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**Ovidian Female-Voiced Complaint  
Poetry  
in Early Modern England**

**by**

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the  
degree of  
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## **Declaration**

This thesis is the sole work of Katherine Smith and has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

## Abstract

This thesis explores the genre of Ovidian female-voiced complaint poetry and its tradition in early modern English literature. In looking at original poems, translations and receptions of Ovid's *Heroides*, I argue that female as well as male writers throughout the early modern period engaged with the tradition of Ovidian female-voiced complaint poetry. By using case studies advancing chronologically throughout the period, I will also show how female-voiced complaint changes and develops in different historical and literary contexts.

Nobody as yet has produced a study looking at a large sample of women writing female-voiced complaint. The criticism around complaint is diffuse, with only a small number of book-length studies which focus on complaint in general as a genre or discourse. There are many articles or chapters on individual complaint poems but not many which compare different female-voiced complaints of the same period, especially those written by women.

When female poets write in the genre, the rhetorical trope of Ovidian female-voiced complaint (that the sex of the author is discontinuous with that of the speaker) must be renegotiated. This renegotiation by female poets is often the result of close and learned engagement with the traditions of complaint, both the classical precedents and the receptions and re-imaginings of the genre in early modern England. They are choosing a genre which has a productive potential in being female-voiced but which also has a tradition of male manipulation. However, rather than seeing women writers as existing separately from male writers, I argue that they work in parallel, drawing on the same Ovidian complaint traditions.

## Introduction

A woman, isolated, distraught, and angry, complains about her situation to her abandoning and unfaithful husband or lover. One finds this scenario repeated, with variations, in the genre of Ovidian female-voiced complaint poetry. This thesis explores the genre and its tradition in early modern English literature through analysis and comparison of various female-voiced complaint poems.

Specifically, I argue that female as well as male writers throughout the early modern period in England engage with the tradition. I look at what happens when women write female-voiced complaint poems, placing them in their relevant historical and literary contexts. I use a comparative methodology and close textual analysis with sensitivity to genre, form, translation, reception and classical tradition. I argue that women writers exploit the productive potential of female-voiced complaint with learned and creative engagements with the genre. As I will show in this thesis, women writers often choose to be different from men with their complaints, for example shifting the power relations of subject and object, voice and frames, in the texts; using a looseness of translation to prioritise issues such as social inequality and female erotic potential; and expressing a political grief with a female voice, giving potential for redress, restoration and alternative realities.

### **Ovid and the *Heroides***

Ovid's *Heroides* is the classical precedent for female-voiced complaint and is the most influential text on the genre and its manifestations in early modern England. The *Heroides* are a collection of poetic letters written in the voice of famous heroines addressing their abandoning and unfaithful lovers. The

majority of the collection, known as the single *Heroides* (1-15), present unanswered epistolary complaint poems from woman to wrongdoing man.

The characters and situations of the poems are taken from Greek and Roman mythology and literature; for example, Penelope writes to Ulysses, Dido to Aeneas, Ariadne to Theseus, and Sappho to Phaon. On one level, the poems function as a reworking or renegotiation of myths, with the perspective shifting to the female and different aspects of the famous stories emphasised or de-emphasised. Thus, intertextuality and dramatic irony form a main focus of interpretation as Ovid invites the external reader to place the heroines' words in comparison to the canonical versions of their myths in classical epic or tragedy.

The *Heroides* is an exemplar of the Roman poet Ovid's inventiveness. The work is unique in classical poetry for its extended presentation of a first person female voice in the 15 single *Heroides* epistles. Ovid signals his inventiveness with the collection in his later work *Ars Amatoria*, in which he describes the *Heroides* as a new work, *ignotum... aliis* ('unknown to others'). Classical scholars have questioned the extent of the novelty of the text, most commonly citing Propertius *Elegies* 4.3 as a precursor. Indeed, Propertius' poem is highly reminiscent of the *Heroides*, as an abandoned woman (Arethusa) writes a poetic epistle to her absent lover Lycotas:

haec Arethusa suo mittit mandata Lycotae,  
cum totiens absis, si potes esse meus.  
si qua tamen tibi lecturo pars oblita derit,  
haec erit e lacrimis facta litura meis:



aut si qua incerto fallet te littera tractu,  
 signa meae dextrae iam morientis erunt.

(Arethusa to her Lycotas sends this letter, if in spite of your frequent absences you can count as mine. But if when you read it any portion is smudged and missing, such a blot will have been caused by my tears; or if the unclear outline of any letter baffles you, this will be a sign that death was even now upon my hand.) (4.3, lines 1-6) <sup>1</sup>

Such signs of materiality as Arethusa's teary blots on the page are a common feature of the *Heroides*. Yet, classical scholars have reached no consensus regarding the date of composition of Ovid and Propertius' respective texts and it could certainly be argued that the Arethusa letter is influenced by Ovid and not the other way around. For example, there are several points in the Propertius epistle which recall Ovid's programmatic Penelope; Arethusa is alone on a bed complaining; she weaves a cloak; and she is jealous of a potential love interest for Lycotas abroad.

Whatever the extent of the inventiveness of Ovid with his *Heroides*, the work is also clearly embedded in tradition. Peter Knox summarises the various origins and influences on the collection: 'Detailed study of the *Heroides* uncovers elements traceable to different branches of ancient rhetorical and literary traditions, no single one of which can account for Ovid's achievement in the *Heroides*.'<sup>2</sup> Knox reflects on the parallels of the *Heroides* with the *suasoria*, *prosopopoeia* and *ethopoeia* of ancient rhetoric, in addition to drama

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<sup>1</sup> G.P. Goold (ed.) and trans. *Propertius Elegies* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, Loeb Classical Library, 1990), p. 377.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Knox, 'The *Heroides*: Elegiac Voices' in B. W. Boyd (ed.), *Brill's Companion to Ovid* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), pp. 117-139 (p. 123).

(especially the monologues of Greek tragedy), and Greek lyric and elegy (for example, the pastoral love laments of Theocritus). One could argue that it is the combination of all these elements which is the root of Ovid's creativity.

The *Heroides* has come under scrutiny from modern scholars since its revival from relative critical neglect with Howard Jacobson's landmark book, *Ovid's Heroides* (1974).<sup>3</sup> The accusation of monotony, which (as we will see) John Dryden pointed out 300 years earlier, is a repeated criticism: Brook Otis talks of 'the wearisome complaint of the reft maiden, the monotonous iteration of her woes'<sup>4</sup> and E.J. Kenney suggests that the text is almost irreparable: 'it is difficult to rescue [the single *Heroides*], especially if they are read sequentially, from the charge of monotony'.<sup>5</sup> The authenticity of some of the *Heroides* has also been questioned, specifically the *Sappho to Phaon* epistle, which has a different tradition of transmission in the medieval corpus; the double *Heroides* 'extension' to the collection (the final six paired poems (16-21) where the man writes first and the woman responds) which appears to have been composed at a later date to the preceding poems; and the intermittent inclusion in *Heroides* editions since 1477 of the 'Sabinus replies'. It is now generally agreed that these replies were written by the humanist Angelus Sabinus and not his namesake the ancient Sabinus whom Ovid himself mentions in *Amores* 2.18.27-34 as having composed replies to the female-voiced complaints.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Howard Jacobson, *Ovid's Heroides* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974).

<sup>4</sup> Brook Otis, *Ovid as an Epic Poet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 17.

<sup>5</sup> E.J. Kenney, *Heroides 16-21* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> For more on the Sabinus epistles see Raphael Lyne, 'Writing back to Ovid in the 1560s and 1570s', *Translation and Literature*, 13:2 (2004), pp. 143-164 (pp. 143-147).

Much of the recent scholarship on the *Heroides* is focused on the exploration of issues of voice, authorship, gender and epistolarity. Feminist criticism has investigated the nature of the female voice in the poems, with Sara Lindheim using the term ‘transvestite ventriloquism’ (borrowed from Harvey) throughout her book to highlight the male authorial presence of Ovid in the female-voiced poems.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, critics have noted the ‘discursively female’ spontaneity of the poems despite their connection with a studied rhetoric.<sup>8</sup> The immediacy and transience of epistolarity, it is argued, emphasises spontaneity as the Ovidian heroine ‘subverts the traditional dichotomies of heart versus mind, speech versus writing, tongue versus pen, for ‘to write’ becomes synonymous with ‘to live’.<sup>9</sup> There are troubling aspects for the feminist critic who can thus interpret the *Heroides* as a gender-troubled male poet’s conception of the female: the women only express themselves when men are absent; they have a voice but are also in a weak and marginal position of abandonment; they are often jealous, angry, and aggressive but seem to want the men to return.

The feminist criticism of the classicists Laurel Fulkerson (2005) and Efrossini Spentzou (2003) respectively offer more positive possibilities for the female voice, arguing that the women have a narrative agency.<sup>10</sup>

Intertextuality debates are refocused from a feminist standpoint, with

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<sup>7</sup> Sara Lindheim, *Mail and Female: Epistolary Narrative and Desire in Ovid's Heroides* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), citing Elizabeth Harvey, *Ventriloquized Voices: Feminist Theory and English Renaissance Texts* (London: Routledge, 1992).

<sup>8</sup> See Duncan Kennedy, ‘Epistolarity: the *Heroides*’, in Philip Hardie (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to Ovid* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 217-32.

<sup>9</sup> Linda Kauffman, *Discourses of Desire: Gender, Genre, and Epistolary Fictions* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), p. 37.

<sup>10</sup> Laurel Fulkerson, *The Ovidian Heroine as Author: Reading, Writing, and Community in the Heroides* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Efrossini Spentzou, *Readers and Writers in Ovid's Heroides: Transgressions of Genre and Gender* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

Fulkerson advancing an argument for the heroines being part of a community of readers, not just of other classical texts (intertextuality) but of each other (intratextuality), and thus gain rhetorical efficacy through shared experiences. Ultimately, Fulkerson prioritises the heroines, further arguing that the written nature of the heroines' texts should not distract us with concerns over the practicalities of the letters' literal transmission as 'they may never "get their man" but they create intricate *personae* and lasting poetry'.<sup>11</sup> Whether the authorial agency lies with Ovid the ventriloquist or whether this is deferred to women who gain corporeality remains a key part of scholarly and theoretical debate and is especially relevant to my study when looking at the reception of the text by men *and women*.

### **Heroides in Europe**

The *Heroides* was first translated into English in 1567 and the first complete Latin edition was not published in England until 1583, giving a rather counter-historical linguistic experience.<sup>12</sup> Yet, by this point, the poems were already well known from their various editions in Latin and vernacular in Europe (mainly France and Italy). No ancient manuscript for Ovid's text survives and the earliest manuscript known is from the Carolingian period, manuscript *Puteaneus* (Par.Lat.8242), which was copied in the ninth century in Corbie, France.<sup>13</sup> It was in the twelfth century, particularly in the scholastic Orléans, when we begin to see prologues, glosses and commentaries accompanying the Latin texts. K.P. Clarke gives a representative example of a twelfth-century

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<sup>11</sup> Fulkerson, *The Ovidian Heroine as Author: Reading, Writing, and Community in the Heroides*, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> First edition in England was *Publii Ovidii Nasonis Heroidum Epistolae*, Edited by *Andrea Navagero* (Venice: Aldus Manutius, 1516-17), Reprint, London: T. Vautrollerius, 1583.

<sup>13</sup> E.J. Kenney, *Heroides* 16-21, p. 26.

manuscript edition (MS lat. 7994 at Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale) in which the commentator explains the *Heroides* as providing examples of *legitimus*, *stultus*, and *illicitus* love.<sup>14</sup>

This tradition of moralisation through introductions and commentaries in annotated editions continues and can be linked to the early fourteenth-century *Ovide Moralisé* where a moralised reception of Ovid's works (including the *Heroides*) is incorporated into the body of the text. The *Ovide Moralisé* was particularly influential on Chaucer. Furthermore, it has been argued that Chaucer in both his *Legend of Good Women* and *House of Fame* was using a fourteenth-century vernacular Italian *Heroides* translation by Filippo Ceffi.<sup>15</sup> In both Italy and France, vernacular translations and adaptations of the *Heroides* were popular by the fourteenth century and followed in the Latin textual (and extra-textual) tradition. After the popular French poet Octavien de Saint-Gelais' fifteenth-century translation *Les Vingt et Une Epistres d'Ovide*, many *Heroides*-inspired epistle versions were composed in the sixteenth century. These editions and translations were presented with moralising paratextual and extra-textual material.

The *Heroides* became prized by humanist educators as models for elegant Latin verse composition, both rhetorical and epistolary, and also as ethical and affective examples of vice and virtue in chaste and unchaste models. The prefatory 'argomenti' of the Italian translators Remigio Fiorentino (1555) and Camillo Camilli (1587) (discussed further in chapter one) are good examples of the ethical framing as applied to *Heroides*

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<sup>14</sup> K.P. Clarke, *Chaucer and Italian Textuality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p.15.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

translations. There was also an accompanying tradition of Christian adaptation of the *Heroides*, for example the *Heroidum Christianarum Epistolae* by Eobanus Hessus where Ovid's heroines are changed to Christian subjects.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, those who might question the appropriateness of Ovid's elegiac verse for a Christian readership could look to Biblical precedents of the genre, not least in the *Lamentations of Jeremiah* which has an allegorical female-voiced complainant.

Erasmus discussed the *Heroides* in his *De conscribendis epistolis* (1522), seeing them as letter writing models but cautioning their moral suitability for younger students:

In the first category are the love letters of Ovid, which perhaps are not to be recommended as classroom exercises for those of tender years.

On the other hand they are comparatively innocent, and there is nothing to prevent a chaste and seemly treatment even in this kind of letter for instance, a suitor seeking a girl in marriage with cajoling letters, or Helen restraining Paris from an illicit love. Penelope's letter to Ulysses is perfectly chaste, as is that of Acontius to Cydippe.<sup>17</sup>

Erasmus highlights how the poems, or at least a number of them, could instead be seen as innocent and chaste, functioning as guides of sexual conduct or misconduct.

In England, the *Heroides* was regularly included on the Tudor grammar schools' curricula following the instructions of Erasmus and the humanists.

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<sup>16</sup> Eobanus Hessus, *Heroidum christianarum epistolae* (Leipzig: M. Lotter, 1514).

<sup>17</sup> Cited and trans. in Helen Moore, 'Elizabethan Fiction and the *Heroides*', *Translation and Literature*, 9 (2000), pp. 40-63 (p. 44).

Therefore, although the text was not published in England till later in the sixteenth century, its inclusion on the school curriculum in addition to the strong Latin and vernacular traditions in Europe, meant that the *Heroides* was well-known. There was, however, as demonstrated by Chaucer's necessary recourse to Italian versions, no tradition of vernacular translation and reception in England as there was in Europe. George Turberville produced the first complete English translation of the *Heroides* which was published in 1567. It proved very popular, going through four editions by the end of the century, and with no other complete translations following until those by Wye Saltonstall and John Sherburne in 1636 and 1639 respectively.

### **Women and Female-voiced complaint**

Turberville's *Heroides* was published in the same year as an edition of *The Instruction of a Christen Woman* was issued, in which Juan Luis Vives' warning against the dangers of women reading Ovid was 'reiterated for a sixth time'.<sup>18</sup> Yet, not only were women able to read the *Heroides*, especially with the removal of any possible linguistic barriers with the English translation of Turberville available, they offered their own literary responses to the text. As will be explored in chapter one, Isabella Whitney published *Heroides*-inspired female-voiced complaint poems in 1567, the very same year as the Turberville *Heroides*.

When considering the access of women to the *Heroides* in England we must consider the impact of the gender-related contexts of education, language learning, and the stigma of publication. The concerns about modesty and

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<sup>18</sup> Richard Rowland, 'The Desperation of Deianira: *Heroides* 9 and Early Modern Translation', *Translation and Literature*, 22 (2013), pp. 1-24 (p. 19).

chastity which we have already seen connected to the *Heroides* as a possible didactic and edificatory text are increased when a female readership is supposed.

To imagine a female readership at all for classical texts in Renaissance England is not to be done lightly. For example, although Margaret Ferguson cautions that ‘statistics on early modern literacy are unreliable partly because the criterion of signatures is biased against women of various ranks as well as against many poor men who lacked access to the kinds of property transactions that provide our chief secular archive of signed documents in England before 1642’, there are indicators available based on the 1642 ‘Protestant Returns’ documents which gives a literacy rate of 30 percent for men and 10 percent for women.<sup>19</sup> Statistics do indicate that female literacy rose through the later part of the seventeenth century, though such a conclusion as that of David Cressy, that ‘the women of Mrs Aphra Behn’s London were as literate as men in the countryside’,<sup>20</sup> has the proviso of social and geographical differences. J. Stephan Edwards lists women known to have learnt Latin (the royal ladies Mary Tudor, Elizabeth, Jane Grey, and Katherine Parr and the daughters of Sir Thomas More), but notes that ‘these examples are remarkable for their uniqueness’.<sup>21</sup> The social and economic advantages of aristocratic women no doubt provided access to education and the literary world which other women could not have.

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<sup>19</sup> Margaret Ferguson, *Dido's Daughters: Literacy, Gender, and Empire in Early Modern England and France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 77.

<sup>20</sup> David Cressy, ‘Literacy in Context: Meaning and Measurement in Early Modern England’, in John Brewer and Roy Porter (eds), *Consumption and the World of Goods* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1993), pp. 305-319 (p. 314).

<sup>21</sup> J. Stephan Edwards, ‘A Woman is Wise: The Influence of Civic and Christian Humanism on the Education of Women in Northern Italy and England during the Renaissance’, *Ex Post Facto: Journal of the History Students at San Francisco State University*, 11 (2002), pp. 99-114 (p. 106).



In truth, when women did write and translate, they seem to be battling against cultural expectations and gender-related perceptions. Margaret Tyler's translation of a Spanish romance in 1578 was the first open transgression of the 'unspoken rule' which allowed women only to translate religious works with fidelity and invisibility.<sup>22</sup> She also included a preface (a space which we shall see offers opportunity for self-expression, gendered discussions and theoretical frameworks) which denounces 'the inhibiting effects of the patriarchal divisions of genre and gender on female literary expression'.<sup>23</sup> Tyler's translation choices display how dissent and resistance could be expressed openly. The presence of authors like Ovid in the libraries of aristocratic families throughout the early modern period, with texts like the *Heroides* sanctioned as school texts and soon widely available in English editions (for example those of George Turberville in the sixteenth century and John Dryden in the seventeenth century), meant that women from these households would have some access.

Mary Wortley Montagu, a woman writer of the early eighteenth century who will be studied further in chapter four, shows that the stigma around this access still existed for her; she recalls 'stealing' Ovid in her childhood: 'I used to study five or six hours a day for two years in my father's library; and so got that language, whilst everybody else thought I was reading nothing but novels and romances'.<sup>24</sup> The nineteenth-century collection of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's works by Moy Thomas also includes Montagu's letter to Miss

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<sup>22</sup> Margaret Tyler, *A Mirrour of Princely Deeds and Knighthood* (London: Thomas East, 1580).

<sup>23</sup> Mirella Agorni, 'The Voice of the 'Translatress': From Aphra Behn to Elizabeth Carter', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 28 (1988), pp. 181-195 (p. 182).

<sup>24</sup> Joseph Spence, *Observations, Anecdotes, and Characters of Books and Men*, ed. J. M. Osborn (Vol 1, Oxford, 1966), p. 303 cited in Moy Thomas, *The letters and works of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1861), p. 53.

Anne Wortley (To Miss Anne Wortley. [Thoresby] August 8, 1709) which gives further evidence that she was studying Latin proactively and independently: ‘My study at present is nothing but dictionaries and grammars. I am trying whether it be possible to learn without a master’.<sup>25</sup> Women such as Wortley-Montagu could have access to classical texts and study through their own self-reliance and proactivity despite any cultural or familial pressures not to do this.

Women, at least those from aristocratic families and literary circles, did read, understand and respond to the Classics. Lucy Hutchinson, whose complaint writings I explore in chapter three, translated the whole of Lucretius’ *De Rerum Natura*, in addition to translating lines from Ovid’s *Heroides* in one of her commonplace books. David Norbrook, in his new edition of Hutchinson’s Lucretius, notes a poem published in 1658 which refers to Hutchinson, written by Sir Aston Cokayne to his friend Alexander Broome:

I know a Lady that hath been about  
The same designe, but she must needs give out:  
Your Poet strikes too boldly home sometimes,  
In geniall things, t’appear in womens rhimes,  
The task is masculine, and he that can  
Translate Lucretius, is an able man (‘To my ingenuous Friend Mr.  
Alexander Brome on his Essay to translate Lucretius’, lines 1-6).<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>26</sup> Aston Cokayne, *Small poems of divers sorts written by Sir Aston Cokain* (London: William Godbid, 1658), p. 204.

This poem, on the one hand, proves that Hutchinson's manuscript translation was known by others, and on the other hand, attributes any potential difficulties on the part of Hutchinson completing the mammoth task of translating six books of unwieldy natural philosophy explicitly to her female gender. The task of translating Lucretius, according to Cokayne, 'is masculine' and so only a man can succeed in it. The facts of the matter put the lie to this gendered assumption; Hutchinson did in fact complete her translation of the *De Rerum Natura*, in a partially autograph manuscript which is now housed at the British Library.<sup>27</sup>

Further exploration of women writers and translation will be found in chapter four, accompanying my analysis of Aphra Behn's translation of *Oenone to Paris*. However, as a final example here of the potential for women to undermine gendered preconceptions, I will turn to Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*. Shakespeare recreates a schoolroom situation as Lucentio uses the *Heroides* in an underhand way to woo Bianca, showing just how men can use their linguistic powers to allow 'their imaginations to rove':

Lucentio: Here, madam:

*Hic ibat Simois, hic est Sigeia tellus,*

*Hic steterat Priami regia celsa senis.*

Bianca: Construe them.

Lucentio: *Hic ibat*, as I told you before – *Simois* I am Lucentio – *hic est* son unto Vincentio of Pisa – *Sigeia tellus*, disguised thus to get your love – *Hic steterat* and that Lucentio that

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<sup>27</sup> British Library, Lucy Hutchinson, 'De rerum natura', Add. MS 19333.

comes a-wooing - *Priami* is my man Tranio – *regia*, bearing my  
port - *celsa senis*, that we might beguile the old pantaloon. (3.1.27-36)

If we stop the dialogue here, we see a man disguised as a tutor, using his superior knowledge of the classics in order to dupe a woman probably inexperienced with the Latin text of Ovid's *Heroides* (and particularly such innocuous lines as these). We can agree with Jonathan Bate that the chief effect 'is to take the Latin text out of the schoolroom and make it a means to the fulfilment of desire'.<sup>28</sup> However, the imperative 'construe' signals a rather bolder undertaking by Bianca as the traditional classroom roles are reversed: Bianca instructs her teacher.

Furthermore, if we consider Bianca's response to Lucentio's (mis)-translation, we are perhaps surprised that she replies with her own way of 'construing' the lines:

Bianca: Now let me see if I can construe it: *Hic ibat Simois*, I  
know you not - *hic est Sigeia tellus*, I trust you not - *Hic*  
*steterat Priami*, take heed he hear us not – *regia*, presume not -  
*celsa senis*, despair not. (3.1. 40-43)<sup>29</sup>

Bianca shows that she can understand just as well, paradoxically via translating just as badly, as her male counterpart. By voicing the Latin lines paired with her own mistranslation, Bianca gives herself an active role in the game, both the love game and the translating game. Just as the title of the play invites, the woman has shown a resistance to taming. Significantly, she does so by

<sup>28</sup> Jonathan Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 121-2.

<sup>29</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, in Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson and David Kastan (eds), *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), p. 1055.

resisting the appropriation of Ovid's heroines by a male coterie and reintroducing a female authority. Shakespeare legitimates this active female role in part by the fact that the male teacher is the servant and so Bianca has a position of social and economic superiority. Shakespeare shows that translation is open to manipulation by school master and pupil, men and women.

The potential for women to be readers of the *Heroides*, and the accompanying implications on a text so uniquely female-voiced, was a fact not ignored by the English translators. As with the European editors and translators, paratextual and prefatory spaces were used to comment on the gender implications of the *Heroides* as a text spoken by women and potentially read by women. Wye Saltonstall's preface to his *Ovids heroicall epistles Englished by W.S.* (1636) is an obvious example of this history of *Heroides* prefatory gendering. Saltonstall exaggerates the femininity of the subject, revealing that he has a very specific readership in mind for his translation:

To the virtuous ladies, and gentlewomen of England. Your beauties (Ladies and Gentlewomen) are but types and shadows of the beauty of your vertuous minde, which is discerned by Noble and Courteous actions. I may therefore presume that *Ovid's* Heroical Epistles, chiefly translated for your sakes, shall find a gentle acceptance, sutable to your Heroical dispositions, for Courtesie and Ingenuity are the companions

of Gentility... a certain delectation in vertue, as Modesty, Temperance, and especially curtesie; to which *Ovid* doth appeal. (A3r-A4r)<sup>30</sup>

An intended female readership is revealed, partly because the relevance or 'relation' of the subject is more closely linked to women than men. As Dryden goes on to do in his later preface, Saltonstall assumes that Ovid is appealing to a feminine 'modesty' with his epistles.

An awareness of readership is an emphasised element in receptions of the *Heroides*, considering their essential status as letters to be read, but Saltonstall takes this a step further with his imagination of women reading the text aloud:

Ladies and Gentlewomen, since this book of Ovids, which most Gentlemen could reade before in Latine, is for your sakes come forth in English, it doth at first addresse it selfe as a Suiter, to wooe your acceptance, that it may kisse your hands, and afterward have the lines thereof in reading sweetned by the odour of your breath, while the dead letters formd into words by your divided lips, may receive new life by your passionate expression, and the words marryed in that Ruby colourd Temple, may thus happily united, multiply your contentment.  
(sig.A4v)

Saltonstall relates his English female readers to Ovid's literary heroines soliloquising. The modesty topos is stretched here as his translation is metaphorised as a male lover wooing a woman (the reader), recalling the not unfamiliar relationship of male poet to female patroness. The quite explicit

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<sup>30</sup> Wye Saltonstall, *Ovid's Heroical Epistles Englished by W.S* (London: William Whitwood, 1636).

eroticism of the metaphor, as letters pass through ‘divided lips’ in a ‘passionate’ act’, marrying and multiplying in the ‘ruby coloured Temple’, turns modest readership into an act of sexual ecstasy. This double meaning is presumably reserved for the men who already know the text ‘in Latine’ in comparison to women who, Saltonstall implies, can only understand the poems thanks to simplifying translations like his. Stapleton points out the irony in actual female engagement:

One wonders what the many literate and highly educated women in Stuart England such as Katherine Philips, Margaret Cavendish, and Anne Finch must have thought of this rather baroque analogy of a book that metamorphoses into a suitor whose body is enhanced by their breath and touch and somehow works his way into their mouths—virtuously, it must be assumed.<sup>31</sup>

One does not have to ‘wonder’ too far, of course, as the answer lies in the female poets’ choice to engage in the genre and write Ovidian female-voiced complaints themselves.

There is also a subtle reversal at play in this preface by Saltonstall, as the *Heroides*, letters from women to men, are theoretically changed by Saltonstall into ‘male’ letters sent to women to read, imitating the wooing of courtly love poetry. The female voice only appears when the female audience read the translation aloud as Saltonstall employs an epiphenomenal methodology of translation, determinedly reproducing the classical words into a new language, but refusing to breathe life into the characters – that is left up

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<sup>31</sup> Michael Stapleton, ‘Edmund Spenser, George Turberville, and Isabella Whitney Read Ovid’s *Heroides*’, *Studies in Philology*, 105:4 (2008), pp. 487-519 (p. 496).

to his female audience. Paradoxically, the authorship is almost shifted to the female readers themselves by Saltonstall's directions, as 'dead letters' refers to the ancient Latin language of the original as much as a mock-modest reference to his own version. This quasi-invitation for women to 'translate' the female voices of Ovid's *Heroides* is taken up by actual female translators like Aphra Behn in a way which Saltonstall could not have imagined.

### **Methodology**

In this thesis, I will critically examine a range of Ovidian female-voiced complaint poems by both men and women. I use the term 'Ovidian' to indicate the influence of the Roman poet and particularly the *Heroides* on the poetic genre which develops in early modern England. Throughout the thesis, I show the influence of the classical text on the early modern poems, referring to Ovid's original to consider translatory methodologies and techniques of reception on the microcosmic as well as the macrocosmic level. By focussing on women writer's engagement with the genre, I will show that women were able to access classical texts; participate in literary culture and classical tradition; and have a role in genre formation and development.

I will argue that female-voiced complaint is a genre that opens up a space for female poetic utterance and articulation. An issue inherent to the genre is how the female voice is presented and reproduced. When reading the *Heroides* we find ourselves asking: Is the enduring first person voice enough to present women speaking for themselves or are we always reminded of Ovid the ventriloquist, playing a rhetorical, even misogynist, game of prosopopoeia?

When studying early modern translations and receptions of these



Ovidian female-voiced complaints, how the poems are (re)presented becomes complicated and hinges precisely on the gendered layers of authorial voice. When female poets write in the genre, the rhetorical trope of Ovidian female-voiced complaint (that the sex of the author is discontinuous with that of the speaker) must be renegotiated. This renegotiation, I will argue, is often the result of close and learned engagement with the traditions of complaint, both the classical precedents and the contemporary English (sub)-generic receptions and re-imaginings. For the women writers, I will show how the genre can offer opportunities and productivity.

To date, John Kerrigan's anthology *Motives of Woe: Shakespeare and Female Complaint* is the most comprehensive treatment of the genre, publishing various complaint poems of the early modern period in one place and so allowing comparison and acknowledgement of the genre. Although there is a detailed introduction which gives useful background and analysis of female-voiced complaint in England, Kerrigan's book is an anthology, not a book-length study and so is self-confessedly limited. Kerrigan admits that 'most of the works collected here [in his anthology] were written by men' but also notes that 'some of these works [by women] are immensely accomplished, and all (by virtue of the congruence of author and persona) are of interest'.<sup>32</sup> My thesis seeks to give space to women writers, discovering how they engage with such issues as the 'congruence of author and persona'. Although there are several recent articles and chapters which include analysis of complaint poems written by women in the early modern period, there is no extended study comparing male and female authored Ovidian female-voiced complaint poems.

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<sup>32</sup> John Kerrigan, *Motives of Woe: Shakespeare and Female Complaint* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. vii.

My thesis will feed into what Sarah Ross calls the ‘recuperative push in feminist scholarship’ in that I include unstudied or understudied texts, such as an unpublished manuscript of Anne Wharton’s poetry and several poems, by both men and women, which remain without a modern scholarly edition.<sup>33</sup> Yet, as Ross continues, what is important now is to critically examine the texts, to construct a narrative and to understand the place and emergence of literature written by early modern women. Specifically, as Susanne Woods and Margaret Hannay comment: ‘there remains a significant amount of work to be done on the form and content of women’s writing, especially within the context of the wider literary canon’.<sup>34</sup> By focussing on one genre, Ovidian female-voiced complaint poetry, and seeing how tropes, themes and forms are chosen, repeated or altered, I am able to gain a more complex and nuanced understanding of these women writers’ relationships to literary culture and traditions.

I examine how women write from within the tradition. I will use a case study approach, whereby different key texts or groups of texts are the subject of a chapter, each bringing out different nuances and developments in female-voiced complaint poetry. In each chapter, I will compare both male and female writers in order to view both as responding to the same classical text and to be engaging in the same literary-historical traditions. Alice Eardley comments on the benefits of a comparative study which places women’s texts in their literary contexts rather than just their historical contexts:

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<sup>33</sup> Sarah C.E. Ross, *Women, Poetry, and Politics in Seventeenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 211.

<sup>34</sup> Susanne Woods and Margaret P. Hannay (eds.), *Teaching Tudor and Stuart Women Writers*, (New York: The Modern Language Association, 2000) pp. 19-20.

The juxtaposition of poems by men and women reveals the gaps in research into the formal and generic elements of women's writing. Traditionally, within the study of early modern women's writing, an emphasis on historical circumstance over poetical form has inadvertently created the impression that poetry produced by women cannot, or should not, be studied in this way. But in the last few years, steps have been made to consider women's poetry as literature in its own right, in dialogue with a wider literary culture and not just historical circumstance. This has opened up possibilities for capitalizing on the research already conducted into women's writing and for establishing a more accurate understanding of the early modern literary canon in general.<sup>35</sup>

A formalist and comparative methodology promotes close reading and allows continuities and discontinuities to be highlighted as well as revealing any common influences between the texts and connections between authors.

I choose the texts and authors for study based on points where female-voiced complaint seems to enter into the public conscious, for example through the (multiple edition) publications of landmark *Heroides* editions (such as Turberville's in the 1560s and Dryden's in the 1680s); the creation of new sub-genres such as the post-sonnet sequence or 'framed' complaints taken up by such poets as Shakespeare; or the use of female-voiced complaint to reflect on political events or social phenomena.

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<sup>35</sup> Alice Eardley, 'Recreating the Canon: Women Writers and Anthologies of Early Modern Verse', *Women's Writing*, 14:2 (2007), pp. 270-289, (p. 271).

Furthermore, the five chapters will advance chronologically through the period. In this way, my study is both synchronic (within chapters a literary-historical contextualisation is available owing to the closely contemporaneous texts) and diachronic, as by studying a selection of female-voiced complaint poems over a relatively large period of time (from the 1560s to the 1680s), I have been able to track the reception of the *Heroides* in English and the development and transformations of the female-voiced complaint genre. I can also be historicist while being formalist in methodology, using knowledge of historical, political and social contexts to inform poetic interpretation. The argument of the thesis will be accretive, as each chapter adds understanding about the genre, with repeated themes and issues linking the texts while each chapter also has a fresh focus. Examples of these repeated themes explored throughout the thesis are gendered placement, materiality and criticism; voice, subjectivity, and ventriloquism; identification and consolation; and translation and reception.

In chapter one, I focus on Isabella Whitney's two publications, *The Copy of a Letter* (1567) and *A Sweet Nosegay* (1573). I consider Whitney's use of the Ovidian complaint genre in the context of (and in connection to) George Turberville's *The Heroycall Epistles* (1567) which was the first complete translation of the *Heroides* into English and so the first opportunity for a wider readership to encounter Ovid's text. I argue that Whitney's engagement with the genre is learned and her difference lies in subtle changes to key tropes and themes of complaint and its early modern contemporary manifestations (e.g. links to humanist education, epistolary form, role of edification, and allusions to Ovid's text).

In chapter two, I focus on a creative example of Ovidian complaint in early modern England; a post-sonnet sequence complaint poem written by Mary Wroth. Wroth's 'A Shepherd Who noe care did take', I argue, should be considered in the same sub-genre as fellow post-sonnet complaint poems, namely Samuel Daniel's *A Complaint of Rosamond* and William Shakespeare's *A Lover's Complaint*. These poems are heavily influenced by both Ovid's *Heroides* and vernacular Mirrour poetry but are original and imaginative in their yoking of Ovidian complaint to a Petrarchan-inspired genre. Rather than having a straightforwardly first person female voice, the poems are framed. I include an original argument about the authorial voice in Wroth's poem. Wroth employs a conventional voyeuristic male overhearing/spying on a complaining female in her poem, seemingly following the pattern of her male contemporaries. However, I argue that she deliberately twists this traditional framing trope at the last in a surprising subjective intervention of a female 'I' and 'eye'.

Chapter three takes as its starting point Hester Pulter's poem *The complaint of Thames, 1647, When the Best of Kings Was Imprisoned by the Worst of Rebels at Holmby*. I argue that this poem is influenced by the Ovidian-female voiced complaint genre, a connection which has not been developed by critics. The chapter will consider female-voiced complaint in connection with political retreat, loss and elegy, comparing Andrew Marvell's famous 'Nymph Complaining for the Death of her Fawn' to the *Elegies* of Lucy Hutchinson and poems of Hester Pulter. In particular, I will look at how female-voiced complaint was used as a way of expressing both political and personal loss during these times of political and social tumult and unrest.

The final two chapters move on to examine what happens to Ovidian female-voiced complaint in the 1680s, when John Dryden's landmark compilation edition of *Ovid's Epistles* begins its long publication history. In chapter four, there will be a particularly close study of Dryden's prefaces; Behn's contribution to the Dryden multi-author edition; and the imminent publication of parodic versions of the female-voiced epistles. Through studying prefaces, titles, arguments, and comparing paired translations, I open up the topic of gendered writing about writing practices, and translation as a 'place' of criticism.

Finally, in chapter five, there will be a close study of Anne Wharton's complaint poems, including the critically neglected and unpublished manuscript of Wharton's verse (Yale Beinecke Library, Osborn Collection b408). I will look closely at the different versions of her Ovidian complaints which include a *Heroides*-inspired Sappho Ode which was printed in Aphra Behn's own miscellany and a *Penelope to Ulysses* translation which eventually was published alongside Behn's in the Dryden-Tonson collection. I position the poetry of Wharton next to her uncle Rochester's satiric response to the *Heroides*, considering the cultural work of chastity and constancy in this Restoration period. Furthermore, I make connections with contemporaneous complaints by women writers such as Behn, with whom she developed a poetic (and published) correspondence.

### **Transcription notes**

I have transcribed texts which exist only in manuscript or early printed form exactly as given apart from expanding contractions, replacing 'v' with 'u', and

normalising the long 's'. I think there is a good argument for adjusting spelling, grammar and typography in manuscript and early printed editions, not least as it would be easier and fairer for comparative purposes; often it is the early modern women writers' work which do not have a modern edition, making it look like 'worse' poetry on a surface level compared the edited poetry of men. However, in this thesis I have decided to retain the texts as accurately as possible, considering that it is most helpful for the reader who cannot consult the manuscript or early printed book to be given the transcribed text in the form in which it survives, in order that they can make their own judgements. Furthermore, it is not the function (or in the scope) of my thesis to attempt to provide modern scholarly editions of poems. All other quotations from texts are copied exactly from editions specified in the relevant footnotes.

## Chapter 1

### Isabella Whitney and the emergence of Ovidian female-voiced complaint in print

Isabella Whitney can be considered a programmatic example of women writers' engagement with the genre of Ovidian female-voiced complaint. She is programmatic in setting out female participation in the genre as both unexpected and different to her male counterparts in various ways. Yet, as we will see by examining the poems themselves and their relation to contemporary texts and the wider reception of the *Heroides*, her poems are neither separate from, nor ignorant of, the Ovidian female-voiced complaint tradition.

Whitney works against expectations by publishing her epistolary complaint poems. Her two collections of poetry (*The Copy of a Letter* and *A Sweet Nosegay*) were published in print volumes, during her lifetime, in 1567 and 1573 respectively.<sup>1</sup> This fact is remarkable in its own right, as the only other women to have had works published in England by this point were royalty or exalted aristocrats in courtly circles and those writing religious verse or translations. There is little information about Isabella Whitney to help us to explain her uniqueness in this regard, with the source of most details about her life being her own poems. We do know that she was from Coole Pilate in Cheshire, but also lived in London for some of her life, and was the sister of Geoffrey Whitney who became well-known for his influential publication *A*

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<sup>1</sup> Isabella Whitney, *The copy of a letter, lately written in meeter, by a yonge gentilwoman: to her unconstant loue With an admonitio[n] to al yong gentilwomen, and to all other mayds in general to beware of mennes flattery* (London: Richard Jones, 1567); and *A sweet nosgay, or pleasant posye: contayning a hundred and ten phylosophicall flowers* (London: Richard Jones, 1573). Henceforth *Copy* and *Nosegay* respectively.



*Choice of Emblemes* (1586), and to whom she apparently addresses one of her 'Certain familiar Epistles and friendly Letters' in *Nosegay*.<sup>2</sup> There have been some questions raised about the non-inclusion of Isabella in Geoffrey's will dated 1600, but an explanation for this could be that Whitney herself had died by this point (no record of her death has been found) or that she is in fact the mysterious 'Sister Eldershae' mentioned in the will.<sup>3</sup>

It was perhaps because of literary connections made through her brother or during her time in London which might answer the question raised in the Norton Anthology (Volume 1, edition 7) about how Whitney could have managed to succeed in being able 'to break through the formidable social barriers that inhibited female appearance in print'.<sup>4</sup> She was clearly writing for an audience and for posterity despite the familiarity of many of her epistolary poems. There is further evidence for her having a place in literary circles in the inclusion of a commendatory poem (by T.B) in her *Nosegay* and the preceding dedicatory poem of Whitney to George Mainwaring, where she weighs whether her literary 'labour' has been worthy as 'recompense' for 'benefits' received, such economic terminology of contractual obligation being reminiscent of poets seeking patronage. Mainwaring could be described as a relatively minor figure of patronage in comparison to someone like Robert, Earl of Leicester to whom her brother Geoffrey dedicates his publication, yet

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<sup>2</sup> For further details about the connections and parallels between Isabella Whitney and Geoffrey Whitney, see Michael Felker (ed.), *The Poems of Isabella Whitney: A Critical Edition* (Texas Tech University, Thesis, 1990), pp. x-xi.

<sup>3</sup> See Felker (ed.), *The Poems of Isabella Whitney: A Critical Edition*, pp. 182-184 for 'Copy of the will of Geoffrey Whitney, gentleman. From Her Majesty's Principal Registry of the Court of Probate, London'.

<sup>4</sup> Meyer Abrams and Stephen Greenblatt (eds.), *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Seventh Edition (Vol 1, New York: Norton, 2000), pp. 606-614.

the same family friend Mainwaring does have an Emblem dedicated to him by Geoffrey.

It appears from her poems that Isabella Whitney was not wealthy, with the speaker often mentioning a lack of 'purse', and also suggesting that she was without a husband and was at some points in service (as, she says, were her sisters, whom she addresses in one letter: 'to two of her yonger sisters servinge in London'). In Nosegay, amongst the several personal letters to friends and family, is a poetic epistle to 'A.B' (most likely her sister-in-law Anne Barron) in which the author-persona seems bereft:

Had I a Husband, or a house,  
and all that longes therto  
My selfe could frame about to rouse,  
as other women doo:  
But til some houshold cares mee tie.  
My bookes and Pen I wyll apply.  
(lines 37-42)<sup>5</sup>

One could argue that these lines suggest that Whitney takes to 'bookes and Pen' either to offer amusement or 'cares' in her lonely life or perhaps provide financial self-support, which otherwise 'husband' and 'house' would fulfil. However, it is just as possible that this is a pose or stance, allowing Whitney to position herself apart from the usual status and occupations of 'other women'. This is emphasised firstly by the contrast of 'other women' to the exaggerated

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<sup>5</sup> Felker (ed.), *The Poems of Isabella Whitney: A Critical Edition*, p. 80. All quotations of Whitney poems are from this edition.

use of a personal possessive pronoun ‘my selfe’ in the previous line and secondly by the volta of the rhyming couplet (coming after the natural pause at the end of the final trimeter line in the sixaine), which undermines her seeming desire for those things she lacks. At the same time as this individualising self-representation, Whitney defines herself in terms of lack and absence. Rather like a complaining female of the *Heroides*, it is this very state of isolation which provides an opportunity and occasion for writing.

Tina Krontiris argues that the publication of this second miscellany, *Nosegay*, suggests that Whitney’s works proved popular and commercially successful: ‘for it is unlikely that Richard Jones would have agreed to publish her second work, had the returns from *The Letter* been too bad.’<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, there is evidence in the commendatory poem by T.B that other works (longer and more serious, following the example of the classical *cursus honorum* of poetic careers) will follow: ‘And when her busie care from head shall lurke,/ She practize will, and promise longer worke.’ (lines 58-49)<sup>7</sup> However, today there is only one copy of *Copy* (in the Bodleian Library) and one copy of *Nosegay* (in the British Library) known to survive. The edition which I am using is the critical edition of Whitney’s poems produced by Michael Felker for his PhD thesis in 1990, which uses the two unique editions as copy-texts and provides a very close transcription. Apart from two nineteenth century editions and a number of appearances of individual Whitney poems in anthologies, there is no complete published modern scholarly edition of her poetry.

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<sup>6</sup> Tina Krontiris, *Oppositional Voices: Women as Writers and Translators of Literature in the English Renaissance* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 40.

<sup>7</sup> Felker, p. 41.

Scholars more recently have noticed Whitney's remarkable status as a published secular woman poet and moreover as a poet who is influenced by Ovid's *Heroides*. Danielle Clarke notes that Whitney's poems become more like letters and less like poems, picking up on the epistle forms of Ovid's *Heroides*: 'the attention paid to the material form of the letter destabilises the power relations of the *Heroides* and their Renaissance reworkings, by literalising the epistolary form, so that the text becomes grounded in the written, rather than the performative.'<sup>8</sup> There is a dichotomy set up here between (male) Renaissance reworkings as more inclined to the 'performative' (which follows, Clarke suggests, the Ovidian original) and Whitney's engagements as 'grounded in the written'. Like Clarke, Lorna Hutson argues that Whitney was reacting against male traditions of female-voiced complaint. Hutson says that the *Heroides* and its Renaissance versions have the power 'to condition our expectation of female character' and that we must ask: 'What women who wrote in the early modern period might have brought to the established literary forms of female utterance, how they might have understood them differently from men'. Hutson's answer lies in a revisionist legal historicism which argues that Whitney 'reverse(s) the approach' to prioritise in her complaints the 'more pressing ethical questions of intention and liability... raised in relation to the interlocutor who remained absent'.<sup>9</sup> My argument in this chapter is that Whitney's engagement with the genre of Ovidian female-voiced complaint is learned and that her difference lies in subtle changes to key

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<sup>8</sup> Danielle Clarke, 'Formd into words by your divided lips': Women, Rhetoric and the Ovidian Tradition' in Danielle Clarke and Elizabeth Clarke (eds.), *This Double Voice' Gendered Writing in Early Modern England* (London: Macmillan Press, 2000), pp. 61-87 (pp. 78-79).

<sup>9</sup> Lorna Hutson, "Who Speaks for Justice?" Renaissance Legal Development and the Literary Voices of Women', *Sederi*, 8 (1999), pp. 101-119 (p. 104).

tropes and themes of Ovid's *Heroides* and its early modern contemporary manifestations and traditions. In particular, Whitney displays a process of conformity, working in line with the Ovidian text and its receptions.

The publication dates of Whitney's works are important in that they correspond to a high point for female-voiced complaint poetry in English. For 1567 is the year in which George Turberville published the first English translation of Ovid's *Heroides*.<sup>10</sup> Turberville's complete translation, *The Heroycall Epistles*, also precedes the first Latin edition to be published in England, which was a 1583 reprint of an earlier Venetian-published edition.<sup>11</sup> Lindsay Reid informs us that this Latin edition was subsequently expanded to include further works by Ovid and re-published: 'In 1583, the year before the expiry of his ten year patent, Vautrollier produced three more editions. Two of these were multitext editions that included the *Heroides*, *Amores*, *Ars amatoria*, and *Remedia amoris*. These texts were edited by Navagero, and they include line numbers and marginal annotations. Argumenta for the *Heroides* were authored by Guy Morillon.'<sup>12</sup> Turberville's English *Heroides*, made more accessible on account of it being an English translation, would have been the first opportunity for a wider readership to encounter Ovid's text. The popularity of Turberville's book is attested by its going through six editions. It remains the standard vernacular text, with another complete

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<sup>10</sup> George Turberville, *The Heroycall Epistles of the learned poet Publius Ovidius Naso, in English verse set out and translated by George Turberuile with Aulus Sabinus aunsweres to certaine of the same* (London: Henry Denham, 1567), henceforth *Heroical Epistles*.

<sup>11</sup> *Publii Ovidii Nasonis Heroidum Epistolae (...)*, Edited by *Andreae Nauigerius* (Venice: Aldus Manutius, 1516-17), Reprint, London: T. Vautrollerius, 1583.

<sup>12</sup> Lindsay Reid *Ovidian Bibliofictions and the Tudor Book: Metamorphosing Classical Heroines in Late Medieval and Renaissance England* (London: Routledge, 2014), p. 182.

translation of the *Heroides* not appearing until Saltonstall's edition in 1636.<sup>13</sup> The influence of his text can be evidenced by the steady increase in print of female-voiced complaint poems up to the end of the sixteenth century and beyond.<sup>14</sup> This is demonstrated, for example, by the publication of Michael Drayton's *Englands Heroicall Epistles* (1597), the title of which cannot help but, as Danielle Clarke comments: 'evoke the only available English translation, by George Turberville'. The extended engagement of Turberville with female-voiced complaint in his *Heroical Epistles*, as Deborah Greenhut says, 'certainly establishes a kind of precedent for women's literary speech'.<sup>15</sup>

There were also vernacular traditions of complaint poetry at this time, which were clearly influential on both Turberville and Whitney. The Tudor miscellanies, both in manuscript and print, included many love lyrics of plaintful content, some of which were female-voiced. Of those verse manuscripts that survive, the Devonshire MS (British Library MS Additional 17492) is an intriguing example as it gives evidence for female involvement, firstly through the fact that the material manuscript itself belonged to Mary Fitzroy, and secondly by the presence of female hands (namely Fitzroy, Margaret Douglas and Mary Shelton, who were all powerful women in the courtly circle of Anne Boleyn in the 1530s). These women were involved in the social courtly game of verse exchange and circulation, and, in addition to male copyists and poets, the women are frequently found in the manuscript

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<sup>13</sup> Wye Saltonstall, *Ovid's Heroical Epistles Englished by W.S* (London: William Whitwood, 1636).

<sup>14</sup> Danielle Clarke, 'Signifying, but not sounding': gender and paratext in the complaint genre', in Helen Smith and Louise Wilson (eds.), *Renaissance Paratexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 133-150 (p. 142).

<sup>15</sup> Deborah S. Greenhut, *Feminine Rhetorical Culture: Tudor Adaptations of Ovid's Heroides* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, American University Studies (Book 59), 1988), p. 17.

‘copying, annotating, commenting, and, most remarkably, entering their own compositions’.<sup>16</sup> The vast majority of items in the manuscript (129 out of 185), however, are poems attributed to the popular court poet Sir Thomas Wyatt, with other contributions being verses transcribed from Chaucer and a prison exchange between Thomas (Earl of Surrey) and Margaret Howard. Furthermore, most of the complaint poems in the manuscript are male-voiced, not female-voiced, and operate in the tradition of Petrarchan love lyric and answer-poems rather than Ovidian female-voiced complaint. An example of this is poem 147 (of which poem 64 is also a different version) which can be considered an early example of the framed complaints which will be studied in the next chapter. However, the complaining voice is that of a man who has been unsuccessful in seduction (‘I am betrayed/and utterly undone./ Whom I did trust/ and think so just/ another man hath won’ (lines 12-16, p. 123) rather than a betrayed or abandoned woman.

However, there are some notable examples of female-voiced complaints in female hands in the manuscript. Poem 65, for example, which is in Margaret Douglas’ hand, has been considered a particularly gendered adaptation of complaint on account of a difference in script of the final stanza to the rest of the poem: ‘The final (sixth) stanza of poem 65 is particularly interesting because it seems to have been added to a conventional five-stanza complaint against the false faith and fickleness of a lover. Most such poems in this period are male-voiced and blame women. Only in the sixth stanza does

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<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth Heale (ed.), *The Devonshire Manuscript: A Women’s Book of Courtly Poetry* (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2012), p. 1. All quotations of poems from the Devonshire MS are from this edition.

poem 65 shift gear to identify its speaker as a woman blaming male perfidy'.<sup>17</sup>

As a counterpoint to this example, poem 106 (in the hand of Mary Shelton) shifts from a potentially female perspective (the object of the MS complaint is actually gender-neutral, 'the', to be understood either as 'thee' or 'they') to a male complainant who is bereft of the lover of a lady ('And I a man in woe' (line 6)) and who speaks out against a woman:

I see what will ye more  
She will me gladly kill:  
And you shall see therefore  
That she shall have her will (lines 25-28, p. 165).

The gendering of the voices in these poems is slippery just as the authorship, which is often anonymous, seems to be. In such manuscript verses, just because a female-voiced poem is copied by a female hand does not mean that she is the author.<sup>18</sup>

When poems like those in the Devonshire MS become printed in miscellanies like Tottel's, their content as well as function often alter.<sup>19</sup> Elizabeth Heale has demonstrated persuasively how the function of the manuscript poems shifts when they are published in the print miscellanies of Tottel or his various (multi- or single-authored) successors. Turberville is one prominent example of such a print-miscellanist with his 1567 *Epigrams*,

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<sup>17</sup> Heale, *The Devonshire Manuscript: A Women's Book of Courtly Poetry*, p.21.

<sup>18</sup> An example of this is poem 81 in the Devonshire MS ('O happy Dames') which is in the hand of Mary Fitzroy (the only such example) but is written by her brother Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey. The poem is a rare example of a female-voiced complaint to be printed in Tottel's miscellany, where it is entitled 'Complaint of the absence of her lover being upon the sea'.

<sup>19</sup> *Tottel's Miscellany: Songes and sonettes, written by the right honorable Lorde Henry Haward late Earle of Surrey* (Richard Tottel: London, 1557).



*Epitaphs, Songs and Sonnets*.<sup>20</sup> In these collections, manuscript poems become part of a model of literary gentility, giving privileged access for a wider readership to a combination of ‘witty or graceful gestures in a system of elite manuscript exchange and social pastime’<sup>21</sup> and more serious humanist aphorisms and *sententiae*. Heale continues in her analysis to say that along with this print transformation, the role of women in manuscripts like the Devonshire becomes lost, pointing out that only ‘a scattering of female-voiced poems (give) a sympathetically female perspective’.<sup>22</sup> Isabella Whitney offers a different model of female authorship and perspective at this time and engages with these vernacular traditions of manuscript and print miscellanies. In *Copy* she includes two typical love lyric answer-poems against ‘inconstant women’ written by men, but they appear after her own two female-voiced complaint poems. In *Nosegay* the prefatory poems establish her identity more explicitly as a woman writer and the familiar epistles locate and identify her personally, countering the questions of authorship which often accompany female-voiced lyrics such as those in the Devonshire MS.

The publication of Whitney’s two volumes is important in meaning that female-voiced complaint poems were some of the first female-authored poems available to a wider readership. Furthermore, Whitney brings together influences from the amorous complaint poems in these manuscript and print miscellanies in addition to the traditions of *Heroides* reception and translation. A book review by Jane Donaworth goes so far as to describe one of the

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<sup>20</sup> George Turberville, *Epitaphes, Epigrams, Songs and Sonnets* (London: Henry Denham, 1567), henceforth *Epitaphs*.

<sup>21</sup> Elizabeth Heale, ‘Misogyny and the Complete Gentleman in Early Elizabethan Printed Miscellanies’, *Yearbook of English Studies*, 22 (2003), pp. 223-247 (p. 234).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 244.

Devonshire MS poems, poem 12, as ‘a brief version of the tale of Isabella Whitney’s much later ‘Inconstant Lover’’.<sup>23</sup> While both poems share the same basic scenario of complaint against an inconstant lover however, Whitney’s is a far more developed poem with allusions to the *Heroides* and addressed directly to the wrong-doer. The more generalised warnings of the manuscript poem, for example ‘Let never woman again/ trust to such words as men can feign’ (lines 29-30), actually recall more closely the sentiments of Whitney’s second poem in *Copy* (‘The Admonition’) but again, via closer Ovidian intertexts, Whitney’s poem is very different, taking the discourse of warning and trusting to its ironical extreme. While there are similarities, especially in shared vocabulary and imagery, between Whitney’s poems and some of the miscellany complaints, she takes a more generically-focussed approach, extending her complaints in length, changing the scenarios with personal markers of identification and context, and interacting with the *Heroides* and its reception.

### **Humanist Interactions**

A suggestion that Whitney read Turberville’s *Heroical Epistles* and considered there to be certain parallels between his translation and her own poetry might be found in the similarity of her *Nosegay* dedication (which I quote first) to Turberville’s *Heroical Epistles* dedication (quoted second):

I come to present you like the pore man which having no goods, came  
with his hands full of water to meete the Persian Prince withal, who

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<sup>23</sup> Jane Donawerth, “Women’s Courtly Poetry”, Book Review of Lady Margaret Douglas and Others. *The Devonshire Manuscript: A Women’s Book of Courtly Poetry*. Ed. and intro. by Elizabeth Heale’, *Appositions: Studies in Renaissance/ Early Modern Literature and Culture*, 7 (2014).

respecting the good wyll of the man: did not disdayne his simple Gift:  
 even so, I being willinge to bestow some present on you, by the same  
 thinking to make part of amendes for the much that you have merited.  
 (lines 18-21, p.30)

*Artaxerxes* his good acceptaunce of a handefull of running water, bred  
 me to this boldnesse to offer your Honor a handful of written Papers:  
 hoping that as be thought no disdain of the one, so you wil not take  
 scorne of the other. (sig.A4v)

This metaphor used by both Whitney and Turberville alludes to the life of Artaxerxes II Mneomon and Plutarch's particular use of the story as a modesty topos: 'in the dedicatory letter to *Regum et imperatorum apophthegmata* (*Moralia* 172b), Plutarch tells the story to excuse himself for offering so small a work to so great a man as Emperor Trajan'.<sup>24</sup> In the early sixteenth century, Erasmus makes use of this anecdote in a dedication before his ode in praise of Britain, King Henry and the royal children (*Poem 4* in his 1518 *Epigrammata*).<sup>25</sup> Thomas Elyot also employs the Plutarchian metaphor in the dedication of *The Book named the Governor* (1531), a humanist text which only begrudgingly accepts the study of Ovid in schools (and only the *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti* ) as he regards that time would be 'better employed on such authors, that do minister both eloquence, civil policy and exhortation

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<sup>24</sup> Harry Vredeveld, *The Poetic Works of Helius Eobanus Hessus: Volume 3: King of Poets, 1514-1517* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), p. 29. The allusion is also found in Hessus' poetry (a German Latin poet who notably also produced a Christianised version of the *Heroides*).

<sup>25</sup> Erasmus, *Epigrammata* (Basel: J. Froben, 1518).

to virtue'.<sup>26</sup> Aside from these comparable prefatory uses, the Artraxerxes allusion is far from a common one in printed books. Indeed, the popular English translation of Plutarch's *Lives* by Thomas North did not appear in print till 1579. It is striking that Whitney should choose to use this particular metaphor, which has a clear connection to the classical humanist tradition (in its inclusion in books by Erasmus and Elyot) and in particular echoes the *Heroides* project of her contemporary Turberville. This kind of repeated allusion suggests a self-conscious interaction with these texts and traditions.

The status of Ovid's *Heroides* as a school text in the Renaissance, in Europe and England, is key to its contested simultaneous reception as a stylistic letter-writing model, an entertaining piece for study by younger pupils and an example of a moral (or, at least, moralised) classical text which can promote good behaviour. These potentially conflicting ways of receiving and representing Ovid's text frame how poets such as Turberville and Whitney choose to translate or respond. Turberville, being an educated man of the Inns of Court, would have encountered the *Heroides* at school (most grammar school masters did not share Elyot's reluctance towards Ovid). Ann Moss examines the text's role in education:

The *Heroides* had an entrenched position in the normal school curriculum, a position defended by no less an authority than Erasmus. Throughout the sixteenth century a pupil's first exercises in prose composition were most likely to take the form of writing different types

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<sup>26</sup> Thomas Elyot, *The Book named the Governor* (London: Thomas Bertheletti, 1531) cited in Allan Gilbert, *Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1967), p. 236.

of letter, a practice inherited from the Middle Ages and continued by Renaissance humanists. In his *De Conscribendis Epistolis* of 1522 Erasmus recommends teachers to present their youngest pupils with themes for letters taken from incidents described in *Heroides*. They will thus absorb useful information about the background of classical culture at the same time as they begin to learn how to adapt and imitate the manner of a classical author.<sup>27</sup>

The humanists' recommendations were taken up in England, along with the text itself. This was especially so in schools, as for example, Thomas Baldwin in his study *William Shakespeare's Small Latin less Greek*, records that by 1528, the *Heroides* was on the curriculum at Eton School: 'Ovid's *Epistolae Heroidum* had aided the fifth form in its poetical and versifical attempts'.<sup>28</sup> Turberville shows the direct influence of Ovid on his poetry by writing a poem about his learning experiences. He followed a traditional education for a gentleman in progressing from school, then to Oxford University, and then to the Inns of Court (eventually going on to serve as secretary to Sir Thomas Randolph, ambassador to Russia) where he entered into literary circles and began publishing poetry. This path of education is similar to that of Whitney's brother Geoffrey, eighteen years his junior, and the literary efforts of both men are mentioned comparably in the preface of John Harrington's *Orlando Furioso* translation as examples of authors of wood-cut illustrated books

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<sup>27</sup> Ann Moss, *Ovid in Renaissance France: A Survey of the Latin Editions of Ovid and Commentaries printed in France before 1600* (Leeds: W.W. Maney and Son, 1982), p. 9.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas Baldwin, *William Shakespeare Small Latin Less Greek* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1944), p. 419.

(Turberville's *The Booke of Faulconrie, or Hawking* and Whitney's *Emblems*).<sup>29</sup>

Turberville reveals his particular pleasure in studying Ovid at school from a young age in a poem in his *Epitaphes*, which was published in the same year as his *Heroical Epistles*:

In gréene and tender age  
 (my Lorde) till xvij yeares,  
 I spent my time as fitted youth  
 in Schole among my peers  
 ...  
 I neede not tell the names  
 of Authors which I read,  
 Of Prose and Verse we had enough  
 to fine the dullest head.  
 But I was chiefly bent  
 to Poets famous Art,  
 To them with all my deor  
 I my studie did conuert.  
 Where when I had with ioy  
 yspent my time a while:  
 The rest refusde, I gaue me whole  
 to *Nasos* Noble stile.

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<sup>29</sup> See John King, *Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs' and Early Modern Print Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 168.

Whose volumes when I saw  
 with pleasant stories fright:  
 In him (I say) about the rest  
 I laide my whole delight. (sig.45r-46v)

Where Turberville is open about his indebtedness to Ovid, singling out two of the didactic features educators approved of, 'stile' and 'delight', Whitney is more guarded. Indeed, Whitney would not have encountered Ovid in a formal school setting like Turberville. In *Nosegay*, Whitney uses the prefatory space of 'The Auctor to the Reader' to describe her relationship with reading and learning:

Had leasure good, (though learning lackt)  
 some study to apply  
 To reade such Bookes, whereby I thought  
 my selfe to edyfye. (lines 5-10, p. 32)

The foregrounding of 'myself' and 'I thought' suggests a degree of necessary auto-didacticism, Whitney having to take personal responsibility for her own learning activity which could only take place in 'leisure time'. However a tone of fatigue arrives, imminent and unmistakeable as Whitney undercuts the ostensibly positive setting of individual development: 'I straight wart wery of those Bookes/ and many other more'. The 'many other' are specifically named as 'VIRGILL, OVID, MANTUAN', three authors who featured heavily on humanist school curricula.

The reference to Mantuan, the Italian humanist Baptista Manutanius, might seem out of place in this trio, but his Eclogues were popular during the Renaissance, ‘adopted as a school textbook’<sup>30</sup> and translated by Turberville himself in his prolific publishing year of 1567.<sup>31</sup> Mantuan also produced a Christianised version of Ovid’s *Fasti* and a collection of epic poems on religious subjects, the *Parthenice Prima*, in which there is an account of the Blessed Virgin’s education where, as Moss informs us, ‘the names of heroes and heroines abundantly listed would lead one to assume (Mary) read them primarily in the *Metamorphoses* and *Heroides* of Ovid, were this not historically impossible.’<sup>32</sup> Like Mantuan’s Blessed Virgin, Whitney makes abundant references to Ovidian heroes and heroines and is clearly influenced by the *Heroides* throughout her work. Mary’s surprising knowledge of Ovid is matched by Whitney’s presumed lack of classical education.

Therefore, Whitney puts aside the humanist mainstream, but only after acknowledging that she has read or experienced the important texts, enough indeed to grow ‘wery’ and for them to make an impact on her ‘brused brayne’. By explicitly naming the authors of these ‘other’ types of books, in addition to ‘Scriptures’ and ‘Histories’, Whitney points to her particular relationship, one seemingly of both attraction and repulsion, to those classical texts of the humanist school curricula from which she is excluded. Throughout her work, there is a tension between acknowledging such texts, in many ways models for her own poetry, and the expectation that she must be doing something different

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<sup>30</sup> Felker, *The Poems of Isabella Whitney: A Critical Edition*, p. 127.

<sup>31</sup> George Turberville, *The Eglogs of the poet B. Mantuan Carmelitan* (London: Henry Bynneman, 1567).

<sup>32</sup> Ann Moss, *Renaissance Truth and the Latin Language Turn* (Oxford: OUP, 2004), p. 20.



from them, owing to her gender and the lack of formal education which men like Turberville have received. As we shall see, Whitney's poems reveal that such a classical trio of books were not violently rejected after their scholarly assault on her.

The interaction with these texts might be different, difficult, strained or even hypothetical, but the very appearance of such interactions is telling. Whitney mentions a 'store of bookes' left to legal students in her satirical 'Wyll':

And also leave I at ech inne  
of court, or chauncerye  
of gentylmen, a youthfull roote  
full of Activytie  
for whom I store of bookes have left  
at each bookebinders stall. (lines 288-293, pp. 108-109)

The parodic supply of books to the Inns of Court paradoxically reveals her relative lack of such access and resources. The energetic polysyllables ('chancerye', 'gentylmen', 'youthfull roote', and 'activytie') add pace to the lines, belying a certain envy and attraction to this bookish life which she is only able to participate in via her literary efforts post-mortem. This imaginary scene of book-supply to those who do not need it (the men of the Inns of Court) follows the conceit that drives the mock-testament poem; despite not receiving anything of benefit from London, Whitney makes the City her beneficiary and is 'in no angry moode'. Although she is excluded in many ways from the learning and literary traditions that are attractive to her, Whitney

does not react in anger or violence but finds a way to participate in them while doing something original. In fact, as we have seen, it is the books which 'bruse' her, initiating a playful struggle and a natural interaction which is more realistic than the endless 'joy' and 'delight' which Turberville expresses.

### **Voice, Epistolarity and Edification**

Presenting her poems as letters is one way that Whitney aligns herself with the wider literary tradition surrounding female-voiced complaint. When writing self-consciously in epistolary form in *A Copy*, Whitney uses the word 'store' (a word she goes on to repeat in the will and testament in *Nosegay*) to indicate her desire for a lasting effect and a literary legacy for her epistolary verse:

'And when you shall this letter have/ let it be kept in store' (p.9, lines 133-4) and 'I wish al Maids within their brests/ to kepe this thing in store' (p.11, lines 35-6). Wendy Wall says of Whitney's epistolarity that it 'counters the anxieties of print publication by presenting a book that replicates private textual circulation'.<sup>33</sup> This 'anxiety' in the case of Whitney would be particularly concerned with the acceptance of female-authored female-voiced works in print by a general reading public. The storing ability of letters can look forwards; so that there might at least be an enduring receipt of her literary offering by posterity. Indeed, far from the ephemeral and occasional personal offerings which are more commonly associated with letters, Whitney's epistolary poems are part of a universal female-voiced complaint tradition which lasts through time.

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<sup>33</sup> Wendy Wall, 'Isabella Whitney and the Female Legacy', *English Literary History*, 58 (1991), pp. 35-62 (p. 47).

Whitney allows the gap between author and 'I' to close, with an authorial identification with the female-voiced persona subtly promoted. This is further emphasised by the added potential for self-expression and reflection which comes with writing in letter form. In 'I.W To her unconstant Lover' there is an extended comparison of the 'unconstant lover' with examples of treacherous and abandoning males from the *Heroides*. There is a notable moment of digression:

For they, for their unfaithfulnes  
 did get perpetuall Fame:  
 Fame? Wherefore dyd I terme it so?  
 I should have cald it shame (lines 69-72, p.6)

Author and persona merge in reaction against a word choice. By retaining this thought process as part of the poem, the very process of poetic composition is also highlighted. A rhetorical expression of disgust at the use of the word 'fame' becomes an authorial reflection on diction and rhyme selections for poetry. In this Ovidian context, the word 'fame' also recalls, via intra-lingual allusion,<sup>34</sup> the Latin word 'fama' which can reflect a range of meanings, both positive and negative.<sup>35</sup> By offering the alternative of 'shame', the more negative interpretation of 'fame' is highlighted. The female voice becomes the authorial voice as Whitney takes a detached view of her own writing.

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<sup>34</sup> For the term 'intralingual allusion' I am indebted to Linda Grant's paper on 'Imitatio, intertextuality and reception: re-writing classical Latin love elegy in sixteenth-century England' at Warwick University's Conference *Using, Misusing and Abusing Latin in the Early Modern Period* (2014).

<sup>35</sup> For the full range of meanings see Philip Hardie, *Rumour and Renown: Representations of Fama in Western Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 2.

The immediacy of the epistolary form allows the expression of such self-reflection and re-considerations. Introverted verbs such as ‘I muse’ and ‘I think’ frequently appear in Whitney’s poems as thought processes can instantly become part of poetry. In an extreme example of *praeteritio*, Whitney goes on to suggest that she does not need to continue her complaint:

These words I do not spek, thinking  
 from thy new Love to turne thee  
 Thou knowest by proof what I deserve  
 I nede not to informe thee. (p.8, lines 109-112)

Whitney’s persona almost rhetorically cancels out 109 lines of complaint while they still exist on the page, recorded for posterity. Speaking, writing and thinking all seem to combine in these lines. Boundaries between written and spoken are broken down, as self-reflection becomes authoritative and authorial.

In the following poem, ‘The Admonition by the Auctor, to all young Gentilwomen And to all other Maids being in Love’, Whitney again expresses a mock-modest hesitancy before continuing her verse:

Oh if I could good counsell geve  
 my tongue should not be slacke  
 But such as I can geve, I wyll  
 here in few wordes expresse. (lines 7-10, p.10)

This prolonged musing on the ‘wordes’ reveals a heightened consideration for what is ‘expressed’ in the ensuing reconsideration of Ovidian myth and ‘counsell’ to women which is far from ‘slacke’. Pausing to consider the right

words in a personal act which combines writing and speaking, the female-complainant has a level of authorial control which in Turberville's female-voiced translations often extends only to a nervous or sexualised grip onto a 'painful pen' as his Oenone is reported to do in the 'argument' of the opening epistle: 'The wordes shee wrote with painefull penne/ began as you shall heare' (sig.Diiiiv).

The emphasis on epistolarity by Whitney both allies it to Ovid's *Heroides* and contemporary humanist receptions of the *Heroides* as a school text and a letter-writing model. Yet it also allows Whitney to use the personal and familiar nature of letters, for example by giving personalised titles to her letters which identify author with female voice. In many of the poem's titles, her initials 'I.W' or 'Is.W' are positioned in the active sender role. The inclusion of these initials within the titles of the poems themselves, specifically referencing the author, works to align the sex of the author with the sex of the speaker. Author and persona become one and the same.

Whitney's printer, Richard Jones, in 'The Printer to the Reader' poem set before *Copy*, is anxious to let readers know that Whitney's seemingly personal letters also have literary value:

Perchance my wordes be thought,  
uncredible to you:  
Because I say this Treatise is,  
both false and also true.

The matter of it selfe,  
 is true as many know:  
 And in the same, some fained tales,  
 the Auctor doth bestow. (lines 9-16, p.2)

Jones is keen to balance the ‘true’ in Whitney’s work with an advertisement for ‘fained tales’ in order to attract a wider readership. This can be contrasted to the ‘To the Reader’ prefatory poem in Turberville’s *Epitaphs*, where Turberville tries to assure the reader that the love affair of Anne Russell, Countess of Warwick (or ‘Pyndara’) presented in the volume is ‘meere fiction of these fancies’. Feigning to be in love as ‘he speaks of himself among the gallants at the Inns of Court’, is necessary for Turberville’s project: ‘although my minde were free: Yet must I seeme love wounded eke to be’. Creating a poetic persona is linked to the literary environment of epistolary exchange at the Inns. This is especially necessary for Turberville to emphasise as he also includes several female-voiced poems (in the voice of Pyndara) in his edition. The element of ‘truth’ is retained by Whitney and her printer (‘both false and also true’) in a way which Turberville cannot maintain.

In his extended presentation of the female voice in the *Heroical Epistles* translation, there is necessarily more opportunity for identification, as Catherine Bates suggests, because ‘the *Heroides* allows for the sustained articulation of a feminine ‘I’, one in which the male poet might identify with female subjectivity with some intimacy and imaginatively enter into female experience at some length’.<sup>36</sup> However, even here we find that Turberville

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<sup>36</sup> Catherine Bates, *Masculinity and the Hunt: Wyatt to Spenser* (Oxford: OUP, 2013), p. 166.

employs tactics to de-emphasise the authorial control of the first person female voice.

One such tactic is that in the preface to the *Heroical Epistles*, there is an ‘apparent obliviousness’ by Turberville, ‘to even the rhetorical fiction that the *Heroides* are women’s stories... in none of the prefatory material does he raise the issue of the speaker’s genders.’<sup>37</sup> This indeed is a surprising omission, especially when we consider the heavily gendered prefaces of the later *Heroides* versions, such as that of Wye Saltonstall’s 1636 translation which we have already encountered in the introduction. Although the paratext can ‘play a crucial role in inaugurating the play of gender within a given text or genre’,<sup>38</sup> unlike Saltonstall, who foregrounds the role of the female voice to an extreme point with a sexualised metaphor of oral copulation, Turberville’s preface avoids discussing the female-voiced element at all. His ‘To the Reader’ preface instead offers a banquet metaphor, which continues the modesty topos of his dedication, describing his project as ‘slender’ and taking responsibility as the translator-‘cook’ for anything which is disagreeable. For Turberville, the translation task comes before any desire for experimentation with the female voice.

It should be noted that when Turberville does offer some experimentation with the female-voiced complaint, in his original epistles in the *Epitaphs* miscellany, he turns to satire and ridicule. In one of the few female-voiced poems (all of which are responses to letters from Tymetes),

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<sup>37</sup> Deborah S. Greenhut, *Feminine Rhetorical Culture: Tudor Adaptations of Ovid’s Heroides*, p. 46.

<sup>38</sup> Danielle Clarke, ‘Signifying, but not sounding’: gender and paratext in the complaint genre’, p. 133.

‘*Pyndaras* aunswere to the Letter which *Tymetes* sent hir at the time of his departure’, for example, much of the poem is taken up with the reaction of Pyndara to Tymetes’ letter:

it yrkt to read the rest:  
 For when I saw the Inck was such,  
 I thought I saw the best.  
 Long stoode I in a dumpe,  
 my hart began to ake:  
 My Liuer leapt within my bulck,  
 my trembling hands did shake.  
 My Senses were bereft,  
 my bowing knées did bende:  
 Out from my Nose the bloud it brake,  
 much like the Letter pende.  
 Vp start my staring Locks,  
 I lay for dead a space:  
 And what with bloud and brine I all  
 bedewde the dréerie place. (lines 18-32, p. 25)

Pyndara’s words are in a low, comedic register, with her complaint reduced to being ‘in a dumpe’. The climax of the farcical physical reaction of Pyndara to seeing the unwelcome ‘Inck’ is to have a spontaneous nosebleed. This bloody reaction can be understood as a parodic extension of those signs of physical materiality, the drops of tears or bloody ink, which appear in some of the *Heroides* epistles. The choice of a particularly violent nosebleed, however,



might also have been prompted by its relation to menstrual bleeding, making it a particularly feminine over-reaction. Indeed, from the beginning of Turberville's sequence, Pyndara is set out as 'strange' and 'coy', a Helena figure who is at fault for the pains of 'Poore Tymetes' who must turn to his pen to declare his state.

A final example of Turberville downplaying the female-voiced aspect in his *Heroical Epistles* translation is his inclusion of 'arguments' before each epistle. On a formal level, the arguments work to frame the poems, repeatedly delaying and interrupting the first person female voice complaints. By using an argument, there is a marked separation of the authorial voice and the female persona. The *Penelope to Ulysses* argument for example, is written in heroic couplets, contrasting markedly (visually as well as metrically) with the ballad verse of the epistle:

Which absence long Penelope aggrieude,  
That little space hir husband had enioyde:  
(For saken wight) she verilie belieude  
Some other Lasse Ulysses had acoyde.  
And this procurde the louing wife to wright,  
That she his cause of absence learne might (lines 13-18, sig.A2r)

The argument is in the third person and provides an authoritative summary of both the background and, significantly, the content of the ensuing epistle. This simplification of the complaint's content takes the authority and individuality away from the female voice. The epistle that follows thus becomes more like a rhetorical set piece, an exercise in writing on a given theme or situation, more

akin to the kind that Turberville would have practised at school. Furthermore, there is a particular focus on Penelope as jealous of ‘some other lasse’ in comparison with the presentation of Ulysses as an honest and successful warrior, who ‘gladly would have stayde’, potentially influencing the reader’s sympathy for Penelope’s complaint before her epistle even begins.

The presence of these arguments seems to recall the tradition of moralising arguments in European Renaissance editions of the *Heroides*. Turberville was well aware of humanist receptions of the *Heroides*, revealed in his understated prefatory acknowledgement that it was ‘passing wel liked in learned *Italie*’. It is via such ‘arguments’ that humanist editions of the *Heroides* provide a ‘didactic framing’<sup>39</sup> to the epistles, thus ensuring that the female-voiced complaint is adequately explained and read in a morally acceptable way. Usually this involved interpreting Ovid’s complaining women as *exempla* of good or bad behaviour. This paratextual *intentio auctoris* was repeated in nearly all humanist editions produced in Europe. The 1490 *Epistolae Heroides* Italian translation published in Rome for example, balances these two types of women in the prologue: ‘Et poi induce y raconta molti exempli damore honesti e disonesti. Li honesti per che si seguistano, li dishonesti per ch si scisano’ (‘and then he brings in and narrates many examples of honourable and dishonourable love: the honourable which they themselves carry on, the dishonourable which disgust them’).<sup>40</sup> The Ubertinus Clericus and Antonius Volscus prologue and commentary, which was re-used

<sup>39</sup> Patricia Phillippy, ‘Loytering in love”: Ovid’s *Heroides*, hospitality, and humanist education in The Taming of the Shrew’, *Criticism*, 40 (1998), pp. 27-53 (p. 30).

<sup>40</sup> [*L’Espistole d’Ovidio Nassone*], (Rome: Eucharius Silber, 1490), sig. A2r. Trans. by Paul Botley, personal correspondence, 2014.

in many Latin editions through the sixteenth century similarly sets out that ‘Materia vero est ethica. Id est moralis: quod describit varios virorum: mulierumque mores’ (‘Indeed the subject is ethical, that is, moral, because it describes the various behaviours of men and women’).<sup>41</sup> The women are variously described as ‘pudica’ or ‘impudica’, chaste or unchaste.

The ‘argomenti’ and commentaries in such early European *Heroides* editions influence the reading of the original epistle. The Volscus edition introduces Penelope (in a more positive way than Turberville): ‘quæ hactenus in tanta procorum turba pudice vixit et coniugalem thorum sine labe seruauit’ (‘who has lived thus far among such a crowd of suitors in chastity and has preserved her husband’s marital bed without dishonour’).<sup>42</sup> The tautological inclusion of ‘sine labe’ (which can be read as referring to either the bed or Penelope) emphasises the purity of the marital bed and thus Penelope’s spotless reputation as a positive female example. Similarly, the Italian translation of Remigio Fiorentino (1555) ‘include(s) prefatory ‘argomenti’ that provide didactic and informational glosses to each epistle... *Heroides One (Penelope to Ulysses)* demonstrates the praiseworthy ‘honesty of a modest woman’ (‘l’honesta di una pudica Donna’).<sup>43</sup>

Turberville’s *Phaedra to Hippolytus* argument provides a striking example of a woman who would be described as ‘impudica’:

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<sup>41</sup> Ovid, *Epistolae Heroides: cum commentariis Antonii Volsci et Ubertini Clerici Crescentinatis; Sappho et Ibis cum commentariis Domitii Calderini*, (Venice: Symonem Bivilaqua, 1496). Latin cited in Moss, *Ovid in Renaissance France: A Survey of the Latin Editions of Ovid and Commentaries printed in France before 1600*, p. 8. My translation.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., my translation.

<sup>43</sup> Phillippy, ‘Loytering in love’: Ovid’s *Heroides*, hospitality, and humanist education in *The Taming of the Shrew*, p. 30.

The frantick Phaetra, Theseus wedded Make,  
 In absence of the Duke her husband fell  
 In loue with Hippolyte, and did forsake  
 The worthie wight that looude his wife so well.  
 ...  
 She naythelesse attacht with glowing gleede,  
 To winne the chastfull youth to filthie lust:  
 In subtile sort his humors sought to feede,  
 Perswading him hir sute to be but iust.  
 With sundrie sleighes she went about to winne  
 The retchlesse youth, that minded nothing lesse  
 Than shamefull lust and filthie fleshly sinne.  
 The Mothers minde this Pistle doth expresse,  
 These suing lynes hir sluttish sute bewray,  
 Wherein to Hippolyte thus gan she say. (sig.18v)

Persistent alliteration and onomatopoeia in this argument ensure that Phaetra (even hyperbolically called ‘mother’) is linked to a repulsive incestuous desire. This misogynist outburst is justified by Phaetra’s accepted position as a negative example. Her ensuing complaint is transformed into a ‘sluttish sute’ as readers are directed not to trust or treat seriously what she is about to say.

Whitney’s poems might be viewed as doing something very different with female-voiced complaint in comparison to such moralising *Heroides* versions. Patricia Phillippy points to the negative effects of the *exempla* method of reception on the empowering potential of female-voiced complaint:

‘(the) power to overturn or revise traditional gender paradigms was clearly diminished given the reconsignment of Ovid’s subversive heroines to their tamer, and ideologically tamed, roles as *exempla* of feminine behaviour.’<sup>44</sup>

However, Whitney’s original complaint epistles, deliberating on the nature of complaint and interacting with the literary tradition to which the poetry belongs, self-consciously feed into a didactic and moralising approach while still maintaining an authoritative female voice.<sup>45</sup> Whitney’s use of a didactic and edifying approach in her poems clearly reflects and interacts with contemporary receptions of female-voiced complaint.

Rather than reserving only women for an exemplary moralised role in complaint, Whitney allows men to be equally judged in either a positive or a negative light. In ‘I.W to her unconstant lover’, the belated discovery of her lover’s betrothal to another woman (‘As close as you your weding kept/ yet now the trueth I here’ (lines 1-2, p. 3) triggers a complaint which is motivated by the male lover’s breaking of promises to I.W. These promises seem to have amounted to a marriage pact: ‘then take me to your wife/ So shall the promises be kept,/ that you so firmly made’ (lines 24-6, p. 4). The imminent treachery, if indeed the lover goes ahead with the planned marriage to another, is highlighted as a negative model of behaviour. Whitney’s persona digresses to ensure that this message comes across. She provides a catalogue of male lovers from the *Heroides* who particularly demonstrate this characteristic, retrospectively positioning them as negative *exempla*: ‘Example take by many

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<sup>44</sup> Patricia Phillippy, *Love's Remedies: Recantation and Renaissance Lyric Poetry* (Cranbury: Associated University Press, 1995), p. 99.

<sup>45</sup> For example, the poems ‘I.W to her unconstant lover’, ‘The Admonition’ and ‘The Carefull Complaint’.

a one/ whose falshood now is playne' (lines 31-2, p. 4). Whitney provides three Ovidian wrong-doers as examples:

As by ENEAS first of all,  
 who dyd poore Dido leave,  
 Causing the Quene by his untrueth  
 with Sword her hart to cleave.

Also I finde that THESEUS did,  
 his faithful love foresake:  
 Stealyng away within the night,  
 before she dyd awake.

IASON that came of noble race,  
 two Ladies did beguile:  
 I muse how he durst shew his face,  
 to them that knew his wile (lines 33-44, p.4)

Theseus is no longer the 'worthie wight that looude his wife so well' in contrast to the 'sluttish sute' of Turberville's Phaedra, but a false lover who steals away from Ariadne while she sleeps. In going on to question the favourable reactions of the gods Aeolus and Neptune to the doubly treacherous Jason, Whitney reveals how the fault of the male is often less thoroughly scrutinised as only now, after reflecting on the complaints of betrayed women, is it emphasised: '*Now* may you heare how falseness is/ made manyfest in time'. In Whitney's poems, men as well as women are moralised and open to a negative assessment.

In 'The Admonition', further lessons (in the form of 'good advice' and 'good counsell') are offered. Complaint and moralised commentary combine as the addressee shifts between fellow women needing to be schooled ('ye virgins that from Cupids tentes') and a generalised treacherous male ('Why have ye such deceit in store?'). This creation of a communal female complaint is prompted by an intratextual reference to the particular 'unconstant lover' of the first poem: 'and I who was deceived late/ by ones unfaithful teares'. Moral advice quickly becomes a warning to women to beware the trickery of men:

Beware of fayre and painted talke,  
 beware of flattering tonges  
 ...  
 Some use the teares of Crocodiles  
 contrary to their hart  
 And if they cannot alwayes weepe,  
 they wet their Cheekes by Art.  
  
 Ovid, within his Arte of love,  
 doth teach them this same knacke  
 To wet their hand and touch their eies  
 so oft as teares they lacke. (lines 17-24, pp. 10-11)

This forceful warning combines complaint and a very different type of didacticism. Whitney exposes the amoral behaviour which Ovid himself has promoted in another of his works, the *Ars Amatoria*. Although Felker, quoting Moss, asserts that 'no translation of the *Ars Amatoria* was available during the

sixteenth century... Whitney must either have been familiar with the original or have gotten her information at second hand',<sup>46</sup> there was actually an English edition in print ('The flores of Ovide de arte amandi with theyr englysshe afore them' (1513). This translation, published in 1513 by the printer Wynkyn de Worde, is a Latin-English textbook based on verses in Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* and is described by Ian Lancashire as a 'set text for early tudor grammar-school boys'.<sup>47</sup> The inclusion of bilingual dictionaries in *The Flores of Ovide* edition also suggests that edition could be used for private study, and so potentially the kind of book that Whitney may have accessed during her individual classical reading. The *Ars Amatoria* was widely agreed to be a morally offensive work; it was rumoured to have caused Ovid's exile and his own book *Tristia* shuns them in a meta-literary meeting: 'tres procul obscura latitantes parte uidebis:/ hi quia, quod nemo nescit, amare docent;/ hos tu uel fugias' (1.111-114).<sup>48</sup> The irony of this work being set out as a stylistic school text is not lost on Whitney as she turns teacher (a kind of anti-*praeceptor amoris*) in order to instruct the reader *not* to follow or be fooled by such lessons in trickery.

More than just a friendly advisor who can 'proffer helpful counsel to other young women',<sup>49</sup> Whitney directs her reader how to read Ovid. She

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<sup>46</sup> Felker, p. 120.

<sup>47</sup> Ian Lancashire, 'The Flores of Ovide (1513). An early Tudor Latin-English textbook' in Olga Timofeeva and Tanja Säily (eds), *Words in Dictionaries and History: Essays in Honour of R.W. McConchie* (Amsterdam: John Benjamin Publishing, 2011), pp. 3-16 (p. 3). Lancashire further details the volume: 'The three-part quarto of 42 pages consists of 85 numbered distichs in English and Latin from the three books of Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*, an English alphabet or index, and a Latin alphabet.'

<sup>48</sup> My translation: 'You will see the three hiding far away in shady places/ those which, as everyone knows, teach how to love/ make sure you flee them...'

<sup>49</sup> G. P. Goold (ed.), *Ovid's Tristia* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, Loeb Classical Library 151, 1924), p. 10.



places Ovid on the side of the duping and abandoning males, with her warnings against trusting men also applying to Ovid's poetry. Whitney wants to change Ovid's stories and shift their interpretation. When listing examples of women who have been too trusting, Whitney provides an alternative reality. She gives the positive outcome in the conditional, revealing what would have happened 'if' they had tested their man before. She tricks the reader's sense of dramatic irony as the endings which classically learned readers might expect are altered. By using the conditional, Whitney empowers her complaining heroines, and by presenting possible counter-factuals, breaks them free from their gendered destinies.

In another microcosmic allusion to *Heroides* poems (similar to that in the previous 'unconstant lover' poem) Whitney this time gives the examples of Oenone and Phyllis respectively:

Or if such falshood had ben once,  
unto Oenone knowne:  
About the fieldes of Ida wood,  
Paris had walkt alone  
  
Or if Demaphoons deceite,  
to Phillis had ben tolde  
  
She had not ben transformed so,  
as Poets tell of olde. (lines 65-72, p.13)

Whitney imagines the Ovidian complainants taking heed of her warnings and so changing the outcomes of their well-known stories. This is in contrast to

ostensibly similar uses of the conditional in a male-authored poem in a later miscellany (printed by Whitney's publisher Jones): 'If any fault be found at all,/ To womens lot it néedes must fall:/ If (*Hellen*) had not bin so light,/ Sir *Paris* had not died in fight.' (sig.Aivv)<sup>50</sup> Here, it is the 'lightness' of Helen which causes the destruction, not her mistake of trusting Paris too much from the start, and not Paris leaving Oenone.

However, in Whitney's lines, there is also revealed a possible feeling of discomfort about what such a reversal of situation would mean. With Paris now in the position of isolation rather than Oenone, and Phyllis' suicide having never happened, Whitney implies that the repercussions would include a lack of female expression through complaint ('as Poets tell of olde'). Without the conditions or motivation for complaint, women would be written out of literary history - 'Paris had walkt alone'. Yes, Paris would be in the isolated position of Oenone wandering around the woods, but Oenone by implication would then never have been present, never existed even. This demonstrates the double standard of female-voiced complaint as women gain a voice but only as a result of a negative situation. Indeed, Whitney's very re-imagination of these stories is contingent on the existence of the female-voiced complaint tradition, the very tradition which carves a place for her to participate as a female poet.

Perhaps it is this worrying possibility about Oenone which explains the inclusion by Whitney of a peculiar final counter-example of Hero and Leander. Hero is expressed as an example of a woman who did try her lover first: 'Hero

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<sup>50</sup> Owen Roydon, 'The louer in praise of his Ladie and To a Gentilwoman that sayd: All men be false, they thinke not what they say (by O.R)' in Thomas Proctor, *A Gorgeous Gallery of Gallant Inventions* (London: Richard Jones, 1585).

did trie Leanders truth,/ before that she did trust/ Therefore she found him unto her/ both constant, true, and just.’ (lines 73-76, p. 13) The narrative though, as the reader knows from the *Heroides*, does not end positively:

‘For he alwayes did swim the Sea,  
when starres in Skie did glide  
Till he was drowned by the way  
nere hand unto the side.

She scrat her Face, she ters her Heir  
(it greveth me to tell)

When she did know the end of him,  
that she did love so well’ (lines 77-84, pp.13-14)

Leander’s night time swims of the Hellespont are presented as part of Hero’s test to prove his constancy. The casual and blunt nature of Leander’s death ‘by the way’ belies the peculiarity of this story’s inclusion as a positive example. After all, this one example given where a woman did try before she ‘did trust’ ends in the death of the male lover. It is unclear in Whitney’s altered context for the myth, whether the death of Leander is as a result of his constancy or inconstancy and so the reader is left to wonder whether this is a positive or a negative example, and whether Hero’s expressions of elegiac lamentation are genuine.

The closing moral example which follows the Hero and Leander myth seems rather out of place amongst classical allusions, except for continuing the watery theme. There is an extended moralising metaphor, whereby a fish

(gendered male) is caught on hook having been tricked by the appearance of bait in the water. Even though the caught fish was said to have needed ‘Linceus eies/ for to have seene the hooke’, his friend, with the help of this negative model, is able to escape: ‘And now he pries on every baite/ suspecting styll that pricke/ (For to lye hid in every thing)/ Wherewith the Fishers stricke’ (lines 103-120, p.15). Here a negative example allows the same fate to be avoided in future. The sexualised risks of the ‘pricke’ however, still threaten, but the fish has adapted and learnt how to play the game. Just like the fish, Whitney cannot remove the causes of complaint but she can develop creative responses based on previous examples and experiences.

### **Persistent use of Female-voiced Complaint**

Whitney’s second volume, *Nosegay*, published six years after *Copy*, shows that female-voiced complaint still remains a model for her poetry. Within this volume, Whitney self-consciously expands the genre so that there are various motivations for female-voiced complaint; neglectful family members or personal illness (whether of the mind or the body) become the cause of unrest and the trigger for plaintful expression. The *Heroides* remains an important touchstone. In the poem ‘A Careful Complaint by the unfortunate Auctor’ for example, Whitney invokes Dido’s grief as a comparison. The poem is structured to reflect the intertwining of myth and reality and the balancing of comparable experiences, with a shifting of focus from Dido (first four stanzas) to Whitney (signalled by ‘yet), followed by a further four stanzas on Dido before finally returning focus to Whitney (signalled by ‘But I’).

Dido's complaint is described as being caused by male treachery and resulted in her suicide. Whitney's complaint is caused not by an abandoning lover but by her ill fortune: 'For Fortune fell converted hath,/ My health to heapes of payne' (line 19, p. 82). Despite this difference in motivation, she acknowledges that she is part of the 'lucklesse line' of female complainants of which Dido is a famous example, and moreover that she wants to compete with the line:

For though thy Troyan mate,  
 that Lorde AENEAS hight:  
 Requityng yll thy stetfast loue,  
 from Carthage tooke his flight  
 And fowly brake his oth,  
 and promise made before:  
 Whose falshode finisht thy delight,  
 before thy haires were hore.  
 Yet greater cause of grieve  
 compells mee to complayne:  
 For Fortune fell conuerted hath,  
 My health to heapes of payne. (lines 9-20, pp. 81-2)

After summarising the causes of Dido's complaint, with each couplet re-emphasising Aeneas' faults, there is a surprising interruption to this retelling as Whitney turns back to her own situation: 'Yet greater cause of grieve/ compells mee to complayne'. The genre expands to allow this different

‘cause’, revealing the extent of the influence of female-voiced complaint on Whitney’s epistolary poems.

As the poem continues, Whitney presents a more divergent interpretation of the traditional Dido complaint. The absence of Aeneas becomes the way out of pain and complaint for Dido, rather than being the very cause of it:

So might thy cares in tyme,  
be banisht out of thought:  
His absence might well salve the sore,  
that earst his presence wrought. (lines 29-33, p. 82)

An opportunity for change is presented as Dido’s famous suicidal end (which Whitney herself related in her ‘Unconstant Lover’ complaint in *Copy*: ‘Causing the Quene by his untrueth/ with Sword her hart to cleave’ (lines 35-6, p. 4) is replaced by the possibility of recovery. This is a very different interpretation of the Dido who, in Ovid’s *Heroides*, declares her own death both at the beginning and end of her epistle:

Sic ubi fata vocant, udis abiectus in herbis  
ad vada Maeandri concinit albus olor  
...  
nec consumpta rogis inscribar Elissa Sychaei,  
hoc tantum in tumuli marmore carmen erit:  
PRAEBUIT AENEAS ET CAUSAM MORTIS ET ENSEM;  
IPSA SUA DIDO CONCIDIT USA MANU. (lines 1-2; 193-6)

(Thus, at the summons of fate, casting himself down amid the watery  
grasses by the shallows of Maeander, sings the white swan... Nor when I  
have been consumed upon the pyre, shall my inscription read: ELISSA,  
WIFE OF SYCHAEUS; let this brief epitaph be read on the marble of my  
tomb: FROM AENEAS CAME THE CAUSE OF HER DEATH, AND FROM HIM  
THE BLADE; FROM THE HAND OF DIDO HERSELF CAME THE STROKE BY  
WHICH SHE FELL.)<sup>51</sup>

The very fire which Ovid's Dido, while writing her own epitaph at the end of  
her complaint, declares will consume her body, is transformed by Whitney into  
an idiom with a hopeful message:

For fyre no lenger burnes,  
then Faggots feede the flame:  
The want of things that breede annoy,  
may soone redress the same. (lines 37-40, pp. 82-83)

The implication that Dido will recover and find redress for her pains in  
Aeneas' absence is a unique reinterpretation of the Ovidian complaint which  
Whitney seems to employ in order to validate her own complaint. Where Dido  
can learn from her mistake with the help of Aeneas' departure, Whitney  
cannot; her grief, caused not by male treachery but by 'health', is described as  
'endless'. There is a juxtaposition of change (Dido 'hadst liv'de') and  
persistence (the auctor being 'gript with endless griefes') as Whitney tries to  
persuade that she is 'unhappy moste'. This competitive and creative

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<sup>51</sup> Grant Showerman (ed.) and trans., *Ovid: Heroides, Amores* (London: Harvard University Press, 1977), pp. 98-99.

reinterpretation demonstrates the same tendency as her 'Admonition' poem in *Copy* to alter Ovidian models while remaining firmly in the female-voiced complaint genre. Whitney is self-consciously carving a place for herself in the line of complainants.

Despite the expressed personal nature of the 'Certain familier epistles and friendly letters by the auctor', with abandoning lovers replaced by absent siblings, poetry is still at the forefront of Whitney's mind, as she looks to literary posterity: 'But that thy Fame, for ever flourish shall/ If IS. Her Pen, may promise ought at all' (lines 54-55, p. 87). Complaint themes persist in 'To her Brother G.W and To her Brother B.W respectively as each are reproached for their absence and lack of communication: 'But none can tell, if you be well,/ nor where you do soierne/ Which makes me feare, that I shall heare/ your health appaired is' (lines 3-6, p. 73). With 'frowarde Fortune' representing a variety of everyday 'sorowes', causing Is.W's despair in the familiar epistles, the 'air of realism' in the 'verisimilitude of Whitney's verse epistles as letters' is felt more profoundly.<sup>52</sup> Yet, the more personal speaker in these poems can still be compared with literary heroines of complaint.

Whitney's letter 'to C.B in bewaylinge her mishappes' describes her night time complaints:

The dryrie daye in dole (alas)  
 continuallye I spende  
 The noysome nightes, in restlesse Bedde,  
 I bring unto his ende

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<sup>52</sup> Reid, *Ovidian Bibliofictions and the Tudor Book: Metamorphosing Classical Heroines in Late Medieval and Renaissance England*, p.140-2.



And when the daye appeares agayne,  
Then fresh begyn my plaints amayne. (lines 7-12, p. 87)

These lines closely recall Penelope's restless night in the *Heroides*: 'non ego deserto iacuissem frigida lecto/ nec quererer tardos ire relictas dies' ('Then had I not lain cold in my deserted bed, nor would now be left alone complaining of slowly passing days' (poem 1, lines 7-8).<sup>53</sup> Penelope's suffering is applied by Whitney to her different situation of complaint in this poem, in which she seeks comfort and redress not from the wrong-doer, as in Ovid, but from a supportive friend. This creative engagement with female-voiced complaint continues from her poems in *Copy*.

Though more miscellaneous in content than *Copy*, with a translation of an aphoristic work and a Juvenalian satire included as well as the more familial epistolary verse, much of *Nosegay* interacts with complaint. Her inclusion of a version of Hugh Platt's 'Flowers of Philosophy', for example, interacts with a schoolboy and moralised context of classical learning, reminiscent of the 1513 *Ars Amatoria* edition 'The Flores of Ovide' discussed above and signalled by the word 'flowers': '(Schoolboys') first encounter with Ovid usually came in the form of rhetorical handbooks that collected specimens of eloquence. Such handbooks, or 'florilegia' (gatherings of rhetorical flowers), spared tender students the moral trials of reading Ovid first-hand and, should any intrepid readers venture in on their own, they offered a guide to safe reading.'<sup>54</sup> Whitney's version of these 'flowers' however, is presented as more creative

<sup>53</sup> Showerman (ed.) and trans., *Ovid: Heroides, Amores*, p. 10.

<sup>54</sup> Heather James, 'Ovid in Renaissance Literature' in Peter Knox (ed.), *A Companion to Ovid* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2009), pp. 423-441 (p.423).

and experimental as she sets out ‘to chuse of all his flowers/ which may my fancy fill’. (p. 36, lines 89-92). Amongst the ‘flowers’ chosen and turned by Whitney into four-line ballad stanzas are many themes and issues relevant to female-voiced complaint, such as absence and presence (‘yet absence sometime bringeth harm’), and trust and deceit (‘Nor without tryall, trust too much/ to any ones perswation’). There are also lines concerning female expression and complaint:

A miserable grieve it is,  
by him to have a harme  
On whom we dare not once complaine  
nor can our selves him charme. (verse 89, p. 64)

Here the adage resolves that the greater grief comes when there is an inability to complain. As we have seen, Whitney is less concerned with eradicating grief than preserving the opportunities for female expression and literary experimentation.

Ultimately, the genre of female-voiced complaint provides a model for Whitney and a way for her to publish poetry. Whitney was able to position her works in relation to the female-voiced complaints in the popular print miscellanies (which interacted with the manuscript miscellany tradition), and to Turberville’s *Heroides*. Rather than restricting the appearance of female-voiced lyrics as in the miscellanies, or translating in the style of a set piece school exercise as in Turberville, Whitney offers a unique expansion of the genre which is both highly allusive and self-consciously ‘familial’, especially in *Nosegay*, causes and motivations for complaint become more personal and

not contingent on male treachery. She both remains in and departs from complaint traditions in offering a moralised reading of the *Heroides*, yet challenging the moralisation of female complainants by holding heroes like Aeneas and Jason up to scrutiny, and in engaging with the epistolary and answer-poem form, yet establishing a more personal form of epistolarity which ties author and persona. While seeming to offer women advice so that they can avoid needing recourse to complaint, she actually writes self-consciously, creatively, and persistently from within the genre. This writing, and yet changing, from within is a method of generic engagement and development which we will see consistently employed by early modern women writers of female-voiced complaint.

## Chapter 2

### Lady Mary Wroth and the post-sonnet sequence ‘female-voiced’ complaint

There has been a trend amongst critics interested in framed Elizabethan ‘female-voiced’ complaint poems to describe their appearance as a ‘vogue’. Hallett Smith begins this vogue for ‘vogue’ in 1952 by discussing ‘the vogue of the new complaint poem [started] by Samuel Daniel with *The Complaint of Rosamond* in 1592’.<sup>1</sup> Shirley Sharon-Zisser similarly comments on ‘the vogue of the pastoral complaint in Renaissance England [which was] accompanied by the fashion of prefacing a complaint with a sonnet sequence’.<sup>2</sup> Donald Jellerson refers to the ‘vogue for what John Kerrigan has called “female complaint” poems: a succession of poems published in the 1590s featuring the ghosts of lamenting women’.<sup>3</sup>

This epithetical repetition of critical discourse does not, thankfully, result in limited or plagiarised ideas about these poems. However, there seems to be a lack of consensus around what exactly is *voguish* about the poems: is it the placement of complaints after sonnet sequences; is it the female-voiced element; is it their focus on fallen (and/or dead) women; or is it the pastoral setting? This lack of consensus may explain why there is limited comparative

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<sup>1</sup> Hallett Smith, *Elizabethan Poetry: A Study in Conventions, Meaning, and Expression* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1952), p. 104.

<sup>2</sup> Shirley Sharon-Zisser and Stephen Whitworth, ‘Introduction: Generating Dialogue on Shakespeare’s *A Lover’s Complaint*’ in Shirley Sharon-Zisser (ed.), *Critical Essays on Shakespeare’s A Lover’s Complaint: Suffering Ecstasy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 1-54 (p. 10).

<sup>3</sup> Donald Jellerson, *Ghost Complaint: Historiography, Gender, and the return of the dead in Elizabethan Literature* (Vanderbilt University, Dissertation, 2009), p. 11.

study and close analyses of these poems. In some of the criticisms referenced above, for example, there are different ideas about when the ‘vogue’ begins: Smith says it was inspired by Daniel’s *Complaint of Rosamond* (1592), Sharon-Zisser argues for Gascoigne’s *The Complaint of Philomene* (1576), and Jellerson proposes Churchyard’s *Shore’s Wife* (1563). The selection of different contenders for the beginning of the vogue demonstrates the various ways and different traditions in which these poems can be studied.

Seeing Churchyard’s *Shore’s Wife*, for example, as the forerunner suggests a concentration of the ‘female-voiced’ aspect. Although there are clearly female-voiced complaints in English before Churchyard’s poem, Turberville’s *Heroical Epistles* and Whitney’s complaint epistles which have been considered in the previous chapter being notable examples, the 1563 *Mirror for Magistrates* edition is an anomaly. Its placement of a female complainant amongst all the famous male speakers (in combination with the subsequent popularity of the verse collection) may give it a special place in the tradition of female-voiced complaint. As Wendy Wall puts it, the ‘gendered encroachment’ of Jane Shore ‘(ushers) a literary trend’.<sup>4</sup> Being included in the *Mirror for Magistrates* second edition, the Jane Shore complaint is not positioned after a sonnet sequence but is part of a line of ghost laments common to the *de casibus* tradition of complainants from chronicle history.

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<sup>4</sup> Wall, *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 250. As Lindsay Ann Reid notes, there followed further female *Mirror* complainants: ‘Following the inclusion of Shore’s Wife’s lament in 1563, greater numbers of female voices were integrated into later editions of *A Mirror for Magistrates*. John Higgins’s 1574 edition included the tragedies of Elstride, wife of Humber, and her daughter Sabrine, as well as the story of Lear’s daughter Cordelia.’ See Lindsay Ann Reid, *Ovidian Bibliofictions and the Tudor Book: Metamorphosing Classical Heroines in Late Medieval and Renaissance England*, p. 166.

Daniel's *Rosamond* includes an intertextual allusion to 'Shores Wife', which both compares and contrasts their position as female complainants appearing *post mortem*, with Rosamond 'left behinde', coming after the example of Jane Shore who has passed through both her ghostly state and obscurity:

Shores wife is grac'd, and passes for a Saint;  
Her Legend iustifies her foule attaint;  
Her well-told tale did such compassion finde,  
That she is pass'd, and I am left behinde. (lines 25-28, pp.165-166)<sup>5</sup>

The reference to the 'foule attaint' also ensures that the moral judgement on the woman's chastity is not forgotten despite the 'compassion' that she achieves when her complaint is made public ('well-told').

Thomas Lodge's *The Complaint of Elstred* (published a year after Daniel's *Rosamond*), has a similar combination of ghost lament and moral exemplarity, with the complainant (and her daughter) having been killed by King Locrinus' jealous wife in a similar experience to Rosamond, who was allegedly murdered by Queen Eleanor.<sup>6</sup> The King's former mistress Elstred appears as a 'woefull vision' to Damon (the male speaker of the preceding sonnets) and the aim of her complaint ('May teache successions to avoyde my fall' (lines 21, 24)), recalls the didactic and edifying ambitions which are common to the Mirror complaints. Daniel's *Rosamond* has the same desire to help the reader to avoid her negative experience: 'To teach to others, what I

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<sup>5</sup> Samuel Daniel, *The Complaint of Rosamond* (1592) in John Kerrigan (ed.), *Motives of Woe: Shakespeare and Female Complaint* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 165-190.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Lodge, *Phylis, Honoured with Pastorall Sonnets, Elegies, and Amorous Delights. Where-unto is annexed, the tragicall complaynt of Elstred* (London: John Busbie, 1593).

learnt too late:/ Exemplifie my frailtie, tell howe Fate' (lines 67-68, p.167).

This also shows the influence of the more heavily gendered moralising tradition of *Heroides* translations and receptions which have been highlighted in the previous chapter.

The emphasis of these complaints on the women's 'fall' and 'fault', a discourse which Shakespeare's female complainant also shares in ('Ay me! I fell; and yet do question make/ What I should do again for such a sake' (lines 321-322, p. 220),<sup>7</sup> shows the double standard at the heart of the poems, as they often 'feature subjects who confess the wrongs done to them as well as the wrongs they have done'.<sup>8</sup> This double standard is often a gendered one, for example with the blame being on the loss of female chastity ('There my white stole of chastity I daft' (line 297, p. 220), recalling Ovidian rape culture where women and not men are to blame. There is also the sense in *Rosamond* that the greater powers of heaven or history are party to this injustice: 'For that must hap decreed by heavenly powers,/ Who worke our fall, yet make the fault still ours.' (lines 412-413, p. 179) The feeling of inevitability about the woman's downfall is epitomised by the famously cyclical ending of Shakespeare's poem: 'Would yet again betray the fore-betray'd,/ And new pervert a reconciled maid!' (lines 328-329, p. 221). The exemplary words of the female-voiced complainants are thus often proved ineffective as the focus remains on their inevitable fall and surrender to shame.

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<sup>7</sup> William Shakespeare, *A Lover's Complaint* (1609) in John Kerrigan (ed.), *Motives of Woe: Shakespeare and Female Complaint* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 209-221.

<sup>8</sup> Joanne Diaz, *Grief as Medicine for Grief: Complaint Poetry in Early Modern England, 1559–1609* (Northwestern University, Dissertation, 2008), p. 77.

Heather Dubrow in her study of Shakespeare's epyllia discusses Hallett Smith's 'narrower framework' of 'complaints written about inviolably chaste women in the 1590s'.<sup>9</sup> She argues that 'although these poems may deviate from the formula in small particulars... they follow it closely enough – and appear in close conjunction with each other – for contemporary readers to have sensed themselves in the presence of a subgenre.'<sup>10</sup> Despite some variations, for example in the ghost lament element (which is present in *Rosamond* and *Elstred*, following *Shore's Wife* but not in Shakespeare's *A Lover's Complaint* or Wroth's *A Shepherd*), and the development of the post-sonnet positioning (which does not apply to *Shore's Wife* but is a repeated feature of these framed complaint poems from Daniel's *Rosamond* onwards), the writers and readers would be aware that they are part of a sub-genre. There are many links, echoes and recurring themes between the texts, which suggests both that the contemporary poets were responding to each other and that they were influenced by the same traditions (both classical and vernacular).<sup>11</sup>

This popularity and generic recognition is epitomised by a poem published at the end of Giles Fletcher's *Licia* (1593), entitled 'Whereunto is added the rising to the crowne of Richard the third'.<sup>12</sup> The opening stanzas are

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<sup>9</sup> Heather Dubrow, 'A Mirror for Complaints: Shakespeare's Lucrece and Generic Tradition' (399-417) in Barbara Lewalski (ed.), *Renaissance Genres: Essays on Theory, History, and Interpretation* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1986), pp. 102-130 (p. 401).

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 401.

<sup>11</sup> See John Kerrigan, *Motives of Woe: Shakespeare and Female Complaint* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 1. Kerrigan has discussed the classical and vernacular traditions of these types of complaint poem, for example: 'Shakespeare and his contemporaries were familiar, not only with forms of chronicle-complaint leading back through *A Myrroure for Magistrates* to Boccaccio, and with pastoral, epic, and epistolary laments stemming from Theocritus, Virgil, and Ovid, but with ballads and courtly lyrics which carried into the Renaissance motifs from the early Middle Ages'.

<sup>12</sup> Giles Fletcher, *Licia, or Poemes of loue in honour of the admirable and singular vertues of his lady, to the imitation of the best Latin poets, and others. Whereunto is added the rising to the crowne of Richard the third* (Cambridge: John Legat, 1593).



taken up with providing a justification for the poem, particularly in connection with the contemporaneous 'female-voiced' complaint poems which were found annexed to sonnet sequences. Fletcher is justifying the male gender of his complainant, which is actually quite remarkable considering a complaint in the voice of Richard III already appears in the (predominantly male-voiced) *Mirror for Magistrates*. Fletcher lists the female complainants who appear published by poets whose precedent he is not following:

*Shores* wife, a subject, though a Princesse mate,  
 Had little cause her fortune to lament.  
 Her birth was meane, and yet she liv'd with State,  
 The King was dead before her honour went.  
*Shores* wife might fall, and none can justly wonder,  
 To see her fall, that useth to lye under.

*Rosamond* was fayre, and farre more fayre then she,  
 Her fall was great, and but a womans fall.  
 Tryfles are these, compare them but with me,  
 My fortunes farre, were higher then they all.  
 I left this land, possest with Civill strife,  
 And lost a Crowne, mine honour, and my life.

*Elstred* I pitie, for she was a Queene,  
 But for my selfe, to sigh I sorrow want,  
 Her fall was great, but greater falles have beene,  
 "Some falles they have, that use the Court to haunt.

A toye did happen, and this Queene dismayd,

But yet I see not why she was afraid. (lines 7-18, sig.L2r-L3v)

The women's complaints are called 'trifles' compared to Richard's, as the competitive intertextuality which we have already seen in Daniel's *Rosamond* is given a misogynist emphasis. Jane Shore's fall is seen as justified by her lack of honour, as she is described as 'useth to lye under'. Richard argues that as his starting point was 'higher', being a man of honour and a King, his fall is the greater. The fact that Fletcher felt it necessary to allude to the female complainants in this poem about Richard, which itself is positioned after a collection of amorous sonnets, signals and evidences the presence of a sub-generic tradition.

A key contention of this chapter is that the 'female-voiced' aspect of the poems is much more complex than it is presented by both modern critics and early modern poets such as Giles Fletcher (who, for example, describes Daniel's *Rosamond* as 'a woman's fall'). Near the beginning of his book, John Kerrigan quotes Smith's description of 'a vogue of complaint poems about women in the 1590s'.<sup>13</sup> This quotation is instructive and entices further questions: 'a vogue of complaint poems *about women*'. The prepositional 'about women' recalls the term "female complaint" used by Kerrigan throughout his landmark study and anthology of complaint poetry. It also marginalises or downplays the potential agency of the female voice within these poems by describing them merely as 'about women'. It suggests that the

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<sup>13</sup> Kerrigan, *Motives of Woe: Shakespeare and Female Complaint*, p. 1, quoting Hallet Smith, 'A Lover's Complaint', in Gwynne Blakemore Evans (ed.), *The Riverside Shakespeare*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1996).

women are talked about in the third person rather than talking themselves in the first person. This is actually a crucial interpretive choice. The title to this chapter adopts Kerrigan-style apostrophes in its generic labelling (post sonnet-sequence ‘female-voiced’ complaint) in order to represent this interpretive question. It foregrounds a key point of interest in these complaints, especially in looking at a woman writing them. When reading these poems, one can find oneself asking: Are they female-voiced in the way that the *Heroides* are? Or are they just poems ‘about women’? And, if we are disposed to ask these questions, why and how did a woman like Lady Mary Wroth participate in this generic iconoclasm which seems to build frames around subjectivity, equating ventriloquism with voyeurism, and weakening the potentially strong subjectivity of female-voiced complaint?

My use of the phrase ‘post-sonnet ‘female-voiced’ complaint’ in the title to this chapter also reveals that I think the post-sonnet positioning of the poems is important and that the two parts of this descriptor complement and inform each other. For Mary Wroth for example, as we shall see, the conventionality of the sub-genre allowed her to engage with the tradition while doing something different. For poets like Daniel and Shakespeare, the ‘female-voiced’ potential of the complaint is made more attractive in its post-sonnet sequence position as it allows a contrast with the first person (male) voice of the preceding sonnets. Similarly, the ‘female-voiced’ nature of Wroth’s post-sonnet sequence complaint allows a reflection on what precedes it, but in a different way as Wroth’s sonnets are, uniquely, in a first-person female voice.

I restrict my study in the main to post-sonnet sequence ‘female-voiced’ complaint, but also consider the poets’ wider engagements with the genre. I examine how a woman writer approaches this new generic creation, specifically Lady Mary Wroth’s poem ‘A shepherd who no care did take’.<sup>14</sup> I argue that Wroth’s complaint ought to be studied alongside post-sonnet ‘female-voiced’ complaints such as Daniel’s *The Complaint of Rosamond* and that a comparative study can illuminate such issues as female subjectivity and voice which are central to Ovidian female-voiced complaint poetry at large.

These complaint poems signal a more creative engagement with Ovidian complaint than previous female-voiced complaint poems influenced by Ovid’s *Heroides*. As well as not being ‘straight-forwardly’ female-voiced owing to the framed and dialogic elements of the texts, the complaints are not presented as letters but are more akin to a dramatic performance. In the place of epistolarity however, is a heightened sense of the ventriloquism innate to Heroidean authorship and there remains an explicit focus on the wrong-doer and the motives behind the complaint even if he is not a direct epistolary addressee. The poems also rely on a domesticating technique of reception, relocating the genre within an Elizabethan/ Jacobean context through engagements with the new and popular sonnet sequences and pastoral romances. Yet Ovid remains an important touchstone and the issues highlighted in post-sonnet sequence ‘female-voiced’ complaints can be traced back to those which embody the *Heroides* and make Ovid’s text such a rich one for both creative and critical engagement.

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<sup>14</sup> Henceforth *A Shepherd*. All quotations of Mary Wroth *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* poems are from Paul Salzman (ed.), *Mary Wroth’s Poetry: An Electronic Edition* (2012), accessed at <http://wroth.latrobe.edu.au/critical-introduction.html>.

### **Lady Mary Wroth's post-sonnet sequence complaint?**

Not until Jonathan Gibson's landmark article "Cherchez la femme: Mary Wroth and Shakespeare's Sonnets", has Wroth's *A Shepherd* really been considered in connection with Ovid's *Heroides* and Elizabethan-Jacobean post-sonnet sequence complaints such as Daniel's *Rosamond* and Shakespeare's *A Lover's Complaint*.<sup>15</sup> Gibson's article comparing Wroth with Shakespeare has an ulterior motive as the links he elucidates between the two poets are used in order to further an argument for Mary Wroth being Shakespeare's mysterious Dark Lady.

However, Gibson makes some very important observations about Wroth's work. Firstly, he opens up the possibility, quoting Parker, that *A Shepherd* (and the following grief-themed poems, including 'I, who doe feel the highest part of grief') 'are "a deliberate extension of the sequence rather than (in Robert's dismissive view) 'a group of miscellaneous poems"'.<sup>16</sup> This refers to the fact that, seemingly ignored by scholars owing to an over-reliance on Josephine Robert's seminal edition of Wroth's poetry,<sup>17</sup> these post sonnet-sequence poems only appear in this position in the Folger manuscript version of Wroth's *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*.<sup>18</sup> When Wroth's work was published

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<sup>15</sup> Jonathan Gibson, 'Cherchez la femme', *The Times Literary Supplement*, Issue 5289 (August 2004), p. 12.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> As Gibson elucidates, 'Roberts followed the substantive readings of 1621, while taking spelling, punctuation and capitalization from the Folger manuscript. Though Roberts was perfectly open about what she was doing, this procedure seems to have misled some critics into thinking that her text was an edition of the Folger manuscript'.

<sup>18</sup> Folger Shakespeare Library, Mary Wroth, *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, MS V.a.104 in Salzman (ed.), *Mary Wroth's Poetry: An Electronic Edition* (2012), accessed at <http://wroth.latrobe.edu.au/critical-introduction.html>.

much later in 1621,<sup>19</sup> *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* was altered: poems were re-ordered and some were no longer included. Most notably, the final poems were removed so that the sequence concludes with the more uplifting sonnet ‘My Muse is now happy lay thy selfe to rest’ rather than the lengthy ‘female-voiced’ complaint poem *A Shepherd* and other complaint-themed poems. As I will discuss below, where in particular the complaint *A Shepherd* is transferred to within the *Urania* prose romance, and the fact that it is transferred rather than removed completely from the print edition, are also significant to its reception as an Ovidian female-voiced complaint.

As Gibson first makes clear, there are arguments for and against Wroth self-consciously positioning her complaint after her sonnet sequence in the manuscript. The introduction to the La Trobe online Mary Wroth edition questions the likelihood of this intentional positioning:

That the structure of Wroth's manuscript is similar to Shakespeare's printed sonnets, in so far as both end with a complaint...seems an unlikely comparison to me, as the Shakespeare volume consists of a sequence of 154 sonnets and the complaint, while Wroth's manuscript follows a pattern very similar to her father's volume of interspersed songs and sonnets, which gives her volume an entirely different feel to the Shakespeare book.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Mary Wroth, *The Countesse of Mountgomeries Urania. Written by the right honorable the Lady Mary Wroath. Daughter to the right noble Robert Earle of Leicester. And neece to the ever famous, and renowned Sr. Phillips Sidney knight. And to ye most excele[n]t Lady Mary Countesse of Pembroke late deceased* (London: John Marriott and John Grismand, 1621).

<sup>20</sup> Paul Salzman, *Mary Wroth's Poetry: An Electronic Edition* (2012), Critical Introduction, note 27. Accessed at <http://wroth.latrobe.edu.au/critical-introduction.html>.

A counter-argument to this observation could be that while Wroth may take inspiration from her father's preference for interspersing songs and sonnets, this does not mean that she did not also take inspiration from elsewhere for the inclusion of a 'female-voiced' complaint poem. As for the three extra poems placed with Wroth's complaint poem, this more miscellaneous inclusion was not uncommon; in Samuel Daniel's sonnet sequence, for example, there are two 'odes' which follow the main body of *Delia* and come before the *Complaint of Rosamond*.

As Wall suggests, the initial reason for Daniel including poems at the end of the sonnet sequence may have been one of practicality and logistics, though this does not mean that the resultant 'pseudomorphic form' is not one which is generative and influential:

While this first grouping may have been inspired by the physical conditions of publication – the necessity to 'make up' the text by including a shorter work at the end – its subsequent popularity and the way in which Daniel positions the poems to reflect and comment on each other creates a paradigm for their interconnection.<sup>21</sup>

Though the exact formal structure may differ, there are key similarities between the 'female-voiced' complaints, especially those connected to voice and subjectivity, which have a particular weight when the complaint is presented to a reader in connection with a preceding sonnet sequence.

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<sup>21</sup> Wall, *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance*, p. 253.

However, there are also things to be learnt if we receive Wroth's *A Shepherd* in its translated position in the *Urania* instead.

Whether the removal of complaint poems from their manuscript post-sonnet positioning in print was Wroth's own personal choice or whether it was as the result of publishing pressures by editors and printers, it is difficult to know. However, I think it is clear that Wroth was aware of the 'female-voiced' post-sonnet complaint sub-genre and the opportunities that this form could offer, shown by her engagement with the recurring themes and issues such as the complexity of voice and subjectivity as represented by the presence of frames and exchanges of dialogue; the influence of Ovid and a tendency to use *exempla*; and a focus on the themes of constancy and fame. Thus it seems likely that the initial positioning of the complaint in her manuscript *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* was an intentional nod towards that sub-genre. Ultimately, I would argue that the repositioning of poems in print does not preclude an awareness of post-sonnet sequence 'female-voiced' complaint. Indeed, Daniel's *Rosamond* was often published without *Delia*, and often with other female-voiced poetic works (for example Daniel's 'Letter from Octavia to Marcus Antonius') in later editions of his works, showing both the popularity and flexibility of *Rosamond* in that it developed a literary life of its own.

Before thinking further about Wroth's engagement with 'female-voiced' complaint, it is instructive to consider the connection between Samuel Daniel and Mary Wroth. Critical comparisons between the two are lacking,



not merely because of the generational gap but for reasons connected to genre and gender.<sup>22</sup> As Gibson concludes:

*Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*'s connection with the lover's-complaint tradition has been obscured by the authority of Roberts's edition. Also, critics have tended to analyse Wroth's sonnets alongside sonnets by her uncle Sir Philip Sidney and her father, Sir Robert Sidney, rather than in tandem with other Petrarchist sequences. More generally, there seems to have been a tendency for the study of Renaissance women writers and the study of Shakespeare to move in separate worlds.<sup>23</sup>

Where Gibson says Shakespeare, one could also say Daniel. In fact, there are many links between Wroth and Daniel, and Wroth's common literary comparison with the Sidneys does not have to obscure this. Daniel's *Delia* is dedicated to Mary Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, Mary Wroth's aunt. During this *recusatio*-style dedication, in which Daniel alludes to the apparently unwanted publication of some of his *Delia* sonnets amongst the sonnets of Philip Sidney in the 1591 edition of *Astrophil and Stella*, he calls on the 'protection' of Mary Herbert, who is described as the 'Patronesse of the Muses'. This recalls Mary Herbert's own position as a writer and a patron. Her house at Wilton was known as a place of literary production and education both before and after Philip Sidney's death. Samuel Daniel was a tutor at Wilton to the Countess' children and he also seems to have begun writing poetry himself there:

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<sup>22</sup> In fact, although Mary Wroth's edition was published in 1621, the manuscript is thought to have been transcribed as early as 1613.

<sup>23</sup> Gibson, 'Cherchez la femme', p. 12.

Having beene first encourag'd or fram'd thereunto by your most  
 Worthy and Honourable Mother (Countess of Pembroke), receiving the  
 first notion for the formall ordering of those compositions at *Wilton*,  
 which I must ever acknowledge to have beene my best Schoole, and  
 thereof alwayes am to hold a feeling and grateful Memory. (*A Defence  
 of Rhyme*, sig. E8r)<sup>24</sup>

Although there is no direct evidence to suggest that Daniel also tutored Wroth, it is likely that their paths crossed at Wilton. Mary Sidney was Wroth's godmother and namesake as well as her aunt, and the closeness of the two is emphasised by the former referring to Wroth as 'my pretey daughter'.<sup>25</sup> Wroth, thus 'empowered by her heritage as a Sidney woman',<sup>26</sup> became a literary patron herself (as shown, for example, in Ben Jonson's dedication to *The Alchemist* and his poem 'A Sonnet to the Noble Lady, the Lady Mary Wroth'). The influence of the Sidneys on Wroth suggests that she was at least very familiar with Daniel's works.

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<sup>24</sup> Samuel Daniel, *A Defence of Rhyme*, in the edition *A panegyrike congratatorie deliuered to the Kings most excellent Maiestie at Burleigh Harrington in Rutlandshire. By Samuel Daniel. Also certaine epistles, with a defence of ryme heretofore written, and now published by the author* (London: Edward Blount, 1603).

<sup>25</sup> British Library, 'Mary Sidney, the Countess of Pembroke, to Barbara Sidney, 9 Sept. 1590', Addit.MS 15, 232. As Hannay says: 'From the occasional references in letters and account books, we can deduce that young Mary was frequently in the company of her learned aunt, particularly during her mother's many pregnancies.' Margaret Hannay, 'The Countess of Pembroke as Mentor' in Naomi Miller and Gary Waller (eds.), *Reading Mary Wroth: Representing Alternatives in Early Modern England* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), pp. 15-34 (p. 22).

<sup>26</sup> Margaret Hannay, 'O Daughter Heare': Reconstructing the Lives of Aristocratic Englishwomen', in Betty Travitsky and Adele Seeff (eds.), *Attending to Women in Early Modern England* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1994), pp. 35-63 (p. 38).

### **Wroth and Daniel's wider engagements with Ovidian complaint**

Though, as we shall see, their post-sonnet sequence 'female-voiced' complaints are in many ways different, Wroth and Daniel clearly have a shared interest in the themes connected with Ovidian complaint. As an example of this, I will first of all examine two poems, one by Daniel and the second by Wroth, which are so similar that one could certainly argue that Wroth's poem was a response to or a variation on the theme of Daniel's. As I have already mentioned, in Daniel's *Delia*, there is an 'ode' (one of two) after the sonnets and before Rosamond's complaint:

Eccho daughter of the ayre,  
 Babbling gheste of Rocks and Hills,  
 Knowes the name of my fearce Fayre,  
 And soundes the accents of my ills:  
 Each thing pitties my dispaire,  
 Whilst that she her Louer kills.

Whilst that she O cruell Maide,  
 Doth me, and my true loue dispise:  
 My liues florish is decayde  
 That depended on her eyes:  
 But her will must be obaide,  
 And well he' ends for loue who dies. (sig. E5v)<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Samuel Daniel, *Delia and Rosamond augmented Cleopatra* (London: Simon Waterson, 1594).

Ovidian Echo is addressed in the first stanza as a ‘babbling gheste’, spreading the male speaker’s complaints across the ‘rocks and hills’ of a pastoral scene.

The sound of the name of his ‘fearce Fayre’ (referring to the unreciprocating Delia) triggers the turn to address the ‘cruell Maide’ herself in the second stanza. Introducing the idea of ‘fame’ which is to follow in *Rosamond*, this poem suggests that complaints have the power to make Delia ‘known’. This memorising effect of complaint is a consolatory prize. The ‘pitty’ coming from ‘each thing’ also introduces the consolatory and community aspect of complaint. Despite Delia refusing to pity the complainant, there is some consolation in the form of the inanimate objects echoing the complaint. This ‘pitty’ element is present in the *Rosamond* poem which follows as the complaint is figured as effective in winning the empathy of Delia (who is then in the position of third party) and the ‘griefs’ of *Rosamond* are comparable to Daniel’s own in the preceding sonnets.

The similarity between Daniel’s ode and a Mary Wroth sonnet, the first interspersed poem of the *Urania*, is striking:

Unseene, unknowne, I here alone complaine  
 To rocks, to hills, to meadowes, and to springs,  
 Which can no helpe returne to ease my paine,  
 But back my sorrowes the sad Eccho brings.  
 Thus still encreasing are my woes to me,  
 Doubly resounded by that monefull voice,  
 Which seemes to second me in miserie,  
 And answere gives like friend of mine owne choice.

Thus onely she doth my companion prove,  
 The others silently doe offer ease:  
 But those that grieve, a grieving note doe love;  
 Pleasures to dying eies bring but disease:  
 And such am I, who daily ending live,  
 Wayling a state which can no comfort give. (lines 1-14, p.146)<sup>28</sup>

Wroth's female speaker, in contrast to Daniel's male speaker, complains 'to rocks, to hills' in a similar pastoral setting with 'sad Eccho' bringing 'back my sorrowes' just as Daniel has Echo sounding 'the accents of my ills'. Wroth's connection of eyes and disease towards the end of the poem, 'Pleasures to dying eies bring but disease', recalls the ocular turn in Daniel's poem: 'My liues flourish is decayde/ That depended on her eyes'. Where Daniel ends his poem in the comforting Petrarchan trope of dying for love however, Wroth's complainant does not die but 'daily ending live', left behind in the isolated pastoral setting. Wroth's speaker seems to receive no comfort either in life or death. The focus for her complainant is on the speaker's role rather than that of the cruel addressee as in Daniel. Echo is singled out as her only 'friend' (unlike the general 'each thing' pitying Daniel's speaker) with 'the others' not helpful in her plight because they 'silently doe offer ease'. Only the expression of grief is the correct response to grief and in Wroth's poem it is Echo, a personified female character, who voices this empathetic repetition of woe.

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<sup>28</sup> Josephine Roberts (ed.), *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth* (Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1983).

The opening of Wroth's poem with 'unseene, unknowne' works as a comment on post-sonnet sequence 'female-voiced' complaint. A standard trope in these poems is that the female complainant laments her lot, thinking that she is alone, when actually she is seen and heard by a hidden male. This provides a frame to the complaint, meaning it is not straightforwardly female-voiced and so threatens a female subjectivity by the voyeuristic intrusion. Though this construction is not present in Daniel's *Complaint of Rosamond*, there is a comparable framing device employed which puts the focus back on Daniel as the first person (male-voiced) speaker of the poem. At the end of Daniel's *Rosamond* the very same terms as Wroth are used but in a different way: 'Who made me knowne, must make me live unseene'. This seems to be a direct comment on the framing device of the poem. As the last 7 lines of the poem (from line 736 onwards: 'So vanisht shee, and left me to returne') close the frame and are back in the voice of Daniel rather than Rosamond, this final line ('Who made me knowne, must make me live unseene' (line 742, p. 190) recognises that in 'female-voiced' complaint Daniel can be 'knowne' as a poet but that he must hide and pass the authorial stance onto Rosamond.

In Wroth's 'unseen, unknowne' poem, there is no frame; the speaker is truly alone. This allows for a more straight-forward female voice and also reflects back onto the immediate context of this complaint in the prose romance, where Urania is mourning her ignorance of her own birth and parents. In Wroth's poem, Echo is a 'companion' and a 'friend' in this misery, another complaining female voice, rather than the detached means of over-hearing which the legacy of Echo becomes in framed complaints, as in the 'rewording' and 'double voice' which Shakespeare's speaker 'espies' in A

*Lover's Complaint*. Crucially though, by specifying the setting as 'unseene, unknowne', by including Echo and a Shakespearean 'doubly resounded by that monefull voice', Wroth acknowledges the contemporary generic contexts of 'female-voiced' complaint while doing something different.

Even though this poem is in the *Urania* rather than positioned after a sonnet sequence, it shows that Wroth has an awareness of the traditions influencing framed 'female-voiced' complaints. Her debt to Ovid is experienced throughout her work. Many of the interspersed poems and songs in *Urania* and *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* are influenced by Ovidian complaint: 'I, who doe feele the highest part of grief' (which appears as the final poem in the *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* Folger manuscript and is published in the *Urania* (U24)) for example, is a first-person female-voiced complaint described by Gibson as a 'small-scale anthology of ideas from the *Heroides*'.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, the poem combines the tones (often juxtaposed in the *Heroides*) of accusation, lament and persuasion as a Dido-like figure tries to come to terms with her abandonment: 'Have I offended? T'was att your desire/ When by your vowes, you felt lov's fire' (lines 11-12, U24).<sup>30</sup> Like Dido, the broken vow, 'fidem', is emphasised, giving the betrayal a legal and religious ramification. Yet, also like Dido, the complainant still urges her lover's return: 'Kindly relent, lett causeless curstnes fly/ Give butt one sigh, I blest shall dy' (lines 17-18). As in the *Heroides*, persuasion is given as much of a place in the poems as lament or revenge.

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<sup>29</sup> Gibson, 'Cherchez la femme', p. 12.

<sup>30</sup> Roberts, (ed.), *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*, p. 163.

Another Wroth poem which is included within *Urania*, ‘Deare, though unconstant these I send to you’ (U35, p. 172),<sup>31</sup> alludes to the *Heroides* most directly. The opening lines clearly place the poem in the Ovidian tradition:

Deare, though unconstant, these I send to you  
 As witnesses, that still my Love is true  
 Receive these Lines as Images of Death  
 That beare the Infants of my latest breath (lines 1-4)

This self-conscious reference to the epistolary nature of the poem (signalled by the terms ‘deare’ and ‘send’) and to the very process of writing is particularly Heroidean, especially in its linking of writing with death. An extreme example in Ovid’s text is the opening to *Canace to Macareus*, where Canace draws attention to the blots on the page and to the sword in her hand as she writes:

Siqua tamen caecis errabunt scripta lituris,  
 oblitus a dominae caede libellus erit.  
 Dextra tenet calamus, strictum tenet altera ferrum,  
 et iacet in gremio charta soluta meo

(If aught of what I write is yet blotted deep and escapes your eye, ‘twill be because the little roll has been stained by its mistress’ blood. My right hand holds the pen, a drawn blade the other holds, and the paper lies unrolled in my lap.) (*Heroides 11*, lines 1-4)<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 172.

<sup>32</sup> Showerman (ed) and trans, *Ovid: Heroides, Amores*, p. 133.



Wroth's poem becomes a *Heroides* in microcosm as she uses the stories of Dido and Aeneas, Ariadne and Theseus, Phillis and Demophon, Medea and Jason, and Penelope and Ulysses as 'Examples' of her distress.

Wroth's employment of exempla here is unlike Daniel's *Complaint of Rosamond*, where Rosamond in the 'Mirror' tradition is positioned as an example for others to copy in a moralistic and didactic vein ('To teach others, what I learnt too late/ Exemplifie my frailtie, tell how Fate'). In Wroth's poem, the heroines are figured as comforting predecessors owing to their shared experiences: 'Especially, my ending is the lesse/ When I Examples see of my distresse' (lines 7-8). Yet Wroth's speaker (Dorolina) also compares herself with each of the heroines to ensure that her plight is not underestimated, being placed in such illustrious company: 'Faire Ariadne never tooke more care/ Then I did how you might in safety fare/ Her thrid my life was to draw you from harme' (lines 15-17). There is a competitive element here as Wroth offers a bolder female complainant than Ovid's Ariadne. Whilst, unusually, placing Ariadne in an active position (as if she is pulling Theseus to safety rather than the more usual passive image of Theseus being guided by a thread),<sup>33</sup> Dorolina makes sure that the 'I' of the poem is not lost by comparing her situation to a legendary mythic character. Wroth transforms the feminine image of wool-work to a metaphoric demonstration of her devotion and loyalty.

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<sup>33</sup> E.g. Daniel's *Rosamond*: 'And he himselfe came guided by a threed' (line 483). There is no female subject needed grammatically due to the passive verb.

From line 73, after the allusion to Penelope and Ulysses, Wroth's speaker shifts the focus of the poem (the remaining 28 lines) back onto her lover with an imperative refrain influenced by the Ovidian epistle:

Come you now back, I thus invite you home

And love you, as if you did never roame:

I have forgot it as if never done,

And doe but thinke me a new to be wone. (lines 73-76, p. 174)

The paradox of 'roaming' and 'constancy'; 'strangers', 'falshood' and 'chaste loves' in the closing section, punctured by the refrain ('Come you now backe... Come back to me... Come, I say, come again... Come, and give life') clearly invokes Penelope's complaint. There is shown here an understanding of the uncomfortable double standard inherent in Ovidian complaint; the paradox of complaining and yet wanting the man to return. These lines also reflect the endless cycle of complaint as promoted in the framed poems of Shakespeare and Daniel where the complainant's current position is caused by a sexual shame. There is even the hint that Wroth's speaker can appear, ghost-like, hiding all previous faults 'I shall appeare, it may be, as I did,/ And all passd faults shall in my breast be hid' (lines 77-78). Yet, there is always a counter-emphasis in the poem that it is the Ulysses figure at fault ('from me have made you fall') and that the female speaker intends to use the erotic potential of the vacant marital bed. In this poem, Wroth shows how her complaint poems are informed by both vernacular and Ovidian traditions.

### **Links between sonnets and complaints**

Joyce MacDonald, in her article which argues for the influence of Ovidian pastoral on Wroth's dramatic work *Love's Victory*, makes an observation about scholarship on Wroth:

Recently, critics have begun to discuss Renaissance women writers' use of Ovid, although discussion of Wroth's classicism is still fairly rare. By tracing some of the contours of Wroth's encounter with the *Metamorphoses* or with the Ovidian poetics that this encounter modelled, I have hoped to further discussion of the nature of Wroth's writerly-ness.<sup>34</sup>

Indeed, a study of Wroth's Heroidean poetics is crucial to understanding her post-sonnet sequence *A Shepherd*, illuminating the significance of complaint poetry in her work. As displayed by the poems already discussed, Ovidian complaint informs much of Wroth's oeuvre. Whether Wroth ever meant for *A Shepherd* to be positioned after the *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* sonnet sequence or not,<sup>35</sup> it is clear that she is trying to do something different with this poem than with her other Ovidian complaints.

That difference is primarily concerned with the framed, dialogic, and narrative nature of the complaint, tropes which are common to post-sonnet sequence complaints and which lend themselves to exploration of issues such as female voice and subjectivity. These issues are already apparent in

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<sup>34</sup> Joyce MacDonald, 'Ovid and Women's pastoral in Lady Mary Wroth's *Love's Victory*', *Studies in English Literature*, 51.2 (2011), pp. 447-463, (p. 459).

<sup>35</sup> I.e. whether the positioning found in the Folger MS is deliberate or merely the result of a coincidental grouping of miscellaneous poems.

*Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*: Wroth was the first to reverse the gender of the Petrarchan subject in a whole sonnet sequence. Kerrigan's comparison highlights the originality of this switched subject:

While poems in which masculine figures sue for grace are more abundant than those lamenting female infidelity, there is an even greater disproportion in 'female'-voiced poems between those which long for love and the many which regret its loss.<sup>36</sup>

Despite Kerrigan framing these two types of poem as contrasting however, Wroth's sonnets and her complaint (*A Shepherd*) have much in common, with the loss of love and the longing for love combining in poems. Mary Wroth's sonnets are 'melancholic' in nature.<sup>37</sup> The Crowne of sonnets (the 'Corona Dedicated to Love') within *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* in particular, described by Hodgson as mapping out 'a complex form of amatory grief held in a poetic trap',<sup>38</sup> is full of complaint imagery and discourse.

The opening poem invokes the Ariadne-Theseus myth as Pamphilia finds herself in the mental equivalent of a labyrinth: 'In this strang labourinth how shall I turne...Yett that which most my troubled sence doth move/ Is to leave all, and take the thread of love'. The sonnet-speaker here seems most closely paralleled to Theseus in the metaphor, using the physical image of being lost in a dark labyrinth and not knowing which way to turn to reflect her mental turmoil. The speaker muses in the following poems on whether to take

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<sup>36</sup> Kerrigan, *Motives of Woe*, p. 8.

<sup>37</sup> For a discussion of the melancholic nature of Wroth's sonnets see Elizabeth Hodgson, *Grief and Women Writers in the English Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), see chapter 3, pp. 72-99.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

up the 'thread of love'. The imagery of labyrinths and monsters is a repeated one in framed complaint poems, though usually it emphasises the guilt of the King and the shame of the female complainant. In Daniel's *Rosamond* for example, the labyrinth metaphor is used to compare the complaining woman with a Minotaur ('Heere I inclos'd from all the world a sunder,/ The Minotaure of shame kept for disgrace' (lines 476-477, p. 181) as the sexual shame of being the King's mistress relegates her to the bestial level of monstrous sexuality. Thomas Lodge's Elstred is also kept locked up in a labyrinth built specifically for her: 'And to assure my lyfe and his content/ a second Cretan wonder he began' (sig.K2r). In contrast, it is not monstrous sexuality but 'chaste thoughts' which guide Wroth's Pamphilia.

The final sonnet in the crown describes the speaker's rejection by her lover:

Except my hart which you bestow'd before,  
 And for a signe of conquest gave away  
 As worthles to bee kept in your choyse store  
 Yett one more spotles with you doth nott stay.

The tribute which my heart doth truly pay  
 Is faith untouch'd, pure thoughts discharge the score  
 Of debts for mee, wher constancy bears sway,  
 And rules as Lord, unharm'd by envyes sore (lines 1-8, F95)

The emphasis on constancy in spite of rejection is a key theme in both the sonnets and *A Shepherd*. Josephine Roberts comments that Wroth's

‘distinctive tone (in contrast to ‘Elizabethan elements’) is much closer to that of Donne’s lyrics, with a harsh, occasionally cynical attitude towards earthly constancy’.<sup>39</sup> In sonnet 104 in the Folger manuscript, constancy and faith are responsible for Pamphilia’s ‘chiefe paine’ as she must hide the passions in her heart ‘From all save only one who shold itt see’ even though she reveals that ‘more passion in my hart doth move/ Then in a million that make show of love’ (lines 13-14). It is this begrudging commitment to constancy in the face of the changing nature of Amphilanthus which has caused critics such as Jennifer Lawes to be concerned at ‘the passive and victimised Pamphilia who cannot free herself from the perfidious Amphilanthus’. Lawes adds:

And this is in spite of the fact that the woman in Wroth's sequence has become the poet/narrator; no longer an object, she is now the speaking subject. The opportunities one might imagine that this reversal of roles could bring - either for female wooing or for the scornful rejection of unwanted male attention - are simply passed by. Pamphilia remains throughout unfulfilled and yet a model of patient constancy.<sup>40</sup>

I would argue, in contrast, that Pamphilia’s determination to be constant is a deliberate and literary choice; the rejected, deserted, betrayed woman has a voice in the tradition of Ovidian complaint. The female sonnet-subject introduced by Wroth has a model for female expression if Pamphilia remains ‘unfulfilled’ and if there is the threat of inconstancy and betrayal from her lover. The hypocrisy of the usual male Petrarchan subject whose love is

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<sup>39</sup> Roberts (ed.), *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*, p. 41.

<sup>40</sup> Jennifer Lawes, ‘Gender and Genre in the Sonnet Sequences of Philip Sidney and Mary Wroth’, *Deep South*, 2:1 (1996).

unrequited is revealed as, once love is achieved, he leaves and betrays. This does not mean that Pamphilia's voice is passive but that Wroth has chosen to appropriate a model of poetic female voice and to explore this 'melancholic' position of complaint in her sonnets.

Moreover, in *A Shepherd* we will see that the theme of constancy shifts, giving opportunity for that 'scornful rejection of unwanted male attention' which is lacking in the sonnets, by the very persistence of constancy. In *A Shepherd*, the same discourse of 'constancy' and 'change' is employed but with a different emphasis. Constancy is used in the complaint by the female speaker primarily as a point of contrast to the changing and roaming of the men. The female speaker in *A Shepherd* remains constant at every point, almost hyperbolically constant:

Ile make my loyalty  
to shine soe cleere as thy foule fault  
to all men shal bee knowne  
thy chang to thy changd hart bee brought  
my faith abroad bee blowne. (lines 148-152)

In fact, the whole presence of Aradeame in the poem can be seen merely as a challenge to the woman's constancy. Accepting Aradeame's love would be a clear way to gain revenge on her inconstant lover. Instead, she 'more constant burne(s)' and tries, unsuccessfully, to free Aradeame from loving her. Even before the woman sees Aradeame for the first time, we are informed of her constant intent in the face of his desires ('Within her brest to ly' (line 120) as the narrator prematurely gives her response: 'She that refused' (line 121). As

we will explore further below, when she departs, constancy intact, Aradeame takes over her position of complaint and abandonment and literally becomes a source of constancy.

Links between Daniel's *Delia* sonnets and the *Complaint of Rosamond* are more explicit than those between Wroth's *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* and *A Shepherd*. The connection between the sonnets and complaint is highlighted by Daniel's choice of the rhyme royal for Rosamond, the same form which Shakespeare uses in *A Lover's Complaint*. These seven-line iambic pentameter stanzas recall the metrical form of the preceding sonnets; as Peter Hyland says 'What is rhyme royal if not a kind of half-sonnet?'<sup>41</sup> Moreover, courtly literary tropes found in sonnets, such as the blazon, are included and transformed to the ghost complaint context. Rosamond quotes the King apostrophising a necrophiliac blazon (lines 659-693), with the catalogue of body parts expressing signs of death but also 'sweet remnants' of life as he expresses his desire to join her in death.

The roles of wooing and lamenting, traditionally assigned to sonnets and complaints respectively, come together in Daniel's *Rosamond*. When Rosamond compares herself to Shore's Wife, she emphasises how the latter's story has inspired 'compassion' through being well-known and read by other lovers. Daniel's role is to help Rosamond tell her story as the repetition of 'fame' throughout the poem builds on this idea of creating a literary monument. Rosamond gives a further motive and explanation for her appearance by linking her complaint to Daniel's previous wooing of Delia in

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<sup>41</sup> Peter Hyland, *An Introduction to Shakespeare's Poems* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 189.



the sonnets. Rosamond positions Delia as a potential reader of her complaint: ‘Delia may happe to deygne to read our story/ and offer up her sigh among the rest’ (lines 43-44, p. 166). At this point, Delia begins to lose ownership of her own complaint as it becomes explicitly ‘our story’. It is this mention of Delia which triggers the acceptance of the task by Daniel: ‘thus saide: forthwith mov’d with a tender care and pittie’ (lines 57-58, p. 167). Daniel interjects with a clarification at this point: ‘and I more willing tooke this charge assigned/ because her griefes were worthy to be knowne/ and telling hers, might hap forget mine owne’ (lines 61-63). He explains that he takes on the task not necessarily because he thinks it will win Delia’s heart but because it is a welcome distraction. There are reminders of Delia’s role throughout the poem; at lines 524-5 for example, during the section of the poem where Rosamond laments how she had to remain hidden from view in a chamber, Delia is described as a comparable example of beauty: ‘Heere is the center of all beauties best,/ Excepting Delia, left to adorne the West’ (lines 524-525).

It is not until line 71 that the narrative of the complaint begins, as the *recusatio*-style introductory stanzas offer precedents, justifications and motivations for Rosamond’s story being told. In this overly long introduction to Rosamond we see foregrounded the issue of voice. Yes, the appearance of Rosamond as a ghost to the poet is reminiscent of the *Mirror for Magistrates*, but it also enables and represents Ovidian ventriloquism inherent to the *Heroides* as a male-authored and female-voiced text.

Wiseman presents the possible argument that ‘Rosamond’s ‘ambition’ (is) not to regain the attention of her lover or to rewrite the male history of her

life, but to feature in precisely the sort of mournful poem from which Ovid's heroines come'.<sup>42</sup> If this is true, then Daniel ensures that this is achieved on his terms. The poet and first-person female voice are separated from the start, and the speaker-listener relationship is inherited from ghost complaint in order to emphasise that most of the poem, seemingly in Rosamond's voice, is actually the poet's record of a monologue. Rosamond is asked to 'boldly tell her minde' and says 'I'll tell thee how' whereas Daniel is the one who is writing it down. He takes on the poet's role in the 'male-authored but female-voiced' dichotomy of Ovidian complaint.

Daniel constructs a similarly complex context in another female-voiced complaint text. He uses the dedication (to the Countess of Pembroke) to explain his use of first person female voice in his poetical letter *Octavia to Mark Antony*:

Yet haue there aduentur'd to bestow  
 Words upon grieffe, as my griefes comprehend,  
 And made this great afflicted Ladie show  
 Out of my feelings, what she might haue pend.  
 And here the same, I bring forth, to attend  
 Upon thy reuerent name, to liue with thee  
 Most vertuous Ladie, that vouch saf'st to lend  
 Eare to my notes, and comfort vnto me,

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<sup>42</sup> Susan Wiseman, 'Romes wanton Ovid': reading and writing Ovid's *Heroides* 1590–1712', *Renaissance Studies*, 22. 3 (2008), pp. 295–306 (p. 300). See also Stephen Guy-Bray, *Rosamond's complaint: Daniel, Ovid, and the purpose of poetry*, *Renaissance Studies*, 22.3, (2008), pp. 338–350.

That one day may thine owne faire vertues spread

Be'ing secretarie now, but to the dead. (lines 5-14)<sup>43</sup>

Daniel is in a similar position of 'secretary to the dead' here in writing Octavia's 'grief' as he is with Rosamond. Daniel reveals an anxiety to distinguish between his own words and feelings and those of Octavia, demonstrated by the balanced clause 'out of *my* feelings, what *she* might have pend'.

While the ventriloquism of the poet is somewhat hidden in Ovid's *Heroides* owing to the first person female voice throughout, Daniel's presence in the *Complaint of Rosamond* is clear. The poem comes to a close as it opened, with a reminder that the complaint is a dialogue and with Delia's role emphasised:

But heere an end, I may no longer stay thee,

I must returne t'attend at Stigian flood:

Yet ere I goe, thys one word more I pray thee,

Tell Delia now her sigh may doe me good,

And will her note the frailtie of our blood.

And if I passe vnto those happy banks,

Then she must haue her praise, thy pen her thanks.

So vanisht shee, and left me to returne,

To prosecute the tenor of my woes:

Eternall matter for my Muse to mourne,

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<sup>43</sup> Samuel Daniel 'Letter from Octavia to Marcus Antonius' in *The poeticall essayes of Sam. Danyel* (London: Simon Waterson, 1599).

But ah the worlde hath heard too much of those, (lines 729-739, pp.  
189-190)

Rosamond physically departs from the poem ('so vanisht shee') which paves the way for Daniel to return to his own poems, presumably more sonnets to Delia, which are described as similarly plaintful ('the tenor of my woes'). At this point, the first person pronouns ('left me', 'my Muse') are now assigned to Daniel rather than Rosamond, serving to undermine the previous association of first person voice with female voice and to jolt us back to the poem proper as if merely after a poetic digression.

### **Framing and Voice in Wroth's *A Shepherd***

Post-sonnet sequence 'female-voiced' complaints complicate identity and voice. Taking the framing and dialogic elements of Daniel's poem, Shakespeare and Wroth respectively transfer their poems to a pastoral setting. The standard trope in these poems is that the female complainer laments her lot, thinking that she is alone, when actually she is seen and heard by a hidden male. This provides a frame to the complaint, meaning it is not straightforwardly female-voiced and so threatens a female subjectivity by the voyeuristic intrusion.

Shakespeare in *A Lover's Complaint*, has a first person male voice as the voyeur of the poem, overhearing the plaintful 'tale' of a woman:

From off a hill whose concave womb reworded  
A plaintful story from a sistering vale,  
My spirits to attend this double voice accorded,

And down I laid to list the sad-tuned tale;  
 Ere long espied a fickle maid full pale,  
 Tearing of papers, breaking rings a-twain,  
 Storming her world with sorrow's wind and rain. (lines 1-7, p. 209)

Shakespeare establishes a frame around the first person female voice by the pastoral device of overhearing, just as Daniel does with the ghost complaint speaker-listener device establishing a frame around Rosamond's speech. The origins of this pastoral framing can be found in classical pastoral poetry such as Theocritus' *Idylls* and Virgilian bucolic. There are many examples of overhearing and spying, often in the context of a competitive and 'bantering' pastoral convention of song stealing. An example of this Virgil's *Eclogue 9*, in which the shepherds discuss overhearing poetic compositions: *vel quae sublegi tacitus tibi carmina nuper* ('or what about that song that I secretly overheard from you recently?') (*Eclogue 9*, line 21).<sup>44</sup> Yet, there is also the potential for a more violent and threatening voyeurism in this setting, as shown, for example, throughout Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. There are also vernacular precedents in the *chansons d'aventure* poems of the Medieval love lyrics, where the male poet often overhears a lamenting maiden and retells her story.

Wroth's *A Shepherd* clearly engages with this aspect of framing and overhearing. Wroth's choice of the ballad metre rather than rhyme royal links it more closely to pastoral precedents. Setting out the poem in third person

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<sup>44</sup> H.R. Fairclough (ed.), *Virgil Eclogues; Georgics; Aeneid bks. 1-6* (Harvard, Loeb Classical Library, 1916), p. 84, my translation.

voice, Wroth adds a layer of detachment, seemingly removing the need to assign a gender to a first person speaker:

A sheapherd who noe care did take  
 of aught butt of his flock  
 whose thoughts noe pride cowl'd higher make  
 then to maintaine his stock (lines 1-4)

The shepherd, who we later discover is called Aradeame, is the first character introduced and is quickly established in the position of a voyeur. The meeting of Aradeame and the unnamed woman in the pastoral setting seems by chance as 'a lambe hee chanc'd to miss'. By failing to keep his 'eye' on his sheep, he spies the complaining woman: 'Butt as hee past O! Fate unkind/ His ill lead him that way' (lines 21-22). The shepherd makes a choice to stay and look, feeding his eyes in a voyeuristic gaze:

The sheapherd stayd, and fed his eyes  
 nor furdur might hee pas  
 ...  
 His former lyfe is alterd quite  
 his sheep feed in her eyes (lines 33-34; 41-42)

Because of Wroth's use of the third person however, the reader is also able to look down on Aradeame and his reactions. When the woman's complaint is introduced, we are also aware of Aradeame: 'As this lost man still gazing stood/ Amased att such light... When mournfully she did unfolde/ Her woes without reliefe' (lines 57-64). The reader is spying on Aradeame as he is

spying on the unnamed woman. Thus we sense that Wroth is using the framed and dialogic element of post-sonnet sequence complaints in a more reflective and meta-textual way. She is exploring the boundaries of these multi-character 'female-voiced' complaint poems.

The woman goes on to read out papers as Aradeame spies her, she is said to 'ly weeping by a rivers side/ beholding papers near' (lines 123-124). The papers that she reads were written by her lover some time since, pledging his love and loyalty. They recall the style of oath which the abandoned Oenone reads carved on a tree trunk by Paris in *Heroides* 5. Paris's vow is an adynaton, persuading Oenone that it is impossible for him to betray her:

Cum Paris Oenone poterit spirare relictā,

Ad fontem Xanthi versa recurret aqua.

(If Paris' breath shall fail not, once Oenone he doth spurn,

The waters of the Xanthus to their fount shall backward turn. (*Heroides* 5, lines 29-30)<sup>45</sup>

The lover's vow in *A Shepherd* is less hyperbolic but is similarly phrased as a persuasive impossible condition:

When I unconstant am to thee

Or faulse doe ever prove,

Let hapines bee banisht mee

Nor have least taste of love; (lines 129-132)

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<sup>45</sup> Showerman (ed.) and trans., *Ovid: Heroides, Amores*, p. 59.

Unlike Shakespeare's female complainant who famously tears, kisses and cries on her 'folded schedules' and 'yet moe letters sadly penn'd in blood', Wroth's woman actually reads the oath aloud; she pays more attention to the words on the page and allows them to be heard. Not only does this direct quoting provide material evidence of the lover's broken promise, it reverses the Heroidean ventriloquism dramatised by Aradeame's voyeuristic presence. The woman is voicing the words of her male lover and so Aradeame overhears his words too.

There is a deliberate piling up of frames by Wroth so that the 'I' in the poem keeps shifting and the subjectivity is unsettled. Eventually in the poem, the woman spots Aradeame lurking amongst the trees:

Butt as she going was along  
that pleasant runing streame  
she saw the sallow trees amonge  
the sheapherd Aradeame (lines 157-160)

This initiates a dialogue between the two which lasts for the next 14 stanzas. The exchange of speeches gives the female complainant the opportunity to assume the role of advice-giver. Unlike the generalised didactic role 'to exemplify' set out in *Rosamond*, the counsel that Wroth's woman gives is directed specifically to Aradeame, a male wooer of the very kind she begins her complaint about. This also reverses the moralising relationship in *A Lover's Complaint*, where the woman confesses to an overhearing male who is poised to offer her advice 'Which may her suffering ecstasy assuage' (lines 69-70). Wroth's female complainant offers pity and empathy to Aradeame,



comparing his situation to her own at least in part: 'take itt from her who too too well/ can wittness itt is soe/ whose hope seem'd heav'n, yett prov'd a hell/ and comfort chang'd to woe' (lines 205-208). This allows the woman to have an element of control, offering pitty rather than yielding to his desires: 'I pitty thee, butt can nott ayde' (lines 189-190). Aradeame's ambitions to woo change into an empathetic pledge.

Yett give mee leave (sigh'd hee with tears)  
 To live butt wher you are,  
 My woes shall waite upon your fears,  
 My sighs attend your care,  
 I'le weepe whenever you shall waile,  
 If you sigh I will cry  
 When you complaine, I'le never faile  
 To plaine my misery. (lines 235-240)

Finally, Aradeame transforms himself into an echo by demonstrating how he will copy her complaints. The woman, however, departs the scene: 'With that away she hasted fast/ Left him his cares to hold' (lines 273-4). The abandoned woman becomes the abandoner, not by making an oath and betraying it but by remaining constant to her original oath. While Shakespeare's female complainant ends her speech in a climatic realisation that she will soon be in a similar position of complaint again and Daniel's Rosamond is murdered, consigned to the annals of history via 'fama', Wroth's woman removes herself from the framed pastoral setting of her complaint.

**The final twist: 'Eye' gives way to 'I'**

At the end of her complaint, Wroth complicates gender stereotypes and calls into question, at the last, all the voices and frames of the poem, not by a Shakespearean refusal to return to the male 'I', but by bringing an 'I' into the poem for the first time. The final two stanzas of the poem describe Aradeame's watery end:

And thus did live, though dayly dide  
 The shepherd Aradeame  
 Whose ceasles tears which never drid  
 Were turn'd into a streame  
 Himself the hed, his eyes the spring  
 Which fed that river cleere,  
 And to true harts this good doth bring  
 When they aproach itt neere;  
  
 And drinke of itt to banish quite  
 All ficle thoughts of chang  
 Butt still in one choyce to delight,  
 And never think to rang;  
 Of this sweet water I did drink  
 Which did such faith infuse  
 As since to change I can nott think  
 Love will death sooner chuse (lines 297-312)

The transformation of Aradeame into a stream is an Ovidian ending of the kind in the *Metamorphoses*, perhaps most reminiscent of the change of the nymph Arethusa into a stream, while also recalling the Echo and Narcissus myth. Aradeame's 'change' paradoxically represents the theme of constancy in the poem as those who drink the water are said to reject 'fickle thoughts of change' in favour of faithfulness in love.

Crucially, in the final stanza it is 'I' who says 'Of this sweet water I did drink' and 'As since to change I can not think'. This 'I' signals the delayed entry of the first person voice into the poem. Suddenly the detached third person narrating the scene of complaint from the beginning of the poem is undermined. Wroth opens up the possibility that this 'I' has been the first person voice of the poem all along, with the usual pronoun signal postponed grammatically till this point. This parallels the change in first person voice in Daniel's *Complaint of Rosamond* back to the poet himself in the final lines, as the 'I' of the previous stanza suddenly becomes 'she'. Wroth's 'I' is in the position of voyeur at the end of the poem as the watery transformation is witnessed and the river is drunk in the same moment. The voyeuristic 'eyes' of Aradeame at the start of the poem, feeding on the female complainant, are transferred to a female 'I' at the end of the poem who literally drinks Aradeame.

The reader is left to wonder, who is this 'I'? If we consider the poem as a post-sonnet 'female-voiced' complaint, following Wroth's sonnet sequence *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, we could argue that Pamphilia is the 'I'

of the poem just as she is the persona of the preceding sonnets.<sup>46</sup> Thus the post-sonnet positioning of the complaint has given the opportunity for Pamphilia to see the cheating and changeable Amphilanthus figure make his final transformation – a metamorphosis into a source of constancy. The woman of *A Shepherd* is linked to Pamphilia herself and gains subjectivity by being ventriloquised by a female author-subject rather than being spied on by a shepherd. Ultimately the ‘I’ of the poem, by drinking the water, follows the pattern of the complaining woman as she remains constant and does not think fickle thoughts of change. There is the further possibility that Pamphilia as Wroth’s persona represents Wroth herself. Roberts has pointed out the potential biographical identification in the sonnets: ‘To emphasise that she is the speaker of the collection Lady Mary signed the name Pamphilia in the Folger manuscript after the first group of poems (P1-55) and after the farewell sonnet (P103)’.<sup>47</sup>

Thus *A Shepherd* can be interpreted as both authored and voiced by a woman. The framing and voyeurism set out in the poem with Aradeame in the subjective position overseeing and overhearing the lamenting woman place the complaint in the same sub-generic tradition as Shakespeare and Daniel’s post-sonnet sequence ‘female-voiced’ complaint poems. However, the appearance of the drinking ‘I’ at the end twists our expectations as we realise that there was a first person female voice behind it all.

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<sup>46</sup> In the *Urania*, the poem is given an epistolary context and is said to be read aloud by the Duke of Wertenberg to his female audience, having received it from his love Lycencia. See Josephine Roberts (ed.), *The first part of the Countess of Montgomery’s Urania by Lady Mary Wroth* (New York: Centre for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, Renaissance English Text Society, 1995), p. 610.

<sup>47</sup> Josephine Roberts, p. 42.

## Chapter 3

### Hester Pulter, Lucy Hutchinson and Andrew Marvell: Elegy and Retreat as Female-voiced Complaint

In the mid-seventeenth century, the chaotic impact of political events is reflected in both female and male authored poetry. This chapter will consider complaint poems written in the 1640s, 1650s and 1660s; a period which saw civil wars, a regicide, the interregnum, a Cromwellian protectorate and the eventual restoration of the monarchy under the previously-exiled Charles II. There was certainly a lot to complain about during ‘these Times’, as the Royalist John Quarles makes clear in the ‘To the Reader’ section of *Fons Lachrymarum* (1649):

I Here present to thy view a *Fountain*, from which doth  
flow, *Complaints*, *Lamentations*, and *Meditations*, three Necessaries for  
these Times. Never were *Complaints* more frequent, then they are in  
this age of obduracy and oppression; Nor *Lamentations* more requisite,  
then in these Lachrymable Times; Nor *Meditations* more  
commendable, then in these days of uncertainty. (sig.A7r)<sup>1</sup>

This description by Quarles introduces how complaint becomes a fitting poetic genre to respond to and represent events at this time. This period sees a continuing expansion of the Ovidian complaint genre, as poets recognise its similarity to elegiac and pastoral retreat poems.

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<sup>1</sup> John Quarles, *Fons lachrymarum, or, A fountain of tears from whence doth flow Englands complaint, Jeremiah's lamentations paraphras'd, with divine meditations, and an elegy upon that son of valor Sir Charles Lucas*, (London: Printed for Nathaniel Brooks, 1649).

In this chapter, I look at the examples of Hester Pulter and Lucy Hutchinson as women who expand the Ovidian female-voiced complaint genre. In particular, I will focus on Pulter's poem 'The Complaint of Thames, 1647, When the Best of Kings Was Imprisoned by the Worst of Rebels at Holmby'<sup>2</sup> and Lucy Hutchinson's *Elegies*. Both poets engage with the female-voiced complaint genre. As we will discover, Hutchinson shows a particular interest in the *Heroides* from entries in her commonplace book. Pulter's work is full of complaint and interacts specifically with vernacular traditions, such as the framed complaints which I explored in the previous chapter. Both poets are in a situation of 'confinement', isolated, and abandoned, both personally and politically. The Hutchinsons spent most of their time at their country estate (Owthorpe) during the interregnum. Hutchinson was left alone at Owthorpe, as we learn in the *Elegies*, when her husband was imprisoned after the Restoration for his role in the regicide of Charles I. Hester Pulter was a royalist, in contrast to her Parliamentary husband, and was often confined at Broadfield, not least due to the many childbirths, as she complains: 'Sad, sick and Lame as in my bed I Lay/ Least Pain and Passion should bear all the sway/ My thoughts beeing free I bid them take their flight' (lines 1-3).<sup>3</sup> Though they were born 15 years apart (Pulter was born in 1605 and Hutchinson in 1620), both were writing poetry at similar times, with Pulter's verse seemingly composed between 1644 and 1660, and Hutchinson writing her *Elegies*, which

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<sup>2</sup> Henceforth *Complaint of Thames*.

<sup>3</sup> Hester Pulter, 'This was written 1648, when I Lay Inn, with my Son John, being my 15 Child, I being soe weak, that in Ten Dayes and Nights I never moved my Head one jot from my Pillow'. All Pulter poems are quoted from Alice Eardley (ed.), *Poems, Emblems, and The Unfortunate Florinda, by Lady Hester Pulter*, The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: The Toronto Series, 32, (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2014).

reflect on the 1650s, in the 1660s (with other poetry in her manuscript commonplace books written earlier). Moreover, despite the inverted political situation, there are noticeable similarities in Hutchinson's situation with Pulter's *Complaint of Thames* (and other poems) in the imprisonment and eventual death of the addressee and in the mournful isolation of the speaker.

When women write elegiac poems or retirement poems in the period, I argue that female-voiced complaint becomes an effective model, providing opportunities for a female expression of grief or isolation (states which often go hand in hand) which can be both personal and political. Elegy and retirement, key recourses for poetic creations in this period, are naturally linked to female-voiced complaint. As we shall see, one type of poem can easily transition into the other. An elegy on the death of a loved one can become a complaint on the abandonment of a wife by her husband; an invitation poem seemingly praising retired life over a corrupted political London can become a complaint about enforced female isolation. Elegies and retreat poems also overlap with each other, finding common ground in complaint, as, for example, Andrew Marvell's famous complaining nymph contains a reflection on an overgrown garden and ends with an elegiac engraving of an epitaph. The situation of an elegiac female speaker (one of loss and abandonment) often chimes with that of a woman in retirement and the poems that ensue show the influence of female-voiced complaint.

### **Hester Pulter's *Complaint of Thames***

Hester Pulter's poem 'The Complaint of Thames, 1647, When the Best of Kings Was Imprisoned by the Worst of Rebels at Holmby' is a key example of a woman writer in this period choosing the complaint genre in order to express political and personal ideas. The immediate context of the poem referred to explicitly in the title is Charles I being held prisoner by the English Parliament in Holmby House in Northamptonshire from February 7<sup>th</sup> until June 4<sup>th</sup> 1647. The title of the poem signals the complaint tradition and the poem presents a personified Thames river complaining for the absence of Charles I. The opening verse strongly recalls the structure, setting, and tone of the framed post-sonnet complaints examined in the previous chapter:

Late in an evening as I walk'd alone,  
I heard the Thames most sadly make her moane.  
As shee came weeping from her western spring,  
Shee thus bewaild the learned shepherds king. (lines 1-4)

This establishes the poem as a female-voiced complaint. The gendering of the personified Thames speaker as female is emphasised through an abundance of feminine personal pronouns in these opening lines: 'her...she...her...she'. This gendering needs to be explicit as the river does not have to be designated female traditionally; it is notable that Spenser's Thames in 'The Ruines of Time' is gendered male.<sup>4</sup> In Latin too, rivers are usually masculine nouns. Despite this explicit feminisation by Pulter, Kate Chedgzoy argues that this poem is an example of unfeminine mourning:

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<sup>4</sup> John Kerrigan (ed.), *Motives of Woe*, pp. 140-163.



Here, however, the undecorously passionate vigour with which the Thames expresses her grief employs the politically charged symbolism of England's national river to validate a strikingly unfeminine mode of mourning.<sup>5</sup>

Mourning is described in gendered terms as the 'undecorously passionate vigour' of the complaint makes it an 'unfeminine mode of mourning', only to be 'validated' through the political and public weight of the Thames' symbolism. Yet this 'passionate vigour', I would argue, is particularly feminine in that its persuasive, rhetorical, and emotional force is related to that of female-voiced complaint.

Also female, more tacitly understood, is the first person 'I' of the poem, the over-hearer who is on the outside of the frame and who comes across the complaining Thames. Owing to the personal nature of her poems, many of which are addressed to family members, the persona is naturally associated with Pulter. The walking next to a river is a familiar setting in Pulter's verse which often evokes local waterways and geography.

This framing device, introducing a pastoral setting and the complaint soliloquy by the Thames, can be compared to similar openings in William Shakespeare's *A Lover's Complaint*:

From off a hill whose concave wombe reworded,  
A plaintfull story from a sistring vale  
My spirrits t'attend this doble voyce accorded,

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<sup>5</sup> Kate Chedzoy, *Women's Writing in the British Atlantic World: Memory, Place and History, 1550-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 149.

And downe I laid to list the sad tun'd tale,  
 Ere long espied a fickle maid full pale  
 Tearing of papers, breaking rings atwaine,  
 Storming her world with sorrowes wind and raine. (lines 1-7, p. 209)

And Mary Wroth's 'A Shepherd Who noe care did take':

Butt as hee past O! Fate unkind  
 His ill lead him that way  
 Wheras a willow tree behind  
 A faire young mayden lay;

Her bed was on the humble ground  
 Her hed upon her hand  
 While sighs did show her hart was bound  
 In lov's untying band,  
 Clear tears her cleerest eyes lett fall  
 Upon her love borne face  
 Which heavnly drops did sorrow call  
 Prowd wittnes of disgrace; (lines 21-32)

The difference between Shakespeare and Wroth's openings and that of Pulter's poem, is in the gendering of the person overhearing. Rather than having an explicitly male voyeur who is interested in seducing the female complainant as we have in Wroth, made clear by the third person description of him stationed behind the 'willow tree', Pulter's first person observer is female (by

association with the female poet) and returns at the end of the poem to close the frame with an empathetic response to the Thames' plight:

“Oh my sad heart, these are but foolish dreams  
 For they triumph upon my conquered streams.  
 Yet this I'll do while sighs breathe up my spring,  
 I'll trickle tears for my afflicted king  
 And look how far one drop of crystal Thames  
 Doth run, so far I'll memorize their fames,  
 So shall my grief immortalize their names.”  
 I, hearing these complaints, though time to sleep,  
 Sat sadly down with her 'gan to weep. (lines 113-121)

This closing image of empathy recalls a key feature of Ovidian complaint poems where the speaker desires pity from the addressee and a consoling third party, whether that be the external reader of the poem or an internal character. The return of the first person 'I' here is also a more smooth transition from the 'I' of the internal speaker (the Thames) than is usual in other framed complaints. There is no deliberate exit of the speaker and re-entry of the grieving poet as we have in Daniel's *Complaint of Rosamond* for example, 'So vanisht shee, and left me to returne,/ To prosecute the tenor of my woes' (lines 736-737) or indeed in Spenser's 'Ruines of Time' (1591), 'Thus having ended all her piteous plaint,/ With dolefull shrikes shee vanished away' (lines 470-471). Rather than a dramatic swapping of roles, there is a conjoining of the complaints of Pulten the poet and Thames the speaker as they grieve together. The complaint of the Thames specifically provides consolation in these times

of royal loss and political unrest because of her ability to ‘memorize’ and ‘immortalize’. The ‘tears’ of elegy, even just ‘one drop’, therefore become productive in the form of a female-voiced complaint; though ‘wishes are in vain’ and ‘more impossible than ‘tis to change/ the skins of Negroes that in Afric range’ (lines 19-20), what she can do is to complain, meaning the story at least will be remembered, the injustice recorded and written down for posterity.

The conjoining of the experiences of Pulter and the Thames as speaker is felt throughout the poem. In the opening lines of the Thames’ speech, there is a subtle use of the third person:

Amintas sad Amintas sits forelorne  
 And his faire Cloris now's become the scorne  
 Of Troynovants in greate licentious Dames  
 Noe merveile then of poore afflicted Thames  
 With salt abortive teares dos wash this Citty  
 As full of Blood and lies as voyd of pittie (lines 5-10)

The Thames introduces the motive of the complaint in the realm of pastoral and classical myth. The transparent pastoral disguise is not difficult to penetrate with Amintas and Chloris as pseudonyms for Charles I and Henrietta Maria respectively and Troynovant recalling the mythical Trojan founding of London. The Thames refers to herself at this point as ‘the poore afflicted Thames’, in the third person, in a similar way to how Amintas and Chloris are addressed in the preceding lines. This gives the impression that the first person voice of Pulter is the driving force of this speech as the Thames’s initial use of

a personal pronoun is delayed until line 13: ‘And I may live to see another turn/ when thy proud fabric shall unpitied burn.’ The confluence of Pulter and the Thames in the poem elides the political with the personal, as the concerns of Charles I and the Royalist cause combine with a personal expression of grief. The poet’s mention of ‘though time to sleep’ in the final couplet emphasises this political interaction with the personal realm.

The political nature of the poem is clear and outspoken, as shown with such lines as: ‘But oh, thy blood and perjuries repent/ then heaven, I hope, in mercy will relent/ thy king restore, call home his queen again/ or all thy prayer and fasting is in vain’ (lines 31-34). The Thames laments the state of London ravaged by Civil War and thinks it is necessary for the river to wash the city clean once again. The speaker goes on to recall former times when Charles and his queen Henrietta Maria used to ride on the river, and a lengthy catalogue follows of all the rivers and waterways that used to envy the Thames. There is further reminiscence about Charles being on the river which gives way to anger at ‘the kingdom’s scourges’, who we understand to be Cromwell and his Parliamentary supporters, and a desire to help send them to death with an aptly watery analogy: ‘Then would I waft them to the stygian shade,/ Examples unto rebels to be made’ (lines 111-112). At these points, the anthropomorphism of a female-voiced complainant in the Ovidian tradition merges with a more wide-ranging complaint against the times.

In this tradition, we can see connections between Pulter’s poem and the much earlier ‘The Ruines of Time’ by Edmund Spenser, which first appeared

in his 1591 collection *Complaints*.<sup>6</sup> Spenser's poem is set next to the 'silver streaming Thamesis', where a woman is observed crying 'streams of teares' (line 12). The woman is discovered to be the allegorical 'genius' of the ancient Roman city Verulamium, the ruins of which are located in St Albans, Hertfordshire. This geography explains Pulter's allusion to 'Round Verulan his ruined stones' in a description of the journey of various local Hertfordshire rivers to the Thames in a different poem ('The Invitation into the Country'). Spenser's poem functions as a lament on the death of his patron Sir Philip Sidney by offering an invective against the generalised passing of time and deterioration of history in a series of visions. Spenser's female speaker apostrophises:

O vaine worlds glorie, and unstedfast state  
Of all that lives on face of sinfull earth!  
Which from their first untill their utmost date  
Tast no one hower of happines or merth, (lines 43-46, p. 141)

This is similar to Pulter's general call against London: 'Perfidious town know thou the power of fate/ Thy long felicitie shall find a date' (lines 11-12).

The rather digressive and wide-ranging scope of Verlame's complaint (also emphasised by the length of Spenser's poem being 686 lines, which is in contrast to Pulter's 121 lines) is demonstrated by the unconventional inclusion of seven 'tragicke Pageants' to close the poem in order explain and summarise the seemingly confusing speech:

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<sup>6</sup> Edmund Spenser, *Complaints Containing sundrie small poemes of the worlds vanitie. Whereof the next page maketh mention* (London: William Ponsonbie, 1591).

So inlie greeving in my groaning brest,  
 And deeplie musing at her doubtfull speach,  
 Whose meaning much I labored foorth to wreste,  
 Being above my slender reasons reach;  
 At length by demonstration me to teach,  
 Before mine eies strange sights presented were,  
 Like tragicke Pageants seeming to appeare. (lines 484-490, p. 156)

The plaint of Pulter's Thames in contrast, has a tight structure which is tied together by themes of jealousy, loss, memory and grief. These themes are more akin to Ovidian amatory complaint. One example is the digressive inclusion of a catalogue of rivers, an unusual device for a complaint poem, and one which Ross has argued shows the influence of river poetry (specifically Josuah Sylvester's translation *Du Bartas his divine weekes and workes* (1608), Michael Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* (1612), and John Denham's *Cooper's Hill* (1642)).<sup>7</sup> Yet, the function of the catalogue is specifically to recall the times when other waterways were jealous of the Thames.

A similar catalogue appears in Pulter's longest poem 'The Garden, or The Contention of Flowers, to My Dear Daughter Mistress Anne Pulter, at Her Desire Written', which is a series of love-rival speeches by the various flowers in Pulter's garden as they compete with each other about which is the best, almost as a version of the Paris-judged mythic beauty contest between Hera, Athena and Aphrodite which we know from Homer:

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<sup>7</sup> See Ross, *Women, Poetry and Politics in Seventeenth Century Britain*, pp. 145-6.

There happened amongst them this contention:  
 Which of them did their fellows all excel  
 In virtue, colour, beauty, fashion, smell,  
 And me they chose for umpire in this play (lines 3-6).

The competition over their various qualities becomes linked to erotic and poetic concerns. Some flowers argue that it is 'virtue' rather than 'beauty' ('Tis virtue doth immortalise their name,/ And makes an aromatic, splendent fame' (lines 93-94) which will help them in securing an immortalised 'name' or 'fame' through verse and a literary monument.

In the *Complaint of Thames*, the river catalogue is introduced, 'Envied I was by Severn, Humber, Ouse', with the specific thing envied being the Thames having Amintas and Cloris on her waters, and there follows a list of the rivers who were envious despite their own highly impressive features (e.g. being the biggest or most golden). The other rivers wish that they could 'beare so good a king' as the Thames did, using language which suggests a lover comparing herself to rivals: 'Yet all that Glory shee did count a toye/ Compar'd shee said with happy Thames her Joy' (lines 67-8). As the Thames reflects on what she has lost, there is a longing for past pleasures, 'those halcyon days, the sweet tranquility' (line 136) and many emotional interjections, 'ay me', 'But oh', 'which oh, forbid', 'oh come', which are located in the same amorous discourse of Ovidian complaint.

At line 81, after the catalogue, there is a more detailed description of the Thames' former function as a carrier of the King's barge:



Oft have I borne my sacred sovereign's barge,  
 being richly gilt, most proud of such a charge.  
 My waves would swell to see his princely face,  
 Each billow loath to give his fellow place;  
 sometimes they would rise to kiss his royal hand  
 And hardly would give back at my command.  
 ...  
 But now insulting on my billows ride  
 The kingdom's scourges and this city's pride,  
 Which made my trembling stream lamenting roar,  
 And her sad loss with troubled breast deplore. (lines 81-86; 89-92)

Here we have a disassociation of the personified body of the female Thames into gendered parts – waves, billows, streams, and breasts - as a kind of blazon. The King also comes into more human focus, with his 'princely face' and 'royal hand' specified. The language is sexualised with the female speaker bearing her 'sovereign's barge' and the waves 'would swell to see his princely face' and 'give rise to kiss his royal hand'. In this erotic discourse, there is a distinction between the consensual joining of the Thames and the King and the unwanted presence of the parliamentarians ('the kingdom's scourges') who have replaced the monarch and who 'insulting on my billows ride'. This interaction with Ovidian complaint provides a female expression of loss and abandonment which is both personal and political.

It is fitting that after the Restoration, there was a similar sexualisation of the personified Thames in a court masque *Calisto, or the chaste nymph* by John Crowne.<sup>8</sup> In this play, the hoped-for 'sweet tranquility' desired by Pulter's Thames is actually achieved through the Restoration of Charles II. In the dedication to the reader, Crowne reveals that his masque includes a Thames character who is female:

I have in the *Prologue* represented the River *Thames* by a Woman,  
and *Europe* by a Man, contrary to all Authority and Antiquity. To that I  
answer, I know of no Sexes in Lands and Rivers, nor of any Laws in  
Poetry, but the fundamental one to please; they who do that, follow the  
highest Authority, and agree with the best Antiquity. (sig.a3v)

Crowne takes time to justify his choice to present the river Thames as a woman rather than a man, acknowledging that he departs from traditional poetic expectations in doing this, as Pulter anticipates in her poem. There is a further similarity to Pulter's poem in that the Thames, who addresses the new King and Queen (who are present in the masque audience) as 'The God and Goddess... of this bless'd Isle', describes her contact with the King:

My Streams beneath his Palace hourly slide  
There it is not far before you,  
Pleasure, Arts, Religion, Glory,  
Warm'd by his propitious Smile,  
Flourish there, and bless this Isle (prologue, sig.b2v)

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<sup>8</sup> John Crowne, *Calisto, or, The chaste nymph, the late masque at court as it was frequently presented there, by several persons of great quality*, (London: Thomas Newcomb, 1675).

The Thames is presented as a lover, both in the play (she is lover to the male ‘genius of England’) and in reality; the irony would not be lost on the audience that the actress was Charles’s mistress, Mary Davis.<sup>9</sup>

### **Hutchinson and Elegy**

In her chapter ‘Shedding teares for England’s Loss: women’s writing and the memory of war’, Kate Chedgzoy asks a pertinent question: ‘What kind of reparation or consolation can possibly be available to the grief-stricken woman living through a continuing national and personal crisis?’<sup>10</sup> Chedgzoy argues that elegy as a poetic genre was ‘ubiquitous and highly politicised within the Royalist literary culture of the civil war years’, yet it was used ‘primarily to produce poems of mourning for the passing of an era and a civilisation rather than of consolation’.<sup>11</sup> Poems such as Pulter’s *Complaint of Thames* might be considered an example of this ‘mourning for the passing of an era’ with its complaint against the times content, however, the poem also shows that the roles of elegy as consolatory and memorial do not have to be mutually exclusive. Neither does one have to be private and the other public, especially in an elegiac poem which is expanded and interacts generically with female-voiced complaint. Elegy is a genre that can be modified to express the hope of reparation or restoration, often through the reproduction of that which has been lost, in verse, so that it lasts for posterity. There is a desire for an alternative

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<sup>9</sup> See Margaret Ezell (ed.), “My Rare Wit Killing Sin”: Poems of a Restoration Courtier, Anne Killigrew (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2013), p. 14.

<sup>10</sup> Chedgzoy, *Women's Writing in the British Atlantic World: Memory, Place and History, 1550-1700*, p. 139.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144, citing Nigel Smith, *Literature and Revolution in England, 1640-1660* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 287.

reality which is enacted through its expression in verse and a call for something which is absent to be returned.

There are key similarities between Pulter's expansion of the genre and Lucy Hutchinson's use of elegy and complaint. The contexts for Hutchinson's poems are different to those of Pulter of course, having been written after the restoration of Charles II and far from a Royalist point of view. Ross summarises the immediate context of Hutchinson's *Elegies*:

John Hutchinson signed the death warrant of Charles I and in the Restoration he was persecuted for his political views: he was arrested in 1663 on allegations of treason against Charles II and imprisoned at Sandown Castle in Kent, where he died on 11 September 1664. In the 1650s however, John Hutchinson had become disillusioned with the protectorate and retired from public life to the Hutchinson's country estate at Owthorpe in Nottinghamshire, where he cultivated an extensive garden. Lucy Hutchinson's twenty five elegies, epitaphs and songs on his death are likely to have been composed at Owthorpe between 1664 and 1671, and they look back on this retreat in the 1650s in a republican and retrospective evocation of rural retirement that is overlaid with the grief-stricken isolation of the elegiac speaker.<sup>12</sup>

Despite the inverted political situation, with her republican husband imprisoned by Charles II, there are noticeable similarities in Hutchinson's situation with Pulter's *Complaint of Thames* (and other poems) in the imprisonment and eventual death of the addressee and in the 'grief-stricken

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<sup>12</sup> Ross, *Women, Poetry, and Politics in Seventeenth-Century Britain*, p. 175.

isolation' of the speaker. The significance of the pastoral landscape of rural retirement in both writers' poems will be considered in more detail below, however I will note here the similar emphasis on restoration, as shown in the final lines of the seventh elegy in Hutchinson's collection:

But Could I call back hasty flying time  
 The vanisht glories that once my Prime  
 To me That resurrection would be vaine  
 And like ungathred flowers would die againe  
 In vaine would doting time which can no more  
 Giue Shuch a louer Loveliness restore. (To the Gardin at Owthorpe,  
 lines 47-52, p. 500)<sup>13</sup>

The politically and religiously charged words 'resurrection' and 'restore' appear in relation to the loss of both the 'lover', her husband, and the 'loveliness', the once-blooming garden. This restoration is desired but 'would be vaine... In vaine', just as Pulter's Thames admits that 'wishes are in vaine' and 'O my sad heart these are but foolish dreames' (line 113). Hutchinson's lines also recall the inevitably cyclical ending of Shakespeare's *A Lover's Complaint*. This hopeless inevitability is a key intersection of complaint and elegy. As we will see, the interaction of elegy with Ovidian female-voiced complaint in Hutchinson's *Elegies* allows her to focus on the female first person subject left behind and the impact of her husband's abandonment.

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<sup>13</sup> David Norbrook, 'Lucy Hutchinson's "Elegies" and the Situation of the Republican Woman Writer (with text)', *English Literary Renaissance*, 27:3 (1997), pp. 468–521. All quotations of Lucy Hutchinson's *Elegies* are from this edition.

The ‘topical and generic fluidity inherent in elegy’<sup>14</sup> makes it a particularly apt genre for experimentation and interaction with amatory complaint. A consideration of the definition of elegy and its reception in early modern England will illustrate this. Elegy maintains a dual definition on the one hand as a genre based on mournful content and on the other as verse in the classical elegiac metre of alternating dactylic hexameter and pentameter lines (*‘subditur ergo constanti Heroico fluxus pentameter’*)<sup>15</sup> which came to be used for many different topics.<sup>16</sup> The mournful content of elegy is thought to be connected to its origins as funerary lament accompanied by a pipe (or ‘aulos’ in Greek: *‘esse enim tibiam lugubre instrumentum’* (‘for the flute is a sad instrument’)).<sup>17</sup>

However, the funeral lament content, according to Margaret Alexious in her study of Greek ritual lament, was criticised in a poetic contest in the sixth century BC:

It is possible that Echembrotos, the Peloponnesian poet who was famous for his mournful elgoi accompanied by the aulos, was only one of a school of Dorian elegists, who used the form for a kind of lament, and it was this same Echembrotos whose music to the aulos was

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<sup>14</sup> Ross, *Women, Poetry, and Politics in Seventeenth-Century Britain*, p. 152.

<sup>15</sup> Julius Caesar Scaliger, *Poetices Libri Septem* (Geneva: Joannes Crispinus, 1561), book 3, chapter 125, in Edward Paleit (ed.) and trans. ‘Sexual and Political Liberty and neo-Latin Poetics: the Heroides of Mark Alexander Boyd’, *Renaissance Studies*, 22:3 (2008), pp. 1-27 (p. 10): ‘the variable [*fluxus*] pentameter is placed beneath/subjected to [*subditur*] the constant heroic [meter]’.

<sup>16</sup> Paleit argues that ‘a definitinal slippage from meter to situation in part reflects the rise of vernacular poetry, in which classical quantitative meter was rarely used’, p. 8.

<sup>17</sup> Scaliger, *Poetices Libri Septem*, book 1, chapter 50.

disqualified at the Delphic festival in 578BC on the grounds that its mournful character was unsuitable.<sup>18</sup>

Edward Paleit notes that Renaissance humanists ‘understood elegy through its major Latin exponents, Tibullus, Propertius, and Ovid... as a complaint by distressed lovers, typically men’, giving the example of George Puttenham:

There was an other sort, who sought the favor of faire Ladies, and coveted to bemone their estates at large, and the perplexities of love in a certain pitious verse called Elegie, and thence were called the Elegiack: such among the Latines were Ovid, Tibullus and Propertius.<sup>19</sup>

Ovid clearly expanded the genre. In addition to the *Heroides*, the love poems (*Amores*), the Roman calendar (*Fasti*) and the exilic poetry are all in the elegiac meter. In *Heroides* 15 (*Sappho to Phaon*), the female speaker Sappho says that her love complaint is fitting to the elegiac metre:

Forsitan et quare mea sint alterna requiras  
carmina, cum lyricis sim magis apta modis:  
flendus amor meus est; elegiae flebile carmen;  
non facit ad lacrimas barbitos ulla meas. (lines 5-8)

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<sup>18</sup> Margaret Alexious, *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), p. 104, quoted in Peter Sacks, *The English elegy: Studies in the Genre from Spenser to Yeats* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press), 1985, p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie* (London, 1589), p. 20, quoted in Paleit, ‘Sexual and Political Liberty and neo-Latin Poetics: the *Heroides* of Mark Alexander Boyd’, p. 8.

(Perhaps, too, you may ask why my verses alternate, when I am better suited to the lyric mode. I must weep, for my love – and elegy is the weeping strain; no lyre is suited to my tears.)<sup>20</sup>

This female-voiced complaint of Sappho is clearly linked to the ‘weeping strain’ of elegy yet her complaint is different to both the distressed male lovers of the Roman elegists and the funerary mourning which was often linked to women’s grief at the death of their military husbands in classical epic and tragedy.

Scaliger’s handbook *Poetices Libri Septem* (1561) shows that this cultural link between women and lament continued into the early modern period, as he presents a lack of moderation, figured by a headlong female weeping:

Praecipites vero in fletum atque conquestionem feminae [...]

Insatiabilis enim est sexus ille rerum omnium, ut neque appetens pacari neque plenus expleri possit. Numquam sane sorti suae acquiescit.

(Truly they fall headlong into weeping and complaining [...] for that sex is insatiable in all matters, such that it cannot be placated when it desires something nor satisfied when it has obtained it. It is never satisfied with its lot.)<sup>21</sup>

Andrew Marvell genders weeping as female (through comparison of ‘two Eyes swoln with weeping’ with ‘the chaste Ladies pregnant Womb’) in ‘Eyes and

<sup>20</sup> Showerman (ed) and trans, *Ovid: Heroides, Amores*, pp. 180-181.

<sup>21</sup> Scaliger, in Edward Paleit (ed.) and trans., ‘Sexual and Political Liberty and neo-Latin Poetics: the Heroides of Mark Alexander Boyd’, p. 9.



Tears', while Hester Pulter in 'On the Horrid Murder of That Incomparable Prince, King Charles' reflects that the hyperbolic gendered mourning of 'poor village girls' with their classical performative grief, is not adequate to express a political loss or grief connected ultimately to regicide: 'Nor let none dare to sigh, or strike their breast/ To show a grief that so transcends the rest' (lines 7-8). Women writers like Hutchinson and Pulter in contrast, use the model of female-voiced complainants such as Sappho from Ovid's *Heroides* in order to give a more empowered version of elegy which interacts with both the funerary and the distressed Roman elegiac lover traditions. This model provides a female subjectivity and a generic richness of themes and content apt for manipulation.

Lucy Hutchinson shows with one of her commonplace books (Nottinghamshire Archives, MS DDHU 1) that Ovid's *Heroides* was a text that she was reading and engaging with during poetic production. The manuscript commonplace book, largely in Lucy Hutchinson's own hand, is housed in the Northamptonshire Records Office and remains unpublished (although a selection of poems is forthcoming in David Norbrook's 'The Works of Lucy Hutchinson' volumes for Oxford University Press).<sup>22</sup>

Hutchinson selects and translates lines from four different *Heroides* epistles. All of the selections consider painful or unrequited love and Hutchinson seems to enjoy the task of translating Ovid's economical Latin.

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<sup>22</sup> For a full list of the contents of this manuscript and the identification of the various scribes, see Jerome De Groot, 'John Denham and Lucy Hutchinson's Commonplace Book', *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 48:1 (2008), pp. 147-163. Only one volume out of four of 'The works of Lucy Hutchinson' has been published to date. See David Norbrook and Reid Barbour, *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson, Vol. 1: Translation of Lucretius* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

She recreates the chiasmatic line from *Acontius to Cydippe* for example, ‘Si noceo, quod amo, fateor sine fine nocebo’, translating to a rhyming couplet with a similarly determined inevitability: ‘If that I love doe iniure you/ This iniury I shall still persue’.<sup>23</sup> Jerome De Groot studies the manuscript in connection with John Denham’s *Aeneid*, books 2 to 6 of which Hutchinson transcribed into the manuscript. De Groot opens up the possibility that the appearance of the *Aeneid* translation in Hutchinson’s manuscript is a result of a poetic collaboration rather than simple transcription:

While it would seem clear that the poem itself was composed in the 1630s, it is much less certain when the manuscript version was copied, and this very uncertainty allows us to consider the merits of various models of reading and coterie compilation.<sup>24</sup>

While De Groot describes the *Heroides* extracts in Hutchinson’s manuscript as ‘lines on love from Ovid with translations probably by Hutchinson (LH)’, I think we can be more certain than this of Hutchinson’s authorship, especially considering the various corrections and emendations in the transcription.

The Latin text appears transcribed on the verso with translations facing on the recto (rather in the same manner as a modern day ‘Loeb’ edition). In my transcription below I retain all the markings as closely as possible to how they appear in the original commonplace book:

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<sup>23</sup> Nottinghamshire County Archives, MS DDHU 1, *Lucy Hutchinson Commonplace Book*, Item 7.8, p. 207 (my transcription). The poems are partially transcribed and studied on the Perdita Project website, which is the edition I will use to help reference the items: <https://web.warwick.ac.uk/english/perdita/html/>.

<sup>24</sup> De Groot, ‘John Denham and Lucy Hutchinson’s Commonplace Book’, p. 148.

Venit amor gravius, quo serius: urimus intus

Urimur et caecum pectora vulnus habent.

Scilicet ut teneros laedunt iuga prima invencos

Frenaque vix patitur de grege captus equus

Sic male vixque subit primos rude pectus amore

Sarcinaque haec animo non sedet apta meo

~~Love wou hurts most s~~

~~That love wounds sorest weh doth late begin~~

That love hurts sorest which doth late begin

I burne, I burne: I feele the wound within

~~As unbroken steeres scarcely the yoke sustaine~~

~~As young As unbroken steere~~

As unbroke steeres receive the yoake with payne

As young colts ~~lamb~~ scarce endure the curbing reine

So my rude brest, uneasily love admits

Unaptly on my soule this pressure sits.<sup>25</sup>

The presence of these cancellations and corrections suggests that the manuscript functioned as a working document, providing an insight into the translation process. The corrections often rest on key words or rhyming choices and so it seems much more likely that this is an indication of an authorial creative poetic process rather than a series of transcription errors.

These translated lines from the *Phaedra to Hippolytus* epistle focus on the

<sup>25</sup> Hutchinson, MS DDHU 1, Item 7.6, p. 207 (my transcription).

passion and uneasiness of the original around the pain attendant on love. The translation reproduces the repetition in the Latin ('urimur... urimur' with 'I burne... I burne'), retaining the georgic metaphors, but allowing a Christianised context with the translation of the classical 'animo' as 'soul'. The presence of repeated words and variations as Hutchinson alters her translation are still visible beneath the lines, adding a sense of immediate and raw emotion. This is revealed most clearly when we compare them to John Sherburne's translation of the same passages in his 1639 work *Ovids heroical epistles*:

Love comes more heavie through its sloath: I hide  
 Within me flames, my breast doth wounds abide.  
 As the first yoake the tender Heifer paines,  
 As new backt Colt the curbing bit disdaines:  
 So rude, so rawly love's by me indur'd,  
 Nor is my minde to the new load inur'd. (p. 19)<sup>26</sup>

Sherburne's couplets lack the pace and intensity of Hutchinson's; he does not translate the repeated first person exclamations in the same direct way ('I burne, I burne: I feelee'). Sherburne's complaint is more reminiscent of a reported adage than the immediacy of a painful apostrophe.

The selection of the particular elegiac couplets from the *Heroides* seems to be a self-conscious choice by Hutchinson. Much of the manuscript focuses on themes of loss and grief, linking with the themes of these Latin

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<sup>26</sup> John Sherburne, *Ovids heroical epistles, Englished by Iohn Sherburne. Gent* (London: William Cooke, 1639).

passages. For example, the first item in the manuscript is a letter of condolence to a lady on the death of her daughter, where Hutchinson seems to reveal her own sickness:

It turns the mercies I have received into bitterness making me know  
that the death i have so often this year approached, and turned from  
with so much reluctance, would have hid this sorrow from my eies,  
which makes me much lesse in love with life, and consent to the  
opinion of that holy father, who says god cuts of many sorrows from  
them whose life he shortens.<sup>27</sup>

Hutchinson reflects on how her own death, as she had often come close to that year, would have prevented her from knowing about this other sorrow. The inclusion of a *Heroides* couplet from *Briseis to Achilles* (poem 3, lines 139-140) comparing death and absence, then, is especially relevant: ‘Yet if your love to wearninesse encline/ Rather my death than absent life enioyne’ (‘At si versus amor tuus est in taedia nostri/ Quem sine te cogis vivere, cogi mori’).<sup>28</sup> The sentiments expressed in this couplet are also relevant to Hutchinson’s *Elegies*.

With De Groot’s assessment that the manuscript could have been added to later, with the ‘commonplace book text as a document of the complex and fluid intellectual relationships of the 1630s, ’40s, and ’50s’,<sup>29</sup> an engagement with the *Heroides* as a touch-stone during the periods of retirement in the 1650s and isolation due to her husband’s imprisonment and death during the

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<sup>27</sup> Hutchinson, MS DDHU 1, Item 2 (Letter), pp. 2-4 (p. 2).

<sup>28</sup> Hutchinson, MS DDHU 1, Item 7.2, p. 206.

<sup>29</sup> De Groot, ‘John Denham and Lucy Hutchinson’s Commonplace Book’, p. 160.

1660s, becomes a possibility. De Groot argues that Hutchinson may have engaged in this way with the *Aeneid*:

Virgil was also translated in 1658 by James Harrington as a means to express his political frustration at the drift back toward monarchy, and his ambivalent use of Virgil might provide us with a model for Lucy Hutchinson's possible interest in the *Aeneid* during the 1650s as a vehicle for articulating disillusion.<sup>30</sup>

Indeed, nowhere are Hutchinson's feelings of 'disillusion' more strongly or personally expressed than in her *Elegies*. David Norbrook's journal article, 'Lucy Hutchinson's "Elegies" and the Situation of the Republican Woman Writer', (which includes the only complete edition of the *Elegies* to date) marks the *Elegies* apart from Hutchinson's other major works on the grounds that 'in the writings which have hitherto received critical discussion, she adopts personae which play down the fact that a woman is writing'.<sup>31</sup> In the *Elegies*, with the influence of Ovidian female-voiced complaint, Hutchinson does quite the opposite of playing down the fact both that a woman is writing and that Hutchinson herself is the woman writing.

The first poem in the collection of the elegies makes a bold opening statement:

Leaue of yee pittying freinds; leaue of in vaine  
Doe you perswade the dead to liue againe  
in uaine to me your comforts are applied

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 157.

<sup>31</sup> Norbrook, 'Lucy Hutchinson's "Elegies" and the Situation of the Republican Woman Writer (with text)', (pp. 468-521), p. 469.

For, 'twas not he; twas only I That died

In That Cold Graue which his deare reliques keepes

My light is quite extinct where he but sleepes

My substance into the darke vault was laide

And now I am my owne pale Empty Shade. (lines 1-8, p. 487)

In declaring that 'twas only I that died' Hutchinson shifts the focus of the elegies from her husband to herself. The poem swaps the position of dead husband and living wife in a Christian vision of John Hutchinson in unity with God, which Erica Longfellow describes as 'a Puritan element of perfectibility... her husband must undergo the trials of prison and rigorous study of the scriptures before he can become like God'.<sup>32</sup> However beyond these Christian pieties, this swapping of positions also puts the emphasis on Hutchinson as the one left behind, with the comfort of poetry replacing the 'pittyng freinds' for the female speaker. Complaint offers a rhetorical efficacy for the woman left behind, allowing her to air grievances and give a chance for communication and change.

A highly personal female voice pervades the elegies. In poem 12, 'Musings in my evening Walkes at O', there is a painful realism as daily life and memory fail to console Hutchinson:

Takes upe my walkes and Still I find

Something That calls my losse to mind

His disperst Image which I see

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<sup>32</sup> Erica Longfellow, *Women and Religious Writing in Early Modern England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 195

Amongst his Children Joyes not me (lines 27-30, p. 509)

This description of a mother's feelings of pain, almost revulsion, at seeing her own children's faces because they remind her of her dead husband is acutely personal and specific. One can only imagine that the inclusion of this is the result of personal anecdotal experience. It is, however, also a situation that recalls a memorable episode in classical literature, and specifically female-voiced complaint. We can compare it to Dido's famous speech to persuade Aeneas to stay with her in Carthage from Virgil's *Aeneid*:

saltem si qua mihi de te suscepta fuisset  
ante fugam suboles, si quis mihi parvulus aula  
luderet Aeneas, qui te tamen ore referret,  
non equidem omnino capta ac deserta viderer.

(At least, if before your flight a child of yours had been born to me, if in my hall a baby Aeneas were playing, whose face, in spite of all, would bring back yours, I should not think myself utterly vanquished and forlorn. (book 4, lines 328-331)<sup>33</sup>

Here a soon-to-be-abandoned woman longs for a child in order to replace the presence of the father. Ovid's Dido in the *Heroides* inverts this sentiment, giving an alternative reality to Virgil's text whereby Dido is indeed pregnant but this state does not provide comfort or consolation as Virgil's speaker imagines:

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<sup>33</sup> H.R. Fairclough (ed.) and trans., *Virgil Eclogues; Georgics; Aeneid bks. 1-6* (Harvard, Loeb Classical Library, 1916), pp. 444-5.



Forsitan et gravidam Dido, scelerate, relinquo,  
 parsque tui lateat corpore clausa meo.  
 accedet fatis matris miserabilis infans,  
 et nondum nato funeris auctor eris,  
 cumque parente sua frater morietur Iuli,  
 poenaeque conexos auferet una duos.

(Perhaps, too, it is Dido soon to be mother, O evil-doer, whom you  
 abandon now, and a part of your being lies hidden in myself. To the fate  
 of the mother will be added that of the wretched babe, and you will be  
 the cause of doom to your yet unborn child; with his own mother will  
 Iulus' brother die, and one fate will bear us both away together. (poem 7,  
 lines 134-139)<sup>34</sup>

This alteration of the Virgilian episode is a demonstration of how Ovid's *Heroides* often provides alternative readings, or counter-stories, to the epic and heroic mainstream. In place of the '*parvulus... Aeneas*' playing in the halls, Ovid's Dido imagines with bodily disgust that part of Aeneas could be existing inside of her ('*corpore clausa meo*') and declares, Medea-like, that the '*miserabilis infans*' will die with her. Hutchinson was no doubt familiar with both Dido texts. As well as the translation of Denham's *Aeneid* books 2 to 6, Hutchinson transcribed a translation of *Aeneid* book 4, which she ascribes to Sidney Godolphin, into her commonplace book. In this very manuscript, as we have seen, are also lines selected for translation from the *Heroides*. She places herself somewhere in between Virgil's and Ovid's two versions of Dido with

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<sup>34</sup> Showerman (ed.) and trans., *Ovid: Heroides, Amores*, pp. 92-93.

her elegy, emphasising the same themes of loss and memory, but adapting the child-father motif to a more realistic and personal manifestation. Hutchinson is closer to Ovid's complaining Dido in that she is already abandoned and has children, more 'miserabilis' in description than 'parvulus' and perhaps bitterly referred to as '*his* Children' who bring no 'joy' to Hutchinson at all.

While there is not the same threat of suicide and murder, there is the same element of despair in Hutchinson:

With unseene teares and unheard [groanes]  
 Ore those cold ashes and dried bones  
 I weepe my wretched life away  
 No Joy comes with the Chearefull day  
 No rest comes wth the Silent Night  
 What terrors my darke Soule affright (lines 1-6, p. 509)

Hutchinson's despair is specifically linked to her isolation. The privacy of her complaints 'unseene' and 'unheard' are simultaneously being made public through poetry, presumably with help from the inspiration of the new books ('new ones') she has been forced to turn to. This desire to publicise her grief is shown in the second elegy, 'To the Sun Shineing into her Cham', paradoxically when Hutchinson is calling for the sun to leave her in private:

Let me and my Just greifes alone  
 Goe guild the tyrants bloody Throne  
 Cast lustre on The Strumpetts face  
 Reueale Their glories in full grace

And lett The Greate ones by Thy Light  
 Act crymes which used to black The Night  
 But keepe away Thy prying beames  
 From lookeing one Those silent Streames  
 Which from our Eies in Secrett fall  
 Wayling a Publick funeral (lines 15-24, p. 489)

The invective against ‘tyrants’ and their ‘strumpets’ and the imperative voice used against the sun does not disguise the fact that these lines actually form an apostrophe, opening up Hutchinson’s words to a wider reader. Barbara Johnson describes this function of apostrophe as a self-conscious choice: ‘apostrophe is a form of ventriloquism through which the speaker throws voice, life, and human form onto the addressee, turning its silence into mute responsiveness’.<sup>35</sup> Hutchinson’s use of apostrophe throughout her *Elegies* is reminiscent of Ovid’s heroines, who ostensibly write their poems as letters to their abandoning loved-ones despite the reality of non-response. Dido, for example, expresses her pessimism: ‘*Nec quia te nostra sperem prece posse moveri, adloquor*’ (‘Not because I hope you may be moved by prayer of mine do I address you’ (*Heroides* 7, lines 3-4)).<sup>36</sup> Hutchinson, like Ovid’s Dido, writes with an addressee expressed, making private thoughts public and leaving a literary monument.

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<sup>35</sup> Mark Robson, ‘Swansongs: Reading Voice in the Poetry of Lady Hester Pulter’, in *English Manuscript Studies* 9 (2000), pp. 238-256.

<sup>36</sup> Showerman (ed) and trans, *Ovid: Heroides, Amores*, pp. 82-3.

### **Marvell's Complaining Nymph**

When considering despair in connection with the presence of a child in these complaints, one also thinks of the most famous female-voiced complaint poem of the period in which Hutchinson and Pulter were writing, Andrew Marvell's 'Nymph Complaining for the Death of her Fawn'. The fawn is not technically the nymph's child, yet there is a mothering relationship expressed: 'With sweetest milk and sugar first/ I it at mine own fingers nurst' (lines 55-56).<sup>37</sup> Moreover, these metaphors have persuaded some critics to argue that the fawn is precisely the nymph's child, including an entertaining, if not wholly convincing, essay entitled 'What is the Nymph Complaining For?' by John Teunissen and Evelyn Hinz: 'Far from being a young girl whose grief over the death of her pet is so poignant that she can liken herself to a mother bewailing the death of her child, the Nymph *is* the bereaved mother'.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, Marvell's nymph sounds rather like Virgil's Dido in finding pleasure and consolation in the fawn, while noting its potential similarity to Sylvio (the Aeneas-like father figure in the relationship):

Thenceforth I set myself to play  
My solitary time away,  
With this, and very well content  
Could so mine idle life have spent;  
For it was full of sport, and light

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<sup>37</sup> Andrew Marvell, 'The Nymph Complaining for the Death of her Fawn', in Kerrigan (ed.), *Motives of Woe*, pp. 235-238 (p.413).

<sup>38</sup> John Teunissen and Evelyn Hinz, 'What is the Nymph Complaining for?' *English Literary History*, 45:3 (1978), pp. 410-428.

Of foot and heart, and did invite  
 Me to its game; it seem'd to bless  
 Itself in me. How could I less  
 Than love it? Oh, I cannot be  
 Unkind t' a beast that loveth me.

Had it liv'd long, I do not know  
 Whether it too might have done so  
 As Sylvio did; his gifts might be  
 Perhaps as false or more than he.  
 But I am sure, for aught that I  
 Could in so short a time espy,  
 Thy love was far more better then  
 The love of false and cruel men. (lines 37-54)

The casual way that the fawn and Sylvio's potential similarity is expressed emphasises the difference between Marvell's female-voiced complaint and Hutchinson's. Marvell's nymph lacks the anger or despair of an abandoned woman. Commentators on *Nymph Complaining* often mention the possible political allegory of the fawn as Charles I.

Yet what they do not consider adequately is the fact that the nymph has been abandoned by *Sylvio*. Indeed, my answer to Teunissen and Hinz's question 'What is the Nymph Complaining for?' would be first and foremost her treatment by Sylvio. The original situation for the nymph's complaint was that Sylvio tricked and deserted her. It is only after this that the pet fawn dies.

And, as the nymph reveals, whether the fawn is deserving of her love and grief is questionable. As is suggested by her musings, he may well add to her complaints in a more forceful rather than elegiac strain had he lived on to replicate the behaviours of his 'father' Sylvio:

Had it liv'd long, I do not know  
Whether it too might have done so  
As Sylvio did; his gifts might be  
Perhaps as false or more than he. (lines 47-50, p. 236)

The death of the fawn, that 'unkind... beast that loveth me' (line 46), is then figured as potentially a relief or an escape from the potential future ill treatment by the fawn as an image of his father and so perhaps a future lover.

This represents a revision in the interpretation of Marvell's poem, with the situation and motive of the nymph's complaint changing. The neglect of this part of the story by critics is most probably because they do not consider the poem in the context of a female-voiced complaint tradition. All the evidence is there for Sylvio's role as a male deserter of complaint; he is described as 'Unconstant Sylvio, when yet/ I had not found him counterfeit' (lines 25-26, p. 236) and the fawn 'ty'd in this silver chain and bell' (line 28) is in the position of a gift, reminiscent of those seducing 'thousand favours... trophies of affections hot' given to the complainant in Shakespeare's *A Lover's Complaint*.

By considering *Nymph Complaining* in this complaint tradition we can see how different Marvell's poem is to its female-voiced complaint

counterparts by women writers like Hester Pulter and Lucy Hutchinson. Comparisons have already been made between Pulter, Hutchinson and Marvell, notably by Peter Davidson, Sarah Ross, and Nigel Smith.<sup>39</sup> However, these comparisons are largely based on verbal echoes between the poems, for example Davidson's noting of similarities between Pulter's elegy 'Upon the death of my deare and lovely daughter Jane Pulter' and Marvell's *Nymph Complaining* in images of gardens, flowers, whiteness, and the concluding Ovidian Niobe image of weeping stone.<sup>40</sup> It should immediately be noted with such an argument that many of these images are common throughout the elegiac poetry of this period. The Niobe allusion, for example, although it is common to both Pulter and Marvell, also appears widely in many poems of the period, including in Lucy Hutchinson's *Elegies*, for example in poem 19: 'In vaine wee weeping Marbles doe Incise/ Wherein The Celebrated man twice dies/ When Salt tears frett his worthlesse monument/ Whome the best words but faintly represent' (lines 1-4, p. 518) and John Quarles in his 'England's Complaint', ('Only *Melpomene*, who now appears/ Like *Nioby*, a monument of tears' (sig.B2v).<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, this kind of comparison, however, lends itself to an outcome which is based on unidirectional influence, an influence which is presumed to pass from male poet to female poet, as Davidson demonstrates:

Lady Pulter's poem speaks of two years having passed since her daughter's death, so the poem was presumably at least begun in 1648,

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<sup>39</sup> See Peter Davidson, 'Green Thoughts', *The Times Literary Supplement*, Issue 5044 (December, 1999), p. 14; Ross, *Women, Poetry and Politics in Seventeenth Century Britain*; Nigel Smith, 'The Rod and the Canon', *Women's Writing*, 14 (2007), pp. 232–45.

<sup>40</sup> Peter Davidson, 'Green Thoughts', p. 14.

<sup>41</sup> John Quarles, *Fons lachrymarum, or, A fountain of tears from whence doth flow Englands complaint, Jeremiah's lamentations paraphras'd, with divine meditations, and an elegy upon that son of valor Sir Charles Lucas*, (London: Nathaniel Brooks, 1649).

which could help fix a latest date for “The Nymph Complaining”, since its relation to Sir Richard Fanshawe’s Royalist translation of Guarini would seem to give an earliest date of 1647.<sup>42</sup>

The similarities Davidson identifies in the poems help to lead him to a conclusion that Marvell’s poem must have been written before Pulter’s, suggesting the date of 1647.

In contrast, Nigel Smith opens up the possibility of influence transmitting from female writer to male:

A formalist critical approach to poems by Katherine Philips and Hester Pulter positions their work within a tradition of Royalist writing and suggests an influence on Marvell’s poetry; an appreciation of Lucy Hutchinson’s translation of Lucretius elucidates links with Marvell and Milton. These interactions make it possible to begin to construct a history of women’s writing and its interface with literary traditions.<sup>43</sup>

It is this ‘interface with literary traditions’, as Smith sets out in the final sentence of this quotation, which should be effectively explored. The two poets engage quite differently with themes of abandonment and isolation. In Marvell’s poem, once the nymph comes to realise that Sylvio was betraying and deserting her, ‘had me beguiled’, her time in isolation is described in terms of pastoral innocence and escapism:

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<sup>42</sup> Peter Davidson, ‘Green Thoughts’, p. 14.

<sup>43</sup> Nigel Smith, ‘The Rod and the Canon’, p. 232.



Thenceforth I set myself to play  
 My solitary time away,  
 With this, and very well content  
 Could so mine idle life have spent;  
 For it was full of sport, and light  
 Of foot and heart, and did invite  
 Me to its game; it seem'd to bless  
 Itself in me. How could I less  
 Than love it? Oh, I cannot be  
 Unkind t' a beast that loveth me. (lines 37-46, p. 236)

This is a very optimistic version of a female-complainant, and one which indeed fits the naive words of a desperate Dido in Virgil's *Aeneid* rather than the frustrated ones of Ovid's Dido or the painful one's of Hutchinson. It is also very different to the portrayal of child-death in Pulter's 'Upon the death of my deare and lovely daughter Jane Pulter' where the comparison of her daughter to a wounded hart, gendered female in the simile rather than male, is made by Pulter to illustrate the image of red on white of Jane's skin as blood on snow. For Pulter, the inevitable political symbolism of the hounded hart is made more personal by the precise details she includes of the animal being struck by an arrow, tripping and struggling along the snowy ground till the 'guiltless blood doth flow'.

In Marvell's poem, only when the fawn is dying does the garden show any signs of doom, and these are metaphorically expressed, so that the cry of grief from the nymph comes almost as a shock to the reader:

O help, O help! I see it faint,  
 And die as calmly as a saint.  
 See how it weeps! The tears do come,  
 Sad, slowly dropping like a gumme. (lines 93-96)

It is this unexpected emotion which may have persuaded critics to see the elegiac element of the poem as hyperbolic or parodic, linking it to the ‘dead pet’ sub-genre of Latin love elegy and recalling the ridiculous ventriloquised mourning of Ovid’s Corinna for her dead parrot and Catullus’ Lesbia for her dead sparrow. When the fawn is expressed as dead, the poem ends quite swiftly, with little mention of the nymph alone in her pastoral setting; instead there are tears of mourning from a Niobe-like statue image, and a vision of the fawn running around in Elysium, ‘With milk-white lambs and ermines pure’, with no sign of that vermillion colouring of blood which is the lasting image of Pulter’s dying hart.

For Hutchinson, in contrast to Marvell, it is the desertion and her resultant isolation which are emphasised throughout the *Elegies*. The pastoral setting of Marvell’s nymph, even when the nymph’s ‘garden’ is described as ‘roses overgrown’, is a happy ‘wilderness’ apt for playful games of hide and seek. Marvell’s complainant’s ‘solitary time away’ is in a pastoral setting of innocence, idleness and *otium*. Hutchinson’s *Elegies* are pervaded by natural imagery, with a number of the poems centred around the garden or other parts of the Hutchinson Estate at Owthorpe. In contrast to the nymph’s ‘solitary time away... well content... idle life’, Hutchinson’s ‘sollitude’ is not a content

one, as expressed, for example, in ‘On my Visitt to W S which I dreamt of That Night’:

The place no more affords glad sight or sound  
 Nothing but desolation now is found  
 In Sollitude and silence reigning here  
 Where soule and sence so often feasted were  
 But new Inhabitants may restore  
 The grace and beauty This Place had before  
 I a Polluted Pallace must remaine  
 No ornaments can decke me up againe (lines 47-54, p. 508)

Hutchinson is in a position of desolation and alienation, with the aesthetic decay of the estate used to represent this change in circumstance. Hutchinson breaks the ‘silence’ of the ‘sollitude’ by writing a complaint. Elizabeth Scott-Baumann observes that, in this abandoned setting, ‘now it is the wife who must be the creative force, writing poems which recall his absent form’ and compares Hutchinson’s speaker to the classical female Dido in this elegy, as she must remain alone and abandoned in ‘a Polluted Palace’.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, this poem demonstrates how the pastoral vein is very different in Hutchinson to that of idle innocence in Marvell.

Scott-Baumann proceeds to comment on how Hutchinson’s *Elegies* engage with the poetics of ‘retreat’:

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<sup>44</sup> Elizabeth Scott-Baumann, *Forms of Engagement: Women, Poetry, and Culture 1640-1680* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 145. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

In the *Elegies*, Hutchinson's depiction of rural retreat is one of painful isolation, not calm ease. Pastoral idyll is replaced by dystopian, fallen Eden. 'Musings' and 'To the Gardin' have the resounding grief, wrath and castigatory tone of a bereaved and politically despairing poet. The hints of disenchantment can no longer be contained within Horatian praise. Under the Restoration, and without her husband's presence, Hutchinson writes dark and dystopian variations on the retreat and estate poem theme.<sup>45</sup>

Hutchinson's inversion of the more positive possibilities of 'retreat' or 'retirement' in the period, I would argue, is influenced by a female complaint reversal of fortune. The isolated situation of the female speaker is accentuated by the previous version of rural retirement. Before her husband departed, the rural landscape was a place where books were enjoyed ('The pleasant lines I chose and Loved' (poem 12, line 37), gardens and house were tended to, and visions of a Golden Age literally covered the place: 'The arras Storries did our fances rayse/ To what The Poets faind of Golden days' (poem 11, line 19). This background of Horatian retreat, with idealised images of withdrawal from political action, shifts completely with the absence of John Hutchinson.<sup>46</sup> Now the retirement is unquestionably an enforced one, more akin to the 'confinement' which Hester Pulter complains about throughout her poems.

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<sup>45</sup> Scott-Baumann, p. 163.

<sup>46</sup> See Susan Wiseman, *Conspiracy and Virtue: Women, Writing, and Politics in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 212: 'For poets of the Commonwealth and Protectorate the implications of pastoral retreat, often implying an enforced retirement from political affairs as much as a retreat to the good life, were mediated by Horace - himself an admirer of Epicurus. Hutchinson analyses retirement in a poem which clearly engages with many of the tropes of pastoral poetry of the 1630s, particularly Ben Jonson's 'To Penshurst', where the virtuous man is represented as lord of his manor.'

In Pulter too, there is the same sense that retirement has shifted from pastoral ease to isolation and desolation. In ‘The Invitation into the Country’,<sup>47</sup> for example, a poem which has verbal and thematic echoes with *Complaint of Thames*, there is a definite change:

But oh those times now changed bee  
 Then lovely lasses com away  
 To cheere my heart make noe delaye  
 Sad Metamorphosis wee see.  
 For since Amintas went away  
 Shepherds and sheepe goe all astray (lines 71-76).

Here the idyllic countryside of Broadfield metamorphoses, with the absence of ‘Amintas’, into a place just as corrupt as London, from where the poet ostensibly calls her daughters to ‘come make haste away’. The female-voiced complaints of the waterways, Broadfield’s ‘enamelled vales and crystal streams’, begin to mourn in the same way as ‘the crystal Thames her loss deplores’. Being written by Pulter specifically to her ‘D.[ear] D.[aughters] M.[argaret] P.[ulter], P.[enelope] P.[ulter]’, this is designed to show the effect of the civil war on even the most secluded pastoral surroundings and ‘how a civil war is experienced and remembered by women, how their experiences of it are shaped by gender... remembering public events in powerfully personal

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<sup>47</sup> Pulter, ‘The Invitation into the Country, to My D.[ear] D.[aughters] M.[argaret] P.[ulter], P.[enelope] P.[ulter], 1647, When His Sacred Majesty was at Unhappy [Holmby]’.

ways'.<sup>48</sup> It also demonstrates how absence can provide an occasion for writing. The absence of Charles I creates a desolate setting in both London and the country retreat, where rivers and nature come together to mourn their loss. Furthermore, the absence of Pulter's daughters from Broadfield creates an epistolary addressee to whom the complaint can be directed, opening up a rhetorical function for the poem. Though confined, 'shut up in a country grange', and whatever the reason for this enforced position apart from her daughters, Pulter's poems allow her to participate and to petition for change.

In a similar way, however desperate the position of retired isolation seems, Hutchinson uses it in a productive way in her *Elegies*. Though isolated, Hutchinson can speak out from behind the shadows, mirrors and echoes. Hutchinson creates her own echoes with the first person female poetic voice of the *Elegies*:

As Liewlesse Ecchoes fainter growe  
 The oftner Theyre repeated soe  
 At first fame which Lovd Noyse proclames  
 The Just renowne of vertues names  
 Which by degrees doth each age fall  
 Untill the Last Leaue none at all  
 And Heroes no more mention haue  
 Then the obscure Vulgar in the Graue (poem 22, lines 25-32).

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<sup>48</sup> Chedgzoy, *Women's Writing in the British Atlantic World: Memory, Place and History, 1550-1700*, p. 127.

This is in contrast to her words in the biographical *Memoirs of the life of Colonel Hutchinson*, a prose work written in the detached third person rather than first person: ‘Soe, as his shaddow, she waited on him every where, till he was taken into that region of light which admitts of none, and then she vanisht into nothing’.<sup>49</sup> In the *Elegies*, it is the memory of John Hutchinson which is at risk of disappearing into obscurity, with Hutchinson mediating on the poetic concerns of fame, monument and posterity. The garden and plants themselves find voice in their desolation:

Poore desolate Gardin smile no more on me  
 To whome glad looks rude entertainments be  
 While Thou and I for thy deare Master mourne  
 Thats best becoming that doth least adorne  
 ...  
 But he is gone and These gone with him too  
 Let now Thy flowers rise Chargd with weeping dew (‘To the Gardin at  
 Owthorpe’, lines 1-4, 18-22)

The personification of nature serves to highlight the empathetic and consolatory role of elegy, with Hutchinson’s comparison of her own grief with that of the garden showing the inward and outward effect of loss. By observing the flowers ‘weeping’, Hutchinson as the female speaker is placed in a similar position to Pulter in the *Complaint of Thames*, watching from the

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<sup>49</sup> N. H. Keeble (ed.), *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson with a Fragment of Autobiography* (London: J.M. Dent, 1995) p. 32.

outside and participating in a communal complaint. Any joy that used to be found in horticultural retirement has gone, with the only comfort to be located coming from the empathetic response of the garden to the same desolation felt by the poet. There is the sense, with the volta 'But he is gone', that it is the very absence of Hutchinson's husband which allows her to speak and express herself in verse, just as the flowers are ready and waiting to express themselves: 'charged with weeping dew'. Hutchinson's control over the the elegy as first person speaker is re-established with a meta-poetic comment, 'Too much alas This Parillil I find/ In the disordered passions of my mind' (poem 7, line 32-33), signalling that the metaphorical grief of the garden is a digressive and self-conscious manipulation of the pastoral retreat setting.

There is further personification in the *Elegies*, notably of the river running through the estate in 'Musings in my evening Walkes at O':

The murmering springs rise and Complaine  
 Then shrink into The earth againe  
 Least They foule mixtures should endure  
 Since he whoe kept Their Channells pure  
 No more on Their greene bankes appeares  
 The Clouds offers to lend me teares  
 While They sayle ore the empty pile  
 Which his Loved presence did ere while (lines 17-24)

There are verbal echoes here with Pulteney's *Complaint of Thames* poem, as we recall that the female-voiced Thames had 'waves' and 'billows' which would 'give rise' and 'lamenting roar'. Just as Hutchinson finds voice in enforced



isolation, so does the river 'rise and Complaine' with the absence of their 'lord' John Hutchinson, who used to keep the rivers clean and banks well-kept.

Andrew Marvell's use of the female-voiced complaint genre in his *Nymph Complaining* links with elegy and retreat in a way that makes us question the exact source of the nymph's complaint and whether we should feel sympathy at all for the fawn's death. The reasons for this clear interaction with the complaint genre in presenting Sylvio as an abandoning and unfaithful lover are perhaps in order to disguise or lessen the political symbolism of his poem. Hutchinson and Pulter in contrast, use the genre to emphasise aspects of complaint which map onto their own personal experiences and real-life sufferings, identifying directly with the elegiac and isolated female voices of their poems. Despite their different political situations, Pulter and Hutchinson are both interested in the question of how to express themselves in the isolated situation that they find themselves in. It is while they are in this position, while isolated and abandoned, that opportunities can be found. In their elegiac or 'retired' positions, they can open up the possibility of restoration and memorialisation. For these women writers, female-voiced complaint becomes a model for subjectivity and nuanced comment around themes of loss and offers alternative ways to mourn which give opportunities for personal and political expression.

## Chapter 4

### **Aphra Behn and John Dryden's *Ovid's Epistles*, Translated By Several Hands**

This chapter focuses on Aphra Behn and her contribution to the tradition of female-voiced complaint in a period which sees a renewed focus on Ovid's *Heroides*. In a return to a closer engagement with the Ovidian text after more creative developments of the genre, the *Heroides* was translated in 1680, the first complete translation since 1639, in a multi-authored volume which was to prove extremely popular and influential. I argue that Aphra Behn used her exceptional status as a female translator of the *Heroides* in *Ovid's Epistles* to create a place for herself in the Ovidian female-voiced complaint tradition, to instigate a female-authored tradition, and to use a looseness of translation to make wider comments on both translation itself and other issues in society and politics.

#### **Julia and Ovid: A Female Tradition?**

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu is one example of a female poet influenced by the resurgent Ovidian tradition and specifically by Aphra Behn's contribution. Montagu, born 1689, was an aristocrat who was very proactive in seeking a classical education. She composed a poem entitled 'Julia to Ovid' which she 'Wrote at 12 Years of Age in Imitation of Ovid's Epistles'. This added context to the poem, modestly indicating her age, appears in a header note to the poem

in the autograph Harrowby Manuscript compiled in 1730.<sup>1</sup> The young Montagu's poem is a creative version of a *Heroides* epistle, taking as its subject matter the famous quasi-biographical relationship between the poet Ovid and Julia, the Emperor Augustus' daughter (or grand-daughter).<sup>2</sup>

The authenticity of this love affair and its connection to Ovid's exile from Rome has been debated since antiquity, as Thomas Underdowne's preface to *Ovid his invective against Ibis* (1569) translation summarises:

The cause of his banishment is uncertayn, but most men thinke, and I am of that opinion also, that it was for using too familiarly *Iulia*, *Augustus* his daughter, who of hir selfe too much enclined to lasciviousness, unto whom he wrote many wanton *Elegies*, under the name of *Corinna*, as *Sidonius* plainly affirmeth.

'et te carmina per libidinosa  
notum, Naso tener, Tomosque missum,  
quondam Caesareae nimis puellae,  
ficto nomine subditum Corinnae' (sig.A7r)<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sandon Hall, Stafford, Harrowby MS 256, ff. (57v-8). I thank Lord Harrowby for kindly granting me access to the Harrowby collection and the surviving library of Mary Wortley Montagu. See Robert Halsband and Isobel Grundy (eds.), *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu: Essays and Poems and Simplicity, A Comedy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 176-177. All verse by Montagu is quoted from this edition.

<sup>2</sup> There is some confusion over which Julia is meant as both have the same name and both were banished from court by Augustus.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Underdowne, *Ovid his inuective against Ibis. Translated into English méeter, whereunto is added by the translator, a short draught of all the stories and tales containd therein, very pleasant to be read* (London: Thomas East and Henry Middleton, 1569).

[And gentle Naso, you were notorious for lascivious poetry, and exiled to Tomis, once excessively enamoured of the daughter of Caesar, known secretly under the fictitious name of Corinna]<sup>4</sup>

Montagu casts Julia into the role of an Ovidian complaining heroine, with Ovid as the abandoning male lover and the fictional addressee. Therefore, Montagu's biographical adaptation of a *Heroides* epistle reverses Ovid's role in his original text; rather than the author-ventriloquist, identifying with the complaining heroines, Ovid is in the same position as the heroic male wrongdoers. He moves from being on the heroines' side to being one of the cheating heroes himself.

Montagu's poem reveals that she was familiar with Ovid's *Heroides* from an early age. As noted by Isobel Grundy in an article on a later unpublished Montagu love-complaint poem ('Epistle from Mrs. Y- to her Husband. 1724'), the poet listed all of the characters from the *Heroides* in the back of one of her albums of juvenile verse and she composed several complaint poems from the perspective of forsaken mistresses at this time.<sup>5</sup> The possibility that she was familiar in her youth with some of Ovid's works in the original Latin is promoted by her later words to Joseph Spence:

When I was young I was a vast admirer of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and that was one of the chief reasons that set me upon the thoughts of stealing the Latin language. Mr Wortley was the only person to whom

<sup>4</sup> Michael Stapleton, trans., *Marlowe's Ovid: The "Elegies" in the Marlowe Canon* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Isobel Grundy, 'Ovid and Eighteenth-Century Divorce: An Unpublished Poem by Lady Mary Wortley', *The Review of English Studies, New Series*, 23.92 (1972), pp. 417-428 (p. 240); see, Sandon Hall, Stafford, Harrowby MSS. Juvenile albums 250, 251.

I communicated my design, and he encouraged me in it. I used to study five or six hours a day for two years in my father's library; and so got that language, whilst everybody else thought I was reading nothing but novels and romances.<sup>6</sup>

This reveals the gendered hierarchy of literary genres and texts which was very much in the social and cultural consciousness at this time: Latin verse was for men and vernacular 'novels and romances' (considered 'lower'), were for women or girls.

Montagu's poem also displays the specific influence of English literary receptions of Ovid. John Dryden's *Ovid's Epistles, Translated by Several Hands* (1680) had been through six editions by the time Montagu wrote her poem in 1701 (the year of the sixth edition). The Ovid volume continued to be collected and published by the Tonson publishing house into the eighteenth century, constantly updated by various additions and changes.<sup>7</sup> As will be explored further below, the popularity of this work was such that it attracted many literary responses and *Heroides*-inspired projects, both in print and manuscript. The re-imagining of the Ovid-Julia legend as a heroical epistle by Montagu is a reversal of Dryden's argument on the subject in his famous preface to this work, perpetuating the 'fictional' relationship as Dryden viewed it.<sup>8</sup> Within Dryden's preface, there is a denouncement as a 'ghess' and 'far

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<sup>6</sup> Joseph Spence, *Observations, Anecdotes, and Characters of Books and Men*, J. M. Osborn (ed.), (Vol 1, Oxford, 1966), p. 303 cited in Moy Thomas, *The letters and works of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1861), p. 53.

<sup>7</sup> For a list of all these editions, see Harriette Andreadis, 'The early modern afterlife of Ovidian erotics: Dryden's *Heroides*', *Renaissance Studies*, 22 (2008), pp. 401-413 (Appendix).

<sup>8</sup> John Dryden, *Ovid's Epistles translated by several hands* (London: Jacob Tonson, 1680). All quotations from Dryden's text are from this edition unless otherwise specified as the 1681 edition.

from the truth' of the contention that Ovid was 'banish'd for some favours, which they say he received from Julia, the Daughter of Augustus, whom they think he celebrates under the name of Corinna in his Elegies' (sig.R4r).

Significantly, Aphra Behn, herself a contributor to Dryden's collection, wrote her own Ovid-Julia *Heroides*-style epistolary poem, 'Ovid to Julia. A Letter', which was first published in 1685.<sup>9</sup>

This poem has clear connections to Dryden's *Heroides* edition and specifically to Behn's own 'Oenone to Paris' contribution. Behn's complaint epistles 'Ovid to Julia' and 'Oenone to Paris' have in common the theme of the irreconcilability of love and social position. The seducer Ovid with his 'haughty soul' writes in terms of frustration that Julia is at once unattainable and attainable, the space between them being 'so vast' (socially) but yet not vast enough (physically):

Who from the Gods durst steal Caelestial fire,  
 And tho with less success, I did as high aspire.  
 Oh why ye Gods! was she of Mortal Race?  
 And why 'twixt her and me, was there so vast a space?  
 Why was she not above my Passion made  
 Some Star in Heaven, or Goddess of the Shade?  
 And yet my haughty Soul cou'd ne'er have bow'd  
 To any Beauty, of the common Crowd.

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<sup>9</sup> Aphra Behn, *Miscellany, being a collection of poems by several hands; together with Reflections on morality, or, Seneca unmasked*. (London: J. Hindermarsh, 1685). All verse by Aphra Behn (excepting her 'Oenone to Paris' in the Dryden editions) is quoted from edition by Janet Todd, *The Works of Aphra Behn, Vol. 1*, (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2000-2001).

None but the Brow, that did expect a Crown

Cou'd Charm or Awe me with a Smile, or Frown; (lines 5-14, p. 183)

These lines can be read alongside very similar ones in Behn's 'Oenone to Paris':

What God, our Love industrious to prevent,

Curst thee with power, and ruin'd my Content?

Greatness, which does at best but ill agree

With Love, such Distance sets 'twixt Thee and Me.

Whilst thou a Prince, and I a Shepherdess,

My raging Passion can have no redress.

Wou'd God, when first I saw thee, thou hadst been

This Great, this Cruel, Celebrated thing. (sig.H2v)

Both speakers turn to bewailing their situation to the gods before specifying the problem of the 'space' or 'distance' between themselves and their lovers. Behn's Oenone sees the 'distance... twixt thee and me' as one of class which *a priori* makes her and Paris incompatible and love impossible. Before Paris' transformation into a Prince during his capture of Helen, Behn presents the relationship between him and Oenone as one of equality. Indeed this is an example of when Behn's 'translation', so often marked by expansion, reduces or distils the original Latin. Ovid's text contains commonplace meditations on the role of guilt and suffering, which Behn transforms into a logical attachment of responsibility to Paris' new status as a Prince.<sup>10</sup> Here the distinction can be

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<sup>10</sup> Showerman (ed.) and trans, *Ovid: Heroides, Amores*, p. 59: 'What god has set his will against my prayers? What guilt stands in my way, that I may not remain your own? Softly

drawn with the very similar line in 'Ovid to Julia': 'And why 'twixt her and me, was there so vast a space?' (line 8). Here the sentiment is rather that the fault lies in the very fact that Julia was made a mortal woman rather than an immortal goddess. The distance was great enough that the love affair hit against social and political barriers but not so great (i.e. she was a woman and not a 'star' or 'goddess') that Ovid's love, or at least desire, could not aspire to achieve her. The pessimistic realism of Oenone's words is transformed into an arrogant ambition when the lines are put into the voice of Ovid.

These alternate ways of reacting to a similar situation perhaps represent a gendered difference as distinguished by the first person female voice of Oenone and the first person male voice of Ovid. Certainly the complaint poems are used to explore the various 'politics of love' around thwarted relationships. Edward Burns uses this term to describe the reception of the *Heroides* in the Restoration:

The politics of love in Ovid, its implication in a court world ('all his Poems bear the Character of a Court' according to Dryden), and especially the play of class difference between lovers, provide apt material for Restoration Ovidians.<sup>11</sup>

It should be noted here that Behn actively adapts the Ovidian original with her 'Oenone to Paris' version in order to include ideas on the play of class and the politics of love. Any hints of courtly love and tensions of class in the original are amplified and altered in Behn's English version. Furthermore, Behn's

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must we bear whatever suffering is our desert; the penalty that comes without deserving brings us dole.' (lines 5-8).

<sup>11</sup> Edward Burns, *Reading Rochester*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1995), p. 73.



‘Ovid to Julia’ is given an extra layer of politicisation when the poem is published in *Poems on the Affairs of State* (1696). The title of the poem is changed to ‘Bajazet to Gloriana, 1684’, with the names Ovid and Julia becoming Bajazet and Gloriana respectively.<sup>12</sup> This expanded version of the poem interacts with the series of Ephelia/ Bajazet poems published around this time by the Earl of Rochester and his circle.<sup>13</sup> These *Heroides*-inspired poems were ‘designed to embarrass Mulgrave’; ‘Bajazet’ is a pseudonym for John Sheffield, Lord Mulgrave, who was mocked at Court for having inappropriate ‘social and marital ambitions’ towards Princess Anne.<sup>14</sup> A *Heroides* poem was also a particularly apt vehicle to parody Mulgrave because the Earl had co-written with Dryden a ‘Helen to Paris’ translation included in all editions of *Ovid’s Epistles* from 1680 onwards. Satirical details are added to Behn’s poem, for example, five lines are added at line 65 mocking a contemporary figure:

Whose composition was like Cheder-Cheese,  
 (In whose Production all the town agrees)  
 To whom from Prince to Priest was added stuff,  
 From Great King Charles e’en down to Father Goff,  
 Yet he with vain Pretensions lays a claim. (lines 65-69)

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<sup>12</sup> ‘Bajazet to Gloriana, 1684’ in George Villiers, *Poems on Affairs of State* (London, 1697), pp. 168-170.

<sup>13</sup> For example, ‘Ephelia to Bajazet’ by George Etherege and ‘A very Heroicall Epistle in answer to Ephelia’ by the Earl of Rochester.

<sup>14</sup> Janet Todd, *The Works of Aphra Behn, Vol. 1*, p. 413; see also Brice Harris, ‘Aphra Behn’s ‘Bajazet to Gloriana’ [Letter to the Editor].’ *Times Literary Supplement*, (Feb 1933), p. 92.

Further small editorial changes, such as swapping the name of the female addressee by re-ordering words within couplets<sup>15</sup> help to assimilate the complaint more explicitly to Behn's contemporary society. Behn actively uses and adapts *Heroides* poems in order to express and explore political and social ideas.

Turning back to Lady Mary Montagu's poem, 'Julia to Ovid', we see that she was particularly influenced by Aphra Behn's *Heroides* adaptations. Montagu opens her 'imitation' poem in the voice of Julia with lines complaining that it is a hereditary entitlement which entraps her and is the cause of her 'absent Ovid':

Are love and power incapable to meet?  
 And must they all be wretched who are great?  
 Enslav'd by titles, and by forms confin'd  
 for wretched victims to the state design'd (lines 1-4)

This generalisation of political comment, though with a different emphasis, clearly recalls Behn's philosophical lines in 'Oenone to Paris':

What Stars do rule the Great? no sooner you  
 Became a Prince, but you were Perjur'd too.  
 Are Crowns and Falshoods then consistent things?  
 And must they all be faithless who are Kings? (sig.I1v)

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<sup>15</sup> For example 'Charming Julia...less Conqu'ring than you are...my glorious Loyalty retain'd' (lines 24-6) becomes 'bright Gloriana...less charming than you are...my honest Loyalty retain'd'.

The focus of Montagu's poem on the class element and the direct address to the banished Ovid ('O Ovid!', 'my Ovid') further connects it with Behn's 'Ovid to Julia'. This pairing of the two female poets' 'Ovid to Julia' and 'Julia to Ovid' reproduces the pattern of the later *Heroides* (poems 16-21) where Ovid writes three 'double *Heroides*' consisting of an amatory verse epistle of wooing from a male hero with a complaint reply from the female lover.

Behn's particular influence on Montagu is confirmed by the existence of a 1739 book-list of Lady Mary's library, now located in the Sheffield Archives.<sup>16</sup> On the back of the 23 page list is written 'Catalogue Lady Mary Wortleys books packed up to be sent Abroad July 1739'. Grundy identifies the handwritten list as being made 'by some unknown employee (though titled by her husband)' and notes that, as remarked in *Letters* 3:261, 'after her husband's death (à propos her son's challenging his will) she said he had "given" these books to her; this accorded with the legal situation in which a wife's possessions belonged to her husband.'<sup>17</sup> Although we cannot be sure when the books were purchased (or inherited) and read, Behn's works appear several times, including entries for 'Behn's plays', 'Love Letters between a Nobleman and his (sic)' (which must refer to Behn's biographical epistolary prose fiction work *Love Letters between a Nobleman and his Sister*),<sup>18</sup> and 'Behn's poems' in the appended 'Catalogue of Select Books among L. Mary Wortleys'.

Furthermore, on the fifth page of the list, there appears an entry 'Ovid's Epistles', which is in all probability a reference to one of the Dryden editions,

<sup>16</sup> Sheffield Archives, 'Catalogue Lady Mary Wortleys books packed up to be sent Abroad July 1739', Lady Mary Wortley Montagu Booklist, WL.M 135-3 (1739).

<sup>17</sup> Isobel Grundy, 'Books and the Woman: An Eighteenth-Century Owner and Her Libraries', *English Studies in Canada*, 20.1 (1994), pp. 1-22 (p. 5).

<sup>18</sup> Aphra Behn, *Love Letters between a Nobleman and his Sister* (London: Jacob Tonson, 1693).

although no such book is present in her surviving library at Sandon Hall, Staffordshire. This book which she had read from a very early age (presumably by the age of 12 when she was writing 'Julia to Ovid') is still important to her almost forty years later; important enough that it was packed up to be taken abroad with her. In her letters written during the Embassy to Constantinople (1716-18), another trip abroad taken by Montagu, there is further evidence for the continuing influence of the *Heroides*. From travel notes she made during the trip, Montagu shows that she is prompted twice on her travels to recall Ovid's complaining heroines:

There are now two little ancient castles, but of no strength, being commanded by a rising ground behind them, which I confess I should never have taken notice of, if I had not heard it observed by our captain and officers, my imagination being wholly employed by the tragic story that you are well acquainted with:

The swimming lover, and the nightly bride,  
How Hero loved, and how Leander died.

Verse again! – I am certainly infected by the poetical air I have passed through. (p. 375)

...

This was Xanthus among the gods, as Homer tells us and 'tis by that heavenly name the nymph Oenone invokes it in her epistle to Paris. (p. 377)<sup>19</sup>

Montagu uses these *Heroides* examples to show that these fortifications are insignificant in contrast to their place in literary history. To think of Oenone's adynaton, from the very epistle which was translated by Aphra Behn in Dryden's volume, (as Behn translates: 'When Paris to Oenone proves untrue, / Back Xanthus Streams shall to their Fountains flow' (sig.H4r) on seeing the river Simois and to be so immersed with the *Hero to Leander* complaint that she almost misses an ancient landmark, reveals how formative and influential Ovidian complaint was for Montagu on her poetry and even in her daily life.

Montagu's 'Ovid to Julia' is just one example of female poets producing translations or more creative *Heroidean* texts in the years following Dryden's 1680 *Ovid's Epistles* edition. These key examples of women writing female-voiced complaint poems, I think, signal the influence of Behn in particular. Other female poets include Anne Wharton, whose work will be studied in chapter 5, and who we will see was in several ways connected to Aphra Behn. As well as writing many female-voiced complaint poems, including a *Penelope to Ulysses* translation and 'A Paraphrase on the Last Speech of Dido in Virgil's Aeneis', she also wrote a play, 'Love's Martyr', which takes as its subject the Ovid and Julia love affair. The themes of love and power, represented by Ovidian arguments of the 'supremacy of love'

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<sup>19</sup> Lord Wharncliffe, *The Letters and Works of Lady Mary Montagu, Vol.1*, (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1837).

matched against the ‘Roman realpolitik’ of the Augustan court, pervade the play:

How dull a thing is Empire and how poor

Kings are perplex’d but never pleas’d an hour

Lovers can laugh at them and scorn their power (2.3.342-4).<sup>20</sup>

The words of Wharton’s Ovid here can be compared to those sentiments on the irreconcilability of love and power that we have studied in Behn and Montagu’s respective Ovid-Julia poems. Further examples of female-authored *Heroides* poems are those by Anne Killigrew, the poet and painter praised and compared to ‘Sappho’ and ‘Orinda’ in a famous ode by Dryden.<sup>21</sup> Like Wharton, Killigrew writes a ‘paraphrase’ of Ovid’s ‘Penelope to Ulysses’ epistle in addition to several other female-voiced complaint poems.<sup>22</sup> Also like Wharton, she died young in the year 1685. Killigrew’s poems were collected and published posthumously in 1686 in an edition which included a poem by John Dryden praising Killigrew and her accomplishments (‘To the Pious Memory Of the Accomplisht Young Lady Mrs Anne Killigrew, Excellent in the two Sister-Acts of Poesie, and Painting’ (pp. 97-104). The ode seems to be commissioned by Dryden’s friend, Anne’s father Henry Killigrew; in the poem Anne is celebrated in her role as a daughter, learning from ‘the best of books,

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<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Alison Findlay, Gwen Williams, and Stephanie Wright, *Women and Dramatic Production 1550–1700*, (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 182. See also Germaine Greer and Selina Hastings (ed.), *The Surviving Works of Anne Wharton*, (Essex: Stump Cross Books, 1997).

<sup>21</sup> Dryden, ‘To the Pious Memory of the accomplished young lady, Mrs. Anne Killigrew’, in *Examen poeticum being the third part of miscellany poems* (London: Jacob Tonson, 1693), pp. 351-363.

<sup>22</sup> Ezell (ed.), ‘My Rare Wit Killing Sin’: Poems of a Restoration Courtier, Anne Killigrew’, in Patricia Hoffmann, (ed.) *Anne Killigrew*, in series *The Early Modern Englishwomen: A Facsimile Library of Essential Works, Series II, Printed Writings, 1641-1700: Part 2, Volume 5*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).

Her Fathers Life' (line 79), yet Dryden does mention her poetic talents, comparing her favourably to Sappho with an image of pagan metempsychosis:

But if thy preexisting soul  
 Was form'd, at first, with myriads more,  
 It did through all the mighty poets roll,  
 Who Greek or Latin laurels wore,  
 And was that Sappho last, which once it was before. (p. 353)

As we will see below, Behn was also called Sappho, though often in a less favourable way. The links between the Killigrews and Dryden, and indeed Behn herself (for example, Behn famously acknowledges in her play *The Rover* her use of *Thomaso* by Thomas Killigrew, who was the manager of the King's Theatre) might suggest that Killigrew's choice to write Ovidian complaint poems was influenced by Behn.

The year after Killigrew's edition, another poetical volume was published by a woman; Jane Barker, a poet and novelist born in Northamptonshire and of a gentry family. Published in her first printed volume *Poetical recreations* was Barker's poem about the *Heroides*, 'To Ovid's Heroines in his Epistles':

Bright *Shees*, what Glories had your Names acquir'd,  
 Had you consum'd those whom your Beauties fir'd,  
 Had laugh'd to see them burn, and so retir'd:

Then they cou'd ne'er have glory'd in their shames,

Either to *Roman*, or to *English* Dames,  
 Had you but warm'd, not melted in their flames.  
  
 You'd not been wrack'd then on despair's rough coast,  
 Nor yet by storms of Perjuries been toss'd,  
 Had you but fix'd your flowing Love with Frost.  
  
 Had you put on the Armour of your scorn,  
 (That *Gem* which do's our Beauties most adorn)  
 What hardy *Hero* durst have been forsworn.  
  
 But since they found such *lenity* in you,  
 Their crime so Epidemical do's grow,  
 That all have, or do, or would be doing so. (pp. 28-9)<sup>23</sup>

Barker's poem is a complaint against complaint. It denounces the heroines' epistles while taking the form, tone and discourse of an Ovidian epistolary address. In a similar way to Isabella Whitney's collection of Ovidian epistolary poems in her publication *Copy of a Letter* which I discussed in chapter one, Barker's speaker offers advice and gives a hypothetical alternative reality to the situation that the heroines find themselves in. Barker encapsulates the actual and metaphorical situation of abandonment with pathetic fallacy: 'despair's rough coast', 'storms of perjuries' and 'flowing Love'. As well as avoiding these negative consequences, Barker is concerned

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<sup>23</sup> Jane Barker, 'To Ovid's Heroines in his Epistles', in *Poetical recreations consisting of original poems, songs, odes, &c. with several new translations: in two parts*, part I (London: Benjamin Crayle, 1688), pp. 28-29. Although the title page is dated 1688, the volume was actually on sale by December 1687. See also Kathryn King (ed.), *Jane Barker, Exile: A Literary Career 1675-1725* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), p. 31.



with reputation and literary fame – ‘what Glories had your Names acquir’d’. As it is, the glory resides in ‘their shame’, a negative rather than a positive reputation.

The final three lines work as comment on the popularity of the *Heroides*, as the wide-spread publication and reception of *Heroides* texts are figured in terms of a spreading disease: ‘Their crime so Epidemical do's grow,/ That all have, or do, or would be doing so.’ The sense of frustration here and the comment that ‘all’ are ‘doing so’ may suggest that Barker has a particular Ovidian edition in mind: the poem could be aimed at, or at least prompted by, Dryden’s *Ovid’s Epistles* and/or the parody versions which appeared in quick succession. Further evidence for this can be found in Carol Wilson’s suggestion that Barker and Dryden (fellow Catholic converters) were acquainted when the former moved to London.<sup>24</sup> The addition of ‘English Dames’ in line 5 (‘Either to *Roman*, or to *English Dames*’) also suggests the effect that the heroines’ complaints have had on specifically English female readers. Barker’s retrospective advice to the heroines within the poem rests upon a violent *militia-amoris* method of resistance, taking back for women the Ovidian metaphorical relation of seduction and love to a military conquest and a war-like campaign; she orders the women to ‘burn’ the heroes with their fire and to put on ‘the Armour of your scorn’. Yet, it is significant that her actual response is to write a creative *Heroides* poem herself. This discourse of complaint is empowering in that it allows criticism and comment to be made. Despite her protestations against the heroines, the literary manifestation of

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<sup>24</sup> Carol Wilson, (ed.) *The Galesia Trilogy and Selected Manuscript Poems of Jane Barker* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. xxiv.

their situation in female-voiced complaint poems does not come under scrutiny and indeed is perpetuated by Barker's very experimentation with Ovid's *Heroides* and female-voiced complaint in this poem.

### **Aphra Behn in Ovid's Epistles**

In this period, then, we may see the beginnings of a women's tradition forming around Ovidian female-voiced complaint writing. I argue that this tradition is signalled by loose, creative translations and adaptations of the *Heroides*; poems which stand out from the crowd of Ovidian complaint poems on the literary market place at this time. Newlands and Miller describe the women writers' contribution in these terms: 'a handful of women writers shared in an early modern craze for the *Heroides* – writers like Aphra Behn, Mary Wortley Montagu, and Jane Barker'.<sup>25</sup> However, to say that the women writers were 'sharing' in it, downplays the exceptional role of Aphra Behn in the *Ovid's Epistles* volume, being the only female translator of a complaint (that is, until Anne Wharton's 'Penelope to Ulysses' was included in the 1712 edition) and standing out with her style of translation in addition to producing further complaints.

The importance of Dryden's *Ovid's Epistles* should not be understated in this; it was Dryden's edition, after all, which initiated this new-found 'craze'. Although aristocratic women like Montagu and Wharton would in all probability have had access to Ovid in the original Latin in the libraries of their parents or guardians, Dryden's compilation undoubtedly revived interest in the

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<sup>25</sup> John Miller and Carole Newlands, *A Handbook to the Reception of Ovid* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), p. 2.

*Heroides*, making Ovidian complaint exciting, popular and accessible. As Susan Wiseman notes, with the ‘expansion of print culture’ and ‘John Dryden’s Restoration edition of *Ovids Epistles* (1680)’ there was ‘a development of the sense of Ovid’s epistles as readily available for gender games’ and ‘a growth in gender satire and burlesque and possibly a shift in the cultural work... performed’.<sup>26</sup> However, alongside this more satirical reception which opened up the Ovidian female complainants to games and ridicule, there was also a positive opportunity for women writers.

Women owned and read Dryden’s book, but they also translated and wrote their own versions. In addition to surviving book lists like those of Mary Wortley Montagu, we have evidence of female readership and ownership in inscriptions and marginalia on the printed books themselves. One surviving 1680 edition of *Ovid’s Epistles* contains this inscription: ‘Jane Kemeys her Booke givein [*sic*] [by] Her Father’.<sup>27</sup> It seems likely that this Jane Kemeys is the same Jane (1685-1747) who was the daughter of Sir Charles Kemeys (1651-1702) and Mary Wharton (1649-1699). This would make Jane Kemeys Anne Wharton’s niece, as Mary was Anne’s sister-in-law.<sup>28</sup> This act by a young girl of inscribing her name on the title page and above the preface is significant. It shows that the book was important enough for Kemeys to claim ownership and her property rights to the book as inheritance, whilst also being an example of a woman writing herself into literary history and the tradition of complaint writing. Perhaps it was exposure to this book that helped her to

<sup>26</sup> Wiseman, ‘Rome’s wanton Ovid: reading and writing *Ovid’s Heroides* 1590–1712’, pp. 295-306.

<sup>27</sup> Personal copy owned by Dr Paul Botley, University of Warwick.

<sup>28</sup> For more information on Jane Kemeys and Mary Wharton see Philip Jenkins, ‘Mary Wharton and the rise of the New Woman’, *National Library of Wales Journal*, Cyf. 22.2 (1981), pp. 170-186.

write letters from a very young age, as we learn from the surviving letters of her mother Mary Wharton: ‘And your daughter jane is very busie writing a letter to her Pa: and talking so fast in her language’.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, her relationship to a female poet in Anne Wharton who had by this point written her own *Heroides* translation and was to be included posthumously in the 1712 *Ovid’s Epistles*, serves to emphasise how women also participate in these editions themselves.

Aphra Behn’s inclusion as an author in Dryden’s *Ovid’s Epistles* is noteworthy for a number of reasons. Firstly, the fact that she is a woman means that she is naturally affiliated not only with the Ovidian heroine complainants themselves but also with the traditionally constructed readers of the *Heroides*. Dryden, in his extended preface to the volume, noted by literary antecedents and modern critics alike for its pioneering model of translation theory, suggests that women were the intended readers of Ovid’s text: ‘but of the general character of women which is modesty, he has taken a most becoming care; for his amorous expressions go no further than vertue may allow, and therefore may be read, as he intended them, by Matrons without a blush.’ This equation of female readership and modesty looks back to the moralising humanist interpretations of the *Heroides* which I discussed in chapter one. Women may well have been amongst the original audience of Ovid’s *Heroides* – as Jouteur reminds us, poetry of Ovid’s time, irrespective of literary genre, was written to be read aloud (‘en ce qu'elle est écrite pour être

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<sup>29</sup> National Library of Wales, *Kemeys-Tynte Estate Papers 1441, 1570-1888*, ‘Lady Mary Kemeys to Sir Charles Kemeys [1686/7], March 15’, Correspondence 1644-1888, Item C89 (1686/7).

lue à haute voix’)<sup>30</sup> However, the audience would by no means be solely female and, remembering the epistolary nature of the poems, Dryden’s statement also crucially goes against the literary direction of the letters. By making explicit that his published letters are to be read by women, Dryden implicitly reverses the actual readers of the original epistles – men. The authorial position of women is muted by Dryden as his letters go from male to female rather than female to male.

Michael Stapleton argues that Dryden prizes modesty in his selection of translations, and surmises that this could be in anticipation of a female readership and links this further to the female monarchs later in the seventeenth century:

Although he claims universal approbation for the poems, he praises their decorousness above all, very much in Saltonstall’s key... Dryden, generally an astute critic and savage satirist, perhaps underplays the passions that Ovid makes his heroines express. Increasing calls for censorship and squeamishness about erotic representations of women, especially by the sister monarchs Mary (1688-92) and Anne (1702-14), mark the end of the seventeenth century. Or perhaps he anticipates women readers who wanted to be considered modest.<sup>31</sup>

Yet, from the poems which follow, we know that some female readers of these translations wanted something very different from the text than a safe and

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<sup>30</sup> Isabelle Jouteur, *La théâtralité de l’œuvre ovidienne*, quoted in Dan Curley (ed.), *Tragedy in Ovid: Theater, Metatheater, and the Transformation of a Genre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 61.

<sup>31</sup> Michael Stapleton, *Spenser’s Ovidian Poetics* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2009), p. 81.

modest read. These women are active readers who translate and write their own *Heroides* poems, contributing to the female-voiced complaint tradition.

Dryden's concern with female readership recalls the demoted gendered position of women in previous *Heroides* volumes in English. Women are often dedicatees, receivers of the texts, as in Michael Drayton's *England's Heroical Epistles* (1597) where several of the poems have dedications to women, including the 'First Epistle of Fair Rosamond to King Henry II', which is dedicated to Lucy, Countess of Bedford and includes a comment on modesty: 'the method of my epistle must conclude the modesty of her's; which I wish may recommend my ever vowed service to your honour. (sig.A4r)'<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, as we have seen in Wye Saltonstall's preface examined in the introduction to this thesis, the metaphorical language of translation prefaces in *Heroides* editions foregrounds (often gendered) theory and literary and social contexts, creating an awareness of the larger projects connected to the translation of female voices. The translations of women writers run counter to this, demonstrating an engagement with Ovidian complaint which reaches beyond conformation to the dominant theoretical impulse and the still-pervasive discourse of female inferiority.

Discussing the kind of gendering of authorship and readership which takes place in Saltonstall's preface, Stapleton points out the irony in actual female engagement:

One wonders what the many literate and highly educated women in Stuart England such as Katherine Philips, Margaret Cavendish, and

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<sup>32</sup> Michael Drayton, *Englands heroicall epistles*, (London: N. Ling, 1597). There are also dedications to Anne Harrington and Elizabeth Tanfield.

Anne Finch must have thought of this rather baroque analogy of a book that metamorphoses into a suitor whose body is enhanced by their breath and touch and somehow works his way into their mouths—virtuously, it must be assumed.<sup>33</sup>

One does not have to ‘wonder’ too far, of course, as the answer lies in the female poets’ choice to engage in the genre and write Ovidian female-voiced complaints themselves. The invitation for women to ‘translate’ the female voices of Ovid’s *Heroides* in Saltonstall’s preface is taken up by actual female translators like Aphra Behn in a way which Saltonstall perhaps could not have imagined.

These prefaces, by promoting a populist approach in gendered terms (for example, because ‘Gentlemen could reade before in Latine’ (sig.A4v),<sup>34</sup> also emphasises how femininity and translation are culturally equated. There is a persistent historical trope of the femininity of translation, which results in ‘woman’ and ‘translator’ being relegated to the same position of discursive inferiority.<sup>35</sup> The passive translator, acting as a mouthpiece for the original, is compared to the passive woman in both literature and society. As we will see, Aphra Behn reacts against this misogynistic comparison by shifting the role of the translator away from the passive.

In the *Heroides* tradition in England, there is a further link between femininity and the lowness of the subject. John Sherburne’s 1639 translation

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<sup>33</sup> Stapleton, ‘Edmund Spenser, George Turberville, and Isabella Whitney Read Ovid’s *Heroides*’, p. 496.

<sup>34</sup> Saltonstall, *Ovid’s Heroical Epistles Englished by W.S.*

<sup>35</sup> Sherry Simon, *Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission* (Oxford: Routledge, 1996), p. 1.

has an apology in the author's dedication to Sir Edward Bash: 'The subject I confesse somewhat too light for your eare, oft conversant in more serious studies' (sig.A3v).<sup>36</sup> The conventional modesty motif finds its way into extra-textual material (namely dedications and prefaces).

In these cases however, the motif is given a more serious edge, with the triviality of the subject matter and the inadequacy of the source text being emphasised as well as the usual authorial plea of inexperience and unworthiness. It is specifically the 'subject' which is 'too light', suggesting that the very choice to translate subjective female voices needs an extra defence or justification. Furthermore in his preface, whilst arguing for the benefits of a 'verse for verse traduction' approach, Sherburne notes 'I am not ignorant of a sort of curious ones, that looke for wonders from a translation: when indeed they ought rather to checke, and limit their expectation' (sig.A4r). George Turberville also partakes in this discourse of modesty, calling his work 'the baseness of this my translation' and 'this trifling toy' in the preface to his landmark *Heroides* translation.<sup>37</sup> This plays on the convention of translations as a secondary literary activity, yet the 'trifling' nature of the source text emphasises more strongly the inferior status. The translators feel that they must justify their choice of classical text, owing to it being female-voiced (a rarity for classical poems) as well as its potential status as an unserious and monotonous youthful Ovidian work.

The particular criticism of the *Heroides* as monotonous is also considered directly by Dryden in his preface. He comments:

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<sup>36</sup> Sherburne, *Ovids heroical epistles, Englished by Iohn Sherburne. Gent.*

<sup>37</sup> Turberville, *The Heroicall Epistles of the learned poet Publius Ovidius Naso.*



(Ovid) though, perhaps, has Romanized his Grecian Dames too much, and made them speak, sometimes, as if they had been born in the City of Rome, and under the Empire of Augustus. There seems to be no great variety in the particular Subjects which he has chosen; Most of the Epistles being written from Ladies, who were forsaken by their Lovers: Which is the reason that many of the same thoughts come back upon us in divers Letters... Thus much concerning the Poet: Whom you find translated by divers hands, that you may at least have that variety in the English, which the Subject denied to the Author of the Latine. (sig.A8r)

Dryden links the lack of variety in Ovid's text to the female voice of the epistles; letting the women 'speak' and the letters being written 'from ladies' is 'the reason' why the thoughts are so monotonous. The implication is that once we hear one woman's complaint, we have heard them all. It should be noted that Dryden says 'written from Ladies' here and not 'by', lending emphasis not on female authorship or voice but rather on the directional intention of the letters being sent to male recipients. Translation and its opportunity for corrective intervention allow Dryden to address this negative aspect. By producing a complete translation in compilation style, with different poets contributing individual translations, Dryden hopes to introduce the 'variety' which the Ovidian female subjects, too Romanised (i.e. too realistic for supposedly fictional mythological characters, and we infer too poetically skilful for women), could not offer. Dryden reveals his underlying motivations for translating the *Heroides* as being 'translation as improvement'. He believes the originals to be too homogenous, too Romanised, and he wishes to

disrupt this monotony by having numerous different translators play a part. Though we might see this as quite a radical view of translation, perhaps overstepping the mark of his own 'paraphrase' theory, he seems to pursue this for artistic goals, as an experimentation with translation versions and as an antidote to potential criticism of Ovid's text.

Elsewhere in the preface, Dryden explains that he disagrees with the title of the work: 'Sure he would not be guilty of such an oversight, to call his work by the names of Heroines when there are divers Men, or Heroes'. The very femininity of the title is questioned, as we see the translator's reluctance to categorise his translation choice in any way as a 'female' work. Danielle Clarke sees this as illuminating Ovid's poetry, showing that the *Heroides* 'is in no sense a straightforwardly 'feminine' text, despite its almost exclusive concentration upon the modulations of the female voice'.<sup>38</sup> The presence of a male voice is connected with the classical text via the presence of the double *Heroides* (poems 16 to 21) and the Sabinus replies in many editions, in addition to the proximity of Ovid's authorial voice to the voices of female personae. However, there is surely also some intentional distancing from the first person female voice at the hands of the translator himself here.

Aphra Behn writing a *Heroides* translation in this volume complicates the 'gendered metaphors'<sup>39</sup> of the *Heroides* prefaces and the position of women as readers or receivers of the text. The equation of translation and femininity is also complicated. Mihoko Suzuki challenges 'the assumption by

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<sup>38</sup> Danielle Clarke and Elizabeth Clarke (eds.), *'This Double Voice': Gendered Writing in Early Modern England*, p. 61.

<sup>39</sup> Lori Chamberlain, 'Gender and the Metaphors of Translation', *Signs*, 13:3 (1988), pp. 454-472.

an earlier generation of scholars that women's translations were gender-appropriate and self-effacing in declining to assert authorship... Suzanne Trill and Danielle Clarke have argued against the association of translation with femininity, both focussing on the example of Mary Sidney'.<sup>40</sup> Suzuki quotes from Peter Burke's *Cultural Translation in Early Modern Europe* (2007) as an example of this traditional view of women and translation: 'Women were relatively prominent in this field, probably because translation was considered more compatible than original writing with female modesty.'<sup>41</sup> Though I agree with Suzuki's caution at an assumption that the resulting translation from women conformed to this idea of translation as somehow feminine because less authorial, it is important to know that such views *were* promulgated in the early modern period, as we have seen in the *Heroides* prefaces.

There are more explicit examples of this negative gendered theory of translation. In John Florio's 1603 paratexts to his Montaigne translations for example, he famously writes in a dedication to his female patron Lucy, Countess of Bedford: 'since all translations are reputed femalls, delivered at second hand'.<sup>42</sup> The metaphor of child-birth is used to demonstrate female inferiority and translation's secondary status. In truth, Florio's metaphors become confused as 'it is not clear whether it is the parturition or the progeny that is being gendered'<sup>43</sup> and later the author imagines his role as a 'fondling

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<sup>40</sup> Mihoko Suzuki, *The History of British Women's Writing, 1610-1690 Vol. 3*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 271.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., quoting Peter Burke, *Cultural Translation in Early Modern Europe*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 12.

<sup>42</sup> John Florio, *The Essayes of Lo. Michaell de Montaigne*, (London: Edward Blount, 1603), quoted in Neil Rhodes, 'Status Anxiety and English Renaissance Translation' in Smith and Wilson (eds.), *Renaissance Paratexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 106-120 (p. 113).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 114.

foster-father' rather than a true father to his translation. This demonstrates how prefaces and dedications are often complicated sites for mixing reflections on translation and gender. The tenors and vehicles of prefatory metaphors rarely map perfectly. The familiar justification topos also appears in Florio's 'To the courteous reader' section:

Shall I apologize translation? Why but who is not jealous, his Mistresse should be so prostitute...Why but Schollers should have some privilege of preheminnence. So have they: they onely are worthy Translators.

Why but the vulgar should not knowe at all.

This time the translation appears as a mistress prostituted, rather than a 'daughter delivered at second hand'. The issue raised here is whether ancient texts should remain the domain of learned and scholarly men or be translated and distributed more widely. Hence, Florio struggles with the concept of translations being female, a painful birthing process or even prostitution, but yet also being more correctly and safely in the hands of classical (male) scholars. Either way, whether translation is viewed as 'low' art and therefore a secondary, modest or female activity, or whether it is considered 'high' art in its pre-requisite of privileged knowledge and duty to disseminate the ancient *arcana* to the vulgar (including women), the female sex comes off badly.

However, Suzuki is correct to challenge the validity of this association in practice. There is a lot more to be said of women's translations in the period, and Aphra Behn's *Heroides* translation is a case in point. Deborah Uman, referencing Brenda Hosington's critical work in this area, argues that 'the works themselves [i.e. translations by women] belie old claims that

translation was a safe and silent task'.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, Suzuki's argument mirrors Patricia Demers' excellent invitation for more research into women's translations:

Instead of ghettoizing female co-workers in this influential genre [translation], it is important to assess their relatively obscure work – ranging from the filial to the transgressive, the impersonal to the deeply revealing – within the context of the widely retailed claims for early modern English translations' agility with language and capacity for originality. That is, it is necessary to treat their work with what the Old Testament scholar Alastair Hunter calls a lexicographical sensitivity, which he explains as being developed bit by bit, through what could be described as a process of continuous feedback involving both the individual translator, the corpus of the language under scrutiny, the larger tradition of translation, and the contemporary societies of those carrying out the work of translation.<sup>45</sup>

This sort of attention to translation is especially rewarding when looking at the *Heroides*, considering its female-voiced nature and the tradition surrounding the text and its reception in early modern England. I argue that Aphra Behn used her demotion and exceptional status as a female translator of the *Heroides* in *Ovid's Epistles* to create a place for herself in the Ovidian female-voiced complaint tradition, to instigate a female-authored tradition, and to make wider comments on both translation and other issues in society and politics.

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<sup>44</sup> Deborah Uman, 'Translation and Community in the Work of Elizabeth Cary', Patricia Pender and Rosalind Smith, (eds.) *Material Cultures of Early Modern Women's Writing* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 76-98 (p. 77).

<sup>45</sup> Patricia Demers, *Women's Writing in English: Early Modern England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), p. 65.

As I have already indicated, Aphra Behn appeared as the only female translator in the first edition of Dryden's *Ovid's Epistles* (1680). Behn's inclusion as a woman writer is made to stand out to an even greater degree by Dryden's explicit mention of her translation in his preface. Dryden's discussion of Behn centres around three interrelated issues: her being a woman, her style of translation, and her knowledge of Latin. Dryden in his preface famously rejects 'metaphrase' (word for word translation) and 'imitation' ('where the translator (if now he has not lost that name) assumes the liberty not only to vary from the words and sense, but to forsake them both as he sees occasion') at either extreme and selects 'paraphrase' as the middle way, 'the mean betwixt them'. Paraphrase, a quasi-Aristotelian 'golden mean' compromise position in Dryden's triangulation, is described as 'translation with latitude, where the author is kept in view by the translator, so as never to be lost, but his words are not so strictly follow'd as his sense, and that too is admitted to be amplified, but not alter'd.' Towards the end of the preface, Aphra Behn is singled out via her gender – she 'who is of the fair sex'. In theory and learning, the (female) Behn is presented as a different type of translator to all of the other twenty two (male) translators:

In the mean time it seems to me, that the true reason why we have so few versions which are tolerable, is not from the too close persuing of the authors sence; but because there are so few who have all the talents which are requisite for translation: and that there is so little praise and so small encouragement for so considerable a part of learning.

To apply in short, what has been said, to this present work, the reader will here find most of the translations, with some little latitude or variation from the author's sence: that of Oenone to Paris, is in Mr. Cowley's way of Imitation only. I was desir'd to say that the authour who is of the fair sex, understood not Latine. But if she does not, I am afraid she has given us occasion to be asham'd who do.

For my own part I am ready to acknowledge that I have transgress'd the Rules which I have given; and taken more liberty than a just translation will allow. But so many gentlemen whose wit and learning are well known, being joyn'd in it, I doubt not but that their excellencies will make you ample satisfaction for my errours. (sig.a4v-r)

Behn's translation is described specifically as 'imitation'. It is a looseness of translation which is linked to Behn's gender: 'That of Oenone to Paris, is in Mr. Cowley's way of Imitation only'. Dryden ensures to find a male precedent for Behn's method in Cowley – but Dryden earlier in his preface states firmly that imitation 'ought only to be granted to Mr. Cowley' and that it might be dangerous in another's hands. The freer translation style of Behn is linked to her presumed lack of Latin as a female poet. The way that Dryden presents this as hesitatingly suggested, using the passive voice with 'I was desired to say that the authour who is of the fair sex', perhaps reveals that such an association of women with a lack of classical languages is a standard piece of gendered discourse rather than a biographically accurate fact. It also hints at a reluctance on Dryden's part, indeed connected with his admission 'for his

own part', that he has also 'transgress'd the rules'. Dryden, whether wittingly or not, links himself to Behn in this regard and specifically links this transgression to a looser (one concludes more 'imitative') style: 'more liberty than a just translation will allow'. Indeed, in his later translation *The Satires of Juvenal and Persius* (1692) Dryden has moved to a self-confessedly looser methodology: 'a kind of paraphrase – or somewhat yet more loose, betwixt a paraphrase and imitation' (sig.ov), suggesting that there is a degree of flux and development in his translatory tactics.<sup>46</sup> The only saving grace for both Behn and Dryden's transgressive translations in *Ovid's Epistles* however, is the presence of multiple others in the volume more excellently written 'by so many gentlemen'.

Dryden might seem to be defensive, even kind, towards Behn here (as Montague Summers argues he 'took care to pay her a graceful compliment in the preface'),<sup>47</sup> by comparing his own situation with hers and by saying that if she does not understand Latin 'she has given us occasion to be ashamed who do'. Yet even this statement feels patronising with the emphasis being on the learning of the men 'who do (know Latin)'. Elsewhere, in a private letter of advice to the poet Elizabeth Thomas (whom he calls 'Corinna', quickly qualified in a *praeteritio* aside: 'I mean not the Lady with whom Ovid was in Love') Dryden uses Behn as a negative exemplar:

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<sup>46</sup> Dryden, *The Satires of Juvenal and Persius* (London: Jacob Tonson, 1692).

<sup>47</sup> Montague Summers, *The Works of Aphra Behn* (Vol 6, London: William Heineman, 1915), p. 400.



avoiding (as I know you will) the Licenses which Mrs. Behn allowed herself, of writing loosely, and giving (if I may have leave to say so) some Scandal to the Modesty of her Sex.<sup>48</sup>

Thus Dryden singles Aphra Behn out as a theoretical and gendered intruder. Behn's loose method of writing, which refers to her techniques of translation but also infers a link to the more lascivious nature of her libertine verse, is stated as unsuitable for her sex. The implication in Dryden's *Heroides* preface that Behn's loose imitative style of translating is a result of not using the Latin source text directly (owing to a lack of classical language knowledge) is expanded here to also represent an immodest style of writing. The strength of Behn's authorial voice and her desire to actively participate in the creation of a text is singled out by Dryden as a negative characteristic which is intimately linked with her sex. For Behn, a woman intruding in a male coterie publishing project, looseness of translation is equated with moral looseness.

Thomas is said to have been taught some Latin in her biography 'Life of Corinna': 'and before she was six, finished the little learning that was ever bestowed on her; which included some Latin... Covetous she was of Learning to the last Degree'.<sup>49</sup> Thus she may have made the link between sexual 'looseness' and translatory 'looseness'. She writes a poem entitled 'The Dream, an epistle to Mr Dryden' which contains reflections on contemporary classical translation:

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<sup>48</sup> C. E. Ward (ed.), *The Letters of John Dryden*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1942), p. 127.

<sup>49</sup> Elizabeth Thomas, *Pylades and Corinna*, Vol 1, (London, 1732), p. viii.

When yet a Child, I read great Virgil o'er,  
 And sigh'd, to see the barb'rous Dress he wore;  
 The Phrase how awkward, how abstruse the Sense!  
 And how remote from Roman Eloquence!  
 And mov'd, to see his lofty Epick Rhymes  
 By murd'ring Pens debas'd, to doggerel Chimes;  
 Ye, sacred Maids, cried I, How long? and why  
 Must Virgil under English Rubbish lye?  
 He, who can charm in this Exotick Dress,  
 What Beauties must his native Tongue express?  
 Ah barren Isle! not One, one gen'rous Quill,  
 To give Him whole, will non exert their skill,  
 But who translate incorrigibly ill?<sup>50</sup>

Thomas' criticism of English translations of Virgil contains commonplace metaphors of the translated text represented in 'barbarous' and 'exotic' dress. However, the complaint does not mention loose or imitative styles of translation but rather that the 'phrase' and 'sense' are 'awkward' and 'abstruse' respectively. The task is not an impossible one, as Thomas calls for 'one gen'rous quill' to offer a redemptive translation. The first couplet of this poem portrays an intentional obscurity about her classical reading when she was a child. Did she read 'great Virgil' in the original first? Or was she introduced to him from the start through English translations? One could argue that the only way to be able to make such comments, bemoaning the 'English rubbish'

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<sup>50</sup> Jane Stevenson and Peter Davidson (eds.), *Early Modern Women Poets (1520-1700): An Anthology*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 517-519.

in comparison to ‘Roman Eloquence’, and to be able to say that she is ‘mov’d, to see his lofty epick Rhymes... debas’d’, is to know the Latin original. This can help us reveal that Behn’s protestations about being ‘unlearned in Schools’ in her famous poem ‘To the unknown Daphnis on his excellent translation of Lucretius’ might similarly be merely a pose, feeding into this traditional view of women as not party to the secrets of classical texts:

Till now I curst my sex and education,  
and more the scanted customs of the nation,  
permitting not the female sex to tread  
the mighty paths of learned heroes dead.  
the godlike Vergil and great Homers muse  
like divine mysteries are conceal’d from us  
...  
so thou by this translation dost advance  
our knowledge from the state of ignorance  
and equallst us to man! Oh how shall we  
enough adore, or sacrifice enough to thee! (lines 25-30; 41-44)<sup>51</sup>

The hyperbolic discourse of the panegyric genre and the generalisation of ‘us’ and ‘we’ also suggest that Behn’s words should not be taken as an autobiographical admission of ignorance.

There is a tantalising suggestion by the scholar Joseph Levine that it was Behn herself who ‘desired’ Dryden to single her out: ‘When Aphra translated some Ovid for Dryden in 1680, she asked him to explain to his

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<sup>51</sup> Todd, *The Works of Aphra Behn*, Vol. 1, pp. 26-29.

readers that she “understood not Latin”.’ However, rather than arguing that this was a subtle tactic by Behn to write herself into the Ovidian translation tradition while seeming to conform to a pose of feminine ignorance, Levine rather argues that this was a sincere confession by Behn: ‘Thus even while she protested about the exclusion of women from modern culture, she admitted her “want of languages,” and professed to write only for entertainment.’<sup>52</sup>

Both Behn and Thomas were non-aristocratic literary women and both certainly read French (Behn is well known for her French translations and Thomas’s *Miscellany Poems on Several Subjects* (1722) contains French translations) but their contemporaries (just as modern scholars) reject the possibility that they were learned in classical languages. As a result of these preconceptions there follows a cumulative effect where no Latin knowledge results in loose, imitative translations, which in turn result in an immodest or loose female poet who is not conforming to the idealised Ovidian readership of ‘Matrons without a blush’.

Studying Behn’s *Heroides* translation itself will allow more informed judgements to be made. It is difficult to prove whether somebody knew Latin or not from a translation and in some ways it is not the answer to this question which is important. Rather, we can see how Behn engaged with Ovid’s complaint text and the translatory task. How does Behn represent the female voice? Is her translation rightly described as ‘loose’ and what restrictions or freedoms does this give her? Simone De Beauvoir’s famous aphorism ‘*on ne nait pas femme, on le devient*’ and French feminist theory of ‘*écriture*

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<sup>52</sup> Joseph M. Levine, *Between the Ancients and Moderns: Baroque Culture in Restoration England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 211.

*feminine*' prompt us to think about translations as culturally-determined representations and the *Heroides* in particular has been described as 'a paradigmatic text for the investigation of the inscription of the female-gendered voice within male rhetorical culture'.<sup>53</sup> Whether female writers like Behn seek to resist a culturally-determined representation of the female voice in their translations and whether men seek either patriarchal continuity or corrective intervention (and how they go about this) are key considerations. And giving attention to women's translations and receptions of the *Heroides* can help us to explore the double bind which Sherry Simon has described: 'we are led to wonder whether translation condemned women to the margins of discourse or, on the contrary, rescued them from imposed silence'.<sup>54</sup> Behn's place, material as well as literary, in Dryden's compilation editions reveals marginality but also resistance.

### **Cooper and Behn: *Oenone to Paris***

The way that Dryden's 1681 second edition is compiled particularly invites close comparison of Behn's poem with a male-authored translation of the very same epistle. This second edition of 1681 is identical (in terms of numbers and ordering of poems) to the first edition of 1680 except for a change to the 'Oenone to Paris' translation. In the 1680 edition, the eleventh poem is the translation of 'Oenone to Paris' by Aphra Behn. In the 1681 edition, there is an additional translation of 'Oenone to Paris' by John Cooper: the Cooper 'Oenone to Paris' is the eleventh translation and the Behn 'Oenone to Paris' is

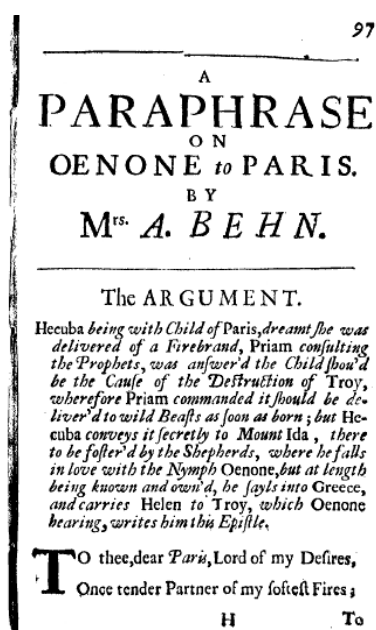
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<sup>53</sup> Danielle Clarke and Elizabeth Clarke (eds.), *'This Double Voice' Gendered Writing in Early Modern England*, p. 61.

<sup>54</sup> Simon, *Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission*, p. 46.

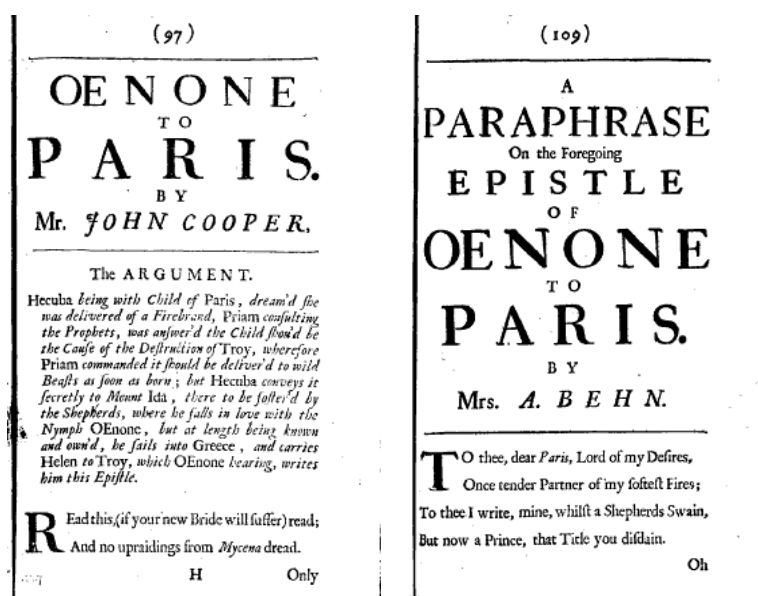
the twelfth translation. By offering two juxtaposed versions, a comparative approach is promoted, whilst more suggestively revealing the significance of a woman's place in books published by men. There are two editorial issues connected to this in the changed 1681 volume which are important to address. The first centres on the positioning of the 'argument' before Cooper's poem and the second centres on the title of Behn's poem. To demonstrate this most clearly, here is an image of page 97 of Dryden's 1680 (first) edition (Figure 1) followed by an image of pages 97 and 109 of Dryden's 1681 (second) edition (Figure 2):<sup>55</sup>

Figure 1:



<sup>55</sup> Images in figure 1 and figure 2 are from *Early English Books Online*, 1680 and 1681 editions of Dryden, *Ovid's Epistles* respectively.

Figure 2:



The translation by Cooper is placed before that of Behn in the 1681 edition. Furthermore, the argument, which was part of Behn's translation in the 1680 edition, is instead moved to be placed with Cooper's translation. This implies attribution to him, or at least would suggest it strongly to someone who is just reading this 1681 edition. Janet Todd seems to be the only scholar to have noticed this and she argues that this removal of the argument away from Behn suggests that its authorship is not by Behn: 'In the first edition of Ovid's Epistles this is printed immediately before Behn's paraphrase, but in the second edition it precedes Cooper's translation, suggesting the possibility that it is not by Behn herself. It is, however, reprinted in [*Poems on Several Occasions*].'<sup>56</sup> Todd also notices here that the argument appears with Behn's translation in Behn's own later publication *Poems upon several occasions*

<sup>56</sup> Todd, *The Works of Aphra Behn*, Vol. 1, p. 373.

*with, A voyage to the island of love* (1684). This suggests in contrast that Behn authored the argument. It might be significant that Behn's publisher for this collection was the same Jacob Tonson who printed Dryden's *Ovid's Epistles*.

The swapping of the argument from Behn to Cooper between editions raises questions about editorial control and practice. If Behn did write it, the authority of the editors of the volume was such that it enabled misattribution, even plagiarism or stealth. I think a more likely explanation is that all of the arguments in the volume were authored by one person, probably Dryden himself. However, at the very least, we can be confident that Cooper was not the author of this argument as it appeared before he had written his translation. When the male translator's version is published then, it is placed in a dominating position, superseding Behn's, and even commands the transfer of the argument to his text.

The second aspect which stands out in these images is the difference in titles to the poems. The titles of Behn's translations in both editions set up a distinction between female translation and male translation. In particular, the title given to Behn's poem in the 1681 edition implies that her translation has an inferior role in the collection, matching its demoted placement after Cooper's. Behn's title in the 1681 edition is 'A paraphrase on the foregoing epistle of Oenone to Paris by Mrs A. Behn' (in the 1680 first edition the title was just 'A paraphrase on Oenone to Paris by Mrs. A Behn'). The new title emphasises its secondary position. Furthermore, the wording 'A paraphrase on the *foregoing* epistle' suggests that Behn's version functions as a mere rewording of Cooper's 'foregoing' translated text, forming a gendered



translation hierarchy. Therefore, Cooper's translation almost stands for the Latin text. There is a disjunction between Behn's work being singled out in the preface as 'imitation' (rather than the preferred 'paraphrase') and in the titles (in both the 1680 and 1681 titles) as specifically 'paraphrase'. Thus 'paraphrase' takes on a different and more negative association when exceptionally attached to Behn's works, losing its golden mean association of Dryden's preface. The meaning of 'paraphrase' in the 1681 altered title, coming after Cooper's more authoritatively positioned and presented translation, seems to be specifically secondary translation, implying that Behn is working from a previous translator rather than the original text in the original language.

When we consider the translations themselves, Cooper's 'Oenone to Paris' is indeed a 'closer' translation (if by that we mean more literal) than that of Behn. No doubt this is why Cooper's poem was belatedly selected for inclusion, as it was considered a more accurate translation of the epistle in contrast to Behn's looser version. It is possible that Cooper's text was commissioned by Dryden as either he or Tonson wanted a closer translation of the text; a translation conditioned by Behn's looseness. Whatever the reason, Behn's poem is not permitted to stand alone as the authoritative version of the Ovidian text.

As already explored above in relation to Montagu's epistle, Behn in her 'Oenone to Paris' opens translation up as a vehicle for social and political comment. She achieves this through subtle changes to the original text which her freer style allows. The contentiously positioned argument summarises the

background to the epistle, recounting how Hecuba secretly saves the cursed baby Paris who is raised by shepherds on Mount Ida and that Oenone is in time abandoned by him: ‘where he [Paris] falls in love with the Nymph Oenone, but at length being known and own’d, he sayls into Greece, and carries Helen to Troy, which Oenone hearing, writes him this Epistle’. One way in which Behn changes the original text is to emphasise the change of Paris from shepherd to royalty, blaming the resulting new difference in class between her and him for their estrangement: ‘whilst thou a Prince, and I a shepherdess,/ My raging passion can have no redress’ (p. 110). Where Cooper, following the original, gives a generalised apostrophe to the gods in the opening verses (‘What God has robb’d me of your love and you?/ Or from what crime of mine proceeds my woe?’ (p. 98)<sup>57</sup> Behn specifies that to blame is Paris’ curse of power (a clever statement of his original ‘curse’ as per the Hecuba firebrand story): ‘What God our loves industrious to prevent,/ Curst thee with power, and ruin’d my content?’ (p. 110). Whilst recounting the time before Paris abandons her, the Oenone of the Latin original is at pains to emphasise the reversal of fortunes and the irony of Paris’ new position of superiority (as prince and son of Priam). She bitterly contrasts her own position as nymph with Paris’ (former) status:

Nondum tantus eras, cum te contenta marito  
edita de magno flumine nympha fui.  
qui nunc Priamides—absit reverentia vero!—  
servus eras; servo nubere nympha tuli!

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<sup>57</sup> Quotations of John Cooper’s and Aphra Behn’s respective translations of ‘Oeneone to Paris’ are from edition by Dryden, *Ovid’s Epistles Translated by Several Hands, The Second Edition, with the Addition of a New Epistle*, (London: Jacob Tonson, 1681).

(Not yet so great were you when I was content to wed you—I, the nymph-daughter of a mighty stream. You who are now a son of Priam—let not respect keep back the truth!—were then a slave; I deigned to wed a slave—I, a nymph! (*Heroides* 5, lines 9-12).<sup>58</sup>

John Cooper translates these lines quite closely:

Tho' now a Prince, not yet so great you was  
 When a famed nymph I stoop'd to your imbrace  
 A Slave you was (forgive what I have said)  
 Slave as you was, I took you to my Bed. (p. 98)

As point of contrast to Behn, Cooper's version gives emphasis to their inequality with 'I stoop'd to your imbrace' and 'famed'. Furthermore, the references to marriage in the original ('marito' and 'nubere') lose their formality as Cooper casualises and sexualises the vows to 'imbrace' and 'took you to my Bed'. Yet, unlike the Latin original and Cooper, Behn's Oenone does not self-identify as a superior nymph. Behn does not include any such descriptions in the original as '*edita de magno flumine nympa*' ('the nymph-daughter of a mighty stream') or '*Phrygiis celeberrima silvis*' ('well-known to the Phrygian forests'). Behn does not translate these specific lines and begins instead on a lengthy digression about former times and the recent change, with such lines as: 'To thee I write, mine, whilst a shepherds swain,/ But now a prince, that title you disdain./ oh fatal pomp, that cou'd so soon divide/ What love, and all our vows so firmly ty'd!' (pp. 109-110). The mutual and equal love of a pastoral golden age past, with Paris as Oenone's 'tender partner', is

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<sup>58</sup> Showerman (ed) and trans, *Ovid: Heroides, Amores*, p. 59.

corrupted by ‘fatal pomp’. Significantly, the word ‘swain’ is used throughout both Behn and Cooper’s translations, with the word not appearing in the original. Todd thinks that ‘either translator might have seen the other’s work, and it is not possible to tell the direction of any influence’<sup>59</sup> yet the reappearance of ‘swain’ could be evidence for Cooper being influenced by Behn’s poem (not the other way around) owing to its more natural usage in Behn’s rural landscape.

Indeed, throughout, Behn uses pastoral diction such as ‘swain’, ‘shepherd’, ‘silly nymph’, ‘cottager’ and ‘village herdsmen’, setting a personal and rural scene of what has been lost. Before Paris sails off in Behn’s translation, there is a long reflection on what is left behind – flowers, moss, woods, shades – and after he has sailed away there is a reflection on Oenone alone in the groves:

Now like a ghost I glide through evr’y Grove,  
 silent, and sad as death, about I rove,  
 and visit all our treasures of love! (p. 120)

Instead of such a digression to focus on the deserted Oenone waiting for her partner’s return, Cooper (like the original) has a very quick shift from the ship sailing away from Oenone to the brazen return with a ‘strumpet’:

You are embarked: against your gally’s side  
 the plying oars beat up the foaming tide  
 till hurry’d from my sight, your ships I view,  
 then my salt tears the parched sands bedew

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<sup>59</sup> Todd, *The Works of Aphra Behn*, Vol. 1, p. 373.

soon, ye sea gods, again soon may he come  
 (I fondly pray'd) but to my ruin soon,  
 the gods my wishes do successfull make,  
 but all, alas! For that curst strumpets sake,  
 my pray'rs into anothers arms have brought you back. (pp. 100-101)

Behn's Oenone, in contrast, must stand on a rock everyday in anticipation of Paris' return ('Whose hanging top with toyl I climb each day') until at long last there is a sign: 'One day all hopeless on its point I stood,/ And saw a Vessel bounding o're the Flood' (p. 121). On seeing Helen in the boat, Behn's Oenone takes on the thorough role of an abandoned Ovidian complainant, 'with out-stretched voice I cry'd, and all around/ the rocks and hills my dire complaints resound' (p. 122), an echoing pastoral image which remind us of Shakespeare's *A Lover's Complaint* or Mary Wroth's *A Shepherd*.

The moment that Behn does begin to emphasise the difference in class between Oenone and Paris is when Paris becomes a prince and obtains Helen. The reversal of the sense of the original is clear as Oenone becomes the shepherdess and Paris the 'Great public man', who cannot be seen to have a relationship with someone of Oenone's social level:

Greatness, which does at best but ill agree  
 With love, such distance sets twixt thee and me.  
 Whilst thou a prince, and I a shepherdess,  
 My raging passion can have no redress (p. 110)

It is a social not an individual wrong. Everything is fixed by convention and there is no chance for Oenone's 'passion' now that social hierarchies have changed. Thus personal bitterness gives way to more generalised philosophical musings. While Cooper's Oenone, as Ovid's original, is concerned to present herself as an equal or superior match for her new rival Helen ('A scepter would not ill become this hand,/ So much I wish and merit to command' (p. 103), Behn's Oenone does not lust after power: 'and I had rather this way wretched prove,/ Than be a queen and faithless in my love' (p. 124). There is a generalised tone of self-consolation:

How much more happy are we rural maids  
 who know no other places than shades  
 who want no titles to inslave the crowd  
 lest they should babble all our crimes aloud (p. 125)

In these lines, Behn's Oenone is neither royalty nor royal subject. She forges a place for herself beyond the reach of political or social corruption which provides comfort in her abandonment and betrayal. The translator is showing an engagement with Ovid's text which allows her to focus on the class-aspect inherent in the original. The female voice of Oenone is subtly shifted from venomous rival to social commentator.

When John Cooper departs from the Latin to make a more generalised comment, it is a misogynistic one. These lines in Cooper are expanded from

the Latin original (which only has the idea that Helen once claimed to love Menelaus – ‘*ardet amore tui? Sic et Menelaon amavit*’ (line 105):<sup>60</sup>

When once debauch’d, our sex for ever burn  
in lawless fire; virtue knows no return  
dishonour never gives a second blow  
and once a whore she will ever be so (p. 104)

Cooper’s Oenone is much more offensive towards Helen, calling her a ‘whore’ once again: ‘fair tho’ she be, your Helen is a whore’ and presenting Paris as comic character from Restoration theatre: ‘Alone he lies poor cred’lous cuckold now!’ Conversely, Behn allows no such generalised and bitter lines about ‘whores’. Sex becomes a locus of power for Behn’s Oenone as she recalls the ‘joy’ and ‘ecstasy’ at the fulfilment of sexual desire which left Paris ‘Speechless, and panting at my feet you lay’ (p. 112). There is no direct Latin equivalent for these lines as Behn converts a conventional scene (in the Latin the pair lay on the grass, ‘*saepe greges inter*’) into one of female sexual dominance. As elsewhere in her poetry, most notably in her poem ‘The Disappointment’ where the impotence genre is twisted to a female perspective, Behn reverses the passivity of female sexuality. Munns’ comment on Anne Finch’s accusation in ‘The Circuit of Apollo’ (1712) that Behn ‘a little too loosely she writ’ is pertinent to Behn’s ‘loose’ method of translation here:

Behn’s pastoral muse, however, was not merely loose, but was also political; not only in the overt politics of state but in her sexual politics.

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<sup>60</sup> Showerman (ed.), *Ovid: Heroides, Amores*, pp. 64-65. Trans.: ‘Is she ardent with love for you? So, too, she loved Menelaus.’

Like her male contemporaries, she wrote of a highly sexualized pastoral world, but, unlike the majority of their verse, her verses did not merely enact the drama of female sexual submission. When her females yielded and suffered, they complained: frequently she reversed the tropes and expectations to present women in the ascendant.<sup>61</sup>

With the ‘blushes’ of consummated love which Behn adds into her translation, ‘And yet how long my Maiden blushes strove’ and ‘The Blushes left my cheeks’, one recalls Dryden’s desire in the preface for Ovid’s text to be read ‘by Matrons without a blush’. This is an example of Behn ‘(reinterpreting) the tropes of sexual conquest so that precisely ‘blushes’ need not be ‘faults’, rather ‘Trembling and blushing are not marks of shame’ but the signs of mutual pleasure.’<sup>62</sup>

Finally, I want to show that Behn’s translation in some aspects can actually be considered closer to the Latin than Cooper’s despite her expansive and loose style. An example of this is how Behn tends to translate classical names within the poems in a very accurate and detailed way. At lines 35-6 in Ovid’s original the three goddesses are named in connection to the famous Paris-judged beauty contest: ‘Venus et Iuno... nuda Minerva’. Behn expands the names, translating them as: ‘Venus, Pallas, and the wife of Jove’. Whereas Behn keeps the Latin names here (though altering them slightly, for example by using the alternative name ‘Pallas’ for ‘Minerva’) Cooper translates the names with a domesticating method by merely using the term ‘three heav’nly

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<sup>61</sup> Jessica Munns, ‘Pastoral and lyric: Astrea in Arcadia’ in Janet Todd and Derek Hughes (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Aphra Behn*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 204-220 (p. 219).

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, p. 220.



beauties'. Similarly, the word 'Nereidas' at line 57 in Ovid's poem (used as an invocation by Oenone to the 'daughters of Nereus') is simplified to 'ye Sea Gods' in Cooper's translation, yet retains its Latin name in Behn: 'And all the Sea born Nereids implore'. Throughout Cooper's translation, there is a simplification or Anglicisation of classical names and terminology; this seems to be a conscious decision, perhaps in order to make his translation more accessible to the popular reader. Behn's retaining of Latin names in contrast, while not proof that she was working from the original, *is* evidence that she was not relying on Cooper's text. The way that Behn changes the text, the very extent of her digression and expansions, I think, argues for her having a close engagement with the original. When describing Helen for example, Behn's Oenone says:

With Theseus from her country made escape,  
whilst she miscall'd the willing flight, a rape.  
so now from Atreus son, with thee is fled,  
and still the rape hides the adult'rous deed. (p. 124)

Behn combines the allusions to Theseus and Atreus which appear separately in the Latin. The Atreus (Menelaus) allusion comes at line 101 in the original Ovid:

Think not, too, if you are wise, that the Laconian will be faithful – she  
who so quickly turned to your embrace. Just as the younger Atrides  
cries out at the violation of his marriage-bed, and feels his painful  
wound from the wife who loves another, you too will cry.

And the Theseus allusion comes later at line 127:

Let her seem how fair soever of face, none the less she surely is a jade;  
smitten with a stranger, she left behind her marriage-gods. Theseus –  
unless I mistake the name – one Theseus, even before, had stolen her  
away from her father's land.<sup>63</sup>

Behn chooses to combine these two references in Oenone's speech as they both represent the same theme of unchastity, both being examples of Helen being 'carried off' or raped (depending on interpretation of Helen's behaviour). After these examples, Behn typically concludes the thought with a generalised point about virtue and sexual politics which could equally be applied to the court of the Restoration:

And is it thus Great Ladies keep intire  
That Vertue they so boast, and you admire?  
Is this a Trick of Courts, can Ravishment  
Serve for a poor Evasion of Consent? (p. 125)

Such structural changes to Ovid's original by Behn are therefore shown to have reason behind them. Behn's looseness of translation style can be argued to be a deliberate choice. She plays to the cultural expectations of a loose, 'imitative' (in Dryden's triangulation) method yet delivers a translation which shows close and thoughtful engagement with Ovid's original in order to adapt the text and provide her own interpretation.

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<sup>63</sup> Showerman (ed.) and trans, *Ovid: Heroides, Amores*, pp. 64-65 and pp. 66-67.

### **Behn and female-voiced complaint**

Though we cannot be sure whether Behn knew the *Heroides* in the Latin original, there appears little similarity, verbal or otherwise, between her poem and previous English translations by George Turberville, Wye Saltonstall or John Sherburne. A different possibility could be that she was familiar with the *Heroides* from a French source. For example, Michel de Marolles was a prolific French translator of Ovid at this time, with his French translation of the *Heroides*, *P. Ovidii Nasonis...Heroidum Liber. Cum interpretation et notis M. de Marolles* (1661), which Paul Hammond says was read by Dryden.<sup>64</sup> It is clear however, that Behn's engagement with the Ovidian female-voiced complaint tradition extends beyond this one translation. Many of Behn's poems contain complaint themes or discourses. In her poem 'The Reflection: A Song' (1684) for example, where the first person female speaker Serena is in an abandoned state, Behn expresses that studied silence or feminine tears of mourning can only hold out so long:

Her eyes, as if they would have spar'd,  
The Language of her Tongue,  
In Silent Tears a while declar'd  
The Sense of all her wrong.  
But they alas too feeble were,  
Her Grief was swoln too high  
To be Exprest in Sighs and Tears;

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<sup>64</sup> Michel de Marolles, *Publii Ovidii Nasonis Sulmonensis. Heroidum liber cum interpretation et notis...Les Epistres heroides d'Ovide de la traduction de M. de Marolles avec des remarques* (Paris: Vve P. Lamy, 1661). See Paul Hammond (ed.), *The Poems of John Dryden: 1682-1685, Volume 2* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), p. 376.

She must speak or dye.

And thus at last she did complain (lines 5-13) <sup>65</sup>

The urge to speak her complaint directly becomes too much as the persistent couplets signal the move from quiet grief to forthright complaint. The only ‘remedy for despair’ is revealed as its poetic expression.<sup>66</sup>

Often Behn’s poems have direct reference to the *Heroides*. In Behn’s ‘On Desire’ (1688) for example, the final two lines relate the female speaker’s situation to that of Helen: ‘So *Helen* while from *Theseus* arms she fled, / To charming *Paris* yields her heart and bed.’ (lines 115-116, p. 284) While an allusion to Theseus appears in ‘Oenone to Paris’, it should be noted that the Theseus element to Helen’s back-story is much more obscure than the similar incident with Menelaus, which would have been the more obvious choice for inclusion here.

In a different style, Behn’s allegorical poem ‘Rebellions Antidote: or a dialogue between coffee and tea’ (1685) uses a *Heroides* reference in order to make a distinction between tea as complainant and coffee as wrong-doing addressee: ‘and since as Dido thou command’st my grief,/ I’ll with Aeneas sum up all in brief’ (lines 17-18, , p.165). In particular, this poem uses the *Heroides* complaint positions to make a political comment at this time of rebellion (those of Argyle and Monmouth) with Royalism (and Behn herself) represented by ‘tea’ and ‘coffee’ presenting ‘a more Whiggish perspective’.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Todd, *The Works of Aphra Behn*, Vol. 1, p. 75.

<sup>66</sup> Diaz, *Grief as Medicine for Grief: Complaint Poetry in Early Modern England, 1559—1609*, p. 1.

<sup>67</sup> Melinda Zook, ‘Contextualizing Aphra Behn: plays, politics, and party, 1679-1689’ in Hilda Smith (ed.), *Women Writers and the Early Modern British Political Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 75-93 (pp. 88-89).

Another allusion to Dido is the image in the fourth stanza of Behn's later poem 'A Pindaric Poem to the Reverend Doctor Burnet on the honour he did me of enquiring after me and my muse' (1689):

The Breeze that wafts the Crowding Nations o're,  
Leaves me unpity'd far behind  
On the Forsaken Barren Shore,  
To Sigh with Echo, and the Murmuring Wind (lines 53-56, p. 310).

One could compare Behn in this poem with a number of Ovidian complaint heroines. Here the abandoned situation of a *Heroides* complainant is used to portray a feeling of political disenchantment or exile, with the specific situation being Behn's refusal to write a poem praising William and Mary due to her loyalty to James II.

In fact, Behn did go on to write such a poem about the new monarchs, although it was specifically to Mary rather than William, being entitled 'A Congratulatory Poem To Her Sacred Majesty Queen Mary Upon Her Arrival in England' (1689). This poem also aligns itself with the complaint tradition. Though called 'A Congratulatory Poem', Melinda Zook notes that 'at times the tone is hardly celebratory at all... it sighs with heavy resignation and takes the line that many of the 'Maryites' (supporters of Mary's claim to the throne over William's) took at the Convention Parliament of January 1689: if not the father, then at least the daughter'.<sup>68</sup> Behn opens her poem in the same way as

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<sup>68</sup> Melinda Zook, 'The Political Poetry of Aphra Behn', in Todd and Hughes (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Aphra Behn*, pp. 46-67 (p. 61).

the framed female-voiced complaints which we have explored by Shakespeare, Wroth, and later Pulter. Behn's Muse is alone on the banks of the Thames:

While my sad Muse the darkest Covert Sought,  
To give a loose to Melancholy Thought;  
Opprest, and sighing eith the Heavy Weight  
Of an Unhappy dear Lov'd Monarch's Fate (lines 1-4)

Suddenly her melancholy solitude is interrupted:

While thus she lay resolved to tune no more  
Her fruitless songs on Britain's faithless shore,  
All on a sudden through the woods there rung,  
Loud sounds of joy that Io Peans sung.  
Maria! blest Maria! was the theme,  
Great Britain's happy genius, and her queen. (lines 13-18, p. 305)

Complaints are said to be put aside, 'whilst mourning Eccho now forgot her sighs', and even the (female-voiced) Thames, in a verse reminiscent of Hester Pulter's *Complaint of Thames*, can make happy report of the new queen:

All things in Nature, a New Face put on,  
Thames with Harmonious Purlings glides along,  
and tells her Ravisht Banks, she lately bore  
A Prize more great than all her hidden Store,  
Or all the Sun it self e're saw before. (lines 25-30, p. 306)

With this change of tone and the disappearance of complaint, the path is now clear for the panegyric verse expected from the beginning. However, the complaint opening has already achieved the desired effect. Behn has been able to express her dissatisfaction with the panegyric task in a subtle way and her reluctance to follow and be ‘among the Clouds to Adore’. Her political allegiance to James II can be displayed while also praising Mary. Thus, Behn uses Ovidian complaint to make political comments.

Finally, the complaint links of this poem are shown even more clearly when a pair of complaint poems on a very similar theme are published anonymously in 1691: ‘*Maria to Henric and Henric to Maria: or, the Queen to the King in Holland, and his Majesty’s Answer two heroical epistles in Imitation of the Stile and Manner of Ovid. Written by a Young Lady. London Printed for Joseph Knight, at the Pope’s Head, in the Lower Walk of the New Exchange, 1691.*’ The title signals the indebtedness of the poem to Ovid and specifically his ‘heroical epistles’. Though the work could not have been written by Behn (it seems from references in the poem to ‘the fall of Mons’ that it must have been written, as well as published, in 1691, the year after Behn’s death), the influence of Behn’s combination of the Mary-William coronation theme with the complaint genre is clear. There are also echoes of the generalised social comments of Behn’s ‘*Oenone to Paris*’ in Maria’s complaint: ‘Why was I born so great, or you so brave?/ Were you less so, or were I but a slave,/ my servile consort I in view might have?’.<sup>69</sup> Whatever the identity of the ‘Young Lady’ writing this complaint poem, Behn’s *Heroides*-

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<sup>69</sup> *Maria to Henric, and Henric to Maria, or, The Queen to the King in Holland, and His Majesty’s answer two heroical epistles in imitation of the stile and manner of Ovid / written by a Young lady* (London: Joseph Knight, 1691), p. 3.

inspired poems have provided a model for a personal expression of political dissatisfaction.

Behn is shown to be engaging with the wider traditions of Ovidian female-voiced complaint. Her translation of 'Oenone to Paris' maybe 'loose' but it is grounded in the complaint discourse and imagery which she is using throughout her work.<sup>70</sup> To conclude this chapter I will consider some ways in which (male) poets reacted to Behn's 'Oenone to Paris' and Dryden's *Ovid's Epistles* in general. In the three examples I have found of poems directly acknowledging Behn's 'Oenone to Paris' translation, there is a shared presentation of Behn being compared to Oenone. A poem by Richard Ames published in *The Pleasures of Love and Marriage* compares Behn (called 'Sappho') unfavourably to 'Orinda' (the sobriquet for Katherine Philips):

Nor had soft Afra less Immortal prov'd,  
Had that fond Sappho kept her Heart unmov'd,  
And had she not too many Phaons Lov'd,  
Whether with fair Oenonoe she deplor'd  
The broken Faith of her ungrateful Lord; (sig.C1v)<sup>71</sup>

The identification with Sappho ostensibly creates an intratextual allusion, with Behn being compared to two complainants from the *Heroides*. A community of grieving heroines is established with Behn, as Sappho, mourning as if for Phaon, compared to Oenone 'deploring' Paris. By identifying Behn with the Ovidian complainants, we can agree with Jane Spencer that there is another

<sup>70</sup> Further complaint poems by Behn include: 'Song. The surprize, set by Mr Farmer'; 'Song. The Complaint' and 'On a Locket of hair wove in a true-loves knot given me by sir R.O'.

<sup>71</sup> Richard Ames, *The Pleasures of Love and Marriage* (London: R. Baldwin, 1691).



side to such ‘customary poems of praise’: ‘Behn's treatment of love was not received as a contribution to tradition, but as the unproblematic expression of a feminine self. Behn was either giving voice to her own passionate feelings, or displaying her own attractions to seduce the male reader.’<sup>72</sup> Indeed, the description of Sappho as ‘too many Phaons lov’d’ also opens up the alternative history of the Greek female poet in connection with women writers – prolific and unmatched in terms of poetry but always paired with a monstrous sexuality and unchastity. Behn’s identification with Oenone, prompted no doubt by her translation, is secondary to this typical association based on loose morals and public poetic reputation.

Similarly, Matthew Prior’s inclusion of Behn in ‘A Satyr on the modern Translators’ connects her Ovidian translation task with a display of ‘lewdness’:

The Female Wit, who next convicted stands,  
 Not for abusing Ovid’s Verse but Sand’s:  
 She might have learn’d from the ill borrow’d Grace,  
 (Which little helps the ruine of her Face)  
 That Wit, like Beauty, triumphs o’re the Heart,  
 When more of Nature’s seen and less of Art:  
 Nor strive in Ovid’s Letters to have shown,  
 As much of Skill, as Lewdness in her own:  
 Then let her from the next inconstant Lover,  
 Take a new Copy for a second Rover:

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<sup>72</sup> Jane Spencer, *Aphra Behn’s Afterlife* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 47.

Describe the cunning of a Jilting Whore,  
 From the ill Arts her self has us'd before;  
 Thus let her write, but Paraphrase no more. (p. 196)<sup>73</sup>

This attack on Behn's translation is expressed through disgust at her physical appearance and immodesty connected with her sex. The poem is an example of Behn taking 'the full brunt of misogynist outrage against a female writing and publishing under her own name'.<sup>74</sup> This female outwardness, represented here as an ugly deformity - 'the ruin of her face' – is further combined by Prior with an accusation of plagiarism and overly loose imitation. The implication of 'Nor for abusing Ovid's Verse but Sand's' is that Behn did not translate from the original Ovidian Latin but rather adapted earlier translations. George Sandys seems a strange example of one of these earlier translators for Prior to allude to however, as he had translated Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in 1626 (it was still popular in Prior's time), not the *Heroides*, although Sandys may be used as a general example of a very 'close' translation in contrast to Behn's loose offering.

There is a potentially kinder assessment given in a dedicatory poem to Behn's later publication *Poems upon several occasions with, A voyage to the island of love* (1684), (the very same edition in which Behn's 'Oenone to Paris' appears with the argument attributed to Cooper in *Ovid's Epistles*

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<sup>73</sup> Matthew Prior, 'A Satyr on the modern Translators' (1685), published in Buckingham, George Villiers, *Poems on Affairs of State* (London, 1697).

<sup>74</sup> Anne Cotterill, "Manly strength with Modern softness": Dryden and the Mentoring of Women Writers' in Anthony Lee (ed.), *Mentoring in Eighteenth-Century British Literature and Culture* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 25-50 (p. 41).

(1681). In this anonymous poem, numbered 'VI' in the collection of dedicatory verses, the poet laments that Oenone did not originally complain like Behn:

Wretched Oenone's inauspicious fate,  
That she was born so soon, or her blest Muse so late!  
Cou'd the poor Virgin have like her complain'd,  
She soon her perjur'd Lover had regain'd (lines 1-4, sig.(b)4v).<sup>75</sup>

Behn is offered a way to change Oenone's epistle in an even more radical way than she does in her translation. A more positive assessment of her loose imitative style is given:

How does it please the learned *Roman's* Ghost  
(The sweetest that th' *Elysian* Field can boast)  
To see his noble thoughts so well exprest,  
So tenderly in a rough Language drest (lines 13-16).

The poet is confident that Ovid himself would have been pleased with Behn's poem, with the thoughts of the Roman poet 'so well exprest' despite the restrictions of the 'rough Language' of English. However, as the poem continues, we soon learn that this praise progresses to an identification of Behn not with Oenone or with Ovid but with Julia:

Had she there liv'd, and he her *Genius* known,  
So soft, so charming, and so like his own,

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<sup>75</sup> *Poems upon several occasions with, A voyage to the island of love* (London: Richard Tonson and Jacob Tonson, 1684).

One of his Works had unattempted been,  
 And *Ovid* ne'er in mournfull Verse been seen;  
 Then the great *Caesar* to the *Scythian* plain,  
 From *Rome's* gay Court had banish'd him in vain  
 Her plenteous Muse had all his wants supplied,  
 And he had flourish'd in exalted pride:  
 ...  
 He there had spent within her softer Armes,  
 And soon forgot the Royal *Iulia's* charmes. (lines 17-24; 31-32)

Behn is figured as a replacement for Julia and a positive one at that as this alternative reality would result in Ovid being no longer exiled by Augustus (an affair between Ovid and Julia is implied as the cause of banishment here). The climax of the poem and the identification of the female poet with Julia is that Behn becomes Ovid's lover. Thus identification of the woman writer in these poems with Ovidian heroines or lovers ultimately has a negative emphasis; in this example identification of Behn with Ovidian heroine or poet is extended and relegated to an imagined sexual relationship between her and the classical author. This sexualised identification technique is used as a justification or explanation for the female translator's involvement and achievements in the *Heroides* reception tradition.

There appears to have been a particular difficulty amongst male poets in how to receive Behn's loose translation of 'Oenone to Paris'. Behn uses her translation as a way to explore the female voice; present political and social ideas; and correct cultural assumptions of gender and sexuality. When men

create more loose and imitative responses to Ovid's text in this period in contrast, it is an opportunity to reject the seriousness of the *Heroides* altogether and open up the text to parodic games. Alexander Radcliffe and Matthew Stevenson produce parodies or burlesque versions of the *Heroides* in this period, in response to, and in conjunction with, the publication of Dryden's *Ovid's Epistles*. Radcliffe's parody is advertised at the back of the 1680 *Ovid's Epistles* edition and he has the same publisher in Tonson. Though positioned as oppositional, the two parodic endeavours are actually quite similar and offer an engagement with the *Heroides* which casts the heroines down to a low level. Radcliffe and Stevenson's parodies go beyond a reaction against Dryden or each other to use 'the poems' dual authorship as an entry point into satire and play on gender roles'.<sup>76</sup> The satirical verges on the pornographic at times; Radcliffe's Sappho, for example, is voyeuristically described: 'there stands, you know, an antiquated tub/ gainst which, since that, I often stand and rub'.<sup>77</sup> This line shows how Ovid's heterosexual Sappho, who laments her abandonment by Phaon, is transformed by Radcliffe's loose parodic translation into a ridiculous image of tribadism, playing on Sappho's wider reception as a lesbian.

The parodists take the 'englishing' of the epistles to the extreme, reducing stylised Latin to colloquial English as references to 'beers', 'pox' and 'hot houses' allow them to depart from Dryden's paraphrase schemata and present the heroines' voices from a lower level. Safely in a bawdy register

<sup>76</sup> Wiseman, 'Romes wanton Ovid': Reading and Writing Ovid's *Heroides* 1590–1712', p. 301.

<sup>77</sup> Alexander Radcliffe, *Ovid Travestie, A Burlesque upon Ovid's Epistles, The Second Edition, enlarged with Ten Epistles never before Printed* (London: Jacob Tonson, 1680); see also Matthew Stevenson, *The wits paraphras'd, or, Paraphrase upon paraphrase in a burlesque on the several late translations of Ovids Epistles* (London: Will Cademan, 1680).

suited to low genres, the female sexuality and authorship previously problematically received can be challenged. Katherine Heavey finds in these parodies ‘a startling interest in the physical that may often veer into misogyny in its presentation of the female voice’<sup>78</sup> and Kerrigan argues that the appearance of these volumes ‘indicates that male writers felt a threat from women’s plaintful poetry’. Indeed, if a threat was felt from the subjectivity of the female voice, the compilation edition of Dryden’s *Ovid’s Epistles* was not considered adequate to nullify it, especially with the influential inclusion of a translation by a woman within the first edition. It was this same Alexander Radcliffe (in *The Ramble: An Anti-Heroick Poem* (London, 1682)) who accused Behn of plagiarism, alleging that ‘a ‘Greys Inn Lawyer’, her ‘Friend in bosom’, either John Hoyle or Edward Ravenscroft, was the author of her plays.’<sup>79</sup>

The inclusion of Cooper’s translation in the second edition, the removal of the argument from Behn’s translation and the subtle re-titling of Behn’s ‘Paraphrase’ could be considered a response to such a threat. Behn’s exceptional position in *Ovid’s Epistles* commanded special attention and inspired further receptions and imitations. At one extreme Behn’s unique ‘paraphrase’ or ‘imitation’ (however we choose to label her translation) of ‘Oenone to Paris’ influenced the transformation of ‘loose’ translation of the female voice into insulting burlesque and ‘low’ bawdy poetry. However, as we have seen at the beginning of this chapter and as we will examine further in

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<sup>78</sup> Katherine Heavey, ‘Pedantry, Paraphrase or Potty Humour? The Art of Translating Ovid’s Heroines in 1680’, *Studies in Renaissance: Early Modern Literature*, 2 (2009), p. 49.

<sup>79</sup> See Mary Ann O’Donnell, ‘Aphra Behn: the documentary record’, in Todd and Hughes (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Aphra Behn*, pp. 1-11 (pp. 9-10).

the following chapter by studying Anne Wharton's poetry, we should not ignore that Behn also influenced many *Heroides*-inspired poems by female authors and created a female-authored tradition around Ovid's female-voiced complaint text.

## Chapter 5

### Anne Wharton's Manuscript and Print Complaints

The parody versions of the *Heroides* which, as we have seen in the previous chapter, appeared in publication soon after Dryden's *Ovid's Epistles* (1680), signal one type of response to the resurgent Ovidian female-voiced tradition in the 1680s. These satirical responses were followed by further playful versions of Ovidian complaint by poets like the Earl of Rochester, who saw the *Heroides* as an opportunity to ridicule Dryden and to shift the Ovidian female complainant into a Restoration court lady who is desperate only to submit to his sexual advances.

For Anne Wharton, a female poet closely connected to Rochester (who was her uncle), the *Heroides* offered a similar model for manipulatory power as she found in writing female-voiced complaint the potential to challenge conventions and shift expectations. As we will see, Wharton can write a poem expressing her fear and despair at crossing the dangerous seas while presenting herself outwardly as unmoved, she can set up a situation where the religious language of a lamenting Jeremiah can be compared to the erotic discourse of Sappho, and she can present an abandoned Penelope who can declare herself 'inconstant'. Wharton finds in Ovidian female-voiced complaint a genre which can be adapted to her own situation and which allows her to connect with such an influential female poet as Aphra Behn.



### **Rochester and the *Heroides***

John Wilmot, the Earl of Rochester, writes an epistolary poem, ‘Answer to a Paper of Verses sent him by L.B Felton and taken out of the Translation of Ovid’s *Epistles*, 1680’, which gives a satirical response to the *Heroides* (and Dryden’s edition in particular). The poem relocates female-voiced complaint within the Restoration Court and gives examples of courtly women who are understanding and using the text in the ‘wrong’ way; too seriously, and not allowing for experimentation and titillation. Furthermore, the interaction of Rochester’s poem with court satires means that the complaining heroines of *Ovid’s Epistles* are reduced to the level of court bawds made notorious in scurrilous verse.

The title of Rochester’s poem is tantalisingly anecdotal, giving us important context to the situation of this seemingly extempore verse composition, yet not telling us the whole story. Edward Burns, referring to the ‘circle’ of poets (namely Rochester, George Etherege and Aphra Behn) who composed the various Ephelia-Mulgrave satirical epistles discussed in the previous chapter, comments that this ‘kind of of playfully gossip-orientated writing’ in which ‘contexts and, more frustratingly, authorial identification, must be seen to dissolve into a game of masking and innuendo... seems to be typical of the kind of attention to *The Heroides* by this circle of writers’.<sup>1</sup> Rochester’s response to the *Heroides* ‘paper of verses’, which he apparently received, is also reminiscent of the parodic Ovidian translations such as Matthew Stevenson’s *The Wits Paraphrased*. Rochester’s poem is a kind of

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Burns, *Reading Rochester* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1995), p. 75.

paraphrase itself, commenting on and shifting the meaning of the *Heroides* verses received:

What strange Surprise to meet such Words as these?  
 Such Terms of Horrour were ne'er chose to please:  
 To meet, midst Pleasures of a Jovial Night,  
 Words that can only give amaze and fright,  
 No gentle thought that does to Love invite.  
 Were it not better far your Arms t'employ,  
 Grasping a Lover in pursuit of Joy,  
 Than handling Sword, and Pen, Weapons unfit:  
 Your Sex gains Conquest, by their Charms and Wit.  
 Of Writers slain I could with pleasure hear,  
 Approve of Fights, o'er-joy'd to cause a Tear;  
 So slain, I mean, that she should soon revive,  
 Pleas'd in my Arms to find her self Alive. (lines 1-13) <sup>2</sup>

The manner of receiving the epistolary poem and the materiality of the 'paper of verses' as object are emphasised in the opening description of a shock physical encounter: 'what strange Surprise to meet such Words as these... To meet midst Pleasures of a Jovial Night' (lines 1-2). Though the exact nature of the situation is not clear, there is suggested a 'jovial' scene of drinking and debauchery interrupted by the delivery of a letter from Lady Felton. This theatre of receiving a letter dramatises the imagined delivery and reception of the epistolary female-voiced complaint poems of the *Heroides*, with

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<sup>2</sup> Harold Love, *The Works of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 43.

Rochester's 'Answer' in the position of a male-voiced reply (like those of the double *Heroides* or the letters of Sabinus). This added context and material emphasis invites the kind of biographical reading which Burns would say is part of Rochester's game.

Two suggestions have been made for which particular 'Ovid's Epistles' poem is meant, both hinging on the reference to 'Sword, and Pen' in the eighth line. Firstly, Harold Love in his notes on the poem argues that the lines were probably taken from the 'Dido to Aeneas' epistle, giving an example from Carr Scroope's translation in the 1680 Dryden edition:

But you resolve to force me to my Grave,  
 And are not far from all that you would have.  
 Your Sword before me, whilst I write, does lie,  
 And, by it, if I write in vain, I die.  
 Already stain'd with many a falling Tear,  
 It shortly shall another Colour wear. (Q4r, p. 238)

The image of sword and writing here, along with the 'tears' prompt the comparison with this famous closing image of Dido's suicide preparations in the wake of her distressing abandonment by Aeneas. Love concludes with speculation about why Felton selected Dido's lines: 'Felton, then, may well have sent Rochester a suicide threat'.<sup>3</sup> This suggestion relies on Felton identifying with the Ovidian heroine in a way comparable to a faithful or literal translation, selecting verses which match her personal situation and emotions and using Dido's voice as her own.

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<sup>3</sup> Love, *The Works of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester*, p. 368 (notes).

Burns' alternative suggestion is that the verses were from the (also suicidal) Canace's complaint to Macareus, which was translated by Dryden himself in *Ovid's Epistles*:

If streaming blood my fatal Letter stain,  
 Imagine, ere you read, the Writer slain:  
 One hand the Sword, and one the pen employs,  
 And in my lap the ready paper lyes.  
 Think in this posture thou behold'st me Write:  
 In this my cruel Father wou'd delight. (p. 8)

Burns describes the Canace lines rightly as a 'caricature of a male view of a woman writing – pen in one hand, the equally phallic sword in the other, and the paper in her lap... *écriture féminine* in this case is written out of wounds, or from the gash of the womb.'<sup>4</sup> He sees Felton, if not in the same way as Love's suicide suggestion, as 'taking the Ovidian pose too seriously', with Rochester's response both 'sexualising the act of writing in order to return the female writer to her proper sphere' and an exposé of Felton's lack of skill in manipulating and angling the text; she is not a writer but a 'performer of male-authored texts'.<sup>5</sup>

It should be noted however, that it is Rochester who presents Felton as 'taking the Ovidian pose too seriously'. By copying the verses verbatim, Felton's identification with the Ovidian complainant is shown to be open to further interpretation and parody. Rochester's poem is a manipulation and it

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<sup>4</sup> Burns, *Reading Rochester*, p. 76.

<sup>5</sup> Burns, *Reading Rochester*, p. 80.

seems likely that he creates the whole Felton pretext in order to ridicule Dryden's female-voiced project. The tensions between Rochester and Dryden are well documented, and are represented in the series of poetic attacks on Mulgrave, Dryden's patron.<sup>6</sup> The links between writing and death and death and sex are translated to a 'jovial night' scene where tears are not the tears of complaint; joy is not the happiness of spiritual union or the freeing of soul from body at death, but a verbal representation of sexual climax. The final couplet, clarifying the double meanings at play in the poem ('So slain, I mean') sees female writer become a lover, slain and revived in the casual sexual embrace of Rochester.

This manipulation by Rochester also ensures that the phallic potential of pen and sword in the Ovidian original takes over the poem. Rochester may well have been thinking of Stevenson's recently published *Heroides* parodies, although in truth he does not reduce Felton to the same level as Stevenson does Canace, where the sword-pen trope moves to somewhere between sodomy and defecation:

One hand employs my Pen, alas!  
 With t'other hand I scratch my A---  
 In that same posture now I write,  
 Just as my Father us'd to sh---' (B4r, p.9).<sup>7</sup>

Elsewhere in Rochester's verse, Felton is very much a subject of parody, featuring in Rochester's lewd satire 'Signior Dildo', 'Lady Betty by chance

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example, David Farley-Hills, *Earl of Rochester: The Critical Heritage* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2005), p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> Matthew Stevenson, *The wits paraphras'd, or, Paraphrase upon paraphrase in a burlesque on the several late translations of Ovids Epistles* (London: Will Cademan, 1680), pp. 9-16.

came the secret to know,/ And from her own mother stole Signior Dildo' (lines 23-24),<sup>8</sup> and as one of the Duchess of Mazarin's three 'whores of honor' in 'Rochester's Farewell'.<sup>9</sup> Felton (who was born Elizabeth Howard), was the wife of Thomas Felton who was groom of the King's bedchamber, yet appears often in 'shotgun libels' and other court satires, including one 'Ballad on Betty Felton', which John Wilson notes is a rare example of such a poem in its singular emphasis, 'attacking only one lesser Court lady'.<sup>10</sup> In this ballad, Felton is described in a similarly parodic sexualised posture as Stevenson's Canace: 'She's always attended by bollocks and tarse,/ Sweet Candish in cunt and bold Frank at her arse' (lines 4-5). With this background, Felton's *Heroides* verses, like the woman herself, become ripe for satire in the hands of Rochester. Identification is not a matter of Felton putting herself in a suicidal heroine's position of despair but about the *Heroides* being reduced to, or re-imagined as, the same satirical mode in which notorious court ladies like Felton are committed to verse.

There are further examples of the *Heroides* being associated with scandalous sexual behaviour at Court. David Vieth directs our attention to another incident of a court lady sending *Heroides* verses to an Earl: Count Grammont's 'somewhat similar story concerning Frances Jennings and Henry Jermyn'.<sup>11</sup> Grammont's *Memoirs*, from which the 'story' is taken, centre around his time spent in the court of Charles II and were prepared for publication after his death by his brother (Count Antoine Hamilton) and later

<sup>8</sup> Love, *The Works of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester*, pp. 248-249.

<sup>9</sup> See John Wilson (ed.), *Court Satires of the Restoration* (Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1976), p. 47.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 47-8.

<sup>11</sup> David Vieth, *The Complete Poems of John Wilmot Earl of Rochester* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), p. 149.

translated into English by Abel Boyer. The subject of this particular incident is Lady Jennings, a well-known court bawd who features (alongside several others, including the aforementioned Felton) in such satires as *The Ladies March* (1681).<sup>12</sup> She is reported by Grammont to have copied down verses of the ‘Ariadne to Theseus’ epistle, changing the name of the Ovidian addressee to her false lover Henry Jermyn but otherwise offering a ‘word for word’ transcription:

Ovid’s Epistles, translated into English Verse by the greatest Wits at Court, being lately publish’d, she wrote a Letter from a forlorn Maid in despair, address’d to the ‘Perfidious Germain’ and having taken the Epistle of Ariadne and Theseus for her Pattern, the beginning of that Letter contain’d, Word for Word, the Complaints and Expostulations of that injur’d Fair, to the cruel Man, by whom she was abandon’d: All which was pretty well adapted to the present Times and Conjunctions. (p. 354)<sup>13</sup>

Grammont goes on to explain in this recollection how Jennings was planning to close the piece by adding details of the ‘Toils, Perils and Monsters, that waited for him in Guinea, and for which he quitted a fond Mistress, overwhelm’d with Grief and Sorrow’ (p. 354). This alludes to how Henry Jermyn was planning to leave her for a trip to Guinea. However, he continues to report that she ran out of time to do this and failed to get the letter transcribed or anonymised as planned (‘in order to send it with a sham Name’)

<sup>12</sup> Wilson (ed.), *Court Satires of the Restoration*, pp. 56-59 (line 71).

<sup>13</sup> Antoine Hamilton, *Memoirs of the Life of Count de Grammont...translated out of the French by Mr [Abel] Boyer* (London: J. Round, 1714). There is some debate about how much Hamilton changed his brother’s *Memoirs* when writing them up for publication, so we must be aware of this in referring to either Hamilton or Grammont as author.

and a farcical accident occurred: 'she heedlessly put in her Pocket that Fragment of a Letter written with her own Hand; and afterwards, ten times more heedlessly, dropt it in the middle of the Court.'

This inevitably led to the letter being found in Court and circulated:

They who took it up, knowing her Hand, wrote several Copies of it, which were soon dispers'd all over the Town; but her discreet Conduct had so well establish'd the Reputation of her Virtue, that no Body doubted that the whole Adventure had pass'd in the Manner above related. (p. 355)

Grammont's relating of this incident turns the identification of Jennings with Ariadne's complaint into a vehicle for gossip and scandal. In attempting to adapt the Ovidian epistle to her own circumstances, Jennings is presented as being naive and farcical. The circulation of Ovidian verses around Court takes place in a game of gossip and comic misunderstanding. The irony of the final line, claiming that the virtuous reputation of Jennings meant that everyone took her epistle seriously, makes the shift to the ridiculous complete. Grammont relies on the comic scenario making Jennings an untrustworthy writer and the fact that Jennings is frequently demonised for both her age and sexuality in other satirical verse (e.g. 'Old Mrs. Jennings next comes crawling' (line 71)). She could hardly be considered virtuous or comparable to the naive Ariadne abandoned on Naxos and soon to be raped by Bacchus. In a comparable way to the framing by Rochester of Felton's copied *Heroides* verses, Grammont ensures that the epistle of Jennings is contextualised in such a way as to



emphasise the satirical reception of *Ovid's Epistles*. Ovid's text is lowered to a vehicle for jealous slander and the love affair gossip of court bawds.

In these two examples of Felton and Jennings, we can see how an alternative use of *Ovid's Epistles* by Court mistresses was being promoted. The reputation of these women was such that the identification created between them and the Ovidian heroines shifts the text further towards entertainment, sexualisation, and satire. Anne Wharton, in contrast is a woman who can experiment with Ovid's text, creating connections with poets such as Aphra Behn and gaining control in seemingly restrictive relationships and contexts.

### **The life of Anne Wharton**

Wharton, born Anne Lee, was christened on 24<sup>th</sup> July 1659, at the eve of the Restoration. This also proved the same day as the funeral of her mother, Anne Danvers, who did not survive her daughter's birth: 'Too late for me for had she sooner fled/ She with her own had broke my twisted thred.' (lines 22-23).<sup>14</sup> Anne's father, Sir Henry Lee, had also died five months earlier, leaving his second daughter orphaned, as she later reflects in the poem 'Thoughts occasion'd by her retirement into the Countrey':

Abandon'd, helples, and alone, I came  
From nothing to this life, from ease to pain  
...

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<sup>14</sup> Anne Wharton, 'Thoughts occasion'd by her retirement into the Countrey', in Germaine Greer and Selina Hastings (eds), *The Surviving Works of Anne Wharton*, (Essex: Stump Cross Books, 1997), pp. 166-168. All Wharton texts are quoted from this edition unless otherwise specified.

Twas then, alas, by certaine instinct taught  
 they fear'd to see what I was borne to prove  
 they fled from youth from pleasure and from love  
 But 'twas to meete againe, in groves above (lines 5-6; 10-15).

Immediately then, one can see that Wharton's poetic self-presentation, situated in the grounding facts of her personal existence, is intimately connected to complaint. Poetry is used to respond to the reality of her abandonment, a state which is shown in this poem to persist from birth through to her married life which included the kind of 'retirements' which we have seen were often experienced by aristocratic women in the seventeenth century.<sup>15</sup> Classical and biblical translations, creative Ovidian complaints (including the Ovid-Julia-based play, *Love's Martyr*, discussed in the previous chapter), and poetic correspondences dominate her response.

It took Germaine Greer and Selina Hastings ten years to compile an excellent biography of Anne Wharton from surviving letters and chancery records. I will briefly relate some significant details about Wharton's upbringing and marriage in order to better understand how her short and troubled life led her to write at least 42 poems and one play.<sup>16</sup> Anne and her sister Eleanor, on their parents' death, inherited the large (and legally contested) Davers-Danby estate. Their grandmother, the Countess of Rochester (mother of Anne's father Henry Lee by her first husband Sir Francis Henry Lee of Ditchley) was made the girls' guardian and the executrix of their

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<sup>15</sup> See, for example, the retirement of Hester Pulter discussed in chapter 3.

<sup>16</sup> Number calculated from number of poems in the Beinecke manuscript (33, including 7 incomplete or titles only) added to number of poems in the Greer and Hastings edition but not in manuscript (9).

wills. Therefore, Anne grew up living with her powerful grandmother and famous uncle (John Wilmot was the Countess' son through her second marriage to Henry Wilmot, first Earl of Rochester). This upbringing is no doubt where Anne first developed her poetic talents and literary connections. She acknowledges this in her most famous poem 'Elegie on John Earle of Rochester', which initiated a series of poetic correspondences with Aphra Behn:

He led thee up the steep and high assent  
To Poetry the sacred way he went  
He taught thy Infant Muse, the Art betimes  
Tho then the way was difficult to climbe (lines 18-21).<sup>17</sup>

The correspondences with various literary figures maintained during her times of poetic composition would have been opened up to her through living with the Rochester family at Adderbury until she was married (and indeed when returning for visits afterwards).<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, she almost certainly would have accompanied the Countess of Rochester, who was in the circle of the Duchess of York (wife of James Stuart), to court. There is even a tantalising possibility that Anne could have known Lucy Hutchinson, who was a cousin of her grandmother's.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Greer and Hastings (eds.), *The Surviving Works of Anne Wharton*, pp. 140-142.

<sup>18</sup> E.g. in 1679 - see *ibid.*, p. 53 (letter 10 February 1678/9 John Cary to Sir Ralph Verney).

<sup>19</sup> According to the diary of the Earl of Anglesey (to whom Hutchinson dedicated her Lucretius translation in 1675), the Rochester family and Hutchinson were at dinner with Anglesey in Oxford in 1676 (see Stuart Gillespie, *English Translation and Classical Reception: Towards a New Literary History* (Sussex: Blackwell's Publishing, 2011), p. 106. Furthermore, the Countess of Rochester owned a manuscript copy (dated 1664) of Hutchinson's *Order and Disorder*. See Scott-Baumann, *Forms of Engagement: Women, Poetry, and Culture 1640-1680*, p. 172; and Ross, *Women, Poetry, and Politics in Seventeenth-Century Britain*, p.209.

There is little direct evidence about Anne's education. Greer speculates that 'the Countess's personal chaplin, Francis Gifford, who had been Rochester's tutor and had, by his own account, far more exacting standards than any of Rochester's other teachers, may have served as tutor to Eleanor and Anne' and that she may have learnt French with the Princess Mary.<sup>20</sup> Certainly, Anne's later marriage contract with Tom Wharton, a lengthy document at 39 folio pages (over 25,000 words), reveals the importance she set on (specifically female) education.<sup>21</sup> Amongst the usual details of inheritances, cash settlements and property lists, there is a clause to provide for 'the severall and respective yearely sums of one hundred pounds a piece of lawfull Money of England for each and every such Daughter and Daughters for their respective Maintenances and Educations untill her or their respective Age or Ages of twelve years And from thenceforth untill the sd respective of two hundred pounds a piece of like lawfull Money to each and every such Daughter and Daughters for their respective Maintenances and Educations'.<sup>22</sup> Having no children, it is perhaps fitting (as well as intriguing) that Anne Wharton's will left a sum of £3000 to Hester Barry, an illegitimate daughter of Rochester.<sup>23</sup> As Greer informs us, this gift did not escape the attention of satirists:

Tis Barry, the Illustrious of her kind,  
Whose Charity the Poor cou'd never find;  
Rochester taught her first how to be leud,

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<sup>20</sup> Greer and Hastings (eds.), *The Surviving Works of Anne Wharton*, p.22.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p.22.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p.99. Greer suggests that 'As Barry took the part of Lucina in the revival of Rochester's *Valentinian*, it is probable that during the preparations for the production and publication Anne had seen something of Rochester's little daughter and conceived a special fondness for her.'

Father'd a Chedder Child as his own Brood.  
 And had he liv'd to Hesty's fifteenth year,  
 He'd F—kd his Girl t'have been a Grandfather,  
 But dying, left it to his Neece's care.---  
 She likewise dy's and leaves three thousand pounds  
 To dour the Girl, provided She prove Sound.  
 T. Wharton is to have her Maidenhead,  
 And if not Sound, the Dowry's forfeited.  
 If he to gain the Sume shou'd Pox her now,  
 And swear before the Iudge he found her so!<sup>24</sup>

The mother of this child was Elizabeth Barry, a well-known actress and mistress of Rochester, and so it is not surprising that she or her daughter became the subject of such lampoons. The poet is actually quite biased towards Anne here, removing any blame from her if the girl should prove not 'sound' and even taking the opportunity in the closing lines to present her husband Tom Wharton as syphilitic and dishonest. This refers to Anne's early death in 1685; the symptoms matched syphilis, and were rumoured to have been caused by her husband, as for example, the disinherited Countess of Rochester inevitably argued: '[Wharton] gave [his wife] the pox a great many yeares agoe and never told her of it'.<sup>25</sup> The marriage between Anne and Tom Wharton, which was hastily arranged by her grandmother and Sir Ralph

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., pp. 99-100, quoting Bodleian Library, MS Firth c. 15, A folio miscellany of poems on affairs of state entitled *A Choice Collection of Poems, Lampoons, Satyrs*, p. 316.

<sup>25</sup> Greer and Hastings (eds.), *The Surviving Works of Anne Wharton*, p. 103, quoting University of Rochester NY MS D29, letter of 4 December 1685, Lady Rochester to Lord Lichfield.

Verney who suggested the match, presumably for financial reasons,<sup>26</sup> took place in 1673. It was not destined to be a happy one; Tom was a Parliamentarian, 11 years older than Anne (who was only 13), and seemingly neglectful of his wife (keeping her in the marital home at Winchendon), focussing as much time on hawking, horses and drinking as his political career.

Tom Wharton's exploits did not escape satiric attention. The hypocrisy and greed of Whig politicians and supporters of Monmouth's claim to the throne were exposed in many poems, including the 1683 'Satire on both the Whigs and the Tories' in which the brothers Tom and Henry Wharton are described as having desecrated a Church:

The Whartons, who so great a reverence bear

To monarchy, to church, and Common Prayer-

...

But our more hopeful youth, to show their zeals,

In reverend pulpit laid their nasty tails,

Profaned the altar, in the font did spew,

And made their footman frig in every pew (lines 62-63; 66-69).<sup>27</sup>

Despite her husband's rakish exploits and political links to the illegitimate Monmouth, Anne Wharton herself seems to have escaped notoriety.<sup>28</sup> Betty Felton, as we have seen a common presence in libellous satires, was actually a

<sup>26</sup> Greer and Hastings (eds.), *The Surviving Works of Anne Wharton*, p. 34.

<sup>27</sup> 'Satire on both the Whigs and the Tories' in Wilson (ed.), *Court Satires of the Restoration* pp. 121-127.

<sup>28</sup> Aside from a pair of accusations in the untrustworthy autobiography of Goodwin Wharton (he said that his brother's wife had been debauched when very young by Henry Mordaunt, second Earl of Peterborough and had 'lain a long while by her uncle Rochester'). See Goodwin Wharton, British Library, *Autobiography*, Add. MS 26006, i, 308.

cousin of Rochester and Wharton (they shared Sir John St John as a great grandfather). Yet, there were of course some women who maintained a good reputation, as Ezell gives examples: ‘The women at court, however, whose virtue was above question in such satires were the royal wives, Queen Catherine and Princess Mary of Modena, and, of course, there were numerous women who served them who are simply less known to later generations precisely because they did not embrace a libertine lifestyle and thus become fodder for gossip and satire.’<sup>29</sup> Anne Wharton seems to have maintained this chaste image, helped by her social position as a wealthy aristocratic heiress and her geographical position, which was often away from London in the country at Winchendon or in various other places receiving treatment for her persistent afflictions.

### **Creative responses to Ovidian myth: Questioning constancy**

The expectations for Wharton to maintain an image of chastity and constancy while her husband enjoyed quite a different lifestyle is reflected in her poem ‘Unchangeable’:

Priests preach and Poets teach us that all harmes  
 Are shun’d by Constancye’s defencive armes  
 Achylis sire by Constancy at last  
 Forse’d Proteus to a stand as held him fast  
 My toile hath as unweary’d been and great  
 But all in vain my Proteus changes yet

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<sup>29</sup> Ezell, Anne Killigrew “My Rare Wit Killing Sin”: *Poems of a Restoration Courtier*, p. 17.

I ask no more of heaven, to make him stay

Now every shape of his I'de drive away. (p. 76)<sup>30</sup>

This poem, which remains unpublished,<sup>31</sup> seems to present a personal situation, as one can imagine Wharton's feelings of frustration and futile efforts to keep her husband at home, free from scandal and at least with the appearance of being faithful. However, the potential image of a helpless wife praying to heaven for better treatment is quickly removed in the final line where the positions are reversed; Wharton will not just give up and accept her fate, rather she has made an active choice to repel him: 'Now every shape of his I'de drive away'. Furthermore, Wharton conflates the Ovidian and Homeric myths about Proteus, resulting in a mixing of gendered subjects and objects in the poem and offering an alternative interpretation of the virtue of constancy. The first myth, alluded to by 'Achilles sire', is the story in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* Book 11 where Proteus informs Peleus (the father of Achilles) how to stop Thetis from changing shape (she is a sea nymph and a shape shifter like the sea god Proteus). The result of this successful ensnaring as advised by Proteus is the rape of Thetis by Peleus which coincides with the conception of Achilles. Here is a prose translation of the incident in Ovid:

"O son of Aeacus, thou shalt yet gain the bride thou dost desire. Only do thou, when she lies within the rocky cave, deep sunk in sleep, bind her in her unconsciousness with snares and close-clinging thongs. And though

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<sup>30</sup> Wharton, 'Unchangeable' in manuscript, Yale Beinecke, MS Osborn b408, p. 76.

<sup>31</sup> Yale Beinecke MS Osborn b408 was purchased by the Yale Beinecke library in 2004 and was unknown to Greer and Hastings when they were working on *The Surviving Works of Anne Wharton* in the 1990s. The poems in the MS have not been published (although Greer informs me that she has prepared a second Wharton edition incorporating the poems). There are no scholarly publications about the MS.



she take a hundred lying forms, let her not escape thee, but hold her close, whatever she may be, until she take again the form she had at first.”

(...) There scarce had Peleus well laid hold on her virgin limbs, when she began to assume new forms, until she perceived that she was held firmly bound and that her arms were pinioned wide. (book 11, lines 25-254; 260-63)<sup>32</sup>

This reveals how Wharton’s allusion twists her classical models. Firstly, as the one being made constant is a woman in the myth (and not a man as the later male pronouns in Wharton’s poem make clear) and secondly as the attempt to make constant is actually a rape (an inconstant act). In Wharton, the allusion then becomes combined with another related Proteus myth (from Homer’s *Odyssey* Book 4) in which Menelaus (with the advice of another sea nymph, Eidothea) ensnares Proteus himself. The deserted Greek hero forces Proteus to remain in one shape; he is not raped like Thetis but grows weary, and succumbs to Menelaus’ requests for information on how to escape the island he has become trapped on. This is a reversal of the previous myth, a point not lost on Ovid as he has Thetis comment on the help which Peleus must have received (‘Then at length she groaned and said: “‘Tis not without some god’s assistance that you conquer,”) in a way reminiscent of Proteus asking the question of Menelaus in Homer (‘Who of the gods, son of Atreus, took counsel with you that you might lie in wait for me, and take me against my will?’ (book

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<sup>32</sup> Frank Miller (ed.), *Ovid IV: Metamorphoses, Books IX-XV*, (Harvard: Harvard University Press, Loeb Classical Library, No. 4, 1916), pp. 138-139.

4, lines 462-3).<sup>33</sup> The ostensible image of Christian piety in the penultimate line of Wharton's poem then ('I ask no more of heaven, to make him stay') is actually an engagement with this mythic intertextuality, as Wharton's inability to make her own 'Proteus' constant is figured as a refusal of help from a manipulative godly assistant. By alluding to both versions of the myth, Wharton presents constancy as hypocritical and ironic; when Thetis is forced to be constant the result is rape and when Proteus is forced to be constant the result is merely the breaking of a silence, the forcing of information to help a traveller to return home.

The very next poem in the manuscript, 'The Inconstancy of Woman Kind' (p. 77), offers an alternative view of female constancy. Continuing the military imagery of the openings lines of 'Unchangeable', where the common trope 'that all harmes/ Are shun'd by Constancye's defencive armes' is unsettled, 'Aminta' is observed by the first person speaker of the following poem as struck by 'darts':

Rude sight broke fiercely from her heart,  
And seem'd to fly loves piercing darts;  
Which complain'd was enter'd there,  
And drove forth peace to let in care (p.77, lines 1-4).

The complainant Aminta responds to this threat by asserting her constancy, vowing to die rather than 'change' and submit to the impulses of love:

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<sup>33</sup> A.T. Murray and George Dimmock (eds.), *Homer Odyssey, Books I-XII* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, Loeb Classical Library, No. 104, 1916), p. 153.

Thus on her bed her fingers wrought  
 Love thou bright Object of my thought  
 Rather then Change I'll yield my breath  
 And crowne with constancy my death.  
 Thus to thy name I'll Alters raise,  
 And deck it with imortal praise (lines 9-14).

This refusal to become the changeable Proteus from the previous poem is presented as a recorded vow of words traced in sand, observed long enough for the verse to be quoted in the poem, but destined ultimately to be washed away:

There were her words, but who can trust  
 Word spoke by women, wrote in dust  
 The inconstant tide of womans love  
 Will soon those monuments remove  
 The streams have washed away the sand  
 And her false heart directs her hand. (lines 15-20)

These closing 6 lines undermine the vow as Aminta's words are literally removed. The constancy of written verse as literary monument is altered by the inconstant tide just as a woman's sexual constancy is undermined by her 'false heart'. Though one could argue that the generalisation of 'women' in these lines has a misogynist emphasis, recalling the licentious image of notorious women at court, there is also a potential desirability in the empowering action of erasure. By using Aminta's own feminine 'inconstant tide' and 'false heart', she is able to trick and deceive, shifting the interpretation of her words and altering her shape like a Proteus. There is a

kind of manipulatory power that Betty Felton and Frances Jennings did not have with their verses; here a woman has the ability to say one thing and mean another.

In personal correspondence, Germaine Greer has suggested to me the possibility that these two poems ('Unchangeable' and 'The Inconstancy of Woman Kind') 'might be remains of a contest between members of her circle to write *bouts rimés* on a theme, but they may not be from her hand.'<sup>34</sup> This is certainly a possibility, given that the two poems are a variation on a theme and that the manuscript does seem to have a collecting instinct as it includes a poem written by Edmund Waller. It should be pointed out though, that in the case of the Waller poem, the title in the manuscript does make it explicit that the poem is not by Wharton: 'Of Divine Poesy by Mr Waller 2 Canto's Occasioned upon sight of the 53d Chapter of Isaiah turnend into Verse by Mrs Wharton'.

For me, the 'Unchangeable' and 'The Inconstancy of Woman Kind' poems bear the hallmarks of Wharton. Firstly, the choice of the Proteus myth in 'Unchangeable' links closely and intertextually with Wharton's Ovidian complaint poems, and particularly the choice of 'Penelope to Ulysses' for translation. The Homeric version of the Proteus myth is narrated within the epic by Menelaus when he is questioned about Ulysses' whereabouts by Telemachus, an episode which is included in the *Penelope to Ulysses* epistle

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<sup>34</sup> Germaine Greer, personal correspondence with Katie Smith, 11th June 2013.

(at line 65).<sup>35</sup> In general, the two poems fit well with Wharton's Ovidian complaint poems which they are placed together with in the second half of the Osborn manuscript. The breaking of promises and the changeability of lovers are recurrent themes in Wharton's complaint verse. The volta of the closing lines of 'The Inconstancy of Woman Kind', for example, chimes with that in Wharton's 'Melpomene against Complaint' (the authorship of which is confirmed by its publication as 'To Melpomene against Complaint. By the same Author' in *A Collection of Poems By Several Hands* (1693)). In this poem, Wharton's call for Melpomene to stop inspiring complaint poems is undermined in the final three lines: 'But if thou wilt not, since thy Harp is strung,/ Attend a while, and, like a dying Swan,/ My latest Accents shall be sweetly sung.' (p. 65) The way that expectations are altered so that, at the last, the reader realises that this poem 'against complaint' is actually a complaint itself, is emblematic of the rhetorical playfulness in Wharton's proclivity for translation, adaptation and poetic variations on a form or theme.

### **Unanswered letters of complaint**

This experimental and manipulatory aspect of her poetry is also present in her personal correspondence with her husband, Tom Wharton. There are seven surviving autograph letters from Anne to her husband when she was in France in 1681 receiving treatment for a particularly bad bout of illness. Her husband's neglect is revealed in these letters, along with the potential difference between the expectations of Anne as an aristocratic wife and her

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<sup>35</sup> Grant Showerman, *Heroides and Amores* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, Loeb Classical Library, 1977), pp. 14-15, line 65: *misimus et Sparten; Sparte quoque nescia veri* ('We have sent to Sparta, too; Sparta also could tell us nothing true').

instincts to speak out and follow her own path, instincts which we also see in her poetry.

In one letter for example, she opens with a complaint about the lack of replies she receives: ‘Tho I never heare from you, I can not giue over the custom of writing to you euery post, but I think I may complain a little of you for it’. She proceeds in the letter to explain a disagreement she had with her regular congregation in France over changing her choice of church for the Easter day service. The episode left her very angry: ‘and can hardly keep my self from being rude, which for your sake I would auoide It not becoming one who hath the Honour of being your obedient wife and humble seruant Anne Wharton’.<sup>36</sup> She reveals her instinct to be forthright, ‘rude’ even, in defending herself from what she sees as unfair criticism (she had a perfectly logical reason for choosing another service) and yet she conforms to her wifely expectations. She draws critical attention to the convention and praises her own restraint.

Throughout the letters are rebukes of her husband for his lack of replies and also graphic details about her afflictions and treatments. Yet, her complaints are often made in good humour, softened by juxtaposition to a more mundane or humorous story. The letter sent on 11<sup>th</sup> May for example (having received no reply to the previous one), on the one hand makes horrifically realistic and material the rhetorical trope we get in the *Heroides* (where the complainants are crying, bleeding or trembling as they hold the

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<sup>36</sup> Greer and Selina Hastings (eds.), *The Surviving Works of Anne Wharton*, p. 68, quoting British Library MS Add. 4,162, f. 234.

pen) but on the other is presented in such a way as if it were written to entertain. Here is the letter in full:

To begin a letter orderly, and discreetly, I must first begg your pardon for writing so often and then make an excuse for saying so little as I shall be now forsed to doe, being iust lett blood and not well able to stir my arm, this is orderly, but I think 'tis enough of Both, I will then goe on to tell you that I was yesterday at St Garmans which is not worth seeing, and fell down on the topp of the house and strained my legg which is not worth telling and conclude with a thing to you as insignificant as eather which is not worth your remembering that I will be for euer

Your most obedient humble sarvant

Anne Wharton

Pray send me som neuse I know note but that Mrs H's nose is redd and her Husbands blew, my Docr forbis me wine and lett me drink nothing but barly water and licorish and Improve daly in patience. If I writ not this you'd think me drunck for the rest.<sup>37</sup>

The self-conscious nature of Wharton's epistle is revealed by her sprezzatura style and repeated reflections on her own letter-writing practice, identified as paradoxical from the start as she writes 'so often' but says 'so little'. This is epitomised in the final reflection of the post script, assuring her husband that her letter is not the early modern equivalent of a drunken text message to be

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<sup>37</sup> Greer and Selina Hastings (eds.), *The Surviving Works of Anne Wharton*, p. 71.

regretted the next morning. She anticipates the reading of her letter (a reading, judging by the tardy or non-responses of Tom, which might never happen) in this extreme form of mock-modesty. Wharton disguises details of complaint and suffering in an incidental piece, both actualising the position of an abandoned and suffering Ovidian heroine but also maintaining the rhetorical distance akin to that of a poet. She reveals her true complaint by not specifically saying it.

Just so, in Wharton's final letter to her husband from France, writing allows her desires and complaints to be expressed while she ultimately presents herself as submitting to her husband's commands. She accepts his call for her to return to England rather than progressing south to sunny Montpellier (a request first expressed in letters from her grandmother the Countess of Rochester who Wharton says 'I find is very impatient to hue me home againe'). Yet she ensures to explain why this is not a sensible idea:

I was yesterday (at parting with you) in more troble Then I ether did, or was willing to shew, but methink it looks les like hipocrysie to tell it att this distance, and therefore I would have you now believe it. I knew not what I thought for a quarter of an hower and could not answer to eny thing you said. Give me leave therefore to do it now; when I said I had a mind to goe to Montpelier you said you loved no thing so well as me If I thoght that I should be in england (if possible) tomorow. But tho I should, you cant upon consideration desire it.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Greer and Selina Hastings (eds.), *The Surviving Works of Anne Wharton*, p. 73.



Wharton proceeds to explain how the cold of the winter will surely make her ill again, leading possibly to death, which, she says 'I am not yet meloncoly enough to beleive you would be pleased with'. This comment recalls an incident in the first surviving letter where Wharton describes a particularly violent fit she had: 'the other day, in a fitt, I almost beat my branes out against the pauements and found the want of bords, for a little more and it had eased you of the inconvenience of a wife'. Death must have been a very real fear; only months before her friend Mrs Loftus had 'taken the Long iurney' and indeed reading the letters now we have the bitter dramatic irony of knowing that Wharton would die within four years of returning to England, aged just 26. The inclusion of the threat of illness and death is very real and yet the way that Wharton writes about the possibility either in a light and humorous vein or, as she says, at a 'distance', as part of a logical argument destined to fail, normalises the threat and opens up the more sinister possibility that her husband really would prefer her to be dead.<sup>39</sup> Wharton plays with epistolary conventions, making it her right to complain and ultimately showing the effort she is making to conform to expectations.

In the letters, Wharton never seems to desire the return of her husband in person despite the frequent notes about his lack of replies, and actually seems to want to remain separated from him in France. Her wish to remain in France was perhaps based on medical advice or perhaps because she was enjoying her time there. Even the tortuous journey across the English Channel

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<sup>39</sup> Indeed, this possibility seemed to be the opinion of family friends when Wharton was dying in September 1685. John Stewkley and Lady Gardiner write respectively that 'If Mrs Wharton be dead, I am sorry for it, but her husband will be no Looser by her death, nor I believ will not breake his heart with mourning' and 'I am sorry mrs whorton is so dangarously ill bit gis it will not grive her husband'. See Greer and Selina Hastings (eds.), *The Surviving Works of Anne Wharton*, p. 96.

could be endured by Wharton and it allowed her opportunity to create a set piece poem which is reminiscent of Ovid's *Tristia*. In her poem 'On the storme betweene Gravesend and Dieppe made at that time', the stormy sea, entrapping and 'betraying' the boat, triggers a comparison to a false lover: 'such is the love of impious men, where e're/ their cruel kindness lights, 'tis to ensnare' (lines 5-6, p. 74).<sup>40</sup> This couplet also recalls the ensnaring constancy of the sea god Proteus in Wharton's poem 'Unchangeable'. The pathetic fallacy of the storm overtakes her, reflected by marine metaphors which make clear the speaker's gendered position as the feminine boat being attacked by the stormy sea: 'I, toss'd in tedious Storms of troubled Thought... My Anchor Hope... Rocks of sad Despair... Seas of Grief'. The potential image of a female crying in fear built up in these lines however, is revealed not to be the case at line 11: 'Mistaken Seamen prais'd my fearless Mind'. Wharton tricks those men aboard with an outward appearance of stoicism and with the appeasing comfort of 'approaching death' which is a common Christian piety. The reality of the situation is quite different and Wharton can express this inner turmoil in verse by comparing her position to that of a betrayed Ovidian complainant.

### **Literary correspondences and manuscript circulation**

Though abroad and unwell, Wharton was productive in poetic composition whilst in France, at least writing the 'Lamentations of Jeremiah', of which she sent a copy to the nonconformist divine Samuel Clarke on her return to

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<sup>40</sup> Osborn B408 manuscript.

Winchendon.<sup>41</sup> Such correspondences allowed Wharton to remain connected and to create a body of work which could bring her literary recognition and a possible future fame. During one poem addressed to Edmund Waller, part of a group of response poems between the two, Wharton ultimately reflects on her own literary practice:

This forces me with grateful thanks to own,  
I'm prais'd by one, whose lines such skill have shown,  
That I now ought to prize what he esteems,  
and think there is some worth in my dull rhymes. ('From Mrs  
Wharton', lines 36-39)<sup>42</sup>

She recognises the immortalising and memorialising ability of verse: 'Envy I long have scorn'd but now defie,/ Since rais'd by you to immortality;/ Once mention'd in your verse, I cannot die.' ('To Mr Waller', lines 7-9)<sup>43</sup> These poems by Wharton and Waller appear foregrounded at the beginning of the 1688 publication of Edward Young's *The Idea of Christian Love being a translation, at the instance of Mr. Waller*, apparently due to a printing error: 'Thro the Printer's Mistake, the Verses from pag. vii. are misplac'd; having been intended to come in at the end'.

The circulation of poems in manuscript and via letters is not unusual for either male or female poets at the time. Carol Barash has written about the female literary circle which grew around Mary of Modena, Duchess of York,

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<sup>41</sup> See Greer and Selina Hastings (eds.), *The Surviving Works of Anne Wharton*, p. 315: 'According to the author of the 'Anne Wharton' entry in the General Dictionary (x, 128-9), 'a note prefixed to the original manuscript' indicated that the paraphrase 'was begun March the 21<sup>st</sup> 1680-1, and ended April the 2d following'.

<sup>42</sup> Greer and Selina Hastings (eds.), *The Surviving Works of Anne Wharton*, p. 187.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 182.

in the 1670s and 1680s.<sup>44</sup> Anne Killigrew is an example of one of her Maids of Honour who wrote and circulated poetry and whose self-penned epitaph, ‘And for a monument, I leave my Verse’, was realised with the posthumous publication of her poetry (an edition made famous by Dryden’s opening Ode ‘To the Pious Memory Of the Accomplisht Young Lady Mrs Anne Killigrew, Excellent in the two Sister-Acts of Poesie, and Painting’).

Other literary coteries and correspondence groups included women too. Dustin Griffin describes such practices as ‘loose epistolary networks in which writers (both male and female) adopted pseudonyms, exchanged or answered each other’s poems, and sometimes appeared jointly in manuscript collections or even printed works.’<sup>45</sup> One example Griffin gives is Lady Mary Chudleigh who ‘exchanged compliments with Elizabeth Thomas and Mary Astell, and had links to both Dryden and the poet John Norris of Bemerton’.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, Dryden writes in a letter to Jacob Tonson that Chudleigh’s verses had made their way to him and he then passed them onto others for consideration: ‘Mr Tonson, you were no sooner gone, but I felt in my pocket, and found my Lady Chudleighs verses; which this afternoon I gave Mr Walsh to read in the Coffee house’.<sup>47</sup> It should be noted that Chudleigh, whose maiden name was Mary Lee, also composed a poem cataloguing both classical and vernacular poets, in which she includes reflections on Ovid’s *Heroides*.

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<sup>44</sup> Carol Barash, *English Women’s Poetry, 1649-1714: Politics, Community, and Linguistic Authority* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 149-72.

<sup>45</sup> Dustin Griffin, *Authorship in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Delaware: University of Delaware Press, 2013), p. 67.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>47</sup> Dryden in Charles Ward (ed.), *The Letters of John Dryden with Letters Addressed to Him*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1942), letter 50, p. 98.

Furthermore, she wrote several epistles which appear in the *Whartoniana* (1727) volume, a collection of Wharton family (and friends') verse in which several of Anne Wharton's poems are also printed.<sup>48</sup> It seems that these particular verses of Chudleigh were commending Dryden's *Aeneid* ('To Mr. Dryden, on his excellent Translation of Virgil'). Chudleigh must have been one of those who Dryden saw fit to give a copy of his translation pre-publication, as he explains in another letter to Tonson: 'Mr Tonson, Tis now three dayes since I have ended the fourth Eneid; and I am this Morning beginning to transcribe it; as you may do afterwards; for I am willing some few of my Friends may see it; and shall give leave to you, to shew your transcription to some others, whose names I will tell you.'<sup>49</sup> This letter gives a good insight into how poems were passed around in manuscript to a select group of 'friends' before being published, demonstrating how manuscript and print in this period often are concomitant.

Wharton takes part in a similar verse exchange process. As Griffin notes, she 'corresponded with Gilbert Burnet (future Bishop of Salisbury), exchanged verses with Aphra Behn... [and] her commendatory poem on her uncle was itself commended in poems by Waller and others'.<sup>50</sup> Several of Wharton's poems are addressed or responding to others, and many of them are later published, as we have seen with the six Waller-Wharton poems. She receives comments, criticism, approval, praise (either in letter or verse

<sup>48</sup> *Whartoniana or Miscellanies in verse and prose by the Wharton family (...)* (London: 1727). It is possible, although I have found no direct evidence, that Anne Wharton and Mary Chudleigh knew each other.

<sup>49</sup> Dryden's *Works of Virgil* was not published till 1697 and this letter was written in 1692. Dryden began work on his translation of Virgil in 1680. See Margaret Ezell (ed.), *The Poems and Prose and Prose of Lady Chudleigh* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 70-72.

<sup>50</sup> Griffin, *Authorship in the Long Eighteenth Century*, p. 67.

response form) and becomes part of the kind of poetic exchanges which can be considered, to borrow Ezell's term, 'social authorship' ('the serious pursuit of literary excellence shared with a select audience of readers using the medium of circulating handwritten copies').<sup>51</sup> This term is particularly apt when applied to Wharton as it gives the sense that her poems, even though many are addressed or responding to others, are not merely incidental but have a literary aspiration.

The people who are part of Wharton's network can be seen to fall into two overlapping groups. Firstly, there are religious figures, namely Samuel Clarke and Gilbert Burnet, both of whom were connected to her husband.<sup>52</sup> Secondly, there are poets, such as Edmund Waller, William Atwood, Robert Wolseley and Aphra Behn. The two groups are linked in that Burnet, for example, sent Wharton's poems onto others – he showed Wharton's paraphrase of Isaiah 53 to Waller (which in turn inspired Waller's 'Of Divine Poesy') and on 9 January 1683 wrote: 'I send them about to all my female friends who know not what to think on you'.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, Rochester has a connection both to Burnet (the Whig priest claimed responsibility for the Earl's deathbed conversion, as recorded in his *Some Passages of the Life and Death of John, Earl of Rochester* (1680)) and the poets, demonstrated through the bringing together of Wharton, Wolseley and Behn in the posthumous edition and performance of Rochester's *Valentinian*. Despite these cross-

<sup>51</sup> Ezell, Anne Killigrew "My Rare Wit Killing Sin": *Poems of a Restoration Courtier*, p. 32.

<sup>52</sup> Kent Clarke informs us that Burnet was to become a staunch political ally of Tom Wharton; also that Samuel Clarke, a nonconformist who occasionally preached at Winchendon, was Tom Wharton's 'agent' when he was looking for a wife. See Kent Clarke, 'Marriage A La Mode', *California Institute of Technology, Humanities Working Paper*, 142 (1990), p. 2.

<sup>53</sup> Burnet in edition *Letters between the Rev James Granger Letters between the Rev. James Granger... and many of the most eminent literary men of his time*, (London: Nichols and son, 1805), p. 243.

overs, there were distinct differences between the kinds of people she communicated with, differences which show Wharton's need to balance responsibilities and desires.

There were inevitable conflicts between Wharton's choices. Mary Ann O'Donnell, in discussing Behn's contribution to Rochester's *Valentinian*, notes:

While Wolseley was on friendly terms with Anne Wharton, his relationship with the notorious Wharton brothers, especially William, reached the level of angry lampooning by 1687. Eight of the poems in Bodleian MS Firth c.16<sup>54</sup> illustrate Behn's keen interest in the literary battles of Robert Wolseley and William Wharton. The war of words ended in Wharton's death a week after he was wounded by Wolseley in a duel in 1685.<sup>55</sup>

The precise reason for the animosity between Wolseley and the Wharton brothers is not clear, but is likely to stem from political differences. Anne Wharton's loyalties to Rochester and the poetic circles related to him were often at odds with her expected position as a dutiful and devout wife to Tom Wharton. Another key example of conflicts can be seen in how both Clarke

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<sup>54</sup> Bodleian MS Firth C.16 is described on the Perdita website as 'A verse miscellany that appears to have been compiled and transcribed by Aphra Behn and several other unidentified people... The original manuscript consists of 166 leaves with a paper cover (now rebound and with additional endpapers). A title-page identifies the collection as 'Astrea's Booke for Songs and Satyr's', and provides the date '1688' (corrected from '1686' and '1685'). Pages 1-305 comprise 128 poems dating from between 1682 and 1689, transcribed in two dominant and up to four subsidiary hands'.

<sup>55</sup> Mary Ann O'Donnell, 'Private jottings, public utterances', in Todd (ed.), *Aphra Behn Studies*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 285-309 (p. 208). O'Donnell also suggests here that Wolseley 'may have been the link between the two women (Behn and Wharton) at this time'.

and Burnet were vocal in their warnings to Wharton about her non-religious verse.

Clarke's letter to Wharton on 23 July 1681, responding to his receipt of the *Lamentations of Jeremiah* paraphrase she wrote while in France, adds a warning to his praise of her verse:

Yet I must further add that I am chiefly pleas'd with the Subject you have chosen, and that you lay out your Time and imploy your thoughts so much on the holy, and Divinely inspired Oracles. That is it Madam, which wil turn to a better account, and afford more comfortable reflections at a dying hour, than conversing with what belongs only to, or is fit for the Theater: Such things tend only to fil that noble Soul of yours with froth, which was made for better things.<sup>56</sup>

Clarke could be referring specifically here to Wharton's play *Love's Martyr* (helping us to date the dramatic work which seems never to have been performed or published) or more generally to her Ovidian poetry. Burnet similarly warns Wharton against such secular poetic endeavours, lamenting in one letter that 'if she would only give the same care to religion that she gave to her poetry, he added later, he would consider her "the brightest piece of God's workmanship" he ever saw'.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, Wharton's poetic exchange with Aphra Behn did not go unnoticed by Burnet: 'Some of Mrs. Behn's songs are very tender; but she is so abominably vile a woman, and rallies not only all Religion, but all virtue in so odious and obscene a manner, that I am ...

<sup>56</sup> Greer and Hastings (eds.), *The Surviving Works of Anne Wharton*, p. 74, quoting Bod MS Rawl.lett.53, ff. 351-2.

<sup>57</sup> Quoted in Kent Clarke, 'Outrages', *California Institute of Technology, Humanities Working Paper 161* (1995), p. 8.



heartily sorry she has writ anything in your commendation ... The praises of such as she is are as great reproaches as yours are blessings.'<sup>58</sup> Burnet's initial praise of Behn's work as 'tender' creates a distinction between poetry and the poet. Though 'tender' can be a positive description, referring to good poetry, it can quickly turn to the negative when the subject matter and the 'abominably vile' woman writer herself are not seen to be fitting to 'Religion' and 'virtue'.

### **Aphra Behn and Anne Wharton in communication**

Despite these disapproving warnings, Wharton's poetry shows that Behn was both intriguing and influential on her. Wharton and Behn create an elegiac web of poems triggered by the early death of John Wilmot 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Rochester. Elegies on the Earl's death lead to a further pair of poetic correspondences between the women.<sup>59</sup> In her responding poem 'To Mrs A Behn, On What she Writ of the Earl of Rochester', Wharton presents herself as inspired to write by Behn with a triple rhyme: 'It is this Flight of yours excites my Art,/ Weak as it is, to take your Muse's part,/ and pay loud thanks back from my bleeding Heart.' (lines 11-13) When Rochester dies, it is Behn who has the potential to fill the void. Wharton compliments Behn, describing her as a poet worthy of the laurel and one who achieves this literary recognition in life: 'few living poets may the laurel claim,/ Most pass thro' death, to reach at living fame' (line 3). Just so, Rochester has achieved this and also retains his claim to the laurel *post mortem* with the help of Behn's elegies: 'you prais'd him living, whom you dead bemoan,/ and now your tears afresh his laurel

<sup>58</sup> Greer and Hastings (eds.), *The Surviving Works of Anne Wharton*, p. 290.

<sup>59</sup> Wharton, 'Elegie on John Earle of Rochester'; Behn, 'On the Death of the late Earl of Rochester' (1685); Wharton, 'To Mrs A Behn, On What she Writ of the Earl of Rochester'; Behn, 'To Mrs W. On her excellent verses (writ in praise of some I had made on the Earl of Rochester). Written in a fit of sickness'.

crown' (line 9). This refers back to the allusion to Daphne (synonymous with the laurel of poets) by Wharton in her initial elegy on Rochester:

Since Daphney prostituted hath her tree  
 We well may scorn the gift of Poetry.  
 Then she was his alone, constant and fair  
 And taught us all desire and all despair  
 But now like other Beauties oft enjoy'd  
 Her charmes are gone and all her Lovers cloy'd  
 Great was thy losse which thou cans't n'ere express  
 Nor was th'insensible dull Nations lesse (lines 22-29)

This allusion to the Daphne myth in book one of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* reminds us of the sexual violence at the heart of Daphne's change into a laurel tree and the irony of her 'constant and fair' link to Apollo. Rather like Thetis as we have seen above, Daphne's constancy comes as the result of a rape (or at least a near-rape experience, depending on how one interprets Ovidian Apollo's continued advances when Daphne is a tree). The poetic inspiration which comes from the laurel is expressed in terms which recall this side of myth, with the negative experience of Daphne in 'despair' as the object of rape being emphasised: 'And taught us all desire and all despair'. Now that Rochester is dead, the charms of Daphne are said to be lost 'like other Beauties', lowering the status of the laurel to an over-sexed 'beauty' of court. Now Rochester, in the place of Apollo, has gone, the laurel is open to all.

The rather uncomfortable pairing of poetry with 'Daphney prostituted' can result in poetry that is too close to the threatening 'desire' which the

Daphne story exemplifies. Hence Wharton offers a warning to Behn, comparing her to Sappho, who is seen as a more dangerous model for female literary productivity than Daphne:

Tho' she to Honour gave a fatal wound,  
 employ your hand to raise it from the ground.  
 Right its wrong'd cause with your inticing strain,  
 its ruin'd temples try to build again.  
 Scorn meaner theams, declining low desire,  
 And bid your muse maintain a vestal fire.  
 If you do this, what glory will insue,  
 To all our sex, to Poesie, and you?  
 Write on, and may your numbers ever flow,  
 soft as the wishes that I make for you. (lines 18-27)

The call for Behn to 'Scorn meaner theams, declining low desire' seems to replicate the advice which Burnet gives to Wharton about Behn. Yet Burnet's initial praise of Behn's songs as 'tender', before he condemns her for her loose morals, finds a different kind of parallel with Wharton's final call for Behn to 'write on'. Specifically, Wharton asks that her verse be 'soft': 'Write on, and may your numbers ever flow,/ soft as the wishes that I make for you'. The use of 'soft' here recalls Burnet's 'tender', but as well as pointing to a quality of feminine sensibility which Burnet alludes to, 'soft' also naturally suggests

associations with love and desire. Just so, allusions to 'Vestal Fire' can simultaneously provoke images of a secretive sexuality.<sup>60</sup>

Behn's response poem 'To Mrs W.' takes up this request for a 'soft' poetics by describing Rochester's own poetry in the very same terms:

It did advance, and with a Generous Look,  
To me Addrest, to worthless me it spoke:  
With the same wonted Grace my Muse it prais'd,  
With the same Goodness did my Faults Correct:  
And Careful of the Fame himself first rais'd,  
Obligingly it School'd my loose Neglect.  
The soft, the moving Accents soon I knew  
The gentle Voice made up of Harmony (lines 33-40)<sup>61</sup>

Behn responds to her potential criticism by Wharton with an allusion to the very poetry which was inspiring to both of them as 'soft... moving Accents' and 'gentle Voice'. The ghost of Rochester, which also functions as a representative of Wharton herself (she is called 'the mighty soul of Rochester revived'), is said to have 'School'd my loose Neglect', which is clearly a reference to Wharton's moral advice in her previous poem to Behn. Just as 'soft' and 'gentle' can have both sexual and literary implications, so can a phrase like 'loose Neglect'. Positioned as the opposite of 'Harmony' here, 'loose neglect' can be interpreted as a self-reflexive comment on Behn's own

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<sup>60</sup> Often vestal virgins were punished, by burial alive, for their unchastity. Cf. Statius, *Silvae*, 1.1.36-7.

<sup>61</sup> Greer and Hastings (eds.), *The Surviving Works of Anne Wharton*, pp. 283-285.

poetic practice. As we have seen in chapter 4 for example, Behn's 'Oenone to Paris' epistle is famously loose in translatory methodology.

Wharton's own *Heroides* translation, 'Penelope to Ulysses', can be similarly described, adding many ideas not in the original Latin. As an example of this looseness, at line 15 of Wharton's translation, she uses the word 'tender' to economically express the delaying tactics of Penelope's shroud (lines 9-10 in the original): 'My tender hands with weaving would not tire'.<sup>62</sup> The idea is expanded in the following line of the rhyming couplet: 'nor my soft thoughts with unobtained desire'. This is not in the Latin text and allows an erotic sense to be implied, with the potential sexuality of this night time handiwork,<sup>63</sup> otherwise masked by traditional associations of weaving with chastity,<sup>64</sup> brought to the forefront by the assimilation of 'tender hands' with 'soft thoughts' and 'weaving' with 'unobtained desire'. Wharton's Penelope, expanding the synecdoche 'viduas' in the Latin original, reveals a sense of bitter unfulfillment and sexual frustration prompted by her endless weaving and unweaving. It should be noted that Thomas Rymer's translation of the same epistle (juxtaposed to Wharton's in the 1712 edition of *Ovid's Epistles*) adds no such new ideas and stays quite close to the sense of the Latin: 'Nor should this pains to pass the ev'ning take,/ And work, and weave, ev'n till

<sup>62</sup> Showerman (ed.) and trans, *Ovid: Heroides, Amores*: 'nor would now be left alone complaining of slowly passing days; nor would the hanging web be wearying now my widowed hands as I seek to beguile the hours of spacious night.', p. 11.

<sup>63</sup> Derrida explains this association, see Linda Kauffman, *Discourses of Desire: Gender, Genre, and Epistolary Fictions*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1986), p.v57.

<sup>64</sup> See Peter Knox, *Ovid Heroides: Select Epistles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 91: 'A Roman sensibility would instantly have responded to this depiction of a faithful wife at her loom, a scene which typified for them all the essential feminine virtues'.

my fingers ake.’ (p. 154)<sup>65</sup> In Rymer, to ‘weave’ becomes a mere conventional glance to the quotidian tasks of a housewife.

Wharton then, with her poetic correspondence with Behn, is revealing the conflict at the heart of her existence. Though ostensibly far removed from a woman like Behn, who in turn feels like she must make only an oblique reference to Wharton in her titles, presumably out of respect for a woman of aristocratic status, Wharton shares much of Behn’s poetic desire and inspiration. Ultimately, she asks Behn to ‘write on’. The final lines of Behn’s elegy on Rochester show the inevitable pairing of love and poetry, comparing the poet’s achievement of the laurel with Ovid’s pursuit of Julia:

In love and verse his Ovid he’d out-done,  
And all his laurels, and his Julia won.  
Mourn, mourn, unhappy world, his loss deplore,  
The great, the charming Strephon is no more (lines 82-85)<sup>66</sup>

This is another mixed allusion to the Daphne-Apollo myth but it also compares Rochester to Ovid and specifically recalls the Roman poet’s fictional relationship with Julia. This also works as a hidden reference to Wharton’s play *Love’s Matryr* which, as we have seen in the previous chapter, takes Ovid and Julia as its subjects, just as Behn also writes a *Heroides*-inspired poem

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<sup>65</sup> Thomas Rymer, *Penelope to Ulysses*, in John Dryden, *Ovid's epistles translated by several hands* (1712).

<sup>66</sup> Janet Todd (ed.), *The Works of Aphra Behn, Vol. 1*, (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2000-2001), p. 164.

from Ovid to Julia.<sup>67</sup> Wharton's choice to write female-voiced complaint poems in the Ovidian tradition connects her to both the 'loose' verse of Behn and the erotic lyrics of Rochester.

Some critics have found it tempting to label the interactions of the three in the Wharton-Behn Rochester elegies as 'a kind of literary love-triangle'.<sup>68</sup> Though this comment sits rather too closely to the kind of gossip promoted by Goodwin Wharton, it does highlight the literary connection between the three. Behn's second poem of the group in particular ('To Mrs W. On her excellent verses (writ in praise of some I had made on the Earl of Rochester). Written in a fit of sickness') is significant in suggesting that Rochester and Behn had a close literary relationship, with Rochester 'schooling' and 'raising' Behn in poetry just as Wharton describes him as her 'guide': 'He taught thy infant-muse the art betimes' and 'civilized the rude and taught the young'. It also proves that Behn and Wharton must have either moved in the same manuscript circles or have been in direct epistolary communication, as Behn's elegy on Rochester was not printed until 1685. As well as the obvious connections between Wharton and her uncle Rochester, there is a possibility that they could have written together: a manuscript of some of Rochester's incidental verse at Longleat has 'Mrs Whorton' written in the margin next to one of a pair of ditties ('Give me leave to rail at you'), which I suggest could evidence Wharton's involvements in the kinds of *bouts rimés* which Harold Love says

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<sup>67</sup> It is just possible, given the evidence for manuscript communication between the two and their mutual involvement in the posthumous production of Rochester's *Valentinian*, that Behn could have had a hand in Wharton's play *Love's Martyr*.

<sup>68</sup> James Turner, *Schooling Sex: Libertine Literature and Erotic Education in Italy, France, and England 1534-1685* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 375.

that Rochester took part in with his wife.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, Behn and Rochester were involved in several cases of mistaken identity (whether by error or design); three of Behn's poems, 'On a Juniper Tree, cut down to make Busks', 'The Disappointment', and 'On the death of Mr Grinhil, the famous painter' were attributed to Rochester by appearing in his *Poems on Several Occasions* (1680).

### **Sappho in print and manuscript**

Behn and Wharton have a further connection in the appearance of a Sappho poem in print. The poem 'Verses made by Sapho done from the Greek by Boyleau and from the French by a Lady of Quality' was included in Behn's miscellany of 1685, a volume of poems and translations by Behn and Rochester amongst others.<sup>70</sup> I can now be attribute this anonymous poem to Wharton owing to the appearance of the poem (with variations) in the Osborn b408 manuscript of Wharton's verse. This is yet another indicator then, of Wharton and Behn's literary communication, as Behn would need access to Wharton's poems to include this in her printed collection. Greer considers the version of the same poem which appears in the Osborn manuscript, 'Sapho to Phaon Englished out of Boyleau', as the most interesting thing in the manuscript.<sup>71</sup> The variations between the two versions in print and manuscript respectively give two very different interpretations of the Sappho poem.

The original Sappho poem is the famous lyric 31 which survives in Greek owing to it being quoted by Longinus in his 'On the Sublime'. It begins

<sup>69</sup> See Love, *The Works of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester*, p. 356 (notes).

<sup>70</sup> Behn, *Miscellany, Being a Collection of Poems by Several Hands* (London: J. Hindmarsh, 1685).

<sup>71</sup> Greer, personal correspondance.



'*phainetai moi*' ('he seems to me') and is later imitated by the Roman poet Catullus in his poem 51 ('*Ille mi par esse deo videtur*'). The first English translation of Longinus by John Hall in 1652<sup>72</sup> was followed by Boileau's French translation in 1674 in a volume which was to become very popular both in France and England.<sup>73</sup> Amongst others, Mary Wortley Montagu owned a copy of Boileau's volume which still survives in her library at Sandon Hall. Boileau's translation of Sappho, which is clearly the one which Wharton is using as specified in both titles, is close to the Greek original. It reveals the gender of Sappho's lover as female and Sappho's rival as male respectively. This pattern is followed in the printed version of Wharton's poem in Behn's miscellany, where there is also an expanded reflection in the second stanza on the comparison between heavenly and earthly joys:

Happy, who near you, sigh for you alone  
 Who hears you speake to whom you smile upon,  
 You might, for this, disdain a starry throne  
  
 To this compar's the Heav'nly Bliss they prove,  
 No envy raises; for the Powers a Love  
 Ne'er tasted Joys, compar'd to such above. (lines 1-6, pp. 212-213)

Yet in the manuscript version, as well as this second stanza not being present and several other variations in word order, these gendered identifications change. The first stanza alters at the third line:

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<sup>72</sup> John Hall, *Peri hypsous, or Dionysius Longinus of the height of eloquence*, (London: Roger Daniel, 1652).

<sup>73</sup> Boileau, *Oeuvres Diverses* (Paris, 1674).

Happy, who near you, sigh for you alone  
 Who hears you speake to whom you smile upon,  
 She might, for this, disdain a starry throne (lines 1-3, p. 92)

When we consider this in combination with the change in title to ‘Sappho to Phaon Englished out of Boyleau’, we can see that now the female speaker is addressing a male lover (Phaon) and has a female rival (‘she might’). This represents a hetero-normalisation of the homosexual Sappho tradition as represented by Boyleau’s poem. The alteration of title and the second person rival ‘you’ to feminine third person ‘she’ in the third line changes the relationship of Sappho to her lover from a homosexual to a heterosexual one.

It is possible that these alterations were made at the behest of, or even by, a publisher or editor as the poem was prepared for print.<sup>74</sup> However, it seems more likely to me that Wharton penned the two variations of the poem with different copy-texts used for the two surviving versions, in print and manuscript presentation copy respectively, which we have today. Indeed, many of Wharton’s other poems also exist in different sources with variations. Wharton’s manuscript Sappho poem shows the influence of the ‘Sappho to Phaon’ *Heroides* epistle on the poet when she is translating the ode. She is acutely aware that two different Sappho traditions exist, demonstrating the power of the translator or adapter in presenting Sappho one way or the other. Where satirists like Alexander Radcliffe can change Ovidian Sappho from the *Heroides* into a figure who finds satisfaction in relentless tribadism, Wharton can offer a version of Sappho’s erotic ode which puts the emphasis back on the

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<sup>74</sup> It is just possible that Behn could have been involved in these alterations. A paper by Gill Manning which she kindly shared with me mentions that this is an intriguing possibility.

male Phaon as abandoner and traitor. Wharton shows her classical learning and her knowledge of the traditions surrounding Sappho to relate the situation of ode 31 to the situation of the fictional Sappho in Ovid's *Heroides*.

The existence of these two versions of the Sappho poem is also important when we consider Wharton's literary communication with Behn. When Wharton advises Behn in her elegy response, 'May yours excel the Matchless Sappho's Name;/ May you have all her Wit, without her Shame' (line 16), we should not think that these sentiments mean the same thing as those expressed by Burnet or Waller (for example, Waller's reproach of Behn: 'If they should dye, who can the world forgive?/ Such Pious lines! When wanton Sappho's live' (lines 11-12)).<sup>75</sup> While she may seem to replicate her advisers' criticism of Behn in her elegy 'To Mrs A Behn, On What she Writ of the Earl of Rochester', Wharton also undermines this by her two translations of Sappho, one of which is printed (albeit unattributed) in Behn's own miscellany.<sup>76</sup> It is surely a double standard to insult or criticise Behn by calling her Sappho when Wharton puts herself into the voice of Sappho in a translation which required a close engagement from the poet, resulting, as it did, in two variants.

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<sup>75</sup> Edmund Waller, 'Of Devine Poesy. Two Cantos: Occasioned upon sight of the fifty thur'd Chapter of Isaiah turn'd into vers by Mrs Wharton', Greer and Hastings (eds.), *The Surviving Works of Anne Wharton*, pp. 286-290.

<sup>76</sup> It should also be noted that Behn herself was connected to a version of this Sappho ode. William Bowles's 'Sappho's Ode Out of Longinus', translated from the Greek, is (wrongly) ascribed to Behn in the collection *Chorus Poetarum* (1694). Perhaps Behn's oblique inclusion of Wharton's translation after the latter's death was in part to make the point that she and Wharton had much in common, both comparable to Sappho at least in their literary achievements.

### **Complaint in Osborn B408**

Wharton, ignoring the advice of Clarke and Burnet, experimented with a range of literary forms, from biblical paraphrase to theatre, classical translation, and creative Ovidian verse. It is striking how complaint dominates her *oeuvre*.

Most of her works have links to female-voiced complaint; from the Ovid-Julia subject of her play *Love's Martyr* to her choice of the 'Lamentations of Jeremiah' for her longest project of biblical paraphrase.<sup>77</sup> In the *Lamentations*, the complainant Jerusalem is gendered female (as the 'Argument' of chapter one, quoted by Wharton from the authorised version of the Bible, introduces: 'by reason of her Sin. 12. She Complaineth of her Grief'). The opening of the first chapter in the paraphrase by Wharton is highly reminiscent of Ovidian female-voiced complaint:

How doth the Mournful Widow'd City bow?

She that was once so great: Alas, how low?

Once fill'd with Joy, with Desolation now.

Tears on her Cheeks, and Sables on her Head;

She mourns her Lover's lost, and Comfort's Dead.

Alas, alas, lost City, where are those,

So proud once to be Friends, now turn'd her Foes? (lines 1-7).

Wharton adds direct exclamation, 'Alas, alas', and rhetorical questions to her translation, extending and shifting the allegory of Jerusalem as a widow. The loss of her 'lover' and the resultant death of 'comfort' for Jerusalem can be compared to Penelope in the *Heroides* translation where Wharton's heroine

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<sup>77</sup> Greer and Hastings (eds.), *The Surviving Works of Anne Wharton*, pp. 145-162.

decries the absence of Ulysses: ‘but all in vain, for day is night to me,/ nor day nor night brings comfort, only thee’ (lines 12-13). Jerusalem’s experience directly maps onto that of an Ovidian female complainant, emphasised by the repetition of words like ‘comfort’ in allied contexts of loss and desperation. Even in Wharton’s biblical poetry then, her choice of texts (e.g. the Lamentations, the Psalms and the Song of Solomon) and the shared discourse and themes create links to her Ovidian poems.

The spheres of religious suffering and love complaint find common ground in Wharton’s foundational discourse of ‘joy’, ‘hope’, ‘comfort’, and their opposites, such as ‘despair’, ‘grief’, and ‘fear’ which pervade her verse. The definitions of the words shift from poem to poem, from their use as a general philosophical or spiritual musing to their application to specific situations. The contrast of ‘joy’ with ‘desolation’ in the *Lamentations* extract above, for example, is an idea which is raised again and again in this biblical translation; the final couplet of ‘chapter 2’ has a similar exclamation: ‘All that was mine, alas! The Foe destroys,/ My Strength, my Help, my Hope, and all my Joys’ (lines 24-25). Throughout, the physical destruction of the City is amplified by the accompanying loss and destruction of these more human abstract qualities.

Yet these are very different kinds of ‘hope’ and ‘joy’ to those which Wharton’s Dido says are ‘destroyed’ in another female-voiced complaint translation, ‘A Paraphrase on the last speech of Dido in Virgil’s *Aeneas*’.<sup>78</sup> Here, very similar sentiments are expressed by Dido: ‘And last the bed which

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<sup>78</sup> Greer and Hastings (eds.), *The Surviving Works of Anne Wharton*, pp. 138-139.

every hope destroys/ The bed where borne and buried were her Joys' (lines 20-21). The destroy-joy rhyme is used again to emphasise the contrast between past and present, hopes and realities. The repetition of 'bed' helps to shift the discourse to a sexual definition where the absence of a lover is assimilated to the loss of sexual 'joy'.

Such definitions located in the erotic sphere of reference find further context in Wharton's *Penelope to Ulysses* translation. The repeated idea in Ovid's original that, from Penelope's nuanced point of view, the successful destruction of Troy by the Greeks after 10 long years was not in fact a positive outcome, reaches a climactic point at line 51. Ovid's Penelope declares that the famous walls of Troy still stand: *diruta sunt aliis, uni mihi Pergama restant* ('For others Pergamum has been brought low; for me alone it still stands' (line 51)).<sup>79</sup> Wharton turns this glimpse into the psyche of Penelope into a reflection which ends with a potential bargain – Troy for Ulysses:

But what remains for Victories past  
 I like that Citty still my hopes lye waste  
 your presence would my springing Joys renew;  
 Would Troy were glorious still so I had you. (lines 69-72)

Here, in an intertextual reversal of the *Lamentations* extended metaphor, Penelope is compared to a conquered city in her complaint. It is in particular her 'hopes' that are comparable in destruction to the city's, with the return of Ulysses the only remedy and the equivalent of Troy being 'glorious' once again. The result of that remedy for Penelope would be the conversion of her

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<sup>79</sup> Showerman (ed.) and trans, *Ovid: Heroides, Amores*, pp. 14-15.

wasted 'hopes' to 'springing joys'. These wished-for 'joys' increase the erotic potential of Penelope's complaint as Wharton shifts the longstanding traditional interpretation of Penelope as an emblem of constancy and chastity, both in antiquity and the Renaissance. Moreover, the 'Joyfull Dames' (those whose Grecian victor husbands have already returned, in contrast to Penelope's wandering Ulysses) are defined by Wharton in terms of the sexual fulfilment which the complainant herself desires. The single line in the Latin original, *narrantis coniunx pendet ab ore viri* ('the wife hangs on the tale that falls from her husband's lips' (line 30)),<sup>80</sup> is translated to a triple rhyme by Wharton: 'The joyfull wife from soft embraces now/ Will hardly time to hear these talks allow/ Forgets long absence and renews her vow' (lines 39-41). For these women, the 'soft thoughts with unobtained desire' which Wharton's Penelope experiences alone in her bed at the beginning of her epistolary complaint, are transformed into the actual joys of 'soft embraces' and vow renewal.

This kind of 'joy' is akin to the erotic discourse which pervades the poetry of Rochester and Behn. Their respective poems on impotence (Rochester's *The Imperfect Enjoyment* and Behn's *The Disappointment*) both contain images of unfulfilled ecstasy described in terms of a hoped-for orgasmic 'joy' cruelly taken away. Rochester's speaker addresses his own ill-performing phallus in a despairing yet parodic final four lines:

May'st thou ne'er piss, who did refuse to spend  
When all my joys did on false thee depend.

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<sup>80</sup> Showerman (ed) and trans, *Ovid: Heroides, Amores*, pp. 12-13.

And may ten thousand abler pricks agree

To do the wronged Corinna right for thee. (lines 69-72)

A similar fate is assigned to the swain in Behn's poem, where it appears to be a timing issue of 'too much love' too soon specified as the problem:

Ready to taste a *Thousand Joys*,

Thee too transported hapless Swain,

Found the vast *Pleasure* turn'd to Pain :

*Pleasure*, which too much Love destroys! (lines 71-74, p. 68)

Moreover, 'springing hopes' are synonymous with 'approaching joys' in another impotence situation in Behn's play *The Town Fop* (1676), where Bellamour laments:

Thou art that Winter storm, that nips my Bud,

All my young springing hopes, my gay desires,

The prospect of approaching joyes of Love,

Thou in a hapless minute hast took from me' (Act 3, scene 1)<sup>81</sup>

There are many other examples of this discourse of 'joy' and 'hope' used in an explicitly (failed) erotic context, especially in the Restoration verse of Rochester and Behn. We might think back, for example, to Rochester's call for Felton to grasp 'a Lover in pursuit of Joy' (line 7) or Behn's account of the 'thousand Joys' experienced by Oenone and Paris before the latter's abandonment and pursuit of Helen. The adoption of this discourse by Wharton makes sense in her Ovidian complaint poems as they have obvious links to

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<sup>81</sup> Janet Todd, *The Works of Aphra Behn, Vol. 5*, (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2000-2001), p. 353.



Behn and Rochester. Yet, the persistence of complaint themes and this eroticised discourse in her biblical poetry creates double meanings and promotes comparison, as shown by the second stanza of the printed Sappho poem:

To this compar's the Heav'nly Bliss they prove,  
 No envy raises; for the Powers a Love  
 Ne'er tasted Joys, compar'd to such above. (lines 4-6)

The classical gods are Christianised as 'heaven'ly bliss' before earthly and heavenly joys are explicitly 'compared'. The two traditions of female-voiced complaint, biblical and classical, are seen to inform each other in Wharton's verse. There is a shift in the meanings of key markers of complaint according to different poetic contexts, but the shift is left incomplete as readers are invited to compare and contrast the experiences across the poems. The natural connection of 'hopes' and 'joys' with failure and loss, as promoted in the impotence verse of the Restoration is translated to a female-voiced complaint context. This is also a very different version of the more positive spiritual association of 'hope' and 'joy' of religious discourse, that 'settled state of joy that accompanies sanctification, as the Calvinist-Puritan line has it' and the 'writing into joy' expressed in spiritual diaries ('the tendency on the part of the diarist to begin writing about the drudgeries, even sorrows, of the day but ending each entry with an exclamation of joy, as if the practice of writing became almost therapeutic for the devout').<sup>82</sup> By focussing on the effect of the losses on the female subjects, Wharton can experiment with poetic voice and

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<sup>82</sup> James Lambert, *Unspeakable joy: rejoicing in early modern England* (University of Iowa, Thesis, 2012), p. 21.

female-voiced complaint in particular; fully exploring those aspects which would be closed off if she acceded to the requests of Burnet and Waller to modify her poetic inclinations and associations. As has been shown with the belated conformity to convention in her personal letters, and the shifting focus of her poems, by using this common discourse throughout her complaints, Wharton is able to express the kind of erotic control and experimentation which is closed off to her in real life.

The ordering of the Osborn B408 manuscript reflects the experimentation of Wharton and her relation of poems through repeated application of metaphors, allusions, themes and discourses. In Osborn B408, the biblical paraphrases are grouped at the beginning of the manuscript,<sup>83</sup> with the two long classical translations ('A Paraphrase on Dido in the Last Speech of Virgil's Aeneid' and 'Penelope to Ulysses') coming at the end. Bridging the gap are many of Wharton's original poems, including poems which seem only to survive in this manuscript, namely 'Unchangeable', 'The Inconstancy of Womankind', and 'To the Earle of Danby att Winchenden After his coming out of the Tower'.<sup>84</sup> As the manuscript appears to be a posthumous presentation copy, with a neat italic hand maybe by a person with a collecting instinct, this placement of poems can be considered deliberate. The foregrounding of the sacred poems, Greer suggests, might infer a hierarchy,

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<sup>83</sup> There are eight new biblical paraphrases in the manuscript which have not been found elsewhere: 'A Paraphrase on the 47<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Isaiah'; 'A Paraphrase on the Lords prayer'; 'A Paraphrase on the 4 Psalm'; 'A Paraphrase on the 36 Psalm'; 'A Paraphrase on the 37 Psalm'; 'A Paraphrase on the 45<sup>th</sup> Psalm'; 'Part of the 4<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Solomons song (and part of the 5<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Solomons song)'; 'His Majesties Lamentation over King Charles the Second In allusion to Davids over Jonathon 2 Sam chap 1<sup>st</sup> Verse the 19<sup>th</sup>'.

<sup>84</sup> In personal correspondence, Greer suggests that 'Winchenden' in the title of the manuscript poem 'To the Earle of Danby att Winchenden After his coming out of the Tower' is 'the copyist's misreading of a contracted version of 'Wimbledon', Danby's own house to which he retired on his release from prison in February 1684'.

and specifically that ‘the source is a clergyman, possibly one of the presbyterian divines who were frequent guests at Winchendon and at Adderbury’. It could equally be the case however, that the transcriber used the ordering of many commonplace books and library catalogues of the period in starting with scripture, then theology, the sacred before the profane.

There are also a number of blank pages interspersed throughout the manuscript, some one page in size, some several pages, which seem to have been left so intentionally in preparation for further poems to be transcribed. Furthermore, there are pages which are blank all but for titles or incomplete verses. Some of these examples relate to poems for which we already have copy texts, including, for example, ‘On the Earle of Rochester son to the former’ is followed by the fragment ‘Insatiate grave yield back thy mighty treasure/ Why should’st thou rob thy world of so’ in the manuscript, which is clearly the same poem as ‘Elegie on Charles Earle of Rochester’ in Greer’s edition.<sup>85</sup> Most significantly for my study, on page 75 of the manuscript, positioned between the two short lyric poems ‘On the storm between Gravesend and Diep: made at the time’ (p.74) and ‘Unchangeable’ (p.76), there is a title written of a missing poem: ‘The Complaint’. Though we do not know anything about the content of the complaint poem, the appearance of this title gives further evidence of Wharton’s interest in the genre.

The placement of the Sappho, Virgil and Ovid female-voiced complaints next to each other in the manuscript also highlights how Wharton engages with the genre, making links between these classical sources of

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<sup>85</sup> Greer and Hastings (eds.), *The Surviving Works of Anne Wharton*, pp. 163-164.

complaining heroines. It is also further evidence of her classical learning as she shows sensitivity to nuances of translation and interpretation, rather like the variations on the Daphne and Proteus myths which we have already seen as prominent in her poems. Like Behn's *Heroides* translation, Wharton's 'Penelope to Ulysses' appears in *Ovid's Epistles* (from the 1712 edition onwards) positioned as the second version of the epistle after a male-authored version. Unlike the male translation of 'Oenone to Paris' by John Cooper, which is included in the second edition of 1681 seemingly as a 'closer' and more authoritative version than Behn's looser offering of the first edition, the 'Penelope to Ulysses' by Wharton is added in 1712 after Thomas Rymer was the sole translator of the epistle for the previous seven editions. It is not at all clear why Wharton's translation was added to the edition and why it was added so late. However, it is clear from a comparison of the two versions of the complaint that they are very different poems.

Rymer's translation is often closer to the Latin (at least in content, length and order), but it also has a very different tone to that of Wharton. Rymer's Penelope is quite casual in her complaint, using such anticlimactic line endings as 'ado' to express that most extreme comparison to the Trojan War: 'Nor twenty troy's were worth all this ado'. Instead of a Penelope bereft of hope and joy, Rymer presents a woman more afflicted by boredom than anything else: 'I should not then of tedious days complain,/ Nor cold a nights and comfortless have lay'n' (p. 154). There is a persistent low, rustic and comedic register, for example with Penelope calling Ulysses a 'Ruffian' and using light-hearted alliteration when describing the serious plight of the household: 'The Beggar Irus, and that Goat-herd Clown,/ Melanchius range

and rummage up and down' (p. 158). Rymer turns the helpless sincerity of Ovid's Penelope into casual sarcasm ('So kept your house, such stout defenders we,/ A helpless Wife, old Man, and little Boy') and turns the horror felt at learning details of the Trojan War into a parodic, even farcical physical reaction: 'Whatever Greeks miscarry'd in the fray,/ I fainted, and fell (well nigh) dead as they' (p. 154). The result of emotional overload here is the kind of gendered fainting which is not unfamiliar to the *Heroides* (in the epistle from Briseis to Achilles, for example, the heroine collapses after hearing a report about Achilles: *sanguinis atque animi pectus inane fuit* (poem 3, line 60))<sup>86</sup> however the comparison of the fainting Penelope to dead Grecian soldiers in Rymer is to show her reaction as ridiculous.

When Wharton departs from Ovid's original, it is to give a more nuanced interpretation of Penelope and her complaint. As I have already argued, Wharton's Penelope has more erotic potential, as figured by her alone on the bed, weaving, and with 'soft thoughts' of 'unobtained desire', in addition to her exploration of those quasi-spiritual and emotional terms such as 'hope', 'joy', 'fear' and 'despair' which are repeated throughout. The manuscript version of Wharton's poem, which is 19 lines longer than the printed version in *Ovid's Epistles*, actually adds details to the poem which in many ways bring it closer to the original. A crucial addition in the manuscript, for example, is the inclusion of two extra lines (quoted below in italics) in between lines 105 and 106 in the printed text. In the manuscript the lines read:

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<sup>86</sup> Showerman (ed.) and trans, *Ovid: Heroides, Amores*, pp. 36-7. (Trans.): 'the blood went from my breast, and with it my sense fled.'

To Sparta, but could there no Tydings hear:

Where art thou, my Ulysses, tell me where?

Where dost thou hide thy self t'encrease my Fear.

*Inconstant as I am my prayers are lost*

*My wishes granted and those wishes crost*

To me none of thy victories returne

Apollo's Citty's vanquished yet I mourn.<sup>87</sup>

The two added lines correspond very closely to line 68 in the Latin original:

*irascor votis, heu, levis ipsa meis!* ('ah me inconstant, I am wroth with the  
vows myself have made!' (line 68) The wishes 'granted' and 'crost'

correspond to the 'vows' in the original and seem to refer to the repeated wish

that the Trojan walls were still standing. Yet this emphasis is not quite the

same in the Wharton manuscript poem as the lines are placed before the

restatement of the Trojan wall traitorous wish rather than immediately after as

in the Latin original (see *Heroides*, poem 1, line 67). There is a feeling of

confusion in the lines by Wharton, with Penelope saying that prayers are lost at

the same time as wishes being both granted and crossed. This instability of

expression is perhaps reflecting the expanded description in Wharton of the

(potentially meta-poetical) letter which Penelope gives to passers-by in case

they come across Ulysses (lines 90-100 in the printed edition). As well as

expanding the many questions (*de te multa rogatus*) which the Latin original

says are in the letter (but does not report them in the text), Wharton's Penelope

goes on to reflect: 'I fear your Death, and more I fear your scorn' (line 98).

This hints at the potential sexual transgressions of Ulysses as being a reason

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<sup>87</sup> Osborn B408 manuscript, p. 97.

for his long delay. The deception of Ulysses on his way home is referred to in Wharton's poem much earlier than in the Ovidian original.

Wharton's choice to translate the flexible Latin word '*levis*' in the lines above as 'inconstant' also recalls this element and naturally brings to the reader's mind the specifically erotic definition of the word. Considering that Penelope has become an icon for female chastity and constancy, from antiquity through to this point of her reception and beyond, it is quite surprising to hear her declare 'inconstant as I am', especially with the lines being shifted slightly out of context. The reader of the manuscript may also make the intertextual link to the poem 'The Inconstancy of Woman Kind' where the 'inconstant tide of womans love' had washed away and altered the constant vows of the female subject. Wharton is building on the alternative reading of Penelope as a cunning woman which finds an early influence in her weaving and unweaving of the shroud for Laertes in Homer. Her Penelope is seemingly armed with the dramatic irony and foresight which Wharton as a learned reader and translator enjoys, as well as the self-awareness of her position in a tradition of female-voiced complaint.

As is a common feature of her verse, Wharton challenges and unsettles expectations. Private letters of despair to her husband while receiving treatment for serious illness are actually carefully formed literary artefacts full of wit and defiance. Virtues such as constancy and chastity become hypocritical and ironic as myths, traditions and definitions are opened up to interpretation and interrogation. Female-voiced complaint seems a natural choice for Wharton's verse owing to the ostensible similarities between the

poet's own situation and that of the female complainants. Yet it is not merely identification or consolation which Wharton seeks from the genre. It is the ability for her to give a different response to reading a female-voiced text like the *Heroides* to that represented by the satirical and incidental scenarios of Rochester's Felton or Grammont's Jennings. Wharton does not just copy the texts but changes and connects different complaint poems and traditions, displaying a manipulatory power and opening up ideals such as 'constancy', 'joy', as well as female obedience, to scrutiny. Wharton also managed to carefully balance the different responsibilities and demands of her life, producing work which could be accepted by a range of different associates, and ultimately achieving a literary reputation which, no doubt influenced by the achievements of Rochester and Behn, she seemed to covet.



## Conclusion

This thesis has set out to explore the genre of Ovidian female-voiced complaint poetry and its tradition in early modern English literature. In looking at original poems, translations and receptions of Ovid's *Heroides*, I argue that female as well as male writers throughout the early modern period engaged with the tradition of Ovidian female-voiced complaint poetry. Whilst a relatively simple survey of complaint poems in the period can prove that this hypothesis is valid, I wanted to explore *how* different women writers engaged with the genre.

In order to do this, I argue that it is both helpful and necessary to also study complaint poems written by men. There are two main reasons for this choice. Firstly, the gendered nature of female-voiced complaint and its beginnings as a ventriloquised text means that it is particularly important to consider the gender of the author and the rhetorical relationship between author and persona-complainant. Secondly, it is often inevitably the case that many more of the female-voiced complaints by male poets than female poets in the period are canonical, popular (that is, well-known and widely available), and so influential. They thus form part of the important generic and literary contexts around the female-voiced complaint tradition. When considering receptions, traditions and re-imaginings of a classical text or a literary genre, such influences and specific literary contexts are crucial to understanding the particular poem (or poems) in question.

Finally, I have a methodological argument for studying both male and female authored poems in that a comparative approach to literary analysis is

beneficial to a historical formalist study, promoting both close reading of the text and a heightened sensitivity to various relevant contexts. This assertion has been borne out in my thesis as often I discover that looking at more canonical texts through the less well known or less frequently studied texts opens up the former to new interpretations and fresh revisions. One example of this in my thesis is the re-reading of Andrew Marvell's 'Nymph Complaining for the Death of her Fawn', which puts more emphasis on the abandoning Silvio as the cause of the nymph's complaint before the death of the child-like fawn, whom the nymph says could have turned out (if he had lived) to resemble the abandoning and disloyal Silvio anyway. In this way, I find dual rather than uni-directional influences and communications between male and female-authored texts. This mirrors the dual-directional glosses and reinterpretations resulting from early modern receptions of the *Heroides* as a classical text and the *locus classicus* of female-voiced complaint.

Furthermore, this formalist-comparative approach has opened up the possibility, promoted by Nigel Smith in his study of Pulter, Philips and Hutchinson, of '(constructing) a history of women's writing and its interface with literary traditions'.<sup>1</sup> By studying a selection of female-voiced complaint poems over a relatively long period of time (from the 1560s to the 1680s), I am able to track the reception of the *Heroides* in English and the development and transformations of the female-voiced complaint genre. While the number of women writers who engage with the genre might suggest a female tradition forming around the complaint, one should be cautious in making this argument. As has become clear in this thesis, women did not write in a

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<sup>1</sup> Smith, 'The Rod and the Canon', p. 232.

vacuum or in separate worlds from male writers. There are many examples of such engagements or ‘interfaces’: Whitney with the moralising and didactic receptions; Wroth with the framed post-sonnet complaint; Pulter and Hutchinson in their interactions with elegy and retirement; Behn and Wharton with the popular multi-authored translations and parodies of the *Heroides*. This does not preclude, however, the fact that complaint poems by women influenced other women writers, as I have argued, for example, in my chapter on Aphra Behn and the *Ovid’s Epistles* compiled by John Dryden.

### **Supplementary Issues, Reflections and Future Directions**

Over the course of this thesis on female-voiced complaint, a number of supplementary issues have emerged as very important to the investigation. Naturally, these aspects have highlighted future directions for further study and pointed out work still needing to be done which it has not been possible to explore in full within the boundaries of a PhD thesis.

Many of the poems studied in this thesis have only recently been made available in modern scholarly editions. Hester Pulter provides a case in point. Although her manuscript was discovered at the Leeds Brotherton library in 1996, it was only in 2014, one year into this PhD project, that a complete scholarly edition of her works (comprising poetry, emblems, and a prose romance) edited by Alice Eardley was published by Toronto Series ‘The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe’. I was honoured to co-organise the book-launch event for this edition, which took place at University of Warwick and which was followed by Alice Eardley discussing Pulter and the edition on Radio 4’s *Woman’s Hour*. Some poets still lack a modern scholarly edition.

Isabella Whitney can be studied only in the early modern printed edition (though this is easily accessible on EEBO), in modern anthologies, or in a critical edition produced for a PhD dissertation in 1990. The works of Lucy Hutchinson are in the process of being published in four volumes for OUP, edited by David Norbrook, though as of yet only the first volume in this series (*De Rerum Natura*) has been published. It is not just the women who still lack editions; the poetry of George Turberville and the various *Heroides* translations of the seventeenth century have to be found on EEBO. Margaret Ezell's cautionary words in the introduction to her Toronto Series seminal edition of Anne Killigrew are important to remember: 'There is, after all, no way to make up for decades of critical neglect in one edition, by one editor. We can only hope for the dialogue to begin.'<sup>2</sup> Having a modern edition is just the beginning and not the end of the story.

Anne Wharton is an example of a poet whose works have been published in a modern critical edition (by Germaine Greer and Selina Hastings in 2008) yet new manuscript discoveries have since added to her oeuvre. The only way to read these new manuscript poems is to visit (or contact) the Yale Beinecke Library. I have been fortunate enough to be able to study this manuscript first hand in addition to many others needed for my research. When manuscripts or early printed books are held at academic institutions, county archives and libraries, I have often been generously funded from a number of sources in order to carry out the research trips, many of which are overseas. It must be noted here though, that this is obviously a prohibitive cost

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<sup>2</sup> Ezell, "My Rare Wit Killing Sin": *Poems of a Restoration Courtier. Anne Killigrew*, page xiii.

for many. Until modern editions are published, much work by early modern women writers in particular will remain hidden in archives and accessible only by a few privileged researchers. It must surely be an aim for all scholars, and feminist researchers in particular, to bring unknown or under-studied works into the public consciousness, to bring early modern texts back to life and to redress the canon. For me, it is especially important that we stop thinking about male and female writers as existing in different worlds and realise that they were contributing to and developing the same literary tradition. As the recent 'Shakespeare Association of America' conference panel 'Hester Pulter in the Archives' has shown, there is still very much a place for the study of 'women's history' or 'women's writing', as scholars seek effective modern methods to bring potentially obscure women writers out of the archives and into public consciousness.

A practical way forward to help students and early researchers in this aim would be to keep working towards the digitisation of archives. We need a similar resource for manuscripts as we have for early English printed books in EEBO (which itself continues to be developed with texts added to the database daily). Thankfully, there are several projects which have begun this enormous task, one of which is the Perdita Project, the sponsors of my PhD scholarship, which provides an online database of manuscripts written by women in the seventeenth century. Over the course of my PhD I have also noticed that archives are becoming more supportive of researchers taking their own photographs of items for future use and consultation. A particular test for researchers is that many of the works are housed not at academic institutions or libraries but in country estates or great houses, where one is reliant on the

kindness and time of estate managers and owners whose job is not primarily to provide access to scholars. Often, of course, it is crucial that manuscripts and early printed books are studied first hand. The Pulter manuscript at the Leeds Brotherton library is a prime example of this, as one can see different hands and various emendations in addition to the second half of the prose romance being inverted and on loose pages. Furthermore, on the reverse of the title page to *The Unfortunate Florinda* there can be spotted a list of everyday household notes, giving a material insight into how the manuscript was composed.

Another example of the importance of consulting items in person is the surviving library of Mary Wortley Montagu at Sandon Hall, Staffordshire, which I studied with the kind permission of Lord Harrowby. The library of Lady Mary was a fascinating example of early modern books which contain marks of ownership and marginalia with detailed comments and criticism. Though beyond the scope of my thesis, a book history approach which looks at examples of booklists, surviving libraries and marginalia, could give a useful insight into early modern reading practices of both men and women and would be especially illuminating for a genre study. In the course of my research, for example, I have found a copy of the 1680 *Ovid's Epistles* edition (a personal copy belonging to my supervisor, Dr Paul Botley) to contain marks of ownership by a woman, Jane Keymes, who says she was given the book by her father. Jane Keymes seems to have been the niece of Anne Wharton, born in the same year that Anne died. It would be instructive to track any similar markings of ownership and gift-giving of the *Ovid's Epistles* edition, looking at materiality and the location of gender in books and one could explore

whether, in reality, women and girls were the primary readers of the text and what they thought of the poems.

Another area which I have found my study of Ovidian female-voiced complaint to be naturally linked to is translation. I have found my research to be naturally interdisciplinary in its connections with classical reception, feminism and translation theory. I have used the term ‘Ovidian’ in the title of my thesis as an indicator of the influence of the Roman poet and particularly the *Heroides* on the poetic genre. As Dryden shows in his preface to *Ovid’s Epistles*, ‘translation’ is a flexible and highly theorised term and I have studied a range of texts in this thesis which could be considered translations but I have also included more poems which would be considered ‘original’ but which are also part of the reception of the *Heroides* into English literary tradition. There is evidence of women reading the *Heroides* in the poems themselves, but also in prefaces, commonplace book entries, and booklists. Whether all of the women writers I have studied read the text in the original Latin rather than in English or via the French, cannot be known, although I would argue there is a definite case for some, as for example, shown by the Latin-English *Heroides* couplets translated in Lucy Hutchinson’s commonplace book.

Classical knowledge is shown throughout the women’s poems. At a time when satirists like Alexander Radcliffe represent Ovidian Sappho as a figure who finds satisfaction in relentless tribadism, Wharton can offer a version of Sappho’s erotic ode (31) which puts the emphasis back on the male Phaon as abandoner and traitor, showing her classical learning and knowledge of the traditions surrounding Sappho. Another study on Ovidian female-

voiced complaint might productively take a more theoretical approach to translation and reception. There is a growing movement of ‘feminism and classics’ scholarship, with a major conference in the area taking place every four years (the most recent being ‘Visions: Feminism and Classics VII’). Though mainly driven by classicists, the interdisciplinary nature of feminism and classical studies has incorporated researchers from Modern Languages, Philosophy and English Literature. The work of feminist translation theorists such as Sherry Simon, Louise Von Flotow and Tina Krontiris is also important for such an approach, offering models for considering both translations of female voices and female translators. I draw on the approach of Simon throughout my work, discovering how poets use gender in their translations and re-interpretations of Ovid in order to place their work in a literary tradition and to make a social or cultural statement:

Gender is not always a relevant factor in translation. There are no *a priori* characteristics which would make women either more or less competent at their task. Where identity enters into play is the point at which the translator transforms the fact of gender into a social or literary project.<sup>3</sup>

Through studying prefaces, titles, arguments, and comparing paired translations, I have explored translatory strategies and tactics of both men and women, opening up the topic of gendered writing and translation as a place of criticism and gender construction.

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<sup>3</sup> Sherry Simon, *Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission*, (Oxford: Routledge, 1996), p. 7.



Finally, my research for this thesis has revealed how much work there still is to be done on complaint in the early modern period and beyond. Though there are several important studies on the genre, there are still many complaint poems, both in manuscript and print, yet to be studied sufficiently and many directions in which the topic should be taken. By using case studies of texts moving chronologically through the period, my thesis is both synchronic and diachronic. As well as comparing the different manifestations of female-voiced complaint with contemporary texts at certain points in time, I have been able to see how the genre changes and develops over time. For example, there is a shift in the creative framed complaints from the historical and tragic to the pastoral and romantic and then towards the lone voice of elegy and retirement. There is also a change in the representation of morals, eroticism and chastity in complaint over time. The early moralised reception of the *Heroides* women as chaste or unchaste shifts focus with the framed complaints to represent fallen women ruined by male treachery. Then, from the mid to late seventeenth century, there is more emphasis on the political and erotic potential of the women (whether this be a positive or negative representation).

Despite the different sub-genres and types of reception, many aspects of Ovidian female-voiced complaint are repeated over time, for example, the prefaces and paratextual material of all the 'complete' *Heroides* translations of the period ranging from the 1560s to the 1680s have included a discussion of gender, often resulting in a re-establishment of male authority for the text and a demotion of the female. Other issues which are repeatedly emphasised in the female-voiced complaints are ventriloquism; framing and voice; memory and

monument; and empathy and consolation. My study also provides evidence for the complicated relationship between manuscript and print texts and publication. There is not a smooth transition from manuscript to print which we might expect from women's writing in particular. For example, my case studies include examples of a printed collection published in 1567, two purely manuscript female poets of the mid-seventeenth century and a female poet with works in both manuscript and print who was writing in the 1680s at the same time as the most prolific woman writer in print (Aphra Behn). We have seen evidence in Anne Wharton and Lucy Hutchinson of the argument promoted by Margaret Ezell that writing in manuscript and writing for an audience are not mutually exclusive, that 'manuscript works cannot be dismissed as being either private or unpolished'.<sup>4</sup>

I am particularly encouraged by the presence of a panel on female complaint, which included a paper by Sarah Ross on Hester Pulter, at this year's Renaissance Society of America conference. Moreover, it has been announced that the theme of the 2017 Reading Conference in Early Modern Studies (the very same conference at which I presented my first paper in 2013 on Anne Wharton and Female-voiced Complaint) is 'Complaints and Grievances, 1500-1750'. This demonstrates that complaint is becoming a burgeoning area for scholarly attention. The open nature of the title to this conference also highlights how many different ways the genre can be explored, with suggested topics being divided into three areas: 'Literary Complaint'; 'Medical Complaint and Grievances'; and 'Political and Religious Complaints

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<sup>4</sup> Ezell, *Writing Women's Literary History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 55.

and Grievances'. Indeed, there is also scope for more historical research into female-voiced complaint in the period, which would focus on non-literary texts, such as personal letters, spiritual autobiographies, laments of female prophets, court grievances, gallows confessions, and petitions to Parliament. This kind of historical study would also provide useful contextual background for literary female-voiced complaint as one could track how complaint is used and thought of in everyday life, for example whether complaining to the addressee is part of the conventions of letter writing; whether women who banded together to complain and fight for various rights were empowered or successful; whether complaint was seen negatively as moaning in the face of illness or adversity or whether it was accepted as natural and potentially medicative, restorative or productive.

I anticipate future research both on female-voiced complaint and women's writing in general. I would like the opportunity to produce and publish an anthology of Ovidian female-voiced complaint poems, following on from the land-mark anthology by John Kerrigan but offering more space to female-authored texts by pairing male and female-authored complaint poems as I have done in my thesis.

### **Gendering of the genre**

In investigating how women writers engage with female-voiced complaint, it is clear from my case studies that the female poets are acutely aware of the gendered tradition they are participating in. The highly gendered prefaces of *Heroides* translations such as those by Saltonstall and Dryden, which follow the practice of including lengthy moralising paratextual matter in the early

European medieval and humanist editions of the text, present Ovidian female-voiced complaint as poems which can be read by women. Women become suitable readers only because the poems are translated and interpreted for them by men, with the aid of paratextual matter such as moralising glosses or simplified arguments. There is often the sense that men are also readers but, in their privileged position as learned readers of classical languages and so able to access the *arcana* of the text, they can read more into the female-voiced complaint. However, the female-authored poems I study in this thesis show that women writers knew very well the game that such translators of Ovid were playing in presenting the text as suitable for a potential female audience. They understood that the *Heroides* has the power, as Lorna Hutson says, ‘to condition our expectation of female character’.<sup>5</sup> This powerful role of the text as a model for the female voice and character gives a productive potential as well as a potential for negative exploitation.

The very act of a woman writing female-voiced complaint is an inversion of the expected gendered separation of author and subject of which the *Heroides* offers a model. The innate ventriloquism of the genre is recognised by the female poets as they engage with the *Heroides* tradition. In the *Heroides*, there is a dual position whereby women are subjects as first person speakers of the poems, but they are also objects since we are reminded of Ovid himself as the author-ventriloquist. As we have seen, Ovid asserts his control over the text as author and innovator in his later work the *Ars Amatoria*, where the poet includes his own works among those which women

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<sup>5</sup> Lorna Hutson, ‘Who Speaks for Justice?’: Renaissance Legal Development and the Literary Voices of Women’, *Sederi*, 8 (1999), pp. 101-119 (p. 104).

might be advised to read. Here is the Loeb translation of the section of the *Ars Amatoria* which has an extended intertextual allusion to the *Heroides*:

Perhaps too my name will be joined to theirs, nor will my writings be  
given to Lethe's waters; and someone will say, "Read the elegant poems  
of our master, wherein he instructs the rival parties; or from the three  
books marked by the title of 'Loves' choose out what you may softly  
read with docile voice; or let some Letter be read by you with practised  
utterance; he first invented this art, unknown to others."<sup>6</sup>

Ovid self-styles his female-voiced letters as *ignotum... aliis* ('unknown to others'), seemingly emphasising their uniqueness in the contemporary poetry of Augustan Rome. Moreover, women are seen as readers of the *Heroides*, almost actresses, no doubt influenced by the speaking heroines of Greek and Roman tragedy, as they are imagined reading aloud *composita... voce* ('with practised utterance'). This also highlights the generic fluidity between reading the complaints as letters or as dramatic soliloquies. The emphasis on the dramatic element can work to remind us of the ventriloquism at the heart of the genre as we might imagine the male author playing a rhetorical, even misogynist, game of prosopopoeia.

The idea of an idealised female readership for the text promoted by Ovid in the *Ars Amatoria* has been repeated throughout the period of reception which I concentrate on in my study. We have seen this in the prefaces of both

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<sup>6</sup> Ovid, *Ars Amatoria* book 3, lines 339-346: 'Forsitan et nostrum nomen miscebitur istis,/ Nec mea Lethaeis scripta dabuntur aquis:/ Atque aliquis dicet "nostri lege culta magistri/ Carmina, quis partes instruit ille duas:/ Deve tribus libris, titulus quos signat Amorum,/ Elige, quod docili molliter ore legas:/ Vel tibi composita cantetur Epistola voce:/ Ignotum hoc aliis ille novavit opus.'" (ed.) J. H. Mozley, *Ovid The Art of Love and Other Poems* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, Loeb Classical Library, 1929), pp. 142-3.

Wye Saltonstall and John Dryden for example, which draw on this tradition of female readership but also hint at men being very different readers of the text. While, as Dryden says, the poems can be read ‘by Matrons without a blush’, they are also open to interpretation by the more ‘judicious readers’. And while, as Saltonstall says, the *Heroides* have been ‘chiefly translated for your sakes’ (‘your’ being the addressees of his gendered preface, ‘the vertuous ladies and gentlewomen of England’), he cannot help but mention that ‘most Gentlemen could read (it) before in Latin’.

Another particular irony of the *Heroides* which has been very relevant to my study of the early modern poems is that the complaint is addressed to the very man who is the cause of the complaint. In this way, complaint is also related to rhetorical persuasion, or *suasoria* in Roman rhetorical terminology, as well as being akin to a tragic soliloquy about ill treatment. The efficacy of the persuasion is undermined throughout by the reality of the woman’s abandoned state. The absent men will more than likely not receive the letters: Dido, for example, expresses this innate pessimism: ‘*Nec quia te nostra sperem prece posse moveri, adloquor*’ (‘Not because I hope you may be moved by prayer of mine do I address you’ (*Heroides* 7, lines 3-4)).<sup>7</sup> This, again, closes the gap between epistolarity and tragic soliloquy. Not all the texts studied in my thesis adhere to this formula, with some female-voiced complaints being addressed to a third person or overheard by a third person. It is perhaps helpful here to think about distinctions made by modern social discourse theory about complaint as a mode of speech. In an article by Hartford and Mahboob, there is

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<sup>7</sup> Showerman (ed) and trans, *Ovid: Heroides, Amores*, pp. 82-3.

a summary of complaint and ‘complaint reader’ definitions in ‘speech act’ literature:

Boxer (1993) has distinguished complaints, addressed to the person deemed responsible for the undesirable action, from gripes, addressed to persons who have no responsibility for the action, about non-present third persons who are responsible. Letters to the editor do not fall directly into either category, and are interesting data from that point of view. As discussed in Hartford (2002a, 2002b), such letters may be written by an author who may not be complaining only as an individual, but also as a (self-appointed) representative of some wronged group. The readers of the letters (the immediate addressees) may or may not comprise other members of the wronged group, the actual wrong-doers, and third parties whose responsibility it is to take redressive action against the wrong-doers.<sup>8</sup>

The distinction between what Boxer terms ‘complaints’ and ‘gripes’ rests on who is addressed – the wrong-doer or a non-responsible person. The existence of a third category in ‘letters to the editor’ here which is related to the speech-acts of both complaint and gripe, collapses such distinctions based on addressee, suggesting the potential relation of the third party reader with the wrong-doer. In early modern female-voiced complaints, for example, we might think of the framed complaint of Mary Wroth (‘A Shepherd who no care did take’) where the relation of non-responsible third person to the original wrong-doer is a particularly gendered one.

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<sup>8</sup> Beverly Hartford and Ahmar Mahboob, ‘Models of Discourse in the Letter of Complaint’, *World Englishes*, 23:4 (2004), pp. 585-600, (pp. 585-6).

### **Women writers and the female voice**

Feminist classical scholars have argued that the choice of Ovid to write as a woman in the *Heroides* – the issue of voice and ventriloquism – is crucial to reading and interpreting the text. Sara Lindheim's landmark study, for example, argues that there are markers of male authorial presence throughout the work. Lindheim uses terms such as 'construction' (of the heroines) and 'transvestite ventriloquism' in arguing that paying attention to such issues 'unmasks' or 'shatters' 'the illusion that the *Heroides* present uncomplicated female voices'.<sup>9</sup> The very nature of complaint as a mode of speech, as well as a poetic genre, is central to such a reading. Complaint as a discourse inherently requires a dislocation of the subject; the women complain directly because they are in a position of loss and abandonment. They gain subjectivity through their very disenfranchisement. This is a paradox in terms, and there is always that reminder of the female complainant's inherent powerless and marginal position during her first person complaint.

Yet, as I hope to have shown in my study, one can see how this very paradox might be appealing to early modern women writers who could similarly be described as lost (or *perdita*) in their gaining of subjectivity through writing from the margins, those (dis)empowered peripheries of a patriarchal society and a male-dominated literary culture. As Dana Lawrence comments on Isabella Whitney, such female poets had the ability to both participate in early modern culture and literary tradition while also doing something different: 'through her imitation, adaptation, and revision of these

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<sup>9</sup> Sara Lindheim, *Mail and Female: Epistolary Narrative and Desire in Ovid's Heroides* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), p. 15.



male-authored works... to establish her identity as a writer while participating in a literary tradition from which women such as she had long been excluded.’<sup>10</sup> This is particularly the case when such women take on a female-voiced genre like Ovidian complaint, which is more traditionally male-authored.

In Whitney’s case, I have argued that her engagement with the genre is learned and her difference lies in subtle changes to key tropes and themes of complaint and its early modern contemporary manifestations. For example, she prioritises the moralising, edificatory, and epistolary aspects of *Heroides* reception in her complaint poems. By comparing her use of these aspects with that of humanists and the contemporary translation of the *Heroides* by George Turberville in 1567, we see that Whitney gives different emphases. While writing her complaint in epistolary form, Whitney uses the potential for personalisation and familiarity to emphasise the control of the first person female voice. For example, in ‘I.W To her unconstant Lover’, author and first person voice merge, with digressions and introverted verbs allowing self-reflection and re-considerations. Furthermore, Whitney uses *exempla* and conditional constructions to open up men as well as women to moral scrutiny and offering alternative realities and versions of myth by imagining famous classical complaining women making different choices. Though the female-voiced complaint tradition might be seen as male-dominated, ventriloquised, sanitised, or exploited, Whitney recognises it as a useful point of embarkation

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<sup>10</sup> Dana Lawrence, *Class, Authority, and the Querelle des Femmes: A Women’s Community of Resistance in Early Modern Europe* (Dissertation, Texas A&M University, 2009), p. iii.

for her as a woman writer and a tradition within which she could work to publish her own female authored-secular verse.

A nuanced definition of ‘identification’ is needed when considering women writers and female-voiced complaint. Identification and personalisation of the female-voiced complaint is something that we often see the women writers deliberately engaging with, as author and persona elide. Any identification is one not simply based on the fact that the female authors are naturally aligned to the speakers of the *Heroides* as female poetic models, although the disproportionate lack of female voices in classical poetry is rare enough for this to be a more than valid observation. There is a more nuanced identification at play in the comparable complex subjectivities of the complaining females and the early modern women writers. Furthermore, as we have seen, there is a certain productive potential in complaint and *Heroides* reception as the female author can appropriate and adapt the genre, strengthening the subjectivity of the female voice and shifting the genre into different directions.

Another example of this productive potential is shown in chapter 3, where my focus on Hester Pulter and Lucy Hutchinson reveals that female-voiced complaint becomes a key model, providing opportunities for a female expression of grief or isolation which can be both personal and political. The more creative and expansive engagement with the *Heroides* and female-voiced complaint here finds generic allies and links in the retirement poem and in elegy. Despite the situations of loss and abandonment in the tumultuous political times in which both poets were writing, they can find expression in complaint. Pulter for example, in her poem *Complaint of the Thames*, shifts

the genre of elegy towards complaint in order to foreground the themes of memory, empathy and the relation of personal and political during this period of national unrest. The watery female-voiced complaint of the Thames is not an uncontrollable wailing woman but is an articulate expression of disillusionment, loss and frustration and gives opportunity to regain, restore, remember, and to petition for change. For Hutchinson too, the absence of her husband through imprisonment and then death also creates a space for first person female writing. Elegy and complaint are key intersections as Hutchinson expresses her enforced isolation in elegiac poems which are strongly reminiscent of female-voiced complaint. In both Pulter and Hutchinson, there is the sense that being heard is what is important, and being able to create a lasting literary monument. This is a theme which ties many of the female-voiced complaint poems by women in this thesis, as we are reminded of Whitney's preoccupation with 'store' in contrast to the potential ephemeral and immediate nature of the epistolary form.

When we think about such creative examples of female-voiced complaint, it is revealing in this thesis how apt the genre seems to be to adaptation and experimentation in its reception and development throughout the early modern period. There is a tradition of male writers adapting female-voiced complaint. The post sonnet complaints of famous poets such as Daniel and Shakespeare are an example of such creative adaptation. Mary Wroth however, as we have seen in chapter 2, exposes with her poem how these post-sonnet complaints build frames around female subjectivity and equate the innate ventriloquism of female-voiced complaint with voyeurism. Wroth adds an extra layer at the end of her poem which reveals a voyeuristic first person

female voice, taking the male poets' framed adaptations to the extreme and recovering a female subjectivity in complaint. Wroth employs a conventional voyeuristic male overhearing/ spying on a complaining female in her post-sonnet poem, seemingly following the pattern of her male contemporaries. However, I argue that she deliberately twists this traditional framing trope at the last in a surprising subjective intervention of a female 'I' and 'eye'.

Another example of such adaptation would be the growing popularity of parodic versions of the *Heroides* at the end of the seventeenth century. Where these parodists use a looseness of translation in order to expose female-voiced complaints as morally repugnant, lewd, monotonous and ripe to be ridiculed, women writers of the same period such as Aphra Behn and Anne Wharton use translatory looseness and adaptation in order to make social or political comments and to explore or manipulate conventional ideas about such issues as female chastity. As we have seen, the gendered prefatory material and positioning of Behn's *Oenone to Paris* 'paraphrase' in the 1680 and 1681 Dryden editions marks her poem apart. Her demoted and exceptional status as a female translator in the collection also instigates a female tradition around the *Heroides*, shown by the emergence of Ovidian complaint poems which show the influence of Behn on women writers such as Anne Wharton, Anne Killigrew, Mary Wortley Montagu and Jane Barker. Despite warnings from her spiritual advisors, Wharton chose to engage in poetic exchange with Behn, in poems which reveal the influence of Behn and Ovidian female-voiced complaint. Ultimately, Wharton produced a *Heroides*-inspired Sappho Ode which was printed in Behn's own miscellany and a *Penelope to Ulysses*

translation which eventually was published alongside Behn's in the Dryden-Tonson collection.

The influence of female-authored female-voiced complaints by poets like Behn gives an alternative to the interpretation of the genre as a model of female voice which ultimately reinforces patriarchy. John Kerrigan, for example has previously argued that the tradition of complaint poetry is a perilous influence on women's writing in early modern England: 'If up to a point, the development of women's writing after the fifteenth century was encouraged by 'female complaint', the subgenre was embedded in belying and bemonstering relations which framed texts reinforced and which *Heroidean* texts could not dismantle, and which directed the energies of the form into male constructions of femininity'.<sup>11</sup> I show in this thesis that female-voiced complaint was as enabling and productive for women writers as it was potentially frustrating, patronising or even misogynistic. This more productive potential has been demonstrated by the renegotiation, re-interpretation, adaptation and translation of female-voiced complaint by early modern women writers. They employ a close and learned engagement with the traditions of complaint, both the classical precedents and the contemporary English (sub)-generic receptions and re-imaginings.

The women writers knew what they were getting into. They were choosing a genre which was both female-voiced but also had a tradition of male manipulation. They often chose to be different with their complaints, for example, shifting power relations of subject and object, voice and frames, in

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<sup>11</sup> Kerrigan, *Motives of Woe*, p. 82.

the texts; using a looseness of translation to prioritise issues such as social inequality and female erotic potential; and expressing a political grief with a female voice, giving potential for redress, restoration and alternative realities.

**Length of thesis: 70332**

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