scenic action (*actus*). She feels a divine possession (213 *viderit ista deus, qui nunc mea pectora versat*), highly suitable for tragic characters and for tragic poets as well: perhaps the same force which propels Medea in the Ovidian tragedy (fr. 2 Owen, *feror huc illuc ut plena deo*).¹⁴ Yet, we are still reading a letter, a text poised below the tragic level:

nunc animis audi verba minora meis

(12, 186).¹⁵

A disputed line from Euripides, *θυμὸς δὲ κρείσσω* τῶν ἐμῶν βουλευμάτων (1079) exhibits an increased tension between *animus* and arguments. The Euripidean tragedy starts when someone notices that

¹² P. Knox, "Harv. Stud. Class. Philol." 90, 1986, 210.

¹³ Well pointed out by Knox, art. cit., 213 and n. 21. The adverb is frequent in comedy, attested for almost all the Republican tragic poets (Naev. 25; Pac. 118; Acc. 508 R.²); in Augustan poetry only Verg. *Aen.* 9,255, in direct speech (as is frequent for words from old tragedy in Vergil: interestingly, the speaker is a very old man) and Ov. *Met.* 3,557, in the story of Pentheus, a passage influenced by Pacuvian tragedy.

¹⁴ Given the affinity with Maenadism (*feror huc illuc*), one might suggest Bacchus as a candidate (so, with excessive confidence, A. Arcellaschi, *Médée dans le théâtre latin d'Ennius à Sénèque*, Roma 1990, 292 f.); in Euripides, Jason sees a daimon inside her; in Apollonius, of course, Eros is the hidden force. Ovid alludes to the mysterious depths of Medea's *animus*: the ultimate divine presence is impossible to identify, but the analogy with Dionysiac possession suggests a complicity between tragic character and tragic poet.

¹⁵ Ovid implies that only tragedy could give her *verba maiora*, i.e. words adequate to her feelings: cf. *Rem.* 375 *grande sonent tragici: tragicos decet ira cothurnos*; *Trist.* 2,554 *quaeque gravis debet verba cothurnus habet*. Cf. Aristoph. *Ran.* 1060–61.

Medea is preparing “something new”

δέδοικα δ' αὐτὴν μή τι βουλεύσῃ νέον
(37)

and the Ovidian Medea, probably ἔνθεος, ends with a powerful preface to action:

nescio quid certe mens mea *maius* agit
(12, 214).

There is a hint of a complicity between tragic persona, frenzied to *nefas*, and the demoniac inspiration necessary to a tragic poet. (Readers of Seneca's tragedies should notice this anticipation.) Medea has a *mens* which could conceive unspeakable plans; this potential is inscribed in her name, because Apollonius already connects his Μήδεα with νόον καὶ μήδεα κούρης.¹⁶ Realizing her *mens* and her plans, Medea is now becoming herself—an idea which will prove attractive to Seneca. The main point is that she speaks not only as a self-conscious character, but also (by implication) as a self-conscious author:

nescio quid certe mens mea maius agit.

There is a tradition of tragic characters moving to greater deeds: *maior mihi moles, maius miscendumst malum* (Atreus in Acc. 200 R.²); *maiusque ... aliquid cupio* (Oedipus, Sen. *Phoen.* 353–4, wants real tragic action: not just civil war, but mutual fratricide and the suicide of a mother). And there is also a tradition of *maius* used as a poetical prooemium or promise. Eumolpus enters the *Satyricon* as a man *exercitati vultus et qui videretur nescio quid magnum promittere* (Petron. 83.7). *Maius opus* is for Vergil the announcement of a higher epic, with kings, battles, and *animi* (*Aen.* 7, 41–45); *maius opus* describes the *Metamorphoses* seen from the angle of Ovid's humble elegiacs (*Trist.* 2.63). More importantly, the constellation *nescio quid ... maius* is found nowhere else in Augustan poetry¹⁷ except in a famous passage of

¹⁶ See R. Hunter, *Apollonius of Rhodes, Argonautica, Book III*, Cambridge 1989, 185; 222 f.; N. Hopkinson, *A Hellenistic Anthology*, Cambridge 1988, 192 (“plotter, contriver”).

¹⁷ This point has been made, independently, by Stephen Hinds, who is preparing a paper on intertextuality in *her.* 12: a welcome coincidence in this area of subtle hints and

literary criticism, Propertius 2,34, 66:

nescio quid maius nascitur Iliade.

In other words, Medea is suggesting that a new poetic kind is called for: she could not write a letter about her 'greater' actions, and this material, unspeakable for elegiacs, is reserved to the heights of a *cothurnata*. A poor version of this line of thought would be a dry 'see my (and Ovid's) tragedy', but there is more than that. Medea implicates her readers in a difficult question: in a different setting, she could be different. Drama and elegy have different and conflicting codes, and literary consciousness diffracts the identity of mythical personae. It is difficult to say how far this Medea — seen through Apollonius and Euripides, Ovid's tragedy and Ovid's elegiacs — is still *one*.¹⁸

The example of Deianira enables us to make a distinction which is of vital importance to our argument. Here we have a model, Sophocles, which is already a powerful source of dramatic irony. (Ovid, as we have seen, comments on the device, lays bare the mechanism.) Deianira introduces the action of the play by saying that it is not necessary to wait for the final day of a life in order to pass judgment on it: she herself, even before she goes down to Hades, already knows that her destiny is nothing but unhappiness.¹⁹ Life is unpredictable ... A well known, generalising topos of exits is turned upside down as an entrance statement. We are only at the fourth line of the drama, and the phrase "before going down to Hades" is a remarkable utterance for a character whom the audience will actually see go down to Hades in the course of that very same day. Sophocles's perspective of irony

allusions to missing texts. Note also that Amata's frenzy (*maius ... nefas, maiorem ... furorem Aen.* 7.386) is parallel to (and a necessary implement of) Virgil's *maius opus*.

¹⁸ In Ap. Rh. 3,1107–8, Medea makes an interesting statement: "I am not identical to Ariadne". The reader has to unravel different perspectives: 'I will be different: I will not follow Jason as she did with Theseus' (see Hunter ad loc.); 'she will be like A.' because she will betray father and brother; because she will be betrayed ('after' Apollonius) like Ariadne; 'she will be different, a tremendous witch and avenger, not a victim like A.'; 'she will be raised to the skies, like A.' (see Goldhill, op. cit., 304).

¹⁹ There is a vast bibliography on tragic irony in the *Trachiniae*, e.g. M. Halleran, "Class. Philol." 83, 1988, 129–31 (pointing out the polysemy of βάπτω; a similar strategy can be seen in Ov. *her.* 10,142 *infecit sanguis*).

may seem no different from the examples we have taken from Ovid, but a significant distinction exists. Ovid's heroines — and the case of Theocritus's Cyclops is again particularly relevant — are conditioned by an intertextuality which is not simply mythological, but is specifically literary. In tragedy the irony arises from that knowledge of myth which the dramatic text reactivates in the spectator through a continuous triangular movement at the characters' expense. (It would be silly to deny that literary consciousness, allusivity, and intertextuality are present in Attic tragedy: but there is still, I believe, a difference in degree.) The youthful Cyclops and Ovid's heroines, on the contrary, are caught up in a conflict of literary codes and genres; the reader hesitates about their place in the literary tradition; they are characters who attempt to rewrite their own story in terms of a new and different code. It is not by chance that this conflict and indecision is generally derived from the contrast between such traditional genres as epic and tragedy, and such a new and private genre as love poetry.

Different genres diffract our perceptions and multiply differences. From our vantage point, we see love poetry framed by more powerful codes. We are superior to the heroines, we know the unavoidable ends — but while we look at their illusions from the vantage point of irony, we are framed too: our ironical vantage point is built on the acceptance of a master fiction which controls us as we control intertextual ironies.

No one can read Ariadne's epistle without thinking of Catullus 64, but not everyone is prepared to accept the consequences of this link. This new Ariadne is more restless and dynamic than any other heroine: she runs around, climbs up rocks, shouts, gesticulates — just as if she had been let out of a prison, the prison of the static character of the Catullan ekphrasis. The new Ariadne roams around like a possessed Bacchante (10,47–8) and of course she is about to meet some even more frenzied Maenads (cf. Catullus 64,254 ff.) — but for Catullus she was immobilised in the *statue* of a Bacchante (64,61 *saxea ut effigies Bacchantis*), a paradox of frozen energy. Ovid's Ariadne has got a bed and a bedcover to complain to (10,51 ff.): this is a topos of erotic poetry (*torum repeto ... strataque quae membris intepuere tuis ... lacrimisque toro manante profusis ... "lectule ..."*),²⁰ and certainly not

²⁰ The address '*lectule*' defines a shared topos of neoteric and early Augustan poetry (Ticidas 1 Morel; Prop. 2,15,2).

very realistic in the setting of a deserted shore. Nothing remains of Theseus except a bed and bedclothes: a bed which will not “show” the two lovers together any more (*non ... exhibiturus erat*, 10,52). It is useful to recall (as Florence Verducci has done²¹) that Ariadne made her entrance in the Roman literary world as the decorative element on a bed, exhibiting herself to visitors on a bedcover: oddly enough this was, in fact, a marriage bed, like the one she is addressing in Ovid. The Ovidian letter gestures towards its origins in the ekphrastic tradition.

The temporal context of the letter within the myth is more or less the same as that of the animated ekphrasis on which it is modelled: but the Ovidian reader is invited to a more complex response. The myth has a divided future: Theseus and Dionysus; the deserted woman and the sleeping beauty.²² The letter is poised between the conventional model of the lamenting Forsaken (10,80 *quaecumque potest ulla relicta pati*) and the promise of a surprising epiphany. Many of Ariadne’s remarks leave room for unorthodox and involuntary associations of ideas, and point to two separated areas of foreshadowing: the rescue by Dionysus, and the fall of the house of Theseus.²³

Meanwhile, as we know, Theseus is sailing away. Ariadne wakes up in the dead of night and strains for a glimpse of his ship in the moonlight (conveniently provided by Ovid: 10,17 *luna fuit*). This is a dark setting which Catullus, impeded by his purple backdrop, could not

²¹ *Ovid’s toyshop of the heart*, Princeton 1985, 262 ff.

²² Propertius (1,3,1–2) starts with a sleeping Ariadne an elegy in which he will play, according to perspectives, both Dionysus and Theseus (so A. Wlosok, “Hermes” 95, 1967, 352).

²³ See e.g. 10,59–60 *vacat insula cultu; / non hominum video, non ego facta boum*; this is a topos of unlucky explorations (Hom. *Od.* 10, 98 ἐνθα μὲν οὐτὲ βοῶν οὐτ’ ἀνδρῶν φαίνετο ἔργα before meeting the cannibals) but contrast e.g. *OLD* s.v. ‘Naxos’: “most fertile of the Cyclades, famous for its wine and worship of Dionysus”. At 10,132 *auctores saxa fretumque tui* is again a topos (starting from *Il.* 16,34–35 “not Peleus and Thetis, but the blue sea and steep rocks are your parents”) but it comes near to reality if one pauses to think that Theseus is either the son of Poseidon or of a man who is going to give his name to the Aegean sea. Many topoi used by Ariadne can be seen as the *recto* of a surprising future. On anticipations of the arrival of Dionysus see my comments in “MD” 16, 1986, 93–102, and particularly “MD” 23, 1989, 173–74 (Ariadne, 10,89–90, is afraid of being a prisoner in chains, a slave forced to humble works. This is both an epic topos, and the inversion of Catull. 64,161; but in a few moments she will become, instead of a *captiva* and *serva*, a goddess called *Libera*). On latent Bacchic associations in Catull. 64 see recently G. Tatham, “Class. Quart.” 40, 1990, 560–61.

allow himself to depict. At last (10,30) it looks as if Ariadne has seen the sails, but the following line should qualify this statement:

vidi praecipiti carbasa tenta Noto.
Aut vidi aut fuerant quae me vidisse putarem

fuerant quae me: tamquam quae me: etiam cum me: aut vidi aut etiam cum te vidisse putarem *Bentley*: aut vidi aut tantum quia me vidisse putavi *Madvig*: aut vidi aut tamquam quae me vidisse putavi *Palmer*: ut vidi haut umquam quae me meruisse putarem *Housman*

Line 31 could be reconstructed in various ways.²⁴ Housman, for example, corrected it to *ut vidi haut umquam quae me meruisse putarem*, “when I saw the sails, a sight I would never have thought I deserved”; for him the basic meaning is obviously that Ariadne definitely sees the sails but in her indignation does not believe her own eyes. This is exactly how Catullus describes Ariadne at the beginning, 64,55 *necdum sese etiam quae visis visere credit*. But as we have already implied, the situation is different: Ovid insists on the darkness of the night, on the physical difficulties in seeing, and on Ariadne’s hope of making any kind of contact whatever. His Ariadne is not (or at least not yet) indignant: she is fighting for her life. Soon afterwards we see her making desperate signals to attract the attention of the lover who has left her behind:

candidaque imposui longae velamina virgae
scilicet oblitos admonitura mei

(10,41–2)

and this signal is well chosen, because a white cloth ought to catch the eye against the obscurity. If we take line 31 in the most promising

²⁴ Failure to explain why Ariadne is so confused in reporting what she sees (*vidi ... aut vidi aut ...*) has proved a difficult problem. In the light of my interpretation I could accept both the texts offered by N. Heinsius (*aut vidi aut quod erant quae me vidisse putarem*) and Palmer (*aut vidi aut tamquam quae me vidisse putarem*), but they are inferior on stylistic grounds: *tamquam* is particularly weak and looks like an explicative insertion, and *quod erant quae* is clumsy. For less convincing attempts see e.g. A. Ronconi, “Par. Pass.” 13, 1958, 147–48; R. Giomini, “Riv. Cult. Class. Med.” 1, 1959, 80.

form offered by the manuscripts

aut vidi aut fuerant quae me vidisse putarem

we can now translate it confidently as 'either I saw the sails, or they were just as I thought I saw them, I was able to see them'. This meaning is supported by two illustrious poetic models, two sentences in which someone "sees or thinks he sees" something elusive in a gloomy setting. In Apollonius (4,1477) the hero Lynceus, with his portentous lynx-eye, tries to see Heracles from an enormous distance: just as someone who wants to see the moon at the beginning of the month "sees or thinks he has seen it". We also remember Aeneas trying to glimpse the shade of Dido, *per umbras/obscuram* (Aen. 6,4522 f.): once again there is the analogy of one who sees or thinks he has seen (*aut videt aut vidisse putat*) the new moon, indistinct against a screen of clouds. In both examples there is darkness on darkness, vision at a breaking point, difficulty in trusting the senses.

Thus Ariadne says she has seen sails bellying in the wind: *vidi praecipiti carbasa tenta Noto* (10,30), but then she corrects herself: either she has seen them, or she was able to think she had seen them (after all, we might add, she wanted to see them at all costs). But why all this uncertainty? The white sails of a ship ought not to be so difficult to see on a moonlit night. If Theseus received her letter he would understand, and might then make up for his lapse of memory. The fact is that, as Catullus tells us (64, 227–45), he is sailing homewards with *black* sails, which are by no means easy to see against the sea by night: this is why Ariadne is so uncertain. If Theseus were to see the white sails (10, 41 *candida ... velamina*) that Ariadne is waving to attract his attention, he might realise²⁵ that he is making a fatal mistake: the *candida ... vela* (Catull. 64, 235) should be substituted for the *infecta ... lintea* (Catull. 64,227), the *fallacia vela* (Ov. *Ib.* 493) that will be the cause of his father's death. Forgotten on the shore, the girl is in mourning (10,134 *maesta*; 137 *lugentis* more; 145 *lugubria pectora*): but Theseus's ship brings an inappropriate sign of mourning (Catull. 64,234 *funestam ... vestem*) which will bring death to his beholder, as a compensation for Theseus's desertion. Consider also the last prayer of the heroine

²⁵ A point made by Verducci, op. cit., 261. Note that Ovid has *candida ... velamina* where Catullus has Ariadne losing a veil (*amictus*, cfr. 64, 64 and 68), as a sign of dismay.

(10,149, in the last distich of the epistle):

Flecte ratem, Theseu, versoque relabere vento.

Verso ... vento is a bit surprising: at this stage of the story, Ariadne speaks about Theseus as a voluntary betrayer, and preoccupation about weather conditions seems out of place. Perhaps Burman was right in suggesting *verso ... velo*. What Theseus should do, is to change his course (*her.* 13,132 *dum licet ... vertite vela!*): but the Latin also suggests 'change your sail' before it's too late.

Ars patet arte sua: characters writing about their story written by others: I know that so far I have not done much to defend the poetic merits of the *Heroides*. Many readers think that allusiveness and dependance on mythology are faults in a text which is only worth reading for its psychological interest. But maybe these two aspects are not incompatible. The heroines' struggle for control over their own destinies in the face of adverse or even impossible conditions is dramatic for the very reason that these destinies have already been recorded and written down: these women are in fact writing against the grain of the classical authorities. The idea of allowing 'feminine' voices to make themselves heard through the gaps in the opus of the past is full of possibilities, which are by no means limited to intertextuality and poetics. Once again I want to stress that we too, as readers, are caught in the process of irony, because our ironical reading needs an external vantage point, and this 'external' vantage point turns out to be based on the acceptance of master fictions. These naive, sentimental little fictions are framed as illusions by more powerful texts: but irony cuts both ways, and the superiority of the reader exposes the nexus between tradition and fiction.

Reflexive allusions

But we shall now go a little further into the world of artifice and erudition. We have already mentioned the idea of a text which in a certain way identifies its model, and so becomes self-conscious, self-referring.²⁶ On my reading of selected passages, Ovid's Phaedra,

²⁶ On imitation and reflexivity I would single out (from different perspectives) R. Alter, *Partial magic*, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 1975; J. Hollander, *The figure of echo*, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 1981 ('transumption'; see also L. Barkan, *Transum-*

Medea, and Deianira remind the reader of their origins as constructs of the tragic scene, and Ariadne even draws particular attention to bed-covers, after having been introduced to Roman culture as an image on a marriage bed. The Roman poet reenacts origins, pointing to continuity and difference.

We know that here too the example comes from Alexandrian poetry, and it would be difficult to neglect Callimachean precedents. We are a few lines into the first hymn, and a simple sentence

‘Κρήτες ἀεὶ ψεύδονται’ (1,8)

opens a vertiginous perspective. At the beginning of his ‘Hymn to Zeus’, Callimachus is not sure whether Zeus was born in Crete or in Arcadia, and asks the god to make the point clear. Our quotation seems to suggest (though this is not certain, and it would be an unprecedented move in the hymnic tradition) that the god actually replies, even though in only three words: ‘Cretans always lie’. Readers perceive a strong quotation effect: this is a famous saying, not exactly a proverb, but a quotation from an almost legendary poet and holy man of the remote past, Epimenides. This distant authority is already inscribed in a tradition: the text of Epimenides seems to be modelled on a famous line of Hesiod’s *Musenweihe*. Anyone who recognises the source of the quotation sees a recession of mirrors opening up in front of him.²⁷ Epimenides was a poet who recounted the birth and infancy of Zeus: thus we have here a god who reconstructs his own origins by a quoting a human informant, better, a literary text—just as his poet Callimachus could have done himself. But Epimenides was also a Cretan, and this sentence offers a ready-made example for handbooks of logic: a statement that renders the truth of its own content unprovable. Third,

ing passion, Stanford 1991, 41–48); G. B. Conte, *The rhetoric of imitation*, Ithaca N.Y. 1986, 57–69; S. Hinds on ‘reflexive annotation’ (forthcoming).

²⁷ I am combining some recent responses to this provocative passage: N. Hopkinson, “Class. Quart.” 34, 1984, 140; S. Goldhill, “Proc. Cambr. Philol. Ass.” 212, 1986, 27–28; and particularly P. Bing, *The well-read Muse*, Göttingen 1988, 76 n. 42. On the hypothesis that Zeus is a Cretan, his statement sounds like a version of the famous *mentiens* (Cic. div. 2,11 with Pease ad loc.), ὁ ψευδόμενος. This ill-famed paradox is attested in conjunction with another Alexandrian master: in his funerary epigram (explained by A. Cameron, “Class. Quart.” 41, 1991, 536) Philitas is said to have died by consumption, pondering this aenigma (Athen. 401d). Contrast *Hymn. Hom.* 1,6 ψευδόμενον, a traditional maneuver to discard alternative versions for the birthplace of a god.

the weight of the tradition behind Callimachus affirms that Zeus really was born in Crete. This is, however, a dangerous mainstream: Cretans are also famous for pointing out a grave of Zeus, and regard the god as a warrant for their tradition of paederasty.²⁸ So, the poet has good reasons for turning away from the Cretan tradition: but if we admit that the god is a Cretan, like Epimenides, then we must apply Epimenides' self-implicating statement to him too, with the result that we are back to square one. The authority that Callimachus's text derives from the past has the effect of endangering his own credibility, and exposes the connection between fiction, tradition, and antiquarian research.

The Callimachean example is an extreme one, but points to a more general quality of literary allusion: in the process of alluding to predecessors, poetic texts discover a potential for self-reference. Allusions always focus on individual models but, to some extent, every allusive text makes also some broader reflexive statement: "I am poetry", or "fiction", or "I belong in a tradition". Augustan poets are particularly interested in this potential because they write in a tradition which has rich articulations and separate canons. I will be speaking again about Ovid's *Heroides*, but I would not liken this mode of allusivity to an Ovidian peculiarity, typical of the 'excessively literary poet' as opposed to his 'restrained', 'classical' predecessors. I will select a short Vergilian example to show that we are dealing with a continuous tradition. When readers meet Dido they become aware of a shocking novelty: this character owes many features to the model of tragedy. Various stages of Vergilian narrative gradually reveal her as having elements in common with, for instance, Phaedra, Medea, Alcestis, Pentheus, Ajax, Andromache, Helen and Evadne. I list these influences merely to assert that there is no dominant, individual 'source': every single allusion points to a common factor and Dido enters the epic poem as a complex voice of tragedy. This is a reference to genre, not to single exemplary models, and we have to accommodate this reference within our reading of the *Aeneid* as an epic.

There has been a lot of industry in reconstructing a proper tragedy

²⁸ The Cretan 'monopoly' on Zeus is connected with a justification of paederasty via the 'invention' of the Ganymede myth (so Plato, *Leg.* 636 d) and with the scandalous forging of a tomb of Zeus (Call. *Hymn.* 1.8–9, immediately after our problematic tag). In the *Certamen Homeri et Hesiodi* (94–101) Homer answers the embarrassing question 'sing about something which is not present, nor future, nor past' with a couple of verses about the tomb of Zeus, the ultimate fiction of all times.

of Dido, with act divisions, scenic actions, and the like, but this is not my preoccupation here. I am more interested in attempts to show that the Vergilian text is a self-conscious part in this debate on the appropriation of the tragic code.²⁹ Aeneas arrives at an unknown harbor, described by the narrator (the epic voice) as a *scaena* (Aen. 1,164). Later, he visits Carthage, and notices among the buildings going up a very unusual sight in heroic times: foundation for theaters, theatrical scenery in construction (1,427 ff. *lata theatris / fundamenta ... scaenis decora alta futuris*). It almost seems as if the Carthaginians are setting the stage for Punic tragedies to be performed. Aeneas has learnt of Dido's earlier history—a dark story worthy of the Atridae—from his mother Venus, who is disguised as a huntress: Venus is wearing buskins (1,337 *cothurno*), the typical marker of tragedy in Roman culture. Later on, when Dido is sitting in her magnificent dining-hall, we see her profiled against *aulaea* (1,697 f.), rich hangings: a luxurious setting, but the most common use of the word in Latin denotes curtains in a theater. Thus, even if in a fragmentary, subliminal form, we are not completely unprepared when the epic voice, with a bold stroke, presents Dido as a tragic character brought on to the scene by an actor: *aut Agamemnonius scaenis agitatus Orestes* (4,471). We are in the fourth book but the germs of the story—and the scenic apparatus—were already set in Book I. Along similar lines, perhaps, Ovid opens the Theban sequence in the *Metamorphoses*, an extended cycle of stories linked by a common tragic matrix, with an odd image: the Sown Men of Thebes rise out of the ground like a theater curtain going up.³⁰ For a moment the reader is like the spectator of a tragedy: these epic poets are glossing their operations outside the epic code. Interestingly, Dido is *dreaming* when she is compared to an actor *performing* Orestes.

Reading is dangerous

Again we can take some cues from the *Heroides*. As a text it is erudite, rich in models of different kinds and, as we have seen, in literary self-consciousness. It is also a text in which the procedures of writing and

²⁹ See e.g. E. L. Harrison, "Proc. Virg. Soc." 12, 1972–3, 10–25; J. E. G. Zetzel, "Crit. Inq." 10, 1983, 86 and n. 6; D. Clay, "Class. Philol." 83, 1988, 195 ff.

³⁰ As observed by Ph. Hardie, "Class. Quart." 40, 1990, 226 n. 14.

story-telling are used not only as the form but also as material for the content. From this angle I would like to examine the last 'double' *Epistulae*, the correspondence between Acontius and Cydippe. Like all the other texts in the *Heroides*, these final pages tell a story which is well known: there is an illustrious model in Callimachus' *Aitia*. Acontius throws an apple on which there is written (more or less) 'I swear by Artemis to marry Acontius' and Cydippe falls into the trap: she picks up the apple and reads its cunning message. Betrothed to another, Cydippe falls ill, and the cause of her illness is, an oracle reveals, the work of the offended goddess. In order to escape from this situation of involuntary oath-breaking, Cydippe agrees to marry Acontius, because the god Apollo has announced through his Delphic oracle that this is the only possible solution to the problem. Ovid places Acontius's letter in a significant pause in the story: Cydippe is ill, the end is coming. This position has a striking consequence: the letter is explicitly presented as a replica of the more important message, the apple that Acontius as in the model (Callimachus) has made use of as an insidious means of communication. Acontius refers to that message as a *scripta ... caute littera* (20,40), which is also a satisfying definition of the epistle itself (cf. *A.A.* 1,455; 457). Writing and repetition will be the main concerns of my reading (which will be, of course, very selective).³¹

Acontius starts from a negative move (20,3 *nihil hic iterum iurabis amanti*), but his letter glides into repetitions: *verba licet repetas ...* (20,11). *En iterum scribo* (20,35) is a remarkable confession, since every letter in Ovid's *Heroides* is normally a 'first' act of writing. His invitation to Cydippe, *perlege!* (20,5) is an insidious echo: *perlege!* (21,111) was the nurse's invitation to read the tricky words on the apple. Cydippe is now aware that reading is dangerous (note the pun in 21,146 *vir mihi non isto more legendus (!) eras*), and understands that an epistle can be a repetition of the fallacious apple: *succedat epistula pomo* (21,147). Of course, Ovid too is repeating: he is repeating Callimachus. This procedure is revealed at the crucial point where Acontius writes: "say again the words of the oath", *recitetur formula pacti* (20,153); *lecta tibi quondam nunc quoque verba refer* (20,216). If Cydippe obeys

³¹ E. J. Kenney, "Arion" 9, 1970, 388–414, provides the best interpretation and synkrisis with Callimachus. G. Rosati, *Ovidio. Lettere di eroine*, Milano 1989, 26–29, is helpful on the narrative technique.

mittitur ante pedes malum cum carmine tali —
ei mihi! iuravi nunc quoque paene tibi!

(21,109–10)

she will bind herself by a second promise: in reading Acontius's (and Ovid's) epistle, she will be made to repeat the other, absent, words that she has already read on the apple—and which have been read, I presume, in the text of Callimachus's *Aitia*.³² This is a tantalizing moment: the Latin text stops before reciting the formula of the Greek model. The apple with its text comes into the Ovidian text as an emblem of the model that the Latin imitator intends to recall, but not to reproduce: *iurare in verba alicuius* is always a sign of excessive subjection. Interestingly, Cydippe sees the message as a *carmen*: this is appropriate for an oath, which is also a kind of binding spell, but also of course for the Callimachean model.

It is interesting to note that at the end of Acontius's letter the apple is even reduplicated physically. Acontius wants to display an effigy of it, an image of the apple that will demonstrate the efficacy of its message by means of an inscription: a new inscription, after those carved by the Callimachean Acontius on trees and on the apple itself. The inscription is a distich:

causaque versiculis scripta duobus erit:
"Effigie pomi testatur Acontius huius,
quae fuerint in eo scripta, fuisse rata".

(20,240–2)

There is a strong mirror effect. Acontius ends his story by displaying a *causa ... versiculis scripta duobus*—a precise allusion if one remembers that the model for this story is to be found in a poem entitled 'Causes' and composed in elegiac couplets. His *ex voto* re-evokes

³² A dangerous assumption, since the text of the oath transmitted by Aristaenetos and the *Diegesis* (p. 71 Pf.) does not scan and, moreover, it is a notorious faux pas to make assumptions about what Callimachus should tell, or omit, in his capricious narrations. My leap of faith is based on the joint evidence of Aristaenetos, Ovid, and the *Diegesis*: these three versions, each in his very different stylization, are unanimous in showing that the plot needs the oath as a focal point. Note also that Callimachus is not reworking a well-known mythical story: the elision of a basic moment in the story could not be recovered *ex silentio* by the reader's competence.

both the object itself and its origin in a text.

Callimachus's pair of lovers have now become the authors of letters, and both of them, in their own ways, show themselves worthy to continue the work of their original author. Acontius is, as he was in Callimachus, a simple young man rendered expert and astute by love. "Love himself was the teacher of Acontius ..." (fr. 67,1 Pf.). In his first-person repetition of this statement, Acontius underlines that Amor has been a teacher in *verbal art*: *dictatis ab eo feci sponsalia verbis* (20,31). Another powerful stimulus was the *puella*: *sollertem tu me, crede, puella, facis* (20,28); the Ovidian lover is a manipulator of words inspired by a woman and dictated by love. The poetics of Roman elegy, as we shall see later, provides an area of comparison: *Amor ... me docuit* (Prop. 1,1, 4–5); *Venus ... perdocuit* (Tib. 1,8,5–6). Acontius describes his success as a victory of witty discourse: *te mihi compositis, si quid tamen egimus, arte / adstrinxit verbis ingeniosus Amor* (20,29–30). This is in fact a witty statement: on a first reading, *arte* goes with *adstrinxit*, because the message is a binding spell, a kind of κατάδεσμος. Bondage is a recurring theme in the letter, but the metrical position of *artē* allows a second reading: *artē compositis verbis* would be a good Ciceronian definition of manipulative rhetoric (*de or.* 3,196 *verbis arte positae moventur omnes*). Acontius is learning the art of writing.³³

Cydispe, on the other side, ill and obliged to write in secret, is a suitable embodiment for some well-known qualities of Callimachean art. Her frail body, *gracilem* (21,17) as a result of illness, responds to the precepts of a 'thin', λεπτάλη Muse.³⁴ The effort involved in writing (21,27 ff. *verba imperfecta ... repetita ... fatigat ... labor*; 247 *calamo lassavimus*) and the refusal of length (20,243 *longior infirmum ne lasset epistula corpus*; 21,248 *officium longius*) are typical requisites

³³ On the creativity of lovers see also *Her.* 2,21–2 *fidus amor ... finxit et ad causas ingeniosa fui*. Phyllis, "witty and versed in causes", is, as far as we know (fr. 556 Pf.), a character from the *Aitia*: again, the use of *causae* could be a deft touch of reflexivity. The conceit 'Love makes you clever and eloquent' can be paralleled in a third episode from the *Aitia*, the story of Pieria (in the third book, like Acontius and Cydispe): Aphrodite trains orators superior to Nestor (fr. 82 Pf.). This Callimachean material is of course relevant to the genealogy of the *topos ingenium nobis ipsa puella facit* (on which see the next paragraph).

³⁴ For *gracilis* as a response to λεπτός, λεπταλέος, see Prop. 2,13,3; Ov. *Pont.* 2,5,26. On female bodies as poetic programs see M. Wyke in Averil Cameron (ed.) *History as text*, London, 1989, 118 ff.

of any author who aspires to be part of the Callimachean tradition. The message of the apple is seen, in a symmetrical perspective, as something “learned”, which requires “learning” in order to be understood: *verba ferens doctis insidiosa notis* (Acontius, 20,212); *docta fui* (Cydicpe, 21,184). Slenderness, toil, brevity, doctrine are a familiar pattern of Roman Alexandrianism.

The story had begun with a chance meeting in a famous resort of religious tourism. Cydicpe recalls her journey: attracted by its fame, she hastened to visit Delos (21,79). We might ask ourselves if this fame has anything to do with Callimachus’s ‘Hymn to Delos’. Finding it difficult to land, she addresses the island: “*Quid me fugis, insula? ... Laberis in magno numquid ut ante mari?*” (21,85–6). The question captures the central point of the story told in the hymn. Cydicpe herself remarks that her letter is not supposed to be a Blue Guide: *neque enim meminive libetve / quidquid ibi vidi, dicere* (21,103–4), but the only two sights that she mentions correspond to two famous images from two Callimachean hymns: the altar made of horns in the ‘Hymn to Apollo’ (21,102 with *Apoll.* 62–3) and the palm-tree in the ‘Hymn to Delos’ (21,102 with *Del.* 209–10). These cross-references lead us to the repetition of a famous scene from the *Aitia*. As we have seen, Cydicpe remembers that she has enacted this scene, but avoids repeating the exact words of the *carmen* (21,109–12). If she pronounces the formula, she will fall into the trap a second time. If Ovid reproduces his model, he will be an imitator in the trap of repetition, one who swears according to the formula of his model. For Ovid the *carmen* (21,109) consists of a combination of two texts, that of Acontius and that of Callimachus, inscribed on the same apple. In responding to her nurse’s *perlege* (21,111), Cydicpe comes very near to a literal repetition of the words of a ‘great poet’:

insidias legi, magne poeta, tuas.

(21, 112)

The irony directed against the ‘great poet’ Acontius is redoubled by the awe that the imitator shows in respect to his own great but insidious predecessor.

Cydicpe’s letter rushes towards a solution which covers exactly the Callimachean story: the answer given by Apollo’s Delphic oracle forces the girl’s parents to accept Acontius as a son-in-law. The Ovi-

dian version is a problematic passage, very badly transmitted; however, some points can still be made:

is quoque nescio quam — nunc ut vaga fama susurrat —
neglectam queritur testis habere fidem.

Hoc deus et vates, hoc et mea carmina dicunt:

At desunt voto carmina nulla tuo!

Unde tibi favor hic? Nisi si nova forte reperta est,
quae capiat magnos littera lecta deos

(21,235–40)

Apollo's intervention shows that Acontius is the victor — the victor, it is interesting to note, not only as a lover, but also as the author of approved texts: the language of 238–40 (*carmina ... favor ... nova ... reperta est ... littera lecta*) suggests a true literary 'success story'. Line 238 is difficult and possibly corrupt, but at least a general meaning seems to be clear: a wandering rumour whispers or insinuates (*susurrat*) that the god demands the keeping of the oath. Interesting, the *detailed* speech of Apollo *reported* in the Callimachean original (fr. 75,20–38 ff.), and *directly* received by Cydippe's father who was consulting the Delphic oracle, has become a *fama*: there are other examples, in Roman poetry, where *fama* becomes a mediator and an analogy for the literary tradition. 'Rumour' functions as a substitute for 'literary influence': we have already commented on the 'fame' of Delos in 21,79. There could be even a more precise link: Callimachus introduces the god's message as an ἐννύχιον ἔπος: in fact, the speech will be difficult, learned, and winding, so ἐννύχιον could be taken to mean 'obscure', and *vaga fama susurrat* would be an apt way of capturing this Callimachean point.³⁵ Anyway, the wandering, whispering

³⁵ The interpretation of ἐννύχιον as a reference to *incubatio* (see Hopkinson, op. cit., 106) is not so evident, since this is not an obvious practice for the Delphic oracle. Pfeiffer explains 'in adyto', quoting Aristaen. 1,10 ó δ' 'Απόλλων πάντα σαφῶς τὸν πατέρα διδάσκει, and thus discarding any metaphorical explanation. Fr. 765 Pf., however, shows that ἐννύχιον in Callimachus could mean 'obscure'. Possibly the adjective connotes not the message — which is crystal clear, for an oracle: 'take Acontius as a son-in-law' — but the *style* boldly adopted by Callimachus: Apollo starts from a series of places where Artemis was *not* at the time of the oath, and ends with glosses about Cean history: rituals, the etymology of 'Etesian winds', the migration of quails. The oracle is a compressed version of Callimachus' poetic technique, and ἐννύχιον ἔπος could be taken as a humorous self-reference. Ovid explicitly comments on the problem of translating the difficult manner of Callimachus in *Ib.* 55 ff. *utque ille historiis involvam carmina caecis*

rumour exonerates Ovid from close repetition of a Callimachean text: the oracle 'fades', like the oath. So, Cydippe capitulates to a god, to a *vates*, and to *carmina*: every kind of *carmen* is on Acontius's side (237–38). The use of *carmina*³⁶ suggests a metaliterary effect: Acontius wins through inscription and oath, through oracles, through his (and Cydippe's) letter and finally through the Callimachean *carmina* which warrant the end of the story. The identity of the *vates* (237) has proved difficult to assess: Van Lennep suggests that he is still Apollo, *deus et vates*, "god and his own prophet"; Palmer brings on to the scene "seers whom Cydippe's friends may be supposed to have consulted on her behalf". There are no other traces of these prophets in Ovid's text; and Callimachus, for his part, clearly states that it was Apollo himself who gave the complete explanation. Callimachus takes advantage of an opportunity to put words into the mouth of his favorite god, the truest "advocate of Callimachean poetics".³⁷ The answer is rich in erudition and indirectness, a good sample of the poetics of the *Aitia*. The Roman reader sees a recession of *carmina*, and a mysterious *vates* who conceals a tribute to the authority of Callimachus. In this way the poet is paired with his patron, with implications that the author of the *Aitia* would certainly have appreciated. The epistolary collection ends conjuring up the Greek *princeps elegiae* and his victorious *carmina*. Reader and rewriter of Callimachus, Ovid has exploited to the full a story in which the acts of reading and writing play a fundamental part, and has made of it a conclusion to a poetic book of heroic epistles, a book in which the act of writing itself is (by implication) exalted to the rank of heroic action.³⁸

... utque mei versus aliquantum noctis habebunt etc.

³⁶ In my opinion, the use of *carmina* in 238 ("as inexplicable as in the last verse" Palmer ad loc.) is unobjectionable: every oracle is a *carmen*, and Cydippe sees a *carmen* on the apple in 21,109. Cydippe of course means 'oaths and oracles' and the reader is free to overhear 'every kind of poetry is on your side'. But the use of *mea carmina* at 237 is a real problem: "Cydippe is not a poet" (M. Reeve, "Class. Quart." n.s. 23, 1973, 336 n. 7). No other character in the *Heroides* refers unambiguously to her letter as 'poetry': 7,1 *moriturae carmen Elissae* is in a distich omitted by the main mss.; 15,6 *mea ... carmina* is in a spurious letter — and, moreover, represents no exception: the letter is by none other than Sappho. I would consider emending *mea* to *tua carmina* in 237: 'the god, the vates, and your verses (i.e. the oath, and the epigram which reduplicates it in 20,241–2), all tell the same story: every kind of poetry supports your desire'.

³⁷ See N. Hopkinson, op. cit., 102.

³⁸ Both 20 and 21 have a degree of formal closure which is exceptional in the *Heroides*

‘The Origins of Latin Love Elegy’

This reading of *Her.* 20–21 has focused on the idea that the epistles are not only imitations of Callimachus, but texts which are self-conscious about their intertextual origins. These epistles ‘stage’ their derivation from a Callimachean original. This may seem a subtle distinction, and my analysis may have overworked it; but I was trying to underline features which will be useful as I start, finally, to examine literary reflexivity from a different angle.

Two kinds of premises can be made. First, Acontius is not a typical character in Ovid’s *Heroides*. He is not a famous mythical name, as eighteen or nineteen other ‘authors’ in the collection are. He owes his existence to a single Callimachean tale, presented as ‘history’ by Callimachus himself. In this history he features as a successful *writer*: his decisive move is not acting, but writing. According to that premise, he is the only character in the *Heroides* to *achieve* something through writing. Secondly, *Her.* 20–21 differ from many other *Heroides* (double and single) in that they have, and acknowledge, a model which is *elegy* (not, for instance, narrative or dramatic poetry, to be metamorphosed into Ovidian elegy).

This last point becomes more important if we recall a sketch of Ovid’s poetic career. Ovid’s double *Heroides* represent his latest work in love elegy: Ovid has made every possible effort to demarcate his ‘sad’ elegies from Pontus and his earlier amatory work. *Her.* 20–21 seem (on the manuscript evidence) to have a final position, both in the writing of letters, and in the composition of love elegiacs. They are also, by the way, the latest compositions we have from Augustan love poetry. And Acontius is, of course, from more than one point of view an elegiac hero. He comes from the most successful love story in what is, in general, an elegiac masterpiece, the *Aitia*. More than that, he has a long career as a role model for Roman love poetry. The Callimachean narration is largely imitated before Ovid starts to rework it but, more than that, it is appropriated, and receives a new programmatic force. As we will see in an Appendix, Catullus 65, a crucial text in the development of Roman elegy, seems to play on Acontius’s seductive apple. But in general, the elegiac poets focus on a different

(9,168 is in a very different situation): *VALE* is the final word. Ovid spares this last word for his last, Callimachean epistles; Callimachus, less obviously, closes his *Aitia* with a χαίρει (fr. 112,8 Pf., in the last distich of the *Epilogue*).

part of the Callimachean original. Desperately in love, Acontius becomes the solitary lover who goes to the woods, addresses trees, and carves 'beautiful Cydippe' on the barks. This is where he becomes a prototype: the solitary lover reappears, as an explicit Callimachean influence, in important texts like Propertius 1,18³⁹ and the first love poem by Vergil, *Ecl.* 2, and the Gallan/Vergilian texture of eclogue 10.⁴⁰ In this last poem, which represents Gallus as the model for Roman love elegy, we see the poet carving 'love' on the trees

... tenerisque *meos* incidere *amores*
arboribus: crescent illae, crescetis *amores*

(10, 53–4)

Of course, Gallus is famous for writing *Amores*, so this is an intense metaliterary moment. Acontius carving the trees becomes a model not only for the Roman lover, but for the Roman lover and poet. His writing on the trees is seen as a germ of elegiac poetics: in Prop. 1,18 the poet's voice is cast in the role of Acontius.

The importance of this appropriation cannot be overstated. Augustan poetry *needs* Callimachus for complex reasons, which include the politics of poetics, and sometimes have little to do with the poetics of the originals. A powerful, creative misreading of the *Aitia* is badly needed, if Callimachus has to provide the precedent and warrant for Roman love elegy. So, the episode of Acontius and Cydippe (see Ov. *Rem.* 381–2) is very influential for a complex poetic strategy: through this allusion the elegist 'proves' that his Callimachean allegiance has a basis; through the theme of writing 'beautiful Cydippe', the Callimachean character becomes a project for the 'subjective' Roman poet.

I believe that this recession of appropriations and misreadings is important for Ovid's imitation of Callimachus. The theme of writing is, again, relevant, but now with a different emphasis. From the original, Ovid selects not the over-exploited solitary lover (and writer), but the successful writer of love apples. The focus shifts from writing

³⁹ C. Dilthey, *De Callimachi Cydippa*, Leipzig 1863, 78; F. Cairns, "Class. Rev." 83, 1969, 131–34; P. Fedeli, *Sesto Propertio. Il primo libro delle elegie*, Firenze 1980, 418 f.

⁴⁰ E. J. Kenney, "Ill. Class. Stud." 8, 1983, 46–52; D. O. Ross, *Backgrounds to Augustan Poetry*, Cambridge 1975, 72 f.

'Cydippe' to seducing Cydippe through writing. Writing as seduction would be, of course, an apt way of describing the poetics of Roman elegy: this is poetry which represents itself as *practice*, *werbende Dichtung*. As we have seen, this new Acontius is archly conscious that his writing is dictated by Love and the beloved: *sollertem tu me, crede, puella facis* (20,28); *scribere iussit Amor* (20,232). This is elegiac poetics in a nutshell (*iussit Amor*, for instance, is a tag from Tibullus, 1,6,30).⁴¹ These statements sound like typical openings of a poem, of a collection of poems based on courtship and love at first sight. Acontius is now aware that he is a model for Propertius and his fellow poets. Ovid's readers are witness to the (re-)birth of modern love elegy in Rome: an artful practice nurtured (alternatively, or simultaneously) by the feeling of love and by a reading of Callimachus. Here we have it both ways: Love dictates, and Callimachus too. In a few moments, the Callimachean hero will discover the *servitium amoris* (20,90 *ipsa tibi dices: 'Quam patienter amat!'*) and the love triangle (20,149 *improbe, tolle manus!*).

Ovid has rediscovered the Acontius story as a convincing 'plot' for Roman elegy as a whole: a genre which claims seduction through writing finds its archegete in Acontius, who has made a woman accessible through a cunning manipulation of words. Now we can understand better why epistle 20 closes on the idea of Acontius literally writing poetry, and a distich. He explains his production as a votive epigram (20, 237 ff. *quod si contigerit ... votivo sanguine ... ponetur ... testatur ... fuisse rata*: a thorough rehearsal of the topoi and markers of dedicatory epigrams, indeed). This is very fitting, because, when an Augustan poet reflects on the origin of the elegiac format, votive epigrams are likely to be introduced as predecessors of elegy: *voti sententia compos*, according to Horace (*A.P.* 76).

This is why I would read the Acontius epistle not only as a reflexive imitation of Callimachus, but also as a reenactment, a recapitulation of ideas familiar to modern scholarship ('The Origins of Latin Love Elegy'). I believe that Augustan poets are sometimes tempted to use allusion this way: to recreate a kind of myth of origins (a bit as rituals usually construct their remote beginnings). One could try to show that there is a genealogical dimension in allusive art, and link this idea with

⁴¹ The genealogy includes Propertius (2,1,4 *ingenium nobis ipsa puella facit*; 2,30,40 *nam sine te nostrum non valet ingenium*) and Ovid himself as poet of the *Amores* (2,17,34; 3,12,16).

the tendentiousness which is so typical of Augustan poetics: these poets devote great energy to inventing predecessors, reshaping genealogies. Acknowledging a debt to such a remote predecessors and 'inventors' of forms as Sappho and Homer, Hipponax and Hesiodus, could not be an innocent act, an 'honest' scholarly footnote. But this, of course, is the project for another study.

Appendix: elegiac apples

My case for reading in *Her.* 20–21 a kind of 'recapitulation' of Roman elegiac tradition would gain some support from a certain reading of Catullus 65: if one accepts that Catullus (19–24) is alluding to the Callimachean story of Acontius, then the *volubile malum* would not be a newcomer in Roman elegy at all.

This is of course a controversial point, and my rehearsal will be very selective. Wendell Clausen has shown, in a powerful reading of Catullus 65,⁴² the opportunity of accepting a specific Callimachean allusion in that particular context. The poem is offered as a preface to a translation from Callimachus (65,16 *carmina Battiadae*), and is likely to have a programmatic function: its companion piece, 66, certainly has a programmatic force in importing Callimachus' *Aitia* to Rome. The style of poem 65, far from being humble and deliberately uncouth,⁴³ is a deliberate attempt to re-evolve the difficult elegiac manner of Callimachus, with its long rambling sentences, parentheses, unexpected turns and changes of mood. Moreover, someone (some say Catullus) has placed this poem as an introduction to Catullus' elegiac oeuvre; poem 116, at the other end of the collection, has been shown to be no less programmatic,⁴⁴ and carries another reference to the effort of reworking Callimachus (116,2: *carmina Battiadae* again). If we accept that the position is significant, then some other details acquire a certain programmatic emphasis. Catullus starts from a crisis in his poetical

⁴² "Harv. Stud. Class. Philol." 74, 1970, 93. [See also R. Hunter, *Callimachean echoes in Catullus 65*, "ZPE" forthcoming].

⁴³ A very thorough discussion in M. Citroni, "MD" 2, 1979, 91–100.

⁴⁴ T. P. Wiseman, *Catullan Questions*, Leicester 1969, 17–18 "The promise is not to keep writing about the brother's death, but to keep writing *carmina maesta*—which means ... to keep writing elegiacs. And, of course, the rest of the collection *is* in elegiacs." Note also S. Hinds, *The metamorphosis of Persephone*, Cambridge 1987, 103–6. On 116 and its implications, C. Macleod, *Collected Essays*, Oxford 1983, 181–86.

career: grief and mourning are diverting him from the Muses. The (paradoxical) result is poetry, poetry of mourning. There is a strong tradition in Roman culture (not, apparently, in Alexandria)⁴⁵ connecting the birth of elegy with lament, *querela*, ἐῖς λέγειν and the like. There seems to be an implicit, but deep connection between his personal loss and the choice of elegiac form. A line like

semper maesta tua carmina morte canam⁴⁶

(65,12)

is highly suggestive in this perspective. The following simile, the nightingale, fits very well with the poet's voice, and particularly with a voice of lament. With *semper ... canam*, I would suggest, Catullus has actually become a nightingale, while being still a learned poet: there is Greek evidence for an etymological connection between ἀηδών and αἶψα + αἶδω, possibly with a Callimachean model.⁴⁷ Ἀηδονίδες, ἀηδόνες are attested as a symbolic reference to poetry and (possibly) as a title for poetic collections of elegies. The nightingale simile will be adapted by Vergil (*Ge.* 4,511–15)⁴⁸ when the *illustrandum* is Orpheus' poetical activity after the loss of Eurydice: Orpheus has become a singer of laments and carries some features of a proto-elegist. All these tenuous clues point to a shared area, where elegy appears as a mediator between poetry and grief. This area of metaliterary reference (if that is the word: Catullus is showing that his poetical choice has a root in personal experience: elegy nurtured by grief) has to be further combined with the unexpected turn to *carmina Battiadae*: again, there is a common theme, elegy (nurtured by assimilation of Callimachus).

⁴⁵ But see below, on nightingales and poetry.

⁴⁶ As will be evident, I have a vested interest in *canam*, but *tegam* is unacceptable on all counts.

⁴⁷ N. Hopkinson, *A Hellenistic Anthology*, Cambridge 1988, 249, suggests that this etymology is relevant to Callimachus, *epigr.* 2. For 'nightingales' as poetry see Call. fr. 1,16 Pf. (as integrated by Housman) and *epigr.* 2,6 (with Gow-Page and Hopkinson ad loc.; G. Williams, "Class. Quart." 41, 1991, 121 n. 11).

⁴⁸ The simile shares with Catullus an allusion to Homeric models (see the commentaries). Many have observed a parallelism between Orpheus and the Gallus of *Eclogue X*. In general, both ἔλεγος and *questus* can be applied both to nightingales and to elegy; Hinds, op. cit., 104, analyses a mythological nightingale-simile from Ovid's *Fasti* and suggests a programmatic nuance. On the Greek tradition see R. Kannicht, *Euripides Helena*, Heidelberg 1969, II, 282–85.

It seems to me that the final section of 65 could be read in this frame of reference. The situation has no strict parallel in Ovid: but Cydippe blushes (21,114 *sensi me totis erubuisse genis*) as the anonymous girl does in 65,24 (*huic manat tristi conscius ore rubor*).⁴⁹ And the apple, of course, rolls down. The poem answers a request for *carmina Battiadæ*, so it would be a nice touch to offer something from the *Aitia*, though in a devious way, before 66 actually begins.⁵⁰ The apple, after all, had been described by Callimachus; more than that, it had been inscribed by Callimachus. As far as we know, the apple carried a *text*, a Callimachean text which is central to the Acontius elegy in the *Aitia*. A written message could be an apt way of connecting Catullus' text with the master of elegy⁵¹: nothing can be proved, but certainly the apple in Ovid can be seen as an important signifier of elegiac writing. Accepting the apple written by Callimachus, Roman elegists frame a reference to the model they are claiming to appropriate.

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⁴⁹ See also 20,7–8; 99; Aristaen. 1,10 (with a refined poetical simile for the color of Cydippe's cheeks); E. J. Kenney, "Arion" 9, 1970, 411 n. 42 "her blushes ... no doubt figured in the Callimachean narrative", with A. Dietzler, *Die Akontios-Elegie des Kallimachos*, Diss. Greifswald 1933, 37. *Sensi* is a perfect 'shifter' from narrative to *Icherzählung*.

⁵⁰ Catullus would be saying 'even if my sorrow keeps me away from poetry (but could also promote a different kind of poetry, a new elegiac vein) don't think that I have forgotten your request about *carmina Battiadæ*'; then the simile, while picturing a situation of oblivion, confusion, and loss, simultaneously proves — through content and style — that Callimachus is being offered and the request is not forgotten. Of course we have great problems in assessing Catullus's relationship to the addressee, Hortensius Hortalus (see Citroni, op. cit., for this line of enquiry), but I assume that a poetical strategy should be understandable even without this substantial information.

⁵¹ This kind of 'double motivation' — writing elegy around a personal loss, writing elegy in a literary tradition — is parallel to a double motivation typical of Augustan elegy: the genre is both (either) dictated from love at first sight, and (or) inspired by Callimachus' Muses. I have tried to show that this duplicity is important for the Acontius epistle.