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A Companion to Roman Rhetoric
Edited by William Dominik, Jon Hall
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CHAPTER THIRTY

Rhetoric and Ovid

Ulrike Auhagen

The German dramatist Christian Friedrich Hebbel (1813–1863) wrote in his diary: *Form ist der höchste Inhalt* ("form is the greatest content"). Indeed literary form plays a highly important role in the corpus of the Augustan poet. "Form" often has been equated with "rhetoric," and Ovid has been one of the most controversial authors in Roman literature with regard to the role of rhetoric in his work. Some modern scholars have reproached Ovid for being too "rhetorical" without taking into consideration that the term is ambiguous. In ancient times rhetoric meant the art "of speaking (or speaking and writing) clearly, convincingly, pleasantly, and forcefully," whereas in modern usage the term often implies that the speaker "is lacking in sincerity, simplicity, directness" (Fränkel 1945: 2 n4). Some scholars, even in the latter part of twentieth century, have deprecated imperial rhetoric and considered it to be incompatible with poetry (e.g., G. Williams 1978: 266–82; Ogilvie 1980: 168–82). Consequently they have either interpreted Ovid's work as primarily a product of the schools of rhetoric or they have denied that rhetoric had any influence at all. Both of these views are unbalanced, however, and present scholarship reflects more differentiated views. Accordingly, this chapter will first discuss briefly the nature of rhetoric in Ovid's time and his rhetorical education before turning to examine the rhetorical style of the Ovidian corpus.

Rhetoric in Ovid's Time

Ovid writes exclusively in the postwar period of Augustus' reign, a time of martial peace but also of political upheaval as the offices of the republic came under the hegemony of one man, the *princeps*. Along with the political developments that led to the transformation of the Roman republic to the order of the *principatus*, the societal role of rhetoric underwent change (Kennedy 1994: 172). Institutions such as the Forum and the senate, the main locations for political rhetoric, witnessed a shift in the

style and approach of oratory (see chapters 9, 24); at the same time displays of rhetoric blossomed in the lecture halls of the professors, where rhetoric's influence on literature was significant. About one hundred years after Ovid, Maternus in Tacitus' *Dialogus de Oratoribus* points out the relationship between the establishment of the *principatus* and the altered conditions of political rhetoric (cf. chapters 9, 24):

> quid enim opus est longis in senatu sententiis, cum optimi cito consentiant? quid multis apud populum contionibus, cum de re publica non imperiti et multi deliberent, sed sapientissimus et unus? (Tacitus, *Dialogus de Oratoribus* 41.4)

> Why in fact is there a need for long speeches in the senate when the best men consent quickly? Why is there a need for many public meetings when it is not the inexperienced crowd that deliberate about the state but only the one and wisest [*princeps*]?

Due to the changed political circumstances, many rhetoricians concentrated more intensively on the artistic and elaborate arrangement of their speeches. In Ovid's time rhetoric was "l'expression d'un goût nouveau, d'un raffinement exquis de sentiments exprimés dans une forme recherchée et brillante" ("the expression of a new sensibility, of an exclusive refinement of feeling conveyed in a studied and sparkling form," Sabot 1976: 346). Ovid's audience and readers, being "connoisseurs of rhetoric" (Jacobson 1974: 97), were able to appreciate his style. Ovid himself confesses how much he enjoys living in his own culturally refined time:

> prisca iuvent alios, ego me nunc denique natum
> gratulor: haec aetas moribus apta meis
> . . . . . .
> . . . quia cultus adest nec nostros mansit in annos
> rusticitas priscis illa superstes avis.
>
> (Ovid, *Ars Amatoria* 3.121–2, 127–8)

> Let others promote ancient times. I congratulate myself that I was not born until now: this age is in keeping with my nature . . . because culture is here and rusticity, which persisted until our old grandfathers, has not lasted to our time.

The importance of rhetoric in this highly refined literary environment is a complex issue that has ignited much debate. Naturally the use of rhetorical devices in literature can serve many purposes depending on the author's motives. Indeed, some scholars have argued, with regard to a variety of authors of Ovid's time, that rhetoric offered a means to criticize the *princeps* safely in literature, thus implying that rhetoric's significance is largely content driven and dependent upon the politics and social concerns of the time (cf. e.g., Ahl 1985; Hinds 1987: 115–34; Newlands 1995). Although political and social concerns are naturally bound up with the use of rhetoric, Ovid seems especially motivated in aesthetic terms with regard to rhetoric; for Ovid rhetoric is a means to play with form, to be witty, to be imaginative. And the evidence for this aesthetic motivation is present in the accounts concerning Ovid's rhetorical education.

Ovid's Rhetorical Education

From the early love poetry to the literature of exile, Ovid's work displays the use of rhetoric throughout. Its influence is particularly evident in the *Heroides*, elegies written while he was still a young man, where Ovid plays with the structure of *suasoriae*, a circumstance that directly reflects his rhetorical education. The elder Seneca (*Controv.* 2.2.8–12) mentions that the young Ovid was a student of the Roman rhetoricians Marcus Porcius Latro and Arellius Fuscus and provides a vivid testimony, which is partly anecdotal, to Roman rhetorical education of this time. At the beginning Seneca sums up Ovid's rhetorical talent: *habebat ille comptum et decens et amabile ingenium. oratio eius iam tum nihil aliud poterat videri quam solutum carmen* ("He had an elegant, tasteful, and pleasurable talent. Already at that time his speech could be seen as nothing other than poetry in prose," *Controv.* 2.2.8). The expression *solutum carmen* is noteworthy: it shows that rhetoric and poetry are inseparably connected. Seneca further informs us that Ovid was highly talented in declaiming *controversiae* (fictitious law cases) but that he preferred *suasoriae* (fictitious speeches of persuasion): *declamabat autem Naso raro controversias . . . ; libentius dicebat suasorias: molesta illi erat omnis argumentatio* ("but Naso rarely declaimed *controversiae* . . . ; he preferred speaking *suasoriae*; all argumentation was tiresome to him," *Controv.* 2.2.12). After that Seneca adds an anecdote that sounds "like other good anecdotes . . . truer than the truth" (Fränkel 1945: 7): some of Ovid's friends had agreed with the poet to select three verses out of his work that should be eliminated for reasons of taste, while Ovid himself was to choose three verses that he liked most. The verses chosen were identical. Seneca cites two of them: first, *semibovemque virum semivirumque bovem* ("the man half-bull and the bull half-man [the Minotaur]," Ov. *Ars Am.* 2.24); secondly, *et gelidum Borean, egelidumque Notum* ("and the frozen Boreas, and the unfrozen South [two winds]," *Am.* 2.11.10). In both verses the rhetorical point, which results from chiasmus and paronomasia, takes precedence over the content. With this anecdote goes Quintilian's famous judgment of Ovid that he had been *nimium amator ingenii sui* ("a lover too much of his own talent," *Inst.* 10.1.88). With regard to the poet's (now lost) drama *Medea*, Quintilian remarks that it would have been better for Ovid's work *si ingenio suo imperare quam indulgere maluisset* ("if he had chosen to control his talent rather than indulge it," *Inst.* 10.1.98).

In his "autobiographical" *Tristia* Ovid himself refers to the education he had received together with his brother, whose rhetorical talent made him more suited to a political career, whereas he himself was attracted by poetry (4.10). Humorously he describes his fruitless attempts to write in prose: *et quod temptabam scribere versus erat* ("and whatever I tried to write was verse," 4.10.26). The view the elder Seneca sketched of Ovid as a student of rhetoric can be transferred to his poetry: the expression *comptum et decens et amabile ingenium* (*Controv.* 2.2.8) is a suitable characterization of his elegant and artistic style.

Rhetorical Style of the Ovidian Corpus

Apart from alluding to a few specific rhetorical genres like the *suasoriae* in his *Heroides*, Ovid's style owes much to the influence of rhetoric in general. This will be illustrated by various examples taken from many parts of his work. Ovid creates a new synthesis of rhetoric and poetry, which has been described as mannerist (cf. Burck 1971; Friedrich and Killy 1964: 353–8). Ovid's rhetorical style can best be seen in his monologues. The monologue form, which plays a leading role in his poetry, is not restricted to *epos* and drama, although its most prominent examples are to be found in the *Metamorphoses* (and no doubt played a part in the lost drama *Medea*). It can also be found in works of other genres such as the *Heroides*, *Amores*, *Tristia*, and *Epistulae ex Ponto*. Broadly defined, the monologue involves a speaker in an extreme situation speaking alone with no real addressee except herself or himself (e.g., Ariadne on Naxos in *Heroides* 10, Medea in *Metamorphoses* 7, Ovid in exile in his *Tristia*). This monologue form is central to Ovid's style: he seems to intellectualize the speaker and makes the monologue a vehicle for literary games, exploiting it for witty rhetorical points.

Ovid shows a particular interest in extreme or extraordinary situations. Many of his monologues involve unusual or paradoxical circumstances. *Heroides* 1–15, for example, are soliloquies in the form of letters: abandoned heroines (e.g., Ariadne on Naxos) "write" to their absent beloveds or husbands with no chance of getting their letters posted or receiving any answer (Auhagen 1999: 45–9). Ovid plays with the absurdity of the situation and exploits it for a variety of rhetorical effects. In the *Metamorphoses* most of the great monologues also deal with some extreme, in part perverse, love affair: Medea loves her father's enemy Jason, for whom she betrays her country; Byblis loves her own brother; and Myrrha has an affair with her father. By contrast, in his *Tristia*, Ovid's self-referential poems from exile, the poet himself is the speaker of the monologic elegies. In the *Tristia* the context of exile provides the texts with their extreme point of view. The following discussion analyzes three monologues from three different periods of the poet's life in order to illustrate his rhetorical mastery – those of Ariadne (*Her.* 10), Medea (*Met.* 7.11–71), and Ovid himself (*Tr.* 3.10).

Heroides 10

In the *Heroides* Ovid uses fifteen variations to explore the situation of the abandoned heroine who is trying to persuade her beloved or husband to return. Because of the similarity of theme and content the *Heroides* were criticized in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as being mere rhetorical exercises (e.g., Brück 1909). This extreme view is certainly misguided, but the influence of the schools of rhetoric cannot be denied. Students were trained in writing *suasoriae*, fictitious exercises in which they adopted a fictitious (usually mythological) *persona*, from whose point of view they had to persuade themselves or somebody else to do (or not to do) something (e.g., *Agamemnon an Iphigeniam immolet*, "should Agamemnon offer Iphigenia as a sacrifice?", Sen. *Suas.* 3 *praef.* 1). In this respect the basic format and themes of the *Heroides* do indeed resemble those of *suasoriae*. But Ovid's work

contains far more than that. Jacobson (1974: 338) sums up the problem as follows: "I suppose that there is sufficient reason to assume that in conceiving and composing the *Heroides*, Ovid did receive, here and there, ideas from the world of rhetorical training.... Yet, one cannot help wondering if Ovid might not have written the *Heroides* even without these 'models.' " The *Heroides* are experiments of thought in which Ovid describes fictitious passions. Some scholars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries equated "fictitious" with "unfelt" and "artificial" and labeled it "rhetorical" (e.g., Otis 1966: 16–17). This view is as one-sided as its opposite, which interprets the texts solely as examples of psychological or emotional realism.

Ariadne's "letter" is a prototype of the lonely lament. Ovid presents her flow of thought and builds up a highly complex structure of past, present, and future, of memories and wishes. He creates an atmosphere of loneliness, and the description of the landscape becomes a mirror of Ariadne's soul (Auhagen 1999: 63–77). By means of rhetorical techniques Ovid intellectualizes her speech: he has Ariadne take a dissociated perspective of herself as she observes and describes her own behavior. As Jacobson (1974: 224) notes: "There is a significant amount of role-playing. Ariadne portrays herself as the 'deserted' woman.... She is both actress and director." In a pointed contradiction Ariadne rationally and precisely analyzes her irrational state of mind. She describes, for example, how she awoke one morning only to find that Theseus had left her alone. The phrase *incertum vigilans* ("drowsily awake," *Her.* 10.9) illustrates her lethargic state with a pointed antithesis. In spite of her panic she is able to give a detailed description of her environment: *mons fuit; apparent frutices in vertice rari* ("there was a mountain; bushes were rising up here and there on top," 10.25): "Conscious of self as she is... she still does not forget to surround herself with a picturesque landscape, describing the sand on which she steps, and the hill which she climbs with a proliferation of irrelevant detail" (Leach 1963: 424). Ovid is interested in the effects that result from toying with different perspectives.

The distance from which Ariadne looks upon herself is emphasized by the artistry of her language: Ovid shows that he is not interested as much in spontaneous, realistic trains of thought as he is in subtle pieces of art. The following examples serve as illustrations: Ariadne pointedly paraphrases the fact that she was sleeping when Theseus left by personifying sleep and making it an accomplice to Theseus' "crime": *somnusque meus male prodidit et tu* ("my sleep wretchedly betrayed me, and so did you," *Her.* 10.5). She also describes the moment when she realized that her lover had disappeared: *nullus erat, referoque manus iterumque retempto / perque torum moveo bracchia; nullus erat* ("He was not there! I draw back my hands and again I try, and over the couch I move my arms – he was not there!", 10.11–12). The recurrence of *nullus erat* and the refined changes of tense artfully show the tension between the reexperience and description of the events. The text is also full of corresponding pronominal adverbs and conjunctions that stress the rational argumentative style. Note for instance *nunc huc, nunc illuc* (10.19), *quotiens... totiens* (10.31), and *quam... tam* (10.50). Parallelism and homoeoteleuton are in the service of witticisms, for example, when the story tells of Theseus killing the Minotaur with his bare hand: *ardua parte virum dextera, parte bovem* ("with upraised hand [he killed] him that was man in part, and in part bull," 10.94). Another example of his playful rhetoric is found in Ariadne's final comment on her situation: *in me iurarunt somnus ventusque fidesque / prodita sum causis una puella tribus* ("sleep, wind, and a

treacherous pledge were conspiring against me: one maid was betrayed by a threefold cause," 10.117–18). This distich shows that the rhetorical point is at least as important as the content: Ovid seems not to be interested in a realistic portrayal of Ariadne's sorrow as much as he is in putting his effort into polishing the rhetorical form.

Metamorphoses 7.11–71

In the *Metamorphoses* Ovid plays with the form of the *epos*: in its length (almost 12,000 lines), metrical form (hexameter), and chronological arrangement of the stories of metamorphosis, the work is an *epos*, though its tone does not differ radically from the other non-epic works by the *tenerorum lusor amorum* ("playful poet of tender love," *Tr.* 4.10.1); nor is the rhetorical style fundamentally varied. As noted above, this fact can best be demonstrated with regard to Ovid's monologues, most of which deal with some extreme love affair – for example, Medea's monologue (7.11–71). Because of her contradictory and inconsistent character, she is the heroine in whom Ovid was most interested. The theme of Medea runs through his oeuvre like a golden thread: it features in two of his *Heroides*, a (lost) drama, one half of a book in *Metamorphoses* (7.1–424), and one elegy of the *Tristia* (3.7). The long episode in the *Metamorphoses* contains the whole story from Medea's first encounter with Jason in Colchis to her flight to Athens and her marriage to Aeacus. It starts out with a very long monologue: although Medea has only seen Jason without talking to him, her monologue nevertheless contains far-reaching thoughts on betrayal and marriage.

The Ovidian monologue is another experiment of thought, this time on a massive scale. Its structure is rational and argumentative; Ovid intellectualizes Medea's emotions. This intellectualization can be called "rhetorical," but it is not enough to equate the term merely with a few rules of the schools of rhetoric. At the very start of the monologue the narrator points to Medea's state of mind: *et luctata diu, postquam ratione furorem / vincere non poterat* ("she struggled against it for a long time; when she could not defeat her madness with reason [she cried]," *Met.* 7.10–11). The key words *ratio* and *furor* are juxtaposed: in Medea's mind both principles fight against each other in an inner discussion that will end in self-betrayal. Nicolai (1973: 112) aptly describes this phenomenon and talks of "perverted sophistic rhetoric, which is not used in an oratorical struggle against another person, but in some kind of civil war within one's soul." Indeed Medea's monologue is staged as an "internal dialogue" (Auhagen 1999: 137–41). She negotiates with herself, beginning with a diagnosis of her state of mind. She knows precisely that she has fallen in love and is now powerless: *frustra, Medea, repugnas* ("in vain, Medea, do you fight," *Met.* 7.11). This comment sums up the situation as far as content is concerned, but Ovid lets his protagonist continue to fight her inner battle for sixty more verses. At first she diagnoses her state of being in love: *aliquid certe simile huic, quod amare vocatur* ("what is called love, or at least something like this," 7.13). And as a proof she adds rhetorical questions on which she herself comments:

> nam cur sunt iussa patris nimium mihi dura videntur?
> sunt quoque dura nimis! cur, quem modo denique vidi,
> ne pereat, timeo? quae tanti causa timoris?
> excute virgineo conceptas pectore flammas,

si potes, infelix! si possem, sanior essem;
sed trahit invitam nova vis, aliudque cupido,
mens aliud suadet. video meliora proboque,
deteriora sequor. . . .

(Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 7.14–21)

For why do the orders of my father seem too harsh? They certainly are too harsh. Why am I afraid that he might die whom I have actually only seen? What is the cause of so much fear? Expel from your maiden breast the pent up flames if you can, unhappy girl! If I could, I would be more sane! But a new power draws me on unwillingly, and desire persuades me one way, reason another. I see the better course and approve it, but I follow the worse. . . .

In this internal discussion Medea asks and answers her own questions. She herself names the fighting opposites: *cupido* (19) and *mens* (20), an irrational and a rational part of herself. This skill of self-diagnosis shows the distanced attitude she has toward herself during the whole monologue. From a practical point of view the monologue could end at this point, but Ovid still lets Medea start on a long, irrational experiment of thought in which she speculates on her whole future. A more detailed analysis of Medea's reflections will give us a deeper appreciation of Ovid's rhetorical technique.

Medea first reproaches herself for having fallen in love with a foreigner (*hospes*, 7.21), but through another rhetorical question she denies any responsibility for this by claiming that everybody (*quem non* . . .?, 7.27) would be moved by Jason's youth (*aetas*, 7.26), birth (*genus*, 7.26), and decency (*virtus*, 7.27). Without her aid, he would be without protection against the dragon and the other dangers on his way to retrieve the Golden Fleece (7.29–31). At this point Medea begins to ask herself whether she should help Jason or not. If she were not to do so, such a denial would be proof of her heartlessness (7.33). With this argument she disguises her aid for him as an act of humanity and distracts attention away from her personal motivation. For the first time in the monologue Ovid makes Medea change her perspective and question whether her way of thinking means a betrayal of her fatherland (*prodamne ego regna parentis*, 7.38). In her pessimism she formulates the hypothesis, which stems from her fear (although later it becomes true), that Jason, having been rescued by her, might fall in love with another woman (7.42–3). She obsesses so much about this that ultimately she wishes death upon him (*occidat ingratus*, 7.43). Here, as so often elsewhere, Ovid is playing with the reader's mythological knowledge. But then Medea immediately changes her mind and argues that Jason is too decent for betrayal (7.43–4). To this moment of self-delusion Ovid adds doubts by letting Medea then ask herself paradoxically: *quid tuta times?* ("why do you fear when all is safe?", 7.47). The pointed antithesis is combined with alliteration.

Medea's thoughts wander to her family's fate and she asks herself whether she should abandon sister, brother, father, gods, and fatherland (7.51–2). She answers by picking up the key words in a different order: the father is wild, the fatherland barbarian, the brother a child, and the greatest god inside herself (*maximus intra me deus est*, 7.55). This statement culminates with the antithetical parallelism *non*

magna relinquam, / magna sequar ("I shall not be leaving great things; I shall be going to great things," 7.55–6). This point serves Medea as a transition to thoughts on her future home in Greece: she envisages her luck in being married to Jason (*coniuge*, 7.60) and imagines the dangerous journey to Greece, which would be without fear if undertaken together with him (7.62–5); she would be anxious only for her "husband." At this point the expression *coniunx* marks another change of mind: Ovid makes Medea expose her own logic as faulty (7.69). In the last words of her monologue she appeals to herself (in vain) to flee from the imminent "crime" (*effuge crimen*, 7.71). Her *ratio* seems to have been victorious over the *furor* but, as Ovid shows in the following verses, her efforts at self-persuasion are in fact fruitless: just five verses later Medea meets Jason again and *cum videt Aesoniden extinctaque flamma reluxit* ("when she saw Aeson's son [i.e., Jason], the extinguished flame leaped up again," 7.77). As it turns out, Medea has been given sixty-one verses to carry out an inner struggle whose outcome has been clear from the very first words she uttered: *frustra, Medea, repugnas* (7.11). In a single monologue Ovid has Medea imagine her future together with Jason even though she has seen him only once. As Wise (1982: 18) observes, "there is no love story to be told, except the one within her imagination." The train of thought in Medea's monologue not only demonstrates his aesthetic principles but also his mastery of rhetoric. The speech reflects not so much a realistic image of his character's state of mind as it presents an intellectual game that takes into account the refined rhetorical and literary tastes of his contemporary readers.

Tristia 3.10

In 8 CE Ovid's life underwent an abrupt change when he was banished to Tomis on the Black Sea. His poetry from exile in some respects continues where his previous works left off; in other ways, however, it marks a transition to something new. The *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* do not have any real model in Greek or Roman literature, though Ovid might have been inspired by his own work: with the *Amores* and the *Heroides* he had already created collections of elegies, the latter being a play on the form of epistles. The novelty of Ovid's poetry from exile is his expression of personal affection. In the *Amores* Ovid adopts several poses of the elegiac lover in order to parody him; in the *Heroides* he takes the point of view of mythological women; in the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* by contrast, he puts himself on stage: the "laments of heroines separated from their lovers have become the laments of the poet separated from his fatherland and friends" (Barsby 1978: 44). The art of rhetoric has an important role in this game: the use of witticisms and the play with *paradoxa*, on the one hand, and Ovid's personal involvement, on the other, result in a sharp contrast. He hides his shock behind his rhetorical style, which is one of the reasons why scholars have not believed his description of the troublesome events in exile. Some have even gone so far as to question whether Ovid lived in exile at all (e.g., Fitton Brown 1985). The ease with which he portrays his fate disguises his real suffering: "Tomis was a shock.... His world was turned upside-down.... Imagine the effect on Byron of deportation to Australia, or on Oscar Wilde of exile to the far north of Canada" (Dickinson 1973: 157).

Ovid exploits his situation rhetorically and aesthetically as a means of coping with it. The pointed tension between rhetoric and (real) emotion is manifest in *Tristia* 3.10. Ovid complains about exile in Tomis, where the inhabitants are barbarians and the winters are long and severe. His description of the icy climate does not correspond to the factual meteorological details but is a poetical, stylized illustration of Ovid's state of mind: in Tomis, far away from the metropolis of Rome with all her culture and luxury, he feels alone and lost; consequently he views the climate as icy, the inhabitants as uncivilized and hostile. The theme of the elegy is established early in the poem: his life *in media... barbaria* ("in the midst of the barbarian world," 3.10.4). The poem builds up to a climax of exterior dangers, culminating in the description of the long, icy winters (3.10.13–50). In this passage of hyperbole the glacial landscape mirrors the poet's feelings. For his description of wintry Tomis Ovid uses a famous model: the scene in Vergil's *Georgics* (3.349–83) describing the severe winter in Scythia. In alluding to this text Ovid mostly uses the parts that depict the extreme cold, but he then exaggerates the Vergilian detail. He even lets the long frozen hair-strands of the inhabitants of Tomis (in Vergil's description the beards were full of ice, *G.* 3.366) clink against each other and make noise: *saepe sonat moti glacie pendente capilli / et nitet inducto candida barba gelu* ("often their moving hair tinkles with hanging ice and their beards glitter white with a mantle of frost," *Tr.* 3.10.21–2). Wine frozen solid, an incredible circumstance even in Vergil (*G.* 3.364), is described in witty detail by Ovid: *nudaque consistunt, formamque servantia testae, / vina, nec hausta meri, sed data frusta bibunt* ("exposed wine stands upright, keeping the form of the vessel, and they do not drink draughts of wine but pieces served to them," *Tr.* 3.10.23–4). In his description of the frozen Black Sea he mixes in absurd elements like frozen waves: *undaque non udo sub pede firma fuit* ("the wave was firm under a dry foot," 3.10.40). Moreover, the dolphins are unable to jump out of the water because of the sheet of ice (3.10.43–4). At the climax of the passage Ovid hyperbolically remarks: *vidimus in glacie pisces haerere ligatos / sed pars ex illis tum quoque viva fuit* ("I have seen fish stuck together bound in the ice, but some of them even then were still alive," 3.10.49–50).

Of rhetorical interest are Ovid's two mythological illustrations, both of which are wryly humorous. To the description of the frozen sea he adds an apostrophe to Leander, who would have been able to cross the Hellespont safely if it had been frozen: *si tibi tale fretum quondam, Leandre, fuisset / non foret angustae mors tua crimen aquae* ("if, Leander, there had once been such a sea for you, the narrow waters would not have been liable for your death," 3.10.41–2). This is, of course, an allusion to the myth of Leander, who drowned when swimming through the straits in order to meet his beloved Hero. The story, perhaps modeled upon a Hellenistic source, is told in length by Ovid in *Heroides* 17 (Leander to Hero) and 18 (and Hero to Leander). Not only is the apostrophe pointed, but the formulation is sharp as well. The second mythological example is of the same type: Ovid describes how the countryside lay fallow and without fruit (as a consequence of war) and alludes to the myth of Acontius and Cydippe: *poma negat regio, nec haberet Acontius in quo / scriberet hic dominae verba legenda suae* ("fruits are denied in this region, and Acontius would not have anything here on which he might write the words for his mistress to read," 3.10.73–4). In Tomis Acontius would not have been able to send messages to his

beloved Cydippe. According to the myth he tricks her into promising herself to him in marriage: at a festival for Artemis in Delos he rolls to Cydippe an apple with the inscription *μὰ τὴν Ἄρτεμιν Ἀκοντίῳ γαμοῦμαι* ("by Artemis, I will marry Acontius!", Aristaenet. *Epist.* 1.10.37–80). She receives the apple and unsuspectingly reads the inscription aloud. Following a Hellenistic version in Callimachus' *Aitia*, Ovid narrates the story in *Heroides* 20–1. Examples of this kind, which on the surface do not seem to fit the mood of an exile in despair, are learned and amusing. These exaggerations and curious details show how Ovid plays with his rhetorical circumstances. It is a desperate game by a desperate author in exile who nevertheless has not lost touch with his humor and wit.

Other works

In the elegies of his youth, the *Amores*, Ovid parodies the *persona* of the elegiac lover and plays with roles and *topoi*. Rhetoric plays an important part in this intellectual exercise. One of the Ovidian verses quoted by the elder Seneca comes from *Amores* 2.11. In this elegy Ovid's *persona* complains that his beloved Corinna is going to leave him:

> ecce fugit notumque torum sociosque Penates
> fallacisque vias ire Corinna parat.
> quid tibi, me miserum, Zephyros Eurosque timebo,
> et gelidum Borean, egelidumque Notum.
>
> (Ovid, *Amores* 2.11.7–10)

> Behold! Corinna flies from both the known couch and the allied Penates and prepares to go on false paths. How, wretched me, I shall fear for you the West wind and the East, and the frozen Boreas, and the unfrozen South.

Here Ovid artistically puns on the names of the winds that might influence Corinna's journey. He seems more interested in wordplay than meteorology, as shown in his use of the past participle *notum* (7) and the noun *Notum* (10) in the same context, his arrangement of the two geographically opposite winds *Boreas* and *Notus* through paronomasia and antithesis, and the ingenious pun made with *et gelidum* (10) and the contrasting *egelidum* (10). Ovid exploits such highly emotional situations, which are typical elements in Roman love elegy, as a literary and intellectual game.

The *Ars Amatoria*, which also belongs to the works of his youth, displays a similar rhetorical style. In the first place, the theme of "persuasion" (and with it rhetorical strategies generally) plays an important role in the poem as a whole (Toohey 1997); for example, Ovid gives the following advice to male seducers:

> disce bonas artes, moneo, Romana iuventus,
> non tantum trepidos ut tueare reos:
> quam populus iudexque gravis lectusque senatus,
> tam dabit eloquio victa puella manus.
>
> (Ovid, *Ars Amatoria* 1.459–62)

> Learn noble arts, I warn you, young men of Rome, not so much that you may protect anxious defendants; just like the people, the severe judge, or the chosen senate, so a young woman captured by eloquence will give her hand.

But witty rhetorical tricks are evident throughout the *Ars Amatoria*. An example is provided by 1.527–64, which is again a mythological episode. It is the story of the abandoned Ariadne, who was already the subject of Ovid's *Heroides* 10. Here the theme is her rescue by Bacchus. Ovid describes how Ariadne wanders along the beach in despair of ever seeing Theseus again (*Ars Am.* 1.527–32). After a vivid, sympathetic depiction of her tears, he comments wittily: *clamabat flebatque simul; sed utrumque decebat; / non facta est lacrimis turpior illa suis* ("she was crying and weeping simultaneously, but both became her; she was not made uglier by her tears," *Ars Am.* 1.533–4). Through these observations Ovid humorously undermines the pathos of the scene. He uses the same technique to describe Ariadne's reaction to Bacchus' arrival:

> et color et Theseus et vox abiere puellae,
> terque fugam petiit terque retenta metu est,
> horruit, ut steriles agitat quas ventus aristas,
> ut levis in madida canna palude tremit.
>
> (Ovid, *Ars Amatoria* 1.551–4)

> Color and Theseus and voice were gone from the girl. Three times she attempted an escape; three times she was held back by fear. She shivered, just like the slender stalks that the wind moves, just like the light reed that trembles in the humid marsh.

This passage is full of rhetorical devices: the threefold zeugma (551), amplified by a polysyndeton, wittily brings together the incommensurable terms *color*, which refers to her face, and *Theseus*, which refers to the thoughts in her mind; the repetition of *terque* in line 552 mocks epic style; the two similes in lines 553–4 are also full of rhetorical erudition: both images, taken from plants, are antithetically arranged, the one referring to a dry context, the other to a wet context. These two distiches form only one example of Ovid's rhetorical art in the *Ars Amatoria*.

The *Fasti* contain the Roman calendar in elegiac meter. Since Ovid could not finish the poem before he was banished to Tomis in 8 CE, the work's six books, which describe the religious holidays and their origins, only deal with six months beginning in January. Here too Ovid shows his interest in mythology by introducing unusual or rare (or newly invented) variations. An instance of his use of rhetorical point is Ariadne's monologue (*Fast.* 3.471–506). Ovid revives the Ariadne myth anew to explain the origin of the constellation *Corona Borealis* (March 8; according to the myth, this is the wedding crown of Ariadne, which was placed in the heavens by Ariadne's husband, Dionysus/Bacchus). This monologue in the *Fasti* constitutes a literary game and stands in relation to Ovid's *Heroides* 10 and Catullus 64. In all three poems Ariadne is depicted standing on the beach. Although the situation is radically different, it is ironically parallel: the Ariadne of the *Fasti* is not the woman abandoned by Theseus but the wife of Bacchus, who had rescued her at Naxos. Nevertheless she worries that she will be abandoned once again since her husband seems to be

perfidious. This is her state of mind when she speaks her monologue. The first distich illustrates well Ovid's rhetorical style:

> en iterum, fluctus, similis audite querellas!
> en iterum lacrimas accipe, harena, meas!
>
> (Ovid, *Fasti* 3.471–2)

Oh, again, waves, hear similar complaints! Oh, again, sand, accept my tears!

The witty and pathetic anaphora, the apostrophe to *fluctus* and *harena*, and the literary allusions to *Heroides* 10, other works of Ovid, and Catullus all play with the reader's literary knowledge, and the text gives a new, pointed variation upon the Ariadne myth.

Conclusion

During the late republic and early empire rhetoric flourished in the lecture halls of the professors, where Ovid received his rhetorical education, and in literary works. In this environment Ovid created a synthesis of rhetoric and poetry in which form was an important focus. Ovid's predominant aesthetic concern can be seen from the time of the rhetorical education of his youth, through the early joyous love poetry, to the sorrowful *Tristia* of his exile. In his early *Heroides* the formal structure and style of the school exercise of the *suasoria* seem particularly influential, but rhetorical devices appear throughout all his works and generate a wide variety of effects. The use of rhetorical devices, traditionally developed and refined in large part for use in speech and prose, offered a useful tool for Ovid, especially in the aesthetic, formalist dimensions of his verse. Ovid is *lusor*: the precepts of rhetoric are essential tools as he plays with topics, situations, and emotions in order to entertain and inform his highly aware and refined audience.

FURTHER READING

On rhetoric in Ovid, including an analysis of the elder Seneca's remarks on Ovid's rhetorical education, see Higham (1958). Bonner (1949) provides a good overview of Roman declamation. Fantham (1997: esp. 122–6) discusses the function of rhetoric under the principate. Oppel (1968: 37–67), in German, challenges the view that the *Heroides* are versified *suasoriae* (cf. Jacobson 1974: 322–30; in general see Sabot 1976, 1981, both in French). Kennedy (1972: 405–19) discusses Ovid and rhetoric; Schiesaro (2002: esp. 70–4) and Hardie (2002b: esp. 36–8) also deal with this subject. Kenney (2002) is a detailed analysis of Ovid's literary style that includes considerations of numerous rhetorical devices employed by Ovid.