

**PUBLIUS OVIDIUS NASO, Excerpts from *Epistulae Heroidum* [*Heroides*]
In Latin, manuscript on paper
Germany, likely Southern (perhaps Bavaria?), c. 1500-1525**

2 bifolia from a disassembled quire of 8 leaves, on paper (watermark close to Briquet, "Couronne", no. 4922 [Bavière 1506-1513; Augsbourg, 1518; Nuremberg, 1524-1525]), written in a German bastarda script, in brown ink, on up to 25 long lines, with very wide margins, change of hand (hand A, ff. 1-2v; hand B, ff. 3-4v), interlinear and marginal gloss in a very tight and small cursive script, with larger size of bastarda script reserved for some passages of marginal gloss. Unbound and unstitched (leaves in clearly legible and fine condition). Dimensions 325 x 210 mm.

The present fragment of exceptionally large format comes from an unidentified schoolbook that contained Ovid's *Heroides*. Its unusually dense marginal and interlinear glosses merit further study as reflections of the preoccupations of a sixteenth-century German reader and commentator on Ovid. This fragment, studied in conjunction with other surviving glossed schoolbooks of Ovid's texts, promises insight into the way the *Heroides* functioned in the classroom in relation to teaching methods of which Ovid's text was both adjunct and product.

PROVENANCE

1. Script and watermarks suggest a German origin for this manuscript, likely from the South, perhaps Bavaria. Further research might lead to the discovery of other dismembered leaves from this manuscript, either in the trade or in institutions (binder's waste?).
2. European Private Collection.

TEXT

ff. 1-2, Ovid, *Epistulae Heroidum*, VII, Dido to Aeneas, v. 124-196, incipit, "[...] Nescio quem thalamis preposuisse suis..."; explicit, "[...] Ipsa sua dido concidit usa manu" (begins incomplete) [ed. H. Bornecque, *Ovide. Héroïdes*, 1991, pp. 43-46];

ff. 2-2v, Ovid, *Epistulae Heroidum*, VIII, Hermione to Orestes, v. 1-28, incipit, "[P]yrrhus achilleides animosus imagine patris..."; explicit. "[...] Et si non esses vir michi frater eras [...]" (ends incomplete) [ed. H. Bornecque, *Ovide. Héroïdes*, 1991, pp. 47-48];

ff. 3-4v, Ovid, *Epistulae Heroidum*, IX, Deianira to Hercules, v. 9-114 [missing v. 112-113], incipit, "[...] At non ille venis cui nox si credimur una..." ; explicit, "[...] Sed tua tuque feri victor es illa tui [...]" (begins and ends incomplete) [ed. H. Bornecque, *Ovide. Héroïdes*, 1991, pp. 52-56];

These two bifolia were once part of a rather large glossed schoolbook that must have contained at least the complete *Heroides* by Ovid. Excerpts from three *Heroides* (respectively VII, VIII and IX) are preserved here, with their accompanying interlinear and marginal glosses. The glosses appear to be all in Latin, although a complete transcription of the glosses, written in a tight and highly abridged cursive script, might yield some vernacular elements. The glosses are mostly of two types: firstly, of rhetorical nature with commentaries of the type "Excusatio" (f. 2v); "Exemplo" (f. 2v); "Arguit"; "Amplius" etc.; and secondly, historical or mythological notes, of the type found on f. 2, lower lefthand margin: "Hanc epistolam...Meneleas et Helene filia Orestis filio Agamenaus...." In general, the interlinear glosses appear to explicate vocabulary, grammatical, and syntactical concerns, while the marginal glosses focus more on literary and rhetorical/stylistic aspects of the text.

The *Epistulae Heroidum* (Letters of the Heroines), sometimes referred to as the "Heroides" (Heroines), is a collection of fictive letters from famous women in mythology to their absent lovers or husbands. In these letters of complaint, reproach, anxiety, longing or seduction, Penelope writes to Ulysses, Phyllis to Demophoon, Phaedra to Hippolytus, and so forth. For the medieval and certain Renaissance readers, the collection comprised some twenty letters. Originally composed in the first century BC and not always thought to be authored entirely by Ovid himself, these letters called for commentaries so that medieval readers could better understand them.

The elegance of Ovid's style and his command of rhetorical technique favored his status as a school author, perhaps even at the elementary level. Anthologies of readings composed for pre-university students, called *Libri manuals*, often include Ovid's works—the *Heroides* as well as the *Metamorphoses*—as grammatical or rhetorical models. Nearly all Ovid's works, in their entirety or in part, were read in the schools, and often he was the first poet to be introduced to the class. His texts served students as sources for the ideal ancient culture of Rome, as a linguistic and literary model, and of course as a repository of fables that could provide edification and moral improvement (for studies of Ovid and the school tradition, see Alton, 1960 and 1961; McGregory, 1976; Hexter, 1986; Moss, 1982). The twelfth and thirteenth centuries are frequently called the "Aetas Ovidiana," because of Ovid's considerable popularity during this period. But the success and popularity of Ovid continued well into the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and his works were still read in the schools even in the later Baroque period.

Among Ovid's works, the *Heroides* was especially popular as a school text because, as scholars have pointed out, it offered a more "manageable number of tales" (twenty in most medieval manuscripts) than did the *Metamorphoses* (Hexter, 1986, p. 143). Commentaries in several manuscripts reveal that the texts in Ovid's *Heroides* were read with multiple uses: to study grammar, rhetoric, the art of letter writing, and mythology and to learn moral and ethical judgment. The oldest manuscript to contain the *Heroides* is Paris BnF, MS lat. 7311, dated to the beginning of the ninth century. All the genuine and some of the spurious works of Ovid were first printed in 1471 in the *editiones principes* of Sweynheym and Pannartz at Rome and by F. Puteolanus at Bologna (see Richmond, 2002). Yet, in spite of Ovid's importance for the Middle Ages, there is

neither a definitive study of the Ovidian tradition in medieval times nor a complete census of extant Ovidian manuscripts (Moss, Hexter and Coulson were announced as authors of an annotated catalogue of the medieval and humanistic Latin commentaries on Ovid, still to appear in a volume of the *Catalogus translationum et commentariorum*, ed. Virginia Brown).

Each extant manuscript of commentaries on the *Heroides* survives as a witness to the teaching, reading, or study of Ovid (and sometimes all three) at the time it was made. Further research of existing manuscripts and fragments promises insight into the way the *Heroides* was studied in relation to teaching methods of which it was both an adjunct and product. The commentaries and glosses contain Latin (and sometimes also vernacular) scholia of still-unidentified authorship. In the case of the present manuscript, the preoccupations of a sixteenth-century German reader and commentator on Ovid merit closer examination.

LITERATURE

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ONLINE RESOURCES

Ovid, Heroides, Latin e-text:

<http://meta.montclair.edu/latintexts/ovid/heroides/>

Ovid, Heroides, English Translation, Loeb Classical Library:

<http://www.theoi.com/Text/OvidHeroides2.html>

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