

World-Building in the *Heroides*

As a collection of letters from mythologized women to the men who abandoned them, Ovid's single *Heroides* have primarily been viewed independently, except when the women's stories intersected. Hypsipyle (*Her.* 6) and Medea (*Her.* 12), after all, were both writing to Jason; Phyllis (*Her.* 2.75–80) and Phaedra (*Her.* 4.59–66) both reference Ariadne (*Her.* 10) and compare their situations to hers (see Fulkerson 32–36, 127–40). But overall, the epistles of the *Heroides* vary widely in tone and purpose, leading many scholars to analyze letters individually. However, the *Heroides* contain a shared, coherent internal logic. Each individual letter details a variety of scenes that readers can reconcile as part of a single narrative, and in turn, each epistle contributes to a larger, unified whole.

Jacobson valuably explores how the *Heroides* are a single body of poetry which showcases Ovid's "powers of *variatio*" (1974, 381–404). However, I argue that, as Kauffman briefly discusses, Ovid created "a coherent text with a unified form, theme, and structure" (1986, 31). More recent scholarship has been increasingly aware of the ties between the individual epistles, but generally with emphasis on a single element of the connection. Spoth looks at letters individually, but also analyzes how aspects of the *Heroides*—especially Ovid's methods of genre transformation—are universal to the collection. Jolivet's approach is similar, focusing overall on how Ovid uses the literary traditions of his characters throughout the *Heroides*. Bolton's observations on gender and place in the *Heroides* demonstrate how individual letters contribute to a larger concept of how space and gender are delineated consistently. Björk shows the cohesiveness of the *Heroides* while exploring how Ovid used *ethopoeia*. Fulkerson most fully develops the idea that the *Heroides* are a single, coherent narrative to argue that the heroines are in communication with each other as members of a poetic circle.

I will demonstrate that the poems of the single *Heroides* have internal consistency, and that Ovid has successfully created a distinct and coherent world. Spoth, Jolivet, Bolton, Björk, and Fulkerson each, to varying degrees, recognize the cohesiveness of the *Heroides* for their own aims. I, on the other hand, will analyze the single *Heroides* according to the Text World Theory (as detailed by Gavins), with a view to highlighting how Ovid, his audience, and their shared environment created a cohesive world in which readers could immerse themselves. Manifold layers of created scenes exist within the letters of Ovid's heroines, just as they do in any type of communication. I will show that the scenes presented throughout the individual epistles of the *Heroides* are compatible with each other, and thus work together to form a single understood reality.

Ovid carefully built all of his *Heroides* into a world with consistent rules. My paper will provide a background for those wishing to explore the letters of the *Heroides* in relation to each other. Interpreting the environment of the *Heroides* as a coherent world is challenging, since one must navigate the various scenes in the epistles, the assumptions that readers naturally make when encountering discourses, and the positions scholars wish to highlight. The Text World model of analysis thus offers a valuable way to look at the world of Ovid's heroines.

Bibliography

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