Introduction

Ovid's poetic career is easily divided into three parts, like that of Vergil.[1] The tripartite structure of Vergil's poetic career appears rather straightforward. The *Rota Vergilii* ('the wheel of Vergil'), as his career was dubbed in the Middle Ages, famously consists of the poet's three works: the pastoral *Eclogues* (*c.*800 lines), the didactic *Georgics* (*c.*2,200 lines) and finally the epic *Aeneid* (*c.*10,000 lines).[2] These three works differ not only in their ever greater size but also in the themes and qualities that seem to represent Vergil's generic ascent from a humbler to a grander style.[3]

By comparison, the case of Ovid is more complicated.[4] His poetic career displays a tripartite structure in the sense that three *themes* mark his output: love, myth and exile. These themes consecutively dominate not one but several works. The three parts of Ovid's poetic career thus consist in clusters of works that are sequentially dominated by three different themes. Furthermore, while each of the three stages of Ovid's poetic career is dominated by one out of three themes, all three themes – love, myth and exile – occur throughout his entire output. The lines between the three parts of Ovid's poetic career are therefore suggestive rather than definite. Finally, while Vergil's career is regarded as a development in size, scope and significance from the juvenile and smaller to the more mature and greater, it is harder to discern the same kind of progress in the case of Ovid. In fact, as argued in this book, even the first part of his career amounts to a fully accomplished artistic project, replenished with poetic refinement, profound poetics and Ovidian greatness, on a par with his subsequent achievements.

Ovid's poetic career

Ovid was active as a poet for more than four decades. Born on 20 March 43 BC, he claims to have publicly recited love poems about Corinna already

[1] Cf. Hardie and Moore (2010b: 4–5). [2] Cf. Geymonat and Della Corte (1984–91 IV: 586–7).
[3] Cf. e.g. Putnam (2010). [4] Cf. e.g. Barchiesi and Hardie (2010).

when he was a mature teenager, plausibly between sixteen and eighteen years old.[5] The approximately 10,000 lines that can be dated before AD 2, when Ovid had reached the age of forty-five, are dominated by the theme of love and constitute the first part of his poetic career. This part includes the lost tragedy *Medea*; the so-called single *Heroides* 1–15 ('Heroines'), elegiac letters by literary heroines to absent heroes; the *Amores* 1–3 ('Loves'), erotic elegies centred on the figure of Corinna; the didactic work on cosmetics *Medicamina faciei femineae* ('Make-up for Female Beauty'); the erotic handbook *Ars amatoria* 1–3 ('Art of Love'); and the self-help manual *Remedia amoris* ('Cures for Love').[6]

During the next six years Ovid must have produced most of what we now possess of his epic *Metamorphoses* 1–15 ('Changes') and his aetiological *Fasti* 1–6 ('Calendar'), which amounts to a total of almost 17,000 lines. These works form the second, mythic part of Ovid's poetic career. After these six years, when Ovid had reached the age of fifty-one, the emperor Augustus suddenly – and famously – banished him from Rome. Ovid might have conceived and even drafted parts of the *Metamorphoses* and the *Fasti* before AD 2. It is equally plausible that he revised and rewrote these works while living in exile on the shores of the Black Sea.[7]

Yet, it remains reasonable to assume that Ovid, before he died in exile sometime between AD 17 and 18, must have spent most of his time writing his exile poetry: five books of the *Tristia* ('Songs of Lament'); four of *Epistulae ex Ponto* ('Letters from the Black Sea'); possibly the so-called double *Heroides* 16–21, in which pairs of heroes and heroines exchange letters; and the curse poem named after the bird *Ibis*.[8] In total these four

[5] For Ovid's birthday, see *Tr.* 4.10.13–14. In the same poem Ovid claims that *carmina cum primum populo iuuenalia legi | barba resecta mihi bisue semelue fuit* (*Tr.* 4.10.57–8, 'When I first read my youthful songs in public, my beard had been cut but once or twice'). For the possible allusion to Callimachus being inspired in a dream to produce the *Aetia* when he was a young man, see ἀ]ρτιγένειος (Callim. *Aet.* fr. 2d Harder, 'with beard just sprouted') and McKeown (1987: 74).

[6] The *Medicamina* may have been another erotic-elegiac work of Ovid. Judging from the hundred lines of the remaining fragment, it looks more didactic (cf. Rosati 1985 and Knox 2009b: 209). The extant fragments of a Latin hexameter translation of Aratus' *Phaenomena* attributed to Ovid by pseudo-Probus *Ad Verg. G.* 1.138 and Lactantius *Diu. inst.* 2.5.24 (frr. 1–2 Courtney and frr. 1–2 Blänsdorf), not attested elsewhere in ancient sources (cf. Knox 2009b: 208), might be an earlier (Hinds 1987: 13–14; Gee 2000: 69, n. 8) or later work by Ovid (Bömer 1957–8 1: 14).

[7] For revisions in Roman literature in general, see Gurd (2012); for revisions in the case of Ovid, see Martelli (2013); see also Johnson (2008) for the possibility of Ovid's revision of his *Metamorphoses*.

[8] In particular two features of the double *Heroides* suggest that they were written late in Ovid's career: the usage of *nec* for *et 'ne'* in the introduction of direct speech, which Ovid applies only here and in *Metamorphoses* and the *Fasti*; and three instances of polysyllabic pentameter endings (*Her.* 16.290, 17.16 and 19.202), otherwise found only at *Fast.* 5.582 and 6.660 and in the exile poetry (cf. Courtney 1965: 63–4, Kenney 1996: 21–2 and Platnauer 1951: 16–17). Furthermore, Platnauer (1951: 9–10) notes the low frequency of weak caesurae in the third foot of the hexameter in the double *Heroides* (*c.*3.6%) and the exile poetry, including *Ibis* (*c.*4%), while the works of Ovid's early poetry have a frequency of the same caesura between 7.5% and 9%.

works span more than 8,500 lines and represent the final part of Ovid's career, obviously dominated by the theme of exile.

If Ovid entered upon the literary stage of Rome between the age of sixteen and eighteen, he was officially active as a poet for more than forty years. During these years he produced about 35,000 lines, an approximate annual average of 800 lines, which is the typical book length for Ovid. However, as the evidence suggests, Ovid spent at least twenty-seven years on his first 10,000 lines, six years on almost 17,000 lines (between the ages of forty-something and fifty-something), and some nine years in exile on 8,500 lines.

The first 10,000 of these lines constitute what in this book is called Ovid's early poetry, of which the extant, non-fragmentary works will be at the centre of attention. These 10,000 lines were written when Ovid, in addition to his poetic projects, had other obligations, such as education and administrative duties, which to some extent account for the relatively slow pace of his earlier writing as compared to his later poetic career.[9]

Nevertheless, the slower pace must also reflect that Ovid was in the formative phase of his poetic career, a phase in which he tried out his ideas, created his literary universe, refined his poetic strategies and established himself as an artist. This book is thus an investigation into the intriguing creation of the poet – as poet.

Approaches: previous and new

Ovidian scholarship is vast. Yet, with the fine exceptions of Sabot (1976) and Scivoletto (1976), no book-length studies have focused exclusively on all the extant works that belong to the first part of Ovid's poetic career. This is not to say that the various works that belong to this part of the poet's career have not enjoyed growing scholarly interest in later times. In recent scholarship the single *Heroides* have been profoundly examined, particularly regarding the work's intertextual relationship with literary models[10] as well as regarding the intratextual play between the individual letters.[11] There is, however, a tendency towards reading the single *Heroides* separately from the *Amores*, *Ars amatoria* and *Remedia amoris*.[12]

[9] For Ovid's administrative career, see *Am.* 1.15.5–6 and *Tr.* 4.10.29–36, Kenney (1969) and Bablitz (2008). As a part of his education, Ovid embarked on his 'compulsory' tour to Greece, cf. *Fast.* 6.417, *Tr.* 1.2.77–80, *Pont.* 2.10.21–30 and McKeown (1987: 82–3).

[10] E.g. Jacobson (1974); Jolivet (2001); Lindheim (2003) and Ottone (2007).

[11] See e.g. Spentzou (2003) and Fulkerson (2005).

[12] E.g. Myerowitz/Myerowitz-Levine (1985, 2006); Sharrock (1994, 2006); Boyd (1997); Barchiesi (2006); Casali (2006); Gibson (2006); Henderson (2006); Holzberg (2006); Labate (1984); Volk (2006) and Gardner (2013).

Notably, most studies that do include one or more of the letters of the *Heroides* as well as one or more of Ovid's amatory works regularly disregard *Heroides* 15, whose literary heroine is Sappho and absent hero is Phaon.[13] The different works that belong to Ovid's early poetry are interwoven by means of explicit as well as more opaque allusions. *Heroides* 15 represents a particularly rich trove of such Ovidian *loci similes*. By taking such Ovidian-internal allusions, especially those that occur in *Heroides* 15, as cues to read all of these works as part of a greater unity, this book will balance a trend in current scholarship, where, as already mentioned, the single *Heroides*, the *Amores*, *Ars amatoria* and *Remedia amoris* tend to be treated separately.

Finally, by focusing on *Heroides* 15 in order to better understand the works in question, this book represents a novel approach not only to Ovid's single *Heroides* but also to his other amatory works. The most radical contribution of this book thus consists in regarding Ovid's early poetry through the kaleidoscope of *Heroides* 15.

Outline of chapters

The first chapter re-examines the vexed question of the chronological order of Ovid's early poetry. A thorough examination of the internal and external evidence concerning the dates of all the works and the particular transmission of the single and double *Heroides* shows that it is impossible to establish a date earlier than AD 2 for any of the extant works in question. Consequently, the chapter endorses the hypothesis hinted at by Syme[14] and Harrison[15] of a revised, collected edition including Ovid's single *Heroides*, the extant *Amores*, the *Ars amatoria* and the *Remedia amoris*, which appeared around AD 2.

Having demonstrated the impossibility of establishing the chronological order of the different works of Ovid's early poetry in a strict sense, the chapter shifts focus from historical evidence to other categories that might instead be regarded as organising the early Ovidian output, such as the chronological order of the history of literature and a striking gender equality that provides Ovidian poetry with salient aesthetical symmetry. Ovid's single *Heroides* assume a leading role within both of these fictional chronologies by featuring the Homeric heroine Penelope in the first poem,

[13] Examples are Spoth (1992); Landolfi (2000); Armstrong (2005); Davis (2006); Hardie (2006); Kennedy (2006); Labate (2006); Rosati (2006); Gold (2012) and Caston (2012). Exceptions are e.g. Sabot (1976); Rimell (1999); Liveley (2005) and three books that cover all of Ovid's output, including *Heroides* 15: Holzberg (2002); Hardie (2002b) and Volk (2010).

[14] Syme (1978: 1, 20). [15] Harrison (2002: 84).

which thus evokes the starting point of ancient literary history, and by embodying the aesthetical symmetry achieved by gender equality with remarkable consistency.

Chapter 2 investigates Ovid's technique of signing his works, focusing particularly on the least obvious case for such Ovidian signatures, namely his single *Heroides*. As shown, Ovid epitomises his own image in each of his amatory works by means of a particular signature that consists of his own *cognomen* (*Naso*) plus an 'epithet'. Strikingly, the heroines of Ovid's *Heroides* sign each of their letters in a similar manner. The Heroidean signature that most closely resembles that of Ovid is Sappho's in *Heroides* 15.

The chapter then proceeds to examine the 'joint authorship' of the single *Heroides*, through which a model-author, most acutely represented by the historical poet Sappho, is evoked at the same time as the epistolary mode of the elegiac collection, behind which Ovid is after all the actual poet, corroborates the fiction of each heroine as writer. Finally, the chapter focuses on how the narrative dynamics of *Heroides* 15 are intensified in a way that reflects back on the authorial qualities of a number of the other heroines in the *Heroides*.

Chapter 3 explores the relationship between Ovid and some of his immediate poetic precursors and contemporary colleagues. The chapter identifies three features of a particular Horatian-Propertian dynamic that typifies Augustan literature: assertion of originality, identification with at least one Greek model, and rivalry with a Roman poet colleague. In his early poetry, Ovid evokes this dynamic by combining a boastful claim to originality on behalf of his *Heroides* (*Ars* 3.345), a close association with a Greek poet (Sappho in *Heroides* 15) and rivalry with a contemporary poet (Horace in the guise of Alcaeus at *Her.* 15.29–30). Finally, Ovid's rivalry with Horace seems to be supported by the importance of lyric in the *Heroides*, which has previously been largely neglected. In this context especially, Horace's *Odes* 3.11, which features the heroine Hypermestra, represents an important backdrop for *Heroides* 14, which is Hypermestra's Ovidian letter to Lynceus. The chapter discusses the way in which the juxtaposition of Hypermestra (*Her.* 14) and Sappho (*Her.* 15) at the end of Ovid's single *Heroides* reflects the influence of the lyric genre on this work.

The chapter then goes on to explore how Roman literary models may be linked to the much ignored geography of Ovid's *Heroides*. In particular, *Heroides* 15 recalls two places of Roman significance. The first of these places is Sicily, whose evocation in *Heroides* 15 arguably brings Vergil's *Eclogue* 10 into play. Vergil's eclogue provides a striking parallel to Sappho's letter to Phaon. The metapoetic plot of the two poems, where Gallus (*Eclogue* 10)

and Sappho (*Heroides* 15) find themselves in the erotic-elegiac situation of being abandoned by their beloved, centres on the metamorphosis from one genre (elegy/lyric) into another (bucolics/elegy). Furthermore, *Eclogue* 10 seems to include significant allusions to Sappho's fragments,[16] which is also the case of *Heroides* 15. Finally, both poems fittingly represent the *extremus labor* (*Ecl.* 10.1, 'final undertaking') of the earliest works of Vergil and Ovid respectively.

The other place of a 'Roman' significance in *Heroides* 15 that is treated in this chapter is Actium, close to where Sappho intends to jump into the sea in order to release herself from the agony of unrequited love, but of course the momentous place in recent Roman history where Octavian, the later Augustus, secured his victory over Mark Antony and Cleopatra in the naval battle of 31 BC. It should thus be possible to argue for a political understanding of the place within the framework of the *Heroides* at the time when Ovid composed his early poetry. Finally, the chapter explores the possibility of endowing Sappho's Actium with a political significance through hindsight.

In the three first chapters of this book, *Heroides* 15 emerges as a thoroughly Ovidian composition. Yet, the authenticity of this poem has been – and still is – vehemently disputed. Chapter 4 is entirely dedicated to the debate on the authenticity of *Heroides* 15, which with varied intensity has been going on for almost two hundred years. The first half of the chapter deals with the historical debate (1816–98), examines the arguments that were levelled against the poem at the time and explains why they were eventually abandoned in favour of the virtual *consensus omnium* that the poem is genuine. The second half of the chapter is a critical enquiry into the revival of the debate in recent times (1965–2003), where the arguments against the authenticity of *Heroides* 15 have proved highly influential and continue to nurture the widespread notion that the poem is inauthentic. The conclusion of this chapter is that none of these arguments are decisive when scrutinised more closely.

Few scholars have read *Heroides* 15 as an integral part of Ovid's early poetry in recent scholarship, because of the prevailing doubt about the authenticity of the poem. In an attempt to balance this trend, the final three chapters are dedicated to the way in which *Heroides* 15 represents a key to a profounder appreciation of Ovid's single *Heroides*, his extant *Amores*, the *Ars amatoria* and the *Remedia amoris*.

[16] Cf. Harrison (forthcoming).

Chapter 5 thus returns to the relationship between the first fourteen of the single *Heroides* and Sappho's letter to Phaon, focusing on two features that have been adduced as further reasons to view *Heroides* 15 as inauthentic: the recurring scene of a hero's departure, which represents a variation on the elegiac *topos* of the *paraclausithyron* ('lament by the closed door'), and the theme of sex.[17] Regarding the *topos* of the departing hero, this chapter shows how the imagined departure scene of Phaon in *Heroides* 15, instead of representing an anomaly within the framework of Ovid's single *Heroides*, rather vouches for the varied unity of Ovid's Heroidean recasting of the elegiac *topos* of the *paraclausithyron*. As regards the theme of sex, the chapter explores how the explicit erotic imagery and vocabulary of *Heroides* 15, contrary to being at odds with the other single *Heroides*, rather highlights the intrinsic importance in this work of the experience and consequences of sex.

Chapter 6 is dedicated to the relationship between Ovid's single *Heroides* and his extant *Amores*. The two works appear to be profoundly different: while the work of the *Heroides* consists of a series of epistolary elegies set in the realm of myth and canonical literature, Ovid's contemporary Rome is the scene of his *Amores* – a conventional collection of poems in the profoundly Roman genre of Latin love elegy. Furthermore, while the most important character in the *Amores* is a male poet-lover, the work of the *Heroides* displays a whole range of female protagonists. Yet, by examining the five *Amores* poems with which *Heroides* 15 has the most parallel passages in common, it becomes evident that not only do these *Amores* poems map Ovid's erotic-elegiac landscape with striking precision, but also that *Heroides* 15 epitomises the erotic-elegiac nature of the *Heroides* as a whole and thus vouches for a common ground between the two works in Ovid's poetics of love elegy.

Finally, Chapter 7 explores the relationship between art and love, life and death in Ovid's *Heroides*, *Ars amatoria* 1–3 and *Remedia amoris*. After discussing the striking resemblance between the erotodidactic qualities of Sappho in *Heroides* 15 and Ovid in the *Ars amatoria* 1–2, the chapter investigates the third book of the *Ars amatoria*, addressed to women, and the striking affinity between the role of the poet, poetry and the *puella*, which seems ultimately to reflect back on the figure of Sappho in *Heroides* 15 as Ovid's transvestite self-portrait. Ultimately, the common theme of

[17] For the *paraclausithyron*, see Copley (1956); for the departure scene as a Heroidean topos, see Fulkerson (2005: 154).

suicide in Ovid's single *Heroides* and in his *Remedia amoris* allows for an exploration not only of the end of love but also the end of life in a manner, which to a love-poet is of profoundly existential significance.

The book closes by reflecting on the poet who comes to light in Ovid's early poetry, not least in the portrait of Sappho in *Heroides* 15.

CHAPTER 1

Dating the young Ovid

There are two especially striking features that unite the works of Ovid's early poetry, in addition to having been produced during the same period of time: first, they all belong to the genre of love elegy,[1] and second, Ovid incessantly connects these works by means of explicit references and subtler allusions, thus insisting that these works should be read together.[2] In the following we map the more explicit references of this kind in Ovid's early poetry, while re-examining the vexed question of its chronological order.

The single *Heroides* and the *Amores*

Ovid's fullest reference to his single *Heroides* is found in his three-book collection of love elegies known as the *Amores*:[3]

> . . . quod Penelopes uerbis reddatur Vlixi
> scribimus et lacrimas, Phylli relicta, tuas,
> quod Paris et Macareus et quod male gratus Iason
> Hippolytique parens Hippolytusque legant,

[1] An exception is the tragedy *Medea*. Another possible exception is the hexameter translation of Aratus' *Phaenomena*, if indeed it should be regarded as one of Ovid's earlier works, cf. the Introduction. It should also be mentioned that from the remaining fragment in elegiac couplets of the *Medicamina*, it seems to be more concerned with *cultus* than with love, although the two themes are strongly related (Myerowitz 1985).

[2] This feature is a hallmark of Ovid's entire output, seminal here is Hinds (1987), see also e.g. Frings (2005) and Barchiesi and Hardie (2010: 59).

[3] In using the title *Heroides*, attested by the grammarian Priscian (*Gramm. Lat.* II.544.4 Keil), I follow the editions of Knox (1995) and Kenney (1996). In most manuscripts the work is called *Epistulae Heroidum* ('Letters of Heroines') or *Liber Heroidum* ('The Book of Heroines'). All three variations ignore the three male letter writers of the so-called double *Heroides* (16–21). Ovid calls one of the single *Heroides* simply *epistula* ('letter') at *Ars* 3.345.

quodque tenens strictum Dido miserabilis ensem
dicat et Aeoliae[4] Lesbis amara[5] lyrae.
(*Am.* 2.18.21–6)

[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 embittered Lesbian of the Aeolian lyre.]

In this passage, Ovid subtly reveals that the *Heroides* are letters, mentioning the heroine writers Penelope, Phyllis, Dido and Sappho (dubbed *Lesbis*)[6] and the hero addressees Ulysses, Paris, Macareus, Jason, Hippolytus and Theseus (Hippolytus' father). Furthermore, the passage insists on one of the most striking features of the work of the single *Heroides*, namely its 'double authorship'. With a first-person plural – which conventionally would refer to the single person speaking as in the translation above, but which in this case arguably retains some of its strict plural sense – Ovid claims that 'we' write (*scribimus*) what is conveyed by the words of the heroines. Through *Amores* 2.18 Ovid thus seems to stress that he and the heroines share words and tears, voices and audiences.[7]

This passage occurs in the only poem in the second book of the *Amores* that recounts Ovid's poetic achievements thus far in his career. *Amores* 2.18 seems therefore to fit into the pattern of the closing poems in the two remaining books of the collection of love elegies. In the first of these two poems, *Amores* 1.15, Ovid insists on his place in the great tradition of Greek and Roman poetry, and in the other, 3.15, he stresses his importance within the narrower context of Roman literature as he claims to be the pride of his birthplace Sulmo (*Am.* 3.15.8, 11–14), just as Verona takes pride in Catullus and Mantua in Vergil (3.15.7).

However, *Amores* 2.18 is not the final but rather the *penultimate* poem of the second book and thus one example of how expected patterns are broken in Ovid's poetry. Furthermore, the poem is not only about Ovid

[4] I prefer the reading *Aeoliae amica lyrae* transmitted in *p*, the second hand of the eleventh-century *Parisinus* Lat. 8242 (*Puteaneus*), to *Aeoniae Lesbis amata lyrae* printed with an obelus by Kenney (1994: 68), *Aeoniam Lesbis amica lyram* printed by McKeown (1987) and *Aeolio Lesbis amata uiro* printed by Ramírez de Verger (2006a: 88).

[5] I prefer the conjecture *amara* ('embittered') to the transmitted variants *amica* and, identical with v. 34, *amata*. Ingleheart (forthcoming) advances the conjecture.

[6] Cf. Chapter 3.

[7] Considering Phyllis' tears at *Am.* 2.18.22, it seems relevant to recall that the compiler of the *Florilegium Gallicum* knew, with a twist on *Her.* 3.4, that *interdum lacrimae pondera uocis habent* ('sometimes tears have the weight of words', my translation, cf. Rackley 1986: 126).