OVID'S *MEDEA* AND THE AUTHENTICITY OF *HEROIDES* 12

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THE eighteenth elegy in Ovid's second book of *Amores* is addressed to a friend, Macer, also a poet, who is currently composing an epic. Ovid admits to his friend that he too has tried to compose serious verse, a tragedy (*Am.* 2.18.13–16), but was compelled to return to amatory elegy. At lines 19–26 he lists the types of poetry he writes:

> quod licet, aut artes teneri profitemur Amoris
> (ei mihi, praeceptis urgeor ipse meis),
> aut quod Penelopes uerbis reddatur Vlixi
> 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 †Aoniae Lesbis amata lyrae.†

The nine epistles referred to here correspond to extant poems in the collection known as the *Heroides*, but there is no mention of the remaining twelve letters. The question immediately arises whether Ovid intended to refer to a complete collection of epistles in *Am.* 2.18 and, if so, to what extent the group of letters in our possession corresponds to the work sketched out here. The issue is further complicated by the corruption of line 26, which refers to the fifteenth epistle, Sappho to Phaon. No convincing remedy for this crux has been proposed, but its resolution must of course take into account the problem of the authenticity of the epistle that it names. This question, long a matter of dispute, may finally have been laid to rest with the decisive objections to Ovidian authorship posed in a recent article by R. J. Tarrant.[1] If *Her.* 15 is not by Ovid, as Tarrant argues, it is

[1] "The Authenticity of the Letter of Sappho to Phaon," *HSCP* 85 (1981) 133–153.

likely that both line 26 and the later reference to Sappho in line 34 are interpolations. *Am.* 2.18 must then have been altered by a reader at some point after the spurious epistle had become attached to the collection.[2] In that case, we do not know what has been ousted from the text in these two lines, nor what other genuine epistles, if any, were included here. Unless the text has suffered even greater damage than has been suspected, it is not likely that Ovid could have included similar references to all the other extant *Heroides* in this space. While it is possible that Ovid chose not to name all the *Heroides* that he had composed, the problem must be faced squarely whether any of the epistles not mentioned in *Am.* 2.18 is authentic.

This question was first addressed by Lachmann, who answered it in the negative.[3] But the consensus of more recent scholarship is different: Ovidian authorship is generally assumed for the entire collection, with only occasional protests. Attention focuses on the so-called single epistles, *Her.* 1–14.[4] The ninth epistle from Deianira to Hercules has come under some suspicion, and specific objections have also been made to the eighth, Hermione to Orestes, and the thirteenth, Laodamia to Protesilaus.[5] The case against *Her.* 12, however, has never been made, not even by Lachmann, who was troubled only by *molestam quandam et exuberantem orationis abundantiam.*[6] It may be objected that in fact *Am.* 2.18 does contain a reference to Medea's epistle in line 23. But this line must then be understood to refer to both Hypsipyle's epistle, *Her.* 6, and Medea's, while all the other poems in this list each receive separate mention. It is also curious that as the collection now stands, Jason is the only hero to receive two letters. Of course, none of this would matter if *Her.* 12 conformed to the generally recognizable standards of Ovidian style and diction. But it is precisely on these grounds that the poem arouses suspicion.

[2] See Tarrant (above, n. 1) 149–152. Tarrant's arguments will perhaps not convince everyone. In particular, the uncertainty of the text of *Am.* 2.18.26 and 34 remains as a point of appeal for those who wish to defend Ovidian authorship at all costs. But his indictment of these lines, together with the suspect epistle, on points of style and Ovidian usage has certainly shifted the burden of proof.

[3] "De Ovidii epistulis," *Kleinere Schriften* 2 (Berlin 1876) 56–61.

[4] The double epistles (*Her.* 16–21) are a separate issue, since even those who defend Ovidian authorship assign their composition to a later period, contemporaneous with the *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti*. They cannot be used to guarantee the stylistic peculiarities of *Her.* 12 without extreme caution, but in any event, it seems that the author of our poem has made use of Helen's epistle: see below, 219. *Her.* 15 is not transmitted in its traditional position by the manuscripts, a circumstance which, while not decisive, sets it apart from the other single letters; cf. Tarrant (above, n. 1) 135–136 and 148. Similarly, two long passages in the double epistles (16.39–144 and 21.145–248) depend upon a single late witness. Their authorship has been disputed, most notably by Uta Fischer, *Ignotum hoc aliis ille novavit opus* (diss. Berlin 1969), and M. D. Reeve, "Notes on Ovid's *Heroides*," *CQ* N.S. 23 (1973) 334–337. A very strong case is made by E. J. Kenney, "Two Disputed Passages in the *Heroides*," *CQ* N.S. 29 (1979) 394–431 that the author of these passages is at least identical with the poet of the double epistles. He also offers considerable evidence that that poet is Ovid.

[5] On *Her.* 9 see D. W. T. C. Vessey, "Notes on Ovid, *Heroides* 9," *CQ* N.S. 19 (1969) 349–361; see also, for a number of the suspect epistles (but not *Her.* 12), E. Courtney, "Ovidian and Non-Ovidian *Heroides*," *BICS* 12 (1965) 63–66. G. P. Goold, *Gnomon* 46 (1974) 484 considers as authentic only 1–7, 10, 11, and 15.

[6] Lachmann (above, n. 3) 58.

[7] Tac. *Dial.* 12; Quint. 10.1.98.

[8] The couplet first appears in the Venetian edition of 1474.

The Influence of Ovid's *Medea*

Heroides 12 purports to be a letter from Medea to Jason written after he has decided to abandon her for Creusa, but it reads not so much as a letter composed in order to win Jason back as a character sketch in which Medea outlines her past history and present distress. In its organization the epistle owes much to tragic monologue, a form in which Ovid apparently achieved great success in his most celebrated treatment of Medea, the lost tragedy of the same name.[7] The opening of Medea's epistle is surprisingly abrupt:

> at tibi Colchorum, memini, regina uacaui,
> ars mea cum peteres ut tibi ferret opem.
> (*Her.* 12.1–2)

What is missing in the opening couplet, indeed in the entire introduction, is some form of epistolary salutation of the type commonly found in Ovid's other verse epistles, identifying the author of the letter and the recipient. Accordingly, in this letter, as in some others in the collection, an opening couplet identifying the correspondent has been interpolated in early editions.[8]

exul inops contempta nouo Medea marito
dicit an a regnis tempora nulla uacant.

Although these lines are certainly spurious, more than one critic has been disturbed by the opening adversative *at*. Heinsius long ago provided an adequate defense: "ita enim indignantes aut mirantes exordiebantur plerumque," aptly comparing the opening of speeches in Ovid's other works.[9] This method of beginning a speech of high emotional content, which derives from tragic monologue, is quite at home in Roman poetry[10] but is oddly out of place in a group of poetic epistles. Indeed, the first indication that Medea is writing and not speaking these lines does not occur until line 114: *deficit hoc uno littera nostra loco.*

The ending of *Her.* 12 likewise bears little resemblance to the closings employed in the certainly genuine epistles. Two of them, the second and seventh, end with funerary epigrams. More characteristic is a final closing remark, an appeal or imprecation, directed at the addressee, such as Hypsipyle's (*Her.* 6.164) *uiuite, deuoto nuptaque uirque toro!* Against this background the closing of *Her.* 12 looks suspiciously like a preliminary to further action:

uiderit ista deus, qui nunc mea pectora uersat!
nescio quid certe mens mea maius agit!

Medea brings her letter to a close addressing, not Jason, but, as throughout much of the poem, herself. So far from the epistolary form does the poet stray that at one point in line 66 his Medea refers to Jason in the third person: *Aesonio iuueni quod rogat illa, damus.* Whereas in the other *Heroides* Ovid goes to great lengths to sustain and exploit the fiction that these are real letters, in *Her.* 12 this pose seems a distant afterthought. To a degree unparalleled in the rest of the collection this poem resembles a dramatic soliloquy. 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.

It was Friedrich Leo who first suggested a specific tragedy as the source from which the author of *Her.* 12, whom he took to be Ovid,

[9] E.g., *Am.* 3.7.1 *at non formosa est*; *Met.* 8.279, 10.725, 12.367, *Fast.* 2.395.

[10] Cf. Rothstein on Prop. 1.17.1 and H. Tränkle, *Die Sprachkunst des Properz und die Tradition der lateinischen Dichtersprache* (Wiesbaden 1960 [*Hermes* Einzelschrift 15]) 152.

drew his material.[11] Leo pointed to parallels between this epistle and Seneca's *Medea*, where Ovidian influence is evident on a broad scale,[12] although there is no evidence that *Her.* 12 itself served as Seneca's model in these cases. But Seneca's divergences from the *Medea* of Euripides in treatment of plot and character indicated to Leo the existence of some important intermediary. This he identified as Ovid's celebrated play, a bold claim, but a plausible one nonetheless.[13] As Leo noted, Seneca seems to have known at least one of the two surviving lines of Ovid's *Medea*: *feror huc illuc ut plena deo*, with which he compared line 123 of the Senecan play: *incerta uecors mente uesana feror.*[14] Of equal importance is an echo, not noted by Leo, of the other surviving line of Ovid's *Medea* by the author of *Her.* 12: *seruare potui: perdere an possim rogas?* 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 iuuet ipsa potestas.*[15] Leo's conclusions about the importance of Ovid's play as a model for Seneca's portrayal of a furious Medea may therefore serve as the basis for a working hypothesis that where Euripidean influence cannot be traced, parallels between Seneca's play and *Her.* 12 may be due to common borrowing from

[11] F. Leo, *De Senecae tragoediis observationes criticae* (Berlin 1878) 166–170. See also H. L. Cleasby, "The Medea of Seneca," *HSCP* 18 (1907) 39–71.

[12] On the influence of Ovid's poetry in Seneca's drama, see H. L. Cleasby, "De Seneca Tragico Ovidii imitatore," Ph.D. diss. Harvard University 1907; Elaine Fantham, *Seneca's Troades: A Literary Introduction with Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Princeton 1982) 24–33.

[13] At times the portrayal of Medea's character in *Her.* 12 is strangely inconsistent. In lines 113–118 Medea refers in some detail to the murder of Absyrtus and describes herself as *femina nocens.* In the following couplet, however, when she asks for punishment it is not, as we would expect, for the murder but for her *credulitas* in following Jason: *numen ubi est? ubi di? meritas subeamus in alto, | tu fraudis poenas, credulitatis ego!* Such inconsistencies might be accounted for if the author of *Her.* 12 is drawing on two different portrayals of Medea for his material, as suggested by Tarrant (above, n. 1) 152 n. 39. But if the principal model was Ovid's *Medea* these inconsistencies might well have been found in that play. Augustan tragedy is likely to have resembled Senecan drama in its sacrifice of dramatic coherence to concentrate on the single scene. On the probable importance of Augustan tragedy for Seneca, see Tarrant, "Senecan Drama and Its Antecedents," *HSCP* 82 (1978) 258–263.

[14] Sen. *Suas.* 3.5. Cf. Leo (above, n. 11) 166–167.

[15] I owe this observation to R. J. Tarrant, whose comments have improved this article at several other points as well. Leo (above, n. 11) 169 suggests that Sen. *Med.* 557–560 are a rhetorical expansion of this fragment.

Ovid's own *Medea*.[16]

In the epistle ascribed to Ovid, for example, Medea refers to the sound of the wedding song of Jason and Creusa:

> ut subito nostras Hymen cantatus ad aures
> uenit, et accenso lampades igne micant,
> tibiaque effundit socialia carmina uobis,
> at mihi funerea flebiliora tuba,
> pertimui.
> (*Her.* 12.137–141)

There is no mention of an epithalamium in Euripides: Jason is of course already married as the play begins and Euripides' Medea does not reflect on the ceremony. Seneca, however, employs the same motif:

> Occidimus, aures pepulit hymenaeus meas.
> uix ipsa tantum, uix adhuc credo malum.
> (Sen. *Med.* 116–117)

Neither passage appears to be dependent upon the other, but the resemblance led Leo to conclude that the two authors were drawing on the same source, which he reasonably suspected to be Ovid's own *Medea*. We may draw the same inference about another pair of similar passages. At line 155–156 of *Her.* 12, Medea exclaims,

> ire animus mediae suadebat in agmina turbae
> sertaque conpositis demere rapta comis.

It is not clear from the context whom she intends to tear the wreaths from. From herself perhaps: "My heart impelled me to rush into the midst of the moving throng, to tear off the wreaths from my ordered locks," in the Loeb translation. But it is not likely that Medea would be wearing wreaths under these circumstances. It seems rather that Jason's marriage party is meant. And in fact, as Leo noticed,[17] Seneca's Medea expresses a similar desire to disrupt Jason's wedding:

[16] While it is of course impossible to measure the extent of Ovid's debt to an earlier treatment, in particular Ennius' *Medea*, it is unlikely that Seneca used an earlier play as model. He seems to have had little knowledge of, or affection for, Republican tragedy: cf. R. J. Tarrant, *Seneca: Agamemnon* (Cambridge 1976) 13–14, with references to earlier literature.

[17] Leo (above, n. 11) 168.

> non ibo in hostes? manibus excutiam faces
> caeloque lucem.
> (Sen. *Med.* 27–28)

If the two poets are drawing on the same source, Ovid's lost play is the most likely candidate.[18] *Her.* 12 contains many peculiarities of diction, but some of them can best be explained if the author was working with a specific tragedy as a model.

> aut, semel in nostras quoniam noua puppis harenas
> uenerat audacis attuleratque uiros,
> isset anhelatos non praemedicatus in ignes
> (*Her.* 12.13–15)

In line 13 it is clear *quoniam* is being used as a temporal conjunction. As is the case with *cum*, the temporal significance of *quoniam* is older than its causal sense.[19] After Plautus it occurs before this passage only in the tragic diction of Pacuvius and Accius.[20] Genuine archaisms, as distinct from commonly accepted poeticisms, are rare in Ovid. It may be objected that the appearance of one here only reflects a desire to evoke the background of tragedy in the opening of what amounts to a monologue. But the occurrence of another striking archaism near the end of the epistle suggests a closer dependence on a tragic model:

> quod uiuis, quod habes nuptam socerumque potentis,
> hoc ipsum, ingratus quod potes esse, meum est.
> quos equidem actutum—sed quid praedicere poenam
> attinet?
> (*Her.* 12.205–208)

Actutum, which is often attested in Comedy and the fragments of Republican tragedy, is otherwise rare in classical Latin. In Ovid it occurs only once in the third book of the *Metamorphoses*,[21] in the story of Pentheus, a common tragic theme and a passage where Ovid

[18] Other parallels may be noted briefly: *Her.* 12.132 *pro quo sum totiens esse coacta nocens.* Cf. Sen. *Med.* 280 *totiens nocens sum facta, sed numquam mihi. Her.* 12.171 *potui sopire draconem.* Cf. *Inc. trag.* 172 R^3 *non commemoro quod* draconis saeui sopiui impetum, | *non quod domui uim taurorum et segetis armatae manus.* And Ov. *Met.* 7.149 *peruigilem superest herbis* sopire draconem.

[19] Cf. K-S 2.366, H-S 627.

[20] Pac. *Trag.* 392 R^3, Accius *Praet.* 17 R^3.

[21] Its only other occurrence in Augustan poetry is at Virg. *Aen.* 9.252.

is probably much indebted to Pacuvius' treatment.[22]

There is no reason why Ovid could not have made use of his own play in drawing up Medea's imaginary epistle, borrowing the archaizing diction of tragedy to evoke the dramatic background. It would in fact be in character: no Roman poet is as fond of imitating himself as Ovid.[23] But in this case the evidence would require the existence of Ovid's tragedy as a background for the composition of *Her.* 12, which, if true, introduces serious chronological difficulties.

The relative dating of Ovid's early works is a notorious problem, involving as it does the additional complication that Ovid released two editions of the *Amores.* Ovid himself provides us with little information, remarking only in the introductory epigram of the *Amores* that the second edition is an abridgement of the first. The safest assumption is that the elimination of poems that he deemed unsuccessful was the only change he made.[24] At an early stage of his career, then, Ovid refers to the *Heroides* as a completed work, his tragedy as a project postponed:

> sceptra tamen sumpsi curaque tragoedia nostra
> creuit, et huic operi quamlibet aptus eram:
> risit Amor pallamque meam pictosque cothurnos
> sceptraque priuata tam cito sumpta manu;
> hinc quoque me dominae numen deduxit iniquae,
> deque cothurnato uate triumphat Amor.
> (*Am.* 2.18.13–18)

If Ovid's *Medea* served as a model for *Her.* 12, at the very least Medea's epistle cannot belong to the group of *Heroides* listed at *Am.* 2.18. It then becomes difficult to establish a plausible date for the composition of either the epistle or indeed the collection of single *Heroides* as a whole. These problems disappear if the author of *Her.* 12 is not Ovid. But in order to sustain Ovidian authorship at an early

[22] *Met.* 3.557. Cf. G. d'Anna, "La tragedia latina arcaica nelle *Metamorfosi*," *Atti del Convegno Internazionale Ovidiano* (Rome 1959) 2.220–226.

[23] For examples of Ovidian self-imitation see A. Lueneburg, *De Ovidio sui imitatore* (diss. Jena 1888); C. Ganzenmüller, "Aus Ovids Werkstatt. II," *Philologus* 70 (1911) 397–437.

[24] Cf. A. Cameron, "The First Edition of Ovid's *Amores*," *CQ* N.S. 18 (1968) 320–333. Cameron's conclusions have not been accepted everywhere (e.g., A. S. Hollis, *Ovid: Ars Amatoria. Book I* [Oxford 1977] 150–151), but another passage, if it refers to the *Amores*, supports his interpretation: *Trist.* 4.10.61–62 *multa quidem scripsi, sed quae uitiosa putaui, | emendaturis ignibus ipse dedi.*

date it becomes necessary to argue that Ovid did not intend to list all of the *Heroides* and that before its publication the *Medea* could have influenced the composition of the epistle. In either case, the date of *Her.* 12 cannot fall after the latest possible date for *Am.* 2.18 of ca. 2 B.C. This line of defense cannot stand if it can be shown that *Her.* 12 has also been influenced by Ovid's later work.

Evidence of Borrowing from *Metamorphoses* 7

The criteria for establishing the relative chronology of two related works of literature have long been known. If two passages in different works share enough significant features of content and diction so that the relationship cannot be regarded as accidental, and one passage fits securely into its context, while the other does not, then the second passage is an imitation. Bertil Axelson's application of this principle in his discussion of the relative chronology of Ovid and Lygdamus remains a classic demonstration.[25] It may be applied to an important group of parallels to *Her.* 12 found in Ovid's only extant treatment of Medea, in the opening of Book 7 of the *Metamorphoses.*

The similarities between *Her.* 12 and *Met.* 7 have not escaped the notice of commentators. A number of the resemblances between the two works might be characterized as unconscious reminiscences or the repetition of rhetorical commonplaces.[26] But some also include close repetition of diction and theme, as in the characterization of Jason's earth-born assailants at line 48 *ille est agricolae messis iniqua suo*; cf. *Met.* 7.30 *concurretque suae segeti.* And in line 39 the unusual use of *lex* for the terms of the agreement between Jason and Aeetes (*dicitur interea tibi lex*) enabled Heinsius to restore the corrupt passage at *Met.* 7.8: *lexque datur Minyis magnorum horrenda laborum.* The relationship between *Her.* 12 and *Met.* 7 is not likely to be casual, but none of the parallels yet adduced by commentators seems to establish priority.

[25] "Lygdamus und Ovid: Zur Methodik der literarischen Prioritätsbestimmung," *Eranos* 58 (1960) 92–111. For recent applications of Axelson's method to pseudo-Ovidian works, see Tarrant (above, n. 1) esp. 142–147; E. J. Kenney, "On the *Somnium* Attributed to Ovid," *Agon* 3 (1969) 1–14. See also J. A. Richmond, "The Authorship of the Halieuticon ascribed to Ovid," *Philologus* 120 (1976) 92–106; A. G. Lee, "The Authorship of the Nux," in *Ovidiana*, ed. N. Herescu (Paris 1958) 457–471.

[26] E.g., *Her.* 12.15 *anhelatos . . . in ignes*; cf. *Met.* 7.115–116 *nec ignes sensit anhelatos, Fast.* 4.492 *anhelatis ignibus. Her.* 12.173 *quos ego seruaui, paelex amplectitur artus*; cf. *Met.* 7.40–41 *ut per me sospes sine me det lintea uentis | uirque sit alterius, poenae Medea relinquar?*

Again, many of the similarities between the two pieces might be ascribed to borrowing from a common source, the most likely one being Ovid's own tragedy, the *Medea*. But one case in particular meets the test as laid down by Axelson, and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the author of Medea's epistle has in fact drawn on the *Metamorphoses*.

In lines 121–124 of *Her.* 12 Medea expresses the wish that she had been destroyed on the journey home from Colchis rather than endure Jason's second marriage:

> compressos utinam Symplegades elisissent,
> nostraque adhaererent ossibus ossa tuis;
> aut nos Scylla rapax canibus mersisset edendos —
> debuit ingratis Scylla nocere uiris.

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.[27] But the 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.[28] In *Her.* 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 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. The author of *Her.* 12 seems to have lifted a phrase out

[27] *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 Prop. 2.28.49 *formosarum*. Cf. M. Platnauer, *Latin Elegiac Verse* (Cambridge 1951) 38–39.

[28] According to the scholia on A.R. 4.284, Apollonius is following Timagetus, author of a Περὶ Λιμένων. Another poet, who also wrote on rivers, has the Argonauts return through the Bosphorus: cf. Call. fr. 9 Pf. For the whole question of a return route see the convenient summary of F. Vian, *Apollonios de Rhodes: Chant IV* (Paris 1981) 16–20.

of context from the *Metamorphoses*:

> quid, quod nescio qui mediis concurrere in undis
> dicuntur montes ratibusque inimica Charybdis
> nunc sorbere fretum, nunc reddere, cinctaque saeuis
> *Scylla rapax canibus* Siculo latrare profundo?
> (*Met.* 7.62–65)

In the *Metamorphoses* Medea speaks these words before she leaves her homeland, Colchis, with Jason and before she can know which route they will take home. The mention of Scylla and the Symplegades together makes good sense here as Medea catalogues the as yet unknown terrors of the sea.[29] Moreover, examination of the first half of the hexameter at *Her.* 12.123 reveals a certain logical awkwardness uncharacteristic of Ovid, as Medea wishes that she had been drowned to be eaten by Scylla's dogs.[30] 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 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 is a good example of the kind of incriminating borrowing defined by Axelson. The *Metamorphoses* belong to a different stage of Ovid's career, after he had finished with amatory elegy. If the author of *Her.* 12 is making use of the *Metamorphoses*, the poem cannot belong to the collection of epistles described in *Amores* 2.18. In order to sustain the authenticity of *Her.* 12 it would now be necessary to maintain that Ovid composed more epistles of this type at a later stage of his career. This would be a difficult case to make when confronted with the unimaginative borrowing from the seventh book of the *Metamorphoses* observed above. It becomes impossible when we see the same process at work with Ovid's other verse, including the poems from exile.

[29] In Apollonius' version, as the Argonauts continue their journey they are apparently unaware that the rocks were no longer to be feared; cf. A.R. 2.891–892, 2.1190–1191. In accounts where they return by this route they presumably noticed this change.

[30] *Mersisset* is a conjecture by Palmer; the inconsistency is not removed by retaining *misisset* of the manuscripts.

Borrowings from Ovid's Other Works

Medea's epistle contains a number of half-lines and repetitions from Ovid's earlier amatory poetry. Since it is possible to maintain that *Her.* 12 belongs to a later period, these imitations cannot be used with much assurance to resolve the question of authenticity. But Ovid's manner of self-imitation is well documented, and when the borrowings are as uncharacteristically flat and unimaginative as is the case in this poem, we may legitimately question whether the author is Ovid.

At the poem's midpoint, for example, Medea describes how Jason won her to his cause:

> uidi etiam lacrimas—sua pars et fraudis in illis.
> sic cito sum uerbis capta puella tuis.
> (*Her.* 12.91–92)

The pentameter is grammatically unobjectionable but certainly lacks point. The emphasis lies in the adverb *cito*—curious, since the process Medea has described was not swift—and *uerbis*, although, as she states in line 91, the deception depended as much on other factors such as Jason's tears. It appears that the author of this line had before him a couplet in the *Ars*:

> littera Cydippen pomo perlata fefellit,
> insciaque est uerbis capta puella suis.
> (*Ars* 1.457–458)

An original and quite clever point is spoiled in *Her.* 12 by the necessary change of *suis* to *tuis*. There is nothing unusual in a girl being deceived by a man's words, while it is certainly uncommon for anyone to be fooled by his or her own. The change from the clever to the banal is the mark of an imitator, which may be detected elsewhere in the poem.

Ovid's stylistic preferences are decisive for the earlier amatory poetry, and his adherence to them is extraordinarily consistent. But if the standards of an imitator were not as high, then perhaps some faults ought not to be removed. At line 201 f. Medea points indignantly to the Golden Fleece as the dowry she brought Jason:

> aureus ille aries uillo spectabilis alto
> dos mea.

At the end of the hexameter *alto*, which is accepted by most editors, was the original reading of the oldest manuscript P. Most other manuscripts have the adjective *aureo*, which is also the reading of P after correction. The repetition of *aureo* in this line would of course be intolerable in Ovid, but perhaps not in a lesser poet. In any event, *alto* scarcely makes for better sense: "the famous golden ram sightly for deep flock," as in the Loeb translation. Ehwald refers to 4.177 of Apollonius' *Argonautica* for the fact that the ram did indeed have a deep flock, but it is not the *depth* of the flock that makes the ram "sightly." 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:

> non erat hic *aries uillo spectabilis aureo*,[31]
> nec senis Aeetae regia Lemnos erat.
> (*Her.* 6.49–50)

The author of *Her.* 12 may well have had a number of such phrases running through his head from other passages in the Ovidian corpus referring to the story of Jason and Medea which he has not been able to adapt securely to their new context. For example, at line 134 Medea quotes Jason's words of dismissal: *ausus es "Aesonia," dicere, "cede domo!"* But this is, after all, a strange way for Jason himself to refer to the palace of Creon. The phrase has perhaps been lifted from a different context, a casual remark in Helen's epistle referring to Medea: *Her.* 17.230 *pulsa est* Aesonia *num minus illa* domo.

Troubling words and phrases occur throughout the poem, but in particular a number of passages suggest that the author of this epistle was working at a date well after that indicated for the collection by *Am.* 2.18 and, in addition, had some of Ovid's exile poetry before him. At lines 31–36 Medea describes the moment she first laid eyes on Jason:

> tunc ego te uidi, tunc coepi scire, quid esses;
> illa fuit mentis prima ruina meae.
> et uidi et perii nec notis ignibus arsi,
> ardet ut ad magnos pinea taeda deos.

[31] For the synizesis at line end cf. *Am.* 1.8.59 *palla spectabilis aurea.* From two other suspect epistles compare also *Her.* 9.127 *lato spectabilis auro*, 13.57 *multo spectabilis auro.*

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

Each of these three couplets presents the familiar motif of love at first sight. The repetition, while certainly not effective, is not necessarily un-Ovidian. It does, however, represent a good example of the exuberance that troubled Lachmann. More troubling is the awkwardness of Medea's claim in the opening line. Throughout the rest of the epistle she complains of having been taken in by Jason, but here she appears to be saying that she perceived his nature from the beginning. If that had been the case she would never have left Colchis. The phrase appears to be an unfortunate reworking of a line in the *Epistulae ex Ponto*: 1.6.11 *cum primum potui sentire quid essem.*

The awkward phrasing and obscurity of the imagery in the second couplet is also uncharacteristic of Ovid. The hexameter is a reworking of a famous line in Virgil: *Ecl.* 8.41 *ut uidi, ut perii, ut me malus abstulit error.*[32] Ovid usually takes great pains to make his comparisons clear,[33] but the point of the comparison in the pentameter is feeble: torches kindled before the gods do not burn more powerfully than ordinary torches. Furthermore, the religious associations of the *taeda* are limited to the wedding procession, a context which cannot be ruled out in this passage but for which the reference to *magnos deos* is certainly weak. This couplet reads like an awkward conflation of the imagery depicted in another passage in a certainly genuine epistle, which also makes use of this familiar comparison:

uror, ut inducto ceratae sulpure taedae,
ut pia fumosis addita tura focis.
(*Her.* 7.23–24)[34]

[32] Line 33 should not be punctuated at the caesura: *nec notis* = *et ignotis*; cf. S. Timpanaro, *Contributi di filologia e di storia della lingua latina* (Rome 1978) 278–279.

[33] Compare *Met.* 1.493–497 *utque leues stipulae demptis adolentur aristis, | ut facibus saepes ardent, quas forte uiator, | uel nimis admouit uel iam sub luce reliquit, | sic deus in flammas abiit, sic pectore toto | uritur.*

[34] Line 24 of *Her.* 7 is missing in P and G along with the following hexameter, but there is no reason for an interpolator to have supplied them and their genuineness is adequately defended by Housman, "Ovid's *Heroides* II," *CR* 11 (1897) 202 (= *Classical Papers* 391–392).

The two different members of this comparison, torches and incense burnt to the gods, have been combined in *Heroides* 12. For the phrasing the author might have stitched together other passages remembered from Ovid: for example, *Fast.* 2.558 *exspectet puros* pinea taeda *dies* and *Pont.* 3.1.162 *tura fer* ad magnos *uinaque pura* deos.[35]

Then in lines 161–166 Medea laments her lonely condition:

deseror amissis regno patriaque domoque
coniuge, qui nobis omnia solus erat!
serpentis igitur potui taurosque furentes;
unum non potui perdomuisse uirum,
quaeque feros pepuli doctis medicatibus ignes,
non ualeo flammas effugere ipsa meas.

The author here repeats the commonplace already expressed earlier in the epistle at lines 109 ff: *proditus est genitor, regnum patriumque reliqui . . . optima cum cara matre relicta soror.* The motif appears in the *Metamorphoses* as well, where sense and syntax are clear: *Met.* 7.51–52 *ergo ego germanam fratremque patremque deosque | et natale solum uentis ablata relinquam?* The recurrence of the motif at Sen. *Med.* 118–119 suggests that it might also have appeared in Ovid's tragedy. But the second appearance of this *topos* in *Her.* 12 has no apparent rhetorical motivation and the construction is unbearably awkward. If the ablative *coniuge* in line 162 is to be construed with *amissis*, we are faced with a type of connection that is otherwise unparalleled in Ovid: the final member in asyndeton in an otherwise connected series.[36] The only way out, as noted by Palmer, is to construe *coniuge* with *deseror* in the line above, an uncomfortable solution at best after the string of ablatives preceding. And the ablative without the preposition is a construction not attested with *deseror* in poetry before Silius.[37] Peculiarities of vocabulary also attract notice here. In line 65 *medicatibus*, which occurs only here in Latin, is an unobjectionable formation: Ovid coins several such words elsewhere, e.g., *contemplatus* (*Tr.* 5.7.66), *electus* (*Her.* 2.144), *narratus* (*Met.*

[35] In this setting it is then awkward to find in the next couplet a half-line repeated from Hypsipyle's epistle without special point: *Her.* 6.51 *certa fui primo—sed me mea fata trahebant.* But cf. *Met.* 7.816; *Trist.* 2.341, 3.16.15.

[36] Cf. K-S 2.153–154.

[37] Cf. Sil. 8.50 *Iliaco postquam deserta est hospita Dido*, 13.683, 17.154; Val. Fl. 6.639; *Anth. Lat.* 415.59. In prose this contruction does not occur before Tacitus; cf. *TLL* 5.1.670.19 ff.

5.499), *praemonitus* (*Met.* 15.800).[38] But the occurrence of *igitur* in line 63 requires explanation. This word was for the most part avoided in Augustan poetry.[39] Tibullus never uses it, Horace has it only in the *Satires* (6). Propertius has it 12 times, Virgil only 3. Ovid is more rigorous: this would be the only occurrence of *igitur* in the amatory elegies of his early period. It first occurs in the *Metamorphoses* (9), the *Fasti* (10), the double *Heroides* (4), and the elegies from exile (54). In other words, Ovid's tastes evolved and in his later poetry he did not find the word too prosaic, but he would not have used it in a work of his early period. The author of this epistle, who had before him the whole corpus of Ovidian poetry, did not notice, or was not concerned with, this change in Ovid's stylistic preferences. There are other indications that he was familiar with Ovid's exile poetry,[40] but enough has been said about the nature of this poet's borrowings from Ovid.

We have no external evidence to suggest that Ovid himself prepared a second edition of the *Heroides* containing additional poems not mentioned in *Am.* 2.18. Even if the authenticity of several of the single epistles were not doubtful, it is still plain that with the addition of the double epistles and the spurious *Epistula Sapphus* the collection as we know it differs sharply from the one outlined there. But with Medea's epistle shown to be a compilation by a later hand, we must conclude that the dislocation of the original collection has been much more severe and that the present arrangement of the single epistles does not reflect the author's intent. The *Heroides* have often been criticized as tedious, and perhaps some of the poems in the collection are. If the group of *Her.* 1–14 contains some spurious epistles, there might be much less to object to in Ovid's original plan. It does not

[38] For further examples cf. A. Linse, *De P. Ovidio Nasone vocabulorum inventore* (Leipzig 1891) 28–29.

[39] B. Axelson, *Unpoetische Wörter* (Lund 1945) 92–93. For a tabulation of occurrences of *ergo*, *igitur*, and *itaque* from Ennius to Augustine, see *TLL* 5.2.760.31 ff.

[40] At line 110, for example, *munus, in exilio quod licet esse, tuli* appears to echo the sentiment found at *Pont.* 3.3.39 *pro quibus exilium misero est mihi reddita merces.* And exclamations of the type at line 89, *et quota pars haec sunt*, while first attested in Ovid, are elsewhere found only in his later work. Cf. Bömer on *Met.* 7.522. The phrase may have been borrowed from *Pont.* 2.10.31 et quota pars haec sunt *rerum quas uidimus ambo.*

necessarily follow that the spurious letters are deliberate forgeries.[41] Ovid proved an easy poet to imitate. Very early he began to provide a model for fluent composition in elegiac couplets, and several examples of *Heroides* composed in the Ovidian manner survive from late antiquity and the Middle Ages.[42] There is nothing to suggest that *Her.* 12 is that late. The tragedy of Medea was, as Ovid himself notes, a particularly popular theme:

> cui non defleta est Ephyraeae flamma Creusae
> et nece natorum sanguinolenta parens?
> (*Ars* 1.335–336)

Especially after Ovid's treatment in his tragedy and the *Metamorphoses*, Medea would have seemed a particularly attractive figure for an author trying to imitate Ovid's early verse epistles. The poem might well belong to the period immediately following Ovid's death.[43] If that is the case, we should be prepared to forgive the editor who set about collecting Ovid's verse epistles and mistook the exercises of an *Ovidianus poeta* for the real thing.

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[41] See the remarks by Tarrant (above, n. 1) 152 on the author of the *Epistula Sapphus.*

[42] E.g., *Anth. Lat.* 71 SB (Dido to Aeneas). For other examples of late or medieval *Heroides* and responses to Ovid's epistles, cf. A. Riese, "Deidamia an Achilles," *RhM* 34 (1879) 474–480; H. S. Sedlmayer, "Epistula Phaonis ad Sappho," *WS* 10 (1888) 167. The genre had a long history, for which a useful discussion is provided by H. Dörrie, *Der heroische Brief* (Berlin 1968). A notable modern example is the clever "Ulysses to Penelope" of Ronald Knox, printed in an appendix to Austin's edition of *Aeneid* 2 (Oxford 1964).

[43] I have found no certain example of influence later than Ovid. Heinsius defended the use of *uigil* of the serpent by referring to Germ. 537–538 *quem perfida Colchis | sopito uigile incesto donauit amori*, but there are no indications of priority. Compare also *Her.* 12.125 *quaeque uomit totidem fluctus, totidemque resorbet*, with the similar phrasing and articulation of Man. 4.850 *et* uomit *Oceanus pontum, sitiensque* resorbet.

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