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Materiali e discussioni per l'analisi dei testi classici

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Stephen Hinds

Medea in Ovid: Scenes from the Life of an Intertextual Heroine

Introduction[1]

How many Medeas are there in Ovid? Three, goes a plausible answer: one in the tragedy of that name, composed by Ovid early in his career; another in the collection of elegiac epistles from heroines, or *Heroides*, also dated to Ovid's early period; and another dominating the first half of Book 7 of the *Metamorphoses*, the great epic of Ovid's maturity. Three Medeas: too many, perhaps, for one paper.

However, three minus one equals two: Ovid's tragic Medea has not survived into the modern period, a casualty of the vicissitudes of textual transmission. And two minus one equals one: a substantial body of scholarly opinion seeks to deny Ovidian authorship to the epistolary Medea, the first-person correspondent of *Heroides* 12. It is my intention, however, to resist this second piece of subtraction; and it is here, in Ovid's disputed

1. A slightly shorter version of this paper was delivered in February 1992 as the Third Annual George Walsh Memorial Lecture at the University of Chicago. I am most grateful to the Department of Classics there for inviting me to give the lecture, and for making my visit so enjoyable. I am equally indebted to a number of generous colleagues and institutions in Italy, who entertained me for a week, also in February 1992, in the course of which I gave versions of paper (in Italian) at the Universities of Florence, Pisa, Verona and Padua. This project first began to take shape when I gave a presentation on the Medea epistle to a *Heroides* seminar in the Faculty of Classics, Cambridge, in December 1989, in the course of a term-long visit made possible by the generosity of St. Catharine's College, Cambridge, and of the Department of Classical Studies and Horace H. Rackham School of Graduate Studies in the University of Michigan. An intermediate version was presented in March 1991 to the Department of Classics in the University of Toronto. I am grateful to my audience there, as to my audiences at all the other venues, for a rich harvest of comments and criticisms. For their comments on final drafts I am especially grateful to A. Barchiesi (whom I thank too for his Italian translation of my paper, more felicitous than the original), J.J. Clauss, D.C. Feeney, E.J. Kenney, J.C. McKeown and J.I. Porter. I have not seen T. Heinze, *The Authenticity of Ovid Heroides 12 Reconsidered*, advertised as forthcoming in «Bull. Inst. Class. Stud.» at time of final submission.

Medea epistle, that I find my theme. At one level, this paper will constitute a specific contribution to a long-standing debate about Ovidian and non-Ovidian epistles in the *Heroides*, a response to the latest and most energetic attempt to banish Medea from the corpus of authentic *Heroides*, and a necessary prolegomenon to some future work of mine on the Medea of *Metamorphoses* 7[2]. But it will also be read, I hope, as a broader inquiry into philological method, a case-study in allusion, poetic self-consciousness, and the movement of a myth across texts – and ultimately a celebration of Medea, in her oneness, her twoness, her threeness and more.

Why should we doubt that Ovid wrote *Heroides* 12, the letter from Medea to Jason? Because (a number of recent scholars argue, reviving a position taken by Lachmann) the letter is not one of the nine epistles mentioned in Ovid's catalogue of his *Heroides* in *Amores* 2, 18.[3] In effect, at least half of Ovid's best modern editors proclaim open season upon *any* epistle not alluded to in this list. What will enable us to move in against any one of these poems for the kill? Tell-tale traces in the text itself: viz, style, metre and diction which look unOvidian; evidence of inept borrowing; and imitations of verse agreed to have been written by Ovid after the single *Heroides*. Such are the terms of the recent investigation of the Medea epistle by Peter Knox in a 1986 *Harvard Studies* article. He sees awkwardnesses in the style of the epistle. He argues that its literary 'borrowings' are 'flat and unimaginative' in a way which is not consistent with the borrower being Ovid[4]. And, drawing on the philological method canonized by Bertil Axelson in his 'Lygdamus und Ovid' for determining priority between two related texts[5], he finds in *Heroides* 12 a case of 'incriminating borrowing' from the ostensibly later Medea in *Metamorphoses* 7[6]. In Knox's discussion of the parallel in question, the *Metamorphoses* 7 passage fits securely into its context while the evidently related *Heroides* 12 passage does not: therefore the *Metamorphoses* 7 passage is prior, and the *Heroides* 12 passage is an imitation[7].

2. I shall be working on *Met.* 7-9 for a collaborative commentary on the *Metamorphoses* organised by Alessandro Barchiesi under the auspices of the Fondazione Valla.

3. For K. Lachmann's view that only the letters named in *Am.* 2, 18 are authentic see *Kleinere Schriften*, Berlin 1876, II, 56-61. For varyingly confident revivals of his position see G.P. Goold, «Gnomon» 46, 1974, 484 (recanting Goold, «Harv. Stud. Class. Phil.» 69, 1965, 43); Tarrant 1981, 152 n. 39; Knox 1986, 207-9. All of these treatments raise, but reject, the idea of interpreting *Am.* 2, 18, 23 as a reference to *Her.* 12: a discussion of this matter will form part of my third 'scene'. Notably circumspect on the evidential value of *Am.* 2.18 is E. Courtney, *Ovidian and non-Ovidian Heroides*, «Bull. Inst. Class. Stud.» 12, 1965, 63-6 at 64-5.

4. e.g. Knox 1986, 218.

My response to all this, which will sometimes emerge obliquely rather than directly in the course of this exploration of Medea, is that the sceptics misread both the letter and the spirit of the *Amores* 2, 18 catalogue, and of poetic catalogues in general (we shall come to this in my third 'scene'); that little or nothing has emerged in *Heroides* 12 worth worrying about in the way of unOvidian style and diction; and that Knox's discussion of 'flat and unimaginative' or 'incriminating' borrowings tells us more about the instability of our criteria for evaluating poetic allusion than about anything else.

I raise the curtain on my first 'scene'.

Scene 1. Marine Hazards: Her. 12, 121-4 and Met. 7, 62-5

Similarities between the treatments of Medea in *Her.* 12 and in *Met.* 7 have long been noticed by commentators. A major element in Peter Knox's case against Ovidian authorship of *Her.* 12 is to suggest that one such correspondence between the two texts 'incriminates' the *Her.* 12 passage as having been written

5. B. Axelson, *Lygdamus und Ovid: Zur Methodik der literarischen Prioritätsbestimmung*, «Eranos» 58, 1960, 92-111. See also the independently conceived article of A.G. Lee, «Proc. Camb. Phil. Soc.» n.s. 5, 1958-59, 15-23, which has not attained the same celebrity but is in some ways a sharper treatment of the Lygdamus question.

6. Knox 1986, 217.

7. Knox in effect is following up (the first half of) a challenging remark made by Tarrant 1981, 152 n. 39: '*Her.* 12 can, I think, be shown to be a skillful amalgam of two Ovidian treatments of Medea, that in *Metamorphoses* 7 (1-132) and in the lost tragedy *Medea* (133-end)'. (The second half of Tarrant's remark, concerning affinities between the lost *Medea* and *Her.* 12, draws on an old area of scholarly interest, and is less immediately controversial in that it does not involve any reversal of the usual chronology: for discussion of the lost *Medea* see my 'Scene 4' below).

after rather than *before* the *Met.* 7 one. The argument in question focusses on *Her.* 12, 121-4[8],

> compressos utinam Symplegades elisissent,
> nostraque adhaererent ossibus ossa tuis;
> aut nos *Scylla rapax canibus* misisset edendos –
> debuit ingratis Scylla nocere viris

in which Medea, attacking Jason for deserting her in favour of the Corinthian marriage, expresses the wish that they had both been killed on the journey from Colchis to Greece. (It is at Corinth that Medea writes her epistle.) The *Her.* 12 passage is argued to be derived from a closely parallel passage in *Met.* 7 (lines 62-5),

> quid quod nescioqui mediis concurrere in undis
> dicuntur montes ratibusque inimica Charybdis
> nunc sorbere fretum, nunc reddere, cinctaque saevis
> *Scylla rapax canibus* Siculo latrare profundo?

and to be unOvidian both in style and in level of competence. Knox makes four points, each of which I find valuable and stimulating, but each of which leads me to a conclusion diametrically opposed to his.

My aim here is not to prove Knox definitively wrong, but rather to show how easily his arguments about the passage can be turned upon their heads – how his appeals to the objectivity of philological method stand or fall by value-judgements no less subjective than those which I will offer in response as one of those many readers who see no reason to doubt the poem's Ovidian nature.

First, Knox rightly draws our attention to a metrical peculiarity in line 121. Let me quote his discussion[9]:

8. Unless otherwise noted, my quotations throughout of the *Heroides* will be taken from the Loeb text of G. Showerman, rev. G.P. Goold (Cambridge, Mass. 1977), with minor modifications of orthography and punctuation here and there. I shall also follow the line-numbering in Showerman-Goold. My first quotation contains one departure from Showerman-Goold in line 123 (an emendation declined): since this will be integral to my discussion later in the present 'scene' I postpone discussion of it until then.

9. Knox 1986, 216 and n. 27.

> 'The passage contains a striking metrical anomaly in the opening line. *elisissent* is the only example of a Latin quadrisyllabic word at the end of a spondaic hexameter in Ovid's amatory elegies. (Footnote:) *Fast.* 2, 787 is the only other example in Ovid's elegiacs. It ends in a proper name, *Collatini*, an apparent exception based on Greek models. The only other example in Augustan elegy is Propertius 2, 28, 49 *formosarum*.'

Let me now offer a competing interpretation of my own, which embraces Knox's stylistic observation but puts an opposite 'spin' upon it:

The striking metrical effect, with the Latin quadrisyllabic word at the end of a spondaic hexameter, aptly expresses the inexorable and crushing force of the Symplegades. The effect is complemented by the mimetic juxtapositioning of *ossibus ossa* in a sibilant jingle in the second half of the pentameter.

On my reading, that is, *elisissent* is a special effect. It is *because* this quadrisyllabic formation is so unusual that it is so effective mimetically. Statistical approaches to style can indeed be helpful, but only if we remember that poets are poets precisely because they do not always write as we expect them to[10]. And in fact Knox's suggestion that a Latin quadrisyllable in this position is stylistically suspicious for Ovid where a Greek one would not be is hardly stronger in statistical terms than it is instinctually. The Latin examples in Ovidian elegy total only two; but the Greek examples total no more than eleven. Propertius has only one Latin example; but he has no more than six Greek ones. Tibullus has no examples in either language. A hunch may be based on this material, but not, perhaps, a statistical argument. And, to come back to instinct again, *Her.* 12, 121 *feels* like a Greek example anyway: *elisissent* is a Latin word, but the line as a whole is strongly Hellenized by the immediately preceding *Symplegades*[11].

10. Jim Porter points out the general appositeness in this connexion of the remarks with which Dionysius introduces his discussion of word-arrangement in Homer's verses on the rock of Sisyphus: inspired poet that he is, Homer is always achieving novel effects and artistic refinements, ἀεί τι καινουργῶν ... καὶ φιλοτεχνῶν, within the limited metrical and rhythmical resources available to him (Dion. Hal. *Comp.* 20).

11. Like Knox, I take all my data from M. Platnauer, *Latin Elegiac Verse*, Cambridge 1951, 38-9.

Knox's second point against the authenticity and workmanship of the *Her.* 12 passage is more important. He very acutely draws our attention to an anomaly in the passage's mythological geography. Let me again quote his discussion[12]:

> '[T]he passage as a whole poses problems. The mythographical tradition offers two mutually exclusive accounts of the route taken home from Colchis by the Argonauts. One version has them sail back the same way they came, through the Symplegades. The other, represented by Apollonius of Rhodes, takes them home by way of the northern rivers of Europe to the waters off Italy, whence they return to Greece passing Scylla and Charybdis. In *Heroides* 12, after Medea has long since arrived safely in Greece with Jason, we are to believe that she expresses the wish that she had died sooner, either by the Symplegades or the monster, Scylla. At this point she must know the route she took to Greece, and [i.e. a further anomaly] she knows that she had never encountered both these dangers, for the Symplegades were fixed forever once they had been passed by the Argo on the outward journey. Medea could never have been destroyed by the Clashing Rocks, no matter what route Jason returned by.'

Now here is my competing interpretation, which reaps the considerable benefits of Knox's observation but again puts the opposite 'spin' upon it:

As noticed by Knox, Medea here vacillates between two literary traditions. In the Alexandrian manner, Ovid as poet turns scholiast, and wittily makes his heroine divide her wish between two variant and mutually exclusive versions of her own journey (the Symplegades version and the Scylla and Charybdis version). Part of the learned game is that her first wish is a doubly counterfactual one: even if Medea travelled via the Symplegades they could never have crushed her – because they were fixed forever once they were passed by the Argo on the outward journey[13].

12. Knox 1986, 216.

13. Note that in Apollonius (as both Richard Hunter and Jim Clauss point out to me) while the Symplegades are indeed fixed forever after the Argo's passage on its outward journey (2, 604-6), Jason himself is represented as unaware of this: 4, 1252-4 αἰθ' ἔτλημεν, ἀφειδέες οὐλομένοιο / δείματος, αὐτὰ κέλευθα διαμπερὲς ὁρμηθῆναι / πετράων; see also 2, 1190-1.

Two ways of interpreting the same point: one by a critic biassed against the poem's workmanship, the other by a critic biassed in favour of the poem's workmanship. How can we decide which reading is right? Often a decision like this will be determined by little more than a withholding of faith on one side, and a leap of faith on the other. But in this particular case I think that I can tilt the balance of probability in my direction.

Why should we read the confusion about the Argonauts' route as a piece of learned contamination rather than as an inept mistake? Because the poet 'embroiders' it with *another* piece of learned contamination, in these very same verses: the second wish enacts that most mannered and celebrated of all Alexandrian conflations, the one between the two Scyllas. Line 123 gives us Scylla the sea-monster, but in line 124 (as the commentators note) *ingratis ... viris* must rather evoke Scylla the daughter of Nisus, spurned by the man (Minos) for whom she betrayed her father's city – a true Medea type, as the line well suggests. The Scylla confusion, with which Virgil, Propertius and on at least four other occasions Ovid all play 'spot the deliberate error', has the effect, precisely, of glossing the other 'error' as an equally deliberate one[14]. Not proof, perhaps, but a good hunch backed up with strong circumstantial evidence.

Knox's third point is that the very details which do *not* fit in the *Her.* 12 passage *do* fit in the parallel *Met.* 7 passage[15]. I quote the relevant lines again (62-5):

> quid quod nescioqui mediis concurrere in undis
> dicuntur montes ratibusque inimica Charybdis
> nunc sorbere fretum, nunc reddere, cinctaque saevis
> Scylla rapax canibus Siculo latrare profundo?

14. On the Scylla confusion see [Virg.] *Ciris* 54-7 (on *Scylla Nisi) complures illam magni, Messalla, poetae / (nam verum fateamur: amat Polyhymnia verum) / longe alia perhibent mutatam membra figura / Scyllaeum monstro saxum infestasse voraci.* Cf. R.O.A. M. Lyne's commentary (Cambridge 1978) ad loc. 'There were indeed *magni poetae* who confused, or consciously contaminated, the stories of the two Scyllas', citing (as well as our passage) Virg. *Ecl.* 6.74-7, Prop. 4, 4, 39-40, Ov. *Am.* 3, 12, 21-2, *A.A.* 1, 331-2, *Rem.* 737, *Fast.* 4, 500. On the contamination at *Am.* 3, 12, 21-2 (in its own way a falsehood which glosses a falsehood) see J.C. McKeown, *Ovid, Amores 3, 12*, «Pap. Liv. Lat. Sem.» 2, 1979, 163-77 at 169; on *Fast.* 4, 500 see S.E. Hinds, *Cave canem: Ovid, Fasti 4, 500*, «Liv. Class. Month.» 9, 1984, 79.

15. Knox 1986, 216-7.

The geography which is anomalous in *Her.* 12, 121-4 – Medea should *know*, having done it, which route she came to Greece by – is unexceptionable in *Met.* 7, 62-5, where Medea is still in Colchis, the route is as yet unplanned, and a general survey of potential marine hazards is entirely unproblematic. Knox draws the Axelsonian conclusion. The lines fit the *Met.* 7 context better than they fit the *Her.* 12 context: therefore the *Met.* 7 passage is prior, and the author of the *Her.* 12 passage is guilty of an inept borrowing.

The argument retains a certain attractiveness, even if I have succeeded in debilitating it by showing how the lines *do* rather interestingly fit in the *Her.* 12 context. It remains true that the *Her.* 12 passage is the more difficult of the two; and if you believe that Ovid's first use of a conceit will always be more straightforward than his subsequent uses of it, that may worry you.

I could pursue that; but let me instead use another part of the *Met.* 7 passage to argue that *Met.* 7 alludes to *Her.* 12, and not vice versa. My oppositional reading, with Ovid as author of both passages, goes like this:

When Ovid returns to the dangers of Medea's voyage in *Met.* 7, 62-5, he caps his *Her.* 12 conceits by making his heroine turn scholiast again. In *Her.* 12 Medea had vacillated between variant traditions which couldn't agree on whether to send the Argo home via the Symplegades or via Scylla/Charybdis; and she had compounded her confusion by conflating the two Scyllas. Here in *Met.* 7, 62 Medea, once more acting as critical commentator on her own story, alludes to the one remaining area of traditional confusion which she had left unconfused in her earlier account of the geography.

Throughout the history of Greek and Roman literature, there had been an embarrassing over-supply of non-fixed rocks in the seas of myth. 'The difference between the Συμπληγάδες ... and the Πλαγκταί is commonly obscured by the poets': so Page's commentary[16] on Euripides, *Medea* 2, a representative discussion which ends by quoting Pliny, *Nat.* 6, 32:

> insulae in Ponto Planctae sive Cyaneae sive Symplegades ...

16. D.L. Page (Oxford 1938); cf. the discussions cited in n. 18 below.

Ovid's Alexandrian Medea in *Met.* 7, 62 is self-consciously part of this debate: *quid quod nescioqui mediis concurrere in undis / dicuntur montes. Nescioqui*, indeed: Planctae or Cyaneae or Symplegades? An ancient commentator's nightmare; and a fitting sequel to the two learned contaminations of *Her.* 12.

There is of course one sense in which the *Met.* 7 passage *is* prior to the *Her.* 12 one: it is prior in terms of its dramatic moment. This temporal paradox is a familiar one in the intertextual life of Medea, exploited long before Ovid: as Richard Hunter well brings out in his *Argonautica* 3 commentary, Apollonius' narrative makes much poetic capital of the fact that it simultaneously *recalls* Euripides' *Medea* and *foreshadows* it. Euripides' *text* is prior to Apollonius', but the *action* which it relates is subsequent. The two texts, therefore, become mutually explicative: Euripides' tragedy lends resonance to Apollonius' epic, but also Apollonius' epic 'explains' the origins of Euripides' tragedy[17].

As I shall have cause to remark again in my 'Scene 4', this paradoxical mixture of recall and foreshadowing is fundamental to Ovid's way of constructing Medea too, and does much to energise his repeated forays into her history. Let me offer a tentative two-way reading of this kind here. The play with geographical confusion in the *Met.* 7 passage constitutes a textual allusion to the two geographical confusions of the *Her.* 12 passage. But also, in terms of Medea's actions as a character within an Ovidian 'supertext', the confusion in *Met.* 7 can be regarded as foreshadowing and even 'explaining' the confusions in *Her.* 12. The heroine whose marine geography is shown to be so vague before she even leaves Colchis is a heroine who can be expected to get her geography wrong after the event too. Specifically, in the *Met.* 7 passage Medea is unable to distinguish between the marine rocks of myth. Let us (perversely but precisely) pursue the logic of that characterisation back (but also forward) to the related *Her.* 12 passage. What if Medea gets the rocks wrong there too? If she did indeed travel to Greece via Scylla and Charybdis, like her Apollonian counterpart, then she *did* in fact encounter a set of mobile rocks at the very same

17. Hunter 1989, 18-19.

time and place as her encounter with Scylla and Charybdis: not the Symplegades, but the Planctae[18].

In other words, *nescioqui ... montes* in *Met. 7* playfully opens up a new way of reading the geographical error in *Her.* 12, one which operates at a different level of mimetic reality – and one which would never have occurred to the first-time reader of the epistle. Ovid rewrites Ovid: the original geographical conceit in *Her.* 12 is transformed, or perhaps deformed, by its literary sequel[19].

Knox's fourth point, which can be treated more briefly, returns to considerations of linguistic detail. He notes that the words *Scylla rapax canibus* occur both in the *Her.* 12 and in the *Met. 7* passages (see my earlier quotation of the two passages, this time with the italics); and, again, he argues that the words are appropriate in the *Met. 7* context, and inappropriate and unOvidian (and therefore subsequent and spurious) in the *Her.* 12 context. I quote[20]:

> '[E]xamination of the first half of the hexameter at *Her.* 12, 123 reveals a certain logical awkwardness uncharacteristic of Ovid .... Here *canibus* is governed by *edendos* as if the dogs were somehow distinct from Scylla. It would be difficult to explain the genesis of this passage without the prior existence of the *Metamorphoses*. There [i.e. in the *Met. 7* passage] the sense is clear, as we would expect from Ovid. *Canibus* is governed by the participle in the preceding line and presents a familiar picture of the monster, part woman, part dog.
>
> This passage [the *Her.* 12 one] is a good example of the kind of incriminating borrowing defined by Axelson.'

18. So Apollon. *Arg.* 4, 922ff. In this matter of 'getting the rocks wrong', incidentally, it may be interesting to compare a well-known Apollonian crux at *Arg.* 4, 786-8. Many, perhaps most modern critics have taken the πΠλαγκτὰς ... πέτρας of those highly problematic lines to denote the (Pontic) Symplegades – just before the Argonauts' encounter with the (western) rocks for which Apollonius (showing a consistency not found in the tradition at large) otherwise reserves the name Planctae (4, 860 and 922ff.): see E. Livrea's commentary (Florence 1973) on 4, 786 for this interpretation, with due acknowledgement of the evident strains which it entails. Against Livrea, F. Vian, *Apollonios de Rhodes, Argonautiques* Tome 3 Chant 4 (Paris 1981) 41ff. argues a strong case for taking 4, 786-8 as referring to the Planctae proper, thus rescuing Apollonian consistency. However, his interpretation entails some strains of its own; and (as Jim Clauss suggests to me) a suspicion lingers that the reason why the lines cause such difficulty to modern scholars is that Apollonius himself designed them with an existing scholarly controversy in mind.

19. With this kind of interpretative perspective cf. A. Barchiesi, *Problemi d'interpretazione in Ovidio: continuità delle storie, continuazione dei testi*, «MD» 16, 1986, 77-107, esp. 85-90, 103.

20. Knox 1986, 217.

Once again, my antithetical reading accepts the substance of Knox's point, but puts the opposite 'spin' upon it. Knox is quite right to argue that the *Heroides* passage is the more difficult of the two. Here again is his reading of the *Her.* 12 phraseology: '*canibus* is governed by *edendos* as if the dogs were somehow distinct from Scylla.' Just so. But what if this is the very *point* of the poet's conceit here? However, Knox is not alone in finding the passage problematic. Arthur Palmer was so worried by it, in fact, that he sought to smooth out its strangeness by emending *misisset* to *mersisset* – an emendation also accepted by Showerman-Goold[21]. Palmer explains: 'I prefer this word to *misisset*; for the dogs are parts of Scylla: and *mittere*, to fling, is only proper of throwing to that which is at least a little distance away'. Knox and Palmer are both worried about the same thing: viz that the poet seems to write as if Scylla and the dogs are two separate entities. They miss here what Knox finds in *Met. 7*, 'a familiar picture of the monster, part woman, part dog'. Let me now pose my oppositional question. Might it not be the poet's intent precisely to *defamiliarize* Scylla? (– if indeed the concept of 'familiarity' makes any sense applied to a fantastic biform monster). It may be instructive to consider Ovid's own full treatment of Scylla in Book 14 of the *Metamorphoses*.

> Scylla venit mediaque tenus descenderat alvo,
> cum sua foedari latrantibus inguina monstris

21. ... and by Knox. *Pace* Knox 1986, 217 n. 30, his adoption of *mersisset* is not wholly without consequence for his observation about *canibus edendos*. The transmitted *misisset* allows one to take *canibus* closely with the finite verb (cf. *OLD mitto* 15 for the idiom) rather than with the gerundive. The presence of this option, unavailable if *mersisset* is read, surely helps the syntax – even if it leaves unresolved Knox's objection to 'dogs ... distinct from Scylla'. A discussion with Gian Biagio Conte has sharpened this point for me. Further in support of *canibus misisset*, Ted Kenney now suggests *per litteras* that it may be read as an example of *simplex pro composito*, a habit of Ovid's: i.e. *demitto* as *vox propria* for thrusting somebody down to destruction (*OLD* s.v. 4c; cf. *TLL* 5.1.492.62ff.). For Ovidian *simplex pro composito* see Bömer 1969-86 on *Met.* 11, 232 and for *mitto* = *demitto* his note on 11, 381.

adspicit; ac primo credens non corporis illas
esse sui partes refugitque abigitque timetque
ora proterva canum, sed, quos fugit, attrahit una
et corpus quaerens femorum crurumque pedumque
Cerbereos rictus pro partibus invenit illis
statque canum rabie subiectaque terga ferarum
inguinibus truncis uteroque exstante coërcet.

(*Met.* 14, 59-67)

This nightmarish portrayal of Scylla at the moment of her metamorphosis turns precisely upon the perverse conceit of a biform creature in which (unlike, say, in the case of a centaur) twoness is in active tension with oneness. The dogs are part of Scylla, and yet they are horribly alien to her. The problem which constitutes the imaginative premise of the *Met.* 14 passage is the very problem which Knox has described in *Her.* 12 as 'a ... logical awkwardness uncharacteristic of Ovid'. How can Scylla's dogs be 'somehow distinct from Scylla'? The logic adumbrated in *Her.* 12, 123 is more than awkward: it is hellish, perverse ... and very Ovidian[22].

Such is my competing reading. The conceptual parallel in *Met.* 14 does not prove that *Her.* 12, 123 is by Ovid; but it does prove that *Her.* 12, 123 is by a poet who is better at making sense, and indeed better at being Ovid, than he has been given credit for. On the other side, although the argument for the priority of the *Met.* 7 passage is greatly weakened once it is shown that the words *Scylla rapax canibus* do in fact fit their context in the *Her.* 12 passage, such an argument can still be made. The *Her.* 12 passage remains the more difficult of the two; and, as with the question of the easiness or difficulty of the mythological geography, some may feel that that still constitutes a case for the priority of the more straightforward passage. However what my discussion shows is that the application of judgement and commonsense to questions of priority in literary imitation is a more hazardous business than at first sight it may look[23]. The Axelsonian method tends too often to

22. For such logic as distinctly Ovidian, compare the remarks of Bömer 1969-86 on Ovidian 'Ichspaltung' at *Met.* 11, 621 *excussit [sc. Somnus] sibi se*; cf. his n. on 2, 303, with further cross-references.

23. Cf. here the methodological strictures offered by G.W. Most, *The 'Virgilian' Culex*, in M. Whitby, P. Hardie and M. Whitby, edd., *Homo Viator: Classical*

spur its users to precipitate acts of philological condemnation[24]; and in this case our analysis has certainly demoted the debate about priority from the realm of the objectively verifiable to the realm of personal evaluation and opinion.

Scene 2. Recognising the Signs of Love: Her. 12, 31-6 and its antecedents

tunc ego te vidi, tunc coepi scire, quid esses;
illa fuit mentis prima ruina meae.
et vidi et perii nec notis ignibus arsi,
ardet ut ad magnos pinea taeda deos.
et formosus eras, et me mea fata trahebant;
abstulerant oculi lumina nostra tui

(*Her.* 12, 31-6)

In the earlier stages of the epistle, Medea is tracking one of her more famous literary predecessors, the Medea of Apollonius, *Arg.* 3 and 4, very closely indeed. But the particular moment on which I am going to focus now – the instant of Medea's first sight of Jason – is one in which this more pervasive Apollonian model yields the foreground to other correspondences, which are also part of the history of our intertextual heroine, but less obviously so. Once again the crucial link is made by Peter Knox[25]; and once again our different interpretations expose our different biases in approaching *Her.* 12.

On Knox's firmly negative reading, these three couplets are an awkward cento of tags lifted from random poems of Ovid, late as well as early. More persuasively to my point of view, but still with a negative evaluation, he adduces one Virgilian passage:

Essays for John Bramble, Bristol 1987, 199-209 at 201-4 – an excellent and succinct treatment of the main issues.

24. The method itself constitutes an incentive to find ineptitude in one of a given pair of passages whose relative chronology is under consideration, since it depends for its very operation upon an imbalance of competence between them. See the description of the method by Kenney 1969, 4, which is admirably explicit on this point (my italics): 'As between two different writers *of unequal genius*, the principles governing determination of the direction of literary indebtedness have been set out with exemplary clarity by Axelson ....'. On this matter see further my conclusion, with n. 76.

25. Knox 1986, 219-21.

> '[*Her.* 12, 33] is a reworking of a famous line in Virgil: *Ecl.* 8, 41 ut vidi, ut perii, ut me malus abstulit error'

Note how the choice of word to describe the intertextual correspondence carries its built-in verdict of disapproval: not 'an allusion', not 'a creative imitation', but 'a reworking'. Just above, the preceding hexameter of *Her.* 12 is described even more negatively as 'an *unfortunate* reworking'[26]. We see here an example of a strand of tautology often found in Latin philological method. Certain poets at the edge of the canon are deemed to be 'reworkers' rather than 'creative imitators'. Therefore when we spot a line in one of them which corresponds to a line in an earlier poet, we simply list it as a 'reworking' rather than assessing its claims to be a sign of dynamic interaction with a previous text or texts. That is why Roland Mayer can offer at the end of his new and otherwise admirable commentary on Seneca's *Phaedra* an undifferentiated and unannotated line-by-line list of 'borrowings' seven pages long whose *raison d'être* is expressed thus (my italics)[27]:

> 'By the time Seneca took to *verse composition* there was a considerable body of classic Latin poetry to draw on for ready-made phrases... The sheer bulk of [borrowings] is an impressive testimony to Seneca's admiration for the verbal dexterity of the masters.'

One can imagine the riots in the streets were a new commentary on Virgil to present such a list with such a heading. A scholarly strategy like this promotes the impression that the less-than-canonical poet's discourse with the tradition is a mere matter of fragmentary, aphasic utterances. It is nothing more than circularity when such a list is seen as reaffirming that the poet in question is indeed a reworker rather than a creative imitator.

26. Knox 1986, 220 (my italics) on *Her.* 12, 31 as a 'reworking' of Ovid, *Pont.* 1, 6, 11. For my (and Timpanaro's) very different account of this line's resonances, see below. The Virgilian link is compelling, as I shall argue: other perceived intertextual problems in *Her.* 12, 31-6 seem to me unfounded, and to fall away once the passage's sustained engagement with the Virgilian model is given its due.

27. M. Coffey and R. Mayer, edd., *Seneca: Phaedra*, Cambridge 1990, 197.

For the purposes of my oppositional reading of *Her.* 12, 33, therefore, let me assume that the poet of *Her.* 12 is not a reworker but a creative imitator. That means that I will not be content with merely listing the individual Virgilian line imitated, but will instead explore the potential of the correspondence by looking for further interaction between the two passages in their broader linguistic and conceptual contexts. As it turns out, *Her.* 12, 33 is very amenable to such an exploration. Here, then, is my reading.

Ovid's allusion in *Her.* 12, 33 to a famous line in *Eclogue* 8, noted by all the commentators, is indeed a clear and prominently signalled one. It is likely to be interesting too, in that the Virgilian line is itself a *locus classicus* for self-conscious allusion (– to two passages of Theocritus, to be discussed shortly). By not reading the *Ecl.* 8 line in its context, however, Knox and others miss the broader point of the *Her.* 12 allusion. Let me quote *Ecl.* 8, 41, this time surrounded by *Ecl.* 8, 37-50:

> saepibus in nostris parvam te roscida mala
> (dux ego vester eram) vidi cum matre legentem.
> alter ab undecimo tum me iam acceperat annus,
> iam fragilis poteram a terra contingere ramos:
> *ut vidi, ut perii, ut me malus abstulit error!*
> incipe Maenalios mecum, mea tibia, versus.
> *nunc scio quid sit Amor:* nudis in cautibus illum
> aut Tmaros aut Rhodope aut extremi Garamantes
> nec generis nostri puerum nec sanguinis edunt.
> incipe Maenalios mecum, mea tibia, versus.
> *saevus Amor docuit natorum sanguine matrem*
> *commaculare manus*; crudelis tu quoque mater.
> crudelis mater magis, an puer improbus ille?
> improbus ille puer; crudelis tu quoque, mater.

Damon, upon seeing Nysa picking apples, has experienced that rush of erotic infatuation which we have been looking at in *Ecl.* 8, 41 (*ut vidi, ut perii* ...). Now in his agony he knows what sort of being Love really is (line 43) – a pitiless savage who (lines 47-8) induced *Medea* to slay her own children (see Servius ad loc. for the clear mythological reference)[28]. So the echo in *Her.*

28. Servius on *Ecl.* 8, 47 (*saevus Amor docuit* ...): *et bene fabulam omnibus notam per transitum tetigit: quis enim ignorat Medeam, ab Iasone contemptam, suos filios*

12, 33 is no mere recycling of a Virgilian tag. What Ovid has done in *Her.* 12, 33 is to write the Virgilian Damon's words *into* the myth against which the Virgilian Damon had measured his own experience of erotic infatuation and embitterment.

Further details underpin and complicate the allusion[29]. *abstulit* in *Ecl.* 8, 41 finds its way into *Her.* 12, 36 – as Shuckburgh long ago noted. Both passages have the same sequence of a 'first sight' which is then commented on: *Ecl.* 8, 37-41 *te ... vidi ... / ut vidi, ut perii; Her.* 12, 31-3 *te vidi ... / et vidi, et perii.*

Most interestingly, perhaps, *Ecl.* 8, 43 *nunc scio quid sit Amor* (underlined) is transformed into *Her.* 12, 31 *tunc coepi scire, quid esses.* For Ovid's Medea, in this verse, the first suspicion of disillusionment is inscribed not just textually but also intertextually. Medea begins to know what Jason is: he is equivalent to the love god of *Ecl.* 8, 43, and also of *Ecl.* 8, 47-48; *he* is the one who will lead her to the cruel end of her story. In a sense, Jason *is* the love-god of *Ecl.* 8, 43. Has Medea been smitten by Jason, or has she been smitten by the god Amor? That is the question which *Her.* 12, 31, referring to Jason, poses in its intertextual chorus with *Ecl.* 8, 43, referring to Amor[30]. It is a question, surely, which Ovid poses as a reader of Apollonius 3, his broader model here, and especially as a reader of the complex moment in Apollonius 3 when Medea first sees Jason. Was Medea smitten by Jason there, or was she smitten by the archery of the god Eros[31]? Can Medea understand the divine

interemisse? Virgil's *saevus Amor* may specifically recall a phrase in the opening speech of Ennius' *Medea exul*: see *scen.* 215-16 Jocelyn *nam numquam era errans mea domo efferret pedem / Medea animo aegro* amore saevo *saucia*, with the suggestion of H.D. Jocelyn, ed., *The Tragedies of Ennius*, Cambridge 1967, ad loc.

29. All three of the following 'details' have in fact attracted passing attention before: for *abstulit / abstulerant* cf. Shuckburgh 1879 on *Her.* 12, 36; for the Virgilian echoes in *Her.* 12, 31 cf. (without further elaboration) Timpanaro 1978, 279 n.88 'quanto al rapporto Ovidio-Virgilio [*et vidi et perii / ut vidi, ut perii*], si noti che è allusivo a quel passo dell'ecloga VIII anche il distico precedente ...'.

30. Later in the poem, as he leads his wedding *pompa*, Jason (i.e. Jason himself) is strikingly described as *aureus: Her.* 12, 152 *adiunctos* aureus *urget equos.* Does this usage fleetingly take us back (cf. A. Palmer's commentary [Oxford 1898] ad loc.) to another Ovidian *pompa*, involving another charioteer – the god Amor? *Am.* 1, 2, 41-2 *tu pinnas gemma, gemma variante capillos, / ibis in auratis* aureus ipse *rotis.*

31. *Arg.* 3, 275ff. Recent work on the *Argonautica* finds other kinds of narrative parallelism between Jason and Eros too: T.M. Klein, *Apollonius Rhodius, Vates Ludens: Eros' Golden Ball (Arg. 3, 113-50)*, «Class. World» 74, 1980-81, 225-7; J.J. Clauss in «Quad. Urb. Cult. Class.» 36, 1990, 139 with n. 24.

machinery which operates with and against her free-will in Apollonius 3? How do *we* read the divine and human levels of motivation in Apollonius 3?

The same questions will continue to interest Ovid when he rewrites Medea's passion in the more clearly Apollonian sequence which begins *Met.* 7.

> concipit interea validos Aeetias ignes
> et luctata diu, postquam ratione furorem
> vincere non poterat, 'frustra, Medea, repugnas:
> *nescioquis deus obstat*,' ait, 'mirumque, nisi hoc est,
> aut aliquid certe simile huic, quod amare vocatur
>
> (*Met.* 7, 9-13)

nescioquis, indeed: an Ovidian 'buzz-word'; and an arch acknowledgement of a question which fascinates Ovid, as it had fascinated Apollonius before him: to what level of reality do the gods in epic belong[32]? Compare the way in which, later in the *Met.* 7 narrative, Ovid will undermine the divine explanation offered by Apollonius for the surprisingly good looks of Jason at the temple of Hecate: cosmetics courtesy of Zeus's wife Hera, or just ... *casu*[33]?

And so back, after that rather vertiginous journey, to our point of departure, the correspondence between *Her.* 12, 33 and *Ecl.* 8, 41:

> et vidi et perii nec notis ignibus arsi
>
> ut vidi, ut perii, ut me malus abstulit error.

What about the second half of the *Her.* line? In *nec notis* I smell an 'Alexandrian footnote'. In the first place, perhaps, the words signal a departure from the Virgilian model of the first half of

32. Cf. now the far-reaching discussions in D.C. Feeney, *The Gods in Epic: Poets and Critics of the Classical Tradition*, Oxford 1991 *passim*, and specifically 80ff., 239.

33. Apollon. *Arg.* 3, 919-23 ἔνθ' οὔ πώ τις τοῖος ἐπὶ προτέρων γένετ' ἀνδρῶν /.../ οἷον Ἰήσονα θῆκε Διὸς δάμαρ ἥματι κείνῳ / ἡμὲν ἐσάντα ἰδεῖν ἠδὲ προτιμυθήσασθαι; *Met.* 7, 84-5 *et casu solito formosior Aesone natus / illa luce fuit.*

the line: not the line-end familiar to the Virgilian reader, but something new. The replacement, as we might expect, is a pointed one. Ovid has gone back through his clear Virgilian model *Ecl.* 8, 41 to *its* clear Theocritean model, or rather models[34]. Not so much to *Idyll* 3, 42,

> Ἱππομένης, ὅκα δὴ τὰν παρθένον ἤθελε γᾶμαι,
> μᾶλ' ἐν χερσὶν ἐλὼν δρόμον ἄνυεν· ἁ δ' Ἀταλάντα
> *ὡς ἴδεν, ὡς ἐμάνη, ὡς ἐς βαθὺν ἅλατ' ἔρωτα*
>
> (Theocr., *Id.* 3, 40-2)

though that is Virgil's chief model in terms of immediate context, with its apples and with the bilingual punning between *malus* and μᾶλα and *error* and ἔρως. Rather to the verbally equally close but contextually more distant Theocritean model for *Ecl.* 8, 41, *Id.* 2, 82[35]:

> *χὠς ἴδον, ὡς ἐμάνην, ὡς μοι πυρὶ θυμὸς ἰάφθη*
> *δειλαίας*, τὸ δὲ κάλλος ἐτάκετο ...
>
> (Theocr., *Id.* 2, 82-3)

In other words, the Virgilian line's slightly less recognisable parent becomes the Ovidian line's slightly more recognisable grandparent: verbally more recognisable, in that this Theocritean line closes with the image of erotic fire, as does the Ovidian line[36]; contextually more recognisable, in that the first-person speaker of this Theocritean line, Simaetha, is herself a witch ... and, on her own emphatic admission (*Id.* 2, 14-16), a

34. On these much-discussed Theocritean lines and their relationship to the Virgilian line see the commentaries of A.S.F. Gow (Cambridge 1952) and N. Hopkinson (*A Hellenistic Anthology*, Cambridge 1988, 161-2) on *Id.* 2.82, both with bibliography; R. Coleman (Cambridge 1977) on *Ecl.* 8, 41; and, most fully, Timpanaro 1978.

35. Note that while an evocation of *Id.* 2 may not make much *immediate* contextual sense for Virgil at *Ecl.* 8.41, the Simaetha *Idyll* will be the central inspiration for the whole second half of the eighth *Eclogue*.

36. A Theocritean allusion in *Her.* 12, 33 is already countenanced by Timpanaro 1978, 279: '... ciò che segue, *nec notis ignibus arsi* ecc., allude forse a Teocrito ὡς μευ πυρὶ θυμὸς ἰάφθη: Ovidio avrà voluto far vedere che si ricordava non solo di Virgilio, ma anche del modello di quel verso virgiliano.'

suburban child of the Medea tradition[37]. *nec notis ignibus*: like Simaetha's fires, but also not like Simaetha's fires. Same kind of character, different name, different genre.

I could go on to relate *Her.* 12, 31-6 to the more global Apollonian model[38]; but I have done all that I want to do here to set against Knox's pessimistic assessment of the passage's allusive qualities my own determinedly optimistic assessment. If I am right to hear all the resonances which I hear in the *Heroides* passage, Ovid has complicated his broader pattern of intertextual engagement with Apollonius' Medea by making a two-tier allusion to Virgilian and Theocritean passages which are themselves unexpectedly and separately implicated in the Medea tradition.

Scene 3. Merging Heroines: Her. 12, Her. 6 and Am. 2, 18, 23 & 33

Jason is unique in the *Heroides* in being the only addressee to receive two letters rather than one: here in *Her.* 12 he is written to by Medea, and in *Her.* 6 his correspondent is Hypsipyle. To a suspicious reader the existence of *Her.* 6 is therefore another reason to doubt the authenticity of *Her.* 12; to the reader who accepts both letters as Ovidian the comparison between *Her.* 6 and *Her.* 12 is one of the most fruitful possibilities in the collection[39].

The thing which stands out about Hypsipyle's letter is its obsession with Medea. Hypsipyle's letter, in fact, is more about Medea than it is about Hypsipyle herself. The moment at which she writes is the moment at which she hears that the Argo has

37. Theocritus, *Id.* 2, 14-16 χαῖρ', Ἑκάτα δασπλῆτι, καὶ ἐς τέλος ἄμμιν ὀπάδει, / φάρμακα ταῦτ' ἐρδοισα χερείονα μήτε τι Κίρκας / *μήτε τι Μηδείας* μήτε ξανθᾶς Περιμήδας.

38. It is my tentative belief that behind the specification of Medea's fire in the simile of *Her.* 12, 33-4 as a *grand* kind of fire (*nec notis ignibus arsi, / ardet ut ad magnos pinea taeda deos*) lies an arch contrast with the simile of *humble* fire which describes Medea's ardour at the equivalent moment in *Arg.* 3, 291-8 – an arch contrast in that a humble image in a grand genre (epic) is picked up by a grand image in a humble genre (elegy).

39. For this latter perspective see esp. Verducci 1985, 56-81; also Jacobson 1974, 108, and more recently G. Rosati, *Il parto maledetto di Medea (Ovidio, Her. 6, 156s.)*, «MD» 20-21, 1988, 305-9 at 305.

safely returned to Thessaly – and that the marriage-bed promised by Jason to *her* has been given instead to a barbarian sorceress:

> barbara narratur venisse venefica tecum,
> in mihi promissi parte recepta tori.
>
> (*Her.* 6, 19-20)

Ovid's decision to position the letter at this juncture surely constitutes a challenge to read it as a kind of 'prequel' to Medea's own change-of-partner letter in *Her.* 12. There are many verbal and thematic correspondences between the two epistles – some arguably more pointed, others less so.

One of the closest correspondences in purely verbal terms is one of the most difficult to assess in terms of level of significance. Here is Hypsipyle, at *Her.* 6, 51-2, in her first encounter with Jason:

> certa fui primo – *sed me mala fata trahebant* –
> hospita feminea pellere castra manu.

Now listen to Medea, at *Her.* 12, 35-6, in *her* first encounter with Jason:

> et formosus eras, *et me mea fata trahebant*;
> abstulerant oculi lumina nostra tui.

To Knox, 'It is ... awkward to find ... a half-line repeated from Hypsipyle's epistle without special point'[40]. But, on another reading, the very repetitiveness of the wording *constitutes* the special point. It is always the same story with Jason and his women. Only the names change, the situation remains the same. Hypsipyle is thrown over for Medea; Medea is thrown over for Creusa[41]. *sed me mala fata trahebant; et me mea fata trahebant*: but when fate strikes twice in the same place, we

40. Knox 1986, 221, with the majority of MSS, reads *mea* for *mala* at *Her.* 6, 51, so that his two half-lines are absolutely identical. *me mea fata trahebant* occurs elsewhere in Ovid (i.e. besides *Her.* 12, 35) at *Met.* 7, 816 and *Trist.* 2, 341. I still incline slightly towards *mala* at *Her.* 6, 51 (*utrum in alterum*?).

41. For Medea and Creusa cf. *Her.* 12, 25-6 *hoc illic Medea fui, nova nupta quod hic est; / quam pater est illi, tam mihi dives erat.*

may say, *cherchez l'homme*. Consider, moreover, what immediately precedes this correspondence in the Hypsipyle letter (*Her.* 6, 49-50):

> non erat hic *aries villo spectabilis aureo*,
> nec senis Aeetae regia Lemnos erat.

Not here was the golden fleece, not here was Colchis ... and yet Hypsipyle is forced to enact the fate of her Colchian successor. The hexameter about the golden fleece is itself a repetition, or an anticipation, of a hexameter about the golden fleece in *Her.* 12 (lines 201-2)[42]:

> *aureus* ille *aries villo spectabilis alto*
> dos mea, qu'am' dicam si tibi 'redde' neges[43].

non erat hic: and yet Hypsipyle's text here, in two adjacent hexameters (lines 49 and 51), threatens very precisely to become Medea's text: such is my reading of the *Her.* 6 passage.

My view, then, is that the textual interaction of Jason's two correspondents is dynamic and self-conscious, rather than merely being an inert symptom of literary theft[44]. The point cannot be proved; but strong circumstantial support for it may be found in the final stages of *Her.* 6, in which (a process vividly evoked in Verducci's essay) the fusion of Hypsipyle with Medea becomes something quite overt, and quite memorable[45].

42. Contrast Knox 1986, 218-9 on *Her.* 12, 201 (making no connection between this correspondence and the one discussed above): 'the line is rather an unfortunate adaptation of a passage in the certainly genuine epistle to Jason from Hypsipyle, lamenting that the Argo had ever come to Lemnos'. At the end of the hexameter, where most edd. follow the original reading of P, *alto*, most MSS (including P after correction) offer *aureo* (or *auro*) i.e. *aureus ... aureo*. This is explicable as a corruption deriving from *Her.* 6, 49 (and cf. also *Her.* 9, 127, 13, 57); but Knox, arguing again for a more passive authorial adaptation of a *Her.* 6 line in a *Her.* 12 line, suggests that *aureus ... aureo*, though 'of course ... intolerable in Ovid', might perhaps be defensible in 'a lesser poet'.

43. For a reason which will emerge in n. 75 below, I have adopted the 'grotesque' punctuation offered for *Her.* 12, 202 by Housman 1897, 427 = 1972, 1.414.

44. Federica Bessone has increased my confidence in this view by sharing (*per litteras*) some fine ongoing work of her own on interaction between *Her.* 6 and *Her.* 12.

45. Verducci 1985, 64-6.

Hypsipyle imagines what would have happened if Jason had chanced to revisit Lemnos on his way home from Colchis, with Medea in tow. The Lemnian queen would have spared Jason; but as for Medea, Hypsipyle would have done to her what Medea is destined to do to Creusa – 'I would have been Medea to Medea', *Medeae Medea forem* (*Her.* 6, 151). At this moment, *Her.* 6 and 12 converge: the programmatic invitation to read one as a palimpsest of the other could hardly be clearer.

As so often in Ovid's treatment of Argonautic material, incidentally, what is quintessentially Ovidian is also quintessentially Apollonian. Ovid's 'merging' of Hypsipyle and Medea surely takes its cue from the more muted (but no less pervasive) patterns of convergence between the two heroines' love stories in the *Argonautica* itself[46].

At this point (as promised in my introduction) I return to the catalogue of epistles in *Amores* 2, 18. Let me ask a preparatory question.

What is the difference between a shopping list and an Alexandrian poetic catalogue? Shopping lists aim at clarity; Alexandrian poetic catalogues do not. Items in shopping lists relate primarily to items in shops; items in Alexandrian poetic catalogues relate primarily to one other. Finally, shopping lists which leave things out are deeply irritating; Alexandrian poetic catalogues which leave things out are ... deeply Alexandrian.

With this in mind, let me approach *Am.* 2, 18. The poem appears to catalogue nine of the *Heroides*, numbers 1, 2, 4-7, 10, 11 and 15 in our collection. A number of influential critics have regarded the absence of any extant *Herois* from this catalogue as deeply damaging to its claims to authenticity[47].

The first purpose of my syncrisis with the shopping list is to suggest that this argument is an inherently weak one: it is simply perverse to expect comprehensiveness in such a poetic catalogue as we find in *Am.* 2, 18.

However, in the case of *Her.* 12, a second and more interesting response to the 'shopping list' school may be attempted. Let

46. On the Apollonian patterns see A.W. Bulloch in *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature* I, Cambridge 1985, 594-5; Hunter 1989, *index of subjects* s.v. Hypsipyle.

47. See again the bibliography cited in n. 3.

me prepare for it by embarking on a quick reading of the poem – which will serve to underline the dangers of an overly literal interpretation of the evidence available.

In *Amores* 2, 18 a discussion with the epic poet Macer of choices in a poetic career is interspersed, in a rather irregular and oblique way, with what looks like a catalogue of Ovid's *oeuvre* to date. The obliquity of the autobiographical information is perhaps complemented by the obliquity of the placing of the poem: one position *short* of *sphragis* position in Book 2 – in contrast with the final placement of similarly autobiographical poems in Books 1 and 3[48].

First, in general terms (lines 1-12), Ovid indicates his allegiance to amatory poetry and – as in *Am.* 1, 1 and 2, 1 – alludes to balked attempts to get into epic, Macer's preferred field. Then, by way of contrast (lines 13-18), he draws attention to the fact that he has written a tragedy (presumably the *Medea*)

> sceptra tamen sumpsi curaque tragoedia nostra
> crevit, et huic operi quamlibet aptus eram:
> risit Amor pallamque meam pictosque cothurnos
> sceptraque privata tam cito sumpta manu;
> hinc quoque me dominae numen deduxit iniquae,
> deque cothurnato vate triumphat Amor

– but does this so obliquely that Alan Cameron and others, reading in a literal way, understand the poet to be saying that he has *not* written a tragedy[49]. Then (lines 19-20) another problematic item:

> quod licet, aut artes teneri profitemur Amoris
> (ei mihi, praeceptis urgeor ipse meis!)

48. I think that this *is* felt as a formal asymmetry – *pace* D. Lateiner, *Ovid's Homage to Callimachean and Alexandrian Poetic Theory (Am. 2, 19)*, «Hermes» 106, 1978, 188-96 at 194-5, who does indeed show that 2, 19 is able to rise to the challenge of its closural position.

49. A. Cameron, *The First Edition of Ovid's Amores*, «Class. Quart.» n.s. 18, 1968, 320-33 at 332 (part of an argument that *Am.* 2, 18 is ascribable to the first edition of the *Amores*): '2, 18 clearly implies that Ovid ... had *not* yet written a tragedy' (his emphasis). So too Knox 1986, 214, with consequences for his position noted in n. 63 below. Cogent rebuttal by A.S. Hollis, ed., *Ovid: Ars Amatoria Book I*, Oxford 1977, 150-1: 'I am inclined to draw the opposite conclusion: Ovid *has* finished the *Medea*, yet, in spite of its favourable reception ('*et huic operi*

Some read this couplet as a reference to the *Ars Amatoria*; others (citing chronological worries) read it as a reference to the *Amores* or to amatory poetry in general[50]. Then the *Heroides* (lines 21-6):

> aut quod Penelopes verbis reddatur Ulixi
> scribimus et lacrimas, Phylli relicta, tuas,
> quod Paris et Macareus et quod male gratus Iason
> Hippolytique parens Hippolytusque legant,
> quodque tenens strictum Dido miserabilis ensem
> dicat et Aoniam Lesbis amica lyram.

Nine are listed; the list is mannered, patterned and elliptical; some letters are designated by sender, others by addressee, and one by sender and addressee.

Among the five letters designated by addressee only, one (in line 23) is a letter to Jason. But who is the sender? Hypsipyle, of course, say the literalists, looking ahead to line 33. They have almost, but not quite, drowned out the critics who sense an ambiguity here in line 23. Which of Jason's two correspondents would more pointedly call him *male gratus*? Not Hypsipyle, for whom the epithet would have no appropriateness over and above its general appropriateness to any of the addressees of the *Heroides*. No: as Palmer long ago observed, the reproach would more pointedly come from Jason's more famous correspondent, the one who got the golden fleece for him, the one who killed for him, who gave up her home to follow him: Medea[51]. Even the Ovid Concordance lends its weight to this conclusion. Only one *male gratus* for the *Heroides*, attached by

quamlibet aptus eram') he is still wedded to love-poetry and has not become a regular tragedian'. See further ad loc.; and for refinements of the view that (*contra* Cameron) *Am.* 2, 18 implies a *Medea* more advanced (at least) than do *Am.* 3, 1 and 3, 15 see most recently McKeown 1987, 88-9, M. Citroni in *Continuità e trasformazioni fra repubblica e principato: istituzioni, politica, società*, Bari 1991, 133-66 at 149-50. The question remains a thorny one, and the dangers of overly biographical reading apply on either side of it. In the end, 2, 18; 3, 1 and 3, 15 do more to develop a programmatic attitude towards tragedy than to give interpretable information about the progress of actual compositional activity.

50. On this controversy, and its relationship to the controversy concerning lines 13-18, see again the bibliography cited in n. 49.

51. The observation is made in his shorter edition: A. Palmer, ed., *P. Ovidii Nasonis Heroides XIV*, London, Cambridge and Dublin 1874, xviii-xix.

Dido to Aeneas. But three instances of *ingratus, all* hurled by Medea at Jason. None from Hypsipyle, none from any of the other sixteen heroines in our collection.

But now we come to the 'replies' to the *Heroides* which (Ovid tells us) his friend Sabinus has written (lines 27-34):

> quam cito de toto rediit meus orbe Sabinus
> scriptaque diversis rettulit ipse locis!
> candida Penelope signum cognovit Ulixis,
> legit ab Hippolyto scripta noverca suo;
> iam pius Aeneas miserae rescripsit Elissae,
> quodque legat Phyllis, si modo vivit, adest.
> tristis ad Hypsipylen ab Iasone littera venit,
> dat votam Phoebo Lesbis amata lyram.

Only six replies, rather than the nine which symmetry with the previous catalogue would seem to require. Ulysses has replied to Penelope, Hippolytus to Phaedra, Aeneas to Dido, Demophoon (unnamed) to Phyllis, Phaon (unnamed) to Sappho ... and Jason to *Hypsipyle*. Hypsipyle? On one reading, an unremarkable completion of the epistolary information only half-given ten lines earlier. On another reading, a *para prosdokian: not* the correspondent of Jason whom we were led to expect by line 23, but the other one; a cunning asymmetry, in fact, between two catalogues which are already more obviously asymmetrical[52].

What could be more Alexandrian than this 'condensation' of the Medea and Hypsipyle epistles into a single, composite catalogue entry? And a final, rather bold suggestion may be made, which will complete the unity of my third 'scene'. Could it be

52. Directly after these two *Heroides* catalogues, in lines 35-40, Ovid returns his attention to the addressee of *Am.* 2, 18, suggesting that, even though Macer has chosen to sing of *arma*, his Trojan epic shows a not unOvidian interest in amatory themes: *nec tibi, qua tutum vati, Macer, arma canenti, / aureus in medio Marte tacetur Amor: / et Paris est illic et adultera, nobile crimen, / et comes extincto Laodamia viro. / si bene te novi, non bella libentius istis / dicis, et a vestris in mea castra venis.* An 'Alexandrian' (as opposed to a 'shopping list') approach to *Am.* 2, 18, 38 might well suspect that (when read in close conjunction with the succeeding couplet) this verse should be taken as an oblique allusion by Ovid to the fact that his own *Heroides* contain a Laodamia letter – a kind of sly supplement to the catalogue of his *oeuvre*. (Lachmann and his adherents have of course declared open season on *Her.* 13 because of its absence from the *Am.* 2, 18 catalogue).

that, in conflating Medea and Hypsipyle in the catalogue of *Am.* 2, 18, Ovid is actually making a sly allusion to the intertextual relationship between the heroines of *Her.* 12 and *Her.* 6 themselves? It is not just that Medea and Hypsipyle share an addressee. In the text of *Her.* 6, as we saw a few minutes ago, Hypsipyle in effect 'becomes' Medea (*Medeae Medea forem*); in the catalogue of *Am.* 2, 18, conversely, Medea now 'becomes' Hypsipyle.

Scene 4. A Herois Takes the Stage: Ovid, Seneca and the Tragic Tradition

It has often been said of the *Heroides* that they read more like tragic monologues than like letters. In the case of the Medea poem in particular, despite one mannered gesture towards an epistolary format (lines 114-5 *deficit hoc uno littera nostra loco. / quod facere ausa mea est, non audet scribere dextra*), many critics have felt the conventions of epistolography to be crowded out by the conventions of the dramatic soliloquy. *Her.* 12 is not the only poem in the collection to dispense with an overtly epistolary incipit; but it is probably the only one in which there arrives as surrogate within ten lines one of the most famous incipits ... of tragedy:

> ei mihi! cur umquam iuvenalibus acta lacertis
> Phrixeam petiit Pelias arbor ovem?
> cur umquam Colchi Magnetida vidimus Argo,
> turbaque Phasiacam Graia bibistis aquam?
>
> (*Her.* 12, 7-10)

'La deprecazione dell'impresa argonautica apriva, notoriamente, la *Medea* di Euripide e, sulle sue tracce, quella di Ennio' (Rosati ad loc.)[53]. The observation is not made in isolation: here and throughout *Her.* 12, formal and substantial parallels

53. G. Rosati, *Ovidio: Lettere di eroine*, Milan 1989, 235 n. 4. For further ramifications of the Medea-incipit in Roman poetry, not without interest for the present passage, see Richard Thomas's landmark treatment of Cat. 64, 1-18: *Catullus and the Polemics of Poetic Reference*, «Amer. Journ. Phil.» 103, 1982, 144-64.

from tragedy dominate the exegetical literature. Knox is good on this; and he adds precision to the consensus by homing in on some detailed 'dramatic' nuances of style and diction in *Her.* 12, from the opening adversative *at* in line 1 (which had already exercised Ovid's Renaissance editors) to the emphatically deployed *actutum* in line 207 (which necessarily attracts notice because of its archaism)[54].

Let us, then, accept that this poem resembles a dramatic soliloquy, and let us also, again with Knox, embrace the corollary: 'It is perhaps not unreasonable to suppose that this resemblance is due to a powerful influence exerted on the author of the epistle by a dramatic representation of Medea'[55]. This Medea speaks at times in tones reminiscent of the Euripidean Medea, and probably also (if only the evidence allowed us to pursue the possibility) in tones reminiscent of one or more Republican Latin Medeas; but the really exciting possibility, the possibility which at some level has energised almost every critical discussion of this poem, is that, at any or every moment in her letter, the Medea of *Her.* 12 may be shadowing a more recent and immediate tragic predecessor: the Medea of Ovid's (own) lost play.

The idea of a *Her.* 12 containing Ovid's *Medea* in palimpsest is an arresting one. It makes a great deal of intuitive sense, both in terms of a reading of *Her.* 12 as by Ovid (our poet shows his usual penchant for self-imitation with generic variation) and in terms of a reading of the letter as not by Ovid (the *Ovidianus poeta* finds in Ovid's tragedy the perfect starting point for a Medea in the manner of Ovid's epistles).

The intuition has found support in a body of concrete (but ultimately conjectural) evidence first put together by Friedrich Leo in his *De Senecae tragoediis observationes criticae*[56]. Leo

54. '*actutum*, which is often attested in Comedy and the fragments of Republican tragedy, is otherwise rare in classical Latin': so Knox 1986, 213-4, noting the tragic *color* of the only (other?) Ovidian occurrence at *Met.* 3, 557. Cf. E.J. Kenney, *The Style of the Metamorphoses*, in J.W. Binns, ed., *Ovid*, London 1973, 116-53 at 120; H. MacL. Currie, *Ovid and the Roman Stage*, in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 2, 31, 4, Berlin 1981, 2701-42 at 2717; and add now a footnote discussion in Barchiesi 1993. (For more on the *at*, see n. 64 below).

55. Knox 1986, 210.

56. Berlin 1878, 166-9; followed by the fuller treatment of Cleasby 1907.

pointed to parallels between *Her.* 12 and Seneca's *Medea*, and argued that these could most plausibly be explained not by direct influence but by a common source in the lost *Medea* of Ovid. For example, the influence of the lost *Medea* may be suspected when the heroine of the epistle (at *Her.* 12, 137ff.) and the heroine of Seneca's play (at *Med.* 116ff.) both talk about hearing and reacting to the wedding song of Jason and Creusa – a motif which does not occur (any more than does the epithalamium itself) in the play of Euripides. In Knox's formulation of the working hypothesis, 'where Euripidean influence cannot be traced, parallels between Seneca's play and *Her.* 12 may be due to common borrowing from Ovid's own *Medea*'[57]. It is, of course, no more than a hypothesis: the likely influence on the tradition of other lost and fragmentary dramatic Medeas cannot be disregarded; and the temptation to read *Her.* 12 as an indirect witness to Seneca's use of the lost play should not blind us to the ample evidence that Seneca in his tragedies was wont to make *direct* use of the *Heroides* themselves (witness especially the *Phaedra*, with *Her.* 4)[58]. Thus, for instance, it *may* be right to hypothesise from Seneca, *Med.* 280 *totiens nocens sum facta, sed numquam mihi* and from *Her.* 12, 132 *pro quo sum totiens esse coacta nocens* a common source in Ovid's *Medea*[59]. However we need to register the fact that *Her.* 12, 132 is tightly woven into its own textual environment in *Her.* 12, with *totiens* in effect glossing a third and climactic pentameter-ending repetition of *nocens* (cf. 106, 118) in a 30-line tirade cataloguing Jason's implication in Medea's crimes; and that this whole 'system' makes a good deal of sense as the direct target of the Senecan line. It remains possible to envisage a lost common forebear in Ovid's *Medea* for the two *totiens/nocens* lines (perhaps operating, in Seneca's case, as the further element in a 'double' or 'two-tier' allusion)[60], but it would be a

57. Knox 1986, 211-12.

58. For Senecan echoes of the *Heroides* see Jakobi 1988 *passim*; on the *Phaedra* and *Her.* 4, besides Jakobi and the commentaries, see also Cleasby 1907, 45n. 2 (in the context of a methodological caution very like mine).

59. So Knox 1986, 213n. 18, Cleasby 1907, 51.

60. For the terms 'double' and 'two-tier' allusion see respectively McKeown 1987, 37, and S.E. Hinds, *The Metamorphosis of Persephone: Ovid and the Self-conscious Muse*, Cambridge 1987, index s.v. 'allusion'; and cf. the taxonomy of complex allusions in R.F. Thomas, *Virgil's Georgics and the Art of Reference*, «Harv. Stud. Class. Phil.» 90, 1986, 171-98.

mistake to argue that such a model is logically required.

However, such *caveats* once stated, as a matter of broad literary historical probability I am as ready as any previous commentator to embrace the idea of a *Her.* 12 resonant with the tones of Ovid's lost play. It is time to look at the most arresting piece of detailed evidence, neglected by Leo and many other commentators, but rightly emphasised by Knox. Only two lines of Ovid's *Medea* have survived, one cited by the Elder Seneca (ap. *Suas.* 3, 7), and the other by Quintilian (ap. *Inst. Or.* 8, 5, 6). The citations come up in a way which allows us to suppose that the lines in question were among the more celebrated in the play; and, remarkably enough, one of them appears to be directly imitated in *Her.* 12.

> servare potui: perdere an possim rogas?
>
> (Ovid, *Medea* fr. 1[61])

Here is Knox's comment[62]:

> 'Medea's exclamation at *Her.* 12, 75 is most likely an imitation of this fragment, with a weak expansion of the sentiment in the second half of the line:
> perdere posse sat est, siquem iuvet ipsa potestas.'

Thus far Knox; and if we extend his quotation of the *Heroides* to the accompanying pentameter, the imitation becomes clearer – and more pointed:

> sed tibi servatus gloria maior ero.
>
> (*Her.* 12, 76)

The speaker of the *Heroides* couplet is Jason (as quoted, of course, by Medea). In pleading for Medea's help at Colchis, he

61. ap. Quint. *Inst. Or.* 8, 5, 6 (a discussion of *sententiae*) *sed maiorem vim accipiunt et mutatione figurae, ut 'usque adeone mori miserum est?' (acrius hoc enim quam per se 'mors misera non est'), et translatione a communi ad proprium. nam cum sit rectum 'nocere facile est, prodesse difficile', vehementius apud Ovidium Medea dicit: 'servare potui: perdere an possim rogas?'*

62. Knox 1986, 211, citing Richard Tarrant for the observation. Cf. also Cleasby 1907, 43n. 1.

appropriates and turns around the very *servare/perdere* argument which she has used (will use) against him. 'Has used', that is, in a prior text, Ovid's *Medea*; but 'will use', in terms of the chronology of the myth, in the subsequent action at Corinth: we have seen this paradoxical mixture of recall and foreshadowing before. Freed by the pentameter from the responsibility of 'closing' the epigram, incidentally, that expansion in the second half of *Her.* 12, 75 can be seen to have something to offer in purely formal terms: the pattern *perdere posse ... potestas* echoes two elements in the tragic verse, its 'p' alliteration and its doubling of *possum*-forms.

The usual uncertainties attendant upon arguments about allusion are intensified when, as here, one of the two passages reaches us all but stripped of context – and when even their relative chronology is a matter of some dispute[63]. However, while it may be impossible absolutely to prove the presence of Ovid's *Medea* behind *Her.* 12, I think that the overall circumstances do indeed encourage us to embrace the strong possibility of such a presence.

Let us focus now upon an interestingly evaluative turn in the debate concerning dramatic *color* in *Her.* 12 – leaving aside the question of whether or not that *color* is specifically ascribable to Ovid's *Medea*. The somewhat negative assessment offered just above by Knox of the proposed allusion to the *Medea* fragment at *Her.* 12, 75-6 ('a weak expansion of the sentiment ...') fits in with a broad pattern of evaluation in his treatment of the whole 'dramatic' question in *Her.* 12. In Knox's arguments against attribution to Ovid, the tragic elements in *Her.* 12 are seen in the main as moments of involuntary 'slippage' in which the non-Ovidian poet fails fully to convert his dramatic sources to a properly Ovidian epistolary format. Others might seek to counter this line by arguing the disruption of the epistolary format to be no greater in *Her.* 12 than in other epistles. However, in my view Knox is quite right to insist that an especial tension is felt. I differ only in my evaluation of the phenomenon. Why should Knox's moments of slippage, from the *at* of line 1[64] to the *actutum* of line 207, not be read as calculated effects? Medea, the tragic heroine *par excellence*, enters a collection of elegiac epistles, but she does not come quietly: her tragic identity is not suppressed, but rather is set in productive tension with her new epistolary environment. On my reading, that is, dramatic inruptions into *Her.* 12 constitute not involuntary lapses of generic propriety, but rather instances of self-conscious generic contamination – of the kind favoured by Ovid elsewhere in his *oeuvre*[65].

63. See n. 49 above for Cameron's interpretation of *Am.* 2, 18, 13-18, according to which the single *Heroides* mentioned in 2, 18, 21-34 predate the *Medea*. For Knox, who follows this chronology, the influence – as he agrees in seeing it – of the *Medea* upon *Her.* 12 is then itself an argument against Ovidian authorship of that epistle. Note, however, that even on the Cameron reading of *Am.* 2, 18 the *Medea* seems to be represented as at least *conceived* before the publication of the single *Heroides*.

It seems to me, moreover, that the dramatic *color* is deliberately intensified as the epistle proceeds. Jason's and Creusa's wedding procession, the passage which especially attracted Leo's attention, unfolds two-thirds way through the epistle like a piece of offstage action. It first impinges on Medea's ears (lines 137-8) in the manner of 'noises off'[66]; Medea's children greet it with something very like a standard 'entrance announcement' (lines 151-2)[67]; and in between there may even be a metadramatic hint from Medea that her uncertainty as to what the noises portend is due to the fact that no messenger's speech has been forthcoming (*Her.* 12.145-6 *diversi flebant servi lacrimasque tegebant – / quis vellet tanti nuntius esse mali?*; Ciofani's apt parallel, reported by Palmer ad loc., is the famous Soph. *Ant.* 277 στέργει γὰρ οὐδεὶς ἄγγελον κακῶν ἐπῶν).

Let us turn, finally, to the very end of the letter, which, as Knox rightly remarks, is lacking some expected kinds of closure[68]:

> 'The ending of *Her.* 12 ... bears little resemblance to the closings employed in the certainly genuine epistles. Two of them, the

64. 'This method of beginning a speech of high emotional content, which derives from tragic monologue, is quite at home in Roman poetry but is oddly out of place in a group of poetic epistles' (Knox 1986, 210).

65. Knox himself (1986, 214) sees the real attractions of such an interpretation; but the larger trajectory of his argument requires him to rule it out of court.

66. For the manner cf. e.g. Soph. *Phil.* 201-18.

67. For bibliography on and extensive discussion of the conventions of 'entrance announcements' in tragedy, see M.R. Halleran, *Stagecraft in Euripides*, London 1985, 5-32.

68. Knox 1986, 210.

second and seventh, end with funerary epigrams. More characteristic is a final closing remark, an appeal or imprecation, directed at the addressee ... Against this background the closing of *Her.* 12 looks suspiciously like a preliminary to further action.'

This is a shrewd analysis; I quibble only with the pejorative implication in the word 'suspiciously'. Here are the final four couplets:

quod vivis, quod habes nuptam socerumque potentis,
hoc ipsum, ingratus quod potes esse, meum est.
quos equidem actutum – sed quid praedicere poenam
attinet? ingentis parturit ira minas.
quo feret ira, sequar! facti fortasse pigebit –
et piget infido consuluisse viro.
viderit iste deus, qui nunc mea pectora versat!
nescioquid certe mens mea maius agit!

(*Her.* 12, 205-12)

What is the 'further action' to which *Her.* 12 is preliminary? The plot against Creon and Creusa, evidently, and the murder of the children – the action, in short, of the classic revenge tragedy handled by Euripides and (we may guess) followed in the main by Ovid in his *Medea*. In exploring the likely influence of tragic *Medeas* upon *Her.* 12, I may have seemed to suggest that the epistle *replicates* a Medea tragedy: rather, it serves as the prologue (or, more precisely, the 'prequel') to one. The act which sets events in motion at the beginning of the Euripidean play, the banishment from Corinth, has yet to happen in our poem. This epistolary Medea is working herself up to truly tragic stature at the end of *Her.* 12 because ... she is about to 'enter' a tragedy[69].

I shall probe that last thought more closely in a moment. First, however, let me pause to note the deft obliquity with which the poet hints at *all* the coming deaths in 207-8. The

69. Very suggestive work has been done on some ways in which Ovid carefully 'positions' the purported time of composition of a *Herois* relative to the prior text(s) on which it draws: D.F. Kennedy, *The Epistolary Mode and the First of Ovid's Heroides*, «Class. Quart.» n.s. 34, 1984, 413-22; cf. Gareth Williams, *Ovid's Canace: Dramatic Irony in Heroides 11*, «Class. Quart.» n.s. 42, 1992, 201-9.

quos, with its aposiopesis, embraces the *nupta* and the *socer* of the previous hexameter. However in 208 the choice of verb (*parturit* 'is in labour with') hints darkly at the identity of those other victims who will be the ultimate embodiment of Medea's 'threats' (*minas*). The weight of implication carried by *parturit* has been noted by earlier commentators[70]; what has been missed is the enforcement of the implication by the epithet attached to the *minas*. *ingentis ... minas*: not just 'mighty' threats but, by an etymologising suggestion found several times elsewhere in Latin poetry, threats abiding in Medea's own 'generative' powers, threats within and against her own '*gens*'[71].

In the final couplet *nescioquid ... maius* sustains that dark obliquity as to the coming crimes; but it plays, I think[72], with another kind of obliquity too, in which the epistle can achieve a metaliterary kind of closure.

nescioquid certe mens mea maius agit

Something greater awaits Medea; but also, as the theatrical resonance available in the verb *agere* can help to suggest, a greater rôle awaits – a rôle on the tragic stage. Indeed the promise of

70. ... Including, perhaps, Seneca. As Shuckburgh 1879 notes ad loc., the best commentary on *Her.* 12, 207-8 is Seneca, *Med.* 25-6 *parta iam, parta ultio est: / peperi. querelas verbaque in cassum sero?* (Jakobi 1988 is silent on this *locus*).

71. Some suggestive observations in D.O. Ross, *Virgil's Elements: Physics and Poetry in the Georgics*, Princeton 1987, have stimulated interest in what is undoubtedly an important etymological nexus for Latin poets. Picking up J.W. Mackail, *Virgil's Use of the Word ingens*, «Class. Rev.» 26, 1912, 251-5, Ross (index s.v.) traces the use of *ingens* in Virgil in the sense 'in-born' 'engendered' or 'native', reading it as if cognate with *ingenium*, or as if derived from an aorist participle **ingenens* (cf. *gigno*). A.M. Keith, *Etymological Play on Ingens in Ovid, Vergil, and Octavia*, «Amer. Journ. Phil.» 112, 1991, 73-6, in an allied approach, taking as starting point the attested ancient etymology from *in* (intensive) + *gens* in Paul. Fest., argues for an Ovidian variation which etymologises *ingens* from *in* + *gens* in the senses 'within *and* against the *gens*' at *Met.* 7, 419-27. Intriguingly, the *ingens ...nefas* explored by Keith in this passage concerns nome other than Medea, attempting a later crime against the family in a later Ovidian text. In effect, then, we might argue that the *ingens* wordplay functions as a recurrent trait in Ovid's explorations of Medea's bloody familial history.

72. My discussion here will be seen to coalesce with an episode in Barchiesi 1993. Barchiesi and I compared notes on the end of *Her.* 12 at a time when we were already coming by independent paths to similar conclusions; his treatment has had considerable influence upon the final form of mine.

'something greater', especially in this final position, may be more than a little evocative of overt closural formulae of 'generic escalation' such as the one which occupies the penultimate couplet of the *Amores*[73]:

> corniger increpuit thyrso graviore Lyaeus:
> pulsanda est magnis area maior equis.
>
> (*Am.* 3, 15, 17-18)

Even the hexameter of the final couplet may collude in this programmatic reading:

> viderit ista deus, qui nunc mea pectora versat!

Could this 'god' be invoked to inspire not just passion but poetry? *pectora* could imply both; and as it happens the closest available verbal parallel for the line, in Ovid's account of the attack of the god of love(-poetry) early in the *Amores*, is one in which the latter suggestion overtly coexists with the former:

> et possessa ferus pectora versat Amor.
>
> (*Am.* 1, 2, 8)

Such a resonance is fleeting enough, to be sure; and even at the best of times it is hard to determine the limits of an allusive correspondence, to know how much of one passage's context to empty into the other. The same *caveat* applies to a resonance which may possibly be heard in the final pentameter. The only previous instance in extant Latin poetry of the phrase *nescioquid ... maius* is overtly programmatic, and overtly concerned with generic escalation. In a poem in which he contrasts his own elegiac work with the newly ambitious epic production of Virgil, Propertius writes

> cedite Romani scriptores, cedite Grai!
> nescioquid maius nascitur Iliade.
>
> (Prop. 2, 34, 65-6)

73. Another suggestive instance of such a formula in the *Amores*, also concerned specifically with escalation from elegy to tragedy, is *Am.* 3, 1, 67-70.

A relevant parallel? Perhaps; perhaps not[74]. At all events, with or without resonances from this and other elegiac programmes, the metaliterary suggestiveness of *Her.* 12, 212, including the suggestiveness of that Ovidian 'buzz-word' *nescioquid*, remains. We *know* what greater thing is on the way: as this Medea prepares to exit, another, greater performance is about to begin. Ovid's buskined Medea waits in the wings – as does Euripides' Medea, as do the other Medeas of Greek and Roman tragedy. In a sense detailed 'proofs' of the literary reflexivity of this moment are superfluous: given the weight of the dramatic tradition, can we really imagine Medea playing out her final Corinthian scenes on anything *other* than a tragic stage?

Conclusion

I offer this paper not as a comprehensive treatise, but as an incomplete set of readings which seem to be moving towards two possible endings. On the one hand, I might keep 'authenticity' as the central issue, and continue to probe the arguments adduced against Ovidian authorship for their vulnerability to appropriation by the Ovidian interest. I think that more such probing can be done; but I do not expect ever to arrive at anything which can be called scientific proof. All that I can show in this area (and I hope I have begun to show it here) is that the author of *Her.* 12 seems to be a lot better at being Ovid than he has recently been given credit for[75].

74. *nascitur* finds no equivalent in line 212; but one might argue, in favour of allusion, that its metaphor is displaced on to the *parturit* of 208. On the eve of publication, I am now inclined to be less tentative than before about this and other intertextual resonances in the closing lines of *Her.* 12. Not only have I found myself independently thinking along the same lines as Alessandro Barchiesi (see n. 72 above), but our pooled thoughts on the end of *Her.* 12 have just been 'scooped' in the monograph of Friedrich Spoth, which is now in my hands, and to which I refer the reader for a full and richly nuanced discussion of these *loci*: *Ovids Heroides als Elegien* («Zetemata» 89), Munich 1992, 202-5.

75. Michael Reeve, recalling a recent debate about two passages in the double *Heroides*, draws my attention to one intriguing detail in this connexion. Housman's well-known treatment of the curious and (it seems) peculiarly Ovidian construction of a *nec*, at the beginning of a quotation, whose element of conjunction is not to be ascribed to the quotation (= *'ne'c*), includes the suggestion that the word *quam* in *Her.* 12, 202 should be read as a further development of this usage (= *qu*

In fact, I am less concerned to *identify* the author *per se* than to defend the author's workmanship – whether he (or she) be Ovid or not. My greatest unease with standard philological methods for discussing questions of priority and authenticity is not with the fact that their results are often less reliable than they claim to be, but with the fact that the vocabulary of differentiation which they use is almost invariably a vocabulary of disparagement[76]. My judgement of the *Epistula Sapphus*, for instance, that more famously disputed piece of Ovidiana, tends to suggest to me that its author is much better at writing an Ovidian *Herois* than he has been given credit for[77]; but I think it far from certain that the author is Ovid. My reading of the generally rejected *Somnium* (*Am.* 3, 5) finds the poem better, and more deeply engaged with the *Amores*, than its detractors

'am'): Housman 1897, 426-7 = 1972, 1.413-4 'In *Her.* 12, 202 Ovid takes one step further, and not content with breaking up *neque* into *et 'non'* and *neve* into *et 'ne'* he breaks up *quam* into *et 'hanc': aureus ille aries villo spectabilis alto / dos mea, qu 'am' dicam si tibi 'redde' neges.* i.e. *aries est dos mea, et, si dicam tibi 'hanc redde', neges.*' If the use of *'ne'c* is an index of a writer who is exceptionally good at being Ovid – cf. the discussion of *Her.* 16, 83 and 21, 221-2 at E.J. Kenney, «Class. Quart.» n.s. 29, 1979, 396 –, perhaps, Prof. Reeve suggests, the use of *qu'am'* can be read in the same light too. However, it may be that *qu 'am'* is less singular than *'ne'c*: see A.E. Housman, «Journ. Phil.» 30, 1907, 248-9 = 1972, 2.726, for a parallel in *qu'od'* at Martial 10, 4, 8.

76. In the particular case of the Axelsonian method, Kenney's important qualification, discussed in n. 24 above, points in effect to an *inevitability* of association between that method and the vocabulary of disparagement. In voicing my unease I am not suggesting that the Axelsonian approach be abandoned, just that it be used with more caution and with a healthier respect for its element of subjectivity. We need to be more self-conscious about the limitations of the Axelsonian approach, to be aware, say, that the very decision to designate two texts as being 'of unequal genius' is a subjective one – and may in practice rest in part upon a circular appeal to the results of the Axelsonian analysis itself.

77. The terms in which Tarrant expresses his opinion of the *Ep. Sapph.* at the outset of his important 1981 article bear directly on our discussion (my italics): 'It is *my private opinion* that the *ES* is a tedious production containing hardly a moment of wit, elegance, or truth to nature, and that its ascription to Ovid ought never to have been taken seriously, but I shall try to distinguish my low opinion of the work ... from arguments relevant to the question of its authenticity.' One of my theses has been, precisely, that critics tend to be overly confident about the power of philological methods to separate personal evaluation from objective analysis. In practice, the vocabulary of disparagement dominates Tarrant's treatment of the *Ep. Sapph.*; and my (so far) tentative feeling is that some of his findings need to have their evaluative dimensions interrogated rather more closely than he himself has envisaged.

have been prepared to allow[78]; but I think it unlikely that the author is Ovid. A poet can fail to be Ovid without failing to be a poet; a Roman writer can fail to make the inner canon without failing to have command of the vocabulary and themes of his own literary tradition. Modern critical discussions of authenticity and attribution are not always sufficiently aware of these truths.

My other option for an ending is to de-centre the question of authenticity altogether. What is most interesting to me about *Her.* 12 is not its ability to exercise the competing methodologies of modern Latinists – though that is indeed of some interest to me –, but rather the epistle's own vigorous intertextual life. Medea is one of the most frequently portrayed figures in mythology – the most central marginal figure in Hellenic culture, one might say. Here in *Her.* 12 we have a Medea who is many of the Medeas before her – Euripidean, Apollonian, Ennian and Ovidian –[79] and also many of the Medeas after her – Ovidian again, Senecan and Valerian. It is possible, I think (though I have not attempted to exhaust the possibilities here), to trace lines of affinity from *Her.* 12 to all these Medeas – and probably to others too. There are also links with figures who belong more obliquely to the Medea tradition: Hypsipyle, as argued in my 'Scene 3'; Simaetha, as tentatively suggested in 'Scene 2'; even, in a couple of places, the Virgilian Dido[80].

78. My reading of the *Somnium* takes its cue, then, from the notably appreciative treatment of Kenney, whose landmark article rejects Ovidian authorship, but concludes with a not unenthusiastic defence of the poem's merits (1969, 11-12). (Earlier, wholly negative evaluations are reported at Kenney 1969, 7.) Suggestive affinities between the *Somnium* and *Am.* 1, 5 are discerned by W.S.M. Nicoll, «Mnem.» ser. 4, 30, 1977, 47-8 (cf. McKeown 1987, 99-100); as in the case of Kenney's discussion, praise is not made dependent upon Ovidian authorship.

79. I start my catalogue with Ovid's favourite fifth century tragedian; but of course from a Euripidean vantage point the crowd of past Medeas looks hardly less numerous than from an Ovidian vantage point. See in this connexion the cautionary stress upon lost parts of the Medea tradition at Jacobson 1974, 109-10. We can only guess, e.g., whether or how much Varro of Atax may mediate the epistle's Apollonian allusions. For a tantalising glimpse of Ovid as critical reader of Varro's *Argonautae*, see Sen. *Contr.* 7, 1, 27.

80. See the felicitous suggestion of Jacobson 1974, 114n. 13, concerning *Her.* 12.1 *at tibi Colchorum, memini, regina vacavi*: 'I cannot but wonder whether this is, conscious or otherwise, a reminiscence of another opening verse of a famous ill-fated love story, *Aen.* 4, 1 *at regina.*' More securely, Shuckburgh 1879 adduces the

I close, then, by affirming a pleasure in the intertextual richness of Medea[81]. And I see a tentative connection with my first ending. The readers who deny *Her.* 12 to Ovid argue, in effect, that the epistle's spuriousness is betrayed by the fact that its Medea is a composite of fragments of other Medeas. Thus Tarrant, '*Her.* 12 can, I think, be shown to be a skillful amalgam of two Ovidian treatments of Medea, that in *Met.* 7 ... and in the lost tragedy *Medea* ...'[82]. But what my continuing investigation suggests to me is that it will always be possible for a suspicious reader to fragment *any* given Medea into some or all of her predecessors and successors. Medea is an intertextual heroine: every one of the limited number of moves in her story is multiply determined in literary history.

And her story is from the beginning a *story* of fragmentation: the innocent girl who is also the all-powerful witch; the defender of the integrity of the family who is also the killer of her own brother and children. Fragmented by her story, fragmented by her constant reinscription in new texts, in new genres, in new eras, Medea will always in the end elude her interpreters[83].

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beginning of *Aen.* 4 at *Her.* 12, 57 *ut positum tetigi thalamo male saucia lectum.* *male saucia* combines the *saucia* of *Aen.* 4, 1 with the *male sana* of *Aen.* 4, 8, in a narrative context (*Her.* 12, 57-62) which precisely doubles *Aen.* 4, 1-8 – and 'restores' those Virgilian lines to their Medean origins in Apollonius, *Arg.* 3, 449ff. and 616ff. To return to Jacobson's suggestion, it is worth noting that Valerius Flaccus (too?) claims for his Medea the famous *at regina* of Virgil's Medea-inspired Dido: Val. Flacc. *Arg.* 6, 657-8 *at regina virum (neque enim deus amovet ignem) / persequitur lustrans oculisque ardentibus haeret.*

81. Let me note here that Jim Clauss and Sarah Iles Johnston are in the final stages of putting together a new collection of essays by various hands which will explore the myth of Medea throughout antiquity and since.

82. Cf. n. 7 above.

83. Jim Porter (discussing the literary prehistory of Medea) elaborates on the impossibility of finding any originary 'wholeness' in our heroine – whether in time or in conceptual space: 'Fragmentation probably occurs in Homer as well, since Circe seems to be borrowed from Medea, which is to say, their identities are split or shared, which suggests the plasticity of literary «figures» in general, from the start' (*per litteras*).

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