

Edmund Spenser, George  
Turberville, and Isabella Whitney  
Read Ovid's *Heroides*

by M. L. Stapleton

IN the *Heroides*, perhaps the ancient world's most prominent example of literary transvestism, Ovid adopts the personae of legendary women who lament the amatory crimes of the men they love. It may have been some of the first poetry in Latin that Spenser encountered, as it was for many schoolboys from the twelfth century onward, in accordance with its traditional pedagogical status, admirably documented by Ralph Hexter.<sup>1</sup> Since it was part of Eton's Erasmian curriculum as early as 1528, its familiarity and centrality to Spenser, whom Richard Mulcaster inculcated with a similar humanism at the Merchant Taylors' School, should not surprise.<sup>2</sup> It served as a primary text for beginning Latin students in England through the nineteenth century. For early modern readers, it also served as a celebrated exemplum of the potential for inventive excellence by an ancient author in his juvenile endeavors, another reason why the burgeoning New Poet would probably have read it. To Spenser and his innumerable poetical predecessors who sought to work meaningful improvisations on the traditions they wished to embody in their work, Ovid's cadre of mythical heroines (Lat. *herois*, *-ides*) exemplified doubly literate women—those

<sup>1</sup>See Hexter, *Ovid and Medieval Schooling: Studies in Medieval School Commentaries on Ovid's "Ars amatoria," "Epistulae ex Ponto," and "Epistulum heroidum"* (Munich: Arboe Gesellschaft, 1986), 137–204.

<sup>2</sup>Even after six decades, the most thorough standard account of Elizabethan education remains T. W. Baldwin's *William Shakspeare's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke*, 2 vols. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1947), especially 2:242, 419. As it happens, one Victorian editor of the *Heroides*, Evelyn S. Shuckburgh, was an assistant master at Eton, whose college library still holds two important medieval manuscripts of this early Ovidian work. See her *P. Ovidii Nasonis Heroidum Epistulae XIII* (London, 1879).

who wrote, since the genre was understood to be epistolary—and those who spoke persuasively, since the form utilized the *suasoria*, which the author had himself used in his formal education, as the Elder Seneca reports (*Controversiae* 2.2.9–11).<sup>3</sup>

Some contemporary readers may be offended by the heroines' obsession with the men who wronged them and their apparent lack of interest in defining a subjectivity independent of them. Ovid's creations may well have been designed for masculine consumption and approval, since Roman men and their Elizabethan successors found emotional, poetical women erotic.<sup>4</sup> This phenomenon may have reinforced the already pernicious cultural hegemony against women. Yet such projections of current theory into the past could certainly be rejected as anachronistic, as well as beside the point. For Ovid's Medea and Penelope are neither pinup material nor hapless satellites of Jason and Ulysses. Rather, they seem to be anguished portraits of women revealing themselves in all emotions squalid and otherwise, in a form ultimately less epistolary than rhetorical and performative, precedents for Elizabethan soliloquies and nineteenth-century dramatic monologues, as some commentators assert.<sup>5</sup>

## I

The cynic may well object that no such extended complaint in explicit letter form exists in Spenser. Indeed, the only real missive by a woman

<sup>3</sup> E. J. Kenney tells us that the ultimate source of the title *Heroides* comes from Priscian (6th c. CE); Ovid simply calls them *epistulae* ("The Manuscript Tradition of Ovid's *Amores*, *Ars Amatoria* and *Remedia Amoris*," *Classical Quarterly* 12 [1962]: 111). Joseph Farrell makes the valuable point that the Ovid presents the *Heroides* "as a collection of texts produced by writing women" ("Reading and Writing the *Heroides*," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 98 [1998]: 310). The standard analysis of Ovid in the *Controversiae* is T. E. Higham, "Ovid and Rhetoric," in *Ovidiana: Recherches sur Ovide, Publiée à l'occasion du bimillénaire du poète*, ed. Niculae I. Herescu (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1958), 32–48.

<sup>4</sup> Danielle Clarke writes, "One reason why men may have turned into authorial cross-dressers was the long-standing nature of the debate and the repetitive nature of its arguments; to introduce a female persona was at least novel, and may have been rather a titillating novelty at that, given the kinds of proscriptions and constructions surrounding female speech" (*The Politics of Early Modern Women's Writing* [London: Longman, 2001], 51).

<sup>5</sup> Louis Claude Purser writes, "The Epistles are really soliloquies, the epistolary setting being little more than a mere form which gives an apparent reason for these soliloquies being committed to writing at all" (*P. Ovidi Nasonis Heroides, with the Greek translation of Planudes*, ed. Arthur Palmer [Oxford, 1874], preface). Duncan F. Kennedy argues that although most of the *Heroides* only discuss their epistolary status in a glancing way, Ovid still exploits the form ("The Epistolary Mode and the First of Ovid's *Heroides*," *Classical Quarterly* 34 [1984]: 416).

in *The Faerie Queene* is merely that, not an impassioned rhetorical performance. Duessa's duplicitous message meant to destroy Redcrosse and humiliate him in front of Una's mother and father (1.12.26–28) ends with the witch's signature, which tellingly does not rhyme and lies outside the stanza to which it serves as postscript. If the *Heroides* was so important to Spenser, why should he not include a feminine verse epistle anywhere else in his work? Three explanations come immediately to mind. He often ethically corrects his pagan predecessors elsewhere in his canon. Perhaps he implicitly critiques Ovid's form by savaging it in the mouth of one of his least redeemable characters. Conversely, it may be that he especially champions women's literacy, because even Duessa can write. Yet it would be most accurate to say that there is no place for an extended *Heroides*-type letter in his work, and that his habit is to internalize, reconfigure, and emulate his predecessors whether he approves of them or not, because there are many such impassioned speeches in *The Faerie Queene* that closely resemble many of the epistles of Ovid's heroines, such as Britomart's Petrarchan paraphrase at the sea (3.4.8–10), Scudamour's lament for Amoret in the House of Busirane (3.11.9–11), Florimell's complaint for Marinell (4.12.6–11), or even Una's narrative of woe to Arthur (1.7.41–51).

Such speeches (with the exception of Scudamour's) help Spenser make a woman, rhetorically speaking. He was surely cognizant of Ovid's ultimate example of the male artist who fashions womankind in the image he wishes to see. The story of Pygmalion, which Orpheus, in his misogynistic phase, narrates, constitutes a double irony that their creator may well have intended, since the sculptor's creative impulse also arises from a loathing for women. He might as well be a Roman elegiac poet or an Elizabethan sonneteer, one who eschews the company of any woman so that he can make up his own: "offensus vitiis, quae plurima menti / femineae natura dedit" (*Met.* 10.244–45) (offended at the vices that nature gave to the mind of woman in such abundance).<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> All references to the texts of Ovid's poetry, as well as English prose translations, follow the Loeb Classical Library editions and will be cited parenthetically within the text. *Heroides and Amores*, trans. Grant Showerman, 2nd ed., rev. G. P. Goold (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986); *The Art of Love and Other Poems*, trans. J. H. Mozley, 2nd ed., rev. Goold (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985); *Metamorphoses*, 2 vols., trans. Frank Justus Miller, 3rd ed., rev. Goold (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976–77). Genevieve Liveley suggests that the Pygmalion story symbolizes the elegiac love poet creating a mistress ("Reading Resistance in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*," in *Ovidian Transformations: Essays on the "Metamorphoses" and Its Reception*, ed. Philip Hardie, Alessandro Barchiesi, and Stephen Hinds, Cambridge Philological Society Supplements 23 [Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, 1999], 210).

Arthur Golding's translation evokes the comic improbability of such an enterprise by the artist so enamored of a material object that he engages in foreplay with it before attempting to make love to it:

He beleevd his fingars made a dint  
 Uppon her flesh, and feared least sum blacke or broosed print  
 Should come by touching over hard. Sumtyme with pleasaunt boords  
 And wanton toyes he dalyngly dooth cast fourth amorous woords.  
(XVB 10.276–80)<sup>7</sup>

The translator emphasizes Ovid's subtle points that masculine caresses are sometimes clumsy and inexpert so that the difference between touching and brutalizing does not often seem apparent to a man, although it always does to a woman. Spenser's fable of the False Florimell, "Enough to hold a foole in vaine delight" (*FQ* 3.8.10), especially the pursuit of the "Idole faire" by the likes of the Chorle, Braggadocchio, and Sir Ferraugh, comments on the vapidty and ineptitude of men who lust for artifice, as well as on his own fabrications of women in *Amorette*.<sup>8</sup> One might similarly describe as thematizing Acrasia's ability to excite the all-consuming amorous gaze, who "was arayd, or rather disarayd, / All in a vele of silke and siluer thin, / That hid no whit her alabaster skin, / But rather shewd more white, if more might be" (2.12.77). Perhaps all such physical descriptions allegorize the futility of a man "making" a woman. The *Heroides*, then, may represent another direction and a different perspective for Spenser to adopt. Let women seem to create themselves with words, even if, as one critic says of Ovid, his "sexually-charged, passionate, female voices" are "controlled by a male moralist's invisible hand."<sup>9</sup>

Spenser, in designing these performances that seem written as they are spoken, may well have noted how Ovid draws attention to the physical act of writing by women in his other work. A remarkable section of the *Metamorphoses* (9.474–516) emblemizes all the characters in the *Heroides*. As Byblis contemplates incest with her brother, she ex-

<sup>7</sup> All references to this text follow *Shakespeare's Ovid, Being Arthur Golding's Translation of the "Metamorphoses" (1567)* (ed. W. H. D. Rouse [1904; rpt. New York: Norton, 1966]) and will be cited parenthetically in the text with the acronym XVB.

<sup>8</sup> All quotations of Spenser's poetry follow *The Works of Edmund Spenser, A Variorum Edition* (ed. Edwin Greenlaw et al., 11 vols. [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1932–57]) and will be cited parenthetically in the text.

<sup>9</sup> Jeremy Dimmick, "Ovid in the Middle Ages: Authority and Poetry," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ovid*, ed. Philip Hardie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 268.

presses her angst by applying stylus to tablet, which Golding renders this way:

What furie raging in my hart my senses dooth appall?  
 In thinking so, with trembling hand shee framed her too wryght  
 The matter that her troubled mynd in musing did indyght.  
 Her ryght hand holdes the pen, her left dooth hold the empty wax.  
 Shee ginnes. Shee doutes, shee wryghtes: shee in the tables findeth lacks.  
 Shee notes, shee blurres, dislikes, and likes: and chaungeth this for that.  
 Shee layes away the booke, and takes it up. Shee wotes not what  
 She would herself. What ever thing shee myndeth for too doo  
 Misliketh hir. A shamefastnesse with boldenesse mixt theretoo  
 Was in her counnance. Shee had one writ Suster. Out agen  
 The name of Suster for too raze shee thought it best.

(XVB 9.620–30)

As Byblis writes and revises and rewrites and erases, she establishes her identity and gives permanence to her act and her psyche in the process Ovid describes, the anguished act of writing tied to the tumultuous emotions surrounding what she contemplates. Before framing her hand to “indyght” the matter that occupies her “troubled mynd in musing,” it is no more than a thought, evil that may come and go (so unapproved) in her mind, as Milton’s Adam tells Eve. Bold and shamefast, she determines her relationship to her brother and the nature of her identity, what is truth to her. In writing and erasing the “name of Suster,” desiring and composing and becoming as an author, fashioning and inventing and negating the self all run together. The interpenetration of the imitation and becoming mirrors the incestuous nature of the love. Ovid may even suggest that such transgression occurs when any author negotiates an identity by writing the self, a “psychosexual shibboleth” that can result in “autoincrimination,” as Joseph Farrell suggests of his heroines, or what Florence Verducci calls “involuntary self-revelation.”<sup>10</sup>

Spenser’s proficiency in Latin allowed him to see how Ovid first explores such multiplex turmoil in the *Heroides*, the intermingling of desire, writing, and becoming in the process of feminine self-fashioning. George Turberville’s translation, *The Heroycall Epistles of the Learned Poet Publius Ouidius Naso, In Englishe Verse* (1567), may also have aided

<sup>10</sup> Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 5.117–19 in *Complete Poems and Major Prose*, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub., 2003); Farrell, “Reading and Writing the *Heroides*,” 323. Verducci’s theory of the “accelerating process of involuntary self-revelation” in the *Heroides* anticipates Farrell’s idea of “autoincrimination” (*Ovid’s Toyshop of the Heart: “Epistulae Heroidum”* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985], 63).

him. As with all other renditions of classical authors in a given epoch, it suggests how Ovid may have sounded to sixteenth-century English readers, in this case an early modern transvestite version of *l'écriture féminine*, one that Michael Drayton utilized in his much later imitation of the same text, *Englands heroicall epistles* (1597), his heroines drawn from British history, such as Henry II's mistress Rosamond. For an even more direct instance of Hélène Cixous' concept without the surmised literary crossdressing, recent scholarship reveals that women writers in Spenser's time such as Isabella Whitney (fl. 1567–69) write themselves by reading and imitating the *Heroides*.<sup>11</sup> So Turberville's translations and Whitney's epistles serve as important precedents for the use of different poetical forms and meters and for women's voices in *The Shepherdes Calender* and *The Faerie Queene*, even to the extent of surmised feminine prolixity and capriciousness garnered from the *Heroides* itself. Whitney provides an example of a thinking, feeling, emoting woman, a Tudor *herois*, an emblem worthy of her brother Geoffrey of how a poetical woman's voice may have "sounded" to a reader such as Spenser, conceiving the Britomarts, Amorets, and Radigunds to come.<sup>12</sup>

## II

As with all other Ovidian texts, the *Heroides* has its own 2000-year-old critical tradition, in part comprised by allusion or imitation, one in which Spenser enthusiastically participates. In a fashion typical of the ancient *auctor* and his ironic aesthetics, some of the elegies them-

<sup>11</sup> See Verena Andermatt Conley, *Hélène Cixous: Writing the Feminine* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984). Verducci's generous assessment of the *Heroides* theorizes about its originality: "Perhaps the greatest, and surely the most original, achievement of Ovid's letters is the impression they create of psychological authenticity, of convincing fidelity to the private perspective of a speaker caught in a double process of intentional persuasion and unintentionally revealing self-expression" (*Ovid's Toyshop*, 15). For Drayton, see *Englands heroicall epistles* (London, 1597). This popular text was frequently reprinted: 1598, 1599, 1600, 1602, 1603, 1619, and 1620.

<sup>12</sup> Geoffrey Whitney is best known for his scholarly *Emblemes* (1582). Georgia Brown provides excellent analysis of the use of the *Heroides* in the 1590s by English authors, especially in Drayton's *Englands heroicall epistles* and Samuel Daniel's *The Complaint of Rosamond* (1592) (*Redefining Elizabethan Literature* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005], 36–52, 49, 103–4, 179–81, 195, and 198–99). Clarke stresses the importance of Turberville's work on Whitney in *The Politics of Early Modern English Women's Writing*, 194–95. She makes other important connections between Whitney and the Ovidian epistolary tradition, with Turberville as a kind of intermediary, in the introduction to *Isabella Whitney, Mary Sidney and Aemilia Lanyer: Renaissance Women Poets* (London: Penguin, 2000), xiii–xiv.

selves function as commentary on earlier authors or interpretations of their works, such as Penelope-Ulysses (*Her.* 1) for the *Odyssey*; Briseis-Achilles (3), Oenone-Paris (5), Paris-Helen (16), and Helen-Paris (17) for the *Iliad*; and Dido-Aeneas (7) for the *Aeneid*. Early medieval authors such as Isidore of Seville (ca. 580–635) allude to the *Heroides*, as does Baudri de Bourgueil (1046–1130), who reconfigures the Paris-Helen correspondence into his own elegiac form, a tradition that Christine de Pizan (1365–ca. 1429) continues two hundred years later in *Cent ballades d'amant et de dame*. Eleventh- and twelfth-century cathedral schools deploy many of the heroines' letters as school texts, often accompanied by *accessus*, or commentaries/introductions. Hexter reminds us that our medieval forebears would not have understood our Wildean conception of the essential purposelessness of art and that schoolmasters from this time remind their charges that Ovid's very practical intention for pedagogical purposes is to castigate men and women who practice illicit love, such as Dido and Aeneas, and to commend the married kind instead, such as Penelope and Ulysses.<sup>13</sup> Two headnotes from medieval school manuscripts read: "intentio sua est in hoc libro hortari ad uirtutes et redarguere uicia" (his intention in this book is to encourage one to virtues and to dissuade us from vices) and "commendando legitimum, stultum et illicitum reprehendit" (in commending lawful love, he condemns the foolish and illicit kinds).<sup>14</sup> The women troubadours (*les trobairitz*) such as Maria de Ventadorn, who may also have benefited from such pedagogy, anticipate Whitney by fashioning their poetry as epistolary complaint. In the fourteenth century, the Italian Latin poem once attributed to Petrarch, the *Antiovidianus*, denounces Ovid's text as "meretricia carmina," unchaste verses.<sup>15</sup> Chaucer perhaps thought of his *Legend of Good Women* as a revision of the *Heroides* since he makes third-person narratives of some of the auctor's first-person accounts, such as that of Medea and Dido. It may well have been one of the "bokes" he praises "Thurgh whiche that olde thinges ben in mynde," without which "Yloren were of remembraunce the keye" (17,

<sup>13</sup> Hexter, *Ovid and Medieval Schooling*, 154. Oscar Wilde concludes his preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (London, 1891) with "All art is quite useless."

<sup>14</sup> See R. B. C. Huygens, ed., *Accessus ad auctores, Bernard d'Utrecht, Conrad d'Hirsau, "Dialogus super Auctores"* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 31 and 30, respectively. The translations are my own.

<sup>15</sup> See *Antiovidianus*, ed. Richard Kienast, in *Aus Petrarca's ältestem deutschen Schülerkreise*, ed. Konrad Burdach, *Texte und Untersuchungen* 7 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1929), 79–111; the quotation is from line 73 of the poem. Hexter discusses the *Antiovidianus* in *Ovid and Medieval Schooling* (96–99).

18, 26).<sup>16</sup> Julius Caesar Scaliger (1484–1558) commends it for its decorum, writerly facility, and meter.<sup>17</sup> Drayton praises Ovid as one “whose imitator I partly professe to be” in 1597.<sup>18</sup>

The *Heroides*, sometimes slighted by Ovidians, are almost always positioned first in early printings of Ovid, from the *incunabulae* through the sixteenth century, such as the especially handsome edition produced by Aldus Manutius and edited by Andreas Navigerius (1502). This version served as the standard for English readers such as Spenser, reprinted first by Thomas Vautrollier and, later, by his successor in the business and the marriage bed, Richard Field, Shakespeare's classmate in Stratford.<sup>19</sup> Daniel Hensius's Ovid (1629), however, probably best bridges the *Heroides* to the modern world by commenting on the spurious nature of some elegies, especially the “Sabine epistles.”<sup>20</sup> This perceived lack of authenticity, as well as the feminine voices within, may account for the later perception of the text as second rate. Wye Saltonstall, Turberville's successor in rendering the *Heroides* into English (1637), inadvertently

<sup>16</sup> *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd. ed., gen. ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), 589.

<sup>17</sup> “Epistolae omnium [Ovidii] librorum politissime, nam & sententiae sunt illustres facilitas, & composita, & numeri Poetici” (*Ovids heroical epistles, Englished by John Sherburne, Gent.* [London, 1639], A4v).

<sup>18</sup> Drayton, *Englands heroicall Epistles*, A2r.

<sup>19</sup> Field married Vautrollier's widow, Jacqueline. The first Aldine edition is *Publii Ovidii Nasonis Heroidam epistolae, Amorum libri iii, De arte amandi libri iii, De remedio amoris lib. ii, Omnia ex accuratiss*, ed. Andrea Navigerius (Venice, 1516–17). Vautrollier's reprint is dated 1583, and Field's slight revision of this edition for English readers, 1594.

<sup>20</sup> Both Kennedy (“The Epistolary Mode,” 218) and Hexter (*Ovid and Medieval Schooling*, 138n5) summarize the critical controversies regarding the Sappho letter. See also R. J. Tarrant, “The Authenticity of the Letter of Sappho to Phaon (*Heroides* XV),” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 85 (1981): 133–54. Hensius alerts the reader to the apocryphal nature of this epistle by placing it at the end of the fourteen single epistles and before the Sabine letters. Shuckburgh omits it without comment.

Critics sometimes refer to the Sabine letters as the “double epistles” because they feature replies by some of the men to the women who address them, such as Ulysses, Demophoon, and Paris to Penelope, Phyllis, and Oenone, respectively. Renaissance editions of Ovid usually call this subset the *Epistulae tres ad Ovidianas epistulas responsoriae*, although there are seven masculine replies rather than the three implied by this title. As for “Sabine,” modern consensus holds that the author of these letters was Angelus Sabinus (i.e., Angelo Sabino), a fifteenth-century Italian scholar/poet who helped introduce them as genuine classical artifacts. He was able to create such confusion because Ovid had a friend by the same name, Aulus Sabinus, whom he said wrote seven epistles (*Amores* 2.18.27–35). Although a commentator as astute and knowledgeable as Hexter is willing to accept them as genuine (*Ovid and Medieval Schooling*, 139), Kennedy disclaims them as forgeries (“The Epistolary Mode,” 218n5). Hence modern editors generally do not include the Sabine Epistles with the *Heroides*. Yet it was standard Renaissance practice to do so. Turberville faithfully translates them since the unimpeachable Aldus includes them in his edition of Ovid.



undercuts the worth of Ovid's work and his own by his patronizing dedication to its target audience:

Ladies and Gentlewomen, since this book of *Ovids*, which most Gentlemen could reade before in Latine, is for your sakes come forth in English, it doth at first addresse it selfe as a Suiter, to wooe your acceptance, that it may kisse your hands, and afterward have the lines thereof in reading sweetned by the odour of your breath, while the dead letters formd into words by your divided lips, may receive new life by your passionate expression, and the words marryed in that Ruby colourd Temple, may thus happily united, multiply your contentment.<sup>21</sup>

He describes himself in his postscript as "A Servant with you to the *Lady Vertue*." One wonders what the many literate and highly educated women in Stuart England such as Katherine Philips, Margaret Cavendish, and Anne Finch must have thought of this rather baroque analogy of a book that metamorphoses into a suitor whose body is enhanced by their breath and touch and somehow works his way into their mouths—virtuously, it must be assumed.<sup>22</sup>

John Dryden translates many of the *Heroides*, along with other authors such as Aphra Behn, in *Ovid's Epistles, Translated by Several Hands* (1680). His preface to the work is much better known today than the actual renditions themselves for its extremely important theories about translation, imitation, and paraphrase. Still, its critical pronouncements about the ancient text represent a trend. Although he claims universal approbation for the poems, he praises their decorousness above all, very much in Saltonstall's key:

*they are generally granted to be the most perfect piece of Ovid, and that the Style of them is tenderly Passionate and Courtly, two properties which were well agreeing with the Persons which were Heroines, and Lovers . . . of the general Character of Women which is Modesty, he has taken a most becoming care; for his amorous Expressions go no further than vertue may allow, and therefore may be read, as he intended them, by Matrons without a blush.*<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Saltonstall, *Ovids heroicall epistles Englished by W.S.* (London, 1637), A3r.

<sup>22</sup> Sherburne may implicitly criticize Saltonstall in the preface to his own identically titled translation: "the Iudicious Reader may be pleased to take notice, that no vain desire of praise, nor giddy humour to bee seen in print, hath thus brought me into publique view. But an humble, and modest hope, of rectifying the wrongs our Author hath sustained through the rude attempts of a too-too busie pen" (*Ovids heroical epistles*, A4r). It should be noted, however, that his work quickly receded from sight, whereas Saltonstall's was reprinted five times (1639, 1663, 1673, 1686, and 1695), competing even with the celebrated edition by Dryden et al.

<sup>23</sup> Dryden et al., *Ovid's Epistles, Translated by Several Hands, The second Edition, with the Addition of a New Epistle* (London, 1681), A7r–v. This text was originally published in 1680 and is best known for Dryden's influential and magisterial essay on translation, which serves as a preface.

Dryden, generally an astute critic, savage satirist, and witness to all types of feminine behavior in and out of the court of Charles II, perhaps underplays the passions that Ovid makes his heroines express. Increasing calls for censorship and squeamishness about erotic representations of women, especially by the sister monarchs Mary (1688–92) and Anne (1702–14), mark the end of the seventeenth century. Or perhaps he anticipates women readers who wanted to be considered modest. Yet Behn's imitative paraphrase of the Oenone to Paris epistle (*Her.* 5), for instance, may have aroused entirely different reactions from the nation's matrons than blushes: "I lov'd, and all Loves Dictates did persue, / And never thought it cou'd be Sin with you."<sup>24</sup>

Two major twentieth-century studies typify this ambiguous view of the *Heroides* that Spenser may well have held himself: disdain for their excesses and praise for their emotional and psychological authenticity. Howard Jacobson categorizes it as the "most rhetorical work" of a "rhetorical poet" and is critical of its "sometimes rather ludicrous cleverness." Verducci, whose study in some ways supplants Jacobson's and still serves as the standard book-length reading in English of this single Ovidian text, summarizes such dismissive criticism of these elegies: "they are exercises in school rhetoric tricked out into poetry; and that numerous passages from different poems are monotonously interchangeable, such as descriptions of excessive grief, fainting fits, jealousy, and longing." Her monograph undercuts such facile readings by explaining the differences between speakers (a concept Turberville actually puts into practice with the number of different forms and meters he uses so that his versions of Ovid's characters have distinguishable voices). She argues that the individual elegies reconfigure and parody the rhetorical exercises known as *suasoria* (impassioned plea, persuasive) and *ethopoia* (speaking through a historical character under specific circumstances)—forms that Spenser practices quite often in *The Faerie Queene*.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup>Behn's poem, *A Paraphrase on Oenone to Paris* is included in *Ovid's Epistles* and praised by Dryden: "I was desir'd to say that the Authour who is of the Fair Sex, understood not Latine. But if she does not, I am afraid she has given us occasion to be asham'd who do" (a3v). An *Ovid to Julia: A Letter* has also been attributed to her, which would mean that she created her own type of "Sabine" reply. Both poems are most accessible in *The Works of Aphra Behn*, ed. Janet Todd, 7 vols. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1992), 1:12–19 and 182–84, respectively. For the growing trend toward censorship in the Enlightenment, see, for example, Leona Rostenberg, "Robert Stephens, Messenger of the Press: An Episode in 17th-Century Censorship," *Publications of the Bibliographical Society of America* 49 (1955): 131–52; and Harold M. Weber, *Paper Bullets: Print and Kingship under Charles II* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1996).

<sup>25</sup>See Verducci, *Ovid's Toyshop*, 158. P. E. Knox concurs with Verducci's opinions (Knox,

## III

Turberville's translation of the *Heroides*, *The Heroycall Epistles of the Learned Poet Publius Ovidius Naso, In Englishe Verse*, was the standard English edition for seventy years, with four different printings in his lifetime, 1567, 1569, 1570, and 1600. It was not displaced until well into the reign of Charles I by the renditions of Saltonstall (1637) and John Sherburne (1639).<sup>26</sup> Its prosody, not always regularly iambic or contained in the pentameter line, displeases some contemporary readers. Yet it probably represents, in the manner of Golding's *Metamorphoses*, how this Ovidian text fell on the ears of early modern auditors, since Turberville's minute attention to sound suggests that his version was meant to be read aloud, its speakers heard as if they were delivering soliloquies in his underrated fourteeners, poulter's measure, and blank verse. Spenser may have known him, and probably read the *Heroycall Epistles*.

Turberville (ca. 1540–1610) was simultaneously a prolific author and a public person. He translated Baptista Mantuan, the fifteenth-century Latin poet Dominicus Manicus, Boccaccio, and others. He wrote a sonnet sequence as well as treatises on hunting and falconry. He was known and admired by Sir John Harington, George Gascoigne, and Francis Meres. George Puttenham, Thomas Nashe, and Gabriel Harvey seem somewhat less enthusiastic about Turberville's poetical effusions. Also, he served as secretary to Thomas Randolph, Elizabeth's ambassador to Ivan the Terrible, and composed topographical verse about the Russian landscape and other sights exotic to an early modern Englishman.<sup>27</sup> He

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ed., *Heroides: Select Epistles* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995], 16). For the Jacobson quotations, see *Ovid's Heroides* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), 322 and 8. He is prone to summary judgments: "The real Sappho, with keen esthetic sensibilities and subtle feelings for love and beauty, has degenerated into a grotesque pursuer of material luxury and corporeal lust" (297). Kenney views the *Heroides* in the *suasoria* tradition: see "The Manuscript Tradition of Ovid's *Amores*," in which he also discusses the problems with the Sabine letters and his use of the *controversia* form (2). Alessandro Schiesaro takes the opposite view in "Ovid and the Professional Discourses of Scholarship, Religion, Rhetoric," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ovid*, ed. Hardie, 71. Good general accounts of the *Heroides* include W. S. Anderson, "The *Heroides*," in *Ovid*, ed. J. W. Binns (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), 4–83; and Hardie, "Ovid's Poetics of Illusion," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ovid*, ed. Hardie, 106–42. Kennedy laments "a determinedly masculine condescension" in the reception of the *Heroides* ("Epistolarity: The *Heroides*," in *The Cambridge Companion*, ed. Hardie, 219).

<sup>26</sup>The full title of the translation is *The Heroycall Epistles of the Learned Poet Publius Ovidius Naso, In Englishe Verse: set out and translated by George Turberuile Gent. with Aulius Sabinus Answeres to certaine of the same* (London, 1567). All quotations from the text refer to this edition and are, when necessary, cited parenthetically with the acronym HE.

<sup>27</sup>Turberville, who also spelled his name Turberuile, receives some mention in *The Dic-*

may have been known to Spenser, since his bold variations on standard form and meter could well have inspired the similar and artistically superior experiments of *The Shepheardes Calender*. In the preface to his *Tragicall tales translated by Turberuile in time of his troubles*, his rendition of Italian authors, he draws together his professional and artistic experiences in the dedication to his brother, which suggests that things did not always go well for him: "dedicating to you these few Poetical parers, and pensiuie Pamphlets, the ruful records of my former trauel, in the sorrowful sea of my late misaduentures."<sup>28</sup> His use of florid language and heavy alliteration is similar to the type that Spenser exhibits, sometimes satirically.

Yet perhaps Turberville's detractors might have been enjoined to empathize with the horrors of a grueling journey to spend time in Ivan's court, and to admire him for doing his own work under such circumstances. He seems unusually and touchingly aware of his own poetical lapses. The preface to *Heroycall Epistles* informs the reader, "I had long ere thys time bid thee to a slender banquet." At the same time, and perhaps not paradoxically, he seems defensive about these shortcomings and knowledgeable about sixteenth-century translation theory. In "The Translator to the captious sort of Syncophants," he warns any adventurous novice that he will find it difficult "That vndertakes with well agreeing file / Of English verse, to rub the Romaine stile." Critics, "those Snakes, and beastly Viperys broode," should take writers at their best: "Condemne them not or ere thou hast begonne / To vewe their workes, but ouerreade the rest." After all, he says, translators know (even if critics do not), how much work is involved in an undertaking such as rendering the *Heroides* into passable English verse:

Deuises of the language diuerse are,  
Well couched wordes, and featly forged phras,  
Eche string in tune, no ragged ryme doth iarre,

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*tionary of National Biography (DNB)*, ed. Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee, 22 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1917), 19:1248–50. He served as secretary to Thomas Randolph, Elizabeth's ambassador to Ivan the Terrible and went to Russia with him. He sent topographical poetry home, which the *DNB* refers to as his "first volume" published in 1568. His other publications include *The eglogs of the poet B. Mantuan Carmelitan, turned into English verse, & set forth with the argument to euery egloge by George Turberuile Gent.* (London, 1567); *Epitaphes, epigrams, songs, and sonets with a discourse of the friendly affections of Tymetes to Pyndara his ladie* (London, 1567); *A plaine path to perfect virtue* (London, 1568), translations from Domincus Manicus (fl. 1478–91), a Renaissance Latin poet; and the rendering of Boccaccio and others in *Tragicall tales translated by Turberuile in time of his troubles, out of sundrie Italians* (London, 1587).

<sup>28</sup>Turberville, *Tragicall tales*, A3r.

With figures fraught their bookes in euery place  
 So that it is a worke of prayse to cause  
 A Romaine borne to speake with English iawes.<sup>29</sup>

Turberville, although over deploying his standard device of alliteration, paraphrases what most medieval and Renaissance writers say about translation, especially the most difficult tenet of remembering that one's source should not distort the language of the target text with ragged rhymes, rhetorical howlers, and poor or unfamiliar diction. The student of English literary history may well note that Spenser and Gabriel Harvey espoused similar ideas in their correspondence at the same time that the *Heroycall Epistles* saw print.<sup>30</sup> She or he might also think of the old diplomat as a kind of Ovidian midwife for the New Poet. Just as Turberville uses contemporary theory in his struggle to create vernacular versions of the heroines who sound credibly like the *magister* himself, Spenser fashions his own *heroides* that reflect his predecessor's ideas and practices regarding Romans "borne to speake with English iawes."

## IV

Arguably, Spenser's most careful readers can be found in the intertwined editorial and philological traditions, especially when we examine their work on allusions to Latin authors such as Ovid. To contemporary theorists, the parallel passage method that John Hughes, John Jortin, John Upton, and Henry Lotspeich used may seem not just old fashioned but counterproductive, inhibitive of deeper analysis. Yet their training as textual scholars and as classicists is simply unparalleled today. As they reread, studied, and analyzed virtually all of Ovid and Spenser in their editorial work, they developed linguistic sensitivity and powers of memory that should dazzle rather than give cause for scorn. Although their method of comparative analysis now seems naïve, most contemporary scholars, it should be said, simply do not have the training to engage in such activity without the aid of sophisticated computer programs, as well as the concordances, critical editions, and scholarly dictionaries that the philologists themselves created. Perhaps we cannot even understand their achievement as we first encounter it without specialized education. So at least some of the twenty-odd intertextual

<sup>29</sup>Turberville, *Heroycall Epistles*, A6r, x2v, x2r, x3r, and x2v, respectively.

<sup>30</sup>See the Spenser *Variorum*, ed. Greenlaw et al., 10:6, 252, 443, 463, 474–75, and 480–81.

equations involving the *Heroides* listed in the Spenser *Variorum* deserve scrutiny and may help us understand the imitative process itself.<sup>31</sup>

The critical problem of building upon such work to deduce exactly what Spenser gleaned from the *Heroides* can be illustrated by two philological cruces fretted over by Upton, Jortin, and Lotspeich.<sup>32</sup> Upton analyzes Spenser's puzzling simile for Calidore, "like *Phrygian Paris* by *Plexippus* brooke, / When he the loue of fayre *Oenone* sought" (FQ 6.9.36). He suggests its root in the epithet "*Pegasis Oenone*" (*Her.* 5.3), concerning Paris's first love, which Turberville translates "*Pegasian Nymph* renoumde in *Troie*" (26r). Never one to omit any research he has done, even if it seems admittedly misleading, he constructs two etymons from Greek and Latin to explain the mysterious adjective "*Plexippus*" and its possible relation to the name of Perseus's horse, Pegasus, and the fountain he created with his hoof, Hippocrene—and then throws up his hands.<sup>33</sup> In *Virgils Gnat*, Spenser alludes to the matter of *Heroides* 2, Phyllis's letter to Demophoon: "And that same tree, in which Demophoon, / By his disloyalty lamented sore" (201–2). According to Jortin and Lotspeich, Spenser probably gathered his information from pseudo-Virgil's *Culex* rather than from Ovid: "posterius cui Demophoon aeterna reliquit / perfidiam lamentanti mala (131–32) (Next came she, to whom, as she wept over his treachery, Demophoon left unending grief).<sup>34</sup> Yet they contend that his reading of the dative "cui" was mistaken, because the *Gnat* implies that the perfidious lover, not his fair victim, suffered by his changing into an almond tree. By common knowledge of the myth, they argue, Phyllis, not Demophoon,

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 9:82–84.

<sup>32</sup>See Jortin, *Remarks on Spenser's Poems* (London, 1734), 142; and Lotspeich, *Classical Mythology in the Poetry of Edmund Spenser* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1932), 53. For easiest access, see the Spenser *Variorum*, ed. Greenlaw, 8:339.

<sup>33</sup>Upton writes in his edition, "Observe this word *Pegasis*, and see if from hence we cannot get the true explanation and understanding of *Plexippus'* brook. . . . Spenser loves . . . to miswrite proper names; he does not say *Pege*, *Pegasis*, *Pedasis* or *Pegasion*: nor follows any commentator; but as he corrupts the name of *Oenone* and writes *Benone*; so he corrupts the name of the *Brook* near which *Oenone* was educated, and who was said to be the daughter of a fountain, and writes it *Plexippus*.—This is my real opinion of this very difficult passage. I formerly understood it otherwise: viz. that *Plexippus* was the same as *Hippocrene*; from *πλήγζω*, *ξω*, *percutio* and *ἵππος*, *equus*: imagin[in]g that this whole story of Paris and the three goddesses, which appeared on mount Ida, was invented by the drinkers of the fountain Hippocrene. but let the reader please himself, and improve the hint here given, if he thinks it not satisfactory" (*Spenser's Faerie Queene, A New Edition with a Glossary, and Notes Explanatory and Critical* by John Upton, Prebendary of Rochester and Rector of Great Rissington in Gloucestershire, 2 vols. [London, 1758], 2:651).

<sup>34</sup>Text and translation: *Virgil*, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough, rev. ed. G. P. Goold, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 2:414–15.

underwent this ordeal. Perhaps Ovid and pseudo-Virgil expected their readers to know this, which may explain why there is no specific mention of any metamorphoses or almond trees in *Heroides* 2, the *Culex*, or in the possibly spurious *Heroides* 23 by Aulus Sabinus, Demophoon's reply to Phyllis. Only a later prose preface to this latter epistle clarifies the matter: "Phyllis . . . erat . . . in amygdalum . . . conversa."<sup>35</sup> Accordingly, since Turberville's Sabine Demophoon is murky on the subject, "What Gibbet (oh) is that that thou dost manace [i.e., menace] so / Vnto thy selfe?" (157r), his rendition of the Latin prose represents another step toward clarity: "In Almon tree good Phyllis hanges, and this was all the Hostesse gainde" (153r).

So perhaps Spenser deserves some empathy for not getting it exactly right. What should give pause, however, is that both he and Turberville got one detail exactly wrong. Neither poet's characters become transformed into an *amygdalum*, or almond tree. However, both Turberville's Phyllis and Spenser's Demophoon are represented as *hanging in a tree*. In the translation of Sabinus, the "Gibbet" mentioned is obviously something from which one is suspended or exhibited, which according to the preface is an "Almon tree." If we untangle the syntax of the *Gnat*, it is "that same tree, in which Demophoon . . . lamented." So perhaps the preposition is the clue to intertextuality here and hints at Spenser's very interesting misreading of Turberville, his source.

One is tempted to speculate that editors such as Upton, armed with a sense of humor in his intertextuality, left it to posterity to pursue these allusive leads and determine what kinds of translinguistic poetics Spenser was practicing. He points out simple parallels between specific parts of *Heroides* 1, Penelope to Ulysses, and certain sections of *The Faerie Queene*. Penelope complains of her husband's absence with a fervent wish that Paris had been drowned on his fateful trip, for "Then shoulde I not haue layde my limmes, in desert couch alone" (*HE* 1r), or more properly, "iacuissem frigida lecto" (*Her.* 1.7) (lain cold in my deserted bed). Upton hears this line in Archimago's fiendishly disingenuous appeal to Redcrosse, an "vnhappy Swaine, / That here wex old in sleepe, whiles wicked wyghts / Haue knit themselues in *Venus* shamefull chaine" (*FQ* 1.2.4), these wights being the False Una and the second Sprite transformed into the lusty Young Squire.<sup>36</sup> Penelope notes rue-

<sup>35</sup>Ovid, *Pub. Ovidi Nasonis Heroidum epistolae unà cum A. Sabini epistolis tribus* (Cambridge, 1635), 123.

<sup>36</sup>Upton suggests that "wex old" may have been miscopied from "wax cold": "Perhaps 'twas written in Spenser's copy *was cold*, one of the strokes of the x being separated from the other" (ed., *Spenser's Faerie Queene*, 2:354).

fully that other women more fortunate than she cling to their returning spouses with gratitude and desire (*Her.* 1.30): "The wyues about their husbandes hang when they begin to speake" (*HE* 2r). Again, Upton senses that this bit of Ovidiana informs a passage, this time between Paridell and his paramour: "all the while, that he these speaches spent, / Vpon his lips hong faire Dame *Hellenore*" (*FQ* 3.9.52).<sup>37</sup> In subtly upbraiding Ulysses for his failure to return to her, Ovid's heroine recalls Nestor's tale to Telemachus of his father's bravery and craft against a less crafty pair of foes (*Her.* 1.39–42): "Howe *Rhesus* thou didst make to rue, and *Dolon* yelde to death: / Th'one sleeping, th'other by thy guile did lose his vitall breath" (*HE* 2r). Spenser, Upton claims, uses this locus to reanimate Dolon in his Book of Justice, "A man of subtill wit and wicked minde . . . / with slie shiftes and wiles did vnderminde / All noble Knights" (*FQ* 5.6.32), an enemy of Artegall who will certainly be undone but not before kidnapping the hero and necessitating his rescue by Britomart, who performs the undoing.<sup>38</sup> So, on two occasions, the Enlightenment editor implies, the Elizabethan author who constantly celebrates his queen's chastity uses the ultimate example of marital fidelity from the ancient world to help him create amusingly bawdy fabliaux for two couples, one human, the other demonic. Penelope's nonce reference to an extremely obscure figure ends up personified as an enemy of one of Spenser's most important chivalric figures, a foe from whom this hero must be rescued by the monarch's virginal surrogate in the epic. Such subtle observations may well have emboldened Upton to defend Spenser as a maker of complicated fables, for a writer "is at liberty to *lie*, as much as he pleases, provided his lies are consistent, and he makes his tale hang well together."<sup>39</sup>

Spenser reprocesses one of Phaedra's lines several times in his career for many purposes, most of them humorous.<sup>40</sup> Her somewhat ironic "quod caret alterna requie, durable non est" (*Her.* 4.89) becomes, in Turberville's words, "For what so lacks successiue rest and respite after toyle / Which should refresh the fainting limmes, must needes sustaine the soyle" (*HE* 22r). She urges such seemingly beneficent advice on a stepson so that she might seduce him more easily if he would only stop his obsessive hunting of game and commence pursuing her instead, a wish that even Ovid probably would not have wanted to see fulfilled.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:568.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:620

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:xxii.

<sup>40</sup> Upton notes the following parallels (*Ibid.*, 2:347 and 556) but provides no analysis.



Spenser's echo of the aphorism in his description of the Witch's Son in his chase of Florimell as he stops for a breather, "nought that wanteth rest, can long aby" (*FQ* 3.7.3), seems very droll and in the same spirit in describing someone who, like Phaedra, would seem to need no further encouragement, since one would assume that Spenser does not want Florimell to be captured. His earliest use of his predecessor's passage is approvingly noted by E. K. (who cites the Latin) in the "September" eclogue to the *Calender*: "What euer thing lacketh chaungeable rest, / Mought needs decay, when it is at best" (240–41). Turberville may well have been a medium of transference, especially the resemblance of his "lacks successiue rest" to Spenser's "lacketh chaungeable rest." Yet the *locus classicus* echoes somewhat improbably in the observation by the shepherd Hobbinoll commiserating with his friend Diggon Davy about the vigilance required to keep the wolves and foxes from attacking their sheep, Spenser's allegorical satire on ecclesiastical matters. One assumes that the irony redounds against the offending clergy rather than the well-meaning shepherd—their corruption would make Phaedra their champion. Most improbably of all, Spenser's allusion to "quod caret alterna requie, durable non est" sounds in Una's directive to Redcrosse that they refresh themselves by spending the night in Archimago's hovel: "what so strong, / But wanting rest will also want of might?" (*FQ* 1.1.32). Even the Truth herself can be fooled and may help Everyman lead himself astray—the amusing irony of her unconscious Ovidian allusion says as much.

Spenser sometimes echoes Ovidian parodies of Virgilian-sounding *sententiae* so that he actually diverges from and satirizes both of his predecessors.<sup>41</sup> Phaedra justifies herself with "regnat, et in dominos ius habet ille deos" (*Her.* 4.12), which Turberville renders, "For what so Cupid giues in charge t'is madnesse to dispise: / For he doth conquer God and men as nature did deuise" (*HE* 19r). This reworking of "omnia vincit Amor" (*Ecllogues* 10.69) seems quite jarring, given the speaker, Ovid may well imply. What does it mean for love to conquer all? Is it necessarily a desirable state? As Spenser paraphrases Phaedra in the emblem at the foot of Cupid's altar in the House of Busirane, he may not

<sup>41</sup>Colin Burrow notes similar dialectic imitation in other contexts. Ovid rewrites phases of the Aeneas story in *Met.* 12.728–14.74, and "forcibly imprints his metamorphic concerns on his predecessor's subject matter, almost to the extent of making Virgil appear to be trying to be an Ovidian poet" ("Spenser and Classical Traditions," in *The Cambridge Companion to Spenser*, ed. Andrew Hatfield [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001], 227).

agree with his ancient predecessor or subscribe to the same sentiment: "Vnto the Victor of the Gods this bee" (*FQ* 3.11.49). Yet Ovidian Marinell certainly does as Cupid "like a victor on his backe he ride" (4.12.13).<sup>42</sup> A belief that love conquers all is precisely what enthralles him and what bound his Amoret in the House of Busirane in the first place. In an equally bizarre confluence of voices, Sappho, the only writer of poetry among the heroines (each of whom nevertheless spouts perfect elegiac verse), assures Phaon, the young man she loves, that her lesbianism has passed. Her insides burn for him like lava bubbling in mount Aetna or an uncontrollable crop fire, news that she expects, rightly, to be felicitous to him. Since he has not yet met her expectations, she finds that her writing suffers, that she cannot wax poetical because "vacuae carmina mentis opus!" (*Her.* 15.14) (songs are the labour of minds care-free), a pseudo-Virgilian saw that Turberville translates "in deede of quiet minde such verses tokens arre" (*HE* 109v).<sup>43</sup> Spenser's somewhat infelicitous rendering of it in the mouth of Cuddie occurs in the "October" eclogue of the *Calender*: "The vaunted verse a vacant head demaundes" (100). This pastoral in some ways serves as his author's *ars poetica* even in such a self-consciously literary collection in which each poem showily concerns poetical theory or composition. Here Cuddie, one of Spenser's surrogates, debates such matters with Piers, especially Virgilian topoi such as the worth of poetry, whether "the prayse is better, then the price" (19), or if he should follow the usual career trajectory of eschewing love lyrics and shepherdesses for the challenge of writing epic. Yet why should he cause his alter ego, as he implies that he hopes to emulate the author of the *Aeneid*, to echo the Ovidian musings of an erotomaniacal poetess offering her sexual services to a man? Could the purpose be ironic also, a suggestion that Cuddie is as uninformed about love and poetry as Shakespeare's Romeo will be twenty years later? Sappho's elegy demonstrates her knowledge that precisely the opposite

<sup>42</sup>Upton notes the House of Busirane parallel in what amounts to a small essay on the phrase in literary history (ed., *Spenser's Faerie Queene*, 2:575–76). Wilhelm Riedner notes the Marinell reference (*Spensers Belesenheit: Die Bibel und das klassische Altertum*, Munchener Beitrage zur romanischen und englischen Philologie 38 [Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1908], 114).

<sup>43</sup>For comparison's sake, see Saltonstall: "A quiet mind dothe Verses best beget" (*Ovids heroicall epistles*, 151); and Sherburne: "No verse that I to well disposed strings / May set (the work of care freed thoughts) there springs" (*Ovids heroical epistles*, 138). E. K. says that the line is simultaneously proverbial and taken from Mantuan's "vacuum curis divina cerebrum Poscit" (divine poetry needs a mind empty from cares), but no such line exists in Mantuan. For discussion of the problem, see the Spenser *Variorum*, ed. Greenlaw, 7:394. Upton suggests the Cuddie and Sappho parallels (ed., *Spenser's Faerie Queene*, 2:347, 556).

is true. One's *mens* should be anything except *vacua*, productive instead of the poetical furor that Cuddie seeks to enkindle in himself, which constitutes part of the emotional turmoil that creates the very impulse, a physical need, to write in the first place.

Sometimes the quest for poetical fury must take a less serious turn. Spenser's significant Ovidian prompt for the Paridell-Hellenore episode (*FQ* 3.9, 10) must be *Amores* 2.5 and *Ars amatoria* 1, given Spenser's virtual translations of many lines from these *loci* into his poem. Yet this parallelism does not account for the sheer comedy of the cuckoldry fabliau that Spenser reconfigures with Ovid's help and prosecutes with great relish, involving Paridell's ability to manipulate both Malbecco and his dear spouse: "His halfen eye he wiled wondrous well, / And Hellenors both eyes did eke beguyle" (3.10.5); the lover's shameless pose of death and mercurial grief at her coyness, "Tho when againe he him bethought to liue, / He wept, and wayld, and false laments belyde" (7); and the earlier mutual ploy by the adulterers to communicate secretly under the husband's very nose by Paridell writing in wine and Hellenore spilling it in her lap, the "ape" they "put into *Malbecco's* cape" (3.9.30–31). Upton notes without elaboration that Helen's letter to Paris contains exactly such elements (*Her.* 17.75–90).<sup>44</sup> Turberville's translation, perhaps unconsciously, emphasizes the comedy:

Sometime thou (wanton wight) dost cast a glauncing blinck  
 With wrested looke, whereat well neare my daunted eyes doe shrinck.  
 Againe you sigh as fast, another time you take  
 The Cup, and where I dranck euen there you falced thirst doth slake.  
 With fingers (Lord) how oft, and with a talking browe,  
 Hast thou me giuen secret signes I wote well where, and howe.  
 And oft I stooede in feare my husband sawe the same,  
 And often dreading to be spyde I blusht with bashfull shame.  
 Oft times with whispring wordes vnto my selfe I sed:  
 (This is a shamelesse guest) my wordes did hit the nayle on hed.  
 And often wrought in wine I rad vpon the boorde,  
 Euen vnderneath my name (I loue) [I] well recorde the worde.  
 (HE 100v–101r)

His Tudor Helen makes somewhat risible rhymes: "glauncing blinck" / "eyes doe shrinck"; "selfe I sed" / "nayle on hed." His fourteeners force him into some questionable adjectival pairings, such as "falced thirst" and "talking browe." They also allow the translator to include some verbal tics that emphasize Helen's somewhat prolix and breathy vocal style,

<sup>44</sup>Upton, ed., *Spenser's Faerie Queene*, 2:566.

since he, like virtually all other early modern writers and translators of poetry, intended that his lines be heard as well as read. She chides her addressee as a "wanton wight"; she talks to herself about him "(This is a shamelesse guest)"; she uses an expletive "(Lord)" about his fingers, which must concern Paris's trick of tracing messages in the wine spilled on the table such as "(I loue)" and perhaps other uses to which he put these extremities. This is how Turberville thinks women talk. Spenser may have found the translation itself awkward and laughable. It is more likely that he appreciated his underrated predecessor's special effects and appropriated his comic spirit.

## V

So a reader, after engaging in such Byzantine comparative activity, may conclude that Spenser transforms and reanimates the *Heroides* in his own poetry, as he seems to have done with the *Metamorphoses* and *Ars amatoria*. This scholarly investigator may pursue more general Turbervillian-Ovidian patterns since searching out point-for-point comparisons and echoes can be a perilous business, as the example of the philologists has shown. She or he may also conclude that sometimes Spenser creates a tableau that more subtly comments on the tradition that he addresses, one that appears as a kind of signature. Arthur, for example, identifies a type of the suffering, poeticizing heroine, wary of her attendant dangers. He

did find in her delitious boure  
 The faire *Pæana* playing on a Rote,  
 Complayning of her cruell Paramoure,  
 And singing all her sorrow to the note,  
 As she had learned readily by rote.  
 That with the sweetnesse of her rare delight,  
 The Prince halfe rapt, began on her to dote:  
 Till better him bethinking of the right,  
 He her vnwares attacht, and captiue held by might.  
(FQ 4.9.6)

The Squire of Low Degree will, true to type, certainly fall for her, in spite of admonitions such as Whitney's, their humbleness making them no less true: "The Mermaides do pretend no good / for all their pleasant Songs."<sup>45</sup> However, this female demonic Spenserian figure eroticizes

<sup>45</sup> Whitney, "The admonition by the Auctor, to all yong Gentlewomen: And to al other Maids being in Loue," in *The copie of a letter, lately written in meeter, by a yonge gentilwoman*

her bathetic lovesickness in musical (read poetical) form so that even Arthur becomes enraptured. He is the same figure who appears in the eighth canto of virtually every book in *The Faerie Queene* to intervene on the side of right and who does not betray any attraction to the even more beautiful and grieving Una, another Spenserian *herois*. This emblem of divine grace and moderation counsels Truth herself to use reason to purge immoderate sadness by expressing it:

griefe (quoth she) does greater grow displaid,  
 If then it find not helpe, and breeds despaire.  
 Despaire breeds not (quoth he) where faith is staid.  
 No faith so fast (quoth she) but flesh does paire.  
 Flesh may empaire (quoth he) but reason can repaire.  
 (1.7.41)

He understands that reason can repair what the flesh impairs, which he shows not only in his advice to Una, but eventually in curbing his own passions, “better him bethinking” of the manifold dangers of the *herois* type. He, knowing well the falseness of her “delicious bowre” and the “sweetnesse of her rare delight” in “singing all her sorrow to the note,” must silence her, like Guyon with Acrasia in the Bower of Bliss. The alexandrine of Poena’s stanza, “He her vnwares attacht, and captive held by might,” shows just how elusive and delusory the passions are that such a woman can arouse in her listeners. Although “He” comprises the grammatical subject and “her” the object of “vnwares attacht,” a reader familiar with Spenser’s fiendish habit of creating ambiguous pronouns and sometimes making his cases opaque might at first glance think that Poena attached herself to Arthur and held him captive, instead. She whose name suggests “poem of praise,” “joy,” and “punishment” shows just how powerful the *herois* can be—and ironically, since, in “singing all her sorrow to the note,” she voices the same type of angst that the emblem of reason and grace counseled Una to express.<sup>46</sup>

In another type of patterning, Spenser, either in his omniscient voice or in the words of his characters, frequently “says” the *Heroides* by a

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*To her vnconstant louer* (London, 1567) A6r. All signature numbers refer to this edition of Whitney’s work and will be cited parenthetically in the text. Although the title *The copie of a letter* serves as the title of the book, it is also a poem within, just as “The admonition” is.

<sup>46</sup> Upton relates her name to the concept of singing and poetry in Virgil, e.g., “laetumque choro paeana canentis” (*Aen.* 6.657) (chanting in chorus a joyous paeon): “Poena should have been written *Paeana*: she has the name from her singing and playing” (ed., *Spenser’s Faerie Queene*, 2:598). He does not note the pun on punishment, penalty, *poena*, inherent in listening to such a person.

kind of synecdoche, a part symbolizing or enunciating the whole. Britomart, Florimell, and Una utter lines that simultaneously encapsulate their circumstances as well as the motifs of Ovid's feminine elegiacs. Turberville's Oenone warns Paris, "vndeserved wrongs will grieue a woman at the gall" (*HE* 26v), speaking for all the *heroides* who speak for themselves, as does Florimell: "So had I rather to be thrall, then free" (*FQ* 4.12.10). His Canace, operatic and performative, supersedes both of these characters in this regard. She equates self-expression with violent action in her anguished lament to her brother Macareus about their incestuous relationship. Writing becomes a form of self-abuse, she implies, as she begins her epistle:

If any blots doe blinde, or blurre my lynes,  
The murder of their Maistresse makes ye sam[e].  
My right hande holdes the pen, the left a sworde,  
And in my carefull lape the paper lyes.

(*HE* 66r)

The physical and symbolic sexuality of the *heroides* convention could not be more evident, especially the location of the "paper" and its "lynnes" that can be blinded or blurred by metaphorically sanguinary "blots." This target for the phallic pen over which the woman maintains complete control becomes a metaphorical load concerning authorship: writing, self-determination, and living strive against erasure, self-destruction, and suicide (admittedly quite a burden for one little lap). This may well be the ultimate example of Verducci's theory of involuntary self-revelation, Farrell's of autoincrimination. Canace's masculine pen, as Aphra Behn would have called it, writes her feminine self.

Although Britomart often holds a sword, never a pen, and no paper graces her mysterious lap, she also writes her feminine self in two of six further examples I will use of Spenser's reconfiguration of the *Heroides* in his own work. In her penultimate canto before her disappearance from the epic, as she contemplates the battle in which she finally vanquishes Radigund and frees Artegall, she adopts a pose of an Ovidian *herois* ready to deliver her rhetoric (*FQ* 5.6.24–26). Although she may well be Spenser's most androgynous, physical, and instinctive character, her critical detractors often miss her meditative and intellectual qualities.<sup>47</sup> In the apostrophic form, in this case to a part of her body,

<sup>47</sup> Sheila Cavanagh (*Wanton Eyes, and Chaste Desires: Female Sexuality in "The Faerie Queene"* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994]), thinks Britomart "surprisingly dim-witted" and "plagued by repeated misapprehensions" as well as by a "lack of insight

"her eyes she streight reprieued" (24) as she begins her brief and oddly conversational aria:

Ye guilty eyes (sayd she) the which with guyle  
 My heart at first betrayd, will ye betray  
 My life now to, for which a little whyle  
 Ye will not watch?

(25)

In the manner of her classical predecessors, Britomart finds herself alone, asking rhetorical questions as she meditates on her weaknesses. Yet she upbraids herself in the language that Ovid's heroines use to criticize the men who desert them. Her eyes betray her heart as pitilessly as Paris breaks Oenone's, and she finds herself left to her grief: "Thus did she watch, and weare the weary night / In wayfull plaints, that none was to appease" (26). Spenser improvises on the conventions he inherits for subtle psychological effect and demonstrates through this how Britomart will be intelligent enough to avoid Dolon's trickery, vanquish her evil doppelgänger, and free her beloved. Yet her feelings matter also. Not only does Spenser allow her to indulge in them, but he invites us to watch her do so.

Those who have the stamina to read continuously into book 5 of *The Faerie Queene* and the patience to keep in mind the peregrinations of various figures from the 1590 version of the epic may remember one of Britomart's most celebrated utterances, her lament to the sea (3.4.8–10), a paraphrase of a Petrarch sonnet translated by both Wyatt and Spenser (i.e., *Rime* 189; "My galey charged with forgetfulnes"; *Amoretti* 34). Here her masculine pen defines her feminine self. This passage, which owes much to the *Ars amatoria*, also depends markedly on the *Heroides* in its rhetorical scaffolding and nautical theme.<sup>48</sup> One small but important variation on literary custom is that rather than just invoking the sea, Britomart actually stands before it, doing Ovid's heroines one better:

Huge sea of sorrow, and tempestuous grieffe,  
 Wherein my feeble barke is tossed long,  
 Far from the hoped hauen of reliefe

(3.4.8)

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and intelligence" (141). She is also, allegedly, a bad feminist: "Despite several chances to extend her protection of chastity to other women, Britomart always lets these opportunities pass" (145)—although it must be pointed out that this Spenserian heroine is primarily responsible for the liberation of Amoret in *Faerie Queene* 3.12.

<sup>48</sup>See my "'Loue my lewd Pilot': The *Ars Amatoria* in *The Faerie Queene*," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 40 (1998): 328–46.

Although Spenser obviously does the writing, he just as clearly intends to create the illusion that his heroine conceives these lines and delivers them so that she, in effect, occupies the authorial place. She, not Spenser, paraphrases and competes with Petrarch, Wyatt, and the *Amoretti*. She, not Spenser, waxes Ovidian and imitates the *Heroides* with her analogy between her emotional state and the turbulence of nature, using the ocean as setting, deploying the rhetorical figures of imprecation and allusion. The passage, utterly devoted to conventions that are nonetheless completely reconceived, requires a completion that, along with its speaker's desire for peace, comprises the "haven" that all writers, and all *heroides*, seek. Yet a rhetorical question must first be asked in the middle of the stanza:

Why doe thy cruel billowes beat so strong,  
And thy moyst mountaines each on others throng,  
Threatning to swallow vp my fearefull lyfe?  
(*ibid.*)

And the question must not be answered or answer itself by its overwrought and fanciful delivery, its dramatic setting true to Spenser's aesthetics. The billows must beat, and the moist mountains must throng on each other because Britomart would be otherwise unrecognizable as an alliterative purveyor of psychological verisimilitude in an epic in which everyone has what we moderns would mislabel a highly artificial style. Only through this artifice for expressing emotion can such emotions be invoked, especially in the conclusion to the stanza:

O doe thy cruell wrath and spightfull wrong  
At length allay, and stint thy stormy stryfe,  
Which in thy troubled bowels raignes, and rageth ryfe.  
(*ibid.*)

The physiological reference in the alexandrine, infelicitous to moderns (how can an ocean have intestines? what woman would discuss this part of herself?), does not trouble Britomart elsewhere, since this seat of what Elizabethans call the concupiscible passions troubles her in her lovesickness for Artegall: "the hidden hooke with baite I swallowed" (3.2.38) now "infixed . . . Within my bleeding bowels" (39).<sup>49</sup> Ovid's Phaedra complains of the same disagreeable sensation, lust-

<sup>49</sup> For a discussion of these matters, see Lawrence Babb, *The Elizabethan Malady: A Study of Melancholia in English Literature from 1580 to 1642* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1951), especially the chapter entitled "The Physiology and Psychology of the Renaissance" (1–20).



crazed for her stepson: "My inward parts are all inflamde, my bowels boyle with heate" (*HE* 20v). These extreme emotional analogies concur with the customary anthropomorphizing of nature, e.g., Lear on the stormy heath, unbuttoning to commiserate with unaccommodated man. Yet the sea, according to Dido, constitutes an appropriate emblem for specifically feminine passion and strife because of the genesis of the goddess of love, well known to us because of the Botticelli masterpiece. It mirrors women's turmoil "most when loue is wrongde, cause *Venus* hath bene thought / T'haue had hir offspring of the waues in Cytheris wrought" (*HE* 42r).<sup>50</sup> Hence, says Ovid's reanimation, even parody, of this Virgilian character, "let stormes haue powre / To ayde my case, see how the seas do surge with *Eurus* scowre" (41r). Dido wants the calm, feminine sea to express her tempestuous passions about her deserting paramour. Britomart notes that a similar body of water, part of a tempest that would drown Shakespeare's mad elderly hero or deliver a certain wedding party into the hands of an exiled duke with magical powers and an ingenuous daughter, already expresses the angst that she feels. The positions are converse but not quite equal, as if Spenser raises himself an inch above his *auctor*. Britomart, it should also be noted, longs for delivery from her circumstances, having seen exactly how little power storms have to aid her case:

when I shall my selfe in safety see,  
 A table for eternall monument  
 Of thy great grace, and my great ieopardie,  
 Great Neptune, I avow to hallow vnto thee.  
(*FQ* 3.4.10)

Then Spenser, through his surrogate, signs his work as she completes her thought, vowing to consecrate herself to the god of the sea by means of "A table for eternall monument," not just a votive tablet but one on which a person writes. And her poem in these three stanzas within the larger poetical works of canto, book, and epic proves that Spenser uses exactly this writerly medium. That we read her twenty-seven Petrarchan-Ovidian infused lines now suggests that her vow has been fulfilled. They constitute a "moniment" of some sort, four centuries old

<sup>50</sup>Turberville's grammar suggests that Venus birthed her children in the sea, also. Ovid says, "perfidiae poenas exigit ille locus, / praecipue cum laesus amor, quia mater Amorum / nuda Cytheriacis edita fertur aquis" (*Her.* 7.58–60) (Yon is the place that exacts the penalty for faithlessness, above all when 'tis love has been wronged; for 'twas from the sea, in Cytherean waters, so runs the tale, that the mother of the Loves, undraped, arose).

if not quite eternal, analogous to the last two words of *Epithalamion*, the groom's hopeful and slightly egocentric concept of his wedding song as "endlesse monument" (433) to his barefoot bride. Both "monuments" nod to the classical topos of the permanence of poetry, one that Ovid invokes as he finishes his epic: "iamque opus exegi" (*Met.* 15.871). Britomart's allusive passage suggests her creator's desire to emulate his predecessor and outdo him, couched in the language of the *Heroides*.

Florimell more recognizably partakes of the *herois* in her conception and rhetoric. In accordance with Spenser's paradigm of the self-sufficient woman, she serves as her own rescuer and redeemer in fleeing from the beastly son of the witch: "when *she* fit season saw"; "*she* cast / In secret wize *her selfe* thence to withdraw" (*FQ* 3.7.18; my emphasis). And she helps restore Marinell to life as if she were a fertility goddess, "*Venus* of the fomy sea" (4.12.2), and he an Attis, Osiris, or Adonis, one who somewhat priapically "Liftes vp his head, that did before decline" (34). As she finds herself imprisoned under a cliff beneath the sea, it is her Ovidian-infused lament (4.12.6–11) that helps to free her and change her beloved's sensibility (with his mother's help). The grieving motif in the opening lines of the passage "says" the *Heroides*, especially the formidably instinctive desire that the *herois* has to express herself:

Though vaine I see my sorrowes to vnfold,  
And count my cares, when none is nigh to heare,  
Yet hoping grieffe may lessen being told,  
I will them tell though vnto no man neare:

(6)

Again, Spenser's alliteration calls attention to the elements that help make his intertext and its conventions recognizable: "count . . . cares" though "*none*" is "*nigh*" (my emphasis). Dido, Phyllis, and even Britomart exhibit this type of emotion whether anyone listens or not. Just as Florimell hopes to lessen her grief by telling it "though vnto no man neare," Ovid's Dido, via Turberville, makes the same defiant claim: "since my fame, my corpse, and spotlesse minde are lost / By cankered hap: to wast my wordes I recke it little cost" (*HE* 40r). Both seem to follow the advice that Arthur gives Una: "vnfold the anguish of your hart" (*FQ* 1.7.40). In this same spirit, Spenser's heroine aggressively voices her desire to submit: "Yet will I neuer of my loue repent, / But ioy that for his sake I suffer prisonment" (4.12.7). As if he were creating an icon of how a *herois* should look as she delivers her lines, he engages in some theatrical direction with gesture and attitude: "There did she pause, inforced to giue place, / Vnto the passion, that her heart opprest" before

"She gan afresh thus to renew her wretched case" (8). Her use of the rhetorical category of imprecation to the "Gods of seas," or any who may "Haue care of right, or ruth of wretches wrong," to "Deliuer" her "hence out of this dungeon strong," also reveals more than a simple partaking of Ovidian convention, since this real oceanic dungeon evokes the prison of her mind with its elaborate emotional extremes. In the manner of her ancient predecessors, she complains, "And greedy seas doe in the spoile of life delight" (6). It is worth noting that some *heroides* discuss the sea and make it a part of what they say. Dido cannot help but use it as a figure of speech as her beloved makes his nautical escape: "they that false their fayth in daunger are / On perilous seas" (*HE* 42r). Britomart stands in front of it as a way of illustrating her analogy. Spenser bests himself and Ovid by immersing her in the water and making her speak through it. It gives credence to her claim of sincerity:

if ye deeme me death for louing one,  
That loues not me, then doe it not prolong,  
But let me die and end my daies attone,  
And let him liue vnrou'd, or loue him selfe alone.  
(*FQ* 4.12.9)

Since her mortal status dictates that she does not have gills and exists in this unnatural state through supernatural means, her invocation of death possesses a strangely realistic type of authority. I will die for my amatory beliefs but let the object of my desire "liue vnrou'd" or be consumed in self-love, since no one will care for him as I do. Just as Whitney says, "I am content, I your refuse for to be" (*The copie of a letter*, A4r), Florimell forthrightly addresses the man she feels is destined to be her mate: "Know Marinell that all this is for thee" (*FQ* 4.12.10). So, rather than embodying the submissiveness that the diction seems to delineate, such lines actually imply the opposite in the very fact of their expression: by daring to say this humble thing, I reveal that I have much to offer; you are a fool not to love me. If Ovid's women frequently associate themselves with the sea, and Spenser seeks to overgo them by making the water a physical prop to the speech of his own heroines, he in the case of Florimell associates her beloved with the substance as well, given the etymology of his name. It must also be said that no one of the *heroides* actually effects anything by her lament. Aeneas sails away, Demophoon departs, Ulysses does not hurry back. Florimell's pseudo-neo-elegy actually accomplishes something: it gets her what she wants and liberates and reinvigorates her beloved.

Spenser even uses the same Ovidian conventions with a male speaker,

Scudamour (3.11.9–11), as if to demonstrate that femininity does not make the *herois* and to comment on how we construct the dynamics of love poetry. However, instead of beseeching a woman to return to him or to gain the love of a man, Scudamour directs his imprecation at the little love god who has transformed himself into Petrarch's Lord of Terrible Aspect:

O souerayne Lord that sit'st on hye,  
 And raignt in blis emongst thy blessed Saintes,  
 How suffrest thou such shamefull cruelty,  
 So long vnwreaked of thine enemy?

(9)

Penelope angrily upbraids her husband for his absence even though the cause seemed worthy at the time of his departure. Dido rages at the founder of the Roman state who behaves in the way that most women think that all men act, even though Virgil and the Ovid who parodies him know that *patria* must trump *amor*. Reason repairs what the flesh impairs. If this is true, Scudamour asks, since "heauenly iustice may withstand / The wrongfull outrage of vnrighteous men" (10), how can such a disgusting nonentity as the villainous seducer of *Faerie Queene* 3—no ancient hero on a worthy quest—be allowed by such a powerful entity as Cupid to enthrall the girl brought up in "goodly womanhed" and named accordingly by his divine mother?:

Why then is *Busirane* with wicked hand  
 Suffred, these seuen monethes day in secret den  
 My Lady and my loue so cruelly to pen?

(10)

Why indeed? Here Spenser doubly inverts the Ovidian custom of the woman in danger lamenting her lonely fate to create a more familiar paradigm. Again, a man appropriates such language and then makes the woman become the subject, so that she does not speak but is spoken about. This is precisely the dramatic scaffolding of most early modern love poetry, what the male writer does to a female subject: Ovid, Spenser, *Busirane*, Scudamour. Men use women as they praise them. Scudamour speaks about a suffering woman who has been wronged, who is a *herois* herself, and in this sense he "pens" Amoret as surely as *Busirane* does—they pen her in, if you will. To be imprisoned and written about, in this instance, constitutes the same thing: "My Lady and my loue is cruelly pend / In dolefull darkenes from the vew of day, / Whilest deadly torments doe her chast brest rend" (11). This

final line again “says” the *Heroides*, evoking the sexual trauma underneath it all, that of the male speaker as well as that of his female subject. Penelope looks forward to her marital bed—Dido, Phaedra, and Phyllis all deeply regret not receiving due benevolence. Seven months has certainly been a long wait for Scudamour, as it was for Phaedra: “eche of vs at once shall bee to sinfull lust in thrall” (*HE* 20r). Yet she must be destroyed. Spenser, the ultimate “penner,” ensures that Amoret and her swain, both liberated from the wizard’s spell, resemble “that faire Hermaphrodite” (*FQ* 3.12.44 [1590]) in their sweet physical congress, they who “Each other of loues bitter fruit despoile” (45) as “like two senceles stocks in long embracement dwelt” (43).

It seems appropriate at this juncture to discuss the one actual epistle in Spenser’s epic that conforms to the *Heroides* paradigm in the most basic ways: a letter by a woman about the amatory wrong a man has done to her that sometimes borders on autoincrimination (1.12.26–28). Yet in it the author, Duessa, attacks the hapless Redcrosse whom she helped lead astray. The letter’s false intent trumps any truths within, appropriate for a woman who disingenuously calls herself Fidessa. As one might also expect, her beautifully composed, tripartite letter best exemplifies its epistolarity in its middle section, an intended mean between extremes. She assumes the pose that the *herois* should adopt, that of the virtuous, low-voiced woman:

To me sad mayd, or rather widow sad,  
 He was affyaunced long time before,  
 And sacred pledges he both gaue, and had,  
 False erraunt knight, infamous, and forswore:  
 Witnessse the burning Altars, which he swore,  
 And guilty heauens of his bold periury,  
 Which though he hath polluted oft of yore,  
 Yet I to them for iudgement iust doe fly,  
 And them coniure t’auenge this shamefull iniury.  
 (27)

Indeed, Redcrosse enjoyed sexual congress with the beautiful witch, as his vital spirits “Poured out in loosnesse on the grassy grownd” (1.7.7), and he departed from her because her grotesquely throbbing champion who serves as emblem of his uncontrollable lust, the phallic Orgoglio, captures and imprisons him. In the simplest possible sense, the hero deserted Duessa because Arthur and Una liberated him from the giant’s dungeon so that he could attain his rightful place with his destined woman. However, rather than the gently pleading, subtle heroines of

Ovid's epistles, the lying Duessa shoots her venomous demands at her audience, and her clichéd exaggerations undermine her: no "mayd," barely a "widow," hardly "sad," not really "affyaunced" or the recipient of "sacred pledges." Her inherent overstatement in words such as "polluted," "avenge," "false," "guilty," and "perjury" suggests that her posture and rhetoric summarize and parody the *Heroides* tradition. Ovid's Oenone makes a genre-defining statement to Paris: "vnderseued wrongs will grieue a woman at the gall" (*HE* 26v), which explains why the *herois* must violate decorum. Duessa's letter feigns to demonstrate why its author thinks herself such a woman or one who could say with Whitney, "if such falshood had ben once, / unto Oenone knowne: / About the fieldes of Ida wood, / Paris had walkt alone" ("The admonition," A7r). The first and most common complaint of any woman in the epistles is Penelope's: "I vnconstant wight am wroth with thee my wishes vaine" (*HE* 3r). Phaedra's generalization to Hippolytus explains a typical motivation for the rage within: "foes that feede on rancour, reade the lynes the foes doe sende" (19r). Phyllis modestly admits her own folly through generalization: "And long ynough I fedde on hope, for such is louers guize: / We hardly credit hurtefull happes till damage doe arise" (6r). Duessa's letter encompasses all of these typical elements, with its dramatic speech, its storytelling and background, and its indignant self-righteousness. As I said earlier, perhaps Spenser seeks to make a point for just that reason. If the one actual letter in the epic is merely a malicious missive from a woman who makes her unjustified complaints sound valid in the manner of Poëana, Spenser may well be commenting on the form itself, one that Falsehood uses and that he must rewrite with his own characters, especially she who exemplifies the One Truth who opposes Duessa. Here, he may be saying, is the real *herois*, or what she ought to be, his ultimate example of reconfiguring the genre and its forms.

This "real *herois*" would not seem to fit the Ovidian paradigm on which Spenser otherwise improvises with Britomart and others. Una, virginal and therefore no wife, widow, or adulteress, struggles as a person with some capacity for human error, struggling too with her occasionally burdensome allegorical identity as the embodiment of Truth. Yet one could also say that Florimell shares some of her characteristics and that Una, in her extended speeches and complaints about her history, her relationship with Redcrosse, and their struggles (*FQ* 1.7.21–25; 43–51), may be Spenser's most subtle and accomplished version of the reanimated Ovidian figure. Again, he uses her to reimagine, reconfigure, and

perhaps ethically correct the classical amatory epistle so that she serves as Fidessa-Duessa's antipodal opposite. Therefore, his emblem of Truth must not use Ovid's actual form—precisely because Falsehood does.

Una would not seem to resemble Penelope or, for that matter, Isabella Whitney. Yet Spenser co-opts their conventionally feminine evocation of fear and dread into his heroine's speeches, as if he had used the poetess to help him understand each *herois*. Whitney summarizes them succinctly as she demonstrates her own performative femininity. Their "hartes," like hers, "as yet with raginge love / most paynfully do boyle" ("The admonition," A5v). Her physical description of Oenone also seems to encapsulate such concepts: "She scrat[ched] her face, she tare / her Heir" (A7r). In some ways it is hard to imagine Una as a purveyor of such stagy lamentation, especially as a maker of verses (even though her utterances are mostly stanzaic and, in effect, poetry). Yet Spenser creates similar theater for her, not at the disappointment of her love or at her sense of abandonment but at her empathetic grief for Redcrosse's sufferings in the House of Holiness. She "often tore / Her guiltlesse garments, and her golden heare, / For pittie of his paine and anguish sore" (FQ 1.10.28). And, after a line that once again "says" the *Heroides*, "Then gins her grieued ghost thus to lament and mourne" (1.7.21), Una takes her place in the tradition:

Ye dreary instruments of dolefull sight,  
That doe this deadly spectacle behold,  
Why do ye lenger feed on loathed light,  
Or liking find to gaze on earthly mould,  
Sith cruell fates the carefull threds vnfold,  
The which my life and loue together tyde?  
Now let the stony dart of sencelesse cold  
Perce to my hart, and pas through euerie side,  
And let eternall night so sad sight fro me hyde.  
(23)

Spenser reproduces and distills all the emotional turbulence in any Ovidian epistle, such as Penelope's "Aye loue is passing full of feare, though euerie thing be well" (HE 1r) and "I fraughted am with feare, but what I dread I know not well" (3v). Una's apostrophe to her own eyes about her grief may seem theatrical and overwrought. Yet it recalls Britomart's similar poetry about her eyes, Florimell's defiant longing for death and fixation upon Marinell, Scudamour's rhetorical extremities, and, strangely, the smooth epistolary machinery of Duessa at her most deceptive. Una continues:

Thy sad tong cannot tell more heauy plight,  
 Then that I feele, and harbour in mine hart:  
 Who hath endur'd the whole, can beare ech part.  
 If death it be, it is not the first wound,  
 That launched hath my brest with bleeding smart.  
 Begin, and end the bitter balefull stound;  
 If lesse, then that I feare, more fauour I haue found.  
 (EQ 1.7.25)

Then she, like Penelope, Dido, Phyllis, Helen, Sappho, Briseis, and everyone else in the Ovidian canon, tells the story, a narrative of herself, but unlike her predecessors she has virtually no self-interest and does not use the master's slightly offbeat method to reweave a well-known tale. Spenser is much more subversive than this. His "forlorne Maiden," self-described as "The laughing stocke of fortunes mockeries" (43), using the conventions of his classical predecessor, narrates an entirely new tale, couched in the tone of defiant, fierce, unyielding love, in effect redefining what such devotion should signify or concern: "my cause of grieffe, more great, then may be told" (51); "I him lou'd, and loue with all my might, / So thought I eke of him, and think I thought aright" (49). Who else could deliver Redcrosse to the House of Holiness? She structures her song of the self, Spenser's new mythology, as carefully as any Ovidian epistle. She identifies herself as a daughter of Eden (43), whose parents are imprisoned by a dragon (44), and thereby has searched out and found a knight worthy enough to redeem them all, including himself (45-47). Archimago fools Redcrosse into thinking Una unchaste, and then after Redcrosse deserts her, Duessa tempts him into mortal sin so that he blunders into Orgoglio and complete disaster (48-51). Ovid's Homeric matron expects her husband to come home and enjoy marital love in all its forms. His Virgilian queen knows that her beloved will not return and will kill herself. Spenser's answer to them and their sisters explains how Everyman must be redeemed from Pride and Falsehood by Grace and Truth. Although his *herois* seems suicidal at times and may someday enjoy the lawful act of married love with the hero, she helps counsel him against self-immolation, a discipline that helps make him worthy of the task for which she has chosen him.

Spenser and Whitney may have read Turberville's translation of *Heroides* 8.57-64, Hermione to Orestes, as the ultimate emblem of the *herois* tradition:

I frette, and as my face doth puffe, so swelles myne inward minde:  
 And burning breast with silent flame of dolor scorcht I finde,



Before *Hermions* face imbrayded should *Orestes* bee:  
 I want but force and brainsick blade to be reuengde for thee.  
 But weepe and wayle I may my fill which lessens parte of woe:  
 And downe on eyther side my face my teares as conduites floe.  
 Them onely to commaunde I haue and out I poure them still:  
 Alongste my stayned cheekes eche houre the welling teares doe trill.  
 (HE 50r)

Spenser's heroines partake of this physicality and its corollary, an anguished mental state triggered by a defining amatory crisis. His reanimated *heroides* fret and puff their faces in a way that symbolizes the swelling of their inward minds. They weep and wail to purge their grief, as Arthur tells Una she should, which is why they, and Ovid's sophisticated and subtle speakers, say what they say. There is again, however, a difference, one that Spenser may have meant as an ethical correction of his predecessor that may not seem valid to us. Britomart, Una, and Florimell use their speeches to felicitous effect: the liberation of Artegall and Amoret; the education of Marinell and Redcrosse; the vanquishing of Radigund, Orgoglio, and Duessa. They are not laments that nobody hears, or suicide notes, but rather improvisations on such rhetorical performances that can help us read both Spenser and Ovid in mutually illuminating ways. Just as we may see Virgil's Dido differently after reading Ovid's variations on her in the *Heroides*, that epistle itself may well seem transformed once we understand how Spenser reconfigures it in Una, Britomart, and Florimell.

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