W.s Buch zeugt auf jeder Seite von großer Gelehrsamkeit und rhetorischer Brillanz. Unterm Strich bleibt aber zumindest für diesen Rezensenten mehr der Eindruck einer modisch-akademischen Aristie als eines substanziellen Beitrags zum griechischen Liebesroman.

Stefan Tilg


Chiara Battistella’s ‘P. Ovidii Nasonis Heroidum Epistula 10: Ariadne Theseo’ is a revised version of her doctoral dissertation, written under the supervision of Gian Biagio Conte. The nicely produced book from de Gruyter contains an introduction, the text of *Heroides* 10 with a facing translation, and then a commentary on the poem. Although Battistella does offer a text of the poem, she does not really grapple with the notoriously problematic manuscript tradition of the *Heroides* and its individual poems. She chooses to print a version that draws primarily on the published texts of Palmer and Dörrie,1 forgoing an *apparatus criticus* in favor of a short list of the choices she made that diverge from her models. A brief note refers the reader to Richard Tarrant’s piece on the *Heroides* in ‘Scribes and Scholars’ or Peter Knox’s Cambridge commentary for further discussion about issues of transmission.2

Battistella does not disguise the fact that her focus, in every aspect of this book, is literary. Her approach to Ariadne’s letter to Theseus shares the concerns of scholars who engage with formalist questions about genre and intertextuality. What happens when Ariadne, great heroine of Catullus’ *epyllion*, offers up her own story in elegiac verse? To what extent can she, avid reader of her own source text, escape the *ephrastic* Ariadne emblazoned on the coverlet of Peleus’ and Thetis’ marriage bed when she fashions her own self-portrait? Making few concessions to those who are not intimately acquainted with the ancient texts she discusses, over which she ranges quite widely, Battistella offers eight brief readings of *Heroides* 10 in her introduction that consider the Ovidian heroine in the light of her relationship to elegy and to other literary texts.

The Ovidian Ariadne, Battistella points out, begins her letter from a very familiar vantage point; her missive comes *ex illo . . . litore* (10.3), that very shore on which Catullus’ Ariadne reminds Theseus that he has abandoned her (64,113). Ovid’s heroine depicts herself in constant motion, running here and there (*nunc huc, nunc illuc*, 10.19) along the beach, in confused disorder. This chaotic motion, Battistella argues, metaphorically figures the Ovidian Ariadne’s unrestrained incursions into disparate and surprising texts beyond Catullus 64 (on which,

more below). Despite her best attempts, however, she cannot escape the overbearing physical and poetic presence of her source text. With a wink, Ovid points out that the Catullan shore prevents the epistolary Ariadne’s flight. Battistella offers a clever reading of line 20: *alta puellares tardat harena pedes*. The rather startling adjective, *puellares*, that the Ovidian Ariadne chooses in reference to her own feet, makes perfect sense if one reads *pedes* metrically. The Ovidian Ariadne has the metrical feet of a *puella*; in other words, Ovid is wittily pointing out the generic transposition he has pulled off here. This Ariadne is elegiac. Her elegiac self, however, cannot make progress along the beach, since the deep sand, the *alta harena* that is the Catullan source text, holds her back.

In addition to Catullus 64, Battistella’s introductory material discloses a multiplicity of source texts to which she believes the Ovidian heroine alludes, both inter- and intra-textually. Drawing on a well-established line of scholarship regarding Catullus, Battistella points out that Catullus’ Ariadne echoes many of the sentiments found in Catullus’ poetry about his relationship to Lesbia. Mythological heroine and poet share feelings of anger, distress, betrayal. Following these insights, Battistella points out that Ovid’s Ariadne attacks Theseus’ lack of *fides* with intertextual references to Catullus 64, but also to other Catullan poems, in particular those in which the poet expresses (proto-)elegiac sentiments about Lesbia. And indeed, Battistella points out, the Ovidian Ariadne goes to great intertextual lengths to establish an exaggeratedly elegiac self. As she undresses herself rather immodestly before Theseus’, and the reader’s, eyes, hanging her *candida velamina* (10.41) on branches on the top of a cliff in order to attract the attention of the hero departing in his ship, Battistella sees a reference to Ovid’s Corinna and her nakedness in *Amores* 1.5.

Despite the Ovidian Ariadne’s desire for an elegiac self-representation, Battistella suggests that ultimately the heroine «disfigures» elegy. In the end, she is overrun by epic incursions and the ironic intrusion of references to the happy ‘future’ with Bacchus in store for her. As she wakes up on her abandoned couch for the first time, Ovid’s heroine moves her hands back and forth over the bed. Twice, once at the beginning of a couplet, and a second time at the end, she exclaims: *nullus erat* (10.11 and 12). For Battistella, the intertext here is *Odyssey* 9. She enumerates the similarities. Just as sleeping Ariadne has been deceived by a hero who took to flight, so Polyphemus in his cave is tricked by Odysseus’ ploy of identifying himself as ‘Nobody’ (twice *Od*. 9.366), by his drunken sleep, and by the hero’s escape. As Ariadne’s hands feel for her lover in the bed, so Polyphemus’ hands, seeking out the presence of Odysseus and his men, pass over the sheep as they leave his cave. Equally tenuous is the intertext that Battistella sees with the *Aeneid* when Ariadne clings to the rocks on top of a cliff in order to get a better view of the departing Theseus. Battistella suggests that Ovid here alludes to the famous moment in *Aeneid* 4 when Aeneas is compared to a great oak tree clinging to the rocks as he is buffeted, yet unmoved, by the pleas and lamentations of Dido to which her sister, Anna, gives voice (441–449).

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Battistella’s interpretive suggestions frequently open up clever readings of the Ovidian epistle. The format and execution of the introduction, eight short quasi-snapshots of interpretation, however, leave a bit to be desired. I found myself intrigued by many of the suggested possibilities she raised, willing to consider her readings, yet frequently concluded that I wanted more in-depth discussion, more argument to be fully convinced. While she returned to many of the points highlighted in the introduction when she turned to the commentary on the text, again the interpretations were not sufficiently fleshed out. Indeed, some of the more ‘surprising’ intertexts that Battistella proposes really do need argumentation at much greater length. The idea of Ariadne masquerading as Polyphemus is particularly difficult to accept, and I, for one, require more than a handful of words that appear in both texts to be persuaded. And what do we get if we do accept the intertext, beyond a heroine who has lost all control of her authorial power? Perhaps a greater sense of overarching argument to, or payoff from, the introductory vignettes, would have provided the reader with more of an incentive to accept all the individual claims of intertextuality.

If Battistella’s loose approach to tracing allusion sometimes comes up short, a similar method of paying close attention to individual words and the associations they trigger pays great dividends in the commentary section. Following Barchiesi’s particularly fruitful suggestion about temporality in the *Heroides*, Battistella discovers in Ariadne’s epistle frequent hints at the heroine’s future marriage to Bacchus. As Barchiesi has pointed out, the abandoned Ovidian heroines write their letters at one particular moment in their story, leaving their ‘source texts’ to represent the women’s ‘future’ narratives. And yet, this ‘future’ narrative belonging to the heroine already exists, and is well-known to the external reader in the form of the source text. Here delicious Ovidian irony opens up, a chance for poet and external reader to share a chuckle at the expense of the epistolary correspondent. Battistella mines this line of interpretation, carefully reading *Heroides* 10 to expose moments when Ariadne’s words lead us to remember that Bacchus is coming to be her husband, that she will live happily ever after, that, despite all her best literary efforts, she is not the super-elegiac, prototypical abandoned woman.

Indeed, Battistella’s interpretation of Ariadne, caught in a temporal web with an ironically prophetic-like view of her future, leads to a wonderful decision to print in her text a couplet that many other editors (most notably Palmer and Knox) choose to excise. At lines 79–80, Ariadne makes the somewhat strange statement: *nunc ego non tantum quae sum passura recordor / sed quaecumque potest illa relicta pati.* Ariadne’s claim has been removed as a textual corruption for being otiose – how silly for the heroine to insist at this moment on enumerating all the terrible things any abandoned women can suffer – – as well as for the unusual construction of *recordor* with a future participle – how can someone recall something that has yet to happen. Turning a literary lens on these two lines, and running an argument that rings true in many places in the poem, Battistella (ad loc.) defends their inclusion in, even their importance to, the text.

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Ovid’s Ariadne can remember all the things that she will suffer; she is writing her Ovidian epistle just at the moment Theseus abandons her. She has a future to recall from her source text, a narrative that reveals the events that occur after her abandonment, already written by Catullus, already carefully read and studied by the Ovidian Ariadne.

In sum, this volume makes a fine addition to the existing commentaries on individual poems in the single *Heroides*, offering compelling new insights into Ariadne’s letter to Theseus. For those who wish to read these Ovidian poems seriously, Battistella’s work belongs on the shelf beside those of Barchiesi (1–3), Casali (9), Bessone (12), Heinze (12), Reeson (11, 13, 14).¹

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