

OID'S WIFE IN THE *TRISTIA* AND *EPISTULAE EX PONTO*:
TRANSFORMING EROTIC ELEGY INTO CONJUGAL ELEGY

by

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(Under the Direction of T. KEITH DIX)

ABSTRACT

Augustus exiled Ovid to Tomis in AD 8 in part, the poet says, because of his *carmen*, the *Ars Amatoria*. Ovid presents the misfortunes of exile in two collections of elegiac epistles, the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*. As the recipient of nine epistles, Ovid's wife is his most frequent addressee. Other poems throughout the two works also mention her. Ovid models the persona of his wife in the exile poetry on characters he developed in the *Amores*, *Heroides*, and *Ars Amatoria*. She appears initially as an abandoned heroine, then as a beloved from whom Ovid seeks fulfillment of his needs, and eventually becomes a pupil in imperial courtship. The resulting "conjugal love elegy" does not replace his earlier erotic elegy but recasts it as a means for Ovid to lament his misfortunes, present a new image for his poet-narrator, and immortalize his genius.

INDEX WORDS: Augustus, *Coniunx*, Elegy, Epistolary Poetry, *Epistulae*, Exile, Latin, Livia, Ovid, Ovid's wife, *Tristia*

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DEDICATION

To my high school Latin teacher, Virginia Jensen, who continues to inspire me.

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INTRODUCTION

Ovid addresses seven epistolary poems of the *Tristia* and two of the *Epistulae ex Ponto* to his wife. He also refers to her in several other poems throughout these works, using such appellations as *coniunx*, *uxor* and *domina*. She receives the greatest and most tender attention in the *Tristia*, in which he laments that his misfortune is causing her suffering and lauds her devotion to him. As his exile in Tomis continues, he expresses frustration at her inability to remedy his situation, particularly in the *Epistulae ex Ponto*. With increasing vehemence, he exhorts her to merit the praise he has bestowed upon her in his poetry. Finally, when his disappointment over continuing exile turns to resignation, Ovid no longer addresses his wife in his poetry, abandoning her as a recipient along with his other previous addressees and turning his attention to new recipients in his fourth and final book of the *Epistulae*.

Throughout both the *Tristia* and the *Epistulae ex Ponto*, Ovid portrays himself as a loving husband, saddened by his separation from his virtuous *cara coniunx* back home. This portrait of himself and his wife differs markedly from that of himself and his *puella* in his earlier elegiac poetry, where he is first a lover of an ungrateful and unresponsive *domina*, then a teacher of illicit love.¹ In an ironic twist, Ovid and his wife assume the roles of certain characters from his pre-exilic works, including his erotic elegy, so that while Ovid creates a new image for himself as loyal spouse and promoter of marital virtue, he also composes new versions of his earlier works, with himself and his wife as

¹ In the *Amores* and *Ars Amatoria* respectively. Ovid cites as one of the reasons for his exile the allegation that he had taught Roman matrons how to have affairs, *Tr.* 2.241-252.

the principal characters. He remains the poetic narrator and teacher, lamenting what he no longer has. At the same time he creates a new counterpart for himself in response to a new form of suffering. He is now a caring husband whom political conditions force to be absent from his pious wife; he is no longer a spokesman for bachelorhood whose unfaithful and fickle lover forces him to suffer unsatisfied physical desires. As wanton lovers, his earlier characters only feigned fidelity; as loyal spouses, the exilic narrator and his beloved become manifestations of a moral ideal. Thus, Ovid retains many characteristics of his pre-exilic personae while responding to his exclusion from Rome where Augustus was increasingly applying political force in his efforts to revive traditional Roman morality.

Chapter One presents the occurrences of Ovid's wife as both addressee and *materia* within the *Tristia* and the *Epistulae* and charts her transformation from a sympathetic character praised for steadfast spousal devotion to one exhorted to merit the praise she receives. In fashioning his wife's character, Ovid repeatedly compares her to legendary heroines, such as Penelope and Andromache. By appropriating the idealized traits of these women to the character of his wife, he elevates not only her image but also his own as a sufferer of heroic proportion.

Ovid employs topoi from various genres when portraying his wife. Although he introduces the reader to her in an epic-like scene as she bewails his departure, he primarily employs elegiac motifs to lament his separation from those he loves. In his final letter to his wife, he incorporates a didactic style within his elegy as he tells her how to petition Livia for his release from Tomis.

Chapter Two explores in detail how Ovid adapts elements from earlier poetry, including his own, in the poems that address or mention his wife. He casts her in several roles and for each he allots himself a corresponding role. The most frequent characterization of Ovid's wife is that of the beloved from love elegy, a character particularly familiar from Ovid's own *Amores*. As a man in exile, Ovid presents himself as the *exclusus amator* prevented from uniting with the objects of his love: his fatherland, his companions, and his wife. In order to bring about their reunion, Ovid asks his wife to play the part of an intermediary to assist in the efforts to secure his release from Tomis. In a sense, he tries to woo his wife as an elegiac lover woos his *puella* in order to get what he wants.

Even though the separation from his wife recalls an elegiac scenario, Ovid does not fashion his wife as the *puella* from love elegy. Rather, he elevates his wife beyond even the stature of the virtuous wives of legend, Penelope, Laodamia, Andromache, Evadne and Alcestis.² As a counterpart to his wife's character, Ovid elevates himself by claiming that the dictates of an angry god have forced him to endure more than ancient heroes endured in their trials. Yet he likens himself more often to the abandoned heroine than to her heroic counterpart, ultimately inverting his initial depiction of his wife as the abandoned one.

One individual whom Ovid's wife does not surpass in virtue is Livia, wife of Augustus. Ovid expects his wife to follow the model of Livia in her role as a traditional Roman *matrona*, behaving as an ideal wife who brings honor to her family as she upholds the virtues ubiquitous in Augustan ideology and iconography. Ovid refers to his wife

² *Tr.* 1.6.33, *prima locum sanctas heroides inter haberes*, "you would be considered first among the sacred heroines."

most often as his *coniunx*, his partner, with whom he shares a *socialis amor*, wedded love, describing her in a way that recalls sentiments expressed on epitaphs, in eulogies, and in other literary accounts reflecting women's roles in Roman society.

When Ovid's wife does not act upon her devotion to him to his satisfaction, she becomes his *discipula*. He writes to her in the didactic fashion of the *praeceptor amoris* of the *Ars Amatoria* as he explains what he expects of her and gives her instruction on how to plead with Livia for his release. Since all these poems are part of a larger published collection, the messages to his wife are not for her eyes alone. Rather, as the designated addressee, his wife acts as a synecdoche for his larger audience. Through his words to her, all of Ovid's readers receive his requests for support and his expressions of despair.³

Ovid follows literary and societal standards of the ideal wife in portraying his own wife, thus creating poetry that encapsulates his experience as a poet in the time of Augustus, not just as a husband in exile. The details of the portrait are not as important as that the portrait evoke pity and indignation in his readers. By drawing on the expectations of his audience, Ovid is more likely to create the desired responses.⁴

Chapter Three examines how Ovid employs the persona of his wife to respond poetically to a real-life event. Although he frequently expresses the desire to return to Rome itself, most often he asks his wife and friends to appeal to Augustus to allow him merely to live somewhere closer to home and farther from the barbaric and harsh land of

³ See Jesper Svenbro, *Phrasikleia: An Anthropology of Reading in Ancient Greece*. trans. Janet Lloyd. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 3; M. K. Gamel, "Reading as a Man: Performance and Gender in Roman Elegy," *Helios* 25 (1998): 94; R. A. Smith, *Poetic Allusion and Poetic Embrace in Ovid and Vergil* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 140.

⁴ Ruth Webb, "Imagination and the Arousal of the Emotions in Greco-Roman Rhetoric," in *The Passions in Roman Thought and Literature*, ed. Susanne Morton Braund and Christopher Gill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 124-7; Smith, 7.

Tomis. Ovid says that he also writes in order to stay connected to what he was forced to leave behind when exiled.⁵ He mentions three things in particular, often listing them in the same sentence: *patria*, *sodales*, and his *cara coniunx*. Writing letters brings them into his mind's eye and conveys a part of him to them. His letters can go where he cannot. This provides him with consolation as well as grief, he remarks, since it reminds him of his separation at the same time that it helps him to endure the distance.

When others within the city read Ovid's letters, his name continues to be on their lips. In this way he achieves a certain immortality despite what he refers to as his spiritual death in exile. As long as his poetry is read, he cannot completely die, as so many poets before him understood.⁶ Ovid uses his letters, particularly those to his wife, as a means to recall and immortalize his earlier love elegy after its censure, while he claims that his exilic works are meant to win fame for others, not for himself. He presents immortality through enshrinement in his poetry as an incentive to those he calls upon for support. He praises many of his addressees for their aid and encourages them to assist him further by petitioning Augustus for his release. As the addressee with the strongest obligations to Ovid and as someone who could approach Livia (the one most able to influence Augustus), Ovid's wife is his most valuable asset for obtaining Augustus' clemency, and he repeatedly reminds her (and his readers) that his poetry immortalizes her deeds. At first he considers this as a gift in return for her devotion, but later it becomes an incentive for her to intensify her efforts.

⁵ Not all of Ovid's poems in the *Tristia* are letters. Several poems, particularly in the first book, describe his journey and his place of exile without use of the second person or a stated addressee.

⁶ E.g. Hor. 3.30, *exegi monumentum*. Ovid himself expresses such a notion in many of his pre-exilic works, e.g. *Met.* 15.879.

Ovid often expresses his concern about the shame which exile has brought upon him and his wife. He makes a great effort to defend his image in order to prove that, although he is guilty of a grave *error*, his moral character is blameless. In the *Tristia*, Ovid refers to himself as a poet who only played around with the idea of love⁷ and stresses that his earlier poetry, in particular the *Ars Amatoria*, was not a reflection of his real life.⁸ He gives his wife a significant presence in his exile poetry and fashions her character as quite different from the sort of women he wrote about in his *Ars Amatoria* and *Amores*. Her character, so virtuous and so exclusively associated with revered literary models, makes a pointed contrast with his earlier poetic “*ioci*” (*Tr.* 2.238). Having been judged as if he himself were the persona from his earlier love elegies, Ovid now offers a reformed elegiac persona by which to judge him.⁹

Ovid recasts the narrating poet of his erotic elegy, a lascivious and deceptive corrupter of women and abandoner of civic duty, as a caring husband in a proper Roman marriage that is strained by the toils of exile. The Roman male was often defined by his relationships with the women in his life.¹⁰ One way to slander a man’s reputation in ancient Rome was to demonstrate his lack of control over his own behavior or over the propriety of his wife and female kin. Likewise, the probity of the women in a man’s family enhanced his reputation. If Ovid wanted to improve his reputation, whether to convince Augustus to recall him or to reduce the stigma on his poetic image, he had to

⁷ *Tr.* 3.3.73, *tenerorum lusor amorum*.

⁸ *Tr.* 2.340, *et falso movi pectus amore meum*, “and I moved my heart with a fictitious love”; 2.355, *magnaue pars mendax operum est et ficta meorum*, “and a great part of my works is a lie and has been made up.”

⁹ Ovid announces his change of character in the introductory poem of the *Tristia*, *non sum praeceptor amoris*, “I am not the teacher of love” (1.1.67).

¹⁰ Tom Hillard, “On the Stage, Behind the Curtain: Images of Politically Active Women in the Late Roman Republic,” in *Stereotypes of Women in Power: Historical Perspectives and Revisionist Views*. ed. Barbara Garlick, Suzanne Dixon and Pauline Allen (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992).

demonstrate that his wife fit the Roman ideal.¹¹ As Cooper says, “in a society premised on honor and shame, rhetoric was reality.”¹² Ovid’s expectations for his wife are two-fold. She should not only advocate for his release from Tomis, but she must also live up to the virtuous image created for her within his poetry. He has recorded her probity as a gift to her, greater than any riches. Yet she must continue to play the part with which he has immortalized her lest she bring dishonor upon her family, her husband and his poetry.

Ovid presents his new poetic self-image while reminding his readers of the playful pre-exilic character which had won his fame.¹³ In appearing to make peace with the current regime, he maintains his artistic identity. Thus, while claiming that his earlier poetry was not a reflection of his earlier life, he demonstrates the irony that his life in exile was a reflection of his earlier poetry. He has become the *exclusus amator* of elegy and an abandoned heroine of the *Heroides*, kept from what he desires because he has roused a god’s anger. The only power remaining to him is to express the agony of his condition through poetry in order to receive sympathy from his general audience, if not mercy from Augustus. By employing motifs from his earlier works, Ovid in a sense rewrites them, portraying himself and his wife as the principal characters.¹⁴ The presence of his wife helps to transform his earlier image, which expressed the playful attitudes of the late Republic, into one that would suit the changed moral climate of the principate. Ovid cleverly presents himself as supporting rather than undermining the Augustan ideal

¹¹ Stephen E. Hinds, “First Among Women: Ovid *Tristia* 1.6 and the Traditions of Exemplary Catalog,” in *Amor, Roma: Love and Latin Literature*. ed. Susanna Morton Braund and Roland Mayer (Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, 1999), 139.

¹² Kate Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride: Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 4.

¹³ Ovid often mentions in the exile poetry that he does not seek to be remembered for his exilic works but prefers to be remembered as the poet of tender loves, e.g. *Tr.* 3.3.73-4 and *Ep.* 3.9.

for wives, not by denying the postures of his earlier poetry, but by recasting them. Elegy emerges from the poet's castigation with a reformed outer-image fashioned from chaste *materia* while retaining an unchanged core.

Throughout this thesis it is important to remember that what we have in the exile poetry are characters, aligned with but not reducible to real people. Ovid was a real man whose wife remained at home in Rome while he went into exile at Tomis. If she did not exist, the whole premise for writing to her for help and to elicit sympathy from the reader would be undermined, at least for Ovid's contemporary readers, many of whom would know if or to what extent she was a poetic creation. Nevertheless, Ovid is a poet and is not writing autobiography. The closest he gets to autobiography is in *Tristia* 4.10, where he gives an account of his life, as if delivering his own eulogy.¹⁵ In that poem, he writes only two lines about his wife, but they may provide the only factual information about her in the exile poetry:

*ultima, quae mecum seros permansit in annos,
sustinuit coniunx exulis esse viri. (73-4)*¹⁶

Ovid presents himself and his wife as main characters within the *Tristia* and *Epistulae*, molding the traits of those characters according to the constraints of genres such as epic and elegy. He blurs his own existence as real-life poet writing letters from

¹⁴ Stephen E. Hinds, "Booking the Return Trip: Ovid and *Tristia* 1," *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 31 (1985): 13-32, and Patricia Rosenmeyer, "Ovid's *Heroides* and *Tristia*: Voices from Exile," *Ramus* 26.1 (1997): 29-56.

¹⁵ For the reading of 4.10 as a eulogy, see Janet Fairweather, "Ovid's Autobiographical Poem, *Tristia* 4.10," *Classical Quarterly* n.s. 37.1 (1987): 184-5; Thomas Habinek, *The Politics of Latin Literature: Writing, Identity and Empire in Ancient Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 154-5.

¹⁶ "The last, who remained with me until my later years, endured to be the wife of an exile husband." Ovid also mentions a daughter in the *Tristia*: *nata procul Libycis aberat diversa sub oris, / nec poterat fati certior esse mei*, "My daughter was far away on the shores of Libya, nor was she able to be more certain of my fate" (1.3.19-20), *filia me mea bis prima fecunda iuventa, / sed non ex uno coniuge, fecit avum*, "My daughter, pregnant in her early youth, twice made me a grandfather, but not out of one husband" (4.10.75). In *Tristia* 3.7 he writes to a step-daughter, Perilla, with whom he seems to have shared the pleasures of writing poetry. Neither daughter assumes any prominence in the exilic works as a whole.

exile with his character in the poems, making it difficult to distinguish between his actual circumstances and those of the characters he fashions for himself in his poetry. What remains certain is that Ovid is a poet, deservedly famous for his *ars*.

CHAPTER 1

The Poet's Wife in the Exile Poetry

Although Ovid's wife is one of the most ubiquitous and important characters in the exile poetry, apart from Ovid himself, commentators rarely grant her more than cursory attention. This chapter will present all the letters and references to her within both the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* in their published order since the elegiac progression of her character is much more apparent when the poems pertaining to her are read in isolation.

Tristia 1.2

After Ovid introduces his purpose for the exile poetry in 1.1 by setting forth directions to his personified book, he launches into a description of his recent sufferings as an exile in 1.2. This second poem begins with a hyperbolic description of his storm-tossed journey to Tomis, in which he amplifies the pathos of the scene with a brief mention of his unknowing wife:

*at pia nil aliud quam me dolet exule coniunx:
hoc unum nostri scitque gemitque mali.
nescit in immenso iactari corpora ponto,
nescit agi ventis, nescit adesse necem.
o bene, quod non sum mecum conscendere passus,
ne mihi mors misero bis patienda foret!
at nunc, ut peream, quoniam caret illa periclo,
dimidia certe parte superstes ero. (37-42)¹⁷*

¹⁷ “But my pious wife grieves for nothing other than me as an exile: and she both knows about and groans over this misfortune alone. She does not know that my body is being tossed about on the vast sea, she does not know that I am driven by the winds, she does not know that death is near. Oh, it is well that I did not allow her to embark with me, so that death would not have to be endured twice by miserable me! But now, although I perish, since she is without danger, half of me will certainly survive.”

Ovid claims not only that he is suffering the expected pains of exile caused by an angry ‘god,’ but also that he is facing unanticipated death on an angry sea. Friends and family back home know he has been forced to leave them; they do not know that he is experiencing much worse. In this time of peril, Ovid’s thoughts turn to his *coniunx*.¹⁸ The storm of 1.2 can be read as a metaphor of the poet’s experiences.¹⁹ Whether or not the real Ovid was caught in a storm, the very fact of his exile means he suffered the repercussions of a political storm. Ovid casts himself as a victim of forces greater than himself, unleashed by Nature and by the *princeps*. As one so distant from home, he is essentially dead to those who once knew and loved him.

In 1.2, Ovid presents his wife as an extension of himself. What happens to him affects her. Likewise, what happens to her, he expresses as happening to himself; hence his comment that her death, if she were present, would entail his dying twice. Since Ovid presents her as ignorant of his imminent death, repeating *nescit*, “she does not know,” three times, she preserves his former existence, allowing at least part of him to survive.²⁰

1.3

The next poem, 1.3, narrates a flashback to the night Ovid left his home for distant Tomis. The poet’s account focuses on his wife:

¹⁸ Ovid refers to his wife as *coniunx* 25 times, *uxor* 10 times (several of these refer to how others regard her, e.g. *exilis uxor*). The word *coniunx* is linked etymologically to the word *iungere*, to join. The term stresses the ‘union’ of spouses more than the generic term *uxor* which simply means wife.

¹⁹ For commentary on Ovid’s probable exaggeration of the dangers of his journey and life at Tomis, see Adrian Radulescu, *Ovid in Exile*. trans. Laura Treptow (Portland: The Center for Romanian Studies, 2002).

²⁰ The notion of survival through one’s writings after physical death is a common one in other poems of Ovid as well as in other writers (e.g. Hor. 3.30). For reference to Ovid’s wife as a guardian of his poetry, see *Tr.* 1.6.5-8.

*uxor amans flentem flens acrius ipsa tenebat,
imbre per indignas usque cadente genas. (17-8)²¹*

He depicts her attachment as so strong that she weeps more than he who must endure the perils of exile. The flow of her falling tears echoes the waves that fell upon his cheeks in 1.2.²² The description of her cheeks as undeserving anticipates an argument Ovid will make later: even if he deserves the punishment of exile, his wife does not deserve the pain his exile causes her (*Tr.* 5.5.63-4).

The scene in which Ovid leaves his wife and home resembles a funeral, *formaque non taciti funeris intus erat* (22), as well as Troy with its people bewailing their homeland's fall to the Greeks, *haec facies Troiae cum caperetur erat* (26). Ovid depicts himself as taking up his shield in preparation for departure, *quamquam sero clipeum post vulnera sumo* (35), just as Aeneas had in his last effort to defend Troy.²³ He depicts his wife more like the abandoned Ariadne of his *Heroides*, with her hair loosened in despair, crying out useless prayers:²⁴

*hac prece adoravi superos ego, pluribus uxor,
singultu medios impediante sonos.
illa etiam ante Lares passis adstrata capillis
contigit extinctos ore tremente focos,
multaque in aversos effudit verba Penates
pro deplorato non valitura viro. (41-6)²⁵*

²¹ “My loving wife was holding me as I wept, weeping more intensely herself, with a constant shower of tears falling down her undeserving cheeks.”

²² *Vultus obruit unda meos*, “a wave overwhelms my face” (34). This line occurs just before Ovid mentions his *pia coniunx* in line 37.

²³ *Aen.* 2.671-2: *hinc ferro accingor rursus clipeoque sinistram / insertabam aptans meque extra tecta ferebam*, “Hence I am girded with a sword again and, fitting it on, I put my left hand through my shield strap and brought myself outside the house.”

²⁴ *Her.* 10.15-58, 145-52: Ariadne awakens to find Theseus sailing away. She pulls at her disheveled hair and calls out unanswered pleas in a futile attempt to recall her lover.

²⁵ “With this prayer I implored the gods above, my wife with more, with a sob breaking in mid-speech. She, now prostrate before the Lares with her hair down in disarray, touched the extinguished hearth with a trembling mouth, and poured out to the unfavorable Penates many words, which would be to no avail for the husband she mourned over.”

Ovid emphasizes the futility of his wife's cries as a way of heightening the pathos of his account. He conveys the misery of being forced to leave his beloved Rome for Scythia by savoring what he will soon be without:

*uxor in aeternum vivo mihi viva negatur,
et domus et fidae dulcia membra domus,
quosque ego dilexi fraterno more sodales,
o mihi Thesea pectora iuncta fide
dum licet, amplectar: numquam fortasse licebit
amplius. in lucro est quae datur hora mihi. (63-8)²⁶*

With *uxor* as the first word in this passage, Ovid presents his wife as foremost of the things denied to him. She embraces him within the line, *uxor...vivo mihi viva*. The three following lines also include a chiasmus, revealing the embracing comfort of his *domus* and the *dulcia membra* within it as well as the *sodales* who are like brothers joined to him with a loyalty worthy of legend. The reference to Thesean faith recalls two contrasting examples of the hero's fidelity: as Theseus abandoned Ariadne, so must Ovid abandon those whose love for him has made them loyal companions;²⁷ and like Theseus' friend Pirithous, Ovid will ultimately be without his devoted companions in the underworld.²⁸ The enjambment of *amplius* and the delayed antecedent *hora* in line 68 reflect the unsettling loss of Ovid's domestic comforts and the distressing confusion of the moment.

As the time of departure arrives, Ovid embraces everyone closest to his heart, *animi proxima* (70). The scene becomes funereal: moans arise, *exoritur clamor gemitusque* (77), and sad hands strike bare chests, *feriunt maestae pectora nuda manus*

²⁶ "My living wife is being denied to me, her husband, for eternity, and my home and the sweet members of my dependable household, and those companions whom I loved as would a brother. Oh, I should embrace hearts joined to me with a faith like that of Theseus as long as I can: perhaps it will never be allowed again. The hour which is given to me is a gain."

²⁷ At other points in the exile poetry Ovid refers to "Thesean faith" in relation to the loyalty that prompted Theseus to accompany his friend Pirithous to the underworld to help him take the wife of Hades. Theseus was eventually allowed to leave the underworld, but Pirithous was not. E.g. *Tr.* 1.9.31-2.

(78). Ovid employs six lines of *oratio recta* for a speech in which his wife implores him not to leave her behind:

*tum vero coniunx umeris abeuntis inhaerens
miscuit haec lacrimis Tristia verba meis:
“non potes avelli. simul ah! simul ibimus,” inquit,
“te sequar et coniunx exulis exul ero.
et mihi dicta via est et me capit ultima tellus:
accedam profugae sarcina parva rati.
te iubet e patria discedere Caesaris ira,
me pietas. pietas haec mihi Caesar erit.” (79-86)²⁹*

Through the voice of his wife’s character, Ovid assigns the blame for his departure to the emotional whim of the man ruling their homeland. By indirectly citing Caesar’s anger through his wife’s speech, Ovid deflects the responsibility for his sorrows from himself, but does not directly blame the *princeps*. Rather, Ovid provides Augustus with an opportunity to demonstrate clemency by attributing the order of exile to anger, a heated emotion rather than a rational decision.³⁰ Although the words he assigns to his wife cite an external cause as the force driving her husband away from home, something internal and less fickle than anger drives her own actions, that is, her devotion to her husband: *pietas* (86).

Like Antigone, to whom Ovid will compare his wife in *Tristia* 3.3.67, Ovid’s wife claims that familial piety commands her more strongly than loyalty to her ruler. After

²⁸ For discussion on how Ovid equates Tomis with the underworld in his poems, see Williams, *Banished Voices*, 12-13.

²⁹ “Then truly my wife, clinging to my shoulders as I left, mixed these sad words with my tears: ‘You are not able to be carried away. O together, together we will go,’ she said. ‘I will follow you and I will be the exile wife of an exile. The journey has been commanded for me too and the distant land takes me: I will come along as a small load for the exiled ship. Caesar’s anger orders you to leave your fatherland, piety orders me. This piety will be for me a Caesar.’”

³⁰ Ovid refers repeatedly throughout the exile poetry to Augustus’ *ira* towards him, presenting a marked contrast to the *clementia* Augustus espoused in his public image. Ovid is particularly pointed at *Tristia* 3.11.17-18 where he mentions the *nuda ira*, naked anger, of Augustus twice within the two lines. For more on Augustan anger and clemency, see William V. Harris, *Restraining Rage: The Ideology of Anger Control in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 243-8.

presenting such a pious speech from his wife, one befitting a dutiful matron, Ovid explains that she only agreed to remain at home once she realized that doing so would preserve her husband and home:

*talia temptabat, sicut temptaverat ante,
vixque dedit victas utilitate manus. (87-8)³¹*

Ovid recounts how it is said (*narratur*) that, once he left, his wife fainted and later awakened, deserted and groaning as if she had seen her husband and daughter upon a pyre:

*illa dolore amens tenebris narratur obortis
semianimis media procubuisse domo,
utque resurrexit foedatis pulvere turpi
crinibus et gelida membra levavit humo,
se modo, desertos modo complorasse Penates,
nomen et erepti saepe vocasse viri,
nec gemuisse minus, quam si nataeque meumque
vidisset structos corpus habere rogos. (91-8)³²*

She desired her own death, but the fates desired that she live:

*et voluisse mali moriendo ponere sensum,
respectuque tamen non potuisse mei.
vivat, et absentem, quoniam sic fata tulerunt,
vivat ut, auxilio sublevet usque suo. (99-102)³³*

The change in mood to the subjunctive (*vivat*) and the anaphora stress the fact that Ovid now is apart from his wife and can only express the hope that she live.

³¹ “She kept trying such words, just as she had tried before, and she scarcely cast up her hands in surrender to her usefulness.”

³² “She, senseless with grief, is said to have fainted, with a darkness having come over her, in the midst of our home, and as she rose with her hair defiled by foul dust and raised her cold limbs from the ground, she is said to have repeatedly called the name of the husband taken from her, then to have wept over the abandoned Penates, and not to have groaned less than if she had seen the body of her daughter and myself laid out on a pyre.”

³³ “And [she is said] to have wanted to set aside her feelings of pain by dying, but was not able out of regard for me. May she live, and since the fates have brought it about in this way, may she live so that she may support continuously with her aid the one who is absent.”

1.6

Once Ovid provides some background in the first few poems about the sorrows and dangers he is enduring, he begins to address specific, although unnamed, individuals. The first, in 1.5, is a friend (*amice*) who helped him when others abandoned him. The second, in 1.6, is his wife. He likens her to an elegiac *domina* by declaring at the outset that his love for her is stronger than that of the elegiac poets Antimachus and Philetas for their beloveds, Lyde and Bittis:

*nec tantum Clario est Lyde dilecta poetae,
nec tantum Coe Bittis amata suo est,
pectoribus quantum tu nostris, uxor, inhaeres,
digna minus misero, non meliore viro. (1-4)*³⁴

Ovid takes the opportunity both to elevate his reputation as a husband and to maintain his identity as an elegiac poet. His wife's suffering is due to his misfortune and the misery it causes, not to his deficiency as a *vir*, a word used frequently in elegy for the elegiac lover; here it stands for Ovid's new role as elegiac husband. By comparing his love for his wife to that of the elegiac poets for their beloveds, he "subverts her importance to his own: she is the shadowy 'muse,' he is the great poet."³⁵ In this one area, he can maintain dominance. His wife may be worthy of great affection but we only know of her for elegiac reasons, namely that Ovid's circumstances have given her the opportunity to prove her worth and Ovid the opportunity to record it.

Having alerted the reader that he is following elegiac tradition by initiating his poem with a reference to Lyde and Bittis, Ovid then continues to praise his wife, recording how she has looked after his affairs and protected them from harm:

³⁴ "Not so much was Lyde loved by the poet from Claros, not so much was Bittis by her man from Cos, as much as you, wife, cling to my heart, worthy of a less miserable, not a better husband."

³⁵ Rosenmeyer, 46.

*te mea supposita veluti trabe fulva ruina est:
siquid adhuc ego sum, muneris omne tui est.
tu facis, ut spoliū non sim, nec nuder ab illis,
naufragii tabulas qui petiere mei. (5-8)³⁶*

She has performed the duties of a proper wife. As her husband's partner, his interests are her interests. When he cannot protect them, she must do so.³⁷

Just as Ovid's love for his wife is greater than the love of elegists for their beloveds, so she herself is greater than the most revered women in ancient literature, Andromache, Laodamia and Penelope:³⁸

*nec probitate tua prior est aut Hectoris uxor,
aut comes extincto Laodamia viro.
tu si Maeonium vatem sortita fuisses,
Penelopes esset fama secunda tuae. (19-22)³⁹*

As in the first lines of the poem, where Ovid elevated his own image by declaring that his love for his wife exceeded that of Antimachus and Philetas for their respective lovers, here too he elevates himself by comparing his wife to virtuous women such as Andromache and Laodamia, whom he associates in lines 19 and 20 with their husbands, Hector and the *extinctus vir* Protesilaus. Ovid refers to Penelope not in association with

³⁶ "My ruin is supported by you, who has been placed under me just like a beam: if I am anything still, it is all your gift. You make it that I am not someone else's loot, and that I am not stripped bare by those who have sought the tablets of my shipwreck."

³⁷ Cf. Cicero's letter to his wife Terentia whom he desires to remain in Rome in order to take care of their affairs while he is in exile: *cum sciam magnam partem istius oneris abs te sustineri, te istic esse volo*, "since I know that a large part of this burden is taken up by you, I want you to be there [in Rome]" (*Ad Fam.* 14.3.5).

³⁸ Ovid mentions Andromache twice in the *Heroides*: at 5.107, where Phaedra says to Hippolytus, *felix Andromache, certo bene nupta marito* "fortunate Andromache, well married to a constant spouse"; and at 8.13, where Hermione says to Orestes, *parcius Andromachen vexavit Achaia victrix*, "the victorious Greeks abused Andromache less."

Laodamia writes a letter to her husband in Ovid's *Heroides* 13. Catullus 68 and Hyginus' *Fabulae* 103-4 also mention her story.

Penelope is featured as the first of Ovid's *Heroides*.

Penelope and Laodamia appear in a list by Hyginus (*Fab* 256) of women "*quae castissimae fuerunt*," which also includes Alcestis, Evadne, Hecuba and Lucretia.

³⁹ "Neither is Hector's wife before you in probity nor Laodamia, companion to her deceased husband. If you had been allotted the Maeonian bard, Penelope's fame would be second to yours."

her husband, but with Homer, the poet who immortalized her. Thus, Ovid casts himself both as a husband whose misfortune provides his wife with an opportunity to display her greatness and as a poet with the power to immortalize her as his subject.⁴⁰

It would seem that there is no better wife than Ovid's. The following lines, however, reveal that there is one greater, Augustus' wife Livia, referred to as *femina princeps*:

*sive tibi hoc debes, nullo pia facta magistro,
cumque nova mores sunt tibi luce dati,
femina seu princeps omnes tibi culta per annos
te docet exemplum coniugis esse bonae,
adsimilemque sui longa adsuetudine fecit,
grandia si parvis adsimilare licet. (23-28)⁴¹*

Later, in *Tristia* 5.5, Ovid says that his wife was born virtuous.⁴² Here he mentions that as a possibility but adds another, that Livia makes her the model of a good wife.

Attributing her goodness as a wife to training and imitation bestows praise upon her teacher Livia.⁴³ By making Livia even greater than his wife, Ovid is showing that he understands imperial protocol as much as he values having a good wife.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Although there is no mention of Penelope's husband Odysseus in this poem, Ovid makes a lengthy comparison between himself and Odysseus in the previous poem, 1.5. There Ovid laments a fate worse than that of Odysseus, who was able to return home to his wife.

⁴¹ "Whether you owe this to yourself, having been made pious by no teacher, and your habits were given to you at the dawn of day, or whether the first lady, revered by you through all the years, teaches you to be the model of a good wife, and made you like her through a long intimacy, if it is allowed to liken grand things to small ones."

⁴² *Nata pudicitia est ista probitasque, fidesque [ista die]*, "chastity and probity and fidelity were born on this day" – his wife's birthday (5.5.45).

⁴³ Livia had taken on a sort of teacher's role in Roman society as a model of matronly virtue in Augustan ideology and iconography, particularly during the later years of the principate. See Anthony A. Barrett, *Livia: First Lady of Imperial Rome* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

⁴⁴ Ovid reveals that he is aware of Augustus' efforts to restore morality in *Tristia* 2.233-4: *urbs quoque te et legum lassat tutela tuarum / et morum, similes quos cupis esse tuis*, "The city also wearies you and the guardianship of both your laws and moral codes, which you desire to be similar to your own." Hinds explains "Livia's usurpation of the poet's praise" by pointing out that "a poem whose argumentative agenda is to negotiate a first-place ranking for one person cannot but be disrupted when another person is introduced whose claim to first-place ranking is absolute and non-negotiable" ("First Among Women," 140). Line 28 recalls *Eclogues* 1.23 in which Tityrus tells Meliboeus, who has been forced to leave his

The poem ends with a familiar gift from a poet, immortality through song:

*ei mihi, non magnas quod habent mea carmina vires,
nostraque sunt meritis ora minora tuis!
siquid et in nobis vivi fuit ante vigoris,
extinctum longis occidit omne malis!
prima locum sanctas heroidas inter haberes,
prima bonis animi conspicerere tui.⁴⁵
quantumcumque tamen praeconia nostra valebunt,
carminibus vives tempus in omne meis. (29-36)⁴⁶*

Ovid uses the common rhetorical technique of magnifying his point by deprecating his ability to express it. Elegists often use this poetic ploy to contrast the slightness of their slender poems with the gravity of epic.⁴⁷ Here Ovid employs this tactic to demonstrate how exile has weakened his poetic powers so that he cannot praise his wife as he should. If he were better, she would be first in the catalogue of virtuous women.⁴⁸

Ovid ends the first poem addressed to his wife in the *Tristia* as he ended the first poem to his *puella* in the *Amores*, by inserting a thematic cluster of legendary women immortalized in song for their relationship with great men; as *materia* for his poems, his wife and *puella* too will gain immortal fame through his poetry.⁴⁹ Ovid employs another theme from his *Amores* when he professes his inability to write loftier works and suggests

home, that the city of Rome is much grander than their home. Ovid himself makes a similar remark when comparing his home at the time of his departure to Troy at its downfall (*Tr.* 1.3.25).

⁴⁵ The Loeb edition places lines 33-4 between lines 22-3. Georg Luck makes the case for this placement in the Teubner edition of the *Tristia*. Hinds prefers to keep them as they are numbered so that “it is not just against the trio of Andromache, Laodamia and Penelope that the goodness of Ovid’s wife would win first place in fame, but against every other *sancta herois* of mythology too” (“First Among Women,” 128).

⁴⁶ “Woe to me, because my songs do not have great strength, and my speech is smaller than your merits! If there was any sort of living vigor in me previously, it has all died out due to my long misfortunes. You would have first place among the sacred heroines, you would be seen as first because of the good in your spirit. But as much as my proclamations will have strength, you will live for all time in my songs.” Although Ovid uses the poetic first person plural in instances clearly referring only to himself, the *nostra* here could be taken as plural. If taken as “our proclamations,” Ovid would be referring not only to his exilic poems, but also to the advocacy he requests of his wife.

⁴⁷ Cf. Callimachus’ *Aetia* prologue, lines 21-4, “For, when I first placed a tablet on my knees, Lycian Apollo said to me: ‘...poet, feed the victim to be as fat as possible but, my friend, keep the Muse slender’” (trans. C. A. Trypanis [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989]).

⁴⁸ For a discussion of the catalogue tradition employed in 1.6, see Hinds, “First Among Women” (123-42).

that his songs do not have the same strength as those which immortalized the heroines he compares to his wife.⁵⁰ Although the details here are not erotic as they were in the *Amores*, the elegiac essence remains.⁵¹

3.3

Ovid's wife does not appear again until 3.3. In the intervening verses, Ovid describes his journey, pleads his case in a poem addressed to Augustus (Book 2) and, at the beginning of Book 3, announces his arrival in Tomis. Now that he has reached the land of his punishment, *poenae tellus* (18), his thoughts turn to the home he left behind:

*Roma domusque subit desideriumque locorum,
quicquid et amissa restat in urbe mei. (3.2.21-2)*⁵²

With home on his mind, Ovid fittingly addresses the next poem, 3.3, to his wife. Following a statement in 3.2 that he has been forced to endure many hardships, which have brought him near death, he complains to his wife of his current difficulties. Tomis, he claims, lacks a tolerable climate, potable water, beneficial food, and friends to comfort him (7-12). His plight makes him think of all he has lost:

*omnia cum subeant, vincis tamen omnia, coniunx,
et plus in nostro pectore parte tenes.⁵³
te loquor absentem, te vox mea nominat unam;
nulla venit sine te nox mihi, nulla dies.*

⁴⁹ *Am.* 1.3.25-6: *nos quoque per totum pariter cantabimur orbem, / iunctaque semper erunt nomina nostra tuis*, "we too will be sung throughout the whole world, and my name will always be joined with yours."

⁵⁰ Ovid could be referring both to elegy's subordinate position to epic (as in Callimachus' *Aetia* prologue as well as Ovid's own *Amores* 1.1) and to the weakening of his *ingenium* as a result of exile, causing his exilic elegies to be less representative of his skill than his earlier elegies.

⁵¹ Cf. *Tr.* 5.1 in which Ovid explains that his *Tristia*, as its name implies, is filled with sadness, in contrast to the joyful jests of his poetic youth. Cf. *Ep.* 3.9.35, *laeta fere laetus cecini, cano tristia tristis*, "As a nearly happy man I sang happy things, as a sad man I sing sad things."

⁵² "Rome and my home come to mind, and a longing for places, and whatever of myself that remains in that city lost to me."

⁵³ Ovid uses a similar sentiment to describe his relationship with his brother in *Tr.* 4.10.32: *cum perit, et coepi parte carere mei*. "When he died, I began to lack a part of myself."

*quin etiam sic me dicunt aliena locutum,
 ut foret amenti nomen in ore tuum.
 sit iam deficiens suppressaque lingua palato
 vix instillato restituenda mero,
 nuntiet huc aliquis dominam venisse, resurgam,
 spesque tui nobis causa vigoris erit. (15-24)⁵⁴*

Although not explicitly erotic (Ovid is addressing his wife, not a lover), the poem nevertheless is unmistakably elegiac. Ovid is like the *exclusus amator* of his *Amores* and the heroines of his *Heroides*. He has been separated from his love and now writes to her, expressing his pain at being apart. She is all he thinks about now that he is so near death. His devotion is so strong that it leads him to wonder if she feels the same way:

*ergo ego sum dubius vitae, tu forsitan istic
 iucundum nostri nescia tempus agis? (25-6)⁵⁵*

Although his sadness makes him think of her, he fears she may be unmindful of him. He refuses to allow himself to believe that she could not be as distraught as he at their separation.

*non agis, adfirmo. liquet hoc, carissima, nobis,
 tempus agi sine me non nisi triste tibi. (27-8)⁵⁶*

As he questions his wife's devotion and then provides the answer he desires, Ovid, as an elegiac narrator, expresses the familiar emotions of elegy.⁵⁷ He shifts the viewpoint from 1.6: there he cast his wife as the one left behind; while here, it is he who has been abandoned. He chronicles his own misery but only imagines that of his wife. His refusal

⁵⁴ "Although all things come to my mind, nevertheless you conquer all things, wife, and you hold more than half of my heart. I speak to you who are absent, my voice names you alone; no night comes to me without you, no day. Thus they even say when I spoke strange things, your name was on my delirious lips. I may be failing and my tongue pressed to my palate, scarcely restored by the wine poured in. But should someone announce that my mistress has come here, I would rise, and the hope of you will be a cause for my strength."

⁵⁵ "Therefore I am doubtful of life, but perhaps you are spending pleasurable time there unmindful of me?"

⁵⁶ "You are not [unmindful of me], I declare it. It is clear to me, dearest one, that no time except sad time is spent by you without me."

to accept that she could be happy without him strengthens the sense of their mutual dependency and adds to the sources of his sorrow.

Employing another motif from elegy, Ovid turns his thoughts back to death and bewails the prospect that his wife will not carry out his funeral rites.⁵⁸ A wife was expected to perform funeral rites for her husband, and so Ovid's wish combines elegiac trope with established Roman custom. In the context of the entire poem Ovid decries his circumstances through the language of elegy even as he transforms elegy's erotic themes into conjugal ones:

*nec dominae lacrimis in nostra cadentibus ora
accedent animae tempora parva meae;
nec mandata dabo, nec cum clamore supremo
labentes oculos condet amica manus;
sed sine funeribus caput hoc, sine honore sepulcri
indeploratum barbara terra teget!
ecquid, ubi audieris, tota turbabere mente,
et feries pavida pectora fida manu?
ecquid, in has frustra tendens tua bracchia partes,
clamabis miseri nomen inane viri?
parce tamen lacerare genas, nec scinde capillos:
non tibi nunc primum, lux mea, raptus ero.
cum patriam amisi, tunc me periisse putato:
et prior et gravior mors fuit illa mihi.
nunc, si forte potes – sed non potes, optima coniunx –
finitis gaude tot mihi morte malis.
quod potes, extenua forti mala corde ferendo,
ad quae iam pridem non rude pectus habes. (41-58)⁵⁹*

⁵⁷ E.g. *Am.* 3.3: upon realizing his beloved's infidelity, he decides to act as if he were unaware and thus will assert that she is faithful.

⁵⁸ For examples of elegies in which the lover shows concern for his or her burial, see *Am.* 3.9; *Her.* 1 and 10; Propertius 1.17, 2.13.31f., 3.12.13f.; Tibullus 1.1.59-68.

⁵⁹ "Nor will a brief moment of life come to my face when my mistress's tears fall; I will not give my last wishes, nor will a friendly hand close my drooping eyes with a final cry; but a barbarian land will cover this head without funeral rites, unmourned without the honor of a tomb. When you will have heard, will you be troubled with your whole mind, if at all, and will you strike your trembling breast with a faithful hand? Holding your arms in vain toward these parts, will you shout the worthless name of your miserable husband, if at all? Yet do not mar your cheeks, nor tear your hair: I will not have been snatched from you now for the first time, my light. When I lost my fatherland, you must think that I died then: that was an earlier and heavier death for me. Now, if by chance you are able – but you are not able, my very good wife

In addition to characterizing his wife as *domina*, Ovid asks rhetorical questions about her state of mind within a tricolon crescendo and thus dramatizes her escalating grief. He moves from questions to commands: *parce nec scinde*. This is not the first time her husband has been snatched (*raptus*) from her. She has already endured his spiritual death and mourned him when he lost his native land. Ovid weaves between the present and the past (*nunc...tunc...nunc*) and addresses her tenderly (*lux mea, optima coniunx*) in an attempt to assuage the grief she likely feels when she thinks of him facing death in Tomis.

Ovid plays both his own and his wife's roles as he explores how she will respond to his death. By manipulating his wife's hypothetical responses to his imagined death, Ovid transforms himself into a sympathetic abandoned character like those in his *Heroides*. The focus remains on his emotional turmoil, as he imagines her state.

Next, Ovid becomes didactic, as he instructs his wife to ensure that his physical remains return to their native soil:

*ossa tamen facito parva referantur in urna:
sic ego non etiam mortuus exul ero.
non vetat hoc quisquam: fratrem Thebana peremptum
supposuit tumulo rege vetante soror.
atque ea cum foliis et amomi pulvere misce,
inque suburbano condita pone solo... (65-70)⁶⁰*

The reference to Antigone enhances the tragedy of the death motif. It is also a commentary on the strength of familial devotion in the face of political forces acting

– rejoice because so many evils have been ended for me by death. Do what you can by bearing extensive evils with a strong heart, for which you have had for a long time now a not inexperienced heart.”

On lines 41-46, cf. *Her.* 10.119-124 in which Ariadne worries that she will be unmourned and unburied on a foreign shore.

⁶⁰ “Yet make sure that my bones are carried back in a small urn: thus I will not be an exile even when dead. No one is forbidding this: the Theban sister [Antigone] buried her brother who had been taken from her in a tomb although the king forbade it. And mix them with leaves and ashes of the amomum plant, and place them in suburban soil.”

against a family.⁶¹ Like several of his heroines in the *Heroides*, Ovid attempts to assert some control over his desperate circumstances by supplying his own epitaph:⁶²

*quosque legat versus oculo properante viator,
grandibus in tumuli marmore caede notis:
HIC EGO QVI IACEO TENERORVM LVSOR AMORVM
INGENIO PERII NASO POETA MEO.
AT TIBI QVI TRANSIS NE SIT GRAVE QVISQVIS AMASTI
DICERE NASONIS MOLLITER OSSA CVBENT.* (71-6)⁶³

Ovid, desiring to be remembered as a poet, privileges his own poetry as a better memorial than the necessary honors, including the tombstone, that he enjoins his wife to provide:⁶⁴

*hoc satis in titulo est. etenim maiora libelli
et diuturna magis sunt monimenta mihi,
quos ego confido, quamvis nocuere, daturos
nomen et auctori tempora longa suo.
tu tamen extincto feralia munera semper
deque tuis lacrimis umidaserta dato.
quamvis in cinerem corpus mutaverit ignis,
sentiet officium maesta favilla pium.* (77-84)⁶⁵

His poetry provides him with a greater and more enduring memorial, but his wife's piety is still important, since to be buried by one's wife was considered a desirable and fitting

⁶¹ Antigone buried her brother, who had been accused of treason, acting out of loyalty to her family rather than to the king who had forbidden her brother's burial. In the following lines of this poem Ovid will ask his wife to set up an epitaph which lauds him for the poetry that contributed, in part, to his exile. This act would defy the efforts of Augustus to erase the record of Ovid's playful love poetry.

⁶² Cf. Phyllis (2.147-8), Dido (7.195-6), and Hypermetra (14.129-30), who compose epitaphs for themselves. See Teresa Ramsby, "Striving for Permanence: Ovid's Funerary Inscriptions," *Classical Journal* 100.4 (2005): 365-391.

⁶³ "Cut verses which a traveler may read with a passing eye, on the marble of the tomb with large markings: 'Here I lie, the player of tender loves, I Naso the poet, perished because of my talent. But may it not be burdensome for you who passes by, you whoever loved, to say: may the bones of Naso lie gently.'" Cf. *Tr.* 1.1.56; 2.2, 12, 342; *Ep.* 3.5.4; 4.14.17-18 where Ovid blames his *ingenium* for his plight.

⁶⁴ Joseph Farrell discusses Ovid's self-representation of his career through this passage and others that include the phrase *ille ego qui*, alluding to Vergil's poetic career and posthumous fame, in "Ovid's Virgilian Career," *Materiali e discussione per l'analisi dei testi classici* 52 (2004): 47-55.

⁶⁵ "This is good enough for the inscription. For my books are greater and more long-lasting monuments for me, which I trust, although they have harmed, will give a name and a long life for their creator. But, you, give funeral gifts for your dead husband and wreaths wet from your tears always. Although the fire will have changed my body into ash, those sad remains will feel your pious duty."

end to a husband's life.⁶⁶ Even though he will be remembered best through his poetry, his poetry will not tend his ashes.

Ovid woefully concludes with what he suggests may be his final farewell:

*scribere plura libet: sed vox mihi fessa loquendo
dictandi vires siccaque lingua negat.
accipe supremo dictum mihi forsitan ore,
quod tibi qui mittit non habet ipse "vale."* (85-88)⁶⁷

This letter establishes Ovid as a pitiable character whose playful book was taken too seriously, and who, as a result, is now near death and forced to request proper burial rites from his pious but distant wife.

3.4

The next letter, 3.4, addressed to a friend, mentions Ovid's wife. She and Rome are the dearest things from which Ovid must be apart. Both are still vivid in his mind's eye:

*at longe patria est, longe carissima coniunx,
quicquid et haec nobis post duo dulce fuit.
sic tamen haec adsunt, ut, quae contingere non est
corpore, sint animo cuncta videnda meo.
ante oculos errant domus, urbsque et forma locorum,
acceduntque suis singula facta locis.
coniugis ante oculos, sicut praesentis, imago est.* (53-9)⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Cf. Lucan 9.51ff, Erik Wistrand, *The So-Called Laudatio Turiae* (Berlin: Lund, 1976), 66.

⁶⁷ "I would like to write more: but my voice, tired from speaking, and dry tongue deny me the strength for dictation. Receive what is perhaps the final word from my dying mouth, which he who sends it to you does not have [the ability to say] himself: 'Fare well.'"

Even if Ovid actually was near death at this time and not just depressed and desperate to return home, he nevertheless survived. According to Syme, this letter was likely written in AD 9 or 10, a year after Ovid's relegation had been imposed and at least eight years before his actual death (*History in Ovid* 38). Syme assigns this date from references in other poems in Books 3 and 4 which predict a victory in Germany where Tiberius was conducting a campaign at the time.

⁶⁸ "But far away is my fatherland, far my dearest wife, and whatever was sweet for me after these two. Thus, however, these things are present, and those things which one is not able to touch with the body, must all be seen in my mind. My home and city and the form of places wander before my eyes, and

Ovid repeats *ante oculos*. All that he loves is before his eyes. Yet the framing words of this passage reveal the illusory nature of what he sees. The reality is that all things dearest to him, including his wife, are far away (*longe*) and appear before his eyes merely as a vision (*imago*).

Ovid depicts his experience in Tomis as a living death. The memories of his past lighten his spirit, but the fact that they are only memories, and thus no longer realities, exacerbates the burden of exile:

*illa meos casus ingravat, illa levat:
ingravat hoc, quod abest; levat hoc, quod praestat amorem
inpositumque sibi firma tuetur onus. (60-2)⁶⁹*

Thoughts of his wife, Ovid remarks, both intensify and lighten his troubles: the former because she is absent, the latter because her endurance proves that she loves him. Ovid demonstrates his wife's dedication in the way he composes his words: she embraces his misfortunes (*illa meos casus illa*), taking an active role as the subject of all seven verbs in this three line passage, and shows her love by standing firm amidst the burden surrounding her (*inpositum sibi firma onus*).

3.8

The contrast between Ovid's current abode and his lost home persists in 3.8, where he again mentions the wife he misses, as she remains foremost in his memory of the things he loves and lost:

nunc ego iactandas optarem sumere pennas,

individual events from these places come to me. A vision of my wife is before my eyes, as if she were present."

⁶⁹ "She makes my cares heavier, she lightens them: the fact that she is absent makes them heavier, the fact that she maintains her love and firmly takes charge over the burden which has been placed on her lightens them."

*sive tuas, Perseu, Daedale, sive tuas:
ut tenera nostris cedente volatibus aura
aspicerem patriae dulce repente solum,
desertaeque domus vultus, memoresque sodales,
caraque praecipue coniugis ora meae. (5-10)⁷⁰*

Cara coniunx is becoming her regular epithet. Here, however, the adjective *cara* describes *ora*. Her face is still before his eyes as it was in 3.4. He still shows a glimmer of hope that Augustus could answer his prayers but soon checks himself and hopes instead for merely a change of place for his weak and troubled limbs.⁷¹ This hope dominates the rest of the exile poetry; with the likelihood of returning to his wife and home very slight, his longing for them becomes all the more pitiable.

3.11

Ovid makes a similar reference to missing his wife and home in 3.11, a poem addressed to an unnamed individual who has spoken against Ovid. Ovid chastises him for adding insult to injury since Ovid has already suffered so much, whereupon he mentions separation from his wife as one of the punishments he has been forced to endure:

*utque sit exiguum poenae, quod coniuge cara,
quod patria careo pignoribusque meis:
ut mala nulla feram nisi nudam Caesaris iram,
nuda parum nobis Caesaris ira mali est? (15-18)⁷²*

⁷⁰ “Now I would wish to take up wings to be moved about, whether yours, Perseus, or yours, Daedalus: so that with a gentle breeze giving way to my flight I might behold suddenly the sweet ground of my fatherland, the faces of my deserted household, and my mindful companions, and especially the dear face of my wife.”

⁷¹ *Ex his me iubeat quolibet ire locis*, “may he order me to go anywhere out of these places” (3.8.22).

⁷² “Even if it were a small bit of punishment, that I am without my dear wife, my fatherland and my children: even if I were bearing no evils except the naked anger of Caesar, is Caesar’s naked anger not enough of an evil for me?”

Caesar's anger and the loss of his wife, homeland, and loved ones ought to be enough to bear. Yet now he must endure slander against his character as well.

4.3

The only epistle Ovid addresses to his wife in the fourth book is 4.3, a poem that expands on the elegiac motifs of 3.3, also the third poem in its book. Ovid invokes the ever-present constellations Ursa Major and Ursa Minor, asking them to gaze upon his wife and report whether or not she is thinking of him.⁷³ Again, he is like an *exclusus amator*, kept from seeing his love. He assures himself that his wife is devoted to him and loves him still:

*in meam nitidos dominam convertite vultus,
sitque memor nostri necne, referte mihi.
ei mihi, cur nimium quae sunt manifesta requiro?
cur labat ambiguo spes mea mixta metu?
crede, quod est et vis, ac desine tuta vereri,
deque fide certa sit tibi certa fides,
quodque polo fixae nequeunt tibi dicere flammae,
non mentitura tu tibi voce refer,
esse tui memorem, de qua tibi maxima cura est,
quodque potest secum nomen habere tuum.
vultibus illa tuis tamquam praesentibus haeret,
teque remota procul, si modo vivit, amat. (9-20)⁷⁴*

Ovid's distance from his wife keeps him unaware of her mindfulness of him and he must ask the more distant stars to gaze not upon the one who shares his yoke or is half of his

⁷³ The constellations represent Callisto, punished by Juno because of her affair with Jupiter, and her son Arcas. Juno forced them to stay fixed in the sky and never to return to earth like the other constellations. Perhaps Ovid found them suitable for his purposes here since they could be not only ever-watchful but also sympathetic to his plight. He includes their story in the *Metamorphoses* (2.401-530).

⁷⁴ "Turn your shining faces onto my mistress, tell me whether she is mindful of me or not. Woe to me, why do I seek to know what is all too clear? Why does my hope waver mixed with doubt-filled fear? Trust what is and what you want, and cease to fear things which are safe, and let a sure trust exist for you with a sure trust, and what the fires fixed at the pole are not able to say to you, tell yourself with a voice that will not lie, that she is mindful of you, about whom there is the greatest concern for you, and that she has your

heart, but who, more like an elegiac *domina* (the term he employs here) than a Roman matron, could disregard her man. Thus Ovid, in employing the elegiac trope, conveys the distress of his exclusion from the life he knew. His distance leaves him out of touch and thus he is free to believe that his wife is who he wants her to be. He concludes that he is as present in her mind's eye as she is in his and that if she lives, she loves him.⁷⁵

Ovid then shifts to second person address, no longer talking to the stars. He asks his wife if she can sleep while affected with grief, and then supplies the answer himself. Her silence reminds the reader of her distance and his solitude, as well as the inefficacy of his appeal to her:

*ecquid, ubi incubuit iusto mens aegra dolori,
lenis ab admonito pectore somnus abit?
tunc subeunt curae, dum te lectusque locusque
tangit et oblitam non sinit esse mei,
et veniunt aestus, et nox immensa videtur,
fessaque iactati corporis ossa dolent?
non equidem dubito, quin haec et cetera fiant,
detque tuus maesti signa doloris amor,
nec cruciere minus, quam cum Thebana cruentum
Hectora Thessalico vidit ab axe rapi. (21-30)⁷⁶*

After an inflated depiction of his own grief, Ovid expresses uncertainty about her emotions and what he wishes them to be. He asks her simply, *tristis es?* He answers by asserting that she should mourn as a proper wife, to relieve her grief. He only wishes she

name, that which she is able to have, with her. She clings to your face as if it were present, and, if only she lives, she loves you, though she has been removed far from you.”

⁷⁵ Catullus also unites the actions of living and loving in 5.1: *vivamus atque amemus*. Ovid uses the verbs together again in *Tristia* 5.5.23: *vivat, ametque virum*.

⁷⁶ “When, if at all, your sick mind has brooded over a just grief, does light sleep go away from your heart, which has been reminded of it? Then do cares slip in, while both bed and place touch you and do not allow you to be forgetful of me, and do tides of agitation come, and does the night seem endless, and do the weary bones of your tossed body ache? Indeed I do not doubt that these and other things are happening, and your love gives the signs of a sad grief, nor are you less tortured than when the Theban woman [Andromache] saw bloody Hector snatched by the Thessalian axle [Achilles’ chariot].”

were grieving his actual death, not the metaphorical death of exile that denies her the ability to give him a fitting ceremony:

*quid tamen ipse precer dubito, nec dicere possum,
affectum quem te mentis habere velim.
tristis es? indignor quod sim tibi causa doloris:
non es? at amisso coniuge digna fores.
tu vero tua damna dole, mitissima coniunx,
tempus et a nostris exige triste malis,
fleque meos casus: est quaedam flere voluptas;
expletur lacrimis egeriturque dolor.
atque utinam lugenda tibi non vita, sed esset
mors mea, morte fores sola relictæ mea! (31-40)⁷⁷*

Ovid digresses to recount the funeral rites he commanded his wife to perform in 3.3. He laments that if he had died before being exiled, not only would she have performed those rites for him, but shame would not have left its mark on his life.

Next Ovid decries the shame his wife must feel because of him:

*me miserum, si tu, cum diceris exulis uxor,
avertis vultus et subit ora rubor!
me miserum, si turpe putas mihi nupta videri!
me miserum, si te iam pudet esse meam!
tempus ubi est illud, quo te iactare solebas
coniuge, nec nomen dissimulare viri?
tempus ubi est, quo te – nisi non vis illa referri –
et dici, meministi, iuvat et esse meam?
utque proba dignum est, omni tibi dote placebam:
addebat veris multa faventis amor.
nec, quem praeferres – ita res tibi magna videbar –
quemque tuum malles esse, vir alter erat.
nunc quoque ne pudeat, quod sis mihi nupta; tuusque
non debet dolor hinc, debet abesse pudor.
cum cecidit Capaneus subito temerarius ictu,
num legis Evadnen erubuisse viro?
nec quia rex mundi compescuit ignibus ignes,*

⁷⁷ “However, I am doubtful as to what I myself should pray, nor am I able to say, what state of mind I wish you to have. Are you sad? I am upset because I am the cause of your grief: Are you not? You should be worthy of your lost husband. Truly you, gentlest wife, should condemn your loss and consider this time sad because of my misfortunes, and weep for my plight: it is a certain sort of pleasure to weep; grief is discharged and is taken away by tears. And would that my life did not need to be mourned by you, but my death, and would that you were left alone due to my death!”

*ipse suis Phaethon infitiandus erat.
nec Semele Cadmo facta est aliena parenti,
quod precibus periit ambitiosa suis.
nec tibi, quod saevis ego sum Iovis ignibus ictus,
purpureus molli fiat in ore pudor. (48-70)⁷⁸*

Through his comments to his wife, Ovid expresses the disgrace of his change in status from popular poet to defamed outcast. It troubles him that she must be known as an exile's wife. Before his exile she had been accustomed to boast of being his – a phrasing that locates her emotions in an elegiac framework. He says that she used to compete for attention by flaunting her status as his wife, just as he said in the *Amores* that girls were claiming to be his Corinna.⁷⁹ That time is over. Such contrasts between past and present, which lead the narrator to long for a return to the past, highlight the sense of loss captured by elegy. Ovid's new elegy is pure lament; his wife should feel grief, not shame. He praises her for having shared in his good fortune with pride.⁸⁰ He expects her now to share his sorrows as well.⁸¹

⁷⁸ “O miserable me, if you, when you are called an exile's wife, turn away your gaze and a blush comes over your face. O miserable me, if you think it is disgraceful to be seen as my bride! Miserable me, if it now shames you to be mine! Where is that time when you were accustomed to boast that you were my wife, and did not keep the name of your husband a secret? Where is the time that I remember – unless you do not wish those times to be recalled – when it was even pleasing that you were said to be mine? As is right for a good woman, I used to be pleasing to you with every endowment: the love of you supporting me added many things to what was true. Nor was there another man whom you would put before me – I seemed so great a thing to you – and whom you would prefer to be yours. Now also it should not be shameful, because you are my bride; and your grief should not be for this reason, shame ought to be absent. When rash Capaneus fell from a sudden blow, do you read that Evadne blushed because of her husband? Nor because the king of the world restrained fires with fires, was Phaethon himself to be denied by his family. Nor was Semele made a stranger to her father Cadmus, since she, eager to know, perished because of her prayers. Nor should crimson shame come to your soft face, because I was struck by the fierce flames of Jove.”

⁷⁹ *Amores* 2.17. Cf. *Amores* 3.10, in which Delia and Nemesis boast of belonging to Tibullus. Cf. also *Cat.* 70.1-2: *nulli se dicit mulier mea nubere malle / quam mihi, non si se Iuppiter ipse petat*, “My woman says that she prefers to marry no one other than me, not if Jupiter himself should ask her.”

⁸⁰ If his wife felt ashamed, it would imply that Ovid had done something improper. Her boast at being his wife and her pride in his work would support his position that he was not writing what he knew from experience, i.e. that he was teaching immorality from first-hand knowledge, but was merely a poet playing with elegiac loves, a “*lusor amoris*.” Cf. *Tr.* 2.329-358.

⁸¹ A wife was expected to support her husband through thick and thin. Lucretius (3.894-99) and Cicero (*Ad Atticum* 1.18.1), for example, record this expectation and extol its benefits to husbands. Augustus himself,

Ovid uses the incentive of fame to encourage his wife to conduct herself in a manner befitting the renowned characters he provides as her models. He gives her directions, which he repeats frequently in the next book of the *Tristia*:

*sed magis in curam nostri consurge tuendi,
 exemplumque mihi coniugis esto bonae,
 materiamque tuis tristem virtutibus imple
 ardua per praeceps gloria vadit iter.
 Hectors quis nosset, si felix Troia fuisset?
 publica virtutis per mala facta via est.
 ars tua, Tiphys, iacet, si non sit in aequore fluctus:
 si valeant homines, ars tua, Phoebus, iacet.
 quae latet inque bonis cessat non cognita rebus,
 apparet virtus arguiturque malis.
 dat tibi nostra locum tituli fortuna, caputque
 conspicuum pietas quo tua tollat, habet.
 utere temporibus, quorum nunc munere facta est
 et patet in laudes area magna tuas. (71-84)⁸²*

Evans calls this Ovid's "faith and loyalty lecture."⁸³ His misfortunes have provided an opportunity for his wife to display her greatness. The reference to *area* has appeared before in Ovid's works to suggest a new undertaking, or a change in circumstances.⁸⁴

Ovid's wife must undertake a new duty as his spouse now that he has been exiled. Less patient and more insistent, he moves from unconditional praise to warning-filled instruction as he reveals the *magna area* to be a *magna scaena*, a great stage (*Ep.* 3.1.69).

when he was promoting his marriage legislation, cited the comfort a wife could bring her husband as someone who would share his fortunes and misfortunes (Dio 56.3.3-4).

⁸² "But aspire more to care for looking after me, and be a model of a good wife for me, and fill my sad subject matter with your virtues. Lofty glory travels along a steep route. Who would know Hector, if Troy had been fortunate? The road to virtue has been made through public misfortunes. Your skill, Tiphys, is unrealized, if there is no wave on the water: if men are healthy, Apollo, your skill lies hidden. The virtue which lies hidden and fallow while unrecognized in good circumstances, becomes apparent and is revealed in bad. My fate gives you a place of honor, and has a place to where your piety may raise a conspicuous head. Make use of the opportunities, by whose gift a great field has now been made and lies open for your praises." Ovid reiterates these last sentiments in 5.14.23.

⁸³ Harry B. Evans, *Publica Carmina: Ovid's Books from Exile* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 79.

⁸⁴ *Am.* 3.1.26, 3.15.18; *Ars* 1.39; *Fasti* 4.10.

Now that the poetry of her exiled husband has made her famous, she will undergo greater scrutiny as she carries out her role as his wife.

4.6

Ovid's wife receives only passing reference in a few other places in the fourth book. One occurs at the end of the sixth poem where Ovid bewails the fact that time is doing him more harm than good. He is far from the city, far from his friends, and far from his wife, who is his greatest concern:

*urbis abest facies, absunt, mea cura, sodales,
et, qua nulla mihi carior, uxor abest.
vulgus adest Scythicum bracataque turba Getarum:
sic me quae video non videoque movent. (45-8)⁸⁵*

The poem records that Ovid has been in Tomis for two years, yet passing time has not eased his sorrow. He claims to be growing weaker and predicts that he will not live much longer. At this point he laments how far he is from what he loves, listing the three things he most often mentions in his poems: *urbs*, *sodales*, and *cara uxor*. He can no longer see them and what he does see troubles him. Now he merely hopes for death:

*una tamen spes est quae me soletur in istis,
haec fore morte mea non diuturna mala. (49-50)⁸⁶*

Such thoughts prepare the reader for the final poem of the fourth book which serves as a sort of self-eulogy.

⁸⁵ “The sight of the city, and my concern, my friends, are absent, and she than whom no one is dearer to me, my wife, is absent. The Scythian crowd is present and the trousered throng of Getae: thus I see and do not see the things which move me.”

⁸⁶ “Yet, there is one hope which could console me in these things, that this evil will not be long-lasting because of my death.”

4.10

Ovid's tenth and final poem in the book, his autobiographical poem, offers the most clues about his real-life wife. The reader discovers that she is actually Ovid's third wife. Ovid portrays each of his three wives in a couplet and no more, leaving many more questions than answers:

*paene mihi puero nec digna nec utilis uxor.
est data, quae tempus perbreve nupta fuit.
illi successit, quamvis sine crimine coniunx,
non tamen in nostro firma futura toro.
ultima, quae mecum seros permansit in annos,
sustinuit coniunx exulis esse viri. (69-74)⁸⁷*

In this poem, which Habinek describes as Ovid's own eulogy,⁸⁸ the poet undertakes a role usually performed by others and takes charge of how he is immortalized. He begins his memorial by recording the things for which he desires to be remembered. Others will judge him by what he records, but what he chooses to leave out, such as the details of his *error*, will be unavailable for consideration. Although Ovid is confined to a distant land, his poetry preserves his voice by allowing it to travel across time and space in a journey that the poet himself cannot make.

5.1

The fifth book begins with an apologetic introductory epistle. Ovid states, as he has several times before in the *Tristia*, that his mournful disposition is due to continued confinement in the harsh Getic land. He also repeats his defense of his wanton songs,

⁸⁷ "A neither worthy nor useful wife was given to me when I was almost still a boy, who was my wife for a short time. Another wife followed her, although she was without sin, nevertheless she would not last long on my couch. The last, who remained with me until my later years, endured to be the wife of an exile husband."

⁸⁸ Habinek, 154-5. See also Fairweather, 181-196.

lasciva carmina (15), and decries the shriveling of his poetic genius due to the many grievous things he must bear, *multa dolenda* (26). He need only return to what he loves to restore his genius. The two loves he mentions are his fatherland and, again, his *cara coniunx*:

*at mihi si cara patriam cum coniuge reddas,
sint vultus hilares, simque quod ante fui. (39-40)*⁸⁹

5.2a

As a proem, 5.1 introduces the rest of Book 5. Ovid claims that his surroundings enervate him and his poetry, a lament he continues in 5.2a, addressed to his wife. Despite his weakening poetic strength, he continues to write, he says in 5.1, to stay in contact with those he holds dear, specifically mentioning his wife as one to whom he wishes to return, establishing her as the primary recipient of letters in this book. In 5.2a, Ovid wonders what it is like for her to receive his letters, filled with accounts of his toils:

*ecquid ubi e Ponto nova venit epistula, palles,
et tibi sollicita solvitur illa manu? (1-2)*⁹⁰

His image of his wife resembles a heroine from his *Heroides* who grows pale and worried when she imagines or hears about the dangers her man faces.⁹¹ Ovid tries to console her:

*pone metum, valeo; corpusque, quod ante laborum
inpatiens nobis invalidumque fuit,
sufficit, atque ipso vexatum induruit usu.
an magis infirmo non vacat esse mihi?
mens tamen aegra iacet, nec tempore robora sumpsit,*

⁸⁹ “But if you should return my fatherland to me along with my dear wife, my expressions would be cheerful, and I would be what I was before.”

⁹⁰ “When a new letter comes from Pontus, do you grow pale at all, and is it opened by you with an anxious hand?”

⁹¹ E.g. *Her.* 1.12-14 (Penelope): *res est solliciti plena timoris amor. / in te fingebam violentos Troas ituros; / nomine in Hectoreo pallida semper eram.* “Love is a matter filled with anxious fear. I was imagining the violent Trojans would attack you; I was always pale at Hector’s name.” Later Penelope describes jumping with fear when her son told her all he had heard about Odysseus from Nestor (37-46).

*affectusque animi, qui fuit ante, manet.
 quaeque mora spatiumque suo coitura putavi
 vulnera non aliter quam modo facta dolent.
 scilicet exiguis prodest annosa vetustas;
 grandibus accedunt tempore damna malis. (3-12)⁹²*

After a hyperbolic listing of the many adversities overwhelming him, reiterated from 5.1, Ovid exhorts his wife to approach Augustus and ask him for help:

*hinc ego traicerer – neque enim mea culpa cruenta est –
 esset, quae debet, si tibi cura mei.
 ille deus, bene quo Romana potentia nixa est,
 saepe suo victor lenis in hoste fuit.
 quid dubitas et tuta times? accede rogaque:
 Caesare nil ingens mitius orbis habet. (33-8)⁹³*

Now he transforms his concern for his wife into concern for himself and censure of her hesitation. He desires her advocacy, not just her mindfulness and good character. The fear he attributes to her is also within himself, but his fear is that those closest to him, including his wife, are abandoning him:

*me miserum! quid agam, si proxima quaeque relinquunt?
 subtrahis effracto tu quoque colla iugo?
 quo ferar? unde petam lassus solacia rebus?
 ancora iam nostram non tenet ulla ratem.
 videris! ipse sacram, quamvis invisus, ad aram
 confugiam: nullas summovet ara manus. (39-44)⁹⁴*

⁹² “Set aside your fear, I am well; and my body, which before was weak and unable to endure the toils, is capable, and has grown tough having been troubled by its very use. Or rather is it that there is not time for me to be weak? Yet my mind lies sick, nor has it gained strength with time, the condition of my spirit remains what it was before. The wounds which I thought would heal with delay and in their own time, hurt not otherwise than if they had just been made. Certainly aged time is good for small matters; but for great misfortunes harm comes with time.”

⁹³ “I would be cast out of here – indeed my fault is not blood-stained – if I were of concern to you, which ought to be so. That god, on whom Roman power well depended, was often a kind conqueror to his enemy. Why are you doubtful and why are you afraid of things that are safe? Approach and ask: the great world has nothing kindlier than Caesar.”

⁹⁴ “O miserable me! What should I do if everyone close to me is abandoning me? Are you withdrawing your neck too from a broken yoke? Where will I be carried? Where will I seek solace in weary circumstances? Now no anchor holds my ship. You will see! I myself, although hated, will flee to the sacred altar: the altar denies no hands.”

Ovid asks his wife if she is withdrawing from the yoke which has bound them and thus wonders where he could receive comfort as he drifts helpless along the sea without an anchor.⁹⁵ He again adopts the tone of abandonment from his *Heroides*: he still cares for his wife but the long duration of his separation from her has him questioning her devotion.⁹⁶ This time, however, there is no immediate denial of her lack of loyalty as there had been earlier (*Tr.* 3.3.27-8). His wife is his strongest link to Rome and to Augustus. If she has abandoned him, he has nowhere to turn except to Augustus himself. Ovid ends 5.2a with the hope of finding refuge at the altar, which, he claims, rejects no one, setting up his prayer to Augustus in 5.2b.

5.5

After a poem invoking Bacchus (5.3), followed by an epistle to a good friend (5.4), Ovid returns to his wife in 5.5. It is her birthday and he performs the appropriate rites as he imagines Odysseus did for his wife despite his distance from her:

*Annuus adsuetum dominae natalis honorem
exigit: ite manus ad pia sacra meae.*

⁹⁵ Ovid uses similar sentiments and metaphors of abandonment in 5.6, an epistle to an unnamed friend who has shirked the duties of friendship. The reference in 5.2a to withdrawing from a broken yoke, however, is particular to his wife and may express Ovid's fear that his wife would divorce him, something she could do if married to him *sine manu* (Treggiari, "Divorce," 37). Later, in *Epistulae* 3.1.68, Ovid refers again to the yoke which joins them and calls on her to pull the weight for both of them since he is too weak, suggesting that if Ovid feared divorce in 5.2a, it did not occur. In *Epistulae* 3.7, he says that he will no longer write to his friends and his wife to petition them for aid but instead has grown accustomed to bearing the burden of exile and thus no longer resists like a young bull unfamiliar with the yoke, *subtrahit et duro colla novella iugo* (16). Ovid takes the burden of the yoke off his wife and now declares that he will pull the weight himself without her assistance.

⁹⁶ E.g. Penelope to Odysseus, *Her.* 1.73-6: *quaecumque aequor habet, quaecumque pericula tellus, / tam longae causas suspicor esse morae. / haec ego dum stulte metuo, quae vestra libido est, / esse peregrino captus amore potes.* "Whatever dangers the sea has, whatever the earth, I imagine these to be the causes of your long delay. While I foolishly fear these, you could be captured by a foreign love, which is the passion of you men."

*sic quondam festum Laertius egerat heros
forsan in extremo coniugis orbe diem. (1-4)⁹⁷*

Ovid then orders his tongue to be silent about his own misfortunes, *lingua favens adsit, nostrorum oblita malorum* (5), yet nearly every statement he makes thereafter refers to them. He puts on a white toga, whose color does not match his fate, *sumatur fatis discolor alba meis* (8). In a direct address to his wife's birthday, he hopes it arrives bright and unlike his own birthday, *candidus huc venias dissimilisque meo* (14).⁹⁸ He extends a wish that his wife enjoy what he does not have and that all in her life be joyous, except for the sadness of having an absent husband:

*si quod et instabat dominae miserabile vulnus,
sit perfuncta meis tempus in omne malis;
quaeque gravi nuper plus quam quassata procella est,
quod superest, tutum per mare navis eat.
illa domo nataque sua patriaque fruatur
-erepta haec uni sit satis esse mihi –
quatenus et non est in caro coniuge felix,
pars vitae tristi cetera nube vacet.
vivat, ametque virum, quoniam sic cogitur, absens,
consumatque annos, sed diuturna, suos.
adicerem et nostros, sed ne contagia fati
corrumpant timeo, quos agit ipsa, mei. (15-26)⁹⁹*

Every wish for his wife is balanced by a lament for his own condition. Even the smoke rising from the incense lit in her honor wafts as a good omen toward Italy, leaving Pontus behind (29-40).

⁹⁷ “The annual birthday of my lady has exacted its usual honor: go hands of mine to your pious duties. In the past the hero Odysseus, son of Laertes, had conducted the celebration of his wife's birthday perhaps at the edge of the world.”

⁹⁸ Ovid had already written a poem for his own birthday, *Tr.* 3.13.

⁹⁹ “If any miserable wound was also threatening my mistress, may she have gotten rid of my misfortunes for all time; and may the ship which was recently shaken more than it should by a serious storm, go through a safe sea, whatever is left of it. May she enjoy her home and daughter and her fatherland – may it be enough that these things have been snatched from me alone – and as far as she is not fortunate in her dear husband, may the remaining part of her life be free from a sad cloud. May she live, and may she love her husband, though apart from him since she is forced to be so, and may she live out her years, but for a long

Ovid ends with a familiar consolation. His wife may not be entirely blessed with happiness due to his misfortunes, but, as a result of them, she will win praise for her *pudicitia*, *probitas*, *fides* and *pietas*, the virtues which made Penelope, Evadne, Alcestis, and Laodamia famous:¹⁰⁰

*haec ergo lux est, quae si non orta fuisset,
 nulla fuit misero festa videnda mihi.
 edidit haec mores illis heroisin aequos,
 quis erat Eetion Icariusque pater.
 nata pudicitia est ista probitasque, fidesque,
 at non sunt ista gaudia nata die,
 sed labor et curae fortunaque moribus impar,
 iustaque de viduo paene querella toro.
 scilicet adversis probitas exercita rebus
 tristi materiam tempore laudis habet.
 si nihil infesti durus vidisset Ulixes,
 Penelope felix sed sine laude foret.
 victor Echionias si vir penetrasset in arces,
 forsitan Euadnen vix sua nosset humus.
 cum Pelia genitae tot sint, cur nobilis una est?
 nempe fuit misero nupta quod una viro.
 effice ut Iliacas tangat prior alter harenas,
 Laodamia nihil cur referatur erit.
 et tua, quod malles, pietas ignota maneret,
 implerent venti si mea vela sui. (41-60)¹⁰¹*

These women's laments may be elegiac but their suffering is heroic. Ovid's examples have their origin in epic. Ovid will continue to employ such consolation in successive

time. I would add my own too, but I fear that contamination with my fate would ruin the ones which she herself lives."

¹⁰⁰ The story of Alcestis is told in Euripides' *Alcestis*. For commentary on the other women, see the footnotes for *Tr.* 1.6.

¹⁰¹ "Therefore, this is the light, which if it had not risen, no sacred day would need to be observed by miserable me. This day brought forth traits equal to those heroines whose fathers were Eetion and Icarius [*i.e.*, Andromache and Penelope]. Chastity was born on this day and probity and fidelity, but joys were not born on this day, rather toil and cares and fortune not equal to your character, and just complaint from your almost widowed bed. To be sure, probity employed in adverse circumstances has material for praises at a sad time. If hardy Odysseus had seen nothing hostile, Penelope would be fortunate but without praise. If her victorious husband had penetrated into the citadels of Echion, perhaps her own land would have scarcely known Evadne. When there are so many daughters of Pelias, why is one famous? Naturally, because that one was the bride of that miserable man. Make it so that another touches the Trojan sands before him, there will be no reason why Laodamia should be talked about. And your piety would remain unknown, which you would prefer, if favorable winds should fill my sails."

letters to his wife, transforming her miseries into benefits. Elsewhere he uses a similar argument to motivate his wife to display piety and fidelity by devoting her efforts to his cause. In this poem, however, Ovid focuses on consoling his wife and wishing her well.

He concludes with a plea to the gods and Augustus:

*di tamen et Caesar dis accessure, sed olim,
aequarint Pylios cum tua fata dies,
non mihi, qui poenam fateor meruisse, sed illi
parcite, quae nullo digna dolore dolet. (61-4)¹⁰²*

Ovid acknowledges that he does not deserve to be spared his punishment, but claims that his wife deserves to be spared the grief of his absence. He emphasizes his guilt in order to highlight her innocence and virtue. He then presents what he wants most as if a gift for her: he should be allowed to return so that she might be spared her grief.

5.11

Ovid responds to both disloyal friends and outright detractors throughout the *Tristia*, but particularly in the fifth book. In 5.11, he addresses his wife's complaint (in the first letter from her that he ever mentions receiving) that an unnamed individual has called her *exilis uxor*, "exile's wife." Whether responding to an actual letter or just employing a trope, Ovid conveys his grief and hurt in response to the shame of such an insult:

*quod te nescioquis per iurgia dixerit esse
exulis uxorem, littera questa tua est.
indolui, non tam mea quod fortuna male audit,
qui iam consuevi fortiter esse miser,
quam quod cui minime vellem, sum causa pudoris,
teque reor nostris erubuisse malis. (1-6)¹⁰³*

¹⁰² "Yet gods and Caesar, about to enter into the gods, but once, when your fates will have equaled the Pylian days, spare not me, who, I admit, deserved punishment, but her who, worthy of no grief, is in pain."

Ovid will continue to express surprise that his wife is not successful in the tasks he has assigned her, but no longer do we find him imagining her emotional state as he had in previous letters. He encourages her to endure the insult, which is much milder than the separation from him that she has already endured:

*perfer et obdura; multo graviora tulisti,
eripuit cum me principis ira tibi. (7-8)*¹⁰⁴

After comforting his wife in two lines, the following fourteen restate the defense Ovid has presented many times already: he offended Augustus but committed no crime. Ovid addresses Augustus, declaring that he has praised Augustus as a god on earth in his writings (23-28). He then addresses the person who called him an exile, demanding that he spare Ovid's fate from having a false name attached to it (29-30). The epistle becomes a response not only to his wife but also to the accuser; he is protecting her but also defending himself. Rather than tell her what to say in reply, he seizes the initiative and responds to the comment himself, addressing her detractor directly in a letter that replaces face-to-face conversation. He restates his shame at the undue misery his misfortune causes his wife; despite his distance, he is doing what he can to relieve her sufferings. Later, he will ask that she do more to relieve his.

¹⁰³ "Your letter complained that someone as an insult said that you were an exile's wife. I grieved, not because my fortune is in bad repute, since I have boldly grown accustomed to being miserable, so much as because I am the cause of shame for one to whom I wish it least of all, and I think that you have blushed at my misfortunes."

¹⁰⁴ "Carry through and be strong; you bore much heavier things when the princeps' anger snatched me away from you." Ovid also uses the commands *perfer* and *obdura* in the *Ars Amatoria* (2.178) where he encourages a lover to persist when the girl he desires seems uninterested. Catullus also uses the two commands in 8.11 where he consoles himself after his relationship has ended.

5.14

Ovid reflects upon how he has characterized his wife throughout the *Tristia* in this final poem of the entire collection:

*quanta tibi dederim nostris monumenta libellis,
o mihi me coniunx carior, ipsa vides.
detrahat auctori multum fortuna licebit,
tu tamen ingenio clara ferere meo;
dumque legar, mecum pariter tua fama legetur,
nec potes in maestos omnis abire rogos. (1-6)¹⁰⁵*

She will receive immortal fame through her presence in his poems. Yet, with fame comes the danger that others will envy her gains:

*cumque viri casu possis miseranda videri,
invenies aliquas, quae, quod es, esse velint.
quae te, nostrorum cum sis in parte malorum,
felicem dicant invidiantque tibi. (7-10)¹⁰⁶*

These lines are reminiscent of *Amores* 2.17 in which Ovid chides Corinna for making him *praeda dominae*, claiming that although many other girls want to be immortalized by his song, he will sing about no one other than his Corinna, so she ought to be grateful and not so difficult. Using this motif from the *Amores*, Ovid attempts to persuade his wife to stay devoted to him. Despite the erotic parallel, here he asks that she be *pia*, loyal in all the respects required by their *socialis amor* (*Tr.* 5.14.28). As throughout his exile poems, Ovid assigns her a great responsibility, which he portrays as a gift:

*non ego divitias dando tibi plura dedissem:
nil feret ad Manes divitis umbra suum.
perpetui fructum donavi nominis idque,
quo dare nil potui munere maius, habes.*

¹⁰⁵ “You yourself see what great monuments I have given you in my books, o wife dearer to me than myself. Fortune may take away much from this author, you however will be made famous by my talent; and as long as I will be read, your fame will be read equally with me, nor are you able to completely go away onto the sad pyre.”

¹⁰⁶ “And although you may be able to seem pitied because of the plight of your husband, you will find some women who may wish to be what you are. There are those who may say that you are fortunate and may be jealous of you, because you are a part of my misfortunes.”

*adde quod, ut rerum sola es tutela mearum,
ad te non parvi venit honoris onus,
quod numquam vox est de te mea muta tuique
indiciis debes esse superba viri. (11-18)¹⁰⁷*

Ovid acknowledges that his absence and his damaged reputation make the traditional role of caring for her husband's home and honor more challenging. He offers his immortalizing praise as the reward for her loyalty but also reminds her of the great responsibility which accompanies such acclaim, sealing his gift with an admonition:

*quae ne quis possit temeraria dicere, persta
et pariter serva meque piamque fidem.
nam tua, dum stetimus, turpi sine crimine mansit,
et tantum probitas inreprehensa fuit.
area de nostra nunc est tibi facta ruina;
conspicuum virtus hic tua ponat opus.
esse bonam facile est, ubi, quod vetet esse, remotum est,
et nihil officio nupta quod obstet habet.
cum deus intonuit, non se subducere nimbo,
id demum est pietas, id socialis amor.
rara quidem virtus, quam non Fortuna gubernet,
quae maneat stabili, cum fugit illa, pede.
siqua tamen pretium sibi virtus ipsa petitum,
inque parum laetis ardua rebus adest,
ut tempus numeres, per saecula nulla tacetur,
et loca mirantur qua patet orbis iter. (19-34)¹⁰⁸*

Ovid asks his wife to act in such a way that his praise of her may not be regarded as false, since her reputation affects his. She will preserve him by preserving her *pia fides*. While

¹⁰⁷ "I could not have given you more by giving you riches: a shade will bring nothing of its own riches beyond the grave. I have given the enjoyment of a perpetual name, and you have a gift than which I was able to give nothing greater. Add the fact that, as you are the sole guardian of my affairs, the burden of a not small honor has come to you, my voice is never silent about you, and you ought to be proud of your husband's rewards."

¹⁰⁸ "Lest anyone be able to say that these things are thoughtlessly given, stand firm and equally save me and your pious devotion. For, as long as I stood, your great probity remained without foul sin and was blameless. Now an area has been made for you out of my ruin; here let your virtue set down a conspicuous work. It is easy to be good, when that which forbids you to be is remote and a bride has nothing to obstruct her duty. When a god has thundered, not to take oneself away from under the cloud, that at last is piety, that is wedded love. Rare indeed is the virtue which fortune does not steer, which remains with a stable foot, when Fortune flees. However, if in any way virtue itself is its own reward and remains upright in hardly happy circumstances, though you may count the time, through no generations is it kept silent, and all areas admire it wherever the world's path extends."

he was in good standing, no one could say anything bad about her,¹⁰⁹ but now that he has suffered ruin, maintaining her *pietas* and *socialis amor* is a greater challenge.

Nevertheless, these circumstances give her the opportunity to have her greatness told throughout the world forever. As proof, Ovid offers some familiar examples of renowned wives:

*aspicis ut longo teneat laudabilis aevo
nomen inextinctum Penelopaea fides?
cernis ut Admeti cantetur et Hectoris uxor
ausaque in accensos Iphias ire rogos?
ut vivat fama coniunx Phylaceia, cuius
Iliacam celeri vir pede pressit humum?
morte nihil opus est pro me, sed amore fideque:
non ex difficili fama petenda tibi est. (35-42)¹¹⁰*

Penelope was immortalized for her faithfulness to Odysseus. The others, too – Alcestis, Andromache, Evadne and Laodamia - are memorialized in poetry for noble devotion to their husbands. By contrast, Ovid makes his wife’s obligations seem lighter than theirs, as he asks not for her death but for her love and devotion; in return, he will immortalize her, too, in his poetry.

Such a weighty and extensive exhortation could suggest that Ovid’s wife was not maintaining proper devotion to his interests. To allay such thoughts, he adds:

*nec te credideris, quia non facis, ista moneri:
vela damus, quamvis remige navis eat.
qui monet ut facias, quod iam facis, ille monendo
laudat et hortatu comprobat acta suo. (43-6)¹¹¹*

¹⁰⁹ Cf. *Tr.* 5.11 in which she had been ridiculed as an “exile’s wife.”

¹¹⁰ “Do you notice how Penelope’s praiseworthy fidelity holds a name not extinguished by the long passing of time? Do you see how the wives of Admetus and Hector are sung about as is the daughter of Iphis [*i.e.*, Evadne] who dared to go to the lit pyre? How the wife of the hero of Phylacos [*i.e.*, Laodamia] lives because of her fame, whose husband stepped upon the Trojan ground with a quick foot? There is no need for death on my account, but for love and fidelity: fame does not need to be sought by you from something difficult.”

At all times, Ovid is careful to praise and encourage his wife, even when he gives her direction, as here. Theirs is a *socialis amor*: he does what he can to support her and urges her to do the same for him.

Ovid's wife clearly dominates this last book of the *Tristia*. He addresses more epistles to her here than in any other book of his exilic corpus and places them in very prominent positions within the collection. His letters to his wife offer consolation and support for her as well as for himself, simultaneously encouraging her actions and enhancing his own reputation. Throughout the *Tristia* Ovid displays great concern for his wife, even while using her as a valuable source of poetic *materia*, particularly for evoking sympathy from his readers.

Epistulae ex Ponto 1.2

While Ovid only addresses two letters in the *Epistulae ex Ponto* to his wife, he mentions her throughout the work, keeping her in the reader's mind. The first mention comes in 1.2, addressed to Paullus Fabius Maximus, an important link between Ovid and Augustus.¹¹² In this lengthy epistle, as well as the one before it, Ovid stresses that his sufferings have not lessened, despite four years in exile.¹¹³ His nightmares mimic the real dangers he faces and his pleasant dreams of seeing his native land and conversing with his friends and wife bring sorrow because they rekindle his sense of deprivation and loss:

*aut ubi decipior melioris imagine somni,
aspicio patriae tecta relictæ meae.*

¹¹¹ "Nor should you believe that you are being advised of these things because you are not doing them: I am giving sails, although the boat is going by oar. He who advises that you do what you are already doing praises by advising and approves of the deeds by his own encouragement."

¹¹² Maximus is believed to have been a close friend of Augustus and was married to Augustus' cousin, Marcia. See Ronald Syme, *History in Ovid* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 149-51.

¹¹³ *Ep.* 2.1.26: *quarta fatigat hiems*, "the fourth winter is wearing upon me."

*et modo vobiscum, quos sum veneratus, amici,
 et modo cum cara coniuge multa loquor.
 sic ubi percepta est brevis et non vera voluptas,
 peior ab admonitu fit status ipse boni.
 sive dies igitur caput hoc miserabile cernit,
 sive pruinosi Noctis aguntur equi,
 sic mea perpetuis liquefiunt pectora curis,
 ignibus admotis ut nova cera solet. (47-56)¹¹⁴*

The mention of his *cara coniunx* conveys the emotional impact of losing what he treasures since remembering her brings both pleasure and pain.¹¹⁵

Later in the epistle to Maximus, Ovid emphasizes their intimate familial connections, especially the fact that they are related through his wife:

*ergo tam placidas orator missus ad aures,
 ut propior patriae sit fuga nostra roga.
 ille ego sum, qui te colui, quem festa solebat
 inter convivas mensa videre tuos:
 ille ego, qui duxi vestros Hymenaeon ad ignes,
 et cecini fausto carmina digna toro,
 cuius te solitum memini laudare libellos,
 exceptis domino qui nocuere suo.
 cui tua nonnumquam miranti scripta legebas:
 ille ego de vestra cui data nupta domo est.
 hanc probat et primo dilectam semper ab aevo
 est inter comites Marcia censa suas,
 inque suis habuit matertera Caesaris ante:
 quarum iudicio siqua probata, proba est. (127-40)¹¹⁶*

¹¹⁴ “Or when I am deceived by the image of a better dream, I behold the roofs of my fatherland which have been left behind. And I speak of many things now with you, friends, whom I have revered, and now with my dear wife. Thus when this desire is perceived, brief but not real, the very existence of something good becomes worse from its suggestion. Therefore, whether the day sees this miserable head, or the frosty horses of Night are driven, thus my heart wastes away with perpetual cares as fresh wax is accustomed to do when fire has been brought close.”

¹¹⁵ Cf. *Tr.* 3.4.59-62.

¹¹⁶ “Therefore, as an orator sent to such serene ears, ask that my exile be closer to my fatherland. I am he who honored you, whom your sacred table was accustomed to see among your guests: I am he who led the wedding song to your hearth, and I sang songs worthy of your auspicious bed, whose little books I remember you were accustomed to praise, except those which harmed their master. Often you used to read your compositions to one who marveled at them: I am one who had a bride given to him from your home. That Marcia has always been loved from the beginning and is regarded as one of her companions proves this, and the fact that Caesar’s aunt had her among her companions even before that: if any woman is approved by their judgment, she is proven to be good.”

Ovid mentions the relationship through his wife as the last in a list of ties that should garner Maximus' assistance, suggesting the persuasive value such connections could have. He concludes his letter by asking Maximus for aid on his wife's behalf, not his own:

*nos quoque praeteritos sine labe peregimus annos:
proxima pars vitae transilienda meae.
sed de me ut sileam, coniunx mea sarcina vestra est:
non potes hanc salva dissimulare fide.
confugit haec ad vos, vestras amplectitur auras,
iure venit cultos ad sibi quisque deos,
flensque rogat, precibus lenito Caesare vestris,
busta sui fiant ut propiora viri. (143-150)¹¹⁷*

In *Tristia* 1.3.84, Ovid says that his wife asked to join him as he left for Tomis, claiming that she would only be a small burden, *parva sarcina*, to him.¹¹⁸ Ovid reuses the word *sarcina* in this letter to Maximus, placing his wife, who stayed behind, in Maximus' charge; he recasts her as a suppliant, so that Maximus is no longer merely her guardian, but her god.¹¹⁹ He then sets up a hierarchy of suppliant to supplicated with Augustus at the top: Maximus himself, on behalf of Ovid's wife, should beseech Augustus with prayers that Ovid's tomb be allowed closer to where she is. Ovid assigns this request to his wife, making the appeal more pitiful and, since it comes from kin, less likely to meet refusal.

¹¹⁷ "We too have gone through the years that have passed without disgrace: the most recent part of my life must be passed over in silence. But I should be silent about myself, my wife is your burden: you are not able to disregard her with your loyalty preserved. She flees to you, she embraces your altars - rightfully does each one come to the gods he worships for himself - and weeping she asks, with Caesar having been softened by your prayers, that the tomb of her husband may be made closer."

¹¹⁸ Ovid also used this word in *Heroides* 3.68, when Breisis begs Achilles to place her on a ship to his homeland, claiming *non ego sum classi sarcina magna tuae*, "I am not a great load for your fleet." Propertius used the word in 4.3.46 as a woman claims to her husband at war that she would be *militiae sarcina fida tuae*, "the faithful load of your military service."

¹¹⁹ As a woman, it would not be proper for Ovid's wife to present her case before Augustus himself. It would be better that a male representative do so. Ovid's wife can exert influence, however, on male family members such as Maximus. Later, in *Epistulae* 3.1, Ovid will encourage his wife to go a step further by pleading with Livia, the wife of Augustus.

1.4

In this, the first of the two letters to his wife in the entire collection of *Epistulae ex Ponto*, Ovid bemoans his prominent signs of ageing - white hair, wrinkles, and weakening strength:

*iam mihi deterior canis aspergitur aetas,
iamque meos vultus ruga senilis arat:
iam vigor et quasso languent in corpore vires,
nec, iuveni lusus qui placuere, iuvant.
nec, si me subito videas, agnoscere possis,
aetatis facta est tanta ruina meae.
confiteor facere hoc annos, sed et altera causa est,
anxietas animi continuusque labor.
nam mea per longos siquis mala digerat annos,
crede mihi, Pyllo Nestore maior ero. (1-10)¹²⁰*

Ovid claims that both the passage of time and the strains of exile have altered his appearance to such an extent that his addressee would not recognize him:

*me quoque debilitat immensa malorum,
ante meum tempus cogit et esse senem.
otia corpus alunt, animus quoque pascitur illis:
inmodicus contra carpit utrumque labor. (19-22)¹²¹*

He compares his trials to those of Jason, an earlier visitor to the Pontic region (23-46), and the comparison magnifies his woes in every aspect.¹²² Only after concluding his comparison to Jason does Ovid identify the recipient of the epistle as his wife:

*durius est igitur nostrum, fidissima coniunx,
illo, quod subiit Aesone natus, opus. (45-6)¹²³*

¹²⁰ “Now a more feeble age is sprinkled with gray hairs for me, and now the wrinkles of old age plow my face: now vim and vigor are sluggish in a battered body, nor do the games of my youth which pleased me, do me any good. Nor, if you should see me suddenly, would you be able to recognize me, so great a ruin has been made of my life. I admit that the years are doing this, but there is another cause, anxiety of the soul and continuous toil. For if anyone should spread my misfortunes through the long years, believe me, I will be older than Pylian Nestor.”

¹²¹ “The immensity of evils also weakens me, and encourages me to be an old man before my time. Leisure nourishes the body, the spirit is also fed by it: excessive toil acts against both.”

¹²² Cf. *Tr.* 1.5.57-84, in which Ovid compares his sufferings to those endured by Odysseus.

¹²³ “My burden is harder, most faithful wife, than that which Aeson’s son underwent.”

This delayed identification draws Ovid's readers into his plight by allowing each of them to assume the position of addressee; at the same time, it distances his wife from association with Jason's maligned counterpart, Medea, even though Ovid has compared himself to the hero. Upon mentioning his wife, Ovid returns to Odysseus and the highly esteemed Penelope as his comparanda. He imagines that time and trials have also altered his wife's appearance:

*te quoque, quam iuvenem discedens urbe reliqui,
credibile est nostris insenuisse malis.
o, ego di faciant talem te cernere possim,
caraque mutatis oscula ferre comis,
amplectique meis corpus non pingue lacertis,
et "gracile hoc fecit," dicere "cura mei,"
et narrare meos flenti flens ipse labores,
sperato numquam conloquioque frui. (47-54)¹²⁴*

He prays for a reunion with his wife like the one enjoyed by Odysseus and Penelope after their many years apart, expressing the fear that, just as Penelope did not recognize Odysseus due to his changed appearance, his wife will not recognize him.¹²⁵ Like Odysseus, Ovid appears old and worn because of a god, or more precisely because of a god's anger, *ira dei* (44), earlier called Caesar's anger, *Caesaris ira* (29). Ovid does not ask for restored looks but merely a return home so that he too may lovingly kiss and embrace his wife,¹²⁶ adding that he and his wife will offer incense to Augustus and Livia as the gods to whom they would owe thanks for such a reunion:

¹²⁴ "It is credible that you too have grown old because of our misfortunes, whom I left behind as a young woman when leaving the city. O, may the gods make it so that I may be able to see you in such a way, and to provide dear kisses to your changed hair, and to embrace your slender body with my arms, and to say 'care for me has made this body slight,' and to tell you my toils as you weep, weeping myself, and to enjoy a conversation I never hoped to have."

¹²⁵ *Od.* 23.93-5: Athena changed Odysseus' appearance so that he appeared as a worn, old man and then later restored his looks, once he was reunited with Penelope.

¹²⁶ Cf. *Od.* 23.207-8: Penelope embraces and kisses Odysseus' head, and in 231-1, Odysseus weeps and holds his wife in his arms.

*turaque Caesaribus cum coniuge Caesare digna,
dis veris, memori debita ferre manu! (55-6)¹²⁷*

Here, as throughout the exile poetry, Ovid shows his mindfulness of Augustus' control over his happiness; the responsibility for his well-being is in the *princeps*' hands. He assures Augustus that, filled with shame and regret, he has learned his lesson and suffered for his transgressions. Should he be allowed to return to his wife, as Odysseus had after his long suffering, he would be duly grateful.

Just as Dawn extends the time for Odysseus and Penelope to recount their trials to one another and rest their wearied hearts and limbs (*Odyssey* 23.241-349), so Ovid hopes Dawn will hasten the arrival of such a reunion for him:

*Memnonis hanc utinam lenito principe mater
quam primum roseo provocet ore diem! (57-8)¹²⁸*

1.8

One more brief reference to Ovid's wife occurs in the first book of the *Epistulae*. She is part of the familiar triad of things for which he longs: his fatherland, his companions and his dear wife:

*nec tu credideris urbanae commoda vitae
quaerere Nasonem, quaerit et illa tamen.
nam modo vos animo dulces reminiscor, amici,
nunc mihi cum cara coniuge nata subit:
aque domo rursus pulchrae loca vertor ad urbis,
cunctaque mens oculis pervidet usa suis. (29-34)¹²⁹*

¹²⁷ "And [may I be able] to bear incense to the Caesars along with the wife worthy of a Caesar, true gods, which is owed by my mindful hand!"

¹²⁸ "Would that Memnon's mother (Aurora), when the prince has softened, call this day forth with her rosy mouth as soon as possible!"

¹²⁹ "Nor should you believe that Naso is seeking the comforts of a city life, although he seeks them too. For now, friends, I recall you sweetly in my mind, now my daughter along with my dear wife come to my mind: and I am turned from my home back to the places of the beautiful city, and my mind scans all the other things experienced by my eyes."

The memories of home are still vivid in Ovid's mind and his longing for them, especially his *cara coniunx*, has become almost formulaic. Although Ovid says he does not seek to return to these things, only to move closer to them, his lengthy digression on the pleasures of surveying the city and working his farm belies his claim and exposes the sad futility of his longing to return to what he loves.

2.10

Ovid does not mention his wife again until late in the second book of *Epistulae*; before that he is preoccupied with addressing those left unnamed in the *Tristia*.¹³⁰ Although he says he wishes to honor his supportive recipients by immortalizing their names, he also admits other pragmatic intentions: *una per plures vox mea temptat opem* ("may my one voice seek the help of many," 3.9.42). He asks them to plead with Augustus that he be allowed to go *in locum Scythico vacuum ab arcu* ("into a place free from the Scythian bow," *Ep.* 1.1.79), something he already asked of his wife in the *Tristia*.

In 2.10, Ovid addresses a fellow poet, Macer, whose loyalty and affection he claims in part through a connection to his wife:¹³¹

*sis licet oblitus pariter gemmaeque manusque,
exciderit tantum ne tibi cura mei,
quam tu vel longi debes convictibus aevi,*

¹³⁰ *Ep.* 1.1.17-20: *rebus idem, titulo differt; et epistula cui sit / non occultato nomine missa docet. / nec vos hoc vultis, sed nec prohibere potestis, / Musa que ad invitos officiosa venit.* "[This work is] the same in theme, different in title; and each letter reveals to whom it has been sent without the name concealed. You all do not wish this, but neither are you able to prohibit it, and my dutiful Muse comes to those who are unwilling;" 3.9.51-2: *nec liber ut fieret, sed uti sua cuique daretur / littera, propositum cura que nostra fuit,* "Not so that a book would be made, but so that each person would be given a letter was my goal and concern."

¹³¹ This may be the same Macer whom Augustus had put in charge of the libraries at Rome (Suet. *Caes.* 56.7); Peter White challenges the connections in "'Pompeius Macer' and Ovid," *Classical Quarterly* 42 (1992): 210-18.

*vel mea quod coniunx non aliena tibi est,
vel studiis, quibus es, quam nos, sapientius usus
utque decet, nulla factus es Arte nocens. (7-12)¹³²*

Ovid asks that Macer not be unmindful of the concern he once had for his now injured friend, claiming Macer's affections as a companion in verse and as a relative of his wife. Ovid does not make a specific request that Macer plead before Augustus, but asks to be remembered as a poet, rather than an exile. Remaining in the minds of those in Rome helps him stay alive there in spirit despite his physical absence.¹³³ For Ovid, Macer is another link to home.

2.11

Ovid addresses the next and last poem in the second book to another person with a connection to his wife, her uncle Rufus, whom he praises as a role model for her and as an advocate of her probity:

*sponte quidem per seque mea est laudabilis uxor,
admonitu melior fit tamen illa tuo.
namque quod Hermionae Castor fuit, Hector Iuli,
hoc ego te laetor coniugis esse meae,
quae ne dissimilis tibi sit probitate laborat,
seque tui vita sanguinis esse probat.
ergo quod fuerat stimulis factura sine ullis,
plenius auctorem te quoque nancta facit.
acer et ad palmae per se cursurus honores,
si tamen horteris, fortius ibit equus.
adde quod absentis cura mandata fideli
perficis, et nullum ferre gravaris onus.*

¹³² “Although you may forget equally my signet ring and handwriting, may only concern for me not have disappeared from your mind, which you either owe to the associations we have had over a long time, or because my wife is not a stranger to you, or which you owe to the pursuits that you have used more wisely than I, and as is proper, you have been injured by no Art.”

¹³³ *Hic es, et ignoras, et ades celeberrimus absens, / inque Getas media iussus ab urbe venis. / redde vicem, et, quoniam regio felicior ista est, / istic me memori pectore semper habe.* “You are here, and you do not know it, and you are here very often though absent, and you come summoned from the midst of the city among the Getae. Do likewise for me, and, since that is the happier region, always have me there in your mindful heart” (49-52). Cf. *Tr.* 4.10.125-132; 5.1.79-80; 5.3.49-58; 5.9; 5.13; *Ep.* 3.5.41-4.

*o, referant grates, quoniam non possumus ipsi,
di tibi! qui referent, si pia facta vident;
sufficiatque diu corpus quoque moribus istis,
maxima Fundani gloria, Rufe, soli. (13-20)¹³⁴*

This poem is one of gratitude for what Rufus has done both to console Ovid and to support his wife's exercise of virtue.¹³⁵

Even though Ovid mentions his wife less frequently in the *Epistulae*, the references to her are still in prominent positions within each of the books. At the start of Book 1 and now at the close of Book 2, she is present as an important familial link who obligates others to be mindful of Ovid.

3.1

The poem to Rufus acts as a prelude to 3.1, which Ovid addresses to his wife. It is the longest as well as the last epistle to her. Here he expands upon many themes present in previous poems to her, creating a sort of cohesive conclusion for all he has said. He begins this poem by reiterating the hardships he must endure in Tomis to explain why he repeats both his pleas to leave and his fears that he will die in that place:

*ecquod erit tempus quo vos ego Naso relinquam
in minus hostili iussus abesse loco?*

¹³⁴ "Indeed my wife is praiseworthy of her own accord and by her own doing, however she is made better by your advice. For what Castor was to Hermione, Hector to Iulus, I am glad that you are this for my wife, who strives to be not unlike you in probity, and her life proves that she is of your blood. Therefore what she had been about to do without any encouragement, she does more fully having you as her supporter too. The swift horse will go more boldly yet, which will run for the rewards of the palm on its own accord, if you encourage it. Add the fact that you are completing commands with faithful concern for one who is absent, and you object to bearing no burden. O, may the gods render thanks to you, since I am not able to myself. They will render thanks, if they see your pious deeds; may your body also be fitting to those traits of yours, Rufus, greatest glory of Fundi's land."

¹³⁵ This comment might suggest that Rufus had assumed the role of guardian for Ovid's wife. Any woman without a husband present in the home, because of death, divorce, public duty or exile, would be expected to have a male guardian to help her with household matters and to ensure the maintenance of her good character. See J.P.V.D Balston, *Roman Women: Their History and Habits* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1962), 45. Cf. *Ep.* 1.2 in which Ovid addresses Paullus Fabius Maximus as if he too were acting as a guardian for his wife.

*an mihi barbaria vivendum semper in ista,
inque Tomitana condar oportet humo? (3-6)¹³⁶*

The land lacks peace (7-10), flowers (11-12), grapes (13), warmth (14-16), springs (17-18), trees (19-20), and the sweet songs of birds (21-22). Instead, it holds bitter wormwood (23-4) and fears of death (25-8). It should be no wonder that he asks to reside in another place:

*non igitur mirum, finem quaerentibus horum
altera si nobis usque rogatur humus. (29-30)¹³⁷*

Only after this does Ovid reveal that he is writing to his wife. He emphasizes that she is the addressee by framing the line with the words *te* and *coniunx*, omitting the usual epithet *cara* (31). In elegiac fashion, his regard for her diminishes as she appears unconcerned about his plight. He becomes perplexed, if not upset, that she has not been successful and that she can restrain her tears despite his misfortunes:

*te magis est mirum non hoc evincere, coniunx,
inque meis lacrimas posse tenere malis. (31-2)¹³⁸*

Ovid then responds to what appears to be a question from his wife:

*quid facias, quaeris? quaeras hoc scilicet ipsum,
invenies, vere si reperire voles.
velle parum est: cupias, ut re potiaris, oportet,
et faciat somnos haec tibi cura breves.
velle reor multos: quis enim mihi tam sit iniquus,
optet ut exilium pace carere meum?
pectore te toto cunctisque incumbere nervis
et niti pro me nocte dieque decet.
utque iuvent alii, tu debes vincere amicos,
uxor, et ad partis prima venire tuas. (33-42)¹³⁹*

¹³⁶ “Will there ever be a time when I, Naso, will leave you [the land and sea] behind, having been ordered to go away to a less hostile place? Or must I always live in this barbaric land and must I be buried in the soil of Tomis?”

¹³⁷ “It is no wonder if another land is asked for continuously by me since I seek an end to these things.”

¹³⁸ “It is more a wonder, wife, that you are not able to prevail in this matter and that you are able to hold back your tears over my misfortunes.”

He gets specific: it is not enough just to wish (*velle*) for success, she must long (*cupias*) for it and be as he imagined her in *Tristia* 4.3, losing sleep over his misfortune and working for his release, as he asked of her in *Tristia* 5.1. He is forceful and direct as he gives her more specific direction on how to do this: she should approach his friends and win them over to his cause. Indeed, she should be the first to act, taking care that she not ruin the image he has promoted for her.¹⁴⁰

*magna tibi imposita est nostris persona libellis:
coniugis exemplum diceris esse bonae.
hanc cave degeneres. ut sint praeconia nostra
vera, vide famae quod tuearis opus.
ut nihil ipse querar, tacito me fama queretur,
quae debet, fuerit ni tibi cura mei. (43-8)¹⁴¹*

Ovid presents himself as a creator who has developed a *persona* for his wife in his books.¹⁴² He uses the passive to suggest that she will be said to be the model of a good wife rather than stating that she is one, as he previously described her.¹⁴³ Ovid cautions her not to fall short of her created image, using a term associated with familial dishonor, *degeneres*,¹⁴⁴ to prevent making him known as a liar and herself as unconcerned for her husband. She has a duty to maintain not only her honor and her *fama*, but his as well,

¹³⁹ “What can you do, you ask? You should certainly ask this very thing and you will find out, if you truly wish to find out. It is a small thing to wish: you must long for it, so that you may prevail over the task, and this concern should make your sleep short. I believe that many want it: who indeed is so unfair that he should choose my exile to lack peace? It is proper for you to strive with your whole heart and with all your strength and to struggle for me night and day. So that others help you, you ought to win over our friends, wife, and come to do your part first.”

¹⁴⁰ For the ways in which Roman women of high status could, and were expected to, exert influence in a male-dominated society, see Hillard, 37-64.

¹⁴¹ “A great persona has been set down for you in my little books: you are said to be the model of a good wife. Beware that you do not dishonor this. So that my proclamations may be true, see that you protect the work of fame. Although I myself do not complain, while I am silent, fame will complain, who ought, if you will not have been concerned about me.”

¹⁴² Cf. *Tr.* 1.6.19-22 where Ovid compares his wife to Andromache, Laodamia and Penelope not only as the wife of a husband beset by misfortune, but also as a poet’s *materia*. Thus, both the first and last poems addressed to his wife highlight her role as *materia* in his songs.

¹⁴³ Cf. *Tr.* 1.6.26: *te docet exemplum coniugis esse bonae*, “[Livia] teaches you to be the model of a good wife,” and 4.3.72: *exemplumque mihi coniugis esto bonae*, “be a model of a good wife for me.”

something all the more important because his recent fate has made him better known than he was before:

*exposuit memet populo Fortuna videndum,
et plus notitiae, quam fuit ante, dedit.
notior est factus Capaneus a fulminis ictu:
notus humo mersis Amphiaraus equis.
si minus errasset, notus minus esset Ulixes:
magna Philoctetae vulnere fama suo est.
si locus est aliquis tanta inter nomina parvis,
nos quoque conspicuos nostra ruina facit. (49-56)¹⁴⁵*

To support his point, Ovid offers examples of men made famous by their misfortunes.¹⁴⁶

Two of these men, Capaneus and Odysseus, had wives famed for their devotion to their husbands, namely Evadne and Penelope, women already employed by Ovid as comparanda for his wife. Another, Amphiaraus, had a wife who betrayed him.¹⁴⁷ Ovid thus demonstrates that a person could be famed for good or ill. His notoriety as a poet, now increased, puts her in the public eye and she must ensure that the fame she receives matches the praiseworthy character he portrays in his poetry.

Expanding on his words to her at the conclusion of the *Tristia*, he reminds her that people will be comparing how she conducts herself against how he has described her; her reputation will be based on their judgments:

¹⁴⁴ This word could also refer to Ovid's wife as a character type; she must not dishonor the *genre*.

¹⁴⁵ "Fortune made it so that I would be seen by the people, and gave me more attention than there was before. Capaneus was made more well known from a strike of lightning: Amphiaraus is known because his horses had been swallowed by the earth. If he had wandered less, Odysseus would have been less known: great was Philoctetes' fame because of his wound. If there is any place for the small among such great names, my ruin has also made me conspicuous."

¹⁴⁶ Ovid himself continued their fame by writing about them in his *Metamorphoses*.

¹⁴⁷ Amphiaraus, mentioned in Sophocles' *Antigone* and *Oedipus at Colonus*, was a prophet and as such knew that he would not return home alive if he went with Polyneices to attack Thebes. He went because he was under oath to allow his wife Eriphyle to decide disputes between himself and her brother Adrastus. Polyneices bribed her with a necklace to make Amphiaraus go to war with him and her brother. This reference to a woman's greed at the expense of her husband could allude to Ovid's comments that he has given his wife the gift of immortality. She must not take that gift without giving something in return, in accordance with their *socialis amor* (73). Amphiaraus is briefly mentioned in *Metamorphoses* 9.407.

*nec te nesciri patitur mea pagina, qua non
inferius Coa Bittide nomen habes.
quicquid ages igitur, scaena spectabere magna,
et pia non paucis testibus uxor eris.
crede mihi, quotiens laudaris carmine nostro,
qui legit has laudes, an mereare rogat.
utque favere reor plures virtutibus istis,
sic tua non paucae carpere facta volent.
quarum tu praesta ne livor dicere possit
“haec est pro miseri lenta salute viri.” (57-66)¹⁴⁸*

His wife’s role is great, not only because it is so publicly scrutinized, but because Ovid himself is becoming weaker; she must make up for his incapacities:

*cumque ego deficiam, nec possim ducere currum,
fac tu sustineas debile sola iugum.
ad medicum specto venis fugientibus aeger:
ultima pars animae dum mihi restat, ades;
quodque ego praestarem, si te magis ipse valerem,
id mihi, cum valeas fortius ipsa, refer.
exigit hoc socialis amor foedusque maritum:
moribus hoc, coniunx, exigis ipsa tuis.
hoc domui debes, de qua censeris, ut illam
non magis officiis quam probitate colas.
cuncta licet facias, nisi eris laudabilis uxor,
non poterit credi Marcia culta tibi. (67-78)¹⁴⁹*

The metaphor of the yoke is a common one for married couples, as each partner has an obligation to assist the other. Ovid reminds his wife to merit the praise she receives in order to maintain her own as well as her family’s reputation, represented by the reference to Marcia. The word Ovid uses is *credi*: it is not just what she does that is important, but

¹⁴⁸ “Nor does my page allow that you not be known, because you have a name not inferior to Coan Bittis. Whatever you do, therefore, you will be seen on a great stage, and you will be a pious wife to not a few witnesses. Believe me, however often you are praised by my song, whoever reads these praises asks whether you deserve them. Just as I think most people are favorable to these virtues, a few may thus wish to carp at your deeds. You must take care that their envy is not able to say ‘this woman is slow to act for her poor husband’s welfare.’”

¹⁴⁹ “And since I am growing weak, and I am not able to draw the cart, make it so that you sustain the feeble yoke alone. I, sick, gaze at the doctor with my veins weakening. While the final part of my life remains for me, be present; and what I would be in charge of, if I myself were stronger than you, do in payment to me, since you yourself are stronger. Our wedded love and marriage pact demand this: you yourself, wife, demand this because of your character. You owe this to your home, from which you are esteemed, so that

what others perceive her as doing. She must be regarded as worthy of praise and respectful to those in a position to help her.

Ovid stresses again that he has aided her and that, although she has acted well, she is obligated to do more:

*nec sumus indigni: nec, si vis vera fateri,
debetur meritis gratia nulla meis.
redditur illa quidem grandi cum fenore nobis,
nec te, si cupiat, laedere rumor habet.
sed tamen hoc factis adiunge prioribus unum,
pro nostris ut sis ambitiosa malis.
ut minus infesta iaceam regione labora,
clauda nec officii pars erit ulla tui.
magna peto, sed non tamen invidiosa roganti:
utque ea non teneas, tuta repulsa tua est.
nec mihi suscense, totiens, si carmine nostro,
quod facis, ut facias, teque imitere, rogo.
fortibus adsuevit tubicen prodesse, suoque
dux bene pugnantis incitat ore viros.
nota tua est probitas testataque tempus in omne;
sit virtus etiam non probitate minor. (79-94)¹⁵⁰*

Here, Ovid adopts a kindlier approach as he apologizes for imploring her to do what she is already doing: he is merely trying to encourage the probity and virtue she already displays. He expressed similar thoughts in his concluding poem of the *Tristia*, 5.14, but what he used as encouragement in that poem, he employs as a warning here. In 5.14, he referred to the *Tristia* as a memorial to his wife that makes her famous along with him and even the source of jealousy; his misfortune gives her the opportunity to show her

you honor it more because of duty than because of probity. Although you may do everything, unless you will be a praiseworthy wife, Marcia will not be able to be believed to have been honored by you.”

¹⁵⁰ “Nor am I unworthy: nor, if you wish to speak the truth, is no thanks owed to my merits. Indeed, that thanks is rendered to me with great debt, nor does rumor have the capability to harm you, if she should desire. But yet add this one thing to your earlier deeds, that you are eager to do something about my misfortunes. Work so that I may be in a less hostile region, and not any part of your duty will be ineffective. I seek great things, but, however, not things causing envy for the one asking: although you may not attain them, your being driven away brings no harm. Do not be mad at me, if I ask so often in my song that you do what you are doing and that you imitate yourself. The trumpeter has grown accustomed to

greatness and receive fame for the courage and fidelity he encourages her to maintain. Even though he includes similar sentiments in *Epistulae* 3.1, he is more critical of his wife as he encloses his reminder of the fame he has bestowed upon her within a strong admonition to uphold a reputation that will keep those who are jealous from questioning whether she deserves such fame. Like an elegiac lover, he is simultaneously dependent and demanding.

Whereas Ovid kept the focus primarily on what he was doing for his wife in *Tristia* 5.14, in *Epistulae* 3.1 it is now her turn to act. He goes on to explain in much greater detail, and with stronger emphasis, what she must do for him. In a lengthy presentation of arguments, Ovid suggests that what he asks of her is not something to fear.¹⁵¹ He uses bold contrasts to prove that his request is neither dangerous nor inappropriate. She need not be Amazonian in her acts as there is a place in Roman society for female influence (95-112).¹⁵² Nor is he asking her to face death or monsters, but to approach Livia, a woman of beauty who is a model of greatness for their time, second only to Caesar himself (113-128). The intensity of Ovid's effort to allay his wife's fears seemingly undermines his credibility, however, especially when we compare such comments to Ovid's earlier references to Caesar's anger and his later reference to Livia as Juno (145), a goddess not known for her kindly disposition.

Ovid is careful to provide specific instructions for his wife on how to approach someone as important as the wife of Augustus. She should go before Livia at an appropriate time and petition her with tears as a suppliant before a goddess (129-160).

being helpful to the strong, and a leader with his voice urges on men who are fighting well. Your probity is famous and witnessed for all time; may your strength also not be lesser than your probity."

¹⁵¹ He uses a similar, although shorter, line of argument when trying to convince Fabius Maximus that he should not be afraid to approach Augustus in *Epistulae* 1.2.

Ovid refers repeatedly in the exile poetry to Augustus and his family as deities who must be worshipped and from whom forgiveness can be sought with the proper supplication, always giving the *princeps* a chance to set aside his anger and display his clemency. His wife ought to regard the imperial couple as gods as well (161-4). Ovid closes with his own prayer to the divine pair that they receive his wife with kindly expressions (165-6).

3.7

After 3.1, the focus is on friends, particularly those with connections to the imperial household, and on an occasional enemy. Although two epistles follow, 3.7 serves as Ovid's farewell poem. He admits the monotony of his epistles and announces that he will no longer trouble his friends nor burden his wife with his pleas and sorrowful accounts:

*nec gravis uxori dicar: quae scilicet in me
quam proba tam timida est experiensque parum.
hoc quoque, Naso, feres: etenim peiora tulisti.
iam tibi sentiri sarcina nulla potest. (11-14)¹⁵³*

In 3.1, Ovid made one last emphatic attempt to spur his wife to action. In 3.7, he resigns himself to the futility of his efforts, although he expresses no malice towards his wife; she has been good to him, but ineffective, and he will accept this, having suffered worse and grown accustomed to his burdens.

When he abandons hope that his wife and friends will be able to secure his release, he seems to abandon all hope of leaving Tomis and with a dramatic flourish resigns himself to death. In ironic accord with the genre of elegy, the narrator

¹⁵² See Hillard, 37-64.

ultimately gives up the pursuit without having obtained what he claimed to desire so fervently throughout the corpus. Even though Ovid leads his readers to think that he has given up hope of leaving Tomis, Ovid writes a fourth book of *Epistulae* in which he addresses many new individuals not with pleas for aid, but with expressions of gratitude and honor. He may have ceased to plead publicly with most of his previous addressees for assistance, but he still continues to reach out to others from Tomis and does not wait quietly for death.

4.8

The fourth book of *Epistulae* was published separately from the other three and may not have been prepared for publication by Ovid himself.¹⁵⁴ The recipients of the letters in the fourth book are primarily individuals who did not receive letters in the earlier collections.¹⁵⁵ Ovid's wife, mentioned with such finality in 3.1 and 3.7, does not appear in the fourth book except when Ovid reminds their son-in-law Suillius of the family ties which obligate him to assist Ovid:

*ius aliquod faciunt ad finia vincula nobis,
quae semper maneant in labefacta precor.
nam tibi quae coniunx, eadem mihi filia paene est,
et quae te generum, me vocat illa virum. (9-12)*¹⁵⁶

Ovid begins and ends his plea with the same argument:

¹⁵³ “Nor will I be said to be a burden on my wife; who certainly is as good to me as she is timid and too little enterprising. You, Naso, will endure this too: you have endured even worse things. Now no burden is able to be felt by you.”

¹⁵⁴ Arthur Wheeler, *Ovid: Tristia and Ex Ponto* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), xxxvi.

¹⁵⁵ It is difficult to be certain since Ovid did not name his recipients in the *Tristia* and in some of the *Epistulae*, but, according to Wheeler, many of the individuals addressed in *Epistulae* 4 do not appear to be the same as the earlier unnamed addressees, *ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ “Marriage bonds make a certain obligation for us, which I pray may always remain unbroken. The one who is your wife, is my step-daughter, and she who calls you son-in-law calls me husband.”

*clausaque si misero patria est, ut ponar in ullo,
 qui minus Ausonia distet ab urbe, loco,
 unde tuas possim laudes celebrare recentes
 magnaue quam minima facta referre mora.
 tangat ut hoc votum caelestia, care Suilli,
 numina, pro socero paene precare tuo. (85-90)¹⁵⁷*

Ovid may have given up petitioning former addressees, including his wife, but he has not given up petitioning.

¹⁵⁷ “And if my fatherland is closed for miserable me, may I be placed in any place that is less distant from the Ausonian city, from where I may be able to celebrate your recent glories and relate your great deeds with as little delay as possible. Dear Suillius, pray on behalf of one who is nearly your father-in-law that this vow touch the heavenly divine powers.”

CHAPTER 2

The Roles of the Poet's Wife in the Exile Poetry

Ovid, as poet, creates the character of his wife according to roles and conventions adapted from other literary works, as well as from society itself. He never names her, nor does he provide readers with specific details of her appearance or actions, thus forcing readers to formulate their conception of her from the familiar female tropes he selects to depict her.¹⁵⁸ Ovid engages her character with his own, likewise fashioned and selective, in order to reflect upon his famed past as a popular poet, wretched present as an exile, and desired, yet doubtful, future as a pardoned man. As poetic creator, he assigns his wife many important roles to play, giving rise to his comment in the last letter addressed to her: *scaena spectabere magna*.¹⁵⁹

In the first poems to mention his wife, *Tristia* 1.2 and 1.3, Ovid portrays her as an abandoned heroine bewailing the loss of her beloved. In later poems he casts her more as an elegiac mistress of questioned fidelity, not with respect to sexual fidelity but with respect to her devotion to aiding his release from exile in Tomis. Throughout the poems, her character is that of a proper matron as Ovid repeatedly asserts her probity, filling his lines with praise and occasionally comparing her with Augustus' wife Livia, hailed by

¹⁵⁸ Paul Veyne describes elegiac characters as “made up of negative features. The Roman elegists are not interested in doing the portrait of some woman they have really known; what they are interested in is making the elegiac fiction work, and too much detail would be harmful to it” (*Roman Erotic Elegy: Love, Poetry and the West*, trans. David Pellauer [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988] 91).

Maria Wyke believes that this is true for female characters in Roman literature in general, not just Ovid's wife. “Broadly speaking, literary representations of the female are determined both at the level of culture and at the level of genre: that is to say by the range of cultural codes and institutions which order the female in a particular society and by the conventions which surround a particular practice of writing” (“The Elegiac Woman at Rome,” *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 213 [1987]: 153).

Ovid as the foremost of virtuous matrons. In Ovid's last letter to his wife, *Epistulae* 3.1, she becomes a *discipula*, receiving the lessons of his didactic verse in his final plea that she act as his intermediary in Rome. Yet even as Ovid reduces and eventually eliminates her presence in the exile poetry, she remains a character worthy of praise: upright and devoted, despite her ineffectiveness as his advocate.

Although the exile poetry retains a certain consistency of style and perspective with that found in his pre-exilic works, Ovid clearly reacts in it to a change in the reception of his poetry.¹⁶⁰ Once Augustus increased his influence over the moral environment in Rome and cast out the once famous poet for his promotion of wantonness, Ovid changes his tune. Aligning the characters he creates for himself and his wife with Augustan moral expectations, he portrays the poetic narrator in a new light. Nonetheless, he preserves his earlier style by using recognizable and admired roles from his pre-exilic corpus.¹⁶¹ Ovid in essence rewrites his earlier works as he writes the exile poetry.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ "You will be seen on a great stage" (*Ep.* 3.1.59).

¹⁶⁰ Ovid himself reveals this in *Tr.* 1.1.59-64: *nec te, quod venias magnam peregrinus in urbem, / ignotum populo posse venire puta. / ut titulo careas, ipso noscere colore; / dissimulare velis, te linquet esse meum. / clam tamen intrato, ne te mea carmina laedant; / non sunt ut quondam plena favoris erant.* "Nor think that you are able to come into the great city unknown to the people because you are coming as a foreigner. Although you lack a title, you will be known by your very style, you may wish to disguise yourself, but it will be obvious that you are mine. Nevertheless, enter secretly, lest my songs harm you; they are not full of favor as they once were."

¹⁶¹ Jo-Marie Claassen describes the use of allusion to earlier works as "a poetic short-hand, bringing the conceptual framework of an earlier work to bear as a counterpoint to the framework of a new poem, which gains a double or stronger set of meanings. This intertextual counterpoint either supports the thrust of the poem, or carries a cross-current of meaning, to create irony," thus giving an earlier work a new perspective (*Displaced Persons: The Literature of Exile from Cicero to Boethius* [Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999], 230).

¹⁶² As Barbara Weiden Boyd remarks, "Ovid writes always conscious of his past, the language of which becomes his means of shaping a very different present" (*Ovid's Literary Loves: Influences and Innovation in the Amores* [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997], 89).

The Poet's Wife as Heroine

The first role we see Ovid's wife play in the exile poetry is that of an epic heroine. In *Tristia* 1.2 Ovid depicts his wife grieving piously over their separation, like Alcyone grieving over her husband Ceyx in Ovid's own epic, the *Metamorphoses*; Ceyx, despite Alcyone's tearful protest, left on a sea voyage. While lamenting her husband's absence and anxiously awaiting his return, Alcyone remained unaware that he was battling a storm at sea (*tantum ignara malorum*, 11.573), just as Ovid depicts his wife as unaware of the peril he is facing at sea.¹⁶³ Ovid writes that Alcyone died when her husband perished (*occidit una cum Ceyce suo*, 684-5), but in 1.2 he inverts the notion by saying that part of himself will survive, should he die at sea, since his wife will not perish with him.¹⁶⁴ He appropriates his wife's condition, claiming survival through her, metapoetically proving his claim by performing the self-preserving act of writing about his circumstances to her.

In 1.3, Ovid recounts his departure, when his wife begged to share his fate, only agreeing to stay behind when she realized that she would thus be of more use to her husband. There are many parallels in 1.3 to the departure scene, well-known to Ovid's readers, in Book II of the *Aeneid*, when Aeneas prepares to renew a futile fight with the victorious Greeks. The poet invites the comparison in line 26: *haec facies Troiae cum caperetur erat*. In line 35, Ovid takes up his *clipeum* as he prepares, like Aeneas, to

¹⁶³ *Nescit in immenso iactari corpora ponto, / nescit agi ventis, nescit adesse necem*, "She does not know that my body is being tossed about on the vast sea, she does not know that I am driven by the winds, she does not know that death is near" (1.2.39-40).

¹⁶⁴ *At nunc, ut peream, quoniam caret illa periclo, / dimidia certe parte superstes ero*, "But now, although I perish, since she is without danger, half of me will certainly survive" (41-2).

depart.¹⁶⁵ Ovid's wife (*coniunx*) then clings (*inhaerens*) to him, preferring to follow him into danger rather than be abandoned, just as Creusa clung to Aeneas:¹⁶⁶

“*si periturus abis, et nos rape in omnia tecum;
sin aliquam expertus sumptis spem ponis in armis,
hanc primum tutare domum. cui parvus Iulus,
cui pater et coniunx quondam tua dicta relinquer?*” (*Aen.*2.675-8)¹⁶⁷

Creusa's concern in these lines is for her home and family, where her duty lies as a woman and wife. In the end, however, the fates allow neither Creusa nor Ovid's wife to accompany their husbands.

Yet Ovid's wife is more than a Creusa figure. Fainting and moaning over her desertion, she is reminiscent of Dido when Aeneas abandons her in Book IV, or of Laodamia in the *Heroides*.¹⁶⁸ Ovid writes that his wife contemplates suicide, an act eventually chosen by both Dido and Laodamia in order to reunite with their husbands.¹⁶⁹ Since Ovid is only metaphorically dead, his wife's fainting serves as a simulated death. The fact that she remains alive as a representative of the life he had in Rome sustains the possibility that he will return there from the underworld that is Tomis,¹⁷⁰ while the fact that she desires to kill herself places her within a tradition of the romantic woman driven

¹⁶⁵ *Aen.*2.671-2: *hinc ferro accingor rursus clipeoque sinistram / insertabam aptans meque extra tecta ferebam*, “Hence I am girded with a sword again and, fitting it on, I put my left hand through my shield strap and brought myself outside the house.”

¹⁶⁶ *Aen.*2.673-4: *ecce autem complexa pedes in limine coniunx / haerebat parvumque patri tendebat Iulum*, “But look, having embraced my feet upon the threshold, my wife was clinging to me and was holding small Iulus up to his father.”

¹⁶⁷ “If you are going away to die, take us with you too into all things; if you, experienced, place any hope in the weapons you have taken up, save this home first. To whom is small Iulus, to whom are your father and I your wife, once your command, left?”

¹⁶⁸ *Her.* 13.15-42. In Ovid's version, Laodamia faints after the departure of her husband. Later, she will kill herself when she learns of her husband's death (Hyg., *Fab* 103-4). She appears in the Fields of Mourning with Dido and Evadne in *Aeneid* 6.447.

¹⁶⁹ Dido committed suicide not to be with Aeneas, but to reunite with the man to whom she originally intended to be faithful, her husband Sychaeus.

¹⁷⁰ For discussion of Ovid's depiction of Tomis as the underworld, see Claassen, *Displaced Persons*, 163; Paul Allen Miller, *Subjecting Verses: Latin Love Elegy and the Emergence of the Real* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 212; Radulescu, *passim*; and Williams, *Banished Voices*, 12-16.

by love to perish for her man.¹⁷¹ Ovid captures the emotions surrounding his departure by transforming the scene into epic. His wife's role is crucial for developing the sort of tragic motif commonly found in epic as he assigns her the exceptional level of piety found in that loftiest of genres and thereby initiates her heroization.

Ovid will continue to employ epic allusions to enhance the image of his wife, as in *Tristia* 4.3, where he imagines that she suffers from grief no less than Andromache did upon seeing Hector dragged behind Achilles' chariot, a climactic scene from Homer's *Iliad* famous even to this day for its emotional impact. By equating his wife's grief with Andromache's, Ovid equates his own punishment with the insult to Hector's defiled body, an intertextual analogy with lament-filled resonance and strong rhetorical effect. Despite its inclusion in elegiac verse, Ovid seems to argue, the grief of his wife is of epic proportion, not merely a lover's *querella*.

In 1.6, the first poem addressed to his wife, Ovid lauds her for supporting him by protecting his assets while he is away. He begins with the assertion that neither Antimachus nor Philetas, Greek poets who celebrated their beloveds in elegiac verse, loved their female poetic subjects as much as he loves her. Although these authors and their loves have not survived well in the modern literary record, making it difficult to understand the precise meaning of the comparison, pseudo-Plutarch's *Consolatio ad Apollonium* states that Antimachus placed the story of how he lost his beloved at the

¹⁷¹ Two examples Ovid repeatedly mentions in the exile poetry are Laodamia and Evadne.

Laodamia killed herself after learning that her husband Protesilaus volunteered to be the first Greek to disembark onto the shores of Troy, fulfilling the prophecy that that man would be the first to die. She writes a letter to her husband in Ovid's *Heroides* 13. Catullus 68 and Hyginus, *Fab* 103-4, also mention her story.

Evadne leapt onto her husband's funeral pyre after he had been killed by Jupiter for his arrogance during the siege of Thebes. The story is told by Euripides, Aeschylus and Statius. Propertius 1.15 also mentions her suicide.

beginning of a list of mythical accounts of heroic misfortunes.¹⁷² This becomes relevant at the conclusion of Ovid's poem where he claims that his wife would surpass all heroines in fame for her greatness, if only he had the talent left to sing her praises as she deserved, specifically stating, *Penelopes esset fama secunda tuae*.¹⁷³ Hinds takes the downgrading of Penelope, the first heroine in the order of Ovid's *Heroides*, along with the earlier allusion to a mythological catalogue and Ovid's propensity toward using his own earlier works as springboards for later works, to mean that Ovid now places his wife in first place, not just in his stated list of heroines within 1.6, but before all the heroines of his *Heroides*.¹⁷⁴

Rosenmeyer points out that, since Ovid links Penelope with Homer rather than her husband, he is turning his wife, as another one of his heroines, into his muse, subordinating her importance to his own as her creator.¹⁷⁵ Not only is Ovid's wife physically distant and thus present only in what he writes, but in writing about her, he subsumes her physical reality into an idealized image, making himself her creator. As Williams writes, "mythical exempla can be used to give guidance, but when our experiences are situated in immediate competition with them we can easily find ourselves

Propertius employs the notion of sharing a lover's death in 2.26 and 2.281. Other examples of lovers' suicide can be found in sources ranging from Greek myth and drama to the letters of Pliny.¹⁷² *Tr.* 1.6 is the only explicit reference to Lyde after the third century BC and is the only explicit reference to Bittis after a brief comment by Hermesianax, Philetas' friend and pupil. Ovid refers to Philetas in *Ars Amatoria* 3.329 as a poet with whom a girl should make herself familiar if she desires a lover. In *Remedia Amoris* 760 Ovid advises the love sick to avoid Philetas. Propertius 3.11 invokes Philetas as a muse for elegy. Perhaps the works about Bittis were more familiar than the lack of preservation of her name suggests.

For more information on both Lyde and Bittis, see Hinds, "First Among Women"; Victor T. Matthews, *Antimachus of Colophon* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 26; and Konstantinos Spanoudakis, *Philetas of Cos* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 32-4.

¹⁷³ "Penelope's fame would be second to yours" (1.6.22).

¹⁷⁴ Hinds, "First Among Women," 126-8.

¹⁷⁵ Rosenmeyer, 29-56.

fictionalizing our own lives rather than adding a dimension of reality to the myth.”¹⁷⁶ Ovid compares his wife most frequently to Penelope, strengthening the comparisons of himself to Odysseus, especially in reference to his perilous sea voyage and inability to return home. Ovid enumerates how his misfortunes are greater than Odysseus’ in *Tristia* 1.5 and in the following poem compares his wife to Penelope: *Penelopes esset fama secunda tuae* (*Tr.* 1.6.22). For Ovid to characterize himself as more deserving of poetic attention than Odysseus,¹⁷⁷ his wife must also be greater than Penelope.

Penelope was the archetype of a good wife in the ancient world. In the words of Treggiari, the marriage of Penelope and Odysseus was a “recipe for perfection,” just as the relationship between Paris and Helen was a “recipe for failure.”¹⁷⁸ Despite constant pressure to marry, Penelope remained faithful to her husband throughout his twenty year absence, intelligently managing their affairs and home during his absence and resolutely maintaining her reputation for probity. As Jacobson notes, “it is in this mold that the Romans finally froze – or should we say embalmed – her.”¹⁷⁹ She was no longer a subject for literary development but rather a static model of feminine virtue favored by poets, especially elegists like Ovid. Nor were poets the only ones to capitalize on Penelope’s associations with wifely virtue. Many funerary inscriptions compare the wives they laud to Penelope, the representative of marital success.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁶ Williams, *Banished Voices*, 109.

¹⁷⁷ *Tr.* 1.5.57-8: *pro duce Neritio docti mala nostra poetae / scribite: Neritio nam mala plura tuli*, “Learned poets, write my misfortunes in place of the Neritian leader: for I have borne more misfortunes than the Neritian.”

¹⁷⁸ Suzanne Treggiari, *Roman Marriage: Iusti Coniuges from the Time of Cicero to the Time of Ulpian* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 185.

¹⁷⁹ Howard Jacobson, *Ovid’s Heroides* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 246.

¹⁸⁰ Mary R. Lefkowitz, “Wives and Husbands,” *Greece and Rome* 2d ser., 30 (1983): 46. See also Nancy Felson-Rubin, *Regarding Penelope: From Character to Poetics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

Through repeated associations, Ovid solidifies an image of his own wife that equals the idealized traditional portrait of Penelope.¹⁸¹ Rather than identifying his wife by her own name, he always refers to her by her position as his wife or by comparison to mythological wives, themselves identified at times merely as the wives of their named husbands. Thus Ovid honors his wife and enhances her image, but because he does not mention her name or the unique details of her actions, he denies her a personal identity and highlights her role as a character in his poetry.¹⁸²

Other strong resemblances link the circumstances faced by Ovid and his wife to those faced by Odysseus and Penelope. What Ovid records about his wife in the two lines dedicated to her in his autobiographical poem, *Tristia* 4.10, also gave Penelope her fame: that she stayed devoted to her husband into old age.¹⁸³ In other poems, Ovid expands the description of their relationship, repeatedly stating in letters to friends that his greatest desire is to see his wife and home, the things which Odysseus also desired. When writing to his wife, Ovid refers to their devotion to each other as they work for the same cause: he supports her through his poetry as she supports him by caring for their affairs and advocating for his release. In *Epistulae* 3.1 he describes how they labor together under the same yoke, although, since exile has weakened him, she must take up the greater burden as demanded by their *socialis amor foedusque maritum*, shared love and marriage pact, an expression of mutual devotion reminiscent of the *homophrosune*,

¹⁸¹ Roland Barthes describes this process of characterization through the repetition of *semes* in detail in *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974).

¹⁸² The lack of description becomes apparent when Ovid's letters are compared to others' accounts honoring their wives. For example, the *Laudatio Turiae*, and letters of both Cicero and Pliny praise specific actions of the women to whom they refer by name. Hinds describes the penchant of Roman love poets for fusing the identity of their beloved with those of mythological heroines as "a compulsive mapping of lover and beloved onto the famous pairs of the mythical or historical past" (*First Among Women*, 125).

¹⁸³ *Tr.* 4.10.73-74: *ultima, quae mecum seros permansit in annos, / sustinuit coniunx exulis esse viri*, "The last, who remained with me until my later years, endured to be the wife of an exile husband."

“like-mindedness,” in Odysseus’ and Penelope’s relationship.¹⁸⁴ Ovid writes to his wife in *Epistulae* 1.4 about the passing years which have aged him and likely her,¹⁸⁵ concluding by expressing the desire to reunite with his wife in an embrace as he tells her of his trials, as Odysseus had with Penelope.¹⁸⁶ He concludes with a prayer that Dawn, who had refrained from appearing so that Penelope and Odysseus could spend more time together, bring the day of his reunion with his wife as soon as possible.

Ovid’s portrayal of his wife as one who surpasses the heroic wives of legend continues throughout the exile poetry, despite his increasing resort to exhortation and accusation. As Odysseus questioned the fidelity of Penelope in the *Odyssey*,¹⁸⁷ so does Ovid, in *Tristia* 4.3, begin to wonder if his wife still faithfully regards him, after he has spent at least a year in exile. He employs the examples of the mythic heroines, namely Penelope, Alcestis, Evadne, Laodamia and Andromache,¹⁸⁸ to serve as her models for devotion, adding that their fame derived from their misfortunes, as will hers. In 5.5, her birthday poem, he compares her character to that of Penelope and Andromache, who were known for their *pudicitia probitasque fidesque* (45). Like these heroines, as well as Evadne, Alcestis and Laodamia, her loyalty will be remembered because of the greatness of her undeserved grief; Ovid repeats this message in 5.14, an epistle requesting her continued fidelity and uprightness in trying times. By his final letter to her, *Epistulae*

¹⁸⁴ Odysseus describes his marriage to Penelope in such a way in 6.181-84 when talking with Nausicaa.

¹⁸⁵ Cf. *Ep.* 1.4.47-8: *te quoque, quam iuvenem discedens urbe reliqui, / credibile est nostris insenuisse malis*, “it is likely that you too have grown old because of our misfortunes, whom I left behind as a young woman when departing from the city,” with *Heroides* 1.115-16 (Penelope to Odysseus): *certe ego, quae fueram te discedente puella, / protinus ut venias, facta videbor anus*, “certainly I, who had been a girl when you left, will seem to have become an old woman, even if you should come right away.”

¹⁸⁶ *Ep.* 1.4.49-54. Cf. *Her.* 13.115-122, in which Laodamia expresses the same desire to reunite in a tender embrace with her husband as he tells her of his glorious deeds.

¹⁸⁷ *Od.* 11.441-3, 454-6; 15.19-26.

¹⁸⁸ These five heroines are mentioned at the beginning of Ovid’s third book of the *Ars Amatoria*. His book of advice for women in love, he says, is not for such women as these five.

3.1, Ovid changes his approach to claim that he does not expect her to make as great a sacrifice as these other heroines were forced to make, only that she follow their example of piety in accomplishing a less fearful task: beseeching Livia for his release from Tomis. Even though she need not sacrifice as much as other heroines, he gives his wife tactical advice from a line in the *Heroides*: *interdum lacrimae pondera vocis habent*.¹⁸⁹ Although she does not appear to have accomplished the task requested of her, despite the encouragement of his accolades, Ovid establishes a distinct and stable character for her by consistently repeating his heroic comparanda, a character which fits neatly into established notions of the heroine.¹⁹⁰ She emerges from his epistles as one with great devotion and probity, despite her inability to effect his release.

As Ovid's letters begin to mix rebuke with praise for his wife, they shift from characterizing her as an abandoned heroine to placing Ovid himself in such a role. Early on, he was his wife's counterpart who, like the undeservedly troubled Odysseus, was enduring divine forces which prevented him from being with his virtuous wife in their homeland. Yet soon Ovid transforms himself into the abandoned heroine as he is cast away by someone with greater ambitions and forgotten by the ones he loves. Like his heroines, he chose to follow *amor* and must now face *pudor*. He claims that by writing the *Ars Amatoria* he angered Augustus, whom he portrays in the exile poetry as a god wielding ultimate control over his fate. As a result, he is enduring the shame of exile, which taints his immortal fame as a poet. He is separated from what he loves, his wife and home, enduring a living death for which he writes his own epitaph, following the

¹⁸⁹ "Sometimes tears have the impact of voice" (58). Cf. *Her.* 3.4 (Briseis to Achilles): *sed tamen et lacrimae pondera vocis habent*, "but however tears also have the impact of voice."

example of some of his own heroines in the *Heroides*.¹⁹¹ Like them, he can only write letters to stay connected, but they appear unanswered, as he frequently answers his own questions and imagines the responses his letters receive.¹⁹² Ovid essentially feminizes himself as a heroine to demonstrate his inferiority, alienation and innocence in the face of another's ambition.¹⁹³ Having emulated such characters before in the *Heroides*, he now has become one of them, casting his wife as a victim along with himself, not just as a plea for mercy to the one who caused his suffering but as a call to all his readers for sympathy. He and his innocent wife are suffering because he chose to pursue love and refused to join in Augustus' campaign against vice.¹⁹⁴ The presence of Ovid's wife in the exile poetry allows him to create two characters for soliciting sympathy, the abandoner and the abandoned one, while his role as a heroic counterpart ensures the fame he will receive for his suffering.

The Poet's Wife as Elegiac "Puella"

Ovid casts his wife not only as a modern heroine but also gives her the attributes of another literary character, the elegiac *puella*. Nowhere does he refer to her using the term *puella*, but he does on occasion refer to her with another term for an elegiac mistress, *domina*. The identification of his wife as an elegiac character, however,

¹⁹⁰ For more on the creation of character through repetition of semes, see Barthes. See also Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, 2d ed (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 120-125.

¹⁹¹ *Her.* 2.147-8, 7.195-6, 14.129-30, 15.183-4.

¹⁹² *Tr.* 5.2.1, cf. *Her.* 18.16-18, 20.1-5.

¹⁹³ Rosenmeyer writes, "Ovid identifies with his heroines, using their gendered, foreign voices to enunciate views and feelings he would be at a loss to express in his own, male, Roman voice" (47).

¹⁹⁴ Ovid published his new version of the *Ars Amatoria*, which included a third book instructing women in the ways of elegiac love, soon after the scandal which resulted in the elder Julia's banishment in 2 BC and well after the *Leges Juliae*. For more on the concurrency of Augustan moral issues and Ovid's writings, see Syme's chapter on "The Error of Caesar Augustus" (215-229).

emerges most clearly from Ovid's choice of elegiac meter and motifs for his exile poetry. As Graf states, using an established character type in narrative is as "ideal for providing a template and standard in expressing new experience as for proving a point."¹⁹⁵ Ovid must describe his new weakened condition as an exile while still showing that he is an able poet, undeserving of his new circumstances. By casting both himself and his wife as characters from elegy, he can tap into the pre-existing emotional connections his readers have from reading elegy, a genre associated with lament.¹⁹⁶ This not only motivates a sympathetic response but also demonstrates that Ovid can still write verse in the genre that brought him fame as well as censure.

The character of Ovid's wife redefines the elegiac female's role and that of her narrating counterpart. Ovid selects particular aspects of the elegiac *puella*'s character to attribute to his wife, while omitting others, in order to glorify her but keep her respectable, in the interest of both her and his own honor and reputation. He faults her not for deceit and sexual infidelity but for timidity and ineffectiveness. Her presence allows the exilic poems to express traditional themes of longing and frustration; but instead of criticizing the morality of his elegiac mistress, he extols the virtues of a pious Roman matron as "a conscious counter to the erstwhile love poet's earlier attitude."¹⁹⁷ From the first book of the *Tristia*, Ovid claims that he is abandoning the poetic pursuits that offended Augustus and asserts his rectitude.¹⁹⁸ He demonstrates that elegy can exist

¹⁹⁵ Fritz Graf, "Myth in Ovid," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ovid*, ed. Philip Hardie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 112.

¹⁹⁶ Ancient authors commonly derived *elegos*, "elegy" from *e e legein*, "to cry woe, woe" (Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961]).

¹⁹⁷ Claassen, *Displaced Persons*, 121. Hinds also sees this "new subgenre of spousal love elegy" as being presented by Ovid as "a new departure in Augustan personal poetry" ("First Among Women," 124).

¹⁹⁸ 1.1.22-4 (in which Ovid addresses the book itself): *ne, quae non opus est, forte loquere, cave! / protinus admonitus repetet mea crimina lector, / et peragar populi ore reus*, "Be careful that you not say something by chance which you should not! Forthwith reminded, the reader will recall my sins, and I will be read by

without erotic love but still be an effective tool for provoking the reader's sympathies. The new virtuous framework for the relationship between narrator and beloved enhances the frustrations of separation and crushed desire found within traditional Roman erotic elegy while tempering feelings of disdain that the self-interested narrator of earlier elegies could evoke – both for himself and his *puella*.¹⁹⁹

At the first mention of Ovid's wife in *Tristia* 1.2, we learn that she stayed behind, causing Ovid to face death alone on a turbulent sea. The separation of lovers - a key element in elegy - is most often represented by a locked door, but a sea voyage, more applicable to Ovid's circumstances in exile, is also common.²⁰⁰ The potentially death-bringing dangers of the journey and the distance it creates between lover and beloved contribute to the foundation of lament upon which Ovid constructs his elegy.

In both the *Tristia* (literally "sad things") and the *Epistulae* Ovid exploits the association of elegy with lament, as perpetuated by the Roman elegists.²⁰¹ He employs his own suffering and self-pity as elegiac tools of persuasion, directed not only toward his general readership but also his wife as his elegiac counterpart. Just as the typical lover/narrator of elegy regularly uses persuasion by pathos, so too does Ovid bewail his condition in the exile poetry to secure his wife's pity and thus her aid in fulfilling his desires – and to win over his readers.

the mouth of the people as a public defendant." Other examples appear at *Tr.* 2, 3.1.4, 3.14.6, 5.1, 5.12.48, *Ep.* 1.1, 2.2.104, 3.3.37-8.

¹⁹⁹ For more on how the traditional elegiac narrator can be regarded, see Sharon James, *Learned Girls and Male Persuasion: Gender and Reading in Roman Love Elegy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

²⁰⁰ *Tib.* 1.2; *Prop.* 1.1.7, 2.26; *Am.* 2.11.

²⁰¹ Ovid admits that, despite the change in title, the *Epistulae* will be no less sad: *invenies...non minus hoc illo triste, quod ante dedi. / rebus idem, titulo differt*, "you will find something no less sad than that work, which I gave before. It is the same in content, it differs in title" (*Ep.* 1.1.15-17). Cf. *Tr.* 3.1.9: *nihil hic nisi triste videbis*, "You will see nothing here but sadness." and *Tr.* 5.1.5-6: *flebilis ut noster status est, ita*

As one means to foster pathos, Ovid employs elegiac themes involving death. After identifying his fear of death on the sea in *Tristia* 1.2, Ovid describes his departure in the following poem as if it were his funeral, a notion alluded to in *Tristia* 3.3 when he tells his wife, in the midst of his directions to her to care for his remains and epitaph, that she already endured his death when he left Rome. He repeats his lament in 4.3.37-47, wishing he had died before he left so that she could have performed all the duties of his funeral rites, a request not only fitting traditional Roman burial custom but also reminiscent of elegiac sentiment.²⁰²

In *Tristia* 1.4, Ovid offers his wife what he had offered Corinna in *Amores* 3.1:²⁰³ the gift of immortality through song, although here it is a reward for her *probitas* and the goodness of her heart.²⁰⁴ Later he uses the lure of immortality as a persuasive tool, as it often is in love elegy. In the concluding line of 4.3, after a long lament, Ovid reminds his wife that his misfortune has bestowed upon her the opportunity to earn great fame, *patet in laudes area magna tuas*.²⁰⁵ To persuade her he employs pathos, a hallmark of elegy, and creates the hyperbolic descriptions of his sufferings expected of the genre.²⁰⁶ At the conclusion of the *Tristia*, in 5.14, he declares that he has completed a *monumentum* to her

flebile carmen, / materiae scripto conveniente suae, “As my status is mournful, thus my song is mournful, with the script fitting its theme.”

²⁰² Cf. *Am.* 3.10 and *Her.* 1, 10. Tibullus hoped in the first elegy of his collection that he would die in Delia’s arms and thereafter be mourned by her (1.1.59-68). In 1.3.1-12, he fears he will die far away from her and not receive his proper rites. Propertius instructs Cynthia how to conduct his funeral (1.17) and fears that she will not be able to perform the rites for him if he dies at sea without her (2.13.17-36).

²⁰³ *Am.* 1.3.25-6: *nos quoque per totum pariter cantabimur orbem, / iunctaque semper erunt nomina nostra tuis*, “We also will be sung equally throughout the whole world, and my name will always be joined with yours.” In *Tr.* 1.6.35-6 Ovid writes to his wife: *quantumcumque tamen praeconia nostra valebunt, / carminibus vives tempus in omne meis*, “But as much as my proclamations will have strength, you will live for all time in my songs.” Cf. *Prop.* 2.25, 2.34, 3.2, 3.24.

²⁰⁴ *Tr.* 1.6.19: *nec probitate tua prior est aut Hectoris uxor*, “nor is Hector’s wife before you in probity,” and 1.6.34: *prima bonis animi conspicerere tui*, “you will be noticed as first because of the goodness of your heart.”

²⁰⁵ “A great area lies open for your praises.”

in his poetry, of which she must prove worthy. He suggests, as he had in the *Amores*, that there are always others who feel that they are the ones who deserve poetic recognition; thus she is obliged to merit the honor by acting the part he has recorded for her.²⁰⁷ He softens his admonition by claiming that he is only trying to encourage her to continue doing what she is already doing, but by his very last letter to her in the exilic works, *Epistulae* 3.1, Ovid is more vehement that she fulfill her obligation. He has placed her on a great stage and now she must act the part by rendering her services of devotion, lest others say she does not deserve such poetic immortality.²⁰⁸

While Ovid most frequently uses the term *coniunx* for his wife, he does on occasion refer to her as his *domina*, a term that in a marital context corresponds to *dominus*, male head of the household, but in an elegiac context connotes the mistress-slave relationship of the elegiac *puella* and her poet-lover. Ovid refers to his wife as *domina* when, in great despair, he puts his wife in the position of caretaker, as in *Tristia* 3.3,²⁰⁹ or when he wants to reflect his disconnection from her, as in *Tristia* 4.3, where he asks the stars to gaze upon his *domina* and tell him whether she is thinking of him.²¹⁰ At

²⁰⁶ As James explains, Ovid's readers, made up of the elite, would have been trained in rhetoric and thus would have not only anticipated but expected such principles and techniques (4).

²⁰⁷ *Am.* 2.17.27-9: *sunt mihi pro magno felicia carmina censu, / et multae per me nomen habere volunt; / novi aliquam, quae se circumferat esse Corinnam*, "I have felicitous songs for great possessions, and many girls wish to have a name through me; I know someone who goes around saying she is Corinna." *Tr.* 5.14.8-10: *invenies aliquas, quae, quod es, esse velint, / quae te, nostrorum cum sis in parte malorum, / felicem dicant invidiantque tibi*, "You will find some women who may wish to be what you are. There are those who may say that you are fortunate and may be jealous of you, because you are a part of my misfortunes."

²⁰⁸ 5.14.19-20: *quae ne quis possit temeraria dicere, persta, / et pariter serva meque piamque fidem*, "Lest anyone be able to say that these things are thoughtlessly given, stand firm and equally save me and your pious devotion."

²⁰⁹ *Nuntiet huc aliquis dominam venisse, resurgam*, "if someone announces that my mistress has come here, I will rise" (23).

²¹⁰ *Inque meam nitidos dominam convertite vultus, / sitque memor nostri necne, referte mihi*, "Turn your shining faces onto my mistress, tell me whether she is mindful of me or not" (9-10).

that point he begins to question her devotion.²¹¹ The doubt is followed by denial, and he describes her (as he had described himself in the *Amores*) as sleepless and weary, tortured as a result of her love for him and the separation she must endure.²¹² In the *Amores*, Ovid ascribed the same feelings that he expressed as an elegiac lover to his *puella* and thus complained about her asking for money when they received the same satisfaction and had the same desires (*Am.* 1.10). In the exile poetry, although Ovid gives his wife the symptoms of tortured longing which he had attributed to his character in the *Amores*, his character in the exile poetry does not display these symptoms out of desire for her. He does express a longing to see her again and to hold her in his aged arms and fears she will not be there to tend to his funeral rites, but when he suffers insomnia, loss of appetite and pallor, it is because he has been barred from Rome and sent to a place he detests.²¹³ While his wife's pining is for her husband alone, for Ovid the loss of her is only part of something greater - the loss of home and his former way of life in the city. Throughout the rest of 4.3, Ovid no longer refers to his wife as his *domina* but addresses her again as his *coniunx*, whom he encourages to be an *exemplum bonae coniugis* by actively displaying her devotion to him as she works to secure his release (72). In 5.5, Ovid performs rites for his wife's birthday, using the term *domina* to represent his act of service to her at what should be a happy celebration, although it turns out to be a vehicle for expressing his own wretchedness.²¹⁴ Other than in these few instances, Ovid most

²¹¹ This is a common progression in amatory elegy. Cf. Tib. 1.6; Prop. 1.15, 1.16, 2.9; *Am.* 2.5, 3.3.

²¹² *Tr.* 4.3.21-30. Cf. *Am.* 1.2.1-4, in particular line 4: *lassaque versati corporis ossa dolent?*, with *Tr.* 4.3.26: *fessaque iactati corporis ossa dolent?*

²¹³ *Tr.* 3.8.24-31, 4.6.41-2; *Ep.* 1.10.3-28.

²¹⁴ *Annus adsuetum dominae natalis honorem / exigit* (1). The *genethliakon*, the birthday poem, is also a feature of elegy. Cf. Prop. 3.10 and Tib. 3.12.

frequently stresses unity with his wife and, by referring to her as his *coniunx*, emphasizes her obligations to him as his spouse.

The traditional elegiac lover, at the end of the poet's collection of elegies, becomes frustrated at his *puella*'s false declarations of fidelity, the difficulty in gaining access to her, and her growing demand for money. This often causes the poetic narrator to declare a new pursuit, in the form of a different lover, topic or genre.²¹⁵ In the exile poetry, Ovid grows increasingly critical of and impatient with his wife's lack of success in securing his release from Tomis. He portrays her as if she were an elegiac mistress holding a key but not opening the door while he, the elegiac lover, has tried praise and persuasion to no avail. With his declaration in *Epistulae* 3.7 that he will no longer bother his wife and is resigning himself to her ineffectiveness,²¹⁶ he moves on to address other individuals in his fourth and last book of epistles. Ovid thus follows a narrative pattern familiar from elegy: he starts out with praise for his beloved but soon, in response to his feelings of abandonment, begins to question her dedication to the fulfillment of his desires, initially countering such feelings by denying her lack of devotion; then he ultimately accepts her ineffectiveness and uses it as a pretext to cease his persuasive tactics, such as offering immortality for her services, and to move on to other pursuits.

²¹⁵ Tibullus took on a new lover, Nemesis, in place of Delia. Propertius undertook a new direction for his elegies in his fourth book by including more national topics: *sacra deosque canam et cognomina prisca locorum*, "I will sing of sacred rites and the gods and the ancient names of places" (4.1.69). Ovid undertook tragedy and epic following his elegies.

²¹⁶ *Nec gravis uxori dicar: quae scilicet in me / quam proba tam timida est experiensque parum*, "nor will I be said to be a burden on my wife; who certainly is as good to me as timid and too little enterprising" (11-12).

The Poet's Wife as "Matrona"

Ovid often adds epithets appropriate to good wives, *cara*, *pia* and *bona*, when referring to his *coniunx*. In portraying her as a model wife, he draws upon not only literary sources, but also contemporary imperial models: she is second only to Livia, wife of the *princeps* Augustus. As the material of his poetry, his wife's character fits within a literary tradition, and as the representation of a real woman, alive in Rome when Ovid was writing about her, her character also follows the traditional societal expectations for a Roman matron espoused by Augustan moral legislation and propaganda.

Ovid's very first mention of his wife describes her as *pia*.²¹⁷ She is pious because she grieves over his misfortune as an exile and, as he explains in the following poem, she desired to share in his fate, only agreeing not to follow him to Tomis when she realized she could be of more service to him in Rome. The poet assigns these words to her:

*"te sequar et coniunx exulis exul ero.
et mihi dicta via est et me capit ultima tellus:
accedam profugae sarcina parva rati.
te iubet e patria discedere Caesaris ira,
me pietas. pietas haec mihi Caesar erit."* (Tr. 1.3.82-6)²¹⁸

Piety dictates her actions and serves as a foil to the *ira* of Augustus. Saller defines piety as "a reciprocal feeling connoting not 'obedience' but 'affectionate devotion,' due from all members of the family,"²¹⁹ By traditional Roman values, such affectionate devotion

²¹⁷ Tr. 1.2.37: *at pia nil aliud quam me dolet exule coniunx*, "But my pious wife grieves for nothing other than me as an exile."

²¹⁸ "I will follow you and I will be the exile wife of an exile. The journey has been commanded for me too and the distant land takes me: I will come along as a small load for the exiled ship. Caesar's anger orders you to leave your fatherland, piety orders me. This piety will be for me a Caesar."

²¹⁹ Richard Saller, "Pietas, Obligation and Authority in the Roman Family," in *Alte Geschichte und Wissenschaftsgeschichte: Festschrift für Karl Christ*, ed. P. Kneiss and V. Lasemann (Darmstadt, 1988), 393.

was an important component of a well-functioning marriage.²²⁰ Other women before Ovid's wife had husbands who were forced from their homes; while some followed their husbands, others remained at home to protect assets and improve circumstances.²²¹ In *Tristia* 3.3, Ovid offers an example of conjugal piety:

*ossa tamen facito parva referantur in urna:
 sic ego non etiam mortuus exul ero.
 non vetat hoc quisquam: fratrem Thebana peremptum
 supposuit tumulo rege vetante soror.
 atque ea cum foliis et amomi pulvere misce,
 inque suburbano condita pone solo. (65-70)²²²*

The reference to Antigone demonstrates the strength of the devotion Ovid requires.²²³

Earlier in 1.6, Ovid praises his wife for her role as the guardian of what survived his 'shipwreck':

*te mea supposita veluti trabe fulta ruina est:
 siquid adhuc ego sum, muneris omne tui est.
 tu facis, ut spoliū non sim, nec nuder ab illis,
 naufragii tabulas qui petiere mei. (5-8)²²⁴*

The *Laudatio Turiae* and Cicero's letters both provide evidence of wives protecting their husbands' property from going into the wrong hands when it was exposed to

²²⁰ The benefits of partnership within a marriage, particularly the sharing of both joys and misfortunes with one's spouse, are expounded in such sources as Cassius Dio's account of Augustus' speech on the Papio-Poppaeian Law of AD 9 (56.3-4); Cicero's letters to his wife Terentia (14.1-5), *Tusc.* 5.5, and *De Off.* 1.2; Livy 1.9.14; Lucan 2.346-7; Musonius 13a; Pliny's letters describing his and others' marriages; Plutarch's *Advice to Bride and Groom*; and Tacitus' *Germ.* 18, *Ann.* 3.15.2 and 12.5.4.

²²¹ Examples can be found in Val. Max. 6.7.3; Ap. *BC* 4.39-40, 48; Dio 54.7.1; Cic. *Ad Fam.* 14.3, 14.4, 14.7.2; and the *Laudatio Turiae*.

²²² "Yet make sure that my bones are carried back in a small urn: thus I will not be an exile even when dead. No one is forbidding this: the Theban sister [Antigone] buried her brother who had been taken from her in a tomb although the king forbade it. And mix them with leaves and ashes of the amomum plant, and place them in suburban soil."

²²³ Antigone buried her brother, who had been accused of treason, acting out of loyalty to her family rather than the king who had forbidden her brother's burial. In the following lines of this poem Ovid will ask his wife to set up an epitaph which lauds him for the poetry that contributed, in part, to his exile. This could be regarded as an act in defiance of Augustus' efforts to erase the record of Ovid's playful love poetry.

²²⁴ "My ruin is supported by you, who has been placed under me just like a beam: if I am anything still, it is all your gift. You make it that I am not someone else's loot, and that I am not stripped bare by those who have sought the tablets of my shipwreck." Cf. *Tr.* 5.14.15, *rerum sola es tutela mearum*, "you alone are the guardian of my affairs."

plundering.²²⁵ Yet Ovid's complaint is about individuals who attack his works rather than his property; even though *tabulae* could signify financial accounts, here it more likely refers to his literary works.²²⁶ His wife has devotedly assisted him when many others abandoned him,²²⁷ a point Ovid reiterates in *Tristia* 5.14:

*cum deus in tonuit, non se subducere nimbo,
id demum est pietas, id socialis amor. (27-8)*²²⁸

More than once Ovid uses the term *socialis* to refer to the love he shares with his wife.²²⁹ Treggiari presents the idea of marriage as a partnership through good and bad times as a “particularly Roman” ideal, well-established not only in Roman literary works over the centuries, but also on epitaphs.²³⁰ The success of the family depended upon the *mater familias*. The *domus* was her sphere, while her husband had a more public role; the two worked within their respective realms to support each other. Ovid demonstrates that he regards the relationship he has with his wife as reciprocal, particularly in *Epistulae* 3.1, in which he calls upon his wife to take up the greater burden of the yoke which joins them,²³¹ a service he himself would perform if he were stronger,²³² and reminds her of

²²⁵ *Laudatio Turiae* 9a-11a.; Cic. *Ad Fam.* 14.3.

²²⁶ *Tr.* 2.7-8, 3.14, 5.18; *Ep.* 4.16; *Ibis* 17-18: *cumque ego quassa meae complectar membra carinae, naufragii tabulas pugnat habere mei*. “and when I embrace the shattered pieces of my keel, he fights to have the tablets of my shipwreck.” Cf. *Rem. Am.* 811 in which Ovid refers to his works metaphorically as a ship, *hoc opus exegi: fessae date sera carinae*, “I have completed this work: give wreaths to my tired keel.” The metaphor of his poetry as a ship and his exile as a shipwreck occurs frequently throughout the exilic epistles, particularly in *Tristia* 2, such as lines 469-470, after pointing out that Propertius wrote the same sort of material but remained unpunished: *non timui, fateor, ne, qua tot iere carinae, / naufraga servatis omnibus una foret*, “I was not afraid, I admit, that, where so many keels went out, there would be one shipwreck when all the others were saved.”

²²⁷ Ovid had a collection of his works at home, which his wife would be safeguarding while protecting their home, *Tr.* 1.1.105-8.

²²⁸ “When a god has thundered, not to take oneself away from under the cloud, that at last is piety, that is wedded love.”

²²⁹ *Ep.* 3.1.73: *exigit hoc socialis amor foedusque maritum*, “Our wedded love and marriage pact demand this”; and *Ep.* 2.8.29: *perque tori sociam, quae par tibi sola reperta est*, “and by the companion of your couch, who alone has been found to be equal to you.”

²³⁰ Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 12.

²³¹ *Cumque ego deficiam, nec possim ducere currum, / fac tu sustineas debile sola iugum*, “and since I am growing weak, and I am not able to draw the cart, make it so that you sustain the feeble yoke alone” (67-8).

their *socialis amor foedusque maritum*, shared love and marriage pact, adding that the assistance he is asking of her has been paid for already by his praise for her within his poetry.²³³ He has acted within the public sphere on her behalf and now asks her to work for his release within the proper circles back in Rome while maintaining her reputation as a dutiful wife and matron of good social standing.

As we have seen, the poet attributes a piety surpassing that of legendary heroic wives to his *coniunx*. Long before her birth, these heroines had been the ultimate models of wifely devotion.²³⁴ Yet the one woman whom Ovid's wife does not surpass, but who instead serves as a model for her, is Livia, the wife of Augustus. Ovid depicts Livia as sharing *socialis amor* with her husband: *Livia sic tecum sociales compleat annos.*²³⁵

While the partnership of Livia and Augustus was celebrated publicly with the term *concordia*, representing harmony in both political and personal relationships, Ovid himself does not use this term to refer to the imperial union but does often mention Livia and Augustus as a harmoniously suited pair, acting together in showing mercy, and so he instructs his wife to pray to them jointly.²³⁶

By the time Ovid was writing his exile poetry, Livia had taken on a much more prominent role as a member of the Augustan family, even publicly dedicating a shrine to Concordia in 7 BC in gratitude for her harmonious marriage to Augustus, as Ovid himself

²³² *Quodque ego praestarem, si te magis ipse valerem, / id mihi, cum valeas fortius ipsa, refer,* “and what I would be in charge of, if I myself were stronger than you, do in payment to me, since you yourself are stronger” (71-2).

²³³ *Nec sumus indigni: nec, si vis vera fateri, / debetur meritis gratia nulla meis. / redditur illa quidem grandi cum fenore nobis, / nec te, si cupiat, laedere rumor habet,* “Nor am I unworthy: nor, if you wish to speak the truth, is no thanks owed to my merits. Indeed that thanks is rendered to me with great debt, nor does rumor have the capability to harm you, if she should desire” (79-82).

²³⁴ In the poem celebrating his wife's birthday Ovid writes: *edidit haec mores illis heroinis aequos...nata pudicitia est ista probitasque, fidesque,* “this [day] brought forth a character equal to those heroines...chastity was born on this day and probity and fidelity” (*Tr.* 5.5.43, 45).

²³⁵ “Thus may Livia fill up years in companionship with you” (*Tr.* 2.161).

mentions in the *Fasti*.²³⁷ The shrine served to connect marital with civic harmony, as did Augustus' moral legislation, which transformed previously private matters into public policy. Augustus was using his private family life as a public model and Ovid follows suit in the exile poetry by offering his own marriage to public view. Just as Livia was playing the role created for her by her husband's political needs, so too does Ovid expect his wife to play the role he has developed for her based on his needs, declaring openly *magna tibi imposita est nostris persona libellis*,²³⁸ and warning her not to be less than her role requires: *hanc cave degeneres*.²³⁹

When Ovid lauds his wife as surpassing the wives of legend in *Tristia* 1.6, he postulates that it could either be a result of her own natural piety or because Livia taught her to be the model of a good wife, *exemplum coniugis esse bonae* (26). In *Tristia* 4.3, Ovid transposes Livia's public role onto his wife as he changes the verb from the infinitive to the imperative: *exemplumque mihi coniugis esto bonae* (72). When Ovid reminds his wife of her role in *Epistulae* 3.1, he adjusts his earlier statement to say that she will *be said* to be the model of a good wife because of his poetry: *coniugis exemplum diceris esse bonae* (44). Since he has already declared that she is the model of a good wife, it is now her responsibility to live up to that image so that the veracity of his words will not be questioned (*Ep.* 3.1.59-66).

Ovid then returns to the notion of conjugal partnership and urges his wife to bear the burden of the yoke they share, as required by their *socialis amor foedusque maritum*, since he cannot. It is her conjugal duty to guard her reputation, which reflects not only

²³⁶ *Tr.* 2.161-164; *Ep.* 1.4.55, 2.8.4-5, 29-30, 43; 3.1.114-18, 163-6.

²³⁷ 6.637-8: *te quoque magnifica, Concordia, dedicat aede Livia, quam caro praestitit ipsa viro*, "Livia also consecrates you, Concordia, with a magnificent temple, which she herself offered for her dear husband."

²³⁸ "A great persona has been set down for you in my little books" (*Ep.* 3.1.43).

upon his reputation, but on that of her entire family (*Ep.* 3.1.75-78). To make his point, he mentions that she must honor Marcia (*Marcia culta*, 78),²⁴⁰ forging a link to her civic duty of honoring Augustus and Livia (*Augustem numen adora / progeniemque piam participemque tori*, 163-4).²⁴¹

Private and public roles blended for all Roman women, even before Augustus. Terminology used for marital unions (*pietas*, *foedus*, *fides*) mirrored that used for friendships and political alliances. Ovid, particularly in *Epistulae* 1.3, refers to things which are owed (*debes*) to him by his wife as a condition of their relationship, just as he expresses to his friends and male relatives in his exilic epistles that they have certain obligations to him by the very nature of their *amicitia* or family ties. Ovid reminds his wife in *Tristia* 5.14 that, although she receives honor for her uprightness, maintaining probity is her *officium*, her duty.²⁴²

When reminding his wife of her duty, Ovid frequently uses the word *probitas*, goodness of character, considered the prime ingredient in a good marriage and essential for a good reputation.²⁴³ In *Tristia* 1.6, neither Andromache nor Laodamia surpasses Ovid's wife in *probitas* (19-20). In the poem Ovid writes for her birthday, *Tristia* 5.5, he joins the term with *pudicitia* and *fides* as her key virtues.²⁴⁴ Ovid reveals in *Tristia* 5.14 that her probity - easy to maintain when one stands unaccused and unchallenged - has been put to the test by his misfortunes. He makes *probitas* a family trait when he writes

²³⁹ "Beware that you do not dishonor this" (*Ep.* 3.1.45).

²⁴⁰ For an explanation of Marcia's relationship to Ovid's wife and to Augustus, see Chapter 1, *Ep.* 1.2.

²⁴¹ Ovid refers to Augustus and Livia as gods in the *Epistulae* (1.4.55, 2.8, 3.1).

²⁴² *Ad te non parvi venit honoris onus*, "the burden of no small honor comes to you" (16).

²⁴³ Susan Treggiari, "Ideals and Practicalities in Matchmaking in Ancient Rome," in *The Family in Italy from Antiquity to the Present*, ed. D. Kertzer and R. P. Saller (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 101; and Augusto Frascchetti, *Roman Women*, trans. Linda Lappin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 27.

to his wife's uncle Rufus that she strives to match him in this quality (*Ep.* 2.11.17).

Finally, Ovid employs the term more than once in *Epistulae* 3.1 as he warns his wife to maintain her reputation for *probitas* by working to support him now that he has weakened (76, 93, 94). As the chief virtue of a proper matron, Ovid uses this character trait more than any other to extol his wife.

Often coupled with *probitas*, in both the Roman conception of a proper matron and in Ovid's own description of his wife, is *fides*. *Fides* represented not just faithfulness in sexual terms but a general sense of trustworthiness in any sort of relationship.²⁴⁵ In marriage, a woman was entrusted with many responsibilities, including caring for financial, familial and domestic affairs, even matters related to her husband's business and burial.²⁴⁶ An ideal wife was her husband's confidant and a reflection of his own good character, able to be trusted to maintain the well-being of her husband's home, children, and reputation.

The three virtues that Ovid attributes most to his wife, *probitas*, *pietas* and *fides*, are the three interconnected virtues most important to the conception of an ideal and successful marriage in the Roman mindset. They appear frequently in eulogies and epitaphs²⁴⁷ and other genres, particularly with regard to the behavior of prominent

²⁴⁴ *Tr.* 5.5.45. Livia is praised for her *pudicitia* in *Epistulae* 3.1.116. Augustus had revived the cult of *Pudicitia* in 28-7 BC as a precursor to his moral legislation.

²⁴⁵ Ovid uses the term to remind both Fabius Maximus and Rufus of their obligations to assist him (*Ep.* 1.2.146 and 2.11.15 respectively).

²⁴⁶ Cf. Ovid's references to his wife caring for his affairs during his absence (*Tr.* 1.6.5-8 and 5.14.15) and performing his burial rites as part of her *officium pium* (*Tr.* 3.3).

²⁴⁷ See *Laudatio Turiae* 30 (ILS 8393 = CIL 6.1527, 31670, 37053); *Laudatio Murdiae* (ILS 8394 = CIL 6.10230); and Vettius Agorius Praetextatus to his wife Paulina (ILS 1259 = CIL 6.1779, Rome). According to Lefkowitz, "the highest complement on epitaphs remained service to home and husband" (44).

women, as many authors tied these virtues to the well-being of the state.²⁴⁸ Cicero uses these same terms to describe his wife's loyalty and goodness during his exile.²⁴⁹ Their pervasive presence conveys a societal ideal: that the success of a woman's life be measured by the extent to which she supports and honors her husband and family.

There was a particularly heightened interest in the proper roles for women within public discourse following the conclusion of the civil wars.²⁵⁰ Augustus made a great effort to show that the conflicts of the late republic were due to vices of character that neither he nor his family possessed and that he was striving to eradicate. Similarly, the portrayal of Ovid and his wife in the exile poetry is less autobiographical than a reflection of what Ovid wants to suggest about his characters as spouses and about himself as a man judged through his poetic persona. As Pomeroy points out, "the usual purpose of honoring women was to exalt the men to whom they were mothers, wives or sisters."²⁵¹ Thus both Augustus and Ovid fashion images of their wives that support their public pronouncements.

It is important that Ovid characterize his wife as a proper matron because he asks her to take on more than the traditional matron's role and places her in the public

²⁴⁸ Suzanne Dixon, *The Roman Family* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 70. Likewise, women who acted outside of a man's control were seen as detrimental to the state, particularly when their chastity was compromised. Beth Severy explains how "the ideological connection between the health and well-being of the state and the sexual control of women had a long history in Roman culture," in *Augustus and the Family at the Birth of the Roman Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 39. Roman writers extol virtues such as *probitas*, *pietas*, *pudicitia* and *fides* in the women they praise (e.g. Livy's presentation of Lucretia and Virginia, Propertius' eulogy to Cornelia [4.11], the depictions of Octavia in contrast with Fulvia and Cleopatra, and early depictions of Julia in contrast to later vituperations).

²⁴⁹ *Ad Fam.* 14.1...3: *te ista virtute, fide, probitate, humanitate in tantas aerumnas propter me incidisse...si et vos et me ipsum recipiaro, satis magnum mihi fructum videbor percepisse et vestrae pietatis meae*, "[woe] that you, with such courage, loyalty, probity, and gentleness, have fallen into such great miseries because of me!...if I will have gotten you all back as well as myself, I will think that a great reward has been received because of your piety to your family and to me."

²⁵⁰ Severy, 39.

²⁵¹ Sarah Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity* (New York: Schocken Books, 1975), 183.

spotlight, making her potential prey for critics. Ovid instructs her not only to canvass his male friends for help,²⁵² but also to approach the imperial house in order to persuade Augustus to retract his sentence. This would require that she operate within a male realm, in place of her absent husband.²⁵³ In his studies of Seneca, Suetonius, Juvenal and others, Cohen notes how consistently a woman's reputation seems to depend on the management of her public appearance and behavior, particularly by avoiding gossip, which always finds ways to vilify innocent acts.²⁵⁴ Ovid shows that he is aware of the dangers of gossip as he warns his wife to live up to the image he has created for her in his poems.²⁵⁵ He keeps her safely identified solely as his wife, rather than as an autonomous woman, by refraining from recording her name and from characterizing her by anything but the most respected and ideal traits for a Roman matron. Ovid presents her not only as his wife, but also as under the guardianship of Fabius Maximus and her uncle Rufus. Since women of any age were perceived as weaker than men by nature, they were expected to have a male legal guardian in the absence of their father or husband, a public understanding confirmed by Augustus' law allowing women who bore at least three children not to have an appointed guardian. Yet the view expressed by Roman authors,

²⁵² *Ep.* 3.1.41: *utque iuvent alii, tu debes vincere amicos*, "and so that others may help, you ought to win over our friends."

²⁵³ *Tr.* 37-38, *Ep.* 3.1.84-85.

²⁵⁴ David Cohen, "The Augustan Law on Adultery: The Social and Cultural Context," in *The Family in Italy*, ed. David J. Kertzer and Richard P. Saller (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 109-126. Seneca reveals the awareness that it was important for a prominent woman to guard against gossip when he writes of Livia that "she guarded her good name jealously" (*Ep.* 4.3). Anthony Barrett points out that Livia seems to have been able to make herself immune to Antony's attacks against her character by her careful attention to maintaining a dignified demeanor, 28.

²⁵⁵ *Tr.* 5.14.19-24, *Ep.* 3.1.43-66.

that is, elite males, is that a proper Roman matron should always be under a man's control.²⁵⁶

Ovid directs his wife in the appropriate way to approach the wife of the *princeps*. Women could, in a proper and harmonious partnership, influence their husbands, but to influence a male who was neither her husband nor a close family friend, a woman was to engage the man's wife to plead her case on her behalf.²⁵⁷ Livia was known both to have acted as her husband's advisor and to have handled his client's petitions, while also managing her own set of clients, thereby developing "a powerful and recognized influence in public affairs."²⁵⁸ She was the most fitting person to whom Ovid's wife could appeal for assistance in securing Augustus' permission for her husband to leave Tomis.

Ovid grants Livia a frequent, but often brief, presence in the exile poetry. Her presence in the letters to Ovid's wife assists his portrayal of his wife as an ideal Roman matron. As we have seen, both she and Livia are described as the model of a good wife, *exemplum coniugis bonae*. Livia was one of the first women to be publicly praised and honored with memorials while still alive; traditionally a woman carried out her role within the confines of her home and family circle until her epitaph granted a public display for her virtues. As Augustus grew to dominate the public sphere, eventually receiving the title of *pater patriae*, Livia assumed a coordinate role as mother to the country. Just as a matron's role was to be a model of virtue for her daughters, so Livia

²⁵⁶ Pomeroy explains how marriage propaganda under Augustan and Stoic authors formulated stories about the old republic that placed proper women under the authority of their husbands and vituperated those women who acted outside of a man's purview, in order to idealize a husband's power over his wife as the basis for harmonious marriage and thus concord within the state. See also the first chapter of Miller's *Subjecting Verses*; Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*; and Dixon.

²⁵⁷ For a discussion of how women brokered influence with their male relatives and friends while remaining safely within matronly spheres, see Severy's chapter on "Family and State in the Late Republic," 7-32.

became a model of virtue for all Roman women; her public imagery served to promote this role.²⁵⁹ Ovid, following this new example of a public memorial for a living woman, publicizes his wife's virtuous character through his poetry while she is still living. The memorials for both women are careful not to overstep the bounds of decency, fashioned after long-held conceptions of what characterized the ideal Roman matron, a traditionally private role. The two women are exhibited as dutiful wives upholding their family honor by maintaining not just unsoiled, but exceptionally virtuous reputations. Both Augustus and Ovid promote their interests by controlling the public images of their wives. The possibility that they might not live up to their created images, or that they might even soil them, was a source of concern, expressed by Ovid in the exile poetry and also manifested within imperial and senatorial circles.²⁶⁰

Ovid depicts both Livia and his wife as foremost in virtue. They possess great *probitas* and share harmonious partnerships with their husbands, based on *socialis amor*. Ovid says that Livia's virtue assures that no earlier age could give more praise for a woman's *pudicitia* (*Ep.* 3.1.115) and likewise lavishes praise upon his wife for her virtues, claiming that none other than Livia could be said to be greater.²⁶¹ In Ovid's autobiographical poem, *Tristia* 4.10, the poet records aspects of his life which parallel Augustus' own life, revealing even more similarities between their wives. Both are the third wives for these men, with whom they are growing old, and both have brought a

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 152.

²⁵⁹ *Ep.* 3.1. For a discussion of how imagery was used to promote Augustan marriage ideals see Paul Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988).

²⁶⁰ See Barrett, 133; Susan Fischler, "Social Stereotypes and Historical Analysis: The Case of the Imperial Women at Rome," in *Women in Ancient Societies: An Illusion of the Night*, ed. Leonie J. Archer, Susan Fischler and Maria Wyke (New York: Routledge, 1994), 122; and Severy, 237-9.

²⁶¹ *Tr.* 1.6. By using the passive expression 'could be said' Ovid is making a reference to the promotion of Livia more than Livia herself, thereby commenting on himself as a promoter for his wife's public image while seeming to praise her character.

daughter by another husband to the marriage. Thus, Ovid's wife is not just characterized as a Roman matron, but her life is shown to parallel that of the *femina princeps* herself. As Hinds points out, Livia "is the ultimate arbiter of the standing of Ovid's wife, just as the *princeps* himself is (and has shown himself to be) the ultimate arbiter of Ovid's own standing."²⁶² There was no better woman than Livia upon whom Ovid could base his wife's character for the role of matron. Livia herself had been placed on a great stage and was playing the role created for her. Every woman in the family of Augustus was forced onto that stage, but those who refused to play the role expected of them, such as the two Julias, were removed from public view.²⁶³ If Ovid wanted his poetry to be accepted within the new Augustan moral world, even though he himself had been exiled, the characters he created in his public works had to be appropriate for public viewing.

The Poet's Wife as "Discipula"

Through a focused study of *Tristia* 1.1 and 1.7, Hinds shows how Ovid seems to rewrite his *Metamorphoses* in the exile poetry,²⁶⁴ while Rosenmeyer asserts that Ovid is rewriting the *Heroides* within the exile poetry.²⁶⁵ I would add that Ovid rewrites the *Amores* and the *Ars Amatoria* as well. His wife functions as new female *materia* in the rewriting of these works. While we have already examined her role as a replacement for the elegiac *puella* in general, she is also a replacement, more particularly, for the *puella* as *discipula*. In the *Ars Amatoria*, Ovid becomes the *praeceptor amoris*, no longer

²⁶² Hinds, "First Among Women," 141.

²⁶³ The early public image of the elder Julia, which had been developing since about 10 BC, made her an icon of wifehood and motherhood. Once Augustus could no longer deny that she was not playing the role given to her, but was instead engaged in scandalous activities, he exiled her (2 BC). Later (about 8 AD), the younger Julia was exiled for similar improprieties.

²⁶⁴ Hinds, "Booking," 13-32.

²⁶⁵ Rosenmeyer, 29-56.

recounting his own experiences in the role of *amator* as he did in the *Amores*, but using that experience to counsel others in the ways of love. He is careful to caution that he is not teaching stola-wearing matrons, whose virtue precludes them from his precepts, but rather men and women engaged in elegiac courtship. In the exile poetry, Ovid rewrites the *Ars Amatoria* by instructing new *discipuli*, his friends and his wife, in the proper approach for courting the *princeps* and his wife.

The *Epistulae* include the most didactic poems in the exilic corpus, primarily 1.2, 2.2, and 3.1, notably early and programmatic poems within each book. Each poem either begins with, or is preceded by, an account of Ovid's sufferings as an exile. The poetic narrator then asks his addressee, Maximus in 1.2, Messalinus in 2.2, and his wife in 3.1, to appeal to the gods, namely Augustus or Livia, whom Ovid praises, in part by contrasting them with negative exempla. His *discipuli* are to approach at a time most favorable for the reception of their appeals and to only seek his transfer, rather than a complete pardon, refraining from any defense, or even mention, of his *crimen*. Ovid concludes his instructions with a reminder, uniquely suited to each recipient, of the obligation they have to act as advocate in Ovid's stead, despite the difficulties of their case. While all three letters follow this didactic pattern, the instructions Ovid provides for his wife in 3.1 are most like the precepts in his *Ars Amatoria*.

Ovid begins the third book of the *Ars Amatoria*, presented as a guide for women in the ways of elegiac courtship, by declaring that his instructions are not for virtuous matrons like Penelope, Laodamia, Alcestis and Evadne.²⁶⁶ As a woman repeatedly compared in character to these exemplars of piety, Ovid's wife differs markedly from the

poet's previous *discipulae* and so does the individual she must court, Livia. Colakis, who recognizes that Ovid casts Livia "in the role of elegiac mistress" and Ovid's wife as "her prospective lover," finds the connection in the fact that, because the elegiac mistress is "demanding, capricious and hot-tempered," she is difficult to persuade.²⁶⁷ Ovid allots considerable space in his letter to assuring his wife that her task is not dangerous. Unlike the elegiac *puella*, who is often likened to various creatures and forces of the natural world that must be tamed by those who pursue them, Ovid specifically contrasts Livia to untamable monsters and tells his wife that she need not become a warrior.²⁶⁸ In this way he not only dissociates his wife and Livia from characters in his morally criticized elegy,²⁶⁹ but also suggests that, since Livia is not like the elegiac *puella*, who ultimately frustrates her lover by failing to be persuaded, the efforts of his wife to supplicate Livia may not be in vain. Yet Ovid does recall such elegiac challenges for his reader in the very act of presenting such a lengthy *recusatio* and concedes that his wife's task is difficult and that her efforts may not come to fruition:

*magna peto, sed non tamen invidiosa roganti:
utque ea non teneas, tuta repulsa tua est. (87-88)*²⁷⁰

He expresses the same sentiment with an identical conclusion to his *discipulus* in the *Ars Amatoria*: *ut iam fallaris, tuta repulsa tua est.*²⁷¹ His point in both passages is that there is no harm in trying.

²⁶⁶ 3.25-7: *nec tamen hae mentes nostra poscuntur ab arte: / conveniunt cumbae vela minora meae. / nil nisi lascivi per me discuntur amores*, "However these minds are not sought after by my art: my boats are fit for lesser sails. Nothing except lascivious loves are learned through me."

²⁶⁷ Marianthe Colakis, "Ovid as a *Praeceptor Amoris* in *Epistulae ex Pontis* 3.1," *Classical Journal* 82 (1987): 213.

²⁶⁸ *Non tibi Amazonia est pro me sumenda securis*, "There is no need for you to take up the Amazonian battle axe on my account" (95).

²⁶⁹ *Rem.Am.361-2: nuper enim nostros quidam carpsere libellos, / quorum censura Musa proterva mea est*, "Recently, indeed, certain people have picked on my books, whose censure is that my Muse is brash."

When instructing his wife in being a suppliant before Livia, Ovid includes many of the same suggestions that he offered to the prospective lover in the *Ars Amatoria*. One of Ovid's first pieces of advice to his wife incorporates the common didactic metaphor of the ship:

*eligito tempus captatum saepe rogandi,
exeat adversa ne tua navis aqua. (Ep. 3.1.129-30)*²⁷²

He tells his wife that timing is important, as he told the lover in the *Ars Amatoria*:

*tempora qui solis operosa colentibus arva,
fallitur, et nautis aspicienda putat; (Ars 1.399-400)*²⁷³

Achieving one's goal requires approaching at a time when prayers are likely to be well-received, since anxious haste could dash all hopes: *caveque spem festinando praecipitare meam*.²⁷⁴ Once she has found an appropriate time and is standing before Livia, referred to here as Juno, Ovid's wife is to play the part of suppliant.²⁷⁵

*cum tibi contigerit vultum Iunonis adire,
fac sis personae, quam tueare, memor. (145-6)*²⁷⁶

²⁷⁰ "I seek great things, but, however, not things causing envy for the one asking: although you may not attain them, your being driven away brings no harm."

²⁷¹ "Although you may now be disappointed, your being driven away brings no harm" (1.346).

²⁷² "Choose a time for asking, for which you have often striven, so that your ship does not go out on a hostile sea."

²⁷³ "He is deceived who thinks that time must be observed only by those who cultivate the troublesome fields, and by sailors."

²⁷⁴ "And beware that my hope does not fall to ruin because of your haste" (139-40).

²⁷⁵ Livia was associated with Juno in Augustan iconography. Juno was the goddess of marriage and had a strong association with chastity (*pudicitia*). She is also the divine antagonist for Aeneas in Vergil's *Aeneid*, full of unrelenting anger and described with the epithet *saeva*. Ovid assigns Livia the beauty of Venus and the character of Juno and refers to Livia as one worthy of sharing the heavenly couch: *quae Veneris formam, mores Iunonis habendo / sola est caelesti digna reperta toro* (117-8). The reference recalls both goddesses' ability to influence their husbands with the sort of access that others do not have and thus suggests Livia's ability to influence her husband as the *particeps tori*. For more information on how Livia was linked with Juno in the Augustan world, see Hans-Friedrich Mueller, "Vita, Pudicitia, Libertas: Juno, Gender, and Religious Politics in Valerius Maximus," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 128 (1998): 221-263.

²⁷⁶ "When there is the opportunity for you to come before Juno's face, make sure to remember the persona which you are guarding."

As Ovid explains at length in the *Ars Amatoria*, courting someone's favor involves keeping up appearances by showing one's flattering characteristics and masking imperfections, since what people believe is more important than what really is. Hence pretense is entirely appropriate and often necessary. What Ovid's wife must mask is the reason for her need to appeal - the cause of Ovid's exile:

*nec factum defende meum: mala causa silenda est.
nil nisi sollicitae sint tua verba preces. (147-8)*²⁷⁷

Prayer will suffice. Ovid suggests prayer as a tool for courtship in the *Ars Amatoria* as well,²⁷⁸ since it is not only appropriate, but often the best means in difficult circumstances of courting someone's favor, especially a god's.

Along with prayer should come tears: *tum lacrimis demenda mora est.*²⁷⁹ Earlier in *Ep. 3.1*, Ovid remarked on the value of tears in an appeal:

*gratia si nulla est, lacrimae tibi gratia fient.
hac potes aut nulla parte movere deos. (99-100)*²⁸⁰

He later expands on the effects tears may have:

*nec, tua si fletu scindentur verba, nocebit:
interdum lacrimae pondera vocis habent. (157-8)*²⁸¹

Ovid also teaches the value of tears in the *Ars Amatoria*: they add force to prayers and express more than words are able to convey.²⁸² Throughout this passage, Ovid explains

²⁷⁷ "Do not defend my deed: a bad case must be kept silent. Your words should be nothing but anxious prayers."

²⁷⁸ 1.440-42: *nec exiguas, quisquis es, adde preces. / Hectora donavit Priamo prece motus Achilles; / flectitur iratus voce rogante deus*, "Whoever you are, add prayers which are not meager. Achilles granted Hector to Priam because he was moved by prayer; an angry god is bent by a praying voice." 1.710-11: *vir prior accedat, vir verba precantia dicat: / excipiet blandas comiter illa preces*. "A man should first approach, a man should say beseeching words: She will kindly welcome charming prayers."

²⁷⁹ "Then delay must be replaced by tears" (149).

²⁸⁰ "If there is no grace, tears will bring about grace for you. You can move gods with this or in no way."

²⁸¹ "Nor will it do harm, if your words are interrupted by weeping: sometimes tears have the impact of voice."

to his wife how she is to woo Livia with the same precepts that he used to teach the readers of his *Ars Amatoria* how to go about their courtships. Paradoxically, in a work in which Ovid seems to be defending himself against the accusation that he was instructing men how to seduce women and women how to be seduced, he essentially tells his wife, a proper matron, how to go about seducing the wife of his accuser, the epitome of proper matrons.

Ovid concludes his precepts by commanding his wife to offer incense and wine to the gods, beginning with Augustus and his family, including Livia, the *particeps tori*.²⁸³ Ovid closes with a prayer of his own that Augustus and his family be propitious to his wife and behold her with expressions free from severity, *non duris vultibus*. Such a conclusion reworks those of his amatory didactic works. The concluding lines of Books 2 and 3 of the *Ars Amatoria*, as well as of the *Remedia Amoris*, instruct their pupils to honor their teacher as they celebrate their success in love. In contrast, success is not certain in *Epistulae* 3.1, as the poet no longer expresses his former confidence, but instead recognizes his place in the newly reformed Rome. Just as triumphing generals would lose their place to the emperor, the teacher may no longer lay claim to the honors of victory, since all recognition goes to the new god in the pantheon who ultimately determines the result of Ovid's teachings and allows the poet to achieve success only through his benevolence.

²⁸² *Et lacrimae prosunt: lacrimis adamanta movebis*, "And tears are beneficial: you will move steel with tears." Cf. *Her.* 3.4: *sed tamen et lacrimae pondera vocis habent*, "But however tears also have the weight of voice" (1.660).

²⁸³ See the reference to Livia as Juno (*sola est caelesti digna reperta toro*) in note 276.

The Poet's Wife as Intermediary

Not only does Ovid refashion various roles from earlier works for his wife, he also gives her a role assigned to other individuals within the exile poetry itself. As with most of the recipients of his letters, Ovid expects his wife to be his advocate back in Rome. The first letter which mentions her in detail, *Tristia* 1.3, concludes with the declaration of this role for her: *vivat ut auxilio sublevet usque suo*.²⁸⁴ As Ovid's wife it is not only her duty to work on his behalf but also in her own interest. Moreover, she is a particularly strong asset because of her access to the private circle of influence within Augustus' household, a connection which became more valuable as power became more centralized under Augustus.

Ovid's wife functions as an advocate and intermediary not only to the imperial household but also to other recipients of the poet's *epistulae*, such as Fabius Maximus. Ovid mentions his wife at considerable length in the first letter openly addressed to Maximus and asserts that Maximus' status as his wife's kin does not allow him to deny his wife's pleas:

*sed de me ut sileam, coniunx mea sarcina vestra est:
non potes hanc salva dissimulare fide.
confugit haec ad vos, vestras amplectitur auras,
iure venit cultos ad sibi quisque deos,
flensque rogat, precibus lenito Caesare vestris,
busta sui fiant ut propiora viri. (Ep. 1.2.143-150)²⁸⁵*

²⁸⁴ "May she live so that she may support continuously with her aid the one who is absent" (102). Earlier in the poem Ovid remarked that his wife had wanted to follow him into exile until she surrendered to the understanding that she would be more useful to him in Rome: *vixque dedit victas utilitate manus*, "and she scarcely gave up, until she surrendered to her usefulness" (88).

²⁸⁵ "But I should be silent about myself, my wife is your burden: you are not able to disregard her with your loyalty preserved. She flees to you, she embraces your altars - rightfully does each one come to the gods he worships for himself - and weeping she asks, with Caesar having been softened by your prayers, that the tomb of her husband may be made closer."

In *Epistulae* 3.1, Ovid directs his wife to win over the aid of others as well, and to serve as their example:

*utque iuvent alii, tu debes vincere amicos,
uxor, et ad partis prima venire tuas.* (33-42)²⁸⁶

Ovid models this through the placement of the epistles to his wife in the exile poetry: the poems lamenting their separation and requesting her aid often serve as springboards for the themes and petitions he will present to others in later poems. *Tristia* 1.6 lauds his wife for protecting his assets from someone who would have plundered their goods²⁸⁷ and is followed by 1.8, lambasting one who has betrayed his friendship, and 1.9, praising another who, like his wife, has maintained his support. *Tristia* 3.3 initiates an even lengthier series of praises and requests of those still loyal to him, while 4.3 commences a theme of immortal praise through poetry in exchange for loyalty to the poet, which will reappear in many poems.

5.2a is perhaps the poem in which the poet uses his wife most extensively as an intermediary for the presentation of his message to others. While Ovid never actually addresses his wife in 5.2a, it seems clear that she is the intended addressee since he asks whether his recipient grows pale at receiving his letter and if it is opened with a trembling hand, responses that would be expected of a woman or an anxious lover.²⁸⁸ At the end, Ovid asks whether his addressee is withdrawing from the yoke, an image often used in reference to marriage and etymologically related to the word *coniunx*, spouse.²⁸⁹ While it

²⁸⁶ “So that others help you, you ought to win over our friends, wife, and come to do your part first.”

²⁸⁷ *Sic mea nescio quis, rebus male fidus acerbis / in bona venturus, si paterere, fuit. / hunc tua per fortis virtus summovit amicos / nulla quibus reddi gratia digna potest*, “Thus someone untrustworthy in our bitter circumstances was about to come into our goods, if you would have allowed it. Your courage has driven away this man, through the assistance of brave friends, to whom no proper thanks is able to be rendered” (13-16).

²⁸⁸ Cf. *Ars* 1.729: *hic est color aptus amanti*, “this is the color suited for a lover.”

²⁸⁹ Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A New Latin Dictionary* (New York: American Book Co., 1907).

seems natural to take Ovid's wife as the intended addressee, Ovid himself has left the intended recipient ambiguous, leaving no grammatical indication that the addressee is even female, allowing all who read the epistle to do so as if it were written directly to themselves. As a summary of the previous four books of the *Tristia*, the poem reiterates the dangers and toils of his exile along with the pleas for aid included in letters to numerous recipients. In his conclusion to 5.2a Ovid questions what he should do if everyone close to him were abandoning him, expressing concern that he is not just being forsaken by his singular addressee but by all with the ability to ease his suffering. Ovid displays a strong connection with many individuals in other letters and claims to be a concern of theirs, a fact which could allow them to read themselves as a substitute for his wife as the addressee of 5.2a. In the last line Ovid declares that he will flee to the altar for help, which in the next poem turns out to be the altar of Augustus. If his loyal friends and wife will not be his advocates, the poem to them will act as his intermediary to bring the poet straight to the top.

Tristia 5.11 begins as a letter to his wife, in response to her complaint that she has been called 'an exile's wife,' but turns into a direct reproach of the individual who made the taunt and even includes a separate address to Augustus himself. The two letters to Ovid's wife in the *Epistulae* act as setups as well, establishing themes that recur in later poems. In 1.4, a querulous exposition of Ovid's exilic condition, Ovid laments his physical and poetic decline and ends with a flicker of hope that one day he will be reunited with his wife. Similar expressions of gloom, decline and hope fill the subsequent epistles. 3.1 begins a final series of appeals for advocacy before Ovid

concludes the book with the declaration that he will no longer assail his recipients, including his wife, with his constant requests for aid.

As the proper Roman matron Ovid depicts, his wife would be expected to exert her influence within suitable circles. As Dixon explains, “the subtle business of alliance, obligations, favors, friendship, intervention, reconciliation and offence (which formed the backbone of Roman politics) was one in which the socially competent Roman matron from a distinguished family would naturally play an active part.”²⁹⁰ In all periods, Roman women had the right to proffer their opinions on family affairs and have them respectfully received.²⁹¹ The civil wars seem to have enhanced women’s roles as mediators within their families.²⁹² Barrett maintains that by the time of Augustus “Romans were well acquainted with the phenomenon of women playing an influential, if indirect, role in public life.”²⁹³ Thus, Ovid does not ask his wife to do anything that would not be acceptable for a Roman matron, although the public and poetic nature of his request is unusual.

A woman could properly petition male family members and friends for assistance, as Ovid instructs his wife to do in the exile poetry, since both kinship and friendship entailed mutual obligation.²⁹⁴ Ovid praises those who have acted in accordance with such obligations and reminds others that they ought to do so. His kinship to Fabius Maximus through his wife is perhaps his strongest link to a male with significant connections to

²⁹⁰ Dixon, 109.

²⁹¹ Fischler, 123.

²⁹² White, *Promised Verse*, 192.

²⁹³ Barrett, 186.

²⁹⁴ Jeremy Boissevain discusses how close contacts have been important in Mediterranean societies over centuries for getting things accomplished that one could not do on one’s own. Just as or more important than family members in and of themselves are friends who have the necessary connections (*Friends of Friends: Networks, Manipulation and Coalitions* [New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1974]). David O. Ross Jr.

Augustus since Maximus was married to Augustus' cousin Marcia and, according to Tacitus' account, a close confidant of the *princeps*.²⁹⁵ Ovid expands on their ties, or *affinitas*, in *Epistulae* 1.2 and mentions Marcia twice in the exile poetry. In 1.2 he asserts that his wife is in her confidence and that not only Marcia, but also Augustus' aunt, Atia Minor, approves of her. The second occurrence comes in 3.1, in which Ovid reminds his wife that her actions must honor Marcia,²⁹⁶ an act of name-dropping as much as counsel for his wife since the greatest power and influence came from links to the Augustan family line.²⁹⁷

Livia, however, was the ultimate link to Augustus since an appeal through her could potentially be more effective than a direct appeal to the *princeps*. The first poem Ovid addresses to his wife, *Tristia* 1.6, links his wife to the *femina princeps* by praising her as a model for his wife's supreme character and as the object of his wife's reverence:

*sive tibi hoc debes, nullo pia facta magistro,
cumque nova mores sunt tibi luce dati,
femina seu princeps omnes tibi culta per annos
te docet exemplum coniugis esse bonae,
adsimilemque sui longa adsuetudine fecit,
grandia si parvis adsimilare licet. (23-28)²⁹⁸*

calls ties of kinship in Roman politics "a supreme obligation" (*Style and Tradition in Catullus* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969], 87).

²⁹⁵ In *Annales* 1.5, Tacitus recounts a story from the end of Augustus' life that Augustus and Fabius Maximus had secretly visited Agrippa Postumus, tearfully and affectionately discussing bringing the young man out of exile to the home of Augustus. Horace's fourth book of Odes also suggests the link: the first poem is addressed to Maximus and the last to Augustus.

²⁹⁶ *Hoc domui debes, de qua censeris, ut illam / non magis officii quam probitate colas. / cuncta licet facias, nisi eris laudabilis uxor, / non poterit credi Marcia culta tibi*, "You owe this to your home, from which you are esteemed, so that you honor it more because of duty than because of probity. Although you may do everything, unless you will be a praiseworthy wife, Marcia will not be able to be believed to have been honored by you" (75-8).

²⁹⁷ Severy discusses how ties to the Augustan family line were closely guarded through marriage alliances. Such scrutiny and exclusive access to kinship with Augustus "marked his house as separate and special," 65-7.

²⁹⁸ "Whether you owe this to yourself, having been made pious by no teacher, and your habits were given to you at the dawn of day, or whether the first lady, revered by you through all the years, teaches you to be the model of a good wife, and made you like her through a long intimacy, if it is allowed to liken grand things to small ones."

Livia reappears in the last poem Ovid addresses to his wife, *Epistulae* 3.1. He instructs his wife on how to approach Livia directly, telling her to appeal to Livia as a client: *per rerum turbam tu quoque oportet eas*.²⁹⁹ It was most appropriate for a woman with political needs to ask the wives of politicians to speak to their husbands on her behalf, rather than to make a public appeal.³⁰⁰ Barrett's book on Livia describes the role of the *femina princeps* as *patrona* to the state, in partnership with her husband's role as the ultimate *patronus*, and mentions numerous cases in which Livia assisted families who had fallen on hard times. While her husband could be a strict enforcer of power, Livia maintained the image of ever-merciful counterpart. Stories about her influence tell how her mediation saved senators' lives, improved Julia's exilic conditions, and won concessions for Tiberius. As power became concentrated in the hands of Augustus, opportunities for Livia to influence decisions made within the walls of the imperial *domus* increased, particularly those involving issues of clemency as we know from accounts in Cassius Dio, Seneca, Suetonius and Tacitus.³⁰¹

Ovid maintains the virtuous character he promotes for his wife by having her work through the appropriate connections; it would not be proper, or even credible, for him to instruct her to go to Augustus himself. In addition, Livia had the potential to be one of Ovid's most influential advocates, especially as the *particeps tori*, which could explain why he so freely mentions and honors her when contemporary poets venerate

²⁹⁹ "It is best that you go also through the crowd of affairs" (144). Hillard discusses the very real but little mentioned existence of *patronae* in the Roman world, 37-64.

³⁰⁰ This is illustrated by Appian's account of Hortensia's address to the triumvirs in the forum. Hortensia had gone to the triumvir's womenfolk, as was appropriate, but when Antony's wife Fulvia refused to hear her appeal, Hortensia was forced to make a direct public appeal to the men (Ap. *BC*. 4.32-4).

³⁰¹ Dio 54.19.2; Seneca *Ep*. 4.3; Suet. *Aug*. 24.1, 84.2; Tac. *Ann*. 3.34.12

only Augustus.³⁰² Perhaps Ovid also recognizes Livia as a more sympathetic character for his poetry, having once been exiled herself.³⁰³ Certainly, Ovid gives Livia a prominent place within the poems to his wife and strives to capitalize on her image as *exemplum* and *patrona*. Ovid's wife, as the intermediary, grants the poet access to the private circle of womanly influence within the Augustan household, a circle other poets had little need to enter. Through his poems, Ovid can direct his wife to act in his stead, seeking the aid of his friends and the mercy of the imperial family.

After *Epistulae* 3.1, the final poem Ovid addresses to his wife, the poet employs her one last time as intermediary in order to lay claim to assistance from his son-in-law Suillius in 4.8. Like the elegiac lover, Ovid seems to have grown disillusioned with his beloved, but he does not disavow his devotion to her and still depicts her as a pious and respectable matron, only timid and ineffective.³⁰⁴ Ovid proves unable to woo his wife, just as his wife fails to woo Livia. Through her many roles, she has served what purpose she could, if only to maintain the formulaic progression of elegy and preserve its integrity, ironically enough, as a genre that fails to fulfill the poetic narrator's desires. Ovid's poetic recreations through the portrayals of his wife may not have brought his release from exile, but they have revealed to posterity the creativity and adaptability that allowed Ovid to survive through his verse.

³⁰² Barrett says: "[Ovid's] special circumstances and desperate need for [Livia's] intercession must surely lie behind the difference" (193-4). Those who prefer an anti-Augustan reading of the exile poetry could argue that by mentioning Livia, particularly as the *particeps tori*, when other authors do not include her in their praises of Augustus, Ovid is being more irreverent than laudatory.

³⁰³ Livia went into exile with her first husband Tiberius Claudius Nero during the Perusine Wars in 40 BC, fleeing Octavian's forces. The couple was able to return after the Treaty of Misenum in 39 BC.

³⁰⁴ *Tr.* 3.7.11-12: *nec gravis uxori dicar: quae scilicet in me / quam proba tam timida est experiensque parum*, "Nor will I be said to be a burden on my wife; who certainly is as good to me as timid and too little enterprising."

CHAPTER 3

Utilitas Officiumque

Although Ovid continues to write epistles to a new set of addressees in the fourth and final book of *Epistulae*, he announces an end to the elegiac programme that he launched with the *Tristia* by declaring in *Epistulae* 3.7 that he will no longer petition his wife and friends for their aid. In the very last epistle of the set, 3.9, he explains why he has written so many variations of the same petition in his works:

*da veniam scriptis, quorum non gloria nobis
causa, sed utilitas officiumque fuit. (55-56)*³⁰⁵

Ovid uses the same words, *utilitas officiumque*, usefulness and duty, in describing his wife's role. He concludes the departure scene in *Tristia* 1.3 with her reluctant surrender to the *utilitas* of her remaining in Rome where she could both guard their possessions (*Tr.* 1.6.7-8) and advocate for his release from Tomis (*Tr.* 5.2a.37-8).³⁰⁶ He explains the *officium* he expects of his wife in *Tristia* 3.3, where he directs her to perform the rites of his burial;³⁰⁷ in *Tristia* 5.14, in which he exhorts her to uphold her piety;³⁰⁸ and in *Epistulae* 3.1, using the word twice to remind her that by striving for his release she will honor her family.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁵ "Pardon my writings, the reason for which is not my glory, but was usefulness and duty."

³⁰⁶ *Tr.* 1.3.88: *vixque dedit victas utilitate manus*, "and she scarcely cast up her hands in surrender to her usefulness."

³⁰⁷ *Quamvis in cinerem corpus mutaverit ignis, / sentiet officium maesta favilla pium*, "Although the fire will have changed my body into ash, those sad remains will feel your pious duty" (83-4).

³⁰⁸ *Esse bonam facile est, ubi, quod vetet esse, remotum est / et nihil officio nupta quod obstet habet*, "It is easy to be good, when that which forbids you to be is remote and a bride has nothing to obstruct her duty" (24-5).

³⁰⁹ *Hoc domui debes, de qua censeris, ut illam / non magis officii quam probitate colas*, "You owe this to your home, from which you are esteemed, so that you honor it more because of duty than because of

This chapter will examine the ways in which Ovid capitalizes on the usefulness of his wife for himself as an exile and as a poet. We have already seen in Chapter Two's coverage of her role as *matrona* that he commends her preservation of his works and stresses her duty to advocate for his release from Tomis. The focus in this chapter will be on the additional ways in which Ovid displays his wife's *utilitas officiumque*. She is both a character cast from the real world, who brings consolation for his miseries and helps to correct his defamed image, as well as a poetic character, who allows Ovid to exercise his poetic genius while manipulating generic motifs for the development of pathos and the immortalization of his works.

The Poet's Wife as a Source of Consolation

Just as Orpheus used song to console himself after the loss of his wife, so Ovid says his Muse comforts him on his journey into exile:

*cum traheret silvas Orpheus et dura canendo
saxa, bis amissa coniuge maestus erat.
me quoque Musa levat Ponti loca iussa petentem:
sola comes nostrae perstitit illa fugae. (Tr. 4.1.17-20)³¹⁰*

Poetry continues to give him pleasure, despite being the very thing that has injured him:

*nos quoque delectant, quamvis nocuere, libelli,
quodque mihi telum vulnera fecit, amo. (35-6)³¹¹*

Poetry also provides him with emotional release.³¹² It allows him to forget his present miseries and return imaginatively to the wife, city and friends he loves:

probity" (75-6) and *ut minus infesta iaceam regione labora / clauda nec officii pars erit ulla tui*, "Work so that I may be in a less hostile region, and not any part of your duty will be ineffective" (85-6).

³¹⁰ "When Orpheus was winning over the forests and the harsh rocks with his singing, he was sad because his wife had been lost twice. My Muse also lightened me as I sought the commanded location of Pontus: she alone has remained as the companion of my flight."

*coniugis ante oculos, sicut praesentis, imago est.
illa meos casus ingravat, illa levat:
ingravat hoc, quod abest; levat hoc, quod praestat amorem
inpositumque sibi firma tuetur onus. (Tr. 3.4.59-62)³¹³*

Remembering his wife gives Ovid both solace and pain. When he left for exile, she grieved over his misfortune and begged to accompany him before accepting her role as guardian of what he left behind and advocate for his release. Such spousal piety is a source of comfort for any husband, and one of the reasons to pursue marriage, as Ovid's predecessors and contemporaries, including Augustus, affirm.³¹⁴

Through his wife, a part of Ovid is able to survive in Rome:

*o bene, quod non sum tecum conscendere passus,
ne mihi mors misero bis patienda foret!
at nunc, ut peream, quoniam caret illa periclo,
dimidia certe parte superstes ero. (Tr. 1.2.39-42)³¹⁵*

She is his supporting pillar, through whose efforts he has not been plundered by those seeking to take advantage of his exile:

*te mea supposita veluti trabe fulva ruina est:
siquid adhuc ego sum, muneris omne tui est.
tu facis, ut spoliium non sim, nec nuder ab illis,
naufragii tabulas qui petiere mei. (Tr. 1.6.5-8)³¹⁶*

³¹¹ "My little books also delight me, although they have done harm, and I love the weapon which has given me wounds." Ovid recalls erotic motifs in this passage by using the thematic words *telum*, *vulnera* and *amo*. Cf. *Tr.* 4.10.112-122.

³¹² *Tr.* 4.3.3-4, 37-48; 5.7.67-8.

³¹³ "A vision of my wife is before my eyes, as if she were present. She makes my cares heavier, she lightens them: the fact that she is absent makes them heavier, the fact that she maintains her love and firmly takes charge over the burden which has been placed on her lightens them."

³¹⁴ E.g. Cassius Dio's account of Augustus' speech on the Papio-Poppaeian Law of AD 9, "For is there anything better than a wife who is chaste, domestic, a good house-keeper, a rearer of children; one to gladden you in health, to tend you in sickness, to be your partner in good fortune, to console you in misfortune; to restrain the mad passion of youth and to temper the unreasonable harshness of old age?" (56.3.3-4, Trans. Earnest Cary). Dixon, 29.

³¹⁵ "Oh, it is well that I did not allow her to embark with me, so that death would not have to be endured twice by miserable me! But now, although I perish, since she is without danger, half of me will certainly survive."

³¹⁶ "My ruin is supported by you, who has been placed under me just like a beam: if I am anything still, it is all your gift. You make it that I am not someone else's loot, and that I am not stripped bare by those who have sought the tablets of my shipwreck."

Ovid declares that his wife, as one who holds part of his heart, is constantly on his mind; should his health fail, the mere mention of her would bring him strength:

*sit iam deficiens suppressaque lingua palato
vix instillato restituenda mero,
nuntiet huc aliquis dominam venisse, resurgam,
spesque tui nobis causa vigoris erit. (Tr. 3.3.21-24)³¹⁷*

Near the end of the *Tristia* Ovid affirms that writing letters allows him to be with those whom he loves; he can walk the streets of Rome and converse with them through his poetry.³¹⁸ The next poem is a letter to his wife, the dominant recipient of epistles in the book. Through such letters, Ovid engages in a dialogue, even if we as readers only hear one side of the conversation.³¹⁹ The format helps him eliminate his distance from those who comfort him, offering him an escape from Tomis and a connection to all that he misses in Rome (*Tr.* 3.4.73-6).

The letters have a dual purpose: they keep Ovid connected to his addressees, but also remind them of their *officium* to remain loyal. Ovid bolsters his constant plea for help by emphasizing the *officium* he is performing when he honors them in his poetry. By writing multiple letters with the same message, sometimes even to the same recipient, particularly his wife, he does not allow his readers to forget either himself or his pleas.

Ovid does not just ask his recipients to beseech Augustus for his release; he also implores them to preserve his name and identity as a poet in Rome - the only part of him

³¹⁷ “I may be failing and my tongue pressed to my palate, scarcely restored by the wine poured in. But should someone announce that my mistress has come here, I would rise, and the hope of you will be a cause for my strength.”

³¹⁸ *Cur scribam, docui. cur mittam, quaeritis, isto / vobiscum cupio quolibet esse modo*, “I have explained why I write. You ask why I send them: I desire to be with you all in that very way, however much it is possible” (79-80). Cf. *Ep.* 2.10. In *Tristia* 1.1 Ovid addresses his book and guides it through Rome where it can go but he cannot. *Tristia* 3.1 is written as if narrated by his book as it travels through Rome.

³¹⁹ *Ep.* 3.5.49-50: *hac ubi perveni nulli cernendus in urbem, / saepe loquor tecum, saepe loquente furor*, “When in this way I have come into the city, noticed by no one, often I speak with you, often I enjoy you speaking.”

that has escaped exile.³²⁰ Ovid makes repeated self-references to prevent his name at least from being cast out of Rome.³²¹ He reassures himself with the fact that his wife keeps his name alive in the city when he asks her whether she remains mindful of him:

*non mentitura tu tibi voce refer,
esse tui memorem, de qua tibi maxima cura est,
quodque potest secum nomen habere tuum. (Tr. 4.3.16-18)*³²²

Ovid expresses the hope that at least his name and works may remain on people's lips.³²³

Knowing that others are thinking of him, he says, would lighten the burdens of exile.³²⁴

His wife, friends and works all have the power to keep his memory alive and Ovid writes to all of them, including his works themselves, to do so by keeping his poetry alive. His works, as his offspring, are what remains of him in Rome now that he is gone.³²⁵ He complains that Augustus' ban on his works expresses a public rejection of them, even among former supporters; his wife and those friends who loyally retained copies of his works have the task of preserving his poetic existence, at least in the private sphere.³²⁶

³²⁰ *Tr.* 3.3.45-6: *Nasonis tui quod adhuc non exulat unum, nomen ama: Scythicus cetera Pontus habet*, "Love the name of your Naso which alone is not yet an exile: Scythian Pontus has everything else."

³²¹ E.g. Ovid refers to himself by creating his own epitaph in which he records his name twice (*Tr.* 3.3.74 and 76); he begins 3.10 in the hopes that people remember the name of Naso, "*meminit Nasonis*," and expresses a similar sentiment in 5.3.49-58, ending with "*inter vos nomen habete meum*" and *Ep.* 3.5.44, "*Nasonis nomen in ore tuo est?*"; in *Ep.* 4.3.10 he wonders to a friend "*quisque sit, audito nomine, Naso, rogas*"; he also does additional name-dropping for himself in *Tr.* 1.7.10, 2.119, 3.12.51, 4.4.86, 5.4.1, 5.13.1, *Ep.* 1.3.1, 1.5.2, 1.7.4 and 69, 1.8.1 and 30, 1.10.1, 2.2.2, 2.4.1, 2.5.1, 2.6.2, 3.1.3, 3.4.2, 3.5.4, 3.7.13, 4.6.2, 4.8.34, 4.14.14, 4.15.2, and 4.16.1.

³²² "Tell yourself with a voice that will not lie, that she is mindful of you, about whom there is the greatest concern for you, and that she has your name, that which she is able to have, with her."

³²³ *Tr.* 5.7.29-30: *non tamen ingratum est, quodcumque oblivia nostri / impedit et profugi nomen in ora refert*, "But it is not unappreciated, whatever prevents forgetfulness of me and brings the name of an exile back onto people's lips."

³²⁴ *Ep.* 4.4.47-50: *di faciant aliquo subeat tibi tempore nostrum / nomen et "heu" dicas "quid miser ille facit?" / haec tua pertulerit si quis mihi verba, fatebor / protinus exilium mollius esse meum*, "May the gods make it so that at some time my name should enter your mind and you should say, "Alas, how is that poor man doing?" If someone will have shared these words of yours with me, forthwith I will admit that my exile is milder."

³²⁵ *Tr.* 1.1.15-16, 3.1.73-4, 5.1.80; *Ep.* 1.1.21.

³²⁶ For a discussion on Augustus' censure of Ovid's works, see White, *Promised Verse*, 153. Cf. *Tr.* 1.1, 1.6.5-18, 2.7-10, 3.1, 3.14.5-6, *Ep.* 1.1.12. Ovid comments on his works' public rejection and praises those who maintain their private existence in many poems of both the *Tristia* and *Epistulae*, e.g. *Tr.* 2.87-8: *ergo*

The Poet's Wife as a Corrective to the Poet's Image

With the exile poetry Ovid is responding to a real-life event: Augustus' public condemnation of his poetry, manifested by the poet's relegation to Tomis. Ovid reacts by creating a counter to the poetry that caused his real-life misfortune. Thus he uses the same poetic tools that sparked his troubles in developing a new persona to counter the degradation suffered by his previous poetic image. Belying his claim that poetry is fiction,³²⁷ he engenders the genre of realistic poetry by presenting the character of his wife as a portrait of his real wife, the counterpart to his own autobiographical portrait of himself in the exile poetry. This contrasts with his former posture as poet-lover and *praeceptor amoris* and declares this persona to have been merely a playful, fictive representation of himself.³²⁸ This section examines how Ovid exploits the *utilitas* of his wife's character together with the historical context of his exile in order to shape his readers' attitudes toward his own poetic personae.

Ovid blames his punishment on *carmen et error* (*Tr.* 2.207). The *carmen* he identifies as the *Ars Amatoria* (*Tr.* 2.8); he is less forthcoming about the *error*. Instead, he describes his life as a poet before and after exile and replies to the criticism of his earlier elegy. Ovid attributes Augustan censure primarily to the third book of the *Ars*, which instructs women rather than men in the art of love (*Tr.* 2.212, 237-54). Augustus could not have appreciated this work as he strove to foster an image of himself as the

hominum quaesitum odium mihi carmine, quosque / debuit, est vultus turba secuta tuos, "Therefore the hatred of men has been sought after by me with my song, and, as it ought, the crowd has followed your expression"; *Ep.* 1.1.5: *publica non audent intra monimenta venire*, "They do not dare to come inside public monuments (i.e. public libraries)," and 1.1.10, *sub Lare privato tutius esse putant*, "[my works] think that it is safer [to hide] under a private household god."

³²⁷ *Nec liber indicum est animi, sed honesta voluptas*, "Nor is a book an indication of the mind, but innocent pleasure" (*Tr.* 2.357). Other authors also protest that a poet's own life and that of his poetic persona differ. E.g. Catullus 16.5-8; Martial 1.4, 11.15; Pliny 4.14.

moral guardian of the state (*Tr.* 2.234). By the time of Ovid's exile, Augustus' power was supreme and well-established; if Ovid wanted clemency, he had to obtain it from Augustus. Ovid assimilates Augustan ideology into his poetry as he tries to persuade the *princeps* to either end or ease his punishment. He designs the character of his wife to fit the Augustan mold in order to demonstrate that his 'real life,' as opposed to his fictive poetic persona, reflects the values Augustus advocates.³²⁹ By transforming elegy's allegedly corrupting erotic themes into acceptable conjugal ones, Ovid uses his wife as a corrective to his poetic image.

The censure of Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* had begun well before Ovid's exile. Ovid acknowledges the criticism in the *Remedia Amoris*, his follow-up to the *Ars*, published no later than AD 2.³³⁰ He concedes that his work has been called brash, *proterva*, and full of licentiousness, *licentia*, but responds to the attacks by claiming fame through the recognition they bring (370-400), although he admits that the censure is causing him to compose with more restraint (359-62). Yet the damage had been done. The *Ars* not only articulated an indifference to Augustan values of marriage, procreation and chastity, but even taught ways to circumvent Augustan guidelines in these areas. According to Ovid, his works playfully extended themes and motifs from his predecessors.³³¹ The elegists before him had represented a lifestyle that rejected traditional Roman severity in favor of Hellenistic refinements and was adopted by what Cicero referred to as the *delicata*

³²⁸ *Ad leve rursus opus, iuvenalia carmina, veni, / et falso movi pectus amore meum*, "I came again to light work, youthful songs, and I moved my heart with a fictitious love (*Tr.* 2.339-40). Cf. *Tr.* 4.10.65-76.

³²⁹ *Tr.* 2.354-6: *vita verecunda est, Musa iocosa mea - / magnaue pars mendax operum est et ficta meorum: / plus sibi permisit compositore suo*, "My life is modest, my Muse playful – and a great part of my works is a lie and fictitious: more has been permitted to them than to their creator."

³³⁰ 361ff. The *Remedia Amoris* is dated by an allusion in lines 155-8 to the eastern campaigns mentioned in *Ars* 1.177ff.

³³¹ Ovid comments to a great extent on this in his defense addressed to Augustus, *Tristia* 2.

iuventus.³³² By the time Ovid published the *Ars* (his most criticized work),³³³ he was writing without serious poetic rivals and was uniquely exposed to the growing literary censorship that marked the Silver Age.³³⁴ Even if Ovid's writings were completely in jest and had no subversive intent, what mattered was that Augustus, who perceived them as acting against his own attempts to instill moral order, publicly condemned the poet and his works.³³⁵

The force of Augustus' reaction demanded a response. To complement his defense of the *Ars*, Ovid presents a new image for himself in the exile poetry that upholds rather than subverts the social and political order Augustus was working to establish. The first poem of the *Tristia* disclaims a major elegiac role: *inspice titulum, non sum praeceptor amoris*.³³⁶ For Ovid's exile poetry to be accepted back in Rome, he needed to clarify from the very start how it differed from his *Ars*, which the *princeps* had condemned:

*carmina fecerunt, ut me moresque notaret
iam demi iussa Caesar ab Arte mea. (Tr. 2.7-8)*³³⁷

Since Ovid perceives Augustus as linking his poetry with his own character, his wife is central to the correction of his image because so much of what Augustus objected to in

³³² *Ad Atticum* 1.19.8. Judith Hallett refers to this same group as the “counter-culture” in “The Role of Women in Roman Elegy: Counter-Cultural Feminism,” *Women in the Ancient World: The Arethusa Papers*, ed. John Peradotto and J. P. Sullivan (Albany: State University Press, 1984), 242.

³³³ Approximately 1 BC – AD 2. For speculations on the dating of Ovid's works see Syme, 8-20, and Wheeler, xxxiv-xxxvi.

³³⁴ See Richard A. Bauman, *Impietas in Principem: A study of treason against the Roman emperor with special reference to the first century AD* (Munich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1974) and Syme.

³³⁵ *Tr.* 2.207-253, especially lines 211-12: *altera pars superest, qua turpi carmine factus / arguor obsceni doctor adulterii*, “The other part [of the charge against me] remains, whereby I am argued to have become a doctor of obscene adultery by my foul song”; lines 233-4: *urbs quoque te et legum lassat tutela tuarum / et morum, similes quos cupis esse tuis*, “The city also wearies you and the guardianship of your laws and morals, which you desire to be like yours”; and line 236: *bellaque cum vitiis inrequieta geris*, “you are waging tireless wars with vices.”

³³⁶ “Look at the title, I am not the teacher of love” (67).

Ovid's earlier poetry was its potential to corrupt Roman wives. By showing that his own wife took pride in but was not corrupted by his verse (*Tr.* 4.3.48-62), Ovid counters Augustus' criticism.

Ovid presents his wife's moral rectitude as a reflection of his own. Cooper notes that when women are discussed in Roman literature, "their appearance should be read as a sign that a man's character is in question, whether its virtue is to be defended or its dissolution illustrated."³³⁸ She goes on to discuss the importance for any man whose character was being attacked to make the virtue of his wife known as part of his defense. This had been true in the Republic,³³⁹ but even more so as the principate developed and individuals were judged by how well they emulated the Augustan family.³⁴⁰ Fairweather proposes that Ovid includes the information on his three wives in his autobiographical poem, *Tristia* 4.10, in order to draw parallels between his own life and that of Augustus, thereby causing Augustus to feel more compassion towards him, or at least making it difficult for Augustus to criticize a life that so closely resembled his own.³⁴¹ According to Suetonius' account, Augustus, like Ovid, had a short-lived first marriage. The second marriage for each man produced a daughter as an only child, while the third wife of each brought a step-child to the marriage. The third marriage endured through old age for each man, Ovid with the wife to whom he writes in the exile poetry and Augustus with Livia. By mentioning his three wives, Ovid even demonstrates that he has followed the expectation of Augustus that a man remarry if widowed or divorced.

³³⁷ "My songs have brought it about that Caesar would brand me and my character from my Art, which has been ordered to be taken away."

³³⁸ Cooper, 11.

³³⁹ E.g. Cicero's *Pro Caelio* 13.32-18.42, where Cicero discusses how virtuous women bring glory on a house, whereas adulteresses dishonor the men of the family.

³⁴⁰ See Severy, 249.

³⁴¹ Fairweather, 194-5.

Ovid takes care to remark how his wife brings honor to him, her family, and the Augustan family,³⁴² and how, like Livia, she is worthy of her husband.³⁴³ While she is like Livia in character, Ovid makes certain to reveal her relation, albeit remote, to Augustus himself, mentioning both Augustus' cousin Marcia and aunt Atia as individuals whose respect his wife has gained (*Ep.* 1.2.137-40). When Ovid writes to his wife with instructions on how to approach Livia in *Epistulae* 3.1, he reminds her of her obligation to honor Marcia's household, simultaneously informing his readers of this link to Augustus. Such a link could not only facilitate her access to the inner circle of female influence in the Augustan household but also increase her chances of gaining a sympathetic ear.³⁴⁴

Ovid's characterization of his wife allows him to align his poetic content with Augustan values. Augustus' political success was based in part on blaming the social problems during and following the civil wars on the licentious attitudes adopted by individuals such as Antony, who, according to propaganda, failed to respect social boundaries and took pleasure as his goal. Love elegists like Ovid could be regarded as articulating, if not championing, such a way of life in their poems. By 2 BC Augustus had received the title of *Pater Patriae*, which validated his status as the moral guardian of Rome. Roman society had always been particularly sensitive to the moral condition of its women; Augustus now assumed the role of father to them all. Through his marriage legislation, he acquired the authority to punish sexual infidelity involving women of lofty

³⁴² *Tr.* 1.3.79-102, 1.6, 4.3.57-60, 5.5.41-64, 5.14.5-18. *Ep.* 1.2.138-140, 2.11.13-20.

³⁴³ Cf. *Tr.* 1.6.4, with regard to his wife: *digna minus misero, non meliore viro*, "worthy of a less miserable, not a better husband," with *Ep.* 1.4.55, addressed to Ovid's wife, but with regard to Livia: *turaque Caesaribus cum coniuge Caesare digna, / dis veris, memori debita ferre manu*, "And [may I be able] to bear incense to the Caesars along with the wife worthy of a Caesar, true gods, which is owed by my mindful hand!"

³⁴⁴ Barrett, 185-7; Boissevain; Severy, 232-251.

social standing, in place of their husbands and fathers. Initial public opposition to the marriage legislation may have made Ovid feel comfortable publishing his *Ars* and other elegiac works. Around the time of Ovid's exile, Augustus reworked the laws in response to problems within the empire, which he attributed in part to continued avoidance by Rome's elite of sound family practices as he worked to build his reputation as paternal savior and protector of family values.³⁴⁵ If Ovid wished to be accepted back into Rome, his poetry had to fit into the morally charged and controlled environment under Augustus. The character Ovid presents for his wife not only shows that his personal life followed the Augustan model, but also that his poetry could promote rather than undermine that model.³⁴⁶

If the poet Ovid was to return to Rome, he first needed clemency. *Clementia* was part of the legacy that Augustus had inherited from Caesar and was one of the four cardinal virtues listed on a golden shield that he mentions in his *Res Gestae*.³⁴⁷ Capitalizing upon this trait of the *princeps*, Ovid offers the plight of his wife as an opportunity for Augustus to display his clemency.³⁴⁸ He prays that she be spared from undeserved grief (*Tr.* 5.5.61-4). He comments on Augustus' leniency when he implores her to beseech the *princeps* and later extends such clemency to Livia as well.³⁴⁹ Within his poems, Ovid routinely offers prayers to Augustus and Livia, whose divine roles oblige them to show mercy to their suppliants. The laudation of his wife's good character

³⁴⁵ See Severy, 201.

³⁴⁶ *Tr.* 5.1.45: *quod probet ipse, canam, poenae modo parte levata*, "I will sing what he himself will approve, with only a part of my punishment lightened." Cf. *Ep.* 1.12, addressed to the book itself.

³⁴⁷ 34.2. For more on Augustan clemency, see Harris, 243-7.

³⁴⁸ Cf. *Laudatio Turiae* 19: *quid hac virtute efficaciu[s], praebere Caesari clementia[e] locum*, "What could have been more effective than this virtue of yours? You offered Caesar a place for his clemency."

³⁴⁹ *Tr.* 5.2.38: *Caesare nil ingens mitius orbis habet*, "The greatness of the world has nothing more lenient than Caesar." *Ep.* 3.1.165: *sint utinam mites solito tibi more*, "May they be kind to you as is their usual custom."

demonstrates the imperially acceptable response Ovid vows to provide in return, should the gods grant his wish.

In his defense to Augustus in *Tristia* 2 Ovid asserts the difference between his life and his earlier poetry:

*crede mihi, distant mores a carmine nostri –
vita verecunda est, Musa iocosa mea –
magnaue pars mendax operum est et ficta meorum:
plus sibi permisit compositore suo. (Tr. 2.353-6)*³⁵⁰

Ovid calls his *Ars* both *ioci* and *iuvenalia carmina*, produced from a fictitious love, *ficto amore* (*Tr.* 2.238, 339-40). He responds to Augustus' allegation that his wanton poetry has disturbed Roman marriages with the defense that women could not have learned to be deceptive through his poetry because he cannot teach what he does not know (345-8). He adds that his real life is modest, only his verse is 'playful' (354). The description of his marriage bolsters his point. Ovid shares a *socialis amor* with his wife: they both act upon their devotion and concern for each other. She stayed in Rome to assist his cause; he glorifies her in poetry for her efforts on his behalf and makes her akin to Livia in upright character (*Tr.* 1.6.23-28), knowing that Augustus desires the morals of his people to be like his own.³⁵¹ Even when Ovid starts to pressure more than praise his wife, he is careful to deflect thoughts that she may be disloyal or wanton by emphasizing that he is merely encouraging what she is already doing.³⁵² Ovid establishes a consistent character for his wife, one which would be acceptable to Augustus. Thus he makes his poetry safe

³⁵⁰ "Believe me, my character is different from my song – my life is modest, my Muse playful – and a great part of my works is a lie and made up: more is permitted for them than for their author."

³⁵¹ *Tr.* 2.233-4: *urbs quoque te et legum lassat tutela tuarum / et morum, similes quos cupis esse tuis*, "The city also wearies you and the guardianship of your laws and morals, which you desire to be like yours."

³⁵² *Tr.* 5.14.43-46, *Ep.* 2.11.13-22.

for entering Rome, where it could present its author as merely misunderstood rather than corrupt.

The Poet's Wife as a Source of Pathos

In addition to her *utilitas* for her exiled husband, Ovid's wife is also useful for him as a poet who is creating verse for publication and not just writing letters in response to his exile. Ovid has his eyes on posterity even as he appears to be addressing his wife, Augustus, and other designated recipients.³⁵³ Building on his wife's character, he contrasts his former 'fictitious' persona as the *lusor amorum* with a traditional conjugal persona, and thereby fashions opportunities for producing pathos which could not only motivate his addressees to try to alleviate his plight, but also emotionally engage all his readers, present and future.

As a student of rhetoric and a life-long poet, Ovid was a master at engaging emotion and invoking pathos. According to his account in *Tristia* 4.10, he did not make it far in political life, but opted for the poetic pursuits more suited to him, in which undertakings his rhetorical training served him well. Expertly employing expressive and persuasive language as he assumed the voices of his varied characters, Ovid composed moving and entertaining verse.³⁵⁴ Whereas Ovid designated his earlier works as playful *ioci*, written for the reader's *voluptas*, and takes pride in their popularity (*Tr.* 2.238, 357), he presents his exile poetry as composed for *utilitas* and *officium* (*Ep.* 3.9.56). He uses his ability to emotionally engage his readers for more than mere entertainment. Exile lends seriousness to his tone. He invites the reader not to be amused by his supposed

³⁵³ Cf. *Tr.* 4.10 which Ovid addresses to posterity.

self-representation, as in his earlier love elegies, but to be moved to sympathy and action. In revealing how exile has troubled his private life as a husband, he follows the advice of his predecessor Horace who advised poets that if they desire their readers to cry, they must first display their own tears.³⁵⁵

Writing letters in elegiac verse with epic strains allows Ovid to develop his wife's character to its fullest potential for inducing pathos.³⁵⁶ He initially introduces her as a tragic character. The epic-like scene of his wife's mourning at his departure, combined with her glorified characterization in the poet's first letter to her, turn Ovid's situation into the sort of 'perfect tragedy' that Aristotle described in his *Poetics*:

The structure of the best tragedy should be...one that represents incidents arousing fear and pity... [The tragic character must be one] who is not pre-eminently virtuous and just, and yet it is through no badness or villainy of his own that he falls into the misfortune, but rather through some flaw in him, he being one of those who are in high station and good fortune....one who is better rather than worse.³⁵⁷

Ovid's wife, undeserving of her misfortune as the partner of a famed poet who has erred, serves to evoke pity.³⁵⁸ The use of epic conceits adds gravity to Ovid's themes as it calls upon readers to regard Ovid's wife as they regard epic figures like Creusa or Andromache, who also mournfully witnessed their husbands' departures and faced the possibility that they might never return.

Through the presentation of his conjugal partner, Ovid depicts his life as upright, his verse as playful.³⁵⁹ He repeatedly declares that he deserves his misfortune but

³⁵⁴ Such techniques were necessary for the practice of declamation, particularly the *suasoriae*, which the Elder Seneca states were a favorite for Ovid as a schoolboy: "*libentius dicebat suasorias*" (*Contr* 2.2.12).

³⁵⁵ *Ars Poetica* 102-3: *si vis me flere, dolendum est primum ipsi tibi*, "If you wish me to weep, you yourself must first grieve."

³⁵⁶ Evans describes Ovid's departure scene in 1.2 as capturing an emotion more than an event, 37.

³⁵⁷ *Poetics* 8.5-6, trans. Hamilton Fyfe (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 47.

³⁵⁸ *Tr.* 1.6.4: *digna minus misero, non meliore viro*, "worthy of a less miserable, not a better husband."

³⁵⁹ Ovid makes a prolonged defense to this effect in *Tristia* 2.

attributes his fault to an *error*, rather than a *crimen*, sparking *ira* but deserving *clementia*. He is human in that he erred, but he also casts both himself and his wife as greater than the average mortal, fitting Aristotle's other recommendation for the writing of good tragedy:

Since tragedy is a representation of men better than ourselves we must copy the good portrait-painters who, while rendering the distinctive form and making a likeness, yet paint people better than they are. It is the same with the poet. (*Poetics* 15.11)

Ovid suffers even more than epic heroes like Odysseus³⁶⁰ and his wife is greater than the pious wives of legend (*Tr.* 1.6.19-34), having all the qualities expected of a Roman matron, yet to a degree unmatched by anyone other than the *exemplum* of all Roman matrons, the *femina princeps* Livia (*Tr.* 1.6.25-8). It is Ovid's wife who does not deserve the suffering his exile causes:

*non mihi, qui poenam fateor meruisse, sed illi
parcite, quae nullo digna dolore dolet.* (*Tr.* 5.5.63-4)³⁶¹

Ovid shows that his concern extends beyond himself, he also uses the elevation of his wife's character as a means to foster enough pity for her undeserved misfortune to warrant releasing him, who accepts the blame, from exile.

The character Ovid allots his wife allows him to harness the pathos associated with elegy as well. He courts his wife through poetry as he courted Corinna in the *Amores*. He calls upon his wife for aid as someone who is able to end his misfortunes, offering the gift of immortal fame in his songs in return for her *officium*. With a new female persona for his elegies, the poet replaces the former *dolores amoris* with the *dolores exili*. The lamenting nature of elegy, associated with abandonment and desire,

³⁶⁰ *Tr.* 1.5.58: *Neritio nam mala plura tuli*, "for I have endured more evils than Odysseus."

³⁶¹ "Spare not me, who, I admit, deserved punishment, but her who, worthy of no grief, is in pain."

well suits Ovid's circumstances as an exile and one distant from his *carissima coniunx*. The narrating poet makes a subtle shift from seeking sexual fidelity to calling for spousal piety. He demands of his wife that she appear on that great stage of Rome in the role of virtuous and pious *coniunx* (*Ep.* 3.1.59); she must distance herself from association with the erotic and wanton character she replaces so that she may appear wholly undeserving of the misery brought on by Ovid's exile and unassociated with its causes. Her presence lends seriousness to a genre the poet formerly used to compose "*ioci*," allowing him to write the very type of verse that got him into trouble.

The melancholic symptoms of the elegiac lover (insomnia, despondency, longing for death, pallor, anxiety) transfer easily to the exilic narrator and his wife.³⁶² Williams compares such symptoms with those in ancient medical treatises on mania and concludes that Ovid creates "an artistically contrived condition" in the exile poems.³⁶³ He does not regard their mention as literal accounts of Ovid's physical condition, nor of his wife's, but as a means for the poet to persuade his readers that exile is causing him and his even less-deserving wife severe emotional distress, which only release from exile could cure. If Ovid really were suffering from such depths of depression with its accompanying fixations on death, Williams points out, Ovid would be unable to compose such "artistically controlled" poetry. Such melodrama - a characteristic of elegy - highlights the hope, abandonment, hostility, and despair felt by the elegiac narrator. Ovid plays with the emotions of exile as he played with the emotions of love; in many ways they are one and the same.

³⁶² Throughout the exile poems, Ovid depicts his wife as suffering from all of these symptoms, himself from even more.

³⁶³ Gareth Williams, *The Curse of Exile: A Study of Ovid's "Ibis"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 115.

Ovid incorporates the elegiac motif of the death of the lover to dramatize his situation. He casts his wife and his friends as mourners. Their duty is to care for the memory of the deceased poet, if not bring him back from the exile he equates with death. The poet describes his departure from Rome in *Tristia* 1.3 as if it were a funeral and includes the image of his his wife wailing as if she had seen him on a pyre.³⁶⁴ In 3.3, Ovid continues the death motif both by giving his wife directions on how to carry out his actual funeral as part of her *officium* (*Tr.* 3.3.37-88, 4.3.39-46),³⁶⁵ and by memorializing himself through his letter to her, complete with epitaph.

The choice of the epistolary format also heightens pathos. The very act of writing to someone implies distance. The lack of responses within the collection; the replies Ovid feels compelled to make to his own questions; and the poet's verbal attacks on uncommunicative recipients turn his recipients into mere "sounding boards for his misery."³⁶⁶ Ovid is alone. Through the use of the second person address, he reaches out to all his readers, encouraging them to become the addressees so that they might experience the aspect of his condition that each epistle expresses. In this manner Ovid controls how his readers interpret his text. The letters he sends to his wife invite them to become gentler critics and to view his situation from the perspective of his dearest, most intimate companion. In exile, Ovid's wife only appears to him as an *imago ante oculos* (*Tr.* 3.4.57-9), recalling Creusa as she appeared as a wraith before Aeneas.³⁶⁷ Yet as the one who is dead, Ovid himself is like Creusa, appearing through his letters to his living

³⁶⁴ *Nec gemuisse minus, quam si nataeque meumque vidisset structos corpus habere rogos*, "Nor did she groan less than if she had seen both my body and her daughter's on the pyre" (97-8).

³⁶⁵ Cf. *Tib.* 1.1.59-68; *Prop.* 1.17; *Am.* 3.9.

³⁶⁶ Claassen, *Displaced Persons*, 108.

³⁶⁷ In Book 2 of the *Aeneid*, Aeneas searches for his lost wife and she appears before him as a ghost: *umbra Creusae visa mihi ante oculos et nota maior imago* (772-3).

wife in a weakened illusory form of his prior self. By making his wife a pinnacle of virtue, undeserving of the suffering she must endure, Ovid intensifies the pathos of their separation and leads the reader to sympathize with both his and her condition. He compels the reader to feel that his wife, as one so loyal to her husband, must be enduring enormous hardship at having to be so distant from the one to whom she is so exceptionally devoted, while he, as the one who has ‘died,’ must endure the harsh surroundings of the underworld so distant from his beloved wife back home.

That the distant Ovid can only imagine his wife’s real feelings affirms that exile causes him to be out of touch.³⁶⁸ He thus focuses on his own misfortunes more than his wife’s condition, particularly in the final book of the *Tristia*, where he appears to become desperate for aid and sympathy. In the first poem of this book to his wife, 5.2, Ovid begins by asking her if she is going pale and trembling at receiving another letter from him. He reassures her that he has physically improved, but quickly proceeds to describe his ailing mind and festering emotional wounds, concluding with the fear that he has been abandoned by all, including her. Later, in the birthday poem to his wife, 5.5, what purports to be a celebration of his wife’s birthday and a means of forgetting his misfortunes ends up being an account of his suffering in Tomis as he calls upon the gods to make her life unlike his. In singing praises for her virtue, Ovid laments that his exile is weakening his ability to laud his wife properly.³⁶⁹ The posture of poetic weakness exerts a psychological hold upon his readers, begging them to conclude that if only Ovid were allowed to return, he would be able to regain his poetic strength so that his wife could

³⁶⁸ *Tr.* 3.3, 4.3, 5.1, 5.5.

³⁶⁹ E.g. *Tr.* 1.6.30-32, 35-6.

receive the praise she deserves.³⁷⁰ The poems end up being not only about Ovid, but also for Ovid; his wife is the means by which he harnesses the readers' desire for his return and reprieve.

In the exile poetry, Ovid mentions his deceased brother and parents, a distant daughter and a step-daughter,³⁷¹ but his wife, his closest living relative, receives the most attention as she evokes the most pathos and most easily replaces the characters from his earlier works. Ovid employs many rhetorical techniques for provoking pity through the presence of her character.³⁷² First, in his role as a concerned husband he appeals to the personal experience of many of his contemporary readers within the marriage-centered political atmosphere under Augustus. The fact that his wife is back at Rome allows Ovid to stress the opposition between what is and what was, as rhetoricians also recommend.³⁷³ Ovid frequently recalls his wife with longing, each time inviting his readers to form an image of her in their minds. He offers few physical images of his wife but does produce a vivid, emotional depiction early on in *Tristia* 1.3, of her clinging to her departing husband, weeping, and then fainting after he has left their house. Upon reawakening, with her hair fouled with dust, she calls out to her absent spouse. Many rhetoricians regarded such visualization as particularly persuasive, because it could 'enslave' the reader.³⁷⁴ The image of his wife in 1.3 is the only one Ovid invokes for his readers until *Epistulae* 1.4. In this letter to his wife, he imagines that her appearance has likely

³⁷⁰ Harold Gotoff discusses how rhetoricians regarded psychology as more important than fact for persuading an audience in "Oratory: The Art of Illusion," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 95 (1993): 293.

³⁷¹ Ovid mentions these individuals primarily in the autobiographical 4.10. Mentioning family members in an *apologia*, which 4.10 resembles, was considered a valuable rhetorical technique for arousing sympathy.

³⁷² Ruth Webb discusses the prevalence among rhetoricians of these persuasive techniques in her work on emotions in rhetoric, "Imagination," 112-127.

³⁷³ E.g. *Tr.* 4.1.99: *cum vice mutata, qui sim fuerimque, recordor*, "When, now that my fortune has changed, I think of who I am and who I was."

suffered, as his has suffered from the effects of time and sorrow. He gives a detailed description of his own graying hair, wrinkled face and weakened frame at the outset of the poem, but only briefly posits her changed hair, *mutatis comis*, and thin frame, *corpus non pingue*, which he longs to enfold in his arms as they shed mutual tears and enjoy the conversation he thought he would never regain (50-54). This new image, representing the passing of time, offers his readers a hopeful image for the future rather than a mournful view of the past and suggests that his request would be a harmless one for Augustus to grant.

With so little physical description of his wife, the poet reserves the reader's focus for other methods of formulating her image, which he provides with his frequent comparisons of her to epic heroines.³⁷⁵ By relying on the force of shared cultural knowledge, Ovid taps into pre-existing and culturally-set emotional reactions to these characters from literature. Employing his readers' mimetic imaginations, Ovid guides their constructions of his wife's character and their responses to his wife's misfortunes. His readers' sources for literary allusion include Ovid's own earlier works such as the *Heroides*: his wife is like the abandoned heroines whose cause Ovid championed and whom he gave a voice, exposing their stories of victimization and inviting his readers to witness their plight as never before.³⁷⁶ As Ovid writes of his wife in the exile poetry, he again reveals the female perspective on misfortune, triggering a sympathetic response.

By linking his wife with Livia, Ovid also appeals to societal values as he controls his readers' conceptions of his wife and himself. Ovid's wife is everything Augustus expects of a Roman matron, precisely because she exemplifies the touted virtues of the

³⁷⁴ E.g. Longinus, *On the Sublime* 15.9.

³⁷⁵ Alcestis, Andromache, Evadne, Laodamia, and Penelope.

princeps' own wife Livia. In *Tristia* 1.6, Ovid suggests that his wife must owe her outstanding character to Livia's training, if she was not simply born with it (23-8). She has honored Livia her entire life. Having a wife of such virtue so undeservedly distressed produces another emotion that rhetoricians recommend for the swaying of an audience: *indignatio*. Ovid lays claim to indignation from his readers for his wife's suffering at several points. In *Tristia* 1.3, tears flood down her undeserving cheeks.³⁷⁷ 1.6 begins with the declaration that his wife is worthy of a less miserable, not a better, husband.³⁷⁸ In 4.3, Ovid cannot bear the thought that she must endure the shame of being called an exile's wife (49-51), a complaint which resurfaces in 4.10 and 5.11.³⁷⁹ 5.5 assigns her a fortune ill-suited to her character, then asserts that she justly laments her nearly widowed couch, and concludes with the plea that she be spared the grief she does not deserve (45-8, 63-4). In the *Epistulae*, however, Ovid focuses his readers' indignation directly on himself, even to the point of seeking indignation from his wife as he calls upon her in 1.4 to live up to the character he has immortalized for her. Later, in 3.1, Ovid gives his wife direct instructions on how to earn her fame by beseeching Livia for his release and makes himself the one who is not unworthy, *nec sumus indigni* (79). Claiming to have immortalized his wife's good character to the point that not even Rumor could do injury to it, he reminds his wife that, in return, she owes it to him to work for the lessening of his misfortunes (79-84). By making one who herself is worthy of his readers' indignation

³⁷⁶ For a comparison of Ovid's heroines with their depictions by other authors see Jacobson.

³⁷⁷ *Imbre per indignas usque cadente genas* (18).

³⁷⁸ *Digna minus misero, non meliore viro* (4).

³⁷⁹ 4.10.73-4. Ovid restricts mention of his wife in this autobiographical poem to the fact that she has endured being an exile's wife. 5.11 responds to a letter that Ovid says his wife sent complaining that she has been insultingly called 'an exile's wife.' He replies that he is wretched because his misfortune is causing her shame.

now the one who must be reminded to be indignant, Ovid compounds the injustice of his situation.

What Rosenmeyer says about the *Heroides* is true of the exile poetry: “form and content conspire to implicate the reader, and to elicit the exact response Ovid desires.”³⁸⁰ Like Orpheus, Ovid composes song to regain the life for which he longs. Within the underworld that is Tomis, Ovid, full of grief but still poetically alive, makes his appeal to those who control his happiness, the *princeps* and his wife. His song refuses to address the error that has pained Augustus and contributed to the poet’s exile. Instead, Ovid appeals to the common joys of conjugal love, an experience the *princeps* himself was publicly professing for his own marriage and politically promoting for all of Rome. The poet not only tries to obtain clemency directly from the *princeps*, but also, like Orpheus, he speaks to others who hear his song. In an attempt to mobilize support, he moves his entire audience to pity with his words, focusing on the emotional appeal of reuniting with his innocent and devoted wife. Should Ovid not succeed in reclaiming life as he knew it, at least he might get a sympathetic ear.

The Contributions of the Poet’s Wife to His Immortality

Immortality is constantly on Ovid’s mind in the exile poetry. Repeatedly, he offers it as a reward for his recipients’ loyalty and claims it for himself as the product of his poetic powers. Ovid’s wife not only receives immortality through her husband’s poetry but also provides a venue for his effort to preserve and promote his own fame, which he claims to have already gained (*Tr.* 3.3.78-80, 4.10.125-132, *Epistulae* 4.16).

³⁸⁰ Rosenmeyer, 32.

We have already seen him acknowledge that she preserves his name in Rome.³⁸¹ Her more everlasting contribution comes through her role as a recipient of Ovid's letters, in which he discusses his own mortality and immortality.

Taken metapoetically, Ovid's comment to his wife that part of him survives through her proves true (*Tr.* 1.2.42). Ovid presents himself as if two characters. One, the husband-poet writing to his distant wife, has survived the strike of Jupiter's thunderbolt. The other, the *tenerorum lusor amorum*, has died. Ovid's wife helps to memorialize his former self. Through the guise of giving instructions in *Tristia* 3.3 on the burial rites she is to perform for him as her husband, he carries out the burial rites for himself as the poet of tender loves. He announces the death of his former poetic persona:

*cum patriam amisi, tunc me periisse putato:
et prior et gravior mors fuit illa mihi. (53-4)*³⁸²

The condemnation of his earlier poetry has killed the *lusor amorum*. The following lines express the wish that his soul, *anima*, could die with his body, *corpus*, rather than be condemned to wandering among the shades of Tomis, *Sarmaticae umbrae* (59-64). Ovid then provides the epitaph:

*HIC EGO QVI IACEO TENERORVM LVSOR AMORVM
INGENIO PERII NASO POETA MEO.
AT TIBI QVI TRANSIS NE SIT GRAVE QVISQVIS AMASTI
DICERE NASONIS MOLLITER OSSA CVBENT. (71-6)*³⁸³

Ovid follows this with the statement that his works themselves provide greater and more lasting memorials, *maiora et diuturna monimenta* (77-8), which, he adds, will give a name and long life to their author, *nomen et auctori tempora longa suo* (80). Thus he

³⁸¹ See the discussion of Ovid's name on page 114.

³⁸² "When I lost my fatherland, you must think that I died then: that was an earlier and heavier death for me."

responds to the condemnation of his love elegies by specifically memorializing the poet-narrator of those works. Earlier in *Tristia* 3.3, Ovid asks his wife if she is spending her time pleasantly unmindful of him, but he denies that she could.³⁸⁴ By including his epitaph within the letter, Ovid ensures that she will preserve his memory simply by reading his words, since the reading of an epitaph was, in itself, an act of preservation for the deceased.³⁸⁵ Moreover, since the letters addressed to his wife are, in fact, public poems, everyone who lends voice to the poet's words contributes to his memorialization. Ovid further memorializes himself in a eulogistic poem addressed to posterity, which begins with the expression *ille ego qui*.³⁸⁶ In this poem he focuses on his life before exile, laments his downfall without dwelling upon it, and concludes with gratitude to his readers for bestowing immortality upon his genius (*Tr.* 4.10).

The metaphor of exile as death pervades the exilic works, providing "a new twist to the commonplace of immortality achieved through poetry."³⁸⁷ By writing from exile as if from death, Ovid proves that his poetic *ingenium* survives him. Yet Ovid says he does not seek *gloria* for the exilic epistles themselves, but rather, that their purpose is to affirm the *gloria* he received for his earlier works and bestow immortality on his supporters.³⁸⁸ His first letter to his wife, *Tristia* 1.6, while offering immortality as a reward for her devotion, concedes that the poetic atrophy brought on by exile will not

³⁸³ "Here I lie, the player of tender loves, I Naso the poet, perished because of my talent. But may it not be burdensome for you who passes by, you whoever loved, to say: may the bones of Naso lie gently."

³⁸⁴ *iucundum nostri nescia tempus agis?* (26).

³⁸⁵ For more on Ovid's use of epitaphic and eulogic language in the exilic works to preserve his memory, see Habinek, 154-5 and Richard King, "Ritual and Autobiography: The Cult of Reading in Ovid's *Tristia* 4.10," *Helios* 25.1 (1998): 99-119. For Ovid's underworld-like depiction of Tomis in contrast to the reality of his location see Claassen, *Displaced Persons*, 163; Miller, 212; Radulescu; Ramsby; and Williams, *Banished Voices*, 12-16.

³⁸⁶ For commentary on Ovid's autobiographical use of this expression, see Farrell.

³⁸⁷ Betty Nagle, "The Poetics of Exile," *Latomus* 170 (1980): 171.

allow his praise to match her merits (29-36). Later Ovid claims greater poetic strength when he advises his wife to take care that her actions reflect the lofty image he has created for her within his poetry (*Tr.* 5.14). In this poem, no longer is his poetry unable to live up to her greatness, but her greatness must live up to his poetic representation of her. Her varied roles within the exile poetry, based on roles from within his earlier poetry, recall the *materia* his wife replaces. By claiming that his exilic works reflect a diminution of his poetic abilities, Ovid is asserting the exile poetry's inferiority as a stand-in to what he considers his greater works. Thus he not only helps immortalize his earlier works by recalling them through his reworking of them, but also glorifies them by deprecating the quality of their successors.

Ovid expands and elevates his own persona along with his wife's. Although Ovid, whether genuinely or not, lays no claim to glory for the exile poetry itself, he does claim greater notoriety because of his exile. Such mythologizing dramatizes the situation for Ovid. As his wife's character surpasses that of heroines, so he suffers more than heroes (*Tr.* 1.5.57-84). At the conclusion of 4.3, where he instructs his wife to be a model spouse who looks after him by looking after her own image so that he may continue to sing her praises in his works, he uses the image of Andromache. Just as Andromache became the *exemplum* of a wife, noble in her misfortune, so Ovid instructs his wife to be now. She will be the *materia* for his exile poetry, like his *puella* in the *Amores*.³⁸⁹ Employing the rhetorical technique of proffering *exempla*,³⁹⁰ he argues that

³⁸⁸ *Ep.* 3.9. See also Ovid's very last epistle, *Ep.* 4.16, for his longest assertion of the fame he received for his earlier works.

³⁸⁹ *Am.* 1.3.19: *te mihi materiem felicem in carmine praebe*, "offer yourself to me as felicitous material in my song."

³⁹⁰ In *Am.* 1.3.19-26 Ovid tries to convince a girl to be his lover and thus become the material for his song. By doing so she will gain immortal fame. To prove his point, he cites the examples of Io, Leda, and Europa, all of whom were famous in the mythological record as lovers of Jupiter. In the exile poetry, the

the greater the adversity his wife must endure, the more chance she has to reveal virtues that would otherwise remain untested, and thus the greater her fame will be.

With such a message to his wife, Ovid is not only encouraging his wife but also guiding his readers to regard him as worthy of glory as well as pity because of his suffering. An expert on metamorphosis, he turns misfortunes into opportunities for renown. The topos of achieving immortality through poetry captivated him early on in his poetic career and continues to permeate his exile poetry where it becomes a solace for his misfortunes. He presents his attainment of immortal fame through his poetry as a consolation for his wife, but it may also have communicated to Augustus as a part of his larger readership that exile had not actually diminished the poet's renown in Rome, but in fact was fostering it by making him the victim of a god's unjust anger.

Ovid's poetry often expresses an anxiety about his reputation and his public disgrace in mythological terms. That his wife might feel disgraced disturbs Ovid and he thinks back to a time when she preferred no one to him (*Tr.* 4.3.60). He gives his wife literary examples to follow, mentioning individuals punished by Jupiter for their transgressions. Although they were guilty, all were unaware of the seriousness of their offences, committed out of ignorance and self-centeredness rather than evil intent. Their faithful loved-ones, moreover, still mourned them, despite their acts. Ovid claims to be like these transgressors when he describes himself as a victim of Jupiter's thunderbolt.³⁹¹

examples that Ovid uses are Hector, Tiphys and Achilles. Hector was killed by Achilles and dragged behind his chariot. Tiphys was the helmsman of the Argo. One of Apollo's realms was the art of healing. Misfortune allowed these individuals to do the things which made them great and famous. These three examples prove the point Ovid is trying to make to his wife since he has already perpetuated their fame and preserved their immortality by making them part of his *materia* in the introduction to the *Ars Amatoria*.³⁹¹ Cf. Capaneus, killed by Jupiter for his arrogance during the siege of Thebes. His wife Evadne leapt onto his funeral pyre. The story is told by Euripides in *Suppliants*. Cf. Phaethon (*Met.* 1.747- 2.400); granted his wish to drive his father's sun-chariot, he was unable to control it and Jupiter struck him with his thunderbolt. Phaethon fell to the earth and was mourned by those who loved him. Finally, cf. the fate of

Placing his punisher at the level of a god glorifies Ovid's downfall; the fact that he casts Augustus as Jupiter, who often appears in mythology as unjust and unkind (and his wife Juno as spiteful and cruel), invites his readers to mourn for Ovid as they would for the god's other victims.

While Ovid gains the sympathy of his readers through the exile poetry, he does not need, as we have seen, to gain immortality. He has already achieved that by writing his famed erotic works. He reminds his readers, directly and indirectly, throughout the exile poetry, of those earlier works, countering the *damnatio memoriae* seemingly placed upon them. Having already presented a memorial to their author in *Tristia* 3.3, Ovid ends the entire *corpus*, not with the usual claim to immortality for their author, but grants immortality to his wife instead and uses it to remind her of her *officium* (5.14). By emphasizing his wife as the one immortalized, he reveals that his poetry still has power to bestow immortality; but by not explicitly claiming the immortality for himself as the writer of the exile poetry, he restricts his immortal fame to that of the popular poet of playful loves rather than the humbled husband of a proper Roman matron.

The reader is able to chart the poet's changes in attitude and approach to the *utilitas officiumque* of his wife's character over the eight years that he writes letters to her from exile. Throughout the works he maintains her probity as a means of transforming his own image from that of condemned, wanton lover to penitent, devoted husband. She is also a conduit through which Ovid speaks to his readers. By presenting his intentionally public poems to her in the format of private epistles, he appropriates a tone

Semele (*Met.* 3.256-313), one of Jupiter's lovers, incinerated by Jupiter's appearance in full glory when Juno convinced her to ask Jupiter to grant her any wish.

of lament useful for fostering the pathos needed to win their sympathy. He fills the first two books of the *Tristia* with lofty praise for his wife and dramatic complaints about his toils as he travels to Tomis, laying the foundation for feelings of indignation for both her and his own undeserved suffering. Book 3 presents a stronger tone of pathos, particularly with the long letter to his wife describing her duties at his funeral. As the poems continue, her function as advocate and intermediary begins to dominate her previous *utilitas* as a consoling memory for the poet. When the poet names his recipients in the *Epistulae*, his wife loses her preeminence as addressee. His mentions of her diminish as he grows more resigned to his condition, and the possibility of his return becomes increasingly doubtful. By *Epistulae* 3.7 Ovid has exhausted her *utilitas*, and so, with the declaration *quam proba tam timida est experienseque parum*,³⁹² he abandons her. She has granted him the opportunity to recast himself in order to refute the accusation against his earlier character as well as immortalize that character. With her as his new elegiac female counterpart, Ovid navigates through both a real-life and a poetic crisis, ultimately achieving the reward of immortality for both his erotic and exilic works.

³⁹² “[She is] as good as she is timid and too little enterprising” (*Ep.* 3.7.12).

CONCLUSION

Ovid responds to the unexpected outcome of his life by writing elegy, the very thing which prompted the exile he deplors. He answers the charge of teaching adultery through his poetry with the declaration that poetry is fictitious by nature and that his real life is moral and unlike his former playful jests (*Tr.* 2.353-8). Throughout the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*, Ovid presents a portrait of his life that counters his image as wanton lover and *praeceptor amoris* while revealing the irony that now, in some ways, his life does resemble his art. He achieves this with the help of a new character for his elegy – his wife. Lending credibility to his claim and seriousness to his message, she supplants the female characters of Ovid’s condemned works, precluding moral censure for this new elegy. In assigning her character elegiac roles, Ovid belies his presentation of both her and himself as the reality behind his former fictive jests, allowing the continued application of his claim that his work is fiction (*Tristia* 2.355).

By casting him out of Rome, Augustus makes Ovid the locked-out lover-poet of the *Amores*. Suddenly Ovid finds himself on the wrong side of the door, pleading with everyone who could assist him to work for his reentry. Augustus is the *vir* in this elegiac scenario as the man who controls that to which Ovid wants access. Ovid’s wife is the stand-in for the *puella* whom he desires to have *ante oculos*. What he wants, however, is not just her, but a return to life in the city, which includes his *sodales* and unblemished poetic fame. Ovid is like many of the characters in his *Metamorphoses*, transformed by a powerful strike from the thunderbolt of Jupiter for rousing his wrath through their

transgressions. Allusion to the *ira* of Augustus (often referred to as Jupiter) permeates the exile poetry as Ovid, now a despondent poet-husband, laments the death of the playful poet-lover. Initially casting his wife as an abandoned heroine like those from his *Heroides*, Ovid then conveys his lament by representing himself as the abandoned one; the years pass and no one answers his cries to end his solitude. In his final collection of letters, the *Epistulae*, Ovid resumes his role as the *praeceptor amoris*, instructing his recipients in the ways to court Augustus and Livia, most closely paralleling his advice in the *Ars Amatoria* in the instructions he gives to his wife. His students do not follow his precepts and the teacher abandons his efforts. Announcing an end to such pursuits completes the elegiac framework: the exiled poet moves on to address others but ultimately abandons his dependency on his former addressees, including his wife.

Even though it appears that his wife has failed him as an advocate for his release, she has served a poetic purpose. She is the key to the transformations which take place between the wanton jests of the playful poet and the serious lament of the exiled poet.³⁹³ She turns erotic love into conjugal love in reaction to the censure of the former poetry while preserving the basic formula of elegy. She is the foil to all that has brought Ovid *pudor*, shame. Her character does not replace Ovid's earlier characters as much as it facilitates a metamorphosis that seeks to exonerate the poet and his works, lending a more respectable appearance to elegy and winning its acceptance in a more critical and morally sensitive environment. In the exile poetry, Ovid declares the death of the poet of tender loves, allowing the *lusor amorum* to lay claim to his immortality while proving that elegy itself, reborn in a new *corpus*, lives on after that poet's death.

³⁹³ Ovid comments in *Tristia* 1.1.117-20 that his altered fate would allow him to enter his collection of changed figures, the *Metamorphoses*.

Ovid begins the *Tristia* by denying that he is the poet he once was: *non sum praeceptor amoris*. If his readers wish to know what he is writing now, they need only read the title to discover that his book offers nothing but sad things. By introducing his wife in an epic scene, Ovid announces that her character conveys seriousness and tragedy as it represents the transformation of his work from trifling amusements to grave lament. He confirms that he is writing elegy in the first poem addressed to her, *Tristia* 1.6, by stating in its first three lines that his love for her is greater than the love that the elegists Antimachus and Philetas had for their beloveds. In this poem he inserts her into the collection of his *Heroides*.³⁹⁴ He has been forced to abandon her, a situation made more pitiable by her great virtue, which surpasses that of famed heroines like Penelope and Laodamia.

The remaining poems to Ovid's wife follow the established progression of the elegiac format. The initial poems offer nothing but praise for his wife, making her a larger-than-life figure and setting up the poet-persona for his inevitable disappointment when she fails to live up to the image he creates for her. In *Tristia* 3.3, Ovid employs elegiac death motifs as he gives his wife instructions for his burial and calls for her continued display of pious devotion through the carrying out of her final duty. *Tristia* 4.3 expresses doubts about the beloved's fidelity and the fears of abandonment found in the elegiac relationship. Such emotions intensify as the epistles continue but are tempered by the poet's attempts to reassure himself that his wife still thinks of him and is upholding her pious concern for him as well as her decorum. He begins to strengthen his requests and admonitions as she continues to frustrate his ultimate desire – release from Tomis. In his final and longest letter to her, *Epistulae* 3.1, he presents the clincher by transforming

³⁹⁴ See the section "Ovid's Wife as Heroine" in Chapter 2.

her character's model from the *puella* of the *Amores* to his *discipulus* in the *Ars Amatoria*. In giving directions to his wife, whom he has presented as surpassing the most legendary and virtuous wives, Ovid now instructs the very pupil he declared he was not teaching in the *Ars*.³⁹⁵

Epistulae 3.1 parallels the first letter of the *Tristia*, addressed to the book itself with instructions on how to approach the *domus Caesarea* with its appeal. As he tells his wife, *nec factum defende meum: mala causa silenda est* (do not defend my deed, the evil case must be kept silent, *Ep.* 3.1.147), so he told his book, *tu cave defendas, quamvis mordebere dictis* (you, beware of making a defense, although you will be attacked with words, *Tr.* 1.1.25). The petition has changed, however, from *sedibus in patriis det mihi posse mori* (may he grant that I be able to die in my ancestral home, *Tr.* 1.1.34) to *pete nil aliud, saevo nisi ab hoste recedam* (seek nothing else, other than that I withdraw from this savage enemy, *Ep.* 3.1.151). Ovid cautions both his book (*Tr.* 1.1.92-98) and his wife (*Ep.* 3.1.129-160) to approach at a good time. At the end of *Tristia* 1.1, Ovid says he will stop short of saying more so as not to delay the book and not to be a greater burden to his reader (123-6); he expresses a similar sentiment as he concludes *Epistulae* 3.1 (153-5). What his book and his wife are to do and the circumstances they will face are no different.

By conflating his wife's character with that of his book, Ovid shows that, on the one hand, poetry can communicatively act as a person, and, on the other, that the character of his wife is essentially a poetic medium. In the very act of instructing his wife on how to appeal to Livia, he himself does the pleading. His wife, as in all the

³⁹⁵ Ovid says that his precepts are for wanton maidens, not respectable matrons like Penelope, Laodamia, Alcestis, and Evadne (*Ars* 3.15-28).

poems addressed to her, is his literary mouthpiece. Ovid relies on his book, his wife, and others to speak for him. Through his letters to them, he transcends time and space, bringing his appeals into the public domain; whether or not his recipients actually verbalize them becomes secondary. If the only purpose of the epistles were to instruct his recipients, it would be unwise of Ovid to publicize the strategies they are to use, especially to the target of their pleas. Ovid is making direct, public appeals in the guise of individual calls for aid. His poems serve as surrogate intermediaries for his addressees and need only make their way to Augustus, Livia, or the general public for his appeals to be heard.

The advice Ovid gives his wife in *Epistulae* 3.1 not only models the precepts he gives the prospective lover in the *Ars Amatoria* and his book in *Tristia* 1.1, but reveals the strategies he himself has employed as poet of the exile poetry. He begins by stating the purpose of his wife's mission:

*numen adorandum est, non ut mihi fiat amicum,
sed sit ut iratum, quam fuit ante, minus.* (97-8)³⁹⁶

This is the same purpose he laid out for his work in the *Tristia*: *invenies aliquem, qui...optet sit mea lenito Caesare poena levis* (you will find someone, who... may wish my punishment to be light with Caesar having been calmed, 1.1.27-30). For his wife to win grace, he suggests the use of tears, which she will be able to conjure by thinking of his misfortune (*Ep.* 3.1.99-104, 149, 157-8). Ovid often mentions the tears he sheds when he thinks of all he has lost and the miseries of the land in which he now dwells, offering his greater audience, not just Livia, opportunities to show their grace through

³⁹⁶ "A divine power must be honored, not so that it become friendly, but so that it will be less irate than it was before."

pity.³⁹⁷ He follows his own advice to approach at a time when the imperial house is free from sorrow and filled with peace by writing encomiastic verse to celebrate the military victories and political accomplishments of his designated recipients.³⁹⁸ When his wife is finally before Livia, he says she must be mindful of the persona she protects, *fac sis personae, quam tueare, memor* (146), refrain from mentioning his transgressions and speak only prayers in the posture of a suppliant (147-150). Ovid, too, is mindful of the persona he is protecting³⁹⁹ and is careful not to divulge the *error* which has led to his exile, covering the silence of omission with humble pleas. He casts himself as a penitent man weakened by the might of a god's wrath who, like Priam before Achilles, must move his opponent to pity using arguments of familial piety in order to provide the disgraced *corpus* of his offspring a proper burial.⁴⁰⁰

Thus, what Ovid tells his wife to do is what he has already done in writing the exile poetry. On the surface, in *Epistulae* 3.1 and other poems, his wife appears to perform a real function as advocate in Rome, but his wife as a character also has an important poetic function in his works. She is one of the conduits through which his poetic voice passes. The conjugal relationship that her character represents casts a hue of respectability and pathos upon his verse as it travels to his public audience. In teaching his wife how to appeal to Livia as a way to gain clemency from Augustus, he is poetically revealing the strategies of elegy itself. Readers should not be surprised that these

³⁹⁷ E.g. *Tr.* 1.1.13-14: *ne liturarum pudeat; qui viderit illas, / de lacrimis factas sentiet esse meis*, "Do not be ashamed of your letters; he who sees them will sense that they were made by my tears."

³⁹⁸ E.g. *Tr.* 4.2, *Ep.* 2.1, 2.2, 4.4, 4.5, 4.9.

³⁹⁹ See the section on "Ovid's Wife as a Corrective to the Poet's Image" in Chapter 3.

⁴⁰⁰ Cf. *Tr.* 3.5.37-8: *maius apud Troiam forti quid habemus Achille? / Dardanii lacrimas non tulit ille senis*, "What do we have at Troy greater than the brave Achilles? He did not endure the tears of the old Dardanian." Ovid refers to his works as his offspring at many points, e.g. *Tr.* 1.1.15-16, 3.1.73-4, 5.1.80, *Ep.* 1.1.21. For reference to the death of his earlier work and its 'burial,' see the section on immortality in Chapter 3.

strategies, as far as we know, did not achieve their stated goal of recall by the *princeps*. Since Ovid was following the progression of elegy and employing its techniques, he himself and his contemporary readers, all very familiar with the genre, had to know that it would result in frustration and resignation. Either Ovid knew his punishment was final or his letters are further from historical confluence than they seem. Regardless of the actual facts which lie behind the exile poetry, their poetic truth – their programmatic adherence to the elegiac genre – prevails.

Just as elegy survives, altered but true to its framework, so too does Ovid show that he has survived his change of fortune. Ovid's new character in the exile poetry, full of woe and penitence, appears weak and declares that exile has enervated his *ingenium*. Other characters such as his wife and Livia appear as pinnacles of virtue and Augustus as a mighty god. Yet Ovid ultimately reveals that he has power over them all; he controls how they will be memorialized in his poetry.⁴⁰¹ Ovid uses his power as both reward and encouragement for his wife and friends, and as a warning to detractors. History has proven his vatic powers. Because of his poetry, we know his wife as *proba* but *timida* (*Ep.* 3.7). His friends are likewise faithful but *timidi* (*Ep.* 3.2). Ovid himself claims to be a man of good morals but *timidus* (*Ep.* 2.2). All fear the *ira* of Augustus, which pervades the exilic works. The relentless *ira* of the *princeps* and his disruption of Ovid's union with his wife belie Augustus' claim to be a merciful leader and champion of marriage. Ovid shows due reverence for Augustus as a god and frequently offers him the opportunity to replace his wrath with mercy. The more Ovid describes himself as penitent, innocuous, and even impotent, the harsher his punishment seems and the greater pity he could garner, especially from posterity. The poet's many references to epic

heroes who had won fame for their toils at the hands of unjust gods reveals his conscious employment of such poetic powers. As Syme says, “the poet won his war with Caesar” because tyrants “bring eternal infamy on themselves, renown to authors.”⁴⁰² References to Ovid in the works of Quintilian, Seneca, medieval writers, and modern scholars prove that Ovid was able to keep his poetry and his genius alive.⁴⁰³ The survival of the exile poetry actually increases his reputation since we now know him not only as the witty *tenerorum lusor amorum* and *praeceptor amoris*, but also as a loving husband, devoted friend, and pitiable casualty of political change.

⁴⁰¹ See *Ep.* 4.8.47-56.

⁴⁰² Syme, 229.

⁴⁰³ See Chapters 15-20 of *The Cambridge Companion to Ovid*, ed. Philip Hardie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 249-367.

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