Malum, pomum or fetus? Naming fruits in Ov. *Her.* 20-21

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In the last pair of letters of his *Heroides* (20-21) Ovid treats the story of Acontius and Cydippe. Ovid himself considers this story as elegiac material *par excellence*, in contrast to Achilles who naturally belongs to epic (*Rem.* 381-2):

*Callimachi numeris non est dicendus Achilles;
Cydippe non est oris, Homere, tui.*

“Achilles is not to be spoken of in Callimachus’ rhythms,
Cydippe is not for your mouth, Homer.”¹

The story of Acontius and Cydippe does not feature in Parthenius’ *Ἐρωτικά παθήματα* or in any other surviving Greek or Roman text prior to Ovid, except of course for Callimachus’ *Αἴτια*, which most likely has been Ovid’s single source.² This is

¹ Ovid mentions the story of Acontius and Cydippe two more times in his work: at *Ars* 1.457-8 as an example of amatory deception through a written message (*littera Cydippen pomo perlata fefellit, / insciaque est verbis capta puella suis*), and at *Tr.* 3.10.73 in relation to the inhospitable place of his exile (*poma negat regio, nec haberet Acontius in quo / scriberet hic dominae verba legenda suae*).

² Of course, the use of other source texts cannot be ruled out. On the existence of other sources see the bibliography cited by Rosenmeyer (2001, 112 n. 28).

arguably the most popular story of the Αἴτια and is the longest surviving story of the work (Book III, fr. 67-75 Pf.); it is the αἴτιον of the Acontiadae family of Ceos. Callimachus mentions Xenomedes as his source for this myth (fr. 75.50-55 Pf.):

ἐκ δὲ γάμου κείνοιο μέγ' οὔνομα μέλλε νέεσθαι·
 δὴ γὰρ ἔθ' ὑμέτερον φύλον Ἀκοντιάδαι
 πολὺ τι καὶ περίτιμον Ἰουλίδι ναιετάουσιν,
Κεῖε, τεὸν δ' ἡμεῖς ἴμερον ἐκλύομεν
 τόνδε παρ' ἀρχαίου Ξενομήδεος, ὃς ποτε πᾶσαν
 νῆσον ἐνὶ μνήμῃ κάτ' ἔθετο μυθολόγῳ.

“And from that marriage a great name was destined to arise. For, O Cean, your clan, the Acontiadae, still dwell, numerous and honoured, at Iulis. And this thy passion we heard from old Xenomedes, who once enshrined all the island in a mythological history”

It is universally accepted that Ovid's version is innovative and considerably independent from Callimachus, especially since the two protagonists, Acontius and Cydippe, exchange letters for the first time in their literary career.³

A. The Story

Very briefly the story goes as follows: during a religious festival on Delos Acontius, a handsome young man from Ceos, sees Cydippe, a beautiful girl from Naxos, and instantly falls in love with her. Acontius engraves on an apple (or a quince) a certain oath and then secretly rolls the fruit towards Cydippe, who is standing in front of Artemis' temple together with her old nurse. The nurse picks up the fruit, but is unable to read the oath, so she hands it over to Cydippe. The text of the oath does not feature in the surviving part of the Αἴτια nor is it

³ See Kenney (1996, 15-8).

translated into Latin in Ovid's *Heroides*. It is attested, however, by the epistolographer Aristaenetus (5th century C.E.) in a prose adaptation (1.10.37-8 Mazal), which does not scan in dactylic verse: «μὰ τὴν Ἄρτεμιν Ἀκοντίῳ γαμοῦμαι». Upon reading the oath Cydippe is automatically, albeit unintentionally, obliged to marry Acontius in the name of Artemis. She throws the apple away without revealing anything to her mother and returns to Naxos,⁴ where her ignorant father has arranged for her to marry another man. Each time the wedding is prepared Cydippe falls seriously ill. After the third unsuccessful attempt her father consults the oracle of Delphi. Apollo reveals to him the truth and finally Acontius and Cydippe get married.

B. The Symbolism of the apple

Apples were considered to be symbols of love, and the apple imagery is prominent in ancient erotic poetry.⁵ The apple is a well-established erotic gift, also thought to be an aphrodisiac, and is frequently used in love magic.⁶ Apples are often used as means of erotic seduction: e.g. Theoc. 3.10 (ἦνίδε τοι δέκα μᾶλα φέρω) ["see, here I brought you ten apples"], Verg. *Ecl.* 3.70-71 (*quod potui, puero silvestri ex arbore lecta / aurea mala decem misi; cras altera mittam*) ["ten golden apples did I pluck, ten golden apples a wild tree bore: All that I could, I sent to

⁴ In Callimachus' version Acontius returns to Ceos tormented by his passion for Cydippe. He spends his time in the woods, carving Cydippe's name on the bark of trees.

⁵ For the apple as fruit of love see Dilthey (1863, 112ff.), Palmer (1898, 481-2), Foster (1899), Gow (1952) on Theoc. 5.88, Trumpf (1960), Littlewood (1968), Lugauer (1967), Brazda (1977), Coleman (1977) Verg. *Ecl.* 3.64, Fedeli (1980) Prop. 1.3.24, Clausen (1994) Verg. *Ecl.* 3.64, Kenney (1996) 20.9 and Intro. 15 n.60, 19 n.74, Rosenmeyer (2001, 109 with n. 23), Petropoulos (2003, 64-9 and 69-73). See also PA 5.79, Lucian *Dial. Mer.* 12.1, Aristaen. 1.10, Ant. Lib. 1, Heliod. 3.3.8, Hesych. s.v. *μηλοβαλεῖν*, Ov. *Tr.* 3.10.73.

⁶ See Faraone (1990, 230-43) and Faraone (1999, 69-78).

my boy, tomorrow he shall have ten more”], Prop. 1.3.24 (*nunc furtiva cavis poma dabam manibus*)⁷ [“or to cupped hands I gave stolen fruit”].

The apple (and the quince) are associated with Aphrodite and wedding rituals. There are statues of the goddess holding an apple.⁸ The similarity of the apple with the female breast may have contributed to its association with love:⁹ e.g. Ar. *Lys.* 155 (ὁ γῶν Μενέλαος τᾶς Ἑλένας τὰ μᾶλά πα / γυμνᾶς παραϊδὼν ἐξέβαλ’, οἶῶ, τὸ ξίφος), [“Just as Menelaus, they say, seeing the bosom of his naked Helen flung down the sword”] Theoc. 27.49-50: [KO.] τί ρέζεις, σατυρίσκε; τί δ’ ἔνδοθεν ἄψαο μαζῶν; / [ΔΑ.] μᾶλα τεὰ πρᾶτιστα τάδε χνοάοντα διδάξω. [“What are you at, satyr-boy? Why have you put your hand inside on my breasts?” “I will give your ripe apples their first lesson.”]

The throwing of an apple by a man to a woman (μηλοβολεῖν) signifies erotic desire. These are two characteristic epigrams from the *Greek Anthology* (5.79 Πλάτωνος):¹⁰

Τῷ μήλω βάλλω σε· σὺ δ’ εἰ μὲν ἐκοῦσα φιλεῖς με,
δεξαμένη τῆς σῆς παρθενίης μετάδοξ.
εἰ δ’ ἄρ’, ὃ μὴ γίγνοιτο, νοεῖς, τοῦτ’ αὐτὸ λαβοῦσα
σκέψαι τὴν ὥρην ὡς ὀλιγοχρόνιος.

“I throw the apple at you, and you, if you love me from your heart, take it and give me of your virginity; but if your thoughts be what I pray they are not, take it still and reflect how short-lived is beauty.” (tr. W.R. Paton)

⁷ Cf. Prop. 3.13.27: *illis munus erat decussa Cydonia ramo*.

⁸ Foster (1899, 40f.) For artistic representations of Venus with apples see *LIMC* 8.1.176-181, and 23a, 26, 28.

⁹ For μήλα ‘breasts’ see LSJ s.v. II.I; Foster (1899, 51-5), Littlewood (1968, 157).

¹⁰ Cf. Hes. fr. 85, Theoc. 5.88 (βάλλει καὶ μάλοισι τὸν αἰπόλον ἃ Κλεαρίστα) with the ancient scholia ad loc., 6.6-7 (βάλλει τοι Πολύφαμε τὸ ποίμνιον ἃ Γαλάτεια / μάλοισιν, δυσέρωτα τὸν αἰπόλον ἄνδρα καλεῖσα), *Schol. Ar. Nub.* 996, Verg. *Ecl.* 3.64 (*malo me Galatea petit, lasciva puella*). See also Theoc. 2.120, 3.10, 10.34, 11.10, Artem. 1.73, Lucian *Tox.* 13, Athen. 12.553E, Colluth. 67, Prop. 1.3.24, 2.34.69, 3.13.27, Verg. *Ecl.* 3.64, Ov. *Tr.* 3.10.73.

Cf. *PA* 5.80 (ΠΛΑΤΩΝΟΣ)¹¹

Μῆλον ἐγώ· βάλλει με φιλῶν σέ τις. ἀλλ' ἐπίνευσον,
Ξανθίπη· κάγῳ καὶ σὺ μαραινόμεθα.

“I am an apple; one who loves you throws me at you. But consent, Xanthippe. Both you and I decay.” (tr. W.R. Paton)

Apart from the story of Acontius and Cydippe, an apple is central to other well-known love stories:¹² the wedding of Peleus and Thetis (the apple of the goddess Eris, which was effectively the cause for the outbreak of the Trojan war), the race between Hippomenes and Atalanta,¹³ the wedding of Zeus and Hera.¹⁴ Acontius' apple is listed among other famous apples of myth in an epigram from the *Carmina Priapea* (*Priap.* 16, ed. Baehrens):

*qualibus Hippomenes rapuit Schoeneida pomis,
qualibus Hesperidum nobilis hortus erat,
qualia credibile est spatiantem rure paterno
Nausicaam pleno saepe tulisse sinu,
quale fuit malum, quod littera pinxit Aconti,
qua lecta est cupido pacta puella viro:
qualiacunque, pius dominus florentis agelli
imposuit mensae, nude Priape, tuae.*

“As the apples with which Hippomenes ravished Schoeneus' daughter; for which the garden of the Hesperides was renowned; which one may imagine Nausicaa often carrying in her teeming lap as she walked in her father's domains; **as was that apple graced by the words of Acontius, which, read aloud, pledged the maiden to this ardent lover**: such are those which the boy-owner of a small but fertile field has placed on thy sacrificial

¹¹ Discussed in brief by Rosenmeyer (2001, 108-10).

¹² Dilthey (1863, 113-14), Viarre (1988, 772-3).

¹³ See Michalopoulos (2014) on *Her.* 21.123.

¹⁴ Gaia presented her granddaughter, Hera, with a wondrous tree. Hera planted this tree, richly hung with Golden Apples, in her garden under the care of the Hesperides.

table, O naked Priapus.” (tr. Leonard C. Smithers and Sir Richard Burton).

C. Apple or Quince?

Let us now have a closer look at the most crucial episode of the Acontius-Cydippe story, Cydippe’s visit to Delos. Unfortunately, this particular episode is missing from the surviving part of Callimachus’ *Αἴτια*, nor is there any mention of the fruit on which Acontius inscribed his oath. On the other hand, in their Ovidian correspondence both Acontius and Cydippe narrate the Delian episode – each from their own point of view – and they frequently refer to the fruit.

But what type of fruit was it? There are two obvious choices: an apple or a quince. The Greek term *μῆλον* is not used only for apples; it also stands for other fruits (except dried fruits): apricot (*Ἀρμενιακόν*), quince (*Κυδώνιον*), citrus (*Μηδικόν*), peach (*Περσικόν*).¹⁵ Beck¹⁶ claims that Acontius used a quince and cites Aristaenetus (1.10.25-6 Mazal): ὥς ἐθεάσω προκαθημένην τὴν κόρην, τοῦ κήπου τῆς Ἀφροδίτης Κυδώνιον ἐκλεξάμενος μῆλον [“when you saw the girl sitting, you picked a quince from the garden of Aphrodite”]; moreover, at Ov. *Her.* 21.215-6, Cydippe’s paleness is compared with the colour of the fruit on which Acontius inscribed his oath:

*concidimus macie, color est sine sanguine, qualem
in pomo refero mente fuisse tuo.*

“I am enfeebled by emaciation: my colour is bloodless, / just like your fruit was, I recall to mind.”¹⁷

¹⁵ See Littlewood (1968, 147-8), Döpp (1995, 342).

¹⁶ Beck (2002, 239 n. 4).

¹⁷ All *Heroides* translations are by Tony Kline (<<http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/Heroideshome.htm>>, last visit 12/08/2017), with slight modifications.

For the pale colour of the quinces see also Ov. *Ars* 3.703–5:

*palluit, ut serae lectis de vite racemis
palescunt frondes, quas nova laesit hiemps,
quaeque suos curvant matura cydonia ramos.*

“She grew pale, as the leaves of choice vine-stalks grow pale, wounded by an early winter, or ripe quinces arching on their branches.”

Furthermore, Barchiesi¹⁸ cleverly notices the sound-play between a *Cyd-onium malum* (a quince) and *Cyd-ippe*.¹⁹

On the other hand, a few lines below Aristaenetus is obviously describing an apple (1.10.33–4 Mazal):
ὥς ὑπερμέγεθες, ὥς πυρρῶπόν, ὥς ἐρύθημα φέρον τῶν ῥόδων.
[“how big, how flame-coloured, bearing the redness of roses.”]
Besides, the throwing of an apple on Delos is particularly symbolic, since this island is closely related to this particular fruit. Servius narrates (on Verg. *Ecl.* 8.37)²⁰ that there was a man named Melus, who came from Delos. He travelled to Cyprus and became friends with the king Cinyras. He married Pelia and

¹⁸ *Apud* Rosenmeyer (2001, 118).

¹⁹ See also Kenney (1996) Ov. *Her.* 20.9.

²⁰ Servius (*Ecl.* 8.37): *sane unde melus graece traxerit nomen, fabula talis est: Melus quidam, in Delo insula ortus, relictā patriā fugit ad insulam Cyprum, in qua eo tempore Cinyras regnabat, habens filium Adonem. hic Melum sociatum Adoni filio iussit esse, cumque eum videret esse indolis bonae, propinquam suam, dicatam et ipsam Veneri, quae Pelia dicebatur, Melo coniunxit. ex quibus nascitur Melus, quem Venus propterea quod Adonis amore teneretur, tamquam amati filium inter aras praecepit nutriri. sed postquam Adonis apri ictu extinctus est, senex Melus cum dolorem mortis Adonis ferre non posset, laqueo se ad arborem suspendens vitam finit: ex cuius nomine melus appellata est. Pelia autem coniux eius in ea arbore se adpendens necata est. Venus misericordia eorum mortis ducta, Adoni luctum continuum praestitit, Melum in pomum sui nominis vertit, Peliam coniugem eius in columbam mutavit, Melum autem puerum, qui de Cinyrae genere solus supererat, cum adultum vidisset, collecta manu redire ad Delum praecepit. qui cum ad insulam pervenisset et rerum ibi esset potitus, Melon condidit civitatem: et cum primus oves tonderi et vestem de lanis fieri instituisset, meruit ut eius nomine oves μῆλα vocarentur; graece enim oves μῆλα appellantur.*

had a son with her, whom they called Melus too. Out of grief for the death of Adonis, Cinyras' son, Melus the elder hang himself from a tree, and so did his wife. The tree was named 'μηλέα' after Melus. Aphrodite transformed Pelia into a dove and Melus into the fruit of the tree. When the younger Melus came of age, he was sent by Aphrodite to Delos. Melus taught men how to shear the sheep and how to work the wool, therefore sheep were named *μηλα* after him.

It is hard to determine the type of fruit that Acontius used and, sadly, I am unable to offer a definitive solution. I adopt the traditional view that the fruit was an apple 'μήλον', still whether it was an apple or a quince does not really affect my discussion here.

Ovid uses the following terms for the fruit of the story:²¹ *malum*, *pomum*, and the periphrasis *fetus arboris*. All these terms are generic and may be used for any type of tree-fruit, not just for an apple (or a quince).²² So, is Ovid's choice arbitrary? Should the alternate use of *malum*, *pomum*, and *fetus* be attributed simply to Ovid's wish for *variatio* and his intention to avoid irksome repetitions? Are there any deeper reasons that govern his choice of a particular term for the fruit? I will try to look for answers to these questions and to evaluate Ovid's choice of diction for the fruit which plays such a vital role in the story of Acontius and Cydippe.

i) fetus

Acontius opens his letter by declaring that Cydippe does not need to take a new oath (20.1f.):

*pone metum: nihil hic iterum iurabis amanti;
promissam satis est te semel esse mihi*

²¹ For Acontius' apple as a letter see Barchiesi (2001, 119-20), Rosenmeyer (2001, 114-30).

²² See OLD svv. *fetus*, *malum*, and *pomum*.

“Do not fear! You will not swear another oath to your lover: / it is enough that you once promised to be mine.”

Still, despite this statement, Acontius artfully and repeatedly tries to get Cydippe to take the oath again,²³ because he needs her to reconfirm her obligation to marry him. His efforts for a repetition of the oath testify to his insecurity. Acontius’ steady goal is to entrap the unsuspecting girl.²⁴

Acontius mentions the fruit for the first time at the beginning of his letter. This is not at all haphazard given the importance of the fruit in the story. Reminding Cydippe of the oath she took Acontius writes (20.9f.):

*verba licet repetas quae demptus ab arbore fetus
pertulit ad castas me iaciente manus.*

“You might recall the message, that the fruit from the tree / brought to your chaste hands, when I threw it to you.”

Ovid is notably vague about the exact type of the fruit. The word *fetus* stands for ‘a fruit of a plant’ (*OLD*, s.v. 4),²⁵ hence not exclusively for an apple.²⁶ The combination *fetus arboreus* (or similar phrases) first occurs in Vergil (*Georg.* 1.55), but is used more frequently by Ovid (*Met.* 4.125, 10.665, 14.625, 14.689, 15.97). Kenney suggests that the periphrasis *demptus ab arbore fetus* “probably signals the learned poet’s awareness that his sources differed as to the identity of the fruit, which is conventionally referred to as an apple”.²⁷

²³ Rosenmeyer (2001) 123–4.

²⁴ In her letter Cydippe claims that her oath is not valid (*Her.* 21.133–8).

²⁵ Mynors (1990) *Verg. Georg.* 1.55: “*fetus*: a favourite word, used equally of the fruit of plants and trees and the young of animals”. Cf. Bömer (1976) *Ov. Met.* 6.81 and (1986) *Ov. Met.* 15.97.

²⁶ See *Ov. Met.* 4.125 with Bömer (1976) ad loc., 10.665, 14.625, 15.97, *Ciris* 230 etc.

²⁷ See Kenney (1996) *Ov. Her.* 20.9: “*malum* (209, 237, 21.107) and *pomum* (239, 21.123, 145, 216) cover any orchard fruit, and the Diegesis to Callimachus is

Kenney's suggestion makes perfect sense, yet I would like to delve into the matter a bit more. A first thought would be that Ovid takes pains to highlight the fruit from a stylistic point of view, since this is its first appearance in this pair of letters. The periphrasis *demptus ab arbore fetus* is lofty,²⁸ and is used only here in the correspondence of Acontius and Cydippe. It might pick up a parallel Greek phrase about Acontius' fruit occurring in the missing part of the Αἴτια, but conclusive evidence is lacking.

I would suggest that etymology has probably been one more reason for the choice of *fetus* at *Her.* 20.9. In this particular passage Acontius narrates how he threw the fruit (*me iaciente*) and how the fruit carried the message (*pertulit*) to the hands of Cydippe (*ad castas manus*).²⁹ Acontius is the sender, the fruit is the message, Cydippe is the receiver.³⁰ The noun *fetus* is especially suitable for a context of message-carrying, since it supposedly originates from the verb *ferre* 'to carry'. Ovid himself attests this specific etymology in the *Fasti*, a work which may have been contemporary with the double *Heroides*³¹ (4.632): *hinc* (sc. a ferendo)...*fetus nomen habere putant*.³²

similarly vague (Z₂₋₃ μήλωι καλλίστῳι)".

²⁸ Cf. Ov. *Met.* 14.689: *sed neque iam fetus desiderat arbore demptos*.

²⁹ In the discussion following the oral delivery of this paper Stephen Harrison cleverly suggested that the use of the verb *iacere* here by Acontius may be a symbolic anticipation of the couple's sexual encounter after their wedding, given the association of *iacere* with *iaculor* and *ejaculatio*, and the meaning of the name Acontius (cf. *Her.* 21.209-10: *mirabar quare tibi nomen Acontius esset: quod faciat longe vulnus, acumen habes*).

³⁰ Acontius admits to rolling the apple towards Cydippe's feet. Later on, however, he pretends he knows nothing about the origin of the apple (*Her.* 20.209-10).

³¹ See Kraus (1968, 294), Hintermeier (1993, 190-5) with bibliography. Latta (1963, 2-8) dates the double letters between 4 and 8 C.E., while Kenney (1970, 388) places them around 5 C.E. based on certain metrical analogies with the *Fasti*. Rosati (1989) 47 claims that the double *Heroides* were composed between 4-5 C.E.

³² See Maltby (1991) s.v. On Ovid's vivid interest in etymology see among others Ahl (1985), Porte (1985), O'Hara (1996), Tissol (1997), Keith (2001), Michalopoulos (2001).

Furthermore, the use of the neuter *pomum* or *malum* instead of *fetus* in this particular *sedes* is impossible for metrical reasons, since the final syllable of the neuter participle *demptum* would have to be elided before *ab*. On the other hand, an accomplished master of language and metre such as Ovid would have easily overcome this metrical difficulty, had he really wished to use *pomum* or *malum*.

To sum up so far, three reasons have been put forward as regards Ovid's choice of the term *fetus* for the fruit at *Her.* 20.9-10:

1. vagueness of the sources as to the identity of the fruit,
2. etymology, and (perhaps)
3. metre.

To these reasons I would like to add yet another which is related to the relationship of *Her.* 20-21 with their source text, Callimachus' Αἴτια. As already noted above, the story of Acontius and Cydippe is included in the Αἴτια as the αἴτιον of the family of the Acontiadae. Ovid's version of the story lacks any aetiological dimension, at least evidently. Cydippe simply closes her letter by announcing her total submission to Acontius, since this is the will of the god Apollo (21.239-40):

*teque tenente deos numen sequor ipsa deorum
doque libens victas in tua vota manus.*

"And I follow the will of the gods, gods you are master of, / and willingly give my captive hands to your wishes."

This is a happy end; the reader is left to assume that the wedding of the young couple will immediately follow, still this wedding lies beyond the temporal space covered by the two letters. Actually, in his letter Acontius does mention wedding and children, but not his; he refers to the forthcoming wedding of Cydippe with her unnamed fiancé. Acontius severely

attacks Cydippe's fiancé asking him to withdraw immediately from her side (20.135-170), and he further tries to avert the possibility of Cydippe creating a family with anyone else but himself (20.191-6). He warns Cydippe that if she violates her oath to Diana and marries somebody else, she will not be able to rely on Diana's help when she will be pregnant, because she will have betrayed the goddess. Diana will refuse to help Cydippe, because Acontius will not be the father of the child (20.191-6):

*his quoque vitatis in partu nempe rogabis
ut tibi luciferas adferat illa manus.
audiet et repetens quae sint audita requiret
iste tibi de quo coniuge partus eat.
promittes votum: scit te promittere falso;
iurabis: scit te fallere posse deos.*

“Even if you avoid this, you will surely call on her in childbirth, pleading that she might bring you her shining hands. She will hear, and recalling what she has heard, she will ask what husband has given you this child. You will promise gifts: she knows your promises are false. You will swear: she knows that you betray the gods.”

Hence, the family that Cydippe is going to start is actually one of the issues touched upon in the Ovidian correspondence of Acontius and Cydippe.

Given the above, the use of the periphrasis *demptus ab arbore fetus* for the fruit at the beginning of Acontius' letter acquires an interesting new dimension, thus far hidden. Besides 'fruit of a plant', the word *fetus* also means "offspring, of human beings" (*OLD* s.v. 3). This *fetus arboris* – the first name Ovid chooses for the fruit – will actually lead to the wedding of Acontius and Cydippe; and this wedding will produce the descendants, the *fetus*, the Acontiadae, as narrated in the source

text of the story, Callimachus' Αἴτια. The *fetus arboris* will be the αἴτιον of the family of the Acontiadae, so to speak.³³

ii) *malum*

The fruit is again mentioned at 20.209-12, where Acontius narrates the events on Delos:

*postmodo nescioqua venisse volubile malum
verba ferens doctis insidiosa notis,³⁴
quod quia sit lectum sancta praesente Diana,
esse tuam vinctam numine teste fidem.*

“Presently an apple came rolling from I know not where, / bearing artful words in cunning letters: / which, being read out loud, in sacred Diana’s presence, / made your pledge binding, with her as divine witness.”

The noun *mālum* was originally used of any soft-skinned tree-fruit,³⁵ but later it most often stood for the apple (*OLD* s.v. 1). The combination *volubile malum* occurs here for the first time in Latin literature. Ovid’s use of *malum* is possibly intended to pick up the Greek μῆλον,³⁶ which was most probably used by Callimachus in the Αἴτια, although it does not occur in the surviving part of the story. A μῆλον is mentioned in the

³³ Perhaps the idea of the *arbor genealogica* is lurking at the background. The family tree is not established iconographically before the Middle ages, however, both Greek and Roman writers often apply arboricultural terms and images when referring to genealogy, family lineage and familial relationships. See Gowers (2011) and Bretin-Chabrol (2012).

³⁴ The message (*nota*) inscribed on the apple can only be *docta*, since it was inspired, according to Acontius, by the ingenious *Amor* himself (20.27-30): *te mihi compositis (siquid tamen egimus) a se / astrinxit verbis ingeniosus Amor. / dictatis ab eo feci sponsalia verbis / consultoque fui iuris Amore vafēr.*

³⁵ See Coleman (1977) on Verg. *Ecl.* 2.51 and 3.64.

³⁶ μᾶλον Dor. and Aeol. Varro (*LL* 5.102) notes: *malum, quod Graece Aeolis dicunt μᾶλον.*

Diegesis of the Acontius and Cydippe story: Κυδίππης μήλω
καλ- / λίστω.³⁷

But why does Ovid choose the noun *malum* and not *pomum* or *fetus* in this particular passage? I would suggest that the answer lies in the context. Acontius bestows a sinister role on this fruit by mentioning the *insidiosa verba* that it carried. Moreover, he distances himself from the fruit by pretending ironically that he does not know where it came from (*nescioqua*).³⁸ This ignorance as to the fruit's origin adds to its dark role. Ovid here produces an excellent double-entendre, based on the similar sound of *malum* 'apple' and *malum* 'evil'. The prosody of *a* (short in the adjective *mālum*, long in the noun *mālum*) is not a problem in such wordplays and double entendres.³⁹ In fact, the proof that it was indeed possible for the average Roman to associate *malum* (apple) with *malum* (evil) is Rufinus' attempt to explain that the two words are actually not related (*Orig. in cant.* 3 p.180.4 B): *ne...simpliciores aliqui arborem mali malam arborem putent et a malitia dictam, dicamus nos arborem meli, Graeco...nomine utentes*.⁴⁰ Strikingly, a double-entendre between *malum* 'apple' and *malum* 'evil' is impossible in Greek, because in Greek 'apple' is μήλον and 'evil' is κακόν. Ovid displays remarkable creative originality and great skill at elaborating on the sound and the multiple meanings of words.

³⁷ According to Pfeiffer (vol. I p. 71) this *Diegesis* may have been much longer than the other *Diegeses* of the Αἴτια stories ("Diegesis huius fabulae celeberrimae multo longior fuisse videtur quam reliquorum Aetiorum enarrationes").

³⁸ This is how Cydippe depicts the episode in her letter (*Her.* 21.107): *mittitur ante pedes malum cum carmine tali*.

³⁹ On this wordplay see Boyd (1983, 171).

⁴⁰ Other etymologies of *malum* attested in Maltby (1991) s.v.: *malum a Graecis dictum quod sit fructus eius pomorum omnium rotundissimus* (Isid. *Etym.* 17.7.3), and *in Libya ad Hesperidas, unde aurea mala, id est secundum antiquam consuetudinem capras et oves, Hercules ex Africa in Graeciam exportavit. Ea enim a sua voce Graeci appellarunt mela* (Varro *Rust.* 2.1.6).

Notice too the wordplay on the double meaning of *legere*, ‘to read’ and ‘to collect’ at line 20.211: *quod quia sit lectum sancta praesente Diana*. Two different readings are possible: either “**being read out loud** in sacred Diana’s presence”, taking *legere* in the sense ‘to read’ or “**being picked up** in sacred Diana’s presence”, taking *legere* in the sense ‘to collect’. This whole passage is teeming with alternative semasiological possibilities.

The *malum* double-entendre resurfaces in Cydippe’s letter, when she refers to the events on Delos, i.e. in a part of her letter corresponding to Acontius’ account of the Delian episode, where the term *malum* had been used for the first time (20.209). Cydippe writes (21.107):

*mittitur ante pedes **malum** cum carmine tali.*

“An apple was thrown at my feet with this verse on it”.

Cydippe uses this particular term for the apple only here; she then uses the term *pomum* for reasons I intend to explain shortly. Just like Acontius, Cydippe also refers to his *insidiae* inscribed on the *malum* (21.109–10):

*sustulit hoc nutrix mirataque ‘perlege’ dixit:
insidias legi, magne poeta, tuas.*

“My nurse picked it up and, marvelling, said: ‘Read this’. / I read your deceitful lines, mighty poet.”

These remarkable correspondences indicate that the choice of the term *malum* for Acontius’ fruit in these particular passages in both letters is deliberate; with this double-entendre Ovid alerts his readers to the ‘sinister’ aspect of the fruit (*malum*).

iii) *pomum*

As shown above, Cydippe calls the fruit *malum* only the first time that it turns up in her letter (21.107), and she

does so by analogy to Acontius' letter; Ovid produces a striking double-entendre: *malum* = 'apple' and 'evil'. In all the subsequent appearances of the fruit Cydippe uses the term *pomum* (twice at 21.123 and then at 21.145 and 216). This noun covers a wider semantic area than *malum* and may refer to any orchard fruit.⁴¹ It occurs for the first time at 21.123-4:

*Cydippen pomum, pomum Schoeneida cepit:
tu nunc Hippomenes scilicet alter eris.*

"An apple caught Cydippe, an apple Atalanta: / surely now you're a second Hippomenes".

Cydippe conjures up a well-known mythological *exemplum*. This is the famous story of the race between Atalanta and Hippomenes. Atalanta was the daughter of the Boeotian Schoeneus; she was a virgin huntress who shunned marriage.⁴² She was very beautiful and swift-footed and she would challenge her suitors to a footrace. The deal was this: she would marry the man who could outrun her, but she would kill those who lost the race. After many men failed and lost their lives, Hippomenes managed to win the race with the help of the goddess Aphrodite, who gave him three golden apples from the garden of the Hesperides.⁴³ During the race Hippomenes was rolling the three apples, one by one, in front of Atalanta, who kept stopping to pick them up; as a result she was delayed, she lost the race and she became Hippomenes' wife.⁴⁴

The points of contact between the story of Atalanta and Hippomenes and the story of Acontius and Cydippe are hard to miss:

⁴¹ See *OLD* s.v. 2 and Kenney (1996) *Ov. Her.* 20.9.

⁴² Theogn. 1293W: *φεύγουσ' ἡμερόεντα γάμον.*

⁴³ Philetas fr. 18 Powell, *Verg. Ecl.* 6.61.

⁴⁴ The story of Hippomenes and Atalanta is narrated by Ovid in his *Metamorphoses* [10.560-707 with Anderson (1972, 517-18)]. Cf. Hes. fr. 72-6 M-W, Theoc. 3.40-2, *Ov. Her.* 4.99-100, Hyg. *Fab.* 185, *Serv. Aen.* 3.113.

1. in both stories fruits play a decisive role.
2. in both stories a man deceives a woman with the help of fruits.
3. Atalanta was thought to be an Arcadian version of Diana,⁴⁵ who plays such a crucial part in the story of Acontius and Cydippe.⁴⁶
4. The name Hippomenes-Ἰππομένης contains the root *ιππ*-,⁴⁷ which it shares with the name Cydippe-Κυδίππη. But not only that; line 123 is masterly built: the verb *cepit* is placed at the end, while the two hemistichs are symmetrical on either side of the caesura; they consist of a name (*Cydippen* and *Schoeneida*) and the noun *pomum*.⁴⁸ Although the combination *aurea mala* is most frequently used for the apples of the Hesperides, thanks to which Hippomenes won the race with Atalanta, in this particular passage Ovid has preferred the noun *pomum* instead. I suggest that the reason is none other than the similar sound of the noun *pomum* and the name *Hippomenes*. Hippomenes is the perfect mythological *exemplum* for this particular case, because he combines in his name both the *-ipp-* part of the name *Cydippe* and the *pom-* part of the word *pomum*, thus creating a tight bond between the persons involved and the fruit (*pomum*).

The next two times that Cydippe mentions the fruit, she uses again the noun *pomum*. It is the context once again that determines the choice of diction. After Cydippe has managed

⁴⁵ See Rosen-Farrell (1986, 248 n. 25) with bibliography.

⁴⁶ According to Cairns (2002, 477) the *exemplum* of Hippomenes and Atalanta may have featured in the lost part of the Acontius-Cydippe story in Callimachus' *Aetia*.

⁴⁷ The same stands for the names of Hippolytus and Hippolyte also used by Cydippe as *exempla* at *Her.* 21.10 and 21. 119-20 respectively.

⁴⁸ Moreover, the line consists only of spondees, with the exception of the fifth foot.

to prove that her oath was not valid, she blames Acontius for his deceitful trick.⁴⁹ In an impressive *reductio ad absurdum*⁵⁰ – which I am sure Ovid must have enjoyed a lot – she deals with the possible applications of the trick. At lines 21.145–6 Cydippe, with a great deal of sarcasm, urges Acontius to use it so as to deceive the rich and obtain their wealth:

*decipe sic alios, succedat epistula pomo;
si valet hoc, magnas ditibus aufer opes.*

“Deceive others so, let your letters follow apples: / if it’s valid, carry away the riches of the wealthy.”

I suggest that in this case, too, etymology governs the choice of words. Ovid most probably has in mind the etymology of the noun *pomum* from the adjective *opimus* ‘plentiful, abundant’ [*OLD* s.v. 6b], later attested by Isidore (*Etym.* 17.6.24): *poma dicta ab opimo, id est a copia ubertatis*. This etymology is extremely suitable for this context, especially since Ovid skillfully places the cognate noun *opes* at the end of the pentameter,⁵¹ that is in the same metrical *sedes* as *pomo*; this is a common practice in etymological wordplays intended to highlight the two members of a wordplay.⁵² What Cydippe ironically suggests to Acontius is for him to use his *pomum* (< *opimum*) in order to steal the *opes* (< *opimum*) from the rich. Etymology and proper choice of diction enrich the semasiological background of the text.

⁴⁹ Epistolography is the genre of deception *par excellence*. It is usually the women who are associated with guile and deceit. See Rosenmeyer (2001, 27–8, 43–4, 45–60), Lindheim (2003, 25–8). In the story of Acontius and Cydippe the roles have been reversed; it is the man that deceives the woman with some sort of a written message (the oath inscribed on the apple). Besides, Acontius does not hesitate to speak openly about his treachery (20.21–32).

⁵⁰ Kraus (1968, 292), Kenney (1970, 401).

⁵¹ For the probable etymological link *opimus* < *ops* see *OLD* s.v. and Maltby (1991) s.v. *opimus*.

⁵² For this particular etymological marker see Cairns (1996, 3) and Michalopoulos (2001, 5). For the *sedes* of *ops* see Kenney (2002, 35 n. 48).

Perhaps etymology lies again behind the choice of *pomum* in its final occurrence in Cydippe's letter (21.215-7); this is a passage already discussed in relation to the type of fruit that Acontius used:

*concidimus macie, color est sine sanguine, qualem
in **pomo** refero mente fuisse tuo,
candida nec mixto sublucent ora rubore.*

"I am enfeebled by emaciation: my colour is bloodless, / just like your apple was, I recall to mind."

Cydippe describes her bad physical condition caused by her illness. She writes about her leanness (*macies*) and her pallor (*color est sine sanguine*) and she likens the colour of her skin with the colour of the fruit that Acontius had rolled to her.⁵³ As discussed above, this comparison leads to the conclusion that this fruit may have been a quince (which is yellowish) and not an apple (which is red). Cydippe's memory (*refero mente*) comes from her 'real-life' experiences: the girl supposedly remembers the events on Delos. Moreover, this memory is also literary: Ovid's Cydippe recalls the memories of her Callimachean counterpart, Ovid's Cydippe remembers what Callimachus' Cydippe had experienced on Delos. The phrase *refero mente* clearly functions as an Alexandrian footnote⁵⁴ joining Ovid's text with its source text, Callimachus' Αἴτια.

In this passage Ovid has preferred the generic term *pomum* for the fruit. I would suggest that the image of a fruit, which has lost its natural colour and has started to wither,

⁵³ According to Kenney (1996) ad loc. the fruit's yellowness might point to a quince, however "this apparent touch of realism is somewhat compromised by what follows".

⁵⁴ The term 'Alexandrian footnote' was established by Ross (1975, 78). This role is usually played by verbs such as *dicunt*, *ferunt*, *habentur*, *dicitur* etc. See Wills (1996, 31). For the Alexandrian footnote see Hinds (1987, 17-19), Harrison (1991) Verg. *Aen.* 10.189 with bibliography, Horsfall (1990), Thomas (1992), Miller (1993), Michalopoulos (2006, 34-5) and on Ov. *Her.* 16.137-8.

brought to Ovid's mind an alternative etymology of the noun *pomum*, very fitting to this context. Varro (*Rust.* 1.31.5) attests: *quod indigent potu, poma dicta esse possunt*.⁵⁵ Both the *pomum* and Cydippe, who is burning with fever (21.169: *at mihi, vae miserae, torrentur febribus artus*),⁵⁶ need water, a fact which might justify the choice of *pomum* for 'fruit' in this particular context.⁵⁷

In fact, I would also be tempted to suggest that Ovid here elaborates on an alternative meaning of the Greek noun *μηλον*. *Μήλον* may also mean 'cheek' [LSJ s.v. (B) II.2]. With this meaning in mind (*μηλον* = cheek) Ovid compares the colour of sick Cydippe's face (*ora*) with the colour of Acontius' fruit (*μηλον*),⁵⁸ even if here he uses the term *pomum*. A most symptomatic use of the word *μηλον* as 'cheek' can be found in the *Greek Anthology* (9.556 ΖΩΝΑΣ):

Νύμφαι εποχθίδιαι Νηρηίδες, εἶδετε Δάφνιν
 χθιζόν, ἐπαχνιδίαν ὡς ἀπέλουσε κόνιν,
 ὑμετέραις λιβάδεσσιν ὅτ' ἔνθορε σειριόκαυτος
 ἡρέμα φοινιχθεὶς μᾶλα παρηΐδια.
 εἵπατέ μοι, καλὸς ἦν; ἢ ἐγὼ τράγος οὐκ ἄρα κνάμαν
 μοῦνον ἐγνώθην, ἀλλ' ἔτι καὶ κραδίαν;

"Nereids, Nymphs of the shore, you saw Daphnis yesterday, when he washed off the dust that lay like down on his skin; when, burnt by the dog-star, he rushed into your waters, **the apples of his cheeks faintly reddened**. Tell me, was he beautiful? Or am I a goat, not only lame in my legs but in my heart too?"

⁵⁵ See Maltby (1991) s.v.

⁵⁶ Cydippe's fever is also mentioned in Callimachus (fr. 75.16-17 Pf.): δεύτερον ἐστόρνυντο τὰ κλισμία, δεύτερον ἢ πα[ῖ]ς / ἐπὶ τέταρταίῳ μῆνας ἔκαμνε πυρί.

⁵⁷ The choice of *pomum* instead of the more specific *malum* may be also explained in psychological terms. Cydippe possibly wishes to avoid uttering the name of the fruit which has been the cause of her misfortunes.

⁵⁸ At *Ecl.* 903-4 Aristophanes writes: *κάπῃ τοῖς μήλοις ἐπανθεῖ*. The ancient scholiast ad loc. interprets the word *μήλα* as *παρειαί*.

iv) *malum* and *pomum*

Hoping for a happy end to his erotic siege Acontius announces the dedication of a golden effigy of the fruit which helped him win Cydippe. The golden replica of the fruit will be the proof and the reminder that the wedding of Acontius and Cydippe has been realized. In this way the fruit becomes a monument and gets immortalized. Memory acquires a body, it becomes tangible.⁵⁹ With the dedication of the golden effigy of the fruit the story of the young couple, which has been clandestine so far, will become public.⁶⁰

Acontius is once again going to inscribe a text. He has already inscribed:

a) Cydippe's name on the bark of trees (Callim. fr. 73 Pf.): ἀλλ' ἐνὶ δῇ φλοιοῖσι κεκομμένα τόσσα φέροιτε / γράμματα, Κυδίππην ὅσσ' ἐρέουσι καλήν (only in Callimachus and Aristaenetus 1.10.57-60, not in Ovid), and

b) the oath on the fruit that he rolled in front of Cydippe (in both Callimachus and Ovid).

Acontius quotes the votive epigram that is going to accompany the effigy, which he vows to Artemis of Delos. It reads (20.235-40):

*quod si contigerit, cum iam data signa sonabunt
tinctaque votivo sanguine Delos erit,
aurea⁶¹ ponetur mali felicitis imago,
causaque versiculis scripta duobus erit:*

⁵⁹ See Barchiesi (1993, 355). For similar dedications in elegy see Ov. *Am.* 1.11.27-8 with McKeown (1989) ad loc.

⁶⁰ See Rosenmeyer (2001, 129).

⁶¹ Acontius will use the most precious material, gold. The objects of the gods were made of gold (or silver). See Heubeck *et al.* (1988) Hom. *Od.* 1.97, Murgatroyd (1994) Tib. 2.2.17-18. Cf. Hom. *Il.* 1.611 (χρυσόθρονος Ἥρη), 4.2 (χρυσέῳ ἐν δαπέδῳ), 4.3 (χρυσέοις δεπάεσσι), 5.509 (Φοῖβον Απόλλωνος χρυσαόρου), 13.36 (πέδας χρυσείας), *Od.* 1.96-7 (πέδιλα χρύσεια), Pind. *Pyth.* 1.1 (χρυσέα φόρμιγγ'),

*EFFIGIE **POMI** TESTATUR ACONTIUS HUIUS
QUAE FUERINT IN EO SCRIPTA FUISSE RATA.*

“If you will do this, when the signal has sounded, / and Delos is drenched with sacrificial blood, / a golden image of the fortunate apple will be offered, / and the reason for the offering will be written in two short lines: / ‘With this likeness of an apple, Acontius bears witness / that what may have been written on it, has been done.’”

The style of the epigram is pompous enough; the absence of Cydippe’s name is striking, a sign of Acontius’ egocentricity. Acontius calls the fruit a *pomum* for the first time in this pair of letters. Perhaps this is due to the fact that its wider semasiological scope renders it more suitable for a votive epigram.⁶² Besides, the choice of *pomum* may very well be attributed to Ovid’s intention to avoid the awkward repetition of the metrically equivalent *malum*, which features in the previous couplet (237–8). Moreover, Acontius promises to place this epigram under the effigy of the fruit, hence it will be obvious to anyone reading it which type of fruit the word *pomum* refers to.

I would also like to draw attention to the striking combination *mali felix* at line 237.⁶³ Acontius deems the fruit (*malum*) as *felix*, because it proved to be favorable and fortunate,⁶⁴

Nem. 5.24 (χρυσέῳ πλάκτρῳ) etc. One should not forget that the trick with the apple was an idea of the god Amor.

⁶² Both Ovid (x7) and Vergil (x8) are fond of the noun *effigies*.

⁶³ The combination *felix malum* occurs only once before Ovid in Vergil’s *Georgics* (2.127), where it refers to the citron. Servius notes ad loc.: *felix mali secundum eos, qui dicunt citrum, fecundi: nam haec arbor, id est citri, omni paene tempore plena est pomis, quae in ea partim matura, partim acerba, partim adhuc in flore sunt posita. aut certe ‘felix’ salubris: nulla enim efficacior res est ad venena pellenda. felix mali fertilis, fecundi: aut quod a morte revocet.*

⁶⁴ For *felix* as ‘bringing good luck, lucky, auspicious’ see *OLD* s.v. *felix* 2a, Lewis-Short s.v. *felix* 2.

and yielded the desirable outcome.⁶⁵ At the same time, however, if one thinks of the double entendre discussed above, i.e. *malum* as ‘apple’ and ‘evil’, then this combination becomes a salient oxymoron, which invests the closure of Acontius’ letter with great irony. For Acontius the *malum* ‘apple’ was *felix*, because thanks to it he won Cydippe. For Cydippe, however, the *malum* she picked up and read proved to be *malum* ‘evil’, it caused her a great deal of trouble, and it brought her to the brink of death (*Her.* 21.11-4, 31, 43-6, 60, 155-76).

Apart from the double-entendre discussed above, the choice of the noun *malum* in this particular context, where Acontius vows the dedication of a golden effigy of the fruit, may have been influenced by the frequent use of the noun *malum* for the apples of the Hesperides,⁶⁶ traditionally thought to be golden.⁶⁷ As we have already seen, the golden apples of the Hesperides appear in Cydippe’s letter too, where she mentions the story of Hippomenes and Atalanta (21.123f.), in which these golden apples feature prominently.

⁶⁵ For *felix* as ‘fruitful, productive’ see *OLD* s.v. *felix* 1, Lewis-Short s.v. *felix* 1. Interestingly, the apple is called *felix*, an adjective usually attributed to the trees bearing fruits. See Lewis-Short s.v. 1. On the sense of *felix* as ‘fertile’ see also Cato [(Paul. ex Fest. p. 92): *felices arbores Cato dixit, quae fructum ferunt, infelices quae non ferunt.*] and Pliny (*N.H.* 24.68: *vulgus infelicem arborem eam appellat, ..., quoniam nihil ferat, nec seratur unquam.*)

⁶⁶ With the exception of Varro, who mentions the golden “sheep” of the Hesperides instead of the golden “apples”, since in ancient Greek ‘μῆλον’ stands for both ‘apple’ and ‘sheep’ (*Rust.* 2.1.6): *ut in Libya ad Hesperidas, unde aurea mala, id est secundum antiquam consuetudinem capras et oves, [quas] Hercules ex Africa in Graeciam exportavit. ea enim <a> sua voce Graeci appellarunt mela.* See also Serv. *Aen.* 4.484 and Apollonius *Lexicon Homericum* p.112 s.v. μῆλα κοινῶς μὲν τὰ τετράποδα, ὅθεν καὶ πᾶν δέρμα μηλωτὴ λέγεται, κατ’ ἐπικράτειαν δὲ πρόβατα καὶ αἴγες. καὶ ὁ καρπὸς τῆς μηλέας καὶ πάντων δὲ τῶν δένδρων ὁ καρπὸς λέγεται μῆλα· “αὐτῇσι ρίζησι καὶ αὐτοῖς ἄνθεσι μῆλων.”

⁶⁷ Vergil (*Ecl.* 3.71, 8.52-3) mentions the *mala aurea*. For the golden apples of the Hesperides see Lucr. 5.32, Catul. 2b.11-3, Hyg. *Fab.* 30.12, Serv. *Georg.* 1.244, Serv. *Aen.* 3.113, 4.246, 4.484, Bömer (1980) on Ov. *Met.* 10.644. The apple which the goddess Eris threw among the gods at the wedding of Peleus and Thetis was golden too (Serv. *Aen.* 1.27, 1.651).

One final point before closing: as seen above, the first time that Acontius mentions the fruit, he calls it a *fetus arboris*. I have suggested that the choice of the noun *fetus* may have been determined by its alternative meaning, ‘offspring’; the noun *fetus* may allude to the fact that the story of Acontius and Cydippe is the αἴτιον of the Acontiadae family in Callimachus’ Αἴτια, since this family will result from the union of the couple thanks to this *fetus arboris*. By the same token one can look for something similar at the end of Acontius’ letter, especially since, as Barchiesi pointed out,⁶⁸ in that passage one finds the *terminus technicus* for an αἴτιον, i.e. *causa*. My attention focusses on the combination *malum felix*. The most frequent meaning of the adjective *felix* is ‘fruitful, productive’ (*OLD* s.v. 1).⁶⁹ With this meaning in mind the combination *felix malum* may hint at the family of the Acontiadae, which will result from the union of Acontius and Cydippe, made possible thanks to this particular *felix malum*. If this train of thought is legitimate, then at the beginning and the end of Acontius’ letter, with the combinations *fetus arboris* and *malum felix*, Ovid has concealed allusions to the aetiological dimension of the story in his source text, Callimachus’ Αἴτια.

To conclude: I hope to have shown that Ovid’s choice of terms for Acontius’ fruit is neither arbitrary nor haphazard. Ovid takes particular care in picking names for the fruit which played such a crucial role in the story. Ovid’s choice of *malum*, *pomum* or *fetus* is determined by the following factors:

- a) his wish for *variatio*,
- b) metre, and, most importantly,

⁶⁸ Barchiesi (1993, 355) pointed out that Acontius’ *causa* alludes to the model of the story, Callimachus’ Αἴτια (αἴτιον = *causa*). See also Michalopoulos (2014) on *Her.* 20.22.

⁶⁹ The adjective is usually attributed to the trees bearing fruits (*Lewis-Short* s.v. 1).

c) the immediate context and the proper semasiological aspects that he wishes to highlight. Poetic etymology plays a most decisive role in bringing out multiple levels of meaning which allow for various interpretations. Whether an apple or a quince, whether *malum*, *pomum* or *fetus*, this fruit is perhaps the real protagonist in a great story of love and deception.⁷⁰

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