

*Pholoe fugax* (Horace *C.* 2.5.17) Becomes a *Serva*:  
The Significance of the Enslaved Woman's Name in Vergil's Ship-Race (*Aeneid* 5.282–285)

During the ship race in *Aeneid* 5, the Trojan captain Sergestus damages his ship and therefore finishes last. But because he manages to return with his ship relatively unscathed, Aeneas still rewards him, giving him an enslaved woman who is skilled in weaving and nursing twins (*Aen.* 5.282–285). The trafficking of an enslaved woman as a prize follows Homeric precedents with the exception of one detail: Vergil tells us the woman's name, Pholoe (Sharrock). The purpose of this paper is to investigate the significance of this name more fully than has previously been done.

Vergil practically begs us to pause for a moment on this name both by deviating from Homeric practice and also by having Pholoe be the only living woman to appear in the games in *Aeneid* 5. Although scholars often focus on the role played by women in Book 5, the Trojan women are absent from the bulk of the book, and only Dido—who gave Iulus the horse he rides in the *lusus Troiae* (5.570–572)—and Pholoe are mentioned by name earlier.

Previous discussions of Pholoe's name have focused on its echo of Mt. Pholoe and the centaur Pholos after whom it was named. Because Sergestus' ship is named *Centaurus*, a slave with a name that recalls centaurs is fitting (Paschalis, *Muse*). But the likelier significance for Pholoe's name derives from its use in a series of linked poems by Horace and Tibullus, all of which present her as the unobtainable object of someone's desire. A detailed reading of these poems will show that they present a coherent figure of an arrogant Pholoe who spurns lovers' advances (and have further links besides) and provide additional context for reading Vergil's Pholoe.

In Horace, Pholoe is *fugax*, 'fleeing' or 'fugitive' (*C.* 2.5.17), and Tibullus warns a

Pholoe that if she does not cease being fastidious, the gods will punish her (Tib. 1.8.67–78).

Support for linking these two poems comes from another poem that refers to (a) Pholoe, Horace *Odes* 1.33, which addresses an Albius, whom most identify with the poet Albius Tibullus (e.g., Ball). Vergil's name for this enslaved character is therefore a darkly humorous response to this group of poems: the lyric *Pholoe fugax* has at last been tamed in his epic. She has seemingly been punished by the gods for her arrogance by being caught by Aeneas and turned into his child-bearing slave. At the same time, the literary pedigree of "Pholoe" makes her even more valuable as a prize.

Support for reading Vergil's character as a response to Horace and Tibullus may come in Statius *Silvae* 2.3, where he gets the last word in this intertextual "joke." In this poem, Pholoe is a nymph being chased by Pan around the future site of a Rome described with clear Vergilian echoes. There is no evidence for this myth before Statius, and it may be his invention. If Statius invented this myth, he likely got the name from Horace and Tibullus, while also alluding to Vergil by putting it in a setting that recalls *Aeneid* 8. But Statius then reverses Vergil's use of Pholoe, for although she is Pan's would-be *praeda* (*Silv.* 2.30.20) instead of Aeneas' literal *praeda* from his failed attempt at colonizing Crete, she escapes by hiding in a pool, and Pan plants a plane tree as a memento of his chase. Statius has freed Pholoe, allowing her once again to flee from her pursuers.

Ultimately, if we read this brief passage in the *Aeneid* as a response to Horace and Tibullus, we see that there is a dark humor at work, as Aeneas has enslaved the harsh, fugitive woman of the earlier lyric poems. She has been captured and mastered and possibly even impregnated by Aeneas, Venus' son, who was able to succeed where Horace and Tibullus' characters could not.

## Bibliography

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