schnell, damit du nicht zum Stillstand kommst’ (Ankh. 17, 13) mit dem lateini-
schen 'Festina lente' oder dem deutschen Sprichwort 'Eile mit Weile'. Diese
willkürlichen Beispiele, die leicht zu vermehren sind, zeigen im übrigen, daß
unter vergleichbaren Umständen auch vergleichbar Sprichwörter geprägt wer-
den; ein eindrucksvolles Beispiel stellt die 'Goldene Regel' dar. Aber es geht L.
nicht um den Inhalt, der in Sprichwörtern unterschiedlicher Sprachen zum Vor-
schein kommt, sondern um deren sprachliche Formung. So glaubt man ihm gern,
wenner u. a. zu dem Ergebnis kommt: «In general, I do not believe that the
structural similarities identified could have been products of direct inter-cultural
communication …» (241). Da die Sprichwörter zu den 'einfachen Formen' gehören, sind auch ihre Strukturen durchgängig vergleichbar.

Aus meiner Sicht bleibt es ein Desiderat, z. B. demotische und griechische Sprichwörter im Hinblick auf die Haltung von Ägyptern und Griechen zu Le-
ben, Tod, Familie, Staat etc. zu untersuchen. Erftstadt

Heinz-Josef Thissen


This 2007 Bielefeld Habilitationsschrift (written under Siegmar Döpp as Dok-
torvater), is an exhaustively detailed study of the Latin book of verse epistles from a generic point of view. W(ulfram) appears to have read most of the literature on the topic, with due acknowledgement of bibliography in languages other than German: the closely printed 'Forschungsliteratur' alone runs to 46 sides. Each of the three elements of 'Vers-epistel-buch' counts: the genre under exami-
nation is strictly speaking a verse phenomenon; the markers of epistolarity are to be given full weight; and the carefully structured book of verse epistles is more than the sum of its parts. W. emphasizes the importance of the physical experi-
ence of reading a book roll, as opposed to a codex, for the sense of a self-
contained book with beginning, middle, and end. W. profits fully from the recent

growth of scholarly interest in ancient epistolography, and also from the applica-
tion to the classical texts of theoretical models of epistolarity derived from other
disciplines. He also elaborates and extends earlier analyses of the structures of
poetry books. W. offers his own reader a monument of consolidation, character-
ized by the judicious sifting and weighing of earlier discussions, and containing a 
wealth of close readings geared to the particular questions being asked.

W. states the aims of the book at pp. 11–15. Firstly, he will test the proposition 
that Horace invents a new poetic genre in his first book of Epistles, through par-
ticular attention to the markers of epistolarity as identified in recent work on the 
communicative address of the letter form. W. follows the dominant trend in 
recent work on the verse epistle, which has reacted against an earlier view that 
epistolary markers are often perfunctory, largely confined to the beginning and 
end of the texts, pegs on which to hang poems that develop in ways largely obli-
vious to their supposed function as letters. The second major aim is to ask 
whether Horace’s experiment in Epistles 1 found successors. This question is 
answered firstly with reference to Horace’s own later exercises in verse epistolo-
graphy, the texts we normally refer to as Epistles 2 and the Ars Poetica, and sec-
ondly, and at massive length, with reference to Ovid’s poems from exile, the 
Tristia and ex Ponto. The continuities between the Horace and the Ovidian exilic 
epistle are in fact now fairly widely recognized; new is the scale on which these 
continuities are explored. The third aim is to demonstrate that after Ovid the 
genre of the verse epistle book finds no continuators, and that the later collec-
tions of prose letters designed as structured books by their authors (Seneca the 
Younger, Pliny the Younger), and, in the case of Fronto, perhaps by a late-
antique editor rather than the author himself, are not in substance to be regarded 
as a continuation in prose of the Horatian and Ovidian genre of books of verse 
epistles (W. is provocatively emphatic, 440, that there is no example in antiquity 
of such a continuation of a genre across the boundary, in either direction, be-
tween prose and verse).

The first, background, chapter examines the difference between letters inten-
ted for the eyes only of their addressees and those intended to be read by a 
wider audience, the difference between private and public letters, and between ‘working letters’ (‘Gebrauchsbriefer’) and literary or half-literary letters. A de-
tailed typology is constructed, useful but too rigid in its exclusive categories. 
Particularly problematic is the category of the ‘literary’, which is identified with 
letters published in books. W. perhaps privileges this category because of his 
overriding wish to isolate the book of (verse) epistles as an autonomous genre. 
The typology is developed out of a clear and useful analysis of the various ad-
dressees or publics of Cicero’s letters, and of the publication, starting probably 
soon after Cicero’s death and in accordance with plans of Cicero himself, of 
collections of his letters in book form. W. stresses the likely importance of the 
Ciceronian model for the sudden emergence in later first-century BC Rome of 
the verse epistle book; the slippery boundaries between private and public, and 
between real life and constructed reality, manifested both in individual letters of 
Cicero at the time of composition, and in the Ciceronian project, realized by 
others, of publishing collections of ‘private’ letters for a readership whose size 
and temporal endurance will escape the author’s and editor’s control, will also be 
important for the games with autobiography, readership, and circulation that are 
played in Horatian and Ovidian epistles (nowhere with more gusto than in Hor. 
Ep. 1.20).
Turning to the question of Horace’s generic innovation in *Epistles 1*, W. first considers the poet’s own programmatic statements about his new venture. Comparison with the addresses to Maecenas in earlier Horatian books and collections of books leads to the persuasive conclusion that the phrase *summa dicende Ca- mena* (Ep. 1.1.1) makes a claim to a new poetic genre (to be distinguished from the *Satires*, of which *Epistles 1* have by some been taken to be to essentially a continuation). A detailed reading of *Epistles 1.1* touches intermittently on issues of epistolarity, but includes some good comments on the gestures to the model of the letters of Epicurus. There follow: a clear account of Horace’s use of epistolary markers, and of the old question of whether these were ever ‘real’ letters sent through the post; a review of the evidence for earlier texts that might be classified as verse epistles; and a survey of some of the structural and self-referential features that clearly mark *Ep. 1* as a carefully planned poetry book. The chapter concludes with a careful discussion of the epistolary features of *Ep. 2* and *Ars Poetica*, leaving open the question of whether all three might have been intended as a single, second, book of *Epistles* (on this see now S. J. Harrison, ‘Horace *Epistles 2*: the last Horatian book of *sermones*?’, PLLS 13 (2008) 173–186). In one respect there is more continuity between the *Ars* and *Epistles 1* than W. allows, namely in the combination of the verse epistle form with homage to Lucretius (see above all Ferri 1993, cited at 162 n. 483).

Ch. 3 turns to the *Heroides*, with extensive surveys of standard scholarly questions such as that of authenticity, tangential to the main subject of the book. The *Heroides* are seen as a new kind of verse epistle book, separate from, but perhaps stimulated by, the Horatian innovation a few years earlier. With his sharp eye for patterns W. points out that *Epistles 1* and *Heroides 1–15* both develop out of, but are distinct from, earlier genres practiced by their authors (respectively *Satires* and *Amores*), and that both poets continue their invention in changed form (*Epistles 2* + *Ars, Heroides 16–21*).

In the nearly 200 pages of ch. 4 W. looks at Ovid’s exile poetry in the perspectives of (Horatian) epistolarity and book structure. After a lengthy consideration of the *Ibis* which leads to the unsurprising conclusion that the poem is not an epistle, but a learned curse-poem in the manner of Callimachus’ *Ibis*, W. turns first to the unproblematically epistolary *Epistulae ex Ponto*, addressed to named individuals, beginning with Books 1–3, probably sent to Rome and published as a block in AD 13/14. W. develops Froesch’s demonstration that, despite Ovid’s assertion in *Pont. 3.9.51–6* that letters written solely to communicate with individual addressees have now been put together in random order, the poems have a deliberate and artful ordering. The tension in Horace’s verse epistles between an intimate and private correspondence undertaken for psychotherapeutic ends and a poetry book roll with which the poet makes a bid to ‘sell’ himself for literary fame, is resolved when prospective fame in a poetry book is offered as part of Ovid’s individual *officium* to the friends back at Rome whom he asks to act on his behalf. In other respects *ex Ponto 1–3* are persuasively read as determined by a complex pattern of similarities to and differences from the model of Horace *Epistles 1*: epistles written from forced exile in a harsh landscape rather than voluntary retreat into the pleasant countryside, a poetry of *amicitia* in which the main beneficiary is to be Ovid rather than his addressees, and so on. Connections
with Ovid’s own *Heroides* as well as with Cicero’s letters (the importance for Ovid of the Ciceronian model of exile could be brought out more strongly) are also touched on, but the Horatian model is primary for W., a claim supported by the pointed contrast in *ex Ponto* between the chaste Ovidian *libelli* afraid to enter *publica monimenta* and the personification in *Epistles* 1.20 of the book roll as a slave-boy eager to go out into the world to prostitute himself to a wider public.

A section on *ex Ponto* 4 makes a strong case (following recently Holzberg) for a unified structure imposed by the hand of the poet himself, instead of a disordered collection of epistles left unpublished at Ovid’s death.

*Ex Ponto* 1.1.15–18 asserts close continuity between the new collection of poems and the earlier *Tristia*: *rebus idem, titulo differt; et epistula cui sit non occultato nomine missa docet* implies that the earlier collection too was of epistles. The intricate reworking in *Tristia* 1.1 of *Epistles* 1.20, and of other epistles in the Horatian book, is well recognized (Citroni 1986 is seminal); W. makes the nice point that the transference to initial position of a book-ending poem is in itself a statement of continuity with the Horatian project. W. pushes harder at the question of the problematic epistolarity of *Tristia* 1. A detailed reading of 1.1 develops P. Rosenmeyer’s suggestion that the *liber* is sent off as if it were a letter to Rome: *15 uerbisque meis loca grata saluta* implies *Naso Romae saltem dicit*. The problem with the classification of *Tristia* 1 lies with the ten poems after 1.1: W. makes the best case he can for a sustained epistolarity, firstly by emphasizing the central block of epistles, 5–9, which are addressed to (unnamed) individuals back in Rome, and secondly by reading the book as a whole as a chronologically ordered ‘Reiseroman in Briefform’, although what emerges is very different from the epistolary novel as we are familiar with it in its eighteenth-century form. To sustain this reading an interesting case is made that 1.3, the poet’s memories of his last night in Rome, is an analepsis of that sad time in Ovid’s mind during the course of the storm that continues from 1.2 to 1.4. Ingenious too is the suggestion that a non-epistolary model for the *iter ad Pontum* in *Tristia* 1 is Horace’s *iter ad Brundisium* (*Sat*. 1.4), and that that poem can be used to fill in the details of Ovid’s own land-journey from Rome to the harbour of Brundisium, the itinerary that Ovid does not narrate.

Others have already read *Tristia* 2, the letter to Augustus, as a pointed engagement with Horace’s Epistle to Augustus, *Ep*. 2.1; W. suggests that the sequence of *Tr*. 1 followed by *Tr*. 2 evokes the sequence of Horace *Epistles* 1 and 2. At the same time he points to exordial allusions in *Tr*. 2 to *Tristia* 1.1, and also to Hor. *Ep*. 1.1. While the length and content of *Tristia* 2 make of it a one-off within *Tristia* 1–5, W. shows that it is also an integral part of the Horatian-Ovidian web of epistolarity that has been defined in *Tristia* 1.

The section on *Tristia* 3–5 focuses on the opening and closing poems of those three books in order to bring out aspects that unite *Tristia* 1–5 taken as a whole. W. also draws attention to further allusion to Hor. *Ep*. 1 in the last three books, reinforcing his claim that *Tristia* 1–5 are a tightly knit quintet of books, and that one of the most important sources of their unity is a sustained dialogue with Horace that operates through both similarity and difference.

A final chapter on Nachleben surveys the later history of the literary epistle, to reach the conclusion that the genre of the Verseiştelbuch as practiced by Horace
and Ovid finds no successors. Finally we are given sections, 'bisweilen hand-buchartig' as W. himself acknowledges, on the three collections of Latin letters in prose by Seneca, Pliny, and Fronto, whose immediate purpose is to confirm the assertion that the Horatian-Ovidian model has no progeny; but the connection between Horace’s Epistles and Seneca’s Epistulae morales ad Lucilium, at least, does seem real and important. With regard to Pliny the Younger’s Letters i–9, W. makes the valid point that recent interest in the structure of the book of letters is in fact nothing new; already in 1913 Theodor Birt thought that Pliny arranged his books of letters as carefully as Martial or Statius a book of their poems.

The particular set of lenses through which W. views his texts means that the book makes no pretence to be a study of all aspects of them; the focus tends to be formalist, and wider literary- and cultural-historical questions are not broached, such as why might it be that the genre of books of first-person epistles should have been invented by a Roman poet when it was, or how the history of this genre might fit within a wider history of the literature of interiority and autobiography in antiquity. Is it coincidental that ‘subjective love elegy’ and the first-person verse epistle book both seem to be inventions of Roman poets in the second half of the first century BC? In what he does choose to discuss, W. is never less than full in coverage, and the reading experience could have been lightened by elimination or compression of some of the more handbook-like passages of survey. But this does not detract from the scholarly achievement of the book, an essential resource for all working on the Horatian and Ovidian verse epistle, and which combines sound judgement with a fine eye for close textual detail and for larger patterns and symmetries.

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