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Ovid's Epics
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At *Remedia amoris* 395-96, Ovid draws a parallel between his own work and Vergil's: *tantum se nobis elegi debere fatentur, / quantum Vergilio nobile debet epos*. Like the two lines on the page that constitute this couplet, the trope of 'parallelism' also entails separation: i.e., even as Ovid asserts equality with Vergil, he establishes a boundary between the two genres that the two poets represent. Simultaneously, Ovid's couplet models an ironic challenge to its contents: the monumental hexameter is used to characterize Ovid and elegy, the lighter pentameter, to characterize Vergil and *epos*. This gesture characterizes the generic transgressiveness that runs throughout Ovid's elegiac poetry, which repeatedly blurs the boundary so neatly enacted here.

Yet the *aporia* that surrounds discussion of the *Metamorphoses*' genre has no real parallel in scholarly treatments of Ovid's elegiac poetry. The mutual congeniality of Ovid's rhetorical style and elegiac meter is for most readers ample demonstration that Ovid's elegiac poetry is generically coherent. Kroll's famous discussion of 'die Kreuzung der Gattungen' has been accommodated to this view, and has resulted in a nuanced appreciation of the poetics of generic transgression by Ovid and others (e.g., Hinds 1987; Depew and Obbink 2000). A reevaluation of the Ovidian corpus, however, suggests that writing epic was a constant preoccupation of the poet: from *Amores* 1.9 (in which he reads the *Iliad* as erotic elegy) to the erotodidactic works (in which he fashions himself and his readers as comrades in a heroic voyage across the dangerous seas of love), from the *Heroides* (which configure themselves as continuations of epic) to the *Fasti* (with its grandiose assimilation of Roman history and Greek myth), we encounter repeatedly a poet in the process of writing on epic themes. In this paper, I argue that epic is not simply a foil for Ovid against which to assert his elegiac originality; rather, it provides essential material—style, diction, subject-matter—to which he turns repeatedly for inspiration and innovation. In the process, he writes not one but a series of 'epics', encompassing history, heroic myth, and *nostos*; Ovid thus extends and redefines the genre of epic much as he does with elegy.