

OVID, AUGUSTUS, AND THE EXILIC JOURNEY IN THE *TRISTIA* AND *EPISTULAE
EX PONTO*

By

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For Gary and Cindy

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>CIL</i>	Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum
<i>OCD</i> ³	Hornblower, S., and Spawforth, A., edd. <i>Oxford Classical Dictionary</i> . 3 rd edition. (Oxford, 1996).
<i>OLD</i>	Glare, P.G.W., et al. edd. <i>Oxford Latin Dictionary</i> (Oxford, 1968–1982).
<i>PIR</i> ²	Klebs, E.; Dessau, H.; and Rohden, P. von, edd. <i>Prosopographia Imperii Romani</i> . 2 nd edition. (Berlin-Leipzig, 1933).
<i>PMG</i>	Page, D.L., ed. <i>Poetae Melici Graeci</i> (Oxford, 1962).
<i>RE</i>	Wissowa, G., et al. edd. <i>Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumwissenschaft</i> (Stuttgart 1894–1975).
<i>TLL</i>	<i>Thesaurus Linguae Latinae</i>

Journals are abbreviated according to the conventions of *L'Année Philologique*. Abbreviations of the ancient authors derive from the *OCD*, *OLD*, and *LSJ*.

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Ovid's extensive references to act of writing poetry, both the superficial self-deprecating claims to poetic decline, as well as the thinly veiled proclamations of poetic novelty and genius, remain major points of scholarly contention. By reevaluating Ovid's persistent focus on his own poetic act through various metapoetic devices, this project reconsiders Ovid's literary response to exile and his strategy of rebalancing his own political position opposite the emperor within the eyes of the Roman elite. Based on the assumption that at least part of Ovid's exile was the result of his offensive *Ars Amatoria* (*Tr.* 2.211–12), I argue that Ovid's fantastic depiction of his own exilic journey and of the Pontic region is in fact an enactment of the emperor's misguided reading, which mistook the poem's narrator for the poet himself. This accounts for Ovid's mixture of poetry and reality in exile: indeed, he merges fiction and history to such an extent that judicious scholars continue to question the authenticity of the entire debacle. Ovid's rewriting of the exilic journey as a novel poetic undertaking and his dream-like descriptions of Tomis and the Pontic landscape break down the barriers between poetry and history, and thus between narrator and poet. In doing so, Ovid not only mocks the emperor as a *malus*

*interpre*s, unfit to stand for Roman aristocratic values, but aggrandizes his own poetic accomplishments. This project attempts a new, unified reading of the exilic epistles, one which incorporates Ovid's literary and political responses to exile. My reexamination of Ovid's dissimulation in Tomis as well as his stance of poetic degradation addresses not only Ovid's exilic lies, but also the nearly two millennia of intellectual exile he suffered at the hands of the scholarly community who, until the mid-twentieth century, rejected the final third of his work as sycophantic, redundant complaint.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Second only to the “mystery of Ovid’s exile,”¹ in terms of interest to literary critics, is the relationship that Ovid presents between himself and the emperor in his exilic epistles, the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*. The self-contradictory nature of that relationship continues to beguile even the most seasoned readers:² it allows Ovid, for example, to claim that his life was preserved by the emperor’s leniency³ and simultaneously consider exile a death sentence.⁴ This type of “dissimulation”⁵ creates a subtext of power struggle between the exile and the emperor:⁶ Augustus has exercised his power of life and death over the poet,⁷ and it remains for the poet to employ his

¹ The title of Thibault (1964), which remains fundamental when considering the theories proposed for Ovid’s exile.

² See Williams (1994: 2) who catalogues Ovid’s “large scale deception” in great detail.

³ *Tr.* 1.1.19–20, 2.125–8, 5.4.19–22, 5.9.11–14; *P.* 4.5.31–2, etc.

⁴ Called the “*debitor vitae*-motif” by Helzle (1989: 131). *Tr.* 1.1.117, 1.3, 1.4.27–8, 1.7.35, 3.3.53–4, 3.14.20; *P.* 1.1.65–6, 1.5.85–6, 1.7.9–10, 1.9.17–18, 2.3.3–4, 3.4.75–6, 4.15.3–4, etc.

⁵ For the term see Williams (1994); I use it as a blanket expression for points at which Ovid appears to contradict himself in the process of creating an ironic subtext. On the fictional qualities of the verse epistle itself, see Rosenmeyer (1997) and (2001); Gaertner (2007: 168–72).

⁶ I will not argue that Ovid posed any political opposition to Augustus, on which see Boissier (1909); Kennedy (1992); Davis (2006). I follow Raaflaub and Samons (1993: 448–54), Oliensis (2004: 286), McGowan (2009: 2–3) and others, in that “political opposition” may not have existed in the modern sense under Augustus, and that subversive irony played to the expectations of Ovid’s elite audience, undermining the position of Augustus and elevating that of the poet.

⁷ The manner in which Augustus exercised power has been increasingly shown to reflect his republican ideologies, rather than monarchic pretensions. Following Galinsky, I focus on Augustus’ *auctoritas*, or his mutually accepted influence on the Roman state, for which see *R.G.* 34 with Galinsky (1998: 11–16); Gurval (1998). For Augustus’ republicanism, and the pervasiveness of republicanism even after Actium: Kennedy (1992: 26–58); Cooley (2009); Welch (2012); cf. Kienast (1999) whose title is exemplary (*Augustus: Prinzeps und Monarch*); Fantham (2003); McGowan (2009: 21): “in theory the republic continued to exist; in practice the political workings of the state were conducted in an unprecedented fashion so that Rome became an upstart monarchy wrapped in republican garb,” both of which can be read as extensions of Syme’s (1939) interpretation of Augustus as a sinister autocrat.

creative power in response. This major point of contention forms the starting point of the present study: why does Ovid misrepresent the reality of his exile in his poetic epistles?

In what follows I will propose a new, unified interpretation of the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* based on the significance of metapoetry as a tool to respond to Ovid's exilic sentence. I will argue that his self-contradiction (I use the blanket term "lies") and his pose of poetic decline⁸ must be read in coordination with his frequent metapoetic conceits: by confating author and narrator, Ovid creates a universe that is, by necessity, simultaneously fictitious and factual. The resulting effect is both an artistic accomplishment and political statement:⁹ Ovid's exilic epistles pervert and ridicule Augustus' imperial condemnation. The emperor failed to recognize the distinction between Ovid the poet and the narrator's persona in the *Ars Amatoria* and so banished the poet: Ovid's downfall is the product of a *mala interpretatio*.¹⁰ By completely mingling poetry and reality in his exilic corpus, Ovid merges his physical person and his poetic persona in a way similar to Augustus' misguided reading. In doing so, he plays out the role for which he was ostensibly exiled. First, I will demonstrate how Ovid employs

⁸ Luck (1961: esp. 243–61) is seminal to our understanding of Ovid's self-deprecation. His position is picked up in Kenney (1965); Nagle (1980); Claassen (1986: 53–273); Helzle (1987); Williams (1994: 50–99); Green (2005: 350); Stevens (2009).

⁹ Following the "figured speech" of Ahl (1984).

¹⁰ *Tr.* 2.211–12. Cf. the similar, albeit limited, argumentation of Barchiesi (1993); Davis (1999); Ingleheart (2010) who focus on *Tristia* 2 as a didactic work meant to correct (or at least highlight) the emperor's misunderstanding of Latin elegy. Catullus played on such a distinction in poem 16, and the ability to assume various personae was a fundamental aspect of archaic Greek verse (e.g. Archilochus fr. 1 W.). In general see Navaud (2011); for successful applications to satire see Kernan (1962), Anderson (1982) and Braund (1996); cf. Clay (1998); on rhetorical personae see most recently Guérin (2009) and (2011). Persona theory is particularly important in Ovid's amatory works: see Weiden Boyd (1998: *intr.* and 132–64). Caution in application is crucial: as Rosen (2007) points out, "while 'persona theory' has been highly successful in reminding readers that we need not *necessarily* hear a poet's autobiography every time he speaks with his own voice in a poem, it actually does not fully solve the problem of how to interpret the satirist's voice; it merely defers it and makes it more complicated," cf. Gildenhard and Zissos (2000); O'Hara (2007: 42–4) on Miller (2004: 50–2). This complication is precisely what Ovid plays on in his merging of poetry and reality in the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*.

compositional metaphor to mingle poetry and reality and elevate his act of writing.¹¹ The politically shameful journey to Tomis is transformed into a series of narratives that collapse the distance between poetry and reality, and in so doing inaugurate the poet into the lofty company of Homer, Apollonius, Catullus, and Vergil. The fundamental consequence of this reading is a direct violation of Augustus' attempt, through the imposition of exilic instability, to silence the poet. Second, I will evaluate Ovid's perversion of the Tomitan countryside. Every facet of Ovid's exilic universe functions not only as a manifestation of his own misery, as others have argued,¹² but also as a physical barrier to poetic production, further blurring the line between history and poetry, and again increasing the depth of the poet's accomplishment in writing successful verse from exile. Finally, I reconsider Ovid's shifting audience and the ever-present specter of Augustus and the imperial family.¹³ I will demonstrate that Ovid's persistent focus on the poetic act was extremely ironic, and would have thus appealed to the Roman elite from whom the emperor derived his authority.

This strategy reveals an extreme deficit between the poet's genius and the emperor's failure as a reader, alienating the *princeps* from his own power base. In Ovid's universe, Augustus betrays his own philistine understanding of Roman literature by banishing its greatest living poet. Ovid responded by delivering the type of verse his *malus interpret* originally (mis)read, that which does not distinguish poet from narrator. Within this frame of reference, Ovid includes frequent allusions to his own poetic genius

¹¹ Cf. the similar argumentation of Claassen (1988) and Shaw (1994), who stress the triumph of Ovid's verse, with which he inducts himself into the mythological world.

¹² Claassen (1999: 190); Williams (1994: 12–25).

¹³ Ovid, I shall argue, creates a primary distinction between his friends (*philo*) and fellow intellectuals (*sophoi*), both of whom, unlike the emperor, understand the extent of his poetic genius.

that undercut exilic silence. The entire image is then buried beneath obsequious pleas and endless lament, further evidence for the type of poetry that a misguided Hellenistic monarch would enjoy.¹⁴ Ovid framed his interaction with the emperor in such a way as to maintain his own poetic authority at Augustus' expense. In fact, the very artistry with which he renders his mingling of poetry and reality within addresses to the Roman populace and even the emperor himself becomes evidence in support of a recall. Because Ovid incorporated himself into the fiction of his exilic letters, he was able to sidestep the flagrant political imbalance between himself and the emperor, force his readership to recognize his unique literary brilliance, and highlight the emperor's failure to acknowledge that genius.

This project, then, will focus on how Ovid the poet describes his own poetic act, an important point of departure for scholarly discourse because Ovid's representation of his own poetry in exile has been shown to be less than honest.¹⁵ Just as Ovid's selective vocabulary will be key in elucidating his actual opinions of poetry in exile, so too will I employ a limited technical vocabulary to discuss the intersection between Ovid's poetry and the reality he experienced in Tomis. Foremost among these concepts is Ovid's use of metapoetry:¹⁶ a poem or poetic device that has as its thematic subject

¹⁴ Flattery of a monarch became something of a *topos* for bad verse in the Roman adoption of Hellenistic aesthetics: such is the opinion, for example, of Alexander the Great's court poets Agis and Choerilus. See Hor. *Ep.* 2.1.232–4; Festus *De Verb. Sig.* 360.10–11 (*quam malus Homerus, tam bonus Choerilus poeta est*); Porphyry *ad Hor. A.P.* 357 (*pessimus poeta*); *RE* s.v. "Agis," "Choirilos."

¹⁵ On the sincerity of Ovid's self-deprecation see esp. Luck (1961: 243–61); Kenney (1965); Claassen (1986: 53–273); Nagle (1980); Williams (1994: 50–99); Green (2005: 350).

¹⁶ Arguably a subset of another term employed here, "metaliterature." For individual moments of metapoetry, I employ the technical expression "compositional metaphor." The adjectival forms I use are limited to "metapoetic" and "metaliterary," and should be considered interchangeable concepts for the purposes of this project.

the act of composing poetry itself.¹⁷ Side by side with Ovid's use of metapoetry exist his frequent intertextual allusions: these situate the poet's self-referentiality within the context of poetry itself, assuring an association not merely with the poetic act, but with the highest accomplishments of that act.¹⁸ This rereading of Ovidian allusion and metapoetry will focus on how it reestablishes and manipulates his relationship with the emperor, in the eyes of his erudite Roman audience.

The self-referential nature of these images appealed to the elite and well educated within Ovid's audience, and, as I shall argue, degraded the emperor's role in their eyes by replaying his fundamental misconceptions about Latin verse. Since the conceptual "elite" of Rome plays an important role for this project, I must be specific: I do not limit my use of the terms "aristocrat" or "elite," to the Roman senate or patrician

¹⁷ Much ink has been shed on metapoetic topics in ancient literature: Wyke (1987); Hinds (1987b); Scheid and Svenbro (2001); Braund (2002: 207–24); in general, West (2007). I rely on the foundation provided by Cairns (1972) and Lieberg (1982: 172) that Ovid and later poets engaged in a "standard convention whereby the author of a poem can describe himself as doing what he is writing about" (Masters 1992: 6). Quite a bit can be found on Medieval, Renaissance, Romantic and Modern/Postmodern literature, as a reflex of the ancient tradition: see McGavin (2000: 170–206); Müller-Zettlemann (2005: 125–46), and esp. 122 on the issue of metapoetry in the Medieval period.

¹⁸ A number of studies have considered Ovidian intertextuality in the exilic epistles, e.g. Hinds (1985); Williams (1994); in general see Hinds (1998). I reevaluate this intertextuality in light of an over-arching metapoetic function: references to the poetic act of previous, well known authors solidify the metaliterary focus of a passage. One might compare Billy Collins' "Sonnet" (2002: 146) which not only describes the act of writing a sonnet, but in its final lines alludes to the structure's inventor, Petrarch (in his *Sparse Rime*), and his own act of composition for Laura:

All we need is fourteen lines, well, thirteen now,
and after this one just a dozen
to launch a little ship on love's storm-tossed seas,
then only ten more left like rows of beans.
How easily it goes unless you get Elizabethan
and insist the iambic bongos must be played
and rhymes positioned at the ends of lines,
one for every station of the cross.
But hang on here while we make the turn
into the final six where all will be resolved,
where longing and heartache will find an end,
where Laura will tell Petrarch to put down his pen,
take off those crazy medieval tights,
blow out the lights, and come at last to bed.

classes, though these were the most likely to effect Ovid's return from exile. Instead, they are meant to imply any reader within Ovid's audience who could afford (or had received) the type of education necessary to pick up on both his characteristic self-awareness and frequent intertextual allusions to, for example, the *Metamorphoses*, *Aeneid*, *Argonautica*, or Homeric epics. Ovid's target audience was as much the political as the intellectual aristocracy, whether plebeian or patrician. To rebalance his relationship with Augustus, he addressed the entirety of educated Roman society on his own terms, that of literary accomplishment and appreciation.

Ovid's *carmen et error*

We know little regarding the actual circumstances of Ovid's exile.¹⁹ He was banished to Tomis,²⁰ modern Constanța, Romania, in 8 C.E.²¹ by Augustus for what

¹⁹ For compendiums of the various theories and evidence see Appel (1872); Thibault (1964: 125–9, *passim*); della Corte (1973: 63–9); Green (1982: 202–20); Claassen (1987); Luisi and Berrino (2008). I consider Ovid's exile historical fact (Pliny *N.H.* 32.54 and *CIL* 4.10595 provide possible tangible evidence, cf. *P.* 3.5.1–4, where the place of exile indicates the poet's name) despite the skepticism of, e.g. Hartman (1905) and Fitton Brown (1985). For their *fiktions* these see Claassen (1994: 109); Chwalek (1996); Oliensis (2004: 319). I follow, e.g. White (2002: 11–12) on the “suppression of topical details... to direct attention instead to his literary engagement with poetic predecessors.”

²⁰ The official label, according to Ovid was *relegatus* (*Tr.* 1.7.8, 2.135–8; *Ib.* 11–12), though *exul* was more frequently used (26 times and *exilium* 20 times vs. *relego* 10 times) and often in programmatic situations (*Tr.* 1.1.3; *P.* 1.1.22). Although exile was frequently voluntary for capital criminals in the republic (Garsey 1970: 111–22; cf. *OCD*³ s.v. “Exile, Roman,” and “Relegation”); *relegatio* also existed by force, and under Augustus it was specifically reserved for adulterers (Paul. *Sentent.* 2.26.14), e.g. the two Julias, Agrippa Postumus (*Tac. Ann.* 1.53; *Suet. Aug.* 65.1–4), and, of course, Ovid himself. For the legal distinction see [Paul] *Dig.* 48.1.2; Mommsen (1889: 964–80); Strachan-Davidson (1912: 2.64–74). For these citations and others see Ingleheart (2010: 153–4). One must be careful not to confuse the *relegatio* and *exilium* reserved for adultery with Augustus' novel use of *relegatio ad insulam* for Ovid's contemporaries: see Cohen (2008).

²¹ Ovid records Augustus' death (19 Aug. 14 C.E.) in the fifth year of his exile (*P.* 4.6.5–6, 15–16), thus the first year in Tomis was 9 C.E. and his sentence was delivered in 8 C.E. This corroborates Ovid's own testimony concerning the date of his birth (20 Mar. 43 B.C.E., *Tr.* 4.10.11–14; *Fasti* 3.813) and the age at which he was exiled, 50 (*Tr.* 4.8.33–4, 4.10.95–8). The traditional chronology is as follows: *Tr.* 1–5: 9–12 B.C.E.; *P.* 1–3: 13 B.C.E.; *P.* 4: 14–16 B.C.E.: see *OCD*³ s.v. “Ovid”; for the dates of Ovid's life and of individual poems see Syme (1978: 1–47); McGowan (2009: 5 n. 19).

the poet calls only a *carmen et error* (*Tr.* 2.207–8).²² He refers to the former frequently: the *Ars Amatoria* of 2 B.C.E.,²³ but the latter has become something of fodder for conspiracy theorists.²⁴ From Ovid's own vague clues the reader can divine that he saw something he was not supposed to (*Tr.* 2.103–10, 3.5.49–50) and failed to report it (*Tr.* 3.6.11–16). Two schools of thought have emerged concerning the relationship between the *Ars* and Ovid's *error*. Some believe that Ovid's poetry was wholly to blame for his downfall.²⁵ They cite the *lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis* of 18 B.C.E.,²⁶ which condemned adulterers to banishment (and for women a severe loss of property) as well as anyone acting as an accessory.²⁷ By this logic Ovid's punishment fits his crime. The

²² The terminology Ovid uses is instructive: he frequently refers to what his mistake was *not*, i.e. a *scelus* (*Tr.* 1.2.100, 4.4.37) or a *facinus* (*Tr.* 1.1.97–8; *P.* 1.7.40; 4.4.43–4), nor was it *nefas* (*P.* 2.2.15–16). Instead, his *error* (*Tr.* 2.109–10) was a *culpa* (*Tr.* 1.2.64) and a *vitium* (*Tr.* 4.8.49–50), committed by a *stultus* (*Tr.* 1.2.99–100), *non sapiens*, and *timidus* poet (*P.* 2.2.17–18). Thibault (1964: 36–7) and Nagle (1995) raise the possibility that there to was no *error* at all, rather that *carmen et error* constitutes a hendiadys. On the unlikelihood of such a reading see Ingleheart (2006: 64–5).

²³ *Tr.* 1.1.111–14, 1.9.61–2, 2.1–8, 2.211–12, 2.313–16; *P.* 2.9.73–6, 3.3.37–8. The date of the *Ars Amatoria* is partially debated, as book three may have been later: the *terminus ante quem* is the *naumachia* of 2 B.C.E. (1.171) and the *terminus post quem* is the expectation of a contemporary triumph at 1.177–228, perhaps as late as 2 C.E. See McKeown (1987: 77); Gibson (2003: 38–43); Ingleheart (2010: 4, n. 20). Nagle (1995) postulates that Ovid's *ars* could refer to the *Metamorphoses*, though this is unlikely considering the overt identification at *Tr.* 2.207–52, esp. 211–12: *altera pars causae superseset, qua carmine turpi / arguor obsceni doctor adulterii*, “the other part of the case remains, that I am accused of being a teacher of obscene adultery because of a vulgar poem.”

²⁴ Following the title of Hinds (2007: 214–20).

²⁵ E.g. Cocchia (1902); Ripert (1921); Durling (1958), though this argument has fallen into disuse after Syme (1978: 222).

²⁶ For the law itself see Syme (1939: 443–5); Riccobono (1945: 1.112–28); Bauman (1996: 54); Ingleheart (2010: 3–4). Cf. Cohen (2008: 211), who rightly questions the association between adultery and the specific punishment of *relegatio ad insulam*. Her conclusions further cast doubt on Ovid's association with the imperial family as an adulterer, suggesting instead that Augustus invented a punishment for traitors that was, coincidentally, also employed for adulterers.

²⁷ McGinn (2003: 90) argues that the intention behind the law was to more rigidly define citizens within their respective orders. By defining the sexual status of women (Roman matrons vs. prostitutes, free women vs. slaves), the *lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis* could legitimately classify the rest of the family – lineage could be drawn without confusion only through women. Thus punishment was often harsher for the free *nobiles* who encouraged or patronized prostitutes than for the actual prostitute herself. In fact, in the elite sphere, a adulterous Roman matron would not only endanger her own status, but that of her husband as well, who could be held on charges of *lenocinium* (pimping), if it could be shown that he

story goes as follows: the poet is considered “accessory” (through his *Ars Amatoria*) to the adulteress Julia the younger, Augustus’ granddaughter by his daughter Julia and her second husband Agrippa. Because both Julia and Ovid were banished in 8 C.E., many have been tempted to connect Ovid’s *Ars Amatoria* with the princess’s alleged infidelity.²⁸ The chronology of Ovid’s punishment, however, suffers from a severe discrepancy: why was the poet banished in 8 C.E. for a poem written a decade earlier in 2 B.C.E.? Julia the elder was banished c. 2 B.C.E. (*Tac. Ann.* 1.53); if Ovid’s *Ars Amatoria* had anything to do with adultery in the imperial family, why was he not punished then? A second hypothesis draws upon this skepticism to ascribe the majority of Ovid’s fault to his *error*, and to postulate a lesser, symbolic role for his guilty poem.²⁹ But what, then, was the unforgivable *error* that sent Ovid into exile?

Theories as to the type of political “mistake” that Ovid may have committed (given the evidence available in his exile poetry) tend towards the problem of succession in Augustus’ regime,³⁰ though many are absurd.³¹ Syme’s argument

willingly allowed his wife to continue in an illicit affair. The function of this law (and later the *lex Papia Poppaea* of 9 C.E.) was “more ideological than sociological” (129), geared towards defining the sphere of decent Roman women and their families.

²⁸ Although the dates match there is no reason to believe legal association: see Thibault (1964: 54–67); Ingleheart (2010: 4–5 n. 22). On Julia the younger see Suet. *Aug.* 65.

²⁹ E.g. Norwood (1963); Syme (1978: 215–22); Green (1982: 202–20); Williams (1994: 174 and n. 49).

³⁰ Sidonius Apollinaris’ verses (among our oldest evidence, c. 460 C.E.), may corroborate this fact: he calls Ovid’s Corinna a *caesarea puella*, perhaps implying an illicit affair between Ovid and a member of the imperial family (one of the Julias?). See Thibault (1964: 42–6), who rejects this theory on the grounds that Corinna was renowned even in antiquity for her anonymity (*A.A.* 3.538; *Mar. Epig.* 5.10.10), and that the modern scholarly consensus considers Corinna little more than poetic fantasy (42–52). With regards to the emperor, cf. Thibault (1964: 49): “credulity is further strained by the effort to believe that Augustus could have remained in ignorance for some twenty years that his daughter Julia and Ovid’s Corinna were one and the same woman.”

³¹ E.g. Brooks (1866), who postulates that Ovid somehow witnessed Livia bathing nude (cf. *Tr.* 2.103–10), Ellis (1881), who claims Ovid profaned the mysteries of Isis, or Accursius Pisanus’ claim in 1480 that Ovid committed adultery with the empress herself, something even Ovid would have the presence of mind *not*

remains exemplary for this sort of political analysis, though I must stress that I find it compelling, yet incomplete: a better reading incorporates both a literary and political impetus for exile. He claims that the followers of Augustus' granddaughter Julia the Younger did not necessarily share the emperor's ideas about who would become the next *princeps* and were thus swept aside, an act made easy by her notorious infidelities.³² L. Aemilius Paullus, Syme argues, fell from the emperor's good graces on grounds of treason at the same time as his supposedly unfaithful wife (Julia the younger) in 8 C.E. Julia, however, was "convicted of adultery" (most likely a pretext) with a lover, D. Junius Silanus, and was banished *ad insulam*.³³ As for Silanus, Tacitus reports that Caesar summarily sent him from Rome and Italy (*Ann.* 3.24.3). Although the evidence is incidental, Ovid was banished in the same year (8 C.E.), though under the more severe circumstances of official *relegatio* in Pontus. Augustus added the *Ars Amatoria* to the list of charges against the poet, perhaps in an attempt to obfuscate the political machinations of Julia and her lovers, in which Ovid is assumed to have been involved, whether or not of his own accord. A "fragile and flimsy" charge (accessory to Julia's trumped up adultery?) against Ovid could be augmented with the inclusion of his amatory verses in the imperial accusation: "patent corroboration of nocivity."³⁴

to mention repeatedly in his poetry or his letter to Augustus (Thibault 1964: 69–70, 80–1). As late as 1964, Carcopino (145) claimed Ovid was apart of an elaborate conspiracy of Pythagorean sorcerers.

³² Suet. *Aug.* 65; Syme (1978) follows Boissier (1909: 140–5) and Wilkinson (1955: 298–300).

³³ Levick (1976: 55) takes the sources (*Tac. Ann.* 4.71.4; *Suet. Aug.* 19.1; cf. the *scholium* on *Juv.* 6.158) at face value, that Julia was banished for adultery. See Syme (1978: 220), who gathers these citations and, with characteristic brevity, contends that, "theirs [Julia and Paullus] was a common catastrophe, albeit on different pretexts."

³⁴ Syme (1978: 221).

We need not, however, subscribe to one alternative or the other.³⁵ As I mentioned above, a complete reading must account for Ovid's political *error* as well as the faults (whatever they may have been) of his *carmen*. Ovid never privileges either the *carmen* or the *error* as the sole cause of his exile,³⁶ and despite convincing claims to the contrary, the *Ars* appears to have played an immediate and pressing role in the mind of his accuser, the emperor. Ingleheart follows the middle path:

It is important to follow neither scholars who claim that Ovid's "real" offence was the *Ars*, and that the *error* was adduced merely as a convenient pretext on which Augustus could finally rid himself of Ovid, nor those who suggest that the major offence was the *error*, and that the *Ars* formed an additional, subordinate charge. Given the close link between the *carmen et error* in Ovid's exile poetry, it is inappropriate to distinguish too sharply between them as regards their perceived culpability.³⁷

The part played by Ovid's *Ars* in his trial and sentencing was no despotic afterthought, meant to justify an otherwise shaky prosecution.³⁸ Furthermore, it will become clear later on that Ovid is aware of both the political and poetic implications of his stance in the exilic poems. In fact, if we assume that the *carmen* half of Ovid's offense was fabricated by the emperor to substantiate the necessity of his *relegatio*, the way in which

³⁵ This seems to be Syme's conclusion (1978: 222), although he stresses the political subtext as a means of correcting previous historians: "the conspicuous lack is political sense, and common sense" (216); cf. Syme (1939: 468).

³⁶ Indeed, there appears to be an emphasis on the *duality* of Ovid's mistakes, as at *Tr.* 2.207–12; *P.* 2.9.71–6, 3.3.71–2. Additionally, Ovid seems at odds deciding which mistake was more to blame: at *P.* 3.3.72 Love himself seems to support the *error* ahead of the *Ars*: *Scis aliud quod te laeserit esse magis*, "You know that the other thing [the *error*] has harmed you more," but cf. Ovid at *Tr.* 5.12.46: *uos estis nostrae maxima causa fugae*, "You, [Muses], were the greatest cause of my flight."

³⁷ Ingleheart (2010: 5).

³⁸ The role of the *lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis* supports the interpretation that Ovid was exiled for both the *carmen* and the *error*, and that the perhaps primary nature of his *error* does not rule out the disastrous impact of his *carmen*. Following McGinn (2003), Ovid would have violated the ideological spirit of Augustus' marriage laws by encouraging the kind of behavior among the elite that confused social orders and delegitimized otherwise honorable families. As Davis (2006: 9–22) argues, there appears to have been a rigidly understood Augustan ideology, to the extent that Ovid could take a side against it.

Ovid presents the duality of his sentence further supports his intellectual mockery of Augustus, a fundamental point of the present project. The trumped up charge of “poetic indiscretion” becomes a point of departure for Ovid’s literary response to the emperor, which I argue everywhere focuses on Augustus’ shortcomings as a reader of Latin literature. There was an ever-present power on the part of poetry to affect the reality of Augustan Rome,³⁹ and no Roman was more aware of that power than Ovid.

Politics and Literature in Augustan Rome

Superficially, after 8 C.E., then, Ovid had no political position worth considering: he was *relegatus* in Tomis, a small port on the Black Sea some eight hundred miles away from Rome. Nevertheless the poet had certain political goals: an end to or commutation of his sentence. In order to accomplish this he would have to reshape his relationship with the emperor through his verse epistles, in such a way as to compel his audience (whether or not that included the emperor himself) to support his officially condemned cause. Thus I must stress at the outset that the political Ovid I will analyze was by no means “pro-” or “anti-Augustan,” rather, the appropriate epithet may be “opportunistic,” as he employed whatever rhetorical position he thought might tip the imbalanced scales between himself and Augustus in his favor.⁴⁰

³⁹Syme (1939: 252–58). My reading on the intersection between politics and literature, and the power of literature to effect change (or reflect it) owes much to the work of Ahl (1984); Habinek (1998: 151–70); Woodman and West (1984); Hardie (1992: 59–82); McGowan (2009: 21, 74).

⁴⁰ See Davis (2006: 9–22) for the use of the terms “pro-” and “anti-” with respect to Ovid’s politics, as well as Kennedy (1992); Galinsky (1998: 4–5) cf. Woodman and West (1984). Following these works, I accept the timely *caveat* that no text is truly “pro-” or “anti-Augustan,” but that by necessity it must be open, not limited to any set of political or literary pre-suppositions. On Ovid’s “opportunism,” see Hardie (2002); Oliensis (2004); Johnson (2008) and McGowan (2009).

From the emperor's standpoint, Ovid's opportunism can best be understood in light of his refusal to acknowledge Augustus' *auctoritas*,⁴¹ at a time when acceptance of that authority was transitioning from encouraged to compulsory. Because the power base of the *princeps* originally functioned within republican parameters, imperial authority existed not by mandate, but rather by mutual acceptance.⁴² Ovid's refusal to assume the senatorial stripe (*Tr.* 4.10.33–40) may have been the first step down a dangerous path, on which he did not tacitly accept Augustus' *auctoritas* along with the rest of the Roman elite. In fact, Ovid's exilic poetry sits at a dangerous crossroads in Roman history. At the end of Augustus' life, the republican sentiments by which he had so effectively commanded authority in Rome for more than thirty years began to show their more despotic characteristics: refusal to accept the emperor's *amicitia* and therefore participate in his *auctoritas* was not merely social suicide, it was treasonous. Ovid existed in the space between imperial lackey and outright revolutionary: a Roman citizen who bought into the preservation of republican freedoms (such as his right to

⁴¹ Praise for the emperor in the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* does not consistently follow the paradigm of *auctoritas* I have adapted from Galinsky (1998: 10–41); on the emperor's clemency see Ciccarelli (2002). Augustus is frequently deified (Ovid is one of the earliest poets to make this claim outright) or compared with any number of epic or historic heroes (e.g. Achilles and Alexander the Great in *Tr.* 3.5), encomium befitting a Hellenistic monarch, but not a Roman *princeps*; cf. Theoc. *Idyll* 17 on Ptolemy Philadelphus (r. 285–247 B.C.E.). For *Hellenism* as a major aspect of Roman culture in the late republic, see Zanker (1990: 5–32); cf. Galinsky (1998: 5). For antemortem deification of Augustus see Clauss (1999); Gradel (2002: 109–11), who points out that Ovid's trailblazing deification of the emperor, as well as other private religious images of Augustus must be treated differently from state sanctioned worship and imperial cult, which did not exist during Augustus' lifetime.

⁴² For the preservation and extension of Republican government within and beneath the extra-constitutional powers (embodied in titles such as *pater patriae* or *princeps* itself) of Augustus see Galinsky (1998: 10–41). I follow his usage of *auctoritas* as “[a] kind of mutuality” that “cannot be mandated” (14); see also Woodman and West (1984: 195); Cooley (2009); Welch (2012). For the monarch that existed behind republican curtains, see Brundt and Moore (1967: 16); Kienast (1999: 519–24); Davis (2006); McGowan (2009: 21).

free speech exercised in verse),⁴³ but refused to pay the price for Augustan peace. Ovid's downfall then, represents a crack in Augustus' republican façade, in that the emperor's response required the exercise of tyrannical authority, not mutually recognized *auctoritas*. In the exile poetry, we are witness to the degradation of a time-honored Roman tradition: no longer could talented and influential citizens weave political discourse into works of literature. This reading of a republican leader transitioning into despotism best suits the exile poetry, which includes aspects of encomium and deification suited to a god-ruler, as well as a pervasive rhetorical subtext which encourages political dialogue through an aesthetic medium – a hallmark of both republican and early imperial literature.⁴⁴

This “balance” between poet and emperor is articulated by Oliensis, to whom my reading of Ovid's opportunism owes much. She is right to consider Ovid's “envy, aggression, exaltation, and abasement,” part of a rhetorical chess match between opposed players, rather than outright political dissent.⁴⁵ However, I follow McGowan's reinterpretation that the balance between players is asymmetrical,⁴⁶ and that, as I see it, Ovid can only overcome the power inequality through emphasis on his own poetic authority (and the emperor's implied lack thereof). He can thereby avoid the obvious legal problems inherent in contradicting or second-guessing an imperial decree, while simultaneously supporting his own position and questioning the necessity of such a

⁴³ For Ovid's response to restricted free speech, see Claassen (1986: 158–61); Feeney (1992: 1–25); Forbis (1997: 245–67).

⁴⁴ That Roman literature could encourage political dialogue in aesthetic terms forms the foundation of fundamental studies such as Barchiesi (1994) and (2001); Habinek (1998); cf. Johnson (2011: 77–120) on Horace and civil war. For Ovid, see Habinek (1998: 151–70) on the creation of the imperial citizen.

⁴⁵ Oliensis (2004: 286).

⁴⁶ McGowan (2009: 2–3).

severe exile (both points of argument that could be construed as treason).⁴⁷ Instead of irony employed in the service of dissent, Ovid overcomes his power deficit by constantly referring to his own (self-deprecated) poetry within the fictionalized universe of exile, a tacit reference to the Augustus' ostensible idiocy. This, I believe, changes the nature of his discourse with the emperor,⁴⁸ as presented to the collected Roman elite.

Ovid's manipulation of his relationship with the emperor exists within the dissonance between what he says and what his poetry implies. Claassen identifies Ovid's *sermo absentis* as a fundamental form of contradiction between text and subtext: Ovid bypasses Augustus' banishment from Rome by sending elegiac epistles to the city, thus returning the poet's voice and his *carmina*, both of which were banned.⁴⁹ This gap between text and subtext, the point at which Ovid can be said to be "playing it both ways,"⁵⁰ is fundamental for my reading of Ovid's compositional metaphor, his representation of the exile poetry's audience(s), and his reconfiguration of the exilic landscape. Where Ovid has no freedom to debate (or appeal) the emperor's verdict, he makes good use of his poetic arsenal: Ovid's access to Rome and immortality through

⁴⁷ For the dangers of dialogue with a despot, see Hinds (2007: 209–13, with a *caveat* on 212 about application to the Roman empire), who argues, via Grosrichard (1979: 79–80), that any verbal intercourse with the emperor, whether or not invited, was unwelcome and unnecessary: "In this context Ovid's exile poems can perhaps be read as inherently insubordinate, as having the capacity to mobilize *by their very existence* a poetic of conspiracy" (212, emphasis original).

⁴⁸ See Barchiesi (1994) and Habinek (1998: 9). The former argues for a frequent aestheticization of politics in antiquity (the rendering of political figures or events in literary discourses), while the latter has considered the politicization of aesthetics, i.e., the use of literary texts as the conscious and sometimes unconscious tools of a political elite (Habinek 1998: 9). I do not consider these readings mutually exclusive: Ovid can effectively dictate the terms of the dialogue concerning his own exile to an elite audience through the exilic letters (essentially rendering a political event an aesthetic discourse) while simultaneously empowering his own political position through purely artistic means.

⁴⁹ Claassen (1999: 12); McGowan (2009: 3). A second example can be found above, p. 1 (with n. 3 and 4), where Ovid calls his life in exile death, but that because of exile he owes his life to Augustus.

⁵⁰ The title of Stahl (2002). This methodology is representative of Williams (1994), Claassen (1999) and Hardie (2002).

his poetry undermines imperial condemnation and the emperor's gradual assumption of divine honors.⁵¹

Ovid's letters from exile are not merely valuable as political commentary for the early empire. While they invite speculation about Ovid's involvement in the imperial family and their particularly entertaining dysfunction, they have poetic merit in and of themselves,⁵² though it was ignored for the better part of the twentieth century.⁵³ The rehabilitative efforts of Fränkel (1945) and Wilkinson (1955) did much to throw Ovid's exilic poetry, especially the epistles, into the limelight. My reading of Ovidian poetics in the exilic corpus owes much to four subsequent studies, each of which built from and corrected the historicist assumptions of the previous generation. My discussion of Ovid's poetic journey and audience in exile draw upon Rahn's "Ovids elegische Epistel," which has twofold importance: first, Rahn links Ovid's mythologizing in the exilic epistles to that found in his *Heroides* and *Metamorphoses*. Within this interpretive sphere, Rahn

⁵¹ Here I follow McGowan (2009: 5, with n. 16): "The abiding paradox of Ovid's exile is that the very punishment meant to harm the poet in fact substantiates his position vis-à-vis his punisher, Caesar Augustus: political power to banish with impunity is effectively undercut by the power of poetry to immortalize its subject."

⁵² Any discussion of the literary merits of a text must begin with an overview of the text itself, and it is worth noting here that those of the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* remained dismal into the late 1980s; for histories of textual criticism see Nagle (1980); Tarrant (1983); Richmond (2002). Owen's *P. Ovidius Naso Tristia* (1915) rightly earned Housman's (1915) editorial wrath, and the Budé edition of Andrés (1968) met similar poor reception, leaving only Owen's school commentary on *Tristia* 3, Némethy's (1913) commentaries on the *Tristia* and *Epistulae* (called "superficial" by Nagle 1980: 6), and a few dissertations (Bakker 1946 and DeJong 1951). Luck's (1967–77) translation and commentary on the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*, remained the most acceptable texts, (along with Wheeler's 1924 Loeb) throughout much of the 20th century. Both the *Tristia* and *Epistulae* received appropriate textual attention in the 1990s, however, yielding the now standard editions of Richmond's (1990) *Epistulae* and Hall's (1995) *Tristia* (the editions I rely upon for this study). These texts are not without their own faults, and quality commentaries continue to be produced, including the most recent edition of *Epistulae* 1 by Gaertner (2005) and *Tristia* 2 by Ingleheart (2010).

⁵³ Even at the dawn of the New Criticism, one of Ovid's chief rehabilitators, L. P. Wilkinson (1955) remained so doubtful as to the value of the exilic epistles that "a generous selection based on interest and literary merit would barely include a third" of both works (360). See Nagle (1980: 7 and n. 24) for the importance of Wilkinson (1955) and Fränkel (1945).

develops Ovid's *Odysseus-Rolle*, that is, the ways in which Ovid represents himself as venturing on an epic journey to Tomis.⁵⁴ In 1959, Marg reevaluated Ovid's audience in the *Tristia*, suggesting that the lack of addressees played into a larger Ovidian plot to focus on two balanced characters: the poet and the prince, a crucial observation upon which I will build my fourth chapter. Georg Luck's "Notes on the Language and Text of Ovid's *Tristia*" proved the fallacy inherent in Ovid's own complaints that his exilic letters were derivative and poorly written (e.g. *Tr.* 5.1.69), a fallacy taken at face value by otherwise judicious readers.⁵⁵ Instead, Ovid's letters from Tomis contain the same stylistic nuance, irony, and wit found in his previous works. Thus the poet's supposed claims to deterioration are meant instead to focus audience attention on the finer points of his verse, while the emperor's failure to pick up on these is both highlighted and mocked by Ovid's feigned self-deprecation. Finally, Barchiesi's article "Insegnare ad Augusto: Orazio, Epistole 2.1 e Ovidio, *Tristia* II" reconsidered Ovid's concept of his own poetical doctrine in *Tristia* 2, as advice to the emperor on how to read Latin elegy, in light of the literary-critical focus of Horace's *Epistole* 2.1. Each of these critics has augmented the collective understanding of Ovid's "literary response"⁵⁶ to his exile, punctuated, I believe, with the poet's characteristic self-awareness.

⁵⁴ See also McGowan (2009: 169–201), who claims Ovid dons the characteristics of Homer as well as Odysseus.

⁵⁵ So A. L. Wheeler's (1924: xxxi–xxxii) Loeb edition: "Poetry written amid such surroundings was inevitably monotonous and aroused criticism."

⁵⁶ Nagle (1980: 13); she continues: "whereas in the past, scholars were interested in the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* as Ovid's response to his exile, they are now beginning to recognize the need to interpret these works a literary response."

Ovid's focus on poetry and his own poetical doctrine has for some time been recognized as important to his overall program in the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*.⁵⁷ Betty Rose Nagle has, in turn, focused on what and why Ovid wrote, and how poetry fixes the poet within a larger literary historical discourse. She considers how Ovid adapted traditional poetic imagery (such as the narrative spheres of amorous elegy and didactic), or invented new imagery in order to fit the circumstances of his literary and physical exile. The *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*, I will argue, constitute an intersection between the aesthetic of self-criticism so important to Ovid,⁵⁸ and a thematic focus on the exile's suffering. To this end, Ovid will frequently adjust metaphors in such a way as to emphasize the correlation between his literary and physical exile.⁵⁹ He perverts or exaggerates the Tomitan landscape (the sky, sea, and air) in order to rebrand it as an obstacle not only to physical comfort but also to poetic composition. Finally, he plays upon his relationship with each addressee, particularly fellow poets, orators, or critics (e.g. *P.* 4.2, 4.10, 4.12 and 4.14), to remind his audience of his own singular poetic skill, the injustice of his banishment, and the emperor's foolishness for handing down such a sentence. Ultimately, these manipulations rebalance his relationship with the emperor in

⁵⁷ For the poet's representation of his own poetic act in verse see Wimmel (1960: 287–88, 297–99). This was the traditional means for a poet to comment on his own act of writing: see Nagle (1980: 13, n. 67). For self-awareness see Stroh (1971: 250–3); Galletier (1942); Parker (1969: 94–6). On Ovid's self-consciousness in particular Nagle (1980: 10–15): "Throughout his career Ovid was the most self-conscious of the highly self-conscious Augustan poets; his reflections upon the nature of his art perhaps even increased after he was exiled. His poetry was, after all, one of the causes of his exile."

⁵⁸ Nagle (1980: 13).

⁵⁹ For example, Ovid's *naufragus* metaphors, on which see Cuchiarelli (1997); Tola (2001). These images unify references to the poet's dangerous journey to Tomis, his own political downfall and his aversion to writing new poetry, and are a frequent means for Ovid to focus the poetic attention upon himself: *Tr.* 1.5.35–6, 1.6.7–8, 2.99–102; *P.* 1.2.59–60, 1.5.39–42, 1.6.33–4, 2.2.126, etc.

the eyes of the Roman elite by elevating his poetic act to epic proportions, and insulting the emperor's ability to even comprehend that accomplishment.

How does Ovid begin to realign the dialogue surrounding his own exile while hundreds of miles removed from Rome at Tomis? What can Ovid write to reshape the mind of his audience concerning Augustus, the principate, and the poet's place therein? My second chapter will explore these questions, which, I believe, Ovid answered with his programmatic metaphor, that of the "poetic journey." To demonstrate his own primacy of place within the Greco-Roman literary tradition,⁶⁰ and thus emphasize his poetic claim to immortality in the face of banishment ("death" for Ovid),⁶¹ and undermine the emperor's divine honors,⁶² Ovid depicts himself as enacting a traditional poetic image, one which compares the poet's task to the embarkation of a ship upon a long sea voyage.⁶³ Not only has Ovid employed an image that can be found throughout Greek and Latin poetry (as early Homer, Hesiod, and Alcman and as late as Vergil, Propertius, and Tibullus)⁶⁴ but he has also enacted it within a twofold interpretive

⁶⁰ Something Ovid is at pains to do throughout the exilic epistles. See *Tr.* 2.464–70, 4.10.41–6; *P.* 4.16.

⁶¹ See above, pg. 1 n.4.

⁶² Ovid frequently refers to the emperor's divinity in his exilic works: *Tr.* 1.1.29–32, 71–4, 1.3.10–11, 2.22, 33–41, 215–18, etc.; *Fasti* 1.608, 2.130–32; cf. *Met.* 1.204–5, 15.850–60.

⁶³ Here my reading is indebted to Harrison (2007), whose analysis of the "ocean of *epos*" stops short of Ovidian poetry, treating only Catullus, Vergil, and Horace. For Catullus in the exilic epistles, see Bonvincini (2000).

⁶⁴ The use of sailing as a prominent compositional metaphor existed in antiquity from Hesiod's *nautilia* (*Op.* 618–94; see Rosen 1990) and Ibycus' Polycrates Fragment 282 *PMG* (see Barron 1969: 134; Steiner 2005), both of which contain strong Homeric allusions, suggesting an earlier oral tradition of similar metapoetic statements, on which see Nagy (1982: 66); Thalmann (1984: 152–3). In addition, *Od.* 8.246–53 may constitute a moment of aesthetic intersection between sailing and poetry in Homeric epic, although I find this point more debatable than those cited in Hesiod and later in Ibycus: see Rosen (1990: 103–4, n. 19). In Hellenistic poets the metaphor is essentially standard: Callimachus' *Hymn to Apollo* (2.108–12) directly connects the ocean and sea-faring with the act of composing epic poetry. This archaic metaphor is developed under Roman influence through the filter of Hellenistic poets such as Callimachus: Catullus (64.1–12), Vergil (*Aen.* 2.780–2, 3.11, 7.5–7) and Propertius (4.9) all rely on Greek metaphors relating water and seafaring to the act of writing poetry (Harrison 2007). I contend that Ovid not only adds

sphere.⁶⁵ On the one hand it emphasizes the novelty of his poetic undertaking: the elegiac epistles (which he claimed to have invented at *A. A.* 3.345–6) have reached their formal height in his exile. On the other hand as poet in exile, Ovid has highlighted the novelty of his once purely poetic endeavor, a move made possible only through the emperor's misguided censorship.

This chapter also sets the stage for Ovid's representation of his own poetic act in the exilic works and poses the fundamental question, how did Ovid apply the conceptual voyage to his own poetry? What does his emphasis on compositional metaphor mean for our interpretation of the exilic epistles as a whole?⁶⁶ A close reading of the Latin text will demonstrate not only the ubiquity of this image, but also the fundamental importance to Ovid's overall poetic program as a means to reenact the emperor's misguided reading of Ovidian elegy. I will close my second chapter with a section discussing the implications of this metaphor for Ovid's political position in Rome. Ovid, who has no tangible authority with which to respond to Augustus, instead legitimizes his own poetic position⁶⁷ by questioning that of the emperor. Banishment itself encouraged

his name to this list in the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*, but that in doing so he politicizes an otherwise aesthetic statement on poetic authority: as evidence, we need look no further than the "ship of state" metaphor in Alcaeus fr. 6.

⁶⁵ On the voyage and poetry see Wimmel (1960: 222–23); Cody (1976: 82–7); Fedeli (1985: 134–8); Steiner (1986: 71–5); West (2007: 38–43).

⁶⁶ These are points that have received only cursory treatment in modern scholarly discourse, beyond Rahn's (1958: 115–19) *Odysseus-Rolle*, which I will argue forms only part of a larger poetic program (see chapter 2 below). The most extensive recent contribution is that of Ingleheart (2010: 120–21). For tangentially related material on the "poetic craft" see Kenney (1958: 205–6); Cucchiarelli (1997); Tola (2001); West (2007); on Ovid's epic diction in general see Otis (1970); in these scenes, Evans (1983: 34–6, 40); Ingleheart (2006).

⁶⁷ Ovid develops poetic authority from the semi-divine tradition of Hesiodic poetry (*Op.* 642–6; *Theog.* 22–35) and the Augustan poet's reinterpretation of the ancient term *vates*, used interchangeably for *poeta* (*Met.* 10.143; *Tr.* 1.6.21, 2.426, 3.7.20; *P.* 4.8.67) and *augur* (*Met.* 3.348–49; *Tr.* 1.8.9). On the history of the term itself see Newman (1967).

further poetic production (thereby violating the censorship implied in banishment) and not only served as fodder for new verses, but evidenced Augustus' own inept understanding of Latin poetry. Ovid can change the nature of Roman discourse surrounding his exile by restructuring personal authority on literary grounds, as opposed to the political honors assumed by a brutal revolutionary.⁶⁸

In light of Ovid's self-representation as the archetypal poetic voyager,⁶⁹ the third chapter of this study reevaluates Ovid's place of exile. Just as Ovid aggrandized the perils of his journey into exile, a reflection of the danger inherent in writing poetry after imperial condemnation, so too does the poet manipulate the Tomitan environment in order to reflect the oppressive nature of the emperor's wrath. I argue that the Pontic universe is not merely a manifestation of Ovid's internal misery, but a representation of Augustus' harsh punishment. I explore the counterintuitive prison of the Tomitan constellations, which should function as navigational guides considering their position in the extreme north, and yet are frequently depicted as hindering Ovid's poetic act. I look at the frigid Pontic seas, which prevent the consummate journeyman-poet from continuing his sailing imagery because they remain frozen solid year round. I also consider the barren Tomitan landscape, where the only feasible crop is bitter wormwood, a harsh reversal of the fertility associated with a proper locale for poetic

⁶⁸ In this sense I follow Syme (1939: 2): "The rule of Augustus brought manifold blessings to Rome, Italy and the provinces. Yet the new dispensation, or 'novus status,' was the work of fraud and bloodshed, based upon the seizure of power and redistribution of property by a revolutionary leader." On Augustus' divinity and Ovid's exile, see Galinsky (1998: 312–30), who argues that Augustus had assumed many semi-divine honors by the time of Ovid's exile, and that in the provinces he may have been worshiped outright. Ovid's repetitive prayers to Augustus/Jupiter reflect a "provincialization" or downgrading of the exile's personal authority and status: he has lost his homeland and with it he begins the barbaric practice of worshiping Augustus as *deus praesens*. On the imperial cult and what it meant to "worship" a living emperor, see Clauss (1999); Grabel (2002); McGowan (2009: 98–107, esp. 98 n. 20).

⁶⁹ Expanding on imagery found in Catullus and Vergil. See Harrison (2007).

composition, such as the Italian countryside. Even the local inhabitants, (through, for example, their constant violence) reflect the barbarity implicit in the emperor's callous disregard for intellectual pursuits: who else would banish Rome's leading poetic voice, except the utter barbarian? Unlike Ovidian Rome,⁷⁰ Tomis provides Ovid with none of the "weaponry of poetry" (*carminis arma*, *Tr.* 5.12.51–2).

Ovid's supposed audiences form the subject of my fourth chapter. Here I argue that the exilic epistles gradually shift from a general audience of friends and intellectual companions to the more specific subset of highly educated Roman citizens.⁷¹

Ultimately, this emphasizes the authoritative poetic persona Ovid develops from the outset of *Tristia* 1, obfuscating his obvious dearth of political power. By tainting reality with fiction and mixing poet with persona, Ovid lives out his Augustan condemnation. Not only does he continue his program of depicting life in Tomis as a physical reenactment of his own verse, Ovid also refines the presentation of that enactment, drawing closer parallels to, for example, the *Metamorphoses* or the *Aeneid*. The depth of these connections was targeted at well-educated Roman elites, figures that I have subdivided in this chapter between *sophoi* (intellectuals who appreciate Ovid's literary contribution, though are not necessarily connected to Ovid through friendly or political ties) and *philoï* (loyal friends and relatives who have access to the poet's genius through sheer proximity). These categories, I argue, focus the audience's attention on itself, and ostracize a conspicuously absent interlocutor: the emperor himself.⁷² As I will

⁷⁰ For the comparison, which focuses on the similarities between Roman poet's conception of the Golden Age and Ovid's place of exile, see Williams (1994: 12–25).

⁷¹ On exilic letters see D'Elia (1959: 386–91), comparing Cicero, Ovid and Seneca; Gaertner (2007: 168–72). On exilic literature in general see Claassen (1999).

⁷² For the emperor as Ovid's primary interlocutor in the exilic works, see Marg (1959: 349–50).

demonstrate, Ovid uses different strategies for different circles of friends, but ultimately returns to the development of a persona that mingles reality and poetry, in light of the emperor's inability to read Latin verse.

The final chapter will consider Ovid's compositional metaphor and the subsequent indictment of Augustus within the larger sphere of universal stability and instability. By playing out the emperor's idiocy in a very public forum, Ovid essentially reverses the contemporary Augustan paradigm, in so far as he was envisioned as the ultimate stabilizer and free Romans as beneficiaries of his reign. Instead, I conclude, exile, handed down from the top of the new Roman "republic" has destabilized the most celebrated living voice in Roman poetry. By bringing to light a moment of Augustan instability, Ovid recasts himself and the emperor in more rhetorically balanced roles: the poet as champion of Rome's intellectual aristocracy, and Augustus as the unsophisticated autocrat. Ovid first appealed to this refined audience through poetic subtext, that emphasized the destabilization of the poetic act after exile (an undercurrent present even in *Tristia* 2): Augustus is represented as having destabilized Ovid's poetry by association with the dangerous journey to Tomis and the harsh Pontic countryside. Finally, by condemning and physically removing Ovid, Augustus has destabilized the very definition of high culture in contemporary Rome: access to the elite ruling class was no longer based on family, tradition, refinement, or education, but merely imperial whim. In this way, we can reread the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* as inextricably joined works, bent on delivering their author poetic immortality, ironically, at the expense of the very monarch who attempted to rob him of it

CHAPTER 2
POETRY AND SAILING IN THE *TRISTIA* AND *EPISTULAE EX PONTO*

Narrative action, the poet's aesthetic of self-awareness, and the actual circumstances of Ovid's life intersect in the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*. Ovid, of course, employs metaphors of sailing as a means of recalling his own poetic act.¹ Because the poet enacts this metaphor through his exilic journey, however, the image constitutes a formidable demonstration of poetic novelty and accomplishment.² Furthermore, by merging poet with poetic persona, Ovid enacts his judge's ostensible failure to understand and appreciate the fundamental nuance of Latin poetry that necessitates a separation of narrator from author.³ With characteristic Ovidian wit, this merging is accomplished in the highest Callimachean fashion: Ovid compares the originality of his exilic epistles with the first sea voyage to the Pontus, that of Jason and the Argonauts.

Alongside this mythological adaptation of poetry to reality, are Ovid's frequent compositional metaphors, that of the poetic vessel, literary farm, and the poet's chariot,

¹ On the metapoetic journey over the ocean, see Wimmel (1960: 222–3); Kambylis (1965); Lieberg (1969); Harrison (2007); West (2007: 38–43).

² I wish to stress the extent to which Ovid has adapted and expanded this time-honored theme in Roman poetry. We might compare Horace's *exegi monumentum aere perennius / regalique situ pyramidum altius* (*Odes* 3.30.1–2), where the monumental and epigraphic nature of his verse attests the lasting vitality of Horace's poetic accomplishment (Habinek 1998: 109–12). Ovid's poetry is equal parts monument and inscription, as evidenced at *Tr.* 3.3.71–80, esp. 77–8: *hoc satis in titulo est. etenim maiora libelli / et diuturna magis sunt monimenta mihi*, “this is enough for an inscription. My books are a greater and longer-lasting monument.” Allusions to both Catullus (*libelli*) and Horace (*monimenta*) mimic their claims to literary immortality and simultaneously outdo them, on the one hand with grammatical plurality (implying greater output at the same level of artistry) and on the other hand within the context of extreme duress: Ovid composed quality verse *despite* exile to Tomis, which no predecessor suffered. This, however, is merely the basis for Ovid's self-posturing: his “enactment of verse” involves not merely claiming immortality and proving it with excellent poetry, but, in addition, living out the romance (of his *Amores* and *Ars Amatoria*), danger (of, for example, seafaring in his *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*), and even mythology (by adding himself to the *Metamorphoses* in *Tr.* 1.1.117–22) of his best works. This forms a testament to poetic accomplishment which none of Ovid's fellow Latin poets could claim.

³ For Augustus' misreading, see *Tr.* 2.218–38; cf. Hor. *Ep.* 2.1.1–4. See Wiedemann (1975); Barchiesi (1993); cf. Starbyla (1994) and Davis (1999); Ingleheart (2010: *ad loc.*).

which are evidence for the author's metaliterary comparison between his own poetic act and the Argo myth. References to sailing, farming, and charioteering are traditional for the poetic act, but Ovid combines these images with unprecedented scope and emphasis.⁴ Thus in Ovid's exilic epistles we find a focus on authorial originality, substantiated in frequent and extensive compositional metaphors that fuse fiction with reality. These poetic constructions have no parallel or precedent in terms of frequency or quantity: many authors employ the "poetic vessel" metaphor; none (other than Ovid) within the same passage as the literary farm and poet's chariot.⁵ This emphasis serves to focus the audience's attention on the unique intersection between poetry and reality in the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*, and how that intersection plays into the emperor's misunderstanding of Ovid's earlier works. Furthermore, because Ovid physically sails to Tomis, exile itself becomes his chief literary device, one which compares Ovid's poetic act with his physical journey into exile. In fact, Ovid emphasizes this aspect of his novel poetry from Pontus by reenacting the myth of Jason and the Argonauts, who first sailed the open ocean and first journeyed to Pontus. As a poet in exile, Ovid presents himself as living at the intersection between Rome's favorite literary traditions and the reality of

⁴ By employing not one metaphor for the poetic act, but two or even all three at the same time, Ovid is effectively trumping the usage of such imagery by his predecessors: cf. *Tr.* 1.5.53–5, where even an invincible voice (*vox infragilis*, 53), a heart stronger than bronze (*pectus... firmitus aere*, 53) and many mouths with many tongues (*pluraque cum linguis pluribus ora*, 54) could not describe his many sorrows, a reference to *Il.* 2.488–90, where the narrator also has an unbreakable voice (φωνή δ' ἄρρηκτος, 490) but only a brazen heart (χάλκεον δέ μοι ἦτορ, 490), and merely ten tongues in ten mouths (οὐδ' εἴ μοι δέκα μὲν γλώσσαι, δέκα δὲ στόματ' εἶεν, 489). West (2007: 41) notes that the appearance of compositional metaphors in Latin authors may simply be a response to Greek precedent. Based on this assumption, we can accurately read Ovid's frequent and tripartite compositional metaphors as emphatic references to the traditions of Greek and Latin literature.

⁵ Pairings are rare, but more frequent than Ovid's tripartite arrangement. See esp. those which match the poetic "vessel" and "chariot" types in West (2007: 40–3).

Augustan Italy. The result is a demonstration of his genius as a poet and the emperor's folly in condemning him to exile over a misunderstanding.

Ovid's seafaring images are interrelated on narrative grounds: they frequently depict identical scenes, such as the shipwrecked survivor, they can, nevertheless, be subdivided into two categories, those of sailing, which relate Ovid's physical exile to the act of composing poetry, and those of his shipwreck, which play upon the author's historic fall from grace. The latter image is quite popular, and can be found in direct reference to his verse (*Tr.* 5.12.49–50), the catastrophe of his exile (*Tr.* 2.99–102), and even the role of his friends in his longed-for return (*Tr.* 5.9.15–20). The former image, on the other hand, links the actual journey to Ovid's literary vessel, that is, his act of writing poetry.⁶ Here we can distinguish the Callimachean aesthetic of the *genus tenue* and *genus grande*, that is, the limits of Ovidian elegy as opposed to the expanse of epic verse.⁷ In any case, the poetic vessel itself is a programmatic image in the *Tristia* (1.2.87–90, 1.4.9–12) and the *Ex Ponto* (2.2.27–32). In an attempt to appeal to his highly literate Roman audience, Ovid peppers the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* with

⁶ The image is popular throughout Ovid's pre-exilic works, most notably at the closing of the *Remedia Amoris: hoc opus exegi: fessae date serta carinae; / contigimus portus, quo mihi cursus erat*, "I have completed this work: give the crown to my exhausted vessel; / we have reached our port, to which my course led me" (811–12); cf. *A.A.* 2.9–10, 3.99–100, 3.500; *Rem.* 70, 489, 531–2, 739–40, 789–90; *Fasti* 1.3–4, 772, 3.747–8. It is perhaps quite ironic that Ovid would recycle the primary compositional metaphor of his controversial *Ars* in the *Tristia* and *ex Ponto*.

⁷ On the *genus tenue/genus grande* distinction, see Cody (1976: 83–7). Callimachus' *Hymn* 2.105–12 compares the drawn out verse of Hellenistic epicists to the expanse of the ocean: οὐκ ἄγαμαι τὸν αἰοιδὸν ὃς οὐδ' ὅσα πόντος αἰεῖδει, "I don't esteem the singer who doesn't sing things as great as the sea" (106). See Cameron (1995: 403–7); Harrison (2007: 1); cf. Ovid's poetic "boat in a tiny lake" (*in exiguo... cumba lacu*, *Tr.* 2.330). Ovid's self-conscious poetic vehicle (appropriately a ship, in light of Callimachus' *Hymn to Apollo*) owes much to the literary critical *Aetia* prologue (fr. 1.21–38 Pf.), which references not only the poet's "slim muse" (Μοῦσαν... λεπταλέην, 24; cf. the "slight field" of Ovid's poetry, *tenuis campus*, *Tr.* 2.327) but also his "chariot" (ὄϊφρον, 27; cf. Ovid's charioteer at *Tr.* 1.4.9–16) and poetic "path" (ἵχνια, 26), each of which prefigure Ovidian signposts for metaliterary, self-critical verse. Both passages of Callimachus also include references to the purity of the poet's inspirational waters, on which see *P.* 4.2.15–20 with Williams (1994: 73–7); cf. Hollis (1996: 26–7).

references to a fundamental image for poetic composition throughout Greco-Roman literature, that of the poet's journey over the sea,⁸ an image made all the more powerful by the poet's own enactment of an otherwise purely literary motif. In fact, Ovid's use of these metaphors in close proximity and their unique application to his own historical circumstances were unprecedented moves.⁹ By reinterpreting a traditional metaphor, particularly one so apposite to his own political situation, Ovid absorbs and even surmounts the poetic genius of other poets. This pervasive focus on poetic power undercuts Ovid's description of his banishment, which he considers at best an insurmountable obstacle to the composition of high quality verse, and at worst a form of suppression or execution. The first, most obvious impact of seafaring metaphors can be found in Ovid's thematic adaptations of the diction and themes of epic poetry. As a result, frequent references to the language and scenery of epics such the *Argonautica* become a poetic extension of the overarching seafaring metaphor, meant to emphasize (through the intersection of poetry and reality in Ovid's peculiar case) the novelty of the poetic endeavor and subsequent authority wielded by the author.

⁸ The metaliterary poetic vessel of Callimachus can be traced to archaic Greek verse. The Hesiodic *Works and Days* is among the earliest poems to employ the image, in that the so-called *Nautilia* contains the narrator's poetic *sphragis*: see Nagy (1982: 66); Thalmann (1984: 152–3); Rosen (1990). The use of a κυβερνήτης to describe Hegesichora in Alcman fr. 1.92–101 appears to have escaped the notice of many commentators, who tend to focus on Archilochus (fr. 8, 12, 13, 106 *PMG*), Alcaeus (fr. 6, 73, 208, 249 *Voigt*), Hipponax (fr. 115 *PMG*; cf. *Tr.* 5.8; *P.* 4.3; *Ibis* 447–8, 523–4), Theognis (113–14, 575–6), and Ibycus (fr. S223a), a list to which I would also add Simonides (el. 22 *PMG*: "I want to sail with cargo of the dark-wreathed Muses art..."). The image enters maturity in the *epinikia* of Pindar, where one finds the path of words (*O.* 1.110, 9.47); the Muses' chariot (*O.* 9.81; *I.* 2.2); the poetic vessel (*P.* 11.39; *N.* 3.26–7; *O.* 13.49); the pitfalls of poetic composition (*P.* 10.51 – 2); destiny, fate and personal ruin (*P.* 1.86, 10.72; *O.* 12). On these images see Steiner (1986: 72–9) and cf. Bacchylides 12.1–6.

⁹ In addition to Ovid's unique insertion of his own sea voyage into the metaphor, the appearance of all three images at once is unprecedented: cf. the limited Greek, Indic, and Nordic examples in West (2007: 40–3). Each instance appears individually or in pairs in previous authors, but never with the frequency or density found in Ovid. Only Vergil (*G.* 1.40–2) comes close, where the author's characteristically vague language could refer either to sailing or chariotteering with respect to verse composition; see Thomas (1988: *ad loc*); Mynors (1994: *ad loc*); Harrison (2007: 4).

Thematic Adaptations: Jason and the Argonauts

The goal of Ovid's thematic adaptations of epic from the outset of *Tristia* 1 was a commutation of his sentence through self-fashioning as a poet-hero. If he could appeal to the aesthetic refinement upon which his addressees prided themselves, Ovid could demonstrate his intellectual and cultural value. Helmut Rahn has already recognized how Ovid accomplishes as much through his frequent comparisons with Odysseus,¹⁰ but I wish to focus not on the legendary characters that Ovid adopts in the creation of his own persona, but rather the mythic framework with which he presents his journey to Tomis. If Ovid himself is worse off than Odysseus (*Tr.* 1.5.45–84) and more talented than Homer (*Tr.* 1.1.47–8) then, I will argue, his journey to Tomis surpasses the *Argonautica* myth in originality: just as the Argonauts were the first to sail the sea, Ovid is the first to cleave the unknown waters of exilic elegy.¹¹ In this section, I will discuss two traditions, that of the *Odyssey* and the *Argonautica*. Because the role of the *Odyssey* has been well established by my predecessors,¹² I will here focus on how Ovid adopts the *Argonautica* to his own comparison between poetry and sailing. This association figures prominently in programmatic positions: *Tristia* 1.1 and 1.10, two poems that demonstrate Ovid's commitment to the *Argonautica* myth as a means to

¹⁰ Rahn (1958). See *Tr.* 1.2.11–12, esp. 1.5.57–80, 3.11.61–2, 5.5.1–4, 5.5.51–2; *P.* 2.7.57–64, 2.9.41–2, 3.1.53, 3.6.19–20, 3.6.29–30, 4.10.21–8, 4.14.33–6.

¹¹ The primacy of the Argo's voyage to Pontus is evidenced at *P.* 3.1.1: *aequor Iasonio pulsatum remige primum* ("sea first struck by the Jason's oars..."); cf. *Met.* 6.719–21: *ergo ubi concessit tempus puerile iuventae, / vellera cum Minyis nitido radiantia villo / per mare non notum prima petiere carina*, "And so when childhood ended they they sought out the brilliant pelt, with shiny fur, along with the Minyans, on a ship through the unknown sea," and *Od.* 12.69–72, in which the Argo is described as "known to all" (πᾶσι μέλουσα, 70), an important comment not only on the primacy of the myth (for the epithet to make sense it must be thought to predate the *Odyssey*), but also on the popularity of that epic tradition; see Heubeck and Hoekstra (1989: 2.121); West (2005); Harrison (2007: 3). Cf. *Tib.* 1.3.35–50, on the end of the golden age and the beginning of martial epic with the sailing of the Argo.

¹² On epic and the *Odyssey* in Ovid's exilic epistles, esp. *Tr.* 1, see Rahn (1958); Evans (1983: 34–6, 40) Claassen (1999: 68–72); Ingleheart (2006 and 2010); McGowan (2009: 169–202).

demonstrate his own originality and importance within the Latin literary tradition. Only Ovid's elite, well-educated readers would appreciate his self-posturing with respect to these mythic traditions, and only these *sophoi* would understand the implications of matching and surpassing Odysseus, Jason, Homer, and Apollonius.

Although the Argo myth takes a backseat to the *Odyssey* in the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*,¹³ its first reference (placed at the end of Ovid's first exilic book, *Tr.* 1.10) creates a powerful subtext for Ovid's adoption of a mytho-epic *persona* meant to emphasize his poetic authority.¹⁴ *Tristia* 1.10 includes an extensive, veiled comparison between Ovid's poetic act and the Argo myth, a particularly poignant tactic, since this poem recounts the author's historic journey to Tomis. The *Argo* myth becomes important, then, for Ovid's characterization of his journey as a new *Argonautica* (a role that functions alongside frequent comparisons between the author and Odysseus): his exilic elegy is a poetic endeavor as daring as the first ship to ever sail the open ocean.

On its surface, *Tristia* 1.10 purports to be a geographic description of Ovid's journey to Tomis, yet a close reading reveals thematic references to the Argo myth. The poem opens with a prayer to Minerva (*Tr.* 1.10.1–4):

Est mihi sitque, precor, flauae tutela Mineruae,
nauis et a picta casside nomen habet.

¹³ For the *Odyssey* and Odysseus see *Tr.* 1.1.105–14 (the *Ars* is called "Telegonus," cf. *Ibis* 567–8), 1.5.45–84; 3.9.61–2, 5.5.1–4, 51–2; *P.* 3.1.53–4, 6.19–20 (cf. *Ibis* 277–8) 4.10.9–34, 14.35. For Jason and the Argonauts: *Tr.* 1.4.21–46; *P.* 1.3.75–6.

¹⁴ In this section I will present new evidence for the relationship between Ovid's exilic *persona* and that of Jason and the Argonauts, crucial to the poet's self-representation as one who explores the "novel waters" of original poetry. On the author's association between his own person and mythic exempla see Rahn (1958); Broege (1972); Nisbet (1982: 51–2); Claassen (2001: 32–4); McGowan (2009). Rahn (1958: 106) is especially informative with regards Ovid's *Odysseus-Rolle*: "[at this point] the old game of mythological disguise enters a new, incomparably more significant [area]... the elegiac epistle becomes the means of poetic self-representation, that the author has designed and suggested his own fate in his poetry." For Ovid's *persona* (often considered in light of his erotodidactic role in amatory elegy), see Nagle (1980: 71–82); Kenney (1982: 443); Chwalek (1996: 32–3); Amann (2006: 45).

siue opus est uelis, minimam bene currit ad auram,
siue opus est remo, remige carpit iter.

As there is now, may there ever be, for me, I pray, blonde Minerva's protection, and my ship bears her name from her painted helm. Whether she needs sails, she runs well under the slightest breeze, or if it's the oar that's needed, the rowers rush her journey onward.¹⁵

Ovid's ship is not only blessed and protected by Minerva, famous for her oversight of Odysseus and Telemachus in the *Odyssey*,¹⁶ but its very construction is a testament to her influence: the Latin *tutela* can refer to the intangible protection provided by a deity, as well as the actual image of the god or goddess attached to the bow of a ship. These lines connect the poetics of *Tristia* 1 with the primary sea-voyage of the *Argo*: both Ovid's vessel and that of the Argonauts were constructed under the protection of Minerva,¹⁷ and both, through the association of poetry and seafaring, undertook a novel and dangerous endeavor. Because *Tristia* 1.11 forms a sort of "epilogue," in which Ovid describes the circumstances of composition for the previous ten poems (1.11.1–2) and directly addresses his poetic audience, rather than a hidden addressee (*candide lector*, 1.11.35), poem 1.10 closes out the action of the first book. In fact, Ovid recalls the structure of Callimachus' *Aetia*, which also effectively ended with a return to the *Argo*

¹⁵ All translations are my own.

¹⁶ Rahn (1958: 115–118) considers these lines evidence for his *Odysseus-Rolle*. Although right in assigning them to Ovid's self-glorifying comparisons with Odysseus, he misses the key references to Minerva's role in the construction of the *Argo*, and thus the double-headed comparison: Minerva protects Ovid/Odysseus as a character, but also oversees Ovid's exilic poetry/Argonautic-journey. Cf. Nagle (1980: 166), who considers Ovid's special relationship with Minerva: he was born on the day of her festival, the Quinquatrus (*Tr.* 4.10.13–14).

¹⁷ Cf. *Tr.* 3.9.7, on the *Argo*: *nam rate, quae cura pugnacis facta Mineruae*; for the poet's association between Minerva and his verse, see also *Tr.* 3.14.13–14: *Palladis exemplo de me sine matre creata / carmina sunt: stirps haec progeniesque mea est*.

myth.¹⁸ Ovid's return functions, however, as an extended self-aggrandizement¹⁹ familiar from, for example, the conclusion of the *Metamorphoses* (15.871–9), but hidden in a reference to the *Argonautica* (*Tr.* 1.10.5–12):

nec comites uolucris contenta euincere cursu,	1.10.5
occupat egressas quamlibet ante rates,	
fert pariter flatus atque assillientia longe	
aequora, nec saeuis uicta fatiscit aquis.	
illa, Corinthiacis primum mihi cognita Cenchreis,	
fida manet trepidae duxque comesque fugae,	1.10.10
perque tot et uentos et iniquis concita uentis	
aequora Palladio munere tuta fugit.	

Neither is she content to defeat her companions with her swift course, but she overtakes other ships no matter how much earlier they set out, and equally she bears the blowing winds and the dashing waves, nor does she grow weary, defeated by savage waters. She, first known to me in Corinthian Cenchreae, remained faithful as both leader and companion in fearful flight, safe by the gift of Minerva through so many winds and waves stirred up by hated gales.

The *Minerva* (Ovid's ship) acts as code for his poetry, and as such it outstrips (*vincere*, 5) other "vessels" on similar paths (contemporary poets), even those that set out earlier (*egressas...ante rates*, his Latin and Greek predecessors). She is also unaffected by the dangers of the sea (7–8), a second code for the unpredictable nature of individual fortune – a major theme in Ovid's exilic epistles.²⁰ Finally, the *Minerva* was Ovid's leader and companion in exile (*trepidae duxque comesque fugae*, 10), and his source of safety (*tutela*, 1.10.1; *tuta*, 12). The protective guidance of his ship intersects with Ovid's

¹⁸ Fr. 108 Pf. (Ἀργῶ καὶ σέ, Πάνορμε, κατέ ὄραμε καὶ τεὸν ὕδωρ) is the last to precede the *Coma Berenices*, which was most likely added in a later edition.

¹⁹ See Nagle (1980: 71–109; 165–66) for Ovid's self-glorification (e.g. *Tr.* 4.10) in the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*.

²⁰ In addition to those Greek authors cited above, the danger of seafaring can be found in Latin Elegy: Prop. 1.17; 2.25; Tib.3.7.173, 193–7.

own confessions as to the nature of his poetry: that he wrote for *utilitas*,²¹ that is, to forget his misery. Just as Ovid's ship had the power to protect him from the dangers of a long journey at sea, his poetry can soften the misery of exile to Tomis. Taken together, the entire encomium of Ovid's ship stands as an extended praise for his own verse, which, like the unprecedented voyage of the *Argo*, travels an unknown and dangerous path, ultimately to the benefit of its pilot. This interpretation of the metapoetic connection between Ovid's sea voyage and the act of composing the *Tristia* hinges on Ovid's mythologizing in *Tristia* 1.10, which tends not towards the *Odyssey*, but rather the *Argonautica*.

Tristia 1.10 provides ample evidence for authorial focus on the primacy of the *Argo* myth. In addition to the protection afforded by Minerva for both the Argonauts and Ovid, the author's geographic list recalls the *Argonautica* three times. The passing mention of the Sestos, Abydos, and Dardania (1.10.24–8) begins the list of places visited by the *Minerva* on her lonely trip,²² which, coupled with the Helle myth (*quodque per angustas uectae male uirginis undas*, 27), form a familiar set of geographic and mythic identifiers for the Hellespont region. From there Ovid continues on to Cyzicus, where he is careful to emphasize the island's foundation myth (*Cyzicon, Haemoniae nobile gentis opus*, 30). In fact, the Argonauts made just the same journey (in the same order, within the same passage) through the Hellespont (specifically past Abydos and Dardania: Δαρδανίην δὲ λιπόντες ἐπιπροσέβαλλον Ἀβύδῳ, 1.931; the Hellespont,

²¹ *Utilitas*: *Tr.* 4.1.7–14; *P.* 1.5.55–8; 3.9.55–6; McGowan (2009). Ovid also claims to write for his own *gloria* and that of his addressees: *Tr.* 1.6.33; 3.7.49–52; 4.10.129–30; 5.1.23–4; *P.* 2.6. For the origin of these themes in erotic elegy and their usage in Ovid's exilic poetry, see Stroh (1971: 235–49, 250–53, 262–63); Nagle (1980: 71–80).

²² Ovid chose a land route from Thrace to Tomis: *nam mihi Bistonios placuit pede carpere campos*, 1.10.23.

1.935) finally arriving at Cyzicus. There, an extended stay by the Argonauts (1.936–1078) resulted in the tragic death of the city’s eponymous founder.²³ As if these references were too heavily veiled for Ovid’s learned readers, the *Minerva* next passes safely through the Cyaneae (*transeat instabilis strenua Cyaneas*, 1.10.34), past Thynia and Apollo’s city. While Thynia may be a veiled reference to the famous prophet of *Argonautica* 2, Phineas,²⁴ the mention of the Cyaneae and Apollo are surely meant to echo the opening lines of the *Argonautica* (1.1–4):

Ἀρχόμενος σέο Φοῖβε παλαιγενέων κλέα φωτῶν
 μνήσομαι οἷ Πόντοιο κατὰ στόμα καὶ διὰ πέτρας
 Κυανέας βασιλῆος ἐφημοσύνη Πελῖαο
 χρύσειον μετὰ κῶας ἐύζυγον ἤλασαν Ἄργῳ.

I begin with you, Phoebus, as I recall the famous deeds of ancient-born men, who at the command of King Pelias, through the mouth of the Pontus and past the Cyanean rocks drove the well-benched Argo after the Golden Fleece.

Ovid situates his journey to Tomis within the realm of a pre-Odyssean tradition. Just as Ovid’s ship, the *Minerva*, sails through the physical landscape of the Pontus region, so too does his poetry venture through the original poetic landscape of the *Argonautica*, placing Ovid’s own poetic contribution alongside the origins of Greek and Latin poetry. To further emphasize his self-association with the Argo myth and to balance his prayer to Minerva, with which he opened the poem, Ovid closes *Tristia* 1.10 with a prayer to two of the more famous Argonauts, Castor and Pollux (*Tyndaridae*, 1.10.45). He asks that they may favor his ship, whether it pass through the Symplegadae (*parat*

²³ Cyzicos is called “son of Aeneus” (ἐν δ’ ἥρωσ Αἰνήϊος υἱὸς ἄνασσε / Κύζικος, *Arg.* 1.948–9), who himself may have been among the Argonauts, though this is not the case in Apollonius’ account. For a list of the Argonauts see Apollon. 1.32–228; Apollod. 1.9.16; Hyg. *Fab.* 14.

²⁴ Part of Bithynia, named for Thynus, the son of Phineas, who figures prominently in *Arg.* 2.178–528.

Symplegadas ire per artas, 47) or sail the Bistonian seas (*scindere Bistonias...aquas*, 48).

Just as Ovid's poetic *periplous* in *Tristia* 1.10 can be traced back to the *Argonautica*, so too can his over-arching association between navigation and poetic composition. When the Argonauts disembark, Apollonius compares their rowing to a choral dance (1.536–41):

οἱ δ', ὥστ' ἠίθεοι Φοῖβω χορὸν ἢ ἐνὶ Πυθοῖ
ἢ που ἐν Ὀρτυγίῃ ἢ ἐφ' ὕδασιν Ἴσμηνοῖο
στησάμενοι, φόρμιγγος ὑπαὶ περὶ βωμὸν ὄμαρτῆ
ἐμμελέως κραιπνοῖσι πέδον ῥήσσωσι πόδεσσιν –
ὥς οἱ ὑπ' Ὀρφεῖος κιθάρῃ πέπληγον ἔρετμοῖς
πόντου λάβρον ὕδωρ, ἐπὶ δὲ ῥόθια κλύζοντο. 1.540

And just as young men begin a dance to Phoebus or Pytho, whether at Ortygia or around the waters of Ismenus, and together, around the altar to the rhythm of the lyre in time they strike the ground with swift feet – so they struck the surging sea with their oars to the sound of Orpheus' lyre, and the waves crashed over their blades.

From its outset the narrative progression of Apollonius' epic is couched in metaphors relating seafaring and poetry. A long string of adverbial modifiers emphasizes the harmony and rhythm of the Argonauts' rowing motion: like dancers they move to the sound of the lyre (*φόρμιγγος ὑπαὶ*, 538) together (*ὄμαρτῆ*, 538) and in time (*ἐμμελέως*, 539). Apollonius reverses the imagery of Alcman's *Partheneion* (fr. 1.92–101 *PMG*), which compared dancers to sailors and their leader (Hegesichora) to a helmsman. Instead (or perhaps, in keeping with the archaic image), Apollonius' sailors are like dancers, striking the sea (*πέπληγον ἔρετμοῖς / πόντου λάβρον ὕδωρ*, 541–2) with the same musicality that dancers move about the altar (*περὶ βωμὸν*, 538), and the leader is no helmsman, but the archetypal poet himself, Orpheus. It is this association, between sailing and poetry, with which Ovid colors his *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* – an

important and effective comparison because Ovid enacts both sides of the metaphor, that is, he is helmsman of both his exilic letters and the *Minerva*. But we need not rely solely on similarities between Ovidian metaphors and those of his predecessors: the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* contain diction suited to Ovid's metaliterary connection between sailing and poetry, meant to emphasize the novelty of his endeavor.

As Helmut Rahn has argued, Ovid's mythologizing in *Tristia* 1 sets the stage for his *Odysseus-Rolle* throughout the first book. Indeed, Rahn calls the first book Ovid's "Odyssey."²⁵ To this argument I have added Ovid's extensive adaptation of the Argo myth, crucially at the close of *Tristia* 1, where Ovid recaps his mytho-poetic journey not in terms of the *Odyssey*, but in fact the earlier voyage of the Argonauts. This return to the origins of poetry itself (both the *Odyssey* and the Argo myth) signals Ovid's claim to poetic ingenuity and preeminence, and is replayed throughout his adaptations of the "poetic vessel" and "ship of fate" metaphors outlined below. The return is also indicated, however, by Ovid's use of a Latin vocabulary whose semantic range emphasized the conflation of the poetic act with navigation.

Metapoetic Adaptations: The Vocabulary of Sailing

Ovid's claims to poetic novelty through a reenactment of the Argo myth parallels the work of other Latin poets, who had previously employed the same diction and themes in order to demonstrate their originality.²⁶ Indeed, Ovid's poetic journey to Tomis can be seen as an enactment of what had become a popular poetic device in the late republic and early empire. Catullus, for example, drew heavily on the *Argonautica* for his

²⁵ Rahn (1958: 116).

²⁶ Particularly Vergil and Catullus: see Nelis (2001); Harrison (2007).

epyllion (poem 64), and provides an earlier example of the type of the themes outlined above, as well as the vocabulary crucial to Ovid's self-fashioning (64.1–12):

Peliaco quondam prognatae vertice pinus
dicuntur liquidas Neptuni nasse per undas
Phasidos ad fluctus et fines Aeeteos,
cum lecti iuvenes, Argivae robora pubis,
auratam optantes Colchis avertere pellem 64.5
ausi sunt vada salsa cita decurrere puppi,
caerulea verrentes abiegnis aequora palmis.
diva quibus retinens in summis urbibus arces
ipsa levi fecit volitantem flamine currum,
pineae coniungens inflexae texta carinae. 64.10
illa rudem cursu prima imbuat Amphitriten.
quae simul ac rostro ventosum proscidit aequor...

They say that pine trees born atop Pelion once sailed through the flowing waters of Neptune to the Phasian waves and the borders of Aeetes, when select young men, the strength of the Argive youth, desiring to snatch the golden fleece from Colchis dared to rush over salt waves in a swift ship, brushing the deep-blue seas with palm wood oars. The goddess who looks over citadels in the high cities herself made the craft, which would fly under a gentle breeze, joining together the worked pine beams of the curved ship. That boat first touched the youthful sea with its course. As soon as it carved the windy sea with its bow...

Stephen Harrison has argued that these references to the *Argonautica* extend beyond shared plot: Catullus' epyllion is so unique in the history of Latin literature that it effectively rewrites the book on epic (with a nod to Hellenistic compositional aesthetics), making his contribution at least as important as the very institution of the genre itself, embodied in the Argo myth.²⁷ The language and themes recall the metapoetry of Pindar and Callimachus, first through emphasis on the vessel itself, and second on the seafaring path of the ship. Pindar focused on his own poetic vessel, whether ship (*P.* 11.39; *N.* 3.26–7; *O.* 13.49) or chariot (*O.* 9.81; *I.* 2.2). In Catullus *currum* ("chariot," 64.9) can function as a poetic expression for a boat (*OLD* 2). Harrison groups this

²⁷ Harrison (2007: 3–4).

expression with *decurrere* (6) and *cursu* (11), both of which recall the progress of poetry or prose.²⁸ Catullus' *cursu* (11) over the sea (*aequora*, 7 and *aequor*, 12) recalls Apollo's warning in the *Aetia*, that the poet should stick to untried paths (ἑτέρων ἵχνια μὴ καθ' ὁμά / δίφρον ἔλᾶν, 1.26–7 Pf.), and his estimation of the immensity of epic (“things as great as the ocean,” ὄσα πόντος, *Hymn* 2.106 Pf., or “the flow of the Assyrian river,” Ἄσσυρίου ποταμοῖο...ῥόος, *Hymn* 2.108 Pf.). Finally the plowing motion of *proscidit* (12) can also be used in poetic fashion to refer to the composition of verse. In fact, plowing in general was related both to the act of writing²⁹ as well as sailing,³⁰ making it the perfect verb for connecting the two disparate images.³¹ Fundamental for our discussion must be Ovid's etymological link between his place of exile, Tomis, and the Greek τέμνω in *Tristia* 3.9. This connection plays on the alternating usage of the verb for sailing/writing, and emphasizes the author's overlap between his exilic reality and the fictions of his exile poetry. Finally, the Argonauts “dared” (*ausi sunt*, 6) to set out over the sea, in keeping with the literary dangers faced by a poet.³²

²⁸ Cf. the usage to “read through” in Quin. 9.2.48, 10.3.17; Plin.7.16.15; or “to sing” in Stat. *Silv.* 5.3.149: *equum pugnasque virum decurrere versu*, which must be related to the passage Harrison (2007: 4) cites from Hor. *Sat.* 1.10.1: *incomposito dixi pede currere versus*.

²⁹ Of plowing: Lucr. 5.209; Var. *R. R.* 1.10.1, 27.2, 29.2; Verg. *G.* 2.237; of writing: Cic. *Att.* 12.1, 13.38, 16.6; *Fam.* 9.26, 12.20; cf. *Tr.* 3.7.1–2 (which may refer to either writing or versification); of composing verse: Prop. 3.5.19: *me iuvat in prima coluisse Heliconia iuventa*, “it was helpful for me to cultivate Helicon, in my youth,” i.e. to compose poetry, cf. *P.* 4.2.11–12; of satirical or defamatory verse: *P.* 4.16.47; Suet. *Aug.* 13, *Calig.* 30. Ingleheart (2010: 274) notes that verbs of plowing are used for verbs of writing in the early fragments of Roman Comedy: Atta Com. 13; Tintin. Com. 160; cf. Mart. 4.86.12: *inuersa pueris arande charta*.

³⁰ *Aen.* 2.780; *Am.* 2.10.33; *Met.* 4.707.

³¹ Cf. the use of “plowing” or “cutting” verbs in Greek poetry: *Od.* 2.434; Ibycus fr. S223a *PMG*: βαθὺν ἄερα τάμνων; Pindar, *Pyth.* 6.1–4, *Nem.* 6.33; Call. fr. 399 Pf., fr. 572 Pf.; Apollon. 1.1167, 2.332–33, 660–68, 774–5, 4.225–6, 980; Prat. fr. 712 *PMG*.

³² Pin. *P.* 10.51–2; cf. Prop. 1.17.

Vergil draws on similar vocabulary for those crucial moments when he comments on his own poetic enterprise, such as the “course” (*cursum*) and “daring undertakings” (*audacibus coeptis*) in his programmatic address to Caesar (*da facilem cursum atque audacibus adnue coeptis*, “give an easy course and nod assent to my daring beginnings, G. 1.40–1).³³ The movement of Catullus (as well as the Argonauts) through the Argo myth is echoed by Vergil’s use of *decurrere* to describe Maecenas’ reading of the *Georgics* (*tuque ades inceptumque una decurre laborem*, “and you be favorable and go through the work I’ve begun,” 2.39). At crucial points in the *Aeneid* as well, Vergil makes programmatic references to the ocean. When Aeneas leaves Troy, prepared to begin his miniature *Odyssey*, Creusa prophesies that there is a vast level of ocean (*vastum maris aequor*) which Aeneas “must plow” (*arandum*, 2.780–2), a veiled reference to the remaining books of the *Aeneid*. Furthermore, when the epic transitions to its Odyssean section (books 3–6), Aeneas proclaims *feror exul in altum*, “I am born an exile on the deep” (3.11). This stresses the “voyage” of the poem in literal and metaliterary terms. When Vergil begins the Iliadic section of his epic (books 7–12), Aeneas “sets sail,” once again (after burying Caieta, *Aen.* 7.5–7), only this time on quiet seas, as opposed to the stormy weather in which we first encounter him.³⁴

³³ Harrison (2007: 4–5).

³⁴ Harrison (2007: 6–7). To Harrison’s analysis we might add [Tibullus] 4.1.191–6 (=3.7.192–7), in which the author promises to engage both Pierian homage (*Pierii... honores*, 191) in his poetry for Messala, and to dare (*ausim*, 193) to venture out over the swift waves of the (presumably epic) sea (*rapidas... maris ire per undas*, 193). For Propertius, the image of the poetic vessel defines the limits of love elegy and his own poetic process: cf. 1.6.1–2, 2.14.1–4, 29–30, 2.25, 26a; 3.3.15–16, 9 (*passim*), 21 (*passim*, perhaps the author’s rejection of amorous elegy and adoption of the mythic and epic Roman themes found in book four). See also Hor. *Od.* 4.15.3–4; Manilius 3.26.

Seafaring Language in Ovid

Just as Catullus in poem 64, so Ovid frames his poetic act with references to the Argo tradition as a means to emphasize poetic originality.³⁵ Indeed, the extent to which he adopts the two categories of sailing metaphors (the ship of life and poetic vessel) to this end in the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* is staggering.³⁶ In each case, these passages highlight his poetic redirection towards the roots of Greek poetry. By rewriting himself into the elegiac tradition and consequently altering the very nature of the epic and elegiac genres, Ovid demonstrates his own centrality to the history of Latin literature. Because of Ovid's banishment, however, metaphors of sailing are applicable to his historic journey to Tomis as well as to his poetic act, effectively surpassing previous uses in extant Latin literature, which were merely poetic tropes with little to no basis in reality. Ovid achieves even greater fame *because* he was exiled: imperial banishment becomes yet another weapon in the poet's arsenal of self-glorification, as he can now enact the popular poetic metaphor, unlike any other previous poet.³⁷ First, by adopting the language of his predecessors, Ovid demonstrates his debt: the use of seafaring imagery established originality and popularity for the poetic programs of Catullus and Vergil, but only Ovid lived what he wrote.³⁸ Having thus surpassed the accomplishments of his predecessors, Ovid's statements on poetic authority defy imperial attempts to silence the poet or torture his genius with exile.

³⁵ On this phenomenon see esp. Breed (2000).

³⁶ A count from the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* based on passages gathered manually for this project yields sixty one separate sailing metaphors, and nearly as many independent instances of other metapoetic images, such as charioteering or farming.

³⁷ Ingleheart (2010: 120–21) identifies the novelty of this usage, but not its pervasive importance.

³⁸ A claim Ovid prides himself on at *Tr.* 1.5.79–80 and 4.10.105–10. He even advises Albinovanus Pedo to do the same, at *P.* 4.10.71–84.

As a case study of Ovid's seafaring vocabulary, we may return to *Tristia* 1.10. We have already considered how this poem thematically recalled the origins of seafaring through the *Argonautica*. Let us also consider the linguistic cues that link Ovid's exilic journey to the metaliterary voyages found in Catullus and Vergil. Ovid's ship sails well (*bene currit*, 1.10.3), overtaking other ships in their course (*cursu*, 1.10.5), just as Catullus' Argonauts sailed (*decurrere*, 64.6) their own course (*cursu*, 64.11). His vessel carves a path to Pontus (*vasti secet ostia Ponti*, 1.10.13) and cuts through the Bistonian waves (*scindere Bistonias... aquas*, 1.10.48), as did Catullus' Argo (*proscidit*, 64.12).³⁹ In light of these metaliterary references,⁴⁰ Ovid's diction at 1.10.23–4 becomes particularly important: *nam mihi Bistonios placuit pede carpere campos: / Hellespontiacas illa relegit aquas*, "for it was pleasing for me to make my way to the Bistonian fields on foot: and for her [the *Minerva*] to sail back through the waters of the Hellespont." Ovid's journey "on foot" (*pede*, 23) through Thrace plays on the poetic nature of his journey: as he travels he composes poetry in meter and divided into "feet."⁴¹ Furthermore, the journey of the *Minerva* back through the Hellespont indicates a poetic journey within the bounds of previously treated epic, the *Argonautica*, though under the auspices of Ovid's new poetic endeavor. The verb choice reflects this reading: *relegit* (24) can mean to travel or sail,⁴² but etymologically it indicates the act of

³⁹ Cf. *Met.* 7.1, on the Argonauts: *iamque fretum Minyae Pagasaea puppe secabant*, "Now the Argonauts were cutting the waves in their ship, from Minyan Pagasae."

⁴⁰ Ovid employs verbs of cutting for both sailing and writing. Cf. the use of *caedo* at *Tr.* 3.3.71–2: *quosque legat versus oculo properante viator, / grandibus in tumuli marmore caede notis*, "in the marble tomb carve these words, in huge letters, which the traveler may read with a swift eye;" cf. the usage of *aratur* (to plow or write) at *Tr.* 2.327 with Ingleheart (2010: *ad loc.*).

⁴¹ Ovid is not above this type of word play in his exilic poems, with which he opened the more playful *Am.* 1.1.1–4; cf. *Tr.* 2.1.15–16, with Hinds (1985: 18–20), 3.1.21–2, 3.1.53–6, 3.7.9–10; *P.* 4.5.3–8.

⁴² Cf. *Aen.* 3.690; *Val. Fl.* 4.54, 8.121; *Stat. Achill.* 1.23.

reading or relating a story again.⁴³ In addition to the thematic similarities between Ovid's journey to the Black Sea and that of the Argonauts, these metaliterary moments confirm an Ovidian claim to poetic primacy and originality.

Just as *Tristia* 1.10 forms an exclamation point to the sailing/writing imagery of the previous nine poems, poem 1.11, the final poem in *Tristia* 1 (and a sort of poetic epilogue), more explicitly explains Ovid's metaliterary program. Ovid claims that he wrote while he was sailing, and that sailing had an impact on his compositional act: *saepe maris pars intus erat; tamen ipse trementi / carmina ducebam qualiacumque manu*, "often part of the sea was on my ship, nevertheless I was writing whatever verses I could with a trembling hand" (1.11.17–18).⁴⁴ Ovid's pages themselves were stained with seawater: *iactator in indomito brumali luce profundo, / ipsaque caeruleis charta feritur aquis*, "I am tossed in the oppressive deep on a wintry day, and my very pages are beaten with seawater" (39–40). The physical connection between the ocean and Ovid's poetry is nowhere more clear than these lines, and the image of a stained page is elsewhere used to connect the author's miserable state with the act of writing verse. More conventionally, Ovid's pages are blotched with tears, like seawater, in programmatic passages from *Tristia* 1.1 and 3.1. The image is effective: just as the reader can find the stains of teardrops (*liturarum*, 1.1.13; *lituras* 3.1.15) on Ovid's pages,⁴⁵ a metaliterary reference to the immense sorrow found in his poetry, so too are they sprayed with seawater (*caeruleis charta feritur aquis*, 1.11.40), physically bearing

⁴³ Cf. Hor. *Ep.* 1.2.2; *Rem. Am.* 717–18.

⁴⁴ I have followed translational convention with the adverb *intus*, here rendered as "on [my ship]," with the sense of "on board," though this has no such parallel usage in Latin literature, and could just as likely have referred to Ovid himself, leaving: "often part of the sea was *within me*."

⁴⁵ Cf. *Tr.* 4.1.95–6, and note the programmatic placement of the image in poem one of each book.

the marks of both Ovid's metaliterary epic allusions (particularly the *Argo* myth) and his historic circumstances. As a type of metapoetry, the sailing metaphor plays an important role in Ovid's veiled expression of poetic power from exile, a point made evident throughout *Tristia* 1, and embodied in poem 1.10. Ovid solidifies this position by more clearly expressing his aesthetic program in poem 1.11.

Given the centrality of the metaphor of sailing in Ovid's predecessors and *Tristia* 1, it is not surprising to find it adapted throughout the *Tristia*. The Muses follow Ovid's journey on paths of the sea and land (*et partim pelago, partim uestigia terra / uel rate dignatas uel pede nostra sequi*, "partly by sea, partly by land, [the Muses deemed me worthy] to follow whether by boat or on foot," *Tr.* 4.1.51–2), and Ovid himself again plows the waves as an exile (*...arua relegatum iussisti uisere Ponti, / et Scythicum profuga scindere puppe fretum*, "...you have ordered me, a *relegatus*, to see the fields of Pontus, and to plow the Scythian waves with an exile's ship, *Tr.* 5.2.61–2). Ovid's expansion of these metaphors, such that they apply on one level to Ovid's actual life, and on a second level to his derailed poetic career, is in fact unique in extant Roman poetry. These moments, touched upon briefly above, come into sharper focus when Ovid employs multiple metaphors for the poetic act (sailing, farming, and charioteering) within a single passage.

Ovid bolsters the retrospective aspect of his sailing metaphors with the addition of farming or charioteering imagery.⁴⁶ Linguistic connections between farming and

⁴⁶ Helzle (1988: 76–77) identifies Ovid's use of charioteering as a metapoetic image at *P.* 3.9.26, 4.2.23. As will be come apparent, my findings expand upon those of Helzle: "Tightening the reins therefore seems to be an image of applying *ars* whereas letting them go may imply surrendering to the forces of *ingenium*. On one level Ovid wants his reader to realize that the exile-poetry is completely different from everything he had written in Rome because of its lack of polish, on another level he asserts his persistent use of *ars*." Cf. West (2007: 41–3).

sailing can be found in verbs such as *secare*, *scindere*, *arare*, *colere*, which were used primarily for farming: the Hesiodic *Works and Days* provides thematic precedent.

Perhaps also by linguistic extension of “guiding” or “piloting” a vehicle, charioteering can also be found alongside the poetic vessel.⁴⁷ Catullus’ vocabulary does double duty, as *currum* (64.9) must refer to a ship, though it technically meant “chariot” (*OLD* 1a and b), and Vergil goes so far as to mix sailing and chariot-driving metaphors in his programmatic statement at *Georgics* 1.40–2:

da facilem cursum atque audacibus adnue coeptis, 1.40
ignarosque uiae mecum miseratus agrestis
ingredere et uotis iam nunc adsuesce uocari.

Give an easy course and nod assent to my daring beginnings, and when, with me, you’ve pitied those ignorant of rustic affairs, rise up and even now get used to being prayed to with offerings.

The *aporia* among commentators⁴⁸ as to whether these lines refer to the “easy course” (*facilem cursum*, 40) of a chariot or ship is not misplaced: the mingling of these two metaphors goes hand and hand with references to one’s own poetic act. Ovid cultivates this use with more explicit and extended references to sailing, farming, and charioteering in his exilic epistles, often one after the other within the same passage, a combination of poetic motifs that was unparalleled in antiquity. Each example stresses Ovid’s literary debt as well as his inventiveness and poetic power (through a return to original poetry), despite banishment.

The combination of sailing and charioteering imagery in *Tristia* 1.4 demonstrates the author’s emphasis on metapoetry: Ovid links his poetic program with the original

⁴⁷ Hes. *Op.* 618–94, esp. 650–55; Alcman fr. 1.92–101 *PMG*; Pin. *O.* 9.81; *I.* 2.2; Call. *Aet.* 1.25–8 Pf.

⁴⁸ Thomas (1988: *ad loc.*); Mynors (1994: *ad loc.*); Harrison (2007: 4).

compositions of Catullus or Vergil (who also employed the same sailing and charioteering metaphor) but surpasses them through his enactment of the dangerous voyage. On these grounds, *Tristia* 1.4 is not an epic lament mid-storm, and thus an echo of *Tristia* 1.2 or Aeneas' introduction at *Aeneid* 1.92–101, but rather a statement on the status of his own poetry: despite the political turbulence of exile, his poetic vessel carries on, to greater themes. Diction provides the first clues to a metaliterary subtext: *nos tamen Ionium non nostra findimus aequor / sponte, sed audaces cogimur esse metu*, "I, nevertheless, cleave the Ionian sea, not of my own accord, but daring, I am compelled to do so by fear" (1.4.3–4). Ovid's poetic vessel cuts a path through the sea (*findimus aequor*, 3), similar to the plowing of Catullus' Argo (*proscidit*, 64.12). Furthermore, Ovid describes himself as daring (*audaces*, 4), a particularly apt epithet, considering the danger of the voyage, as depicted in the *Tristia*, as well as the danger of composing verse after the censure of the *Ars Amatoria*. This adjective also recalls Catullus, whose Argonauts "dared to travel the salty waves in a swift ship" (*ausi sunt vada salsa cita decurrere puppi*, 64.6), as well as Vergil's daring beginnings (*audacibus coeptis*, *G.* 1.40). Ovid claims for his verse the same daring and novelty with which Catullus associated his epyllion, and Vergil his didactic masterpiece. To emphasize the metaliterary nature of these allusions, Ovid jumps into a metaphor comparing the helmsman of his *Minerva*, defeated by the storm and unable to control the ship, to a charioteer too weak to guide his team (*Tr.* 1.4.9–16):

pinea texta sonant pulsu, stridore rudentes,
 adgemit et nostris ipsa carina malis. 1.4.10
 nauita, confessus gelidum pallore timorem,
 iam sequitur uictus, non regit arte ratem.
 utque parum validus non proficientia rector
 ceruici rigidae frena remittit equi,
 sic non quo uoluit, sed quo rapit impetus undae, 1.4.15
 aurigam uideo uela dedisse rati.

The pine-fabric [of the ship] echoes with blows, the ropes resound with a scream, the ship itself groans at my miseries. The sailor confesses frigid fear with his pallor, now, defeated he doesn't lead the ship with his skill, but follows it. Just as a charioteer, not nearly strong enough, lets fall the worthless reins around the horse's stiff neck. Thus I see the charioteer guides the sails of my ship wherever the force of the waves take him, not where he desires to go.

Again, a close reading of verbal clues is informative. The expression “pine-fabric” (*pinea texta*, 1.4.9) is lifted from Minerva's construction of the Argo in Catullus 64 (*pinea coniungens inflexae texta carinae*, 64.10).⁴⁹ Ovid describes of the storm as *nostris malis* (1.4.10), an expression that bears a double meaning: fear of shipwreck is certain, but the Roman reader in the know associates Ovid's “miseries” with his exile and the emperor's contempt for his poetry. The idea that Ovid's ship groans in response (*adgemit*, 1.4.10) must reflect the frequent laments in the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*, further linking poetry and vessel. The metaphor comparing the sailor and charioteer extends to include Ovid himself, via *Tristia* 1.2: it is the sailor's *arte* (1.4.12) that has failed, just as Ovid's own *ars* (1.2.31) was stupefied (*stupet* 1.2.32). The term *rector* (1.4.13) is here applied to the charioteer, while its only previous use was for the pilot of the *Minerva* at *Tristia* 1.2.31, a double use of vocabulary similar to that found in

⁴⁹ The “web” or “fabric” of song is another important compositional metaphor found in Greek and Latin poetry, and this expression, particularly its use in the construction of the Argo and Ovid's adaptation here, may constitute a metaliterary nod to the traditional metaphor. The earliest overt reference comes at Pin. *Nem.* 2.1–3 (where a rhapsode is one who “stitches together songs”); cf. Durante (1960: 238–44); Schmitt (1967: 14, 296–8); Nagy (1997: 28 with n. 58). See also Hooley (1997: 265) on Philodemus' *Peri Poematon V* for comparisons between poetry and woven material; West (2007: 36–8) in general.

Catullus' *currum* (64.9). *Aurigam* (1.4.16) is employed in a similar sense: traditionally the word for a charioteer, here it must refer to someone who pilots a ship (*uela dedisse rati*, 1.4.16). Finally, the charioteer's reins are worthless (*non proficientia... frena*, 1.4.13–14), terminology also employed in *Tristia* 1.2, to describe Ovid's useless prayers (*uerba...non proficientia*, 1.2.13). On its surface, this metaphor is meant to describe the fearful danger of Ovid's journey to Tomis. Despite imperial condemnation, then, Ovid's poetic vessel continues in the Latin tradition that values nuanced originality.

Ovid also employs the language and imagery of farming when discussing his own poetry.⁵⁰ Nowhere is this usage more clear than in the *recusatio* of *Tristia* 2.327–30:

arguor inmerito: tenuis mihi campus aratur:
 illud erat magnae fertilitatis opus.
 non ideo debet pelago se credere, siqua
 audet in exiguo ludere cumba lacu. 2.330

I'm accused undeservingly: I plow a small field; that was a work of immense fertility. A small vessel, because it dares to play in a little lake, should not entrust itself to the sea.

Ovid's *illud* (328) refers to Caesar's accomplishments, which Ovid here rejects on the grounds that such poetic raw material would be too "fertile" (*magnae fertilitatis opus*, 328), that is, incorporate themes unsuited to Ovid's lighter, more playful elegies.⁵¹ When discussing his own poetic output, Ovid employs two characteristic metaphors: farming and sailing. His genre (elegy) is compared to a smaller field (*tenuis mihi campus aratur*, 327) than the fecund ground of epic poetry, a nod to the Callimachean aesthetic of a

⁵⁰ Cf. the compliment for Cornelius Severus' poetry: *Fertile pectus habes interque Helicon colentes / uberius nulli prouenit ista seges*, "you have a fertile heart among those who cultivate Helicon / none of them produce a more fertile crop" (*P.* 4.2.11–12). On farming in Tomis, see chapter three below.

⁵¹ Stated outright at *Tr.* 2.331–4; Cf. *Am.* 1.1.1–4. My reading of *Tr.* 2.327–30 is indebted to Ingleheart (2010: *ad loc.*).

“skinny muse” (τὴν Μοῦσαν... λεππαλέην, *Aet.* 1.24 Pf.).⁵² Seafaring also constitutes a reference to the poetic task within the Callimachean sphere: his boat is a small one (*exiguo... cumba*, 330), unfit for the open ocean (*non ideo debet pelago se credere*, 329).⁵³ Through this positive use Ovid discusses his own promise as a poet.⁵⁴ For the physically⁵⁵ and intellectually barren landscape of Tomis it is decidedly negative.⁵⁶

Compositional Metaphor as a Political Tool in Ovid’s Exilic Letters

The political implications for Ovid’s mixture of seafaring and writing begin as early as *Tristia* 1.2, where the literary subtext inspired by epic scenery, specialized vocabulary, and expanded metapoetic imagery contribute to a political reading in which Ovid undercuts claims that his punishment was justified or even effective.⁵⁷ At its root, *Tristia* 1.2 demonstrates Ovid’s persistent power of speech through verse, which defies imperial decree and further empowers the poet: despite the dangers of condemnation,

⁵² For *tenuis* as a translation of the Greek λέπτος or λεππαλέος, cf. Hor. *A.P.* 46. The remark is thus not self-deprecating, as the Latin would otherwise imply: cf. Verg. *Ecl.* 6.4–8; Hor. *Ep.* 2.1.225 and the note in Brink (1982: *ad loc.*); Verg. *G.* 2.180 with Thomas (1988: *ad loc.*).

⁵³ Cf. Verg. *G.* 2.41, 4.116–17, *Tr.* 2.99–102. For the elegiac vessel, cf. Prop. 3.3.22–4, 9.3–4, 35–6; Hor. *Carm.* 4.15.1–4; *Met.* 15.176–7. See Ingleheart (2010: 274).

⁵⁴ E.g. *P.* 1.8.49–60 (farming goes hand in hand with poetic ingenuity), 4.2.11, 4.15.14–22; cf. Prat. fr. 712 *PMG*.

⁵⁵ Cf. the ruined ship and aging racehorses of *Tr.* 4.8.17–20, which also act as a metaphor for Ovid’s failing poetic powers.

⁵⁶ Pontus is frequently depicted as anathema to poetic composition (see chapter 3 below). Thus Ovid’s (poetic) ship can’t sail Tomis’ frozen waves (*P.* 4.10.38; and esp. *Tr.* 3.10.47–8, part of a literary reference to the impossibility of a “Hero and Leander” poem existing in Tomis at 41–50, treated in verse by Ovid before in *Her.* 18 and 19). The poles that guide other (poetic) vessels are non-functional in Tomis (*Tr.* 4.3.1–6, 15–18). Furthermore, Moesia is completely infertile (e.g. *P.* 1.7.13, 3.8.5–18), such that, as with Hero and Leander above (*Tr.* 3.10.41–50), the Acontius and Cydippe myth is equally impossible in Tomis (*Tr.* 3.10.73–8, also treated in verse by Ovid, *Her.* 20, with a clear debt to Callimachus fr. 67–75 Pf.). Cf. Williams (1994: 12–17), who considers the climate and inhabitants of Pontus a reversal of the Hesiodic Golden Age (*Op.* 109–201; cf. *Met.* 1.89–100; *Tib.* 1.3.33–50; *Ecl.* 4; *G.* 1.118–46).

⁵⁷ Ovid’s retention of his freedom of speech and his very life (as outlined below), despite the limits imposed on both by exile, can be read as extensions to the fundamental paradox presented by Ovid’s exilic epistles: “the *princeps* requires Ovid’s absence from the city by law, even as the poet recreates his own presence there through his poetry” (McGowan 2009: 84).

Ovid's poetic vessel sails on. The opening verses set a literary, as opposed to an historic scene: Ovid's ship is threatened by a storm at sea: *Di maris et caeli – quid enim nisi uota supersunt? – / soluere quassatae parcite membra ratis*, "Gods of the sea and sky – what indeed but prayer remains? – please don't break the beams of my broken ship" (1.2.1–2). Ovid opens with a prayer (repeated at the close of the poem, 1.2.87–106), ostensibly to save his actual vessel from shipwreck. To introduce literary constraint as well as physical danger, however, Ovid describes a storm of epic proportions. His prayer is directed to pairings of gods who fought in the Trojan War (Vulcan and Apollo, Venus and Minerva, 1.2.4–10). The storm itself raises mountainous waves, revealing the depths of Tartarus (1.2.19–22), a description that appears to outdo the storm with which Aeneas was introduced at *Aeneid* 1.107: *terram inter fluctus aperit; furit aestus harenis*, "the waves reveal the land in between; the surge rages with sand." The waves do not know whether to obey Neptune or the unruly winds (1.2.26), an image that recalls Vergil's famous depiction of the sea god outraged at the unleashed winds (*Aen.* 1.135). In fact, encoded in the storm which threatens to wreck Ovid's ship is poetic censure, which threatens to derail his poetic career. Epic terminology sets the stage for a reading focused more on the book's literary nature than any actual storm Ovid faced *en route* to Tomis.

This literary interpretation of Ovid's storm finds further support in the specialized vocabulary with which he depicts his sailing act. When Ovid stops to describe his reason for being at sea, he uses the expression *aequor aro* (1.2.76), recognizable from the metaliterary images in Catullus and Vergil. The language with which Ovid describes his helmsman is also telling: *rector in incerto est nec quid fugiatue petatue / inuenit:*

ambiguus ars stupet ipsa malis, “the helmsman is uncertain, nor can he figure out whether he should flee or drive on: his art is dumbfounded in the face of uncertain dangers” (1.2.31–2). The Latin makes no distinction between Ovid himself, the narrator, or the *rector* (31). With these figures merged, as is implied by the first person plural (royal “we”) *occidimus* (33), the verbs *fugiat* and *petat* (31) take on new meaning: whom (or what) should Ovid seek out and avoid to aid him in exile? Indeed, the noun *ars* (1.2.32) may then refer to Ovid’s poetry itself, benumbed and speechless (*stupet*, 1.2.32) at the decree of exile. The subsequent lines illustrate this speechlessness: *opprimet hanc animam fluctus, frustra que precanti / ore necaturas accipiemus aquas*, “the waves crush my soul, and with a mouth open in vain prayer I will drink waters about to kill me” (1.2.35–6). Ovid’s exile is often likened to death (most clearly in the very next poem, *Tr.* 1.3), and the waves of the storm, that is, the disaster of his exile, are the vehicle of his demise. The manner of death, drowning in mid-prayer, is appropriate to the poem in which it is written, framed as it is within a prayer to Augustus and the pantheon of Roman gods. Ovid’s prayer (*precanti ore*, 35–6) is his poem, and the storm which threatens to silence him through drowning must be the imperial decree of exile, which partially silenced his poetry. The image of the storm “silencing” Ovid is repeated in greater detail from a more programmatic position at the end of his opening prayer (*Tr.* 1.2.13–16):

uerba miser frustra non proficientia perdo:
 ipsa graves spargunt ora loquentis aquae,
 terribisque Notus iactat mea dicta, precesque
 ad quos mittuntur, non sinit ire deos.

1.2.15

But I, miserable, waste in vain my worthless words: the heavy waves spray my lips as I speak, and terrible Notus tosses away my speech and my prayers, nor does he allow them to go to the gods to whom they are sent.

Ovid's prayer is in vain (*frustra*, 1.2.13) and the very words are pointless (*uerba... non proficientia*, 1.2.13), because the storm has sprayed his lips with water and the winds have muffled his voice (1.2.14–16). The water that now marks his mouth recalls the same seawater that blotted out his poetry at *Tristia* 1.11.40, itself a variation on the teardrops that mar his pages (*liturarum*, *Tr.* 1.1.13; *litturas* *Tr.* 3.1.15). We can reread this passage as a reference to Ovid's exilic poetry, written in vain, since exile has effectively silenced him.⁵⁸ The image is ironic, not merely because of the poet's continued output in exile, but also because of the high quality and self-awareness found in the seafaring metaphor. Ultimately, Ovid's self-representation as a downtrodden victim incapable of speech contrasts the otherwise brilliant combination of sailing and poetry within the historic sphere of Ovid's actual exile.

The political implications of these compositional metaphors can be seen in their usage alongside another exilic *topos*: the poverty of Ovid's verse as a result of his exile.⁵⁹ With characteristic irony, Ovid undermines his own self-deprecation through references to his central compositional metaphor in *Tristia* 5.12. Ovid addresses a friend who has ordered the tearful poet to forget his misery through writing. As one of the first poems specifically about poetry, and one of the last in the *Tristia*, this piece bears a note of retrospective composition, since Ovid is now in the third year of his exile and has written nearly five books of poetry. Given the poem's overtly self-reflective theme,

⁵⁸ Cf. *P.* 2.6.3–4: *Exulis haec uox est: praebet mihi littera linguam / et, si non liceat scribere, mutus ero*, "This [verse] is the voice of an exile: letters offer me a tongue and, if it weren't allowed for me to write, I'd be mute," and *Tr.* 3.7.2: *littera, sermonis fida ministra mei*, "letter, faithful servant of my speech." For speech and speechlessness in Ovid see esp. Claassen (1986: 158–61); Feeney (1992); Forbis (1997).

⁵⁹ That Ovid's verse reflects his miserable environment is programmatic in the *Tristia* (cf. 1.1.1–14, 5.1.5–10) and can be found throughout both works (e.g. *Tr.* 3.14.33–6, *Tr.* 1.1.35–48, 11.35–44; 3.14; 4.1.1–4; 5.1.71–2; *P.* 1.5.17–18, 3.9.13–32, 4.2.15–16).

he employs all three images outlined above back to back. Ovid's poetic ability has suffered in Tomis, and as such staple metaphors of farming, sailing, and charioteering reflect his exhausted poetic genius (*Tr.* 5.12.23–30):

fertilis, assiduo si non renouetur aratro,
nil nisi cum spinis gramen habebit ager.
tempore qui longo steterit, male currit, et inter 5.12.25
carceribus missos ultimus ibit equus.
uertitur in taetram cariem rimisque dehiscit,
siqua diu solitis cumba uacauit aquis.
me quoque despero, fuerim cum paruus et ante,
illi, qui fueram, posse redire parem. 5.12.30

If the fertile field is not renewed by the harsh plow, it will produce nothing but grass and thorns. That horse which has stood around for a long time runs badly and it will go last among those sent from the starting gates. A boat is turned to weak dryness and gapes with cracks, if ever it is removed from its accustomed waters for a long time. For me also despair, that I could ever become that man I was before, little as I was even then.

All three metaphors are lined up, a unique combination in extant Latin literature, meant to emphasize Ovid's poetic fecundity in the face of superficial claims to the opposite. Thus their association with the poverty of Ovid's verse creates an ironic subtext. The artistry of these images, their verbal connections to landmark works in Greco-Roman literature, and their appropriateness to Ovid's own exilic journey fly in the face of the author's claims to poetic decline. Indeed, the self-critical nature of verses 29–30 adheres to the same Callimachean aesthetic of self-awareness that became a hallmark of the work of Ovid's predecessors, such as Propertius, Horace and Vergil.⁶⁰ This irony requires a new reading of the subsequent verses, which claim that Ovid's poor poetry is the result of his surroundings (*Tr.* 5.12.33–36):

adsumpta tabella est,
inque suos uolui cogere uerba pedes,

⁶⁰ Eg. Prop. 3.3, 3.9 and 4.1; Hor. *Carm.* 4.15; Ver. G. 1.40ff.

carmina nulla mihi surgunt, aut qualia cernis, 5.12.35
digna sui domini tempore, digna loco.

[and now,] when I've taken up my tablet, and I want to set words into poetic measures, I write no actual verse, except the type you see here, befitting the times of their master, befitting his locale.

Based on the metapoetry of the sailing, farming, and chariotteering motifs, which undermine Ovid's self-deprecation in the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*, these verses take on new meaning: Ovid's poetry is reflective of his life in Tomis (*digna sui domini tempore, digna loco*, 36) not because the poems themselves are the awful product of a miserable existence, but because the author is in fact reenacting and recreating the epic basis of Greek and Latin poetry (the Argo myth), as well as writing about that action in a self-critical style, loaded with allusions to the epicists and elegists who preceded him.⁶¹ Ovid's entire compositional metaphor, that of sailing, bridges the gap between poetry (the act of writing) and reality (Ovid's trip to Tomis) in a way never before achieved in Greek or Latin literature. The destructive effect of imperial exile on Ovid's verse is thus reversed, even flaunted: Ovid's poetic authority has never been greater.

A similar ironic intersection between Ovid's reenactment of the Argo myth and his act of composition can be found at *ex Ponto* 1.4, where the author pairs the familiar metapoetic imagery (in light of his "poetic decline") with the only extended comparison between himself and Jason in the entirety of the exilic epistles. Ovid first complains that his constitution (as opposed to poetic genius) is ruined by the harshness of life in Tomis, but he employs metapoetic imagery similar to that found above in *Tristia* 5 (*P.* 1.4.11–20):

⁶¹ This poem, for example, owes much to *Cat.* 65–68, see Williams (1994: 55–7). Note also the nearly direct translation of *Call. Aet.* 1.21–2 *Pf. in sumpta tabella est* (33).

Cernis ut in duris – et quid boue firmitus? – aruis fortia taurorum corpora frangat opus. Quae numquam uacuo solita est cessare nouali fructibus adsiduis lassa senescit humus.	
Occidet, ad circi si quis certamina semper non intermissis cursibus ibit equus.	1.4.15
Firma sit illa licet, soluetur in aequore nauis quae numquam liquidis sicca carebit aquis. Me quoque debilitat series inmensa malorum ante meum tempus cogit et esse senem.	1.4.20

You can see how labor breaks even the strong bodies of bulls – and what is tougher than a bull? The earth which is unaccustomed to rest, bereft of a new plowing grows old, exhausted by constant harvests. He'll fail, whichever horse always goes to the contests of the Circus with no breaks in his course. Although the ship be strong, it will break apart in the sea, if it's never dry, cut off from clear waters. An immense series of troubles breaks me down as well, and I am compelled to be an old man before my time.

This passage is not about poetry, but rather about Ovid's physical wretchedness.

Nevertheless, certain clues link it with the more poetic lament in *Tristia* 5.12. Structurally they are identical: each image is repeated from poem 5.12, in its own couplet. The extension of the farming metaphor (*P.* 1.4.11–12) allows for both working parties: both for the bull, who accomplishes the task, and the earth itself, when it lies untouched. The images are arranged in exactly the same order in both passages: farming first, then charioteering and sailing, perhaps according to their importance for the overall interpretation of Ovid's compositional metaphor: the sailing image (1.4.17–18) is placed closest to the couplet which Ovid himself occupies (1.4.19–20). Furthermore, two of the images share metrical structures with *Tristia* 5.12. Ovid places emphasis on the "land" in *Tristia* 5.12 (*habebit ager*, 5.12.24) and the horse (*ibit equus*, 5.12.26) by locating both at the end of their respective couplets. *Ex Ponto* 1.4 follows the same form: *senescit humus* (1.4.14) and *ibit equus* (1.4.16) both end their couplets in an emphatic position. Given the similarities, one is tempted to reread *ex Ponto* 1.4.11–20 with a hint

of irony. Ovid focuses on compositional metaphor in order to demonstrate the vitality of his verse, contrary to any overt claims he makes concerning his own misfortune and his painful existence in exile.

The poetic subtext of this passage, that is, the power of Ovid's compositional metaphor to demonstrate poetic authority despite exile, finds evidence in the next 25 lines (21–46), in which Ovid compares his own exile journey with that of Jason and the Argonauts.⁶² The comparison favors Ovid, whose task was much more difficult, but superficial claims to intense suffering mask a poetic subtext. In addition to obvious thematic references, Ovid employs the appropriate language of sailing: *nos fragile ligno uastum sulcauimus aequor: / quae tulit Aesoniden, densa carina fuit*, “I plowed the vast sea in a delicate bark: that which bore Jason was a sturdy ship” (35–6). Ovid's “delicate bark” (*fragile ligno*, 35) recalls, for example, his “tiny ship” from other passages clearly referring to verse (*exiguo... cumba*, *Tr.* 2.327). The verb “plow” (*sulcauimus*, 35) vividly describes Ovid's poetic act on the “vast sea” (*uastum... aequor*, 35), and its placement forms an apt word picture, with Ovid's “plowing” dividing the sea from its modifier (*uastum sulcavimus aequor*, 35). These are the stylistic flourishes Ovid's audience had come to expect from the author of the *Ars Amatoria* and *Metamorphoses*, and in no way representative of an exile whose mind has suffered from excessive toil (*inmodicus... labor*, 22).⁶³ In order to highlight this overarching dissimulation, Ovid further loads the

⁶² Gaertner (2005: *ad loc.*) is informative. He notes the extremely poetic nature of the comparison between Ovid and Jason (e.g. *Aesona natus*, 1.4.23, 46; *uastum... aequor*, 35; *Aesoniden*, 36; *Aganore natus*, 37; etc.), and subsequently contrasts this passage with the more frequent comparisons between Ovid and Odysseus (e.g. *Tr.* 1.5.57–84). On the rhetorical comparison (σύγκρισις), Gaertner cites Lausberg (1960) §1130.

⁶³ *labor* indicates both the poet's task (*OLD* 3) and his suffering in exile (cf. *P.* 1.4.8). Gaertner (2005: *ad loc.*) adds the various epic and metaliterary uses of the term (with *levis* or *paruus*), at *TLL* s.v. 790.36–9,

comparison with flat-out lies: Jason, he claims, had plenty of comrades on his expedition; not only is Ovid alone, but all his friends abandoned him in his time of need (33–4). How Ovid can make this claim in light of frequent letters professing the continued loyalty of companions at Rome and the faithfulness of his own wife defies explanation.⁶⁴ He claims that while he was the victim of the gods (specifically Augustus), Jason had divine protection (39–40), despite the fact that Minerva (the safekeeper of Ovid’s ship in *Tr.* 1.10) and the Dioscouri (at the closing prayer of *Tr.* 1.2) are identified as tutelary gods, in fact, the same gods who aided Jason on his journey: Minerva famously constructed the *Argo*, and the Dioscouri were themselves Argonauts. Ovidian dissimulation indicates a second interpretive layer: the caliber of Ovid’s style and wit undercuts complaints of poetic decline induced by exilic misery. The emperor’s censure and “execution” of the poet has failed: Ovidian poetry is as vivacious as ever.

Ovid’s adaptation of sailing as his compositional metaphor had such powerful literary implications as to rewrite our understanding of his self-fashioning in exile. In the tradition of Callimachus, Apollonius of Rhodes, Catullus, and Vergil, Ovid found the perfect metaphor to describe his own exilic poetry: sailing images not only reflected his physical circumstances but also stood for his act of writing poetry, which was equally dangerous and glorifying (after the censure of the *Ars Amatoria*). This intersection replayed Augustus’ misguided reading of Ovid’s *carmen*, but in such a way as to aggrandize the poet through association with the masters of Greco-Roman poetry.

equating Ovid’s plight and Jason’s mythic journey – crucial to my reading of the author’s ultimate equation between the physical and poetic circumstances of exile.

⁶⁴ Friends: *Tr.* 1.5, 1.9, 5.4, 5.9; *P.* 2.4, 2.5, 3.6, 3.7, 4.9, etc.; his wife: *Tr.* 1.3, 1.6, 5.5, 5.14, etc. On Ovid’s wife see Helzle (1989b).

So Ovid's manipulation of the exilic journey to reflect his poetic act undermined the emperor's attempts to condemn that act. By treating the voyage to Tomis in this way, Ovid introduces his Roman audience to a new Tomitan reality. Ovid's novel verse is as unique and influential as Jason's voyage in the first sailing ship: art no longer imitates life, life imitates art. In navigating this metamorphosis, Ovid has matched and surpassed Apollonius, Catullus, and Vergil in poetic craftsmanship. In the next chapter, I will explore how Ovid expanded his metapoetic journey to include his entire exilic landscape. Each facet of the Pontic universe functioned as part of Augustus' failed attempt at exilic imprisonment and so demonstrated the emperor's monumental ignorance.

CHAPTER 3 THE PONTIC UNIVERSE

at, puto, si demens studium fatale retemptem,
hic mihi praebebit carminis arma locus?
(*Tr.* 5.12.51–2)

But mindless,¹ I wonder, will this place allow me the equipment for poetry, if I should take up that deadly occupation?

When Ovid conflated his journey into exile with his verse composition, he undermined the emperor's condemnation: his restructuring of exile into an epic journey, geared towards poetic self-glorification stood in contrast to the emperor's intended social and political ostracism and enacted the emperor's foolish criticism that merged poet and narrator. Ovid did not abandon his rebalancing of power between poet and emperor with the completion of his exilic journey. On the contrary, just as the elements, for example, posed a major threat to his physical journey (and thus the poetic act), so too does the Pontic universe into which Ovid was thrust. Ovid's place of exile is rendered in unrealistic and fantastical terms because the author wishes to emphasize the impossibility of literary production in Tomis: the entire Pontic universe conspires against Ovid's composition of poetry, as if acting at the behest of some malevolent deity. I do not wish to argue, as is obvious in the exilic epistles, that Ovid's place of exile is poorly suited to proper literary production: for this one might consult Williams or Claassen.² I argue instead that Ovid's place of exile actively inhibits the author's *ingenium* and that he closely associates Augustus with various aspects of Pontic

¹ "Mindless" as in "foolish," or "naïve," cf. *P.* 4.14.20. The term forms part of Ovid's larger reversal of language concerning poetry and his role in society: Ovid is a genius turned barbarian due to the linguistic and cultural isolation he experiences in exile. On this reversal see esp. Stevens (2009); for the irony, see my conclusion, chapter 5 below.

² Williams (1994: 50–51); Claassen (1999: 190–4).

geography and ethnography.³ Thus, the environment and locals of the Pontic region complement the author's fanciful depiction of his journey in *Tristia* 1. The unreality of these depictions matches that of his journey, and thus his narrative on the geography and ethnography of the Pontic region is less than reliable.⁴ The stars eschew their traditional guiding role in Tomis, the seas freeze and prevent navigation, and the infertile earth bears no produce. Furthermore, Ovid creates a tacit association between Augustus' image in contemporary Rome and the various aspects of his exilic environment, inevitably to the emperor's detriment. The stars, for example, a contemporary hallmark of imperial authority over time and space,⁵ inhibit Ovid's continued poetic composition in the exilic epistles, rather than guide it, as in the work of Ovid's Augustan predecessors. Despite the hurdles to literary production offered in Tomis, Ovid succeeds in producing poetry to the highest Augustan and Callimachean standards, continuing the poetic program begun with his journey from Rome to Tomis, and further undermining the emperor's attempts to silence the poet.

Rather than debate the historicity of Ovid's surroundings and the literary sources upon which he relies, the past two decades of scholarly discourse have centered on the unreality of Ovid's Tomis. Williams concentrates on the literary debt that Ovid owes to Greco-Roman depictions of both the Golden Age (*Op.* 202–12) and more importantly, the underworld. He demonstrates that Ovid's place of exile has more to do with the

³ For literature as a safe venue for imperial criticism, see Ahl (1984); Hinds (1987: 115–34). We cannot, however, ignore the important aesthetic role played by this rhetorical appeal, on which see Auhagen (2010: 413–24).

⁴ For this ahistoric reading, see *RE* Suppl. 9, s.v. "Pontos Euxeinos;" Vulpe (1959: 41–62); Podossinov (1987); Viarre (1988); Claassen (1990); Batty (1994: 88–111); Richmond (1995: 97–120). Cf. the now defunct scholarly tradition that attempted to sap factual geographic, historic, and ethnographic evidence from Ovid's exilic epistles, on which see Vulikh (1974).

⁵ See Newlands (1995: 27–50); Gee (2000: 154–87); Pasco-Pranger (2006); Feeney (2008).

Vergilian Hades than actual, historic geography, a point he later expands to include the author's rhetoric of self-deprecation.⁶ Claassen like Williams employs a literary analysis of Tomis. She demonstrates that the environment of Ovid's exile is not merely fabricated, but a reflection of the author's despair.⁷ Following these lines of inquiry, in this chapter I will consider how Tomis, the Tomitans, and the Pontic universe take on a life of their own. While Ovidian Tomis is surely an echo of the Roman underworld, and can thus be read as a manifestation of the author's internal wretchedness, I will argue that Ovid traces this misery to imperial condemnation, laying the blame squarely on Augustus' shoulders. The landscape of Pontus, like the emperor himself, attempts to block Ovid's literary production. His continued poetic output, however, feeds into the same self-glorifying representation found in his exilic journey, and, as before, indicts the emperor for his shallow understanding of Roman verse. In this way, Ovid recasts his own banishment in the exilic poetry as an indictment of Augustus. In the final section of this chapter I will explore this re-characterization of Augustus, and ask the question, "how could the emperor figure himself as a leader for the Roman elite, and guiding light for contemporary authors, if he attempts (and fails) to silence Rome's greatest poet?"

The Pontic Sky

The Tomitan constellations function as an intellectual prison for Ovid: rather than guide Ovid's verse, they impede the author's poetic navigation. Upon arrival in Tomis,

⁶ Williams (1994: 8–25, 50–60). Ovid's "pose of poetic decline" informs my discussion of the poetic journey; see above, chapter 2; cf. Luck (1961); Helzle (1988); Stevens (2009).

⁷ Claassen (1999: 190–98), esp. 190: "These details are purposely fantastic and have little if any relation to physical reality. They represent the externalization of internal misery, and are not the causes of that misery." See also Williams (1994: 8–25); Stevens (2009), for whom Ovid's depictions of Tomis might rightly be called linguistic reversals of Roman geography.

than function as guiding lights, the Tomitan constellations are a “heavy star,” which Ovid bears (*graue sidus*, *Tr.* 5.10.45–6), and so prevent the poetic navigation outlined in the previous chapter.

This oppression perverts the traditional role of constellations and stars in contemporary poetic vocabulary and reverses a prominent Augustan and Ovidian image: the branding of constellations and time itself with the mark of the Julian family.¹¹ Vergil’s *Georgics*, a poem everywhere concerned with the movement of the heavens,¹² associates the emperor’s inevitable catasterism with the poetic guidance he inspires (*G.* 1.32–5, 40:

anne nouum tardis sidus te mensibus addas,
qua locus Erigonen inter Chelasque sequentis
panditur (ipse tibi iam bracchia contrahit ardens
Scorpius et caeli iusta plus parte reliquit)... 1.35
da facilem cursum atque audacibus adnue coeptis... 1.40

Or you might add yourself as a new constellation fo the slow months, where lies a space between Erigone and the following claws (Scorpio himself, burning even now pulls in his arms and leaves you more than a just portion of heaven... so give an easy course and nod assent to my daring enterprise...

In his final iteration (after having been envisioned as a possible ruler of the earth and sea), Augustus enters the stars and from there provides the divine (*adnue*, 1.40)¹³ and poetic (*facilem cursum*, 1.40) guidance Vergil requests.

¹¹ Such is the characterization of, for example, Germanicus in Ovid’s *Fasti* 1.1–4, an important use of the image for Germanicus’ both political position, as possible heir, and his literary fame, as author of a Latin *Phaenomena*, on which see Gain (1976); Possanza (2004). For Ovid’s interaction with the imperial family’s celestial imagery, see Newlands (1995); Gee (2000: 154–87); Pasco-Pranger (2006); Feeney (2008).

¹² As a result of its agricultural subject matter and literary models (esp. Hes. *Op.*; Arat. *Phaen.*; Call. *Com. Ber.* and *Aet.*). See Thomas (1988: 5–12).

¹³ Thomson (1988: *ad loc.*).

Ovid recapitulated this image in the *Tristia* and *ex Ponto*. By embracing it, he demonstrated his familiarity with the image; by perverting it, he recast the emperor's role in the minds of his readership. When Ovid employs the contemporary image of the emperor as guiding constellation within the context of the abnormal Tomitan sky, he undercuts his own obsequious encomia concerning imperial divinity.¹⁴ Augustus is deified on multiple occasions,¹⁵ and Ovid often employs the imagery of stars, as at *Tristia* 2.57: *optavi, peteres caelestia sidera tarde*, "I've prayed, that you would seek out the celestial stars slowly." Augustus even dons the attributes of stars – like the constellations Ursa Major and Minor from *ex Ponto* 4.3, his vantage point in the heavens allows nothing to escape his notice (*P.* 4.9.125–30):

Et tamen haec tangent aliquando Caesaris aures:	4.9.125
nil illi toto quod fit in orbe latet.	
Tu certe scis haec, superis adscite, uidesque,	
Caesar, ut est oculis subdita terra tuis,	
tu nostras audis inter conuexa locatus	
sidera, sollicito quas damus ore, preces.	4.9.130

And these things will, nevertheless, at some time reach Caesar's ears: for nothing that happens in the entire world lies hidden from that man. You certainly know these things, accepted by the gods above, and you see, Caesar, as the earth is set beneath your gaze, placed within the vaulted stars you hear my prayers, which I give forth with worried lips.

Ovid maintains contemporary imagery by presenting Augustus as a guiding constellation for the Roman poet. However, his association between the emperor and

¹⁴ Passage to the stars was a traditional image for deification: see *Aen.* 9.641–2, *macte nova virtute, puer, sic itur ad astra / dis gerite et geniture deos*, "grow in your newfound power, boy, born from gods and about to bear gods, for that is the way to the stars;" cf. *Met.* 15.843–46; *P.* 4.9.125–34.

¹⁵ See esp. *P.* 4.9.105–18; McGowan (2009: 63–92). For Ovid's take on imperial cult see Gradel (2002: 203–4); Gaertner (2005: 12–14). For imperial cult in general see Beard-North-Price (1998: 318); Clauss (1999); Gradel (2002: 27–72).

the Tomitan stars undermines the encomiastic spirit of the metaphor: Augustus functions not as an exhortation to poetic composition, and thus immortality, but a hindrance. The Pontic stars, though far removed from those above Rome (*Tr.* 1.5.59–62), feed into the poet’s negative portrayal of the emperor: as a kind of poetic stellar map, Augustus now hinders and imprisons Ovid,¹⁶ rather than encourages his verse.

Despite this stellar obstacle, Ovid has no trouble returning to Rome through the implementation of his poetic craft.¹⁷ The journey of his poetry to Rome is programmatic for books one and three of the *Tristia*, where the poet’s voice timidly returns to familiar Roman monuments and locations, including Augustus’ house on the Palatine (*Tr.* 3.1.35–42).¹⁸ “Exile,” Ovid points out, “was decreed for me, but it was not decreed for my little books” (*Tr.* 3.14.9),¹⁹ and so the anonymous bookkeepers of Rome (the addressees of *Tr.* 3.14) should keep the author’s “body” in the city (*retine corpus in Vrbe meum*, “keep my body in the city,” 3.14.8). The defiant freedom Ovid enjoys is nowhere more ironic than in his version of Tiberius’ triumph at *Tristia* 4.2.57–66:

haec ego submotus, qua possum, mente uidebo:
erepti nobis ius habet illa loci;
illa per immensas spatiat libera terras,
in caelum celeri peruenit illa fuga; 4.2.60
illa meos oculos mediam deducit in urbem,
inmunes tanti nec sinit esse boni;

¹⁶ Claassen (1999: 192–3) coins this “oppressive” role for Augustus, and notes that the emperor even had a birthmark resembling Ursa Major (Suet. *Aug.* 80; cf. Ovid’s unacknowledged address to the constellation at *P.* 4.3.15–18). I extend this argument to include the poetic role played by the emperor in contemporary verse, as a guiding constellation that has not only failed Ovid, but also confined him to his exilic prison.

¹⁷ For Ovid’s mental journeys, see Viarre (1991); Nagle (1980: 93–8).

¹⁸ Cf. *P.* 1.8.25–38, 3.5.45–50, 4.9.29–32, with McGowan (2009: 104). Ovid also visits specific people, including his wife: *Tr.* 3.4.53–62; Atticus: *P.* 2.4.7–14; Celsus: *P.* 1.9.7–14; Graecinus: *P.* 4.9.35–42; Macer: *P.* 2.10.45–50; Sextus Pompeius: *P.* 4.4.43–6.

¹⁹ Ovid begins and ends books 1 and 3 of the *Tristia* with addresses to his poetry; cf. Newlands (1998).

inuenietque animus, qua currus spectet eburnos;
sic certe in patria per breue tempus ero.
uera tamen capiet populus spectacula felix, 4.2.65
laetaque erit praesens cum duce turba suo.

So moved I will see these things with my mind – that still has a right to the place taken from me; that is free to journey though the great lands, that ventures swiftly through the sky in flight; that leads my eyes to the midst of the city, it does not allow them to be bereft of such a good thing; and my spirit comes, where it may see the ivory chariot; thus surely I for a short time I will be in my homeland. Nevertheless the lucky populace will capture the true image, and present with their leader the crowd will be happy.

Ovid has both access to the city, as well as an effortless and instantaneous journey home, through the very heavens (*caelum*, 4.2.60) which elsewhere inhibit his poetic act. Furthermore, this journey, unlike those taken in *Tristia* 1.1 and 3.1, delivers the poet directly into a ceremony glorifying the imperial family, space previously forbidden to Ovid's verse.²⁰ The imperial figurehead that has imprisoned the poet in Tomis is powerless to prevent his poetic *ingenium* from entering Rome and attending the successor's triumph. In this way, Ovid fabricates a potentially damning role for the emperor: Augustus not only fails to prevent Ovid's poetic output, in attempting to do so, he betrays his fundamental characterization in the epistles as an out of touch philistine, incapable of appreciating the basic tenets of Callimachean and Augustan verse.

As we shall see with other aspects of the Tomitan landscape, the stars reverse a familiar Augustan image: the emperor's role in poetic guidance. The Tomitan constellations, despite their fundamental importance to navigation, do little to direct the author and instead oppress and inhibit his poetic act. If the exilic stars are meant to silence the poet by obstructing his poetic navigation, then Ovid's various flights to Rome and Italy flaunt the inefficacy and impotency of Augustus' political authority.

²⁰ Forbidden out of fear at *Tr.* 1.1.70–75; imperial decree at 3.1.47–82.

The Pontic Sea

Not only do the Tomitan stars metaphorically inhibit Ovid's poetic production, they also function as a physical prison of ice in the harsh Pontic winter (*P.* 4.10.37–42):

Crede tamen, nec te causas nescire sinemus
horrida Sarmaticum cur mare duret hiems:

Proxima sunt nobis plaustri praebentia formam
et quae praecipuum sidera frigus habent. 4.10.40
Hinc oritur Boreas oraeque domesticus huic est
et sumit uires a propiore loco.

But believe me, nor will I allow you to not know the reason why harsh winter hardens the Sarmatian sea.

Very close to me is the constellation of the wagoner, those which are extremely cold. Thence arises Boreas and here the shore is his house and he grows his strength from the nearby locale.

Ovid blames Boreas, the north wind, for the terrible cold, but his strength is derived from his homeland, the northern constellations. This passage faithfully preserves Ovid's chief depiction of the icy Pontic environment. Just as the stars in the sky, this "ice" acts as both physical and mental prison for the exiled poet.

Although Tomis lies on the same longitude as northern Italy, and has a relatively mild summer climate (it is home to the Romanian resort town Constanța today),²¹ Ovid depicted his place of exile as a frozen hell, situated under the northernmost pole and closer in Roman mythic geography to Scythia than any historic city.²² Just as the stars reversed the navigation metaphor found throughout Ovid's journey into exile, so too

²¹ See Richmond (1995) on Tomis' historic climate and the frequency with which the Danube and Pontic seashore actually froze.

²² Scythia is mentioned either directly or indirectly over thirty times in the exilic epistles. See, e.g. *Tr.* 1.3.61, 3.2.1, 4.1.45, 5.1.21, etc.; *P.* 1.1.79, 2.1.3, 3.2.45, 4.6.5, etc.; Williams (1994: 12); Claassen (1999: 191). On Ovid's adaptation of this literary *topos* (cf. *G.* 3.349–83) to his own circumstance, see below, n. 22.

does the frigid climate: the frozen seas outside Tomis obstruct sailing, and thus the poetic act.

We know Ovid's place of exile will be more than just chilly as early as *Tristia* 1.2, where Boreas, traveling from none other than the oppressive polar stars towards which Ovid was sailing, delivered an icy blast in the midst of a storm: *nunc sicca gelidus Boreas bacchatur ab Arcto*, "now frozen Boreas rages from dry Ursa Major" (1.2.29).²³ The chill of Tomis becomes a constant torture throughout the exilic epistles, imprisoning the poet at *Tristia* 4.4.55 (*frigida me cohibent Euxini litora Ponti*, "the frosty shores of Euxine Pontus confine me"), and functioning as a reliable landmark with which to count the inexorable march of time: *ut sumus in Ponto, ter frigore constitit Hister, / facta est Euxini dura ter unda maris*, "As I have been in Pontus, three times the Danube has frozen with cold, / three times the waves of the Euxine sea have grown hard [with ice]" (*Tr.* 5.10.1–2). Even spring is measured not by an increase in temperature, but the retreat of the ice: *at mihi sentitur nix uerno sole soluta, / quaeque lacu durae non fodiuntur aquae*, "but I see snow melted in the springtime sun, / and water not dug out solid from lakes" (*Tr.* 3.12.27–8).

Ovid extends his sailing metaphor into his time spent imprisoned in Tomis: ships cannot sail in frozen waters.²⁴ Just such a conflation between Ovid's poetic act and that of sailing must have been at work in *Tristia* 3.10.41–50:

si tibi tale fretum quondam, Leandre, fuisset,

²³ Cf. *P.* 4.10.37–42.

²⁴ Evans (1975: 1–9) remarks on Ovid's adaptation of *Georgics* 3.349–83 in his description of the harsh Tomitan winters at *Tr.* 3.10 supports my larger thesis concerning the poet's insertion of his own experience into the sphere of literary tradition. Of particular interest is Evans' assertion (5) that the addition of violence to Ovid's winter landscape adds both credibility and pathos to the scene, by evoking imagery that would resonate with Roman survivors of civil war.

non foret angustae mors tua crimen aquae.
 tum neque se pandi possunt delphines in auras
 tollere – conantes dura coercet hiemps –
 et quamuis Boreas iactatis insonet alis, 3.10.45
 fluctus in obsessio gurgite nullus erit;
 inclusaeque gelu stabunt in marmore puppes,
 nec poterit rigidas findere remus aquas.
 uidimus in glacie pisces haerere ligatos,
 et pars ex illis tunc quoque uiua fuit. 3.10.50

If such a sea was once yours, Leander, your death would not have been the crime born by those straits. Then dolphins would not be able to throw themselves into the breeze; hard winter would hold them back in their attempt; and although Boreas would shriek with beating wings, there would be no wave in the besieged waters; and ships would stand enclosed in frozen marble, nor would oars be able to break the solid water. I've seen fish bound up and stuck in the ice and some of them even then still alive.

The Hero and Leander myth is of course replayed from Ovid's *Heroides* 18 and 19. The image becomes almost comical in exile: Leander could simply walk to his lover every night, rather than swim across the dangerous Hellespont, if only they'd lived further north. There is, however, an undercurrent of impossibility. The nature of the sea has been perverted in Tomis: dolphins cannot jump out of the water,²⁵ and the surface of the water itself stands motionless. This imagery recalls Ovid's effective use of *adynata* to emphasize the pathos of his exile: impossible terrors have become reality in Tomis, and as such the sea is more like the land.²⁶ In fact, the entire Hero and Leander poem becomes impossible to write in exile: the Pontic environment would have foiled Ovid's otherwise fecund *ingenium*. To make the point clear, Ovid concludes his image with two telling couplets: the first (3.10.47–8) recounts how ships can no longer sail the frozen sea, a now obvious reference to the author's extensive use of sailing as a metaphor for

²⁵ A possible reference to the impossible realities of Ovid's own flood at *Met.* 1.293–312 (esp. 301–3).

²⁶ Claassen (1999: 231–33).

the poetic act. The second (3.10.49–50) describes fish locked in ice, even while they are still alive. It can be no coincidence that Ovid’s astrological sign was Pisces.²⁷ Ovid depicts himself imprisoned in an icy cell, and just as the “frozen marble” which encloses ships in Tomis prevents them from sailing, so too is the poet prevented from continuing the composition of original verse.

Tomis not only locks Ovid’s physical body in ice, but also his poetic *ingenium*, rendered as “wine” in the exilic letters through metonymy. Wine has reviving and inspirational qualities for Ovid throughout the *Epistulae ex Ponto*, as at *ex Ponto* 1.3.7–10:

sic ego mente iacens et acerbo saucius ictu
admonitu coepi fortior esse tuo
et iam deficiens sic ad tua uerba reuixi,
ut solet infuso uena redire mero. 1.3.10

So I, wounded in my mind by a harsh blow, began to grow stronger at your advice, and I, waning, was thus regained my health at your words, as the pulse is accustomed to return with a gulp of wine.

The metaphor comparing supportive conversation with the uplifting excitement of drink is an apt one, especially in the context of poetic composition: Rufinus’ correspondences inspired Ovid to compose and to some extent healed his mind weakened by exile. Wine is further a powerful remedy at *Tristia* 3.3.21–2, which preserves diction (*deficiens*, *P.* 1.3.9) similar to the passage above: *sit iam deficiens suppressaque lingua palato, / vix instillato restituenda mero*, “now waning and with my tongue pressed against my palate, scarcely [could I] be revived by a few drops of wine.” Good company and good drinks

²⁷ *Tr.* 4.10.5–6 gives the year of Ovid’s birth, 43 B.C.E. (Ovid marks the year by the battle of Mutina). For the exact day, see *Tr.* 4.10.9–14, which specifies that Ovid’s birthday (and his brother’s) was the first day of the Quinquatrus upon which gladiatorial combat took place, or 20 March. For the Quinquatrus, see *Fast.* 3.809–48.

are crucial to poetic composition elsewhere,²⁸ and Ovid early in his exile associated Bacchus with poets in general (*Tr.* 1.7.1–4):

Siquis habes nostri similes in imagine uultus,
deme meis hederas, Bacchicaserta, comis.
ista decent laetos felicia signa poetas:
temporibus non est apta corona meis.

If anyone of you has an image in the likeness of my face, remove the ivy, Bacchus' wreath, from my hair. That lucky sign belongs to happy poets: it is no fitting crown for my times.

And again much later at *Tristia* 5.3.1–6:

Illa dies haec est, qua te celebrare poetae,
si modo non fallunt tempora, Bacche, solent,
festaque odoratis innectunt tempora sertis,
et dicunt laudes ad tua uina tuas.
inter quos, memini, dum me mea fata sinebant, 5.3.5
non inuisa tibi pars ego saepe fui...

That day is this one, on which the poets are accustomed to celebrate you, Bacchus, if the months do not deceive me, and they crown your festive temples with sweet-smelling wreaths, and they sing your praises for your wine. I remember, I was often among them, not offensive to you, while my fates remained...

Wine is thus associated with poetic success, happiness, and mental health, relative to Ovid's current situation. It should come as no shock then that, with characteristic Ovidian wit, wine in Tomis must be forcibly removed from the jars in which it has frozen solid: *nudaque consistunt, formam servantia testae, / uina, nec hausta meri, sed data frusta bibunt*, "wine stands bare, preserving the shape of its jar, nor do they drink in gulps of wine, but chunks given them in vain" (*Tr.* 3.10.23–4).²⁹ Finally, the context of

²⁸ For company, see, e.g. *Tr.* 3.14.39–42. For wine and poets, see *Tr.* 2.363–4, 2.445–6; cf. *Cat.* 27, 50: the physical impact of verse composition and love on Catullus (e.g. poem 50) is similar to that of wine on Ovid at *P.* 1.3.10.

²⁹ Cf. Xen. *Anab.* 7.4.3; Fitton Brown (1985: 19). Richmond (1995: n. 11) provides these sources and a sound analysis of the historic likelihood of freezing ocean water and wine (at -4° F).

Tristia 3.10 supports the association between ice and physical or mental imprisonment: much of the poem centers on the extreme Tomitan winter, specifically the freezing of the Black Sea and Danube (3.10.25–40), and the “chunks” of water which must be extracted from pools in order to drink in the winter (3.10.26). Similar imagery returns in *ex Ponto* 4.7.7–8, where the poet describes his loathsome place of exile to Vestalis: *Ipse uides certe glacie concrescere Pontum, / ipse uides rigido stantia uina gelu*; “you yourself see Pontus frozen solid in ice, you yourself see wine standing rigid with frost.” Wine, as metonymy for Ovid’s poetic *ingenium*, is ruined by the harsh conditions of the Pontic environment.

The Pontic Earth

Like the Pontic sky and sea, the Tomitan countryside obstructs not only Ovid’s physical health, but also his mental powers and poetic *ingenium*. Ovid makes explicit comparisons between his pleasant physical surroundings in Rome and the miserable landscape of his Tomitan exile: *non haec in nostris, ut quondam, scripsimus hortis, / nec, consuete, meum, lectule, corpus habes*, “I haven’t composed these verses, such as they are, in my garden, nor did my customary couch support my body” (*Tr.* 1.11.37–8).³⁰ Contemporary poetic vernacular employed agricultural production as a metaphor for the fecundity of the poet’s mind, a major poetic device explored in chapter two, above. Ovid himself so compliments Cornelius Severus’ mental fertility in *ex Ponto* 4.2: *fertile pectus habes interque Helicon colentes / uberius nulli prouenit ista seges*, “You have a fertile heart, and among those cultivators of Helicon, none gives forth a more

³⁰ The comparison between Rome and Tomis is most clear at *P.* 1.8, where, Williams (1994: 26–34) argues that Rome forms an intellectual, rural-urban paradise, and Tomis is a backward hell (*Stygias*, 27); cf. the lack of intellectual pursuits and companionship in Tomis in, e.g. *Tr.* 3.14.37–40 and 4.1.89–90.

abundant crop” (11–12).³¹ The Pontic landscape is of course ill suited to agricultural production, much as the sea and sky were incapable of supporting navigation. The barren plains are unproductive (*non ager hic pomum, non dulces educat uvas, / non salices ripa, robora monte uirent*, “no field here bears fruit, nor sweet grapes, no banks are blanketed with willow trees, or mountains verdant with oak,” *P.* 1.3.51–2), and at best produce only bitter wormwood.³²

Ovid illustrates the natural impediments to literary production found in the Tomitan landscape with a metaphor similar to that used with the frozen sea (*Tr.* 3.10.71–5):

non hic pampinea dulcis latet uua sub umbra,
 nec cumulant altos feruida musta lacus.
 poma negat regio, nec haberet Acontius in quo
 scriberet hic dominae uerba legenda suae.
 aspicere est nudos sine fronde, sine arbore, campos. 3.10.75

No sweet grape lies hidden under leafy shade, nor does bubbly must accumulate in deep vats. Fruits are denied to this region, and would not Acontius have anything on which he might write words to be ready by his mistress. You can see bare fields without leaves, without trees...

Wine, as before, is notably missing from the Pontic landscape (3.10.71–2), and so too is Ovid’s ostensible poetic genius. The same infertility that leads to the lack of wine in Tomis also ruins agriculture in general, and so hinders two major metaphors for the poetic act. Ovid signals this metaliterary play by once again recalling one of his original elegiac epistles, *Heroides* 20. Just as Leander could have escaped drowning by walking across the frozen Tomitan seas, thereby eliminating the literary basis for his myth and thus Ovid’s power to compose the original letter, so too does Pontic infertility eliminate

³¹ Cf. *Prop.* 3.5.19.

³² E.g. *Tr.* 5.13.21; *P.* 3.1.23, 3.8.15.

ἀλλ' ἦτις καθαρὴ τε καὶ ἀχράαντος ἀνέρπει
πίδακος ἐξ ἱερῆς ὀλίγη λιβὰς ἄκρον ἄωτον.

Bees don't bring water to Demeter from just anywhere, but from the pure and immaculate stream that flows from a small fountain, on the choicest peak.

As Helzle points out (elsewhere at *P.* 4.2.17–20), Ovid picks up on Callimachus' πίδακος... ὀλίγη (small spring, 112) in his *parvaque vena* (*Tr.* 3.14.34). Exile however, has completely destroyed his creative power, and thus the spring is dried up.

We can see similarly destructive or poisoned imagery in Ovid's depictions of specifically Pontic waters. In addition to the useless sea water described above, Ovid condemns the Danube, which, when it does not function as a bridge for invading forces, produces only foul, brackish waters: *est in aqua dulci non inuidiosa uoluptas: / aequoreo bibitur cum sale mixta palus*, “there is an undeniable desire in sweet water: my drink is swamp water mixed with sea salt” (*P.* 2.7.74–5).³⁵ Ovid reverses the spring imagery above: rather than a gentle pure stream of Callimachean poetic inspiration, he now drinks from a source similar to the Alexandrian's Euphrates: Ἀσσυρίου ποταμοῖο μέγας ῥόος, ἀλλὰ τὰ πολλά / λύματα γῆς καὶ πολλὸν ἐφ' ὕδατι συρφετὸν ἔλκει, “the stream of the Assyrian river is massive, but it drags a great deal of mud and refuse in its waters” (*Call. Hymn* 2.108–9). Ovid's *palus* (*P.* 2.7.75) recalls on Callimachus' τὰ πολλά / λύματα γῆς καὶ πολλὸν... συρφετὸν (*Hymn* 2.108–9), and emphasizes the changed circumstances of composition in exile. In fact, this allusion artfully reverses the very claim it implies, first by referencing Callimachus' self-aware *Hymn to Apollo*, and second by association with the ideal Callimachean spring. Ovid even undercuts his exilic

³⁵ See *P.* 3.1.17–18, 4.10.61–2 and Helzle (1988: 80, n. 46); cf. Richmond (1995: n. 8) on the salinity of the area's brackish water, who notes Arist. *Probl.* 932a21–38 (on levels of fresh and salt water in the same body); cf. *RE* Suppl. 9, s.v. “Pontos Euxeinos.”

deterioration by penning his allusion to Callimachus with greater brevity than his predecessor: *palus* encompasses Callimachus' entire multi-line depiction of the tainted Euphrates. What's more, Ovid renders this expert Callimachean compositional technique at the exact moment his subject matter would otherwise dictate an extensive (and aesthetically loathsome) complaint.

Ovid illustrates his correspondence between water, landscape and poetic inspiration with programmatic force at *ex Ponto* 3.1.15–24:

Tu glacie freta uincta tenes, et in aequore piscis inclusus tecta saepe natauit aqua.	3.1.15
Nec tibi sunt fontes, laticis nisi paene marini, qui potus dubium sistat alatne sitim; rara, neque haec felix, in apertis eminet aruis arbor, et in terra est altera forma maris;	3.1.20
non auis obloquitur, nisi siluis si qua remota aequoreas rauco gutture potat aquas. Tristia per uacuos horrent absinthia campos conueniensque suo messis amara loco.	

You [Pontus] hold the waves overcome with ice, and in the sea and the fish, imprisoned, often swim in roofed-in water. Nor do you have springs, except those flowing with brackish water, and the sea makes it doubtful whether they'll slake your thirst or parch it. The rare tree rises in open fields (it's not fruit-bearing), and the land is really just another form of ocean. Nor do the birds sing out, except if they've come from some far off forest and drink sea water with loud shrieks. Miserable absynth bristles through the empty fields, a bitter harvest that befits this place.

Ovid's lament of the barren Tomitan landscape can be reread as an indictment of his place of exile, which cannot provide him "the equipment of poetry" (*Tr.* 5.12.51–2): each image recalls familiar Ovidian references to poetry and the poetic act. The fish locked in ice (15–16) recall the poet's imprisonment in exile, and the fountains (17–18), as above are here tainted with the massive, dirty flow of the ocean. Farming is impossible (19–20), again a reference to the poet as cultivator of genius, while the comparison between barren land and sea picks up on the familiar Homeric and Hesiodic epithet for the

ocean.³⁶ The fact that birds do not sing in Pontus borders on such blatant fabrication that the reader is encouraged to look deeper: birds elsewhere function as metonymy for the poet, and their song for his poetry.³⁷ The final couplet evokes the name of his previous work, the *Tristia*, equating its compositional circumstances and product with wormwood.³⁸ Each image paints a picture of Pontus that is increasingly hostile not only to the exile's physical body, but also to the poet's mental powers.

Others have noted the various points at which Ovid contradicts his own poetic laments.³⁹ Ovid's ability to overcome the various obstructions to the poetic act in Tomis is embodied both in his dangerous poetic journey, and the Pontic environment into which he was thrust. Ovid further demonstrates his enduring poetic authority in the face of one final obstacle: the Tomitans themselves. As with the exilic journey, his success over the local barbarians will have implications for his relationship with emperor himself.

The Pontic Populace

Ovid depicts the high level of artistry found in his work as anathema to the people of Tomis. They are a barbaric lot, constantly engaged in warfare and completely lacking in Roman institutions of social and judicial order. Furthermore, Ovid highlights their philistine nature in many of his more personal interactions: they mock his language and culture, and even when they can understand him, they misinterpret his poetry. At every

³⁶ ἀτρύγετος: see *Theog.* 130; *Il.* 1.316; *Od.* 2.370, etc.

³⁷ See below, p. 96 and n. 16.

³⁸ Claassen (1999: 195 and n. 48) notes the equation between poetry and absynth reverses the famous Lucretian paradigm of poetry as honey on the cup of absynth, the "spoon full of sugar," so to speak, which helps the medicine go down.

³⁹ On these contradictions see Luck's (1967–77) translation and commentary, and esp. Kenney (1965); Helzle (1987); Williams (1994: 12–49).

turn then, the Tomitans, like the Pontic sky, sea and land, exist as obstacles to the refinement and sustenance of his *ingenium*.

Violence (both brawling and foreign invasion) is an endless threat in Ovid's place of exile. While this point has been adequately analyzed elsewhere,⁴⁰ I would only add that combat often prohibits the cultivation of farmland in Tomis, a metaphor elsewhere associated with the poetic act. Such is the implication of *ex Ponto* 1.8, which belabors the comparison between the rural peace and urban sophistication found only in Rome itself (an excellent setting for poetic composition), and Tomis' perfect reversal of that paradigm: there is no intellectual companionship to be found at Tomis, and no possibility of a peaceful country retreat.⁴¹ Ovid laments this fact at 1.8.49–50: *pro quibus amissis utinam contingere possit / hic saltem profugo glaeba colenda mihi!* "in place of these losses I wish I could have a plot to cultivate, even in my exile!" The "losses" (*amissis*, 1.8.49) Ovid grieves refer to the various pleasures of the Roman countryside (1.8.39–49), juxtaposed with the joys of the city immediately preceding it (1.8.29–38). After his outcry in verses 49–50, Ovid specifies the various activities that might calm his troubled mind: herding goats and sheep (1.8.51–4), plowing and planting (1.8.55–8), and weeding and watering (1.8.59–60), all of which are denied to him as a result of the constant threat of invasion (1.8.61–2). We might compare Ovid's lament at *Tristia* 3.14.41–2: *nec quo secedam locus est; custodia muri / summouet infestos clausaque porta Getas*, "nor is there a place to which I might escape; the shut gate keep away the dangerous Getae." Continuous violence prohibits a peaceful life in the

⁴⁰ See esp. Helzle (1988: 81 with n. 49). Those passages that lament the conditions of the Pontic landscape often climax with complaints of ever-present violence, e.g. *P.* 3.1.25–8.

⁴¹ Williams (1994: 26–34); see also Stevens (2009) for the larger reversal of language in Tomis and Rome.

country,⁴² but what about the pleasures of the city itself? Life within the walls of Tomis is equally miserable, Ovid argues, because, unlike Rome, it lacks those with similarly refined literary tastes and even books (3.14.37–40). Despite the conspiracy of sky, sea, earth, and even population against his mind, Ovid maintains his literary refinement by describing his exilic nightmare with the highest Callimachean and Augustan poetic language, effectively reversing his otherwise tedious and endless complaints.

The violence inherent in Tomitan life extends into the socio-political system; through the lens of Ovid's poetry, this creates a mythoepic antithesis to Rome, Italy, and the Mediterranean world. Unlike the rest of the Roman Empire, Pontus is home to very few cities. In fact, the only mention of a contemporary town other than Tomis comes at *ex Ponto* 4.9.104, near the end of his exilic letters. A large number of bustling cities were, from Homeric precedent, indicative of cultural advancement. The pseudo-historic Homeric description of Crete as having "one hundred cities" provides our earliest evidence.⁴³ Homeric societies that lack cities are invariably backwards and violent, such as the Cyclopes who have no laws nor assemblies, nor even agriculture and religion, (*Od.* 9.105–15). Now the Tomitans have a *forum*, the site, in fact, of frequent brawls (*Tr.* 5.10.44–5), thus making the Getae, or other semi-mythologized barbaric groups listed by Ovid, slightly more civilized than the Homeric Cyclopes.⁴⁴ The perversion (rather than complete omission) of a signpost for civilized life brings the Tomitans closer to the

⁴² *Tr.* 4.1.69–70, 5.10.17–18. See Williams (1994: 5–6).

⁴³ *Il.* 2.649; or "ninety," *Od.* 19.174. For the diachronic validity of this characterization of Crete see Pearlman (1992). Ovid elsewhere betrays his obsession with urban life, as, for example, in the encomium of Rome analyzed above in *P.* 1.8, not to mention the extensive urbanity of the *Ars Amatoria*.

⁴⁴ On these barbarians see Syme (1978: 165); Williams (1994: 5); Richmond (1995); Claassen (1999: 190–92).

Laestrygonians, who, because of their *agora* and political systems (absent in the Cyclopes' society), are much more dangerous for Odysseus and his men (*Od.* 10.87–132). Ovid himself makes just such a comparison between the mythic cannibals and his own Thracian neighbors: *nec tu contuleris urbem Laestrygonos umquam / gentibus obliqua quas obit Hister aqua*, “nor could you ever compare the Laestrygonian city with those peoples whom the Hister passes on its winding course” (*P.* 4.10.21–2). The term is even programmatic, a general comparison for the more specific list of links between Odysseus' enemies and Ovid's own, which of course surpass their mythic predecessors.⁴⁵ Ovid's characterization of the local enemy tribes is then not limited to the physical danger in which they place the poet: in fact, their very existence is so mythologized and poeticized that they equally threaten his ability to compose verse.

Ovid's depiction of the local Tomitans reflects their ability to destabilize the poetic act as well as threaten the poet's safety. Their inability to comprehend Latin or even proper Greek, the long-established *linguae francae* of the Mediterranean world marks them as among the most uncultured inhabitants under Roman rule. Such an obstacle to normal communication implies that the locals perform a role similar to the Pontic sea, sky and earth, that of imprisoning the exile. Ovid so associates all three together at *Tristia* 5.2.63–70 (=5.2b.19–26):

⁴⁵ The comparison between Ovid's own experiences and those of Odysseus forms a larger background to the exilic epistles, most clearly pronounced in the exilic journey of *Tristia* I on which, see Rahn (1958). The image continues, however, after Ovid's journey is complete, as evidenced in this reference to the Laestrygonians, above. Based on Ovid's optimistic view that he may eventually be recalled from Tomis, the imagery is in fact quite apt: Tomis and the Tomitans become little more than Ovid's Odyssean stops on his way back to Rome, perhaps prefiguring less dangerous stops elsewhere: the poet often calls for commutation rather than complete absolution. Had his hoped for recall actually taken place, Ovid may have even enjoyed his own *mnesterophonia*, “killing of the suitors,” in which he could mark his triumphant return to the city by skewering his numerous detractors and false friends at Rome. He had already begun composition of such poetry in *Tr.* 1.8 and the *Ibis*.

iussus ad Euxini deformia litora ueni
 aequoris – haec gelido terra sub axe iacet –
 nec me tam cruciat numquam sine frigore caelum, 5.2.65
 glaebaque canenti semper obusta gelu,
 nesciaque est uocis quod barbara lingua Latinae,
 Graiaque quod Getico uicta loquella sono est,
 quam quod finitimo cinctus premor undique Marte,
 uixque brevis tutos murus ab hoste facit. 5.2.70

So commanded, I have come to the formless shores of the Euxine Sea – this land that lies under the frozen pole – neither does the sky (never without cold) so torture me, nor the soil always scorched with ice, nor the barbarian languages, unknowing of a Latin voice, nor even the Greek speech, conquered as it is by Getic sounds, no, these do not torture me so much as the fact that I am surrounded, pressed on all sides by boundless violence, and scarcely does the wall make us safe from the enemy, even for a brief moment.

Each image is, in turn, subordinated to the violence perpetuated by the barbaric tribes.

Violence is among the most powerful mental prisons Ovid invokes, as, in metaliterary terms, it prevents the cultivation of his poetic garden.

Innate attractions to violence and the inability to understand Latin play into a larger characterization of the Tomitans as uncultured swine. Our first indication that Ovid has a less than stellar opinion of the locals as intellectual companions comes in the form of telling diction: his neighbors in exile are everywhere *durus* and *hirsutus*, adjectives reserved in poetic diction for rough, inartistic, or old-fashioned authors or aesthetics.⁴⁶ When Ovid characterizes local barbarians as hairy or shaggy, he often juxtaposes the image with Rome or the Romans, to emphasize the culture of the latter group, and the barbarity of the former. So the distance between Tomis and Rome at *ex*

⁴⁶ Ovid wastes little time establishing this metaphor in the exilic epistles. When addressing his own books, he makes a point to comment on their lack of artistry and skill (*Tr.* 1.1.11–12; cf. 2.259): *nec fragili geminae poliantur pumice frontes, / hirsutus sparsis ut videre comis*, “nor will your twin fronts be polished with fragile pumice, so that you might rather seem shaggy with disheveled hair,” on Ovid’s use of the poetic book see Newlands (1998). Cf. *Cat.* 1.1–2, which prides itself on a recent pumice stone polish. Ovid even preserves the exaggerated modesty of Catullus’ original, though with different implications in exile.

Ponto 1.5.74: *diuidimur caelo quaeque est procul urbe Quirini / aspicit hirsutos
comminus ursa Getas*, “We are separated by the heavens and the bear who is far from
the city of the Romans gazes close at hand on the shaggy Getae.” The comparison is
even programmatic, at *ex Ponto* 3.5.6: *qui tibi quam mallet praesens adferre salutem /
mittit ab hirsutis, Maxime Cotta, Getis*, “he who would prefer to be present to bring this
greeting sends his salutations from the hairy Getae, Maximus Cotta.”⁴⁷ In each case the
“hirsute” Getae reverse traditional images of Roman intellectual life:⁴⁸ well-kept facial
hair matches high-minded literary criticism and publication, both of which the local
population lacks in abundance.

The inability of the Tomitans to understand Ovid’s language and mannerisms
leads them to ridicule his civilized nature and characterizes the locals as antithetical to
the Roman ideal of a cultured poetic audience. Ovid captures the native hostility to
intellectualism with a clever inversion (*Tr.* 5.10.35–40):

exercent illi sociae commercia linguae:	5.10.35
per gestum res est significanda mihi.	
barbarus hic ego sum, qui non intellegar ulli,	
et rident stolidi uerba Latina Getae;	
meque palam de me tuto male saepe locuntur,	
forsitan obiciunt exiliumque mihi.	5.10.40

They hold conversations with a common language: it’s necessary for me to
be understood with gestures. Here I am the barbarian, it is I whom no one
understands, and the stupid Getae laugh at my Latin words; they often
speak of me badly in the open, perfectly safe, perhaps even mocking my
exile.

⁴⁷ Cf. *P.* 4.2.1–2.

⁴⁸ Cf. *Tr.* 5.7.17–18, 49–50; see *Tr.* 5.10.31–2 for Roman hatred of hairy barbarians. See also *P.* 3.3.13–18, on Amor’s shift from well kept locks to wild and unruly hair, a change that mirrors Ovid’s pose of poetic decline. Love is even compared with an overly handled dove, recalling imagery that equates birds and poetry, a familiar Ovidian motif.

The dichotomy between genius poet and philistine populace is reversed: it is the Tomitans who engage in polite conversation (5.10.35), while Ovid is reduced to gestures (5.10.36). The irony of the image is palpable:⁴⁹ in exile Ovid is the barbarian (5.10.37) and the object of ridicule (5.10.38, 40), rather than the figurehead of an elite society of *literati* in Rome. Ovid emphasizes the differences between his own intellectual background and those of his co-habitants: the Tomitans are so backwards that they do not even know how backwards they are, when, in their company, Rome's greatest poet is a barbarian.

This characterization of Ovid's relationship with the Tomitans has interesting implications for his later notoriety among them as a poet. We have already seen how Ovid was able to overcome the oppressive nature of his exile: his adherence to the high-minded aesthetics of Callimachean and Augustan poetry contradicted a literary landscape with no guiding constellations, no agriculture, no pure running water, nor even songbirds. In short, this was a world where poetry should not exist, and yet the author continues to write in the highest Roman standards. Ovid's poetic successes in exile have been explored extensively by Kennedy, Luck, Helzle, Claassen, Williams and others: these readings aided in the rehabilitation of the exilic epistles in the 1980s and 1990s. To these discussions I have added the fundamental role played by the physical landscape of Ovid's exile, not merely as a reflection of his misery (at which the author himself hints),⁵⁰ or even a complex of intertextual allusions centered on the other

⁴⁹ Not merely because the first poem of *Tr.* 5 opened with precisely the opposite sentiment (5.1.73–4): *nec me Roma suis debet conferre poetis: / inter Sauromatas ingeniosus eram*, "Rome ought not compare me with her poets: among the Sauromatians I am a genius."

⁵⁰ Ovid claims that the sentiment his poetry matches the disaster of his circumstance: *Tr.* 3.1.9–10, 5.1.47–8; *P.* 3.1.23–4, 3.9.35–6.

Augustan poets (particularly Vergil).⁵¹ Instead, Ovid's Pontus functions as an extension of the emperor's misguided condemnation. In the next chapter, I will explore the implications of this characterization and Ovid's program of alienating the emperor from learned Roman society. Ovid's power to overcome the dangers of the exilic journey and set those dangers to work for his own verse would not have been lost on his most learned readers, a group from whom the emperor is explicitly excluded.

⁵¹ So Hinds (1985); Williams (1994:12–25).

CHAPTER 4 OVID'S AUDIENCE AND THE EMPEROR IN THE EXILIC EPISTLES

As Ovid refined his enactment of verse, he furthered his negative characterization of the emperor in the eyes of the Roman elite by disconnecting Augustus from the aristocracy. Augustus is seen as unfit to be first among equals when his ability to appreciate Latin verse is little better than that of the Tomitans.¹ First, Ovid increases the depth of the allusions with which he illustrates the unification of poetry and reality in his own life. Complex intersections draw the reader from the *ex Ponto* back to the *Tristia*, with the *Metamorphoses* as intermediary: the earlier masterpiece's context informs the interaction between the two epistolary works.² Second, Ovid's identification of individual addressees allows the author to play upon their intellectual capacities. Ovid's close friends, or other intelligent, well-educated readers can appreciate the poet's posturing in terms of poetic enactment. Others, however, who are envisioned as overlooking Ovid's poetic genius, are excluded from high Roman society. Along these lines I will demonstrate that Ovid divided his addressees into two groups, *philoï* and *sophoi*.³ Because of their proximity to Ovid (prior to exile), his friends and

¹ A key rhetorical point because the emperor acts as a focal character for Ovid's exilic epistles, aligned opposite the poet himself. On Augustus in this respect see Marg (1959: 349–50); McGowan (2009); Ingleheart (2006) and esp. (2010).

² Such is the example with which I closed the previous chapter. In this regard I follow the *modello-esemplare* (as opposed to the *modello-codice*) of Conté (1986), with the emendation of Hinds (1998: 34–47) on the distinctions between *topoi* and allusions; cf. Edmunds (2001). See also Barchiesi (1994) and Thomas (1999).

³ I have adapted these terms from Nagy (1997), whose methodology is in turn indebted to the system of *code* and *message* found in the Prague School of Linguistics: Jakobson (1960: 353); Culler (1975: 3–36, 64–86). For the application to Archaic poetry, Nagy (1997: 148–9; 426–7) cites, e.g., Theog. 681–2; the application to Ovid's exilic epistles has not previously been attempted. Ovid's addressees are a mixture of poets, statesmen, friends, and family, on which the best source remains Syme (1978). On the functions of the various addressees see Nagle (1980: 89–107); Williams (1994: 115–50); Oliensis (1997); Claassen (1999: 110–31); Gaertner (2005: 6–8, esp. n. 12). For epistolary traditions see Koskenniemi (1956); Malherbe (1988); Rosenmeyer (2001). Ovid did not invent the genre of verse epistles: despite the

political acquaintances, or *philoï*, appreciate and understand his poetic program, as do more distant but well-educated readers, or *sophoi*. Ovid's literary allusions are appropriately suited to each group: sailing metaphors of the poetic vessel type, for example, are more likely to be directed at *sophoi*, while those of the ship of life are suited to eliciting sympathy from *philoï*.⁴ Furthermore, the strategies Ovid employed for each type of addressee detract from the emperor's position condemning Ovid in the political sphere and enhance the poet's position within his own sphere. In effect, this dialogue takes place between author and well-educated audience, with the emperor socially ostracized (a sort of Roman salon recreated in Tomis).⁵ This fashions a new venue for Ovid to respond to the emperor, since he cannot otherwise balance his relationship with Augustus in terms of political authority. Instead he tears down the princeps' connections with the Roman elite and his self-insertion into the literature that they esteemed. Ovid effectively restructures the conflict between himself and the emperor in the eyes of his audience by ostracizing him from his own aristocracy:⁶ Augustus is envisioned as out of touch and intellectually incapable of appreciating the work of Rome's greatest living poet, Ovid.

absence of Hellenistic exempla, we can compare Hor. *Ep.* 1 and (possibly) Prop. 4.3; see Rosenmeyer (2001: 12); McGowan (2009: 22–3 and n. 25).

⁴ Williams (1994: 48–9) hints at this type of division between readers, that a section of Ovid's audience would be compelled by the laments of, e.g. *Tr.* 5.7 and 5.10, while others would see through the author's "dissimulation," as found by Williams' in *P.* 1.8, 2.10, and 4.7: "while Ovid's objective might seem to the credulous reader, whether ancient or modern, to be the simple expression of sincere grief and hardship, the more sophisticated reader will find a different Ovid – an exile who creates an 'unreal' picture of his circumstances in exile by manipulating his 'facts' to creative advantage. This Ovid is no different to the pre-exilic poet who displayed his powers of artistic invention and capability at every turn..."

⁵ A concept linked to the ancient epistolary motif of the *colloquium* (anticipated responses in a letter that create an atmosphere of actual oral discourse), see Cazzaniga (1937: 5). On the *colloquium* in general, see Gaertner (2005: 7, n. 12) who cites Demetr. *Eloc.* 223–35; Cic. *Fam.* 12.30.1; Sen. *Ep.* 75.1.

⁶ For Ovid's rhetorical restructuring of an "imbalanced" relationship, see Oliensis (2004: 286) and McGowan (2009: 2–3).

In this regard Ovid is contradicting a tradition that developed around Augustus after Actium, that is, the association among contemporary poets of the princeps' champion deity with their own patron of music and poetry.⁷ Ovid was not above satirizing the association between Apollo and Augustus before exile, specifically in the Apollo and Daphne scene of the *Metamorphoses* (1.473–567),⁸ and, I argue, in the exilic literature we find an equally telling reversal: the Roman emperor who fashions himself in Apollo's image now fails to appreciate Latin verse.⁹ With this reversal we can see how Augustus, while he clearly does not fall within the realm of Ovid's *philoï*, is by no means counted among the *sophoi*. As I shall argue, Ovid corrects the rhetorical disparity between himself and Augustus not by focusing on the political distance between poet and emperor, but rather by changing the subject, so to speak, among the Roman elite; he forces a dialogue centered on his own genius and the emperor's idiocy.¹⁰ In the exile poetry, then, the focus shifts from a political and sexual deviant

⁷ "Apollo offers to Augustan poets a symbolic site at which literary and political discourse can intersect," Miller (2009: 298). For more on the complex relationship between Apollo, Augustus and poet, see Gurval (1998: 87–111); Loupiac (1999).

⁸ On the many subversive or satirical readings of this passage see esp. Miller (2009: 338–49).

⁹ Miller (2009: 210–11) attributes the lack of continued, vivid associations between the emperor and Apollo in Ovid's later work to a larger change in ideological focus within the imperial system: from a singular emperor to an imperial family by the time of Ovid's exile (thus accounting for Ovid's frequent comparisons between Augustus and Jupiter, the "father of men and the gods"). I argue that Ovid eschews the Apolline characterization for Augustus precisely because he does not wish to focus on the intersection between politics and poetics in the person of the emperor. For Ovid, Bacchus has replaced Apollo as the poetic deity (e.g. *Tr.* 1.7.1–4, 5.3.1–6): in *Tr.* 5.3, Apollo empowers the music of contemporary poets (*Tr.* 5.3.55–8), but Ovid prays to Bacchus. The connections between Augustus and the Apollo that remain in the exilic literature (e.g. Miller 2009: 215–17, on *Tr.* 3.1.35–48) focus rather on Ovidian irony in the *Metamorphoses* and exilic poems, largely at the emperor's expense.

¹⁰ For a related line of reasoning see Barchiesi (1993); Ingleheart (2006: 63–86) and esp. (2010: 24): "Augustus is an inadequate reader of elegy to such an extent that he has failed to recognize the elegiac tendencies of literature in general, and so exiled the poet who perfected the genre." Ingleheart restricts her interpretation to *Tristia* 2; I will here argue that Ovid's engagement with individual addressees in the *ex Ponto* substantiates Ingleheart's argument and further ostracises of the emperor from Roman aristocratic society entirely. See also Ingleheart (2010: *ad loc.* 213–40).

outed by a righteous god-king to a genius poet exiled by a philistine. Augustus' condemnation of Ovid is restructured as an inability to comprehend good poetry, thus turning the *pater patriae* into a little more than a *malus interpret* (*P.* 4.14.41).

As early as the final book of the *Tristia*, Ovid started to deliver his claims to poetic genius and exceptionality with greater clarity.¹¹ *Tristia* 5 (12 C.E.) provides an excellent case study, as it has characteristics of both the early books of the *Tristia* as well as the *Epistulae ex Ponto*. The programmatic statement of *Tristia* 5 illustrates what other compositional metaphors imply only indirectly: *ut cecidi, subiti perago praeconia casus, / sumque argumenti conditor ipse mei*, “since I fell, I have carried out the proclamation of my sudden disaster, and I myself am the creator of my own theme” (*Tr.* 5.1.9–10).¹² Ovid has condensed complicated comparisons between his poetic act and the reality of his exile into a single couplet. The first half describes how he proclaims (or enacts: *perago*) his downfall in verse, and the second how he is in fact the cause of that verse, creating a circular relationship between poet and poetry. Poetry enacts life, which itself is the theme of poetry. The superficial reading which Ovid himself puts forward at the start of *Tristia* 5.1¹³ is meant to explain how the author's verse reflects his exile: both

¹¹ *Tr.* 4.10 (esp. 105–10) provides evidence for the pride Ovid associated with having lived out what he wrote: cf. 1.5.57–84 (on Odysseus). Compositional metaphor hinted at this in the earliest poems of the *Tristia* (against the author's claims to the contrary) and continued to do so throughout the *ex Ponto*. As his exile lingered on, with no hope of a return, Ovid's pleas became increasingly explicit, similar to that found in the autobiographical poems (*Tr.* 4.10 and *P.* 4.16), though, as we shall see, still tinted with the poetic ingenuity characteristic of Ovid's best work. Those who recognize this program of enactment would be so addressed in the *Epistulae ex Ponto*, creating an “in” crowd among the Roman elite.

¹² Cf. Claassen (1999: 190), on the function and reality of Ovid's Tomitan landscape.

¹³ *Tr.* 5.1.3–6: *hic quoque talis erit, quails fortuna poetae: / invenies toto carmine dulce nihil. / flebilis ut noster status est, ita flebile carmen, / materiae scripto conveniente suae*, “This too will be such as is the fortune of the poet: you will find no sweetness in the entire poem. Just as my state is mournful, so too is my song, verse written appropriate to its own theme.” Particularly effective in this dissimulation is the use of the term *dulce*, often used in describing pleasant or agreeable verse (cf. Hor. *A. P.* 99, *passim*).

are terrible, and thus the poet becomes the “herald of his sudden downfall,” by writing loathsome verse about a loathsome situation.¹⁴ In fact, through an allusion to his *Metamorphoses*, the poet reveals the true nature of this relationship: Ovid enacts his exilic experience in verse not through complaining, but through his unique ability to expand poetic boundaries through actual historical circumstance.

The brief mention of swans within the same programmatic statement supports the reversal of Ovid’s claims to mediocrity (*Tr.* 5.1.11–14):

utque iacens ripa deflere Caystrius ales
dicitur ore suam deficiente necem,
sic ego, Sarmaticas longe proiectus in oras,
efficio tacitum ne mihi funus eat.

Just as, while laying out on the shore, the Caystrian bird is said to cry out his own death with a weak voice, thus I, thrown far off to Sarmatian shores, make it so that my funeral does not go on silently.

The “Caystrian bird” refers to the proverbial swan that was said to sing its own funeral dirge (*Il.* 2.449), a fitting image for a poet whose verse supposedly reflects the depths to which his own life has sunk. The same *Caystrius ales* appears in the *Metamorphoses* (*Met.* 5.386–7), and the reference in the *Tristia* to its earlier usage is timely. The swan image is a loaded expression: in Augustan poetry it refers nearly everywhere to poets or poetry, and never otherwise in Ovid.¹⁵ As Hinds has argued, the metaphor found in the *Metamorphoses* forms a poignant statement of poetic accomplishment, setting up

¹⁴ Wheeler (1920: *ad Tr.* 5.1.9). I find Wheeler’s translation misleading here, since the idiom “to be a public crier,” was from Plautus rendered either with *dare* (Plaut. *Men.* 1155) or *facere* (Cic. *ad Fam.* 6.18.1).

¹⁵ See *OLD* and *TLL* s.v. *cycnus* and *olor*. Hinds (1987: 47) gathers the appropriate citations: *Her.* 7.1–2; *Met.* 2.252–3, 5.386–7, 14.429–30; *Fast.* 2.108–10; *Tr.* 5.1.11–14.

Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as rival to any Greek predecessor.¹⁶ In the programmatic statement of *Tristia* 5, then, this intertextuality recalls the circumstances of *Metamorphoses* 5.385–6, and thus forms a statement on poetic self-empowerment, not Ovid's dismal existence in exile. In fact, as a bird closely associated with Apollo,¹⁷ Ovid usurps Augustus' close associations with the patron deity of poets and poetry, by out-singing the other "swans" of the Greco-Roman tradition. The poet steers the learned reader away from his overt claims to a poetic drought (brought on by exile), instead to the height of his career, and perhaps, now in the *Tristia*, beyond.

That Ovid's swans aggrandize his poetic program is developed further in his endless exilic lament. Following the loaded reference to swans, Ovid adds himself to a list of elegiac predecessors, including Gallus, Propertius and Tibullus (*Tr.* 5.1.17–18). In doing so, Ovid casually invites the reader to associate his name with other well-known authors in the elegiac genre,¹⁸ undercutting his assertion of poetic decline. He then concludes the entire passage with a rhetorical *tour de force*, centered precisely on the extent to which he lived what he wrote (*Tr.* 5.1.23–30):

¹⁶ The plurality of song from the Caystrian swans, Hinds (1987: 47) argues, is outdone by Ovid's *perpetuum carmen*. The location itself, in Sicily, had "an unusual wealth of literary variety," leading him to conclude: "if Cayster too exercises its programmatic weight, another claim, perhaps an even prouder one, can be elicited. The *carmina* of Ovid's Sicilian landscape are equal in wealth to any *carmina* which the Cayster, i.e. which the Carian setting of the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* can produce (*Met.* 5.387 *edit.* note that *edere* also means in Latin 'to publish')."

¹⁷ Plato *Phaedo* 84d–85b; in addition to those citations found in Hinds (1987: 47), see Ahl (1982) and (1985: 176–77).

¹⁸ Cf. other poems more overtly about self-aggrandizement, *Tr.* 4.10.45–6 and 51–4, though *not P.* 4.16.

Callimachean image, the fountain of inspiration: *quod querar, illa mihi pleno de fonte ministrat, / nec mea sunt, fati uerba sed ista mei* (that [fortune] furnishes me with a full fountain of complaint, / nor are they my words, but those of my fate, *Tr.* 5.1.37–8).²¹ On the surface, Ovid has accounted for the poor state of his letters from exile: the sad subject matter is reflected in their sorry stylistic state. However, given the premise of poetic self-aggrandizement through the actual enactment of poetry, each of these self-criticisms takes on new meaning, further supporting the author’s claim to originality and exceptionality.

So the Caystrian swans proclaim Ovid’s accomplishment in the face of exile, specifically through his ability to endure and overcome those circumstances that other poets limit to their mythological verse.²² In that example Ovid compares himself directly with a myth from the *Metamorphoses*: both the swans and Ovid sing their own funeral dirge (the swans at *Met.* 14.429–30; Ovid at *Tr.* 3.3). Elsewhere, Ovid inserts himself in the *Metamorphoses*, demonstrating his ability to enact verse by incorporating himself into his masterpiece.²³ We might contrast a characteristic list of similes found in *ex Ponto* 1.2,²⁴ drawn from the *Metamorphoses*, which seems to reverse the paradigm (*P.* 1.2.29–40):

²¹ Cf. Call. *Aet. fr.* 1.1–35 Pf.; *Tr.* 3.7.15–16, 3.14.33–5, 4.8.25–6; *P.* 1.5.5–8, 3.1.11–18, 3.5.17–18.

²² e.g. Homer’s Odysseus (cf. *Tr.* 1.5), Apollonius’ Jason (cf. *Tr.* 1.10) or Vergil’s Aeneas (cf. *Tr.* 1.2).

²³ A programmatic point for the entire corpus of exilic epistles (*Tr.* 1.1.117–22); cf. *Tr.* 1.7.19–22, where the burning of the *Metamorphoses* is tantamount to the burning of the author’s own body at his imagined funeral.

²⁴ On Ovid’s “lists” see Gaertner (2005: *ad loc*) and cf. Gaertner (2005: *ad* 1.4.11–14), who identifies multiple lists of exempla.

Felicem Nioben, quamuis tot funera uidit, quae posuit sensum saxea facta mali.	1.2.30
Vos quoque felices, quarum clamantia fratrem cortice uelauit populus ora nouo.	
Ille ego sum lignum qui non admittor in ullum; ille ego sum frustra qui lapis esse uelim.	
Ipsa Medusa oculis ueniat licet obuia nostris, amittet uires ipsa Medusa suas.	1.2.35
Viuimus ut numquam sensu careamus amaro, et grauior longa fit mea poena mora.	
Sic inconsumptum Tityi semperque renascens non perit, ut possit saepe perire, iecur.	1.2.40

Happy Niobe was, although she saw so many funerals, she set aside her sense of pain when she was turned to stone. You are also happy, whose mouths crying out for your brother the poplar covered up with new bark. I am that man, who's not admitted into any wooden tree; I am that man who desires in vain to be turned to stone. Although Medusa herself might come before my eyes, she would lose all her strength. I live so that I might never lack bitter pain, and long delay makes my punishment heavier. Thus the liver of Tityus, if ever consumed is always reborn and does not perish, so that it might always be able to be destroyed.

Whereas before Ovid sought to add his own transformation to the *Metamorphoses* (*Tr.* 1.1.117–22),²⁵ his suffering surpasses specific scenes from the work precisely because he lacks that fundamental aspect of each myth: the deadly metamorphosis that proves to be a salvation for the tragic victim. Unlike Niobe (*P.* 1.2.29–30; *Met.* 6.146–312), Ovid *cannot* transform into stone to ease his suffering (1.2.34); even Medusa's gaze (1.2.35–6; *Met.* 4.604–5.249)²⁶ would have no effect. Nor can he turn to wood, like the sisters of

²⁵ An association made all the more ironic by the fact that Ovid commands his exile poetry to ensure his transformation (*Tr.* 1.1.117–22):

sunt quoque mutatae, ter quinque uolumina, formae,
nuper ab exequiis carmina rapta meis.
his mando dicas, inter mutata referri
fortunae uultum corpora posse meae, 1.1.120
namque ea dissimilis subito est effecta priori,
flendaque nunc, aliquo tempore laeta fuit.

²⁶ Medusa serves as a supporting actress of sorts in the Perseus story, and the pivot point for Ovid's transition to the next myth (*Met.* 5.250–93).

Phaethon (1.2.31–2; *Met.* 2.344–66). In fact, Ovid is most like the liver of Tityus (1.2.37–40; *Met.* 4.457–58),²⁷ marked not by some mythological change from one state to another, but by its inability to do exactly that: consumed by vultures for all eternity, it regrows every day to repeat the torture. The couplet at 1.2.33–4 hammers home the focus on Ovid himself with the anaphora of the initial *ille ego sum* and internal *qui*. Above, in *Tristia* 5.1, we saw how the poet could claim to have enacted his verse. But, because he lives through the suffering about which he writes, Ovid actually surpasses the mythological and historical exempla of other poets.²⁸ By enacting his own verse, Ovid both inserts himself within and sets himself above Greek mythological heroes. This focus on the intersection of poetry and reality in Ovid's own person, born in the compositional metaphors of *Tristia* 1 and refined over the course of his exile, will become the central tactic in the author's appeals to individuals in the *Epistulae ex Ponto*.

Letters to *Philoï* and *Sophoi*: Cotta (P. 2.3) and Messalinus (P. 2.2)

Ovid's focus on poetry, poetics and the ability to participate in his own verse finds further evidence in the varying tactics with which he addresses individuals in the *Epistulae ex Ponto*. Poems 2.2 and 2.3, the longest in *ex Ponto* 2, demonstrate how Ovid varied his strategy when addressing *philoï* (friends or political acquaintances who might help him escape Tomis) and *sophoi* (well-educated aristocrats to whose sense of esoteric literary expertise Ovid wished to appeal). Ovid's varying tactics of personal

²⁷ Tityus, like Medusa, is a minor character in the *Metamorphoses*, whose myth does not receive extensive treatment; though see *Met.* 10.40–44.

²⁸ As he claimed elsewhere: *Tr.* 1.1.47–8: *da mihi Maeoniden et tot circumice casus / ingenium tantis excidet omne malis*, "place Maeonian Homer in such disastrous circumstances / even his genius as his would fall away among such evils." Cf. the treatments of Odysseus (*Tr.* 1.5.57–84) and Jason (*P.* 1.4.21–46), both of whom Ovid considers himself to have surpassed in suffering.

appeal substantiate his enactment of verse and level the playing field between emperor and poet in the eyes of the addressee/audience.

We must note, however, that the distinction between *philos* and *sophos* is not mutually exclusive. Carus (*P.* 4.13), for example, could be included in the *philoï* as a close friend of the poet's and the *sophoi*, as a fellow writer. Nevertheless, it will be helpful to provide an overriding classification for each addressee, as Ovid's tactics are particular to each group. Among the *sophoi* we may count Paullus Fabius Maximus (*P.* 1.2, 3.3), Germanicus (*P.* 2.1), Lucius Pomponius Flaccus (*P.* 1.10), Rufinus (*P.* 1.3, 3.4), Messalinus (*P.* 2.2), Cotys of Thrace (*P.* 2.9), Tuticanus (*P.* 4.12, 4.14), and Albinovanus Pedo (*P.* 4.10). The *philoï* include Pomponius Graecinus (*P.* 1.6, 2.6, 4.9), Publius Sullius Rufus (*P.* 4.8), Cotta Maximus (*P.* 1.5, 1.9, 2.3, 2.8, 3.2, 3.5), Atticus (*P.* 2.4, 2.7), and, of course, Ovid's wife (*P.* 1.4).

As a case study, let us consider the rhetorical differences and similarities between *ex Ponto* 2.2 and 2.3, which are addressed to Messalinus and his younger brother Cotta Maximus. For our purposes we need note only the literary pretensions of both authors and their familiarity with Ovid: Cotta was a close friend of Ovid's, while Messalinus was not particularly friendly with our poet, in reality linked to him only through his father and brother.²⁹ In any case Cotta may be classified among the *philoï*, while Messalinus must fall into the category of *sophoi*. Indeed, it was to Cotta on Elba that Ovid first confessed his banishment (*P.* 2.3.83–90), while Messalinus knew Ovid only through the literary praise heaped upon him by Cotta and their father (*P.* 2.2.97–104). This paradigm plays out in Ovid's letters: Messalinus (*P.* 2.2) receives mostly

²⁹ On the pair, see Syme (1978: 114–34); *RE* s.v. "Valerius Messalla, Circle."

poetic appeals couched in simile, while Cotta (*P.* 2.3), whose letter is largely devoid of poetic twists and turns, is treated as a close friend and influential part of the emperor's entourage.

From the outset of each poem, we can see that Ovid's appeals will be appropriate to each addressee: Ovid targets the more distant Messalinus (*P.* 2.2) with a formal greeting and a series of learned metaphors, while Cotta, the *philos*, receives a personal salutation and rhetorical appeals based on pathos (*P.* 2.3.1–6):

Maxime, qui claris nomen uirtutibus aequas
nec sinis ingenium nobilitate premi,
culte mihi—quid enim status hic a funere differt?—
supremum uitae tempus adusque meae,
rem facis adflictum non auersatus amicum
qua non est aeuo rarior ulla tuo. 2.3.5

Maximus, you who equal your name to your bright virtues, nor do you allow your genius to be changed by nobility, cherished by me to the very end of my life—for how does my state differ from a funeral?—When you didn't turn away from a downtrodden friend, you did something more rare than anything else in your time.

Cotta's unwavering faithfulness is the focus of his letter (2.3.5–6), and although Ovid will later employ mythological exempla for friendship (2.3.41–8), this is the extent of his references to poetics and his place in Latin literary history. Cotta's greeting is informal and familiar: a lonely vocative address (*Maxime*, 2.3.1), without any standard epistolary salutations. This destabilizes the barriers separating poet and addressee and places the author in the physical presence of his audience as an interlocutor, rather than distant letter-writer.

We might compare the friendly tone of Cotta's letter with the formal, almost defensive greeting in Messalinus' letter (*P.* 2.2.1–4):

Ille domus uestrae primis uenerator ab annis
pulsus ad Euxini Naso Sinistra freti

mittit ab indomitis hanc, Messaline, salutem,
quam solitus praesens est tibi ferre, Getis.

That venerator of your house from its earliest years, Naso, expelled to the far west of the Euxine shore, sends this greeting, which he was accustomed to carry in person to you, Messalinus, from the as yet unconquered Getae.

The epistolary salutation is immediately recognizable: sender in the nominative and *salutem* in the accusative. A familiar Ovidian variation on the Roman formula of *s.d.* (*salutem dicit*) appears here (*mittit... salutem*, 2.2.3),³⁰ as if to emphasize the distance between author and addressee. Ovid emphasizes this point by reminding Messalinus that once before he could address him in person. He even attempts to do so at 2.2.2–3, through the use of the vocative (*mittit ab indomitis hanc, Messaline, salutem, / quam solitus praesens est tibi ferre, Getis*, “[Ovid] sends this greeting, Messalinus, from the as yet unconquered Getae, which he used to bring to you in person”). All this formality (tempered by the gentle reminder of previous proximity with the subsequent vocative address) contrasts the familiarity, friendliness, and congeniality of Cotta’s letter. Because of this distance (both physical and emotional) between Ovid and Messalinus, the poet instead focuses on his recipient’s sense of aesthetic taste, a point of pride for the discerning gentleman of early imperial Rome.

Contrasted with the letter to Cotta, the letter to Messalinus contains a much heavier emphasis on learned poetic allusions (*P.* 2.2.7–14):

Perlege nec mecum pariter mea uerba relega:
Urbe licet uestra uersibus esse meis.
Non ego concepi, si Pelion Ossa tulisset,
clara mea tangi sidera posse manu, 2.2.10

³⁰ Claassen (1999: 114–19, esp. 115, and nn. 37, 40–3). On the structure of the epistle see Malherbe (1988); Stirewalt (1993); Rosenmeyer (1997) and (2001); *OCD*³ s.v. “Letters, Greek” and “Letters, Latin.”

nec nos Enceladi dementia castra secuti
in rerum dominos mouimus arma deos,
nec, quod Tydidæ temeraria dextera fecit,
numina sunt telis ulla petita meis.

Read through and for your part do not relegate my words with myself: my verses are allowed to be in your city. I would never have believed it, if Ossa supported Pelion, that the famous stars could be touched by my hand, neither, following the deranged camp of Enceladus, have I brought weapons against the homes of the gods, nor are any divine powers sought out by my weapons, as did the audacious right hand of the son of Tydeus.

Following this address, Ovid employs a series of poetic comparisons, all of which can be applied more securely to his own situation than the various appeals to mythological friendship found in *ex Ponto* 2.3.41–8. The imperative *relega* (2.2.7) reminds his audience that his legal definition is not technically *exul*, but rather, *relegatus*, an improvement in social terms, in that he maintained control of his property at Rome. The piling of Pelion on top of Ossa, the reference to Enceladus' demented war camps and the gigantomachy (2.2.9–12) follow up on this selective terminology: Ovid was not grasping for power as part of a violent conspiracy against Augustus. Nor did he attack the despot's physical body, as Diomedes once injured Ares and Aphrodite (*Il.* 5.334–863), an appropriate pair considering the Julian family's mythological descent and the sculptural program of the Temple of Mars Ultor, one of the emperor's crowning construction projects. The series of allusions creates a point of connection between Messalinus and Ovid. By refocusing exile on the literary interests shared between poet and audience, Ovid renders the conditions surrounding his conflict with Augustus more favorable to his own position: he effectively changes the subject from politics, where the emperor is immortal, to poetry, where the poet is.

This scene elevates the poet in the eyes of his audience, no matter their opinion of his poetry or level of familiarity. First, language connects the two passages: both begin with the postpositive *quidem*, a traditional means for rhetorical emphasis, while the implied subject of both opening couplets is Caesar's outrage (*iram*, 2.2.19; *ira* 2.3.61). Both are justly outraged (*iure*, 2.2.20; *iusta* 2.3.61) just as Caesar himself was (2.3.62). Cotta, however, the closer friend to Ovid, goes so far as to feel Ovid's pain as well (2.3.65–6). This effectively places Cotta's feelings for Ovid on par with his reverent emotion for the emperor's pain, focusing attention on the pair of characters (Ovid and Augustus), and equating poet and emperor in the audiences' perception.

Messalinus, as a learned reader (but less of a friend to Ovid), receives specialized treatment in the subsequent lines of poem 2.2: Ovid employs a series of mythopoetic allusions that emphasize his power in the face of imperial authority. The overarching theme of the passage supports this interpretation: the idea that Ovid seeks refuge from those who were once his enemies focuses on the relationship between poet and emperor, creating a poetic atmosphere in which Ovid can excel. He first calls up Achaemenides (*P.* 2.2.25), Odysseus' man rescued by Aeneas (*Aen.* 3.588–691), an apt comparison since Ovid is so often Odysseus (*Tr.* 1.5.57–84) and Augustus had obvious links to Aeneas. Next, he compares his plight with Telephus healed by Achilles' spear (*P.* 2.2.26): Augustus is the Achilles to Ovid's Telephus elsewhere (*Tr.* 1.1.97–100; *Tr.* 5.2.15–20) but so is Ovid's own verse (*Tr.* 2.1.19–22), again setting the poet and the emperor within the same sphere.³³ The ensuing references to Polyphemus and Antiphates (*P.* 2.2.113–14) recast Ovid's relationship with Augustus in a similar fashion.

³³ Cf. *Ibis* 255–6, where the comparison with Telephus is negative.

When Messalinus makes his case on Ovid's behalf, the emperor is imagined as a peaceful and friendly parent (*placidus facilisque parens*, 2.2.115), not the monstrous Polyphemus or Antiphates of the *Odyssey*, known for their conspicuous lack of hospitality: *nec tamen Aetnaeus vasto Polyphemus in antro / accipiet voces Antiphatesve tuas* ("nor, nevertheless, will Aetnean Polyphemus receive you in his massive cave, or will Antiphates hear your words," 2.2.113–14). As with Achaemenides and Telephus before, the comparison seems to focus on the emperor, but ultimately favors a restructuring of the dialogue between Augustus and the poet, namely by shifting from political condemnation to poetic authority. Although *not* calling Augustus a man-eating giant could be construed as an emphatic compliment, the characters of Polyphemus and Antiphates refer more likely to Messalinus' relationship with Augustus, who, as the vehicle for Ovid's defense, is required to play the role of Odysseus. As we saw above (for example, in *Tr.* 1.5), Odysseus is commonly associated with Ovid and his poetic act in the exilic epistles. Thus Messalinus must perform the function of Ovid's poetry *in absentia*: defend the poet with the same clever turns his verse uses in Tomis. To hammer the point home, Ovid includes just such a twist within the metaphor: Polyphemus' name ("very famous," or "much spoken of," Greek: πολύ + φημί) coincides nicely with the intended subject of comparison, Augustus, who was of course very famous, while Antiphates, the "contradictor" (Greek: ἀντί + φημί) better describes the emperor's legal position with respect to Ovid. A *figura etymologica* seals the deal: Ovid embeds Antiphates between "your [Messalinus'] voice" in the Latin (*voces Antiphatesve tuas*, 2.2.114), playing upon the understood Greek derivation.³⁴ These comparisons

³⁴ The couplet is highly artistic. Ovid sets Polyphemus into a physical word picture when he situates him within his cave (*vasto Polyphemus in antro*, 2.2.114), contrasting the similar, though etymologically

serve the same veiled purpose for the learned *sophoi* as Cotta's lament for the poet in 2.3: each places Ovid (or his verse) on equal ground with the emperor's political authority by centering on Ovid's power within his own arena, making the case for legitimate complaint more agreeable to an elite audience.

Ovid's sailing metaphors are also tailored to his particular addressee: they refer to personal suffering in *ex Ponto* 2.3 but function as metapoetry in *ex Ponto* 2.2. The image of the sailing vessel is exclusively poetic in his letter to Messalinus (*P.* 2.2.29–36):

Dixerit hoc aliquis tutum non esse: fatemur, sed non per placidas it mea nauis aquas.	2.2.30
Tuta petant alii: fortuna miserrima tuta est; nam timor euentu deterioris abest.	
Qui rapitur	
porrigit... spinas duraque saxa	
accipitremque timens pennis trepidantibus ales	2.2.35
audet ad humanos fessa uenire sinus. ³⁵	

Some have said this is not wise: I admit it, but my ship does not go through calm waters. Let others seek out safety, the most painful fate is safe, for fear of a worse disaster is missing. He who is snatched up... [by waves] clings even to thorns and harsh rocks... and fearing the hawk the bird, with trembling wings and exhausted dares to go to the lap of a human.

Ovid's pleas in verse are compared to acts of desperation: *hoc* (2.2.29) refers to the poet's attempts to gain absolution from Augustus, the very "deity" he offended (2.2.27–8). The drowning victim (2.2.33–4) recalls Ovid's *naufragus* metaphor, but since the reference is specifically to his poetic attempts to sway the emperor (e.g. *Tr.* 2) or the emperor's close friends, the metaphor must be interpreted on literary grounds: Ovid's

based, imagery of the pentameter line. Interlocking alliteration adds musicality: *AEtnAEus vAsto Polyphemus in Antro / Accipiet Voces AntiphatesVe tuAs*. Note the matching of long and short vowels and syllables, as in *vasto... antro*.

³⁵ *P.* 2.2.33–4 is mutilated beyond recognition. See Galasso (1995: *ad loc*) for the most complete overview of scholarship on this corruption.

poetic act is likened to a helpless swimmer, caught up in a strong current. Because Messalinus the *sophos* would better respond to metapoetic uses of the seafaring metaphor,³⁶ just such imagery can be found in *ex Ponto* 2.2 and other letters to *sophoi*. Metaphors that play upon the reader's personal attachment to the poet are more often found in letters to *philoï*, such as *ex Ponto* 2.3.

This image of an oppressed poet finds further support at 2.2.35–6, where Ovid compares his desperate poetic act with a familiar Hesiodic parable: the hawk and the nightingale (*Op.* 202–12).³⁷ The Hesiodic narrator recounts an αἶνον about a nightingale caught by a hawk and emphasizes the narrator's characteristic pessimism. In addition to the parallels between poet and bird implicit in both Hesiod and Ovid, the image is entirely appropriate for Ovid's mixture of poetry and the reality of his current dilemma. Once captured, struggling will only increase the nightingale's suffering: might makes right.³⁸ The distressed swimmer in place of desperate poetry and the oppressed nightingale in place of a condemned poet both dovetail³⁹ nicely with Ovid's self-representation *vis à vis* the emperor elsewhere and focus exclusively on his poetic act. Indeed, the masterful execution of these images defeats their underlying negative

³⁶ In fact, the *naufragus* metaphor more often refers to the physical danger the poet endures in Tomis, not the difficulty he faces in composing poetry, as is evident in 2.2.29–36. See *Tr.* 1.5.35–6, 1.6.7–8, and esp. 2.99–102.

³⁷ The reference to Hesiod is apt, considering Ovid's tactical division of appeals between *philoï* and *sophoi*: the myth of "the hawk and the nightingale" (*Op.* 202–12) constitutes the earliest identifiable example of *code* and *message* (Νῦν δ' αἶνον βασιλεῦσιν ἐρέω φρονέουσι καὶ αὐτοῖς, "now I will tell a tale to the kings who are themselves understanding," 202), imagery which has meaning for only the poet's *sophoi* and *philoï* and thus was meant for an elite and/or learned audience. See Nagy (1997: 255–57). Again, this was to the exclusion of the emperor Augustus.

³⁸ Though I follow Nagy (1997: 256 n. 38), Lonsdale (1989: 403–12) contends that the conclusion to the poem is no epimythium, rather an "omen" predicting Perses' eminent downfall for his violation of justice. This reading would only strengthen the subversive nature of the fable in Ovid's *ex Ponto*.

³⁹ The traditional image was that of the "hawk and the dove": Soph. *Ajax* 140, 168; Aesch. *Prom.* 857; cf. *Tr.* 1.1.75–6. See Galasso (1995: *ad* 2.2.35–6).

implications: the claim that distressed poetry must by necessity be bad is by no means represented in the self-awareness of this learned allusion. The rather straightforward fable now becomes double-sided: Ovid's enactment of the hawk and nightingale myth equates his own position with that of the Hesiodic narrator. Following the interpretation of Nagy, the *Works and Days* reflected a period in which the defunct institution of juridical authority vested in a single monarch was replaced with a religiously coded morality like that preserved in the *Works and Days*. The "gift-devouring kings" no longer held judicial power in Greece during the Archaic period: laws were instead handed down from Zeus himself, through, for example, poets, who are, in both the *ex Ponto* and the *Works and Days*, oppressed by unjust rulers.⁴⁰ This final image caps a surging comparison between Ovid and the emperor, which ultimately equates the poet's sense of justice and piety with that of the *pater patriae* himself, as both are derived from the chief Greco-Roman deity.

We might briefly contrast *ex Ponto* 2.3, where the use of sailing metaphors serves to emphasize Ovid's physical plight (*not* the danger inherent in his poetic act), and thus increase the pathos with which he implores the *philoï* for aid (*P.* 2.3.25–8, 57–60).

En ego non paucis quondam munitus amicis, dum flauit uelis aura secunda meis, ut fera nimbose tumuerunt aequora uento, in mediis lacera naue relinquer aquis.	2.3.25
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⁴⁰ Nagy (1997: 255) cites Solon fr. 31 W. In fact, Nagy goes on to argue, "the juridical authority of earthly kings is eliminated not only in the *Works and Days*. Even in the *Iliad*, an epic about warriors who are simultaneously represented as kings, the scene of litigation on the Shield of Achilles leaves out any mention of kings; the group of men taking turns at standing with skêptron 'scepter' in hand and arbitrating the litigation by pronouncing dikê (XVIII 503-508) are described not as kings, but merely as gerontes, 'elders' (503)."

Alas I, once defended by not a few friends, while a favorable breeze filled my sails, but now the savage ocean swells with a tempestuous wind, and I'm left behind on a broken vessel in the midst of the sea.

Firmus es et, quoniam non sunt ea qualia uelles,
uela regis quassae qualiacumque ratis,
quaeque ita concussa est ut iam casura putetur,
restat adhuc umeris fulta ruina tuis. 2.3.60

You remained steadfast, and since they were not such as you would like, guide my sails, such as they are of a broken raft, which is so broken that even now it is thought about to capsize, still it remains supported on your shoulders.

This is not the poetic vessel of *ex Ponto* 2.2. Ovid's disaster is likened to a wrecked ship, and the imagery of abandoned friends (2.3.25–6) emphasizes the magnitude of his misfortune, like a lone survivor (2.3.27–8).⁴¹ When the image is picked up once again, Ovid simply reverses the subjects: rather than the poet suffering in a shipwrecked life, Cotta is imagined pulling his friend from a foundering boat (2.3.57–8), in direct contrast to the friends who abandoned him before. In fact, this vision of Cotta rescuing the poet from exile (a power otherwise reserved for the emperor himself) is here co-opted by the poet and his *philoï*. Ultimately both poems appeal to the addressees' respective interests, whether through intellectual or personal connections, and both accomplish to some extent an equation between the poet's position and that of the emperor.

We can see similar personal appeals in, for example, a letter to Graecinus (*P.* 2.6), where the addressee's continued friendship aids Ovid's cause like an oar added to a ship under sail, or the whip to a galloping horse (2.6.35–8). Poetic appeals are even more frequent: *ex Ponto* 1.10 (to Flaccus) and 3.4 (to Rufinus) both discuss the addressees' power to mitigate the poet's intellectual suffering in exile. The exilic letters

⁴¹ Cf. *P.* 1.4.33–4; p. 63, n. 57.

are peppered with such passages designed to appeal to the individual's personal sense of attachment to the poet or his familiarity with Greco-Roman literary sophistication. In either case, Ovid defines the boundaries of his cliques and excludes the emperor both, either on grounds of injustice (as in the case of the *philoí*) or intellectual bankruptcy (the *sophoi*).

Poet, Emperor, and *Sophoi*

Ovid's letter to Cotys of Thrace (*P.* 2.9) plays on this relationship between poet and *sophos*, again at the emperor's expense: the barbaric provincial monarch Cotys is depicted as a literary genius, a tacit and vitriolic comparison with the supposedly sophisticated ruler of the civilized world who has banished its greatest living poet. The letter bears a heavy emphasis on encomium, which recalls other passages directed at the emperor and his family.⁴² In *ex Ponto* 2.9, however, that praise is reserved for the Thracian king Cotys, focusing on his illustrious, nearly divine, nobility (2.9.1–2, 21–4),⁴³ prowess in battle (2.9.45, 55–60), and even poetic genius (2.9.49–54, 61–4). These points are typical of panegyric directed at Hellenistic monarchs,⁴⁴ and Ovid makes the comparison between Cotys and Mediterranean tyrants more obvious at 2.9.41–44, where the addressee is no violent dictator like Apollodorus of Cassandrea, Alexander of

⁴² See esp. *Fasti* 1.1–63, 590–616, 2.127–44, etc. Augustus is even deified (a tactic often reserved for the exilic epistles) at 1.650, in an address to Germanicus (possibly a later addition, after the emperor's death). Fantham (1998: 40) notes the panegyric precedent for the *Fasti* was found in Callimachus' *Aetia*. Cf. *P.* 2.8, 4.9.105–12, 4.13.17–32.

⁴³ Green (2005: *ad loc*) notes verbal association between the address here and Horace's address to Maecenas in *Odes* 1.1; cf. Helzle (1988a). Even without this note, Galasso (1995: 379–81) points out that much of the poem assimilates Cotys to Roman aristocratic cultural values, an ironic transposition of the traditionally barbaric Thracians (see below, p. 116 with nn. 46 and 47) to elite Greco-Roman literary pretention.

⁴⁴ Galasso (1995: *ad loc* 2.9.1–2).

Pherae, or Phalaris of Acragas.⁴⁵ Most important for Ovid's plea, though, are the poetic interests he shares with Cotys: ...*Lucida Pieria tendis in astra uia; / haec quoque res aliquid tecum mihi foederis affert*, "you hold out a path to the Pierian stars; / this also brings me a certain union with you" (2.9.62–3). Cotys is depicted as not only the ideal ruler, but also culturally fluent in the traditions of Greek and Latin poetry. Augustus is praised along similar lines: he is compared with a deity (*Tr.* 2.33–40) and a conquering hero (2.225–36). Notably, however, the emperor is never considered inclined towards poetry – Ovid makes a point of writing off his own verse as beneath the emperor (*Tr.* 2.237–40). Jennifer Ingleheart has argued that such passages contain a subversive tone: that Ovid recasts his banishment in light of the emperor's inability to appreciate Ovidian poetry, thus reducing the princeps to little more than a deluded critic.⁴⁶ Given this subtext for *Tristia* 2, the panegyric for Cotys becomes ironic: a provincial monarch appointed by the imperial family now has more appreciation for Latin poetry than the princeps himself. Ovid even emphasizes the irony of this characterization with a backhanded compliment (*P.* 2.9.49–54):

Nec regum quisquam magis est instructus ab illis mitibus aut studiis tempora plura dedit.	2.2.50
Carmina testantur quae, si tua nomina demas, Threicium iuuenem composuisse negem.	
Neue sub hoc tractu uates foret unicus Orpheus, Bistonis ingenio terra superba tuo est.	

No king has been better taught by the liberal arts, nor given more time to them. Your verse is evidence, if you would erase your name, I would deny

⁴⁵ For Phalaris, cf. *Tr.* 3.11.39–54; *P.* 3.6.41–3; *Ibis* 437–40.

⁴⁶ Ingleheart (2010: *introduction* and *passim*), though she only considers evidence in *Tr.* 2.

that a Thracian youth had composed it. The land of Bistonia is proud of your genius, that Orpheus would not be the only poet under this sky.

Ovid plays on the general depiction of Thracians as cruel barbarians,⁴⁷ incapable of appreciating much less composing good poetry. Cotys, on the other hand, is praised as a second Orpheus and the pride of Bistonia (2.9.53–4).⁴⁸ This focus on the addressee's sophistication contrasts the emperor's lack thereof: even the local barbarian kings can identify with Ovid's poetic program. As with other learned allusions, this intensifies the boundaries between the imagined foolish reader, who criticizes without insight, and the *sophoi* or *philoï* who appreciate Ovid's enactment of his own verse because of their esoteric knowledge and access to the poet himself. Ultimately, this type of criticism restructures the emperor's relationship with the poet, to Ovid's benefit: just as Ovid is powerless to counter the emperor's civil authority, so too is the emperor impotent within Ovid's poetic sphere.

Contrasting the good and bad reader (whether Cotys or Augustus) found in *ex Ponto* 2.9, poem 2.10 picks up with a genuine appeal to a sophisticated reader, the poet Macer.⁴⁹ We are informed early on that Macer is an excellent poet, having added some finishing touches even to the Homeric epics: *tu canis aeterno quicquid restabat Homero*,

⁴⁷ See, e.g. Thuc. 7.29; Tac. *Ann.* 4.46; Bömer (1976: *ad Met.* 6.458); Thomas (1982); Galasso (1995: *ad loc.*).

⁴⁸ The idea of a well-spoken, intellectual Thracian often elicits surprise, as at Polybius 27.12: "Ὅτι ὁ Κότυς ἦν ἀνὴρ καὶ κατὰ τὴν ἐπιφάνειαν ἀξιόλογος καὶ πρὸς τὰς πολεμικὰς χρεῖας διαφέρων, ἔτι δὲ κατὰ τὴν ψυχὴν πάντα μᾶλλον ἢ Θρᾶξ· καὶ γὰρ νήπιτος ὑπῆρχε καὶ πραότητα καὶ βάθος ὑπέφαιεν ἐλευθέριον, "But Kotys was a man of stunning appearance and remarkable skill in combat, and even in his spirit he was in no way like a Thracian; in fact, he was sober, he had a gentle disposition, and a depth of character one might expect of a gentleman." Cf. Livy 42.67.3.

⁴⁹ Not to be confused with Aemilius Macer (d. 16 B.C.E.; *PIR*² and *RE* s.v. "Macer"), author of an *Ornithogonia* and *Theriaca* (in the style of Nicander of Colophon); see *Tr.* 4.10.43; Quin. *Inst.* 10.1.56, 87. For this Macer, see *Am.* 2.18; *P.* 4.16.6. Syme (1978: 73, 156) identifies him as Pompeius Macer, son of Theophanes of Mytilene and member of both Tiberius and Augustus' circles, though cf. White (1992), who contests the very existence of such a figure.

/ ne careant summa Troica bella manu, “you sing whatever remained after Homer, nor were the Trojan wars lacking your finishing touches” (2.10.13–14). Unlike Ovid’s ironic treatment of the learned and unlearned reader above in *ex Ponto* 2.9, Macer is a Roman epic poet *par excellence*, with whom Ovid was well acquainted for quite some time (...*quam tu vel longi convictibus debes aevi*, 2.10.9) and shared many long conversations (2.10.35–8). These long conversations are depicted as a journey and signposted by the author with poetic scenery, all couched in the familiar diction of the poetic vessel as an imitation of the poetic act (2.10.21–34):

Te duce magnificas Asiae perspeximus urbes,
 Trinacris est oculis te duce uisa meis;
 uidimus Aetnaea caelum splendescere flamma,
 subpositus monti quam uomit ore gigans
 Hennaesosque lacus et olentia stagna Palici, 2.10.25
 quamque suis Cyanen miscet Anapus aquis.
 Nec procul hinc nympa est quae, dum fugit Elidis amnem,
 tecta sub aequorea nunc quoque currit aqua.
 Hic mihi labentis pars anni magna peracta est.
 Eheu! quam dispar est locus ille Getis! 2.10.30
 Et quota pars haec sunt rerum quas uidimus ambo,
 te mihi iucundas efficiente uias,
 seu rate caeruleas picta sulcauimus undas,
 esseda nos agili siue tulere rota...

While you were leading me we saw the great cities of Asia, while you were leading me I saw the Trinacrian land; we beheld Aetna, lighting up the sky with fire, which the giant spews up from his mouth placed underneath the mountain, and Lake Henna as well as the reeking pools of Palicus, where Anapus mixes its waters with those of Cyane. Not far from there is that place where the nymph, while she fled from the river Elidis, ran then underneath the cover of the watery waves. Here I spent a great part of the sliding year. Alas! How different it is from the land of the Getae! And how small a part is this bit of those things that we saw together, while you made every path easy for me, whether we plowed the deep blue waves in a painted boat, or drove on in a swift-wheeled chariot...

We can quickly dispel the notion of any actual voyage: as Galasso notes, *te duce*, repeated in verses 21 and 22 recalls a purely poetic address to Maecenas found in

Propertius: *te duce vel Iovis arma canam caeloque minantem / Coeum et Phlegraeis Eurymedonta iugis*, “with you as my leader I’ll sing of Jupiter’s weapons and Coeus threatening heaven, Eurymedon on the Phlegraeian rocks” (Prop. 3.9.47–8).⁵⁰ Jupiter’s weapons, Coeus, and Eurymedon all refer to the gigantomachy, and the poet’s willingness to abandon safe, familiar themes for those of the more aesthetically dangerous epic cycle.⁵¹

So in *ex Ponto* 2.10 Ovid refers to a poetic journey taken in conversation and writing, not an actual trip through the Mediterranean, and the catalogue of sites substantiates the literary characteristics of this letter: each place figures prominently in *Metamorphoses* 5.⁵² First Ovid mentions his visit to Sicily (*Trinacris*, 2.10.22), the site of Typhoeus’ imprisonment (*gigans*, 2.10.24; *Met.* 5.346–58), then Lake Henna (2.10.25), where Persephone was abducted by Dis (*Met.* 5.385–424). *Palici* (2.10.25) refers to the sulphur swamps over which Persephone was carried during her abduction, and Ovid even retains the same language found in the *Metamorphoses*: *perque lacus altos et olentia sulphure fertur / stagna Palicorum rupta ferventia terra*, “and it’s said [Dis drove with her] through the deep lakes and reeking sulphur pools of Palici, boiling up from a crack in the earth” (*Met.* 5.405–6). Cyane (2.10.26) is the very pool through which Persephone is brought to the underworld, despite the personified lake’s protestations

⁵⁰ Galasso (1995: 414–15, *ad loc.*).

⁵¹ The author’s propensity for lighter, elegiac themes is clear earlier in the poem: *non ego velifera tumidum mare findo carina: / tota sub exiguo flumine nostra morast*, “I don’t plow the swollen sea in a sail-bearing ship: my whole endeavor exists on but a tiny stream” (3.9.35–6).

⁵² On the correspondences see Galasso (1995: *ad loc.*); cf. the methodology of Miller (2009: 343–53) on the connections between *Tr.* 3.1 and the Apollo and Daphne tale of *Met.* 1.473–567.

(*Met.* 5.425–37). The nymph (2.10.27) refers to Arethusa, who finally reveals the fate of Persephone to her mother at *Metamorphoses* 5.487–508.⁵³

I propose that these scenes have been carefully selected by Ovid and geared towards his audience of *sophoi*: the specific circumstances all recall a previous scene where the poet proclaimed his own poetic authority and immortality, through a reference to the Caystrian swans. In *ex Ponto* 2.10, that scene is replayed with extreme irony, considering the context of Persephone who was banished to the underworld⁵⁴ against her will. Indeed, these allusions not only refer to the same scene (the rape of Persephone), but they are retold in the same narrative sequence found in the *Metamorphoses*.⁵⁵ Considering the addressee, this passage can be reread as an erudite wink to the *sophoi* in his audience: only they would understand the specific scenery as an allusion to *Metamorphoses* 5. The mention of the Cayster and its swans (*Met.* 5.386–7) introduces the scene of Persephone’s abduction alluded to throughout *ex Ponto* 2.10, and formed a programmatic point for *Tristia* 5.1.11–14. Just as Ovid previously employed the *Caystrius ales* as a symbol for his own accomplishment of enacting verse, in this case he redirects his audience’s attention back to a scene that once served to declare poetic immortality. In exile, the context becomes ironic, but the message, and its means of conveyance remain powerful: those with enough knowledge of Latin poetry and familiarity with Ovid’s verse (the *sophoi*) discover in *ex Ponto* 2.10 a

⁵³ The reference is somewhat roundabout: Ovid uses the flight from Alpheus to identify her (2.10.27–8), a scene that comes after her revelation to Ceres in the *Metamorphoses*: for her transformation into a spring after Alpheus’ attempted rape, see *Met.* 5.572–641.

⁵⁴ Ovid often depicts Tomis and the Euxine shores couched in underworld terminology: see Williams (1994: 12–13), who cites, e.g. *P.* 1.7.11–12, 4.12.33–4 for the frigid temperatures and *Tr.* 3.10.71–6; *P.* 1.3.51–2 for the entirely barren landscape.

⁵⁵ Hinds (1987: 141, n. 1) comments on this; cf. Williams (1994: 42–8). I agree with Williams, in that I accept the “unreality” or non-biographical nature of Ovid’s journey with Macer.

veiled affirmation of personal power. The emperor, on the other hand, whom Ovid figures as the consummate literary imbecile, lacks the appropriate familiarity with Latin literature, and thus, in the poet's construction, misses this act of defiance entirely: not so Ovid, Macer, or their *sophoi* friends at Rome.

Letters to *Sophoi* in *ex Ponto* 4

The strategy of enacting poetry through learned allusion became increasingly important in Ovid's exilic program, because it allowed the poet to exclude the uninitiated and thus bring poet and audience closer together by revealing his exile as an act of self-othering on the part of Augustus. The shift towards readers I have classified as *sophoi* in *Epistulae ex Ponto* 4 illustrates this point: of the nine named addressees in book four, four are poets or critics (Cornelius Severus, *P.* 4.2; Albinovanus Pedo, *P.* 4.10; Carus, *P.* 4.13; Tuticanus, *P.* 4.12 and 4.14), and Sextus Pompey, addressed four times, was a patron of Ovid.⁵⁶ Previously, Ovid appealed to the *philoï* and *sophoi* at Rome by guiding them to points at which he enacted his own poetry. At the close of *ex Ponto* 4, a series of poems addressed to Tuticanus (*P.* 4.12, 4.14), Albinovanus Pedo (*P.* 4.10) and finally an unnamed enemy (*P.* 4.16) further substantiate Ovid's tactic of excluding the emperor from the circles of aristocratic and literary elite at Rome.

As with Cotys above (*P.* 2.9), Ovid's dual letters to the critic and old friend Tuticanus play on the dichotomy between erudite and ignorant readers. Poem 4.12 resurrects the playful Ovidian wit familiar from his youthful *Amores*, as well as a dense complement of poetic constructions. First, Ovid complains that Tuticanus' name cannot

⁵⁶ Syme (1978: 156–68) attributes a “change of approach on the part of the poet” (78) to the shift of attention to Germanicus and his circle (Carus the tutor of Germanicus' sons; Suillius, his quaestor). Despite the associations of the individual addressees, the tactics Ovid employs remain suited to Roman readers who identified with the literary elite.

be reasonably fit into the elegiac couplet: *lex pedis officio fortunaque nominis obstat / quaque meos adeas, est uia nulla, modos*, “the law of metrical feet and the unfortunate nature of your name that forbids my service to you / and there is no road by which you might enter my poetry” (*P.* 4.12.5–6).⁵⁷ Despite this difficulty, the poet proceeds to do exactly that, through a brilliant rhetorical twist (*P.* 4.12.9–16):

et pudeat, si te, qua syllaba parte moratur, artius adpellem Tuticanumque uocem.	4.12.10
Et potes in uersum Tuticani more uenire, fiat ut e longa syllaba prima breuis, aut ut ducatur quae nunc correptius exit et sit porrecta longa secunda mora.	
His ego si uitiiis ausim corrumpere nomen, ridear et merito pectus habere neger.	4.12.15

And I’d be ashamed, if, at which point a syllable is meant to be long, I shortened the pronunciation to Tuticānus. And, according to custom, you’re not able to enter into verse as Tūtīcānus, so that, the first short syllable becomes long, or so that the second, which is now short, is extended to a long syllable by a delay.⁵⁸ If I should dare to ruin your name with these defects, I would be laughed at and rightly they would call me mindless.

Ovid reverses his own premise that *Tuticanus* cannot possibly fit into verse, and that any attempt would result in ridicule and rejection. By accepting and highlighting the absurdity of the endeavor, Ovid manages to render his addressees’ unlucky name with great artistry: he accomplishes the impossible and even maintains the self-deprecation and severity characteristic of his exilic letters.⁵⁹ The aesthetic judgment of his audience is twisted back on itself, and those who Ovid claims would originally have chastised

⁵⁷ The short *i* in Tūtīcānus violates both the hexameter and pentameter lines of the elegiac couplet. Ovid notes that only by dividing the name between two lines (*P.* 4.12.7) or by scanning the name incorrectly and thus forcing the reader to mispronounce it (*P.* 4.12.9–12) can “Tuticanus” enter an elegiac couplet.

⁵⁸ Rendering “Tūtīcānus,” a fourth and final corruption that would allow his name to fit Ovid’s meter.

⁵⁹ Cf. above p. 102 n. 19, on *Tr.* 5.1.31–2, where Ovid counts up his uncountable miseries in a classical triplet.

such metrical violence must now chuckle under their breath at the thought of condemning *Tuticānumque* and *Tūtīcani* as forced, hack poetry.

In addition to this light-hearted address, Ovid includes a string of poetic constructions and allusions meant to highlight the positive role played by the friend and critic in his poetic success. Ovid's recollection of his (otherwise unknown) *Phaeacis*, which Tuticanus edited for him (*P.* 4.12.25–8), recalls his consistent association of life in exile with his own poetic compositions about that life, specifically the connection between his own suffering and that of Odysseus (*Tr.* 1.5.57–84). Next he lists off a pair of traditional poetic images: first the “heart of iron” (*P.* 4.12.31–2),⁶⁰ and then a series of *adynata*, tailored to the landscape of his banishment (4.12.33–6). In fact, following the thesis of Davisson, *adynata* form a poignant reminder for Ovid's audience that the impossibilities of the poetic trope have now become the reality of the poet's life, further evidence for the author's mixing of poetry and reality.⁶¹ A passing mention of Ovid's poetic vessel caps this series of poetic constructions (4.12.41–2), which focuses the audience's attention (keeping in mind the critic-addressee) on the vivacity of Ovid's poetry despite exile. The implication is simple: a good reader, like Tuticanus, can appreciate these various poetic turns and find them even in self-deprecating verse. As a result, the reader, like Tuticanus, is inducted into Ovid's circle of *sophoi*.

Tuticanus is the implied addressee of a second poem, *ex Ponto* 2.14, though here Ovid shifts the focus from the well-educated former critic to the obtuse locals in

⁶⁰ Cf. *Eur. Med.* 98–105, 1279–81; likewise the acrostic found in *Cat.* 60: though the metal is different (*aes* in Catullus), the sentiment remains.

⁶¹ Davisson (1980: 128): “Possibilities and impossibilities lie partly within the control of Ovid's readers, and he appeals to them all to ensure that no more impossible horrors become realities in his life.” See also Claassen (1999: 231–33).

Finally, Ovid returns to the now familiar metaphor of the poetic vessel (4.14.21–2). While the poetic vessel may be a popular image throughout Ovid’s exilic letters, the recurrence of each individual metaphor in *Tristia* 2 encourages connections between the two poems. There we find both myths of Telephus (*Tr.* 2.19–20) and Philomela (2.389–90), as well as frequent references to the poetic vessel (2.18),⁶⁴ and the claim that he is at least partially blameless (2.239–40; *P.* 4.14.23). Poem 4.14 plays on the dichotomy between its sophisticated addressee, Tuticanus, and the culturally simpleminded Tomitans, who condemn Ovid’s verse for its treatment of Tomis.

Ovid ascribes his newfound infamy to a misunderstanding: *sed nihil admisi, nulla est mea culpa, Tomitae, / quos ego, cum loca sim uestra perosus, amo*, “but I’ve perpetrated no crime, I’m not at fault, Tomitans, whom I love, although I despise your homeland” (*P.* 4.14.23–4). In his defense, Ovid recalls Hesiod’s treatment of his homeland Ascrea (*Op.* 639–40), the rough terrain of Ithaca, and Metrodorus’ invective against Italy and Rome.⁶⁵ Ovid hates Tomis, not the locals, and his use of prior literary exempla illustrates his point that this is a simple case of misinterpretation: if only the Tomitans were well versed in Greek and Latin literature, they would understand their mistake. In fact, Ovid makes his case abundantly clear at verses 41–2: *at malus interpres populi mihi concitat iram / inque nouum crimen carmina nostra uocat*, “but some bad interpreter incites people’s rage against me / and calls my poetry to a new

⁶⁴ Cf. 2.99–102, 327–30, 469–70, 547–8.

⁶⁵ Pliny *Nat. Hist.* 34.16. If this is the Metrodorus to whom Ovid refers, then the example seems out of place, as Metrodorus bore a special surname for his hatred of the Roman people, not their homeland: *Metrodorus Scepsius, cui cognomen a Romani nominis odio inditum est*. Assuming a certain lack of cultural illiteracy among the Tomitan Greeks, Ovid perhaps sneaks in this reference at their expense, making himself out to be a sort of, “hater of the Tomitans,” *Misotomaeus*, despite his claims to the contrary.

crime” (*P.* 4.14.41–2). Someone among the Tomitans has misread Ovid’s verse, and the result is widespread outrage, another poetic shipwreck. The learned reader and critic (Tuticanus) understand Ovid’s misfortune as well as the implication that his current situation with the Tomitans is merely a microcosm of his relationship with the emperor.⁶⁶

One final poem in the *Epistulae ex Ponto* demonstrates Ovid’s enactment of his verse and his use of that enactment in appeals to learned readers. *Ex Ponto* 4.10, addressed to Albinovanus Pedo, a fellow poet, opens with a series of grand poetic motifs. There we find the “heart of iron” imagery repeated later in the Tuticanus poems, this time reversed to demonstrate Ovid’s extreme endurance of suffering (4.10.3–8). Ovid next returns to a familiar comparison between himself and Odysseus, and, in the fashion of Jason before (*P.* 1.4.21–46), illustrates the severity of his suffering compared to the ease of Odysseus’: Odysseus spent six years with Calypso and was aided by Aeolus (*P.* 4.10.11–16). Odysseus listened to the sirens song, and tasted the Lotus (4.10.17–18); the barbaric tribes surrounding Ovid are worse than the Laestrygonians, and their leaders are worse than the Cyclops, while Heniochian and Achean pirates are far worse than Scylla and Charybdis (4.10.21–30). A poetic catalogue of rivers follows, meant to explain the extreme cold in Pontus (4.10.35–58), and Ovid closes with a particularly telling comparison between Pedo and Theseus (4.10.71–81):

At tu, non dubito, cum Thesea carmine laudes,
materiae titulos quin tueare tuae,
quemque refers, imitere uirum: uetat ille profecto
tranquilli comitem temporis esse fidem.
Qui quamquam est factis ingens et conditur a te
uir tanto quanto debuit ore cani, 4.10.75

⁶⁶ In the same vein of misinterpretation, *P.* 4.16 is addressed to one who does violence to Ovid’s poems (*Inuide, quid laceras Nasonis carmina rapti?* 4.16.1) and contradicts harsh criticism with a list of contemporaries over whom Ovid towers.

est tamen ex illo nobis imitabile quiddam
 inque fide Theseus quilibet esse potest.
 Non tibi sunt hostes ferro clauaque domandi,
 per quos uix ulli peruius Isthmos erat, 4.10.80
 sed praestandus amor, res non operosa uolenti.

But you, no doubt, since you are praising Theseus in your poetry, you are doing justice to the title of your material, and you imitate the man whom you describe: in fact, that man forbids faithfulness to be a companion only of peaceful times. A man who, great in deeds and described by you appropriately, ought to be sung with so great a mouth, nevertheless there is a certain thing in him that can be imitated by us: in faithfulness anyone is able to be Theseus. It's not for you to defeat with sword and club the enemies, because of whom the Isthmos was barely able to be passed by anyone, but to be outstanding in love, this is an easy thing for the willing.

Currently composing a *Theseis*, Pedo is implored by Ovid to imitate the hero about whom he writes, to enact his own verse (*imitere virum*, 4.10.73). Such appeals to friendship appear elsewhere, as, for example in the case of Orestes and Pylades,⁶⁷ though here Pedo is specifically envisioned as not only imitating the hero, but enacting his own verse in the process. With a well-educated reader such as Pedo, Ovid can expect the importance of this image not to be lost: the power of a poet to live out his verse appealed to the most learned Roman audiences, thus it not only forms a tactic in Ovid's attempts to return home, but also a means of address and praise for those knowledgeable enough to understand the compliment.

Ovid managed to enact his poetry early on through the systematic use of seafaring metaphors, an image uniquely appropriate to his own political situation. As the author continued to write, however, more direct methods of poetic enactment and individual address were required. Learned allusions, including the seafaring metaphor, continued to be used, but with the inclusion of named addressees, Ovid began to play

⁶⁷E.g. *Tr.* 5.4.25, 5.6.27–8; *P.* 2.3.45, 3.4.43–110. Cf. Theseus and Perithoös, e.g. *P.* 2.3.43.

with individual relationships, focusing on the faithfulness and eminence of the *philoï* and the literary knowledge of the *sophoi*. By tailoring his appeals to these specific groups, Ovid elevates his own position as poet *par excellence* and degrades the emperor's position through implications of misinterpretation, ignorance, and even delusion in the eyes of his audience. What's more, the mixing of fiction and reality, of poetic act and physical journey creates a universe in which the poet can proclaim his adherence to Augustus' misguided reading. Poet and narrator are merged in the same manner with which Augustus misread the *Ars Amatoria* and subsequently banished Ovid. This restructures an imbalanced relationship between the emperor and poet by concentrating on Ovid's poetic authority and the emperor's stupidity, rather than on the poet's powerlessness in exile. Thus we find extensive connections between declarations of poetic genius in the *Metamorphoses* (the swans in book five, for example) and those in the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*, specifically geared towards Ovid's ability to sing his own life, or live what he sings. This tactic is then translated into a means of address: the *sophoi* to whom Ovid writes are singled out as capable of identifying and appreciating his brilliance despite exile. The wisdom of the *sophoi* is contrasted with various bad readers, which I have argued include the emperor himself. Tuticanus and even Cotys, a Thracian monarch, appreciate Ovid's verse; the culturally backwards Tomitans and the emperor demonstrate their lack of understanding through their misplaced outrage. Ovid's enactment of poetry allowed him to appeal directly to the Roman elite. It added fuel to a rhetorical fire that removed Augustus from his political high ground by calling into question the emperor's ability to read and appreciate Latin poetry, one ostensible basis for the exile. In doing so, it excluded the emperor from the ranks of the Roman

aristocratic *literati*, a kind of damning ostracism imposed upon the monarch by the poet, matching the author's historical exile. *Epistulae ex Ponto* 4 can function as a microcosm of this tactic. Nowhere is Ovid's obsession with the enactment of poetry and the intended effect for his *sophoi* addressees more clear than in his letter to Albinovanus Pedo, where he praises Pedo's ability to live out the characteristics of the hero whose life he versifies, Theseus. Pedo, Ovid, and the Roman readers of the exilic epistles are tacitly identified as part of an exclusive high-culture group, an elite with the leisure and education to enjoy quality poetry. In this club the emperor is nowhere to be found.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS

In this project I have proposed a constructive and comprehensive reading of the exilic epistles that is based on Ovid's metapoetic conceits, while taking into account his basis of poetic decline. Contrary to his own claims, Ovid manifested his poetic brilliance in his application of metapoetry. For Ovid, exile was the result of an autocratic power too dim witted to recognize a fundamental distinction in Greco-Roman verse, that between poet and persona. Ovid mimicked (and in doing so mocked) Augustus' ineptitude in misreading the *Ars Amatoria* by co-mingling poetry and reality to such an extent that thousands of years later historians would still debate the reality of his trip to Tomis. This ingenious maneuver not only changed the discourse concerning his relationship with the emperor (by refocusing discussion on Ovid's poetic authority rather than Augustus' political clout), but also labeled the emperor an uncultured reader and thus alienated him from the very support base from which he derived part of his power.

Ovid employed verse (the sharpest weapon in his "arsenal") to respond to exile: by physically living out Augustus' misreading, he undercut the image of Augustus as peace-maker, patron of the arts, and *pater familias* of a unified, highly educated Roman elite. In effect, he turned the destabilized lifestyle he experienced in exile against the emperor, by highlighting the cracks in Augustus' assumed position among the Roman elite. In this final chapter, then, I will consider how Ovid employed images of stability and instability to recast the emperor as anathema to the image that had developed around him in contemporary Rome.

Ovid presents his exile as continuous instability, contrary to the world of Italy and Augustus. The new emperor had, over time, donned the mantle of Rome's new

founder:¹ he rebuilt the city,² restored the *mos maiorum*,³ and, by ending decades of chaotic civil conflict, ensured domestic peace.⁴ In this regard, Augustus assumed a position of *auctoritas*⁵ within the Roman state, a nebulous, extra-legal sphere (as evidenced, for example, by his numerous unconstitutional privileges, civic positions, and accolades) in which he acted as both member and head of the Roman populace: such is the implication, for example, of his title *princeps*. This is the imperial image upon which Ovid cast doubt. Through his attacks on the emperor's roles as guarantor of peace and artistic genesis,⁶ Ovid questioned the legitimacy and even necessity of Augustus' mutually accepted governance among the educated Roman elite. I shall

¹ Augustus almost assumed the title "Romulus:" Suet. *Aug.* 7. Considering Catullus' use of the epithet against Caesar (poem 29.5, 9), Sallust's insults for Cicero (Quin. 9.3.89) and Sulla (*Hist.* 1.4.45), and Plutarch's treatment of Pompey (*Pomp.* 25), one might conclude that the epithet had a less than desirable semantic range: see Hirst (1926: 348). On Augustus' potential use of the title see Burket (1962); Baldson (1971); Zanker (1990: 44–57, esp. 51, 201–15); Galinsky (1998: 81, 155); Eck (2003: 50, 149). Romulus' hut was of course located on the Palatine: see Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.11.79; cf. Plut. *Rom.* 20.4–6. On the imagery tied to Augustus' adoption of the archaic hut(s), see Rea (2007: 21–42, 46).

² *RG* 19–21; Suet. *Aug.* 28.3–30. On Augustus/Aeneas as builders see Morwood (1991); on the city itself, Favro (1992). For the poets' reactions to the Augustan building program, see Welch (2005); Miller (2009: 185–252); for Ovid in particular, see Miller (2002) and Huskey (2006) on *Tr.* 3.1.

³ *RG* 8.12 (*exempla maiorum... revocavi*). See Galinsky (1998: 16, 100–106), esp. on Hor. *Od.* 3.6.45–8 and *RG* 6.1; cf. Cooley (2009: *ad loc.*). The term itself is complicated: see Linke and Stemmler (2000); Pina Polo (2004: 147).

⁴ *RG* 1–3; Suet. *Aug.* 22. Augustan peace is reflected in the frequent (albeit vague) contemporary "Golden Age" images, found in poetry and the plastic arts: see Galinsky (1998: 90 – 100; 106–21); cf. Zanker (1990: 167–92). On the image itself see Baldry (1952), on the *Ara Pacis*, in addition to Galinsky and Zanker, above, see Holliday (1990); Elsner (1991).

⁵ I employ the term fundamental to Galinsky (1998: 10–41). That this relationship developed organically between *princeps* and *populus* differs from, e.g. Syme (1939); Zanker (1990); Kienast (1999). My reading is in turn influenced by the work of Woodman and West (1984: 195); Favro (1996: 105–16); Rea (2007: 61–3); Cooley (2009); Welch (2012). I consider Augustus' monarchic tendencies on a spectrum opposite his republicanism, and that he is in turn a participant in (as opposed to the sole author of) Rome's new civic contract.

⁶ Augustus and his cronies were well known patrons of the arts. Zanker (1990: 252) considers the interaction between patron and artist to be quite rigid; cf. Galinsky (1998: 244–9) on poetry, who argues that the poets responded organically to turbulent contemporary events. On the complexities of poetic patronage, see White (1978) and (1993).

consider this strategy within two categories: first, the destabilization of the physical environment, and second, of language itself.

Destabilization of the Physical Environment

Ovid frequently laments the frigid, violent landscape of Tomis as a contrast to the charm and security of Roman Italy. In light of Ovid's poetic successes in exile, this constant grief undermined the existence and necessity of the stability promised by the Augustan regime: even without the assured benefits of life in Augustan Rome, Ovid continues to compose verse of the highest quality. Ovid's Roman garden, for example, provided the perfect spot for quiet poetic contemplation (*Tr.* 1.11.35–44), while the joys of both city life and farming allowed Ovid a necessary respite from mental anguish, a break painfully removed by exile (*P.* 1.8.25–62).⁷ Because Rome provided Ovid with an atmosphere conducive to poetic composition, Tomis must function as a poetic foil to the stability of Rome's urban core and the Italian countryside. Augustan peace is a myth in Tomis,⁸ travel impossible and dangerous,⁹ and the climate forbids anything but wormwood from flourishing.¹⁰ Subsequently farming, a common Ovidian and Augustan metaphor for the poetic act, is impossible. Ovid's references to farming in Tomis, therefore, function as poetic signposts and are meant to signify the breakdown of the

⁷ Barbarian incursions here render farming impossible, a premise closely linked in Ovid's exilic laments with the horrendous climate (cf. *Tr.* 5.2.45–78). This organization forms a likely intertext with *G.* 3.349–54; cf. Williams (1994: 26–34), who is more concerned with the generic implications of Ovid's idealized rustic worlds.

⁸ Such is the final, desperate plea of *Tr.* 2.577–8: *tutius exilium pauloque quietius oro, / ut par delicto sit mea poena suo*, "I beg only a slightly safer and quieter place of exile, so that my punishment might be equal to my transgression." See also: *Tr.* 5.2.45–78, 5.7.11–12; *P.* 1.2.13–14, 1.8.5–6, 2.5.18–19.

⁹ Travel outside the city walls is impossible on multiple levels: sheer danger is a deterrent, as is inclement weather (*Tr.* 3.10.47–8), while on the other hand "impossible" journeys are the norm in Tomis (*P.* 4.10.32–4).

¹⁰ E.g. *Tr.* 3.1.23–4.

poetic act resulting from his anti-Augustan environment. Ovid solidifies this reading through his artful reversals of Augustan “Golden Age” imagery in exile: Tomis not only mimics the literary underworld, it does so through frequent and specific reconfigurations of contemporary poetic representations.¹¹ By drawing on poetic conceptions of the underworld, then, Ovid signifies his own reference to poetry, the impossibility of poetic composition, and the breakdown of Augustus’ ensured stability. Nowhere does the Tomitan landscape elicit this concept of poetic instability more clearly than at *ex Ponto*

2.7.65–74:

Est aliquid patriis uicinum finibus esse: ultima me tellus, ultimus orbis habet.	2.7.65
Praestat et exulibus pacem tua laurea, Caesar: Pontica finitimo terra sub hoste iacet.	
Tempus in agrorum cultu consumere dulce est: non patitur uerti barbarus hostis humum.	2.7.70
Temperie caeli corpusque animusque iuuatur: frigore perpetuo Sarmatis ora riget.	
Est in aqua dulci non inuidiosa uoluptas: aequoreo bibitur cum sale mixta palus.	

It’s something to be near the borders of your homeland: the furthest land, the furthest world holds me. Your laurel promises peace even for the exile, Caesar: the Pontic land lies hard by the borders of enemies. It’s nice to spend time cultivating the fields: the barbarian enemy does not allow the soil to be tilled. The body and mind are aided by a temperate climate: the shores of Sarmatia lie stiff with perpetual frost. An unenvied pleasure exists in sweet water: marsh water mixed with sea salt is my drink.

Ovid first emphasizes his distance from Caesar: his place of exile is the antipode of Italy (*ultima me tellus... ultimus orbis*, 2.7.66). Tomis is not only the physical opposite of Augustan Rome, but also the metaphorical opposite. This distinction between the two locales ensures that, although Ovid lives under Roman rule, he has no share of the

¹¹ Ovid’s Tomitan “underworld” is particularly Vergilian in its conception; see Williams (1994: 12–49); Gaertner (2005) on *P.* 1.8.

Augustan peace (2.7.67–8) and therefore cannot safely farm (2.7.69–70). The reference to farming hints at a poetic subtext; the inference is solidified in the subsequent lines: Ovid's mind and body are harmed by the harsh Sarmatian winter (2.7.71–2) and his water is filthy and salty (2.7.73–4). The reference to Callimachus' *Hymn to Apollo* (2.108–12) provides an obvious point of departure: Ovid's inspirational spring is tainted. He has, in effect, created an antithetical landscape, based purely on the physical attributes of Tomis. The lament here is not meant to evoke pathos as part of a continuous stream of Ovidian complaint. Instead, Ovid bemoans his place of exile as a means to highlight the failure of Augustan stability, since it was the emperor himself who imposed the "death" sentence. As a result of that condemnation, Augustus becomes responsible for the difficulty, if not impossibility of poetic composition. Ultimately, this exilic instability calls into question the necessity of Augustus' political stability: although he has no share of peace in exile, Ovid nevertheless manages to compose poetry of the highest Callimachean and Augustan standards, essentially undercutting the accepted premise of Augustan peace as a prerequisite to Roman stability and therefore quality verse.

Destabilization of Language and Art

The linguistic isolation¹² brought on by exile also destabilizes Ovid's poetic act. The poet complains that he has no learned audience or critics to comment on his verse, nor even books in Latin and Greek (*Tr.* 3.14.37–40). Scholars since Luck have noted that Ovid responds to this breakdown with his exilic letters, demonstrating some level of

¹² Williams' (1994: 24) "Linguistic isolation" is a feature of exile that crosses boundaries of time, geography and culture. See Dolbhofer (1987: 100–16); Stevens (2009).

continued poetic success. On the other hand, this linguistic destabilization forces a metamorphosis on the poet's part:¹³ as per the imperial sentence that denounced his poetry, Ovid changes his poetic course, composing an imperial encomium in Getic (*P.* 4.13), essentially the opposite of his urbane *Ars Amatoria* or *Metamorphoses*. This two-pronged literary response matches Ovid's conception of the destabilized Tomitan universe: just as life in exile was a reversal of life at Rome and Ovid's continued poetic success undermined Augustus' new vision for Italy, so too is Ovid's new art and language in exile a reversal of his *Ars* in Rome, while his successes (the exilic epistles themselves and his Getic panegyric) recast the emperor in a negative light.

Ovid employs metapoetry as a means to underscore the compulsory silence and solitude brought on by exile. The interaction between poetry and poet magnifies his seclusion: tears smudge the text of his epistles,¹⁴ effectively ruining his poetic act, and the exilic waters on which he sails mark his pages and blot out his verses (*Tr.* 1.11.39–40). Salt water even fills Ovid's mouth, rendering his speech futile and stopping the words in his throat (*Tr.* 1.2.13–16). Augustus' misguided exile destabilizes the poetic act, by blotting out Ovid's words and choking his poetic voice.

That the exilic epistles maintain Ovidian standards of Callimachean and Augustan poetry could be considered success in and of itself; Ovid, however, was not content to hide behind self-deprecation and victimization. In the conceptual universe of Ovid's exile, the emperor's displeasure with his previously ingenious poetry forced the poet to compose a new, loathsome encomium in Getic. When Ovid delivers his exilic

¹³ Ovid's inclusion of his own life in the *Metamorphoses* is programmatic: see *Tr.* 1.117–22.

¹⁴ *Tr.* 1.1.13–14, 3.1.15–16, 4.1.95–6; cf. *Prop.* 4.3.

encomium of the emperor (*post mortem* praise for Augustus), he plays on the *Metamorphoses*,¹⁵ specifically the catasterization of Caesar (*Met.* 15.745–852). While the poem itself does not survive, the subject does (*P.* 4.13.23–6):

Materiam quaeris? Laudes: de Caesare dixi!
Adiuta est nouitas numine nostra dei.
Nam patris Augusti docui mortale fuisse
corpus, in aetherias numen abisse domos... 4.13.25

You ask after my theme? Praise poetry: I have spoken about Caesar! My novel task was aided by my god's divine power. For I taught how the body of our father Augustus was mortal, but his divine spirit departed to the heavenly sphere...

Ovid's theme matches *Metamorphoses* 15.746–9, with one catch: the apotheosis of Julius Caesar was rendered in Latin, while Augustus' is in Getic (*A! pudet et Getico scripsi sermone libellum / structaque sunt nostris barbara uerba modis*, "Ah! It's shameful, I have composed a little book in the Getic language, and I've set barbaric words to my meter," *P.* 4.13.19–20). *Libellum* recalls Catullus' feigned modesty in poem 1.1 (*lepidum novum libellum*), signifying that Ovid's shame (*pudet*, 19; *barbara uerba*, 20) masks deeper feelings of pride. The breakdown of language and art imposed upon the poet by Augustus have worked their magic (so to speak),¹⁶ and now Ovid can only write the type of poetry which the emperor's punishment demanded, barbaric panegyric. Stylistically, this is a damning association: Augustus is figured as a Hellenistic monarch

¹⁵ Cf. the extensive interaction between the *Met.* and Ovid's promised praise for Germanicus in *P.* 4.8. Major *topoi* from the immortal *Met.* are recycled in Ovid's promised immortalization of the imperial heir (c. 4.8.49–62): Thebes (4.8.53) figures prominently in the *Metamorphoses*, and Chaos (57) is the very first topic in the entire work (*Met.* 1.1–20). The gigantomachy (59; *Met.* 1.151–76), the river Styx (60), Bacchus conquering India (61; *Met.* 15.413) and even Hercules at Oechalia (62; *Met.* 9.136–40) can be found in Ovid's pre-exilic masterpiece.

¹⁶ They have deteriorated Ovid's poetic skill to the extent that he now composes in barbarian languages. See, e.g. *P.* 3.2.40 (= *Tr.* 5.12.58): *nam didici Getice Sarmaticeque loqui*, "I've learned to speak Getic and Sarmatian;" 4.13.18: *nec te mirari, si sint uitiosa, decebit / carmina quae faciam paene poeta Getes*, "nor should you be amazed, if these verses are shameful, it's fitting: I made them as very nearly a Getic poet;"

who not only desires tedious praise poetry,¹⁷ but encourages the composition of that poetry in backward, provincial languages. The Tomitans, antithetical as they are to norms of cultured Latin poetics, enjoy Ovid's poem: *et caput et plenas omnes mouere pharetras, / et longum Getico murmur in ore fuit*, "...they nodded both their heads and full quivers, and there was a long rumble in their Getic mouths" (*P.* 4.13.19–20). Ovid tacitly implies that Augustus also demands this type of poetry, because he sent the author to Tomis in the first place. The award Ovid receives for his composition at *ex Ponto* 4.14.55–6 further implicates Augustus: *tempora sacrata mea sunt velata corona, / publicus invito quam favor inposuit*, "my head is veiled with a sacred crown, which public favor placed there, though I was unwilling." It may be reasonably assumed that the crown was laurel,¹⁸ a symbol for poetic achievement and, ironically, Augustus' patron deity, Apollo. That it graced Ovid's head unwilling must be *double entendre*: Ovid receives Getic (and by extension, the emperor's) approval by composing praise poetry, and his unwillingness is not on account of the author's self-claimed poverty of verse, but rather for the language and genre of its composition. Ovid's response, then, to the collapse of his native language and *ars* is to produce the new poetry of the Augustan age: provincial encomium,¹⁹ perhaps as it occurred to him that any genuine attempt at such poetry would be fruitless in securing a return.²⁰ In doing so, he re-envisioned the emperor as a *malus interpret* and added new meaning to his own, now timeless

¹⁷ Augustus notably rejected such associations in favor of a more republican persona: on the development of his late republican image, see Zanker (1990: 5–77); cf. Galinsky (1998); Cooley (2009). On the encomiastic role of Hellenistic panegyric see esp. Cameron (1995: 263–302).

¹⁸ Green (2005: *ad loc.*).

¹⁹ On Ovid's construction of the imperial citizen, see Habinek (1998: 151–70).

²⁰ Such is the immediate realization at *P.* 4.13.39–42.

description of exile: *barbarus hic ego sum*. Given his metapoetic play with speech, poetry, and the emperor's inability to comprehend quality Latin verse, the context of that quote is telling: *barbarus hic ego sum, qui non intellegor ulli, / et rident stolidi uerba Latina Getae*, "here I am the barbarian, I who am understood by none, the stupid Getae laugh at my Latin words" (*Tr.* 5.10.37–8). Ovid has become an outcast in a land of Augusti.

By undercutting the emperor's perceived image and aggrandizing his own poetic act in exile, Ovid achieves a rebalance. The audience's focus is shifted from the emperor's overbearing political clout to his intellectual shortcomings, and from Ovid's crushing political defeat to his continued production of high-quality poetry. In poeticizing language, speech, his exilic journey, and even Pontus itself, Ovid overcomes the instability of exile, and denounces the emperor for his naïve approach to Latin poetry. Indeed, by mingling poetry and reality in exile, Ovid enacts the very misreading of his *Ars Amatoria* which led the emperor to banish him in the first place.

Because Ovidian metapoetics are a pervasive feature of the exilic epistles, this project has attempted to situate that metapoetry within the larger political and poetic context to which it responded, especially with regards to Ovid's shifting relationship with the emperor and the balance he wished to present to his learned Roman audience. As a literary response to exile, the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* maintained a focused goal: to develop a unique audience appreciation for the technical difficulty and physical danger associated with Ovid's poetic act, and contrast this with Augustus' perceived failures, all couched within the sphere that meant so much to post-civil war Rome: stability. Once the reader looks past Ovid's ceaseless self-deprecation, fundamental

questions begin to unfold: what power does condemnation and exile actually hold over Ovid? To what extent is the *princeps* even qualified to condemn or condone controversial poetry? In raising these questions, Ovid attempted, in the tradition of his Augustan predecessors, to engage the new imperial order in a constructive dialogue, though too late: the time for political discourse through literature had long ended.

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