Imitation and Authenticity in Ovid: Metamorphoses 1.477 and Heroides 15
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IMITATION AND AUTHENTICITY IN OVID:
METAMORPHOSES 1.477 AND HEROIDES 15*

In a recent article, R. J. Tarrant has raised powerful arguments against the authenticity of several attested lines of Ovid's Metamorphoses. In many instances we are compelled either to agree that the lines are spurious or to blame Ovid for an infelicity. This still leaves the final choice unestablished — Ovid could be infelicitous. But sometimes evidence of imitations or reminiscences can rule out either authenticity or interpolation. Tarrant himself has produced evidence that the Epistle of Sappho (Her. 15) was composed after the Metamorphoses and Ex Ponto 2.10, both of which it imitates. I will consider first a passage where imitation supports authenticity of a suspected line, and then return to the Epistle of Sappho, where similar evidence seems opposed to authenticity.

Tarrant rejects Met. 1.477 on grounds of "diction and relation to context." His first objection, that the "isolated physical detail" of 477 ("uitta coercebat positos sine lege capillos") is out of place in a passage concerned with Daphne's devotion to the cult of virginity, he himself eliminates by noting that the uitta is a mark of Daphne's connection with Diana. He then objects that "hair arranged without order" is a "contradiction in terms." This seems to translate into a claim that Ovid could not use oxymoron. Ovid would not agree. The oxymoron is a slight one: though positos here bears the special meaning "dressed," yet, on the analogy of the use of κείμαι in Greek as the perfect passive of τίθημι, there is little difference in basic meaning between positos

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2"The Authenticity of the Letter of Sappho to Phaon (Heroides XV)," HSCP 85 (1981) 133-53. The section on borrowings is 142-47.

3Art. cit. (note 1 above) 355. Tarrant attaches scant weight to the first ground for suspicion, that the verse is omitted by εMN, since he is aware that all other verses omitted in Book 1 by this combination of codices (before correction) are indisputably genuine: 304 f., 326, 427, 698, 742.
"laid") and iacentes ("lying"). Nevertheless there is an oxymoron, but one thematically important: for in Ovid’s verse the concept of chastity is connected with the image of hair simultaneously kept in check (coercerbat, positos) and neglected (see note 7 below). Insistence that 1.477 is "out of place" or self-contradictory arises from a refusal to recognize the connections of image and thought which Ovid observes.

For positive evidence favoring authenticity, consider these passages in apparent chronological order:

Her. 4.77 positique sine arte capilli
Met. 1.476 f. aemula Phoebes;
uitta coercerbat positos sine lege capillos
Met. 2.411 ff. non erat huius . . .
positu uariare comas; ubi . . .
uitta coercuerat neglectos alba capillos . . .
miles erat Phoebes.
Ep. Sapph. 73 iacent sparsi sine lege capilli
Sen. Oed. 416 spargere effusos sine lege crines
Sen. Phaedr. 803 f. coma / nulla lege iacens.

The believer in authenticity can construct an easy stemma of influence: Her. 4.775 influencing Met. 1.477; Met. 1.476–77 influencing Met. 2.412–15 and Ep. Sapph.; and the last influencing Seneca: that is, Ovid’s description of Hippolytus in Her. 4.77, “positi sine arte capilli,” seems to have passed (with change of arte to the bolder lege) to his description in Met. 1.477 of Daphne, similarly devoted to hunting and chastity, and this passage, together with other connected words, seems to have influenced the diction positu, uitta, coercuerat, capillos, and Phoebes in his description of Callisto at Met. 2.411–15, she too presented as devoted to hunting and chastity. With change of positos to

1Note that the charge “contradiction in terms” could as easily be laid against the undisputed line Met. 2.412 (quoted below), on the ground that hair that is confined by a fillet is not completely “neglected.”

3If Ars 3.133 (non sint sine lege capilli) were composed before Met. 1, we would have to understand it as joining in the influence. But as I argue elsewhere in this journal, Ars 3 is the later, and we should take it as also composed under the influence of Met. 1.477: see “The Date of Ovid’s Ars Amatoris 3,” AJP forthcoming.

"Tarrant (note 1 above) 355 quotes both the Ep. Sapph. and Phaedr. 803 f. as evidence that the "correct verb to describe disordered hair is iacere." But sine lege (or nulla lege) is not a normal expression for disordered hair; it is a bold poetic invention, which reaches the Ep. Sapph. and Seneca only by imitation. It is a mistake to make the imitation the standard of "correct" usage. On the thematic appropriateness of positos in Met. 1.477, see above, and note 7 below.
sparsi, Met. 1.477 also influenced the description of Sappho (who was far from chaste)\(^7\) in Ep. Sapph. 73, and this verse led both to the "spargere sine lege crines" of Seneca’s Oedipus, and to the "coma nulla lege iacens" of the Phaedra.

The believer in interpolation must suppose an improbable conflation of all the “Ovidian” parallels, including Met. 2.413 and the Epistle of Sappho.\(^8\) But 2.415 miles Phoebes is undoubtedly already influenced

\(^7\)Yet the words are not inappropriately used, for we now find neither positi nor coercuerat of the other passages. With the dropping of the restraint which these words imply, so was dropped chastity. Sparsi is a thematically appropriate switch of diction.

\(^8\)To be more accurate, the believer in interpolation must suppose a conflation of at least three passages, since any other explanation leaves him either supposing an even greater improbability or agreeing with my own analysis. For all practical purposes, he must believe that the interpolator got “uitta coercbat . . . capillos” from Met. 2.413, since the resemblance is too close to be coincidence, and it would violate Occam’s razor to suppose some lost common source when the resemblance is found within a few hundred lines of the same poem. He must believe that the interpolator conflated the passage with Her. 4.77 (or some lost passage which also contained the same diction and structure) or be prepared to claim that it was mere coincidence that produced the resemblance “positi . . . sine . . . capilli” versus “positos sine . . . capillos” when the interpolator was supposedly imitating only 2.412 f., which share with the above elements only positu in one clause, and capillos in a different clause. Note that the resemblances of Met. 1.477 with Her. 4.77 are at least these: the structure of a participle posit-i/-os modifying capilli/-i/os and in turn modified by a prepositional phrase introduced by sine; and the sequence of the phonemes posit- . . . sine . . . e capill- in that order in the same hemistich. Met. 2.412 f. shares with the common elements the structure of a participle modifying capillos; but the participle is different; the lexically corresponding positu is now a noun, in a different line and clause, relating to different words; and there is no prepositional phrase and no sine. Finally, the believer in interpolation must recognize Ep. Sapph. as an influence on Met. 1.477 or believe one of three other theoretical possibilities: (1) that the authors of Met. 1.477 and Ep. Sapph. 77 independently coined the same bold locution “positos / sparsi sine lege capill-os/-i” (the structure is found in so complete a form only in these two, and lege exists in neither Her. 4.73 nor Met. 2.411-15)—a great improbability to independently create an Ovidian locution (sine lege capill-) not attested before Ovid, if the author is not Ovid; (2) that they both imitate a common source (or, if you would believe it, an ordinary locution) which shared sine lege capilli— but then there would still be a conflation with a third source; or (3) that Ep. Sapph. 73 imitates Met. 1.477—but this is my position, and it establishes a terminus ante quem for Met. 1.477 (as well as post quem for Ep. Sapph.). But even this does not relieve us of belief in a third source, since sine lege capilli is attested as an Ovidian locution in Ars 3 (see note 5 above); unless we wish to claim an improbable independent coinage, lege in Met. 1.477, in any alternative to my own explanation, must come from a third source possessing sine lege capilli.
by *Met.* 1.476 *aemula Phoebes,* and 2.412 possesses *positu,* which looks as if it arose under the influence of the supposedly not yet composed interpolated line: for 1.477's *positos* comes not from 2.412's *positu,* but from *Her.* 4's *positi,* as the surrounding words indicate.

Only the chronological arrangement which I have given presents a self-consistent picture of the relations, once it is recognized that authors repeat and modify their own combinations of words in no very different way from the manner of imitation of one author by another. What I have done is to apply to the relations among literary texts the same system of argument which might be used in tracing the relations of mss. or their readings: stated in general terms, if B resembles closely A, and C resembles closely B, sharing with B characteristic differences from A, but sharing with A nothing that is not in B, and lacking at least one characteristic element which B and A share, then, if B descends from A, C must descend from B. As applied to literary passages, the system

9I assume (what much evidence has previously convinced me) that Ovid composed the poem in generally the order in which we find it, and that an author is always influenced by his own recent compositions, especially in handling the same themes. The latter arises from the way in which the human brain works and explains why all authors naturally repeat themselves. But here we have besides good evidence for belief in the priority of 1.476's *Phoebes,* and its influence on 2.415: see the Appendix.

10I do not mean to claim that the expression was created under the influence of 1.477, but that the occurrence of *positos* triggered the recollection of the expression at this point.

11He who would believe that 2.412 *positu* is the source must accept a great improbability: that an interpolator knowing only *positu* (a noun modifying *variare comas*), and the structure "neglectos . . . capillos" in the following line, independently coined a combination "positos sine . . . capillos" essentially identical with *Her.* 4.77 "positi . . . sine . . . capilli" (see note 8 above). The same improbability attends on anyone who would derive the expression from any of the other passages, or from any conflation of the other passages excluding *Her.* 4.77. If he would claim that *Met.* 1.477's "positos sine . . . capillos" comes not from *Her.* 4.77 but from some lost passage which shared these features, then he would not only violate Occam's razor, but he would concede my claim that *Met.* 2.412 is not the source of *positos* in 1.477.


13It is often claimed that this system may be used only in closed (uncontaminated) traditions. This is not true. It works equally well in contaminated traditions provided that one talks not of relations of mss. (which would require the negative argument
added, that there is nothing in the mss. which indicates a different relationship) but of
relations of readings. For instance in Martianus Capella 643 (p. 224 in the edition of J.
Willis [Leipzig 1983]), we find the following variants and errors (the correct reading
cited first): Prote Mese quae Plin. prote mesque ABD prote mes B² protemesto
M prima temesto D²M²G prima temisto (temisto prima B³) cett. We can say, since
the testimony of Pliny establishes the original reading, that the error of cett. is based on
the error of D²M²G, that this error in turn is based on the error of M (note that M² is the
corrector of M), that M's error is based on either B²'s or ABD's, and that ABD's reading
is archetypal. In saying this we do have to beware of the possibility of contamination of
readings (e.g., prima temesto could be a direct conjecture for prote mesque, and such a
conjecture could have provoked various conflations in the other mss.); but the principle
remains true that if ABD's reading comes from Pliny's (and not from any of the other
readings) the others come from ABD's, if the reading of G and company descends from
ABD's (and not from cett.'s) the reading of cett. comes from it (and so on for the other
readings in a line, with each group of three chosen for comparison becoming anew A, B,
and C). What we cannot say from this passage alone is that the mss. are so related, since
that would require examination of all readings to find consistent testimony, eliminating
the possibility of intermediaries which might lead to different conclusions; most of the
mss. are in fact contaminated. As I use the system of argument to determine the date of a
single line or short passage, it is analogous to tracing the relations of readings of mss.
Used to determine the date of whole poems, it is closer to tracing the relations of mss.,
since now a wide range of evidence must be examined. Note that there is no claim that
the poet operates in the same way as a scribe. What makes the method adaptable to
poetic reminiscence (or, for that matter, to tracing the genealogy of words and languages
in linguistics) is the shared characteristic that the more intermediaries intervene and
make changes in an imitated or reproduced text, the more differences from the original
tend to be introduced (barring clever intervention, such as conjectural emendation). For
the quantity of resemblance required for the system to operate with a high degree of
probability (usually three shared words in a short space, or equivalent distinctive items),
cf. art. cit. (note 5 above) n. 4. The quantity required varies with the commonness of the
words, but they must be in total distinctive; that is, we must find a combination of ele-
ments which links two passages and only two passages of extant literature (other than
provable copies of one or the other), and which is unlikely to have occurred by chance in
lost literature. I describe the requirements for applying the system to a Latin text and
particularly to a text of Latin poetry. A much greater quantity would be required for a
synthetic language such as English, with a larger history of usage known to its users, and
with different canons of originality (a Latin poet took pride in his felicitous use or adap-
tation of a familiar verse and regarded such adaptation as a mark of originality). Other
characteristics of Latin poetry which aid the workability of the system include composi-
tion in meters not native to Latin, with a restricted diction, suited in tone to the genre
and shaped to the needs of the verse, and therefore tending to be copied once felicitously
introduced (for instance, the combination huc ades, quoted below, was never used in
prose, but was coined to permit a desirable dactyl at the beginning of the hexameter;
one introduced by a poet who cultivated initial dactyls in the verse, it tended to be
imitated by poets who shared the same need); known familiarity of the poets with the
works or verses in question (I apply the argument only to texts already linked in some
way, as by shared genre, authorship, proximity in the same work, composition by mem-
ers of the same literary circle, or such); a limited number of lost potential models (more
establishes that, if passage A is earlier than passage B, passage C descends from a passage which contained all the elements which C shares with passage B, plus the elements which B shares with A. In the current case, it establishes first that, if Heroides 4.77 was composed before Met. 1.476 and 477, C (Met. 2.412-15) descends from a passage which shares the elements of diction Phoebes, uitta, coerc-, posit-, sine, capill-, a number of elements of structure (including a perfect passive participle modifying capillos, the latter the object of the verb coerc-, with posit- modifying capillos), and proximity in the textual tradition of the same poem. Even if one wanted to violate Occam’s razor and suppose the existence of some lost common source of B and C which shared all six items of diction and the items of structure, the last shared element, proximity in the textual tradition of the same poem, prevents. The system operates by the laws of probability (not metaphysical certainty). Protection against contamination (conflation) is built into its operation provided that there are enough elements of agreement among the passages within a short space (usually three shared distinctive elements suffice). The protection consists in the improbability of a type of contamination which would upset its operations and in the principle of economy. Most linguistic expression can be thought of as operating by repetition, variation, and conflation (that is, the recombining of learned elements of expression): if language operated through pure creation it would be comprehensible only to its creator. Most of us merely repeat and recombine learned locutions with little variation within the locution, but poets may be allowed a greater amount of creativity consisting in recombining learned elements. But those elements may be letters, words, phrases, or almost any unit consistent with the poet’s own standards of creativity. For conflation to vitiate the operations of the

of Ovid survives than has perished, especially in the relevant genres; probably more verses of his usual Latin models survive than have perished, if one counts verses imitated rather than names of poets; the quantity of lost Greek models is unimportant when the borrowing of Latin diction is at issue). It is of no importance for the argument whether an imitation or reminiscence is conscious or unconscious, and not essential that it be direct (rather than through one or more intermediaries): when I use terms such as “descends from,” “owed to,” and “indebted to,” I am trying to remain noncommittal on the deliberateness or directness of the debt.

It is not necessary to establish that Met. 1.477 was composed in imitation of Heroides 4.77 for the argument to work. The priority of Heroides 4.77 to Met. 1.477 establishes that the expression (or other combination of elements) shared existed before Met. 1.477, and that consequently the expression (or other combination of elements) existed before both Met. 1.477 and the combination of elements which it shares with C.
system as I have employed it (limited to passages sharing at least three distinctive items), the conflater must have not only conflated, but chosen for conflation the right passages, from a limited body of literature, choosing those items whose conflation would create an impression of linear descent, and omitting anything which would undermine

That is, not simply words or phrases in his memory, but whole literary passages, with at least three items from each passage involved in the conflation; for a conflation of three passages, each passage must be correctly selected as earlier or later than the pretended date of the newly created passage (if there was an equal chance in each instance of selecting an earlier or later passage, the chance of getting all three passages right is one in eight); and each passage must contain the right set of words to make it possible for a conflation to give a misleading date (since A and C will both share diction with each other, the system defines this condition of overlapping diction as a necessary characteristic of the passages selected for conflation, if B arose through conflation of A and C); ideally the later passages should also lack evidence that they obtained the shared locutions from elsewhere (e.g., there should be no known closer antecedent to “coercuerat neglectos capillos” if it is to be claimed to have been created under the influence of “coercebant positos sine lege capillos”; this criterion requires a little discretion in its application, because it is possible for influence to proceed by triggering recollection of an already existing locution; normally conflation in C does not mislead unless it has been diabolically selected). Every choice made, when other options are possible, contributes by multiplication to the total improbability when all choices have to be made correctly. If, in a deck of 52 cards, one out of four is a spade, and one out of thirteen is a jack, the chance of drawing a spade on random selection from a full deck is one out of four, of drawing a jack one out of thirteen, but of drawing the jack of spades (if the deck is fair) one out of 52 ($1/4 \times 1/13$). If three choices have to be made, each of which has one chance in eight of being made correctly, the chance of making all choices correctly is one in 512 ($1/8 \times 1/8 \times 1/8$). When a large number of choices have to be made correctly for a given result to occur, the odds quickly become astronomical against all coming out correctly by chance, even when the individual results are not very improbable.

As applied to Met. 1.477 the selection would have to be from Latin dactylic poetry (since the locutions are shaped to the Latin hexameter) and from the amatory tradition (to which the diction capilli belongs—epic prefers coma or crines, and when it adopts capilli it is probably reflecting the influence of the amatory tradition). It may not seem unlikely that an interpolator would imitate Ovid from Ovid, but other options were open (e.g., non-amatory Vergil, non-dactylic Catullus or Horace), and that choice had to be made for each of three passages (in a triple conflation). Every choice contributes by multiplication to the total improbability (see the preceding note), unless one choice implies the other.

E.g., if Met. 1.477 had sparsos from Ep. Sapph. 73, instead of positos, we would lack the third distinctive item shared with Her. 4.77 against Ep. Sapph. 73; the evidence would similarly disappear if its author had chosen (2.412) comas or (2.413) neglectos instead of their equivalents in 1.477.
that theory, all in violation of the principle of economy, and all to meet a test whose application he could not foresee. Any combination of choices quickly becomes prohibitively improbable when all choices have to be satisfied in a specific way (see note 15 above).

What then does happen when conflation occurs? The normal result is not that the system misleads, but that it cannot be applied, at least not without modification. Let me illustrate:

*Met.* 1.194 quos quoniam coeli nondum dignamur honore
*Met.* 3.521 quem nisi templorum fueris dignatus honore
*Met.* 8.569 quosque alios parili fuerat dignatus honore

All three share a relative pronoun at the beginning, and "digna . . . honore" at the end. The first two share the same structure in the first hemistich (relative, conjunction, genitive modifying *honore*), the latter two the same structure in the second hemistich ("fuer-is/-at dignatus honore" versus "nondum dignamur honore"). But C shares one item with A not in B, the plural *quos* versus *quem*. It is possible to pass the resemblance off as coincidence (see note 20 below) or a necessary result of the context, but most likely Ovid's memory contained both 1.194 and 3.521, and both have affected him. The result is not that the system leads to a false ordering of these lines, but that the system cannot be applied without modification (the differences shared by AB and BC are major; those by AC minor and explainable by the context; therefore the weight of the evidence favors C's derivation from B if A is earlier than B), and so with less security. But now ignore either 3.521 or 1.194, or imagine that either had perished, and compare with 8.569 *Pont.* 4.12.3 "ast ego non alium prius hoc dignarer honore." The relation between the last two passages is tenuous (so chosen, since I am using an

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18E.g., since Seneca seems to be indebted to *Ep. Sapph.*, adoption of *effusos, crines*, or some word found in a surrounding line of *Oed. 416* would have interfered with drawing a simple stemma of descent.

19In *Met.* 1.477, although *uitta coercebat* and *lege* would have single sources, *posit-* would have two, and *capillos* three. The principle of economy is not absolute, but, other things being equal, uneconomical explanations are less likely.

20Since there are only two numbers, there is a 50% chance of random variation's recreating in C the number of A: therefore, in general, agreement in number between A and C does not by itself constitute a sufficiently distinctive agreement to argue that C is closer to A than to B.

21Note also that with the removal of 3.521, the relation of 8.569 to 1.194 (which, I have argued, both directly and indirectly influences 8.569) becomes less well attested.
argument *a minore*): though there are three shared elements of diction, the structure is not close except for the construction of *dignor honore*, and this is common and attested even in prose. Ovid is probably not the first to combine *alium dignor honore* (though there is no other extant attestation). Yet there is one additional element shared (if this is conceded) by the passages in question: combination in a single line of verse composed by Ovid. This last cannot reasonably have been shared by any other example of the collocation, and permits invoking the system to say that if either *Met.* 1.194 or 3.521 is earlier than 8.569, then *Pont.* 4.12.3 was composed later than *Met.* 8.569. At worst it can be claimed that the relation of *Pont.* 4.12.3 to *Met.* 8.569 is too tenuous to permit invoking the argument (and yet, even in tenuous cases, it can be shown to work an overwhelming percentage of the time); what cannot be said is that the argument would mislead into the belief that a later line was composed earlier than *Met.* 8.569 (e.g., a line “*quos nisi templorum fueris dignatus honore*” would look as if it were composed between *Met.* 1.194 and 8.569): since there are an almost unlimited number of ways in which words can be shaped or conflated, it is improbable that they would be shaped or conflated in one of the limited number of ways which would mislead.

This explains why the system works. But what matters is whether it works. If it did not, it would be easily refuted: apply it to a large number of passages selected only on the basis that their chronological relationship is beyond dispute and that the conditions of the system are met, and determine whether it would lead to a false conclusion about relationships. Having myself performed the test, and having found the system reliable when the chronology is assured, I see no reason to doubt the conclusions when the results are, for disputable reasons, subject to challenge.

The *Epistle of Sappho* on similar grounds seems to have been composed before Seneca’s tragedies. Its *terminus post quem* is *Pont.* 2.10 (which is imitated in the beginning of *Ep. Sapph*).

Tarrant’s arguments for the priority of *Pont.* 2.10 are two: that the beginning of *Ep. Sapph.* is less successfully integrated with its con-

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This is the normal result of the loss of an intermediary: the apparent relationship does not change, but it becomes harder to perceive, because descendants of the intermediary share fewer items with the ultimate source (the whole system would not work if this were not so). Note too that it does not matter for tracing descendants of 8.569 that it arose through conflation: all that is needed is to establish one related passage that is earlier than B.
text than the beginning of Pont. 2.10, and that the passive form aspecta est (Ep. Sapph. 1) is grounds for suspicion. I agree that the version in Ep. Sapph. is inferior to the beginning of Pont. 2.10 as poetry, though what bothers me most is the blunting of the pathos of ecquid (1), not only by the passive est cognita (2), but by the distracting protinus (2). In Pont. 2.10.1–2 we find “Ecquid ab impressae cognoscis imagine cerae / haec tibi Nasonem scribere uerba, Macer?” (“Do you recognize at all from the seal in the wax that Naso writes you these words, Macer?”), a pathetic and affecting line. In Ep. Sapph. 1–2 we have “Ecquid, ut aspecta est studiose litterae dextrae, / protinus est ocular cognita nostra tuis,” where not only the switch to passive reduces the personal touch, and so the emotional effect, but ecquid is prevented from having its pathetic meaning “at all” by the switch of the sentence’s point to protinus: “Was our writing recognized immediately at all” is an ineffective combination. Yet since both Ep. Sapph. and Pont. 2.10 display variations on what had become a conventional epistolary beginning with ecquid, the fact that Pont. 2.10 is a more successful effort is not absolute proof of its priority: neither passage has absolute priority in use of the epistolary beginning. That honor, among extant poetry, belongs to Propertius 1.11.22 Though Ovid had started other poems with ecquid (Trist. 5.2, Pont. 1.6), the main influence on Pont. 2.10 seems to be Prop. 1.11.1–8, with which it shares five words or concepts:

Ecquid te mediis cessantem Cynthia Bais . . .
nostri cura subit memores a ducere noctes?
ecquis in extremo restat amore locus?
an te nescioquis simulatis ignibus hostis
sustulit e nostris Cynthia carminibus?

This led to Pont. 2.10.1–8:

Ecquid ab impressae cognoscis imagine cerae
haec tibi Nasone scribere uerba, Macer?
auctorisque sui si non est anulus index,
cognitane est nostra littera facta manu?
an tibi notitiam mora temporis eripit horum,
nec repetunt oculi signa uetusta tui?
sis licet oblitus pariter gemmaeque manusque,
exciderit tantum ne tibi cura mei.

22See D. Schaller and E. Koensgen, Initia carminum Latinorum saeculo undecimo antiquiorum. Bibliographisches Repertorium fuer die Lateinische Dichtung der Antike und des fruehen Mittelalters (Goettingen 1977) 196. I have listed all occurrences of the beginning except Martial 7.6, which is irrelevant to our concerns.
Although the correspondence of the structure “ecquid . . . an” by itself could be coincidence, 
osstri cura of Propertius has prompted 
cura mei
of Ovid; and, though the enemy of Prop. 1.11.7 is not in Ovid a personal enemy, but time, Propertius’ 
sustulit
and Ovid’s 
eripit
carry essentially the same function. With allowance for the change of circumstance, the concerns of the two openings are very nearly the same.

_Ep. Sapph._ 1-4 resembles closely _Pont_. 2.10.1-6, but displays no resemblance to Prop. 1.11.1-8 not shared with _Pont_. 2.10. Its inspiration therefore was _Pont_. 2.10:23

_Ecquid, ut aspecta est studiosae littera dextrae,
protinus est oculis cognita nostra tuis,
an, nisi legisses auctoris nomina Sapphus,
hoc breue nescires unde mouetur opus?_

“Ecquid . . . an” is shared by all three poems, but _littera, dextrae / manu, oculis . . . tuis / oculi . . . tui, cognita, nostra, auctoris_ link _Ep. Sapph._ with _Pont_. 2.10. The extant _Ep. Sapph._ therefore was composed after _Pont_. 2.10 but before Seneca’s tragedies.24

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23There is perhaps also influence of _Pont_. 1.6.1 _Ecquid ut audisti._
24Tarrant (art. cit. note 2 above, p. 134) believed (on grounds of diction and meter) that the poem is “probably of Neronian or Flavian date.” The latter can now be excluded. Although many features of the poem do not find parallels before the Neronian age, this does not require us to believe the poem Neronian. There is not much poetry extant for the period between the death of Ovid and the Neronian age in which we could expect to find parallels. In fact the main products of that intervening period seem to be forgeries of Augustan poetry, including much if not all of the _Appendix Vergiliana_, the Helen Episode (and probably other interpolated lines in Vergil, such as the spurious first four lines), and, to pass over the spurious works attributed to Ovid, most if not all of the third book of the Tibullan corpus. The prime period for forgery or misattribution is the generation immediately following an author’s death, when he is unable to expose the forgery, but when a claim to discover an author’s lost work is still credible. Of course the _Ep. Sapph._ need not be a forgery, but may be an innocent attempt to supply a missing poem as the author believed Ovid would have done it, just as we hear that many poets tried to supply the half-lines in Vergil. Nevertheless it is in the period shortly after Ovid’s demise that poets seem to have felt compelled to compose their amatory verse only under the _persona_ of an Augustan poet: so we have Lygdamus and much else in Tibullus 3 written ostensibly in the circle of Messalla Corvinus, not necessarily because the poets maliciously wanted to deceive, but because that may have seemed the only safe way to compose amatory elegy (that and scribbling anonymously on the walls of such as Herculaneum and Pompeii). For the period between Ovid and Nero, pseudo-Augustan poetry is what poets did best.
The poems of Pont. 2 seem to belong to late 12 or early 13.\(^{25}\) Corroboration of the *terminus* may be sought from a slightly earlier poem, bearing the apparent date of spring of 12:

*Verg. E.* 9.43 **huc ades; insani feriant sine litora fluctus**

*Am.* 1.6.53 *si satis es raptae, Borea, memor Orithyiae*

**huc ades et surdas flamine tunde foris.**

1.6.59 *Nox et Amor unimumque nihil moderabile suadent illa pudore uacat, Liber Amorique metu*

*Trist.* 5.3.35 *fer bone Liber opem. . . .*

43 **huc ades et casus releues pulcherrime nostros unum de numero me memor esse tuo.**

*Ep. Sapph.* 95 **huc ades, inque sinus formose relabere nostros: non ut ames uro, uerum ut amere sinas.**

I have put shared diction or phonemes in boldface, and merely shared concepts or structure in Roman type. *Ep. Sapph.* 96 is not part of the resemblances which we are here exploring, but is quoted because it has already been proven to be of (at best) late date.\(^{26}\) By tracing imitation we can establish the lateness of the hexameter as well.

*Am.* 1.6.54 owes to Vergil’s *Eclogues* 9.43 the combination of **huc ades** with the shared concepts **feriant / tunde** and the onomatopoetic repetition of *s*- and *f*- sounds.\(^{27}\) Its couplet has in turn influenced *Trist.* 5.3.43 f.,\(^{28}\) which shared **huc ades et** and **memor**; the clinching element

\(^{25}\)See Sir Ronald Syme, *History in Ovid* (Oxford 1978) 39–42. Pont. 2.1 refers to the triumph of Tiberius in October 23 of 12, and if we allow time for the news (2.1.49 *rumor*) to reach Tomis, it could hardly have been composed before early 13. All the poems in the Ex Ponto seem to postdate the last date in the Tristia (spring of 12; see below).

\(^{26}\)Tarrant (note 2 above) 137 f. (“the elision in *uерum ut* has no Ovidian parallel”), and many scholars before him. Those who try to justify the violations of Ovid’s metrical practice in suspected poems of the *Heroides* argue that Ovid became freer in his technique late in his career.

\(^{27}\)I leave out of account here Tibullus 1.7.49 **huc ades et**, which may also be related to *Am.* 1.6.53, because exterior criteria for their relative dates are insecure. To judge by *Trist.* 4.10.57–60, Ovid may have first recited *amores* when he was seventeen or eighteen. The *terminus post quem* of Tibullus 1.7 is fall of 27 (when Ovid was sixteen and a half), the date of the triumph of Messala mentioned in 1.7.5. For the purposes of our argument, it does not matter whether *Am.* 1.6.54 imitates *E.* 9.43; it only matters that it inherited elements which it shares with *Trist.* 5.43 from some source other than *Trist.* 5.43. The conclusion which follows, that *Trist.* 5.43 is later than *Am.* 1.6.54, is not one which anyone would be tempted to dispute: I am simply exemplifying that application of the system of argument does not lead to a false conclusion.

\(^{28}\)I omit as irrelevant to our concern here one other imitation of *Am.* 1.6.54, *Am.* 3.2.46, “**huc ades et** meus hic fac, dea, uincat amor.”
is that both poems are concerned with Liber. *Am. 1.6* is a para-
clausithyron by a drunken lover (so *Liber* in 60; cf. *Liber* in *Trist.
5.3.35*). *Trist.* 5.3 celebrates apparently the Liberalia (5.3.1 f., "Illa
dies hanc est, qua te celebrare poetae, / si modo non fallunt tempora,
Bacche, solent"). Therefore in both poems the poet is (or is supposed to
be) garlanded (*Am. 1.6.37 f.*, "ergo Amor et modicum circa mea tem-
pora uinum / mecumst et madidis lapsa corona comis"); *Trist.* 5.3.3 f.,
"festaque odoratis innectunt tempora sertis / et dicunt laudes ad tua
uina tuas"). In both a god is asked to intercede: Boreas with the door,
Bacchus with Augustus (45 f., "sunt dis inter se commercia; flectere
tempta / Caesareum numen numine, Bacche, tuo"). On any basis,
*Trist.* 5.3 is very witty; if recognition of the resemblances to *Am.* 1.6
reduces Augustus, if obdurate, to the level of an obdurate door in a
paraclausithyron, that too, I believe, is part of Ovid's wit. But that is
another question. For our current purposes it suffices that the general
resemblances of the two poems establish that the similarities of diction
of *Am.* 1.6.53 f. and *Trist.* 5.3.43 f. do reflect a close genetic connec-

tion. Therefore when *Ep. Sapph.* 95 corresponds with *Trist.* 5.3.43 in
more than half of the line, sharing the diction or phonemes "Huc
ades . . . re- . . . nostros," and the concepts and structure "et / -que"
and "pulcherrime / formose," its main debt is to that line.29 *Trist.* 5.3
therefore joins in establishing a *terminus post quem* for *Ep. Sapph.*
With a probable date for *Trist.* 5.3 of spring of 12 A.D.,30 and for *Pont.*

29Tarrant (art. cit. note 2 above) 145 argued the lateness of 95 on the claim that it
is a conflation of *Met.* 7.813, "meque iuues intresque *sinus*, gratissima, *nostros* and
*Her*, 10.149, "flecte ratem, Theseu, uersoque *relabere* uento." We are not in contradic-
tion, though by my standard, which requires normally at least three shared distinctive
elements to prove a genetic relationship, he has not established his case for indebtedness
to those sources. So *Ep. Sapph.* 95 *inque sinus* is not as close to *Met.* 7.813 *intresque sinus*
as it is to *Met.* 4.596 *inque sinus* (therefore its resemblance to *intresque sinus* is not dis-
tinctive). I suppose that for the words *sinus* and *relabere*, which are not owed to *Trist.*
5.3, we may have a conflation of several passages. Tarrant's concern was with the play on
*sinus* and the use of *relabere* without mention of a conveyance. But here his case is weak.
There does seem to be a play on *sinus* in *Ars* 3.148, "sustineat similes fluctibus illa *sinus*";
and once there is a play, there is motivation for omission of a word for conveyance. Since
*relabere* occurs in only two other Ovidian passages with comparable meaning, there are
insufficient grounds to say that he would have included a word for conveyance.

30The *Liberalia* was celebrated on March 17: see *Fasti* 3.713 ff. For the year, see
*Syme* (note 25 above) 38-40: *Tristia* 4 records the winter of 10/11 (6.19) and the spring
or summer of 11 (7.1); *Tristia* 5 was published later than 4 (5.1.1 f.); 5.10.1 records the
passing of the winter of 11/12; *Pont.* 1–3 seem to start where the *Tristia* leaves off, and
*Pont.* 1.8.27 f. record the autumn of 12. Therefore the spring of *Trist.* 5.3 would be the
spring of 12.
2.10 of late 12, *Ep. Sapph.* could not predate the end of 12; in practice it would be unlikely to predate the end of 13, when the full collection of *Epistulae Ex Ponto* was published.

Tarrant (143) identified another imitation of the *Tristia* in *Ep. Sapph.* 79 f. His arguments ("The impression of fickleness . . . is at variance with the portrait of wounded constancy required by the context," therefore the passage is an imitation of *Trist.* 4.10.65 and *Am.* 2.4.10, "which between them contain all the elements of the couplet"; Ovid "does not elsewhere use *uiolabile*, and does not use *uiolo* in this metaphorical sense"; *leuibus telis* almost requires allusion to *Trist.* 4.10.65 to be understood) taken together are powerful, but individually are liable to challenge. A skeptic might argue that the poet intended the inconsistency in order to portray Sappho in love as irrational (the words after all are in her voice, not the poet's); that we cannot restrict the poet's coinage of new metaphors (though I myself believe that if the poet had coined it early in his career he would probably have repeated it later); and that though *leuibus telis* may suppose an allusion, we must eliminate the possibility that it is to a common source of *Ep. Sapph.* and *Trist.* 4.10.65. But we can confirm Tarrant's conclusion by tracing the genealogy of the lines in question.

*Met.* 12.767 *non agreste tamen nec inexpugnabile Amori pectus*. . . .

*Trist.* 4.10.65 *molle Cupidineis nec inexpugnabile telis cor mihi, quodque leuis causa moueret erat.*

The later verse shares with the earlier the diction *nec inexpugnabile* and the concepts *Amori = Cupidineis telis* and *pectus = cor*, all in the same structure: therefore when *Ep. Sapph.* 79

*molle meum leuibusque est cor uiolabile telis*

shares with *Trist.* 4.10.65 the phonemes and concepts marked with boldface and Roman type (while sharing nothing with *Met.* 12.767 not shared with *Trist.* 4.10.65, and sharing much with the latter which is not in the former), it is because it derived these elements from that source. Again:

*Am.* 1.3.2 *aut amet aut faciat cur ego semper amem*

*Am.* 2.4.10 *centum sunt causae cur ego semper amem*

*Ep. Sapph.* 80 *et semper causa est cur ego semper amem*

shows a progression from *Am.* 1.3.2 to 2.4.10 to *Ep. Sapph.* 80. Here we lack an element of diction shared by A and B but not C. Nevertheless if
we take it as improbable that the *Ep. Sapph.* was composed between Books 1 and 2 of the *Amores*, we can use the shared distinction of A and B here, that they both belong to the same work, as the needed common element shared by A and B versus C, and argue that if *Am.* 1.3.2 is earlier than 2.4.10, it the latter is earlier than *Ep. Sapph.* 80.

In any argument from probability, quantity is important. As I have explained above (note 15) improbabilities grow by multiplication. Just as Tarrant’s argument on the lateness of the above couplet is strengthened by the multiplied probability of his separate arguments, so the large probability inherent in his total argument must be multiplied by the large probability inherent in mine to produce a degree of probability which by now is astronomical. When we add the negative argument that not a single line of the poem, when examined either by Tarrant’s method or by mine, gives evidence of earliness (and if I could find such evidence I would as cheerfully report it, and argue that the poem is a late revision of an early work), the combined probability that the poem is a late composition is overwhelming. Further, the unanimity of internal evidence indicates that the total poem is late. By tracing the genealogy of imitations, I have found lines 1–4, 73, 79, 80, 95 f. to be late. Arguing from different bases, Tarrant concluded the relative lateness of all but one of these (73, whose *sparsi sine lege* he believes a better use of diction than *Met.* 1.477’s *positos sine lege*; I have argued above that both are appropriate to their respective contexts). Because of deviation from Ovid’s practice in use of Ovid’s diction, he argued as well the lateness (indeed spuriousness) of 13, 14, 21, 26, 33, 34, 61–70, 83, 95.

31 This has not been proven, but, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, it has an inherently greater probability than the reverse. In fact we have cited above (note 28) evidence that *Am.* 3.2.46 is later than 1.6.54, and in a number of other poems the books of the *Amores* seem to follow a chronological sequence. The issue of the second edition of the *Amores* complicates all discussion, but *Am.* has not been suspected of being a later insertion. Since the lateness of the hexameter in *Ep. Sapph.* has already been shown, the burden of evidence borne by this issue is slight. What is most important is that the evidence of the pentameter does not conflict.

32 I mean the argument (owed to Axelson) that, of related uses of the same diction, the one that is less well integrated with its context or the less appropriate is the later. This argument can be used to detect early passages as well as late ones. His argument that some lines violate Ovid’s metrical practice is not so ambivalent: it is hard to prove a line early by metrical practice.

33 Some of these lines are only shown to be later than the *Amores* or other *Heroides* (and the system which I use could add to that list): but, though these by themselves do not establish composition after Ovid’s relegation, the consistent lack of evidence of earliness does so indicate.
99, 111-24, 134, 146, 155, 156, 157, 182, 193, 194, and 208. Fifty-one out of 220 lines show in varying degrees evidence of lateness; not a single line shows internal evidence of earliness. If any lines of the poem were early, where are they?

This last point is crucial. The main reason for belief in the poem's authenticity is that two verses of the *Amores* (2.18.26 and 34) contain references to such a work among the *Heroides*, not only such a poem composed by Ovid, but a reply quickly (*cito*) made to it and other poems by Sabinus. The verses clearly claim a Letter of Sappho as a work of Ovid's youth,\(^34\) while the poem which we possess seems, for the reasons given by Tarrant and by myself, a product of a substantially later period. The quantity and unanimity of evidence pointing in this direction, with no internal evidence pointing to earliness, does not even permit us to argue that the extant poem is a revision of an earlier work (unlikely though such activity with amatory themes would be during Ovid's exile).\(^35\) The extant poem then cannot be Ovid's.

Tarrant's solution was to brand as interpolations the references in *Amores* 2.18. But it seems hardly likely that an interpolator would center on this one, of all the poems in the corpus of the *Heroides* not specifically mentioned in *Amores* 2.18, and would not merely interpolate a reference to it, and to a response by Sabinus, but would remove two pentameters (26 and 34) referring to a genuine poem of Ovid, and a genuine reply by Sabinus. The only one with a motive for such interpolation would be the author of the extant *Ep. Sapph*. But how would such a forger be in a position to control the textual transmission of Ovid's *Amores*? And for the interpolation in the *Amores* to be credible in antiquity, it would be necessary to forge not only a Letter of Sappho in the style of Ovid, but a reply to Sappho in the style of Sabinus. Nor can I believe Tarrant's apparent suggestion (*HSCP* 151 f.) that the pentameters referring to the Letter of Sappho drove out pentameters referring to the Letter of Briseis to Achilles (*Her.* 3). Though this letter is undoubtedly genuine, Ovid had good reason based on effective rhetoric to omit mention of the poem. *Am.* 2.18 begins, "Carmen ad iratum dum tu perducis Achillen / primaque iuratis induis arma uiris, / nos, Macer, ignaua Veneris cessamus in umbra, / et tener ausuros grandia

\(^{34}\)Even the second edition of the *Amores* antedates *Ars* 3 (which mentions it; see art. cit. (note 5 above) note 1, in an upcoming issue of this journal), and that book can hardly postdate Ovid's relegation: *Ars* 3 is attested in *Trist.* 1.111-16 as composed before the relegation.

\(^{35}\)It would violate the rhetorical posture of his letters from exile.
frangit Amor.” Achilles is the symbol of epic themes, contrasted with the amatory themes of the _Heroides_. Lest the symbols get confused, Ovid has avoided mention of Achilles in an amatory context. Tarrant also seems to forget or ignore the main reason why Heinsius placed the _Ep. Sapph._ (transmitted separately in our earliest mss.) at the end of the single poems of the _Heroides_: the pentameters referring to it are the last in the series for both Ovid’s poems and Sabinus’ replies, as references to _Her._ 1 are first in both lists. Whatever poem is referred to in the pentameters in question should, if not end the collection, at least follow in order the other poems mentioned. Therefore I think it more likely that, in the general suppression of Ovid’s poetry that followed his exile, a genuine Letter of Sappho became lost, and a poet of the next generation, using the clues of _Amores_ 2.18, and probably also the reply by Sabinus (if that was still extant), supplied the lack by a composition after the manner of Ovid.

Appendix:

Phoebe the Huntress

Daphne and Callisto are the first two heroines in the poem to choose a life of chastity; for both (described at the moment of attracting the amorous attention of a god) this is expressed as devotion to Diana, in both called Phoebe (there are six references to Phoebe in the poem, versus 25 to Diana), in both in the genitive case (the first two occurrences of _Phoebes_ in the poem; the only other occurrence is at 12.36, in a much different context; elsewhere in Ovid it is found only in _Fasti_ 5.306; by comparison, _Phoebes_ never occurs in Vergil’s works, a body of poetry slightly larger than the _Metamorphoses_). In view of the proximity of the occurrences, since 1.476 is indisputably genuine, 2.415 must have arisen under its influence—unless, that is, someone would argue that 1.476 is later than 2.415; but then he would have to deal with my other arguments for order of composition.

In fact, _Met._ 1.476 seems to mark the first occurrence of the form _Phoebes_ referring to Diana in extant literature. The earliest attestation of _Phoebe_ meaning Diana is in Latin poetry; for Hesiod and other Greek poets, Phoebe was a different goddess. The name does not occur at all in Catullus, though his poem 34 is a hymn to Diana which addresses her by many other names: Diana, Latonia, Lucina, Trivia, Luna. It is lacking in Ennius, Lucretius, Tibullus, Horace (who uses
Diana, Delia, Genitalis, Ilithya, Lucina, Noctiluca), while in Propertius (1.2.15), as in Her. 8.77 and Ars 1.679, Phoebe is only the daughter of Leucippus, and the genitive is not found. In Vergil, Phoebe occurs twice (G. 1.431 and Aen. 10.216), both times as the moon, an etymologically appropriate aspect for that eponym; in the story of Camilla (similar in her devotion to Diana, hunting, and chastity) Vergil uses only Diana and Latonia. The Ovidian corpus (including spuria) has 17 occurrences of the name, most of them (as Met. 1.11) referring to the moon. Since I take Her. 20 (19) to be late, if not spurious, the earliest reference to Diana the huntress under the eponym Phoebe seems to be Amores 3.2.51, "auguribus Phoebus adsit, Phoebe uenantibus adsit": here too the use is appropriate, playing on her status as sister of Phoebus. The next occurrence is Met. 1.476; here again, there is appropriateness in the use: devotion to Phoebe balances rejection of Phoebus (1.452, 463). In the next book comes the third attested occurrence of Phoebe the huntress, 2.415, and the first "inappropriate" use. For Phoebe is now simply variatio for Diana; Callisto is pursued by Jupiter, and Diana’s aspect as neither moon nor sister of Phoebus is evoked (in sequence the use is not really inappropriate, because the concepts of hunting and chastity now inhere in the eponym as a result of the reader’s experience of 1.476; but that requires recognition of the priority of 1.476). Since Phoebe up to now has rarely occurred in literature with reference to Diana, and these two occurrences mark two of the first three references to Diana as huntress, and the very first two occurrences of the form Phoebes, and they are there combined within a short space in the same poem, in stories of similar theme, for similar functions, it would push the laws of probability to the limits if there were not a genetic connection between the two. By the principle that of two related passages the one in which shared diction is used with less appropriateness is the imitation, Met. 2.415 is the imitation, and later.

The next occurrence in Ovid of Phoebe seems to be Fasti 2.41, also in the story of Callisto. The passage shares much common diction with Met. 2.409 ff., though the events that such shared diction describes are generally very different (and so the shared diction is not simply the inevitable way to describe the same events). Compare Fasti 2.163–65, "mi/le feras Phoebe siluis uenata redibat / aut plus aut medium sole tenente diem; ut tetigit lucum" with Met. 2.415, "miles Phoebes," 432 "uenata . . . silua," 409 "redit," 417 "medio . . . sol . . . cum subit illa nemus" (note that the form uenata occurs in Ovid only in these two passages). Compare also Fasti 2.170, "hanc pudet, et tardae dat mala
signa morae,” with Met. 2.450, “sed silet et laesi dat signa rubore pudoris.” There are other resemblances, but these suffice to show that the two passages concerning Callisto are closely related, while the shared “inappropriate” use of Phoebe brands the version in Fasti 2 as the later of the two.36 This passage in turn probably influenced Her. 20(19).229, “iaculatrix . . . Phoebe” (cf. Fasti 2.155, “iaculatricemque Dianam”).

Note that I do not claim that Fasti 2 is later than Met. 2. The Fasti is not made up of an interconnected narrative (as is the Metamorphoses) or a continuing argument or exposition, but of separable units which could be, and evidently were, composed at different times and out of sequence.