

**ON THE SOURCES OF
OVID'S HEROIDES I,
III, VII, X, XII**

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JAMES NESBITT ANDERSON

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ON THE SOURCES
OF
OVID'S HEROIDES
I, III, VII, X, XII.

A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE BOARD OF UNIVERSITY
STUDIES OF THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY FOR THE DEGREE
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

BY
JAMES NESBITT ANDERSON.

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*Ἄψ δ' ὄκνη ποτὶ χεῖλος ἐλάμβανε μῦθον ἰόντα,
μή τί οἱ οὐ κατὰ κλισίαν ἔπος προτιμυθήσαστο
σπερχομένου· χαλεπὸν δ' ἑτέρου νόον ἴδμεναι ἀνθρώπος.*

Theoc. Id. 25, 65.

On the Sources of Ovid's *Heroides* I., III., VII., X., XII.

When we take into consideration the comparatively limited experience of any individual, it is not strange that most writers have found it necessary or desirable to go for matter, inspiration, or suggestion, beyond these narrow confines out into the boundless fields of the world's literature, to cull a flower here or there from some perishable contemporary, or take a draught from the mightier streams of genius which flow on forever. Many a great mind has been stirred to productive activity by personal contact with contemporaries who had already achieved fame. Ovid intimates his obligations to the Roman poets in *Trist.* 4, 10, 42:

Quotque aderant vates, rebar adesse deos.
Saepe suas volucres legit mihi grandior aevo,
Quaeque nocet serpens, quae invat herba, Maecr.
Saepe suos solitus recitare Propertius ignes
Iure sodaliti, quo mihi innectus erat.
Ponticus hero, Bassus quoque clarus iambis
Dulcia convictus membra fuere mei;
Et tenuit nostras numerosus Horatius aures,
Dum ferit Ausonia carmina culta lyra.
Vergilium vidi tantum; nec amara Tibullo
Tempus amicitiae fata dedere meae.
Successor fuit hic tibi, Galle, Propertius illi;
Quartus ab his serie temporis ipse fui.

These Roman poets probably exercised most influence on Ovid in the beginning of his career, but afterwards, the Greek literature, with its greater beauty and richness, doubtless became more and more influential in his case. It is our purpose here

to determine, as far as possible, the writers, whether Greek or Roman, who influenced him most in the composition of these five letters, and we shall not be content to determine simply whether or not Ovid was acquainted with a certain work, but we shall make some effort to determine the extent of the influence in each case, for it seems more interesting and more useful from the point of view of literary criticism to know how Ovid used his sources than to know whether or not he had before him some Alexandrian poem which has since been lost.

Many of the stories treated by Ovid were very old. *Rohde, in speaking of the ancient poets, says: "Wie die hellenischen Götter nicht die Schöpfer sondern die Bildner und Leiter der Welt waren, so die Dichter älterer Zeiten nicht die Erfinder, sondern wiederum die kunstvollen Bildner ihrer Stoffe." This does not mean that they were not original. It can hardly be claimed that any literature is more original than that of the Greeks, the originators of so many kinds of literary composition. Only, they preferred to exercise their ingenuity in the treatment and development of a subject that was known, rather than in the invention of a new tale or an unheard-of plot. This is perhaps due to the fact that these works were prepared for hearers rather than for readers.

Though it is interesting and instructive when we have the sources at hand, to trace their influence on the later work, yet it is a very delicate piece of work and we must constantly be on our guard lest we go astray. Many dangers lurk in our path. The greatest, I think, is that of making intentional imitations out of accidental resemblances. This danger is especially great when the resemblance is confined to a word or phrase. For instance, it is generally admitted that Lachmann was rash, to say the least, in placing the Sappho letter later than Lucan on the strength of the single expression *furialis Erichtho* (Ov. H. 15, 139; cf. *Erichtho*, Lucan 6, 508.)** A. Zingerle, too, in

* E. Rohde, *Der griechische Roman und seine Vorläufer*, p. 11.

** It may be added that it is almost equally rash to reject a whole epistle as not genuine on the ground of a metrical irregularity in a single verse. See Alexander Bilger, *De Ovidi Heroidum appendice*, p. 3.

his good and useful book, "Ovidius und sein Verhältniss zu den Vorgängern und gleichzeitigen römischen Dichtern", has carried this verbal resemblance too far.* The human mind, like human nature, is very much the same the world over and there can be no doubt that different people sometimes have the same thoughts quite independently of one another. The trouble is that there are so many ways of transmitting ideas and the human race is so closely connected that we can seldom be quite sure that the thoughts are entirely independent. Take, for instance, Diog. Laert. 1, 10 where he is speaking of Epimenides:

Οὗτός ποτε πεμφθεὶς παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς εἰς ἀγρόν ἐπὶ πρόβατον, τῆς ὁδοῦ κατὰ μεσημβρίαν ἐκκλίνας ὑπ' ἄνθρωπον τινὶ κατακοιμήθη ἑπτὰ καὶ πενήκοντα ἔτη. διαναστάς δὲ μετὰ ταῦτα ἔζηται τὸ πρόβατον, νομῶν ἐπ' ὀλίγον κεκοιμησάσαι. ὡς δὲ οὐχ εὔρισκε, παρεγένετο εἰς τὸν ἀγρόν, καὶ μετασκενασμένα πάντα καταλαβὼν καὶ παρὰ ἑτέρου τὴν κτῆσιν, πάλιν ἦκεν εἰς ἄστυ δι-
αποροῦμενος. Κάκει δὲ εἰς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ εἰσιὼν οὐκίαν περιέτρεχε τοῖς
πνυθανομένοις τίς εἶη. ἕως τὸν νεώτερον ἀδελφὸν εὐρών τότε ᾗδη
γέροντα ὄντα, πᾶσαν νυκτεὶ παρ' ἐκείνου τὴν ἀλήθειαν. In place
and time this is far enough separated from Rip van Winkle yet
who can be sure that there is no connection between the two?

Another case of difficulty is when there are several imitations of the original and the source of our passage may be either the original or an imitation. Take, for instance, Molière, *Le Misanthrope*, 711:

L'amour, pour l'ordinaire, est peu fait à ces lois,
Et l'on voit les amants vanter toujours leur choix;
Jamais leur passion n'y voit rien de blâmable,
Et dans l'objet aimé tout leur devient aimable:
Ils comptent les défauts pour des perfections,
Et savent y donner de favorables noms.

* I find that E. Bährens in the preface (p. VII) to his edition of Valerius Flaccus has expressed a similar opinion: "hoc tamen addo nec Zingerelium satis distinxisse similitudines fortuitas et eas imitationes quae consulto dataque opera sunt factae." Still, the comparison of similar passages is interesting and perhaps useful even when there is no imitation, and some instances of this will be found in the following pages.

La pâle est aux jasmins en blancheur comparable;
 La noire à faire peur, une brune adorable;
 La maigre a de la taille et de la liberté;
 La grasse est dans son port pleine de majesté;
 La malpropre sur soi, de peu d'attraits chargée,
 Est mise sous le nom de beauté négligée;
 La géante paroît une déesse aux yeux;
 La naine, un abrégé des merveilles des cieux;
 L'orgueilleuse a le cœur digne d'une couronne;
 La fourbe a de l'esprit; la sottie est toute bonne;
 La trop grande parleuse est d'agréable humeur;
 Et la muette garde une honnête pudeur.
 C'est ainsi qu'un amant dont l'ardeur est extrême
 Aime jusqu' aux défauts des personnes qu'il aime."

With this compare Plato, Rep. 5, 474 D:

ἢ σὶχ οὕτω ποιεῖτε πρὸς τοὺς καλοὺς; ὁ μὲν, ὅτι σιμός,
 ἐπίχαρις κληθεὶς ἐπαινεθήσεται ὑφ' ἡμῶν, τοῦ δὲ τὸ γρηπτόν
 βασιλικόν φατε εἶναι, τὸν δὲ δὴ διὰ μέσον τούτων ἐμμερότατα
 ἔχειν, μέλανας δὲ ἀνδρικούς ἰδεῖν, λευκοὺς δὲ θεῶν παῖδας εἶναι
 μελιχλῶρος δὲ καὶ τυῖνομα οἶε τινὸς ἄλλου ποιήμα εἶναι ἢ
 ἔραστοῦ ἠποκοριζόμενον τε καὶ εὐχερῶς φέροντας τὴν ὠχρότητα,
 εἰς ἐπὶ ᾧρα ἦ;

The similarity of these two passages is sufficient to warrant the conclusion that they are probably connected. But Molière did not get the idea from Plato, but from Lucr. 4, 1153:

Nam faciunt homines plerumque cupidine caeci
 Et tribuunt ea quae non sunt his commoda vere.
 Multimodis igitur pravas turpisque videmus
 Esse in deliciis summoque in honore vigere.

vs. 1160 Nigra melichrus est, immunda et fetida acosmos,
 Caesia Palladium, nervosa et lignea dorcas,
 Parvula, pumilio, chariton mia, tota merum sal,
 Magna atque inmanis cataplexis plenaque honoris.
 Balba loqui non quit, traulizi, muta pudens est;
 At flagrans odiosa loquaecula Lampadium fit.

Ischnon eromenion tum fit, cum vivere non quit
 Prae macie; rhadine verost iam mortua tussi.
 At tumida et mammosa Ceres est ipsa ab Iaccho,
 Simula Silena ac saturast, labeosa philema.
 Cetera de genere hoc longum est si dicere coner."

There is additional evidence to show that Molière was especially familiar with Lucretius and had even translated him in part.

With these are to be compared further Hor. Sat. 1, 3, 38:

Illic praevertamur, amatorem quod amicae
 Turpia decipiunt caecum vitia, aut etiam ipsa haec
 Delectant, veluti Balbinum polypus Hagnae.

Ov. A. A. 2, 657:

Nominibus mollire licet mala. Fusca vocetur,
 Nigrior Illyrica cui pice sanguis erit:
 Si crassa est, Veneris similis, si torva, Minervae.
 Sit gracilis, macie quae male viva sua est.
 Die habilem, quaecumque brevis, quo turgida, plenam:
 Et lateat vitium proximitate boni.

Cf. Also Am. 2. 4 for the sentiment, and Rem. Am. 323—330 for the opposite. Also Prop. 3, 20, 41 Theoc. Id 6, 18; and 10, 26.

The illustration is already too long and we cannot enter here upon a discussion of the relation of these various passages to one another.*

Our difficulties in investigating the sources of an author like Ovid are further increased by the loss of so many books which he read, especially out of the Alexandrian literature. Ovid himself has been used by some scholars to reconstruct the plots of such lost works.** The plan of the *Heroides* renders it possible to use this argument as far as the essential points of the story are concerned. The details cannot be obtained with any certainty.

* Most of these references may be found in the edition of Molière by Despois & Mesnard, 5, 557.

** See Dilthey, *Cydippe* p. 46.