

SCRIBENTIS IMAGINES
in Ovidian Authorship and Scholarship.
A Study of the *Epistula Sapphus* (*Heroides* 15)

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“Ja, jag gråter, fastän jag är en man. Men har icke en man ögon? Har icke en man händer, lemmar, sinnen, tycken, passioner? Lever han icke av samma föda, såras han icke av samma vapen, värmes han icke och kyles av samma vinter och sommar som en kvinna? Om ni sticker oss, blöda vi icke? Om ni kittlar oss, kikna vi icke? Om ni förgiftar oss, dö vi icke? Varför skulle icke en man få klaga, en soldat få gråta? Därför det er omanligt?”

‘Yes, I weep though I am a man. But has a man not eyes? Has he not hands, limbs, senses, fancies, passions? Is he not fed with the same food, wounded by the same weapon, warmed and chilled by the same winter and summer as a woman? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? Why cannot a man wail, a soldier cry? Since it is unmanly?’¹

The Captain in Act Two, Scene Five of August Strindberg’s
Fadren (The Father).

¹ Translation by Inga Wählberg.

Introduction

Aim

Is the *Epistula Sapphus*, also known as *Heroides* 15, an interesting poem? Did Ovid write it? Does it fit in with the single *Heroides* and the other works that Ovid wrote more or less contemporaneously? Scholars tend to disagree about these questions, the answers to which depend on numerous details and on each scholar's ability to judge these details, as well as the image of Ovid, which he or she entertains. In this thesis I will aim at examining the facts and features, scholarly judgments and Ovidian *scribentis imagines* that appear in relationship with the *Epistula Sapphus*. More importantly, I will attempt, to some extent by novel ways, to give answers to the questions myself.

Ways of Proceeding

The thesis consists of three parts, one for each question, and the order in which they appear reflects my historically conditioned approach to this poem that belongs to times so distant from mine. Motivated by the *Epistula Sapphus*' immediate focus on the image of the author, both as a textual creation and as an inescapable part of the process of reading, Part One explores theoretical and practical aspects of the communicative powers of art, that is, of intention and interpretation. A point of departure is Barthes' 'La mort de l'auteur' (1968), firstly because the article has strongly influenced the concept of intention in modern literary theory, and secondly because it relates to another Barthian study, *S/Z* (1970), which is exceptionally helpful in understanding how gender complicates the image of the author, notably within the tradition which I call the 'gendered reception' of the *Epistula Sapphus*.

Part Two will be dedicated to the question of whether Ovid wrote the poem or not. On the basis of an outline of testimonies and transmission, I try to present the major arguments that were brought up for and against of the poem's authenticity during the second half of the nineteenth century. Several of these arguments are recycled when the debate re-emerges in the latter half of the twentieth century. The singular most influential contribution to the debate in recent times is Tarrant's attack

(1981) on the poem's authenticity. His article contains many and diverse arguments, but the strongest, according to Tarrant himself, is based on so-called *loci similes* which he reads as indications of chronology. He borrows the method of Axelson (1960), who claims that out of two passages that are similar beyond accidental resemblance, the less felicitous must be the later reworking of the more successful one. Tarrant chooses his decisive *loci similes* from the opening of the *Epistula Sapphus* and the *Epistulae ex Ponto* 2.10: he considers the former to be less compelling than the latter, and since the *Epistulae ex Ponto* was composed towards the end of the poet's life, whereas the *Epistula Sapphus* should have belonged to the juvenile *Heroides*, he concludes that Sappho's letter was written on the basis of Ovid's entire output, probably after the poet's death, and accordingly by a forger. Tarrant's approach demonstrates that the chronological order in which we place literary works determines the way we read them. In recognition of this banal, yet basic fact, I will make an attempt to establish the difficult chronology of Ovid's early poetic career. Furthermore, the feature at the heart of Tarrant's reasoning is also known as *allusion*, and, following the lead of Pasquali's 'Arte allusiva' (1942 = 1951), several recent studies on Roman poetry have brilliantly analysed the literary phenomenon as such. Allusions tend to assume the role of authorial 'fingerprints'. In search of meaningful patterns rather than indications of chronology, I will explore the *loci similes* that Tarrant focuses on as well as other allusions that thematize the Ovidian *scribentis imago*, such as the *ille ego*-echo that rings throughout the poet's entire output.

As already mentioned, in Part One I will approach the *Epistula Sapphus* by means of modern literary theory and hermeneutic reflections on how a Latin text can be understood in our time. Part Two tracks the philological reception of the poem along with certain allusions that are found within the entire production of the poet. Part Three will be dedicated to the many and suggestive allusions that are found between the *Epistula Sapphus*, the single *Heroides*, the *Amores* and *Ars Amatoria*. If Sappho's letter was composed as a part of the single *Heroides*, these other works were the ones that Ovid wrote more or less contemporaneously. Although my approach to *loci similes* is different, my purpose is similar to Tarrant's, namely to test to what extent the *Epistula Sapphus* interacts successfully with its presumed literary context. In order to do so, I will focus on three recurring themes that are eminently dramatised in the *Epistula Sapphus* as well as the single *Heroides*, namely the concept of

womanhood, the role of the men and the heroines' writing situation. Finally, I explore images of the writer in the *Epistula Sapphus*, the *Amores* and the *Ars Amatoria*.

What I will try to do here is indeed to climb the shoulders of giants. Still, as the debate on the *Epistula Sapphus*' authenticity has been going on for more than 150 years, and some arguments have become rather trite, I would like to highlight certain novel traits of the present thesis. Although the 'heroine as author' has been astutely explored in the growing research on the *Heroides*, the Heroidean Sappho has not yet been systematically analysed as such, despite the fact that she is the most evident candidate for literary authorship. The entire thesis is an attempt at such an analysis. I will furthermore present some new views on the transmission of the poem, which might, however modestly, indicate a wider distribution of the poem in the Middle Ages than has been presumed so far. By examining the major arguments of the nineteenth as well as the twentieth century debate, I hope to make further contributions to Rosati's defence of the poem's authenticity (1996) which, outstanding as it is for its philological observations in combination with sophisticated readings, has already modified the conclusions of Tarrant. As mentioned above, the parallel passages that Tarrant uses to establish a (late) date for the *Epistula Sapphus* are picked from Ovid's exile poetry. The resemblances between the exile poems and the *Epistula Sapphus* (as well as all the other *Heroides*) are striking and interesting in themselves, but the prominence they have gained due to Tarrant's position in the debate seems to have kept the focus away from the many, well-known allusions between Sappho's letter and the other early, amatory works by Ovid. An attempt to read all these works systematically together also represents therefore a rather fresh approach.

Corpus

The main corpus of texts examined in this thesis consists of those that are traditionally assigned to the period of Ovid's poetic career that precedes the *Metamorphoses* and the *Fasti*, that is, the single *Heroides*, the *Amores*, the *Medicamina Faciei Femineae*, the *Ars Amatoria* and the *Remedia Amoris*. Fortunately, the *Heroides* are presently to be found in many editions and are now well commented, although one still has to turn to Palmer's edition of 1898 for a publication which covers all the letters, the so-called double *Heroides* and Planudes' Greek metaphrase included. The second most

complete edition is Knox's of 1995, which covers *Heroides* 1, 2, 5, 6, 10, 11 and 'incerti auctoris' *Epistula Sapphus*. For the sake of convenience, I will use the text of Knox and supplement it with that of Palmer's edition for the remaining letters.² For the *Amores*, *Medicamina Faciei Femineae*, *Ars Amatoria*, *Remedia Amoris*, I reproduce Kenney's revised edition of 1995. As regards the *Amores* I will supplement this with McKeown's edition of 1987 wherever it is suitable. The translations of Ovid's and other ancient authors' works are all from their respective Loeb editions. Wherever I feel that it is appropriate to present a divergent translation, I will put my alternative solution in brackets. Classics within other disciplines, such as Barthes' 'La mort de l'auteur', will be referred to by their original titles in recognition of their first appearance in time and space.

... *In Terms of the Author* ...

The subject of this thesis, then, is the author as literary figure and cognitive concept, exemplified by the specific case of the *Epistula Sapphus* and its disputed authenticity. Before I embark on the thesis itself, it should be useful to clarify some terms. In Ovidian scholarship we find for instance the expression 'Der Ovid-Epigone' applied to the author of the first five *Heroides* in a recent German study.³ The way we imagine a writer is indeed influenced by what we are able to learn about him or her, and the process works naturally in the opposite direction, as well: our appreciation of facts and features that are related to a text is also shaped by our image of the one who produced it, whether he or she is 'real' or 'false'. Furthermore, Vernier (2004) explains:

Sous le terme d'auteur, bien des sens, bien des instances sont pêle-mêle invoquées, qui chacune, relèvent de, et engagent, une conception différente de la littérature et même du langage. [...] Paradoxalement, en effet, malgré son étymologie et son sens le plus général, le terme d'auteur ne désigne pas le « producteur » de l'œuvre, l'agent qui lui préexiste mais l'instance qui *résulte* de l'existence de l'œuvre (« filles de leurs filles » disait Apollinaire) [...].⁴

² For the sake of typographical consistency I use Knox's typing of u-consonant as 'u' instead of 'v' used for instance by Palmer.

³ Lingenberg (2003) 275.

⁴ Vernier (2004) 119-20.

In order to disentangle certain meanings that cluster around the author as cognitive idea and literary figure, Vernier discerns at least five semantic levels: *l'écrivain*, *l'Auteur*, *l'auteur*, *le narrateur*, and *les locuteurs*, or 'the writer', 'the Author', 'the author', 'the narrator' and 'the speakers'.

A 'writer' is an historical person and a social individual who has a name, a date and place of birth, a civil status and a personal history, in addition to *writing* as his or her major occupation in life. A certain Publius Ovidius Naso, born on March the 20th 43 B.C. in Sulmo, educated as a lawyer in Rome, married three times and deceased in exile on the shores of the Black Sea, wrote during his entire life and was accordingly a 'writer'. And due to his ability and success as such he became an 'Author' as well.

The 'Author' with the capital A is a concept created by schools, universities and academies – in short – the establishment, which, by the help of time, fashions the canon of literature. This institution adapts to ideological conjectures in the course of time and Ovid was certainly less of an 'Author' in the Romantic era than in the Middle Ages. The literary canon is furthermore conservative, and although it secures the established 'Author' long-lasting fame and publicity, it does not always welcome novel interpretations of his or her works.

Ideological conjectures aside, Ovid earned his status as an 'Author' due to his capacity and competence as an 'author'. By introducing this term, Vernier steps out of the field of history (to which the history of literature belongs) and enters the field of literature. Her 'author' denotes the organising instance, the artist and architect who 'détermine la (ou les) perspective(s) de l'œuvre, distribue la ou les voix énonciative(s), choisit les termes, le rythme et les images, assure la régie.'⁵

Vernier discusses at length the relationship between the 'author' and the 'narrator' of a text, as the two instances sometimes seem inseparably close and sometimes incompatibly distinct. About the 'speaker', she simply explains that this is the instance to which the 'narrator' gives the word in a text. Having reached, then, the proper field of this thesis, namely literature, it should be useful, if only briefly, to consider how the last three of Vernier's authorial instances manifest themselves in the major works of the corpus of this thesis.⁶

⁵ Vernier (2004) 123.

⁶ Pertinent here indeed is Genette's distinction between the *heterodiegetic* text (the 'author' and the 'narrator' are presented as different persons), the *homodiegetic* text (the 'author' and the 'narrator' of a

To sum up: the historically, socially and psychologically real (but dead) ‘writer’ Ovid, later canonised as ‘Author’, is the ‘author’ of the *Heroides*, the *Amores* and *Ars Amatoria*. To start with the latter, the ‘narrator’ of this didactic three-book poem calls himself both *Naso magister* and *praeceptor amoris* and assigns speech to other ‘speakers’, such as the future and unnamed admirer who recommends the poet’s amatory output at *Ars* 3.341-6. The ‘narrator’ of the *Amores* also identifies himself as *Naso poeta* and allows several others to talk. The most prominent ‘speaker’ of the *Amores* is Dipsas, the old and thirsty procuress who greedily grasps the opportunity (against the will of the ‘narrator’) to present her good advice on love’s pecuniary potential (*Amores* 1.8). In both works, then, *Naso* is the name of the ‘narrator’. This name is also the cognomen of the historical Ovid. My simple attempt to distinguish between certain narrative levels of the *Amores* and the *Ars Amatoria* shows that the ‘narrators’ of both works are as easily associated with each other as they are associated with Ovid the ‘writer’. The similarities between all these authorial instances constitute furthermore an especially interesting backdrop for the appreciation of the narrative strategies of the *Heroides*.

This collection of elegiac letters presents the reader with a series of female ‘I’-personae. Here, there is not one but fifteen ‘narrators’: Penelope, Phyllis, Briseis, Phaedra, Oenone, Hypsipyle, Dido (Elissa), Hermione, Deianira, Ariadne, Canace, Medea, Laudamia, Hypermestra and Sappho. Several others are allowed to speak in the heroines’ letters, as well. Setting aside those who speak more than one line (see below) the god of Love orders Phaedra to write her epistle (*Her.* 4.14); Nessus’ treacherous words are reproduced by Deianira (*Her.* 9.162); the *matres Phylaceides* beg Laudamia to dress properly (*Her.* 13.36); Hypermestra registers how the *uulgus* called for Hymenaeus in her wedding (*Her.* 14.27); and Sappho gives voice to a *nescio quis* and her brother, Charaxus, in her letter (*Her.* 15.109, 120). The heroes are also allowed to speak: Jason’s tearful goodbye fills several lines of Hypsipyle’s letter (*Her.* 6.59-62); both Dido’s husband, Sychaeus, and her lover, Aeneas, utter some words in the queen’s letter (*Her.* 7.102, 139); Theseus’ direct speech is recorded by Ariadne (*Her.* 10.73-4); Macareus addresses his sister Canace (*Her.* 11.59-62), also

text correspond with each other) and the *autodiegetic* text (the ‘author’ corresponds with the ‘narrator’ who appears in the text in the first person singular), cf. Genette (1972) and (1983) *passim*. While Genette’s vastly complex system of story, narrative and narration embraces the authorial instance as one among many, Vernier’s concern is primarily the author and her exposition of the different narrative levels’ authorial charge is accordingly more attractive to my approach.

addressed by her nurse and a *satelles* in her letter (*Her.* 11.34, 49, 95-6); while Jason gives the longest speech by any Heroidean hero in Medea's letter (*Her.* 12.73-89, 134), where even the shouts of a *turba* and the words of her youngest child are referred to in direct speech (*Her.* 12.143, 151-2).

The multitude of 'narrators' and 'speakers' in the *Heroides* does indeed point towards the *Metamorphoses*, but the comparison with the *Amores* and *Ars Amatoria* is also interesting. A schematic survey should clarify:

Work:	The <i>Heroides</i>	The <i>Amores</i>	<i>Ars Amatoria</i>
Narrator(s):	Heroines	<i>Naso poeta</i>	<i>Naso magister, praeceptor amoris</i>
Speaker(s) (of more than one line):	<i>Aliquis</i> (1.33-6), (2.83-5), Patroclus (3.23-4), Cassandra (5.115-20), Jason (6.59-62), <i>aliquis</i> (6.103-4), Theseus (10.73-4), Macareus (11.59-62), <i>satelles</i> (11.95-6), Jason (12.73-89), <i>minor e pueris</i> (12.151-2), Naiad (15.163-72)	Dipsas (1.8.23-108), <i>aliquis</i> (2.1.9-10), Tragoedia (3.1.15-30), Elegia (3.1.35-60), Anien (3.6.53-66), Ilia (3.6.73-8), <i>puella</i> (3.7.77-80), Delia (3.9.57-8), Nemesis (3.9.57-8), <i>aliquis</i> (3.15.13-14)	Vir (1.129-30), Pasiphae (1.314-6), Ariadne (1.536-7), Bacchus (1.555-8), Busiris (1.651-2), Daedalus (2.25-42, 93-5), Ulysses (2.132-8), Calypso (2.141-2), Apollo (2.497-505), <i>aliquis</i> (2.585-6), Venus (3.45-52), Cephalus (3.697-8, 737-42), Procris (3.737-42).

Curiously, the 'speakers' of the *Heroides* are mostly male and the 'speakers' of the *Amores* are predominantly female, while male and female 'speakers' are rather equally represented in the *Ars Amatoria*. This pattern corresponds with the object, the men of the *Heroides* and the *puellae* of the *Amores*, and the addressees, the heroes of the *Heroides* (again) and the Roman men and women of the *Ars Amatoria*. By consequence, the 'speakers' chiasmatically reflect the respective gender of the 'narrators' of these works.

Compared with the *Amores* and *Ars Amatoria*, the *Heroides* stand out. In the former two of these works, the 'narrators' obviously invoke, by virtue of name and gender, the historical 'writer' Ovid. In the *Heroides*, the names, gender and number of the 'narrators' obviously do not. The debate on authenticity, which is not limited to the Heroidean Sappho, is arguably also a response to this default. By analogy to the 'narrator' of the *Amores* and *Ars Amatoria*, one should perhaps think of Ovid when listening to the Heroidean 'narrators', as well. After all, these heroines are *writing* and some even describe themselves as *scribentis imago* (*Her.* 7.183, 11.5). Contrary to the 'narrators' of the *Amores* and *Ars Amatoria*, the images of the writer that the narrator-

heroines conjure up seem less transparent, more sophisticated – and truer? Vernier observes that ‘qu’ils travaillent ou non les possibles qu’ouvre cette singulière position du narrateur, tous les textes mettent en la scène verbale un narrateur/ énonciateur distinct de l’auteur’ and in recognition of this distinction I will habitually use the names of the heroines, *Naso poeta*, *Naso magister* and *praeceptor amoris* when referring to the content of the *Heroides*, the *Amores* and *Ars Amatoria*.⁷ More importantly, whether the split between ‘author’ and ‘narrator’ is cunningly concealed as in the *Amores* and *Ars Amatoria*, or candidly revealed as in the *Heroides*, it dramatises ‘l’hétérogénéité du moi’.⁸ In this present study I will try to get closer to Ovidian dramatisations of human diversity, as well as to find answers to the initial questions: Is the *Epistula Sapphus* an interesting poem? Is it written by Ovid? And does it fit into the early period of Ovid’s poetic career?

⁷ Vernier (2004) 128.

⁸ Vernier (2004) 128.

Part One:

Authorship Between Literary Theory and Practice

Ecquid, ut aspecta est studiosae littera dextrae,
protinus est oculis cognita nostra tuis,
an, nisi legisses auctoris nomina Sapphus,
hoc breue nescires unde ueniret opus? (*Her.* 15.1-4)⁹

[TELL me, when you looked upon the characters from my eager right hand, did your eye know forthwith whose they were – or, unless you had read their author’s name, Sappho, would you fail to know whence these brief words come?]

Who am ‘I’? Who are ‘you’? And what is ‘poetry’? These questions are at the heart of our poem, which has an obvious theoretical appeal because of its immediate focus on the writer-and-reader-relationship. It is just as obvious that the poem goes beyond theory, simply by being a realisation of poetic possibilities. Before I enter on these problems and possibilities, however, it should be useful to draw attention to basic elements of this opening.

The very first word of the poem, the interrogative *ecquid*, signals that it belongs to a question. A question is a forceful means of communication in as much as it expresses not only a wish to convey a message, but also, normally, to receive an answer. A question points towards the presence of an addressee, of ‘you’.¹⁰ The passive verbal construction, *aspecta est*, which immediately follows the interrogative, continues the emphasis on the addressee and renders the reader of the text all the more active, as it were. The opening interrogative and the passive construction, relying on the reader’s eyes, thus give the impression of conceding power and agency to the reader, and this effect is furthermore underscored by the content of the lines: the beginning of this text is about the beginning of the *reading* of this text.

The text is subsequently described as *studiosae littera dextrae*. This expression conveys both ‘character of an eager, (learned) right hand’ and ‘letter of a

⁹ I print Knox’s text here, but follow the punctuation of Showerman (1996) and Rosati (1989), who make the first four lines one question, instead of two consisting of one couplet each.

¹⁰ Considering other phrases that also naturally presuppose a receiver, like prayers and orders, which usually share the same verbal mode, the imperative, a difference worthy of note emerges: whereas a prayer and an order express either submission to or superiority towards the addressee, a question is much less decisive as regards the relationship between the one who asks and the one who is being asked.

learned, (eager) right hand'. Deremetz (2005) ponders on the simultaneous spontaneity and learnedness evoked by the adjective *studiosae*, and inspired by the alleged Greek authorship of the poem, he points at the etymological link between the Latin adjective occurring in this poem and the Greek *spoudaios*, which also comprises the two senses 'keen' and 'skilful'; an ambiguity which permeates the whole initial passage.¹¹ The word *littera*, in the sense of a 'letter', suggests furthermore that the text is likely to be in accordance with epistolary conventions.¹² But combined with *studiosae dextrae*, the skilful and learned right hand, the letter becomes a *literary* letter, which, as such, not only belongs to the epistolary genre, but also to epistolary *fiction*. Thus, this text, as epistolary fiction, imitates and intimates the processes that concern and constitute literature: it *imitates* because epistolary fiction basically is writing about writing, and it *intimates* because the relationship between writer and reader is personalised, that is pronominalised.¹³ These metaliterary implications enhance rather than repress or supplant the signification of *littera* as 'handwriting'. Within the fictional frame, that is, in believing that this is a letter, the question of whether 'you' are able to recognise the character of 'my' hand is anything but out of place. Every literate person has his or her particular kind of handwriting, which is often seen as a sign of his or her personality. Accordingly, the *littera* is designated as *nostra*, which provides 'you', whose presence is implied by *ecquid* (1) and, more overtly, by *oculis tuis* (2), with the company of 'me'.

'I' am furthermore worried that 'you' would not have recognised 'me' behind the artistic letter that 'you' have just started reading, had 'you' not read, *legisses* (3), that Sappho is the name of the author, *auctoris nomina Sapphus* (3). By stating that this *littera* is a *breue opus* (4) written by *studiosae dextrae*, the fiction cracks open, as it were, and reveals that the letter is literature. The important question of whom this is from can thus more appropriately be called a question of authorship.

And as literature, this elegiac letter involves three aspects that highlight its poetic character: temporality, fictionality and several specific challenges prompted by

¹¹ Deremetz (2005) 2.

¹² For 'letter' in singular, cf. *Her.* 6.9. The epistolary conventions naturally rehearse many of the traits essential to the 'I'-and-'You'-relation, cf. Altman (1982) 117-42.

¹³ 'Mixture (fr. *mélange*) is the letter, the epistle, which is not a genre, but all genres, literature itself. In any event ...' Derrida (1987) 48. And in the case of the *Heroides*: '[...] il testo epistolare, per il quale anzi esso è "programmato": lettore interno (intradiegetico) e lettore esterno (extradiegetico) vengono quindi a sovrapporsi e a identificarsi, esattamente come l'eroina (che scrive la lettera per il suo amante) e il poeta (che scrive per il suo pubblico).' Rosati (1989) 6-7.

the image of Sappho. As already pointed out, by the help of the personal pronouns, ‘I’ am the writer and ‘you’ are the reader of the text, which becomes our meeting place, despite the fact that each of ‘us’ is bound to different times. As ‘I’ write, ‘your’ reading becomes ‘my’ imagined future, whereas ‘my’ writing becomes ‘your’ imagined past as ‘you’ read. There is a time lag inherent in all encounters between a writer and reader that take place in a text, but within the epistolary genre the paradoxically parallel times are likely to become particularly explicit, and in this text the present’s imagined future has already turned into the verbal past. The first line’s perfect passive construction *aspecta est*, which seems to make the text submit itself to the eyes of the reader, appears simultaneously as the writer’s calculated anticipation of future readings. The trick works as well as it possibly can. It is temporally transgressive; it breaks the fictional frame and becomes real. When naming the addressee, ‘you’ will always fit.

But, in as much as the addressing of ‘you’ is a skilful trick, the naming of Sappho is also skilfully tricky. As already mentioned, the letter’s opening passage is formed as a question. This question is essentially about identity and identification, reading and misreading. The latter depends on the former, for the fact that there is an identity to identify facilitates the potential failure of recognition. Through this text’s pronominal interplay between ‘you’ and ‘me’, the anxious question about authorship simultaneously calls attention to an important feature of the act of reading, namely the reader’s urge to imagine a writer. Thus a famous reader claims: ‘in the text, in a way, *I desire* the author: I need his figure (which is neither his representation nor his projection) as he needs mine [...]’¹⁴ The inclination to imagine the author becomes especially underscored in this text when the answer to the question of authorship turns out to be ‘Sappho’. The reason why is simply that the answer is wrong; it is, as it were, fiction in the third degree. Firstly, the epistolary genre renders the text verisimilar in as much as the letter represents perhaps *the* activity belonging to the extra-textual realm that also belongs to the textual world of literature, that is, writing; secondly the explicit literary ambition provides the poem with a metapoetical perspective; and thirdly the claim that this text is written by Sappho is a sheer lie. In other words, the naming of Sappho demands the most of the reader’s imagination and ability to partake in the game of fiction.

¹⁴ Barthes (1975) 27.

There are at least four obstacles that the reader has to face and pass, presumably enriched, in order to enter on this text's verisimilar fiction and fictitious reality. All four are related to difficulties of identity and identification, and all suggest yet a third answer to the question of this text's authorship, that is in addition to 'I' and 'Sappho'. The first challenge is the Latin language of the poem. Language is of course of great importance in determining authorship, and the language of the *Epistula Sapphus* tells us quite a lot; even though it is so obvious that it might be hard to notice, it forcefully suggests yet another answer to the question of the poem's authorship than 'Sappho', since it is written in Latin and Sappho used the Aeolic dialect of the Greek language.¹⁵

Then there is the elegiac metre, which of course shapes the whole initial passage, which is hinted at through the expression *breue opus* (4) and which is overtly commented upon in the lines that follow:

forsitan et quare mea sint alterna requiras
 carmina, cum lyricis sim magis apta modis.
 flendus amor meus est: elegi quoque flebile carmen.
 non facit ad lacrimas barbitos illa meas. (*Her.* 15.5-8)¹⁶

[Perhaps, too, you may ask why my verses alternate, when I am better suited to the lyric mode. I must weep, for my love – and elegy is the weeping strain; [that well known lyre is not] suited to my tears.]

The emphasis on the reader prevails: 'you' know Sappho and accordingly you ought to expect something else than this text from her. At the same time the literary ambition hinted at through the expressions *studiosae littera dextrae* and *breue opus*, not to mention the metrical form in which these expressions are found, is completely exposed through the writer's imagined question on behalf of the reader. These lines are poetry, *carmina*, and as they are alternate in length, *alterna*, their genre is elegy. Furthermore, the change from lyric to elegiac verse is explained by changes in the writer's life, an explanation that amounts to the definition of the elegy as *flebile carmen*.

¹⁵ 'At the very least, [...] we assume that the author wrote in the language in which we are reading [...]. This is not much, but it can be the first thread in the tapestry that is to become the author construct.' Irwin (2002) 195.

¹⁶ For the reading *elegi quoque*, see Part Three, chapter 4.2.c).

Together, then, the first eight lines of this poem present a paradox: there is no obvious connection between text and author, because the connection is subtle. The writer has changed, and so have her writings. If they indeed are *her* writings. The twofold character of this passage should exercise the reader's imagination and call for more than one approach.¹⁷ The text is in Latin but should be in Greek, its genre is elegy, but should have been lyric, and then there is the name of the author, or should we rather read *names*? The text's poetic plural, *nomina*, fits nicely into the double agenda of this poem, hinting at an idea of a plural authorship. In keeping with the text's structural oppositions, the figure of a female *poetria* (*Her.* 15.183) is subtly accompanied by a figure of a male author. And as it happens, there are two claims to the authorship of this poem: firstly, the text itself claims that its author is Sappho and secondly Ovid claims that he is the author of a letter by Sappho, along with a series of other letters that correspond to almost half of the elegiac collection which is traditionally known as the single *Heroides* (cf. *Am.* 2.18.21-26). Summing up, then, the challenges of the *Epistula Sapphus*' opening passage concern language – Greek versus Latin; genre – elegy versus lyric; gender – male versus female; and authorship – Sappho versus Ovid.

¹⁷ The epistolary genre itself has a distinctly twofold character, as it to a great extent is a genre of paired paradoxes that can be summed up as portrait/ mask, writer/ reader, presence/ absence, bridge/ barrier, candour/ dissimulation, cf. Altman (1982) 185-7.

1. Intentional Problems and Possibilities

The phantom of the author haunts the fields of Nietzschean postmodernism and Saussurian poststructuralism. These fields are vast, and the attacks launched against them are at times acrimoniously polemic.¹⁸ I will try to get around both the vastness and the polemics, firstly by outlining some of the problems and possibilities linked to the most difficult feature of the figure of the author, namely intention. The virtue of theory is precisely to accentuate problems, whereas literature might reveal, no less virtuously, the same problems as possibilities. As the opening of the *Epistula Sapphus* makes clear, this text is able to dramatise authorial problems with a rather theoretical appeal, but, as I will argue in this section, the poem is an equally rewarding source for the authorial figure's literary feasibility.

I would furthermore claim that the figure of the author, that is, the one that Barthes declares dead, vacillates between literary theory and practice, as well. Barthes, the great reader of semiotics and contributor to poststructuralist conceptions of literature, is the one to offer the entry through which I will try to get around the immensity of theoretical postmodernism – from the inside, as it were. While focussing not only on theoretical, but also on literary aspects of Barthes' reflections on the author, I will not so much apply his methodology to the *Epistula Sapphus* in order to explain the poem, but rather let this poem elucidate – and be elucidated by – Barthes' studies 'La mort de l'auteur' (1968) and *S/Z* (1970), as well as the literary text of these studies, Balzac's *Sarrasine*, in a comparative reading which is inspired by attractive parallels regarding questions of author and intention, as well as some suggestively different answers to these questions.

¹⁸ The titles of some of these studies are ironic and sometimes sarcastic, cf. *The Death and Return of the Author. Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida*, Burke (1992 = 1999), *Le démon de la théorie: Littérature et sens Commun*, Compagnon (1998) = *Literature, Theory, and Common Sense* (2004) and *The Death and Resurrection of the Author*, Irwin (ed.) (2002). The spiteful tendency of these studies is provoked by their adversaries' particularly aggressive language, most prominently represented by Barthes' 'La mort de l'auteur'. Vernier is undoubtedly right when she links this language to 'la crise politico-idéologique dont 1968 a marqué le point culminant. [...] C'est aussi à ces circonstances que les recherches théoriques, [...], qui furent menées à cette époque, doivent leur caractère violent, entier, utopique volontiers dogmatique et très généralement polémique.' Vernier (2004) 16-7. Once this has been rightly pointed out, it should perhaps, then, be useful to look beyond this 'caractère violent'.

1.1. Timely Timelessness? Theoretical Problems

As already mentioned, the problem of the author is the problem of intention, and the problem of intention *and art* is a classic one. Narrowing down the general term ‘art’ to the specific term ‘literature’, one could say that the hallmark of literature is that it continues to produce new meaning in new contexts. In a more ambitious attempt to define what is specific for art in the form of literature, Vernier draws attention to the way in which art employs idle symbolic resources, and, by consequence, shakes all habitual ways of perceiving the world:

Les systèmes symboliques (parce que, précisément, ils sont fabriqués, conventionnels) sont chargés de ce qui peut apparaître comme des scories du point de vue de leur fonction opératoire : outre leur capacité à organiser des signes, ils charrient avec eux l’épaisseur de leurs signifiants, linguistiques ou sensibles. Ceux-ci sont lourds de croyances, d’expériences, de sensations, de rêves et d’idées qui engluent la pureté fonctionnelle du signe, mais constituent un trésor de possibles inexploités [...] L’exploitation de ce trésor nécessairement négligé, c’est à quoi (consciemment ou non, peu importe) s’emploient les activités artistiques [...]. Ainsi l’œuvre d’art, en sa spécificité [...] se distingue par sa capacité à intervenir dans un système symbolique de telle sorte qu’elle ébranle l’illusoire certitude de nos modes de perception et d’intellection en nous en faisant sentir l’arbitraire, et ouvre à des possible inédits, proprement impensables dans l’enclos de son système.¹⁹

This way of explaining artistic dynamics is sympathetic to intentionalism and matches the Ovidian image of the author remarkably well, as I will show shortly. Furthermore, Vernier’s definition of art relates to how literature miraculously and as a matter of fact continues to produce meaning in ever new contexts.

The very process in which this meaning comes into being remains, however, largely a theoretical problem. If it is easy to associate the meaning of a literary work with the author’s intention, it is harder to explain and sustain such a concept of communication. The difficulty lies first and foremost in a distance between author and reader that can be both temporal, spatial and cultural, all according to the text in question. Classical texts are distant from us both in time, space (somewhat depending on where ‘we’ stand) and cultural conceptions, and the fact that they are still considered Classics underscores both the problems and possibilities concerning communication between author and reader.

¹⁹ Vernier (2004) 68-9 and 71.

Classics is therefore one of Gadamer's test cases when he in *Wahrheit und Methode* (1960) refines hermeneutics by showing how these distances are transformed into meaning through the fusion of horizons. He observes that '[w]hat we call "classical" does not first require the overcoming of historical distance, for in its own constant mediation it overcomes this distance by itself. The classical then, is certainly "timeless," but this timelessness is a mode of historical being.'²⁰ In contrast to poststructuralist convictions, where subject positions tend to exist only as phantoms, the stress on how meaningful expressions transform into phenomenologically conditioned and yet transcendent understanding in the course of the hermeneutic circle, is not completely incompatible with a notion of intention, that is, of intentionality. And in an answer to Derrida, Gadamer describes the relationship between a writer and a reader thus:

[L]ike one who is in a conversation, the writer tries to impart *what he or she means*, and that includes the other with whom one shared presuppositions and upon whose understanding one relies. The other takes what is said as it is *intended*, that is, he or she understands because he or she fills out and concretizes what is said and because he or she does not take what is said in its abstract literal meaning.²¹

Still, the author's intent remains largely irrelevant from an hermeneutical viewpoint, since the very characteristic of literary works is that they outlast their original context, their authors' intentions included. By consequence, any reduction of a literary work to its author's intention would be tantamount to aborting the very process which renders the proliferation of meaning possible, and the text would become an historical document rather than literature.²²

The ambition to restore texts to their original condition has been important to earlier stages of the hermeneutic discipline, just as it has been an important ambition for classical philologists of all times, even the most recent.²³ Contributors to both hermeneutics and classical philology demonstrate, however, the impossibility of such

²⁰ Gadamer continues his explanation thus: '[...] the word 'classical' means: that the duration of a work's power to speak directly is fundamentally unlimited. However much the concept of the classical expresses distance and unattainability and is part of cultural consciousness, the phrase 'classical culture' still implies something of the continuing validity of the classical. Cultural consciousness manifests an ultimately community and sharing with the world from which a classical work speaks.' Gadamer (1999) 290.

²¹ Gadamer in Michelfelder and Palmer (1989) 34, my italics. Cf. Weberman in Irwin (2002) 45-64.

²² Compagnon (2004) 57.

²³ For earlier stages of hermeneutics, cf. Gadamer (1999) 171-264.

undertakings. I would therefore claim that the anxiety of reducing a literary work to an historical monument is largely hypothetical. It is unachievable, and those who draw premature and decisive conclusions, thinking that they have reached through to the original text, cheat perhaps themselves first and foremost. Such (mis)conceptions are, however, not necessarily regrettable: there is a potential heuristic gain involved in such a process; more knowledge about the text can be produced along the way, even if the goal that is believed to be attained always remains beyond reach.

One of the reasons why literary works resist reductionist approaches is that as soon as you engage in the matters of language, be it as reader or writer, you are no longer alone. Indeed, words are always already written, repeated and rehearsed, and their intrinsic loquaciousness justifies the notion of language as an all-embracing body, even, metaphorically speaking, with an intention of its own.²⁴ Accordingly, an author may certainly have intentions while writing (as a reader might, too, while reading), but these intentions will continuously be accompanied, hampered and tampered with by others. Accordingly, whereas some elements of the text may be intended, all of them can never be premeditated.²⁵ In the realm of language, no one has complete control.

Is it still possible to have *some* control? Is there a limit to the proliferation of meaning? Can there be invalid interpretations? Gadamer opens up for the possibility, as he even suggests that the author's intentions could help in correcting invalid understandings:

[...] does 'knowing' what the poet had in mind therefore mean one knows what the poem says? [...] Whoever does not understand more than what the poet could have said without his poetry understands far too little. Of course, outside information can often be valuable. It protects against blatant error in the attempt to interpret. It makes it easier to understand everything correctly, that is, with uniform coherence, at least on a preliminary level.²⁶

Gadamer touches right on another difficult problem, namely that there is more than one kind of intention. Here, the term seems to be categorised under the larger category of 'outside information'. The distinction between extra-textual and textual concepts of

²⁴ Cf. Eco (1990) 5, Ricœur (1991) 148 and Compagnon (2004) 58.

²⁵ This insight is informed by linguistic pragmatism, cf. Compagnon (2004) 63-5.

²⁶ Gadamer (1987) 133.

intention is most interesting, and I will return to it as soon as I have taken a closer look at some cases for certain intentional possibilities.

1.2. Is It Possible to Say the Same Thing in Different Ways?

Before I change focus from theoretical problems concerning the relationship between intention and interpretation to literary manifestations of authorial intent, it should be useful to recall Hirsch's (1967) distinction between 'meaning' and 'significance': 'meaning of the text has remained the same, while the significance of that meaning has shifted.'²⁷ The question of whether it is possible to say the same thing in different ways involves a similar ambivalence of constancy and relativity, which I will try to map through two cases which I eventually will link to the *Epistula Sapphus*.

The first case concerns the possibility of saying the same thing with different words within the same language, that is, with the help of synonyms, which, for the sake of perspicuity, shall be contrasted with homonyms. Basically, homonyms are words that share an identical form, while synonyms are words that parallel each other in meaning.²⁸ Homonyms thus have a clearly formalistic appeal, whereas synonyms seem to rely on a dualistic conception, which allows for the letter's spirit to come in several forms of matter. The suggestion that a thought can be clothed in various kinds of 'flesh' seems to imply that the different 'incarnations' that appear in a text are a matter of choice, and accordingly a matter of intention. Hirsch (1976) states that he wants to defend 'the existence and importance of synonymy' against a growing scepticism in his time, especially among scholars concerned with stylistics.²⁹ Hirsch abandons the ideal of an 'absolutely identical meaning through different linguistic forms', and in order to keep the notion of synonymy he introduces instead the criterion of 'occasional substitutability'.³⁰ He demonstrates how this criterion is applicable down to the level of phonetics. Even differences of dialects of the same language testify to the possibility of saying the same thing in different ways. Indeed, synonymy represents important logic and linguistic challenges, but it is a resource in language which is constantly resorted to, and the practice of varying linguistic

²⁷ Hirsch (1967) 123. The notion is based on Frege's distinction between *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*, which is cognate to Husserl's concept of 'inner' and 'outer' horizons.

²⁸ Cf. Compagnon (2004) 45-8 and 132-5, 137 and 140-2.

²⁹ Hirsch (1976) 50.

³⁰ Hirsch (1976) 50, 54.

expression by the help of synonyms and synonymity does not only represent a literary possibility, but indeed a literary reality.³¹

The theoretical challenges involved in synonyms are, however, just like a *mise en abyme* of what is at stake in the case of translation, which is the other, exceedingly more complex case that I will consider concerning the possibility of saying the same thing with different words. In order not to get lost – not in translation, as it were, but in these complexities – I shall limit myself to pointing out that whereas the question of *translatability* remains an acute theoretic challenge, *translations* are possible, practiced and prominently instructive for the apprehension of the communicative dynamics between author and reader. Translation can be done, at its most conventional, from one language to another. Still, the process almost always involves (at least) two different cultures and (at least) two different times. A series of gaps must be bridged and the very process of translating amounts to a materialisation of the hermeneutical circle, or of ‘interpretation’, as Martindale (1993) prefers to say, touching at the same time on the initial question in the title of this section: is it possible to say the same thing in different ways?

Translation, like interpretation, becomes rather a saying in other words, a constant renegotiation of sameness-within-difference and difference-within-sameness [...]. [...] in language-use equivalence is not equivalent to sameness.³²

Again Classical literature highlights these processes, since, given that they are written in languages that now are dead, reading Greek and Latin is (more or less) an act of translation.

Before I now turn to the Latin *Epistula Sapphus*, I will consider one other feature of language that advocates the answer ‘yes’ to the question of whether it is possible to say the same thing with different words within different languages, namely the case of idiomatic expressions. Idioms represent some of the clearest examples of how Martindale’s ‘equivalence’ is not ‘sameness’: ‘to carry coals to Newcastle’ in English is closest to ‘å gå over bekken etter vann’ in Norwegian (a literal translation of this idiomatic expression would be: ‘to cross the brook to fetch some water’).

³¹ Accordingly synonyms are observed with interest by Barthes, who for instance opposes: ‘[...] an attempt to exhaust the nonetheless infinite variety and inventiveness of synonyms [...]’. And claims that to ‘thematize is [...] to leave the dictionary behind, to follow certain synonymic chains (*turbulent, murky, unstable, unresolved*) [...].’ (1990 = 1993) 58, 93.

³² Martindale (1993) 86-7.

When an equivalent idiomatic expression is hard to find, the sense can be kept non-figuratively, which in this case would be something like: ‘to do something which is pointless, in vain or unnecessary’. A literal translation of idioms always runs the risk of being incomprehensible. At the best it turns into refreshingly unfamiliar imagery, at the worst it is wrong. A translation from one language to another of an idiomatic expression activates (even more intensely than the choosing between synonyms within the same language) the possibility, and sometimes even the necessity, of expressing one sense in a form that is very different from the original.

1.3. Poetic Possibilities of The *Epistula Sapphus*

I will now focus on three features of the *Epistula Sapphus* that relate to the discussion above: firstly, the hermeneutically sophisticated representation of time in the poem’s opening passage, secondly, one line that reads rather like an idiomatic expression and, finally, one word which is particularly important to grasp in order to get closer to the *scribentis imago* of this poem.

The first feature, then, is simply the way in which the temporalities linked to the writer and the reader in the opening passage of the poem constitute a miniature picture of the hermeneutical circle’s fusion of horizons (which has a material match, as it were, in the act of translation). Since I have looked into these dynamics of the different temporalities already in the opening of Part One, I will not dwell more on this point here, but go straight on to the second feature, which is found in this distich:

ultima tu nostris accedit causa querelis,
non agitur uento nostra carina suo. (*Her.* 15.71-2)

Sappho, the abandoned heroine who has turned from lyrics to elegy out of heartache, is here at the end of a longer summary of her life’s miseries, among which Phaon (*tu*) is the last but certainly not the least contributor to her sorrows. The pentameter is arguably as close as one gets to an idiomatic expression in the *Epistula Sapphus*: “‘my ship is not driven by a favouring wind’” *suo* = *secundo*, a common idiom.³³ The phrase vacillates between a non-figurative sense within a metaphor, which can be translated literally, as by Showerman in his 1914 bilingual edition of the *Heroides*:

³³ Knox (1995) 293.

‘Last cause of all are you for my complaint. My craft is not impelled by a propitious gale.’³⁴ But the non-figurative sense of the infelicitous voyage-imagery as a metaphor for ‘an unfortunate lot’ is of course still there in the Latin text, and that is what Pope brings out in his version which was written in 1707 and published in 1712.³⁵

Alas, what more could fate itself impose,
But thee, the last, the greatest of my woes. (79-80)

Pope’s line number 80, which corresponds to *Her.* 15.72, has neither ‘my keel’ (*nostra carina*), nor ‘its wind’ (*uento suo*), but ‘fate itself’. Pope’s adaptation seems indeed freer than Showerman’s choices of ‘my craft’ and ‘propitious gale’. Still, Showerman’s English metaphrase of the Latin poem is, perhaps paradoxically, less in accordance with the original’s formal features than Pope’s version.³⁶ The reason for this is that Pope translates poetry into poetry, which, no matter how different the poetic forms might be, involves a shorter literary leap than does a translation from poetry to prose. And because of the actual metrical forms involved, the literary leap is arguably made even shorter. Given the widespread use of the elegiac distich in the Augustan era and extensive application of the iambic pentameter in the English eighteenth century, these metres are highly equivalent, if not the same, their different eras taken into consideration. Furthermore, Pope’s iambic pentameters constitute a blank-verse composition organised in pairs of *homoioleuta*, and accordingly its smallest metrical unit is, as in the elegiac metre’s combination of dactylic hexameters and dactylic pentameters, the couplet.³⁷ Despite the general dislike of *homoioleuta* in Latin verse, it so happens that the line *Her.* 15.72 has a different and more accepted form of rhyme in Classical poetry, namely the repetition of the same sound at the end of both halves of the pentameter: *non agitur uento || nostra carina suo*. And so there is an approximate equivalent between Pope’s translation and the original even as regards rhyme.

Showerman’s and, even more Pope’s, translation of the Latin elegiac couplet *Her.* 15.71-2 gives an idea of the richness of not only *what*, but also *how* this text

³⁴ Showerman, rev. by Goold (1977 = 1996) 187.

³⁵ Quoted from Dörrie (1975) 211.

³⁶ Pope’s non-figurative translation also facilitates an ampler, and therefore more precise, meaning of the word *ultima* as ‘last, but not least’, which in Showerman’s English becomes just ‘last’.

³⁷ Also known as the ‘heroic couplet.’

means.³⁸ Aiming, as I am in this study, at an overall understanding of the Ovidian *scribentis imago*, I will now try to map the word that appears at *Her* 15.3, *auctor*, similarly.

1.4. Ovidian *Auctores*

‘Méfions-nous des étymologies latines!’ warns Dupont (2004) as she sets out to explore the meaning of the Latin term *auctor*.³⁹ Equally sceptical, Kennedy (1993), who attempts at mapping both *what* and *how* the Latin term *amor* means, asks: ‘[c]an the word [...] ever mean exactly the same to two people given their inevitably different perspectives?’⁴⁰ I would happily add the question of whether a word means exactly the same to the same person at different times, too: precisely because words are ever moving targets, it is important to try to get a hold on them. Again, that achievement might be unfeasible in the end, but the heuristic gain that is likely to be produced along the way is justification enough for the quest.

Kennedy mentions two approaches to getting a grasp on terms that border on untranslatability:⁴¹ firstly there are dictionaries and then there are investigations of ‘the process by which words acquire *meaning* and significance in use, and language moulds its meanings in relation to different discursive situations.’⁴² While bearing Kennedy and Dupont’s scepticism in mind, I will now try both routes.

1.4.a) *The Latin Auctor*

Etymologically the verb *augeo*, ‘to increase’, relates to the nouns *augur*, ‘prophetic seer’, *auctor*, ‘author’, and *auctoritas*, ‘authority’, the verb *auctoro(r)*, ‘to sell/ hire/ oneself out’, the nouns *auctio*, ‘auction’, and *auxilium*, ‘assistance’.⁴³ These etymologically linked words can be organised in two groups of connotations: one concerned with authority understood as the power to increase and make happen, and the other concerned with sales and salesmen. *Auctor*, then, belongs to the first of these groups, whose general characteristics must inform the apprehension of the term.

³⁸ Cf. Martindale (1993) 89 and Kennedy (1994) 25.

³⁹ Dupont (2004) 171.

⁴⁰ Kennedy (1994) 25.

⁴¹ For the term ‘(un)translatability’ cf. Martindale (1993) 87 and Kennedy (1994) 25.

⁴² Kennedy (1994) 25.

⁴³ Ernout and Meillet (1979) 56-8.

The six explanatory categories of the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* (*TLL*) and the sixteen of the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (*OLD*) help in reaching a more precise definition of what, and perhaps even how, *auctor* can mean.⁴⁴ Both dictionaries present the mercantile aspect of the word in the first category, and proceed to cover a wide range of different variants of ‘a person of authority’ and ‘a reliable witness’, as well as ‘founder’ and ‘originator’ of things or of peoples. Dupont claims correctly that when the word *auctor* appears in relationship to writing, it usually denotes ‘historian’.⁴⁵ This significance creates an association between a ‘learned writer’ and a ‘reliable witness’, which is also underscored in the *TLL*: *praevalente sensu scriptoris*, ‘mostly in the sense of a writer’.⁴⁶ And under the same point: ‘*carminis sim. eum significans qui fecit*’, ‘a poem’s or something similar to a poem’s [author], means he who composed it’. This is a sense that renders *auctor* a virtual synonym of *poeta*. Similarly, in the *OLD* *auctor* is explained as:

[...] the maker, creator, builder, inventor or artist. [...] the person who wrote a book, told a story, the author, *sine -ore*; anonymous; [...] the original author (as distinct from an imitator, adapter, etc.). [...] a pioneer (in a literary field).⁴⁷

As already mentioned, Ovid claims to have written an *Epistula Sapphus* (*Am.* 2.18.26), and for this and several other reasons that I will explore profoundly in Part Two of the thesis, the Ovidian corpus represents a legitimate and most rewarding context for the understanding of this poem. It is therefore important to see how the term *auctor*, which can mean so much in so many ways, is employed in the works of Ovid.

According to *A Concordance of Ovid* (*CO*) there are about one hundred occurrences of the word in the poet’s compositions. Following *Am.* 2.18 in presuming that the *Epistula Sapphus* is a part of the *Heroides* and that the *Heroides* are written by Ovid, I shall limit my investigation of the term *auctor* to the works that Ovid composed around the same time, that is during his early poetic career. I will return extensively to the chronological order of the works that I assign to this period. For

⁴⁴ Cf. *OLD*, 204-6 and *TLL*, II, 1194-1215.

⁴⁵ Dupont (2004) 171. ‘A writer who is regarded as a master of his subject or as providing reliable evidence, an authority. [...] *-or esse* (of an historian or other authority, to be recorded as saying, relate, state; *-ores (idoneos) habere*, to have reliable evidence, to find it stated in the authorities.’ *OLD*, 205, 9 b.

⁴⁶ *TLL*, II, 1206-7. Attested in Ovid at *Tr.* 2.411 and 4.4, 26

⁴⁷ *OLD*, 206.

now, it should suffice to mention the works I include in this category: the *Heroides*, the *Amores*, the *Ars Amatoria*, the *Medicamina Faciei Femineae* and the *Remedia Amoris*. Most of the occurrences of the term in question are found in the *Heroides*. Here there are nine instances of the word compared to four in the *Amores*, four in the *Ars Amatoria*, none in the fragments of the *Medicamina Faciei Femineae*, and two in the *Remedia Amoris*. I will now look closer at each instance, beginning with the most recent work and then go back in an inverse chronological order so that I will finally arrive at the term which is the ultimate objective for my investigation, the *auctor* at *Her.* 15.3.

At line 22 of the *Remedia Amoris* the poet claims that the god of Love will not be the *auctor* of any unhappy lover's funeral if he only stops his enterprise, and at 485 the poet encourages his students to follow Agamemnon's example, *auctore Agamemnone*, in taking a new concubine (Briseis) when he had to give up his first (Chryseis). In the *Ars Amatoria* Livia is the *auctor* of the portico she has had constructed at *Ars* 1.72; at *Ars* 1.326 the white bull, with which Pasiphae mates, is the *auctor* of her offspring, the Minotaur; at *Ars* 1.654 the craftsman Perillus, who was roasted in his own bronze bull, becomes his work's unhappy *auctor* and at *Ars* 1.704 Achilles is the *auctor* of the rape (*stuprum*) of Deidamia. In the *Amores*, the books themselves tell how their *auctor*, also called Naso, preferred them to be reduced from five to three in the *epigramma ipsius*. Then Ovid's knightly ancestor, *auctor eques*, is mentioned at *Am.* 1.3.8; at *Am.* 2.6.34 a bird, provoking showers, is an *auctor* of rain and at *Am.* 3.13.22 a boy hunts down a goat, wins her and therefore is both her and her wound's *auctor*. In the *Heroides* Hipsipyle talks about Jason as the *auctor* of her pregnancy at *Her.* 6.120; at *Her.* 7.105 Dido begs our pardon for having trusted someone who seemed an *idoneus auctor*; and at line 136 she calls Aeneas the *auctor* of their unborn baby's death.⁴⁸ Hermione calls her grandfather, Tyndareus, an *auctor* because of his age and experience at *Her.* 8.31, and at *Her.* 10.132 Ariadne says that rocks must be the *auctor* of Theseus, since he has a heart of stone. At *Her.* 11.8 Canace calls her father, who has ordered her to kill herself with a sword, the *auctor* of the suicide she is about to commit, while Hypermetra says at *Her.* 14.110 that white-

⁴⁸ '[...] **idoneus auctor** 'a suitable authority': a literary joke perhaps. The most obvious reference is to Aeneas himself, elsewhere called *pietatis idoneus auctor* (*Fast.* 2.543); but the phrase is most commonly used of trustworthy authors (cf. *TLL* s.v. *idoneus* 234.17ff.) and Dido's affair with Aeneas was largely a product of the imagination of one author, Virgil.' Knox (1995) 220. For a similar survey of the occurrences of *auctor* in the *Heroides* cf. Fulkerson (2005) 153.

headed old age is the *auctor* of the stories she has heard about her ancestor Io who was turned into a heifer by Juno so that Jupiter could not have his will with her. Finally Sappho uses the term twice, firstly when she says that she is the *auctor* of the literary letter (*Her.* 15.3), and secondly when she calls her beloved Phaon the *auctor* of her looks which are now neglected as he has left for Sicily (*Her.* 15.78).

In sum, the term *auctor* displays a variety of significations in the early Ovidian oeuvre and it is used only twice about poets, firstly when the three elegiac books mention their *auctor*, that is, Ovid, in the *Amores' epigramma ipsius*, and secondly when Sappho claims to be the *Epistula Sapphus' auctor*.⁴⁹ I will explore the relationship between these strangely authorial expressions in Part Two. Here I will simply underscore the fact that Ovid and Sappho are the only poets called *auctores* in the extant works of Ovid's early poetic career. The rare reference (i.e. 'author' for Ovid and Sappho) of these two *auctores* make them stand out, and perhaps the *auctor Sappho* most prominently so, since she belongs to yet another rare and significant category, namely that of the term in question applied to women.

1.4.b) *The Gender-Bending Auctor of Art*

The *TLL* operates with a proper category for the application of the term to feminine entities, animate and non-animate alike. With as much as ten usages throughout his entire corpus, Ovid interestingly represents the majority of the instances that have been found from Plautus to Priscus Anastasius.⁵⁰ As regards quantity, the next after Ovid is Servius with five instances, and then comes Seneca. My point, again, is that the Ovidian corpus contains most of the occurrences of an otherwise rare and rather divergent application of the term. The *auctor* of *Heroides* 15 contributes thus to the same unique gender-bending language as does Hypispyle when she calls Medea a *non expectata hostis* (*Her.* 6.82) and when Canace calls herself a *rudis* and *noua miles* (*Her.* 11.48) as she suffers the pangs of giving birth for the first time. These applications help in blurring the traditional gender hierarchy. The conventionally weaker and receptive 'woman' is described with words that are linked to a masculine order of threatening power (*hostis*), aggression (*miles*) and authority (*auctor*).⁵¹ The

⁴⁹ Irony is of course at work in the *epigramma ipsius*, since the term *auctor*, linked as it is with the power to increase, here is used about one who has reduced his work. Cf. McKeown (1989) 5.

⁵⁰ Cf. *TLL*, II, 1211, 45-76.

⁵¹ Cf. Kennedy's discussion of the 'essentially' masculine and the 'essentially' feminine (1994) 29.

destabilisation of gender-defining language becomes exceptionally marked in the case of *Her.* 15.3, since it combines both a female figure, the idea of authority, and the role of a poet, which is the same role that belongs to the male, extradiegetic, producer of this text, that is, Ovid. Ovid's focus on the so-called 'opposite sex' becomes, then, a gesture of non-reductive reflection.

According to the dictionaries, the predominant meaning of *auctor*, except for the mercantile aspect of the word, is an 'originating point', a 'primordial, productive instance', a 'reliable source of information', a 'trustworthy witness', a 'guarantor' and an 'authority'.⁵² This is, however, hardly an accurate description of the *auctor* of the *Epistula Sapphus*, neither in the sense of 'Sappho', nor of 'Ovid'.⁵³ That *auctor* is rather one who blurs the distinction between the sexes and invalidates stereotypical notions of both men and women, and perhaps even of human identity in general. This is an *auctor* who is emblematic for the Ovidian corpus in general, and for how art, as Vernier would define it, is able to shake our habitual perceptions by employing idle 'leftovers' (fr. *scories*) of the symbolic systems that we otherwise have learned to handle in accordance with their operative functions. It is hardly by coincidence that when Kennedy discusses stereotypical concepts of nature, sex and gender in relationship with the Latin *amor*, he turns precisely to Ovid for the inversion of such stereotypes.⁵⁴

⁵² This conception corresponds, however, well with one description of Barthes: 'it is he who knows the code, the origin, the basis, and thus becomes the guarantor, the witness, the author (*auctor*) of reality: he has the right to determine the difference between the sexes [...].' Barthes (1990 = 1993) 167.

⁵³ Dupont, who wants to challenge the ease with which the Latin *auctor* is associated with the French *auteur*, claims that the Latin term initially referred to the senatorial order and belonged to politics and that a writer only could assume the name as a metaphor. The poet-author is, then, not one, but two persons: the person writing and the writer's patron and the author's *auctoritas* stems from this addressee, the patron, (2004) *passim*. Since Dupont keeps to Horace and Virgil, poets who have patrons that remain distinctly present in their works, her insistence on the relation patron-author-authority is warranted. But the situation is very different among the Augustan poets who wrote erotic elegy, a genre in which the attitude towards authorities remains exceedingly problematic, if not uniformly divergent from the situation of non-elegiac poets. In the case of Ovid, however, his early patron, Messalla, is eminently absent from his poems. Ovid mentions him only once, at *Pont.* 4.16.43, which is the very last of his poetic compositions! At this point, when both his exile and life are about to end, Messalla has even more or less ceased to be the poet's patron, and is accordingly mentioned in the poem, not because of his relationship to Ovid, but as a father of the poet Cotta Maximus.

⁵⁴ [...] sexual identities, however internalized and regarded as 'natural' by those who bear them, are for gender critics culturally specific *roles*, and character traits are not autonomous, immanent qualities but functions and ways of relating. The terms of this debate could be represented as 'already explored' (and 'already deconstructed' if one so wishes) in Ovid's discussion of the roles of the sexes in taking the initiative in sexual encounters (*Ars* I.277-8): *conueniat maribus ne quam nos ante rogemus/ femina iam partes uicta rogantis aget* ('were it to be agreed among males that we should not take the lead in courtship, the female, overwhelmed by desire, will play that role'); female libido is 'by nature' stronger (Ovid uses female animals by way of 'proof', 279-80), but it is 'convention' that males, although desire

There are certainly many Latin *auctores*, as there are indeed several French *auteurs*, and in the next chapter I will argue that if the predominant, authoritative image of the Latin author corresponds with the author that Barthes declared dead, then the Ovidian *auctor*, on the contrary, performs as a striking parallel to the author that Barthes brings back to life. And, again, ‘gender’ is a key word.

is more moderate and not so vehement amongst ‘us’ (*parcior in nobis nec tam furiosa libido*, 281) should take the initiative.’ Kennedy (1994) 29.

2. *The Author Is Dead. Long Live The Author.*

Sappho, Ovid, Balzac, Barthes

I shall now try to let four texts – the *Epistula Sapphus*, Balzac's *Sarrasine* and Barthes' 'La mort de l'auteur' and *S/Z* – elucidate each other reciprocally. The most important reason for doing this is that a curious confusion concerning gender and authorship permeates all these works, with the inescapable consequence, so it seems, that someone has to die.

The most (in)famous death of them all, namely 'La mort de l'auteur', which was written by Barthes in the rebellious year of 1968, is the first I shall approach. But before I proceed to this article, I will just pick up on the distinction that Gadamer touched upon when he linked the author's intention to 'outside information' in the preceding chapter.⁵⁵ In relationship with this connection it should be useful to recall that the antibiographical movement of New Criticism aimed at attacking precisely an extra-textual conception of intention when warning against the 'intentional fallacy'. What the authors behind this *caveat* were condemning was the common practice of searching for information about the author's intention as it was prior to the act of writing, then compare the intention to the written result, and finally judge the textual product as successful if it was in accordance with the extra-textual intention, and as less successful if it was not.⁵⁶ But as recent theorists tend to know: 'c'est l'œuf qui fait la poule, et l'on ne devient auteur qu'à partir de l'œuvre.'⁵⁷ And one stage in Barthes' efforts to 'return the documentary figure of the author into a novelistic (fr. *romanesque*), irretrievable, irresponsible figure, caught up in the plural of its own text' is precisely his auctoricide.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Cf. the preceding chapter and Gadamer (1987) 133.

⁵⁶ Wimsatt and Beardsley (1946 = 1954) *passim*.

⁵⁷ Vernier (2004) 120. In Barthes' words: '[...] the book and author stand automatically on a single line divided into a *before* and an *after*. The Author is thought to *nourish* the book, which is to say that he exists before it, thinks, suffers and lives for it, is in the same relation of an antecedence to his work as a father to his child. In complete contrast, the [...] scriptor is born simultaneously with the text [...].'
Barthes (1977 = 2002) 5.

⁵⁸ Significantly, Barthes adds that the task of returning the authors to their texts, is one 'whose adventure has already been recounted, not by critics, but by authors'. Barthes (1990 = 1993) 211-2.

2.1. The Sex Of The Author

Not sex, but ideology is what Barthes first draws attention to in 'La mort de l'auteur'. Here the *author/ Author* (fr. *auteur/ Auteur*) is a capitalist construction furnished with originality, individualism and biography in order to fit the ideals of modernism.⁵⁹ This *Author-God* (fr. *Auteur-Dieu*) caters accordingly for ideological purposes, not literary ones, and so he has to be destroyed. Writers like Mallarmé, Valéry, Proust, Brecht and Baudelaire, who in Barthes' vocabulary merit the title *scriptors* (fr. *scripteurs*), have since long tried to overthrow the empire of the Author. Unfortunately, they have been in want of allies. For in this empire dwells also the just as ideologically charged Critic, a representative of good society (fr. *la bonne société*), who is bent on preserving the capitalist author-construct. In order to save writing (fr. *l'écriture*), from the ideological abuse and extra-textual interests that the Critic and the Author represent, it is therefore necessary to ally scriptors and readers who are semiotically, not ideologically obliged.⁶⁰ Although it is sometimes neglected, it is precisely the future of *writing* which is at the core of Barthes' final punch line: 'to give writing its future, it is necessary to overthrow the myth: the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author.'⁶¹

So, what has sex got to do with it? At the very point of departure for Barthes' Nietzschean declaration of the author's death, we find these curious reflections:

In his story *Sarrasine* Balzac, describing a castrato disguised as a woman, writes the following sentence: '*This was woman herself, with her sudden fears, her irrational whims, her instinctive worries, her impetuous boldness, her fussings, and her delicious sensibility.*'⁶² Who is speaking thus? Is it the hero of the story bent on

⁵⁹ 'The author is a modern figure, a product of our society insofar as, emerging from the Middle Ages with English empiricism, French rationalism and the personal faith of the Reformation, it discovered the prestige of the individual, of, as it is more nobly put, the 'human person'. It is thus logical that in literature (fr. en matière de littérature) it should be this positivism, the epitome and culmination of capitalist ideology, which has attached the greatest importance to the 'person' of the author.' Barthes (1977 = 2002) 4.

⁶⁰ For some tentative descriptions of the Barthesian scriptor and reader respectively, cf. e.g.: 'the scriptor no longer bears with him passions, humours, feelings, impressions, but rather this immense dictionary from which he draws a writing that can know no halt: life never does more than imitate the book, and the book itself is only a tissue of signs, an imitation that is lost, infinitely deferred.' On the other hand: 'the reader is history, biography, psychology; he is simply that *someone* who holds together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted.' Barthes (1977 = 2002) 6, 7.

⁶¹ Barthes (1977 = 2002) 7. In the French: 'pour rendre à l'écriture son avenir, il faut en renverser le mythe : la naissance du lecteur doit se payer de la mort de l'auteur.' Barthes (1968 = 1984) 69.

⁶² In the French: « C'était la femme, avec ses peurs soudaines, ses caprices sans raison, ses troubles instinctifs, ses audaces sans cause, ses bravades et sa délicieuse finesse de sentiments. » I follow Barthes' division of Balzac's text into numbered passages, Balzac, 439 in Barthes (1970) 235.

remaining ignorant of the castrato hidden beneath the woman? Is it Balzac the individual, furnished by his personal experience with a philosophy of Woman? Is it Balzac the author professing 'literary' ideas on femininity? Is it universal wisdom? Romantic psychology?⁶³

Barthes has here found an exceedingly interesting passage in *Sarrasine* where the short story's carefully embedded layers of narrations seem to collapse. The passage is folded into a story about the sculptor Sarrasine and the singer Zambinella that, again, is being told by an unnamed man to Madame Rochefide in a short story, which, yet again, is written by Balzac. As Barthes' questions make clear, there is a certain gnomic character in the description of *la femme*, which impedes the determination of where it belongs in this intricate order of the short story's narratives. It looks almost as if the extradiegetic author is cutting through the carefully embedded layers of the narratives at this point, and speaks in his own person. But precisely 'his own person' becomes a highly unstable point of reference in this drama of deadly deceptions: the truism about *la femme* is indeed proved doubly false by the very text which formulates it, since it firstly seems to come *not* from *a woman*, but *a man* (Balzac), and is secondly destined *not* for *a woman*, but an *emasculated man* (Zambinella). Both Balzac and Zambinella invalidate, as it were, the text's stereotypical definition of 'womanhood', and thus both the fictional character of the castrato and the image of the author become a part of the fiction's dynamics.

In 'La mort de l'auteur' Barthes gives the following answer to the questions quoted above:

We shall never know, for the good reason that writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin. Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative (fr. *le noir-et-blanc*) where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing.⁶⁴

But tellingly, this is not all that Barthes gathers from *Sarrasine*, and accordingly he dedicates his next work, *S/Z* (1970), in its entirety to the short story.

⁶³ Barthes (1977 = 2002) 4.

⁶⁴ Barthes (1977 = 2002) 4.

2.2. Ovid's Sappho, Balzac's Sarrasine ...

The *Epistula Sapphus* and *Sarrasine* appear to be challenging stereotypical concepts of male, female and therefore human identity in general. Fascinatingly, the challenges seem to reflect back on a gender-bending *auctor* in Ovid and a similar *auteur* in Balzac, and in order to map more parallels of this kind, I will now present a summary of the content of each work.

* The *Epistula Sapphus*

(1-8) The opening of this versified letter is concerned with the reader's ability to recognise the familiar handwriting of Sappho through the unfamiliar form of the elegiac distich. Sappho explains that her change from the lyric to the elegiac mode is due to her current heartache. (9-40) Phaon, Sappho's former lover and the addressee of her elegiac letter, has left her and gone to Sicily. Sappho can neither compose lyrical poetry, nor find pleasure in her former girlfriends. Phaon has all her affection; he is like the vatic deities Apollo and Bacchus to her. And if Sappho herself does not have looks to match his, her poetic talent compensates for her physical shortcomings. (41-50) And she used indeed to be attractive to Phaon when he read her poetry or she recited it. Then he kissed her, and they made love. (51-8) But now the Sicilian women are his prey, and Sappho would rather be one of them than a Lesbian. She even warns the Sicilian women that Phaon will abandon them as he has abandoned her. And she prays that the Sicilian goddess of love, Venus Erycina, will not do the same, but rather give her divine assistance. (59-78) Sappho could need this, as she wonders if her misfortunes, which began with her father's death when she was six, and which has reached its culmination in Phaon's deceit, will always continue. Even her looks are miserable and neglected now that Phaon is gone. (79-96) Susceptible to affections, that is simply how her heart is, and so she must always be in love. It was either the will of fate or her own interest in love poetry that made her to be like this. But as if her disposition for falling in love were not sufficient, Phaon himself was so beautiful that even men would find him irresistible. Indeed, even goddesses would help themselves, had they not other interests.

(97-122) Sappho writes that she is writing and that she blots her writing with her tears. She imagines how Phaon's departure would have been, because he did not leave honestly. Actually, he left without saying a word, and Sappho had to suffer the

degradation of being told of his departure by someone else. And when she first realised what had happened, she froze as she was filled with no other feeling, neither shame, nor degradation, but pain. Her wild frenzy made her look so much like a mother bereaved of her child that her brother, Charaxus, spitefully made the remark that her daughter was well. (123-62) But if Phaon is gone to Sicily, Sappho can still find him in her dreams. And in her dreams everything is as if it is real, the embraces, the kisses, the words, and the sexual arousal. Sadly she wakes up, and as if to prolong the imaginary company of Phaon, she takes to the idyllic landscapes where they used to share their erotic joys. On one of these occasions, when she had laid herself down beside a crystal-clear fountain and fallen asleep, a Naiad appeared. The divine creature advised Sappho to go to the Leucadian promontory and jump in order to make her heartache end, just as Deucalion did when his love for Pyrrha was not mutual.

(173-194) Sappho says that she is getting up, as if from the grass she was lying on beside the fountain, and thus bridges the time gap between the Naiad's appearance and the moment she is writing by promising to go immediately to Leucas and try the remedy. It is now as if she were standing at the very edge of the rock and writing. She asks Amor to soften her fall and states that she will dedicate her lyre to Apollo on her safe landing. But she is not confident that the Naiad's advice will work and so she claims that Phaon would be better to her than the Leucadian waters. (195-8) She bewails her failing ability to be eloquent. (199-206) She addresses her former lovers, the Lesbian women, and begs them not to throng around her for her lyre playing. It is in vain: only Phaon can give her inspiration back. (207-20) Sappho now asks herself if her words will ever get through to him and in the very last lines she proposes a series of 'either' ... 'or' alternatives, including a plea for a 'cruel letter' if Phaon remains bent on his decision to stay far away from his Sappho, so that she can seek her fate in the waters at Leucas.

* *Sarrasine*

(1-10) Whereas Sappho ends up lingering in a leap between life and death, as it were, the narrator of *Sarrasine* starts his tale caught up between the dance of the dead and the dance of the living. As already touched upon, this short story has one story embedded in another. (11-61) The first takes place in high-society Paris. Here the narrator is at a luxurious ball hosted by the wealthy Lanty family. (62) With him he

has brought Madame Rochefide. (63-100) They are both fascinated by a very aged and peculiar-looking member of the host family, and when Madame Rochefide finally touches the old man, as if to check if he is alive, he screams and draws the attention of the rest of the family to Madame Rochefide and the narrator, urging them to hide in a boudoir. (101-152) In this boudoir there is a painting, and amazed by the beauty of the portrait that shows Adonis, Madame Rochefide begins to pose questions about the portrait that the narrator apparently is able, but not willing, to answer, at least not immediately. The next day, however, he comes to her residence and tells her the story of *Sarrasine*.

(153-257) Ernest Jean Sarrasine was a French sculptor who came to Rome where he visited the Teatro Argentina and fell in love with the diva called Zambinella. (258-311) He went to the theatre every night, and on one occasion, Zambinella suddenly gazed intensely at him, whereupon an old woman knocked on the door of his lodge and told him that the singer had arranged for them to meet. (312-69) When Sarrasine subsequently showed up at the place where he had been invited to, he was disappointed in finding that they were not alone. In fact, there was quite a large group of people present, mainly from the opera. (370-89) Sarrasine wanted a moment alone with Zambinella and took her to a kind of a boudoir where she threatened him with a dagger to keep him at a distance and escaped. (390-455) Sarrasine ran after her, and was received by discomfiting laughter from the other guests. When they then decided to go to Frascati, Sarrasine and Zambinella shared a phaeton (vehicle), in which Sarrasine finally took the opportunity to declare his love. Zambinella replied that he should not love her, but the sculptor kept on insisting, and on the return from Frascati Zambinella chose to sit in a carriage with someone else. (456-466) Back in Rome Sarrasine was invited to a party where Zambinella would be singing. He arrived a little late, and puzzled at seeing her dressed as a man, he asked the Chigi prince why she was wearing such clothes. (467-474) The Roman prince replied that she was no she, and that he himself was the one who had 'equipped', *doté*, 'ce drôle-là' with his voice. (475-8) At the same time the castrato discovered Sarrasine, his voice shivered and he interrupted his song. (479-83) His protector, Cardinal Cicognara, wanted to find out who had caused this emotional stir in his protégé, and when he had learned Sarrasine's name, he secretly sent for his men. (484-511) After the performance Sarrasine captured Zambinella with the help of some friends. (512-534) Furious with rage because the castrato had fooled him only to amuse his friends at the opera,

Sarrasine threatened to kill him. (535-542) As he was about to carry out the deed, Cardinal Cicognara's men entered and killed the sculptor.

(543) At this point of the narrator's story Madame Rochefide says that she does not understand what Sarrasine has to do either with the portrait she has seen or with the Lanty family. (544-9) And so the narrator explains that a sculpture that Sarrasine had made of Zambinella, showing a perfect woman, later served as a model for Vien's painting that she herself saw at the Lanty's. This was a portrait of the figure of Adonis that again had served as a model of Girodet's Endymion. The first model of all these art works was the castrato diva called Zambinella, who, explains the narrator to Madame Rochefide, is the very same person as the aged member of the family Lanty, whom she had touched the other night. (550-61) Quite contrary to what the narrator had expected, Madame Rochefide finds the whole story utterly disheartening and asks her guest to leave. He calls her rejection a punishment, and says that the story has a happy ending in as much as castration is not practised anymore. She just replies that everything has a right to asylum in a city like Paris and that she is proud that no one shall have 'known' her.

2.3. ... and Barthes' *S/Z*

The *Epistula Sapphus* and *Sarrasine* have the interesting fact in common that both texts tend to invalidate gender-stereotypes through reflexive gestures that seem to complicate the image of the author. *S/Z*, in which Barthes takes these textual gestures, which he calls, among other things, 'that neutral' (fr. *ce neutre*), as a point of departure, is helpful in discovering more counterpoints between these works. Despite the fact that *S/Z* is (in)famous for being strictly structuralist, I will focus on Barthes' treatment of intention, his understanding of how the writer's image is employed in a text, and some strikingly Ovidian features and figures, including Sappho.

S/Z is first and foremost a vindication of the reader's importance, based on two typologies, one of texts and one of interpretations. As regards the first typology, the 'writerly' (fr. *scriptible*) text is of principal value because it is highly plural and demands the most of the reader. The 'readerly' (fr. *lisible*) text is also valuable, but ranks below the 'writerly', because it is less plural. As regards the typology of interpretations, the appreciation of textual plurality is of principal importance, and in order to activate this plurality connotations (as distinguished from denotations) are the

most effective means. Barthes furthermore operates with two methods. The first is concerned with the structuring potential of readings. Here, it is justifiable to forget as one reads and challenge every idea of a text's 'sum'. The quest for the ultimate interpretation or fundamental structure should accordingly be abandoned: for the sake of plurality no end must be imposed onto the text or the reading. The second method is very concrete, and consists of splintering the text into smaller pieces that facilitate both the recuperation of meaning and the development of connotations.⁶⁵ Barthes finds them all in his active playing with shorter passages as he reads and *rereads* the readerly text *Sarrasine* (IV-V); 'the same and new':

If then, a deliberate contradiction in terms, we *immediately* reread the text, it is in order to obtain, as though under the effect of a drug (that of recommencement, of difference), not the *real* text, but a plural text: the same and new.⁶⁶

In these typologies of texts and interpretations, where there apparently is room for *deliberate* (fr. *volontaire*) contradictions in terms, what is the role of intention? I shall now approach this question from a practical, rather than a theoretical angle and look at Barthes' treatment of three literary phenomena: irony, parody and allusions.

2.3.a) Irony, Parody and Parallel Passages

Irony and parody most clearly imply that the author intended the opposite of what he or she wrote (if not, it is no longer irony or parody). Accordingly, these literary features are good examples in favour of an intentionalist stance. Barthes, *for the same reason*, regards such tropes and figures as destructive:⁶⁷

[...] irony acts as a signpost, and thereby it destroys the multivalence [...]. A multivalent text can carry out its basic duplicity only if it subverts the opposition between true and false, if it fails to attribute quotations (even when seeking to discredit them) to explicit authorities [...]. For multivalence (contradicted by irony) is a transgression of ownership. The wall of voices must be passed through to reach the writing: this latter eschews any designation of ownership and can thus never be *ironic* [...]. Employed in behalf of a subject that puts its imaginary elements at the distance it pretends to take with regard to the language of others, thereby making itself even

⁶⁵ These connotations can be of a defining, topical, analytical, topological, dynamic, historical, functionalistic, structuralist and ideological kind.

⁶⁶ Barthes (1990 = 1993) 16.

⁶⁷ In the *Appendices III. Summary of Content* 'irony' is found under the heading *False unleashing of the infinity of codes*, cf. 5. c. Barthes (1990 = 1993) 265.

more securely a subject of the discourse, parody, irony at work, is always a *classic* language. What could parody be that did not advertise itself as such?⁶⁸

Consulting the French of this passage, one sees that Barthes uses the term ‘intention’ in a way that is perfectly common: he evidently does not reject the notion, but, since it tends to impede the redemption of textual plurality, he dislikes it.⁶⁹ Barthes’s dislike of irony and parody reads thus as yet another way of claiming that meaning is the hallmark of literature. The more meaning (which can be either restricted or infinite) there is in the text, the more this text is literature.

As regards the case of parallel passages, Compagnon, who places Barthes firmly in the anti-intentionalist camp, says that:

I do not think we could easily find a more rigorous example of the rejection of the most customary method [i.e. that of parallel passages] of literary studies. Yet at the heart of the book, at its crucial point, I find [...] a comparison with *Le Chef-d’œuvre inconnu*, between Frenhofer and Sarrasine, the painter and the sculptor.⁷⁰

Compagnon presents the comparison between the two artists as an ‘intentional’ slip of Barthes’ structuralist pen, but despite the fact that *S/Z* is a vindication of the reader’s importance, the author, in this case, Balzac, is definitely present in this study – and in rather a multifarious fashion, too. As Companion observes, Frenhofer is called ‘another Balzacian artist’ and Barthes actually uses the adjective about Balzac’s output in general in sub-chapter XC, simply called *The Balzacian text*. Compagnon also refers to this section, but he does not refer to what it contains. This is the point where Barthes comments upon Madame Rochefide’s reaction, when, after having heard the whole story about Sarrasine, she says the following words to the narrator:

⁶⁸ Barthes (1990 = 1993) 44-5. In the French: “[...] l’ironie joue le rôle d’une affiche et par là détruit la multivalence [...] Un texte multivalent n’accomplit jusqu’au bout sa duplicité constitutive que s’il subvertit l’opposition du vrai et du faux, s’il n’attribue pas ses énoncés (même dans l’intention de les discréditer) à des autorités explicites [...] Car la multivalence (démentie par l’ironie) est une transgression de la propriété. Il s’agit de traverser le mur de la voix pour atteindre l’écriture : celle-ci refuse toute désignation de propriété et par conséquent ne peut jamais être *ironique* [...]. Menée au nom d’un sujet qui met son imaginaire dans la distance qu’il feint de prendre vis-à-vis du langage des autres, et se constitue par là d’autant plus sûrement sujet du discours, la parodie, qui est en quelque sorte l’ironie au travail, est toujours une parole *classique*. Que pourrait être une parodie qui ne s’afficherait pas comme telle ?” Barthes (1970) 46-7.

⁶⁹ For the very same reasons, Barthes condemns ‘vulgarisms’ that form ‘a monster and this monster is ideology. [...] the Balzacian text is clotted with it: because of its cultural codes, it stales, rots, excludes itself from writing (which is always a *contemporary* task). [...] the extrusion of the stereotype is scarcely averted by irony, for as we have seen (XXI), irony can only add a new code (a new stereotype) to the codes, the stereotypes it claims to exorcise.’ Barthes (1990 = 1993) 97-8.

⁷⁰ Companion (2004) 53.

‘*Vous m’avez dégoûtée de la vie et des passions pour longtemps.*’⁷¹ ‘A long time?’

Barthes intervenes, and continues:

Hardly. Béatrix, Countess Arthur de Rochefide, born in 1808, married in 1828, and very quickly weary of her husband, taken to Lanty’s ball by the narrator around 1830 – and stricken then, she says, by a mortal castration – will nevertheless three years later run off to Italy with the tenor Conti, will have a celebrated affaire with Calyste du Guénic to spite her friend and rival Félicité des Touches, will later become the mistress of la Palférine, etc.: castration is obviously not a mortal disease, one can be cured of it. However, to be cured we must leave *Sarrasine* and emigrate to other texts (*Béatrix*, *Modeste Mignon*, *Une fille d’Eve*, *Autre étude de femme*, *Les Secrets de la princesse de Cadignan*, etc.). These texts form the Balzacian text. There is no reason not to include the Sarrasinean text within the Balzacian text (we could have done so had we wanted to continue, to develop this game of the plural (fr. *ce jeu du pluriel*)).⁷²

Barthes objects, as it were, to Madame Rochefide’s claim by referring to her further destiny within the output of Balzac, and thus disqualifies her statement.⁷³ The idea that the output of an author, in this case Balzac, forms a special kind of unit, is evidently embraced by Barthes, and he even calls the parallel passages of such a unit, which might also be called allusions, ‘this game of the plural’.

2.3.b) *Personal Pronouns, Proper Names and Authors’ Names*

Thus, even Barthes seems to agree that the notion of intention is pertinent to the understanding of texts and in cases like irony and parody it constrains the textual meaning. Likewise, authors are, to varying degrees, pertinent to the understanding of texts, especially if they are associated with textual plurality, as in the case of the parallel passages that Barthes points out by linking the image of Balzac to his entire literary output. That is, however, not all:

The Author himself – that somewhat decrepit deity of old criticism – can or could some day become a text like any other: he has only to avoid making his person the subject, the impulse, the origin, the authority, the Father, whence his work would proceed, by channel of *expression*: he has only to see himself as a being on paper and his life as a *bio-graphy* (in the etymological sense of the word), a [...] substance of a *connection* and not of a *filiation*: the critical undertaking (if we can still speak of criticism) will then consist in returning the documentary figure of the author into a

⁷¹ Balzac, 552 in Barthes (1970) 239. In the English: ‘You have given me disgust for life and for passions that will last a long time’ Barthes (1990 = 1993) 253.

⁷² Barthes (1990 = 1993) 211.

⁷³ For yet another use of a parallel passage form within the œuvre of Balzac, see Barthes (1990 = 1993) 106.

novelistic (fr. *romanesque*), irretrievable, irresponsible figure, caught up in the plural of its own text: a task whose adventure has already been recounted, not by critics, but by authors themselves [...].⁷⁴

Such authors, I would like to add, as those of the *Epistula Sapphus* and *Sarrasine*. Several features that Barthes points out in Balzac's short story are interestingly mirrored in Sappho's elegiac letter. I will now take a closer look at three of these features, firstly the usage of personal pronouns, secondly proper names and thirdly the author's proper name.

The personal pronoun has power to conjure up a character, as Barthes brilliantly points out.

In the story (and in many conversations), *I* is no longer a pronoun, but a name, the best of names: to say *I* [...] gives one a biographical duration, it enables one to undergo, in one's imagination, an intelligible "evolution", to signify oneself as an object with a destiny, to give meaning to time. On this level, *I* [...] is therefore a character (fr. *personnage*).⁷⁵

Here, Barthes takes a parenthetical detour to the form of conversations to make his point, which is arguably just as well underscored by the example of epistolary conventions employed in the *Epistula Sapphus*. In accordance with these conventions, not only the first person singular, but also the second person singular is brought into play. Since Sappho's letter is versified, and belongs to epistolary fiction, these pronouns bear on an even greater metaliterary charge, eminently demonstrated by the opening of the poem, which introduces the 'personages' of both 'you' and 'me' through details like *littera nostra* and *oculis tuis* (*Her.* 15.1-2).

Proper names have a similar, but more intense effect. Whereas the personal pronoun 'I' might be associated with the author and 'you' with the reading subject, the proper name is invested with a more stable form of imaginary flesh.⁷⁶ 'The proper name acts as a magnetic field for the semes; referring in fact to a body, it draws the semic configuration into an evolving (biographic) tense.'⁷⁷ In the case of the

⁷⁴ Barthes (1990 = 1993) 211-2.

⁷⁵ Barthes (1990 = 1993) 68.

⁷⁶ 'When identical semes traverse the same proper names several times and appear to settle upon it, a character is created. Thus, the character is a product of combinations: the combination is relatively stable (denoted by the recurrences of the semes) and more or less complex (involving more or less congruent, more or less contradictory figures); this complexity determines the character's "personality," [...]' Barthes (1990 = 1993) 67.

⁷⁷ Barthes (1990 = 1993) 67-8.

application of historical persons' proper names the corporeal force becomes even more concentrated. Sarrasine's teacher, Bouchardon, bears one of the many proper names that also belong to historical persons who appear in Balzac's short story. As Barthes observes, none of them are represented according to their '*real* importance [...]. Yet if they are merely mixed in with their fictional neighbours, mentioned as having simply been present at some social gathering, their modesty, like a lock between two levels of water, equalises novel and history.'⁷⁸

Few proper names have the ability to enhance the literary dynamics of virtual reality and real virtuality more than the proper name of the historical author of the text in question. This insight lies at the heart of the enigmatic title of Barthes' study, which becomes a little less enigmatic in the sub-chapter *XLVII*, called precisely *S/Z*. Here, Barthes points out that according to the French custom of writing proper names 'Sarrasine' should have been written with a 'z' as 'Sarrazine'.⁷⁹ At some point in the passing from the patronymic to the sculptor's surname the 'z' must have disappeared, Barthes suggests. But neither 'Sarrazine' nor 'Sarrasine' would be, grammatically speaking, patronymic; if anything, the name is 'matronymic' and as a designation in the feminine gender applied to the male sculptor it draws attention to, and perhaps even questions, the sculptor's masculinity, somehow similarly to the manner in which the name's second 's' draws attention to the absent 'z', about which Barthes writes:

[...] from a Balzacian viewpoint this Z (which appears in Balzac's name) is the letter of deviation [...] Z is the first letter of La Zambinella, the initial of castration, so that the orthographical error committed in the middle of his name, in the centre of his body Sarrasine receives the Zambinellan Z in its true sense – the wound of deficiency. Further, S and Z are in a relation of graphological inversion: the same letter seen from the other side of the mirror [...].⁸⁰

Thus Barthes maps an intricate web of connotations between the protagonist of the short story, his beloved, and the author Balzac, whose name helps in enhancing the very fictional 'reality effect' (fr. *effet de réel*) which is so important to the verisimilarity of literature.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Barthes (1990 = 1993) 102.

⁷⁹ Georges Bataille spells the title of the short story 'Sarrazine' in the 'avant-propos' of *Le bleu du ciel*, cf. Barthes (1990 = 1993) 267.

⁸⁰ Barthes (1990 = 1993) 106-7.

⁸¹ For the 'superlative effects of the real' see Barthes (1990 = 1993) 101-2. For *L'effet de réel* see Barthes (1968 = 1984) 179-87.

As already pointed out, the name of an historical personage appears already in the third line of the *Epistula Sapphus*, as well: *auctoris nomina Sapphus*.⁸² (Sappho is accompanied by other historical characters like Alcaeus (*Her.* 15.29) and her brother Charaxus (*Her.* 15.117), as well). A line of associations similar to the one Barthes sketches out inspired by the name of the protagonist ‘Sarrasine’ is, curiously enough, also feasible in the case of the *Epistula Sapphus*. Firstly, the ‘ph’ in the middle of Sappho’s name is the same as the opening of her beloved **Phaon**’s name, which, rather than invoking castration, recalls the vatic god **Phoebus**, with whom Sappho repeatedly links her young darling.⁸³ The Greek genitive ‘Sapphus’ is furthermore a form which is found only here in extant Latin literature and as it is similar to the second declension’s masculine nominative singular, it might be associated with a male Latin author like **Publius Ovidius Naso**.⁸⁴ Thus, Barthes’ approach to this ‘game of the name’ facilitates the possibility of seeing Sappho and Ovid in a relationship of both a graphic (in terms of text) and gendered inversion, which makes also them the ‘same’ figure, ‘seen from the other side of the mirror.’

Even the concept of ‘the neutral’ which is described as ‘the destruction [...] of every point of origin’ in ‘La mort de l’auteur’ has a twin-concept ‘seen from the other side of the mirror.’ When Barthes revisits the gnomic description of femininity in Balzac’s short story that inspired him to write both ‘La mort de l’auteur’ and, subsequently, *S/Z*, he no longer speaks of it in terms of destruction, but rather of ‘crossing’.

The source of the sentence cannot be discerned. Who is speaking? Is it Sarrasine? the narrator? the author? Balzac-the-author? Balzac-the-man? romanticism? Borgeoisie? universal wisdom? The intersection (fr. *croisement*) of all these origins creates the writing.⁸⁵

No ‘point of origin’ is ‘all these origins’. The author is dead. Long live the author.

⁸² As if to underscore the effect of the real, Sappho is accompanied by other historical characters like Alcaeus (*Her.* 15.29) and her brother Charaxus (*Her.* 15.117).

⁸³ Cf. *Her.* 15.23, 188.

⁸⁴ Notwithstanding the difference in the quantity of the vowels in Sapphus and Publius Ovidius. ‘Sapphus’ is parallel to ‘Clius’ at *Ars* 1.27. For *mascula Sappho* cf. *Hor. Ep.* 1.19.28. Furthermore, ‘Sapphus peut être entendu de deux façons : 1) dans sa lecture morphologique, comme le calque du génitif grec [...]; 2) dans une lecture analogique, comme un nominatif latinisé, cas-pancarte en nominatif absolu qui, hors-phrase, est une dénomination *sphragis*. Cette seule occurrence dans la lettre contraste avec les trois autres occurrences, Sappho, v. 155, 183, 217.’ Dangel (2006) 6, footnote 21.

⁸⁵ Barthes (1990 = 1993) 172-3.

2.4. Ovidian Features and Figures

Sappho is mentioned in Balzac's short story, and at a crucial point, too. She appears in connection with the arresting characterisation of *la femme*, which follows Sarrasine's killing of a snake that scares Zambinella on their arrival at Frascati. When they shortly thereafter have to hide from some bandits who are approaching, Zambinella is too weak to run and so Sarrasine has to carry his feeble darling to the shelter of some vines, where he says:

Oh ! Combien je vous aime ! [...]. Je sens que je détesterais une femme forte, *une Sapho*, courageuse, pleine d'énergie, de passion. O frêle et douce créature ! Comment pourrais-tu être autrement ? Cette voix d'ange, cette voix délicate eût été un contresens, si elle fût sorti d'un corps autre que le tien.⁸⁶

In this passage 'Sappho' is no longer the proper name of an historical personage, but a noun, which does not characterise one woman, but one kind of women; strong, brave and passionate. The Heroidean Sappho is hardly common, but otherwise she seems to fit Sarrasine's description of the kind of woman he would detest.⁸⁷ Barthes' reading of the Balzacian *sapho* helps in revealing further parallels between *Sarrasine* and the *Epistula Sapphus*.

2.4.a) Desire, Playing and Metamorphosis

The very dynamics of the short story *Sarrasine* is based on the sculptor's desire for Zambinella, who, in the words of Barthes, is 'on one hand the Inaccessible Woman, on the other the undesirable castrato'.⁸⁸ Unable to placate his yearning, Sarrasine sublimates his passion by creating a statue of the perfect woman. Likewise, Ovid's poetics of illusion is based on 'impossible objects of desire' which make the desiring person conjure up the absent one's presence by the force of imagination, creating art, just as Sappho does when she moulds her image of Phaon as a more or less divine source of poetic inspiration by means of her writing.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Balzac, 442-5 in Barthes (1970) 235, my italics. In the English: "Ah, how I love you," he went on. "All your faults, your terrors, your resentments, add an indefiable grace to your soul. I think I a strong woman, a Sappho a courageous creature, full of energy and passion. Oh, soft, frail creature, how could you be otherwise? That angelic voice, that delicate voice would be an anomaly coming from any body but yours." Barthes (1990 = 1993) 248-9.

⁸⁷ I disagree with Lipking (1983) who thinks that the tradition that turned the singular Sappho a common 'poet-whore' began with the *Epistula Sapphus*, cf. Part One, chapter 3.1.b).

⁸⁸ Barthes (1990 = 1993) 162.

⁸⁹ Cf. Part Three, chapter 2.2.b).

In the section on parallel passages, I mentioned Barthes' characterisation of allusions as 'this game of the plural'. Likewise, 'games' and 'playing' are basic terms in explaining the preliminary principles for Barthes' reading, both in general and of *Sarrasine* in particular. He underpins the necessity 'to restore each text, not to its individuality, but to its [*playing*].'⁹⁰ This is important, since the reader, unfortunately, tends to be 'plunged into a kind of idleness – he is intransitive; he is, in short, *serious*, instead of [*playing*] himself, instead of gaining access to the magic of the signifier, to the pleasure of writing, he is left with no more than the poor freedom either to accept or reject the text [...].'⁹¹ Through his focus on the playful character of reading and writing, Barthes' appreciation of texts will triumphantly prevail, as will the texts themselves: 'Let us first posit the image of a triumphant plural, unimpoverished by any constraint of representation (of imitation). In this ideal text, the networks are many and [*play with each other*], without any of them being able to surpass the rest [...].'⁹² Games and playing permeate the poetics and poetry of Ovid, who notoriously calls himself *tenerorum LVSOR amorum* in his own funeral epigram (*Tr.* 3.3.73-6) and in his autobiography (*Tr.* 4.10.1). The Heroidean Sappho, too, is concerned with how Phaon is apt for *lusibus* (*Her.* 15.21) and she remembers how she used to utter words that were fitting for their game, *ioco* (*Her.* 15. 48).⁹³

Metamorphosis, the last Ovidian feature I will touch upon here, comprises a major part of the story of *Sarrasine*. A chain of transformations involves human, artistic and artificial forms where the question of gender is just as readily incised in flesh and marble, as it is pictured on canvas: firstly a boy becomes an emasculated *castrato*, only to be transformed into the perfect woman in *Sarrasine*'s sculpture. The sculpture of this ideal woman is then again turned into Vien's portrait of Venus' darling, Adonis, who in due course is changed into another beautiful man, namely Endymion, painted by Girodet. These changes are, of course, embraced by the very story in which they are related, and the textual execution of this material belongs accordingly to the chain of changing human and artistic forms. The literary frame

⁹⁰ Barthes (1990 = 1993) 3, my italics and my translation of '*son jeu*', which is 'function' according to Barthes' translator.

⁹¹ Barthes (1990 = 1993) 4, my italics and my translation of '*jouer*', which is 'functioning' according to Barthes' translator.

⁹² Barthes (1990 = 1993) 11, my italics and my translation of '*jouent*', which is 'interact' according to Barthes' translator.

⁹³ For the voluptuous and interchangeable spheres of love and literature in the *Epistula Sapphus*, see Part Three, chapter 1.5.

facilitates furthermore the reading of Zambinella's destiny as a metaphor for the author's lot, who, just like the castrato, is a human being who also becomes art. Ovid often stages his life in his poetry, most evidently in his autobiography, *Tristia* 4.10. The *Epistula Sapphus* is less obviously a self-portrait, but shares several striking *loci similes* with *Tristia* 4.10 and underscores efficiently the author's metamorphosis from life to art. Sappho has not only made this transformation by composing poetry, she has also, *post mortem*, become a subject of Attic Comedy. And when Ovid places her in the throng of abandoned heroines and has her writing verse lines in his favourite metre, the elegiac distich, he prolongs her particular kind of metamorphosis of life into art.

2.4.b) Tiresias, Hermaphroditus, Pygmalion and Sappho

Although neither Tiresias nor Hermaphroditus is mentioned explicitly in the short story or in the study, these figures arguably function as mythological models for Sarrasine and Zambinella respectively. As already mentioned, on their arrival at Frascati, Sarrasine kills a snake. Zambinella asks:

- Comme avez-vous assez de courage ? reprit Zambinella en contemplant avec un effroi visible le reptile mort.
- Eh bien, dit l'artiste en souriant, oseriez-vous bien prétendre que vous n'êtes pas femme ?⁹⁴

In two sentences they repeat the very drama of their lives – and deaths: the killing of the phallic animal seems to recall Zambinella of the castration, whereas Sarrasine, having performed this castration symbolically, unknowingly shatters his delusion by posing an all-too-confident question.

Tiresias also kills not just one, but several reptiles, and by curious consequence, he, once a man, is transformed into a woman, and then back to a man again (cf. *Met.* 3.322-32). Whereas Tiresias has the experiences of both sexes (cf. *Met.* 3.232, *Venus huic erat utraque nota*), Sarrasine has none. The French sculptor is a negative counterpart to the Theban seer, in much the same way as Zambinella is a negative counterpart to Hermaphroditus (cf. *Met.* 4.285-388). Through the nymph

⁹⁴ Balzac, 434-435 in Barthes (1970) 234. In the English: "How can you be so brave?" La Zambinella continued, looking with visible horror at the dead reptile. "Ah," the artist replied smiling, "now do you dare deny that you are a woman?" Barthes (1990 = 1993) 248.

Salmacis' transgressive desire Hermaphroditus, who has one sex, is, just like the nymph herself, equipped with the other: *nec duo sunt sed forma duplex, nec femina dici/ nec puer ut possit, neutrumque et utrumque uitetur* (*Met.* 4.378-9). The castrato, on the other hand, has one sex and is deprived of that. The union between Salmacis and Hermaphroditus is also strangely perverted in the couple of Sarrasine and Zambinella: 'Tu m'as ravalé jusqu'à toi. *Aimer, être aimé !* sont désormais des mots vides de sens pour moi, comme pour toi', says the sculptor to the singer when he has discovered the truth and confirms simultaneously their union in nothingness.⁹⁵

In contrast to the transsexual figures from the third and fourth book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Pygmalion is duly mentioned both in *Sarrasine* and in *S/Z*, for instance when the narrator of the short story describes the moment when Sarrasine comes to the theatre and sees Zambinella for the first time:

C'était plus qu'une femme, c'était un chef-d'œuvre ! Il se trouvait dans cette création inespérée de l'amour à ravir tous les hommes, et des beautés dignes de satisfaire un critique. Sarrasine dévorait des yeux la statue de Pygmalion, pour lui descendue de son piédestal.⁹⁶

The real 'Pygmalion' behind Zambinella, that is, the one who has turned the boy into a castrato, is the prince Chigi.⁹⁷ But as Sarrasine unwittingly contributes to this metamorphosis not only through his belief that the singer is a woman, but also through moulding this woman in marble, he is a 'Pygmalion', too. Barthes recognises this potential in Sarrasine already before he meets Zambinella. In commenting on the phrase *et ne vivait qu'avec sa muse* of the short story (189), Barthes observes that: 'like a Pygmalion, Sarrasine sleeps with his statues, he puts his eroticism into his art.'⁹⁸ This mythological model is of course even more apt for Sarrasine as he actually begins to sculpt the perfect woman: 'its status is that of a *creation* (it is the work of Pygmalion "*come down from its pedestal*", [...]), [...] the sculptor will continue to

⁹⁵ Balzac, 525 in Barthes (1970) 238. In the English: "You have dragged me down to your level. *To love, to be loved!* are henceforth meaningless words for me, as they are for you." Barthes (1990 = 1993) 252.

⁹⁶ Balzac, 227-9 in Barthes (1970) 225. In the English: 'This was more than a woman, this was a masterpiece! In this un hoped for creation could be found a love to enrapture any man, and beauties worthy of satisfying a critic. With his eyes, Sarrasine devoured Pygmalion's statue, come down from its pedestal.' Barthes (1990 = 1993) 238.

⁹⁷ '[...] Chigi releases a scene, a whole little anterior novel: the *ragazzo* taken in and kept by the old man who takes charge of both his operation [...] and his education [...]. The image clearly has a sadic function [...] it exposes Chigi as the literal castrator [...].' Barthes (1990 = 1993) 186.

⁹⁸ Barthes (1990 = 1993) 103.

whittle (fr. *déchiqueter*) the woman [...], thereby returning to its (fragmented) fetish condition a body whose unity he suppose he had discovered in such amazement.⁹⁹ But whereas Pygmalion's illusion becomes reality, Sarrasine never makes love with his woman, his illusion is only shattered. Barthes brilliantly exposes the stereotypical charge of Sarrasine's delusions:

Sarrasine employs three enthymemes: narcissistic proof (*I love her, therefore she is a woman*), psychological proof (*women are weak, Zambinella is weak, etc.*), and aesthetic proof (*beauty is solely the province of woman (fr. la beauté n'appartient qu'aux Femmes), therefore ...*). These false syllogisms can unite and reinforce their errors, can form a kind of sorites (or abridged syllogism): *beauty is feminine, only an artist can know beauty; I am an artist; therefore I know beauty and therefore I know woman, etc.* [...] In this case, the code is that of plastic art: it is the code which sustains beauty and love, as reflected in the Pygmalion myth, under whose authority Sarrasine is placed [...].¹⁰⁰

The Heroidean Sappho violates the erroneous logic Barthes describes above, firstly by being a woman who is short, dark and ugly, a fact she admits as she tries to remind Phaon of her inner qualities:

si mihi difficilis formam natura negavit,
 ingenio formae damna repende meae.¹⁰¹
 sum brevis, at nomen, quod terras impleat omnes,
 est mihi; mensuram nominis ipsa fero.
 candida si non sum, placuit Cepheia Perseo
 Andromeda, patriae fusca colore suae. (*Her.* 15.31-6)

[If nature, malign to me, has denied the charm of beauty, weigh in the stead of beauty the genius that is mine. If I am slight of stature, yet I have a name [that] fills every land; the measure of my name is my real height. If I am not dazzling fair, Cepheus' Andromeda was fair in Perseus' eyes, though dusky with the hue of her native land.]

Sappho furthermore defies the fallacious syllogisms by actively loving her dazzling boy, as if she were, in her own words, a man:

qui mirum, si me primae lanuginis aetas
 abstulit, atque anni quos uir amare potest? (*Her.* 15.85-6)

[What wonder if age of first down has carried me away, and the years that stir men's love?]

⁹⁹ Barthes (1990 = 1993) 112.

¹⁰⁰ Barthes (1990 = 1993) 167.

¹⁰¹ I prefer Bentley's emendation to *codd.* 'rependo' printed in Knox's text (1995) 79.

Sappho's comparison of herself with a man suggests that Sarrasine's abhorrence for *une Sapho* is almost tantamount to homophobia (although the Heroidean poetess goes further and compares herself to goddesses, too, see below). Barthes, on the other hand, pondering precisely on the difficulty of classifying sex and gender in *Sarrasine*, sees a fear of the emasculating woman in the sculptor's despicably strong, brave and passionate *Sapho*. In Barthes' terms Sappho is an androgyne, a threatening mythological figure.¹⁰²

Bearing on the metamorphic relationship between Zambinella and the paintings of Adonis-Endymion, Barthes recalls yet another feminine figure, who is also active, loving and, according to Barthes, emasculating; the moon, Selene, or, in Latin, Luna, who lusts for the beautiful Endymion.¹⁰³ She resembles Sappho, and, curiously, the goddess' love for Endymion seems to be introduced into poetry by none other than the archaic Sappho herself.¹⁰⁴ Most fittingly, the Heroidean Sappho also mentions this couple of a divine woman, the moon, here called Phoebe, and a mortal man:

nunc ne pro Cephalo raperes, Aurora, timebam;
 et faceres, sed te prima rapina tenet.
 hunc si conspicias, quae conspicit omnia, Phoebe,
 iussus erit somnos continuare Phaon.
 hunc Venus in caelum curru uexisset eburno,
 sed uidet et Marti posse placere suo. (*Her.* 15.87-92)

[Lest thou steal him in Cephalus' place, I ever feared, Aurora – and so thou wouldst do, but that thy first prey holds thee still. Him should Pheobe behold, who beholds all things, 'twill be Phaon she bids continue in his sleep; him Venus would have carried to the skies in her ivory car, but that she knows he might charm even her Mars.]

Une Sapho may suffer, then, the destiny of becoming a common noun and an emasculating figure, but the Heroidean Sappho is one who supplies more instead of reducing to less, especially as regards sex and gender. This is a Sappho who provides a female example of active love towards a beloved male, she equates herself with a man, but without resorting to a masculine role as her ultimate model; she is like a

¹⁰² Cf. Barthes (1990 = 1993) 35-7.

¹⁰³ 'In love with Endymion Selena visits him; her active light caresses the sleeping and unprotected and steals into him; although feminine, the Moon is active; although masculine, the boy is passive: a double inversion, that of the two sexes [...]' Barthes (1990 = 1993) 70.

¹⁰⁴ '[...] the story of Selene and Endymion [...] may have been invented by Sappho, which at all events is known to us first in Sappho'. Jacobson (1974) 283.

man, but still a woman, and so she readily likens herself to female, active, loving, lustful goddesses, like Aurora, Phoebe and Venus.

Except for experience, *usus*, Ovid claims that Sappho has contributed most to his progress in love: *me certe Sappho meliorem fecit amicae* (*Rem.* 761).¹⁰⁵ The Heroidean Sappho is also moulded as an erotodidactic *exemplum*, in as much as she does what *Naso magister* will teach his female students to do in the *Ars Amatoria*, namely to consider themselves equal to men in tricks and strategies and otherwise look to heavenly ideals:

Latmius Endymion non est tibi, Luna, rubori,
nec Cephalus roseae praeda pudenda deae;
ut Veneri, quem luget adhuc, donetur Adonis,
unde habet Aenean Harmoniamque suos?
ite per exemplum, genus o mortale, dearum,
gaudia nec cupidis uestra negate uiris. (*Ars* 3.83-8)

[Latmian Endymion brings no blush to thee, O Moon, nor is Cephalus a prize that shames the roseate goddess; though Adonis, whom she mourns, be granted to Venus, whence has she her Aeneas and Harmonia? Study, ye mortal folk, the examples of goddesses, nor deny your joys to hungry lovers.]

Most of the goddesses of Greek and Latin mythology are chaste, but Aurora, Luna and Venus are notoriously not. The lustful trinity reappears in Ovid's poetry both at *Her.* 4.93-7, *Am.* 1.13.39-44 and *Tr.* 2.299. The fact that the first of the Ovidian catalogues of divine females and mortal males is found in the *Epistula Sapphus* might be regarded as testimony to the Sapphic charge of Ovid's predilection for such unions.¹⁰⁶

In this chapter I have been focussing on the image of the author (*Her.* 15. 1-8) and the Heroidean Sappho's comparison between herself and men who desire men (*Her.* 15. 85-6) and between herself and goddesses who desire men (*Her.* 15.87-92). All of these passages strongly influence the part of the reception of the *Epistula Sapphus* which is concerned with gender, to which I now will turn.

¹⁰⁵ For the *usus* cf. *Ars* 1.29, for more links between *Her.* 15 and *Ars Amatoria*, see Part Three, chapter 1.5 and 4.4.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Gibson (2003) 120.

3. Gendered Receptions of the *Epistula Sapphus*

The reception of the *Epistula Sapphus* displays a striking lack of consensus as regards its Sapphic and Ovidian authenticity, moral and aesthetic qualities, and poetic success. In the flux of many and divergent readings, there are however two points of reference that remain constant; the *Heroides* and Ovid. The *Heroides* is regularly thought of as offering the literary context in which the *Epistula Sapphus* either *does* or *does not* belong. Likewise, Ovid is either conceived of as *the* author or *not* the author of this elegiac letter. Normally, no other work or author is considered in relationship with the *Epistula Sapphus*.¹⁰⁷ The reception of this poem thus offers a privileged access to ideas of *what is* and *what is not* the *Heroides* and Ovid, and in this section I will take a closer look at the part of this discourse which in one way or another is concerned with gender.

3.1. Traditions of the *Epistula Sapphus*

As pointed out at the beginning of this study, the *Epistula Sapphus* is both a letter and a poem. Although these properties are obvious, they involve a series of complexities. I will return to several of these throughout the study, but for now, I would like to point out that it has been argued that epistolarity and poetry, together with a sharp focus on gender, form two particular literary traditions in which the *Epistula Sapphus* is considered to be important.

3.1.a) Epistolarity

Kauffman's (1989) focus on the letter brings her to a tradition where '[f]orgeries, thefts, disguised names, false attributions, and illegitimate copies abound'.¹⁰⁸ At the beginning of this tradition, which normally includes works that either involve a series of letters from one person or a serial exchange between two or more persons, she

¹⁰⁷ Schneidewin (1843), in denying the poem its Ovidian authorship, wonders who might have been the anonymous author. So does Knox (1995) as well, and Zwierlein (1999) even comes up with a name for the man, cf. Part Two, chapter 1.5.

¹⁰⁸ Kauffman (1989) 6.

finds the *Heroides*.¹⁰⁹ This is, however, an epistolary collection where a different heroine writes each letter, and accordingly they appear as isolated fractions of dialogues and greater narratives. Kauffman recognises this feature, at the same time as she sees how the letters also constitute ‘a coherent text with a unified form, theme and structure’.¹¹⁰ The question of identity is one of the themes that the *Heroides* shares with the rest of the tradition that Kauffman sketches out. Sappho’s letter most emphatically poses this question, not so much because of its disputed authenticity, as because of the very dynamics of the epistolary genre – like a human ‘self’, the language of this genre is also fluid, decentred, multiple:

Sappho’s Greek decentres Ovid’s Latin [...]. The bilingualism [...] of the texts mediates against certainty and centrality; each letter writer grapples with the intractability of language and expresses profound scepticism about the connection of words to deeds, to reality, to representation. [...] The genre of amorous epistolary discourse is, paradoxically, antigeneric and anticanonical; it engulfs and is engulfed by other languages and other cultures, and it assimilates other genres – Sapphic lyrics, Roman elegies, the soliloquies of tragic heroines.¹¹¹

Kauffman identifies thus a whole tradition where desire and gender are closely connected to problems of identification, and she shows that these features are highly present in the *Epistula Sapphus*. Drawing attention to Sappho’s *parens* (*Her.* 15.62), who, according to Jacobson, could be both her mother and her father, she suggests that Sappho acts as a poetic *parens* of Ovid and claims that the relationship between the two amounts to a metamorphosis in favour of literature itself.¹¹²

3.1.b) Poetry

Lipking (1988) sees the *Epistula Sapphus* as a contribution to a tradition where poets temporarily take on the role of an abandoned woman, and, despite the fact that these poets return to ‘business as usual’, the process of literary transvestism provides them with insights into both literature and gender. ‘Neither sex monopolizes the figures of poetry [...]’ Lipking observes, and continues:

¹⁰⁹ This is a tradition that includes the correspondence between Heloise and Abelard, John Donne’s *Sappho to Philaenis*, *Clarissa*, *La nouvelle Héloïse*, *Lettres portugaises*, *Les liaisons dangereuses*, and *As Três Marias* (New Portuguese letters).

¹¹⁰ Kauffman (1989) 31.

¹¹¹ Kauffman (1989) 32.

¹¹² Cf. Jacobson (1974) 279. Sappho’s latest editor harbours no doubt about the identity of her deceased parent, who ‘is surely her father, for Sappho’s mother is addressed in a fragment (102 L-P) of Sappho’s love poetry’. Knox (1995) 291.

On the other hand, there is no denying that men and women have read different meanings in those figures. The interdependence of male and female traditions does not prove that gender has no bearing on literature. It only warns us not to think that distinctions between the sexes are absolute. Authors and readers can span them.¹¹³

Although Lipking presents an interpretation that challenges the regular reading of Sappho's sublime fragment 31, it is precisely the understanding of the Sapphic symptoms as symptoms of jealousy that permeates the tradition where the poetess acts as an abandoned woman. This is also a tradition of Sappho's fall, to which Lipking assigns the *Epistula Sapphus*. Lipking claims that 'Sappho falls further in reputation than from the cliff. She descends into sluttishness', and that 'Ovid slices her in two, and reveals the pathetic woman beneath the masterful poet.'¹¹⁴ Lipking links the sexual directness of the poem (*Her.* 15.124-34) to his image of the Ovidian Sappho as a 'poet-whore', and claims that this 'Sappho masturbates to climax.'¹¹⁵

According to Lipking, the *Epistula Sapphus* is a contribution to the process of degrading Sappho and rendering her 'common'. Corporeal descriptions of women who experience sexual arousal are, however, anything but common in classical poetry. Expressed by the first person singular and female, the one in the *Epistula Sapphus* is actually unique. Interestingly, Lipking suggests that the Sapphic symptoms of fragment 31 might be describing precisely an orgasm, but at the same time he fails to point out that this interpretation would help in discovering yet another parallel between the *Epistula Sapphus* and the Greek poetess' lyric.¹¹⁶ Instead Lipking insists on regarding Ovid as the supreme contributor to Sappho's fall from grace, which ultimately makes Ovid fall as well – out of the great literary tradition to which Lipking dedicates his study and to which Ovid belongs.

¹¹³ Lipking (1988) xxi.

¹¹⁴ Lipking (1988) 68-9.

¹¹⁵ Lipking (1988) 70. The text does not, however, state that Sappho touches herself. One might of course interpret the line *siccaae non licet esse mihi* (*Her.* 15.134) as a hint at masturbation, but it will remain an interpretation. What the text tells us is that Sappho *dreams* herself to sexual arousal (lubrication), and climax (cf. *omnia fiunt*, *Her.* 15.133). 'Wet dreams' were known to happen in the ancient world, and even though it is normally described in connection with men, this is what happens to Sappho as well. Cf. Aristotle *De insomnis et diuinatione per somnum* (= *parua naturalia* 462b-474b) and pseudo-Aristotle (877a 9). For Sappho and the Ovidian interest in sexual pleasure, see Part Three chapter 1.5 and 4.2.a).

¹¹⁶ Lipking even considers other possible Latin echoes of this Sapphic orgasm, but, consulting Catullus only, he dismisses the idea because the neoteric poet 'dodges the issue.' Lipking (1988) 65.

3.2. ‘Woman’, ‘Writer’ and ‘Ovid’. Conflicts and Cooperation

The general scarcity of female figures that relate their desires and experiences in Roman literature renders the *Heroides* particularly attractive to gender-oriented approaches. The female figures of the *Heroides* still have a male author, and the tension between the female, intradiegetic ‘I’ of the text and its male, extradiegetic author (captured in Barthes’ *neutre*) becomes interestingly accentuated in the case of the *Epistula Sapphus*, where the question of authenticity is – very explicitly – an element of interpretation.

Despite the fact that neither Jacobson (1974) nor Verducci (1985) make gender a crucial issue in their studies of the *Epistula Sapphus*, they contribute to influential conceptions of the two poetic protagonists, Sappho and Ovid, that merit a certain attention. The text’s apparent gender-clash or gender-combination, explored in the preceding chapter, is for example curiously perceivable in Jacobson’s study, for instance in his initial characterisation of the poem:

Paramount here is the artist’s vision of *himself*, arrogant and egocentric. A mere glance at the writing should suffice to identify *her* to the cognoscenti. [...] the self-centered artist who feels *his* own works is inevitably too short [...].¹¹⁷

At the beginning of his chapter on the *Epistula Sapphus* Jacobson assumes that it was Ovid’s intention to say ‘something about Sappho and her poetry, and Ovid and his poetry’. As the terms ‘himself’, ‘her’ and ‘his’ in the passage quoted above make clear, Jacobson obviously confuses the two.¹¹⁸ But the concerns for ‘material luxury and corporeal lust’ of this text’s ‘degenerated’ and ‘grotesque’ protagonist tend to blur Jacobson’s view of both Sappho and Ovid. Consequently, he concludes that the poem must be a parody, not of Sappho or of Ovid, but of their literary *personae*.¹¹⁹ The aesthetic condemnation that closes Jacobson’s reading of the poem comes, therefore as no surprise.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Jacobson (1974) 287, my italics. Jacobson discusses. Not everyone agrees with Jacobson: ‘Il me semble que la lettre XV, même si elle est pleine d’ironie, donne de Sappho une image qui n’est ni parodique, ni grotesque ; [...] la description de la poétesse, en qui se conjuguent lucidité et passion, tend au contraire vers une rhétorique du sublime.’ Galand-Hallyn (1991) 351. And Davis, commenting, as Jacobson does, on the expression *breue opus* (*Her.* 15.4): ‘The ostensible paradox of the “short” work that turns out to be long is not, in my judgement, evidence of an attempt to portray (or even parody) a supposedly vain “Sappho” who is overtly infatuated with her own genius.’ (2005) 190-1.

¹¹⁸ Jacobson (1974) 286.

¹¹⁹ Jacobson (1974) 297-8.

¹²⁰ ‘We must admit that this poem is not, poetically, one of the best.’ Jacobson (1974) 299.

Verducci reads the *Epistula Sapphus* as a lyric struggle with elegiac dynamics, through which ‘reality’ turns into a mere poetic effect.¹²¹ In Verducci’s view, Sappho, the real poet who has already turned into a fictitious figure through Attic Comedy, becomes the very embodiment of art’s appropriation of life in the hands of Ovid. She agrees with Jacobson in seeing the *Epistula Sapphus* as a grotesque travesty and malicious parody, but differs from him in valuing it highly as such. Her final appreciation of the poem is, however, challenged by a series of unflattering terms, all found on one single page.¹²²

3.2.a) *Sappho and Ovid. Friends and Foes*

Disagreeing with Verducci, DeJean (1989) approaches the *Epistula Sapphus* with ‘the hope of better understanding the feasibility of Ovid’s literary self-portrait as Sappho.’¹²³ Interestingly, she stresses that this self-portrait is drawn in the young poet’s literary ambitions and states that: ‘*Heroides* 15 confronts us not with authorial impotence but with a writer’s struggle to invent a radically new voice.’¹²⁴

But whereas DeJean sees Ovid as ‘Sappho’s heir’, Gordon finds that Ovid in the *Epistula Sapphus* reduces the multifarious woman Sappho to a one-dimensional man.¹²⁵ Gordon’s ambition is to map not only literary, but also historical and socio-cultural landscapes of hetero- and homosexuality.¹²⁶ In her view, Ovid represents the male, heterosexual and ruling order, whereas Sappho, the woman who loves women, ‘dissolves the customary hierarchy’, and:

... uses the mythic pattern of the goddesses’ liaisons with young mortals to form “an open space for imagining unscripted sexual relations” [...] (Stehle, 1990, 108). Ovid sides, however, not with Sappho but with the dominant culture.¹²⁷

¹²¹ An effect called ‘the vacuity behind the elegiac embroidery’. Verducci (1985) 179.

¹²² These are the terms: ‘gauche’, ‘banal’, ‘foolish’, ‘insubstantial’, ‘vacuity’, ‘displaced’, ‘pathetic’, ‘distortion’, ‘confusion’, ‘degenerate’, ‘blurred’, ‘evil’, ‘cruel’, ‘fallen spirit’ and ‘a poet’s fall’. Verducci (1985) 179.

¹²³ DeJean (1989) 71.

¹²⁴ DeJean (1989) 73.

¹²⁵ DeJean (1989) 75. ‘Focusing upon the construction of Sappho’s erotic desire in *Heroides* 15, I suggest that the Ovidian Sappho writes so much “like a man” that the poem would work well as a parody of what French psychoanalytic critic Luce Irigaray has called “hom/m/osexuality” [...], or what Esther Newton has dubbed the “Mythic Mannish Lesbian”. Gordon (1997) 275

¹²⁶ Cf. ‘Epilogue: A Glimpse of the Roman Lesbian’ Gordon (1997) 287.

¹²⁷ Gordon (1997) 277.

Indeed, the Ovidian Sappho has turned heterosexual, she loves a boy so delightful that even a man could love him, she is sexually active and says that she climaxes: *siccae non licet esse mihi* (*Her.* 15.134). Rather curiously Gordon interprets this expression as tantamount to Sappho having ‘acquired a phallus’ and she concludes that not only does this Sappho write like a man, stereotypically speaking she *is* a man.¹²⁸ But the very example of how the Greek Sappho subverts the masculine order by bringing lustful goddesses into play strikingly challenges Gordon’s own argument. Bent on dismantling the masculine agenda of the *Epistula Sapphus*, she ignores how even the Heroidean Sappho ‘dissolves the customary hierarchy’ precisely through a catalogue of desiring goddesses, with whom she compares herself (cf. *Her.* 15.87-92).¹²⁹

John Donne’s poem *Sappho to Philaenis* is the main subject of Harvey (1998), who wants to interpret the poem in the light of ‘the various subtexts with which it is filiated’, and accordingly he pays due attention to the *Epistula Sapphus* which is one of the most important of these.¹³⁰ Harvey immediately recognises how ‘difficulties in assigning an author to the voice’ are inherent in the text, not so much because the poem questions the possibility to identify its author, but because ‘citations from the historical Sappho’s poetry [...] are woven into Ovid’s letter’.¹³¹ Harvey does not, however, see Sappho and Ovid’s textual intertwining as a common contribution to the poetic projects of both. Building on Verducci, she regards them rather as rivals in a battle between lyric and elegy, where Ovid has the upper hand.¹³²

Inspired by the hints at the myth of Procne and Philomela in the *Epistula Sapphus* (*Her.* 15.153-6), Harvey uses the story of the two sisters in the sixth book of the *Metamorphoses* as an allegory of intertextual dynamics.¹³³ By alluding to Sappho’s poetry, Ovid silences her as Tereus silences Philomela when he cuts out her tongue.¹³⁴ Harvey’s image of Ovid is, then, marked by ‘textual violation’ and ‘theft of

¹²⁸ Gordon (1997) 283.

¹²⁹ The catalogue includes Phoebe (Selene) and Endymion, a couple that the archaic Sappho was probably the first to introduce to each other in poetry. Jacobson (1974) 283. See also the discussion of the passage in Part One, chapter 2.4.b).

¹³⁰ Harvey (1997) 82.

¹³¹ Harvey (1998) 83.

¹³² Harvey (1998) 86.

¹³³ For a different interpretation of this passage of the *Epistula Sapphus*, see Part Three, chapter 4.3.b).

¹³⁴ ‘Procne’s murder of her child becomes an act of vengeance that links the organ of speech to the organ of eating; the revenge for Philomela’s rape and muting was, of course, to kill the son, who resembled his father, and to have the father unknowingly consume the child. This act of cannibalization, the father’s literal ingestion of the child’s body, offers a trope for intertextuality. While the Daulian bird laments the death of Itys, the dismembered body that Sappho now mourns is the

Sappho's tongue'.¹³⁵ As Harvey sees it, the poet has 'subordinated Sappho's voice' and held her poetic 'gifts [...] up to comic scrutiny'.¹³⁶ Ovid's own poetry is, on the other hand, one where boundaries are '[...] continually transgressed by acts of penetration, in which Ovid stole from Sappho's poetry, in which women are violated and savagely silenced. Ovidian eroticism carries with it a poetics based on an analogous ideology of violence and possession [...].'¹³⁷ Who is the author of the *Epistula Sapphus*? Sappho's 'son' and successor, or her murderous rapist? Indeed, the differences between Kauffman's and Harvey's Ovid testify to the metamorphic powers of scholarship.

3.2.b) Spentzou, Lindheim and Fulkerson

A pattern of contrasts that are similar to those represented by Kauffman and Harvey (if not so aggressively) emerges in recent monographs on the *Heroides*. Basically, all the studies focus on three themes or ideas, of which two are explicit, namely that of 'womanhood' and 'authorship', whereas the third is more implicit, but ever-present in the books, and that is the idea of Ovid.

These ideas are not equally emphasised in all studies. Spentzou (2003) sets out to grasp *Heroides*' female voice as it allegedly slips through the masculine control of Ovid. Unlike the two other scholars, Spentzou includes the double epistles in her analyses, but does not treat the *Epistula Sapphus*. The way she approaches the epistolary elegies is, however, pertinent to this poem as well, as I will argue shortly. Lindheim (2003) enhances the gendered aspect of the *Heroides* and tones down the fact that the heroines are actually writing. She includes the *Epistula Sapphus* in her study and gives it a prominent place in her line of reasoning. In contrast to Lindheim, Fulkerson (2005) insists on the fact that the heroines are writing, but curiously, she excludes the most evident author of them all, namely Sappho. Fulkerson adds an appendix to explain this exclusion and the arguments she presents here will eventually take my thesis further.

As already mentioned, Spentzou does not treat the *Epistula Sapphus* together with the other single and double *Heroides*. The reason why, she claims, is not so

corpus of her poems that have been cut and scattered, only to be remembered in a different, Ovidian shape.' Harvey (1998) 87-8.

¹³⁵ Harvey (1998) 87.

¹³⁶ Harvey (1998) 88.

¹³⁷ Harvey (1998) 95.

much the current debate on the poem's authenticity, as the fact that Sappho is 'not exactly a figure of myth'.¹³⁸ Even those who take a stand against the authenticity of the *Epistula Sapphus* accept that the *Heroides*-catalogues of *Am.* 2.18 show that the work must have entailed an epistle of Sappho.¹³⁹ Accordingly, the *abiudicantes* deny that the extant epistle is authentic, but not that Ovid once composed such a poem (now lost), or regarded Sappho fit for his original design of the *Heroides*. To exclude Sappho on the grounds that she does not belong to myth may therefore be tantamount to missing important traits that the heroines have in common. And as it happens, belonging to *myth* seems to be of less significance to the heroines even in Spentzou's perspective.¹⁴⁰ The reason why, is that the sphere of myth is constantly merging into that of literature. Spentzou, in her search for 'symbolical' and 'metaphorical' traits of socio-cultural gender-negotiations, says that she finds myth particularly attractive because mythic material is more opaque and resistant to reductive interpretation.¹⁴¹ This is a quality that myth shares with literature, and Spentzou tends accordingly to leave the mythical realm in favour of literary landscapes.

These are landscapes of 'lost innocence' where the heroines 'wake up' and lament the miserable state they have been left in by their 'master texts'. Spentzou sees them as longing for a past which is untainted by their amorous experiences. These experiences have given them sorrow, but also knowledge, and the fact that their nostalgia and desperation are expressed through *letters* proves that the heroines have not resigned. Instead they have turned to *art* in the form of writing in order to regain control over their destinies and to go against their canonical 'source texts'. The abandoned heroine's remedy is thus to become a 'female artist' producing 'female writing', and in doing so she also creates a feminine space and feminine time.¹⁴²

¹³⁸ Spentzou (2003) 4, footnote 5. Notably, Spentzou does not regard the question of authenticity that clings to several of the *Heroides* as decisive for her stance, cf. (2003) 32.

¹³⁹ With the notable exception of Tarrant (1981) *passim* and Knox (1995) 7, cf. Part Two, chapter 1.4, a), b), c) and 1.5.

¹⁴⁰ There is for example only one entry for 'myth' in Spentzou's General Index, and that is to the myth of Teuth.

¹⁴¹ Spentzou (2003) 4-5.

¹⁴² Spentzou's reading rests on insights outlined by canonical French theorists. The 'female writing' is associated with Cixous' '*écriture féminine*', a concept which permeates the entire study, whereas Kristeva's feminocentric version of the Platonic *chora* contributes to Spentzou's outlining of the feminine space as she finds it in the *Heroides*, and when Spentzou contemplates the letter's ambiguous ability to both communicate and to backfire, that is, to be wrongly interpreted or read by unintended addressees, she sees this in the light of Derrida's use of the Platonic *pharmakon*. Spentzou (2003) *passim*.

Spentzou pictures the ‘heroines both as characters in and critics of their stories’ and their double role, being ‘at the same time inside and outside the text’, prompts her to consider the role of Ovid:¹⁴³

Obviously, such a hypothesis still views the meta-discourse on structures as a necessity for the appreciation of these poems, but this time the poet’s elegiac *ego* is split between the heroine and Ovid.¹⁴⁴

Spentzou’s prime example of how this *ego* is appropriated by a heroine is Helen’s letter:

Helen is about to claim the role of her male creator and become herself a female artist. [...] Open-ended and undetermined, her story, as a writing subject’s language must be, will nonetheless be fundamentally different from the one that gave Helen substance previously.¹⁴⁵

Just how well would this characterisation fit the *Epistula Sapphus*? Since it echoes an historical *écriture féminine* through allusions to Sapphic lyric, this poem should, more than any of the other *Heroides*, respond to Spentzou’s pondering on the accessibility of a feminine voice through the barrier of a male author. Helen’s employment of terms that belong to favourite Callimachean vocabulary, among which the words *ludere* and *ars* are prominent, is also used by the Heroidean Sappho.¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, she is a ‘female artist’ who claims ‘the role of her male creator’. Indeed, Sappho has been a subject who writes, but she has also become a subject of writing in Attic Comedy, and so her story is ‘open-ended and undetermined’, perhaps like no others among the *Heroides*: despite her legendary death in the waters of Leucas, it is by no means certain what happens at the end of the *Epistula Sapphus* – the letter does not confirm the idea that she is about to commit suicide, and the tragic outcome is also suggestively refuted by *Am.* 2.18.34.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ Spentzou (2003) 29.

¹⁴⁴ Spentzou (2003) 29.

¹⁴⁵ Spentzou (2003) 30-1.

¹⁴⁶ And here, as opposed to the epistle of Helen, where the words primarily mean ‘to commit adultery’ and ‘deceit/ trick’, the terms explicitly denote either love or art, *sunt apti lusibus anni* (21) ‘age apt to erotic games’, *amoris opus* (46) ‘love-making’ and ‘love-poetry’, *aptaque uerba ioco* (48) ‘words apt to playing’ and *artis magistra* (83) ‘the mistress of art’ (i.e. Thalia). Cf. Part One, chapter 2.4.a).

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Part Two, chapter 1.1. * *Ovidian Testimonies* and Part Three, chapter 3.2.b). In the postscript Spentzou furthermore resorts precisely to the *Amores* in order to find examples of Ovid’s hopes for women, readers and reception, and quotes *centum sunt causae, cur ego semper amem* (*Am.* 2.4.10) This is a truly Ovidian tag that resounds at *Am.* 1.3.2, *aut amet aut faciat, cur ego semper amem* and *Her.*

Whereas the *Epistula Sapphus* is noticeable for its absence in Spentzou's study, it takes centre stage in Lindheim's book. Furthermore, where Spentzou sees traces of genuine socio-cultural femininity in the *Heroides*, Lindheim presents this work as a showcase of male fantasies about Woman with a capital W. The basis for this assumption is presumed flaws and fallacies, first and foremost the work's repetition of settings, characters and vocabulary.¹⁴⁸ Lindheim does not discuss the character of this alleged monotony, and, more importantly, she does not treat more than two-thirds of the single *Heroides*. Still, she asks: why do the heroines look so much the same?

Lindheim turns to the scarce sources of ancient epistolary theory to find an answer. Building on reflections by Cicero, Ovid (sic!), Seneca and Demetrius on the nature of the letter, Lindheim outlines what she calls 'epistolary expectations'. She traces these expectations in different literary compositions that contain letters, and when she proceeds to the subsequent analysis of the *Heroides*, she finds that many of the heroines fail to take advantage of these epistolary conventions.¹⁴⁹ According to Lindheim, the heroines are offered the opportunity to tell their version of the story, alter their destinies and give voice to their subjective opinions. But as Lindheim sees it, they only pay lip service to their addressees, their heroes. Why?

Building on Lacan's lectures on identity, Lindheim explains the heroines' eagerness to adapt to the addressee's demands as a classic case of feminine desire, which is a desire to be desired, whatever it takes. Through her letter the heroine says: 'I was strong, but now I am weak', which in the eyes of the heroic reader means 'she is a worthy partner, but I am stronger'. This is yet again what the man wants to hear, in as much as the masculine desire is to be without desire, that is, to be with an equal woman who does not compete with him. The heroines simply (ab)use the letter in accordance with their female desire to live up to male expectations – as described by

15.80, *et semper causa est, cur ego semper amem*, cf. Part Two, chapter 1.4.c) and Part Three, chapter 4.2. and 4.3. Thus, till the very end of Spentzou's book the indispensable presence of Ovid underscores the absence of Sappho's Letter.

¹⁴⁸ Wilkinson notoriously claims that the *Heroides* are like a 'plum-pudding' (1955) 105-6. I would, however, say that (if anything) the *Heroides* are like the cathedrals of Tuscany: great works of art that resemble each other and that at the same time compete and are individual by virtue of different form, content, history, alliances and destinies.

¹⁴⁹ Lindheim finds examples of ancient 'epistolary expectations' in the *Iliad*, Euripidean tragedies, Callimachus' *Aetia*, Ovid's paired letters of Acontius and Cydippe (sic!), and Propertius' 4.3. It is rather odd how Lindheim makes Ovid contribute to her presentation of ancient theory on the epistolary genre, but otherwise does not consult Ovid's poetry, not even when she allegedly treats the elegiac aspect of the *Heroides*. Lindheim (2003) 18-30, 81.

Lacan. The correspondence that Lindheim finds between the *Heroides* and Lacan, does not, however, lead her to the assumption that the *Heroides* express some psychological truth about our human condition. The reason why lies embedded in her initial question about the sameness of the Heroidean epistolographers. When Lindheim reads (less than two-third of) the single *Heroides*, she reads the same story about the same woman, over and over again, and consequently finds that if the heroines' desire corresponds to Lacan's theories, the sameness of the heroines does not. Lacan claims that there is no one universal woman with a capital W, except in men's fantasies about her. And whereas Lindheim's Ovid displays a profound insight into female psychology as he lets the *Heroides* elaborate their male-oriented desire, the assumption that they are all moulded into the same female form makes him an exponent of the male illusion about woman.

Lindheim's principal example is the letter of Sappho. Through a comparison of feminist readings of Sapphic lyric and the *Epistula Sapphus*, Lindheim concludes that Sappho celebrates women and women's 'protean and multiple' nature. Lindheim's Ovid, on the other hand, reduces her multifarious character to a male illusion of Woman.¹⁵⁰ Despite the fact that for example Phaon evidently takes on a series of roles in the *Epistula Sapphus*, he is ultimately just a 'god'.¹⁵¹ Likewise Sappho, who prays to Venus Erycina (*Her.* 15.57) and is visited by a sea-nymph, associated as such with the Venus who is described as *orta mari* in the poem (*Her.* 15.213), is ultimately just 'unworthy of a powerful Olympian goddess'.¹⁵² Because of the feminine wish to appear as both a man's equal and as his inferior, the heroines have a double agenda that, according to Lindheim, makes their selves 'disunified and incoherent'.¹⁵³ In this way Lindheim anticipates counter-interpretations of her own readings that would stress the fact that the writing heroines *do* claim that they are both strong and powerful.

This is to close the *Heroides* down for discussions about the complexity of the heroines. Though Lacan's lens, Lindheim wants to explain why Ovid's heroines look so much the same.¹⁵⁴ And the answer she finds is Ovid's anxiety about women:

¹⁵⁰ Lindheim (2003) 155-76.

¹⁵¹ For a discussion of the diversity of Phaon's roles, cf. Part Three, chapter 2.2.b).

¹⁵² That is, a goddess like Aphrodite, who deigned to show herself to the Greek Sappho in her first poem.

¹⁵³ Lindheim (2003) 10.

¹⁵⁴ Lindheim (2003) 10.

[...] it is no surprise that Ovid too, in the face of (masculine) anxiety about women's uncontrollable, indefinable diversity and otherness, cannot resist the temptation to construct Woman, offering her, in the *Heroides*, a definition as one who eternally performs, yet carefully limiting her masquerade to a few identical roles, thus underlining the homogeneity of Woman. But his fantasy, as Lacan will help to demonstrate, suffers the fate of all fantasies, and, in the final analysis, unravels. (12)

This passage is arguably unravelling Lindheim's approach, as well. This is an approach to a man who creates an illusion that runs counter to reality, not a poet who creates an illusion with the power to become real.¹⁵⁵ In the Ovidian world illusions are not necessarily aberrant misconceptions that run counter to reality and that will finally lead either to madness or simply be shattered: *saepe tamen uere coepit simulator amare;/ saepe, quod incipiens finxerat esse, fuit* (*Ars* 1.615-6).¹⁵⁶ The point of Lacanian theory that truly matches Ovidian poetics is precisely that of feminine desire, not because it is essentially 'genuine', but because it makes women take on different masks and play many roles.

Still, as far as Lindheim is concerned, Ovid's version of this desire knows only two strategies, namely that of appearing powerful and that of appearing powerless. Penelope, for instance, attempts to look weak to Odysseus by underlining that she is *writing* as opposed to talking, which, in the oral culture of the Homeric epos should presumably be more successful.¹⁵⁷ But if writing is in accordance with the feminine desire to look helpless to the reader, what do such observations tell us about Ovid himself? After all, he is the writer. And even if he were afraid of women and tried to control them, why would he do so by making them look so much like himself, the writer?

Lindheim's image of Ovid, drawn exclusively on the basis of her Lacanian reading of less than two-thirds of the single *Heroides* – that is, without regard to Roman erotic elegy as a genre, without regard to Ovidian poetics or almost all the other Ovidian works – is the supreme male chauvinist incarnated, notably in a battle with Sappho:

By creating fifteen women who so closely resemble one another, by reducing the various heroines of mythology and literature to a single pattern, Ovid betrays his

¹⁵⁵ Cf. *Ovid's Poetics of illusion* by Hardie (2002b).

¹⁵⁶ This is just one of numerous Ovidian lines that makes this point.

¹⁵⁷ Lindheim (2003) 40.

anxiety in the face of women's protean diversity. This is most easily discernible in the example of Sappho, where Ovid confronts head-on a "source text" that celebrates the complexities and multifariousness of women. When he closes down the possibilities that Sappho creates for women through the mouthpiece of his own Sappho and through direct echoes of Sapphic fragments, Ovid's project of limiting Woman by means of a single, unifying principle becomes clear. While Sappho embraces and cultivates women's heterogeneity, Ovid strives to keep his women under control. [...] In this way, the heroines become the vehicle through which the poet, in the guise of writing like a woman, constructs a masculine fantasy or illusion of the Woman.¹⁵⁸

But if Lindheim's reading of the poet who has written more than most classical authors in the persons of female figures, about or to women, testifies to a misandrist position (like Harvey's), rather than to everlasting misogyny, Fulkerson's study sets the image of Ovid free from reductionist definitions through her exploration of the literary and meta-literary character of the *Heroides*.

Fulkerson denies that the *Heroides* should be regarded as fallacious because the letters allegedly do not get through to their addressees. Instead she marvels at the fact that the heroines' epistles actually reach *us*. We read them, and thus they are not failures at all, not as literature. Fulkerson fully recognises that the *Heroides* are writings about writings and that each heroine constitutes an image of the author. She also navigates astutely between the many different levels that such an insight implies: she asserts that the *Heroides* are female figures and sets out '[...] to recuperate a feminine poetics of abandonment'.¹⁵⁹ At the same time, she stresses the 'startling' similarities between such a poetics and the Roman erotic elegy with its 'masculine [...] pose of servitude'.¹⁶⁰ Fulkerson's position is the post-feminist's, and so Ovid, in her view, can perform as a woman.¹⁶¹ In creating the *Heroides*, Ovid metamorphoses himself into a community of women in order to perform as a female and literary figure with privileged access to marginalized experiences, which again allows him to dramatize the business of writing on the edge.¹⁶² Fulkerson is however careful not to present the writer Ovid and the writing heroine as identical and thereby reduce them to one single figure.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁸ Lindheim (2003) 182-3.

¹⁵⁹ Fulkerson (2005) 3.

¹⁶⁰ Fulkerson (2005) 3.

¹⁶¹ Fulkerson (2005) 5, 144.

¹⁶² Cf. Spentzou (2003) as well, *ad pharmakon* and the postscript.

¹⁶³ Her observation on behalf of Phyllis and Oenone, for example, is instructive: 'Yet perhaps we look too quickly behind the mask of Phyllis to find Ovid, for she can be seen as the alluding author, even altering her own story to fit better into the mold of the abandoned woman; she belongs in the *Heroides* simply because she has already decided she has been abandoned. Phyllis, then, is not similar to Dido

Fulkerson's main focus lies on the single *Heroides* and on how they manifest different strategies of authorship, building not only on the reading of their 'master-texts', but also on the reading of each other. This novel and intriguing approach is undoubtedly motivated by the text itself and the way the seemingly look-alike heroines actually create quite a varied collection of epistolary elegies that are not even always in accordance with the elegiac genre. Penelope, for instance, seems to survive the transfer to elegy as an intact epic heroine; the heroines have unelegiac concerns like magic and family matters, and some, like Hypermetra, are probably not even in love.¹⁶⁴

Fulkerson's original approach to the *Heroides* consists in seeing the heroines as a community of writers who read and are inspired by each other. And if their readings are sometimes too strong, or too negligent, they are so only to the detriment of their destinies, not of their mastery of the art of writing. Indeed, even their destinies, however sad, testify to their writing. As Fulkerson sees it, it is above all the heroines' vulnerability as writers that has a counterpoint in the real world of living authors, notably (and prophetically, the distance in time between the *Heroides* and the poet's exile taken into account) in the case of the author Ovid and his reader Augustus. Framing a core message in the work, Fulkerson states that '[...] insofar as the *Heroides* are "about" anything, they focus on the ability (or inability) of poetry to make a difference in the world, both within its mythological context and for the reader.'¹⁶⁵ This insight, outstanding as it is for its sympathy with Ovid, leads Fulkerson to reflect cautiously on the process of communication between writer and reader by the means of literature: '[...] the reader of the *Heroides* is placed in a position of immense authority: we are the final arbiters of whether Briseis is pitiable, Hypermetra is manipulative, or Oenone naïve. More importantly, we also judge Ovid.'¹⁶⁶ In short: 'The *Heroides* thematize the dangers of reception: it is dangerous to be read, but also not to be read.'¹⁶⁷

solely because Ovid sees her that way, but because Ovid has constructed a Phyllis who sees herself that way.' And, noteworthy, in the case of Oenone: 'As she writes, Oenone is not even confident that Paris will read her letter in its entirety; interestingly for our purposes, she sees access to readership as controlled by a woman [i.e. Helen].' In accordance with the text itself autonomy and control can stem from both males (Ovid) and females (Helen). Fulkerson (2005) 29, 57.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Fulkerson (2005) 37-8, 75, 79.

¹⁶⁵ Fulkerson (2005) 146.

¹⁶⁶ Fulkerson (2005) 146.

¹⁶⁷ These are true and refined observations, and I find it hard to imagine that anyone would oppose them, writer or reader. But apparently, even in spite of the focus reader-reception-aesthetics has put on

Surprisingly, Fulkerson seems to go against her own sensible perception in the appendix about the *Epistula Sapphus*. This appendix is as brief as it is arresting. It is a kind of a simultaneous ‘no’ and ‘yes’ to the question of whether the *Epistula Sapphus* is genuinely Ovid’s or not. It is an explicit ‘no’ on the basis of the traditional text-critical objections that Fulkerson accepts without discussion.¹⁶⁸ At the same time it is a hesitating ‘yes’ in recognition of how well a ‘real’ author-heroine would fit into the scope of the study which bears the title *The Ovidian Heroine as Author*.¹⁶⁹ In short, Fulkerson is not convinced that the *Epistula Sapphus* is by Ovid, but, for the sake of her argument, she wishes it was, and to some extent she even argues that it is. This ambiguity, bordering on contradiction, remains unresolved, except, and then only suggestively, when Fulkerson claims that the *Epistula Sapphus* is bad poetry.¹⁷⁰ If the poem is regarded as inauthentic, it contains too many lyric elements to belong to the elegiac *Heroides*, and accordingly it is an unsuccessful forgery. If the poem, on the other hand, is authentic, then it deliberately jars with elegiac conventions on purpose and is *intentionally* bad.

Like several scholars before her, Fulkerson regards the poem as a battle between elegy and lyric, and excludes Sappho from the community of writers that she has carefully outlined through her readings of the other *Heroides*, because the Heroidean Sappho does not understand the elegiac genre. In support of her claim Fulkerson analyses Phaon’s departure-scene, Sappho’s suicidal leap and the fact that she wants a letter from Phaon. All the way through, Fulkerson’s analysis is based on similarities between Sappho’s letter and several other *Heroides*, and, as I intend to show in Part Three, it is a matter of choice whether or not to interpret the variations displayed in the *Epistula Sapphus* as signs of inauthenticity.¹⁷¹

the latter in recent times, the dangers of *being* or *not being* read are something that writers experience more intensely than readers. That is perhaps also the reason why Fulkerson insists so much on the reader’s power: ‘[...] *our* reading is dangerous, perhaps not for us, but for the heroines and for Ovid. For with reading comes judgement; if readers are indeed all-powerful, it is no wonder that authors are constantly urging us to be very careful what we do to them. To write is to make oneself vulnerable: you are either not read, in which case you are safe (but unknown), or you are read, which subjects you to interpretation beyond your control.’ Fulkerson (2005) 151.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Fulkerson (2005) 152.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Fulkerson (2005) 152-3.

¹⁷⁰ Fulkerson (2005) 154.

¹⁷¹ As for now I would just like to pose this generic question inspired by Fulkerson herself: why could not the *Epistula Sapphus*’ fine variations on Heroidean themes be in keeping with Fulkerson’s non-elegiac readings of Penelope, Hermione and Hypermestra? Actually, considering Ovid’s bending of the elegiac genre through the too-elegiac *Amores*, the erotodidactic *Ars Amatoria* and the anti-amatory

Like in the overture of the *Epistula Sapphus* that so cautiously creates the impression of conceding power to the reader, the reader seems to hold sway. Spentzou claims that Sappho does not belong to the *Heroides*, Lindheim claims that Sappho is all the *Heroides* and Fulkerson, by some truly ambiguous routes, seems to say that Sappho is too similar to belong to the *Heroides*. She is led to her double reading, however, by accepting the arguments that deny Ovid authorship of the *Epistula Sapphus*. But are these objections decisive? Part Two of the present thesis will be dedicated to this question.

Remedia Amoris, not to mention the mytho-epic *Heroides*, a Sappho that disrespects the elegiac rules becomes very like Ovid himself.

Part Two:

The *Epistula Sapphus* and Textual Criticism

The question of the *Epistula Sapphus*' authenticity, which in many ways lies embedded in the poem's very opening *auctoris nomina*, manifests itself in a debate which begins at the discovery of the elegiac epistle in the Renaissance period and goes on, with shifting intensity, to our own times.¹⁷² Consensus is just as absent from this debate as it is from the gendered reception of the poem. Elements relating to transmission and testimonies are important to the debate, which, in addition to the question of authenticity, raises many issues concerning textual criticism and interpretation. I will now present the major points of transmission and testimonies, beginning with the most recent information and going backwards, arriving, finally at the text itself.

1. The Debate on Authenticity

Today it is generally accepted that the extant elegiac letter in Latin consisting of 220 verses that claims to be written by Sappho and is addressed to Phaon was designed to belong to the *Heroides*, the collection of elegiac epistles supposedly penned by legendary heroines, of which Ovid claims paternity at *Am.* 2.18.21-26 and *Ars* 3.345.¹⁷³ Since D. Heinsus' edition (1629) it is conventional to place Sappho's epistle between Hypermestra's letter to Lynceus and Paris' letter to Helen, that is, as the last and fifteenth of the single *Heroides*, preceding the sixteenth and double epistles. To the question of who designed the *Epistula Sapphus* so as to belong to the *Heroides*, two conflicting answers dominate today's scholarship: 'Ovid' and 'Anonymous'.

The debate on the *Epistula Sapphus*' authenticity is a debate on the extant poem's aptness or inaptness for the *Heroides* in particular and for the Ovidian corpus

¹⁷² 'Ovid's ability to fuse with Sappho is at once the basis of his originality and the principal threat to his authorial status: the debate about the authenticity of *Heroides* 15 is perhaps the most appropriate response to Ovid's conflicting desire for Sappho.' DeJean (1989) 76.

¹⁷³ Furthermore *Tr.* 1.6.21-22 might be read as a hint at the *Heroides* and *Pont.* 4.16.13-4 as another reference to Sabinus response.

in general. Two images of Ovid and of the Ovidian corpus are accordingly produced in the debate, one which is compatible with the *Epistula Sapphus*, and another which is not. Again, it is the idea of Ovid which is at stake.

1.1. Testimonies and Transmission

The well established connection between the *Epistula Sapphus*, the *Heroides* and Ovid (or ‘Ovid’), is mirrored in the following list of select editions, where only two, in brackets, do not comprise the *Epistula Sapphus*.¹⁷⁴

- 1995: P. E. Knox, *Ovid. Select Epistles*. Contains *Incerti Auctoris ‘Epistula Sapphus’*, (Cambridge)
- 1979: G. P. Goold, revision of Showerman, *Ovid, Heroides and Amores, ed. with an English Translation, (LCL; Cambridge Massachusetts, London)*
- 1975: Dörrie *Der Brief der Sappho an Phaon* (Berlin, New York)
- [1971: Dörrie, *P. Ovidii Nasonis Epistulae Heroidum*, (Berlin, New York)]
- 1928: H. Borneque and M. Prévost, translation, *Ovide, Héroides*, (Paris)
- 1889: A. Palmer, *P. Ovidi Nasonis Heroides*, with the Greek translation of Planudes, (Oxford)
- 1888: R. Ehwald, *P. Ovidius Naso, ex Rudolphi Merkelii recensione*, (Leipzig)
- 1886: H. S. Sedlmayer. *P. Ovidii Nasonis Heroides*, based on his *Kritische Kommentar zu Ovids Heroiden* (1881) and *Prolegomena Critica ad Heroides Ovidianas* (1878), (Vienna)
- 1885: S. G. de Vries, *Epistula Sapphus ad Phaonem. Apparatu critico instructa commentario illustrata et Ovidio vindicata*, (Leiden)
- [1874: A. Palmer. *Heroides* 1-14 (London)]
- 1873, 1850: R. Merkel, (Leipzig)¹⁷⁵
- 1829-30: V. Loers, *P. Ovidii Nasonis Heroides et A. Sabini Epistolae*, (Cologne)
- 1727: P. Burman *P. Ovidi Nasonis, Opera Omnia* (cum et HEINSII) et aliorum notis), (Amsterdam)
- 1661: N. Heinsius, *P. Ovidii Nasonis, Opera*, (Leiden)
- 1629: D. Heinsius, *Pub. Ovidii Nasonis, Opera*, (Leiden). The *Epistula Sapphus*, which is transmitted separately from the other *Heroides*, is placed as number 15 among the single poems, before the double ones.

There were many commentaries, studies and lectures dedicated to the poem in the Renaissance period.¹⁷⁶ The connection to Ovid was not immediately established when

¹⁷⁴ One of these defends the poem’s authenticity, Dörrie (1971) and the second refutes it, Palmer (1874), but both make another edition where the poem is presented as a part of Ovid’s *Heroides*. See below.

¹⁷⁵ ‘[...] il Merkel nella sua edizione d’Ovidio l’ha [i.e. *Epistula Sapphus*] trattata come una povera disgraziatissima e spregiata bastarda, relegandola in calce di tutte le altre epistole, e fin stampandola in caratteri corsivi. E, quasi ciò non bastasse, il Merkel non si è neppur degnato di dire una sola parola di quell’Epistola nella prefazione, come si trattasse di cosa notoriamente condannata e senza appello: neppure ha dato notizia de’ manoscritti adoperati, neppur contezza delle varianti!’ Comparetti (1876) 22.

the text began to circulate around 1420. There are three apparent reasons for this: firstly the poem was often in the company of other rare texts (for instance by Petronius), secondly it had no tag or title that indicated an Ovidian origin, and thirdly it claimed, as it still does, to be written by Sappho. All this supported the notion that the *Epistula Sapphus* was a translation into Latin of Sappho herself.¹⁷⁷

* The vulgate manuscripts of the *Epistula Sapphus*

We know of about 200 copies of the *Epistula Sapphus* that were produced around 1420, and this vulgate class of manuscript is assumed to stem from one lost source, which is generally thought to be independent of the medieval witness *Codex Francofurtanus*, F.¹⁷⁸

* The mediaeval witness

In the mediaeval manuscript *Codex Francofurtanus* (*saec.* xii/xiii), which is the only mediaeval witness that collects the *Epistula Sapphus* and the *Heroides* together, the poem does not occupy the place between Hypermestra's epistle to Lynceus (*Her.* 14) and Paris' to Helen (*Her.* 16), but precedes the entire collection of elegiac epistles, single and double.¹⁷⁹

* Other mediaeval testimonies

The *Florilegium Gallicum* displays several lines from the *Epistula Sapphus* between extracts from Hypermestra's and Paris' letter.¹⁸⁰ It is traditionally assumed that the *Florilegium Gallicum* comes from the Loire Valley (Orléans), but Stirnemann and

¹⁷⁶ 'Hier eine – gewiß nicht vollständige – Liste der frühesten Kommentatoren: Thomas Schiefaldus 1476; Petrus Crinitus 1481, Georgius Merula (gest. 1494; Abfassung und erste Veröffentlichung des Kommentars nicht sicher zu datieren); Domitius Calderinus (gest. 1478; hier gilt das gleiche; die beiden letztgenannten Kommentare erschienen nahezu gleichzeitig); J. B. Egnatius (1473-1553) fügte den Kommentar zur ES seinem Jugendwerk *Racemationes* 1493 ein. Später steuerten A. Naugerius (in der 2. Aldina 1515), J. Micyllus-Molsheim (1563), Hercules Ciofanus (1575) und Gregor Bersmann (1582) Erhebliches zur Erklärung der ES bei.' Dörrie (1975) 2 footnote 4. See also Knox (1995) 12-3.

¹⁷⁷ For all of these, cf. Dörrie (1975) 3.

¹⁷⁸ Cf. Tarrant (1983) 272.

¹⁷⁹ In F the *Epistula Sapphus* does not have as many annotations as the other *Heroides* a fact which might indicate that it was copied from another source, Tarrant (1983) 272. The copyist must, however, have felt that it was cognate to the other *Heroides*.

¹⁸⁰ The two most important manuscripts of the *Florilegium Gallicum* quote eleven (Paris. B. N. lat. 17903) and six (Paris, B. N. lat. 7647) lines from the *Epistula Sapphus* respectively.

Poirel have recently argued that it might have been compiled in the Champagne district.¹⁸¹

Also Vincent de Beauvais, who died in 1264, quotes a line from the *Epistula Sapphus*, *Ingenium nimis deficit omne malis* (*Her.* 15.196), between one line of Hypermetra's (*Her.* 14.56) and one and a half lines of Paris' letter (*Her.* 16.7-8), in a longer list of quotations of the *Heroides*.¹⁸² Burton (1983) suggests that Vincent de Beauvais was using one of the chief manuscripts of the *Florilegium Gallicum* when he made the compilation.¹⁸³

Until recently these were the only medieval testimonies to the *Epistula Sapphus*, but in 2003 Stagni made the discovery that the French 'annotator of Bern 276', identified as Guido de Grana, mentions the epistle in one of his marginal notes.¹⁸⁴ Stagni, who suggests that 'Guido sia morto nel 1283-1285', claims that the note might be independent of the *Florilegium Gallicum*.¹⁸⁵

* Late Antique testimonies

Among the testimonies to the poem in Late Antiquity, there are two largely identical grammatical treatises that both refer to the name *Atthis*. Both treatises are transmitted in the *Codex Bobiensis*, B (now *Vindobonensis 16*) (saec. vii-viii), and the first of these texts, *Catholica Probi*, has: *this et hoc tertiae declinationis, this vel dis facit genetivo. Atthis, Atthisis. Sic Ovidius*.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸¹ Cf. Burton (1983) 10. Stirnemann and Poirel (2006) *passim*.

¹⁸² *Speculum Historiale* VI.107.

¹⁸³ Burton (1983) 50.

¹⁸⁴ For the 'annotator of Bern 276', see Reynolds (1983) 448 and *passim*.

¹⁸⁵ '[...] mi piace segnalare in Guido una traccia della rarissima quindicesima, l'epistola a Saffo, di controversa attribuzione, di cui si conserva un solo testimone preumanistico (oggi a Francoforte), oltre ad estratti nel *Florilegium Gallicum* (quella compilazione che almeno fino a tempi recentissimi veniva considerata originaria della zona di Orléans e con la quale Guido condivide la lettura di testi a dir poco prelibati se non introvabili): al f. 85^r del codice di Wolfenbüttel [...] si legge, con titolo gravemente corrotto, un'incontrovertibile allusione al v. 14 (...*proveniunt; vacuae carmina mentis opus*; nel florilegio *Sunt vacuae carmina mentis opus*): «*ovidius carmin^a secessum/ Idem sappho in epist./ ad pho*» (cfr. *Tristia*, 1.1.41) al di sopra di una glossa marginale a quanto pare preesistente che riassume il concetto espresso da Seneca: «*sapientia eget/ loco vacuo*». Il fatto che per quanto deformato si legga il nome del destinatario esclude una derivazione dai florilegi, nei quali è taciuto, se si esclude un'aggiunta assai tarda in uno dei manoscritti principali che per di più omette il verso in questione (si vedano le edizioni RACKLEY, *The excerpts*, p. 129, v. 109, e soprattutto BURTON, *Classical*, p. 214). Di solito Guido non specifica i nomi dei corrispondenti delle singole epistole; si ha dunque l'impressione che qui dipenda da una tradizione separata, come il Francofortano e a differenza del florilegio.' Stagni (2006) 274 footnote 113, I am grateful to the author for a copy of the paper.

¹⁸⁶ *GLK*, IV, 30.

In the second treatise, the grammarian Marius Plotius Sacerdos presents the same example with an additional piece of information, here in bold: *this et hoc tertiae declinationis, this vel dis facit genetivo haec Atthis, huius Atthis vel Atthis. sic Ovidius.*¹⁸⁷ Keil emends to *haec* from *hic*, which is the *lectio* of B, in order to make it concur with the only attestation of *Atthis* (with aspiration) in Ovid, that occurs at *Epistula Sapphus* 18: *non oculis grata est Atthis ut ante mihi.*¹⁸⁸

Whereas *Catholica Probi* might be referring quite simply to the extant *Epistula Sapphus*, assuming that the grammarian did not just misspell the name of *Attis*, the priest of *Cybele*, only the *emended* text of Sacerdos' text might be regarded as an unproblematic piece of evidence in favour of the *Epistula Sapphus*' authenticity, and as such it is of course neither airtight nor waterproof. In support of Keil's emendation it should however be mentioned that the *Codex Bobiensis* seems weak on vowels: B reads for instance *oboedius* for *Ovidius* and on the same page (482) Keil interestingly prints *haec* for *hic*.¹⁸⁹

As regards the question of transmission, I would like to add that *Her* 1.2 *nil mihi rescribas attinet ipse ueni*, which is not attested in any medieval witness, is:

quoted four times in this form in the fourth-century metrical treatise of Aelius Festus Aphthonius, *GLK* VI 109.3 and VI 111.24. As Housman (1922) 88-91 (*Class. pap.* 1052-4) demonstrates, this must have been what stood in the text known to the grammarian and *attinet* is thus attested by a witness at least seven centuries older than E or G.¹⁹⁰

However small, this is an indication that the witness of Aelius Festus Aphthonius belonged to a different branch of the transmission than those of the extant manuscripts. The indication justifies the question (if nothing more) of whether this could also indicate that there were manuscript-traditions, now lost as well, where the entire single *Heroides* were together, the *Epistula Sapphus* included.

¹⁸⁷ *GLK*, VI, 482.

¹⁸⁸ This makes good sense, since *Atthis* is mentioned as one of Sappho's beloved girls in a number of fragments, cf. Knox (1995) 284.

¹⁸⁹ I am grateful to Professor M. D. Reeve for having pointed this out to me, cf. *GLK* 482, 21 *hic luxus | haec luxus*.

¹⁹⁰ Knox (1995) 88. The *sigla* are E for Coll. Etonensis 150 (Bl. 6.5), saec. xi and G for Guelferbytanus extrav. 260. saec. xii. According to Tolkieln (1888) 16-17, there are 3 more instances of verses from the *Heroides* quoted by grammarians, in addition to the disputed *Atthis*-testimony.

Furthermore Ausonius (310-395 A.D.) seems to allude to the Ovidian Sappho twice in his poetry. One passage appears to recall the *Heroides*, including the *Epistula Sapphus*:

‘Suasi quod potui, <tu> alios modo consule.’ ‘Dic quos?’
‘quod sibi suaserunt Phaedra et Elissa dabunt,
quod Canace Phyllisque, et fastidita Phaoni.’
‘hoc das consilium?’ ‘tale datur miseris’. (*Epigr.* 103.11-4)¹⁹¹

[‘I have advised thee all I can: now take other’s counsel.’ ‘Tell me whose?’ ‘Phaedra and Elissa will give the advice they gave themselves, Canace too, and Phyllis, and she whom Phaon scorned.’ ‘Do you give this counsel? Such is given to the unhappy!’]

Ausonius was familiar with Menander who wrote what is now the oldest extant attestation of the tragic love story of Sappho and Phaon (*Leucadia*), and so he could draw directly on the comic writer in *Epigr.* 103.12.¹⁹² But the whole poem, which is a complaint to Venus on behalf of a lover who has two mistresses at once, seems to be an amusing ‘summary’ of most of the works of Ovid’s early poetic career. The satisfaction of having two mistresses in Ovid’s *Am.* 2.10, has turned into a problem of Ausonius’ lover, who – through Venus – is presented with every kind of instruction that Ovid also employs in the *Amores*, *Ars Amatoria* and *Remedia Amoris* (*passim*). Both problems and instructions are of an arch-elegiac kind and could perhaps point to other elegists as well as to Ovid, but the throng of heart aching heroines is outstandingly Ovidian, and so the presence of five of them in Ausonius’ poem strongly suggests that Ovid is an inspiring force. At any event, the expression *fastidita Phaoni* could hardly allude to *Am.* 2.18 since Sappho in that poem (l. 26 and 34) seems to escape her suicide (see below).¹⁹³

* Ovidian testimonies

Finally, Ovid himself famously mentions Sappho twice in *Am.* 2.18. I will return to this rich and challenging poem in the section on chronologies in Ovid’s early poetic career, in this context it suffices to say that *Am.* 2.18 has significant *sphragis*-features

¹⁹¹ Cf. Green’s edition (1991) 92.

¹⁹² Cf. *Protrepicus ad Nepotem* l. 46. For the comedies about Sappho and Phaon see Knox (1995) 278-9).

¹⁹³ Ausonius’ other reference of the poetess is *et de nimbo saltem Leucate minatur* (*Cupido Cruciatu* l. 24). There is a lacuna after this line, which was filled in by Ugoletus, who, inspired by Horace *Ep.* 1.19.28, wrote: *mascula Lesbicis Sappho peritura sagittis*. Ugoletus’ line plays a (minor) part in the nineteenth century debate on the authenticity of the *Epistula Sapphus*.

in common with *Am.* 1.15 and 3.15, and that its penultimate position in the second book has been argued to be displaced in parallel to the partial *Heroides*-catalogues where the order of poems has also been displaced.¹⁹⁴

aut quod Penelopes uerbis reddatur Vlixī
 scribimus et lacrimas, Phylli relictā, tuas,
 quod Paris et Macareus et quod male gratus Iason
 Hippolytique parens Hippolytusque legant,
 quodque tenens strictum Dido miserabilis ensem
 dicat et Aoniam Lesbīs amica lyram.¹⁹⁵
 quam cito de toto rediit meus orbe Sabinus
 scriptaque diuersis rettulit ipse locis!
 candida Penelope signum cognouit Vlixīs,
 legit ab Hippolyto scripta nouerca suo.
 iam pius Aeneas miserae rescripsit Elissae,
 quodque legat Phyllis, si modo uiuit, adest.
 tristis ad Hysipylen ab Iasone littera uenit,
 dat uotam Phoebō Lesbīs amata lyram. (*Am.* 2.18.21-34)

[What I may, I do. I either profess the art of tender love – ah me, I am caught in the snares of my own teaching! – or I write the words Penelope sends her Ulysses, and thy tearful plaint, abandoned Phyllis; what Paris and Macareus are to read, and what ungrateful Jason, and Hippolytus, and Hippolytus’ sire; and what pitiable Dido, with drawn blade in her hand, indites, and the Lesbian, loved by the Aonian lyre. How quickly has my Sabinus returned from the ends of the earth and brought back missives writ in far-distant places! Spotless Penelope has recognized the seal of Ulysses; the stepdame has read what was penned by her Hippolytus. Already devout Aeneas has written back to wretched Elissa, and a letter is here for Phyllis to read, if only she live. A missive grievous for Hipsipyle has come from Jason; the daughter of Lesbos, her love returned, may offer to Phoebus the lyre she vowed.]

As is evident from this passage, it would perhaps be more apt to talk about the *Heroides*-catalogues in the plural rather than the singular, as the first refers to Ovid’s female epistolographers, whereas the second alludes to the non-extant heroic replies penned by Ovid’s friend Sabinus. Both Ovid’s and Sabinus’ catalogues begin significantly with Penelope and end with Sappho. The authorial statement *scribimus et lacrimas* (*Am.* 2.18.22) can be read as a further echo of the *Epistula Sapphus*, in which one line opens in a very similar way, *scribimus, et lacrimis* (*Her.* 15.97).

The *Heroides*-catalogues come furthermore in a larger (and tricky) summary of Ovid’s poetic achievements to date, all framed by advice to his epic-composing friend Macer to change his chosen subject from war to love. Why does Ovid seem both proud and content that his friend has composed replies to his heroines’ letters

¹⁹⁴ See Hinds (1993) 31.

¹⁹⁵ At this verse line I follow McKeown’s text.

that, as Dörrie observed, do not really allow for any answer?¹⁹⁶ Without objecting to Heldmann's convincing answer (1994) that Sabinus saw in the *Heroides* an invitation to play with Ovidian poetics, in which the fictitious readily transforms into different realities, I want to suggest that Sabinus fits the scope of *Am.* 2.18 because he also serves as a model for Macer. Sabinus is the poet who has seen – even without having been encouraged explicitly to do so – an incitement to make one of Ovid's poems the subject of literary discourse, even beyond the poet's own literary career. Sabinus is a good example because of his initiative, but I find it easy to imagine that Sabinus' heroic replies must also have been superb 'transitory texts' to inspire a Macer on his way from the battlefield to the bed, as it were.

Before I proceed to present the nineteenth-century debate, certain problems concerning lines *Am.* 2.18.34 and *Her.* 15.169 must be addressed. For a long while the *Amores* line was printed with the subjunctive (the indicative is printed in all modern editions, as above): *det uotam Phoebos Lesbis amata lyram.*¹⁹⁷ This line is generally linked to the passage of the *Epistula Sapphus*, which follows immediately after Sappho has begged Amor to soften her fall as she throws herself into the sea, so that she will not lose her life. And then:

inde chelyn Phoebos, communia munera, ponam,
 et sub ea uersus unus et alter erunt:
 GRATIA LYRAM POSVI TIBI PHOEBE POETRIA SAPPHO
 CONVENIT ILLA MIHI CONVENIT ILLA TIBI. (*Her.* 15.181-4)

[Then I will consecrate to Phoebus my shell, our common boon, and under it shall be writ one verse, and a second

SAPPHO THE SINGER, O PHOEBUS, HATH GRATEFULLY BROUGHT THEE
 A ZITHER:
 TOKEN WELL SUITED TO ME, TOKEN WELL SUITED TO THEE.]

¹⁹⁶ Dörrie (1967) 44.

¹⁹⁷ This and line 26 certainly influenced each other, and in Kenney's edition verse line 26 is printed with *crucis*: *dicat et † Aoniae Lesbos amata lyrae.* † McKeown reserves *amata* for verse line 34 only and prints Goold's modification *amica* without *crucis* in 26. McKeown comments: '[...] it seems reasonable to assume that, just as there are verbal correspondences between lines 21 and 29 [...], at the beginning of the respective catalogues, so Ovid marked their conclusion in the same manner here and in line 34. Confusion in the tradition, however, perhaps raising from scribal enhancement of this parallelism, and problems of interpretation leave the text of both lines uncertain [...]. Despite the difficulties, however, there seems to be no good case (*pace* Tarrant) for doubting that Ovid is referring to Sappho in both lines. *Aeoniam Lesbos amica lyram* is Goold's modification ([based on "what stands in ζ, and may have stood in the archetype"] [1965] 42f.) of Borneque's *Aeoniam Lesbos amata lyram*. With this reading, Goold detects a reference to the legend of Sappho's leap from the Leucadian Rock, lyre in hand, just as Dido writes while holding Aeneas' sword.' (1998) 398.

The dedication referred to in the line from the *Amores* is in most cases understood to take place after Sappho has survived the leap from the Leucadian Rock.¹⁹⁸ This is fairly unproblematic, but then there is the problem of *amata*. *Am.* 2.18.34.¹⁹⁹ If Sappho is being *loved* as she dedicates her lyre, safe after the leap, she must be loved by Phaon. But how does this harmonise with the *Epistula Sapphus*? How are Phaon's potentially changeable sentiments anticipated in this poem?

In *Her.* 15.163-72 a Naiad appears to Sappho and tells her to go to the Leucadian promontory and jump in order to get rid of her burning desire, which is not reciprocated by Phaon. Sappho does not seem at all ready to commit suicide, and though she admits that *quidquid erit, melius quam nunc erit* [...] (*Her.* 15.177) she prefers that Phaon should return: *tu mihi Leucadia potes esse salubrior unda* (*Her.* 15.187). Among the many possible outcomes that her letter suggests, as it reads today, one is arguably that Phaon can change. During the nineteenth century there was, however, one line that had found its way into all editions and which particularly advocated such a presumption, and that was the vulgate reading of lines 169-70: *nec mora, uersus amor tetigit lentissima Pyrrhael pectora. Deucalion igne leuatus erat*. This is what the Naiad says to Sappho, and when the divinity continues to say that this is the law of the Leucadian promontory, *hanc legem locus ille tenet* (*Her.* 15.171), the defenders of the Ovidian origin of both *Am.* 2.18 and *Her.* 15 had an excellent argument – just like anyone who suffers from heartache and jumps from the Leucadian Rock, Sappho will both chill her own flaming passion and kindle Phaon's love for her.

Apart from several difficulties with *tetigit*, for which *fugit* and *figit* are also found, 'Pyrrhae' is not found in the mediaeval witness F, which has *mersi*, the preferred solution since Palmer's edition (1898).²⁰⁰ Palmer does not explain his

¹⁹⁸ Not so Dörrie (1975) 160.

¹⁹⁹ Wilamowitz excludes the *amata*-possibility altogether and reads the subjunctive as Phaon's taunting advice to jump (and commit suicide), imagining somehow that his *crudelis epistula* (*Her.* 15.219) arrives as she ponders on whether to throw herself over the edge or not: 'Sabinus, ein Freund Ovids, ließ denn auch den Phaon in seiner Antwort, die er dichtete, den höhnischen Rat geben, *det votam Phoebos lyram* (*Am.* II 18,34), d.h. er griff aus ihrem Briefe auf was sie für den Fall ihrer Heilung in Aussicht gestellt hatte, 182 [...].' (1913) 21. Dörrie has argued against the *amata* reading, defending the *amica*, since he wants the verse line 34 to refer to Apollo, and not Phaon: 'das zieht kaum überwindliche Schwierigkeiten nach sich.' (1975) 188. Heldmann comments: 'Damit wird aber eine[...] Einwände gegen die Deutung von Wilamowitz (er habe nur *amata* unterschlagen) gegenstandslos.' (1994) 214.

²⁰⁰ For the variants on *tetigit*, see the apparatus of Knox (1995) 83. Some of the earliest editions of the texts have *mersi*, too, cf. Dörrie (1975) 160.

choice, except for proclaiming *ego non F deseram*. De Vries, who knows F, but chooses *Pyrrhae*, reports that it has been against the vulgate reading because it adds a unique element to the leap from the Leucadian Rock.²⁰¹ To this objection De Vries rightly answers that not only the notion that Pyrrha changed her feelings towards Deucalion after he took the leap, but the very connection between this pair and the Leucadian promontory is unique to the author of the *Epistula Sapphus*, at least to our knowledge.²⁰²

De Vries softens the jarring effect of the ‘unique element’ that the rejecting person (Pyrrha/ Phaon) changes her/ his affections toward the rejected (Deucalion/ Sappho), by pointing out that the entire story of Pyrrha and Deucalion at the edge of the Leucadian promontory is unique in the first place. And if that still will not do as an argument in favour of the reading *Pyrrhae*, which would make the *Epistula Sapphus* a perfect match to *Am.* 2.18.34, I find the opposite possibility, that the reading *Pyrrhae* is adjusted to the *Amores* poem, almost equally interesting, since such an adjustment would, similar to the *florilegia* and the annotations of Guido de Grana, testify to the way the *Epistula Sapphus* is continuously associated with the Ovidian corpus and the *Heroides*.

1.2. An Historical Survey of the Debate (1843-1898)

As already mentioned, there has been doubt about attributing the *Epistula Sapphus* to Ovid since the poem was discovered in the Renaissance period. I will however start my survey of the discussion as late as 1843, when F. W. Schneidewin, in the second year of the new journal *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie*, was the first to dedicate a brief article to the sole purpose of making the case against the inauthenticity of the *Epistula Sapphus*.

A closer look at this debate is useful, as surprisingly many other arguments are recycled in recent times, and as summaries of the discussion tend to be biased. I

²⁰¹ De Vries (1885) 133-5.

²⁰² De Vries (1885) 133. Baehrens apparently thinks that ‘mersi’ was introduced by a *scriba* who *pro ‘Pyrrhae’ audacter reponeret ‘mersi.’* (1885) 62. Dörrie repeats however that ‘die Überlieferung kennt den Sprung vom Felsen *nur* als ein *remedium amoris* [...]’ and is convinced that the end of the letter pictures two mutually exclusive alternatives, namely that Sappho *either* jumps and gets rid of her amorous feelings *or* that Phaon loves her again, hence his deviating reading of *Am.* 2.18.34 (see above) (1975) 160. Similarly Knox *ad loc.*: ‘This variant [*Pyrrhae*] is probably an interpolation designed to make this letter conform to the context suggested by *Am.* 2.18.34 [...]’ (1995) 308.

will give some examples, starting with Dörrie, who is in favour of authenticity and highlights the moral offence philologists have felt towards the poem. And:

[...] in diesem moralischen Anstoß, lag der eigentliche Grund, die Echtheit der ES zu bezweifeln. Nur wurde leider die Diskussion darüber im Vorfeld des eigentlich Gemeinten ausgetragen, nämlich in der Erörterung der (meist nur vermeintlichen) sprachlichen und metrischen Anstöße.²⁰³

The following survey of the nineteenth-century debate will arguably balance Dörrie's view in as much as it is clearly also concerned with philological problems and by no means only with moral offence.

Dörrie is one of several scholars who defend the poem's Ovidian authorship in the 1960s and 70s. Tarrant, in his highly influential contribution to the *abiudicans* view, has to go all the way back to the nineteenth-century debate for different opinions:

When Arthur Palmer published his edition of *Heroides I-XIV* in 1874, he could say of the *ES* [...] that it "is condemned by Lachmann and by every scholar possessed of common sense."²⁰⁴

But as I will show shortly, the effect of Lachmann's arguments is arguably most ostensible precisely in Palmer's edition of 1874. Among the *Heroides* editions listed at the beginning of this chapter, Palmer's first of 1874 is actually the *only* one – since Heinsius' inclusion of the *Epistula Sapphus* in his 1629 edition – which excludes the poem in the belief that it is inauthentic.²⁰⁵ No doubt, the strength of Tarrant's article lies in pointing out the difficulties that Purser had in carrying out Palmer's last wish, as it were, which was to defend the *Epistula Sapphus* as far as possible for his second edition, completed by Purser after Palmer's death in 1898.²⁰⁶

Still Knox, in his edition of selected *Heroides*, which includes the *Epistula Sapphus* despite the fact that he does not believe it to be Ovid's, also appeals to Lachmann as a particular authority:²⁰⁷

²⁰³ Dörrie (1975) 4.

²⁰⁴ Tarrant (1981) 134.

²⁰⁵ Dörrie keeps the *Epistula Sapphus* aside of his *Heroides*-edition (1971) for a separate edition for the poem in defence of its authenticity (1975).

²⁰⁶ Purser in Palmer (1898) vii-viii.

²⁰⁷ Knox's view on the poem is exceptional in as much as he disclaims its Ovidian authorship at the same time as he holds it in great esteem: 'The *Epistula Sapphus*, which I do not believe to be O.'s, is an

The more cogent points raised by Karl Lachmann had greater effect, but once again the consensus of scholarly opinion swung back in the latter part of the nineteenth century towards accepting the work as O.'s, a view that prevailed through most of the twentieth century.²⁰⁸

But the fact that Lachmann's 'cogent points' against the *Epistula Sapphus*, which are only two, as we shall see, were both refuted in the apparatus of Palmer's second edition, clearly testifies to Lachmann's brief and limited influence on this debate, which I will now recapitulate in some detail.

* Schneidewin (1843, 1845)

Schneidewin's contribution consists to a great extent of a summary of the work of scholars defending the poem's Ovidian authorship.²⁰⁹ As his point of departure for his own opposing stance, he chooses Francke's (1816) suspicions about the problematic last half of *Her.* 15.7.²¹⁰ The *lectio* that Francke found problematic was *elegeia flebile carmen*, reported in Palmer's apparatus to stem from the *recentiores* denoted by the siglum ζ.²¹¹ 'Es wäre wünschenswert gewesen, Francke hätte bessere Gründe nicht zurückzuhalten', claims Schneidewin, and finds the better reasons in another reading of ζ – which corresponds with the *lectio* of F – namely *elegi quoque*, that Schneidewin simply dismisses as a 'schlechte Variante' and serving as such his case against authenticity.²¹²

Schneidewin is aware of the many correspondences between Ovid's literary habits and talent and the *Epistula Sapphus* in words, sense and character, but turns this argument, which has been used, and will be used again in favour of authorship, on its head:²¹³

Uebrigens hilft die ganze [...] in den Noten fleißig fortgesetzte Phrasensammlung für den bezweckten Beweis gar nichts, sondern zeigt eben nur, daß der Verfasser seinen

interesting poem in its own right, and I have included it as an illustration of the principle that judgement against authenticity does not necessarily imply aesthetic condemnation.' (1995) ix.

²⁰⁸ Knox (1995) 13.

²⁰⁹ These scholars are Haupt, Werfer, Loers and Jahn, Schneidewin (1843) 138-42.

²¹⁰ Cf. Francke (1816) 43.

²¹¹ 'vulgo: codd. saec. XIII-XV, pauci eique non boni.' Palmer (1898) lix. Cf. Part Three, chapter 4.2.c).

²¹² Schneidewin (1843) 139.

²¹³ The letter is *verborum et sententiarum rationem atque colorem prorsus esse Ovidiani moris et ingenii* according to Fr. X. Werfer, quoted in Schneidewin (1843) 139. A similar view is sustained by Loers in his edition of the *Heroides* (1829-30) XLII.

Ovid fleißig gelesen und sich Gedanken und Ausdrucksweisen im Ganzen mit Geschick angeeignet hat.²¹⁴

The knowledge of Ovid is however not so perfect that it saves the imitator from committing incriminating mistakes, and Schneidewin finds an example of this already in line 4: *hoc breue nescires unde mouetur opus*.²¹⁵ Schneidewin does not object to the somewhat irregular indicative of the dependent clause, but to its sense, which instead of ‘whence it is inspired’ should have been: ‘Von wem das Liebesbriefchen kommet!’²¹⁶ The imitator-hypothesis, that is, the idea that the poem was written by someone who knew his or her Ovid, but at the same time reveals his or her inferiority through errors and misunderstandings, should be kept *in mente* since it will be recycled in the revival of this debate in the twentieth century.

Considering the testimonies at *Am.* 2.18.34, Schneidewin concludes that the incongruities between the *amata* and the extant epistle indicate that the writer of the *Epistula Sapphus* has used *Am.* 2.18 as a source of inspiration, but without understanding it.²¹⁷ Schneidewin then suggests that the poem is a Renaissance forgery, like the three extant Sabinus-replies that were believed to be the letters of Ovid’s friend Sabinus until Jahn suggested that they were penned by the Renaissance humanist Angelus Sabinus.²¹⁸ Towards the conclusion of this first article, Schneidewin refutes that *Catholica Probi* (see above) could refer to the extant *Epistula Sapphus* at all, since the poem displays the name in the nominative, whereas the grammarian discusses the genitive.

Only two years later, in 1845, on the discovery of a medieval testimony to the *Epistula Sapphus*, Schneidewin has to withdraw the suggestion that the poem was a Renaissance forgery.²¹⁹ The discovery also makes Schneidewin draw the conclusion

²¹⁴ Schneidewin (1843) 140.

²¹⁵ An alternative reading in ζ which again corresponds with the medieval witness F is *unde ueniret opus*.

²¹⁶ Schneidewin (1843) 140.

²¹⁷ ‘Der ächte Ovid sagt: Sappho, jetzt vom Phaon mit befriedigender Antwort (durch die Epistel die Sabinus) beglückt und geliebt (amata) gebe dem Phöbus die gelobte Leier. Wo gelobt sie dem Phöbus im XV. Briefe? Sie gelobt sie dem Phöbus, wenn sie das Leukadische Stürzbad glücklich überstanden habe und von Liebesgluth gekühlt sei! Wer kann solche Sprünge vereinigen? Der Verfertiger des XV. Briefes hat die Stelle [...] wenig verstanden [...]! Also Sappho *amata*?!’ Schneidewin (1843) 143.

²¹⁸ Cf. Jahn (1837) 631. For further arguments in favour of the attribution to the humanist Angelus Sabinus, see Geise (2001). Schneidewin does not think that the forger who let him or herself be inspired by the *Heroides*-catalogue of *Am.* 2.18 and wrote the *Epistula Sapphus* had bad intentions and deliberately wanted to deceive learned men, cf. (1843) 143.

²¹⁹ Apparently already Loers had a medieval witness for the *Epistula Sapphus* in his 1829-30 edition, as Comparetti writes: ‘Non so perchè nè lo Schneidewin nè il Dübner hanno voluto rammentare un Ms.

that the poem was necessarily composed before the Middle Ages, as its Greek theme would have been inconceivable in the times between antiquity and the Renaissance. Schneidewin, now introducing the pejorative term ‘Mackwerk’ about the poem, still sustains the same view on its nonOvidian origin as in 1843.²²⁰

* Loers (1846)

In 1846 the editor of the *Heroides*, Loers, picks up Schneidewin’s gauntlet. He starts his defence of the poem’s authenticity with the imitator-hypothesis and claims that the *Epistula Sapphus* does not merit the description ‘Phrasensammlung’ as it is too similar to the authentic *Heroides* in thought and psychology and that it furthermore displays ‘in der Ovidius so hervorstechend Gelehrsamkeit und Fabelkunde’.²²¹ Loers seems to have an eye both for ‘der kühne Dichter Ovidius’ and for metapoetics, and reads the *opus* at *Her.* 15.4 as *carmen*, which according to him removes the problem of the *mouere* construction.²²²

As regards the Atthis-testimony, Loers points out that no matter how interested the 4th century grammarian must have been in the genitive form, he could not have quoted Ovid for it, neither in the case of Sappho’s beloved female friend (whose name the grammarian in that case spelled correctly) nor for the priest of Cybele (whose name he in that case misspelled), as neither of these names appear in the genitive in the Ovidian corpus. The grammarian thus used Ovid for the genitive even though this form did not exist in his work, just as the grammarian wrote: *sons tis faciet: insons, insontis; sic Horatius*, despite the fact, as Loers points out, that only the nominative is found in the Horatian corpus.²²³

dell’Epistola riferito dall’Heusinger al secolo XIII. Vedi Loers, *Ovidii Heroides*: Colon. 1829 I, pag. XIV.’ (1876) 5. Schneidewin seems to be referring to a Florilegium à la *Fl. Gallicum*: ‘Ein von Dübner für mich des Martialis wegen hervorgespürter Excerptencodex lateinischer Dichter, ehemals der Bibliothek von Notre Dame (nr. 188) angehörend, hat mitten unter Versen aus den übrigen Heroiden *wirklich* auch einige Verse aus dem XV. Briefe. Er gehört aber entschieden ins dreizehnte Jahrhundert. [...] Hinter Hypermetra Lynceo und vor Paris Helenae folgt an der gewöhnlichen Stelle *wirklich* Sappho Phaoni.’ Schneidewin (1845) 144-5, my italics. For a fuller treatment of both Dübner’s discovery and another (*Codex Parisinus* 7647), plus the verses involved, see De Vries (1885) 2-5 and 128 and Burton (1983) 46-52.

²²⁰ Though not without recognition of the problems that his conviction must involve, as the very last of his phrases significantly takes the form of a pertinent question: ‘Wie kommt es aber, daß der Brief von Heinsius an die fünfzehnte Stelle gesetzt worden ist, wo ihn unser Excerptor wirklich vorfand?’ Schneidewin (1845) 146.

²²¹ Loers (1846) 41.

²²² Loers supplies his point with several passages of which *Am.* 3.1.5 is most arresting: *hic ego dum spatior tectus nemoralibus umbris/ quod mea quaerebam Musa moueret opus* (1846) 41.

²²³ *GLK*, IV 27.28 (= *Catholica Probi*) and VI 479.18 (= *Sacerdos*), cf. Loers (1846) 43-4.

Approaching the inconsistency that Schneidewin finds in the gloomy picture of the suicidal Dido at *Am.* 2.18.25 and the relatively serene description of Sappho as a friend of the Aeolian lyre in line 26, Loers makes an amusing point about rhetoric of what ‘jedermann/ niemand wird zugeben’ and what is ‘das Natürlichste/ Unnatürlichste’.²²⁴ He then concludes that there is no incriminating discrepancy between *Am.* 2.18 and the *Epistula Sapphus*, using the vulgate reading at *Her.* 15.169-70 *nec mora, uersus amor tetigit lentissima Pyrrhae/ pectora, Deucalion igne leuatus erat*, and drawing a very confident conclusion.²²⁵ As suggested above, this is an argument that will be repeated, only to crumble, as it were, when the *lectio* of *Epistula Sapphus* 169-70 of F (see above), is given priority.

* Lachmann (1848)

In the printed version of Lachmann’s initial lecture for the summer semester of 1848, he sets out to treat the question of the authenticity of all the *Heroides*, double and single, during the course of approximately 6 pages.²²⁶ He rejects the pertinence of the *Epistula Sapphus* to the *Heroides*, claiming that ‘there is no excuse for the inept scruple of the editors, including the most recent, who neither want to throw out nor circumscribe the Epistle of Sappho.’²²⁷

Lachmann produces two reasons for this judgement. Firstly he rejects the validity of the 4th century grammarian’s Atthis-attestation, citing not *Catholica Probi*, as Schneidewin and Loers do, but the same text in the Sacerdos-version, where the *Codex Bobiensis* has: *HIC Atthis, huius Atthis vel Atthis. sic Ovidius.*²²⁸ Lachmann

²²⁴ Loers (1846) 42-3. See the discussion of *Am.* 2.18.26 above. For an elegant interpretation of the symmetry à la concentric circles produced by the *Heroides* mentioned in *Am.* 2.18.21-34, see Heldmann (1994) 201-17.

²²⁵ ‘Hiermit dürfte jener Vernichtungsschlag, welcher der Aechtheit der Epistel von jenen Stellen der angedroht war, abgewehrt sein, und da die andern aufgeworfenen Zweifel, wie gezeigt haben, bei näherer Beleuchtung ebenso wenig erscheinen, die Aechtheit des Gedichtes, in so fern sie aus innern Gründen bestritten worden, wieder fest stehen.’ Loers (1846) 48.

²²⁶ Like Lachmann, Schneidewin aims at brevity. ‘Es lohnte es denn wohl der Mühe, *kurz und bündig* zu zeigen, wie sehr irrig diese Ueberzeugung [i.e. that the *Epistula Sapphus* is genuine] ist.’ Schneidewin (1843) 139, my italics. ‘I’d like to approach this attractive and useful question in its entirety, though very briefly: because, when it comes to questions like this, nothing will work except arguments that are based on simple and true reasoning.’ My translation for ‘Itaque placet nobis quaestionem [...] de integro instituere, sed brevissime: nam hoc genere nisi quae certa ac simpliciter ratione contineantur nihil efficiunt.’ Lachmann (1848 = 1974) 56.

²²⁷ My translation for ‘neque ullam excusationem habet inepta editorum vel recentissimorum superstitio, qui epistulam Sapphus [...] noluerint aut eicere aut circumscribere.’ Lachmann (1848) 56.

²²⁸ Lachmann (1848 = 1974) 56. Lachmann declares many of the epistles inauthentic due to metrical reasons. After he has presented the first of his arguments against the *Epistula Sapphus*, he mentions two attestations of *Attis* in the genitive in Varro and Nonius, before he continues: ‘In amending these

does not for a moment consider the possible corruption of *hic*, which will be emended to *haec* (like another case of *haec* to *hic*) in Keil's edition (1855-80), but simply explains the attribution to Ovid as due to a misspelling of the name of Cybele's priest, Attis.²²⁹

Secondly Lachmann rejects the possibility that the extant *Epistula Sapphus* is written by Ovid, because of the vulgate reading *Erichtho* at line 139 (instead of the unproblematic *Enyo* preserved in the *Codex Francofurtanus*): '[...] no one would ascribe it to Naso who has read Lucan, from whose sixth book the phrase *furialis Erichtho* is extracted (139). But at what time Sappho's epistle should be estimated to have been written is a difficult task that Schneidewin recently has approached in a praiseworthy manner, but not solved.'²³⁰

These are Lachmann's arguments. He does, however, recognise that a distinct Ovidian style marks the entire collection:

A wide field is accordingly opened up by these twelve poems for those who want to discuss the problem, since nothing attests that they belong to Ovid except the ancient manuscripts' authority and the whole mode of speech, which is composed so as they bear the highest degree of resemblance to the poet's own style. And one surely has to be worried that according to several, the greater part of these poems (XII XIV XVI – XXI) clearly seems to show this poet's genius; if I should say to them that the sane richness and fertility, typical of Ovid, is not present in these poems, but rather a certain unpleasant and exaggerated stylistic abundance, how many will be of a cultivated and independent enough judgement to realise this and agree? On the other hand I will confess that there was a time, during which my mind was not sufficiently

passages, I did not fail to observe the Catullian law, the same law, which Varro observed in many other verses and this one, in which he seems to have called Attis *Venerifuga*, *Spatula eviravit pueros Venerifuga*. In Nonius p. 46, 12 the manuscripts have *spatule eviravit omnes venerivaga pueros*.' My translation for: 'in quibus emendandis a lege Catulliana recedendum non esse putavimus, quam eandem Varro et in aliis observavit et illo versu, quo Attin videtur *Venerifugam* dixisse, *Spatula eviravit omnes venerifuga*. apud Nonium p. 46, 12 libri *spatule eviravit omnes venerivaga pueros*.' As Professor M. D. Reeve stated in a private e-mail (April 17th 2003): 'it has nothing to do with Sacerdos or the authorship of the Ep. Sapph.'

²²⁹ 'Obviously Sacerdos, when he a little earlier on p. 57 had written, *Tis terminata nomina tertiae sunt declinationis. Tis faciunt genetivo Latina – Graeca tis vel dis. Hic Attis, Attidis vel Attis*,²²⁹ and afterwards discovered that the same word in some of Ovid's manuscripts was written with aspiration, felt that this should also be mentioned. Ovid several times says *Attis* in the nominative, once *Attin* in the accusative in Fasti V, 227 [...].' My translation for 'Scilicet Sacerdos, cum paulo ante p. haec posuisset, *Tis terminata nomina tertiae sunt declinationis. tis faciunt genetivo Latina – Graeca tis uel dis. hic Attis, Attidis uel Attis*, mox animadverso idem nomen in Ovidii exemplaribus per aspirationem scribi, hoc quoque regerendum putavit. dixit autem Ovidius aliquotiens *Attis* recto casu, semel quarto *Attin* fastorum V, 227 [...].' Lachmann (1848 = 1974) 56-7.

²³⁰ My translation for 'neque eam [epistulam] Nasoni adscribet qui Lucanum legerit, ex cuius libro sexto ista *furialis Erichtho* in illam deducta est (139).' Lachmann (1848 = 1974) 57.

tranquil due to worries and when I suffered from weak health, when the issue that once was made clear, was then not entirely readily understood or fully explored.²³¹

Despite the Ovidian stylistics, then, Lachmann famously denies the authenticity of *Her.* 3, 8, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21, mostly on metrical grounds, and is accordingly unmatched among his contemporary scholars in relieving Ovid of letter-composing heroes and heroines.

* Mähly (1854)

Mähly's shorter note 'Ovids fünfzehnter Brief' in *Rheinisches Museum* reproduces and refines Loers' argument against the discrepancy that Schneidewin claimed to find between *Am.* 2.18.26 and 34 and the *Epistula Sapphus*.²³²

* Palmer (1874)

As already mentioned, Palmer follows Lachmann in his first edition of the *Heroides*, but only to the extent that he excludes the letters traditionally known as 15-21. The *Epistula Sapphus* is the only one of these that he will change his view about in his second edition of 1898.

* Comparetti (1876)

Comparetti is interested in how the unhappy love story of Sappho and Phaon relates to Sappho's own poetry.²³³ Though he finds no evidence for the origin of the affair in Sappho's texts, his investigations have made him appreciate the singular richness of the *Epistula Sapphus* in a tradition that is generally ignorant of the Lesbian poetess' existence and activities.²³⁴ It is in contrast with this scarceness that Ovid stands out to

²³¹ My translation for: 'Itaque in his duodecim carminibus liber disputantibus aperitur campus, quippe quae Ovidii esse nihil testetur nisi exemplarium veterum auctoritas et omne dicendi genus ad summam eius similitudinem compositum. ac profecto verendum est ne horum carminum maior pars (XII XIV XVI – XXI) plerisque huius poëtae ingenium plane referre videatur; quibus si dicemus in his non illam sanam copiam et ubertatem esse, quam Nasonis propriam esse constat, sed molestam quandam et exuberantem orationis abundantiam, quotus quisque tam aut exulto aut libero iudicio erit ut id sentire atque cognoscere possit? quin etiam ultro confitebimur nobis quoque aliquando, cum animo a curis non satis tranquillo et valetudine minus firma essemus, rem olim perspectam tum non adeo promptam atque exploratam fuisse.' (1848 = 1974) 58.

²³² 'Für welchen Fall hat sie aber dieselbe dem Apoll gelobt? Für den fall, daß sie den Sprung glücklich überstanden, d. h. daß sie von ihrer Glut erleichtert (igne levata), aber von Phaon geliebt ist. Darum „grata lyram posui tibi, Phoebe, poetria Sappho“.' Mähly (1854) 625.

²³³ His approach is thus cognate to a more recent article by Most, cf. (1996) 11-35, esp. 17-8.

²³⁴ During the Middle Ages one scholiast on Horace mentions Sappho while commenting on *Ode* 2.13.25, furthermore, an interpolation in some manuscripts of Servius (*ad Aen.* 3.279) states that the

Comparetti as the only candidate for authorship on such a rare and refined topic. Accordingly he sets out to make the case in defence of its authenticity, but except for the enlightening context of Sappho's fortune in the history of the Occident, he makes few new contributions.

As regards the Atthis-testimony, he considers only *Catholica Probi*, and regrets that Loers brought the priest of Cybele into the discussion, but demonstrates that there is no Ovidian manuscript that has the *lectio* 'Atthis' referring to this priest.²³⁵

Like Loers and Mähly before him, he uses the vulgate reading of line 169 (*Pyrrhae*) to argue that there is no inconsistency between *Am.* 2.18 and the extant *Epistula Sapphus*. It is worth noticing, however, that before he turns to this line, he points out that the god to whom the poetess dedicates her lyre in the catalogue of Sabinus' replies (*Am.* 2.18.34) is *Apollo Leucadius* (cf. *Her.* 15.165-6). The very setting of the poem recalls the famous temple that was dedicated to the god on the promontory at which Octavian defeated Antonius and Cleopatra. This aspect is of no interest to Comparetti, however, who instead stresses that the leap from the Leucadian rock must have taken place before Phaon (by the pen of Sabinus) writes back, whereupon Sappho dedicates her lyre to the Leucadian divinity.

Answering Lachmann's objections against the vulgate reading *Erichtho* (*Her.* 15.139), Comparetti writes that he knows that some manuscripts have the variant *erinnys*, but still defends the vulgate reading which made Lachmann condemn the entire epistle.²³⁶ Apparently Comparetti does not consider Enyo, the unproblematic *lectio* of F.

In view of the content of the poem, Comparetti points out that in many passages the *Epistula Sapphus* has 'esattamente il frasario, le formole poetiche, i colori e la maniera propria dello stile ovidiano.'²³⁷ Thus he refutes, as does Loers, the imitator-hypothesis which was (re)launched by Schneidewin.²³⁸

effect of Phaon's beauty made a woman take the leap from the Leucadian rock and finally Petrarch's friend, Domenico Bandini, claims that the poet hints at Sappho in his *docta puella* of his *Eclogue* 10, cf. Comparetti (1876) 6-9.

²³⁵ Cf. Comparetti reports many other ways of spelling this name, but none with the aspiration 'th' (1876) 10. At *Fasti* 5.227 the witness G2 reads, however, *Athim*.

²³⁶ 'Non sarebbe impossibile che egli [Lucan] l'abbia tolto da Ovidio, ma può averlo anche desunto dalla stessa fonte, oggi ignota, da cui lo desumeva Ovidio.' Comparetti (1876) 20.

²³⁷ Comparetti (1876) 20.

²³⁸ 'Si è trovata una ragione di sospettare in certi luoghi che si dicono *imitati* da luoghi ovidiani, come v. 79. = *Trist.* IV, 10, 65, seg. vedi Teuffel, *Gesch. d. röm. Litt.*, 248, 3. Eppure quanto Ovidio sia

Comparetti then concludes his investigation of the question of authenticity with some reflections on the *florilegia* that display different verses from the *Epistula Sapphus*.²³⁹

* Baehrens (1885)

This article is addressed to Comparetti, not as an objection to his defence of the *Epistula Sapphus*' authenticity, but as an attempt to support this stance. Baehrens is very optimistic on behalf of the diplomatic *status quo* of the poem:

If we add Tibullus' Guelferbytanus, Harleianus and the Francofurtanus, also called Naugerianus, and finally the Parisian excerpts from this, then the critical instrument will be present which is completely safe and certain and whose help will allow us to restore the text which was in the archetype.²⁴⁰

These witnesses form the basis he uses for numerous emendations and conjectures. Despite the fact that none of Baehrens' suggestions will make it to a printed text, they designate *punti caldi* for the extant poem. Several of these 'hot spots' have already received notice and will still receive due attention in the debate to come, and I will therefore list them in a table below, omitting, however, those about which there will be no or very little discussion. The first reading (left-hand column) is the text as Baehrens knew it, the second contains his emendation or conjecture in bold print. The initial number is the verse, the asterisk indicates problems that will recur in the debate.

"imitatore di se stesso" e la sua poesia piena di reminiscenze proprie, è cosa nota, e una ricca raccolta di esempi ne ha data Zingerle, *Ovidius und sein Verhältnis zu den Vorgänger und Gleichzeitigen röm. Dichtern* (Innsbruck, 1869), I, pag. 8 segg.' Comparetti (1876) 21, footnote 1. After Comparetti's study was published, Zingerle also wrote *Untersuchungen zur Echtheitsfrage der Heroiden Ovids* in which he refers to a consensus against the Ovidian authorship for *Her.* 15 and simply excludes it from his investigation (1878) 3. Pace Knox who lists Zingerle among those who find parallels in Ovid as evidence in favour of authorship (1995) 13.

²³⁹ Birt should also be mentioned, as he presents an ample exposition of Ovid's metrical habits as regards the *Heroides* with special attention to the hexameters. He does not believe the *Epistula Sapphus* to be genuine and accordingly does not reserve the 15th place in the collection for that poem, but for Paris' letter to Helena. He does however present statistics for caesuras after the trochee of the fourth foot that he finds indicative of the *Epistula Sapphus*' inauthenticity. Two footnotes are dedicated to the poem, for instance its relationship to Callimachus, but it is all withdrawn in the Appendix. (1877) 399 footnote 2, 410 footnote 2 and 430.

²⁴⁰ My translation for 'Huc si adiungemus Guelferbytanum Tibulli, Harleianum et Francofurtanum siue Naugerianum, denique excerpta Parisina, aderit instrumentum criticum omni a parte tutum securumque, cuius ope licebit restituere textum talem, qualis erat in archetypo.' Baehrens (1885) 55.

- (7) *flendus amor meus est, elegeia flebile carmen** *flendus amor meus est, **elegi sunt** flebile carmen*
- (96) *non ut ames oro, uerum ut amare sinas** *non ut ames oro, **nos sed** amare sinas*
- (113) *postquam se dolor inuenit, mea pectora...** *postquam se **dolor innisit**, mea pectora...*
- (124) *somnia formoso candidiora die** *somnia **nimboso** candidiora die*
- (220) *ut mihi Leucadiae fata petantur aquae* *ut mihi Leucadia **cura** petatur aquae*

Baehrens' interpretative explanations for his conjectures and emendations, particularly as regards the two last ones, are indicative not only of the purely philological competence that these problems require, but also the interpretative challenges they represent.

* De Vries (1885)

De Vries' contribution to the debate on authenticity is in the form of an edition of the text, a commentary that comprises an impressive list of parallel passages and a critical investigation of the letter's origin.

In this investigation De Vries immediately outlines the difficult transmission of the poem, but because of the recently discovered *Codices Parisini* that contain what we now call the *Florilegium Gallicum*, he draws – as confidently as Baehrens – a line from the extant *Epistula Sapphus* back to the *florilegia's* common source, an eighth century manuscript that possibly contained the entire Ovidian corpus, 'in which our *Epistula Sapphus* was to be read as a genuine work of Ovid.'²⁴¹ This plausible hypothesis will be repeated by for instance Purser in Palmer's edition (see below), as even most adversaries of the poem's authenticity will have to postulate a similar chain of events, introducing however the complication that the genuine poem was lost along the way and supplanted by a forgery which continued its life separate from the *Heroides* and other Ovidian poems.²⁴²

²⁴¹ My translation for: '[...] in quo haec nostra Sapphus epistula ut genuinum Ouidii opus legeretur', De Vries (1885) 120.

²⁴² Few share the extremists' view that Tarrant (1981) in particular promotes in order to eradicate the idea of an Ovidian *Epistula Sapphus* altogether, when he claims that even *Am.* 2.18.26 and 34 are interpolations and thus renders the entire transmission of the extant letter of Sappho irrelevant to the question of its authenticity, cf. Part Two, chapter 1.4a), b) and c).

De Vries invokes the Atthis-evidence too, using Keil's emended text (i.e. *haec* for *hic* Atthis) and adds that Sacerdos, despite his interest in the genitive, quotes not only Horace for *insons, insontis* (cf. Loers), but also *Maenas, Maenadis sic Persius*, 'where *Maenas* is not read except in the nominative (Sat. I. 101 and 105).'²⁴³ Having added the allusions to the very Ovidian Sappho in Ausonius, De Vries concludes that the *Epistula Sapphus* was thought to be Ovid's in the fourth century, before he goes on to consider even more ancient, but less direct, evidence of knowledge in the *Consolatio ad Liviam* of the *Epistula Sapphus*.

Passing from transmission to the text itself, De Vries discusses Francke's objections against line 7 (see above), and treats Schneidewin's problems with line 4 and the alleged inconsistency between *Am.* 2.18.26 and (especially) 34 and the extant *Epistula Sapphus*.²⁴⁴ De Vries agrees with Loers, Mähly and Comparetti (see above); he not only relies on the vulgate reading of *Pyrrhae* (*Her.* 15.169) but also defends it against the *lectio* of F (see above).²⁴⁵ De Vries also (before Housman's emendations were published in 1897) defends F's: *Enyo* against Lachmann.

Towards the end of his investigations, De Vries laments the unfortunate combination of *Epistula Sapphus*' particularly troubled transmission and its lack of shrewd and intelligent philological attention to which many of the other *Heroides* have been subject. And so he justly encourages fellow scholars to attempt to rectify this imbalance. De Vries also picks up Birt's gauntlet as he points out some of the metrical features that could benefit from scholarly care, like line 113 where the opening spondee and the caesurae after *se* and *inuenit* form a metrical pattern unparalleled in the Ovidian corpus.²⁴⁶ Birt's 'argument that out of the 110 hexameters

there is a caesura after the trochee of the fourth foot no less than fifteen times, i.e. once in every 7 1/3 verses, to which De Vries ([...] 1885, p. 141) pertinently replies that we might as well deny the authenticity of the Deianira [whose authenticity Birt does not question] on the same grounds because the ratio here is one in 7 7/11 verses.²⁴⁷

²⁴³ My translation for: '[...] ubi *Maenas* non legitur nisi nominativo (Sat. I. 101 et 105).' De Vries (1885) 120.

²⁴⁴ Though he himself prints verse line 7 with a crux: [...] *elegi † flebile carmen*. De Vries (1885) 21 and 127.

²⁴⁵ See De Vries (1885) 133-4.

²⁴⁶ Of the eight other Ovidian hexameters displaying unconventional caesurae, there is not one that opens with a spondee. See Platnauer (1951) 7, footnote 5.

²⁴⁷ Purser in Palmer (1898) 421.

De Vries furthermore advocates the choice of the better readings that the manuscripts and *incunabula* can offer, a point which merits attention, since conviction about the poem's inauthenticity makes some scholars, notably Tarrant (1981), sometimes suggest the worse *lectiones*, in order to render it more inferior and accordingly more 'original'.

Likewise De Vries warns against the use of *hapax legomenon* as an argument against authenticity, since there are many words which are mentioned only once in many authors. As an example he brings up *maeror* (*Her.* 15.117) as a reason for Palmer to condemn the poem in the 1874 edition, which is doubly unjustified as this word comes with several other significant echoes in the programmatically elegiac poem Catullus 65, which will be duly pointed out by Rosati (1996).²⁴⁸

Summing up the destructive attitude displayed by the adversaries of the poem's authenticity, De Vries says: 'This is to cut the knot, not to solve it [...].'²⁴⁹ Then he concludes his investigation with some astute observations on the striking Ovidianisms of the poem.²⁵⁰

* Palmer (and Purser) (1898)

As is evident from the preceding survey, the twenty-four years between Palmer's first and second edition of the *Heroides* involved many efforts and much evidence both in favour of and against the Ovidian authorship of the disputed epistles. One of the clearest testimonies to the impact of these efforts and pieces of evidence is the change of Palmer's view on the authenticity of the *Epistula Sapphus*. It was dramatic, too, as the scholar had no time to look properly into the matter again himself, but was forced to assign the task to Purser more or less on his deathbed. Quite a lot has been written about this philological drama and the consequences it had on the text and commentary that was finally published.²⁵¹ I will leave that aside and draw attention to the *apparatus* that Palmer actually prepared, which includes three features of particular

²⁴⁸ For further resemblances between Catullus and the *Epistula Sapphus*, see Part Three, chapter 4.2.b).

²⁴⁹ My translation for: '[...] hoc est nodum scindere, non soluere [...]' De Vries (1885) 144.

²⁵⁰ Tolkiehn should be mentioned, as he refutes Lachmann's use of *Sacerdos* to prove that the grammarian does not mention the extant *Epistula Sapphus*. Accordingly Tolkiehn does *not* include *Her.* 15 in his analysis, because it is dedicated in its entirety to those epistles about which there is *most* hesitation: 'In this part of the study I must accordingly explore the third, eighth, ninth, twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth epistle, about which there is doubt today.' My translation for: 'Inquirendum igitur nobis hac commentationis parte in epistularum tertiam, octavam, nonam, duodecimam, tertiam decimam, quartam decimam, de quibus ambigitur hodie.' Tolkiehn (1888) 18.

²⁵¹ Tarrant (1981) and Kennedy (2006).

interest: firstly the appraisal of De Vries, secondly the refutation of one of Lachmann's arguments and thirdly the conviction that the extant *Epistula Sapphus* is partly genuine.

[...] during these years very sharp defenders of the [epistle] have come forward [...] above all others De Vries [...] who alone has moved me with his arguments, though I do not recognise with him that the entire epistle is Ovid's work, but rather think that the epistle contains much of the genuine [epistle] which has been lost, and that its greater part has been written by an imitator.²⁵²

And about Lachmann's judgement on *Erichtho* (139), Palmer writes in his apparatus *ad loc.*:

F alone has *Enyo*, and once this is accepted Lachmann's serious argument against the epistle immediately falls.²⁵³

In his introduction to the commentary to the *Epistula Sapphus* Purser presents a commendable survey of the *Stand der Forschung* and the problems involved, which he presents as follows:

- 1) The troubled transmission.
- 2) The indicative *mouetur* in a dependent clause at *Her.* 15,4, which is not very decisive against authorship in itself, and which can even be replaced by the F reading *ueniret*.
- 3) 'The strange or unique usage of the words and phrases *celebras* (11), *diversa* (*ib.*), *erro* (539), *maeror* (117), *dos* (146), *curvum gramen* (148), *chelyn* (181), *poetria* (183) [...].'²⁵⁴ This argument deserves special attention, since it will recur several times in the debate to follow. Rosati will, as already mentioned, point out the meaningful usage of *maeror* in this poem. Likewise the words *chelyn*, attested in Greek in Sappho's own poetry, and *poetria*, which is the precise term for the Latin and elegiac Sappho of this poem, are arguably not problematic, but rather *emblematic* words, and their uniqueness should accordingly add to their pointed presence.²⁵⁵

²⁵² My translation for: '[...] his annis extarent acerrimi pro ea propugnatores, [...] ante omnes De Vries [...], qui unus me argumentis movit, non certe ut cum eo epistolam totam pro Ovidii opere agnoscam, attamen ut credam epistolam multa ex genuina quae deperiit continere, magnam partem ab imitatore scriptam.' Palmer (1898) 91-2.

²⁵³ My translation for: 'Enyo F solus, quo recepto grave Lachmanni contra epistolam argumentum statim cadit.' Palmer (1898) 97.

²⁵⁴ Purser in Palmer (1898) 421.

²⁵⁵ *En passant* I would like to defend the expression *curuum gramen* that is used about the grass on which Sappho and Phaon used to share their joys. In the commentary *ad loc.*, Palmer writes: 'Grass is not bent, but flattened by the weight of the body.' But Sappho narrates that she has gone back to the spot where she and Phaon used to lie, in other words: some time has passed between the moment they flattened the grass and the moment Sappho sees it again, and so the grass, which *was* flattened by the weight of the body, must have risen again (which grass does after a while) and then 'curved' is a very precise expression.

- 4) The metrical problems of verses 96 and 113 (see Baehrens above). These are real difficulties that will come up again.²⁵⁶
- 5) The fable of Deucalion's leap because of unreciprocated love for Pyrrha, which is not attested elsewhere.
- 6) The dubious *furialis Erichtho* (139) which is easily corrected by F's *lectio Enyo*.
- 7) Finally, there are some lines that Palmer found unworthy of Ovid, and which he is alone in objecting to in this debate.²⁵⁷

Even as Purser presents this survey, only two of the problems are really retained as such, that is the 'defective transmission' and the metrical difficulties of lines 96 and 113 (which could perfectly well have their cause in the troubled transmission). These points thus make out an adequate summary of the discussion of the *Epistula Sapphus*' authenticity as it ends in the nineteenth century, only to be revived together with many of the others in the twentieth. Before I proceed to a critical survey of that debate, I will repeat the main points together with their defenders and adversaries, for the sake of perspicuity:

ARGUMENT	CONTRA	PRO
<i>mouetur</i> (<i>Her.</i> 15.4)	Schneidewin	Loers, Purser in Palmer (who also considers <i>ueniret</i>)
<i>eleg*</i> (<i>Her.</i> 15.7)	Schneidewin (with Francke)	Baehrens (with emendation)
<i>Erichthol Enyo</i> (<i>Her.</i> 15.139)	Lachmann (<i>Erichtho</i>)	Comparetti (<i>Erichtho</i>), De Vries (<i>Enyo</i>), Palmer (<i>Enyo</i>)
<i>Am.</i> 2.18.34 and <i>Her.</i> 15.181-4 and 117-220	Schneidewin	Loers, Mähly, Comparetti De Vries
Ovidian parallels	Schneidewin	Loers, Comparetti, De Vries
The Atthis-evidence	Schneidewin, Lachmann	Loers, Comparetti, De Vries

In contrast to the preceding treatment of the debate, I will to a greater extent aim at adding critical comments that by and large have not been made by others. The wider implications of theoretical approaches and methodologies, which lie at the very heart of a debate like this, will be treated in the following chapter.

²⁵⁶ Perhaps one should join Purser in his hope that for example 'the metrical irregularities of 96 and 113 [both addressed by Baehrens, see below] [...] will [...] disappear before the genius of some Bentley or Madvig of the future.' Purser in Palmer (1898) 423. For a recent contribution to the text's improvement, see Ramírez de Verger (2006).

²⁵⁷ The first objection is to verse line 19 *atque aliae centum, quas non sine crimine amaui*, to which Palmer comments: 'As to the absurdity of reminding Phaon of the charge at all there can be but one opinion [...]' (*ad loc.*). The second objection is to 87-8 *hunc ne Cephalo raperes, Aurora, timebam;/ et faceres, sed te prima rapina tenet*, to which Palmer comments: 'What a ridiculous bathos in this verse line [i.e. 88]! For *tenet* is not of unwilling detention: Cephalus was the ravished, not the ravisher.' (*Ad loc.*).

1.3. The Revival of the Debate (1965-1975)

* Courtney (1965)

It is Courtney who reintroduces the question of the *Heroides*' authenticity into the debate in recent times. His contribution is inspired by Lachmann's rejection of the single *Heroides* not explicitly mentioned in *Am.* 2.18.21-34 and of all the double *Heroides*. Courtney's main focus is metrical. Although he reminds us of how metrically impeccable for example the *Nux* is, a work which is now generally agreed not to be by Ovid, he still claims that 'the most objective test is that provided by metre.'²⁵⁸ Accordingly he denies that the double *Heroides* are genuine, because, as Lachmann pointed out as well, they display three instances of polysyllabic pentameter endings of words other than names, a metrical peculiarity that Ovid is known to have employed only in exile, during which, according to Courtney, the poet could not have composed *Heroides* 16-21 which so clearly relate to the single *Heroides*.²⁵⁹

Courtney subsequently examines the other *Heroides* whose authenticity has been questioned, and concludes that only one of these, the ninth from Deianira to Hercules, should not be regarded as genuine. He thus relieves the *Epistula Sapphus* of suspicion, claiming about it that there 'is only one substantial difficulty, XV.96, in a poem in which we cannot rely on our manuscript.'²⁶⁰ About the works that Courtney considers inauthentic, among which he obviously does not count the *Epistula Sapphus*, he adds that 'I do not doubt that the spurious (if I may be allowed now to call them so) *Heroides* were written in Ovid's own lifetime, like the letters of Sabinus.' This final idea will have a vigorous life among the adversaries who are yet to enter on the debate.

* Baca (1971b)

Baca's article is an attempt to explain why the *Epistula Sapphus* has had a separate transmission without denying its Ovidian authorship – to a certain extent, that is: since Baca, even though he declares that 'the letter is by Ovid', also makes Ovid *himself* renounce his authorship.

²⁵⁸ Courtney (1965) 63. The authenticity of *Nux* is defended in Pulbrook's edition of the poem (1985), which has been (severely) criticised by Reeve (1987) and Courtney (1988).

²⁵⁹ '[...] for it is inconceivable, and conceived by no-one, that Ovid could have written poetry of this type at Tomis.' Courtney (1965) 64.

²⁶⁰ Courtney (1965) 65.

Postulating a re-edition of the *Heroides* in analogy with Ovid's claim to have reduced the *Amores* collection in the *epigramma ipsius* (see below), Baca suggests that this re-edition contained both the single and double epistles, just as most of the extant manuscripts of these works do:

[...] it was most probably Ovid himself who removed the Sappho letter from the *Heroides* so as to make a collection which opens with a letter by a heroine from the most distant literary past, Homer's Penelope, and closes with a pair of letters from the most recent literary past, the Hellenistic story of Acontius and Cydippe; the unity of the *Heroides* resides in this procession of figures from the mythological past, taken from the literature of epic and drama, which the real figure of Sappho upsets and, we might even say, destroys.²⁶¹

In addition to this brief and curious summary of both the *Heroides*, single and double, and of literary history, distant and recent, Baca provides two reasons in support of his claim that Sappho's letter destroys the unity of the *Heroides*. The first is the poem's opening question. Even though Baca quotes Oenone's initial question *perlegis?* (*Her.* 5.1), he concludes that except for *Her.* 15 'not one [opening] is interrogative [...].'²⁶² The second reason is Sappho's erotic language, which Baca claims to be incompatible with the other *Heroides*: '[n]either the heroines nor the heroes of the *Heroides* speak in [such] forthright terms [...].'²⁶³ Due to these reasons, then, Ovid edited out the poem, which not much later had the good fortune to be collected together with other poems of the Messallan circle.²⁶⁴

* Goold (1974)

Goold's review of Dörrie's 1971 edition, which does not include *Heroides* 15, merits attention, since he, under the subtitle 'apocryphal tradition', states that: '[i]t needs to be stressed that the tradition of the *Sappho* is quite distinct from that of the other letters, though that is no reason to doubt its genuineness: it was probably segregated

²⁶¹ Baca (1971b) 32.

²⁶² Baca (1971b) 33. For a discussion of the interrogative opening of the *Epistula Sapphus*, see the beginning of Part One.

²⁶³ Baca (1971b) 37.

²⁶⁴ 'It is not, therefore, surprising that the epistle from Sappho, once dislodged from the *Heroides* proper and wandering like Leto in search for a firm abode, came to rest among the poems of the *Corpus Tibullianum*.' (1971b) 37. For a discussion of the licentious language of *Her.* 15 compared to the other *Heroides*, see Part Three, chapter 1.

in imperial times as dealing with historical persons.²⁶⁵ Furthermore, Goold concludes his review like this:

Dörrie accepts the whole corpus as Ovid's, as did I in *HarvSt* 69, 165, 43. Metrical and linguistic arguments invoked against this view dwindle to practically nothing if applied to the years immediately preceding his relegation. However, for his early period they are decisive. And I must own to now harbouring the gravest doubts that Ovid wrote any more amatory epistles after the work he refers to in *Amores* 2, 18; [...], Ovid's *Epistulae Heroidum* will have consisted of 1-7. 10. 11. and 15., a collection of ten letters only.²⁶⁶

And among these ten letters, Goold thus includes the *Epistula Sapphus*.

* Dörrie (1975)

As mentioned above, Dörrie claims that the main reason to deny that the *Epistula Sapphus* is genuine is its moral offensiveness, which to some extent is true.²⁶⁷ And so his edition and 'double commentary' is an amply constructed defence, which he sums up in nine points that sometimes include the given counter-argument against the *Epistula Sapphus*' authenticity.²⁶⁸ These points are:

- 1) The author of the poem was the young Ovid and he wrote it around 20 BC.
- 2) The poem is rich, harmonious and balanced and thus in itself an argument for Ovidian authorship.
- 3) The metrical and grammatical faults, which can be explained by the difficult transmission, are few, as many difficulties have been removed by consulting the better textual witness F.
- 4) Due to this difficult transmission, it is hard to imagine that the poem was separated from the other *Heroides* 'auf mechanischem Wege': and thus someone must have removed it on purpose during the first centuries after Ovid lived. But who and why? Dörrie proposes that the poem's daring content suggests an answer which is similar to Baca's – for very different reasons: 'Als erkennbar wurde, daß das Wagnis für den Autor zur Bedrohung wurde, kann, ja wird er selbst sie getilgt haben.'²⁶⁹
- 5) F is better than the vulgate class of manuscripts.

²⁶⁵ Goold (1974) 483.

²⁶⁶ Goold (1974) 484.

²⁶⁷ See for instance Tarrant's (1981) pejorative characteristics, below.

²⁶⁸ 'Die vorliegende Arbeit möchte zu einer Synthese gelangen. Einerseits hat die Durcharbeitung aller erreichbaren Handschriften die Sicherheit der Textherstellung vermehrt; andererseits trägt die Durchforschung der Tradition, der Ovid die einzelnen Züge seines Sappho-bildes entnahm, viel zum Verständnis des Ganzen, aber auch seiner Teile bei. Diese doppelte Aufgabe soll ein doppelter Kommentar erfüllen; jeder Sinnabschnitt des Gedichtes soll erst von der biographischen und poetischen Motivation erläutert werden; dem schließt sich jeweils ein kritischer Kommentar an, der die Textherstellung rechtfertigt und zugleich die Typik der Fehler kennzeichnet. Beide „Schichten“ des Kommentars haben Sprache, Stil und dichterische Absicht Ovids zum Gegenstand.' Dörrie (1975) 5.

²⁶⁹ Dörrie (1975) 224-5.

6) The Sapphic content of the poem does not stem from Ovid's reading of Sappho's own poetry, though he can allude to famous poems of hers.

7) Dörrie sees the *Epistula Sapphus* 'wie für die übrigen Briefe eine symbolisierende Auffassung, wonach die leidende Heroine zum Inbegriff aller ähnlich Leidenden würde.'²⁷⁰ He then denies any connection between Ovid's Sappho and the image of her in the apsis of the hypogeum at Porta Maggiore.

8) Then Dörrie furthermore suggests that the *ingenium molle* of Sappho is an analogy for Ovid's own, and that he had to pursue this *ingenium*, no matter what the authorities demanded.²⁷¹

9) Dörrie's suggestive and interpretative interests are visible also when he concludes his summary with yet another reflection on *ingenium*, this time as the common condition for love and literature: 'Die Aussagen, die Ovids Sappho über ihr *ingenium* macht, stellen eine der wichtigsten Hilfen dazu dar, zum vollen Verständnis des Gedichtes zu gelangen.'²⁷²

1.4. Tarrant (1981)

Tarrant's article is the single most influential attack on the authenticity of the *Epistula Sapphus* in recent times, and though he does not once mention his forerunner, he is in many ways the Schneidewin of the twentieth century debate. He is the first to (re)attack the re-established notion that the *Epistula Sapphus* belongs to the *Heroides* and is written by Ovid, he (re)uses the imitator-hypothesis to explain the many Ovidian parallels at the same time as he sees the metrical and linguistic peculiarities as signs of the imitator's inferiority and incompetence, and he applies pejorative terms that recall Schneidewin's 'Mackwerk' to describe the poem. This is a selection.

It is my private opinion that the *ES* is a tedious production containing hardly a moment of wit, elegance or truth to nature, and that its ascription to Ovid ought never to have been taken seriously [...].²⁷³ [...] vague, flat, lifeless – qualities not often applicable to the work of Ovid but all too appropriate for the *ES*.²⁷⁴ [...] 95 [...] *sinus, relabere nostros* [...] the tasteless play on the two senses of *sinus* [harbour/ bosom] is even more distressing.²⁷⁵ It is necessary to imagine that Ovid's own letter of Sappho unluckily perished and that this ersatz composition even more unluckily survived [...].²⁷⁶

²⁷⁰ Dörrie (1975) 225.

²⁷¹ This is a point which is valid for a comparison between the *Epistula Sapphus* and the *Ars Amatoria*, cf. Part Three, chapter 4.4.

²⁷² Dörrie (1975) 226.

²⁷³ Tarrant goes on to claim that he will leave his personal opinion aside, but as the repeatedly derogatory characterisations show, he hardly succeeds in this respect (1981) 135.

²⁷⁴ Tarrant (1981) 144.

²⁷⁵ Tarrant (1981) 145.

²⁷⁶ Tarrant (1981) 148.

Despite the fact that it is considerable, Tarrant still claims that ‘external evidence, however strongly it may seem to support the claims of the *ES*, remains, in the end, circumstantial.’ It is worth noticing that Tarrant does not believe that the separate transmission gives any ‘support to suspicions of the letter’s authorship.’²⁷⁷ And so he submits it to ‘a close, but unbiased inspection on grounds of style and form.’²⁷⁸ This inspection focuses on three features: metrical peculiarities, words and phrases not otherwise found in Ovid and incriminating Ovidian borrowings.

1.4.a) *Metre*

Assuming that the poem is spurious, Tarrant would print the metrical oddity *rependo* (*Her.* 15.32), a manuscript reading that was emended to the acceptable *repende* by Bentley in accordance with a line from Ausonius.²⁷⁹ But on this and the other metrical features that remained the one difficult problem as the debate faded out at the end of the nineteenth century (cf. esp. *Her.* 15.96 and 15.113), he simply concludes that ‘since they are few in number, they do not suffice for a completely convincing demonstration.’

1.4.b) ‘Un-Ovidian’ Diction

Secondly, Tarrant examines two passages, *Her.* 15.61-70 and 111-24, in which he finds numerous oddities. For the sake of perspicuity, I will number them in the following survey:

- | | |
|--|--|
| (61) <i>sex mihi
natales ierant</i> | 1. Tarrant claims that Ovid does not use <i>ire</i> , but <i>ago</i> (<i>Met.</i> 2.497 and 13.753) and <i>adesse</i> (<i>Met.</i> 9.285 and <i>Tr.</i> 3.1.2) to describe how time goes by. |
| (64) <i>mixta cum
turpi damna
pudore tulit</i> | 2 a) Tarrant has two objections, the first is because Ovid ‘generally’ uses <i>mixtus</i> of contrasts...

2. b) ... and, regarding <i>Met.</i> 11.180 (<i>turpis pudor</i>) as corrupt, he claims that Ovid never combines these words. Instead he suggests that <i>tristia cum magno damna pudore tuli</i> (<i>Am.</i> 3.7.72) was perhaps ‘the inspiration for the |

²⁷⁷ Tarrant (1981) 135.

²⁷⁸ Tarrant (1981) 136.

²⁷⁹ Bentley’s suggestion is supported by *Commemoratio Professorum Burdigalensium* 2.31-2, *quiesce placidus et caduci corporis/ damnum repende gloria*. If *rependo* is to be maintained, it will have to be bacchiac-shaped and have a shortened final o, which is not found elsewhere in Ovid and is only reported for the future indicative by Hartenberger (1911) 56.

phrase'.²⁸⁰

- (65) *factus*
inops agili
peragit freta
caerula remo
- 3. a)** The expression *peragere freta* is attested only here in the Ovidian corpus, and thereafter in Petronius at *Sat.* 119.3 ff.
- 3. b)** The combination *freta caerula* is unparalleled in Ovid's extant works, despite the high frequency of the adjective.
- 3. c)** 'It might be pedantry to suggest that the addition *agili ... remo* ('he traverses the dark-blue sea on a nimble oar') makes Sappho's brother sound like the first recorded surfer, but to see how Ovid normally puts an idea like this compare *Pont.* 2.10.33 *seu rate caeruleas picta sulcauimus undas*.²⁸¹
- (68) *libertas*
meaning
'frankness',
which is a sense
...
- (69) *desint quae*
me sine fine
fatigent
- 4.** ... not applied elsewhere in Ovid, and which seems, according to Tarrant, to have made 'its *début* in poetry with Phaedrus (1.2.2) and is thereafter found in Martial (6.88.3)'.²⁸²
- 5.** Tarrant considers reading the inferior *lectio* of F: *desit quae me hac sine cura fatiget* for printing 'since one cannot assume that the more elegant reading is also the authentic one.'²⁸³
- (70) *accumulat*
curas [...] meas
- 6.** Tarrant translates the line as: 'increases my anxieties' and claims that it is a 'construction not found in Ovid.' 'The thought of the line is similar to that in *Tr.* 4.1.55 (the gods, *cum magno Caesare*) *meque tot aduersis cumulant, quot*, etc., but the expression is significantly different'.²⁸⁴
- (111) *Et*
deerant oculis
et uerba palato
- 7.** Despite the parallel at *Am.* 2.6,47: *ignaro stupuerunt uerba palato*: 'there is a difference between [...] "the words got stuck in my throat" but not "my throat lacked words." Ovid furnishes no example of this use of *palatum* where *lingua* would be natural'.²⁸⁵
- (114) *exululare*
- 8.** Ovid never uses it to: 'describe normal crying; rather he applies it to the maddened victims of poison (*Met.* 4.521), the baying of Lycaon (*Met.* 1.233) and the shrieking of bacchantes or worshippers of the Magna Mater (*Met.* 6.597; *F.* 4.186, 341; *Ars* 1.508; *Tr.* 4.1.42).'²⁸⁶
- (117) *crescit* 'in
the sense "swell
with
satisfaction" ...
- (117) *maerore*
- 9.** ... for which Ovid offers no parallel, though Seneca (*Ep.* 34.1) does.'²⁸⁷
- 10.** '... is found nowhere in Augustan poetry, with the exception of one

²⁸⁰ *Met.* 11.180, describing the long ears of king Midas. But Tarrant rejects this parallel as 'generally agreed to be corrupt'. Tarrant (1981) 141. According to Bömer, the phrase is however more discussed than condemned as completely corrupt (1980), 283-4.

²⁸¹ Tarrant (1981) 141.

²⁸² Tarrant (1981) 141.

²⁸³ Provided that the poem is inauthentic, which Tarrant clearly thinks that it is, cf. (1981) 142.

²⁸⁴ Tarrant (1981) 142.

²⁸⁵ Tarrant (1981) 139-40.

²⁸⁶ Tarrant (1981) 140.

²⁸⁷ Tarrant (1981) 140.

occurrence in Horace *Ars Poetica* (110).²⁸⁸

(124) *somnia*
formoso
candidiora die

11. The combination *formosus dies*, which Tarrant calls ‘ill-fated’, is unparalleled in Augustan poetry. He rejects the parallel *formosus annus* at Virgil’s *Ecloga* 3.57 and *Ars* 2.315, of flourishing and abounding seasons. The phrase *o formosa dies*, attributed to Petronius, and Martial’s *lux formosior omnibus Kalendis*, (10.24.2) suggest to Tarrant that *Her.* 15 is later than Ovid.²⁸⁹

According to Tarrant there are then at least eleven oddities ‘that cannot be paralleled in the work of Ovid’, and so he strongly suggests that it is not by this poet.

Tarrant observes the ideal of brevity, cherished by both Schneidewin and Lachmann, and so he barely touches on the complexities and diversities of methods and types of arguments that are involved in his line of reasoning. In an attempt to modify his conclusions I will now sketch out a typology of his arguments (the numbers correspond with those of his arguments above).

* Inaccuracies

4. *Libertas* is used in precisely in this sense of Lucilius as an heir of the Old Comedy’s playwrights, [...] *multa cum libertate notabant./ hinc omnis pendet Lucilius* [...], *Hor. Sat.* 1.4.4-5. And as also the next point confirms, there are several allusions to Horace in *Her.* 15. **10.** If not in Augustan poetry, *maeror* is attested in Catullus’ programmatic elegy 65.15 (*in tantis maeroribus*), a poem of great importance to *Her.* 15 to which it alludes several times, cf. Rosati (1996). The *Ars Poetica* echo is also worthy of note, since, as already mentioned, Horace is not an insignificant reference for *Her.* 15.

²⁸⁸ Tarrant (1981) 140.

²⁸⁹ Tarrant (1981) 140.

* Inexact parallels

1. The passages where Ovid uses *adesse* with *natalis* do not refer to ‘the passage of years’. *Met.* 9.285-86 refers to the potential time of Hercules’ birth.²⁹⁰ Furthermore in *Tr.* 3.13.1-2 the birthday is present like a person.²⁹¹ When trying to establish the regular and deviant usage in a certain poet, it is useful to bear Hinds’ cautious observations in mind: ‘Statistic approaches to style can indeed be helpful, but only if we remember that poets are poets precisely because they do not always write as we expect them to.’²⁹² Some of the phrases Tarrant regards as regular Ovidian usage stand in such a special relationship to one another that they are arguably better understood as pointed allusions, as in the case with the other *Metamorphoses* passages Tarrant provides for line 61. An important point here is for Sappho to tell how young she was when her father died. The dative of *mihi* is ‘ethic’ and draws attention not only to Sappho’s age, but also to herself, as if to say ‘poor me, I was *only* six years old’.²⁹³ This is not the sense of *Met.* 2.497 and 13.753, where the similar phrasing furthermore is due to their common theme of a youth on the threshold of adulthood.²⁹⁴

11. Likewise the Virgilian expression *formosus annus* about spring, which is repeated, ‘nicht ohne Bosheit’, about autumn in Ovid’s *Ars Amatoria* and the two phrases relate so clearly to each other that they hardly count as examples of regular usage.²⁹⁵ Furthermore, Knox (1995) observes that the variant at *Her.* 15.124 is ‘not so odd as has been thought; cf. *Rem.* 187 *formosa ... aestas*, *Fast.* 4.129 *formoso tempore [...]*’.²⁹⁶

* Lack of contextualisation and finer readings

2. a) Charaxus not only wasted the wealth of Sappho’s family, he even ruined their reputation by having an affair with a whore. Thus his material *damna* are *mixta* with

²⁹⁰ Cf. *Met.* 9.285-86: *namque laboriferi cum iam natalis adesset / Herculis [...]*.

²⁹¹ Cf. *Tr.* 3.13.1-2: *ecce superuacuus – quid enim fuit utile gigni? – / ad sua natalis tempora noster adest.*

²⁹² Hinds (1993) 13.

²⁹³ Nor is this sense conveyed in the passage *ostendens cumulum, quot haberet corpora puluis, / tot mihi natales contingere uana rogavi* (*Met.* 14.137-8), which Tarrant suggests that the ‘writer may have recalled’ (1981) 141. Here the dative construction is linked to a request, and simply means ‘I asked, in vain, to be granted (*mihi contingere*) as many birthdays as there were grains of sand in the heap I was pointing at’.

²⁹⁴ At the first passage Arcas is about (*fere*) fifteen years old, and at the latter, Acis has just turned sixteen.

²⁹⁵ Janka (1992) 253.

²⁹⁶ Knox (1995) 300-1.

his moral *pudore* somewhat like the *Musa* is *mixta* with Jupiter at *Pont.* 4.8.77-8.²⁹⁷ **6.** *Her.* 15.70 belongs to Sappho's list of reasons to worry, and can be translated as 'my little daughter adds to my worries', retaining a sense of 'heaping something upon something else', in accordance with what Tarrant points out as Ovid's regular use of *ac/cumulare*. *Tr.* 4.1.55 belongs to a catalogue of calamities too, and it is worth noticing that this exile poem, which invokes the shrieking of bacchantes as a simile for the poet (see below), also explores the question of how life – and particularly the adversities in life – relate to poetry, a question that creates the very tension of *Her.* 15. **8.** As regards the use of *exululare* (*Her.* 15.114), Sappho is not poisoned, baying like an animal nor worshipping Cybele, and so the parallels with the three cited passages are perhaps not so relevant. The bacchant passages are however more pertinent: at *Met.* 6.597 the shrieking is not mad, but a calculated trick by Procne (*simulat* 6.596) to attain a rational goal; at *Tr.* 4.1.42, the shrieking belongs to a simile (cf. *ut [...] sic*, 4-1.41-43), in which Ovid likens himself to a bacchant, as his *Heroides* have done before him (cf. *Her.* 4.47, 10.48, 13.33-4). These usages suggest that Sappho's descriptions of her pains when Phaon left her are deliberately depicted as possessed frenzy and not as normal crying.

* Ignored allusions and hints at such

2. b) *Am.* 3.7.72 does not only match *Her.* 15.64 *verbatim*, but stages the same drama: while the playboy Charaxus falls socially and loses wealth and honour, the playboy Naso falls both personally and physically as he loses the ability to perform in bed. **3. c)** Though comic, Tarrant's reading of *Her.* 15.65 is inconceivable at a time unfamiliar with surfing. The synecdoche, focusing on the most active – or agile – part of the whole vessel, the oar, rather helps in creating an image of Charaxus as busy with his evildoings. The altogether disturbing atmosphere of this line is absent from *Pont.* 2.10.33 where Ovid recalls the wonderful journeys he has shared with his epic-composing friend Macer, to whom Ovid has written one other poem, *Am.* 2.18, in which *Her.* 15 is mentioned: this hints at the possibilities of reading the allusions as meaningful, something I will return to as Tarrant resorts to *Pont.* 2.10 for his most decisive argument. **7.** Line *Her.* 15.111 employs a zeugma: tears are absent from the

²⁹⁷ Cf. *sic tibi nec docti desunt nec principis artes, / mixta sed est animo cum Iove Musa tuo*, *Pont.* 4.8.77-8.

‘space’ of the eyes and the ‘space’ of the ‘organ of speech’ (cf. *OLD*, 1284), and reads as a variation on Catullus 51 and Sappho fr. 31. Furthermore, the echo at *Am.* 2.6.47 is immediately followed by another (*Am.* 2.6.48). These are only two minor hints at the meaningful link between these poems, which both stage an image of a poet, as I will show in Part Three.²⁹⁸

* In sum

I would say that those of Tarrant’s arguments that are unquestionable are 9 and 3 a).²⁹⁹ Tarrant provides furthermore several other similar unOvidian expressions that he treats even more briefly than the eleven main examples.³⁰⁰ Using the same method, made all the more accessible through computer science, scholars, especially Lingenberg (2003), have found that for example *Her.* 1-5 (including Briseis’ epistle, whose authenticity Tarrant defends, see below) are crammed with unOvidian words and phrases. And though Lingenberg, just like Tarrant, sees these unparalleled items as indications of inauthenticity, he also demonstrates that unparalleled features are the rule rather than the exception in poems that are traditionally considered to be a part of the Ovidian corpus, and, by consequence, that the *Epistula Sapphus* is not exceptional in that respect.

1.4.c) *Telltale Ovidian Usages*

The final feature, the incriminating use of Ovidian passages, is, according to Tarrant, also the most decisive.³⁰¹ Embarking on his variant of the imitator-hypothesis, Tarrant resorts to Axelson’s principle for *Prioritätsbestimmung*, according to which passages that share similarities beyond accidental likeness can be relatively dated by

²⁹⁸ The phrasing of the *Amores* line is quite rare, too, as McKeown observes *ad loc.*: ‘ignauo ... palato. I can adduce no closer parallel than *torpens palatum*, used with reference to loss of the sense of taste at *Pont.* 1.10.13, *Colum.* 10.110 and *Juv.* 10.203.’ But ‘[f]or the palate as an organ of speech, cf. *Epist. Sapph.* 111, *Hor. Sat.* 2.3.274 and *Persius* 1.35 (all with *uerba palato* in the same line-position as here) [...] (1998) 135-6.

²⁹⁹ Living as a pirate, Charaxus drives hither and thither over the sea in a restless chase, a sense that is attested at *OLD* 1328, which quotes this line of the *Her.* 15 for the sense ‘to pass through or over, traverse, cover’ and ‘to work through or over’. I would like to stress the latter of these explanations, which do not so much indicate that the working goes in one direction only. This understanding of *perago* supports Tarrant’s argument as the sense of ‘driving hither and thither’ and ‘chase’ is attested precisely in the Neronian/ Flavian authors *Seneca Ep.* 58.2 and *Valerius Flaccus* 1.146.

³⁰⁰ Tarrant (1981) 145-7.

³⁰¹ ‘In fact these parallels provide the strongest internal evidence that the work cannot be genuine, since it is possible to show that in several places the writer has drawn on works of Ovid which were not in existence at the time when this letter, were it by Ovid, would have been composed.’ Tarrant (1981) 142.

establishing which of them is more coherent as regards its context, and therefore must have preceded the other.³⁰² Also here Tarrant compares two passages from the *Epistula Sapphus* with other Ovidian texts: *Her.* 15.1-6 with *Pont.* 2.10.1-8, and *Her.* 15.75-80 with both *Am.* 2.4.10 and *Tr.* 4.10.64.

Before I enter on Tarrant's application of Axelson's principle, I would like to point out that the allusive relationship between these elegies suggests that they are not linked together at random. As I will show in Part Three, *Am.* 2.4 draws an image of *Naso poeta* which is particularly relevant to the *Epistula Sapphus*; likewise *Tristia* 4.10 is presented as Ovid's autobiography and the poem is a portrait of the poet, much like the *Epistula Sapphus* is a portrait of the poetess. *Pont.* 2.10 pictures Ovid as well, this time in contrast to his epic-composing friend Macer, to whom, as I have already mentioned, he has written one other extant poem, namely *Am.* 2.18, in which there is a reference to Sappho's epistle. The *Epistula Sapphus*, *Am.* 2.18 and *Pont.* 2.10 help in dramatising Ovid's destiny by means of other poets, firstly Sappho, who has had her fate altered and fictitious life prolonged *post mortem* (also through the *Epistula Sapphus*) and then Macer, who in *Am.* 2.18 is a poet pursuing the wrong genre, but at *Pont.* 2.10 turns out to have chosen the better path after all. These poems then all dramatise how life, particularly a poet's life, is shaped by fiction: they highlight the poets' generic differences and underscore simultaneously their common gift and project. Thus Sappho's designation of the lyre as her and Apollo's *communia munera* (*Her.* 15.181) significantly echoes in Ovid's exile poem: *sunt tamen inter se communia sacra poetis, / diuersum quamuis quisque sequamur iter* (*Pont.* 2.10.17-8).³⁰³

Again, Tarrant's focus is not on interpretative possibilities. Instead he claims that the opening lines of the exile letter to Macer draws a consistent image of its circumstances:

Ecquid ab impressae cognoscis imagine cerae
 haec tibi Nasonem scribere uerba, Macer?
 auctorisque sui si non est anulus index,

³⁰² '[...] eine vernünftige Methode operiert nicht ohne weiteres mit den Kriterien 'besser' und 'schlechter', sie fragt in erster Linie, um nun die Sache so kurz – und so streng – wie möglich auszudrücken, ob die verdächtige Fassung in ihrem organischen Zusammenhang (wenn sie überhaupt einen hat!) ohne die parallele Fassung genetisch denkbar ist oder nicht.' Axelson (1960) 110.

³⁰³ The ring-compositional structure of Ovid's poetic career is also striking and has been explored by Rahn (1958), Rosenmeyer (1997), Williams (1997) and Spentzou (2005).

cognitane est nostra littera facta manu?
an tibi notitiam mora temporis eripit horum,
nec repetunt oculi signa uestusta tui?
sis licet oblitus pariter gemmaeque manusque,
exciderit tantum ne tibi cura mei. (*Pont.* 2.10.1-8)

According to Tarrant, *Her.* 15. 1-4 and 5-6 deal on the other hand, with ‘unrelated topics’.³⁰⁴ These topics are the handwriting/ letter that Sappho wonders if her addressee is able to recognise, and the elegiac couplets which are as new to her as her miserable love life; and as I have argued in Part One, whether these topics are unrelated or not is a matter of interpretation.

The opening of *Her.* 15 is also less felicitous than *Pont.* 2.10 in Tarrant’s opinion, because whereas Macer is mentioned in the first couplet, Phaon is mentioned only in line 11. Tarrant does not consider how this variation on the epistolary *exordium* confounds the extradiegetic and the intradiegetic reader, who, through the very character of epistolary fiction, are inseparable though the employment of the personal pronoun, which Sappho uses just long enough to make this characteristic, metapoetic feature stand out. Many of the other *exordia* of the *Heroides* play with epistolary conventions, and that of the *Epistula Sapphus* is certainly not written by someone blindly following these standards either. And as has been wisely observed: ‘Imitators are timid a “servum pecus,” original poets are bold.’³⁰⁵

The other passage that Tarrant dates with the help of Axelson is *Her.* 15.75-80, where Sappho initially relates how she neglects her looks, since Phaon is gone, and then presents herself like this: *molle meum leuibusque est cor uiolabile telis,/ et semper causa est, cur ego semper amem*. As mentioned above, Tarrant links this couplet to *centum sunt causae, cur ego semper amem* (*Am.* 2.4.10) and *molle Cupidineis nec inexpugnabile telis/ cor mihi, quodque leuis causa moueret, erat* (*Tr.* 4.10.65-6). Tarrant claims that, in contrast to these passages, the *Epistula Sapphus* displays an incoherent tension between fidelity and fickleness in as much as Sappho initially says that she neglects her looks because her ‘one and only’ is gone, and then states that there have always been hundreds of reasons for her to fall in love.

If indeed there is a tension between fidelity and fickleness in the *Epistula Sapphus*, this poem is not alone among Ovid’s works in that respect. Certainly, *Am.*

³⁰⁴ Tarrant (1981) 144.

³⁰⁵ Hor.1.19 quoted by Purser in Palmer (1898) 423.

2.4, with its catalogue of arousing women and the poet's omnivorous wish to have them all, is truly capricious, but in *Am.* 1.3, in which the poet promises everlasting fidelity to his girl, we find exactly the same second half of the pentameter (*Am.* 1.3.2 *cur ego semper amem* = *Am.* 2.4.10), and together these *Amores*-poems establish a very Ovidian tension between fidelity and fickleness.³⁰⁶

It should however be noticed that the passage of *Her.* 15 continues with Sappho's reflection on the relationship between her ability to fall in love and her poetic vocation, just as Ovid does in the passage of *Tr.* 4.10, to which the couplet 65-6 belongs. And when Sappho subsequently describes Phaon's irresistible beauty and the way she had to yearn for him, just like a *uir* (85), the features that according to Tarrant contribute to the fidelity-fickleness tension become instead an account of the impossibility of Sappho's not falling for Phaon.³⁰⁷ Tarrant, however, concludes that:

It is now evident that the reference to this poem in *Amores* 2.18, which seemed to be its most solid base of support, is in reality fatal to its claims. If the *ES* could be regarded as an inferior product of Ovid's exile, some [...] of the evidence against Ovid's authorship could be explained away. In a weary or discouraged moment Ovid might conceivably have put together a tired pastiche of his earlier and contemporary works. But the text of *Amores* 2.18 forbids this recourse; if the work is by Ovid, it must be a product of his vigorous youth, and this, I suggest, is beyond belief.³⁰⁸

Tarrant accordingly rejects all external evidence. Firstly, he concedes no importance to the excerpt from Sappho's epistle between Hypermestra's and Paris' in the *Florilegium Gallicum*.³⁰⁹ Secondly he points, as Schneidewin did before him, to the

³⁰⁶ Bessone thoroughly explores the relationship between these lines of the different poems of *Amores* and line 80 of the *Epistula Sapphus*. Modifying the contrasts between the passages, she states: 'La sezione che inizia con *molle meum* [...] *cor est...* non contraddice del tutto, ma piuttosto relativizza (collocando nel tempo) l'affermazione precedente di amore esclusivo: anche la nuova esperienza viene ora inserita in una vicenda di innamoramenti ricorrenti – e in questa serie quello attuale appare come un episodio, l'ultimo in ordine di tempo (anche se forse è l'ultimo per davvero).' (2003) 233. This is not the only *locus similis* shared between these poems, cf. *Her.* 15.107-8, *per tibi numquam longe discedit Amorem/ perque nouem iuro, numina nostra, deas*, and *Am.* 1.3.11-2, *at Phoebus comitesque nouem uitisque repertor/ hac faciunt et me qui tibi donat amor*.

³⁰⁷ Tarrant furthermore thinks that Sappho's *leibusque* [...] *telis* (*Her.* 15.79) 'requires the more explicit phrase *Cupidineis telis* in *Tristia* 4.10.65 to be correctly understood.'³⁰⁷ But weapons wounding someone who falls in love, especially in the heart, hardly needs the mentioning of Cupid's ownership to be properly comprehended, cf. *saucius ingemuit telumque uolatile sensit* (*Ars* 1.169) and *femina nec flammis nec saeuos discutit arcus;/ parcius haec uideo tela nocere uiris* (*Ars* 3.29-30).

³⁰⁸ Tarrant (1981) 148.

³⁰⁹ As the compiler 'was perfectly capable of doing for himself what Daniel Heinsius did 500 years later, of deciding on the basis of *Amores* 2.18 (a poem the compiler knew, since an excerpt from it appears in the *FG*) that the independently circulating *ES* belonged at the end of the series of single letters.' Tarrant (1981) 148. This is a view which is sustained by Burton (1983) and now challenged by Stagni (2006) and Stirneman and Poirel (2006).

seeming incoherence between the extant *Epistula Sapphus* and *Am.* 2.18.26 and 34 and thinks that the dedication of the lyre in line 34 must mean that Sappho does this because she has received a letter from Phaon (which of course would be absurd, as the 34 should then give a hint of what Phaon's letter contains).³¹⁰ And so he launches the hypothesis that a forger altered verses 26 and 34 of the extant *Am.* 2.18, which should originally refer to the letter of Briseis, in order to match the forged *Epistula Sapphus*.³¹¹ Finally Tarrant adds, just as Schneidewin did, that he does not think that the forger had evil intentions in mind when he composed the *Epistula Sapphus*.

1.5. After Tarrant

* Murgia (1985)

Murgia takes Tarrant's application of Axelson's principle further and points out certain conditions that are necessary in order to reach the most positive results possible. His article is divided in two parts (plus an appendix), each bearing on an article by Tarrant, of which one is on the authenticity of the *Epistula Sapphus*.³¹² Firstly Murgia both argues against Tarrant's *Metamorphoses*-article and supports Tarrant's conclusions as regards the *Epistula Sapphus*. At the same time he presents numerous axioms concerning the establishment of a *literarische Prioritätsbestimmung* that make the distance between classical literature and subjects of so-called hard science seem very narrow.

Murgia claims that it is the way in which the human brain works which 'explains why all authors naturally repeat themselves.'³¹³ It is unimportant whether the repetition is conscious or unconscious.³¹⁴ This indifference is due to the fact that:

[...] linguistic expression can be thought of as operating by repetition, variation and conflation [...]. Most of us merely repeat and recombine learned locutions with little

³¹⁰ It is, however, not hard to imagine that Phaon tells her that he loves her (cf. *amata*) in a letter that arrives after she has survived her leap and so Phaon can imagine in that letter that she, as Sappho claims that she will do, dedicates her lyre to *Apollo Leucadius* for not having died at his sacred promontory.

³¹¹ Tarrant (1981) 152.

³¹² Cf. Tarrant (1981) and (1982).

³¹³ Murgia (1985) 459.

³¹⁴ Murgia (1985) footnote 15, 461.

variation within the locution, but poets may be allowed a greater amount of creativity consisting in recombining learned elements.³¹⁵

From this notion of the human brain and the slight difference between most of us and poets, Murgia goes on to examine how these cerebral repetitions manifest themselves though *loci similes* in a way that reveals their relative chronology.

Certainty is of great importance, and since ‘system operates by the laws of probability (not metaphysical certainty)’, Murgia claims that at least three passages are required in order to reach a positive result. The similarities between these passages can perfectly well be examined just as one traces manuscript relations, with the somewhat peculiar result that scribal *errors* function the same way as linguistic resemblances.³¹⁶ These resemblances range from phonetic repetition, letter-combinations, words and whole expressions of the kind that normally qualifies as references, allusions or inter- and intratextuality. Thus Murgia even claims to be able to establish a chronological order by tracing the ‘repetition of *s*- and *f*-sounds.’³¹⁷ Against the objection that such phonetic combinations must be possible to find practically everywhere, Murgia presents impressive calculations of ‘astronomical’ probability against any result coming out correctly by chance, assuming that there are at least three passages that have at least three items each in common.³¹⁸

‘Astronomical’ is also the degree of probability for a post-Ovidian date for the *Epistula Sapphus* when Murgia adds his observations to Tarrant’s.³¹⁹ Murgia never characterises the poem in negative terms, and he convincingly states that if he could find proof of an earlier date for the poem, he would ‘cheerfully report it.’³²⁰ There is apparently no moral or aesthetic condemnation involved when he presents his most important contribution to Tarrant’s position, taking the opening lines of *Her.* 15 and

³¹⁵ Murgia (1985) 461.

³¹⁶ Murgia does not, however, imply that a poet works like a *scriba*, cf. his explanation of the issue, footnote 15, 460.

³¹⁷ Murgia (1985) 467.

³¹⁸ The ‘astronomical’ conclusion belongs to the following card-game analogy: ‘If, in a deck of 52 cards, one out of four is a spade, and one out thirteen is a jack, the chance of drawing a spade on random selection from a full deck is one out of four, of drawing a jack one out of thirteen, but of drawing the jack of spades (if the deck is fair) one out of 52 (1/4 x 1/13). If three choices have to be made, each of which has one chance in eight of being made correctly, the chance of making all choices correctly is one in 512 (1/8 x 1/8 x 1/8). When a large number of choices have to be made correctly for a given result to occur, the odds quickly become astronomical against all coming out correctly by chance, even when the individual results are not very probable.’ (1985) 462.

³¹⁹ Murgia (1985) 470.

³²⁰ Murgia (1985) 470.

Pont. 2.10 as a point of departure. To these passages, Murgia adds Propertius 1.11.1-8, and quotes the following lines:

Ecquid te mediis cessantem Cynthia Bais
 [...]

 nostri cura subit memores a ducere noctes?
 ecquis in extremo restat amore locus?
 an te nescioquis simulatis ignibus hostis
 sustulit e nostris Cynthia carminibus?

[While you dally in the heart of Baiae, Cynthia [...] does any concern arise to bring on nights when you remember me? Is any rook left for me in a far corner of your heart? Or has some rival by his pretended rapture stolen you, Cynthia, from your place in my songs [?.]

Murgia points out that Propertius' poem share the following items with *Pont.* 2.10:

Propertius, 1.11.1-8

Ovid, *Pont.* 2.10.1-8

ecquid (1) + *an* (7)

ecquid (1) + *an* (5)

nostri cura (5)

cura mei (8)

sustulit (8)

eripit (5)

These three items of conflation demonstrate a well-known fact, namely that Ovid's exile poem is later than Propertius'. As already pointed out, *Pont.* 2.10.1-8 share many similarities with *Her.* 15.1-8, but Murgia notes that none of the elements of the *Epistula Sapphus*, except the interrogative structure of *ecquid* + *an*, are shared with Propertius' poem:

Heroides 15.1-5

Pont. 2.10.1-6

ecquid (1) + *an* (5)

ecquid (1) + *an* (4)

littera dextra [...] *cognita nostra* (1-2)

cognita [...] *nostra littera* [...] *manu*

oculis [...] *tuis* (2)

oculi [...] *tui* (6)

auctoris (3)

auctoris (3)

This looks very neat, but why does Murgia quote and analyse only *four* lines of *Her.* 15, while he considers the eight first lines of Propertius' 1.11 and *Pont.* 2.10 respectively? If one takes the whole passage of *Her.* 15.1-8 into account, one comes

across *mea carmina* (5-6), which is just as relevant to Propertius' *nostris carminibus* (8) as the same poem's *nostris cura* is to *cura mei* of *Pont.* 2.10. Furthermore, when quoting the Propertius passage, Murgia omits three lines, which are not pertinent to his argument. If one can compress or enlarge passages in order to fit them into greater schemes, then why not extend the pertinent passage of *Her.* 15 to verse 9 where the allegorical *ignem* for the 'fire of love' varies the metaphorical *ignibus* of Propertius 1.11.7? The verse-order of this poem is disputed, so why not take *alterna* at line 14 into consideration, since this word also appears in verse five of the *Epistula Sapphus*? If these similarities are emphasised, there are (at least) as many shared elements between Propertius 1.11 and *Her.* 15, as there are between the former and the opening of *Pont.* 2.10. The higher frequency of similarities between the Ovidian poems is due to the shared epistolary genre, not to mention the poem's common theme in as much as they both focus on images of poets.³²¹ These are of course hermeneutic issues, in which Murgia does not indulge in this article, except on one occasion.³²²

As already pointed out, Murgia underscores the astronomical improbability that at least three items in at least three passages can be similar by chance; likewise his application of the theory of probability to Propertius 1.11, *Her.* 15 and *Pont.* 2.10 suggests that chance is not a driving force here either. Rather, these elements seem to be chosen by a selective eye, a human eye, capable of both blindness and insight.

Having established the *Prioritätsbestimmung* of the passages mentioned above, Murgia narrows the hypothesised time span in which Tarrant supposed the *Epistula Sapphus* was composed to the Neronian era, and then makes a claim that will fall on fertile soil in the work of Zwierlein (1999): 'For the period between Ovid and Nero, pseudo-Augustan poetry is what poets did best.'³²³

³²¹ Furthermore, yet another text claims to be considered in relationship to the opening of *Her.* 15 and *Pont.* 2.10, and that is the *Epigramma ispius*, cf. Part Two, chapter 2.3.b).

³²² This happens when Murgia discusses two Ovidian instances where the poet is garlanded at *Am.* 1.6.37-8 and *Tr.* 5.3.3-4: 'In both a god is asked to intercede: Boreas with the door, Bacchus with Augustus [...]. On any basis, *Trist.* 5.3 is very witty; if recognition of the resemblances to *Am.* 1.6 reduces Augustus, if obdurate, to the level of an obdurate door in a paraklausithyron, that too, I believe, is part of Ovid's wit. *But that is another question.*' (1985) 468, my italics.

³²³ Murgia (1985) 466.

* Knox (1995)

Through his edition and commentary of *Her.* 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11 and of the *Epistula Sapphus*, Knox stands out in the debate on authenticity in his denial that Sappho's epistle is genuine while at the same time appreciating the poem's literary qualities:

The *Epistula Sapphus*, which I do not believe to be Ovid's, is an interesting poem in its own right, and I have included it as an illustration of the principle that a judgement against authenticity does not necessarily imply aesthetic condemnation.³²⁴

Like Schneidewin before him, Knox wonders who could have written such a poem (a question so intriguingly anticipated by the text itself). It must have been someone talented who knew Sappho, Knox presumes, and finds it puzzling that a poet of such qualities remained anonymous.

Several of Tarrant's arguments are reported in the commentary, which is otherwise distinguished by fine readings and observations. Unlike Tarrant, Knox mentions the possibility of printing the less felicitous vulgate-reading of *Her.* 15.174 (*nec grauidae lacrimas continuere genae*) if the *Epistula Sapphus* is spurious, instead of the *nec oculi lacrimas continuere mei* of F, which he actually chooses. Except for this suggestion, supported by Baehrens, Knox produces one other important objection to the poem's Ovidian origin, namely that it does not fit in among the other *Heroides*.³²⁵ The 'regular' heroine takes to the pen, as it were, as

a character taken from an earlier narrative and depicted at a crucial juncture of her story. Although it is clear that the author of the *ES* knew Sappho's poetry, the narrative setting is not drawn from any work of literature, but from the biography of Sappho and the later traditions surrounding her life. It was an ingenious idea, but it was not O.'s.³²⁶

³²⁴ Knox (1995) preface. Knox's stance is commendable, but singular when compared to the other contributions to the debate on authenticity.

³²⁵ 'For eyes heavy with tears offer nothing that is offensive. Ruhnken is correct: 'poets call whatever is swollen or filled with something *gravidum*; thus Virgil *gravidum uber, grauidae fruges, gravidas seges*'. This is what the Francofurtanus ms did not understand as he in a serious interpolation wrote 'nec lacrimas oculi continuere mei'. My translation for: 'Nihil quidem offensionem per se praebent oculi lacrimis grauidi. Recte Ruhnkenius: 'poetae quidquid tumidum est et aliqua re plenum, grauidum vocant; sic apud Virgilium *gravidum uber, grauidae fruges, gravidas seges*'. Quod non intellegens Francofurtanus graui cum interpolatione scripsit 'nec lacrimas oculi continuere mei'. Baehrens (1885) 62.

³²⁶ Knox (1995) 14.

This conclusive statement is not convincing, not even to Knox himself, as he modifies it at a later stage, saying – this time more tentatively – that ‘[i]f the author of this epistle based it upon a work of literature, then the most likely candidate is one of the many lost comedies that dealt with Sappho.’³²⁷ Furthermore the closure of Sappho’s letter at the edge of the Leucadian promontory depicts a crucial juncture. The biographical element, which is underscored rather than introduced by Sappho, is ingenious indeed. Since each heroine strives and avails herself of the author’s tool, writing, as she recounts her life, this life somehow becomes the life of a writer. This is a characteristic feature that the author Sappho enhances all the more, and thus she reveals the allegorical level of the *Heroides* – as its poet’s fictitious self-portrait.

In any event, since Knox sustains the view that the *Epistula Sapphus* is inappropriate in the context of the *Heroides*, he must presume that the reference to a letter by Sappho at *Am.* 2.18.26 and 34, is spurious too. If these verses are genuine, the very aptness of the figure of Sappho is guaranteed by Ovid, whether the extant *Epistula Sapphus* is authentic or not. Refuting this possibility, Knox agrees with Tarrant that the *Amores* verses are interpolations.

* Courtney (1998)

A considerable time after Courtney revitalised the debate on the authenticity of several of the *Heroides*, several studies were published, mostly in favour, but also against Ovidian authorship for the *Heroides* that display the most striking metrical oddities, that is to say *Her.* 9 and *Her.* 16-21. In this article Courtney affirms his previous condemnation of these poems, attempting at the same time to put the spotlight on some general problems and establish ground rules for how to treat texts

³²⁷ The contradictions continue. Firstly, Knox admits that the poem can be alluding to a work of literature: ‘[i]f the author of this epistle based it upon a work of literature, then the most likely candidate is one of the many lost comedies that dealt with Sappho. We know at least six produced in Athens with the title *Sappho*, by Diphilius (fr. 70-1 K-A), Amipsias (fr. 15 K-A), Antiphanes (fr. 194 K-A), Ehippos (fr. 20 K-A), and Timocles (fr. 32 K-A). And at least four other plays, in addition to Menander’s, were called *The Leucadian*. Nothing can be discovered about the plot of any of these plays, nor why their authors chose the famous poet of Lesbos as a subject, but the story of Phaon is known to us from other sources [...] Phaon, too, figured in Attic comedy as early as Cratinus (fr. 370 K-A), and the comic playwright Plato (4th cent. BC) produced a play called *Phaon*. However, none of these comedies about Sappho or Phaon acquired the prominence that might have led a poet, in the style of *O.*, to seize upon it as a source from which to extract the material for a poem.’ Knox (1995) 278, my italics, which are due to my amazement at such a statement about a poet who explicitly seized upon material from the low, and far from prominent erotodidactic tradition for the *Ars amatoria*, cf. e.g. Gibson (2003) 13-21.

of disputed origin. When presenting an example of a kind of scholarly conduct, which is not commendable, Courtney draws attention to Tarrant's article of 1981:

Suppose we want to declare the Letter of Sappho spurious; we run up against the difficulty that Ovid himself twice refers to it in *Am.* 2.18. No problem, we have an easy solution available; off with his head, just replace the lines concerned [...] with references to the Letter of Briseis [...]. We then have to presume that the author of the Letter of Sappho validated his forgery by rewriting two lines of *Am.* 2.18 to introduce mention of it; how did he then impose his will on the whole textual tradition? Well we can get around that also. We want to regard not only the Letter of Sappho [...] as spurious (Beck 213), and that of Phyllis (Beck 160-1); all we have to do is follow Zwierlein (Beck 14 n. 14; so far an oral communication) in deleting the whole passage *Am.* 2.18,19-34 (and more). How convenient that, having encountered a passage which forms an obstacle to the theory we wish to uphold, we can then pick holes in that passage and eliminate it! How strange that no scholar with no vested interest at stake has ever found any problem in that passage [...]. Any conclusions can be reached by such means.³²⁸

Still, the conclusions that Zwierlein communicates in writing, must have surpassed what even Courtney could have imagined was possible.

* Zwierlein (1999)

Zwierlein has been, like Schneidewin before him, searching for a forger, and the one he has found represents a discovery that truly fits Tarrant's allusion to Sherlock Holmes: 'when we have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth.'³²⁹ Zwierlein claims that not only pseudo-Virgilian and pseudo-Ovidian texts, but also extensive parts of what are generally considered sound and genuine Virgilian and Ovidian works were written by a forger shortly after Ovid's death. To Zwierlein, the following observation on behalf of Virgil is valid for Ovid as well:

Am Beginn des Vergilstextes, wie er uns überkommen ist, steht nicht die (vielleicht erfundene) Ausgabe des Varius und Tucca, wie dies in der notorische unzuverlässigen *Vergilvita* des Sueton (in der Fassung Donats) behauptet wird, sondern der revidierte, stark überarbeitete, Vergil' eines gelehrten Deklamators und Dichters, hinter dem ich den langjährigen Freund des Kaisers Tiberius, Iulius Montanus, vermute, den der ältere Seneca einen *egregius poeta* nennt, während er dem jüngeren als *tolerabilis poeta* gilt.³³⁰

³²⁸ Courtney (1998) 163.

³²⁹ A. Canon Doyle in Tarrant (1981) 136.

³³⁰ Zwierlein (1999) 4.

Thus the history of literature becomes quite different after Zwierlein's discovery: it is the end of an extensive part of Virgil's and Ovid's output 'as we know it' and it introduces a completely new poet, unknown to all times prior to Zwierlein. This poet behaves like a dogmatic poststructuralist's dream: he effaces himself as author and, truly intertextual, he eliminates the distinctions between one poet's text and another's: he introduces Virgilian elements to Ovid and Ovidian to Virgil in order to render the intentions of each of them just as intractable and insignificant as his own.

Like Schneidewin and Tarrant before him, Zwierlein is convinced that the forger reveals himself through errors, clumsiness and misunderstandings that contribute to an obvious 'Qualitätsunterschied' between the original and the imitation that Iulius Montanus has constructed with his "'Fälscher"-Mentalität'.³³¹ Zwierlein takes, however, a novel path when he combines these incriminating features with several singular interpretations that amounts to a forger's theory of composition, as it were. The psychology of the *tolerabilis poeta* is of great interest to Zwierlein, who is puzzled at the reasons why he, who must have written an enormous amount during a very short time, was content to enter the history of literature so quietly under the names of others. But, as Zwierlein suggests: 'Das Weiterleben des Werkes mochte ihm wichtiger erscheinen als das Fortleben den eigenen Namens.'³³² In support of this suggestion, Zwierlein presents a reading of *Pont.* 1.1., of which he claims that Montanus interpolated verses 29-30: *si dubitas de me, laudes admitte deorum,/ et carmen dempto nomine sume meum*. Here it is as if Montanus communicates directly (and modestly) to Zwierlein, who sees this couplet as a description of Montanus' attitude towards his own project as a secret agent of Augustan poetry.

And this project was not slight. Montanus composed not only major parts of Virgil's works, he also wrote the *Heroides*, the attestations of this work at *Am.* 2.18,

³³¹ Zwierlein (1999), 9 and 5. Montanus is not worthy of many flattering characteristics, and is pictured in a way which is reminiscent of Love's judgements of forgers: 'Fakes are, as said, an incessant and serious challenge to attribution studies. No one should get involved in the field who does not have an inbuilt antennae for spotting them. [...]. Faking is the cancer of scholarship. The appropriate punishment for fakers should be public execution, with a last-minute interruption when a reprieve is brought to the gallows, only to be disregarded when it is discovered to be a fake. Likewise there is nothing amusing in the fact that a fellow scholar may have been misled by a fake: it is a sign of incompetence and dereliction in the individual concerned. If one finds oneself in that situation one's response should not be one of wry amusement expressed in an ironic chuckle but profound self-disgust at failing in one's fundamental duty as an attributionist. Finding evidence of inauthenticity in a work which is actually genuine is regrettable but an error in the right direction.' (2002) 192-3.

³³² Zwierlein (1999) 8.

Ars 3.345 and *Pont.* 4.16.13, the *Medicamina Faciei Femineae*, and its testimony at *Ars*. 3.205-8. About the *Epistula Sapphus*, Zwierlein explains that it is:

von Tarrant mit zwingenden Gründen als unecht erwiese geworden ist [...]. Tarrant hält die Pentameter 26 and 34 [...], in denen die Sappho-epistel erwähnt wird, für interpoliert. Ich selbst stelle das ganze Gedicht [...] an die Seite und schreibe sie dem Iulius Montanus zu [...]³³³

The last phrase reveals the greatest problem with this approach, and that is that Zwierlein's discovery of the new poet does not prompt him to study, analyse and interpret his works in any other way than as expressions of a forger's psychology or – at its most – of a forger's theory of composition. Instead he wants to put these compositions, which in one way or another represent challenges to straightforward minds, 'an die Seite'. Thus, even though he embraces Tarrant's denial of the *Epistula Sapphus*' authenticity, the paradoxical consequence is that the poem can again join the other *Heroides* on Zwierlein's sideline.

1.6. The Debate. A Summary

These are the assumptions about the relationship between the *Epistula Sapphus*, the *Heroides* and Ovid:

Stance:

1. Ovid wrote the extant *Epistula Sapphus* as a part of the *Heroides*.

2. Ovid wrote the extant *Epistula Sapphus* as a part of the *Heroides*, but took the poem out (without changing the text of *Am.* 2.18.26). The poem then began to circulate on its own and at some stage it got attached to the *Corpus Tibullianum*.

3. Ovid wrote an *Epistula Sapphus* which now is lost, leaving thus the attestation of the original poem at *Am.* 2.18.26 as an open invitation to the forger who wrote the extant *Epistula Sapphus* to fill in the gap.

4. Ovid never wrote an *Epistula Sapphus*. A forger composed the poem and imposed the interpolations known as *Am.* 2.18.26 and 34 on the whole transmission of the *Amores*.

Select supporters:

Loers (1846), Comparetti (1876), De Vries (1885), Palmer (and Purser) (1898), Courtney (1965, 1998), Goold (1974), Dörrie (1974), Rosati (1996)

Baca (1971b)

Schneidewin (1843), Lachmann (1848), Murgia (1985)

Tarrant (1981), Knox (1995), Zwierlein (1999)

³³³ Zwierlein (1999) 358.

Points 2, 3 and 4 dodge the Ovidian testimony, but have the advantage of explaining the *Epistula Sapphus*' separate transmission from the other *Heroides*. Tarrant (1981, 1983) is undoubtedly right when he claims that the 'external evidence' has no particular weight in the case for the poem's authenticity. He might not be right in seeing the *codex Francofurtanus* and the *Florilegium Gallicum* as stemming from the same intellectual *milieu*, and he does not know that Guido de Grana identified the poem as Ovid's, still, all the indications that there is a relationship between the *Epistula Sapphus*, the *Heroides* and Ovid tell us either that Ovid was the poet, or that the forger has had an entire tradition of success as Ovid's impersonator.

The first point has the benefit of being in accordance with both Ovidian and external evidence. The problem is, of course, the separate transmission of the poem. This can, however, be accounted for. As the last poem in the collection it must have been physically vulnerable.³³⁴ It could simply have got lost 'mechanically' and by accident. But there is another possible explanation, as well. The lacuna after Ausonius' *Cupido Cruciatu*s 24, which is assumed to have contained a description of the Lesbian poetess, might be indicative of censorship.³³⁵ The content of the *Epistula Sapphus* can similarly have provoked omissions in the process of copying the *Heroides*. Line *Her.* 15.134 *et iuuat et siccae non licet esse mihi* was after all changed in the process of copying the *Epistula Sapphus* alone. Furthermore, the erotic charge of the elegiac letter must have been difficult to handle in times that did not know Plato's Tenth Muse, but only the name- and shameless 'woman' (*una*) who took the leap from the Leucadian rock, hopelessly in love with the beautiful Phaon.³³⁶

Metre and style advocate even less than the 'external evidence' a rejection of the poem's authenticity. After the debate has been going on for more than one hundred and fifty years, there is really one question that remains, and that is whether the *Epistula Sapphus* fits Ovid's early poetic career, during which he composed the single *Heroides*, or not. Part Three is dedicated to this question, but before I turn to that, I want to take a second look at the phenomenon of parallel passages and relate it to the establishment of the chronological order of Ovid's early poetic output.

³³⁴ Prof. S. J. Harrison has kindly pointed out to me that the so-called 'false preface' of Apuleius' *De Deo Socratis* would be a parallel, cf. Harrison (2000) 141-4.

³³⁵ Green (1991) 530.

³³⁶ Cf. the interpolation in some manuscripts of Servius *ad Aen.* 3.279, Comparetti (1876) 7.

2. ILLE EGO QVI ... LVSOR

The arguments proposed in the debate on the *Epistula Sapphus*' authenticity are, roughly speaking, of two kinds, one based on problems of textual criticism and the other based on *loci similes* understood as indications of chronology. In the course of the preceding chapters I have briefly suggested that hermeneutical strategies are preferable to a rigid, *sine interpretatione* application of Axelson's principle when approaching textual parallels. I will further examine this phenomenon of parallel passages, which is called inter- and intratextuality in modern literary theory, before I turn to the problematic chronology of Ovid's early poetic career, which also involves several challenges concerning parallel passages.

Just like the notion of *la mort de l'auteur*, the concepts of inter- and intratextuality aim at redeeming texts from the notions of intention that constrain their meaning. But, as I hope to have shown in Part One, these structuralist devices are neither capable of bringing about the universal redemption of all texts, nor the condemnation of intention altogether. Actually, as the items for *Prioritätsbestimmung* brought forth in the debate on the *Epistula Sapphus*' authenticity demonstrate, texts can become more meaningful if their author's intention is imagined as part of them. In such cases 'reference' and 'allusion' are often more adequate terms for parallel passages than inter- and intratextuality. Hinds (1998) pairs the two phenomena and explains:

As *palam* is to *clam*, so 'reference' is to 'allusion': a 'reference' is 'a specific direction of the attention'; an 'allusion', in the words of the *OED*, is 'a covert, implied or indirect reference'.³³⁷

Indeed, as Fowler (2000) points out, the concept of allusion is traditionally associated with 'the author's mind', the 'private, the 'single', the 'additional extra', the 'special' effect of literature, that which is different from the 'model' and which represents an 'extratextual act'.³³⁸ Focussing precisely on the qualities that Fowler attributes to the same literary phenomenon when it is seen from an intertextualist perspective, that is,

³³⁷ Hinds (1998) 22.

³³⁸ The intertextualist view reveals, on the other hand, the 'systematic', the 'public', the 'multiple' and the 'inescapable' of this literary feature, which furthermore is both different and similar compared to its model and which creates meaning in 'intertextual acts'. Fowler (2000) 117.

its inescapability and incessant ability to produce meaning, I would still like to vindicate the term ‘allusion’: firstly because it is marked by a certain opacity with regard to how and why it alludes to other passages and secondly because it is readily associated with intention. Together these properties balance each other and protect against extremist readings, be it in the form of fundamental literalism or total relativism. There is yet a third reason why I am attracted to ‘allusion’, and that is that this concept most interestingly informs the image of an author, and perhaps the image of Ovid in particular.

2.1. Allusive Structures and Intentional Allusions

Expressions like ‘parallel passages’ and ‘*loci similes*’ are fairly neutral terms, whereas ‘inter-/intratextuality’, ‘allusion’ and ‘reference’ conceptualise different degrees of structural and intentional investments in this complex literary phenomenon. All these concepts, including the forceful friction they produce between them, have been duly explored in seminal studies of Roman poetry.³³⁹

The tension between structural and intentional dynamics is perhaps at its most vibrant in Conte’s *The Rhetoric of Imitation* (1986 = 1996), which rests on firm theoretical ground. As Segal explains in the foreword, Conte has re-examined:

the nature of literary allusion in Roman poetry in the light of the structuralist and poststructuralist theories of language developed by such critics and theorists as Jacobson, Lotman, Barthes, Genette, Riffaterre, Todorov, and others among the Russian formalists and the “new” rhetoricians of Paris.³⁴⁰

The expression ‘the nature of literary allusion’ in this passage reveals, however, that there also are other traditions, prominently represented by Pasquali, in play here.³⁴¹ Conte duly reports his debt to his precursor, but detaches his own stance from ‘Pasquali’s [...] privileging of the moment of *intentionality* in the “poetic memory”. [...] My purpose’, he continues ‘is rather to explore the rhetorical function of the allusion as an aspect of the systematic character of literary composition’.³⁴²

³³⁹ Notably Thomas (1982, 1986), Conte (1986 = 1996), Martindale (1993), Hinds (1998), Fowler (2000) and Edmunds (2001).

³⁴⁰ Segal in Conte (1986 = 1996) 7-8.

³⁴¹ Cf. ‘Arte allusiva’ Pasquali (1951).

³⁴² Conte (1986 = 1996) 26.

Significantly, Conte does not consequently abandon the notion of intention. He sustains that a ‘poem is an intentional piece of work’ and that the poet ‘motivates each element to promote the coherence of the entire text.’³⁴³ And at the same time as he is endorsing these insights, Conte is far from falling victim to ‘The Intentional Fallacy’:

If we refuse to separate the text from its intentions (which means not ingeniously guessing at the author’s intentions but uncovering the living relationship that linked the text with the world and with its immediate public), the writing of this poetry can be seen as a vital use of language in a form brimming with sense.³⁴⁴

Indeed, the map must adapt to the landscape and not the other way around: Axelson’s schematic presentation of verbal resemblances in Ovid and Lydgamus is legitimate, but the sensibility with which Conte elucidates how *loci similes* play with both canon and convention, as well as singular texts and particular means, in much the same way as the tropes and figures of rhetoric work, helps in interpreting more sophisticated cases of parallel passages.³⁴⁵ The feasibility of Conte’s approach is thoroughly demonstrated by a series of brilliant interpretations in which the author in question is discreetly conjured up through expressions like ‘of course [the author] intended the competent reader to recognise this fact’ ‘what ‘is a critico-philological problem for us was a problem in poetic composition for Virgil’, and ‘only Virgil knows’.³⁴⁶

Hinds (1998), who build on Conte’s ‘structuralised’ approach to literary allusion, sums up his model’s position with concise subtlety:

³⁴³ Conte (1986 = 1996) 51.

³⁴⁴ Conte (1986 = 1996) 127.

³⁴⁵ Consider for example how Conte describes the dynamics of the kind that he calls ‘integrative allusion’: ‘In allusion, as in metaphor, a sign that corresponds to one fact supplants the sign that corresponds to another fact, and the substitution produces a new semantic whole. The new act of signification involves the two facts by a single sign.’ (1986 = 1996) 53. And: ‘Knowledge of the ‘duplicity’ of such discourse, in which the two different realities stretch a single poetic idea between themselves, is knowledge of the gap between the letter and the ‘surplus’ of meaning it bears. We see here the capacity of allusion to act as a trope. It provides additional depth of the meaning to speech by diverting it abruptly from a simple communicative function, giving it the opacity of a rhetorical figure. [...] The force of the poetic tension created is proportional to the gap between the original sense of the words that have been violated by the allusion (i.e., have been rendered objectively false) and the sense given to the same words now that they are seen to be motivated (i.e. rendered subjectively true in their freedom from a specific context). The nonpertinence of the allusion is reintegrated by the appropriateness arranged by the context, and the external motivation for the poet’s words not only gives the nonrelevance a literary function but also trains the reader to read those words. Once the philologist has plumbed the allusion, the poem’s meaning comes into focus.’ (1986 = 1996) 54-5.

³⁴⁶ Conte (1986 = 1996) 104, 141, 171.

Like other semiological intertextualists, Conte seeks to free his approach from reliance on the rhetoric of authorial intention and intersubjectivity, but, as a full-time philologist concerned to locate his discussions within well-established Latinist debates, he tends to favour case-studies which remain persistently hospitable to the very terms which he would seek to sideline. [...] this tension is a fruitful one, not evidence of methodological weakness.³⁴⁷

Not everyone agrees with Hinds. Edmunds (2001) credits Conte in a rather oblique manner by saying that his ‘success as a reader-interpreter is in spite of, not because of, his theoretical views’.³⁴⁸

Edmunds is concerned with the epistemology of parallel passages and rejects firmly that the author gives access to knowledge of how verbal echoes relate to each other. ‘I am putting some new nails in the coffin’s lid’ he says, and alludes to *la mort de l’auteur*, before he continues.³⁴⁹

Though lately repudiated in the field of classics, intention has not disappeared. [...]. The fact of the matter for anyone studying Roman poems is that clues to intentions are almost always lacking and have to be inferred from poems. An appeal to the intention of the poet is therefore either *petitio principii* or the scholar’s rhetorical add-on at the conclusion of an interpretation. For the poetry of more recent times, sources of an intention external to poems are often abundant, and it is easy to see why even those who understand the theoretical arguments against intentionalism want to keep it in play. [...] classicists are in a happy position: The conditions of their research have already decided the issue for them.³⁵⁰

The reason why Edmunds is ready to pardon those scholars of more recent literature, who cling to the notion of intention, but not classicists, is due to the fact that ‘sources of an intention external to poems’ are more accessible in the case of modern authors. Edmunds’ line of reasoning is taken through a number of stages, and I would now like to draw attention to some of these.

Edmunds operates with the terms of a first quotation (Q1) in a ‘target text’ (T1) and its source (Q2) in a way which presupposes that the *loci similes* have a straightforward relationship excluding the possibility of reverse influence between them. Edmunds’ conception of intertextuality thus concurs with simplified notions of

³⁴⁷ Hinds (1998) 21. A similar (and commendable) mixture of disciplines can be seen in Fowler, who uses the concept Barthes dislikes, ‘irony’, in order to argue for his postmodernist perspective and who even states: ‘We are continually reminded that what is before us is made by man, not God: that even apparent ‘showing’ is really ‘telling’, that all narrative is discourse, that whether we ask ‘who sees?’ or ‘who speaks?’ the answer will always be: the author.’ (2000) 10.

³⁴⁸ Edmunds (2001) 61.

³⁴⁹ Edmunds (2001) viii.

³⁵⁰ Edmunds (2001) xi-xii.

allusions as echoes that recall preceding expressions. Due to the opacity which is intrinsic to this literary device, it is, however, often hard to tell which of the verbal similarities that should have priority over the other, even in cases of decided chronology, as a later reference to an earlier passage may readily enrich that passage, too.³⁵¹

In order to demonstrate the lack of substantial basis of a graphic or phonetic kind for the relationship between Q1 and Q2, Edmunds resorts to the following observation by Stierl:

A relation in which what is present refers to what is absent is, in the most general aspect, a semiotic one. In this sense, the intertextual relation is a complex semiotic relation insofar as therein a linguistically organized sign context refers to another linguistically organized sign context, but in such a way that *this reference is not itself of a linguistic kind*.³⁵²

‘If the reference is not linguistic, it is not semiotic either’ deduces Edmunds, despite the fact that a semiotic reference does not necessarily have to be linguistic.³⁵³ Signs appear in various forms: animals ‘read’ non-linguistically, even the bee identifies its hive by means of signs (*zoosemiotics*).³⁵⁴ As far as humans are concerned, the way we gesticulate (*kinsemics*, *proxemics*) or sprinkle ourselves with perfume, contribute, *inter alia*, to the non-linguistic signals that surround us. Edmunds’ inaccurate inference on behalf of semiotics, semiology and linguistics leads him, however, to interesting reflections on behalf of our imagination, since, from his point of view, there are no epistemologically real (i.e. material) relations between parallel passages, other than the link *imagined* by a reader:

Lacking any linguistic or semiotic basis, reference can take place only in the mind of a reader, and no amount of theorizing will ever be able to locate either the markers or the boundaries of intertextuality in texts.³⁵⁵

Edmunds concludes therefore that ‘intertextuality is a matter of construction, thus of reading, and the appeal to the intention of the author has to be abandoned’.³⁵⁶

³⁵¹ Hinds (1998) 52-99.

³⁵² Stierl in Edmunds (2001) 154-155.

³⁵³ Edmunds (2001) 155.

³⁵⁴ I am grateful to Amund Børdahl for pointing this out for me.

³⁵⁵ Edmunds (2001) 155.

³⁵⁶ Edmunds (2001) 166.

But at the same time as Edmunds searches for what may be known for certain about the relationship between parallel passages, he continuously draws attention to the imaginary aspects of literature that allow for different conclusions. How close Edmunds is to alternative perspectives is revealed at a point where his line of reasoning converges strikingly with Conte's and Hinds' insights, namely, in a passage where he presents an explicit critique of the latter:

Hinds has written that "we allusionists permit ourselves to look for authorial subject-positions, believing that the figure of the alluding author, however conjectural, is 'good to think with'." But if the author is only a "subject-position" or a figure, then how is the author different from one or another of the personae [...]"³⁵⁷

How 'the author is different from one or another of the personae' is a perfectly sound question, it echoes Barthes' imperative to 'return the documentary figure of the author' to literature and it suggests that quest for the epistemological basis for *loci similes* should be abandoned in favour of pursuit of the allusion's ontological moments.³⁵⁸

2.2. Ontological Moments of Allusion

In shifting focus from epistemological problems to ontological dynamics of parallel passages, I am trying to follow Hardie, who in *Ovid's Poetics of Illusion* (2002b) successfully leaves the poet's much explored wit and continuous questioning of what can and cannot be known aside, to draw attention to those Ovidian dynamics that stage the unstable character of our very being. My approach involves precisely a change of perspective, and so where Edmunds for instance operates with 'an intention external to poems' or claims poets are only 'useful [...] for canons and for literary history', I would see intention as an integrated element of poetry and relate the metonymical use of an author's name to designate his or her output to the concept of the author's corporeality.³⁵⁹

For a textual body is, like a human body, physical.³⁶⁰ Writing can for instance be blotted by tears, as it is indeed claimed to be in the *Epistula Sapphus* (*Her.* 15.97-

³⁵⁷ Edmunds (2001) 166.

³⁵⁸ Barthes (1990 = 1993) 211-2.

³⁵⁹ Edmunds (2001) 37.

³⁶⁰ Farrell (1999) *passim*.

8), which testify to the material circumstances under which the text was produced and thus help us see the textual body as a double of the author.³⁶¹ The evocative association between poet and poetry points towards ontological insights as well, for instance regarding the impossibility of explaining either poet or poem exhaustively. As Martindale (1993) astutely observes:

[...]people are like texts in that we encounter their gestures, words and consciousness. [...] Seeing through books, like seeing through people, may make it impossible to see, for people are evidently not wholly ours to command. Like people, books would have their reticences, their partial disclosures, their resistances to complete appropriation; they would invite us to respect their otherness.³⁶²

The suggestive relationship between the author's two *corpora*, as it were, is dramatised not only on the level of entire literary *œuvres*, but of poetic details, like *personae* and allusions, too. From an ontological viewpoint, the answer to Edmunds' question is the same as the one that Barthes already has given: the author is *not* essentially different.³⁶³ But because the image of the author is able to invoke especially vivid associations, it is able to function as a particularly strong incentive to conjure up what is absent. This point, that the author is *the* literary persona who takes precedence among the many invitations that literature offers to activate our imagination, confirms Martindale's observation and the deeply human experience that no identity, neither textual nor personal, is a truly fixed entity which can never be fully understood, not even by the one possessing it.

These ontological dynamics are mirrored in the way an allusion, however static it may seem in the text where it occurs, simultaneously stretches out for another text. Ben-Porat simply observes (1976) that: '[...] the impression that literary allusion is a device for the linking of texts which are initially totally unrelated [...] is wrong.'³⁶⁴ And through his subtle (and strikingly technical) work he demonstrates how the allusion cuts both ways in that it points to something other than the work in which it occurs, at the same time as it confirms the central issues of that very same work.

³⁶¹ Rosenmeyer (1997) 35.

³⁶² Martindale (1993) 31-32.

³⁶³ Barthes (1990 = 1993) 211-2, see above.

³⁶⁴ Ben-Porat1(1976) 117.

As already pointed out, Ovid calls himself *lusor* and as the term shares the Latin verb *ludere* with the word ‘allusion’, he somehow anticipates the association between his *scribentis imago* and his *loci similes*. I will now take a closer look at some of the many passages that link up, more or less tightly, to the poet’s self-designation. One of these passages forms, as already mentioned, a crucial point of departure for the establishment of Ovid’s early poetic career.

2.3. Allusive Chronologies. Pseudo-Virgil and Ovid

Ovid calls himself *tenerorum lusor amorum* twice, firstly in his own funeral epigram:

‘hic ego qui iaceo tenerorum lusor amorum
ingenio perii Naso poeta meo;
at tibi qui transis ne sit graue quisquis amasti
dicere "Nasonis molliter ossa cubent”’ (Tr. 3.3.73-6)

[I, WHO LIE HERE, WITH TENDER LOVES ONCE PLAYED, NASO, THE BARD, WHOSE LIFE HIS WIT BETRAYED. GRUDGE NOT, O LOVER, AS THOU PASSEST BY, A PRAYER: “SOFT MAY THE BONES OF NASO LIE.”]

The second occurrence is in his autobiography *Tristia* 4.10.1: *Ille ego qui fuerim tenerorum lusor amorum*. These poems dramatise two connected themes, the life and the death of the poet (in reverse order), and without getting too much into detail, the allusion *tenerorum lusor amorum* seems intended to link the two poems overtly together.

Tristia 4.10 has had a particularly prosperous destiny as a source of knowledge about Ovid’s life. This approach to the poem is indeed justified, but when the poet opens this poem by embellishing himself with a title that is a literary device, an allusion, that even has the word *lusor* at its core, the reader should perhaps be prepared to view the poem as a crafted *scribentis imago* just as readily as he or she would read it as a documentary text. At any events, there is an allusive relationship between this self-designation and several other parallel Ovidian passages, of which one of the earliest is an oblique authorial gesture.

2.3.a) The *Epigramma Ipsius*

In the *epigramma ipsius* of the extant *Amores* the author is not talking about his books (*libelli*, 1), as one would perhaps expect from an introductory epigram; instead the books are talking about their author:

Qui modo Nasonis fueramus quinque libelli,
tres sumus; hoc illi praetulit auctor opus.
ut iam nulla tibi nos sit legisse uoluptas,
at leuior demptis poena duobus erit.

[We who erewhile were five booklets of Naso now are three; the poet has preferred to have his work thus than as before. Though even now you may take no joy of reading us, yet with two books taken away your pains will be lighter.]

The *ille ego qui fuerim* of the author at *Tr.* 4.10 might thus be seen as a variation of the *qui modo ... fueramus* of the books. This variation is found in yet another tetrastich, namely the so-called prae-prooemium of the *Aeneid*, which reads:

Ille ego, qui quondam gracili modulatus auena
carmen, et egressus siluis uicina coegi
ut quamuis auido parerent arua colono,
gratum opus agricolis, at nunc horrentia Martis

[I am he who once tuned my song on a slender reed, then, leaving the woodland, constrained the neighbouring fields to serve the husbandmen, however grasping – a work welcome to farmers: but now I sing of Mars' bristling]

Conte points out several structural similarities between this and the *epigramma ipsius* of the *Amores*. There are 'parallels in expression: 'parallelismo dell'espressione: *nos (qui) ~ ego qui*, [...] in entrambi i testi la proposizione subordinata introdotta da *ut* al terzo verso e il movimento avversativo con *at* al quarto.'³⁶⁵ The fact that the lines which follow the respective tetrastichs also echo each other render the comparison even more attractive, cf. Virgil's *arma uirumque cano* and Ovid's *arma graui numero*.

Conte compares the two passages in an attempt to set the date for the prae-prooemium. Despite the conviction of Donatus and Servius, Conte, and most modern scholars with him, thinks that the four lines are spurious. The pseudo-Virgilian lines must, however, have been added at a very early stage: 'La più alta datazione proposta

³⁶⁵ Conte (1974) 63.

non sale oltre l'età di Tiberio. Ecco che qui la figura dell'allusione soccorre la filologia.³⁶⁶ And the allusion Conte has in mind is precisely the *epigramma ipsius* of the *Amores*. Setting the date of the three *Amores*-books (i.e. the second edition) to the very last years of the first century BC, he concludes that Ovid's tetrastich is 'il *terminus ante quem*' per la composizione di *Ille ego qui*.³⁶⁷

Although it is similar to Axelson's principle, Conte's procedure does not seem to rely on aesthetic judgements other than the claim that the allusion is 'sapientemente ricercata'.³⁶⁸ Furthermore, Conte almost completely evades the question of when the three-book version of the *Amores* came into existence. He uses, however, the word *rifacimento*, 'reworking', about Ovid's collection of elegies. Conte thus implies that there was an earlier version, which, according to the *epigramma ipsius*, consisted of five books.³⁶⁹

Barchiesi comes closer to the many problems that arises from a too literal reading of this epigram when he perceptively observes that:

[...] the issue of dating individual poems in relation to the question of two editions can become a stumbling block for interpretation, and that further, the whole question of reconstructing a first edition has had a misleading importance in contemporary scholarship.³⁷⁰

It is by all means true that the stumbling blocks are many for those who try to excavate the first edition from the second, as it were. Barchiesi intelligently challenges these 'excavations' by suggesting that the five-book version of the *Amores* is fictitiously postulated in order to give the impression that the poet's books now already, as the poet is about to embark on his juvenile work of elegies, associate him with Virgil and his career. Barchiesi's interpretation thus reveals an epigram that brims with self-ironic hubris, all the more accentuated by the poet's use of *auctor* – linked, as it is, to *augere*, 'to increase' – about himself as an author who has *reduced* his work.³⁷¹

³⁶⁶ Conte (1974) 63.

³⁶⁷ Conte (1974) 63.

³⁶⁸ Conte (1974) 63.

³⁶⁹ Conte (1974) 63.

³⁷⁰ Barchiesi (2001) 160.

³⁷¹ Again, as observed by McKeown, this is a paradoxical term to use in announcing the reduction of the collection [...]. (1989) 5. Cf. the discussion of *auctor* in Part One, chapter 1.4, a) and b).

At the core of this interpretation lies the presumption that the Ovidian epigram alludes to the pseudo-Virgilian tetrastich, and Barchiesi openly agrees with Conte in seeing the former as the *terminus ante quem* for the latter. Accordingly Barchiesi's reading confirms the hermeneutic rule that an interpretation of more than one passage is informed by the idea not only of their author(s) but also of the chronological order between those passages. Precisely in the interest of interpretation I would now follow La Penna (1985) in an approach to the *epigramma ipsius*, which is slightly different from that of Conte and Barchiesi.

2.3.b) *Ille Ego Qui Quondam ...*

The widespread opinion that the *Aeneid*'s prae-prooemium is not genuine is (re)formulated by Austin (1968) who claims that it violates the epic genre and disturbs the 'canonical opening' *arma uirumque cano*.³⁷² He also makes stylistic observations and claims, for example, that there is a need to supply both *ille ego* and *modulatus* with *sum* in the prae-prooemium. By contrast the *epigramma ipsius* has both *qui fueramus* and *sumus* (a combination which sustains a commendable contrast between the books' former and present states) and *Tristia* 4.10 has *fuerim*.³⁷³ Likewise Austin finds a number of other problematic features in the prae-prooemium, whereas the *Amores*-commentator McKeown spots no problems in the *epigramma ipsius*.

La Penna objects to Austin's stylistic arguments, but accepts his major points and considers the prae-prooemium to be spurious, too. The question of authenticity is, however, not La Penna's major interest. Instead he sets out to outline a tradition of editorial additions, which include lines of the *ille ego* kind.³⁷⁴ Of particular interest to my discourse are La Penna's observations concerning Ovid and, secondly, the

³⁷² '[...] for Virgil to begin with an epic with *ille ego qui quondam gracili modulatus auena* would go against all ancient literary convention.' And: 'Assume [...] that the four *ille ego* lines are prefixed to *arma uirumque cano*: not only is Virgil's acknowledgement to Homer blurred, but the entire period is ruined, and we are no longer conscious of the magnificent antithesis of Troy and Rome. The shapely, balanced, comprehensible rhythm has become top-heavy, ungainly, a burden to ear and breath alike.' Austin (1986) 109 and 113. For a fuller survey of the centuries-long debate on the authenticity of the prae-prooemium, see Gamberale (1991) 964.

³⁷³ The need to supply *ille ego* and *modulatus* with *sum* is refuted by La Penna, who produces several passages where the verb is implicit in the *ille ego* phrase (1985) 78. This objection does not, however, interfere with the fact that both Ovidian passages explicitly have the verb.

³⁷⁴ La Penna's scope is broad and involves among other things the 'esordio della Piccola Iliade', Callimachus' re-edition of the *Aitia*, Persius' hint at Ennius' rearrangement of his works, Augustan poets, Martial and late antique sepulchral epigrams.

imagines, portraits, that were attached to lines of the *ille ego* kind in the period after Martial.

La Penna thinks that the expression *ego ille*, which is found at Terentius (*Ad.* 866) and Cicero (*passim*), was inverted into *ille ego* in a process of adoption to dactylic poetry in the Augustan age. He presents more than eleven instances of the formula in this poetry, of which as many as eight stem from Ovid:

Illa ego, quae tibi sum nunc denique barbara facta,
nunc tibi sum pauper, nunc tibi uisa nocens,
flammea subduxi medicato lumina somno [...] (*Her.* 12.105-7)

[I, the maiden who am now at last become a barbarian in your eyes, who now am poor, who now seem baneful, I closed the lids of the flame-like eyes in slumber wrought by my drug [...]]

HOC quoque composui Paelignis natus aquosis
ille ego nequitiae Naso poeta meae (*Am.* 2.1.1-2)

[This, too, is the work of my pen – mine, Naso's, born among the humid Paeligni, well known singer of my own worthless ways.]

Ille ego Musarum purus Phoebique sacerdos
ad rigidas canto carmen inane fores. (*Am.* 3.8.23-4)

[I, the unstained priest of Phoebus and the Muses, sing verses all in vain before your unyielding doors]

[...] 'ille ego liber / ille ferox tacui' (*Met.* 1.757-8. Phaethon speaking)

[...] 'I, the high-spirited, the bold of tongue, had no word to say [...]]

['iste ego sum' (*Met.* 3.467). Narcissus speaking]

'ille ego sum', dixit, 'qui longum metior annum,
omnia qui uideo, per quem uidet omnia tellus,
mundi oculus [...]' (*Met.* 4.226-8. Sol is speaking)

['Lo, I am he who measure out the year, who behold all things, by whom the earth beholds all things – the world's eye [...]]

Ille ego, si nescis, uerus amator eram. (*Her.* 16.246)

[I was the real lover – if you do not know.]

Ille ego qui fuerim, tenerorum lusor amorum
quem legis, ut noris, accipe, posteritas (*Tr.* 4.10.1-2)

[That thou may know who I was, I that playful poet of tender love whom thou readest, hear my words, thou of the after time.]

Ille ego sum, quamquam non uis audire, uetusta
 paene puer puero iunctus amicitia;
 ille ego, qui primus tua seria nosse solebam
 et tibi iucundus primus adesse iocis;
 ille ego conuictor densoque domesticus usu,
 ille ego iudiciis unica Musa tuis.
 Ille ego sum, qui nunc an uiuam, perfide, nescis,
 cura tibi de quo quaerere nulla fuit. (*Pont.* 4.3.11-8)

[’Tis I, although you will not hear it, who have been united to you in friendship almost boy with boy; ’tis I who lived in close union with you in the same household; ’tis I who in your judgement was the one and only Muse; ’tis I of whom you know not, traitor, whether I am now alive, about whom you have ever been at no pains to inquire.]

The astonishing frequency of the *ille ego* phrase in the Ovidian corpus makes it look like the poet’s insistence both on his capacity to be his poetic characters (and what a fascinating group of characters that is: Medea, Paris, the Sun and the son of the Sun, and – with the allowance for a variation – the artist’s alter ego Narcissus) and an exclamation about his own existence, desperately repeated in the *Epistulae ex Ponto* poem, at the margins of his being, as it were.

The *ille ego* formula clearly contributes to shaping Ovid’s *imago*, and with this particular aspect in mind, the link between the dactylic tradition for the phrase and the later custom of attaching portraits, *imagines*, of the author to such phrases becomes an elucidating banalisation.³⁷⁵ it is as if this custom naively explicates the ability of this phrase to dramatise the image of the author.

Ovid’s outstanding use of the formula, especially at *Am.* 2.1.1 and *Tr.* 4.10.1, prompts La Penna to speculate on the possibility of Ovid’s independence in this tradition.³⁷⁶ But then there is the prae-prooemium of the *Aeneid*, which might have inspired Ovid to write the *epigramma ipsius*:

Indizi consistenti fanno supporre che Ovidio lo elaborasse tenendo presente l’esordio spurio dell’*Eneide* [...]. Sono argomenti che meritano seria considerazione; si cammina però, sempre sul filo del rasoio: non si può ancora affermare che siamo arrivati ad una conclusione rassicurante. La presenza dell’esordio spurio dell’*Eneide* nell’epigramma introduttivo degli *Amores* aprirebbe un altro problema difficile:

³⁷⁵ Here La Penna pursues the ideas of Brandt (1928) that the pseudo-Virgilian tetrastich was composed for an *imago* of the author.

³⁷⁶ ‘La presenza della formula in Tibullo e in passi delle Heroides introdurrebbe a pensare che Ovidio arrivasse al procedimento da sé, senza presupporre altro stimolo; ma non ci sono argomenti soliti per fissare la priorità.’ La Penna (1985) 88. The Tibullan passages are: *Ille ego cum tristi morbo defessa iaceres, / te dicor uotis eripuisse meis* [...] (1.5.9-10), *Ille ego sum, nec me iam dicere uera pudebit, / instabat tota cui tua nocte canis.* (1.6.31-2).

sicuramente Ovidio conosceva *Arma uirumque cano* come il vero inizio dell'*Eneide*; ma che conto faceva dei quattro versi aggiunti? li considerava spuri? Sarebbe strano che egli considerasse come autentici due esordi diversi; ma si può supporre che egli conoscesse l'esordio spurio solo dopo la prima edizione degli *Amores*, *ma la situazione non è così chiara da fare escludere del tutto che il rapporto fra i due autori sia da rovesciare.*³⁷⁷

If Ovid knew the prae-prooemium, I find it very probable that he considered it spurious. Elsewhere he refers only to the 'canonical opening' of the *Aeneid* not only at *Am.* 1.1.1, but also at *Am.* 1.15.25: *Tityrus et segetes Aeneiaque arma legentur*. I choose the text of McKeown, who claims that the ending of the line is 'an exact equivalent in substance to *Arma uirumque*' and who also prints the less felicitously transmitted *segetes* instead of *fruges* in order to match the reference to the *Georgics* with the references to the other works by Virgil, so that Ovid's line contains an element from the first line of each Virgilian work respectively.³⁷⁸ Ovid refers, yet again, overtly to the *Aeneid* by repeating the *arma uirumque* at *Tr.* 2.533-4: *ille tuae felix Aeneidos auctor/ contulit in Tyrios arma uirumque toros*.

In favour of the prae-prooemium's authenticity it has been claimed that it bridges the sphragis-ending of the *Georgics* and Virgil's epos, but Austin refutes 'the "link" theory' since it violates significant generic distinctions by introducing an authorial gesture which belongs not to epic, but to 'didactic and personal poetry'.³⁷⁹ In support of his claim, he points, significantly, to Ovid and the ending of *Ars* 2 and beginning of *Ars* 3:

arma dedi uobis; dederat Vulcanus Achilli:
uincite muneribus, uicit ut ille, datis.
sed quicumque meo superarit Amazona ferro,
inscribat spoliis NASO MAGISTER ERAT.

[...]

(*Ars* 2.741-4)

[I have given you armour; Vulcan gave armour to Achilles; do ye conquer, as he conquered, by virtue of the gift. But whosoever shall by my steel lay low the Amazon, let him inscribe upon his spoils "NASO WAS MY MASTER."]

ARMA dedi Danais in Amazonas; arma supersunt
quae tibi dem et turmae, Penthesilea, tuae. (*Ars* 3.1-2)

³⁷⁷ La Penna (1985) 88, my italics.

³⁷⁸ McKeown (1989) 407-8.

³⁷⁹ Austin (1968) 108-9.

[I have armed the Danaï against the Amazons; there remain arms which I must give to thee Penthesilea, and to thy troop.]

Gamberale (1991) picks up on La Penna's suggestion about the 'rapporto rovesciato' between Ovid and the pseudo-Virgilian author and considers it simply out of place to claim that the stylistically difficult, thematically improper and genre-violating lines that precede the *Aeneid* should be the source of inspiration for Ovid's *ille ego* usages, which are so characteristic and so stylishly employed throughout the poet's entire output.³⁸⁰

The Ovidian passages quoted above where the formula is found constitute a development of intensification, as it were. Without pushing this idea too far, I would suggest that the formulas and cognate passages in Ovid's early career are marked by an allusive opacity that help us see that they are authorial statements, and that they are, as such, connected to the later and more explicit *ille ego* phrases. Three of these early instances, of which two are too oblique to be put in La Penna's list, merit special attention.

The first passage, *Her.* 12.105, represents perhaps the first occurrence of the formula in the entire Ovidian *corpus*, and is noteworthy because it does *not* display *ILLE* ego, but *ILLA* ego, an interesting variation considering how easily confoundable the gender-categories are in Ovid. From this perspective, the second passage of importance here, represents, as I have claimed earlier, an oblique kind of *illa ego*, namely *Her.* 15.1-4. The reason why this passage is pertinent is precisely its allusive affinities with the *epigramma ipsius*, all the more enforced by the unique application of the word *auctor*.³⁸¹ Consider their common features in bold print:

Her. 15.1-4

Ecquid, ut aspecta est studiosae littera dextrae
protinus est **oculis** cognita nostra **tuis**?
an, nisi **legisses auctoris** nomina **Sapphus**,
hoc breue nescires unde ueniret **opus**?

Epigramma ipsius

Qui modo **Nasonis** fueramus quinque libelli,
tres sumus; hoc illi praetulit **auctor opus**.
ut iam nulla **tibi** nos sit **legisse uoluptas**,
at leuior demptis poena duobus erit.

³⁸⁰ Thus Gamberale also sees an Ovidian influence rather than a pseudo-Virgilian, in Martial: 'Se non fossimo troppo condizionati dai quattro versi pseudovirgiliani non ci sarebbero difficoltà ad ammettere in Marziale piuttosto un influsso ovidiano [...]' Gamberale (1991) 977.

³⁸¹ Cf. Part One, chapter 1.4, a) and b).

Both passages display the poet's name in the genitive: *Sapphus/ Nasonis*, both mention their status as *auctoris/ auctor* and just as the phrase *oculis tuis* accompanies the *auctor* of the *Epistula Sapphus* 'tibi balances *auctor*' in the epigram preceding the *Amores*.³⁸² Furthermore, both of these authors' works are called *opus* and the reader's prominence is highlighted through the variation *legisses/ legisse*. And even the introductory epigram's *uoluptas* about the act of reading touches a core theme of the *Epistula Sapphus*, as I will show in Part Three.

As becomes clear from the order in which I present the similarities between the *Epistula Sapphus* and the *epigramma ipsius*, I imagine that the former comes before the latter. This conception has at least three reasons. If the *Epistula Sapphus* is a part of the *Heroides*, Ovid probably finished it before he gave the *Amores* their extant form. Secondly, the way in which *Epistula Sapphus*, serving as the *Heroides*' *sphragis*, links up with the *epigramma ipsius* of the *Amores*, provides an Ovidian analogy to the way in which the end of the second and the beginning of the third books of *Ars Amatoria* are linked. Now, *Ars* 2 and 3 seem more closely connected to each other than the *Heroides* and the *Amores*, but the *Heroides* and the *Amores* represent two sides of a very Ovidian coin, and the linking of the second and the third book of the *Ars* actually involves so many difficulties concerning dates (see the next chapter) that it has been suggested that they constitute two separate poetic projects. I think that the difficulties of establishing a clear-cut chronology for Ovid's early poetic career should not only be regarded as a problem, but as an interpretative advantage, in as much as it trains the reader to look for new possible patterns of meaningful, Ovidian allusions that are not all too obvious at first glance. This does not, however, mean that one should not try one's best with the evidence of chronology at hand. Before I now turn to such an attempt, I will mention the third reason for seeing the verbal resemblances *Her.* 15.1-4 and the *epigramma ipsius* as pointed, and that is that together these passages form parts of an Ovidian *scribentis imago* that transforms into the poet's books as easily as into his female precursor Sappho.

³⁸² McKeown (1989) 5.

3. Chronologies

This chronological outline is limited to Ovid's early poetic career (c. 26-25 B.C. – 2 A.D.), and the works I assign to this period are: the single *Heroides*, the *Amores*, the lost *Medea*, the fragmentary *Medicamina Faciei Femineae*, *Ars Amatoria* 1-3 and the *Remedia Amoris*.

Except for the closeness in time, these works, at least those which are extant, belong together also because of their elegiac metre in combination with the theme of love. Regarding such criteria, the double *Heroides* should also fit in among these works, but as becomes clear from the survey of the debate on authenticity, many scholars have argued that the poems are spurious, mainly on the grounds that they display features that Ovid otherwise employs only in the later part of his poetic career (beginning, perhaps, with the *Fasti*). Now, Courtney's claim that 'it is inconceivable, and conceived by no-one, that Ovid could have written poetry of this type [i.e. the double *Heroides*] at Tomis, is wrong, particularly considering the intimate thematic and generic relationship between the letters of the abandoned heroines and persuading heroes on the one hand and the abandoned and persuading poet at Tomis on the other.³⁸³ It is highly conceivable that these poems are genuine, but not that they belong to Ovid's early career. Most likely they were composed during or after the period Ovid wrote the *Fasti* and the *Metamorphoses*. Keeping to the period that I define as Ovid's early poetic career, I will not focus principally on the double *Heroides*, but include them in the discussions, just as I will include passages from the rest of Ovid's output where it is suitable.

3.1. Points of Departure

I would like to start with Ovid's claim that the first poems he recited in public were about Corinna, which means that the first work the poet presented officially was the *Amores*. It is also worth noticing that he says that he himself burned some of these compositions in his youth:

³⁸³ Courtney (1965) 64. For the relationship between the elegiac letters of the *Heroides* and the exilic poems, cf. Rahn (1958), Rosenmeyer (1997), Williams (1997) and Spentzou (2005).

utque ego maiores, sic me coluere minores,
 notaque non tarde facta Thalia mea est.
 carmina cum primum populo iuuenalia legi,
 barba resecta mihi bisue semelue fuit.
 mouerat ingenium totam cantata per urbem
 nomine non uero dicta Corinna mihi.
 multa quidem scripsi, sed, quae uitiosa putauī,
 emendaturis ignibus ipse dedi. (*Tr.* 4.10.55-62)

[And as I revered the older poets so was I revered by the younger, for my Thalia was not slow to become renowned. When I first read my youthful songs in public, my beard had been cut but once or twice. My genius had been stirred by her who was sung throughout the city, whom I called, not by a real name, Corinna. Much did I write, but what I thought defective I gave in person to the flames for their revision.]

The poet's claim that he burned *multa* ('much') of his juvenile compositions matches strikingly well the claim about a former five-book version of the extant *Amores* which is made in the *epigramma ipsius*.

The single most important poem as regards Ovid's early poetic career is, however, *Am.* 2.18, in particular the following passage, which summarizes the poet's literary achievements so far and which I have discussed in the preceding chapter:³⁸⁴

sceptra tamen sumpsī curaque Tragoedia nostra
 creuit, et huic operi quamlibet aptus eram.
 risit Amor pallamque meam pictosque cothurnos
 sceptraque priuata tam cito sumpta manu;
 hinc quoque me dominae numen deduxit iniquae,
 deque cothurnato uate triumphat Amor.
 quod licet, aut artes teneri profitemur Amoris
 (ei mihi, praeceptis urgeor ipse meis!),
 aut quod Penelopes uerbis reddatur Vlīxi
 scribimus et lacrimas, Phylli relictā, tuas,
 quod Paris et Macareus et quod male gratus Iason
 Hippolytique parens Hippolytusque legant,
 quodque tenens strictum Dido miserabilis ense
 dicat et Aoniam Lesbīs amica lyram.³⁸⁵
 quam cito de toto rediit meus orbe Sabinus
 scriptaque diuersis rettulit ipse locis!
 candida Penelope signum cognouit Vlīxis,
 legit ab Hippolyto scripta nouerca suo.
 iam pius Aeneas miserae rescripsit Elissae,
 quodque legat Phyllis, si modo uiuit, adest.
 tristis ad Hypsipylē ab Iasone littera uenit,
 dat uotam Phoebō Lesbīs amata lyram. (*Am.* 2.18.13-34)

³⁸⁴ Here I will leave aside the four aspects of the passage which I discuss in the preceding chapter; its *sphragis*-features and penultimate place in the second book of the *Amores*, its two *Heroides*-catalogues in the sense of Ovid's and Sabinus', the role of Sabinus and the lines concerning the *Epistula Sapphus*.

³⁸⁵ For this line I follow McKeown's text.

[None the less, I did begin to sing of sceptres, and through my effort tragedy grew in favour, and for that task no one more fit than I. But Love laughed at my pall and painted buskins, and at the sceptre I had so promptly grasped in my unkingly hand. From this ambition, too, the worshipful will of my lady drew me away – for she liked it not – and Love triumphant drags in his train the buskined bard. What I may, I do. I either profess the art of tender love – ah me, I am caught in the snares of my own teaching! – or I write the words Penelope sends her Ulysses, and thy tearful plaint, abandoned Phyllis; what Paris and Macareus are to read, and what ungrateful Jason and Hippolytus and Hippolytus’ sire; and what pitiable Dido, with drawn blade in her hand, indites, and the Lesbian, loved of the Aonian lyre. How quickly has my Sabinus returned from the ends of the earth and brought back missives writ in far-distant places! Spotless Penelope has recognized the seal of Ulysses; the stepdame has read what was penned by her Hippolytus. Already devout Aeneas has written back to wretched Elissa, and a letter is here for Phyllis to read, if only she live. A missive grievous for Hipsipyle has come from Jason; the daughter of Lesbos, her love returned, may offer to Phoebus the lyre she vowed.]

This passage is no straightforward list of literary merits: firstly there is a description of Ovid’s tragic ambition and talent, if not success, and I side with those who assume that this is a reference to the almost entirely lost *Medea*. Then *risit Amor* and thus the passage continues as a variation on the elegiac *recusatio*-motif.³⁸⁶ Ovid is compelled to leave the camp of lofty tragedy due to two divine forces, the god of Love and his mistress (*dominae numen*), cf. *Am.* 2.18.17-18.

Accordingly, the following passage is dedicated to *quod licet*, ‘what is permitted’. And the first thing Ovid is allowed to do is to ‘profess the arts of love’, a confession to which he adds parenthetically: ‘(damned! I am tormented by my own advice!)’ (*Am.* 2.18.9-20). The very diction of the distich, cf. *artes Amoris, praeceptis meis*, is highly didactic and seems indeed to recall the *Ars Amatoria*.³⁸⁷ This reading does however complicate the chronology of Ovid’s early poetic career to the extent that several scholars have been inclined to read the lines as referring to the *Amores* themselves.³⁸⁸

The subsequent passage presents either the following 9 or 10 epistolographers of the *Heroides*, Penelope, Phyllis, Oenone, Canace, Hipsipyle, Medea (depending on

³⁸⁶ The phrase *risit Amor* marks the poet’s turning away from the lofty genre Tragedy to elegy and repeats the structure at *Am.* 1.1 where *risisse Cupido* indicates Ovid’s turning away from the lofty genre of epic to, again, elegy, cf. McKeown (1998) 395.

³⁸⁷ I agree: ‘[t]hat is the natural and easy assumption.’ Syme (1978) 7. McKeown firstly takes no firm stance in (1987) 88, but is later more positive towards the *Ars*-interpretation in (1998) 385.

³⁸⁸ Cf. e.g. Cameron (1968) 332. But Cameron relies on the reading *deue tribus libris titulo quae signat AMORVM* with support from Kenney, who, following Courtney (1970) changes his mind and prints *tener* instead of *tribus*.

the reading of 23 *male gratus Iason*) Ariadne, Phaedra, Dido and Sappho.³⁸⁹ Then there is of course the catalogue of Sabinus' male replies to Ovid's heroines, both lost and intriguing, which is supposed to have inspired Ovid to write the so-called double *Heroides*, where three heroes each write a letter to their respective heroine, who then pens a reply.

Both Ovid's and Sabinus' catalogues begin with Penelope and end with Sappho. Not only are there attractive textual intertwinings between the two epistolary elegies *per se*, but, as already mentioned, the epic Penelope's short letter (116 lines) and the lyric Sappho's long one, the longest, actually, in the entire collection (220 lines), form a perfect frame for the greater design of the *Heroides*, which is also a young poet's audacious inversion and appropriation of the preceding literary canon.³⁹⁰

Yet another work belonging to Ovid's early poetic career is mentioned in *Ars* 3. That is his make-up manual, *Medicamina Faciei Femineae*, which accordingly must have been written before this love manual to women:

est mihi, quo dixi uestrae medicamina formae,
 paruus, sed cura grande, libellus, opus.
 hinc quoque praesidium laesae petitote figurae;
 non est pro uestris ars mea rebus iners. (*Ars* 3.205-8)

[I have a book, a small work, but great in the pains it cost me, wherein I have told of the paints that will make you beautiful; from it too seek means to rescue impaired beauty: my art is no sluggard in your behalf.]

Ars 3 is not only concerned with women and the cultivation of female advantages in order to seduce men, it is a work equally obsessed with poetry. In the book's centrepiece on the topic, which includes a Greek and Roman literary history of love-related authors, there is yet another reference to Ovid's own poetic output, put in the mouth of some future admirer:

atque aliquis dicet 'nostri lege culta magistri
 carmina, quis partes instruit ille duas,
 deue tener libris titulus quos signat AMORVM
 elige quod docili molliter ore legas,
 uel tibi composita cantetur EPISTVLA uoce;

³⁸⁹ Though Ovid's friend Sabinus let Jason write only to Hypsipyle in line 33, line 23 should not be read as exclusively referring to the Lemnian queen, but also to Medea (*Her.* 12) who also address Jason cf. Hinds (1993) 32-4 and McKeown (1998) 397.

³⁹⁰ Cf. Rosati (1996) 211-2.

ignotum hoc aliis ille nouauit opus.’ (*Ars* 3.341-5)

[and someone will say, “read the elegant poems of our master, wherein he instructs the rival parties; or from the [...] books marked by the [tender] title of ‘Loves’ choose out what you may softly read with docile voice; or let some Letter be read by you with practiced utterance; he first invented this art, unknown to others.”]

With regard to establishing the chronology for Ovid’s early career, this passage must be the *terminus ante quem* for the poet’s output until *Ars Amatoria* 3. Lines 341-2 refer to the *Ars Amatoria*, the third book included, as the phrase *partes duas* denotes the two sexes. On assuming that *tener* is the better reading the couplet 343-4 becomes an unproblematic reference to the *Amores*.³⁹¹ In lines 345-6 Ovid mentions his letters of legendary heroines, known as the *Heroides*.

The couplet merits further attention since it contains cues to more than the date of the work. Firstly, the work is referred to as *EPISTVLA*. Considering this title-like designation in the singular, Tarrant finds it plausible that the same word featured in the original title as well, and suggests that it could have been *EPISTVLAE HEROIDVM*.³⁹² The work is, however, entitled *HEROIDES* in Priscian (*GLK* 2.544.4) and in the scholia to *Ibis* (357, 589). Furthermore, there are several parallel titles of Greek works.³⁹³ As far as the manuscript-tradition is concerned, two kinds of titles appear, namely *LIBER EPISTVLARVM* and *LIBER HEROIDVM*, and Knox claims that the latter of these might have even been the original.³⁹⁴ But no matter what the title was, Ovid undoubtedly considered the work a novel creation. An *opus* that is *ignotum aliis* leaves little room for alternative interpretations: this is new, it has never been done before, and, accordingly, Ovid has established a new genre.³⁹⁵ Considering this claim I find it hard to accept that the expression *composita uoce* has ‘a relatively colourless sense’.³⁹⁶ Since *uox* can mean both ‘language’ and ‘word’ I would rather see in it a statement that this work is written in a careful and composite language that requires a ‘voix méthodique’.³⁹⁷ Finally there is the term *cantetur*, ‘to be sung or read aloud’. Gibson comments: ‘*composita uoce* might lend to *cantare* the suggestion of a

³⁹¹ Cf. footnote 388.

³⁹² Tarrant (1983) 269. See also Kennedy (2002) 217-9.

³⁹³ Cf. Knox (1995) 5.

³⁹⁴ Knox (1995) 5.

³⁹⁵ Cf. Gibson (2003) 239.

³⁹⁶ Gibson (2003) 239.

³⁹⁷ The French translation is Dangel’s, who explains that Ovid: ‘ajoute que leur lecture doit être attentive à ce réseau de mots ‘sensés’, qui requiert une mise en sens aussi méthodique que l’a été la mise en œuvre : *composita uoce*.’ (2006) 11. Cf. *OLD*, 2104, 10 and 11.

more expressive performance than could be conveyed by *legere*.³⁹⁸ Otherwise he regards the terms *cantare* and *legere* ‘interchangeable’ and refers to Martial and Juvenal for examples in support of his claim. I agree with Gibson, but would like to add that there is one arresting occurrence in the Ovidian *corpus* where the ‘reading’ and ‘singing’ of poetry are harmoniously combined, namely in the following passage of the *Epistula Sapphus*:

at me cum **legeres**, etiam formosa uidebar;
unam iurabas usque decere loqui.
cantabam, memini (meminerunt onmia amantes);
oscula **cantanti** tu mihi rapta dabas. (*Her.* 15.41-4)

[Yet, when I read you my songs, I seemed already beautiful [as well]; you swore ‘twas I alone whom speech forever graced. I would sing to you, I remember – for lovers remember all – and while I sang you stole kisses from me.]

The *Remedia Amoris* is not mentioned in any of the Ovidian works, but most of the works mentioned in this chapter are alluded to in Ovid’s manual on how to cure unsuccessful love. It can be read as a perverted, inverted or metamorphosed summary of Ovid’s career until the point where he is about to round the *meta* and head towards his epic and aetiological accomplishments. It is worth noticing that Ovid renounces the amorous theme in the *Remedia Amoris*, but not an inch of his poetic vocation.

3.2. Datability. References and Speculations

Now, the order in which I have presented the passages that are crucial to the establishing of an early Ovidian chronology relies already on a presumption of how these texts relate to each other. In the subsequent section I will present the information that forms the foundation for the chronology that I find most reasonable. The information is of two kinds: firstly, there are more or less datable references to historical events, then there are more or less reliable speculations on the relative chronology between Ovid and the other Augustan poets that are either mentioned, not mentioned or textually alluded to in the works involved in this chronological survey.

³⁹⁸ Gibson (2003) 238.

3.2.a) *The Lost Ones. The First edition of the Amores and the Medea*

For a start, the five-book edition of the *Amores* (if there ever was one) probably contained the poems Ovid first recited in public. This version is now lost, or rather, as the *epigramma ipsius* claims, it was reduced to three books.³⁹⁹ The epigram also enhances the continuity between the two collections and renders it probable that some poems of the extant *Amores* collection might stem from the period of Ovid's earliest recitation, at the same time as others might be more recent.

The almost entirely lost tragedy *Medea* competes with the five-book-version of the *Amores* in terms of being considered as the first of Ovid's works.⁴⁰⁰ Ovid does not, however, mention the tragedy as part of his very first literary projects, as he mentions his poems about Corinna, and so the tragedy's prospects in the competition depend on the date of two *Amores* poems 3.1 and 3.15: given that Ovid claims that his first shaving and recitation took place at about the same time, he is supposed to have been begun writing the *Amores* around 26-25 B.C, and because he claims to be urged to turn to tragedy at *Am.* 3.1 (*passim*) and 3.15.17-8, the tragedy might be parallel to the earliest strata of the extant *Amores*, if these two poems belong to that stratum of the elegiac collection, that is.

The poet's hint of his success as a tragic playwright at *Am.* 2.18.13-4 might furthermore suggest that the *Medea* was already finished before *Am.* 2.18 was written. The same must be true for the *Heroides* and perhaps even the *Ars Amatoria*, and it is therefore not unreasonable that *Am.* 2.18 belongs to the more recent stratum of the elegiac collection. The fact that Ovid's tragic ambitions and abilities are mentioned before the *Heroides*-catalogue has led to the inference that the *Medea* was composed before the elegiac epistles, although nothing else supports this notion.⁴⁰¹

No matter whether the single *Heroides* is a *terminus ante quem* for the tragedy or not, what could the *terminus post quem* be for the elegiac epistolary collection?

³⁹⁹ And a rare thing it seems to have been, this announcement of a revision: 'Ovid's *Amores* is perhaps the only certain case of a revised ancient poetry book.' Cameron (1995) 115.

⁴⁰⁰ These are the fragments and attestations of the tragedy: 'Fragm. 1: *seruare potui: perdere an possis, rogas?* (Quint. *Inst.* 8.5.6.) Fragn. 2: *feror huc illuc, uae, plena deo.* (Seneca Mai. *suas.* 3.7) *Testimonia, ad tragoediam conscriptam spectantia Am.* 2.18.13-18, *Trist.* 2.547-56, *ad tragoedias conscribendas spectantia Am.* 3.1., *Am.* 3.15-20, *Rem.* 361-88, *Trist.* 2.381-412, *ad poemata in theatro saltata spectantia Trist.* 2.509-28, *Trist.* 5.7.25-30 *ueterum Tac. dial.* 12.5-6 et Quint. *inst.* 10.1.97-8.' Cf. Heinze (1997) 237-243.

⁴⁰¹ Cf. Heinze (1997) 24. This line of thought somehow presupposes that *Am.* 2.18.19-20 must refer to an *Amores* edition, because if the lines refer to the *Ars*, the passage does not follow the chronology of Ovid's early poetic career, in as much as the *Heroides* most certainly were composed before the *Ars*. Alternatively, Ovid does not keep to the chronological order of his works at all.

The tangible impact of the *Aeneid* on the *Heroides* makes it plausible that they were composed after the publication of Virgil's grand epic, which probably took place in the year after the poet's death in 19 B.C. That the Virgilian influence should stem from recitations is generally ruled out, since Ovid claims only to have seen Virgil, while he heard Horace read (*Tr.* 4.10.49, 51).

Together with speculations on the chronology of the other works, to which one should add the estimated time it must have taken to compose them all, these lines of reasoning lead to the conclusion that the tragedy *Medea* could have been composed between ca. 17 and 6 B.C., and, according to Heinze (1997), most probably before *Heroides* 6 and 12.⁴⁰²

3.2.b) *The First Edition of the Heroides*

So the composition of the *Heroides* presumably took place after the publication of the incomplete *Aeneid* in c. 18 B.C. And since so many of the single *Heroides* are listed in *Am.* 2.18, which for good reason is thought to belong to the recent stratum of the *Amores*, this version, which could be dated as late as 2 A.D., should, at least partly, be the *terminus ante quem* for the heroines' letters. To say that the *Heroides* were composed between 18 B.C. and 2 A.D. would be to make a very cautious estimate. The time that Ovid spent on the *Heroides* during this period was most certainly restricted by both elegiac and didactic projects. Accordingly, the perhaps least speculative of all the speculations on the early Ovidian chronology must be that the single *Heroides* were composed closer to 18 B.C. than 2 A.D.⁴⁰³

3.2.c) *The Fragment. Medicamina Faciei Femineae*

This work must have been written before the third book of the *Ars* as it is referred to at *Ars* 3.205-8.

⁴⁰² Heinze (1997) 21, for further references, 24 footnote 127 and Bessone (1997) 31.

⁴⁰³ Heinze suggests between 16 and 5 B.C. (1997) 21. Because Jacobson objects to the idea that Ovid composed the *Amores* and the *Heroides* partly at the same time, he dates the *Heroides* as late as 10 B.C., leaving Ovid some 15 years to compose his Roman erotic elegies. Jacobson (1974) 311.

3.2.d) *The Ars Amatoria and Remedia Amoris*

The entire *Ars* bears witness to a lively engagement with Ovid's contemporary Rome. Accordingly, there are numerous lines, especially in book 1, that refer to historical events that are relatively easily datable. The first lines of importance are:

nec tibi uitetur quae priscis sparsa tabellis
porticus auctoris Livia nomen habet [...] (*Ars* 1.70-2).

[Nor should you avoid the Livian colonnade which, scattered o'er with ancient paintings keeps its founder's name [...]]

Livia's portico was inaugurated during the first months of 7 B.C., but had been constructed previously, so the reference can be to an earlier period, but still around that date.

The next lines of interest are:

quid, modo cum belli naualis imagine Caesar
Persidas induxit Cecropiasque rates? (*Ars* 1.171-2)

[What when Caesar of late brought Persian and Athenian vessels under the fashion of naval fight?]

This is a reference to Augustus' staging of the historical naval battle of Salamis between the Persians and the Athenians (allegedly descendants of the legendary Athenian king Cecrops). The show took place on an artificial lake on the left bank of the river Tiber 'in the late summer of 2 B.C.'⁴⁰⁴ The expression *modo* at *Ars* 1.171 could indicate that the mock battle was a rather recent event when Ovid wrote the passage.

Yet another *terminus post quem* for the first book of *Ars* is the panegyric *propempticon* to Gaius Caesar before his military campaign against the East at lines *Ars* 1.177-8:

ecce parat Caesar domito quod defuit orbi
addere: nunc, Oriens ultime, noster eris. (*Ars* 1.177-8)

[Lo! Caesar is preparing to add what was lacking to the conquered world: now, farthest East, shalt thou be ours.]

⁴⁰⁴ Syme (1978) 8, with references to Augustus *Res Gestae*, 23 and Dio 55. 10, 7.

The whole passage, *Ars* 1.177-228, contains hints about the situation that prompted this military action, which set off from Rome in 2 B.C. Ovid's love manual bears however no sign of the peaceful settlement that Gaius Caesar obtained with the Parthians 'hardly later than the spring of 2', not to mention the death of the young prince in 4 A.D.⁴⁰⁵ These pieces of information are therefore assumed to indicate both the *terminus post* and *ante quem* for this passage which accordingly must have come into being between after 2 B.C. and before 2 A.D. (rather than 4 A.D.).

Now, this conclusion becomes problematic the very moment one claims that books 1 and 2 of the *Ars* formed a separate unit, which was issued before the publication of book 3. This view on *Ars* 1 and 2 has been put forward by several scholars on the following grounds: first, the didactic program presented at *Ars* 1.35-40 is realised only in books 1 and 2, midway through Ovid's two manuals to men in lines 1.771-2, the *praeceptor* announces that he and his pupils are half way through the work and the invocation of Erato in 2.16 reads as a parallel to Apollonius Rhodius and Virgil who initiate the second halves of *Argonautica* and the *Aeneid* respectively by invoking precisely that Muse. Hollis, to whom I owe this survey, also adds the personal seals of NASO MAGISTER in the last distiches of books 2 and 3 in support of regarding *Ars* 1 and 2 as one work, and *Ars* 3 as another.⁴⁰⁶ This idea, which I suppose also must have been influenced by the fact that *Ars* 1 and 2 are addressed to men, whereas *Ars* 3 is addressed to women, is opposed by Sharrock (1994a) and Janka (1997) with whom I agree.⁴⁰⁷ The surprising effect of addressing an entire book to women – which is a rare literary gesture – would be spoiled if the *Ars* was announced as three-book work for both sexes from the very beginning.⁴⁰⁸

At any event, the knowledge of Gaius Caesar's imminent departure and the apparent lack of acquaintance with his diplomatic success in book 1 must be explained as a later addition in order to uphold this theory, since ignorance of the peace between Parthia and Rome prevails in the *Remedia Amoris*, which should have been composed after or simultaneously with *Ars* 3, even though those who tend to be more concerned with historical datability than poetic design date the *Remedia* before *Ars* 3 precisely because of the former work's lack of information about the outcome

⁴⁰⁵ Syme (1978) 11.

⁴⁰⁶ Hollis (1977) xii-xiii.

⁴⁰⁷ Cf. Gibson (2003) 38, footnote 100.

⁴⁰⁸ '[...] there appear to be no separate didactic work in verse (and few in prose) which are addressed exclusively to women in the classical period [...].' Gibson (2003) 13-4.

of Gaius Caesar's campaign in the East. Any attempt to put a date to *Ars* 1.177-228 would therefore render it more or less contemporaneous with *Ars* 3 and the *Remedia Amoris*, and if this passage is not a later addition, this means that Ovid must have been working with all these poetic projects more or less at the same time.

When push comes to shove, the safest speculation on the date of the *Ars* must therefore be that the work was composed after 2 B.C., and quite certainly before 2 A.D.⁴⁰⁹

3.2.e) *The Extant Amores*⁴¹⁰

While trying to locate the date of the extant *Amores* with the help of historical events, it is helpful to bear in mind that they are not only closely linked to the first and 'lost' ones, but are most likely identical with them, (to a certain extent). Accordingly, Ovid's entire early poetic career should be imagined as a backdrop for the *Amores*.

In addition to the historical references and general speculations on the relative chronology of Ovid's career and the careers of other Augustan poets, there is yet another factor that might be relevant, namely that Ovid himself must have been rather busy with other engagements in this period – his education, his trip to Sicily, Greece and Asia Minor, and his early administrative duties.⁴¹¹ Accordingly, McKeown suggests that the most intense period of Ovid's work on the first edition was after 20 B.C.⁴¹²

As already mentioned, it is generally agreed that Ovid first shaved his beard and recited his poems publicly when he was 17-18, that is in 26-25 BC. As McKeown observes: '1.1 has very close affinities with Prop. 3.3.1.2 with Prop. 3.1 and 1.3 with Prop 2.3 [...].'⁴¹³ Propertius' third book was most probably published between 22-21 B.C. but Ovid (if indeed he was influenced by Propertius, and not the other way around) could also have heard recitations of the poems before their publication date.

⁴⁰⁹ Syme's revised edition theory (1987) 13-20 is relaunched (with modifications) by Murgia, suggesting that *Ars* 1 and 2 were republished with *Ars* 3 and a revised edition of the *Remedia Amoris* which originally preceded both *Ars* 3 and *Amores* 3 (1986a) 203 and *passim*, (1986b) 80, 86 and *passim*. The notion is refuted by Hollis (1977) xiii, Cameron (1995) 116 and Gibson (2003) 39-43.

⁴¹⁰ 'The chronology of the *Amores* and the related problem of the two editions have been much discussed: see Edmonds (1941) 236 ff. Oliver (1945), Munari *xiii*ff., D'Elia (1958), Giomini (1959), Luck (1961) 166 ff. and (1969) 151 ff. Cameron (1968) Jacobson (1974) 300 ff., Sabot (1976) 49 ff., Hollis (1977) XIff. and 150f., Syme (1978) 1ff., Goold (1983) 96ff., Murgia (1986a) and 1986b) della Corte (1986).' McKeown (1987) 74, footnote 1.

⁴¹¹ Cf. e.g. *Am.* 1.15.5-6.

⁴¹² McKeown (1987) 82.

⁴¹³ McKeown (1987) 75.

McKeown guesses that the first book appeared around the same time as Propertius 3.⁴¹⁴ According to him the term *libelli* at *Am.* 3.12.7 might indicate more volumes (not just one five-book volume) before the second edition, if the poem was not composed for that version.⁴¹⁵ The *quoque* at *Am.* 2.1.3 might also indicate that. Then there is *Am.* 2.18 as the *terminus ante quem* for the tragedy, the *Ars* and the *Heroides*, which gives a very late date to the final version of the extant *Amores* (albeit bearing on much earlier strata), as the *Ars* can have been as late as 2 A.D. There is, however, a possibility of a collection of all the erotic poems published c. 2 A.D.⁴¹⁶

3.2.f) Dates. A Summary

Ovid's early poetic career begins with recitations from the *Amores* c. 26-25 B.C. and ends with the *Remedia Amoris* probably before 4 A.D., and even more probably before 2 A.D.

Work	Date	Why?
<i>Medea</i>	Certainly much closer to 25 than to 2. A.D. (cf. the extant <i>Amores</i>).	A tragic project is rejected <i>Am.</i> 3.1, embraced at 3.15 and is a success (?) at 2.18. Was it influenced by the unpublished <i>Aeneid</i> (cf. <i>plena deo</i>) from which it must have been recited before Virgil's death in 19 B.C.? Does the work precede <i>Her.</i> 6 and 12 since it is mentioned before the <i>Heroides</i> at <i>Am.</i> 2.18?
<i>Heroides</i> 1-15	Closer to 18 B.C. than to 2. A.D. (cf. the extant <i>Amores</i>).	Influenced by the published <i>Aeneid</i> which was edited after Virgil's death 19. B.C. Is mentioned in <i>Am.</i> 2.18.21-6 and <i>Ars</i> 3.345.
<i>Medicamina ...</i> <i>Ars Amatoria</i>	Before <i>Ars</i> 3. Between 2 B.C. and 2 A.D.	Mentioned at <i>Ars</i> 3.205-8. References to the naval battle and Gaius Caesar's impending military campaign datable to 2 B.C. Lack of reference to the peaceful outcome of the campaign in 2 A.D. and Gaius Caesar's death in 4 A.D.
<i>Amores</i>	Begun c. 26-25 B.C. The extant collection before 2 A.D.	The first work the young Ovid recited publicly from. Seems very convincingly to refer to <i>Ars</i> at <i>Am.</i> 2.18.
<i>Remedia Amoris</i>	Before 2 A.D.	The work contains no reference to Gaius Caesar's diplomatic success.
A collection of	c. 2 A.D.	Explains why both the extant <i>Amores</i> , <i>Ars</i> 1-3 and

⁴¹⁴ McKeown (1987) 75.

⁴¹⁵ One could object to this reading that, except for the poem's very message that poets make up everything, Canace also calls her letter of 128 lines a *libellus* (*Heroides* 11.2).

⁴¹⁶ Syme more or less implies that there was a collection of Ovid's amatory output (including *Heroides* 16-21, with no mentioning of the *Medicamina*) c. 1 B.C., (1978) 20. Prof. S. Harrison suggests, however, that there was a collection (excluding the double *Heroides*, but including the *Medicamina*) at c. 2 A.D., (2002) 84.

the erotic output

Remedia Amoris seems to have 2 A.D. as their most certain *terminus ante quem*.

3.3. Chronological Fiction and Fictional Chronology

I have tried to limit the discussion above to what is fairly certain, and that is not much. The result is an overwhelming imprecision. This lack of historical certainty is however splendidly balanced with what should be called Ovid's poetic and fictitious chronology.⁴¹⁷ In many ways the fictional chronology of Ovid's early poetic career stages the three poetological principles found in the first lines of the *Metamorphoses*: *in nova, perpetuum carmen* and *mutatas formas*. The concept of a future reflexive so effectually employed in the *Heroides* also constitutes the important dynamics of the fictional chronology of Ovid's whole output from the first edition of the *Amores* to the *Remedia Amoris*.⁴¹⁸ These are dynamics that arguably vibrate between the legendary heroines of mythical and canonical literature and Ovid's own Augustan career, as well.

How is this so? Consider the poetic agency in *Am.* 2.18. Ovid, who unsuccessfully tried to suppress his poetic vocation in the first place, has, again, no choice in the face of literary demands. As a poet he is forced to follow the orders of his divine mistress and Amor. But these superiors do not only require submission; the poet is not even in control of his writings, he has to abide by them, in as much as he is tormented by his own advice (20). And when he is writing the *Heroides*, he does not claim, contrary to the originality that his future admirer attributes to these epistolary elegies (*Ars* 3.346), to invent them. A rearrangement of the phrase would render the point more perspicuous: *quod reddatur Vlixi uerbis Penelopes scribimus*. Ovid does not invent, or reinvent for that matter, the epistle of Penelope, he is 'writing that which is to be sent to Ulysses through the words of Penelope'.⁴¹⁹

Thus the poet carefully suggests at least two points, firstly that the epistle has a double authorship in Ovid and Penelope, and secondly that the words relate events that took place before Ovid writes them down. This last point is very much in accordance with the quite particular documentary strain of the whole *Heroides*, where

⁴¹⁷ Farrell (1999) *passim*.

⁴¹⁸ Barchiesi (1993) *passim*.

⁴¹⁹ '[...] not simply 'on behalf of Penelope' [...] the epistle purports to be written in Penelope's own words.' McKeown (1998) 397.

the blind spots of canonical stories are filled out by Ovidian heroines, who create the impression that the literary canon presents versions of real events that took place in that parallel universe of imagination. The epistolary collection of elegies seems thus to create the impression of a literary ‘memory’ that is greater than the sum of the literary works, and that is subjected (in an almost Freudian fashion, to put it anachronistically) to oblivion, projection, suppression or, in other words, to the laws of metamorphosis.

The same dynamics are played out between the fumbling uncertainties of *Naso amator* in the *Amores*, and the boasting self-assurance of the *praeceptor* and his *usus* in the *Ars* and all the instances of recalling the past *Amores*. The mix up between poetic and personal history is, again splendidly, extended to the *Heroides*:

saepe uiri fallunt, tenerae sed non saepe puellae
 paucaque, si quaeras, crimina fraudis habent.
 Phasida, iam matrem, fallax dimisit Iason;
 uenit in Aesonios altera nupta sinus.
 quantum in te, Theseu, uolucres Ariadna marinas
 pauit in ignoto sola relicta loco.
 quaere, Nouem cur una Viae dicatur, et audi
 depositis siluas Phyllida flesse comis.
 et famam pietatis habet, tamen hospes et ensem
 praebuit et causam mortis, Elissa, tuae.
 quid uos perdidit, dicam: nescistis amare;
 defuit ars uobis: arte perennat amor. (*Ars* 3.31-42.)

[Often do men deceive, tender maids not often; should you enquire, they are rarely charged with deceit. Perfidious Jason sent away the Phasian, already a mother; another bride came to the bosom of Aeson’s son. So far as concerned thee, O Theseus, Ariadne fell prey to the sea-birds, left desolate in an unknown spot! Ask why one way is called Nine Ways, and hear how the woods shed their leaves and wailed for Phyllis. Famed too is he for piety, yet thy guest, Elissa, gave thee both a sword and the cause of thy destruction. Shall I tell what led you all to ruin? ye knew not how to love; it was skill ye lacked; skill makes love unending.]

This point is famously repeated in the *Remedia*:

sed, quaecumque uiris, uobis quoque dicta, puellae,
 credite: diuersis partibus arma damus.
 [...]
 uixisset Phyllis, si me foret usa magistro,
 et per quod nouies, saepius isset iter.
 nec moriens Dido summa uidisset ab arce
 Dardanias uento uela dedisse rates,
 nec dolor armasset contra sua uiscera matrem,
 quae socii damno sanguinis ulta uirum est.

[...]

da Phaedran, Phaedrae turpis abibit amor.

[...]

(*Rem.* 49-64)

[But whatever is said to men, deem also said to you, ye women: we give arms to the opposing sides [.] [...] Phyllis would have lived, had she used my counsel, and taken more often to the path she took nine times; nor dying Dido have seen from her citadel's height the Dardan vessel spread their sails to the wind; nor would anger have armed against her own offspring the mother who took vengeance on her husband with the loss of kindred blood. [...] give me Phaedra: Phaedra's shameful love will disappear.]

Considering both the historical references and the poetic dynamics of the created and creative *continuum* that is Ovid's early poetic career, it is probable that Ovid to a considerable extent worked simultaneously on the *Amores* and the *Heroides*.⁴²⁰ The problematic late date of the passage on Gaius Caesar's campaign to the East at *Ars* 1.177-228, making it contemporaneous with the *Remedia*, shows, if anything, that Ovid must have been working on these books, too, at the same time, and that he did not subject them to changes in order to make their relative chronology look smoother (in the eyes of future philologists). I would furthermore argue that Ovid's entire didactic output constitutes one great design that is in accordance both with the poet's preference for units divisible by three or five, and a perfectly equal distribution of advice to men and women.⁴²¹ The rather widespread opinion that Ovid first published the *Ars* as a unit of two books and then had the idea of adding a third book does not hamper this view. On the contrary, the clues to the first two manuals as 'for men only' do not just create an artistic effect of surprise when the game turns and hunter becomes hunted, as it were, these features may also be feigned in order to create a 'false end' which could then again suggest that even more ends in the didactic output are equally preliminary.⁴²² If that is so, the *Ars* does not only constitute a meaningful whole as a three-book work, but it contributes to a more loosely united total of five books, of which three manuals are addressed to men (*Ars* 1 and 2, plus the *Remedia*), at the same time as three manuals are written to women (*Medicamina Faciei Femineae*, *Ars* 3 and the *Remedia*). If we add that before the didactic period Ovid

⁴²⁰ This is a view shared by Hollis (1977), Syme (1978) and McKeown (1987). Cf. the correspondences between the *Epigramma Ipsius* and *Her.* 15.1-4, especially as regards the unique and parallel application of the term *auctor*, see Part One, chapter 1.4, a) and b) and Part Two, chapter 2.3, a) and b).

⁴²¹ Holzberg (2002) 77-86.

⁴²² For references to scholars in favour and against a two-book division of the *Ars* cf. Gibson (2003) 38, footnote 100.

produced two works with female protagonists, one that is lost (the *Medea*) and one that has survived (the *Heroides*) and two with male protagonists (the lost and the extant *Amores*) we get an overall complete distribution of Ovidian poetry between the sexes.

I will base much of the subsequent analysis on the supposition that all these works are cognate and as such display very interesting patterns of coherence and complexity, in which the *Epistula Sapphus* plays an emblematic role.

Part Three:

The *Epistula Sapphus* and Ovid's Early Poetic Career

This part will present readings, which will be guided by allusions and intertextuality between the *Epistula Sapphus* and the other works of Ovid's early poetic career. The first of these works is the *Heroides* themselves and their allusive comparison with the *Epistula Sapphus* will depart from certain features that have been suggested as further evidence of the poem's inauthenticity, Sappho's sexual licentiousness, the departure scene of Phaon and her alleged 'otherness' compared to the 'real' heroines.⁴²³ The question of whether the *Epistula Sapphus* belongs to the *Heroides* is therefore also a question of how the *Heroides* are as women.

1. Womanhood

Sex, marriage and motherhood are among the elements that help constitute the multifarious womanhoods of the *Heroides*, and they will all be duly explored in the following section. But in order to understand even better how these elements relate to the Ovidian figure of Sappho, it would be useful to trace systematically – if only briefly – her presence in Ovid's entire literary output.

1.1. Sappho in Ovid

Sappho's name or 'nationality' is mentioned some ten times throughout the Ovidian corpus. Except for in the *Epistula Sapphus* itself, she appears most frequently in passages that aspire to give an overview of either literary history or of Ovid's own literary production and that are pertinent to the question of Ovidian chronology

⁴²³ The latest contributor to this view is Fulkerson: '*Heroides* 15 has few obvious similarities to other *Heroides* (but many to Sappho's own poetry). Given what we have seen so far about the care the letters take to situate themselves in relation to one another, this lack of internal reference can be seen as yet another piece of evidence against the authenticity of the poem. Sappho simply does not belong.' (2005) 154.

(presented in Part Two): *Am.* 2.18.26.34, *Ars* 3.331, *Rem.* 761, *Tr.* 2.365-366 and *Tr.* 3.7.20.⁴²⁴ With the strikingly equal distribution of male and female protagonists and addressees in Ovid's early poetic career in mind, Sappho, as the only female *uates*, becomes especially interesting.⁴²⁵ I will therefore not limit the survey of the explicit dropping of Sappho's name in Ovid to his early poetic career, since all of these passages, the exilic lines included, contribute to a pattern of female and Ovidian affinities that is first employed in the *Epistula Sapphus* and the other Ovidian works that I will focus on here. In order to analyse certain elements of this pattern, I will briefly comment upon all of the instances where Sappho is mentioned, in a reverse chronological order, arriving, finally, at the *Epistula Sapphus*.

In *Tristia* 3.7 a female writer is at the centre of attention. From exile Ovid is worried that his stepdaughter Perilla will stop writing because of his own misfortunes as an author.⁴²⁶ This would be a shame, according to Ovid, since Perilla is so gifted that only Sappho's poetry surpasses hers. Though there are several reasons not to read this as a mock compliment, the comparison is still a bit presumptuous.⁴²⁷ Ovid makes it clear that Perilla refrains from erotic topics, which is a good thing while she can consider herself safe from the censure of the emperor. It would, however, have been even *better* to write like Sappho, an understatement which plays along with the exiled poet's compliment 'your works can only be beaten by the Lesbian poet', *sola tuum uates Lesbia uincet opus* (*Tr.* 3.7.20).

In *Tristia* 2, the long and apologetic poem addressed to the emperor, we find this couplet: *quid docuit Sappho nisi non amare puellas?/ tuta tamen Sappho [...]* (*Tristia* 2.365-366). The rhetorical question about what Sappho taught, except how to

⁴²⁴ Tarrant presents the following survey of the Ovidian passages where poets and their works are at centre stage: 'Ovid's characteristic literary-historical gesture is the list. Extended lists of authors appear at *Am.* 1.15.9-30, *Ars* 3.321-48, *Rem.* 361-96, 757-66, *Trist.* 2.359-468, 4.10.43-54, *Pont.* 4.16.5-44, and references to the clusters of poets at *Am.* 3.9.21-6, 61-6, 3.15.7-8, *Ars* 3.535-8, *Trist.* 51.17-19. In addition, the catalogue of passionate women in *Ars* 1.283-340 and its inverted counterpart in *Rem.* 55-68 function as implicit lists of poets who have treated those legends.' Tarrant (2002) 15. *En passant* I would suggest, that if the latter examples imply lists of authors, the same claim is valid for the entire *Heroides*, single and double. 'Literary histories' appear also in other poets, as well cf. Horace, *Sat.* 1.10 (especially 50-71), *Epist.*, 2.2, and Propertius 2.34 (especially 29-45 and 59-94), but Ovid seems exceptionally obsessed with this kind of catalogue, and frequently includes his own works, too, cf. *Am.* 2.18.13-34, *Ars* 3.341-8 and *Tristia* 2.547-56.

⁴²⁵ Corinna of the *Amores* is of course also a hint at an historical poetess, but, unlike the Heroidean Sappho, Ovid's elegiac *puella* never reveals poetic ambitions on her own behalf.

⁴²⁶ For the relationship between Perilla and Ovid, see Harrison (2002) 91, footnote 61.

⁴²⁷ The allusive relationship between *Tristia* 3.7, *Tristia* 4.10, the very end of the *Metamorphoses*, *Ars* 3, and *Medicamina Faciei Femineae* suggests that art itself is at stake in Ovid's poem to his stepdaughter.

love girls, relates not only to the Lesbian poet, but also to Ovid himself.⁴²⁸ The similarities between the two writers, in as much as they are both poets of love, is at the heart of the line, but their differences are also emphasised, especially by the first hemistich of the pentameter; *tuta tamen Sappho*, ‘and yet Sappho was safe’, which underlines that Ovid, who also taught his audience to love girls, is not. But Ovid did not only teach how to love girls, that is, he did not only write *Ars Amatoria* 1 and 2, he also wrote a third manual on loving men in *Ars* 3. And since Sappho after all is imagined as a woman who teaches the love of women, this implicit piece of information – though free from homoerotic implications – completes the inversion of Sappho in Ovid, who resembles not only Sappho in giving lectures on how to love girls, but also in giving lectures on how to love people of the same gender as the poet’s.

In the *Remedia Amoris* Ovid imposes a hierarchical structure on Sappho and himself as lascivious teachers, giving her the principal role: *me certe Sappho meliorem fecit amicae* (*Rem.* 761). This passage highlights their similarities and not their differences: Sappho is the only other poet in Ovid’s list who is explicitly linked to the poet himself. The statement is furthermore a continuation of Ovid’s game of his poetic and personal history that he also plays out in the *Amores*, where he gains the experience he will employ in the *Ars Amatoria*.

As already touched upon, Sappho’s affinities are of course not only with Ovid, but with women, too, and in *Ars Amatoria* they both get their implicit shares of her: *nota sit et Sappho (quid enim lasciuius illa?)* (*Ars* 3.331). The line in question consists of a piece of advice, plus a parenthetical question on behalf of the *praeceptor amoris* to his female audience: ‘and you should know Sappho (for what is more lascivious than her?)’. The rhetorical question certainly recalls the qualities of Sapphic education, but the very term *lasciuius* suggests that it might not be completely rhetorical after all. *Lasciuius* is a favourite characterisation of Ovid, even

⁴²⁸ ‘Ovid’s allusion to Sappho and her poetry are too knowing and direct to make it believable that he had but a passing acquaintance with her work. When he writes, *Lesbia quid docuit nisi non amare Puellas?* (*Tr.* 2.365) one almost senses that he considers her his female counterpart.’ Jacobson (1947) 281.

used by him before others found it apt for him.⁴²⁹ Thus the question ‘what is more lascivious than her?’ should perhaps give the answer ‘Ovid’.

In the context of *Am* 2.18, the name of Sappho has a triple reference, as it were, compared to the instances mentioned above, in both lines that mention her name: *dicat et Aoniam Lesbis amica lyram* (*Am.* 2.18.26), and *dat uotam Phoebos Lesbis amata lyram* (*Am.* 2.18.34).⁴³⁰ Here ‘Sappho’ is firstly the Archaic Lesbian poet, secondly the lovesick lady of Attic New Comedy (cf. the allusions to the dedicatory scene which belongs to her legendary biography as it was developed *post mortem*) and thirdly she is one of the female contributors to *Heroides*. All these senses reverberate in the *Epistula Sapphus*, which might as well be called *Heroides* 15.

Sappho is first mentioned in this poem’s third line *an, nisi legisses auctoris nomina Sapphus*. Thus the letter’s voice immediately becomes suggestively polyphonic, at the same time as the significant word *auctor* signals the poem’s capacity to perform as the *Heroides*’ *sphragis*, in as much as it entails the authorial tag which is regularly required by Ovidian works. All of this is furthermore achieved without disturbing the fictional frame of the entire collection of elegiac letters, which would have been violated by the explicit presence of the extradiegetic writer.⁴³¹

A brief look at the other lines helps in discerning important counterpoints between the *Epistula Sapphus* and the rest of the single *Heroides*. The second time Sappho mentions herself, she complains to Phaon because he has left for Sicily, and says that if he had to go, he would have done so in a more decent manner ‘if you had said to me “Lesbian girl, goodbye”’: *si mihi dixisses ‘Lesbi puella, uale’*, (*Her.* 15.100). I will return amply to Sappho’s imaginary departure scene (cf. Part Three, chapter 2.1.a) and 2.1.b)), but for now I would like to point out that such a scene

⁴²⁹ Cf. *saepe ego lasciuie consumpsi tempora noctis* (*Am.* 2.10.27), *is mihi ‘lasciui’ dixit ‘praeceptor Amoris’* (*Ars* 2.497) and *Lasciuus quidem in herois quoque Ovidius et nimium amator ingenii sui* [...], Quintilian, *Inst. Or.*, 10.1.88.

⁴³⁰ This is the text of McKeown (1987) 187-8. Kenney prints it with *crucis*: *dicat et † Aoniae Lesbis amata lyrae †*.

⁴³¹ ‘The *Heroides* are of particular interest [...], for a crucial question is the extent to which we may be able to read ‘a woman’s voice’. What kind of gendered voice is produced by a male author speaking through a female mask, but completely subsuming his masculine authority into the female writing? The poems have no frame, no explicit sign from the author that we are really reading a male text.’ Sharrock (2002a) 99.

belongs to an inversion of the elegiac inventory in as much as it shares affinities with the elegiac *paraklausithyron*, and hence Sappho's necessity to be an elegiac *puella*.⁴³²

Later in the poem, Sappho lies on the grass where she and Phaon lay together and in the dead of the night 'the bird sings "Itys", whereas Sappho sings of rejected loves': *ales Ityn, Sappho desertos cantat amores* (*Her.* 15.155). And as she sings, she recalls the elegiac *poeta/ amator* Ovid who notoriously also sings of loves; *Amores*, (cf. Part Three, chapter 4.2.b)).

Towards the dramatic end of the poem, Sappho has decided to follow a Naiad's advice and leap from the Leucadian rock. She is afraid and comforts herself by imagining that she will dedicate her lyre to Apollo if she survives. To the dedication she will add the following inscription; "Grateful, the poetess Sappho offered the lyre to you, Phoebus", "*grata lyram posui tibi, Phoebe, poetria Sappho*" (*Her.* 15.183). The imaginary dedication to the vatic divinity Apollo reinstates the shared poetic vocation between the *poetria* and *Naso poeta* who in *Am.* 1.15 claims that *mihi flauus Apollo/ pocula Castalia plena ministret aqua* (*Am.* 1.15.35-6).

Finally, Sappho begs for a letter, if Phaon prefers to be far away from her: *siue iuuat longe fugisse Pelasgida Sappho* (*Her.* 15.217). Since the dedication in line (183) touches upon Sappho's legendary biography to which the leap from the Leucadian rock belongs, and the adjective 'Pelasgida' (217) invokes her historically Archaic origin, Knox accordingly suggests that it may be a hint at Sappho's own poetry.⁴³³

This brief tracking of the explicit naming of Sappho in the Ovidian corpus reveals, among many things, her repeated association with Ovid, girls and poetry, and I shall argue that these associations are of crucial importance to the moulding of the Ovidian *scribentis imagines* in the early part of his poetic career, and that the *Epistula Sapphus* enables a better understanding of these images.

⁴³² The following observations on the '*paraklausithyron*' of Penelope's letter is valid for the other *Heroides*, as well: 'As the lament of an elegiac speaker complaining that she cannot be with the one she loves, this passage [*Her.* 1.1-10] displays an unmistakable affinity with the *paraklausithyron* [...]. Admittedly, here it is a *puella* (3) who seeks "to beguile the long night." But it is all the more appropriate that Penelope should find herself – as the *puella* usually does in a *paraklausithyron* – not in front of the door, but behind it. And it is equally appropriate that, as she waits there, she should while away the time of her separation from Odysseus doing just what an elegiac *amator* would want her to be doing: weaving (cf. Propertius 1.3.41; 3.6.16.).' Holzberg (2002) 73. For the Heroidean '*paraklausithyron*' Holzberg (2002) 73. See also Spoth (1992) 33-4 and Part Three, chapter 2.1.

⁴³³ Knox (1995) 315.

1.2. Sex and Marriage

One trait that has raised suspicion about the authenticity of the *Epistula Sapphus* is, as mentioned above, the heroine's licentiousness. There are two passages particularly, in which Sappho is especially explicit about both sexual lust and pleasures:

at mea cum legeres, etiam formosa uidebar:
unam iurabas usque decere loqui;
cantabam, memini – meminerunt omnia amantes –
oscula cantanti tu mihi rapta dabas;
haec quoque laudabas, omnique a parte placebam,
sed tunc praecipue, cum fit amoris opus.
tunc te plus solito lasciua nostra iuuabat
crebraque mobilitas aptaque uerba ioco,
et quod, ubi amborum fuerat confusa uoluptas,
plurimus in lasso corpore languor erat. (*Her.* 15.41-50)

[Yet, when I read you my songs, I seemed already beautiful [as well]; you swore 'twas I alone whom speech forever graced. I would sing to you, I remember – for lovers remember all – and while I sang you stole kisses from me. My kisses too you praised, and I pleased in every way – but then above all when we wrought at the task of love. Then did my playful ways delight you more than your wont – the quick embrace, the jest that gave spice to our sport, and, when the joys of both had mingled into one, the deep, deep languor in our wearied frames.]

In Sappho's memory of her time with Phaon, there is a direct link between love poetry and love between the two.⁴³⁴ An equally gliding transition between the poetic and the physical is accomplished in Sappho's 'wet dream' a little later in her elegiac letter:⁴³⁵

tu mihi cura Phaon; te somnia nostra reducunt,
somnia formoso candidiora die.
illic te inuenio, quamuis regionibus absis;
sed non longa satis gaudia somnus habet.
saepe tuos nostra ceruice onerare lacertos,
saepe tuae uideor supposuisse meos;
oscula cognosco, quae tu committere lingua
aptaque consueras accipere, apta dare.
blandior interdum uerisque simillima uerba
eloquor, et uigilant sensibus ora meis.
ulteriora pudet narrare, sed omnia fiunt:
et iuuat et siccae non licet esse mihi. (*Her.* 15.123-134)

[You, Phaon, are my care; you, my dreams bring back to me – dreams brighter than the beautiful day. In them I find you, though in space you are far away; but not long enough are the joys that slumber gives. Often I seem with the burden of my neck to

⁴³⁴ See Part Three, chapter 1.5.

⁴³⁵ This 'wet dream' is important to the gendered reception of the *Epistula Sapphus*, especially Lipking (1988) 67-70, cf. Part One, chapter 3.1.b).

press your arms, often to place beneath your neck my arms. I recognize the kisses – close caresses of the tongue – which you were wont to take and wont to give. At times I fondle you, and utter words that seem almost the waking truth, and my lips keep vigil for my senses. Further I blush to tell, but all takes place; I feel the delight and cannot rule myself.]

These two passages, the last being the only one in extant works from antiquity where a female figure describes an orgasm, have proved provocative. At some point in the transmission the *siccae* in line 134 was famously ‘improved’ to *sine te* and *libet*, and these modifications, the first form being found in Palmer’s ω and the latter in ζ , entered the entire paradigm with the exception of the oldest extant manuscript F. As Burmann stated *spurca, sed certa, lectio*.⁴³⁶

Philological competence is of course crucial, but it is not always the only skill required to understand a Latin poem, as shown by for instance Bodenstein’s difficulties with lines 129-130: ‘Was soll der Ausdruck *oscula linguae committere* bedeuten? Hat die Zunge mit dem Kuss etwas zu tun? Wohl kaum.’⁴³⁷ Romantic idealism may also be misleading. I suspect that something similar to Goethe’s promise that ‘Das Ewig-Weibliche zieht uns hinan’ comes into play when Gruppe expresses the following view on lines 45-50: “[...] die Dichterin erinnert den Geliebten an die genossenen Liebesfreuden in einer Art, welche aller Weiblichkeit Hohn spricht [...]”.⁴³⁸

One of the *Heroides*’ most neglected virtues that they constitute a multifarious chorus that transgresses stereotypical categories of womanhood.⁴³⁹ These transgressions necessarily mean that the Ovidian *Heroides* do not always appeal to the sympathy of the reader, neither the hero addressed nor a general readership. The result is genuinely Ovidian, too, for somewhere between the many points of departure, the

⁴³⁶ Cf. Palmer (1898) 97.

⁴³⁷ Bodenstein in de Vries (1885) 85. Bodenstein chooses the vulgate reading *linguae* against F’s *lingua*, ‘the ablative is instrumental’. Knox (1995) 301. De Vries comments that ‘Pueriliter rogat Bodenstein (*Studien* 2) cet. p. 10. footnote 3)’. De Vries does, however, not print the *spurca, sed certa lectio* (see above) of F *siccae* at verse line 134 instead of *et sine te non licet esse mihi*. (1885) 29.

⁴³⁸ Gruppe presumes that the passage is an interpolation: ‘Ich halte V. 45-50 für späteren Einschub, weil in der That dies Gedicht bei allen sonstigen Mängeln und Verdachtsgründen doch nicht auf diese Tonart angelegt erscheint, wie das z. B. bei V. 133 ganz deutlich zu erkennen gibt: *ulteriora pudet narrare* – es ist widersinnig, dass hier die Briefstellerin auf einmal schamhaft sein soll, während sie zuvor so durchaus schamlos gewesen’. It is furthermore his opinion that ‘Sappho überhaupt nicht unter die Heroiden gehört’. Gruppe (1859) 497-8. There is, however, a striking parallel in the *Ars Amatoria*, esp. towards the end of the third book, cf. *Ars* 3.769, where unabashed passages are accompanied by apparent disclaimers of immorality.

⁴³⁹ Spentzou (2003) and Fulkerson (2005) have also contributed greatly to reveal this virtue.

many objectives and the many transgressions the *Heroides* make, lies an almost harsh realism.

Even though the unabashed passages from the *Epistula Sapphus* quoted above apparently have proved too much for both *scribae* and philologists, the crucial questions remains: is Sappho exceptional compared with the other heroines when she indulges in erotic fantasies? Is she exceptional as a mother when she complains, shockingly to many, that her little daughter adds to her burdens? Is she exceptional when she says that she felt like a mother bereaved of her son when she realised that Phaon had abandoned her? And is her outstanding capacity to enjoy sexual pleasures incompatible with Ovidian writings in general?

For a start, sex is not an alien element to the *Heroides*: on the contrary, it is an ever present issue treated with great variety in each heroine's story. Sex might be linked to an idea of marriage or – more concretely – to pregnancy and childbirth, but not always. Phyllis regrets that she ever *lateri conseruisse latus* (*Her.* 2.57) with Demophoon and recalls their first physical union in the sinister terms of a flawed sacrifice in a mock marriage:

cui mea uirginitas auibus libata sinistris
castaque fallaci zona recincta manu.
pronuba Tisiphone thalamis ululauit in illis,
et cecinit maestum deuia carmen auis;
adfruit Allecto breuibus torquata colubris,
suntque sepulcrali lumina mota face. (*Her.* 2.115-20)

[to you, on whom mid omens all sinister my maiden innocence was first bestowed, and whose guileful hand ungirdled my chaste zone! Tisiphone was minister at that bridal, with shrieks, and the bird that shuns the light chanted her mournful note; Allecto was there, with little serpents coiled about her neck, and the lights that waved were torches of the tomb!]

Briseis, on the other hand, has no illusions of marriage, but tells the reader that she was often called – as a slave – to the bed of Achilles: *saepius in domini serua uocata torum* (*Her.* 3.100).⁴⁴⁰ Still, as if to underscore the romantic aspect of her *seruitium amoris* – *al femmine*, she clearly thinks that she and Achilles should be exclusive to each other as lovers:⁴⁴¹

⁴⁴⁰ Cf. *Inter Achaeiadas longe pulcherrima matres/ in thalamos coniunx ibit eatque tuos,/ [...] nos humiles famulaeque tuae data pensa trahemus,/ et minuent plenos stamina nostra colos.* (*Her.* 3.71-6).

⁴⁴¹ Cf. Rosati (1992), Spoth (1992) and Barchiesi (1992) .

nulla Mycenaenum sociasse cubilia mecum
iuro: fallentem deseruisse velis!
si tibi nunc dicam 'fortissime, tu quoque iura
nulla tibi sine me gaudia facta' neges. (*Her.* 3.109-112)

[I swear that the Mycenaean has shared no couch with me; if I prove false, wish never to see me more! If now I should say to you, most valiant one: "Do you swear also that you have indulged in no joys apart from me!" you would refuse.]

Hypsipyle did not just become pregnant during Jason's stay on the island of Lemnos (*Her.* 6.61-2), she has even already given birth to her twins when she writes him his letter (*Her.* 6.121-122).

Like Phyllis, Dido famously believed she was married to her hero:

his tamen officiis utinam contenta fuisset,
et mihi concubitus fama sepulta foret!
illa dies nocuit, qua nos declivae sub antra
caeruleus subitis compulit imber aquis. (*Her.* 7.91-4).

[Yet would I had been content with these kindnesses, and that the story of our union were buried! That dreadful day was my ruin, when sudden downpour of rain from the deep-blue heaven drove us to shelter in the lofty grot.]

That their marriage also consisted of *concubitus* is emphasised in Dido's fantasies about how not only she, but perhaps also her and Aeneas' unborn child will now have to die since the Trojan forces her to commit suicide by leaving: *forsitan et gravidam Dido, scelerate, relinquas, / parsque tui lateat corpore clausa meo.* (*Her.* 7.133-4).

Hypsipyle's rival Medea, who is, like her, a mother of two, has of course had sex with Jason, and she refers to it thus: *uirginitas facta est peregrini praeda latronis* (*Her.* 12.111). The penultimate epistolographer of the *Heroides*, Hypermestra, refers presumably to plain sex, too, if Palmer's reading of the passage that has proved difficult is correct: *quaeque tibi dederam, plena soporis erant* (*Her.* 14.42). Palmer seems to find the meaning quite simple: *de sopore qui coitu efficitur loquitur Hypermestra.*⁴⁴²

⁴⁴² Palmer (1898) 87

1.3. Incest, Rape and Bigamy

The Heroidean Phaedra is at pains to demonstrate her innocence and lack of experience in the field of romantic love. She is no virgin, she has given birth to her and Theseus' sons (cf. *Her.* 4.123), but her rhetorical strategy, which consists of conjuring up an image of emotional purity, is fitting in as much as, unlike all the other single *Heroides*, she writes to a man with whom she has never had sex. Thus she can only fantasise about their pleasures, and so she does as she tries to seduce her stepson:

i nunc, sic meriti lectum reuerere parentis,
 quem fugit et factis abdicat ipse suis!
nec quia priuigno uidear coitura nouerca,
 terruerint animos nomina uana tuos.
ista uetus pietas, aeuo moritura futuro,
 rustica Saturno regna tenente fuit.
iuppiter esse pium statuit, quodcumque iuuaret,
 et fas omne facit fratre marita soror.
illa coit firma generis iunctura catena,
 imposuit nodos cui Venus ipsa suos.
nec labor est celare, licet peccemus, amorem:⁴⁴³
 cognato poterit nomine culpa tegi.
uiderit amplexos aliquis, laudabimur ambo:
 dicar priuigno fida nouerca meo. (*Her.* 4.127-40)

[Go now, reverence the bed of a father who thus deserves of you – the bed which he neglects and is disowning by his deeds. And should you think of me as a stepdame who would mate with her husband's son, let empty names fright not your soul. Such old-fashioned regard for virtue was rustic even in Saturn's reign, and doomed to die in the age to come. Jove fixed that virtue was to be in whatever brought us pleasure; and naught is wrong before the gods since sister was made wife by brother. That bond of kinship only holds close and firm in which Venus herself has forged the chain. Nor, though we indulge our feelings, would it be difficult to conceal our love for each other. Our fault can be covered under the name of kinship. Should someone see us embrace, we both shall meet with praise; I shall be called a faithful stepdame to the son of my lord.]

Oenone's obstacle is not only that her beloved is not interested in her, but also that he has found another. In order to degrade her rival Helen, the Phrygian nymph insinuates that the Spartan did not return a virgin from her first abductor, Theseus, *a iuvene et cupido credatur reddita uirgo?/ unde hoc compererim tam bene quaeris? amo* (*Her.* 5.129-30).⁴⁴⁴ And in this quite bizarre way she tries to disparage Helen in the eyes of

⁴⁴³ This is Palmer's conjecture, supported by Sedlmayer, for the lectio *pete munus ab illa*, 'quae uerba nemo intellexit, neque ut credo intelliget.' Palmer (1898) 23.

⁴⁴⁴ Paris himself rebukes Theseus because he let go of Helen, and to her the Trojan prince promises: *si reddenda fores, aliquid tamen ante tulissem,/ nec Venus ex toto nostra fuisset iners./ uel tua uirginitas*

Paris, at the same time as she confesses that she knows how difficult it is to resist sex, because she is also in love.

Love is not, however, the only experience that Oenone seems to think that she shares with Helen; there is also the experience of rape. On behalf of Helen, Oenone makes the following remark: *uim licet appelles et culpam nomine ueles:/ quae totiens rapta est praebuit ipsa rapi* (*Her.* 5.131-2).⁴⁴⁵ But while Oenone claims that Helen has had many men in order to reduce the Spartan's value, the nymph gladly tells of how crowds of half-human creatures like satyrs and fauns desire her (*Her.* 5.135-8). The point may well be to show how she continuously rejects these beastly beings, but she somehow undermines her own strategy by telling of one god who did have his way with her, namely Apollo, the builder of the walls of Troy:

me fide conspicuus Troiae munitor amauit:
 ille meae spoliū uirginitatis habet.
id quoque luctando; rupi tamen ungue capillos,
 oraque sunt digitis aspera facta meis;
nec pretium stupri gemmas aurumque poposci:
 turpiter ingenuum munera corpus emunt. (*Her.* 5.139-44)

[Me, the builder of Troy, the illustrious god of the lyre, loved, [he has the spoils of my virginity. And that too by a struggle, I tore his hair with my nails and his face was wounded by my fingers; I demanded no price in jewellery or gold for the illicit rape: Money that buys a free-born body is disgraceful].]

The heroine who claims that Helen must blame herself for 'all' her 'rapes', tells of how she fought (*luctando*) her own rapist, and, when she lost, how she refrained from her right to have compensation for the rape (*pretium stupri*). Both these pieces of information are meant to vouch for the truthfulness of her claim to have been raped.

esset libata uel illud/ quod poterat salua uirginitate rapi. (*Her.* 16.159-62). Kenney comments: 'The implication is 'as I rather think Theseus in fact did', for there was a tradition that this Spartan custom of treating unmarried girls 'like favourite boys' [...] was, according to 'Aristotle' [...] invented by Theseus and Helen.' (1996) 105.

⁴⁴⁵ The appeal to use violence in the *Ars Amatoria* interestingly recalls, partly *verbatim*, this epistle where both prejudices towards 'rape' and cruel experience of rape are expressed by the same female figure: *uim licet apelles: grata est uis ista puellis;/ quod iuuat, inuitae saepe dedisse uolunt./ quaecumque est Veneris subita uiolata rapina,/ gaudet, et improbitas muneris instar habet.* (*Ars* 1.673-6).

Oenone's logic is certainly one of double standards, hence the incoherence of her argument, which is so stark that Merkel put brackets around the whole passage, followed by Palmer.⁴⁴⁶

Hermione (unlike Sappho) prefers the day to the night:

cum tamen altus equis Titan radiantibus instat,
perfruor infelix liberiore malo;
nox ubi me thalamis ululantem et acerba gementem
condidit in maesto procubuique toro
pro somno lacrimis oculi funguntur obortis,
quaque licet, fugio sicut ab hoste uiro. (*Her.* 8.105-10)

[Yet my unhappy soul has the comfort, when Titan is urging aloft his radiant steeds, of being more free in its wretchedness; but when the dark of night has fallen and sent me to my chamber with wails and lamentation for my bitter lot, and I have stretched myself prostrate on my sorrowful bed, then springing tears, not slumber, is the service of mine eyes, and in every way I can I shrink from my mate as away from my foe.]

Hermione not only mentions the Titan Helios, son of Hyperion, as a metonymy for the sun just as Sappho does (*Her.* 15.135), but her (Virgilian) phrase *lacrimis oculi funguntur obortis* is also echoed in Sappho's expression *scribimus, et lacrimis oculi rorantur obortis* (*Her.* 15.97).⁴⁴⁷ But while they both yearn for a beloved and absent man, who in Hermione's case is Orestes, Hermione has the additional problem of the presence of an unwanted man, Pyrrhus. In spite of Hermione's marriage to Orestes, she is also married to Pyrrhus.⁴⁴⁸ In bed she flees from him, she says, but only to a certain point (*qua licet*). Though she says she was forced to leave her house in the opening lines (*Her.* 8.5-10), she does not seem to be forced in bed, where she touches Pyrrhus as if by mistake:

saepe malis stupeo rerumque oblita locique
ignara tetigi Scyria membra manu,
utque nefas sensi, male corpora tacta relinquo
et mihi pollutas credor habere manus. (*Her.* 8.111-14)

⁴⁴⁶ '[...] versus turpes totam sententiam evertentes [in dubium iure vocavit Merkel.] Palmer (1898) 30. The latest editor of Oenone's letter, Knox, keeps them due to 'a number of grounds, especially because it too casually dismisses the god's infatuation with Oenone, when O is at pains to show that she rejected all advances' (1995) 166.

⁴⁴⁷ Cf. *lacrimis [...] obortis*, Virgil *Aen.* 4.30.

⁴⁴⁸ Hermione's grandfather, Tyndareus, first married her to Orestes, while her father Menelaus was in Troy, fighting to get her mother Helen back. At war, Menelaus betrothed her to Achilles' son Pyrrhus, who simply took her from Orestes.

[Oft I am distraught with woe; I lose sense of where I am and what my fate, and with witless hand have touched the body of him of Scyrus; but when I have waked to the awful act, I draw my hand from the base contact, and look upon it as defiled.]

Hermione uses strong language to express her disgust with the situation, but she remains ambiguous: her last attempt to flatter Orestes reveals that she does have sex with Pyrrhus, and imagining that he is her first husband, she seems to enjoy it too: *saepe Neoptolemi pro nomina nomen Orestis/ exit, et errorem vocis ut omen amo.* (*Her.* 8.115-16).

1.4. More Incest and Motherhood

Canace in *Heroides* 11 is, like Phaedra, involved in incestuous sex. But as calculating as Phaedra seems to be in her lust for her stepson – arrestingly contrary to her own claim – Canace is equally passive in relationship with her brother, Macareus, and his love of her. It is impossible to tell whether Canace’s torments before she gave birth to her son were due to her being in love, or to her pregnancy. Her letter is a truly ambiguous masterpiece, though it allows for no uncertainty about the siblings’ sexual encounter.⁴⁴⁹ After having described how her health has weakened, Canace says that she thinks it was because of love, but at the same time she reveals how the burden of her ‘violated womb’, *uitiati uentris*, has been growing:

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.
iam tumescebant uitiati pondera uentris,
aeграque furtiuum membra grauabat onus. (*Her.* 11.31-8)

[Nor could I render myself a reason why I did these things; I did not know what it was to be in love – yet in love I was. The first to perceive my trouble, in her old wife’s way, was my nurse; she first, my nurse, said: “Daughter of Aeolus, thou art in love!” I blushed, and shame bent down my eyes into my bosom; I said no word, but this was sign enough that I confessed. And presently there grew the burden of my wayward bosom, and my weakened frame felt the weight of its secret load.]

⁴⁴⁹ For the poem’s refined ambiguities, see Williams (1992), Casali (1995c), (1998) and Philippides (1996).

Like Penelope, Phaedra, Hypsipyle, Medea and Sappho, Canace has then had the experience of childbirth, a natural consequence of sex; but none of the other heroines describes it so violently:⁴⁵⁰

nescia, quae faceret subitos mihi causa dolores,
 et rudis ad partus et noua miles eram:
 nec tenui uocem; 'quid' ait 'tua crimina prodis?'
 oraue clamantis conscia pressit anus.
 quid faciam infelix? Gemitus dolor edere cogit,
 sed timor et nutrix et pudor ipse uetant.
 contineo gemitus elapsaque uerba rependo,
 et cogor lacrimas conbibere ipsa meas.
 mors erat ante oculos, et opem Lucina negabat,
 (et graue, si morerer, mors quoque crimen erat)
 [...] (Her. 11.47-56)

[I knew not what caused the sudden pangs in me; to travail I was unused, a soldier new to the service. I could not keep from groans. "Why betray thy fault?" said the ancient dame who knew my secret, and stopped my crying lips. What shall I do, unhappy that I am? The pains compel my groans, but fear, the nurse, and shame itself forbid. I repress my groans, and try to take back the words that slip from me, and force myself to drink my very tears. Death was before my eyes; and Lucina denied her aid – death, too, were I to die, would fasten upon me – heavy guilt [...].]

The Heroides mentioned above are not all model mothers. Actually, Canace is the one who shows most affection towards her baby (cf. *Her.* 11.111-18), followed by Hypsipyle, who seems fond of her twins (cf. *Her.* 6.118-24). But Phaedra wishes, as we have seen, that her sons had died while she gave birth to them, *o, utinam nocitura tibi, pulcherrime rerum, / in medio nisu uiscera rupta forent!* (*Her.* 4.125-6). And Medea might not know yet what she will do while writing her elegiac epistle, but the informed reader does: *nescio quid certe mens mea maius agit* (*Her.* 12.212).⁴⁵¹

When Sappho claims that her daughter Cleis increases her lot of troubles, she immediately adds that the latest contributor to her worries is Phaon:

et tamquam desint quae me hac sine fine fatigent,
 accumulatur curas filia parua meas.
 ultima tu nostris accedis causa querelis:
 non agitur uento nostra carina suo. (*Her.* 15.69-72)

⁴⁵⁰ The consequences of sex are also an issue in the *Amores*, and it is worth noticing that *Amores* 2.13, 2.14 and the passage of Canace's epistle that is between the two passages quoted above, are the only instances where abortion is described in the Ovidian corpus.

⁴⁵¹ Hinds (1993) *passim*, esp. 40-2.

[And as if there were lack of things to weary me endlessly, a little daughter fills the measure of my cares. Last cause of all are you for my complaint. My craft is not impelled by a propitious gale.]

Sappho actually expends most of her lines in declarations of love to her young ferryman, and it is reasonable to presume that she can likewise say that her daughter troubles her without implying that she does not love her. Sappho is certainly not the worst mother in the *Heroides*. She is also far from being the most outrageous of the heroines – whether voluntary or involuntary – when it comes to sexual relations, not even when, to express her grief over the absent Phaon, she uses the image that has proved so revolting to many, namely that of a pious and grieving mother bereaved of her son. She felt, she says: *non aliter, quam si nati pia mater adempti/ portet ad exstructos corpus inane rogos* (*Her.* 15.115-16). This image is thematically inverted in the lament of Procne (*Her.* 15.153-56), who, contrary to Sappho's self-representation as a *pia mater*, is a *non ultra pie maestissima mater*.⁴⁵²

Sappho's relationship to her child and her lover represents a significant contribution to the concept of womanhood in the *Heroides*, but her juxtaposition of Cleis and Phaon is furthermore heavily charged with poetic and metapoetic significations. I will return to these aspects in the next chapter on the *Epistula Sapphus* and the *Amores*, and in anticipation of both this and the final chapter on the *Epistula Sapphus'* intertwinings with *Ars Amatoria*, I will close this section with some observations on Sappho and Ovidian pleasure.

1.5. Pleasure in the *Heroides* and Beyond

Sappho brightens a gloom that lingers over sex in this epistolary collection, siding with heroines like Phaedra and Laudamia, and, within the wider context of Ovid's early poetic career, with *Naso poeta* and the *praeceptor amoris* of the *Ars*, who all value making love highly. Thus Sappho makes a valuable contribution not only to the complexity of 'womanhood' in the *Heroides*, but to 'sex' in general in Ovid's amatory works. In order to show how, I will briefly revisit the 'licentious' passages quoted at the beginning of this chapter.

⁴⁵² Cf. Bessone (2003) 218-9.

In the first of these Sappho claims that her lasciviousness was particularly pleasing to Phaon when they made love: *tunc plus solito lasciuia nostra iuuabat/ crebraque mobilitas aptaque uerba ioco ...* (*Her.* 15.46-7). The *Naso poeta* of the *Amores* twice uses similar imagery, firstly in the catalogue of women that stir his sexual appetite, where he favourably stresses the flexibility of a *procax* mistress (*Am.* 2.4.13-4). The second time, in *Am.* 3.14, not only lascivious movements, but also arousing words are mentioned as *Naso poeta* anticipates his role as *praeceptor* in giving women advice to engage in sexual activity while pretending, as soon as they are outside the bedroom, that they do not indulge in such actions. And so there, *illic*, in bed, *nec uoces nec uerba iuuantia cessent,/ spondaque lasciuia mobilitate tremat* (25-6).

The importance of ‘wicked words’ is also emphasised in *Ars*, where a similar piece of advice is found; *nec blandae uoces iucundaeque murmura cessent/ nec taceant mediis improba uerba iocis* (*Ars* 3.795-6). In this work, where the poet is explicitly performing as a teacher, he also promotes much the same ideas as Sappho in the distich that follows the one quoted above; *et quod, ubi amborum fuerat confusa uoluptas,/ plurimus in lasso corpore languor erat.* (*Her.* 15.49-50).

These precepts reverberate in several lines in the final part of *Ars* 2, where the *praeceptor* assures his male audience of the many advantages of a mature mistress (such as Sappho). Firstly because *illis sentitur non irritata uoluptas;/ quod iuuat, ex aequo femina uirque ferant* (*Ars* 2.681-2). When with a woman like this, the *praeceptor* himself (sic!) likes to see her how her gaze drowns in the madness of pleasure: *aspiciam dominae uictos amentis ocellos;/ langueat et tangi se uetet illa diu* (*Ars* 2.691-2). He also stresses the importance of mutual pleasure: *ad metam properate simul: tum plena uoluptas,/ cum pariter uicti femina uirque iacent* (*Ars* 2.727).

In *Ars* 3 it becomes even clearer that *her* pleasure is not only *his* responsibility, and so the professor of love reminds his female audience that the woman must feel the orgasm deep down in the marrow of her bones: *sentiat ex imis Venerem resoluta medullis/ femina, et ex aequo res iuuat illa duos* (*Ars* 3.793-4). To enjoy erotic pleasures is, according to the *praeceptor amoris*, one of the most important lessons to learn for a woman on the battlefield of love. Sex has little point if ‘she lies there all dry, thinking about her wool’, *siccaque de lana cogitat ipsa sua* (*Ars* 2.682). The only female figure in the Ovidian corpus who has an orgasm and thus

embodies the *praeceptor's* ideal at the same time as she is inverting the undesirable dryness in repeating the word *sicca*, as it were, is Sappho: *et iuuat et siccae non licet esse mihi* (*Her.* 15.134).

Ovid keeps referring to the protagonists of the *Heroides* and to their unsuccessful stories of love, cf. *Ars* 3.31-44 and *Rem.* 49-64.⁴⁵³ Recognising that the ability to enjoy erotic pleasure forms part of the art of love (even when taking into consideration Ovid's advice to fake an orgasm if a real one is out of reach) Sappho could be absent from the first of these lists of disastrous love stories simply because of her sexual success.⁴⁵⁴

Certainly, the end of the *Epistula Sapphus* is radically open, but my suggestion, based on the capacity to obtain sexual pleasure as an important parameter of amatory achievement, would at least be in keeping with the reading that the Lesbian poet is finally *amata* by Phaon, as Ovid reports that she is in Sabinus' reply (*Am.* 2.18.34), just as it would be in keeping with the claim that Sappho herself has taught Ovid to be a better lover of women (*Rem.* 761). Between these statements there is a slight and amusing uncertainty as to whether it is the *praeceptor's* advice that has reached this poetic figure, or whether it is Sappho who has informed the Roman poet on this important point, a confusion which has affinities to how the double pupil, *pupula duplex*, in the eyes of Dipsas (*Am.* 1.8.15) can be seen as an image both of Ovid and of Corinna.⁴⁵⁵ At any event, the leap from the Heroidean Sappho's to Ovid's erotopoetics is short: 'Writing poetry, for Ovid, [...] is itself an erotic experience, in which it is impossible to distinguish clearly between sex and poetry.'⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵³ Cf. Part Two, chapter 3.2.f).

⁴⁵⁴ For women's real and faked orgasms, cf. *sentiat ex imis Venerem resoluta medullis/ femina, et ex aequo res iuuat illa deos./ [...] tu quoque, cui Veneris sensum natura negauit,/ dulcia mendaci gaudia finge sono./ (infelix, cui torpet hebes locus ille puella, quo pariter debent femina uirque frui.)/ tantum, cum finges, ne sis manifesta, caueto:/ effice per motum luminaque ipsa fidem.* (*Ars* 3.793-802).

⁴⁵⁵ Hardie (2002b) 2-3.

⁴⁵⁶ Sharrock (2002a) 99.

2. Leaving Men

Men are also important in the *Heroides*, since the absence of a hero is the major reason why most of the heroines take to the pen in the first place. The moment when they part with their men is therefore of crucial importance to their stories. Fulkerson recognises that the ‘departure scene’ is one of the elegiac topoi of the *Heroides*, and claims that it is ‘(mis)handled by Sappho’ in as much as she only imagines a departure scene, and does not refer to a ‘real’ one, since, according to Sappho’s letter, Phaon left without telling his mistress:⁴⁵⁷

si tam certus eras hinc ire, modestius isses,
 si mihi dixisses ‘Lesbi puella, uale!’
non tecum lacrimas, non oscula nostra tulisti:
 denique non timui, quod dolitura fui.
nil de te mecum est nihil tantum iniuria; nec tu,
 admoneat quod te, pignus amantis habes.
non mandata dedi, neque enim mandata dedissem
 ulla, nisi ut nolles inmemor esse mei.
per tibi, qui numquam longe discedit, Amorem,
 perque nouem iuro, numina nostra, deas,
cum mihi nescioquis ‘fugiunt tua gaudia’ dixit,
 nec me flere diu, nec potuisse loqui.
et lacrimae deerant oculis et uerba palato,
 adstrictum gelido frigore pectus erat.
[sed postquam] dolor inuenit, nec pectora plangi
 nec puduit scissis exululare comis,
non aliter quam si nati pia mater adempti
 portet ad exstructos corpus inane rogos. (*Her.* 15.99-116)⁴⁵⁸

[If you were so resolved to leave my side, you could have gone in more becoming wise. You might at least have said to me: “O Lesbian mistress, fare you well!” You did not take with you my tears, you did not take my kisses; indeed, I felt no fear of the pangs I was to suffer. You have left me nothing, nothing except my wrong; and you – you have no token which may remind you of your lover. I gave you no behest – nor would I have given you any, save not to be unmindful of me. O by [...] Love – and may [he] never far depart! – and by the heavenly Nine who are my deities, I swear to you, when someone said to me: “Your joys are flying from you!” for a long time I could not weep, and could not speak! Tears failed my eyes, and words my tongue; my breast was fast frozen with icy chill. [But] after my grief had [come], I felt no shame to beat my breast, and rend my hair, and shriek, not otherwise than when the loving mother of a son whom death has taken bears to the high-built funeral pile his empty frame.]

⁴⁵⁷ Fulkerson (2005) 154.

⁴⁵⁸ I choose to print half of Ramírez de Verger’s emendation/ conjecture, accepting *sed postquam* for *postquam se*, but hesitating about *increuit* for *inuenit*, cf. (2006) 123-4.

This passage takes up a substantial part of Sappho's letter, and interacts overtly, especially as regards lines 109-12, with Sapphic and Catullan subtexts:

Il est facile de reconnaître ici une imitation un peu lointaine de l'ode fameuse où Sappho décrit les symptômes de la passion. On retrouve le phénomène général de stupeur, la privation de la parole, la fièvre (ici le froid) qui saisit le corps, la crainte qui étreint le cœur.⁴⁵⁹

The variation of the Heroidean Sappho continues ('un peu lointaine') in relationship to her Roman model, Catullus 51, the translation of Sappho's fragment 31, as well. Notably, the first line of the departure-scene's core passage, 109, echoes another important Catullan poem, the elegiac lament for his brother *omnia tecum una perierunt gaudia nostra* (65.23.95). Then Catullus *misero quod omnis/ eripit sensus mihi* (51.7-8) corresponds with the Heroidean Sappho's general state, *lingua sed torpet* (51.9) is varied in *nec potuisse loqui./ et lacrimae deerant oculis et uerba palato* (*Her.* 15.111) and Catullus' translation of Sappho's *lepton pur* (fr. 31.9-10) into *tenuis flammis* (51.9-10) is completely transformed in the Heroidean Sappho's 'icy chill'.⁴⁶⁰

But this Sappho does not only relate to poetic precursors. In endowing the moment she realised that her man had left her with great importance, she behaves like most of the Ovidian *Heroides* (see below). When looking systematically at the presentation of the moment when the heroines are being abandoned by, separated from or otherwise realise that they cannot share their lives with their men, a pattern of great variation emerges. In the following section I will sketch out these variations, while keeping a focus on four elements of particular interest in Sappho's departure scene, that is the sad (however imagined) goodbye, the 'Sapphic' shock and paralysis when she realises that her hero is gone, the suspension of crying and finally the wild and uncontrolled grief.

2.1. Peripeteia and Paraklausithyra

Firstly, in almost half of all the *Heroides* there really is no departure scene in the literal sense at all.⁴⁶¹ The departure scene is indeed a typical but not mandatory

⁴⁵⁹ Galand-Hallyn (1991) 355-6.

⁴⁶⁰ Cf. Lipking (1988) 69-70 and Knox (1995) 299.

⁴⁶¹ The number of departure scenes is to some extent a question of interpretation. In my view the departure, in as much as it is to be regarded as an elegiac topos (as Fulkerson rightly calls it), is a

version of the dramatic moment that is repeated in each of the heroine's letters and that marks the *peripeteia*, the turning or tragic point of their stories. This point is closely linked to the absence of a hero and '[d]amit stehen die Heroïdes in der Grundsituation elegischer Liebe, der Situation des *exclusus amator*; sie sind gleichsam mythologische Paraklausithyra.'⁴⁶²

Penelope, for instance, tells of no departure scene. Her letter is full of hints so deigned that the informed reader, if not Penelope herself, should be able to detect the presence of Ulysses, and it is reasonable to imagine that the first Ovidian heroine writes what we read some twenty years after her hero has left her.⁴⁶³ Penelope's letter is, however, permeated with extended versions of the emotions and reactions that become so condensed in such a scene: fear and longing (e.g. *Her.* 1.11-24), impatience and demands for a swift return (e.g. *Her.* 1.1-2).

Phaedra too finds herself in the situation of an *exclusa amatrix*, where the very closeness to her beloved stepson Hippolytus is the obstacle that keeps him away from her.⁴⁶⁴ The elements of a classic departure scene are all present in Phaedra's letter; the embraces, kisses and crying, except that the embraces she delights in are imaginary (*Her.* 4.139-140) and the only kissing she can think of either form part of her fantasies about the future, or of past moments when she and Hippolytus exchanged decent kisses as family members (*Her.* 4.144). The crying is as if forgotten until the very last line, where Phaedra suddenly seems to remember that tears are required in the discourse of an elegiac heroine, and adds *perlegis, et lacrimas finge uidere meas* (*Her.* 4.176).

In Dido's case one gets the feeling that Aeneas has not yet left the country, and accordingly no departure has taken place that the Carthaginian queen could tell of. Significantly, she repeatedly uses the same expression as Sappho (*certus eras [...]* *ire*, 15.99) only in the present tense:

certus es ire tamen miseramque relinquere Dido,
atque idem uenti uela fidemque ferent?
certus es, Aenea, cum foedere soluere naues,

subcategory of the greater *paraklausithyron*-situation, which has different forms in the *Heroïdes*. At all events, among those heroines who arguably do not describe a scene where either she or the hero departs, are Penelope, Phaedra, Dido, Hermione, Deianira, Canace, Medea and Hypermestra.

⁴⁶² Spoth (1992) 33.

⁴⁶³ Cf. Kennedy (1984) *passim*.

⁴⁶⁴ For the transformation of elegiac *amator* in the Heroïdean *amatrix*, see Holzberg (2002) 71-2, 85-6.

quaeque ubi sint nescis, Itala regna sequi? (*Her.* 7.7-9)

[Are you resolved non the less to go, and to abandon wretched Dido, and shall the same winds bear away from me at once your sails and your promises? Are you resolved, Aeneas, to break at the same time from your moorings and from your pledge, and to follow after the fleeting realms of Italy, which lie you know not where?]

The common condition of all the Ovidian heroines is then that they are denied the chances to stay with their men, and as the letters of Penelope, Phaedra and Dido show, the Heroidean experience of the inverted *paraklausithyron* comes in a variety of forms.⁴⁶⁵ The most recurrent of these, as already hinted, is the departure scene.

2.1.a) Classic Departure Scenes

Phyllis is the first of the heroines to depict a classic departure scene which includes, as it should, embraces, kisses, tears and promises of return:

illa meis oculis species abeuntis inhaeret,
cum premeret portus classis itura meos.
ausus es amplecti, colloque infusus amantis
oscula per longas iungere pressa moras
cumque tuis lacrimis lacrimas confundere nostras,
quodque foret uelis aura secunda queri
et mihi discedens suprema dicere uoce:
‘Phylli, fac expectes Demophoonta tuum!’ (*Her.* 2.91-8)

[Ever to my sight clings that vision of you as you went, what time your ships were riding the waters of my harbour, all ready to depart. You dared embrace me, and, with arms close around the neck of her who loved you, to join your lips to mine in long and lingering kisses, to mingle with my tears your own, to complain because the breeze was favouring to your sails, and, as you left my side, to say for your last words: “Phyllis, remember well, expect your own Demophon!”]

As the phrase *ausus es amplecti*, ‘you dared embrace ...’ indicates, this is not primarily a romantic memory, but something that Phyllis recalls with bitterness after having waited in vain for her hero’s arrival.⁴⁶⁶

Briseis, as already pointed out, has almost entirely accepted her new status as a slave in her letter, and holds nothing against Achilles, except the fact that he is not

⁴⁶⁵ That also includes Hermione, Deianira and Hypermetra, whom I will not say so much about in this section.

⁴⁶⁶ According to Phyllis’ own judgement: *non sapienter amaui* (*Her.* 2.27) and as the *praeceptor amoris* makes repeatedly clear, one of the most important lesson that there is to learn in the field of love, is to love *sapienter* (e.g. *Ars* 2.501). Indeed, *uixisset Phyllis, si me foret usa magistro* (*Rem.* 55).

fighting to get her back.⁴⁶⁷ So her departure scene, where *she* leaves Achilles, and not the other way around, is described as genuinely sad, particularly, perhaps, because she could not, like Sappho, give her hero kisses: *ei mihi! discedens oscula nulla dedi* (*Her.* 3.14).⁴⁶⁸

Oenone's description of the moment when Paris had to leave her to act as judge in the beauty contest between the three goddesses (*Her* 5.33-6) is yet another classic departure scene:

flesti discedens: hoc saltim parce negare;
 praeterito magis est iste pudendus amor.
 et flesti et nostros uidisti flentis ocellos:
 miscuimus lacrimas maestus uterque suas.
 non sic adpositis uincitur uitibus ulmus,
 ut tua sunt collo bracchia nexa meo.
 a quotiens, cum te uento quererere teneri,
 risunt comites! ille secundus erat.
 oscula dimissae quotiens repetita dedisti;
 quam uis sustinuit dicere lingua 'uale'! (*Her.* 5.43-52)

[Your tears fell as you left me – this, at least, deny not! The love that holds you now is more to your shame, than the one of yore. You both wept and you saw my weeping eyes. We mingled our weeping, each a prey to grief; the elm is not so closely clasped by the clinging vine as was my neck by your embracing arms. Ah, how oft, when you complained that you were kept by the wind, did your comrades smile! – that wind was favouring. How oft, when you had taken your leave of me, did you return to ask another kiss! How your tongue could scarce endure to say “Farewell!”]

As in the case of Phyllis, Oenone remembers the tearful goodbye through a veil of anger and bitterness. In Oenone's case this is arguably more justified, as Paris has not only left her, but notoriously found someone else, the Spartan Helen, whom Oenone also sees as Paris' ship makes a stop at the Phrygian coast on his way to Troy: *fit propior terrasque cita ratis attigit aura:/ femineas uidi corde tremente genas* (*Her.* 5.67-8). Oenone's reaction to this, with this – tearing her clothes, beating her breast and her howling – very much resembles that of Sappho (cf. *Her.* 15.113-6):

non satis id fuerat? quid enim furiosa morabar?
 haerebat gremio turpis amica tuo!

⁴⁶⁷ A slight hint at her pain at having been reduced from a Lynnesian princess to the slave of a Greek soldier is expressed in the line: *me, quaedam, memini, dominam captiva vocabat:/ 'servitio' dixi 'nominis addis onus.'* (*Her.* 3.101-2).

⁴⁶⁸ Fulkerson recognises the similarities between the *Epistula Sapphus* and Briseis' letter, but she is not willing to see any kind of meaningful relationship, and claims instead that 'Briseis' letter is the exception that proves the rule.' (2005) 155.

tunc uero rupique sinus et pectora planxi,
et secui madidas ungue rigente genas,
impleuique sacram querulis ululatibus Iden.
illuc has lacrimas in mea saxa tuli. (*Her.* 5.69-74)⁴⁶⁹

[And this was not enough – why was I mad enough to stay and see? – in your embrace that shameless woman clung! Then indeed did I rend my bosom and beat my breast, and with the hard nail furrowed my streaming cheeks, and filled holy Ida with wailing cries of lamentation; yonder to the rocks I love I bore my tears.]

Like Oenone, Hypsipyle too has a rival. When she writes her letter, she has heard that Jason has fallen for the Colchian princess Medea, but she does not seem to be too sure that it is true (cf. *Her.* 6.19-22). When recalling Jason going off with his ship, she does however call his face ‘false’, *falsa ora*, and – significantly – she first tells only of *his* tears:

tertia messis erat, cum tu dare uela coactus
implesti lacrimis talia uerba tuis:
‘abstrahor, Hypsipyle, sed dent modo fata recursus,
uir tuus hinc abeo, uir tibi semper ero.’
[...]
hactenus: et lacrimis in falsa cadentibus ora
cetera te meminisse non potuisse loqui. (*Her.* 6.57-64)

[It was the third harvest when you were compelled to set sail, and accompanied these lies with lying tears: “I am sundered from thee, Hypsipyle; but so the fates grant me return, thine own I leave thee now, and thine own will I ever be [...]”. Thus did you speak; and with tears streaming down your false face I remember you could say no more.]

There is a steady emphasis on Hypsipyle’s gaze in the passage that follows the very departure of Jason. She takes in the whole scene: *terra tibi, nobis aspiciuntur aquae* (68). And she relates *her own* tears only when she has left the harbour and gone up into a tower which allows her to continue to see the Argo:

in latus omne patens turris circumspicit undas;
huc feror, et lacrimis osque sinusque madent.

⁴⁶⁹ Medea, though deprived of a classic departure scene, has a similar reaction when she realises that Jason actually marries Creusa of Corinth after their divorce: *ausus es - o! iusto desunt sua uerba dolori - / ausus es ‘Aesoniam’ dicere ‘cede domo!’ / iussa domo cessi natis comitata duobus / et, qui me sequitur semper, amore tui. / ut subito nostras Hymen cantatus ad aures / uenit [...] / pertimui nec adhuc tantum scelus esse putabam: / sed tamen in toto pectore frigus erat.* (*Her.* 12.133-138) The fear (cf. *pertimui*), which Medea also shares with Ariadne and Canace (see below) is followed by a furious rage, where she tears her clothes, beats her breast and scratches her cheeks: *protinus abscissa planxi mea pectora ueste, / tuta nec a digitis ora fuere meis.* (*Her.* 12. 153-4).

per lacrimas specto, cupidaeque fauentia menti
longius assueto lumina nostra uident. (*Her.* 6.69-72)

[There is a tower that looks from every side upon the waters round about; tither I betake myself, my face and bosom wet with tears. Through my tears I gaze; my eyes are gracious to my eager heart, and see farther than their wont.]

Thus it seems that Hypsipyle, like Sappho, only cries after the pain of having been left by her man has sunk in.

The *Heroides*' last classic departure scene, except Sappho's imagined one, is described by Laudamia, who tells how she finally passed out when she could no longer see her beloved husband Protesilaus, but does not narrate her tears:

dum potui spectare uirum, spectare iuuebat,
sumque tuos oculos usque secuta meis;
ut te non poteram, poteram tua uela uidere,
uela diu uultus detinuere meos;
at postquam nec te nec uela fugacia uidi,
et quod spectarem, nil nisi pontus erat,
lux quoque tecum abiit, tenebrique exanguis obortis
succiduo dicor procubuisse genu. (*Her.* 13.17-24)

[As long as I could gaze upon my lord, to gaze was my delight, and I followed your eyes ever with my own; when I could no longer see you, I still could see your sails, and long your sails detained my eyes. But after I [discerned] no more either you or your flying sails, and what my eyes rested on was naught but only sea, the light, too, went away with you, the darkness rose about me, my blood retreated, and with failing knee I sank, they say, upon the ground.]

Laudamia's recollection of her departing man is in fact the only one among the *Heroides* that is not tainted by deceit and anger. Laudamia is still convinced that her husband loves her. Accordingly she emphasises his passiveness in the very moment he had to leave, just to make it clear that her husband was 'taken' away from her and that he did not go voluntarily:

oscula plura uiro mandataque plura dedissem,
 et sunt quae uolui dicere multa tibi.
 raptus es hinc praeceps, et qui tua uela uocaret,
 quem cuperent nautae, non ego, uentus erat.
 uentus erat nautis aptus, non aptus amanti:
 soluor ab amplexu, Protesilae, tuo,
 linguaque mandantis uerba imperfecta reliquit;
 uix illud potui dicere triste ‘uale.’
 incubuit Boreas abreptaque uela tetendit,
 iamque meus longe Protesilaus erat. (*Her.* 13.7-16)

[I could have given my lord more kisses and laid upon him more behests; and many are the things I wished to say to you. But you were swept headlong hence; and the wind that invited forth your sails was one your seamen longed for, not I; it was a wind suited to seamen, not to one who loved. I must [...] loose myself from your embrace, Protesilaus, and my tongue leave half unsaid what I would rejoin, scarce had I time to say that sad “Farewell!” Boreas came swooping down, seized on and stretched your sails, and my Protesilaus was far away.]

Laudamia is not jealous of any woman, she is jealous of death, and with good reason, as the informed reader knows:

uix socer Iphicles, uix me grandaeuus Acastus,
 uix mater gelida maesta refecit aqua.
 officium fecere pium, sed inutile nobis:
 indignor miserae non licuisse mori. (*Her.* 13.25-8)

[Scarce your sire Iphiclus, scarce mine, the aged Acastus, scarce my mother, stricken with grief, could bring me back to life with water icy-cold. They did their kindly task, but it had no profit for me. ‘Tis shame I had not in my misery the right to die!]

Laudamia will have her ‘right’, a future event to which she unknowingly hints in this complaint about not being able to die when she could no longer see Protesilaus.

2.1.b) Other Departures and Shocking Events

Almost all of the heroines are subjected to shocking events, and I will now focus on two of them in comparison with Sappho, namely Ariadne and Canace. If not a proper departure scene, Ariadne describes events that involve a hero’s leaving. Her case has arguably most in common with the *Epistula Sapphus*, first and foremost because she is being left without realising it at first.

On the island of Dia Ariadne has gone to bed with Theseus and wakes up alone. Still sleepy, she reaches out for her lover and finds no one. She stumbles out of bed, beats her breast and pulls her hair, but she does not cry. She goes to the shore,

looks for Theseus' ship, runs about and shouts his name, but she does not cry. Instead she climbs a rock. And then she sees the sails of Theseus.⁴⁷⁰

Sappho, when realising that Phaon has left Lesbos, says that she cannot cry or speak, and the reason why is because her *pectus* is *adstrictum gelido frigore* (*Her.* 15.12). Ariadne has a similar reaction: *frigidior glacie semanimisque fui* (*Her.* 10.32). She is paralysed, if only for an instance; *nec languere diu patitur dolor; excitor illo,/ excitor et summa Thesea uoce uoco* (*Her.* 10.33-4). On her rock, Ariadne makes an ultimate attempt to communicate with Theseus, but when it proves futile, and he is no longer to be seen, *tum denique fleui:/ torpuerant molles ante dolore genae* (*Her.* 10.43-4).⁴⁷¹ The shock, and perhaps hope, has checked her tears until this point.

The most dramatic moment of Canace's epistle is when her father, King Aeolus, discovers that Canace has given birth to a son without his knowing or permission (*Her.* 11.71-4). Her child is also the reason why the King has ordered her to commit suicide and thus to be separated from her brother and lover. When her furious father storms into her chambers she only cries and is unable to utter a word: *ipsa nihil praeter lacrimas pudibunda profudi;/ torpuerat gelido lingua retente metu* (*Her.* 11.81-2). Like both Ariadne and Sappho, Canace feels an icy fear, and whereas Sappho in the moment of shock is unable both to speak and cry, Ariadne speaks and suspends her tears, while Canace cries, but cannot speak.⁴⁷²

2.2. Absence and Enargeia

As already said, all of the *Heroides* include some *peripeteia* that can also be described as a *paraklausithyron* in their narratives. In eight of the letters the *paraklausithyron* takes on different forms, and the *Epistula Sapphus* shares important traits also with

⁴⁷⁰ Or perhaps she does not. After all, it must have been difficult to spot the black sails of Theseus in the moonlight, cf. Barchiesi (1993) 345-50.

⁴⁷¹ Medea too is crying a while after the reason for her tears has occurred (*Her.* 12.57-58). The similarities between Sappho's and Ariadne's letters lead Fulkerson, if only momentarily, to generate an interpretation: '*Heroides* 15 includes a departure scene *manqué*; Sappho implicitly confirms generic expectations as she refuses to fulfil them. If we were pursuing this line of argument in order to prove that this poem does indeed belong with the rest of the corpus, I would suggest that Sappho learned from reading the other heroines about the necessity of a departure scene (but not how to compose one). Instead, I move on to another topos of Heroidean elegy.' (2005) 156.

⁴⁷² Deianira must also deal with a shocking event even *while* she is writing her letter. This happens when she learns of how the clothes that were smeared with Nessus' blood and that she sent to Hercules, now burn and poison her husband to death: [...] *scribenti nuntia uenit/ fama, uirum tunicae tabe perire meae./ ei mihi! quid feci? quo me furor amantem?* (*Her.* 9.143-5).

the heroines who narrate their men's departure: both Dido and Sappho, even though they surely have doubts about their men's decisiveness, describe their hero as someone who *certus est ire*, both Ariadne and Sappho discover belatedly that their man has left them and they both momentarily suspend their crying, and Ariadne, Canace, Medea and Sappho all freeze with shock.⁴⁷³

Six of the letters, Sappho's included, depict the most recurrent single moment of when the heroine is doomed to the role of the *exclusa amatrix*, the departure scene, and here too there are shared traits between the Sappho and the other heroines: both Briseis and Sappho complain that they did not get to kiss their heroes goodbye, both Oenone and Sappho rage when realising that they are abandoned, and Hypsipyle, like Ariadne and Sappho, suspends her crying, at least while writing her letter, if not during the very departure of Jason.

The longest descriptions of this scene-type are to be found in Laudamia's and Sappho's epistles. And if Sappho *imagines* how Phaon's departure could have been, instead of referring to one that actually took place, she does not exclude herself from the *Heroides*, but rather becomes emblematically representative. Conjuring up absent presences is in fact yet another ability that Sappho shares with the other heroines, as with Ovidian characters in general and in his exploration of Ovid's 'poetics of illusion', Hardie (2002b) explains that the 'key term is *enargeia* 'vividness' (Latin *euidencia, illustratio*)'.⁴⁷⁴ As regards Briseis' departure from Achilles, Fulkerson herself suggests the heroine might have 'imagined the entire scene'.⁴⁷⁵ And thinking about the change of sentiments in the case of Phyllis, Oenone and Hypsipyle, who all describe their men as most affectionate in overwhelmingly pathetic departure scenes, they might just employ rhetorical and manipulative strategies to underscore the

⁴⁷³ So even if the *Epistula Sapphus* included 'a departure scene *manqué*' (Fulkerson (2005) 156) it would hardly have made her extraneous to the *Heroides*, as she would have shared this similarity with as many as eight other heroines. *Pace* Fulkerson.

⁴⁷⁴ Hardie continues that this key term is: 'defined by Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*On Lysias* 7) as 'a power that brings what is said before the senses', so that the audience 'consort with the characters brought on by the orator as if they were present'. *Enargeia* effects the illusion of sight: Cicero defines vivid (*illustris*) language as 'a part of a speech which almost brings something before our eyes' (*quae rem constituat paene ante oculos, Part. or.* 20). The term for such mental visual representations and for the psychological faculty responsible for them is *phantasia*, literally 'appearance'. Quintilian describes the working of *phantasiai*, or in Latin *uisiones*, as follows (*Inst. or.* 6.2.29): *per quas imagines rerum absentium ita representantur animo ut eas cernere oculis ac praesentes habere uideamur* 'by them images of things absent are represented to the mind, so that we seem to see them with our eyes and have them in our presence'; he adds that the orator who masters them will be very effective in arousing emotion.' (2002b) 5.

⁴⁷⁵ Fulkerson (2005) 155.

outrageous betrayals they think that they so unjustly have become victims of. In favour of this assumption, one could add that the least pathetic departure scene of all is Laudamia's, who still loves her husband without resentment.

2.2.a) *Mature Mistresses. Phaedra and Sappho*⁴⁷⁶

The elegiac epistle with which Sappho's shares most *loci similes* with is the letter of Phaedra to Hippolytus (*Heoides* 4).⁴⁷⁷ Recognising that an allusion is not just a matter of equal wording, but also involves intricate patterns of meaning, I will now take the *verbatim* echoes as incitements to search for coherence and connections between the two poems.⁴⁷⁸

Phaedra, after a seemingly simple but all too sinister attempt to capture Hippolytus' attention, tells him that she has tried to talk to him three times, but that shame has checked her tongue each time.⁴⁷⁹ She then explains that there is a limit to the possible *mélange* of shame and love: *qua licet et sequitur, pudor est miscendus amori*. This is however only valid for speech, because: *dicere quae puduit, scribere iussit amor* (*Her.* 4.9-10).⁴⁸⁰ Towards the end of her letter, where she implores her stepson most intensely, the incongruity between love and dignified decorum again finds its place in her rhetoric:

⁴⁷⁶ For an analysis of Phaedra's mature age alone, see 'Difficoltà logistiche: Fedra e gli ostacoli dell'età', Landolfi (2000) 19.

⁴⁷⁷ The similarities between the two ladies who are in love with their much younger men tamper with the idea that Phaedra's letter 'costituisca un *unicum* nella silloge delle lettere ovidiane': Landolfi (2000) 11, footnote 1. Phaedra's letter engages in much the same precepts and problems as the *praeceptor amoris* of the *Ars* and according to Landolfi it thus becomes 'un testo autoriflessivo' for Ovid himself 'più di qualunque altra *Eroide*'. (2000) 43. The allusive relationship of the *Ars* to Phaedra's letter is undeniable, but I would suggest that the self-reflexive charge of this relationship is enhanced, not by means of the unique status of Phaedra's letter among the *Heroides*, but rather through its many connections to the even more self-reflexive *Epistula Sapphus*.

⁴⁷⁸ Followed by Laudamia's letter, which I will treat shortly, and Dido's; compare *Her.* 7.25, *uror ut inducto ceratae sulphure taedae* with *Her.* 15.8-9, *Her.* 7.76, *te satis est titulum mortis habere meae* with *Her.* 15.190 *si moriar, titulum mortis habere meae?*, *Her.* 7.171, *cum dabit aura uiam, praebebis carbasa uentis* with 15.214, *aura dabit cursum; tu modo solue ratem!* and *Her.* 7.183-4, *aspicias utinam, quae sit scribentis imago! scribimus et gremio Troicus ensis adest* with *Her.* 15.97, *scribimus et lacrimis oculi rorantur abortis*.

⁴⁷⁹ For the sinister character of Phaedra's letter, see Casali (1995) *passim*.

⁴⁸⁰ There is a typically Ovidian interchange between noun and verb in *pudor* and *puduit*, repeated with *variatio* in *amor* as the feeling and in *Amor* the god, who appears most perspicuously in the next line: *quidquid Amor iussit, non est contemnere tutum*.

uicta precor genibusque tuis regalia tendo
bracchia; quid deceat, non uidet ullus amans (*Her.* 4.153-4)⁴⁸¹

[I pray to you, to clasp your knees I extend my queenly arms. Of what benefits, no one who loves takes thought.]

Sappho too, is painfully aware of the relative incompatibility of shame and love as she remembers how she tore her dress and exposed her breast when she realised that Phaon had left Lesbos:

non ueniunt in idem pudor atque amor: omne uidebat
uulgus; eram lacero pectus aperta sinu (*Her.* 15.121-2)

[Modesty and love are not at one. There was no one did not see me; yet I rent my robe and laid bare my breast.]

Both Sappho and Phaedra thus seem to have gained a somewhat similar knowledge about the relationship between shame and love, and they formulate it in a rather gnomic way. If we are to believe what they write, this is a wisdom which is linked with a burning desire. In the words of Phaedra: [...] *urimur intus [...] urimur, et caecum pectora vulnus habent* (19-20). Sappho, all fire and air, burns no less, but instead of locating the sentiment inside herself, she extends it metaphorically to a whole field of flaming crops:

uror, ut indomitis ignem exercentibus Euris
fertilis accensis messibus ardet ager. (*Her.* 15. 9-10)⁴⁸²

Now, just before declaring her burning love, Phaedra hints at her mature age: *uenit amor grauius, quo serius* (*Her.* 4.19). Significantly both Phaedra and Sappho call themselves *puella* (*Her.* 4.2, and *Her.* 15.100) even though they are older than the males they long for. This common fact leads, however, to very different results as regards both their self-representation and the way they mould the image of their men.

⁴⁸¹ There are of course metrical reasons for writing *ullus* instead of *ulla*, but the masculine form almost implies that Hippolytus is the one who is in love and who – by rejecting Phaedra – does the contrary to *quid deceat*. Anyhow, the masculine form enhances the gnomic character of the statement.

⁴⁸² Prof. S. Harrison has gently pointed out to me that the passage reads as a version of an epic simile like the one at *Il.* 4.452 and *Aen.* 2.304-5, *in segetem ueluti cum flamma furentibus Austris/ incidit*. Davis reads the epic simile as an inversion of the *lepton pur* of Sappho's fragment 31 (2005) 179-80, and I would suggest that the presence of an overblown fire here could explain the absence of a finer flame in the passage recalling both Sappho's fragment and Catullus 51.

Phaedra tries to convince Hippolytus that it is precisely her age that guarantees her sincere and genuine passion:

uenit Amor grauius, quo serius: urimur intus;
urimur, et caecum pectora uulnus habent.
scilicet ut teneros laedunt iuga prima iuuenos,
frenaque uix patitur de grege captus equus,
sic male uixque subit primos rude pectus amores,
sarcinaque haec animo non sede apta meo.
ars fit, ubi a teneris crimen condiscitur annis;
quae uenit exacto tempore peius amat.
tu noua seruatae capies libimina famae,
et pariter nostrum fiet uterque nocens. (*Her.* 4.19-30)

[Love has come to me, the deeper for its coming late – I am burning with love within; I am burning, and my breast has an unseen wound. As the first bearing of the yoke galls the tender steer, and as the rein is scarce endured by the colt fresh taken from the drove, so does my untried heart rebel, and scarce submit to the first restraints of love, and the burden I undergo does not sit well upon my soul. Love grows to be but an art, when the fault is well learned from tender years; she to whom love comes when the time for love is past, has a fiercer passion. You will enjoy the fresh first-offerings of purity long preserved, and both of us will be equal in our guilt.]

Adult and naive, that is how Phaedra – paradoxically – pictures herself.⁴⁸³ This is another way of saying that she has never been in love before, which of course is an important point since all the while she is *married* to the father of her desired object. She does not, however, emphasise Hippolytus' youth. Instead she praises his severe and reckless beauty, as when she recalls the moment she fell in love with him during the festival of Demeter at Eleusis:⁴⁸⁴

candida uestis erat, praecinctorum flore capilli
flaua uerecundus tinxerat ora rubor,
quemque uocant aliae uultum rigidumque trucemque,
pro rigido Phaedra iudice fortis erat.
sint procul a nobis iuuenes ut femina compta:
fine coli modico forma uiriliter amat. (*Her.* 4.71-6)

⁴⁸³ The *praeceptor amoris* of *Ars* notably recommends grown women, but the reason why is precisely because they are experienced. 'Good sex', *haec bona non primae tribuit natura iuuentae, / quae cito post septem lustra uenire solent.* (*Ars* 2.693-694). Phaedra, on the other hand, seems to disagree with most of the *Ars* when she claims – in a condemning tone – that *ars fit crimen* when it is learned, *condiscitur*, from an early age, *teneris annis* (*Her.* 4.27). She does, however, seem to resort to *praeceptor's* ideals whenever it suits her, like when she warns Hippolytus that the woods, *silua*, will be *rustica* if he chases Venus away (*Her.* 4.102), and when she claims that it is a *pietas* not to get involved in incest: *nec, quia priuigno uidear coitura nouerca, / terruerint animos nomina uana tuos, / ista uetus pietas, aeuo moritura futuro, / rustica Saturno regna tenente fuit* (*Her.* 4.129-2). Landolfi reads the epistle precisely 'come se trattassi di un manuale erotico' (2000) 13.

⁴⁸⁴ Acontius and Cydippe too 'fell in love' at a festival (for Diana), cf. *Her.* 20 and 21.

[Shining white was your raiment, bound round with flowers your locks, the blush of modesty had tinged your sun-browned cheeks, and, what others call a countenance hard and stern, in Phaedra's eye was strong instead of hard. Away from me with your young men arrayed like women! – beauty in a man would fain be striven for in measure.]

Moderation and masculinity are then the parameters of male attractiveness according to Phaedra, who goes on to describe him – in action – as a full-fledged hunter:⁴⁸⁵

te tuus iste rigor positisque sine arte capilli
et leuis egregio pulvis in ore decet.
siue ferocis equi luctantia colla recuruas,
exiguo flexos miror in orbe pedes;
seu lentum ualido torques hastile lacerto,
ora ferox in se uersa lacertus habet;
siue tenes lato uenabula cornea ferro –
denique nostra iuuat lumina quidquid agis. (*Her.* 4.77-84)

[That hardness of feature suits you well, those locks that fall without art, and the light dust upon your handsome face. Whether you draw rein and curb the resisting neck of your spirited steed, I look with wonder at your turning his feet in circle so slight; whether with strong arm you hurl the pliant shaft, your gallant arm draws my regard upon itself, or whether you grasp the broad-headed cornel hunting spear. To say no more, my eyes delight in whatsoe'er you do.]

Hippolytus is a he-man with his horse and his weapons.⁴⁸⁶ What then of Phaedra? She now possesses the same faculties as Hippolytus, so how feminine can she be?⁴⁸⁷

iam quoque, uix credes, ignotas mittor in artes:
est mihi per saeuas impetus ire feras;
[...]
aut tremulum excusso iaculum uibrare lacerto
aut in graminea ponere corpus humo.
saepe iuuat uersare leues in puluere currus
torquentem frenis ora fugacis equi. (*Her.* 4.37-44)

[Now too – you will scarce believe it – I am launched upon pursuits I did not know; I am stirred to go among wild beats [...] or with arm shot forth to let fly the quivering spear, or to lay my body upon the grassy ground. Oft do I delight to whirl the light car in the dust of the course, twisting with the rein the mouth of the flying steed.]

⁴⁸⁵ A view she obviously shares with Deianira, cf. *Her.* 9.55-102.

⁴⁸⁶ Cf. *forma uiros neglecta decet; Minoida Theseus/ abstulit, a nulla tempora comptus acu;/ Hippolytum Phaedra, nec erat bene cultus, amaui;/ cura deae siluis aptus Adonis erat.* (*Ars* 1.509-11).

⁴⁸⁷ In Euripides Phaedra wants to hunt, too, cf. *Hipp.* 215-22.

In the Ovidian world masculinity in a man does then not necessarily match the femininity in his woman, or vice versa. Following the logic of love, brought to extremes by for example Salmacis, Phaedra wants to be united with Hippolytus. It is useful to keep this in mind while considering, in contrast to how Phaedra is moulding the image of her beloved, how Sappho draws her image of Phaon, especially since the idea of a *mascula Sappho* is proverbial.⁴⁸⁸

The actual moment when Phaedra fell in love is described like this; *tunc mihi praecipue, nec non tamen ante, placebas:/ acer in extremis ossibus haesit amor* (*Her.* 4.69-71). The phrase reverberates in Sappho's epistle: *haec quoque laudabas, omnique a parte placebam/ sed tunc praecipue, cum fit amoris opus* (*Her.* 15.45-6). In spite of the variation of agency (cf. *placebas* and *placebam*) the *locus similis* reveals that both women are actively taking pleasure in their men. The way in which they address them is accordingly anything but resigned, and when it comes to lust and sexual interest, Phaedra and Sappho are clearly the most explicit, followed, perhaps, only by Medea.⁴⁸⁹ No wonder, then, that both Phaedra and Sappho find it apt to compare their male objects with young or athletic men abducted by lustful goddesses.⁴⁹⁰ Phaedra clearly needs model lovers for Hippolytus and accordingly she keeps to hunt-related heroes.⁴⁹¹ Sappho, on the other hand, seems to brag most of all about the irresistible beauty of her young lover when she compares him to the same gorgeous mythical males as Phaedra, including Endymion.⁴⁹²

Whereas Phaedra can only hope for more than the pleasure of feasting her eyes on her hunter, Sappho has shared many joys with Phaon. With the exception of the elegiac slip of the tongue when Sappho calls herself *puella* (*Her.* 15.100), she is as

⁴⁸⁸ Cf. *Hor. Ep.* 1.19.28.

⁴⁸⁹ In words that echoes Sappho's line 86 (see. above), Medea states: *et formosus eras, et me mea fata trahebant: / abstulerant oculi lumina nostra tui.* (*Her.* 12.35-6).

⁴⁹⁰ In *Ars Amatoria* the *praeceptor amoris* makes it clear that his lectures are not for divine beauties, and implicitly he then advises his female students not to compare themselves with female figures like that: *non mihi uenistis, Semele Ledeue, docendae,/ perque fretum falso, Sidoni, uecta boue/ aut Helene, quam non stulte, Menelae, reposcis,/ tu quoque non stulte, Troice raptor, habes. turba docenda uenit pulchrae turpesque puellae,/ pluraque sunt semper deteriora bonis* (*Ars* 3.151-6). But when it comes to the importance of showing initiative towards men, women should resort to divine models, cf. Part One, chapter 2.4.b).

⁴⁹¹ Cf. *clarus erat siluis Cephalus, multaque per herbam/ conciderant illo percutiente ferae,/ nec tamen Aurorae male se praebebat amandum:/ ibat ad hunc sapiens a sene diua uiro./ saepe sub illicibus Venerem Cinyraque creatum/ sustinuit positos quaelibet herba duos./ [...]/ nos quoque iam primum turba numeremur in ista:/ si Venerem tollas, rustica silua tua est.* (*Her.* 4.93-102).

⁴⁹² Cf., *hunc ne pro Cephalo raperes, Aurora, timebam;/ et faceres; sed te prima rapina tenet./ hunc si conspicias, quae conspicit omnia, Phoebe,/ iussus erit somnos continuare Phaon./ hunc Venus in caelum curru uexisset eburno,/ sed uidet et Marti posse placere suo.* (*Her.* 15.87-92), cf. Part One, chapter 2.4.b).

indifferent to her own age, at least according to what she explicitly says, as Phaedra is obsessed with hers. And almost to the same extent as Theseus' Cretan wife ignores her stepson's youth, Sappho relishes Phaon's: *quid mirum, si me primae lanuginis aetas/ abstulit, atque anni quos uir amare potest?* (*Her.* 15.85-6), and: *o nec adhuc iuuenis, nec iam puer, utilis aetas!// o decus atque aeui gloria magna tui!* (*Her.* 15.93-4).

The capacity of the epistolary conventions to generate self-portraits, of 'me', the epistolographer, is particularly evident in the case of Phaedra's and Sappho's letters. Their descriptions of their darlings show, however, that the epistolary elegy also represents a privileged chance to draw portraits of the letter's 'you', the addressee, and it is with that epistolary aspect in mind that I now turn to another colleague of Sappho, namely Laudamia.

2.2.b) *Imagining Men. Laudamia and Sappho*

Whereas Phaedra and Sappho have much in common, *inter alia* a mature age and erotic adventures on the margins of conventional love, Laudamia is indeed different. She is young, happily married and devoted to her husband.⁴⁹³ Still, she shares several interesting traits with Sappho.

Laudamia wants to imitate her husband's hardship by means of neglecting her looks:

nec mihi pectendos cura est praebere capillos,
nec libet aurata corpora ueste tegi:
[...]
silicet ipsa geram saturatas murice uestes,
bella sub Iliacis moenibus ille gerat?
ipsa comas pectar, galea caput ille prematur?
ipsa nouas uestes, dura uir arma ferat?
qua possum, squalore tuos imitata labores
dicar et haec belli tempora tristis agam. (*Her.* 13.31-43)

[I care not now to let my hair be dressed, not does it pleasure me to be arrayed in robes of gold. [...] Shall I, then, go clad in stuffs that are saturate with costly purple, while my lord goes warring under the walls of Ilion? Am I to dress my hair, while his head is weighed down by the helm? Am I to wear new apparel while my lord wears hard and heavy arms? In what I can, they shall say I imitate your toils – in rude attire; and these times of war I will pass in gloom.]

⁴⁹³ There is a parallel in Lieberg's contrasting of Laudamia (68.70-86) and Lesbia in the works of Catullus, cf. (1962) 305-6.

Even in this she shares similar sentiments with Sappho, who does not want to dress up either – not to imitate the sufferings of her man, but because adornments are pointless as long as he cannot enjoy them:

ecce, iacent collo sparsi sine lege capilli,
nec premit articulos lucida gemma meos;
ueste tegor uili, nullum est in crinibus aurum,
non Arabum noster dona capillus habet.
cui colar infelix, aut cui placuisse laborem?
ille mei cultus unicus auctor abes. (*Her.* 15.73-8)

[Lo, see, my hair lies scattered in disorder about my neck, my fingers are laden with no sparkling gems; I am clad in garment mean, no gold is in the strands of my hair, my locks are scented with no gifts from Araby. For whom should I adorn myself, or whom should I strive to please? You, the one cause for my adornment, are gone.]

Furthermore, Laudamia represents a particular case when it comes to the moulding of men in the *Heroides* and is thus perhaps closest to Sappho among the heroines in using her imagination vividly. She dreams about her beloved man: *aucupor in lecto mendaces caelibe somnos;/ dum caret ueris, gaudia falsa iuuant.* (*Her.* 13.107-8), very much like Sappho in her erotic fantasies (cf. *Her.* 15.123-34). Laudamia is also impatiently longing to make real love to her husband again:

quando ego, te reducem cupidis amplexa lacertis,
languida laetitia soluar ab ipsa mea?
quando erit, ut lecto mecum bene iunctus in uno
militiae referas splendida facta tuae?⁴⁹⁴
quae mihi dum referes, quamuis audire iuuabit;
multa tamen rapiens oscula, multa dabis:
semper in his apte narrantia uerba resistunt;
promptior est dulci lingua refecta mora. (*Her.* 13.115-22)

[When shall I clasp you, safe returned, in my eager arms, and lose myself in languishing delight? When will it be mine to have you again close joined to me on the same couch, telling me your glorious deeds in the fields? And while you are telling them, though it delight to hear, you will snatch many kisses none the less, and will give me many back. The words of well told tales meet ever with such stops as this; more ready for report is the tongue refreshed by sweet delay.]

⁴⁹⁴ Reeson comments that Laudamia's 'desire that Protesilaus recount his deeds of military prowess (116) is not consistent with her attitude elsewhere (65-82, 89, 94-100), but in her fantasy he is returned and his safety is no longer an issue [...]. Prof. Harrison suggests that the expression *militiae referas* is a sexual pun: 'perform your services again', cf. Cahoon (1988) 293-4.

Laudamia's most recent editor comments: '[i]n our passage, the familiar motifs are so ordered and expressed as to exhibit a strong sexual element.'⁴⁹⁵ Laudamia's expression *solvar ab ipsa* points towards both Sappho's wet dream (*Her.* 15.134) and the request of the *praeceptor amoris*: *sentiat ex imis Venerem resoluta medullis/femina, et ex aequo res iuuuet illa duos* (*Ars* 3.793-4).⁴⁹⁶ The idea of reciprocity between man and woman reverberates in the Ovidian corpus.⁴⁹⁷ Laudamia 'does it right' in her fantasy about her husband's homecoming, when they will be *lecto bene iunctus in uno*. Sappho and Phaon have also equality in bed, *amborum fuerat confusa uoluptas* (*Her.* 15.49), and the *languida* Laudamia points towards Sappho's *languor* (*Her.* 15.50).

The way in which the two heroines imagine their men relates to each other in a very interesting way, as well. There is no doubt about Phaon's principal characteristics in Sappho's image of the boy. He is young and beautiful, but in yet another passage where Sappho praises his fantastic physique, she includes a forceful hint about other, important aspects of this youth:

est in te facies, sunt apti lusibus anni.
o facies oculis insidiosa meis!
sume fidem et pharetram: fies manifestus Apollo;
accedant capiti cornua: Bacchus eris.
et Phoebus Daphnen, et Gnosida Bacchus amauit,
nec norat lyricos illa vel illa modos. (*Her.* 15.21-6)

[You have beauty, and your years are apt for [love's] delight – O beauty that lay in ambush for my eyes! Take up the lyre and quiver – you will be Apollo manifest; let horns but spring on your head - you will be Bacchus! Phoebus loved Daphne, and Bacchus, too, loved the Gnosian maid, and neither one nor other knew the lyric mode [...].]

Notably, the first line in the passage resounds both in a description of a handsome man (*est etiam facies, qua se tibi comparet, illi, Am.* 1.8.33) and (verbally even more closely) in a description of the *puella* herself (*est etiam facies, sunt apti lusibus anni, Am.* 2.3.13). Within the inverted gender-order of the *Heroides* men tend to play the role of the elegiac *puella*, but none of the addressees of the elegiac letters fits it better than Phaon, the *puer* (*Her.* 15.93). In keeping with his elegiac charge Sappho says he

⁴⁹⁵ Reeson (2001) 181.

⁴⁹⁶ Ovid uses *soluo* 'for the physical effect of sex' Reeson (2001) 181, but also *resoluo* as shown above and in the next footnote.

⁴⁹⁷ Notably in the *Ars Amatoria*, e.g. *odi concubitus qui non utrumque resoluunt* (*Ars* 2.683).

is her sole source of inspiration, *ingenio uires ille dat, ille rapit* (*Her.* 15.206). The line is an allusion to Propertius 2.1.4, *ingenium nobis ipsa puella facit*, and Ovid *Am.* 2.17.34, *ingenio causas tu dabis una meo*. Just like the elegiac *puella* is *divina*, Phaon is a *puer divinus*. He suits even Lieberg's Homeric category of those (normally women) who 'durch die verzaubernde Hand von Göttinnen ein göttlich-übermenschlicher Schönheitsglanz verliehen wird', since Phaon, the ferry boy, unwittingly gave Aphrodite a ride in his boat and was subsequently rewarded with irresistible charm.⁴⁹⁸

But the divine powers of this Phaon do not on rely on Aphrodite. The passage (*Her.* 15.23-6) interestingly includes the vatic deities Apollo and Bacchus and their favourite mortal girls, Daphne and Ariadne, compared, in inverted ways, to Sappho and Phaon. There is a complete confusion of agency and gender in these lines that is especially appealing in the greater context of the *Heroides*. Sappho likens her beloved Phaon to both Apollo and Bacchus, and then she suddenly and implicitly likens *herself* to the vatic deities, because they loved, like Sappho, someone who was not trained in musical arts, which makes Phaon equal to the two girls Daphne and Ariadne. The logic is as fuzzy as it can get in the Ovidian world, where Naso poeta for example fantasises about how Corinna's finger will penetrate him in the form of a ring, which, in consequence, has an erection in *Am.* 2.15 and where the gods Bacchus and Amor get completely confused with love and wine in *Ars* 1. 231-6. The most important of these gods is Phoebus Apollo. The allusion in line *Her.* 15.23 leads directly to the epiphany of the god in *Ars.* 2.493, *haec ego cum canerem, subito manifestus Apollo*. And when Sappho entreats her darling towards the end of her letter, the identities of Apollo and Phaon tend to merge:

cur tamen Actiacas miseram me mittis ad oras,
 cum profugum possis ipse referre pedem?
 tu mihi Leucadia potes esse salubrior unda;
 et forma et meritis tu mihi Phoebus eris. (*Her.* 15.185-8)

[Yet why do you send me to the shores of Actium, unhappy that I am, when you yourself could turn back your wandering steps? You can better help my state than the Leucadian wave; both in beauty and in kindness you will be a Phoebus to me.]

⁴⁹⁸ Lieberg (1962) 300. For the legend of Phaon, see Palmer (1898) 419-20, Dörrie (1975) 29-33, Knox (1995) and Holzberg (2002) 85-6.

As the elegiac *puella* represents both the poem and the Muse to the male elegist, Phaon is *puer*, poem and divine inspiration to Sappho.

And while Phaon thus embodies the complex role of the beloved, Laudamia's husband, Protesilaus, does so in a very concrete way. Laudamia creates an image of Protesilaus in wax, which she even talks to and caresses as if it were her husband himself:

dum tamen arma geres diuerso miles in orbe,
 quae referat uultus est mihi cera tuos:
illi blanditias, illi tibi debita uerba
 dicimus, amplexus accipit illa meos.
crede mihi, plus est, quam quod uideatur, imago:
 adde sonum cerae, Protesilaus erit.
hanc specto teneoque sinu pro coniuge uero,
 et tamquam possit uerba referre queror. (*Her.* 13.151-8)

[None the less, while you, a soldier in a distant world, will be bearing arms, I keep a waxen image to give back your features to my sight; it hears the caressing phrase, it hears the words of love that are yours by right, and it receives my embrace. Believe me, the image is more than it appears; add but a voice to the wax, Protesilaus it will be. On this I look, and I hold it to my heart in place of my real lord, and complain to it, as if it could speak back.]

Sculpting his desired object, the figure of Pygmalion in the *Metamorphoses* (10.243-97) might be said to act as a male Laudamia.⁴⁹⁹ The similarities between Pygmalion and Laudamia, of whom the former is often read as an image of the artist in general or even the artist Ovid, is also useful to bear in mind when recognising the associations between Laudamia and Sappho. With her wax bust of Protesilaus, Laudamia overstates the point that the heroines are creators, not only in a general sense, but of the image of their men, as well. And as a creative writer Sappho is very much at home among these heroines.

⁴⁹⁹ Sharrock uses the Pygmalion-tale (*Met.* 10.243-97) as a deconstruction of the Roman erotic elegists moulding of their poetic *puella* and calls the process 'womanufacture' (1991a) 49. Holzberg renames the process of the reversed gender-order of the *Heroides* 'man-ufacturing' (2002) 76, 81. Penelope and Dido are Holzberg's most prominent examples, but Hardie shows that Laudamia is perhaps the most outstanding candidate for 'man-ufacturing' (Hardie does not apply this term) as the heroine acts as a tragic Pygmalion (2002b) 132-7.

3. The Writing Situation

As shown above, when considering Heroidean dynamics and Heroidean themes in relationship with the *Epistula Sapphus*, not much emerges that is truly anomalous; on the contrary, a strong affinity between all the Heroidean letters appears, all the more enforced by a rich web of verbal and semantic allusions. That the *Epistula Sapphus* also shares a fundamental writing situation with the other Ovidian *Heroides* is generally accepted, though of course not always. Fulkerson, for instance, thinks that:

Even a casual reading of *Heroides* 15 suggests that Sappho views herself differently from the women with whom she shares a corpus. [...] with Sappho poetry seems to gain priority over life. Sappho refers to herself in the *Heroides* 15 as an *auctor* (15.3), *poetria* (15.183 [...]), and *vates* (15.58, 15.205), to her right hand as *studiosus* (15.1) and to the letter as an *opus* (15.4) and a *carmen* (15.6). She boasts of her fame as a poet and remembers past poetic performances [...]. She also invokes a host of divinities associated with poetry with whom she has had long acquaintance and from whom she expects favours.⁵⁰⁰

Instead of exploring the proto-Ovidian tension between life and literature further, Fulkerson seems to regard Sappho as too much of a writer to be classified as one of the *Heroides*. But as Farrell observes: ‘In addition to being separated from the men they desire, these women share an additional, equally important trait: they are all writers. [...]’⁵⁰¹ Focussing on this trait Sappho’s poetic vocation and faculties make her not just pertinent to, but emblematic of, the entire *Heroides*. To make a more or less exhaustive list of the traits of the *Epistula Sapphus* that identify the letter’s author as a poet can safely be left to Fulkerson, who does it brilliantly in the passage quoted above. I would however like to add that every term she mentions is fitting not only for Sappho, but for Ovid as well. I will now examine the ways in which a combined poet and epistolographer is pertinent to the design of the *Heroides*, and again I will carry out my examination by means of comparing the *Epistula Sapphus* to the other *Heroides*, with some detours to the other works in Ovid’s early poetic career.

⁵⁰⁰ Fulkerson (2005) 153-4.

⁵⁰¹ Farrell continues: ‘Their writing expresses a range of personalities, motives, and fantasies. But they all write. I stress this simple fact first because it tends to get overlooked and second because it is crucial to remember that the *Heroides* is presented as a collection of texts produced by writing women. In order to make sense of this fact, we must first realize how strange it is.’ (1998) 310–1.

3.1. Letter and Literature

3.1.a) Taking to the Pen ...

An evident trait the *Heroides* share is the epistolary convention's formal criteria. Penelope, Ariadne and Laudamia open their letters rather conventionally. Penelope is sending *haec*, 'these words', to Ulysses, but ordering him to write nothing back, *nil mihi rescribas* (*Her.* 1.1-2), as she prefers to see him in person, rather than to receive his substitute in the form of a letter. And even though the isolated situation of Ariadne requires an extra imaginative effort for her letter to be sent off, she simply explains to her hero: *quae legis ex illo, Theseu, tibi litore mitto* (*Her.* 10.3). Laudamia too, starts out conventionally, however strangely elliptical, when she says about herself in the third person singular: *mittit et optat amans, quo mittitur, ire salutem/ Haemonis Haemonio Laudamia uiro* (*Her.* 13.1-2).⁵⁰²

Briseis, Phaedra, Oenone and Canace make use of the letter's conventions in a more creative way, either by mastering them beyond their boundaries, or by turning their personal disadvantages, for instance lack of knowledge of the addressee's language, into shrewd *captationes beneuolentiae*. For instance, the Lyrnesian Briseis' Latin letter to the great Greek hero, Achilles, starts like this:

quam **legis**, a rapta Briseide **littera** uenit,
uix bene **barbarica Graeca notata manu**.
Quaerumque aspicias, lacrimae fecere **lituras**;
sed tamen et lacrimae pondera uocis habent. (*Her.* 3.1-4)

[From stolen Briseis is the writing you read, scarce charactered in Greek by her barbarian hand. Whatever blots you shall see, her tears have made; but tears, too, have none the less the weight of words.]

Phaedra plays with the *salus* of a letter and the *salus* of a life, in her opening lines to Hippolytus:⁵⁰³

qua, nisi tu dederis, **caritura** est ipsa, **salutem**
mittit Amazonio Cressa puella uiro. (*Her.* 4.1-2)

[With wishes for the welfare which she herself, unless you give it her, will ever lack, the Cretan maid greets the hero whose mother was an Amazon.]

⁵⁰² Palmer (1898) 411.

⁵⁰³ For the ill-omened character of this opening, see Casali (1995) *passim*.

As Briseis, but much more self-assured, the Phrygian nymph Oenone plays on the differences in handwriting and, at the same time, on Paris' notorious cowardice in her letter to the Trojan prince:

Perlegis? an coniunx prohibet noua? **perlege:** non est
ista Mycenaea **littera** facta manu. (*Her.* 5.1-2)

[Will you read my letter through? or does your new wife forbid? Read – this is no letter writ by Mycenaean hand!]

Finally, the exordium of Canace's letter to her brother Macareus is particularly pointed as an act of writing and, I would add, a (suicidal) performance of art:

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 uideor duro posse placere patri.
ipse necis cuperem nostrae **spectator** adesset,
auctorisque oculis exigereetur **opus**. (*Her.* 11.1-8)

[If aught what I write is yet blotted deep and escapes your eye, 'twill be because the little roll has been stained by its mistress' blood. My right hand holds the pen, a drawn blade the other holds, and the paper lies unrolled in my lap. This is the picture of Aeolus' daughter writing to her brother; in this guise, it seems, I may please my hard-hearted sire. I would he himself were here to view my end, and the deed were done before the eyes of him who orders it!]

Again there is a certain kinship between absence and *enargeia* in as much as this extension is partly obtained through a kind of substitute discourse:⁵⁰⁴ Briseis and Oenone focus, like Sappho, on the language in which the extant Latin letter is *not* written, namely Greek. Like Sappho (*aspice, quam sit in hoc multa litura loco!* *Her.* 15.98), Briseis points out that blots caused by tears assume the communicative powers of the words they wash away. Not tears, but indeed blood will communicate in place of words in Canace's tragic and theatrical opening. Finally Phaedra too partakes in the discourse of absence, when she gloomily says that she will be deprived of *salus* if Hippolytus does not respond to her letter (*Her.* 4.1).

⁵⁰⁴ For 'enargeia' see Part Three, chapter 2.2.

Though highly cursory, this survey of the epistolary *exordia* shows that five of these eight letters, if the *Epistula Sapphus* is included, display (at least) an artistic elaboration of the formal criteria of the epistolary conventions.

3.1.b) ... Keeping to the Writing

In spite of the fact that the *Heroides* are referred to, singularly, as EPISTVLA by Ovid's future admirer (*Ars* 3.345) and collectively remind the reader of their epistolarity through conventional and contra-conventional features, the letter form remains somehow alien to the stories that the work relates. The epistolary *exordia* contribute to a tension between the epistolary form and their canonical content. So do the minor, but frequent insistences on the writing process, as well. A quick stroll through the elegiac epistolary collection will be instructive in order to see how this tension works.

Well into her letter, Penelope writes about her habit of giving letters to strangers so that they can give them to Ulysses if they should meet him somewhere: *quamque tibi reddat, si te modo uiderit usquam/ traditur huic digitis charta notata meis* (*Her.* 1.61-2). In Phyllis' letter there is nothing in particular that indicates her writing situation, while Briseis, as mentioned above, insists on the writing process through her comments on language and words blotted by tears. Phaedra does not only play with the twofold character of *salus* in the opening lines of her letter, but also explains how the god Amor made her take to the pen:

quidquid Amor iussit, non est contemnere tutum:
regnat et in dominos ius habet ille deos.
ille mihi primo dubitanti scribere dixit:
'scribe: dabit uictas ferreus ille manus'. (*Her.* 4.11-4)

[Whatever Love commands, it is not safe to hold for naught; his throne and law are over even the gods who are lords of all. 'Twas he who spoke to me when first I doubted if to write or no: "Write; the iron-hearted man will yield his hand."]

In this very Ovidian way, Phaedra's letter actually becomes a kind of *recusatio*, an apology, not for not writing something else, but for writing at all. Towards the end Phaedra also repeats her initial instruction to Hippolytus to read her letter through; cf. *perlege* (*Her.* 4.3) and *uerba precantis perlegis* (*Her.* 4.175-6).

Oenone is, as mentioned above, one of the contributors to the more artistic employment of the epistolarity in the *Heroides*, and continues to call attention to

writing as a phenomenon when she tells about the epigram that Paris incised in a tree when they were lovers:

incisae seruant 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!
popule, uiue, precor, quae consita margine ripae
hoc in rugoso cortice carmen habes:
CVM PARIS OENONE POTERIT SPIRARE RELICTA
AD FONTEM XANTHI VERSA RECVRRET AQVA. (*Her.* 5.21-30)

[The beeches still conserve my name carved on them by you, and I am read there Oenone, charactered by your blade; and the more the trunks, the greater grows my name. Grow on, rise high and straight to make my honours known! O poplar, ever live, I pray, that art planted by the marge of the stream and hast in thy seamy bark these verses: IF PARIS' BREATH SHALL FAIL NOT, ONCE OENONE HE DOTH SPURN, THE WATERS OF THE XANTHUS TO THEIR FOUNT SHALL BACKWARD TURN.]

Thus Oenone, in a brief passage, manages to dramatise, as Sappho does in the overture of her letter, the relationship between a text, a name and an identity. Simultaneously, Oenone links herself, the nymph who belongs to a pastoral idyll, to the grand and gruesome consequences of epics.⁵⁰⁵

It has been claimed that Sappho diverges from the other *Heroides* because she wants a letter from Phaon (on certain conditions that is, cf. *Her.* 15.219), but Hypsipyle too very much wants a letter from her hero.⁵⁰⁶ She would like to have received one, or even many, already, and she most probably would not mind getting a reply to the one she is currently writing.

⁵⁰⁵ The curse will be 'fulfilled' when Achilles slaughters so many men that their corpses block the Trojan flood as narrated in the *Iliad* (21), cf. Kennedy (2002) 224.

⁵⁰⁶ Fulkerson claims that [...] 'Penelope insists that Odysseus return rather than sending a letter [...]. Penelope's command, which serves as a model for the rest of the heroines, is disregarded by Sappho' who 'simply wants Phaon back' (2005) 157. Considering that Fulkerson dedicates several pages to what she calls the 'interference from the double *Heroides*' and thus includes the paired letters in her study, where heroes write to a heroine that replies, it is rather peculiar that Fulkerson states that '[m]en do not write in the *Heroides*, why then does Sappho want a letter?' (2002) 157. Actually, kept in its traditional place (with the support of *Am.* 2.18 and the *Florilegium Gallicum*), Sappho's letter becomes the very bridge between the single and the double epistles – where men *do* write! It is not out of place to have a heroine ask for a letter at the end of the single and just before the double *Heroides*. Sappho anticipates future letters from heroes, by asking for one, she creates a 'proem in the middle', cf. Conte (1992).

quamlibet aduerso signatur epistula uento.
 Hypsipyle missa digna salute fui.
 cur mihi fama prior de te quam littera uenit,
 [...]
 o ego si possem timide credentibus ista
 'ipse mihi scripsit' dicere, quanta forem! (*Her.* 6.7-16)

[but a letter is written, howe'er adverse the wind. Hypsipyle deserved the sending of a greeting. Why was it rumour brought me tidings of you, rather than lines from your hand? [...] Could I say to those who are slow to credit these reports, "He has written me this with his own hand," oh, how proud should I be!]

Dido is the first of the heroines who uses the term *scribentis imago*, towards the dramatic closure of her letter:

aspicias 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. (*Her.* 7.183-6)

[Could you but see now the face of her who writes these words! I write, and the Trojan's blade is ready in my lap. Over my cheeks the tears roll, and fall upon the drawn steel – which soon shall be stained with blood instead of tears.]

The peripeteia of Deianira's letter is taking place as she writes: *sed quid ego haec refero? scribenti nuntia uenit/ fama, uirum tunicae tabe perire meae* (*Her.* 9.143). The news of Hercules' agonizing death as he wears the clothes dyed in the blood of Nessus, divides Deianira's letter into two parts of stark contrasts, one comic-sarcastic, where Deianira reproaches her husband for wearing women's clothes and performing women's duties, the other seriously tragic, where the refrain *impia quid dubitas Deianira mori?* (*Her.* 9.146, 152, 158, 164) ends in her suicidal farewell to this life.⁵⁰⁷

Ariadne does not only open her letter with several hints at her writing situation (see above), she also begs Theseus to picture her as she clings to the rock whipped by the foaming sea, her hair all disarranged, her clothes soaked with tears and her *words* gliding under her trembling hand: *litteraque articulo pressa tremente labat* (*Her.* 10.140). And as already said, Canace describes the scene where she composes her letter very dramatically, and a curious observation is made by Medea on the relationship between doing and writing as she tries to relate the moment when she

⁵⁰⁷ With this refrain, which has caused several scholars to question the poem's authenticity, Deianira's epistle somehow occupies the same place within the *Heroides* as the elegy 1.6 does in the *Amores*. *Am* 1.6 – exactly like Deianira's letter – is the only poem in the collection that has a pentameter refrain which is repeated four times: *tempora noctis eunt; excute poste seram* (24, 32, 48, 56).

killed her own brother: *quod facere ausa mea est, non audet scribere dextra* (*Her.* 12.115). Laudamia ends her anxious epistle with the following words: *ultima mandato claudetur epistula paruo:/ si tibi cura mei, sit tibi cura tui* (*Her.* 13.165-6) and thus she provides her letter with a conventional closure. As in the case of Medea, Hypermestra – addressing not Lynceus, but her father – ponders on the differences between deeds and words, as her hand shrinks from describing the murder it has not even committed: *quam tu caede putes fungi potuisse mariti;/ scribere de facta non sibi caede timet* (*Her.* 14.18-9). She also lets her very imprisonment, as it were, finish off her letter, this time addressing her saved husband, Lynceus: *scribere plura libet, sed pondere lassa catenae/ est manus, et uires subtrahit ipse timor* (*Her.* 14.131-2).

As this brief survey shows, hints at the writing situation in the single *Heroides* are not overwhelmingly many. Embedded in larger narrative sections of mythological discourses belonging to the literary canon, they furthermore assume a paradoxically twofold function. As if the reader should be inclined to forget it, the few but frequent epistolary features seem to perform as some kind of reminder that these poems are also letters, and as such the epistolary traits are in a way pointing away from the canonical literature in which they appear. At the same time, the meta-poetical charge of these epistolary features compensates for such a break with the literary discourse, and therefore, perhaps to an even greater extent, again points to fiction. It is as if the epistolarity, extraneous to the very stories in which it works, breaks the poetic fiction and by doing so renders it fiction to an even higher degree, because it renders it truer – as fiction.

3.2. The Fictional Breakthrough

Just as epistolarity might be said to stir the fictional foundations of the *Heroides*, the heroines themselves tend to break loose from both their canonical *fabulae* and their writing situation. I would suggest that this happens in two ways that are perhaps most perspicuously dramatised in the *Epistula Sapphus*.

I will however start with Dido, who in the middle of her letter is called upon by her former husband Sychaeus, and it is as if she actually goes to his marble temple, and begs him for forgiveness:

exige, laese pudor, poenas, uiolataque lecti
 iura nec ad cineres fama retenta meos, 97a
 uosque, mei manes, animaeque cinisque Sychaei 97b
 ad quem, me miseram, plena pudoris eo.
 est mihi marmorea sacratus in aede Sychaeus;
 appositae frondes uelleraque alba tegunt.
 hinc ego me sensi noto quater ore citari;
 ipse sono tenui dixit ‘Elissa, ueni!’
 nulla mora est, venio, uenio tibi debita coniunx;
 sum tamen admissi tarda pudore mei.
 da ueniam culpae [...] (Her. 7.96-105)⁵⁰⁸

[Exact the penalty of me, O purity undone! – [the marriage’s broken vows and my name which I did not keep safe until my ashes, and you, my ancestors’ spirits, and Sychaeus’ soul and ash to which] now I go – ah me, wretched I am, and overcome with shame! Standing in shrine of marble is an image of Sychaeus I hold sacred – in the midst of green fronds hung about, and fillets of white wool. From within it four times I have heard myself called by a voice well known; ‘twas he himself crying in faintly sounding tone: “Elissa, come!” I delay no longer, I come: I come thy bride, thine own by right; I am late, but ‘tis for shame of my fault confessed. Forgive me my offence! [...].]

It is quite remarkable that Dido says that she is walking to a particular place in her palace, as she writes. It should not be possible, but the very impracticality confirms that everything is possible in the imaginary universe of literature.

Dido is not the only one of the *Heroides* who behaves like this. As already mentioned, Deianira describes a radical change in her life that accordingly changes her letter. Ariadne not only writes in spite of almost everything; in most of her letter she is running around at what seems to be the very same moment as she writes. The passage where she describes how she returns to the love scene, the bed, is perhaps most representative of her ceaseless movements:⁵⁰⁹

saepe torum repeto, qui nos acceperat ambo,
 sed non acceptos exhibiturus erat,
 et tua, quae possum, pro te uestigia tango,
 strataque, quae membris intepuere tuis.
 incumbo lacrimisque toro manante profusis
 ‘pressimus’, exclamo ‘te duo: redde duos!’
 uenimus huc ambo; cur non discedimus ambo?
 perfide, pars nostri, lectule, maior ubi est?’ (Her. 10.51-8)⁵¹⁰

⁵⁰⁸ The passage has numerous difficulties, cf. Knox (1995) 218-9.

⁵⁰⁹ As astutely observed by Barchiesi who compares the Heroidean Ariadne with Catullus’ 64: ‘This new Ariadne [Her. 10] is more restless and dynamic than any other heroine: she runs around, climbs up rocks, shouts, gesticulates – just as if she had been let out of a prison, the prison of the static character of the Catullan ekphrasis.’ (1993) 346.

⁵¹⁰ This scene shares many similarities with Her. 15.157-36, cf. Knox (1995) 304.

[Oft do I come again to the couch that once received us both, but was fated never to show us together again, and touch the imprint left by you – ‘tis all I can in place of you! – and the stuffs that once grew warm beneath your limbs. I lay me down upon my face, bedew the bed with pouring tears, and cry aloud: “We were two who pressed thee – give back two! We came to thee both together; why do we not depart the same? Ah, faithless bed – the greater part of my being, oh, where is he?”]

As in the case of Dido the passage in which the present tense is combined with a very vivid description of the heroine’s actions is followed by an intense reflection on their miserable states and circumstances, a reflection that smoothes the transition between the momentary break with the writing situation and the rest of the letter. The same structure is found in Briseis’ letter, who even asks: *an miseros tristis fortuna tenaciter urget,/ nec uenit inceptis mollior hora malis?* (*Her.* 3.43-4) before she recounts Achilles’ sack of her hometown and slaughtering of her family. Likewise Sappho poses a similar question before she tells of her life’s miseries: *an grauis inceptum peragit fortuna tenorem/ et manet in cursu semper acerba suo?* (*Her.* 15.59-60).

The most complex letter as regards different levels of fiction, including fictional breaks, is in many ways the *Epistula Sapphus*. In order to see how, it should be useful to take one step back and look more closely at the relationship between Hypermestra, who is the penultimate heroine (*Her.* 14), and Sappho, the last of this collection of epistolary elegies.

3.2.a) *Mytho-Psychological Negotiations. Hypermestra and Sappho*

Now, Sappho is a poet, and thus the embodiment of the *scribentis imago* of the epistolary collection, furthermore she is both a legendary and historical figure and as such she fits in well too, not only because of the tense canonical and self-consciously metapoetic dynamics of the work, but also because she represents a poetic opportunity to accentuate the psychological realism so curiously intrinsic to the *Heroides*.⁵¹¹

Of all the interesting psychologically complex pictures that are drawn of the *Heroides*, there is one which, arguably, stands out. Whereas most heroines are concerned with their own desperation, one heroine, Hypermestra, tries to imagine how another must have felt in a deeply desperate situation.

⁵¹¹ For psychology and myth in Ovid’s early poetic career, see Armstrong (2005) 105-14.

As Fulkerson astutely points out, Hypermestra's letter is not even about love.⁵¹² Seemingly addressed just as much to her father as to her newly wed husband and cousin, Lynceus, she most dramatically tells of how she tried to obey her father's orders and kill her sleeping spouse (*Her.* 14.45-50). Instead she woke him up and advised him to flee in the middle of the night (*Her.* 14.73-4). No less dramatic is Hypermestra's account of what happened when her father discovered that there were only 49 corpses the next morning:

mane erat, et Danaus generos ex aede iacentis
 dinumerat: summae criminis unus abes.
 fert male cognatae iacturam mortis in uno
 et queritur facti sanguinis esse parum.
 abstrahor a patriis pedibus, raptamque capillis
 – haec meruit pietas praemia – carcer habet. (*Her.* 14.79-84).

[‘Twas early morn, and Danaus counted o’er his sons-in-law that lay there slain. You alone lack to make the crime complete. He bears ill the loss of a single kinsman’s death, and complains that too little blood was shed. I am seized by the hair, and dragged from my father’s feet – such reward my love for duty won! – and thrust in gaol.]

Apparently imprisoned (cf. the chain that fatigues her hand in the last line), Hypermestra thinks about Io and has a strange way of identifying with her ancestor, whose story is retold in the *Metamorphoses* (1.583-750). Hypermestra does not think that they share a common lot, but rather that the lot of Io was severe enough to spare the rest of the family further punishment. After this rather rebellious reflection, in which Hypermestra actually accuses Juno of unjust vengeance if that is also the cause of her present misery too, she recreates, as it were, Io’s psychological state when she discovered that she had been changed into a heifer (*Her.* 14.85-110). The passage, that takes up 22 lines of a total of 132, puts exclusive emphasis on the mental and emotional reactions of Io; cf. *territa/ territa* (92), *infelix* (93), *stupefacta* (97), *times* (98) and *insana* (108). In addition to these emphatic descriptions, the passage includes pathetic apostrophes, only to be rejected in their entirety as irrelevant to Hypermestra:

ultima quid referam, quorum mihi cana senectus
 auctor? dant anni, quod querar, ecce mei (*Her.* 14.109-10)

⁵¹² Fulkerson (2005) 79.

[Why do I talk of far-off things, told me by hoary eld? My own years, look you, give me matter for lament.]

A number of scholars have doubted the authenticity of the entire passage.⁵¹³ Hypermestra's latest editor claims however that:

The lines should undoubtedly be kept. This is a fine example of a familiar myth being recast by an Ovidian heroine [...] she acts *as a poet* [...]. This Io arises out of Hypermestra's own experience, and her condition is allegorically linked to Hypermestra's.⁵¹⁴

Reeson's claim is valid, but it is valid only to a certain point, since Hypermestra eventually disqualifies the myth's relevance to herself. Despite the strong empathy and psychological understanding Hypermestra shows her ancestor, I would say that she also executes a particular kind of demythification that all the heroines have contributed to in the course of the entire collection of epistolary elegies. 'The slightly odd phrase', Hinds says, referring to the couplet 109-10 'looks like an 'Alexandrian footnote.' Hinds furthermore suggests that

[t]he story which Hypermestra claims to have heard from *cana senectus* will presumably have been derived from an *auctor* (note the word's suggestiveness: 'author' as well as 'authority') of the literary kind.⁵¹⁵

Hinds then goes on to propose that a hint at the identity of this author is hidden in the description of old age as *cana*, 'white-haired', and that Ovid refers, by the principle of identifying things *a contrariis*, to someone who has no hair at all, like the poet Calvus, who also wrote the now lost epyllion about the myth of Io.⁵¹⁶ Without excluding this interpretation, which may very well be allusively embedded in the phrase *cana senectus / auctor*, I would like to point out an additional possibility.

When Hypermestra implicitly questions the justification of the goddess Juno's enduring anger, she shares a scepticism towards divine fatalism with many of the epistolographers in the *Heroides*, and in picturing Io's psyche, she blatantly does what Ovid himself does as the writer of the heroines' letters. I would furthermore suggest

⁵¹³ For these scholars, see Palmer (1898) 89. Jäkel claims that: '[...] the way in which the Io-episode and the contents of the letter are linked seems artificial [sic] – not organic' (1973) 243.

⁵¹⁴ Reeson (2001) 283, my italics.

⁵¹⁵ Hinds (1987b) 18.

⁵¹⁶ Hinds (1987b) 18-19.

that the use of *auctor* to describe ‘hoary old age’ points towards *auctoris nomina Sappho* in the following letter.⁵¹⁷ Within the range of these very different applications of the very same word, it is as if myth as an undefined mass of legends is being transformed into the artistic inventions of authors that Ovid playfully claims that myths are for example in *Am.* 3.12.⁵¹⁸ In this way, too, the *Epistula Sapphus* becomes the very embodiment of a tension that vibrates through the entire epistolary collection of elegies, and that is well prepared through Hypermestra’s letter.

3.2.b) Sappho’s Fictional Breakthrough

Myths and psychological realism stand out as properties of poetry in this Heroidean game, which is taken even further in the *Epistula Sapphus*, in as much as the poem contains elements of Sappho’s historical biography. By combining facts from the poet’s life, the destiny she was endowed with in Attic New Comedy and a radically open end, the movement from myth to psychology swings back to myth again, this time in the form of Sappho’s legendary afterlife. Thus the transformations of life into art, or realism into illusions, and back, have no conclusion in this Ovidian *perpetuum carmen*. Between Sappho’s autobiography (*Her.* 15.59-78) and her legendary leap from the Leucadian rock (*Her.* 15.175-8), we can follow several stages that contribute to these Ovidian dynamics.

As already mentioned, none of the *Heroides* performs her fictional breakthrough as thoroughly as Sappho, though she is in good company. In the section between her *historia calamitatum* and her halt, as it were, at the edge of the Leucadian rock, we firstly find the much discussed departure scene. I would like to repeat that in as much as Sappho explicitly *imagines* the departure scene, she enhances the rhetorical and creative aspects of this form of *paraklausithyron* in the *Heroides*.⁵¹⁹ Of course, this scene is surprisingly civilized compared to the wild frenzy that Sappho tells Phaon that she was possessed by when she realised that she had been abandoned. The juxtaposition of a civilised and imaginary departure with a passage that relates the uncontrolled grief that was the consequence of the real departure is as incoherent as, for instance, Oenone’s treatment of the mock ‘rapes’ of Helen and the violent rape of herself (cf. *Her.* 5.131-2 and 139-45). But the incoherence seems to imply a

⁵¹⁷ For the unique significance of these occurrences of *auctor*, see Part One, chapter 1.4, a) and b).

⁵¹⁸ Because, *exit in immensum fecunda licentia uatum* (*Am.* 3.12.41).

⁵¹⁹ For the Heroidean ‘paraklausithyron’, see Part Three, chapter, 2.1.

feigned lack of control on Sappho's part; she tries to convince Phaon that he had no reason *not* to say goodbye to her. It is true that she would have cried and kissed him, but otherwise she would just have begged him not to forget her (*Her.* 15.106). In short, he had nothing to fear. The hysterical grief she describes shortly afterwards is only a proof that she loves him, as a mother loves her child, to be precise.

In the subsequent passage Sappho narrates her daily and nightly habits as an abandoned heroine (cf. *saepe, saepe* in *Her.* 15.127-8). Despite the fact that Phaon has left her, he is still accessible to her in her dreams: *illic te inuenio quamuis regionibus absis*. Taking into consideration the fantastic state that dreams usually involve, I would like to draw attention to the verb *inuenio*, which suggests that Sappho almost 'invents' Phaon.⁵²⁰ Sappho is not the only heroine who has nocturnal visions in relationship to her lover. Dido tells how she sees the face of Aeneas both day and night: *Aenean animo noxque diesque refert* (*Her.* 7.26). Deianira sees all kinds of Herculean monsters as she keeps tossing around on her bed: *iter serpentes aprosque avidosque leones/ iactor et haesuros terna per ora canes* (*Her.* 9.37-8).⁵²¹ Laudamia combines nocturnal fear and pleasure and thus anticipates the erotic dreams of Sappho:

aucupor in lecto mendaces caelibe somnos;⁵²²
 dum careo ueris, gaudia falsa iuuant.
 sed tua cur nobis pallens occurit imago?
 cur uenit a uerbis multa querella latens? (*Her.* 13.107-10)

[I, in my widowed couch, can only court a sleep with lying dreams; while true joys fail me, false ones must delight. But why does your face, all pale appear before me? Why from your lips comes many a complaint?]

Sappho's dream boy generates few nocturnal worries, but instead real life sensations, even orgasms, and words: *uerisque simillima uerba* (*Her.* 15.131). It is as if her dream language turns into this poem's fiction as the dream itself ends 'when Titan shows himself and everything with him' (*Her.* 15.135).⁵²³ It is telling that when the dream finishes and Phaon is again taken away from her, as it were, she complains, using a term that is programmatic to the elegiac genre – *queror* (*Her.* 15.136).

⁵²⁰ Cf. *OLD* (957.7). For Sappho's 'invention' of Phaon, see Part Three, chapter 2.2.b).

⁵²¹ For attestations of *iactari* in this sense, see Palmer (1898) 362.

⁵²² The expression *caelibe lecto* is, in the inversed word order, also to be found in Catullus 68.6.

⁵²³ I am grateful to Prof. S. Harrison for this formulation.

When the dream ends, Sappho's daily habits begin, cf. *saepe* again (*Her.* 15.143) and the frequentative perfects *incubui* and *tetigi* (*Her.* 15.149). Sappho runs, as was apparently her usual custom, like a wild bacchant to the places where she finds, *inuenio* (*Her.* 15.143) the woods where she and Phaon made love: *antra nemusque peto, tamquam nemus antraque prosint*.⁵²⁴ The *somnia candidiora die* (*Her.* 15.124) that allowed her to find Phaon are not there to help her conjure up her lover during daytime, and so she realises that she does *not* find the lord of the woods and herself, *non inuenio* (*Her.* 15.145). She therefore lets the grass, which previously provided the lovers with their bed, drink her tears (*Her.* 15.150). Curiously enough, no birds sing in this idyllic landscape: *et nullae dulce queruntur aues* (*Her.* 15.152). The statement becomes particularly arresting since it represents an inversion of a *locus similis* in *Am.* 3.1 where birds sing sweetly everywhere: *et latere ex omni dulce queruntur aues* (*Her.* 15.4). I will return to the rich and fascinating relationship between these poems in the next part, but for now I would like to suggest that the singing birds of the *Amores* imbue this overtly metapoetic and programmatic poem with a realistic colour. Similarly, the absence of birds contributes to uncovering the *Heroides* as truly poetic fiction, which has been astutely concealed in fragile, but verisimilar writing situations throughout the epistolary collection of elegies. It is not natural, but *poetic* that no birds sing other than the nightingale – and that Sappho joins in with her songs of lost love. This poetic setting takes up the hexameter of a couplet in which the pentameter is introduced by the abrupt *hactenus*, ‘that is all, everything else is silent as if in the middle of a night’, *ut media cetera nocte silent* (*Her.* 15.155). As Sappho's dreams about Phaon make clear, the night, as opposed to the day, facilitates fantasies and imagination, and it seems particularly apt to compare the nightly setting in which Sappho habitually finds herself with the particular night just prior to her going to a sacred well, where something will happen that breaks her habitual life, an event that will not be repeated, unlike all the other real and imaginary actions that she has told of until this point.

est nitidus uitroque magis perlucidus omni
 fons sacer (hunc multi numen habere putant),
 quem supra ramos expandit aquatica lotos,

⁵²⁴ ‘L’inutile ricerca di un *remedium* resiste ancora, nell’Eroide – ma che sia una ricerca votata al fallimento lo dice proprio un segnale allusivo al fallimento di Gallo.’ Bessone (2003) 227. For a further exploration of this allusion to Gallus in Virgil’s tenth *Eclogue*, see Bessone (2003) 227-9.

una nemus; tenero caespite terra uiret.
 hic ego cum lassos posuissem flebilis artus,
 constitit ante oculos Naias una meos.
 constitit et dixit: 'quoniam non ignibus aequis
 ureris [...]' (Her. 15.157-63)

[There is a sacred spring, bright and more transparent than any crystal – many think a spirit dwells therein – above which a watery lotus spreads its branches wide, a grove all in itself; the earth is green with tender turf. Here I had laid my wearied limbs and given way to tears, when there stood before my eyes a Naiad. She stood before me, and said: “Since thou art burning with unrequited flame [...].]

I read *est* as indicative of a poetic realism typical of this poem. *Est* is of course common and would hardly be reserved for certain cases charged with a particular kind of meaning, but when rereading the beginning of this poem, the use of *est* arguably helps in seeing more clearly what is real and unreal to the Heroidean Sappho. Through the repetitive negations that follow in the next lines, cf. *nec mihi* (Her. 15.13), *nec me* (15) and *non [...] est* (18) Sappho stresses that her former love for Lesbian girls does not exist. It is no longer real to her. Following this insistence on what is not, the *est* in the following line becomes very pointed: *est in te* [i.e. Phaon] *facies [...]* (Her. 15.21). In spite of Phaon’s physical absence, his beauty is then ever present to Sappho. Phaon’s paradoxical state is underscored through his potential to become Sappho’s vatic deities, Apollo and Bacchus (Her. 15.23). The possible metamorphoses reveal Phaon’s intimate association with Sappho’s vocation as a writer. Tellingly, Phaon is as real as her own fame as a poet: *nomen [...] est mihi* (Her. 15.21-34).

The *est* in the passage quoted above announces, together with the divine setting, a theophany and oracular vision.⁵²⁵ Theophanies are quite frequent in Ovid’s early poetic career. In the *Ars Amatoria* the vatic gods Bacchus (1.525-64) and Apollo (2.493-510) enter the poem successively, and in the third book the *praeceptor* tells of how Venus ordered him to teach the art of love to women. The way in which Ovid describes Venus’ epiphany closely resembles the appearance of Sappho’s Naiad (see above): [...] *sed me Cytherea docere/ iussit et ante oculos constitit ipsa meos* (*Ars*

⁵²⁵ In *Amores* 3.1 the goddesses Elegia and Tragoedia appear to Ovid in a landscape that very much resembles the one where Sappho lies, cf. Part Three, chapter 4.1. The two poets are then in a poetic realm, exposed to supernatural powers. *Naso poeta* is strolling around pondering on what to write, while Sappho is lying down and perhaps even sleeping when the divine being appears. Dörrie regards Sappho’s sleep and vision not as a vain delusion, but as an incubation dream that vouches for the truthfulness of the dream’s content. Cf. Dörrie (1975) 155.

3.43-4).⁵²⁶ Cupid speaks both at the beginning and the middle of the *Remedia Amoris*, and there are also striking affinities as well between Ovid's Cupid and Sappho's Naiad, in as much as both divinities preach a cure for love. After the epiphany of the Naiad, Sappho uses the present tense:

ut monuit, cum uoce abiit; ego territa surgo,
nec lacrimas oculi continuere mei.
ibimus, o nympe, monstrataque saxa petemus;
sit procul insano uictus amore timor!
quidquid erit, melius quam nunc erit. aura subito
et mea non magnum corpora pondus habe. (*Her.* 15.173-8)

[Her warning given, she ceased her speech, and vanished; in terror I arose, and my eyes could not keep back their tears. I shall go, O nymph, to seek out the cliff thou toldst of; away with fear – my maddening passion casts it out. Whatever shall be, better 'twill be than now! Come, breeze, and bear up my body: it is no heavy weight.]

Sappho is no longer describing her regular habits, and *surgo* seems to capture a moment of getting up and stepping out. True, when Sappho states that her eyes could no longer keep her tears from flowing she uses the perfect tense *continuere*, but a kind of instant 'now' is enforced by the subsequent future tense *ibimus*. Sappho's desperate and confused finale somehow seems to be acted out at the edge of the Leucadian rock, where it is as if she is looking at the sea as she ponders on whether the Leucadian waters could be her death or not: *ut mihi Leucadiae fata petantur aquae* (15.220). Her suicide is anything but certain; she only hints at such a solution in line 176, but immediately asks the wind, *aura*, to rescue her (*Her.* 15.176), then she begs Amor for help (*Her.* 15.179-80), and – less directly – Phoebus (*Her.* 15.181-4), not to mention Phaon himself (cf. *Her.* 15.185-90). And as if to demonstrate her deep desperation she even turns to the Lesbian women for help, trying to bribe even them with her poetic talent, echoing (as already mentioned) a Propertian line which Ovid uses again elsewhere: *efficite, ut redeat: uates quoque uestra redibit;/ ingenio uires ille dat ille rapit* (*Her.* 15.205-6). From Sappho's point of view nothing is certain, something which becomes particularly perspicuous through the repeated *siue* in line 211 (*siue redis*) and 217 (*siue iuuat longe fugisse Pelasgida Sappho*). By means of uncertainty and multifarious strategies this poem shrewdly recognises that even if the legendary

⁵²⁶ Paris narrates the appearance of Mercury with similar words: *constitit ante oculos actus uelocibus alis* (*Her.* 16.61).

life story of Sappho would have her commit suicide, the very fact that a fictitious biography has come to life proves that her destiny can change again.

4. Images of the Writer.

The Epistula Sapphus, the Amores and Ars Amatoria

In the preceding chapters I have mainly focused on the meaningful relationship between the different Heroidean letters, with special attention to *Heroides* 15. But as several detours to the other works in Ovid's poetic career have shown, there are interesting parallels between *Heroides* 15 and both the *Amores* and the *Ars Amatoria*, too. In order to explore more closely the relationship between the former of these works, this chapter will be dedicated to three of the *Amores*' images of the poet that by means of allusion reflect the *Epistula Sapphus*. The reflections between these *scribentis imagines* foreground furthermore a certain tension which is typical of the Ovidian elegy and which facilitates the understanding of the *Heroides* and the *Amores* as complementary parts in the greater design of Ovid's literary career.

4.1. Elegy

Most of Ovid's career is of course moulded in the elegiac distich, and this metrical form is perhaps the most evident feature that the *Heroides* and the *Amores* have in common. How the latter work abides strictly by the established *topoi* of the Roman elegiac genre has been successfully demonstrated by for example McKeown (1987, 1989, 1998), and Spoth (1992) has effectively argued that Ovid's *ignotum opus* is an elegiac variation in keeping with Ovid's 'metamorphotische Poetik' on the same *topoi*.⁵²⁷ To point out that there is a rich web of allusions between the two first elegiac works in Ovid's poetic career certainly runs the risk of 'reinventing the wheel'. It should however be possible to avoid some of this risk if these allusions are related to

⁵²⁷ McKeown convincingly argues against the common view that the *Amores* are primarily an elegiac parody (1987) 17-8. Spoth's *Ovids Heroides als Elegien* is certainly not the only contribution to the knowledge of the elegiac character of the *Heroides*, but I mention him here because his study is dedicated to the entire collection of the *Heroides* and aims at making amends for the faulty approach that 'Entweder betrachtete man die Heroides ohne ihre Gattung oder die Gattung ohne die Heroides' (1992) 12.

the *Epistula Sapphus*, which is excluded from the very beginning of Spoth's study.⁵²⁸ Such an approach will of course not be a complete novelty. Jacobson (1974) reflects on the similarities between *Heroides* 15 and the *Amores*, and Holzberg (2002) suggests that the entire structure of the *Amores* is repeated in the *Epistula Sapphus*.⁵²⁹ I will make use of Holzberg's attractive observation in the subsequent section in a less linear order and start the subsequent investigation of the relationship between the *Amores* and the *Heroides* – viewed through the *Epistula Sapphus* – with a closer look at the genre herself, Elegia, as she appears in person to the poet in the third book of the *Amores*.

In a setting which notoriously resembles Sappho's surroundings just before she has her vision, Elegia advises Naso to pursue his elegiac project. At the same time she accuses her proud rival Tragedy of not being able to bear what she herself, as a humble genre, has had to suffer:

uel quotiens foribus duris infixā pependi
 non uerita a populo praetereunte legi!
 quin ego me memini, dum custos saeuus abiret,
 ancillae miseram delituisse sinu.
 quid, cum me munus natali mittis, at illa
 rumpit et apposita barbara mergit aqua? (*Am.* 3.1.53-8)

[[or] have I been fastened to unyielding doors, not shaming there to be read by the passer by! Nay, once I remember going through agonies hid in a servant's bosom till the fierce guard went. How, when you send me as a birthday gift, and my dear barbarian rends me, and drowns me in the water standing near?]

In addition to a marvellously smooth and Ovidian way of employing several degrees of personification, involving the elegiac genre as goddess and the goddess as the

⁵²⁸ Cf. (1992) 9, footnote 2. The *Epistula Sapphus* is however mentioned several times in brackets, cf. p. 30 footnote 11, p. 139, 174 footnote 6, p. 88, footnote 15, p. 105, footnote 10 and p. 134, footnote 27.

⁵²⁹ Jacobson does not depict the author of the *Epistula Sapphus* in a very positive way, and he says that: 'Paramount here is the artist's vision of himself, arrogant and egocentric.' (1974) 287. As the term 'himself' makes clear, Jacobson sees Ovid in Sappho, which makes him conclude his chapter on the *Epistula Sapphus* thus: 'A Sappho who is supposed to sound authentic, by virtue of many Graecisms and characteristic themes and motifs; but, on the other hand, a Sappho who in many respects sounds like the Ovid of the *Amores*. The real Sappho, with keen aesthetic sensibilities and subtle feelings for love and beauty, has degenerated into a grotesque pursuer of material luxury and corporeal lust' (1974) 297. Holzberg has a much more constructive take on both Ovid and the Heroidean Sappho as he convincingly argues that the passage *Her.* 15.1-8 corresponds especially to *Am.* 1.1 and that *Her.* 15.9-96 is similar to *Amores* book 1, furthermore that the verse lines *Her.* 15.97-156 correspond to *Amores* book 2, whereas the remainder of the *Epistula Sapphus*, introduced with a divine epiphany that echoes the epiphanies of *Am.* 3.1, recalls *Amores* book 3, cf. (2002) 85-6.

genre's material conditions, the Muse's observations also bear on affinities between the elegiac poem and other cognate phenomena, especially the letter.

In the *Amores* a letter easily slips into a realistic setting, for instance when Naso *poeta* complains to the eunuch Bagoas because he guards the girl he wants to meet, a girl whom he made acquaintance with only the day before:

hesterna uidi spatiantem luce puellam
illa quae Danai porticus agmen habet.
protinus, ut placuit, misi scriptoque rogavi;
rescripsit trepida 'non licet' illa manu [...] (*Am.* 2.3-6)

[Yesterday I saw the fair one walking in the portico – the one that has the train of Danaus. Forthwith – for I was smitten – I sent and asked for her favours in a note. She wrote back with trembling hand: “It is not possible!”]

The letter shares the material conditions that the goddess *Elegia* dwells upon in her apologetic lament. This is a common trait which is particularly elaborated in *Amores* 1.12, the last poem in the diptych where Naso *poeta* curses his letter, because the first poem has failed to give him access to his mistress:

ite hinc, difficiles, funebria ligna, tabellae,
tuque, negaturis cera referta notis,
quam, puto, de longae collectam flore cicutae
melle sub infami Corsica misit apis.
at tamquam minio penitus medicata rubebas:
ille color uere sanguinolentus erat.
proiectae triuiis iaceatis, inutile lignum,
uosque rotae frangat praetereuntis onus. (*Am.* 1.12.6-14)

[Away from me, ill-natured tablets, funeral pieces of wood, and you, wax close writ with characters that will say me nay! – wax which I think was gathered from the flower of the long hemlock by the bee of Corsica and sent us under its ill-famed honey. Yet you had a blushing hue, as if tintured deep with minium – but that colour was really a colour from blood. Lie there at the crossing of the ways, where I throw you, useless sticks, and may the passing wheel with its heavy load crush you!]

The poet continues with numerous suggestions about the cruel or boring applications that the letter's wood and wax must have been subject to, before he concludes: *ergo ego uos rebus duplices pro nomine sensi:/ auspicii numerus non erat ipse boni* (*Am.* 1.12, 27-8).⁵³⁰ Hardie explores profoundly the dynamics of duplicity (cf. *duplices*) in

⁵³⁰ The conclusion is in keeping with both the typically Ovidian metonymic plays, in the case of *Elegia* above, and *inter alia* the replicated key, *adulter*, in the *Ars Amatoria*. 3.645.

terms of Ovidian poetics of illusion.⁵³¹ Due to the material similarities between the letter and the elegiac poem, I would suggest that the term *duplex* also could be taken as a hint at the Ovidian elegy's character which tends to involve elements of sharp contrast, like combination of the low and lofty in the subsequent passage.

As already mentioned, the Heroidean Sappho is aware of her physical shortcomings and admits that she is neither fair, tall nor white: *si mihi difficilis formam natura negavit [...] sum brevis [...] candida si non sum [...]* (*Her.* 15.31-5). But as the repeated *si* indicates, Sappho still claims to be a match for the dazzling Phaon because her inner qualities compensate for her lack of exterior beauty, and because opposites notoriously attract each other (cf. *Her.* 15.35-8). Likewise, Naso *poeta* admits that he is no equal to Corinna's divine appearance in *Amores* 2.17. But, like Sappho, he argues:

non, tibi si facies nimium dat in omnia regni
 (o facies oculos nata tenere meos!),
 collatum idcirco tibi me contemnere debes:
 aptari magnis inferiora licet. (*Am.* 2.17.11-4)

[Not even if your charms do give you pride and promise of empire – O charms born to captivate my eyes! – should you therefore scorn me when compared with yourself; lesser things may be fitted to the great.]

The parenthetical exclamation recalls Sappho's *o facies oculis insidiosa meis!* (*Her.* 15.22), and Naso *poeta* will also – like the Lesbian poetess and the *praeceptor amoris* – use the poetic talent as his strongest argument to choose him (cf. *Am.* 2.17.27-8, not without threat).⁵³² But before Naso presents the advantages of taking a poet-lover, he mentions that goddesses like Calypso, Thetis, Egeria and Venus have found less beautiful and/or mortal men worthy of their amorous attention, and: *carminis hoc ipsum genus impar, sed tamen apte/ iungitur herous cum breuiore modo* (*Am.* 2.17.21-2). The female divinities and the heroic hexameter verse are thus located at the same lofty level, just like the inferior male lovers and the limping pentameter are relegated to a pettier plane, only to be famously paired with each other in the embrace of elegy. Certainly, the *Amores* are elegiac and their literary characteristics stand centre stage throughout the entire collection. But as *Amores* 2.17 suggests, one of

⁵³¹ Hardie (2002b) 1-3.

⁵³² Cf., *sunt mihi pro magno felicia carmina censu,/ et multae per me nomen habere uolunt./ noui aliquam, quae se circumferat esse Corinnam;/ ut fiat, quid non illa dedisse uelit?* *Am.* 2.17.27-30.

these characteristics points to the *Heroides*, which, by virtue of their mythical and legendary content, become a particular realisation of a most Ovidian predilection for the loftier paired with the lower, the male with the female, human with divine and the sad with the jolly.

Whereas the elegiac genre is, as it were, ‘all over’ the *Amores*, it is mentioned explicitly only once in the *Ars Amatoria* (1.264) and only once in the *Heroides* (*Her.* 15.7).⁵³³ The very rarity of these metapoetic comments in these elegiac works is striking, but with the self-characterisation of Elegia in mind, one should hesitate to draw the conclusion that these works are accordingly of a *less* elegiac character. When Elegia associates herself with the material conditions of letters in the *Amores*, this not only links her to written missives of the elegiac collection in which she appears, but points to the elegiac epistles of the *Heroides* as well. Likewise Elegia’s comical complaint and erotodidactic concerns anticipate in many ways the *Ars Amatoria*. I will return to the elegiac character of the *Ars* in relationship with the *Epistula Sapphus*, but for now, I would like to point out that when Sappho enters the community of Ovidian heroines, she has already made the transition from lyrics to elegy and her elegiac awareness is accordingly acute. Despite the possibility that the historical Sappho may have written elegies, the Ovidian Sappho makes a clear distinction between her former identity as a composer of lyrical poems (and lover of women) and her current status as a writing elegist (and mistress of Phaon).

Furthermore, her potential *alter ego* as a Roman elegist is arguably present in the opening *recusatio* of the *Amores*: both *Amores* 1.1 and *Heroides* 15 narrate how their authors came to be elegists. In the case of Naso this transformation has famously been brought about *not* by his falling in love, which is the regular prerequisite for becoming a Roman erotic elegist, but (so they say) by a laughing Cupid’s metrical intervention: *rississe Cupido/ dicitur atque unum surripuisse pedem* (*Am.* 1.1.3-4). The divine theft urges the poet to rebuke the *puer* of Love, employing a kind of variation on the Gallo-Virgilian motto *omnia uincit amor*:

sunt tibi magna, puer, nimiumque potentia regna:
 cur opus affectas ambitiose nouum?
 an, quod ubique, tuum est? tua sunt Heliconia tempe?
 uix etiam Phoebus iam lyra tuta sua est? (*Am.* 1.1.13-6)

⁵³³Cf., *hactenus, unde legas quod ames, ubi retia ponas, praecipit imparibus uecta Thalea rotis*, *Ars* 1.263-4, *Her.* 15.7, *flendus amor meus est: elegi quoque flebile carmen*.

[Thou hast an empire of thine own – great, yea, all too potent; why dost lay claim to new powers, ambitious boy? Or is everything, wheresoever, thine? Thine are the vales of Helicon? Is even the lyre of Phoebus scarce longer safely his own?]

Now, in *Heroides* 15 Apollo's lyre is his and Sappho's *communia munera* (*Her.* 15.181), and their shared ownership is furthermore emphasised through the votive inscription that Sappho says that she will write if she survives the leap from the Leucadian rock, GRATA LYRAM POSVI TIBI, PHOEBE, POETRIA SAPPHO/ CONVENTIT ILLA MIHI CONVENTIT ILLA TIBI (*Her.* 15.183-4). Just as Naso *poeta* becomes the proof that Cupid has conquered the realm of epics, the Heroidean Sappho testifies to the claim that 'not even Apollo's lyre could be safe' from the god of Love (all the while they perhaps never were anything but the elegist Ovid in the first place).

Towards the end of his poem Naso *poeta* concedes that the god rules in his formerly careless mind, *in uacuo pectore regnat Amor* (*Am.* 1.1.26). Sappho uses a similar image as well when she explains that she is unable to compose lyrics, because this kind of poetry requires a careless mind, *nec mihi, dispositis quae iungam carmina neruis, / proueniunt; uacuae carmina mentis opus* (*Her.* 15.13-14). The end of both poets' carelessness is due to a flaming feeling, and they both claim to be ardently in love, cf. *Am.* 1.1, 26 and *Her.* 15.9.

Naso's life as an elegist will notoriously bring about both victories and defeats on the battlefield of love, and there is no particular stress on the traditionally miserable aspects of the elegiac genre in the poet's account of his elegiac genesis. The expressions *questus eram* (*Am.* 1.1.21) and *me miserum* (*Am.* 1.1.25) can indeed be ascribed to a traditional elegiac vocabulary, but the fact that none of these phrases are addressed to the beloved *puella*, but to Cupid, is quite untraditional.⁵³⁴ Sappho, on the other hand, acts as an abandoned heroine and incessantly draws attention to the lamentable sides of love and the sad qualities of elegy: not only is her love and poetry deplorable (*flendus, flebile*, (*Her.* 15.7)), her tears are mentioned repeatedly

⁵³⁴ Spoth on the frequency of *queri* in the *Amores*. '25-26. **me miserum!**: Ovid uses this exclamation 45 (15) times. It is not found in Virgil, Horace or Tibullus (*heu miserum!* at 2.3.78), in Propertius only at 2.33B35 and 3.23.19. It is fairly common in comedy and rhetorical prose; see *TLL* 8.1105.84ff. For the exclamatory accusative in general, see Knox (1986) 56. Ovid favours the idiom because it helps to produce a lively style; see Vol. 1, 68. Here, he is perhaps echoing and dramatising Prop. 1.1.1 *Cynthia prima suis miserum me cepit ocellis.*' McKeown (1989) 27. For a commendable 'semiological intertextualist' discussion of the *me miserum*-expression and McKeown's observations, see Hinds (1998) 29-34.

throughout the entire epistle (cf. *Her.* 15.8, 62, 97, 101, 111, 150, 174). Furthermore: none of the other heroines uses the word *lacrima* as many times as Sappho.⁵³⁵ She is lamenting, (cf. *querelis* (71) and *queror* (136)) and ceaselessly haunted by different kinds of pains (cf. *dolor* (113), *maerore* (117), *infelix* (78) *miseram me* (185) and *miseræ* (219)).

In short: the intricate interplay of counterpoints and contrasts between the Naso of the *Amores* and the Heroidean Sappho demonstrates the rich potential of the elegiac genre.⁵³⁶ Certainly, the elegist Ovid's versatility is thoroughly explored, yet and still, by linking this well established Ovidian trait to the *Epistula Sapphus*, I hope not to kick in open doors as I halt a little while on the spot, or by the *fount* to be more correct, from which this flexibility seems to spring.⁵³⁷

As already hinted at in a previous section, the fact that there are no singing birds in the idyllic landscape to which Sappho resorts when another day has dawned and her dreams of Phaon are over, isolates the nightingale's and Sappho's own song in a way which is both surreal and metapoetic. From this point on, everything seems possible in Sappho's letter, and the very progress of the epistolary elegy, from the carefully created realism of the abandoned heroine's writing situation in a magical realm, renders it a most appropriate sphragis for the *Heroides* and a typically Ovidian hallmark. I repeat the passage:

[...] et nullae dulce queruntur aues
 [...] est nitidus uitroque magis perlucidus omni
 fons sacer (hunc multi numen habere putant),
 quem super ramos expandit aquatica lotos,

⁵³⁵ This is the frequency: *Her.* 1; 0, *Her.* 2; 2, *Her.* 3; 4, *Her.* 4; 2, *Her.* 5; 3, *Her.* 6; 4, *Her.* 7; 2, *Her.* 8; 2, *Her.* 9; 0, *Her.* 10; 5, *Her.* 11; 4, *Her.* 12; *Her.* 13; 3, *Her.* 14; 3. Cf. Baca (1971a) and Spoth on *querela* (1992) 29-30.

⁵³⁶ There are some other features of the *Am.* 1.1 that can be read as indicative of the relationship between Sappho and Ovid. Towards the end of the poem he writes: *sex mihi surgat opus numeris, in quinque residat;/ ferrea cum uestris bella ualete modis./ cingere litorea flauentia tempora myrto,/ Musa per undenos emodulanda pedes.* (*Am.* 1.1.27-30) The myrtle is indicative of both the goddess ELEGIA (cf. *Am.* 3.1.34: *fallor, an in dextra myrtea uirga fuit*) and Venus (cf. *Ars* 3.53-4: *dixit et e myrto (myrto nam uincta capillos/ constiterat folium granaque pauca dedit)*). Through the myrtle, as it were, the last distich points to the importance of the goddess of Love to both Sappho and Ovid, and the suggestive identification of Aphrodite/Venus could furthermore imply that the number of the verse feet denotes not just the elegiac, but also Sappho's syllabic metre. Dangel promotes this idea, referring precisely to *Am.* 1.1.26: '[...] l'hendécasyllabe saphique compte 11 syllabes. Et si l'on y prête bien attention, ce même chiffre 11 se retrouve très exactement dans la mesure métrique de l'élégiaque latin et en particulier ovidien, à condition de ne plus compter en syllabes, mais en pieds métriques.' Dangel (2006) 9.

⁵³⁷ Cf. Harrison (2002).

una nemus; tenero caespite terra uiret.
hic ego cum lassos posuissem flebilis artus,
constitit ante oculos Naias una meos. (*Her.* 15.152-62)

[...] and no birds warble their sweet complaint [...] There is a sacred spring, bright and more transparent than any crystal – many think a spirit dwells therein – above which a watery lotus spreads its branches wide, a grove all in itself; the earth is green with tender turf. Here I had laid my wearied limbs and given way to tears, when there stood before my eyes a Naiad.]

The description of the fount that follows after the duet of Sappho and the nightingale famously – and allusively – intertwines with the opening of *Amores* 3.1:⁵³⁸

STAT uetus et multos incaedua silua per annos;
credibile est illi numen inesse loco.
fons sacer in medio speluncaque pumice pendens
et latere ex omni dulce queruntur aues.
hic ego dum spatior tectus nemoraliter umbris,
quod mea, quaerebam, Musa moueret, opus;
uenit [...] Elegia
[...]
uenit et [...] Tragoedia (Am. 3.1.1-11)

[Ancient, and spared by the axe through many years, there stands a grove; you could believe a deity indwelt the place. A sacred spring is in its midst, and a cave with overhanging rock, and from every side comes the sweet complaint of birds. Whilst I was strolling here enveloped in woodland shadows, asking myself what work my Muse should venture on – came Elegy [...]. There came, too, [...] Tragedy [...].]

As already proposed, the inversion of *nullae dulce queruntur aues* (*Her.* 15.152) in *et latere ex omni dulce queruntur aues* (*Am.* 3.1, 4) signals that the coming *locus similis* is also a point of contrasts.⁵³⁹ The seemingly circumstantial mentioning of the singing birds furnishes the explicit metapoetic setting of *Amores* 3.1 with a realistic touch that becomes all the more pointed with the unnatural silence of the birds in *Her.* 15.152 in mind. The inverted imagery in a cluster of verbal allusions enhances furthermore the game of metapoetics and ‘reality effect’ in these emblematic poems, from which the

⁵³⁸ There is another clear allusion to this passage in Ovid which fittingly also involves the (deadly) epiphany of a goddess: cf. *Met.* 3. 157-164: [...] *est antrum nemorale recessu,/ arte laboratum nulla: simulauerat artem/ ingenio natura suo; nam pumice uiuo/ et leuibus tofis natium duxerat arcum./ fons sonat a dextra tenui perlucidus unda,/ margine gramineo patulos incinctus hiatus./ hic dea siluarum uenatu fessa solebat/ uirgineos artus liquido perfundere rore.*

⁵³⁹ There are two more parallels: [...] *tectae fronde queruntur aues* (*Her.* 10.8), and: [...] *tactae rore querentur aues* (*Fast.* 4.166). As all the other passages record birds that sing, *Her.* 15.152 stands out due to the ample allusion in 3.1, the parallel between the *Epistula Sapphus* and this poem is the most arresting.

very genre elegy moves in equally contrasting directions.⁵⁴⁰ The *Elegia* of the *Amores* embodies (very concretely) the elegiac epistle and anticipates an *Ars Amatoria*, whereas Sappho is in search of *Remedia Amoris*.

I will now explore three of the *Amores'* *scribentis imagines* which, by means of allusions, are reflected in the *Epistula Sapphus* and which continue to dramatise the vivid and vibrant tensions between the low and the lofty, the divine and the human, the male and the female, and the sad and the joyful of Ovidian elegy.

4.2. Three *Scribentis imagines*

There are particularly three poems in the extant *Amores* collection that share *loci similes* with the *Epistula Sapphus*; *Amores* 2.4, a typology of the women that sharpen the poet's sexual appetite, *Amores* 2.6, about Corrina's dead parrot, and *Amores* 3.9, the lament for the elegist Tibullus. These poems all contribute to the intriguingly multifarious image of the writer who is initially forced into becoming an elegist (*Am.* 1.1) and who ultimately prays for eternal renown (*Am.* 3.15), and this *scribentis imago* becomes even more perspicuous when read with the allusions to the *Epistula Sapphus* in mind.

4.2.a) *The Sex Athlete*

Amores 2.4 famously includes a catalogue of attractive women, and has a confessional tone, cf. *confiteor* (*Am.* 2.4.3), which permeates the lines that present the very reason why the poet has to declare his guilt, *non est certa meos quae forma inuitet amores: / centum sunt causae cur ego semper amem* (*Am.* 2.4.9-10). I have already pointed out that the final line of this couplet alludes to *Amores* 1.3 where Naso *poeta* promises to be true to his girl and swears that he is no *desultor amoris* (*Am.* 1.3.15). The echo of these lines in the *Epistula Sapphus* should therefore indicate an ambiguous attitude to fidelity and fickleness that the Heroidean Sappho shares with Naso: *et semper causa est, cur ego semper amem* (*Her.* 15.80).

Furthermore, both poets see fit to realise their erotic emotions in terms of physical lovemaking, with some verbal similarities as a result. Naso *poeta* tells that he appreciates a girl who is *procax*, because she is probably also *mobilis*. This is

⁵⁴⁰ For the 'reality effect', cf. Barthes (1989) 141-8.

precisely a quality that the Heroidean Sappho claims that Phaon praised in her (*crebra mobilitas*, cf. *Her.* 15.48). Furthermore Naso *poeta* likes to steal kisses from a girl who sings sweetly; *huic, quia dulce canit flectitque facillima uocem, / oscula cantanti rapta dedisse uelim* (*Am.* 2.4.25-6). Thus Naso wants to do what Sappho says that Phaon did when she sang her poems accompanied on her lyre: *oscula cantati tu mihi rapta dabas* (*Her.* 15.44). Before Sappho reaches her sexual climax (which according to the *praeceptor amoris* should be every woman's goal and which should only be abandoned due to physical impediments) the Lesbian poetess actually acts as a kind of dream woman in as much as she represents what Naso *poeta* fantasises about.⁵⁴¹

In their heterosexual constellation it is necessarily Phaon who gets to play the part that Naso *poeta* is eager to perform, but as an extreme case of a 'sex athlete' Naso *poeta* has just one female match in the entire Ovidian corpus, namely the Heroidean Sappho. One of the more coherent and dramatic lines that can be traced throughout the *Amores* goes from *Amores* 1.5, where Naso *poeta* and Corinna happily enjoy the pleasures of Venus, through 2.10, where the poet claims to have done the impossible, namely to fall in love with two girls at one and the same time and finally 3.7, where he tells of his bitter defeat in the form of impotence in bed. The girl to whom he wanted to make love remains unnamed, but in assuring the reader about his abilities he names many others: *at nuper bis flaua Chlide, ter candida Pitho, / ter Libas officio continuata meo est; / exigere a nobis angusta nocte Corinnam, / me memini numeros sustinuisse nouem* (*Am.* 3.7.23-6).⁵⁴² Though this is most certainly an expression of sexual hubris (which is duly punished, cf. the 'drooping rose'; *nostra tamen iacuere uelut praemortura membra / turpiter hesterna languidiora rosa* (*Am.* 3.7.65-6)), the Heroidean Sappho has helped herself even more eagerly.⁵⁴³ Like Naso *poeta*, she also names three girls, in her case Anactoria, Gyrinno and Atthis (*Her.* 15.17-8), and talks hyperbolically of the 'other hundred girls', *aliae centum*, whom she has loved – not without reproach, or as suggested in a emendation, not without a song (*Her.* 15.19).⁵⁴⁴ Towards the end of her elegiac epistle, Sappho addresses the

⁵⁴¹ Cf. Part Three, chapter 1.5.

⁵⁴² For the poetic charge of the *numeros nouem* and the mistresses' suggestive names and, see Sharrock (1995) 160 and 170-2.

⁵⁴³ I borrow the expression from Sharrock's paper 'The Drooping Rose: Elegiac Failure in *Amores* 3, 7' (1995).

⁵⁴⁴ Horace on *centum* as a number of lovers. The choice of Gyrinno is accordance with Knox's text. The emendation belongs to Heyworth (1984) 107-9.

Lesbian women in a way that hyperbolically indicates that she had almost all of them as mistresses:

Lesbides aequoreae, nupturaque nuptaque proles,
Lesbides, Aeolia nomina dicta lyra,
Lesbides, infamem quae me fecistis amatae,
desinite ad citharas turba uenire meas! (*Her.* 15.199-202)

[Lesbian daughters of the wave, ye who are to wed and ye already wed, ye Lesbian daughters, whose name have been sung to the Aeolian lyre, ye Lesbian daughters whom I have loved to my reproach, cease, band of mine, to come to hear my shell!]

Knox keeps the first, disputed couplet and comments thus on the passage: '[t]he triple anaphora of the Greek substantive [...] *Lesbides ... Lesbides ... Lesbides* is emphatic, a reminder that it is the women named in her poetry who made Sappho famous as a love poet.'⁵⁴⁵ Knox's own emphasis on the importance for renown as a love poet of having a large number of beloved women renders the point I have been trying to make in the preceding chapter even more perspicuous. In the staging of the *opus amoris* as a physical as well as poetic project, one important image of the author of the *Amores* is as a *puella predator*, and through the *loci similes* between *Heroides* 15 and *Amores* 2.4 it becomes clear that it is also as a *puella predator* that Sappho contributes to the dramatisation of the image of the writer.

4.2.b) *The Bird*

Amores 2.6, the highly elaborated epicedium on Corinna's parrot, shares a number of *loci similes* with the *Epistula Sapphus* as well. For a start: Sappho mentions the green bird, *uiridis auis*, in her letter when she claims that her inner qualities should compensate for her lack of a stereotypically fair exterior (which resounds in the arguments promoted by Naso in *Amores* 2.17 and elsewhere, cf. the next chapter) and she furnishes her contention with an example of how opposites attract each other even in the natural world where the green parrot loves the black dove: *et niger a uiridi turtur amatur aue* (*Her.* 15.38). Likewise, in the *Amores* poem the dove is exhorted to mourn the most, as the dead parrot and the dove were close friends: *tu tamen ante alios, turtur amice, dole* (*Am.* 2.6.12).

⁵⁴⁵ Knox (1995) 312.

Two echoes of the *Epistula Sapphus* are furthermore detectable in the pathetic scene of the bird's actual death. Firstly there is the bird's almost supernatural will to speak, *nec tamen ignauo stupuerunt uerba palato* (*Am.* 2.6.47), which recalls the description of Sappho's completely contrary reaction to Phaon's departure from Lesbos in the much discussed line 111: *et lacrimae deerant oculis et uerba palato*. This line belongs to the passage that reads as yet another Roman variation on Sappho's fragment 31, and thus both Sappho's silence and the parrot's death-surpassing words, which seem to express a vatic will to immortality, point towards poetry.⁵⁴⁶

The next echo of the *Epistula Sapphus* in *Amores* 2.6 confirms even more clearly that these poems belong to an elegiac order, and as far as the *Amores* poem is concerned, it might be said to take the variation on the Heroidean departure scene even further, as the bird, *clamauit moriens lingua 'Corinna, uale'* (*Am.* 2.6.48). Significantly, all the Ovidian parallels that McKeown finds for the parrot's valediction come from the *Heroides* (cf. 5.52, 12.58 and 14.13).⁵⁴⁷ Thus the bird's goodbye, which is reported to have taken place, becomes – to a striking extent *verbatim* – a contrast to Sappho's imagined departure scene, the one that could have been performed with decency: *si mihi dixisses 'Lesbi puella, uale!'* (*Her.* 15.100).⁵⁴⁸ As regards the *Amores* poem, McKeown observes that '[...], Corinna is addressed by name only here, by her dying parrot.'⁵⁴⁹ The allusion draws attention to Corinna and Sappho, a pair which has received a most interesting treatment by Galand-Hallyn (1991) who explores *la femme-poème* and *la femme-poète*, focusing on Ovid's employment of his *ars* and *ingenium*. Ovid pays tribute to Catullus' Sapphic 'Lesbia' in choosing the name of another *femme-poète*, the lyrical poetess of Tanagra, for his *Amores*, but when considering *Heroides* 15 it is clear that this Catullan tribute is not limited to Corinna.⁵⁵⁰ Galand-Hallyn demonstrates how Ovid's Corinna and Sappho embody the poet's creative engagement with the rich poetic tradition that precedes

⁵⁴⁶ For more 'sapphic symptoms' in this passage, see Part Three, chapter 2.

⁵⁴⁷ McKeown (1998) 136.

⁵⁴⁸ The short valediction echoes Catullus 8.12, *uale puella*, as well.

⁵⁴⁹ McKeown (1998) 136.

⁵⁵⁰ Cf. Galand-Hallyn (1991) 344-5. Hinds expresses a similar idea, and his observation as regards the *Epistula Sapphus* is worth mentioning: 'Ovid's stress in the *Amores* on the need to observe rules of the game of love owes more [...] to the Catullan idea of a formal code of amatory commitment than to anything in the world of Propertian *furor*. And, significantly, in naming his mistress after the Greek poetess Corinna, Ovid bypasses the Augustan elegiac procedure of choosing feminised cult names of Apollo for this purpose [...] in favour of a return to Catullan practice [...]' (1987b) 6.

him, and she overrules the flimsy, cynical and parodic shallowness that has often been forced upon these female figures. About Corinna, the model for the *femme-poème*, she observes:

Nous voyons qu'elle est le point de convergence de deux esthétiques : d'un côté, un texte à la fois orné et voilé, qui correspond à l'alexandrinisme ésotérique de Properce ; de l'autre, une écriture nue, dépouillée, dont le lexique est pur et la composition harmonieuse, mais dont la régularité est pimentée de grâce : l'écriture des néo-attiques, mais aussi de Catulle, qui avait tenté une synthèse entre alexandrinisme et atticisme ; d'un côté l'*ars*, de l'autre l'*ingenium*, assorti de la grâce. À travers le portrait de son héroïne, Ovide invite le lecteur à déceler dans ses *Amores*, sous le voile de l'*ornatus* et de la convention, la transparence véridique d'une écriture de la sincérité.⁵⁵¹

Galand-Hallyn sees the same sincerity at the heart of the *Heroides*, in which the fallibility of the heroines' attempts to persuade their addressees makes them attain a much nobler and artistically legitimate objective than simply luck in love, namely a sublime text. Paramount here is of course Sappho.⁵⁵²

Clin d'œil d'Ovide à sa propre poésie érotique, ou l'héroïne qui est chantée devient aussi le symbole de l'écriture qui la chante, l'autoportrait de Sappho retrace le double projet de la poétique ovidienne : préserver la lucidité du regard sur soi-même et sur le monde, tout en cherchant dans la virtuosité de la parole, non une échappatoire, mais une sublimation esthétique.⁵⁵³

Returning to the parrot, this seemingly insubstantial subject, it is useful to bear Galand-Hallyn's observations on Corinna and Sappho in mind, especially since the scholarly reception of *Amores* 2.6 involves vehement disagreements as to whether it is a serious or simply a silly poem.⁵⁵⁴

Disagreements aside, Ovid's *psittacus* tends to be placed in an imitative relationship with Catullus' poem on Lesbia's *passer*, but whereas Catullus' sparrow only *pipiabat* to its mistress (3.10), Ovid's *psittacus* possessed a striking ability to speak eloquently; cf. *imitatrix* (1), *uox [...] ingeniosa* (*Am.* 2.6.18), *non fuit in terris uocum simulantior ales* (*Am.* 2.6.23), *garrulus [...] amator* (*Am.* 2.6.26), *loquax*

⁵⁵¹ Galand-Hallyn (1991) 249.

⁵⁵² Farrell (1998) makes a similar observation about male deceitfulness and female sincerity in the *Heroides*.

⁵⁵³ Galand-Hallyn (1991) 353.

⁵⁵⁴ Cf. especially Cahoon (1984, 1991) and Boyd (1987).

humana uocis imago (*Am.* 2.6.37), *ora [...] docta loqui* (*Am.* 2.6.62).⁵⁵⁵ This ability makes it easy to associate Corinna's parrot not only with her lover (*amator*), which would be in keeping with its association with the suggestively obscene symbolism of the *passer*, but also with a poet.⁵⁵⁶ The parrot's capacity to act as poet becomes even clearer within the frame of the *Amores*, since 'the encomium of the parrot's ability to speak is equivalent to that of Tibullus' ability as a poet in *Amores* 3.9.'⁵⁵⁷ The obvious allusions between the dead parrot and the dead poet aggravate the previously mentioned question of whether to regard these poems as parodies that mock death and the ambition of vatic immortality. Instead of aiming at an answer to this question, since any reductionist approach would certainly cheat the reader of the Ovidianism of Ovid, I would say that this question rather captures a tension that is as pertinent to the *passer/psittacus* and the *poeta*, as it is to Ovidian birds and the *poetria*.

For a start, *Heroides* 15 is about an abandoned heroine, and the *Amores* 2.6 is about a pet, which – by dying – abandons its mistress (cf. the *uale* discussed above). As an abandoned heroine, Sappho is at home among figures that belong to the realm of tragic myth and grand epic, whereas the deceased bird points to the humble topics of Alexandrianism.⁵⁵⁸ The contrasting literary traditions the *psittacus* and the *poetria* represent are furthermore enhanced by their common quality as *scribentis imagines*. In order to explore this capacity more closely, it is helpful to turn to these poems' richest and most suggestive *locus similis*, in which a particular bird that merges the two poet images appears, namely the nightingale.⁵⁵⁹

As I have stressed earlier, the nightingale is the only bird that accompanies the *poetria* in her grievances just before the divine water-nymph appears to her:

sola uirum non ultra pie maestissima mater
 concinit Ismarium Daulias ales Ityn.
 ales Ityn, Sappho desertos cantat amores.
 hactenus; ut media cetera nocte silent. (*Her.* 15.153-6)

⁵⁵⁵ Boyd (1997) 173.

⁵⁵⁶ Cf. Thomas (1993).

⁵⁵⁷ McKeown (1998) 119.

⁵⁵⁸ 'Laments for dead animals, mostly in the form of an epitaph, whether real or purely literary, are a common theme in Hellenistic epigram.' McKeown (1998) 108.

⁵⁵⁹ On referring to Procne and Philomela and the confusion about the two in Ovid, see McKeown (1998) 114-5.

[only the Daulian bird, most mournful mother who wreaked unholy vengeance on her lord, laments in song Ismarian Itys. The bird sings of Itys, Sappho sings of love abandoned – that is all; all else is silent as midnight.]

The parallel passage in *Am.* 3.12, 32 *concinit Odrysius Cecropis ales Ityn* is regularly noted in the commentaries, and Knox observes that the employment of the noun *Daulias* ‘one who belongs to Daulis’ is ‘not inert.’ Knox (1995) explains:

For *Odrysius* ‘Thracian’ the poet substitutes an equivalent epithet *Ismarius*, from Mt Ismarius in southern Thrace. For the nightingale *Cecropis ales* the poet restores an older epithet *Daulias ales*. According to Thucydides 2.29.3, Tereus ruled in the city of Daulis in Phocis, and ‘in references to the nightingale the bird has been called “Daulias” by many poets.’⁵⁶⁰

And whereas there is no example of this noun in extant Greek poetry, there is one significant employment of the word in Latin poetry in Catullus:

[...] at certe semper amabo,
semper maesta tua carmina morte canam,
qualia sub densis ramorum concinit umbris
Daulias, absumpsi fata gemens Ityli. (65.11-4)

[But surely I shall always love thee, always sing strains of mourning from thy death, as under the thick shadows of the boughs sings the Daulian bird, bewailing the fate of Itys.]

Knox furthermore suggests that: ‘[i]t is not unreasonable to suppose that one of the poets Thucydides had in mind was Sappho, and that this passage reflects familiarity with one of her lost poems. Fr. 135 L-P shows that she knew the myth.’⁵⁶¹

Rosati (1996) picks up on the same allusion and links it to Callimachus’ epigram in memory of his friend, the elegiac poet Heraclitus (*AP* 7.80 = 2 Pf.), who enhances the ‘programmatic, poetological quality of the discourse of Ovid’s character.’⁵⁶² He furthermore links the lament of the Heroidean Sappho and the *maesta carmina* of Catullus, by highlighting the allusive use of *concinit* in the former

⁵⁶⁰ Knox (1995) 305. On the authenticity of the *Heroides* 15, Knox states in the preface that: ‘[t]he *Epistula Sapphus*, which I do not believe to be Ovid’s, is an interesting poem in its own right [...]’

⁵⁶¹ Knox (1995) 305.

⁵⁶² Rosati (1996) 215. In support of Rosati’s commendable observations, I would like to add that the productive relationship between Sappho, Callimachus and Ovid is mirrored in a set of Ovidian *loci similes* which starts with the Heroidean Sappho, *iam canitur toto nomen in orbe meum*. (*Her.* 15.28), *Battiades semper toto cantabitur orbe* (*Am.* 1.15.13), [...] *mihi fama perennis/ quaeritur, in toto semper ut orbe canar* (*Am.* 1.15.7-8), *cantetur toto nomen in orbe meum* (*Ars.* 2.740), and *dum modo sic placeam, dum toto canter in orbe* (*Rem.* 363).

poem and by pointing out that the Catullan *in tantis maeroribus* (65.15) is equivalent to *maerore* at *Her.* 15.117.⁵⁶³ Rosati also stresses the nightingale's 'Sapphic' ability to perform as an image of the poet:

What Sappho and the nightingale have in common – beyond the ancient, widespread metaphor that assimilates a poet to this bird (and Sappho herself is defined as a nightingale in the famous passage from Hermesianax's *Leontion* on the poets' unhappy loves) – is the *maestitia* of their song (for a grave emotional loss).⁵⁶⁴

In *Amores* 2.6 the poet bids precisely the nightingale to join in the grieving of the dead parrot:

quod scelus Ismarii quereris, Philomela, tyranni,
 expleta est annis ista querela suis;
alitis in rarae miserum deuertere funus:
 magna sed antiqua est causa doloris Itys. (*Am.* 2.6.7-10)

[If you, Philomela, are lamenting the deed of the tyrant of Ismarus, that lament has been fulfilled by its term of years; turn aside to the hapless funeral of no common bird – great cause for grief is Itys, but belongs to the ancient past.]

Commentators tend to leave the recurrence of *Ismarius* at *Am.* 2.6.7 and *Her.* 15.154 unmentioned, and one apparent reason is that whereas the adjective is applied to Itys in the Heroidean verses, it designates his father, Tereus, in *Amores* 2.6. I would still insist on the link established between the two through this word, because it is precisely the likeness between the father and his child that ultimately will bring about the death and accordingly the lament of Itys, as the account of the sadistic myth in the *Metamorphoses* will make clear (*Met.* 6.412-674). Picking up on this small trait that *Amores* 2.6 and *Heroides* 15 have in common, I will now proceed to map more of their shared poetic landscape.

Whereas the nightingale is a symbol not only of the poet in general, but also of Sappho in particular, the *Amores* 2.6 is an allegory not only for poets, but also for human beings in general. The poem contains a large number of different birds, of which many are not distinguished by their capacity to sing. Some of these are evil: the *coturnix* (*Am.* 2.6, 27), *uultur* (33), *miluus* (34), *graculus* (34) and *cornix* (35) must be

⁵⁶³ Important is also the allusion to the singing Halcyon in Leander's letter, *nullaque uox usquam, nullum ueniebat ad aures/ praeter dimotae corpore murmur aquae./ Alcyones solae memores Ceycis amati/ nescioquid uisa sunt mihi dulce queri* (*Her.* 18.79-82), cf. Rosati (1996) 214.

⁵⁶⁴ Rosati (1996) 214.

some of the *obscenae aues* (52) excluded from Elysium, and some are good, like the *olor* (53), the *phoenix* (54) and *Iunonia ales* (55). The pious birds that listen to the parrot in the afterlife should accordingly represent the blessed in general and not only the blessed poets (cf. *pias uolucres* (*Am.* 2.6.58)). At the beginning of the poem, where several types of birds are called upon to form a mourning chorus for the dead parrot, their song is remarkably called *carmina* (*Am.* 2.6.6), and there are good reasons to read it as indicative of the poets' allegorical presence. In the undefined mass of *carmen*-producers, so to speak, there are two individuals that stand out in their ability to feature as an image of a poet, namely the *psittacus* itself, who speaks from the grave, as it were, and the nightingale, *Philomela*. True, in *Amores* 2.6. this bird is firmly placed within its mythical frame, but the well established allegorical dimension of the poem breaks down this isolated significance, as does its rich interaction with the allusive passage in *Heroides* 15, which allows the reader to see this bird as a reflection of Sappho, the greatest love poet of ancient times.

This observation also contributes interestingly to the discourse of immortality that Boyd (1997) and others pursue, in as much as the quest for (and question of) immortality necessarily involves the quest for (and question of) tradition and innovation. For just as the Sapphic nightingale has performed her lament (*querela*, *Am.* 2.6.8) due to a cause, which, true enough, is great (*magna*) it is also old (*antiqua*, *Am.* 2.6.10), and therefore she should now turn to the miserable (by enallage) funeral of the exotic parrot (*Am.* 2.6.9). The Ovidian ideal of metamorphic innovation is intrinsic to this request – addressed to the nightingale – to change her song's subject, which is exactly what the Heroidean Sappho has done.⁵⁶⁵

The counterpoints between the *psittacus* and *poetria* poem arguably resound most harmoniously at *Her.* 15.155: *ales Ityn, Sappho desertos cantat amores*. In this line, where the nightingale and the Heroidean Sappho sing simultaneously, there are at least three features that stand out as particularly arresting. Firstly this is the only instance throughout the entire poem where Sappho is described in the third person singular. The unique grammatical variation creates a distance to the *poetria*, a distance that again renders the extradiegetic author all the more present. Secondly, this is the only instance where we find the word *amor*, which recurs frequently throughout the entire *Epistula Sapphus*, in a plural form that recalls the title of the

⁵⁶⁵ Cf. *in noua*; the very first words of the *Metamorphoses*' programmatically charged opening.

elegiac collection of Naso *poeta*. Thirdly, these singular features appear immediately before the description of a magical landscape that looks very much like the one Naso *poeta* wanders around in *Amores* 3.1, a poem that is emblematic for the entire collection of erotic elegies. All of these features in the *Epistula Sapphus* thus suggestively link the *Heroides* to the *Amores* and the Heroidean Sappho to Naso *poeta*.

Despite their disagreements, both Boyd and Cahoon see the poet Ovid in the dead parrot. This interpretation is of course complicated as soon as the echoes in the *Amores* 3.9, on Tibullus' death, are taken into consideration, and I will return to this complex in the subsequent section; for now, I happily agree with Boyd and Cahoon. And from this interpretative point of view it is quite arresting how the masculine word *psittacus* is paired with the feminine *imitatrix ales* in the very first line of the poem. The strong sense of gender-clash, or of gender-combination, through these words that appear so closely and in such a prominent position of the poem, is confirmed by McKeown's observation on the latter designation of the exotic bird as *imitatrix*: 'The feminine form, never common, occurs only here in poetry, earlier only in Cicero (3 times).'⁵⁶⁶ The parrot, in as much as it is an image of the writer, embodies then both a male and a female figure. The associations evoked by the allusive relationship between the poems discussed in this section not only reflect this twofold quality, but also suggests that the male image might just be Ovid, whereas the female might be Sappho, and vice versa, that is that the male image might just be Sappho, and the female Ovid.

4.2.c) Another Poet

Ovid's poetic birds thrive in the invigorating shades of proliferating poetic models that enable them to be metamorphosed into a different bird or a poet. The symbolic charge of such creatures mediates intertextual dynamics that allow us to see Sappho in the Ovidian nightingale that is urged to sing a new song while the allusion from the *psittacus* to the *passer* recasts Catullus in the image of Ovid. And so Ovid, being a

⁵⁶⁶ McKeown (1998) 112. As I am prone to see an awareness of gender in the juxtaposition of the male *psittacus* and the female *imitatrix*, I give more flesh, as it were, to the latter term than Hinds, who observes that: 'Here we find [...] the allusion which is so constructed as to draw attention to its status as allusion. Corinna's engaging *psittacus* is modelled on Lesbia's famous *passer*, or 'sparrow': and it is called an *imitatrix ales* by Ovid not just because, as a parrot, its role in nature is to mimic; but because its role in the Latin erotic tradition is to 'imitate' that particular bird celebrated by Catullus' (1987b) 7.

dead parrot that resembles the dead poet Tibullus, underscores the notion that an author can come in the shape of a bird, as readily as he or she can appear in the form of another poet.

This manner of portraying oneself by means of the portrait of another is of course not singular to Ovid. In Augustan Rome it is almost as important to be a Roman *uates* as to be a Greek poet:⁵⁶⁷ Virgil is a famous match for Theocritus, Hesiod and Homer, Propertius explicitly claims to be the Roman Callimachus and Horace notoriously maintains that he is the new Alcaeus. But whereas Ovid brings up both Virgil and Propertius, among many others, the Roman Alcaeus is never explicitly mentioned in Ovid's early poetic career. Particularly those who try to date these poems have noticed his absence from for instance *Amores* 1.15 and 3.15, where the two literary histories of the *Amores* are to be found.⁵⁶⁸ Since their theme is poetic immortality, one assumes that the omission of Horace is due to his lacking the prerequisite for immortality, namely to have died before Ovid wrote these poems.

The poet with whom Ovid most explicitly compares himself is actually Virgil, cf. *tantum se nobis elegi debere fatentur, / quantum Vergilio nobile debet opus* (*Rem.* 395-6). But, as I have argued throughout this study, *Pelagida Sappho* (*Her.* 15.217) is also (made to be) Ovid's counterpart, to which the *Epistula Sapphus* testifies most clearly. And if we suspend all disbelief, if only for a second, and accept that Ovid is Sappho, then Horace might just be mentioned in Ovid's early poetic career after all, if the following passage is entrusted with sufficient fictional transparency for us to catch a glimpse of a contemporary scene:

nec plus Alcaeus, consors patriaeque lyraeque,
laudis habet, quamuis grandius ille sonet. (*Her.* 15.29-30)

[Not greater is the praise Alcaeus wins, the sharer in my homeland and in my gift of song, though a statelier strain he sounds.]

⁵⁶⁷ This does not imply that the correspondence between Greek and Roman poets is accurate. On the contrary, the lack of precision is in keeping with the idea of a community between poets that always, in a way, goes beyond the individual level.

⁵⁶⁸ In *Amores* 1.15 the following poets are mentioned: Homer (*Maeonides*, 9), Hesiod (*Ascraeus*, 11) Callimachus (*Battiades*, 13), Sophocles (15), Aratus (16), Menander (18), Ennius, Accius (19), Varro (21), Lucretius (23), Virgil (25-6), Tibullus (27-8) and Gallus (29-30). In *Am.* 3.15 there are Virgil and Catullus, together with Ovid: *Mantua Vergilio gaudet, Verona Catullo; / Paelignae dicar gloria gentis ego [...]* (7-8).

This is one of the *Epistula Sapphus*' several allusions to Horace, who writes thus about the two Lesbian poets:

quam paene furvae regna Proserpinae
et iudicantem vidimus Aeacum
 sedes discretas piorum et
 Aeoliis fidibus querentem

Sappho puellis de popularibus
et te sonantem plenius aureo,
 Alcaeae, plectra dura navis,
 dura fugae mala, dura belli!

utrumque sacro digna silentio
mirantur umbrae dicere, sed magis
 pugnas et exactos tyrannos
 densum umeris bibit aure volgus. (*Odes* 2.13.21-32)

[How narrowly did I escape beholding the realms of dusky Proserpine and Aeacus on his judgement-seat, and the abodes set apart for the righteous, and Sappho complaining on Aeolian lyre of her countrywomen, and thee, Alcaeus, rehearsing in fuller strain with golden plectrum the woes of exile, and the woes of war. The shades marvel at both as they utter words worthily of reverent silence; but the dense throng, should to shoulder packed, drinks in more eagerly with listening ear stories of battle and of tyrants banished.]

Bessone (2003) explores the Heroidean allusion to this ode and observes about *Heroides* 15 that: 'Questa Saffo aggiornata all'età di Augusto è pienamente ascritta al programma callimacheo – quel programma con cui la lirica alcaica, preferita da Orazio, rischiava invece di entrare in conflitto.'⁵⁶⁹ Without attempting an exhaustive treatment of the Horatian models at play in the *Epistula Sapphus*, I would like to call attention to two points. One is that the elegiac Sappho seems to be anticipated in Horace, in as much as he defines the elegiac metre as *uersibus impariter iunctis querimonia* (*Ars Poetica*, 75) and describes the Sappho he meets in the underworld as *querentem*.⁵⁷⁰ The second point is that when the Heroidean Sappho admits that Alcaeus sings 'more grandly' (*grandius*, *Her.* 15.30) she picks up on Horace's description of Alcaeus as *sonantem plenius aureo* (*Odes* 2.13.26), but when she insists on receiving just as much praise for her poetry as Alcaeus, she simultaneously

⁵⁶⁹ Bessone (2003) 210. For Horace and the *Epistula Sapphus* see especially pp. 209-215.

⁵⁷⁰ Bessone touches on the same point, (2003) 211.

denies that people would rather (*magis*, *Odes* 2.13.30) listen to her lyrical compatriot's political themes, than to her.⁵⁷¹

More evident than a potential allusion to Horace, is the relationship between the Heroidean Sappho and another poet, namely Tibullus, to whom *Amores* 3.9 is dedicated. But, as suggested above, a portrait of another poet sometimes serves as a poetic self-portrait, and in this case I will focus more on the echoes of Sappho/ Ovid than Tibullus himself. Two themes are particularly prominent in the allusive relationship between *Heroides* 15 and *Amores* 3.9: the 'deplorability' of elegy and an interesting set of imageries that seem to confuse love-relations with family-relations.

The first *locus similis* shared by *Heroides* 15 and *Amores* 3.9 involves an apostrophe to Elegia, to whom Naso *poeta* has spoken before (*Am.* 3.1.61-8) and will speak again (*Am* 3.15):⁵⁷²

[...]
flebilis indignos, Elegia, solue capillos:
a, nimium ex uero nunc tibi nomen erit! (*Am.* 3.9.3-4)

[[...] O Elegy, and loose thine undeserving hair! Ah, all too truthful now will be thy name!]

The genre's Greek tradition is of immense significance and this tradition plays most perspicuously along with the exclamation in the pentameter of the couplet, which picks up on the attempt to explain the lamentable mode of elegy by means of its Greek etymology: in *elegos* 'pity', *eu legein*, 'eulogise' or '*e, e' legein*, 'to say 'e, e' ['alas']'.⁵⁷³ But precisely because the elegiac genre is such a well established literary institution, it is all the more important to search for its particularly Ovidian mark. The Heroidean Sappho, eagerly concerned as she is with her literary metamorphoses, defines her new genre in strikingly similar terms to the poet addressing Elegia, *flendus amor meus est, elegi quoque flebile carmen* (*Her.* 15.7), and it will be repeated by the exiled Ovid, *flebilis ut noster status est, ita flebile carmen* (*Tr.* 5.1.5). I immediately

⁵⁷¹ Other Horatian echoes comprise the *fons sacer*-passage (*Her.* 15.157ff) that recalls *o fons Bandusiae* (*Odes* 3.13.1) the word *libertas* (*Her.* 15.68) which is used in the same sense of Lucilius (*Sat.* 1.4.5) and *maerore* (*Her.* 15.117) recalling *ad humum maerore graui deducit et angit* of *Ars Poetica* (110).

⁵⁷² The first time Naso *poeta* addresses both Tragoedia and Elegia; *desierat, coepi 'per uos utramque rogamus./ in uacuas aures uerba timentis eant./ altera me scepro decoras altoque cothurno:/ iam nunc contracto magnus in ore sonus./ altera das nostro uictorum nomen amori:/ ergo ades et longis uersibus adde breues./ exiguum uati concede, Tragoedia, tempus:/ tu labor aeternus; quod petit illa, breue est.'* (*Am.* 3.1.61-68).

⁵⁷³ Cf. Harvey (1955), 168-72, West (1974) 7, Hinds (1987a) 103-7 and Knox (1995) 281.

have to say that *Her.* 15.7 is notorious because of the textual problems in the second half, and I will return to these problems and the reason for my reading (which is not in accordance with Knox (1995)), in a footnote, after having approached more hermeneutical aspects of this ‘deplorable’ identity of elegy.

The speech of the personified Elegy of *Amores* 3.1 who opened this chapter should accordingly merit further attention. First she contrasts herself to the grave genre of Tragedy (*Am.* 3.1.35-40), comparing herself with a humble house in the shade of a palace: *obruit exiguas regia uestra fores* (*Am.* 3.1.40). She says that she is nimble, just like her favourite Cupid, and that the mother of lascivious Love would have been unrefined without her (41-44). She calls herself both a procuress, *lena*, and companion, *comes*, of Venus (44), a presentation which recalls the most prominent *lena* of the *Amores*, namely Dipsas (*Amores* 1.8) and – by association – her *alter ego*, *Naso magister* of the *Ars*. Elegia then tells of her achievements, which most of all look like different adultery scenes from a mime or – again – from the repertoire of the *praeceptor amoris*’ love manual (45-2). In the last part of her speech she relates her hardships (following 52; 47-58), before she finally reminds *Naso poeta* of the fact that she was the first to inspire him to write poetry, *prima tuae moui felicia semina mentis;/ munus habes, quod te iam petit ista, meum.*’ (59-60). Now, this personified genre is unmistakably Ovidian, a fact that the hints at other *Amores* poems and the *Ars* make clear. This programmatically *Ovidian* Elegy finds therefore a highly interesting compliment in the programmatically *traditional* elegy dedicated to the deceased Tibullus. I would like to propose that this doubleness, stretched out between the traditional Graeco-Roman woeful Elegia present in Tibullus’ funeral (*Am.* 3.9) and the light, lascivious, erotodidactic and accordingly Ovidian Elegy of *Amores* 3.1, is summed up in the Heroidean Sappho’s suggestive definition of the genre: *Flendus amor meus est: elegi quoque flebile carmen*; ‘elegies too [involve] a miserable song.’⁵⁷⁴

⁵⁷⁴ There are several problems involved in this line after the penthemimeral caesura. These are the variants:

<i>Lectio</i>	Source	Problem
<i>elegi quoque flebile carmen</i>	Manuscript F	Plural (regular usage of the genre, cf. <i>OLD</i> , 598) + apposition in singular, odd <i>quoque</i>
<i>elegia flebile carmen</i>	Siglum ζ, Knox (1995)	Elegia, the genre, no verb
<i>elegiae flebile carmen</i>	Palmer’s emendation	Personification of the genre, no verb
<i>elegi sunt flebile carmen</i>	Baehrens’ emendation	Plural + apposition in singular

Yet another interesting element links the *Epistula Sapphus* and *Amores* 3.1 and 3.9 together, namely the confusion of love and family relations. In *Amores* 3.1 there are particularly two couplets which foreground love and family:

sum leuis, et mecum leuis est, mea cura, Cupido:
non sum materia fortior ipsa mea.
rustica sit sine me lasciui mater Amoris:
huic ego proueni lena comesque deae. (*Am.* 3.1.41-4).

[I am but light, and Cupid, my heart's fond care, is light as well; myself am not stronger than the theme I sing. The mother of sportive Love, without me, would be but a rustic jade; to be go-between and comrade to this goddess was I brought forth.]

Elegia's designation of Cupid as *mea cura*, 'my favourite', as the lascivious *son* of the goddess of Love serves as a cue to greater patterns that the allusive relationship between all these poems invites a reader to map. The term *cura*, which has a wide range of significances, is employed only twice and for a similar purpose in the *Epistula Sapphus*: firstly when Sappho claims that her little daughter adds to her responsibilities, *et tamquam desint quae me hac sine fine fatigent,/ accumulatur curas filia parua meas* (*Her.* 15.69-70), and secondly when she exclaims to her young lover that he is her only concern: *tu mihi cura, Phaon* (123). Both Cleis and Phaon are Sappho's *cura*, and the similarity facilitates the criticised mother-and-child-imagery that Sappho finds it apt to use when she wants to describe how she felt when she realised that Phaon had left her: *non aliter, quam si nati pia mater adempti/ Portet ad exstructos corpus inane rogos* (*Her.* 15.115-6). The reproach is already embedded in the text, not without sarcasm, when Sappho's brother Charaxus remarks: *'quid dolet haec? certe filia uiuit' ait* (*Her.* 15.120)

Of course, the comparison between Sappho as mother and Phaon as son is apt in the sense that Sappho is old enough to be Phaon's mother, a fact she normally seems to ignore, but there is arguably more to this confusion of erotic love and family relations than a Freudian slip of the pen, especially when its reflection in *Amores* 3.9 comes into focus, *ardet in exstructo corpus inane rogo* (6). The 'lifeless body', *corpus*

Knox solution is convincing, but Ovidian elegy is as light-hearted as it is tearful, and I feel attracted to the reading of F precisely because of *quoque*. Bessone defends the *lectio* thus: '[i]l connettivo *quoque* rinforza la saldezza dei passaggi logici in questa struttura sillogistica, e la correlazione, resa così ancora più stringente, tra materia e forma della poesia (*flendus/flebile*) mette l'esametro sullo stesso piano de *trist.* 5, 1, 5 *flebilis UT noster status est, ITA flebile carmen.*' (2003), 216, footnote 24.

inane, is Tibullus, and the one who is to mourn his death is, as we have seen, Elegia.

This is how the poem begins:

MEMNONA si mater, mater plorauit Achillem,
et tangunt magnas tristia fata deas,
flebilis indignos, Elegia, solue capillos:
a nimis ex uero nunc tibi nomen erit!
ille tui uates operis, tua fama, Tibullus
ardet in exstructo corpus inane rogo.
ecce puer Veneris fert euersam pharetram
et fractos arcus et sine luce facem;
aspice, demissis ut eat miserabilis alis
pectoraque infesta tundat aperta manu.
[...]
fratris in Aeneae sic illum funere dicunt
egressum tectis, pulcher Iule, tuis. (*Am.* 3.9.1-14)

[IF Memnon was bewailed by his mother, if a mother bewailed Achilles, and if sad fates are touching to great goddesses, be thou in tears, O Elegy, and loose thine undeserving hair! Ah, all too truthful now will be thy name! – he, that singer of thy strain, that glory of thine, Tibullus, lies burning on the high-reared pyre, an empty mortal frame. See, the child of Venus comes, with quiver reversed, with bows broken, and lightless torch; look, how pitiable he comes, with drooping wings, how he beats his bared breast with hostile hand! [...] In such plight, they say, he was at Aeneas his brother's laying away, when he came forth of thy dwelling, fair Iulus [...].]

The solemn epicedium's opening passage is woven around an arresting number of family relations: Aurora mourns for the loss of her son, Thetis grieves for her son Achilles' death and, like these divine mothers, Elegy will now lament for the dead Tibullus. Cupid too must be sad, just as sad as he was when his brother Aeneas died.⁵⁷⁵ Aeneas' son, Iulus/ Ascanius, is also mentioned (with a typical Virgilian epithet, *pulcher*) for no other purpose, it seems, than to underscore the importance of family relations in this passage.⁵⁷⁶ The obsession with family loss and lament is extended further into the poem, too, for instance where Apollo, the father of Linus and Orpheus, plus the mother of the latter, Calliope, demonstrate the powerlessness of poetic gifts in preventing someone from dying.⁵⁷⁷ The last couplet of the passage on

⁵⁷⁵ In his commentary on *Amores* 1.2.51 *cognati Caesaris*, McKeown notes that in 'serious Augustan political poetry' the family bond between Aeneas and Cupid, in as much as they were the sons of Venus, is mentioned in *Aen.* 1.667 and *Tib.* 2.5.39, whereas it is 'exploited by Ovid at 3.9.13 f. and *Epist.* [Heroides] 7.31 f.; his kinship with Augustus himself is mentioned also at *Pont* 3.361 f.' McKeown (1989) 58.

⁵⁷⁶ Boyd (1997) 182.

⁵⁷⁷ Cf., *quid pater Ismario, quid mater, profuit Orpheo./ carmine quid uictas obstipuisse feras?/ et Linon in siluis idem pater 'aelinon' altis/ dicitur inuita concinuisse lyra.* (*Am.* 3.9.21-4).

those who are to mourn for Tibullus is the most arresting in relationship with the *Epistula Sapphus*:

nec minus est confusa Venus moriente Tibullo
quam iuueni rupit cum ferus inguen aper. (*Am.* 3.9.15-6)

[nor was Venus heart less wrought when Tibullus died than when the fierce boar crushed the groin of the youth she loved.]

Venus is of course not Tibullus' mother, but she has nurtured him as an erotic elegist, and the parental side to this role is enforced by the fact that the goddess' son Cupid mourns for him just as he mourned for another brother, Aeneas. When Venus then is said not to have grieved less, *nec minus*, for Tibullus than for her young and beautiful lover, she is a contrasting parallel to Sappho, who narrates that when her lover was gone, she behaved in no other way, *non aliter*, than a mother bereaved of her child.

The combination of grieving family members and lovers is repeated yet again in the epicedium, in a passage where the poet dies and his poetry comes to life, as it were. Tibullus' fear of dying alone in Phaeacia (Tibullus, 1.3.3) did not come true, after all (cf. *Am.* 3.9.47-8). So not only his mother and sister could attend to the dying Tibullus and grieve for him when he eventually deceased (cf. 49-52), but also his elegiac mistresses Nemesis and Delia, who keep on talking when their poet has been silenced:

Delia discedens 'felicus' inquit 'amata
sum tibi: uixisti, dum tuus ignis eram.'
cui Nemesis 'quid' ait 'tibi sunt mea damna dolori?
me tenuit moriens deficiente manu.' (*Am.* 3.9.55-8)

["More happily", spake Delia, as she took her leave, "was I beloved by thee; thou wert living as long as I kindled thee." To whom Nemesis, "Why," said she, "do you mourn for a loss which is mine? 'Twas I to whom he clung when his hand failed in death."]

Thus the point that has been made earlier in the poem, that even the greatest poets die but their works live on, is staged with brilliant ease and immediacy:

adice Maeoniden, a quo ceu fonte perenni
uatem Pieriis ora rigantur aquis;
hunc quoque summa dies nigro summersit Auerno:
defugiunt auidos carmina sola rogos.
durat opus uatum, Troiani fama laboris

tardaque nocturno tela retexa dolo:
sic Nemesis longum, sic Delia nomen habebunt,
altera cura recens, altera primus amor. (*Am.* 3.9.25-32)

[Add to these Maeonia's child, from whom as from fount perennial the lips of bards are bedewed with Pierian waters – him, too, a final day submerged in black Avernus. 'Tis song alone escapes the greedy pyre. The poems of the bard – the renown of the toils of Troy, and the tardy web unwoven with nightly wile – endure for aye. So Nemesis, so Delia, will long be known to fame, the one a recent passion, the other his first love.]

Family members and lovers who mourn are equally at home in the elegiac genre, and their appearance in tandem at the deathbed of Tibullus is in keeping with Venus' grieving for an heir which is like her grief for a lover, and the Heroidean Sappho's despair for the loss of a lover as if he were her son arguably touches one of the Ovidian elegy's most vibrant nerves.

The elaborated diversity of confoundable love and family relations in *Amores* 3.9 shows, if anything, that Sappho is not alone in blending affective bonds with lovers and relatives. Ovid is arguably not alone in this respect, either: Catullus claims that he used to love Lesbia like a father loves his sons and sons-in-law (*dilexi tum te*), Propertius to Cynthia at 1.11, and when Briseis tells Achilles that *tu dominus, tu uir, tu mihi frater eras* (*Her.* 3.51-2) she recalls Andromache words to Hector at *Iliad* 6.429-30.

4.3. The *Epistula Sapphus* and the *Amores*. A Summary

As the comparison between *Heroides* 15 and *Amores* 2.4 makes clear, Sappho and *Naso poeta* know that the elegiac genre can be intensely erotic and light-hearted. Elegy herself, in *Amores* 3.1 testifies to that. But as this genre also belongs to a flourishing tradition with established traits, of which the mode of mourning is one of the most prominent, there is also an ample recognition of its tearful nature in Ovid's early poetry. It is telling that in all of the *Amores*, two of the three poems that the *Epistula Sapphus* shares most *loci similes* with are the elegiac collection's two *epicedia*. Only in the face of death, be it in a humorous way as in the *psittacus* poem, or in a solemn manner as in the funeral lament for Tibullus, does the *Epistula Sapphus*' realisation as a doleful elegy become particularly perspicuous. And in as much as this poem establishes an especially allusive relationship to the *epicedia* of the *Amores*, Sappho's letter embodies a most important counterpoint between the

Heroides and the *Amores*, which does not exclude an erotodidactic potential, that according to Ovid goes back precisely to Sappho (*me certe Sappho meliorem fecit amicae, Rem. 761*). It is to the educational aspect I will focus, as I now turn to certain allusive connections between the *Epistula Sapphus* and the *Ars Amatoria*.

4.4. ‘Abeunt Studia in Mores’ ... ‘Et Studio Mores Eunt’

If the *Ars* was not a work intended for both men and women at its initial stage, the project did at some point turn into a highly interesting manual for both sexes. The way in which the image of the author develops throughout the three volumes is no less interesting: Instructions on art and writing, poetic ideas and ambitions permeate the entire text and become, together with an increasingly stronger personal voice, all the more frequent as the poet addresses women. Female figures thus seem to attract reflections concerning authors in general and the author Ovid in particular, and these are all aspects of the *Ars* that, as in the case of the *Amores*, become more visible in the light of its allusive intertwining with the *Epistula Sapphus*. I will therefore focus on these allusions, some of which I have touched upon already, and on the *praeceptor*'s tendency to associate himself with the so-called opposite sex at several moments of the *Ars*.

4.4.a) Allusive Structures

Throughout the preceding chapters I have touched upon several *loci similes* between the *Epistula Sapphus* and the *Ars Amatoria*. One kind of these parallel passages concerns epiphanies. In the love manual Bacchus enters first and saves the abandoned Ariadne at *Ars* 1.525-54, the prophetic Apollo appears at *Ars* 2.493-510 and gives surprisingly trivial advice and in *Ars* 3.43-56 the poet reports how Venus has already appeared and ordered him to teach women, as he had taught men, in the art of love. Sappho sees both Apollo and Bacchus in Phaon when she addresses him as follows: *sume fidem et pharetram: fies manifestus Apollo./ accedant capiti cornua: Bacchus eris (Her. 15.23-4)*. Whereas Bacchus is first and foremost associated with wine and Apollo with wisdom in the *Ars*, Sappho focuses on their poetic interests (in addition to

their loves):⁵⁷⁸ *et Phoebus Daphnen, et Cnosida Bacchus amaui, nec norat lyricos illa uel illa modos* (*Her.* 15.25-6). Strictly speaking, Venus does not appear to Sappho. She turns to the goddess, cf. *tu quoque, quae montes celebras, Erycina, Sicanos, (nam tua sum) uati consule, diua, tuae.* (*Her.* 15.57-8).⁵⁷⁹ She states, however, at the very end of her letter, that *Venus orta mari* (*Her.* 15.213) and so the water-nymph who appears to Sappho at the crystal-clear spring, can be associated with the goddess of love, especially since both divinities emerge in passages that verbally resemble each other: [...] *sed me Cytherea docere/ iussit at ante oculos constitit ipsa meos* (*Ars* 3.43-4) and *constitit ante oculos Naias una meos* (*Her.* 15.162).

Sappho challenges Phaedra's claim to the Heroidean role as a *praeceptor amoris*, in showing off sexual competence in a language that much resembles and is echoed in the *Ars*.⁵⁸⁰ And when Sappho turns to Phaon's imagination in a plea to see her true value, that is, her poetic qualities, beyond her physical shortcomings, she employs seductive strategies that are very similar to those of the *Ars Amatoria*:

sum breuis, at nomen, quod terras impleat omnes,
 est mihi; mensuram nominis ipsa fero.
 candida si non sum, placuit Cepheia Perseo
 Andromeda, patriae fusca colore suae.
 et uariis albae iunguntur saepe colombae
 et niger a uiridi turtur amatur aue.
 si, nisi quae facie poterit te digna uideri,
 nulla futura tua est, nulla futura tua est.
 at mea cum legeres, etiam formosa uidebar ... (*Her.* 15.31-43)

[I am slight of stature, yet I have a name that fills every land; the measure of my name if my real height. If I am not dazzling fair, Cepheus' Andromeda was fair in Perseus' eyes, though dusky with the hue of her native land. Besides, white pigeons oft are mated with those of different hue, and the black turtle-dove, too, is loved by the bird of green. If none shall be yours unless deemed worthy of you for her beauty's sake, then none shall be yours at all. Yet, when I read you my songs, I seemed beautiful [too] [...].]

Sappho, like the *praeceptor amoris*, gives advice not to pay attention to faults (cf. *Ars* 2.641 ff.), but instead to look for that which is, or can become, praiseworthy (cf. *Ars*

⁵⁷⁸ The passage on Bacchus' epiphany leads to the following conclusion, *ergo, ubi contigerint, positi tibi munera Bacchi/ atque erit in socii femina parte tori* (*Ars* 1.565-6). And although Apollo is adorned with symbols of his poetic patronage, the lyre and the laurel, he gives overall philosophical and Delphic advices, cf. e.g. *litteram, cognosci quae sibi quemque iubet* (*Ars* 2.500).

⁵⁷⁹ Recalling Sappho's first poem to Aphrodite.

⁵⁸⁰ Cf. Landolfi (2000).

2.662-3). Inner qualities are among the most important features of this kind (cf. e.g. *Ars* 2.109-12, and 3.311 ff.). The mythical example of how opposites, exemplified by the black Andromeda and the white Perseus, attract each other is also employed by the *praeceptor* (cf. *Ars* 2.643-644). Furthermore Sappho, just like the *praeceptor*, highlights the special benefits of the poet in this respect (cf. *Ars* 3.532-50). I will look more closely at this special counterpoint between the sexual *suasoria* of the Heroidean Sappho and the *praeceptor* as soon as I have tracked down another interesting feature of the *Ars*, namely that the poet tends to identify not only with his male, but also, and sometimes rather, his female audience.

4.4.b) *Breaking Through to the Other Side*

Although the *praeceptor* uses both harsh arguments and harsh imagery when he tries to justify lies and deceit against women already in the first book, he does not take the male part when he later warns girls against unfaithful men.⁵⁸¹ As already mentioned the poet sums up the sad destinies of several of the Heroidean heroines (*Ars* 3.33-40) and he warns the daughters of Cecrops against believing in Theseus' oath thus: *parcite, Cecropides, iuranti credere Theseo:/ quos faciet testes, facit ut ante deos*. Similarly Sappho warns another group of patronymically defined women, the Sicilians: *o uos erronem tellure remittite uestra,/ Nisiades matres Nisiadesque nurus!/ nec uos decipiant blandae mendacia linguae:/ quas uobis dicit, dixerat ante mihi* (*Her.* 15.53-6).

More than once, the *praeceptor* admits that he is opening the gates for the enemy (cf. *Ars* 3.557-8, 667-72), but he also sides with women in a more subtle way. At the beginning of the *Ars* he makes the following observation: *femina nec flammam nec saeuos discutit arcus;/ parcius haec uideo tela nocere uiris* (*Ars* 3.29-30). But if this is true, what does this make of the poet Ovid? In keeping with his own poetical autobiography, which means that incidents in earlier works can be referred to as actual events in later ones, I would like to turn to the *Amores* where the poet is

⁵⁸¹ This is how Ovid argues in favour of deceiving deceitful girls: *ludite, si sapitis, solas impune puellas:/ hac minus est una fraude tuenda fides./ fallite fallentes; ex magna parte profanum/ sunt genus: in laqueos, quos posuere, cadant./ dicitur Aegyptos caruisse iuuantibus arua/ imbribus atque annos sicca fuisse nouem,/ cum Phrasius Busirin adit monstratque piari/ hospitis affuso sanguine posse Iouem./ illi Busiris 'fies Iouis hostia primus'/ inquit 'et Aegypto tu dabis hospes aquam./ et Phalaris tauro uiolenti membra Perilli/ torruit; infelix imbuit auctor opus./ iustus uterque fuit, neque enim lex aequior ulla est/ quam necis artifices arte perire sua./ ergo, ut periuras merito periura fallant,/ exemplo doleat femina laesa suo.* (*Ars* 1.644-58).

elaborating on his defencelessness confronted with the god of love. In poem 1.2, where Ovid pictures Cupid's triumph, he says that he will follow the god with his wound, *uulnus*, (*Am.* 1.2.29) and he adds that the arrows would never stop being launched, not even if that was the will of the god. The most developed statement about the poet's life as Cupid's target is found in poem 2.9. Firstly the poet asks: *quid iuuat in nudis hamata retundere tela/ ossibus? ossa mihi nuda reliquit Amor* (*Am.* 2.9.13-4). And when he decides to surrender, it is with a brave imperative: *fige puer: positus nudus tibi praebeor armis;/ hic tibi sunt uires, hic tua dextra facit,/ huc tamquam iussae ueniunt iam sponte sagittae;/ uix illis prae me nota pharetra sua est* (*Am.* 2.9, 37-8).

A similar dissociation from men and association with women is found in this passage from the *Ars*, which begins with a list of all the physical activities that men can enjoy and that are forbidden for women. The list of these activities and their respective arenas continues with suggestions of other places a girl could frequent in order to be noticed – preferably by potential lovers. To get out is of the greatest importance, since:

quod latet, ignotum est; ignoti nulla cupido:
fructus abest, facies quam bona teste caret.
tu licet et Thamyran superes et Amoebea cantu,
non erit ignotae gratia magna lyrae.
Si Venerem Coan nusquam posuisset Apelles,
mersa sub aequoreis illa lateret aquis.
quid petitur sacris, nisi tantum fama, poetis?
hoc uotum nostri summa laboris habet. (*Ars* 3.397-404)

[What is hidden unknown; what is unknown none desires; naught is gained when a comely face has none to see it. Though in song you may surpass Thamyras and Amoebus, in an unknown lyre there is no great delight. If Coan Apelles had never painted Venus, she would still be lying hid in the sea's depths. What is sought by the sacred bards save fame alone? toil we ne'er so hard, this is all we ask.]

There is an affinity between the poet and women, all the more enforced by art.⁵⁸²

⁵⁸² A poet must 'get out' just like a *puella* must get out, which, of course, can be problematic, cf. *quae modo dicta mea est, quam coepi solus amare,/ cum multis uereor ne sit habenda mihi./ fallimur, an nostris innotuit illa libellis?/ sic erit: ingenio prostitit illa meo* (*Am.* 3.12.5-8).

4.4.c) Art and Being in the *Epistula Sapphus* and *Ars Amatoria*

Indeed, the way in which Ovid employs the term ‘ars’ in his love manual merits a study of its own. Within the scope of this thesis I will, however, simply outline certain references to art and – preferably – to art in relation to writing. In contrast to conventional concepts of the inspired and passionate artist, Ovid points to control and experience as linked to art from the very beginning of the work (cf. *Ars* 1.1-4 and 1.25-30). Technical aspects are also highlighted when the *praeceptor amoris*, in the middle of the first book, gives advice to the men on how to write letters to women (and again the natural mode of writing, the letter, comes first):

cera uadum temptet rasis infusa tabellis,
cera tuae primum conscia mentis eat;
blanditias ferat illa tuas imitataque amantem
uerba, nec exiguas, quisquis es, adde preces.
[...]
sed lateant uires, nec sis in fronte disertus;
effugiant uoces uerba molesta tuae.
quis nisi mentis inops tenerae declamat amicae?
saepe ualens odii littera causa fuit.
sit tibi credibilis sermo consuetaque uerba,
blanda tamen, praesens ut uideare loqui.
si non accipiet scriptum illectumque remittet,
lecturam spera propositumque tene.
[...]
legerit et nolit rescribere, cogere noli;
tu modo blanditias fac legat usque tuas.
quae uoluit legisse, uolet rescribere lectis:
per numeros ueniunt ista gradusque suos.
forsitan et primo ueniet tibi littera tristis,
quaeque roget ne se sollicitare uelis.
quod rogat illa, timet; quod non rogat, optat, ut instes:
insequere, et uoti postmodo compos eris. (*Ars* 1.437-86)

[Let wax, spread on smooth tablets, attempt the crossing; let wax go first to show your mind. Let that carry your flatteries and words that play the lover; and, whoever you are, add earnest entreaties. [...] But hide your powers, nor put on a learned brow; let your pleading avoid troublesome words. Who, save an idiot, would declaim to his tender sweetheart? often has a letter been a potent cause of hate. Your language should aspire trust and your words be familiar, yet coaxing too, so that you seem to be speaking in her presence. If she does not receive your message and sends it back unread, hope that one day she will read, and hold to your purpose. [...] Suppose she has read, but will not write back: compel her not; only see that she is ever reading your flatteries. She who has consented to read will consent to answer what she has read; that will come by its own stages and degrees. Perhaps even an angry letter will first come to you, asking you to be pleased not to vex her. What she asks, she fears; what she does not ask, she desires – that you will continue; press on, then, and soon you will have gained your wish.]

If there is any correspondence between these instructions on letter writing and the *Heroides*, then it is perhaps more like Phaedra's adoption of the *Art of Love*, that is, there is no exact correspondence, but rather variations of much the same theme. In the words of Rimell (1999):

Sappho's poem negotiates a complex relationship with Ovid's commentary on love-letters in the [...] *Ars*, so that we are almost encouraged to view its challenges as a 'test' of knowledge acquired in Ovid's earlier texts, as well as of the educated reader's loyalty to the Ovidian authorial persona, based largely on an ability to recognise its originality.⁵⁸³

The *praeceptor amoris*' instructions on letter-writing are followed by his reflections on composing poetry. At the very beginning of *Ars* 2 (1-4), the poet boasts that he surpasses both Homer and Hesiod and performs thus a kind of literary *eiaculatio praecox*.⁵⁸⁴ Despite his own success as a poet (in his own view), he hesitates when he comes to the question of whether his male student should resort to poetry:

quid tibi praecipiam teneros quoque mittere uersus?
ei mihi, non multum carmen honoris habet.
carmina laudantur sed munera magna petuntur:
dummodo sit diues, barbarus ipse placet.
aurea sunt uere nunc saecula: plurimus auro
uenit honos, auro conciliatur amor.
ipse licet uenias Musis comitatus, Homere,
si nihil attuleris, ibis, Homere, foras.
sunt tamen et doctae, rarissima turba, puellae,
altera non doctae turba, sed esse uolunt.
utraque laudetur per carmina; carmina lector
commendet dulci qualiacumque sono;
his ergo aut illis uigilatum carmen in ipsas
forsitan exigui muneris instar erit. (*Ars* 2.272-86)

[Shall I bid you send tender verses also? Alas, a poem is not much honoured. Poems are praised, but costly gifts are sought; so he be wealthy, even a barbarian pleases. Now truly is the age of gold: for gold is sold many an honour, by gold is affection gained. Though you come, Homer, and all the Muses with you, if you bring nothing, Homer, out you go! Yet there are learned women too, a scanty number; and others are not learned, but wish to be so. Let either sort be praised in poems; his verses, whate'er their quality, let the reader commend by the charm of his recital; and thus to learned and unlearned the poem fashioned in their praise will perchance seem like a little gift.]

⁵⁸³ Rimell (1999) 110.

⁵⁸⁴ The expression was used by Ellen Oliensis of *Am.* 1.15 at the *Passmore Symposium on Poetic Career*, Oxford, Corpus Christi College, September, 2004.

And except for a small warning about sending tablets whose wax displays old letters amongst the new at 2.395-6, the *praeceptor amoris* goes on to elaborate on the status of himself as a poet. Within the field of love, he thinks that he is just as great as the greatest of all the Homeric heroes within their respective fields: *me uatem celebrate, uiri, mihi dicite laudes;/ cantetur toto nomen in orbe meum* (*Ars* 2.739-40). Thus he associates himself with the Ovidian Sappho, too, who notoriously claims that *iam canitur toto nomen in orbe meum* (*Her.* 15.28)

The general wish that the poet's name should be sung all over the world is expressed through a more concrete and detailed fantasy on behalf of his reception at 3.329-346. The Professor of Love does not explicitly recommend his female pupils to compose poetry themselves, as he suggestively does to men (and later will do to Perilla, cf. *Tristia* 3.7). But whereas he is content to underscore the importance for men of learning both Greek and Latin (cf. *Ars* 2.122), he presents a rich curriculum of Greek and Roman literature for 'the utterly rare throng of learned girls, and those who want to be so' in this particular passage. The Greek poets in this list are distinguished by a certain indulgence in erotics, *la dolce vita* and tricks of love (Callimachus, Philetas, Anacreon, Sappho and Menander), whereas the category for Roman literature is wider. Indeed, the love poets Propertius, Gallus and Tibullus are all there. But likewise both Varro's *Argonautica* and Virgil's *Aeneid* are mentioned among the works a girl ought to know. About the latter the *praeceptor amoris* even admiringly states: *et profugum Aenean, altae primordia Romae,/ quo nullum Latio clarius extat opus* (*Ars* 3.337-8). The curriculum then changes into the poet's fantasy about his own reception, which nicely sums up his poetic career so far. The prophetic wish is sealed with a prayer to the vatic gods, Bacchus and Apollo, and to the Muses: *o ita, Phoebae, uelis, ita uos, pia numina uatum/ insignis cornu Bacche nouemque deae!* (*Ars* 337-8). The distich echoes Sappho's oath to Phaon: *per tibi, qui numquam longe discedat, Amorem/ perque nouem iuro, numina nostra, deas* (*Her.* 15.171-2). Sappho is here talking about Phaon's actual departure, and, interestingly, she calls upon the vatic poetic divinities to testify to the truth of her 'Sapphic symptoms'. And even if her oath is not addressed to the vatic gods themselves, it is uttered to someone who shiftingly acquires Apollo's identity throughout the *Epistula Sapphus*.⁵⁸⁵

⁵⁸⁵ Cf. Phaon' image, Part Three, chapter 2.2.b).

Though the female students of the *praeceptor amoris* are not explicitly instructed to compose poetry, they are, however, taught to write letters. Here, as to the men, the Professor of Love compares the sending of a letter with the sending off of a ship:

uerba uadum temptent abiegnis scripta tabellis;
accipiat missas apta ministra notas.
inspice, quodque leges, ex ipsis collige uerbis
fingat an ex animo sollicitusque roget.
postque breuem rescribe moram: mora semper amantes
incitat, exiguum si modo tempus habet.
sed neque te facilem iuueni promitte roganti
nec tamen e duro, quod petit ille, nega:
fac timeat speretque simul, quotiensque remittes,
spesque magis ueniat certa minorque metus.
munda sed e medio consuetaque uerba, puellae,
scribite: sermonis publica forma placet.
a quotiens dubius scriptis exarsit amator
et nocuit formae barbara lingua bonae!
[...]
nec nisi deletis tutum rescribere ceris,
ne teneat geminas una tabella manus.
femina dicatur scribenti semper amator:
'illa' sit in uestris, qui fuit 'ille', notis. (*Ars* 3.469-98)

[Let words written on fir-wood tablets prepare the way: let a suitable handmaid receive the missive; examine it, and in what you read, gather from the words themselves whether he is feigning, or writes from his heart in real distress; after a brief delay write back: delay ever spurns lovers on, if its term be brief. But neither promise yourself too easily to him who entreats you, nor yet deny what he asks too stubbornly. Cause him to hope and fear together; and as often as you reply, see that hope becomes surer and fear diminishes. Dainty, O women, be the words you write, but customary and in common use: ordinary speech gives pleasure; ah, how often has a message inflamed a doubting lover, or some barbaric phrase done harm to beautiful shape! [...] nor is it safe to write an answer unless the wax is quite smoothed over, lest one tablet hold two hands. Let your lover always be called a woman by the writer: in your messages let what is really "he" be "she."]

The passage focuses on the process of reading and writing, and whereas the girl must discover the lover's feigned feelings, she must herself be able to manipulate her own language through style and diction to the degree that 'he' becomes a 'she'.⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸⁶ The omitted passage is about the dangers of trusting a new slave with such potential weapons as love letters can be if they do not reach their destined addressees. The Professor also gives advice on how to fool a guard or husband by tying a letter to the bosom of a slave, or under her foot or even using her back as writing material. He furthermore tells how the very writing can be made invisible by means of milk and oil, (*Ars* 3. 621-30).

Towards the end of this book addressed to women, the *praeceptor amoris* recommends poets as the best of lovers in the following passage, which also touches on one of his other literary productions, namely the *Amores*:

carmina qui facimus, mittamus carmina tantum;
hic chorus ante alios aptus amare sumus.
nos facimus placitae late praeconia formae:
nomen habet Nemesis, Cynthia nomen habet,
Vesper et Eoae nouere Lycorida terrae,
et multi, quae sit nostra Corinna, rogant.
adde quod insidiae sacris a uatibus absunt
et facit ad mores ars quoque nostra suos.
nec nos ambitio nec amor nos tangit habendi;
contempto colitur lectus et umbra foro.
sed facile haeremus ualidoque perurimur aestu
et nimium certa scimus amare fide.
scilicet ingenium placida mollitur ab arte
et studio mores conuenienter eunt.
uatibus Aoniis faciles estote, puellae:
numen inest illis Pieridesque fauent. (*Ars* 3.533-58)

[let us who make poems send poems only: we poets are a band more fitted than the rest for love. 'Tis we who herald the loved one's beauty far and wide; renowned is Nemesis, Cynthia is renowned; evening and Eastern lands know Lycoris, and many inquire who my Corinna may be. Besides, treachery is alien to sacred bards, and our art too helps to shape our character. Neither ambition nor love of gain affects us; the Forum we despise, and cultivate the couch and shade. But we are easily caught, and burn with a strong passion, and know how to love with a loyalty most sure. 'Tis in truth from the gentle art that our spirit wins tenderness, and our behaviour is akin to our pursuit. Be kind, ye women, to Aeonian bards; divinity is in them, and the Muses show them favour.]

Erotic and poetic pleasures are totally interchangeable in this massive commercial for Ovid's *poeta/ amator*, just as they are in Sappho's *amoris opus* (*Her.* 15. 46). The *praeceptor's* seemingly personal engagement in these matters is expressed through a peculiar confusion between 'we and 'they' in lines 539-40: '[...] "and our art also suits one's character". What does this mean? Conceivably Ovid is giving us a version of *talis oratio qualis homo*, but it is puzzling to tell us that the *oratio* is similar to the *homo* without having first defined the characteristics of the *oratio*.⁵⁸⁷ Such is Gibson's comment on the passage. S. J. Harrison has, however, suggested to me that *suos* is a corruption for *malos*: art, in as much as it is associated with the *sacred* poets,

⁵⁸⁷ Gibson continues: 'Nevertheless elaboration and clarification will follow [...]' (2003) 312.

must indeed have a cultivating and civilising quality which is incompatible with ‘bad manners’.⁵⁸⁸

At any event, the passage reflects an uncertainty as regards which came first, the artistic interests or the gentle behaviour, which is at the core of an important part of the *Epistula Sapphus*:

molle meum leuibusque cor est uiolabile telis,
et semper causa est, cur ego semper amem,
siue ita nascenti legem dixere Sorores
nec data sunt uitae fila seuera meae,
siue abeunt studia in mores artisque magistra
ingenium nobis molle Thalea facit. (*Her.* 15.79-84)

[Tender is my heart, and easily pierced by the light shaft, and there is ever cause why I should ever love – whether at my birth the Sisters declared this law and did not spin my thread of life with austere strand, or whether tastes change into character, and Thalia, mistress of my art, is making my nature soft.]

It is particularly the last couplet that displays yet another way of expressing the notion that an artist’s matter is in accordance with his or her manners. The Heroidean Sappho is not sure what came first, but her pondering on whether her ‘tender heart’ is a natural inclination or an acquired quality, continues in a kind of exploration of even finer variations in these dynamics in the allusion in *Ars* 3. Whereas the eager interests (*studia*) emerge into gentle conduct (*mores*) at *Her.* 15.83, it is behaviour (*mores*) that goes well along with an eager interest (*studio*) in *Ars* 3.456. In the *Epistula Sapphus* it is furthermore the Muse of lighter verse, Thalea, who makes her ‘talent’ *molle*, whereas the ‘talent’ is made soft (*mollitur*) by art in the *Ars* passage. Cause and effect are confounded, as are the active and passive.⁵⁸⁹ The chiastically inversed repetition by means of this allusion makes the statements of Ovid and Sappho about the poet’s personality seem confusingly like each other.

⁵⁸⁸ In support of this emendation there is *Am.* 11.b).42, *non facit ad mores tam bona forma malos*.

⁵⁸⁹ As Rimell states: ‘[...] the creative thrust of *Heroides* 15 is precisely the *lack* of distance between Ovid and Sappho, the interpretative dilemmas that arise from a complex collusion and interdependence of authorial identities.’ (1999) 118.

Conclusion

The titles of each of the three parts of this thesis could have been extended in the following manner:

- * Authorship between literary theory and practice, or, Is the *Epistula Sapphus* an interesting poem?
- * The *Epistula Sapphus* and Textual Criticism, or, Is the poem written by Ovid?
- * The *Epistula Sapphus* and Ovid's early poetic career, or, Does the poem fit in with the *Heroides*, the *Amores* and *Ars Amatoria*?

It will hardly come as a surprise that my answer to these questions are 'yes', 'yes' and 'yes'.

In my view the *Epistula Sapphus* is exceedingly interesting. The canonical charge of the poem is as heavy as its novelty is refreshing. This Heroidean mix of literary tradition and innovation enhances furthermore the drama of this particular *Herois*, since it not only dramatises the legendary destiny of Sappho, but also the text's inescapable need of an author as well as reader(s). The *Epistula Sapphus* thematizes fundamental dynamics of art, it reminds us of the dangers of prejudices and reductionist readings and it underscores the difficulties of grasping someone's identity.

My image of Ovid is undoubtedly compatible with the *Epistula Sapphus*. One of the virtues of classical scholarship is, however, that the discipline cherishes facts about which it is possible to reach consensus (in addition to subjective opinions, which are inescapable). The question is really quite simple: Did or did not the historically, socially and psychologically real Ovid write the poem or not? To provide an answer is, unfortunately, not simple at all. The historical facts are irretrievably out of reach, just as Ovid the 'writer' – in the terms of Vernier – is irretrievably dead. We are, however, left with poetic invitations to interpretations.

As mentioned in the introduction, Tarrant's strongest argument, according to himself, relies on the assumption that the opening of the *Epistula Sapphus* is modelled

on the opening of *Epistulae ex Ponto* 2.10. I would not deny that parallel passages can contain hints about their relative chronology, and Axelson's case is compelling. It represents, however, a sub-category of a highly complex phenomenon that I prefer to call 'allusion'. Furthermore, the question of assigning parallel passages as signposts of *Prioritätsbestimmung* to this sub-category remains a question of interpretation. It might be difficult to argue that there is a meaningful relationship between the poets Axelson is concerned with, Ovid and Lygdamus, but it is easy to argue in favour of an evocative pattern between the *Epistula Sapphus* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* 2.10: rather than being accidentally recalled in a post-Ovidian poem, the first lines of *Epistulae ex Ponto* 2.10 allude to the epistolary overture of *Heroides* 15. Yet a third poem confirms the suggestive relationship between these epistolary elegies. Together with the *Epistula Sapphus*, *Amores* 2.18 is also recalled in *Epistulae ex Ponto* 2.10 in as much as the two latter poems are the only ones in the Ovidian corpus that are dedicated to Ovid's poet-colleague Macer. Furthermore, *Amores* 2.18 is the only poem that explicitly refers to the *Epistula Sapphus* together with the other *Heroides*. The allusions between *Epistulae ex Ponto* 2.10, *Amores* 2.18 and *Heroides* 15 seem highly intentional, and open up for numerous reflections on the poems' common theme: the destinies of poets.

Little remains if Ockham's razor is applied to the other arguments against the poem's authenticity. Even several of those who do not consider the extant *Epistula Sapphus* to be genuine argue that the original poem must have been mechanically lost or deliberately removed from the collection of epistolary elegies. The humanist copies have several *lectiones* that are different from the mediaeval witness (F). Considering that the separate transmission of the *Epistula Sapphus* lasted longer than the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the poem displays too little damage to justify the introduction of such a complicating explanation as that of a lost original, which was replaced by a forgery. To claim that there was no original at all, but instead the forgery, not only of the extant poem, but also of the two lines that mention the poem at *Amores* 2.18.26, 34, violates indeed the principle of Ockham. Of course, there could have been a forger who knew Ovidian poetry and poetics just as well as Ovid the 'writer', to use Vernier's term. Still in the terms of Vernier, these 'writers' would, however, operate as the same 'author'. And when considering, too, the meaningful position that the *Epistula Sapphus* holds in Ovid's early career, the inference that the

poem is inauthentic is way too complicated to match the facts and circumstances of the problem.

The *Heroides*, the *Amores* and *Ars Amatoria* intertwine playfully, and the *Epistula Sapphus* surely has its place in this game. More importantly, the poem enriches our understanding of the poet's *scribentis imago* in an establishing phase of Ovid's poetic career. Indeed, as 'author' he readily identifies himself as *Naso*, both *poeta* and *magister*, and there are many other male images of the author throughout the poet's corpus, among which Pygmalion, Daedalus and Orpheus of the *Metamorphoses* are some of the most prominent. But consider for instance the figures that populate Hinds' (1987) adventurous quest for Proserpina in the *Metamorphoses* 5 and *Fasti* 4: Pallas, the Muses, 'a rival band of artists, the daughters of Pieros' and Calliope – who sings about Ceres and her daughter, in short; a throng of female figures that epitomize and dramatise Ovidian poetry and poetics.⁵⁹⁰ The Heroidean Sappho is a crucial and extraordinary testimony to the androgynous 'author' Ovid.

⁵⁹⁰ Hinds (1987a) 3.

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