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Voce voco. Some Text Linguistic Observations on Ovid *Heroides* 10[1]

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Abstract

In his article *Voce voco. Ariadne in Ovids Heroides und die 'weibliche Stimme'* (Mnemosyne, this issue), Christoph Pieper proposes a metapoetic interpretation of Ovid *Heroides* 10 in terms of a gradual awakening (and subsequent faltering) of Ariadne's literary voice. The present contribution serves as a supplement to this article, in that it provides some text linguistic support for this metapoetic reading. In a linguistically and narratologically oriented discussion of the structure of *Heroides* 10, it is shown how epic and elegy literally merge in this poem, for instance by means of an ingenious mixing of discourse modes and time frames, and a subtle play with the inherent ambiguity of the present tense. The analysis reveals by which formal means the poet manages to reconcile all of Ariadne's different roles and perspectives in the poem (epistolary speaker, epic speaker, elegiac speaker, narrative character), and integrate them, by way of literary experiment, in one coherent text.

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1. Introduction

In his article on the tenth of Ovid's *Epistles of the Heroines*, Christoph Pieper (this issue) shows how this poem can be read as an extensive meta-poetic discussion on the potential of the female voice in Roman elegy (a genre fully dominated by male speakers), and on the carrying power of this female voice in the context of the Ariadne myth. The deconstruction of the actual epistolary framework at the very start of the poem enables Ariadne to adopt the role of an epic narrator (cf. Maurer 1990, 160 f.) who, in a remarkable heterodiegetic narrative mode, recounts the events of her own recent past. Speaker and character are strictly kept apart in this 'epic' part of the poem, but start to merge in line 43 (*iamque oculis ereptus eras. tum denique flevi*), which clearly functions as the pivoting point of the poem: it is at this point that epic becomes elegy, and that the narrative character Ariadne turns into an elegiac speaker who is finally able to voice a female version of the myth she herself is part of.

The present contribution provides some text linguistic support for Christoph Pieper's observations in his article.[2] A brief discussion of the structure of *Heroides* 10, and of the various 'discourse modes' in which the text is presented, is meant to show how epic and elegy merge in this poem, and how the poet subtly manages to reconcile all of Ariadne's different roles and perspectives (epistolary speaker, epic speaker, elegiac speaker, narrative character), and integrate them, by way of literary experiment, in one coherent text. For ease of exposition I have divided the poem into various sections. I concentrate on the first half of the poem, lines 1-58.

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[2] I use 'text linguistics' as a cover term for the linguistic discipline that is concerned with text as communication, i.e. text as it is situated in an interactional, communicative context. As such, the discipline studies language use beyond the sentence boundary, and takes both the speaker and the addressee into account in their respective roles in the communicative interaction. The discipline is also referred to as 'discourse analysis' or 'discourse linguistics'. Where the roles of speaker and addressee coincide with the roles of narrator and narratee, text linguistics and narratology go hand in hand in the analysis.

2. A Text Linguistic Analysis of *Heroides* 10.1-58

1-6: *Introduction*

The verses 1-6 serve as the introduction to the poem.[3] The section fulfils a number of different jobs, which are all meant to 'set the scene' and guide the expectations of the readers. In terms of narrative plot structure,[4] we could regard lines 1-2 as an *evaluation*, more specifically a subjective evaluation of past behavior of the addressee of the letter. As such the lines seem to point forward especially to the 'elegiac' second part of the poem. At the same time, the verses give an indication of the communicative situation (there is an 'I' and a 'you'), which is further specified in line 3, where *legis* and *mitto* point more specifically to the epistolary framework, and reference is made to the location where the communicative event of letter writing is supposed to take place (the shore of Dia/Naxos). This mentioning of the location gives rise, in lines 4-6, to an extended relative clause which functions as a prospective summary of the 'epic' first part of the poem, and which alerts the reader for an upcoming narrative. In terms of narrative plot structure, this extended relative clause can be seen as the *abstract*, an element that prototypically precedes the narrative proper. The coherence of the entire introductory section 1-6 is enhanced by the fact that the evaluative elements that started in line 1 continue in lines 4-6: *male, per facinus*, and *insidiate*.[5]

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[3] Cf. also Knox 1995, 235.

[4] An influential model of narrative plot structure has been proposed by Labov (1972), and developed further by e.g. Fleischman (1990) and Longacre (1996). The constitutive elements of a prototypical narrative plot structure are called Abstract, Orientation, Complication, Peak, Evaluation, Resolution, and Coda. For an approach to Ancient Greek narrative in which discourse modes are related to plot structure, cf. Allan 2007, 2009.

[5] Some editors have suggested to transpose or delete the first couplet, arguing that it is a too abrupt start of the poem. See Knox 1995, 235. The above analysis can be seen as an argument in favour of retaining the text of the manuscripts.

7-44: *Epic Narrative* (*Four Subsections*)

Section I: 7-16

The phrasing of line 7, *tempus erat . . . quo primum . . .*, forms a strong indication that we are now entering a typical epic narrative.[6] As Adema has shown for Vergil's *Aeneid*, the imperfect tense is often used at the beginning of a scene to create a 'frame' within which some incident (usually in the perfect tense) is about to obtain.[7] This is also the case in line 7, where *tempus erat . . . quo . . .* creates the temporal frame for the occurrence of the first main event on the narrative time line: the perfect tense form *movi*. This constellation of tenses, an imperfect tense followed by one or more perfect tense forms, is characteristic of what text linguists would refer to as the diegetic (or narrative) discourse mode. In this mode, a narrator refers to a past story world which is composed of various successive events, which each advance the narrative, and together form the time line of the story. From Adema's study it becomes clear, however, that by far the most common tense used in Vergil's *Aeneid* for advancing the narrative time line is not the perfect tense but the historic present tense. This tense positions the narrator, in a quite artificial way, in the time of the story, and suggests that the narrator is giving a live report of what is going on on an imaginary stage in front of him. This typically epic feature can also be observed in Ariadne's account in *Heroides* 10, where after the first incident in the perfect tense (*movi*), the present tense takes over: *refero, retempto*, and *surgo* (ll. 11-13).[8]

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[6] Knox (1995, 236) points out that the phrasing *tempus erat* is found often in Ovid and later poets, as a reminiscence of Vergil *A.* 2.268 *tempus erat quo prima quies . . .* (the appearance of Hector to Aeneas). A comparable expression is e.g. *nox erat*, which is very common in both Vergil and Ovid.

[7] Adema 2008, 83-4. Adema counts 51 instances of an imperfect verb form with a 'framing' function in the *Aeneid*.

[8] The imperfect tense form *erat* in *nullus erat* (ll. 11 and 12) refers to an embedded focalization of the character Ariadne, and does not advance the time line of the story. For the imperfect as a tense for expressing embedded focalization, cf. Mellet 1988, ch. 9, Kroon 2007, 81, and Adema 2008, 90. The perfect tense of *excussere* in l. 13 can be explained on account of the fact that, in contrast to the present tense forms in this section, the perfect *excussere* does not refer to an action of Ariadne, but rather explains and interprets the action that is to follow (*conterrita surgo*), which it takes as the temporal point of reference

After this series of historic presents there is, in lines 14-16, a return to the perfect tense (*sunt praecipitata; sonuerunt, rupta est*). The perfect *sunt praecipitata* in 14 can be explained by the fact that it elaborates on the last action mentioned (*surgo*), rather than that it adds a new action to the series, and a new reference time on the time line. The next two perfect tense verb forms (*sonuerunt* and *rupta est*, ll. 14-15), however, do advance the narrative time line: the adverb *protinus* clearly suggests an immediately occurring *next* event. The switch from historic presents to the perfect tense may be taken as an indication that the events are presented now in a different narrative mode: the narrator Ariadne now relates the events from a temporally *displaced* position, and describes with hindsight and detach the character Ariadne's emotional reactions to her observed loneliness.[9] This reaction is not speech, but gestures, which are, moreover, described as depersonalized and passive states-of-affairs, which have Ariadne's various body parts as their grammatical subject (*adductis palmis*; *sonuerunt pectora*; *rupta coma est*), and not Ariadne herself.[10] *Sonuerunt pectora* might be seen as the first acoustic reaction stemming from the character Ariadne, albeit presented in the most indirect and detached way possible. We are still far from a female literary voice.

Section II: 17-24

The first phase of Ariadne's 'awakening' (ll. 7-16, see above) has fully centred on Ariadne's *tactile* senses and on the physical and gestural reactions to what they perceive. In the next phase (ll. 17-24), Ariadne's *visual* senses come into play, which gives rise to a widening of her radius of action (from bed and bedroom to the surrounding shore). In line with this progression, we also find a progression in the awakening of Ariadne's voice: this second section contains Ariadne's first self-quotation, the mere calling of Theseus' name (l. 21). For the first time there is the sound of a voice in reaction to the emotions, but, as Pieper observes in his contribution

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with regard to which it is anterior. For a general overview of the Latin tense system, and of the use of tenses in narrative texts, see Pinkster 1983; 1990, ch. 11.

[9] To use the terminology of Chafe (1994), the *immediate* narrative mode is replaced by a *displaced* narrative mode.

[10] This observation fits in with Pieper's observation (this issue) about the surprising heterodiegetic narrative style in these verses.

(this issue), innovative female communication is certainly not yet achieved here.

An important signal for a structural boundary at line 17, and for inter-preting lines 17-24 as a new, second phase in Ariadne's literary awakening, is formed by the sentence *luna fuit* in l. 17. This sentence does not merely provide a descriptive detail or an update of the temporal frame (as the imperfect tense alternative *luna erat* would have done), but contains a piece of necessary information which the narrator, from a position out-side the story world, supplies in order to be able to move over to the next stage of the narrative. As a necessary precondition for Ariadne's visual discoveries, the information *luna fuit* triggers the start of a new phase in the narrative.[11] After this narratorial intervention in the perfect tense, we find a series of verb forms in the present tense (*specto, habent, curro, tar-dat*), which, as stated above, is the basic tense in Vergilian epic for relating actions on the main story line, presented from an immediate narratorial position.[12] But despite the use of the 'immediate' present tense, the narra-tor Ariadne is still emphatically present in the text as an intermediary voice, and clearly separated from the character Ariadne, as appears for instance from the evaluative element *sine ordine* (l. 19), and the fact that Ariadne refers to her own feet as *puellares pedes* (l. 20).

Like in the first phase of the narrative (ll. 7-16), in this second episode the discourse mode changes when the narrative turns to the description of the acoustic events which are connected to the awakening of Ariadne's voice (ll. 21-4; compare ll. 15-16): again, the acoustic events are presented from a temporally *displaced* position, that is, from the *hic et nunc* of a

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[11] Cf. Knox 1995, 238: "O.'s Ariadne is a convincing narrator who explains why she is able to see at this hour". In terms of the 'discourse modes' used, we could say that with *luna fuit* the narrative (or diegetic) discourse mode is temporarily replaced by the discursive mode. For the difference between narrative mode and discursive mode, see below. The Latin perfect tense may occur in both modes. In order to distinguish between both uses, the former use of the perfect is sometimes referred to as the 'narrative perfect', the latter as the 'authorial perfect'.

[12] It is to be noted that the four present tense forms do not form a series of consecutive events here, but that Ovid, in contrast to e.g. Vergil, apparently also uses the historical present tense for other jobs, and as an alternative to the imperfect tense. For the same observations with respect to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and for a comparison with Vergil on this point, see Kroon 2007.

distant narrator using past tense verb forms. This time the events do not involve perfect but imperfect tense forms, which, in combination with the adverb *interea*, significantly give the awakening of Ariadne's voice the status of descriptive background information rather than of main line events, as something which happened to take place at the same time as the foregrounded events *curro* and *tardat*. Moreover, the event of the awakening of Ariadne's voice is syntactically expressed in a very indirect and 'hesitating' way: not in the form of a main verb, but hidden in a participle construction in the dative case (*clamanti*, line 21; see Pieper's remark in this issue ad loc.), while the main clause is reserved for the event of the rocks echoing Ariadne's voice. Apparently Ariadne is not yet able to make her voice heard on her own account, and is still in need of assistance (cf. also *ferre opem* in l. 24). The consistent distancing of the narrator Ariadne from the character Ariadne, also appears from the evaluative element *miserae* in line 24. The distance is at its smallest when the narrator makes use of the immediate narrative mode, that is, when historic presents are employed and the narrator pretends to be describing the events as they unfold. But as yet, the events recorded in this mode do not refer to any speech put forward by the character Ariadne herself.

As to the last two lines of this second phase of the narrative (ll. 23-4), it may be noted that we have an emphatic *ego te* here, whereas at other moments in the narrative Theseus is not referred to by the second person pronoun, but by a proper name in the accusative (*Thesea* in 10 and 34). *Te* in 23 might be taken as a signal that we have left the narrative, epic framework now, and are temporarily back in the epistolary framework that we had left in line 6. The change in 'discourse mode' (from the narrative mode to the discursive mode) may be taken as a signal that the second narrative episode has come to an end.

Section III: 25-42

Ariadne resumes her role as an epic narrator in line 25. First, in much the same way as in 17 with *luna fuit*, information is provided that enables the start of a new phase in the narrative: *mons fuit* ('authorial perfect', see n. 11). Ariadne's radius of scope and action is again widened, this time by climbing on the top of a nearby mountain, from which she can also scan the sea. The narrative technique used in this third narrative section is the same as in the prior episodes, as after the initial perfect tense verb form

fuit the historic present takes over (*adscendo; metior, patitur; excitor; excitor; voco; exclamo*).[13]

Two things are remarkable, though. First, it is surprising that the action that might be assumed to be the peak of the narrative as a whole, Ariadne's actual observation of Theseus sailing away (*vidi* in l. 30, to be placed on the time line after *metior*), is not recounted in the immediate narrative mode, but from a displaced narratorial position. This is not only indicated by the use of the perfect tense, but also by the emphatic use of the pronoun *ego*, the narratorial comment in the parenthetical *nam*-clause, and the evaluating reflections in lines 31-2. One might interpret this unexpected change in discourse mode as an explicit sign that the ultimate goal of the poet is not the writing of epic narrative here, but, as Pieper claims, the creation of literature about literature.

The second interesting point, which enhances this interpretation, is the fact that the text continues with a series of present tense forms (*patitur; excitor; excitor; voco; exclamo*) of which the last four directly refer to the awakening of Ariadne's voice. Not only is Ariadne's second *oratio recta* (l. 35-6) more complex than the prior one in 21, and accompanied this time by gesture (combination of phase 1 and 2; see also Pieper, this issue), but the description of Ariadne's awakening voice (*excitor; excitor; voco; exclamo*) is also for the first time presented in the historic present tense, with the character Ariadne as the syntactic subject. The awakening of Ariadne's voice is now, for the first time, presented as part of the narrative *main line*, and may be taken as a—carefully prepared for—peak in the narrative.

Like in the second narrative section (ll. 17-24), the self-quotation is followed—and in fact repeated—by past tenses, which indicate a shift to a more remote and separate narrator position, and eventually perhaps even to a return to the epistolary framework (witness the verse *si non audires ut saltem cernere posses* in l. 39, which contains a second person reference and the addressee-involving particle *scilicet*).[14] So again, like in the first two narrative sections, the use of past tenses and other signs of narratorial control lead us out of the narrative proper.

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[13] *Apparent* and *pendet* are best taken as actual presents, not as historic presents.

[14] For the addressee-orientedness of *scilicet*, cf. Schrickx 2011.

Section IV: 43-4

In order to resume the narrative, and add a fourth phase, a strong indication of (epic) narrativity is required now. This is provided in line 43 by the combination of *iam* with a pluperfect tense form, which is a common narrative technique in Latin epic and historiography for indicating a condensation of time and the approach of a new important event on the narrative time line.[15] As such the technique can be seen as a tension-heightening device. The use of this technique in line 43 (*iamque oculis ereptus eras*), together with the 'resolution' formula *tum denique* in the next sentence,[16] seems to put full force on the verb that follows: *flevi*, the importance of which is underlined by its last position in the verse and the repetition of the verb at the end of line 45. As stated above, we have reached now the pivoting point of the poem. Narrative epic will from now on become elegy, and the mythical character Ariadne will gradually merge with, and turn into, the elegiac speaker Ariadne.[17]

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[15] Cf. Kroon & Risselada 2004, on the basis of Chausserie-Laprée 1969, 497-517. We also find the imperfect tense in this technique.

[16] 'Resolution' is the term that models of narrative plot structure use for the outcome or aftermath of the story, which usually follows the peak. The resolution recounts 'what finally happened'. See n. 4 for the relevant literature. The formula *tum denique* is not used in Vergil's *Aeneid*, but we find ten instances in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

[17] The second verse of the couplet, *torpuerant molles ante dolore genae* (l. 44), explains *denique* in line 43 and in fact summarizes the point of the narrative that has preceded. The use of a pluperfect tense form and its first position in the verse underline that the 'epic' stage has definitely come to an end now. Like *flevi* in 43, the line seems to qualify for a metapoetic interpretation, for which the 'elegiac' word *mollis* might be taken as an explicit signal: the elegiac potential had in essence been there all the time, only waiting to be activated (*torpuerant molles genae*). For the elegiac ring of the word *mollis* and its meta-poetic use in e.g. Propertius and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, cf. Heerink 2010, ch. 3 §7.1 and ch. 4 § 5.3, who refers to Baker 2000, 102. The metapoetic use of *mollis/mollire* to denote the genre love elegy contrasts with the use of *durus* for describing epic poetry. These metapo-etic lines might have been prepared already in the verses 19 and 20, which may be given an equally metapoetic interpretation, with *pedes* in 20 as the key word: *puellares pedes* can also be taken as referring to 'young and female *metrical* feet'. Ariadne tries to 'run' (i.e. to write an elegiac couplet), but the result still remains slow (*tardat*, six metrical feet, as in epic). The literary experiment has not yet been crystallized, it is *sine ordine*, half epic and half elegy (*nunc huc, nunc illuc*). The use of the lexeme *pes* for referring to a metrical foot (and the plural for 'metre') is as old as Ennius (cf. the first line of his *Annals: Musae, quae pedibus magnum pulsatis Olympum*). Cf. e.g. also Ov. *Am.* 1.1.4 and 1.1.30; Hor. *S.* 1.10.1 (about

45-58: *Epic Narrative or Elegiac Discourse?*

The connection in time and place between both Ariadnes is made in the poem in a quite ingenious way, by means of a transitional section in which narrative past and speaker present approach one another, and in which the narrative mode gradually makes way for what is usually called the discursive mode or report mode.[18] In a narrative discourse mode, the speaker/narrator refers to a past story world which is characteristically composed of successive events. This is the default mode in prototypical narrative, as we find it in, for instance, Vergilian epic. In a discursive mode, the speaker (writer) directly addresses the hearer (reader). In this mode, which is essentially dialogic in character, the speaker may, of course, also refer to past events, but the events referred to are not necessarily sequentially related to one another within a particular story world. Rather the past events are presented as currently relevant facts which are each individually related to the communicative situation of the speaker and his addressee. In the discursive mode past events may, moreover, be combined with present and future events.

   The discursive mode is not excluded from such prototypically narrative genres as epic, where it is used especially for narratorial comment, evaluations, prospective and retrospective summaries, and the like. In the 'epic' first part of *Heroides* 10 it is, as we have seen, relatively well represented, especially in the transitional sections in between the narrative sub-episodes, and explainable from the epistolary framework in which the narrative is embedded. But whereas in this 'epic' first part of the poem the narrative mode still clearly prevails, with some instances of the discursive mode at the boundaries of each narrative subsection, the discursive mode gets the upper hand from line 45 onwards, where the text clearly becomes

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Lucilius: *incomposito dixi pede currere versus Lucili*); Hor. *Epod.* 14.12 (about Anacreon: *qui . . . flevit amorem non elaboratum ad pedem*). See further *OLD* s.v. *pes* 11. For a comparable metapoetic play with the word's double meaning in Catullus 63, see Kroon 2004.

[18] Terminology is quite confusing in this field of research. Smith 2003 (followed by e.g. Kroon 2007 and Adema 2008) uses the term 'report mode'. What Smith means by report mode comes close to what Weinrich (1964) refers to as *besprochene Welt* (as opposed to *erzählte Welt*) and Benveniste (1966) as *discours* (as opposed to *histoire*). Allan (2007, 2009) follows Benveniste and speaks of *discursive mode*.

more 'dialogical' in nature.[19] Whereas the poet has so far seemed to be hesitating between (epic) narrative and (elegiac) discourse, the scale now appears to tip definitely into the direction of the latter mode of presentation. The transition is made in lines 45-6, which are a restatement of the information provided in 43-4, but, as appears from the deliberative question, now presented in a different discourse mode.[20]

In this discursive mode, the references to the past (which start in l. 47) are iterative in nature, and do not form series of consecutive events (as would have been the case in a narrative discourse mode). Rather, a period of time is described in which Ariadne frequently and alternatively roamed about the place, sat upon the rock, and wept upon the bed she used to share with Theseus. Initially these repeated events are phrased by perfect tense verb forms (*erravi, sedi, fui*), as we may indeed expect for references to the past in a discursive mode ('authorial perfect', see n. 11). Surprisingly, however, there is a change to the present tense from line 51 onwards, where we find the series *repeto, tango, incumbo, exclamo*. At first sight we might think of a return to the immediate narrative mode (see above), but especially the use of *saepe* in 51, and the repeated reference to the addressee (*tua, te, tuis*) makes such an analysis unlikely. A much more attractive interpretation would be that the *praesentia* are no longer historic but *actual*, and that a gradual, stepwise connection can be observed between the 'epic' past and the 'elegiac' present, and between the character Ariadne and the elegiac speaker Ariadne:

(1)   iterative events in a past tense form (ll. 47-50)
(2)   iterative events in an (ambiguous) present tense form (ll. 51-4)
(3)   singulative events in an actual present tense (*incumbo, exclamo*), resulting in the final, most elaborate and complex self-quotation of Ariadne (ll. 55-6)

The epic bed of the first part of the poem has now become an elegiac bed, and what follows from 59 onwards looks like full blown elegy, albeit voiced by a woman who still has to find her way on this literary path (line 59

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[19] The change may already be foreshadowed by the hybrid line 43, where, despite the unequivocal features of a narrative mode, a second person verb form is used instead of a third person verb form (*ereptus eras*).

[20] The brief similes in l. 48 en l. 50 also point to a discursive mode.

Quid faciam? quo sola ferar?; cf. Pieper, this issue). Although contiguity of 'actual' and 'historic' presents seems to be avoided by Roman authors (cf. Pinkster to appear), and the two uses are usually clearly distinguished, Ovid seems to exploit the inherent ambiguity of the present tense here for his particular literary-rhetorical aims. A comparable play with the ambiguity of the present tense can be observed in the *Metamorphoses*, where historic present tense forms often appear to break out of the specific time frame of the story, and seem to acquire a universal and generic validity.[21]

3. Conclusion

A text linguistic analysis of Ovid *Heroides* 10 appears to provide clear support for a metapoetic interpretation of the poem as proposed by Pieper in his article (this issue). The analysis, in which the structure of the 'epic' first part of the poem has been divided into four narrative subsections, underlines the gradual process of the awakening of Ariadne's literary voice. Moreover, the analysis shows how epic and elegy literally merge in this poem, for instance by means of an ingenious mixing of discourse modes and time frames, and a subtle play with the inherent ambiguity of the present tense. The confrontation between 'male' epic (Theseus) and 'female' elegy (Ariadne), which can be seen as a second metapoetic layer in the text,[22] returns in various ways and on a larger scale in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, where, in a comparable way, the literary experiment of generic diversity is at the same time illustrated *and* commented on.[23]

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[21] Cf. Kroon 2007, 78-81.

[22] See also n. 17 above.

[23] For the metapoetic dimension of the *Metamorphoses*, see most recently Heerink 2010, ch. 7 §5.3, who draws attention to the metapoetic meaning of the prologue of the *Metamorphoses*, and especially to the significant metapoetical dimension of the Salmacis and Hermaphroditus episode. In this episode the nymph Salmacis can be seen metapoetically to 'feminize' and thus elegize the male epic hero Hermaphroditus. As such, this episode shows some interesting points of resemblance to *Heroides* 10.

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