

Nobis Aspiciuntur Undae: Water and Abandonment in Ovid's Heroides

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Link to Abstract: <https://camws.org/sites/default/files/meeting2021/abstracts/2469HeroidesWater.pdf>

1. Plato *Laws* 705A

πρόσοικος γὰρ θάλαττα χώρα τὸ μὲν παρ' ἐκάστην
ἡμέραν ἡδύ, μάλα γε μὴν ὄντως ἀλμυρὸν καὶ πικρὸν
γειτόνημα· ἐμπορίας γὰρ καὶ χρηματισμοῦ διὰ
καπηλείας ἐμπιπλάσα αὐτήν, ἦθη παλίμβολα καὶ
ἄπιστα ταῖς ψυχαῖς ἐντίκτουσα, αὐτήν τε πρὸς αὐτήν
τὴν πόλιν ἀπιστον καὶ ἄφιλον ποιεῖ καὶ πρὸς τοὺς
ἄλλους ἀνθρώπους ὡσαύτως.

For the sea neighboring the land is sweet each day,
but in fact it is actually a briny and bitter neighbor;
for filling it with merchandise and profit through
retail trade, creating habits that are untrustworthy and
faithless in souls, and it makes it [the city] faithless
and loveless to itself and even to other people in a
similar manner.

2. Theocritus *Idyll* 11.12-16

πολλάκι ται ὄιες ποτὶ τῷλιον αὐταὶ ἀπῆνθον
γλωρᾶς ἐκ βοτάνας· ὃ δὲ τὰν Γαλάτειαν ἀείδων
αὐτὸς ἐπ' αἰόνος κατετάκετο φυκιόεσσας
ἐξ ἀοῦς, ἔχθιστον ἔχων ὑποκάρδιον ἔλκος,
Κύπριδος ἐκ μεγάλας τό οἱ ἦπατι πᾶξε βέλεμονον

Often his sheep departed toward the stables
From the green pasture. But singing about Galatea
He was melting away upon the shore full of seaweed
From dawn, having a most hateful wound in his heart
Which an arrow from the great Cyprian fixed in his
liver.

3. Ovid *Heroides* 2.4-6

litoribus nostris ancora pacta tua est
...
nec vehit Actaeas Sithonis unda rates

Your anchors were promised to my shores . . . the
Thracian sea does not convey Athenian ships.

4. Ovid *Heroides* 2.121-128

maesta tamen scopulos fruticosaque litora calco;
quaque patent oculis aequora lata meis,
...
et quaecumque procul venientia lintea vidi, (125)
protinus illa meos auguror esse deos.
in freta procurro, vix me retinentibus undis,
mobile qua primas porrigit aequor aquas.

Nevertheless, sorrowful I walk over the ledges and
the shrubby shores; [I look out at] the broad waters
wherever they lie open to my eyes,
...
And whatever sails I saw coming from a distance,
immediately I predict that those are my gods. I rush
into the waves, the waves scarcely hold me back,
where the shifting water stretches out its first waters

5. Ovid *Heroides* 2.133-136

hinc mihi suppositas immittere corpus in undas
mens fuit, et, quoniam fallere pergis, erit,
ad tua me fluctus proiectam litora portent,
occuramque oculis intumulata tuis.

From here I intended to throw my body into the
waves placed under, and it will happen, because you
continue to deceive me. May the waves carry me
flung forth to your shores, and may I come up to your
eyes while unburied.

6. Ovid *Heroides* 10.17-20

luna fuit; specto, si quid nisi litora cernam.
quod videant oculi, nil nisi litus habent.
nunc huc, nunc illuc, et utroque sine ordine, curro;
alta puellares tardat harena pedes.

The moon was there; I look, if I may see something
except the shores. That which the eyes could see was
nothing except what the shores hold. Now to here,
now to there, to each of the two places aimlessly, I
run; The deep sand slows my girlish feet.

7. Ovid *Heroides* 10.47-50

aut ego diffusis erravi sola capillis,
qualis ab Ogygio concita Baccha deo,
aut mare prospiciens in saxo frigida sedi,
quamque lapis sedes, tam lapis ipsa fui.

Either I wandered alone with my hair flowing in
different directions, like a Bacchant stirred up by the
Theban god, or looking out at the sea, I sat frozen on
a rock, and as much as the rock was a seat, so I
myself was a rock.

8. Ovid *Heroides* 10.135-138

nunc quoque non oculis, sed, qua potes, aspice mente
haerentem scopulo, quem vaga pulsat aqua,
aspice demissos lugentis more capillos
et tunicas lacrimis sicut ab imbre gravis.

Now look also upon me not with your eyes, but with
what you are able, with your mind, clinging to a cliff,
which the wandering water strikes. Look upon my
hair let down in the manner of a mourner and my
tunic heavy with tears just as if by rain.

Select Bibliography

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