

## ***Heroides* 20 and 21: motion and emotions\***

STRATIS KYRIAKIDIS (UNIVERSITY OF THESSALONIKI)

ABSTRACT: Ovid's *Heroides* 20 and 21 are the literary epistles exchanged by Acontius and Cydippe in the effort of the former to win the love of the latter. The two letters rely heavily on the oath Acontius inscribed on the apple, which he then threw at the feet of Cydippe. She in turn picked up the apple, uttered the oath and unwittingly bound herself to Acontius whose wish was to represent the fruition of this union by the dedication of a sculpted golden apple. Through the movement of the apple and the fixity of its golden effigy, the poet alludes respectively to the process leading to their union and then to its stability. Furthermore Ovid uses a variety of techniques to highlight the materiality of the letters as written objects that can be moved in space: the various positions the letter can take suggest, at least for Cydippe, the fluctuation in her feelings prior to her final union with Acontius. To help the reader grasp the correspondence of the internal course of sentiments and feelings to the external movement of things, the poet employs a number of ways which prompt his reader to 'see' the situations the text describes.

*Heroides* 20 and 21, the last in the collection of the *Heroides*, are the letters exchanged by Acontius and Cydippe. Both letters rely heavily—if, indeed, they are not wholly based—on another written text: the oath<sup>1</sup> inscribed on an apple,<sup>2</sup> which Acontius insidiously conceived and wrote<sup>3</sup> and Cydippe unwittingly uttered.<sup>4</sup> According to the story in Ovid,<sup>5</sup> Acontius threw the inscribed apple<sup>6</sup> before her feet at the Temple of Diana at Delos as the means of binding her and

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<sup>1</sup> Hardie (2002b), 110: 'oaths and contracts in the end are only figures for the true source of the power that energises the written words, desire'; also 111f.

<sup>2</sup> For 'the apple as signifier' see Rosenmeyer (1996), 17-20 and (2001), 118-20.

<sup>3</sup> Hardie (2002b), 121: 'The story of Acontius and Cydippe is an ideal vehicle for dramatising the struggle of the written word to affect events in the world, a constant theme of the *Heroides*.' Even the pun on Acontius' name from *acumen* ('point of stylus'), used at 210 in Cydippe's letter, may indicate the power of writing; on the etymology of the name of Acontius see Cairns (2002), 471-7; Rosenmeyer (2001), 125; Hardie (2002b), 112.

<sup>4</sup> Farrell (1998), 312. He also considers that the letters of Paris and Acontius from the double epistles are 'good examples' of the male attitude to letter-writing since 'from the male point of view, it [*sc.* the love letter] is nothing more than an especially good and comparatively safe medium for practicing the duplicity that seduction requires' (322).

<sup>5</sup> The story of Acontius and Cydippe in its fragmented form appears in Callimachus (fr. 67-75 Pf.), but the oath inscribed on an apple appears in the *Diegesis* (71 Pf.) and in the text of Aristaenetus 1.10 (there a Calydonian apple). See Barchiesi (2001), 120 with n.32.

<sup>6</sup> *mittitur ante pedes malum cum carmine tali* ('an apple is thrown at my feet with this kind of verse', *Her.* 21.107). On tossing or throwing apples in antiquity as a declaration of love see McCartney (1925), 70-81; see also Littlewood (1968), 154f.; for inscribing on apples: 167f. On the magic charm of throwing an apple, see Sider (1997), 65 (on 2.1). Cf. Spentzou (2003), 42.

thus forcing her to marry him. In his effort to convince Cydippe to marry him, Acontius' letter focuses on this apple and the oath she uttered. In her reply to him, Cydippe explains that she considers the whole issue with the oath on the apple a deceitful act but finally acknowledges she is bound to him by the oath she gave and her letter ends with her agreeing to marry him.

In these letters, with their amorous content, objects and external events play an important role. Even the letters themselves, especially that of Cydippe, are treated not merely as vehicles of speech but as material objects which can change position in space; by extension, the physical movement of the letter may reflect some of the sender's inner feelings. As a consequence, the reader is invited to 'see' what Acontius and Cydippe describe as an external situation and accordingly to perceive what these descriptions convey with regard to their inner world.

Ovid has employed a number of techniques and features some of which also appear in other works of his, namely the *Metamorphoses* and the *Fasti*, especially in descriptions of landscape setting where the 'invitation to view' is particularly vivid.<sup>7</sup> According to Cydippe's narrative, she was wandering nonchalantly about the sacred places of the island of Delos, astonished at the various sites. Her description of the sites, however, is cut short, for, as she claims, neither memory nor her feelings at the moment permitted her to elaborate on the marvels of the sacred island (21.101f.). Her relation, though short, was an invitation to the reader to view, enhanced by the sudden twist the young girl has given to her account when she realised that from viewer of the sites she had become an object of someone else's gaze as Acontius was watching her, presumably all the time (21.103):

forsitan haec **spectans** a te **spectabar**, Aconti

(perhaps, while I was gazing at these monuments, Acontius, I was gazed upon by you.)

The recurrence here of two verbal forms of the same verb in a 'voice reversal',<sup>8</sup> creates an effect by turning the spectator to a spectacle.<sup>9</sup> Cydippe simultaneously gazes and is gazed upon. Her description (21.95-109) concerns the urban surroundings of the sacred island, contextually a fitting substitute for a landscape, especially since the appeal of the environment and the security she feels within it are feelings often experienced, at least initially,<sup>10</sup> by characters entering into a pleasant landscape and a setting familiar to them. Cydippe is attracted to the place and shows her admiration for the various monuments (21.97-9). Similarly in the

<sup>7</sup> See Segal (1969); Hinds (1987), 25-48, and (2002), 136-40. Rosati (1983), 129-53 has given an excellent account of how Ovid's poetry in the *Metamorphoses* evokes the reader's visual participation.

<sup>8</sup> See Wills (1996), 295-8. Although 'voice reversal' is strongly connected with mirroring it is not the only construction involving mirror effect, see e.g. Wills *Index Rerum* s.v. *chiasmus*, *reversal of verbs* and *reversal pairs*.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *AA* 3.513: *spectantem spectat, ridenti mollia ride*. Rimell (2006), 80-2 discusses various 'mirroring strategies'.

<sup>10</sup> Segal (1969), 8: 'a place of refuge and peace is invaded, there is no safety, no escape of arbitrary force', also 16.

*Metamorphoses* (5.385-92)<sup>11</sup> as well as in the *Fasti* (4.427-42) Persephone is attracted to the landscape at Henna. In all three instances, Cydippe and Persephone feel quite safe to continue with their pursuits since the island of Delos as well as the landscape at Henna intimates a sense of security, either because of the former's urban surroundings<sup>12</sup> and religious sanctity, or the goddess' familiarity with the latter.<sup>13</sup> The text of the *Heroides*,<sup>14</sup> as well as that of the *Metamorphoses* and the *Fasti*,<sup>15</sup> establish a pleasant ambience which will soon prove to be fatal. To this effect, Ovid employs a number of devices which all lead to the same outcome. In the *Metamorphoses*, when Pluto sees, loves, and abducts Persephone, all at once, the suddenness of the act (*paene simul visa est dilectaque raptaque Diti*, 'almost at once Pluto saw her and loved her and took her away', 5.395) is expressed through the accumulation of three verbs, while the ellipsis in the periphrastic past tense augments the sense of sudden change already prominent by position at the opening of the line (*paene simul*). At the same time the emphatic position of the *visa est*—first among the three verbs and the only one with the periphrasis of the tense in full—enhances the 'spectacularity' of what is described in the passage; the reader is invited to view it as a theatrical scene.<sup>16</sup> In the text of the *Fasti*, the abduction of *Kópn* is presented with equal speed but with a different syntactic structure: *hanc videt et visam patruus velociter aufert* ('her uncle sees her and, having seen, swiftly takes her away', 4.445).<sup>17</sup> Here the finite form of the verb (*videt*) is followed by its participle (*visam*). This figure of participial resumption is favoured by Ovid, because it effectively renders the rapidity of action.<sup>18</sup> Its employment gives point to the adverb (*velociter*) of the line and focuses on the object of Pluto's gaze and the speed of the action. In the text of the *Heroides*, the description is again brief and to the point. Here too, Ovid uses a verb of seeing (*spectare*) which also captures the essence of the line's meaning. The sense of the spectacle is present rather intensely as it is strongly suggested by the very meaning of the verb and the structure employed. In a

<sup>11</sup> With Hinds (1987), 26-30.

<sup>12</sup> Segal (1969), 18: 'Entrance into it [*sc.* the landscape] constitutes a separation from the familiar, from the sheltered world of civilization and society...'

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Cydippe's rhetorical amazement, *tutor hoc equis debuit esse locus?* ('is there any place that could be safer?', 21.106), and Proserpina's familiarity with the place particularly evident in the text of the *Fasti*: [*filia*] *errabat nudo per sua prata pede* ('the daughter was wandering barefoot around the familiar fields', 4.426); walking barefoot is a strong indication of being secure and on familiar ground; cf. Fantham (1998), *ad. loc.*

<sup>14</sup> The Ovidian techniques appearing in the *Heroides* (irrespective of whether *Her.* 16-21 are written in a different period from *Her.* 1-15) are equally present in all of them. Hardie's statement about the Ovidian oeuvre regarding 'consistency in style and poetics between his [Ovid's] earliest and latest works, spanning some forty years' (2002a, 35) is equally valid for the whole corpus of the *Heroides*; see also Rimell (2006), 156 n.1.

<sup>15</sup> For the landscape settings in the *Metamorphoses* and the *Fasti* see Segal (1969); also Hinds (1987), (2002), 130-36.

<sup>16</sup> According to Hinds (1987), 33f., on *Met.* 5.388-92 as an amphitheatrical scene; see also (2002), 136-40, esp.139.

<sup>17</sup> *Contra* Segal (1969), 19: 'Thus its landscapes [*i.e.* those of the *Fasti*] have the sensuousness and stylized charm of those of the *Metamorphoses*, but not the potential horror or *the sudden turn-about from the idyllic to the nightmarish*' (my emphasis).

<sup>18</sup> See Wills (1996), 311, 316f., 324.

variation of the ‘voice reversal’ that we saw above (21.103), Ovid retains the participle in the active voice and the finite form of the verb in the passive thus managing to focus simultaneously on Cydippe as the viewer (*spectans*) and the object of Acontius’ gaze (*spectabar*).<sup>19</sup> Ovid’s insistence on ‘seeing’ motivates the reader to be a spectator of what Cydippe describes. The poet applies this intriguing technique just at the point where Cydippe is going to mention in her letter the throwing of the apple at her feet which, as it turned, became the cause of all her trouble.<sup>20</sup>

From early times, the apple was seen as an erotic symbol<sup>21</sup> (as well as a symbol of discord);<sup>22</sup> it has also functioned as an instrument of deceit, as in our story of Acontius and Cydippe<sup>23</sup> and in the myth of Atalanta in the *Metamorphoses*. In addition to these characteristics, Ovid highlights in *Her.* 20 and 21 one further property: the apple’s ability to roll. This *volubile malum* (20.209), as Acontius describes it, recalls another famous apple; that of the Catullan simile at the end of 65,<sup>24</sup> which figuratively stands for the Callimachean poems<sup>25</sup> Catullus translated for his friend Hortalus.<sup>26</sup> It is generally agreed that with this simile Catullus recalls—without reproducing—the Callimachean episode of Acontius and Cydippe (65.15-24).

|                                                   |    |
|---------------------------------------------------|----|
| Sed tamen in tantis maeroribus, Hortale, mitto    | 15 |
| haec expressa tibi carmina Battiadae,             |    |
| ne tua dicta vagis nequiquam credita ventis       |    |
| effluxisse meo forte putes animo,                 |    |
| ut <b>missum</b> sponsi furtivo munere malum      |    |
| <b>procurrit</b> casto virginis e gremio,         | 20 |
| quod miserae oblatae molli sub veste locatum,     |    |
| dum adventu matris prosilit, <b>excutitur</b> ,   |    |
| <b>atque illud prono praeceps agitur decursu,</b> |    |
| huic manat tristi conscius ore rubor.             |    |

(But even in the midst of such a great sorrow I send these poems of the son of Battus translated for you, Hortalus, so that you do not think that your words, vainly entrusted to the unstable winds, have perhaps dropped from my mind like

<sup>19</sup> Wills (1996), 296.

<sup>20</sup> It is worth noticing that in the case of Cydippe as well as that of Persephone, the character involved experienced a dramatic change in life owing to an unforeseeable event. In the instance of Cydippe the throwing of the apple with the oath inscribed on it may not have been as drastic and grave an act as the abduction of the daughter of Ceres, but for the exigencies of Cydippe’s narrative it had equally sweeping consequences in her life.

<sup>21</sup> Rosenmeyer (2001), 108f. gives a brief account of the apple’s history as a love token and the symbolism it carries in literature.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Littlewood (1968), 168 (*Luc. Dial. Mar.* 5); also Rosenmeyer (2001), 118f.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. *Her.* 21.123: *Cydippen pomum, pomum Schoeneida cepit*; cf. also Farrell, quoted n.4 above.

<sup>24</sup> Clausen (1970), 93; Barchiesi (2001), 126. For the apple in its Catullan erotic context, see Holzberg (2002b), 151-6.

<sup>25</sup> Strictly speaking, the simile refers to Hortalus’ words (65.17f.), but it is obvious that what Hortalus had said to Catullus was relevant to the request of the former for the translation of Callimachus’ poems. On the Catullan simile see Fitzgerald (1995), 193-5; Hunter (1993), 179f.; (2006), 88, 101f.; also Barchiesi (2001), 126f.

<sup>26</sup> With regard to Hortalus see Tatum (1997), 489.

the apple which, sent as a secret gift by the fiancé, drops from the girl's chaste bosom; it was placed under the soft clothes of the poor girl who had forgotten it but when she leaps up at her mother's arrival it falls down and, at full tilt, rolls bouncing onwards while a guilty blush spreads over the girl's sad face.)

In Catullus, as in Ovid, the apple is a moving object taking various positions as it rolled (*excutitur; / atque illud prono praeceps agitur decursu*, 65.24).<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, as in the Ovidian text, the apple appears to be a parallel to the poetic diction.<sup>28</sup> In Ovid, the apple being the conveyor of a message/oath is actually a substitute for a letter and it thus turns out to become a 'model'<sup>29</sup> for Acontius' epistle.<sup>30</sup> Parallel to it, this *volubile malum*, in its quality to substitute for a letter, can also function as an effective vehicle of speech.<sup>31</sup> The latter property is enhanced by the application of the very same adjective *volubilis* which can also convey rhetorical connotations.<sup>32</sup> In fact, this use of the adjective is not rare in classical Latin.<sup>33</sup> The reader, therefore, is enabled to grasp the literary and rhetorical potentials alluded to and to perceive the apple as a conveyor of Acontius' feelings. The apple is instrumental in making Acontius' wishes come true.

Ironically the rolling apple had as its final goal the binding of Cydippe with *nodos* (20.39) and hence the steadfastness of the relationship Acontius craved to have with her. To this effect, he employs in his letter verbs of binding such as *iungo* (20.23, 212, 215, 226) and *vincio* (20.86, 212). Rosenmeyer is right in suggesting that here we have 'the idea of a binding oath, a *κατάδεσμος*'.<sup>34</sup> Acontius declares his true love which will bind him to Cydippe, rendering thus unnecessary any material objects to that purpose (*Her.* 20.85f.):

<sup>27</sup> The spondees of the line—according to van Sickle (1968), 502—suggest motion and 'represent the apple but by a kind of antiphrasis'. Furthermore, the spondaic fifth foot (*agitur decursu*) recalls 'a favoured Hellenistic mannerism' (Hunter [1989], 42) taken up by the neoterics. This had been noticed already by West (1957), 101; see also Papaioannou (2008), esp. 677, and n.49.

<sup>28</sup> Such an interpretative possibility has rightly found its place in the poetry of Jack Spicer in whose work there are many allusions to Classical poetics. The modern American poet has employed, *mutatis mutandis*, the metaphor of the baseball for poetry. On the use of a less erotic but certainly more popular round object, the same poet comments that it was 'an ideal correlative to poetic composition with its model of mutuality [and] reciprocity.' See Gizzi (ed.) (1998), 98.

<sup>29</sup> See Rosenmeyer (2001), 109, 114-8; Hardie (2002b), 111. For the apple as a model of the whole collection of the *Heroides* see Rimell (2006), 170: 'Only in *Her.* 20-1 is the inscribed apple a direct model for the letter, yet this analogy offers an image for visualizing the circularity of the collection as a whole.'

<sup>30</sup> Barchiesi (2001), 127 notes with caution: 'nothing can be proved, but certainly the apple in Ovid can be seen as an important signifier of elegiac writing.' See also Hardie (2002b), 112-4, 119.

<sup>31</sup> Holzberg (2002a), 88: 'For the apple bears what is far and away the shortest text in either of the two collections of letters; yet, despite its brevity, this text is much more effective than all the other voluminous elegiac texts they contain. But is that any wonder? "A big book is a big evil."'

<sup>32</sup> The word *volubilis* (with the cognates *volubilitas*, *revolubilis*) appears seven times in Ovid and in all it is connected with motion; nevertheless the same word appears in Cicero seventeen times, in eleven of which it is used as a rhetorical term meaning: 'rapid', 'fluent', 'voluble'.

<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, the connection of *volubilis* with *volumen*, the roll or the book, that is, the most widely spread medium for the transmission of the written speech, is only a matter of course.

<sup>34</sup> See also Rosenmeyer (2001), 124; Barchiesi (2001), 120.

*Sed neque conpedibus nec me conpesce catenis—  
servabor firmo vinctus amore tui*

(But tie me down not with fetters or chains—I shall be bound to you by the firm power of my love.)

This elegiac couplet conveys the sense of binding with almost all of its components. Acontius' craving for union with Cydippe will be realised through his firm love for her (*servabor firmo... amore*) rather than through shackles and chains, objects appropriate for physical bonds. The steadfastness of this relationship, he writes to her, will be represented by a golden apple, a replica of the original one (*aurea... mali felicitis imago*, 'a golden representation of the lucky apple', 237) which would pronounce for ever the fulfilment of the oath inscribed on the original apple (20.239f.):

EFFIGIE POMI TESTATUR ACONTIUS HUIUS  
QUAE FUERINT IN EO SCRIPTA FUISSE RATA

(By the image of this apple I, Acontius, declare that what was written on it has been accomplished.)

This *effigy* of the apple that Acontius rolled to Cydippe's feet will have the form but not the qualities of the original. As an offering it will be a motionless imitation of the one Acontius had characterised as *volubile* (*Her.* 20.209). As a dedication,<sup>35</sup> then, this inert golden apple with its fixity will represent not so much the course of events that led to the union of Acontius with Cydippe but rather the effectiveness<sup>36</sup> of the original in uniting the two lovers.

Acontius feels strongly the psychological drive to carry through his plans for a steady and permanent relationship with Cydippe and asks her to inform her mother of how they first met (20.201-8), how the inscribed apple rolled in front of her (20.209f.), and how she was bound to marry him reading the oath with Diana as witness (*esse tuam vinctam numine teste fidem*, 212). The apple, therefore, with its motion (and in sharp contrast with the fixity of its replica in gold) seems to reflect Acontius' emotions and his inner urge to fulfill his union with Cydippe. At the same time, however, it evidently turns into an agent of deception;<sup>37</sup> a trait which, according to Cydippe, it would equally share with a letter of his to any other girl: *decipe sic alias—succedat epistula pomo!* ('you may deceive others in this way—let a letter follow an apple!', 21.145).<sup>38</sup>

In reply to Acontius' letter, Cydippe will send hers (*Her.* 21), her own *charta* (21.244) as she calls it. At the end of it, she admits her exhaustion and consents to unite with him (*coniungere*, 21.247). **While writing her letter, however, the reader**

<sup>35</sup> According to Rosenmeyer (2001), 129: 'The Ovidian sculpture of the apple represents the ultimate victory of writing and its elevation to cult-status.'

<sup>36</sup> Barchiesi (2001), 120.

<sup>37</sup> Unlike Acontius, Cydippe in her letter puts the emphasis on the mode he followed in winning her over, a procedure characterised by deceit; even at the opening of her letter the verb *capio* is negatively charged (*captasses*, 21.3) and the sense of deceit is preeminent throughout (21.3, 104, 122, 128, 200, 238; cf. 20.65f.).

<sup>38</sup> Barchiesi (2001), 120.

is informed she was at pains to hide it from inquisitive eyes, trying to deceive the people around in her effort to keep the letter in secrecy (21.17f.):

*Nunc timor accedit, ne quis nisi conscia nutrix  
colloquii nobis sentiat esse vices.*

(Now fear has been added lest someone other than the confidant nurse may sense that we are exchanging words.)

Whenever the *conscia nutrix* let her know that someone was coming she hastened to hide the letter in her bosom (21.25f.):<sup>39</sup>

*properans verba imperfecta relinquo,  
et tegitur trepido littera coepta sinu.*

(I hastily leave my half-finished words as they were and hide the letter I have begun in my trembling bosom.)

When safe, she started writing again. Cydippe's description suggests that she hastily rolled the letter up in order to hide it away; then unrolled it again to continue writing. This movement in turn reminds one of Catullus' description of the apple falling from the girl's lap or bosom (*gremio*, 65.20).<sup>40</sup> Within the same context, it is of interest to note the use of the term *charta*; the word refers mainly to the material,<sup>41</sup> the paper, and on a secondary level to what is written on it. Hardie (2002b, 111) translates the passage *non timuit tecum... mea charta loqui* (244): 'my piece of paper was not afraid to talk to you.' The application of the word here can hardly be fortuitous. The reader of the Ovidian letter perceives it as an object which can move and can be rolled, as in the case of both the Catullan and the Ovidian apple. The opening of *Heroides* 11 is another instance where the word *charta* is used to that effect. There Canace, writing to Macareus, has the paper open on her lap (*et iacet in gremio charta soluta meo*, 'and the unrolled paper lies in my lap', 11.4).<sup>42</sup> There, too, the *charta* could be rolled up for concealing its contents and then unrolled, to be continued; when finally the letter was ready to be sent, it could be rolled up and sealed. The materiality of the letter is also put into higher relief in the opening of Leander's epistle to Hero (18.15-20):

*Protinus haec scribens, 'felix, i, littera!' dixi,  
'iam tibi formosam porriget illa manum.  
forsitan admotis etiam tangere labellis,  
'rumpere dum niveo vincula dente volet.'  
talibus exiguo dictis mihi murmure verbis,  
'cetera cum charta dextra locuta mea est.*

(As soon as I wrote these words I immediately said: 'Go, happy letter, she will soon reach out her beautiful hand for you. Perhaps, she will even touch you with her moving lips while she tries to break the seal with her snow-white teeth.'

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Tib. 2.6.44-6.

<sup>40</sup> But in reverse: in Catullus the apple falls from the girl's lap whereas in Cydippe's case the letter is hidden in her bosom (*sinu*, 26); See Daly (1952), 99 n.8 (also n.10).

<sup>41</sup> Barchiesi (2001), 353f.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. *AA* 3.623: *chartas... ligatas*, with Gibson (2003); *Her.* 1.62, 11.4; also *Tr.* 4.7.7: *chartae sua vincula dempsi*. See below, n.44.

Saying such words as these in a low whisper I let my right hand say the rest on paper.)

The sender enviously imagines his letter being fondled in the hands of his beloved. On these lines Kennedy writes: ‘Leander pictures himself *as* his letter, arriving at its intended destination... ; his letter is driven back on that materiality as a surrogate, even a fetishized substitute, for presence, as Leander imagines it kissed, fondled and subjected to even more passionate signs of physical love.’<sup>43</sup> It is obvious that the materiality of the letter is here stressed.<sup>44</sup> Similarly, in the letters of Acontius and Cydippe ‘it is... the tangible fact of the letter itself that Ovid stresses’, to put it in Farrell’s words, used on another occasion, where he concludes ‘the letter[s]’ materiality refuses to be denied’.<sup>45</sup> A letter, therefore, is an object which can be read, moved, transmitted and, on occasion, hidden away; every move seems to imply a delicate moment in the world of the writer of the letter.

Fascinated by the material aspect of the letter, Ovid ventures to give it a more functional character; to this purpose, he devised additional means for enhancing this property. This, I think, can be best shown in a passage on which scholars generally agree that it presents some difficulties in interpretation. I am referring to *Heroides* 21.81f. In these lines there is a short catalogue of place names, which, in my view, is a characteristic example of extratextual mirroring, a technique which highlights the material quality of a text;<sup>46</sup> for, unless we consider some such poetic intention, then meaning and context would be at variance. It is a ‘mirroring’ because the form of the text seems to be the reflection of something else, as in a mirror, and it is ‘extratextual’<sup>47</sup> because what is mirrored belongs to an environment apart and beyond that of the text. In other words the poet attempts to reproduce or imitate through the textual form and structure<sup>48</sup> an extratextual situation. At 21.77-84 Cydippe writes about her trip to Delos. In fact, because of the island’s renown (*nota loci fama*, 77) she was anxious to reach it as soon as possible; she often chided the oarsmen and complained the sails were slack (79f.); and then comes the contentious passage (21.81f.):

*Et iam transieram Myconon, iam Tenon et Andron,  
inque meis oculis candida Delos erat.*

(And now I had passed Myconos, now Tenos and Andros, and shining Delos was before my eyes.)

<sup>43</sup> Kennedy (2002), 224.

<sup>44</sup> In *Ars Amatoria* (3.617-30) the *praeceptor amoris* shows to the *puella* a number of ways to smuggle out a letter safely to her lover by deceiving her *custos* (also 3.484-6) and advises on the material of the letter and how it can be secretly sent (Spentzou [2003], 147-9). In this part of the work the word *charta* is used twice (623, 625); Gibson (2003), on 621f., 623f., 625f., 627-30.

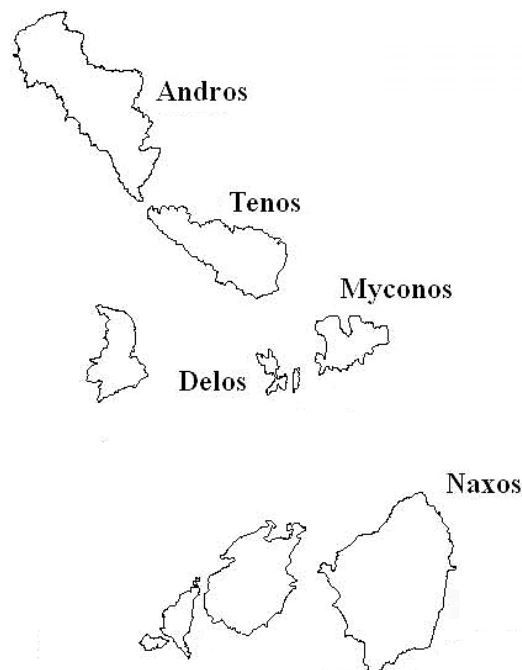
<sup>45</sup> Farrell (1998), 316; see also 335 n.55.

<sup>46</sup> For Lateiner (1990), 208: ‘Ovid expected his poetry to be read by the eye on the page as well as recited and heard.’

<sup>47</sup> Kyriakidis (2007), xviii and 54f.

<sup>48</sup> For similar instances see Thomas (1999), 313f. (for Virgil); Lateiner (1990), esp. 209-37, Kyriakidis (2007), 55f. (for Ovid).

For a journey made in haste, the course plotted could only have caused delay. Mykonos is very close to Delos and there is no reason whatsoever to travel to Tenos and then to Andros to get to Delos. Furthermore, if Cydippe were travelling from Naxos,<sup>49</sup> she could have made her journey even shorter by sailing directly to Delos without passing Mykonos either. This incongruity between context and geographic reality has perplexed the epistle's commentators. In trying to find a logical explanation for this detour, Kenney mentions that 'O[vid] liked the sound of the names and sacrificed geographical accuracy to poetic atmosphere'.<sup>50</sup> This may be so, but something else drew my attention here. At the very beginning of his comment on 81f. Kenney advises the reader: 'A glance at the map will show that the direct voyage from Naxos to Delos does not take one past Andros and Tenos, and only by a stretch of language past Mykonos.' What I would like to add and suggest here is not to take 'a glance at the map' but rather *to take a glance at the text as a map*.



In fact the linear placement of the names of Mykonos, Tenos and Andros almost at the second half of the verse represents the geographical position of the three islands. The direction of writing from left to right seems to correspond to the south to northern geographical location of the islands. This is not the only passage in which Ovid substitutes the former for the latter. A characteristic case is at *Met.* 5.350f., *dextra sed Ausonio manus est subiecta Peloro/ laeva, Pachyne, tibi* ('the right hand [sc. of Typhoeus] is kept down by the Ausonian Pelorus and the left by you, Pachynus'), where the right hand of Typhoeus is under the northern promontory of Sicily, Pelorus, while his left is under the southern, Pachynus. Another instance where the same replacement occurs is found at *Met.* 1.45f.: *utque duae dextra caelum totidemque sinistra/ parte secant zonae, quinta est*

<sup>49</sup> This piece of information Ovid's readers would have to draw from Callimachus fr. 67.5 Pf.

<sup>50</sup> Kenney (1996), *ad loc.*

*ardentior illis* ('as the sky is cut into zones, two on the right and two on the left and the fifth is the hottest of all...'). Here the celestial zones are described as right and left rather than northern and southern<sup>51</sup> with the fifth (*quinta*) holding the middle in correspondence to the torrid zone on earth (cf. 1.46 with 1.49). The same notion is described later by the astronomer Cleomedes who relates the right position with the North: 'It is said, therefore, that the front parts (of the *cosmos*) are those turned toward the West since the forward movement is made westwards, whereas the hind parts look eastwards, because it is from there that the forward course is initiated. Consequently, things on the right look northwards and the ones on the left look southwards and in these positions of the cosmos there is nothing ambiguous.'<sup>52</sup>

Accordingly, in our text of the *Heroides*, the northernmost island of Andros appears at the extreme right of the hexameter, while Myconos, the southernmost of the three, is the first to appear in the text. As for Delos, it is mentioned in the pentameter on its own and hence it shows its proximity to the linear placement of the other three but it is not included in it. In this way, the text appears to function as a map.

The structure of line 81 reminds one of the poetic technique applied in a *technopaignion* where a literary text takes the form of the object to which it refers<sup>53</sup> in an extratextual mirroring.<sup>54</sup> *Technopaignion* is perhaps the most extreme case of the perception of the text as an object, as (e.g.) Sim(m)ias' *Wings of Eros*, *Axe* and *Egg*<sup>55</sup> or Theocritus' *Pipe*<sup>56</sup> and, in Latin, Laevius' *Phoenix*.<sup>57</sup> The technique is not simply a literary fancy of the Hellenistic and Roman periods but it seems to be employed as a mode of expression in other cultures and periods.<sup>58</sup> It is more than likely that Ovid was fully acquainted with this literary device and, in a similar fashion, wished to play with the form of the elegiac couplet and its textual possibilities.

<sup>51</sup> Kyriakidis (forthcoming).

<sup>52</sup> Cleom. *De motu circulari corporum caelestium* 16.19-25: Ἐμπρόσθια μὲν οὖν τὰ πρὸς τῇ δύσει φασι εἶναι αὐτοῦ, ἐπειδὴ ὡς ἐπὶ δύσιν ἔχει τὴν ὀρμὴν, ὀπίσθια δὲ τὰ πρὸς τῇ ἀνατολῇ· ἀπὸ τούτων γὰρ ἐπὶ τὰ ἔμπροσθεν πρόεισιν. Ὅθεν δεξιὰ μὲν αὐτοῦ τὰ πρὸς ἄρκτον, εὐώνυμα δὲ τὰ πρὸς μεσημβρίαν γενήσεται. Καὶ αὗται μὲν αἱ σχέσεις αὐτοῦ οὐδὲν ἔχουσιν ἀσαφές.

<sup>53</sup> For the texts see *AP* 15.21-2, 24-7. See Verdenius (1971), 323-30; Fantuzzi-Hunter (2002), 43f.; López (2002), 173-82; Gutzwiller (2007), 180f.

<sup>54</sup> The relation is even more intriguing since, in some of them, both the content and the shape given to the form of a *technopaignion* refer to the same object. See Bing (1988), 15, 'visual phenomena'.

<sup>55</sup> *AP* 15.22 and 27 and Gow (1952a).

<sup>56</sup> *AP* 15.21 and Gow (1952b), 552-4.

<sup>57</sup> Courtney (1993), 136.

<sup>58</sup> The same poetic technique is found in Chinese calligraphic poetry, Persian poetry and was employed in the poetry of Rabelais, Mallarmé and Apollinaire, among others. In modern poetry it has appeared in so-called 'concrete' (or 'visual') poetry: see Shingler (2007). Markiewicz and Gabara (1987), 552 state that: 'The above-mentioned treatment of literary texts as stimuli of perceptual presentations corresponding to extratextual reality has been revived recently in a new form, on the basis of semiotic poetics.' Wimsatt (1975), referring to *technopaignia*, states that it is a poetry which 'merely attempts to become a visual art' and paraphrases the well known *ut pictura poesis* to *poesis cum pictura* (235, 247 with references).

To the extent that part of a text may represent qualities of the whole, the small catalogue we have just discussed may indeed suggest to the reader the material quality of the letter and its ability, therefore, to be moved. It is perhaps this that the use of the word *charta* is aiming at, enabling the poet to point to its possibilities of being moved and rolled in a way similar to that of the *volubile malum*. When Cydippe refers to Acontius' letter as *tua littera* (21.150), the phrase, according to Hardie, 'may again refer to either the apple or the letter' and one cannot but agree with him that '*Heroides* 20 and 21 conclude the book with an apotheosis of writing, a demonstration of the power of the poet's own craft'.<sup>59</sup>

In these two epistles of the *Heroides*, the narratives of Acontius and Cydippe rely heavily on the description of objects and external situations. Parallel to this, the poet seems to highlight the materiality, especially of Cydippe's letter, in a variety of ways, and exploits its movability as a hint towards the fluctuation of her inner feelings, until her union to Acontius, as represented by the fixity of the golden apple. The poet appears to objectify the inner feelings of his characters. Material and immaterial world converge in empathy,<sup>60</sup> to show how Acontius and Cydippe, starting from different experiences and through different emotional motives, are brought to their union.

[skyr@otenet.gr](mailto:skyr@otenet.gr)

[skyr@lit.auth.gr](mailto:skyr@lit.auth.gr)

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<sup>59</sup> Hardie (2002b), 119.

<sup>60</sup> Hardie (2002a), 39.

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