

Briseis' Elegiac Failure in *Heroides* 3

by

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### Abstract

Ovid's *Heroides* is unique for its presentation of female speech. It is a collection of letters written in elegiac couplets, each one narrated by a different mythological heroine. Each heroine is familiar to Ovid's audience because she has already appeared in works of other authors. Each letter is unique and the ways in which the heroines express themselves is distinct. Although each letter is narrated by a heroine, they are truly authored by Ovid and therefore, each heroine's speech is bound to Ovid's own motivations. This creates a constant tension within each text that is the product of the long-established literary tradition and the heroines' interpretation of their roles within the literary tradition. This relationship allows for Ovid to embed dramatic irony into each letter and showcase his authorial wit. This wit is realized in *Heroides* 3, a letter from Briseis, a captive woman, sent to Achilles, the greatest of the Greek soldiers. Ovid allows Briseis an opportunity for speech that is limited in her original text, Homer's *Iliad*. My thesis will examine the relationship between Briseis' epic experience and the construction of her doomed elegiac letter in *Heroides* 3. Ultimately, I will argue that Briseis' failure as an elegiac *puella* is not the result of her attempt at elegiac speech, but of her audience. In an exercise of his authorial power and wit, Ovid elects to retain Achilles' harsh epic nature thereby setting Briseis up for elegiac failure.

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**Table of Contents**

Introduction	p. 1
Chapter 1: The Female Slave in Homer	p. 5
Chapter 2: The Slave in Elegy	p. 15
Chapter 3: Agency and Female Expression	p. 27
Chapter 4: Briseis and the Elegiac Paradigm	p.51
Conclusion	p. 72
Works Cited/Works Consulted	p. 74

## Glossary of Terms

*ancilla* : handmaiden

*anus*: aged woman

*arma* : weapon

*blanditiae*: flatteries

*concessa*: permitted

*docta*: learned

*domina*: mistress

*dominus*: master

*exempla*: example

*fallacia*: deceptive speech

*fama*: reputation

*fortis*: brave

*fortissime*: bravest

*membrum*: penis

*geras* : gift of honour

*ianitor*: door-keeper

*inermis*: unarmed

*lena*: madam

*mollis*: soft

*paraclausithyron*: lament beside a door

*perfide*: faithless

*puella*: girl

*serva*: slave-girl

*servus*: slave-boy

*vilicus*: manager

## Introduction

Ovid's *Heroides* is unique for its presentation of female speech. It is a collection of letters written in elegiac couplets<sup>1</sup>, each one narrated by a different mythological heroine writing to her absent lover. Ovid's heroines are familiar to his audience in that they each appear in the works of earlier authors and have long been established in the literary tradition. The collection as a whole has been criticized for being monotonous and ultimately, univocal<sup>2</sup> but the *Heroides* does not represent a single female voice or experience. Each letter is unique, and though they are linked by the common theme of abandonment, the ways in which the heroines express themselves are distinct<sup>3</sup>. No 'universal' woman can be found within the collection. Ovid grants wives, concubines, foreign queens, sexual deviants, family betrayers, and slave girls alike a site to negotiate and express their experiences with abandonment and betrayal.

Ovid provides his heroines with an opportunity for speech that is limited, if not absent, in the texts that they originally appear in. Ovid finds a way for his heroines to compose their letters despite being in circumstances such as captivity, abandonment on a deserted island, and prison that would make it difficult to access writing instruments and a means to deliver their letters. Each letter is *authored* by Ovid, but *narrated* by a heroine. Each has their own motivations and it is difficult to determine whether or not the heroine's speech is reflective of her motivations or those of the poet. Ultimately, each heroine's speech is bound to the authorial motivations of Ovid. This means that there is a constant tension inherent in each letter.

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<sup>1</sup> Spentzou suggests that Ovid's heroines assume an "elegiac ego"(19) and directs her audience to the work done by Rosati on this topic. See also Thorsen for a discussion of the *Heroides* as "puella poetry" (117)

<sup>2</sup> See Wilkinson (86, 97, 105-106) and Kenney, *Heroides* (1).

<sup>3</sup> Haley, for example, observes that "Penelope's tone is tenderly reproachful, Dido's fretful, Briseis' forgiving, Laodamia's apprehensive, and Phyllis' tinged with the romantic melancholy of sea-worn crags and aging mountains" (16).

The individual details of each heroine's story are significant and instrumental for Ovid, who uses each letter as an opportunity to demonstrate his wit as a poet. For example, Ovid has Penelope compose her letter when Odysseus has already returned to Ithaca<sup>4</sup>. She writes, *nil mihi rescribas attinet: ipse veni/ do not reply to me, but come yourself* (Ov.Her.1.2)<sup>5</sup>, unaware that he has already come back to her. The irony of this line is not lost on Ovid's audience and heightens the tension of the episode: Penelope plans to give the letter to the next visitor, whom the audience knows is actually Odysseus in the guise of a beggar, to deliver to Odysseus. Here, the irony is based on the chronological aspect of the letter. Ovid has paid close attention to Homer's *Odyssey* and selected the opportune moment for Penelope to speak. Both Ovid, as the author, and Penelope, as the narrator, are successful at the conclusion of the letter: Penelope's husband returns to her and Ovid cleverly reworks the events of the *Odyssey*.

Ovid's wit is also realized in *Heroides* 3. He affords Briseis, the captive woman of Achilles, an opportunity to speak. Unlike *Heroides* 1, where both the author and the narrator are successful, in *Heroides* 3 the success of the author can only be fully realized through the failure of the narrator. Ovid cleverly transfers Briseis from epic into the genre of elegy. Verducci argues that:

what Ovid cleverly saw in his Briseis letter was, in part, and admittedly only in part, an occasion to report the events of the heroic age of Greece not only through a female but through a female and servile perspective. It was an occasion to explore the seeming paradox of servile love, and to render into literal terms—from the unorthodox vantage of a woman's perspective—one of the most dominant of all conventions of Roman elegiac poetry, the lover's *servitium amoris*. (99)

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<sup>4</sup> See Kennedy's discussion of the dramatic irony in *Heroides* 1 ("Epistolary Mode" 421-22).

<sup>5</sup> All translations of Latin are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

My thesis will examine the relationship between Briseis' epic experience and the construction of her elegy in *Heroides* 3. In the first chapter, "The Female Slave in Homer", I will examine the role of the female slave in Homer's *Iliad*. I will establish the ways in which the female slave is ascribed status and ascertain Briseis' broader function within the text. I will also illustrate the nature of Briseis' servile experience which will become important in the discussion of Briseis' self-characterization and the ways in which she is seen resisting her status as a slave in her instance of speech in *Heroides* 3.

In chapter two, "The Slave in Elegy", I will outline the functions that slaves fulfill in genre of elegy. I will demonstrate that slaves, though subordinate to their masters, demonstrate agency. The slave has the ability to facilitate or hinder the elegiac love affair and depending on how the slave chooses to act, his or her agency is considered to be appropriate or inappropriate by the poet and his audience. This chapter will outline the dynamics of the elegiac relationship and will be useful in assessing how well Briseis incorporates the elegiac paradigm into the structure of her letter.

In chapter three, "Agency and Female Expression", I will outline the definition of agency and describe the relationship between agency and female expression. I will demonstrate that individuals, specifically vulnerable women, can demonstrate their agency through varied mediums of expression. I will first consider Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and discuss how Daphne, Io, Callisto, Philomela, Byblis and Myrrha express their agency in situations in which they are sexually vulnerable. I will demonstrate that, like the elegiac slave, the expressive acts of these women are presented as either appropriate or inappropriate, depending on the nature of the acts. I will move on to discuss Briseis' self-characterization and her own demonstration of agency in



*Heroides* 3. I will argue that Briseis actively resists her position as a slave in Homer's *Iliad*, and presents herself as an elegiac *puella* instead.

In chapter four, "Briseis and the Elegiac Paradigm", I will outline the criteria which Briseis' letter, as an elegy, must follow. I will demonstrate that Briseis' interpretation, or rather, re-imagination, of her experience in Homer's *Iliad* serves as the basis on which she constructs her elegiac letter to Achilles. I will assess the nature of the relationship between Achilles and Briseis by comparing the depiction of the relationship in different sources and demonstrate that the disconnect that occurs in *Heroides* 3 is rooted in the fact that Achilles retains his harsh epic nature and does not successfully transfer into the genre of elegy. Finally, I will demonstrate that Briseis diligently adheres to the elegiac paradigm and though she fails in persuading Achilles, structurally she presents a convincing elegy to her audience<sup>6</sup>.

Ultimately, I argue that Briseis' failure as an elegiac *puella* is not the result of her speech, but of her audience. Exercising his authorial power and demonstrating his wit, Ovid elects to retain Achilles' epic nature. In doing so, he makes Achilles an unsuitable audience for Briseis' elegy and sets Briseis up for elegiac failure.

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<sup>6</sup> In the context of elegy proper, Briseis' letter itself is not actually a failure. Briseis diligently and appropriately employs elegiac elements in her letter. However, these efforts are in vain because her audience, Achilles, has not transferred over from epic and cannot function as she needs him to within the elegiac paradigm. The elegiac relationship is characterized by a combination of failures and successes (See Propertius 4.7 and 4.8 for a good example of this). Within the *Heroides* as a whole, Ovid's audience witnesses a combination of successes and failures. For example, Penelope finds success while Ariadne is expected to fail from the beginning of her epistle. If Achilles had successfully transformed into an elegiac lover, perhaps we would have seen a subsequent elegy recounting their romantic reunion. This would not be impossible, as Ovid provides his audience with double letters in which a letter written by one lover to the other is followed by a response from the recipient (*Her.* 16-21).

## Chapter 1 The Female Slave in Homer

Slavery, especially of women, was a natural outcome of war in Homeric Greece<sup>7</sup>.

Women who were captured in war became slaves for their captors and underwent a change in their individual status. One's 'day of slavery' (Hom.*Il.*6.463)<sup>8</sup> was synonymous with the loss of one's 'day of liberty' (Hom.*Il.*6.455). It was a source of anxiety among free born Greeks because they knew that their status was not fixed and that they could become slaves at any time, especially in times of war<sup>9</sup>. They believed slavery to be "unavoidable, and... an unknown variable of individual fate" (Andreau and Descat 129). In Homer's *Iliad*, the characters Chryseis and Briseis suffer this turn of fate. Prior to their capture, both women were of free and noble status. Chryseis is the daughter of Chryses, a priest of Apollo. Briseis is a princess of Lyrnessus who becomes the captive woman of Achilles following the sack of Lyrnessus and the slaughter of her family. Andreau and Descat suggest that "the female slave in Homer projects an image of sexual vulnerability that is much greater than that of the freeborn woman (24)". I argue that this sexual vulnerability is not actually realized in Homer's depiction of Chryseis and Briseis. The women are not subjected to a particularly harsh servile experience, a fact that becomes important in understanding the ways in which Briseis characterizes herself in *Heroides* 3.

Although there is the implication that they serve as the sexual companions of the heroes (Hom.*Il.* 1.31, 1.307, 9.660-668), Homer does not portray them as the victims of sexual violence

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<sup>7</sup> See Andreau and Descat for further discussion of slavery in Homeric times (19-26).

<sup>8</sup> All translations of the *Iliad* are Lattimore's (2011), unless otherwise stated.

<sup>9</sup> For a male and female expression of these anxieties in Homer see Hector's speech expressing the concern he has over his wife Andromache and her servile fate ( Hom.*Il.*6.450-458) and Andromache's lamentation over her impending fall into slavery following the death of Hector (Hom.*Il.* 24.730-734).

or corporal punishment. Harris attributes Homer's mild treatment of Chryseis and Briseis to the nature of epic:

This is partly a function of literary genre: more elevated genres as a rule do not depict rough treatment of slaves. By contrast, low genres like comedy make frequent references to beating and whipping slaves. Since epic resembles tragedy and is an elevated genre, one would not expect to find many references to the physical abuse of slaves.(356)<sup>12</sup>

This is a general rule and there are moments in which Homer depicts violence against slave women. For example, upon his return to Ithaca, Odysseus's house slaves are punished for engaging in sexual relationships with Penelope's suitors. This contrasts with the mild treatment of Chryseis and Briseis and the difference is rooted in status. The female house slaves of Odysseus are of lower status than Briseis and Chryseis and they function differently within the text. Household slaves were expected to act in the best interest of their owner,

cum aliter nulla domus tuta esse possit, nisi periculo capitis sui  
custodiam dominis tam ab domesticis quam ab extraneis praestare  
servi cogantur.(Ulp.*Dig.*29.5.1; Krueger & Mommsen 410)

since no household could be safe unless slaves were compelled by danger to their own lives to protect their masters from both familiar enemies and foreign ones.<sup>13</sup>

The suitors of Penelope have corrupted Odysseus's female slaves since,

Is quoque deteriorem facit, qui servo persuadet, ut iniuriam faceret vel furtum vel fugeret  
vel alienum servum ut sollicitaret vel ut peculium intricaret, aut amator existeret  
(Ulp.*Dig.*.11.3.1.5; Krueger & Mommsen 152)

one also makes the slave worse if he persuades him to commit  
injury or theft or to run away or to tempt another person's slave

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<sup>12</sup> Compare with the sexual violence that slaves are subjected to in Latin elegy. For example the rape of Cypassis by Ovid in *Am.*2.8 or that of a slave boy in Catullus 56.

<sup>13</sup> Ulpian, a Roman jurist, was writing in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD and his not necessarily reflective of the Homeric perception of slavery. However, I include this reference here because it provides insight into Ovid's understanding of slavery.

or to forge his *peculium* or to become a lover.

The female slaves of Odysseus were not forced to have sex with the suitors. Odysseus' aged nurse, Eurycleia, provides evidence that only some slavewomen elected to betray Odysseus. She recalls that,

You have fifty serving women here in your palace,  
And these I have taught to work at their own tasks, the carding  
of wool, and how to endure their own slavery. Of these  
fifty, twelve in all have taken to immorality.  
They pay no attention to me, or even to Penelope<sup>14</sup>. (Hom.*Od.*22.421-425)

This betrayal of Odysseus is a demonstration of agency. The slaves are punished by death because they have *willingly* contributed to the damages done against Odysseus. As the property of Odysseus, the women are damaged themselves and as such, they depreciate in value.

Chryseis and Briseis do not depreciate in value because they are not damaged, but they are commodities, like all slaves. Within the *Iliad*, Chryseis and Briseis function primarily as “commodities, exchange objects whose value is defined by the relationship between men, the subjects of exchange” (Staten 339). As commodities, the women are appraised and their value is determined by their physical appearance, status, and potential for economic production. Chryseis and Briseis, as markers of distinction, cannot be damaged because they must retain their symbolic value for the Greek heroes.

A beautiful body was a marker of status and increased the symbolic value of the Homeric slavewoman. Homer repeatedly employs the epithet “fair cheeked” to describe Chryseis and Briseis. This characterization is especially seen in lines that describe the heroes' acquisition and loss of the women (Hom.*Il.*1-142-143, 1.182-185, 1.321-323; 1.346-349, 1.365-370). They are not described as displaying the markings of the whip, which was “the primary symbol of the

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<sup>14</sup> All translations of the *Odyssey* are Lattimore's (1975).

master's power over the slave" (Fitzgerald 33) and distinguished the slave from the free man<sup>15</sup>. The whipped body was unattractive and served as a reminder of the degraded nature of the slave<sup>16</sup>. That Chryseis and Briseis do not bear the markings of the whip is significant as it distinguishes them from other types of slaves. The unmarked body of these two women serves as a reminder that they had not been born into slavery and increases their symbolic value for the Greek heroes.

The beautiful slave afforded the Greek hero a greater status relative to his peers. Agamemnon takes great effort to convince Achilles that Briseis' worth has not been compromised in this way and swears by the gods that "[he] [has] never laid a hand on the girl Briseis on pretext to go to bed with her, or for any other reason" (Hom.*Il.*19.261-262). The women are "markers of distinction" for the Greek soldiers (Staten 342): the beautiful woman increases the total value of the hero's war spoils and distinguishes him from his fellow soldiers. The beautiful woman is also associated with youth and fertility. The female slave who is youthful is of more use to the master, not only in terms of the status she affords him but also for her potential to rear children that will contribute to the labour force of his household. In Homeric Greece "masters exercise their right to the fruits of slaves by exercising the rights of ownership over their children" (Harris 354). The aged woman who becomes a slave experiences different treatment than Chryseis and Briseis<sup>18</sup> because she is not physically desirable<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> Harris notes that Homer does include this imagery in the *Odyssey* (356). For example, Helen explains that Odysseus "flagellated himself with degrading strokes" (Hom.*Od.*4.244) so that he could enter Troy unnoticed.

<sup>16</sup> Ovid asks his beloved, Corinna, *quis Veneris famulae conubia liber inire tergaque conplecti verbere secta velit/ What free man would have sex with a slave girl and wish to embrace a back scarred by the whip?*(*Am.* 2.7.21-22).

<sup>18</sup> Take for example, the fate of the Trojan queen Hecuba that Euripides depicts in his work *Hecuba*.

Within the *Iliad* beauty is quantifiable but the Greek heroes prefer the symbolic status that is attached to a beautiful woman rather than the economic wealth they could accumulate in an exchange for her<sup>20</sup>. The symbolic value of the beautiful woman has no economic equivalent for the Greek hero, a fact that is realized in instances in which the exchange of these women is in question. For example, Chryses “came beside the fast ships of the Achaians to ransom back his daughter, carrying gifts beyond count” (Hom.*Il.*1.12-13). Chryses carries gifts that he has assessed to be equal to or greater than Chryseis’ value to the Greek soldiers. However, Agamemnon is reluctant to accept Chryses’ offer:

because I for the sake of the girl Chryseis would not take  
the shining ransom; and I indeed wish greatly to have her  
in my own house; since I like her better than Klytaimnestra  
my own wife, for in truth she is not way inferior,  
neither in build nor stature nor wit, not in accomplishment. (Hom.*Il.*1.111-115)

Agamemnon has assessed Chryseis to be of high value that cannot be replaced by the sum value of Chryses’ gifts. Agamemnon does eventually return Chryseis to her father but this exchange is not economic in nature. Agamemnon returns her to prevent the Greek soldiers from perishing in

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<sup>19</sup> A similar attitude is found in elegy. Tibullus writes that,  
Iam subrepet iners aetas, nec amare decebit,

Dicere nec cano blanditias capite.

Nunc levis est tractanda venus, dum frangere postes

Non pudet et rixas inseruisse iuvat..( Tib.1.1.71-74)

By now idle old age will have snuck up, and  
it will not be appropriate to love, or to speak  
sweet flatteries with our hair white. Now  
flighty love should drag us, while there is no shame  
to break down doors and enjoy picking fights.

<sup>20</sup> This is not limited to the genre of epic. The Latin elegists also attach economic value to beauty. For example, Horace writes about the selection of suitable girlfriends in *Sat.* 1.2.86-93.

a plague that Chryses, a priest of Apollo, has cursed them with (Hom.*Il.* 1.116-117). This contrasts with Achilles' acceptance of Priam's ransom for Hector's body in which a formalized economic transaction takes place. Priam is seen collecting goods that will equal the price set for Hector's body (Hom.*Il.*24.228-37). When Priam arrives at Achilles' tent, Achilles accepts the ransom as it was "not unworthy" (Hom.*Il.*24.594-5) and he prepares a feast for the two men to share (Hom.*Il.*24.621-7). Once the feast is completed, the men settle upon an appropriate duration for the Trojans to mourn Hector (Hom.*Il.*24.656-70), and in doing so, they establish a treaty of sorts.

When Agamemnon is forced to give up Chryseis, he experiences a diminution of status and power relative to the other Greek soldiers. This is a source of anxiety for the Greek leader and he strives to restore his status and reassert his position as the most powerful among the Greeks. In this economic system, Agamemnon can achieve his goal through the acquisition of another "marker of distinction". Agamemnon seizes Briseis from Achilles to replace Chryseis. Briseis is a suitable replacement because she has been assessed as being of equivalent value to Chryseis in terms of beauty and status. Chryseis and Briseis are of luxury status relative to the other captive women in the Greek camp. Semonides' metaphor of the horse aptly captures this idea:

Another a dainty, long-maned mare engendered. She pushes servile tasks and trouble onto others, and she wouldn't touch a millstone, lift a sieve, throw dung out of the house, or sit by the oven since she avoids soot. And she forces a man to be her lover. Twice every day, sometimes three times, she washes the dirt off her and anoints herself with scents, and she always wears her hair combed out and long, shaded with flowers. Such a

woman is a beautiful sight to others, but for the man who has her as wife she is a plague, unless he is some tyrant or sceptre bearer whose heart delights in such things. (7. 56-69)<sup>21</sup>

Agamemnon and Achilles are the type of men who take pride in such objects. Only the most elite Greek heroes receive luxury items from the collection of war spoils. When Agamemnon expresses his desire to replace Chryseis, he looks only to the captive women of specific men:

Either the great-hearted Achaians shall give me a new prize  
chosen to my desire to atone for the girl lost,  
or else if they will not give me one I myself shall take her,  
your own prize, or that of Aias, or that of Odysseus.(Hom.II. 1.135-8)

Achilles, Ajax, and Odysseus are of elevated status within the Greek camp and they have acquired women of luxury status. These women are not valued for their economic potential. They are forms of “supplementation” (Staten 343) for the Greek heroes and their presence signals the elevated status of the male who possesses them. They are of higher value and therefore demand a higher price in their exchange. When Agamemnon offers Achilles reparations payments for his unlawful seizure of Briseis, he assesses her to be worth seven slave women:

I will give him seven women of Lesbos, the work of whose hands is  
Blameless, whom when he himself captured strong-founded Lesbos  
I chose, and who in their beauty surpassed the races of women.  
I will give him these, and with them shall go the one I took from him,  
(Hom.II. 9.128-131)<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> This translation is Gerber’s (1999)

<sup>22</sup> See Hom.II. 9.636-639 for an additional reference to a quantifiable measure of Briseis’ worth.



The seven women that Agamemnon describes in the passage above are not luxury items, which is why Achilles is unmoved by this offer<sup>23</sup>. Achilles boasts about his many other possessions at home and that he has acquired throughout the course of the Trojan War:

I have many possessions there that I left behind when I came here  
 On this desperate venture, and from here there is more gold, and red bronze,  
 and fair-girdled women, and gray iron I will take back;  
 all that was allotted to me. But my prize: he who gave it;  
 powerful Agamemnon, son of Atreus, has taken it back again  
 ( Hom.*Il.*9.364- 368)

Although Agamemnon does appear to increase the overall value of the Lesbian women by emphasizing their beauty, they lack the symbolic value that Achilles and the other Greek soldiers have ascribed to Briseis. Achilles is not concerned with the loss of Briseis' economic potential and there is no economic equivalent for the diminution of status he experienced when Agamemnon stole her<sup>24</sup>. It is the acquisition and loss of items associated with status that is the central source of tension driving the plot of the *Iliad*. Even though the skilled captive woman has the potential to add to her possessor's wealth, wealth in this context is not synonymous with status. It is status that the Greek heroes strive to accumulate and this status is based on public recognition from the Greek hero's peers.

Agamemnon's offer to Achilles also illustrates that the value of a slave woman could also be determined by her potential to contribute to the economic productivity of her master's household, particularly through wool-working. This was done through the performance of

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<sup>23</sup> In addition, it was Achilles who captured the Lesbian women, not Agamemnon. Agamemnon's offer is not a significant offer of reparation. Instead, it is really only the return of objects that were rightfully Achilles'.

<sup>24</sup> This compares with the genre of elegy in that the elegist's beloved *puella* is seen as irreplaceable and he goes to great lengths to gain exclusive sexual access to her.

*profitable* labour in which case “all the benefits of work done by slaves belong to the master” (Harris 354). Like beauty, the skill of wool-working is appraised and receives a ‘market value’:

Now Peleides set forth the prizes for the third contest,  
 For the painful wrestling, at once, and displayed them before the Danaans.  
 There was a great tripod, to set over fire, for the winner.  
 The Achaians among themselves valued it at the worth of twelve oxen.  
 But for the beaten man he set in their midst a woman  
 skilled in much work of her hands, and they rated her at four oxen. ( Hom.*Il.* 23.700-705)

Wool-working was the primary economic task that women performed in Homeric Greece which explains why it is repeatedly cited as a valuable skill for slave women to have. Wool-working is also an indicator of status in that the type of wool-working a woman completed was reflective of her social status. For example, wool-working completed for the purpose of economic production was often laborious and completed by slaves. Hector laments the idea of Andromache working the loom of her new master (Hom.*Il.* 6.455-458) because it undermines her current status. As the wife of a Trojan prince, Andromache would have had her own slave women fulfilling these tasks. In Euripides’s *Hecuba*, Polyxena, a princess of Troy, also expresses anxiety about performing the tasks of a household slave:

this maybe my lot might give me to some savage master, one that would buy me for money,-me the sister of Hector and many another chief,-who would make me knead him bread within his halls, or sweep his house or set me working at the loom, leading a life of misery. (360- 365)

These elite Trojan women were used to completing wool-working for enjoyment, weaving luxury tapestries as an expressive act<sup>25</sup> rather than for economic necessity. Helen is shown weaving an elaborate robe that depicts the events of the Trojan War (Hom.*Il.*3.125-9). The ability to complete luxurious pieces of weaving is a marker of status and stands in contrast to the wool-working completed by slaves for the economic gain of their masters.

Briseis' role as a luxury object supersedes her status as a captive of war and slave. Her experience as a slave was relatively mild, as it was necessary for her to retain her high symbolic value. Her role as a luxury object for the Greek hero within the *Iliad* provides the background for Ovid to present Briseis in *Heroides* 3 as resistant to her position as a slave and allows her to reposition herself as an elegiac *puella*.

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<sup>25</sup> The feminine act of weaving as an expressive action will be discussed in Chapter 3, "Agency and Female Expression".

## Chapter 2 The Slave in Elegy

The theme of servility is embedded in the genre of elegy. The elegist employs language associated with slavery to describe his relationship. He positions himself as a *servus amoris* (slave of love) and often refers to his beloved *puella* as his *domina* (mistress). The *domina* appears to be in a position of power relative to the poet in that her sexual availability is a reward for the poet rather than an expectation. The elegist gains access to his mistress by employing a variety of techniques: love poetry, flattery, gift-giving, lengthy pledges of fidelity, and the help of slaves as intermediaries. The role of these intermediary slaves will be the focus of this section.

The elegists include multiple instances of the servile relationship in their works. Like the historical slave, the literary slave was *functional* for the poet. Three clear types of slaves emerge in elegy. First, the slave can act as an intermediary by which the elegist gains access or is denied access to his *puella*, or lover. Second, the slave can act as a sexual substitute for the elegist's *puella*. Third, the figure of the slave can act as metaphor for the poet in the narration of his elegiac experience.

Within the genre of elegy as a whole, slaves are both visible and integral to the elegist's plot. The primary function of elegiac slaves is to act as intermediaries and brokers of love. They are instruments who facilitate the elegiac affair. This is especially true in the case of the *ancilla*, the handmaiden of the elegist's *puella*. The *ancilla's* utility to the poet is rooted in her proximity to his *domina*. In Ovid's *Amores*, Nape is the slave of Ovid's *puella*, Corinna. Nape carries out

standard domestic tasks for Corinna as well as the tasks that the poet requires throughout the course of his elegiac love affair (Glaicar 6)<sup>28</sup>:

Colligere incertos et in ordine ponere crines  
                   docta neque ancillas inter habenda Nape,  
 inque ministeriis furtivae cognita noctis  
                   utilis et dandis ingeniosa notis  
 saepe venire ad me dubitantem hortata Corinnam,  
                   saepe laboranti fida reperta mihi—  
 accipe et ad dominam peraratas mane tabellas  
                   perfer et obstantes sedula pelle moras! (1.11.1-8)

Skilled at gathering and arranging Corinna's messy hair,  
 Nape is not to be considered a lowly servant,  
 She is known to be useful in the secret service of night  
 and she cleverly delivers our messages,  
 often ordering hesitant Corinna to come to me,  
 often loyally discovering things while I work hard—  
 Take the messages I have written and hand them to my mistress.  
 Complete the mission and eagerly keep hindering delay away!

In order to successfully complete her task of delivering the tablets to Corinna, the slave must be autonomous (Glaicar 7)<sup>29</sup>. Fitzgerald argues that Nape is,

She is the supplement needed to control meaning that might otherwise slip, for the written message will not bear its intended sense unless delivered at the right moment, and with the right instruction for response, which is a matter for judgement on the spur of the moment. (62)

In the absence of the elegist, Nape must assess the situation and act without his direction. Ovid's romantic success with Corinna is dependent upon Nape's best judgement. Nape requires agency

<sup>28</sup> It is important to note that Ovid is not the rightful master of Nape, Corinna is. Technically, he is not supposed to give orders to Nape, at least not without Corinna's permission. This will be discussed in greater detail at a later point within this chapter.

<sup>29</sup> The selection of an appropriate go-between for the poet parallels the historical master's selection of a *vilicus* (manager). See Columella's outline of the ideal traits of a *vilicus* (*Rust.* 1.8).

in order to complete her task and ensure Ovid's success<sup>30</sup>. A central paradox of the servile relationship is realized here: agency is only desirable in a slave when it benefits the master. Ovid recognizes that Nape is clever and he relies on her to act on his behalf and successfully deliver his tablets to Corinna. Once Nape has received the tablets from Ovid, she can decide whether or not she chooses to help him. If she elects to deliver Ovid's messages to Corinna, she will be praised by him for her independence and cleverness. However, if she does not help facilitate Ovid's love affair, Nape's agency will be perceived by the poet as problematic and Nape will be criticized by the poet. Columella provides a useful illustration of this paradox:

ac plerumque velocior animus est improborum hominum, quem desiderat huius operis conditio. Non solum enim fortem, sed et acuminis strenui ministrum postulat, ideoque vineta plurimum per alligatos excoluntur. (*Rust.* 1.9.4-5)

and the most disobedient of men have sharper minds, which is desirable for the nature of this work. For it is necessary that the worker is not only strong, but that he also possesses a keen mind. For this reason, the vineyards are cultivated by slaves in chains.

The slave must be clever enough to act in the best interest of the master, but not so clever that he or she acts in self-interest and betrays the master<sup>31</sup>.

Like the *ancilla*, the *anus* (aged woman) can act as an intermediary for the elegist. She facilitates the love affair and serves as a role model for the *puella*. Tibullus relies upon the *anus* of Delia to physically orchestrate the affair. He acknowledges the role that the *anus* fulfills for him:

non ego te propter parco tibi, sed tua mater  
me movet atque iras aurea vincit anus.

<sup>30</sup> See also Fitzgerald's discussion of Nape's agency (61).

<sup>31</sup> The slave who contributes to the success of his or her master is likely to benefit from this success. For example, the successful slave owner could offer his slaves a *peculium* or *praeposito* (Andreau and Descat 81-87) or reward them with manumission and therefore, freedom.



man who offers wealth (1.5. 59- 66). The elegist's perception of the aged woman is dependent upon the nature of her agency. The *anus* is praised for her agency because she reinforces the poet's ideal status quo, while the *lena* who resists the status quo is presented as a negative feature and blamed for the poet's romantic failure.

In addition to the *ancilla* and *anus*, the *ianitor* (door-keeper) acts as an intermediary in the elegiac affair. The door-keeper functions as broker of love in that he controls the poet's physical access to his *domina* (Glaicar 7). In his *Amores*, Ovid orders Corinna's door-keeper to open the door and delivers a *paraclausithyron*<sup>32</sup>:

Excute! sic, inquam, longa relevere catena,  
                   nec tibi perpetuo serva bibatur aqua!  
 ferreus orantem nequiquam, ianitor, audis,  
                   roboribus duris ianua fulta riget.  
 urbibus obsessis clausae munimina portae  
                   prosunt; in media pace quid arma times?  
 quid facies hosti, qui sic excludis amantem?  
                   tempora noctis eunt; excute poste seram!(1.6.25-32)

Open up! Then, I say that you'll be free from your long chains,  
                   and you will not drink slave water forever!  
 Hard doorkeeper, you do not listen to the one who is begging you,  
                   the door stands rigid, supported by hard oak.  
 Shut doors benefit cities obsessed with defence;  
                   What do you fear in the middle of peace?  
 What will you do to the enemy, you who shut out the lover in the same way?

Here, Ovid appears dependent on the slave and the audience witnesses a temporary reversal of the servile relationship. The slave, although he is in chains, ignores the poet's commands and denies Ovid access to Corinna (Glaicar 8). This expression of resistance is appropriate because

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<sup>32</sup> *Paraclausithyron* is generally accepted to mean "lament beside the door" (Canter 356). See Francis Cairns (5-6) for a detailed discussion of the *paraclausithyron*.



the slave does not belong to Ovid and Ovid does not legally exercise control over him. Ovid attempts to persuade the shackled door-keeper with empty promises of freedom<sup>33</sup> and reminders of the ways in which Ovid has treated the slave benevolently (*Am.* 1.6.19-28). The nature of the door-keeper's agency contrasts with that of Nape. The door-keeper actively resists the poet, while Nape complies with the poet's requests. As a result, Nape is praised for her agency because it benefits Ovid. The door-keeper's agency is resented by the poet and considered to be an inappropriate act of expression.

### Slave as a Sexual Substitute

Unlike Nape, Ovid's 'thinking tool', the female slave who acts as a sexual substitute for the poet exercises limited agency. She acts in compliance with the poet's desires as a means of self-preservation. It is not in her best interest to act in resistance to the poet because she risks punishment. She is objectified and James argues that "her individuality is erased, replaced by a representation of generic characteristics of service both domestic and sexual to those who have power over her" ("Slave Rape" 68). This function is best realized in *Amores* 2.7 and 2.8 in which Ovid explores the dynamics of the sexual servile relationship. Ovid first introduces Cypassis to his audience in *Amores* 2.7 while declaring his sexual loyalty to Corinna. Corinna charges Ovid with the crime of having sex with her hairdresser Cypassis (*Am.* 2.7.17-18). Ovid uses Cypassis' position as a slave as the primary evidence for his innocence:

di melius, quam me, si sit peccasse libido,  
 sordida contemptae sortis amica iuuet!  
 quis Veneris famulae conubia liber inire  
 tergaque complecti verbere secta velit? (*Am.* 2.7.19-22).

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<sup>33</sup> The door-keeper is not the slave of Ovid. He belongs to Ovid's *puella* or her *vir* and as such, Ovid does not have the legal ability to manumit the slave.

Gods, think better of me than to have sinned in lust,  
 and to have taken pleasure with an ugly girlfriend of the disgraced lot!  
 What free man would take a slave-girl as a lover  
 and would wish to embrace a back scarred by the whip?

Ovid claims that engaging in a sexual relationship with a slave would be shameful for him. The marks of the whip on Cypassis' back are unattractive. They represent degradation and are undesirable to the elite poet. They stand in contrast to the beautiful body of Corinna, a free woman. Following his denial of infidelity to Corinna, the poet turns his sexual attention to Cypassis in *Amores* 2.8. The juxtaposition of *Amores* 2.7 and 2.8 highlights Ovid's wit: Ovid attempts to seduce Cypassis with *blanditiae* (flatteries). He compliments her skill as a hair dresser and lover (*Am.*2.8.1). James argues that the initial line that is "ostensibly designed to restore her individuality by praising her skills actually underscores her generic status as a domestic slave vulnerable to the wrath of her *domina*" ("Slave Rape" 68). When this flattery fails Ovid, he proceeds to pursue Cypassis by means of a more aggressive and forceful seductive method:

Pro quibus officiis pretium mihi dulce repende  
 concubitus hodie, fusca Cypassi, tuos!  
 quid renuis fingisque novos, ingrata, timores?  
 unum est e dominis emeruisse satis.  
 quod si stulta negas, index anteacta fatebor,  
 et veniam culpae proditor ipse meae,  
 quoque loco tecum fuerim, quotiensque, Cypassi,  
 narrabo dominae, quotque quibusque modis! (*Am.*2.8. 21-28).

On behalf of the services I provided to you, pay me the sweet price  
 of sex with you, dark Cypassis!  
 Why do you deny me and invent new fears, ungrateful girl?  
 It is enough to have satisfied one of your masters  
 but if you foolishly deny me, I, as an informer, shall confess what we have already done  
 and I, myself, shall come as a betrayer of my own crime,  
 I will also tell your mistress the place I met with you, how many times,

and how many ways and what positions they were!

Ovid uses threats to coerce Cypassis into having sex with him. He takes advantage of the power differential inherent in servile relationships and ultimately, rapes the slave (Glaicar 9). James argues that Cypassis is “forced by her social and legal status to be silent and endure rape, or risk at least physical punishment” (“Slave Rape” 60). Unlike Corinna, who has the right to deny the poet sexual access, Cypassis cannot. As a slave, she does not have a choice whether or not to comply with the sexual demands of the poet. If she resists the poet, Ovid will disclose the affair to Corinna. Cypassis will be blamed for the affair and suffer corporal punishment for the betrayal of her mistress<sup>34</sup>, despite the violent nature of the affair. In either scenario, her body will become a site of abuse because the slave lacks authority over the treatment of her body. This contrasts with the *puella* who controls her sexual availability and uses sexuality as a mechanism of control over the poet.

### **The Metaphor of the Slave**

The term *servitium amoris* is used to describe the elegist’s state of servility (Lyne 121). As we have seen already, the poet often refers to his mistress as his *domina* and is a self-declared *servus amoris* (Glaicar 10). After dedicating himself to *servitium amoris*, the elegist deliberately isolates himself from his peers. This isolation is dual. First, the elegist distinguishes himself from the poets who pursued the genre of epic. He elects to find value in his love poetry rather than in prestige that is achieved through the composition and circulation of epic poetry. This notion is expressed in the works of both Propertius and Ovid (Glaicar 11). The former, expressing his isolation from epic poets, writes,

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<sup>34</sup> In this regard, being a female is similar to being a slave because the violated free woman, like Philomela, is afraid that she has betrayed her sister (Ov. *Met.* 6.533-8) Procne, despite the fact that she was an unwilling participant in this betrayal.

Dum tibi Cadmeae dicuntur, Pontice, Thebae  
 armaque fraternae tristia militiae,  
 atque, ita sim felix, primo contendis Homero  
 (sint modo fata tuis mollia carminibus),  
 nos, ut consuemus, nostros agitamus amores,  
 atque aliquid duram quaerimus in dominam. (1.7.1-6)

While you speak about Cadmus and Thebes, Ponticus,  
 and the sad weapons of brotherly battle,  
 and, may I be so happy, you try to battle with Homer  
 ( may the fates be only soft on your songs),  
 I, as I pass my time, pursue my love affairs  
 and seek something against my harsh mistress.

Propertius feels that he was not given the talent to write epic and he attributes this lack of talent to the Fates. He laments,

quod mihi si tantum, Maecenas, fata dedissent,  
 ut possem heroas ducere in arma manus.(2.1.17-18)  
 If only the fates had given so much talent to me, Maecenas,  
 that I could lead bands of heroes into war.

Ovid expresses a similar sentiment:

Arma gravi numero violentaque bella parabam  
 edere, materia conveniente modis.  
 par erat inferior versus—risisse Cupido  
 dicitur atque unum surripuisse pedem. (*Am.*1.1.1-4)

I was preparing to speak about weapons and violent war,  
 with a meter that was fitting for the material.  
 It was suitable for a lesser verse—it is said that Cupid laughed  
 and snatched away one foot!

The elegist believed his inferiority to be the result of divine intervention. That being said, it is the poet's choice to write elegy. For example, Propertius tells his audience that even if he could write epic he would not want to (2.1. 19-26). He embraces the social inferiority that the choice of

elegy will result in because it is important to him to provide his audience with high quality poetry<sup>35</sup>.

The elegist experienced a second form of isolation in that he isolated himself from elite Roman men who pursued military *fama* (glory). Both Propertius and Ovid acknowledge this alienation in their texts but they address it in two different ways. For Propertius, his decision to engage in love affairs is a demonstration of his agency. He chooses to write elegy because he is well-suited for it (Glaicar 12):

navita de ventis, de tauris narrat arator,  
 enumerat miles vulnera, pastor ovis;  
 nos contra angusto versantes proelia lecto:  
 qua pote quisque, in ea conerat arte diem. (2.1.43-46)

The ploughman talks about the bulls, the sailor about the winds,  
 the soldier counts his wounds, the shepherd his flocks;  
 I count twisting battles in a narrow bed:  
 Let each man spend his time where he can and doing his own art.

He recognizes that he is likely being scrutinized for his decision but he is dismissive of this scrutiny and claims that *laus in amore mori/ it is glorious to die for love* (2.1.47). Propertius need not acquire military fame and glory because his elegies record and immortalize his glory as a lover (Glaicar 13).

Ovid attempts to justify his decision to engage in battles of love. Like Propertius, who *nos contra angusto versantes proelia lecto/counts [his] twisting battles in a narrow bed* (2.1.45), Ovid draws similarities between the Roman soldier and himself<sup>36</sup>. He asserts that *militat omnis amans, et habet sua castra Cupido/ Attice, crede mihi, militat omnis amans/every lover is a soldier and its camp is held by Cupid. Believe me Atticus, every lover is a soldier* (Am.1.9.1-2).

<sup>35</sup> See Catullus 14 and Martial 2.86 in which they both complain about bad epic poets.

<sup>36</sup> See Drinkwater for an in-depth discussion of the figure of the soldier in elegy (194-206).

Ovid compares the soldier's battle to that of elegist: he must gain access to his *domina*, conquer her harshness and secure her attention. In doing so, Ovid outrageously portrays his own task as being more difficult than that of the soldier and he in turn criticizes those who pursue military war as being lazy (*Am.* 1.9.46).

In reality, the suffering of the elegist was mild in comparison to that of the ordinary Roman soldier. The Roman soldier had more in common with the Roman slave than he did with the elegist. Like the slave, the soldier was subordinate to the leader of the army, stripped of his individuality, and subjected to corporal punishment. A few decades after Ovid's writing, Josephus writes about the harsh life of the Roman soldier<sup>37</sup>:

they do not sit with folded hands in peace time only to put them in motion in the hour of need. On the contrary, as though they had been born with weapons in hand, they never have a truce from training, never wait for emergencies to arise. Moreover, their peace manœuvres are no less strenuous than veritable warfare; each soldier daily throws all his energy into his drill, as though he were in action. Hence that perfect ease with which they sustain the shock of battle: no confusion breaks their customary formation, no panic paralyses, no fatigue exhausts them; and as their opponents cannot match these qualities, victory is the invariable and certain consequence. Indeed, it would not be wrong to describe their manœuvres as bloodless combats and their combats as sanguinary manœuvres. (*BJ.* 3.72-77)<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Josephus, like the elegist, strives to justify his defeat and make it more acceptable by elevating the skill of the Roman soldier. This also parallels Briseis and Helen's praise of their respective captors in that the women present themselves as gracious slaves to their masters in the hopes that they will be receive mild treatment.

<sup>38</sup> This translation is Thackeray's (1927).

In contrast, the elegist's life was full of pleasure. The only weapon he wielded was his *membrum* (penis)<sup>39</sup> which he employed in battles in the bedroom with his *puella*. He could not even maintain his one weapon and was easily fatigued by his intimate battles. Ovid writes:

hanc tamen in nullos tenui male languidus usus,  
                   sed iacui pigro crimen onusque toro;  
 nec potui cupiens, pariter cupiente puella,  
                   inguinis effeti parte iuvante frui. (*Am.* 3.7.3-6)

I was exhausted, but still I held her in vain, for I was of no use,  
                   and I lie as a shame and burden on an indle bed;  
 And though I was eager, and she was equally eager, I could not  
                   enjoy the pleasing part of my worn-out member.

The failure of his *membrum* leaves Ovid *inermis* (unarmed) (*Am.*3.7.71) and unprepared for further battles—a position that the ordinary Roman soldier would never be in.

The elegist romanticizes the lives of the Roman slave and soldier servitude as a means of demonstrating his position within the elegiac affair. Although the poet cleverly argues for his condition of subordination, only a free person had the leisure to become a slave to love. Unlike the slave and the soldier, who had to fulfill certain obligations in order to be manumitted (in the case of the slave) or discharged from war, the elegist was free to abandon his post at any time and regain his position as an elite Roman man.

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<sup>39</sup>See Kennedy for a discussion on the figures of sexuality that are present within Roman love elegy ( *Arts of Love* 59-63).

### Chapter 3 Agency and Female Expression

Within the social sciences: anthropology and sociology, and the humanities, in particular philosophy, agency is personal and a means to understand the relationship between the actions of individuals and social structures. Sociologists Gubrium and Holstein argue that “agency serves to accountably describe and explain what is said and done” (556) while Kockleman reminds his reader that “we make ourselves, but not under conditions of our own choosing” (376). All three of these observations become relevant in the discussion of female speech in the Ovidian corpus.

While the concept of agency has been useful in scholarship that considers the relationship between individual actions and societal expectations, its utility extends to literary analysis. Within texts, individual narrators and individual characters can demonstrate agency. In practice theory, agentive “actions are always already socially, culturally, and linguistically constrained (Ahearn 13). In literature, the agentive actions of narrators and characters are constrained by the motivations of the author. It is typical of poetic language to be ambiguous and open to multiple interpretations. This makes it possible for an author’s characters to appear to work against the motivations of the author and demonstrate their agency within texts.

Ovid seems as interested in demonstrating the agency of his female narrators and female characters as he is in that of his male characters. He recognizes the power of expression and grants his women the ability to express themselves in a variety of ways. Agentive actions are varied and can be classified into distinct categories. Ahearn suggests that although “some scholars use *agency* as a synonym for resistance, most practice theorists maintain that agentive acts may also involve complicity with, accommodation to, or reinforcement of the status quo, sometimes all at the same time” (13).



Expression for Ovid's women takes multiple forms and is not limited to speech. Ovid's female narrators, specifically those of the *Heroides*, express themselves through the writing of letters. The nature of their agency is realized in the structure and content of these letters. Briseis, the narrator of *Heroides* 3 and the focus of this thesis, expresses resistance to the status quo of her social position in her letter. Originally a foreign princess, Briseis undergoes a change in status quo when she is captured in the Trojan War and becomes the slave of Achilles. Briseis uses her letter as a means to negotiate her social position. Within the *Iliad*, Briseis' expressions are limited and restricted to a specific moment of time that is appropriate for female speech—at the funeral of Patroclus. In *Heroides* 3, Briseis actively rewrites her role in the *Iliad* and puts forth a version in which she presents herself as an elegiac *puella*. As the narrator, this is an appropriate expressive act of resistance and it has been “approved” by Ovid. Ovid allows Briseis to act in resistance to the text of the *Iliad* because it contributes to *his* success as the author<sup>40</sup>.

Female expression and its reception is varied within the Ovidian corpus. The expressive act of writing can also be seen as inappropriate. Ovid's Byblis writes a letter to her brother in which she discloses her incestuous love for him (*Met.* 9). In doing so, Byblis is presented as actively resisting social order and natural law. She becomes alienated from her external audience, Ovid's readers, who are disapproving of this display of agency and Ovid instructs his audience not to model their expressions after Byblis' example. Ovid's women also demonstrate their agency through speech and their expressions are considered to be appropriate or inappropriate. The woman, like Philomela, who actively resists her rape through speech is praised and this expressive act is considered to appropriate. On the other hand, Ovid's Myrrha, who expresses love for her father through speech, is criticized. Like Byblis, her expression

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<sup>40</sup> This point will be discussed in greater detail in the section, “Briseis' Self-Characterization”, and throughout Chapter 4, “Briseis and the Elegiac Paradigm”.

actively challenges social norms and is an inappropriate act. In this instance, silence would have been the appropriate action.

There is a special category of Ovidian women, vulnerable women, whose acts of expression are less sophisticated than writing or speech but no less powerful or significant. For example, Daphne and Io express themselves with movement. The nature of their agency is fluid. Initially, they are seen actively resisting their rapes: Daphne through flight and Io through fight. Although their expressive acts of resistance fail, the women retain their agency. They are seen renegotiating their positions and expressing themselves accordingly.

In offering women a site for expression, Ovid affords them a degree of agency within his texts that is striking. That this agency is *granted* by Ovid does not undermine its significance. Ovid allows women to express their reactions to their roles within texts. The female narrators of the *Heroides* are given the space to express their lived experiences and, more importantly, he allows them to challenge the authority of the male-centric texts in which they originally appear. In providing a site for the expression of vulnerable women, Ovid presents them to his audience as agents rather than passive victims. He gives them a narrative voice in situations where silence is expected. Whether Ovid's women are successful in their expressive acts or not is irrelevant. The point is that they express themselves with authority and use expression to negotiate and react to the positions they have been ascribed within the literary tradition.

### **Vulnerable Women and Expressive Acts in Ovid's *Metamorphoses***

In his *Metamorphoses*, Ovid includes multiple instances of female narrative. This is typical for the author who “[seemed] to have had an unusual inclination to see things from their view” (Wilkinson 86) and whose “work gives space to a female voice, in however problematic a manner” (Sharrock 95). Often, the women to whom Ovid affords a voice are sexually vulnerable<sup>41</sup> and they have lost their capacity for verbal speech<sup>42</sup>. However, Ovid’s women display agency and find alternative means of expression during times that verbalization is not possible.<sup>43</sup> A hierarchy in the medium of expression emerges. This hierarchy is based on the nature of the sexual relationship that the female is trying to express to her audience. Those women who are raped by a god, like Daphne, Io, and Callisto express themselves through simple expressive acts while those women who have deviant sexual desires, like Byblis or Myrrha, express themselves through more sophisticated mediums of expression.

#### **Daphne**

Ovid’s first illustration of the relationship between sexual vulnerability and expression is realized in his account of Phoebus’ rape of Daphne. Daphne becomes the object of Phoebus’ sexual desire (Ov. *Met.* 1.490-501) and as a virgin nymph, she flees from him (Ov. *Met.* 1.502). He eventually overwhelms Daphne (Ov. *Met.* 1.540-2) and she begs her father to transform her so that her body is not violated by the god (Ov. *Met.* 1.545- 6). Daphne is transformed into a laurel tree (Ov. *Met.* 1.548-552) but this transformation does not protect her from sexual violation:

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<sup>41</sup> See Salzman-Mitchell’s comprehensive study of the relationship between the male’s “intrusive gaze” and female vulnerability (22-65).

<sup>42</sup> Ovid also includes narrative accounts of men who are punished with the loss of voice for inappropriate expressions of sexual desires, such as Actaeon (*Met.* 3.131-250), or for inappropriate speech in general, such as Corvus (*Met.* 2.532-632).

hanc quoque Phoebus amat, positaque in stipites dextra  
 sentit adhuc trepidare novo sub cortice pectus,  
 complexusque suis ramos, ut membra, lacertis  
 oscula dat lingo; refugit tamen oscula lignum.(1.553-556)

Still, Phoebus loves her, and with his right hand placed on her trunk,  
 he feels her heart still beating under her new bark,  
 and joining her branches with his arms, as if they were limbs,  
 he gives kisses to the tree, nevertheless, the tree recoils from his kisses.

In her new form, Daphne lacks the human capacity to speak. She cannot verbalize her consent or lack thereof and is forced to find an alternative medium of expression. In the above passage, Ovid's employment of the verb *refugit* is significant. When he describes Daphne's initial flight (*Met.* 1.502) he uses the verb *fugit*. In adding the prefix *re* to the verb, the compound verb takes on an alternative meaning: to recoil. In her new form as a tree, Daphne cannot literally flee away from Apollo. Still, Ovid finds a medium for her to express her resistance and he depicts her as recoiling her branches (*refugit*) from the god's embraces (*Ov.Met.* 1.556). However, Phoebus is unmoved by Daphne's acts of resistance. He continues on to express his desire to make the laurel his sacred tree (*Ov.Met.* 1.557-65) thereby forcing Daphne to be linked to him permanently in both a physical and symbolical sense. Daphne responds to this expression of desire:

finierat Paean: factis modo laurea ramis  
 adnuit utque caput visa est agitasse cacumen. (*Ov.Met.* 1.566-7)

He finishes his lament: now the laurel waves with her newly formed branches  
 and it seems to Apollo that her head-like top nodded in approval.

The message that is embedded in Daphne's movement is unclear to her audience and open for interpretation. Ovid's employment of the verb *adnuit* demonstrates that he has interpreted Daphne's movement to be a nod of consent and acceptance of her new role (*Met.* 1.567). This contrasts with his usage of the verb *refugit* a few lines earlier. The prefix *ad* indicates the

forward motion of Daphne and functions as evidence for her compliance. However, an audience who has seen Daphne's multiple acts of resistance is more likely to read Daphne's movement as an act of resistance rather than compliance. In affording Daphne a limited medium of expression, Ovid ensures that her message is left ambiguous and open to interpretation. So, although she expresses herself to the best of her ability, the meaning of Daphne's message is indeterminate for her audience. However, the failure of Daphne to successfully deliver her intended message does not undermine her individual agency. Her movement (*adnuit*), whether it is a sign of consent or refusal, is an agentive act and a renegotiation of her position within the text.

### Io

The next instance of sexual vulnerability occurs in Ovid's narration of the rape of Io. Like Daphne, Io becomes the object of a god's sexual desire. While Jupiter is expressing his desires, Io is given an opportunity to exhibit agency and act in resistance. She flees from Jupiter (*Ov.Met.1.597*), but, like Daphne before her, she is unsuccessful and raped by the god who *tenuitque fugam rapuitque pudorem/he prevented her flight and snatched away her virginity* (*Ov.Met.1.600*). He transforms Io into a heifer so that her rape will go unnoticed by Juno (*Ov.Met.1.610-12*). With this transformation, Io loses her ability to speak. Io's initial attempts at communication are limited, just as those of Daphne's were. She attempts to communicate her plight to her father and sisters by means of physical movements:

at illa patrem sequitur sequiturque sorores  
 et patitur tangi seque admirantibus offert.  
 decerptas senior porrexerat Inachus herbas;  
 illa manus lambit patriisque dat oscula palmis. (*Ov.Met.1.643-646*)  
 and she follows her father and she follows her sisters  
 and she tries to be touched and she offers herself to be praised.  
 Old Inachus offered her herbs that he had plucked;

she licks his hands and gives kisses to the palms of her father.

Her efforts are in vain as Inachus and Io's sisters are unable to establish the link between her movements and the meaning of the movements. Io goes unrecognized but Ovid permits Io to find a means to successfully deliver her message<sup>44</sup>. Though she is forlorn and laments the loss of her voice, Briseis is not defeated. Displaying her resourcefulness, she employs an alternative medium of expression that is possible in her new bovine form and recognizable to humans:

nec retinet lacrimas et, si modo verba sequantur,  
 oret opem nomenque suum casusque loquatur.  
 littera pro verbis, quam pes in pulvere duxit,  
 corporis indicium mutata triste peregit. (*Ov. Met.* 1.647-50)

and she could not hold back her tears, if only words would follow,  
 then she might ask for help and tell them her name and her misfortunes.  
 letters instead of words, which her hoof drew in the sand,  
 as the proof that disclosed the sad change of her body.

Though it is relatively unsophisticated, this attempt at communication is successful for Io. Inachus recognizes her and proceeds to lament her fate (*Ov. Met.* 1.651-63). Inachus' lamentation draws the attention of Argus, the guard of Io, and he carries her off to an isolated mountain top (*Ov. Met.* 1. 666-7). This evokes the pity of Jupiter, who does not want to see Io continue to suffer. He orders Mercury to slay Argus (*Ov. Met.* 1.670) and in doing so, angers Juno. Just as before, Juno blames Io for Jupiter's actions and forces her to wander across the world, lonely and followed by a Fury (*Ov. Met.* 1.724-7). Thus, Io's expression can be seen as resulting in a new form of suffering. The loss of Io's voice was a punishment exacted by Juno. By finding an alternative means of expression, Io actively defied the goddess' divine will and becomes a threat

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<sup>44</sup> Ovid allows Io to find an alternative medium of expression so that he can fulfill his authorial goals. He requires Io to give birth to Epaphus so that he can begin his narration of the myth of Phaethon.

once again. Eventually, Jupiter is able to placate Juno and he successfully implores her to relent in her punishment of Io (Ov.*Met.* 1.734-7). Io then undergoes a second transformation and regains her human form (Ov.*Met.* 1.738-43) and thus, her capacity to speak. However, Io is left so traumatized by her initial loss of voice that she chooses to remain silent at first:

erigitur metuitque loqui, ne more iuvencae  
 mugiat, et timide verba intermissa retemptat. (Ov.*Met.* 1.745-6)  
 She was scared, and afraid to speak, lest she groan in the manner of a heifer,  
 until fearfully, she tried to speak again the words that she had avoided fearfully.

Ovid's selection of the verb *retemptat* is witty and parallels his employment of *refugit* in Daphne's narrative episode. In the same way that he uses the prefix *re* to emphasize Daphne's agentive act of moving her body away from Apollo, Ovid uses *re* to highlight Io's decision to try to speak again. While Io's initial decision to remain silent may be interpreted as defeat, it ends up creating a contrast with the moment she attempts to speak again. When she expresses herself, it is her decision.

### Callisto

Like Io, Callisto becomes the object of Jupiter's sexual desire (Ov. *Met.* 2.409-10). Callisto is a beautiful member of Diana's band of virginal nymphs. Jupiter presents himself as Diana and uses speech (Ov.*Met.* 2.425-7) to gain intimate proximity to Callisto without revealing his infidelity to his wife, Juno (Ov.*Met.* 2.423-4). Under this guise, Jupiter rapes the nymph who, like Daphne, displays agency and acts in resistance to Jupiter's desires. Ovid highlights this agency:

illa quidem contra, quantum modo femina posset  
 (aspiceres utinam, Saturnia: mitior esse)  
 illa quidem pugnat; sed quem superare puella,

quisve Iovem poterat? (*Met.*2.434-7)

Indeed she fought against him, as much as a girl could  
( would that you had seen her, Juno, you might be softer)  
indeed she fought; but what girl  
was able to overcome Jupiter?

Callisto's efforts of resistance are in vain and ultimately, she is raped by the god. As a nymph of Diana, a virgin goddess, Callisto elects to remain silent about her rape (*Ov.Met.*2.450). This silence and blushing is an involuntary medium of expression for Callisto, but it is not received by Diana<sup>45</sup> because she has not experienced her own loss of virginity:

sed silet et laesi dat signa rubore pudoris;  
et nisi quod virgo est, poterat sentire Diana (*Ov.Met.*2.450-2).  
But she is silent and she gives the signs of her injured virginity with a blush;  
and, if she were not a virgin, Diana could have understood.

However, Callisto's body betrays her when it begins to show the signs of pregnancy (*Ov.Met.*2.460-4). With her pregnancy revealed, Callisto is banished from Diana's band of virgin nymphs (*Ov.Met.*2.464-5). Diana cares little about the circumstances which lead to Callisto's loss of virginity and Callisto's lived experience of suffering remains unexpressed. Callisto experiences alienation on multiple levels. First, she is alienated from her own physical body. Callisto did not consent to the loss of her virginity and she is left violated and pregnant. Second, Callisto is alienated from her fellow nymphs who exclude her from their group because she is no longer virginal. Callisto is left to carry the burden and reminder of her rape with no support. She gives birth to a son, Arcas, and like Io, becomes the object of Juno's wrath (*Ov.Met.*2.468-70).

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<sup>45</sup> It is likely that Callisto's fellow nymphs established the link between Callisto's blushing and the loss of her virginity because it is common for nymphs to be raped by the gods in the mythological tradition.



Juno transforms Callisto into a bear as both a punishment and a preventative measure: she hopes Callisto's new form will prevent Jupiter from pursuing further affairs with her. Ovid provides a rich description of Callisto's transformation and emphasizes the loss of Callisto's voice:

Officioque pedum fungi laudataque quondam  
 ora Iovi lato fieri deformia rictu  
 neve preces animos et verba precantia flectant  
 posse loqui eripitur; vox iracunda minaxque  
 plenaque terroris rauco de gutture fertur. (*Met.*2.480-4)

and curved claws stood in the place of her feet and her lips, once praised by Jupiter became wide and ugly jaws  
 and so that her prayers and entreating words would not move Jove's spirit,  
 her ability to speak was seized and her voice became angry and threatening  
 and it bore plenty of fear from her rough throat.

The loss of speech as a punishment is deliberate—Juno considers Callisto's ability to speak to be a threat to her relationship with Jupiter. For Callisto, the loss of her speech is not only a punishment but it makes her vulnerable. She becomes the target of Arcas' hunting spear and tries to communicate with her son using her eyes. He does not recognize her and her message is not delivered (*Ov.Met.*2.500-4)<sup>46</sup>. Jupiter intervenes and transforms them into constellations (*Ov.Met.*2.505-7). While Callisto's final transformation prevents her from employing any medium of expressions, her position in the sky as a constellation makes her an expression in and of herself. As a constellation, Callisto acts as a sign for ancient travellers. Callisto's new form of expression is still ambiguous in that it is open to the interpretation of her audience. Her meaning

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<sup>46</sup> This parallels Io's failure in communicating with Inachus with physical displays of affection. The family members of both women require a more sophisticated medium of expression for their messages to be meaningful to and understood by their respective audiences.

can only be realized by those individuals who are experienced in navigating by the reading of the constellations.

### **Philomela**

Whereas Daphne, Callisto, and Io use physical movement to express resistance to their sexual violations, Philomela expresses her resistance through speech. Philomela attracts the attention of her brother-in-law, Tereus, when she comes to visit her sister, Procne. Tereus rapes Philomela who, like Daphne, is seen actively resisting her rape:

o diris barbare factis,  
o crudelis' ait, 'nec te mandata parentis  
cum lacrimis movere piis nec cura sororis  
nec mea virginitas nec coniugalia iura?  
omnia turbasti; paelex ego facta sororis,  
tu geminus coniunx, hostis mihi debita Procne! (Ov.*Met.*6.533-8)  
“Oh barbarous and wretched one, you have done a horrible thing”  
she said and “do the orders of my father  
with his pious tears or concern for my sister  
or my virginity or marriage laws move you not at all?”

Initially, Philomela appeals to Tereus’ legal and moral obligations but she experiences little success so she prays to the gods, a powerful expressive act, to try to prevent her rape:

si tamen haec superi cernunt, si numina divum  
sunt aliquid, si non perierunt omnia mecum,  
quandocumque mihi poenas dabis! ipsa pudore  
proiecto tua facta loquar: si copia detur,  
in populos veniam; si silvis clausa tenebor,  
inplebo silvas et conscia saxa movebo;  
audiet haec aether et si deus ullus in illo est! (Ov.*Met.*6.544-48)  
If nevertheless, the gods above see this crime, if there are any  
spirits, if everything has not perished with me,

whenever you give punishment to me! I myself, having let go  
of my shame, I will proclaim your actions: If the opportunity should be given,  
I shall come upon the people and speak out; if I am held, hidden in the woods,  
I will fill up the trees with my tale, and I will move the knowing rocks;  
The sky shall hear the story and if there is any god in the sky, he shall hear it too!

Whereas Daphne resisted Apollo through flight, Philomela uses speech to attempt to resist Tereus and prevent her rape. For two reasons, her speech is appropriate and permitted, although it is ineffective. First, the violation occurs between a mortal man and woman. Daphne, Io, and Callisto's positions as nymphs make them susceptible to rape by the gods. This is an unfortunate, but common, occurrence in myth. Second, Philomela's rape violates marriage laws and is an inappropriate relationship. Philomela loses her ability to speak only when Tereus cuts out her tongue (*Ov.Met.6.555-8*) and literally silences her. The loss of Philomela's ability to speak is not a punishment, but a preventative measure. Tereus believes that the loss of Philomela's voice will ensure that his crime is not disclosed (*Ov.Met.6.549-50*). With Philomela now silenced, he rapes her a second time and returns to his wife, claiming that Philomela was killed (*Ov.Met.6.663-6*). However, Philomela's silence is temporary and Ovid grants Philomela an alternative medium of expression. Resolved to tell her story, Philomela weaves a tapestry that depicts her violation:

os mutum facti caret indice. grande doloris  
ingenium est, miserisque venit sollertia rebus:  
stamina barbarica suspendit callida tela  
purpureasque notas filis intexuit albis,  
indiciium sceleris. (*Ov.Met.6.574-8*)

Her mutilated mouth lacked the marker of the crime. Grief is  
of great genius, and resourcefulness comes in miserable times:  
She hangs a foreign web on the loom, and clever,  
she weaves purple signs onto the white cloth,  
as a marker of Tereus' crime.

Ovid praises Philomela's clever attempt at finding a means to communicate the crime that she has suffered<sup>47</sup>. Upon the completion of her tapestry, Philomela implores a slave to deliver it in secret to Procne. With no voice, Philomela employs another medium of expression and used hand signs to give her instructions to the slave (*Ov.Met.6.579*)<sup>48</sup>. Weaving was an appropriate medium for Philomela to embed her message to Procne. Weaving was an activity typically conducted by women. Philomela knew that her message would not be lost because Procne, as a female, understood the art of weaving and its potential as a medium of expression<sup>49</sup>. Procne successfully interprets the messages embedded in Philomela's tapestry and sets out to find her (*Ov.Met.6.587-600*).

The women return together and plot revenge against Tereus. They murder Procne and Tereus' son and serve him to Tereus at a feast (*Ov.Met.6.636-655*). When the crime is revealed to Tereus, he rushes after Procne and Philomela with his sword (*Ov.Met.6.666*). However, the women escape him through transformation into songbirds. By the conclusion of this episode, Philomela undergoes a second transformation. She is not solely a victim as her role in the heinous crime committed against Tereus makes her culpable. Her episode serves as transition point to those Ovidian women who are not victims but instead are violators who express inappropriate sexual desires and are punished accordingly.

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<sup>47</sup> Ovid further demonstrates the power of female expression through wool-working in his account of the myth of Arachne and Minerva. Arachne weaves the crimes of the gods into her tapestry (*Met.6.103-128*). Her expression is powerful and incurs the anger of Minerva who transforms Arachne into a spider as punishment (*Ov. Met.6.130-145*).

<sup>48</sup> It is a little strange that Philomela does not also express her rape through hand signs. However, I argue that it is indicative of her agency. As a 'prisoner' of Tereus, it is possible that Philomela's slave belonged to Tereus and was therefore obligated to act in his best interest. Expressing her rape to the slave adds an additional audience and puts Philomela at risk for further punishment by Tereus.

<sup>49</sup> Compare with Helen who is seen embedding her account of the Trojan War into a tapestry (*Hom.II.3.125-9*).

## Byblis

Ovid introduces Byblis to his audience as *exemplum* (example) to remind women to seek relationships that are *concessa* (permitted) (*Met.9.454*). Byblis developed sexual feelings toward her brother:

Byblis Apollinei correpta cupidine fratris;  
non soror ut fratrem, nec qua debebat, amabat.  
illa quidem primo nullos intellegit ignes,  
nec peccare putat, quod saepius oscula iungat,  
quod sua fraterno circumdet bracchia collo. (*Ov.Met.9.455-9*)

Byblis was seized by desire for her brother, a grandson of Apollo;  
She loved him not in a way that a sister ought to love a brother.  
Indeed she did not understand her passions at first,  
and she did not think it a sin, when she kissed him often,  
or when she wrapped her arms around her brother's neck.

Unlike Ovid's other vulnerable women, Byblis is seen as a violator rather than the object of another's violations. Her thoughts are in violation of natural law (*Ov.Met.9.490*), and it is the expression of this violation that makes her vulnerable. Byblis understands the problems with her love for Caunus and she spends a significant amount of time considering whether or not she should express her love to him (*Ov.Met.9.487-514*). Byblis decides to reveal herself to her brother and carefully selects the medium of expression she will use:

coget amor, potero! vel, si pudor ora tenebit,  
littera celatos arcana fatebitur ignes. (*Ov.Met.9.515-516*)  
Love will compel me, I shall be able to! Or, if shame holds my tongue,  
a secret letter shall confess my hidden passions.

Byblis is aware that vocally expressing her feelings becomes a public act and her audience is three-fold, an inevitable fact in a slave society. Byblis' audience consists of her intended recipient, Caunus, the slave who acts as a messenger, as well as any unexpected witnesses to her

expression. The risk of an unplanned audience puts Byblis at risk of experiencing feelings of shame. It is this fear of shame that regulates Byblis' medium of expression. A letter is a more appropriate medium because it is intimate and there is a greater chance that only the intended recipient will read it<sup>50</sup>. Byblis composes her letter (*Ov. Met.9.535-64*) and instructs one of her slaves to deliver it to Caunus (*Ov. Met.9.568-570*). When she hands her tablet to the slave, it falls from her hands (*Ov. Met.9.571*). Ovid notes *that omine turbata est, misit tamen/she was disturbed by the omen but nevertheless she sent it (Met.9.572)* and emphasizes to his audience that the contents of Byblis' letter are inappropriate and unnatural. Caunus reacts to Byblis' letter angrily:

vixque manus retinens trepidantis ab ore ministri,  
 'dum licet, o vetitae scelerate libidinis auctor,  
 effuge!' ait 'qui, si nostrum tua fata pudorem  
 non traherent secum, poenas mihi morte dedisses. (*Ov. Met.9.576-9*)  
 and scarcely holding his hands back from the face of the trembling slave,  
 Caunus said "While it is possible, oh evil doer of forbidden lust,  
 be gone! If your fate had not dragged your shame with it,  
 you have given the penalty of death to me.

He blames the slave for facilitating the delivery of Byblis' letter. Caunus appears angry that the slave elected to deliver the letter to him, despite its disturbing contents. The slave becomes Caunus' medium of expression, and returns to inform Byblis of Caunus' rejection (*Ov. Met.9.580-2*). Byblis does not attribute her failure to the contents of her letter. Instead, she blames the medium of expression which she chose:

et tamen ipsa loqui, nec me committere cerae  
 debueram, praesensque meos aperire furores.

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<sup>50</sup> Farrell aptly observes that "it is noteworthy that [Byblis] deliberates whether she should speak to him directly or make her confession in written, and decides for the latter course— exactly what Ovid advised his *male* pupils to do in Book 1 of the *Ars*. This reversal of gender roles signals that something is amiss" (319) and that Byblis' expression will be considered inappropriate by her audience and Ovid's.

vidisset lacrimas, vultum vidisset amantis;  
 plura loqui poteram, quam quae cepere tabellae.  
 invito potui circumdare bracchia collo,  
 et, si reicerer, potui moritura videri  
 amplectique pedes, adfusaque poscere vitam.<sup>51</sup> (Ov.*Met.*9.601-7)

And still, I should have told him myself, and I should not have entrusted my desires to tablets, I should have revealed my desires in person. He should have seen my tears, he should have seen the face of his lover; I could have spoken more than what the tablets could take on. I could have wrapped my arms around his unwilling neck, And, if I was rejected, I could have appeared dead, and could have embraced his feet, lying there, and begged for my life.

Byblis also blames her slave for her failure:

forsitan et missi sit quaedam culpa ministri:  
 non adiit apte, nec legit idonea, credo,  
 tempora, nec petiit horamque animumque vacantem. (Ov.*Met.*9.610-612)  
 and perhaps the slave I sent has made a mistake:  
 He did not approach him properly, he did not choose an ideal time, I believe,  
 he did not seek an hour when the mind was free.

In reality, Byblis' failure is rooted in her audience. Caunus is not an appropriate recipient<sup>52</sup> because he is her brother and the love is unnatural. The medium of expression does not guarantee that one's message is successfully received, especially when the recipient does not share the same feelings. Caunus attempts to remove himself from the situation and flees the city (Ov.*Met.*9.634). Byblis follows after him until she is transformed into a fountain (Ov.*Met.*9.663-5). Ovid's account of Byblis and Caunus is a cautionary tale. He grants Byblis a sophisticated medium to express her incestuous desires and in doing so he illustrates to his audience the consequences of a female expressing an inappropriate sexual desire.

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<sup>51</sup> A similar sentiment is expressed by Briseis in *Her.*3.127-134 and will be discussed in Chapter 4, "Briseis and the Elegiac Paradigm".

<sup>52</sup> Compare with Briseis' letter to Achilles. Like Byblis, Briseis' letter fails her because Achilles is an unsuitable audience.

### Myrrha

Like Byblis, Myrrha experiences incestuous sexual desires. Myrrha loves her father (Ov. *Met.* 10.317-8) and Ovid eventually allows her to verbalize these feelings. She knows that her desires are unnatural but still she cites natural law as justification for her desires. She claims that her desires are appropriate because animals are free to mate with whomever they like (Ov. *Met.* 10.324-5). Myrrha proclaims her love for her father at length (Ov. *Met.* 10.320-55). However, her message is misinterpreted by her father. Myrrha tells Cinyras that she wants a husband *simile [sibi]/ like him* (Ov. *Met.* 10.364) but Cinyras does not realize the true meaning of Myrrha's comment. He regards this expression as being complimentary and is honoured that she wants to find a husband with the same qualities as him (Ov. *Met.* 10.364). He praises Myrrha and exclaims *iam pia semper/always be so pious* (Ov. *Met.* 10.365-6). The irony here is that Myrrha's expression was not pious at all: Myrrha does not want a husband that acts as a substitute for her father—she wants her father himself. Cinyras' misinterpretation provides Myrrha with the opportunity to negotiate her next course of action. She wavers between accepting her failure thereby keeping her incestuous desires undisclosed or making further attempts to be understood by Cinyras and disclosing her desires in another inappropriate act of expression (Ov. *Met.* 10.368-78).

Myrrha decides to commit suicide (Ov. *Met.* 10.380-2) but is interrupted by her aged nurse (Ov. *Met.* 10.384-8)<sup>53</sup>. The nurse tries to understand the cause of Myrrha's suicide attempt,

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<sup>53</sup> The figure of the aged nurse appears in several myths depicting bad women. The aged nurse is aware of the female's intent and often facilitates in the crime. For an example of this see the relationship between Phaedra and her nurse in Euripides' *Hippolytus*. Juno uses this theme when she disguises herself as the aged nurse of Semele in order to trick Semele into causing her own death (Ov. *Met.* 3.271-307)



but Myrrha remains silent (Ov. *Met.* 10.389). After many requests, Myrrha struggles to express the source of her grief:

extulit illa caput lacrimisque inplevit obortis  
 pectora nutricis conataque saepe fateri  
 saepe tenet vocem pudibundaque vestibus ora  
 textit et "o" dixit "felicem coniuge matrem!"  
 hactenus, et gemuit. gelidus nutricis in artus  
 ossaque (sensit enim) penetrat tremor, albaque toto  
 vertice canities rigidis stetit hirta capillis.

Multaque, excuteret diros, si posset amores addidit (Ov. *Met.* 10.419-27)

She lifts her head and fills up the chest of her nurse  
 with her rising tears and often, she tries to confess,  
 and often she holds her voice, and covers her ashamed face with her robe  
 and she says only this, "oh, mother, blessed with your husband!"  
 and groans. An icy wave penetrated her limbs  
 and her bones (for she understood), and her white hair  
 stood up stiffly on top of her whole head  
 and she said many things, to drive out the horrible love if she could.

Without Myrrha explicitly admitting to loving her father, Myrrha's nurse understands the gravity of the situation and, loyal to Myrrha, becomes an intermediary in the unnatural affair:

cunctantem longaeva manu deducit et alto  
 admotam lecto cum traderet "accipe," dixit,  
 "ista tua est"<sup>54</sup>, Cinyra" devotaque corpora iunxit. (Ov. *Met.* 10.462-4)

The old woman led her away, joined with her hand and  
 Handed her over, to the side of the tall bed and says, "take her,  
 she is yours, Cinyras" and she joined the devoted bodies.

Cinyras does not know that Myrrha is his new lover. When it is revealed that his lover is actually Myrrha, Cinyras experiences shame and retrieves his sword (Ov. *Met.* 10.475). Myrrha flees and

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<sup>54</sup> Ovid leaves the nurse's words *ista tua est / she is yours* ambiguous here to increase the dramatic irony of this episode and further demonstrate his wit.

begs the gods to transform her as a punishment (Ov. *Met.* 10.483-7), willingly giving up her ability for speech.

Ovid affords Byblis and Myrrha sophisticated mediums of expression: writing and speech. The messages embedded in their expression are clear and can be easily realized by their individual internal audience and Ovid's external audience. Unlike Io, Daphne, Callisto and Philomela, transformation for Byblis and Myrrha is not a reward or a rescue. It is a punishment that has been served to them for their misuse of speech and expression of inappropriate feelings. These women serve as *exempla* which are not to be modeled after. Ovid tells his audience *procul hinc natae, procul este parente/be far from this daughters, be far from this fathers* (*Met.* 10.300). Ovid's audience takes away the message that female expressions can be appropriate and inappropriate. Although expressions of resistance to sexual violation are permitted, they are often ineffectual and reveal that the ancient female exerted little control over the selection of her sexual partner. The relationship between agency and female expression is also realized in the discussion of Briseis' speech in *Heroides* 3. Just like Ovid's vulnerable women, Briseis' expression is limited by her social position. Although Ovid's women find multiple ways to express resistance and negotiate themselves within their respective texts, they are ultimately ineffectual and lack the freedom of expression that is afforded to the ancient male author.

### Briseis' Self-Characterization in *Heroides* 3

When Briseis, a foreign princess, is captured by the Greek soldiers she undergoes a change in social status and becomes a slave. Briseis' capture results in the ascription of a new social position and status within society. Others perceive her to be of servile status, which influences the way her expression is received. Given Briseis' new position as a slave, her audience holds certain expectations for her speech. The speech of the slave in Roman literature was limited, save for the genre of comedy, and "if we are looking for the slave's story in literature, we have to content ourselves with scraps" (Fitzgerald 2). From the point of view of the ancient audience, Briseis' speech is inappropriate. She transgresses the confines of her social class, and as a slave confronting her master, she is speaking out of turn. From Briseis' point of view, however, her speech is appropriate. Despite her newly ascribed social status, Briseis does not perceive herself to be a slave. She positions herself as an elegiac *puella* and within the elegiac tradition, her speech is appropriate.

Briseis is aware of her status as a captive and she uses grammatical features to emphasize this self-awareness to her audience. Although she is the narrator, she frequently employs passive verb constructions:

Saepe ego decepto volui custode **reverti**,  
                   sed, me qui timidam prenderet, hostis erat.  
 si progressa forem, **caperer** ne, nocte, timebam,  
                   quamlibet ad Priami munus itura nurum.  
 Sed **data sim**, quia **danda fui**—tot noctibus absum  
                   nec **repetor**; cessas, iraque lenta tua est.  
 ipse Menoetiades tum, cum **tradebar**, in aurem.  
                   "quid fles? hic parvo tempore," dixit, "eris" (Ov.*Her.*3.17-24)

Often, I wished to return to you, with my guard deceived,  
 But, there was an enemy who kept me fearful.  
 I was afraid that, if I went out, I would be *seized* in the middle of the night  
 and would be *sent* as a gift to one of Priam's daughters-in-law.  
 But even if I was *given*, because I had to have been *given*—I have been away for so  
 many nights and not been *returned*; you delay and your wrath is sluggish.  
 Even Patroclus himself at that time when I was *handed over*,  
 whispered into my ear, “ Why do you cry? You will be back in a matter of time.”

Briseis appears to be presenting herself to her audience as the *object* of another's actions.

Furthermore, when Briseis characterizes herself she chooses to use passive participles such as *capta* (seize), *data* (given), *rapta* (snatch), and *tradita* (handed over) as descriptors.<sup>55</sup> This grammatical passivity functions dually. First, it demonstrates the nature of Briseis' comparatively mild experience as a slave<sup>56</sup>. Briseis employs participles derived from the verb *dare*, to give, more frequently than those derived from the harsher verbs *capere*, to seize, and *rapire*, to snatch. This is a signal to Briseis' audience that her vocabulary is not truly reflective or indicative of a *violent* servile experience<sup>57</sup>.

Secondly, Briseis' usage of passive verbs provides Achilles an opportunity to respond to her as an *active* elegiac lover. She hopes that by presenting herself as vulnerable, Achilles will come to her rescue. This is not an implausible scenario in terms of the elegiac framework. Within elegy proper, the *puella*'s life is presented as being in danger when she becomes ill. Her illness compels her lover to respond to her. Although he does not physically come to her aid, he

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<sup>55</sup> For the usages of *capta* in *Heroides* 3 see lines 36-37, 111-112; For the usages of *data* see lines 10-11, 21-22, 75-76; For the usage of *rapta* in *Heroides* 3, see lines 1-2; For the usage of *tradita* in *Heroides* 3 see line 7-8.

<sup>56</sup> The potential to create a *hierarchy* of servile experiences is present here. My point here is that that there was an expectation that the ancient slave was much more likely to encounter violence than the free born individual.

<sup>57</sup> The romanticization of Briseis' slavery parallels that of the elegist who presents himself as a *servus amoris* but does not actually experience the harsh realities that the historical slave was subjected to.

responds to her illness with his poetry (Ov. *Am.*2.13; Prop.2.28; Tib.3.10). When the *puella* is ill, her lover is provided another opportunity to express the depth of his love for her:

Phoebe, faue: laus magna tibi tribuetur in uno  
corpore seruato restituisset duos. (Tib. 3.10.19-20)

Be favourable, Phoebus: there will be great praise bestowed upon you:  
In saving one person, you have restored two.

Propertius expresses a similar sentiment. He writes that,

una ratis fati nostros portabit amores  
caerula in inferno velificata lacu.  
si non unius, quaeso, miserere duorum!  
vivam, si vivet, si cadet illa, cadam. ( Prop.2.28b.39-42)

One ship of fate will carry our love  
with its gloomy sails unfurled on the infernal lake.  
If you cannot pity both of us, I ask, have pity on one of us!  
If she lives, I shall live. If she dies, I shall die.

The *puella*'s illness results in her lover expressing his love for her and he affirms his devotion to her. The lover recognizes the vulnerability of his *puella* and fears for her safety. The fear of losing his *puella* provokes a prompt response from the elegiac lover. Briseis wants Achilles to experience this same fear. She hopes that he will imagine the potential dangers that she faces within Agamemnon's camp and as a result, come to her rescue and in doing so affirm his love for her.

Although Briseis acknowledges that Achilles is her master (Ov.*Her.*3.5-6) and appears to recognize the reality of her situation, she is unwilling to internalize her position as a slave and she actively resists this social position through expression. She recalls to her audience that *me quaedam, memini, dominam captiva vocabat/ I remember once, a captive woman called me mistress* (Ov.*Her.*3.101) when she was seized from Achilles and taken to Agamemnon's camp.

Briseis replies that *servitio nominis addis onus/you add burden to my servitude with that name* (Ov.Her.3.102) and in doing so, reveals to her audience that, while she acknowledges her status of a slave, she does not regard the captive woman to be her fellow. Briseis further distances herself from her servile position when she explains that *propter mea mota est, propter me desinat ira/ simque ego tristitiae causa modusque tuae/ your wrath began because of me, let it cease because of me and let me be both the cause of and the limit to your troubles too* (Ov.Her.3.89-90). She presents herself as being both the cause of Achilles' rage and the solution to this rage<sup>58</sup>. In presenting herself in this manner, Briseis attempts to establish herself as an equal of Helen, the loss of whom incited the Trojan War<sup>59</sup>, rather than the captive woman with whom she interacts inside Agamemnon's camp.

While Briseis uses grammatical passivity to demonstrate her awareness of her servile status, her letter is not actually composed from the slave's perspective. Briseis actively expresses her denial of her position as a slave through the grammatical structure of her letter. Although Achilles is her master, Briseis frequently employs imperative verbs and jussive subjunctive clauses when addressing him:

*i* nunc et cupidi nomen amantis **habe!** (Ov.Her.3.26)  
**Go** now and defend your title as an eager lover!

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victorem captiva **sequar**, non nupta maritum (Ov.Her.3.69)  
**Let me follow** you, the victor, as a captive, not as a wife following her husband

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<sup>58</sup> This is a typical situation in elegy. The elegist cites the love for his *puella* as the source of his suffering but this suffering is only alleviated by a sexual reunion with his beloved. For example, Ovid writes *nil ego, quod nullo tempore laedat, amo / viderat hoc in me vitium versuta Corinna/ I don't love anything that won't hurt me at some time; clever Corinna saw this fault in me* (Am.2.19.8-9)

<sup>59</sup> Some literary sources suggest that Helen willingly ran off with Paris (Hom.II.24.763-5; Sappho fr.16) while others maintain that she was stolen from Menelaus by Paris (Dio Chrys.Or.11.27-59; Hdt.2.113.1)

*exagitet* ne me tantum tua, deprecor, uxor—

quae mihi nescio quo non erit aequa modo—

neve meos coram scindi *patiare* capillos

et leviter *dicas*: ‘ haec quoque nostra fuit.’ (Ov.*Her.*3.77-80)

I beg you only this, **do not let** your wife torment me—

for some reason I think that she will be unfair to me—

and **do not allow** her to pull my hair in your presence

and **do not tell** her lightly that “ this girl was also mine once”

*vince* animos iramque tuam, qui cetera vincis! (Ov.*Her.*3.85)

**conquer** your spirit and your anger, you who conquers everything else!

arma *cape*, Aeacide, sed me tamen ante recepta,

et *preme* turbatos Marte favente viros!( Ov.*Her.*3.87-88)

**Take up** your arms, Achilles, but not before I have been returned

and with Mars in your favour, **pursue** the roused men!

*respice* sollicitam Briseida, fortis Achille,

nec miseram lenta ferreus ure mora!

aut, si versus amor tuus est in taedia nostri,

quam sine te cogis vivere, *coge* mori! (Ov.*Her.*3.137-140)

**Have concern for** worried Briseis, brave Achilles,

and **do not**, iron one, **kindle** my misery with slow delay!

or, if your love for me has changed into disinterest,

**force** me to die, rather than to live without you!

sive manes, domini iure venire *iube*!( Ov.*Her.*3.154)

or if you stay, **command** me to come by your right as an owner!

In attempting to control Achilles’ behaviour, Briseis actively resists the power dynamics that define their servile relationship. This relationship was characterized by an unequal distribution of power. The *dominus* (or *domina*) exerted influence over the slave, who became the subordinate property of the *dominus*. In expressing resistance to her role as a slave, Briseis sets herself up to take on a new role: the elegiac *puella* who exerts influence over the elegist.

**Chapter 4**  
**Briseis and the Elegiac Paradigm**

**Briseis' Speech in Homer's *Iliad*: Patroclus' Nature**

Homer provides Briseis an opportunity to speak at Patroclus' funeral, which is a significant turning point in the *Iliad*. Patroclus, the closest male companion of Achilles, presents himself as Achilles and is slaughtered in battle by Hector. The death of Patroclus motivates Achilles to re-enter the Trojan War. Briseis' speech takes the form of a funeral lamentation, which is an appropriate site for female expression in the genre of epic. Her speech is short and occupies only thirteen lines of text. The lamentation centers on her relationship to Patroclus and his treatment of her following her capture at the hands of the Greeks. She cites Patroclus as being "far most pleasing to [her] heart" (Hom. *Il.*19. 287) and proceeds to lament Patroclus as if she were his wife. Noticeably absent from her lamentation is a catalogue of Patroclus' military accomplishments. Whereas Andromache, the wife of Hector, fears that "[Troy] will be sacked, for [Hektor], its defender, [is] gone" (Hom.*Il.*24.729-30) and emphasizes that "there were so many Achaians whose teeth bit the vast earth, beaten down by the hands of Hektor" (Hom.*Il.*24.737-8), Briseis' lamentation honours Patroclus' soft nature and it is his friendship rather than his military prowess that she memorializes. She does not view Patroclus as a harsh epic hero and her characterization of him serves as a contrast to the nature of Achilles. While she remembers Patroclus as her friend, she characterizes Achilles as the murderer of her family (Hom.*Il.*19.295-296). She expresses her gratitude to Patroclus for the kindness that he showed her following the slaughter of her family and her resulting capture:

And yet you would not let me, when swift Achilles cut down  
my husband, and sacked the city of godlike Mynes, you would not  
let me sorrow, but said you would make me godlike Achilleus'



wedded lawful wife, that you would take me back in the ships  
 to Phthia, and formalize my marriage among the Myrmidons.  
 Therefore I weep your death without ceasing. You were kind always<sup>60</sup>.  
 ( Hom.*Il.*19.295-300)

Briseis does not mention the moment when Patroclus presents himself in Achilles' armour (Hom.*Il.*16.130-8) and unsuccessfully engages in battle with Hector (Hom.*Il.*16.760-865).

Patroclus' attempt to become an epic hero is admirable and it highlights his desire to be more like Achilles. His failure highlights the inherent difference between the two men. It is not in Patroclus' nature to act as an epic hero. He is better suited to act as a care-giver:

Meanwhile Patroklos, all the time the Achaians and Trojans  
 were fighting on both sides of the wall, far away from the fast ships,  
 had sat all this time in the shelter of courtly Eurypylos  
 and had been entertaining him with words and applying  
 medicines that would mitigate the black pains to the sore wound.( Hom.*Il.*15.390-4)

This imagery further depicts the soft nature of Patroclus and complements the observations that Briseis makes in her lamentation. The softness that is characteristic of Patroclus in the *Iliad* parallels the *mollis* (soft) elegist who pursues love poetry rather than war. Patroclus appears better suited for elegy than he is for epic and perhaps, he would have been a more suitable elegiac lover for Briseis than Achilles in *Heroides* 3.

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<sup>60</sup> A similar sentiment is expressed in Helen's lament of Hector. Helen remembers Hector treating her kindly and laments his kind character rather than his military achievements (Hom.*Il.*24.762-775). It is interesting that both Helen and Briseis deliberately emphasize the tenderness of men who are warriors but also their foreign enemies. These expressions illustrate the ability of epic characters to be soft, even towards people who occupy positions that may not require this treatment. This serves as supplementary evidence for the flexibility of the epic hero's nature and allows for Ovid's demonstration of wit in *Heroides* 3: Achilles *can* be soft, but Ovid's text requires him to be harsh.

### Achilles' Treatment of Patroclus

Briseis' praise of Patroclus' mild treatment of her in her funeral lamentation contrasts with Achilles' treatment of her. Instead of treating Briseis, his beloved, with affection, Achilles directs his emotional attention to Patroclus. Ovid recognizes this disparity and uses it as evidence for an unresponsive Achilles in *Heroides* 3. Achilles is depicted in the *Iliad* showing Patroclus compassion. Homer writes that,

swift-footed brilliant Achilles looked upon him in pity,  
and spoke to him aloud and addressed him in winged words: "Why then  
are you crying like some poor little girl, Patroklos. (Hom.*Il.* 16.5-7)<sup>61</sup>

Achilles allows Patroclus, the "dearest of his companions" (Hom.*Il.* 17.655)<sup>62</sup>, to be the object of his mildness and compassion. Although Achilles' words to Patroclus could be interpreted as dismissive or mocking, Achilles presents himself throughout the *Iliad* as being responsive to Patroclus and he experiences significant emotional distress when Patroclus is killed by Hector (18.22-35). In the above exchange, Achilles is expressing genuine concern for his companion and he comes closest to presenting himself as the elegiac lover that Briseis wishes him to be. The irony is that it is Patroclus who serves as the elegiac *puella*, not Briseis. Briseis never experiences the intimacy that occurs between Achilles and Patroclus. She cannot overcome this difference, though she tries to soften Achilles with her elegiac letter<sup>63</sup> and present their relationship as loving and legitimate.

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<sup>61</sup> Compare with *Heroides* 3 in which Briseis quotes Patroclus as asking her *quid fles/why do you cry?* (3.24).

<sup>62</sup> The difference in Achilles's treatment of Briseis and Patroclus could be linked to the literary tradition that considers the relationship of Achilles and Patroclus to be erotic. (See Aeschin. *Fragments*. 135-138, Aeschin. *In Tim.* 133, 141-150, and Plat. *Sym.* 179e-180b).

<sup>63</sup> Hanson argues that there is a possibility that Patroclus "appropriated Briseis' message" (138) and that it was critical to his appeal to Achilles in *Iliad* 16 (143).

The depth of Achilles' emotional attachment to Patroclus is further demonstrated when he appears as the prime mourner at Patroclus' funeral and "as [a] mourner occupies a structural slot that is marked as a woman's" (Staten 359). Like Andromache and Hecuba who "tore their hair" at Hector's funeral (Hom.*Il.* 24.711), Achilles "took and tore at his hair with his hands, and defiled it" (Hom.*Il.* 18.27). Achilles presents himself as a softer epic hero and in this display of emotion, he demonstrates that he has the ability to become an elegiac lover—so long as his beloved is Patroclus.

Achilles does not express this same degree of anguish following his loss of Briseis. Although he initially "lay idle in sore grief for her" (Hom.*Il.* 2.694), Achilles does take other lovers (Hom.*Il.* 9.663-5) and Briseis' absence is not felt on a romantic level. When Agamemnon returns Briseis to Achilles following Patroclus' death, he does not rejoice. Instead, he blames Briseis for Patroclus' death. Achilles reveals that,

I wish Artemis had killed her beside the ships with an arrow  
on that day when I destroyed Lyrnessos and took her.  
For thus not all these too many Achaians would have bitten  
the dust, by enemy hands, when I was away in my anger. (Hom.*Il.* 19.59-62)

The elegiac lover would not wish death upon his beloved and again, Achilles distances himself from the role of the elegiac lover, at least when it comes to his treatment of Briseis. Homer's depiction of Achilles and Patroclus' relationship adds to the irony of *Heroides* 3. Achilles *can* and *does* display those traits that are required of the elegiac lover. The problem for Briseis is that Achilles has established Patroclus as his beloved, not her.

### Elegiac Features within Briseis' Elegy

Within the standard elegy, several key figures may be present: the lover, the *puella*<sup>64</sup>, slaves, and the *vir* (husband) of the *puella*. Traditionally, the elegiac lover is a male poet who attempts to gain access to his beloved girlfriend, or *puella*. The central relationship occurs between the lover and his *puella* but additional interactions between the different elegiac figures are necessary for the relationship between the lover and *puella* to occur. The elegiac lover can be facilitated by slaves acting as intermediaries or hindered by slaves acting as barriers between him and his *puella*. The *vir*'s presence in the text can be implied (Ov.*Am.*2.2) or explicit (Ov.*Am.*1.4) but in neither case does he act as an obstacle which permanently prevents the affair<sup>65</sup>.

Briseis' speech in *Heroides* 3 takes the form of an elegiac letter. I argue that she attempts to transfer her and Achilles' relationship from epic into elegy. The nature of the *Iliad* limits the availability of 'elegiac' figures but still, she tries to account for these characters in her text. Briseis positions herself as the *puella* of Achilles and hopes that he will become an elegiac lover. Briseis' role as a *puella* is realized in the style of her speech. This will be discussed in the section that follows.

Briseis attempts to include the characters found in elegy proper into her letter. She incorporates intermediaries into her text to the best of her ability but in doing so, she temporarily transforms from a *puella* into an elegist trying to gain access to his *puella*. Briseis finds characters in the *Iliad* that most closely resemble the standard figures found in elegy. Her employment of intermediaries is a persuasive technique: she hopes that they will encourage

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<sup>64</sup> See Wyke's discussion of the social role and position of the Roman elegiac *puella*.

<sup>65</sup>The presence of a *vir* is desired by the elegiac lover. For example, Ovid actually complains about the complacent *vir* of his *puella*. Ovid dedicates an entire poem, *Amores* 2.19, to the complacency of the *vir*. He explains that a protective *vir* makes his *puella* more desirable (1-2; 57-60).

Achilles (acting as a *puella*) to soften and respond to Briseis' elegiac desires. She recognizes the close relationship that Achilles and Patroclus share and selects Patroclus to function as an *anus* in her letter. Briseis believes that Patroclus has the ability to exert influence over Achilles. In the *Iliad*, Patroclus tells Eurypylus that,

now it is for your henchman to look after you, while I  
go in haste to Achilleus, to stir him into the fighting .  
Who knows if, with God helping, I might trouble his spirit  
by entreaty, since the persuasion of a friend is a strong thing. (15.401-4)

Ovid's Briseis is well-acquainted with the *Iliad* and perhaps uses this revelation of Patroclus as an indication that he will make for a suitable *anus* in her elegy. She is aware of Patroclus' potential to influence Achilles and makes sure to include him in her text. She remembers Patroclus asking her *quid fles* (Ov.*Her.*3. 24), which echoes his speech to her in the *Iliad*. When Briseis was seized from her family by the Greek soldiers, Patroclus comforted her with promise of legitimate marriage to Achilles (Hom.*Il.*19.297-9). This quotation serves as a reminder to Achilles that his closest friend believes that she is suitable for marriage. Like the *anus* of elegy proper who encourages the *puella* to remain loyal to her elegist, Briseis hopes that Patroclus will act as an advocate for her while she is absent from Achilles <sup>66</sup>.

On the other hand, Briseis transforms the Greek heralds, Eurybates and Talthybius, into elegiac *lenae*. They are seen unwillingly seizing Briseis from Achilles in the *Iliad* (1. 327-48) to bring her to Agamemnon. She references this event in her letter and emphasizes the facial expressions they exchange:

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<sup>66</sup> Hanson argues that Patroclus is not only simply an advocate for Briseis but that he actually aids in the composition and delivery of Briseis' letter ( 130) and in doing so positions himself as a true elegiac intermediary.

nam simul Eurybates me Talhybiusque vocarunt,

Eurybati data sum Talhybioque comes.

*alter in alterius iactantes lumina vultum*

*quaerebant taciti, noster ubi esset amor.* (Ov.*Her.*3.9-12)

For at the same time that Eurybates and Talhybius had summoned me,  
I was given over to Talhybius and his comrade.

*Each on fixing his eyes onto the other's face,  
they asked without sound where your love for me was.*

Homer however does not cite this exchange of expression in his description of Briseis' seizure. He writes that the two men, "terrified and in awe of the king stood waiting quietly, and did not speak a word or question him" (*Il.*1.331-2). Briseis' rewriting of this moment reflects her need to present herself as a desirable *puella* to Achilles. A large part of a woman's desirability was rooted in the way the other men perceive her. Women whom one's peers praised were more desirable than those who were ridiculed and considered to be shameful romantic partners<sup>67</sup>. The heralds are shocked by Achilles' lack of objection to Briseis' removal and express this in their body language. She interprets this as evidence that they consider her to be a worthy *puella* and hopes that their confused expression will remind Achilles of this desirability and elicit a response from Achilles. The ambiguity of physical expression is convenient for both Ovid and Briseis<sup>68</sup>. Ovid allows Briseis to reinterpret the original physical movements of Homer's characters in order to demonstrate his wit. She reimagines the events that take place in the *Iliad* and forces

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<sup>67</sup> Horace provides a useful illustration of the conversations about female desirability that occur between men in *Satires* 1.2.58-63. Livy provides a similar account in which he describes Tarquinius Collatinus and his comrades sitting around a campfire comparing each of their wives' virtues. Tarquinius' wife, Lucretia, wins this competition and becomes the object of Sextus Tarquinius' desires. He rapes her and she commits suicide so that she will not be seen as an *exempla* of an unchaste wife.(1.57-8)

<sup>68</sup> The ambiguity of expression is a recurring theme for Ovid. Briseis' interpretation of Talhybius and Eurybates' expressive exchange parallels the exchanges Ovid's audience sees in the *Metamorphoses* between Daphne and Apollo, Io and her family, and Callisto and Arcas. Again, Ovid demonstrates that the interpretation of ambiguous messages is a subjective act for external observers.

them into the elegiac framework. However, this reimagining is not convincing to Achilles or Ovid's audience<sup>69</sup> and Briseis does not accomplish her act of persuasion: Achilles refuses to engage in any form of elegiac negotiation and Briseis is led away to her new 'lover', Agamemnon.

Like the *puella* of elegy proper, Briseis does not perceive her *vir* to be an obstacle in the construction of her elegiac relationship. James argues that the presence of a *vir* "creates exciting intrigue that will help to keep the lover interested" (*Learned Girls* 65). Briseis does not express significant grief over his death nor does she feel guilty about engaging in a relationship with Achilles, the man responsible for her *vir*'s death. The death of her *vir* becomes instrumental for her and she requires his presence in her text. She transforms the memory of his death into a form of *blanditiae* that serves to flatter Achilles and garner his interest<sup>70</sup>.

Briseis' recognition of characters within the *Iliad* who have the potential to function as elegiac figures highlights her determination to create a convincing elegy. Her inclusion of these characters is clever, but does not bring about the response she desires from Achilles. This is rooted in Achilles' epic nature. Achilles does not recognize the functions that the elegiac figures, including his own role as the elegiac lover, are supposed to perform in Briseis' elegy. This prevents him from responding to Briseis' elegy accordingly. This same disconnect also undermines Briseis' diligent employment of elements of speech that are characteristic of the elegiac *puella*.

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<sup>69</sup> An audience who has read Homer's *Iliad* has already seen Ajax the Greater criticizing Achilles for refusing to fight because Briseis was taken from him (9.637-8).

<sup>70</sup> This point will be discussed in the section, "Briseis' Speech as an Elegiac *Puella*", that follows.

### Briseis' Elegiac Speech

Ovid's Briseis strives to create a narrative that depicts Achilles and her relationship as legitimate and significant. She portrays herself as an elegiac *docta puella* (learned girl) and she selectively employs various features of the elegiac paradigm in the hopes of persuading Achilles to demand that she be returned to him. Briseis attempts to transform Achilles from an epic hero into an elegiac lover<sup>71</sup>. The elegiac lover is also a poet who uses poetry to declare his love for his *puella*. Briseis would prefer that Achilles abandon his epic tendency to seek military glory and like an elegist, submit to and express his elegiac desires<sup>72</sup>:

pugna nocet, citharae noxque Venusque iuvant.  
tutius est iacuisse toro, tenuisse puellam,  
Threiciam digitis increpuisse lyram,  
quam manibus clipeos et acutae cuspidis hastam,  
et galeam pressa sustinuisse coma.  
Sed tibi pro tutis insignia facta placebant,  
Partaque bellando gloria dulcis erat. (Ov.Her.3.116-122)  
Fighting is harmful, you prefer the lyre and night and Love.  
It is safer to lie in bed, holding a girl,  
Plucking the Thracian lyre with your fingers,  
Than for you to arm yourself with a shield and the sword with sharp edges  
in your hands and endure the helmet pressing your hair.  
Before, remarkable deeds were pleasing to you, not safety,  
and the glory that was to be obtained through war was sweet.

Briseis wants Achilles to admit that his refusal to engage in battle is the result of his desire to be an elegiac lover. Her wish for an Achilles who writes poetry is not impossible, as she has already seen Achilles playing the lyre in the *Iliad* and singing about “the glorious deeds of warriors” (9.185-190).

<sup>71</sup> See Nesholm for further discussion of the persuasive power of writing. She aptly argues that Acontius uses writing to transform his beloved Cydippe into an elegiac *puella* (56-7).

<sup>72</sup> Compare with Hor.*Odes*.1, Ovid.*Am*.9, and Tib.1.1.



Briseis can attempt to transform Achilles into an elegiac lover because his characterization as a harsh epic hero is not fixed in the literary tradition. Individual authors depict Achilles differently, as per their individual plot motivations. For example, in his *Achilleid*, Statius depicts Achilles as a responsive and sympathetic lover when his lover, Deidamia, expresses sadness at his departure:

talia dicentem non ipse immotus Achilles  
 solatur iuratque fidem iurataque fletu  
 spondet et ingentis famulas captumque reversus  
 Ilion et Phrygiae promittit munera gazae. (1.956-9).

As she is speaking, Achilles, himself moved, comforts her, and gives her a sworn promise, and he binds his oath with tears, and promises her tall slave girls and Trojan spoils and gifts of Phrygian wealth once he has returned.

Within poetry, the nature of Briseis and Achilles' relationship has been portrayed as loving and intimate. Horace asks his friend, Xanthias, why he is ashamed to love a slave girl. He cites Briseis and Achilles as an example of a loving relationship between a free man and a slave:

Ne sit ancillae tibi amor pudori,  
     Xanthia Phoceu: prius insolentem  
 serva Briseis niveo colore  
     movit Anchillem. (*Carm.*2.4.1-4)

Don't let love of a slave-girl be shameful to you  
     Phoecian Xanthias: before you,  
 the slave-girl Briseis moved proud Achilles  
     with her snowy skin.

In his elegies, Propertius also represents their relationship as loving:

nec non exanimem amplectens Briseis Achillem  
     candida vesana verberat ora manu;  
 et dominum lavit maerens captiva cruentum,  
     appositum flavis in Simoenta vadis,

foedavitque comas, et tanti corpus Achilli  
 maximaque in parva sustulit ossa manu. (2.9. 9-14)  
 even Briseis, embracing dead Achilles  
 beat her beautiful face with insane arms  
 and, as a grieving slave, she washed her bloodied master,  
 lying in the yellow waters of the Simoi,  
 and she defiled her hair, and she lifted up the body and great bones  
 of great Achilles with her little hands.

Even Ovid himself writes that *ardet in abducta Briseide magnus Achilles/ great Achilles burned for captured Briseis* (*Am.* 1.9.33). However, he contradicts himself in *Heroides* 3 and presents Briseis' love of Achilles as unrequited. Achilles is harsh and unresponsive. This is a demonstration of Ovid's narrative agency and the decision to retain Achilles' harsh epic nature is instrumental for him. Although Ovid has not transformed Achilles into an elegiac lover, he allows Briseis to imagine him as an elegiac lover. The corresponding requirement is that Briseis must become an elegiac *puella* and structure her speech accordingly.

Briseis' speech is recognizable as the speech of an elegiac *puella* because she adheres to the conventions of an elegiac *puella's* speech. As James argues, within the speech of elegiac *puellae*:

there are three basic conversational topics, which are apparently also conversational styles, as will become clear: *blanditiae*, *fallacia*, and shows of devotion. *Blanditiae* range from soft words to flatteries to endearments to pillow-talk; *fallacia* covers a multitude of sins, chiefly baldfaced lies about a *puella's* fidelity and availability, but also includes false promises. Shows of devotion feature hysterical behavior and speech at the prospect of a lover's departure, elaborate displays of jealousy, protestations of fidelity, accusations of infidelity, pathetic tears, and occasional physical violence accompanied by verbal abuse. ("Ipsa Dixerat" 320)

I propose that physical displays of affection also be included in discussions of the elegiac *puella*'s persuasive toolbox. These expressive displays include romantic embraces, kisses, and sexual intercourse which can only be employed when the *puella* is in the physical presence of her lover. Although these displays are not violent, they still represent the physical power that the *puella* exerts over her lover.

In this section, I will outline Briseis' employment of various elements of the *puella*'s toolbox to demonstrate that the strategies which are normally successful for the *puella* of elegy proper fail Briseis in persuading Achilles. However, Briseis' failure allows Ovid's audience to realize his wit as a poet. He successfully references plot points in the *Iliad* that are embedded in his audience's collective memory, and uses them to undermine Briseis' speech and heighten the dramatic irony of the episode.

Of James' three conversational topics, Briseis employs "shows of devotion" and *blanditiae* but omits *fallacia* from her letter. Briseis diligently employs multiple types of James' "shows of devotion". For example, Briseis reacts hysterically when she learns that Achilles plans to depart from Troy and return home. First, she appears to be suicidal. She claims that she would rather die than be permanently absent from Achilles:

devorer ante, precor, subito telluris hiatu  
 aut rutilo missi fulminis igne cremer,  
 quam sine me Phthiis canescant aequora remis,  
 et videam puppes ire relicta tuas! (Ov.*Her.*3.63-66)

Let me be swallowed by the gaping earth  
 or let me be burned by the red fire of the lightning bolt sent forth,  
 before the sea glows white with the Pythian oars without me,  
 and I, abandoned, watch your ships go away!

However, this resolution to die is fleeting and is more strategic than it is sincere<sup>73</sup>. Briseis hopes to evoke a sense of guilt in Achilles and to emphasize the urgency of her letter so that Achilles will respond promptly. Within a few lines, Briseis changes her tone and instead of begging for death, she begs Achilles to take her home with him as his slave:

non ego sum classi sarcina magna tuae.  
Victorem captiva sequar, non rupta maritum;  
est mihi, quae lanas molliat, apta manus.(Ov.Her.3.68-70)  
I am no great burden for your fleet.  
Let me follow you, a captor, as your captive; not as a wife following her husband;  
My hand is skilled in softening wool.

Briseis, a foreign princess, surely does not consider a life of slavery to be ideal. Her desperate pleas to return with Achilles as his slave parallel the desires of the elegist to be a *servus amoris*. In her state of hysteria, Briseis has confused her role within her elegy. It is characteristic of the elegist to become the slave of his beloved *puella*<sup>74</sup>. Briseis wants to be Achilles' beloved and in desiring to become a *serva amoris*, her elegy becomes one-sided in a structural sense. Ovid allows this to happen because it increases the dramatic irony of her letter.

Briseis' elegy is not only structurally one-sided, but it is thematically one-sided: Achilles never becomes an elegiac lover for her. When her lover does not respond in the ways expected of him, Briseis forces the elegy to continue by alternating between the roles of the *puella* and the lover-poet as her text requires. She becomes the lover-poet in moments when an elegiac audience would expect a response from the lover-poet. Her responses reflect *her* desires rather than those of Achilles. When Briseis speaks as a *puella*, she diligently adheres to the elegiac paradigm.

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<sup>73</sup> While Briseis' occupation with suicide lasts only a few lines, a significant portion of Dido's letter to Aeneas centers around her desire to commit suicide. Dido's letter concludes with her narrating her suicide while the action is ongoing (Ov.Her.7.183-196).

<sup>74</sup> See Ovid (*Am.*1.2)

Briseis incorporates both accusations of her lover's infidelity as well as protestations of her own fidelity into her letter. First, she accuses Achilles of infidelity<sup>75</sup>:

Si tibi nunc dicam: "fortissime, tu quoque iura  
 nulla tibi sine me gaudia capta!" neges.  
 at Danaï maerere putant- tibi plectra moventur  
 te tenet in tepido mollis amica sinu. (Ov.Her.3.111-114)

If I should say to you now: "oh bravest of all the soldiers, swear too that you took pleasure in no captive woman without me!" you would deny it. But, the Greeks think that you have been grieving— the lyre moves you While a tender girlfriend holds you to her chest.

James aptly observes that the *puella's* "behaviour—both appearance and speech—produces the desired state in the lover: he swears his fidelity to her and seeks hers to him" ("Ipsa Dixerat" 321)<sup>76</sup>. Briseis hopes that her own accusation will provoke Achilles to respond like a good elegiac lover and assert his fidelity to her. Although both Briseis and her audience have read the *Iliad* and have seen Achilles continue to take other lovers in Briseis' absence (9.660-666), Briseis continues to construct her elegy, and vehemently asserts her own fidelity as well as her belief that he loves her too. She structures her own oath around the oath Agamemnon offers to Achilles in the *Iliad* in which he promises that he has not violated Briseis in any way (19.258-265). Briseis swears that,

Per tamen ossa viri subito male tecta sepulchro,  
 Semper iudiciis ossa verenda meis;  
 perque trium fortes animas, mea numina, fratrum,  
 qui bene pro patria cum patriaque iacent;

<sup>75</sup> See Prop.2.29, 3.23.

<sup>76</sup> This relationship is realized in Ovid's *Amores* 2.7 in which Ovid responds to the Corinna's accusations of infidelity. He defends himself passionately and works to convince Corinna of his innocence.

perque tuum nostrumque caput, quae iunximus una,  
     perque tuos enses, cognita tela meis—  
 nulla Mycenaean sociasse cubilia mecum  
     iuro; fallentem deseruisse velis! (Ov.*Her.*3.103-110)

Nevertheless, by the bones of my husband, poorly buried in a sudden tomb,  
     bones that ought to be always honoured in my thoughts;  
 and by the brave souls of my three brother, my own ghosts  
     who fell on behalf of their country, now lie with their country;  
 and on your own head and my own head, now joined as one,  
     and by your sword, the weapon known to my family—  
 I swear that no Mycenaean has joined me in bed;  
     If I have deceived you, you may wish to desert me!

That Briseis swears upon the bones of her dead husband is strategic and is used as a means of emphasizing the gravity of her pledge. Verducci argues that,

Briseis' oath, sworn upon the bones of her husband, upon the bones of her brothers, and upon Achilles' sword, which tasted the flesh of those brothers and that husband, would have been entirely appropriate in a vow professing hatred and threatening retribution. It is entirely inappropriate as an avowal of sexual fidelity, especially since within the body of her oath Briseis names the man for whom she has kept inviolate as the same man who is most properly her mortal enemy. (117)

However, I argue that Briseis' oath is entirely *appropriate* in the context of her letter. Briseis' oath functions dually. First, the mention of her dead husband emphasizes the gravity of her pledge. She hopes that she will adequately demonstrate her fidelity and receive a pledge of Achilles' loyalty in return. Again, the irony of Briseis' oath is that Achilles has already proven himself to be unconcerned with Briseis' fidelity. He states that he does not care if Agamemnon engages in sexual relations with Briseis (Hom.*Il.*9.336-337). Briseis structures her letter with the expectation that Achilles will, at some point, respond in accordance with the elegiac tradition. Second, Briseis' oath is a form of *blanditiae* (flattery). This point will be discussed in greater detail at a later point in this chapter.

I will now return to the discussion of James' list. James identifies verbal abuse as a feature that is characteristic of the elegiac *puella's* speech. Briseis' verbal abuse takes two forms. Initially, her abuse of Achilles is subtle but deliberate. She says things that she believes Achilles will consider to be an attack on his prowess as a lover. Again, she hopes that he will respond promptly to defend himself. She writes *i nunc et cupidi nomen amantis habe/go now and earn the title of an eager lover (Ov.Her.3.26)* while under the illusion that the title of eager lover is one that Achilles desires to hold. Achilles, as we have seen, has not transferred into Ovidian elegy and his motivations remain rooted in epic fantasy rather than elegiac fantasy. When subtle abuse does not elicit a response from Achilles, Briseis elects to reproach Achilles and in doing so she convincingly presents herself as an elegiac *puella*. Briseis accuses Achilles of holding her cheaply:

si tibi ab Atride pretio redimenda fuissem,  
     quae dare debueras, accipere illa negas!  
 qua merui culpa fieri tibi vilis, Achille?  
     Quo levis a nobis tam cito fugit amor?  
 An miseros tristis fortuna tenaciter urget,  
     nec venit inceptis mollior hora malis? ( *Ov.Her.* 3.39-44)  
 If I had been bought back from Agamemnon for a price by you,  
     you would have had to give him that which you refuse to accept now,  
 For what crime do I deserve to have become so cheap to you, Achilles?  
     To where has your love fled so quickly and fickly?  
 Or is it the case that sad fate urges on wretched men,  
     and that a softer hour comes, with our miseries begun?

Again, Briseis has misinterpreted the nature of Achilles' attachment to her. He holds her cheaply because she is a marker of distinction among his peers rather than a irreplaceable sexual

partner<sup>78</sup>. Her value has been appraised and her worth has been established through a system of exchange that does not take romantic attachment into consideration<sup>79</sup>.

Briseis' first reproach of Achilles resembles the reproach of Cynthia, the *puella* of Propertius, who also reproaches Propertius for being cheap:

cur uentos non ipse rogis, ingrate, petisti?  
 cur nardo flammae non oluere meae?  
 hoc etiam graue erat, nulla mercede hyacinthos  
 inicere et fracto busta piare cado. (4.7.31-34)  
 Why didn't you pray for a wind for my pyre, ungrateful one?  
 Why didn't my fires smell of nard oil?  
 Was even this too much, to throw cheap hyacinths  
 on my grave and honor my grave with a broken jar?

Propertius' cheapness is literal—nard and flowers are expensive. This is not surprising given the fact the elegiac lover has rejected the military lifestyle and the wealth that comes with it. He emphasizes the symbolic value of his love, rather than the economic value of gifts. He presents his poetry as a gift and display of the love for his *puella*. Both women are angry that their lovers hold them cheaply and feel that they deserve better treatment. They use their reproaches to express this discontent and provide their lovers with another opportunity to declare their love.

Unlike Cynthia, who uses physical violence to exert power over Propertius and obtain a pledge of his loyalty (4.8.64-70), Briseis hopes to move Achilles with physical displays of

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<sup>78</sup> This serves as further evidence that Achilles has not transferred into the elegiac paradigm and illustrates the disconnect between heroic and elegiac assessments of value. In elegy proper, the elegiac lover's *puella* is irreplaceable and he goes to great lengths to gain exclusive sexual access to her.

<sup>79</sup> That Briseis reproaches Achilles, her *dominus*, for not appreciating her value is bold for a slave girl and alludes to the fact that *Heroides* 3 is not really an expression of the slave's lived experience.



affection. She suspects that her elegy will be ineffectual but believes that her physical presence will succeed in the persuasion of Achilles:

mittite me, Danaï! dominum legata rogabo  
 multaque mandatis oscula mixta feram.  
 plus ego quam Phoenix, plus quam facundus Ulixes,  
 plus ego quam Teucris, credite, frater agam.  
 est aliquid, collum solitis tetigisse lacertis,  
 praesentisque oculos admonuisse sinu.  
 sis licet inmitis matrisque ferocior undis,  
 ut taceam, lacrimis conminuere meis. (Ov.*Her.*3.127-134)

Release me, Greeks! Chosen as a messenger, I will ask for my master  
 and I shall bear many kisses mixed with your commands.  
 I shall accomplish more than Phoenix, more than eloquent Odysseus,  
 I shall accomplish more than the brother of Teucris, believe me.  
 The embrace of familiar arms around his neck is something,  
 and the sight of my breast will urge him to remember.  
 Although you are harsh and fiercer than your mother's waves,  
 Although I shall remain silent, you will be broken by my tears.

Briseis' belief that her physical presence will move Achilles heightens the dramatic irony that has been developed throughout her letter. The audience knows that Achilles will not be happy with her return to him as they have seen him begrudge her presence in his life when she is returned to him following the death of Patroclus (Hom.*Il.*19.56-61). This contrasts with Propertius' response to Cynthia's physical dominance over him: he vows to obey Cynthia's demand of fidelity (4.8.83) and the two consummate their relationship again (4.8.90).

Within her letter, Briseis gives her audience the impression that she is aware that, ultimately, her words will fail her. She is careful to employ pathetic tears in her letter and cites them in the opening lines of her narrative episode. She highlights her tears to Achilles and reminds him that *quascumque adspicies, lacrimae fecere lituras, sed tamen et lacrimae pondera*

*vocis habent / whatever blots you see, my tears have made, but nevertheless, tears carry weight* (Ov.Her.3.3-4). These tears are strategic and used to emphasize both the intensity and the sincerity of Briseis' grief and anguish while she composes her letter to Achilles. Briseis hopes that the thought of her emotional distress will evoke a prompt response from Achilles so that he might prevent his lover from further suffering.

Briseis employs pathetic tears for a second time in her description of her seizure from Achilles. She writes that *ei mihi! discedens oscula nulla dedi; at lacrimas sine fine dedi rupique capillos/ alas for me! Departing without giving any kisses; but I cried tears with no end and I tore my hair* (Ov.Her.3.15-16). This image resembles the one that Homer provides in his description of Achilles' mourning of Patroclus (Hom.II.18.27). Briseis tries to appeal to Achilles' strongest emotions in order to emphasize the intensity of her grief. This is a risky strategy as Achilles considers his and Agamemnon's fight over Briseis to be the cause of Patroclus' death (Hom.II.19.56-9). Briseis ends up reminding Achilles of her role in his grief instead of emphasizing her own grief and state of emotional distress. In doing so, she further alienates herself from Achilles and reinforces his unwillingness to respond to her.

Ultimately, Briseis' tears, coupled with the rest of her displays of devotion, fail her. Briseis attributes this failure to the medium of her message: the power of her tears is best realized with her physical presence. Briseis considers her tears to be weapons<sup>80</sup> with the power to overwhelm Achilles' harshness. She boldly asserts that *sis licet inmitis matrisque ferocior undis, ut taceam, lacrimis conminuere meis/even though you are harsh and fiercer than your mother's waves, and although I shall be silent, you will be broken by my tears* (Ov.Her.3.133-134). Again,

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<sup>80</sup> See also Verger for a discussion of Briseis' weapons (229-31).

Briseis overestimates Achilles' emotional attachment to her and believes that her tears will elicit the response expected of an elegiac lover poet<sup>81</sup>.

Whereas Briseis extensively employs shows of devotion in her letter, her usage of James' third conversational topic, *blanditiae*, is limited and rather ineffective. Where other Ovidian heroines use terms of insult in lieu of *blanditiae* to evoke a response from them, Briseis attempts to entreat Achilles using terms of endearment<sup>82</sup>. She refers to him using the adjective *fortis* (Ov.*Her.*3.137) as well as its superlative *fortissime* (Ov.*Her.*3.111) thereby acknowledging that he is the bravest of the Greek soldiers. Briseis' most powerful instance of *blanditiae* is realized in the oath of fidelity that she swears to Achilles (Ov.*Her.*3.103-110). She recognizes that the slaughter of her husband and family, while traumatic for her, was a great military achievement for Achilles. Putting aside her grief and reliving this traumatic event, she reminds Achilles of this moment in order to appeal to his epic fantasies and flatter him. Briseis' flattery of Achilles occurs when she requests him to affirm his fidelity (Ov.*Her.*3.111) or to be considerate of her emotional state (Ov.*Her.*3.137). In other words, Briseis' usage of these terms is out of context. These traits are associated with the military man rather than the elegiac lover. Briseis attempts to exercise influence over Achilles' decisions with the usage of these *blanditiae* and hopes that they will encourage him to respond in accordance with her requests. Briseis' attempts at *blanditiae* oppose the elegiac motivations embedded in her letter. The usage of adjectives and phrases that appeal to Achilles' epic fantasy add to the overall ineffectuality and irony of Briseis' letter. She

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<sup>81</sup> Achilles can be moved by tears, just not by Briseis' tears. As already mentioned, he is seen asking Patroclus why he is "crying like some poor little girl" in Homer's *Iliad* (16.6-7).

<sup>82</sup> Compare with Dido, who has also transferred over from epic, and her usage of *perfide* (Ov.*Her.*7.78,118).

accidentally reinforces his harsh, epic nature rather than encouraging him to adopt the role of an elegiac lover.

The persuasive techniques that are normally successful for the *puella* of elegy proper fail Briseis because the internal audience of her letter, Achilles, remains fixed in the epic tradition. The motivations of Briseis are at odds with those of Achilles, and her diligent efforts to adhere to the elegiac tradition are in vain. However, Briseis' failure as an elegiac *puella* allows Ovid's audience to realize his wit as a poet. He references plot points in the *Iliad* that are embedded in his audience's collective memory and that Briseis has desperately attempted to transfer into her elegy. Briseis' misinterpretation of the *Iliad* and subsequent misemployment of the elegiac tradition is realized by Ovid's audience and heightens the dramatic irony of the episode. The audience's memory of the *Iliad's* events undermines Briseis' attempts and prevents her from presenting a convincing and successful elegy to her external audience. Although Ovid's audience may pity Briseis, her failure entertains the audience more than it evokes the sympathy of the audience.

### Conclusion

As I have shown in this thesis, Briseis diligently employs the necessary elements of the elegiac *puella*'s speech. However diligent she is, Briseis does not successfully persuade Achilles to become an elegiac lover and he does not respond to her letter. This failure is not the product of Briseis' speech. It is the result of Ovid's decision to retain Achilles' harsh epic nature. Briseis cannot overcome the motivations of Ovid and as such, her letter is considered a failure and her elegiac desires are left unrealized. The significance of Briseis' speech however, is not rooted in her success or failure as an elegiac *puella*. Briseis' speech is significant because it is an expressive act of resistance. Briseis, a slave, uses her opportunity for speech to actively resist her position as a slave, and though the irony of this situation may entertain some audiences, Briseis successfully presents a strategic instance of the slave's usage of speech. Briseis proves to her audience that she has not only read Homer's *Iliad*, but that she is clever enough to recognize instances in the *Iliad* that have the potential to bolster her elegiac persuasive argument. Briseis' cleverness as a narrator undermines her position as a slave and *Heroides* 3 provides a unique realization of the intersections that *can* occur between the genres of epic and elegy.

While I have made a diligent effort at separating Briseis' motivations as a speaker from those of Ovid's in *Heroides* 3, there is much more work that should be done in this area. The task of disentangling the female's voice from that of the male author's in ancient literature is important as feminist scholarship continues to reinterpret the ancient world from the female's perspective. *Heroides* 15, written by Sappho to her lover Phaon, could prove fruitful in the discussion of the relationship between female voice and male authorship<sup>83</sup>. I make this suggestion because Sappho is a rare example of a female poet in a literary world that was

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<sup>83</sup> See Hallett for a discussion of the masculinization of Sappho in *Heroides* 15.

dominated by male authors. The fact that we have a literary record of her poetry becomes useful in evaluating Ovid's representation of her speech. Her poetry provides a baseline against which Ovid's presentation of her speech in *Heroides* 15 can be compared with the hopes of determining how representative of the female voice, and lived experience, Ovid's *Heroides* truly are.

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