

# *OVIDIUS DECLAMANS: THE INFLUENCE OF DECLAMATION IN OVID'S HEROIDES IV*

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## RESUMO

A declamação, exercício escolar feito sobre uma situação forense ou deliberativa praticado nas escolas de retórica, se tornou popular na Era Augustana. Sua influência sobre a literatura da época pode ser notada: Ovídio, sobretudo, não está livre do estilo e da linguagem declamatória. Sêneca O Velho (*Contr.* 2.2.8-12), por exemplo, testemunha sobre as atividades de Ovídio como um declamador. Sendo assim, este artigo analisa a *Heroides IV*, uma epístola contida em uma das obras ovidianas de maior conteúdo retórico, à luz do gênero declamação, concentrando-se no estilo, sobretudo no uso de *sententiae*, e em outras similaridades temáticas e estruturais.

## ABSTRACT

Declamation, the exercise on a fictive forensic or deliberative situation practised in the schools of rhetoric, became popular in the Augustan Era. Its influence on literature can be noticed: Ovid, above all, is not free from its style and language. Seneca, the Elder (*Contr.* 2.2.8-12), for example, gives a testimonial of Ovid's activities as a declamator. Therefore this paper discusses the *Heroides IV*, an epistle that belongs to one of Ovid's most rhetorical works, in the light of the declamatory genre, focusing on style, like the use of *sententiae*, and other thematic and structural similarities.

**Keywords:** Rhetoric, Declamation, Ovid, *Heroides IV*.

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If Ovid had not had training in speech-making in the schools of rhetoric of the late Republic and early Empire, would his poetry be any different in content, form, or style from what is known to us today? This question arises frequently in modern readings,<sup>3</sup> but the matter goes back as far as Bentley's reading in 1699, who first proposed a comparison between the *Heroides* and the school exercise of *ethopoeia*.<sup>4</sup> All modern critics agree that Ovid's style is rhetorical. Although not all of them, as Kenney<sup>5</sup> observes, bother to define what they understand by the term.

"Rhetorical", according to Kenney,<sup>6</sup> is an expression applied to language engineered to produce a particular effect on the reader; its success depends on whether the poet observes a due proportion between ends and means, but the definition of rhetoric as a procedure can (and must) be more accurate. For this, Kennedy's concepts of primary and secondary rhetoric are elucidating. Primary rhetoric is used in civic life; it is mainly oral and has a specific occasion. Secondary rhetoric, on the other hand, "is the apparatus of rhetorical techniques clustering around discourse or art forms when those techniques are not being used for their primary oral purpose".<sup>7</sup> Essentially, secondary rhetoric is the conscious use of figures of thought and language, topics and tropes, and the quadripartite division of speech in literature; hence, it constitutes rhetorical literature. Kennedy points out that the first manifestation of secondary rhetoric was Latin literature of the early Empire, although Hellenistic poetry shows some signs of artful use of literary rhetoric.<sup>8</sup> On that ground, we intend in this paper, to highlight stylistic similarities between Ovid's early poetry and declamation, especially the sort of declamation about which Seneca writes in his book.

To illustrate how Ovid plays with declamatory procedures we have chosen the *Heroides* IV (the epistle from Phaedra to Hyppolitus). More specifically, we will point out those passages in which Ovid makes use of rhetorical features – *sententiae*, *exempla*, oaths and rhetorical figures – to shape Phaedra's speech as persuasive, blending erotic seduction and forensic persuasiveness. Therefore, the paper is divided into two parts: the first one presents a discussion of Ovid's activities as a student of declamation, focusing on a piece Seneca attributes to Ovid. In the second part, we concentrate specifically on passages of the *Heroides* IV in which it is possible to find stylistic and thematic parallels with passages of declamation that prove Ovid's rhetorical skills and domain of declamation technics.

<sup>3</sup> e.g. JACOBSON (1974: 338).

<sup>4</sup> KNOX (2002: 124, n. 32); JACOBSON (1974: 325).

<sup>5</sup> KENNEY (2002: 74).

<sup>6</sup> *Id. ib.*

<sup>7</sup> KENNEDY (1980: 5).

<sup>8</sup> KENNEDY (1980: 113).

## 1. OVID: A POET AMONG DECLAIMERS, A DECLAIMER AMONG POETS

Declamation had acquired an incredible popularity by the beginning of the *Principatus*. The exercise, of which Seneca and Pseudo-Quintilian offer the best Latin accounts, had long transcended the schoolroom. More than a scholastic practice, it was a literary genre confined to a specific occasion of performance, akin to *recitationes* of poetry.<sup>9</sup> The shift from the discourse practised within the schools and under the supervision of a master to a private speech-making practice in which the style is often extravagant and histrionic – declaimers are often condemned for pursuing the applauses at any price – happened, according to Latin sources (Seneca, *Contr.* 1, pref. §12), somewhere in the period between the end of the Republic and the beginning of the Empire. Not only did the exercise change in form, but also in content. The flavour of many declamatory themes suggests a divorce between reality and declamation: intricacy, especially legal, and the treatment of types, instead of persons, left this practice a bad reputation for being unsatisfactory as preparation for the law courts. Despite heavy criticism, declamation kept increasing in popularity throughout the early decades of the Empire – it is said that even Augustus was fond of declaiming (*Contr.* 10.5.22).<sup>10</sup> The curious fact that declamation was under attack precisely at the same moment we know it to have been growing is explained by modern commentators as due to political changes, and the rise of the imperial system in particular, through which oratory lost much of its political value.<sup>11</sup> The social role of rhetoric underwent a change, and instead of focusing on argumentation, rhetoricians turned their attention to artistic arrangement and exuberant style.<sup>12</sup> That would be why Seneca spent so much attention on reporting the most successful *sententiae* and *colores* which he heard in his early life.

<sup>9</sup> BONNER (1949: 39); BLOOMMER (2007: 297).

<sup>10</sup> On the critics of declamation, see BONNER (1949: *ch.* 4 “Declamation and its ancient critics”); RUSSELL (1983: *ch.* 2 “Sophistopolis, or the world of the aristeus”); Quintilian, *Inst. Or.* 2. 10.3; Petronius, *Satyricon* §§ 1-4.

<sup>11</sup> BONNER (1949: 43).

<sup>12</sup> KENNEDY (1994: 172); AUHAGEN (2007: 414).

If we are to believe in Seneca, the young Ovid, sitting in the classroom of Arellius Fuscus as a schoolboy, declaimed. Not only did he declaim, but he declaimed well. Seneca says Ovid was held as a *bonus declamator* (*Contr.* 2.2.9), which to Seneca might have meant that Ovid used good diction that was neither ordinary nor distasteful. He had a pungent and fervent style of oratory and was meticulous with his words.<sup>13</sup> Seneca uses three adjectives to qualify Ovid's *ingenium* when talking about a piece of declamation for which Ovid received applause. Ovid's innate talent is *comptum* (past participle of *como* "to arrange, to put"), "well put together", therefore "polished", "neat", an adjective applied to Isocrates in the *Institutio* (*Isocrates nitidus et comptus; Inst. Orat.* 10.1.79). It is also *decens* (from *decet*), "befitting", "proper", therefore "harmonious", and *amabile*, "captivating". These three adjectival forms, as Fantham<sup>14</sup> puts it, are more suitable to qualify a poet than an orator: "wit, taste, and elegance are all features we associate with the predominant mode of Ovid's early love poetry", in her words. Certainly modern critics feel compelled to apply "neatness", "harmony" and "charm" to Ovid's amatory poems. However, in a context where declamation served as more than a purely academic exercise, these qualities could be applied to an orator whose main purpose was not persuasion, but simply a demonstration of rhetorical wittiness – declamation, among youngsters fresh from the school like Seneca's Ovid, was a show performance in the Augustan Era, not different from a dramatic presentation in prose form.

Fortunately, Seneca (2.9.5 ss.) reports a piece of declamation by Ovid. Of course, it is difficult to take it as a pure Ovidian: Seneca is reporting, allegedly relying on his own memories, what he finds most interesting in terms of division, sententiousness, and rhetorical twists in argumentation. It would not be prudent, however, to neglect a more careful reading of this piece, which is presented in Winterbottom's translation to Loeb (1974):

*Iusiurandum Mariti et Uxoris*

Vir et uxor iuraverunt, ut, si quid alteri optigisset, alter moreretur. Vir peregre profectus misit nuntium ad uxorem, qui diceret decessisse virum. Uxor se praecipitavit. Recreata iubetur a patre relinquere virum; non vult. Abdicatur. Haec illo dicente excepta memini: Quidquid laboris est in hoc est, ut uxori virum et uxorem viro diligere concedas; necesse est deinde iurare permittas si amare permiseris. Quod habuisse nos iusiurandum putas? Tu nobis religiosum nomen fuisti; si mentiremur, illa sibi iratum patrem invocavit, ego socerum. Parce, pater: non peieravimus. Ecce obiurgator nostri quam effrenato amore fertur! queritur quemquam esse filiae praeter se carum. Quid est quod illam ab indulgentia sua avocet? di boni, quomodo hic amavit uxorem? Amat filiam et abdicat; dolet periclitatam esse, et ab eo abducit sine quo negat se posse vivere; queritur periculum eius qua paene caruit, hic qui amare caute iubet. Facilius in amore finem inpetres quam modum. Tu hoc obtinebis, ut terminos quasi adprobaturi custodiant, ut nihil faciant nisi considerate, nihil promittant nisi ut iure pacturi, omnia verba ratione et fide ponderent? senes sic amant. Pauca nosti, pater, crimina: et litigavimus aliquando et decidimus et, quod fortasse

<sup>13</sup> To the concept of *bonus declamator*, see *Contr.* 3. Pref. 7.

<sup>14</sup> FANTHAM (2009: 27).

*non putas, peieravimus. Quid ad patrem pertinet quod amantes iurant? si vis credere, nec ad deos pertinet. Non est quod tibi placeas, uxor, tamquam prima peccaveris: perit aliqua cum viro, perit aliqua pro viro; illas tamen omnis aetas honorabit, omne celebrabit ingenium. Fer, socer, felicitatem tuam: magnum tibi quam parvo constat exemplum! In reliquum, ut iubes, diligentiores facti sumus; errorem nostrum confitemur; exciderat iurantibus esse tertium qui magis amaret: sic, di, sit semper. Perseveras, socer? recipe filiam: ego, qui peccavi, poena dignus sum; quare uxori notae causa sim, socero orbitatis? Discedam e civitate, fugiam, exulabo, utcumque potero desiderium misera et crudeli patientia perferam. Morerer, si solus moriturus essem.*

*The oath sworn by husband and wife*

A husband and wife took an oath that if anything should happen to either of them the other would die. The husband went off on a trip abroad, and sent a message to his wife to say that he had died. The wife threw herself off a cliff. Revived, she is told by her father to leave her husband. She does not want to, and is disinherited. *I remember that the following sayings of his were applauded: "The whole trouble is getting you to let husband and wife love each other. You must allow them to swear once you allow them to love. - What do you think your oath was by? It was you whose name aroused our awe. In case of perjury, she called down on herself an angry father, I an angry father-in-law. Spare me, father: we were not forsworn. - Look at the unbridled passion that sweeps our censor away! His complaint is that anyone apart from himself is dear to his daughter. Why is that he summons her away from her fondness? Good God, how did he love his wife? - He loves his daughter -, and disinherits her. He is grieved that she should have been in danger - and takes her away from the man she says she cannot live without. He complains of the peril to one he almost lost - this man who preaches cautious love. - Where love is concerned, a parting is easier to come by than restraint. Will you get lovers to observe limits as though they have to answer for them, do nothing without forethought, promise nothing except as though by legal covenant, weigh up all their words rationally and conscientiously? That is the way old people love. - Father, you know of few of our crimes. We have, at times, quarrelled, been reconciled, and - though you may not think it - perjured ourselves. What is it to do with father if lovers swear? If you will believe it, it is nothing to do even with the gods. There is no need, wife, for you to pride yourself on being the first to sin thus. Women have perished with their husbands, women have perished for them: they will be honoured by every age, sung by every genius. Contrive, father, to endure your good fortune. What a small price you have to pay for so glorious an instance! - For the future, as you instruct us, we have become more cautious. We acknowledge our mistakes. We forgot, when we swore, that there was a third party - who loved more; may it always be so, ye gods. - Do you persist, father-in-law? Take your daughter back; I was the sinner, and I deserve punishment. Why should I be the cause of censure to my wife, of childlessness to her father? I shall leave the city, flee, go into exile, endure my loss as best I may a miserable and heartless endurance. I should kill myself - if I could die alone."*

Bonner defines Ovid as "a poet among declaimers and a declaimer among poets".<sup>15</sup> The meaning of this statement emerges clearly in the light of the declamatory excerpt just mentioned. The passage is overflowing with

<sup>15</sup> BONNER (1949: 153)

rhetorical figures commonly seen in Ovid's poetry; to mention just a few of them, one could easily notice the systemic usage of interrogation and its related figures, antithesis (*amat filiam et abdicat*), apostrophe (*pater, di boni, uxor*), anaphora (*perit aliqua cum viro, perit aliqua pro viro*) and polyptoton (*ut uxori virum et uxorem viro diligere concedas*). Along with other figures, like syllepsis, zeugma and chiasmus, those mentioned distinguish Ovid's poetical language and style.<sup>16</sup> The content of this excerpt is also very Ovidian-like. The theme of this *controversia*, as Berti<sup>17</sup> notices, revolves round love and marital fidelity, then showing an affinity with themes of elegy, especially the *Heroides*, which might be alluded in the passage where the declamatory excerpt mentioned above reads:

*Perit aliqua cum viro, perit aliqua pro viro; illas tamen omnis aetas honorabit, omne celebrabit ingenium.*

Women have perished with their husbands, women have perished for them: they will be honoured by every age, sung by every genius.

A factor to be taken into account when discussing this excerpt of declamation is the composition of Seneca's book. In the first preface, Seneca declares his intentions: he will report, by memory, the most promising declaimers he heard in his early age. The role of memory could be read as a sort of programmatic feature: as noticed by Bloomer,<sup>18</sup> Seneca equates a decadence of oratory and, consequently, Roman values with the act of forgetting. Memory thus occupies a special place within Seneca's account of declamation: to keep alive in the mind a past in which there was more talent and morality is to preserve it. Therefore, Seneca's claim that declamation had been developed in Rome in his lifetime also fits into his programme. Consequently, few people nowadays would dare to take Seneca's report as legitimate: he must have had some kind of access to written versions of the declamations, and it is possible that these writings were notes he had written in the moment he listened to the declaimers or it could be the case of published texts. If Seneca had access to a declamation allegedly produced by the poet Ovid, it is reasonable to consider it a work of an imitator of Ovid, someone who could reproduce the language and style of Ovidian poetry in a prose work. In any case, Seneca was contemporaneous with Ovid and is probably a more reliable source to Ovid's life than we are.

<sup>16</sup> On syllepsis, see KENNEY (2002: 45-8).

<sup>17</sup> BERTI (2007: 295).

<sup>18</sup> BLOOMER (1997: 298).

At any rate, similarities between Ovid's language and declamation are vast, especially in regards to the use of rhetorical figures. These parallels were remarked by many scholars since Brück.<sup>19</sup> Norden<sup>20</sup> asserts the need of a commentary on Ovid in which Ovidian material is compared with declamation. This assertion could sound excessive, but illustrates well the likeness we see in Ovid's poetry and in declamation. In the next paragraphs, we will present examples of this possible comparison to prove the point. Immediately, in the following section, we will track the characteristics of declamation in *Heroides* IV, the epistle from Phaedra to Hippolytus.

Seneca, in his account of Ovid's activities in *Contr.* 2.2.8, says that Ovid adapted one *sententia* said by Latro in a declamation whose theme was the *Armorum Iudicium*:<sup>21</sup>

Latro's epigram:

*mittamus arma in hostis et petamus*

Let us hurl the arms at the enemy  
and go fetch them.<sup>22</sup>

Ovid's version (which is found  
in *Met.* 13.121-2):

*arma uiri fortis medios mittantur in  
hostis; inde tubele peti (...).*

Let the hero's arms be hurled into  
the enemy's midst; Order them to be  
fetched - from there.<sup>23</sup>

Another example of Ovid's adaptation quoted by Seneca:

Latro's epigram:

*Non uides ut immota fax torpeat, ut  
exagitata reddat ignes? Mollit uiros  
otium, ferrum situ carpitur et  
rubiginem ducit, desidia dedocet.*

Do you not see how a torch  
unbrandished is dim, but when  
shaken it gives out its fires? Men  
are softened by leisure, iron is eaten  
away by disuse, and takes on rust.  
Sloth brings forgetfulness.

Ovid's version (which is found  
in the *Am.* 1.2.11-2):

*uidi ego iactatas mota face crescere  
flammas et rursus nullo concutiente  
mori.*

I have seen flames grow as a torch is  
shaken, and again die when no-one  
brandishes it.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>19</sup> BRÜCK (1909).

<sup>20</sup> *Apud* BONNER (1949: 149).

<sup>21</sup> This was a dispute between Ajax and Ulysses over Achilles' weapons, which might have been a stock theme in *suasoriae*. Juvenal makes a parody of this in 7.115.

<sup>22</sup> All translations of Seneca are taken from WINTERBOTTOM (1974).

<sup>23</sup> Translation by TARRANT (2004: *ad loc.*).

<sup>24</sup> Translation by SHOWERMAN (1977: *ad loc.*)

## 2. PARALLELS BETWEEN OVID'S POETRY AND DECLAMATION: THE CASE OF THE *HEROIDES* IV

We have seen that much of Ovid's poetical style is mirrored in the passage quoted by Seneca. Ovid was, indeed, very fond of creating an intricate effect on the reader by means of word playing; the success of his poetical techniques relied heavily on the knowledge and awareness of his audience. The same thing is true with declamation, especially when practiced privately: people applauded clever and sharp uses of language. In order to recognise these intelligent language choices and even to appreciate them, the reader – or the listener in a *recitatio* – had to be acquainted with techniques of composition. It is important to have in mind that Ovid was writing to a very demanding public; this notion is fundamental to understand why rhetoric offered such an opportunity for Ovid to be witty and imaginative.

*Heroides*, presumably his second work, but written in parallel with the *Amores*,<sup>25</sup> offers a good opportunity to study the use of rhetoric, both in form and content. Contemporary approaches to the poems tend to observe the contribution made by many literary genres to the composition of these elegiac epistles. They are indeed a fine example of *Kreuzung der Gattungen*,<sup>26</sup> the crossing of literary genres in one poetic piece, a compositional process alike to Hellenistic *poikilia*, and through which Ovid assembles elegy, epistolary, tragedy, lyric, epic, even iambic poetry and rhetoric in the *Heroides*.<sup>27</sup> In fact, in this work, the influence of Ovid's rhetorical education manifests itself particularly in the proximity between these epistles and rhetorical exercises, as we previously mentioned we have at our hands sufficient evidence that Ovid had been trained in formal rhetoric and that this training had an effect in Ovid's aesthetics, as Auhagen takes notice.<sup>28</sup>

The letters in this collection were long regarded as school exercises, mere *suasoriae*, a type of advisory declamation based upon mythological or historical events and characters, or simple *ethopoeiae*.<sup>29</sup> Although the individual poems resemble *suasoriae*, the similarities are superficial:

<sup>25</sup> Cf. *Amores* 2. 18, where the poet says he is writing the epistles of Penelope (*Her.1*), Phyllis (*Her.2*), Oenone (*Her.5*), Canace (*Her.11*), Hypsipyle (*Her.6*), Ariadne (*Her.10*), Phaedra (*Her.4*), Dido (*Her.7*) and Sappho (*Her.15*).

<sup>26</sup> KROLL (1924). See also BARCHIESI (2001).

<sup>27</sup> On the many genres in Ovid's *Heroides*, see CUNNINGHAM (1949), CURLEY (2013), JACOBSON (1974), SPOTH (1992), KNOX (1995), KENNEY (1996), KENNEDY (1994), and BARCHIESI (2001), i. a.

<sup>28</sup> AUHAGEN (2007: 414).

<sup>29</sup> PALMER (1898). See also CUNNINGHAM (1949), JACOBSON (1974), SPOTH (1992), KNOX (1995), KENNEY (1996) and KENNEDY (1994).

almost none of the letters are advisory and the ones that are called “single *Heroides*” do not have a declamatory counterpart.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, the “double *Heroides*” may be considered *controversiae*, as two speakers argued from opposite sides of a question. However, as Fantham<sup>31</sup> points out, the letters may work more as a vehicle of reproach than of persuasion, a feature which, in a way, puts the *Heroides* on a different path from *controversia*.

Thus, it is possible to affirm that, in the *Heroides*, Ovid was not an imitator or even an emulator of declamation – as Brück, in 1909, proposed in his dissertation *De Ovidio Scholasticarum Declamationum Imitatore*, “On Ovid as an Imitator of Scholastic Declamation”. Instead, declamation works as one of the forces with which Ovid shapes his poetical collection: the training Ovid had in the schools shaped his thoughts on how to create a speech *in persona* and provided him with techniques on how to handle language successfully, in a way his audience would be delighted.

The fourth epistle is the one that Phaedra “writes” to Hippolytus. Phaedra’s is the only epistle that has erotic seduction and love conquest as the main purpose: Phaedra is trying to persuade Hippolytus into loving her back by means of showing that the act is neither a betrayal to Hippolytus’ father nor incest. As such, we may expect that Phaedra will use rhetorical devices in order to convey her advisory message. In this way, Ovid brings the letter closer to the exercise of *suasoria*.

The structure of *Heroides* IV is heavily based upon rhetorical formal models. As Bonner asserts, like declamation, the letter follows the standard four-fold division which for many centuries had been laid down in the handbooks.<sup>32</sup> Following Oppel,<sup>33</sup> the division of the letter is given below:

1-6: Introduction	}	<i>Proemium/exordium</i>
7-10: Reason of the letter		
11-34: Apologies and excuses		
35-52: Love Confession: love symptoms		
53-66: Excuses for this particular infatuation: Her Family destiny	}	<i>narratio</i>
67- 74: <i>Narratio</i> : the wakening of her love		
75-84: <i>Narratio</i> : why she likes Hippolytus	}	<i>argumentatio</i>
85-164: <i>Argumentatio</i> : try to convince in sophistic way		
149-176: <i>Cohortatio</i> .	}	<i>peroratio</i>

<sup>30</sup> For the differences between the *suasoriae* and the *Heroides*, see OPPEL (1968: 37-45).

<sup>31</sup> To the letter as *controversiae* see KENNEY (1996, 2) and FANTHAM (2009: 32).

<sup>32</sup> BONNER (1949: 54).

<sup>33</sup> OPPEL (1968: 12).

Right at the start, in the *proemium*, Phaedra appeals to *ethos*, acting *ab adversariorum persona* when she refers to Hippolytus as *vir* and *a nostra persona* when she mentions herself as *puella*.<sup>34</sup> She sets off establishing herself as *puella*, a young lady, which could have sounded odd to the reader who was familiar to the poetic tradition of the heroine, as she is no *puella* in real life:

*Quam, nisi tu dederis, caritura est ipsa, salutem  
Mittit amazonio cressa puella viro  
Perlege, quodcumque est. Quid epistula lecta nocebit?  
Tu quoque in hac aliquid quod iuvet esse potest. (Her. IV. 1-4)*

With wishes for the welfare which she herself, unless you give it her, will ever lack, the Cretan maid greets the hero whose mother was an Amazon. Read to the end, whatever is here contained – what shall reading of a letter harm?<sup>35</sup>

The effort to present herself as a young woman has two main purposes: the first one is to frame the poem within the elegiac genre and the reference to Hippolytus as *vir* also reinforces this effort.<sup>36</sup> *Mittit*, *perlege* and *epistula* work as references to the genre which Ovid adopts to compose his poem. In this case, these references are related to the epistolary genre.

The second purpose is mainly rhetorical: Phaedra, who is no *puella*, is trying to present herself as younger, therefore more appealing to Hippolytus. It is more persuasive to put herself as someone who could be attractive to a young man, like Hippolytus is, than revealing her true colours. The *interrogatio*, which is a figure favoured by declaimers, as the reader can notice by the Ovidian declamatory excerpt quoted at the beginning of this paper, appears in verse 3 and also plays with persuasiveness (*Quid epistula lecta nocebit?*). The question is addressed to Hippolytus and presupposes a negative answer ('none'). Hence it is used as a purely rhetorical feature in order to get Hippolytus to read the letter thoroughly.

In the first ten verses, Phaedra introduces herself as a woman in love and continues to work her *ethos* as *puella*. As an *amatrix*, she makes use of elegiac *topoi*, like *militia amoris*:

*Inspicit acceptas hostis ab hoste notas. (Her. IV. 6)*

Even foe looks into missive writ foe.

<sup>34</sup> See Cic. *Inv.* 1.25.

<sup>35</sup> All translation to the *Heroides* are SHOWERMAN (1977: *ad loc.*)

<sup>36</sup> CASALI (1995: 2).

As a *puella*, she pinpoints her *pudicitia*. However she tries to disengage from the will and fondness which compels her to love her stepson: she says she is torn apart by *pudor* and *Amor*, modesty forbids her to say what Love wants her to write (v. 10 - *dicere quae pudet, scribere iussit Amor*, “what modesty forbade to say, love has commanded me to write”).

In this process of working out an ideal *ethos* for Phaedra, one can easily notice two rhetorical features being employed by the poet: *sententiae* and *exempla*. It is indeed very common to find these two expedients in Ovidian poetry. In the eleventh verse, a *sententia*, which helps to shape Phaedra’s *ethos*, explains why, in spite her possible reluctance, she could not hold back from loving her stepson, and so she asserts:

*Quidquid Amor iussit, non est contemnere tutum.* (Her. IV. 11)

Whatever Love commands, it is not safe to hold for naught.

Thus, the letter is written by a *puella*, who is in love (and married, but, of course, she will not mention this in the *captatio benevolentia*) with her stepson (but that is also concealed from the letter, hiding their actual relation under the more general “Cressa” and “Amazonio” epithets in the second verse) and knows that her *pudor* should stop her from writing. Nevertheless, there is a god taking over, and against this, nothing and no one can.

In the *exordium* there are another three *sententiae*.<sup>37</sup> In verses 19 and 26 we find two that refer to the type of feeling Phaedra experiments and how she manages this infatuation:

*Venit amor gravius, quo serior* (Her. IV. 19)

Love has come to me, the deeper for its coming late

*Quae venit exacto tempore, peius amat.* (Her. IV. 26)

She who yields her heart when the time for love is past, has a fiercer passion.

Again, the ideas implied by these *sententiae* are that Phaedra is not the one to blame for her passion and that, even if she wanted to forget her feelings, they would find a way to become stronger. From a rhetorical point of view, Phaedra is playing with *fides*: her addressee will become more willing and receptive to read her letter if he believes that the writer is a person morally reliable.

<sup>37</sup> *Sententiae* are a constitutive element of the exordium (GIOMINI 1993: 351).

The *exordium* closes with another *sententia* (*peius adulterius turpis adulter obest* - *Her.* IV. 34, “worse than forbidden love is a lover who is base”). This feature must not pass unnoticed. It is indeed very common to end a part of speech with a *sententiae* in Latin declamation. Quintilian (4.1.77) even condemns this practice as being a vice from the schools of rhetoric, in which declaimers were concerned only with applause. This *sententia* also works, again from a rhetorical point of view, as *transitus*: Phaedra summarizes what is coming next, i.e. how to consummate love with her stepson without being guilty of adultery and how to conceal their love from others.

The *exempla* used by the declaimers are mostly heroes who were well-known to the Roman audience.<sup>38</sup> In the case of Phaedra’s epistle, the examples she uses are, indeed, very well known, although there are no heroes. They are about the women member of her family. Before the proper narration, Phaedra starts a digression with mythological examples from her ancestors (vv. 54-66). The story of Phaedra’s mother, Pesiphaë, with the bull and the birth of their son, the minotaur, is one of the most famous stories of mythology. The minotaur was killed by Theseus (Phaedra’s husband and Hyppolitus father) in the center of the labyrinth, from which he came out with help of Ariadne’s thread, Phaedra’s sister. Thus, *exempla* abound in Phaedra’s letter so much as in Phaedra’s personal life. She also brings three other *exempla* to demonstrate that other hunters, like Hippolytus, did not refused to love. The examples are those of Cephalus and Aurora, Adonis and Venus and Meleagrus and Atalanta. (vv. 94-100)

We would also like to draw attention to the use of oaths and promises, a figure commonly applied in declamatory appeals, known as *figura iuris iurandi*. In this kind of pleas, the speaker takes an oath or swear “by” or “in the name of”, in lat. *per*, someone or something (or the speaker makes someone take an oath). This device has a strong pathetic appeal. The next is an example extracted from a declamation:

*ARELLI FUSCI patris: Rogo vos per securitatem publicam, per modo restituta  
libertatis laetitiam, per coniuges liberosque vestros. (Contr. 9.4.4)*<sup>39</sup>

ARELLIUS FUSCUS SENIOR. I beg you by the safety of the state, by the pleasure we take in liberty now restored to us, by your wives and children.

In the case of the *Heroides*, the employment of oaths and promises is frequently used to accentuate anguishes of the heroines, who fell disheartened by their lover’s vain promises (that is for example, the case of *Heroides* X). In *Heroides* IV there are also instances of *iuris iurandi*:

<sup>38</sup> POEL (2009: 337).

<sup>39</sup> See also *Contr.* 10.1.7; *Suas.* 7.9; *Contr.* 3. Pref §7.

*per Venerem, parcas, oro, quae plurima mecum est!* (Her. IV.167)  
Spare me, by Venus I pray, who is chiefest with me now.<sup>40</sup>

The rhetorical figures abound in the epistles and ornate the heroines words. The figures embellish the speech and complete its rhetorical structure, reinforcing Phaedra's seduction and her defense as a woman in love. In Phaedra's letter is possible to find a great number of figures. Are very common the examples of alliteration (vv. 4, 43, 45, 134),<sup>41</sup> anaphora (vv. 6-7, 19-20, 144), asyndeton (v. 26), parallelisms (vv. 57-59, 112, 144), polyptoton (vv. 109, 152) and there is also an exceedingly large amount chiasmic sentences<sup>42</sup> (vv. 2, 6, 14, 16, 23, 27, 28, 30, 32, 132).

The apostrophe is another favorite figure, more than appropriate in a kind of speech that looks for persuasion and appealing to pathetic strategies. In the letter, Phaedra remarks the addressee with *tu* in verses 1, 27 (emphasize by the asyndeton with the previous verse), 85, 146, and with vocatives, in particular *perlege* that opens the epistle in v. 3 and closes it in v. 176, creating the effect of a *Ringkomposition*.

## CONCLUSION

Finally a few remarks must be made. The first one is that the prose piece Seneca reports as being Ovidian must be take into account when trying to established if Ovid's poetry was influenced by the declamatory style of his contemporaries or not. Critics repeatedly overlook this excerpt when dealing with that it is often referred as a "Ovidian poetics". The vast majority prefer to believe that Ovid's education in declamation provided him with techniques and ideas on how to create a speech in character, but the only non-autobiographical reference to Ovid's education is Seneca and Seneca reports Ovid as an adult declaiming at the same time he was publishing his first amatory poems. Although one can recognise different constructions and themes taken from rhetoric in the *Heroides*, it is impossible to measure the impact declamation has on Ovid's work and vice versa. Seneca, for instance, informs in book 3.7 that Alfius Flavius used one *sententia* in his declamation taken from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. As seen, similarities between declamation and Ovid's poetry

<sup>40</sup> Another examples in *Heroides* are: Her. VII.157: *Tu modo, per matrem fraternaque tela, sagittas*, "Do you, by your mother and by your brother's weapons, arrows", Her. X. 73-4: *Cum mihi dicebas: "per ego ipsa pericula iuro, l te fore, dum nostrum vivet uterque, meam"*, "you said to me: 'By these very perils of mine, I swear that, so long as both of us shall live, thou shall be mine!'"

<sup>41</sup> We do not pretend to be exhaustive naming every example, but just to illustrate the point.

<sup>42</sup> For Ovid's preference of this figure see Giomini (1993).

are large in number. This information is, however, better understood in the light of a co-influence: not only Ovid's language is affected by declaimers he listened to, but the style of declamation in the Augustan Era is highly engaged with aesthetics and poetical practices from that period. This osmosis was only possible once declamation had become a literary genre *per se* dislocated from the school and disengaged from its persuasive endings.

As for the *Heroides* IV, we have remarked that there are many rhetorical strategies related to persuasion in the poem. This letter is the only one with a clear persuasive aim: Phaedra's efforts aim at making Hippolytus read the letter. In this way, she employs several rhetorical devices, like the ethical *exordium* as *captatio benevolentia*. There are also some features which are very common in declamation, like the use of *interrogatio* in the *exordium* and of *sententia* to close a part of speech. The abundance of figures of speech, especially oaths and stylistic features, also put the poem and declamation on a similar rhetorical path.

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