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Ovid's *Heroides* and the Ethopoeia

MARTINA BJÖRK

FACULTIES OF HUMANITIES AND THEOLOGY | LUND UNIVERSITY 2016



Ovid's *Heroides* and the Ethopoeia

Studia Graeca et Latina Lundensia 22

Ovid's *Heroides* and the Ethopoeia

Martina Björk



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1 Introduction

1.1 Aim of study

Ovid's collection *Heroides* (or *Epistulae Heroidum*)¹ is regarded as the poet's most rhetorical work.² The elegiac poems, written as fictitious letters by love-struck characters from Greco-Roman mythology, abound in argumentation and stylistic figures. The writers persuade, plead, praise, condemn, complain, lament and threaten. The rhetorical character of the text is striking. Yet, despite the scholarly fad for Ovid in recent decades, his rhetoric has enjoyed relatively little attention.

The aim of my study is to explore a long-lived but uninvestigated notion of Ovid's 'single letters', the *Heroides* 1-15,³ as *ethopoeiae*, and I will attempt to elucidate the relationship between the *ethopoeia* and Ovid's poems, a relationship which, I will argue, exists. The *ethopoeia* (in Greek *ἠθοποιία*)⁴ was a *progymnasma*, a rhetorical exercise practised in ancient grammar schools, which aimed at giving voice to a speaker in a certain situation.⁵

In the *Heroides*, fifteen women, Penelope, Phyllis, Briseis, Phaedra, Oenone, Hypsipyle, Dido, Hermione, Deianira, Ariadne, Canace, Medea, Laodamia, Hypermestra and Sappho, separated from their lovers⁶ and on the verge of despair, lament their fates. War, infidelity and kinship are

¹ I have chosen to refer to the work as the *Heroides* for two reasons: the title is known from antiquity (Priscian, *Institutio de nomine et pronomine de verbo* 10.544: "idem in heroidibus") and it is also the name mostly used in modern scholarship.

² Wilkinson (1955): 95; Oppel (1968): 35; Jacobson (1974): 322; Kauffman (1986): 44; Volk (2010): 68.

³ From now on, these fifteen single letters will be the ones which I have in mind when I refer to the *Heroides*. Letters 16-21 will pass under the name of 'the double letters'.

⁴ Sometimes transcribed as *ethopoiia*.

⁵ The term of *ethopoeia* has wider connotations, but the definition given above will be my starting point.

⁶ In the case of Phaedra (ep. 4): her stepson, whom she desires.

circumstances that put obstacles in their way and render their love-affairs difficult or even impossible.

The accumulation of so many stories on the same theme is unique for ancient literature and raises a number of questions. What is the purpose? Why women? Why the seriality? Why the epistolary form? Why the rhetorical elements? In contrast to other Ovidian works, metapoetic comments from the author on the form or the idea of the work are missing.⁷ It would be bold to declare that this study will give definite answers to such important questions. Yet, I believe that the method of using the ethopoeia as an explanatory model reaches something fundamental in the nature of the poems and the collection as a whole.

Formal aspects have often been neglected in contemporary Ovidian scholarship in favour of literary interpretations. Form is seldom studied *per se* but rather as a bearer of certain expectations. In contemporary scholarship, the elegiac distich as a metre is subordinated to the literary conventions it entails, and epistolary studies on the work do not so much deal with structure or stylistic figures as they search to justify the choice of the form. In my search for the ethopoeia in Ovid's text, my aim is to take into consideration both the formal aspect of it and its literary idea and motifs. For, as we will see, the ethopoeia holds inherent literary expectations.

It might be seen as a vexed question to categorize texts, but as the ethopoeia has been used either as a catch-all term or as referring to the school ethopoeia only, I see a need to bring some order into the discussion and will try and define the concept. My examination demands a rhetorical-historical perspective, first and foremost in order to narrow down the concept of ethopoeia and secondly to try and find its origins. The search for the origins of the ethopoeia will take us back to the teaching of the Sophists and to Greek drama. One of my conclusions will be that the concept of the ethopoeia needs to be reconsidered, that it functioned not as a mere school exercise but as a text model, a tool for writers in the composition of literary texts. Throughout the work I will emphasize the importance of rhetoric as a means of composing texts, prose as well as poetry. This is stressed in the sophistic tradition, where rhetoric was used as a pedagogical tool for writing, a tradition to which I believe Ovid belongs.

⁷ *Amores* 1.1.27-28. Conte (1994a): 123 observes that the Augustan poets were aware of genre and comment on it in their works. Volk (2010): 41 makes the observation that a discussion on the genre of the work is missing in the *Heroides*. However, Volk reads a meta-comment in the letter of Sappho (15.5-8) on the genre of elegy as fitting for weeping.

My first chapter will introduce the literary object of this study, Ovid's *Heroides*, 1-15. Chapter two will give the rhetorical framework for my analysis. As Ovid is claimed to be a rhetorical poet and his *Heroides* extraordinarily rhetorical, I will discuss the relationship between rhetoric and poetry in ancient literature, with the emphasis on Ovid's time. Further, I will draw an outline of the teaching of rhetoric and place Ovid into it. Sources tell us that Ovid took an enthusiastic part in his training in rhetoric and applied it to his writing of poetry. After an exposition of the rhetorical exercises *progymnasmata*, I will focus on the central one for this study, the *ethopoeia*. By the means of Greek textbooks in rhetoric and standard examples of *ethopoeiae* preserved from antiquity, I will be able to outline the common traits for the *ethopoeia*. Although these model texts are of a later date than Ovid, I find it justified in using them as a basis for comparison. This method presupposes a more or less intact tradition in the teaching of rhetoric over the centuries. I will argue that this was the case. In the third chapter, I will make an attempt to trace the *ethopoeia* in ancient literature. These three chapters will serve as a background for my search for *ethopoeia* in Ovid's poetry. That the *ethopoeia* was used not only in the *Heroides*, but in the *Metamorphoses* as well, will show in chapter four. Chapter five will focus on form: how the concept, structure, motifs and loci of the *ethopoeia* are visible in the *Heroides*. In chapter six, I will study some of the poems more closely, focusing on the characterization of the writing women.

A more thorough study would perhaps include the double letters, 16-21. These are, however, omitted due to considerations of delimitation and the fact that they often are separated from the single letters, as they are regarded as constituting a work of their own.

1.2 Some remarks

Throughout the work I will write the names of authors, mythological characters and geographical places according to English standard (for instance *Aristotle*, *Quintilian*, *Helen*, *Jason*, *Ulysses* and *Troy*), and titles of works according to the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*. For Greek rhetorical terms, the Latin variant will be used (*locus* instead of *topos*, *encomium* instead of *enkomion* etc), even when I refer to the Greek *progymnasmata* teachers.

Latin and Greek quotations in my text come from the *Loeb Classical Library* editions, except for the progymnasmata texts, which are available only in other editions.⁸ Also, the passages from the *Heroides* are from the 1977 Loeb edition.⁹ Several editions have been published in recent decades,¹⁰ but this easily accessible edition includes all the poems. Translations from the original Greek and Latin are mine unless otherwise stated.

When referring to the *Heroides*, I will omit the title of the work, marking only the number of the epistle and the verses (for instance “7.21-22”). After a heroine’s name, I often add the number of her epistle (for instance “ep. 7”). When other works of Ovid are cited or referred to, I omit Ovid’s name and note only the title of the work, the actual poem and its verse (for instance “*Amores* 1.6.25”).

1.3 Authenticity and transmission of the text

The earliest extant manuscript of the *Heroides* originates from the late 9th century,¹¹ copied from an ancient manuscript. This Carolingian codex is referred to as either the Codex Parisinus or Puteanus 8242 (P) and is considered to be the best text.¹² According to E. J. Kenney, two other manuscripts from the Carolingian period were extant in the 15th century.¹³ Louis C. Purser suggests that one of these codices, akin to P, was emended and even filled with interpolations at some time before the 11th century, an operation he calls “the Chief Recension”.¹⁴ Peter E. Knox remarks that these corrections might rather originate from an independent source.¹⁵ In any case,

⁸ Selected editions will be presented later.

⁹ Ovidius Naso, Publius, *Ovid in six Volumes. 1. Heroides and Amores*. Translated by Grant Showerman. Revised by G. P. Goold. Second Edition. Cambridge Mass. 1977.

¹⁰ Other editions containing more than one letter are: Dörrie (1971, ep. 1-15), Barchiesi (1992, ep. 1-3), Knox (1995, ep. 1-2, 5-7, 10-11 and 15) and Reeson (2001, ep. 11, 13 and 14).

¹¹ Knox (1995): 34; Kenney (1996): 26; Richmond (2002) 462. Purser [1898](1967): xxxiii dates it to the 11th century. So does Showerman [1914] (1977): 5.

¹² Verses 1.1-2.13, 4.48-103, 5.97-6.49, 16.139-144 are lacking and the text ends at 20.175; Knox (1995): 34; Kenney (1996): 26.

¹³ Kenney (1996): 26.

¹⁴ Purser [1898] (1967): xxxvii.

¹⁵ Knox (1995): 36.

the emendations and supplements occur in many manuscripts and are also added by a second hand in P.

Two manuscripts derive from the two lost Carolingian manuscripts, but these are considered of less value than P, though still of great importance: Codex Etonensis (E) of the 11th century and Codex Guelferbytanus (G), of the 15th.

Additional emendations were made after the 12th century.¹⁶ The Codex Francofortanus (F) from the 13th century, containing the Epistula Sapphus, (Sappho's letter, ep. 15) and the 14th century Codex Vindobonensis (V), are important manuscripts influenced by these later corrections.

Another witness ought to be mentioned. In the late 13th or early 14th century a Greek prose translation was made by Maximus Planudes.¹⁷ Opinions differ about its value. Purser follows Alfred Gudeman, who holds that the translation goes back to a manuscript more reliable than P, and that it therefore is an important authority when re-establishing Ovid's text.¹⁸ This view is not shared by Kenney, who claims that the importance of Planudes' contribution is exaggerated.¹⁹

One of the most discussed issues over time is the one concerning the authenticity of the *Heroides*. The authorship is by no means completely established, a fact that also had had influence on the long-lived neglect of the collection. During the 19th century, it was suggested that as much as nearly half of the content was spurious.²⁰ Karl Lachmann discarded not only all the double epistles, but also 3, 8, 9, 12, 13 and 14, justifying his selection on metrical and aesthetic grounds.²¹ Several efforts, however, were made during the 19th century to settle the question of Ovid as the author of all the letters, including the double ones. For instance, Vitus Loers made a thorough examination of the authenticity of the poems by comparing text lines with passages from Ovid's other works.²² Loers stated that all the poems were written by Ovid. W. Terpstra came to the same conclusion.²³ The discussion

¹⁶ Purser [1898] (1967): xxxvii-xxxviii.

¹⁷ Presented in Palmer [1898] (1967).

¹⁸ Purser [1898] (1967): li.

¹⁹ Kenney (1963): 214ff.

²⁰ Rosenkranz (1832): 320.

²¹ Lachmann (1876): 56-61.

²² Loers (1829): XLViff.

²³ Terpstra (1829): XV, "Sunt ingenii Ovidiani partus, ab hoc naturam, vim ac formam acceperunt." 'They are the offspring of the Ovidian genius; from this they have received their nature, force and structure.'

is not considered a large issue today, with perhaps one exception: the authenticity of Sappho's letter. The epistle has its own history. It appears in only one medieval manuscript, the Francofortanus (F),²⁴ in which it is placed before the collection. Sappho's letter was put between epistle 14 and the double letters in Daniel Heinsius' edition from 1629. These circumstances, along with metrical and lexical peculiarities, has made scholars continue to question its authenticity. Recently, two scholars have come to opposite conclusions.²⁵ I will here leave the question open, assuming that the text presented in the edition I will use is Ovid's, with one exception: a long passage in Hypermetra's letter, a digression in which Hypermetra tells the myth of Hera and Io, 14.85-122. To me it seems totally out of place, and it has no counterpart in any other of the poems. Already J. C. Scaliger and Heinsius judged the lines to be spurious,²⁶ a view with which I agree.

In most manuscripts, the epistles lack introductory salutary couplets.²⁷ Oenone's letter begins:

PERLEGIS? an coniunx prohibet nova? perlege—non est
ista Mycenaea littera facta manu! (5.1-2)

Do you read this through? Or does your new bride prevent you?
Read it through – this letter you have received is not produced
by Mycenaean hand!

Thus, this letter begins quite abruptly. Presumably some scribe, finding the introduction unsatisfactory for a letter, composed the following introductory couplet, present in the E manuscript:²⁸

²⁴ Hexter (1986): 141 and Knox (1995): 37. The *Epistula Sapphus* is thereafter present in later manuscripts.

²⁵ The scholar who has most recently discussed the issue of authenticity, Thorsen (2014): 96-122, claims that Sappho's epistle (ep. 15) is authentic, thus refuting Tarrant (1981) who claims the opposite. Fulkerson (2005): 152-158, without taking a definite position, makes an account of the arguments.

²⁶ Heinsius (1629): 331. Palmer [1898] (1967): 416 on the other hand, calls the abruptness "poetic". Jacobson (1974): 134 and Reeson (2001): 283 also defend the passage.

²⁷ On the transmission of the introductory couplets, see Kirfel (1969): 37-111.

²⁸ Knox (1995): 36 and 50. As Jacobson (1974): 406 observes, some of the letters have introductory salutations, which are "indisputably genuine". These, however, "define the nature of the relationship" rather than introducing the people involved. Jacobson (1974):

Nympha suo Paridi quamvis suus esse recuset
mittit ab Ideis verba legenda iugis

The nymph writes to her Paris words worth reading from the
ridges of Mount Ida, even though he refuses to be hers.

Supplementary introductory lines for letters 5-12, 17-18 and 20-21 have been inserted in some of the manuscripts.²⁹ These were probably added to fill in what were understood as gaps, where an epistolary greeting was expected.³⁰

1.4 The *Heroides* and Ovid's other works

In the single letters of the *Heroides*, fifteen women – princesses and queens, wives and mistresses – from Greco-Roman myth step forward complaining about their situation. This first collection of the *Heroides* is considered to be early, more or less contemporary with what is agreed to be Ovid's very first elegiac collection, the *Amores*.³¹ The two collections share not only metre but also the unavoidable necessities that seem to come with Roman erotic elegy: the themes of unhappy love and love as slavery, *servitium amoris*.³² Whereas different mythological women hold the centre of the stage in the *Heroides*, one male poet plays the main part in the *Amores*. He is the typical elegiac lover, the *amator* who is courting women and struggling with his love for his *puella* Corinna. By way of introduction, the poet in *Amores* 1.1 declares himself ready to compose hexameter on violent war, when suddenly little

405 believes that the superscriptions *Penelope Ulixi* etc, present in the manuscripts, were ancient and that they gave enough information about the sender and the recipient.

²⁹ Codex Etonensis (E) and some 13th to 15th century codices.

³⁰ Purser [1898] (1967): xli cites Vahlen: "...Ovid would not break into the middle of a thought; and, in what are formally Epistles, Ovid would naturally employ some metrical form of the ordinary salutation, as he does so frequently in the *Epistles from Pontus*."

³¹ Conte (1994b): 343. Thorsen (2014): 27 puts the *Heroides* prior to the *Amores* by means of literary allusion, or what she calls "fictional chronology". With the salute to Homer and his *Odyssey* with Penelope's first letter of the *Heroides*, and then the *Amores* 1 beginning with an allusion to the opening lines in Virgil's *Aeneid*, Ovid establishes his authorship as part of the Homeric and Virgilian tradition. For the chronological relationship between the *Heroides* and the *Amores*, see Knox (2002): 119-120.

³² For an exposition of the concept of *servitium amoris*, see Fulkerson (2013): 180-193.

Cupid kicks one metrical foot away from every other verse. Cupid, demanding the poet to write amatory and not military poetry, shoots an arrow through his heart. In fact, though the poet is asked to avoid warfare, he will discover that making love is like making war, *militat omnes amans*, ‘every loving person serves as a soldier’, as Ovid states in *Amores* 1.9.³³ The defeated poet takes farewell of the hexameter by introducing the elegiac distich, the metre that Ovid will stick to in all his extant works, except for the *Metamorphoses*:

Sex mihi surgat opus numeris, in quinque residat:

ferrea cum vestris bella valete modis! (*Amores* 1.1.27-28)

Let my work rise in six numbers and fall back in five: goodbye,
armed conflicts together with your metre!

Amores 1.1 is not only programmatic for Ovid’s choice of writing love elegies, it also displays a playfulness and distance so typical of him.³⁴ The poetic standpoint, which is claimed to be imposed on him by the gods and not self-chosen, returns in the opening poem of *Amores* 2. Here, the poet is again pondering on epic material, this time on the creation of the world, when his girlfriend suddenly leaves and shuts the front door,³⁵ an action that can be redressed only through “blanditias elegosque levis, mea tela”, ‘soft words and easy-going elegy, my weapons’.³⁶ Later, in his poem to Augustus, composed in exile, the poet will comment on this choice, regretting he did not write about (the real) war, Troy or the greatness of Rome, since his elegiac duties caused his ruin.³⁷

³³ *Amores* 1.9 is considered an essential poem in the Ovidian corpus. The commission of serving in Love’s army, *militia amoris*, is discussed in Drinkwater (2013): 194-206.

³⁴ Veyne (1988): 48: Veyne supports the idea of not taking Roman elegy very seriously. “It was poetry to laugh at”, Veyne writes, referring to Ovid’s epithet on elegy in *Remedia Amoris* 380 as a “levis amica”, “a light girlfriend”.

³⁵ *Amores* 2.1.1-20.

³⁶ *Amores* 2.1.21.

³⁷ *Tristia* 2.315-324.

Further in the second book of *Amores*, Ovid actually mentions the heroines of his *Heroides*,³⁸ in a piece addressed to Macer (who, according to the poet, is at work upon a poem on the Trojan War):³⁹

Quod licet, aut artes teneri profitemur Amoris—
ei mihi, praeceptis urgeor ipse meis!—
aut, quod Penelopes verbis reddatur Ulixi,
scribimus et lacrimas, Phylli relictas, 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.
Quam cito de toto rediit meus orbe Sabinus
scriptaque diversis rettulit ille 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:
det votam Phoebo Lesbis amata lyram. (*Amores* 2.18.19-34)

What I can do is either to explain the arts of tender Amor – but
ah, I am attacked by my own instructions! – or to write the

³⁸ The fact that the *Heroides* are mentioned here is no clear evidence for them being subsequent in date. The *Amores* were, according to Ovid in his introduction, revised from five to three books. This revision might have been made after the publication of the *Heroides*.

³⁹ Macer is identified as Macer Iliacus (not to be mistaken for the poet Aemilius Macer). The letter 2.10 in *Epistulae ex Ponto* is dedicated to him, here verses 13-16: "tu canis aeterno quicquid restabat Homero, / ne careant summa Troica bella manu. / Naso parum prudens, artem dum tradit amandi, / doctrinae pretium triste magister habet." 'You sing whatever immortal Homer left unsung, that the wars of Troy may not lack the final hand. Naso thoughtlessly imparts the art of love and the teacher has the harsh reward of his teaching.' Translation: A. L. Wheeler. Macer is also mentioned in the 'catalogue' of poets in *Tristia* 4.10.43-44.

words Penelope sends to Ulysses, and to write about your tears, Phyllis; to write what Paris, Macareus and the ungrateful Jason read, what Hippolytus and his father read; to write what pitiable Dido utters as she extends her sword; to write the composition of the Lesbian woman, loved of the Aonian lyre. How quick my friend Sabinus returned from his trip over the world and brought back epistles from various places! Fair Penelope recognized the seal of Ulysses; the stepmother read the letter of her Hippolytus. Pious Aeneas replied to the wretched Elissa, and a letter is here for Phyllis, if she is still alive. An epistle with sad news reached Hypsipyle from Jason, and the beloved woman of Lesbos may offer the lyre she vowed to Phoebus.

The names of mythological characters mentioned above are writers and recipients of the single letters 1-7, 10, 11, and 15.⁴⁰ The passage implies that Ovid's friend and poet colleague Sabinus brought replies to the writing women from all over the world. In editions from the Renaissance and onwards to the 1850's, three Sabinian letters (from Ulysses, Demophoon and Paris) were often added to the *Heroides*' editions. If there ever existed such letters it is hard to decide. The letters were presumably composed by Aulus Sabinus, although the identity of the real poet, the Italian humanist, poet and namesake of Sabinus, Angelo Sabino, at that time already had been revealed. Ovid returns to Sabinus in his *Epistulae ex Ponto*:

et qui Penelopae rescribere iussit Ulixem
 errantem saevo per duo lustra mari,
 quique suam Troesmin imperfectumque dierum
 deseruit celeri morte Sabinus opus
 (*Epistulae ex Ponto* 4.16.13-16)

...and he who demanded Ulysses to reply to Penelope, Ulysses, who wandered through two lustra over the savage sea, Sabinus, who because of a swift death abandoned his *Troesmis* and his unfinished work of days...

⁴⁰ Ten of the fifteen heroines are thus here mentioned. Missing are Hermione (ep. 8), Deianira (ep. 9), Medea (ep. 12), Laodamia (ep. 13) and Hypermeatra (ep. 14).

Ovid gives us to understand that replies actually existed – or is he joking? Surely, the fictive framing suggests that he is pulling our leg, but what would be the point with such a joke? One of my observations is that the Ovidian epistles (1-15) in their status as *ethopoeiae* do not receive any replies.

On the other hand, correspondence by letter is central in the double letters, 16-21. In these, the reader meets three love couples exchanging letters: from Paris to Helen (ep. 16) and vice versa (ep. 17), from Leander to Hero (ep. 18) and vice versa (ep. 19), from Acontius to Cydippe (ep. 20) and vice versa (ep. 21). In these cases, the first letter comes from the male and the reply from his female partner. Here too something stands in the way of love – yet love is victorious, which is seldom the case in Roman love elegy and certainly not in the single letters.

The epistolary form returns in Ovid's exile poetry, *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*, written at the end of his career. Here the plaintive character is again central; the poet writes epistles to his friends lamenting his fate, the emperor's wrath and the conditions of his new home district on the Black Sea. Although Ovid in his poetry recommends the writing of a letter for amatory persuasion, it rarely works as a means of communication. Throughout Ovid's works, communication by way of mail seems to be futile, except for the double letters of the *Heroides*. The exiled poet gains no hearing but has to resign himself to his fate. In this respect, *Amores* 2.2 seems programmatic: the lover writes a letter to his girl. The reply he gets is a brief and concise *non licet*, 'it is not possible'.⁴¹

In his letter to Augustus, *Tristia* 2, the poet points out the erotic-didactic *Ars Amatoria* as the reason for his exile.⁴² *Ars Amatoria* can be read as a play with the genre of didactic poems. Instead of teaching readers the art of agriculture or of writing poetry, Ovid provides a manual on amatory persuasion. The poet is a *praeceptor amoris*, an instructor in the art of love. The first and second books instruct men how to seduce women and keep them. Learning eloquence is the key to get a girl. The following lines from *Ars Amatoria* 1 say something about the power of flattering words in a letter. Cydippe, recipient of letter 20 and writer of letter 21 of the *Heroides*, is mentioned:

⁴¹ *Amores* 2.2.6.

⁴² *Tristia* 2.8, 2.207, 2.211 and 2.240.

Ergo eat et blandis peraretur littera verbis,
Exploretque animos, primaque temptet iter.
Littera Cydippen pomo perlata fefellit,
Insciaque est verbis capta puella suis.
(*Ars Amatoria* 1.455-458)

Therefore, a letter may go off and be ploughed by sweet words.
May it explore her mind and as the first one try this journey. A
letter brought on an apple deceived Cydippe, and the unaware
girl was captured by her own words.⁴³

Sweet words and eloquence is the key to a woman's heart.⁴⁴ The men of the double letters, Paris (ep. 16), Leander (ep. 18) and Acontius (ep. 20) obviously know the art and succeed. The women of the single letters fail, unaware of amatory art as they are. Another passage from *Ars Amatoria* may illustrate this. Four women from the *Heroides* are mentioned: Medea, Ariadne, Phyllis and Dido. The passage is from book 3, in which women receive advice from the poet how to best attract men. Whereas the men already have received two books of advice on love strategy, the women remain unarmed. The poet acts as the expert, who knows everything worth knowing. Exhorted by Venus, he teaches every man and woman who is willing to listen:

Saepe viri fallunt: tenerae non saepe puellae,
Paucaque, si quaeras, crimina fraudis habent.
Phasida iam matrem fallax dimisit Iason:
Venit in Aesonios altera nupta sinus.
Quantum in te, Theseu, volucres Ariadna marinas
Pavit, in ignoto sola relictā loco!
Quaere, novem cur una viae dicantur, et audi

⁴³ The note that Acontius wrote on the apple reads: 'I swear by Artemis to marry Acontius'.

⁴⁴ *Ars Amatoria* 2.151-152: "Este procul, lites et amarae proelia linguae: / Dulcibus est verbis mollis alendus amor." 'Keep far away, quarrels and fights of a bitter tongue: love must be nourished with sweet and gentle words.'

Depositis silvas Phyllida flesse comis.
 Et famam pietatis habet, tamen hospes et ensem
 Praebuit et causam mortis, Elissa, tuae.
 Quid vos perdiderit, dicam? nescistis amare:
 Defuit ars vobis; arte perennat amor.
 Nunc quoque nescirent: sed me Cytherea docere
 Iussit, et ante oculos constitit ipsa meos.
 Tum mihi "Quid miserae" dixit "meruere puellae?
 Traditur armatis vulgus inerme viris.
 Illos artifices gemini fecere libelli:
 Haec quoque pars monitis erudienda tuis..."

(*Ars Amatoria* 3.31-48).

Men do often deceive: sweet girls not often. If you should ask, they are guilty of few crimes of fraud. Deceitful Jason sent away the Phasian when she was a mother: another bride came to the bosom of Aeson's son. How much for your sake, Theseus, she feared the sea-birds, lonely and deserted on an unknown spot! Ask why nine ways are called one, and hear the woods deploring Phyllis by shedding their leaves. The man has the reputation of piety – yet did he as a guest offer both a sword and a reason for your death, Elissa. Shall I tell you what ruined you all? You did not know how to love: you lacked art; love is preserved long by art. Neither should they know now: but Cytherea⁴⁵ demanded me to teach; she herself stood before my eyes. Then she said, "What have these poor girls deserved? An unarmed crowd is handed over to armed men. Two small books have made them artists: the female part must also be educated in your admonitions..."

The four women, Medea, Ariadne, Phyllis and Dido are victims of the deceitfulness of men. Their destinies gave the poet material for his work. Two points can be made here. Firstly, the distance kept to the mythological characters who appear as protagonists in his work *Heroides* should be

⁴⁵ "Cytherea" is Venus.

noticed. Ovid here makes a comment on his previous work. The poet treats his heroines with a rather easy-going attitude. Their status as queens or princesses do not matter: they must be taught the basics of his art. Secondly: although the poet states that the women were deplorable because of their lovers' deceitfulness, he does not primarily blame the men. What led the women to their ruin? It was lack of art, lack of skill. The third book, the poet claims, will have as its purpose setting this right. At the same time, Ovid gives the reader a hint of the women's shortcomings: *ars* is of course the amatory art as the title says, but not only. The main point here is that everyone can win love, and that eloquence is the key to love, and eloquence is an *ars*. Women who are not trained in this art will fail in their pursuits.

In the following *Remedia Amoris*, however, it soon becomes clear that the only cure for love is not falling in love. The change of perspectives that this poem cycle displays is typical of Ovid. Other advice to women is given in the didactic elegy *Medicamina faciei femineae*, unfortunately truncated after roughly a hundred lines.

In *Ars Amatoria*, an *Epistola* is mentioned, universally viewed as alluding to the epistles of the *Heroides*.

Vel tibi composita cantetur Epistola voce:

Ignotum hoc aliis ille novavit opus.

(*Ars Amatoria* 3.345-346)

Or may an epistle be recited by you in a well-formulated voice:
he invented this work, unknown to others.

Whereas writers like Cicero and Horace pride themselves on having transmitted Greek philosophy or poetry into Latin,⁴⁶ Ovid, at least if we accept the prevailing interpretation, claims to have *invented* something new with his work.⁴⁷ Speculations concerning the alleged novelty have not

⁴⁶ Cicero, *Topica* 1.2, *Epistulae ad Familiares* 1.9.23; Horace, *Carmina* 3.30.13-14.

⁴⁷ The word "novavit" could otherwise be translated as *renewed* or *revised*. In that case, Ovid implies that he revised his collection, as he did with the *Amores*, *Amores* 1.1, epigramma: "Qui modo Nasonis fueramus quinque libelli, / tres sumus; hoc illi praetulit auctor opus. / ut iam nulla tibi nos sit legisse voluptas, / at levior demptis poena duobus erit". 'We who used to be five little books by Naso are now three; the author preferred this work to the previous one. If you still find no joy reading us, your pain will be easier now when two are

reached any definite agreement. In the *Heroides*, we observe a change of arena: the centre of events is not the busy and modern city of Rome as in *Amores* or *Ars Amatoria*, but the Greek archipelago of the past.⁴⁸ Instead of one poet's *ego* fifteen different *egos* speak to us, all female. The protagonist is not the elegiac *ego-amator* but an *amatrix*. To shift speaker within a poetical collection is not uncommon,⁴⁹ but it is indeed unique to shift speaker for every single poem. These mere circumstances indicate that the *Heroides* present new elements, previously unknown to traditional literature. It seems as Ovid strived to invent something new, though strongly rooted in mythological, metrical and rhetorical traditions.⁵⁰ The *Heroides* certainly break new ground, since no other extant ancient literary work offers a cohesive collection of monologue-letters on one well-defined theme, combining love and myth with elegy. Whatever lies behind Ovid's novelty, the introduction of new elements into an established genre is a consistent feature of his poetry.

The model often referred to for Ovid's *Heroides* is Propertius 4.3,⁵¹ in which Arethusa writes a letter to her husband Lycotas, absent due to war. The two characters are not known from myth but were, as far as we know, invented by Propertius.⁵² The letter shares obvious similarities with the poems of the *Heroides*, not least the letters of Penelope (ep. 1) and Laodamia (ep. 13), where wives write to men at war. Not only the epistolary frame and the theme unite the Propertian letter with the Ovidian, but we also recognize similar loci: the introductory salutation⁵³, the blurred text dissolved by tears,⁵⁴

removed.' The translation *renewed* or *revised* would work, if it had not been for the presence of *ignotum aliis*. This is noted by Jacobson (1974): 320-321.

⁴⁸ The Roman temper is still there, according to readers who think that the Greek women have been transferred to the Augustan Rome, see for example Liveley (2005): 69.

⁴⁹ Propertius has different speakers in his fourth book – one of them is Arethusa in 4.3.

⁵⁰ As Knox (2002): 123 observes: "We know of no other collection of fictional verse epistles in Greek or Latin: Ovid's *Heroides* are unique. Innovation is the hallmark of every stage of Ovid's career. But each innovation is firmly rooted in tradition. The originality of the *Heroides* consists primarily in the combination of features from other literary forms, and in this respect they may represent the most interesting example in Roman poetry of innovation in genre".

⁵¹ See for example Anderson (1973): 67, Conte (1994b): 347 and Knox (2002): 117 and 126.

⁵² Hutchinson (2006): 99. According to Mack (1988): 69 who makes a short comparison between Propertius' poem and the Ovidian letters, the characters are not mythical, but contemporary Romans.

⁵³ Propertius 4.3.1: "Haec Arethusa suo mittit mandata Lycotae", 'Arethusa sends this letter to her Lycotas'; *Heroides* 1.1: "Haec tua Penelope lento tibi mittit, Ulixe", 'Your Penelope sends this letter to you, tardy man, Ulysses'.

the image of the woman writing, *scribentis imago*,⁵⁵ the broken conjugal agreements and the wedding carrying omens,⁵⁶ the lonely night when the woman is thinking of her husband,⁵⁷ the visualising of him in the middle of an adventure⁵⁸ and the closing inscription.⁵⁹

In *Amores* 1.1 and 2.1, the poet said he was about to compose epic, while Elegy (embodied by Cupid and Corinna respectively) unexpectedly grabbed the opportunity of seizing power. The poet seems to say that he has an inclination and aptitude for love poetry rather than for epic. For Ovid's part however, an epic work in hexameter actually became a reality, with his *magnum opus*, the *Metamorphoses*. In relation to the generic conventions concerning epic, Ovid acts freely, maintaining his decision not to write military or heroic poetry. In one sense, Ovid is close to his predecessors in his *Metamorphoses*: the beginning of the work seems to make Hesiodic claims in its aim to explain the creation of the world. The end, telling the story of Aeneas, the greatness of Rome and its emperor Augustus, recalls Virgil's *Aeneid*. The cosmology that Ovid presents is scientific, as if Lucretius was his model, not mythological as could be expected in a work famous for its affluence of mythological tales and characters. Unlike the epics of Homer or Virgil's *Aeneid*, Ovid chooses not to pick a hero as the protagonist. Instead, the chronology from chaos to the Augustan era moves through winding tales of metamorphoses – people being transformed into animals, plants or stones – in a flowing, intertwined structure. It is a *carmen perpetuum*, a perpetual poem, in the poet's own words.⁶⁰ The inexhaustible

⁵⁴ Propertius 4.3.4: "haec erit e lacrimis facta litura meis", 'this smear shall be made by my tears'; *Heroides* 3.3: "lacrimae fecere lituras", 'tears made the smears'; 11.1: "SIQUA tamen caecis errabunt scripta lituris", 'If some of the writing will appear illegible because of blind smears'.

⁵⁵ Propertius 4.3.5-6. Compare *Heroides* 11.3-5.

⁵⁶ Propertius 4.3.11-14: "haecne marita fides et pacta haec munera nuptae, / cum rudis urgenti brachia victa dedi? / quae mihi deductae fax omen praetulit, illa / traxit ab everso lumina nigra rogo", 'was this the matrimonial faith and your agreed bridal gifts, when I, immature, gave my conquered arms to you when you urged? The wedding torch which carried an omen to me when I was married, took its black lights from a burnt out funeral pyre'; Ovid, *Heroides* 6.41-42: "heu! ubi pacta fides? ubi conubialia iura / faxque sub arsueros dignior ire rogos?", 'Oh, where is the agreed faith? Where are the conjugal promises and the wedding torch, more worthy to ignite funeral pyres?' Further, Phyllis speaks of existing conjugal agreements, 2.31-34.

⁵⁷ Propertius 4.3.29-32. Compare *Heroides* 9.35-36 and 13.105-108.

⁵⁸ Propertius 4.3.65-66. Compare *Heroides* 1.13-22 and 9.37-40.

⁵⁹ Propertius 4.3.72. Compare *Heroides* 2.147-148, 7.195-196 and 14.129-130.

⁶⁰ *Metamorphoses* 1.4.

well of myth is the material for Ovid, stories of which he was intimately familiar.

By this survey, I have pointed at some traits in Ovid's poetic project: love, myth and an eagerness to challenge conventions and find new paths. Central to Ovid's treatment of literary subjects is the approach from different angles. There seems to be a game going on, in which a statement can be true in one moment and confuted in the next.

Striving for cohesiveness and a connecting thought within each work is another characteristic, visible also in the *Heroides*, as in the unfinished *Fasti*, a work in elegiac metre which aimed to cover Roman myth and religious customs in the framework of the Roman calendar: one book for each month. In *Ars Amatoria*, Ovid exhorts young men to use fine arts, *bonas artes*, in order to get at girl.⁶¹ A similar message is visible in the *Fasti*:

eloquiumque fuit duram exorare puellam,
proque sua causa quisque disertus erat. (*Fasti* 4.111-112)

And it was eloquence to placate a hard girl, and each man was
skilled in speaking for his own case.

Here, it is evident that Ovid wants to stress the importance of knowing the art of rhetoric. Eloquence is needed for the *amator*, according to the poet, and courting can be compared to a *causa*, a legal process.

Unfortunately, an important piece of Ovid's oeuvre is lost, the tragedy *Medea*. Medea, as one of Ovid's favourite characters, is found not only in *Heroides* 12 (of which she is the fictitious writer) and 6, but also in the *Metamorphoses* 7 and *Tristia* 3.9. Several pieces that once bore the name of Ovid, are today considered as non-authentic. These are *Nux*, *Ibis* and *Halieutica*.⁶²

⁶¹ *Ars Amatoria* 1.459: "Disce bonas artes, moneo, Romana iuventus", 'Learn fine arts, I exhort you, youth of Rome'.

⁶² For Ovid's lost and spurious works, see Knox (2009): 207-216.

1.5 Scholarship on the *Heroides* – some preoccupations and trends

The question of authenticity was the chief concern of scholars in the 19th century. The poor interest among scholars in the *Heroides*, until at least the 1960's, can therefore be attributed to the disputed authorship.

Thanks to Howard Jacobson's *Ovid's Heroides* from 1974, Ovid's long neglected work was brought into the light again. In his book, Jacobson takes a comprehensive view of the single letters, analysing them one by one, examining the literary sources and the characters. Jacobson is interested in the psychological aspect of every heroine, not least her individuality and self-presentation, an approach that will be of great value for my study. Other aspects treated are the dramatic narrative of the epistles, their genre, their dating and, actually, the possible relationship of the poems to the ethopoeia.

Manifold as they are, the *Heroides* offer a range of approaches for the reader. As Jacobson puts it: "These are, indeed, complex poems and they repay the reader as he deserves of them".⁶³ Intertextuality, epistolarity, gender and genre are some of the fields that have recently been explored in Ovidian scholarship.

In recent decades, attention has been paid to the intertextual bonds between Ovid's poetry and its sources. According to intertextual theory, a text interacts with other texts in a web composed of many strands. The text itself is viewed as a part of a poetic project, a reply in an ongoing debate.⁶⁴ Gian Biagio Conte, who introduced the term "poetic memory",⁶⁵ is a pioneer here. Text references in Catullus, Virgil and Ovid to earlier literature indicate a phenomenon typical of Ovid and other Roman writers: the *imitatio*, imitation, the usage of previous literary works in their own texts.⁶⁶ Characters depicted in earlier ancient literature – Penelope, Briseis, Phaedra,

⁶³ Jacobson (1974): 4.

⁶⁴ For an introduction to Ovid and intertextuality, see for example Casali (2009): 343-345.

⁶⁵ Conte (1986).

⁶⁶ *Imitatio* will be discussed in section 2.5.

Hypsipyle, Dido, Deianira, Medea and Sappho,⁶⁷ have been the subjects of several intertextual studies.⁶⁸

What does Ovid gain when choosing the epistolary form for his poems? Duncan Kennedy gives us an answer in a ground-breaking reading of Penelope's letter (ep. 1):⁶⁹ Ovid plays a game with the reader. By studying how Ovid uses the story told by Homer in the *Odyssey*, Kennedy finds out that the stranger, to whom Penelope is to hand over her letter, must be Ulysses himself. Penelope is writing on the very day she will meet her husband again. This means that the whole conception of the poem is overthrown. Penelope's first words to Ulysses, which also begin the entire collection and can be seen as programmatic for the entire collection, "nil mihi rescribas attinet: ipse veni!"⁷⁰ ('it is of no importance that you write back to me: come yourself!') have an ironic twist when we realize that Ulysses is already present on the island.

The poems of the *Heroides* have been viewed as being predecessors of epistolary novels,⁷¹ and an article that moves in the two circles of intertextuality and epistolarity is one by Megan O. Drinkwater.⁷² Drinkwater argues that Ovid's choice of the epistolary form as a literary framework is due to the fact that several of the heroines have sent messages before, in the literary tradition.⁷³ She gives examples of how the heroines make self-conscious references to their literary past. She claims that this might have constituted Ovid's method of selecting female characters for his work. According to W. S. Anderson, the epistle is a useful tool to make a poem

⁶⁷ Other Ovidian heroines were portrayed in now lost works. The story of Hermione was described by Sophocles in his lost drama, *Hermione*; Euripides portrayed Canace in *Aeolus* and Laodamia in the lost *Protesilaus*. For other possible sources, see Fulkerson (2009): 78.

⁶⁸ For example Barchiesi (1993) who treats Ovid's game with the future perspective, exemplified by Phaedra (ep. 4), Oenone (ep. 5), Deianira (ep. 9), Ariadne (ep. 10) and Medea (ep. 12). Casali (1998), using the fragments of *Aeolus*, makes an intertextual study of Canace's letter (ep. 11).

⁶⁹ Kennedy (1984). For a similar intertextual reading on the letter of Briseis (ep. 3), see Barchiesi (2001): 10-12 and 30.

⁷⁰ 1.2. Kennedy here cites Knox's edition.

⁷¹ Dörrie (1968).

⁷² Drinkwater (2007).

⁷³ Penelope sends messenges in Homer's *Odyssey* 2.91-92; Phaedra writes a letter in Euripides, *Hippolytus* 858-859; by a herald, Oenone leaves a message in Parthenius' *Narrationum amatoriarum libellus* 4.175.17-18; Hypsipyle too speaks by a herald in Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica* 1.640-652; in Virgil's *Aeneid* 4.420-436, Dido asks Anna to carry a message, and Deianira is thinking of sending a letter in Sophocles' *Trachiniae* 492-494.

unintroduced and uninterrupted, to make the reader know the speaker without any help from a narrator.⁷⁴ Laurel Fulkerson suggests that the writing of the letters gives an opportunity for the women to really speak their unheard story. As Fulkerson notes, the letters are written at “a crucial moment in the story” told in the previous literary source.⁷⁵ When Fulkerson speaks about this “crucial moment”, she actually puts her finger on a central point for my study. Kennedy believes the letter-form to be suitable for women, since the writing stimulates “spontaneity, sincerity and authenticity of emotion” and often seen as “discursively feminine”.⁷⁶

The fact that all the fifteen single letters are sent from women make them rewarding for gender studies. Why does Ovid include women in the way he does? Ovid is said to be “sympathetic” to women,⁷⁷ with “an unusual inclination to see things from their point of view”,⁷⁸ and indeed, here they are allowed free rein to express themselves.⁷⁹ In the search for a female voice, gender roles and the relationship between external male authorship and female internal ditto, several scholars have made their contributions.

Joseph Farrell, leaning on the different modes of masculine and feminine writing in *Ars Amatoria*, sees Byblis from *Metamorphoses* 9 as an important model for the *Heroides*.⁸⁰ The attempt to write like a man (sc. to seduce) must fail; woman’s talent is not to persuade or seduce but to disclose herself.⁸¹

With Farrell’s article as a point of departure, Effrosini Spentzou searches for the female voice in the footsteps of French feminist theory.⁸² Her book presents a theory which brings out the women as authors, described as female combative writers who free themselves and attack the male-dominant interpretation of the myths.⁸³ The women are on the warpath, not only against

⁷⁴ Anderson (1973): 66.

⁷⁵ Fulkerson (2009): 85.

⁷⁶ Kennedy (2002): 222.

⁷⁷ Sharrock (2002): 95.

⁷⁸ Wilkinson (1955): 86.

⁷⁹ For an elucidative chapter on Ovid’s women and the female perspective, see Volk (2010): 81-94.

⁸⁰ Farrell (1998).

⁸¹ Farrell (1998): 323.

⁸² Spentzou (2003): French feminist criticism is here represented by Julia Kristeva and Hélène Cixous.

⁸³ A thought earlier expressed in Barchiesi (1993): 350. Spentzou (2003): 43-83 notes for example how the heroines re-write their past in brighter colours than expected.

Homer and Virgil, but also against their own author, Ovid. As an example, their lack of self-control should be read as a rebellion against male standards for how women should act and speak. This is also reflected in their "suppressed discourse", consisting of contradictions, repetitions and interruptions.⁸⁴

The idea that the heroines are skilled writers is also put forward by Sara H. Lindheim. Using as a starting point the notion that gender is pure construction, Lindheim examines some of the women's self-presentations, looking to grasp a female core out of a male author's work. "Is Ovid really 'writing like a woman', or does he instead write Woman like a man?" is one of the main questions.⁸⁵ Lindheim applies two theories on the *Heroides*: Jacques Lacan's ideas on feminine desire with a basis in psychoanalysis together with Patricia A. Rosenmeyer's theory on epistolarity. Lindheim justifies her method by using the arguments that the elegiac genre in itself has desire inherent and that "the epistle conveys in an unmediated fashion the voice of the letter writer".⁸⁶ Lindheim observes that the heroines present themselves as both powerful and powerless. Ovid constructs woman in this way out of male fantasy. In order to arouse her partner's desire, the female writer tries different roles to please him.

Fulkerson explores the connections between the writers and thereby adds another level: intra-textuality. Her interpretation of the heroines presents a society of authors who are influenced by each other; they read and allude to each other's letters, which explains the recurring motifs. For instance, she claims that Phyllis (ep. 2) writes her story after having read the letters of other women abandoned by seafarers: Dido (ep. 7), Ariadne (ep. 10) and Medea (ep. 12).⁸⁷ Further, she argues that Hypermestra (ep. 14), thanks to her reading of Canace's letter (ep. 11), rescues herself from prison.⁸⁸

According to these studies, Ovid transgresses the boundaries of gender. In her article, M. Catherine Bolton discusses another perspective of gender transgression: the tension between spatial boundaries and gender.⁸⁹ The area within which the women are moving is often delimited: Ariadne, Hypsipyle and Sappho live on islands. Briseis and Hypermestra are in prison. Penelope

⁸⁴ Spentzou (2003): 103.

⁸⁵ Lindheim (2003): 8.

⁸⁶ Lindheim (2003): 78.

⁸⁷ Fulkerson (2005): 23.

⁸⁸ Fulkerson (2005): 67-86.

⁸⁹ Bolton (2009).

and Hermione feel like prisoners in their own homes. Herein lies their sexual identity, according to Bolton. When the women transgress their defined limits, this identity is challenged.

The relation between the elegiac *puella* and her *amator* is well known.⁹⁰ The girl is the *domina* of the poet, who one day finds himself flushed with erotic joy, and on another day literally shut out from her love as an *exclusus amator*. In the *Heroides*, the situation is reversed: it is the *puella* who is the poet, the *exclusa amatrix* and the slave of love, and it is she who is hunting her shunning boyfriend. In addition, several of the heroines have a literary past in the epic and the drama. How the women play their new elegiac roles are, among other aspects, explored by Anderson and Friedrich Spoth.⁹¹

Although the poems of the *Heroides* are formally written as letters, their character is oral in a way that reminds one of dramatic monologues. In her doctoral thesis, Ulrike Auhagen describes the monologues as being disguised as epistles, and claims that the senders are rather speaking to themselves than their intended recipients, a view with which I agree.⁹² The discrepancy between the external form of the poems as letters and their inner form is studied in another German doctoral thesis, by Eberhard Oppel.⁹³

It is a hard task for us as modern readers to decide what was considered ironic or funny in antiquity. Nevertheless, Florence Verducci makes an attempt. In her book, *Ovid's Toyshop of the Heart*,⁹⁴ which treats six of the letters, Verducci points out several examples of how Ovid deliberately breaks the rules of decorum, arguing that he goes so far as to make parodies of the women. This perspective is of interest to my study because it, as we will see, actually conforms well to the mentality of the progymnasmata.

⁹⁰ For an exposition of the concept of *puella* in Roman elegy, see Miller (2013): 166-179. On the tension between the *amator* and the *puella*, see for example Weiden Boyd (2012): 530-534.

⁹¹ Whereas Spoth (1992) treats the entire collection and its identity as elegy, Anderson (1973): 49-68 puts Ovid's elegiac Dido, "a woman of fears, anxieties, tears and complaints" (p. 64) in contrast to Virgil's more queenly Dido.

⁹² Auhagen (1999): 45-48.

⁹³ Oppel (1968).

⁹⁴ Verducci (1985).

1.6 A neglected approach

The letters are really dramatic monologues, in which the lessons of Ovid's rhetorical education, particularly the exercises called *ethopoeia* ("character drawing"), are brilliantly exploited.⁹⁵

The quotation above from *Encyclopaedia Britannica* displays a view on the *Heroides* that dates back to at least 1699 and Richard Bentley.⁹⁶ In his *A Dissertation Upon the Epistles of Phalaris* (1699), Bentley claims that the authorship of the *Epistles of Phalaris*, usually ascribed to the 6th century BC, in reality was the forged work of a sophistic rhetorician from the 2nd century AD. Following up on this unmasking scoop of classical scholarship, Bentley refers to the tradition of the Sophists of imitating the works of old masters, "as an exercise of style, and an ostentation of wit",⁹⁷ and points to Ovid as a follower of this sophistic tradition:

In this the tribe of the Sophists are principally concerned; in whose schools it was the ordinary task to compose ἠθοποιίας, to make speeches and write letters in the name and character of some Hero, or great Commander, or Philosopher; Τίνας ἂν εἴποι λόγους, *What would Achilles, Medea, or Alexander, say in such or such circumstances?* Thus Ovid, we see, who was bred up in

⁹⁵ *Britannica Online* (1994-), entry 'Ovid'. Article written by E. J. Kenney.

⁹⁶ Bentley [1699] (1817): 7. For later comparisons, see Deratani (1916): 8: "verae ethopoeiae indolem prae se ferunt; Wilkinson (1955): 95: "Whatever their origin as an idea, and whatever their varied sources, in treatment the *Heroides* are influenced by the rhetorical *ethopoeia*"; Clark (1957): 201: "The *Heroides* of Ovid, who had been trained in the school exercise, are excellent examples of what words Dido might say to Aeneas or what Medea might say to Jason"; Oppel (1968): 34 calls them "dramatische Ethopoiien in Briefform"; Bonner (1977): 268; Kennedy (1999): 27: "*Progymnasmata* are important for the study of Greek and Latin literature of the Hellenistic and Roman periods in that the exercises often supplied writers with structural units in their works and with techniques of amplification. Among the best examples are the *Heroides* by the Latin poet Ovid, which are versified *prosopopoeia*"; Lanham (2001): 111: "Splendid literary examples of fictional letters created in accordance with the rhetorical rules for *ethopoeia* are Ovid's *Heroides*"; Knox (2002): 124; Liveley (2005): 64; Lightfoot (2009) 233: "Clearly, soliloquies by Ovidian heroines stand in a long tradition of dramatic *ethopoeia*"; Volk (2010): 68 categorizes the letters as being both *suasoriae* and *ethopoeiae*.

⁹⁷ Bentley [1699] (1817): 82-83.

that way, wrote Love Letters in the names of Penelope and the rest.⁹⁸

Bentley's comment on Ovid is made in passing and as a matter of course. Later scholars have either rejected the parallel or approved it, without – as I see it – giving very satisfactory analyses. Identifications with the Roman school exercise in rhetoric, the *suasoria*, have also been made.⁹⁹

Despite the fact that the ethopoeia has often been adduced as the model of the *Heroides*, it has, all the same, over and over again been brushed aside as being too simple a prototype. Jacobson makes an attempt to analyse possible connections but considers the influence from the rhetorical tradition to be marginal. The following quote from Jacobson reveals a view of the "models" as being to a certain but not considerable degree influential, which means that Ovid could have written his epistles even without them:

I suppose that there is sufficient reason to assume that in conceiving and composing the *Heroides*, Ovid did receive, here and there, ideas from the world of rhetorical training and strictly epistolographical writing that begot or influenced particular elements which go into the constitution of these poems. This is reasonable and probably right. Yet, one cannot help wondering if Ovid might not have written the *Heroides* even without these "models".¹⁰⁰

Although Jacobson finds several similarities to the ethopoeia in Ovid's heroine letters (the mythological characters, the adaptation to the situation and the aspects of time), he is reluctant in admitting it. He considers every mention of rhetoric as misleading, since, as he puts it, "it promotes categorization at the expense of understanding".¹⁰¹ In Jacobson's opinion, a straight comparison to the ethopoeia would be to go too far, indicating that the label implies a denial of the superiority of Ovid's poems:

⁹⁸ Bentley [1699] (1817): 7.

⁹⁹ Otis (1970): 17. Conte (1994b): 348; Volk (2010): 68. A comparison with the *suasoria* will be made in section 2.7.

¹⁰⁰ Jacobson (1974): 338.

¹⁰¹ Jacobson (1974): 322-323.

Yet, all this similarity is largely illusion, for the gulf between the *Heroides* and these *ethopoiae* is unbridgeable. A more exacting inspection of ethopoetic theory, and, most decisively, a reading of the extant *ethopoiae* side by side with the *Heroides* establish this beyond any doubt. Nor is it a simple matter of the qualitative difference between the efforts of a fine poet and those of hack rhetoricians.¹⁰²

The lack of thorough studies of Ovid's work from a rhetorical point of view is very likely due to the dismissive ring associated with rhetoric. Even though the interest in rhetoric has increased lately, Ovidian scholarship has moved in other directions. Rhetoric suffered from a bad reputation during the 19th and 20th centuries. During the Romantic era, when originality and aesthetics became primary literary values, the art of rhetoric with its systematic, predetermined model, was considered non-inventive, as an obstruction for individual expression.¹⁰³ If literary texts were the products of training from childhood, they would have very little to do with originality, independence and genius – keywords of Romanticism. Moreover, rhetoric was often seen as a misleading and deceitful tool, an obstacle to truth and knowledge. As John Locke writes:

But yet if we would speak of Things as they are, we must allow that all the Art of Rhetorick, besides Order and Clearness; all the artificial and figurative application of Words Eloquence hath invented, are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong *Ideas*, move the Passions, and thereby mislead the Judgment; and so indeed are perfect cheats: and therefore, however laudable or allowable Oratory may render them in Harangues and popular Addresses, they are certainly, in all Discourses that pretend to inform or instruct, wholly to be avoided; and where Truth and Knowledge are concerned, cannot but be thought a great fault, either of the Language or Person that makes use of them. What and how various they are, will be superfluous here to take notice; the Books of Rhetorick which abound in the world, will instruct those who want to be informed: Only I cannot but observe how little the preservation and improvement of Truth and Knowledge is the Care and Concern of Mankind; since the Arts of Fallacy are endow'd and preferred. 'Tis evident how

¹⁰² Jacobson (1974): 327.

¹⁰³ See for example Wellbery (2000): 187-189.

much Men love to deceive, and be deceived, since Rhetorick, that powerful instrument of Error and Deceit, has its established Professors, is publicly taught, and has always been had in great Reputation: And, I doubt not but it will be thought great boldness, if not brutality, in me to have said thus much against it. Eloquence, like the fair Sex, has too prevailing Beauties in it to suffer itself ever to be spoken against. And 'tis in vain to find fault with those Arts of Deceiving, wherein men find pleasure to be Deceived.¹⁰⁴

The verdict of rhetoric as a “powerful instrument of Error and Deceit” echoes in later judgments: the poems of the *Heroides* were seen as charming but shallow. Still, despite the new interest in rhetoric in our times, I assume it would be considered to go too far as to call the *Heroides* fruits of rhetorical education. The label of progymnasmata is still, at least within some circles, considered as limiting and humiliating for a poet of Ovid’s calibre.¹⁰⁵ Jacobson argues that “rhetoric was so pervasive a cultural force in the ancient world that it is almost impossible to speak of any literature or thought that was not rhetorical, or shaped and influenced by rhetoric”,¹⁰⁶ and that rhetoric and poetry were connected to each other in such a manner that it is futile to treat them as entities.¹⁰⁷ While Jacobson finds the comparison more or less meaningless, Alessandro Schiesaro speaks of a pejorative and “forced” identification:

The forced identification of the *Heroides* with such exercises not only underestimates the poems’ rich and varied texture, but, incidentally, also presupposes a somewhat tendentious view of *ethopoiiai* themselves, and a close association between the *Heroides* and *suasoriae* is of course meant to be damning.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Locke [1700] (1975): 508.

¹⁰⁵ Schiesaro (2002): 71.

¹⁰⁶ Jacobson (1974): 323.

¹⁰⁷ Jacobson (1974): 323. I will treat the relationship between rhetoric and poetry in chapter 2.

¹⁰⁸ Schiesaro (2002): 71. See also Verducci (1985): 158 on Sappho’s epistle (ep. 15): “It seems to deserve the double censure so often leveled at the *Heroides*: that they are exercises in school rhetoric tricked out into poetry; and that numerous passages from different poems are monotonously interchangeable, such as descriptions of excessive grief, fainting fits, jealousy, and longing.”

Interestingly, reservations against comparisons to progymnasmata are made by classicists, whereas scholars in rhetoric seem to embrace a connection.¹⁰⁹

The oratorical tradition is strongly noticeable throughout the works of Ovid, not only in the *Heroides*. Speeches and monologues come thick and fast in the *Metamorphoses*. Rhetorical conventions influenced ancient writers, and we do these writers a disfavoured if we do not take that into account. They were part of a tradition, and we, as readers of texts from antiquity, ought to be aware of this background. Yet, studies of the *Heroides* from a rhetorical point of view are very few. This aspect is not totally neglected, but it is mentioned only incidentally. For instance, Genevieve Liveley stresses the importance of seeing the influence from rhetorical training as one source of inspiration among others, as does Knox.¹¹⁰

Some modern classical scholars have touched upon Ovid's rhetoric.¹¹¹ Farrell pays attention to the rhetorical abundance of the *Heroides*, referring to Ovid's advice to men in *Ars Amatoria* to use rhetorical strategy for amatory success:

Disce bonas artes, moneo, Romana iuventus,
Non tantum trepidos ut tueare reos;
Quam populus iudexque gravis lectusque senatus,
Tam dabit eloquio victa puella manus.
(*Ars Amatoria* 1.459-462)

Learn fine arts, I exhort you, youth of Rome, not only for taking
care of trembling defendants. As the people, the grave judge
and the elected senate, so will the girl, conquered by eloquence,
give you her hands.

¹⁰⁹ Kennedy (1994): 202 regards Ovid's poems as evident products of the rhetorical training. See also Kraus (2007): 463: "And Ovid's *Heroides*, clearly rooted in their author's rhetorical education, are just the most prominent example of literary epistles in female voices." Russell (1983): 12: "...there were verse *ethopoiiai*, often with Homeric themes (*Anth. pal.* 9.453-80); and Ovid's *Heroides* show what the exercise might become in a poet's hands."; Lanham (2001): 111.

¹¹⁰ Liveley (2005): 64; Knox (1995): 15.

¹¹¹ Fantham (2009): 26-44 has her main emphasis on *Metamorphoses* 13, but discusses also the argumentation of Oenone (ep. 5) and Helen (ep. 17). Michalopoulos (2008): 187-210 analyses the rhetorical structure of Phyllis' epistle (ep. 2).

As Farrell observes, Phaedra (ep. 4) is the only one among the heroines who does not have a love affair but seeks to enter into one. Her female "colleagues" are already involved in relationships, although several of the women have reasons to question them. Yet, their skills in rhetoric are not sufficient enough for success. Farrell settles the problem by stating that the women, in conformity with another female letter writer, Byblis of the *Metamorphoses*,¹¹² are speaking from the passion of their hearts when they ask the men to return their love, and that passion in itself calls for a rhetorical style.¹¹³

Stephen Hinds rightly remarks that the hunt for intertextual allusions in Roman poetry (not specifically speaking of Ovid's *Heroides*) sometimes becomes too extravagant, when we in fact are dealing with rhetorical commonplaces, *loci communes*.¹¹⁴ Here, Hinds mentions exercises – *progymnasmata* – offering the students a range of fixed themes to elaborate:

The so-called commonplace, despite our name for it, is not an inert category in this discourse but an active one, with as much potential to draw poet and reader into, as away from, engagement with the specificities of its history. Members of the Roman literary élite learned in school to declaim on set themes such as the sacrifice of Iphigenia, or the deliberation of the three hundred Spartans at Thermopylae, and to embellish their declamations with expected topics like the details of a storm, or the vicissitudes of fortune. The immediate point of these exercises was to make something new and fresh out of something well-worn; and the way to excel will have been to engage actively with existing literary and rhetorical versions of the given theme.¹¹⁵

Hinds hints that the *loci* which reappear in texts are not only products of learned authors' literary game, but may have their explanation in the teaching of the *progymnasmata*. Even though such comments on Ovid's rhetoric are neither common nor exhaustive, still they point in a direction which I find important to follow.

¹¹² *Metamorphoses* 9.454-665.

¹¹³ Farrell (1998): 317-321.

¹¹⁴ Hinds (1998): 26-28 and 36-39.

¹¹⁵ Hinds (1998): 40.

Two dissertations from the early 20th century, by Carl Brück,¹¹⁶ and by Nicolaus Deratani,¹¹⁷ search for rhetorical elements in the poetry of Ovid. What they do is to list passages from Ovid's poetry which they find correspond with rhetorical terms. Such studies have been regarded as antiquated, reducing Ovid's poetry to mere rhetoric.¹¹⁸ It is true that the lists are presented without any deeper further explanation; still, these scholars raise an undervalued but important aspect of Ovid's poetry that deserves attention. However, there is an incipient interest in the influences of rhetorical education on ancient literature. In his book on Cicero's *In Verrem*, Thomas D. Frazel argues that Cicero used loci from the progymnasma *locus communis* ('commonplace') in order to portray Verres in an infavourable light. His study paves the way for a new field of exploration to which my dissertation also makes a contribution.

1.7 Poems with blemishes?

As we will see in chapter two, Ovid's style was accused already in his time of having *vitia*, blemishes. The judgment of critics from the first half of the 20th century has often been harsh. The elegance or the aesthetic value of the work is not an issue in contemporary scholarship. Critics of today pay attention rather to the complexity of the poems than to their language and style. Even though Ovid and his *Heroides* nowadays have obtained redress, I will here quote some judgments on the qualities of the poems. Some of them are examples of what I would call misreadings, which are due to unreasonable expectations on the text.

In the introduction to the Loeb edition, under the heading "In appreciation of the *Heroides*", we read:

THE *Heroides* are not a work of the highest order of genius. Their language, nearly always artificial, frequently rhetorical, and often diffuse, is the same throughout – whether from the lips of barbarian Medea or Sappho the poetess. The heroines and heroes who speak it are creatures from the world of legend,

¹¹⁶ Brück (1909).

¹¹⁷ Deratani (1916).

¹¹⁸ Jacobson (1974): 323, note 11; Auhagen (1999): 58.

are not always warm flesh and blood, and rarely communicate their passions to us. (...) The heroines that speak to us from Ovid's page may lack in convincing quality, and may not stir our passions, but they are sufficiently real to win our sympathy, and to blind us for the moment to the faults of both themselves and their sponsor.¹¹⁹

These lines are indeed not very appreciative. L. P. Wilkinson is even harsher. To him, the poems are too long and overdone.¹²⁰ He pities the tradition of letting school boys make the acquaintance of Ovid through this work:

To me the single *Heroides* (I-XV) are a uniform plum pudding with a fair admixture of glittering rings and sixpences. The first slice is appetizing enough, but each further slice becomes colder and less digestible, until the only incentive for going on is the prospect of coming across an occasional ring or sixpence. It seems a pity that so many school-boys should first be introduced to Ovid through this work.¹²¹

According to Brooks Otis, the letters are quite uninteresting and lack individuality:

The chief fault of the *Heroides* is rather their empty emotionalism: most of the heroines have really nothing to write about but their loves, and their loves are after all remarkably similar.¹²²

Monotony, dullness and emptiness are, according to the scholars cited above, prominent features of Ovid's letters. Another subject for criticism are the

¹¹⁹ Showerman [1914] (1977): 8.

¹²⁰ Wilkinson (1955): 96-97: "He loved to set himself a problem and then treat it exhaustively, fitting in all the pieces provided by the subject. He cannot select; he must go on to the end, even if it spoils his poem. Deianeira must recite all the amours of Hercules, not excluding the grotesque story of his obliging the fifty daughters of Thespius, and follow this with a complete catalogue of his labours, of which he was no doubt even now boasting to her rival! *Nescit quod bene cessit relinquere*, as Seneca said. Nearly all the *Heroides* are too long."

¹²¹ Wilkinson (1955): 106.

¹²² Otis (1970): 17.

”absurd” situations. To Otis, the idea of letting a drowsy Ariadne write from a desert island to Theseus, who never will receive her message, is not credible.¹²³ Kennedy, however, comments on the situations, claiming it wrong to put emphasis on their absurdity. To him, ”the very implausibility of the circumstances of writing can be a commentary on the writer’s character or situation.”¹²⁴

Even Jacobson, who in many respects defends the poems against earlier critics, considers several of the poems as failures.¹²⁵ The word ’failure’ is also used about Ovid’s witty style:

But when points of language take precedence over points of sense, when plays on words prove no more than a substitute for substance, then his failure is manifest.¹²⁶

Moreover, Jacobson is not fond of Ovid’s distanced attitude. The heroines’ transition from epic to amatory elegy, is not very successful, according to him:

In addition, that sense of remove, of distance, which so often informs Ovid’s poetry, lurks here sometimes as well, and this we can only regret. Ovid and his audience were undoubtedly delighted and amused to hear the words of the great Homeric heroes in the mouth of a mere girl, in an elegiac format and a partially amatory context, and, to top it all, with a very different sense and put to quite distinct purposes, but this delight and amusement is one thing the poem could do well without...¹²⁷

The way in which Ovid treats his literary matter makes his poems superficial, Jacobson seems to think. Another obstacle for successful poetry, he argues, is

¹²³ Otis (1970): 17-18.

¹²⁴ Kennedy (1984): 416.

¹²⁵ For example Dido’s letter (ep. 7), Jacobson (1974): 76: ”We need go no further than place it side by side with most of the poems in the corpus, of which this is certainly one of the least successful. But it will nevertheless repay study, both for the light it sheds on Ovid’s understanding of and attitude toward Vergil’s work, and because it gives us rare insights into the nature and causes of Ovid’s poetic failure.”

¹²⁶ Jacobson (1974): 8.

¹²⁷ Jacobson (1974): 41.

the epistolary form, which gives the poems a static character.¹²⁸ Here he agrees with Otis, who claims that the epistle lacks "dramatic quality" and reduces the story to "one or two disconnected moments of static pathos".¹²⁹ Kenney, in the previously cited *Encyclopaedia Britannica* article, speaks of "an inherent monotony of subject and treatment, which Ovid's skill could not completely disguise".¹³⁰

We naturally tend to judge literary works from the aesthetic values of our own time. It is interesting to note, however, that the *Heroides* were for a long time viewed as Ovid's *maximum opus* and Ovid as the most accomplished poet with the highest genius. The following exuberant praise, written by Nathan Bailey, opens a 1762 London edition of the *Heroides*. The emphasis is on the elegance of the poems, a judgment quite typical of its time. The collection is called "the most polished Piece of all Ovid's Works". Other qualities that are stressed are the beauty in metre and language and the poet's wit, his ability of insight into the human soul and his skill in finding the accurate words to describe it:

The Matter and the Words so aptly agree to the Measures, that if taken to Pieces, one would almost be ready to believe, they would flow into Metre of their own Accord.

And this easy Vein, polished to the utmost with human Art, shines out no where so bright as in his Epistles; so that if any one would inspect the greatest Endowment of Naso's Wit, he will find them shine no where brighter than in these Epistles.

This facetious and amiable Kind of Writing is adorned with the most suitable and accurate Sharpness, and the Utile dulci is every where excellently intermixed.

He seems to have been suited by Nature to speak what every one would wish to speak in their particular Cases.

Those Epistles written in the Names of others, he has composed with that Felicity and Diligence, that he has said all Things that are to be said by any one in the like Case.

He depaints the most internal Affections of the Mind with that Accuracy, that no one seems more thoroughly to have dived into the Affections of human Nature.¹³¹

¹²⁸ Jacobson (1974): 363.

¹²⁹ Otis (1970): 17.

¹³⁰ *Britannica Online* (1994-), entry 'Ovid'. Article written by E. J. Kenney.

¹³¹ Bailey (1762): I-II.

It is striking to note how the *Heroides* have been subjected to various and opposite opinions from the Renaissance onwards. The poems surely have raised affections in their readers. Unfortunately few of the admirers or slanderers go further than to describe the feelings that arise. The qualities and faults of the poems are mentioned, but no deeper explanations, discussions or analyses follow.

The high esteem for the *Heroides* has been strong in Western culture. The influence it exerted from the Middle Ages onwards, at least until Romanticism, cannot be underestimated. Already at schools it came to the acquaintance of innumerable schoolboys, when it served as compulsory literature in the curriculum.¹³² The poems of the *Heroides* were read, translated and imitated as no other work by Ovid, with its peak during the Renaissance.¹³³ The collection of the *Heroides* is said to be the only Ovidian work which has been imitated in full.¹³⁴

It is sometimes assumed that the devaluation of the *Heroides* dates from the Romantic era, in connection with the decline of rhetoric. Nevertheless, Ovid's epistles are praised for their artistic-aesthetic qualities in two editions as late as 1829. Ovid is called by Terpstra a "divinus poëta" ('a divine poet'), who in the *Heroides* has surpassed himself: "Epistolas vero Heroidum (...) in quibus sane Ovidius se ipse superavit".¹³⁵ Loers mentions a number of merits that the collection exhibits: its bright Latin ("candida[que] Latinitate"), its flowing imagination ("uberrima illa vi imaginandi"), its wit ("condimenta facetiarum"), and it is said to be polished and embellished ("polita est atque exornata") etc. Ovid is praised for his erudition in mythology and his way of adding gravity ("gravitas") and various human feelings to the myths:

Elucet praeterea in iisdem, ut in reliquis eius poematis,
singularis quaedam animi humani eiusque motuum atque
affectionum notitia; inprimis autem animi amantis, cuius varios
affectus, spes, sollicitudines, aegritudines, iras, desperationes,
suspiciones, furores mirari licet, qua calliditate indagarit,

¹³² There are a number of school editions with commentaries included. For a study of one of the medieval commentaries, see Hexter (1986): 137-204 and 229-302.

¹³³ See for example Lanham (1976): 36-64 and 82-110; Burrow (2002): 301ff.

¹³⁴ Tarrant (2002): 31.

¹³⁵ Terpstra (1829): XVIII.

quantaque arte atque subtilitate descripserit, ac prope dicam,
depinxerit.¹³⁶

Moreover, in these as in his other poems, an exceptional knowledge of the human mind and its feelings and emotions shines forth, in particular of the mind of the loving, whose different emotions, hopes, worries, distresses, rages, desperations, suspicions and frenzies it is possible to admire with what skill he has investigated them and with what great art and subtlety he has described and, I can almost say, depicted them.

All these features, Loers claims, make Ovid unique as an artist.

1.8 Repetitions

The previous section introduced some of the disparaging judgments that Ovid's *Heroides* have been subjected to by 20th century scholars. Judgments containing words such as "uniform" and "similar" appear. Further, T. F. Higham speaks of the "idle variations" of the poems and Otis of "the wearisome complaint of the reft maiden, the monotonous reiteration of her woes",¹³⁷ in contrast to the *Metamorphoses*, in which Ovid, he claims, achieved variety and overcame "the intrinsic monotony", despite the repeated motifs.¹³⁸ Kenney writes: "It is difficult to rescue them, especially if they are read sequentially, from the charge of monotony".¹³⁹ How come then, that the character of variety differs between the *Heroides* and the *Metamorphoses*? Obviously, Ovid knew how to create a work free from what critics call wearisome and monotonous elements. My assumption is that the repetitions are there for a reason.

The repetitive character is evident on three levels. The first one is of comprehensive character: Ovid re-uses the theme of the lonely woman delivering lamentations in fifteen poems one after another. As if the heroines

¹³⁶ Loers (1829): LXX.

¹³⁷ Higham (1958): 41; Otis (1970): 17.

¹³⁸ Otis (1970): 78.

¹³⁹ Kenney (1996): 1. See also Verducci (1985): 259 on a passage in Ariadne's letter (ep. 10).

not only shared fate, they also tend to describe them in similar manners. Reccurring motifs and loci constitute the second level. Motifs that recur are the image of the writing woman, *scribentis imago* (ep. 7 and 11), the imprisoned woman (ep. 3, 8, 11 and 14), the waiting woman (ep. 1, 2 and 13), the jealous woman (ep. 5, 6 and 12), the mendacious lover (ep. 2, 5 and 12), love in the woods (ep. 4, 5 and 15), the departure scene (ep. 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 13 and 15) etc. The women seem to have a share in the same well of loci, bringing forward recurrent arguments and reacting in the same ways. Below is an example of desperate behaviour illustrated with a common locus of grief by three women, Oenone (ep. 5), Ariadne (ep. 10) and Medea (ep. 12), who in their wrath beat themselves and tear their clothes.

tunc vero rupique sinus et pectora planxi,
et secui madidas ungue rigente genas,
inplevique sacram querulis ululatibus Iden (5.71-73)

Then I actually tore the clothes from my breast and beat my chest. With a hard nail I cut my damp cheeks, and I filled sacred Ida with lamentations and howling.

...quod voci deerat, plangore replebam;
verbera cum verbis mixta fuere meis. (10.37-38)

What my voice could not achieve, I filled with beating; the blows became mixed with my words.

protinus abscissa planxi mea pectora veste,
tuta nec a digitis ora fuere meis. (12.153-154)

Immediately I tore my dress and beat my chest. My face was not safe from my fingers.

The third type of iteration is lexical. Separate words and phrases are repeated within one poem. One such example of words is found in Briseis' letter (repeated words in bold type):

Si mihi **pauca queri de te dominoque viroque**
 fas est, **de domino pauca viroque querar.**
 non, ego poscenti quod sum cito tradita regi,
culpa tua est – quamvis haec quoque **culpa tua est;**
 nam simul **Eurybates** me **Talthybiousque** vocarunt,
Eurybati data sum **Talthybioque** comes. (3.5-10)

If it is right for me to **complain a little about you, my lord and man**, I will **complain a little about my lord and man**. It is not **your fault** that I was so quickly handed over to the king when he demanded me, even though this too **is your fault**: for as soon as **Eurybates and Talthybius** called for me, I was given to **Eurybates and Talthybius** as their companion.

In the letter of Laodamia (ep. 13), the word *ventus* (in different cases) appears four times between the lines 3 and 11 and then returns four times between 123 and 131.¹⁴⁰ The word *vix* occurs three times in two lines.¹⁴¹ Deianira (ep. 9) utters the line “*inpia quid dubitas Deianira mori?*” (‘impious Deianira, why do you hesitate to die?’) four times.¹⁴² Alessandro Barchiesi discusses the Deianira lines, suggesting that the repetition is a means to call upon tragedy and Ovid’s playful inventiveness at the same time. In the Sophoclean drama *Trachiniae*, Deianira does not lament but disappears from stage without words and kills herself.¹⁴³

In Seneca the elder’s *Controversiae*, which deals with imaginary legal cases, the teacher Porcius Latro has a woman saying the word *escende* (‘ascend’) four times to her husband.¹⁴⁴ Manfred Kraus points at this passage

¹⁴⁰ *vento* (13.3); *ventus* (13.4); *ventus* (13.10); *ventus* (13.11); *ventique* (13.123); *venti* (13.125); *vento* (13.127); *ventos* (13.131).

¹⁴¹ 13.25-26. The list can be enlarged. Laodamia is probably the heroine of most repetitions. In the manuscripts, Laodamia also mentions *Hector* four times in six lines: *Hectora* (13.63); *Hectora* (13.63); *Hectora* (13.65) and *Hectoras* (13.68). The distich 13.63-64 is however suggested by Palmer [1898] (1967): 81 to be deleted on the following ground: “distichon aperte spurium seclusi: unde enim quae dixisset Paris scire Laodamia potuit?”, ‘I have secluded the evidently spurious distich: since from where could Laodamia know what Paris had said?’. The Loeb edition follows the cut.

¹⁴² 9.146, 9.152, 9.158 and 9.164.

¹⁴³ Barchiesi (1993): 342.

¹⁴⁴ Seneca *Controversiae* 2.5.1.

along with others in Seneca and Libanius displaying female speech as staccatic and inquisitive. It is a manner of speaking that is “brief and disjointed and bristling with repetitions”.¹⁴⁵

An upset or even desperate human being repeats himself or herself or – according to Macrobius – he or she does so in order to arouse pathos. In Macrobius’ *Saturnalia*, a group of scholars discusses the style and qualities of Virgil, analysing it with rhetorical tools in a systematic scheme. On the figure of repetition, one of the members gives three examples from Virgil (repeated words in bold type):

Nascitur pathos et de repetitione, quam Graeci “ἐπαναφορὰν”
vocant, cum sententiae ab isdem nominibus incipiunt. hinc
Vergilius:

...**Eurydicen** vox ipsa et frigida lingua,
a! miseram **Eurydicen** anima fugiente vocabat.
Eurydicen toto referebant flumine ripae,¹⁴⁶

et illud,

te dulcis coniunx, **te** solo in litore secum,
te veniente die, **te** decedente canebat,¹⁴⁷

et illud,

te nemus Angitiaë, vitrea **te** Fucinus unda,
te liquidi flevere lacus.¹⁴⁸

(Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 4.6.23)

¹⁴⁵ Kraus (2007): 460.

¹⁴⁶ Virgil, *Georgics* 4.525-527.

¹⁴⁷ Virgil, *Georgics* 4.465-466.

¹⁴⁸ Virgil, *Aeneid* 7.759-760.

Pathos is also aroused from repetition, which the Greeks call epanaphora, when sentences begin with the same noun or pronoun. Hence Virgil:

...**"Eurydice!"** his voice and chill tongue called. "Ah, poor **Eurydice!**" **while her** breath expired. The banks reproduced the name **"Eurydice"** through the whole course of the river,

and this:

of **you** your sweet husband sang, of **you** he sang to himself on a
lonely shore,
of **you** he sang when the day drew near, of **you** when it
departed,

and this:

for **you** the grove of Angitia wept, for **you** the wave of
Fuscinus,
for **you** the fluid lakes.

According to this passage in Macrobius, lexical repetitions are used as a means of arousing pathos in the listener. This should be born in mind when I later examine in more detail the poems of the *Heroides*. It is clear from Macrobius that repetition can involve *fastidium* ('weariness'), which Virgil knows how to avoid: "variat velut dedecus aut crimen vitans repetitionem" ('he varies, avoiding repetition as it was a disgrace or a crime').¹⁴⁹ From the examples displayed above, it is obvious that Virgil did not avoid *repetition*. What the speaker in Macrobius' *Saturnalia* expresses, is the *weariness* of the repetition, the repetition that lacks function.

Ovid was known for his sentential style, a style which he is said to have developed as a student – the *sententia* was one of the progymnasmata. According to Seneca, the following sententia was an example of a typical Ovidian repetition: "ut uxori virum et uxorem viro diligere concedas" ('that

¹⁴⁹ Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 5.15.14-15.

you may agree to let a husband love his wife and the wife her husband’).¹⁵⁰ Jeffrey Wills names this figure “case-interchange”,¹⁵¹ in which two words in different cases appear again in the same line having changed cases with each other. Wills finds two examples of this device in the *Heroides* (repeated nouns in bold type):¹⁵²

speque **timor** dubia spesque **timore** cadit (9.42)

tu tibi **dux comiti**, tu **comes** ipsa **duci** (14.106)

This figure of speech is however not unique for the *Heroides*, but appears also in the *Metamorphoses* and the *Fasti*. A simpler variant of the figure is the *polyptoton*: one word with the same root is varied in different cases:¹⁵³

servus eras; **servo** nubere nympha tuli! (5.12)

cum male **perdiderim**, **perdere** verba leve est (7.6)

Medeam timui: plus est **Medea** noverca;

Medeae faciunt ad scelus omne manus. (12.127-128)

et **duo** cum vivant, orba **duobus** eram. (8.90)

morsque minus poenae quam mora **mortis** habet (10.82)

cum quo sum pariter facta **parente** **parens** (12.198)

¹⁵⁰ Seneca, *Controversiae* 2.2.9.

¹⁵¹ Wills (1996): 276.

¹⁵² I have chosen not to translate the following passages for the reason that the meaning here is of secondary importance. I am here principally interested in the morphological variation, and my point is to show the word repetitions.

¹⁵³ Lausberg (1998): 288-292. A standard example of the polyptoton is from Virgil’s *Aeneid* 4.628-629: “**litora litoribus** contraria, fluctibus undas / imprecor, **arma armis**”.

However, sometimes repetitions occur without any apparent refinement, as in the case with Ariadne and Sappho here:

illic tu silices, illic adamanta tulisti,

illic, qui silices, Thesea, vincat, habes. (10.109-110)

nulla futura tua est, nulla futura tua est. (15.40)

In *Amores* 1.6, a locked out lover (*exclusus amator*) exclaims the following line five times as a refrain: “tempora noctis eunt; excute poste seram!” (‘the hours of the night fly; remove the bolt from the door!’).¹⁵⁴ Obviously, Ovid did not shun repetitions.

Efforts have been made to rescue the poems from the charge of annoying repetition. Conte blames the monotony on the limited conditions of the epistolary form which, he states, offers little variation.¹⁵⁵ In comparing some of the repetitive passages, Jacobson demonstrates how they differ “in accord with the particular purposes of each poem”. Instead of using the pejorative word ‘repetition’, Jacobson uses the word *variatio*,¹⁵⁶ putting forward the explanation that the repetitions mirror projections of the individual heroines’ minds. One and the same event is perceived in a slightly different way, depending on who experiences it. A possible objection to Jacobson’s statement is that it is applicable to recurring motifs and phrases, but not words. Kennedy prefers the term ‘reiteration’ instead of ‘repetition’ because it offers an invitation to view the *Heroides* as a collection. The iterations combine the poems into a cohesive collection, and they inculcate the pain that the women suffer.¹⁵⁷ Spentzou is on the same track when she speaks of the repetitiveness as a means for the women “to make their exclamations heard”.¹⁵⁸ Fulkerson argues that the repetitions are a key to understanding the collection as a correspondence not only between the writers and the recipients, but also, or rather, as a correspondence between the writers themselves. They read, comment and allude to the letters, sharing their

¹⁵⁴ *Amores* 1.6.24, 1.6.32, 1.6.40, 1.6.48 and 1.6.56.

¹⁵⁵ Conte (1994b): 348.

¹⁵⁶ Jacobson (1974): 381-404.

¹⁵⁷ Kennedy (2002): 220.

¹⁵⁸ Spentzou (2003): 39.

experiences.¹⁵⁹ Lindheim offers another interpretation: the seriality tells us that all women are the same, both powerful and helpless.¹⁶⁰ The female writers wish to drum into the reader that they share the same experiences. Schiesaro compares the iterations of repeated refrains or themes in serial music or pop-art. The repetitions are all the more striking, he claims, since love elegy in its genre mostly deals with unique and individual passion.¹⁶¹ Farrell makes a similar comparison when he refers to Schubert's *Winterreise*, "a cycle of twenty-four meditations on the despair that follows unrequited love – representing, however, a male point of view".¹⁶² Sara Mack makes the following observation, with which I would like to concur:

"It seems, then, that Ovid strove for the sameness readers have complained of in the poems. He must have wanted that sense of similarity; with all of myth to choose from he could have found more variety than he did and he could have deemphasized any similarities. We can assume, then, that Ovid saw the restrictiveness as a challenge – to himself, to create as much variety as he could within limited boundaries."¹⁶³

Brück cites a passage about Ulysses, where the hero again and again retells the story of Troy to Calypso. This, Brück suggests, should be seen as an invitation to us to read Ulysses' *facundia* ('eloquence') and way of telling a story as Ovid's own.¹⁶⁴ Ovid thus rephrases the same story, and his *Heroides* are variations on a theme, seen from different angles. Saying the same things in different ways is also, according to Fulkerson, the "height of erotic skill".¹⁶⁵ Like Brück, she cites the Ulysses passage in *Ars Amatoria*: "referre

¹⁵⁹ Fulkerson (2005): 4.

¹⁶⁰ Lindheim (2003): 180.

¹⁶¹ Schiesaro (2002): 72.

¹⁶² Farrell (1998): 310, note 6.

¹⁶³ Mack (1988): 71-72.

¹⁶⁴ Brück (1909): 47 quotes, as does Fulkerson (2005): 4, *Ars Amatoria* 2.128, here presented in its context, *Ars Amatoria* 2.123-128: "Non formosus erat, sed erat facundus Ulixes, / Et tamen aequoreas torsit amore deas. / A quotiens illum doluit properare Calypso, / Remigioque aptas esse negavit aquas! / Haec Troiae casus iterumque iterumque rogabat: / Ille referre aliter saepe solebat idem." 'Ulysses was not handsome, but he was eloquent; yet he fired two goddesses of the sea with love. Ah, how oft did Calypso grieve that he was hasty, and say that the waters were not fit for oars. Again and again did she ask to hear the fate of Troy; often would he tell the same tale in different words.'

¹⁶⁵ Fulkerson (2005): 4.

aliter saepe solebat idem” (‘often would he tell the same tale in different words’).¹⁶⁶ This is the way Ovid says that Ulysses told his stories to Calypso. In accordance with Jacobson, these solutions do not discuss the word repetitions but explain the repeated themes and motifs.

Contemporary scholarship on the *Heroides* has successfully begun to eradicate the perception of the poems as annoyingly monotonous, containing tiresome laments of desperate women. Repetitions are for that matter certainly not unique for Ovid. The epithets in the Homeric epics would perhaps be as annoying, given that we did not understand that they were sprung from an oral tradition. If we read the *Heroides* as a part of the rhetorical tradition, if we assume that they have their origins in oral exercises based on certain standards, perhaps the repetitions do have their place.

According to Ovid himself, he (if I may put a biographical interpretation on his words) was criticized by his contemporaries for being repetitive in his exile poetry.¹⁶⁷ The exile poems are like the *Heroides* verse letters and treat the same subject over and over: the poet’s discomfort in Tomis and a longing for Rome.

In a letter to his friend Brutus, a self-critical poet comments on the alleged blemishes:

Quod sit in his eadem sententia, Brute, libellis,
carmina nescio quem carpere nostra refers:
nil nisi me terra fruar ut propiore rogare,
et quam sim denso cinctus ab hoste loqui.
o, quam de multis vitium reprehenditur unum!
hoc peccat solum si mea Musa, bene est.
ipse ego librorum video delicta meorum,
cum sua plus iusto carmina quisque probet.
auctor opus laudat: sic forsitan Agrius olim
Thersiten facie dixerit esse bona.
iudicium tamen hic nostrum non decipit error,

¹⁶⁶ *Ars Amatoria* 2.128. Fulkerson (2005): 4.

¹⁶⁷ Ovid’s exile poetry was for that matter also criticized in 20th century scholarship. For a summary of the criticism, see for example Williams (1994): 1-2.

nec, quicquid genui, protinus illud amo.
 cur igitur, si me video delinquere, peccem,
 et patiar scripto crimen inesse, rogas?
 non eadem ratio est sentire et demere morbos;
 sensus inest cunctis, tollitur arte malum.
 saepe aliquod verbum cupiens mutare reliqui,
 iudicium vires destituuntque meum.
 saepe piget (quid enim dubitem tibi vera fateri)
 corrigere et longi ferre laboris onus.
 scribentem iuvat ipse labor minuitque laborem,
 cumque suo crescens pectore fervet opus.
 corrigere ut res est tanto minus ardua quanto
 magnus Aristarcho maior Homerus erat,
 sic animum lento curarum frigore laedit,
 ut cupidi cursor frena retentat equi.
 atque ita di mites minuant mihi Caesaris iram,
 ossaque pacata nostra tegantur humo,
 ut mihi conanti nonnumquam intendere curas
 fortunae species obstat acerba meae.
 vixque mihi videor, faciam qui carmina, sanus,
 inque feris curem corrigere illa Getis.
 nil tamen e scriptis magis excusabile nostris,
 quam sensus cunctis paene quod unus inest.
 (*Epistulae ex Ponto* 3.9.1-34)

Brutus, you tell me that someone carps at my poems, because the same idea is expressed in this booklet: that I ask for nothing else than to enjoy a nearer located land, and that I speak of how encircled I am by a dense crowd of enemies. Oh, how one failure out of many is criticized! If my Muse falls short in this respect only, it is well. I myself see the defects of my books, although each and everyone likes his own poems more than

what is just. The author praises his work. In this way, Agrius may once have said that Thersites had a good face.¹⁶⁸ This mistake, though, does not deceive my judgment. Whatever I created, I do not immediately embrace. Why then, do you ask, do I fall short, if I see that I fail? Why do I permit that a blemish exists in my writings? It is not the same business to feel and to remove diseases; the feeling is inside everyone, but the evil is removed by art. Often I left some word though I wished to change it, but energy deprives my judgment. Often it irks me (why should I hesitate to tell you the truth?) to emend and endure the burden of a long labour. Labour itself amuses the writer and diminishes the labour, and while the work grows, it glows along with the heart. As it is a much less difficult task to emend, as the great Homer was greater than Aristarchus,¹⁶⁹ all the same it damages the mind with the slow cold of worries, just as a rider restrains the reins of a mettlesome horse. May lenient gods diminish the wrath of Caesar, and may my bones be covered by peaceful soil, so that the bitter aspect of my fate never may prevent me when I am trying to concentrate. I hardly consider myself sane enough to compose poems or to care to emend them among the wild Getae. Yet, nothing is more excusable than that there is hardly anything but one feeling inside all my writings.

The poet here writes an apology in which he confesses his faults when writing. He is aware of his mistakes, but blames them on his weariness, caused by the pitiful and involuntary stay on the coast of the Black Sea. Could this be valid for the heroines' lament as well? Can we from the passage conclude that the women's repetitiveness is the result of their states of mind? Lines 3.9.23-24 are difficult to grasp, but as I interpret them, they express a somewhat irritated attitude towards the criticism. It is as if the poet tried to say the following: it is easy to emend, but boring and wearing. To criticize, on the other hand, is even easier. Aristarchus may have had his

¹⁶⁸ Thersites, son of Agrius, was a Greek soldier in Troy, who was known for his impudence and deformed figure, Homer, *Iliad* 2.212-219.

¹⁶⁹ Aristarchus was a Hellenistic grammarian and librarian of Alexandria, who made an important critical edition of Homer's works. According to Cicero, *Epistulae ad Familiares* 3.11.5 (letter to Appius Claudius Pulcher), Aristarchus rejected the lines he did not approve as non-Homeric: "ut enim Aristarchus Homeri versum negat quem non probat, sic tu (libet enim mihi iocari), quod disertum non erit, ne putaris meum." 'As Aristarchus denies that Homer is the author of the verse he does not approve, so should you (for it pleases me to joke) not regard that as mine what is not well written.'

ideas of Homer's qualities; still he was an inferior writer to Homer. The critic who claims his or her right to carp and even to emend, does not take into account that the writer might be aware of his style.

Worth noticing are the repetitions of words in this very passage which actually *complains* about the repetitiveness. The writer notes that he sometimes would have liked to change a word, but that he lacked the energy. Is he mocking us, or would he indeed have liked to exchange the thrice occurring word *corrigere* for another word,¹⁷⁰ or the polyptoton *laboris, labor, laborem*?¹⁷¹ Speaking of polyptoton, three cases of this figure will occur in the same line: “**laeta fere laetus cecini, cano tristia tristis**”.¹⁷² And, as if he was checking if we as readers are following, he repeats the words from line 16, “sensus”, “inest” and “cunctis”, in line 34, though in another sense – and *sense* is exactly what he is commenting on. Line 16 speaks of a *sensus* inherent in every man, while line 34 is about the *sensus* in his books. Confessing that he expresses the same sense over and over, he in this line is doing quite the reverse.

The suggestion made by Kennedy and Spentzou, that the repetitive style has an inculcating aim,¹⁷³ is worth taking seriously. It is not very plausible that Ovid should write three (or four, if we count *Heroides* 16-21 as an entity) collections of letters (*Heroides*, *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*) containing thematic and lexical iterations without any awareness or intention. Like the exiled poet, the heroines of the *Heroides* write to different persons. A difference is that the senders in their case are many and not only one. Still, Showerman's criticism is that their “language is the same throughout”.¹⁷⁴ And as we will see, they express themselves in mostly the same manner. There seems, however, to be no doubt that Ovid was aware of his repetitions on different levels, and that he decided to keep them.

Later in *Epistulae ex Ponto* 3.9, the poet makes a comment on his letter-writing, a comment which is tempting to transfer to the epistles of the *Heroides*:

¹⁷⁰ *Epistulae ex Ponto* 3.9.20, 3.9.23 and 3.9.32.

¹⁷¹ *Epistulae ex Ponto* 3.9.20-21.

¹⁷² *Epistulae ex Ponto* 3.9.35.

¹⁷³ Kennedy (2002): 220; Spentzou (2003): 39.

¹⁷⁴ Showerman [1914] (1977): 8.

cum totiens eadem dicam, vix audior ulli,
verbaque profectu dissimulata carent.
et tamen haec eadem cum sint, non scripsimus isdem,
unaque per plures vox mea temptat opem.
(*Epistulae ex Ponto* 3.9.39-42)

Although I say the same thing so many times, I hardly gain a hearing by anyone, and words that are ignored lack success. And even though the words may be the same, I have not written to the same persons. My one and only voice asks for aid through many.

The words indicate desperation. The poet's rhetoric is failing. To say the same things again and again with the same words, which fall on deaf ears – that is actually not only the fate for the exiled poet but for the deserted heroines as well.

2 Rhetoric, education and poetry

2.1 Rhetoric, oratory and eloquence

This chapter will serve three purposes: 1) to explore the relationship between rhetoric and poetry in ancient literature, 2) to give an account of the pedagogical ideas of the rhetorical education in which Ovid took part, and 3) to offer a survey of the progymnasmata, focusing on the ethopoeia.

For the sake of clarity, I will start by defining the terms rhetoric, oratory and eloquence.¹⁷⁵ *Rhetoric* (Greek: *ῥητορικὴ*) is often regarded as synonymous with the art of speaking.¹⁷⁶ In practice, however, it was used as a general term to represent the theory of speaking *and* writing – or, since the dividing line between oral and literary texts was not at all distinct in antiquity, if it even existed, rather the theory of composing texts. Thus, my use of the term will be in this wider sense: rhetoric as the tool-box needed for practising the art of *eloquence* (*eloquentia*), which comprises speaking and writing well, elegantly and fluently in an appropriate style. *Oratory* (*oratoria*) is the art of public speaking aiming at influencing and convincing. The division of rhetoric and poetry (which is often seen) into two different genres is misleading. In Roman culture, rhetoric was neither confined only to speeches, nor to style. The handbooks make clear that the art of rhetoric is about inventing material, putting it in order, making it ornate, and presenting it in the best way, in short: the composition of a convincing text. It would be more correct to speak of oratory and poetry as various genres – even though, as we will see in Ovid's case, they influenced each other.

The great influence Aristotle has had on Western culture makes us associate the concept of rhetoric primarily with him. However, the progymnasmata were derived from another tradition, the sophistic, which started in Athens in the 5th century BC. Thanks to its curriculum it remained

¹⁷⁵ For a survey of ancient philosophers' view on the concept of rhetoric, see Clark (1957): 24-58.

¹⁷⁶ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.3; Cicero, *De inventione* 1.5.

persistent through the centuries, gaining a revival in Roman imperial times with new generations of teachers, “the Second Sophistic”.¹⁷⁷ According to Cicero, Aristotle was not known to contemporary teachers of rhetoric.¹⁷⁸ Thus, it seems that we have to deal with a parallel rhetorical tradition in antiquity, predominant in the educational system. The sophistic philosophy repudiated absolute truth, which is reflected in the rhetorical exercises. The student had to be prepared to criticize or defend any matter, and to narrate the same story from different perspectives.

2.2 Homer as the fount of rhetoric

Speeches, argumentation and persuasion are frequent already in the Homeric epics. Strikingly often, when a Homeric character speaks in a monologue, he or she has a certain purpose: to persuade, exhort, warn, plea, complain, blame or praise. As Hanna M. Roisman points out, almost half of the lines in the *Iliad* consists of direct speech.¹⁷⁹ In antiquity, Homer was viewed as the source of rhetoric.¹⁸⁰ In fact, Quintilian advises students to start rhetorical studies with Homer, not only because he is the most eminent in the power of poetry, but also of oratory. In Homer’s works, Quintilian argues, every part of *eloquentia* is represented:

Igitur, ut Aratus ab Iove incipiendum putat, ita nos rite coepturi ab Homero videmur. Hic enim, quem ad modum ex Oceano dicit ipse <omnium> amnium fontiumque cursus initium capere, omnibus eloquentiae partibus exemplum et ortum dedit. Hunc nemo in magnis rebus sublimitate, in parvis proprietate

¹⁷⁷ The term “Second Sophistic” was coined by Philostratus in his *Vitae Sophistarum* 1.481 (“δευτέραν δὲ μᾶλλον προσρητέον”, ‘one must rather call it the second’).

¹⁷⁸ Cicero, *Topica* 1.3: “...rhetor autem ille magnus haec, ut opinor, Aristotelia se ignorare respondit. Quod quidem minime sum admiratus eum philosophum rhetori non esse cognitum, qui ab ipsis philosophis praeter admodum paucos ignoretur...”, ‘That great rhetor replied that he did not know about these Aristotelian, as I believe they were, works. I am not at all surprised that the philosopher was not known by the rhetor. He is not known even by philosophers except for rather few...’

¹⁷⁹ Roisman (2007): 429: “Although the *Iliad* is a war poem, its heroes spend more time talking than fighting. Formal discussions in which characters try to persuade one another to act in accord with their own recommendations abound...”.

¹⁸⁰ Roisman (2007): 430.

superaverit. Idem laetus ac pressus, iucundus et gravis, tum copia tum brevitate mirabilis, nec poetica modo sed oratoria virtute eminentissimus. Nam ut de laudibus exhortationibus consolationibus taceam, nonne vel nonus liber, quo missa ad Achillem legatio continetur, vel in primo inter duces illa contentio vel dictae in secundo sententiae omnis litium atque consiliorum explicant artes? (Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 10.1.46-47)

Thus, it seems right for us to start with Homer, as Aratus thinks one must begin with Jupiter. Homer, who himself actually says that every river and spring starts their course in the ocean, gave an example and origin of all the parts of eloquence. No one was able to surpass him in sublimity in great things or in propriety in small. At one and the same time he is happy and depressed, delightful and grave, admirable in both abundance and brevity, he is the most eminent not only in the virtue of poetry but also in oratory. Not to mention his laudations, exhortations and consolations: does not the ninth book, which contains the embassy sent to Achilles, or the first in which the struggle between the leaders is described, or the second where opinions are delivered, explain all the arts of quarrelling and counselling?

Homer was the author most studied in school. Papyri preserved from Greco-Roman Egypt show rhetorical school exercises deriving material preferably from the Homeric epics. Among the stories paraphrased are the preservation of Patroclus' body, the return of Briseis to Achilles and Ulysses' return to Ithaca.¹⁸¹ Next in popularity came Euripides.¹⁸² Rules of rhetoric were formalized based on the works of Homer,¹⁸³ and his epics provided material for the progymnasmata. In the text passage quoted above, Quintilian stresses the passage referring to Achilles and the embassy from *Iliad* 9 as an important source for learning rhetoric, which is a plausible indication that it was discussed and used at schools.

Why were Homer and Euripides the most popular? There are naturally several reasons why these classics are rewarding to study. One aspect that I would like to introduce for consideration is that these two authors – together

¹⁸¹ Morgan (1998): 39-43 and 219.

¹⁸² Cribiore (2001): 194. Cribiore also observes that particularly the two first books of the Homeric *Iliad* were popular.

¹⁸³ Roisman (2007): 430.

with Sophocles – depict the Trojans, and stories from the Trojan War were popular. In their stories, the Trojans are not cruel enemies but suffering human beings, neither better nor worse than the Greeks. Euripides wrote several plays from the perspective of the Trojans.¹⁸⁴ In fact, Euripides, in his *Troades*, even has Andromache call the Greeks barbarians.¹⁸⁵ It is consistent with the view of the Sophists to unreservedly portray the opposing side from its own perspective, even if it is an enemy.

2.3 Poetry and oratory

In a letter from exile addressed to the orator Salanus, Ovid compares the two different fields of oratory and poetry and their fruitful exchange:

tu quoque Pieridum studio, studiose, teneris,
ingenioque faves, ingeniose, meo.
distat opus nostrum, sed fontibus exit ab isdem:
artis et ingenuae cultor uterque sumus.
thyrsus abest a te, gustata est laurea nobis,
sed tamen ambobus debet inesse calor:
utque meis numeris tua dat facundia nervos,
sic venit a nobis in tua verba nitor.
iure igitur studio confinia carmina vestro
et commilitii sacra tuenda putas.
(*Epistulae ex Ponto* 2.5.63-72)

You, studious one, are also tied to the study of the Muses, and you, talented one, are a supporter of my talent. Our work differs but derives from the same sources: we are both devotees of a noble art. The thyrsus¹⁸⁶ is far from you, the laurel¹⁸⁷ has been

¹⁸⁴ *Andromache*, *Hecuba* and *Troades* are Euripidean plays from a Trojan perspective. Sophocles wrote *Andromache*, *Cassandra*, *Polyxena* and *Priam*, extant only in fragments.

¹⁸⁵ Euripides, *Troades* 764.

¹⁸⁶ The Bacchic staff, *thyrsus*, is a symbol for poetic inspiration.

tasted by me, but for us both, ardour should be present in what we do. As your fluency gives energy to the rhythms of my poetry, so lustre comes from me into your words. Thus, you rightly think my poems are related to your study and that attention must be paid to the holy celebration of the friendship.

The passage indicates that Ovid deliberately borrowed from the field of oratory and that the two genres of poetry and oratory are related to each other because they are of the same origin: the *ars ingenua*. What exactly constituted the *ars ingenua*, or, more common, *artes ingenuae*, is not easy to define. Cicero mentions the term several times,¹⁸⁸ and in *De Oratore*, book 3, he includes geometry, music and knowledge of literature and poets in the arts of liberal and noble education.¹⁸⁹ However, like Quintilian in the passage cited above, Ovid stresses the relationship to tradition. He seems to claim that he and Salanus come from the same educational tradition. They have both undergone the teaching of noble arts, which I cannot think as anything else than a common literary-rhetorical training.

The poet received *facundia*, fluency or eloquence, from his friend, giving *nitor*, lustre or brilliance, back to him. The tasks, the metre and the matter differ, but the unifying key is to speak with ardour. Using the words *facundia* and *nitor* Ovid puts his finger on what for posterity is considered typical of the literature of the coming silver age. A wide-spread view of literature from the early imperial time is that it is empty, sensational and “rhetorical” with an immediate impact on the audience.¹⁹⁰ The negative development is often explained by the new autocracy which is said to have moved oratory from public arenas into more private spheres.¹⁹¹ Silver Latin poets are accused of elevating form over content. For Ovid, *nitor* is a desirable quality, and according to him this ideal seems to be non-controversial and in line with the

¹⁸⁷ The Apollonian laurel, *laurea*, is a symbol for poetic art.

¹⁸⁸ Cicero, *Epistulae ad Familiares* 4.3.4, *De Oratore* 1.73 and 3.127.

¹⁸⁹ Cicero *De Oratore* 3.127: “nec solum has artes quibus liberales doctrinae atque ingenuae continerentur, geometriam, musicam, litterarum cognitionem et poetarum, atque illa quae de naturis rerum, quae de hominum moribus, quae de rebus publicis dicerentur se tenere”, ‘and that he not only controlled these arts which liberal and noble education comprise: geometry, music, knowledge of literature and poets, but that he also controlled those things said about the nature of things, ethics and politics’.

¹⁹⁰ Walker (2000): vii; Hardie (2002a): 36.

¹⁹¹ Kennedy (1972): 303-304.

tradition of *artes ingenuae*. Ovid is clearly interested in the formal aspects of poetry, and he is a true perfectionist when it comes to metre.¹⁹²

Macrobius regarded Virgil as an orator, superior even to the great Cicero because of his many-sided and diverse style.¹⁹³ Speaking of Cicero, he too comments on the similarity between poetry and oratory. In fact, the difference between these fields has never been large, he claims. And now, the poets and the orators are coming still closer to each other. The poets, Cicero continues, are imitating the orators and vice versa. After distinguishing the prose styles needed by an orator from the prose of philosophers, Sophists and historians, Cicero turns to consider the poets:

Nam etiam poetae quaestionem attulerunt, quidnam esset illud quo ipsi differrent ab oratoribus: numero maxime videbantur antea et versu, nunc apud oratores iam ipse numerus increbruit. Quicquid est enim, quod sub aurium mensuram aliquam cadit, etiamsi abest a versu—nam id quidem orationis est vitium—numerus vocatur, qui Graece ῥυθμὸς dicitur. Itaque video visum esse nonnullis Platonis et Democriti locutionem, etsi absit a versu, tamen, quod incitatius feratur et clarissimis verborum luminibus utatur, potius poema putandum quam comicorum poetarum, apud quos, nisi quod versiculi sunt, nihil est aliud cotidiani dissimile sermonis. Nec tamen id est poetae maximum, etsi est eo laudabilior quod virtutes oratoris persequitur, cum versu sit astrictior. Ego autem, etiamsi quorundam grandis et ornata vox est poetarum, tamen in ea cum licentiam statuo maiorem esse quam in nobis faciendorum iungendorumque verborum, tum etiam nonnullorum voluntate vocibus magis quam rebus inserviunt. Nec vero, si quid est unum inter eos simile—id autem est iudicium electioque verborum—propterea ceterarum rerum dissimilitudo intellegi non potest. (Cicero, *Orator* 20.66-68)

For even poets have put the question in what way they differ from the orators: in former times it seemed to be mostly regarding rhythm and verse; now, rhythm has increased among orators. For whatever it is that falls into the measure of the ears, even if it is not verse (that is to be sure a blemish for a speech),

¹⁹² On the elegists' metrical ideals and use of them, see Platnauer (1951). On the metre in Ovid's poetry, see Kenney (2002): 30ff.

¹⁹³ Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 5.1-5.

it is called rhythm, which in Greek is called “rhythmos”. Therefore, I see that several have thought that the speaking in Plato and Democritus, which, though not in verse, is moved forward rather lively and uses the brightest lights of the words, should be considered poetry rather than the speaking of the comic poets, in which, apart from that they write in verse, differs in no way from daily conversation. However, this is not the greatest for a poet, although he is the more laudable since he follows the virtues of the orator, because he is more restricted to the verse. As for me, even though the sound of some poets is grand and elaborate, I maintain that the freedom in that sound is larger than we have, both in inventing and arranging the words. And because of the demands of many of their audience, the poets serve the sounds more than the content. And certainly, if there is one similarity between them, this is the feeling for and choice of words. For that reason, the differences between them regarding other things cannot be ignored.

Cicero’s analysis of the relationship between poets and orators is that there is a movement towards each other: the orators borrow the rhythm from the poets, and the poets are paying more attention to sound than sense. The latter is, according to Cicero, a consequence of “nonnullorum voluntate”, the wish from several hearers. Posterity’s verdict of Silver Latin poets as preferring elegance to content and ingratiating the audience, is thus foreboded by Cicero as he discusses contemporary poets and orators. The rhetorician Votienus Montanus, cited by Seneca the Elder, criticizes this development, claiming that the orators instead of offering cogent arguments polish their linguistic formulations with the purpose of entertaining or fascinating the audience.¹⁹⁴ The result is that the speaker himself is highlighted at the expense of the aim of the speech.

Qui declamationem parat, scribit non ut vincat sed ut placeat. Omnia itaque lenocinia [ita] conquirat; argumentationes, quia molestae sunt et minimum habent floris, relinquit; sententiis, explicationibus audientis delinire contentus est. Cupit enim se approbare, non causam. (Seneca, *Controversiae* 9, preface 1)

He who prepares a declamation, writes not in order to win the cause but to please. Thus he seeks for all enticement; he leaves

¹⁹⁴ Seneca, *Controversiae* 9, preface 1.

argumentations, which are tiresome and have little of embellishment; he is satisfied to delineate the audience with sentences and explanations. He wishes that they will approve him and not the case.

In Cicero's rhetorical works, as in other handbooks of rhetoric, most examples are taken from poetry, from Greek masters as well as from Roman epic poets.¹⁹⁵ *Exempla* and wordings from poetry influenced Roman rhetoric, and went the other way as well.

2.4 Ovid and rhetorical education

In his 'autobiographical' poem, *Tristia* 4.10, Ovid mentions his ambivalence in choosing between a career as an orator or as a poet. According to his own statement, his brother was the one most suited for a career as an orator, whereas he himself was more attracted by the muses:

frater ad eloquium viridi tendebat ab aevo,
fortia verbosi natus ad arma fori;
at mihi iam puero caelestia sacra placebant,
inque suum furtim Musa trahebat opus.
saepe pater dixit "studium quid inutile temptas?
Maeonides nullas ipse reliquit opes."
motus eram dictis, totoque Helicone relicto
scribere temptabam verba soluta modis.
sponte sua carmen numeros veniebat ad aptos,
et quod temptabam scribere versus erat. (*Tristia* 4.10.17-26.)

¹⁹⁵ There are plenty of examples, but let me just mention one from Cicero. Cicero, *Orator* 27.93, on metaphors: "...tamen alio modo transtulit cum dixit Ennius *arce et urbe orba sum* alio modo, *horridam Africam terribili tremere tumultu*." 'Yet Ennius transferred in one way when he said: "I am deprived of fortress and city" and in another way: "rough Africa trembled in terrible tumult".'

My brother was inclined for eloquence already in the prime of his life, born as he was for the strong weapons of the verbose forum. To me as a boy, holy celebration appealed, and the muse furtively drew me to her work. My father often said: "why are you trying an inutile study? Not even Maeonides¹⁹⁶ left any fortune." I was moved by his words, and having left Helicon many times, I tried to write words freed from metre. A poem showed up of its own accord with suitable rhythm, and what I tried to write proved to be verse.

Already in his school-days, Ovid made a great impression on those around him for his rhetorical skills. According to Seneca the Elder, young Ovid was a student of the Roman rhetors Marcus Porcius Latro and Arellius Fuscus. Seneca's books *Controversiae* and *Suasoriae* deal with rhetorical school exercises. Ovid is described by Seneca as a *bonus declamator*, "a good declaimer".¹⁹⁷ Seneca remembers the poet as a very gifted student and as one who incorporated what he had learnt into his own poetry:

Hanc controversiam memini ab Ovidio Nasone declamari apud
rhetorem Arellium Fuscum, cuius auditor fuit; nam Latronis
admirator erat, cum diversum sequeretur dicendi genus.
Habebat ille comptum et decens et amabile ingenium. Oratio
eius iam tum nihil aliud poterat videri quam solutum carmen.
Adeo autem studiose Latronem audit ut multas illius sententias
in versus suos transtulerit. In armorum iudicio dixerat Latro:
mittamus arma in hostis et petamus. Naso dixit:

arma viri fortis medios mittantur in hostis;
inde iubete peti.¹⁹⁸

Et alium ex illa suasoria sensum aequae a Latrone mutuatus est.
Memini Latronem in praefatione quadam dicere quod
scholastici quasi carmen didicerunt: Non vides ut immota fax
torpeat, ut exagitata reddat ignes? Mollit viros otium, ferrum
situ carpitur et rubiginem ducit, desidia dedocet. Naso dixit:

¹⁹⁶ *Maeonides*, i.e. the man from Maeonia, is another name for Homer.

¹⁹⁷ Seneca, *Controversiae*. 2.2.9.

¹⁹⁸ *Metamorphoses* 13.121-122.

vidi ego iactatas mota face crescere flammās
et rursus nullo concutiente mori.¹⁹⁹

Tunc autem cum studeret habebatur bonus declamator. Hanc certe controversiam ante Arellium Fuscum declamavit, ut mihi videbatur, longe ingeniosius, excepto eo quod sine certo ordine per locos discurrebat. (Seneca, *Controversiae* 2.2.8-9)

I remember that this *controversia* was declaimed by Ovid Naso in the presence of the rhetor Arellius Fuscus, whose student he was; for Ovid was an admirer of Latro, although he followed a different mode of speaking. He had a well-groomed, pleasant and amiable talent. His speech could be seen, even then, as nothing other than poetry dissolved into prose. He listened to Latro so eagerly that he transferred many of his *sententiae* into his own verses. Regarding the Judgment of Arms, Latro had said: let us send the arms into the crowd of our enemies and then demand their return. Naso said:

let the arms of a brave man be sent into the crowd of our
enemies; demand that they be returned.

In the same way he also borrowed another sentence from Latro in that *suasoria*. I remember that Latro in some preface said something that the schoolmen learnt as if it were a poem: You do not see that an unshaken torch is inactive, that it gives fire when shaken? Leisure softens men, iron weakens through decay and produces rust, idleness discards previous teaching. Naso said:

I saw flames grow, flung from a swinging torch, and die again
when no one shook it.

¹⁹⁹ *Amores* 1.2.11-12.

At that time, when he studied, he was thought to be a good declaimer. Surely, he declaimed the following *controversia* before Arellius Fuscus. As it appears to me, he did it much more ingeniously, except for the fact that he ran through the loci without any fixed order.

The above cited passage is an indication that it is important to have Ovid's rhetorical education in mind when studying his texts. Seneca the Elder here mentions two examples from Ovid's poetry which he claims were directly inspired by his teacher Latro at the rhetor's school. In Seneca's opinion, Latro possessed every oratorical quality.²⁰⁰ Latro was known for his art in delivering *sententiae* and is said to have had a stock of them: "hoc quoque Latro meus faciebat, ut sententias amaret" ('My friend Latro also made this, because he loved *sententiae*'). A *sententia* was a short and punchy phrase, often with linguistic refinement. Let us remind ourselves of what Votienus Montanus said: that for some orators, *sententiae* had won in popularity over argument. As for Ovid, he found argumentation "molesta",²⁰¹ 'tiresome', and he transferred Latro's *sententiae* into his own verse,²⁰² all according to Seneca.

In the passage, Seneca starts and ends by telling us that Ovid declaimed *controversiae*. These two *controversiae* are outlined in an earlier and subsequent passage in Seneca's *Controversiae*. A *controversia* was, like the *suasoria*, a Roman progymnasma, developed from the Greek progymnasmata. The precursor was the *νόμος* or in Latin *legislatio*, a pleading for or against the introduction of a law. Judging from its place as the last in the series of exercises, it was probably viewed as the final aim of the course of study. Like the Roman *suasoria*, the *controversia* also introduced characters. It was a judicial exercise which staged a fictitious law case in which the student was required to speak for one of the sides. Seneca himself claims that the term *controversia* is new but that it corresponds to what Cicero called *causa*.²⁰³

After the words about Ovid and Latro, Seneca refers to a task on the "Judgment of Arms", a competition for the arms of the dead Achilles between Ulysses and Ajax. From what Seneca says, we can assume that Latro

²⁰⁰ Seneca, *Controversiae* 1, preface 13.

²⁰¹ Seneca, *Controversiae* 2.2.12.

²⁰² Seneca, *Controversiae* 2.2.8-9.

²⁰³ Seneca, *Controversiae* 1.12.

was giving instructions for writing a *suasoria*, telling the story in his own words, words that Ovid probably used in his *suasoria* and later on actually included in his *Metamorphoses*, book 13. The competition between Ulysses and Ajax described by Homer is a battle of words, where the hero is to convince the judges that he is worthy the honour of taking over Achilles' arms. Each of the warriors delivers a speech. This verbal battle is won by the eloquent Ulysses, and thus the weapons fall to his share. In an exercise on this theme, the student was to plead the cause of one of the heroes. It is a perfect theme for a rhetorical exercise.

Every chapter in Seneca's *Controversiae* deals with a *controversia*. In the beginning of *Controversiae* 2.2, Seneca presents the theme of this *controversia*: "iusiurandum mariti et uxoris", 'an oath sworn by husband and wife'. The situation outlined is intricate: a married couple gives a promise to each other to die if anything should happen to the other ("si quid alteri obtigisset"). During a trip, the husband sends a messenger to his wife with the announcement of his death, whereupon the wife throws herself from a great height. She survives and her father demands that she leave her husband. She refuses and is disinherited. Seneca hereafter has the declaimers (Porcius Latro, Cestius, Arellius Fuscus and others) throwing out a few sentences each in the defence of the woman and then the man, some addressing the judges, some addressing the woman, some rendering the lines of the husband and the wife. Later in the chapter, Ovid makes a declamation on this same theme, recited by Seneca.²⁰⁴ Although Ovid is said to put the commonplaces in an unconventional order, the order as presented in Seneca could impossibly be the original version. Ovid jumps from one thing to another, sometimes being the husband, sometimes the wife, sometimes addressing them or the judges. It seems that we as readers are presented with ideas of approaches, not a text in full. Like the excerpts from the rhetoricians, the Ovidian *controversia* seems to be composed of fragments.²⁰⁵ Anyhow, Ovid is praised by Seneca for making his *controversia* much more ingeniously, "longe ingeniosius". Whether he is compared to the teacher Fuscus, his fellow students or the other rhetors or orators, is not evident.

In the Latro-imitations referred to by Seneca, Ovid remoulds the original words, turning them to something else. It might be the case, though, that he took one phrase almost as he had heard it. Latro says "amens cucurri".²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ Seneca, *Controversiae* 2.2.9-11.

²⁰⁵ There are, however, *controversiae* presented in full in Seneca's collection.

²⁰⁶ Seneca, *Controversiae* 2.4.1.

This word combination is found twice in Ovid, “amensque cucurri”.²⁰⁷ One example is of course too little for a proof, but, found nowhere else in Latin literature, I find it worth mentioning.

Ovid was respected as a good declaimer, “bonus declamator”,²⁰⁸ and he is said to have preferred *suasoriae* to *controversiae*.²⁰⁹ The words “libentius dicebat suasorias” (‘he preferred *suasoriae*’) are often quoted; strangely enough the preceding words are sometimes omitted in quotations. The whole clause reads:

Declamabat autem Naso raro controversias et non nisi ethicās;
libentius dicebat suasorias: molesta illi erat omnis argumentatio.
(Seneca, *Controversiae* 2.2.12.)

Naso rarely declaimed *controversiae* and not unless ethical;
rather he told *suasoriae*. Every argumentation was tiresome to him.

The word “ethicās” is a keyword here. A vital declamatory point for Ovid was the ethos of the exercise, sc. the characterization. When the Romans developed the *thesis* and *legislatio* into the *suasoria* and *controversia*, they included characters. Both exercises imagine one or more persons, whose status, deeds, gender and relationship must be taken into account. If Ovid was fond of such an exercise, it is a reasonable assumption that he even more liked the ethopoeia.

Ovid’s style sometimes annoyed even his contemporaries. Seneca writes:

Verbis minime licenter usus est nisi in carminibus, in quibus
non ignoravit vitia sua sed amavit. (Seneca, *Controversiae*
2.2.12)

He did not use words licentiously except in his poems. In these,
he was not unaware of his blemishes but loved them.

²⁰⁷ *Amores* 3.1.26 and *Metamorphoses* 7.835.

²⁰⁸ Seneca, *Controversiae* 2.2.9.

²⁰⁹ Seneca, *Controversiae* 2.2.12.

In sections 1.7 and 1.8, I touched upon Ovid's 'weary' poetry. Judging from the quotation above, Ovid's choice of keeping his "vitia" was completely deliberate, for he loved his 'blemishes'. As an illustration, Seneca tells the following anecdote: Ovid and some friends had agreed to play a game. His friends were asked to select three verses out of his poetical work that they wanted to eliminate for reasons of taste, while Ovid himself was to pick the three verses that he liked most. His friends chose the following: "semibovemque virum semivirumque bovem" ('half-bull man and the half-man bull') and "et gelidum Borean, egelidumque Notum" ('freezing north wind and de-freezing south').²¹⁰ When comparing their choices, it showed that the verses were identical.

We can assume that his friends carped at the abundance of wit, blaming the poet for repeating himself or being over-explicit. But this seems to have been exactly Ovid's point. Ovid, fancying *sententiae*, was proud of his ingenuity. The words Ovid's friends wanted to remove were essential to him.

Perhaps this is what Quintilian wanted to point out when judging that Ovid was "nimium amator ingenii sui" ('a lover too much of his own talent').²¹¹ Quintilian likewise remarked, regarding the now lost drama *Medea*: "si ingenio suo imperare quam indulgere maluisset" ('if he had chosen to control his talent rather than indulge it').²¹²

Seneca sums up:

Ex quo adparet summi ingenii viro non iudicium defuisse ad compescendam licentiam carminum suorum sed animum. Aiebat interim decentiorem faciem esse in qua aliquis naevos esset. (Seneca, *Controversiae* 2.2.12)

From this it is clear that it was not judgment to restrain the licence of his poems that lacked in this man of highest talent, but the spirit. He sometimes said that a face in which there was a mole was more attractive.

In the passage below, the previously mentioned Montanus Votienus who criticized the wallowing in *sententiae*, is himself accused of the same *vitium*, by Seneca the Elder. Seneca carps at his repetitions and his bad habit of not

²¹⁰ *Ars Amatoria* 2.24 and *Amores* 2.11.10. The third verse that Ovid picked is not known.

²¹¹ Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 10.1.88.

²¹² Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 10.1.98.

holding up in appropriate time. Another rhetorician, Scaurus, calls him ‘Ovid among orators’, “inter oratores Ovidium”, “nam et Ovidius nescit quod bene cessit relinquere”, ‘for not even Ovid knows how to round off his writing neatly’. Thereafter, Seneca points to Ovid’s superfluous style in a passage found in Hecuba’s monologue in the *Metamorphoses*:

Habet hoc Montanus vitium: sententias suas repetendo corrumpit; dum non est contentus unam rem semel bene dicere, efficit ne bene dixerit. Et propter hoc et propter alia quibus orator potest poetae similis videri solebat Scaurus Montanum inter oratores Ovidium vocare; nam et Ovidius nescit quod bene cessit relinquere. Ne multa referam quae Montaniana Scaurus vocabat, uno hoc contentus ero: cum Polyxene esset abducta ut ad tumulum Achillis immolaretur, Hecuba dicit:

cinis ipse sepulti
in genus hoc pugnat.

Poterat hoc contentus esse; adiecit:

tumulo quoque sensimus hostem.

Nec hoc contentus est; adiecit:

Aeacidae fecunda fui.²¹³

Aiebat autem Scaurus rem veram: non minus magnam virtutem esse scire dicere quam scire desinere. (Seneca, *Controversiae* 9.5.17).

²¹³ The cited lines are from *Metamorphoses* 13.503-505, although instead of the word “pugnat,” modern editions read “saevit”, ‘raged’.

Montanus has the following blemish: he ruins his *sententiae* by repeating them. As long as he is not content to say one thing well, the effect is that he did not say it well at all. And because of this and because of other things through which an orator can appear similar to a poet, Scaurus used to call Montanus “Ovid among orators”; for even Ovid does not know how to round off his writing neatly. In order not to say too much about what Scaurus called “*Montaniana*”,²¹⁴ I will be content with only this: when Polyxena had been abducted in order to be sacrificed at the tomb of Achilles, Hecuba says:

“The very ashes of the buried man fight against this family.”

He could have been content with this, but added:

“I knew the enemy, also through the grave.”

But he was not content with this. He added:

“I was fertile for the son of Aeacus.”

Scaurus however said a true thing: that it is no less virtue to know to speak than to know to stop.

What Seneca here seems to illustrate is the phrase “less is more” The criticism directed towards Montanus Votienus and Ovid in this matter by their contemporaries, echoes also in modern times. The charge of saying “too much” too many times is often raised against the *Heroides*. The passage is interesting also for another reason: that it likely refers to an *ethopoeia*.

²¹⁴ *Montaniana*: elements that are reminiscent of Montanus’ style in Ovid’s poetry.

2.5 *Imitatio*

A modern interpretation of the word *imitation* includes ‘copying’ and ‘lack of independence’. However, the idea of imitating as a main principle for achieving artistic skill prevailed in Western culture until Romanticism. As Quintilian puts it below, “*artis pars magna contineatur imitatione*”, ‘a great part of art consists of imitation’. Dionysius Halicarnassensis devoted three books to the subject of imitation, *De Imitatione*, preserved only in fragments.

The rhetorical-literary teaching rested on the notion that former speakers and writers were in the possession of a skill, a *τέχνη* (with the word from Aristotle), a heritage worth being transferred to future generations. The student should first imitate the master in order to later develop his own art.²¹⁵ From Quintilian we learn that imitating was about taking part in a tradition, to learn a craft from the masters in order to develop and improve it and to find a unique voice. Imitation exercises at school were designed in a way that made simple plagiarism impossible. The student’s aim would instead be to emulate the original. It was about working on a text and reusing it.²¹⁶ Quintilian makes clear that imitation alone is not enough, “*imitatio per se ipsa non sufficit*”.²¹⁷ In every discipline, he says, experience and models, well-tryed by our antecedents, are available to us. The aim should always be to improve the art. What is said here about orators, should thus be applied also to poets:

Neque enim dubitari potest quin artis pars magna contineatur imitatione. Nam ut invenire primum fuit estque praecipuum, sic ea quae bene inventa sunt utile sequi. Atque omnis vitae ratio sic constat, ut quae probamus in aliis facere ipsi velimus. Sic litterarum ductus, ut scribendi fiat usus, pueri secuntur, sic musici vocem docentium, pictores opera priorum, rustici probatam experimento culturam in exemplum intuentur, omnis

²¹⁵ Cizek (1994): 11-12 stresses the pedagogical aim of the *imitatio*, holding one receptive-contemplative aspect and one productive-creative, so that the student must thoroughly contemplate what he is reading or hearing and thereafter create a product of his own.

²¹⁶ Cizek (1994): 44 distinguishes three steps in this process: *interpretatio*, *imitatio* and *aemulatio*. The *interpretatio* is the transformation of the text into another language or genre, the *imitatio* the relatively free re-writing when it comes to topic and style, and the *aemulatio* which produces an independent text which can stand comparison with its original model.

²¹⁷ Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 10.2.4.

denique disciplinae initia ad propositum sibi praescriptum formari videmus. Et hercule necesse est aut similes aut dissimiles bonis simus. Similem raro natura praestat, frequenter imitatio. Sed hoc ipsum, quod tanto faciliorem nobis rationem rerum omnium facit quam fuit iis qui nihil quod sequerentur habuerunt, nisi caute et cum iudicio adprehenditur nocet. Ante omnia igitur imitatio per se ipsa non sufficit, vel quia pigri est ingenii contentum esse iis quae sint ab aliis inventa. (Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 10.2.1-4)

Turpe etiam illud est, contentum esse id consequi quod imiteris. Nam rursus quid erat futurum si nemo plus effecisset eo quem sequebatur? Nihil in poetis supra Livium Andronicum, nihil in historiis supra pontificum annales haberemus; ratibus adhuc navigaremus, non esset pictura nisi quae lineas modo extremas umbrae quam corpora in sole fecissent circumscriberet. Ac si omnia percenseas, nulla mansit ars qualis inventa est, nec intra initium stetit: nisi forte nostra potissimum tempora damnamus huius infelicitatis, ut nunc demum nihil crescat: nihil autem crescit sola imitatione. Quod si prioribus adicere fas non est, quo modo sperare possumus illum oratorem perfectum? (Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 10.2.7-9)

It can, however, not be doubted that a great part of art consists of imitation. For as to invent was the first and is the beginning, so is that which was well invented useful to follow. Common sense in life tells us that we wish to achieve what we like in others. Moreover, it is a principle of life in general that we want to do ourselves what we approve of in others. In this way, children follow the forms of the letters in order to become accustomed to writing; singers find their model in their teachers' voice, painters in the works of their predecessors, and farmers in methods of cultivation which have been tested by experience. In a word, we see the rudiments of every branch of learning shaped by the standards prescribed for it. We obviously cannot help being either like the good or unlike them. Nature rarely makes us like them; imitation often does. But this very fact, which makes the principles of everything so much easier for us than for those who had no antecedents to follow, works to our disadvantage unless we treat it with caution and dis-

crimination. First of all, then, imitation is not sufficient on its own. For one thing, only a lazy mind is content with what others have discovered.

It is disgraceful to be content in following what you imitate. For again, what would happen if no one had achieved more than he whom he followed? We would have nothing superior to Livius Andronicus, nothing superior to the annals of the priests regarding history; we would still be sailing with rafts, there would be no picture except for the one that drew outlines of a shadow that objects made in the sun. If you think it through: no art has remained such it was invented, nor stood it still in its beginning: if we do not by chance condemn our time above all for this unhappiness, that now at last nothing grows: nothing, however, grows by imitation alone. But if it is not right to add to our predecessors, how can we hope for the perfect orator?

The poet was an imitator, a regular borrower of words and expressions from his predecessors. That Ovid was part of this tradition, is clear from the many intertextual studies on Ovid's poetry,²¹⁸ but also from ancient sources. Seneca the Elder, approving the Virgilian phrase "plena deo" ('full of a god') which his friend Gallio used for a *suasoria*, writes:

Hoc autem dicebat Gallio Nasoni suo valde placuisse; itaque fecisse illum quod in multis aliis versibus Vergilii fecerat, non subripiendi causa, sed palam mutuandi, hoc animo ut vellet agnoscere... (Seneca, *Suasoriae* 3.7)

Gallio said that his friend Naso liked this very much, and that he for that reason did what he had done with many other verses from Virgil – not with the intention of secretly stealing, but to borrow openly, with the hope that it would be recognized...

In the case above, Ovid borrows openly with the expectation of calling forth recognition. It seems that the source should be evident, though not *too* evident, and the loan elegantly made, adapted into the author's own style, in order not to seem like a literary theft. Horace writes in his *Ars Poetica* that the material used in common will become the writer's own property, if he

²¹⁸ See for example Hinds (1998), who studies Ovid's allusions to previous writers.

avoids rendering the original text word for word or being restrained by rules.²¹⁹

Macrobius points out Virgil as converting Homeric lines into something else:

Interdum sic auctorem suum dissimulanter imitatur, ut loci inde descripti solam dispositionem mutet et faciat velut aliud videri.
(Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 5.16.12)

Sometimes he imitates his author so secretly, that he changes only the disposition of the described place from the original and makes it look like something else.

A passage in Seneca's *Controversiae* shows how Ovid remoulds a Virgilian phrase, already used by others. The story begins with the Greek rhetor Cestius who is said to have used the following sentence for a controversia: "nox erat concubia, et omnia, iudices, canentia <sub> sideribus muta erant", inspired by the Virgilian lines:

nox erat et terras animalia fessa per omnis,
aliturum pecudumque genus, sopor altus habebat.²²⁰
(Seneca, *Controversiae* 7.1.27)

It was night and through the whole world animals were tired.
Deep sleep held the species of birds and sheep.

This, according to Seneca, was an improvement of some lines by Varro:

At Vergilio imitationem bene cessisse, qui illos optimos versus Varronis expressisset in melius:

desierant latrare canes urbesque silebant;
omnia noctis erant placida composta quiete.

²¹⁹ Horace, *Ars Poetica* 131-135.

²²⁰ Virgil, *Aeneid* 8.26-27.

Solebat Ovidius de his versibus dicere potuisse fieri longe meliores si secundi versus ultima pars abscideretur et sic desineret:

omnia noctis erant. (Seneca, *Controversiae* 7.1.27)

But the imitation had turned out well for Virgil, who had expressed Varro's already very good verses into the better:

The dogs had stopped barking and the cities were silent. All of night was composed by a gentle quiet.

Ovid used to say about these verses that they could have been much better if the last part of the second verse were cut and thus finished:

All was of night.

By doing this, Seneca writes, Ovid invented his own sense, or idea, in his verse:

Ovidius in illius versu suum sensum invenit; aliud enim intercisus versus sensum invenit; aliud enim intercisus versus significaturus est, aliud totus significat. (Seneca, *Controversiae* 7.1.27)

Ovidius invented his own sense in this verse: having cut off the verse he invented another sense. The truncated verse will mean one thing; the intact verse will mean something else.

We saw earlier (pp. 54-58) how Ovid in *Epistulae ex Ponto* 3.9 plays with the word *sensus*, using different *senses* while he was speaking of *sense*. Here again, he – according to Seneca – reshapes a phrase, giving it a fresh signification. In the writing process, not only words and phrases are remoulded, but texts. As Hinds observes, Ovid in his poetry sometimes

borrowed from different sources in one passage. The example of Narcissus (*Metamorphoses* 3) is put forward, containing phrases from both Virgil's *Eclogues* 3 and Catullus' nuptial hymn, number 62.²²¹ That this method of working derives from the rhetorical education, becomes clear from Seneca's evidence above. Ovid is said to use phrases from his teacher, along with passages from Roman poets – all within the frame of rhetorical exercises.

2.6 The progymnasmata

The chief aim of the Roman school was to train the students to speak and write in an effective manner. For this purpose, the educational system offered a programme of compiled preliminary exercises, *progymnasmata*, adopted from the Greek rhetorical tradition.²²² In these, imitation was a main principle. The exercises of this programme trained certain elements which were considered useful for future orators or writers. The principal idea of the educational project was practising the art of text composition, striving to achieve the skills of the old masters.

The progymnasmata were designed on the principles of imitating, reusing, transferring and emulating. Another principle upon which the progymnasmata rests is constant improvement. Thus, the exercises were ordered in increasing difficulty.²²³ Each exercise was trained in seven steps: the teacher read a text of an acknowledged writer aloud (*lectio*). The text was then interpreted by the teacher (*praelectio*).²²⁴ The student had to memorize the story (*memoria*) and then retell it (*paraphrasis*) and transpose it to different levels of style and different genres (*conversio*). If the original story was written in Greek, the students could be asked to translate it into Latin and vice versa. If it was written in poetry their task could be to transform it into a prose text. When the students had finished, it was time for them to read their texts before their teacher and classmates (*recitatio*). Finally, the teacher commented and corrected the finished work (*correctio*).²²⁵

²²¹ Hinds (1998): 8-9.

²²² For a comprehensive survey of the progymnasmata and their practice, see for example Clark (1957): 177-212; Bonner (1977): 250-276 and Webb (2001): 289-316.

²²³ Cribiore (2001): 223.

²²⁴ Clark (1957): 63 and 65 gives a thorough description of *praelectio*.

²²⁵ Eriksson (2002): 16-18.

Not only was this method useful for amending and correcting texts. Anders Sigrell writes:

Paraphrasing not only forces students to try to find the main idea..., but also consider how different language choices make us perceive the transmitted way of looking at the world from a different point of view.²²⁶

To view a subject from different angles in order to make the mind elastic, was characteristic of the progymnasmata. The origin of this pedagogical method is said to be the schools of the Sophists. In the spirit of the Sophists, the progymnasmata drilled the students to defend and accuse the same person, and to treat the same subject in different ways. The Sophists were noted for turning a subject over again and again. Not least, the *Encomium of Helen* by Gorgias is a classic example of that: an unexpected reappraisal of the moral acts of Helen, and at the same time an encomium of language as a strong weapon. A playful approach to the material is visible in the model progymnasmata, like a game in which nothing is sacred. Aphthonius, the rhetor, demonstrates with seven arguments in a *refutatio* how the story of Daphne can be argued as true as well as untrue.²²⁷ It is not a too bold venture to suggest that an exercise like his might have attracted a playful and rhetorically aware poet like Ovid. We have seen him changing perspectives more than once. Another example from his poetry, observed by Volk, is the arguing of two opposite sides: *Amores* 2.19 respectively 3.4.²²⁸ It is a theme that, in my opinion, very well would do as a rhetorical exercise. In *Amores* 2.19, the poet exhorts a man to guard his *puella*, while the opposite is advocated in *Amores* 3.4.

The rhetor Libanius is of the same spirit in the progymnasmata he has composed when he offers speeches on unconventional things, for example an *encomium* (praise) of an ox, a *descriptio* (description) of drunkenness or a *vituperatio* (invective) against the grapevine.²²⁹ These subjects are, to say the least, unexpected. However, it was also part of the programme to be able to deal with difficult matters, to be ready to speak on whatever subject.

²²⁶ Sigrell (2003): 114.

²²⁷ Aphthonius 28-30.

²²⁸ Volk (2010): 68-69.

²²⁹ Libanius, Encomium 8, Descriptio 6 and Vituperatio 8.

Even the easiest exercise, the fable, first in order, was regarded with respect by Quintilian:

Quod opus, etiam consummatis professoribus difficile, qui commode tractaverit cuicumque discendo sufficiet. (Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 1.9.3)

This task is difficult even for perfect teachers. He who handles it with ease will suffice to learn anything.

Seneca puts forward Arellius Fuscus as the most elegant speaker, who readily declaimed suasoriae.

Et quia soletis mihi molesti esse de Fusco, quid fuerit quare nemo videretur dixisse cultius, ingeram vobis Fuscinas explicationes. Dicebat autem suasorias libentissime et frequentius Graecas quam Latinas. (Seneca, *Suasoriae* 4.5)

And because you use to bother me by talking about Fuscus, and how no one was thought to have spoken more elegantly than he, I will lay on you Fuscan expositions. He spoke readily suasoriae, more often in Greek than in Latin.

The extant manuals of the progymnasmata were written down after Ovid's life-time. There is however good reason to believe that the school, which he attended, to a large degree followed an old tradition, and that he practised more types of exercises than the Roman *declamationes* (the *suasoria* and the *controversia*). According to D. L. Clark, Roman schools were "practically identical with the Hellenistic Greek schools of their own epoch. These did not so much imitate the Greek schools as take over their methods with little or no modification. This Greco-Roman educational program was not only homogeneous, but widespread and long-lived. It was fully accepted in Rome by the middle of the second century BC."²³⁰

The word *progymnasma* appears for the first time in *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* from the fourth century BC.²³¹ As for the ethopoeia, which will

²³⁰ Clark (1957): 59-60. See also Gwynn [1926] (1966): 34-45 on the first Greek teachers in Rome.

²³¹ *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* 28.

be presented in section 2.8, it has a long tradition in rhetorical handbooks as a tool for text composition.

The students became accustomed to using characters from Greek and Roman history and mythology in their texts and to meditate upon their acts, their habits and their personalities. These future orators and writers were trained in the art of describing, portraying, praising, refuting etc. They received templates from the progymnasmata, templates within which they later could use their poetical freedom.

Roman inventions as they were, the *declamationes* were not represented in the Greek progymnasmata handbooks. These exercises were practised in the rhetor school. Fundamental, preliminary exercises for these were the progymnasmata, practised at grammar school.²³² It is clear from Quintilian 1.9 and 2.4 that the Romans practised progymnasmata,²³³ albeit in a slightly different order than will be presented below. The four extant handbooks from antiquity, written by Aelius Theon, probably from the 1st century AD,²³⁴ Hermogenes, 2nd century AD, Aphthonius, 4th century and Nicolaus, 5th century, consist of eleven to fourteen exercises each.

For my brief exposition of the progymnasmata I will choose the order and terms as presented in Aphthonius, because his work has been the most widely practised. The same order is found also in Nicolaus.

The progymnasmata presented below are named in both Greek and Latin.²³⁵ Henceforward I will use their Latin names.

1. *μῦθος/fabula*: Drawn from the model of Aisopos, the *fabula* was a short moral story often including animals.
2. *διήγημα/narratio*: The *narratio* was a story about an isolated event. The student was expected to include the person involved, the action, the time, place and cause of the action and what it led to.
3. *χρεῖα/chria*: The *chria* took a sentence or an action, associated with a certain person, as a starting point, for example “Isocrates says that the root of education is bitter but that its fruits are sweet”. Based on a model in eight steps including praise, paraphrase, cause, contrary,

²³² Clark (1957): 63.

²³³ Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 1.9 and 2.4.

²³⁴ Clark (1957) dates Theon to the second century, although it is nowadays agreed that he lived during the first century, see Walker (2011): 25. Cizek (1994): 243 believes that Quintilian knew Theon, since there are close points of similarities between them.

²³⁵ See also Murphy (2001): 62-74 for a survey of the progymnasmata.

parabola, example, testimony, and a brief epilogue, the student composed his essay.

4. *γνώμη/sententia*: The exercise of *sententia* was composed in the same way as the *chria*, but started from a declarative sentence, for example “A man who is a counselor should not sleep all night”.²³⁶
5. *ἀνασκευή/refutatio*: The *refutatio* aimed to refute a statement, for example that the accusations against Ajax are not plausible. The student started to speak ill of the informant, and continued with an exposition of the cause. After that came the arguments, ending up in a conclusion.
6. *κατασκευή/confirmatio*: The exercise of *confirmatio* shared the same idea and construction as the previous type, with the difference that the statement was to be confirmed instead of refuted.
7. *κοινὸς τόπος/locus communis*: The *locus communis* is not to be confused with the rhetorical term meaning the store supplying with arguments. The *locus communis* as a progymnasma is a speech that stresses, and even amplifies, the evil or the good in a person or a deed.
8. *ἐγκώμιον/encomium*: This speech praised not only human beings, but also things, times, places, animals, and even plants. Origin, background, education and achievements were qualities worth mentioning. The *encomium* concluded with a comparison to another thing that the praised object surpassed.
9. *ψόγος/vituperatio*: The *vituperatio* was the opposite to *laudatio*, though constructed in the same way.
10. *σύγκρισις/comparatio*: The *comparatio* used the same *loci* as in exercise eight and nine. Two persons were compared, for instance Achilles and Hector.
11. *ἠθοποιία/ethopoeia*: The aim of this speech was to characterize the speaker, to enter into his or her mind and compose a speech suited to a specific moment.
12. *ἔκφρασις/descriptio*: In this exercise the student practised describing a person, an animal, a thing or a place.
13. *θέσις/thesis*: The *thesis* was an investigating essay often answering a question of inner deliberation, for example “Should one marry or not?”. The question was discussed with pro- and contra-arguments.

²³⁶ Gibson (2008): 89.

14. νόμος or νόμον εἰσφορά/*legislatio*: In the *legislatio* the student pleaded for or against a law. It can be seen as a progression of the *thesis*: what is right for the private person should also be defined as public law for all citizens.

To these can be added the Roman *declamationes*, which consisted of:

- a) *Suasoria*: The *suasoria* derived from the *thesis* and was a deliberative exercise aiming at giving advice in one direction or another.
- b) *Controversia*: The *controversia* was a judicial exercise which outlined a legal case, in which the student was to speak for one side.

We learned from Seneca that imitation of masters was incorporated into the practice of the exercises. I am prone to think of the systematic progymnasmata training as prerequisite for the intertextual tradition in literary Rome. It encouraged pupils to comment on and take a position against what someone else had written before. When Richard Thomas defines Virgil's *Georgics* as a poetic version of Varro's prose text *De Re Rustica*,²³⁷ it reminds of one of the standard procedures in the progymnasmata programme: to convert a text into another genre or language.

2.7 The *Heroides* as *suasoriae*?

The *Heroides* have not only been called *ethopoeiae* but also *suasoriae*.²³⁸ The Roman school exercise *suasoria* was a development from the Greek progymnasma *thesis*, which was a deliberative exercise. The student was to advise a person which path to choose in an important matter. The difference between *thesis* and *suasoria* is that the latter gives advice to a historical person, for example whether *Cato* should marry or not, instead of whether *one* should marry or not. Whereas the *suasoria* is directed outwards, the *thesis* is more about inner deliberation. It is true that most of the writers of the *Heroides* want their recipients to act in one direction, but the aim is rather

²³⁷ Thomas (1999): 142-172.

²³⁸ Otis (1970): 17. Conte (1994b): 348: "...the influence of the rhetorical exercise of the *suasoria* is evident"; Volk (2010): 68. For a survey of the *suasoria*, see Clark (1957): 218-228.

complaining and lamenting than advising. Yet, there are similarities. In fact, Quintilian sorted the ethopoeia, or the *prosopopoeia*,²³⁹ as he, like Theon, calls it, under the *suasoria*, claiming it to be almost the same thing, except for the characterization.²⁴⁰ Nicolaus reports a claimed kinship between the two exercises.²⁴¹

In Seneca's *Suasoriae*, seven models of the exercise are presented, as delivered and explained by famous rhetoricians. They are:

1. *Deliberat Alexander an Oceanum navigat* (Alexander deliberates whether to sail the ocean).
2. *Trecenti Lacones contra Xerseni missi, cum trecenti ex omni Graecia missi fugissent, deliberant an et ipsi fugiant* (After the three hundred sent from all over Greece had fled, the three hundred Spartans sent against Xerxes, deliberate whether they too should flee).
3. *Deliberat Agamemnon an Iphigeniam immolet negante Calchante aliter navigari fas esse* (Agamemnon deliberates whether he should sacrifice Iphigenia, since Calchas says that it is otherwise not permitted to sail).
4. *Deliberat Alexander Magnus an Babylona intret cum denuntiandum esset illi responso auguris periculum* (Alexander the Great deliberates whether to enter Babylon after a danger has been announced him through the answer of an augur).
5. *Deliberant Athenienses an trophaea Persica tollant, Xerse minante rediturum se nisi tollerentur* (The Athenians deliberate whether they shall remove the Persian war-trophies, although Xerxes threatens that he will return unless they do so).
6. *Deliberat Cicero an Antonium deprecetur* (Cicero deliberates whether he should ask Antonius' forgiveness).
7. *Deliberat Cicero an scripta sua conburat, promittente Antonio incolumitatem si fecisset* (Cicero deliberates whether to burn his writings, when Antonius promises to spare his life if doing so).

²³⁹ There is a slight confusion about the term. Nicolaus 65 writes that some speak of a *prosopopoeia* when they mean an *ethopoeia*. Theon 115 does not distinguish between the two, but uses the term *prosopopoeia*. Those who according to Nicolaus have the best opinion, define the *prosopopoeia* as an exercise in which the writer invents the character, and the *ethopoeia* in which the character is already known.

²⁴⁰ Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 3.8.52.

²⁴¹ Nicolaus 63.

That the titles of the *suasoriae* do not fit with the letters of the *Heroides* becomes here quite clear. One criterium for a deliberative text, such as a *suasoria*, is that the speaker pleads for the one of two sides, but the heroines do not deliberate on two alternatives. Secondly, the *suasoriae* do not speak in the first person (as the heroines do), although it seems so, judging from the titles. While the protagonist is deliberating upon the matter, the speaker plays the part of the adviser, recommending to him what decision to make. He, not the speaker, is in focus.

The *suasoria* moves in and points towards the historical-mythological sphere. It defines a concrete situation, just like the *ethopoeia*. In addition, the character and the situation must be taken into account.²⁴² In the commentary to the first of the *suasoriae*, the one concerning whether Alexander should sail or not, Seneca cites Cestius, who claims that the opinion presented to the recipient must differ depending on where it is expressed: in a free country or in a country ruled by kings. In the later case, the king's personality must be considered as well. In this case, Alexander is considered as arrogant with elements of megalomania. Further, the speaker must not forget that he is speaking to a king and thus show reverence.

An example of a completed literary *suasoria* can be seen in Juvenal's sixth satire. Here, the poet seeks to persuade his friend Postumus not to marry, whatever woman comes into his life, arguing that there is no reason at all to marry, "ducendi nulla videtur causa".²⁴³

In fact, even though I claim that the single letters are not, generally speaking, deliberative in their character, there is actually one exception. I agree with Jacobson's view that Phaedra's letter reminds one of a *suasoria*.²⁴⁴ Phaedra (ep. 4) aims not only at revealing her feelings for Hippolytus but also to convince him that she is right for him and that they should have an affair, without any moral reservations. In that matter she precedes Paris (ep. 16) and Acontius (ep. 20) in the double letters. They too court their addressees and, in contrast to Phaedra, they succeed. They still differ from the *suasoria* in that they do not give advice but argue in first person and for their self-interest. In spite of occasional elements of *suasoria* in the *Heroides*, these are not enough to justify an identification with the *suasoria*. Closer to hand is a comparison with the *ethopoeia*.

²⁴² Seneca, *Suasoriae* 1.5.

²⁴³ Juvenal 6.201-202.

²⁴⁴ Jacobson (1974): 151.

2.8 The ethopoeia

The *ethopoeia*, number eleven in the list of progymnasmata (see section 2.6), is often translated as "speech in character" or "impersonation". The challenge for the writer is to capture the words suited to the person speaking. Even more so, the ethopoeia has also to take into account the conditions under which the speaker delivers his or her monologue. Judging from papyri from Greco-Roman Egypt, ethopoeia was along with the *encomium* the most popular school exercise.²⁴⁵

The word *ethopoeia* deriving from the Greek words ἦθος and ποιεῖν means "creating an ethos".²⁴⁶ *Ethos* is about presenting a trustworthy appearance. According to Aristotle the three main components of infusing confidence in the audience are reason, φρόνησις, virtue, ἀρετή, and goodwill, εὖνοια.²⁴⁷ Aristotle had in mind a speaker whose aim was to convince. The *creating* of a fictive ethos, however, is about creating trustworthiness in how the speaker appears.

Before we move on, an important distinction must be made. The term *ethopoeia* can be used as general term for speeches or monologues intended to be delivered by any other person than the writer. Thus, every impersonation could be called an ethopoeia. It is in this wider sense we must understand rhetoricians like Aristotle or Cicero, who will be quoted in the next section, when they speak about the creating of an ethos. The school ethopoeia, presented above, was a formalized exercise with certain rules. Its purpose was presumably to train the students for the possible future challenge of writing texts having someone else in mind as the intended speaker. Throughout this chapter, the word *ethopoeia* will be used in the sense of the formalized school exercise.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁵ Cribiore (2001): 228.

²⁴⁶ Liddell & Scott (1968): 766, entry ἠθοποιία, suggests "formation of character" or "delineation of character".

²⁴⁷ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 2.1.5.

²⁴⁸ For a more detailed overview of the different uses of the term *ethopoeia* by ancient authors, see Hagen (1967).

2.8.1 The ethopoeia according to the rhetoricians

The concept of ethopoeia exists already in Aristotle.²⁴⁹ Aristotle, when speaking of creating an ethos, exhorts to adapt a style depending on who is the speaker. An educated man does not speak in the same manner as an uneducated one, a child not like an old man, a man not like a woman and a Lacedaemonian not like a Thessalian. He who is going to create the *ethos*, ποιήσει το ἦθος, Aristotle states, is he who "uses the language appropriate to each habit".²⁵⁰

Καὶ ἠθικὴ δὲ αὕτη ἢ ἐκ τῶν σημείων δείξις, ὅτι ἀκολουθεῖ ἢ ἀρμόττουσα ἐκάστω γένει καὶ ἔξει. λέγω δὲ γένος μὲν καθ' ἡλικίαν, οἷον παῖς ἢ ἀνὴρ ἢ γέρων, καὶ γυνή ἢ ἀνὴρ, καὶ Λάκων ἢ Θετταλός, ἔξεις δέ, καθ' ἃς ποιός τις τῷ βίῳ· οὐ γὰρ καθ' ἅπασαν ἔξιν οἱ βίοι ποιοῖ τινες. ἐὰν οὖν καὶ τὰ ὀνόματα οἰκεῖα λέγῃ τῇ ἔξει, ποιήσει τὸ ἦθος· οὐ γὰρ ταῦτα οὐδ' ὥσαύτως ἀγροῖκος ἂν καὶ πεπαιδευμένος εἴπειεν. (Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 3.7.6-7)

Character may also be expressed by the proof from signs, because to each class and habit there is an appropriate style. I mean class in reference to age—child, man, or old man; to sex—man or woman; to country—Lacedaemonian or Thessalian. I call habits those moral states which form a man's character in life; for not all habits do this. If then anyone uses the language appropriate to each habit, he will represent the character; for the uneducated man will not say the same things in the same way as the educated. (Translation: John Henry Freese)

It is of great importance that the character is visible in a speech. Cicero makes this clear in a letter to Atticus. Cicero writes that he is asked by Brutus to make corrections to and improvements in a speech before its publication,

²⁴⁹ This is not noted by Jacobson (1974): 325, who claims that "there is no evidence that the *ethopoiia* even existed in Ovid's time. Our knowledge of it and other *progymnasmata* derives from later sources such as Theon and Hermogenes (both second century) and Aphthonius (fourth century). Seeing in them an accurate reflection of an earlier period (even as far back as Hellenistic times) rests upon the assumption (not unreasonable) of a very conservative educational tradition."

²⁵⁰ Horace, *Ars Poetica* 114-118 expresses a similar thought concerning the characterization of the fictive speaker, although he does not use any rhetorical or literary terms for it.

the speech Brutus held on the Capitolian hill on the day after the murder of Caesar. Cicero comments: "ὁπότεσις vides quae sit et persona dicentis. Itaque eam corrigere non potui" ('you see what the theme is and the character of the speaker. Therefore I could not emend it').²⁵¹ The persona is not necessarily the writer of the speech – *persona* actually means 'mask' or 'role', a character in a play or a speech – but the speech has to make a true portrayal of the character, it has to *feel* authentic.

Quintilian, as we have seen, regarded already the fable as a difficult exercise. The *ethopoeia*, however, he ranks as the most difficult progymnasma,²⁵² since the writer must pay attention to the intended speaker and the circumstances in which he or she produces his or her speech. Thus: two speeches sharing a topic performed by two different speakers must be composed in two different ways (compare with the passage by Aristotle above). In order to be convincing, the text must be adapted to the speaker and his or her background and experiences:

Multum refert etiam quae sit persona suadentis, quia, ante acta vita si inlustris fuit aut clarius genus aut aetas aut fortuna adfert expectationem, providendum est ne quae dicuntur ab eo qui dicit dissentiant. At his contraria summissiorem quendam modum postulant. Nam quae in aliis libertas est, in aliis licentia vocatur, et quibusdam sufficit auctoritas, quosdam ratio ipsa aegre tuetur. Ideoque longe mihi difficillimae videntur *prosopopoeiae*, in quibus ad relicum suasoriae laborem accedit etiam personae difficultas: namque idem illud aliter Caesar, aliter Cicero, aliter Cato suadere debebit. Utilissima vero haec exercitatio, vel quod duplicis est operis vel quod poetis quoque aut historiarum futuris scriptoribus plurimum confert: verum et oratoribus necessaria. Nam sunt multae a Graecis Latinisque compositae orationes quibus alii uterentur, ad quorum condicionem vitamque aptanda quae dicebantur fuerunt. An eodem modo cogitavit aut eandem personam induit Cicero cum scriberet Cn. Pompeio et cum T. Ampio ceterisque, ac non unius cuiusque eorum fortunam, dignitatem, res gestas intuitus omnium quibus vocem dabat etiam imaginem expressit, ut melius quidem sed tamen ipsi dicere viderentur? Neque enim minus vitiosa est oratio si ab homine quam si a re cui

²⁵¹ Cicero, *Epistulae Ad Atticum* 15.1a.

²⁵² As previously mentioned, Quintilian, like Theon, names this exercise *prosopopoeia*. During Quintilian's time, every speech of character was to all appearance called *prosopopoeia*. See Theon 115 and Hermogenes 20.

accomodari debuit dissidet. Ideoque Lysias optime videtur in iis quae scribebat inductis servasse veritatis fidem. Enimvero praecipue declamatoribus considerandum est quid cuique personae conveniat, qui paucissimas controversias ita dicunt ut advocati: plerumque filii patres divites senes asperi lenes avari, denique superstitiosi timidi derisores fiunt, ut vix comoediarum actoribus plures habitus in pronuntiando concipiendi sint quam his in dicendo. Quae omnia possunt videri prosopopoeiae, quam ego suasoriis subieci quia nullo alio ab his quam persona distat: quamquam haec aliquando etiam in controversias ducitur quae ex historiis compositae certis agentium nominibus continentur. Neque ignoro plerumque exercitationis gratia poni et poeticas et historicas, ut Priami verba apud Achillem²⁵³ aut Sullae dictaturam deponentis in contione. (Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 3.8.48-53.)

It is of great importance who the character of the adviser is, because if he was famous in his past, if his family was of the more successful kind or if his age or fortune raise expectations, one must see that what is said corresponds to what he says. But what is contrary to this demands a more humble tone. For what is liberty regarding some things is called licence regarding others. For some, it is enough with authority, while sense itself hardly protects others. That is why prosopopoeiae to me seem as the far most difficult, for in this is added to the other labour of the suasoria the difficulty of the character. For Caesar has to advise the same thing in one way, Cicero in another and Cato in yet another. This exercise is indeed very useful, because it both means double effort and conveys much material for future writers of poetry and history. But it is necessary for orators too. For there are many speeches composed by Greeks and Romans for others to use, to whose condition and life the speeches delivered had to be adapted. Did not Cicero think in the same way or arrayed himself in the same character when he wrote for Gnaeus Pompeius, with Titus Ampius or others, or did he not reflect upon each person's fortune, dignity or achievements to which he gave his voice and even expressed an image, so that they seemed to speak better, but still from themselves? A speech is not less flawed if it disagrees with the man rather than with the subject to which it should be accommodated. That is why Lysias so well seems to have preserved the credibility in

²⁵³ Priam begging for the body of Hector, after Achilles had slain him.

those speeches which he wrote for the uneducated. To be sure, declaimers must particularly take into account what is suitable for each person. These declaimers deliver few controversias as advocates; mostly they become sons, fathers, rich men, old men, strict, gentle or greedy men, and then superstitious, timid or mocking men. Scarcely more postures must be produced by the comedy actors when proclaiming than by declaimers when speaking. All these can be viewed as prosopopoeiae, which I have sorted under suasoriae, since it differs from these in no other respect than the character. Sometimes, this exercise also leads into controversiae, which, composed from history, includes certain names of the ones acting. I am not unaware that poetical and historical themes are set thanks to this exercise, such as Priam's words at Achilles' place, or Sulla's words in the assembly as he renounces his dictatorship.

Quintilian stresses the importance of taking into account who the speaker is and whom he (or she) is talking to, and the relationship between the speaker and the recipient. The writer of the speech should adapt the style and the words to the person speaking. Caesar must not speak like Cicero even if they were to give the same advice. Quintilian regards this exercise useful since it provides future writers and orators with material. The exercise of ethopoeia thus served as practice for a professional career.

Lysias is often mentioned in relation to the ethopoeia. As a logographer, he was a professional speech-writer who wrote on demand. To write a speech of this kind called for an ability of insight into a clients' situation. The successful logographer had to be equipped with empathy in order to defend his client and make his speech trustworthy. Likewise, the student who studied the ethopoeia was expected to improve his empathetic qualities.

For the student, practising the ethopoeia could involve thinking himself into a female role. St. Augustine relates how he was instructed to write a speech from the mouth of Juno:

proponeretur enim mihi negotium, animae meae satis inquietum
praemio laudis et dedecoris vel plagarum metu, ut dicerem
verba Iunonis irascentis et dolentis, quod non posset Italia
Teucrorum avertere regem, quae numquam Iunonem dixisse
audieram. Sed figmentorum poeticorum vestigia errantes sequi
cogebamur, et tale aliquid dicere solutis verbis, quale poeta
dixisset versibus. et ille dicebat laudabilius, in quo pro dignitate
adumbratae personae irae ac doloris similior affectus eminebat

verbis sententias congruenter vestientibus. (Augustine, *Confessions* 1.17)

For an exercise was imposed upon me, causing sufficient unrest to my soul on account of the reward of praise or disgrace or even fear of receiving a beating. The task given me was that I would speak the words of Juno, who was angry and in mourning because she could not keep the King of Troy away from Italy – words which I never had heard Juno speak. Still, we were forced to follow the paths of fictive poetics, on which we were wandering, and to express the same thing in prose, what the poet had said in verse. And he spoke in a more laudable way, in whose speech appeared an emotion fairly similar to the rage and pain of the suitably disguised person, using words that aptly dressed the idea.

Exhorted by his teacher to create a speech, delivered by Juno in a given situation with pathos (“Iunonis irascentis et dolentis”) as a main component, it is obvious that Saint Augustine here is about to write an *ethopoeia*. Formulated as such, the theme would be “what words would Juno say realizing that she cannot keep Aeneas away from Italy?”. Augustine is supposed to borrow material from a literary model, most likely the *Aeneid* – we can assume that his teacher read the passage aloud – and put what the poet had expressed in poetry, into prose. The words had to suit the divinity of the goddess. In an earlier passage, Augustine mentions that he weeps for the sake of Dido,²⁵⁴ perhaps an indication that the students worked so hard with the texts and were familiar with the characters to such a degree that they felt empathy for them. The mental journey into a woman’s mind probably involved the greatest challenge for a school-boy. Students were allowed and encouraged to engage with “their” characters’ innermost feelings. As Bret Mulligan writes:

In practising *ethopoeia*, students were encouraged to fully immerse themselves in the feelings and circumstances of their character, with awards given to those who displayed the most convincing anger or who elicited the most sympathy from the audience. The emphasis on eliciting sympathy likely explains why so many of these speeches required (male) students to

²⁵⁴ Augustine, *Confessions* 1.13.

impersonate the perspectives and experiences of non-Roman women.²⁵⁵

The student who could make a credible portrait of an unhappy and desperate woman was prepared to compete with the tragedians. As we know, female characters often played the main part in tragedy. Likewise, Ovid's collection is a series of studies of different female characters, sharing more or less the same fate.

Since the female gender was considered to be more related to emotions than the male, the female ethopoeia, Kraus claims, gave the student an opportunity to practice the speech of pathos.²⁵⁶ When giving voice to a fictive woman, the student could allow himself to get absorbed in imagined grief and passion, emotions important for a speaker to be aware of, but difficult for a boy to exhibit lest he risked being regarded as effeminate.²⁵⁷

To Quintilian, the ability to feel moved by the speaker is essential:

Sed in schola quoque rebus ipsis adfici convenit, easque veras sibi fingere, hoc magis quod illic ut litigatores loquimur frequentius quam ut advocati: orbum agimus et naufragum et periclitantem, quorum induere personas quid attinet nisi adfectus adsumimus? (Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 6.2.36)

Yet in school too it is suitable to be affected also by these things, and to convey a mental picture of them being true – the more as we more often speak as litigants than lawyers. We are acting an orphan, a ship-wrecked person or someone standing trial: of what avail is it to array ourselves in their characters if we do not adopt their emotions?

Quintilian compares this kind of writing process with acting: in order for the part to be played convincingly, the actor who is speaking must *feel*. Horace expresses the same thought from the audience's point of view:

²⁵⁵ Mulligan (2014): 120.

²⁵⁶ Kraus (2007): 465-466.

²⁵⁷ Kraus (2007): 466.

Si vis me flere, dolendum est
primum ipsi tibi: tunc tua me infortunia laedent...
(Horace, *Ars Poetica* 102-103)

If you wish me to cry, you, first of all, must suffer: then your
misfortunes will torment me...

The key to arouse emotions in the audience is that we feel them ourselves, “ut moveamur ipsi”.²⁵⁸ Otherwise, the speech loses its point.

2.8.2 The ethopoeia according to the progymnasmata handbooks

Theon, Hermogenes, Aphthonius and Nicolaus incorporate the ethopoeia in their curriculum. In the hope of capturing the concept of the ethopoeia, I will here give excerpts from these four rhetors.²⁵⁹ As we have seen, Theon and Quintilian use the term *prosopopoeia* for the exercise. For the sake of simplicity, I will treat Theon as he is speaking of the ethopoeia – for that is what he has in mind when speaking of the *prosopopoeia*. Later rhetors, however, separate the ethopoeia from the *prosopopoeia* and the *eidolopoeia*. Hermogenes defines the *ethopoeia* as a speech of a real person, the *prosopopoeia* as a personification of a thing, for example the sea addressing the Athenians, and the *eidolopoeia* a speech of a dead person.²⁶⁰

Aphthonius gives the following definition:

καὶ ἠθοποιία μὲν ἡ γνώριμον ἔχουσα πρόσωπον, πλαττομένη δὲ
μόνον τὸ ἦθος· ὅθεν καὶ ἠθοποιία προσαγορεύεται· οἷον τίνας
ἂν εἴποι λόγους Ἡρακλῆς Εὐρυσθέως ἐπιτάσσοντος· ἐνταῦθα ὁ

²⁵⁸ Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 6.2.26.

²⁵⁹ For Theon, Patillon's edition (1997) is used; for Hermogenes and Aphthonius, Rabe's editions (1913 respectively 1928); for Nicolaus, Felten's edition (1913). Translations are also from Kennedy.

²⁶⁰ Hermogenes 20. See also Nicolaus 65. For a survey of the concepts of these three different types of speeches in character, see Cizek (1994): 279. Pignani (1983): 29 gives an example of an *eidolopoeia* in Nicephorus 45: 'what words would Ajax say as he sees Ulysses in Hades?'.

μὲν Ἡρακλῆς ἔγνωσται, τὸ δὲ τοῦ λέγοντος ἦθος πλαττόμεθα.
(Aphthonius 44)

Ethopoeia has a known person as speaker and only invents the characterization, which is why it is called "character-making"; for example what words would Heracles say when Eurystheus gave his commands. Here Heracles is known, but we invent the character in which he speaks. (Translation: George A. Kennedy)

The speaker is, thus, a character known to the general public. The task for the writer is to fill him or her with an ethos, a character, deciding "τίνας ἂν εἴποι λόγους": what words he or she would say.

Theon requires the speech to take into account the different circumstances regarding the speaker, the recipient and the subject. In accord with Aristotle, he stresses that a speech delivered by a man or a woman, a Laconian or an Attic, must be different:

πρῶτον μὲν τοίνυν ἀπάντων ἐνθυμηθῆναι δεῖ τό τε τοῦ λέγοντος πρόσωπον ὁποῖόν ἐστι, καὶ τὸ πρὸς ὃν ὁ λόγος, τὴν τε παροῦσαν ἡλικίαν, καὶ τὸν καιρὸν, καὶ τὸν τόπον, καὶ τὴν τύχην, καὶ τὴν ὑποκειμένην ὕλην, περὶ ἧς μέλλουσιν οἱ λόγοι ῥηθῆσεσθαι. Ἐπειτα δὲ ἡδὴ πειρᾶσθαι λόγους ἀρμόττοντας εἰπεῖν. πρέπουσι γὰρ δι' ἡλικίαν ἄλλοι ἄλλοις, πρεσβυτέρῳ καὶ νεωτέρῳ οὐχ οἱ αὐτοί, ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν τοῦ νεωτέρου λόγος ἡμῖν ἀπλότητι καὶ σφροσύνῃ μεμιγμένος ἔσται, ὁ δὲ τοῦ πρεσβυτέρου συνέσει καὶ ἐμπειρίᾳ. καὶ διὰ φύσιν γυναικὶ καὶ ἀνδρὶ ἕτεροι λόγοι ἀρμόττοιεν ἄν, καὶ διὰ τύχην δούλῳ καὶ ἐλευθέρῳ, καὶ δι' ἐπιτήδευμα στρατιώτῃ καὶ γεωργῷ, κατὰ δὲ διάθεσιν ἐρῶντι καὶ δωφρονοῦντι, καὶ διὰ γένος ἕτεροι μὲν λόγοι τοῦ Λάκωνος παῦροι καὶ λιγέες, ἕτεροι δὲ τοῦ Ἀττικοῦ ἀνδρὸς στωμύλοι. (Theon 115-116)

First of all, then, one should have in mind what the personality of the speaker is like, and to whom the speech is addressed: the speaker's age, the occasion, the place, the social status of the speaker; also the general subject which the projected speeches are going to discuss. Then one is ready to try to say appropriate words. Different ways of speaking would also be fitting by nature for a woman and for a man, and by status for a slave and a free man, and by activities for a soldier and a farmer, and by state of mind for a lover and a temperate man, and by their

origin the words of a Laconian, sparse and clear, differ from those of a man of Attica. (Translation: George A. Kennedy)

Note the words in the first line of the Theon-quotation: “τοῦ λέγοντος πρόσωπον”. What is this but the Greek original for the Latin translation *persona dicentis* used by Cicero and quoted in the previous section?²⁶¹ Without jumping to any rash conclusions, we can at least note that there existed a discourse on the rhetorical tradition of speeches in character.

Hermogenes makes a distinction between single characterization, which is the case for the speech composed as a soliloquy or an internal monologue, and double characterization, where the speech is directed at someone else.²⁶² Theon actually sorts letter-writing under this heading.²⁶³ For Nicolaus, the ethopoeia is valuable for different kinds of speeches and also for letter writing. Writing a letter, Nicolaus claims, forces the external writer to have in mind who the sender is and to whom and under which circumstances he or she is writing the ethopoeia:

Ἔστι δὲ καὶ τοῦτο τὸ προγύμνασμα πρὸς τὰ τρία εἶδη τῆς ῥητορικῆς χρήσιμον. καὶ γὰρ καὶ ἐγκωμιάζοντες καὶ κατηγοῦντες καὶ συμβουλευόντες ἠθοποιῶν πολλάκις δεόμεθα· ἐμοὶ δὲ δοκεῖ καὶ πρὸς τὸν ἐπιστολικὸν ἡμᾶς γυμνάζειν χαρακτῆρα, εἴ γε καὶ ἐν ἐκείνῳ δεῖ τοῦ ἥθους τῶν τε ἐπιστελλόντων καὶ πρὸς οὓς ἐπιστέλλουσι, ποιεῖσθαι πρόνοιαν. (Nicolaus 66-67)

This progymnasma is useful for the three kinds of rhetoric;²⁶⁴ for we often need ethopoeia when speaking an encomion and in prosecuting and giving counsel. To me, it seems also to exercise us in the style of letter writing, since in that there is need of foreseeing the character of those sending letters and those to whom they are sent. (Translation: George A. Kennedy)

²⁶¹ Cicero, *Ad Atticum* 15.1a.

²⁶² Hermogenes 21. This is not to be mistaken for the naming of the ‘single’ and ‘double’ letter of the *Heroides*.

²⁶³ Theon 115.

²⁶⁴ The three kinds of rhetoric: demonstrative, judicial and deliberative.

Demetrius may not be among the progymnasmata authors, but he is worthy a mention in this connection. In his treatise on style, Demetrius points to the epistle as being the best form to illustrate a character, which tells us that it is usable for the speech in character:

Πλεῖστον δὲ ἔχτω τὸ ἠθικὸν ἢ ἐπιστολή, ὥσπερ καὶ ὁ διάλογος· σχεδὸν γὰρ εἰκόνα ἑκαστος τῆς ἑαυτοῦ ψυχῆς γράφει τὴν ἐπιστολήν. καὶ ἔστι μὲν καὶ ἐξ ἄλλου λόγου παντὸς ἰδεῖν τὸ ἦθος τοῦ γράφοντος, ἐξ οὐδενὸς δὲ οὕτως, ὥς ἐπιστολῆς.
(Demetrius, *De Elocutione* 227)

Like the dialogue, the letter should be strong in characterization. Everyone writes a letter in the virtual image of his own soul. In every other form of speech it is possible to see the writer's character, but in none so clearly as in the letter.
(Translation: W. Rhys Roberts & Doreen C. Innes)

Three of the rhetors, Hermogenes, Aphthonius and Nicolaus, divide the *ethopoeia* into three periods of times, "τρεῖς χρόνους", or the *tria tempora*: present, past and future. Nicolaus presents the following structural scheme based on time in the passage below. Note that he defines the *ethopoeia* with the standard formula "what words would X say", here what words Peleus having heard of the death of Achilles would say, "ποίους ἂν εἴποι λόγους Πηλεὺς, τὸν θάνατον ἀκούσας τοῦ Ἀχιλλέως".²⁶⁵

ἀρξόμεθα οὖν ἀπὸ τοῦ ἐνεστῶτος, καὶ ἀναδραμούμεθα ἐπὶ τὸν παρεληλυθότα χρόνον, εἴτα ἐκεῖθεν πάλιν ἀναστρέψομεν ἐπὶ τὸν ἐνεστῶτα· οὐ γὰρ ἀμέσως ἤξομεν ἐπὶ τὸν μέλλοντα, ἀλλὰ μνημονεύσομεν διὰ βραχέων τῶν νῦν συνεχόντων καὶ οὕτως ἐξετάσομεν τὰ μέλλοντα. οἷον ἢ ἠθοποιία· ποίους ἂν εἴποι λόγους Πηλεὺς, τὸν θάνατον ἀκούσας τοῦ Ἀχιλλέως· οὐκ εὐθὺς ἀναμνησθήσεται τῆς παλαιᾶς εὐδαιμονίας, ἀλλὰ πρότερον θρηνήσας τὴν παρούσαν τύχην ἀντιπαραθήσει τὰ πάλαι αὐτῷ συμβεβηκότα ἀγαθὰ, τὸν γάμον τῆς θεᾶς, τὴν παρὰ τῶν θεῶν τιμὴν, τὰς πολλὰς ἀριστείας, εἴτα δὲ δακρύσει τὰ νῦν προστιθείς, οἷα ἐξ οἷων αὐτὸν περιέστηκε, καὶ οὕτως οἷον μαντεύσεται, πόσοις εἰκὸς αὐτὸν περιπεσεῖν κακοῖς δι' ἐρημίαν τοῦ βοηθήσοντος. (Nicolaus 65-66)

²⁶⁵ See also Hermogenes 21-22 and Aphthonius 45.

We shall, therefore, begin from the present and run back to past time, then from there again return to the present; for we shall not immediately come to the future, but shall make brief mention of present constraints and in this way we shall consider what is going to follow. For example, the ethopoeia "what words Peleus would say when hearing of the death of Achilles". He will not right off recall his former happiness, but he will lament his present misfortune before contrasting it with the good things that came upon him in the past – marriage with a goddess, honor from the gods, many valiant deeds; then he will weep for what has now befallen him, adding what circumstances, and from what sources, surround him, and thus, as it were, he will prophesy how many evils will likely befall him through the loss of one to aid him. (Translation: George A. Kennedy)

A formal ethopoeia is thus suggested to have the following order: the present, the past, the present and the future. It should begin with the present tense lamenting the unfortunate situation, continue with the past as a contrast to the present disaster, and ultimately go back to the present before closing with a prophesy of the evils of the future. The topic intrinsically demands lamentations of the present disaster, but not all ethopoeiae have themes of a deplorable nature. An ethopoeia presenting Hercules taking commands by Eurystheus (as Aphthonius suggested) will presumably not include laments or tears.²⁶⁶

Hermogenes, Aphthonius and Nicolaus distinguish between ethical, pathetical, and mixed ethopoeiae.²⁶⁷ Ethical are those which are dominated by the characterization of the speaker; pathetical are those in which emotion is a vital part; mixed are those which have a combination of both. As examples of each category Hermogenes mentions a farmer who for the first time sees a ship as an appropriate example of an ethical ethopoeia, Andromache's words over the dead Hector as a pathetical, and Achilles' words over the dead Patroclus as a mixed – ethical because of Achilles' future plans for war, and pathetical because of his sorrow.²⁶⁸ Peleus' words when hearing of the dead Achilles, as Nicolaus suggested above, must be regarded as a pathetical ethopoeia and the instructions drawn up according to

²⁶⁶ Aphthonius 44.

²⁶⁷ Hermogenes 21, Aphthonius 45 and Nicolaus 64.

²⁶⁸ Hermogenes 21.

its emotional character. Nicolaus makes clear that characterization is of greater importance in the ethical ethopoeia (which of course is indicated by its name) than in the pathetic. If we are to write an ethical ethopoeia for a coward, focus will be on the character of a coward, whereas a pathetic ethopoeia having the lamenting Andromache as the speaker will focus on the emotions. In the case of Hercules taking orders from Eurystheus, one can probably expect an ethical rather than a pathetic ethopoeia.

Aphthonius recommends the use of language with a plain style that is clear, concise and pure, free from any inversion and figure.²⁶⁹ Nicolaus, too, stresses the plain style, claiming it especially important for the pathetic ethopoeia, because a person affected by emotion does not care to speak in an adorned style; rather he or she will have a tendency to “say one thing after another”:

Χρὴ δὲ τὴν ἀπαγγελίαν κομματικωτέραν εἶναι μᾶλλον καὶ οἶον πρὸς <...> ἀλλὰ μὴ περιοδικῶς συμπληροῦσθαι· τὸ γὰρ περὶ τὴν φράσιν καταγίνεσθαι πάθους ἄλλοτριον, ἴδιον δὲ καὶ χαίρόντων καὶ θρηνοῦντων τὸ συντόμως καὶ διὰ βραχέων ἕτερα ἐφ’ ἑτέροις ἐπάγειν. (Nicolaus 66)

The expression should be in rather short phrases and, as it were, <natural>, not in full periods; for to be fussy about style is alien to emotion, and it is characteristic of those in joy and grief to say one thing after another, concisely, and in few words. (Translation: George A. Kennedy)

Furthermore, no introductions to the text or “narrations keeping to a succession of events” should be seen in an ethopoeia, according to Nicolaus.²⁷⁰ Such literary devices would only be an obstacle to the emotions expressed. Nor should the text be argumentative; the sole aim of the ethopoeia is to move the hearer to pleasure or tears, “ἀλλὰ μόνον κινῶν τὸν ἀκροατὴν εἰς ἡδονὴν ἢ εἰς δάκρυα”.²⁷¹

²⁶⁹ Aphthonius 45.

²⁷⁰ Nicolaus 67. Translation: George A. Kennedy.

²⁷¹ Nicolaus 67.

2.8.3 Model ethopoeiae

2.8.3.1 Selection

The progymnasmata programme was pedagogically well thought-out. In order to illustrate the instructions of the rhetors, ready-made ethopoeiae were available for the students to imitate. A considerable number have been preserved for posterity. By means of a selection of these along with the instructions from the handbooks, I intend to outline some common features of the ethopoeia. My sources are one ethopoeia by Aphthonius, twenty-seven ethopoeiae by Aphthonius' pupil Libanius, who worked as a sophistic rhetor in Constantinople, ten by his contemporary colleague Severus from Alexandria and twenty-seven by the 12th century Byzantic rhetor Nicephorus Basilaces.²⁷² Best known is probably the Niobe-ethopoeia by Aphthonius, as his progymnasmata were much used in Western Europe as late as the 17th century.

From these ethopoeiae, I have selected the ones dealing with known speakers from the mythological sphere. Thus, I have excluded the exercises concerning types (cowards, painters, eunuchs etc), orators and commanders and, in the case of Nicephorus, the ones with biblical characters as speakers.²⁷³ As this study aims to examine the lamenting women of Ovid's *Heroides*, closest attention will be paid to the female speakers delivering pathetic ethopoeiae. All in all, my selection numbers thirty-six ethopoeiae: the one by Aphthonius performed by Niobe; twenty-one from Libanius, of which six are delivered by women; five from Severus, of which one has Briseis as the speaker, and nine from Nicephorus, with three female speakers.

What words would X say in a certain situation? The standard formula of the ethopoeia as presented in the progymnasmata handbooks expresses the main aim of the exercise: to freeze a pivotal moment and give the speaker the suitable words for it. All ethopoeiae that I have come across have the superscription "what words would", *τίνας ἂν (εἴποι) λόγους*. Some examples are: What words would Medea say when she is about to murder her children? Achilles over the dead Patroclus? Polyxena when the order is given for her to be taken by the Greeks as they tell her that she is to become the bride of Achilles? Ulysses upon being trapped in the cave of the Cyclops? Briseis as

²⁷² Editions selected are: for Aphthonius, Kennedy (2003), for Libanius, Gibson (2008), for Severus, Amato (2002) and for Nicephorus, Pignani (1983).

²⁷³ In one case, ancient pagan and Christian tradition meet. In Nicephorus 39, excluded by me, Hades is to speak before the risen body of Lazarus.

she is abducted by the heralds? Zeus when seeing Io transform into a cow? Pasiphaë when falling in love with a bull?²⁷⁴

The most popular protagonists from Greek mythology in the selected ethopoeiae are Achilles, followed by Ajax, Hercules and Ulysses.²⁷⁵ Libanius gives Medea and Niobe two speeches each.²⁷⁶ Menelaus figures in both Libanius and Severus.²⁷⁷ In addition, Libanius present Andromache, Bellerophon, Chiron, Polyxena and Menoeceus as speakers.²⁷⁸ Briseis and Hector speaks in Severus,²⁷⁹ and in Nicephorus we find Atalanta, Danae, Zeus, Eros, Adrastus and Pasiphaë.²⁸⁰

2.8.3.2 Comic 'types' and comical elements

Although omitted in this study, I find it important to mention the ethopoeiae concerning types or 'indefinite persons', to use Hermogenes' term.²⁸¹ In Libanius, prostitutes, cowards, eunuchs and painters appear as speakers.²⁸² The two last types are found also in Severus.²⁸³ In Nicephorus a blind man, a seaman, a flutenist, a gardener and a girl from Edessa speak.²⁸⁴ It has been suggested that these types were borrowed from comedy.²⁸⁵ There is reason already here to point to the range of uses that the ethopoeia conveys. Depending on who is speaking and how the ethopoeia is formulated, it can either arouse tears or laughter – or both at the same time, when composed by a clever writer. Some of the situations indicate such possibilities. I am thinking of tragicomical and absurd situations such as what words Achilles would say when he falls in love with Penthesilea after her death, or a painter

²⁷⁴ The examples are, in the same order, from Libanius, Ethopoeia 1, 3, 16 and 23, Severus, Ethopoeia α and Nicephorus 45, 47 and 54.

²⁷⁵ Achilles figures in Libanius, Ethopoeia 3-4, 12-13 and 15 and Severus, Ethopoeia β; Ajax in Libanius, Ethopoeia 5-7 and Nicephorus 45; Hercules in Severus, Ethopoeia ε and Nicephorus 44 and 48; Ulysses in Libanius, Ethopoeia 23-25.

²⁷⁶ Libanius, Ethopoeia 1 and 17, respectively 8-9.

²⁷⁷ Libanius, Ethopoeia 21 and Severus, Ethopoeia γ.

²⁷⁸ Libanius, Ethopoeia 2, 10, 14, 16 and 22.

²⁷⁹ Severus, Ethopoeia α and δ.

²⁸⁰ Nicephorus 43, 46, 47, 51, 52 and 54.

²⁸¹ Hermogenes 20.

²⁸² Libanius, Ethopoeia 11, 18-20 and 26-27.

²⁸³ Severus, Ethopoeia θ and ι.

²⁸⁴ Nicephorus 38, 49, 53 and 55-56.

²⁸⁵ Cizek (1994): 280-282. Cizek exemplifies the comic ethopoeia with the farmer (in Hermogenes) who for the first time sees a ship.

when he falls in love with a girl he has painted.²⁸⁶ Comical elements are sometimes visible, as in Nicephorus' ethopoeia on Zeus reacting to Io's transformation into a cow, where the greatest of gods suggests that they two should unite in mooing.²⁸⁷ The comical effect is something that Horace draws attention to:

si dicentis erunt fortunis absona dicta,
Romani tollent equites peditesque cachinnum.
(Horace, *Ars Poetica* 112-113)

If the speaker's words are discordant from his fate, the Romans – ordinary people as well as from the equestrian class – will burst out laughing.

Actually, Quintilian recommends comedy in order to train orators:

...et nescio an ulla <poesis>, post Homerum tamen (...) aut similior sit oratoribus aut ad oratores faciendos aptior.
(Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 10.1.65)

...and I know of no other poetry, after Homer, that is more similar to the speech of the orators or more suitable in making orators.

Quintilian mentions Aristophanes, Eupolis and Cratinus and goes on to state that Menander's literature would be sufficient for the one aspiring to become a good orator:

Menander, qui vel unus meo quidem iudicio diligenter lectus ad cuncta quae praecipimus effingenda sufficiat.

²⁸⁶ Libanius, Ethopoeia 12-13 and 27.

²⁸⁷ Nicephorus 47.

In my opinion, Menander alone, read carefully, would be enough in order to express all the things that I have taught. (Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 10.1.69)

We saw Quintilian earlier speak of the orator adopting the manner of an actor (p. 94).²⁸⁸ Here, he takes the master of new comedy, Menander, as a model for orators. Cicero, after having delivered an impersonation in *Pro Caelio*, by the long-since deceased Caecus²⁸⁹ – an eidolopoeia in a wider, non-formalized sense –²⁹⁰ then turns to a play by Terence, from which he illustrates his speech with two fathers, quoting the play as if he himself was acting in a play for the theatre.²⁹¹ According to Matthew Leigh, Cicero's aim with this gesture is to "induce the jury to interpret the central events of the case as if they were drawn from a Roman comedy", thereby inferring the same moral conclusions in the legal case as in the drama.²⁹² The man whom Cicero defends, Caelius, was to be seen as a youngster, *adulescens*, and Clodia, whose reputation Cicero wants to smear, as a prostitute, *meretrix*.²⁹³ This reduction of characters into stereotypes might tell us an important thing not only of Cicero's means of persuasion and oratorical technique, but on speeches of characters as a whole. Could it be that their purpose was to caricature rather than to characterize, to concentrate on and exaggerate a few typical traits? Or is that limited to comic types only?

2.8.3.3 Niobe, Medea, Achilles and Andromache

We meet Niobe lamenting her dead children. The superscription of her pathetic ethopoeia reads: "What words Niobe might say when her children lie dead".

τίνας ἂν εἴποι λόγους Νιόβη κειμένων τῶν παίδων.

Οἶαν ἀνθ' οἴας ἀλλάσσομαι τύχην ἅπαις ἢ πρὶν εὖπαις δοκοῦσα;
καὶ περιέστη τὸ πλῆθος εἰς ἔνδειαν, καὶ μήτηρ ἑνος οὐχ ὑπάρχω
παιδὸς ἢ πολλῶν τοῦτο δόξασα πρότερον. ὥς ἔδει τὴν ἀρχὴν μὴ

²⁸⁸ Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 6.2.36.

²⁸⁹ Appius Claudius Caecus, consul in 307 and 296, builder of the Appian way.

²⁹⁰ Austin (1952): 90 calls this passage a *prosopopoeia*.

²⁹¹ Cicero, *Pro Caelio* 14-16 (34-38).

²⁹² Leigh (2004): 303.

²⁹³ Leigh (2004): 303-311.

τεκεῖν ἢ τίκειν εἰς δάκρυα. τῶν οὐ τεκουσῶν αἱ στερηθέντες εἰσὶν ἀτυχέστεροι. τὸ γὰρ εἰς πεῖραν ἦκον ἀνιαρὸν εἰς ἀφαίρεσιν. Ἀλλ' οἱμοι, παραπλησίαν ἔχω τῷ τεκόντι τὴν τύχην. Ταντάλου προῆλθον, ὃς συνδιητᾶτο μὲν θεοῖς, θεῶν δὲ μετὰ τὴν συνουσίαν ἐξέπιπτε, καὶ καταστᾶσα Ταντάλου βεβαιῶ τὸ γένος τοῖς ἀτυχήμασι. συνήφθην Λητοῖ καὶ διὰ ταύτην κακοπραγῶ καὶ τὴν ὁμιλίαν εἰς ἀφαίρεσιν εἴληφα παίδων καὶ τελευτᾶ μοι πρὸς συμφορὰς συνουσία θεοῦ. πρὶν εἰς πεῖραν ἀφικέσθαι Λητοῦς ζηλωτοτέρα μήτηρ ὑπῆρχον, καταστᾶσα δὲ γνώριμος ἀπορῶ γονῆς, ἣν πρὸ τῆς πείρας εἶχον εἰς πλῆθος· καὶ νῦν ἐκατέρων παίδων κεῖται μοι γόνος, καὶ τρηνεῖν ἀπορώτερον, ὃ κατέστη σεμνότερον. Ποῖ τράπωμαι; τίνων ἀνθέξομαι; ποῖος ἀρκέσει μοι τάφος πρὸς ὅλων παίδων κειμένων ὄλεθρον; ἐπιλείπουσι πρὸς τὰς συμφορὰς αἱ τιμαί. Ἀλλὰ τί ταῦτα ὀδύρομαι, παρὸν αἰτῆσαι θεοὺς ἑτέραν ἀλλάξασθαι φύσιν; μίαν τῶν ἀτυχημάτων θεθέσθαι λύσιν, μεταστῆναι πρὸς τὰ μηδὲν αἰσθανόμενα. ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον δέδοικα, μὴ καὶ τοῦτο φανείσα μείνω δακρυσουσα. (Aphthonius 45-46)

”What words Niobe might say when her children lie dead”

How great is the change in my fortune! – childless now, once seeming blessed with children. Abundance has turned into want and I who earlier seemed the mother of many children am now not the mother of one! As a result, I ought not to have given birth to start with, rather than giving birth to tears. Those deprived are more unfortunate than those not having given birth; for what has once been experienced gives pain when taken away. Alas, I have a fate much like that of my parent. I was begotten by Tantalus, who was banished from the gods after he had feasted with them, and descended as I am from Tantalus, I confirm the relationship by my misfortunes. I had an acquaintance with Leto and because of it I fare badly and the connection led to the loss of my children. Connection with a goddess brings me in the end to misfortune. Before entering rivalry with Leto I was a mother to be envied, but having become famous I am at a loss for offspring, which I had in abundance before the rivalry. Now my lot is one of weeping for each child and grieving at the loss of what was a source of pride. Where can I turn? What can I hold to? What kind of tomb

will suffice for the destruction of so many dead children? My honors have ended in misfortunes. But why do I lament (sic!) these things, when it is possible to ask the gods to change my nature for another? I see but one escape from my misfortunes, to change into a substance that feels nothing. Yet I am more fearful lest even in that form I may continue weeping. (Translation: George A. Kennedy)

Aphthonius' Niobe-ethopoeia is composed as an internal monologue, what Hermogenes would call 'single characterization', not directed to any certain person. Niobe starts without introduction, *in medias res*, complaining her fate, stressing with the words "δάκρυα", "γόος" and "δακρύουσα" that she is weeping.

The structure is a textbook example of the *tria tempora*. Niobe starts complaining about her present situation, in which fate has put her. After a philosophical reflection, she meditates on the curse laid on her family. The responsibility for this horrible crime lies not only with the twin gods, Apollo and Artemis, or with herself, but with the ancestral sins. Then, Niobe reveals the cause of her misfortune: she challenged Leto, the mother of two gods. Thus she accounts for what led to her misery. At the same time, she remembers the good times before the calamity occurred. As Nicolaus recommended, she then goes back to the present, saying that her lot is grieving. Her speech ends with speculations on what will happen next. The only way out, as she sees it, is to be transformed into stone. Here, she gives the expected prophecy at the end. Niobe foresees her destiny, expressing it as a kind of wish.

The principle of the *tria tempora* is visible in more or less all of the model ethopoeiae, although some follow it more strictly than others. Some slight variations of the principle of time are seen in Libanius. Achilles, falling in love with Penthesileia after her death, does not mention the future.²⁹⁴ Polyxena and Menoeceus do not give us any of their past.²⁹⁵ Ulixes in the cave starts, on the other hand, by telling us of his past events.²⁹⁶ Sometimes the present is interfoliated by a short reflection of the past in the very beginning, in order to tell what brought the speaker into the situation.²⁹⁷ The closing future quite often takes off from the present.

²⁹⁴ Libanius, Ethopoeia 13.

²⁹⁵ Libanius, Ethopoeia 16 and 22.

²⁹⁶ Libanius, Ethopoeia 25.

²⁹⁷ See Libanius, Ethopoeia 7.1 and 16.1.

The two Niobe-ethopoeiae by Libanius share similarities with the one composed by his teacher. Here too, Niobe mentions her tears explicitly. She laments the loss of her children and her lost state of motherhood. In her desperation, she exclaims that she should never have become a mother. Libanius' Niobe puts the blame on herself, and therefore, *she* should have been the victim of Apollo's and Diana's arrows, instead of her innocent children. Her self-reproach is part of her personality. Like Aphthonius' Niobe, the two Niobes of Libanius put rhetorical questions. Libanius' first Niobe-ethopoeia, number 8, has nine such questions in sequel in the beginning of the text and another six in the end.²⁹⁸ In Libanius 9, Niobe asks six questions in a row. Libanius 8 repeats the interjection ὦ fourteen times. As regards the tria tempora, Libanius 9 is more true to the scheme. Niobe starts by cursing the present disaster, describing briefly what has happened. She then accounts for her arrogance against the gods, regretting her transgression. She had the hopes of seeing her children marry. Then comes a row of questions in the future tense. Whom shall she first mourn? What will her future life look like?²⁹⁹ Niobe sees one release, expressed as a prophecy: either she can be transformed into a thing or die by suicide, executed by hanging, by throwing down herself into the sea or by wounding herself. Libanius 8 starts with the present – Niobe states that her children are dead – and closes with a threat to kill herself. In between, the past is mixed with the future.

The ethopoeia is said to be an exercise in characterization. Judging in what degree a speaker's personality appears is a hard task for the reader who has few or no ideas of how the person concerned may sound. What are we to expect from a young person or an old one, a man or a woman, a philosopher or a farmer? Presumably, there were fixed ideas about the mythological characters or types for the writers to take into account. Medea, for example, is "ferox invictaque", according to Horace's *Ars Poetica*:

Aut famam sequere aut sibi convenientia finge.
 scriptor honoratum si forte reponis Achillem,
 impiger, iracundus, inexorabilis, acer,
 iura neget sibi nata, nihil non arroget armis.

²⁹⁸ Libanius, Ethopoeia 8.3 respectively 8.9-10.

²⁹⁹ See also Severus, Ethopoeia γ4.

sit Medea ferox invictaque, flebilis Ino,
perfidus Ixion, Io vaga, tristis Orestes.
(Horace, *Ars Poetica* 119-124)

Either follow tradition or invent what is selfconsistent. If haply, when you write, you bring back to the stage the honouring of Achilles, let him be impatient, passionate, ruthless, fierce; let him claim that laws are not for him, let him ever make appeal to the sword. Let Medea be fierce and unyielding, Ino tearful, Ixion forsworn, Io a wanderer, Orestes sorrowful. (Translation: H. Rushton Fairclough)

Horace's instruction gives the impression that we are dealing with rather non-complex characters with fixed and static qualities. Or is Horace giving us the minimal standards?

Is Niobe in possession of any certain characteristics? Or is the aim of the writer of her ethopoeia rather to grasp the state of mind of a mourning mother? The many questions, the cries and the self-blame are indications of the latter. As the ethopoeia is pathological, is it reasonable to assume that the stress is on the emotions rather than the individual who expresses them? At least to Nicolaus, emotions seem to be placed above any other elements. Indeed, it seems as if the character becomes more of a type; in the case of Niobe – a mourning mother.

Another mother who loses her children is Medea, though in her case by killing them herself. Libanius gives her space for two ethopoeiae, one when Jason is about to leave her for the young princess and one in which she is about to murder her children.³⁰⁰ Whereas Niobe is entirely mother, Medea in Libanius 17 displays a spectre of her life, jumping from one element to another: her barbaric origin, her lost virginity, Jason's infidelity and his blasphemy against the gods. In the other ethopoeia, Medea meditates on her past, justifying her previous acts and her future plans. There are no traces visible of motherly care. Instead, Medea is finding arguments for her horrible deeds. She motivates and justifies them by adducing previous humiliations that she has been subjected to. She denies responsibility, blaming her future deed on her husband. He is responsible for all the evils to come. Her speech

³⁰⁰ Libanius, Ethopoeia 17 respectively 1.

reveals her evil character in this ethical (or mixed) ethopoeia. The closing passage of the text reads:

δεινὸν μὲν τὸ ἔργον, ἀλλ' ἀκόλουθον τῷ προτέρῳ. περὶ τὴν φύσιν ἀσεβήσομεν. τοῦτο πάλαι τετολμήκαμεν. ἀδελφοῦ φόνος ἐπὶ τὸν τῶν παίδων παραπέμπει φόνον. τῆς αὐτῆς ἐστὶ καὶ τοῦτο γνώμης, τῆς αὐτῆς δεξιᾶς. Ἦκετε, ὦ παῖδες, ὑπὸ τὸ ξίφος, ἦκετε. τοῦτο εἰς ὑμᾶς ὁ πατὴρ ὠθεῖ δι' ἐμοῦ. εἰ γὰρ ἐκεῖνος ἦν χρηστός, οὐδέν γε τούτων ἔδει. καλαί γε αἱ μορφαί, καλὸς ὁ τύπος τοῦ σώματος. ἀλλ' εἰκάσι τῷ πατρί. τοῦθ' ἡδίω μοι ποιήσει τὸν φόνον. Οἱ μὲν οὖν αὐτίκα κείσονται, ἐγὼ δὲ ἄνωθεν ἐξ ἁέρος μέσου τὸν ἀλιτήριον ὄψομαι, καὶ στένων καὶ πάντα ποιῶν βοήσεται μὲν, οὐ μὴν λήψεταιί μου. τοιούτῳ ζεύγῃ θαρρῶ δρακόντων. ἐπιβᾶσα δὲ τῶν Ἀθηνῶν ἐκεῖσε τὴν λύπην ἀποθήσομαι. (Libanius, Ethopoeia 1.9-11)

This deed is a terrible one, but consistent with the one before. We will commit impiety against nature. This we dared to do long ago. The murder of my brother brings me to the murder of my children. This, too, is the product of the same mind, the same right hand. You have come, O children, under the sword, you have come. Your father forced this upon you through me; for if he had been a good man, none of this would have been necessary. Beautiful are the shapes of your bodies, beautiful the lines of your features. But they resemble your father. This will make the murder sweeter for me. And so they will shortly lie dead, but I will see the sinner from above, from the middle of the air, and groaning and doing everything he will shout, but he will not catch me. From such a brace of yoked dragons do I take courage. And setting foot in Athens I will there put aside my pain. (Translation: Craig A. Gibson)

Medea reveals her plans to kill. The time structure of present (even though this tense gets little attention), past (which is given the largest attention) and future is followed. One part deals with Jason's challenges in Colchis, which, she claims, led to her ruin. Despite her support he, this brute ("ὁ μαρὸς οὗτος"), deceived her and gave nothing in return.³⁰¹ Life was better before all this happened. Medea was the daughter of a king, had a better reputation, her

³⁰¹ Libanius, Ethopoeia 1.4-7.

virginity intact and many suitors.³⁰² In her ethical ethopoeia, Medea has enough presence of mind to plan for the future without any emotions involved. Is Medea such as Horace claimed she should be? I believe she is. She is *ferox*, because she sticks at nothing. She is *invicta*, because she decides to take the most dreadful revenge she could ever conceive, and will afterwards leave the scene safe and sound.

In the passage from *Ars Poetica*, Horace also mentioned other characters. One of them was Achilles, who is represented in the ethopoeiae. Is he described in the ethopoeiae as he is in Horace, as impatient, passionate, ruthless, fierce and a law-transgressor who claims everything with the help of arms? Of the four speeches in Libanius from the mouth of Achilles, I can find only a few traces, not very convincing. In Libanius 3, Achilles mourns the dead Patroclus. Two thirds of the speech is a lament and not written very characteristically. The end, however, shows a resolute man who will go back to war and kill Hector. Now weaponless, he will, by the help from his mother, get new weapons with which he will be able to avenge his fallen friend. Without his weapons he is nothing; armed he is able to achieve anything. In Libanius 4, Achilles speaks before the Greeks when they are being beaten by the Trojans. He names his master Agamemnon as "ὁ νεανίας", which I think should be interpreted as the pejorative 'head-strong'.³⁰³ Otherwise the information of his character is scanty – but probably we are to think of him the way he is described by Agamemnon in the same ethopoeia: "δύσεριν καὶ φιλόνεικον καὶ ἀφόρητον καὶ βαρὺν", "contentious and quarrelsome and unbearable and grievous".³⁰⁴ In Libanius 12, Achilles describes himself as a man who used to "laugh in the ranks, considering battle a joke and assuming war to be women's work".³⁰⁵

One of the women represented in Libanius is Andromache (see also p. 210). Andromache speaks over the dead body of her husband. Hector has died, though she warned him. Not in her arms but at the hands of Achilles, he is now dead. His death means the ruin of his family and the whole city. Everything is destroyed and Andromache considers herself as the unhappiest of women. Andromache says she once had everything and was blessed. So it should have remained, but Achilles ruined everything. Andromache sees

³⁰² Libanius, Ethopoeia 1.3.

³⁰³ Liddell & Scott (1968): 1163, entry 'νεανίας'. Gibson (2008): 367 translates the word with "little man".

³⁰⁴ Libanius, Ethopoeia 4.5. Translation: Craig A. Gibson.

³⁰⁵ Libanius, Ethopoeia 12.2. Translation: Craig A. Gibson.

flames before her and Troy being taken. Andromache speaks to her son, fearing that someone will kill him – and her too. Or will her fate be to become a slave, maybe the mistress of the murderer of her husband – Achilles. The speaker Andromache opens by describing the situation, giving no background. She continues by lamenting her present condition, remembering a previous ideal state of things. A person guilty of her misery is pointed out. Next she predicts the future. She shifts from speaking in the first person to the second person, first addressing Hector and then her son.

Andromache does not try to find reasons for why the terrible thing happened, nor does she stress her own achievements, apart from stating that Hector neglected her warnings. Instead, Andromache mourns her present condition in contrast to the happy days she experienced in the past, stressing the injustice of life. One person, Achilles, is guilty of the catastrophe, and if it were not for him, things could have returned to as they were. While Niobe, as we saw, put the blame on herself, and Medea on her husband, Andromache puts the blame on Achilles. To Andromache, the future is associated with death, although she is not wishing death for herself. As if Andromache had prophetic gifts, she predicts the future and thereby anticipates her own story. Troy will burn. Her child will be killed. Andromache herself will perhaps become a slave and married to the enemy. The actual reader of her worries knows that Achilles dies in the war, and can therefore not be her bridegroom. His son Neoptolemus will instead take his place. Thus, we can see that Andromache is right on some points in her prediction, in some not.

Andromache's *ethopoeia* is close to the rhetors' instructions. One phenomenon, however, not mentioned there, is the addressing of someone other than the recipient of the speech. Libanius' Medea spoke to her sons. Andromache addresses both her dead husband and her son. Though nowhere recommended in the *progymnasmata* manuals, I have found it common in the *ethopoeia* that the speaker suddenly turns to somebody other than the one whom the speech is intended for.

2.8.4 Female speech?

According to Theon, a woman differs in language from a man by nature.³⁰⁶ In section 1.8, which dealt with repetitions, I put forward the idea that women's language was considered repetitive and staccative. We noticed

³⁰⁶ Theon 116.

Niobe uttering the word *Ω* fourteen times³⁰⁷ and also asking several questions in sequence (p. 107).³⁰⁸ In Nicephorus' ethopoeia delivered by Danae,³⁰⁹ the word for 'gold', *χρῦσος*, is mentioned twenty-four times (of which two in compounds, twenty-five if one counts the heading) and the word for bronze, *χαλκός*, in a text containing forty-three lines or roughly 350 words is repeated eight times. The text begins (the repeated word *χρῦσος* is given in bold style):

ὦ πάτερ Ἀχρίσιε καὶ χάλκεος παρθενῶν καὶ σωφροσύνης
προμήθεια, οὐδὲν ἡμῖν εἰς φυλακὴν ἐπηρκέσατε, **χρυσός** με
τυραννεῖ, **χρυσός** μου τὴν παρθενίαν ἀποσυλᾷ, **χρυσός** με
βιάζεται. ὦ **χρυσός** κάλλους ἐπίβουλος! ὦ **χρυσός**
φιλοπάρθενος! μηκέτι κόσμου χάριν, ὦ παρθένοι, **χρυσῶ** τὸ
σῶμα πιστεύετε... (Nicephorus 46)

O, father Acrisius, my virginal chamber of copper and my
forethought of self-control: you offered me no protection. **Gold**
is ruling me, **gold** is robbing my virginity, **gold** overpowers me.
O **gold**, plotting against beauty! O **gold**, lover of virgins! O,
virgins, do not entrust your body, a grace of beauty, to **gold**...

Is the lexical repetition due to the fact that she is a woman or a virgin or both? Or do she and Niobe express themselves repetitively in their state of excitement, respectively desperation, or to arouse pathos? Severus' Briseis repeats herself too.³¹⁰ Her first clause contains the word *μετά* thrice. *Ἑλληνες καθ'* opens the two following clauses. On the other hand, we can also note that Ajax is fond of asking questions in sequence.³¹¹ Is it possible that – as Nicolaus said – one, regardless whether they are male or female, in joy or grief says one thing after another (p. 100)?³¹² Presumably, women are considered more prone to sorrow and desperation, wherefore a repetitive language is more common among female characters.

³⁰⁷ Libanius 8.

³⁰⁸ Aphthonius 46 and Libanius 9.

³⁰⁹ Nicephorus 46, 'What words would Danae say when Zeus, transformed into gold, took her virginity?'

³¹⁰ Severus, Ethopoeia α.

³¹¹ Libanius, Ethopoeia 6.7-8.

³¹² Nicolaus 66.

2.9 Summary

My first encounter with Ovid's *Heroides* raised questions about the rhetorical nature of the poems. The stylistic figures, the questions and the arguments invited me to test whether the label of *ethopoeia* could be justified. Hitherto, without yet having examined the text, I can at least establish that the external conditions for Ovid to make such a collection seem to exist. Ovid is said to have taken a great interest in the training of rhetoric. From Seneca the Elder, we read that Ovid especially liked the exercises that involved speaking to or through a character. Furthermore, he borrowed *sententiae* from his admired teacher Latro and incorporated them into his own poetry. From Seneca, we learn that creative literary writing was practised in immediate connection with the *progymnasmata*.

The educational programme that Ovid underwent was a sophistic invention. The pedagogy of the Sophists was characterized by the treatment of a subject from different perspectives. The essential thing for the students was not to discover an absolute truth – on the contrary: reality should be interpreted from different points of views. This pedagogical idea not only reflected the sophistic philosophy but was considered to be an important quality to have for a politician, for a lawyer or for any speaker who was to accuse someone or defend himself or a client. The rhetorical exercises – the *progymnasmata* – showed a playful inventiveness, encouraging and enticing wit. It is a kind of mentality that is almost omnipresent in the poetry of Ovid. Ovid does not confine himself to one opinion, perspective or interpretation; instead, by means of his equivocal attitude, he inverts what was earlier stated.

Ovid's metapoetic comments include also his rhetoric. Eloquence is the strongest weapon for success, whether it concerns amatory matters or the challenge to lay hands on Achilles' weapons. On the other hand, his characters seem to fail in persuasion time and time again, as if they implemented the idea of unhappy love in Roman elegy. Likewise, Ovid on several occasions admits the monotony and overloading that he is accused of, but is still keeping to it, unwilling to change his style.

The *Heroides* invite us to enter the world of Greco-Roman mythology. Already the casting calls for attention. Where else in Roman elegy has the poet's ego been replaced by so many women? Where else can they speak without being interrupted? The answer is nowhere. In the *ethopoeiae*, however, mythological men and women from Greek epic and tragedy perform soliloquies.

From the instructions of the Second Sophistic school and by means of model ethopoeiae, I have distinguished central features for the ethopoeia. First and foremost, it can be summarized in the question “What words would X say in a certain situation?”. This superscription appears both in instructions and exemplary texts of the ethopoeia. The ethopoeia captures the speaker in a critical moment of his or her life. Although this is never explicitly stated by the rhetors, all the examples they give speak of moments of crisis or challenge. Some situations appear somewhat preposterous, which might be the point. It was a challenge for the student to create something out of the unexpected. Their absurdity is part of the playfulness, humour and disrespect.

The *tria tempora* are followed in the model ethopoeia, sometimes strictly, sometimes freely, not necessarily as grammatical tenses but rather as time aspects. Mostly, the monologue starts abruptly, without introduction, in the present with laments about the present conditions. Then it makes a reflection back in time. If the past was better, it should have continued that way. Someone is guilty of the catastrophe – and if it weren’t for him, her or that, none of the terrible things would have happened, if the speaker could choose. If the past was not better, here is an opportunity to tell what circumstances led to the present evil. Before closing, the present situation is sometimes again stressed. Finally, a prediction, a wish or a decision is made concerning the future, often involving death.

The ethopoeia focuses primarily on *who* is speaking; the message delivered is subordinate. The character must seem authentic. Thus, the aim was first and foremost to give credibility to the character and not necessarily to the arguments. If the arguments are not convincing, that might not be the point, as long as the character is coherent and convincing. Ethopoeiae depicted mostly heroes and heroines from the past, people from history and literature. How can they be depicted with credibility? How does one compose an ethopoeia which takes into account the speaker’s age, gender, origin, education, the recipient, the time and the place – in short, the whole situation? Apparently, some conceptions of the character and speaking mode of these characters existed, as it did with human types: old and young, men and women, farmers, Athenians etc. The portrayal of the character seems however to be relatively more important in the ethical ethopoeia – as the name reveals. The pathological ethopoeia, on the other hand, gives priority to emotions. As for the characterization, my impression so far is that only one or two characteristics can be discerned, that there exist prior assumptions of a character that must be taken into account. Niobe is a mother and speaks in *loci* typical of a mother. She is grieving, which colours her language. That

she is Niobe and no other grieving mother is revealed in the story of her killed children, in her hubris, in the curse of her family and in her transformation into stone, rather than in any psychologically drawn depiction. This information functions in a sense as attributes to her.

Some of the ethopoeiae are formed as internal monologues (so called single characterization). In cases where there is one recipient (so called double characterization), or even more – because it may be the case that the speaker unexpectedly addresses someone else – still, the speech is to be regarded as a solo performance with no other hearer than the speaker himself or herself.

Rhetorical questions, anaphors and exclamations appear frequently. The ideal for the ethopoeia was a plain style, which presumably is what the audience expects from a speaker in straits. Indeed, the style of the model ethopoeiae is not very elaborate. How is this consistent with the pedagogical pretension of imitating old masters when their literary quality is that mediocre? I believe these school exercises functioned as instruments for the students, models to compete with. A music teacher can instruct a series of chords that form a melody. The teacher can also teach recurring motifs and ornaments in order to decorate the melody. The young composer can deviate from what he or she has learnt – as long as he or she sticks to the model. Thus, frowning upon a comparison between Ovid's *Heroides* and the ethopoeiae, claiming it to be humiliating to have such a model, is a misdirected remark. In which case, Mozart would not have composed music of the highest quality out of 'Twinkle, twinkle, little star'. As I already have indicated and will show further, the language of Ovid's heroines is not always the most varied and exquisite, but presumably their language was aimed to be characteristic and the heroines thus trustworthy in their appearance.

If Ovid wrote his *Heroides* inspired by school ethopoeiae – were these his only inspiration or did he write in an existing tradition of which these were only a part? This will be discussed in the next chapter.

3 Ethopoeia in ancient literature

It can be questioned whether it at all is reasonable or scholarly justified to speak of influences on Ovid's *Heroides* when the texts compared to are that much later. Jacobson would probably consider it as a non-reliable method: "To be sure, anyone who promotes this theory makes himself an easy target for opponents. There is no evidence that the *ethopoiia* even existed in Ovid's time."³¹³ The comparison calls for a more or less intact tradition in Greek rhetorical education. Nicephorus' *ethopoeiae*, written a thousand years after Theon, follow the *ethopoetic* standards and diverge from other *ethopoeiae* only in the respect that they introduce Christian characters. Arguably, the Second Sophistic generation preserved the educational tradition that they had inherited from the first generation. Theon, Hermogenes and the other sophistic rhetors did not invent the *progymnasmata*, but followed a tradition that probably had been active for centuries. As Jeffrey Walker suggests, Theon is to be regarded as an administrator of a long-lived tradition.³¹⁴ As stated in section 2.8.1, rhetorical handbooks written before Ovid's lifetime mention the concept of *ethopoeia*. The model texts that Ovid was presented with were probably similar to the ones available to us. Even though the rhetors sometimes disagree about rhetorical labels, they do not differ on important matters. The Roman declamations were additions to already existing *progymnasmata*, and as such they cannot have caused any noticeable change of the standards of the rhetorical education. The Sophists were, certainly, known for their conservatism. From Libanius we learn that Greek language and its ancient literature were held in such esteem, that it is almost impossible to think of any changes to the curriculum. In his *Letters*, Libanius refers to and quotes only the old Greek writers: Pindar, Simonides, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes.³¹⁵ In a letter, Libanius criticizes his friend for not writing letters in Greek, underlining the importance of the old

³¹³ Jacobson (1974): 325.

³¹⁴ Walker (2011): 26. See also Frazel (2009): 26-27.

³¹⁵ Libanius, *Letters* 6.2, 24.3, 38.3, 60.4 and 118.6.

Greek masters: Homer, Hesiod, Demosthenes, Lysias, Herodotus and Thucydides.³¹⁶ Since the literary ideal was found in the old Greek masters, it is reasonable to assume that the authors of the progymnasmata handbooks took their models and inspiration from them. In fact, there exists ancient literary material which allows us to discover the ethopoeia before the time of the extant handbooks.

This chapter will offer examples of ethopoeia in ancient literature. For this purpose, I will introduce the term *literary ethopoeia* in order to separate it from the rhetorical exercise. As the name reveals, this ethopoeia claims literary pretensions. I will present the ones that I have happened to come across, renouncing any claims of forming a complete picture of their presence in ancient literature.

Henceforth, I will talk of the ethopoeia in the following different senses:

- *the school ethopoeia* or *the model ethopoeia*: the formalized exercise drawn up in the handbooks of the progymnasmata and practised in the written samples with which the rhetors provided their students,
- *ethopoeia in a wider sense*: a speech in character, without taking into account any formal rules, and
- *the literary ethopoeia*: ethopoeia as a text in ancient literature, from which the rhetors probably took their inspiration to the exercise.

Furthermore, I will distinguish the ethopoeia that functions as a text in its own right (an autonomous text) from the ethopoeia that is incorporated in a larger text. The literary ethopoeia as an autonomous text will be exemplified in the first part of this chapter. The poems of the *Heroides* will not be discussed here, since they will be treated separately in chapters five and six. The second and main part of this chapter will deal with the literary ethopoeia incorporated in larger texts, which I have discovered are to be found in Greek tragedy. The thought of finding the roots of the ethopoeia in Greek tragedy is exciting; however I will not speculate on which came first, the school ethopoeia or the literary ethopoeia, but merely dwell upon the observation that there is a connection.³¹⁷ Somehow, the concept of this type of monologue arose and continued to flourish in Greek literature, along with certain conventions attached to it.

³¹⁶ Libanius, *Letters* 181.4-5.

³¹⁷ For the relationship between drama as a whole and rhetoric, see Sansone (2012) who claims rhetoric had its roots in Greek drama.

3.1 The literary ethopoeia as an autonomous text

3.1.1 The letters of Aelian and Alciphron

Carol D. Lanham refers to 2nd and 3rd imaginary prose letters by the Sophists Aelian and Alciphron, claiming that these are, beside Ovid's *Heroides*, "splendid literary examples of fictional letters created in accordance with the rhetorical rules for *ethopoeia*".³¹⁸ On the whole, the collections do not exhibit remarkable parallels either with the school ethopoeiae or the *Heroides*. Mostly, they are short meditations on daily life or philosophical matters (a visit at a barber's shop, a reflection of a slave's behaviour etc). Thus, they remind one more of some of the letters by Cicero or Pliny. But there are exceptions.

The fictive writers belong to a group of people, sharing the same profession or social background. The twenty letters of Aelian are attributed to farmers. Roughly 120 letters divided into four collections are preserved from Alciphron. We meet fishermen, farmers (as in Aelian), parasites and courtesans, types from comedy that frequently occur in the school ethopoeiae. As the courtesans are writing letters to their famous lovers (for example the sculptor Praxiteles³¹⁹), it is tempting to think of them as literally related to the *Heroides*. Here and there we find angry writers exhorting the recipients to stay away from them or change their behaviour;³²⁰ otherwise their lives seem to be void of dramatic events. Epistolary greetings occur but are quite rare. Unexpectedly, some women appear among the fishermen, writing on subjects that do not seem to belong to a fisherman's world. A girl called Glaucippe writes to her mother Charope when she is about to marry a boy she does not want.³²¹ For her, it is impossible to marry the appointed husband-to-be, especially after she met another boy for whom her heart beats. Glaucippe reveals her emotional state and the reason for it – how she some time ago met this boy. If she cannot marry her new love, she will do as Sappho did – throw herself from the rocks. The letter has the structure of the *tria tempora*. It can be summarized as: What words would Glaucippe say as she is compelled to marry a boy she does not want?

³¹⁸ Lanham (2001): 111.

³¹⁹ Alciphron 4.1.

³²⁰ See for example Alciphron, 2.7 and 2.14.

³²¹ Alciphron, 1.11.

In another letter from the same collection, the fisherman's wife Panope writes to her husband Euthybolus in a marital crisis: he has fallen in love with a foreign woman.

What words would Panope say when her husband has fallen in love with another woman?

Πανόπη Εὐθυβόλῳ

Ἥγαγόν με, ὦ Εὐθύβολε, οὐκ ἀπερριμμένην γυναῖκα οὐδὲ μίαν τῶν ἀσήμεων, ἀλλ' ἐξ ἀγαθοῦ μὲν πατρὸς ἀγαθῆς δὲ μητρὸς γεγονυῖαν. Σωσθένης ὁ Στειριεὺς ἦν μοι πατήρ καὶ Δαμοφίλῃ μήτηρ, οἳ με ἐγγυητὴν ἐπικληρον ἐπὶ παίδων ἀρότῳ γνησίων συνῆψάν σοι γάμῳ. σὺ δὲ ῥάδιος ὢν τῷ ὀφθαλμῷ καὶ πρὸς πᾶσαν ἡδονὴν ἀφροδισίων κεχυμένος, ἀτιμάσας ἐμὲ καὶ τὰ κοινὰ παιδιά, Γαλήνην καὶ Θαλασσίωνα, ἐρᾷς τῆς Ἑρμιονίδος μετοίκου, ἣν ἐπὶ κακῷ τῶν ἐρώντων ὁ Πειραιεὺς ἐδέξατο. κωμάζουσι γὰρ εἰς αὐτὴν ἢ πρὸς θάλατταν νεολαία καὶ ἄλλος ἄλλο δῶρον ἀποφέρει· ἡ δὲ εἰσδέχεται καὶ ἀναλοῖ Χαρύβδεως δίκην. σὺ δὲ ὑπερβαίνων τὰς ἀλιευτικὰς δωροφορίας μαινίδας μὲν ἢ τρίγλας οὔτε φέρεις οὔτε θέλεις διδόναι, ἀλλ' ὥς ἀφηλικέστερος καὶ γυναικὶ πάλαι συνὼν καὶ παιδίων οὐ μάλα νηπίων πατὴρ παραγκωνίσασθαι τοὺς ἀντραστὰς βουλόμενος, κεκρυφάλους Μιλησίους καὶ Σικελικὸν ἱμάτιον καὶ ἐπ' αὐτῷ χρυσίον εἰσπέμπεις. ἡ πέπαισο τῆς ἀγρωχίας, καὶ τοῦ λάγνος εἶναι καὶ θηλυμανῆς ἀπόσχου, ἢ ἴσθι με παρὰ τὸν πατέρα οἰχισομένην, ὃς οὐτ' ἐμὲ περιόψεται καὶ σὲ γράψεται παρὰ τοῖς δικασταῖς κακώσεως. (Alciphron 1.6)

Panopê to Euthybolus

When you married me, Euthybolus, I was not an outcast and I was not a nobody; no, I was born of an honest father and an honest mother. My father was Sosthenes of Steiria and my mother was Damophilê; and they gave me, formally betrothed and their sole heir, in wedlock to you for the begetting of legitimate children. But you, with your roving eyes, have abandoned yourself to every wanton pleasure; with no regard for me or for Galenê and Thalassion, your children and

mine, you are enamoured of a foreign woman, the one from Hermionê whom the Peiraeus has taken in to the ruin of her lovers. All the young fellows along the coast hold revel in her house, and one after another brings his gift; while she receives and consumes like a Charybdis. But you outdo the usual gifts of a fisherman; you don't bring her sprats or mullets — you wouldn't want to give her sprats or mullets; no, since you are getting on in years and have long been married and are the father of children who are not exactly babies, and since you want to elbow your rivals aside, you send her snoods from Miletus and a gown from Sicily and gold to cap all. Either cease playing the nabob and stop being a lecher and crazy about women or, let me tell you, I shall be off to my father. He will not overlook my plight, and he will prosecute you before the judges for ill-usage. (Translation: Allen Rogers Benner)

By saying that she comes from a decent home, Panope is hinting that she is worth better than being treated like this. At the same time she gives us a typical ethopoetic locus: life used to be better, before someone destroyed it. The husband is pointed out as the guilty party of the marital crisis, and if he does not stop his behaviour, she will — and here comes the closing future tense — give him future evils, by seeing to it that her father prosecutes him. The order between the present and the past of the *tria tempora* is here reversed.

The sender is the deceived wife and the recipient the unfaithful husband, who should know better than to behave this way. It would actually be better if he gave his mistress fish — fisherman as he is! The only indication that we are in a setting of fishermen, is Panope's mention of fish and her husband as a fisherman. The fish functions as an attribute. Nothing else reveals the profession or social status (as far as I can judge) of her or him. No gifts are appropriate for a husband to give to a mistress, but if any, fish is at least the most suitable for him.

In another letter, Eunape, the wife of a farmer, complains about her husband's absence.³²² She, however, does not write her letter to him but to a female friend, describing how she suffers being alone while her husband is away doing business in town. Meanwhile, a lazy deputy is running the farm. On account of his negligence, a wolf is ravaging the stock.

³²² Alciphron 2.18.

What words would Eunape say when a wolf has killed animals of the farm? Using the *tria tempora*, Eunape starts by unburdening herself of the intolerable situation on the farm, thereafter that a wolf has mauled a kid. Her final reflection contains a fear that her husband will hang his deputy in the nearest tree when he finds out what has happened – here comes the prediction of future evils. Like Aphthonius' Niobe, Eunape tells us she is crying.

When the courtesan Thaïs writes to her lover – or client – Euthydemus,³²³ she is jealous and angry with him because he has started studying under a Sophist.

What words would Thaïs say when she hears that her lover visits a sophistic teacher? The teacher, Thaïs argues, is a misogynist and is not in the least better than a courtesan. "παιδεύομεν δὲ οὐ χεῖρον ἡμεῖς τοὺς νέους", 'we do not teach the young ones more poorly', she writes.³²⁴ Alciphron here not only exhibits a distance to his characters and subjects but also to his own profession. Apparently, a true Sophist should be prepared not only to make fun of his characters but also of himself.

The purpose in these letters seems to be the seizing on mentality rather than personality. These types of people have different tempers. The courtesans are self-conscious, more angry and hardened than Ovid's dejected and desperate women. The fishermen seem to live a peaceful life, whereas the farmers are more lively. The parasites are occupied with money and parties. Actually, in his last letter from farmers, Aelian makes a meta-comment on his writing:

...μὴ τοίνυν γεωργῶν καταφρόνει· ἔστι γάρ τις καὶ ἐνταῦθα σοφία, γλώττῃ μὲν οὐ πεποικιλμένη οὐδὲ καλλωπιζομένη λόγων δυνάμει, σιγῶσα δὲ εὖ μάλα καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ τοῦ βίου τὴν ἀρετὴν ὁμολογοῦσα. εἰ δὲ σοφώτερα ταῦτα ἐπέσταλταί σοι ἢ κατὰ τὴν τῶν ἀγρῶν χορηγίαν, μὴ θαυμάσης· οὐ γὰρ ἐσμέν οὔτε Λίβυες οὔτε Λυδοὶ ἀλλ' Ἀθηναῖοι γεωργοί. (Aelian 20)

So then do not be contemptuous of farmers; for in them too is wisdom of a sort—not elaborately expressed in speech nor decking itself out with forceful rhetoric, but conspicuous by its silence and confessing its virtue through its very life. If these written words addressed to you are too clever for the country to

³²³ Alciphron 4.7.

³²⁴ Alciphron 4.7.6.

supply, do not marvel; for we are not Libyan nor Lydian, but Athenian farmers. (Translation: Allen Rogers Benner)

Aelian's striving is twofold: to capture the Attic (not the Libyan or Lydian) *and* the agricultural spirit. The passage is almost an echo of Theon 116 (above p. 96), where the rhetor claims that a farmer's speech should differ from a soldier's, and the speech of a Laconian man from the one of an man from Attica.

Taken as a whole, these collections of letters have not very much in common with the collections of ethopoeiae that I have presented, with the exception of the few ones discussed above. These are written in a sophistic spirit known from the progymnasmata – and with the intention of capturing the essence of a type.

As regards the *Heroides*, I find Alciphron's imaginary female writings of interest as a comparison. Like Ovid's heroines, the women are unhappy with their absent men and are in the middle of an unbearable situation – although in some cases, the reader can allow him/herself to smile at their dramatic exaggeration of the matter.

3.1.2 *Anthologia Palatina*

Book 9 of *Anthologia Palatina*, a collection of poems presumably from late antiquity, offers a number of anonymous short poems in verse, sometimes regarded as being ethopoeiae.³²⁵ In the section of declamatory epigrams, thirty-one poems appear in which characters from mythology, both men and women, speak in certain situations.³²⁶ The poems comprise only four or five lines each, some of them even less. Already the modest length of the poems in the *Anthologia Palatina* allows us to observe ethopoetic traits. In their brevity, they give the impression of being fragments or sketches, reminiscent of the piecemeal writing process outlined in Seneca's *Suasoriae* and *Controversiae*. In creating the *declamationes*, the rhetors take turns in offering loci for the composition of the text: one argument here and one sententia there.

Some of the themes occur twice – a phenomenon we saw for example in Libanius (Medea, Niobe, Ajax and Ulysses) – which might be an indication

³²⁵ Russell (1983): 12 calls them "verse ethopoiiai"; Kraus (2007): 457.

³²⁶ *Anthologia Palatina* 9.449, 9.451-480.

that we are dealing with the educational ethopoetic tradition. Not rarely the poems are supplied with the typical superscription “τίνας ἂν εἴποι λόγους”, ‘what words would X say’. The themes are often Homeric with the Trojan War as the setting. Both single and double characterization are represented. We recognize several popular speakers from the ethopoeia, such as Achilles, Ulysses and Hector. Thirteen of the thirtyone poems have female speakers.³²⁷ In *Anthologia Palatina* 9.457, Achilles addresses the wounded Agamemnon. The six lines remind us more of an introduction to an ethopoeia than a finished poem. The last line looks like a transition to a passage intended to be in the past tense, but since the poem ends there, we cannot be certain.

What words would Achilles say after Agamemnon is wounded?

Ἔγνωνς νῦν, Ἀγάμεμνον, ἐμὸν φθισήγορα θυμόν·
 ἔγνωνς ἐν σταδίῃσιν ὅσον σθένος Ἑκτορός ἐστι.
 νῦν γάρ πάντες ὄλοντο τεῇ πολυπήμονι λώβῃ·
 σοὶ δ' αὐτῷ μέγα πῆμα φάνη, θανάτοιο χέρειον.
 ἄφροσύνης κακὰ ἔργα καὶ ἄσχετα πένθεα πάσχεις,
 ὃς πᾶσιν Δαναοῖσιν ἀρήϊον ἔρκος ἐτύχθης.
 (*Anthologia Palatina* 9.457)

You have now come to know, Agamemnon, my men-killing spirit. You have come to know Hector's strength in close combat. For now all have died because of your baneful outrage. A great misery seems to have come upon you, worse than death. You suffer the evil deeds of thoughtlessness and irrepressible laments, you who were the defence of Ares for all Greeks.

When we last looked at Achilles, in the discussion of Libanius' ethopoeiae (pp. 107-111), his personality did not appear very clearly outlined. According to Horace, he should be depicted as "impiger, iracundus, inexorabilis, acer, iura neget sibi nata, nihil non arroget armis", 'impatient, passionate, ruthless, fierce; let him claim that laws are not for him, let him ever make appeal to the sword'.³²⁸ The above cited passage takes place in the *Iliad* 11, after a battle

³²⁷ *Anthologia Palatina* 9.451-452, 9.454, 9.456, 9.462, 9. 465-466, 9.468-469, 9. 474-475, 9.477 and 9.480.

³²⁸ Horace, *Ars Poetica* 119-122. Translation: H. Rushton Fairclough.

in which Agamemnon and many of the Greeks have been wounded or even died. The setback is due to Achilles' refusal to take part in the battle. Still, he blames Agamemnon for the defeat. His inexorable stubbornness is evident here, although he himself chooses to furnish himself with the quality of a men-killing spirit, "φθισήνορα θυμόν". That he also is dependent upon his weapons, becomes clear in another poem, in which Achilles appears.³²⁹ It seems as though the ethopoeia stresses one or two characteristics which are traditionally associated with the speaker.

The next poem that I would like to cite deals with Eros, who has fallen in love. Here, I find a linguistic peculiarity (repeated words in bold type):

Τίς **πυρὶ πῦρ** ἔδαμασσε; τίς ἔσβεσε λαμπάδι **πυρσόν**;

τίς κατ' ἐμῆς **νευρή**ς ἑτέραν ἐτανύσσατο **νευρήν**;

καινὸς Ἔ**ρως** κατ' Ἔ**ρωτος** ἐμῷ μένει ἰσοφαρίζει.

(*Anthologia Palatina* 9.449)

Who is this that overcame fire by fire, who quenched a torch
with a torch? Who drew another bow against mine? A new
Love by my might contends on equal terms with Love.
(Translation: James Loeb)

Three lines, of which every line contains a noun inflected in two different cases – and a cognate word, "πυρσόν", in the first line. The Sophists' preference for word games and linguistic twists makes me inclined to regard this example of polyptoton as an ethopoetic trait.

³²⁹ *Anthologia Palatina* 9.460: "Μῆτερ, τεύχεα ταῦτα καὶ ἀγλαὰ δῶρα κομίζεις / ἀγχεμάχῳ σέο παιδί, τὰ μὴ πάρος ἔδρακεν ἀνὴρ· οἶδα δὲ νῦν ὅτι Παλλὰς ἐφ' Ἑκτορι χεῖρα κορύσσει / ἡμετέρην, καὶ Τρῳσὶν ἀεκέα λοιγὸν ἐγείρει.", 'Mother, you bring these arms, these shining gifts to your child who will fight man-to-man, such gifts that no man before me ever saw. Now I know that Pallas equips my hand against Hector, and stirs up shameful destruction for the Trojans.'

3.2 The literary ethopoeia as an incorporated text

3.2.1 Lucian, *Vera Historia* 2.35

The 2nd century rhetorician and satirist Lucian wrote his novel *Vera Historia* (*A True Story*, in the Greek original: *Ἀληθῆ διηγήματα*) as a parody of travel literature. After a trip to the moon and other exotic places, in this 'true' story, the I, Lucian, and his fellow-travellers meet Ulysses on the isle of the dead. The motif of catabasis to the underworld occurs in Greek myths and in the epics,³³⁰ as it does in the ethopoeiae – or rather eidolopoeiae (speeches of character in which the speaker is dead, p. 95). In *Anthologia Palatina*, we meet *Achilles* as he sees Ulysses in Hades.³³¹ In an ethopoeia – or eidolopoeia – by Nicephorus, *Ajax* speaks as he sees Ulysses in Hades.³³² In Severus, *Achilles* speaks from Hades hearing that Pyrrhus has devastated Troy, and *Hector* speaks as he hears that Priam has met Achilles.³³³ In *Vera Historia* 2.29, Ulysses hands over a letter to Lucian, to be delivered to Calypso. Whether the situation in which we find Ulysses can be classified as dramatic or not is not clear. It is *absurd*, though: he is actually dead, and from his letter we learn that he regrets that he left Calypso and declined her offer of immortality.

What words does Ulysses write when he finds himself dead (when he could have chosen immortality)? In the novel, the letter is incorporated – and reads:

Ὀδυσσεὺς Καλυψοῖ χαίρειν. Ἴσθι με, ὥς τὰ πρῶτα ἐξέπλευσα
παρὰ σοῦ τὴν σχεδίαν κατασκευασάμενος, ναυαγία χρησάμενον
μόλις ὑπὸ Λευκοθέας διασωθῆναι εἰς τὴν τῶν Φαιάκων χώραν,
ὕφ' ὧν ἐς τὴν οἰκείαν ἀποπεμφθεὶς κατέλαβον πολλοὺς τῆς
γυναικὸς μνηστῆρας ἐν τοῖς ἡμετέροις τρυφῶντας· ἀποκτείνας
δὲ ἅπαντας ὑπὸ Τηλεγόνου ὕστερον τοῦ ἐκ Κίρκης μοι
γενομένου ἀνηρέθην, καὶ νῦν εἰμι ἐν τῇ Μακάρων νήσῳ πάννυκτος
μετανοῶν ἐπὶ τῷ καταλιπεῖν τὴν παρὰ σοὶ δίαίταν καὶ τὴν ὑπὸ

³³⁰ Examples of descents to Hades in ancient literature: Ulysses meeting Agamemnon and Achilles among others (Homer, *Odyssey* 11), Aeneas meeting his father and others (Virgil, *Aeneid* 6) and Orpheus seeking his bride Eurydice (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 10).

³³¹ *Anthologia Palatina* 9.459.

³³² Nicephorus, Ethopoeia 45.

³³³ Severus, Ethopoeiae β respectively δ.

σοῦ προτεινομένην ἀθανασίαν. ἦν οὖν καιροῦ λάβωμαι,
ἀποδρᾶς ἀφίξομαι πρὸς σέ. (Lucian, *Vera Historia* 2.35)

Odysseus to Calypso, greeting. Soon after I built the raft and sailed away from you I was shipwrecked, and with the help of Leucothea managed to reach the land of the Phaeacians in safety. They sent me home, and there I found that my wife had a number of suitors who were living on the fat of the land at our house. I killed them all, and was afterwards slain by Telegonus, my son by Circe. Now I am on the Isle of the Blest, thoroughly sorry to have given up my life with you and the immortality which you offered me. Therefore, if I get a chance, I shall run away and come to you. (Translation: M. A. Harmon)

Ulysses does not lament his present state, as one might expect, nor does his specific characteristic – the inventiveness – show. He simply accounts for the last events in his life, very concisely. The style is plain. The important message to Calypso is that he, if he will get the chance, will do the impossible: to flee from Hades and unite with her. Apart from that the letter starts in the past and not in the present, it follows the ethopoetic time scheme. The end does not involve any thoughts of death – the speaker is already in Hades – but is written in the future tense. The reader is informed that Calypso weeps after reading it, but nothing is said about any letter in reply.

3.2.2 Ethopoeia in classical Greek tragedy

As the ethopoeia is a monologue and the writer was to imagine him/herself into someone else's shoes, it is natural to search for examples of ethopoeia in the drama. A connection to comedy has been mentioned. Regarding the formal aspects, it will prove more rewarding to look into tragedy. As the tragedians besides Homer were the most imitated authors at schools, it does not come as a surprise that the ethopoeia in concept, structure and loci can be found in the tragic monologue. To my surprise, though, I have not read any scholar who identifies the pivotal monologue of Greek tragedy with the ethopoeia or even mentions it as central. The dramatic monologue is, like the ethopoeia, an impersonation, it is about living the part of another character. In the hope of gaining sympathy from the audience, the speaker exposes him/herself in a dramatic soliloquy.

The terms 'dramatische Ethopoien' and 'lyrisch-dramatische Monologe' for Ovid's *Heroides* are however suggested by Eberhard Oppel.³³⁴ Oppel points to the presentation of the speaker's action and reaction as the crucial factor. It is, he claims, the fluctuation of emotions that relates the poems to Greek tragedy. In fact, Oppel calls the poems of the *Heroides* "Tragödienfragment".³³⁵ Other scholars make similar observations of the parallel to tragedy. Wilkinson deprecates the choice of an epistolary form for what in fact are "tragic soliloquies" and points to influences from the Euripidean drama.³³⁶ Verducci finds illuminating a comparison between the epistles of the *Heroides* and tragic monologues.³³⁷ Despite the obvious parallel of the ethopoeia's persona to the actor in a drama, and despite scholars' observations of it, the comparison has been neglected, Verducci continues. The reason, she says, is that Ovid's *Heroides* are said to lack expected virtues and features of the drama:

It has long been conceded that the epistles of Ovid's heroines reveal closer affinities to the dramatic monologue than to the rhetorical suasoria. But the implications of that distinction have not been assessed. Ovid's poems are said to lack the virtues of true drama and, by extension, of dramatic narrative.³³⁸

To Verducci, Ovid's epistles display women's "irrational mind engaged in passionate thought and rational second thought", suggesting this to be a heritage from the Euripidean plays.³³⁹

In the examples given below, I have continued with formulating ethopoetic questions in order to capture the situation facing the speaker. In cases where the monologues are too long to be read and commented on in one sequence, I have divided them, following the principle of the *tria tempora*.

³³⁴ Oppel (1968): 34 respectively 82; followed by Lightfoot (2009): 233.

³³⁵ Oppel (1968): 82.

³³⁶ Wilkinson (1955): 86 and 93-95.

³³⁷ Verducci (1985): 29: "There is, however, one other genre of verse composition to which the Ovidian fictive epistle, despite its differences, may be compared. That genre is the dramatic monologue."

³³⁸ Verducci (1985): 82.

³³⁹ Verducci (1985): 16.

3.2.2.1 Aeschylus

3.2.2.1.1 *Prometheus vincitus* 88-127

A soliloquy from Prometheus will be the first to illustrate the ethopoetic monologue in Greek drama. We hear the outcries of Prometheus, who has been chained to a rock by Zeus as a punishment for bringing fire to man.

What words would Prometheus say when he has been bound to the rock?

ὦ δῖος αἰθήρ καὶ ταχύπτεροι πνοαί,
ποταμῶν τε πηγαί, ποντίων τε κυμάτων
ἀνήριθμον γέλασμα, παμμῆτόρ τε γῆ,
καὶ τὸν πανόπτην κύκλον ἡλίου καλῶ.
ἴδεσθέ μ' οἷα πρὸς θεῶν πάσχω θεός.
δέρχθηθ' οἷαις αἰκείαισιν
διακναιόμενος τὸν μυριετῆ
χρόνον ἀθλεύσω.
τοιόνδ' ὁ νέος ταγὸς μακάρων
ἐξηῦρ' ἐπ' ἐμοὶ δεσμὸν ἀεικῆ.
φεῦ φεῦ, τὸ παρὸν τό τ' ἐπερχόμενον
πῆμα στενάχω, πῇ ποτε μόχθων
χρὴ τέρματα τῶνδ' ἐπιτεῖλαι.
καίτοι τί φημι; πάντα προυξέπισταμαι
σκεθρῶς τὰ μέλλοντ', οὐδέ μοι ποταίνιον
πῆμ' οὐδὲν ἥξει. τὴν πεπρωμένην δὲ χρὴ
αἶσαν φέρειν ὥς ῥᾶστα, γινώσκονθ' ὅτι
τὸ τῆς ἀνάγκης ἔστ' ἀδήριτον σθένος.
ἀλλ' οὔτε σιγᾶν οὔτε μὴ σιγᾶν τύχας
οἶόν τέ μοι τάσδ' ἐστί. (Aeschylus, *Prometheus vincitus*, 88-107)

O bright Sky, and you swift-flying winds, and river-springs, and
you countless twinkling waves of the sea, and Earth mother of
all, behold what I, a god, am suffering at the hands of the gods!

Look, with what indignities I am tormented, to endure these trials for endless years! Such a degrading bondage has been invented for me by the new high commander of the Blest Ones. Alas, I groan for my present suffering and for that which is coming: where can one fix a limit for these sorrows? But what am I saying? I have precise foreknowledge of all that will happen: none of my sufferings will come as a surprise. I must bear my destined fate as easily as may be, knowing that the power of Necessity is unchallengeable. And yet it is impossible for me either to keep silence or to speak about my fortunes.
(Translation: Alan H. Sommerstein)

Prometheus starts his lament apostrophizing the sky, the breezes, the river, the waves of the ocean, mother Earth and Sun. This is a useless cry as he cannot expect any reply. The appeal to Nature seems natural, as Prometheus has no one else to call upon. He has no hopes of having his prayer granted, but sees no other way out. Thus, the speech is an internal monologue rather than directed at anyone. His soliloquy is an outburst of feeling, intensified by exclamations such as "ὦ" and "φεῦ".

After an account of his dreadful conditions, Prometheus admonishes himself to pull himself together. His behaviour is explained by his profession as a seer. Not only can he foresee what will happen: as a wise man he should also be capable of self-restraint.

In the next section, Prometheus explains how he ended up fettered to a cliff:

θνητοῖς γὰρ γέρα

πορῶ ν' ἀνάγκαις ταῖσδ' ἐνέζευγμαι τάλας.

ναρθηκοπλήρωτον δὲ θηρῶμαι πυρὸς

πηγὴν κλοπαίαν, ἣ διδάσκαλος τέχνης

πάσης βροτοῖς πέφηνε καὶ μέγας πόρος.

τοιῶνδε ποινὰς ἀμπλακημάτων τίνω

ὑπαιθρίοις δεσμοῖς πεπασσαλευμένος.

(Aeschylus, *Prometheus vincitus* 107-113)

I am in this wretchedness, yoked in these constraining bonds,
because I gave privileges to mortals: I hunted for, and stole, a

source of fire, putting it into a fennel-stalk, and it has shown itself to be mortals' great resource and their teacher of every skill. Such is the offence for which I am paying this penalty, pinned in these bonds under the open sky. (Translation: Alan H. Sommerstein)

The cause of Prometheus' calamity was his great gift to mankind – fire. Without showing any sentimentality or nostalgia, Prometheus makes a retrospective reflection, simply pointing out the reason for his misfortunes. As with Niobe, hubris was his ruin. Unlike her, however, he neither blames himself nor anyone nor anything, but it appears that he feels unjustly and severely judged.

In his concluding section, Prometheus reflects upon what is happening to him in the present moment, realizing that the vision of the birds that hover above his head implies an omen, by which the audience is given a premonition that evil things are going to happen:

ἄ ἄ ἔα ἔα.

τίς ἄχῳ, τίς ὁδμὰ προσέπτα μ' ἀφεγγής,

θεόσυτος, ἦ βρότειος, ἦ κεκραμένη;

ἵκετο θερμόνιον ἐπὶ πάγον

πόνων ἐμῶν θεωρός, ἦ τί δὴ θέλων;

ὁρᾶτε δεσμώτην με δύσποτμον θεόν

τὸν Διὸς ἐχθρόν, τὸν πᾶσι θεοῖς

δι' ἀπεχθείας ἐλθόνθ' ὅποσοι

τὴν Διὸς αὐλήν εἰσοιχνεῦσιν,

διὰ τὴν λίαν φιλότητα βροτῶν.

φεῦ φεῦ, τί ποτ' αὖ κινάθισμα κλύω

πέλας οἰωνῶν; αἰθὴρ δ' ἐλαφραῖς

περυγῶν ῥιπαῖς ὑποσυρίζει.

πᾶν μοι φοβερόν τὸ προσέρπον.

(Aeschylus, *Prometheus vincitus* 114-127)

Hey, what is that? What sound, what scent has been wafted to me, unseen, from gods, from mortals, or from both together? Has someone come to this rock at the end of the world to be a spectator of my sufferings — or what do they want? Behold me, the prisoner, the god in misery, the enemy of Zeus, who incurred the hostility of all the gods who enter Zeus's courtsthrough being too friendly to mortals! Ah, ah, what is this rustling sound of birds that I now hear close by? The air is whistling with the light beating of wings. Whatever approaches me makes me fearful! (Translation: Alan H. Sommerstein)

The formal criteria of a (pathetical) ethopoeia are quite evident in Prometheus' monologue. Faced by a dramatic situation, Prometheus starts by lamenting, telling us what led to his misfortune – and then returns to his present emergency. Eventually, he worries about the imminent dangers, represented by the hovering birds. Unexpectedly, the seer does not prophesy in the end. Instead, he seems to be unknowing of what will happen, though he has claimed the opposite.

It is worth noticing that words are repeated in the same line or close to each other. Twice, Prometheus stresses the fact that he is a god, put out to punishment by the gods (repeated words in bold type):

ἴδεσθέ μ' οἷα πρὸς **θεῶν** πάσχω **θεός**. (line 92)

ὁρᾶτε δεσμώτην με δύσποτμον **θεόν**

τὸν **Διὸς** ἐχθρόν, τὸν πᾶσι **θεοῖς**

δι' ἀπεχθείας ἐλθόνθ' ὅποσοι

τὴν **Διὸς** αὐλήν εισοιχνεῦσιν,

διὰ τὴν λίαν φιλότητα βροτῶν. (lines 118-122)

Behold, what I, a **god**, am suffering at the hands of the **gods**!
(Translation: Alan H. Sommerstein)

Behold me, the prisoner, the **god** in misery, the enemy of **Zeus**, who incurred the hostility of all the **gods** who enter **Zeus'** courts through being too friendly to mortals! (Translation: Alan H. Sommerstein)

Here, Prometheus tells us that he can neither be silent nor speak:

ἀλλ' οὔτε **σιγᾶν** οὔτε μὴ **σιγᾶν** τύχας
οἷόν τέ μοι τάσδ' ἐστί. (lines 106-107)

And yet it is impossible for me either to keep silence or to speak about my fortunes. (Translation: Alan H. Sommerstein)

In the following lines, we find a more sophisticated play on words:

θνητοῖς γὰρ γέρα
πορῶν ἀνάγκαις ταῖσδ' ἐνέζευγμαι τάλας.
ναρθηκοπλήρωτον δὲ θηρῶμαι **πυρὸς**
πηγὴν κλοπαίαν, ἥ διδάσκαλος τέχνης
πάσης βροτοῖς πέφηνε καὶ μέγας **πόρος**. (lines 108-112)

I hunted for, and stole, a source of fire, putting it into a fennel-stalk, and it has shown itself to be mortals' great resource and their teacher of every skill. Such is the offence for which I am paying this penalty, pinned in these bonds under the open sky. (Translation: Alan H. Sommerstein)

The first word in bold type, "πορῶν", is a present participle meaning 'giving'. It is very similar to the last word "πόρος", which however is the word for 'passage-way' (here translated with 'resource'). In the middle we find a word central to Prometheus, "πυρὸς", 'fire'. The three words together form not only a phonetic assonance but also points out the key words for the passage: Prometheus *gave* the *fire*, which worked as a passage-way or a *resource* for the humans.

As plays on words and crafty lexical repetitions are as central to the Sophists as they are to Ovid's poetry, I find it noteworthy to observe the occurrence of such features also in a tragic monologue. Let us compare it with a line from Plato's *Symposium*:

Πανσανίου δὲ **πανσαμένου**, διδάσκουσι γάρ με ἴσα λέγειν
οὕτως οἱ σοφοί... (Plato, *Symposium* 185c)

Pausanias' praise made a pause with this phrase—you see what
jingles the schoolmen are teaching me! (Translation: W. R. M.
Lamb)

”The schoolmen” are “οἱ σοφοί”, the rhetoric-teaching Sophists. The witty
assonance is an allusion to the sort of linguistic devices that the sophistic
teachers were claimed to be fond of. As I pointed out in the introduction of
this chapter, it is not daring to assume that the extant handbooks from the
Second Sophistic school are quite conservative imitators of the First
Sophistic movement, and that the progymnasmata tradition was flourishing in
the Classical period.

Later in *Symposium*, Agathon gives his speech to Eros. Everyone seems
delighted – Socrates too, but it will appear that he actually is mocking
Agathon’s sophistic style. This, Socrates does ironically with a play on words
on the Sophist Gorgias (whom Agathon is said to admire) comparing him
with a gorgon who will turn him into stone:

ἀποδράς ὀχόμην, εἴ πη εἶχον. καὶ γάρ με **Γοργίου** ὁ λόγος
ἀνεμίμνησκεν, ὥστε ἀτεχνῶς τὸ τοῦ Ὀμήρου ἐπεπόνθη:
ἐφοβούμην μή μοι τελευτῶν ὁ Ἀγάθων **Γοργίου** κεφαλὴν
δεινοῦ λέγειν ἐν τῷ λόγῳ ἐπὶ τὸν ἐμὸν λόγον πέμψας αὐτόν με
λίθον τῇ ἀφωνίᾳ ποιήσειεν. (Plato, *Symposium* 198c)

For his speech so reminded me of **Gorgias** that I was exactly in
the plight described by Homer: I feared that Agathon in his final
phrases would confront me with the eloquent **Gorgias'** head,
and by opposing his speech to mine would turn me thus
dumbfounded into stone. (Translation: Harald N. Fowler)

3.2.2.1.2 Agamemnon 1214-1241

Another Aeschylian character bestowed with the gift of prophecy is
Cassandra, Trojan War-trophy of king Agamemnon. As she enters the hall of
Mycenae, she is struck by a sudden vision.

What words would Cassandra say as she comes to Mycenae and
experiences an ominous vision?

ἰοὺ ἰοῦ, ὦ ὦ κακά·
 ὑπ' αὖ με δεινὸς ὀρθομαντείας πόνος
 στροβεῖ ταράσσων φροιμίους †έφημένους†.
 ὁρᾶτε τούσδε τοὺς δόμοις ἐφημένους
 νέους, ὀνείρων προσφερεῖς μορφώμασιν;
 παῖδες θανόντες, ὥσπερ εἰ πρὸς οὐ φίλων,
 χεῖρας κρεῶν πλήθοντες, οἰκεῖας βορᾶς,
 σὺν ἐντέροις τε σπλάγχν', ἐποίκτιστον γέμος,
 πρέπουσ' ἔχοντες, ὧν πατὴρ ἐγεύσατο.
 (Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 1214-1222)

Iou, iou! Oh! Oh! The pain! The terrible agony of true prophecy is coming over me again, whirling me around and deranging me in the <fierce storm> of its onset. Do you see these young ones, sitting near the house, looking like dream-shapes? Children dead, as if at the hands of enemies, their hands conspicuously filled with the flesh on which their close kin fed, holding the offals and entrails — a most pitiable burden — which their father tasted. (Translation: Alan H. Sommerstein)

Using other exclamatory words than Prometheus, Cassandra begins her speech, directed to the chorus. The pictures that come to light are from the past, pictures which she incorporates into the narrative present. It is a horrible scene: Atreus, the father of Agamemnon and Menelaus, invites his brother to eat the flesh of his own children, prepared as dishes. The abominable crime has led to a curse upon the family (as in the case of Niobe). Cassandra's interpretation is that it will lead to total destruction in the future:

ἐκ τῶνδε ποινάς φημι βουλεύειν τινὰ
 οἰκουρόν, οἴμοι, τῷ μολόντι δεσπότη,
 †λέοντ' ἄναλκιν† ἐν λέχει στρωφώμενον.
 νεῶν δ' ἄπαρχος Ἰλίου τ' ἀναστάτης
 ἄτης λαθραίου τεύξεται κακῇ τύχῃ·
 οὐκ οἶδεν οἷα γλῶσσα μισητῆς κυνός,

λείξασα καὶ κλίναςα φαιδρὸν οὗς, δάκνει.
 τοιάδε τόλμαν θῆλυς ἄρσενος φονεύς·
 ἔστιν — τί νιν καλοῦσα δυσφιλὲς δάκος
 τύχοιμ' ἄν; ἀμφίσβαιναν, ἢ Σκύλλαν τινὰ
 οἰκοῦσαν ἐν πέτραισι, ναυτίλων βλάβην,
 θυίουςαν Ἄιδου μητέρ' ἄσπονδόν τ' Ἄρη
 φίλοις πνέουσας; ὥς δ' ἐπωλολύξατο
 ἢ παντότολμος, ὥσπερ ἐν μάχης τροπῇ·
 δοκεῖ δὲ χαίρειν νοστήμῳ σωτηρίᾳ.
 καὶ τῶνδ' ὅμοιον εἴ τι μὴ πείθω·
 τί γάρ; τὸ μέλλον ἥξει, καὶ σύ μ' ἐν τάχει παρῶν
 ἄγαν γ' ἀληθόμαντιν οἰκτίρας ἐρεῖς.
 (Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 1223-1241)

For this, I say, revenge is being planned upon the returning master of the house by someone who stayed at home—alas!—a cowardly wolf treating the master's bed as his own. The commander of the fleet, the destroyer of Ilium, is about to suffer an evil fate and meet a destruction that will spring from concealment: he does not know what kind of bite comes after the fawning tongue of that hateful bitch and the cheerful inclination of her ear. Such is the audacity of this female who murders a male; she is—what loathsome beast's name can I call her by, to hit the mark? An amphisbaena, or some Scylla dwelling among the rocks, the bane of sailors, a raging, hellish mother, breathing out truceless war against her nearest and dearest? What a cry of triumph she raised, as if an enemy had been routed in battle, this woman who will stop at nothing!—though she pretends to be delighted at his safe return. And if I don't persuade you that all this is true, it makes no difference—how could it? The future will come, and you will soon behold it, take pity on me, and call me all too true a prophet. (Translation: Alan H. Sommerstein)

Half of the speech is in the future tense. Prophetess as she is, Cassandra fills it with a prediction. Her own curse is not to be taken seriously as a

prophetess; although her prophecies always come true, she is never believed. Presumably, this is why the veracity of her prediction is being stressed.

3.2.2.1.3 *Choephoroe* 1021-1043

Orestes, son of Agamemnon, will be the one taking revenge for the murder of his father; accordingly he will have to kill his own mother and her lover Aegisthus. In the monologue below from *Choephoroe*, Orestes speaks in the presence of his attendants and the chorus. He just held a vituperative monologue over the dead bodies (973-1006), seemingly proud of his work. One could have expected an ethopoeia before this hideous act. Instead, it comes afterwards, when Orestes' mind has shifted from wrath to consideration. Whereas his first speech was about his mother's wickedness, the focus here is on himself and his emotions.

What words would Orestes say after having slain his mother and stepfather?

ἀλλ' ὡς ἂν εἰδῇτ'—οὐ γὰρ οἶδ' ὅπῃ τελεῖ,
ὥσπερ ξὺν ἵπποις ἡνιοστροφῶν δρόμου
ἔξωτέρω· φέρουσι γὰρ νικώμενον
φρένες δύσαρκτοι, πρὸς δὲ καρδίᾳ Φόβος
ἄδειν ἔτοιμος ἢ δ' ὑπορχεῖσθαι Κότῳ—ἔως
δ' ἔτ' ἔμφρων εἰμί, κηρύσσω φίλοις
(Aeschylus, *Choephoroe* 1021-1026)

Now, so that you may know—for I have no idea how this will end; I am already, as a horse-driver might say, charioteering somewhat off the track; my mind is almost out of control and carrying me along half-overpowered, and Terror is near my heart, ready to sing and to dance to Wrath's tune—but while I still have my wits, I make proclamation to my friends...
(Translation: Alan H. Sommerstein)

Orestes' speech begins in the present tense with the conjunction *ἀλλά* ('but'), which here has a contrastive function towards the recent events. The audience of the drama has of course followed the plot and can relate what has happened when Orestes utters these words. However, *ἀλλά* also occurs as the

introductory word in Libanius' ethopoeia 4 ("Ἄλλ' εἰ καὶ μὴ πρότερον..."). In a model ethopoeia (which is an autonomous text), we have no text to put it in relation to. This coincidence, I read as a relationship between the school ethopoeia and the tragic monologue. It is hard to otherwise explain why a model ethopoeia would start with an *ἀλλά*.

To return to Orestes: having spoken of his state of mind, he continues in the past tense to comment on his recent murder:

κτανεῖν τέ φημι μητέρ' οὐκ ἄνευ δίκης,
πατροκτόνον μίasma καὶ θεῶν στύγος·
καὶ φίλτρα τόλμης τῆσδε πλειστηρίζομαι
τὸν πυθόμαντιν Λοξίαν, χρήσαντ' ἐμοὶ
πράξαντα μὲν ταῦτ' ἐκτὸς αἰτίας κακῆς
εἶναι, παρέντα δ'—οὐκ ἔρῳ τὴν ζημίαν·
τόξω γὰρ οὐδεὶς πημάτων ἐφίξεται.
(Aeschylus, *Choephoroe*, 1027-1033)

...and say that it was not without justice that I killed my mother, the polluted murderer of my father, hated by the gods. And as my prime inducement to dare this deed I name Loxias, the prophet god of Pytho, whose oracle told me that if I did it I would be free from guilt and blame, but if I failed to—I shall not speak of the punishment: no archer could reach that height of suffering. (Translation: Alan H. Sommerstein)

Orestes feels no need to defend his act. The incentive for committing the crime was the prophet god Loxias claiming that Orestes could not be free unless he killed the murderers of his father. Still, the prophecy proved to be wrong: Orestes has not achieved the inner peace that he had hoped for.

Nicolaus advised against the use of arguments in the ethopoeia (p. 100).³⁴⁰ That is, however, what Orestes does in order to justify his slaughter. Orestes wishes to defend his deed and seek sympathy. According to the members of the chorus there is however no need. They answer Orestes, after his speech,

³⁴⁰ Nicolaus 67.

by saying that he has made a charitable action in liberating the city from its tyrants. Their answer comes directly after this closing passage:

καὶ **νῦν** ὁράτε μ', ὥς παρεσκευασμένος
ξὺν τῷδε θαλλῷ καὶ στέφει προσίζομαι
μεσόμφαλόν θ' ἵδρυμα, Λοξίου πέδον,
πυρός τε φέγγος ἄφθιτον κεκλημένον,
φεύγων τόδ' αἶμα κοινόν· οὐδ' ἐφ' ἐστίαν
ἄλλην τραπέσθαι Λοξίας ἐφίετο.
τάδ' ἐν χρόνῳ μοι πάντας Ἀργείους λέγω
<μνήμη φυλάσσειν> ὥς ἐπορσύνθη κακά,
ακαὶ μαρτυρεῖν μοι, Μενέλεως <ἐὰν μόλῃ>·
φεύγω δ' ἀλήτης τῇσδε γῆς ἀπόξενος,
ζῶν καὶ τεθνηκῶς τάσδε κληδόνας λιπών,
<|>. (Aeschylus, *Choephoroe*, 1034-1043)

And **now** see me, how, accoutred with this wreathed olive-branch, I will go as a suppliant to Loxias' domain, his abode at the central navel of earth, and to the light of the fire that is called immortal, fleeing this kindred bloodshed: to no other hearth than that did Loxias bid me direct myself. I call on all Argives <to preserve in memory> for me, as time goes by, how these evils were brought to pass, and to bear witness for me <if> Menelaus <comes home>. Now I go into exile, a wanderer banished from this land, leaving behind me, in life and in death, this reputation—<that in revenge for my father I killed my mother>. (Translation: Alan H. Sommerstein)

In the Greek text it can be noticed that Orestes marks the transition between the past and the future with a "νῦν" (*now*, line 1034, above marked in bold type) in the beginning of the sentence. Orestes is drawing attention to himself here and now, pondering on what to do next. He declares he will go into exile. It is neither a prophecy nor announcement of death, but as near death as one can come, as exile is something evil *per se*.

3.2.2.1.4 *Prometheus, Cassandra and Orestes*

Prometheus, Cassandra and Orestes are characters from three different tragedies. Apart from the ethopoetic form, their monologues may be seen as having little in common. Yet, they can be regarded as treating a similar situation from different aspects. Prometheus is tormented *physically*, bound to a rock as he is. Cassandra is tormented *visually* as she is struck by an ominous vision. Orestes is tormented *mentally* after having committed the horrible murder, which did not lead to the spiritual liberation that he wished for. All of them pick out causes for and effects of their calamities. For Prometheus, it was him giving the fire to man. Thus, he is the guilty one, although his punishment is not in relation to what he has done. Cassandra's vision includes the sin of the ancestors, which will lead to the disaster of the Mycenaean palace. Orestes, although he is a murderer, blames his mother for provoking this necessary deed. That his sense of guilt is due to his horrible deed does not seem to occur to him. Instead, he almost blames Loxias for having misled him into believing that this administering of justice would give him peace of mind.

In all three monologues, a prophetic gift is the chief concern. For Prometheus, he seems not to be able to use it, for Cassandra, she is cursed to make correct prophecies but is not believed, and for Orestes, his prophecy leads to an error. To treat a motif or a locus in three different ways is something we will see also in the *Heroides*.

The division into tria tempora is discernible. What is also common to the three monologues is the ethopoetic prediction of an evil future.

The initial word of Orestes' monologue deserves attention. When he begins with an "ἀλλ'", he thereby reflects and comments on previous events which have been related in the drama. When Achilles speaks the same word in a model ethopoeia by Libanius, the reader is not provided with such background information.³⁴¹ Thus, to start with a word that means 'but' in a autonomous ethopoeia appears abrupt, but can be explained by its kinship to the dramatic monologue.

³⁴¹ Libanius, Ethopoeia 4.1.

3.2.2.2 *Sophocles*

3.2.2.2.1 *Electra* 86-120

In *Agamemnon*, Cassandra commented on the future murder of Agamemnon, and in *Coephoroe*, we met Orestes commenting on it afterwards. The same story is told by Sophocles, though from the sister's point of view. Electra feels stuck and unfree, unable to release herself from pain.

What words would Electra say after the murder of her beloved father?

ὦ φάος ἄγνόν
καὶ γῆς ἰσόμοιρ' ἀήρ, ὥς μοι
πολλὰς μὲν θρήνων ᾤδάς,
πολλὰς δ' ἀντήρεις ἦσθου
στέρνων πλαγὰς αἵμασσομένων,
ὅπότεν δνοφερὰ νύξ ὑπολειφθῇ·
τὰ δὲ παννυχίδων κήδη στυγερὰι
ξυνίσας' εὖναι μογερῶν οἴκων,
ὅσα τὸν δύστηνον ἐμὸν θρηνηῶ
πατέρ' ... (Sophocles, *Electra* 86-95)

O holy light and air that has an equal share of earth, how many dirges have you heard me sing, and how many blows have you heard me aim against my bleeding breast, when dusky night has been left behind! And my hateful bed in the miserable house knows of the sorrows of my sleepless nights, how often I lament for my unhappy father... (Translation: Hugh Lloyd-Jones)

Like Prometheus, Electra addresses the light, the air and the earth, indicating that they alone hear her lamentations. Her loneliness will show in the line where she, addressing her father, says that she is the only one who is mourning him. Electra illustrates her grief by singing dirges and beating her breast.

A short account of the reason for her emotional state points out the two criminals: her mother and Aegisthus:

...ὄν κατὰ μὲν βάρβαρον αἶαν
φοίνιος Ἄρης οὐκ ἐξένισεν,
μήτηρ δ' ἡμὴ χῶ κοινολεχῆς
Αἴγισθος ὅπως δρῶν ὕλοτόμοι
σχίζουσι κᾶρα φονίῳ πελέκει.
(Sophocles, *Electra* 95-99)

...whom the bloody war-god did not make his guest in a
barbarian land, but my mother and her bedfellow, Aegisthus,
split his head with a murderous axe, as woodmen split an oak.

After this short section on the past, Electra returns to where she started: by
telling that she is alone in her grief:

κοῦδεῖς τούτων οἶκτος ἀπ' ἄλλης
ἢ 'μοῦ φέρεται, σοῦ, πάτερ, οὕτως
αἰκῶς οἰκτρῶς τε θανόντος. (Sophocles, *Electra* 100-102)

And from none but me does your due of lamentation come,
father, though your death was so dreadful and so pitiful!
(Translation: Hugh Lloyd-Jones)

In her concluding passage, Electra declares that her intention is to stay in her
gloomy mood:

ἀλλ' οὐ μὲν δὴ
λήξω θρήνων στυγεράων τε γόων,
ἔστ' ἂν παμφεγγεῖς ἄστρονρίπας,
λεύσσω δὲ τόδ' ἥμαρ,
μὴ οὐ τεκνολέτειρ' ὥς τις ἀηδῶν
ἐπὶ κωκυτῷ τῶνδε πατρώων
πρὸ θυρῶν ἡχῶ πᾶσι προφωνεῖν.

ὦ δῶμ' Αἴδου καὶ Περσεφόνης,
 ὦ χθόνι' Ἑρμῇ καὶ πότνι' Ἀρά,
 σεμναὶ τε θεῶν παῖδες Ἑρινύες,
 αἱ τοὺς ἀδίκως θνήσκοντας ὀρᾷθ',
 αἱ τοὺς εὐνὰς ὑποκλεπτομένους,
 ἔλθετ', ἀρήξατε, τείσασθε πατρός
 φόνον ἡμετέρου,
 καὶ μοι τὸν ἐμὸν πέμψατ' ἀδελφόν.
 μούνη γὰρ ἄγειν οὐκέτι σῶκῶ
 λύπης ἀντίτροπον ἄχθος. (Sophocles, *Electra* 103-120)

But I shall not cease from my dirges and miserable lamentations, so long as I look upon the sparkling of the bright stars, and upon this light of day, like the nightingale, slayer of her young, crying out loud and making loud proclamation to all before my father's doors. O house of Hades and Persephone, O Hermes of the underworld and powerful Curse, and Erinyes, revered children of the gods who look upon those wrongfully done to death, who look upon those who dishonour the marriage bed in secret, come, bring help, avenge the murder of our father, and send to me my brother! For I have no longer strength to bear alone the burden of grief that weighs me down. (Translation: Hugh Lloyd-Jones)

In this long passage, Electra says she will spend her future by mourning the death of her father. She turns to the gods of death and revenge in order to avenge the murder. She asks them to send her Orestes, so that he will execute the revenge and share her grief.

3.2.2.2 *Ajax* 430-480

Motifs associated with Ajax are his shame for having lost the competition against Ulysses, the madness put upon him by Athena, and the fear, because of his inferiority complex, of meeting his father. Most likely, Libanius sought inspiration for his three Ajax-ethopoeiae (5-7) in Sophocles' *Ajax*. His ethopoeiae capture three different situations: when Ajax is about to kill himself, when he sobers up after his madness, and when he is deprived of

Achilles' weapons. Libanius fetches material to the two first themes in this following passage, *Ajax* 430-480.³⁴² When we meet the Sophoclean Ajax, he is gradually coming to his senses after his madness. Feeling humiliated by the Greeks, he took revenge and attacked a flock of sheep which he thought were Agamemnon, Ulysses and other Greeks.

What words would Ajax say after having slain a flock of sheep?

αἰαῖ· τίς ἄν ποτ' ὤεθ' ὧδ' ἐπώνυμον
 τοῦμὸν ξυνοίσειν ὄνομα τοῖς ἐμοῖς κακοῖς;
 νῦν γὰρ πάρεστι καὶ δις αἰάζειν ἐμοί,
 [καὶ τρίς· τοιούτοις γὰρ κακοῖς ἐντυγχάνω·]
 ὅτου πατὴρ μὲν τῆσδ' ἀπ' Ἰδαίας χθονὸς
 τὰ πρῶτα καλλιστεῖ· ἄριστεύσας στρατοῦ
 πρὸς οἶκον ἦλθε πᾶσαν εὐκλειαν φέρων·
 ἐγὼ δ' ὁ κείνου παῖς, τὸν αὐτὸν ἐς τόπον
 Τροίας ἐπελθὼν οὐκ ἐλάσσονι σθένει,
 οὐδ' ἔργα μείω χειρὸς ἀρκέσας ἐμῆς,
 ἄτιμος Ἀργείοισιν ὧδ' ἀπόλλυμαι. (Sophocles, *Ajax* 430-440)

Alas! Who ever would have thought that my name would come to harmonise with my sorrows? For now I can say “Alas” a second time [and a third; such are the sorrows I am encountering], I whose father came home from this land of Ida having won the army's first prize for valour, and bringing home every kind of fame. But I, his son, having come to the same place, Troy, with no less strong a force and having performed with my own hand no lesser deeds, am thus perishing, dishonoured by the Argives. (Translation: Hugh Lloyd-Jones)

The opening interjection *Aiai!*, an expression uttered in pitiable circumstances, is worth giving some attention. Ajax gives the following comment on it: it suits his name. It is both a name and an interjection: thus,

³⁴² This is noted by Gibson (2008): 373-377, notes 79-81, 83, 97, 100 and 102, in which he refers to the passage of Sophocles' *Ajax* 430-480 in Libanius, *Ethopoeia* 5 and 6.

again another play on words. Ovid actually makes a similar comment on Ajax in his *Metamorphoses*.³⁴³

Ajax seems to think that he is worthy of honour, but that he is insulted and dishonoured by the Greeks. Instead of being horrified at the crazy and bloody slaughter of the sheep, he praises his deeds as if they ought to have been the object for greater appreciation.

After his account of his present state, Ajax turns to retrospection:

καίτοι τοσοῦτόν γ' ἐξέπιστασθαι δοκῶ,
εἰ ζῶν Ἀχιλλεὺς τῶν ὅπλων τῶν ὧν πέρι
κρίνειν ἔμελλε κράτος ἀριστείας τινί,
οὐκ ἄν τις αὐτ' ἔμαρψεν ἄλλος ἀντ' ἐμοῦ.
νῦν δ' αὐτ' Ἀτρεΐδαι φωτὶ παντουργῶ φρένας
ἔπραξαν, ἀνδρὸς τοῦδ' ἀπώσαντες κράτη.
κεί μὴ τόδ' ὄμμα καὶ φρένες διάστροφοι
γνώμης ἀπῆξαν τῆς ἐμῆς, οὐκ ἄν ποτε
δίκην κατ' ἄλλου φωτὸς ᾧδ' ἐνήφισαν.
νῦν δ' ἡ Διὸς γοργῶπις ἀδάματος θεὰ
ἦδη μ' ἐπ' αὐτοῖς χεῖρ' ἐπευθύνοντ' ἐμῇν
ἔσφηλεν ἐμβαλοῦσα λυσσώδη νόσον,
ὥστ' ἐν τοιοῖσδε χεῖρας αἰμάξαι βοτοῖς·
κεῖνοι δ' ἐπεγγελῶσιν ἐκπεφυγότες,
ἐμοῦ μὲν οὐχ ἐκόντος· εἰ δέ τις θεῶν
βλάπτοι, φύγοι τᾶν χῶ κακὸς τὸν κρείσσονα.
καὶ **νῦν** τί χρὴ δρᾶν; ὅστις ἐμφανῶς θεοῖς
ἐχθαίρομαι, μισεῖ δέ μ' Ἑλλήνων στρατός,
ἔχθει δὲ Τροία πᾶσα καὶ πεδία τάδε.
(Sophocles, *Ajax* 441-459)

³⁴³ In *Metamorphoses* 13.398, Ovid connects the fate of Ajax (after the Judgment of Arms) with the story of Apollo and Hyacinthus. The inscription on the hyacinth's petals alludes to Ajax, both as a name and a woe. For the story of Apollo and Hyacinthus, see *Metamorphoses* 10.196-208 (discussed below in section 4.6).

Yet so much I think I well know, that if Achilles were alive and were to award the prize of valour in a contest for his own arms, no other would receive them but I. But **now** the sons of Atreus have made them over to an unscrupulous fellow, pushing aside this man's mighty deeds. And if my eye and mind had not been turned aside, swerving from my intention, they would not have lived to vote such a decision against another man. But as it is the fierce-eyed untamable goddess, daughter of Zeus, overthrew me, casting a plague of madness upon me just as I was stretching out my hand against them, so that I stained my hands with the blood of these beasts. And they have escaped and are laughing at me; the fault is not mine, but if one of the gods does harm, even the coward may escape the stronger man. And **now** what must I do, I who patently am hated by the gods, and loathed by the army of the Greeks, and hated, too, by Troy and by these plains? (Translation: Hugh Lloyd-Jones)

Ajax is not in possession of enough self-criticism to see his own part in the events. The fault is not his, he insists, but Agamemnon's and Ulysses' for putting both him and the great Achilles aside. Athena is guilty of his madness, he claims, not being sound enough to understand that it was cattle that he attacked. It is true that Athena tricked him, but at the same time she actually saved him from committing murder on his leader and companions.³⁴⁴

Three *vũv* (marked in bold type, lines 445, 450 and 457; the second *vũv* is missing in the translation) bring us back to Ajax's present situation: the weapons are in the hands of Ulysses, and his former colleagues, now enemies, have escaped him and are laughing at him.

In the following section of Ajax's speech, his numerous questions (also present in the Ajax-ethopoeiae by Libanius) should be observed:

πότερα πρὸς οἴκους, ναυλόχους λιπὼν ἔδρας
μόνους τ' Ἀτρείδας, πέλαγος Αἰγαῖον περῶ;
καὶ ποῖον ὄμμα πατρὶ δηλώσω φανεῖς
Τελαμῶνι; πῶς με τλήσεται ποτ' εἰσιδεῖν
γυμνὸν φανέντα τῶν ἀριστείων ἄτερ,
ὣν αὐτὸς ἔσχε στέφανον εὐκλείας μέγαν;

³⁴⁴ Sophocles, *Ajax* 44-54.

οὐκ ἔστι τοῦργον τλητόν. ἀλλὰ δῆτ' ἰὼν
πρὸς ἔρυμα Τρώων, ξυμπεσὼν μόνος μόνους
καὶ δρῶν τι χρηστόν, εἴτα λοίσθιον θάνω;
ἀλλ' ὧδέ γ' Ἀτρεΐδας ἂν εὐφράναιμί που.
οὐκ ἔστι ταῦτα. πεῖρά τις ζητητέα
τοιάδ' ἀφ' ἧς γέροντι δηλώσω πατρὶ
μή τοι φύσιν γ' ἄσπλαγχος ἐκ κείνου γεγώς.
αἰσχροὺν γὰρ ἄνδρα τοῦ μακροῦ χρήζειν βίου,
κακοῖσιν ὅστις μηδὲν ἐξαλλάσσεται.
τί γὰρ παρ' ἡμᾶρ ἡμέρα τέρπειν ἔχει
προσθεῖσα κἀναθεῖσα τοῦ γε κατθανεῖν;
οὐκ ἂν πριαίμην οὐδενὸς λόγου βροτὸν
ὅστις κεναῖσιν ἐλπίσιν θερμαίνεται.
ἀλλ' ἢ καλῶς ζῆν ἢ καλῶς τεθνηκέναι
τὸν εὐγενῆ χρή. πάντ' ἀκήκοας λόγον.
(Sophocles, *Ajax* 460-480)

Shall I cross the Aegean sea, leaving behind the station of the ships and the sons of Atreus, and go home? And what kind of face shall I show to my father Telamon when I appear? How ever shall he bring himself to look at me when I appear empty-handed, without the prize of victory, when he himself won a great crown of fame? The thing is not to be endured! But am I to go to the Trojan wall, challenge them all single-handed, achieve some feat, and at last perish? No, in that way I would give pleasure, I think, to the sons of Atreus. That cannot be! I must think of some action that will prove to my aged father that I his son was born no coward. When a man has no relief from troubles, it is shameful for him to desire long life. What pleasure comes from day following day, bringing us near to and taking us back from death? I would not set any value upon a man who is warmed by false hopes. The noble man must live with honour or be honourably dead; you have heard all I have to say. (Translation: Hugh Lloyd-Jones)

An inferiority complex with regard to a successful father runs as a main thread through this Sophoclean ethopoeia. In both Sophocles and Libanius 5, Ajax finds it unbearable to continue living with shame. The adjective in line 473, "αἰσχρὸν", 'shameful', corresponds with "αἰσχύνομαι", 'I am ashamed' in Libanius 5.6. Ajax deliberates on his future fate. Rather than living with ignominy, death would be better. If he cannot *live* with honour, it is better to *die* with honour (line 479). Thus, Ajax's ethopoeia closes with thoughts on death, or rather a prediction that he will commit suicide.

3.2.2.2.3 *Antigone* 891-928

Oedipus' daughter Antigone is sentenced to death for having illegally buried her brother, the traitor Polynices. As she faces death, she gives the following speech.

What words would Antigone say as she is going to be buried alive?

ὦ τύμβος, ὦ νυμφεῖον, ὦ κατασκαφῆς
οἴκησις αἰέφρουρος, οἷ πορεύομαι
πρὸς τοὺς ἑμαυτῆς, ὧν ἀριθμὸν ἐν νεκροῖς
πλεῖστον δέδεκται Φερσέφασσ' ὀλωλότων·
ὧν λοισθία ἄγω καὶ κάκιστα δὴ μακρῷ
κάτειμι, πρὶν μοι μοῖραν ἐξῆκεν βίου.
ἐλθοῦσα μέντοι κάρτ' ἐν ἐλπίσιν τρέφω
φίλη μὲν ἤξειν πατρί, προσφιλῆς δὲ σοί,
μητὲρ, φίλη δὲ σοί, κασίγνητον κάρα·
ἐπεὶ θανόντας αὐτόχειρ ὑμᾶς ἐγὼ
ἔλουσα κακόσμησα κάπιτυμβίους
χοὰς ἔδωκα· νῦν δέ, Πολύνεικες, τὸ σὸν
δέμας περιστέλλουσα τοιάδ' ἄρνυμαι.
(Sophocles, *Antigone* 891-903)

O tomb, O bridal chamber, O deep-dug home, to be guarded for ever, where I go to join those who are my own, of whom Pherssephassa has already received a great number, dead, among the shades! Of these I am the last and my descent will be the

saddest of all, before the term of my life has come. But when I come there, I am confident that I shall come dear to my father, dear to you, my mother, and dear to you, my own brother; since when you died it was I that with my own hands washed you and adorned you and poured libations on your graves; and now, Polynices, for burying your body I get this reward! (Translation: Hugh Lloyd-Jones)

In this passage, which includes the present as well as the past and the future, Antigone apostrophizes the tomb that she will enter alive. She is going to be an *inclusa puella*, a girl shut in the most horrible of circumstances. Nicephorus' Danae who is shut in on more human conditions, also starts her ethopoeia by addressing the room in which she is locked, a bridal chamber of a different sort.³⁴⁵

Antigone continues by reflecting on her crime:

καίτοι σ' ἐγὼ τίμησα τοῖς φρονοῦσιν εὔ.
οὐ γάρ ποτ' οὔτ' ἄν εἰ τέκν' ὦν μήτηρ ἔφυν
οὔτ' εἰ πόσις μοι καθανὼν ἐτήκετο,
βία πολιτῶν τόνδ' ἄν ἥρόμην πόνον.
τίνος νόμου δὴ ταῦτα πρὸς χάριν λέγω;
πόσις μὲν ἄν μοι καθανόντος ἄλλος ἦν,
καὶ παῖς ἀπ' ἄλλου φωτός, εἰ τοῦδ' ἥμπλακον,
μητρὸς δ' ἐν Ἰδίου καὶ πατρὸς κεκευθότοιν
οὐκ ἔστ' ἀδελφὸς ὅστις ἄν βλάστοι ποτέ.
τοιῷδε μέντοι σ' ἐκπροτιμήσας ἐγὼ
νόμῳ, Κρέοντι ταῦτ' ἔδοξ' ἀμαρτάνειν
καὶ δεινὰ τολμᾶν, ὃ κασίγνητον κάρα.
(Sophocles, *Antigone* 904-915)

Yet in the eyes of the wise I did well to honour you; for never, had children of whom I was the mother or had my husband perished and been mouldering there, would I have taken on

³⁴⁵ Nicephorus 46.

myself this task, in defiance of the citizens. In virtue of what law do I say this? If my husband had died, I could have had another, and a child by another man, if I had lost the first, but with my mother and my father in Hades below, I could never have another brother. Such was the law for whose sake I did you special honour, but to Creon I seemed to do wrong and to show shocking recklessness, O my own brother. (Translation: Hugh Lloyd-Jones)

Addressing her brother, Antigone uses arguments to defend her crime in a quite unexpected way. The main reason for her to give her brother a decent funeral is that he cannot be replaced by another brother. According to her logic, she would not have acted the same way had it been her children or her husband.

In the last section of her speech, Antigone returns to her present situation, illustrated by the word *νῦν* (in bold type, line 916), reflecting on the severe punishment imposed upon her:

καὶ **νῦν** ἄγει με διὰ χειρῶν οὕτω λαβὼν
νᾶλεκτρον, ἀνυμέναιον, οὔτε του γάμου
μέρος λαχοῦσαν οὔτε παιδείου τροφῆς,
ἀλλ' ὧδ' ἐρήμιος πρὸς φίλων ἢ δύσμορος
ζῶσ' ἐς θανόντων ἔρχομαι κατασκαφάς·
ποίηαν παρεξελθοῦσα δαιμόνων δίκην;
τί χρή με τὴν δύστηνον ἐς θεοὺς ἐτιβλέπειν;
τίν' αὐδᾶν ζυμμάχων; ἐπεὶ γε δὴ
τὴν δυσσέβειαν εὐσεβοῦς' ἐκτησάμην.
ἀλλ' εἰ μὲν οὖν τάδ' ἐστὶν ἐν θεοῖς καλά,
παθόντες ἂν ζυγγοῖμεν ἡμαρτηκότες·
εἰ δ' οἶδ' ἀμαρτάνουσι, μὴ πλείω κακὰ
πάθοιεν ἢ καὶ δρῶσιν ἐκδίκως ἐμέ.
(Sophocles, *Antigone* 916-928)

And **now** he leads me thus by the hands, without marriage, without bridal, having no share in wedlock or in the rearing of children, but thus deserted by my friends I come living, poor creature, to the caverns of the dead. What justice of the gods have I transgressed? Why must I still look to the gods, unhappy one? Whom can I call on to protect me? For by acting piously I have been convicted of impiety. Well, if this is approved among the gods, I should forgive them for what I have suffered, since I have done wrong; but if they are the wrongdoers, may they not suffer worse evils than those they are unjustly inflicting upon me! (Translation: Hugh Lloyd-Jones)

The audience is brought back to Antigone facing her death by the word *vōn*. Antigone faces death with dignity, confident that her act was morally correct though legally wrongful. If the gods support the death sentence, she is willing to forgive her adversaries; otherwise she wishes them no worse evils than her for the future. She takes the law into her own hands, but she is an independent thinker and a morally good example. Philoctetes, another Sophoclean character, forms a contrast to Antigone's magnificent attitude. Although his speech in *Philoctetes* 254-313 well could pass under the heading *ethopoeia*, I have not included it because of its conversational-like composition. My point here is to show a man in a similar, though less deplorable situation, and his handling of it. When we meet Philoctetes, he has been left by Ulysses on an island for ten years. When suddenly the son of Achilles, Neoptolemus, shows up, Philoctetes laments his fate and tells his story. Philoctetes closes his monologue thus:

...ἀλλ' ἀπόλλυμαι τάλας
ἔτος τόδ' ἤδη δέκατον ἐν λιμῷ τε καὶ
κακοῖσι βόσκων τὴν ἀδηφάγον νόσον.
τοιαῦτ' Ἀτρεΐδαί μ' ἤ τ' Ὀδυσσέως βία,
ὦ παῖ, δεδράκασ'· οἷς Ὀλύμπιοι θεοὶ
δοῖέν ποτ' αὐτοῖς ἀντίποιν' ἐμοῦ παθεῖν.
(Sophocles, *Philoctetes* 311-316)

No, I have been miserably perishing now for nine years, in hunger and distress, feeding the insatiable disease. That is what

the sons of Atreus and the mighty Odysseus have done to me,
my son; may the Olympian gods grant that in requital they
suffer such things themselves! (Translation: Hugh Lloyd-Jones)

Antigone's wish may well be compared with that of Philoctetes: whiningly and aggressively he wishes the same bad things for his antagonists Agamemnon and Ulysses as he himself has suffered. What we see is an example of a locus that is treated differently depending on the character of the speaker. Whereas Philoctetes uses the closing "future evils"-locus to seek revenge, Antigone looks at her fate with a more philosophical and human eye, reflecting, deliberating and acting with self-control.

3.2.2.2.4 *Electra, Ajax and Antigone*

Like Orestes, Antigone takes the law into her own hands, with the intention of putting family matters right. While Orestes' deed is an act of revenge on his mother, Antigone's burial of her brother is an act of sisterly love. Antigone knows that she has defied the law. For this she blames no one, but feels that she is unjustly punished. Prometheus, thinking he did a good deed towards mankind, expresses the same notion of a punishment out of proportion to the crime. Ajax, lacking self-criticism, blames everyone but himself for his outrage.

Electra mourns her father. In contrast to Antigone, she seems to lack the ability in taking action, intending as she does to go on weeping, and puts instead her hope in her brother.

The adverb *vōv*, placed at the beginning of lines, is used as a marker for the transition into the present within the principle of the *tria tempora*. In the case of Antigone, it draws the audience into the dramatic situation she is confronted with: her entry into her own tomb.

So far, we have, in Aeschylus and Sophocles, come across *ethopoeiae* performed by both men and women. Euripides will follow the path that Sophocles paved through Antigone: women who meet death with dignity.

3.2.2.3 Euripides

To Quintilian, the study of Euripides is preferable for the orator rather than that of Aeschylus and Sophocles, because Euripides comes closest to oratory:

Namque is et sermone (quod ipsum reprehendunt quibus gravitas et coturnus et sonus Sophocli videtur esse sublimior) magis accedit oratorio generi, et sentiis densus, et in iis quae a sapientibus tradita sunt paene ipsis par, et in dicendo ac respondendo cuilibet eorum qui fuerunt in foro disertum comparandus, in affectibus vero cum omnibus mirus, tum in iis qui miseratione constant facile praecipuus. (Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 10.1.68)

For he in his language (which they criticize who find the dignity, solemnity and tone of Sophocles more sublime) comes closer to the genre of oratory, thick with *sententiae* as he is, and with regard to the things that are taught by wise men, he is almost equal. When it comes to the art of speaking and responding, he can be compared to anyone of those who used to be eloquent in the forum. He is indeed admirable in every emotion, as he is, without hesitation, outstanding referring the ones that consist of compassion.

Euripides, especially, enjoyed favour among school pupils, particularly his plays *Phoenissae*, *Orestes*, *Hecuba*, *Medea* and *Alcestis*.³⁴⁶ Teresa Morgan also mentions the preference for these works by Euripides, adding *Troades*, *Helen*, *Electra*, *Hippolytus* and *Bacchae*.³⁴⁷ As for the ethopoeia, however, I have found examples from *Andromache* and *Hercules furens*.

3.2.2.3.1 *Andromache* 384-420

When we met Andromache in Libanius 2 (pp. 110-111), she had recently lost her husband Hector in the Trojan War. In her ethopoeia, she foresaw her fate as the slave of the killer of Hector, Achilles. Her prediction came fairly true: in the play by Euripides, we find Andromache ten years after the Trojan War, being the slave mistress to the son of (the dead) Achilles, Neoptolemus, and mother to his son. The wife of Neoptolemus, Hermione, is jealous of her and

³⁴⁶ Criboire (2001): 198 claims these plays to be Euripides' most rhetorical ones.

³⁴⁷ Morgan (1998): 116.

sees Andromache's son as a threat to the throne. In Neoptolemus' absence, Hermione's father, Menelaus, obtains a judgment that either Andromache or her son must die.

What words would Andromache say when Menelaus tells her that either she or her son must lose their lives?

οἴμοι κακῶν τῶνδ'· ὃ τάλαιν' ἐμὴ πατρίς,
ὥς δεινὰ πάσχω. τί δέ με καὶ τεκεῖν ἐχρῆν
ἄχθος τ' ἐπ' ἄχθει τῷδε προσθέσθαι διπλοῦν;
τί δῆτά μοι ζῆν ἡδύ; πρὸς τί χρὴ βλέπειν;
πρὸς τὰς παρούσας ἢ παρελθούσας τύχας;
(Euripides, *Andromache* 389-405)³⁴⁸

O misery! My unhappy fatherland, what suffering is mine! Why did I need to give birth and double the burden I bear? How can life be sweet for me? To what shall I look? To my past or my present fate? (Translation: David Kovacs)

Andromache starts with a lament, beginning with the plaintive word "οἴμοι", a frequent word in the model ethopoeiae. Her pathological ethopoeia contains a number of words beginning with a π, and a number of questions, presented in sequence, addressed to Menelaus and then to herself.

As in a classic ethopoeia, Andromache goes on telling about the past. In her case, though, the past was not better; rather her life has been miserable ever since the Trojan War began. Yet, her son by Neoptolemus has been the light of her life:

ἦτις σφαγὰς μὲν Ἑκτορος τροχηλάτους
κατεῖδον οἰκτρῶς τ' Ἴλιον πυρούμενον,
αὐτὴ δὲ δούλη ναῦς ἐπ' Ἀργείων ἔβην
κόμης ἐπισπασθεῖσ'· ἐπεὶ δ' ἀφικόμην
Φθίαν, φονεῦσιν Ἑκτορος νυμφεύομαι.

³⁴⁸ The two last lines in the excerpt, lines 404 and 405, are suggested to change places with lines 397 and 398; thus the illogical numbering. Kovacs (1995): 310.

ἀτὰρ τί ταῦτα δύρομαι, τὰ δ' ἐν ποσὶν
 οὐκ ἐξικμάζω καὶ λογίζομαι κακά;
 εἷς παῖς ὁδ' ἦν μοι λοιπὸς ὀφθαλμὸς βίου·
 τοῦτον κτανεῖν μέλλουσιν οἷς δοκεῖ τάδε.
 οὐ δῆτα τοῦμοῦ γ' οὔνεκ' ἀθλίου βίου·
 ἐν τῷδε μὲν γὰρ ἐλπίζ, εἰ σωθήσεται,
 ἐμοὶ δ' ὄνειδος μὴ θανεῖν ὑπὲρ τέκνου.
 ἰδοῦ, προλείπω βωμὸν ἥδε χειρία
 σφάζειν φονεύειν δεῖν ἀπαρτῆσαι δέρην.
 ὦ τέκνον, ἡ τεκοῦσά σ', ὥς σὺ μὴ θάνης,
 στείχω πρὸς Ἄϊδην· ἦν δ' ὑπεκδράμης μόρον,
 μέμνησο μητρός, οἷα τλᾶσ' ἀπωλόμην,
 καὶ πατρὶ τῷ σῷ διὰ φιλημάτων ἰὼν
 δάκρυά τε λείβων καὶ περιπτύσσων χέρας
 λέγ' οἷ' ἔπραξα. πᾶσι δ' ἀνθρώποις ἄρ' ἦν
 ψυχὴ τέκν'· ὅστις δ' αὐτ' ἄπειρος ὦν ψέγει,
 ἦσσαν μὲν ἀλγεῖ, δυστυχῶν δ' εὐδαιμονεῖ.
 (Euripides, *Andromache* 399-420)

I saw Hector dragged to death behind a chariot and Troy put
 piteously to the torch, and I myself went, pulled by the hair, as a
 slave to the Argive ships. And when I came to Phthia, I was
 wedded to Hector's murderers. Yet why do I lament these
 things but not drain to their last drop the misfortunes
 immediately before me? My son here was the only light my life
 possessed: those who think it best are about to kill him. But no,
 not if my poor life can prevent it! If he survives he bears my
 hopes, while not to die for my child would be a reproach to me.
 There, I leave the altar and am in your hands, to slaughter,
 murder, imprison, or hang. My child, I, your mother, go to the
 world below so that you may live. If you escape death,
 remember the sufferings your mother endured and the death I
 died. Kiss your father and embrace him and tell him in tears
 what I have done. All mankind, it seems, find children their
 very life. Whoever has no children and disparages them, though

he may have less pain, has sorry happiness. (Translation: David Kovacs)

Andromache turns to the goddess Thetis (mother of Achilles and goddess of the city), at whose altar she is standing, ready to surrender completely, so that her son can live instead. Like Niobe in Libanius' *ethopoeia* 9.8, Andromache mentions different ways of dying. Then, she addresses her child, as we have seen other *ethopoetic* mothers do. Her message to her son is formulated as a wish that he will remember her.

Quintilian spoke of the great number of *sententiae* in Euripides (p. 153).³⁴⁹ Here I read the two last clauses as such: maxims that are universal and not only connected to her fate.

That this is a pathological *ethopoeia*, aimed to arouse emotions becomes especially clear when the chorus leader after Andromache has spoken, says she feels pity (”ᾠκτιρ’ ἀκούσας”).³⁵⁰

3.2.2.3.2 *Andromache* 453-463

As if her fate was not enough, Andromache is soon facing another shock: even though she is punished with death and she declares herself ready to die for her son, she hears that he too will be killed.

What words would Andromache say after having being told that both she and her son will be killed? The speech is addressed to Menelaus:

ἔμοι μὲν θάνατος οὐχ οὕτω βαρὺς
ὅς σοι δέδοκται· κεῖνα γάρ μ’ ἀπώλεσεν,
ὅθ’ ἡ τάλαινα πόλις ἀνηλώθη Φρυγῶν
πόσις θ’ ὁ κλεινός, ὅς σε πολλάκις δορὶ
ναύτην ἔθηκεν ἀντὶ χειρσαίου κακόν.
νῦν δ’ ἐς γυναῖκα γοργὸς ὀπλίτης φανείς
κτείνεις μ’. ἀπόκτειν’· ὡς ἀθώπευτόν γέ σε
γλώσσης ἀφήσω τῆς ἐμῆς καὶ παῖδα σὴν.
ἐπεὶ σὺ μὲν πέφυκας ἐν Σπάρτῃ μέγας,
ἡμεῖς δὲ Τροίᾳ γ’. εἰ δ’ ἐγὼ πρᾶσσω κακῶς,

³⁴⁹ Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 10.1.68.

³⁵⁰ Euripides, *Andromache* 421.

μηδὲν τόδ' αὔχει· καὶ σὺ γὰρ πράξειαι ἄν.

(Euripides, *Andromache* 453-463)

I do not find so heavy the death-sentence you have passed on me. That day brought my life to an end when the unhappy city of Troy was destroyed and my glorious husband killed, my husband whose spear often changed you from a coward on land to one on shipboard. And **now** you appear against a woman in grim warrior garb and are killing me! Kill on! For I shall leave you without uttering one word of truckling flattery to you or your daughter. Though you are great in Sparta, yet I was great in Troy, and if my fortune now is evil, do not make this your boast: yours may be so as well. (Translation: David Kovacs)

This short ethopoeia, containing only ten lines, is divided into the tria tempora, including the return to presence indicated with the word νῦν in line 458 (in bold type) and a prediction of evil things. Instead of lamenting her situation, Andromache accepts her cruel fate. Her life has come to an end, anyway. She used to be happy in Troy, but when Troy was ruined, so was her life.

3.2.2.3.3 *Hercules furens* 454-496

Like Andromache, Megara is sentenced to death along with her children. Megara is the daughter of King Creon, who has been overthrown, and she is the wife of Hercules. In order to secure the succession, King Lycus, who has usurped the throne, decides to execute Megara and her children. This happens while Hercules is away on one of his labours.

What words would Megara say as she and her children are going to be killed?

ὦ τέκν', ἀγόμεθα ζευγος οὐ καλὸν νεκρῶν,
ὁμοῦ γέροντες καὶ νέοι καὶ μητέρες.
ὦ μοῖρα δυστάλιν' ἐμή τε καὶ τέκνων
τῶνδ', οὓς πανύστατ' ὄμμασιν προσδέρομαι.
ἐτέκομεν ὑμᾶς, πολεμίοις δ' ἐθρεψάμην
ὑβρισμα κάπιχαρμα καὶ διαφθοράν. φεῦ·

ἦ πολὺ γε δόξης ἐξέπεσον εὐέλπιδος,
ἦν πατρὸς ὕμῳν ἐκ λόγων ποτ' ἤλπισα.
(Euripides, *Hercules furens* 454-461)

Children, we are led away as an inglorious yoked team of corpses, old men and children and mothers all together! O luckless fate, mine and my children's here! My eyes look on you now for the last time! I gave you birth, but in raising you I raised only something for my enemies to insult, treat with malicious glee, and kill. Ah me, how far I have been cast down from the sanguine hopes your father's words once raised in me!
(Translation: David Kovacs)

Megara faces an almost identical situation as Andromache. She and the children are sentenced to death, in the absence of her husband. Like other mothers, she addresses her children, but in contrast, the children are in the centre from the start. In a quite long passage Megara nostalgically tells of what their father did to them and the hopes that she had for them, hopes that now are gone:

σοὶ μὲν γὰρ Ἄργος ἔνεμ' ὁ καθθανὼν πατήρ,
Εὐρυσθέως δ' ἔμελλες οἰκῆσιν δόμους
τῆς καλλικάρπου κράτος ἔχων Πελασγίας,
στολὴν τε θηρὸς ἀμφέβαλλε σῶ κάρᾳ
λέοντος, ἥπερ αὐτὸς ἐξωπλίζετο.
σὺ δ' ἦσθα Θηβῶν τῶν φιλαρμάτων ἄναξ,
ἔγκληρα πεδία τὰμὰ γῆς κεκτημένος,
ὥς ἐξέπειθες τὸν κατασπεύραντά σε,
ἐς δεξιάν τε σὴν ἀλεξητήριον
ξύλον καθίει δαίδαλον, ψευδῇ δόσιν.
σοὶ δ' ἦν ἔπερσε τοῖς ἐκηβόλοις ποτὲ
τόξοισι δώσειν Οἰχαλίαν ὑπέσχετο.
τρεῖς δ' ὄντας <ὕμᾱς> τριπτύχοις τυραννίσιν
πατὴρ ἐπύργου, μέγα φρονῶν εὐανδρία.

ἐγὼ δὲ νόμφας ἡκροθινιαζόμεν
 κήδη συνάψουσ' ἔκ τ' Ἀθηναίων χθονὸς
 Σπάρτης τε Θηβῶν θ', ὥς ἀνημμένοι κάλως
 πρυμνησίοισι βίον ἔχοιτ' εὐδαίμονα.
 καὶ ταῦτα φροῦδα· μεταβαλοῦσα δ' ἡ τύχη
 νόμφας μὲν ὑμῖν Κῆρας ἀντέδωκ' ἔχειν,
 ἐμοὶ δὲ δάκρυα λουτρὰ δυστήνῳ φέρειν.
 πατὴρ δὲ πατρὸς ἐστὶ γάμους ὅδε,
 Ἄϊδην νομίζων πενθερόν, κῆδος πικρόν.
 (Euripides, *Hercules furens* 462-484)

To you, my son, your dead father used to assign Argos, and you were going to dwell in the palace of Eurystheus and hold sway over fertile Pelasgia. He used to put about your head the lion skin which was his armor. And you, child, were the ruler of Thebes that delights in chariots, and you took the plains of my country for your inheritance—such was the persuasion you worked upon your father—and he lowered into your hand the finely wrought club that warded off danger, a gift in pretense only. And to you, my son, he promised to give Oechalia, which he once sacked with his far-flying arrows. The three <of you> your father fortified with three thrones, proud of his martial valor. And I was choosing the finest of brides for you and was making marriage alliances with Athens, Sparta, and Thebes so that with your stern cables fastened to firm anchorage you might have a happy life. These hopes are all gone: your fortune changed and instead gave to you as your brides death spirits, and to unlucky me as the bath I should have brought you she gave tears. Your grandfather is the host for the wedding banquet, and he acknowledges Hades as the father-in-law, a marriage tie most unwelcome. (Translation: David Kovacs)

Again, we are presented with the abandoned hopes of arranging marriages for the children. When Megara sees death approaching, she responds like Libanius' Niobe:³⁵¹ she asks which of the children she is going to embrace first:

³⁵¹ Libanius, *Ethopoeia* 8.3.

ὦμοι, τίν' ὑμῶν πρῶτον ἢ τίν' ὕστατον
 πρὸς στέρνα θῶμαι; τῷ προσαρμόσω στόμα;
 τίνος λάβωμαι; πῶς ἂν ὡς ξουθόπτερος
 μέλισσα συνενέγκαιμ' ἂν ἐκ πάντων γόους,
 ἐς ἔν δ' ἐνεγκοῦσ' ἀθρόον ἀποδοῖην δάκρυ;
 ὦ φίλτατ', εἴ τις φθόγγος εἰσακούεται
 θνητῶν παρ' Ἄϊδη, σοὶ τάδ', Ἡράκλεις, λέγω·
 θνήσκει πατὴρ σὸς καὶ τέκν', ὄλλυμαι δ' ἐγώ,
 ἢ πρὶν μακαρία διὰ σ' ἐκκληζόμεν βροτοῖς.
 ἄρηξον, ἐλθέ· καὶ σκιὰ φάνηθί μοι·
 ἄλις γὰρ ἐλθὼν κἂν ὄναρ γένοιο σύ·
 κακοὶ γάρ εἰσιν οἱ τέκνα κτείνουσι σά.
 (Euripides, *Hercules furens* 485-496)

Ah me, which of you shall I clasp first to my breast, which last?
 On whose cheek shall I plant my kisses? Whom shall I cling to?
 How I wish that like a bee with tawny wings I might gather
 your lamentations from you all and then combining them give
 them all back as a single tear! Dearest Heracles, if any mortal
 words are heard in the house of Hades, I say this to you: your
 father and children are being killed and I as well, I whom
 mortals once called happy because of you! Come rescue us!
 Appear to me even as a ghost! Even if you came as a dream
 vision it would suffice! For the men who are killing your
 children are cowards. (Translation: David Kovacs)

At the end, Megara speaks to the absent Hercules, begging him to come and rescue them. We can recall Electra, who in her despair sent a prayer that her brother would come home. Prayers addressing a lover – or a brother or a sister – often conclude the letters of the *Heroides*.³⁵²

³⁵² 1.115-116, 3.153-154, 5.157-158, 10.151-152, 11.121-128, 14.123-130 and 15.217-220.

3.2.2.3.4 *Andromache and Megara*

For the three ethopoeiae that I have found in the plays of Euripides, two women are chosen whose destinies run together. They are both wives of heroes and mothers who are under sentence of death along with their children, in the absence of the children's father. They both address their children. Megara uses the locus of the dashed hopes of her children to get married. This, we recognize from Libanius' Niobe,³⁵³ as well as the questions to the children about which one to mourn first.³⁵⁴ Another common element is the appeal to a hero – in their cases their husbands – to come and save them from destruction.

3.3 Summary

In this chapter my aim has been to show that the ethopoeia existed not only in exercises but far earlier in literature, both as an autonomous text in its own right and as one incorporated in a larger context, written both as poetry and as letters in prose. The speakers are preferably heroes and heroines associated with the Trojan War. This is obvious in the short poems of the *Anthologia Palatina*, poems that I believe we should regard as drafts for ethopoeiae. We also meet ordinary people in the letters of Alciphron. The characters in these letters can be described as stereotypes, representing a profession or social group. Farmers, fishermen, parasites and courtesans are the writers. It lies close at hand to compare them with the comical types outlined in Libanius' ethopoeiae, which in their turn were presumably influenced by the characters of comedy. Only a few letters of the collection can, however, possibly be regarded as being ethopoeiae, and these happen to be written by women who complain about their absent men. I find it of interest, because it shows a parallel to the theme of Ovid's *Heroides*. It also implies that the line between comedy and tragedy in these cases is abolished or at least blurred.

The ethopoeia has not simply a connection to comedy. I consider my most important discovery so far to be that I have found that ethopoeia existed in Greek tragedy. I have exemplified my findings with nine monologues from Aeschylus (Prometheus, Cassandra and Orestes), Sophocles (Electra, Ajax and Antigone) and Euripides (Andromache (two speeches) and Megara). Six

³⁵³ Libanius, Ethopoeia 9.6.

³⁵⁴ Libanius, Ethopoeia 8.3.

of the monologues have a connection to the post-Trojan War period. Some of the speakers appear in the school ethopoeiae as well. The speeches contain elements such as woes, questions and exhortations. The speakers put the blame on someone for the catastrophe.

Greek tragedy treats a well-known material and sees it through the lenses of different characters. For the creators of the progymnasmata, this must have been an inexhaustible well. In my examples above, the death of Agamemnon is commented on by Cassandra, Orestes and Electra. Whereas certain situations seem to be popular in the model ethopoeiae, such as seeing Ulysses in the underworld or speaking over a friend's body, I found three examples of women facing death: Sophocles' *Antigone*, Euripides' *Andromache*, and his *Megara* in *Hercules furens*. In these, loci recur – such as the addressing of the children and their wish for a saviour – for the women sharing a similar situation, although individual differences can be observed, for example in their attitudes towards death.

The monologues are divided into the *tria tempora*. Here, the word *vōv* functions as a transition marker to the present. As in the model ethopoeiae, the speaking characters often address someone – it can be a relative, a friend, a god, the country, the furies, the sun or the skies. Still, the speech remains unanswered, unless it is commented on by the chorus. The lack of a reply seems to be a constant feature of the ethopoeia.

4 Ethopoeiae in the *Metamorphoses*

Occasionally, the word *ethopoeia* appears in connection with the *Metamorphoses*.³⁵⁵ The monologues pointed out by modern scholars as ethopoeiae are, in the order they appear in Ovid's work (with references to the *Metamorphoses*):

1. Inachus' desperate outburst when he realizes that his daughter is transformed into a cow (1.653-663),
2. Narcissus' speech to his own mirror image (3.442-473),
3. Niobe seeing her children being killed (6.170-202),
4. Philomela raging against her brother-in-law and rapist Tereus (6.533-548),
5. Medea's inner deliberation on how to deal with her love for Jason (7.11-71),
6. Scylla when she is about to betray her father and fatherland for her beloved Minus, the enemy of her father (8.44-80),

³⁵⁵ Lightfoot (2009): 233 writes: "Clearly, soliloquies by Ovidian heroines stand in a long tradition of dramatic ethopoeia", pointing out Medea's, (*Metamorphoses* 7.11-71) Byblis' (9.474-516 and 585-629), Iphis' (9.726-763), Myrrha's (10.320-355) and Narcissus' (3.442-473) monologues as *ethopoeiae*. At the same time, she calls Myrrha's speech a *controversia* and Byblis' a miniature *suasoria* (2009): 234. Brück (1909): 71-73 labels the monologues of Inachus (*Metamorphoses* 1.653-663) Narcissus (3.442-473), Niobe (6.170-202), Philomela (6.533-548), Medea (7.11-71), Scylla (8.44-80), Althaea (8.481-510), Byblis (9.474-516), Hercules (9.176-204), Iphis (9.726-763), Apollo (10.196-208) and Myrrha (10.320-355) as *ethopoeiae*. For the battle between Ulysses and Ajax, see Otis (1970): 284: "Here Ovid strives for an obvious *ethopoeia*, the stupid Ajax contrasted with the clever Ulysses. But the *ethopoeia* is also very Ovidian." Hopkinson (2000): 20 on Ajax's speech in book 13: "The disproportion and lack of organisation of his speech make it a character-study (ethopoia) in indignation." Simpson (2001): 429 comments on Polyphemus' speech, referring to Mack (without giving a reference): "Mack, without using the word, implicitly (sic!) notes the ethopoeia in Galatea's tale."

7. Althaea, on hearing that her son Meleager has killed her brothers (8.481-510),
8. Hercules addressing Juno when he is about to die (9.176-204),
9. Byblis' love letter to her brother Caunus (9.474-516 and 9.585-629),
10. Iphis' lamentation over being born a girl when she is in love with a girl (9.726-763),
11. Apollo's speech over the body of his dead friend Hyacinthus (10.196-208),
12. Myrrha's speech of self-justification when she understands that she is in love with her father (10.320-355),
13. The battle of words between Ulysses and Ajax when the two heroes are competing for Achilles' weapons (13.1-397) and
14. Polyphemus' proposal speech to Galatea (13.789-869).

4.1 Progymnasmatic speeches

Medea (*Metamorphoses* 7.11-71),³⁵⁶ Scylla (*Metamorphoses* 8.44-80), Byblis (*Metamorphoses* 9.474-516, 528-570 and 585-629),³⁵⁷ Iphis (*Metamorphoses* 9.726-763) and Myrrha (*Metamorphoses* 10.320-355) experience similar hardship, as they all are young girls struggling with forbidden love – here illustrated by Medea:

sed trahit invitam nova vis, aliudque cupido,
mens aliud suadet: video meliora proboque,
deteriora sequor. quid in hospite, regia virgo,
ureris et thalamos alieni concipis orbis?
(*Metamorphoses* 7.19-22)

But a new force pulls me against my will. Desire advises one thing, common sense another. I see and I approve the better, but I follow the worse. Why are you passionately in love with a

³⁵⁶ Medea's monologue is based upon Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica* 3.653ff. For a comparison, see Auhagen (1999): 132-133.

³⁵⁷ I have here added the passage (9.528-570) in which Byblis writes a letter to her brother.

guest, you royal girl, and draw up plans for marriage with a foreign world?

The girls' situations can be summarized in 'What words would X say when she finds out that she is in love with Y?', situations dramatic enough to cause anxiety for the girls. Their honour is at stake. Medea falls in love with a foreigner, Scylla with the enemy of her father, Byblis with her brother, Iphis with another girl and Myrrha with her own father. Still, a more suitable question would be 'Should X follow her feelings or not?'. The speeches are of deliberative character; the girls are weighing the pros and cons of their ethical dilemma, alternating between rational arguments and emotions, trying to convince themselves. Their speeches have more in common with the *suasoria*, or its precursor *thesis*. In addition, the girls come to a conclusion by deliberating with themselves, instead of having made up their mind before they start speaking. Their texts are not divided into the *tria tempora*, but move around certain loci. The *thesis* lists the loci of four different arguments: justice, advantage, possibility, appropriateness, "τῷ δίκαιῳ, τῷ συμφέροντι, τῷ δυνατόν, τῷ πρέποντι".³⁵⁸ In the following passage, words connected to these four loci are marked in bold type. Myrrha, who is seized by a culpable passion for her father, says:

di, precor, et pietas sacratæque **iura** parentum,
hoc prohibete **nefas scelerique** resistite nostro,
si tamen hoc **scelus** est. sed enim damnare negatur
hanc Venerem pietas: coeunt animalia nullo
cetera dilectu, nec habetur **turpe** iuvencae
ferre patrem tergo, fit equo sua filia coniunx,
quasque creavit init pecudes caper, ipsaque, cuius
semine concepta est, ex illo concipit ales.
felices, quibus ista **licent!** humana malignas
cura dedit **leges**, et quod natura remittit,
invida **iura** negant. gentes tamen esse feruntur,

³⁵⁸ Hermogenes 26. Translation: George A. Kennedy. See also Theon 123-124 and Aphthonius 50.

in quibus et nato genetrix et nata parenti
iungitur, et pietas geminato crescit amore.
me miseram, quod non nasci mihi contigit illic,
fortunaque loci laedor!—quid in ista revolvor?
spes **interdictae**, discedite! (*Metamorphoses* 10.321-336)

Gods and the piety and the sacred **rights** of my parents, I pray:
prevent this **sin** and and stop my **crime**, if it is a **crime**. For
piety refuses to condemn this love. Animals come together
without discrimination, and it is not regarded **shameful** for a
heifer to take her father on the back. Her calf will be the spouse
of a horse. A goat covers flocks which he procreated, and a bird
conceives from the one of whose seed she was conceived.
Happy are those for which this is **possible**! Human endeavour
has produced malicious **laws**, and what nature allows, grudging
rules forbid. Yet, it is told that there are people among which a
mother unites with her son and a daughter with her father, and
piety grows with the mutual love. Poor me, that I did not
happen to be born there. I suffer from Fortune's choice of
birthplace for me! – Why do I ponder about these things?
Forbidden hopes, go away!

Myrrha goes from asking the gods to prevent her sinful thoughts to question whether it at all is a crime, "si tamen hoc scelus est" (line 323). She questions human law, taking animal behaviour as an example of a more natural attitude towards life and sexuality. With civilization comes unnatural and envious laws. An even stronger argument lies in the fact that tribes exist where incest is allowed. She pities herself for not being born into one of those, to just a little later, ward off such forbidden thoughts. The arguments, however, make her grow bolder, and her persuasion of herself ends up in an overcoming of her previous reservations regarding what is legal and just. Myrrha avoids a discussion of the *advantageous* part – for the simple reason that a relationship with her father never can be advantageous. Would it be *possible*, then? As his daughter, no. She envies those who have that opportunity. Realizing that the family ties will prevent a relationship, Myrrha seduces her father in disguise.

Iphis speaks of her love as unnatural – illustrating with examples from the animal world in order to show that there are no homosexual relationships.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁹ *Metamorphoses* 9.729-734.

However, she finds examples from the mythological world to legitimise her love. Byblis does the same to justify her incestuous relationship.³⁶⁰

Scylla, daughter to king Nisus and in love with the enemy Minus, is quite sure how to act. Her process of self-persuasion is rapid, and her doubts concerning her deception of her father are not very great. Here, she is in a similar situation as young Medea. In contrast to her, however, Scylla's love of Minus is not mutual. Her actions stand out as extremely naïve, as she betrays her country for a man who is not in love with her and even tells her off for her behaving foolishly.

The deliberative character of Scylla's speech is revealed already in the opening lines:

“laeter,” ait “doleamne geri lacrimabile bellum,
in dubio est; doleo, quod Minos hostis amanti est.
sed nisi bella forent, numquam mihi cognitus esset!...”
(*Metamorphoses* 8.44-46)

“I am in doubt whether I should be glad or regret this deplorable war. I regret it because Minos is the enemy of the one who loves him. But if there were no war, he would never have been known to me!”

A woman whom it is often referred to when speaking of Ovid's heroines, is Byblis. In her case, she delivers three monologues. In the first one (*Metamorphoses* 9.474-516), she tries to convince herself, as Myrrha did. Once convinced, she turns to her brother Caunus, declaring her incestuous love in a letter (lines 528-570). When her proposal is rejected, she discusses what she did wrong (lines 585-629). Her second monologue, written as a letter, begins with a salutation (almost identical with Phaedra's, ep. 4), continues with her state of love for him and ends with her hopes of future love. Here, she discusses what is just, possible and appropriate (words connected are marked in bold type):

³⁶⁰ *Metamorphoses* 9.497-499.

iura senes norint, et quid **liceat**que **nefas**que
fasque sit, inquirant, **legum**que examina servant.
conveniens Venus est annis temeraria nostris.
quid **liceat**, nescimus adhuc, et cuncta **licere**
credimus, et sequimur magnorum exempla deorum.
(*Metamorphoses* 9.551-555)

Old people may know the **rules**. They may inquire after what is **possible** and what is **right** and **wrong**, and they may preserve the multitude of **laws**. But Venus is **appropriate** and thoughtless in our age. We do not yet know what is **possible**, and we believe that all things are **permitted**, and we follow the examples of the great gods.

To Byblis, deciding what is "iura" (which concerns *human law*) and "fas" (which concerns *divine law*) is an activity suitable for seniors. Instead, she later emphasizes a *possible* relationship, in that she and her brother openly, without suspicions from those around them, can embrace each other. Caunus' reaction when he receives the letter is to smash the writing tablets, having read just a part of her proposal.³⁶¹

Althaea (*Metamorphoses* 8.481-510), who is reached by the news that her son Meleager has killed her two brothers, decides after some deliberation to take revenge on her son. In contrast to the ethopoeia, her monologue moves the story forward instead of freezing it. Unlike her young 'sisters' of the *Metamorphoses*, she does not hesitate or deliberate that much. Instead, she is quick to justify her approaching crime against divine law:

ulciscor facioque **nefas**; mors morte pianda est,
in **scelus** addendum **scelus** est, in funera funus
(*Metamorphoses* 8.483-484)

I avenge and I commit a **sin**: death must be expiated by death; a **crime** must be added to a **crime**, a funeral to a funeral.

³⁶¹ *Metamorphoses* 9.575.

Even though Althaea is struck by anxiety, "mens ubi materna est?" ('where is my maternal love?'),³⁶² she is more resolute than the five girls. The argument to prefer a brother to a son, is reminiscent of Antigone's reasoning.³⁶³

Niobe (*Metamorphoses* 6.170-202) is the mythological character that Aphthonius chose for his ethopoeia, and she appears in two of Libanius' ethopoeiae.³⁶⁴ In these, the ethopoeia catches Niobe in the most fatal moment of her life. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, though, Niobe is caught when she is expected to sacrifice to Latona, an act she refuses to take part in. The moment she refers to when she speaks in the model ethopoeiae forms the core of this monologue. Is this a central monologue, then? Dramaturgically, yes. It will decide her destiny. For Niobe herself, however, this event is not of an especially dramatic character. We can, therefore, not expect an ethopoeia to be delivered. What Niobe does in her speech is to question the cult of Latona. This she does by promoting herself, praising herself with loci typical of the *encomium*:³⁶⁵ the praise of origin (Tantalus is her father, her mother is the sister of the Pleiades, her maternal grandfather is Atlas, her paternal grandfather and father-in-law is Jupiter), power (she is a queen), beauty, offspring (seven sons and seven daughters). As she mentions her qualities in relation to the goddess, one could just as well speak of a *comparatio*.³⁶⁶

Concerning *encomium*: when the giant Polyphemus (*Metamorphoses* 13.789-869) makes his offer of marriage to the nymph Galatea, he is advertising himself rather than praising her, in order to convince her that he would be the perfect partner. He emphasizes his many possessions, which he offers to Galatea if she could change her stubborn mind and become his wife. He even turns his ugly appearance into something advantageous.

External conditions are not, however, always decisive of somebody's fate. The battle of words between Ajax and Ulysses (*Metamorphoses* 13.1-397) is the story of how rhetorical skills win over physical force. It is a competition in which each of the two must justify why he has priority over the other to inherit the arms of the dead Achilles. In this *comparatio*, ancestors, fathers and deeds are stressed.

The here presented monologues have thus more in common with other progymnasmata than the ethopoeia. Especially is this obvious for the five

³⁶² *Metamorphoses* 8.499.

³⁶³ Sophocles, *Antigone* 909-912.

³⁶⁴ Libanius, Ethopoeia 8 and 9.

³⁶⁵ Theon 110, Hermogenes 15-18 and Aphthonius 36 on *encomium*.

³⁶⁶ Theon 112-115 on *comparatio*.

girls in distress: Medea, Scylla, Byblis, Iphis and Myrrha, whose speeches follow the instructions of the exercise *thesis*.

Below follow the passages from the *Metamorphoses* which I find suitable for a more narrow definition of the ethopoeia. To the ones already listed, I will add one speech which takes material from the Trojan War. It is found in book 13, which I regard as the most rhetorical book in the *Metamorphoses*. The ethopoeiae will be presented in the order that they appear in the *Metamorphoses*.

4.2 Inachus, *Metamorphoses* 1.653-663

Inachus, king of Argos and river god, searches for his missing daughter. To his horror, he finds her in the shape of a cow.

What words would Inachus say when he discovers that his daughter Io is transformed into a cow?

"me miserum!" ingeminat; "tunc es quaesita per omne
nata mihi terras? tu non inventa reperta
luctus eras levior! retices nec mutua nostris
dicta refers, alto tantum suspiria ducis
pectore, quodque unum potes, ad mea verba remugis!
at tibi ego ignarus thalamos taedasque parabam,
spesque fuit generi mihi prima, secunda nepotum.
de grege nunc tibi vir, nunc de grege natus habendus.
nec finire licet tantos mihi morte dolores;
sed nocet esse deum, praeclusaque ianua leti
aeternum nostros luctus extendit in aevum."

(*Metamorphoses* 1.653-663)

"Poor me!" he repeats, "you are then my daughter whom I have sought over the world? You were a lighter grief unfound than found! You are silent and give no replies to me, you only sigh deeply from your heart and you moo to my words, the only

thing you can do! In my naivety I prepared for a wedding, I hoped for a son-in-law and then for grandchildren. Now you must have a husband from the flock and then a son from the flock. It is not possible for me to finish such pains through death. To be a god is a detrimental thing: the closed door to death extends my grief to eternity.”

Though containing only eleven lines, Inachus’ mode of lamentation suits well the concept of the ethopoeia. Confronting reality, Inachus cries out his horror over the transformation of his beloved daughter (present). Then he tells of the hopes he had for her, hopes that were in vain (past). We can recall Megara’s tragic monologue (above pp. 158-159), in which she lamented the dashed hopes of her sons.³⁶⁷ Another parental locus of seeing his children getting married, known from Niobe,³⁶⁸ comes here. The effect is tragicomic when Inachus realizes that he will see his daughter getting married to a bull from the flock. His speech closes with a wish for death, impossible to realize (future). The idea of past times being better and future times disastrous, is present here.

Inachus is speaking to his daughter, but since she is a cow, she cannot reply. I read this as an ingenious Ovidian device, revealing the inherent ethopoetic idea in the words “retices nec mutua nostris / dicta refers”, ‘you are silent and give no replies to me’ (lines 655-656). Inachus’ lamentation is, as I see it, a textbook case of a pathological ethopoeia.

4.3 Narcissus, *Metamorphoses* 3.442-473

The young and handsome hunter Narcissus finds himself in love with his own image reflected in a pond. Realizing that his love cannot be reciprocated, he gives a lament, addressed to his mirror image.

What words would Narcissus say as he is unhappily in love with his own mirror image? In his opening phrases, Narcissus speaks to the woods:

³⁶⁷ Euripides, *Hercules furens* 460-482.

³⁶⁸ Libanius, *Ethopoeia* 9.6.

“ecquis, io silvae, crudelius” inquit “amavit?
scitis enim et multis latebra opportuna fuistis.
ecquem, cum vestrae tot agantur saecula vitae,
qui sic tabuerit, longo meministis in aevo?
et placet et video; sed quod videoque placetque,
non tamen invenio” —tantus tenet error amantem—
“quoque magis doleam, nec nos mare separat ingens
nec via nec montes nec clausis moenia portis;
exigua prohibemur aqua! cupit ipse teneri:
nam quotiens liquidis porreximus oscula lymphis,
hic totiens ad me resupino nititur ore.
posse putes tangi: minimum est, quod amantibus obstat...”
(*Metamorphoses* 3.442-453)

“Oh woods, did anyone love more cruelly? For you know, and you have been a favourable hiding-place for many. Do you remember anyone during this long space of time, although you live your lives during so many centuries, who has withered away? He pleases me and I see him; but what I see and what pleases me, I still cannot find” – such great aberration holds the one who loves. ”And I suffer the more in that neither a vast sea separates us, nor a road, nor mountains or walls with shut gates; we are kept apart by a tiny stream of water! He desires to be embraced: for whenever I stretch my lips with kisses to the flowing currents, he aims towards me with his mouth pointing upwards. You would think that he can be touched: it is the smallest thing that blocks the way for lovers...”

Like the girls in the examples above, Narcissus is unhappily in love. For Narcissus however, there is neither scope for action nor any moral conflict. Even though he does not initially understand that the object for his love is himself, he realizes that his love is in vain.

Narcissus continues his lament:

"...quisquis es, huc exi! quid me, puer unice, fallis
 quove petitus abis? certe nec forma nec aetas
 est mea, quam fugias, et amarunt me quoque nymphae!
 spem mihi nescio quam vultu promittis amico,
 cumque ego porrexi tibi brachia, porrigis ultro,
 cum risi, adrides; lacrimas quoque saepe notavi
 me lacrimante tuas; nutu quoque signa remittis
 et, quantum motu formosi suspicor oris,
 verba refers aures non pervenientia nostras!
 iste ego sum: sensi, nec me mea fallit imago;
 uror amore mei: flammam moveoque feroque..."

(*Metamorphoses* 3.454-464)

"...Whoever you are, go away! Why do you, incomparable
 boy, elude me? Where do you go when I ask for you? Clearly, it
 is neither my appearance nor my age that you are running from
 – even the nymphs have loved me! You promise some hope for
 me with your friendly face, and when I stretch my arms towards
 you, you stretch yours in return. When I smile, you smile back.
 I have also often noticed your tears while I weep. You return
 my signs with a nod, and to the extent that I suspect a
 movement from your beautiful mouth, you reproduce words
 which do not reach my ears! I am he: I have felt it, and my
 image does not elude me. I burn of love to myself: I am aroused
 and I bear the torch..."

Here, Narcissus is beginning to understand that he has fallen in love with himself. Narcissus declares that his beloved can neither shun his form nor his age – is this an example of Ovidian sense of humour? Anyhow, Narcissus is so self-absorbed, so narcissistic that he does not recognize himself. The word pairs "porrexi"... "porrigis" (line 458), "risi"... "adrides" (line 459) and "lacrimas"... "lacrimante" (lines 459-460) hint a reciprocity, but it is false alarm. The perfect tense should be interpreted as iterative, for what reason this section is not a typical section on the past.

After some rhetorical questions, death is the only future option for the young hunter. Note the polyptoton in the first line (marked in bold type):

”...quid faciam? **roger** anne **rogem**? quid deinde **rogabo**?
quod cupio mecum est: inopem me copia fecit.
o utinam a nostro secedere corpore possem!
votum in amante novum, vellem, quod amamus, abesset.
iamque dolor vires adimit, nec tempora vitae
longa meae superant, primoque exstinguor in aevo.
nec mihi mors gravis est posituro morte dolores,
hic, qui diligitur, vellem diuturnior esset
nunc duo concordēs anima moriemur in una.”
(*Metamorphoses* 3.465-473)

”...What shall I do? Shall I be asked or ask? What shall I ask thereafter? What I desire is mine; the abundance has made me poor. Oh, that I could withdraw from my own body! A new wish for the one who loves: I wish that what I love would be gone. The pain saps my energy. Not a long time of my life is left. I dissolve in my young years. Death is not heavy for me who by death will remove my pains. I wish that he, who is loved, would be more long-lived; now we will die, two like-minded souls in one breath.”

The deplorable situation, the addressing of nature and a sudden change of direction to a person, the division of the *tria tempora* (although not very strictly), and the prediction of death are components that make me read Narcissus’ speech as an *ethopoeia*. To this can be added the double perspective inherent in the tale of Narcissus and his mirror image. Ovid makes use of this by the means of word pairs: except for the ones already mentioned, we have “et placet et video; sed quod videoque placetque” (3.446) and “mors... morte” (3.471).

4.4 Philomela, *Metamorphoses* 6.533-548

The Athenian princess Philomela visits her sister Procne, who is married to the Thracian king Tereus. Possessed by desire, Tereus rapes his wife's sister. The violated Philomela speaks to her perpetrator Tereus.

What words would Philomela say when she has been raped by her sister's husband?

“o diris barbare factis,
o crudelis” ait, “nec te mandata parentis
cum lacrimis movere piis nec cura sororis
nec mea virginitas nec coniugalia iura?
omnia turbasti; paelex ego facta sororis,
tu geminus coniunx, hostis mihi debita Procne!
quin animam hanc, ne quod facinus tibi, perfide, restet,
eripis? atque utinam fecisses ante nefandos
concubitus: vacuas habuissem criminis umbras.
si tamen haec superi cernunt, si numina divum
sunt aliquid, si non perierunt omnia mecum,
quandocumque mihi poenas dabis! ipsa pudore
proiecto tua facta loquar: si copia detur,
in populos veniam; si silvis clausa tenebor,
inplebo silvas et conscia saxa movebo;
audiet haec aether et si deus ullus in illo est!”
(*Metamorphoses* 6.533-548)

“Oh, you savage of dreadful deeds, oh you cruel man”, she says. “Do neither my father’s commands and his pious tears move you nor my sister’s care nor my virginity nor the conjugal law? You have disturbed everything; I have become my sister’s rival, you are a mutual spouse, and Procne my enemy! Why do you not carry off my breath, you deceitful man, so that no evil deed will remain? Oh, that you had done that before that wicked

intercourse: then I would have had a soul clean from crime. Still, if the gods above notice these things, if divinities exist at all, if not all have died along with me, you will at some time suffer punishment for me! Having laid aside my shame, I will talk of what you have done. If an opportunity appears, I will come among people. If I will be shut up in the woods, I will fill the forests and move the stones to awareness; the sky and a god, if there is one in it, will hear these things!”

Tereus’ answer to her monologue is brutal: he cuts off her tongue.

Philomela’s speech is directly addressed to Tereus, and he reacts to it. Therefore, we cannot speak of an internal monologue. It lacks an account of the past, a component that also is typical of the ethopoeia. Even though the reader is aware of the past events, the speaker of an ethopoeia still often tells or comments on events in the past. The horrible present, the guilty one and the prophecy of evil to come are elements common for the ethopoeia, although Philomela’s speech might be a borderline case. At the end of her speech, Philomela speaks in the future tense but does not explicitly speak of death. Her threat of shouting out Tereus’ crimes will be realized in another way than she had expected. After her revenge on Tereus, she will be transformed into a nightingale, and as such, she will be able to soar above the woods and move the rocks to pity. And before that: although she will be mutilated and locked in, she will tell the world by painting her story in yarn on a loom.

4.5 Hercules, *Metamorphoses* 9.176-204

Hercules is about to sacrifice to his father Jupiter, when he receives a parcel from his wife Deianira. It turns out to be a tunic soaked in the blood of Nessus the centaur. Deianira has sent him this gift in order to turn his love of her rival Iole back to her. Dressing in the tunic, he senses the approach of death. The dying Hercules addresses his stepmother Juno (Saturnia), whom he blames for his approaching death.

What words would Hercules say when he feels death coming?

“cladibus,” exclamat “Saturnia, pascere nostris:

pascere, et hanc pestem specta, crudelis, ab alto,

corque ferum satia. vel si miserandus et hosti,
hoc est, si tibi sum, diris cruciatibus aegram
invisamque animam natamque laboribus aufer.
mors mihi munus erit; decet haec dare dona novercam...”
(*Metamorphoses* 9.176-181)

”Saturnia”, he cries out, ”feast on my calamity. Feast and watch this plague, you cruel one, from the height. Satisfy your wild heart. Or if I am pitiable for the enemy, that is, if I am pitiable for you, remove my hateful breath, sick of hard torture and born for toils. Death will be a gift to me; it becomes a stepmother to give this gift...”

Hercules starts with a prayer to the goddess to put an end to his pains by death. He welcomes death, probably because of the magnitude of the pain.

As the hero he is, with many heroic deeds on his personal record, he makes a long account of these, expressed in rhetorical questions, in this section on the past:

“...ergo ego foedantem peregrino templa cruore
Busirin domui? saevoque alimenta parentis
Antaeo eripui? nec me pastoris Hiberi
forma triplex, nec forma triplex tua, Cerbere, movit?
vosne, manus, validi pressistis cornua tauri?
vestrum opus Elis habet, vestrum Stymphalides undae,
Partheniumque nemus? vestra virtute relatus
Thermodontiaco caelatus balteus auro,
pomaque ab insomni concustodita dracone?
nec mihi centauri potuere resistere, nec mi
Arcadiae vastator aper? nec profuit hydrae
crescere per damnum geminasque resumere vires?
quid, cum Thracis equos humano sanguine pingues
plenaque corporibus laceris praeseptia vidi,

visaue deieci, dominumque ipsosque peremi?

his elisa iacet moles Nemeaea lacertis:

hac caelum cervice tuli...” (*Metamorphoses* 9.182-198)

“...Accordingly, did I tame Busiris who polluted the temples with foreign blood? Did I remove his father’s nutriment from savage Antaeus? Did not the Iberian shepherd’s threefold shape move me, or your threefold shape, Cerberus? Have you, hands, pressed down the horns of a strong bull? Have not Elis, the Stymphalian waves or the Parthenian groves experienced your work? Was not the belt, adorned with Thermodontian gold, brought back by means of your ability, or the apples, guarded by an unsleeping dragon? Could the centaurs offer resistance to me, or the boar, devastator of Arcadia? It did not profit the hydra to grow by loss and regain double strength, did it? What about when I saw the Thracian’s horses thick with human blood and their mangers full of mutilated corpses and then threw down what I had seen and defeated them and their master? Thanks to these arms, the Nemean monster lies crushed. I held up the sky on my shoulder...”

All these deeds – for such an infamous death? Hercules not only speaks to Juno, but turns to Cerberus for a moment, and then to his hands, which have performed his deeds. Why this list? For a hero like Hercules, it is natural to fill his recollections with his valiant deeds.³⁶⁹ His listing of his achievements is not nostalgically related, but rhetorically presented to Juno. Hercules’ interpretation of his situation is that the goddess is tired of imposing labours on him and thus sends him this punishment. According to Hercules, his past has indirectly given him this plague. Hercules returns to the plague torturing him:

“...defessa iubendo est

saeva Iovis coniunx: ego sum indefessus agendo.

sed nova pestis adest, cui nec virtute resisti

nec telis armisque potest. pulmonibus errat

ignis edax imis, perque omnes pascitur artus.

³⁶⁹ Nicolaus 66.

at valet Eurystheus! et sunt, qui credere possint
esse deos?” (*Metamorphoses* 9.198-204)

“...The savage wife of Jupiter is tired of demanding: I am tireless as a man of action. But a new plague is here, which can be resisted neither by my virtue nor by weapons and arms. A devouring fire is wandering to the middle of my lungs, and it works its way through all my limbs. But Eurystheus is alive! And they are who believe that gods exist?”

As Hercules’ speech so far has followed the order of the *tria tempora*, one could expect a closing piece about his approaching death. His final lines are however unexpected. Hercules exclaims that Eurystheus, the king who harassed him with trials, still lives. The hero also questions that people believe that gods exist (compare Philomela’s locus of questioning the gods’ existence, *Metamorphoses* 6.542-543 and 6.548). In this tragic scene, the utterance becomes humoristic, as it is declared by a man who recently spoke to a goddess, who has suffered pain through her and other gods, and who is a semi-god himself.

4.6 Apollo, *Metamorphoses* 10.196-208

Apollo speaks over the body of his dead friend Hyacinthus. Speaking over a dead body is a classic motif in the *ethopoeiae*. It is not an epideictic speech meant to praise the dead. Instead, it reveals the direct reaction, before the speaker in mourning has come so far as to formulate a funeral oration.

Apollo mourns his beloved Hyacinthus, who was killed when the two were throwing the discus. The jealous but invisible Western wind, Zephyrus, got hold of the discus and threw it into Hyacinthus’ head. After his death, the flower, now known as the hyacinth, grew from his blood.

Apollo starts his speech by lamenting Hyacinthus (present) and points to himself as guilty, although he wonders what crime he actually committed just by admiring him (past). Apollo then tells how he will praise him in his songs and that a flower will shoot forth (future).

What words would Apollo say when Hyacinthus is killed?

‘laberis, Oealide, prima fraudate iuventa,’
Phoebus ait, ‘videoque tuum, mea crimina, vulnus.
tu dolor es facinusque meum: mea dextera leto
inscribenda tuo est. ego sum tibi funeris auctor...’
(*Metamorphoses* 10.196-199)

“Son of Oebalus”, Apollo says, ”you perish, deceitfully deprived of life in the prime of youth. I can see in your wound my own guilt. You are the cause of my grief and self-reproach. My right hand is guilty of your death — I am the author of your destruction...”

Apollo continues by reflecting on the causes of his death, using the perfect tense. The word *culpa* is repeated, representing the feelings of guilt that Apollo has:

‘...quae mea **culpa** tamen? nisi si lusisse vocari
culpa potest, nisi **culpa** potest et amasse vocari?
atque utinam tecumque mori vitamque liceret
reddere!...’ (*Metamorphoses* 10.200-203)

”...What was then my **crime**? Could it be called a **crime** to have played with you? Could it be called a **crime** to have loved you? If only it had been possible to die with you and give up my life together with you!....”

After having lamented the present situation, reflected on the past and expressed a wish of changing his fate, Apollo looks forward and speaks in the future tense:

‘...quod quoniam fatali lege tenemur,
semper eris mecum memorique haerebis in ore.
te lyra pulsa manu, te carmina nostra sonabunt,
flosque novus scripto gemitus imitabere nostros.

tempus et illud erit, quo se fortissimus heros
addat in hunc florem folioque legatur eodem.’
(*Metamorphoses* 10.203-208)

”Although we are controlled by the law of destiny, you will always be with me, and your memory will dwell upon my lips. The lyre, struck by my hand, will praise you, as will my songs. As a new flower you will imitate my cries of grief, with markings on your petals. There will come a time when a valiant hero shall link himself to this flower and be known by the same marks upon its petals.”

Although Apollo here speaks in the future tense, his speech does not contain any elements of evil deeds. Rather, he turns his present sorrow into an embrace of the future.

Apollo’s monologue is no more than thirteen lines long, but is a typical ethopoeia. Because of its briefness, there is not much room for characterization. The mentioning of his attributes, the lyre and the songs, makes however this ethopoeia his own. The attributes are enough to identify him as the speaker.

4.7 Hecuba, *Metamorphoses* 13.494-532

To this exposition of the suggested ethopoeiae in the *Metamorphoses*, I would like to add Hecuba’s monologue. In *Metamorphoses* 13, Ovid tells the fates of two Trojan women, daughter and mother, princess and queen, Polyxena and Hecuba, who have also been portrayed by the tragedians. When Troy is in flames, the Greeks, heading for home, are waiting for a benevolent wind. In order to please the gods, they have to make a human sacrifice. Polyxena, daughter of king Priam, is sacrificed in front of Achilles’ tomb. Here, Euripides’ *Troades* commences. Euripides’ Hecuba performs a soliloquy, not included among my chosen ethopoeiae for the reason that I find it a pure lament more than anything else.³⁷⁰ Ovid, however, forms her speech differently.

³⁷⁰ Euripides, *Troades* 98-152.

When Seneca the Elder carps at Ovid's overloaded style, comparing him with Montanus (above pp. 73-74), he exemplifies with some lines that are found in the *Metamorphoses*. The lines are the words spoken by Hecuba. When Seneca presents the text, he outlines the situation with the following ethopoetic phrase: "cum Polyxene esset abducta ut ad tumulum Achillis immolaretur, Hecuba dicit", 'when Polyxena had been abducted in order to be sacrificed at the tomb of Achilles, Hecuba speaks'.³⁷¹ That Seneca relates this anecdote with reference to the composition of a *declamatio*, might be a token that parts of Hecuba's monologue were composed already during Ovid's time as a student, or at least written in the tradition of the progymnasmata. Seneca's summary of the situation implies that Hecuba is speaking before Polyxena is killed. In *Metamorphoses*, however, Polyxena has already been executed when her mother performs her speech. Therefore, in this context it would be more suitable to express it as: What words would Hecuba say over her daughter's dead body? Again, we see the typical ethopoetic motif of mourning over a dear one's dead body:

"nata, tuae—quid enim superest?—dolor ultime matris,
nata, iaces, videoque tuum, mea vulnera, vulnus:
en, ne perdiderim quemquam sine caede meorum,
tu quoque vulnus habes; at te, quia femina, rebar
a ferro tutam: cecidisti et femina ferro,
totque tuos idem fratres, te perdidit idem,
exitium Troiae nostrique orbator, Achilles;
at postquam cecidit Paridis Phoebique sagittis,
nunc certe, dixi, non est metuendus Achilles:
nunc quoque mi metuendus erat; cinis ipse sepulti
in genus hoc saevit, tumulo quoque sensimus hostem:
Aeacidiae fecunda fui!..." (*Metamorphoses* 13.494-505)

"Daughter, your mother's last grief — what else remains? —
daughter, you lie, and I see your wound, my wound. Look: in
order that I may not lose any of my children except by murder,

³⁷¹ Seneca, *Controversiae* 9.5.17.

you too have a wound, but I thought you would be safe from the sword, since you were a woman. Though you were a woman, you fell to the sword. The same man who put your many brothers to death has killed you: Achilles, Troy's ruin and our destroyer. But after he fell for Paris' and Phoebus' arrows, I said: **now**, surely, is there no reason to fear Achilles. Even **now**, though, I was to fear him. His very ashes have raged against this family; we have even felt the enemy through the tomb. I have been fertile for the son of Aeacus!..."³⁷²

We read that Seneca the Elder thought Ovid to be long-winded regarding Hecuba's mode of expression. He would probably find faults with the repetitive character of the beginning of the speech. The first lines consist of the lexical repetitions "nata"... "nata", "vulnera"... "vulnus"... "vulnus", "femina"... "femina", "ferro"... "ferro", "idem"... "idem", "Achilles"... "Achilles", "nunc"... "nunc" and "metuendus"... "metuendus", giving an impression of confusion, caused by Hecuba's grief. Although he is dead, Achilles is guilty of her daughter's cruel death and he seems to haunt the royal family of Troy.

After a brief recapitulation on the death of Achilles and his continued persecution, two *nunc* (lines 502-503, marked in bold type) refer to Hecuba's sense of relief on the news of Achilles' death. Her next *nunc* contrasts the present misery with the wealth she enjoyed. At the same time, it marks the transition into the future:

"...iacet Ilion ingens,
eventuque gravi finita est publica clades,
sed finita tamen; soli mihi Pergama restant.
in cursuque meus dolor est: modo maxima rerum,
tot generis natisque potens nuribusque viroque
nunc trahor exul, inops, tumulis avulsa meorum,
Penelopae munus, quae me data pensa trahentem
matribus ostendens Ithacis 'haec Hectoris illa est
clara parens, haec est' dicet 'Priameia coniunx'

³⁷² Aeacus was the grandfather of Achilles.

postque tot amissos tu nunc, quae sola levabas
maternos luctus, hostilia busta piasti!...”

(*Metamorphoses* 13.505-515)

“...Powerful Troy is destroyed, and the public calamity came to end through a sad outcome. Pergamon stands for me alone. I am in the midst of grief. Recently I had the most of means: I was mighty by means of sons and daughters, sons-in-laws, daughters-in-law and a husband. **Now** I am dragged away as an exiled, destitute widow, separated from the graves of my relatives. I am a booty for Penelope, who will show me to the mothers of Ithaca when I spin yarn, saying: ‘This is the famous mother of Hector. This is the wife of Priam.’ And after so many losses, you, who alone alleviated your mother’s distress, have expiated the enemy’s grave!...”

As a mother, Hecuba points at the loss of her children. For her, as for other mothers, her characteristic is that she is speaking of herself as rich in terms of having children and poor when deprived of them.

Like Libanius’ Andromache, Hecuba sees before her a life as the slave of a Greek. Andromache closed her ethopoeia with such a reflection. Hecuba continues speaking, but her formal ethopoeia stops here. However, I will quote the last part of her speech, for the reason that it contains ethopoetic elements. In the following passage, Hecuba continues with five rhetorical questions, framed by a couple of verbs in the perfect tense:

“...inferias hosti peperit! quo ferrea resto?
quidve moror? quo me servas, annosa senectus?
quo, di crudeles, nisi uti nova funera cernam,
vivacem differtis anum? quis posse putaret
felicem Priamum post diruta Pergama dici?
felix morte sua est! nec te, mea nata, preemptam
adspicit et vitam pariter regnumque reliquit...”

(*Metamorphoses* 13.516-522)

“...I have given birth for the sake of the enemy! Why am I, hard-hearted, left alive? Why do I linger? Why are you keeping me, long-lived old age? Why, cruel gods, do you defer a vigorous old lady, if not so that I will experience more funerals? Who would think that Priam would be called happy after the destruction of Pergamon? He is happy thanks to his death! He does not see you now when you are deceased, my daughter, and he left his life and his kingdom at the same time...”

The phrase, “inferias hosti peperit!”, ‘I have given birth for the sake of the enemy!’,³⁷³ is a rephrasing of “Aeacidae fecunda fui!”, ‘I have been fertile for the son of Aeacus!’.³⁷⁴ One can suspect that such a parallelism would not appeal to Seneca and his colleagues.

In the concluding passage below, Hecuba speaks in the future tense and then in the present. She addresses her daughter and answers her initial question of what is remaining for her: she still has a son, Polydorus:

“...at, puto, funeribus dotabere, regia virgo,
condeturque tuum monumentis corpus avitis!
non haec est fortuna domus: tibi munera matris
contingent fletus peregrinaeque haustus harenae!
omnia perdidimus: superest, cur vivere tempus
in breve sustineam, proles gratissima matri,
nunc solus, quondam minimus de stirpe virili,
has datus Ismario regi Polydorus in oras.
quid moror interea crudelia vulnera lymphis
abluere et sparsos inmiti sanguine vultus?”

(*Metamorphoses* 13.523-532)

But I think, royal maiden, that you shall be bestowed with a funeral, and that your body will be buried in the monuments of our ancestors! This is not the fortune of our house. Your mother’s gifts will touch you: her crying and her covering of

³⁷³ *Metamorphoses* 13.516.

³⁷⁴ *Metamorphoses* 13.505.

your body with foreign sand! I have lost all: what remains is the off-spring dearest to his mother, the reason why I can stand to live for a brief time. Now he is the only one; once he was the youngest among the male stem, Polydorus, who was given to king Ismarius on this coast. Why, meanwhile, I am slow about washing away my daughter's cruel wounds and her face that have spots of awful blood?"

4.8 Summary

The literary ethopoeia belongs to a tradition to which Ovid connects. Ovid incorporates several ethopoeiae in the *Metamorphoses*. Of the thirteen monologues that were suggested as ethopoeiae in the beginning of this chapter, I have selected five (Inachus, Narcissus, Philomela, which I regard as a borderline case, Hercules and Apollo) and added one (Hecuba). These are more or less true to the *tria tempora*, and are all monologues performed in critical situations: Philomela speaks when she has been raped, Hercules when he is about to die, Apollo when his beloved Hyacinthus is dead and Hecuba when her daughter Polyxena has been killed as a human sacrifice. For two of the speakers, their situations are not only critical but also absurd: Inachus speaks to his daughter, transformed into a cow, and Narcissus to himself, convinced that the image he sees is another.

Some of their monologues are short, which makes it hard for the writer to put any careful characterization into them. Even so, I have previously presented the idea that the characterization is rather an emphasizing of a few characteristics. What do we get to know of Inachus in eleven lines? Of Apollo in ten lines? Of Inachus, that he is a god and thus immortal, which is of importance for his misfortune. Apollo plays his lyre and sings. The reflective language of Narcissus characterizes the false reciprocity of his love, and shows his naivety and self-absorbedness. Philomela speaks of herself in her future appearance, both as locked in and as a free bird. Hercules, who actually is the character whom Aphthonius uses in his description of the ethopoeia,³⁷⁵ is at one with his deeds, to which he devotes the greater part of his speech. Hecuba is the mourning mother.

The six speeches can be categorized as pathetic ethopoeiae, aimed at gaining our sympathy. Still, the outcome is sometimes equivocal. Inachus

³⁷⁵ Aphthonius 44.

deplores the fact that he will not be able to have grandchildren – unless from the herd of cows. Narcissus is fading away – but has the possibility to rise and go. Philomela curses Tereus for his dreadful deeds – and will later give him an even more dreadful revenge, when she and her sister kill his son and prepare him for a dinner to be served to Tereus.

The ethopoetic motif of speaking over a dead body is seen in Apollo's and Hecuba's speeches. Other familiar ethopoetic elements are the addressing of one's child (Inachus and Hecuba) and the idea that someone is guilty of causing the miserable situation: Tereus is obviously guilty of the violation of Philomela, Apollo puts the blame on himself, as emphasized by the word *culpa* (a word which is also repeated by Ovid's heroine Briseis (3.8 and 3.41), Hercules curses Juno for his torment, although the poisoned tunic was a gift from his wife, and Hecuba points to Achilles as the reason for the ruin of her family. In Hecuba's speech, we also find several rhetorical questions – as in Hercules' – and repetitions of words.

Neither of the speakers receives any verbal reaction to their speeches. For Narcissus, it is impossible since he is speaking to an image. For natural reasons, Apollo and Hecuba, cannot expect any answer from their dead dear ones. Philomela, however, incurs a violent response from Tereus, and Inachus hears a mooing from Io.

Byblis, together with Medea, Scylla, Iphis and Myrrha form an entity of their own. Their speeches could constitute a *volumen* as a sequel to the *Heroides*. Their argumentation follows the standards as outlined in the *thesis*. Although not formal ethopoeiae, they capture a compositional idea which is identical in the *Heroides*: young women are struck by impossible love. Although their situations are alike, each girl has her individual problems and ways of handle them. In addition, the speeches held by Niobe, Polyphemus, Ajax and Ulysses are influenced by other progymnasmata, such as *comparatio* and *encomium*. This inspiration from the progymnasmata might provide material for further examination.

5 Ethopoeiae in the *Heroides*

As the purpose of my work is to elucidate the relationship between the ethopoeia and the first fifteen poems of Ovid's *Heroides*, I will in this chapter point at typical ethopoetic traits in the poems and how they are used, with an emphasis on the formal aspects. Firstly, I will take a comprehensive approach to the poems as ethopoeiae. Thereafter, I will make an exposition of the *tria tempora* and their use in some of the epistles. The three aspects of time will then be treated separately, exemplified by passages from different letters. This examination will provide opportunities to observe and discuss literary motifs and loci in the *Heroides*, found or not found in the ethopoeiae presented earlier.

5.1 The *Heroides* as ethopoeiae

Judging from the school papyri found in Egypt, the story of Briseis and Achilles was very popular in the Roman-Egypt school.³⁷⁶ Among the ethopoeiae that I have presented, stories connected to Troy predominate. In the *Heroides*, we read not only Briseis' letter to Achilles (ep. 3), but letters addressed to five other heroes from the Trojan War: Ulysses (Odysseus, ep. 1), Paris (ep. 5), Aeneas (ep. 7), Pyrrhus (ep. 8) and Protesilaus (ep. 13). Ovid chose however to write from the point of view of the female lovers, a device that can be interpreted as sophistic and conformable to the progymnasmata. In addition, women are often protagonists of the Greek drama, from where the ethopoeia possibly derives. We have met Cassandra, Electra, Antigone, Andromache and Megara in Greek tragedy in monologues which I have argued are ethopoeiae. Ovid puts women who have previously been main characters in ancient drama into his *Heroides*: Phaedra (ep. 4, Euripides' *Hippolytus*), Hermione (ep. 8, Sophocles' *Hermione*), Deianira (ep. 9,

³⁷⁶ Morgan (1998): 219.

Sophocles' *Trachiniae*), Canace (ep. 11, Euripides' *Aeolus*), Medea (ep. 12, Euripides' *Medea*), Laodamia (ep. 13, Euripides' *Protesilaus*) and Hypermestra (ep. 14, Aeschylus' *The Danaids*). Sappho stands out among the others as she is not a part of the literary mythological web of stories, but is an author herself. She is not the typical protagonist of an ethopoeia.

In order to capture the essence of the ethopoeia, I have below constructed key questions as headings for the fifteen letters of the first collection.

What words would...

1. ...Penelope write to Ulysses when she hears that the soldiers return from Troy but her husband does not?
2. ...Phyllis write to Demophoon when he has not returned as he promised?
3. ...Briseis write to Achilles after being abducted by Agamemnon?
4. ...Phaedra write to her stepson Hippolytus when she realizes that she is in love with him?
5. ...Oenone write to Paris when he has met Fair Helen?
6. ...Hypsipyle write to Jason upon the news that he has met Medea?
7. ...Dido write to Aeneas when he is leaving Carthage?
8. ...Hermione write to Orestes after being married against her will to Pyrrhus?
9. ...Deianira write to Hercules when she hears that he has fallen in love with Iole?
10. ...Ariadne write to Theseus when she finds herself abandoned by him on a desert island?
11. ...Canace write to her brother and lover Macareus when she is about to end her life with a sword given to her from her father?
12. ...Medea write to Jason when he is to marry another woman?
13. ...Laodamia write to Protesilaus when he has left to fight in the Trojan War?
14. ...Hypermestra write to Lynceus from jail after having spared his life, while her sisters have killed their husbands?
15. ...Sappho write to Phaon when he has left for Sicily?

Ovid's fifteen heroines are caught in the most critical moment in their lives, and they are on the verge of a collapse. Most of them write to men who are physically or mentally absent. This external condition is not required by the rhetors; nevertheless, it occurs in some of the literary ethopoeiae that I have presented. In Alciphron's letters, for instance, we read about a woman,

Panope, who complains about her husband having met another woman (above pp. 120-121),³⁷⁷ in another, Eunape, who is annoyed with her husband that he has been away in the city too long (pp. 121-122),³⁷⁸ and in a third, Thaïs, who is angry with her lover for being absorbed by sophistic studies (p. 122).³⁷⁹ Euripides' Andromache and Megara speak when their husbands are away (pp. 153-160),³⁸⁰ and Electra prays that her absent brother will come and resolve her dilemma (pp. 142-143).³⁸¹

As the poems of the *Heroides* are directed at certain individuals, they fulfil the criterion of Hermogenes' double characterization.³⁸² The apostrophizing of the lovers should however not mislead the reader into believing that the letters reach their recipients. They are letters in disguise, to refer to Auhagen.³⁸³ A conclusion that I have come to so far, is that the ethopoeia stands alone, as a monologue not requiring a response. A reply would mean a deviation from the ethopoetic idea, because it would not capture a critical moment in an individual's life. A constructed heading like 'what words would Ulysses say after having received and read Penelope's letter would not correspond to any scenario from the mythological story, but would be a fabrication. If Ulysses were to compose a letter himself to Penelope, it would be independently of her, as in the example of *Anthologia Palatina* 9.458, 'What words would Ulysses say having entered Ithaca?'.³⁸⁴

Although the double letters will not be explored further here, their deviation from the ethopoetic idea or ideal can not be ignored. The fact that there are replies is a reason to regard them as something else other than ethopoeiae. Kenney suggests that Ovid in the double epistles exploits the ethopoeia by means of another rhetorical exercise, the *controversia*, "the clash of opposing characters and viewpoints".³⁸⁴

When Verducci discusses Ovid's choice of the epistolary form of the first collection, she argues that it offers more possibilities than the dramatic

³⁷⁷ Alciphron 1.6.

³⁷⁸ Alciphron 2.18.

³⁷⁹ Alciphron 4.7.

³⁸⁰ Euripides, *Andromache* 384-420 and 453-463; *Hercules furens* 454-496.

³⁸¹ Sophocles, *Electra* 86-120.

³⁸² Hermogenes 21.

³⁸³ Auhagen (1999): 36 and 45-48.

³⁸⁴ Kenney (1996): 2.

monologue (to which she claims the *Heroides* are related).³⁸⁵ Moreover, it explains the rhetorical elements:

As Ovid must have foreseen, the epistle can combine, often in radical tension, the privacy of the interior monologue and the publicity of would-be persuasion. This combination simultaneously encourages rhetorical and expressive motives, providing scope for greater complexity of development than does the soliloquy or monologue of drama.³⁸⁶

What Verducci says is actually an elaborated echo of the statement that the ethopoeia is especially suitable for the epistle.³⁸⁷ The fact that there are intended addressees makes it motivated to interfoliate with rhetorical elements such as arguments, exhortations, criticism, questions, praise etc, elements that are not associated with the ethopoeia in particular, but were practised in the progymnasmata in general.

Comparing the situations of the heroines, Phaedra stands out from the rest in the respect that she writes to a man who is not her lover. I have described the resemblance of her letter with a *suasoria* because of its deliberative character (p. 87). Phaedra tries to persuade Hippolytus to be her lover. Her will to conquer his love makes the speech argumentative in its nature. This does not of course mean that the other letters are free from arguments: on the contrary. The other female writers of the letters are making attempts to connect to their recipients, revealing their aim: a cry for help out of their situation. Their message is: "come and love me and I will be saved". When the lovers are reluctant (which most of them are), some means of persuasion are needed. Persuasion is however not a chief characteristic or an end itself for the ethopoeia; the aim for the author is to give the speaker the fitting words for the situation. Common to all the poems of the *Heroides* is that the writers speak their mind in a situation that they find untenable.

Penelope opens the collection with the following appeal:

HAEC tua Penelope lento tibi mittit, Ulixee;
nil mihi rescribas attinet: ipse veni! (1.1-2)

³⁸⁵ Verducci (1985): 16.

³⁸⁶ Verducci (1985): 16.

³⁸⁷ Theon 115, Nicolaus 67; Demetrius, *De Elocutione* 227.

Your Penelope sends this letter to you, tardy man, Ulysses; it is
of no importance that you write back to me: come yourself!

Penelope thus begs her husband to come in person instead of writing to her. From this first couplet we can conclude that she is waiting for her husband who takes his time to return home. It is not a detailed summary of the situation, but clear enough for the external reader to apprehend where in the Homeric story Ovid makes us meet Penelope in her letter.

Scholars regard the opening of Penelope's letter as a programmatic statement for the whole collection.³⁸⁸ By Penelope's words, we should read between the lines that we cannot expect any letters in return from the lovers. Barchiesi sees them as "a signal to Ovid's readers that these are autonomous texts and do not need to be read against an answer for a complete understanding".³⁸⁹ Demonstrating that Ulysses is present on the island (without his wife's knowledge) already when Penelope is writing, Kennedy points at a trait typical of Ovid: his irony.³⁹⁰ To this I would like to add a circumstance that doubles the irony: the fact that there actually existed an ethopoeia with the heading "What words would Ulysses say having entered Ithaca" (p. 191).³⁹¹ Again, Ovid inverts it. Farrell interprets the lines as establishing the epistolary form and pointing at the sexual tension between men's and women's writing in the *Heroides*: women write letters, men act.³⁹²

These are readings that I endorse. Still, I would suggest Penelope's admonition as a programmatic manifesto of another kind, a signal that she (as the internal writer) is to compose an ethopoeia and thus does not expect any reply. The heroines do not ask for replies. Hypsipyle had hoped for a reporting letter from Jason, instead of having the information delivered by a messenger. However, she does not ask Jason to comment on her letter. There exists one exception, though. As the only writer in the entire collection, Sappho actually asks for a letter in return.³⁹³ Her prayer is placed as the penultimate line of the collection, thus corresponding with Penelope's line, which is the second in the collection. Her final lines read:

³⁸⁸ Although we can not be sure about the original order of the epistles, scholars seem to agree that Penelope's should be the first, see Jacobson (1974): 407-409.

³⁸⁹ Quoted by Hardie (2002b): 107. Barchiesi (1992): 15-16; Barchiesi (2001): 29.

³⁹⁰ Kennedy (1984). See also section 1.5.

³⁹¹ See *Anthologia Palatina* 9.458.

³⁹² Farrell (1998): 324.

³⁹³ This is noted by Fulkerson (2005): 157.

non tamen invenies, cur ego digna fugi —
hoc saltem miserae crudelis epistula dicat,
ut mihi Leucadiae fata petantur aquae! (15.218-220)

If you still cannot find the arguments why I was worthy to be
fled from – let at least a cruel letter tell me, miserable, to seek
my fate in the Leucadian waters!

How is this to be interpreted? Fulkerson suggests that Sappho, being the last in "an endless cycle of unanswered letters" is tired of reading the other heroines' writing and simply wants Phaon back.³⁹⁴ Thus, "she will be freed from the world of the *Heroides* (and of elegy) so that she may return to the kind of poetry she knows how to write".³⁹⁵ To me, however, Ovid is either closing the loop ironically with Sappho's letter or is pointing forward at the double collection. If we assume that Sappho is the writer of the last letter, we know that we cannot expect a reply from her lover. Her wish is futile already from the beginning, whereas Penelope's wish comes true at the time of writing, without her knowing it. Or, Sappho's wish could be a glimpse of what is about to come: a collection in which the writers will receive replies from their loved ones.

In section 1.3 (above pp. 18-19), I mentioned the spurious introductory couplets, likely added by someone who regarded the loss of greetings unsatisfactory. Some of the assumed original introductory lines still contain a form of greeting, for example in Phaedra's letter. Let us dwell on her opening lines, for the reason that they remind readers of an ethopoeia from the *Anthologia Palatina*:

QUAM nisi tu dederis, caritura est ipsa, salutem
mittit Amazonio Cressa puella viro. (4.1-2)

The Cretan girl sends health to you, Amazonian man, health
which she will lack, unless you give it to her.

³⁹⁴ Fulkerson (2005): 157.

³⁹⁵ Fulkerson (2005): 157.

Note in Phaedra's epistle that the word *salus* (here in the accusative form "salutem"), 'health' is of the same root as *salutare* ('greet'), that is to wish someone health. The Greek counterpart is *χαίρειν* ('be glad' or 'rejoice'), from which the greeting word *χαῖρε* is derived.³⁹⁶

The beginning of Phaedra's letter can be compared to Philomela's letter to Procne in the *Anthologia Palatina*:

Χαῖρε, Πρόκνη, παρὰ σεῖο κασιγνητῆς Φιλομήλης,
χαίρειν εἰ τόδε γ' ἔστιν. (*Anthologia Palatina* 9.452)

Health, Procne, from your sister Philomela, if this is to wish
well.

Both beginnings play with the greeting word. In the case of Phaedra, she cannot feel well unless Hippolytus comes to her rescue. The motif of the woman whose only salvation is a man (compare the dramatic monologues of Electra and Megara) is here present already in the beginning. Phaedra's words are almost identical with another writer of a letter, Byblis:

"quam, nisi tu dederis, non est habitura salutem,
hanc tibi mittit amans..." (*Metamorphoses* 9.530-531)

She who loves you sends health to you, health which she will
not have, unless you give it to her.

The similarity between the three openings might be explained by their epistolary rather than their ethopoetic nature. Still, the possibility to track a link to the ethopoetic poems of *Anthologia Palatina* and to the story of Philomela, makes me wonder if the similarities are not on a more profound level. Philomela, whose fate we meet in *Metamorphoses* 6.401-674, addresses her speech to her sister's husband, Tereus, in a monologue that shows elements of an ethopoeia.³⁹⁷ Ovid tells us that Tereus right after her

³⁹⁶ I have, in the passages below, chosen to translate the words with *well* and *wellness*, since both the Latin and the Greek variant has the same signification in greetings.

³⁹⁷ *Metamorphoses* 6.533-548, see section 4.4.

speech – and the rape – cut out her tongue. Philomela is thus physically unable to speak when she writes to Procne. In the beginning of her letter, Phaedra in a similar way declares herself being unable to speak for mental reasons, as her tongue has restrained her to speak:

Ter tecum conata loqui ter inutilis haesit
lingua, ter in primo restitit ore sonus. (4.7-8)

Thrice I tried to speak with you. Thrice did my useless tongue
get stuck. Thrice the sound halted in my mouth.

Like Byblis, shame prevents Phaedra from speaking, wherefore she decides to write instead.³⁹⁸

Despite its scope of only five lines, Philomela's ethopoeia has more to offer in a comparison with Ovid's *Heroides*. The following lines read:

...έμου δέ σοι ἄλγεα θυμοῦ
πέπλος ἀπαγγεῖλειε, τά μοι λυγρὸς ὥπασε Τηρεῦς,
ὃς μ' ἔρξας βαρύποτμον ἐν ἔρκεσι μηλονομήων,
πρῶτον παρθενίης, μετέπειτα δ' ἐνόσφισε φωνῆς.
(*Anthologia Palatina* 9.452)

Let my cloak proclaim my heart's pains for you,³⁹⁹ pains which
baneful Tereus sent on me, he who shut me up, miserable, in the
shepherds' fold, depriving me firstly of my virginity, secondly
of my voice.

Philomela summarizes her present miserable situation. She shares the situation of being imprisoned with Hypermestra (ep. 14), although the motif, the *inclusa puella*, is present in a number of the letters: Penelope (ep. 1) feels restricted by the suitors in her own home, Briseis (ep. 3) is a slave in the king's tent, Hermione (ep. 8) is stuck in the house of her new husband

³⁹⁸ *Metamorphoses* 9.515-516.

³⁹⁹ Philomela wove a cloak in which she, unable to speak, could tell about Tereus' rape of her.

Pyrrhus, Ariadne (ep. 10) is left alone on a desert island and Canace (ep. 11) is doomed by her father to take her own life. The motif occurs also in the model ethopoeiae: Severus' Briseis is stuck in the tent of Agamemnon,⁴⁰⁰ and Nicephorus' Danae is locked in in a copper tower by her father.⁴⁰¹ If we read the motif *inclusa puella* as a direct opposite to the *exclusus amator*, we are dealing with a motif turned upside-down by Ovid. Regarding the latter motif, Sharon L. James observes that in Roman love elegy, the doors are obstacles between the man and the woman.⁴⁰² The doors belong to the girl who shuts out the lover. On the contrary, in the *Heroides*, the doors lock in the girl. I regard these reversed perspectives of elegy as another sophistic-progymnasmatic move by Ovid. The female writer has adapted the role of the sad lover who complains about a cruel man.

The *inclusa* Hypermestra sends her letter from jail:

MITTIT Hypermestra de tot modo fratribus uni –
 cetera nuptarum crimine turba iacet.
 clausa domo teneor gravibusque coercita vinclis;
 est mihi supplicii causa fuisse piam. (14.1-4)

Hypermestra sends you this letter to one of recently so many brothers – the rest lie dead because of the brides' crime. I am held shut in, restrained by heavy chains; the reason for my punishment is to have been pious.

In these four lines, Hypermestra summarizes her situation: she is locked up and fettered because of her *pietas*, 'piety'. The man to whom she writes, Lynceus, recently lost his many brothers, killed by their brides, moreover Hypermestra's sisters.

The summary of her present condition to a few lines in the beginning is a trait typical of the model ethopoeiae. In Libanius, the situation is often defined in the speaker's first, second or third phrase. The practice shifts in Nicephorus, where Pasiphaë tells us in her second phrase that she has fallen

⁴⁰⁰ Severus, Ethopoeia α.

⁴⁰¹ Nicephorus 46.

⁴⁰² James (2003): 111.

in love with a bull,⁴⁰³ while Zeus has made more than half of his speech before he comes to the point: his beloved has been transformed into a cow.⁴⁰⁴ In the *Heroides*, however, the situation is sometimes summarized initially, but often only faintly outlined, as here, in the beginning of Oenone's letter:

PERLEGIS? an coniunx prohibet nova? perlege – non est
ista Mycenaea littera facta manu!
Pegasis Oenone, Phrygiis celeberrima silvis,
laesa queror de te, si sinis ipse, meo. (5.1-4)

Do you read this through? Or does your new bride prevent you?
Read it through – this letter you have received is not produced
by Mycenaean hand! I, the fountain-nymph Oenone, most
famous in the Phrygian woods, am offended and complain
about you, who are, if you allow, mine.

Oenone begins her letter by telling that she is violated, deserted and prevented from remaining the wife of Paris. By the statement that her letter is not written by Mycenaean hand, Oenone implies that another woman has come into Paris' life. Step by step, the reader understands what has happened to Oenone, but she does not supply this information easily.

With the exception of Medea, the epistles of the *Heroides* start with an epistolary introduction. Medea's opening couplet reads:

At tibi colchorum, memini, regina vacavi,
ars mea cum peteres ut tibi ferret opem. (12.1-2)

But I remember that I, a princess of the Colchians, was
available to you, when you asked for my art to bring you help.

How can it be that a letter starts with an *at*? My suggestion is that it is a heritage from the ethopoetic tradition. There are parallels. Libanius starts his

⁴⁰³ Nicephorus 54.

⁴⁰⁴ Nicephorus 47.

fourth ethopoeia (delivered by Achilles) with "ἄλλ'", a corresponding word to *at* in Greek (above pp. 137-138).⁴⁰⁵ Aeschylus has Orestes starting his speech in *Coephoroe* with the same word, "ἄλλ'".⁴⁰⁶ It is more natural in the dramatic monologue to begin with such a conjunction, because it can contrast to what has been said before. For the ethopoeia as an autonomous text it cannot, however, be contrasted to anything said before. It makes sense only if we regard it as a trait from Greek tragedy.

5.2 *Tria tempora* in the *Heroides*

The poems of the *Heroides* are constructed on the principle of the *tria tempora*, although used in slightly various ways. Deianira (ep. 9) and Ariadne (ep. 10) offer very little of the past. All letters except for Medea's begin with the present. Each letter closes with predictions, plans or wishes for the future. The rhetorical elements of the poems sometimes break or block the view of the temporal structure. In the case of Hermione (ep. 8), her letter contains both direct speech (8.5-6 and 8.80), rhetorical questions (8.11-12, 8.17-18, 8.59-60, 8. 65-66 and 8.87-88), admonitions (8.15-16, 8.19-20, 8.23-24 and 8.29), praise (8.40-54), vituperation (8.55) and counterfactual thoughts (8.21-22, 8.83-84), breaking the time structure of present (8.1-30), past (8.31-100) with a discontinuing remark by Hermione of her wretched situation (8.59-68), present (8.101-116) and future (8.117-122).

The two next sections will provide one example of another letter where, as in the case of Hermione, Ovid uses the *tria tempora* as a skeleton from which he sometimes strays, and one example of a letter where he sticks strictly to the form.

⁴⁰⁵ Palmer [1898] (1967): 387 explains the *at* as a "particle to lead in *medias res*" as it implies a reference to a previous current of thought". He also sees it as "an exordium where indignation is intended", a Latin counterpart to the Greek *ἀλλά*. For a comparison with *ἀλλά*, see *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* (2009), entry "at".

⁴⁰⁶ Aeschylus, *Choephoroe* 1021.

5.2.1 *Tria tempora* with deviations: the example of Hypsipyle

Hypsipyle's letter (ep. 6) may serve as an example of a poem in which the *tria tempora* rule, although they may not seem to do so. Almost 1/3 of Hypsipyle's text consists of an expression of rage against her rival Medea. Hypsipyle begins by stating that Jason is back in Thessaly, his homeland, without having paid her a visit on his way back. She complains that she has not heard anything from him; instead, "fama" ('rumour') has brought her information from his trip, not least the news about his new woman (6.1-22). The section on the present is interrupted by a *sententia*, "credula res amor est" ('love is credulous thing'), combined with an expression of hope that her suspicion will prove wrong: "utinam temeraria dicar / criminibus falsis insimulasse virum!" ('if only I may be called thoughtless to have charged my husband with false crimes!', 6.23-24). In the following passage, Hypsipyle reproduces a dialogue between her and a messenger from Thessaly, who reports on Jason's heroic achievements in Colchis (6.25-40). Two rhetorical questions lead over to a recollection of the past: how she and Jason married and the moment when he left (6.43-74). Hypsipyle then provides a long passage of vituperation against Medea (6.75-108), whereupon Jason is also attacked (6.109-110). After the question "vir meus hinc ieras: cur non meus inde redisti?", ('as my husband you had left from here, why did you not return as my husband?'), Hypsipyle argues why she is an eligible match for Jason: she is of noble birth and has a kingdom which she is ready to hand over, and she has given birth to twins, his children (6.112-124). The mention of the children becomes an incentive for Hypsipyle to imagine a scenario with Medea as the stepmother of her children (6.125-126). Thus, she finds another reason for affronting her rival (6.127-133). The *vituperatio* turns to a *comparatio*, in which Hypsipyle puts forward her own merits (6.134-140). Hypsipyle continues by depicting a future scenario, where she imagines what she would do if Jason and Medea were to come in her presence (6.141-151). Her last lines prophesy the future fate of Medea. Hypsipyle expresses a wish that Medea will lose her man and her children and escape (6.151-164). Thus, although Hypsipyle includes long passages which are outside the aspects of time, she still follows the order of present, past and future. In her letter, the *tria tempora* function as control points in a narrative that is a chain of associations, where one thing gives an impulse to another, and where digressions are allowed. Her deviations give a spontaneous impression, all in accordance with the ethopoeic idea of providing an immediate reaction. Hypsipyle's outcries are also in accord with her desperate emotional state.

5.2.2 Tria tempora in a strict sense: the example of Canace

A more strict treatment of the tria tempora is visible in Canace's epistle (ep. 11). Brück, referring to Hermogenes' declaration of the tria tempora as characteristic of the ethopoeia, designates Canace's letter as a full ethopoeia. Brück divides it into the present (lines 1-20), the perfect (lines 21-64) and the future (from 107 and to the end). He is vague about the lines 65-106, perhaps because they do not fit into his model. Here, Ovid has Canace shift into the present tense, although her story takes place in the past. This kind of historical or dramatic present disappears in line 81, where the perfect tense returns. The ordinary present tense re-appears in line 97, mixed with wishes of the future 103-106, to close with the future from line 119. If Brück had regarded the time aspects rather than the grammatical tenses and, moreover, noted Nicolaus' instructions about turning to the present before the concluding part, he probably would have commented on lines 65-106 as well.

I will here cite and comment on Canace's epistle following Brück's division, beginning with the first part:

SIQUA tamen caecis errabunt scripta lituris,
oblitus a dominae caede libellus erit.
dextra tenet calamum, strictum tenet altera ferrum,
et iacet in gremio charta soluta meo.
haec est Aeolidos fratri scribentis imago;
sic videor duro posse placere patri.
Ipse necis cuperem nostrae spectator adesset,
auctorisque oculis exigeretur opus!
ut ferus est multoque suis truculentior Euris,
spectasset siccis vulnera nostra genis.
scilicet est aliquid, cum saevis vivere ventis;
ingenio populi convenit ille sui.
ille Noto Zephyroque et Sithonio Aquiloni
imperat et pinnis, Eure proterve, tuis.
imperat heu! ventis, tumidae non imperat irae,
possidet et vitiis regna minora suis.

quid iuvat admotam per avorum nomina caelo
inter cognatos posse referre Iovem?
num minus infestum, funebria munera, ferrum
feminea teneo, non mea tela, manu? (11.1-20)

If some of the writing will appear illegible because of blind smears, it is due to the fact that the booklet will be smeared by its owner's shedding of blood. My right hand holds a pen, the other a bare weapon. In my lap lies the letter unrolled. This is the picture of Aeolus' daughter writing to her brother. Thus, I seem to be able to please my harsh father. I wish that he himself would be here to watch my death, that the action was done before the eyes of its initiator! As he is uncivilized and much more aggressive than his East winds, he would have watched my wounds dry-cheeked. It means something to live together with savage winds; he suits well the temperament of his people. He rules the South wind, the Western wind and the Thracian wind of the North. He also rules your wings, bold Eastern wind. Oh! He rules the winds, but he does not rule his swelling wrath, he is in the control of realms that are less than his faults. What good does it do to me to be brought up to heaven through the names of the ancestors and be able to claim Jupiter among my relatives? Is my funeral gift less hostile, the weapon that I hold in my female hand, a weapon that does not suit me?

Canace's incestuous relationship with her brother resulted in a baby. Presumably, Ovid sought inspiration to his poem in the Euripidean play *Aeolus*.⁴⁰⁷ Ovid could have chosen to depict her fate the moment when she realized that she was in love with her brother (to be compared with Phaedra, who is captured when she realizes that she is in love with her stepson) or when she found out that she was pregnant with his child. Instead, Canace writes to Macareus when her baby is born and their father has instructed her to take her own life. Even though Euripides' play is extant only in fragments, it is clear from what is left that the plot of the drama begins earlier in the story.

Apart from the introductory couplet, in which Canace imagines Macareus reading her letter in the future, Canace speaks in this passage about her here-

⁴⁰⁷ For the relationship between Ovid's epistle 11 and Euripides' *Aeolus*, see Casali (1998).

and-now-situation. At the beginning of epistle 11, Canace sits with a knife in her lap. She introduces the reader to her approaching suicide instead of summarizing her situation. Her cruel and implacable father is the focus: *he* is the cause of her present calamity. Her introduction links up with the crimes of Prometheus and Antigone as presented in Aeschylus and Sophocles: even though they did not deny their crimes, they claimed that their punishments were too severe.⁴⁰⁸

A wish of being able to undo the past introduces the section on the past:

O utinam, Macareu, quae nos commisit in unum,
venisset leto serior hora meo!
cur umquam plus me, frater, quam frater amasti,
et tibi, non debet quod soror esse, fui?
ipsa quoque incalui, qualemque audire solebam,
nescio quem sensi corde tepente deum.
fugerat ore color; macies adduxerat artus;
sumebant minimos ora coacta cibos;
nec somni faciles et nox erat annua nobis,
et gemitum nullo laesa dolore dabam.
nec, cur haec facerem, poteram mihi reddere causam
nec noram, quid amans esset; at illud eram.
Prima malum nutrix animo praesensit anili;
prima mihi nutrix “Aeoli,” dixit, “amas!”
erubui, gremioque pudor deiecit ocellos;
haec satis in tacita signa fatentis erant.
iamque tumescebant vitati pondera ventris,
aeграque furtivum membra gravabat onus.
quas mihi non herbas, quae non medicamina nutrix
attulit audaci supposuitque manu,
ut penitus nostris—hoc te celavimus unum—

⁴⁰⁸ Aeschylus, *Prometheus vinctus* 107-113; Sophocles, *Antigone* 921-928.

visceribus crescens excuteretur onus?
 a, nimium vivax admotis restitit infans
 artibus et tecto tutus ab hoste fuit!
 Iam noviens erat orta soror pulcherrima Phoebi,
 et nova luciferos Luna movebat equos.
 nescia, quae faceret subitos mihi causa dolores,
 et rudis ad partus et nova miles eram.
 nec tenui vocem. "quid," ait, "tua crimina prodis?"
 oraque clamantis conscia pressit anus.
 quid faciam infelix? gemitus dolor edere cogit,
 sed timor et nutrix et pudor ipse vetant.
 contineo gemitus elapsaque verba reprendo
 et cogor lacrimas conbibere ipsa meas.
 mors erat ante oculos, et opem Lucina negabat—
 et grave, si morerer, mors quoque crimen erat—
 cum super incumbens scissa tunicaque comaque
 pressa refovisti pectora nostra tuis,
 et mihi "vive, soror, soror o carissima," dixti;
 "vive nec unius corpore perde duos!
 spes bona det vires; fratri nam nupta futura es.
 illius, de quo mater, et uxor eris."
 Mortua, crede mihi, tamen ad tua verba revixi:
 et positum est uteri crimen onusque mei. (11.21-64)

Oh Macareus, if only the moment which united us into one had come after my death! Why, brother, did you love me more than a brother, and why was I not what a sister should be to you? I, too, grew hot, and I felt some god with my heart growing warm of passion, a god of a kind that I used to hear about. The colour had fled from my face; a thinness had drawn into my limbs; I forced my mouth to take food in small portions. To sleep was not easy and a night was like a year. I groaned, though I was

hurt by no pain. Neither could I find any reason for why I did these things, nor did I know what it meant to be in love; but in love was what I was. The first who had a premonition in her old mind was my nurse. My nurse was the first one who said: "Daughter of Aeolus, you are in love!" I blushed, and the sense of shame made me lower my eyes. These signs were the signs from one who confessed, though silent. And already swelled the load from my injured womb. A furtive burden pressed upon my sick body. What herbs, what medicaments did my nurse not bring with bold hand, so that the growing burden would be thrown out deep down from my bowels? Ah, too vigorous resisted the little baby the tricks that were appended and was safe from a hidden enemy! Nine times already had Phoebus' most beautiful sister risen, and a new Luna stirred her light-bearing horses. Ignorant of what caused my sudden pains, I was both a novice and a new soldier in giving birth. And I could not keep quiet. "Why do you disclose your crime?" said the old lady, aware of my secret, and shut my mouth when I shouted. What shall I unfortunate do? The pain forces me to give groans. But the fear, the nurse and shame itself forbid. I hold back the groans and censure my verbal slips, and I am forced to drink my own tears. Death was before my eyes and Lucina denied assistance – and if I died, death too would be a grave sin – when you, having torn both your tunic and your hair, leaned over me and warmed my chest with yours, saying: "Live, sister, oh dearest sister, and do not put two bodies into death by one! A lucky hope may give you strength; you will become the bride of your brother. You will be the wife of him, through which you are a mother." Although dead, believe me, I gained new life at your words, and the crime and burden of my womb was alleviated.

The first part showed that Canace's father Aeolus was the cause of her disaster. In the passage above, Canace points out her brother's love for her as the first link in a chain of causality. Still, she does not condemn him; she too was guilty of their mutual love. Whereas other ethopoeiae point out one person as being responsible, Canace's interpretation is more nuanced.

The question "cur umquam plus me, frater, quam frater amasti, / et tibi, non debet quod soror esse, fui?" ('Why, brother, did you love me more than a brother, and why was I not what a sister should be to you?', 11.23-24) reveals Canace's dilemma. It also defines the core of her situation. Not until this point is Canace able to put words on the reason for her death sentence.

Ovid's version of the story diverges from that of other authors. Without speculating why this is the case, I observe that Canace in all other sources is seduced by Macareus, and that there is no question of any mutual love.⁴⁰⁹ Moreover, Ovid's Canace describes physical illness caused by love, whereas other versions have her pretending to be sick in order to hide her pregnancy.

Canace makes a summary of the whole story, from the moment of her falling in love to her labour pains. Regarding these lines, Brück makes the following comment: "quamquam omnia haec Macareo sunt nota" ('although all of this is known to Macareus').⁴¹⁰ Brück seems to regard the large space of past time as redundant information. Macareus, Canace's recipient, moreover her brother and the father of her child, is naturally aware about their mutual story. Accounting for the past is however part of the *ethopoeia*, no matter how superfluous it seems. Here, the past has not the function of contrasting it to good times; it is an explanation of what led to the present calamity.

Brück does not comment on the lines 65-106. Because of the length of the passage, I will not quote it here in full. In fact, it does not differ very much from the earlier lines: Canace continues to relate the course of events. Here, the nurse is holding and hiding the baby when suddenly Aeolus hears an infant crying:

iam prope limen erat—patrias vagitus ad auris
venit, et indicio proditur ille suo!
eripit infanтем mentitaque sacra revelat
Aeolus; insana regia voce sonat. (11.71-74)

Now she stood near the threshold; the sound of a crying reached my father's ears, and the boy betrays himself through his own exposure! Aeolus snatches the boy and reveals the pretended sacrifice. The palace resounds with his mad voice.

Ovid has Canace shift from past tense to present tense, which gives a dramatic effect. Presumably, the grammatical tense made Brück avoid categorizing the passage. However, the fact that Ovid has Canace writing in

⁴⁰⁹ Casali (1998): 701.

⁴¹⁰ Brück (1909): 77.

the present tense, does not remove the aspect of past times. She writes in *praesens historicum*, the historical present.

At the end of her letter, Canace turns to her new-born son:

nate, dolor matris, rabidarum praeda ferarum,
ei mihi! natali dilacerate tuo;
nate, parum fausti miserabile pignus amoris—
haec tibi prima dies, haec tibi summa fuit.
non mihi te licuit lacrimis perfundere iustis,
in tua non tonsas ferre sepulcra comas;
non super incubui, non oscula frigida carpsi.
diripiunt avidae viscera nostra ferae.
Ipsa quoque infantis cum vulnere prosequar umbras
nec mater fuero dicta nec orba diu.
tu tamen, o frustra miserae sperate sorori,
sparsa, precor, nati collige membra tui,
et refer ad matrem socioque inpone sepulcro,
urnaue nos habeat quamlibet arta duos!
vive memor nostri, lacrimasque in vulnera funde,
neve reformida corpus amantis amans.
tu, rogo, dilectae nimium mandata sororis
perfice; mandatis obsequar ipsa patris! (11.111-128)

My son, grief of your mother, prey of wild beasts, woe me!
Torn to pieces on the day of your birth; my son, you were a
miserable pledge for a love affair of little blessing – this was
your first day, this was your last day. It was neither possible for
me to mourn you with righteous tears, nor to carry a lock from
your hair to your tomb. Greedy beasts tear to pieces the fruit of
my womb. I myself too will follow the shadows of my baby,
along with his wound, and I will neither have been called a
mother nor childless for a long time. You, however, in vain
hoped for by your miserable sister, I pray: collect the scattered
limbs of your son, and bring them back to his mother and put

them in the same tomb and let one urn have us both, how small it may be! Live in the memory of us, shed your tears for our wounds, do not shrink from the body of the one who loved you, my beloved. I ask you: execute the commissions of your too beloved sister; for my own part, I will follow my father's commands!

From line 119, as Brück notes, Canace turns to pondering on the future. The "tu" in line 121 is Macareus. Like Libanius' Andromache and Euripides' Megara,⁴¹¹ she addresses both her son and her lover. The talk of motherhood combined with her expression of her last wishes are present also in Andromache's monologue in Euripides' drama.⁴¹²

Jacobson regards some of the epistles as being more successful because of their lack of emotion and their certain amount of self-restraint. According to these standards, Jacobson refers to Canace's letter (ep. 11) as a shining example.⁴¹³ The absence of pleas makes this letter specially "appealing", he claims.⁴¹⁴ The circumstance can however be explained by the adaptation to the situation: Macareus, Canace's brother and lover, has not abandoned his sister or shirked from his responsibility, in contrast to most of the other lovers in the collection, and she is not disappointed in him. The absence of rhetorical elements not only forms Canace's personality (which will be more fully explored in chapter six), but also gives a coherent narrative without deviations, true to the *tria tempora*.

5.2.3 Two ethopoeiae in one poem?

I note a peculiarity in Phyllis' letter (ep. 2): here I would suggest that Ovid actually incorporates *two* ethopoeiae in one poem. Phyllis begins her letter by stating that four months have passed without any Demophoon in sight (2.1-8). She continues to tell about how she has spent these last months (2.9-22). The iterative clauses, intensified with *saepe*, which occurs four times (2.11 (twice), 2.17 and 2.19), mingle the past aspect with the present, telling us that Phyllis sticks to her pattern of behaviour. The passage is succeeded by a

⁴¹¹ Libanius, Ethopoeia 2; Euripides *Hercules furens* 454-496.

⁴¹² Euripides, *Andromache* 402-420.

⁴¹³ Jacobson (1974): 159: "The poem is testimony to Ovid's ability, which he did not often exploit, to profit from tact, restraint, and self-control."

⁴¹⁴ Jacobson (1974): 175.

reflection on Demophoon's deceit and a question about where his vows have gone now (2.23-34), emphasized by a repeated *nunc* (2.31 and 2.33). The mentioning of the vows gives Phyllis a reason to remind him of the gods by which he swore (2.35-42), thereby moving on to the past. A clause saying that the gods will punish Demophoon (2.43-44) functions as a transition to the next section on the past, in which Phyllis accounts for her great effort of being his hostess, and her regrets of being too helpful (2.45-65). An ironic wish that Demophoon's erotic conquest of Phyllis will prove to have been his greatest deed ends the section on the past (2.66). Thereafter, Phyllis expresses a wish: that the people of Athens may erect a statue of Demophoon and his father Theseus (2.67-74). The Athenians will see the image of the king of Athens, known for his heroic achievement, and then the image of his son, followed by an inscription carved in stone telling about his deceitfulness. So far, the scheme is: present (mingled with the past), past, present and future, which is the order of an ordinary ethopoeia. Phyllis' wish for the erection of a statue does not include any thoughts of death but expresses a wish for revenge, that her harsh judgment on him will follow him in eternity. The inscription in stone also gives rise to associations with gravestones, which on several occasions end the letters – including Phyllis' letter.

A comparison between Demophoon and his father Theseus (to the latter's advantage) and another between her own situation and the fate of Ariadne (also to the latter's advantage) follow (2.75-86). Then, Phyllis is almost back where she started, as if she uttered the beginning of a new ethopoeia. Here, she identifies herself rather with a regent than a hostess, who would have provided for herself and her people, would only Demophoon return (2.87-90). In line 91, Phyllis recollects the moment of departure, which makes her shift into the past (2.92-98). A few rhetorical questions, to which she answers (2.99-106) puts the focus on her, and she goes on accounting for all the things she did to her guest (2.107-120). Suddenly, Phyllis turns to the present, telling how she desperately runs on the shore waiting for Demophoon to return (2.121-130). A short description of a rock (2.131-132) gives incentive reason to mention the suicide that Phyllis threatens to commit (2.133-144). The four last lines (2.145-148) are devoted to the epitaph for her grave that Phyllis is composing.

The division into two parts is striking. The inscription on Demophoon's statue is formulated in line 74; thus it comes exactly halfway in the poem, as if it corresponded with Phyllis' own epitaph and ended a first ethopoeia. The two inscriptions certainly match each other: the first one will tell to posterity about Demophoon's deceit; the second one will tell about his deceit as well,

but also about Phyllis' love and loyalty. He will live and she will die. Both parts are composed on the principle of present, past, present and future.

5.3 The present

5.3.1 The present is miserable

The ethopoeia should begin in the present with the speaker lamenting his/her miserable situation. Here, Andromache speaks over the dead body of Hector (see also pp. 110-111):

Ἦκει δὴ πρὸς ἔργον ὁ φόβος καὶ τοὺς ἔμοὺς λόγους Ἴεκτωρ
ὑπεριδὼν ἔγνω με τὰ βέλτιστα εἰσηγουμένην. παρήνουν ἑαυτοῦ
φείδεσθαι. ὁ δὲ ἠφείδισε. τοιγαροῦν τέθνηκεν οὐκ ἐν ταῖς
ἡμετέραις, ὧ θεοί, χερσίν, ἀλλ' ὑπὸ τοῦ Ἀχιλλέως. τὸ δὲ ἐκεῖνον
τεθνάναι τὸν Πριάμῳ ἐστὶν ἀπολωλέναι, τὴν Ἑκάβην, τοὺς
ἀδελφούς, τουτὶ τὸ παιδίον, ἐμέ, τὴν πόλιν ὅλην. ἐκεῖνος ἔσωζε
τὸ Ἴλιον. πόθεν οὖν ἔτι σωθήσεται; ἔρρει πάντα καὶ
διέφθαρται. καὶ γέγονα γυναικῶν ἀθλιωτάτη. οἷας με γένυσας ὁ
δαίμων εὐδαιμονίας ἀπεστέρησεν. (Libanius, Ethopoeia 2.1-2)

My fear has come to fulfilment, and though he disdained my words, Hector has recognized that I was proposing what was best. I encouraged him to spare himself. But he was unsparing. For that very reason he has died not in my arms, O gods, but at the hands of Achilles. And his death means the destruction of Priam, Hecuba, his brothers, this child here, me, and the entire city. That man used to keep Troy safe. By whom, then will it be saved now? Everything has perished and has been destroyed. And I have become the most miserable of women. What sort of happiness did the divinity let me taste, only to deprive me of it? (Translation: Craig A. Gibson)

After a few lines, the reader is able to grasp Andromache's situation. Hector has died, killed by Achilles. Andromache laments his death and destruction and that she thereby has 'become the most miserable of women' ("γέγονα γυναικῶν ἄθλιωτάτη"). It can be noted that although the present is the dominant aspect in this passage, it is interfoliated with both retrospection and forward-looking.

By using the word *queror*, 'I complain', Phyllis (ep. 2), Briseis (ep. 3), Oenone (ep. 5) and Deianira (ep. 9) tell us in their introductions that the purpose of their letters is to complain about their lovers. Here Phyllis:

HOSPITA, Demophoon, tua te Rhodopeia Phyllis

ultra promissum tempus abesse **queror**. (2.1-2)

As your hostess, Demophoon, I, your Phyllis from Mount Rhodope, complain about you being absent beyond the time promised.

The word *queror* invites an association with the origin of elegy, the lamentation. The lamentation, or *querela*, is typical of Roman elegy.⁴¹⁵ As such, it is by James summarized as a drama between a "sad lover" and a "cruel girl", which contains a "harsh separation" and attempts at persuading the girl to come back.⁴¹⁶ Briseis' example is the reverse. She is the sad girl who is separated from her cruel lover, who is too inactive in bringing her back. The reason for Briseis' complaint is mentioned in line 1 and 7: she has been abducted, "rapta" and handed over, "tradita":

QUAM legis, a rapta Briseide littera venit,

vix bene barbarica Graeca notata manu.

quascumque adspicies, lacrimae fecere lituras;

sed tamen et lacrimae pondera vocis habent.

Si mihi pauca **queri** de te dominoque viroque

fas est, de domino pauca viroque **querar**.

⁴¹⁵ For an exposition of the *querela* in Roman love elegy, see James (2003): 108-152.

⁴¹⁶ James (2003): 109.

non, ego poscenti quod sum cito tradita regi,
culpa tua est – quamvis haec quoque culpa tua est (3.1-8)

This letter which you now read, written in broken Greek by a barbarian hand, has come from the abducted Briseis. Whatever smears you will see, my tears made; and yet, even tears have the weight of a word. If it is right for me to complain a little about you, my lord and man, I will complain a little about you, my lord and man. It is not your fault that I was so quickly handed over to the king when he demanded me, even though this is your fault as well.

Although the *querela* is commonly associated with elegy, Briseis' example shows the connection to the ethopoetic tradition of pointing out someone responsible for the catastrophe, in Briseis' letter stressed by the repeated word *culpa* (3.8).

Deianira thanks the gods and complains in the same sentence. Like Hypsipyle (6.9), the information has reached her by way of rumour, *fama* (9.3):

GRATULOR Oechaliam titulis accedere nostris;
victorem victae succubuisse **queror**.
fama Pelasgiadas subito pervenit in urbes
decolor et factis infitianda tuis,
quem numquam Iuno seriesque immensa laborum
fregerit, huic Iolen inposuisse iugum. (9.1-6)

I thank the gods that Oechalia has achieved our title of honour, but I complain that the victor has yielded to the conquered. Rumour has suddenly arrived to all cities of Pelasgia, shameful and worth repudiation because of your deeds: he, whom Juno or an immense series of labours never broke, on him has Iole imposed a yoke.

Deianira here summarizes well her situation. Hercules has captured the city of Oechalia. The most important news for Deianira, however, about which

she complains, concerns rather his new erotic conquest, Iole. Thus, the reader knows from line 6 what topic Deianira will focus on. Deianira's greeting lines share similarities with Hypsipyle's, who also places the word *queror* on herself (6.17) when her husband delays his return because of a new woman. This new woman, Medea, will also give reason for a letter through her husband's unfaithfulness. Medea however differs from other writers in her introduction, not only because her letter lacks an epistolary greeting (above p. 198), but because she speaks neither in the present tense nor describes the situation into which she has come. She starts in the past and mentions in line 25 that Jason has met a new woman, "hoc illic Medea fui, nova nupta quod hic est" ('I, Medea, was there what your new bride is here'). The motif is found also in Panope's letter by Alciphron, in which Panope scolds her husband Euthybolus for having met another woman (above pp. 120-121).⁴¹⁷ Like Medea, Panope starts by giving her status before she married; thereafter we are informed of what has happened.

Medea never explicitly uses the word *queror*, even though she complains. Interestingly, though, is the frequency of the word in the *Heroides*. All heroines except for Phaedra (ep. 4), Ariadne (ep. 10), Canace (ep. 11), Medea (ep. 12) and Sappho (ep. 15) use it in some form when they are speaking of themselves.

The present is terrible even when it appears later in the letters. Like the mourning women of the *ethopoeiae* that we have met earlier, Ovid's heroines are eager to tell of their unhappiness and their tears, in order to underline the gravity and importance of their messages. Hermione, who weeps more than anyone else in the collection, expresses herself as follows:⁴¹⁸

flere licet certe; flendo defundimus iram,
perque sinum lacrimae fluminis instar eunt.
has solas habeo semper semperque profundo;
ument incultae fonte perenne genae. (8.61-64)

At least it is possible to weep; through my weeping I drown my wrath. The tears flow across my chest like a flood. Tears are the only things I have – they are always with me – always I let

⁴¹⁷ Alciphron 1.6.

⁴¹⁸ Hermione's many tears are noted by Thorsen (2014): 130.

them pour out; my naked cheeks are moistened by a never-ceasing well.

Not only Hermoine weeps copiously – most heroines do.⁴¹⁹ Briseis draws Achilles' attention to the fact that her letter is stained by tears (3.3-4), Oenone that the sand is made damp by her tears (6.56). Other expressions of grief are demonstrated by means of external conditions, not necessarily directly related to the beloved one. Penelope complains about the suitors making her life a misery (1.81-98), Hermione about Pyrrhus' vehement nature (8.1-14), Ariadne about her miserable conditions on the island (10.133-140), and Laodamia about her empty bed (13.107-108). Their outbursts are sometimes very dramatic, as when Phyllis in her desperate state of mind runs to and fro (2.121-130), or when Laodamia and Sappho neglect their appearance.⁴²⁰ According to James, the men are they who weep in Roman elegy.⁴²¹ The men who weep in the *Heroides*, however, are accused of shedding false tears.⁴²² Thus, the women have not only taken over the role of *amatores*, they are also the ones who cry. Still, their expressions are typically female. To let one's hair hang loose and to beat one's breast is a mode of expression characteristic of women in grief, as conceived of in antiquity.⁴²³ Here Cicero, who condemns this way of mourning:

Ex hac opinione sunt illa varia et detestabilia genera lugendi: pedores, muliebres lacerationes genarum, pectoris, feminum, capitis percussiones. (Cicero, *Tusculanae Disputationes* 3.26.62)

From this idea come different and detestable forms of mourning: filth, female tearing of the cheeks and beating of breast, thighs and head.

⁴¹⁹ As in 2.95, 3.134, 5.74, 6.70-71, 7.185-186, 10.43-45, 10.55, 10.114, 11.54, 13.52 and 14.116.

⁴²⁰ 13.31-42 and 15.73-78.

⁴²¹ James (2003): 110.

⁴²² 2.51, 6.63 and 12.91.

⁴²³ Ariadne says it herself in 10.137: "adspice demissos lugentis more capillos", 'watch my hair, hanging as becomes a person in grief'. See also 8.10.

Nevertheless, the current state is unbearable. The only effort to lighten the burden is made by Laodamia (although she, as mentioned above, falls into decay), who, in order to alleviate the longing for Protesilaus, talks to a picture of him (13.151-158). The only character from the model ethopoeiae who finds constructive solutions in a critical moment is Libanius' Ulysses,⁴²⁴ naturally because inventiveness is his major character trait.

5.3.2 Now and then

The word *now* is undoubtedly of importance for the ethopoeia. In *Anthologia Palatina* 9.457, we heard Achilles speak before the wounded Agamemnon in a six-line poem (p. 124). The word *vōv* ('now', occurring twice in the poem) emphasized the catastrophic situation. In the examples from Greek tragedy (section 3.2), we saw the word *vōv* function as a linking mark between the tria tempora.⁴²⁵ As the ethopoeia is supposed to contrast the good times of the past with the miserable present,⁴²⁶ the present is often stressed with the word *vōv*, or in Latin, *nunc*. In Nicephorus' ethopoeia 44, Hercules has heard a prophecy from Zeus that he is going to be killed by a dead man. To Hercules, this new knowledge is of evil. In his speech, he uses the word *vōv* (or *vōvī*) four times to mark how bad life has become since he has received the prophecy.

Phyllis, waiting in vain for her Demophoon, writes (the words *nunc*, *tunc*, *tum* and *cum* will be marked in bold type):

Spes quoque lenta fuit; tarde, quae credita laedunt,
credimus. invita **nunc** es amante nocens. (2.9-10)

Hope was also slow. I am tardy in believing those things that hurt. **Now** you injure, although your lover is unwilling to believe it.

⁴²⁴ Libanius, Ethopoeia 23.

⁴²⁵ Aeschylus, *Coephoroe* 1034; Sophocles, *Ajax* 445 and 450; *Antigone* 916; Euripides, *Andromache* 458.

⁴²⁶ Nicolaus 65.

iura fidesque ubi **nunc**, commissaque dextera dextrae,
quique erat in falso plurimus ore deus?
promissus socios ubi **nunc** Hymenaeus in annos,
qui mihi coniugii sponsor et obses erat? (2.31-34)

Where are promises and faith **now** and the right hand entrusted to my right hand, and where is the god who constantly was in your false mouth? Where is **now** Hymen who was promised for years together, he who was my guarantor and surety for marriage?

Phyllis contrasts *now* with *then*, thus reminding Demophoon of the promises he made, now broken.

Like Phyllis, Ariadne recalls her lover's promises, promises which meant nothing:

tum mihi dicebas: "per ego ipsa pericula iuro,
te fore, dum nostrum vivet uterque, meam."
Vivimus, et non sum, Theseu, tua – si modo vivit
femina periuri fraude sepulta viri.
me quoque, qua fratrem, mactasses inprobe, clava;
esset, quam dederas, morte soluta fides.
nunc ego non tantum, quae sum passura, recordor,
et quaecumque potest ulla relictā pati:
occurrunt animo pereundi mille figurae,
morsque minus poenae quam mora mortis habet. (10.73-82)

Then you said to me: "I swear by these dangers that you will be mine as long as both of us live." We live, and I am not yours, Theseus – if now a woman lives who is buried by the fraud of her perjured man. Shameless man, you should have slaughtered me too, with the cudgel with which you killed my brother. The faith that you gave had in that case been absolved by my death. **Now** I recollect not only what I am going to suffer and

whatever someone left behind can suffer. Thousands of ways of how to perish appear before me, and death has less of penalty for me than delay of death.

To Ariadne, *nunc* consists of thoughts of death, of a wish to die. The *tum*, which made promises of the *nunc*, turned out to be a lie.

Oenone's existence was better before Paris discovered that he was a prince. The reversed roles within the marriage have changed everything for Oenone's and Paris' relationship:

Nunc tibi conveniunt, quae te per aperta sequantur
aequora legitimos destituantque viros;
at **cum** pauper eras armentaque pastor agebas,
nulla nisi Oenone pauperis uxor erat. (5.77-80)

Now they suit you, the girls who follow you through the open sea, leaving their husbands behind. But **when** you were poor and tended a flock being a shepherd, no one but Oenone was the wife of a poor man.

Paris used to be content with his humble life in the woods with Oenone. His change of social status seems to have changed his taste in women as well – as his morals: Oenone is no longer enough when he hunts foreign married women.

Medea shares a similar experience. Jason climbs the social ladder as he marries a princess. Medea – like Oenone – feels that his view of her has changed:

dotis opes ubi erant? ubi erat tibi regia coniunx,
quique maris gemini distinet Isthmos aquas?
illa ego, quae tibi sum **nunc** denique barbara facta,
nunc tibi sum pauper, **nunc** tibi visa nocens,
flammea subduxi medicato lumina somno,
et tibi, quae raperes, vellera tuta dedi. (12.103-108)

Where were the means of your dowry? Where was your royal bride and Isthmus, which separates the waters of the double sea? She is what I was, I who **now** to you have become a barbarian, who **now** to you am poor, who **now** seem to injure. I brought the eyes of the fire-drake into sleep by my medicament, and I gave you the safe fleece, which you stole.

She, who was indispensable to him at that time is worthless now.

Sappho thinks back to a voluptuous time when she and Phaon loved each other. Her recollection of the past is interrupted with a *nunc*, when she realizes that the girls of Sicily now have the privilege to enjoy what she once had:

tunc te plus solito lascivia nostra iuvabat,
crebraque mobilitas aptaque verba ioco,
et quod, ubi amborum fuerat confusa voluptas,
plurimus in lasso corpore languor erat.
Nunc tibi Sicelides veniunt nova praeda puellae. (15.47-51)

Then my desire pleased you more than usual. Variability was frequent and our words were ready for a joke. And when the voluptuousness of us both had mingled, a great languor came into our wearied bodies. **Now** Sicilian girls come to you, as a new prey.

The shift between past and present seems to be of frequent occurrence among these deserted women. For them, life changed suddenly. The writers use the contrast to remind their partners of a happy past, which will not become better only because they find new loves. The contrast between now and then can also be read as corresponding to the inconstancy and treacherousness of their men. The *nunc* is always followed by a bitter statement, contrasted to the idyllic past, whose gilded crown had dimmed because of their lovers' unfaithfulness.

5.3.3 Watch me now

In the *Heroides*, a number of heroines late in their letters draw attention to their desperate here-and-now-situation, as if they were depicting a scene of the circumstances in which they live for the moment, as if they cried "see me now!". This illustration often takes place right before the end of the poem, thus following Nicolaus' recommendation of returning to the present before the closing future.⁴²⁷ In the passages below, we can note the transition into future, marked in the Latin text in bold type. The poem either ends with the word in the future tense or continues in this tense.

Several of the heroines describe a situation that appears so intolerable that the recipient must react. Phyllis runs desperately on the shore, in the hope of catching sight of Demophoon's returning ship:

Maesta tamen scopulos fruticosaque litora calco
 quaeque patent oculis litora lata meis.
sive die laxatur humus, seu frigida lucent
 sidera, prospicio, quis freta ventus agat;
et quaecumque procul venientia lintea vidi,
 protinus illa meos auguror esse deos.
in freta procuro, vix me retinentibus undis,
 mobile qua primas porrigit aequor aquas.
quo magis accedunt, minus et minus utilis adsto;
 linquor et ancillis excipienda cado.
Est sinus, adductos modice falcatus in arcus;
 ultima praerupta cornua mole rigent.
hinc mihi suppositas inmittere corpus in undas
 mens fuit; et, quoniam fallere pergis, **erit.** (2.121-134)

Although sorrowful, I tread the rocks and the bushy shores, yes
all shores that lay open to my eyes. Whether the soil dissolves
during the day or cool stars are shining, I look forward to see

⁴²⁷ Nicolaus 65.

what wind moves the strait. And whatever sails I see coming, I immediately predict that they will be my gods. I run out in the strait. The waves hardly give way to me, where the moving sea stretches out its first water. The more they draw nearer, the less and less I stand aside useful; I faint and fall, and my maidens must catch me. There is a bay, moderately curved into joining crescents. Its horns at the farthest end rise rigid from a precipitous mass. My intention was to throw my body into the waves beneath; and since you persist in deceiving, it will be so.

Phyllis collapses and gives a sign by the word "erit" (2.134), which introduces the section on the future, that her madness will drive her into death.

Another suicidal heroine is Dido, who at the end of her letter draws attention to the sword in her lap. She invites Aeneas to watch her with an "adspicias":

adspicias utinam, quae sit scribentis imago!
scribimus, et gremio Troicus ensis adest,
perque genas lacrimae strictum labuntur in ensem,
qui iam pro lacrimis sanguine tinctus **erit**. (7.183-186)

If only you could watch this picture of a woman writing! I write, and a Trojan sword is in my bosom. Tears fall over my cheeks onto the bare sword, which shall be stained by blood instead of tears.

Ariadne uses the word *adspicere* as well to call our attention to her situation ("adspice", 10.135 and 10.137). The word *nunc* also emphasizes the here-and-now-situation, and like Briseis, Canace and Dido, she speaks of herself as a female writer. Ariadne's writings run the risk of being destroyed because of her miserable condition:

nunc quoque non oculis, sed, qua potes, **adspice** mente
haerentem scopulo, quem vaga pulsat aqua.
adspice demissos lugentis more capillos

et tunicas lacrimis sicut ab imbre gravis.
 corpus, ut impulsae segetes aquilonibus, horret,
 litteraque articulo pressa tremente labat.
 non te per meritum, quoniam male cessit, adoro;
 debita sit facto gratia nulla meo.
 sed ne poena quidem! si non ego causa salutis,
 non tamen est, cur sis tu mihi causa necis.
 Has tibi plangendo lugubria pectora lassas
 infelix tendo trans freta lata manus;
 hos tibi—qui superant—ostendo maesta capillos!
 per lacrimas oro, quas tua facta movent—
 flecte ratem, Theseu, versoque relabere velo!
 si prius **occidero**, tu tamen ossa **feres**! (10.135-152)

Watch me **now**, not with your eyes, but – to the extent that you can – with your mind, how I am clinging to a rock, which a wondering wave touches. Watch my hair, hanging as becomes a person in grief, and my dress, heavy from tears as if it was from rain. My body shivers like a crop struck by the North wind, and the letter that I have written slips from my trembling limb. I beg you, not as a debt of gratitude, since it turned out so badly; you owe me nothing for what I did. But not this punishment! If I cannot be the reason for your happiness, there is still no reason for you to be the reason for my death. Unhappy I stretch these weary hands to you over the sea, weary with beating my sorrowful breast. Gloomy I show you the hair that still remains! I pray by my tears, which are moved by what you have done: turn your ship, Theseus! Turn your sails and glide back to me! If I die first, it will at least be my bones you will carry away!

The image of Ariadne implies either that she is standing there in order to catch sight of him, even ready to climb cliffs – or, that she is about to throw herself into the sea. Ariadne's description of herself as clinging to a rock is powerful, as if being left alone on a desert island was not dramatic enough. Hermione (8.107-110) and Medea draw attention to their insomnia. They are lying in bed, weeping. We can recall Sophocles' Electra, who spoke of her

hateful bed and her sleepless nights which she filled with woes and songs of lament.⁴²⁸ The scenes are dramatic and culminate in thoughts of death, which are expressed in the future tense, initiating the last part of the letters.

Medea tells of her sleepless state:

non mihi grata dies; noctes vigilantur amarae,

et tener a misero pectore somnus abest.

quae me non possum, potui sopire draconem;

utilior cuivis quam mihi cura mea est.

quos ego servavi, paelex amplectitur artus,

et nostri fructus illa laboris habet.

Forsitan et, stultae dum te iactare maritae

quaeris et iniustis auribus apta loqui,

in faciem moresque meos nova crimina fingas.

rideat et vitiis laeta sit illa meis!

rideat et Tyrio iaceat sublimis in ostro –

flebit et ardores **vincet** adusta meos! (12.169-180)

The day is not welcome to me. I keep vigil through the bitter nights and gentle sleep is absent from my poor heart. I have been able to put a dragon to sleep but not myself. My care is more useful to anyone else than me. The limbs which I took care of, a mistress now embraces – she reaps the fruits of my toil. While you boast about yourself to your stupid bride and try to speak words suitable for her unjust ears, perhaps you make up new charges against my face and manners. May she laugh and be happy for my faults! May she laugh and lie elevated on Tyrian purple. She will weep, and destroyed by fire she will surpass my ardour!

I have here demonstrated two modes in order to illustrate a miserable present situation. One is to contrast it with the better past; often is this expressed in the word pair *nunc-tunc* (or *tum* or *cum*), frequently placed – as in earlier

⁴²⁸ Sophocles, *Electra* 86-104.

ethopoeiae (see section 3.2.2 on Greek tragedy) – in the beginning of a line. Another is to paint a picture of a gloomy woman in an act of devotion to her lover: writing, waiting, being sleepless or threatening to kill herself. I found no parallels to this ‘watch-me-now’-scene in other ethopoeiae. It presupposes of course a recipient, as it is used to make the other understand what he has caused. However, the fact that the scene is followed by a concluding passage in the future makes it correspond to other ethopoeiae.

5.4 The past

In Libanius’ third ethopoeia, Achilles makes his laments over the dead Patroclus. After having defined the present situation, he continues:

ἀλλὰ γὰρ ἀναμνήσκομαι τῶν πρότερον ἀγαθῶν, τῶν τότε, ὅτε
μὲν κατεφρόνεις Ἀγαμέμνονος, ἐμὲ δὲ ἡγάπας... (Libanius,
Ethopoeia 3.2)

But I will remember the good times before, the ones at the time
when you disdained Agamemnon but cherished me...
(Translation: Craig A. Gibson)

Achilles contrasts the good times of the past with the dark ones of the present. In Libanius’ first ethopoeia, Medea claims she had a better life before Jason arrived. She still had her virginity, a good reputation, suitors from the ruling class and expectations.⁴²⁹ One of the letter writers in Alciphron, Panope, emphasizes to her husband the social status she had before she married, implying that she was happier before she met him (above pp. 120-121).⁴³⁰ Aphthonius’ Niobe was envied by others for her many children and her friendship with Leto (pp. 104-106).⁴³¹ Andromache was a blessed daughter and wife and had everything, before Achilles ruined it all (pp. 110-111 and 120).⁴³²

⁴²⁹ Libanius, Ethopoeia 1.3.

⁴³⁰ Alciphron 1.6.

⁴³¹ Aphthonius 45-46.

⁴³² Libanius, Ethopoeia 2.3.

Ovid's Hecuba, who used to be happy, also points to Achilles as the cause of the sorrows of the Trojan royal family (above pp. 182-184).⁴³³ Andromache and Hecuba are not the only ones who impute the blame onto a certain person. In several ethopoeiae in Libanius, someone is made responsible for the misery. According to Achilles, it was Agamemnon's fault that the Greeks were beaten and that he was deprived of Briseis.⁴³⁴ Ajax blames the judges in one ethopoeia and Ulysses in another.⁴³⁵ Achilles blames the war for making him a prisoner of love.⁴³⁶ Achilles, having been deprived of Briseis, lodges accusations against Agamemnon and the Greek soldiers.⁴³⁷ In an ethopoeia by Nicephorus, Zeus wonders if he is to blame Hera or Aphrodite for the transformation of Io into a cow, but comes to the conclusion that Eros with his jokes is the guilty one.⁴³⁸ Not rarely, the speaker who confronts a situation which he or she has caused, defends or accuses him/herself. Niobe in Libanius blames herself for her arrogance.⁴³⁹ Apollo of the *Metamorphoses* declares himself to be guilty of his friend's death (p. 180).⁴⁴⁰ In Nicephorus 54, Pasiphaë, realizing she is in love with a bull, defends herself by saying that Zeus (her father) created the bull and that the Olympian god himself used to be one when he seduced Europa. Sophocles' Antigone defends her act by putting forward ethical arguments (pp. 149-151).⁴⁴¹

Naturally, the section on the past is used as an opportunity to depict previous events. Lucian has Ulysses give a short account of the past in his letter to Calypso.⁴⁴² Prometheus in Aeschylus' tragedy explains to the spectator what made him become fettered.⁴⁴³ In her section on the past in Nicephorus' ethopoeia, Danae addresses her father, telling him that while he

⁴³³ *Metamorphoses* 13.498-505.

⁴³⁴ Libanius, Ethopoeia 4.1-2, 4.4 and 15.1.

⁴³⁵ Libanius, Ethopoeia 6.3, 6.5 and 7.3.

⁴³⁶ Libanius, Ethopoeia 13.2.

⁴³⁷ Libanius, Ethopoeia 15.1.

⁴³⁸ Nicephorus 47.

⁴³⁹ Libanius, Ethopoeia 9.3.

⁴⁴⁰ *Metamorphoses* 10.199.

⁴⁴¹ Sophocles, *Antigone* 904-915 and 920-928.

⁴⁴² Lucian, *Vera Historia* 2.35.

⁴⁴³ Aeschylus, *Prometheus vincetus* 107-111.

built the copper tower in order to guard her, Eros transformed Zeus into gold.⁴⁴⁴

Another category appears when Hercules in the *Metamorphoses* uses his section on the past to enumerate his deeds. His record of merits serves as a contrast to his present weakness caused by poison. Hercules is the speaker also in Nicephorus' ethopoeia 44. Here as well, the hero is listing his deeds in detail, wondering why he, who has achieved such great things, must undergo an ignominious death. Ulysses of Libanius' ethopoeiae 23-25 also lists his merits. It seems as if a great hero must be followed by his deeds.

Of the model ethopoeiae and literary ethopoeiae which present a section on the past tense (which most do), I can thus discern the following categories of retrospectivity:

1. *The golden days of the past.* The past is used as a contrast to the lamentable present.
2. *A course of events.* The past is used to recall a course of events.
3. *Previous deeds.* The past is used to display a personal record or list of qualifications.

A few heroines offer very little of a retrospect. Phaedra (ep. 4) recalls Hippolytus' beauty the moment when she saw him at a party. Laodamia (ep. 13) relates the separation of her husband Protesilaus very briefly. Consequently, these heroines will not be discussed in this section of this chapter. The sections seeing matters in retrospect are not always written in the grammatical past tense, but sometimes in praesens historicum (compare Canace, section 5.2.2).

Ovid uses the section on the past in a fourth way. A recurring motif is the departure scene, where the lover takes farewell and tears are shed. These are omitted in this chapter for the reason that they are not represented in other ethopoeiae but seem to be an Ovidian invention.⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴⁴ Nicephorus 46.

⁴⁴⁵ Reeson (2001): 120.

5.4.1 The golden days of the past

Oenone used the word *nunc* to stress the change in her and Paris' relationship. Here, she reminds Paris of his former non-noble status and dreams of an idyllic, pastoral and sheltered life she once had:⁴⁴⁶

servus eras; servo nubere nympha tuli!
saepe greges inter requievimus arbore tecti,
mixtaque cum foliis praebuit herba torum;
saepe super stramen faenoque iacentibus alto
defensa est humili cana pruina casa.
quis tibi monstrabat saltus venatibus aptos,
et tegeret catulos qua fera rupe suos?
retia saepe comes maculis distincta tetendi;
saepe citos egi per iuga longa canes. (5.12-20)

You were a slave. I, a nymph, condescended to marry a slave!
We often reposed among the flocks, sheltered by a tree, and
grass mixed with leaves offered a bed. We were often protected
from the white winter as we lay on straw and hay in a simple
cottage. Who used to show you woods apt for hunting, and in
what cave wild animals protected their kids? As your
companion, I often set nets, tied with meshes; I often drove
dogs over long ridges.

Life was better when Oenone and Paris knew their roles and lived in the woods. The nymph depicts her Arcadian life with Paris in nostalgic colours. She stresses her helpfulness, a quality to which we will have reason to return in section 6.3.5.

Sappho recalls when she sang poems for Phaon and the two were a loving couple:

⁴⁴⁶ For the nostalgic dreaming of Oenone and other heroines, see Spentzou (2003): 43-53.

At mea cum legerem, sat iam formosa videbar;
 unam iurabas usque decere loqui.
 cantabam, memini—meminerunt omnia amantes—
 oscula cantanti tu mihi rapta dabas.
 haec quoque laudabas, omnique a parte placebam—
 sed tum praecipue, cum fit amoris opus.
 tunc te plus solito lascivia nostra iuvabat,
 crebraque mobilitas aptaque verba ioco,
 et quod, ubi amborum fuerat confusa voluptas,
 plurimus in lasso corpore languor erat. (15.41-50)

But when I read my songs, I seemed already beautiful enough;
 you continuously swore that I was the only one whom it befitted
 to speak. I remember – for loving people remember all – that I
 used to sing. You gave stolen kisses to me as I sang. You used
 to praise them too, and I pleased you in every respect, but
 particularly when we made love. Then you took delight in our
 wildness more than usual, in the quickness of my body and in
 words suitable for the game, and in the fact that a great
 faintness took place in my wearied body, as soon as our mutual
 pleasure had been mixed together.

Sappho remembers her and Phaon's erotic meetings with joy and gratitude. Sappho characterizes herself either more experienced or less honourable than other heroines. Unlike them, she does not regret her liaisons with Phaon, but admits that she enjoyed them. As mentioned (above pp. 109-110), Libanius' Medea claims that she was happier before she met Jason and still was a virgin.⁴⁴⁷ Like her, the heroines claim that they were happy before they foolishly gave themselves to their partners. Phyllis was chaste before Demophoon appeared. If she had remained so, she could have died as an honourable woman:

⁴⁴⁷ Libanius, *Ethopoeia* 1.3.

turpiter hospitium lecto cumulasse iugali
paenitet, et lateri conseruisse latus.
quae fuit ante illam, mallem suprema fuisset
nox mihi, dum potui Phyllis honesta mori. (2.57-60)

I repent that I in a shameful way have crowned my hospitality with you in bed and to have put my side tightly against yours. I wish that the night before had been my last one, while I, Phyllis, still could have died honourable.

Canace wishes that she had died before she went to bed with her brother (11.21-24). Dido regrets that she sought shelter in the cave in the company of Aeneas:

his tamen officiis utinam contenta fuisset,
et mihi concubitus fama sepulta foret! (7.91-92)

Still, if only I had been content with my services, and that the rumour of our sexual meeting would have been buried!

The idea of a better past touches the contrast of *now* and *then*, which I presented in section 5.3.2. In those examples, however, the writer had revalued the past, now regarding it as a fake or illusion. The examples above show the past painted in nostalgic colours. The instruction from the *progymnasmata* books is thus put to good use here.

5.4.2 A course of events

The section on the past is often used to relate the events that led to the present misfortune. Dido blames the day on which she and Aeneas united. That day, "illa dies", was cursed and led to her ruin.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁸ Compare Virgil, *Aeneid* 4.169-170: "ille dies primus leti primusque malorum / causa fuit.", 'That day, the first of death and the first of evils, was the cause.'

illa dies nocuit, qua nos declive sub antrum
caeruleus subitis compulit imber aquis. (7.93-94)

That day did harm, when a dark-blue storm of sudden rain
drove us into a sloping cavern.

Like Dido, Oenone uses the words "illa dies" as she picks out one certain day. But whereas Dido made a mistake that day, Oenone was powerless against what happened. Her unhappiness began when the three goddesses Juno, Minerva and Venus took part in the beauty contest and, not accounted for in the passage below, Paris was granted Fair Helen, an event followed by the building of the boat:

Illa dies fatum miserae mihi dixit, ab illa
pessima mutati coepit amoris hiemps,
qua Venus et Iuno sumptisque decentior armis
venit in arbitrium nuda Minerva tuum.
attoniti micuere sinus, gelidusque cucurrit,
ut mihi narrasti, dura per ossa tremor.
consului—neque enim modice terrebar—anusque
longaevosque senes. constitit esse nefas.
Caesa abies, sectaeque trabes, et classe parata
caerula ceratas accipit unda rates. (5.33-42)

That day spoke a decree of fate to miserable me. From that day started the awful winter of changed love, when Venus, Juno and Minerva, without her arms – more graceful having put them down – came to attend the judgment. As soon as you told me of this, my stupefied bosom quivered, a shudder passed over me and my bones trembled. I consulted old women and men – I was not moderately frightened. It was clear that this was a sin. The fir was felled, the logs were split, and when the ship was ready to sail, the blue wave received the waxed vessel.

Oenone tells the story of the judgment of Paris, concentrated to a few lines. The fatal day tore Oenone's idyllic life into pieces. But it also meant a catastrophe for all those who were to be involved in the Trojan War. With this in mind, the reader will probably read Oenone as if she was attaching great importance to herself. Chapter six will show that she is.

Even though Medea does not use the same expression, "illa dies", she speaks about a certain point in time ("ab illo... tempore", 12.5-6), from which all evil began.

Oenone introduces another dramatic event, the return of Paris – and Helen:

dum moror, in summa fulsit mihi purpura prora—
pertimui; cultus non erat ille tuus.
fit propior terrasque cita ratis attigit aura;
femineas vidi corde tremente genas.
non satis id fuerat— quid enim furiosa morabar?—
haerebat gremio turpis amica tuo!
tunc vero rupique sinus et pectora planxi,
et secui madidas ungue rigente genas,
inplevique sacram querulis ululatibus Iden
illuc has lacrimas in mea saxa tuli. (5.65-74)

While I delay, a purple gown shone towards me from the top of the prow. I became frightened; that was not your garment. The craft is nearing land and touches it by the help of a swift breeze. With trembling heart, I saw that the features were female. This was not enough – why did I, furious, delay? – the shameful girlfriend of yours was glued to your lap! Then I actually tore the clothes from my breast and beat my chest. With a hard nail I cut my damp cheeks, and I filled sacred Ida with lamentations and cries. There, to my rocks, I carried these tears.

The sight of Helen brings forth a recurring motif: a female expression of desperation and grief. Oenone writes how she tore her dress, beat her chest and scratched her cheek.

To Briseis, the abduction by Agamemnon is the most dramatic event in her life. To the reader, however, what had happened to her in the past is so much more deplorable. Still, as we will see in chapter six, Briseis does not lament the loss of her husband and brothers or that Achilles actually killed them:

diruta Marte tuo Lyrnesia moenia vidi –
et fueram patriae pars ego magna meae;
vidi consortes pariter generisque necisque
tres cecidisse, quibus, quae mihi, mater erat;
vidi, quantus erat, fusum tellure cruenta
pectora iactantem sanguinolenta virum.
tot tamen amissis te compensavimus unum (3.45-51)

I saw the walls of Lyrnessus give way to your irresistible attack, and I had been a great part of my native country. I saw three brothers fall, sharers of blood as well as fate, who all sprang from the same mother. I saw my husband too, stretched upon the bloody plain, and tossing with anguish his breast drenched in gore. Yet, I have compensated so many losses in you alone.

In contrast to Dido, Oenone and Medea, Briseis here does not pick out a moment that constituted the start of her misery. Instead, the slaughter of her family becomes a prerequisite for her relationship with Achilles. He alone compensated the loss of her family.

A long passage (here reduced) of Hypermestra's epistle relates the course of events that took place the night when she omitted to kill her newly-wed husband:

Excussere metum violenti iussa parentis;
erigor et capio tela tremente manu.
non ego falsa loquar: ter acutum sustulit ensem,
ter male sublato reccidit ense manus.
admovi iugulo—sine me tibi vera fateri!

—admovi iugulo tela paterna tuo;
 sed timor et pietas crudelibus obstitit ausis,
 castaque mandatum dextra refugit opus.
 purpureos laniata sinus, laniata capillos
 exiguo dixi talia verba sono:
 “saevus, Hypermestra, pater est tibi; iussa parentis
 effice; germanis sit comes iste suis!...” (14.43-54)

The orders from my violent father shook away my fear. I rise and seize the weapon with trembling hand. I will not speak an untruth: thrice did my hand lift the sharp sword, thrice did my **hand** badly lift the sword and sink back again. I brought it to your throat – let me confess the truth for you! – I brought the weapon from my father to your throat; but fear and piety prevented my cruel doings, and my chaste **right hand** fled from the task I had been commissioned to do. Having torn my purple dress, having torn my hair, I uttered the following words, scarcely audible: “Hypermestra, you have a cruel father; carry out the commands of your father; may your husband become a companion to his brothers!”.

Hypermestra’s retrospective narrative deals only with the horrible wedding night. While other heroines jump between different stories of the past: memories of their early relationship, a departure or a deceit, Hypermestra’s story is long and uninterrupted. We find a parallel in Canace’s letter. In this respect, these two letters are more similar to the model *ethopoeiae*, which contain a continuous narrative of the past. On the other hand, they do not follow Nicolaus’ instruction of avoiding “narrations keeping to a succession of events”.⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁹ Nicolaus 67. Translation: George A. Kennedy.

5.4.3 Previous deeds

We saw Oenone stress her helpfulness. Phyllis, Hypsipyle and Dido argue that they should be praised for having welcomed sea-faring strangers. Phyllis offered Demophoon shelter and made him gifts. She even gave him her country to rule:

ei mihi! si, quae sim Phyllis et unde, rogas—
quae tibi, Demophoon, longis erroribus acto
Threicios portus hospitiumque dedi,
cuius opes auxere meae, cui dives egenti
munera multa dedi, multa datura fui;
quae tibi subieci latissima regna Lycurgi,
nomine femineo vix satis apta regi... (2.106-112)

Ah me! If you ask who I, Phyllis, am, and from where I come: I am she who gave you, Demophoon, the Thracian port and shelter, after your long wanderings at sea, you whose resources mine increased, to whom I, being rich, gave you, being needy, many gifts. I am she who lay under you the vast kingdom of Lycurgus, barely suited to be ruled in the name of a woman...

Phyllis identifies herself as a hostess (2.106-108). This is how she prefers to be remembered by Demophoon.

Dido helped the ship-wrecked Aeneas:

fluctibus eiectum tuta statione recepi
vixque bene audito nomine regna dedi (7.89-90)

I received you in a safe place, you who were thrown up by the waves, and I gave you my kingdom when I had scarcely heard your name.

The concept of hospitality and all it implies is a general poetical motif, not unique of the ethopoeia. In Libanius, the one who has given help expresses a

similar feeling of disappointment when he discovers the ingratitude of the one he has helped. Achilles complains that Agamemnon did not show him any respect when he invaded twenty-three cities or the labours he experiences at sea.⁴⁵⁰ In another of Libanius' *ethopoeiae*, Ajax claims he was the one who could replace Achilles, for the reason that he was able to find food for the army; he was brave and inspired the soldiers.⁴⁵¹

Hypsipyle let Jason together with his crew stay on her island for two years. Like the two previous speakers, she stresses her hospitality:

certa fui primo—sed me mala fata trahebant—
hospita feminea pellere castra manu;
Lemniadesque viros, nimium quoque, vincere norunt.
milite tam forti terra tuenda fuit!
Urbe virum iuvi, tectoque animoque recepi!
hic tibi bisque aestas bisque cucurrit hiemps. (6.51-56)

At first I was determined (but my bad fate drew me back) to drive away the camp of guests with my female troop; the women on Lemnos know too well how to defeat men. My country would have been taken care of by such a strong military force. I welcomed a man with my city, with my home and with my heart. While you were here, two summers and two winters elapsed.

Hypsipyle stresses that her generosity was all the more remarkable since she at first intended to drive Jason and his team away, but still allowed them to stay for two years. The achievements that Jason made in Colchis are also accounted for. It is through a messenger that Hypsipyle hears about them:

Ut rediit animus, tua facta requirere coepi.
narrat aenipedes Martis arasse boves,

⁴⁵⁰ Libanius, *Ethopoeia* 4.2-3.

⁴⁵¹ Libanius, *Ethopoeia* 6.4.

vipereos dentes in humum pro semine iactos,
et subito natos arma tulisse viros— (6.31-34)

As soon as my mind returned, I began to ask for your deeds. He tells me that the bronze-footed oxen of Mars ploughed, that dragon teeth were thrown to the ground instead of seed, and that suddenly men were born who carried arms.

Medea also gives an exposition of the tasks that Jason had to undergo on her father's command:

iungis aenipedes inadusto corpore tauros
et solidam iusso vomere findis humum.
arva venenatis pro semine dentibus inpleo,
nascitur et gladios scutaque miles habens.
ipsa ego, quae dederam medicamina, pallida sedi,
cum vidi subitos arma tenere viros,
donec terrigenae, facinus mirabile, fratres
inter se strictas conseruere manus.
Insopor ecce vigil squamis crepitantibus horrens
sibilat et torto pectore verrit humum! (12.93-102)

You unite bronze-footed bulls without scorching the body, and you plough the firm soil with the plough as you have been ordered. You fill the fields with poisoned teeth instead of seed, and a soldier is born, who has both shields and swords. I myself, who had given the medicaments, sat pale, when I saw the new-born men carrying arms, while the earth-born brothers directed their outstretched hands against each other, a remarkable thing to watch. Look, the sleepless snake, horrifying with its rustling scales hisses and sweeps the soil with its twisted chest!

Even though Medea does not take credit for Jason's merits here, but describes herself as shivering in the background, she writes elsewhere that

they are thanks to her. She could just as well have put them in her list of qualifications. We might read the passage as Medea's strategy to show her claimed naivety, inexperience and obedience towards Jason. Still, whatever perspective Medea has, it seems that Jason's deed must be mentioned, that they follow on his character. Hypsipyle was not even a witness, but mentions his challenges anyway. That the hero is associated with his deeds was evident through the example of Hercules from the *Metamorphoses*. Here, Hercules appears again, in Deianira's epistle:

factaque narrabas dissimulanda tibi—
scilicet inmanes elisis faucibus hydros
infantem caudis involuisse manum,
ut Tegeaeus aper cupressifero Erymantho
incubet et vasto pondere laedat humum.
non tibi Threiciis adfixa penatibus ora,
non hominum pingues caede tacentur equae;
prodigiumque triplex, armenti dives Hiberi
Geryones, quamvis in tribus unus erat;
inque canes totidem trunco digestus ab uno
Cerberos inPLICITIS angue minante comis;
quaeque redundabat fecundo vulnere serpens
fertilis et damnis dives ab ipsa suis;
quique inter laevumque latus laevumque lacertum
praegrave conpressa fauce pependit onus;
et male confisum pedibus formaque bimembri
pulsum Thessalicis agmen equestre iugis. (9.84-100)

You told events that should be ignored by you, that is, that your baby hand rolled enormous hydres in their tails after you had crushed their jaws, how the Tegean boar leans over cypress-bearing Erymanthus and lays the soil waste with his vast weight. You will neither be quiet about the faces that were nailed in Thracian homes, nor about the mares who became fat

by the blood from human beings; nor about the threefold monster Geryon, rich in Iberian cattle, although he was one in three; nor about Cerberus, divided in one cut into the same number of dogs, with a snake threatening in his entangled hair; nor about the serpent who spread over in a fruitful wound, fertile and rich in the damages from herself; nor about him, who hung between your left side and your left arm as a heavy burden, after his throat had been squeezed; nor about the equestrian army having bad confidence in its feet and its two-limbed form and was driven away from the Thessalian hills.

Deianira's account is so overloaded that it almost becomes comical. If her purpose is to make ironical remarks on Hercules' megalomaniac boasting, she succeeds.

The past described as nostalgic or only accounted for as a course of events, is connected to the narrative of the *ethopoeia*. The account of the deeds, although a part of the *tria tempora*, has more to do with characterization. Women who take care of seafaring strangers should stress their hospitality. Heroes are expected to be characterized through their achievements. Here, we touch on the idea of literary types, reminiscent of the ones we meet in ancient comedy (for example the greedy old man or the astute servant), where one quality is stressed and almost overdone.

5.5 The future

Letters or poems addressed to someone one is acquainted with naturally tend to close with the future tense. It expresses a wish of keeping in touch. Propertius often closes with an idea of what the future will hold in store – here addressing Cynthia:

semper amica mihi, semper et uxor eris (Propertius 2.6.42)

You will always be my girlfriend, you will always be my wife too.

In these lines, future holds prosperity and light. The ethopoeia, on the contrary, entails death and darkness, as it should end by giving a prophecy of upcoming evil things. In the ethopoeiae so far, prophecies have occurred, though not in every single case. In Libanius, predictions of the future are common. Andromache predicts that she will become a slave or perhaps the mistress of the murderer of Hector.⁴⁵² Achilles anticipates his own story by declaring that he will desecrate the corpse of Hector by dragging it behind his wagon.⁴⁵³ Achilles' following prophecies will come true: when being robbed of Briseis, Achilles imagines that Agamemnon will send ambassadors with gifts, which he indeed does.⁴⁵⁴ Achilles also wishes that Agamemnon like himself, will lose his woman and that someone else will love Clytemnestra.⁴⁵⁵ Ovid's Hypsipyle utters a wish that Medea will be cruel to her husband and her children and that she will flee over the sea, land and sky:

utque ego destituor coniunx materque duorum,
a totidem natis orba sit illa viro!
nec male parta diu teneat peiusque relinquat –
exulet et toto quaerat in orbe fugam!
quam fratri germana fuit miseroque parenti
filia, tam natis, tam sit acerba viro!
cum mare, cum terras consumpserit, aera temptet;
erret inops, exspes, caede cruenta sua!
haec ego, coniugio fraudata Thoantias oro.
vivite, devoto nuptaque virque toro! (6.155-164)

As I am deserted as your bride and a mother of two, may she be deprived of her man and as many children! What she won unjustly, may she leave even worse – may she become fugitive and search for refuge in the entire world! As ruthless as she was as a sister to her brother and a daughter to her poor father, let her be to her children and to her man! When she has covered

⁴⁵² Libanius, Ethopoeia 2.6.

⁴⁵³ Libanius, Ethopoeia 3.6.

⁴⁵⁴ Libanius, Ethopoeia 4.9.

⁴⁵⁵ Libanius, Ethopoeia 15.7.

the sea and the land, may she search out the sky. May she wander about without means, without hope, bloodstained by her murder! Of this I, Thoas' daughter, cheated of my marriage, pray. Live, bride and husband in your bewitched marriage bed!

Hypsipyle's predictions well correspond with what actually will happen to Medea. Oenone, although she herself is known for her prophetic skills, has Cassandra warning of Paris' union with Helen (5.113-120). As we know, these prophecies too will come true.

Phyllis, Briseis, Dido, Hermione and Sappho end their letters by saying that they must die unless their affections are reciprocated. Several women are about to commit suicide. Dido will die of unhappy love and lost honour. Deianira must die although she killed Hercules by mistake, Canace has been commanded by her father to take her own life. Phyllis tells us that she is going to take her own life:

*hinc mihi suppositas inmittere corpus in undas
mens fuit; et, quoniam fallere pergis, erit.
ad tua me fluctus proiectam litora portent,
occurramque oculis intumulata tuis!
duritia ferrum ut superes adamantaque teque,
"non tibi sic", dices, "Phylli, sequendus eram!"
saepe venenorum sitis est mihi; saepe cruenta
traiectam gladio morte perire iuvat.
colla quoque, infidis quia se nectenda lacertis
praebuerunt, laqueis inplicuisse iuvat. (2.133-142)*

My intention was to throw my body into the waves beneath; and as you persist in deceiving, it will be so. The waves will carry me, thrown away, to your shores, and I will appear unburied before your eyes! Though you may surpass iron, steel and yourself in harshness, you will say: "Phyllis, I was not worthy of you for you to follow me in that way!" I often thirst for poison, I often long to die a bloody death having stabbed myself with a sword. I long to entangle my neck in a snare, since it offered itself to be embraced by your unfaithful arms.

Phyllis speaks of four different ways of killing herself: by throwing herself into the sea, by poisoning herself, by killing herself with a sword or by hanging herself. Let us recall Niobe in Libanius 9 (p. 107). She too chose between four courses of action: throwing herself into the sea or against rocks, crying herself to death, giving herself a mortal wound or hanging herself.⁴⁵⁶ We also saw a similar mode of expression in Andromache's first ethopoeia in Euripides. Andromache said she was going to be slaughtered, murdered, imprisoned or hanged.⁴⁵⁷ It might be a locus connected to the motif of suicide, but as the parallel is so similar, I regard it conspicuous.

In the cases of the three heroines Phyllis, Dido and Hypermestra, Ovid uses an inscription as the concluding sentence. Here, he sticks to an elegiac locus. A similar use of this locus is found in Propertius, though not as evidently associated with the ethopoeia as in Ovid.⁴⁵⁸ The heroines formulate texts for their grave-stones, which effectually end their letters.⁴⁵⁹ The epitaphs of Phyllis, Dido and Hypermestra will read:

PHYLLIDA DEMOPHOON LETO DEDIT HOSPES

AMANTEM;

ILLE NECIS CAUSAM PRAEBUIT IPSA MANUM.

(2.147-148)

THE GUEST DEMOPHOON GAVE THE LOVING PHYLLIS
TO DEATH. HE OFFERED A REASON FOR HER SUICIDE
— SHE OFFERED A HAND.

⁴⁵⁶ Libanius, Ethopoeia 9.8.

⁴⁵⁷ Euripides, *Andromache* 411-412.

⁴⁵⁸ Propertius 2.13.35-36: "et duo sint versus, 'qui nunc iacet horrida pulvis, / unius hic quondam servus amoris erat.'" 'And may there be two verses: 'he who lies here is now reduced to horrible ashes, / he who once was the slave of love to one only.'" These lines are not the final ones of the poem. Line 72 of Propertius 4.3, Arethusa's letter to Lycotas, ends with an inscription, however not implying any death. The final lines of Propertius 4.2, offers a humouristic epitaph of the god Vertumnus. In *Tristia* 3.3, Ovid formulates an epitaph over himself.

⁴⁵⁹ 2.147-148, 7.194-196 and 14.127-130.

PRAEBUIT AENEAS ET CAUSAM MORTIS ET ENSEM;
IPSA SUA DIDO CONCIDIT USA MANU. (7.195-196)

AENEAS OFFERED A REASON OF DEATH AND A
SWORD: DIDO HERSELF FELL BY HER OWN HAND.

“exul Hypermestra, pretium pietatis iniquum,
quam mortem fratri depulit, ipsa tulit.” (14.129-130)

“Hypermestra, exiled, the unjust price of piety, herself endured
the death that she took away from her brother.”

The three heroines include their names and how they were put to death by their lovers.

A peculiar case is Sappho. From the myth, we know that she took her own life because of her unrequited love to Phaon. In the passage quoted below, Sappho threatens to take her life. A naiad appears, telling her that she should go to Ambracia and there plunge herself into the sea, like Deucalion once did for Pyrrha’s sake (15.161-178). After the nymph has spoken, Sappho decides to obey and go. She writes:

ibimus, o nymphe, monstrataque saxa petemus;
sit procul insano victus amore timor!
quidquid erit, melius quam nunc erit! aura, subito
et mea non magnum corpora pondus habe!
tu quoque, mollis Amor, pennas suppone cadenti,
ne sim Leucadiae mortua crimen aquae!
inde chelyn Phoebo, communia munera, ponam,
et sub ea versus unus et alter erunt:

GRATA LYRAM POSUI TIBI, PHOEBE, POETRIA
SAPPHO:

CONVENIT ILLA MIHI, CONVENIT ILLA TIBI.

(15.175-184)

I will go, o nymph, I will search for the rocks that you pointed out to me. May fear keep away, defeated by insane love! Whatever it will be, it will be better than now! Wind, take my body of small weight! You too, soft Amor, lay your wings under me when I fall, so that I may not have died causing a crime to the Leucadian sea! Thence, I will place my lyre, our common gift, to Phoebus, and beneath, one verse and another shall be written: I, SAPPHO THE POETRESS, PLACED MY LYRE GRATEFUL TO YOU, PHOEBUS: IT SUITS ME WELL AND IT SUITS YOU.

Sappho is speaking of her future death, she sends a prayer to a god and she composes an inscription comprising a distich. If we read her epistle as an ethopoeia, it would be natural to leave here. In contrast to Phyllis, Dido and Hypermestra, though, Sappho does not name her lover or mention her death in her inscription. But in conformity with the others, her inscription functions as an attribute to her as an individual. Phyllis, who identifies herself as a hostess, mentions her hospitality in her words to posterity. Dido, whose letter is full of suicidal thoughts, tells us that she took her life by her own hand. Hypermestra, who over and over repeats the word *pia* about herself, ensures that this description of her is included in the inscription. Sappho identifies herself as a poetress more than the girlfriend of Phaon. Thus, she wishes to be associated with the god of poetry, Phoebus. Sappho's and Medea's letters are the only poems in the collection containing more than 200 lines. Ending the letter here would be more in lines with the length of the other epistles. There is however no evidence in the manuscripts to justify such a reconstruction of the text. Supposing, though, that the remaining lines were removed or transferred, the penultimate line with Sappho's begging for an epistle would lose its point. However it may be, we here see a departure from the norm.

Prophecies of evils to come are often, but not always, near at hand for the heroines when they round off their speeches. Death or catastrophe is always present. The parallel to the ethopoeia is in this respect obvious.

5.6 Summary

In elegy, men are the ones who mourn, who long for their erratic girlfriends. In the *Heroides* however, Ovid turns this upside down. This innovation, I believe, is inspired by the progymnasmatic tradition, and enables Ovid to play with the genre of elegy and its conventions. The model ethopoeiae as well as the literary ethopoeiae deal mostly with characters from Homeric epics and Greek tragedy. In the *Heroides*, Ovid does so too, with the difference that the epic heroes have to retreat in favour of the female figures. Ovid thus follows the ethopoetic idea of giving voice to historical-mythological characters who find themselves in the most dramatic situations of their lives, but changes the focus from the male heroes to their female companions.

The epistolary genre may have stood in the way of a discovery of the ethopoetic structure in the *Heroides*. In this chapter, I have claimed that the poems of the *Heroides* should, in the first place, be read as ethopoeiae and not as epistles. Still, the introductions emphasize the epistolary character of the poems. In the case of Phaedra, I find her opening lines similar to both an ethopoetic poem of the *Anthologia Palatina* and the letter of Byblis in the *Metamorphoses*. Although I have dismissed Byblis' letter as an ethopoeia and expressed hesitation about Phaedra's, I can at least note that there is a link between the ethopoeia and the epistle.

In Penelope's letter, on the other hand, I read an indication that we are dealing with the ethopoeia. Her admonition to Ulysses that he should return instead of writing to her tells us that the aim of her letter is not to receive a reply, but is a cry for help in a difficult situation. Like other ethopoeiae, her appeal will remain unanswered. Penelope's line is programmatic as the external reader will meet fifteen desperate epistolary cries which will be ignored or never even heard. In the light of these circumstances, it is noteworthy that Sappho in her penultimate line asks for a written reply, a wish that will remain unrealized.

Medea's first lines differ from the other letters in that they do not begin in the present tense. The initial word *at* has confused readers, but if we compare it with examples from the ethopoetic tradition rather than with other letters, it makes sense.

The introductions do not give any backgrounds but capture the speaker in her present situation, which, according to the principles of the ethopoeia should be miserable. Several of the heroines explicitly announce, using forms

of the verb *queror*, that their aim is to complain. Others complain about their unhappiness too, even though the verb *queror* is not used explicitly. Some of the heroines define their situation in keeping with the characters of the model ethopoeiae: explicitly in a few clauses, in the beginning or later; other heroines start with an obscure summary in order to later reveal the whole truth.

In Greek tragedy, we observed that the word *vñv* announced the present misery. In the *Heroides*, the word *nunc*, placed in the beginning of a line, has the same function, sometimes contrasted with *tunc* (or *tum*), either with the purpose of remembering a better time, or to remind the lover of his broken promises. Even when the 'present' appears later in the letters, it is miserable. The heroines cry and tear their hair. Some of them illustrate their desperate emotional state by painting a scene in which they are on the verge of madness. The wish to arouse empathy in the reader is strong. We can remind ourselves of Nicolaus' words that the sole aim of the ethopoeia is to move the hearer to pleasure or tears.⁴⁶⁰

Jacobson, observing the importance of past events in the texts, explains them by the act of letter-writing. He calls it "self-administered psychotherapy", in which the writer reexperiences the past in order to become free.⁴⁶¹ It is an attractive idea. However, the importance of the past is rather due to another circumstance: the ethopoeia as the model for the poems. I have demonstrated that Ovid uses the ethopoetic principle of the *tria tempora* in his *Heroides*. I have divided the use of the past into three sections: the golden days of the past, a course of events and previous deeds. These are categories which I also find in other ethopoeiae. Ovid also uses the section on the past to depict scenes of farewell. I have left these out for the reason that the motif does not occur in any ethopoeia that I have studied.

The description of the past as a golden age is decreed by the progymnasmata rhetors and occurs in some letters, most evident in the letter of Oenone. Her peaceful and happy life with Paris exists now only in her memory. His newly won status as a prince has made her unimportant.

Other retrospective narratives offer a more neutral perspective. They account for the course of events. Some of the heroines choose a point in their life as the beginning of their unhappiness. Canace and Hypermestra tell in detail about the events that led to their punishments. In this respect, their letters are similar to the model ethopoeiae.

⁴⁶⁰ Nicolaus 67.

⁴⁶¹ Jacobson (1974): 372.

Letters tend to close with a wish for the future. In the heroine epistles however, this wish is often expressed as a last wish from the dying heroine. In the ethopoeia, as in the poems of the *Heroides*, the speaker closes with a wish, a prayer or a prediction of the future, which commonly involves unhappiness and death.

Ovid uses descriptions of the scenery, exclamations, questions, *sententiae* and wishes as bonding agents between the passages, not only between the different time aspects, but also between passages within the same time aspect. This may make it difficult to see the time structure. I read the digressions and spontaneous cries as due to the ethopoetic concept, as a part of the characterization. I also agree with the idea of previous scholars that these rhetorical elements fit with the epistolary form, but first and foremost: they were practised in the progymnasmata and offered loci to the composition of the ethopoeiae.

Women who mourn are expected to show female expressions of grief. The literary characters bear certain expectations. In the model ethopoeiae, these characteristics are type-like. The examination so far indicates that this might be the case also for the *Heroides*. Chapter six will explore this in greater detail.

6 Reading the *Heroides* as ethopoeiae

This chapter will deal with the ethos of the speakers. “Enimvero praecipue declamatoribus considerandum est quid cuique personae conveniat” (‘The declaimers must particularly take into account what is suitable for each character’), Quintilian claimed.⁴⁶² The trustworthiness of the portrayal of the character is crucial for the ethopoeia. Differences between the speakers must be observed. If Caesar cannot speak the way Cicero does, neither should Phyllis sound like Dido. If the heroines are of different age, nationality or birth, their appearances should vary. On the other hand, if they are of the same age, nationality or birth, we can expect their appearance to be similar. To find out if this is the case in the *Heroides*, I intend to compare the heroines with each other in groups. Since the situation is of crucial importance in the ethopoeia, I have decided to use it as the starting point for this study. Heroines who share experiences will be compared to each other, in order to examine how they handle similar situations.

How does one grasp a personality? I have chosen to look more closely at the writers’ own presentation. By studying what impressions the speakers wish to give – and actually give – one can form an opinion of who they are. They reveal important characteristics in their view of themselves. Further, I will study their attitudes towards their partners and other involved and, moreover, how they form their argument.

I will begin with three women who not only feel deserted; they also share the experience of being socially inferior in relation to their partners: Briseis (ep. 3), Oenone (ep. 5) and Medea (ep. 12). The next group to be studied will be the two banished daughters, Canace (ep. 11) and Hypermestra. The last group will contain women who fall in love with visiting sailors: Phyllis (ep. 2), Hypsipyle (ep. 6) and Dido (ep. 7). One could argue that Ariadne should be a part of this comparison, but she is ruled out for reasons of delimitation.

⁴⁶² Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 3.8.51.

An increased study could well include a larger amount of letters. For example, Penelope (ep. 1) and Laodamia (ep. 13) could be put together as a couple, both being grass widows to men in the Trojan War. Briseis (ep. 3) and Hypermestra (ep. 14) could form another group together with Hermione (ep. 8) as *inclusae puellae*.

6.1 Heroines of a lower status than their men: Briseis, Oenone and Medea

Briseis and Medea are non-Greek women who have fallen in love with Greek men. The nymph Oenone loses her husband Paris after he discovers that he is a Trojan prince. The women degrade in relation to their men.

Briseis has, notwithstanding her status as a slave and concubine, a central position in the *Iliad*. Agamemnon's abduction of her preludes the Homeric epic poem, an act of offence which makes Achilles refuse to participate in the war. From *Iliad* book 9 we hear that Agamemnon offers to return Briseis, accompanied with an amount of gifts. Achilles rejects the offer, claiming that he does not trust his commander. When the reader meets Briseis, she is described as a girl with fair cheeks.⁴⁶³ At the news of Patroclus' death, she gives a tearful speech, regretting the loss of the man who comforted her and encouraged her to marry Achilles. In this passage she is described for the first time in the *Iliad* as a woman, godlike, resembling golden Aphrodite.⁴⁶⁴

Medea was definitely one of Ovid's favourite characters. His only drama, now lost, was named after her. He gives her 425 lines in *Metamorphoses* 7, one poem in *Tristia* (3.9) and the twelfth epistle of the *Heroides*, the second longest of all the epistles in the first collection (Sappho's, ep. 15, is the longest). As if that was not enough, Medea also plays an important part in Hypsipyle's letter (ep. 6).

The two princesses Briseis and Medea feel inferiority in relation to their partners. It used to be different, though. Briseis was a princess of Lyrnessus, known for her beauty. Now she is deprived of her family by Greek invaders and taken as booty. Medea was a princess of Colchis when she met Jason. In contrast to Briseis, she voluntarily followed her partner and left her country and family.

⁴⁶³ Homer, *Iliad* 1.98: 1.184, 1.323, 1.336, 1.346, 1.392, 2.689 and 9.274.

⁴⁶⁴ Homer, *Iliad* 19.282-286.

In order to avoid juggling with three poems at the same time, I will start my analysis with a comparison of Briseis and Medea and then add Oenone, a strategy I find most useful. Moreover, it will do Oenone more justice if I treat her separately. Whereas Briseis and Medea represent two extremes, Oenone for her part lands somewhere between, or perhaps rather moves between these extremes. She will stand out more distinctly if she is discussed after her heroine sisters Briseis and Medea.

6.1.1 The background to Briseis' and Medea's letters

Letter 3: Briseis Achilli – From Briseis to Achilles

Briseis, princess of Lyrnessus, has sustained heavy losses in the Trojan War. Her parents and three brothers were killed during the occupation of her city. Achilles slew her husband and took her as his war-trophy.

In spite of this unimaginable humiliation, Briseis falls in love with her abductor. Quite soon she is robbed of Achilles by his commander Agamemnon, a fact that causes wrath in Achilles and despair in Briseis. Briseis writes to Achilles begging him to take her back.

Letter 12: Medea Iasoni – From Medea to Jason

Medea, princess of Colchis, met Jason when he visited her country in search of the Golden Fleece. She fell in love with the young stranger. Thanks to her magical skills she was able to help him in the trials he had to undergo. Jason promised to marry her. Medea eloped with him and killed her brother during the flight.

After a short stay in the city of Iolcos, Medea made herself intolerable having caused the death of Jason's uncle Pelias. The couple moved to Corinth. This is where we meet her when she writes. Jason has now left her for Creusa, the princess of Corinth. Medea, addressing her former husband, expresses bitterness, anger and plans for revenge.

6.1.2 “A rapta Briseide littera venit” – ‘This letter has come from the abducted Briseis’

Briseis immediately strikes the tone of underdog when she in line 2 describes her hand (with which she is writing) as “barbarica”, although she is on Trojan soil, an area that is conquered and devastated by strangers. Yet she excuses herself and her poor Greek. The reader who has learnt to appreciate the Ovidian sense of humour has his/her fill here when Briseis in good Latin apologizes for her bad Greek.⁴⁶⁵ The position of the words “barbarica” and “Graeca” adjacent to other, creates a sharp and effective contrast:

QUAM legis, a rapta Briseide littera venit,
vix bene **barbarica Graeca** notata manu (3.1-2)

This letter which you now read, written in broken Greek by a barbarian hand, has come from the abducted Briseis.

Briseis measures herself according to the standard of the Greeks and resigns herself to her fate, not only as a strategy for survival; she really loves Achilles. To love him is connected with accepting a new role. She is prepared to share him with a wife, declaring that she would be happy just being his slave (3.71-72). Instead of accusing him of having murdered her husband, she expresses gratitude that he saved her life. I read the position of “tua munera” between “nostram... vitam” and “victor” between “hosti” and “amica” in the following lines, as an illustration that Briseis’ welfare is in the hands of the Greek hero:

A, potius serves nostram, tua munera, vitam!
quod dederas hosti victor, amica rogo. (3.149-150)

Ah, may you rather watch over my life, your own gift! I ask as your girlfriend what you as the victor gave to your enemy.

⁴⁶⁵ Ovid reuses the play on words in his *Tristia* 3.1.17-18, where he makes an excuse for not writing idiomatic Latin, blaming his new foreign country: “siqua videbuntur casu non dicta latine, / in qua scribebat, barbara terra fuit”, ‘In case some of the words will not seem Latin: the country in which he wrote them, was barbaric’.

Thanks to Achilles' generosity *she* is alive and it is because of *her* that *he* has become mad, she claims.

In her language, Briseis chooses words that speak of her as an object (*me*, *mihi*), and she uses the passive voice almost consistently when speaking of herself. Below are examples of both cases:

rapta Briseide (3.1); ego... sum tradita (3.7); me... vocarunt (3.9); data sum (3.10); mihi visa capi (3.16); me... timidam (3.18); caperer (3.19); data sim (3.21); danda fui (3.21); nec repeto (3.22); cum tradebar (3.23); ne reddar (3.25); comitata (3.29); redimenda fuisset (3.39); fieri (3.41); dotata (3.55); miseram... me (3.61); mihi desertae (3.62); devorer (3.63); cremer (3.64); relicta (3.66); captiva (3.69); meos... scindi... capillos (3.79); ne contempta relinquer (3.81); mihi... miserae (3.82); me... recepta (3.87); serva vocata (3.100); legata (3.127); sollicitam Briseida (3.137); miseram (3.138); destituor (3.143); femina iussa (3.144)

The verbs which Briseis uses often express the handling or trading of her. This usage intensifies the impression of Briseis as a spoil, as an article that is bandied between the warriors. To illustrate this even more, she also, as Jacobson notes,⁴⁶⁶ explicitly refers to herself in the word *sarcina* (3.68). However, though Briseis describes herself as an object, she has a will of her own and she has made her choice: to go over to the other side. She even asks Achilles to put Hector and the other Trojans to death (3.126 and 3.151-152). She tells him that she does not dare to flee. To be forced to serve one of king Priam's daughters – people of her own country – would be the worst imaginable scenario (3.19-20).

Briseis does not yield to her new master, but has set her mind on getting away from him. Achilles is thrice called *dominus* in the letter (3.5-6 and 3.52) an indication to Achilles that *he*, not Agamemnon, is the legitimate owner and lover of her, that she was unjustly carried away by the Greek commander, and that Achilles now should come and take responsibility of her, because she is *his* booty and *his* slave.

Even though the passive voice is dominant in the letter, Briseis uses the active too. When doing so, it is in association with kisses, complaining, tears,

⁴⁶⁶ Jacobson (1974): 38.

fear, prayers or together with words through which she submits to her destiny:

lacrimae pondera vocis habent (3.4); querar (3.6); oscula nulla dedi (3.14); lacrimas dedi rupique capillos (3.15); timebam (3.19); qua merui culpa fieri tibi vilis (3.41); veniam dotata (3.55); precor (3.63 and 3.125); nos humiles famulaeque tuae data pensa trahemus (3.75); deprecor (3.77); nec tamen indignor nec me pro coniuge gessi (3.99); rogabo (3.127); multaque mandatis oscula mixta feram (3.128); ut taceam (3.134); rogo (3.150).

And indeed Briseis takes a more active role when she recalls her former home and her now deceased family, perhaps because that was the role she had when she was still a free woman. She constituted a part of her father's land (active verbs, subject referring to Briseis and subjective complement are written in bold type):

diruta Marte tuo Lyrnesia moenia **vidi** –
et **fuera**m patriae **pars ego** magna meae;
vidi consortes pariter generisque necisque
tres cecidisse, quibus, quae mihi, mater erat;
vidi, quantus erat, fusum tellure cruenta
pectora iactantem sanguinolenta virum.
tot tamen amissis te **compensavimus** unum (3.45-51)

I saw the walls of Lyrnessus give way to your irresistible attack, and I had been a great part of my native country. I saw three brothers fall, sharers of blood as well as fate, who all sprang from the same mother. I saw my husband too, stretched upon the bloody plain, and tossing with anguish his breast drenched in gore. Yet, I have compensated so many losses in you alone.

This is the only passage of the letter where Briseis consistently chooses active verbs. Yet this belongs to the past, for as soon as she becomes a slave, she arrays herself in the passive slave dress, subordinating herself to her

master. Briseis immediately adapts to the new circumstances. Medea, as we will see, does not.

There are more discrete words and expressions in Briseis' text. In her position as subordinate she must adopt an attitude of reserve towards her master. The expression *fas est* is chosen instead of *licet* (both meaning 'it is right', 'it is permitted', 3.6), as if she was in no right to question him. *Fas est* expresses the world order of things, while *licet* deals with the rights of humans. The word *pauca* in the same line is another humble choice of words, stating that the criticism that is about to come is practically nothing. Let us have a closer look at these two and the following lines:

Si mihi **pauca** queri de te dominoque viroque

fas est, **de domino pauca viroque querar.**

non, ego poscenti quod sum cito tradita regi,

culpa tua est – quamvis haec quoque **culpa tua est.**

nam simul **Eurybates** me **Talthybiousque** vocarunt,

Eurybati data sum **Talthybioque** comes (3.5-10).

If it is right for me to **complain a little about you, my lord and man**, I will **complain a little about my lord and man**. It is not **your fault** that I was so quickly handed over to the king when he demanded me, even though this too **is your fault**: for as soon as **Eurybates and Talthybious** called for me, I was given to **Eurybates and Talthybious** as their companion.

Three couplets of repeated words (marked in bold type). Tiresome repetitions or effective epanalepses and chiasms? The lines disturbed Lachmann to such a degree that he wanted to omit them and even questioned the authenticity of the whole letter.⁴⁶⁷ To me, they make good sense. They are placed at the beginning of Briseis' letter. The girl is young, she excuses herself for her bad Greek and that the ink runs because of her tears. She is in a shock, but she cannot wait to write. She must write immediately, and thus, the result reflects her eagerness. The quoted passage gives an impression of spontaneity or confusion, of a writer who has not the time or presence of mind to think through her message, but writes whatever comes to mind and does not

⁴⁶⁷ Lachmann (1876): 58-59.

afterwards revise it. This is fully in line with the ethopoetic idea. R. Alden Smith comments on the passage as follows: "the rhetorical repetition here surely is indicative of a desperate tone and the design of line 8 should be regarded as suggestive of a moment of confusion on Briseis' part."⁴⁶⁸ Her confused mind is also noticeable when she first tells Achilles that she is going to kill herself, then that *he* should kill her – and after that changes her mind (3.139-149). She asks Achilles for one thing: that his wife will not beat her. Soon afterwards, though, she is willing to accept even that (3.77 and 3.81).

6.1.3 "Coacta nocens – 'I had to become noxious'

Whereas Briseis right at the start introduces herself as a foreigner, a non-Greek, Medea defines herself as *regina* in her opening line. The woman from Colchis is always master of the situation and employs active verbs generously:

memini (12.1), vacavi (12.1), potui... mori (12.5), produxi (12.6), vidimus (12.9), fruar (12.22), feram (12.22), Medea fui (12.25), vidi (12.31), coepi scire (12.31), vidi (12.33), perii (12.33), arsi (12.33), vidi (12.91), sedi (12.97), vidi (12.98), subduxi (12.107), dedi (12.108), reliqui (12.109), tuli (12.110), non... reliqui (12.113), ausa mea est, non audet scribere dextra (12.115), extimui (12.117), timerem (12.117), referam (12.129), pertimui (12.141), putabam (12.141), scirem (12.148), planxi (12.153), continui (12.157), clamarem (12.158), iniceremque (12.158), potui perdomuisse (12.164), pepuli (12.165), non valeo (12.166), quae... non possum (12.171), potui sopire (12.171), servavi (12.173), nec moror... procubuisse (12.186), video (12.190), lumina nostra madent (12.190), oro (12.191), reliqui (12.193), non... inploro (12.195), peto (12.197), merui (12.197), dicam (12.202), sequar (12.209), nescio (12.212), mens mea... agit (12.212).

Medea is keen on pointing out for Jason all she has done for him. She was the reason for his success. Now that she no longer controls the situation, she gives an overview of the past, the time when she still had the power to rule

⁴⁶⁸ Smith (2006): 228.

the course of events. Medea's letter is a more strict ethopoeia than Briseis' in terms of tempora: except for the missing present tense in the beginning, she writes about the past and stays there, alternating with contrafactual thoughts, until she reaches the end where she comes back to the present time and closes with her plans for future. Accordingly, most of the verbs are in the past tense, as if she invoked her former strength. This is a rhetoric of memory, indicated by the first line's "memini", *I remember*. The present tense follows Medea's powerlessness, until she, using the future tense in the word "sequar": "quo feret ira, sequar", ('I will follow to the point where wrath takes me', 12.209), marks that something new is about to come. She is planning revenge.

The passive voice does occur in Medea's letter, and it is interesting to note how it is used. Whereas Briseis was forced to become the concubine of Achilles, Medea dictated the terms of marriage when she was about to help Jason. We know from the *Metamorphoses* 7 that Medea fell in love with the foreign hero and made him promise to take her as his wife. In Medea's letter, the passive occurs ten times, of which seven refer back to the time in Colchis:

disiectam...iacentem (12.63), capta puella (12.92), barbara facta (12.105), visa nocens (12.106), virginitas facta est peregrini praeda latronis (12.111), ego... dilaceranda fui (12.116), sum... coacta nocens (12.132), deseror (12.161), tangor (12.189), sum... facta... parens (12.198).

Medea emphasizes that she was a young, naïve girl at that time. She talks of herself as an ensnared girl, "capta puella" (12.92) who was made a foreigner, "barbara facta" (12.105), as if she was a victim, as if Jason had forced her. Is this what we would expect from Briseis after fifteen years? Medea is, after all, a mature woman and more experienced than Briseis. Still, Briseis was forced to follow her abductors and exposed to the worst indignity; Medea followed Jason of her own free will. More conspicuous is the following statement, by means of which she continues to rewrite her history: "virginitas facta est peregrini praeda latronis" ('my maidenly innocence became the booty of a pirate from overseas', 12.111). Medea admits her cruelty, but claims that she was forced to become evil. She seemed noxious ("visa nocens"), because there was no other way out for her: she had to become noxious ("nocens", 12.106 and 12.132). Jason's fraud, his abduction, the stealing of her virginity, his lies, made her evil. This, in turn, meant that she had to kill her little brother Apsyrtus, according to her way of thinking.

Two of the most discussed lines in the poem are:

...meritas subeamus in alto,
tu fraudis poenas, credulitatis ego! (12.119-120)

may we be engulfed by the sea and have the punishment that we
have deserved, you of your falsehood and I of my credulity!

Palmer makes the following comment:

But not two verses of the *Heroides* are more frigid and absurd; that a woman should assign her credulity as a reason for her deserving retribution from heaven, after mentioning that she had murdered her brother, is laughable. Verily bonus Ovidius dormitat. Is it too wild to suppose these lines spurious: that *crudelitatis* was the original reading written by a scribe who regarded sense more than quantity, *credulitatis* a correction by a scribe who regarded quantity more than sense? Loers makes the best of a bad case, "nimia eius credulitas omnium illorum flagitiorum fuerat causa".⁴⁶⁹

Palmer misses an important point. Ovid does not sleep: his Medea is cruel. Her biggest fault, in her own opinion, was that she trusted her husband, that she was naïve. For that sin she had been better swallowed by the sea. The description of Medea in *Metamorphoses* 7 or Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica* 3-4, is to a great part that of a nice girl who struggles with her inner feelings. But as soon as she leaves her country and murders her brother, she is depraved, hardened and shuns nothing. As she writes in her letter: "nec tamen extimui – quid enim post illa timerem", 'nor did I fear, for what after this could I fear?' (12.117). Medea is completely unscrupulous. She calls herself insane ("insana", 12.193), not reflecting upon her own evil acts, but the fact that she left so many things for Jason's sake.

A careful reading of *Heroides* 12 makes it hard to rescue Medea from the charge of evilness, provided that we ignore what we know of her from other literary sources. She is not a woman whom we should feel sympathy for. A number of examples, in which Ovid treats her with a good share of irony, points towards Medea's ruthless nature. Nowhere in the letter does she blame

⁴⁶⁹ Palmer [1898] (1967): 395. Translation of the Latin phrase: 'Her too great credulity had been the cause of all nefarious actions'.

herself for what has happened, nowhere does she regret her horrible crimes. Briseis, on the other hand, puts the blame upon herself for Achilles' wrath. On one occasion, Medea admits that she is guilty of a terrible crime, when she writes that her right hand dared to do what it does not dare to write down (12.115). The effect becomes the more contradictory since the reader knows what her right hand will do next: kill her children. Though Medea is aware of her cruelties, she does not repent them: it is *she*, she claims, who has suffered the most for them. She was cruel out of love, for Jason's sake, a sacrifice that has not brought her any good. Neither is she trustworthy when she begs Jason to spare their children from a severe stepmother who will rail at them (12.188), nor when she accuses Jason of audacity (12.133-134). She is not the *simplex puella* ("puellae simplicis", 'credulous girl', 12.89-90) she claims to be. She is the Medea as Horace instructed authors to describe her: "ferox invictaque", 'fierce and unyielding'.⁴⁷⁰ Thus, I find it difficult to agree with Verducci, who regards Medea, together with Phaedra, as the character of the collection most worthy our empathy.⁴⁷¹

6.1.4 The others

As we have seen, Medea defines herself right at the beginning as a *regina* (a princess or a queen) from Colchis, as the person she was when she was in charge, when she had the control, a strategy she sticks to (almost) throughout the epistle.

I saved you. This is Medea's most important message to Jason, a message that is the only one left from Ovid's drama.⁴⁷² And because she saved him, she is worthy of him ("te peto quem merui", 'I demand you whom I have deserved', 12.197). When Medea met Jason, *he* was the stranger. This is underlined by Medea's distinction of a *we* and a *you*, *we Colchians*, *you Greeks*:

cur umquam Colchi Magnetida vidimus Argo,
turbaque Phasiacam Graia bibistis aquam? (12.9-10)

⁴⁷⁰ Horace, *Ars Poetica* 123. Translation: H. Rushton Fairclough.

⁴⁷¹ Verducci (1985): 21 and 78-80. See also Liveley (2005): 60.

⁴⁷² The extant line from Ovid's drama *Medea* reads: "servare potui: perdere an possim rogas?", 'I was able to save you: do you ask whether I can destroy you?'.

why did we Colchians ever catch sight of Magnesian Argo at all, and why did you drink the water of Phasis, you Greek band?

The distance created is even more tangible in the line “et premitis pictos, corpora Graia, toros” (‘and you, Greek bodies, weigh down embroidered couches’, 12.30). Medea is not only distancing but objectifying the Greeks, speaking of them as “corpora” and not humans in the first place. She does the same when she speaks about her Greek husband. The *body* that she rescued, now rests in the arms of her rival Creusa (“quos ego servavi, paelex amplectitur artus”, ‘the limbs which I took care of, a mistress now embraces’, 12.173).

Medea descends from a noble father, king Aeetes (who in his turn is the son of the god of the sun, Helios, a fact that Medea does not mention). Her father was the master of a happy and blessed kingdom, into which Jason had the luck to enter: “intrasti patriae regna beata meae” (‘you entered the happy kingdom of my native land’, 12.24). In the same breath she compares her own father with the father of Creusa, who is the king of Corinth. The latter rules “Ephyren bimarem”, that is Corinth, while Medea’s father ‘commands all that part of snowy Scythia, which runs along the left-side of the Black sea’, “Scythia tenuis ille nivosa / omne tenet, Ponti qua plaga laeva iacet” (12.27-28), a huge area in other words. Surely Medea is aware that Jason does not count the same way (and, since she is condemned by her father, they do not have the opportunity of enjoying his fortunes): king Aeetes’ kingdom is a non-Greek area and regarded as an inhospitable place. Still, Jason ought to know that he is wrong. Medea actually goes so far as to indicate that Jason has acknowledged the superiority of the Colchians. She quotes him word for word when he had asked for her help to win the Golden Fleece:

“o virgo, miserere mei, miserere meorum;
effice me meritis tempus in omne tuum!
quodsi forte virum non dedignare Pelasgum—
sed mihi tam faciles unde meosque deos?—
spiritus ante meus tenuous vanescat in auras
quam thalamo nisi tu nupta sit ulla meo!” (12.81-86)

“Maiden, have mercy on me and have mercy on my men, and let me be yours through your offices! If you by chance do not scorn a Pelasgian man – but from where do I regard my gods as kindly disposed to me? Sooner may my spirit vanish into air, than any bride except you will take place in my marriage bed!”

Here, Jason is the one in a weak position, begging Medea for her favours, if she by chance can endure a man from Greece.

Not only is Jason the stranger according to Medea, he is an adventurer, hunting for gold, the gold represented both by the Golden Fleece and the wealth that Jason claims by marrying Creusa. In fact, Medea herself is what she accuses Jason of. She left her family and her country in the hope of something better. This was how she reasoned:

ergo ego germanam fratremque patremque deosque
et natale solum ventis ablata relinquam?
nempe pater saevus, nempe est mea barbara tellus,
frater adhuc infans; stant mecum vota sororis
maximus intra me deus est! non magna relinquam,
magna sequar: titulum servatae pubis Achivae
notitiamque soli melioris et oppida, quorum
hic quoque fama viget, cultusque artesque locorum,
quemque ego cum rebus, quas totus possidet orbis,
Aesoniden mutasse velim, quo coniuge felix
et dis cara ferar et vertice sidera tangam.

(*Metamorphoses* 7.51-61)

Shall I thus leave my sister, my brother, my father, the gods and my native soil, taken off by the winds? Of course: my father is cruel, my country is barbaric, my brother is still a baby boy; my sister is on my side and the greatest god is inside me! I will not leave great things but follow them: the title “she who saved the Achaean youth”, knowledge of a better soil, and cities, whose fame is known even here, culture and art of these places, and him, whom I would not exchange for anything in the whole

world, the son of Aeson. Having become his wife I will be regarded as happy and dear to the gods, and I will touch the stars with the crown of my head.

In the *Metamorphoses*, Medea is a young girl from the Eastern world, longing for the exciting and cultivated world in Greece where she can fulfil herself. To be able to identify herself with the young Greeks would be a tremendous goal to strive for. Her own land is uncivilized, “barbara”. She here defines her own culture as *barbara*, the quality she accuses Jason of having brought on her. Her attitude is doubtlessly different from the one she conveys in her heroine letter.

The passage is also interesting for the reason that it says something of how Medea regards her family. Let us compare Briseis’ and Medea’s relationships to their families.

Jacobson notes the frequent use of words connected with family in Briseis’ letter, and gives thirteen examples.⁴⁷³ He discusses it as unique to Briseis. Yet, Medea has many more, more than thirty words.⁴⁷⁴ Nevertheless, Jacobson is right in his observation that Briseis uses words related to family when speaking of other people. Jacobson presents the idea that this manner of speaking is Briseis’ habit of seeing persons in their roles as kin. I would rather suggest that Achilles now for her performs the part as a replacement for her family. He is the only one left for her, and that is why she so eagerly clings to him. She says:

⁴⁷³ Jacobson (1974): 26-27 lists the following words, of which all are not directly related to Briseis or Briseis and Achilles as a couple: *natus*, *satus*, *coniunx*, *mater*, *vir*, *maritus*, *socer*, *nepos*, *prosocer*, *uxor*, *frater*, *parens* and *pater*. I count to fourteen directly related words: *viroque* (3.5), *viroque* (3.6), *mater* (3.48), *virum* (3.50), *vir* and *frater* (3.52), *matris* (3.53), *patrii* (3.67), *nupta* and *maritum* (3.69), *viri* (3.103), *fratrum* (3.105) and *fratresque virumque* (3.143). I count to twenty family words related to other persons or to Achilles in other relationships: *nurum* (3.20), *satus* (3.29), *coniuge* and *coniunx* (3.37), *matres* (3.71), *coniunx* (3.72), *nurus*, *socero* and *nepote* (3.73), *prosocer* (3.74), *uxor* (3.77), *coniugis* (3.92), *fratribus* (3.93), *nati* and *parens* (3.94), *virum* and *coniunx* (3.97), *coniuge* (3.99), *frater* (3.130) and *pater* (3.135).

⁴⁷⁴ Directly related family words in Medea’s letter: *nupta* (12.25), *pater* (12.26), *socer* and *nata* (12.54), *soror* (12.62), *avi* (12.78), *nupta* (12.86), *maritis* (12.87), *genitor* (12.109), *matre* and *soror* (12.112), *germane* (12.113), *paterna* (12.130), *natis* (12.135), *pueris* (12.149), *mater*, *pater* (12.151), *pater* (12.159), *fratris* (12.160), *coniuge* (12.162), *virum* (12.164), *maritae* (12.175), *natos* (12.187), *noverca* (12.188), *avitae* (12.191), *natos* (12.192), *parente* *parens* (12.198), *nuptam* and *socerumque* (12.205) and *viro* (12.210).

tot tamen amissis te compensavimus unum:

tu dominus, tu vir, tu mihi frater eras. (3.51-52)

Yet, I have compensated so many losses in you alone; you were to me a lord, you were a man, you were a brother.

Noteworthy is that this is what Andromache says to Hector in the *Iliad*.⁴⁷⁵ For Andromache, Hector is her beloved husband who is about to go off into war. He is to be killed by Achilles, whom Briseis now addresses with the same words. What is more, Briseis exhorts Achilles to kill “inpiger Hector” (3.86). The effect is quite striking. A twisted comment on the *Iliad*, certainly.

Hector is mentioned by name, so are Agamemnon and Achilles. In fact, Briseis mentions all the people surrounding her with their names or patronymics.⁴⁷⁶ She even knows the names of the messengers Eurybates and Talthybius, and the Greek kings who served as messengers. But nowhere does Briseis mention the names of her family members, although they are mentioned by name in the *Iliad*.⁴⁷⁷ Her brothers are reduced to a number, “tres”, (3.48), whereas she seems to know Achilles’ family tree (3.73-74). She is already so absorbed in the world of the others. She has left her old life behind. Briseis so strongly wants to become integrated that she declares herself ready to adapt herself to whatever it might be.

Medea too has left her former life behind, but tries now to connect to it again. She speaks of her father Aeetes’ hospitality (12.29) and her dear sister (“cara... soror”, 12.62), but we know from *Metamorphoses* 7 that she considered her father *saevus* (‘cruel’), that she regarded what she had in Colchis of not so great importance, and we know that she killed her little brother.

⁴⁷⁵ Homer, *Iliad* 6.429-430.

⁴⁷⁶ *Eurybates* and *Talthybiusque* (3.9), *Eurybati* and *Talthybioque* (3.10), *Priami* (3.20), *Menoetiades* (3.23), *Achille* (3.25), *Telamone* and *Amyntore* (3.27), *Laertaque* (3.29), *Agamemnoniis* (3.38), *Atride* (3.39), *Achille* (3.41), *Iovis Aeginaeque* (3.73), *Nereus* (3.74), *Agamemnona* (3.83), *Hector* (3.86), *Aeacide* (3.87), *Hectoreum* and *Pelias* (3.126), *Phoenix* and *Ulixes* (3.129), *Teucris* (3.130), *Peleus* (3.135), *Pyrrhus* (3.136), *Achille* (3.137) and *Atridae* (3.148).

⁴⁷⁷ Briseis speaks of her husband Mynes in Homer’s *Iliad* 19.295-296. In *Iliad* 2.690-693, Achilles is said to have destroyed Lyrnessus and killed Mynes as well as his brother Epistrophus.

Medea is desperate because Jason has deserted her. He was everything to her (“coniuge, qui nobis omnia solus erat”, 12.162). She exhorts her offended father and the deserted Colchians to rejoice, and the shadows of death to receive her offerings (12.159-160). This is not to be interpreted as an act of regret for what she has done, but of her failure.

The invectives raised against Jason are several. He is awful, faithless, a criminal, full of fraud:

perfidiae *and* scelerate (12.19), perfide (12.37), fraudis (12.91),
peregrini... latronis (12.111), fraudis (12.120), praecordia
ferrea (12.183), inprobe (12.204), ingratus (12.206)

Creusa is a “paelex” (‘mistress’) and a “dira noverca” (‘harsh stepmother’). The last epithet is very conspicuous, considering what Medea soon will do to her children.

Briseis too is angry with her partner, but not for the most obvious reason that he had slain her family, but because he handed her over to his commander. In order to stress who her real commander is, she calls Achilles *dominus*, as we already have seen. She also calls him *vir*, twice in the same breath as she calls him *dominus*, as if she at the same time takes a humble pose and claims her rights in her role as his beloved. But though she speaks in a cautious tone in the beginning, she gradually grows bolder, commanding Achilles to pull himself together and request her (3.87-88).

6.1.5 Loci of argumentation: Briseis and Medea

“At mea pro nullo pondere verba cadunt” (‘But my words are without weight’), Briseis cries in the middle of her letter (3.98), a statement that can be read as programmatic for the whole first collection of letters. Ironically, Briseis is the only one beside Penelope who gets her loved one back. The sentence matches line 4: “sed tamen et lacrimae pondera vocis habent” (‘yet, tears also have the weight of a word’). In both clauses, Briseis uses the word *pondus* (‘weight’), of which she is lacking. Briseis has her beauty and caresses to tempt with, not much more. Well, she has her tears. No one in the collection, with the possible exception of Hermione, sheds as many tears as Briseis. The word *lacrima* (‘tear’) appears several times.⁴⁷⁸ Her tears blur the

⁴⁷⁸ 3.3, 3.15 and 3.134. The verbs *queri* and *flere* are also used, 3.5, 3.6 and 3.24.

ink (3.3). She is *misera* ('poor').⁴⁷⁹ Although the tears make certain passages illegible to Achilles, they tell him that her feelings are real, that she misses him. It is a sorrow to her that she missed the opportunity to kiss Achilles before she was abducted (3.14). Instead, she weeps immensely. She cherishes the thought that he will return, and uses her tears as a means of persuasion. But can the most brutal warrior of the Greeks be affected by Briseis' tears? Briseis believes so:

mittite me, Danaï! dominum legata rogabo
multaque mandatis oscula mixta feram.
plus ego quam Phoenix, plus quam facundus Ulixes,
plus ego quam Teucri, credite, frater agam.
est aliquid collum solitis tetigisse lacertis,
praesentisque oculos admonuisse sui.
sis licet inmitis matrisque ferocior undis,
ut taceam, lacrimis conminuere meis. (3.127-134)

Send me, Greeks! As an ambassador, I will beg my master, and I will carry many kisses mixed with requests. Believe me, I will do more than Phoenix, more than eloquent Ulysses, I will do more than the brother of Teucer.⁴⁸⁰ It means something to have touched his neck with my familiar arms, and to have reminded his eyes of my presence. Though you are merciless and more savage than your mother's waves: even if I am silent, you will be heart-broken to see my tears.

Briseis' *pondus* is dependent on her tears and caresses. She admits that she uses her tears as weapons: Achilles, hard though he is, will be moved by them. In her argument, she can also take advantage of his reputation as a brave soldier. She speaks to his masculine strength. If he really is a man, he should act.

Briseis is in a war zone, where death and slaughter happen every day. Perhaps the violent environment and the fact that she has faced death in the

⁴⁷⁹ The word *misera* appears three times, 3.59, 3.61 and 3.138.

⁴⁸⁰ The brother of Teucer is Ajax.

most appalling way, makes her more prone than others to threaten to take her own life. She says that she would rather die than be left in Troy (3.63-66). If Achilles has become tired of her, her wish is to die, and so is her wish if he will not return in time. In fact, she is already fading away (3.139-142).

Medea does not at all express any suicidal thoughts. But she does weep. She cried for her beloved Jason when he was commissioned with impossible and dangerous tasks (12.55-60). Her eyes become wet every time she sees their sons, copies of their father. By saying this she affirms her love to Jason and their children and hints at the same time that he ought to feel the same. Jason did weep once, she reminds him, when he gave promises of marriage. Or, were the tears not real? In any case, the next one to cry will be her rival Creusa. Happy and smiling now, she will soon taste the flames that Medea will send to her (12.180).

Others cry too. Medea mentions that several slaves respond to the bad news of Jason's new marriage with tears (12.145-146). She makes her partner aware that others have views. Briseis too uses this strategy. She is eager to tell Achilles that the messengers Eurybates and Talthylus in a silent communication wondered where the love between the couple had gone. Yet Medea and Briseis seem to take whatever comes to hand: what slaves think or not think are probably not of great importance to Jason and Achilles.

The game seems lost for Medea. She has lost her husband to another woman. What she can do is to appeal to Jason as head of the household, as a father of their two sons. If this is not enough, she knows that she has her magical skills to resort to. Briseis has nothing, only her power as a young woman. Briseis cannot expect to have Achilles for herself and accepts that. Medea cannot compete with the princess, although she claims that Creusa is now what Medea was to him in Colchis, "*hoc illic Medea fui, nova nupta quod hic est*" ('I, Medea, was there what your new bride is here', 12.25). He is searching for something he already has, or, which she realizes, has had.⁴⁸¹ Medea forgets one thing: Jason was never accepted by Medea's family, as he now is embraced by Creusa's father. Medea eloped with him.

Medea shares something with Jason that Briseis cannot invoke. Medea reminds Jason of the fact that they have a common story and a marriage which resulted in two children. For the greatest effect, she quotes her husband word for word, a strategy that gives an impression of control. Medea remembers what happened, while he is the one who has lost contact with

⁴⁸¹ Compare Medea's rhetoric with Dido's, 7.13-22.

reality. Jason is bound to the vows that he gave her. Where are the promises now?

Briseis cannot claim such bonds between her and Achilles. She can, however, remind him of his oath taken in the name of his mother Thetis: “tu mihi, iuratus per numina matris aquosae” (‘you swore to me by the godhead of your sea-born mother’, 3.53). But what did he actually swear? That it was useful for her to be taken prisoner. This is another indication that Briseis is not in full possession of her senses.

Medea’s and Jason’s engagement scene is intensified by the union of their right hands, “dextrae dextera” (12.90),⁴⁸² indicating that they belong together as a couple by means of ceremonial vows. A parallel to this expression is another polyptoton, “parente parens”, showing that another bond between them has ensued because of their children (12.198), a bond that makes them closely united for all time. The triad “quem, quem, cum quo” in the same line, referring back to Jason, creates a similar effect (12.197-198). But, as it is possible to view Briseis’ two lines (about words having no weight) as reflecting each other, it is also possible to find a counterpart in the passages that are about Medea’s right hand. Medea first underscores the union of their right hands, then 25 lines later mentions (or rather: does not mention) what the same right hand did soon after the marriage: “quod facere ausa mea est, non audet scribere dextra” (‘what my hand dared to commit it dares not to write’, 12.115). With her right hand she killed and dismembered her little brother Absyrtus. Ovid tells the same story in *Tristia* 3.9, again calling attention to her hand:

conscia percussit meritorum pectora Colchis

ausa atque ausura multa nefanda manu (*Tristia* 3.9.15-16)

...the girl from Colchis, aware of her actions, beat her breast
with the hand that had dared and was going to dare many
wicked things...

In line 9 in the *Tristia*-poem Medea is called “impia”, ‘cruel’, ‘godless’ or ‘illoyal’. Ovid could have followed the tradition from Apollonius Rhodius to let Jason plan, kill and dismember Absyrtus, while Medea urges him not to

⁴⁸² Phyllis also uses this figure, 2.31.

do it and then shuns the horrible sight.⁴⁸³ But Ovid chooses not to follow his Greek predecessor. He makes Medea cruel.

From this perspective, the following utterance by Medea appears odd. ‘You dared’, she says in anaphors, ‘you dared to...’:

ausus es—o, iusto desunt sua verba dolori!—

ausus es, “Aesonia,” dicere, ”cede domo!” (12.133-134)

You dared – there are no words for my righteous pain! – you dared to say: “Go away from the house of Aeson!”⁴⁸⁴

To Medea, the offence appears unimaginable. Her strange feeling of unreality is repeated in connection with another ignominy: the marriage between Jason and his new bride. Medea depicts a scene in which music is heard, torches are seen and people fill the streets in celebration (12.143-158). At first, Medea does not understand what is going on, she claims. Instead, it is the youngest of the sons who gets a sight of his father, dressed in gold and riding a horse-chariot. The scene implies that Jason is a cruel father, exposing his children to such an awful sight. Medea refers to this past event in the present tense, as she does when recalling her own engagement scene. The present tense, the flutes, the partying people, the weeping slaves, and the curious boy, make this a vivid depiction.

Medea summarizes her demands on Jason. They appear quite easy. It is simply about taking responsibility, keeping his word and coming back to her. He does not have to tame ill-natured bulls or put dangerous dragons to sleep – an implicit dig to Jason that she never would make such demands on him as he made on her.

Medea’s rhetorical strategy is sophisticated compared to that of Briseis. But then she is a more experienced woman, used to working her will. Medea would never adapt herself the way Briseis does. Others must adapt themselves to her conditions, otherwise she literally cuts off communication.

⁴⁸³ Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* 4.410-481.

⁴⁸⁴ Aeson was Jason’s father.

6.1.6 The background to Oenone's letter

Oenone is mentioned sparingly in ancient sources.⁴⁸⁵ Ovid mentions her once in the *Remedia amoris*.⁴⁸⁶

Oenone shares a similar situation to Medea in that she has been abandoned for another woman of higher status. Like Medea she is the master of an art, but whereas Medea is notorious for her witchcraft, Oenone is known for her powerful skills in medicine.⁴⁸⁷

Letter 5: Oenone Paridi: From Oenone to Paris

The oread Oenone lived a happy life on Mount Ida with her husband, the shepherd Paris. When Paris was invited to judge in the famous beauty contest, arranged on the wedding of Peleus and Thesis (the parents-to-be of Achilles), his prize was Fair Helen, queen of Sparta. In the midst of it all he became aware of his origin. It was found out that he was a prince of Troy, the son of King Priam and Queen Hecuba.

When we meet Oenone she has been deserted by Paris who has gone to fetch his new bride.

6.1.7 "Dignaque sum" – 'And I am worthy'

It could be of interest to compare the opening couplet of Oenone's letter with that of Briseis:

PERLEGIS? an coniunx prohibet nova? Perlege – non est
ista Mycenaea littera facta manu! (5.1-2)

⁴⁸⁵ For a survey of ancient sources, see Jacobson (1974): 176-177, note 2, or Knox (1995): 140-141.

⁴⁸⁶ *Remedia amoris* 457-458: "Et Parin Oenone summos tenuisset ad annos, / Si non Oebalia paelice laesa foret" 'And Oenone had kept Paris until the end of her life, if she had not been offended by the Oebalian mistress'.

⁴⁸⁷ Their skills will be of use for both of them in gaining revenge on their partners: Medea by using them, Oenone by not using them. It is told in Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 3.12.6 that Oenone refused to help Paris when he returned wounded from the Trojan War, and that he died as a result of that. Nothing of this is however told in Oenone's letter.

Do you read this through? Or does your new bride prevent you?
Read it through – this letter you have received is not produced
by Mycenaean hand!

QUAM legis, a rapta Briseide littera venit,
vix bene barbarica Graeca notata manu. (3.1-2)

This letter which you now read, written in broken Greek by a
barbarian hand, has come from the abducted Briseis.

The resemblance of these lines is striking. Oenone's "Mycenaea... manu" is an explicit parallel to Briseis' "barbarica... manu". The girls both say that their letters are written by a non-Greek hand. It is worth noting that these two letters are the only ones with this claim.⁴⁸⁸

Oenone introduces herself together with her Mycenaean rival, stressing that the letter is *not* written by Mycenaean hand. Already here Oenone reveals some characteristic features of her letter: that she identifies herself in contrast to Helen and seems obsessed by her. For a comparison: Medea mentions her rival first after 55 lines. At the same time Oenone underlines what she will return to: that Paris' love affair with Helen will cause a war between the Greeks and the Trojans.

While Briseis presumes that Achilles reads her letter, Oenone is not sure that Paris reads other letters than the ones coming from his new love. But the reason for him not to read her letter, according to Oenone, is Helen's prohibition. That Paris by his own will would neglect her letter seems unthinkable to her. Oenone implies that she is still present in his mind. She will later claim that he still loves her.

Oenone continues:

⁴⁸⁸ Some manuscripts have Canace begin with a similar phrase. This is however, among several introductory greeting lines in other letters, removed by scholars. "Aeolis Aeolidae quam non habet ipsa salutem / mittit et armata verba notata manu" 'The daughter of Aeolus greets the son of Aeolus, and sends him the health that she does not have herself, together with words, written by an armed hand'.

Pegasis Oenone. Phrygiis celeberrima silvis,
laesa queror de te, si sinis ipse, meo. (5.3-4)

I, the fountain-nymph Oenone, most famous in the Phrygian woods, am offended and complain about you, who are, if you allow, mine.

As Oenone of course is well-known to her former husband, she does not need to expose herself in one entire line in order to present herself. But she takes the opportunity to show herself off, to position herself as a person of considerable celebrity. She, she claims, is very famous, “celeberrima”. But a nymph seldom mentioned in the literary sources is not famous, at least no more than other nymphs. Her claim to fame is her marriage to Paris. Apollodorus makes her the former wife of Paris.⁴⁸⁹ If someone is *celeberrima*, it is Queen Helen of Sparta, daughter of Zeus, and furthermore, the most beautiful woman in the world. Yet, Oenone will adorn herself throughout her letter, as if she is struggling with her inferiority complex in search of her identity.

To Oenone it is obvious that the reason for Paris to drop her in favour of Helen is his recently gained status as a prince. Thus, she has two possibilities to win him back: either make Paris understand that his home is with her on the mountain of Ida, or strive to fit in into the new conditions and convince him that she is able to do so. Oenone does not know which to choose. She tries both ways. Oenone’s attitude towards her husband’s new won status is undoubtedly ambivalent.

In the lines below, Oenone reminds Paris that it was not long ago when the conditions were reversed, when he was a person of lower rank whom she had to put up with:

Nondum tantum eras, cum te contenta marito
edita de magno flumine nympha fui.
qui nunc Priamides—absit reverentia vero!—
servus eras; servo nubere nympha tuli! (5.9-12)

⁴⁸⁹ Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 3.12.6.

You were not yet that great, when I, a nymph sprung from a great river, was content to have you as my husband. You, who now are a son of Priam — may reverence give way for truth! — you were a slave. I, a nymph, condescended to marry a slave!

She certainly had mercy on him, indeed, she *condescended* to marry him, when he was a simple shepherd. Though shepherd is not the word Oenone uses; she chooses a considerably stronger word: *servus*, ‘slave’, repeated polyptotonically, contrastively put near to “Priamides” (‘son of Priam’). No one but Oenone was the wife of a poor man, “nulla nisi Oenone pauperis uxor erat” (5.80).

As a proof of her greatness, Oenone claims her noble descent as daughter of a large river. Jacobson suggests that Oenone, by stating this, wishes to compare herself to the love goddess Aphrodite, who sprang from water.⁴⁹⁰ I would rather propose that it can be read as a reference to Paris’ mother Hecuba, who according to tradition was the daughter of the river-god Sangarius.⁴⁹¹ If this is so, she places herself at the same level as royalty when referring to her ancestry. Oenone and Paris thus share their origins and status and are well matched. The nymph goes on to claim to have the same right as Paris’ sister-in-law Andromache to be the wife of a prince (5.107-108).

Oenone’s ambivalence makes her a champion of contradictions. She claims on one hand that she does not admire his wealth, but adds that she is worthy of being the wife of a powerful man:

non ego miror opes, nec me tua regia tangit
nec de tot Priami dicar ut una nurus—
non tamen ut Priamus nymphae socer esse recuset,
aut Hecubae fuerim dissimulanda nurus;
dignaque sum fieri rerum matrona potentis;
sunt mihi, quas possint sceptrum decere, manus.
nec me, faginea quod tecum fronde iacebam,
despice; purpureo sum magis apta toro. (5.81-88)

⁴⁹⁰ Jacobson (1974): 181. The river that Oenone derives from is Cebren. According to Jacobson this is not a river great enough to boast of. Although I wonder if she may have a point after all. The river-god Cebren descends in his turn from Oceanus.

⁴⁹¹ Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 3.12.5, mentions two possible fathers besides Sangarius.

I do not admire your wealth, neither does your royal power affect me, nor do I want to be called one of many daughters-in-law of Priam. Yet, Priam may not object to be the father-in-law to a nymph or I be in the need to ignore my status as a daughter-in-law to Hecuba. And I am worthy to be the wife of a man who has the power over things. I have hands suitable for sceptres. Do not despise me because I slept with you on leaves from the beech-tree. I am more suited to the purple marriage-bed.

Oenone, declaring that she does not admire royal splendour, in the next breath claims that she was born to be royal. At first she says she has no ambition to become one of Priam's daughters-in-law. Immediately afterwards, she claims that her hands are suited to hold a sceptre, and that she, who used to lie on leaves, is more suited for a royal bed. Again there is a hint of Briseis' letter here. Briseis declared herself to be ready to card wool ("est mihi, quae lanas molliat, apta manus", 'my hand is fitting to comb wool', 3.70); Oenone's hands are designed for the regal sceptre – because she is worthy of it. Briseis lapses into slavery of her own free will, Oenone aims higher. Again, we see an expression with the word *manus* – notable only in the letters of Briseis and Oenone. And again, this similar expression is used in quite different ways by the two heroines.

Jacobson notes that Oenone, more than others, emphasizes her excellence.⁴⁹² Three times she calls herself *digna*.⁴⁹³ She uses the same word as Medea, "merui", 'I have deserved' (5.155). Briseis, Oenone and Medea are the only ones who use the word in this form.⁴⁹⁴ There is no doubt that Oenone and Medea use it in the same sense, 'I have deserved', while Briseis uses it in a question when she asks Achilles "qua merui culpa fieri tibi vilis, Achille?" ('What have I done thus to deserve your neglect, Achilles?', 3.41). Is this a mere coincidence? It is tempting to read the word as a sign of a connecting link between the three letters.

As Jacobson writes, "consistency is not one of Oenone's virtues".⁴⁹⁵ Oenone's inconsistency is part of her character; this is how she is. However much she tries to be someone else, her real character is revealed. She is desperate and hasty in thought. She is "laesa", offended (5.4), and does her

⁴⁹² Jacobson (1974): 180.

⁴⁹³ 5.85, 5.145 and 5.155. Jacobson (1974): 191.

⁴⁹⁴ 3.41, 5.155 and 12.199. Dido imagines that Aeneas bursts out "merui" when he, as a punishment from the gods, sees the picture of dead Dido before him, 7.71.

⁴⁹⁵ Jacobson (1974): 185.

best to project her feelings of inferiority onto Paris. Instead of Ovid having Oenone say ‘do not despise me for my humble birth’, she says in lines 5.87-88: ‘do not despise me because I slept with you on leaves from the beech-tree’ (“nec me, faginea quod tecum fronde iacebam, / despice”).

As far as rusticity, leaves and trees are concerned: the letter makes clear that Oenone cannot release herself from her rural origin. References to trees and woods are here and there. Even when she is to characterize Paris, it is through images from the countryside: Paris is lighter than leaves “levior foliis” (5.109) and the top of an ear of corn, “minus est in te quam summa pondus arista” (5.111).

Where Medea spoke of vows, joined hands and children that united her and Jason as a couple for all future, Paris’ love of Oenone is immortalized by the carving in the trees. She is stuck in her world of woods and mountains. Her Nymph nature prevents her from living another life. She can never live like a princess, however much she wishes. The words that in one way or another refer to her rural environment are numerous:

silvis (5.3), greges (5.13), arbore (5.13), foliis (5.14), herba (5.14), stramen (5.15), faenoque... alto (5.15), saltus venantibus aptos (5.17), catulos... suos (5.18), fera rupe (5.18), retia... maculis distenta (5.19), citos... canes (5.20), iuga longa (5.20), fagi (5.21), populus (5.23), pluviali... rivo (5.23), trunci (5.25), rugoso cortice (5.28), fontem Xanthi (5.30), non sic adpositis vincitur vitibus ulmus (5.47), mea saxa (5.74), armentaque (5.79), pastor (5.79), faginea... fronde (5.87), foliis (5.109), arista... usta (5.111-112), semina (5.115), bubus (5.116), aras (5.116), silvis (5.135), pinu... acuta (5.137), immensis... iugis (5.138), herba (5.147), radixque (5.147), herbis (5.149), graminibus (5.153), tellus fecunda (5.153).

Another testimony to Oenone’s inconsistency is visible in the end of the poem. Here Oenone first assures the reader that she will always remain loyal to her unfaithful husband (5.133). There were opportunities for her to deceive him: she mentions satyrs chasing her and Faunus laying eyes on her. To stress her chastity and then boast of having been chased by other men, does not make sense, according to some scholars.⁴⁹⁶ She has earlier sententiously told Paris what decency is: once ruined it can never be repaired. How is the passage to be interpreted? I suggest the following: as a nymph, Oenone is fair

⁴⁹⁶ Jacobson (1974): 185.

game for satyrs, and if she cannot win Paris by emphasizing the usual female virtues or in stressing her purity and loyalty in contrast to Helen's promiscuity and unfaithfulness, she can instead make an effort to present herself as attractive and desirable to other men. It is also a question for her about feeling good enough. Oenone is a proud woman. If wooing satyrs and fauns do not make Paris jealous, she has an ace up her sleeve: she has been loved by the founder of Troy, "Me fide conspicuus Troiae munitor amavit" ('The founder of Troy, conspicuous with his lyre, loved me', 5.139), mentioned as number three among her admirers. Who is this founder? No less than great Apollo. The introduction of him as the founder of Troy (which he is, and its protector too) is in line with her warnings of what will happen to the city if Paris continues tempting Fate. The fact that Oenone has been loved by a god and that she learned medicine from him exceeds being loved by an extraordinary beauty. She does assert that Apollo raped her, but underscores twice that his love was real (5.141-144 and 5.151-152).⁴⁹⁷ The story related to Apollo comes right after the accusation of Helen having been abducted by Theseus.⁴⁹⁸ Undoubtedly, it is a non-convincing move by Oenone. To tell this at all is not quite successful; it undermines the trustworthiness of her persuasion.

The emphasizing of her own ego is manifested in her name, which occurs seven times. Only Phyllis mentions her name as many times as Oenone.⁴⁹⁹ Oenone's name was carved by Paris in the trees:

incisae servant a te mea nomina fagi,
et legor OENONE falce notata tua,
et quantum trunci, tantum mea nomina crescunt.
crescite et in titulos surgite recta meos! (5.21-26)⁵⁰⁰

The beeches still preserve my name carved by your hand; and
'Oenone,' the work of your pruning-knife, is read upon their

⁴⁹⁷ These verses were condemned by Merkel, see Palmer [1898] (1967): 30.

⁴⁹⁸ Though in Helen's case it was not against her will, according to Oenone, 5.127-132. These lines too have been discussed and by some editors eliminated, due to the description of the rape, Jacobson (1974): 185-186; Knox (1995): 54.

⁴⁹⁹ This is observed by Jacobson (1974): 182-183.

⁵⁰⁰ Verses 23-24 were omitted as spurious by Merkel, see Palmer [1898] (1967): 26.

bark; and, as the trunks grow, the names grow. Grow on, and rise as testimonies of my just claim.

Though Paris' love for Oenone is dead, the trees still grow. And as they grow, so does the name of her of whom the trees will boast.

6.1.8 The others

While Oenone is fond of mentioning her own name, she on the other hand avoids mentioning Helen by name. She is mentioned once only, elsewhere mostly in insulting words. Helen is called:

coniunx... nova ('new bride', 5.1); dira paelice ('dreadful mistress', 5.60); turpis amica ('shameful girlfriend', 5.70); Helene ('Helen', 5.75) Tyndaris... fugitiva ('Tyndareus' fugitive daughter', 5.91); superba ('arrogant', 5.92); raptam ('abducted', 5.97); Lacaenam ('Spartan woman', 5.99); Graia iuvenca ('Greek cow', 5.117, 5.118 and 5.124), adultera ('adulteress', 5.125)

To call the most beautiful woman of earth a Greek cow is certainly very insulting to Helen, but amusing to the reader. Oenone is clever enough not to introduce the word herself. It is Paris' sister, the seer Cassandra, who desperately bursts with out her prophecy (5.115-120). A Greek cow is bringing war to Troy.

Further, Oenone contrasts herself to Helen, as we saw in the beginning. Oenone is chaste, "casta", while Helen is an adulteress, "adultera" (5.125). Oenone represents peace and safety, Helen war:

Denique tutus amor meus est; ibi nulla parantur
bella, nec ultrices advehit unda rates.

Tyndaris infestis fugitiva reposcitur armis;
hac venit in thalamos dote superba tuos. (5.89-92)

non ego cum Danais arma cruenta fero (5.156)

Lastly, my love is safe. No wars are prepared there, and no wave transports avenging ships. The fugitive daughter of Tyndareus is reclaimed by menacing arms. This is the dowry with which the arrogant woman comes to your bridal bed.

I do not bring blood-stained arms together with the Greeks.

What does Oenone say about Paris? Not very much. We heard her call him a slave, and accuse him for being unstable. She claims that he still has feelings for her, but can we be sure of her love? It could be expected from a letter of this kind that some love were expressed, or some qualities of the beloved were emphasized. But neither Medea nor Oenone does that. In Medea's case a possible explanation might be that she, in a larger degree than Oenone, has left her old life and made up her mind of what to do next. Oenone is considerably more anxious to win her husband back. Still, she never praises him or expresses her love. She never uses the soft words that are needed for amatory persuasion, in accordance with the advice in Ovid's love poetry.⁵⁰¹ The ending words are probably significant for her pose. She simply states that she belongs to him and that this is the way it should be (5.157-158). Oenone is afraid of his change of character, which she feels is affected and not genuine. When she sees him wearing a purple garment, she says: "pertimui; cultus non erat ille tuus" ('I became scared; this was not your garment', 5.66). As she expresses her fear for this new change, her self-confident words about her rising to be a princess, lose even more in credibility, especially as they come soon after her having caught sight of the new Paris.

6.1.9 Loci of argumentation: Oenone

Like Medea, Oenone makes use of the past. We have seen Oenone painting a romantic picture of a pastoral idyll, of her and Paris' former life in peace and purity. Oenone and Medea both stress how they have supported their men, implying that their men should owe a debt of gratitude to them. Oenone showed Paris the woods and the caves and taught him how to hunt (5.17-20). Jason and Paris know what they have, but not what they will get. Oenone's

⁵⁰¹ *Amores* 2.1.21 and *Ars Amatoria* 1.455.

winning card is that Paris' new relationship will bring war to Troy. Briseis, strangely enough, does not use this argument, although the Greeks nearly lose the war because of Achilles' inactivity.

But how can Oenone know about the Trojan War? Rumour has informed her that Menelaus prepares for war. And Paris' sister Cassandra, known for her gift of prophecy, hints that a war is going to break out (5.20). According to tradition, even Oenone had prophetic talents.⁵⁰² Jacobson pays attention to the fact that Ovid ignores Oenone's gift.⁵⁰³ But Oenone probably believes that Cassandra's testimony has a greater effect on Paris, sister as she is and princess of Troy. The reader, however, knows that the result is the reverse: Cassandra was indeed always right, but cursed by Fate not to be believed.

There is more to say about what Oenone does not say and does not do. According to tradition, she and Paris had a son who guided the Greek troops to Troy.⁵⁰⁴ Ovid makes her childless, or, if she has children, she does not mention them and definitely does not use them in her argumentation, as Medea does. Nor does she, like Briseis, threaten suicide, though she is the only one of the three who actually commits suicide. Ovid does not follow the traditional description of Oenone as choleric, a seer, and mother of a son.⁵⁰⁵

Like Briseis and Medea, Oenone in her argumentation makes use of other people who dislike Paris' act. Oenone consults old women and men who condemn what he has done (5.39-40). Furthermore, she lines up the names of Paris' new family members: Hector, Deiphobus, Polydamas, Antenor and Priam. *Ask*, she says to Paris, *whether Helen ought to be restored* – an implication that they are of the same opinion as she is in the matter (5.93-95). Others have opinions, and others must suffer due to his decision. He loses his reputation by acting badly. Likewise, she tells an anecdote: when Paris sailed away to meet Helen, the wind was not favourable to him. When he complained about it, his friends laughed (5.49-50). They knew, like Oenone, that he would have preferred to stay on Mount Ida with his wife. A comparison with similar passages in Briseis' and Medea's epistles shows that the messengers Eurybates and Talthybius *communicated with glances* instead of talking about Achilles and Briseis, the slaves *cried* for Medea's sake, and Paris' friends *laughed* at him. Jacobson's suggestion that the *Heroides* are

⁵⁰² Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 3.12.6.

⁵⁰³ Jacobson (1974): 178.

⁵⁰⁴ Jacobson (1974): 177.

⁵⁰⁵ Jacobson (1974): 176-178.

variations on a theme is very reasonable. This device, though – to mention what others than relatives think – is unique to Briseis, Oenone and Medea.

6.1.10 Briseis, Oenone and Medea

I have above discussed what unites the three heroines Briseis, Oenone and Medea and what makes them different. I have distinguished a unique personality for each of the three. Briseis and Medea handle their fates in opposite ways: the former displays symptoms of capture-bonding with the killer of her husband, whereas the latter does not submit to her new fate. Oenone is somewhere in the middle, swaying in her opinion on how to handle her situation. There are also common traits between the letters that are unique for them as a group, which I interpret as an indication that they were composed with the intent of them belonging together.

Briseis has already adapted herself to her new circumstances and is ready to take one step further into slavery. She has sacrificed her self-esteem. Oenone claims that she is willing to adapt herself to a royal life, provided that Paris will leave Helen. On the other hand we can see that she is not the stuff that queens are made of. She is stuck in her pastoral world. Moreover, she is proud of it and keen to preserve her identity, which she manifests in her own name. Medea would never in the world adjust herself. Others must adjust to her. We can observe three different attitudes. Briseis and Medea find new roles for themselves, but Oenone does not. Her crisis of identity is the toughest. At the same time, her safe and serene world is still present. She has not been moved from her original environment, as the two others have.

All of the three are longing to return to something that has passed: Medea to her former status, Oenone to the woods and her romantic love, Briseis to Achilles' camp. Oenone uses the rhetoric of memory. So does Medea. This is of course impossible for Briseis who does not share a common story with Achilles. In spite of this, Briseis is the one who seems in love with Achilles and tempts him with kisses and caresses. Such sweet words are absent in Oenone's and Medea's letters. Perhaps accordingly, Briseis is the one of them who actually gets her lover back.

Briseis speaks of her own death and declares that she is longing to die. Oenone does not speak of death at all, though she is the only one of the three who will actually kill herself. Medea speaks of the death of others.

Briseis presents herself as a foreigner, Oenone as a very famous nymph. Medea is eager to stress that she was a naïve girl who was duped by Jason.

Oenone and Medea in particular try to manipulate their personas, but the reader who pays enough attention to what they actually are saying, will see through their disguise.

Briseis uses the passive voice, which is in line with her servile attitude. Medea uses the active. As for Oenone it is not that easy to discern a pattern. Again she is somewhere between the two.

The ethopoeia must take into account the speaker's age and education. Briseis is young and inexperienced. Her youth and beauty are weapons in her argumentation. Oenone possesses medical skills, Medea magical ones. They both have knowledge of things that concern the life and death of human beings. Perhaps this is something that strengthens their personas. They have power, while Briseis is powerless, apart from her physical assets. Medea's letter is the one of the three with most rhetorical awareness, perhaps due to her experience and power, or that she in fact has a plan and therefore is more capable of sorting her thoughts. In this respect, her ethopoeia is more ethical than the others'.

In their relations to their partners Medea is the most aggressive. Briseis plays on Achilles' masculinity. Oenone is afraid of Paris' sudden change of character. As to others, the murderess Medea speaks of the Greeks (even Jason) as objects. Oenone expresses her detestation for Helen with a number of insulting words. Briseis is eager to enter her new world and get to know the people who inhabit it. She knows their names and forgets (or does not mention) the names of people in her past.

Ovid's approach to his characters is both empathetic and playful. His heroines view the same or a similar subject from different perspectives. Comic, or perhaps tragicomic, elements are also visible in the letters, for instance when Briseis excuses her bad Greek (writing in Latin), when the oread Oenone speaks of sleeping on a purple bed, or when she calls Helen a Greek cow.

It is important to read the *Heroides* with an open mind, and not be a victim of one's expectations. We have seen Medea behave and speak in a way that we perhaps do not recognize from Euripides or Apollonius Rhodius. On the other hand, she fulfils the expectations of her that are presented in Horace's *Ars Poetica* 123. According to the few sources we have on Oenone, Ovid seems to have taken liberties even with her. She is not depicted in "the violent, even malignant jealous anger that characterizes Oenone in virtually

every source we have”.⁵⁰⁶ Ovid rather creates her character in accordance with her inferiority complex.

My discovery of unifying elements on a more detailed and refined level, supports the hypothesis of an ethopoetic bond between the letters. Briseis and Oenone both use the word of *manus* with an adjective in the beginning of their letters, in order to introduce themselves and demonstrate their positions. Medea’s right hand, *dextera*, is also mentioned a couple of times, as a weapon for her slaughters, and used in the engagement scene. Briseis and Oenone use the word *manus* once again to position themselves in their new roles, Briseis as a slave, Oenone as a royal personage. The word *merui* is used by the three, though in different ways.

Briseis, Oenone and Medea are the only ones who invite other people than relatives to comment on the relationship. This is presented by looks, laughter and tears, surely ingeniously executed, though these anecdotes probably reveal more of the heroines’ wishful thinking than reality.

6.2 Banished daughters: Canace and Hypermestra

Canace and Hypermestra are both related by blood to their partners. They also have in common that they have incurred their fathers’ rage: Canace for giving birth to her brother’s baby, Hypermestra for ignoring her father’s command to kill her husband. The obvious parallel made Fulkerson put the two heroines together for a comparison, suggesting that Hypermestra is inspired by Canace’s epistle when she writes.⁵⁰⁷

Both girls are punished for their transgressions. When we meet Canace, she is about to commit suicide. Hypermestra writes her letter from imprisonment. There are however other similarities which might make it rewarding to put the two poems together. Canace’s and Hypermestra’s letters are, along with Penelope’s (ep. 1) and Hermione’s (ep. 8), the shortest among the epistles. The structures of the two texts are strikingly similar, following more closely the *tria tempora* than the three earlier studied letters – indeed, more than any other letter in the collection.

As I mentioned in the first chapter (p. 18), a long passage is probably missing in Hypermestra’s epistle, replaced by the misplaced story of Io

⁵⁰⁶ Jacobson (1974): 176.

⁵⁰⁷ Fulkerson (2005): 67.

(14.85-108). One can not help wondering if the result had turned out differently if we had another version preserved, that could possibly elucidate further parallels and differences.

6.2.1 The background to Canace's and Hypermestra's letters

Letter 11: Canace Macareo – From Canace to Macareus

Canace has given birth to a son, the fruit of a forbidden love-affair with her brother. Tradition has it that Macareus seduced his sister, but in Ovid's poem their love is undoubtedly mutual.⁵⁰⁸ When Canace's father, Aeolus, lord of the winds, discovers his daughter with the new-born baby, he orders that it should be put in the forest. At the same time he commands Canace to kill herself, handing over to her a sword for the purpose.

Letter 14: Hypermestra Lynceo – From Hypermestra to Lynceus

The story of the Danaids goes back on an enmity between king Danaus and his brother Aegyptus. Aegyptus managed to bring about forced marriages between his fifty sons and the fifty daughters of Danaus. Danaus, however, equipped his daughters, the Danaids, with daggers, instructing them to kill their cousins and newlywed husbands on their wedding night. Hypermestra is the only one of the daughters not to obey her father's will. She spares Lynceus' life why she is imprisoned by her father.

6.2.2 "Haec est Aeolidos fratri scribentis imago" – 'This is the picture of Aeolus' daughter writing to her brother'

Canace opens her letter by telling that she is writing with a sword in her hand. "haec est Aeolidos fratri scribentis imago" ('this is the picture of Aeolus' daughter writing to her brother', 11.5), she says, as if she were referring to two almost identical lines in Dido.⁵⁰⁹ In this expression lies Canace's characterization. She describes herself in the third person. As

⁵⁰⁸ This is the case also in *Tristia* 2.384: "Nobilis est Canace fratris amore sui" ('Canace is famous for her the love of her brother').

⁵⁰⁹ 7.183-184: "Adspicias utinam, quae sit scribentis imago: / scribimus, et gremio Troicus ensis adest" 'If only you could see the state of the woman who is writing! I write, and a Trojan sword is in my bosom'. In contrast to Canace, Dido received her sword as a gift of friendship from Aeneas.

mentioned, Canace almost instantly starts talking of her father. She defines herself not as Canace in the first place, but as the daughter of Aeolus. When she speaks of herself it is with the name *Aeolis*. Even the nurse addresses her as “Aeoli” (11.34). She is her father’s daughter. The patronymic also stresses the incestuous relationship, that she is connected by blood to her brother. Canace never mentions her own name, as other heroines do.⁵¹⁰ The word *ego* is totally absent in Canace’s letter. If Oenone was anxious about holding her own with Paris and stressing her ego, Canace is her opposite. Canace lacks self-confidence. It is the image of her that matters; only by refusing to have a will of her own can she satisfy her father.

The depiction from outside is evident also in her account of the past, as if she stands at a distance and watches it happen. The picture she gives of herself is that she is unaware of what she is involved in and does not have a clue how babies are conceived. Her nurse is the one who realizes what is going on, a fact that is stressed by “prima... nutrix” (‘the first was my nurse’). Canace is an innocent victim of her body’s reactions, at least that is the impression she wants to give. Instead of admitting that she fell in love, she explains it as a physical process:

ipsa quoque incalui, qualemque audire solebam,
 nescio quem sensi corde tepente deum.
 fugerat ore color; macies adduxerat artus;
 sumebant minimos ora coacta cibos (11.25-28)

erubui, gremioque pudor deiecit ocellos;
 haec satis in tacita signa fatentis erant.
 iamque tumescebant vitati pondere ventris,
 aegraque furtivum membra gravabat onus. (11.35-38)

⁵¹⁰ Penelope (1.1 and 1.84); Phyllis (2.1, 2.60, 2.98, 2.105, 2.106, 2.138 and 2.147); Briseis (3.1 and 3.137); Phaedra (4.74); Oenone (5.3, 5.22, 5.29, 5.32, 5.80, 5.115 and 5.133); Hypsipyle (6.8, 6.59, 6.132 and 6.153); Dido (7.7, 7.17, 7.68, 7.133, 7.168 and 7.196; the name *Elissa* occurs in 7.102 and 7.193); Hermione (8.59); Deianira (9.131, 9.146, 9.152, 9.158 and 9.164); Medea (12.5, 12.25 and 12.182); Laodamia (13.2, 13.36 and 13.70); Hypermestra (14.1, 14.53 and 14.129); Sappho (15.3, 15.155, 15.183 and 15.217). Ariadne (ep. 10) does not use her name, but she mentions Theseus’ name nine times, and calls herself *ego* ten times.

nescia, quae faceret subitos mihi causa dolores,
et rudis ad partus et nova miles eram (11.47-48)

I, too, grew hot, and I felt some god with my heart growing warm of passion, a god of a kind that I used to hear about. The colour had fled from my face; a thinness had drawn into my limbs; I forced my mouth to take food in small portions.

I blushed, and the sense of shame made me lower my eyes. These signs were the signs from one who confessed, though silent. And already swelled the secret load from my injured womb.

Ignorant of what caused my sudden pains, I was both a novice and a new soldier in giving birth.

Love as physical illness is a poetical motif. Here, it has the function not only of showing the power of love, but also Canace's total lack of erotic experience. The indirect questions of the following lines underscore the picture of an inexperienced young woman, not aware of what was happening:

nec, cur haec facerem, poteram mihi reddere causam
nec noram, quid amans esset; at illud eram. (11.31-32)

Neither could I find any reason for why I did these things, nor did I know what it meant to be in love; but in love was what I was.

We have met another young woman, Briseis, who expressed her inferiority and servility using the passive voice (see section 6.1.2). Despite her subservience, Briseis showed more temperament. Canace is the most non-rebellious and obedient heroine of the collection. It is as if she does what other tells her to do. She never seems to take initiatives or try to control her situation. Compared to other incestuous women, Phaedra (who, in all fairness, never got her incestuous wish fulfilled) or for that matter Byblis and

Myrrha of the *Metamorphoses*,⁵¹¹ Canace depicts herself as naïve. The other women are aware that they transgress the legitimate limits of love for family, but convince themselves that their love and actions are justified. Of their elaborate arguments, there are no similar traces in Canace's letter. Could this not be explained by her age, one might ask. Presumably, we are to think that Canace is very young, only a child. Verducci writes: "Canace is not Macareus' sister and lover as much as she is a child, a daughter, Aeolus' daughter."⁵¹² In keeping, with this, she does not use the usual "womanish" language. As mentioned in section 5.2.2, the poem is unusually empty of complaining and crying, features that we otherwise see in other letters, a fact that might have contributed to its high esteem. Canace's letter is, by some scholars, considered the most perfect piece of the entire collection.⁵¹³ Moreover, in contrast to other incestuous women whom Ovid depicts (Phaedra (ep. 4), Byblis (*Metamorphoses* 9) and Myrrha (*Metamorphoses* 10)), Canace does not defend her love with arguments or *exempla* from mythology. Neither does she try to persuade anyone. As Casali notes, Canace does not make an argument of the incestuous marriage of her ancestor Jupiter, which on the other hand Phaedra does (4.133-134).⁵¹⁴ Instead, she asks what good it would do to her to claim Jupiter among her relatives (11.17-18). Another heroine would not let such an opportunity pass by.

But Canace does cry and scream. "nec tenui vocem" ('I could not keep quiet', 11.49), she says, until the nurse stops her mouth. Thereafter, she represses her cries: "timor et nutrix et pudor ipse vetant" ('fear, the nurse, and shame itself forbid', 11.52). Later, when Aeolus, informed about the birth of the boy, flies into a rage, Canace bursts into tears (11.81). When he leaves her room, she tears her hair and beats her breast (11.91-92). What does distinguish her from other crying heroines is that she does not use her tears as a means to persuade or ask for compassion. This could be an indication that Canace is too young to master the manner of expression typical of other women of the *Heroides*. Or, her father's influence is restraining her.

⁵¹¹ *Metamorphoses* 9.474-516 (Byblis) and 10.320-355 (Myrrha).

⁵¹² Verducci (1985): 208-209.

⁵¹³ Palmer [1898] (1967): 381: "The poem is the most finished of the whole series. The subject was one of those in which the soft genius of Ovid luxuriated, and there is nothing forced or unnatural in it." Jacobson (1974) 175: "Undoubtedly, the absence of those pleas, cries and claims which abound elsewhere must, if for no other reason than the temporary relief from grating and carping women, be among the factors, if a minor one, that make this letter so appealing."

⁵¹⁴ Casali (1998): 706.

If Canace is naïve when we meet her, she experiences a transformation. The moment her child is born she acquires an identity as a caring mother. With that comes a dignity and consciousness that is displayed in her speech. The turning point where this is demonstrated is the word *scimus* in line 11.97. She now knows what to do and what to say. The questions she puts to her father are well-turned and defiant (11.99-100 and 11.107-108). The last part of her letter speaks of a maturity. She now speaks of herself as a mother (11.111, 11.120 and 11.123). And for the first time she admits her crime (“admisso... meo”, 11.110).

6.2.3 “Timor et pietas crudelibus obstitit ausis” – ‘Fear and piety prevented my cruel doings’

Unlike her forty-nine sisters, the Danaid Hypermestra defies her father’s command. The words *pia* and *pietas* are repeated almost as a mantra by Hypermestra. The word *pia* can be read in relation to Horace *Carmina* 3.11. Here, the Danaids, are called “impiae” twice.⁵¹⁵ Hypermestra, who in Horace’s poem is praised for her non-violent action, is accordingly *pia*, although the word is not explicitly attributed to her. Throughout Ovid’s poem, however, Hypermestra uses this word about herself. It is not far-fetched to assume that Horace, who wrote *Ars Poetica* and had ideas of how Achilles and Medea should be described, in his poem clings to a literary tradition in regarding Hypermestra as *pia*. That *Heroides* 14 stands in relation to *Carmina* 3.11 is also obvious by the anaphor “surge”,⁵¹⁶ and that Hypermestra asks Lynceus to arrange a grave-stone for her.⁵¹⁷ However, it is possible to trace another source. In section 3.2.2.2.3, I identified the monologue of Sophocles’ Antigone as an ethopoeia. Her story shares similarities with Hypermestra’s. Like Hypermestra, Antigone has been punished by a male relative for having acted against his will. When we meet Hypermestra, she is imprisoned, an *inclusa puella*. Antigone is also going to be one, as she is sentenced to be buried alive. Antigone comments on her crime in the following words:

⁵¹⁵ Horace, *Carmina* 3.11.30-31.

⁵¹⁶ “surge”, 14.73; Horace, *Carmina* 3.11.37-38.

⁵¹⁷ 14.128-130; Horace, *Carmina* 3.11.50-52.

ἐπεὶ γε δὴ
τὴν **δυσσέβειαν εὐσεβοῦς** ἐκτησάμην.
(Sophocles, *Antigone* 923-924)

For by acting **piously** I have been convicted of **impiety**.
(Translation: Hugh Lloyd-Jones)

Antigone's words echo in the beginning of Hypermestra's epistle:

est mihi supplicii causa fuisse **piam** (14.4)

the reason for my punishment is to have been **pious**.

Hypermestra summarizes her crime in the same way as Antigone does: she was pious, but was convicted of impiety. Words connected with *pietas* appear seven times.⁵¹⁸ Hypermestra stands alone and has to repeat the words in order to persuade herself or the reader that she did the right thing. Again and again she states that her punishment is due to her *pietas*:

non est, quam piget esse, **pia** (14.14)

She is not **pious** who regrets that she was **pious**

haec meruit **pietas** praemia! (14.84)

these were the rewards that **piety** deserved!

⁵¹⁸ *piam* (14.4); *piam* (14.14); *pietas* (14.49); *piae* (14.64); *pietas* (14.84); *piae... sororis* (14.123); *pretium pietatis iniquum* (14.129).

pretium **pietatis** iniquum (14.129)

the unjust price of **piety**

Hypermetra's explanation of her punishment is in the first place that she was pious, not that she refused to obey her father. The word *pietas* implies moral obligations. We can assume that Hypermetra's father adduced *pietas* as the reason for his daughters to kill their newly-wed husbands; they would do it as a duty to him. Hypermetra, on the other hand, pleads *pietas* to her husband as the motive for not killing him. Her choice of vocabulary gives us an indication of how she wishes to present herself.

Jacobson notes that only two of the other heroines (Penelope, ep. 1, and Hypsipyle, ep. 6) mention their own piety.⁵¹⁹ Words deriving from *pietas* only occur three times in any other of the *Heroides*.⁵²⁰

Briseis' repetitions gave the impression of spontaneity; her letter seemed to have been written in haste. Hypermetra wishes to achieve something else with her continuous reiteration of *pietas*. The word is contrasted to examples of infamous actions:

crimine (14.2); scelus (14.6); caedis (14.8); violavimus (14.9); iugulet (14.11); sceleris (14.15); saevasque (14.15); nefanda (14.16); temeratae sanguine noctis (14.17); caede (14.19 and 14.21); inopia tura (14.26); funere (14.32); violenti iussa parentis (14.43); crudelibus... ausis (14.49); saevus... pater (14.53); caesos (14.58); caedem (14.59); morte... sanguinolenta (14.60); necem (14.61); mori (14.63); saucia (14.70); caede (14.79); criminis (14.80); cognatae iacturam mortis (14.81); facti sanguinis (14.82); leto (14.116); neci (14.125).

Still, Hypermetra's repeated conscientiousness is not necessarily due solely to her good character. She was overcome by fear and did not dare to stab her husband. She had never questioned the plan: it was not until in the moment when fear took control of her that she, for the first time, started to meditate on the act. Words meaning "fear" occur several times in the letter. As if she compensated for these, she constantly refers to her piety. Arguably, her

⁵¹⁹ Jacobson (1974): 126.

⁵²⁰ 1.85 and 6.137. Jacobson (1974): 125.

refusal to kill was due more to her fear than to her moral character. She reveals herself at the beginning of the letter:

quod manus extimuit iugulo demittere ferrum,
sum rea; laudarer, si scelus ausa forem. (14.5-6)

Because my hand shrank from burying the weapon into your throat, I am charged. I would be praised if I had dared the crime.

The number of words concerning fear exceeds the number of words connected to piety:

extimuit (14.5); si scelus ausa forem (14.6); Cor pavet (14.17);
subitus... tremor (14.18); timet (14.20); tremui magis (14.41);
metum (14.43); tremente manu (14.44); timor (14.49); timebam
(14.71); timida... manu (14.76); timor (14.132)

Yet, since the word *pietas* is not as varied, it has greater impact, as if this is the word that Hypermestra wishes to be associated with. Still, fear has power over her. In Canace's case, her letter ends with the word *patris*, which is a key word for her story. Hypermestra's letter closes with the word *timor*.

If Canace's letter should be praised for the absence of tears and complaints, so should Hypermestra's. There is not more crying in her epistle. Twice she expresses her emotions in tears and rage.⁵²¹ Fear is the overriding emotion.

6.2.4 The others

The lovers of the heroines are usually physically or mentally absent, or both. In the cases of Canace and Hypermestra, the lovers are physically present. Macareus comes to his sister's help and comfort when she is about to give birth, and makes a promise to marry her. Yet, the partners *are* in one sense absent. In fact, they are placed totally in the background. The dominant males

⁵²¹ 14.51 and 14.67-68.

are the fathers, the obstacles to the relationship. Canace and Hypermestra are the only writers in the first collection who never attempt to influence their lovers. It would perhaps be futile since their fathers control them and are in authority. As writers they seem to have no greater aim than to tell their story and to ask their lovers to be helpful when they have passed away. One could expect them to write to their men with the prospects of escaping their fathers, but they do not. Fulkerson actually suggests that the real internal readers of their letters are their fathers.⁵²² Hypermestra has been forced to marry her cousin Lynceus, and no affections for him are apparent. Lynceus is addressed for the first time in line 41 and then in 119.⁵²³ We hear his name for the first and only time in line 123 (“Lynceu”), when the letter is almost finished. He is also addressed with the patronymic “Belide” (‘son of Belus’, 14.73), with the addition “de tot modo fratribus unus” (‘to one of recently so many brothers’) – a phrase that also occurs in the opening line. Lynceus is one of many offsprings of his ancestor Beleus. Hypermestra might as well have married one of Lynceus’ forty-nine brothers. Macareus is mentioned only once by name (11.21). Compare this to Ariadne’s letter where she repeats the name of Theseus nine times. Both Macareus and Lynceus are addressed as *frater*. Lynceus is called *vir* once (14.12). Jacobson suggests that Hypermestra uses the word *frater* because there is no marital love.⁵²⁴

Neither do they feel love for their fathers. Both girls criticize their fathers’ cruelty, but neither of them tries to escape their wrath. Hypermestra has certainly defied her father, but once she is imprisoned, she does not really attempt to run away.

It is striking to note almost the same wording, placed at the beginning of each letter:

sic videor duro posse **placere patri** (11.6)

In this way I seem to be able to please my harsh father

⁵²² Fulkerson (2005): 70-79.

⁵²³ Jacobson (1974): 126.

⁵²⁴ Jacobson (1974): 126.

esse ream praestat, quam **sic placuisse parenti** (14.7)

It is preferable to be charged than to have pleased my parent in this way

Although the lines are similar, the girls do not have the same attitudes towards their fathers. Canace thinks she is pleasing her father by taking her own life, Hypermetra would rather be guilty of the crime than to have pleased her father. The only ones of the heroines except for Canace and Hypermetra who talk about pleasing, *placere*, are Dido and Deianira. In Dido's case she says she pleased suitors (7.123). Deianira is speaking of Alcmene who pleased Jupiter (9.43). In the cases of Canace and Hypermetra, the word is used for their fathers. The heroines never write this word in relation to their lovers.

The text does not reveal whether Aeolus realized that his children were having an incestuous affair. The fact that his daughter was pregnant and delivered a child was shameful enough. That Canace's father is the dominant force in her life is evident by the number of words that concerns him:

Aeolidos (11.5); patri (11.6); spectator (11.7); auctorisque (11.8); Aeoli (11.34); Aeolus (11.65); oculis... patris (11.66); pater (11.70); Aeolus (11.74); patrius... satellites (11.95); Aeolus (11.95); dona paterna (11.98); genitor (11.99); pater (11.100); patris (11.128)

As already mentioned, the last word of Canace's letter is "patris" (11.128). Aeolus is "duro" ('harsh', 11.6), "ferus" ('wild') and "multoque suis truculentior Euris" ('much more aggressive than his east-winds', 11.9). The winds that he rules are "saevis" ('cruel', 11.11). Her father has difficulties in taming his "tumidae... irae" ('swelling wrath', 11.15). Hypermetra's father, Danaus, is a "violenti parentis" ('violent father', 14.43) and he is "saevus" ('cruel', 14.51). Hypermetra's attitude towards him is that he can behave as he likes – he will feel regret. The bad guy here is the father and his power over his family is intensified by the fact that no mother is present. The father, however, is omnipresent, even in a simile that Canace makes. It is certainly no coincidence that Canace chooses words from the world of winds (marked in bold type), since her father is the ruler of the winds:

ut mare fit **tremulum**, tenui cum stringitur **aura**,
 ut **quatitur tepido** fraxina virga **Noto**,
 sic mea **vibrari** pallentia membra videres;
quassus ab inposito corpore lectus erat. (11.75-78)

As the sea becomes **trembling** when it is stroked by a tender **breeze**, as the ash branch is **shaken** by **the tepid South wind**, you would see my pale limbs **quiver** thus; the couch was **shaken** by the body that was laid upon it.

None of the other writers uses this kind of simile – except for Hypermestra:

ut **leni Zephyro** graciles **vibrantur** aristae,
frigida populeas ut **quatit aura** comas,
 aut sic, aut etiam **tremui** magis. (14.39-41)

As the slender ears of corn are **quivered** by **the gentle Western wind**, as **the cold breeze shakes** the poplar leaves, thus or more **I trembled**.

Where Canace chooses *Notus*, the south wind, Hypermestra prefers to compare with the west wind, *Zephyrus*. Both winds are ruled by Aeolus, the man who makes people tremble. Both similes use variations of the same three words for shaking and trembling: “tremulum”/“tremui”, “quatitur”/“quassus”/“quatit” and “vibrari”/“vibrantur”: one on each line.

6.2.5 “Non faciunt molles ad fera tela manus” – ‘My soft hands do not suit fierce weapons’

Both parents give their daughters weapons, symbols of the paternal power, aimed to kill: Canace is commanded to kill herself, Hypermestra is commanded to kill her husband. The word *ensis*, sword, occurs thrice in each poem. For the handing over of the sword, “tradidit ensem” is used (11.95 and 14.11), a phrase that ends a line in both letters and is unique for these two letters and, as I see it, functions as a mark of their connection. A similar

phrase is found in Dido's letter (ep. 7), where Aeneas' handing over the sword to Dido is described as "praebuilt ensem", but the words have a different position (7.195).⁵²⁵ A weapon is referred to eight times in Canace's letter, eleven in Hypermestra's case:

strictum... ferrum (11.3); infestum... ferrum (11.19); funebria munera (11.19); non mea tela (11.20); hunc ensem (11.95); tradidit ensem (11.95); ense (11.97); dona paterna (11.98)

tradidit ensem (14.11); armatas... nurus (14.24); tela (14.44); sustulit ensem (14.45); ense (14.46); tela paterna (14.48); fera tela (14.56); ferro (14.65); bellica tela (14.65); telo (14.70); fortia tela (14.76)

Canace and Hypermestra both declare that it does not suit them to handle weapons. Canace is anxious to stress that it is not *her* weapon that she is holding in her 'female hand'. Hypermestra points at her femininity and tells us that her soft hands are not suited for cruel weapons. The second verses of the couplets are similar:

num minus infestum, funebria munera, ferrum
feminea teneo, non mea tela, manu? (11.19-20)

Is my funeral gift less hostile, the weapon that I hold in my
female hand, a weapon that does not suit me?

femina sum et virgo, natura mitis et annis;
non faciunt molles ad fera tela manus. (14.55-56)

I am a woman and a maiden, gentle in nature and years. My soft
hands do not suit fierce weapons.

In line 66, Hypermestra picks up the *manus*-motif that Briseis and Oenone used in their letters (3.70 and 5.86). Her hands, Hypermestra states, are better

⁵²⁵ "PRAEBUIT AENEAS ET CAUSAM MORTIS ET ENSEM".

suited to treat wool. Briseis said the same thing, but as a way of telling Achilles that she was ready to abandon her role as a princess or even mistress, and subordinate herself to her new master as his servant (3.70). Oenone, on the other hand, used a similar phrase to state that her hands were ready to handle a royal sceptre (5.86). Hypermestra uses it in order to be spared from using weapons. In contrast to Medea, Hypermestra does not kill. Her following comment can be interpreted as a reference to Medea:⁵²⁶

quam tu caede putes fungi potuisse mariti,
scribere de facta non sibi caede timet! (14.19-20)

She, whom you may think could have performed her husband's murder, fears to write about the murder that was not done by her!

The number of times the words *manus* or *dextra* occur in Hypermestra's letter is without parallel in the other letters (words related to *hand* in bold type):

quod **manus** extimuit iugulo demittere ferrum (14.5)

because my **hand** shrank from burying the weapon into your throat

non piget immunes caedis habere **manus** (14.8)

I feel no regret at having **hands** with no share in the murder

⁵²⁶ 12.115: "quod facere ausa mea est, non audet scribere dextra", 'my right hand refuses to write what it dared to commit'.

et subitus **dextrae** praepedit ossa tremor (14.18)

and a sudden trembling fetters the bones of my **right hand**

erigor et capio tela tremente **manu** (14.44)

I rise and seize the weapon with trembling **hand**

ter male sublato reccidit ense **manus** (14.46)

thrice did my **hand** badly lift the sword and sank back again

castaque mandatum **dextra** refugit opus (14.50)

and my chaste **right hand** fled from the task I had been
commissioned to do

non faciunt molles ad fera tela **manus** (14.56)

my soft **hands** do not suit fierce weapons

Si **manus** haec aliquam posset committere caedem (14.59)

If this **hand** could commit any murder

paene **manus** telo saucia facta tua est (14.70)⁵²⁷

your **hand** was almost wounded by the weapon

adspicis in timida fortia tela **manu** (14.76)

you watch the strong weapon in my nervous **hand**

Scribere plura libet: sed pondere lassa catenae

est **manus**, et vires subtrahit ipse timor (14.131-132)

I would like to write more, but my **hand** falls with the weight of
my chain, and fear itself removes my energy.

The hand used as a synecdoche for the owner of the hand, is central in *Amores* 1.7, where the poet looks at his hands, terrified at his violent actions. He has just beaten his girlfriend Corinna. There is a general agreement that the use of *manus* in the poem distances the person from his actions.⁵²⁸ The same can be said about the examples found in Hypermetra's letter. Jacobson writes:

⁵²⁷ The hand referred to here belongs to Lynceus.

⁵²⁸ Reeson (2001): 225.

There is, in short, a virtual dissociation of her hand from herself; the organ, as it were, gains an existence independent of Hypermestra. The point is this. The night of horror and particularly her own actions on that night have taken on an existence all their own, disengaged from the persons involved. Hypermestra now conceives those events as external to herself; she herself virtually has no part in them.⁵²⁹

By referring to her *manus*, Hypermestra – like Canace – takes a step outside herself, observing what happens as if she was not totally present.

6.2.6 Canace and Hypermestra

Canace and Hypermestra stand out among the heroines. They seem not hungry for love or for the company of a man: their letters – two of the shortest in the collection – have nothing to do with amatory strategy. The girls are not trying to persuade anyone, not even their fathers.

Canace attempts to portray herself as unknowing and unaware. She does not mention her name and is entirely in the hands of her father. She is no one until she becomes a mother. Hypermestra on the other hand paints the picture of herself as pious and aware. Like Sophocles' Antigone (section 3.2.2.2.3), Hypermestra claims that she has been unjustly punished: though pious, she is regarded as impious. The words *pia* and *pietas* are drummed and imprinted, perhaps annoying for a first-time reader, although an attentive reader notices that words meaning *fear* occur even more times, though expressed with variations. Hypermestra wishes to stress her piety, but is mastered by her fear. The repetitions are part of her characterization. For her, fear is her companion until the end of the letter, demonstrated by the closing word *timor*. Canace also reveals that she is afraid. When waiting for her death, though, she is surprisingly calm.

The fathers Aeolus and Danaus play dominant roles in the girls' stories. Whereas Canace obeys her father at all times, although she sometimes questions him, the main point of Hypermestra's story is that she was disobedient to her father when she refused to execute his plan.

Canace develops from young girl to mature mother. This kind of transformation is not visible in Hypermestra, although her story also contains a turning point, when she realizes what evil deed she is going to be guilty of.

⁵²⁹ Jacobson (1974): 133.

Scholars have pointed at, and praised, the absence of complaining in Canace's epistle. The same can be stated from Hypermetra's story. In fact, she is even more self-restrained. Other heroines use their emotions to influence their recipients; Canace and Hypermetra do not. If it is due to their youth or the fear of their fathers, I do not dare to decide, only that the phenomenon unites them. Their restraint is, however, also visible in another respect: the structure of their texts are uncommonly strict as regards the *tria tempora*.

Compared to the letters previously discussed, it shows that Canace and Hypermetra have other personalities. Whereas other heroines have a fixed purpose, dissatisfied as they are with their present circumstances, Canace and Hypermetra seem to resign themselves to their fates. Briseis, who like Hypermetra is imprisoned, is resigned in one respect, but still she struggles to get her wish fulfilled. Compared to each other however, the individual portraits of Canace and Hypermetra are not as evident as in the cases of Briseis, Oenone and Medea. There are differences, but on a quite refined level. What can be concluded is that the poems are modelled from the same idea. There can be no doubt that these two letters belong together. The fact that the two girls have much in common (relationships with their relatives, fear of their fathers by which they are judged, their imprisoned state) is reflected in their corresponding way of treating the subject matter, that their modes of expression accordingly correspond, even at word level. The "tradidit ensem" is the most striking example. The simile of the winds can also be mentioned, the descriptions of the hand holding a weapon, or the wording "placere patri" respectively "placuisse parenti". According to the rules of the ethopoeia, X must not sound like Y. X *does* sound like Y more than once in Ovid's text. Yet, the examples of *placere* above show that whereas Canace states that killing herself is the best way to please her father, Hypermetra is proud of not having pleased her father. Perhaps this is the most striking example of two opposite views expressed in not identical but similar language.

6.3 Girls in every port: Phyllis, Dido and Hypsipyle

Three of the writers give us if not identical, at least similar, stories. They are royal personages who share their beds with visiting sailors, only to be deserted afterwards: Phyllis (ep. 2), Hypsipyle (ep. 6) and Dido (ep. 7).

Demophoon, Jason and Aeneas are seafaring heroes who abandon their girlfriends. Aeneas is still present in Carthage; Demophoon has left Thrace and Jason does not return to Lemnos on his way home from Colchis, as he promised. These conditions naturally have an effect on the design of each letter. Dido speaks *to* a present Aeneas. Dido talks of herself as *speaking*, using the word “adloquor” (7.4). In *Amores* 2.18, where some of the letter-writers and their recipients are mentioned, Dido is the only one of whom the verb *dicere* is used (the other heroines *write*).⁵³⁰ In lines 183-184 of her letter, though, she is writing as well. In contrast to other recipients in the collection Aeneas can, at least theoretically, be persuaded. Dido’s letter is the most persuasive of the letters in the collection in its character. Although she starts by stating that she has no hope of convincing him (7.5-6), she never stops accumulating arguments. Her ambivalent attitude is typical of her and makes her guilty of a number of contradictions (which we will see further on). Scholars agree that Ovid found material for the portrait of Dido in Virgil’s *Aeneid*.⁵³¹ Jacobson considers Dido’s epistle to be one of the least successful of the collection:

...let us be quick to admit that this letter is a failure in its own right and would be so judged whether the *Aeneid* existed or not. We need go no further than place it side by side with most of the poems in the corpus, of which this is certainly one of the least successful. But it will nevertheless repay study, both for the light it sheds on Ovid’s understanding of and attitude toward Vergil’s work, and because it gives us rare insights into the nature and causes of Ovid’s poetic failure.⁵³²

There is no doubt that Ovid collected his material on Dido from Virgil’s *Aeneid* book 4, but *Aeneid* 4 is said to have provided material for Phyllis’ letter as well.⁵³³ The reason for me to mentioning this is that Phyllis’ and Dido’s letters have much in common, a fact that has been pointed out by several scholars. Striking similarities can be observed, which makes them a perfect couple for analysis.

⁵³⁰ This is noted by Knox (1995): 203.

⁵³¹ For comparisons between *Aeneid* 4 and *Heroides* 7, see Anderson (1973): 49-65; Jacobson (1974): 77-86; Fulkerson (2002): 154.

⁵³² Jacobson (1974): 76.

⁵³³ Fulkerson (2002): 154 lists parallels between Phyllis’ letter and Dido’s speech in *Aeneid* 4.

Callimachus' *Aetia* is otherwise a plausible source of Phyllis' epistle, and had it been extant, it would have been an important text which probably would have provided us with a key to the poem. We only have one single line left. The only extant pre-Ovidian source in full is to be read in Apollodorus, who gives us just a few lines.⁵³⁴ Apollodorus tells of a princess who was promised by her father to Demophoon together with the kingdom as a dowry. Phyllis and Demophoon never married, because Demophoon needed to go to his own country. When Demophoon departed, Phyllis gave him a basket together with the order not to open it unless he had decided not to return. Demophoon went to Cyprus. Phyllis killed herself. Demophoon opened the basket, and was killed in an accident. Hyginus tells of a Phyllis who on the day agreed ran to the shore nine times and then committed suicide when Demophoon did not show up. On her grave, trees grew and shed their leaves.⁵³⁵ In *Remedia Amoris* 591-608, Ovid sticks quite close to his tradition. Ovid mentions Phyllis several times in his poetry (below, section 6.3.3).

6.3.1 The background to Phyllis' and Dido's letters

Letter 2: Phyllis Demophoonti – From Phyllis to Demophoon

Phyllis of Thrace hospitably received the Athenian prince Demophoon, son of Theseus, on his way from Troy. When he left, he promised to return. Four months have passed with no Demophoon in sight, when Phyllis writes her letter.

Letter 7: Dido Aeneae – From Dido to Aeneas

As the founder of Carthage, Dido is proud of her work. She is ready to hand it over to the Trojan prince Aeneas, with whom she falls in love when he stops in her city on his way from Troy. His mission to found a new kingdom forces him to move on. Dido, in despair, writes her letter right before his departure.

⁵³⁴ Apollodorus, *Epitome* 6.16-17.

⁵³⁵ Hyginus, *Fabulae* 53.

6.3.2 Phyllis as an “altera Dido”?

The heading is a reference to Dido’s epistle.⁵³⁶ Dido is afraid that Aeneas might find a substitute for her. Here, however, I use it in order to point to the “altera Dido” of Ovid’s collection: Phyllis. Scholars have pointed out manifest similarities between Phyllis and Dido. In fact, Ovid seems to adapt Phyllis’ story to Dido’s. Why would he manipulate Phyllis’ story to look more like Dido’s? Jacobson suggests:

The *Heroides* in general are a proclamation by Ovid of his ability to tell and retell the same story in a multitude of colors, but on this level he crowns his achievement when he intentionally redesigns one tale to make it externally as close as possible to a second and within that framework seeks to differentiate the two myths and the two characters.⁵³⁷

According to Fulkerson, Phyllis reads Dido’s letter and is influenced to such a degree that she adapts her life to Dido’s. Some versions of the myth make Demophoon return, but in order to be like Dido, Fulkerson claims, Phyllis “lets other women’s stories persuade her that she has been deserted when precisely the opposite is true”.⁵³⁸ Phyllis reads Dido’s story with so much devotion that she eventually convinces herself that suicide is the only way out.

That Phyllis and Dido, queens who share the same fate, speak, lament and argue in the similar manner is in line with the rules of the ethopoeia. A remodelling of the myth, however, does seem a mystery. Could it be that Ovid searched for an almost identical situation?

According to scholars, Phyllis’ story as told by ancient sources differs in some respects from the one presented by Ovid. That neither of the versions of the myth tells about Demophoon’s shipwreck nor of Phyllis as queen instead of princess is often raised.⁵³⁹ Jacobson’s interpretation of the shipwrecked Demophoon is that it enhances Phyllis’ generosity, especially as he responds with ingratitude.⁵⁴⁰ Yet, can we be sure that Demophoon really suffered a

⁵³⁶ “altera Dido”, 7.17.

⁵³⁷ Jacobson (1974): 65.

⁵³⁸ Fulkerson (2002): 148-149.

⁵³⁹ Jacobson (1974): 62.

⁵⁴⁰ Jacobson (1974): 60-61.

shipwreck? Phyllis speaks of “laceras...puppas” (‘broken ships’, 2.45) and that he was “egenti” (‘needing’, 2.109), but his distress appears considerably more gentle compared to Aeneas’, who was thrown up by the waves (“fluctibus eiectum”, 7.89). In the traditional tales, Phyllis’ father, king of Thrace, offered his daughter and the kingdom as dowry to Demophoon. Ovid’s Phyllis poses as a queen with the right to hand over to Demophoon her kingdom (2.111-112). However we interpret her transformation from princess to queen, the way in which Phyllis introduces herself calls for some caution, as we will see.

Both women welcome heroes who had fought at Troy. Both stress their hospitality and helpfulness and condemn their lovers’ ingratitude and faithlessness. They have even gone so far as to offer their kingdoms to the newly arrived strangers. Suitors were rejected in favour of these foreigners. Phyllis and Dido curse the moment when they gave themselves to strangers (2.57-58 and 7.91-92). They warn their lovers of divine revenge. They threaten to kill themselves and formulate epitaphs to be carved in stone. Dido finishes her letter by asking her sister Anna to carve an epitaph for her grave in marble – and above all in almost the same words as used by Phyllis. This is probably not a coincidence. As if this was not enough, another connection to Phyllis can be observed. As I demonstrated in section 5.2.3, Phyllis suggests, halfway in the poem, that a statue of Demophoon should be erected. When we reach halfway in Dido’s 196-line long letter, Dido speaks (in line 99) of Sychaeus’ image in a marble temple. Again, we have a reference to stone and to the former lover as a statue.

6.3.3 Phyllis and Dido retold

It lies near at hand to combine the two heroines for another reason: Ovid seems to do so himself. The two women are mentioned together twice in other works, in Ovid’s *Ars Amatoria* and *Remedia Amoris*:

Quaere, novem cur una viae dicantur, et audi
 Depositis silvas Phyllida flesse comis.
 Et famam pietatis habet, tamen hospes et ensem
 Praebuit et causam mortis, Elissa, tuae.
 (*Ars Amatoria* 3.37-40)

Ask why nine ways are called one, and hear the woods
deploring Phyllis by shedding their leaves. The man has the
reputation of piety – yet did he as a guest offer both a sword
and a reason for your death, Elissa.

Vixisset Phyllis, si me foret usa magistro,
Et per quod novies, saepius isset iter;
Nec moriens Dido summa vidisset ab arce
Dardanias vento vela dedisse rates (*Remedia Amoris* 55-58)

Phyllis would have lived, had she used advantage of me as her
teacher, and she had more often entered the road on which she
went nine times. The dying Dido would not have seen from the
height of her castle the Dardanian fleet give sails to the wind.

The opinion of the *praeceptor* is probably by now familiar: women do not
know how to love. If Phyllis and Dido had had a teacher and followed him,
Demophoon and Aeneas would never have departed. Therefore, the women
almost without exception fail. The heroines never flatter their lovers with
blanditiae or behave charmingly and moderately interested, as they are
recommended to do. The heroines make the mistake of being too eager and
feeling sorry for themselves. They do not know how to love wisely (*sapienter
amare*).⁵⁴¹

The story of Phyllis is also referred to separately. The mention of her in
Remedia Amoris is followed up later in the work, in a passage which closes
with the message that lack of company makes women unhappy:

Phyllidis exemplo nimium secreta timete,
Laese vir a domina, laesa puella viro!
(*Remedia Amoris* 607-608)

⁵⁴¹ *Ars Amatoria* 1.657, 2.493, 2.511 and 3.565.

Learn by Phyllis' example: fear too much seclusion, you man
who are wronged by your lady, you girl who are wronged by
your man!

A woman burns gently when her man is present. If she is left alone for a
while she will start loving more ardently:

Phyllida Demophoon praesens moderatius ussit:

Exarsit velis acrius illa datis (*Ars Amatoria* 2.353-354)⁵⁴²

While Demophoon was present he set a quite low flame in
Phyllis, but when his sails were set she burned more fiercely.

The following lines support a reading that has Demophoon leave Phyllis:

Et tibi, Demophoon, Thesei criminis heres,

Phyllide decepta nulla relictas fides. (*Ars Amatoria* 3.459-460)

And in you, Demophoon, heir of Theseus' crime, there is no
trust left since Phyllis was deceived.

The following events concerning Dido and Carthage are outlined in *Fasti*.
The origin of the cult of Anna Perenna is at the centre. After Dido's death,
her sister Anna fled the attack of the Numidians, travelled to Latium where
she was reunited with Aeneas and was exalted as the goddess Anna Perenna.
I will here quote only the lines referring to Dido:

arserat Aeneae Dido miserabilis igne,

arserat exstructis in sua fata rogis;

compositusque cinis, tumulique in marmore carmen

hoc breve, quod moriens ipsa reliquit, erat:

⁵⁴² The following lines, 2.355-360, mention other heroines: Penelope (ep. 1), Laodamia (ep. 13) and Helen (ep. 17).

PRAEBUIT AENEAS ET CAUSAM MORTIS ET ENSEM.

IPSA SUA DIDO CONCIDIT USA MANU.

protinus invadunt Numidae sine vindice regnum,

et potitur capta Maurus Iarba domo,

seque memor spretum, "Thalamis tamen" inquit "Elissae

en ego, quem totiens reppulit illa, fruor." (*Fasti* 3.545-554)

Poor Dido had burned for Aeneas with a fire, she had burned on a pyre built for her ruin. Her ashes were collected, and this short verse, which the dying girl herself had left, was engraved in the marble of the gravestone: AENEAS OFFERED A CAUSE OF DEATH AND A SWORD: DIDO HERSELF FELL BY HER OWN HAND. Straight away the Numidians invade her kingdom which offers no resistance, and Iarba the Moor takes possession of her home, and remembering that he was despised, he says: "I enjoy the bridal bed of Elissa, I, whom she many times rejected".

The above cited passages give us indications of the way Ovid looked upon his two heroines and their stories. Dido's inscription will be used as a starting point for the following examination of them.

6.3.4 "Coacta mori" – 'Forced to die'

Death is present from the very beginning of Dido's epistle, in the opening lines illustrated by a "swan song". It is characteristic of her but uncharacteristic of the collection. No other heroine is so obsessed by her own death. Words connected to death and funeral occur seventeen times:

fata (7.1), mori (7.48), perdita (7.61), perdam (7.61 and 7.63), funere (7.63), leti (7.64), mori (7.68), mortis (7.76), occidit (7.84), funeris (7.136), morietur (7.137), effundere vitam (7.181), fato (7.187), sepulcra (7.188), cineres (7.192), mortis (7.195), concidit (7.196).

By letting Dido begin with a song of her own ruin, Ovid also strikes the tone for the poem. Dido's choice of the river Meander for the white swan is certainly not a coincidence: the river runs through Phrygia, homeland of Aeneas. Repeatedly in the letter, she makes him responsible for her death.

According to myth, both Phyllis and Dido kill themselves. The thought of suicide emerges late in Phyllis' letter, as if she there and then for the first time realizes that Demophoon will not return. Once she has started, she does not stop. She has earlier described herself as 'ingeniosa' (2.22), an adjective quite suitable to describe her and the options she considers. From standing out as a quite naïve girl, a Phyllis comes forth who depicts herself as depressed, who faints and seems to go mad.

Dido's epitaph on her grave is expressed exactly as the one in *Fasti* 3.549-550:

PRAEBUIT AENEAS ET CAUSAM MORTIS ET ENSEM;
IPSA SUA DIDO CONCIDIT USA MANU. (7.195-196)

AENEAS OFFERED A CAUSE OF DEATH AND A
SWORD: DIDO HERSELF FELL BY HER OWN HAND.

Phyllis' counterpart, having almost exactly the same wording, matches well:

PHYLLIDA DEMOPHOON LETO DEDIT HOSPES
AMANTEM;
ILLE NECIS CAUSAM PRAEBUIT IPSA MANUM.
(2.147-148)

THE GUEST DEMOPHOON GAVE THE LOVING PHYLLIS
TO DEATH. HE OFFERED A CAUSE FOR HER SUICIDE
—SHE OFFERED A HAND.

Phyllis is the loving hostess who provides for Demophoon but is subjected to his treachery and then to her own death. The gravestone becomes a monument of a dead Phyllis who became a victim to a man's unfaithfulness.

At the same time, through the gravestone Phyllis will get redress for the fraud and humiliation she was exposed to. The same is true for Dido.

Fire as metaphor for love is very common in poetry. As seen in the two first lines of the above quoted passage in *Fasti*,⁵⁴³ love is to Dido a consuming force. This comes back in her epistle. The torches that she mentions, *taedae*, are traditional wedding torches. Smeared with wax they are rather funeral torches (7.23).⁵⁴⁴ In line with this is her simile of incense (7.24). Love makes her a victim to be sacrificed. Note the passive voice “*ceratae*” and “*addita*”, as if she, through her love, has been placed on the sacrificial altar. The adjective *pia* referring to the incense could as well be an epithet suited to her. Despite her love and piety, she is cast off and consumed by her own fire.

6.3.5 “*Amans hospita capta dolo est*” – ‘The loving hostess was captured by treachery’

A recurrent element of the epistles in my study has been the repeated word: one or two central words appearing in the beginning and in the end of a letter. In Phyllis’ case, hospitality (represented with the words *hospes*, *hospita* and *hospitium*) is such a thread (words deriving from *hospes* occur in 2.1, 2.57, 2.74, 2.108 and 2.147).⁵⁴⁵ In fact, the word *hospita*, with which she calls herself, is her very first word:

HOSPITA, Demophon, tua te Rhodopeia Phyllis

ultra promissum tempus abesse queror. (2.1-2)

As your **hostess**, Demophon, I, your Phyllis from Mount Rhodope, complain about you being absent beyond the time promised.

The only line preserved from the story of Phyllis in Callimachus’ *Aetia* (very likely a source to Ovid), “*νυμφίε Δημοφών, ἄδικεξένε*”, (‘bridegroom Demophon, unjust guest’), shows a resemblance to the introductory line of

⁵⁴³ *Fasti* 3.545-546.

⁵⁴⁴ Knox (1995): 207.

⁵⁴⁵ The E manuscript has *officiumque* instead of *hospitiumque* in line 108.

Phyllis' letter.⁵⁴⁶ Apparently, hospitality is a quality connected to Phyllis in literary tradition. It runs as a main theme through her letter. The identification with herself as *hospita*, 'hostess', and Demophoon as the *hospes*, 'guest', is even so strong, that she expresses her wish to engrave it for posterity. On the first inscription, the one intended to decorate a statue depicting Demophoon, will be written:

HIC EST, CUIUS AMANS **HOSPITA** CAPTA DOLO EST.

(2.74)

HERE IS HE WHOSE LOVING **HOSTESS** WAS
CAPTURED BY TREACHERY

Let us again have a look at her tombstone:

PHYLLIDA DEMOPHOON LETO DEDIT **HOSPES**

AMANTEM (2.147)

THE **GUEST** DEMOPHOON GAVE THE LOVING
PHYLLIS TO DEATH

The inscriptions above emphasize Phyllis' role as *hospita* and *amans*, a combination that seems somewhat contradictory. Is it possible to be hostess and lover at the same time? Roy Gibson explores the concept of hospitality in antiquity in an article concerning Dido and Aeneas in the *Aeneid*, discussing the obligations that come with a reception.⁵⁴⁷ The roles of host and hostess are dissolved or at least become confused when the two parties become involved in an erotic relationship.

What is, then, the point of stressing her hospitality? Phyllis wishes to give her lover a sense of guilt. He owes her a debt of gratitude and has not

⁵⁴⁶ Fulkerson (2002): 147, n. 9 along with other scholars, observes this. As Knox (1995): 113 states, other Roman poets give Demophoon the epithet of being a faithless or unjust guest, quoting Propertius 2.24.43-44, "parvo dilexit spatio Minoida Theseus / Phyllida Demophoon, hospes uterque malus", 'Theseus loved Minos' daughter for a short time. Demophoon loved Phyllis – both were bad guests'.

⁵⁴⁷ Gibson (1999).

fulfilled his obligations. Phyllis stresses her hospitality as a means of persuasion, but realizes that she is in a desperate situation. She draws attention to both relationships, but they cannot be united. Although the underlining of her hospitality is the more conspicuous due to its place in the text, she calls herself *amans* more often, in fact six times (2.7, 2.10, 2.65, 2.93, 2.101 and 2.147).⁵⁴⁸ No other heroine comes close to that. Should we read it as an illustration of the passage in *Ars Amatoria*, that Phyllis burned more ardently when Demophoon was absent?

Phyllis is aware that she went one step too far. She regrets her surpassing of the unwritten rules. It was shameful to go further than to repairing his ships:

Nec moveor, quod te iuvi portuque locoque—

debuit haec meriti summa fuisse mei!

turpiter hospitium lecto cumulassem iugali

paenitet, et lateri conseruisse latus. (2.55-58)

Nor do I get upset that I helped you with both harbour and lodging: this should have been the highest grade of my service. I repent that I in a shameful way have crowned my hospitality with you in bed and to have put my side tightly against yours.

Hospitality is a word otherwise primarily associated with Dido's story. In *Aeneid* 1, Dido feels sympathy for Aeneas and his men who like her have suffered hardships. In order to celebrate their arrival to Carthage, she arranges an extravagant banquet. She is happy to welcome a god-begotten hero.⁵⁴⁹

Ovid's Dido is eager to stress the favours she did him, but in contrast to Phyllis, she does not use words deriving from *hospes* in a persuasive manner but in another, more negative manner, and less frequently. Dido warns Aeneas about travelling to a new country. There, he will be only a guest, a newcomer: "nempe ut pervenias, quo cupis, hospes eris" ('though, when you arrive, where you wish, you will be a guest', 7.146). Carthage is his safe home where he belongs. Dido has herself the experience of being a

⁵⁴⁸ The G manuscript has *amore* instead of *amante* in line 10.

⁵⁴⁹ Virgil, *Aeneid* 1.613-642.

“peregrina” (‘stranger’, 7.121). According to Dido, she and Aeneas have passed the stage of *hospes* and *hospita* and advanced to a higher level. He is no longer her guest and she is not his hostess. Yet, if he leaves, he will become a *hospes* again, and if he stays, she is ready to go back to the state as a *hospita*. Whereas Phyllis seems to place the two terms on the same level, Dido is aware that they cannot be combined:

si pudet uxoris, non nupta, sed hospita dicar;
dum tua sit, Dido quidlibet esse feret. (7.167-168)

If it bothers you that I am your wife I will be called your hostess and not your bride. As long as I may be yours, Dido can bear anything.

Briseis expressed similar thoughts, though from the different position of a slave girl. Dido, whose social starting point is completely different, declares herself willing to step down from her royal position.

It might be of interest here to mention a verbal parallel from the passages where Phyllis and Dido offer their kingdoms. Phyllis says:

quae tibi subieci latissima regna Lycurgi,
nomine femineo vix satis apta regi (2.111-112)

I am she who lay under you the vast kingdom of Lycurgus, barely suited to be ruled in the name of a woman.

And Dido:

fluctibus eiectum tuta statione recepi
vixque bene audito nomine regna dedi (7.89-90)

I received you in a safe place, you who were thrown up by the waves, and I gave you my kingdom when I scarcely had heard your name.

The second lines of the two passages are strikingly similar. Not only do they contain the words “vix” and “nomine”, but are also phonetically similar. The caesura of the pentameter is preceded by an ablative *-o* and the two last words end with *-a* and *-i*. In this respect, the lines have no counterpart in any other epistle.

6.3.6 “Parce, Venus, nurui” – ‘Venus, spare your daughter-in-law’

One of Dido’s arguments is that she and Aeneas are now family and that he is under an obligation to take responsibility for his loved ones. Dido even addresses Venus and Amor (not only gods of love, but also Aeneas’ mother and brother) as family:

parce, Venus, nurui, durumque amplectere fratrem,
frater Amor, castris militet ille tuis! (7.31-32)

Venus, spare your daughter-in-law. Brother Amor, embrace
your hard-hearted brother; may he serve as a soldier in your
camp!

As if she were already married, Dido turns to Venus as her mother-in-law. Later, in 7.157, Dido will again address Venus and Amor. Marriage is an atypical trait in elegy: love is not supposed to end happily in marriage. Dido’s behaviour can be traced in the *Aeneid*, where Dido surrenders to love and neglects to hide it.⁵⁵⁰

Quite far into the text, Dido reveals that she might be pregnant (7.133). Even if it is only a suspicion, we would expect this implication to have come earlier. Is it only an attempt to ensnare Aeneas? At first, she says that she may possibly be pregnant (“forsitan”, “lateat”). Yet already in the next line (7.134), the possibility has become a certainty. The poor unborn child will follow his (because Dido presumes it to be a boy) mother’s fate. And Aeneas shall be responsible for the funeral of his unborn child. Aeneas would not make him brotherless, would he? A suspicion, feigned or real, becomes a certainty which becomes a weapon in the argument.

⁵⁵⁰ Virgil, *Aeneid* 4.169-170.

Dido's despair is also shown in the inconsistency of her reasoning in the matter of marriage. In the middle of her speech, she invokes her dead former husband, Sychaeus, as if she was still his wife (7.97).

Phyllis speaks of her and Demophoons' relationship as an engagement. Demophoon has promised "*socios...annos*" (2.33) in the name of Hymenaeus, who was the guarantor and security of marriage ("*coniugii sponsor et obses*", 2.34). Dido's line 178 is similar: "*pro spe coniugii tempora parva peto*" ('I ask for a short time, for the hope of marriage'). All codices read "*pro spe coniugii*", but instead of "*pro*", the word *non* is a conjecture suggested in 1990 by Hall.⁵⁵¹ Knox explains the correction as an elimination of "the inconsistency in the MS reading: Dido cannot in one breath say that she wants only time to learn how to endure the separation and in the other still talk of her hopes of marriage."⁵⁵² I believe she can. Her inconsistency is part of her character and she desperately nourishes her hope to the very last.

6.3.7 "Quod crimen dicis praeter amasse meum?" – 'What do you say is my crime except for having loved?'

Phyllis and Dido show different attitudes towards their own part in the love story. Dido asks Aeneas: "*quod crimen dicis praeter amasse meum?*" ('what do you say is my crime except for having loved?', 7.164). For Dido, the memory of her dead husband Sychaeus throws dark shadows on her love for Aeneas. She is full of shame ("*plena pudoris*", 7.98), and asks her ex-husband Sychaeus to provide a punishment for her. At the same time she asks him for forgiveness, underlining that her intentions were honourable (7.105-109). Yet, in line 33, Dido emphasizes that she is not ashamed of loving Aeneas ("*neque enim dedignor*"). Dido shows her inconsistency again.

Phyllis is ashamed but has no remorse. She places no guilt on herself. On the other hand, she has loved unwisely: "*Dic mihi, quid feci, nisi non sapienter amavi?*" She continues to state that it was only by that mistake that she was able to win Demophoon. Her real crime ("*scelus*") was to welcome him in the first place (2.29).

⁵⁵¹ Knox (1995): 67.

⁵⁵² Knox (1995): 230.

6.3.8 “Simplicitas digna favore fuit” – ‘My credulity deserved a favour’

Phyllis saves herself from guilt by claiming that she was a trustful and honest girl:

Fallere credentem non est operosa puellam
gloria. simplicitas digna favore fuit. (2.63-64)

To deceive a trustful girl is no laborious glory; my credulity
deserved a favour.

Phyllis repeats the verb *credere* in “credidimus”, which occur four times in the lines 49-53. Referring to oneself as a credulous and naïve girl is not very convincing for a queen who rules “latissima regna” (‘a vast kingdom’, 2.111). Is she a very young queen (her “virginitas”, 2.115, is also a sign of youth) or is she at all a queen? The combination of girl and queen strikes a discordant note. The main impression of Phyllis is that she is a girlish lover who is so obsessed by Demophoon, or of the idea of Demophoon, that nothing else in the world seems to exist. Is the amount of lexical repetitions in her letter due to her girlish attitude, is it a manifestation of despair or a means to arouse pathos? Let us have a look on the other words that she repeats three times or more in a short time. Her own name *Phyllis* is mentioned almost as many times as Oenone (2.1, 2.60, 2.105 and 2.106), but without the self-appraisal that we saw was typical of the oread. The words “scelus” (‘crime’) and “scelerate” (‘criminal’) are mentioned three times in two lines (2.29-30). The word *saepe* (‘often’) occurs four times and illustrates her eagerness (2.11 (twice), 2.17 and 2.19). Venus’ weapons – and her own – are mentioned a couple of times (2.39-40 and 2.48). Forms of *expectare* appear four times in four lines (2.98-101). Phyllis’ repetitions enclose a small world, void of people, where *credulous Phyllis* commits a *scelus*, caused by a *sceleratus*, whom she still is *expecting* and *often* looks for. She is wounded by Venus’ *tela* but also by her own, represented by her *hospitality*. The Nine Way Path, on which Phyllis went nine times, is mentioned in Ovid’s other amatory poetry, but is omitted in the letter. Instead, it becomes manifest in the repetitions, symbolizing her impatience.

6.3.9 Dido or Elissa?

To Dido's letter is sometimes added a greeting phrase. These lines (extant in some of the medieval manuscripts but mostly omitted by editors) read:

accipe, Dardanide, moriturae carmen Elissae;
quae legis a nobis ultima verba legis

Listen, Dardanian, to a song from Elissa who is about to die: the
last words that you are going to read from me.

In her letter, Dido refers to herself as *Dido* six times (7.7, 7.17, 7.68, 7.133, 7.168 and 7.196) and her alternative name *Elissa* twice (7.102 and 7.193). Dido is the name she uses when she is addressing Aeneas, Elissa when she speaks of her former life together with Sychaeus. When she explicitly asks Anna to include the name Elissa on her gravestone ("Elissa Sychaei", 7.196), she is underscoring that Elissa is the name connected to Sychaeus and Dido with Aeneas. That Dido would speak of herself as Elissa when addressing Aeneas, is not very probable. The speaker of *Ars Amatoria* addresses her as Elissa in relation to Aeneas, but she would not use that name herself. The examples are of course few, but still worth mentioning. Elissa is her old name, the name that Sychaeus and Iarbas used. It is as if she is eager to present herself as a new woman.

6.3.10 The others

Phyllis moves in a limited world, which seems to be centered on Demophoon's non-arrival. The first 26 lines of her poem deal with his absence and broken promise. She seems totally isolated with the exception of some maid servants. Not a word of any relative. Fulkerson notes that Phyllis mentions little about Demophoon besides his genealogy (and relatively little thereof).⁵⁵³ We do not get much knowledge of him.

Dido on the other hand is surrounded by people, not necessarily in a literary sense, but in her arguments and in her story of herself. We have seen her involve Aeneas' relatives in a desperate attempt at persuasion, when she

⁵⁵³ Fulkerson (2002): 160.

talked of herself as married into the family (7.31) and as being pregnant (7.133). Dido's use of Amor in her speech is another example of the weakness in her trustworthiness. Her "adverso... deo" ('an opposing god') in line 4 will hardly be willing to help her.

Dido's conclusion concerning Aeneas' departure is as follows: a) if he goes, she will die; b) if she dies, her unborn child will also die; c) if her unborn child dies, Ascanius will be without a brother (as if she took for granted that her unborn child – at first just a possible pregnancy – will be a boy (7.135-138)). To have caused *her* death would be enough: "te satis est titulum mortis habere meae" (7.76). Ovid is here again changing perspectives. In the *Aeneid*, *Ascanius* is the strongest card when Mercury argues that Aeneas must leave.⁵⁵⁴ Ascanius will be the heir to Aeneas' kingdom. It is for his son's sake that Aeneas has to leave Carthage.

According to the myth of Troy, Aeneas carried his father Anchises on his shoulders. This is something Dido questions (7.79-82), but later acknowledges (7.107), as if she had forgot what she just said. Again we see an example of Dido's contradictions.

Jacobson states that the Dido of epistle 7 is gentler than the Dido of *Aeneid* 4.⁵⁵⁵ She is definitely not that caring to Ascanius in the *Aeneid*. Virgil's Dido gets furious. She asks herself why she did not tear Aeneas' body to pieces and served to his son to eat. She prays to the gods that they may expose Aeneas to war, that he may lose his son, die a premature death and lie unburied on the shore.⁵⁵⁶ Ovid's Dido would never go so far. She once says to Aeneas that he might expect punishments at sea if he defies his mother Venus (who was born from the sea). Immediately, she regrets what she said (7.61-65). Phyllis, on the other hand, does not wish such a death for her lover; instead she imagines it for herself as a revenge:

ad tua me fluctus proiectam litora portent,
occurramque oculis intumulata tuis! (2.135-136)

stat nece matura tenerum pensare pudorem. (2.143)

⁵⁵⁴ Virgil, *Aeneid* 4.265-276.

⁵⁵⁵ Jacobson (1974): 87.

⁵⁵⁶ Virgil, *Aeneid* 4.600-602.

The waves will carry me, thrown away, to your shores, and I
will appear unburied before your eyes!

It is in my mind to think of my tender chastity through a
premature death.

Ovid seems to be playing with the stories of Phyllis and Dido, mingling them together.

6.3.11 The background to Hypsipyle's letter

Ovid does not engage himself in Hypsipyle in any other work. We find her instead in Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica* 1.609-909. Apollonius begins by relating the story of the Lemnian massacre,⁵⁵⁷ in which the Lemnian women killed all men (except for Hypsipyle's father Thoas) and their Thracian concubines. When the Argonauts arrive, the women prepare for war, in the belief that the seamen are Thracians.⁵⁵⁸ When Jason and his crew show themselves friendly, they are welcomed. In a speech to Jason, queen Hypsipyle lies about the circumstances in which the men disappeared. At the same time, she offers him her kingdom.⁵⁵⁹ Jason rejects the offer kindly but firmly, explaining that a troublesome commission lies ahead.⁵⁶⁰ Hypsipyle gives a farewell speech, in which she stresses that she is well aware that Jason might not return, but that he and his crew are welcome back. She leaves to him to decide what to do if she is to give birth to his baby.⁵⁶¹ Jason, deeply moved by the queen's speech, asks Hypsipyle not to take offence if he does not return.⁵⁶² Apollodorus gives the same version of the slaughter, but adds that Hypsipyle bore Jason two sons.⁵⁶³

⁵⁵⁷ Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* 1.609-626.

⁵⁵⁸ Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* 1.633-639.

⁵⁵⁹ Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* 1.793-835.

⁵⁶⁰ Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* 1.836-841.

⁵⁶¹ Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* 1.888-898.

⁵⁶² Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* 1.900-902.

⁵⁶³ Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 1.9.17.

Letter 6: Hypsipyle Iasoni. From Hypsipyle to Jason.

On their way to fetch the Golden Fleece, Jason and his Argonauts stopped at Lemnos, an island populated by only women. Jason entered into a relationship with Hypsipyle, queen of Lemnos. According to Hypsipyle, Jason and his crew stayed for two years. She was pregnant when he left.

When Hypsipyle writes her letter, she is reached by the news that Jason has met another woman in Colchis, Medea, and has gone back to Thessaly together with her to settle down.

6.3.12 “Urbe virum vidua tectoque animoque recepi” – ‘I welcomed a man with my city, with my home and with my heart’

Like Phyllis and Dido, Hypsipyle stresses her hospitality, though with a harshness that would be unthinkable in their case. Hypsipyle is not slow to mention that she and her female friends on the island could easily have killed the guesting mariners, but that they showed mercy:

certa fui primo—sed me mala fata trahebant—

hospita feminea pellere castra manu;

Lemniadesque viros, nimium quoque, vincere norunt.

milite tam forti terra tuenda fuit!

Urbe virum iuvi, tectoque animoque recepi!

hic tibi bisque aestas bisque cucurrit hiemps. (6.51-56)

At first I was determined (but my bad fate drew me back) to drive away the camp of guests with my female troop; the women on Lemnos know too well how to defeat men. My country would have been taken care of by such a strong military force. I welcomed a man with my city, with my home and with my heart. While you were here, two summers and two winters elapsed.

The tricolon and climax of “urbe” (‘city’), “tecto” (‘home’) and “animo” (‘heart’) shows Jason’s way to Hypsipyle’s heart. Hypsipyle wants to assert that Jason was treated unusually well, a privilege reserved for chosen only. He should be grateful. What she actually says, is that very few male guests

can be welcomed to an island where men have been slaughtered. Even fewer can make their way into the home of the queen or get an exclusive place in her heart for two years. In reality, the visit of the Argonauts was longed-for by the Lemnian women who for a long time had lived without men. Hypsipyle does not avoid mentioning the horrible deed or lie about it but condemns it and seems to exclude herself from it. The pain that her Lemnian sisters experienced when their husbands cheated on them, explained their bloodstained attack:

Lemniadum facinus culpo, non miror, Iason;
quamlibet ignavis iste dat arma dolor. (6.139-140)

I condemn the Lemnians' crime, but I am not surprised; such
pain give arms to the most indolent.

The lines are questioned,⁵⁶⁴ but in actual fact they do make sense in the context. Prior to this passage, Hypsipyle has blurted out abuse against Medea, and also compared herself with her rival, to her own advantage. The mention of Medea's horrible crimes makes Hypsipyle think of her own dark story. Thus, she incidentally brings up the subject of the Lemnian massacre. Like Medea, Hypsipyle mentions the killing as a mere trifle. It will gradually be shown that the queen of Lemnos is in fact as cruel as the woman she hates, Medea. She is balanced at the start, more than most heroines, but becomes furious as no one else.⁵⁶⁵

6.3.13 “Faxque sub arsueros dignior ire rogos” – ‘And the wedding torch, more worthy to ignite funeral pyres’

Hypsipyle, like Dido, makes a play on words by using the *fax* as the torch both for weddings and funerals (6.42, see below). This is the only allusion to death that Hypsipyle makes. She never threatens to kill herself, nor does she feel any guilt (compare Phyllis' and Dido's self-examination). She does not

⁵⁶⁴ The couplet was deleted by Peters (1882): 34, motivated by lack of coherence. Knox (1995): 59 and 198 agrees.

⁵⁶⁵ Verducci (1985): 56-65 makes this observation.

regret that she gave herself to Jason. In this, she differs from Phyllis and Dido. The criminals are Jason and Medea.

Knox writes that Ovid "ignores the tradition that Jason did not marry Hypsipyle",⁵⁶⁶ while I read Hypsipyle's statements about marriage as being vague and ambiguous as Phyllis' and Dido's. Hypsipyle refers to their first sexual meeting ("non ego sum tibi furto cognita", 'it was not in secrecy that I was carnally known by you', 6.43-44).⁵⁶⁷ It seems as if the women for honour's sake wish to keep up the appearance that there has been a wedding. Not always, though, can the reader be sure. Hypsipyle refers to Jason as *maritus* ('mariti', 'husband', 6.17). She, like Phyllis and Dido, speaks of some sort of promise of an alliance:

heu, ubi pacta fides? ubi conubialia iura
faxque sub arsueros dignior ire fagos? (6.41-42)

Oh, where is the agreed faith? Where are the conjugal promises
and the wedding torch, more worthy to ignite funeral pyres?

When Hypsipyle speaks of the promised marriage-bed that is now reserved for Medea (6.20), we can probably conclude that the two were never officially married. Hypsipyle also says:

Non equidem secreta fui semperque verebar,
ne pater Argolica sumeret urbe nurum. (6.79-80)

As a matter of fact I did not feel secure, and I always feared that
your father would choose a daughter-in-law from an Argolic
city.

Hypsipyle tempts Jason with different offers in order to get him back. The island of Lemnos will be given him as a dowry (6.117), in fact it has already

⁵⁶⁶ Knox (1995): 175.

⁵⁶⁷ The expression is also used by Hypsipyle about Medea: "turpiter illa virum cognovit adultera virgo" ('as a virgin she was an adultress when she in a shameless way got to know a man carnally', 6.133). Both lines are cited in *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, entry *cognosco* 5b, "to get to know carnally".

been granted him (6.5). Lemnos is described as a land well suited for the cultivator (“terra ingeniosa colenti”, 6.117). Phyllis’ description of Thrace is “latissima regna” (‘vast kingdom’, 2.111).

If Jason returns, he will see his two children. Hypsipyle waits until line 119 to reveal that she has given birth to twins, although her pregnancy is mentioned by Jason already in line 61. Hypsipyle is the only heroine of the three who is a mother.

In addition, Hypsipyle has a genealogy to be proud of. Whereas Phyllis and Dido criticize the lineage of their lovers, Hypsipyle tempts Jason with her noble birth (6.113-116), perhaps an argument suitable for an ambitious hero (“si te nobilitas generosaeque nomina tangunt”, ‘if noble birth and high-born names will move you’, 6.113). Thoas is her father, Minus and Bacchus her grandfathers.⁵⁶⁸ The composer of an ethopoeia should have in mind the speaker’s birth. From a queen of noble descent, I suppose we should expect a dignified manner. Surprisingly though, she is the heroine that oversteps the limits of decency, perhaps in competition with Phaedra (ep.4) and Medea (ep. 12). Still, Hypsipyle’s rage surpasses everything else. Jacobson writes: “Hypsipyle moves from proud and scornful anger to the depths of violence and hate. In this she is virtually unique among Ovid’s heroines”.⁵⁶⁹

6.3.14 The others

At the end of her letter, Hypsipyle calls herself *mitis*, (‘gentle’, 6.148). This is also the impression she gives consistently, as long as she is not speaking of Medea. Hypsipyle is ready to call herself “temeraria” (‘thoughtless’) if the rumours of Jason are wrong (6.21-22). In order to show her care for and faithfulness to him, she tells of her anxiety when she feared Jason’s death, and her relief when the messenger confirmed the opposite (6.25-38).

When she writes of Jason’s new mistress Medea, though, the Lemnian queen loses control. She is obsessed with Medea. The “barbara... venefica” (‘barbarian poisoner’, 6.19) and “barbara paelex” (‘barbarian mistress’, 6.81) is an adulteress who shamelessly has taken her man (6.133-134). Jason’s father was supposed to choose a Greek bride for him – but this? A slut and a

⁵⁶⁸ Knox (1995): 59 and 194 suggests that lines 115-116 should be deleted, because they “follow awkwardly on 113-14, with a switch of subject accompanied by ellipse of the verb *est*” and because of the transitive use of the verb “*praeradiat*”. Apart from that, Hypsipyle is still the granddaughter of Minus and Bacchus.

⁵⁶⁹ Jacobson (1974): 104.

poisoner! Jason is degrading himself. Medea is an awful witch in possession of witchcraft, which she uses on human beings. Hypsipyle lists a catalogue of her rival's skills in sorcery.⁵⁷⁰

nec facie meritisque placet, sed carmina novit
diraque cantata pabula falce metit.
illa reluctantem cursu deducere lunam
nititur et tenebris abdere solis equos;
illa refrenat aquas obliquaque flumina sistit;
illa loco silvas vivaque saxa movet.
per tumulos errat passis discincta capillis
certaque de tepidis colligit ossa rogis.
devovet absentis simulacraque cerea figit,
et miserum tenuis in iecur urget acus—
et quae nescierim melius. male quaeritur herbis
moribus et forma conciliandus amor.
Hanc potes amplecti thalamoque relictus in uno
inpavidus somno nocte silente frui? (6.83-96)

She does not charm by her face or by merits, but she knows incantations and collects horrible herbs with her enchanted sickle. She strives to get the reluctant moon to deviate from its course and the sun's horses to hide in shadows. She tames the waters and blocks meandering rivers; she moves woods and stone blocks, which are made alive, from their places. With dishevelled hair she wanders about graves and collects certain bones from still warm funeral pyres. She enchants human beings in their absence, makes wax copies of them, which she then pierces, with a fine needle through a poor liver. She does even more that I wish not to know. Love should not be searched for by herbs; love should be aroused by personality and beauty. Can you really embrace her and be left alone with her in the same bed without feeling fear and sleep well in the silent night?

⁵⁷⁰ The passage can be compared with *Metamorphoses* 7.179-219.

What is even worse: Medea has killed her brother, dismembered his corpse and dispersed the parts into the sea. Is this the woman he would like to introduce to his children? When Hypsipyle hints that Medea would not spare her stepchildren, she expresses the same fear as Medea does in relation to Creusa. Medea, too, is afraid (she says) that the new *noverca* ('stepmother') will be cruel to her stepsons (12.188). Like Medea and Dido (in Dido's case her unborn child and Aeneas' son Ascanius), Hypsipyle uses her children as weapons in her argument.

The words *mitis ego* are uttered right before the line in which Hypsipyle threatens to smear Medea's blood in her own face. She wishes to become a Medea to Medea:

paelicis ipsa meos inplessem sanguine vultus,

quosque veneficiis abstulit illa suis.

Medeae Medea forem! (6.149-151)

With the blood of your mistress I would have smeared my face
—and the face, which she stole from me by means of her
poisonous brews. I would like to be a Medea towards Medea!

By doing this, she goes farther than any heroine of the *Heroides*. Otherwise, when she speaks of herself, it is in contrast to Medea. Whereas Medea has betrayed her father and abandoned her country, Hypsipyle has saved her father from murder and stayed on her island (6.135-136). Hypsipyle has merits, Medea has none (6.83). It is important to remember that Hypsipyle has never met Medea. Hypsipyle's primary cause is to warn Jason of his new concubine. The desired effect fails when she herself displays the cruelty of which she accuses her rival.

If *Medea* is one central word or theme in the poem, so are words associated with *dicere*. The "diceris" in line 2 is a hint to Jason that the news she has from him has come by way of rumour, not from him personally. The word is followed by "fama" (6.9), "narratur" (6.19), "narrat" (6.32 and 6.39) and "diceris" again (6.132), words telling us that Hypsipyle builds her whole letter on hearsay. Can we trust her? Phyllis does not hear a word of what has happened to Demophoon, whereas Hypsipyle gives details about Medea's witchery. Is she like Dido who wishes to believe in probability rather than in fact? The rumour that Hypsipyle hears grows and becomes true. Ironically,

she says she does not believe the messenger when he confirms that Jason is alive (6.28-31). She had not, she asserts, believed in it even if a god had told her. Therefore, she asks once again (6.37-38). That Medea is his mistress, she believes, although Medea is introduced with a “narratur” (6.19). The question to the messenger concerning Jason’s possible death is repeated after a section that has been called into question (6.31-38), mainly because it is an echo of lines 10-14 and as such considered disturbing.⁵⁷¹ This fashion of first stating and then confirming, seems however to be a typical trait for Hypsipyle. The words that Jason uttered as he was leaving, “vir tuus hinc abeo, vir tuus semper ero”, (‘as your husband I leave, your husband I will always be’, 6.60), are echoed in “vir meus hinc ieras: cur non meus inde redisti?”, (‘as my husband you had left from here, why did you not return as my husband?’, 6.111). Likewise, the beginning “gratulator incolumi” (‘I thank the gods that you are unharmed’, 6.3) has a counterpart in “gratare ambobus” (‘thank the gods for us both’, 6.119).

6.3.15 Phyllis, Dido and Hypsipyle

When Phyllis, Dido and Hypsipyle write to their sea-faring lovers, their starting positions differ: Phyllis writes to an absent Demophoon, from whom she has heard nothing, Dido speaks to a present Aeneas who is about to leave, and Hypsipyle writes to a Jason, who is reported – by way of a messenger – to have left her for another woman.

Phyllis and Dido share similarities in a way that does not seem accidental. Ovid himself put them together in other poems, which gives another reason for studying them together. I have pointed to the funerary epitaphs in each letter, which allude to each other. The former lover, reproduced in stone, occurring in the middle of the letter, is another parallel. The shipwreck and the heroines’ hospitality are other motifs that occur in both epistles. In the examples of previous heroines, parallels illustrated important differences in the women’s attitudes and personalities. In the case of Phyllis and Dido, however, I cannot discern any *refined* affinity. Instead, there seems to be a striving for unity, for making the letters flagrantly related to each other. Lines 2.112 and 7.90 are almost identical, without any sophisticated diverseness. The same is true of their epitaphs.

⁵⁷¹ Jacobson (1974): 99.

Scholars not only observe that Dido is modelled upon Virgil's counterpart in the *Aeneid*, but that Virgil had a great influence on the portrait of Phyllis too. Why is this the case, when Ovid obviously had access to Phyllis' story? For some reason, he seems to have chosen to make her an "altera Dido", to transform her into a queen from the princess she is said to be in other sources. Ovid mingles their fates together.

In spite of these similarities, though, the heroines distinguish themselves through certain distinctive features. As in other epistles, one or two characteristics are stressed. Dido is consumed by thoughts of death, as no other heroine in the collection. Words alluding to death are numerous. She is also the queen of contradictions. Her inconsistent utterances have made scholars emend the text and blame Ovid for inconsistency, when in fact this is part of her characterization. Another misinterpretation, as I see it, is the addition of introductory lines containing the name *Elissa*. In her epistle, Dido makes quite a sharp distinction between her new and her former life. In her former, she was Elissa. To Aeneas, she is Dido. Thus, I consider it unlikely that she would present herself as Elissa to Aeneas.

Phyllis displays her inexperience and impatience through her choice of words and the repetitions of them. Gradually, her wait for the absent Demophoon makes her love him more intensely which in turn makes her go mad. Hypsipyle describes herself as gentle, but her real nature is revealed as soon as thoughts of her rival Medea surface. Thus, her attempt to be someone else as well as her attempt to persuade Jason of Medea's evilness fail. In the *Aeneid*, Dido shows a thirst for blood in her wish to harm Aeneas for his deceit. This cruelty is de-emphasized in *Heroides* 7. Dido wants revenge, but it is Hypsipyle who represents the ferocity that Virgil's Dido show. This fact might be explained by their history. Hypsipyle has a dark record of mass murder, a crime for which she has no moral conscience. When Dido looks back on her life, she remembers her deceased husband Sychaeus and feels guilty that she fell in love with another man. Phyllis' seems not to have had any life-changing experiences before Demophoon entered her life. She is as credulous and naïve as she claims to be.

All three women, but especially Phyllis, use the *hospes*-motif, stressing their self-sacrificing will to help and the lack of gratitude and lack of mutual appreciation shown by their lovers. In their desperate passion, they even offer their kingdoms. Whereas Phyllis wishes to be a *hospita* and an *amans* at the same time, Dido seems to come to the conclusion that these two roles are impossible to combine. Once a relationship is entered into, the unwritten rules of hospitality are played out. She is, however, ready to go back to her

former status as a *hospita*. Hypsipyle treats the motif somewhat differently. She hints that Jason should be grateful that she did not kill him, considering what she and her female friends on the island were capable of doing. Already here her evilness appears, although she behaves in a calm and collected way. In this, she actually resembles Medea.

6.4 “Nescistis amare: defuit ars vobis” – ‘You did not know how to love: you lacked art’

In *Ars Amatoria* 3.41-42, Ovid asks what led Medea, Ariadne, Phyllis and Dido to their ruin (above pp. 24-26). The poet is clear: the women did not know how to love. In my analysis of the characterization of eight selected writers from the *Heroides*, I have taken into account elements that the author of an ethopoeia was to pay attention to: age, education, gender, origin and social status. What the progymnasmata rhetors however do not mention is how passion can affect a personality. I have discussed the repetitions and the inconsistencies in the heroines’ texts as signs of female speech, of impatience, confusion and spontaneity. Still, another important interacting factor ought to be mentioned: *love*. Briseis, Oenone and Medea, as well as Phyllis, Dido and Hypsipyle are madly in love, even more so because they are about to lose their lovers. As Ovid puts it in relation to Phyllis: “exarsit velis acrius illa datis”, ‘but when his sails were set she burned more fiercely’.⁵⁷² This emotional state of love affects them to the degree that they are thrown off balance. To be abandoned and then live secluded from one’s partner can even be dangerous: “Phyllidis exemplo nimium secreta timete”, ‘Learn by Phyllis’ example: fear too much seclusion’.⁵⁷³ It is love that makes them confused and desperate. It is love that makes them speak inconsistently and use poor arguments. Canace and Hypermestra, on the other hand, are more strict and consistent both in their ways of structuring their letters and in their ways of speaking. In Canace’s case, her love is, though incestuous, mutual. Her anxiety concerns her new-born baby. In Hypermestra’s case, she is not in love with Lynceus, which is why she can concentrate on her deed. In this matter, she resembles not only Antigone but also other tragedian heroines, whose main concern is not an unfaithful man, and thus are able to

⁵⁷² *Ars Amatoria* 2.354.

⁵⁷³ *Remedia Amoris* 607.

deliver closely-reasoned monologues. To the ethopoetic instructions, Ovid added his favourite ingredient: unhappy and unwise love, which had a remarkable and innovative effect on the outcome.

7 Summary and conclusions

I opened this dissertation by claiming a relationship between the ethopoeia and Ovid's *Heroides*, with the assumption that this model of explanation might shed new light on elements often discussed in the poems such as the seriality of complaining women, the rhetorical elements and the repeated words and motifs.

Since the time of Bentley, the term *ethopoeia* has been mentioned in connection with the *Heroides*. Bentley matched the ethopoetic superscription "What words would X say...?" with the poems of the *Heroides*, and traced the origin of the ethopoeia back to the Sophists. The long-lasting lack of interest in studying the influence of rhetoric on poetry seems to have prevented scholars from entering this field of Ovidian scholarship. Another factor that might have stood in the way of a fruitful comparison to the ethopoeia, is the confusion about the actual meaning of the term *ethopoeia*. Not even the authors of the progymnasmata handbooks agree among themselves. Hermogenes categorizes all speeches delivered by a persona as ethopoeiae, mentioning the dialogues of Plato and the monologues in Homer as examples. My examination has had its starting point in the school ethopoeia, which was formalized by the sophistic progymnasmata rhetors and practised through model texts. I can conclude that Ovid's *Heroides* have the school ethopoeia as their model, as well as what I call the *literary* ethopoeia, i. e. an existing literary practice of writing a soliloquy, from which the rhetors possibly took their inspiration. In this final chapter, I will try to clarify and summarize my most important observations.

7.1 Transposing rhetorical teaching into poetry

In Seneca the Elder's report on Ovid's rhetorical training, we read that Ovid as a student transposed this teaching into his own writing. We find *sententiae* by his teacher Latro incorporated in his poetry. A passage from Hecuba's

monologue in the *Metamorphoses* is quoted by Seneca, a passage which I regard as an ethopoeia. Seneca mentions that Ovid preferred exercises focusing on the *ethos*. Besides, Ovid was well familiar with the mythological material, and his playfulness and practice of writing on matters from different perspectives fit perfectly with the sophistic way of treating subjects.

The pedagogical practice of the progymnasmata was to remould a material from a literary source. Training the art of imitation was a cornerstone in rhetorical education. Participation in weaving the web of texts was not a mere project for individual writers: from childhood the pupils were trained in using the material of previous authors, and they were encouraged to re-use phrases and motifs in their own way.

Ancient writers of rhetorical handbooks defined the ethopoeia as a speech adapted to the speaker in a certain situation. Exercises such as “what words would Peleus say when hearing of the death of Achilles?” or “what words would Niobe say when her children lie dead?” were given by the rhetors of the progymnasmata. Ovid, adapting it into amatory elegy, chose to depict women caught in unhappy love affairs in his *Heroides* 1-15. As to the rest, he follows the tradition of having historical-mythological characters speak, some of them with connection to the Trojan War – a common theme for the ethopoeia.

Ovid’s epistles are also divided into the *tria tempora*, recommended in the handbooks and a pattern followed by the authors of the model texts. Arguments, lamentations, exhortations, comparisons, praise and blame – elements recognized from the progymnasmata – now and then cut across the time structure in the texts of the heroines. Within the temporal structure an associative train of thought can be seen, ruled by the speaker’s emotions or spontaneity. This is also a fruit of the ethopoetic idea. The speaker faces a dramatic, sometimes traumatic, situation, speaking instantly in an emotional state of mind, often in shock or despair, without time for preparation.

For a playful mind eager to challenge the boundaries of decorum, the step to transferring the school training into verse is not necessarily very great. The idea of shifting genre within an exercise is inherent in the pedagogy of the progymnasmata. In addition, there already existed a tradition of ethopoeia in Greek classical literature, especially in classical tragedy, which I have shown in my study.

We are aware that Ovid imitated other poets, but did he also imitate the writers of the schoolbooks when he put fifteen letters in sequence? Indeed, if someone were to do it, it would be Ovid. Ovid was known for being unconventional, over-explicit, for challenging conventional values and to

cherish what other would call blemishes. The sophistic progymnasma might well have acted as a stimulus for him to play with conventions. Propertius had written one poem (4.3) of the same kind, but Ovid made a whole collection of female monologues, a whole collection of ethopoeiae. In the drama, or for that matter in the *Metamorphoses*, the literary ethopoeia (as I have chosen to call it) was incorporated into a larger context, as it probably was intended to be originally. In his *Heroides* however, Ovid isolates it, making it a text in its own right. And instead of having the muse sing of male heroes, here, their girlfriends give their version of the story. As often in Ovid, the perspectives are reversed.

Ancient scholars and rhetoricians comment on the lexical repetition as a rhetorical figure. Macrobius writes that repetitions are used to arouse pathos in the listener. As the ethopoeia, according to the rhetor Nicolaus, has as one aim to arouse tears, and Ovid's heroine letters are, generally speaking, pathetic ethopoeiae, the lexical repetition should not come as a surprise. Moreover, that it is typical of female language to be repetitive, we read in Seneca the Elder. Several of the women of the *Heroides* are impatient, confused, desperate and even suicidal, because they are struck by passion. Their language is a mirror of their state of mind and we are to read their letters as if they were written spontaneously. From an ethopoeia, we can expect the speaker to "say one thing after another", as Nicolaus expressed it.⁵⁷⁴ In addition, repetitions that are plays on words are popular within the sophistic tradition. Often in the letters, a word appears in different cases, as in Medea's letter: *cum quo sum pariter facta parente parens*, 'with whom I became a mother at the same time you became a father' (12.198).

One word that is repeated both in the *Heroides* and in other ethopoeiae, is the word *nunc*, which functions as a marker for the present misery: something evil has happened that changed life fundamentally and of which someone is culpable. The structure of the *tria tempora*, which is called for by the progymnasmata rhetors, constitutes the structural spine in Ovid's *Heroides*, although it is interfoliated by elements from other progymnasmata, such as *encomium*, *vituperatio* and *comparatio*. The speaker often begins in the present by lamenting her fate. So far, the use of the *tria tempora* is in line with the instructions. The past, however, is not always described as idyllic, nor contrasted with the present, as the rhetors instructed. Ovid also uses this part of the disposition to depict a background, and/or to let the speaker enumerate her or her lover's personal merits. The end of the ethopoeia is

⁵⁷⁴ Nicolaus 67.

supposed to prophesy on future evil. In the *Heroides*, this is occasionally the case. Generally, though, the letters treat death in the section on the future tense, concerning which the speakers close with a wish or a prayer. Before that, there has been a passage in the present, in accordance with the instructions from Nicolaus. Closest to the structure of the *tria tempora* is Canace's epistle (ep. 11), which also is free from arguments, another trait that the rhetors wished to see in an ethopoeia. In order to understand why the heroines write without giving any introduction, why they tell their history, often known for both the internal and external reader, we need knowledge of the ethopoeia and its temporal structure.

7.2 Words without weight

In his poetry, Ovid repeatedly addresses the topic of rhetorical skill as the means for the lover to succeed. On the other hand, rhetorical strivings often fail. The women of the *Heroides* are not very successful: their wish is to be able to consort with their lovers, but in the few cases where their wishes are fulfilled, it is not because of their rhetorical art. The words of Briseis can be applied to all the poems of the first collection:

at mea pro nullo pondere verba cadunt. (3.98)

But my words are without weight.

There is no actual communication between the sender and the recipient. The heroines complain (the verb *queror* is frequent) in vain. The difficulty or even inability of reaching the other party with one's message is a general motif also in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, where human beings, transformed into creatures, lose their ability to communicate, and others, able to communicate, perform ethopoetic monologues without receiving a reply. The lack of reply seems to be essential for the ethopoeia. The Ovidian heroines write in despair and eagerness to tell their lovers and the world about their misery – without being heard. Most surely, their beloved ones will not even receive their messages. This explains the often absurd situations in which they write. That Hercules or Theseus will never receive the letters of their *amantes* (Hercules because he is dead, and Theseus because Ariadne is not able to send it from

her desert island) is of minor importance. A reply cannot be expected. The model *ethopoeia* can treat the same theme in different ways, but it never offers the reply of another *ethopoeia*. Presumably, Ovid is declaring his choice of *ethopoeia* already in the introductory lines of the collection, when Penelope asks Ulysses not to reply (1.2).

Resting on this principle, I regard the double letters as not being examples of *ethopoeiae*. Here, the initial writers receive a reply, which does not correspond to any situation in the actual story. Nowhere in the myth of Troy can the situation ‘What words would Helen say after having received a letter from Paris?’ (as in ep. 17) be found. It might be that Ovid took one step further when composing this second collection of the *Heroides*, possibly approaching the epistolary genre to a greater extent. That question, however, will have to be the subject of a later study.

7.3 Ethopoetic letters

Scholars have claimed that the *Heroides* were designed with the chief aim of persuading their recipients.⁵⁷⁵ I would say that this is a misunderstanding. It is true that most of the poems contain the element of persuasion, but not all, and the effort is often weak. Only Phaedra (ep. 4) and Dido (ep. 7) focus on persuasion, because the situation demands it, and the situation is of crucial importance for the *ethopoeia*. Phaedra has not entered into a relationship with Hippolytus but wishes to do so and turns her energy to achieve that goal. Dido speaks to Aeneas when he is still present, unlike the other heroines whose lovers have left them and are therefore physically absent. The principal aim of the heroines is not to persuade or to be rhetorically convincing, but to express their thoughts and feelings. Their texts are *ethopoeiae*, and can all be supplied with ethopoetic superscriptions (‘what words would...’). In my view, the epistolary form is rather a pretext for isolating the *ethopoeia*, of making it an autonomous text instead of being incorporated in a larger context. The *Heroides* can be sorted under what Hermogenes called double characterization,⁵⁷⁶ where the speaker imagines a certain recipient and for what reason both sender and recipient must be taken into account in the portrayal. The fact that the poems have recipients makes

⁵⁷⁵ Spentzou (2003): 4; Fulkerson (2005): 1.

⁵⁷⁶ Hermogenes 21.

them suitable for the letter form. Theon sorts letter writing under the ethopoeia, Nicolaus writes that the epistle is suitable for the ethopoeia, and Demetrius claims that the best way of illustrating an individual's personality is to use the epistolary mode.⁵⁷⁷

7.4 The ethopoeia and the tragic monologue

It is reasonable to believe that the sophistic teachers searched for models in literature when they established the rules and recommendations for the progymnasmata. In the case of the ethopoeia, I have traced its possible origin to the Greek tragedians. I have presented examples of ethopoetic monologues from works by Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, and I assume there are more to be found. The tragic monologues are delivered by a main character (historical-mythological, as in all tragedies), in the climax of the play. The structure is built around the *tria tempora*. Several of the speakers in the tragedies deliver their monologues as they are facing (an imposed) death, and death is the theme with which they conclude their unanswered speeches. Another common trait, which we also see in the *Heroides* as well as in other ethopoeiae, is the addressing of different individuals, gods or phenomena.

In Greek tragedy, we find the same story, for instance the murder of Agamemnon, seen from different points of views. In the *Heroides*, fifteen women give their reactions to the same theme, that of being abandoned.

We often meet a woman as the main character in the Greek drama. In the school ethopoeia, this legacy has been continued. Ovid's choice of picking only women for his first *Heroides*' collection is usually explained by his special interest in women and the female psyche. An alternative answer can be found in the genre. Tragedies, or ethopoeiae, did not always have a woman as the protagonist, but often enough for their presence to be conspicuous. For the Roman student, an ability to enter the mind not only of a man but also of a woman was needed in order to become a master of the ethopoeia. As a lawyer-to-be, he must be prepared to defend a woman in court. As a writer-to-be, he should be provided with the tools in order to compete with Euripides in creating a Medea. What could be a greater challenge than to depict a non-Roman aristocrat from the world of mythological history? The *Heroides* can be regarded as a series of female

⁵⁷⁷ Theon 115, Nicolaus 67 and Demetrius, *De elocutione* 227.

portraits, a catalogue of women, inspired in its execution by the collections of the model ethopoeiae. At least three of the women – Briseis, Dido and Medea – are represented in the school ethopoeiae, while others are overshadowed by their famous husbands, such as Ulysses (Odysseus) and Hercules, who frequently appear in the exercises.

The school ethopoeia seems to have found more inspirational elements in the dramatic monologues: someone is guilty of the catastrophe and an absent man is addressed for the reason that he must come and resolve the situation, motifs that we recognize in the *Heroides* as well. Links between the tragic monologue, the school ethopoeia and Ovid's *Heroides* are seen also at a more refined level. I have shown this by pointing at the word *ἀλλά* ('but'), which preludes the monologue of Orestes in Aeschylus' *Coephoroe* and also appears as the introductory word in an ethopoeia by Libanius and can, I believe, explain the abrupt *at*, which introduces Medea's epistle (ep. 12). Phyllis' enumeration of ways of killing herself has also its counterparts in Libanius and in Andromache's monologue by Euripides.

An interesting parallel is found between *Heroides* 14 and Antigone's monologue in Sophocles' drama. Here, Antigone respectively Hypermetra reason in a similar way concerning their own guilt using the same words (in their respective language) about piety. The motif of *inclusa puella* is present here, as in other monologues and heroine poems. Thus, it is not only an inversion of the elegiac motif of the *exclusus amator*, but a legacy of the Greek tradition of tragedy.

7.5 The characterization

If Caesar, Cato and Cicero were to speak on the same topic, the speech has to be designed on the basis of who the speaker is, according to Quintilian. This is attempted in the *Heroides*. The heroines do speak on the same theme, and they use the same motifs. In the cases where the heroines share situations, we can discern different *personas*. What is obvious is that Ovid has the speakers treat the same matter with different attitudes, expressed in a similar language. Briseis (ep. 3), Oenone (ep. 5) and Medea (ep. 12) mention the manus-motif, but treat it individually. Canace (ep. 11) and Hypermetra (ep. 14) express themselves almost with the same words about their fathers, but their attitudes are opposites. This is in keeping with the progymnastic idea: through his heroines, Ovid treats the same or similar subject from different angles.

Parallel expressions make me regard the letters as linked together. The same *loci* are used as varied formulas, as if the letters were designed from similar exercises. Ovid plays a refined intratextual game, which deserves to be explored more.

In the pathetic ethopoeia, we are to expect more of emotions than character. The speaker's personality is not necessarily of a profoundly psychological nature, but close to a stereotype of the speaker. One or two characteristics are emphasized. Phyllis (ep. 2) is naïve and impatient, Briseis (ep. 3) is servile and adaptable, Oenone (ep. 5) is ambivalent in her identity and stuck in her rural background, Hypsipyle (ep. 6) is headlong, Dido (ep. 7) is suicidal, Canace (ep. 11) is young and subservient to her father, but once she has become a mother her language and attitude change into a more mature manner, and the *locus* of the mother speaking to her child (as seen in Greek tragedy and in Libanius) is included. Medea (ep. 12) is ruthless, Hypermestra (ep. 14) describes herself as pious, and is at the same time struck with fear. The characteristics seem to go with the character, following a literary tradition.

The heroines reveal themselves through their self-presentation. Not only do they fail in their argumentation – they also fail in their attempts to be someone they are not. They cannot escape their true nature. Herein lies a humour but also a pity for them. Phaedra (ep. 4) wants to appear as a young, seductive woman. But she is Hippolytus' stepmother. That her whole project is ruined is quite clear at the end of her letter where she hints that Hippolytus is homosexual. A parallel is found in Sappho (ep. 15), who laments the absence of Phaon, but later reveals her weakness for the girls of Lesbos. Oenone (ep. 5) says she is ready to become a queen, but is stuck in her pastoral environment. Hypsipyle (ep. 6) begins her letter in a calm tone, but goes astray when speaking of her rival. Medea (ep. 12) describes herself as a *simplex puella*, but is in reality unscrupulous.

Quite often, the heroines contradict or repeat themselves. The purpose of the ethopoeia is not to perform the most brilliant speech – if the heroines are inconsistent in their arguments or structure, it is not because of negligence from the poet, but belongs to their character. Should not, then, the women speak as the royal personages they are, with a language worthy of their status? I would say that all women lose their dignity, except for the loyal wives Penelope (ep. 1) and Laodamia (ep. 13) and the banished daughters Canace (ep. 11) and Hypermestra (ep. 14), presumably because these four women do not suffer from unreciprocated love. In the case of the women

who love unreservedly and hopelessly, female desperation seems to have taken precedence over decorum.

7.6 Ovid's *Heroides* and the ethopoeia reappraised

Scholars of recent decades have realized that Ovid's *Heroides* needed a reappraisal. The outcome of my work is in accordance with that perception, with the addition that the concept of ethopoeia needs to be reassessed as well. The recognition that Quintilian gives to these exercises should call for our attention too. If we accept that the progymnasmata have their models in the most eminent of Greek literature and were meant to encourage the student to compete with it, the comparison of Ovid's *Heroides* to the ethopoeia does not seem either strange or disparaging. Ovid's *Heroides* fulfil the expectations of ethopoeiae. They speak in the *personae* of historical-mythological women who are caught in dramatic moments. The women reveal their inner emotions in their letters but remain unanswered. We meet them in pitiable situations. Ovid's attitude towards his heroines is both sensitive and sophisticatedly playful, on one hand feeling sympathy with the speaker, on the other hand making fun of her in using his wit, thus, in accordance with Nicolaus' prescription, both moving and amusing the external reader.⁵⁷⁸ Ovid, however, crosses boundaries as he imitates both canonic literature and the collections of model progymnasmata. It is, as I see it, a characteristic of his enthusiasm in overdoing and breaking conventions.

Without knowledge of the progymnasmata in general and the ethopoeia in particular, it is hard to justify Ovid's choice of composition for his work. With his *Heroides*, Ovid shows that elegy, like the letter or the dramatic monologue, is a fine medium for the ethopoeia, self-centered and emotional as it is. Ovid takes the genre of elegy in an unconventional and new direction.

⁵⁷⁸ Nicolaus 67.

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Were Ovid's *Heroides* inspired by the contemporary practice in oratory at schools? The similarity of the poems to the rhetorical exercise *ethopoeia* has made scholars believe so for many centuries. However, there are very few studies into the matter, and the comparison has been controversial. In this thesis, the author explores the concept of *ethopoeia*, arguing that it needs to be reassessed and that the term can be successfully applied to Ovid's famous poems. This discovery provides new perspectives on ancient literary composition and the influence of rhetorical training on the *Heroides*.