

*Quidquid erit, melius quam nunc erit:*  
Reconsidering Ovid's Sappho through her Inscription

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- 1) Ramsby, Teresa R. "The *Heroides* Inscriptions." In *Textual Permanence: Roman Elegists and the Epigraphic Tradition*. 113–30. Cornwall: Duckworth, 2007.
- 2) a. **Phyllis** (*Her.* 2.147–48):  
*Phyllida Demophoon leto dedit hospes amantem*      Demophoon, a guest, ushered his lover Phyllis to a violent end.  
*Ille necis causam praebuit, ipsa manum.*      He provided the cause of death, she the hand.
- b. **Dido** (*Her.* 7.195–96):  
*Praebuit Aeneas et causam mortis et ensem;*      Aeneas provided the cause of death, and the blade;  
*Ipsa sua Dido concidit usa manu.*      Dido herself perished at her own hand.
- c. **Hypermnestra** (*Her.* 14.129–30):  
*Exul Hypermnestra, pretium pietatis iniquum,*      Hypermnestra, an exile—the unjust price for piety—  
*Quam mortem fratri depulit, ipsa tulit.*      herself bore the death she averted from a *frater*.
- 3) a. **Phyllis** (*Her.* 2.145):  
*Inscribere meo causa invidiosa sepulcro.*      Written on my tomb as the hateful cause.
- b. **Dido** (*Her.* 7.194):  
*hoc tamen in tumuli marmore carmen erit:*      Yet this verse will be on the marble of my tomb;
- c. **Hypermnestra** (*Her.* 14.128):  
*sculptaque sint titulo nostra sepulcra brevi:*      and let my tomb be engraved with a short inscription:
- 4) Ramsby, Teresa R. "Striving for Permanence: Ovid's Funerary Inscriptions." *CJ* 100.4 (2005): 365–91.
- 5) *scribere plura libet; sed pondere lassa catenae*      I would like to write more, but my hand is exhausted  
*est manus, et vires subtrahit ipse timor.* (*Her.* 14.131–32)      by the weight of the chain, and fear itself takes away my strength.
- 6) Reeson, James. *Ovid Heroides 11, 13 and 14: A Commentary*. Leiden: Brill, 2001.
- 7) Lattimore notes common formulae on epitaphs include *nolite delere, parentes* ("parents, don't erase me," 18) and *memoriae aeternae* ("for perpetual memory," 245). *Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1942.
- 8) *grata lyram posui tibi, Phoebae, poetria Sappho;*      The poetess Sappho gratefully dedicated this lyre to you, Phoebus;  
*convenit illa mihi, convenit illa tibi.* (*Her.* 15.183–84)      that lyre, fitting for me, fitting for you.
- 9) Lloris, Francisco Beltrán. "Latin Epigraphy: The Main Types of Inscriptions." In *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Epigraphy*, edited by Christer Bruun and Jonathan Edmondson. 89–110. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- 10) a. Offering skilled labor (*Anth. Pal.* VI.136):  
*Πρηξιδικὴ μὲν ἔρεξεν, ἐβούλευσεν δὲ Δύσηρις*      Prexidike made and Dyseris planned  
*εἷμα τόδε· ξυνηὶ δ' ἀμφοτέρων σοφίῃ.*      this garment: the skill shared by them both.

b. Thanks for a cure (*Anth. Pal.* VI.203):

Ἡ γρηῦς ἢ χερνήτις, ἢ γυῖ πόδας,  
 πύστιν κατ' ἐσθλὴν ὕδατος παιωνίου  
 ἦλθεν ποθερπύζουσα σὺν δρυὸς ξύλῳ,  
 τό μιν διεσκήριπτε τὴν τετρωμένην·  
 οἶκτος δὲ Νύμφας εἶλεν, αἴτ' ἐριβρόμου  
 Αἴτνης παρωρείῃσι Συμαίθου πατρὸς  
 ἔχουσι δινήεντος ὕγρον οἰκίον.  
καὶ τῆς μὲν ἀμφίχωλον ἀρτεμὲς σκέλος  
θερμὴ διεστήριξεν Αἰτναίῃ λιβάς·  
Νύμφαις δ' ἔλειπε βάκτρον, αἴτ' ἐπήνεσαν  
πέμπειν μιν ἀστήρικτον, ἡσθείσαις δόσει.

A poor old woman, lame in the feet,  
 came after an auspicious rumor of healing water,  
 and she propped her injured self up,  
 approaching with the help of an oaken stick.  
 And pity seized the nymphs, who hold  
 the watery home of their eddying father Symaethus  
 in the districts of loud-roaring Etna.  
Mt. Etna's hot spring strengthened the  
legs, both lame, of the recovered woman  
and she left the stick for the nymphs; who, delighting in the gift,  
approved of sending her home unsupported by a staff.

11) Ramsby 2007; Knox, Peter E. *Ovid: Heroides: Select Epistles*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

12) “*quoniam non ignibus aequis*  
*ureris, Ambracia est terra petenda tibi.*  
*Phoebus ab excelso, quantum patet, aspicit aequor;*  
*Actiacum populi Leucadiumque vocant.*  
*hinc se Deucalion Pyrrhae succensus amore,*  
*misit, et illaeso corpore pressit aquas.*  
*nec mora, versus amor fugit lentissima mersi*  
*pectora, Deucalion igne levatus erat.*  
*hanc legem locus ille tenet, pete protinus altam*  
*Leucada nec saxo desiluisse time.”*  
 (Her. 15.163–72)

“Since you are consumed by unequal  
 passion, Ambracia is the land you must seek.  
 Phoebus looks upon the sea from above, as far as it extends;  
 the people call it the Actian Sea and the Leucandian.  
Here, Deucalion, inflamed by his love for Pyrrha, threw himself  
down, and struck the waters with his body unharmed.  
At once, his love changed and fled the most indifferent heart  
of the one who plunged into the water, Deucalion had been  
 freed from his love.  
That place has this rule. Immediately seek high  
 Leucadia and do not fear to leap down from the rock.”

13) A fragment of Menander provides the only extant comic reference to the story: ὀρᾶς...τῆ]ν [γὰρ ὑψηλὴν... / οὗ  
 δὴ λέγεται πρώτη Σαπφῶ / τὸν ὑπέρκομπον θηρῶσα Φάων' / οἰστρῶντι πόθῳ ρίψαι πέτρας / ἀπὸ τηλεφανοῦς  
 (“For you see the high cliff, / where Sappho is said to be the first— / in her frenzied longing—to throw herself / from  
 the rocks you can see from afar / while pursuing arrogant Phaon,” *Leukadia*, 10–14).

14) *inde chelyn Phoebo...ponam* (“and then I will dedicate my lyre to Phoebus,” *Her.* 15.181)

15) McKeown, J. C. *Ovid: Amores III: A Commentary on Book Two*. Leeds: Francis Cairnes, 1998.

15)a. *Aoniam Lesbis amica lyram <tenens>* (*Am.* 2.18.26) The Lesbian lover holding her Aonian lyre.  
 b. *dat votam Phoebo Lesbis amata lyram* (*Am.* 2.18.34) The Lesbian, loved, gives her lyre as an offering to Apollo.

16)a. *dolor artibus obstat* (*Her.* 15.195) My grief blocks my art  
 b. *quidquid erit, melius quam nunc erit* (*Her.* 15.177) Whatever happens, it will be better than the way things are now.  
 c. *ut mihi Leucadae fata petantur aquae* (*Her.* 15.220) To seek the fate that the Leucadian sea holds for me.

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