RELIGION AND MORALITY IN OVID:

A SURVEY

OF THE POET'S WORLDVIEW

By

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ABSTRACT

This study attempts an overview of Ovid's attitudes, beliefs, feelings, and thoughts with respect to the religious, moral, and social framework of his day. It proceeds by extensive quotation from the poet's works, and these quotations are arranged by topic and theme. The rationale for this approach is set forth in the "Introduction".

There are three major chapters: the first and third deal respectively with religion and morality (using those terms with their widest connotations); these chapters examine Ovid's interaction with both native Roman and Hellenistic Greek traditions; the second chapter deals with Ovid's beliefs about those important subjects poetry and love.

For each chapter and each new topic relevant background information is given, while a running commentary strings the quotations together. The conclusions proceed from what the poet has written, and each chapter has its own concluding section. There is also a formal "Conclusion" to the thesis which examines the relationship between the poet's subject matter and his on-going popularity.

This thesis attempts to add more definition to Ovid's worldview than has hitherto been possible. For each topic the relevant quotations are given, and the relations among topic areas are indicated. Thus this work can serve variously as a reference for specific topics, as a guide to the place of individual topics in the context of Ovid's thought, or as an overview of the poet's attitudes and beliefs.
Abstract

Although the nature of this thesis precludes any claim to startling originality, it does happen that this approach sometimes shows the poet in a new light. Examples of this would include the evidence of estrangement between the poet and his third wife cited in Chapter Two; and, in Chapter Three, the intimations of parody of imperial marriage legislation (in the abortion elegies), and of a female audience for Ovid's works.
PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As this thesis has been nearly ten years in the making, and since the work has been carried on at three different universities (McMaster, Regina, Brock), there is a larger than usual number of people to thank for its completion. First, I want to recognize the chief victims of this extended project: my wife Sue, and my daughters Julie and Cathy. It is to them that I dedicate this thesis. I am also very thankful for the support of my mother Margaret and my late father Patrick McCabe, and likewise of my mother-in-law, Gordon and Lois Peter.

As the bulk of the writing was done at Brock University I am especially indebted to people there for assistance. Professor Viki Soady was instrumental not only in providing office space and timely employment but also continuous interest and encouragement, tempered by verbal chastisement for procrastination and complacency. I am also grateful to Professors Noel Robertson and Frederick Casler for the loan of office space. Professor Alan Booth read the biographical and educational sections of this thesis, and provided valuable comments.

My supervisor, Dr. A. G. McKay, has maintained close contact throughout this project and has made many valuable suggestions. His remarks have much improved my bibliography, as well as the style and substance of the text. I am indebted to him for his on-going encouragement and valiant attempts to keep me gainfully employed. Dr. Howard Jones has also monitored the dissertation’s progress throughout, and has provided practical support in my search for a position. I am indebted to Dr. Peter Kingston for commenting extensively on all
Preface and Acknowledgements

aspects of the thesis, and for his careful attention to spelling and usage, both in my text and in
the Ovidian quotations.

Special thanks must go to Miss Janet Hastie who began five years ago as my typist
and became my friend. Whatever professionalism or elegance this manuscript possesses must
be attributed to her skill. She also quibbles a lot.

I would also like to make general acknowledgement of the assistance which I have
received from the staff of the Brock University Library. I have kept the circulation desk and
the inter-library loan department especially busy over the last several years; however, no
section of the library staff has escaped unscathed. My thanks go also to library staff at
McMaster University, University of Regina, and Nipissing University.

Regarding the texts for this thesis I am grateful to Harvard University Press for
permission to use both the Latin texts and their English translations from the Loeb Classical
Library. My only alteration has been to arrange their prose translations into lines of verse
which approximate the original classical verses. This should make it easier for the Latinless
reader to compare translation to original. It also helps us to remember that Ovid was, in fact, a
poet.

It is especially fortunate for my study that the Loeb Classical Library texts of Ovid
have all been revised recently by G.P. Goold. I have also availed myself of Goold’s recent
text and translation of Propertius in the LCL.

For the purposes of this thesis I have included in my survey all the works of Ovid
which have been traditionally accepted as his. This goes somewhat counter to the present
minimalist approach to the Ovidian canon. (Recent work on the corpus and tradition by
E. Courtney, E. J. Kenney, A. G. Lee, L. D. Reynolds (editor), John Richmond, and R. J.
Preface and Acknowledgements

Tarrant is noted in the bibliography). My reasons for this are twofold: first, in the case of
firm traditional attribution the burden of proof must rest with the innovator; secondly, in few
cases is the evidence so overwhelming that a new approach to the issue is out of the question.
In fact, I hope that my topical-thematic approach will indicate some interesting links between
the assuredly Ovidian poems and the disputed works. After completing the present study, I
find it very hard, for example, to believe that the Epistle of Sappho (Heroides 15) is
inauthentic. Of the traditional canon, only the Consolatio ad Liviam is considered here as
pseudo-Ovidian; and so I give the Nux, Priapea 3, the Somnium (Amores III.5), and the
disputed Heroides the benefit of the doubt.

It remains to affirm that the author is solely responsible for all errors, omissions,
infelicities, and opinions found in this text.
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INTRODUCTION

The search for a generally acceptable thesis topic in Roman Studies led me in the direction of Publius Ovidius Naso (43 B.C.-A.D. 18). In his survey of Ovid's works John Barsby has written of the Fasti as being "one of the more neglected, even during the present revival of interest in Ovid." Barsby went on to point out some areas for investigation:

It is on the literary side of the Fasti that the most interesting work is to be done. The first obvious question is how far the sceptic of Ars 1.637 has altered his stance in an ostensibly serious work (2.3 ff., 4.9 ff.) on Roman religion.

There appeared room then for a thesis on religious attitudes in the Fasti with side glances at Ovid's other works.

I soon discovered, however, that the Fasti was relatively barren of material illustrative of Ovid's moral and religious outlook, while his other works, treated as a body, provided quite substantial, if general, evidence. I decided, therefore, to survey the whole of Ovid's works for their religious and moral content. A potent influence in this decision was Hoxie Neale Fairchild's six volume Religious Trends in English Poetry 1700-1965, which examines in detail the works of many poets over several centuries to ascertain beliefs and attitudes. I shall quote from Fairchild's "Preface" to his first volume (1939) in the present introduction. This, incidentally, will illustrate my willingness to quote extensively in the course of my thesis from secondary sources which cover material similar to mine in a compatible way. Such quotations help "to put the ball in play", and provide a certain stiffening for what might easily become an

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2Ibid.
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exercise in speculation, subjectivism, and idiosyncrasy. Pinning down the moral and religious
beliefs of Ovid often seems like an exercise in nailing jelly to a wall, and I am grateful for
any help and companionship. In Chapter One ("Religion in Ovid") I make considerable use of
W. Warde Fowler's Roman Ideas of Deity, itself a survey of Roman religious attitudes in the
first century B.C. In my second chapter ("Ovid on Poetry and Love") I take some of my
outline from Saara Lilja's The Roman Elegists' Attitude to Women. In Chapter Three
("Morality in Ovid") I find it useful to refer extensively to Donald Earl's The Moral and
Political Tradition of Rome, Peter Green's Ovid: The Erotic Poems, and Jasper Griffin's Latin
Poets and Roman Life. I adopt similar help on specific topics from other scholars.

This thesis then is not marked by brilliant originality or minute analysis. It presents an
overview of Ovid's attitudes towards men and gods, towards literature, society, and nature.
This approach involves quoting and commenting on every passage in Ovid's works which
holds relevance for an investigation of his fundamental beliefs. Like Fairchild, I use "a very
loose and hospitable conception of the term 'religion'". The intent is to produce a picture of
Ovid's soul by viewing his mind and personality through his many-faceted works. The
accumulation of many passages on a given topic will reveal either a consistent attitude on the
poet's part or a clear indication of inconsistency. According to Fairchild:

While a single poem will seldom justify any statement as to the author's customary
views on the subject with which it deals, the whole mass of his work often gives a
reliable insight into the workings of his mind.4

Thus the repetition of a number of passages on a related theme which express a consistent
attitude may bring us close to the poet's considered opinion on that topic. Such reiteration


4Ibid., p. ix.
may bore the reader, but has some point in the context of this work. It can at least allow for a fair evaluation of the conclusions reached by the present author. It also indicates the generally inductive method at work. At best my summaries should flow from what the poet has written. Fairchild has this to say about his own methods:

Some readers will feel that my quoted passages are too numerous and too long. On this point, however, I am incurably stubborn. I like very copious quotation in a study of this kind ... I have deliberately assembled a large body of passages which reveal the religious temper of the period more vividly than my own words could possibly do.5

It may be questioned who or what the passages actually reveal. Do they show us Ovid himself or a variable persona? On one level this question is irrelevant. Ovid, for us, is "Ovid the Poet", that is, Ovid as he appears in his poems. On another level the fact that Ovid off-stage may not be the same as Ovid on-stage also tells us something about his personality. Ovid was a sophisticated author who liked to pull the reader's leg. He was also someone who liked to talk about himself. Some recent scholars have so urged the separation between poetry and life as to maintain that nothing which occurs in the poems can be true of the man who wrote the poems. Thus we can unhesitatingly dismiss Corinna and all her characteristics as literary fiction. Such critics fail to realise that in denying Corinna a real existence they are making a statement about Ovid which is as much biographical as those statements of scholars who maintain that Corinna had an existence outside the poems. On this topic Fairchild has the following to say about the distance between literature and life:

The pressure of literary tradition and fashion, the desire to imitate more successful writers, the temptation to say what one does not mean in order to be thought witty or edifying or sublime—these remind us of the inevitable differences between art and life.6

5Ibid., p. xii.

6Ibid., p. viii.
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There is not, of course, an exact correlation between the poet as he appears in his work, and
the poet who writes the poems. It is equally true, however, that there is a considerable
overlap. Judging between the two is a common employment for the critic, and in Ovid this
involves recognizing his well-known propensity for humour and parody. Fairchild writes:

Though literary history and social history are by no means identical, the fact remains
that in a general way poetry does reflect the real feelings of the more intelligent and
articulate persons of the age in which it is produced.7

While this thesis is based squarely on primary sources, I have naturally tried to consult
secondary sources which offer assistance on these topics. Since Fairchild’s first volume in
1939 the academic industry has proliferated to the point where it is difficult to stay abreast of
work on a major author such as Ovid, and impossible to read it all. In 1939 Fairchild stated:

My examination of secondary sources has by no means been exhaustive, but I trust
that I have neglected no important scholarly work which would illumine my subject.8

In the present investigation I have limited myself chiefly to twentieth century works in English
which were readily available. A book must have an end, and, like Fairchild, I believe that my
survey of secondary sources has been adequate for my purposes. Because my first draft was
completed in June 1990 very little material published since that date will be noticed.

I have omitted detailed reference to the mystery cults of Isis, Mithras, and other oriental
imports, after satisfying myself that they do not have significant influence on Ovid or his
sources. They are mentioned where they impinge on my larger subjects: native Roman
religion; and Hellenistic Greek religions and cultural influences.9

7Ibid., p. ix.

8Ibid., p. xiii.

9Cf. W. Warde Fowler, Roman Ideas of Deity in the Last Century Before the Christian Era
(London: MacMillan, 1914), p. 14: "But in the period I propose to deal with, these mystery
religions had as yet no firm hold in the indigenous people of Rome and Italy ... It belongs rather
The present work aims at a general, and far from exhaustive, synthesis of some main aspects of Ovid's thought and belief. Detailed and minute analysis of passages is avoided unless some obvious need exists. Sometimes I have ventured original interpretation where it seemed to flow from the texts. I have also kept in mind the impact of Ovid on the later tradition, and his on-going popularity. I have tried to provide something that will work as an introduction and a reference for Ovid's worldview. I have, therefore, tried to write in a lucid and intelligible style, and have aimed at a more general audience than thesis writers commonly anticipate. All Latin quotations, therefore, are translated, and Greek authors appear only in English translation.

If this thesis has a distinctive bias it is towards a more leisurely and traditional approach to the Classics. In recent decades many classicists have become defensive regarding the antiquity of their subject, and have been eager to trick it out in contemporary garb. If the literary and ideological fashions of the last few decades do not loom large in these pages, it is not simply that I have not consulted the works in question. I have found that these trendy yet all-encompassing theories (neo-Marxism, structuralism, -deconstructionism, post-modernism, feminism, and various psychological theories) generally attract attention to the theory itself rather than to the material which it proposes to illuminate.\textsuperscript{10} I have, therefore, been willing

\footnotesize{to the student of the first century of the Empire to try to determine the force and value of their religious or spiritual content."

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{10}There would also appear to be a distinct "make work" element in these new approaches. Cf. Catherine Edwards, \textit{The Politics of Immorality in Ancient Rome} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 11-12 (speaking of some standard Roman authors): "We cannot use these texts, these fragments of a vanished and largely alien world, to reconstruct the behaviour of particular individuals or to explore personal idiosyncrasies. Yet neither can we see them as entirely independent of the material world which produced them. While it is not possible to determine the motives of individual Romans, even of those about whom we are best informed, such as Cicero or the younger Pliny, we can, I think, speak of the interests of a social group or sub-group." Such \textit{formulae} conveniently dismiss former work on the topic as flawed and}
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to cite authors who are not always the very latest in the field, and to follow critical approaches
which, in some circles, will be regarded as passé. We sometimes forget that literary criticism
is not an exact science, and that the proof of the pudding must be in the eating.
Chapter I

RELIGION IN OVID

Introduction: Religion and Morality in Ovid

It has long been a commonplace to mention the poetry, if not the life, of Ovid as a byword for irreligion and immorality. W. Warde Fowler has thus commented on the poetry:

Though Propertius seems to me to be the chilliest of the Augustan poets in regard to religion, it is with Ovid that we reach the lowest depths of degradation ... Even in the Fasti there is no real religious feeling: unlike Virgil, Ovid is entirely outside his subject, stands quite aloof from it. He has the spirit of curiosity and the skill of a consummate artist, but not a spark of genuine feeling.¹

Sympathetic critics of Ovid, such as Hermann Fränkel, have tended to attribute this lack of moral and religious feeling rather to Ovid's society, than to the poet himself. It would be unreasonable to expect a poet living in Augustan Rome to be pious or moral. Nonetheless, Fränkel, this deficiency bodes ill for Roman society:

On what religion or metaphysics, on what firm trust or expectancy did that impressionable man, or did his contemporaries, base their lives and their ideals? When we envisage the answer, we shudder to see how shaky the ground was upon which all the splendid glory of Augustan civilization was resting.²

More recent critics have been unhappy with this seemingly negative attitude towards an entertaining and voluminous poet. Perhaps such harping on religion and morality is inconsequential in literary matters. Perhaps (happy thought!) such a deficiency can be


²Herman Fränkel, Ovid: A Poet Between Two Worlds (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1945), p. 90.
8 Religion in Ovid

reinterpreted as open-mindedness, realism, and genial humanity. Thus the lack of a moral or religious scheme in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* has been praised by Joseph Solodow:

It is human after all to have conflicting views of something or to change one's views from one time to another. To assume a single view implies an impossible fixity in both the observed and the observer. We may admire such firmness but we are also right, with Ovid, to be suspicious of it. He liberates us from the tyranny of an "authoritative" viewpoint.³

These authors, however, concur on Ovid's lack of enthusiasm for traditional Roman religion, morality, and customs. It remains to see whether Ovid in this respect was firm and unyielding, or whether any alterations or variations can be found in his viewpoint. Secondly, is it true that Ovid's beliefs are mainly reflections of popular attitudes in Augustan Rome? If not, in what ways does Ovid differ from our hypothetical "Augustan poet"? Third, it will be useful to abandon generalization, and to look in detail at what Ovid says about religion and morality. It will also be useful to look at likely influences on Ovid's beliefs, and to try to grasp some central aspects of the Ovidian worldview.

Roman Religion and Irreligion in the Late Republic

W. Warde Fowler's outline of Roman beliefs in the 1st Century B.C. (*Roman Ideas of Deity*) provides a starting point. Fowler considers that there were four approaches to religion not entirely dead during this period: first, the traditional religion of the household; second, the state worship of Jupiter, increasingly clothed with Stoic ideas; third, an individualistic interest in Fortuna as a principle; and, fourth, the tendency to elevate great men to quasi-divine or divine status.⁴


For the educated Roman and especially for a precocious poet, such as Ovid, literature and religion were closely intertwined. Poetry was an important teaching vehicle and Greek religion and mythology reached Rome largely in the form of poetry and drama. Roman poets imitated the mythologizing of the Greeks. Being patriotic, they attempted to bring their own deities into literature. Thus it is often difficult to say whether a poet is being religious or literary or both. As time passed, however, references to the gods and to the old morality (mos maiorum) tended to become increasingly conventional and rhetorical.

The educated urban Roman was unfortunate if he aspired to be religious. The Olympian gods were inevitably associated for him with poetry and literature, and only too easily dismissed as poetic fiction. Native Roman religion was almost exclusively agricultural and martial, involving offerings and festivals to local spirits to aid the harvest and the military year. With urbanization and the decline of Roman agriculture, many religious cults and occasions became unimportant and neglected.

The Romans, moreover, with their practical attitudes, never were much interested in spiritual matters as such. They were interested in gaining the help and goodwill of the spirits for their immediate needs. Roman religion was largely made up of legal and contractual arrangements to maintain right relations with the supernatural. Speculation about the spirits, or mythology concerning them, was therefore, quite rare. As Fowler puts it:

the conception of divinity, as distinct from supernaturalism, was for a Roman or Italian peculiarly difficult. His interest was centred in the cult rather than in the objects of it ... He did not speculate on the nature of his numina, or invent stories about them; the priests and the cults were there to keep him in right relations with these manifestations of the Power controlling his life and welfare, and there was an end of his interest in it ... Thus it was not natural to the Roman to meditate on the idea of God ...}

5Ibid., pp. 11-12.
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Thus when the original agricultural purposes of a particular cult became unimportant it is not surprising that many urban Romans lost their interest in its ceremonies, and its deities.

Besides this, most educated Romans had a deep prejudice against foreign cults, as potentially dangerous to the state. These were, moreover, the superstitions of inferior peoples, who were now subject to mighty Rome. So unable to use or accept his own native religion and unwilling to adopt the beliefs of other people, the educated urban Roman was a surprisingly irreligious being. The forms of state religion were, of course, adhered to, but they were for the benefit of the populace, and the continuity of a successful tradition. Jerome Carcopino points out, how, at a later date, the apparently pious utterances of Juvenal, Tacitus, and Pliny the Younger reveal in fact very little interest in the gods as such. ⁶

Roman irreligion dates back at least to the Second Punic War when native deities and cults seemed powerless to help the Romans against Carthage, and foreign cults were introduced as a result. Materialism, following upon military success, the decline of agriculture, the introduction of sceptical Greek philosophy and literature, and class conflict and social upheaval were among the factors which led to the decline of popular religion. State worship itself was tainted by blatant manipulation for private political ends. By the time of Caesar and Cicero the Roman upper classes seem to be largely uninterested in religion as a personal and private matter. As Fowler points out:

In the whole mass ... of the Ciceronian correspondence, there is hardly anything to show that Cicero and his friends, and therefore, as we may presume, the average educated man of the day, were affected in their thinking or their conduct by any sense of dependence on, or responsibility to, a Supreme Being. ⁷

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If, however, as Fowler says, we put aside the English word "religion" and use the Latin

religio, we do find evidences of this. This word, according to Fowler:

meant primarily awe, nervousness, scruple—much the same in fact as that feeling
which in these days we call superstition; and secondarily [it meant] the means taken,
under the authority of the State, to quiet such feelings by the performance of rites
meant to propitiate the gods ...

If, then, the educated urban Roman seems to care little for Jupiter and Juno, Robigus and

Terminus, or Isis and Serapis, he does have considerable interest in dreams, omens, portents,
astrology, the uncanny, ghosts, and "things that go bump in the night". To some extent,
superstition and occult interests seem to have filled the void left by scepticism. And, as
Fowler has said, the Roman was always more interested in supernatural manifestations than in
particular deities. Thus in describing the religion of Sulla as "a mixture of scepticism and
superstition", W. R. Halliday to some extent sums up the religious ideas of many an educated
urban Roman. Lucretius also noted this tendency in the Romans, as Fowler points out:

As Lucretius mockingedly said, even those who think and speak with contempt of the
gods will in moments of trouble slay black sheep and sacrifice them to the Manes.

This inconsistency appears to be especially marked in the Roman character.

Roman Household Religion

The aspect of native religion least affected by the decline of the agricultural cults was the
religion of the household. The early Roman home was centred around the hearth, and the
spirit of the fire was Vesta. Closely associated with Vesta, were the Penates, the spirits of the

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8Ibid.

9William Reginald Halliday, Lectures on the History of Roman Religion: From Numa to

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storeroom, which was usually located close to the hearth. The guardian spirits of the house were the Lares, originally perhaps protectors of the fields and crops, but later brought into the house. The Lar familiaris was in particular the spirit which protected the household. The Genius was the spiritual double of the head of the household (pater familias). It represented the vital and procreative force of the father, and was originally thought of as being born and dying with him. The corresponding spirit for the mother of the family was the Juno. Of great importance also were the spirits of the dead of the family, the di parentum or di Manes, who were offered food at the grave from time to time.

The religion of the household also provided the central aspects of state religion, and so the two reinforced each other. Just as the family hearth and fire were tended by the daughters of the family, so the fire in the temple of Vesta was tended by the Vestal virgins, daughters of leading Roman families. As the pater familias performed the household ceremonies, so at Rome the king (originally) and later a leading statesman as pontifex maximus or rex sacrorum performed the ceremonies for the state. The state had its public Lares and Penates, and the welfare of the di Manes was also a matter of concern.

The household ceremonies were a normal part of everyday life, and the sons and daughters of the family grew up with them. It is not surprising, therefore, that we find more interest and affection for these spirits than for other deities. As Fowler indicates:

this residence in the house, like that of the numina later on in the State, implied a friendly and benevolent character, in contrast to the very doubtful attitude of the wilder spirits beyond the house and its land.\footnote{Fowler, Roman Ideas of Deity, pp. 15-16.}
When these powers (numina) of the household were later portrayed in human form, they were usually given a cheerful and benevolent appearance. D. G. Orr thus describes the Lares of the painted shrines at Pompeii:

In all the paintings on the Lararia at Pompeii with one possible exception, the Lares are portrayed as two happy beings in dancing poses with brimming rhyta clasped in their hands, giving an impression of mirth and gaiety.\textsuperscript{12}

Even here there is a doubt about the emotional power of household religion at the time of Ovid and afterwards. The Augustan religious reforms certainly gave new prominence to the household deities, and Augustus, no doubt, encouraged literary men to emphasize the traditional numina of Rome. Vergil's Aeneid pointedly connects the Lares and Penates with the household gods which Aeneas brought from Troy. Augustus revived the urban worship of the Lares of the Crossroads at Roman street-corners. As Halliday writes:

Augustus now reorganized Rome into fourteen regions, each of which was subdivided into vici. He revived the collegia compitum and at the junctions of the boundaries of these subdivisions were erected shrines containing three images. Two represented the Lares; the third associated with them was the Genius of Augustus. The third partner in this triad naturally predominated in popular estimation and the three became known as Lares Augusti.\textsuperscript{13}

The representation of the Genius flanked by Lares is the standard one at Pompeii, and it may be that the public cult influenced private worship. It is true, however, that all the houses at Pompeii appear to have household shrines, although certain deities, notably the Penates, were only worshipped publicly there.\textsuperscript{14} It may be that the continuity of storehouse supplies was no longer a major concern in the private life of the affluent.

\textsuperscript{12}David Gerald Orr, "Roman Domestic Religion: A Study of the Roman Household Deities and Their Shrines at Pompeii and Herculaneum" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Maryland, 1972), p. 25.

\textsuperscript{13}Halliday, Lectures on Roman Religion, p. 176.

\textsuperscript{14}Orr, "Roman Domestic Religion", p. 43.
Fowler notes that the domestic spirits do not figure largely in private inscriptions, but he understands this to mean that their help and benevolence were taken for granted.\textsuperscript{15} Judson Allen Tolman, Jr. expresses surprise at the rarity of reference to Lares and Penates in Roman epitaphs (only four mentions of the Penates, and nine of the Lares). The di Manes, however, are understandably prominent with over 125 references.\textsuperscript{16} The lack of concern with household religion in Latin authors generally is also a bit surprising, but may be partly accounted for by the familiarity of the subject. Nonetheless it does raise the question whether the preoccupation with household worship which we find in the poet Tibullus may not be more poetic than religious.

The Household Gods in Catullus, Tibullus, Propertius, and Ovid

Although Tibullus seems to have a deep feeling for his ancestral Lares and for traditional worship, he may also be investing the old Roman religion with a romantic glow in a way analogous to Vergil. The two interests (poetry and religion) are not mutually exclusive, but for most Roman writers poetry appears to be the stronger motive. Since, for the Roman, agriculture and religion go together, Tibullus' attraction to his paternal acres is a mark of his interest in Roman rite and ceremony. No strictly urban writer dwells on the native religion at such length, least of all Tibullus' younger contemporary and imitator, Ovid. Tibullus himself somewhat undercuts his professions of esteem for the Lares when he says that he would sell them at his mistress's bidding (Tib. II.4.53-54):

\textsuperscript{15}Fowler, \textit{Roman Ideas of Deity}, p. 15.

quin etiam, sedes iubeat si vendere avitas,
ite sub imperium sub titulumque, Lares.

Yea, if she bid me sell the home of my forefathers,
Then, gods of the household, ye must stoop to be labelled at her word.

Significantly, Ovid imitates this cynical passage (Rem. Am. 301-302), but not the more
romantic attachment to the Lares in Tibullus.

For some time before Ovid the Lares and Penates had been a poetical synonym for “home”
in Roman poetry. At one time perhaps the household gods were thought more significant than
the house itself, but this no longer seems to be the case. A famous passage from Catullus
indicates the synonymous use of “lar” (Cat. XXXI.7-10):

\[
\begin{align*}
o quid solutis est beatus curis, 
\text{cum mens onus reponit, ac peregrino} 
\text{labore fessi venimus larem ad nostrum} 
\text{desideratoque acquiescimus lecto?}
\end{align*}
\]

Ah, what is more blessed than to put cares away,
When the mind lays by its burden, and, tired
With labour of far travel, we have come to our own home
And rest on the couch we longed for?

Here “larem ad nostrum” is translated “to our own home”, and it is not clear that it means
much more. Although Tibullus makes much of the Lares, Ovid’s closer contemporary
Propertius appears mostly to use them slightly and poetically. Propertius is aware of the
efforts by Augustus and Vergil to connect the Roman Lares and Penates with Aeneas and Troy
and refers briefly to this notion (IV.1.39). The same idea had been referred to at greater
length by Tibullus (II.5.19-22,39-42). The only lines in Propertius which show traditional
personal interest in the household gods are II.30A.21-22; III.3.11; and IV.3.53-54.

Ovid follows Propertius in generally using the household gods as synonyms for home (cf.
Prop. IV.1.128; IV.8.50; and IV.10.18). As with Propertius’ Book Four, Ovid discusses the
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Lares in an antiquarian manner when the subject of Roman religion arises (Fasti II.615-616,631-634; V.129-146; VI.791-792). The most genial of these passages is about the family festival of Caristia in February (II.631-634):

\[
\text{dis generis date tura boni (Concordia fertur}
\]
\[
\text{illa praecipue mitis adesse die)}
\]
\[
\text{et libate dapes, ut, grati pignus honoris,}
\]
\[
\text{nutrit incinctos missa patella Lares.}
\]

Give incense to the family gods, ye virtuous ones (on that day above all others Concord is said to lend her gentle presence);
And offer food, that the Lares, in their gilt-up robes,
May feed at the platter presented to them as a pledge of the homage that they love.

The few passages in the Amores which refer to the household gods are slight (i.e., Am.
I.8.113-114; Am. II.11.7-8). The Heroides have an interesting passage in which the connection between pious Aeneas and the household gods is brought into question. Dido scolds Aeneas for his unfaithfulness and impiety (Her. VII.129-132):

\[
\text{pone deos et quae tangendo sacra profanas!}
\]
\[
\text{non bene caelestis inopia dextra colit.}
\]
\[
\text{si tu cultor cras elapsis igne futurus,}
\]
\[
\text{paenitet elapsos ignibus esse deos.}
\]

Lay down those gods and sacred things; your touch profanes them!
It is not well for an impious right hand to worship the dwellers in the sky.
If 'twas fated for you to worship the gods that escaped the fires,
The gods regret that they escaped the fires.

This is a clever attack on the official myth of Roman origins. Generally, however, Ovid avoids the subject—completely in the Ars Amatoria and almost so in the Remedia Amoris.

The allusion here to leaving home as a way of ending a love affair foreshadows Ovid's own experiences in the exile poetry (Rem. Am. 237-240):

\[
\text{forsitan a Laribus patriis exire pigebit:}
\]
\[
\text{sed tamen exibis: deinde redire voles;}
\]
\[
\text{nee te Lar patrius, sed amor revocabit amicae,}
\]
\[
\text{praetendens culpae splendidia verba tuae.}
\]
Perchance 'twill irk you to leave your home and country;  
Yet leave it you will: and then you will wish to return;  
But it will not be your home and country, but the love of your mistress that calls  
you back,  
Cloaking your weakness in grand words.

The Metamorphoses have little to add. Book One has Jupiter’s condemnation of Lycaon  
and his household gods, when Lycaon offered him human flesh (I.230-231):

quod simul inposuit mensis, ego vindice flamma  
in domino dignos everti tecta penates;

But no sooner had he placed these before me on the table than I, with my  
avenging bolt,  
Brought the house down upon its household gods, gods worthy of such a master.

This negative reference to the Penates is rather rare in poetry, although in life the household  
gods were sometimes blamed for disaster and troubles.\textsuperscript{17} Ovid’s account of Pentheus and  
Dionysius and the founding of Thebes reflects the Aeneid. Pentheus urges the Theban elders  
to resist Dionysius (III.538-540):

vosne, senes, mirer, qui longa per aequora vecti  
hac Tyron, hac profugos posuistis sede penates,  
nunc sinitis sine Marte capi?

You, ye elders, should I give you praise, who sailed the long reaches of the sea  
And planted here your Tyre, here your wandering Penates,  
And who now permit them to be taken without a struggle?

Other notices are chiefly synonymous or conventional as when, in his concluding prayer for  
Augustus, Ovid refers to his household gods (XV.864).

In his picture of the palaces of the gods along the Milky Way Ovid is able to score a  
humorous point with his synonymous use of "Penates" (Met. I.173-174):

hac parte potentes  
caelicolae clarique suos posuere penates;

\textsuperscript{17}E.g., Suet. Gaius V.
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In this neighbourhood the illustrious
And strong heaven-dwellers have placed their household gods.

Here the primary meaning of *penates* is "homes", but the word conjures up the incongruous
picture of the great gods having their own little shrines and household gods.

The Household Gods in Ovid's Poems From Exile

Ovid was exiled by Augustus partly for the immorality and irreligion of his poetry. In the
exile poetry then Ovid, pleading for recall, had a special motive to treat with tenderness those
cults, such as the household ones, which Augustus particularly favoured. At the same time
any feeling which Ovid had for his home, its shrine, and its ceremonies may have been
intensified by exile. The utilitarian nature of the exile poetry makes an assessment of the
personal feeling behind the religious utterances problematic, but the increase of references is
welcome. Fowler noticed the problem in *Tristia* I.3.31-34, where Ovid, about to go into exile,
pleads with the gods of Rome to intercede on his behalf:

There is one passage of real feeling in Ovid about the gods. It is at the beginning of
the *Tristia*, where he bids farewell to the city on his way to exile. The beauty of the
Ovidian art is here at last combined with real feeling—I remember how deeply it
affected me at a very tender age—for the divine as well as the human inhabitants of the
city:

numina vicinis habitantia sedibus, inquam,
iamque oculis nunquam templam videnda meis,
dique relinquendi, quos urbs tenet alta Quirini,
este salutati tempus in omne mihi.

[I prayed: "Ye deities that dwell nearby
And ye temples never henceforth to be seen by my eyes,
Ye gods of this lofty city of Quirinus, whom I must leave,
Receive from me this my salutation for all time!"]
Yet almost directly afterwards these gods were prayed to intercede with Augustus (caelestis vid)—and after all, the lines now leave an odd taste in my mouth.¹⁸

Ovid himself tells us (e.g., Pont. III.9.37-46) that his goal in writing is release from exile. We may reasonably expect then that he will present his ideas on religion and morality in a way that he hopes will be acceptable to Augustus. Yet those things associated with Rome—including Roman religion—will now have a special meaning for him.

It was perhaps more convincing to represent the piety rather of his wife than of himself, so following his prayer to the gods, he portrays his wife as falling down before the family altar (Tr. I.3.41-46):

hic prece adoravi superos ego, pluribus uxor,
singultu medios impediens sonos,
illa etiam ante Lares passis adstrata capillis
contigit extinctos ore tremente focos,
multaque in aversos effudit verba Penates
pro deplorato non valitura viro.

With such prayer as this I appealed to the gods, my wife with many more,
The sobs interrupting her cries half uttered.
She even cast herself with flowing hair before the Lares,
Touching the cold hearth with quivering lips
And pouring forth to the estranged Penates many words
Not destined to avail the spouse she mourned.

This is perhaps the closest thing to a statement of domestic religion in Ovid's household that we have. The implication is that Ovid's wife was a regular observer of the household cults, although the passage may represent rather her response to a critical situation. For Ovid too the old synonym of "household gods equal home" becomes more potent now. He describes himself (I. 95) as leaving his desertos ... Penates ("the deserted Penates"), and such references now become more common in his verse.

¹⁸Fowler, Roman Ideas, p. 156. The English translation is inserted for Tr. I.3.31-34.
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The letters from exile are naturally devoted to the dreadfulness of exile and the blessedness of home. Ovid compares his plight unfavourably to the wanderings of Odysseus (Tr. I.5.79-84):

adde, quod illius pars maxima ficta laborum,
ponitur in nostris fabula nulla malis.
denique quaesitos tetigit tandem ille Penates,
quaeque diu petiti, contigit arva tamen:
at mihi perpetuo patria tellure carendum est,
ni fuerit laesi mollior ira dei.

Moreover, the largest part of his labours is fiction;
In my woes no myth resides.
And finally—he did reach the home of his quest,
Attaining the fields he long had sought.
But I must be forever deprived of my native land,
Unless the wrath of the injured god be softened.

In another passage Ovid requests that the shores of the Black Sea will not be his permanent home, but only a temporary domicile (Tr. III.12.51-54):

ci mihi, iamne domus Scythico Nasonis in orbe est?
iamque tuum mihi das pro Lare, Ponte, solum?
di facile ut Caesar non hic penetrale domunque,
hospitium poenae sed velit esse meae.

Ah me! is Naso's home now in the Scythian world,
And dost thou, Pontus, assign me thy soil as an abode?
Ye gods, give Caesar the will that not here may be my hearth and home
But only the hostelry of my punishment!

The idea of home had very strong emotional attachments for the Roman, and Ovid's love of Rome was exceptionally strong. Perhaps in deference to Augustus he envisages home more in terms of a country estate than an urban dwelling (Tr. IV.8.5-12):

nunc erat, ut posito deberem fine laborum
vivere, me nullo sollicitante metu.
quaeque meae semper placuerunt oitia menti
carpere et in studiis molliter esse meis,
et parvam celebrare domum veteresque Penates
et quae nunc domino nara paterna carent,
inque sinu dominac carisque sodalibus inque
securus patria consensuisset mea.

Now 'twere time that I should of right cease my toils
And live with no harassing fears,
To enjoy the leisure that always pleased my taste,
Comfortably engaged in my pursuits,
Devoting myself to my humble house and its old Penates,
The paternal fields that are now bereft of their master,
Peacefully growing old in my lady's embrace,
Among my dear comrades and in my native land.

This passage is very Tibullan in its pastoral qualities, and very different from Ovid's usual
pre-exilic meditations. It is quite likely that Ovid did have "paternal acres" (rura patera), but
this is a rare reference to them (see also Pont. I.8.39-50). The mention of his "old Penates"
(veteres Penates) adds a new note of geniality to Ovid's religious references. The same genial
tone, along with a touch of pathos, is found elsewhere in the same poem, where Ovid applies
the analogy of the army veteran to himself (21-22):

miles ubi emeritis non est satis utilis annis,
opit ad antiquos, quae tulit, arma Lars.

When the soldier after years of service is no longer useful,
He lays the arms he has borne before the good old Lars.

There is also pathos in Ovid's description of the settlers around Tomis taken from their homes
by the Cetic raiders (Tr. III.10.61-62):

pars agit tur vinctis post tegum capit lacertis,
respeciens frustra rura Larumque suum:

Some are driven, with arms bound behind them, into captivity,
Gazing back in vain upon their farms and their homes ...

Exile threw Ovid on the mercies of men of influence at Rome, and he did his best to win
their favour by reminding them of former connections and ties. To the two sons of his first
patron Messalla, Ovid addresses various letters, rather tentatively in the case of the older son
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Messalinus, with whom Ovid had had little contact. He bids Messalinus to show favour to him for his brother's sake (Pont, I.7.57-60):

nec tamen officium sensit domus altera nostrum:
   hic illic vestro sub Lare semper eram.
quaeque tua est pietas, ut te non excolat ipsum,
   ius aliquod tecum fratris amicus habet.

Yet no other house received my attentions:
Whether here or there I was constantly beneath the protection of your common Lar,
And such is your loyalty that though he court you not in person,
Your brother's friend has on you some claim.

In trying to evoke associations of loyalty, hospitality, friendship, piety, and mercy, Ovid refers to the gods more in the exile poems than he normally would have. If it seems too much to say that Ovid believed in the active benevolence of the Lares and Penates, it is perhaps possible that he retained some residual warmth for them as images of home and peace.

Vesta and Her Cult in Ovid

Vesta was originally the power of the fire in the communal hearth. Later she was thought of as a spirit in the fire, and finally Vesta was anthropomorphized as the sister of Jupiter. At first the idea of the ever-burning hearth may have had a practical as well as a magical value, but later it became chiefly a sign of the continuity of the family. The worship of Vesta was effectively extended from the family to the State, so that the State worship, carried on by the Vestal Virgins, tended to overshadow private worship of Vesta.

Vesta is closely associated with the Penates and like them was the object of household worship. At festival times the hearth was decorated with garlands. Vesta was, along with the Lares and Penates, a god to swear by. Because of her location in the hearth, she became the
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goddess of bakers. The ass was her sacred animal, with which she is sometimes represented in
art. Ovid alludes to some of these matters in the Fasti VI.303-306,309-312:

    inde precando
    praeferamur Vestam, quae loca prima tenet.
    ante focos olim scannis considere longis
    mos erat et mensae credere adesse deos ...
    venit in hos annos alicuid de mora vetusto:
    fert missos Vesta pura patella cibos.
    ecce coronatis panis dependet ascellis,
    et velant scabras florida serra molas.

It is from there that in praying
We begin by addressing Vesta, who occupies the first place:
It used to be the custom of old to sit on long benches in front of the hearth
And to suppose that the gods were present at table ...
Something of olden custom has come down to our time:
A clean platter contains the food offered to Vesta.
Lo, loaves are hung on asses decked with wreaths,
And flowery garlands veil the rough mill-stones.

Unlike other Roman numina, Vesta was not represented in her temple by a statue, and
was, in general, less anthropomorphized than other deities. Fowler refers to Ovid’s
investigation of the cult of Vesta in the Fasti, and concludes that it is somewhat more serious
than his usual approach (quoting Fasti VI.297-298):

    Only when he comes to the cult of Vesta in June does the whole tone seem to rise a
    little. Vesta, as we have seen, was an unsullied and genuine religious conception, and
    was too near to the idea of Dea Roma, now beginning to be associated with Augustus,
    to be handled wantonly. He says that he used to think there was a statue of Vesta in
    her temple. He found out that he was wrong:

    Ignis inextinctus templo celatur in illo.
    Effugiem nullam Vesta nec ignis habet.

    [An undying fire is hidden in that temple;
    But there is no effigy of Vesta nor of the fire.]
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Here was an opportunity for a little mysticism, or at least reverence, if he had been disposed for it; but he knew the taste of his readers, and strays away into a multi fabula parva ioci ["a short tale, but a very merry one"].

Ovid now tells how Priapus attempted to rape Vesta one night, only to be thwarted by a braying ass; hence the ass is sacred to Vesta. As Fowler indicates, this very untraditional tale demonstrates that the poet's desire to entertain overcomes the religious motive.

Since Augustus had closely associated himself with Vesta in his religious reforms, it is Vesta of the State to whom Ovid refers. Augustus coveted the position of pontifex maximus which Julius Caesar had held, and which made him priest of Vesta. He enhanced the position of the Vestal Virgins, and was able to arrange that his own household worship was equated with the State worship. As Halliday writes:

"the emperor's private hearth was identified with the hearth of the state and placed upon an equal footing with the temple of Vesta."

Rarely then does Ovid allude to Augustus in his religious aspect without mentioning Vesta also. Because, according to the Augustan myth, the cult of Vesta was brought to Italy by Aeneas, Augustus wished the household cults to be especially associated with him and his family, as descendants of Aeneas. Typical of the passages associating Augustus, Vesta, and Aeneas is Fasti III.419-426:

Caesaris innumeris quos maluit ille mereri? 
ascessit titulis pontificalis honor. 
ignibus aeternis aeterni numina praesunt 
Caesaris: imperii pignora iuncta vides. 
di veteris Troiae, dignissima praeda ferenti, 
qua gravis Aeneas tutus ab hoste fuit, 
ortus ab Aenea tangit cognata sacerdos 
umina: cognatum, Vesta, tuere caput!

19Ibid., pp. 155-156. The English translation of Fasti VI.297-298 is added.

20Halliday, Lectures on Roman Religion, p. 167.
To Caesar’s countless titles, which he has preferred to earn,
Was added the honour of the pontificate.
Over the eternal fire the divinity of Caesar, no less eternal,
Doth preside: the pledges of empire thou seest side by side.
Ye gods of ancient Troy, ye worthiest prize to him who bore ye,
Ye whose weight did save Aeneas from the foe,
A priest of the line of Aeneas handles your kindred divinities;
Vesta, do thou guard his kindred head!

Elsewhere Ovid celebrates Augustus’ aforementioned construction of a chapel of Vesta in
his own house, so that as pontifex maximus he could conveniently combine private worship
with state worship. Since Augustus’ house also was linked with his own temple to Apollo,
Ovid could call it the home of three gods (Fasti IV.949-954):

cognati Vesta recepta est
limine: sic iusti constituere patres.
Phoebus habet partem, Vestae pars altera cessit;
quod superest illis, tertius ipse tenet.
state Palatinae laurus, praetextaque quercu
siet domus: aeternos tres habet una deos.

Vesta has been received in the home of her kinsman:
So have the Fathers righteously decreed.
Phoebus owns part of the house; another part has been given up to Vesta;
What remains is occupied by Caesar himself.
Long live the laurels of the Palatine! Long live the house
Wreathed with the oaken boughs! A single house holds three eternal gods.

While Augustus certainly wished to be closely associated with the chief Roman deities, it
is possible that Ovid lays it on a bit thick here. It may be that Ovid’s blatant deifying of
Augustus may go a little beyond the official wish, and indicate a certain carelessness and lack
of reticence about religious matters in Ovid himself.

The lack of reference to Vesta as a household presence even in Tibullus suggests that
Vesta was a secondary figure in household worship, and that the state cult (representing the
eternal fire of Rome) had largely superceded it. There is also scant reference to Vesta in the
Carmina Epigraphica Latina. Most of the relatively few references in Tibullus and Propertius
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represent the Augustus-Aeneas-Vesta approach. There are passing allusions to Vesta and the Vestal Virgins at Tib. II.5.52, Prop. III.4.11, IV.1.21, and especially in Prop. IV.4, which tells the story of the treasonous Vestal virgin Tarpeia. Apart from the Fasti, Ovid’s references to Vesta are equally inconsequential.

For the love poets the chief feature of Vesta was her virginity. This opened an avenue for comment, comparison, and jest, but a somewhat dangerous one owing to Augustus’ close association with the deity. Propertius began somewhat cautiously to bring his mistress Cynthia and Vesta into juxtaosition (Prop. II.29.23-30):

Mane erat, et volui, si sola quiesceret illa,
viserc: at in lecto Cynthia sola fuit.
obstipui: non illa mihi formosior unquam
visa, neque ostrina cum fuit in tunica,
ibat et hinc castae narratum somnia Vestae,
neu sibi neve mihi quae noctura forent...
talis visa mihi somno dimissa recenti.
heu quantum per se candida forma valet!

It was dawn, and I wished to see if she slept alone,
Yes, Cynthia was alone in bed.
I stood entranced: never had she seemed to me more beautiful,
Even when she wore her crimson tunic,
And was off to tell her dreams to chaste Vesta,
In case they were dreams to bring her harm or me...
So she seemed to me when newly released from slumber
Oh, how great is the power of a fair face unadorned!

Propertius here has at least an ostensibly religious motive for mentioning Vesta (Cynthia’s devotion to her), but Ovid’s allusions are sometimes gratuitous and found in his sauciest poems. Amores III.7 is an extended joke on the poet’s embarrassing impotence on one occasion. He describes his mistress as rising chastely from their encounter (21-22):

sic flammas aditura pias aeterna sacerdos
surgit et a caro fratre verenda soror.
She left the bed as chaste as the devout priestess who rises to tend Vesta's undying fire
And as a sister leaves the side of the dear brother whose respect she commands.

Again in the *Ars Amatoria* Ovid compares the girl who refuses favours after accepting gifts to one who would sacrilegiously extinguish the sacred flame of Vesta (*Ars Am.* III.463-466):

> illa potest vigiles flammam extingueret Vestae,
> et rapere e templis, Inachi, sacra tuus,
> et dare mixta vico tritis aconita cisticus,
> accipio venerem munere siqua negat.

That woman could extinguish Vesta's watchful flame,
And rob thy temple, Inachis, of its sanctities,
And give aconite mixed with pounded hemlock to her lover,
Who receives a gift and then denies her favours.

It is easy to see how Augustus, who was anxiously trying to inculcate reverence for Vesta, might be unhappy with such allusions. They also weaken the praise which Ovid offers to Augustus and his household as devotees of Vesta. When Ovid wishes to praise Augustus' wife Livia, he can think of no better image than Vesta. He describes his poem in the Getic language on the apotheosis of Augustus as saying (*Pont.* IV.13.29-30):

> esse pudicarum te Vestam, Livia, matrum,
> ambiguum nato dignior anne viro:

That thou, Livia, wert the Vesta of pure matrons,
It is uncertain whether more worthy of thy son or thy husband;

Ovid recognizes then that Vesta was a key figure in Augustan religion, but outside the *Fasti*, where he finds the old cults of Rome interesting, Ovid's enthusiasm for Vesta seems limited. The absence of reference to Vesta in the exile poems is rather surprising, since Ovid was aiming at pleasing the imperial household. The only other references to Vesta in Ovid are of the Augustus-Aeneas-Vesta sort at *Amores* III.6.75-76, and *Tristia* III.1.29-30. We
conclude that, apart from his attention to Vesta as the centre of an old Roman cult and its contemporary revival, Ovid's concern for Vesta was fairly limited.

Genius and Juno in Tibullus, Propertius, and Ovid

If the cult of Vesta furnished little poetic material for the Augustan love poets, the traditional worship or homage to the Genius was rather more fruitful. Originally the Genius was the spirit whose existence was co-extensive and intertwined with that of the master of the house. In art the Genius is usually represented either by a serpent or by a man offering sacrifice. The Roman idea of the Genius is reflected in a story that Cicero tells (De Div. 1.36) as summarized by Orr:

An account from Cicero describes how Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus sees two snakes, one of each sex, in his bedroom and it depends on which one he kills whether he or his wife, Cornelia, will die... Significant is the supposition that the reptiles represented the life and death qualities of the two people, a male and a female, and thus appear to be manifestations of the Genius.²¹

As earlier mentioned, the corresponding spirit of the mistress of the house was called the Juno. Important for poetry was the fact that the chief festival of the Genius was on the birthday of the pater familias. Thus he is sometimes called the "birthday god"—natalis. Since birthday observance was an expected family and social custom at Rome, it is not surprising that it figures in the social poetry of the time.

The Genius was undoubtedly an important power in the household originally. According to Fowler:

Genius in earliest times stood for the permanent principle in social life, the continued existence of the family and the gens: for to permanence add the kindred idea of benevolent protection, arising when the mysterious power becomes realized as more

²¹Orr, "Roman Domestic Religion", p. 71. Also in Plutarch, Tiberius Gracchus 1.
personal, and you have almost the whole range of the concept sufficiently explained.\textsuperscript{22}

Fowler addresses the question whether the Genius could be regarded as a god (\textit{deus}) or chiefly as a power or principle:

we may at any rate agree that the Genius was on the border of \textit{deus}—land in the period we are dealing with. In Tibullus III.11.9-10; IV.5.9-10 a girl thus addresses the Genius of her lover on his birthday:

magne Geni, cape tura libens votisque faveto,
    si modo, cum de me cogitat, ille calet.

[Great Genius, take this incense with a will, and smile upon my prayer,
If only when he thinks on me his pulse beats high.]

and again, line 20:

at tu, Natalis, quoniam deus omnia sentis,
   adnue: quid referat, clamne palamne roget?

[But thou, Birth-spirit, a god and knowing all things,
Grant the prayer. What matter if his suit be uttered or unspoken?]

Wine, life-giving and strengthening, is the regular libation to Genius; this always seems to indicate a desire to increase the vitality of the spirit thus propitiated, to make a \textit{deus} of it, for wine, we must remember had a mystic connexion with blood.\textsuperscript{23}

Thus the significance of the Genius included his association with the procreative powers of the \textit{pater familias} (in order that the family continue), and with the protective or guardian aspects of protecting and prolonging the life of the master of the house.

In order to compare Ovid’s treatment of the Genius with that of his immediate predecessors we shall quote some references from Tibullus, the Tibullian Collection, and Propertius. Since Ovid first came to notice as a poet at the house of Messalla, to whose circle

\textsuperscript{22}Fowler, \textit{Roman Ideas}, p. 22.

\textsuperscript{23}Ibid., pp. 17-18. Translations added.
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Tibullus and the other poets of the Tibullan Collection belonged, we can assume Ovid’s familiarity with the social customs connected with Genius as practised there.

Tibullus in fact addresses a poem (I.7) to Messalla at the time of his birthday, on the occasion of his Triumph. Tibullus describes the appearance of the Genius of Messalla, and hopes that Messalla will beget distinguished children (I.7.49-56):

```
huc ades et Genium ludis Geniumque choreis
concelebra et multo tempora funde mero;
illos et nitidum stillent unguenta capillo,
et capite et collo mollia sertia gerat.
sic venias, hodie me tibi dem turis honores.
liba et Mopsoplo dulcia melle feram.
at tibi succrescat proles quae facta parentis
augeat et circa stet veneranda senem.
```

Then hither come, and do honour with sports and do honour with dances
To the Birth-spirit, and let wine in plenty bathe his temples.
From his glistening hair let the ointment drip,
And on his head and neck let soft garlands hang.
Thus come to us today, Birth-spirit; and I will honour thee with incense
And bring thee cakes sweetened with honey from the land of Mopsopus.
But for thee, my friend, let a progeny spring up to add fresh exploits to their sire’s,
And stand in their distinctions about the old man’s chair.

Tibullus II.2 consists entirely of a birthday poem to the poet’s friend Cornutus. It contains the added notion (still popular today) that a wish will be granted on one’s birthday. The social aspect of life is very prominent in such a poem and seems to be taking over from the religious idea (II.2.1-10):

```
Dicamus bona verba: venit Natalis ad aras:
quisque ades, lingua, vir multierque, fave.
uranur pia tura focis, urantur odores
quos tener e terra divite mittit Arabs.
ipse suos Genius adsit visurus honores,
cui decorent sanctas mollia sertia comas.
illius purum destillant tempora nardo,
ille satur libo sit madeatque mero,
```

adnuat et, Cornute, tibi, quodcumque rogabis.
   en age (quid cessas? adnuit ille) roga.

Let naught but good words pass our lips: the Birth-sprite cometh to the altar.
Whoso art with us, man or woman, peace!
Let its fire burn the holy incense, burn the spices
Which the soft Arabian sends us from his wealthy land.
Let the Genius come to view the offering to himself.
Soft garlands must deck his hallowed locks;
His temples must drop with spikenard pure;
He must be filled with honey-cake and tipsy with neat wine.
And to whatsoever thou askest, Cornutus, must he bow assent.
See, quick! Why laggest thou? He bows, and thou must ask.

Continuing with the birthday wish, Tibullus guesses that Cornutus will pray that his wife will
always love him truly. The poet imagines that Cupid comes with bands to bind his wife’s
love. Tibullus concludes with a wish that Cornutus and his wife will have numerous offspring
(21-22):

   eveniat, Natalis, avis prolemque ministret,
       ludat et ante tuos turba novella pedes.

   May the sign come true, Birth-spirit, and bring them offspring,
   And may a troop of younglings play before thy feet.

The Tibullan Collection includes a variety of poems from the circle of Messalla. Those
involving Sulpicia, a female kinswoman of Messalla, and Cerinthus, her boyfriend, show that
birthdays were important days of celebration. We have already quoted Fowler’s citation of

Tibullus III.11.9-10,19-20 (also known as Tib. IV.5.9-10,19-20); the opening address to

Cerinthus is also of interest (1-8):

   Qui mihi te, Cerinthe, dies dedit, hic mihi sanctus
   atque inter festos semper habendus erit.
   te nascente novum Parcae cecinere puellis
   servitium et dederunt regna superba tibi.
   uxor ego ante alias. iuvat hoc, Cerinthe, quod uxor,
   si tibi de nobis munus ignis adest.
   mutuus adsit amor, per te dulcisissima fulta
   perque tuos oculos per Geniumque rogo.
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This day that made thee live for me, Cerinthus, shall be for me
One to be hallowed always and set among the festivals.
When thou wast born, the voices of the Fates proclaimed that now there was new
slavery for woman,
And bestowed proud sovereignty on thee.
I burn more fiercely than them all, but joy, Cerinthus, in the burning,
If within thy breast live fires caught from mine.
May love like mine be thine, I pray thee, by our stolen raptures,
By thine eyes and thy Birth-spirit.

It is interesting to see how the traditional idea of the Genius can be accommodated in
writing very modish love-poetry. Since the Fates (Parcae) are sometimes said to preside over
the birth of a child and determine his destiny, they are appropriate if somewhat dissonant
companions of the Genius. Mythological allusions are a major factor in Augustan poetry.

The following poem in the Collection (Tib. III.12) has in turn Sulpicia's birthday as its
subject. Since her birthday-spirit is female, it is called Juno. Sulpicia's wish on her birthday
(for her love for Cerinthus to flourish) is the central idea of the poem. The Genius or Juno is
thus addressed (13-16,19-20):

adnue purpureaque veni perlucida palla:
    ter tibi fit libo, ter, dea casta, mero,
pnecipit et natae mater studiosa quod optet:
    illa aliud tacita iam sua mente rogat ...
    sis Juno, grata, ut veniet cum proximus annus,
    hie idem votis iam vetus adsit amor.

Bow assent and come in all the sheen of purple palla.
They are making offering to thee, holy goddess, thrice with cake and thrice with
wine,
And the mother eagerly enjoins upon her child what she must pray for.
But she, now mistress of herself, sues for another thing in the silence of her heart
...
Be grateful, Juno, so that when the next year comes,
This love, now of long standing, may be there unchanged to meet their prayers.
Propertius also wrote a birthday poem to his mistress, Cynthia, and describes her as performing the rites to her gods. In Propertius, however, these rites are little more than a prelude to the partying and love-making to follow (III.10.11-21,25-26):

tuque, o cara mihi, felicibus edita pennis,
surge et poscentis iusta precare deos.
at primum pura somnum tibi discute lympha,
et nitidas presso pollice finge comas;
dein qua primum oculos cepisti veste Properti
   indue, nec vacuum flore relinque caput;
et pete, qua polles, ut sit tibi forma perennis,
inque meum semper stent tua regna caput.
inde coronatas ubi ture piaveris aras,
luxerit et tota flamme secunda domo,
sit mensae ratio, noxque inter pocula currat ...
dulciaque ingratos adimant convivia somnos;
publica vicinae perstrepat aura viae.

And you, my darling, born under happy augury,
Arise and make supplication to the gods that demand their due.
But first with fresh water wash away your sleep
And with the impress of your fingers bind up your shining hair:
Then put on the dress in which you first ensnared the eyes of Propertius,
And let your head not lack a garland of flowers;
And pray that the beauty which is your might may abide forever
And that your sovereignty may always hold dominion over me.
Then, when you have hallowed the garlanded altars with incense,
And an auspicious flame shines throughout the house,
Let our thoughts be of the table, let night speed on amid our drinking...
And let sweet conviviality take away thankless slumber;
Let the public air of the neighbouring street resound with noise.

In this poem the religious idea is perfunctory. Genius or Juno is not named, and the ceremony itself is quickly passed over. Cynthia's garb and beauty are treated at more length, and form a suitable prelude to the party that follows. The birthday rites end with poet and mistress in bed (31-32):

annua solvamus thalamo sollemnia nostro,
natalsique tui sic pergamus iter.
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Let us perform the year's rites on our couch
And so complete the course of your birthday.

Another poem by Propertius contains an uncommon reference by the poet to his own
guardian spirit or genius. Cynthia returns to find Propertius dallying with two other females,
chases them away, and attacks the poet's accomplice, the slave Lygdamus (IV.8.67-70):

atque ubi iam nostris lassavit brachia plagis,
Lygdamus ad plutei fulcra sinistra latens
enitur, geniumque meum protractus adorat.
Lygdamus, nil potui: tecum ego captus eram.

Then when her arms were tired with beating me
She routed forth Lygdamus, who lay hid on our left crouched beneath the couch's
head at its very feet.
Dragged forth to light, he implored protection from my guardian spirit.
Lygdamus, I was powerless; I was thy fellow-captive.

The custom of slaves swearing oaths by, or asking protection from, their master's genius
was not unusual. Here the poet introduces it lightly into a lover's quarrel to further indicate
the fearful onslaught of Cynthia, and her jealousy. Thus the idea of the Genius which in
Tibullius had definite religious and traditional overtones has largely lost them in Propertius.

Since the birthday poem was a popular form within the Messallan circle, where Ovid first
began to recite, and was employed by his friend Propertius, it seems a little surprising that
Ovid has no examples of it among his love poems. Nor does Ovid have any noteworthy
allusions to Genius or Natalis in the Metamorphoses or even in the Fasti.

The only reference to birthdays in the love poems is as a day when a mistress will try to
extract a gift from her lover. Appropriately enough this topic begins with the bawd's advice
to the poet's mistress in Amores I.8.93-94, to use all pretexts to get gifts:

cum te deficient poscendi munera causae,
natalem libo testificare tuum!
When pretext fails for asking gifts,
Have a cake to be sign to him your birthday is come.

The cake is the traditional offering (along with wine) to Genius or Juno. Ovid expands on this idea in *Ars Amatoria* I.429-430 where the mistress regularly feigns a birthday whenever she wants a gift. Thus Ovid jokingly argues that birthdays are unhappy days for the lover, but that days of ill omen (*dies nefasti*) are happy because the stores are closed. All the emphasis is on the mercenary-amatory nature of birthdays and birthday gifts (*Ars Am.* I.417-420):

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magna superstitione tibi sit natalis amicae;
quae aequus aeque dandum est, illa sit atra dies.
cum bene vitaris, tamen auseret; inventa artem
femina, qua cupidi carpat amantis opes.
```

But hold in awful dread your lady's birthday;
Let that be a black day whereon a present must be given.
Shun it as you may, yet she will carry off the spoil;
A woman knows the way to fleece an eager lover of his wealth.

These passages show the further reduction of Propertius’ social day to a mere skirmish in the battle of the sexes. Ovid’s jokes about the birthday being a black day (*atra dies*) also show how little he cares about the superstitions regarding lucky and unlucky days. The avoidance of reference to Genius, Juno, and the religious aspects of birthdays would seem to indicate that Ovid had little interest in them, and that perhaps he found them too serious and traditional for his witty and sophisticated verse. It is worth noting that until the exile poems, where Ovid’s writing is more guarded, the rites surrounding birthdays go unmentioned.

**The Genius and Juno in Ovid’s Poems From Exile**

In his autobiographical poem (*Tr.* IV.10.9-12) we have the suggestion that offerings to the Genius were a part of Ovid’s family worship as a boy:
nec stirps prima fui; genito sum fratre creatus,
qui tribus ante quater mensibus ortus erat.
Lucifer amborum natalibus affuit idem:
una celebrata est per duo liba dies ... 

I was not the first born, for my birth befell after that of a brother,
Thrice four months my senior.
The same day-star beheld the birth of us both:
One birthday was celebrated by the offering of our two cakes ...

Possibly the occasion was more memorable for being celebrated jointly.

Two of the exile poems are birthday poems. The second (Tr. V.5) is a Tibullan-style one
addressed to his wife. It may be significant that Ovid's more traditional reflections on
birthdays concern his wife rather than himself. The first birthday poem (Tr. III.13) is
something of a reversal on birthday poems in which Ovid wishes for no more birthdays—at
least no more on the Black Sea shores. It begins with an unusual complaint to Natalis for
coming at all (1-10):

Ecce supervacuus—quid enim fuit utile gigni?—
ad sua Natalis tempora noster adest.
dure, quid ad miser os veniebas exu illus annos?
debueras illis inposuisse modum.
si tibi cum mei, vel si pudor ullus inesset,
non ultra patriam me sequere meam,
quoque loco primum tibi sum male cognitus infans,
illo temptasses ultimus esse mihi,
inque relinquendo, quod idem fecere sodales,
tu quoque dixisses tristis in urbe "vale".

Lo! to no purpose—for what profit was there in my birth?—
My birthday god attends his anniversary.
Cruel one, why hast thou come to increase the wretched years of an exile?
To them thou shouldst have put an end.
Hadst thou any love for me or any sense of shame,
Thou wouldst not be following me beyond my native land,
And where first I was known by thee as an ill-starred child,
There shouldst thou have tried to be my last,
And at the parting, like my friends,
Thou too in the city shouldst have said in sorrow "Farewell".

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Ovid goes on rather bitterly to ask whether Natalis (Genius) still expects to get the same observance on the Pontic shore which he received formerly (13-18):

scilicet expectas soliti tibi moris honorem,
pendeat ex umeris vestis ut alba meis,
fumida cingatur florentibus ara coronis,
micaque sollemni turis in igne sonet,
libaque dem proprie genitale notantia tempus,
concipiamque bonas ore favente preece.

Thou awaitest, I suppose, thine honour in its wonted guise:
A white robe hanging from my shoulders,
A smoking altar garlanded with chaplets,
The grains of incense snapping in the holy fire,
And myself offering the cakes that mark my birthday
And framing kindly petitions with pious lips.

Ovid then picks up the idea that a wish was granted on one's birthday and develops it in a paradoxical way. Death, he says, is more appropriate for me than long life (the usual wish on one's birthday). He also hints disbelief in the efficacy of such wishes, at least as far as winning his recall from exile (23-28):

nec dare tura libet nil exorantia divos
in tantis subeunt nec bona verba malis.
si tamen est aliquid nobis hac luce potendum,
in loca ne redeas amplius ista, precor.
dum me terrarum pars paene novissima, Pontus,
Euxinus falsa nomine dictus, habet.

Nor is it a pleasure to offer incense that wins nothing from gods,
Nor in such misfortunes do words of good omen come to my lips.
Yet if I must ask thee something on this day,
Return no more to such a land, I pray,
So long as all but the remotest part of the world, the Pontus,
Falsely called Euxine, possesses me.

This poem was probably written while Ovid's initial anger and bitterness at his exile remained strong. It is, in fact, an effective statement of his changed condition, and it seems likely that Ovid is using the birthday poem form chiefly as a vehicle for the expression of his
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feelings. Since usual features of a birthday poem (the welcome to Natalis, the joyful offering, the wish, the granting of the wish) are here reversed or undercut, the poem is rather a negative religious statement. It does, however, hint that Ovid was accustomed to celebrate his birthday in happier times with an offering to his Genius. The contrast between the usual celebrations and Ovid's present desolation is poetically effective.

Having written a reversal on a birthday poem, Ovid went on to write a more Tibullan-style one to his wife. His motives may have included the need to vary his praises of his wife, and the forms of his poems from exile. It would not hurt to write a poem fairly traditional in style and family-oriented, if Augustus happened to notice. Ovid speaks of making offerings on his wife's birthday (Tr. V.5.1-12):

annuus adsuetum dominae natalis honorem
exigit: ite manus ad pia sacra meae.
sic quondam festum Laertius egerat heros
forsan in extremo coniugis orbe diem.
lingua favens adsit, nostrorum oblitera malorum,
quae, puto, dedidicit iam bona verba loqui;
quaeque semel toto vestis mihi sumitur anno,
sumatur fatis discolor alba meis;
araque gramineo viridis de caespite fiat,
et velet tepidos nexa corona focos.
da mihi tura, puer, pingues facientia flammas,
quoque pio fusum stridat in igne merum.

The year has flown and the birthday of my lady exacts its customary honour:
Go, hands of mine, perform affection's rites.
Thus of old did the Laertian hero pass,
Perhaps at the world's edge, his wife's gala day.
Let me have a tongue of good omen forgetful of my misfortunes
(My tongue has, I think, unlearned ere now its utterance of propitious words!)
And the garb that I put on only once in the whole year let me now put on—
The white garb that matches not my fate.
Let there be made a green altar of grassy turf,
The warm hearth veiled with a braided garland.
Give me incense, boy, that produces rich flame,
And wine that hisses when poured in the pious fire.
Unlike the earlier poem Ovid now welcomes this birthday, and offers a wish and prayer on behalf of his wife. He hopes that his misery will not impinge too much on his wife’s condition, and wishes long life to her (13-14,19-23):

optime natalis! quamuis procul absumus, opto
candidus huc venias dissimilisque meo ...
illa domo nataque sua patriaque fruatur
—crepta haec uni sit satis esse mihi—
quatenus et non est in caro coniuge felix,
pars vitae tristi cetera nube vacet.
vivat ... 

Best of birthdays! though I am far away, I pray
Thou mayst come hither bright and unlike my own ...
May she continue to enjoy her home, her daughter, and her native land
(Let it suffice that these things have been taken from me alone).
And in as much as she is not blessed in the person of her dear husband,
May all the other part of her life be free from gloomy cloud.
Long life to her ...

This poem then has features of a Tibullan birthday poem (the welcome to Natalis, the celebration and offering, the birthday wish, and the good omen). Ovid develops his good wishes for his wife in contrast with the reality of his exile. Once again there is a poetic and utilitarian motive, but it is developed within a traditional framework.

Because poems to the Genius were not uncommon among Ovid’s contemporary poets, we have a basis for comparison and contrast. In the two Tristia poems Ovid adopts features from the Tibullan-style birthday poem, although in the first (Tr. III.13) he mentions them only to reverse them. Since Ovid follows the Tibullan pattern quite closely, and adds no new elements to the form, we may suspect that he is chiefly turning the form to his own use (to arouse sympathy for his plight as an exile). At the same time it is possible that his exile may have aroused nostalgia for aspects of family and home life.
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Ovid reduces the usual content of the Tibullan-style birthday poem rather as Propertius had done, and indeed perhaps further. As with Propertius, the religious significance of the Genius is not developed at all. In fact he is called natalis ("birthday god") rather than Genius. This suggests that the celebrations were thought of more as family or social occasions rather than religious ones. Although the idea of the birthday wish is introduced, there is no explicit statement that Natalis will grant it (indeed Tr. III.13.23 seems to deny it). The usual wish for long life is asked for in Tristia V.5.23, but rejected in Tristia III.13.26. The traditional expectation of many children is out of place in these poems, but it seems unlikely that Ovid would employ it an any case. All in all, Ovid appears to be using a poetic motif rather than summoning up any deep feeling about birthdays or the Genius.

Other references to birthdays in Ovid include the poet's allusions to his fateful nativity (Tr. IV.1.61-64), and to his wish that his enemy be presented with a book of curses on his birthday (ibid 65-66). Thus the religious aspect of birthdays does not seem to have a deep hold on Ovid's imagination.

The Roman Fear of the Dead (Manes)

Analogous to the Genius but originally distinct were the di parentum or di Manes, the spirits of the family dead, or, more collectively, of the community dead. The di parentum ("the spirits of the parents") were the spirits of the family dead who still retained an interest in the fortunes of the family. Grave offerings were presented to them annually, to ensure their peace and their peacefulness. In Rome this festival in February was called the Parentalia (or Feralia) and was a renewal of the rite of burial. There was also in May a festival called the
Lemuria, which may belong to an older day, and which shows more concern for averting harm from wandering ghosts.

Given the Roman feel for supernaturalism, the concern for the di parentum is a focal point for household worship and Roman religion. As Lucretius indicates, even sceptical Romans would, at times of fear and pressure, sacrifice to the Manes (De Rerum Natura III.48-54):

extorres idem patria longeque fugati
conspectu ex hominum, foedati crimine turpi,
omnibus aerumnis adfecti denique vivunt,
et quocumque tamen miseri venere parentant
et nigras mactant pecudes et manibu’ divis
inferias mittunt mulloque in rebus acerbis
acris adventunt animos ad religionem.

These same men, driven from their native land and banished
Far from the sight of men, stained with some disgraceful charge,
In short afflicted with all tribulations, yet live;
And in spite of all, wherever the wretches go they sacrifice to their ancestors,
And slay black cattle, and send down oblations
To the departed ghosts, and in their bitter days
Direct their minds far more eagerly to religion.

Elsewhere in his poem, Lucretius takes pains to establish that the spontaneous death of birds in flight, and sudden human deaths in certain locales, is a natural phenomenon and not the action of the Manes or the gods of the underworld. It was the notion that departed spirits might return to haunt you, or even drag you off with them, which sometimes gave pause to even the educated urban Roman.

Originally the Manes had been thought of collectively, as one’s dead ancestors. As society became more individualistic, following the war with Hannibal, the Manes too became more individualized. In particular, the shade of the deceased was more often thought of as the
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immortal essence of the dead man. Understandably, in later times, this spirit of the dead man was confused with the Genius, his attendant spirit while alive.\(^\text{24}\)

The imperial biographies of Suetonius have a number of references which suggest that the fear of the Manes and their cult was very much alive in the early Empire. When the suspicious and unpopular Tiberius died, the biographer tells us (Tiberius LXXV.1) that people prayed to Mother Earth and the Manes not to allow him a place except among the damned. His popular nephew and adopted son, Germanicus, however, was revered for his piety which was especially noticeable in his treatment of the dead. According to Suetonius (Gaius III.2), Germanicus would offer sacrifices to the shades of distinguished men, when he came upon their tombs. He also arranged to have the remains of Varus' army, defeated in Germany, collected and buried. Bad and irreligious men, according to Suetonius, feared that the shades of their victims would haunt them. Nero (Nero XXXIV.4) feared the shade of his mother Agrippina (whom he had ordered killed), while Otho (VII.2) attempted to appease the shade of the murdered Galba by various rites.

The Roman concern about the di Manes is reflected by the number of references to them in the Roman epitaphs of Buecheler's Carmina Latin Epigraphica. Tolman's study notes both the frequency of the allusions and their seriousness:

The Di Manes, gods of the world of departed spirits, or the deified souls of the departed are named over 125 times in the metrical inscriptions. In contrast to the [Olympian and household] deities considered previously the references to them do not appear to be for poetical effect, but in the majority of instances give evidence of a true belief in the Manes cult.\(^\text{25}\)

\(^{24}\)Cf. Fowler, Roman Ideas, pp. 19, 25.

\(^{25}\)Tolman, A Study of Sepulchral Inscriptions, pp. 62-63.
Even allowing for their relevance to grave inscriptions, their prominence contrasts sharply with the sparser references to other deities: Jupiter (6); Juno (2); Lucina (2); Mars (2); Apollo (5); Minerva (5); Venus (6); Liber or Bacchus (15); Muses (8); Cupid (3); Hercules (1); Ceres (3); Cybele (3); Penates (4); and Lares (9). Tolman argues ingeniously that the doubts sometimes expressed about the actual existence and awareness of the Manes indicate that they were generally believed in. Richmond Lattimore agrees with this assessment:

For it is in the idea of the Manes that we find the most widespread and tenacious belief of the Romans in immortality. It is true that their existence and their sensibility are frequently questioned; but there are also numerous cases, both in poetry and prose, in which they are taken seriously.

Elsewhere Lattimore affirms:

There is more sincerity in the verse inscriptions which refer to the Manes than in those which affirm outright that the soul is immortal, or in those which speak of Elysium or the underworld; and there is a far greater proportion of inscriptions in prose.

In literature, Horace's Epode V tells the gruesome story of the ritual murder of a boy by witches. The poem concludes with the boy's curse that he will return as a ghost to claw their faces and give them nightmares. The pastoral Tibullus warns his girlfriend Nemesis that even the shade of her little sister may reproach her for scorning him (Tib. II.6.35-40). It is Propertius, however, who especially likes to bring love and death into juxtaposition.

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27 Ibid., p. 65.

28 Ibid., pp. 52-59.


29 Ibid., p. 95.
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The Conscious Ashes in Roman Love Elegy

It is indeed a commonplace of love poetry in general that love should or does conquer death. In the Love Elegy tradition this idea goes back at least to Calvus and Catullus. The fragments of Calvus’ poetry include the line:

forsitan hoc etiam gaudeat ipsa cinis

Perhaps your very ashes may take pleasure even in this.

This seems to express Calvus’ hope that even in death his love, Quintilia, might be comforted by his repentance for infidelities to her and be aware of his love and his praises of her. Catullus in Poem XCVI seems to be seconding this suggestion, and assuring Calvus that the dead Quintilia may feel pleasure from Calvus’ love for her and his grief at her death. Since Propertius was very familiar with the love poetry of Calvus and Catullus (see Prop. II.34.87-90), they may have provided the germ of this idea which he develops at length.

The idea that sympathy between lovers continues beyond the grave and remains even in the ashes of the deceased is no doubt primarily romantic and only secondarily religious, but the two aspects cannot be completely separated. To some extent also the idea is conventional and sentimental. It may even be regarded as a mere poetic exaggeration. Nonetheless it seems to be distinctly Roman, and even more distinctly characteristic of Love Elegy. An approach to it is seen in Tibullus I.1.67-68, where Tibullus urges Delia not to disfigure herself on his death lest she pain his shade. Propertius expands this to a statement that his love for Cynthia will last beyond his death, and the wish that she stay true to him (Prop. I.19.1-6):

Non ego nunc tristis vereor, mea Cynthia, Manes,
 nec moror extremo debita fata rogo;
sed ne forte tuo careat mihi funus amore,

hic timor est ipsis durior exsequiis.
non adeo leviter nostris puer haesit ocellis,
ut meus obliio pulvis amore vacet.

I fear not now, my Cynthia, the grim world of the dead;
Nor grudge I the fate owed to the final pyre;
But that my funeral may lack your love,
Is a fear I dread more than death itself.
Cupid has not so lightly settled on my eyes
That my dust could forget and lose my love for you.

In Propertius II.13 the poet imagines his funeral and Cynthia weeping for him. He
pictures her coming to join him at length, and warns her to be faithful (39-42):

tu quoque si quando venies ad fata, memento
hoc iter: ad lapides cana veni memores.
interea cave sis nos asperrata sepultos:
non nihil ad verum conscia terra sapit.

And when the day you too come to your end, remember the way hither:
Come white-haired to the tombstone that remembers you.
Meanwhile beware of sighting me when I am buried:
Man’s dust has consciousness, and is not heedless of the truth.

The poem concludes with the notions that love ought to be undying, but yet the remaining
lover’s efforts will be unrequited (51-52,57-58):

tu tamen amisso non numquam flebis amico:
fas est praetertos semper amare viros ...
sed frustra mutos revocabis, Cynthia, Manes:
nam mea quid poterunt ossa minuta loqui?

Yet you will sometimes weep for the friend you have lost;
It is a duty to love forever a mate who is dead and gone...
But in vain, Cynthia, will you call back my silent shade;
For what answer shall my crumbled bones be able to make?

Elsewhere (Prop. IV.11.73-74) the poet uses the idea of the conscious ashes when a
Roman matron urges her surviving husband to look after their children:

nunc tibi commend o communia pignora, Paule:
haec cura et cineri spirat inusta meo.
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Now, Paullus, I commend to you the common pledges of our love:
Branded upon my very ashes this care lives on in me.

Propertius cashes in this imagery after Cynthia's supposed death when he recounts a visit
from her ghost. This is a supreme example of love reaching beyond the grave, and, once
more, the treatment is romantic rather than religious. The reality of the dream has been
debated. As usual with Roman authors, a literary interpretation seems safer, but not
necessarily always correct (Prop. IV.7.1-6):

Sunt aliquid Manes: letum non omnia finit,
luridaque evictos effugit umbra rogos.
Cynthia namque meo visast incumbere fulcro,
murmur ad extremae nuper humata tubae,
cum mihi somnus ab exsequiis penderet amoris,
et querere lecti frigida regna mei.

So ghosts do exist: death is not the end of all,
And a pale shade vanquishes and escapes the pyre.
For I dreamt that Cynthia, who had lately been buried,
To the drone of the funeral trumpet, was leaning over my bed,
When after my love's interment sleep hovered over me
And I bemoaned the cold empire of my bed.

Cynthia tells the poet about dreams which reflect the activities of the dead, and concludes with
a statement that they will soon be reunited (87-94):

'nec tu sperne piis venientia somnia portis:
cum pia venerunt somnia, pondus habent.
nocte vagae ferimur, nox clausas liberat umbras,
errat et abiecta Cerberus ipse sera.
luce iubent leges Lethaea ad stagna reverteri:
nos vehimur, vectum nauta recenset onus.
nunc te possideant aliae: mox sola tenebo;
me cum eris, et mixtis ossibusossa teram.'

'Spurn not the dreams that come through the Righteous Gate,
When righteous dreams come, they have the weight of truth.
By night we drift abroad; night frees the imprisoned shades,
And even Cerberus casts aside his chains, and strays.
At dawn the law compels us to return to Lethe's waters:
We board, the ferryman counts the cargo boarded.
Other women may possess you now: Soon I alone shall hold you: With me you will be, and my bones shall press yours in close entwining.'

These interesting explorations of love beyond the grave have no counterpart in Ovid. Ovid's general tone, of course, and attitudes to love are lighter than Propertius', but it is notable that Ovid does little or nothing with this elegiac theme in his own abundant love poetry. His elegy on Tibullus is distinctly literary and detached in attitude. He stops at the conventional wish that perhaps Tibullus will be united with former love elegists (Am. III.9.65-66):

his comes umbra tua est; siqua est modo corporis umbra, auxisti numeros, culte Tibulle, pios.

To these is thy shade comrade; if shade there be that survives the body, Thou has increased the number of the blest, refined Tibullus.

The idea of the conscious ashes Ovid touches on very lightly. In Tristia III.3, Ovid bids his wife look after his ashes and grave when he is dead (83-84):

quamvis in cineres corpus mutaverit ignis, sentiet officium maesta favilla plum.

Although the fire change my body to ashes, The sorrowing dust shall feel the pious care.

These lines appear to be the sole example of this conceit in Ovid.

Ovid on Funeral Rites, his own Death, and the Shades

In the course of his survey of Roman festivals Ovid duly records the Feralia (Parentalia) in February, and the Lemuria in May. He comments on the small offerings given to the shades of the dead at the Feralia (Fasti II. 533-536):

est honor et tumulis. animas placate paternas parvae in extinctas munera ferte pyras.
parva petunt manes, pietas pro divite grata est
munere: non avidos Styx habet ima deos.

Honor is paid also to the tombs. Appease the souls of your fathers
And bring small gifts to the extinguished pyres.
The ghosts ask but little: they value piety more than a costly gift:
No greedy gods are they who in the world below do haunt the banks of Styx.

In the same account Ovid ties the introduction of these rites to Aeneas, and therefore
connects them to Augustus. He goes on to tell a cautionary tale about the neglect of these
rites, at the same time hinting his disbelief of it. The story goes that once the Parentalia was
neglected and that plague ensued (549-556):

non impune fuit; nam dicitur omne ab isto
Roma suburbanis inculuisse rogis,
vix equidem credo: bustis exisse feruntur
et tacitae questi tempore noctis avi,
perque vias urbis latosque ululasse per agros
deformes animas, volgus inane, ferunt.
post ea praeterit tumulis redduntur honores,
prodigisque venit funeribusque modus.

The negligence was not unpunished; for 'tis said that from that ominous day
Rome grew hot with the funeral fires that burned without the city.
They say, though I can hardly think it, that the ancestral souls did issue from the
tombs
And make their moan in the hours of stilly night;
And hideous ghosts, a shadowy throng, they say, did howl
About the city streets and the wide fields.
Afterward the honours which had been omitted were again paid to the tombs,
And so a limit was put to prodigies and funerals.

In Fasti Book Five, Ovid gives an account of the Lemuria. The most interesting aspect of
this festival was the nocturnal ritual for the exorcism of ghosts (429-444). Ovid seems rather
interested in some of these ancient rites. He manages to connect this festival to Augustus’
genealogy by averring that it was originally the Remuria, a festival instituted by Romulus to
allay the shade of Remus.
The Fasti are not very revealing of Ovid's thought. The exile poems are more useful, but strongly tinged by the utilitarian purpose of gaining sympathy and support for the poet.

Ovid's poems to his wife are often emotional, and in Tristia IV.3 he wishes that he had died rather than gone into exile. At least then he would have had the comfort of a normal burial (41-46):

spiritus hic per te patrias exisset in auras,  
sparsissent lacrimae pectora nostra piae,  
supremoque die notum spectantia caelum  
texissent digitii lumina nostra tui,  
et cinis in tumulo positus iacuisset avito,  
tactaque nascenti corpus haberet humus ...

This spirit of mine through thy aid would have gone forth to its native air,  
Loving tears would have wet my breast,  
My eyes upon the last day gazing at a familiar sky  
Would have been closed by thy fingers,  
My ashes would have been laid to rest in the tomb of my fathers  
And the ground that I touched at birth would possess my body ...

In his autobiographical poem Ovid has a unique reference to the shades of his parents. He wishes them, if they are aware of such things, to know that he has not committed a crime (Tr.

IV.10.85-91):

si tamen extinctis alicud nisi nomina restat,  
et gracilis structos effugit umbra rogos,  
fama, parentales, si vos mea contigit, umbrae,  
et sunt in Stygio crimina nostra foro,  
scele, precor, causam (nec vos mihi fallere fas est)  
errem iussae, non scelus, esse fugac.  
Manibus hoc satis est ...

Yet if for those whose light is quenched something besides a name abides,  
If a slender shade escapes the high-heaped pyre,  
If, O spirits of my parents, report of me has reached you  
And the charges against me live in the Stygian court,  
Know, I beg you—and you 'tis impious for me to deceive-  
That the cause of the exile decreed me is an error, and no crime.  
Be these my words to the shades ...
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The whole passage is conditional; Ovid clearly gives no assent to any of the premises which he lists. There is also no special suggestion of the deification of his parents. Ovid seems, moreover, more interested in protesting his relative innocence than in the possible concerns of his parents. Formerly given over to elegiac necuitia (worthlessness), Ovid in exile celebrates utilitas (usefulness), especially anything or anyone that might be useful in moderating or ending his exile (see Pont. II.9.21-40). At the same time he was growing old and likely to die in a strange land. It is probable that both the desire to gain sympathy and distress at his own plight are factors in his expressions of fear about his spirit living on in exile (Tr. III.3.59-66):

atque utinam percant animae cum corpore nostrae,  
effugiatque avidos pars mihi nulla rogés!  
nam si morte carens vacua volat alta in aura  
spiritus, et Samii sunt rata dicta sensis,  
inter Sarmaticas Romana vagabitur umbras,  
perque feros manes hospita semper erigit.  
ossa tamen facito parva referuntur in urna:  
sic ego non etiam mortuus exul ero.

O that our souls might perish with the body  
And that so no part of me might escape the greedy pyre!  
For if the spirit flits aloft deathless in the empty air,  
And the words of the Samian sage are true,  
A Roman will wander among Sarmatian shades,  
A stranger forever among barbarians.  
But my bones—see that they are carried home in a little urn:  
So shall I not be an exile even in death.

The possibility of a deathless spirit is again conditional, and the idea of the spirit living on among the Sarmatians is a rhetorical conceit rather than a Pythagorean teaching. Nonetheless Ovid is now reduced to thinking about the circumstances of his own death, and the recognition that he is mortal strikes a new note in his poetry. Ovid reverts to this conceit in a letter to the influential Paullus Fabius Maximus in which he begs him to use his influence with Augustus
to secure the poet a safer place of exile. There appears to be a note of urgency in these lines in which Ovid imagines his possible fate (Pont. 1.2.103-112):

non petito ut bene sit, sed uti male tutius, utque
exilium saevo distet ab hoste meum,
quamque dedere mihi praesentia numina vitam,
non adimat stricto squalidus ense Getae:
denique, si moriar, subeam pacatius arvum,
ossa nec a Scythica nostra premantur humo,
nec male compositos, ut scilicet exule dignum,
Bistonii cineres ungula pulset equi,
et ne, si superest aliquis post funera sensus,
terreat et Manes Sarmatis umbra meos.

Ask not that I may be happy, but that I may be safer in my unhappiness,
That my place of exile may be distant from the cruel enemy;
That the life granted me by a very present deity
May not be taken from me by the drawn sword of some filthy Getan;
In fine, if I should die, that I may be buried in a more peaceful land
And my bones not be crushed down by Scythian soil,
Nor my ashes, meanly buried, as doubtless an exile deserves,
Be trampled by the foot of a Bistonian horse;
And if there be some feeling that survives after death,
That no Sarmatian shade terrify even my spirit.

For one, like Ovid, who had so carefully skirted the circumstances surrounding death and the fear of death in his earlier poetry, except where a part of the narrative, these exile passages are something new. The polished verse does not entirely conceal a real fear for the poet's own fate. The afterlife, however, is a shadowy footnote to the grimmer idea of death and burial far from home and loved ones.

In general Ovid's feel for household religion is extremely slight. This may reflect his early removal to Rome, and the possibility that his visits to the parental rural estate were infrequent. It may also reflect his parents' own feelings about the relative importance of household religion. As a modish poet of a new generation, Ovid tends to see traditional religion largely as a target for wit. At times he shows genuine interest in the picturesque
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aspects of ancient religion, but this rarely applies to the chief cults or the household gods. In exile his desire for home and his fear of death encourage him to use on occasion the household gods as symbols of what he desires. But his desire seems to be for Rome and his paternal acres and to have little or nothing to do with the gods or cults of the home or state.

Ovid's lack of concern for the shades of the dead is rather unusual, since many educated Romans feared ghosts. The closest Ovid comes to this very Roman sentiment is in the *Ibis*, written in exile against an enemy who was working against Ovid and his interests. Rather conventionally Ovid declares that his enmity for Ibis will continue even after death (139-144):

... nec mors mihi finiet iras,
      saeva sed innocuis manibus arma dabit.
tunc quoque, cum fuero vacuas dilapsus in auras,
exanimitis mores odirit umbra tuos,
tunc quoque factorum veniam memor umbra tuorum,
insequar et vultus ossea forma tuos.

...nor shall death end my wrath,
But give fierce weapons to my innocuous ghost.
Then also when I shall be scattered into tenuous air
My lifeless shade shall detest thy ways;
Then too shall I come, a shade that forgets not thy deeds,
And in bony shape shall I assail thy face.

Ovid goes on to list from mythology the various ways in which his shade will haunt Ibis (153-158):

quidquid ero, Stygiis crumpere nitar ab oris,
et tendam gelidas ultor in ora manus.
me vigilans cernes, tacitis ego noctis in umbri
      excutiam somnos visus adesse tuos.
denique quidquid ages, ante os oculosque volabo
      et querar, et nulla sede quietus eris.

Whatever I shall be, I shall strive to burst forth from the Stygian realm,
And shall stretch forth icy hands in vengeance against thy face.
Waking thou shalt behold me, in the silent shadows of the night
I shall appear before thee and drive away thy slumbers.
Finally, whatever thou dost I shall hover before thine eyes and countenance,  
And make complaint, and in no place shalt thou have repose.

Since Ovid was writing a poem of curses this picture of haunting fits in well with his subject.  
It shows how Ovid could adapt supernatural ideas to his purposes, but perhaps does not add to  
our knowledge of the poet's own beliefs.

The *Ibis* is animated by the passion of hatred, whereas passages concerning the shades of  
the dead in the *Metamorphoses* tend to be more strictly poetical. Ovid provides us with  
descents to the underworld respectively by Juno (*Met.*, IV.432-463), and by Orpheus (*X*.11-52)  
which touch on such traditional subjects as the punishment of sinners there. Somewhat more  
interesting for our purposes is the story of Ceyx and Alcyone (*XI*.410-750), especially the  
account of Juno sending Morpheus, disguised as the shade of Ceyx, to Alcyone (585-693).  
Although based on Homer and other traditional sources, it works out the process whereby the  
gods might send a shade from the house of Sleep (Somnus) to impersonate a dead mortal.  
Here Morpheus, son of Somnus, impersonates the drowned Ceyx, imitating the very  
appearance of a drowned man. The passage has no clear bearing on Ovid's own beliefs,  
except to indicate further his readiness to work with, expand on, travesty, or adapt to his  
purposes traditional materials relating to the afterlife and the underworld. It does, of course,  
tend to tell against any genuine communication between the living and the dead, even though  
they be the closest of lovers.

**Stoic Philosophy at Rome and in Ovid**

Next we come to W. W. Fowler's second item of surviving religious belief in the first  
century B.C., namely the tendency to identify Jupiter with the god of the Stoics in a manner  
tending towards monotheism. No doubt the tendency to reinterpret traditional Roman religion
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in terms of Stoicism was much talked about in this century, especially by such Stoicizing
writers as Posidonius, Varro, and Cicero. It is problematic, however, whether, with respect to
Jupiter at least, such a move produced any real impulse towards heightened religious feeling.
It would rather appear to be a move towards rationalising the Roman state religion in terms of
philosophy, than a religious impulse. No doubt for those well-disposed towards both
traditional Roman religion and Stoicism such an accommodation would tend to reinforce both
elements. It seems likely, however, that it was partly the void left by the disappearance of
traditional religious beliefs among the Roman upper classes which speeded the adoption of
Stoicism. That Stoicism could be used to buttress the declining state religion was indeed
fortunate, but one suspects that the real feeling and belief in such an arrangement is a belief in
Stoicism not in Jupiter or other aspects of Roman religion. We may include Jupiter, with the
other Roman deities, about whom Fowler comments:

They have all become the objects of the scorn of Lucretius, and they are destined to be
the sport of Propertius and Ovid.\(^{31}\)

If then there is something living in this religious eclecticism, we must look for it in Stoicism,
while admitting that we are looking at a Stoicism adapted to Roman attitudes and traditions.

Stoicism became a pervasive philosophy at Rome partly by taking on Roman colours. Its
basic tenet that the good and wise man was proof against all adversity appealed to the sturdy
independence of the Roman. Its ethical emphasis also seemed to evoke ancient Roman mores,
and was especially attractive in comparison to the self-pleasing morality of the Epicureans.
The popularizing of Stoic doctrines by Cicero, combined with his effective attacks on
Epicureanism, gave Stoicism added impetus. At the same time the Stoicizing suicide of Cato
the Younger in 47 B.C. gave the movement a hero and martyr of considerable proportions.

\(^{31}\)Fowler, Roman Ideas, p. 30.
Epicureanism, of course, lived on; given human nature it will never die out. But for those seriously interested in philosophy in the late first century B.C., and the early first century A.D., Stoicism was the obvious choice.

The Stoic teachers, Panactius and Posidonius, had made considerable efforts to accommodate Roman state religion within Stoicism. Posidonius, at least, had also made the Stoic god appear more attractive by attributing to him personal qualities not usually found in early Stoic pantheism. The idea that each man has a divine spark within him, (one might say, his Genius) which relates him to god, was also emphasized. Posidonius' views were also sympathetic to Pythagoreanism, an old mystical tradition which the Romans felt a certain proprietary feeling for. (Numa, the second king of Rome, legend held, had been a pupil of Pythagoras). With the decline of the old Roman religion there was a revived interest in spiritualism, reincarnation, divination and other occult practices at Rome which went under the heading of neo-Pythagoreanism. Roman Stoicism was, for the most part, rather accommodating to such ideas.

Among Roman authors, however, Ovid is remarkable for his lack of interest in Stoicism or formal philosophy. This is partly because Ovid lived at a time when poetry and rhetoric had become more central to intellectual and artistic life than philosophy; it is also because Ovid himself had little or no interest in formal philosophy. As Joseph Solodow notes:

"no poet can be imagined to whom philosophy was more uncongenial than to Ovid"

Similarly M. L. Clarke observes that for consolation in exile Ovid turns rather to poetry than philosophy and cites Tristia IV.10.117-118.33


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Since philosophy is rarely referred to in Ovid's works, we are left in doubt as to how many philosophers Ovid had actually read. It would be difficult to prove from his writings that Ovid had read any specific prose philosopher, although it is hard to believe that he had not looked at such Roman popularizers as Varro and Cicero at some time, since he was clearly a great reader. 34 A rare reference to Socrates raises this issue in pointed form. Despondent in exile, Ovid tells a friend who bid him amuse himself with poetry, that even the great wise man would not be able to write in the land of the Getae:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{des licet in valido pectus mihi robore fulsum,} \\
&\text{fama refert Anyti qualeuisse reo,} \\
&\text{fracta cadet tantae sapientia mole ruinae:} \\
&\text{plus valet humanis viribus ira dei.} \\
&\text{ille senex, dictus sapiens ab Apolline, nullum} \\
&\text{scribere in hoc casu sustinuisset opus.}
\end{align*}
\]

You may give me a heart supported by the mighty power
Which they say he possessed who was accused by Anytus,
But wisdom will fall with a crash under the mass of such a mighty ruin,
For the wrath of a god overpowers human strength.
That famous old man, called a sage by Apollo,
Would have had no power in this misfortune to write a single work.

This interesting passage demonstrates Ovid's disbelief in the power of philosophy to overcome misfortune, and leads us to wonder whether Ovid really thought that Socrates wrote the Socratic dialogues. This latter idea is a common "vulgar error". Ovid is aware that the philosopher's accuser was named Anytus, but this information might come from allusions in poetry, or from discussions in the schools of rhetoric. Although it seems unlikely that this casual reference reflects Ovidian ignorance, it is not possible to completely acquit the poet on this score. More likely it reflects the growing casualness of reference to Socrates in secondary

\[34\] E.J. Kenney, "Nequitiae Poeta", in Ovidiana: Recherches Sur Ovide ... Ed. N.I. Herescu, Paris, 1958, p. 207: "... there are impressive verbal coincidences which seem to me to prove that Ovid had read and drew upon Cicero's de Officiis for the Ars."
literature which points to general disinterest in formal philosophy. The Socratic writings are also alluded to in the *Ibis* 494. Here the reference is probably to an anecdote from an epigram by Callimachus (*Anth. Pal.* VII.471), in which a man leaps to his death inspired by the *Phaedo* of Plato (an interesting anticipation of Cato the Younger’s suicide).

Ovid’s Use of Lucretius and Philosophic Commonplaces

It seems likely that most of Ovid’s philosophic information was second-hand, first through the poets, (most substantially through Lucretius), but also through scattered references throughout the Alexandrian and Roman poets. Secondly, philosophy was sometimes used as a basis of argument in declamations (e.g., *Controversiae* I.3 in Seneca the Elder turns partly on the question, “Do the gods concern themselves with individuals?”). It is, therefore, likely that Ovid may have picked up a smattering of philosophic commonplaces during his schooldays. It is notable indeed that the rhetoricians of this and later times were generally hostile to, and sometimes contemptuous of, philosophy. Ovid may, therefore, have been imbued with a prejudice against it. The younger Seneca says of his father, an older contemporary of Ovid, that he “detested philosophy”—*philosophiam oderat* (*Ep.* CVIII.22). Such prevalent attitudes help to explain Ovid’s indifference.

The one philosopher whom Ovid refers to extensively is the Epicurean poet Lucretius. Lucretius was remarkable among the Romans both for his interest in physical science and for his apparent freedom from popular superstition. Ovid praises him first in his roll call of famous poets in *Amores* I.15.23-24, and refers to him again in *Tristia* II.425-426. As did Vergil, Ovid sounds the Lucretian note whenever he wishes to appear philosophical. Like Vergil too (e.g., *Georg.* II. 490 ff.) Ovid seems to challenge Lucretius’ Epicureanism on some
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points. Like the Stoics and traditional Romans he speaks against the Epicurean belief that the
gods exist but do nothing—a belief injurious to the state religion (Ars Am, I.637-642):

expedit esse deos, et, ut expedit, esse putemus;
dentur in antiquos tura merumque focos;
nec secura quies illos similisque sopori

deinet; innocue vivite: numen adest;
reddite depositum; pietas sua foedera servet:
fraus absit; vacuas caedis habete manus.

It is expedient there should be gods, and as it is expedient let us deem that gods
exist;
Let incense and wine be poured on the ancient hearths;
Nor does careless quiet like unto slumber hold them;
Live innocently, gods are nigh;
Return what is given to your keeping; let duty keep her covenant;
Let fraud be absent; keep your hands clean of blood.

Ovid was willing to pay lip service from time to time to the state religion, since
traditionally Romans had held that it and such moral observances as Ovid lists here were
necessary for the continuance of the state. Like many Romans, Ovid may have felt that the
strict Lucretian relegation of the gods to the spaces between the worlds was too dogmatic to be
comfortable. We may compare the attitude of Henry IV of France: "Paris is well worth a
mass". So too Rome was worth acquiescence in public worship.

Ovid also turns around Lucretian teachings in Pythagoras' speech (Metamorphoses XV.75-
478) which nonetheless contains many Lucretian echoes. As Lucretius had attempted to
conquer the fear of death by arguing that there was no afterlife of punishment since the soul
was mortal, so Ovid's Pythagoras argues that there is no afterlife of punishment because the
soul does not die but continues to take new shapes (Met. XV.153-159). It seems likely that
Ovid's Ars Amatoria takes some hints from the Lucretian discussion of sex (De Rerum Natura
XV.1030-1287), and Phillip DeLacy sees Lucretian influence in Ovid's description of the

Although Ovid declines to embrace doctrinaire Epicureanism (although one might loosely attribute Epicureanism to him) he shows little interest in Stoicism. No Stoic author is mentioned in his writings, and such Stoic notions as he refers to appear to be chiefly popular philosophic commonplaces. DeLacy argues that Ovid, in the manner of a rhetorician, freely chooses philosophical ideas that will best suit his poetic design. Thus when Ovid wishes to use a creation account he finds Stoic ideas most suitable at Fasti I.89 ff. and Metamorphoses I.5 ff. 36 and Epicurean ideas best at Ars Amatoria II.467 ff. The wider circulation of Stoic ideas at Ovid's time account for their frequent occurrence in such an unStoic writer as Ovid; in fact, general popular philosophy in Ovid's time tended to be diluted Stoicism. Ovid's lack of enthusiasm is seen in his often perfunctory treatment of Stoic themes, as in his carelessness in identifying which god it was who brought order out of pramaeval Chaos (Met. I.21):

hanc deus et melior litem natura diremit.

God—or kindlier Nature—composed this strife.

And again at Met. I. 32-33, Ovid writes:

sic ubi dispositam quisquis fuit ille deorum
congeriem secuit sectamque in membra coegit ...

When he, whoever of the gods it was, had thus arranged in order
And resolved that chaotic mass, and reduced it, thus resolved, to cosmic parts ...

DeLacy argues that Ovid's uses of philosophic references do not appear to indicate any personal commitment to these philosophies:


34Ibid.
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Ovid wrote a great variety of poems, and he used at one time or another a wide range of philosophical doctrines. It would, I think, be futile to collect these doctrines, arrange them into a system, and call it Ovid's philosophy. It would be more fruitful to view each instance of philosophical doctrine as appropriate to the context in which it appears, and to recognize from the start that for Ovid the use of philosophy is simply a part of poetic technique.  

Looking at Ovid's poems from exile DeLacy writes that Ovid adapts his philosophy to the subject and his audience. He notes the Stoic tone of *Tristia* III.7.43-52, which he quotes, and concludes:

> This elevation of the goods of the mind above country, home, and life itself is indeed worthy of a Stoic, and the assertion that these higher goods are beyond Caesar's power could hardly have been better expressed by Epictetus himself.

In this poem Ovid had gloried in his poetic self-sufficiency, and had predicted his future fame. DeLacy contrasts *Tristia* III.4, in which Ovid urges a friend to shun renown since that exposes one to danger. Here Ovid adopts an Epicurean commonplace, *lathe biosas* ("live unnoticed"). DeLacy indicates how one poem reverses the ideas of the other. His conclusion is that Ovid throughout his career continued to use philosophy as the occasion demanded:

> ... so far as we may judge from his poems, he retained even then [in exile] the attitude that philosophical doctrines provide a suitable device for heightening an effect, rather than that they are valuable in themselves as aids in understanding the world or in overcoming its evils. For Ovid still refuses to adopt any one constant view of his misfortunes. As his mood varies from one poem to another, the philosophic doctrines by which he supports his mood also tend to vary. It is this fact that leads me to believe that even to the last Ovid subordinated philosophy to poetic technique.

Although doctrines of various philosophers (Heraclitus, Empedocles, Plato) have been isolated in the philosophical parts of the *Metamorphoses*, it is quite possible that Ovid knew these

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37Ibid.

38Ibid., p. 159.

39Ibid.
ideas chiefly at second-hand. As DeLacy points out, his eclectic use of philosophy is typical of his time.

Pythagoras, Ovid, and Popular Philosophy

DeLacy notes the appropriateness of the Pythagorean doctrines to the theme of metamorphosis. He argues, moreover, that Ovid borrows commonplaces from various schools (Stoic, Heraclitean, Epicurean, Pythagorean) which touch on change. DeLacy further claims that by producing a philosophic equivalent for his mythical metamorphoses, Ovid is elaborating a kind of tour de force:

In joining philosophy to mythology Ovid has added a certain richness to his poem, but in another sense he has combined two things that do not go together; for no school of ancient philosophy would seriously consider the possibility of accepting on philosophical grounds the fantastic tales of the Metamorphoses. Ovid’s device of philosophizing the myths can only be considered as an entertaining paradox, not as a serious intellectual effort. 40

Since the tone of the Metamorphoses is, on the whole, light and airy, it is appropriate, thinks DeLacy, that the philosophic sections themselves should be somewhat archly set forth:

... this incongruity between myth and philosophy is appropriate to Ovid’s poem; for, although Ovid himself lists the Metamorphoses among his more serious efforts, yet it has many features of the lusus, the light and entertaining poetry that was so popular among the Augustans. Now to introduce serious and profound thoughts into such a poem would be to destroy its dominant mood, unless the serious thoughts are themselves put into a context that destroys their seriousness. So Ovid, by an incongruous combination of philosophy and myth, has been able to use philosophical doctrines as devices for creating a non-philosophical mood. 41

While allowing for some humorous juxtaposition in Ovid’s mixing of philosophy and myth, we may also remember that at this very time there were efforts by philosopher-

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40Ibid., pp. 156-157.
41Ibid.
declaimers such as Papirius Fabianus to bring popularized philosophy before a larger audience. Such speakers and writers, of whom Seneca the Younger is now the best-known, did not despise the use of epigram, poetry, and rhetorical figures to embellish their theme. Ovid's Pythagorean speech may not then differ so radically from popular philosophic declamations of the time. No doubt Ovid for the most part withholds any commitment to what Pythagoras is saying, and even exaggerates it for humorous effect. This does not necessarily mean that Ovid is merely making an elaborate joke, or that, as Syme suggests, the speech of Pythagoras is chiefly a bridge between Greece and Italy:

Pythagoras is a structural device for bringing Greek mythology into relation with the legendary history of Italy, because of good king Numa; and Pythagoras might lend ostensible support at the end to the long sequence of transmutations.\textsuperscript{42}

This may be true, but it is not exhaustive. If metamorphosis is a theme particularly to Ovid's liking, it is not impossible that his rationalization of this theme may contain fragments of his own personal beliefs.

Some, such as Joseph Solodow, have considered the lack of philosophic rigour in Pythagoras' speech as an argument against its having any seriousness or personal import:

The whole business is but a brief for vegetarianism ... Ovid stands Pythagoreanism on its head. Elevated concepts like metempsychosis and the immortality of the soul, instead of giving rise to vegetarianism as a logically entailed consequence, are subordinated to it; they are introduced merely to give it some support ...\textsuperscript{43}

It might be added here that vegetarianism has always been popularly considered a central tenet of Pythagoras and that this has never been more true than it was in Ovid's day. We detect a feeling of interest in and compassion for animals already in Lucretius, a feeling which widens and deepens in Vergil. Roughly at this time lived Quintus Sextius, an eclectic teacher


\textsuperscript{43}Solodow, \textit{The World of Ovid's Metamorphoses}, p. 165.
who combined Pythagoreanism and Stoicism. Sextius was strong on vegetarianism and yet his reasons according to Sotion (reported by Seneca, Epistles CVIII.17-19) were distinct from Pythagoras'. Since Pythagoras' reasons were based on the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, it follows that Sextius did not entirely hold with that doctrine. Seneca’s account has Sextius speaking against the cruelty and needlessness of killing animals for food, in a manner which Ovid’s verse often echoes:

_Hic homini satis alimentorum citra sanguinem esse credebat et crudelitatis consuetudinem fieri, ubi in voluptatem esset adducta laceratio. Adiebat contrahendam materiam esse luxuriae; colligebat bonae valitudini contraria esse alimenta varia et nostris aliena corporibus._

Sextius believed that man had enough sustenance without resorting to blood and that a habit of cruelty is formed whenever butchery is practised for pleasure. Moreover, he thought we should curtail the sources of our luxury; he argued that a varied diet was contrary to the laws of health, and was unsuited to our constitutions.

Although Sotion, Seneca's own teacher, emphasized the transmigration of souls as a reason for vegetarianism, he also appealed to his listeners to avoid eating meat for more naturalistic reasons (Seneca, Ep. CVIII.21):

_Si vera sunt ista, abstinuisse animalibus innocentia est; si falsa, frugalitas est. Quod istic cre dulitatis tuae damnun est? alimenta tibi leonum et vultumum eripio._

If the theory [of transmigration] is true, it is a mark of purity to refrain from eating flesh; if it be false, it is economy. And what harm does it do to you to give such credence? I am merely depriving you of food which sustains lions and vultures.

Such optional beliefs and multiple reasonings may have had a similar appeal for the mature Ovid as they had for the youthful Seneca. Frinkel summarizes Sextius' and Sotion's arguments against meat-eating as follows:

... to live as vegetarians, for three reasons: because nature provided an ample variety of nourishing foods, so that there was no need to resort to bloody slaughter; because the killing of beasts and the devouring of their flesh would inure to cruelty those who practiced it, and could easily lead them on to murder human beings; and lastly, because Pythagoras had revealed that human souls, migrating from one incarnation to
many others, are often incorporated in animal bodies, so that the eating of meat falls little short of cannibalism.\textsuperscript{44}

It seems from Seneca's account of Sextius and Sotion that it was not entirely clear in the world of popular neo-Pythagoreanism whether vegetarianism or metempsychosis held the upper hand. Fränkel intimates that Ovid may have had Sotion in mind for his picture of Pythagoras preaching his doctrines:

The argumentation of Sotion, as recorded by Seneca (\textit{Epist.} 108.17-22), is all but identical with that of the Ovidian Pythagoras, and it is remarkable that both isolate from the rest the argument derived from reincarnation, rather than using it as the final climax for the arguments from cruelty.\textsuperscript{45}

We cannot expect Ovid to attempt or achieve the seriousness of a poet such as Vergil. In a long poem such as the \textit{Metamorphoses} the poet may nonetheless find room for what E. K. Rand judiciously calls "serious relief".\textsuperscript{46} It is in extensive half-serious passages that we may expect Ovid to hint at his feelings, allowing that he was not one to "wear his heart upon his sleeve". The length, position, and relative seriousness of the Pythagoras passage in the \textit{Metamorphoses} hints at least that Ovid was interested in animals, vegetarianism, and perhaps neo-Pythagoreanism to a degree. This can be partly confirmed with references to other passages in Ovid's works.

\textbf{Vegetarianism, neo-Pythagoreanism, and Animal Sacrifice}

Solodow himself points out that in the important flood passage (\textit{Met.} 1.262-312), Ovid focuses more on the animals than on the people:

\textsuperscript{44}Fränkel, \textit{Ovid: A Poet Between Two Worlds}, p. 108.

\textsuperscript{45}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 224-225, footnotes 97 and 98.

Though the flood is Jupiter's punishment of mankind, Ovid seems more interested in the fate of the animals.\(^{47}\)

Like Lucretius and Vergil, Ovid uses the cow grieving for its calf as a picture of great sorrow.

Phoebus' laments for Coronis are thus described (Met. II. 621-625):

\[
\begin{align*}
tum vero gemitus (neque enim caelestia tingui
ora licet lacrimis) alto de corde petitos
edidit, haud aliter quam cum spectante iuvenca
lactentis vituli dextra libratus ab auro
tempora discussit claro cava malleus icu.
\end{align*}
\]

Then indeed—for the cheeks of the heavenly gods may not be wet with tears—
From his deep heart he uttered piteous groans;
Such groans as the young cow utters when before her eyes
The hammer high poised from beside the right ear
Crashes with its resounding blow through the hollow temples of her suckling calf.

Ovid's oft-expressed distaste for animal sacrifice is perhaps operative in the same book (714-721) when Mercury hovering over the girls of the Panathenaic Procession is compared to a kite (cf. Sotion's vulture):

\[
\begin{align*}
inde revertentes deus adspicit ales iterque
non agit in rectum, sed in orbem curvat cundem:
ut volucris visis rapidissima milius exitis,
dum timet et densi circumstant sacra ministri,
flectitur in gyrum nec longius audet abire
spemque suam motis avidus circumvolat alis,
sic super Actaeas agilis Cyllenus arces
inclinat cursus et easdem cirrnat auras.
\end{align*}
\]

The winged god saw them as they were returning home and directed his way towards them,
Not straight down but sweeping in such a curve
As when the swift kite has spied the fresh-slain sacrifice,
Afraid to come down while the priests are crowded around the victim,
And yet not venturing to go quite away, he circles around in air
And on flapping wings greedily hovers over his
hoped-for prey;
So did the nimble Mercury fly round the Athenian hill,
Sweeping in circles through the same spaces of air.

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In Pythagoras' speech man's inhumanity towards animals is linked with sacrilege in offering the flesh of animals to the gods. Ovid describes the horrors of the sacrifice (Met. XV.130-137):

victimæ labes carens et præstantissima forma
(nam placuisse nocet vitis insignis et auro
sstitur ante aras auditque ignara precanem
inponisque suae videt inter cornua fronti,
quas coluit, fruges percussaque sanguine cultros
inficit in liquida praevisos forsitum unda.
protinus creptas viventi pectore fibras
inspicient sanctosque deum scrutantur in illis ...

A victim without blemish and of perfect form
(For beauty proves his bane), marked off with fillets and with gilded horns,
Is set before the altars, hears the priest's prayer, not knowing what it means,
Watches the barley-meal sprinkled between his horns,
Barley which he himself laboured to produce, and then, smitten to his death,
He stains with his blood the knife which he has perchance already seen reflected in the clear pool
Straightway they tear his entrails from his living breast,
View them with care, and seek to find revealed in them the purposes of heaven.

Ovid seems particularly interested in the progress of inhumanity to animals as reflected in animal sacrifices. Like others he views the offering of a labouring ox by its master as particularly uncouth, especially as it makes the gods accomplices (127-129):

nee satis est, quod talem nefas committitur: ipsos
inscripte deos sceleri numenque supernum
caede laboriferi credunt gaudere iuvencis!

Nor is it enough that we commit such infamy:
They made the gods themselves partners of their crime
And they affected to believe that the heavenly ones took pleasure in the blood of the toiling bullock!

The same themes are employed in Ovid's Fasti. In his account of the worship of Ceres he emphasizes that oxen are not offered to her (Fasti, IV.413-416):

a bove succincti cultros removete ministri:
bovem arct; ignavam sacrificato suem.
apta iugo cervix non est fierienda securi:
vivat et in dura saepe laboret humo.

Ye attendants, with tuck’d up robes, take the knives away from the ox;
Let the ox plough, sacrifice the lazy sow.
The axe should never smite the neck that fits the yoke;
Let him live and often labour in the hard soil.

Earlier in the Fasti (I.337-456) Ovid describes the crimes for which, according to legend
and myth, animals were sacrificed to particular deities. He notes (as later in Metamorphoses
XV) how nearly every creature is the victim of some rite (Fasti I.383-384):

quid tuti superest, animam cum ponat in aris
lanigerumque pecus nuricolaeque boves?

What creature is safe, when even the wool-bearing sheep
And ploughing oxen lay down their lives upon the altars?

Ovid reflects poetically on the fates of birds who are considered useful for augury. Ovid
here assents to this idea, but somewhat undercuts it with his picture of the greedy gods
awaiting the sacrifice (I.447-450):

nec tamen hoc falsum: nam, dis ut proxima quacque,
nunc penna veras, nunc datis ore notas.
tuta diu volucrum proles tum denique caesa est,
juvernumque deos indicis exta sui.

Nor is the charge untrue; for the nearer ye are to the gods,
The true are the signs ye give, whether by wing or voice.
Long time immune, the brood of birds was slaughtered then at last,
And the gods gloated on the guts of the talebearing fowls.

Much of what Ovid has to say about the fate of animals belongs as much to the poets
(e.g., Vergil and Tibullus) as it does to the neo-Pythagoreans. The myth of the Golden Age
was a popular one in Rome during the first century B.C. Nonetheless Ovid’s common concern
with animals certainly reflects popular sentiments tinged with Pythagoreanism, and suggests
the possibility that Ovid acquiesced in some of these notions.
Perhaps the most common reference to animals in Ovid is as a comparison for human sexual passions. Throughout the Ars Amatoria animals are cited as examples and exemplars of passion (Ars Am. II.481-88):

ales habet, quod amat; cum quo sua gaudia iungat,
    invenit in media femina piscis aqua;
cerva parem sequitur, serpens serpente tenetur,
    haeret adulterio cum cane nixa canis;
laeta salitur ovis: tauro quoque laeta iuvenca est:
    sustinet inmundum sima capella marem;
in furias agitantur equae, spatioque remota
    per loca dividuos amne sequuntur equos.

The bird has one he may love; in mid-sea the female fish
Finds one with whom to unite in pleasure;
The hind follows her mate, serpent is clasped by serpent,
The hound is joined in clinging lechery to the bitch;
Gladly the ewe endures the leap, the heifer rejoices in the bull,
The snub-nosed goat supports her unclean lord;
Mares are excited to frenzy, and through regions far removed
Follow the stallions, though streams divide them.

As an example of female lechery Ovid tells the story of Pasiphae at length (Ars Am. 1.289-326). This is his most blatant account of human-animal sexual intercourse, although such overtones are also found in the stories of Io, Europa, and other amours of Jupiter in animal shape. All in all these tend to signify that Ovid made no marked distinction between human and animal lust. Certainly by emphasizing this common factor, it is possible to blur some other distinctions between men and beasts.

How far then did Ovid’s neo-Pythagoreanism go? As Cumont notes, Posidonius was a key figure in the approach to a Stoic-Pythagorean synthesis, and in his own system Posidonius made considerable room for the supernatural:

In this vast syncretism all superstitions, popular and sacerdotal, soothsaying, divination, magic, find their place and their justification; but above all it was due to
him that astrology entered into a coherent explanation of the world, acceptable to the most enlightened intellects ... 48

Cumont sums up the chief tenets of Roman neo-Pythagoreanism as follows:

A marked dualism, which contrasts the soul with the body, and, as a consequence, a moral asceticism, a doctrine of the eternity of the universe and of the influence of the stars on the constant changes of the sublunar world, a belief in airy demons who defile and torment mankind, but above all ... a symbolism of numbers, to which is attributed an active force and a mystic power ... 49

This hardly seems an apt description of Ovid's beliefs, even allowing that the popular philosophy might differ from the esoteric one. It seems likely that Ovid found some tenets of Pythagoreanism, especially kindness to animals, to his liking, but it is doubtful if he went much further than that. If he did, it cannot be proven from the evidence of the poetry.

Witchcraft and Love Magic in Ovid

Ovid, like other elegists, makes much use of witchcraft and magic as colour for his verse, but he goes further than his predecessors in specifically rejecting their use. The Medicamina Faciei, Ars Amatoria, and the Remedias Amoris contain a dismissal of love potions together with a statement of disbelief in magical powers. Thus the Medic. (35-42):

sic potius iungendus amor quam fortibus herbis,
quas magna terribili subsecta arte manus.
nec vos graminibus nec mixto credite suo,
nec temptate nocens virus amantis equae;
nec medique Marsis fuduntur canibus angues,
nec redit in fontes unda supina suos;
et quamvis aliquid Temesaeae removere aera,
nunquam Luna suis excitetur equis.


49Ibid., pp. 49-50.
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Thus is love to be united rather than by strong herbs,
Which the hand of the sorceress gathers as she plies her terrible craft.
Trust not to grasses nor to mixture of juices,
Nor attempt the noxious venom of an infatuated mare;
Snakes are not split in twain by Marsian spells,
Nor does the wave stream backward to its fount;
And though one has clashed the bronze of Temese,
The moon will never be shaken from out her car.

Here Ovid contradicts popular notions of the power of witches. In the Ars Ovid is equally clear that magic and love potions will not control love (II.99-107):

fallitut, Haemonias sichis decurrunt ad artes,
datque quod a teneri fronte revellit equi,
non facient, ut vivat amor, Medeides herbae
mixtique cum magis nenia Marsa sonis.
Phasiae Aeschniden, Circe tenuisset Ulixem,
si modo servari carmine posset amor.
nec data profuerint pallentia philtra puellis:  
philtra nocent animis, vire quies furoris habent.
sit prouci omne nefas; ut amem, amabilis esto ...

Deceived is he whoever has recourse to Haemonian arts,
And gives what he tears from the forehead of a foal.
Medean herbs will not keep love alive,
Nor Marsian charm united to magic sounds.
The Phasian had kept the son of Aeson, Circe had kept Ulysses,
If love could be saved by spells alone.
Nor will pale philtras given to girls profit:
Philtras affect the mind and have power to madden,
Far hence be all unholy deeds! that you may be loved, be lovable ...

Once again Ovid rejects magic and drugs in favour of less drastic approaches. He may have been influenced by Roman laws against magic, and by the unfortunate ill effects of love potions. Nonetheless it seems best to take this as a statement of the poet's disbelief in witchcraft and magic. This does not preclude a certain poetic interest in the subject, as in Ovid's long descriptions of Medea at work (Met. VII. esp. 179-321).

References to witchcraft and love magic are scattered throughout the Amores, but are fairly conventional. The magic powers of the bawd Dipsas are described at length (Am. I.8.5-
18). Ovid’s girlfriend loses her hair, but not because of witchcraft (I.14.39-40). Song has power to accomplish great things (II.1.23-28), and the poet’s song can act like a mighty spell. The poet wonders elsewhere whether his sudden impotence might be a result of witchcraft (III.7.27-36). All these are fairly standard elegiac conceits, and not to be taken very seriously.

A third lengthy warning against witchcraft occurs in the Remedia Amoris (249-288), which repeats and expands on those in the Medicamina Faciei and the Ars. By this time we suspect that Ovid has added the magic resuscatio to his repertoire; yet the uniformity is convincing.

Rejection of Divination and Supernaturalism in the Schools of Rhetoric

It is at least possible that Ovid’s apparent disbelief in magic, divination, and the occult was influenced by his rhetorical teachers and their audience. In particular, Ovid was a pupil of Arelius Fuscus who often liked to give his speeches a religious slant (Seneca the Elder, Controversiae, I.1.16). In his suasoriae or deliberative speeches Fuscus generally rejected divination. In opposing Agamemnon’s sacrifice of Iphigenia he said that (Suas, III.3):

...etiamsi non immolasset, navigatum; illam enim moram naturae, maris et ventorum, esse: deorum voluntatem ab hominibus non intellet.

...Agamemnon would eventually sail even if he did not make the sacrifice; there were natural causes for the delay, sea and winds; the will of the gods was inscrutable to mortals.

The fourth suasoria which Seneca the Elder records concerns chiefly Fuscus’ arguments against divination. In this speech Fuscus urges that Alexander the Great would be unwise to heed an augur who warned him of danger if he entered Babylon. The basic argument is sarcasm. Surely, says Fuscus, an augur must be a wonderful person if the gods are so concerned to pass messages on to him. Why then do not all men study divination? Fuscus goes on to dismiss the accuracy of predication (Suas, IV.3):
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Incertae enim sortis vivimus: unique ista pro ingenio finguntur, non ex fide.

For the destiny under which we live is uncertain. These are fictions devised for individuals as a show of cleverness, not from any belief in them.

Seneca goes on to quote with approval the argument Fuscus used to reject dreams as a guarantee of truth. Following Epicureanism, Fuscus rejects divine guidance in everyday life and quotes in support Dido’s Epicurean argument against Aeneas’ claim that the gods wish him to leave (ibid., IV.4):

Fuscus ... tractaret locum contra somnia et deorum providentiam et male de magnitudine eorum dixisset mereri eum qui illos circa puerperas mitteret, summis clamoribus illum dixit Vergili versum:

scilicet is superis labor est, ea cura quietos sollicitat.

Developing the commonplace against dreams and divine providence, he said that anyone who sent the gods out to minister at childbirths was undervaluing their greatness. And amid loud applause he recited the line of Vergil:

Naturally that is a task for the gods, that is a care
That troubles them in their calm.

While the applause here may have been for skilful quotation, it seems likely that the sentiments expressed had some part in it too. Possibly then the youthful Ovid was also impressed by his teacher’s arguments against supernatural influence in day-to-day life. The popularity of such arguments within the schools likely made an impression in favour of them on Ovid.

Along the same lines is a story which Seneca tells about Ovid’s friend and contemporary Junius Gallio (cf. Pont. IV.11). According to Seneca, Gallio was much taken with the Vergilian phrase (apparently a reference to the Sibyl) plena deo ("she was full of the god"). He used this phrase to describe any enthusiastic orator who poured forth a torrent of words. According to Gallio (Suas. III.6-7), Ovid also liked the jocular use of the phrase, and used it in
his tragedy *Medea*. This usage suggests a joking scepticism about divine inspiration. Even so a few of the *literati* such as the grammarian Lucius Crassicius, whose pupils included Iullus Antonius, became followers of Quintus Sextius (Suet. *Gram.*, XVIII).

**Astrology and Reincarnation in Ovid**

Unlike his contemporaries the Emperors Augustus and Tiberius and the poet Manilius, Ovid seems to have had little concern for astrology. He was, however, interested in the poetic and mythical side of astronomical lore and refers to the stories of constellations especially in the *Fasti* and the *Metamorphoses*. He translated or imitated the most popular of the Hellenistic star poems, Aratus’ *Phaenomena*. In the *Fasti* (I.295-310) he also speaks well of astronomy and astronomers. Sky-lore is nonetheless rather incidental in his work (e.g., *Met.* XIII.291-295). It has long been remarked that the astronomical portions of the *Fasti* are defective, probably owing to Ovid’s blind following of his sources.

Reference to astrology itself tends to be perfunctory (e.g., *Amores* I.8.29-30). *Metamorphoses* I.148 contains a negative reference to divination, perhaps by astrology. There is, therefore, no clear indication that Ovid was a believer, and rather the contrary is indicated.

Like astrology, the belief in reincarnation was much in the air during Ovid’s time. Perhaps it attracted some (as it does today) as a religion for the irreligious—a belief in the afterlife which exacted no prerequisites. As Tolstoy said of nominal Christianity in his own day, it was just another form of Epicureanism—one had the pleasure of contemplating one’s personal survival. There is, at least, in the speech of Ovid’s Pythagoras no obvious moral or spiritual imperatives connected with reincarnation, except abstaining from meat. This immortality at bargain rates could easily be added on to any kind of religion or irreligion.
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Reincarnation, however, makes little impact on the literature of the day. A curious exception, however, is one that may have come to Ovid's notice very early in his career. The Panegyricus Messallae was addressed to Ovid's first patron Messalla about the time that Ovid began his studies in Rome. While Ovid may not have known the poem, it does show that ideas of reincarnation were current in the circle which Ovid was shortly to join. After some 200 lines of fulsome praise of Messalla, the poet concludes (P.M. 204-211):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{quin etiam mea tunc tumulus cum texcit ossa,} \\
\text{seu matura dies celerem properat mihi mortem,} \\
\text{longa manet seu vita, tamen, mutata figura} \\
\text{seu me finget equum rigidos percurrere campos} \\
\text{docutum seu tardi pecoris sim gloria taurus} \\
\text{sive ego per liquidum volucris vehar aera pennis,} \\
\text{quandocumque hominem me longa receperit actas,} \\
\text{inceptis de te subtextam camina chartis.}
\end{align*}
\]

Nay, more even then when the grave has covered my bones,  
Whether the appointed day haste betimes to bring me a speedy end  
Or a long life awaits me, whether a change of shape  
Shall make me a horse that is trained to scour the unyielding plains  
Or I am a bull, the pride of the stow herd,  
Or a bird, borne on wings through the flowing air,  
Nonetheless, when lapse of ages receives me back among mankind,  
Will I weave verse to append to the pages I had begun to write on thee.

For better or worse no such enthusiasm for reincarnation is found in Ovid outside of Pythagoras' speech. Ovid may, nonetheless, have found the notion appealing.

Fate, Fortune, and "The Gods" as Popular Concepts

Among other tendencies in First Century Roman religion, there was, says Fowler:

a growing habit among all strata of society in that age, so full of uncertainty for human life and property, to look away from the old ideas of protecting power ... and to recognise and eventually to adore, a principle (if such a word may be used of it) of blind chance or irresistible fate ...

\[50\] Fowler, Roman Ideas, pp. 12-13.
There seems always to have been among the Greeks and Romans a feeling of helplessness and despondency about man's lot. Well aware of the evils of this life and, having little hope of compensation after death, ancient man struggled to cope with forces beyond his control. The individualism of the Greeks and the independent attitude of the Romans, however, made them less than completely acquiescent in the decrees of Fate or the gods. Lattimore thus expresses it:

a belief in fate does not necessarily lead to a resigned, "fatalistic" acceptance of death; on the contrary, there is an uncomfortable feeling that one is at the mercy of certain gods, vague but powerful, quick-tempered and vindictive, whom one would be careful not to irritate if one only knew how to keep from doing it.\(^\text{31}\)

The loss of confidence in local cults and deities only increased the unease of those wishing to be at peace with the forces behind their world. For some, like the philosophers and scientists, the elaboration of naturalistic explanations of phenomena was greatly to be wished, and they were glad to reduce the gods to "gods of the gaps", to be called on only when human ingenuity failed. The Epicureans literally placed the gods in the gaps between the various worlds, and out of touch with human endeavour. The philosophic historian Polybius preferred to trace causes back to nature, but allowed that unaccountable things could be ascribed to God or Fortune (Polybius XXXVI.17). The various schools of philosophy provided accounts of the powers behind the universe, but the syncretism of the time resulted in popular confusion as to God, Fate, Fortune, Nature and Providence. The decline of traditional faith added to the confusion about the powers, if any, which were in control. Fowler writes:

This was a time when thinking men had dropped their polytheism, and yet were far from clear about any divine agency that might take its place. The vagueness of their ideas is reflected in the diversity of terms they use ... Neither in terms of religion nor

\[^{31}\text{Richmond Lattimore, Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs, p. 158.}\]
philosophy are they able to express those vague ideas adequately, yet they are ready to use the first of either of the two categories that happens to come uppermost.\textsuperscript{52}

The Stoics, however, were generally consistent in acknowledging Fate which they usually identified with God. Their god was indeed impersonal, but nonetheless in some sense benevolent. Since the future was marked out by Fate, divination was possible, and, at least from Posidonius on, most Stoics accepted astrology. Panaceus, however, denied divination, as compromising human free will. He emphasized the importance of human endeavour, which indeed most Stoics did, on the ethical side. St. George Stock thus sums up Epictetus' teaching:

God's will is certain to come about, whether we wish it or not. What is in our power is to make ourselves happy by a cheerful assent to it, or miserable by a futile resistance.\textsuperscript{53}

To the Stoics the great enemy was Fortune, the god of this world, which gave false gifts and held out false hopes to men. Chances for fame, wealth, and influence were especially to be rejected, unless accepted in a true Stoic spirit. According to Seneca the Younger (\textit{Ep. CXVIII.4}) the wise man addresses Fortune as follows:

\begin{quote}
\end{quote}

Fortune, I have nothing to do with you. I am not at your service. I know that men like Cato are spurned by you, and men like Vatinius made by you. I ask no favours.

Elsewhere Seneca approvingly quotes Posidonius on the need to be armed within against the external changes wrought by Fortune (\textit{Ep. CXIII.28}):

\begin{quote}
Non est quod unquam fortunae armis putes esse te tutum; tuis pugna. Contra ipsam fortuna non armat; itaque contra hostes instructi, contra ipsam inemines sunt.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{52}Fowler, ibid., pp. 70-71.

There are never any occasions when you need think yourself safe because you wield the weapons of Fortune; fight with your own! Fortune does not furnish arms against herself; hence men equipped against their foes are unarmed against Fortune herself.

Seneca considers Fate the irrevocable course set by God, which man cannot alter externally, but should consent to internally. Fate is always for the best. Divination is possible, though dubious, but prayers and sacrifices will not change the course of events (Nat. Quaest. II. 35.2-36.1):

Fata alterius suum peragunt nec ulla commovoentur prece. Non misericaedon flecti, non gratia sciant. Cursum irrevocabilem ingessa ex destinato fluunt... Hanc si sacrificis aut capite niveae agnae exorari iudicas, divina non nosti.

The fates perform their function otherwise and are not moved by any prayer. The fates do not know how to be turned by pity or by favour. Once started upon an irrevocable course they flow on in accordance with an unalterable plan ... If you think this is averted by sacrifices or by the head of a snow-white lamb, you do not understand the divine.

Seneca imagines possible objections both to Fate and Fortune on grounds of free will. Some are unhappy with the idea that everything is determined by Fate, so that individual initiative is limited; others are unhappy that Fortune provides an indeterminate world in which planning is impossible (Ep. XVI.4-5). He replies (like Epictetus) that philosophy will teach us to follow God (Fate) cheerfully, but to endure Fortune.

The testimony of epitaphs shows that these matters were of concern to the average man, who nonetheless was somewhat at a loss concerning who to blame for the unpleasant aspects of life and death. According to Lattimore sometimes death or misfortune is accepted with resignation as the normal course of events. More often, however, it is regarded as divine interference, and many epitaphs, says Lattimore, characterize
fate or the Fates, like Fortune, as deities which can at any time step into the course of a life and alter it at will for good or evil ... Usually there is occasion in such epitaphs to think of these controlling powers as capriciously cruel ...\textsuperscript{54}

Lattimore sees this dual attitude towards both Fortune and Fate as merely the subjective and objective side of the same idea. Fate and Fortune may appear impersonal to the detached observer but personal and malignant to a grieving parent:

She [Fortune] may be characterized either as the way of things, subject neither to praise nor blame, or (more commonly) as a willful meddling goddess who delights in confused mortal designs and disappointed hopes; but this twofold character rests, I should think, rather on the different attitudes of her worshippers than on two separate metaphysical concepts. The same idealization looks very different to an impartial historian recording wars fought long ago and a citizen who has lost a promising son.\textsuperscript{55}

Tolman considers that Fate and Fortune were more often in the popular mind than are the individual gods:

... if the average Roman believed in the existence and guiding interest of such deities as Jupiter, Mars, Juno, Minerva, or Apollo, he did not regard it of enough consequence to mention the fact, nevertheless one cannot assert that he had no belief in a supreme power which guided his life and was responsible for his death. This supreme power is commonly designated as the gods, dei, or as Fate or Fortune.\textsuperscript{56}

Among all such powers, Fate is certainly the most prominent. While Fate is most often seen as an impersonal power, there is an approach to deification and personification in a substantial minority of epitaphs. Tolman notes that references to Fate are considerably more common than even the collective references to "the gods":

... it appears from the larger number of times that Fate or the Fates are named throughout the metrical inscriptions that that power was esteemed by many as superior

\textsuperscript{54}Lattimore, \textit{Themes in ... Epitaphs}, p. 157.

\textsuperscript{55}Ibid., p. 155.

\textsuperscript{56}Tolman, \textit{A Study of Sepulchral Inscriptions}, p. 65. Tolman's source, F. Buechler's \textit{Carmina Latina Epigraphica} (Leipzig, 1895-1897), contains classical Latin epitaphs from all periods (into early Christian times).
to the gods. There are 232 references to Fate under the names Fatum or Fata and 50
to it personified as the Parcae, or Clotho, or Lachesis, while there are less than seventy
allusions to the gods which can be considered as showing sincere belief in them.\(^{57}\)

Since a belief in Fate or Fortune exacted no observances or duties, there was little hindrance in
adding it on to other beliefs. The relative vagueness of such concepts may have been an
advantage to them at a time when religious and even philosophic dogmatism were in retreat.

The three old sisters, the Fates or Parcae, were Greek personifications of fate, usually
portrayed as the spinner, measurer, and cutter of the thread of life. Their names were Clotho,
Lachesis, and Atropos, and they were not usually connected with the larger concerns of Fate,
but chiefly with the individual life. They occur most commonly in poetic or mythological
treatments of the theme of Fate.

Fortune in epitaphs is sometimes regarded as similar to Fate as being the power that
directs the affairs of life and determines the time of death.\(^{58}\) She has the added function of
being the source of worldly blessings or misfortunes, of prosperity or penury. Fortune’s close
association with wealth, fame, and influence gives a slightly different connotation to her sphere
of influence. Logically indeed Fate and Fortune are opposites, but in the eclecticism of the
First Century B.C. they sometimes appear to be referred to almost interchangeably.

Fortune, Fate, and the Fates in Ovid

Ovid understandably in his exile poems talks much about his fortune and his fate. He
shares, in his appeal to Bacchus, the popular confusion as to which vague power or vaguer god
he should attribute his exile (Tr. V.3.13-18):

\(^{57}\)Ibid., p. 68.

\(^{58}\)Ibid., p. 74.
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sive mihi casus sive hoc dedit ira deorum,
nubila nascenti seu mihi Parca fuit,
tu tamen e sacris hederae cultoribus unum
numine debueras sustinuisses tuo.
an dominae fati quicquid cecinere sorores,
omne sub arbitrio desinit esse dei?

Whether chance brought this upon me or the wrath of the gods,
Or whether a clouded Fate attended my birth,
Thou at least shouldst have supported by thy divine power
One of the worshippers of thine ivy.
Or is it true that whatever the sisters, mistresses of fate, have ordained,
Ceases wholly to be under a god’s power.

Here Ovid touches on at least three possible powers which may have determined his lot:

chance (casus); the gods (ira deorum); or the Fates (Parcae).

On the whole Ovid tends to blame Fortune (or, at least, to talk about her most). He could hardly directly blame Augustus for his exile. But his references to fortune are often so general that his translator A. L. Wheeler sometimes translates his fortuna as "fate" (e.g., Tr. V.12.5; Pont. II.7.41-42; and IV.9.89-90), and also his casus (chance) as "fate" (e.g., Tr. IV.1.100).

Ovid himself sometimes seems to use fortuna and fata interchangeably when discussing his exile (Pont. II.7.13-22):

membra reformidant mollem quoque saucia tactum,
vanaque sollicitis incutit umbra metum.
sic ego Fortunae telis confixus iniquis
pectore concipio nil nisi triste meo.
iam mihi fata liquet coeptos servantium cursus
per sibi consuetas semper itura vias:
observare deos, ne quid mihi cedat amice,
verbaque Fortunae vix puto posse dari.
est illi curae me perdere, quaque solebat
esse levis, constans et bene certa nocet.

A wounded body shrinks from even a delicate touch;
An empty shadow inspires the anxious with fear.
So I, pierced by the unjust shafts of Fortune,
Fashion in my breast naught but gloomy thoughts.
Already it is clear to me that fate, keeping to the course begun,
Will continue always to run in a familiar path;
The gods are watching that no kind concession be made me
And I think Fortune can scarcely be cheated.
She is working to destroy me—she who used to be fickle,
Is now steadfastly and with determination injuring me.

In this passage "Fortune", "the Fates", and "the gods" all appear to represent roughly the
same kind of powerful influence. Another passage in which fortuna and fata appear as

synonyms is Tristia IV.1.61-64:

nec tamen, ut veni, levior fortuna malorum est:
  hic quoque sunt nostras fata secuta vias.
hic quoque cognosco natalis stamina nostri,
  stamina de nigro vellere facta mihi.

Yet no lighter since my coming is the lot of my misfortune;
To this place also fate has followed my path.
Here also I recognize the threads of my nativity,
Threads twisted for me from a black fleece.

Fate or the Fates do not figure as largely in Ovid’s work as Fortune. Where they do
occur, they usually take the mythic or poetic form of the Parcae, or the Fates. Since Ovid has
no real Stoic tendency there is hardly any philosophic reference to Fate in his verse. Most
references to fate seem of a casual, popular, or conventional type. The Fates are simply
responsible for the length of one’s life. In the Amores he tells his girlfriend that he shall
spend his whole life with her (Am. I.3.17-18):

tecum, quos dederint annos mihi fili sororum,
  vivere contingat teque dolenit mori!

With you may it be my lot to live the years which the Sisters’ threads have spun
for me,
And to be sorrowed over by you when I die!

In the Heroides, Hypsipyle is ready to kill herself if Jason is reported dead (VI.28):

"vivat? an," exclamo, "me quoque fata vocant?"

"Lives he?" I cried, "or must fate call me too?"
In the *Metamorphoses* Deucalion expresses to his wife Pyrrha his sense of desolation that they are the sole survivors of the flood. He tells her that for one of them to have survived alone would be worse (I.358-359):

> quis tibi, si sine me fatis erepta fuisses,  
> nunc animus, miseranda, forcat?

> What would be your feelings, now, poor soul, if the fates had willed that you be rescued all alone?

Cephalus tells young Phocus that his magical javelin is the cause of his grief, since with it he accidentally killed his wife Procris (*Met.* VII.690-692):

> hoc me, nata dea, (quis posset credere?) telum  
> flere facit facieque diea, si vivere nobis  
> fata dui dederint ...

> It is this weapon makes me weep, thou son of a goddess—Who could believe it?—and long will it make me weepIf the fates shall give me long life.

The mother of Aeneas, Venus, appeals to the gods to save Julius Caesar from assassins, but the gods could not break the decrees of fate (*Met.* XV.780-782):

> verba iacit superosque movet, qui rumpere quamquam  
> ferrea non possunt veterum decreta sororum,  
> signa tamen lucius dant haut incerta futuri.

> The gods were moved indeed; and although they were not ableTo break the iron decrees of the ancient sisters,Still they gave no uncertain portents of the woe that was at hand.

The same usage continues in the exile poems, when Ovid’s wife, who wished to die at his exile, stays alive at Rome to try to help the poet (*Tr.* I.3.101-102):

> vivat, et absentem, quoniam sic fata tulerunt,  
> vivat ut, auxilio sublevet usque suo.

> May she live and ever with her aid bring succour to her husband far away(Since thus the fates have willed) that he too may live!
There is a suggestion here and in some other passages that the Fates or Parcae may influence more than the moment of death. In writing to Severus the threads of the Fates seem to suggest fortune as well as life (Pont. I.8.63-64):

\begin{verbatim}
   at tibi nascenti, quod toto pectore laetor,
   nerunt fatales foria filia deae.
\end{verbatim}

For you at birth—my whole heart rejoices at this—
The fateful goddesses spun strong threads.

In the Heroides Canace writes to her brother Macareus to whom she has recently borne a child. Both the child and herself are to die by her father’s orders, and Canace leaves this advice for her sisters (XI.105-106):

\begin{verbatim}
   nubite felices Parca meliore sorores,
   amissae memores sed tamen este mei!
\end{verbatim}

Wed happily under a better fate, O my sisters,
But yet remember me though lost.

Here fate (Parca) seems to have overtones of “star-crossed” rather than simply referring to impending death.

Ovid naturally preferred the more poetic and often lighter picture of the three sisters spinning the threads of life to any mention of an overall grim necessity (but cf. Tr. IV.8.29-32). In his last poems, Ovid faces the prospect of death on the Black Sea shores, and complains about his lot. Fate here is Parca, and Ovid’s attitude swings between a half-resigned self-pity, and hope for deliverance. He writes, perhaps ironically, to his friends that he shall no longer hope anything of them (Pont III.7.17-20):

\begin{verbatim}
   nos, quibus adsuevit fatum crudeliter uti,
   ad mala iam pridem non sumus ulla rudes.
venimus in Geticos fines: moriamur in illis,
   Parcaque ad extremum qua mea coepit eat.
\end{verbatim}
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I, beneath the practised cruelty of fate,
Have for long found no misfortune with which I am not familiar.
I have come to the Getic shores, let me die there
And let my Fate continue to the end the course she has begun.

A last letter to Sextus Pompeius, an influential figure at Rome, indicates that hope is not dead
for Ovid, although he tries not to sound too insistent (Pon. IV.15.35-38):

seu tamen effectus habitura est gratia, seu me
dura iubet gelido Parca sub axe mori,
semper inobliia repetam tua munera menti
et mea me tellus audit esse tuum.

Yet whether your influence shall win its end or whether
A cruel fate bids me die beneath the freezing pole,
I shall always recall your services with unforgetting heart
And my land shall hear that I belong to you.

More commonly, however, Ovid attributes his position and lot to Fortune rather than to Fate.

The Cult of Fortuna (Tyche) at Rome

The cult of Fortune at Rome has a lengthy history. Originally a power (numen) connected
with the unforeseeable events of life, Fortuna was later associated with the fickle Hellenistic
goddess Tyche. Tyche was more of a personification of chance and accidents, rather than a
power able to direct events. Thus Pacuvius (Ad Herennium II.23.36) distinguishes between
Fortune and Chance, although in Hellenistic fashion, he holds that events are chiefly
attributable to blind chance. Fowler thus describes the Roman numen:

As Portunus was the spirit or deity presiding over doors and gates, so Fortuna must
have been, for the early Latins, the deity presiding over the incalculable element in
human life, not a mere personification of Chance itself ... Fortuna perhaps never
wholly lost the meaning of a power presiding over luck, which might be propitiated by
human beings, or assisted by them in her operations ...

59W. Warde Fowler, "Fortune (Roman)." In Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, ed. James
Hastings, Vol. VI, p. 98.
In early Rome Fortuna appears especially as a deity for women, and one whose oracle could be approached for information regarding success in childbirth or the fortunes of the child who would be born. As Fowler states:

She must rather have been a power believed capable of governing the destiny of women in childbirth, possibly also that of the children to be born. She was at all times, and in many places besides Praeneste, especially a woman’s deity; one to whom appeal might be made for help in trouble, more especially in the anxious time of childbirth.  

As time went on the popularity of Euripides and the Epicurean writers made the Greek idea of Tyche or Chance more familiar at Rome. The ups and downs of life in the Hellenistic world found their way to Rome in the First Century B.C., thus convincing many that there was no intelligent direction to the world. By the end of the First Century, except for some writers of a more traditional bent (e.g., Vergil and Livy) most references to Fortune reflect the Greek idea of the fickle goddess. Fowler summarizes this development thus:

Fortuna begins as a deity, not of mere chance, but of helpful power in relation to certain events of human life, especially childbirth and seafaring ... Meanwhile the influence of the later sceptical Greek idea of Tyche introduces the Roman mind to the conception of blind chance ... but this is neutralized among the better educated by the later or Roman school of Stoicism, beginning with Panaetius ... In the confusion of the last age of the Republic, and perhaps under the influence of popular Epicureanism, the more degraded idea of Fortuna gains ground, and appears in writers of a less earnest moral type in the first century of the Empire ...

Among those who treat Fortuna as mere chance Fowler lists Ovid along with other authors who have abandoned the more traditional view:

...we find it in its rawest form in writers who took life less seriously, such as Ovid (e.g., Metam. III.141), or Petronius (Sat. 120,121), or in the work of a soldier like

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60Fowler, Roman Ideas, p. 64.

61Fowler. "Fortune (Roman)", p. 104.
Velleius Paterculus (e.g., II.57,75,110 ad init.), who was not really a man apt and able to reason about such questions.⁶²

Ovid appears to be relatively uninterested in the traditional cult of Fortuna. He does describe (Fasti IV.145-150) how the common women would bathe once a year in the men's baths to obtain a better appearance from Fortuna Virillis. He mentions the establishment of the temple of Fortune at Rome by Servius Tullius, and recounts his murder by his daughter and her husband (Fasti VI.569-636). He also gives a brief but lively picture of the popular festival of Fors Fortuna in June (VI.773-784), but there appears to be no special interest in Fortuna herself.

Once again Ovid's attitude to this deity can be explained partly by literary influence but more fully by the influence of the rhetorical schools. While Ovid's treatment of Fortune is not, therefore, very original, it is significant as illustrating a relatively new image of Fortune at Rome, and as providing a picture of the fickle goddess for future ages. Howard R. Patch in The Goddess Fortuna in Mediaeval Literature has various occasions to cite Ovid's picture of Fortuna as an influence on the writers of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Writing of Boccaccio's treatment of the goddess, Patch says:

In his early works the spirit of what he writes is not unlike that of Ovid, and it is not surprising to find the capricious goddess mentioned on nearly every page ...⁶³

Thus Ovid's treatment of Fortuna has a slight intrinsic, but a much greater historical importance.

⁶²Fowler, "Fortune", p. 103.

Fortuna and Tyche in Roman Poetry and Rhetoric

Although the Greek idea of fortune as mere chance had been known since Hellenistic influence began, it was, as Fowler points out, not completely dominant until almost Ovid’s own time. Through Euripides’ influence especially it had made its impact on dramatic literature, and Pacuvius (fl. 154 B.C.) had spoken in favour of the Greek point of view. As we approach Ovid’s time the portrayal of Fortuna as Tyche (Chance) becomes more common.

Ovid’s immediate predecessors in Love Elegy had already adapted the ideas associated with Tyche to the ups and downs of a love affair, since love poetry had strong links to Hellenistic culture. Tibullus, however, speaks of Fors, not Fortuna, as akin to Tyche (Tib. I.5.69-70), when he admonishes a wealthier and more successful rival:

at tu, qui potior nunc es, mea fata timeto:
versatur celeri Fors levis orbe rotae.

But thou who art victor now must fear that my fate awaits thee.
Chance turns lightly on her swift-rolling wheel.

The Tibullan Collection contains two references to Fortuna. Lygdamus, in typical love elegy fashion, places love over wealth in his esteem (Tib. III.3.21-22):

non opibus mentes hominum curaeque levantur;
nam Fortuna sua tempora lege regit.

Wealth lightens not the hearts and cares of men.
For Fortune rules their circumstances by ordinances of her own.

The author of the Panegyricus Messala’s laments the loss of his farm, perhaps in the confiscations following the establishment of the Second Triumvirate (Tib. III.7.181-182):

languida non noster peragit labor otia, quamvis
Fortuna, ut mos est illi, me adversa fatiget.

’Tis not that toil with me leaves leisure to be passed in indolence,
Albeit Fortune, as is her wont, harasses me with her enmity.
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Propertius, like Ovid, uses Fortuna and Fata almost interchangeably to refer to vague powers which may shape human activity (I.6.25-30):

me sine, quem semper voluit fortuna iacere,
  hanc animam extremam reddere nequitiae.
multi longinquo periere in amore libenter,
in quorum numero me quoque terra tegat.
non ego sum laudi, non natus idoneus armis:
  hanc me militiam fata subire voluit.

Allow me, whom Fortune willed to lie ever prostrate,
To give up my final breath to this worthlessness.
Many have contentedly perished in a long love-affair;
In their number may the earth cover me too.
I was born unfit for glory, unfit for arms:
Love is the warfare Fate wishes me to undergo.

By Fortune Propertius means chiefly the ups and downs of love, although he also uses fortuna to mean "wealth" and "mischance". The fickleness of a girlfriend reflects the waywardness of fortuna (I.15.1-3):

Saepe ego multa tuae levitatis dura timebam,
  hac tamen excepta, Cynthia, perfidia.
aspice me quanto rapiat fortuna periclo!

I dreaded oft much hardship from your fickleness,
Cynthia, but never such treachery as this.
See into what peril fortune plunges me!

Sometimes Propertius seems to equate fortuna and natura in Epicurean fashion (II.22.17-18):

uni cuique dedit vitium natura creato:
  mi fortuna aliquid semper amare dedit.

To every one at birth nature has allotted some fault;
To me fortune allotted the fault of ever having some object for my love.

Throughout his work, however, fortuna, as a power chiefly seems to mean "chance". Man puts himself more at the mercy of mere chance by his activities and inventions (Prop. III.7.29-32):
ite, rates curvate et leti texite causas:
ista per humanas mors venit acta manus.
terra parum fuerat fatis, adiecimus undas:
fortunae miseras auximus arte vias.

Go now, fashion curved ships and weave webs of destruction.
His death was engineered by human hands.
The land was not enough for doom, we have added the sea:
Our skill has extended the cruel avenues of fate.

Here again there is a coming together of such concepts as "chance", "fortune", and "fate", so that the translator, G. P. Goold, renders Propertius' *fortuna* by the English word "fate".

A contemporary poem of some interest for this study is the *Consolatio ad Liviam*, a poem of 474 lines addressed to Livia on the death of her son Drusus in 9 B.C. This work touches on a number of religious and philosophic themes and particularly develops the topic of Fortune. Long attributed to Ovid, it is now generally taken to be by an unknown author, although, according to J. C. Bramble:

> It could be the work of an Ovid composing in more official vein—but we need posit no more than influence ...^4^4

The poet of the *Consolatio* develops at length in rhetorical fashion the contrast between Livia and her family’s good fortune, as to position and power, and their misfortune in Drusus’ death (51-56):

> nempe per hos etiam Fortunae inuria mores
> regnat et incerta est hic quoque nixa rota;
> hic quoque sentitur: ne quid non improba carpat
> saevit et iniustum ius sibi ubique facit.
> scilicet immunis si luctus una fuisset
> Livia, Fortunae regna minora forent.

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Ay, verily o'er such lives too Fortune's injustice reigns;
Here too she rides her shifting wheel;
Here too is she felt; lest anything escape her insatiate grasp,
She rages, and everywhere makes injustice justice for herself.
Forssooh, if Livia alone had been immune from grief,
Then Fortune's realm had suffered.

The poet states that Livia's high position places a special duty on her (349-350):

imposuit te alto Fortuna locumque tueri
lussit honoratum: Livia, perfer onus.

Fortune placed thee high, and bade thee guard an honoured station;
Bear thy burden, Livia, to the end.

He then comments on the power of Fate (that is, Death), which summons all to the
underworld, a Fate which overhangs the universe itself. Fortune (the Greek Tyche) is seen as
influencing the time of death (371-378):

Fortuna arbitris tempus dispensat inquis:
illa rapit iuvenes, sustinet illa senes,
quaque nuit furibunda ruet totumque per orbem
fulminat et caeis caeca triumphat equis.
regna deae immittis parce irritare querendo,
solicitare animos parce potentiis erae.
quae tamen hoc uno tristis tibi tempore venit,
saepe eadem rebus favit amica tuis.

Fortune ordains the time at her own unjust will:
Youths she carries off, the aged she supports;
Her onset, when she makes it, is furious, through the whole world
Her lightnings flash, and she triumphs blindly on blind steeds.
Offend not with thy complaints the sway of the stern goddess,
Vex not the spirit of that powerful queen.
Yet the same power that at this one time hath visited thee in wrath
Has oft been friendly and shown favour to thy fortunes.

Here the deity of Fortuna is more emphasized than usual, although her blind and arbitrary
nature also reflects Fortuna as a personification of chance. The rhetorical nature of the

Consolatio reminds us of the rapid growth of schools of rhetoric during the early Augustan
period. As indicated below, Ovid’s own treatment of Fortuna probably owes much to the influence of the declaimers.

We have already noticed that Ovid’s own teacher Arellius Fuscus liked to use the “colour” of religion in his declamations, especially the mutability of fortune (Contr. I.1.16). Ovid’s other master, Porcius Latro, liked to develop epigrams on stock themes such as fortune. According to Seneca the Elder, Latro’s rhetorical exercises included giving a day to composing one or another kind of figure (Contr. I., Praef.23):

Solebat autem et hoc genere exercitacionis uti, ut aliquo die nihil praeter epiphenemata scriberet, aliquo die nihil praeter enthymemata, aliquo die nihil praeter has translaticias quas proprae sententias dicimus, quae nihil habent cum ipsa controversia implicitum, sed satis aptae et alio transferentur, tamquam quae de fortuna, de crudelitate, de saeculo, de divitiis dicuntur; hoc genus sententiarum supellectilem vocat.

He practised another sort of exercise: one day he would write only “exclamations”, one day only enthymemes, one day nothing but the traditional passages we properly call sententiae, that have no intimate connection with the particular controversia, but can be quite aptly placed elsewhere too, such as those on fortune, cruelty, the age, riches. This type of sententia he called his “stock”.

That a leading and popular orator of the time should be self-consciously developing a set of clever things to say about Fortune may well have had some impact on his admirer Ovid.

Seneca gives us some examples of what Latro spoke on this subject before an audience (e.g., Contr. I.1.3):

omnis instabilis et incerta felicitas est: quis crederet iacentem supra crepidinem
Marium aut fuisse consul aut futurum? Quid porro tam longe exempla repetò,
tamquam domi desit? qui illum vidit quid non timendum felicibus putat, quid desperandum infelicius?

All happiness is unstable and uncertain. Who would believe that Marius, as he lay in the gutter, had been consul—and would be again? But why do I look for instances so far afield, as if there were a shortage at home? Anyone who has seen him [the subject of the case] realises that the fortunate should always fear, the unfortunate never despair.
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Among the rhetoricians fortuna usually refers to the ups and downs of life and has little religious significance. Some orators, such as the philosophic Fabianus, gave a Stoic tinge to their treatment of Fortune (Suas, I.9), but fortuna remains a vague and probably natural force. Ovid’s frequent exposure to this rhetorical treatment of fortuna may be an important factor in his own attitudes on this subject.

Fortuna in Ovid (Especially the Poems from Exile)

In comparison to Propertius there is little mention of Fortune in Ovid’s love poetry. This is probably due to Ovid’s attitude that any woman could be won over given time and effort. When Ovid holds Corinna in his arms he attributes his conquest to skill not chance (Am.

II.12.15-16):

nec casum fortuna meis inmiscuit actis—
   huc ades, o cura parte Triumphi mea!

Nor has fortune mingled chance with my achievements
Hither come, O Triumph won by care alone!

Ovid’s love poetry, then, has little to say about Fortune. Beginning with the

Metamorphoses, however, and the ups and downs of the actors and actresses therein,

references to Fortune become more common.

As Fowler points out, Ovid, in introducing the story of Cadmus’ grandson Actaeon, refers to Fortune after the Greek manner (Met. III.138-142):

prima nepos inter tot res tibi, Cadme, secundas
   causa fuit luctus, alienaque cornua fronti
   addita, vosque, canes satiatae sanguine erili.
   at bene si quaeras, Fortuna crimen in illo,
   non scelus invenies; quod enim scelus error habebat?

   One grandson of thine, Actaeon, midst all thy happiness first brought thee:
Cause of grief, upon whose brow strange horns appeared,
And whose dogs greedily lapped their master's blood.
But if you seek the truth, you will find the cause of this in fortune's fault
And not in any crime of his. For what crime had mere mischance?

In Book Six the foolish Niobe boasts about her ancestry, her seven sons and seven daughters,
and holds herself superior to the goddess Latona. She argues that the abundance of her
blessings is a safeguard against evil and misfortune (Met. VI. 193-197):

> sum felix (quis enim neget hoc?) felixque manebo
(hoc quoque quis dubitet?): tutam me copia fecit.
maior sum quam cui possit Fortuna nocere,
multaque ut cripiat, multo mihi plura relinquet.
excessere metum mea iam bona ...

Surely I am happy. Who can deny it? And happy I shall remain.
This also who can doubt? My very abundance has made me safe.
I am too great for Fortune to harm;
Though she should take many from me, still many more will she leave to me.
My blessings have banished fear ...

Niobe's story well illustrates the power of Fortune, and, among Greek writers, Fortune was
sometimes associated with Nemesis.45

The stories of Scylla and Minos and of Hippomenes and Atalanta touch on the
commonplace sentiment that fortune favours the brave. Debating with herself whether to
betray her father and her city on behalf of Minos, Scylla exclaims (Met. VIII.72-73):

> di facerent, sine patre forem! sibi quisque profecto
est deus: ignavis precibus Fortuna repugnat.

Would to God I had no father! But surely everyone is his own god;
Fortune resists half-hearted prayers.

When Hippomenes decides to compete with Atalanta in the foot-race for her hand in marriage
he thus encourages himself (X.584-586):

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45Cf. Polybius, XXIII.10.1-11.8 on the problems of Philip V of Macedonia.
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"sed cur certaminis huius
intemptata mihi fortuna relinquitur?" inquit
"audentes deus ipse iuvat!"

"But why is my fortune
In this contest left untried?" he cried.
"God himself helps those who dare."

These conventional expressions of the value of action have little positive religious value, and
indeed tend against it.

It is, however, in the poems from exile that Ovid paints his portrait of Fortune at length.
Ovid had now experienced first-hand a dramatic upheaval in his life, one which he usually
discusses in terms of Fortune rather than Fate. The incidents attendant to his exile give him
material to develop various facets of the commonplaces about Fortune, such as fickle friends,
the danger of greatness, the envious power of Fortune, and the likelihood of further reversals
affecting those who gloat at the poet’s downfall. Although probably none of the details in
Ovid’s picture of Fortune is original, he is an important source for Mediaeval and Renaissance
writers, and his imagery has been frequently repeated. The poet is particularly struck by the
desertion of former friends, who change along with his fortunes (Tr. I.5.27-34):

dum iuvat et vultu ridet Fortuna sereno,
indelibilis cuncta sequuntur opes:
at simul intonuit, fugiunt, nec noscitur ulli,
agminibus comitum qui modo cinctus erat.
atque haec, exemplis quondam collecta prorum,
nunc mihi sunt propriis cognita vera malis.
vix duo tresve mihi de tot superestis amici;
cetera Fortunae, non mea turba fuit.

While Fortune aids us and a smile is upon her calm face,
All things follow our unimpaired resources.
But at the first rumble of the thunder they flee, and nobody recognizes him
Who but now was encircled with troops of comrades.
This, which once I inferred from the examples of former men,
Now I know to be true from my own woes.
Scarcely two or three of you, my friends, once so many, remain to me;  
The rest were Fortune's following, not mine.

A similar complaint about fickle friends can be found at *Tr.* I.9.11-16.

Sometimes Ovid refers to chance (*casus*) or fate (*fatum*) as agents in his downfall,
although *fortuna* is his favourite reference (cf. *Tr.* IV.1.99-102). He once blames the Fate,
Lachesis, for not giving him a shorter thread of life (*Tr.* V.10.45-46):

> o duram Lachesis, quae tam grave sidus habenti  
> fila dedit vitae non breviora meae!

Ah! cruel Lachesis, when my star is so ill-fated,  
Not to have granted my life a shorter thread!

One of Ovid's more interesting uses of the idea of Fortune is to warn his enemies and
detractors that they too may suffer a like fate. This idea is common in the declamations
recorded by Seneca the Elder (e.g., *Contr.* 1.1.5). Ovid develops the association between
Fortuna and Nemesis (Rhamnusia), and warns his detractor against a just retribution (*Tr.*
V.8.5-12):

> nec mala te reddunt mitem placidumque iacenti  
> nostra, quibus possint in lacrimare ferae;  
> nec metuis dubio Fortunae stantis in orbis  
> numen, et exosae verba superba deae.  
> exiguit a dignis ultrix Rhamnusia poenas:  
> inposito calceas quid mea fata pede?  
> vidi ego naufragium qui risit in aequore mergi,  
> et "numquam" dixi "iustior unda fuit".

My woes do not soften you and placate you towards one who is prostrate—
Woes over which wild beasts might weep,
Nor do you fear the power of Fortune standing on her swaying wheel,
Or the haughty commands of the goddess who hates.
Avenging Rhamnusia exacts a penalty from those who deserve it;
Why do you set your foot and trample upon my fate?
I have seen one drowned in the waves who laughed at shipwreck,
And I said, "Never were the waters more just."

Ovid goes to paint a picture of the fickle goddess (*ibid*.)
passibus ambiguis Fortuna volubilis errat
et manet in nullo certa tenaxque loco,
sed modo laeta nitit, vultus modo sumit acerbos,
et tantum constans in levitate sua est.

Changeable Fortune wanders abroad with aimless steps,
Abiding firm and persistent in no place;
Now she beams with joy, now she puts on a harsh mien,
Steadfast only in her own fickleness.

Ovid also strives to encourage his friends and his wife to rally to his cause, even though

Fortune is against them. He tells his wife that fame awaits her, if she stands by him. There is

a touch of Stoicism in Ovid’s encouragements (Tr. V.14.27-30):

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.

When the god thunders, not to avoid the cloud—
That is loyalty indeed, that is wedded love.
Rare indeed is the virtue not piloted by Fortune,
Which remains on steady feet when Fortune flees.

In a similar manner Ovid compliments his friend Cotta Maximus for not abandoning him
when fortune turned against him, as others did (Pont, II.3.23-28). Ovid allows, however, that

Maximus’ indifference to fortune may make him less sympathetic to one like Ovid who has

sunk underneath her blows (ibid., 49-56):

si bene te novi, si, qui prius esse solebas,
nunc quoque es, atque animi non cecidere tui,
quo Fortuna magis saevit, magis ipse resistis,
utque decet, ne te vicerit illa, caves;
et bene uti pugnes, bene pugnans efficit hostis.
sic eadem prodest causa nocetque mihi.
scilicet indignum, iuvenes carissime, ducis
te fieri comitem stantis in orbe deae.
If I know you well, if even now you are what you used to be,
And your courage has not failed you,
The greater Fortune's rage, the more do you resist her,
Taking care, as is fitting, that she does not conquer you;
And your own flight is rendered strong by the strong battling of the foe.
Thus the same thing both helps and injures me.
Yea, 'tis an unworthy thing in your sight, dear youth,
To become a companion of the goddess who stands on the sphere.

Later (Pont. III.2.7-8) Ovid again commends Cotta Maximus for not bowing to Fortune by abandoning him:

grata tua est igitur pietas. ignoscimus illis,
qui cum Fortuna terga dedere fugae.

Grateful, therefore, is your loyalty. I pardon those
Who along with Fortune have betaken themselves to flight.

There are throughout the Ex Ponto letters many comments on the effects that Fortune has had on the poet. Most of them emphasize the injurious impact of Fortune and the changes wrought in the poet's life. Sometimes (Pont. II.7.39-42) Ovid laments his fate (here Fortuna):

iam dolor in morem venit meus, utque caducis
percussu crebro saxa cavantur aquis,
sic ego continuo Fortunae vulneror ictu,
vixque habet in nobis iam nova plaga locum.

My grief has already become a habit; as the falling drops
By their constant force hollow the rock,
So am I wounded by the steady blows of fate
Until now I have scarce space upon me for a new wound.

To his wife Ovid continues to promise fame if she will loyally help him. He notes that his misfortunes have not decreased his renown (Pont. III.1.49-50):

expositum memet populo Fortuna videndum,
et plus notitiae, quam fuit ante, dedit.

Fortune has set me forth to be viewed by all the people,
She has given me more celebrity than I had of yore.

In the same poem he asks his wife to approach the imperial family with his petition (151-152):
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tum pete nil aliud, saevo nisi ab hoste recedam;
hostem Fortunam sit satis esse mihi.

Then ask nothing except that I may withdraw from the neighbourhood of a fierce enemy;
Let Fortune for me be enemy enough.

To his wife's son-in-law Suillius, Ovid insists that he has committed no crime, but is a victim of Fortune (Pont. IV.8.15-16):

at nihil hic dignum poteris repere pudore
praeter Fortunam, quae mihi caeca sult.

Yet you will be able to discover in me nothing to shame you
Save only Fortune, who to me has proved blind.

To an old friend Graecinus, Ovid asserts that in spite of his fate (fortuna) the poet remains essentially the same (Pont. IV.9.89-90):

nec sumus hic odio, nec scilicet esse meremur,
nec cum fortuna mens quoque versa mea est.

Here I am not hated, and indeed I do not deserve to be,
And my mind has not changed along with my fate.

These references to Fortune indicate the various ways in which Ovid viewed his downfall.

As he continually reflects on his changed circumstances, it may be that the figure of Fortune becomes more real to him. There also seems to be a tendency here to place the blame for his situation on Fortune, thus largely absolving both himself and Augustus from responsibility.
And it is likely, in general, that Fortune becomes more prominent as the sense of personal responsibility for one's life and actions declines.

Ovid's lengthiest discourse on Fortune comes in a late poem (Pont. IV.3) which, like the earlier poem addressed to a detractor, is sent to a faithless friend. Like Tristia V.8 it both describes the activities of Fortuna and warns that the poet's fate may befall the addressee. It begins by chiding the former friend for abandoning the poet (ibid., 5-10):
dum mea puppis erat valida fundata carina,
qui mecum velles currere, primus eras.
nunc, quia contraxit vultum Fortuna, recedis,
auxillo postquam seis opus esse tuo.
dissimulas etiam, nec me vis nosse videri,
quisque sit, audito nomine, Naso, rogas.

As long as my bark rested firmly upon its keel
Among all who wished to sail with me you were first.
Now that Fortune has frowned you withdraw
Upon discovering that your assistance is needed.
You play the dissembler, too, and wish not to be thought to know me;
When you hear the name you ask who Naso is!

Ovid goes on to charge the man with insulting his name, not caring that retribution may befall
him also (27-34):

vix equidem credo, sed et insultare lacenti
  te mihi nec verbis parcere fama refert.
quid facis, a! demens? cur, si Fortuna recedat,
  naufragio lacrimas eripis ipse tuo?
haec dea non stabili, quam sit levis, orbis fataur,
  quae summum dubio sub pede semper habet.
quolibet est folio, quavis incertior aura:
  par illi levitas, improbe, sola tua est.

I can scarce believe it—but rumour says that you
Are even insulting me in my fall, that you do not spare words.
Ah, why do you do this, madman? Why, in case Fortune should leave you,
Do you thus rob your own shipwreck of tears?
She is a goddess who admits by her unsteady wheel her own fickleness;
She always has its crest beneath her swaying foot.
She is less stable than any leaf, than any breeze;
To match her fickleness, base man, there is only yours.

The last line (34) well sums up the negative popular feelings towards Fortune.

Ovid then goes on to speak about the variances of human affairs (35-48). This whole
passage is basically a rhetorical commonplace which rehearses the usual examples of changes
of fortune: Croesus, Dionysius the Tyrant, Pompey the Great, and most conventionally of all,
Marius, the great general.
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After setting forth these generalities and instances, Ovid now points to himself. And in these lines there is at least a hint that Ovid had come to think of Fortune as a genuine force to be feared, although he himself might have had trouble defining it (49-55):

ludit in humanis divina potentia rebus,
et certam praesens vix feret hora fidel.
"litus ad Euxinum" si quis mihi diceret "ibis,
et metues, arcu ne seriare Getae,"
"i, bibe" dixisset "purgantes pectora sucos,
quidquid et in tota nascitur Anticyra".
sum tamen haec passus ...

Divine power plays with human affairs,
And sure trust can scarce be placed in the present hour.
If anybody had said to me, "You shall go to the Euxine shore
And you shall fear wounds from a Getic bow,"
I would have said, "Go, drink a potion that clears the brain—
Everything that Anticyra produces."
Yet have I suffered this ...

After saying so much about Fortune Ovid returns to mention, as he does in most of his exile poems, the anger of Augustus, or rather, his divine wrath (55-56):

nece, si mortalitas possem,
et summi poteram tela caverere dei.

Though I might have guarded against the weapons of mortals,
Yet I could not protect myself against those of a supreme god.

This leads us to the fourth tendency in Fowler's list of evidences for religion in the First Century B.C., namely, the willingness to pay divine or quasi-divine honours to men of power or great significance.

The Development of the Man-God Cult at Rome

The entire subject of the man-god or divine man in the Greco-Roman world has been examined by scholars in great detail. The religious background of this development owes
something to the Greek cult of the hero, as well as to Greek contact with countries (e.g., Egypt) where important humans were offered worship. From the time that Alexander the Great asked for and received quasi-divine honours in his lifetime the man-god was a part of Hellenistic political life, and was, therefore, an accessible idea to neighbouring peoples, such as the Romans. Since, according to Fowler, there was no indigenous tendency in Italy to confer divine status on human beings, the idea progressed slowly at Rome, and, once again, it was probably the decline of traditional Roman religion that made it opportune. The Greek visitor Polybius (VI.56) had argued that religion held a special and useful place in the Roman Commonwealth. Most educated Romans seemed to agree with this, and appeared worried at the decline of religion. Fowler quotes Cicero (N.D. 1.2.3) as saying that the state needs gods (even if these gods are not very inspiring):

"Gods," he says, "are needed for the maintenance of the social system; without them society would be a chaos (magna confusio); fides, iustitia, societas generis humani would all go to pieces." The gods must exist because they have this definite function of holding the State together; therein is their only raison d'être. At the same time then there were at Rome (and especially during this period of unrest and civil strife) both educated Romans looking for a religious idea or a god which would help to unite the state and also the common people looking for a saviour or Saviour who would provide peace and prosperity. Almost by accident the remarkable successes of Julius Caesar against the senatorial armies turned eyes in his direction. In spite of Caesar's personal lack of religious enthusiasm, it is possible that he was toying with the idea of divine status as a way of legitimizing his own rule. He began to emphasize the roles of Venus and Mars as ancestors of the Julian family. Nonetheless it was not until after Caesar's assassination in 44 B.C. that

66Fowler, Roman Ideas, p. 92.

67Fowler, ibid., p. 83.
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the populace, apparently spontaneously, accepted the notion that there had been something divine about him. The manner of Caesar's death, the generosity of his will, and the fear of further civil strife no doubt contributed to the mood of the people. Caesar's nephew Octavian had little difficulty in encouraging these sentiments, and nature itself concurred. As Fowler writes:

The comet which appeared during the [funeral] games given by Octavian in the summer, and eclipse of the sun in the autumn, served the purpose of keeping up the excitement, and the belief that Caesar was something more than mortal.... It became necessary to control this abnormal feeling, according to the tradition of Roman government... January 1, 42, nearly two years after the murder, is the date of the first Roman official ordinance that made a dead man into a god. A temple was promised to Divus Julius, now numbered among the gods of the State. 64

These events occurred, for the most part, before Ovid was born, and it was the political and religious genius of Octavian (later Augustus) which made the divine Julius the linchpin of a revived state religion. By making Julius and his family the centre of Roman religion, Augustus gave new coherence, significance, and utility to religious observances. It served the beliefs of the populace that Julius, and, later Augustus, were indeed Saviours and Benefactors, and satisfied the desires of educated Romans for social cohesion and a religious underpinning for social and governmental activities.

Ovid and the Augustan Religious Revival

Part of the Augustan religious revival included the attractive portrayal of traditional and Julian religion in literature and art. Poetry played a special part in recommending the Augustan religious mixture to the educated classes. At first Augustus' friend and second Maecenas acted as a skilful intermediary between the princeps and the poets (Vergil, Horace,

64Ibid., pp. 121-122.
Propertius, and perhaps a dozen others). By the time, however, that Ovid was becoming known as a poet at Rome Augustus had lost confidence in Maccenas and increasingly was trying to handle the literary aspects of his regime himself. This made the regime's impact on the poets more problematic and uncomfortable, and may be a factor in the difficulties between Ovid and Augustus. Jasper Griffin and others have suggested this possibility: "When Maccenas was gone, lack of respect, and lack of contact, brought the last heir of the elegiac tradition to ruin."  

Most ancient commentators (e.g., Suet. Aug. Li, and Macrobi. Sat. II.4.19-31) agree that Augustus was generally quite tolerant of dissent and criticism. Since, however, the religious revival was central to the Augustan settlement, Ovid's ridicule of the gods in such works as the Amores, the Ars Amatoria, and the Metamorphoses may have considerably displeased the Emperor. As E. K. Rand writes of Ovid's Metamorphoses:

He deserves a prize for ridiculing an outworn theology with a fine pungency beside which Lucian's diatribes seem primitive and tame.

Later ages, whether Christian or secular, were undismayed by this treatment of the pagan gods in whom they had no wish to believe. Ovid's contemporaries within the schools of rhetoric and in the literary world would also enjoy his wit at the gods' expense. Yet indeed Ovid's humour ran directly counter (in many respects) to the very attitudes that the Emperor and the state's leading men were attempting to inculcate. With the advantage of hindsight we may say that Ovid's mockery of paganism did little harm in the long run, and even

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70 Rand, Ovid and His Influence, p. 63.
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(exaggerating somewhat) that it may have helped to clear a path for Christianity. Fowler, for example, sees some benefit to religion in general from Ovid’s ridicule of polytheism:

In the Metamorphoses Ovid uses what we may call a legitimate material for his skill and his fancy, playing lightly over the whole range of Hellenic and Hellenistic myth, and happily destroying forever all chance of a resurrection of polytheism among the educated classes in the empire. It is this work, always so popular in the Middle Ages, that more than any other has prevented us moderns from finding anything but pure nonsense in that system of polytheism.71

It could hardly have appeared so to the more serious of Ovid’s contemporaries, or even to Ovid himself. The difficult delicate task of providing Roman life with a religious centre was being undermined by a capricious poet in the interest of entertaining his audience. Indeed, throughout literary history, blasphemy (in the general sense) has followed close upon sex and violence as a method of attracting attention to one’s book. By bringing the gods into juxtaposition with the most disreputable activities, Ovid was no doubt self-consciously exploiting whatever shock value remained to be had from traditional religion.

The kinds of religious attitudes that Augustus wished to foster are clearly hinted at in a passage from Propertius which sums up much of the revival. The good old days were exemplary, says Propertius (IV.1.17-26):

nulli cura fuit externos quaerere divos,
cum tremeret patrio pendula turba sacro,
anuaque accenso celebrante Parilia faeno,
qualia nunc curto lustra novantur equo.
Vesta coronatis pauper gaudebat asellis,
ducebant macrae vilia sacra boves.
parva saginati lustrabant compita porci,
pastor et ad calamos exa litabat ovis.
verbera pellitus saetosa movebat arator,
unde licens Fabius sacra Lupercus habet.

No man then felt the need of foreign gods,
When the tense crowd thrilled at the ritual of their fathers;

---

71Fowler, Roman Ideas, pp. 156-157.
And bonfires of straw celebrated the annual festival of Pales,
Just as now purification is renewed with the docking of a horse.
Vesta was poor, and rejoiced in garlanded mules,
And it was lean cattle that led the procession for a paltry sacrifice.
Narrow were the crossroads that fatted swine purified,
And to the sound of the pipe the shepherd made acceptable offering of a sheep's entrails.
The skin-clad ploughman waved his shaggy whip,
Whence derive the wanton rites of Fabian Lupercus.

These lines emphasize festivals and cults which were in fact what Augustus chiefly wished to revive. Disinterested piety or fervent faith in Jupiter and the other gods were dubious goals for a politician or legislator. The reestablishment of the cults best served Augustus' desire for making religion a regular, definite, observable, and socially significant aspect of Roman life. Those cults and festivals especially connected to Roman traditions and the Julian family were the most desirable subjects for verse.

Ovid did embark upon a poem, the Fasti, which might have been a centrepiece of the Augustan programme if it had been completed. The poet seems to have undertaken the Fasti to atone for offences given by his amatory poetry, and to assure the princeps of his mature support of the regime's programmes. In a passage that was probably the original dedication to Augustus, Ovid wonders self-consciously at his change of themes (II.3-8):

{nunc primum velis, elegi, maioribus itis:
exiguum, memini, nuper eratis opus.
ipse ego vos habui faciles in amore ministros,
cum lusit numeris prima iuventa suis.
idem sacra cano signataque tempora fastis:
equis ad haec illinc crederet esse viam?}

My elegiacs, now for the first time ye do sail with ampler canvas spread:
As I remember, up till now your theme was slender.
Myself I found you pliant ministers of love,
When in the morn of youth I toyed with verse.
Myself now sing of sacred rites and of the seasons marked in the calendar:
Who could think that this could come of that?
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Ovid goes on to say that he serves Augustus as he can, that is, through his verses (15-18):

\[
\begin{align*}
atua & \text{ prosequimur studioso pectore, Caesar,} \\
nomina, & \text{ per titulos ingredimurque tuos.} \\
\text{ergo ades et placido paulum mea munera voluptu} & \\
\text{respice, pacando si quid ab hoste vacas.}
\end{align*}
\]

Still do I rehearse with hearty zeal thy titles, Caesar,
And pursue thy march of glory,
Come, then, and if the conquest of the foe leaves thee a vacant hour,
O cast a kindly glance upon my gift.

Significantly Ovid calls the Fasti "my gift" (mea munera) to Augustus. It does indeed include descriptions of most of the rites and festivals favoured by Augustus, along with a goodly amount of traditional patriotic material, and praises of the royal family. An example of Ovid's flattery of the royal family is his notice of Livia's shrine to Concordia "presented to her dear husband" (VI.638, praestitit caro viro). The poet goes on to say that this colonnade was built over the site of a magnificent private house built by Vedius Pollio who willed it to Augustus (VI.643-648):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{haec aequata solo est, nullo sub crimine regni,} \\
\text{sed quia luxuria visa nocere sua,} \\
\text{sustinuit tantas operum subvertere moles} \\
\text{totque suas heres perdere Caesar opes.} \\
\text{sic agitur censura et sic exempla parantur,} \\
\text{cum vindex, alios quod monet, ipse facit.}
\end{align*}
\]

It was levelled with the ground, not on a charge of treason,
But because its luxury was deemed harmful.
Caesar brooked to overthrow so vast a structure,
And to destroy so much wealth, to which he was himself the heir.
That is the way to exercise the censorship; that is the way to set an example,
When an upholder of law does himself what he warns others to do.

In such a passage, where Ovid goes out of his way to extol the Emperor, he clearly shows a willingness to please and accommodate the regime.
The gesture failed, not because the Fasti contained too much amatory material, but because Ovid presumably abandoned the Fasti to write the more completely amatory and much more unAugustan Metamorphoses. It was the Metamorphoses, picking up themes of illicit sex from the Amores and Ars Amatoria, along with a considerable chunk of ridicule of gods and heroes, which must have convinced Augustus that the incomplete Fasti was a mere gesture. It is likely too that the Fasti was relatively unpopular with Ovid's audience—now too long exposed to the imperial theme. Ovid himself must have glimpsed—from elements in the Ars and the Fasti—the possibility of putting together a more satisfactory narrative poem. So, for whatever reasons, the Fasti was left unfinished, and Ovid's concession to the regime failed to bear fruit.

The Imperial Cult in Ovid: His Flattery of Augustus from Exile

Ovid's later poetry from the Ars through the exile poems is important for tracing the many-god idea at Rome with respect to Augustus and his family. Since, except for Manilius's Astronomica, no other poet's work from this period survives complete, Ovid is an important witness to this trend, as well as to the dynastic ups and downs themselves. Fowler sees Ovid as basically following Vergil and Horace in his approach to the Emperor's divinity, that is, Ovid speaks of Augustus as having "the germ of a deity in him", and seems sometimes to assume "in imagination that this development has already taken place". Thus Augustus is represented as having elements of both human and divine. Fowler quotes the following passage (Tr. II.53-60):

per mare, per terras, absentia numina, iuro,
per te praeuentem conspicuumque deum,
hunc animum favisse tibi, vir maxime, meque,
qua sola potui, mente fuisse tuum.

72Ibid., p. 126.
optavi, peteres caelestia sidera tarde,
parsque fui turbae parva precantis idem,
et pia tura dedi pro te, cumque omnibus unus
ipse quoque adiuvi publica vota meis.

By the unseen gods of the earth and sea I swear,
By thee, a present and manifest deity,
That this soul of mine favoured thee, mightiest of men,
And that, wherein alone I could, in heart I have been thine.
I prayed that thou mightest make thy way late to the stars of heaven,
And I was an humble member of the throng that uttered the same prayer.
Loyal incense I offered in thy behalf and with all the rest
I too aided the prayers of the state with my own.

Fowler comments:

Here is indeed a curious melange of humanity and deity: I know no passage that shows so well the characteristics of that borderland. Ovid begins by audaciously including Augustus as praeens deus in his attestation of loyalty (we can hardly call this rhetorical artifice a true oath); and in the very next line he expressly calls him a man, vir maxime. "I prayed", he goes on, "that you might live long on earth—long delay the assumption of godhead: and with this end I offered incense for your safety." Augustus is throughout plainly a man, but has the spirit (or germ) of a divine being in him, waiting for realisation at the moment of his departing this life.73

It is hardly necessary to say that Ovid did not believe in Augustus' deity, any more than he believed in Jupiter or Isis, but Augustus did represent a power whom the poet was constrained to take note of. In his amatory poems, Ovid's treatment of the man-god Augustus often verges on the jocular. In Amores I.2 Ovid pleads with Cupid to release him from the utmost pains of love, and urges the example of Cupid's kinsman Augustus (49-52):

Ergo cum possim sacri pars esse triumphi,
parce tuas in me perdere, victor, opcs!
adspec cognati felicia Caesaris arma—
qua vicit, victos protegit ille manu.

Since, then, I am thine to be part of thy sacred triumph,
Spare to waste upon me, O victor, thy power!
Look but on the fortunate arms of thy kinsman Caesar—
The hand that has made him victor, he uses to shield the vanquished.

73Ibid., p. 127.
In spite of some oblique banter Ovid generally does not seem to go out of his way either to praise or blame Augustus. His poetry does, of course, go quite counter to Augustus' moral reforms and agricultural interests, but this opposition seems personal and fashionable rather than political. Ovid's later claims (e.g., Tr. II.547-562) that his poems celebrate Augustus extensively cannot be justified outside of the Fasti. Galinsky writes of Tristia II:

In this poem and others (e.g., Pont. I.1.27-28), Ovid makes several claims, which patently cannot be substantiated, about the frequency of his references to Augustus in his earlier poetry. He contends that even the books that were his crimina are "full of your (i.e., Augustus') name in a thousand places" (Tr. II.61-62). In fact, the Art of Love and the Remedies of Love together contain no more than six such references. The same is true of Ovid's claim that in the Metamorphoses, Augustus will find many praises of his name (Tr. II.63-66).\(^\text{74}\)

Ironically it was Augustus' punishment of Ovid by exile which led to the poet writing the Emperor's praises. Ovid claims that his book should be honoured because it contains the praises of Augustus (Pont. I.1.27-36). Since the poet is occupied in the religious activity of hymning the divine Emperor he should receive special consideration from his audience (37-40,45-48):

\begin{verbatim}
eequis ita est audax, ut limine cogat abire  
iactantem Pharia tinnula sistra manu?  
ante deum Matrem cornu tibicen adunco  
cum canit, exiguac quis stipis acera negat?  
en égo pro sistro Phrigique foramine buxi  
gentis luteae nomina sancta fero.  
vaticinor monoque. locum date sacra ferent!  
non mihi, sed magno posciur ille deo.
\end{verbatim}

Is there any so brazen as to force from his door  
One who shakes the ringing sistrum of Pharos in his hand?  
When before the mother of the gods the piper plays upon his curved horn,  
Who denies him a few coppers?  
Lo, I, in place of sistrum or hollow shaft of Phrygian boxwood,  
Come bearing the holy names of the lutean race

\(^{74}\text{G. Karl Galinsky, Ovid's Metamorphoses: An Introduction to the Basic Aspects (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1975), pp. 251-252.}\)
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I am a prophet, a monitor! Give place to one who bears holy objects!
Not by me, but by a mighty god that place is claimed.

As an undistinguished worshiper Ovid can only point to the god he worships (Augustus) to gain popular favour. He goes on to compare himself to one who has been smitten by divine anger, and must apply to the god who smote him for relief (49-60). Ovid now claims to be truly penitent, and to feel great anguish for his sin (61-66):

cumque sit exilium, magis est mihi culpa dolori;
estque pati poenam, quam meruisse, minus.
ut mihi di faveant, quibus est manifestior ipse,
poenae potest demi, culpa perennis crite.
mors faciet certe, ne sim, cum venerit, exul:
ut non peccarim mors quoque non faciet.

Though exile is anguish, greater anguish is my fault
And it is a smaller thing to suffer the punishment than to have deserved it.
What though the gods and he who is more conspicuous than the gods should favour me,
My punishment can be removed, my fault will remain forever.
Death at least by his coming will put an end to my exile,
My sin even death will not remove.

It is rather rare, even in his most despairing moods, for Ovid to bewail his "fault" in this manner. Naturally, as time went on, and earlier pleadings for release were unavailing, there was a tendency for the poet to become more abject in his contrition, and more admiring of Augustus' greatness. It is quite common for Ovid either to compare Augustus to the greatest of the gods (Jupiter), or to suggest that he is superior to them in some respect (e.g., quibus est manifestior ipse). This line of thought runs throughout the exile poems.

From the beginning of his exile Ovid speaks of being punished by the wrath of an injured deity (Tr. I.3.40; I.5.84; I.10.42). He later develops this idea more fully. The poet has been stricken by the thunderbolt of Jupiter, who may, however, relent of his severity. There is no wonder that the poet is broken (Tr. IV.8.45-52):
nil adeo validum est, adamas licet alliget illud,  
  ut maneat rapido firmius igne Iovis;  
nil ita sublime est supraque pericula tendit  
  non sit ut inferius suppositumque deo.  
nam quamquam vitio pars est contracta malorum,  
  plus tamen exiti numinis ira dedit.  
at vos admoniti nostris quoque casibus este,  
  aequansem superos emeruisse virum.

Nothing is so strong, though it be bound with adamant,  
As to withstand by greater might the swift thunderbolt of Jupiter;  
Nothing is so lofty or reaches so far above perils  
That it is not beneath a god and subject to him.  
For although by fault I drew upon me a part of my ills,  
Yet more ruin has befallen me because of the wrath of a divine power.  
But be ye warned by my fate also  
That ye make yourselves worthy of the man who is like unto the gods.

The picture of the poet broken by the power of a god may have helped Ovid to strike an  
abject pose and yet retain some self-respect. In lines 49-50 he suggests also that the  
punishment is perhaps out of proportion to the crime. A similar suggestion occurs at Pont.  
I.6.25-6:  

quicquid id est, ut non facinus, sic culpa vocanda est.  
  omnis an in magnos culpa deos scelus est?  

Whatever that is, though it does not deserve the term "crime", yet it should be  
called a "fault".  
Or is every fault against the great gods a crime?  

"Jupiter's thunderbolt" became a convenient way for Ovid to allude to his crime and  
punishment which it was better for him not to discuss in detail. It allowed also for some  
mythological dignity and embellishment as when the poet compares his fate to that of  
Capaneus, one of the Seven Against Thebes (Tr. V.3.29-30):  

illo nec levius ceqidi, quem magna locatum  
  repulit a Thebis Iuppiter igne suo.  

I have fallen no more lightly than he whom Jupiter, for his overweening utterance,  
Drove back from Thebes with his lightning.
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Ovid goes on to compare his experience to that of the god Bacchus struck by the lightning bolt in the womb of his mother Semele, and to ask that god for sympathy and aid (31-34, 45-46):

**ut tamen audisti percussum fulmine vatem,**
**admoniui matris condoluisse potes,**
**et potes aspiciens circum tua sacra poetas**
**nescioquis nostri dicere "c Cultor abest."**
**sunt dis inter se commercia. flectere tempta**
**Caesareum numen numine, Bacche, tuo.**

Yet when thou didst hear that a poet had been smitten by the bolt,
Remembering thy mother, thou mightest have felt sympathy
And gazing upon the bards about thine altar
Thou mightest have said, "Some worshipper of mine is missing."
Gods deal with gods; do thou, O Bacchus,
Seek to sway Caesar’s power divine by thine own.

At the same time as Ovid magnifies Augustus by comparing him to Jupiter he also wishes to suggest that gods can and will forgive offenses. Thus he chides a friend for not wishing his name to appear openly in correspondence with the poet (Pont. III.6.15-18, 21-24):

**cur, dum tuta times, facis ut reverentia talis**
**fiat in Augustos invidiosa deos?**
**fulminis adflatos interdum vivere telis**
**vidimus et refici, non prohibente love.**
**crede mihi, miseric caelestia numina parcunt,**
**nec semper laesos et sine fine premunt.**
**prince nee nostro deus est moderator ullus:**
**Justititia vires temperat ille suas.**

Why, fearful where no fear is, do you by such homage
Bring discredit upon the Augustan gods?
Men smitten by the lightning bolt we have seen at times
Live and recover, nor did Jupiter prevent.
O believe me, the deities of heaven are merciful to the wretched;
Nor do they always and endlessly oppress the stricken.
Aid no god is milder than our Prince
For Justice tempers his strength.
Even here there is a hint that the poet’s punishment has gone on a little too long. Ovid continues (25-38) to reflect on the mercies of both Jupiter and Augustus, and to offer a wish for pardon.

Ovid’s Augustus-Jupiter equation extends into the imperial household with the Empress Livia spoken of as Juno (Pont. III.1.145). Livia’s grandson Germanicus, whom some expected to succeed Augustus, or at least Tiberius, is also considered a god (Pont. IV.8.21-24).

It is notable that Ovid sometimes goes beyond the “borderland” concept of the man-god which Fowler refers to, and treats Augustus not only as a god but as the greatest of the gods. This, surprisingly, is not unlike what was spontaneously happening especially in the eastern cities of the Empire. Commenting on the widespread and popular worship of Dea Roma and the Genius or Numen Augusti Fowler writes:

The objective idea of deity waxes dim and vague all over the Mediterranean world, and what is now called by that name is really a desire to own and propitiate the earthly power on which your life and happiness depend.  

Just as the cities of Asia and the East had come to depend on Rome and to offer her their religious and political homage, so now Ovid was constrained to offer Augustus a kind of worship, or, at least, to pretend to do so. Such worship was to a considerable extent ritual and conventional, and was not thought the worse for that. It was meant to establish a bond between worshipper and deity, and to satisfy the aspirations of the worshipper to belong to an important and triumphant world order. Fowler comments on Emperor worship:

I believe that, as in the case of Dea Roma, the whole force of the worship lies in the worshipper and not in the deity.  

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Fowler, ibid., p. 131.

Ibid., pp. 132-133.
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Twice Ovid calls Augustus "the greatest of the gods" (Tr. III.1.77-78; Ibis 23-24). Such flattery may have even been a bit strong for the Emperor. These statements perhaps point more to the poet’s lack of faith in the gods, than they do to his trust in Augustus. Ovid’s realization that only the Emperor could free him from exile forced him to concentrate his hopes and his homage on him, in spite of some bitterness which the poet is unable to completely conceal. At the same time he is diplomatically obliged to revere key members of the royal family. He urges his wife to offer them incense along with the other gods before she approaches Livia on behalf of the poet (Pont. III.1.161-164):

sed prius imposito sanctis altaribus igni
tura fer ad magnos vinaque pura deos.
e quibus ante omnis Augustum numen adora
progeniemque piam participemque tori.

But first kindle a fire upon the holy altar,
Offer incense and pure wine to the great gods.
Of them all and before all worship the deity of Augustus,
His loyal offspring and his consort.

Some have found Ovid’s later letters distasteful which refer to the imperial household. It is worth remembering, however, that Ovid’s position as supplicant put a peculiar constraint on him to produce abject apologetics. The frequency of Ovid’s addresses to the Augustan family in itself may have encouraged a progressive heightening of the colours with which he painted them. It is likely too that, as Augustus’s reign progressed, repetition made old flattery seem weak, and put a premium on new, more ingenious, and more fulsome approaches. The few other poetic documents from the Ovidian period (Horace’s Odes IV and Manilius’ Astronomica) suggest that imperial flattery was becoming somewhat inflated.

Throughout the exile poems Ovid tells us that his standard now in poetry is utilitas (usefulness)—to procure a pardon from Augustus. Pardon, or mitigation of his sentence, is
now as much the single-minded goal of his verse as popular applause used to be of his amatory writing. Whether Ovid came to believe any of the things which he now said about Augustus is unprovable but barely possible. Stranger things have happened under the pressure of exile and the steady mood of despondency. But, if so, this only happened at intervals and close to the end. Certainly Ovid continued to proclaim the primacy of poetry—even Germanicus and Augustus, it is implied, will owe their fame to poetry (Pont. IV.8.55-56,63-64, echoing Amores III.6.17-18 and III.12.19-44). It is worth observing, at least, how Ovid turns the most blatant flattery into a plea for his release.

Ovid writes warmly to his influential friend Cotta Maximus, who apparently sent him a medallion with the likenesses of Augustus, Tiberius, and Livia (Pont. II.8.1-4,7-10):

Redditus est nobis Caesar cum Caesare nuper,
quos mihi misisti, Maxime Cotta, dei;
uteque tuum munus numerum, quem debet, habere,
est ibi Caesaribus Livia iuncta suis.
non mihi divitas dando maiora dedisses,
caelitus missis nostra sub ora tribus.
est aliquid spectare deos et adesse putare,
et quasi cum vero numine posse loqui.

I have recently received a Caesar in company of a Caesar—
The gods whom you sent me, Cotta Maximus;
And that your gift might be complete,
Livia appeared there united with her Caesars.
Not by the gift of riches could you have given me a greater present
Than the three deities whom you have sent to my shores.
'Tis something to behold gods and think them present,
To have the power to speak as it were with a real deity.

Ovid continues his effusion of thanks for this wonderful gift (11-20), but his thanks gradually turn to inquiring about the attitudes of the imperial family towards himself, and to wishing that he too might see their faces in reality (57-58). He concludes with the
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observation, suggestive of sympathetic magic, that the faces on the medallion seem to consent to his wish. Thus flattery serves utility.

Our final picture of Ovid as the contrite worshipper at Augustus’ shrine seems very incongruous with the modish sceptic of the amatory poems, but the genealogy is sufficiently clear. The almost universal flattery of the Emperor is an axiom of Roman Imperial history. Few in Ovid’s situation responded other than he did. Once again, apart from a small band of devout Stoics, few people had any principle above the Emperor to appeal to. Ovid writes (Pont. IV.9.105-112):

nec pietas ignota mea est: videt hospita terra
in nostra sacrum Caesaris esse domo.
stant pariter natusque plus coniunxque sacerdos,
umina iam facto non leviora deo.
neu desit pars ulla domus, stat uterque nepotum,
hic aviae lateri proximus, ille patris.
his ego do totiens cum ture precantia verba,
Eoo quotiens surgit ab ore dies.

Nor is my piety unknown; a strange land sees
A shrine to Caesar in my house.
Beside him stand the pious son and priestess wife,
Deities not less important than himself now that he has become a god.
To make the household group complete, both of the grandsons are there,
One by the side of his grandmother, the other by that of his father.
To these I offer incense and words of prayer
As often as the day rises from the east.

Augustus was now dead, leaving Livia a widow. Livia’s son Tiberius was now Emperor, and Livia’s grandsons Germanicus and Drusus were prospective heirs. The death of Augustus (A.D. 14) and his deification by the senate provided a new theme for Ovid to write about. In the same poem he calls upon Augustus in heaven as a witness to the information which Ovid has just related about his loyalty and piety. The poet concludes with the observation that Augustus in heaven has finally seen fit to pardon the poet (127-134):
tu certe scis haec, superis ascite, videisque,
Caesar, ut est oculis subdita terra tuis.
tu nostras audis inter convexa locatus
sidera, sollicito quas damas ore, preces.
perveniant istuc et carmina forsitan illa,
quae de te misi caelitie facta novo.
auguror hic igitur flecti tua numina, nec tu
inmerito nomen mite Parentis habes.

Thou at least knowest this, O Caesar, now one with the gods,
And seest it, since now the world is placed beneath thine eyes.
Thou hearest from thy place among the stars of heaven's vault
The prayers of my anxious lips.
Perchance even those poems may reach thee there
Which I have composed and sent about thee, a new divinity.
And do I prophesy that thy holy will is yielding to these prayers,
For not undeservedly hast thou the gracious name of "Father".

It is not surprising then that if Ovid was writing thus under a "good" Emperor, that flattery
knew no bounds under Caligula, Nero, Domitian, and later despots.

Conclusion: The Sources of Ovid's Disinterest in Religion and Philosophy

Of the four tendencies which Fowler perceives in Roman religion during the first century
B.C., all of them, except the survival of household worship, may be seen as attempts to fill the
void left by the decline of traditional cults. Even household religion and the related state
worship probably owes something to attempts by educated Romans, and Augustus especially,
to encourage old Roman practices. Fowler's other three tendencies—Stoic monotheism, the
heightened awareness of Fate and Fortuna, and the man-god cult—all can be partly interpreted
as attempts to plug a hole left by the disappearance of traditional pieties. Roman Stoicism
tried to save some aspects of Roman religion—especially state religion—by philosophizing
them, but this was essentially a rearguard action. Those Romans who wholly embraced
Stoicism tended to be cut loose from the mainstream of Roman life. The belief in Fate and
Fortuna was little more than a confession of agnosticism—that vague powers beyond our control and understanding impinge upon our lives. Once again only Stoicism was able to give any deep meaning to such ideas. The man-god cult bolstered state religion by giving it a renewed focus and a "present deity" (praesens deus). There is little doubt that it helped to give a richer meaning to the social structure, but it naturally failed to deeply engage the educated classes. These alternatives appealed chiefly to those who were convinced that religion was necessary, especially for the state, and wanted to impede its decline. Ovid was not one of these; hence his relative disinterest in the religious trends of his time.

Ovid's essential disbelief in the gods was not unusual for men of his time. It is doubtful whether the leaders of Roman society (Sulla, Cicero, Caesar, Pompey, Augustus) had stronger faith than he did. What is a little unusual is Ovid's apparent lack of belief in supernatural manifestations, such as ghosts, omens, and the uncanny. It is possible, but not probable, that Ovid may have suppressed some of his own beliefs in order to assume the role of the witty, cynical, sophisticate in his verse. More likely a combination of factors discouraged any interest in the supernatural for Ovid at an early age. At the rhetorical schools he would have imbibed the agnostic teachings of the old sophists at second or third hand. Equally potent would have been the expression of such ideas by Euripides and the Alexandrian poets. Popular Epicureanism at Rome, encouraged by a new era of peace and prosperity, would have contributed to a disinterest in spiritual niceties, and have pointed towards a practical atheism. Even Augustus' campaign for a revived religion may have taught the sophistic lesson that religion was a political construct. Of all cultures indeed a "youth culture" which draws its strength from a triumphant materialism is the least nurturing of religious aspirations and metaphysical ideals, and such a culture Ovid found himself admitted to in early adolescence.
Such a "youth culture" was already conventionalized in the Love Elegy tradition, and Ovid early saw himself as the heir of his older friend Propertius and previous elegists.

We may surmise that when, unchallenged by relevant moral or spiritual possibilities, the youthful tendencies towards love of fame, sex, entertainment, and leisure are given untrammelled scope that a consensus against the responsible or religious life will develop. This is especially true when, as in Augustan Rome, there are no critical challenges from foreign enemies or any bracing political possibilities. It is likely, moreover, that civil war and the proscriptions had broken up many families, leaving young people with little guidance and direction. The declamatory education of the day encouraged cleverness and discouraged serious reflection. Its exercises in "making the better cause seem the worse" helped to produce a shallow sophistication which included the belief that the present generation was smarter than past ones. At the same time the luxuries of Rome and the avenues for amusement there allowed the self-centred life of pleasure to be a full-time pursuit for those with adequate means. As Fowler pointedly says of the Ars Amatoria:

The culta puella and cultus puer of Ovid's fascinating yet repulsive poem are the products of a society which looks on pleasure, not reason or duty, as the main end of life, —not indeed pleasure simply of the grosser type, but the gratification of one's own wish for enjoyment and excitement, without a thought of the misery all around, or any sense of the self-respect that comes of active well-doing.77

When the modish pursuit of pleasure rejects self-reflection, as not being sufficiently pleasurable, then there is no means left for such a pursuit to rise towards philosophy or religion. The diluted Epicureanism of Ovid's day rejected formal Epicureanism as being too dogmatic and intransigent. Pleasure itself cannot even tolerate the discipline of the philosophy of pleasure. The life which is filled with physical and worldly entertainments cannot feel the

need for anything beyond the physical and worldly; therefore, it can have no use for
metaphysics or religion. Yet to trouble to deny these is unnecessary and unpleasurable. As G.
K. Chesterton said of his contemporaries:

Atheism itself is too theological for us today.⁷⁸

Of the moderns Ovid has been most frequently compared to Oscar Wilde, and, while the
comparison is not flattering to Ovid, it may be instructive if not pushed too far. Wilde's
solipsism and undisguised love of pleasure led to his rejection of formal religion and morality.
He was, however, interested in the trappings of religion and in Jesus Christ as a great artist
and actor. Hesketh Pearson gives a parable by Wilde which vividly captures the irrelevance of
the religious or spiritual life to one dedicated to the pleasures of this world:

Christ came to the city and heard the sounds of great rejoicing. He entered a dwelling
and saw a man lying drunk upon a couch. He touched him on the shoulder and asked,
"Why do you waste your soul in drink?" The man looked up and answered, "I was a
leper once, and you healed me. What else should I do?" He went further into the city
and saw a youth following a harlot, and said to him, "Why do you look at this woman
with eyes of lust?" The youth knew Him, and answered, "I was blind once, and you
gave me sight. At what else should I look?" So He spoke to the woman: "Why do
you walk in the way of sin?" And the woman replied, "You forgave my sins, and the
way is pleasant". And He passed out of the city, and saw an old man weeping by the
wayside, and asked him why he wept. The old man answered, "Lord, I was dead, and
you brought me back to life. What else can I do but weep?"⁷⁹

The last incident in Wilde's parable is notable for its emphatic rejection of any need for
religion. The religion of Ovid's day was different, of course, but there is little evidence that
the poet saw any need for it. Nor does Ovid show any strong tendency toward reflection, even
in his poems from exile.


⁷⁹Hesketh Pearson, Oscar Wilde: His Life and Wit (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1946),
What makes the religious attitudes of Ovid unsatisfactory is that he rejects *mythos* (traditional lore) without embracing *logos* (rational investigation). Lucretius, and earlier philosophic writers, had rejected the stories of the gods in order to formulate a more rigorous and naturalistic account of phenomena. Ovid airily dismisses the truth of the myths, but seems to have little interest in philosophic truth either. Perhaps Ovid's teachers held to the tradition of the older sophists that reason itself only led to ambiguous conclusions, which they demonstrated by setting argument against argument and philosophy against philosophy. More likely the disrepair into which the schools of philosophy had fallen in Ovid's day and the general disrepute of philosophy among rhetoricians produced in Ovid's generation the notion that the philosophic life was not worth examining. If they did venture to give ear to popular philosophy, it was no doubt only to those which made no strenuous demands for morality or self-discipline. Even here Ovid shows relatively little interest in astrology, for example, although he seems to have been touched by the animal welfare side of neo-Pythagoreanism. Basically, Ovid and his contemporaries were unable to interest themselves in philosophy and religion because they were unaware that they lacked anything. The appeal of even the most profound theology or metaphysics would probably have fallen on deaf ears at Rome during this era. For, as Confucius reportedly said,

> If a person does not say to himself, "What to do? What to do?" indeed I do not know what to do with such a person!⁶⁰

In so far as Ovid possessed aspirations beyond the physical present, these yearnings were met chiefly through the avenues which Love Elegy itself provided for the "youth culture" of the day, namely, self-development through love and poetry. In spite of its heavily sexual emphasis there is at least a possibility in the romances of the elegists that such relationships

may transcend physical passion; for Ovid they also represent a kind of cultivation of the
individual. Even more important for Ovid was the role of poetry as the mode par excellence
for leaping beyond everyday existence into an ideal, if perhaps solipsistic, world.
Chapter II

OVID ON POETRY AND LOVE

The Roman Love Elegists

Studies of the Roman Elegists have traditionally viewed them as a distinct school with similar aims and interests. Beginning with Catullus and Calvus as precursors, there followed the apostolic succession of Gallus, Tibullus, Propertius, and Ovid. The source for this picture is largely Ovid himself.¹ Some modern studies have explored in detail the psychological, social, and literary affinities of the group. In this chapter I will take my start from Lilja’s The Roman Elegists’ Attitude to Women.²

Lilja sees the Elegists in general as being defined by their attitudes toward love and love poetry: "... Tibullus, Propertius, and Ovid opposed a new concept, that of a life devoted to love and love poetry, to the conventional view that civil responsibilities should count for more than individual pursuits."³ In this chapter there will be a short survey of these Elegiac attitudes, followed by an examination of Ovid’s approaches to love and poetry. It will be seen that Ovid differs significantly from his predecessors.


³Lilja, p. 110.
A change in the life-style of the Roman upper class following the Second Punic War was remarked on by authors and statesmen of that period, such as Cato the Elder and Polybius, as well as by later historians such as Sallust and Livy. A major factor in this change was Roman exposure to Greek Literature, Greek Philosophy, and the Hellenistic way of life. The educated Roman commonly found that his intellectual and cultural pursuits were Greek in spirit, while his politics and day-to-day business were Roman. His Greek style of education might lead him to doubt the importance of traditional Roman pursuits and values. As M.L. Clarke says of the Hellenistic philosophers:

...with their constant insistence on simplicity and self-control and their readiness to see greed and self-seeking as the motive of so much of human activity the philosophers went some way towards undermining the belief of the Roman in his own civilization.

The Elegists were involved in this setting of Hellenistic social and cultural values against traditional Roman mores. Their involvement, however, was sufficiently distinctive and creative to justify the notion that they were developing a new sensibility, one which was new to Rome, and which differed in some important ways from the wider Hellenistic culture. In particular, their exaltation of the roles of poet and lover versus the traditional roles of the Roman male (soldier, farmer, statesman) indicated a dramatic shift in values. As Lilja indicates:

Those two aims of life, love and love poetry, formed together actually a new view of life, which was modified, it is true, to a certain degree by the fact that both love and love poetry were considered to pertain to youth.

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4 This subject will be explored more fully in Chapter Three.


6 Lilja, p. 64.
The word *otium* (leisure)—the opposite of *negotium* (business)—is often used for the Elegists' life-style which Lilja defines as being "forgetful of civil responsibilities and wholly devoted to love and to poetry." The stronger term *neguitia* (worthlessness) is sometimes used jocularly by the Elegists of their own way of life and has been defined as "the freeing of self from community-consciousness, the retreating into one's own 'I'". This private frame of reference distinguished the Elegists from the bulk of their contemporaries whether favourably to their own thinking, or unfavourably to the public mind. Their activities of love-making and poetry-making reinforced one another, and combined to exclude *negotium*. As Molly Myerowitz has noted:

The elegists see the madness of love as desirable since it is the reason for their art. Glorifying in love, even inventing it where it does not exist, the elegists make their love and their art indistinguishable.

Because the Latin language did not possess a wide range of terms applicable to *otium*, the Elegists frequently gave new connotations to traditional words. These words themselves had perhaps lost some of their original lustre through misuse. As Lilja says "...the new view of life of the Roman elegists is expressed by means of notions and terms proper to the traditional view." The free love relationship generally espoused by the elegists is sometimes described in terms borrowed from traditional political and social relationships. Catullus, for example, uses the term *amicitia* (friendship) to signify his extra-marital romance with Clodia. An

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7Ibid., p. 90.


10Lilja, p. 69.
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important term in Roman social life amicitia usually referred to the feeling "existing not so much within marriage as between two male parties." At the same time for Catullus the ideal of fides (loyalty) was transferred from the sphere of politics to a free love relationship. In this way the meaning of traditional terms was displaced by the new meanings applied to them. The egocentric usages of the Elegists further distanced them from the world of negotium.

With the Elegists, we are rather in the world of Greek Mythology than Roman Religion. Catullus, however, has his worshipful moments, and Tibullus has a warm feeling for the rural Roman deities and especially the Lares. The Elegiac creed of love and poetry, nonetheless, tends to squeeze out religion in favour of mythology, and this is certainly the case with Propertius and Ovid.

The Elegists' Use of Myth

As Richard Whitaker remarks: "Propertius...is the key figure so far as the elegists' use of myth is concerned." Propertius developed the tendency already present in Catullus and Tibullus to use the myths of gods and heroes as parallels to or variations on his own

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11Lilja, p. 73. Cf. David O. Ross, Jr., Style and Tradition in Catullus (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969), pp. 83-84: "amicitia: seldom does the word mean friendship in our sense, but rather, almost always, refers to the complex web of political alliances between leading men that made the constitutional machinery of Rome workable and dynamic."

12Ross, p. 85: "Fides ... is properly that bond which makes possible the patron-client relationship ... In the Late Republic, however, the concept is continually applied to political amicitiae between equals, and is indeed the only real basis for constancy and stability in such relationships."

13E.g., Catullus XXXIV, LXI, LXXVI, and Tibullus I.1, I.10, II.1.

experiences in love. Lacking the validity of any traditional sanction, the Elegists seem to have turned to myth to "guarantee the timeless significance of their own experience."\footnote{Whitaker, p. 12.} According to Whitaker:

The urgent need the Augustan love-elegists felt to generalize and dignify their experience is, I believe, the fundamental reason for their frequent recourse to myth.\footnote{Ibid.}

One important aspect of this usage is the idealization of the poet's mistress by comparing her to the goddesses and heroines of mythology. Greek Mythology, with its copious tales of amorous adventures by gods and heroes, provided a welcome parallel for the adventures of the Elegists. Myth could be treated as the standard or norm to which the behaviour of the Elegists conformed. Since mythology provided an almost unlimited number of examples, "they could use mythological examples as a rhetorical device to prove or justify virtually anything they wished."\footnote{Whitaker, p. 13.} Thus, while appearing beyond reproach, they were able, from mythology, to find the most extreme examples of devotion to love and poetry, as well as negative reflections on the negotium of their neighbours. The many loves of Jupiter are constantly being urged by Propertius and Ovid to justify their own amorous tendencies (e.g., Prop. II.30.31-32):

\begin{quote}
\textit{quod si nemo exstat qui vicerit Alitis arma,}
\textit{communis culpae cur reus unus agor?}
\end{quote}

And if none has arisen to prevail over the weapons of the winged god, Why am I alone accused of a universal fault?

The not-so-noble feats of gods and heroes in love are used, therefore, to exonerate the lover and his mistress from all blame arising from their erotic transgressions.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 132ff.} Thus references to
the gods are generally used by the Elegists to back up their preoccupation with love and
poetry, rather than for any moral or religious purpose. Even Tibullus, the most religious of the
Elegists, speaks of committing sacrilege in order to provide gifts for his mistress Nemesis
(II.4.23-26). Thus the Elegists subordinate religion and morality to love and poetry rather than
vice versa.

The Poet's Mistress as Divine

It is true, of course, that love and poetry had a certain divine significance in the classical
world reaching back to the time of Homer and Hesiod. Love and poetry were respectively the
gifts of "golden Aphrodite" (Venus) and the Muses, and their servants (lovers and poets)
received a certain reflected glory from this. In general, however, traditional Greek theology
favoured a clear distinction between men and gods, with Hercules being the most notable
exception. During Late Classical and Hellenistic times, nonetheless, this traditional distinction
began to break down because of the decline of the Olympian religion and the growth of a
man-centered view of the world. The willingness of Alexander the Great and his successors to
receive divine honours in their lifetime accelerated this process.\(^1\) Thus during the Hellenistic
Period two related ideas about men and gods gained currency: first, that human beings who
(like Hercules) had greatly benefited mankind might be metamorphosed into gods; and,
second, that the gods of old were perhaps great men (benefactors) who had been deified by a
grateful people. W.W. Fowler quotes Bevan as pointing out that since "the old forms of
worship were emptied of their real significance, there was less hesitation in offering them to

\(^1\)A topic referred in Chapter One with respect to the Julian family.
men." At Rome in the first century B.C. this process was well-advanced, and the century concluded with Julius, Augustus, and other members of the Emperor's family as gods or prospective gods.

There existed for the Elegists and their contemporaries a religious vacuum into which it might be tempting to move. Since love and poetry were the summa bona of the Elegists, these had a certain a priori claim to religious significance. By emphasizing the love-making and art-creating activities of the gods the elegists brought the gods into close proximity with themselves. The first stage of this process seems to be the idealization of the poet's mistress.

In this matter, as in other central aspects of elegy, Catullus appears to be the innovator. The exaltation of Clodia as the candida diva of Cat. LXVIII.70 was a hint which later elegists adopted and developed. The use of "god" as a poetic superlative for "man" has a very old history. The Homeric heroes are frequently "godlike", and similar words of praise were employed variously by later poets. It may have been Sappho's famous love poem, translated by Catullus, which gave the latter this metaphor for the lover (Cat. L1.1-5):

Ille mi par esse deo videtur,
ille, si fas est, superare divos,
qui sedens adversus identidem te
spectat et audit
dulce ridentem...

He seems to me to be equal to a god,
He, if it may be, seems to surpass the very gods,
Who sitting opposite you, again and again Gazes at you and hears
You sweetly laughing...

Here Sappho's comparison of the lover to a god is taken a step higher by Catullus ("to surpass the very gods") which emphasizes the bold metaphoric use of "god" to represent the lover and

\[20\text{W. Warde Fowler, Roman Ideas of Deity In the Last Century Before the Christian Era (London: MacMillan, 1914), pp. 86-87.}\]
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the loved one. The idealization of the mistress is developed by Catullus and the Elegists by comparisons between their girlfriends and the goddesses and heroines of mythology, as Catullus compares Clodia to Laodamia in Poem LXVIII. According to Whitaker:

This use of myth by Roman love-poets to idealize a mistress is regarded by various modern critics as one of their most distinctive innovations...21

The mistress is ennobled by being brought into association with gods and heroes, in a way not dissimilar to that in which a contemporary politician like Augustus is made heroic by being brought together with the great names of legend and mythology. Propertius, for example, praises Gallus's mistress in the following terms (I.13.29-32):

nec mirum, cum sit lice dignae proxima Ledae
et Ledae partu gratior, una tribus
illa sit Inachis et blandior heroinis,
illa suis verbis cogat amare Iovem.

No wonder, since she is the near-equal of Leda, who was worthy of Jove,
And fairer herself alone than all three of Leda's daughters;
She could be even more seductive than the heroines of Argos,
And with her talk force Jove to love her.

To the Elegist, his mistress is a more essential figure than the gods themselves. For her kindness he will bear the wrath of the gods (Prop. II.13.15-16):

quaes si furte bonas ad pacem vererit aures,
possum inmiciatas tune ego ferre Iovis.

If only she turns on me a kindly ear and grants a truce,
Then I can endure Jove's enmity.

She is real object of worship for the poet, with whom the gods are unable to compete. Ovid describes the return of his mistress from a sea voyage, as the return of his gods (Am. II.11.43-44). Elsewhere he describes her as a greater goddess than Venus (Am. III.2.59-60).

21Whitaker, p. 12, footnote 3.
The poet-lover himself regularly compares his activities to those of Jove and other gods, implying the divine nature of the lover. Sometimes he explicitly states the divine nature of love-making, as in Propertius II.15.39-40:

si dabit et multas, fiam immortalis in illis:
nocte una quivis vel deus esse potest.

If she further gives me many [nights], I will grow immortal in them:
A single such night might make any man a god.

The Poet as Divine

The idea of the poet as divine had also traditional and more recent inspiration. In Homer and Hesiod poetry is the sacred gift of Apollo and the Muses, who bestow it upon their favoured followers. Mythology names Orpheus, Linus, and other heroic bards. To the tradition of the "holy bard" was added the Hellenistic tendency to extol or deify great men. Homer and other leading poets were conventionally referred to as "gods", meaning chiefly that they surpassed the crowd of poets. In a similar way Cicero refers to Plato as a kind of god (De Natura Deorum, II.32):

Audiamus enim Platonem quasi quendam deum philosophorum ...

For let us hear Plato, that divine philosopher, for so almost he is to be deemed.

The equation of poet with god had a more than usual impetus because of the widespread convention regarding poetic immortality. The poet himself was immortal with respect to his verse, and also conferred immortality upon those whom he wrote about. With the decline of traditional religious feeling among the educated classes, this possibility of a kind of immortality through literature gained new attractiveness. This point is made by T. F. Higham:
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Professor Cumont has shown, with great sympathy, how man does not, as a rule, resign himself to the prospect of utter destruction envisaged, for example, by Epicurus; and how the desire for fame as a means, however inadequate, of surviving bodily death, was not unnatural in an age when other faiths were hardly more convincing. 22

While both Catullus (LXVIII.41-46) and Tibullus (I.4.61-66) are aware of the power of poetry to confer immortality, it is Propertius who first develops this theme fully (III.2.17-26):

fortunata, meo si qua’s celebrata libello!
carmina erunt formae tot monumenta tuae.
nam neque pyramidum sumptus ad sidera ducti,
nec Iovis Elei caelum imitata domus,
nec Mausolei dives fortuna sepulcri
mortis ab extrema condicione vacant.
aut illis flamma aut imber subducut honores,
amnonum aut tacito pondere victa ruent.
at non ingenio quaesitum nomen, ab sevo
excidet: ingenio stat sine morte decus

Happy woman, whoe’er you be, that are praised in a book of mine!
Each poem will be a memorial of your beauty.
For neither the costly pyramids soaring to the skies,
Nor the temple of Jove at Eleus that mimics heaven,
Nor the sumptuous magnificence of the tomb of Mausolus
Are exempt from the ultimate decree of death.
Either fire or rain will steal away their glory,
Or they will collapse under the weight of the silent years.
But the fame my genius has won shall not perish with time:
Genius claims a glory that knows no death.

Propertius expected his writings to have an impact on the younger generation, and expected them to acclaim him as a god (III.9.45-46). This was in fact the case, as his younger contemporary Ovid idolized him and the other famous poets of the day. Ovid tells us how he looked upon the elder poets as gods, and how he himself was idolized by his younger contemporaries (Tr. IV.10.41-42,55-56):

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temporis illius colui fovique poetas,
quotque aderant vates, rebar adesse deos.
utque ego maiores, sic me coluere minores,
notaque non tarde facta Thalia mea est.

The poets of that time I fondly reverenced:  
All bards I thought so many present gods...  
And as I reverenced older poets so was I reverenced by the younger,  
For my Thalia was not slow to become renowned.

In this same poem Ovid states clearly his desire to be counted among the Elegists (Tr.
IV.X.51-54):

nec avara Tibullo
 tempus amicitiae fata dedere meae,
 (successor fuit hic tibi, Gallae, Propertius illi;
 quartus ab his serie temporis ipse fui).

...and to Tibullus
  Greedy fate gave no time for friendship with me
 (Tibullus was thy successor, Gallus, and Propertius his;
 After them came I, fourth in order of time).

Ovid and the Love Conventions of Elegy

Recent studies have demonstrated that Ovid was a very careful student and skilful imitator of both Tibullus and Propertius. This has led to the accusation that Ovid, at least in the Amores, is a mere copyist of the earlier Elegists. Grenier, for example, regards him as adding nothing new to the tradition:

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His inferiority lies chiefly in his facility. The image presents itself to his mind ready-made, with the lines and colours discovered by two generations of poets before him. The result is agreeable, it pleases: that is all Ovid wants.\textsuperscript{24}

In fact a reading of the Amores discovers very few poems which could pass unnoticed among the canon of Tibullus or Propertius; perhaps Am. I.3, II.17, III.8, and III.11 are a few which might escape notice. Yet in general discussions of Elegy frequent exceptions are made for the poems of Ovid. Differences in moral and religious attitudes are an element in these distinctions.

The most notable difference in the Ovidian love poems is that, unlike those of Catullus, Tibullus, and Propertius, love takes second place to poetry. An important element in this reversal is Ovid's willingness to treat love and the lover in a humorous or ironic manner. A survey of Ovid's work demonstrates both that his commitment to love is less, and his exaltation of poetry is greater than that of his predecessors in elegy.

One characteristic of Elegy is the exaltation of the free love relationship above marriage, and the attribution to it of special rules and customs. This relationship had its own kind of contract (cf. Prop. III.20.15ff.) expressed in terms and imagery derived from Roman judicial life. This free love contract took precedence over other relationships and obligations, and possessed its own "alternative morality." As Saara Lilja puts it:

Tibullus did not feel moral scruples when exhorting Della to deceive her husband, any more than Catullus or Ovid did, because they all considered the free love relationship to be as holy as marriage.\textsuperscript{25}

Ovid, in fact, as Lilja herself points out elsewhere, is the odd man out in this connection.

While Catullus wants an all-involving relationship with Lesbia, and while Tibullus imagines


\textsuperscript{25}Lilja, p. 176.
Delia as chatelaine of his country estate (I.5.21-34), and while Propertius sets his love for Cynthia above marriage (II.6), Ovid "who was already a married man at the outset of his career, omits this point." Ovid rarely indulges in high-flown sentiments about free love without undercutting them somehow. Ovid is also the only poet to mention a wife (Am. III13.1), which he does only shortly before his farewell to love elegy (III15). We have no clear indication whether Catullus or Tibullus were married, although Propertius seems to indicate that he was not (II.7), and it seems likely that his two predecessors were single also. The mistresses Lesbia, Delia, and Corinna are all spoken of as married women, with Cynthia being a more ambiguous case. The marriage of at least one partner gives some rationale for developing a free love contract to take the place of a marriage contract. Ovid's references to such a contract (e.g., III11.45) seem to occur in poems which most closely reflect the writings of his predecessors (e.g., Catullus), and are undercut elsewhere by his jokes about lovers' vows.

Just as he has little interest in an exclusive or permanent free love relationship, so Ovid has less interest in servitium amoris (the slavery of love) than Tibullus or Propertius. One aspect of Elegy had concentrated on the abasement of the lover and his humble service to his mistress. Thus the mistress is sometimes addressed as domina (lady), which indicates her dominant position. This term seems to lose its power in Ovid. Elsewhere Lilja writes:

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26 Ibid., pp. 73-74.
27 Lilja, p. 88.
28 Lilja, p. 83.
Ovid was less interested in those forms of servile punishment—and in the whole ‘idea of love as slavery—than Tibullus or Propertius.\(^{29}\)

In fact when Ovid does write of *servitium amoris* his intention seems to be to make fun of its conventions. Thus, when Ovid uses the common elegiac phrase *me miserum* (wretched me), it is usually to point out the lover’s discomfort for the amusement of the reader. In *Amores* 1.4, for example, after following the lover’s attempts to seduce his mistress at a banquet, we are invited to laugh at the lover (*me miserum*), as he watches helplessly his mistress go home with her husband who will enjoy the experience denied to himself.

Ovid’s lack of concern about being a servant of love is reflected in a more casual attitude towards the gods of love - Venus and Cupid (Amor). Lilja says of the Elegists:

In order to give religious authority to their new view of life the Roman elegiac poets emphasize the supreme power of Venus and Amor, the deities of love.\(^{30}\)

Tibullus especially invokes Venus and Amor as punishers of unfaithful lovers and rewarders of faithful ones. Propertius speaks more frequently of Amor than Venus, while “Ovid concentrates exclusively upon the power of Amor in the *Amores*.\(^{31}\) It is characteristic that, whereas Venus and Amor are described as powerful deities by Tibullus and Propertius, for Ovid they are rather ornamental and humourous. As Lilja puts it:

Ovid, on the other hand, comes nearer to the Hellenistic conception of Amor as an unruly child, who encourages light love-making rather than tyrannical passion.\(^{32}\)

\(^{29}\)Ibid., p. 88.

\(^{30}\)Ibid., p. 74.

\(^{31}\)Lilja, p. 78.

\(^{32}\)Ibid., p. 79.
It is often not clear in Ovid "whether the Latin word *amor* denotes the god Amor or an
abstract concept of love".

This allows for a more naturalistic interpretation of love,

although, in the *Amores*, Ovid consistently avoids the serious implications of sexual passion,

as we find them, for example, in Euripides’ *Hippolytus*. Tibullus had considered the power of

Amor to be sufficiently potent to provide him with an excuse to give Delia’s husband (I.6.29-30):

non ego te laesi prudens: ignoscere fatenti:
    iussit Amor. contra quis ferat arma deos?

I did not wrong thee of purpose—forgive me, now I own it—
’Twas at Love’s bidding. And who may fight against a god?

For Ovid in the *Ars Amatoria* Amor is a mischievous and headstrong boy, who can be guided

and controlled by the lover himself:

*Acadidae Chiron, ego sum praeceptor Amoris:*
    *Saevus uterque puer, natus uterque dea...*
    Et mihi cedet Amor...

Chiron taught Acacides, I am Love’s teacher:
A fierce lad each, and each born of a goddess...
And to me Love shall yield...

Thus Ovid’s playful attitudes towards love are reflected in his feelings towards the deities of

love.

Saara Lilja has done a detailed comparison of the Elegists with respect to their attitudes
towards women. Her conclusions are generally favourable to Ovid, since she views Ovid as
less egoistic than Tibullus or Propertius, and more willing to see the woman’s point of view.
She adds, "a willingness to look at things from another person’s point of view suggests a

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31Kenneth Quinn, quoted by Lilja, pp. 78-79.
propensity to altruism." It may be that she mistakes Ovid's less serious viewpoint for a more flexible and humane one. Ovid lacks the single-minded pursuit of a single love which his predecessors had. He often changes viewpoints to indicate the incongruity of certain elegiac sentiments. These shifts of position need not indicate altruism, but only a lack of commitment to the elegiac creed, and a sense of its humorous possibilities. Similarly, Valerie A. Tracy sees Ovid as less self-centered with respect to self-deification as a lover: "The poet will not exalt himself in love; there is no self-deification for the lover." Ovid, however, is quite prepared to adduce divine parallels for his own amorous activities, and the absence of clear identity statements as to his deity may simply reflect his less obsessive concern with the glory of love.

With respect to technique and critical attitudes Ovid often falls outside the patterns for Roman Literature developed by Catullus, Vergil, Horace and their contemporaries, and carried on by Tibullus and Propertius. F.L. Lucas said flatly that Ovid was "the least Roman of all the Latin poets". Gordon Williams expands on this idea by stating:

...one of the greatest contrasts between Ovid on the one hand and the poets of the late Republic and of the earlier Augustan age on the other is that he reverted to using the material of Greek mythology in ways that were basically Greek.

Richard Whitaker discusses in some detail how Ovid's use of mythology differs from that of the preceding Elegists:

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34Lilja, p. 203.
35Tracy, "One Aspect of nequitia ...", p. 343.
36Quoted by E.K. Rand, Ovid, p. 4.
The poet is not in general concerned, as Tibullus and Propertius had been, to create subtle ties between myth and his own or his girl's experience. He is quite simply seeking to prove a definite given point.38

This means that Ovid's use of mythological examples is usually much simpler and easier to understand than that of Propertius. As Whitaker says:

We do not find, and should not expect to find, the influence of the exemplum extending beyond the immediate context to the poem as a whole.39

Whitaker points out that Ovid's use of myth is very similar to that of popular Hellenistic poets and particularly the epigrammatists. It is the epigrammatists, for example, who enjoyed treating Jupiter (Zeus) frivolously, especially with respect to his love affairs. The general use of mythology for purposes of wit is also characteristic of the Hellenistic epigrammatists. According to Whitaker, "the epigrammatists' employment of myth had little apparent influence on Propertius and Tibullus, but was most important for Ovid."40 Ovid's humorous treatment of elegiac conventions is one of his major innovations, and helps to explain why Ovid had no successors of note in elegy. Parody is a parasitic creature which tends to kill the host it feeds on.

Ovid and the Primacy of Poetry

One reason why Ovid could sacrifice some of the love conventions of elegy is because he was more interested in the poetic conventions. The exaltation of poetry and its power to immortalize is a standard theme of Elegy. But as T.F. Higham says:

38Whitaker, p. 144.
39Ibid., p. 137.
40Ibid., p. 20.
Often the elegist would employ it playfully, to exalt his gift of verse above the gold of the "dives amator." But in Ovid it occurs with singular persistence, sounding like a statement of his poet’s faith and of faith in his own powers.\footnote{Higham, p. 108.}

Throughout Ovid’s life the poetic theme gains strength and confidence; yet, already in the \textit{Amores}, it takes primacy over the theme of sexual attraction. In Propertius a similar process had been going on, with poetry coming a close second to love, and threatening at times to overtake it. Ovid’s comradeship with Propertius (\textit{Tr.} IV.10.45-46) and the others poets of Rome reinforced his early bent towards poetry, and his belief in its greatness (\textit{Tr.} IV.10.19-20):

\begin{quote}
\begin{verse}
at mihi iam puero caelestia sacra placebant, 
inque suum furtim Musa trahebat opus.
\end{verse}
\end{quote}

But to me even as a boy service of the divine gave delight  
And stealthily the Muse was ever drawing me aside to do her work.

This single-minded devotion to poetry from childhood is part of the reason for Ovid’s unhesitating acceptance of the value of poetry, which indeed might be called his "one love".

On the whole, poems in the \textit{Amores} which concern chiefly the glory of poetry (e.g., I.15; II.18; III.1, etc.) give the impression of being written later than some of the love poems. Nonetheless, \textit{Am.} III.9, for example, on the death of Tibullus may not have been written much after 19 B.C. (Tibullus’ probable date of death), and it contains Ovid’s poetic creed fully developed. It is likely that Ovid’s declarations of his own poetic immortality were written after his popularity was established (at which time, however, he may still have been in his twenties).

From the opening poem of the \textit{Amores} Ovid turns again and again to the subject of poetry. For him Cupid (Amor) is as much the god of love poetry as of love. Whereas Tibullus was referring to his love affair with Delia when he wrote "iuussit Amor" (I.6.30), Ovid
is talking about his poetry when he writes "hoc quoque iussit Amor" - "Love ordered this also" - (Am. II.1.3). Book One of The Amores ends with a strong statement of purpose from the usually non-ideological poet in which poetry rather than love is central to the otium of the author. As Lilja notes, "it is characteristic of Ovid to contrast poetry, rather than love, with the mos patrum" (ancestral way of life).42 In this poem (Am. I.15) and elsewhere Ovid contrasts the immortality of poetry with the mortal nature of traditional Roman occupations. The same theme recurs in his elegy on Tibullus (III.9) where in von Albrecht's words:

"Ovide magnificia piété, le talent, le pouvoir divin du poète..."43 In the same poem, however, the counter-theme to the glory of poetry—its inability to stand against death and fate—are announced. This tension is developed most fully in the poems from exile.

As a young man Ovid held to his creed proudly, and lightly touched on its limitations. As a middle-aged exile his head was bloody but unbowed. Douglass Parker sums up the underlying situation:

...if the primacy of poetry is one constant theme in Ovid, its complement is one which was to be put ironically in focus by his banishment: poetry's lack of success in dealing with the real world. From the dead parrot to the doomed artists of the Metamorphoses (Arachne, Aesculapius, Orpheus) to the self-consciously wretched exile writing his letters at Tomi there runs a continuous thread, an unchanging burden: life in the real world imposes certain necessities which art, especially poetry, cannot handle. Poetry cannot pay a bawd, placate a crowd of maddened women, win a reprieve from an emperor.44

Having indicated that differences exist between Ovid's views of love and poetry and those of his predecessors, it is now time to explore in detail what those views were, and how they might fit into a world-view of wider religious significance.

42Lilja, p. 95.

43von Albrecht, "Ovide ...", p. 119.

The Gods as Lovers in Ovid

We have discussed how the religious sanction which the Elegists claimed for their *otium*, or life of love and poetry, was derived rather from Greek Mythology than Roman Religion. This sanction commonly took the form of analogies between the Elegist and his mistress and the gods, heroes, goddesses, and heroines of Mythology, along with a scattering of famous poets and lovers from history. As Whitaker says of the gods and demi-gods of myth and legend:

any comparison with them would automatically lend a depth and dignity to the poets’ experience which it might not otherwise have appeared to possess.\footnote{Whitaker, p. 12.}

This process of idealization was meant to exalt the Elegist and his mistress by comparing them either to divine beings or to the highest and most heroic human figures. This use of myth as a standard or norm, which among Ovid’s predecessors had overtones of heroic poetry, with Ovid takes on elements of the mock-heroic. As Whitaker writes: “Ovid, even where he does bring myth into contact with what he presents as his own experience, does so mainly for purposes of wit.”\footnote{Ibid., p. 15.}

What the earlier Elegists had used as a way of exalting man—comparing lovers to gods—Ovid frequently uses as a way of degrading the gods. Euripides’ technique of pushing anthropomorphism to its logical conclusion, and demonstrating that the gods made rather shoddy human beings was not lost on Ovid. All the same Ovid’s parodies of elegiac conventions are not so blatant as to prevent him from having it both ways.\footnote{Cf. Morgan, Ovid’s Art of Imitation, pp. 27-28: “The term parody has been applied by some scholars to the entire Amores. Such a judgment must be based upon the general difference in tone between Ovid’s elegy and that of his predecessors, the contrast between the light and playful and the sober and intense ... In the Amores, then, we would expect Ovid to parody the most serious of his predecessors, Propertius. Ovid does not disappoint us in this, but he does limit both the
image of the lover and his mistress only makes it easier to subtly undercut the heroic sentiments. The Amores are a mixture of sentiment and cynicism; it is only in the Ars Amatoria that the sentiments are shown to be a mask for deception.

Ovid, as Whitaker says "seems to have enjoyed treating Jupiter frivolously." The king of gods and men provided an excellent precedent for the behaviour of the lover. Venus and Cupid also presented edifying examples, while the virgin goddesses and other less amorous deities might be quietly passed over or slyly glanced at.

In the Heroides Jupiter and Venus are invoked as patterns by Phaedra and Paris. Phaedra writing to the chaste young Hippolytus tells him that his old-fashioned regard for virtue was rustic even in Saturn’s reign (Her. IV.133-134):

Iuppiter esse pium statuit, quodcumque iuvaret,
et fas omne facit fratre marita soror.

Jove fixed that virtue was to be in whatever brought us pleasure;
And naught is wrong before the gods since sister was made wife by brother.

When Paris proposes elopement to Helen he caps his argument with a reference to the manners of Helen’s presumed father Jupiter, and to his own patroness Venus (Her. XVI.291-294):

Iuppiter his gaudet, gaudet Venus aurea furtis;
haec tibi nempe patrem furtam dedere Iovem.
vix fieri, si sunt vires in semine morum,
et Iovis et Ledae filia, casta potes.

amount and the subject matter of the Propertian parody which he includes in the Amores. Generally, Ovid keeps his parody short—one or at most two distichs—and includes only one Propertian parody per poem. His favourite subjects for parody are things which Propertius took very seriously. In the Amores we find parody of Augustus and his programs, one of which was the promotion of serious Roman literature. The greater part of Ovid’s parody, however, has as its subject the Propertian view of the lover and the trials and tribulations which he must endure at the hands of his mistress."

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Jove’s delight, and the delight of Venus are in stealthy sins like these:
Such stealthy sins, indeed, gave you Jove for sire.
If power over character be in the seed, it scarce can be that you,
The child of Jove and Leda, will remain chaste.

The goddesses Luna (Selene), Aurora, and Venus are given as examples of amorous
females, whom girls should imitate, in Ars Amatoria III.83-88:

Latmian Endymion non est tibi, Luna, rubori,
nec Cephalus rosee praeda pudenda deae.
Ut Veneri, quem luget adhuc, donetur Adonis:
Unde habet Aenean Harmoniamque suos?
Ita per exemplum, genus o mortale, deanum,
gaudia nec cupidis vestra negate viris.

Latmian Endymion brings no blush to thee, O Moon,
Nor is Cephalus a prize that shames the rosee goddess;
Though Adonis, whom she mourns, be granted to Venus,
Whence has she her Aeneas and Harmonia?
Study, you mortal folk, the examples of the goddesses,
Nor deny your joys to hungry lovers.

In the Amores (I.13) Ovid upbraids Aurora (Dawn) for coming early to interrupt his night of
love. He tells her that if she were sleeping with young Cephalus instead of her old husband
Tithonus she would not arrive so soon. Similarly, Ovid objects that chastity is expected
during the festival of Ceres, since Ceres herself knew what it was to love when she courted
young Iasius (Am. III.10).

The Metamorphoses relate the loves of the gods and goddesses at length, with the amours
of Jupiter being especially prominent. Rand discusses Ovid’s humorous treatment of Jupiter as
the desultor amoris (the leaper from girl to girl), and his general ridicule of the gods of
mythology:
Never was Aristotle's dictum better justified that the persons of comedy are worse than those in every-day life. Jupiter is easily the protagonist, smitten with each fair face and thwarted by Nemesis in the form of Juno.49

The amorous propensities of Jupiter and other gods provide Ovid with ample material for scandalous reflections on the gods, for divine justification of the lover, and for displaying the fatal attractiveness of pretty women.

Combining humour and humanism Ovid frequently argues that just as Jupiter is a victim of Cupid’s arrows so he himself must yield to love and to his mistress. Ovid rarely tires of joking that a pretty girl is more powerful than the gods. Love (Cupid) makes the poet valiant - afraid of none but his mistress or her door-keeper (Am. I.6.15-16):

> te nimium lentum timeo, tibi blandior uni;  
> tu, me quo possis perdere, fulmen habes.

You alone I fear, too unyielding to my wish; on you alone I fawn; It is you who hold the thunderbolt can ruin me.

He states that his girl's power over him is greater than Jove’s, and makes him turn from epic poetry on the gods to love poems for his mistress (Am. II.1.15-20):

> in manibus nimbos et cum Iove fulmen habebam,  
> quod bene pro caelo mittere: ille suo—  
> Clausit amica fores! ego cum Iove fulmen omisi;  
> excidit ingenio Luppiter ipse meo.  
> Luppiter, ignoscas! nil me tua tela iuvabant;  
> clusa tuo maius ianua fulmen habet.

I had in hand the thunder-clouds, and Jove with his lightning Which he was to hurl to save his own heaven. 
My beloved closed her door! I let fall Jove with his lightning; Jove's very self dropped from my thoughts.
Jove, pardon me! Thy bolts could not serve me; That door she closed was a thunderbolt greater than thine.

49Rand, p. 61.
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Pursuing this theme further, Ovid makes the failure of the gods to punish girls for false oaths a tribute to their power over the gods or to the gods' lack of substance (Am. III.3.1-2, 23-26):

Esse deos, i, crede—fidem iurata feellit,
et facies illi, quae fuit ante, manet!
aut sine re nomen deus est frustraque timetur,
et sancta populos credulitate movet;
aut, siguis deus est, teneras amat ille puellas,
et nimium solas omnia posse iubet.

Go, believe there are gods—she swore and has failed her oath,
And still her face is fair, as it was before...
Either God is a name without substance and feared for naught,
Moving peoples through stupid trustfulness,
Or, if there is a god, he is in love with the tender girls,
And too quick to ordain that they alone may do all things.

Ovid and His Mistress are Compared to the Gods

Ovid is also fond of comparing his mistress to a goddess, but usually in a manner suggesting the mock-heroic or jocular. In Amores III.2.55-60 he tells his prospective girlfriend that Venus is granting his prayers that she will love him. The scene takes place at the chariot races and is part of the poet's hectic pursuit of his "goddess," using the events of the competition including the procession of images of the gods as part of his "line":

nos tibi, blanda Venus, puerisque potentibus arcu,
plaudimus; inceptis adnue, diva, meis
daque novae mentem dominea! patiatur amari!
Adnuit et motu signa secunda dedit.
quod dea promisit, promittas ipsa, rogamus;
pace loquar Veneris, tu dea maior eris.
We, winsome Venus, we applaud thee, and thy children potent with the bow;
Smile, O goddess, upon my undertakings,
And put the right mind in my heart’s new mistress! let her endure to be loved!
She nodded, and by the movement gave favouring sign.
What the goddess has promised, yourself promise I ask;
With Venus’ permission let me say it, you will be the greater goddess.

Similarly, Paris in his attempts to persuade Helen to elope (Her. XVI.334) tells her that, when
they reach Troy together:

teque novam credet vulgus adesse deam

The common crowd will think you a new goddess come to earth.

So although the Ovidian mistress is represented as the poet’s deity, and as immune from the
powers of the gods (e.g., Am. III.45-48), there is always a doubt that this build-up is merely a
strategy by the poet to gain his rather short-term amorous goals.

Although Ovid avoids directly proclaiming his divinity as poet-lover, he enjoys making
analogies between himself as lover and the amorous gods, especially Jupiter. This analogy is
ambiguous in providing both a heightened image for the lover and in undercutting his
professions of faith by reminding us of the multiple conquests of the divine adulterer. This
gives ironic undertones to Ovid’s persuasions to love in such passages as Amores 1.3.19-26:

te mihi materiem felicem in carmina praebere
provenient causa carmina digna sua.
carmina nomen habent externa cornibus Io,
et quam fluminia lusit adulter ave,
quaexquae super ponunt simulato vecta iuvenco
virginea tenuit cornua vara manu.
nos quoque per totum pariter cantabimur orbem,
unctaquae semper erunt nomina nostra tuis.
Give me yourself as happy matter for my songs,
And my songs will come forth worthy of their cause.
Through song came fame to Io frightened by her horns,
And to her whom a lover beguiled in guise of the river-bird,
And to her who was carried over the deep on the pretended bull,
While she grasped with virgin hand his bended horns.
You and I, too, shall be sung in like manner through all the earth,
And my name shall be ever joined with yours.

The various tricks which Jupiter used to escape the notice of Juno such as changing himself into a swan or bull, or changing his mistress into a heifer, appeal to Ovid's sense of incongruity. He himself fears that such an amorous deity might be interested in his own girlfriend (Am. I.10.7-8):

...aquilamque in te taurumque timebam,
et quidquid magno de love fecit amor.

...and in my love for you I feared the eagle and the bull,
And what other form soever love has caused great Jove to take.

Often the poet uses mythology to illustrate his own situation, or give point to his argument. When he is criticizing Aurora (Dawn) for coming too soon for his liking, he points out that Jupiter lengthened the night in order to have his fill of love (Am. I.13.45-46). When he is criticizing his girlfriend's husband ironically for giving her too much freedom, he argues that Jove would never have been interested in Danae, if she had not been locked up (Am. II.19.27-28). Ovid's uses the same story when he reflects on the power of gold to attain one's goals in romance (Am. III.8.29-30):

Jupiter, admonitus nihil esse potentius auro,
corruptae pretium virginis ipse fuit.

Jove, knowing well that naught was more potent than gold,
Himself became the price of a maid's betrayal.

The ennobling aspect of this analogy is to bring the poet into close conjunction with the father of gods and men, and it is significant that in the poems from exile Ovid consistently
uses Jupiter as an analogy for the Emperor Augustus. On the other hand, Jove is both an 
example to be followed by the lover, and a justification for the lover’s activities. In the Ars 
Amatoria (I.713-714) Jupiter can be used as an example to show that the male should pursue 
the female:

Juppiter ad veteres suppplex herdias ibat: 
Corrupt magnum nulla puella iovem.

Jupiter went a suppliant to the heroines of old:
No woman seduced the mighty Jove.

The amorous "over-kill" associated with Jupiter, however, provides innumerable opportunities 
for ironic remarks and comic effects. Although mythology presented Ovid with abundant 
examples of the gods as lovers, it was somewhat less well-stocked with examples of divine 
poets. There was no one god who could be an exemplar for the poet as Jupiter was for the 
lover. Moreover, since Ovid used mythology largely to provide opportunities for wit, and 
since he took poetry more seriously than love, he was perhaps less intent on exploiting 
whatever opportunities did exist.

The Gods of Poetry and the Poetic Lover

The conventional deities of poetry were Phoebus Apollo, the nine Muses, and sometimes 
Bacchus. These are referred to (Am. I.31.II-12) by Ovid as allies of the love poet:

at Phoebus comitesque novem vitisque repertor
hac factunt...

Yet Phoebus and his nine companions and the finder of the vine
Are on my side...

But such references tend to be perfunctory and derivative. Fowler argued that Apollo had no 
real strength as a religious influence at Rome:
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in the Augustan poetry we find Apollo everywhere, not as a deity of medicine, but of
the poet's art, and in fact constantly a mere synonym for poetry.\footnote{\text{50}}

Fowler cites \textit{Ars Am.} III.493ff as an example of Ovid's use of Apollo. Here the Delphic
motto "know thyself" is jocularity referred to by the \textit{preceptor amoris} as a guide to making the
most of one's charms and talents. The lack of incongruous myths regarding Apollo the poet is
also one reason why he occurs infrequently and briefly in Ovid's works.\footnote{\text{51}} Analogies,
therefore, between Ovid the poet and the gods of poetry are rare.

The \textit{Amores} begin with an emphatic statement of Cupid's power over the poet and his
subject matter (\textit{Am.} I.1-4,21-26). Apollo is mentioned only to indicate that Cupid has usurped
his place. As Morgan puts it:

In the \textit{Amores} Cupid is the god of poetry. He has been given this position because he
does not contrast so well with the traditional Apollo and he is thus capable of symbolizing
the new spirit which characterizes the \textit{Amores}. Cupid was chosen for another reason
also. The poet under his authority is in love and thus totally out of control of his own
actions. This provides a perfect excuse for a poet involved in the serious vs. frivolous
poetry controversy.\footnote{\text{52}}

Callimachus had used Apollo as a \textit{deus ex machina} (\textit{Aetia}, preface 19-20) to indicate why he
wrote his allusive scholarly poetry rather than conventional epic. Roman poets, including
Propertius (III.3.13-24), had similarly been warned off epic by Apollo, so that they might
pursue more congenial genres. The presence of Apollo indicated a Callimachean seriousness
about one's poetic art, and a refusal to conform to popular tastes and expectations. According
to Morgan, Ovid is gently parodying this "high seriousness" approach to poetry in \textit{Amores} I.1:

\footnote{\text{50}}Fowler, \textit{Roman Ideas of Deity}, p. 139.

\footnote{\text{51}}The gods of mythology get full length treatment in the narrative poems: the \textit{Metamorphoses},
\textit{Fasti}, and mythic narratives of the \textit{Ars Amatoria}. Apollo is prominent in the \textit{Metamorphoses}, e.g.
I.338-567.

\footnote{\text{52}}Morgan, pp. 10-11.
Prop. 3.3 ... is the Propertian equivalent of this poem, i.e. a face-to-face encounter with an authority figure who orders the poet to write love elegy ... Apollo is, of course, the traditional Callimachean warning figure. Ovid by giving this role to Cupid, and a playful Cupid at that, has both introduced humor into this particular poem and told the reader much about the tone of his entire work.53

When Apollo does come to Ovid in Callimachean guise (Ars Am. II.493-510), it is, as Fowler indicates, simply to give advice on love matters.

Apollo appears in Ovid chiefly as the conventional god of poetry, whether in poems about poetry or as the patron of poets (e.g., Am. I.15.35-36; III.9.21-24; Rem. Am. 251,489, 767).

As such, he represents nothing very vital at contemporary Rome. Understandably then Apollo is overshadowed by gods who do represent aspects of Roman life which loom large in Ovid's verse. Cupid and Venus, of course, personify those aspects of love which make up the subject matter of love elegy. Cupid's prominence in Ovid indicates that the poet wishes to deal chiefly with the light, amusing, and mischievous aspects of love.

To contemporary society also may be attributed the relative importance (compared to Apollo) of Bacchus as a god of poetry and love. Since the life of pleasures and parties (convivia) is a major subject of love elegy, the god of wine can hardly be omitted.54

Bacchus had not been a major god of poetry in early Greek times, although he was, of course, a common figure in drinking songs and sympotic verse. In Hellenistic times a contrast was made between those poets, such as Callimachus, who emphasized technical skill and

53Morgan, pp. 9-10.

54Jasper Griffin, Latin Poets and Roman Life (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), p. 70: "Commentators produce poetical parallels for the ideas that Bacchus can both instil and dispel the pains of love, but without pressing the central point: it is at convivia that one picks up girls, and on the other hand if one drinks enough one can forget about them. And the convivium, that eminently real institution, could be represented as the realm of Bacchus." Griffin's chapter "Of Wines and Spirits", pp. 65-87, deals at length with the connections between the partying life and the role of Bacchus in poetry at Rome.
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artistry, and who called upon Apollo, and those who relied on natural genius and poetic inspiration, and who called upon Bacchus. These two sets of Hellenistic poets corresponded roughly to the "water-drinkers" and the "wine-drinkers".

At Rome also Apollo was seen as representing technical skill (the controlling ars), while Bacchus represented untamed genius (ingenium). Serious poets, therefore, were more likely to line up with Apollo and aim at technical and artistic excellence, and to condemn the "wine-drinkers" as mad or undisciplined. Then too Mark Antony had identified himself closely with Bacchus, while Augustus had exalted Apollo as his special deity, so that, for a while, Bacchus seemed to be in official disrepute.

A rehabilitation of Bacchus, as a god of poetry, is already under way in the Odes of Horace. Horace uses Bacchus to suggest that his poetry is not merely the product of ars, but also of ingenium, in other words that Horace is a true poet like the great poets of old (Homer, Alcaeus, Pindar).55

It is, however, the context of drinking parties and love-making, which is behind the relative frequency of references to Bacchus in Propertius and Ovid. Wine plays a large role in advancing or retarding the love affair. A drinking-party is often the setting for approaching the beloved, or trying to (e.g., Am. I.4). The praecipitor amoris calls upon Bacchus for help in the cause of love (Ars Am. I.525-608). Women are advised to drink wine decorously, and to avoid the perils that go with getting drunk (Ars Am. III.761-768). Ovid advises the unhappy lover that, while moderate drinking may promote love, drunkenness can banish its pains (Rem. Am. 803-810).

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Although Ovid claims that he himself is not given to much wine (Pont. I.5.45-46; I.10.20-32), he expresses genial respect for the god of the grape. Bacchus represented unconventionality, both social and literary, and as such would appeal to our poet. In the Fasti (III.771-778) Ovid connects Bacchus (Liber) with the freedom given to young men when they don the toga virilis. Bacchus also figures regularly in Ovid as a lover, especially with respect to Ariadne (e.g., Ars Am. I.527-564; Fasti III.459-516; Met. VIII.176-182). The freedom which wine and drinking parties provide for love is expressed by the preceptor amoris, along with the idea that the lover himself must not succumb to too much wine (Ars Am. I.555-568):

Ergo ubi contigerint positi tibi munera Bacchi,  
atque erit in socii femina parte tori,  
Nycteulumque patrem nocturnaque sacra precare,  
ze lubeant capiti vina nocere tuo.

Therefore when the bounty of Bacchus set before you falls to your lot,  
And a woman shares your convivial couch,  
Beseech the Nyctelian sire and the spirits of the night  
That they bid not the wines to hurt your head.

The poet goes on to describe various approaches that the lover can make to his beloved at drinking parties (Ars Am. 569-584).

Bacchus seems to be the primary god of poetry and poetic inspiration for Ovid. When Ovid bids farewell to Elegy and looks toward writing some greater work, he portrays this as leaving Cupid and Venus for Bacchus (Am. III.15.15-18):

Culte puer puerique pares Amathusia culti.  
aurea de campo vellite signa meo!  
corniger increpuit thurso graviore Lyaeus:  
pulsanda est magnis area maior equis.

O worshipful child, and thou of Amathus, mother of the worshipful child.  
Pluck ye up from my field your golden standards!  
The homed Lyaean hath dealt me a sounding blow with weightier thyrsus;  
I must smite the earth with mighty steeds on a mightier course.
The poems from exile indicate that Ovid regularly speaks of poetry in Bacchic terms, and that he identifies more closely with Bacchus than with any other god of poetry. In the shock of exile Ovid asks a close friend (perhaps his publisher Brutus) to remove the crown of ivy from the friend’s bust of the poet (Tr. I.7.1-4). Ivy, an evergreen vine, and the thyrsus, a staff tipped by a large pine-cone, were symbols of Bacchus, and, therefore, became associated with poetic inspiration. In the poems from exile Ovid compares himself both to a Bacchic worshipper and to Bacchus himself. In defending his persistent writing of verse in exile the poet compares himself to a Bacchante (a female follower of Bacchus) whose excitement overwhelms her pain (Tr. IV.1.41-44):

utque suum Bacche non sentit saucia vulnus,
dum stupeat Idaei exululata modis
sic ubi mota calent viridi mea pectora thyrs,
altior humano spiritus ille malo est.

As the stricken Bacchante feels not her wound
While in ecstasy she shrieks to the accompaniment of Idaean measures,
So when my heart feels the inspiring glow of the green thyrsus,
That mood is too exalted for human woe.

Tristia V.3 is a prayer to Bacchus, the only exile poem addressed to a traditional deity. It may owe something to Propertius III.17, but the resemblance is limited. It is addressed both to Bacchus and to the poets who meet annually in his name at his Roman festival, the Liberalia. The poem indicates that on this day the poets of Rome came together wearing garlands to sing a hymn to Bacchus, perhaps offer a sacrifice, and partake of unmixed wine (Tr. V.3.1-4, 47-48). Ovid hopes that both the god and his fellow poets will notice his absence and show concern. The god of wine may well show concern since the poet’s misfortunes are comparable with those suffered by the young Bacchus (27-28):

me quoque, si fas est exemplis ire deorum,
ferrea sors vitae difficilisque premit.
I too (if 'tis right to make comparisons with the gods)  
Am crushed by an iron and a difficult lot.

This poem tells both of Ovid's collegial relations with his fellow bards and of the high value  
he places on ingenium (genius, or natural ability), which is symbolized by Bacchus.

Direct attribution of divinity to the poet is much more common in Ovid than idealization  
of the lover. And, while it is sometimes undercut by a wry assessment of the limitations of  
poetry, it is sufficiently persistent to justify T.F. Higham's conjecture that it is a statement of  
the poet himself. The conventional view of the poet's divine nature is repeated by Ovid with  
the regularity of an advertising slogan, and must be taken into account when considering the  
meaning of his work. At the same time the Augustan word vates meaning prophetic or  
"inspired bard" is not always used significantly or seriously by Ovid, perhaps because he  
wished to avoid its public and official connotations.

In his elegy for Tibullus, Ovid eulogizes poets in general (Am. III.9.17-18):

    at sacri vates et divum cura vocamus;
    sunt etiam qui nos numen habere potent.

    Yes, we bards are called sacred, and the care of the gods;
    There are those who even think we have the god within.

Although the divine nature of poets should recommend them to women as lovers this is not,  
unfortunately, always the case (Ars Am. III.547-552):

    vatibus Aoniis faciles estate, puellae:  
    numen inest illis, Pieridesque faret.  
    est deus in nobis, et sunt commercia caeli:  
    sedibus aetheris spiritus ille venit.  
    a doctis pretium scelus est sperare poetis;  
    me miserum! scelus hoc nulla puella timet.
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Be kind, ye women, to Aonian bards;
Divinity is in them, and the Muses show them favour.
There is a god in us; we are in touch with heaven:
From celestial places comes our inspiration.
To hope for reward from skilled poets is a crime:
Ah, wretched that I am, it is a crime no woman fears.

Quite often the poet-lover uses such arguments to build up his own case for conquest,
especially when he has a rival such as the rich military man of Am. III.8.22-24, who has been
telling the girl of his military exploits:

...hoc fassas tangis, avara, manus?
ille ego Musarum purus Phoebique sacerdos
ad rigidas canto carmen inane fores?

Do you touch, greedy girl, hands that tell such tales?
And do I, the unstained priest of Phoebus and the Muses,
Sing verses all in vain before your unyielding doors?

Here we are meant to enjoy the discomfort of the poet-lover, while not entirely dismissing his
plea that poetry and otium should take precedence over military achievements, wealth, and
negotium. The practical praeceptor amoris of Ars Am. II.273ff. confesses that poetry is not a
powerful weapon in the amorous warfare, but may have limited uses in influencing certain
women.

Ovid frequently urges the conventional plea of the elegiac poet-lover to his mistress that if
she is receptive to his wishes he will immortalize her in verse. This device rings somewhat
hollow—no doubt intentionally—since Corinna is a rather shadowy figure, and since the poet’s
philandering nature tempts him to make the same promise to other women. It is, therefore,
interesting to see Ovid using the same reward of literary immortality in his poems from exile
for his wife and friends and supporters. This device then is perhaps only a way of restating
the glory of poetry and the poet as in Am. I.10.61-62:
scindentur vestes, gemmae frangentur et aurum;
carmina quam tribuunt, fama perennis crixit.

Gowns will be rent to rags, and gems and gold be broke to fragments;
The glory my songs shall give will last forever.

Elsewhere (Am. II.16.27-28) the poet tells a haughty Corinna that his gifts of verse are not to be scorned, with a hint that other women might value them more than she does. Thus in the amatory poems Ovid does not take this elegiac convention seriously except as an additional way to exalt the poet. In the poems of exile it becomes an important theme and is closely connected to the power and excellence of verse. It is not surprising that when Ovid does mock the powers of poetry his target is invariably the conventional elegiac love poet and his attitude to love.

Ovid on Persuasions to Love and Lovers’ Vows

Since Ovid prefers to mock the sacredness of the free love bond rather than uphold it, it is not surprising that the fullest statements on the power of love should occur in a dramatic content—the Hermides. In these letters from women of mythology to their lovers reference is frequently made to love at first sight, the overwhelming impact of emotion, the vows exchanged between the two, the faithfulness of the letter writer, etc. Canace writes thus to her brother Macareus of their incestuous love (Her. XI.25-26):

ipsa quoque incului, qualemque audire solebam,
nescio quem sensi corde tepente deum.

I too, was inflamed by love; I felt some god in my glowing heart, And knew him from what I used to hear he was.
The heroines see themselves as victims of Amor, and their passivity and pleas for love in return give the *Heroides* a rather soap opera quality absent from Ovid's more evidently witty works.

In the *Heroides* there are also more sophisticated figures such as Phaedra and Paris who banish moping about love by their active pursuit of their desired object. To them any sentiment which stands in the way of fruition indicates *rusticitas*, meaning an old-fashioned, countrified, way of seeing things. This word is one of the most condemnatory in Ovid's vocabulary, and is usually applied to anything remotely like moral scruples in sexual matters.

In his persuasions to Helen (XVI.285-290) Paris argues that such scruples are unrealistic:

> an pudet et metuis Venerem temereare maritam
> castaque legitimi fallere iura tori?
> a, nimium simplex Helene, ne rustic dicieas,
> hanc faciem culpa posse carere putas?
> aut faciem mutes aut sis non dura, necesse est;
> lis est cum forma magna pudicitiae.

Or do you feel shame and fear to violate your wedding love,
And to be false to the chaste bonds of a lawful bed?
Ah, too simple—nay, too rustic—Helen!
Do you think that beauty of yours can be free from fault?
Either you must change your beauty, or you must needs not be hard;
Fairness and modesty are mightily at strife.

Perhaps Ovid's clearest indication of his feelings towards lovers' vows and the *foedus amatorium* (the long-standing arrangement between lovers) is the fun he has with the whole idea of lovers' oaths in the *Amores*. As we have seen, the favour that the gods show towards beautiful women includes turning a deaf ear to their perjuries. Ovid humourously begs his mistress not to swear false oaths by his eyes (which the gods then afflict), but by her own which are scot-free (*Am.* III.3.11-14):
scilicet aetemi falsum iurare puellis
   di quoque concedunt, formaque numen habet.
perque suos illam nuper iurasse recordor
   perque meos oculos: et doluere mei!

Surely, the gods, too, indulge the fair in eternal swearing false,
And beauty has its privilege divine.
By her own eyes not long ago she swore, I remember,
And by mine - and mine have been the ones to smart.

The most elaborate joke in the Amores is the poet's false oath of faithfulness to Corinna.

The joke is set up by the bawd Dipsas (Am. I.8.85-86) who counsels a young woman to give
false protestations of affection to her lover:

   nec, si quem falles, tu periurare timeto—
      commodat in lusus numina surda Venus.

   Nor fear to swear falsely if deceiving anyone—
   Venus lends deaf ears to love's deceits.

In Amores II.7 the poet himself is attempting to respond effectively to a charge of
unfaithfulness from Corinna. He caps his defence by swearing an oath by Venus (II.7.27-28):

   per Venerem iuro puerique volatilis arcus,
      me non admisit criminis esse reum!

By Venus I swear, and by the bows of her winged boy,
I am not guilty of the charge you bring!

The next poem (II.8) is the poet's speech to Corinna's maid, Cypassis, detailing their sexual
relationship, and wondering how Corinna got wind of it. The poet congratulates himself on
his presence of mind in swearing an oath to Venus to calm Corinna's anger (II.8.17-20):

   at quanto, si forte refers, praesentior ipse
      per Veneris feci numina magna fidelam
         tu, dea, tu iubeas animi periutra puri
         Carpathium tepidos per mare ferre Notos!
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But how much more contained was I, if you happen to remember,
When I swore to my faithfulness in mighty Venus' name,
Thou, goddess, mayst thou bid the warm South-wind
Sweep o'er the Carpathian deep the false oaths of a harmless heart!

In his Ars Amatoria Ovid states the general principle that lovers should make large
promises and feel no compunction to keep them. For this he alleges the gods as examples

(Ars Am. 1.631-636, 643-646):

nec timide promitte: trahunt promissa puellas;
polllicito testes quoslibet adde deos.
Jupiter ex alto periuria ridet amantium,
et iubet Aeolios inrīta ferre notos.
per Styga Iunoni falsum iurare solebat
luppiter; exemplo nunc favet ipse suo...
ludite, si sapitis, solas impune puellas:
haec minus est una fraude tuenda fides.
fallite fallentes: ex magna parte profanum
sunt genus: in laqueos quos posuere, cadant.

Nor be timid in your promises; by promises women are betrayed;
Call as witness what gods you please.
Jupiter from on high smiles at the perjuries of lovers,
And bids the winds of Aeolus carry them unfulfilled away.
Jupiter was wont to swear falsely by Styx to Juno;
Now he favours his own example...
If you are wise, cheat women only and avoid trouble;
Keep faith save for this one deceitfulness.
Deceive the deceivers; they are mostly an unrighteous sort;
Let them fall into the snare which they have laid.

Ovid's treatment of elegiac themes in general "at times comes very close to parody of the
conventional behaviour of the lover-poet."56 Ovid either downplays certain elegiac themes
(e.g., servitium amoris) or provides a context in which elegiac behaviour is seen, at the least,
to have humorous aspects. Barsby sums up the portrayal of the lover-poet in the Amores as
follows:

The love-elegists had always taken themselves very seriously, some would say too seriously, so that in the end they were in danger of becoming monotonous. Ovid's idea was the brilliant one of turning love-elegy upside-down by refusing to take it seriously. He would cast himself in the role of the elegiac lover and then stand back a little to see how comic the behaviour of the elegiac lover often was.\(^{57}\)

Barsby and other commentators have detailed the techniques by which Ovid achieves this undercutting of elegiac ideals.

The Shift from Love to Sex in Ovid

Such a shift in approach, however, is not only one of style and literary variation but something that reflects a shift in attitude towards love itself. While it is customary to use the word "love" as a synonym for "sex" in writing of the Roman Elegists, such a usage is more misleading when speaking of Ovid's work than of his predecessors'. What might be described in the earlier writers as sexual passion in Ovid may often be described as a passion for sex. Thus Ovid finds the high-minded and exclusive free love relationships of Catullus, Tibullus, and Propertius as comical in their way as actual marriage. Ovid's work, therefore, is doubly a reductio ad absurdum of courtship and romance.

Peter Green sees Ovidian elegy as satirizing the attitudes of Tibullus and Propertius, and suggesting, even, that they may be guilty of rusticitas as in the Tibullan rural idylls:

Rusticitas, the country simplicity of character to which Tibullus at least paid lip-service, has become, in Ovid's book, a regrettable naivety. His didacticism aims to turn each simple country girl into a sophisticated demi-mondaine.\(^{58}\)

Ovid's attitude to Propertius, according to Green, is likewise satirical:

\(^{57}\)Ibid.

not for him the urgency of Propertius. I suspect that Ovid found his friend's heart-on-the-sleeve approach a trifle vulgar, and more than a trifle ridiculous.\textsuperscript{39}

Throughout Ovid's erotic poetry fruition is always the goal in mind, and other aspects of the relationship merely add spice to the main dish. Ovid would have agreed with his disciple John Donne that:

\begin{quote}
Whoever loves, if he doth not propose
The right true end of love, he's one that goes
To sea for nothing but to make him sick...\textsuperscript{60}
\end{quote}

This aim is explicit throughout the \textit{Ars Amatoria} and indicated in the \textit{Amores} in various ways. These include emphasis on physical sex (I.5), and aspects of it such as impotency (III.7), on a reductionist approach to courtship (I.8), and on the poet's own headlong philanderism (II.4; II.9; II.10). It is evident from a number of poems that the poet is not satisfied merely with Corinna alone (II.8; II.10; II.19). As the poet says (\textit{Am}, II.4.47-48):

\begin{quote}
Denique quas tota quisquam probet urbe puellas,
noster in has omnis ambitiosus amor.

In fine, whatever fair ones anyone could praise in all the city—
My love is candidate for the favours of them all.
\end{quote}

The author's susceptibility to females of all shapes and sizes is a major theme, and he hopes both in life and in death to pursue his conquests (\textit{Am}, II.10.35-38):

\begin{quote}
at mihi contingat Veneris languescere motu,
cum moriar, medium solvar et inter opus;
atque aliquis nostros lacrimans in funere dicat:
"conveniens vitae mors fuit ista tuae!"

But for me - may it be my lot when I die to languish in Venus' embrace,
And be dissolved in the midst of its delight;
And may one, dropping tears at my funeral, say:
"Thine was a death accorded with thy life!"
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{39}Ibid., p. 268.

\textsuperscript{60}John Donne, \textit{Elegie XVIII}, "Love's Progress", lines 1-3.
Ovid’s reductionism of love to sex is a not unusual attitude of rootless urban man who likes to think of himself as triumphing over natural and traditional prohibitions and limitations. As the ultimate consumer he sees the urban world as existing for the purpose of allowing the satisfaction of his wishes. This is well expressed by the young Scottish author James Macpherson on a visit to London in 1762:

In the country we see a beautiful woman; We conceive an idea that it would be heaven to be in her arms. We think that impossible almost for us to attain. We sigh. We are dejected. Whereas here we behold as fine women as ever were created. Are we fond of one of them? For a guinea we get the full enjoyment of her, and when that is over we find that it is not so amazing a matter as we fancied. Indeed, after a moderate share of the pleasures of London, a man has a much better chance to make a rational unprejudiced marriage.61

This passage illustrates the shift in attitude which has taken place between Ovid’s predecessors and himself. The rusticitas of earlier elegists has given way to the urban sophistication of the praeceptor amoris. It is a natural development that one of Ovid’s major works (the Ars Amatoria) was a manual on how to achieve fruition without tears.

Ovid and the Game of Love

Ovid’s casual attitude towards free love is reflected also in his attitude towards the traditional deities of love Venus and Amor (Cupid). Venus and Cupid are portrayed as carelessly conniving at amorous mayhem. Cupid is presented as a victorious conqueror overcoming moral scruples and good sense (Am. I.2.27-32,35-36):

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ducentur capi iuvenes captaeque puellae;
haec tibi magnificus pompa triumphus erit.
ipse ego, praedae recens, factum modo vulnus habebo
et nova captiva vincula mente feram.
Mens Bona duce manibus post terga retortis,
et Pudor, et castris quidquid Amoris obest...
blanditiae comites tibi erunt Errorque Furorque,
adsidue partes turba secuta tuas.

In thy train shall be captive youths and captive maids;
Such a pomp will be for thee a stately triumph.
Myself, a recent spoil, shall be there with wound all freshly dealt,
And bear my new bonds with unresisting heart.
Conscience shall be led along, with hands tied fast behind her back,
And Modesty, and all who are foes to the camp of love...
Caresses shall be at thy side, and Error, and Madness—
A rout that ever follows in thy train.

This parody of a Roman triumph indicates how Ovid treats Cupid in the jocular manner of the
Hellenistic epigrammatists, rather than as a serious personification of passion. Cupid is the
trickster behind all the incongruous elements in the elegiac world, and is responsible for the
poet writing love poetry and falling in love (Am. I.1). According to Barsby:

Ovid is quite prepared to accept the light-heartedness of Cupid’s treatment of the
lover, in contrast to the more earnest attitude of his immediate predecessors...⁶²

Reflections, therefore, on the destructive power of Love (Amor) are rare in Ovid, in spite of
his interest in Euripides and Hippolytus. In Phaedra’s letter to Hippolytus Ovid lightly touches
on those powers, which, in the Amores, are never seriously treated. Phaedra attempts (Her.
IV.11-12,19-20) to express how Love has driven her to proposition Hippolytus:

quidquid Amor iussit, non est contemnere tutum;
regnat et in dominos ius habet ille deos...
venit amor gravius, quo serius—urimur inus;
urimur, et caecum pectora vulnus habent.

⁶²Barsby, p. 73.
Whatever Love commands, it is not safe to hold for naught;
His throne and law are over even the gods who are lords of all...
Love has come to me, the deeper for its coming late—I am burning with love
within;
I am burning, and my breast has an unseen wound.

Phaedra goes on to make more sophisticated persuasions to love which are more in line
with Ovid’s general attitude including the revealing lines (IV.25-26):

ars fit, ubi a teneris crimen condiscitur annis;
cui venit exacto tempore, peius amat.

Love grows to be but an art, when the fault is well learned from tender years;
She to whom love comes when the time for love is past, has a fiercer passion.

Ovid much prefers love as an art to love as a passion. His picture of Amor (Cupid) is
accordingly less serious in the Amores than in the Heroides. This is reflected in the poet’s
prayer to Cupid (Am. II.9.49-52):

   tu levis es multoque tuis ventosior alis,
gaudiaque amigua dasque negasque fide.
si tamen exaudis, pulchra cum matre, Cupido,
   indeserta meo pectore regna gere!

   Thou art light, more quick to feel the wind than thine own wings,
   And dost grant and deny thy joys with a faith that is never sure.
   Yet, nonetheless, if thou and thy beautiful mother will heed my prayer,
   Come, set up thy thrones in my heart, and reign there for evermore!

The non sequitur in these lines reflects the poet’s shrug-of-the-shoulder acceptance of sexual
attraction, and his delight with the incongruities which result.

In the Ars Amatoria Ovid instructs how Amor is to be mastered. Far from being an
overwhelming passion, love (that is, sex) is a pleasing feeling which can be endlessly renewed
through following certain behavioural patterns. Speaking of the powers of Love, the poet
proclaims his mastery over them (Ars Am. I.19-24):
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sed tamen et tauri cervix oneratur aratro,
    frenaque magnanimi dente teruntur equi;
et mihi cedet Amor, quamvis mea vulneret arcu
    pectora, tactatas excutiatque faces.
quo me fixit Amor, quo me violentius ussit,
hoc melior facti vulneris ulterior ero...

Yet even the bull’s neck is burdened by the plough,
And the high-mettled steed champs the bridle with his teeth;
And to me Love shall yield, though he wound my breast with his bow.
And whirl aloft his brandished torch.
The more violently Love has pierced and branded me,
The better shall I avenge the wound that he has made...

Thus Ovid reverses the usual mythological-elegiac approach in which Cupid teaches the lover.

Comparing himself to Jason the poet himself makes this distinction:

    illum furtivae fuere Cupidinis aeneas;
        quas a me vellem non didicisset Amor.

He was aided by the wily arts of Cupid;
Would that Love had not learned them from me!

In the Ars, as Molly Myerowitz has said, the "human construct" nature of love is stressed.63

Amor is not divine, but a kind of art or game like any other art or game. In the Ars Ovid lays
down the rules for this game which is a chief pursuit for a gentleman of leisure and culture.

As Myerowitz writes:

    the Ars Amatoria represents the wide-ranging spirit of play which sees play as the
        proper, indeed the only valid, option for a man of culture.64

Unlike the otium of the earlier elegists, however, the game of love is not a serious endeavour.

For Ovid only the game of poetry possesses a quasi-religious importance.

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63Myerowitz, Ovid's Games of Love, pp. 31 ff.
64Ibid., p. 39.
Ovid's Attitude Towards Women

Assessments of Ovid’s attitude toward love and women have tended to be favourable. Hermann Fränkel consistently sees Ovid as modern in his sensitivity and ability to identify with others:

His most significant trait is his warm, gentle, understanding kindliness, a kindliness of a novel sort.65

A similar conclusion is reached by Saara Lilja who notes that Ovid "tends to look at things from the woman’s point of view..."66 Even those who find the erotic poems of doubtful altruism feel vindicated by Ovid’s letters to his wife from exile. With these says E.K. Rand:

We may positively say, what we had suspected before, that for all his witty audacities, Ovid had a high conception of womanhood and was himself no libertine.67

As Samuel Johnson remarked, the wish to admire is very close to admiration itself.68 Those who are less willing to admire Ovid’s treatment of love and woman will find abundant materials for their reservations. First, Ovid’s affection for his third wife has its limitations, and would be difficult to translate into a kindly regard towards women in general. Second, the more we learn about Ovid’s humour, style, and dramatization the less likely we are to see his shifts of view as a naive sympathy with the concerns of others. Third, the overtones of the


66Lilja, p. 152.

67Rand, p. 94.

68Samuel Johnson, Lives of the English Poets, 3 vols., ed. George Birkbeck Hill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905), Vol. II, p. 47: "To charge all unmerited praise with the guilt of flattery, and to suppose that the encomiast always knows and feels the falsehood of his assertions is surely to discover great ignorance of human nature and human life. In determinations depending not on rules, but on experience and comparison, judgement is always to some degree subject to affection. Very near to admiration is the wish to admire."
libertine philosophy found throughout the erotic poems (including the rationalizing of rape) make its evaluation as altruistic rather perilous. Fourth, any writer who so scrupulously avoids direct statements of altruism inevitably leaves his admirers falling back on rather subjective interpretations. Nearly all direct statements to the reader in Ovid (save for the exile poems) are of a non-high-minded sort. Fifth, the imagery of Ovid’s works does not favour the idea that he had a high regard for women. Commenting on the way that women are presented the

Ars Amatoria Peter Green writes:

Note the characteristic agricultural image, designed to enhance Ovid’s concept of women as fundamentally akin to cows or wheatfields: a natural phenomenon to be tamed, cultivated, ploughed in season and, ultimately, harvested...²⁹

Green notes how imagery from farming, hunting, and fishing predominates in the Ars and concludes:

Ovid in his own way adored women; but no one who so consistently likened them to crops, cows and other such farmyard phenomena really, in his heart of hearts, believed in the equality of the sexes. Women, like a well-run estate, required cultus; but ars - and possibly ingenium too - was, in the last resort, a male prerogative.²⁹

Ovid on Poetry in the Poems from Exile

Ovid’s banishment to the shores of the Black Sea by the Emperor Augustus in 8 A.D. also banished love from his poetry. Since one cause of his relegation was the too indecorous Ars Amatoria it was henceforth impolitic for Ovid to write of Amor except in an apologetic manner. Thus the theme of ars poetica was given an unrivalled scope, and in the poems from exile there are perhaps more references to poetry and the writing of poetry than we find in any

²⁹Green, p. 350.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 401.
other major ancient poet. Indeed, Ovid can be accused of encouraging future poets to write about poetry, a tendency which has reached epidemic proportions since the 18th century.

We have already noted that, throughout his career, Ovid had maintained a special allegiance to the poetic art, and had reiterated the divine significance of the poet’s role. After the great success of the first two books of the Ars Amatoria, Ovid’s statements on this theme became even more emphatic in Ars Amatoria III and the Remedia Amoris. In the Fasti, written somewhat later, we find Ovid’s usual statement of poetic grace, carefully adapted to its context by explaining the poet’s knowledge of the gods and sacred lore (VI.3-8):

facta canam; sed erunt qui me finxisse loquantur
nullaque mortali numina visa putent.
est deus in nobis; agitante calescimus illo:
impetus hic sacrae semina mentis habet.
fas mihi praecipue voltus vidisse deorum,
vel quia sum vates, vel quia sacra cano.

I’ll sing the truth, but some will say I lied,
And think that no deities were ever seen by mortal.  
There is a god within us. It is when he stirs us that our bosom warms;
It is his impulse that sows the seeds of inspiration.  
I have a peculiar right to see the faces of the gods,
Whether because I am a bard, or because I sing of sacred things.

This common theme of Ovid’s work is intensified in the exile poems for a variety of reasons: first, Ovid is at pains to defend himself and his poetry from general condemnation; second, he wants to keep his name alive and interest in his poetry keen while he is far removed from Rome; third, as he grows older and faces death in exile, he desires to present a new generation and posterity with his history and achievements; and fourth, since he is now bereft of so much that was dear to him, he cherishes poetry as an occupation and a solace to make his relegatio less bitter, as well as giving him some semblance of power in allowing him to exalt his friends and condemn his enemies.
Ovid’s exile changes his attitude towards poetry, especially as his condemnation resulted partly from his verses. A love-hate relationship with poetry, not unlike the unhappy lover’s love-hate relationship with his mistress, is traceable throughout the exile poems. Perhaps partly to shock his readers Ovid talks about burning his unpublished work, the Metamorphoses, at the time of his exile (Tr. I.7.19-22).

sic ego non meritos mecum peritura libellos
imposui rapidis viscera nostra regis:
vel quod eram Musas, ut crimina nostra, perosus,
vel quod adhuc crescens et rude carmen erat

So I placed the innocent books consigned with me to death,
My very vitals, upon the devouring pyre,
Either because I had come to hate the Muses as my accuser,
Or because the poem itself was as yet half grown and rough.

Several years later Ovid is writing to a friend of how he burns his unsatisfactory verses, and how he wishes he had burnt the Ars Amatoria (Tr. V.12.61-68):

scribimus et scriptos absumimas igne libellos:
exitus est studii parva favilla mei.
nec possum et cupio non nullo ducere versus:
ponitur idcirco noster in igne labor,
nec nisi pars casu flammis crepta dolove
ad vos ingenii pervenit usque mei.
sic utinam, quae nil metuentem tale magistrum
perdidit, in cineres Ars mea versa fore!

I write poems which once written I consume in the fire;
A few ashes are the result of my toil.
I cannot and yet I long to refrain from writing verse;
Hence my labour is placed in the fire
And nothing but a bit of my effort,
Saved by chance or by craft, reaches you.
In such wise I would that my "Art", which ruined a master who feared nothing of the kind,
Had been turned to ashes!

Whereas Ovid’s writing had previously been encouraged by Roman audiences who applauded his recitals and approvingly commented on his books, Ovid in exile was obliged to
motivate himself to write. The need to restrict his topics to those which might meet with
approval from the Emperor was another disincentive. Often in response to his own doubts or
those of a correspondent he would deal with the question, "Why do I write?" At times in
surveying his unhappy isolation on the Black Sea coast he could only see the negative aspects
of what he was doing (Pont. IV.2.29-34):

parvaque, ne dicam scribendi nulla voluptas
   est mihi, nec numeris nectere verba iuvat.
sive quod hinc fructus adeo non cepimus ullos,
   principium nostrō res sit ut ista mali:
sive quod in tenebris numerosos ponere gestus,
   quodque legas nulli scribere carmen, idem est.

I have little pleasure, or none at all, in writing,
No zest in joining words to metre,
Whether because I have reaped from it no profit—
That this very thing is the source of my misfortune—
Or that making rhythmic gestures in the dark
And composing a poem which you may read to nobody are one and the same
thing.

More often he replied that poetry was the only activity available to him, and that it acted as a
soothing drug for his care-worn mind (Pont. IV.10.67-70):

"detinui" dicam "curas tempusque fecelli,
   hunc fructum praesens attulit hora mihi.
   afuimus solito, dum scribimus ista, dolore,
   in medias nec nos sensimus esse Getis."

I would say, "I have given pause to my cares and beguiled the time;
This is the profit the present hour has brought me.
I have gained release in writing this from my accustomed grief,
And have lost the feeling that I am among the Getae."

In spite of his accusations against them, the poet still gives allegiance to the Muses. Indeed
the over-all effect of the exile poems is to exalt poets and poetry as triumphing in some sense
over negative external circumstances (Tr. IV.1.27-30):
Ovid on Poetry and Love

non equidem vellem, quoniam nocitura fuerunt,
    Pieridum sacris inposuisse manum.
    sed nunc quid faciam? vis me tenet ipsa sacrorum,
    et carmen demens canmine laesus amo...

Well could I wish, since they were destined to work me harm,
That I had never set hand to the holy service of the Muses.
But now, what am I to do? The very power of that holy service grips me;
Madman that I am, though song has injured me, 'tis still song that I love...

Ovid's casual references to poetry in the exile poems make clear that he still holds it in
high esteem, and regards its role in his ill fortune as rather exceptional and unaccountable. He
is obviously hurt that his books have been excluded from the public libraries in Rome and
urges his friends there to protect them (Tr. III.14.5-8,II-14):

    conficio exceptis ecquid mea carmina solis
        Antibus, artifici quae nocuere suo?
    immo ita fac, quae, voatum studiose novorum,
        quaque potes, retine corpus in urbe meum...
    saepe per externas profugus pater exulat oras,
        urbe tamen natis exulis esse licet.
Palladis exemplo de me sine matre creat
    carmina sunt; stirps haec progeniesque mea est.

Dost thou assemble my verse except only
That "Art" which ruined its artificer?
Do so, I pray, thou patron of new bards;
So far as may be, keep my body in the city...
Oft is a father exiled on a foreign shore,
Yet may the exile's children live in the city.
Pallas-fashion were my verses born from me
Without a mother, these are my offspring, my family.

Ovid encourages those in happier circumstances to write verse. He tells the girl
Perilla—perhaps his step-daughter—to put aside sloth (Tr. III.7.32):

    inque bonas artes et tua sacra redi.

And return to a noble art and thy sacred offerings.
He urges his friend and fellow poet Severus to keep up his writing (since for him it has no sting attached) and to send Ovid some results (Pont. IV.2.47-50):

at tu, cui bibitur felicis Aonius fons,
utiliter studium quod tibi cedit ama,
sacraque Musarum merito colc, quoque legamus,
huc aliquo curae mitte recentis opus.

But you, who quaff more happily the Aonian spring,
Continue your love for the pursuit which yields you profit
Worship as is right the cult of the Muses and for my reading
Send hither some work over which you have recently toiled.

He longs to recapture his old position as poet at Rome and his close ties to the other poets of his time (Pont. III.4.67-70):

sunt mihi vobiscum communia sacra, poetae,
in vestro miseric si licet esse choro.
magnaque pars animae mecum vixisti, amici:
hac ego vos absens nunc quoque parte colo.

I have rites in common with you, ye poets—
If you allow the unfortunate a place in your guild.
Your life with me was a great part of my soul, my friends;
Even now in absence I continue thus to cherish you.

Even though Ovid writes more about poetry than ever before in his exile poems, his statements generally lack the powerful self-confidence and sometimes abrasive gloat over critics that occur in such pre-exile passages as Remedia Amoris 389-96:

rumpere, Livor edax: magnum iam nomen habemus;
malus erit, tantum quo pede coepit cat.
se des nimium properas: vivam modo, plura dolebis;
et capient animi carmina multa mei.
nam iuvat et studium famae mihi crevit honore;
principio clivi noster anhelat equus.
tantum se nobis elegi debere fatetur,
quantum Vergilio nobile debet epos.
Burst thyself, greedy Envy! my fame is great already;
It will be greater still, so it keeps its first good fortune.
But you hast overmuch; if I but live you will grieve the more;
Many a song in store has my genius yet.
For the desire of fame delights me, and has grown with my renown;
My steed pants but at the beginning of the slope.
Elegy admits it owes as much to me
As the noble Epic owes to Virgil.

Ovid, the Emperor, and the Myths of the Gods

Even though Ovid in exile rarely questions the value of poetry or his own fame and abilities as a poet, his claims in this direction are more circumspect. A chief reason for this is that he appears in these poems of exile in the guise of a suppliant. Primarily he wishes to convince the Emperor and his family of his loyalty and inoffensiveness, but Ovid also wants to influence favourably anyone who might be able to approach the Emperor on his behalf, and to well-dispose the general reading public to himself. At the same time he is well aware of the disadvantages he labours under in attaining favour with Roman readers: first, his own and his works’ condemnation by the Emperor will scare away some readers; second, his exile will eliminate his own recitals of new work (an important means of publication), and make even written contact with his audience somewhat difficult; third, his isolation at Tomis will preclude the possibility of new literary avenues opening up for the poet, while his continuing pleas for pardon will become monotonous to readers. Even to praise the imperial family will prove difficult since Ovid must rely on second-hand sources for information on their doings.

Ovid acknowledges these and similar difficulties and addresses himself to them in the exile poems. He thus defends his verses against such criticism when writing to his friend Brutus (Pont, III.9.46,55-56):
vilior est operis fama salutae mea...
da veniam scriptis, quorum non gloria nobis
causa, sed utilitas officiumque fuit.

Cheaper in my eyes is the reputation of my work than my own wealth...
Grant indulgence to my writings, for their purpose has not been my renown
But my advantage, and to do homage to others.

Faced with the need to win friends and influence people Ovid sometimes tactfully backs away
from pressing his poetic claims too hard. At times he will use the sorry state of his Muse as a
further argument for sympathy and generosity from his reader, with even an unexpected touch
of humility (Pont. III.4.9-14):

\[\text{non opus est magnis placido lectore poetis:} \\
\text{quamlibet invitum difficultemque tenent.} \\
\text{nos, quibus ingenium longi minuere labores,} \\
\text{aut etiam nullum forsitan ante fuit,} \\
\text{viribus infirmi, vestro candore valemus:} \\
\text{quem mihi si demas, omnia rapta putem.}\]

Great poets need no favouring reader:
They hold even the unwilling or him who is hard to please,
I, whose talent has been diminished by long sorrows—
Or perhaps even of old I had no talent—
Weakened now, am strong in your generosity;
If you take that from me, I should deem all else torn away.

The flattery with which Ovid wraps his words to the Emperor in Tristia II causes his
praise of poetry to be more subdued than usual. Unlike the conclusion of the Metamorphoses
where Augustus' glory and the poet's own are juxtaposed, here (Tr. II.67-70) the poet is a
servant of a gracious and self-sufficient ruler:

\[\text{non tua carminibus maior fit gloria, nec quo,} \\
\text{ut maior fiat, crescere possit, habet.} \\
\text{fama iovi superest: tamen hunc sua facta referri} \\
\text{et se materiam carminis esse luvat...}\]
Thy glory is not made mightier by song, nor has it room
Wherein to grow so as to be made mightier.
Jupiter has more than enough of glory: yet he is pleased to have his deeds related
And himself become the theme of song.

This compares strangely with such passages as Am. III.12.21-22.32-34, in which it is strongly
implied that Jupiter himself and the stories about him were invented by poets:

per nos Scylla patri caros furata capillos
pube premit rabidos inguinibusque canes...
concinit Odrysium Cercopis ales Iyyn;
Iuppiter aut in aves aut se transformat in aurum
aut secat inposita virgine taurus aquas.

"Twas we poets made Scylla steal from her sire his treasured locks,
And hide in her groin the devouring dogs...
"Tis due to us that the bird of Cercops sings Odrysian Iyys;
That Jove transforms himself now to a bird, and now to gold,
Or cleaves the waters a bull with a maiden on his back.

As we have seen, Ovid tends to regard both art and love as human constructs, so that it is
the gods who depend on poets for existence rather than vice versa. In the Ars Amatoria
Ovid's introduction dismisses the notion of love being an unassailable deity, or that the poet
required divine inspiration for his teaching (Ars Am. I.25-30):

non ego, Phoebus, datas a te mihi mentiar artes,
nec nos aeriae voce monemur avis,
nec mihi sunt visae Clio Clusisque sorores
servant pecudes vallibus, Ascra, tuis:
usus opus movet hoc: vati parete perito;
vera canam: coeptis, mater Amoris, ades!

I will not falsely claim that my art is thy gift, O Phoebus,
Nor am I taught by the voice of a bird of the air,
Neither did Clio and Clio's sisters appear to me
While I kept flocks in they valis, O Ascra:
Experience inspires this work: give ear to an experienced bard;
True will be my song: favour my enterprise, O mother of Love.

Apart from a perfunctory nod to Venus (later expanded at Ars Am. III.53-56), Ovid's world is
to be one of experience, art, and the senses. This is in line with Ovid's usual rejection of
mythology as poetic fiction (cf. *Am*, III.6.17-18), and this attitude continues (slightly subdued) in the exile poems. We find him casually using a list of mythological monsters as the epitome of impossibility in *Tr*, IV.7.11-14.19-20:

...credam prius ora Medusae
Gorgonis anguineis cincta fuisse comis,
esse canes utero sub virginis, esse Chimaeram,
a truce quae flammis separat angue leam...
haec ego cuncta prius, quam te, carissime, credam
mutatum curam deposuisse mei.

...I’ll sooner believe that
The gorgon Medusa’s face was garlanded with snaky locks,
That there is a maiden with dogs beneath her womb,
That there is a Chimaera, formed of a lioness and a fierce serpent held apart by flame...
All these things will I believe rather than that thou, dear one,
Hast changed and put aside thy love for me.

While the ridicule of mythology was a common literary practice in the Graeco-Roman period, Ovid must be said to indulge in it more than most. And we may be surprised that in a letter to Suillius, Ovid’s wife’s son-in-law - intended for the ears of Germanicus and the imperial family - that the poet attributes the creation of gods to poets (*Pont*, IV.8.55-56):

di quoque carminibus, si fas est dicere, fiunt,
tantaque maestas ore canentis eget.

Even the gods, if ‘tis right to say this, are created by verse;
Their mighty majesty needs the poet’s voice.

Such lines indicate that Ovid’s attitudes towards poetry and the gods had not changed since the *Amores*, although he was now somewhat more restrained in expressing these thoughts.

**Ovid in Exile: His Audience and His Quest for Fame**

For one of Ovid’s social disposition and love of city-life, exile to a small and remote settlement was a heavy penalty indeed. Ovid never tires of saying that his sentence was just
and his fault grievous, but, at the same time, he begs for a different place of punishment. As a poet his audience was of extreme importance to him. He had early frequented the circle of Messalla, and had enjoyed both the literary contacts and modish social life found there. His pleasure in being talked about reveals itself already in the Amores, where he strikes a pose for his readers' entertainment (Am. II.1.1-3):

hoc quoque conposui Paehgnis natus aquosis,
ille ego nequitalae Naso poeta meae.
hoc quoque iussit Amor - procul hine, procul este, severae!

This, too, is the work of my pen—mine, Naso's, born in the well-watered Paehgnii, The well-known singer of my own worthless ways.
This, too, have I wrought at the bidding of Love—away from me, far away, ye austere fair.

The same work contains hints that Ovid enjoyed the interest that his writing and fame brought from young women (Am. II.4.19-22):

est, quae Callimachi prae nostris rustica dicat
   carmina—cui placeo, protinus ipsa placet.
est etiam, quae me vatem et mea carmina culpae—
   culpatis cupiam sustinuisse femur.

Some fair one tells me Callimachus' songs are rustic beside mine—
   One who likes me I straightway like myself.
Another calls me no poet, and chides my verses—
   And I fain would clasp the fault-finder to my arms.

To find himself deserted—even by once close friends—at the time of his relegation must have made Ovid fear that his audience would turn against him. Much of the exile poetry is a plea for his work and himself, containing copious excuses for the badness of work recently written in distress (Tr. III.1.1-4):

"Missus in hanc venio timide liber exulis urbem:
da placidam fesso, lector amice, manum;
neve reformida, ne sim tibi forte pudori:
nullus in hac charta versus amare docet.

"
Though sent to this city I come in fear, an exile's book.
Stretch forth a kindly hand to me in my weariness, friendly reader,
And fear not that I may perchance bring shame upon you;
Not a line on this paper teaches love.

Because Ovid hesitated to address openly his first books from exile (the Tristia) to particular individuals, they are written to his Roman readers in general. These five books are sprinkled with such phrases as *candidus lector* (kindly reader), *lector amice* (friendly reader), *studiosa pectora* (attentive hearts), and simply *lector* (reader). These words of address indicate Ovid's awareness of his audience, and his desire to ingratiate himself with them.

Both the Tristia and the later Ex Ponto are preoccupied with the loss of the pleasures and amenities of Rome, and with the fear that he may be forgotten there. It is evident that for Ovid writing verse was a social activity (cf. Catullus L.1-13) and that the loss of his literary friends took away much of his pleasure in poetry. He thus complains of his new home and its unlettered inhabitants (Tr IV.1.89-92):

> sed neque cui recitem quisquam est mea carmina, nec qui
> auribus accipiat verba Latina suis.
> ipse mihi - quid enim faciam? - scriboque legoque,
> tutaque iudicio littera nostra suo est.

But there is none to whom I may read my verses,
None whose ears can comprehend Latin words.
I write for myself—what else can I do?—and I read to myself,
And my writing is secure in its own criticism.

The mental anguish, moreover, which his exile caused him, the unfaithfulness of friends and the dread of dangers, have made his mind too uneasy and preoccupied to write verses comfortably. He regularly asks his readers to consider the conditions under which he labours, and once compares himself to a menial worker (Tr IV.1.1-6):
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Siqua meis fuerint, ut erunt, vitiosa libellis,
exclusa suo tempore, lector, habe.
exul eram, requiesque mihi, non fama petita est,
mens intenta suis ne foret usque mali.
hoc est cur cantet vincus quoque compede fossor,
indocii numero cum grave mollit opus.

Whatever faults you may find—and you will find them—in my books,
Hold them absolved, reader, because of the time of their writing,
I am an exile; solace, not fame, has been my object—
That my mind dwell not constantly on its own woes.
This is why even the ditcher, shackled though he be, resorts to song,
Lightening with untutored rhythm his heavy work.

Everything is more difficult in the land of the Getae. Rome and Tomis are, in the exile
poems, as much a contrast as day and night. Ovid misses those friends with whom he might
discuss poetry and who might comment on his work, as formerly (Pont. II.4.9-16):

seria multa mihi tecum contata recordor,
nec data iucundis tempora paucis iocis.
saepe citae longis visae sermonibus horae,
saepe fuit brevior quam mea verba dies.
saepe tuas venit factum modo carmen ad auris
et nova ludicio subdita Musa tuo est.
quod tu laudaras, populo placuisse putabam.
hoc pretium curae dulce recentis erat.

I recall many serious talks that we have had
And not a few hours given over to pleasant jest.
Oft did the hours seem too swift for our long talks,
Oft the day was too short for my words.
Oft came to your ears a poem I had just composed;
A new effort was subjected to your criticism.
What you had praised I considered had already pleased the public,
This was the pleasant reward of my latest efforts.

Any hints that he was being remembered in the Roman literary world, and, especially, that
his recent verse was being praised, were warmly welcomed by the exile. In spite of Ovid’s
overall confidence that his fame would be lasting, his depressed state of mind made present
praise from literary men an important motivation to writing (Pont. II.5.19-24):
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tu tamen hic structos inter fera proelia versus
et legis et lectos ore favente probas,
ingeniique meo, vena quod paupere manat
plaudis, et e rivo flumina magna facis.
grata quidem sunt haec animo suffragia nostro,
vi sibi cum miseros posse placere putes.

Yet you are reading here verses composed amid fierce battles,
And when you have read, your favouring lips approve them.
My talent, trickling now in so impoverished a stream,
Wins your applause, and from a rivulet you make a mighty river.
Gratifying indeed to my soul is this suffrage of yours,
Even though one might think that the wretched can scarce be pleased with themselves.

For Ovid contemporary reputation was the sweet foretaste of that eternal fame which great poets receive; indeed *fama* (fame) for him refers to both the present and the future. Present readers, therefore, are at least as important as distant posterity. Although the depressed exile sometimes feigns indifference to his literary reputation, he is pleased to hear that his poems are being presented in the theatre at Rome as subjects for ballet and pantomime (*Tr*., V.7.25-30):

carmina quod pleno saltari nostra theatro,
versibus et plaudi scribis, amice, meis,
il equidem feci—tu scis hoc ipse—theatris,
Musa nec in plausus ambitiosa mea est.
non tamen ingratum est, quodcumque oblivia nostri
impedit et profugi nomen in ora referit.

As for your news that my songs are being presented with dancing in a crowded theatre,
My friend, and that my verses are applauded—
I have indeed composed nothing (you yourself know this) for the theatre;
My Muse is not ambitious for hand-clappings.
Yet I am not ungrateful for anything which hinders oblivion of me,
Which brings back the exile’s name to men’s lips.
While Ovid compares his exile to a living death, it is a very literary one, and one intended to be noticed by booksellers and readers. He compares himself to the dying swan which is said to sing before it dies (Tr. V.1.11-14):

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

As the bird of Cayster is said to lie upon the bank
And bemoan its own death with weakening note,
So I, cast far away upon the Sarmatian shores,
Take heed that my funeral rites pass not off in silence.

Just as life among the Getae is death, so Ovid would be recalled to life if he could return to Rome, and even the thought of being there revives his spirits. As long as his friends and readers keep his memory alive at Rome, the hope of returning does not seem an impossibility. He encourages those who knew him, such as the company of poets meeting in honour of Bacchus, to stay mindful of him (Tr. V.3.49-52.58):

atque aliquis vestrum, Nasonis nomine dicto,
apponat labris pocula mixta suis,
admonitusque mei, cum circumspecerit omnes,
dicat "ubi est nostri pars modo Naso chorei?"...
quad licet, inter vos nomen habete meum.

And let someone of you, uttering Naso's name,
Raise a bumber of wine to his lips,
And in thought of me, when he has gazed around upon all,
Let him say, "Where is Naso, who was but now a part of our company?"
Keep—for this is lawful—my name among you.

Amid the petitions and repetitions of the exile poems, two items recur most frequently—the reminders of the horrid place where Ovid is now situated, and the poet's name itself. Tomis is mentioned so often to keep the reader in mind that Ovid now languishes in misery disproportionate to his guilt, and to urge his sympathizers to work harder for his
pardon; "Ovidius Naso" is mentioned to keep current the name which symbolizes life, hope, and fame to the poet. In a letter to Cotta Maximus (Messalla's son) Ovid strikes both these notes with exceptional persistence. The first six lines of this verse epistle mention the poet's name once, and his place of exile twice (Pont. III.5.1-6):

Quam legis, unde tibi mittatur epistula, quaeris?
hinc, ubi eaceruleis iungitur Hister aquis.
ut regio dicta est, succurrere debet et auctor,
laesus ab ingenio Naso poeta suo.
qui tibi, quam mallet praesens adferre salutem,
mittit ab hisrutis, Maxime Cotta, Getis.

Whence comes the letter that you read, you ask?
From this place where Hister unites with the blue waves.
Soon as the place is named the writer too should come before you—
He whose own talent injured him, Naso the poet.
To you, Maximus Cotta, to whom he would rather offer it face to face,
He sends a greeting from the land of the shaggy Getae.

In order to vary the names for his place of exile Ovid refers both to the geographic features and the people of the region. Here he refers to the Danube River (Hister) a prominent feature of the coast (though actually some distance from Tomis), and the "hairy Getae", the semi-barbarian inhabitants of the region. Ovid also, in these six lines, manages to allude to the reason for his exile - laesus ab ingenio suo ("injured by his own talents") - and to offer a wish that he might be in Rome with Cotta (praesens). He also rather emphatically identifies himself as Naso poeta.

Ovid goes on to thank Cotta for sending him the public speech which he had recently delivered in Rome. This brings the poet back again to the thought of his exile and its cause (ll. 21-2):

at nisi peccassem, nisi me mea Musa fugasset,
quod legi, tua vox exhibuisset opus...
If I had not erred, if my Muse had never exiled me,
Your own voice would have delivered to me the work that I have read...

This naturally leads to thoughts of the place of exile and Ovid's need to find solace in the
writings and attention which Cotta conveys to his old friend (27-31):

quem quoniam fatum patria vobisque relictis
inter inhumanos maluit esse Getas,
quod licet, ut videar tecom magis esse, legenda
saepe, precor, studi plegera mitte tu...

But since Fate has wished rather that I, leaving my country and you,
Should dwell among the uncivilized Getae,
That I may seem the more to be with you
Send for my reading (this is possible) continual proofs, I beseech you, of your
study...

Ovid now sets up a comparison between the humane studies which Cotta pursues and
Ovid's inhuman place of exile—*inter inhumanos Getas* ("among the barbarous Getae"). He
wonders if Cotta amidst the orators and poets of Rome thinks ever of his old friend as he
follows those studies which they used to pursue together (43-7):

utque loqui multum de me praesente solebas,
nunc quoque Nasonis nomen in ore tuo est?
ipse quidem Getico peream violatus ab arcu
(et sit periti quam prope poena, vides)
te nisi momentis video paene omnibus absens.

As you used to talk often of me in my presence,
Is Naso's name now also on your lips?
As for me, may I die outraged by a Getic bow—
And you see how close my penalty if I prove false—
If I do not see you at almost every moment, absent though I am.

Here we have both the repetition of the poet's name, and an allusion to the nature of his
present surroundings. This leads into a reverie in which Ovid's spirit is with Cotta in Rome
and to a comparison between Rome and Heaven and Tomis and Hell (49-56):

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71One of Ovid's major complaints about Tomis is that there is no audience for his poetry there
(Pont. I.5.59-66, IV.2.29-38).
hac ubi perveni nulli cemendus in urbem,
saepe loquor tecum, saepe loquente fuor.
tum mihi difficile est, quam sit bene, dicere, quamque

candida iudiciis illa sit hora meis.
tum me, siqua fides, caelesti sede recepium

cum fortunatis suspicor esse deis.
rursus ubi hic redii, caelum superosque relinquo,

a Styge nec longe Pontica distat humus.

When in this way I have entered the city though none can see me,
I often converse with you, often enjoy your converse.
Then 'tis hard to say how happy I am,
How bright I think that hour.
Then, if you can credit it, I conceive myself harboured in heaven's abode,
Dwelling with the blessed gods.
Again when I have returned hither I leave behind heaven and the gods above:
The land of the Pontus is hard by the Styx.

This is one of Ovid's strongest statements of the happiness of Rome and its pursuits to
him, and the desolation of the Black Sea shore (the Pontus). The religious imagery is
appropriate for an urban secular man such as Ovid who sees his happiness entirely in the
present and its pursuits. It is also a powerful literary image for pointing out Ovid's present
plight.

This letter (Pont. III.5) was written to a sympathetic and influential aristocrat whom Ovid
felt might be able to help him be pardoned. For this reason the poet seems tempted to overdo
his usual complaints and comparisons. This repetition had a counter-productive effect in that
Ovid's readers grew bored with it, and presumably supposed that Augustus was not about to
pardon the poet in any case. Ovid plaintively replied to criticisms of his works by saying that
he could not help their defects (Pont. III.9.33-40).
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nil tamen e scriptis magnis excusabile nostris,
quam sorsus cunctis paene quod unus inest.
laeta fere laetus cecini, cano tristia tristis:
conveniens operi tempus utrumque suo est.
quid nisi de viuo scribam regionis annarum,
utque loco moriar commodiore precer?
cum totiens eadem dicam, vix audior ulli,
verbaque profectu dissimulata carent.

And yet there is nothing more deserving of excuse in what I write
Than that in it all there is one single thought.
Gay was oft my song when I was gay, sad it is now that I am sad:
Each period has a type of work that befits it.
Of what am I to write save the evils of a bitter country
And to pray that I may die in a pleasanter region?
I write so often of the same things that scarce any listen,
And my words, which they feign not to understand, are without result.

As we have seen, perhaps the poet's chief motive in repeating his name and place of exile
was that those at Rome might not forget him, and might busy themselves in working for his
recall. In writing to influential people, such as Sextus Pompeius, Ovid clearly desires to plant
his message deeply in their minds (Pont. IV.47-48):

di faciant aliquo subeat tibi tempore nostrum
nomen, et "heu" dicas "quid miser ille facit?"

May the gods grant that at some moment my name may come into your mind,
That you may say, "Alas! What is that miserable man doing now?"

There was, however, an important secondary consideration, namely, that the poet's fame and
reputation might be passed on to posterity as favourably as possible.

Literary Immortality versus Personal Immortality

Personal immortality was not a well-established doctrine in the ancient world until the
triumph of Christianity. The mystery cults which promised immortality to their followers
tended to be frowned on in Rome as foreign superstitions lacking dignity. The Eleusinian
Mysteries were respectable and well-established but did not appear to capture the allegiance of educated Romans. The dominant faiths among the educated in the Graeco-Roman world were the Stoic and Epicurean philosophies. Of these the Epicureans flatly denied the possibility of personal immortality, while the Stoics waffled somewhat on this point, but on the whole tended against it. In particular, influential Stoics at Rome from Panaitius to Comitus denied the soul's survival after the death of the body, while others indicated that the soul's survival was of limited duration. The neo-Pythagoreans, indeed, spoke of the immortality of the soul, but few among the educated classes fully adopted their disciplines and doctrines. Thus Roman statements regarding the after-life invariably begin with the word "if", since there was no philosophic or theological consensus regarding personal survival after death.

Franz Cumont has described the situation at Rome as follows:

The future life was generally regarded as a consoling metaphysical conception, a mere hypothesis supported by some thinkers, a religious hope but not an article of faith. The lofty conclusion which ends Agricola's eulogy will be remembered. "If," says Tacitus, "there be an abode of the spirits of virtuous men, if, as sages have taught, great souls be not extinguished with the body, rest in peace." But side by side with the supposition thus hazarded, the historian expresses the assurance that Agricola will receive another reward for his merits. All that his contemporaries have loved and admired in his character will cause the fame of his deeds to live in men's memory through the eternity of ages.22

For poets, who traditionally regarded themselves as the central figures in producing this immortality of fame, there was a strong impetus to regard literary immortality as the one which mattered. The absence of an established regard for poets and poetry at Rome which might satisfy the ambitions of poetic practitioners also tempted poets to look to posterity to correct present devaluation. For many of them such as Ovid - and no doubt a majority of

educated Romans also - wrestling with the knotty problems which contemporary philosophy
put in the way of supernatural beliefs was an unwelcome employment. And, if a belief merely
in literary immortality gave more glory to poets living and dead, so much the better. As
Cumont writes:

...the perplexity in which men struggled, when they thought of psychic survival, gave
earthly immortality a greater value in the eyes of the ancients. It was for many of
them the essential point because it alone was certain. Not to fall into the abyss of
forgetfulness seemed a sufficient reward for virtue. "Death is to be feared by those for
whom everything is extinguished with their life, not by those whose renown cannot
perish." ... Even more than today, the hope of a durable renown, the anxiety that their
fellows should be busy about them even after their departure, the preoccupation lest
their life should not be favourably judged by public opinion, haunted many men,
secretly or avowedly dominated their thought and directed their actions.73

Ovid’s exile poetry is greatly concerned with fame, reputation, and the survival of his
name. This concern is heightened because the poet indicates that he does not believe in an
afterlife. His immortality, and that of his wife and friends, will come through verse. He
thanks Cotta Maximus for his loyalty to an exiled man in the following words (Pont. III.2.27-
32):

tunc igitur meritum: mortem gratia vestri,
cum cinis absorbto corpore factus ero.
faller, et ulla meae superabita tempora vitae,
si tamem a memori postenitae legar.
corpora debentur maestis exsanguia bustis:
   effugiunt structos nomen honorque rogos.

So then will my gratitude for your merit die
When my body shall be consumed to ashes—
I am wrong: it will outlive the span of my life,
If after all posterity shall remember and read me.
The bloodless body is destined for the mournful tomb:
Name and honour escape the high-built pyre.

73Cumont, p. 19.
He also writes to the young poetess Perilla, commending poetry as a means of escaping oblivion. By this argument he indicates that poetry is superior to all things, since all other things are subject to death (Tr. III.7.49-54):

quilisat hanc saevo vitam mihi finiat ense,
me tamen extincto fama superstes erit,
dunque suis victrix septem de montibus orbem
prospiciet domitum Martia Roma, legar.
tu quoque, quam studii maneat felicior usus,
effuge venturos, qua potes, usque rogos!

Let any you will end my life with the cruel sword,
Yet when I am dead my fame shall survive.
As long as Martian Rome gazes forth victorious.
From her seven hills over the conquered world, I shall be read.
Do thou too—and may a happier use of thine art await thee—
Ever shun what way thou cast the coming pyre.

The value of poetry is enhanced since it is the surest way to the only certain form of immortality. Thus Ovid encourages his wife to work for his recall by reminding her of the great gift which he is bestowing on her (Tr. V.14.5-6,II-14):

dunque legar, mecum pariter tua fama legetur,
nec potes in maestos omnis abire rogos...
non ego divitas dando tibi plura dedissem:
nil feret ad Manes divitis umbra suum.
perpetui fructum donavi nominis idque,
quo dare nil potui munere malus, habes.

As long as men read me thy fame shall be read along with me;
Nor canst thou utterly pass away into the sad pyre...
Not by giving thee riches could I have given thee more:
Naught of himself will the rich man's shade carry to the dead.
I gave thee enjoyment of an immortal name,
And thou hast a boon than which I could give none greater.

Thus Ovid's most commonly-expressed belief is that there is no survival after death, and this belief serves for him to magnify the importance of poetry and its benefits.
Such an age as Ovid's (like our own time) gave poets a free range in speculating about the afterlife - these speculations being usually introduced by the word "if". Ovid had used the Pythagorean philosophy as a unifying theme for his epic *Metamorphoses*; in the exile poetry he refers several times to Pythagoras of Samos and his belief in the immortality of the soul (e.g., *Tr.*, III.3.59-64):

> atque utinam pereant animae cum corpore nostrae,<br>effugiatque avidos pars mihi nulla rogos!<br>nam si morte carens vacua volat altus in aura<br>spiritus, et Samii sunt rata dicta senis,<br>inter Sarmaticas Romana vagabitur umbras,<br>perque feros manes hospita semper erit.

O that our souls might perish with the body
And that so no part of me might escape the greedy pyre!
For if the spirit flits aloft deathless in the empty air,
And the words of the Samian sage are true,
A Roman will wander among Sarmatian shades,
A stranger forever among barbarians.

Here lines 59-60 would seem to contradict what we have just said about Ovid's lack of belief in personal survival. It seems likely, however, that these lines are used to introduce effectively the sentiment which follows—Ovid's fear that his spirit might continue to exist among the Getae after his death. This idea in turn is Ovid's ultimate expression of distaste for Tomis and the Black Sea coast—which forms, of course, a constant theme of the exile poetry. This fear of psychic survival among the Getae becomes the climax for the poet's plea not to be left to die at Tomis but to be transferred to a less menacing place of exile (*Pont.*, I.2.107-112):

> denique, si moriar, subeam pacatius arvum,<br>ossa nec a Scythica nostra premantur humo,<br>nec male compositos, ut scilicet exule dignum,<br>Bistonii cineres ungula pulset equi,<br>et ne, si superest aliquis post funera sensus<br>terreat et Manes Sarmatis umbra meos.
At least, if I should die, that I may be buried in a more peaceful land
And my bones be not crushed down by Scythian soil,
Nor my ashes, meanly buried, as doubtless an exile deserves,
Be trampled by the hoof of a Bistonian horse;
And if there be some feeling that survives after death;
That no Sarmatian shade terrify even my spirit.

In these passages the Pythagoreanism is a suitable literary conceit, and is carefully introduced
by the conjunction "if".

In contrast to these, Ovid's address to the spirits of his parents - with its reference to the
"Stygian court" (in Stygio foro) - suggests the traditional underworld of Greek myth (Tr.
IV.10.85-90):

si tamen extinctis aliquid nisi nomina restat,
et gracilis structos effugit umbra rogos
fama, parentales, si vos mea contigit, umbrae,
et sunt in stygio crimina nostra foro,
Scite, precor, causam (ne vos mihi fallere fas est)
errem iussae, non seclus, esse fugae.

Yet if for those whose light is quenched something besides a name abides,
If a slender shade escapes the high-heapèd pyre,
If, O spirits of my parents, report of me has reached you
And the charges against me live in the Stygian court,
Know, I beg you - and you 'tis impious of me to deceive—
That the cause of the exile decreed me is an error, and no crime.

Once again this seems to be an effective way for the poet to assert his innocence with respect
to the charges facing him, with overtones of filial piety and Stygian honesty thrown in. It is
unlikely in any case that Ovid was dogmatic in rejecting an afterlife; such rigour was not to
his liking. It would have been also detrimental to his literary practice.

Ovid's lack of any definite belief in an afterlife gave a stronger impetus to his desire for
literary fame both among contemporary audiences and distant posterity. Even this deep desire,
and Ovid's usual confidence in its fulfilment, were shaken during the period of fearfulness and
depression which followed his condemnation and relegatio. He may have felt that the removal
of his books from libraries at Rome threatened their physical survival,²⁴ while the charges
brought against him might seriously damage his posthumous reputation. In the exile poems,
therefore, he pleads both for his books and for himself; his frequent references to fame,
reputation, and posterity indicate that these things remained very important for him.

Long ago in the Amores Ovid had said that he preferred poetry over traditional Roman
occupations, because poetry alone gave lasting fame (Am. I.15.7-8):

mortale est, quod quae ris, opus. mhi fame perennis
quae ritur, in toto semper ut orbe canar.

It is but mortal, the work you ask of me; but my quest is glory
Through all the years, to be ever known in song throughout the earth.

Later at the height of his powers and popularity he wrote (Ars Am. III.403-404):

quid petitur sacr is, nisi tantum fame, poetis?
 hoc votum nostri summa laboris habet.

What is sought by the sacred bards save fame alone?
Toil we ne'er so hard, this is all we ask.

Just as Ovid's banishment resulted in some ambiguity towards poetry itself, so it caused
him some rethinking of the quest for fame. Although his later references to fame have
elements of self-pity and self-dramatization, it is plausible that the sentence of exile severely
challenged Ovid's somewhat facile philosophy of poetry and poetic fame. It is evident that for
some years previous to his exile, Ovid's popularity was well-established, and his claims to
fame well-received. Passages in Ars Amatoria III and Remedia Amoris give clear indications
that Ovid had few doubts about his lasting fame, and little expectation of any challenge to his
contemporary reputation. It is plausible that he was generally regarded in his own time as the

²⁴Cf. Tr. II.8,419-420, Tr. III.1.1-8, 59-82; 14.5-18; and Pont. I.1.3-12, on the removal of
Ovid's books from the public libraries, and the suppression of the Ars Amatoria.
leading poet of the age, and his remarks on his own place among the love poets seem to
reflect popular favour (Ars Am., III.339-348):

forsitan et nostrum nomen miscelitur isus,
nec mea Letaeis scripta dabuntur aquis:
anguis aliquis dicit "nostri lege culta magistri
carmina, quis partes instruit ille duas:
devi tribus libris, titulus quos signat Amorum,
elige, quod docili molliter ore legas:
vel ubi composita cantetur Epistola voce:
ignotum hoc aliis ille novavit opus."
O ita, Phoebus, velis! ita vos, pia numina vatum,
insignis cornu Bacche, novemque deae!

Perhaps too my name will be joined to theirs,
Nor will my writings be given to Lethe's waters;
And someone will say, "Read the elegant poems of our master,
Wherein he instructs the rival parties;
Or from the three books marked out by the title of 'Loves'
Choose out what you may softly read with docile voice;
Or let some Letter be read by you with practised utterance;
He first invented this art, unknown to others."
So grant it, O Phoebus! so grant it, ye blessed souls of poets,
And thou, O homed Bacchus, and ye goddesses nine!

These lines indicate that Ovid not only expected fame in general, but also expected that his
various love poetry (Ars Amatoria, Amores, and Heroïdes) would all remain well-known. It is
significant too that he invokes the shades of the great poets of the past (pia numina vatum) in
the same manner as the traditional gods of poetry (Phoebus Apollo, Bacchus, and the Muses).
This is a strong statement of the poet's divine nature and his triumph over mortality (oblivion).

In the exile poems, however, partly no doubt through caution but perhaps also partly
through a real fear that the Emperor's censure and condemnation might affect his lasting
reputation, Ovid's desire for fame and his confidence of it are sometimes downplayed, or even
denied at times, only to surface again later on. This loss of desire and confidence becomes
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one example among many of the changes wrought in Ovid’s heart and mind by his exile (Tr. I.1.53-56):

\[
\text{donec eram sospes, tituli tangebar amore,}
\quad \text{quaerendique mihi nominis ardor erat.}
\]
\[
camina nunc si non studiumque, quod obfuit, odi,
\quad \text{sit satis; ingenio sic fuga parte meo.}
\]

In the time of my security I was touched by the love of renown,
And I burned to win a name.
Now let it be enough if I do not hate poetry and the pursuit
Which has injured me; through that my own wit has brought me exile.

Ovid later returns to the same theme to explain why he no longer enjoys writing verse and
why his recent verse is inferior to his pre-exile writings. He explains that while circumstances
were favourable he was encouraged by love of fame, but that now he finds that misery does
not love company (Tr. V.12.37-42):

\[
\text{denique non parvas animo dat gloria vires,}
\quad \text{et secunda facit pectora laudis amor.}
\]
\[
nominis et famae quondam fulgore trahebar,
\quad \text{dum tuli antenna auras secunda meas.}
\]
\[
\text{non adeo est bene nunc ut sit mihi gloria curae:}
\quad \text{si licet, nulli cognitus esse velim.}
\]

In short desire for fame lends no small strength to the mind;
Love of praise makes the heart fertile.
Once I was drawn on by the glamour of name and fame
While the favouring breeze bore on my yards.
‘Tis not so well with me now that I care for renown;
If ‘twere possible I would have none know of me.

This pose of indifference to fame was not one which the poet could long maintain, even if
there were moments when depression overcame his normal attitudes. Even in his (supposedly)
contrite letter to Augustus the poet cannot help boasting about the renown which his genius
has won (Tr. II.117-120):
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quo videar quamvis nimium iuvenaliter usus,
grande tamen toto nomen ab orbe fero,
turbaque doctorum Nasonem novit et audet
non fastiditis adnumerare viris.

This I may have employed in too youthful exuberance,
Yet my name is great throughout the world;
A throng of the cultured are well acquainted with Naso and venture
To count him with those whom they do not despise.

Likewise in his autobiographical sketch Ovid refers to his reputation as an established and
universal thing (Tr. IV.10.125-128):

nam tulerint magnos cum saecula nostra poetas,
non fuit ingenio fama maligna meo,
cumque ego praeponam multos mihi, non minor illis
dicere et in toto plurimus orbe leger.

For although this age of ours has brought forth mighty poets,
Fame has not been grudging to my genius,
And though I place many before myself, report calls me not their inferior
And throughout the world I am most read of all.

Ovid feels that his fame is sufficiently firm to turn the matter against his detractors and to
point to his assured position among the Roman poets (Pont. IV.16.1-4,45-46):

Invide, quid laceras Nasonis carmina rapti?
non solet ingeniis summa nocere dies,
famaque post cineres maior venit. et mihi nomen
tum quoque, cum vivis adnumerarer, erat...
dicere si fas est, claro mea nomine Musa
atque inter tantos quae legeretur erat.

Jealous man, why do you wound the verse of ravished Naso?
The final day is not wont to injure genius,
And fame is greater after one is ashes. I too had a name
Even at the time when I was counted with the living...
My Muse was famed, if 'tis right to speak thus,
And she was one who was read among so many of the great.
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Ovid maintains here both his contemporary fame, plus the certainty of even greater posthumous fame. In spite of the batterings of fortune, and occasional second thoughts, Ovid’s faith that his poetic art would endure is a continuous refrain of the exile poems.

The Poet’s Power to Immortalize the Worthy, Including His Wife

We have seen that in the Ovidian love poems the power of the poet to confer immortality on his mistress is only a minor theme, and is thrown in as part of the conventional elegiac lover’s line. This very traditional theme—that the poet can bestow fame on the worthy—recurs with insistent frequency in the exile poems, along with its reverse image—the poet’s power to damn the memory of his unjust enemies.

It is easy to imagine some reasons why this particular theme surfaces so forcefully in the poems from Tomis. Ovid is in the position of a suppliant, and can both sweeten his petitions and disguise his beggary by offering a *quid pro quo* (something for something). The poet, moreover, wishes to turn his own cause into the cause of poetry, and by emphasizing a major traditional role of poetry, he legitimizes both his current activity, and his vocation in general. Ovid’s praise of those who have helped him or will help him, in the face of official hostility, is also a natural and pleasing way for a poet to express his gratitude, and confer benefits on praiseworthy and beloved individuals. It is not surprising that Ovid’s wife is prominent among those whom he praises.

It appears (*Tr*. I.3.79-88) that Ovid’s wife wished to accompany him into exile, and that he persuaded her to stay at Rome to work for his pardon. Beginning in *Tristia* I.6 he praises her as equal to the heroines of old (Andromache, Laodamia, Penelope), and commends her for preserving his estate against an unnamed enemy. The poet claims that his love for his wife is
greater than that of famous love poets for their mistresses, and, so far as it lies in his power,
he will immortalize her memory (Tr. I.6.1-4,29-30,35-36):

Nec tantum Clario est Lyde dilecta poetae,
 nec tantum Coo Bitis amata suo est,
pectoris quantus tu nostris, uxor, inhaeris,
digna minus miserio, non meliore viro...
ei mihi, non magnis quod habent mea carmina vires,
nostraque sunt meritis ora minora tuis...
quantumcumque tamen praecocia nostra valebunt,
carminibus vives tempus in omne meis

Not so great was the love of the Clarian bard for Lyde
Or that of her own Coan for Bitis
As the love that clings in my heart for thee, my wife,
Who art worthy of a less wretched, not a better, husband...
Alas that great power lies not in my song
And my lips cannot match thy merits...
Yet so far as my praise has power,
Thou shalt live for all time in my song.

Ovid, lying on a sick bed in Tomis, thinks of his wife throughout his illness. Depressed
by the many bad features of the country and the lack of medical help, the poet's thoughts turn
to his wife (Tr. III.3.15-20):

omnia cum subeant, vincis tamen omnia, coniunx,
et plus in nostro pectore parte tenes.
te loquor absentem, te vox mea nominat unam;
nulla venit sine te nox mihi, nulla dies.
quin etiam sic me dicunt aliena locatum,
ut foret ameni nomen in ore tuum.

All things steal into mind, yet above all, you, my wife,
And you hold more than half my heart.
You I address though you are absent;you alone my voice names,
No night comes to me without you, no day.
Nay more, they say that when I talked strange things,
"Twas so that your name would be on my delirious lips.

He takes the traditional opportunity of praising her with a birthday poem, once again
comparing her to Andromache and Penelope (Tr. V.5.43-46):
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edidit haec mores illis heroisin aequos,
quia erat Eetion Icariusque pater.
nata pudicitia est, ista probitasque, fidesque,
at non sunt ista gaudia nata die...

This day brought forth a character equal those famed heroines
Whose fathers were Eetion and Icarius.
Chastity was born on this day and uprightness, and loyalty;
But on this day no joys...

Then Ovid urges his wife to persevere under tribulation. After all, if the heroines of old had
not met with misfortunes, they would never have achieved fame. In the same way his wife
must continue to live miserably without him, and steadfastly work towards his recall.

Meanwhile she is earning immortal fame from his many references to her in these books from
exile (Tr. V.14.1-6):

Quanta tibi dederim nostris monumenta libellis,
o mihi me coniunx carior, ipsa vides.
detrahat auctori multum fortuna licebit,
tu tamen ingenio clara ferere moe;
dumque legar, mecum pariter tua fama legetur,
nec potes in maestos omnis abire rogos...

What a memorial I have reared to thee in my books,
O my wife, dearer to me than myself, thou seest.
Though fate may take much from their author,
Thou at least shalt be made illustrious by my powers.
As long as men read me thy fame shall be read along with me;
Nor canst thou utterly pass away into the sad pyre.

In spite of some tender allusions to his wife Ovid's poems about her are not entirely
successful as love poems. Apart from their quid pro quo nature, when he dangles the carrot of
immortal fame in front of his wife to encourage her zeal on his behalf, his promises of fame
are also indirect praise of his powers as a poet. His hints that he may take back his blessing if
his wife does not perform her part adequately is also rather detrimental to the mood of
romance. He thus reminds her of the favour she has received (Pont. III.1.43-46):
magnum tibi impositum est nostris persona libellis
coniugis exemplum diceres esse bona.
hane cave degeneres: ut sint praecordia nostra
vera, vide famae quod tuearis opus.

Great is the role imposed upon thee in my books:
Thou art called the model of a good wife.
Beware thou fallest not from that: that I may have proclaimed the truth.
Look to the work that fame has wrought and guard it well.

This letter is Ovid's last extended appeal to his wife to exert herself on his behalf. It seems as
if friends now intervened to persuade Ovid not to put so much pressure on his wife. So he
recants, and mentions her no more in the remainder of the correspondence (Pont. III.7.11-12):

nec gravis uxori dicar: quae scilicet in me
quam proba tam timida est experiensque parum.

Nor will I be called a trouble to my wife who in sooth
Is as true to me as she is timid and backwards in her efforts.

With this backhanded compliment Ovid desists from further immortalization of his wife. In a
sense his public programme had backfired on him. He had urged his wife's immortality on
the grounds that she would infinitely persevere on his behalf and ultimately win him pardon.
When at long last his wife refused to push her efforts further, Ovid has no option but to
abandon his theme, and to transfer the promise of immortality to others.

Because Ovid's addresses to his wife end with a whimper we may be sure that he is
writing in propria persona and not assuming a role. There are many things in the exile poems
which an author might wish not to say, but, as Ovid tells us himself, his goal is not fame but
pardon. Thus he urges his wife and others, in season and out of season, to work on his behalf
with a singlemindedness which might lead one to question his deep regard for wife and
friends. He goes so far as to blame his wife for the continuance of his exile (Tr. V.2.33-34):

hinc ego traherer—neque enim mea culpa cruenta est—
esset, quae debit, si tibi cura mei.
From here might I pass—for my fault has no taint of blood—
If you had the love for me which is my due.

Ovid’s impatient importunity often renders it necessary for him to search out new names
to appeal to, as former ones grow weary of his petitions, or detect criticisms of themselves in
his dissatisfaction. The matter was complicated because many potential helpers were reluctant
to be mentioned in the verse of one with whom the Emperor was displeased. Ovid frequently
chafes at this timidity which restricts the scope and effectiveness of his petitions (Tr. III.4.63-
68):

vos quoque pectoribus nostris haecretis, amici,
dicere quos cupio nomine quemque suo.
sed timor officium cautos compescit, et ipsos
in nostro non carmine nolle puto.
ante volebatis, gratique erat instar honoris,
versibus in nostri nomina vestra legi.

You too are fast in my heart, my friends,
Whom I am eager to mention each by his own name,
But cautious fear restrains the duty, and you yourselves
Do not wish a place in my poetry, I think.
Of old you wished it, for it was like a grateful honour
To have your names read in my verse.

In fact Ovid’s references to contemporaries in his earlier verse were rather infrequent,
since he had then no particular reason to mention them. Now he manages to personalize his
letters by references to particular incidents and other hints which indicate the addressee. For
example in Tr. III.5.17-18 Ovid calls his correspondent carus (dear one) which may indeed
have been his name (Carus). The poet can even turn a limitation to account by proclaiming
the extent to which he would praise his benefactors if he were permitted to name them (Tr.
V.9.7-10):
te praesens mitem nosset, te serior actas,
scripta vetustatem si modo nostra ferunt,
nece tibi cessaret doctus bene dicere lector:
hic te servato vate manerei honor.

Thy kindness the present, thy kindness later time would know,
If only my writings endure age,
Nor would the accomplished reader cease to bless thee;
This honour would abide with thee for having preserved a poet.

To contemporary readers familiar with the poet’s story the identity of recipients was perhaps transparent, although to us it is conjectural. In some cases such as Tristia V.9 (above) there is enough detail to suggest the name of Ovid’s correspondent—Cotta Maximus. In the Tristia the poet is restricted (save for his wife and the girl Perilla) to merely suggesting the honour which his addressees might receive from him. He was no doubt relieved when the Emperor indicated (it seems) that Ovid should name his correspondents in future (Pont. 1.1.17-30)—a circumstance partly brought about by Ovid’s reiteration of the disadvantages of his friends’ anonymity. Ovid’s preoccupation with the danger of association with himself suggested (and probably was meant to suggest) that the Emperor’s clemency was of limited scope. Thus it is conjectured that the permission (or perhaps command) for the poet to name his correspondents came from court.

This permission, along with his wife’s faltering enthusiasm, gave wings to Ovid’s desire to enlist new sources of help. Perhaps buoyed by thoughts that the new glasnost policy of the Emperor, and the poet’s own express willingness to immortalize supporters would encourage aid, he wrote to some previously hesitant admirers. Some of the addressees of the four books Ex Ponto were no doubt the anonymous correspondents of the Tristia letters, but many appear to be new. Ovid now goes farther afield, especially in his own area of liberales artes, to approach those with whom his contacts had been slight, but who might reasonably be expected
to sympathize with a poet in distress. These are generally people of rank - or their friends - for whom it would be possible to approach members of the Imperial family on behalf of the poet. Ovid had particular hopes of Germanicus—the most likeable and cultivated of the royal princes—and addresses him indirectly through friends and tutors such as Salanus (Pont. II.5), Sextus Pompey (Pont. IV.5) and Suillius (Pont. IV.8). Ovid still felt that something might be done through his wife's connections with Marcia, wife of the distinguished aristocrat Paullus Fabius Maximus, but Fabius died before Augustus (Pont. IV.6). In general, Ovid presents himself in the Ex Ponto epistles as a man of culture whom other men of culture ought to empathize with and protect.

In the exile poems Ovid especially holds up the virtue of friendship, and sees his praise of friends and supporters as the just reward of their deeds. Thus he writes to his old friend Graccinus (Pont. II.6.29-34) that he deserves to be named with Pylades and Orestes, Theseus and Pirithous:

tu quoque per durum servato tempus amico
dignus es in tantis nomen habere viris.
dignus es, et, quoniam laudem pietate mereris,
non crit officii gratia surda tui.
crede mihi, nostrum si non mortale futurum est
camen, in ore frequens posteritatis eris.

You too who have held to your friend through times of stress
Deserve to have a name among such great men.
You deserve it—yes, and since praise is the just reward for your loyalty,
My gratitude for your service shall never be dumb.
Trust me, if my song is not destined to die,
You shall be often on the lips of posterity.

Besides praising old friends the poems maintain the poet's role as immortalizer of worthy deeds by celebrating Roman victories and the generals of the Imperial family. He addresses local potentates and sings the praises of Vestalis, a Gallic commander in Roman service, who
has been sent to the Pontic area to dispense justice (reddere iura). He calls to mind Vestalis's role in the recapture of Aegisos from the Getae and assures him of literary immortality (Pont. IV.7.53-54):

vincitur Aegisos, testataque tempus in omne
sunt tua, Vestalis, carmine facia meo.

Aegisos is conquered, and for all time, Vestalis,
My song bears witness to your deeds.

Ovid put his greatest hopes for Imperial favour and eventual pardon in Germanicus who wrote acceptable verse himself and was a friend of literary men. Ovid hopes that his daughter-in-law's husband Suillius, and other friends, will approach the young prince on the poet's behalf. His letter to Suillius is evidently intended for Germanicus's eyes and contains both flattery and an offer of service (Pont. IV.8.65-70):

siquid adhuc igitur vivi, Germanice, nostro
restat in ingenio, serviet omne tibi.
on potes officium vatis contemnere vates:
judicio pretium res habet ista tuo.
quod nisi te nomen tantum ad maiora vocasset,
gloria Pieridum summa futurus eras.

If there be still any life, Germanicus,
In my genius, it shall wholly serve thee.
Thou canst not as a poet despise the tribute of a poet,
For that has a value in thy judgment.
Wherefore if a great name had not called thee to greater things,
Thou wert destined to be the supreme glory of the Pierians.

The whole letter resounds with the praises of poetry itself. Ovid does not hesitate to remind the prospective great warrior of his need for literary fame (43-8):

nec tamen officio vatum per carmina facto
principibus res est aptior ulla viris.
carmina vestrarum peragunt praecocia laudum,
neve sit actorum fama caduca cavent.
carmine fit vivax virtus, expersque sepulchri
notitiam serae posteritatis habet.
Yet than the proffered tribute of poets' verse
Naught else more befits the leaders of men.
Verse heralds abroad your praises and sees to it
That the glory of your deeds falls not to the ground.
By verse virtue lives on and, avoiding the tomb,
Becomes known to late posterity.

The Poet’s Power to Condemn Enemies to Everlasting Infamy

Just as the poet may confer an immortality of honour on his worthy friends, so also may he blast the memory of his enemies with everlasting infamy. This theme equally reflects the greatness of poetry and the poet, and is equally appropriate to Ovid’s role as an otherwise helpless exile. There was a long classical tradition of invective verse going back to Archilochus’s iambics. Callimachus, the model for so much Roman poetry, had written invective, supposedly against Apollonius of Rhodes, in his Ibis. This poem Ovid imitated at length shortly after arriving at Tomis in order to attack an enemy who had been publicly criticizing the poet and attempting to deprive him of his property (Ibis 7-22). Ovid omits the enemy’s name. The poet perhaps did not feel sufficiently secure of his own position at this time to go boldly on the offensive. At the same time he turns this deficiency to account by threatening the man with more personal satires, such as Archilochus aimed at Lycamnes, if he persists in enmity against Ovid (Ibis 51-4):

et neque nomen in hoc nec dicam facta libello,
teque brevi, qui sis, dissimulare sinam.
postmodo, si perges, in te mihi liber iambus
incta Lycambeo sanguine tela dabit.

And no name nor deeds shall I mention in this work,
And I will suffer thee a short while to dissemble who thou art.
Afterwards, if thou dost continue, my satire unrestrained Shall hurl at thee missiles tinged by Lycambean blood.
Similar lines are addressed to an unnamed enemy (presumably the same person) in Tristia IV.9, with the same reluctance to name names (31-32):

...cane, Musa, receptus,
dum licet huic nomen dissimulare suum.

...Muse, sound the retreat,
While this man still has the power to conceal his name.

Here the man is warned how widely his infamy will be proclaimed if he continues to show hatred for the poet. Ovid affirms that the weapons of the Muse will be adequate to punish him (15-16,25-26):

denique vindictae si sit mihi nulla facultas;
Pierides vires et sua tela dabunt...
nec tua te sรมent tantummodo saecula norint:
perpetuae crimen posteritatis cris.

In fine if I should have no opportunity for vengeance,
The daughters of Pieria will give me strength and their own weapons...
Not alone your own age shall know you guilty;
To everlasting posterity you shall be a criminal.

Ovid’s address to a faithless friend (Pont. IV.3) is similar in its anonymity. Here, however, the silence is not to give the man time to repent, but to prevent him from being honoured with a place in Ovid’s verse (3-4):

nomine non utar, ne commendere querella,
quaeaturque tibi carmine fama meo.

I will not employ your name lest my complaint bring you favour,
And through my verse you win renown.

Thus Ovid clearly states the power of verse to immortalize wickedness as well as goodness. His reluctance to be personal perhaps relates to an unwillingness as a supplicant to offend anyone who might be of benefit to him. A too-aggressive counter-attack might reflect badly on his pose of innocuous loyalty to the Emperor. At the same time he may be trying to
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warn off a range of potential enemies by keeping his attacks general and by holding his most powerful weapons in reserve.

The Poet as Donor of Literary Immortality

Ovid's belief in the importance of literary immortality, and the willingness of his audience to accept this, reflects the absence of serious faith in personal immortality and the traditional gods in Augustan society. The early Greeks from Homer to Pindar saw the poet's role as immortalizer as dependant on two other factors: first, the existence of men and deeds worthy of lasting remembrance; and, secondly, the favour of the gods (especially the Muses) in ensuring the efficacy of the poet's attempt. In Hellenistic court poetry both these two requirements were consistently downplayed. A generous prince was self-evidently worthy of verse tributes; the gods in a naturalistic age had little to do with the actual processes of verse composition; and very few poets were inclined to consider their talents inadequate for the task of immortalization. By Roman times it was natural to think of poetry as merely the bestowing of fame on one's patron, and this was generally thought of as well within the poet's own power. Horace (Odes IV.8 and 9) went further, according to J.K. Newman, in suggesting a doctrine of poetic sovereignty, which "seemed to imply that the gods and heroes owed their very existence to poetry, since without the poet not only would no one know of them, but they would not even be real."35

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The line of thought is easy to trace. Poets confer immortal fame: such is their power that they can give it to the man who may not really deserve it (one may imagine what Pindar would have said about this). In fact, they can conjure fame out of thin air, as the old poets did with their myths of gods and heroes, whom we modern, enlightened, people know never actually to have existed.⁷⁶

Newman sees this theme in Tibullus (I.4.61-66), as well as Horace and Ovid (Am. III.12.19-26). Referring to the ending of Horace's ode (IV.8.28-33) Newman writes:

...the continuation of his ode suggests strongly, when we read it in conjunction with Tibullus, writing before him, and Ovid, writing at the same time, that the only reward for the virtuous man is poetic fame, that there is nothing really beyond this in another life - not a surprising conclusion, when one considers the age in which Horace lived.⁷⁷

Here Newman particularizes the general assessment of the age already quoted from Cumont, that literary immortality was the one most credited and desired. The poets, of course, desired this for themselves as well as for their friends, family, and patrons, hence we have the common addresses to posterity found in Augustan poetry. Contemporary fame, especially the approbation of those who know, was the beginning of this long eternity of renown. Ovid's work, therefore, is meant to achieve this fame, and thus also to justify the poet's verse and character against detractors both for the present and the future. The apologetics contained in the exile poetry aim at the goals of defending the poet against charges brought against him (particularly those related to his exile) and to justify his vocation and his interpretation of it. Particularly notable here are Tristia II (addressed to Augustus) and Tristia IV.10 (addressed to posterity).

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Newman, p. 416.
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Ovid’s Apologia: Tristia II and Tristia IV.10

Tristia II is a lengthy appeal to Augustus dealing in detail with the charge of teaching adultery. Ovid omits to refute the other charge against him - the mistake or blunder - as being too painful to the Emperor’s ears to recall (207-212):

perdiderint cum me duo crimina, carmen et error,
alterius facti culpa silenda mihi:
nam non sum tanti, renovem ut tua vulnera Caesar,
quam nimio plus est indoluisse semel.
altera pars superest, qua turpi carmine factus
arguor obsceni doctor adulterii.

Though two crimes, a poem and a blunder, have brought me ruin,
Of my fault in the one I must keep silent,
For my worth is not such that I may reopen thy wounds, O Caesar;
’Tis more than enough that thou shouldst have been pained once.
The other remains: the charge that by an obscene poem,
I have taught foul adultery.

Perhaps Ovid felt that the error, something which he had done or seen which offended the Emperor personally, was beyond remedy, and was best left alone. The carmen, however, given Ovid’s life-long devotion to poetry, inspired a passionate defence of the Ars Amatoria and Ovid’s other verses. Ovid reasonably assumed that his faithful readers would be sympathetic to his stand, and feel that the Emperor’s condemnation of the Ars was too harsh.

It is perhaps true that Ovid’s defence was produced too soon, before his jumble of feelings upon being sentenced had had time to compose themselves, and before his enthusiastic regard for his own work had been moderated by more practical concerns. In the warmth of his defence Ovid’s sense of unfairness surfaces and he comes very close to charging the Emperor with injustice and hypocrisy for blaming himself alone for things common to many writers and entertainers. Such a strange defence has led scholars to assume that Tristia II is only nominally addressed to the Emperor, but is really designed for sympathetic readers both in
contemporary Rome and distant posterity. E.K. Rand is not certain of Ovid's own intention but notes that "this apologia pro vitis suis is addressed not to Augustus but to posterity."\(^{78}\)

More recently Sir Ronald Syme has said of Ovid's intentions:

he saw no chance of persuading the ruler. The audience he desired to reach and influence was the educated class - and notably old friends in high places.\(^{79}\)

These two opinions amount to the same thing since Ovid includes in his intended audience both contemporary readers and future generations.

Both the Tristia and Ex Ponto are autobiographical almost beyond any previous ancient poetry. In Tristia IV.10 Ovid devotes a poem of 132 lines to giving an outline of his life and opinions. This poem throughout indicates the poet's awareness of his audience and his concern to pass on his name and story (I-2,91-92,131-132):

Ille ego qui fuerim, tenerorum lusor amorum,
    quem legis, ut noris, accipe posteritas.
...ad vos, studiosa, revertor,
    pectora, quae vitae quaeritis acta meae...
    sive favere tuli, sive hanc ego carmine famam,
    iure tibi grates, candide lector, ago.

That thou mayst know who I was, I that playful poet of tender love
Whom thou readiest, hear my words, thou of the after time.
...to you, fond hearts, once more I turn
That would know the events of my life...
But whether through favour or by very poetry I have gained this fame,
"Tis right, kind reader, that I render thanks to thee

Earlier Ovid had favoured his readers with an epitaph to serve for himself (Tr. III.3.73-76):

hic ego qui iaceo tenerorum lusor amorum
    ingenio perit Naso poeta meo.
at tibi qui transis ne sit grave quisquis amasti
    dicere Nasonis molliter ossa cubent.

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\(^{78}\)Rand, p. 98.

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I, who lie here, with tender loves once played,  
Naso, the bard, whose life his wit be-trayed.  
Grudge not, O lover, as thou passest by.  
A prayer: "Soft may the bones of Naso lie!"

In the lines following this epitaph Ovid reiterates his belief that his real memorial, which will last to distant posterity, will be his books (77-80):

hoc satis in titulo est. etenim maiora libelli  
et diuturna magis sunt monimenta mihi,  
quos ego confido, quamvis nocuere, daturos  
nomen et auctori iempora longa suo.

This for the inscription; my books  
Are a greater and more enduring memorial.  
These I have sure trust, although they have injured him,  
Will give a name and a long enduring life to their author.

Sophistic and Rhetorical Influences on Ovid

We may now ask the question: if Ovid placed the highest value on poetry and literary immortality, whence did he derive these values? As with most of us, the answer seems to be that he was educated into them, by a society and educational system which fostered them. In Ovid's own time the teachings of the grammaticus (secondary teacher) consisted chiefly of the study of poetry, thereby contributing to poetry's diffusion and survival. Going back at least to the teachings of the sophists in 5th century Greece, literary excellence and personal fame had been implicit in education as major human goals. Indirectly these values are traceable to the Homeric epics, if we allow that the glory given therein to the adventurer-hero had since been made over to the poet who wrote about him. We have seen that the emphasis shifted, after the time of Pindar, from the glory of the doer of deeds, to the glory of the poet who immortalized them. An important figure in this shift, both as an originator of new attitudes and as a popularizer of sophistic thought, was the Athenian dramatist Euripides (480-406 B.C.).
In general, the teaching of the sophists rested on two major assumptions: first, that the world and society could be explained in naturalistic terms without any reference to gods or supernatural intervention; and, secondly, that, therefore, morality was a human construct which each individual could temper to his own purposes. These theories affected art and literature in encouraging greater subjectivity and an anti-heroic turn of mind. Euripides’ plays proved one of the strongest vehicles for the new philosophy, which accounts for their initial unpopularity and their later preeminence, when they had come to represent the new orthodoxy. Moses Hadas thus explains the attacks of Aristophanes both on the ideas and the methods of Euripidean tragedy:

Aristophanes is most bitter against the sophists, for it was their doctrine of man the measure which was the greatest solvent for traditional privilege and for traditional morality, and which encouraged the loquacious impudence of sailors and artisans.... He strikes at Euripides in almost every play and makes him the chief butt of the *Frogs* and *Thesmophoriazusae* because, following sophistic doctrine, Euripides degraded tragedy from its lofty plane and vulgarized it by introducing commonplace characters and unseemly plots.80

In spite of the vigorous attacks of Socrates, Plato, Aristophanes, and others, sophism came to provide the basis for much of the educational and literary thought of the late Greek world.

The Alexandrian writers take their start from Euripides and so passed on (with a few alterations) sophistic thought to the Romans. Greek teachers and philosophers were active in Rome from the 2nd century B.C., where some variations on sophism, such as Epicureanism, found a fertile soil. The Academy itself (founded by Plato) was a synonym for scepticism by the time of Cicero. So pervasive were sophistic and subjective tendencies in education, philosophy, and literature that by Ovid’s time they were no longer an issue. As Syme says of

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Epicureanism, "It was no longer professed, merely practised." Thus sophistic attitudes are taken for granted by Ovid as the only plausible ones.

Ovid's debt to Euripides is most evident in the Heroides, but is found also in ideas and attitudes everywhere in his work. As Howard Jacobsen writes:

...Ovid—whether consciously or not—inherited many of the intellectual and moral attitudes that were Euripides'. Like the Greek tragedian, he had a remarkable ability to see through the eyes of women. He too was interested in the erotic, in the psychopathology of love, and in human psychology in general. Both show unusual affection for generalizations; their intrusive sententiae can be annoying at times. Both were apt to consider originality and novelty virtues in themselves. Finally, we can be quite sure that Euripides' moral relativism made a major impact on Ovid's thought and sensibility. Trapped in an age of deliberate and imposed puritanism, himself by disposition a liberal spirit, Ovid was only too ready to adopt a Euripidean pose in opposition to Augustan policy and dogma.

Euripides' influence was seconded by Callimachus and the Alexandrian poets who worked out in practice a new poetry based on sophistic principles. This new poetry carried the dechristianization of mythological figures into new genres, and emphasized the crucial role of the poet in cultural activities and in bestowing literary immortality. As L.P. Wilkinson notes:

The Alexandrians, true pupils of Euripides, liked to imagine in fact and in detail what would have happened on particular mythological occasions, [thus] humanising gods and heroic personages sometimes to the verge of burlesque.

The Hellenistic epigrammatists likewise taught Ovid similar lessons, but were more overtly witty in their treatment of gods, heroes, and traditional values. At least since the time of Calvus and Catullus Alexandrian approaches to poetry and Hellenistic approaches to life and society were well established at Rome, and provided many of the attitudes found in Catullus's

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81Syme, History, p. 181.


successors in Elegy. It was almost predictable, therefore, that a person of Ovid’s literary aspirations would closely follow the patterns established by leading late Greek poets and adopted by Ovid’s predecessors in Roman Love Elegy.

Besides the sophistic influence which Ovid imbibed through poetry and literature he was also exposed to sophistic attitudes through his study of rhetoric itself. The growth of rhetorical teaching in Late Republican Rome in time produced an audience able to appreciate the niceties of declamation. First as a hobby and later as a serious pursuit, leading orators competed with one another in handling themes from law, history, and popular fiction to the applause of audiences. As a result the prestige of schools of declamation grew, and ambitious parents saw them as a necessary step for boys embarking on a public career.

In Ovid’s time the schools taught two main genres of oratory: first, the suasoria in which the speaker argues for a particular course of action given the circumstances of the situation; and, secondly, the controversia which was a speaking exercise based on a hypothetical legal case. Both apparently have sophistic origins: the suasoria resembles speeches by "the early sophists who employed debates on mythological topics very similar in conception to the Roman suasoria in its final form";\(^{84}\) likewise, the mock law case, or controversia, may be traced back "to the times of Gorgias, one or more of whose speeches were mythical law cases."\(^{85}\) The teachers of rhetoric at Rome, moreover, have some resemblance to the sophists of old in being both teachers and public speakers, as Winterbottom points out:

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\(^{85}\) Sussman, p. 3.
the normal scholasticus did run a school of his own very much as did Quintilian later. But like the sophists of fifth-century Athens, he was able to combine with his teaching a practice of display speaking (epideixis) that brought him before the public and might make him known to great men and even emperors. The

General conditions were apparently similar enough in fifth-century Athens and first-century Rome to produce similar responses. Urbanization had helped to produce a preoccupation with politics and law, and with the need to defend oneself and others in court. There was also a growing interest in language and culture for its own sake, and a concern for verbal and mental dexterity. Increasing leisure, especially for young people, was resulting in extended education, and the need for hobbies, pursuits, and entertainment. Not least important was the belief that real life meant the life of the city, and success in the eyes of the world. Given these factors, along with the enthusiasm of Octavian and other leading Romans for recruiting young men to their standard, it is not surprising that Ovid’s ambitious father bought his two sons to Rome while they were still young.

The Influence of Ovid’s Education on His Belief in "Culture"

Ovid and his brother (who was exactly one year older) probably had come to Rome by the time Ovid was twelve. They studied literature, mainly poetry, under a grammaticus, and a few years later would have attended the schools of declamation. There, Ovid studied under the well-known rhetor Arelius Fuscus, although he also greatly admired the brilliant and epigrammatic Marcus Porcius Latro. Even at this time Ovid’s interest in poetry was starting to compete with his rhetorical studies, as he himself tells us (Tr. IV.10.15-20):

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protinus excolimur teneri curaque parentis
inus ad insignes Urbis ab arte viros.
frater ad eloquium viridi tendebat ab aevo,
fortia verbosi natus ad arma fori;
at mihi iam puero caelestia sacra placebant,
inque suum furtim Musa trahebat opus.

While still of tender age we began our training, and through our father's care
We came to attend upon men of the city distinguished in the liberal arts.
My brother's bent even in the green of years was oratory:
He was born for the stout weapons of the wordy forum.
But to me even as a boy service of the divine gave delight
And stealthily the Muse was ever drawing me aside to do her work.

It is notable that Ovid spent some crucial years for his literary and emotional development
in the schools of rhetoric, and in the company of orators or would-be orators, including his
own brother. The contacts and associations established then continued to act upon the poet
throughout his life - not surprisingly, since a goodly part of the educated circle at Rome was
made up of writers, orators, teachers, and their patrons.

In his autobiography Ovid emphasizes the attraction of poetry in drawing him away from
oratory and law, but, in fact, the latter subjects had a profound influence on him. It is notable
that philosophy had little impact on the poet, and probably played very little role in his
education.⁷ Ovid no doubt picked up a smattering of popular philosophy (such as
neo-Pythagoreanism) from contemporary teachers, but there is no evidence of it making a deep
impression him. In fact, it is scarcely mentioned in the Tristia and Ex Ponto. Most of his
philosophical ideas seem attributable to the diluted sophism of the rhetorical schools and the
Hellenistic poets. As M.L. Clarke notes:

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⁷ Ovid refers in passing to going to Athens as a student (Tr. 1.2.77), the usual centre for
philosophical study. His works, however, demonstrate the lack of impact which the lectures had.
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There is no trace of the consolations of philosophy in the Tristia and Letters from Pontus... It is the Muse who supplies solace and relief. Philosophy, the professed physician of the mind, did not fail Ovid; she was not even summoned to the bedside. 88

What does emerge in Ovid's work and becomes a major theme in the exile poetry is his devotion to culture and the liberal arts (most commonly seen as rhetoric and poetry). Such a view may reflect Ovid's studies of literature and rhetoric with his brother, and his continuing interest in both subjects. It also suggests that grammarians, rhetors, and writers may have made common cause against the less cultured but perhaps more influential members of society who discounted the arts, such as some of the new senators and administrators created by Rome's civil wars. Ovid jocularly refers to this hostility in his love poetry when his mistress shows favour to a wealthy but untaught soldier (Am. III.8.1-4):

Et quisquam ingenuas etiamnunc suscipit artes,
aut tenerum dotes carmen habere putat?
ingeniun quondam fuerat pretiosius auro;
at nunc barbaria est grandis, habere nihil.

And does anyone still respect the freeborn arts,
Or deem tender verse brings any dower?
Time was when genius was more precious than gold;
But now to have nothing is monstrous barbarism.

True to his dedication to poetry and rhetoric Ovid tries to find a use for them in that other favourite of his, the art of seduction. In the Ars Amatoria (I.459-462) the poet suggest that eloquence can be employed for other things than law cases:

Disce bonas artes, moneo, Romana iuventus,
non tantum trepidos ut tecare reos;
quam populus indexque gravis lectusque senatus,
tam dabit eloquio victa puella manus.

88Clarke, p. 76.
Learn noble arts, I counsel you, young men of Rome,
Not only that you may defend trembling clients:
A woman, no less than populace, grave judge or chosen senate,
Will surrender, defeated, to eloquence.

In the same poem Ovid affirms that he places most value on social refinement and the fashionable pursuits of a cultured society rather than on mere wealth or the accumulation of material goods (Ars Am. III.121-128):

Prisca juvent alios: ego me nunc denique natum
gratulor: haec aetas moribus apta meis.
non quia nunc terrae lentum subducitur aurum,
lectaque diverso littore concha venit:
 nec quia decrescent efflosso marmore montes,
 nec quia caeruleae mole fugantur aquae.
 sed quia cultus adest, nec nostros mansit in annos
 rusticitas, priscis illa superstes avis.

Let ancient times delight other folk: I congratulate myself
That I was not born till now; this age fits my nature well.
Not because now stubborn gold is drawn from out the earth,
And shells come gathered from divers shores,
Nor because mountains diminish as the marble is dug from them,
Nor because masonry puts to flight the dark-blue waters;
But because culture is with us, and rusticity,
Which survived until our grandsires, has not lasted to our days.

This passage clearly demonstrates the attitudes of a sophisticated urban modernist - one who would be at home in 5th century Athens, 17th century Paris, or 20th century New York.

As one who could "crush joy's grape upon his palate fine," Ovid was one of those who found the special attractions and cultural benefits of a large urban centre to transcend a mere accumulation of entertainments, arts, and social activities. They provided the true bread of life, the rich otium of the poets, against which all else was mere rusticitas. This view was no doubt heightened by the sophistication and worldliness of Ovid's rhetorical education, and confirmed by his contacts with the literary circle of Messalla.
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Ovid on the Civilizing Influence of Poetry, Love, and the Liberal Arts

In exile Ovid naturally turned to the cultured members of Rome’s literary and rhetorical circles for support and encouragement, and justified himself in terms of their common pursuits. It can hardly be doubted that Ovid’s idealization of art and culture was genuine, and that through it he felt a bond with other men of letters, even if this bond was sometimes too much insisted on in his desire for sympathy and help. In his letter to Salanus, an orator and friend of Germanicus, Ovid emphasizes the ties which bards and declaimers share (Pont. II.5.57-70):

huic tu cum placeas et vertice sidera tangas,
scripta tamen profugi vatis habenda putas.
selicet ingenii aliqua est concordia junctis,
et servat studii foedera quisque sui:
rusticus agricolam, miles fera bella gerentiem,
rectorem dubiae navita puppis amat.
tu quoque Pieridum studio, studiose, teneris,
ingenioque faves, ingenioso, meo.
distat opus nostrum, sed fontibus exit ab isdem:
artis et ingenuae cultor uterque sumus.
thyrsus abest a te gustata et laura nobis,
sed tamen ambobus debet inesse calor:
ute mei numeris tua dat facundia nervos,
sic venit a nobis in tua verba nitor.

Though you find favour with this youth, touching the very stars with your head,
Yet you consider the writings of an exiled bard worthy of consideration.
Surely there is some bond of harmony between kindred spirits,
Each keeping the compacts which belong to his pursuit.
The peasant loves the farmer, the soldier him who wages war,
The sailor the pilot of the swaying ship.
You too are possessed with devotion to the Pierians, studious one;
You, talented yourself, look with favour on my talent.
Our work differs, but it derives from the same sources;
We are both worshippers of liberal art.
The thyrsus and laurel tasted by me are foreign to you;
But there should be fire in us both:
As my numbers receive vigour from your eloquence,
So I lend brilliance to your words.
In the exile poems Ovid refines his view of the liberal arts as the basis of the good life, and as the foundation of his own work. He talks about the civilizing influence of art and culture, and how it favourably disposes an individual towards kindness and understanding. It also provides the values which lead to artistic integrity, and personal satisfaction.

Although these views receive their fullest exposition in the exile poems they are implicit throughout his love poetry. Ovid, in his autobiography, emphasizes that his basic nature was to be sensitive and susceptible (Tr. IV.10.65-66):

molle Cupidineis nec inexpugnabile telis
    cor mihi, quoque levis causa moveret, erat.

My heart was ever soft, no stronghold against Cupid's darts—
A heart moved by the slightest impulse.

Throughout the love poems the links between love, poetry, and the arts are spoken of, perhaps most pointedly by Sappho in the Heroides (XV.79-84):

molle meum levibusque cor est violabile telis,
    et semper causa est, cur ego semper amem—
sive ita nascenti legem dixere Sorores
    nec data sunt vilae fila severa meae,
sive aeternum studia in mores, antiquae magistra
    ingenium nobis molle Thalia facit.

Tender is my heart, and easily pierced by the light shaft,
And there is ever cause why I should ever love -
Whether at my birth the Sisters declared this law
And did not spin my thread of life with austere strand,
Or whether tastes change into character, and Thalia,
Mistress of my art, is making my nature soft.

The cultivation of poetry and the arts not only makes one susceptible to love, it also produces a commendable aversion to the busy trades of the marketplace, and the harsh spirit which these often inculcate (Ars Am. III.534,539-546):
Ovid on Poetry and Love

hic chorus ante alios aptus amare sumus...
adde, quod insidiae sacris a vatibus absunt,
Et facit ad mores ars quoque nostra suos.
nec nos ambitio, nec amor nos tangit habendi:
contempto colitur lectus et umbra foro.
sed facile haeremus, validoque perurimur aestu,
et nimium certa scimus amare fide.
scilicet ingenium placida mollitur ab arte,
et studio mores convenienter eunt.

We poets are a band more fitted than the rest for love...
Besides, treachery is alien to sacred bards,
And our art too helps to shape our character.
Neither ambition nor love of gain affects us;
The Forum we despise, and cultivate the couch and the shade.
But we are easily caught, and burn with a strong passion,
And know how to love with a loyalty most sure.
'Tis in truth from the gentle art that our spirit wins tenderness,
And our behaviour is akin to our pursuits.

Here Ovid handily rationalizes the two aspects of the poet’s otium which were most displeasing to the Roman traditionalist: his avoidance of serious business (war, law, politics, agriculture) and his pursuit of trifles (love, literature). These necessarily go together, says Ovid, either because they derive from the poet’s soft and gentle inborn nature, or because his education and cultivation of the arts renders him sensitive and susceptible to love. In neither case can the poet be much blamed, since the causes lie outside of his control.

Ovid was aware that these sayings would be displeasing both to his father (while he lived), and to the Emperor himself. He excused himself as best as he could by blaming either his inborn character and constitution, or his education and cultural background. In the autobiography, he thus explains his failure to pursue public office as chiefly due to his physical and mental limitations (Tr. IV.10.35-40):
curia restabat: clavi mensura coacta est;
maius erat nostris viribus illud onus.
nec patiens corpus, nec mens fuit apta labori,
sollicitaeque fugax ambitionis eram,
et petere Aonieae suadebant tuta sorores
otia, iudicio semper amata meo.

The senate house awaited me, but I narrowed my purple stripe:
That was a burden too great for my powers.
I had neither a body to endure the toil nor a mind suited to it;
By nature I shunned the worries of an ambitious life
And the Aonian sisters were ever urging me to seek
The security of a retirement I had ever chosen and loved.

In his defence before Augustus Ovid laments his education and upbringing which contributed to his condemnation by the Emperor (Tr. II.339-346):

ad leve rursus opus, iuvenalia carmina, veni,
et falso movi pectus amore meum.
non equidem vellem. Sed mea fata trahebant,
inque meas poenas ingensiosus eram.
ei mihi, quod didici! cur me docuere parentes
literaque est oculos ulla morata meos?
hae tibi me invisum lascivia fecit, ob artes,
quis ratus es vetitos sollicitare toros.

I returned once more to my light task, the songs of youth,
Stimulating my breast with fictitious love.
Would that I had not! But fate drew me on
To be clever to my own hurt.
Alas that I ever acquired learning! Why did my parents teach me?
Why did any letter ever beguile my eyes?
This wantonness has caused thee to hate me on account of the arts
Which thou didst think disturbed unions that all were forbidden to attack.

This passage is reminiscent of Euripides' Medea, lines 292-305, in which Medea laments the lot of the intellectual, or reputedly clever person, who is envied and mistrusted by all.

Because of Ovid's close familiarity with the Euripidean play it is not far-fetched that Medea's words may have been the germ of his own apology. P. Vellacott translates the lines as follows:
Ovid on Poetry and Love

My reputation, yet again! Many times, Creon,
It has been my curse and ruin. A man of any shrewdness
Should never have His children taught to use their brains
More than their fellows. What do you gain by being clever?
You neglect your own affairs; and all your fellow citizens
Hate you. Those who are fools will call you ignorant
And useless, when you offer them unfamiliar knowledge.
As for those thought intelligent, if people rank
You above them, that is a thing they will not stand.
I know this from experience: because I am clever,
They are jealous; while the rest dislike me. After all,
I am not so clever as all that.89

Ovid's experiences with "livor edax" seem to have been similar to Medea's. In his exile the poet may have derived comfort from the example of Euripides and other bards who likewise faced censure.

It is evident from the exile poetry that Ovid has no wish to renounce poetry and the arts; in fact, he gains a greater appreciation for them. He does, however, wish to show that his pursuit of literature is not a mere wilful indulgence but a natural result of his character and education. The initial shock and depression of exile forced him to re-evaluate his belief in the arts, but he reaffirmed it shortly after, and began to elaborate on the positive values of love, poetry, and art. Far from renouncing his education, he sees the pleasures of the mind as his chief support (Tr. III.7.43-48):

singula ne referam, nil non mortale tenemus
pectoris exceptis ingeniique bonis.
en ego, cum caream patria vobisque domoque,
raptaque sint, adimi quae potuere mini,
ingeni tamen ipse meo comitorque fruorque:
Caesar in hoc potuit iuris habere nihil.

In brief we possess nothing that is not mortal
Except the blessings of heart and mind.
Behold me, deprived of native land, of you and my home,
Reft of all that could be taken from me;
My mind is nevertheless my comrade and my joy;
Over this Caesar could have no right.

This is Ovid’s familiar theme that death destroys everything except the arts, those lively
products of the mind. In life too they are beyond the reach of powerful and hostile men.

It is understandable that after receiving the censure of Augustus, Ovid turned to the
patrons and practitioners of the arts for sympathy and support. In so doing he puts into
practice his belief that men of letters and their patrons are humanized by these pursuits. He
thus addresses his old friend Graccinus (see Am. II.10), now a military commander and
politician, in Ex Ponto I.6.1-10:

Ecquid, ut audisti—nam te diversa tenebat
terra—meos casus, cor tibi triste fuit?
dissimules metuasque licet, Graccine, fateri,
si bene te novi, triste fuisse liquet,
non cadit in mores feritas inamabilis istos,
nec minus a studiis dissidet illa tuis.
artibus ingenuis, quorum tibi maxima cura est,
pectora mollescunt asperitasque fugit.
nec quisquam meliore fide complactitur illas,
qua sinit officium militiamque labor.

Is it true that when you heard of my disaster, for you were then
In a different land, your heart was sad?
You may try to hide it and shrink from the admission, Graccinus,
But if I know you well, ‘tis certain it was sad.
Revolting cruelty does not square with your character
And is no less at variance with your pursuits.
The liberal arts, for which you care above all things,
Soften the heart and expel harshness.
Nobody embraces them with greater faith than you—
So far as duty and the toil of a soldier’s life permit.

Besides being true to Ovid’s own view of life, this approach suggested itself as allowing
the poet to flatter and cajole his correspondent while emphasizing his own worthy role as poet.
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It is a superior approach to the abject flattery sometimes addressed to Augustus and the
Imperial Household, and has the added motivation that Ovid might reasonably expect
sympathy and support from those who were in fact part of his audience, and would understand
and appreciate his point of view. That little help was forthcoming for the poet from this
source suggests that the antipathy of the Emperors Augustus and Tiberius and the Empress
Livia for Ovid was widely known and understood.

With admirable perseverance Ovid set himself to addressing anyone who might be
expected to pity his plight. Nearby Thrace was a Roman protectorate, and its king, Cotys, was
known to write verse. Ovid writes to Cotys, asking for his favour, and arguing that the king’s
study of the arts should prompt him to be merciful (Pont. II.9.47-54,63-66):

adde quod ingenuas didicisse fideliter artes
emollit mores nec sinit esse feros.
nec regum quisquam magis est instructus ab illis,
mitibus aut studiis tempora plura dedit.
carmina testantur, quae, si tua homina demas,
Threicium iuvenum compositisse negem;
neve sub hoc tractu vates foret unicus Orpheus,
Bistonis ingenio terra superba tuo est...
hace quoque res alicud tectum mihi foederis affert:
elusdem sacri cultor uterque sumus.
ad vatem vates orantia brachia tendo,
terra sit exiliiis ut tua fida meis.

Note too that a faithful study of the liberal arts
Humanizes character and permits it not to be cruel.
No king has been better trained by them
Or given more time to humane studies.
Thy verse bears witness; shouldst thou remove thy name,
I should deny that a Thracian youth was the composer;
And that beneath this sky Orpheus might not be the only bard,
By thy talent is the Bistonian land made proud...
This also brings me a certain union with thee:
Each is a worshipper at the same shrine.
As bard to bard I extend my arms in prayer
That thy land may be loyal to me in exile.
The most enticing prospect for the exiled poet was that of finding favour with Germanicus, the cultivated young prince, who was a prospective Emperor. Germanicus wrote poetry, notably a Latin adaptation of Aratus' *Phaenomena*. Ovid begins *Ex Ponto* Book II with a vicarious celebration of Germanicus’ expected triumph at Rome over the Dalmatians. Ovid promises further verse, and begins a campaign to influence Germanicus through mutual friends and acquaintances, such as Salanus, Sextus Pompey and Ovid’s step-son-in-law Suillius. These letters often contain hints and passages intended for Germanicus himself. In writing to Suillius Ovid cannot forebear to address the prince directly (*Pont*, IV.8.65-72):

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siquid adhuc igitur vivi, Germanice, nostro
restat in ingenio, serviet omne tibi.
non potes officium vatis contemptere vates:
judicio pretium res habet ista tuo.
quod nisi te nomen tantum ad maiora vocasset,
gloria Pieridum summa futurus eras.
se dare materiam nobis quam carmina mavis:
 nec tamen ex toto deserere illa potes.
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If there be still any life, Germanicus,  
In my genius, it shall wholly serve thee.  
Thou canst not as a poet despise the tribute of a poet,  
For that has a value in thy judgment.  
Wherefore if a great name had not called thee to greater things,  
Thou wert destined to be the supreme glory of the Pierians.  
But thou preferest to furnish themes for us rather than verse;  
Yet verse thou canst not wholly leave neglected.

Unlike most of his hopes, Ovid’s belief that Germanicus might one day help him may never have faded, even though there is no indication that Ovid received any kind of positive response. In any case, Ovid had nowhere else to turn, if we may take the apparent hostility of Tiberius towards the poet to be a settled thing. It may be that Ovid’s last efforts in verse were an attempt to revise the *Fasti* in honour of Germanicus. In his dedication to the prince, Ovid recapitulates the themes of mildness, poetry, and the arts once more (*Fasti* I.17-26):
da mihi te placidum, dederis in carmina viris:
ingenium volu statque caditque tuo.
pagina iudiciun docti subitura movetur
principis, ut Clario missa legenda deo.
quae sit enim culti facundia sensimus oris,
civica pro trepidis cum tulit arma reis;
scimus et, ad nostras cum se tulit impetus artes,
ingenii currant flumina quanta tui.
si licet et fas est, vates rege vatis habenas,
auspicie te felix totus ut annus eat.

Show thyself mild to me; so shalt thou lend vigour to my song;
At thy look my Muse must stand or fall.
Submitted to the judgement of a learned prince my page doth shiver,
Even as if sent to the Clarian god to read.
On thy accomplished lips what eloquence attends, we have seen,
When it took civic arms in defence of trembling prisoners at the bar.
And when to poetry thy fancy turns, we know
How broad the current of thy genius flows.
If it is right and lawful, guide a poet's reins, thyself a poet,
That under thy auspices the year may run its entire course happy.

Germanicus, apparently, did nothing, and Ovid died in exile. Nonetheless, in the course of
these petitions Ovid expanded and amplified his belief in the civilizing role and ultimate value
of the liberal arts.

Conclusion: Ovid and the Religion of Poetry and Culture

Secular man does not believe in nothing. His religion is admittedly of a subjective and
idiosyncratic nature, and often is related to his work, favourite activities, or immediate
environment. It is not surprising that the belief and value system of the poet Ovid should be
based on the primacy of poetry and the complex of things which (in Ovid's thought and
practice) interrelated with poetry: otium, erotic love, urban sophistication, literary pursuits, and
educated conversation. Ovid viewed these things as producing (upon a receptive nature) a
mildness of temperament which included a susceptibility to "falling in love" and an aversion to
competitive professional work. It was desirable that many, if not all, citizens should aim at this *citium*, as it would lead to a more humane and civilized society. Ovid thus maintains and develops the formal beliefs of the Love Elegists from Catullus through Propertius. Explicit in his work is the necessity of poetry and the arts in overcoming mortality and oblivion.

It is interesting to compare Ovid to some nineteenth-century secularists such as Matthew Arnold and Henrik Ibsen, who also represent a point in culture and history at which literature appears to be more important than religion or philosophy. Once again the enthusiasm for this point of view is somewhat idiosyncratic but made very plausible by the reinforcement which it receives from educational biases and popular thought.

Nineteenth-century writers tend to be more aggressively anti-religious than the ancients probably because they are dealing with a religion which is more exclusive and more moralistic. They see literature as a way of preserving vaguely spiritual values without any of the harsh or unaesthetic aspects of popular religious doctrine and practice.

Matthew Arnold writes (in his essay "The Study of Poetry"):

The strongest part of our religion to-day is its unconscious poetry.... More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Without poetry, our science will appear incomplete, and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry.90

In Arnold and his successors the idea of the arts as a substitute for religion is much more explicit than in Ovid, but the basic assumptions are very similar: man is at the centre of things; the arts are central to the good life; poetry and education humanize character; the arts are an effective substitute for religion since they are vehicles for appropriate value systems and provide a vicarious immortality.

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Nineteenth-century liberals believed that the future would confirm and extend their own views of the importance of literature and the arts. While futurism is not self-consciously present in Ovid, his preoccupation with posterity indicates a kinship with many 19th and 20th century figures. Likewise, although Ovid is not obsessed with Progress and Evolution, he undoubtedly believes that society improves over time, and that man gradually imposes his creative will on raw nature (e.g., Ars Am. III.121-128).

Unlike some modern writers, however, he does not predict a new spiritual reality or attempt to bring it to birth. Born into an increasingly autocratic era, he is not motivated to be a demagogue. The faith of Henrik Ibsen in the future development of poetry and man is both more detailed and more enthusiastic than Ovid’s. Ibsen is a romantic prophet, while Ovid is a classical poet with romantic leanings. Nonetheless, if one were to project Ovid’s romantic hankerings on to a large screen, they might bear some resemblance to Ibsen’s words to his admirers in Stockholm in 1887:

I believe that the teaching of natural science about evolution is also valid as regards the spiritual aspects of life. I believe that the time is not far off when political and social conceptions will cease to exist in their present forms, and that from both of them there will arise a unity, which for a while will contain within itself the conditions for the happiness of mankind. I believe that poetry, philosophy, and religion will be merged in a new category and become a new vital force, of which we who are living now can have no clear conception.91

The nineteenth-century liberals and their successors drank ultimately at the same source as Ovid: sophism, and especially Epicureanism. It was the strong revival of Epicureanism in the 17th Century which gave new impetus to liberalism and liberal ideals, notably "the pursuit of happiness." Like Ovid we live now in an era in which (to quote Syme again) Epicureanism is "no longer professed, merely practised."

It is especially useful, therefore, to examine the life and times of one whose practice in religion and morality is so in tune with contemporary *mores*, and who, like many today, is not very reflective about the assumptions underlying these practices. By examining both these practices and the mind which lies behind them, we may be able to clarify their appropriateness both as standards for human behaviour and as touchstones for literary orthodoxy.
Chapter III

MORALITY IN OVID

Roman Traditions versus Hellenistic Influences

From their first contacts with Greece and other older civilizations, the Romans found that their native patterns of behaviour were in competition with new foreign ones. Like Third World peoples of today exposed to American influence, the Romans at every point had to choose whether to retain their traditional habits and customs or to try the new imports. The Roman attitude was especially ambiguous, since they encountered surrounding cultures chiefly as conquerors, and foreign cultural products then became booty and wealth for the Romans. It was hard to resist material acquisitions from Greece and Asia, since they were the expected spoils of war, and Rome became gradually dependent on such sources of revenues and supplies. At the same time, most Romans doubted the wisdom of adopting the customs, arts, literature, philosophy, and religion of apparently inferior and servile peoples. To succumb to the culture of the conquered would be a hollow victory. In general, there was resistance at Rome to attempts to introduce novel Greek and foreign arts, beliefs, and customs. At the same time the pervasiveness of Hellenistic culture, even among the Romans themselves, required that effective resistance be selective and canny. Outnumbered by foreigners, attracted by the Hellenistic way of life, often educated by Greeks, and entertained by them, the Roman conservative tradition was being constantly eroded, most effectively by the Romans themselves. Donald Earl sums up the situation during the final heyday of the Roman nobility:
The typical attitude of the Roman nobility in the second century B.C. was to combine interests in Greek culture with strict adherence to traditional aims and standards. Foreign influences and importations were admissible only if they remained matters of private interest and did not violate tradition or endanger the state.¹

A central aspect of the Roman tradition, one closely related to their military and political success, was the belief that public activity on behalf of the state was the proper role of the citizen. The nobility especially coveted a public role in which to display their nobilitas and their virtus (manliness). The inscriptions on the tombs of the Scipio family point towards a public role as the ideal Roman model:

...to serve the Republic as warrior and general, orator and senator; to achieve by this commission of great deeds in this service a position of pre-eminence ... to be a man both brave and wise; to gain great honour through public office; to ensure the continuance of the family so that posterity might emulate and surpass the glory attained by its ancestors.²

In the Hellenistic world the institution of monarchy had somewhat limited the public involvement of citizens or had made it hazardous. Hellenistic culture, therefore, with its emphasis on the private cultivation of philosophy, literature, and the arts went counter to the Roman tradition. Even the private cultivation of virtue, religion, or philosophy was looked at suspiciously by Roman conservatism:

To a purely private cultivation of personal virtue the Roman tradition was always hostile. The tradition prescribed the service of the state as the only fit field of activity. The proper service of the state demanded private goodness, but such goodness without public achievement was of no account ... In this tradition terms denoting laziness, such as ignavia and inertia, have a sharp and definite connotation: refusal to play a part in politics ...³

²Earl, p. 24.
³Ibid., p. 23.
In practice, however, considerable self-indulgence was allowed to the young Roman male, with the expectation that public service would follow rapidly upon the sowing of wild oats. It was the fear that Greek arts and philosophy would turn young Romans from their traditional pursuits that inspired the criticisms of Cato the Elder against Greek philosophers and rhetoricians. Only such philosophers as Panetius and Posidonius who accommodated their teachings to Roman traditions were welcome at Rome. Scepticism and Epicureanism were especially looked down on. Cicero (De Senectute, XIII) portrays Cato the Elder as wishing that all the enemies of Rome would become Epicureans, so that they would be easier to conquer. Cicero himself never tires of pointing out the incompatibility of Epicureanism and Roman tradition.

In spite of its vigorous defenders, the testimony of such contemporaries as Cato the Elder and Polybius, and later historians such as Sallust and Livy indicates that the Roman moral and political tradition was severely shaken in the second century B.C. According to Earl:

... for long years the defects of individuals were contained by the strength of the tradition. As late as the early decades of the second century B.C. the demand of the aristocratic tradition could be felt as imperative. Scipio Africanus, assailed by his enemies despite, or rather because of, his great services to the state, was yet not prepared to defend his position by subverting the whole aristocratic way of politics. He bowed to the storm and went into exile.  

Soon the precarious balance between patriotism and individualism, virtus and gloria, between social needs and private ambitions shifted in favour of the individual nobleman. Earl continues:

... not much more than thirty years later we have documented in the events of the Spanish war clear evidence of a profound change in attitude ... for the first

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Earl, p. 56.
occasion in Roman history over an extended period of time the demands of the provinces were consistently subordinated by all sections of the nobility to factional self-interest ... the nobility as a whole treated affairs in Spain not on their merits but as they advanced their own cause and glory and retarded and diminished those of their enemies in the narrow arena of political life at Rome.\(^5\)

The decline in the Roman conservative tradition gave rise to one essentially Roman literary form, namely satire. Lucilius attacked the degeneration of political life, the self-seeking bustle of the forum, and, perhaps invoking a Stoicized version of Roman tradition, gave a full definition of virtus. Virtus included many things, but not rampant individualism (quoted, Lactantius, Div. Instit. VI.5.2):

\[
\text{commoda præterea patriæ prima putare,}
\text{deinde parentum, tertia iam postremaque nostra.}
\]

And besides all this, thinking our country’s interest to be foremost of all, Our parents’ next, and then third and lastly our own.

The low regard for literature at Rome was part of the tradition which gave most esteem to work of a military, political, and public nature. R. E. Smith quotes Cato the Elder as saying:

\[
\text{Men used not to respect the poet’s art; anyone that gave his attention to it or spent his time at parties was called a “vagabond”.}^6
\]

Lack of encouragement from the nobility was an important factor in the slow start which Roman literature experienced. Nonetheless the conservative tradition was itself breaking down under the irresponsible behaviour of the Roman nobility. R. E. Smith says of Polybius:

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\(^5\)Ibid.

It had become clear to him that the ideal state was ceasing to be, and that the fault lay with the nobles themselves, who, corrupted by unchallenged power and wealth, were falling away from their own ideals.\(^7\)

The move in military and political circles away from public *virtus* to personal *gloria* may have influenced a similar move in the literary world.

Hellenistic culture, the new individualism, and cynicism or indifference regarding the conservative tradition is seen most potently in literature among the Love Elegists (Catullus, Tibullus, Propertius and Ovid). They are neither glorifiers of the state and its great men, like Ennius, nor satirists of the self-indulgent nobility, like Lucilius. They, according to William Chase Greene, represent something new in Roman literature:

Ovid helps us to realize the change that has come over Roman poetry. Even when reading the passionate outpourings of Catullus we feel that we are dealing with a poet who is far from subduing himself to the national *mores* and the expression of social ideals ... With these poets, love, or at least love-affairs imaginary or real, social pleasures, and in general the entertaining surface of life, instead of being subordinated to grave social considerations are the whole of life; and poetry is no longer the medium of a homogeneous society, but is the pastime of a sophisticated group.\(^8\)

Love poetry evidently reflects to a considerable extent the life of young upper class males (and a variety of females) of the first century B.C. It appears that many who were not poets (Clodius, Caelius, Antony) engaged in a roughly similar way of life. This is also indicated by the success and popularity of the love elegy mode. On the other hand, those poets, such as Vergil and Horace, who wished to evoke the moral and political traditions of Rome, were evidently moving counter to the fashion. Vergil, in the *Aeneid*, reverts to attitudes which had been seldom invoked since Ennius, although, unlike Ennius, he has little

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\(^7\)Ibid., p. 219.

good to say about gloria. He points to Aeneas, Cato the Younger, and Augustus as servants of the state:

The traditional aristocratic concept of virtus prescribed winning glory in the service of the state. The nobiles of the late Republic by pursuing gloria at the expense of the state had destroyed the res publica. Virgil redressed the balance. All that the nobiles had meant by gloria he showed to be false and disruptive. Devotion to Rome, and to Rome’s mission was the test of virtus.9

One problem for the new poets of Rome was the lack of glory, if the not downright condemnation, which the Roman tradition prescribed for poets. In a society where the thirst for fame and for literary immortality was a powerful motivation to be a singer of others’ deeds (like Ennius) or a critic of them (like Lucilius) seemed to offer little. The Hellenistic tradition which viewed the great poet as a praesens deus was much more seductive. Moreover, by the first century B.C., the Hellenistic attitudes towards a life of pleasure, refinement, and literature had thoroughly permeated Roman education and society. The ideals of the Scipios seemed far in the past. The choice for a young man seemed to be between either political agitation and intrigue or the pleasures of private life. And some combined both.

Attempts were made, however, to adapt traditional mores to new circumstances. The historian Sallust tried to expand the concept of virtus to cover his own activity:

Sallust’s concept of virtus applied to every field of activity and to every class of people. Any man engaged on any activity could claim virtus if he exerted his talents to the full, performed gloriously and observed the rules of morality. Sallust, however, accepted that of all the works that ingenium could achieve the highest was the service of the state, with the writing of history a poor second.10

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9Earl, p. 69.
10Ibid., p. 53.
Cicero likewise pointed to his translations of Greek philosophy into Latin as meritorious public service. A similar approach could have been taken to poetry, and was, to some extent, by Vergil and Horace, but not by the Elegists.

The Love Elegists Reject Roman Traditions

Several reasons may be suggested why the Love Elegists did not attempt to accommodate their lives and writings to the Roman moral and political tradition. The most plausible one is the ineffectual nature of the tradition itself during our period. The Senate, the expected defender of the *mos maiorum*, was often its deadliest enemy. The circumstances of Rome's rapid expansion involved continuous foreign wars, rural depopulation, urban crowding, political intrigue, social disorientation, immense resources in slaves, hoarding of wealth, and eventually civil war. As R. E. Smith remarks:

> The transition from a purely agrarian economy to an economy that began to consist largely in taking what one wanted from other people was bound to have profound effects on the social structure of Rome ... \(^{11}\)

Although the bulk of foreign wealth ended up in the hands of senatorial families and the more energetic members of the *equites*, the people and soldiers of Rome were also affected by hopes of foreign booty and by the vote-catching policies of ambitious senators. Political handouts of free grain, along with lavish gladiatorial games, led the Roman populace to believe that they deserved to be sustained in *otiun*. Warde Fowler commented on the effects of these policies:

> enormous amounts of capital were used unproductively, and the people were gradually accustomed to believe that the State was responsible for their enjoyment as well as their food.\(^{12}\)

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\(^{11}\)Smith, p. 189.

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The omnipresence of slaves and slave-labour was also a powerful argument for otium. Both rich and poor Romans became accustomed to view nearly all physical labour and business activity as appropriate only for slaves or, at best, freedmen. The Hellenistic life of pleasure seemed inevitable when nearly all the disagreeable or tedious aspects of daily life could be turned over to slaves and freedmen. Slaves also provided a ready supply of convenient sexual partners, both male and female. Moreover, the large numbers of slaves and freedmen of foreign birth and education further diluted the already waning Roman tradition and reinforced the more general Hellenistic one.

The tendency for children to be educated by slaves and freedmen rather than by their parents also represents a weakening of tradition and, no doubt, aided its decline. Tacitus (Dialogus, 28-29) comments unfavourably on this development, which was normal under the Empire, and becoming common in the Late Republic. Warde Fowler points out the general dangers of slavery for the morals of the slave-owners:

When most members of a man's household or estate are absolutely at his mercy, when he has no feeling of any contractual relation with them, his sense of duty and obligation is inevitably deadened, even towards others who are not thus in his power.\textsuperscript{13}

The moral tradition had also been weakened by the decline of religion and the resulting loss of religious sanctions for moral behaviour. Polybius (VI.56.6-15) considered the religious convictions of the Romans a prerequisite to their moral superiority over the Greeks. But Roman religion too was even then being undermined by Hellenistic influences and by the manipulations of Roman politicians. Not long after Polybius wrote, a Roman censor Quintus Metellus warned the Romans that the gods would desert them if their evil ways continued (Aulus Gellius, I.6.7):

\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., p. 235.
Di immortales plurimum possunt; sed non plus velle nobis debent quam parentes. At parentes, si pergunt liberi errare, bonis exherdant. Quid ergo nos ab immortalibus dissimile ius expectemus, nisi malis rationibus finem faciamus? Is demum deos propitios esse accum est, qui sibi adversarii non sunt. Dii immortales virtutem adprobare, non adhibere debent.

The immortal gods have mighty power, but they are not expected to be more indulgent to us than our parents. But parents, if their children persist in wrong-doing, disinherit them. What different application of justice then are we to look for from the immortal gods, unless we put an end to our evil ways. Those people may fairly claim the favour of the gods who are not their own worst enemies. The immortal gods ought to support, not supply virtue.

While a nostalgic sympathy for some aspects of old religion may still be detected in Catullus and Tibullus, even with them it has little or no influence on their moral behaviour.

With Propertius and Ovid the state religion has no influence at all, unless by opposition. This seems to be true for educated society in general during their lifetimes.

Roman society had generally allowed some freedom of activity to the adolescent male. This tendency had been greatly enhanced by Hellenistic contacts. Greek and Roman comedy treated the amorous, idle and scatterbrained young man with great tenderness, and condemned censorious elders, especially fathers. It was expected, however, that the young man would, after a period of self-indulgence, get married and pursue a public career. Increasing opportunities for self-indulgence conspired to thwart in part the traditional programme.

Already, following the defeat of Perseus of Macedon in 168 B.C., Polybius notes the existence of something like a "youth culture" at Rome (XXXI.25.2-8). A few years later during the Celtiberian War of 152-151 B.C. the Senate found that the young recruits were unwilling to fight and that others were unwilling to enlist. So far was the tradition floundering already.

The key aspect of the rejection of tradition by the Love Elegists was their glorification of free love and their indifference or antipathy to marriage. Both Roman tradition and Roman
comedy allowed for considerable male sexual licence before marriage, if it were socially
discrete. An anecdote of Cato the Elder is often cited:

One day, the story goes, Cato saw a young man leaving a brothel. "Well
done", he said. "That's better than chasing other men's wives." But after
seeing him emerge on several subsequent occasions, he said "Look here, when
I commended you for visiting that place I was not suggesting you should take
up residence."\(^\text{14}\)

Since there were large numbers of slavewomen and freedwomen at Rome, practical Romans
like Cato considered that they should be used as alternatives to adultery. According to
Plutarch (Cato, XXI.2), he permitted his male slaves to have sexual relations with his female
slaves at a fixed price, for he felt that sexual passions often lead otherwise to mischief. He
himself, after the death of his wife, took a slave girl to bed. When, however, his son and
daughter-in-law objected to this arrangement, he obtained the daughter of one of his
dependants as a wife (Cato, XXIV). Thus Cato felt that sexual urges should be satisfied in a
convenient but socially acceptable manner. He attacked giving undue attention or undue
expenditure to sexual matters and told the people (Polybius, XXXI.25.5) that it was the surest
sign of deterioration in the Republic when pretty boys fetch a higher price than land.

One aspect of the Roman ideal was for a man to leave sons and daughters who would
carry on the family and surpass the achievements of the past. Apart from personal and family
honour there was also the need of the state for soldiers to carry on its constant wars.

According to Appian (Civil Wars I.7-8,10-11,13,27) and Plutarch (Tiberius Gracchus, VIII),
the reform movement of the Gracchi was largely aimed at stemming the depopulation of rural
Italy. Here again the Senate was often the worst enemy of Rome's interests by its promotion
and prolongation of wars and its greed for land. The change from a rural Italy of peasant

\(^{14}\)Quoted by Niall Rudd, Themes in Roman Satire (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press,
farmers to an Italy of Rome and her large landowners broke down many of the incentives towards large families and child-rearing. The urban masses had little motive to rear a large family. Nonetheless marriage and a large family remained a hypothetical ideal. It is perhaps significant of its general acceptance that a fragment of a speech in favour of marriage and children should be attributed to Quintus Metellus Macedonicus, an enemy of the Gracchi (Aulus Gellius, I.6.2):

Si sine uxore pati possemus, Quirites, omnes ea molestia careremus; set quoniam ita natura traditit, ut nec cum illis satis commode, nec sine illis ullo modo vivi possit, saluti perpetuae potius quam brevi voluptati consulendum est.

If we could get on without a wife, Romans, we would all avoid that annoyance; but since nature has ordained that we can neither live very comfortably with them nor at all without them, we must take thought for our lasting well-being rather than for the pleasure of the moment.

Such rather half-hearted urgings fell largely on deaf ears. In this also the life and example of the Hellenistic world was a major factor. Polybius (XXXVI.17.5-10) had pointed to the depopulation of Greece as a clear instance of human behaviour influencing events (ibid. 7):

... men had fallen into such a state of pretentiousness, avarice, and indolence that they did not wish to marry, or, if they married, to rear the children born to them, or at most as a rule but one or two of them, so as to leave these in affluence and bring them up to waste their substance ...

In the same way "the pleasure of the moment" became an important argument at Rome against marriage and child-rearing.

With the Love Elegists an aggressive individualism is opposed to the traditional consensus, which was then breaking down:
... Tibullus, Propertius and Ovid opposed a new concept, that of a life devoted to love and love poetry to the conventional view that civil responsibilities should count for more than individual pursuits.\textsuperscript{15}

These poets and their friends extended the "youth culture" or pre-marriage culture to cover the whole of life. Usually this involved a self-conscious rejection of traditional \textit{mores} (e.g., Catullus V.1-3):

\begin{center}
\begin{quote}
Vivamus, mea Lesbia, atque amemus,
rumoresque senum severionum
omnes unius aestimemus assis.

Let us live, my Lesbia, and love,
And value at one farthing
All the talk of crabbed old men.
\end{quote}
\end{center}

In the heat of passion Catullus and his fellow poets will dare or do anything for their beloved. At moments of disappointment or despair they sometimes revert to saying more conventional things, although they do not break free from the "youth culture". Thus, although Catullus sometimes condemns himself in the manner of the \textit{senes severiores} (e.g., LI.13-16), he does not appear to change his way of life. This opposition to social pressure is perhaps reflected in Catullus's outspoken attacks on Julius Caesar and other political leaders (e.g., LVII and XCIII). Although they may state it less openly, the other elegists also seem to have little rapport with the political leaders of their day.

Ovid is perhaps more direct in his rejection of public roles and traditional activities than the other elegists. Confident in his skill and popularity as a poet, he depicts all criticism of his way of life as envy (\textit{livor}), anticipating the modern criticism of moralists as being envious of the things they condemn (Am. I.15.1-8):

\begin{center}
\begin{quote}
Quid mihi, Livor edax, ignavos obicis annos,
ingentiiique vocas carmen inertis opus;
\end{quote}
\end{center}

\textsuperscript{15}Saara Lilja, \textit{The Roman Elegists Attitude to Women} (Helsinki, 1965), p. 110.
non me more patrum, dum strenua sustinet actas,
praemia militiae pulverulenta sequi,
nec me verbosas leges ediscere nec me
ingrato vocem prostituisses foro?
Mortale est, quod quaeris, opus. Mihi fama perennis
quaeritur, in toto semper ut orbe canar.

Why, biting Envy, dost thou charge me with slothful years,
And call my song the work of an idle wit,
Complaining that, while vigorous age gives strength, I neither, after the fashion
of our fathers,
Pursue the dusty prizes of a soldier’s life,
Nor learn garrulous legal lore, nor set my voice
For common case in the ungrateful forum?
It is but mortal, the work you ask of me; but my quest is glory
Through all the years, to be ever known in song throughout the earth.

The contrast between this and the epitaphs of the Scipios is complete. In a few phrases Ovid
dismisses the public service ideal of military, legal, and political action. The verb for political
activity (prostituisse) is particularly dismissive. Instead of the Roman ideal, Ovid substitutes a
Hellenistic ideal—literary fame. Instead of fame won through great deeds and service (and
later sung by poets) Ovid aspires to the renown of the poet (famous for being a poet). It was
inevitable that some of the fame traditionally given to the doer of great deeds would attach
itself to the bards who perpetuated those deeds and names, but by Ovid’s time the poet had
become, as it were, independent of his subject matter. Poetic art alone was sufficient to win
fame.

Ovid’s attitude is only understandable as the end result of generations of Hellenistic
influence at Rome. Greek orators, historians, critics, and educators had spoken repeatedly
about the sublimity of great poetry and the unparalleled influence of the great poet. The
educational system made commonplace the opinions of the critics. In the mind of Ovid, and
many others, the gods themselves owed their existence to the poets (Pont. IV.3.55-56). The
entire realm of mythology is the invention of poets, and the fame of great men and fine cities
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is dependent on them. No wonder that Ovid felt that his hostile critics were not only foolish
in attacking the best of things, but were personally offensive in suggesting that he surrender
his passport to immortality.

Ovid, His Father, Family, and Marriages

A peculiar Roman institution, honoured both by law and custom, was patria potestas—the
complete and lifelong power which the father of the family exerted over the family
members and their offspring. Since Ovid's father lived to be very old, it is likely that the poet
remained in his father's power till he was middle-aged. Some elements of this paternal control
are detailed by John Crook:

Patria potestas was lifelong. Those subject to it could have no property of
their own, and their lives were almost wholly controlled by their paterfamilias.
His potestas included the well-known "power of life and death", which was
undoubtedly a reality in Republican times. His household jurisdiction, with a
family council, dealt with offences of its members (such as sexual offences)
that threatened the reputation of the family, and he could inflict chastisement
and even death.\(^{16}\)

Especially peculiar is the fact that this power continued regardless of the age or rank of the
offspring, or his marital state:

... in private life it mattered nothing that you might be forty years old or
married or consul of the Roman people; if you were in potestate you owned
nothing, whatever you acquired accrued automatically to your paterfamilias,
you could make no gifts, and if you borrowed money to give a dowry to your
daughter it was a charge on your paterfamilias.\(^{17}\)


\(^{17}\)Crook, p. 109.
The head of the household also could decline to rear any of his children without explanation and order the baby abandoned. He also controlled to a very great extent the marriages and divorces of his offspring:

... it was the right of the paterfamilias to decide whether new-born children should be reared or exposed (their mother had no voice in the matter), and exposure was common and not a crime. The paterfamilias could force his married children to divorce, and they could not marry in the first place without his consent.\textsuperscript{18}

It is very likely, therefore, that Ovid's father had some influence at least with respect to Ovid's first two marriages and divorces. A further control on the poet would be his father's financial reins on the poet's income and expenditures. While not much is known about Ovid's finances, it is likely that he lived either on an allowance from his father, or a fund called a peculium to which he had ready access:

The son, in potestate, like the slave, could have a fund which, though ultimately belonging to the head of the family, was in practice his to manage, and on the basis of which he could contract ... It is overwhelmingly probable that married sons living independently had such a fund; but the limitations must be borne in mind: it belonged to the paterfamilias, there was nothing to stop him withdrawing it, and it was part of his estate when he died.\textsuperscript{19}

It would be interesting to speculate whether this extended tutelage had an encouraging effect on the "youth culture" of the elegists, or on the markedly adolescent nature of their interests. Certainly the elegists' rejection of the mos maiorum must often have included the rejection of their parents's wishes. It is evident that this was the case with Ovid, since his father tried to discourage his interest in verse (\textit{Tr.} IV.10.19-26):

\begin{quote}
 at mihi iam puero caelestia sacra placebant, 
 inque suum furtim Musa trahebat opus. 
 saepe pater dixit "studium quid inutili temptas?
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{18}Ibid., p. 108.

\textsuperscript{19}Ibid., p. 110.
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Maeonides nullas ipse reliquit opes."

But to me even as a boy service of the divine gave delight
And stealthily the Muse was ever drawing me aside to do her work.

Often my father said, "Why do you try a profitless pursuit?
Even the Maeonian left no wealth."

I was influenced by what he said and wholly forsaking Helicon
I tried to write words freed from rhythm,
Yet all unbidden song would come upon befitting numbers
And whatever I tried to write was verse.

These lines no doubt summarize a long on-going debate between Ovid and his father as to the poet’s activities. Like many a later poet (e.g., Thomas Gray) Ovid externally seemed to comply with his father’s wishes, but in fact never gave up his poetic intentions. Eventually the poet’s success, popularity, his patrons, and his persistence may have overcome the paternal dislike for the poet’s role.

Like many poets Ovid tells us little about his parents in his verses. In Amores 1.3 he hints (on his disadvantages as a lover) that his parents keep him on a tight financial rein (7-10):

si me non veterum commendant magna parentum
nomina, si nostri sanguinis auctor eques,
nec meus innumeris renovator campus aratis,
temperat et sumptus pares uterque pares—

If I have not ancient ancestry and great name to commend me,
If the author of my line was but a knight,
And my fields are not renewed with ploughshares numberless,
If both my parents guard frugally their spending—

More suggestive is Amores 1.7 in which he laments raising his hand against his girlfriend, and says that in such a mood he might have struck his parents or the gods. Since striking one’s parents could conceivably be punished by death, there is considerable shock value in what
Ovid says. Whether it indicates anger against his parents, may be left for the psychologists to decide (Am. I.7.3-6):

nam furor in dominam temeraria brachia movit;
fiel mea vaesana laesa puella manu.
tunc ego vel caros potui violare parentes
saeva vel in sanctos verbera ferre deos!

For madness it was that moved me to raise reckless hands against my lady-love;
My sweetheart is in tears from the hurt of my raging blows.
'Twas in me then to lay cruel hands on even the parents I love,
Or to deal out cruel strokes even to the holy gods!

Elsewhere (Tr. VI.10) Ovid tells how his parents lived to an advanced age and died before they knew of his disgrace (81-84):

felices ambo tempestiveque sculti,
ant diem poenae quod periere meae!
me quoque felicem, quod non viventibus illis
sum miser, et de me quod doluere nihil!

Happy both! and laid to rest in good season!
Since they passed away before the day of my punishment.
Happy too am I that my misery falls not in their lifetime
And that for me they felt no grief.

This passage indicates at least that family ties were maintained right up to Ovid's parents' death, a suggestion reinforced by Ovid's affectionate references to his hometown of Sulmo, and to his family's status as equites.

There is a hint that Ovid's father was very ambitious for his son to succeed in those very public roles which the son so pointedly rejected. It is tempting to see Ovid's rejection of the roles as a vicarious rejection of his father, or to see Augustus as another father-figure whom the poet disliked. It is also tempting to see a lack of intimacy and affection within Ovid's family as a triggering mechanism for Ovid's flamboyant sexual interests. The poet sometimes seems to lack warm emotional feeling towards real people, and one would like to
account for this partly by early training. It is doubtful, however, whether the evidence can be pushed that far.

With respect to marriage and the procreation of children neither Ovid nor his fellow elegists fulfilled the traditional ideal. Catullus seems neither to have married nor to have had descendants. Of the others Syme writes:

The elegiac poets also made a poor contribution to the governmental programme of encouraging marriage and procreation among the better sort. No offspring of Albius Tibullus is discoverable, no wife. Of Propertius a descendant is on record in the time of Trajan, a certain Passennus Paullus of equestrian rank ... As for Ovid, divorce terminated the first two marriages, the second producing a daughter who was twice wedded.\(^{20}\)

Of Ovid's three wives he himself writes (Tr. IV.10.69-74):

\[
\text{paene mihi puero nec digna nec utilis uxor est data, quae tempus per breve nupta fuit. illi successit, quamvis sine crimine coniunx, non tamen in nostro firma futura toro. ultima, quae mecum seros permansit in annos, sustinuit coniunx exulis esse viri.}
\]

When I was scarce more than a boy a wife unworthy and unprofitable Became mine—mine for but a short space. Into her place came one, blameless, But not destined to remain my bride. And last is she who remained with me till the twilight of my declining years, Who has endured to be the mate of an exile husband.

Of Ovid's wives, we otherwise know little or nothing, until we meet with his extensive letters to his third wife from exile. That Ovid, alone of the Love Elegists, should have been married during the period of his amorous poetry probably reflects the strong parental influence on his life. His account of his first wife (Tr. IV.10.69-70) sounds rather like a complaint, that "hardly more than a boy" he "was given" a wife "neither worthy nor useful". It was a brief marriage. His second wife was blameless (\textit{sine crimine}), but nonetheless the marriage was

dissolved. One suspects that she was not glamorous enough, distinguished enough, or lively enough to hold the increasingly successful and popular bard. It is likely that his second wife came from "the fruit-bearing Faliscan town" (pomiferis Falscis), alluded to in Am. III.13.1. By one of these two wives (probably by the second) Ovid had a daughter "twice fertile, but not of one husband" (Tr. IV.10.75). Ovid's third wife was seemingly a step up the marriage ladder, a woman with connections both with the family of Paullus Fabius Maximus and the imperial household itself. From the poet's testimony she was well-liked, and Ovid rarely tires of expressing his own affection for her (an indication that she had the reputation of being lovable, since Ovid was no eccentric). That Ovid may overcolour these passages of marital devotion in the interest of utilitas does not wholly negate the affectionate portrait. One may even suspect that the wedding was not long in the past when the poet was exiled, for the bloom seems to remain until undone by Ovid's too frequent complaints.

Marriage and Married Love in Ovid's Writings

The influence of marriage on the love poetry of Ovid is an interesting subject for speculation. One need not go so far as to identify Ovid's first wife with Corinna, in order to believe that some of the differences between Ovid and previous elegists may be accounted for by his marital status.\(^{21}\) The absence of frantic emotional involvement in the affair, the light treatment of the free love mystique, and especially the treatment of woman as a familiar and easily explicable creature may well owe something to the poet's marriages. The theme of

\(^{21}\) In a University of Texas M.A. thesis, "Corinna and the Tradition of Love Elegy" (1979), Joseph A. Casazza argued that the relationship between the poet-lover and his girl in the Amores was one of marriage (citing I.8.19, I.14.39, II.5 passim, II.11.7-8, etc.). Adopting this argument Peter Green, Ovid: The Erotic Poems (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1982), pp. 22-26, identifies Corinna with Ovid's first wife.
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adultery draws attention, since for the married poet pursuing a married woman it would be
double adultery.

In the Ars Amatoria Ovid consistently treats sex within marriage as too easy and,
therefore, boring. The wife, like the captive woman, is unsatisfactory because her conquest is
not a challenge (Ars Am. II.685-690):

odi quae praebet, quia sit praebere necesse,
siccaque de lana cogitat ipsa sua.
quae datur officio, non est mihi grata voluptas:
officium faciat nulla puella mihi.
me voces audire iuvat sua gaudia fassas:
utque morer meme sustineamque rogent.

I hate her who gives because she must,
And who, herself unmoved, is thinking of her wool.
Pleasure given as a duty has no charms for me;
For me let no woman be dutiful.
I like to hear the words that confess rapture,
That beg me hold back and stay awhile.

Married relations are portrayed as a model for the artful lover to note and avoid (Ars Am.
II.151-158):

este procul, lites et amarae proelia linguae:
dulcis est verbis mollis alendus amor.
lite fugent nuptaeque viros nuptasque mariti,
inque vicem credant res sibi semper agi;
hoc decet uxores; dos est uxoria ilies:
audiat optatos semper amica sonos.
non legis iussu lectum venistis in unum:
fungitur in vobis munere legis amor.

Keep far away, quarrels and bitter-tongued affrays;
With soft words must love be fostered.
With quarrels let wives pursue husbands and husbands wives,
And deem that they are ever at issue with each other;
This befits wives; the dowry of a wife is quarreling:
But let your mistress ever hear welcome sounds.
Not by the law’s command have you come into one bed;
For you love performs the work of law.
The final couplet which places individual desires above the marriage law is at odds with imperial marriage legislation.

Ovid indicates that both he and lovers in general are urged on by difficulties. Marital sex is too easy an endeavour, and, therefore, uninteresting (Ars Am., III.583-588):

\begin{quote}
dulcia non ferimus; suco renovemur amaro;
\hspace{1cm} saepe perit ventis obruta cumba suis;
\hspace{1cm} hoc est, uxores quod non patiatur amari:
\hspace{1cm} conveniunt illas, cum voluere, viri;
\hspace{1cm} adde forem, et duro dicat tibi ianitor ore
\hspace{1cm} "non potes", exclusum te quoque tanget amor.
\end{quote}

We cannot bear sweetness; let us be refreshed by bitter juices;
Oft is a vessel sunk by favouring winds;
'Tis this which prevents wives from being loved:
To them their husbands come whenever they will;
Add but a door, and let a doorkeeper say to you with stubborn mouth, "You cannot";
Once shut out, you too, Sir, will be touched by love.

Ovid mentions rivals and jealous husbands as incitements to love; indeed, he says, he has trouble loving when they are not present. The easy woman or "pushover" should also put artificial difficulties in front of her lover, lest he grow weary from the ease of conquest (Ars Am., III.597-598,601-606):

\begin{quote}
quamlibet extinctos injuria suscitat ignes:
\hspace{1cm} en, ego (confiteor!) non nisi laesus amor,
\hspace{1cm} inclit et ficti tristis custodia servi,
\hspace{1cm} et nimium duri cura molesta viri.
\hspace{1cm} quae venit ex tuto, minus est accepta voluptas:
\hspace{1cm} ut sis liberior Thaide, finge metus.
\hspace{1cm} cum melius foribus possis, admitte fenestra,
\hspace{1cm} inque tuo vultu signa timentis habe.
\end{quote}

Fires, howe'er extinct, are aroused by injury;
Lo, myself (I confess) save when hurt, I cannot love...
The surly guardianship of a pretended slave excites him,
And the irksome vigilance of a husband too severe.
Pleasure safely enjoyed is less welcome;
Though you be freer than Thais pretend to fears.
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Though it were easier by the door, admit him by the window,
And show signs of fright upon your face.

Along with wives Ovid rejects captive women (who are, therefore, melancholy) as mistresses. This does not apply to slave girls in general, including his girlfriend’s maidservant, who may be cultivated after a careful assessment of the risks. Ovid gives Andromache as the example of the uncouth wife of a soldier (Ars Am., III.107-111), and later suggests that as a captive widow among the Greeks she would be even less satisfactory (III.517-524). Indeed, it is implied that the wives of the heroes of old were particularly undesirable models for the women of Ovid’s time. This is both because they were rustic in their family attachments and marital fidelity, and also because they lacked the modish tastes and physical cultivation available in Augustan Rome.

While the advice of the praecensor amoris is sometimes exaggerated for shock effects and comedy, it is basically consistent with the point of view regularly expressed in Ovid’s other love poetry. The confident assertion that Ovid was always at heart chivalrous and maturely considerate of women is based almost solely on his letters from exile to his third wife.22 It is to this period also that we must attribute any respect on the poet’s part for the institution of marriage. In the Ibis (15) he speaks of his wife being joined to him “in the perpetual union of the marriage-bed” (perpetuo ... foedere lecti). This image is, of course, quite incompatible with Ovid’s previous love poetry, and may be interpreted as a change in

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22 Cf. L.P. Wilkinson, Ovid Recalled (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), p. 288. Also, Pierre Grimal, Love in Ancient Rome, trans. Arthur Train, Jr. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986), p. 137: “Ovid’s family life was quite honorable. He loved his wife tenderly. What he tells us of his fondness for her when he was in exile, and the heartbreak they suffered when they had to separate proves beyond any possible doubt that he was a ‘good husband’, faithful and affectionate. But if his life was pure, his Muse was not.”
attitude, an accommodation to the imperial wishes, or perhaps both. Peter Green's opinion of Ovid's third marriage is balanced, but appreciative:

For the first time ever, Ovid, or his poetic persona, is treating a woman as an equal, as an adult human being. The sad thing about this public correspondence—of which, of course, we have only one side—is the element of despair that finally permeates it; the exile's paranoia, the nagging anxiety that his wife, if not positively disloyal, could nevertheless, somehow, be doing more than she is to help him ... But their cumulative impact makes it clear that not only was this marriage wholly different from Ovid's two previous ones; it marked a fundamental change in his concept of human relationships.23

The change that we see in the letters may have been partly thrust upon the poet by exile to Tomis. This was not the time or place to sing the joys of free love, or to ridicule the marriage-bond. At the same time the difference in attitude seems to be more than solely the effects of exile.

It seems barely possible that Ovid's vaunted susceptibility to female charms (Tr. IV.10.65-66) might have been satisfied within marriage, if his first or second wife had been more to his liking. A declamation which he delivered as a teenager (Seneca, Controv. II.2.9-11) concerns the passionate love of a married couple. A husband and wife had taken an oath that if one of them died the other would too. The husband arranged for a false notice of his death to be sent to his wife, presumably to test her response (cf. Cephalus' test of Procris, Metamorphoses VII.714 ff.). The wife tried to kill herself but lived. She still loves her husband, and is, therefore, disinherited by her father for refusing to divorce him. This was the given kernel for the declamation, which Ovid was required to expand on.

Ovid argued typically that it was impossible to put restrictions on love. Lovers will swear oaths and sometimes break them, sometimes keep them. Only old people can love

23Green, Ovid: The Erotic Poems, p. 42.
rational and conscientiously. Young lovers often do wild things; they often fight and are later reconciled. A woman who dies for love will be famous for all time. The husband would willingly die, except that this would cause the wife to kill herself also.

This declamation already has the mixture of sentimentalism and sophistication found in Ovid's mature work. Rather than suggesting solely that Ovid's genius was breaking through the commonplaces of rhetoric, it is also true that Ovid's attitudes were strongly influenced by rhetorical commonplaces. Such topics as that young lovers deserve special indulgence (hinted at in Ovid's declamation) are found regularly in contemporary rhetoric (e.g., Seneca, Controv. II.4 and II.6). Indeed, the subject matter of Ovid's poetry is often equally common in declamation (loss of virginity, rape, adultery, prostitution, family conflict, and stark cruelty). This was no doubt encouraged because declaimers and poets largely shared the same audience.

Ovid's declamation, in fact, shows an interest not so much in marriage, as in passionate love (especially the extreme love of a woman for her man). This is also the theme of the Ars Amatoria; the mistress (unlike the typical wife) must be passionately involved and overcome with desire. Ovid's apparent divorce of his second wife, whom he admits was "blameless" (sine crímine), suggests that he was seeking a more sensational relationship. Both the mores of the contemporary social whirl, and the sensationalism of the declaiming schools would encourage such an interest.

The Decline of Traditional Roman Notions of Marriage and Family

Clear indications of the unpopularity of marriage and child-rearing in Ovid's time are the unprecedented efforts of Augustus to promote them, and the strong opposition to these attempts. Ovid acted as a spokesman for the sophisticated life of his time but whether Ovid
was only generally opposed to the Augustan legislation, or whether he attacks its specific measures in detail is debatable. His joke about the widow looking for her next man at her husband’s funeral ( Ars Am., III.431-432) could be a piece of modish cynicism, or it could be an attack on Augustan legislation which penalized widows who didn’t speedily remarry. On the other hand Romans generally accepted the idea of speedy remarriage. In a serious letter to his friend Gallio, Ovid begins to console him on the death of his wife, and ends by hoping that he is already happy in a new marriage ( Pont. IV.11.7-22).

We have abundant evidence of the importance of marriage and family life to the Romans before Hellenization. Husband and wife acted as partners on the farm, and generally aspired to producing a sizable family. Father and mother acted as teachers to their children. In the not-uncommon situation where the father died or was killed, the mother frequently directed her sons’ education. Divorce was something to be remarked on, and adultery (at least for the wife) was apparently rare. Cato the Elder (Aulus Gellius X.23.4-5) affirms the right of the husband to put his wife to death if caught in adultery, but adds that the wife has no similar recourse against her husband. Cato reflected traditional mores in another way when he expelled Manilius from the senate “because he embraced his wife in open day before the eyes of his daughter” ( Plutarch, Cato, XVII.7).

It is interesting then to examine the marriage and family life of Cato himself, as an example of the old Roman attitudes. Cato apparently had sexual intercourse with his wife but rarely, although he spoke favourably of the practice ( ibid.). He felt it wise, however, to provide moderate opportunities for the sexual appetites of both young men and male slaves through slave women and prostitutes. He himself chose a wife of good birth but moderate
fortune, thinking that a high-born woman would have more fear of doing something disgraceful (Cato, XX.1). According to Plutarch (Cato, XX.2):

He used to say that the man who struck his wife or child, laid violent hands on the holiest of holy things. Also that he thought it more praiseworthy to be a good husband than a great senator, nay, there was nothing else to admire in Socrates of old except that he was always kind and gentle in his intercourse with a shrewish wife and stupid sons.

Plutarch goes on to narrate Cato's attentiveness towards his son and notes that Cato was usually present for the bathing and clothing of the infant. He himself took charge of his son's education and training, not wishing that his son should have to submit to a slave for such a valuable thing. Besides supervising his son's physical and military training, Cato copied out his own "History of Rome" in large letters, so that his son could better learn from it. Tacitus's Messalla (Dialogus, 28) refers to similar attentions by mothers.

The Roman family pattern ultimately went back to the old Latin or Sabine farmer-soldier and his wife and their frugal life on the farm. With rural depopulation such families became very much the exception, and they no longer provided a strong model for society. Once again the senatorial class, the nominal upholders of tradition, were often its most potent enemies. Physical separation of husbands and wives was a regular occurrence during the Late Republic with its procession of foreign and civil wars and the increasing number of conquered lands to police and administer. Husbands and wives might both prove faithful during these long intervals, and reunions sometimes resulted in divorce. Each party learned to act independently of the other, a situation aided by the abundance of slaves and freedmen. Divorce was easy for either party, and had little stigma attached to it. Most destructive of all, perhaps, was the increasing view of marriage as a political convenience, an alliance to be changed with any shift on the political scene. The rapidity of marriage, divorce, and
remarriage among the politically-involved upper classes during the Late Republic must have
done much to devalue marriage, something now done by Hollywood entertainers. A major
weakness in Augustus's own attempts to reform the marriage institution was his failure to
dispense with such arbitrary politically-motivated marriages.

The growing distaste for marriage among both men and women was aided by the ease
and social acceptability of liaisons with favourite slaves and freedmen. The inexperienced
young wife and the elderly senator could hardly compete sexually with the skills of semi-
professionals or professionals of lower rank. As Carcopino puts it:

Even when he was not debauched, the wealthy Roman looked askance at a life
in which every day he would have to contend or reckon with the wishes of a
legitimate wife, and he often preferred the easy concubinage which Augustus
has recognised as a licit though inferior union, to which public opinion
attached not the slightest stigma ...²⁴

At first Roman husbands probably availed themselves more of this resource than their wives,
but attempts were made later to restore the balance. Under the Empire, if we give any
credence to Martial or Juvenal, women were experienced players. Carcopino continues:

Martial launches many a dart at home-keeping adulterers. He mocks the
master who buys back the maidservant mistress he cannot bear to do without;
he makes merry over the great lady who has lost her heart to her hairdresser
and having set him free pours an equestrian fortune in his lap; he attributes
Marulla's many offspring not to her husband Cinna but to Cinna's cook, his
bailiff, his baker, his flutist, even to his wrestler, and to his buffoon.²⁵

Some wealthy men acquired a harem of mistresses, and perhaps their wives were not far
behind. Martial (XII.58) calls one husband an admirer of servant girls, and his wife an


²⁵Carcopino, p. 102.
admirer of litter bearers. Cato the Elder’s worst fears about an institutionalized adultery were realized. The effect on marriage is thus described:

The proximity of concubinage in even the best houses, and the atmosphere of licentiousness and irresponsibility created by so many slave liaisons on every side, had done more than the prostitution of the “she-wolves” who stood around the circus and haunted the suburban roads at night, lurking behind the tombs, to degrade marriage, until husband and wife in their turn considered it only a fleeting anodyne.26

It is likely then that the normality of liaisons with slaves and ex-slaves led to a more casual approach to sex and a greater emphasis on sexual pleasure even within marriage. The vexed question of whether the elegiac mistress is a Roman lady or a freedwoman is complicated by the suggestion that the freedwoman may have become a model for the Roman lady. In that sense Ovid’s claim to be writing regarding freedwomen in the Ars Amatoria may have a glimmer of truth. Jasper Griffin suggests that Ovid’s Corinna is a courtesan because of the way the poet describes her in Am. 1.5:

the list of her unclothed attractions (“shoulders ... arms ... breasts ... belly ... legs ...”), and the whole tone of the inspection, recall the connoisseur who picks out his mercenary partners with discrimination.27

There is some evidence, however, that, for men such as Ovid, sexual attitudes ultimately based on experience with slaves, ex-slaves, and courtesans provided a norm, to which freeborn ladies might have to conform in order to be sexually successful. The ambiguous audience of the Ars Amatoria (ostensibly freedwomen, actually Roman ladies) strongly hints at such a possibility.

By allowing norms of sexual morality to emerge from relationships with slaves and ex-slaves, the Romans succeeded in largely demolishing their own traditional notions of family and marriage. When Augustus, fearful for the future of the family and the state, tried to return

26Ibid., p. 103.

to a more traditional position, he found that he was swimming against a very strong current.  
It is doubtful even whether such reforms would have been possible a century earlier, but, at  
the end of the Republic, they were almost certain of some degree of failure, since Augustus  
was fighting with well-established practices, including his own.  

**Augustan Marriage Legislation and The Elegists**

Augustus's plan was to use legislation to encourage child-bearing and child-rearing and  
to discourage adultery and the unmarried state. Bachelors and spinsters were subjected to  
penalties, especially with respect to inheritance, while parents of three or more children  
received benefits. Widows and divorcees were subjected to penalties also if they did not  
remarry within a stated time. (In expecting widows to remarry, Augustus went somewhat  
against the *mos maieron*.) Adultery was punished by banishment, and partial loss of property.  
The state encouraged prosecution, and set up a permanent court for such cases. While a  
marrried man could not usually be prosecuted for adultery with an unmarried girl, men in  
general could be prosecuted for *stainum* ("illicit sex") if they had sexual relations with a free-  
born unmarried woman. Homosexual practices were also liable to prosecution.  

Augustus made at least two attempts to legislate regarding adultery, fornication, and  
the unmarried state. Whether there was an unsuccessful first attempt around 28 B.C. is  
debatable. Such legislation was successfully introduced around 19 or 18 B.C. Balsdon thus  
describes the event:  

in 19/18 the bills went through the Senate, a law on marriage between the  
social classes (*de mariandis ordinibus*) and a law for the restraint of adultery  

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26 Tacitus indicates (*Annals* II.25.1-2, 28.4-5) that spies and informers were associated with the  
Lex Papia Poppaea of A.D. 9, and may not have been encouraged by the "Julian Laws" of 19 or  
18 B.C.
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(de adulteris coercendis). Both were Julian laws, introduced by Augustus and called after him. The programme was one which Cicero had recommended to Julius Caesar over a quarter of a century earlier: "less lust and larger families ..."

This legislation was later recast in A.D. 9, with some provisions softened, as the Lex Papia Poppaea, and introduced by the two consuls at that time, Marcus Papius Mutilus and Quintus Poppaeus Secundus, both of whom, significantly enough, were bachelors (Dio Cassius LVI.10.3).

The approximate time and nature of Augustus's first legislative attempt can be generally discerned from literary references, including several odes of Horace advocating such measures (III.6; III.24), and an elegy of Propertius rejoicing in their failure (II.7). The


30In 1893 Paul Jörs wrote an article ("Die Ehegesetze des Augustus") which argued that Augustus must have passed an earlier version of his later marriage laws around 28 B.C., and that Propertius II.7 refers to this law and its subsequent repeal. Jörs also cites various circumstantial evidence, both contemporary and later, to support the existence of such a law at this time. Ernst Badian, "A Phantom Marriage Law", Philologus 129 (1985), pp. 82-98, collects and reviews the arguments for and against such a law, and concludes that there is no adequate proof for this marriage law (p. 93): "only positive attestation of a high order of reliability could force us to accept such a surprising lapse [on the part of Augustus] and such historical and legal complications." If, adds Badian (pp. 95-98), Propertius II.7 is more than poetic fiction it must refer to a tax imposed on bachelors (caelibes) by Augustus before Actium, and later cancelled when the danger was over, and the tax legislation from the Civil War period was annulled in 28 B.C. Badian's view is adopted by G.P. Goold, Propertius: Elegies (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 139: "The law, proclaimed shortly before Actium to bring in money Octavian desperately needed, would seem to have imposed on bachelors a substantial tax, which Propertius was in no position to pay; anxiety over his non-compliance was ended when the law was repealed in 28." Badian's suggestion of a tax on bachelors is not, however, the most natural interpretation of Propertius II.7. It is not clear that such a tax would have forced Propertius to marry, and to marry someone other than Cynthia. Propertius also complains that the law would have obliged him to have children. Even allowing for poetic exaggeration this seems a little much to complain about regarding a tax on bachelornood. Further, why should Propertius have to abandon Cynthia? Once again this sounds like more than a tax. The most cogent comment on this situation was made by Gordon Williams, Tradition and Originality in Roman Poetry (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), pp. 529-535, who argues that the greatest danger to an elegiac love affair (continued...
latter poem is particularly useful here as it doubtless represented the unguarded opinion of the
elegists and their audience:

Nos uxor numquam, numquam seducet amica:
    semper amica mihi, semper et uxor eris.
gavisas est certe sublatam, Cynthia, legem,
    qua quondam edicta flumus uterque diu,
    ni nos divideret: quamvis diducere amantes
    non quet invitos Juppiter ipse duos.
'At Magnus Caesar,' sed Magnus Caesar in amis:
    devictae gentes nil in amore valent.
nam cius paterer caput hoc discedere collo
    quam possem nuptae perdere more faces,
aut ego transirem tua limes clausa maritus,
    respiciens udis prodicta luminibus.
ae mea tum qualis caneret tibi tibia somnos,
    tibia funesta tristior illa tuba!
unde mihi patriis natos praebere triumphis?
    nullus de nostro sanguine miles erit.
quod si vera meae comitarem castra puellae,
    non mihi sat magnus Castorides iret equus.
hinc etenim tantum meruit mea gloria nomen,
    gloria ad hibernos lata Borysthenidas.
    tu mihi sola places: placeam tibi, Cynthia, solus:
    hic erit et patrio nomine pluris amor.

Never shall wife, never shall mistress part us:
You shall ever be mistress, ever be wife to me.
How you must have rejoiced, Cynthia, at the repeal of that law,
Whose erstwhile issuance caused us to weep for many an hour
In case it parted us! Still, not even Jove himself
Can part two lovers against their will.
'Yet Caesar is mighty:' True, but mighty in warfare:
In love the defeat of nations counts for naught.
For sooner should I let my head be severed from my neck
Than I could quench the torch of love to humour a bride's whim,
Or as a married man pass by your barred threshold,
Looking back with tearful eyes at the house I had betrayed.
Ah, what dire slumbers would my wedding-flute warble for you,

\[^{30}\text{...continued}\]

would come from a law against adultery if the beloved (Lesbia, Delia, Cynthia, Corinna) were a
married woman of status. It is hard to get around this argument since it was in fact Augustus's
laws against adultery which brought love elegy to an end, and contributed to the exile of its last
practitioner, Ovid.
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That flute more dismal than the trumpet of death!
How should I furnish sons for our country’s triumphs?
No soldier shall ever be born of my blood.
But if I were following the real camp, that of my mistress,
Then Castor’s charger would not be grand enough for me.
It is through service to her that renown has so glorified my name,
Renown that has travelled to the wintry northlands.
You are my only joy: be I your only joy, Cynthia:
This love means more to me than the name of father.

A poem more contrary to the spirit of the Roman moral and political tradition cannot
easily be imagined, and yet this poem is just what we would expect any love elegist, including
Ovid, to write. Ovid, as praecceptor amoris, has argued that sexual relationships ought to be as
passionate and exciting as possible; rivals and husbands, as difficulties to be overcome, spur
on passion, but marriage for the lover was a dismal alternative. The emotional engagement in
an unconventional and unruly passionate affair is what love elegy and its manner of life are all
about. The scornfulness with which Propertius here (II.7) dismisses both marriage (7-12) and
begetting of children (13-14, 19-20) anticipates the Ars Amatoria.

Gordon Williams argues convincingly that Propertius’s relief at the repeal of the
proposed law is related to the provision of severe penalties for adultery, and Williams infers
that Cynthia was a married woman.31 The fear may also be a more general one that the
elegists’ whole way of life is being threatened, and they are being pushed towards something
they have learned to despise. The furor which greets any present day attempt at moral
legislation in sexual matters is a useful parallel. Comprehensive also is the saying of Samuel
Taylor Coleridge regarding such revulsions:

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31 Gordon Williams, Tradition and Originality, pp. 532-535.
In all perplexity there is a portion of fear, which predisposes the mind to anger.\textsuperscript{32} A generation completely severed by training and habit from traditional moral behaviour can be expected to react with anger, irritation, and incomprehension to any attempts to reinvoke such mores. The hint that such attempts can only spring from sinister and unwholesome motives is common to both the Roman opposition and to contemporary pundits.

That Augustus was both sincere and determined in his attempts to promote marriage and child-bearing and that he was generally unsuccessful can be deduced from a lengthy speech which Dio Cassius puts into his mouth (LVI.1-10). At the triumphal games of A.D. 9 Augustus responded to an appeal from the knights that he revoke his marriage and family legislation. In response Augustus spoke both to those knights who had children and those who were unmarried and childless. He noted with chagrin that the latter were the larger group. He praised the former for their patriotism, sense of responsibility, and their regard for himself and promised them further rewards. To the unmarried and childless he delivered a stinging rebuke, at the same time exhorting them to reconsider their way of life and giving them time to amend.

Augustus attempted to invoke the old Roman moral and political tradition in order to prove that marriage and families were necessary for the survival and the glory of Rome. He gathered together and refurbished all the traditional arguments against celibacy and childlessness. According to the summary of Livy (Bk. LIX) he cited ancient precedents for his legislation including a speech by the censor Quintus Metellus Macedonicus in 129 B.C. who "proposed that everyone should be compelled to marry in order to produce children".

Augustus's marriage legislation is so much in line with the traditional role of censor at Rome, that both ancient and modern authors have assumed that Augustus held the censorship. It seems, however, that in spite of trying unsuccessfully to revive that office, Augustus avoided holding it himself, probably out of fear of offending the senatorial class. It is likely, on the other hand, that Ovid's studious avoidance (in his love poetry) of accommodating Augustus's wishes was a factor in his popularity and a reason for the Emperor's hostility.

Gordon Williams has argued that the situation envisioned in Love Elegy is an adulterous love affair, usually between the single poet and a married woman. This seems to be the case for Catullus-Lesbia, Tibullus-Delia, Propertius-Cynthia, and more vaguely, for Ovid-Corinna. For Ovid there were two major complications: first, most of his love poetry was written after the anti-adultery legislation of 19-18 B.C.; second, Ovid was himself married during at least part of the time that he was writing love poetry. These facts may partly account for the lack of definite outline in the poet's descriptions and accounts of Corinna and his relationship with her, and for the light and jocular approach which he takes to the theme of love. Nonetheless in A.D. 8 Ovid was exiled by the Emperor on two charges. One of them, he says, was that "by an obscene poem I have taught foul adultery" (Tr. II.211-212).

The Theme of Adultery in Ovid's Verse

A survey of Ovid's love poetry will indicate the poet's generally favourable view of adultery, a view entirely compatible with the attitudes of the elegists and their audience. Taking the Amores first, the theme of outwitting the husband and enjoying the wife is very prominent. Amores I.4 involves persuasions to a wife to be unfaithful at a dinner party. Although Ovid enjoys the discomfort of the unsuccessful lover here, he omits that detail
elsewhere. The words of the bawd Dipsas (Am. I.8.39-44) turn up again in various Ovidian contexts:

\[\text{forsitan inmundae Tatio regnante Sabinae}\
\text{noluerint habiles pluribus esse viris;}\
\text{nunc Mars externis animos exercet in armis,}\
\text{at Venus Aeneae regnat in urbe sui.}\
\text{Iudunt formosae; casta est, quam nemo rogavit—}\
\text{aut, si rusticitas non vetat, ipsa rogat.}\
\]

It may be that in Tatius' reign the unadorned Sabine fair
Would not be had to wife by more than one;
But now in wars far off Mars tries the souls of men,
And 'tis Venus reigns in the city of her Aeneas.
The beautiful keep holiday; chaste is she whom no one has asked—
Or, be she not too countriplied, she herself asks first.

Marriage and guards are regularly viewed as useful impediments which spur on the lover's passions. Amores II.2 is addressed to Bagoas, the eunuch guardian of a married woman, to persuade him not to do his job too thoroughly. It employs familiar rationalizations of adultery (Am. II.2.11-14):

\[\text{vir quoque non sapiens; quid enim servare laboret,}\
\text{unde nihil, quamvis non tueare, perit?}\
\text{sed gerat ille suo morem furiosus amor}\
\text{et castum, multis quod placet, esse putet...}\
\]

Her husband, too, is anything but wise; for why take pains to watch
Over that from which, even did you not guard, nothing would be lost?
But let him, mad fool, do as his passion prompts him,
And let him think she can be chaste who takes the eye of many...

Bagoas is advised to take the wife's excuses for absence at face value (31-32):

\[\text{huic, verae ut laeant causae, finguntur inanes;}\
\text{atque ambo domini, quod pro cat una, probant.}\
\]

For the husband empty reasons are fashioned to keep the true ones hid;
And both master and mistress approve what the mistress alone approves.
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In any case, says the poet, the husband won't want to hear that his wife is unfaithful and will punish you for talking (41-62). Adultery, moreover, is no crime, so why interfere with our wishes (63-66):

Non scelus adgredimur, non ad miscenda coimus
    toxica, non stricto fulminat ense manus,
quae risus, ut tuo per te possimus amare.
    quid precibus nostris mollius esse potest?
'Tis no crime we are entering on; we are not coming together to mingle poisons;
No drawn sword flashes in our hands.
What we ask is that you will give us the means to love in safety.
What can be more modest than our prayers.33

In the following poem Bagoas is again criticized for interference and, in effect, for wasting a good woman (Am. II.3.13-14):

Est etiam facies, sunt apti Iusibus anni;
    indigna est pigro forma perire situ.

Then, too, she has charms, and her years are apt for love's delights;
'Tis a shame for her beauty to perish by dull neglect.

Amores II.19 is a deliberately shocking poem in which the poet argues with a husband that he must set a guard on his wife if he wants the poet to pursue her. This is a kind of reductio ad absurdum of the elegiac creed (II.19.1-6):

Si tibi non opus est servata, stulte, puella,
at mihi fac serves, quo magis ipse velim!
quod licet, ingratum est; quod non licet acerius urit.
    fereus est, siquis, quod sinit alter, amat.
speramus pariter, pariter metuamus amantes,
et faciat voto rara repulsa locum.

33Ovid's suggestion (Am. II.2.63) that adultery is not a crime may either be a dismissive flippancy directed toward the "Julian Laws", or an indication that these were not in effect at the time the poem was written. We may note, in any case, that the line was not revised for the second edition.
If you feel no need of guarding your love for yourself, O fool,
See that you guard her for me, that I may desire her the more!
What one may do freely has no charm; what one may not do pricks more keenly.
He has a heart of iron who loves what another concedes.
Let us hope while we fear and fear while we hope, we lovers,
And let repulse sometimes be ours to make a place for vows.

This is reminiscent of Ovid’s strictures on married love, that it is too easy and, therefore, uninteresting. The elegiac creed urged difficulties, though not impossibilities. Thus in Ars Amatoria (III.579-610) Ovid urges the girl to invent difficulties if none exist, but concludes by admonishing her to provide some “secure enjoyment” (609-610):

\[
\text{admissenda tamen venus est secura timori,}
\text{ne tanti noctes non putet esse tuas.}
\]

Yet with fear must be mingled secure enjoyment,
Lest he think your nights are not worthwhile.

In the same spirit Ovid (Am, III.4) urges a husband not to be over-rigorous in watching his wife. Such conduct will lead other men to suspect that his wife is a special prize (25-32).

The poet manages to argue that marriage promotes promiscuous sex (29-32):

\[
\text{non proba fit, quam vir servat, sed adultera cara;}
\text{ipse timor pretium corpore maius habet.}
\text{indignere licet, iuvat inconcessa voluptas;}
\text{sola placet, "timeo!" dicere siqua potest.}
\]

She whom her husband guards is not made honest thereby, but a mistress much desired;
Fear itself gives her greater price than her charms.
Be wrathful if you will, ’tis forbidden joys delight;
She only charms whoe’er can say: “I fear!”

Ovid maintains, with his usual aplomb, that the husband who resents his wife’s infidelities is hopelessly old-fashioned (37-42):

\[
\text{Rusticus est nimium, quem laedit aliqua coniurx,}
\text{et notos mores non satis urbis habet}
\text{in qua Martigenae non sunt sine crimine nati}
\]
Romulus Iliades Iliadesque Remus.
quo tibi formosam, si non nisi casta placebat?
non possunt ullis ista coire modis.

He is too countriified who is hurt when his wife plays false,
And is but slightly acquaint with the manners of the city
In which the sons of Mars were born not without reproach—
Romulus, child of Ili, and Iili’s child Remus.
Why did you marry a beauty if none but a chaste woman would suit?
Those two things can never in any wise combine.

Elsewhere Ovid indicates that the husband will acquiesce in adultery if only the lover has
money and provides gifts (Am. III.8.64). He also excuses his mistress’s inconstancy on the
grounds that she is fair (Am. III.14.1), and adds, that she who denies her sin does not sin at all
(5-6).

Adultery was the stock-in-trade of the elegiac poets, and while Ovid is careful to avoid
verifiable details, and to treat the whole matter as a huge joke, it is difficult not to see extra-
marital sex as a major motivation behind the life-style and interests of the poet and his
audience. Elegy herself (Am. III.1.49-52) proclaims her skill in teaching infidelity:

per me decepto didicit custode Corinna
liminis adstrixi sollicitare fidem,
delabique toro tunica velata soluta
atque inpercussos nocte movere pedes.

Through me Corinna has learned to elude her guard
And tamper with the faith of tight-closed door,
To slip away from her couch in tunic ungirdled
And move in the night with unstumbling foot.

In the Heroides Ovid expresses the reverse side of the Amores. They are the laments
chiefly of forsaken wives and mistresses to their erstwhile lovers. There heroines have some
of the qualities of the ideal elegiac mistress, being devoted to their lover and passionate in
their love. Even Penelope, somewhat incongruously, reproaches Ulysses in the terms of elegy,
as she worries about his fate (Her. I.75-78):
hace ego dum stulte metuo, quae vestra libido est,
esser perigrino captus amore poes.
forsitan et narres, quam sit tibi rustica coniunx,
quae tantum lanas non sinat esse rudes.

While I live on in foolish fear of things like these (such are the hearts of you
men),
You may be captive to a stranger love.
It may be you even tell how rustic a wife you have—
One fit only to dress fine the wool.

Since the heroines are generally urging their men to return or reproaching them for leaving,
persuasions to adultery are less common. A notable exception is Phaedra’s epistle to
Hippolytus in which she attempts to rationalize both adultery and incest (Her. IV.129-134):

Nec, quia privigno videar coitura noverca,
teruerint animos nomina vana tuos.
ista vetus pietas, aevo moritura futuro,
rustica Saturno regna tenente fuit.
Iupiter esse plum statuit, quodcumque iuvaret,
et fas omne facit fratre marita soror.

And, should you think of me as a stepdame who would mate with her
husband’s son,
Let empty names fright not your soul.
Such old-fashioned regard for virtue was rustic even in Saturn’s reign,
And doomed to die in the age to come.
Love fixed that virtue was to be in whatever brought us pleasure;
And naught is wrong before the gods since sister was made wife by brother.

Phaedra goes on to argue that their kinship will make a love affair even easier to consummate
and to conceal.

Already familiar (from the Amores) are the arguments which Paris uses to persuade
Helen to elope. Heroides XVI includes a banquet scene in which Paris plays the discomforted
lover to Helen’s elegiac mistress (213-248; cf. Am. I.4). In a standard Ovidian argument Paris
then tells Helen not to be old-fashioned (285-292):

an pudet et metuis Venerem temerare maritam
castaque legitimi fallere iura tori?
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a, nimum simplex Helene, ne rustica dicam,
hanc faciem culpa posse carere putas?
aut faciem mutes aut sis non dura, necesse est;
lis est cum forma magna pudicitiae.
Iuppiter his gaudent, gaudent Venus aurae furtis;
haec tibi nempe patrem furtar dedere amorem.

Or do you feel shame and fear to violate your wedded love,
And to be false to the chaste bonds of a lawful bed?
Ah, too simple—nay, too rustic—Helen!
Do you think that beauty of yours can be free from fault?
Either you must change your beauty, or you must needs not be hard;
Fairness and modesty are mightily at strife.
Jove's delight, and the delight of Venus, are in stealthy sins like these;
Such stealthy sins, indeed, gave you Jove for sire.

Ovid picks up the story of Paris and Helen in the Ars Amatoria and emphatically absolves Helen of any blame. Menelaus is to blame for giving Paris the opportunity to seduce her (Ars Am., II.365-372):

nil Helene peccat, nihil hic committit adulter:
    quod tu, quod faceret quilibet, ille facit.
cogis adulterium dando tempusque locumque;
    quid nisi consilio est usa puella tuo?
quid faciat? vir abstet, et adest non rusticus hospes,
et timet in vacuo sola cubare toro.
viderit Atrides: Helenen ego crimen solvo:
    usa est humani commoditate viri.

In naught does Helen sin; in naught is that adulterer to blame:
He does what you, what anyone would have done.
By giving time and place you are compelling adultery,
The woman has but used your own counsel.
What could she do? her husband is away; a guest, and no rustic one, is present;
And she fears to sleep in an empty bed alone.
Let the son of Atreus see to it; Helen I absolve from blame:
She used the opportunity a courteous love gave.

It is the freedom with which the preceptorem amoris justifies adultery that made the book a target for enforcers of the Augustan marriage legislation. The poet urges amatory caution in
some cases, but maintains that chastity and fidelity are foreign to the normal flux of human activity (Ars Am. II.387-390):

nec mea vos uni damnat censura puellae:
    di melius! vix hoc nupta tenere potest.
ludite, sed furto celetur culpa modoesto:
    gloria peccati nulla petenda sui est.

Yet my ruling does not condemn you to one woman alone:
Heaven forbid! even a young bride can hardly secure this.
Have your sport but let modest deception veil the fault;
Seek no vainglory from your sin.

Ovid urges lovers and husbands to tolerate the infidelities of their women (II.539-560). He ironically tells lovers to take an example from the husband who falls asleep when his wife plans to be unfaithful (545-546), but allows that he himself feels anger easily, as when her husband kisses the poet’s mistress (551-552).

In Book III, the poet tells women how to deceive their husband or guardian (611-666). This is part of Cupid’s art, as we are told in the Remedia Amoris (33-34). Ovid’s disclaimer that he is writing only for freedwomen is implausible, as Peter Green demonstrates, and indeed married freedwomen would be also subject to the adultery law.\textsuperscript{34} Green also points out that many of the mythological exempla used by the poet to illustrate his lover’s art are adulterous, such as the familiar tale of Vulcan, Venus, and Mars (Ars Am. II.561-594).\textsuperscript{35}

The arguments of the elegists for adultery are neither original nor thoughtful. It is assumed that a married mistress will provide more interest and excitement than a single one. This seems to indicate social tension between the poets and Roman husbands (usually seen as dull men of public life). For either husband or wife to object to adultery is rusticus.

\textsuperscript{34}Green, pp. 377-378, 398.

\textsuperscript{35}Ibid., p. 347.
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("countrified"). The life of pleasure, especially sexual pleasure, is taken to be the most satisfactory way of life, and any residual morality that intervenes is to be mocked. Parties and drinking are to be among the normal activities and these parties will often end in sexual activity (see Ars. Am. I.4.1-10; cf. Prop. III.10.19-32).

Ovid and the elegists naturally defended adultery, as an essential portion of their art and of their world. Ovid’s basic reply to criticism of his morality is that he is an elegist, and elegy implies free love. The poet tells his critics to get their genres straight—Elegy is supposed to be wanton (Remedia Amoris, 385-388):

Thais in arte mea est; lascivia libera nostra est;
nihil mihi cum vita; Thais in arte mea est.
si mea materiae respondet Musa iocosae,
vicimus, et falsi criminis acta rea est.

Thais is the subject of my art; unfettered is my love-making: Naught have I to do with fillets; Thais is the subject of my art. If my Muse meets the charge of mirthful themes, I have won, and she is accused on a false charge.

On this passage and Ovid’s arguments Peter Green comments as follows:

... he argues (371-388) that if his form and style are appropriate to his subject-matter, the charge against him fails by definition—a presumption that might appeal to art-for-art’s sakers, but would hardly satisfy a Catonian moralist ... This defence is outrageous, not least because it so gratuitously begs a moral question in literary terms. Granted that a wanton (proterva) Muse calls for wanton expression, what obligation has Ovid to choose such a subject in the first place?36

Like many direct or indirect promoters of immorality Ovid’s goal was certainly as much popularity as sexual excitement. Just as poetry rather than love seems paramount in the Amores, so popularity rather than licentiousness seems the primary goal of the poet of the Ars

36Ibid., p. 412.
Amatoria. It is significant that Ovid tends to justify himself in terms of his popularity, as in this same passage (389-396):

rumpere, Livor edax: magnum iam nomen habemus;
maius erit, tantum quo pede coepit cat.
sem minim pro reras: vivam modo, plura dolebis,
et capiunt animi carmina multa mei.
nam iuvat et studium famae mihi crevit honore;
principio elivi noster anhelat equus.
tantum sc nobis elegi debere fatentur,
quanto Vergilio nobile debet epos.

Burst thyself, greedy Envy! my fame is great already;
It will be greater still, so it keep its first good fortune.
But you haste overmuch: if I but live, you will grieve the more;
Many a song in store has my genius yet.
For the desire of fame delights me, and has grown with my renown;
My steed pants but at the beginning of the slope.
Elegy admits it owes as much to me
As the noble Epic owes to Virgil.

Ovid no doubt chose his subject matter largely because it was a popular genre.

Popularity now and lasting fame after death were the poet’s chief goals. Peace and the Hellenistic way of life conspired to present sexual adventures as a preferable alternative to military and political adventures both in literature and real life. This is why adultery, seduction, and even rape loom large on the Ovidian landscape; they represent for both men and women an element of danger and excitement in an increasingly predictable and regulated world. Challenge, largely absent from public life, became, in this stereotyped form, an important ingredient in private life.

Art versus Life in Ovid (the Persona Theory)

It has often been asked whether biographical data and private opinions can be ascertained from a poet’s work. Is it Ovid speaking, they ask, or only one of potentially
numerous persona which he has chosen to adopt? It is only since Walter Pater and Oscar Wilde that such a question has played much role in English criticism at all. It is natural and inevitable that a poet’s writing should ultimately reflect his own thoughts and feelings, no doubt sometimes exaggerated, sometimes over-simplified, sometimes variously adapted, and usually somewhat transmuted. To read into ancient authors the self-conscious and tortuous experiments with persona of some modern poets is to prejudge one’s expectations of poetry in an extreme manner. Even modern poetry rarely escapes far from the circumstances of its authors. As Peter Green notes of T. S. Eliot, a major promoter of the persona approach:

The release of new material since Eliot’s death has shown that The Waste Land is deeply rooted in unhappy personal experience, an all-too-accurate reflection of the poet’s psychological and sexual problems at the time when it was written.\(^37\)

Ovid has a well-developed sense of parody, and his inclination to parody those conventions of a genre which do not suit his character or purpose is evident in the Amores. One may, with Barsby, talk about "Ovid the poet and Ovid in the persona of the elegiac lover",\(^38\) although it seems simpler to speak rather in terms of parody. The difficulty often is that those who take up the persona approach don’t know when to put it down. It is patently ridiculous to talk about the persona of Amores 1.15, for example; the poem is obviously Ovid’s own credo. The documentation of the relationship between literature and real life at Rome by Jasper Griffin has perhaps done something to curb the more extreme tendencies of the persona theory, and its cousin, the genre theory.

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\(^37\)Green, pp. 66-67.

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Such theories seem designed to put as much distance between art and life as possible, perhaps to avoid any embarrassing inferences from the life of the writer back to his work or vice versa. In particular they seem designed to prevent any moral assessment of the work, or the placing of any special construction on the character traits of the author. Sometimes writers will adopt such a pose (of detachment from their work) in the hope of gaining their writings a more sympathetic hearing. Sometimes it is simply an attempt to forestall criticism. It is notable that Charles Baudelaire, often thought of as a figurehead of the "art for art's sake" movement, vehemently denied the pose towards the end of his life. In a letter to a family friend Baudelaire wrote thus about Fleurs du Mal:

Is it necessary to tell you, you who have not guessed more than the others, that in that atrocious book I have put all my heart, all my affection, all my religion (travestied), all my hate? It is true that I will write to the contrary, that I will swear by my great gods that it is a work of pure art, of foolery ... of sleight-of-hand, and I will be lying through the teeth.39

It is almost inevitable that a significant work of art should be essentially a full expression of its author. The desire to sidestep the moral, mental, emotional, and spiritual problems of some Romantic and modern authors has led both the authors themselves and their commentators to separate art and life.

In Ovid the consistency of outlook makes such an approach especially suspect. Only are the poems in general congruent with one another, but their outlook and background fit well with ancient information on Ovid's life and attitudes. If the persona mode is used at all, it must be recognized that the persona in the Ovidian poems draws heavily on the poet himself, as Peter Green points out:

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In Ovid’s case we cannot begin to understand the literary persona until we accept the fact that it constantly embodies and exploits material from the poet’s life.40

Other critics find the term persona unnecessary, and employ simpler terms such as "narrator" for Ovid’s narrative poems, and usually just "Ovid", "the poet" or "praeeceptor amoris" for the love poems. Of the Metamorphoses Joseph Solodow writes:

The voices of the characters [e.g., Orpheus, Vertumnus] cannot be distinguished from that of the poem’s narrator ... I can find no sign of distance between narrator and poet ... the voice here is so similar to that in Ovid’s other poetry.41

At the same time apparent inconsistencies in Ovid such as injecting epigrams into serious narrative or readily switching perspective owe much to Ovid’s rhetorical training. A contemporary of Ovid’s, Votienus Montanus, declined to practise declamation on the grounds that it was sure to lead to bad habits of speech (quoted, Seneca the Elder, Contre IX, prf. 1):

Qui declamationem parat, scribit non ut vinca sed ut placeat. Omnia itaque lenocinia [ita] conquirit; argumentationes, quia molestae sunt et minimum habent floris, relinquit; sententiis, explicationibus audientis delinire contentus est. Cupit enim se approbare, non causam.

If you prepare a declamation beforehand, you write not to win but to please. You look for all possible allurements; you throw arguments overboard, because they are bothersome and much too sober; you rest content with cajoling the audience with epigrams and developments. Your aim is to win approval for yourself rather than for the case.

If Ovid’s attitudes and arguments are not always a model of consistency, he is nevertheless consistently entertaining. In order to entertain he will sometimes pursue a joke on a tangent to the main theme, or shift points-of-view rapidly to introduce an unnecessary but amusing incongruity. Ovid never takes his eye off his audience, and never turns a deaf ear to their

40Green, p. 64.

applause. Like other orators, he sometimes adopts far-fetched but striking language, in order to impress his listeners. As the Elder Seneca said of his poetry (a saying which may possibly also apply to his life), "he was well aware of his faults—and enjoyed them" (non ignoravit vitia sua sed amavit, Contr. II.2.12).

A connection between life and art was assumed by the Emperor Augustus when he exiled Ovid for two crimes, a poem and a mistake (carmen et error, Tr. II.207). The poem was the Ars Amatoria, Ovid's guidebook to seduction, and it is likely that his "blunder" was somehow related to the life-style envisioned in the Ars. Ovid denied the linkage and protested that his private character was free from blot (Tr. II.347-356):

sed neque me ruptae didicerunt furtu magistro, 
quodque parum novit, nemo docere potest. 
sic ego delicias et mollia carmina feci,  
strinxerit ut nomen fabula nulla meum. 
nec quisquam est adeo media de plebe maritus,  
ut dubius vitio sit pater ille meo. 
crede mihi, distant mores a carmine nostro—  
vita verecunda est, Musa iocosa mea—  
magnaque pars mendax operum est et ficta meorum:  
plus sibi permisit compositore suo.

But no brides have learned deception through my teaching;  
Nobody can teach that of which he knows too little.  
I have composed songs of pleasure and love  
But in such fashion that no scandal has ever touched my name.  
No husband exists even amid the common people  
Who doubts his fatherhood through sin of mine.  
I assure you, my character differs from my verse  
(My life is moral, my muse is gay),  
And most of my work, unreal and fictitious,  
Has allowed itself more licence that its author has had.

That there is a difference between a poet's life and his work will be admitted; but that the difference is usually radical, or one of opposition, is less likely. Indeed, Ovid does not pursue this line of defence much further, and instead argues at great length (361-470) that it is
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unfair to condemn him alone for writing of love when so many others were unpunished.

Throughout this passage Ovid fails to distinguish between life and poetry. Of Callimachus

Ovid says (367-368):

nec tibi, Battuïde, nocuit, quod saepe legenti
delicias versu fassus es ipse tuas.

It did not injure thee, scion of Battus, that thou didst often in verse
Confess to the reader thy wanton pleasures.

When Ovid speaks of the Roman Elegists he unhesitatingly connects the poet and his subject
matter. Of Catullus he writes (427-430):

sic sua lascivo cantata est saepe Catullo
femina, cui falsum Lesbia nomen erat;
nec contentus ea, multos vulgavit amores,
in quibus ipse suum fassus adulterium est.

Yet wanton Catullus sang oft of her
Who was falsely called Lesbia,
And not content with her he noised abroad many other loves
In which he admitted his own intrigues.

Ovid lists many more Roman love poets (431-444) ending with the elegists Gallus, Tibullus,
and Propertius (445-470). Tibullus is especially pointed to as one who taught the arts of love
(461-462):

multaque dat furti talis praecetpa docetque
qua nuptae possint fallere ab arte viros.

He gives teachings of many sorts for such an intrigue,
Showing brides by what arts ladies can deceive their lords.

The implication of Ovid's own argument is that he is only doing the same as the other elegists
did. The ineptness of this defence is that the marriage and adultery legislation did not exist at
Rome when Ovid's predecessors were writing.
It may be suggested that *Tristia* II was written too soon, and before Ovid's shock and anger at his exile had subsided. The poet's defence is not very judicious, and in places may have angered the Emperor further. No doubt also Ovid had a difficult case to argue: that the *Ars* was not harmful, and that it was not written for Roman ladies (both very dubious propositions). R. J. Dickinson has said of Ovid's defence:

He had to plead a negative case; he could not insist that he had wrought good with his *Ars Amatoria*, but only that he had not wrought evil ... the consequence of his spirited yet negative rhetoric is a desperation and wildness and overelaboration which critics have frequently noticed ... 42

The poet regularly asserts that no one has ever been injured by his poetry except himself (e.g., *Tr* II.563-568; *Ibis* 5-6). Yet, apart from pointing to a few verbal disclaimers in the *Ars Amatoria*, it was hard for him to argue that he had not written favourably about adultery. It may be indeed that Ovid's didactic pose in that poem was more than a pose. Peter Green notes that Ovid had done detailed research in preparing his cosmetic recipes for Roman ladies in the *Medicamina Faciei Feminace* ("On Facial Treatment for Ladies"). Green argues that the *Ars Amatoria* may be a more serious manual of seduction than is usually thought. 43 There is no doubt that the poet had given a lot of time and thought to techniques of seduction, and to minute aspects of the love affair. This supposes at least a fascination with the subject, and Ovid's repeated claims in the *Ars* of teaching from experience jar with his professions of ignorance after his exile (e.g., *Tr* II.347-348). 44


43Green, pp. 427-428.

44Holt N. Parker, in "Love's Body Anatomized: The Ancient Erotic Handbooks and the Rhetoric of Sexuality", in Pornography and Representation in Greece and Rome, ed. Amy Richlin (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 96, points out that experience (*susus*) was the (continued...)
Ovid makes several statements in *Tristia* II which seem to be untrue, and increase our doubts about the poem’s veracity; moreover, in his account (280-300) of places in Rome which might inspire lustful thoughts in women, he unfortunately reminds us of the list of spots for rendez-vous at Rome from the *Ars* (I.67-268). His suggestion that seeing the statues of gods in Roman temples will inspire women to think of love affairs is hardly self-evident.45 The assertion that the *Ars* was written for prostitutes alone (303), while necessary to Ovid’s defence, seems to overstate his case. His claim (543-544) that his youthful work (the *Ars*) is harming him now that he is old is certainly stretching chronology. Ovid’s apparent claim to have written twelve books of the *Fasti* (549-552) would also seem false. The poem appears to illustrate Montanus’s axiom that the declaimer tries to win approval for himself rather than for his case.

Ovid stated (351-352) that no husband needs to doubt of his child’s legitimacy because of the poet. This phrasing reminds us uncomfortably of the two elegies on Corinna’s abortion (*Am*, II.13 and 14); it also evokes the reply of Augustus’s daughter Julia when her intimates remarked on the resemblance of her offspring to their father Agrippa (*Macrobius*, II.5.9):

Numquam enim nisi navi plena tollo vectorem.

I never take on a passenger unless the hold is full.

Since the histories of Augustus’s daughter and granddaughter seem to be bound together with the poet’s fortunes, it is necessary to give attention to them.

44(...) continued
usual claim of the didactic teacher, even in ancient sex manuals. Nonetheless the frequent emphasis on this point in the *Ars Amatoria* makes denial less convincing later on.

Augustus, Julia, and the Dynastic Background

It may be emphasized that no contemporary evidence links Ovid directly with the two Julias; the evidence is all circumstantial, though plausible. Even the dates of exile for Ovid and the younger Julia are not certainly the same, although likelihood strongly supports their identity. A late tradition or conjecture links Ovid romantically with the elder Julia (Sidonius Apollinaris, Carm., XXIII.158-161): but it is likely that this based on the mistaken assumption that Ovid was exiled for adultery. A general connection, however, between the way of life of the two Julias and the amatory writings of Ovid has been widely assumed (e.g., Mattingly.

Roman Imperial Civilisation):

Ovid, the genius who could never learn self-discipline, ventured to give full expression to the licentious life of the generation of the Emperor's daughter, Julia, and her children.⁴⁶

The social and family life of Augustus himself was far from immaculate, a circumstance regularly evoked when the Emperor attempted to defend his social and marriage legislation. Dio Cassius relates (LIV.16.3-7) that the senate urged Augustus to further enlarge on his moral legislation "with ironical allusions to his own intimacy with so many women". They then pressed the Emperor to explain how he maintained control over his own household, to which he replied reluctantly in general terms "not in the least concerned that his actions did not lend credence to his words". To further embarrass Augustus (ibid.) the case of a young man who had married a woman with whom he had previously committed adultery was brought to him:

... Augustus was at a loss what to do, not daring to overlook the affair nor yet to administer any rebuke. At length, though with difficulty, he recovered himself and said: "Our factious quarrels have borne many terrible fruits; let

us, then, forget them and give our attention to the future, that nothing of the
sort may occur again."

This was a wise answer, but the case indicates, along with examples from the Imperial family,
how difficult it would be to restore even a semblance of traditional morality to Rome.

Augustus himself during "our factious quarrels" had engaged in amorous escapades
which were only surpassed by his vigorous rival Mark Antony. When, during their war of
propaganda, he accused of Antony of licentiousness, the triumvir replied effectively in kind
and listed the names of Augustus's paramours (Suet., Div. Aug. LXIX). Like any ambitious
young man of the Late Republic the young Octavian had aimed at using marriage as a political
stepping-stone. His first engagement was probably planned by Julius Caesar, but was broken
off after the dictator's assassination in order that he might ally himself with a relation of his
fellow triumvir, Mark Antony. This un consummated marriage was in tum repudiated in order
that the young general might reach an accommodation with Sextus Pompeius, leader of the
remaining Republican forces. Accordingly, Octavian married Scribonia, a relative of the
Pompeian leader (ibid., LXII). Soon after this, Octavian grew passionately fond of Livia, the
young wife of Tiberius Nero, and planned to marry her, even though both Scribonia and Livia
were pregnant at the time. After Scribonia had given birth to a daughter (the elder Julia),
Octavian repudiated her, and married Livia three days after her second son Drusus was born.
Livia's two children by her first husband became rivals for imperial honours, with Tiberius,
her elder son, eventually succeeding Augustus as Emperor. Octavian thus introduced a family
rivalry between the children of Scribonia and Livia which was to cause both himself and many
others great distress.

In spite of his happy marriage to Livia, Augustus did not, even as Emperor, refrain
from adultery (ibid., LXIX). Suetonius records gossip that even in his later years he was fond
of deflowering maidens and that even Livia helped at times to bring them to him (ibid., LXXI). This contrasts, of course, with Scribonia's shrewish and jealous attitude (ibid., LXII, LXIX). These faults of his greatly impeded the Emperor's efforts at moral reform, and caused resentment within his own family.

Augustus was especially desirous of obtaining a suitable heir from within his own family. His instincts were against promoting Livia's sons as possible contenders. When the imperial couple failed to produce children, the Emperor was forced to resort to ingenious but risky arrangements for a successor. The situation was complicated by Augustus's own questionable health, and by the pressing need to nominate someone who could command Rome's armies in the field. The latter consideration forced the Emperor to consider non-Julian candidates such as his friend and general, Marcus Agrippa, and later on, his step-son Tiberius.

That Augustus was not a public tyrant is evident in the freedom with which people criticized him to his face; such liberty can only be interpreted as widespread understanding of his clemency. That Augustus may have been a domestic tyrant, ably abetted by Livia, is a more plausible proposition. In any case the full weight of the new Augustan order fell most heavily on the members of the Emperor's family and his close associates. The restless search for a suitable heir put immense pressures on both the male and female members of his household. Meanwhile the daily life of his children and grandchildren was carefully planned and fully supervised (Suet., Div. Aug. LXIV). Julia, his daughter, was also a member of the imperial household, and her private and social activities were strictly limited. She, and later her own daughters, were taught spinning and weaving in the traditional manner; they were told not to do or say anything which might not be recorded in the household diary; they were not
to meet strangers, and the Emperor once wrote a letter to a young man, reprimanding him for approaching Julia without permission (ibid.).

The Emperor's daughters and granddaughters were to be married to politically significant figures who would support the new regime effectively. The history of the elder Julia demonstrates how Augustus was responsible for carrying the bad example of Late Republican marriage and divorce for political convenience into a new era. As a teenager Julia was married to Marcellus, Augustus's nephew and heir-apparent. When Marcellus died two years later, she was promptly married to Augustus's lieutenant Marcus Agrippa. Agrippa, a stem and middle-aged soldier, had to divorce Augustus's niece Marcella, in order to marry her. By Agrippa, Julia had three sons and two daughters. Agrippa died in 12 B.C., and the following year Julia was married to Tiberius, Livia's son. After five years Tiberius left Julia and Rome, for voluntary exile in Rhodes. Tiberius had been forced to divorce his wife (Agrippa's daughter, Vipsania) in order to marry Agrippa's widow, and he did so with the greatest reluctance. Thus by promoting forced marriage and divorce Augustus undermined his attempts to enhance marriage, and provoked resentment within his own family. Indeed the lack of any check on divorce is a major flaw in his enactments, since, as Carcopino asserts:

... facilities for divorce had, as it were, legitimised adultery by anticipation.47

The Emperor's sister Octavia had also experienced political marriages arising out of attempts to forge new alliances. Her children were to carry on this tradition. The plight of Julian males was no less uncomfortable. Octavia's son, Marcellus, while still a teenager, was married to the elder Julia. The young man was rapidly promoted to high honours, a circumstance which displeased Marcus Agrippa and other old supporters of the regime. In

47Carcopino, p. 95.
spite of his desire for a blood-heir, Augustus seems to have also recognized the need for a strong leader, and during the Emperor's illness of 23 B.C., Agrippa was indicated as successor. Thus an on-going clash between the Emperor's desire to be succeeded by a blood relative, and the need to recognize the services and abilities of men like Agrippa and Tiberius began. The early death of Marcellus postponed further conflict, and Augustus recognized Agrippa's services by marrying him to Marcellus's widow Julia.

This marriage seemed an ideal dynastic solution since it joined Agrippa to the Julian family, and resulted in offspring who were grandchildren of the Emperor, and children of his most able general. Three sons (Gaius, Lucius, and Agrippa) and two daughters (the younger Julia, and Agrippina) were born from this union. In Gaius and Lucius the succession seemed secure against fortune, and the two young men were accordingly groomed for imperial power, as Marcellus had been. The death of Agrippa in 12 B.C., however, produced a fresh need for a competent and trustworthy general, and Tiberius was selected to be Julia's new husband. The retirement of Tiberius to private life at Rhodes in 6 B.C. left the angry Augustus without a reliable general, and caused a further rapid promotion of Gaius. The inexperienced young man was sent at the head of a Roman Army to pacify the East (Armenia and Parthia) in 1 B.C. During this campaign Gaius was wounded treacherously at a parley in Armenia, and a gradual decline preceded his death early in A.D. 4. His brother Lucius had died en route to Spain eighteen months earlier. Augustus was then forced to elevate Tiberius as a potential successor.

The role of heir-apparent was an onerous one, since it involved both danger and leadership responsibility. Since the Emperor's health was precarious, the heir was himself a possible target of intrigues, and was resented by non-Julians who felt more deserving of
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promotion. To adapt Oscar Wilde's gibe, for the Emperor to lose one heir was a misfortune, but to lose three seems like carelessness. Not only the Emperor, but even more the Roman people, were anxious that Gaius and Lucius be promoted beyond their years and abilities (Dio Cassius, LV.9.1-5). There is a hint in descriptions of Gaius's last years (e.g., Dio, LV.10a.6-9) that he suffered from depression. While it cannot be said for certain that the pressures and expectations dropped upon these young men of unremarkable character hastened their death, it is at least as plausible that they were overwhelmed and demoralized by their responsibilities, as that they were hastened off by poison.

Meanwhile Julia remained at the centre of the dynastic whirlwind, but was quite powerless to direct it. Her sons, Gaius and Lucius, were adopted by Augustus, so that she played little role in their upbringing. She appears to have been both ambitious of power, and resentful of her father's control over her and her family. The common situation of a daughter disobliging her parents through sexual escapades would seem to apply to Julia, except that initially she took pains to conceal these from her father. It is at least possible that ambitious aristocrats used Julia as a potential weapon against the regime. Tacitus (Annals 1.53) speaks of her long adulterous relationship with Sempronius Gracchus:

qui, familia nobili, solleurs ingenio et prave facundus, candidam Iuliam in matrimonio Marci Agrippae temeraverat. Nec is libidini finis: traditam Tiberio pervicax adulter contemplatus est et odis in maritum accendebat; litteraeque quas Iulia patri Augusto cum inspectione Tiberii scripsit, a Gracco compciitae credebantur.

... a man of high birth, shrewd wit and perverted eloquence; who had seduced the same Julia while she was still the wife of Marcus Agrippa. Nor was this the close of the intrigue: for when she was made over to Tiberius, her persevering adulterer worked her into a fever of defiance and hatred towards her husband; and her letter to her father Augustus, with its tirade against Tiberius, was believed to have been drafted by Gracchus.
Rumours also said (Suet., Tib, VII.2) that Julia had shown an amorous interest in Tiberius while she was still married to Agrippa. At first indeed the marriage between Julia and Tiberius was harmonious (ibid., VII.3), but they separated soon after the death of their child in infancy. In large measure, the sullen nature of Tiberius was incompatible with the gaiety of Julia. Possibly, her continuing adulteries made his position unbearable, because, as Emperor’s daughter, it was dangerous to attempt to curb her (ibid., X.1). Tacitus (Annals 1.53) says that Julia despised Tiberius as her inferior, even though he was an aristocrat. A modern theory, noted by Pierre Grimal, is that Julia was offended by Tiberius’s reluctance to pull dynastic strings, and by his willingness to step aside in favour of Gaius and Lucius:

Tiberius had been selected only to act as “protector” of the young princes; Augustus had intended him to play a secondary and temporary role. While Tiberius’ natural modesty adjusted itself to the situation perfectly well, Julia could not tolerate it, after having dreamed of one day being a companion of great leaders, she could not bear the thought of taking second place. She told Tiberius, and reproached him with what she called his cowardice. In the end, Tiberius decided to leave Rome and live in Rhodes as a simple citizen.48

According to such conjectures, Julia hoped to become Empress or, at least, regent in the event of Augustus’s death. She, therefore, wished to be married to one who might reasonably aspire to be Emperor. Among several ambitious lovers, it appears that Iulius Antonius (the son of Mark Antony and Fulvia) had the strongest aspirations to the monarchy (Dio, LV.10.15), since he was afterwards forced to commit suicide on such grounds. Ironically, if Julia had remained married comfortably to Tiberius, she would have become Empress on Augustus’s death, but impatience and resentment frustrated this. Tiberius learned to hate her, and further punished her and her former lover Sempronius Gracchus on his accession to power.

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It has been suggested that the sexual adventurism of this period reflects the limitations and lack of challenge in public life, and the same may be said of the dynastic intrigues. How serious a challenge Julia and her lovers intended to give Augustus and the princes is a matter of dispute. In spite of a contemporary tendency to emphasize the conspiratorial and political aspects of this opposition, it seems unlikely that attacks on Augustus or the princes were directly planned. The continued popularity of Julia with the Roman people suggests that they attributed no cruel designs to her, and transferred any conspiratorial guilt to her lovers. Indeed the chief charges against Julia in 2 B.C. are of flagrant adulteries. Tiberius was still her husband, although in self-imposed exile. Worse still she had clearly violated and held up to ridicule her father’s marriage legislation, and thus further undermined the whole social programme which he was promoting with much difficulty. The charges against Julia were (Seneca, De Beneficiis VI.32.1):

admissos gregatim adulteros, pererratam nocturnis comissionibus civitatem, forum ipsum ac rostra, ex quibus pater legem de adulteriis tulerat, filiae in stupra placuisse, coediamum ad Marsysam concursum, cum ex adultera in quaestuarium versa ius omnis licitiae sub ignoto adultero pateret.

... that she had been accessible to scores of paramours, that in nocturnal revels she had roamed about the city, that the very forum and the rostrum, from which her father had proposed a law against adultery, had been chosen by the daughter for her debaucheries, that she had daily resorted to the statue of Marsyas, and laying aside the role of adulteress, there sold her favours, and sought the right to every indulgence with even an unknown paramour.

Of Julia’s revels in the Forum and even on the rostra itself we also have Dio’s testimony (LV.10.12). Some scholars have doubted these accounts, but quite unreasonably. Augustus communicated the charges to the senate, so that they would have been widely known. Seneca

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49 E.g., Grimal, pp. 269-270.
(ibid., 2) indeed relates that Augustus later regretted the extent of his disclosures, which reflected so badly on the imperial family.

That Julia should have engaged in sex on the rostra, or speaker's platform, argues a deliberate defiance of her father's programme. Such studied defiance of tradition and morality has become very common in the twentieth century, but must have been especially shocking to Roman attitudes. Stephen Spender tells how he and other young writers in the 1930s thought that the most important thing they could do was to write books which would offend the censors and the authorities.\textsuperscript{50} A similar self-righteous unrighteousness seems to have motivated Julia. We find that most of the anecdotes of her preserved by Macrobius \textit{(Saturnalia, II.5.1-10)} show her at odds with the expectations of Augustus and Livia. One anecdote relates how one day Julia visited her father wearing an immodest dress. The next day he pointedly commended her for wearing more modest attire. She readily replied (ibid., 5):

\begin{quote}
\textit{hodie enim me patris oculis ornavi, heri viri.}
\end{quote}

Yes, for today I am dressed to meet my father's eyes; yesterday it was for my husband'.

Augustus disapproved of her friends and one day made a disparaging comparison between the elderly respectable men who sat by Livia and the young modish group with Julia. The daughter neatly pointed out that her friends too would be old men, when she was old. This anecdote evokes a possible rivalry between Livia and Julia.

Sometimes Augustus got the better of the exchange, as when one day he found Julia's maids pulling out her gray hairs. Augustus asked her whether she would rather be gray or

\textsuperscript{50}E.g., Henry Miller, and others, who during the 1930s and after wrote books with the express purpose of breaking down sexual taboos and censorship.
bald. When she answered "gray", Augustus asked why then were her women in such a hurry to make her bald.

Common to all these stories is a clash of attitudes between father and daughter. That Julia was able to hold her own in wit against Augustus is no small mark of her abilities. As Macrobius puts it (ibid., 2):

cum alioquin litterarum amor multaque eruditio, quod in illa domo facile erat,
praeterea mitis humanitas minimeque saevus animus ignem feminae gratiam conciliarent...

Nevertheless, she had a love of letters and a considerable store of learning—not hard to come by in her home—and to these qualities were added a gentle humanity and a kindly disposition, all of which won for her a high regard...

Her interest in literature and her easy-going nature suggested for Grenier a close similarity in attitudes between Julia and Ovid.\(^{31}\) Julia's friends also seem to have like interests.

Sempronius Gracchus, for example, is described (Tac., \textit{Annals} I.53) as a man of wit and eloquence, and Iulius Antonius is pictured by Horace as no mean poet. Also suggestive is the great popularity of both Julia and Ovid, something which they both may have courted, and which indicates the popular preference for the life of pleasure over the life of responsibility. It is noteworthy that Julia by no means lost her popularity upon banishment (Dio, LV.13.1), and indeed popular pressure influenced Augustus to somewhat mitigate her punishment. It is unlikely too that Ovid's readership was much diminished by his exile.

Indications of Julia's behaviour had been conspicuous for some time but the Emperor hesitated to make the conclusions (Dio, LV.10.13):

He had surmised even before this time that she was not leading a straight life, but refused to believe it. For those who hold positions of command, it

appears, are acquainted with everything else better than with their own affairs ...

A similar account is given by Macrobius (II.5.3-4), along with Augustus’ reasons for doubting the rising gossip about his daughter:

Non semel praeceperat pater, temperato tamen inter indulgentiam gravitatemque sermone, moderaretur profusos cultus perspicuosque comitatus. Idem cum ad nepotum urbam similitudinemque respexerat qua representabatur Agrippa, dubitare de pudicitia filiae erubescbat. Inde blandiebatur sibi Augustus laetum in filia animum usque ad speciem procacitatis, sed reatu liberum, et talemuisse apud majores Claudiam credere audebat.

Again and again her father had referred to the extravagance of her dress and the notoriety of her companions and had urged her in language at once tender and grave to show more restraint. But at the same time the sight of his many grandchildren and their likeness to their father, Agrippa, forbade him for very shame’s sake to entertain any doubts about his daughter’s virtue. And so he flattered himself that her high spirits, even if they gave the impression of a wanton, were in fact blameless, and he ventured to regard her as a latter-day Claudia.

This would be Claudia Quinta, a celebrated Roman matron of the Claudian family (ironically, the family of Livia and Tiberius). Her story is told at length by Ovid (Fasti IV.291-348), and referred to briefly by Suetonius (Tib. II.3).

Julia, the Elegists, and Claudia Quinta

During the Second Punic War the Romans called upon new gods to bolster the deficiencies of the old ones. Most exotic of these was Cybele, the Mother Goddess from Asia Minor. In 204 B.C. a Roman delegation was sent to Pergamum, and the stone representing the goddess was then brought by ship to Rome and the Tiber River. The story continues that the people came out to meet the ship, as it sailed up the river, but it became stuck in the shallow stream. Then Claudia came forward, conscious of scandalous gossip about herself, and prayed
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to the goddess that the boat would be released, but only if Claudia herself were indeed chaste.

With little effort, Claudia drew the ship free from the shallows, and along the stream. Ovid adds (ibid., 326)

(mira, sed et scaena testificata loquar).

My story is a strange one, but it is attested by the stage.

Claudia’s story became the archetypical tale of an apparently overly-free woman who was in fact virtuous, and of how base reproach might be turned back on the rumour-mongers. It was, as Ovid says, popularized on stage, either as a traditional tale performed at a religious festival or perhaps in a more recent adaptation. A statue of Claudia existed in the temple of Cybele on the Palatine, which was restored by Augustus (Res Gestae, 19). The building was destroyed by fire in A.D. 3, but not the statue (Valerius Maximus, I.8.11).

The moral of the story would appeal to the elegists: an apparently loose woman is shown to be moral, while the censorious are shown to be scandal-mongers. A significant use of the tale occurs in Propertius (IV.11.51-52). This elegy, resembling a funeral oration, sings the praises of Cornelia, wife of Paullus Aemilius Lepidus (consul in 34 B.C.), daughter of Scribonia, and therefore, half-sister of the elder Julia. Like Claudia, there was gossip about Cornelia (in spite of her three children), and the poet deals at some length with her vindication (ibid., 15-22, 37-60). He reiterates (in the persona of Cornelia) that she has no need to fear the judges of the underworld (49-52):

quaelibet austeras de me ferat una tabellas:  
turpior assessu non erit ulla meo,  
vel tu, quae tardam movisti fune Cybellen,  
Claudia, turritae rara ministra deae ...

I care not who the judges be that pass stern sentence on me;  
No woman shall be shamed by sitting at my side,
Not thou, Claudia, the peerless servant of the tower-crowned goddess,  
That didst lay hold of the cable and move Cybele's lagging image ...

Although the poet does not drive home the point, it is likely that his choice of Claudia as an  
underworld companion for Cornelia was suggested by their similarity in being victims of  
gossip.

It is suggestive that we have here a gossipped-about matron with close ties to the  
imperial household. Scribonia, Augustus, and the elder Julia are all mentioned in the poem  
(55-60). Cornelia's son Lucius Aemilius Paullus (consul in A.D. 1) married the adulterous  
younger Julia, and was accused of conspiring against the imperial succession. One of the sons  
of her brother, Publius Cornelius Scipio (consul in 16 B.C.), may have been the Scipio  
charged with adultery with the elder Julia in 2 B.C.\textsuperscript{52}

Claudia, as a reference for a woman of vindicated virtue, is employed by Ovid himself  
in praising his wife. After listing his wife's many ties to the affections of the imperial  
household, he notes that the approval of Marcia and Atia would have been sufficient also for  
Claudia's vindication (\textit{Pont.} I.2.140-142):

\begin{center}
\begin{quote}
quam iudicio situa probata, proba est.
ipsa sua melior fama laudantibus istic,
Claudia divina non eguisset ope.
\end{quote}
\end{center}

Any woman approved in their judgment is indeed approved.  
Even she who was better than her own fame, even Claudia,  
Had such women praised her, would have needed no divine aid.

The \textit{Fasti} passage gives Ovid an opportunity to take aim against a favourite foe, \textit{livor}  
\textit{edax} ("gnawing envy") who plagues both poets and lively matrons. The crime of being too  
cultivated, too fashionable, and too witty (too much like Ovid and his friends) inspires false  
rumours of immorality (\textit{Fasti} IV.305-312):

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{52}Syme, \textit{History in Ovid}, p. 194, fnt. 4.
\end{quote}
Claudia Quinta traced her descent from Clausus of old,
And her beauty matched her nobility.
Chaste was she, though not reputed so. Rumour unkind
Had wronged her, and a false charge had been trumped up against her.
It told against her that she dressed sprucely, that she walked abroad with her hair
Dressed in varied fashion, that she had a ready tongue for gruff old men.
Conscious of innocence, she laughed at fame’s untruths:
But we of the multitude are prone to think the worst.

This seems to go beyond the usual elegiac dismissal of the talk of old men (as in Cat. V.1-3).

Its circumstantiality suggests a particular instance, and G. H. Hallam suggested that Ovid has
the elder Julia in mind:

Under cover of this story about Claudia Ovid defends the character of
Augustus’s light-hearted, dissolute, but witty daughter Julia. Evil reports were
mooted against her about 1 or 2 B.C. when these lines were probably written.\(^5\)

It seems more likely, however, that these lines were written after Julia’s banishment.\(^6\) In
spite of the public nature of the evidence against her, it is possible that some suggestions to
the contrary may have been part of the campaign to secure her recall. It is less disputable that
the example of Claudia is a standard defence for elegiac lovers and poets, and ultimately


\(^6\)One may either suppose that the *Fasti* was written before the banishment of the elder Julia,
and broken off at the time of her fall, in which case these lines are defending her against mere verbal attacks, or that it was begun after her banishment to win the poet some credit in the eyes of the regime, in which case the Claudia story is meant to suggest that Julia was not as bad as she had been painted. I have adopted the second supposition, as it seems to fit the *Fasti* more comfortably into the sequence of Ovid’s works.
Ovid’s own in exile: a protestation of (relative) innocence, combined with an attack on rumour-mongers and enemies in general. The gambit is to move attention from the charges back to the motives of the accusers, and the Claudia story is an excellent precedent for dismissing scandalous reports.

The first source to bring the elder Julia and Ovid into close association is Sidonius Apollinaris, writing circa 461-466 A.D. Sidonius is clearly interested in Ovid, both in his banishment to Tomi and in his relations with Corinna. His information, however, appears to be garbled, where not ambiguous. In a catalogue of Roman poets he lists Ovid (Carm. XXIII.158-161):

\[
et te carmina per libidinosa
notum, Naso tener, Tomosque missum,
quondam Caesareae nimos puellae
ficio nomine substitum Corinnae?
\]

And languishing Ovid, famed for his Lascivious poems and banished to Tomi, Too much erstwhile the slave of Caesar’s daughter Whom he called by the feigned name of Corinna.

For what it is worth this is the earliest explicit statement of connection between Ovid and the Julias. Indeed there is relatively little about Ovid’s banishment from ancient sources.\textsuperscript{55}

The younger Julia was banished circa A.D. 8, nine years after her mother, and for similar reasons. Her husband, L. Aemilius Paullus (consul in A.D. 1) was punished by exile for conspiracy.\textsuperscript{56} Fewer details are known of the circumstances of this scandal than of the elder Julia’s. Tacitus relates (Ann. III.24) that D. Junius Silanus was one of Julia’s adulterers. He was obliged to leave Rome in unofficial exile.

\textsuperscript{55}Cf. Syme, p. 215.

\textsuperscript{56}Thus Syme, pp. 210-211. Paullus died in exile in A.D. 13 or 14.
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The apparent coincidence in date between Julia's exile and Ovid's has led to speculations about their mutual involvement. No clear evidence of this exists, but the anger of Augustus and the severity of Ovid's penalty certainly suggests a dynastic involvement. Perhaps the most plausible suggestion is that Ovid concealed knowledge of a plot against Augustus, or some other dynastic misadventure, until after its discovery.\(^{57}\)

Julia, Ovid, and "Older Women"

Adultery by the elder Julia would have been serious enough in itself, especially given her father's strict laws on the subject. But in the eyes of Julia's critics her sexual sins were aggravated by both their blatant and semi-public nature and by Julia's age at the time. It seems that Augustus (like the Emperor Claudius regarding Messalina) was trying hard not to see his daughter's misbehaviour, and that she finally forced the evidence on him by her persistent transgressions. While there is no clear evidence that sexual promiscuity in a young woman (especially an heiress) was regarded with tolerance, it seems that custom attributed more culpability to an older matron.\(^{58}\) Thus Macrobius states (ibid., II.5.2):

> Annum agebat tricesimum et octavum, tempus aetatis, si mens sana superesset, vergentis in senium, sed indulgentia tam fortunae quam patris abuebatur ...

Julia was thirty-eight and had reached a time of life which, had she been sensible enough, she would have regarded as bordering on old age, but she habitually misused the kindness of her own good fortune and her father's indulgence.

\(^{57}\)Cf. Green, pp. 58-59.

\(^{58}\)It would appear, for example, that Messalla's young niece Sulpicia had few scruples about proclaiming her love. Yet to write about love in a literary circle had a certain legitimacy which the unalloyed life of pleasure might not.
According to Roman tradition, adolescence was the time of life for love and revels. Julia and her friends were pushing their "youth culture" activities well into middle age. Ovid too may be implicated in this anti-traditional extension of oitium, especially as praecceptor amoris. In the Ars, moreover, the aging poet makes a number of comments which show that he envisions middle-aged women as playing the amorous game also.

Although the "gather ye rosebuds" theme is not a predominant one for Ovid it does occur emphatically at the beginning of Ars Am. III.(69-76):

tempus erit, quo tu, quae nunc excludis amanies,  
frigida deserta nocte iacibus anus,  
nec tua frangetur nocturna Ianua rixa,  
sparsa nec invenies limina mane rosa.  
quam cito (me miserum!) laxantur corpora rugis,  
et perit in nitido qui fuit ore color.  
quasque fuisse tibi canas a virging iuras,  
spargentur subito per caput omnie comae.

That day will come when you, who now shut out your lovers,  
Will lie, a cold and lonely old woman, through the night;  
Nor will your door be broken in a nightly brawl,  
Nor will you find your threshold strewn with roses in the morning.  
How quickly, ah! is the body furrowed by wrinkles,  
And the colour fled that once was in that lovely face!  
And the white hairs that you swear have been there since maidenhood  
Will suddenly be scattered over all your head.

This sounds a bit like the poet’s lament for his own generation, growing too old (almost) for the life of pleasure. Later (163-166) he suggests how some of the catastrophes of aging may be remedied:

femina canitiem Germanis inficit herbis,  
et melior vero quarerit arte color.  
Femina procedit densissima crinibus emptis,  
Proque suis alias efficit aere suos.

A woman stains her whitening locks with German juices,  
And by skill seeks a hue better than the real;
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A woman walks 'neath a burden of purchased tresses,
And money buys new locks for old.

Such passages remind us of Macrobius's anecdote about Julia's maids pulling her gray hairs. Ovid himself seems to come down strongly in favour of older women, although some of his remarks on the benefits of experience may be indirect self-advertisement (Ars Am.

II.663-668,675-680):

necquis annus eat, nec quo sit nata, require,
consul, quae rigidus munera Censor habet:
praecipue si flore caret, meliusque peractum
tempus, et albenes iam legit illa comas.
utilis, o iuvenes, aut haec, aut serior actas:
iste feret segetes, iste serendus ager ...
adde, quod est illis operum prudentia maior,
solus et artifices qui facit, usus adest:
illae munditis annorum damna rependunt,
et faciunt cura, ne videantur anus.
utque velis, venerem iungunt per mille figuram:
inventit plures nulla tabella modos.

Ask not how old she be, nor under what consul she was born;
These are the duties of the stern Censor:
Particularly so, if she is past her prime, if the flower of her age is over,
And already she is plucking out the whitening hairs.
Profitable, ye lovers, is that or even a later age;
That field will bear, that field must be sown ...
Add this, that they have greater acquaintance with their business,
And they have experience, which alone gives skill, on their side:
They make good the waste of years by elegance,
And by their pains contrive not to seem old.
According to your taste they will embrace you in a thousand ways;
No picture could devise more modes than they.

This passage comes emphatically near the conclusion of the original Ars, where the poet discusses sexual intercourse itself. He urges young men (iuvenes, l. 667) to seek out older women, and praises them as generally preferable for sexual activity (ibid., 693-694,699-702):

haec bona non primae tribuit natura iuventae,
que cito post septem lustra venire solent ...
selicet Hermionen Helenae praeponere posses,
et melior Gorge, quam sua mater, erat?
at venerum quicumque voles adtingere seram,
si modo duraris, praemia digna feres.

These joys, which come quickly after seven lustres,
Nature has not granted to early youth...
What? would you be able to prefer Hermione to Helen,
And was Gorge fairer than her mother?
Whoever you are that wish to approach charms that are mature,
If you will play your part, you will win a fitting reward.

The poet's interest in women over thirty-five (septem lustra) is notable. It certainly agrees with the theme of experience in the poem, and may indicate that Ovid expected middle-aged women to be an important part of his audience.

Ovid would be some four years older than the elder Julia, and, therefore, of the same generation. From their common interests it is likely that they shared acquaintances, if not friends. In talking about older women, therefore, Ovid is speaking of his own contemporaries.

The basic reason for associating Ovid with the Julias is the need to find a context for his poetry. As L. P. Wilkinson writes:

The Ars Amatoria was not written in a vacuum; it was the reaction of a witty and high-spirited member of a sophisticated circle to a puritanical and sometimes hypocritical orthodoxy backed by power.\(^{59}\)

Ovid was not an independent social thinker, nor a man of political courage. In spite of his desire for popularity or notoriety, he would probably need encouragement to write something as contrary to the Emperor's programme as the Ars. It is unlikely that the patrons addressed in the poems from exile would support such an approach. His eye, therefore, must have been on the favour of someone else—presumably the Julias and their circle of friends.

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\(^{59}\)Wilkinson, Ovid Recalled, p. 294.
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Abortion and Infanticide in Ancient Rome

Ovid’s elegies on abortion (Am., II.13 and 14) and Julia’s explanation for the resemblance of her offspring to their father Agrippa raise in acute form the complications of free love for both the married and unmarried. As in Propertius II.7, the elegist objects equally to either a wife or children. The elegiac lover must be available at all times for the emotions and adventures of a love affair; family life is an unwanted complication. Propertius makes the elegists’ attitude towards pregnancy, childbirth, and abortion clear (II.15.21-22):

nece dum inclinatae prohibent te ludere mammæ:
viderit haec, si quam iam peperisse pudet.

It’s not as though sagging breasts bar you from fun and games:
Leave that worry to her who knows the shame of having given birth.

Not only are pregnancy and children undesirable in themselves, but they are also possible informers against the lovers who are attempting to keep their relationship secret from spouses, gossips, and authorities. Since the elegiac life-style is primarily the life of pleasure, and it is unpleasant even to think upon these things, there is rarely a direct connection made between sexual activity and pregnancy in elegy. In so far as a connection is made at all it is perfunctory and cannily practical; one has to deal with these things but not dwell on them. In mythology, however, pregnancy and child-bearing can be effectively pathetic and emotional, adding interest to the story.

The præceptor amoris touches only briefly on these matters, and, often in his haste to recommend sexual activity, ignores them completely for the time. The poet tells women to imitate the amorous goddesses, and feel no scruples about sex since the vagina suffers no wear and tear from intercourse. The only loss would be a foolish loss of pleasure if you decline (cf. Am., II.2.11-12). Peter Green comments thus on this particular passage (Ars Am., III.87-89):
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There follows what must surely rank as Ovid’s most outra argument: a reassurance that the human vagina, unlike stone and metal, is infinitely elastic and does not wear out as a result of heavy use! Not encouraging promiscuous conduct (97)? Surely this line carries a stage-wink for male readers? And when he gaily asks (89) ‘Why worry?’ he, like jesting Pilate, does not wait for the answers, some of which (unwanted pregnancies being the most obvious) he was well aware of himself. At moments such as this the eristic dexterity cannot mask a fundamental hollowness of purpose.60

While we may believe that the poet here is exaggerating for humourous and shocking effect, the passage is nonetheless quite compatible with his favourite theme. It is the absence of even the most elementary qualifications to his doctrine, or reflections on its consequences, that has branded Ovid as a shallow and immoral writer.

Preceding the above passage by a little, is Ovid’s advice to ladies to "gather ye rosebuds" which concludes with an apparent warning against child-bearing (Ars Am. III.79-82):

... carpite florem
qui, nisi carptus erit, turpiter ipse cadet.
adde, quod et partus faciunt breviorm iuventae
tempora: continua messe senescit ager.

... pluck the flower,
Which save it be plucked will basely wither.
Besides, childbirth shortens the period of youth:
A field grows old by continual harvesting.

Since women gain weight during pregnancy which they do not immediately lose on delivery, pregnancy is less than popular in cultures which admire most a slim or girlish female figure, and in which women continue to vie for male attention long after adolescence and marriage. Since child-bearing also stretches the abdominal skin and muscles it tends to impair the shape and appearance of the figure, as well as increasing its size. These tendencies are greater when the women in question are sedentary, as among the affluent Romans.

60Green, p. 60.
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References in Roman Literature to women, especially "beauties" or socialites of the upper classes, who deliberately avoided child-bearing for cosmetic reasons are fairly common. Most elaborate is the argument of the philosopher Favorinus (2nd century A.D.) who argues against women who refuse to breast-feed their babies for beauty reasons, and goes on to associate such behaviour with those who have abortions to avoid the physical effects of childbirth (Aulus Gellius, XII.1.7-9). Juvenal, in a famous passage (VI.592-601), says that upper class women avoid the trouble of child-bearing by drinking abortive drugs. Seneca (ad Helviam, 16.3) commends his mother by saying that she is not like women who regard beauty as all in all:

...numquam te secunditatis tuae, quasi exprobraret actatem, puduit, numquam more aliarum, quibus omnis commendatio ex forma petitur, tumescentem uterum abscondisti quasi indecens onus, nec intra viscera tua conceptus spes liberorum elisisti ...

...you have never blushed for the number of your children, as if it taunted you with your years, never have you, in the manner of other women whose only recommendation lies in their beauty, tried to conceal your pregnancy as if an unseemly burden, nor have you ever crushed the hope of children that were being nurtured in your body ...

In Ovid's love poetry the beauty of Corinna's smooth belly (planus venter) and youthful thigh (juvenale femur) are listed among her charms (Am. I.5.21-22). Writing about Corinna's abortion, the poet asks her whether it was done to avoid stretch marks (Am. II.14.7-8). In a poem from exile (the Nux 23-24) Ovid also associates abortion and childlessness with the desire for beauty:

nunc uterum vitiat quae vult formosa videri,
raraque in hoc aevo est quae velit esse pares.

Now she that would seem beautiful harms her womb, And rare in these days is she who would be a parent.
In the *Ars* (III.785-786) the praeceptor gives advice to women with stretch marks to sit backwards on their lovers during sexual intercourse (cf. 779-782):

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{tu quoque, cui nugis uterum Lucina notavit,} \\
&\text{ut celer aversis utere Parthus equis.}
\end{align*}
\]

And you whose belly Lucina has marked with wrinkles, 
Like the swift Parthian, use a backward-turned steed.

For women who wished not to have children or wished to have extra-marital relationships there were a number of ways to avoid either childbirth or detection. The fertility of the elder Julia was itself a cover for adultery, since she was pregnant during a good part of her second marriage. More commonly childbirth itself was avoided. At a later period Juvenal alleges (VI.366-378) that some women kept eunuchs capable of the sex act but not of procreation. A declamation, quoted by the elder Seneca (*Controv.*, II.5.2), suggests that women had access both to contraception and abortion. Neither method was proven and secure, however, and Pliny the Elder cites contradictory statements from two female writers on abortion (*Natural History*, XXVIII.81). Ovid (*Am.*, II.14.27-28) speaks of women using either metal tools or drugs as means of abortion, and indicates that Corinna used "weapons" (*telaec, ibid.*, 1-8,33-34).

It may seem strange, given the Emperor's desire for increased population, that abortion should seem rather common and relatively unchecked. The *Lex Cornelia* of 81 B.C. may have applied to abortionists, as well as assassins and poisoners, and may have been revised by Augustus (*Musonius Rufus, Discourse* XV); but we know of no prosecutions for abortion at this period in Rome. Abortion may have been grounds for divorce if done without the husband's permission.\(^4^1\) Perhaps, since it was usually supposed that abortion took place to

avoid detection of an illicit love affair, it was felt that the death of the unborn child was not a loss to the family. There are imperial examples of the infanticide by exposure of children born as a result of adultery (Suet. Div. Aug. LXV.4, and Claud. XXVII.2).

The power of life and death over his household by the paterfamilias applied especially to newborn babies. The father recognized the legitimacy and promise of the newborn by picking him up when the baby was placed at his feet. Both Greeks and Romans accepted the idea of the exposure of unwanted children, a practice which presumably goes back to the time when their ancestors were wandering tribesmen eking out a scant subsistence. The baby was not usually killed directly (originally this was to avoid the taint of blood-guilt) but was left at a recognized spot for foundlings where it might be rescued by a sympathetic passer-by or a slave-dealer. An apparently disproportionately low number of females compared to males in the Roman world suggests that exposure of females was more common, and usually resulted in the death of the child.

On the whole, abortion seems to have been less respectable than traditional infanticide, presumably because the former was associated with illicit love affairs. Also, exposure of infants was a traditional privilege of the paterfamilias and does not receive any serious challenge until Musonius Rufus spoke against it in Nero’s day; sentiment, however, sometimes allowed it to be cruel (e.g., the Elder Seneca, Controv. IX.3.11). Moreover, by abortion the father and his family could be deprived of a legitimate heir. Cicero (Pro Cluentio, 31-35) paints a lurid picture of plots to kill a pregnant mother or to bribe her to have an abortion in order that the plotters may receive larger inheritances after the father’s death. The belief too that abortion was practised by society women for cosmetic reasons, or to avoid the trouble of children, made it appear less acceptable.
Ovid's Abortion Elegies (Am. II.13 and 14)

It is none the less surprising to find Ovid speaking strongly against abortion in the
Amores and later in the Nux, since as a modish praeceptior amoris he accepts it by implication
(Ars Am. III.79-82). The two elegies (Am. II.13 and 14) are open to varied interpretation, but,
on the whole, their ostensible case against abortion is sufficiently undercut that they cannot be
taken as serious attacks on abortion. In the first elegy Ovid begins by stressing the danger to
Corinna and the poet's fear (Am. II.13.1-4). This is followed immediately by the poet's rueful
reflection as to his chances of being the father (5-6). Next comes a grandiloquent invocation
of Isis to bring help to Corinna (7-18), which makes up well over a third of the poem. With
its injunction to Isis "by the face of revered Anubis" (per Anubidis ora verendi), it seems that
the poet is having some fun with the trappings of the Isis cult. A second invocation to a
goddess follows (19-26), (rather inappropriately) to Illithyia, the goddess of childbirth. The
poet pledges himself to become a humble devotee of Illithyia if Corinna lives (22-26). The
poem ends (27-28) with a brief warning to Corinna not to have more abortions. It is easy to
read the poem as an elaborate joke, or as a comic treatment of the panic which attacks those
under pressure. It is difficult to read it as an expression of serious concern either for the act of
abortion or for Corinna.

The poem that follows is longer, more philosophic, and ostensibly more serious (Am.
II.14). Ovid begins by lamenting the rashness that involves women in such peril (1-4). In a
common poetic and rhetorical figure, he declaims against the inventrix of the practice (5-6).
Then he charges that vanity is a motive for abortion (7-8). Next he forms the argument that if
mothers of olden time had done this the human race would have perished, and heroes like
Achilles and Aeneas would never have been born (9-18). The reference to Venus depriving
the world of Aeneas's race, and, therefore, the Caesars raises a suspicion of levity. This increases when Ovid leads the argument down to himself, and remarks that if his mother had slain him in the womb he would not be able to die of love.

Ovid's argument is most familiar to us from Immanuel Kant's "Categorical Imperative", a moral guideline that we should always act as if our actions were to have a universal application in such cases. Thus we should never lie even in small or apparently justifiable matters, since to lie would be indefensible if done as a general principle. In ancient times Socrates is said to have used a similar argument to persuade his friends not to bribe his jailer in order to allow him to escape. Socrates argued (Crito, 11) that to run away from the judgment against him would be to destroy the city's laws, and that, if everyone did such things, the state would be overturned.

It is unlikely that Ovid went to the philosophers for his arguments, so we may suppose a nearer source. It is likely that some such arguments were current in the schools of rhetoric, and in public life, and indeed on this very topic, the decline in population. Augustus may have first initiated legislation to increase marriage and childbirth in 28 B.C., and the argument from general principles was a natural one to use, and perhaps one that traditionally appealed to the Romans. Dio Cassius (LVI.4.4) portrays Augustus as using a similar argument in his censure of the unmarried equites in A.D. 9. The Emperor emphasizes the dire results of the practices of celibacy and childlessness:

For you, heedless alike of the providence of the gods and of the watchful care of your forefathers, are bent upon annihilating our entire race and making it in truth mortal, are bent upon destroying and bringing to an end the entire Roman nation. For what seed of human beings would be left, if all the rest of mankind should do what you are doing?
Such a passage raises the possibility that Ovid is citing, and perhaps parodying, contemporary arguments in favour of marriage and childbirth. The parody would come from using official rhetoric in the context of an unofficial and irregular relationship.

Amores II.14 continues (23-26) with an argument by analogy from nature. ("We leave fruit to mature, don’t we?") This analogy is much expanded years later in the Nux (7-34). Then follows (27-40) an address to women arguing against the practice. He compares women who abort to the tragic heroines Medea and Procris (20-34) and asks them what villainous hero has driven them to this crime. Neither fierce tigresses nor lionesses kill their offspring, but women do, and are often punished by suffering death themselves from the attempt (35-40). The poem concludes with a wish and a prayer that this will not be the case for Corinna (41-44).

In these two poems then there is evidence that Ovid is parodying official sentiments in favour of marriage and motherhood, by transferring them to irregular unions and abortion.

This is most evident in the first poem where the invocation to the Mother Goddess, Isis, and the Goddess of Childbirth, Ilithyia, is jarring in the context of abortion. The appeal to Ilithyia, hardly a household name, reminds the reader that she was invoked by Horace in that very official poem, the Carmen Saeculare in 17 B.C. (13-20):

rite maturas aperi re partus  
enis, Ilithyia, tuere matres,  
sive tu Lucina probas vocari  
seu Genitalis.

---

Mary-Kay Gamel, Non Sine Caede: Abortion Politics and Poetics in Ovid’s Amores", in Helios 16(1989), pp. 183-206, also sees a possible connection between this speech of Augustus and the speaker in Ovid’s abortion elegies.

Cf. Green, p. 303.
diva, producas subolem patrumque
proserpes decreta super iugandis
feminis prolisque novae ferac
lege marita ...

O Illithyia, that, according to thy office, art gracious
To bring issue in due season, protect our matrons,
Whether thou preferrest to be invoked as "Lucina"
Or as "Genitalis"

Rear up our youth, O goddess, and bless
The Fathers' edicts concerning wedlock and the marriage-law,
Destined, we pray, to be prolific
In new offspring.

Here Horace is invoking the goddess responsible for birth as the religious figurehead for Augustus's repopulation programme. By invoking the same goddess to assist the recovery of his girlfriend after an abortion Ovid is certainly introducing a jarring change of context. Just as his invocation to Isis could be a parody of the vows and prayers of Isis's devotees wishing to become mothers, so the Illithyia prayer by Ovid may parody official prayers for the fruitfulness of Roman matrons.

The second abortion poem is longer and more complex, but the parody element also seems present. The important "categorical imperative" argument (9-22) sounds like a parody of official sentiments on procreation, which are somewhat undercut by the poet's own case being prominently displayed (21-22). The next important section (27-40) may be regarded as melodramatic with its tragic motifs and mythological exempla. There is a suggestion here that the poet is so over-stating his case as to make it ridiculous, a suggestion reinforced by the concluding hope that the poet's fears will be vain (41-42) and his concession that Corinna may die if she tries this again (44). The element of parody in Ovid's abortion elegies suggests that he does not treat the matter as one of great seriousness. This would be in line with the worldliness elsewhere
evident in the *Amores* and the *Ars*. This need not rule out the possibility that the poet would be fearful, angry, or upset if his mistress were in the situation envisioned in the poem.

Since elegy tends to idealize the life of pleasure, by invoking mythological precedents and omitting commonplace details, the connection between sex and procreation is rarely made. Part of the shock value of the two abortion elegies is to pointedly introduce a subject which love elegists would normally avoid altogether. The other shock element of the poems is to bring the exalted official sentiments on procreation into close juxtaposition with contemporary mores.

**Abortion, Infanticide, Pregnancy, and Childbirth in Ovid**

In his *Fasti* Ovid tells the traditional story of how Roman matrons regained the honour of riding in carriages by using abortion as a weapon (1.619-626):

```latex
Nam prius Ausonias matres carpenta vehebant
  (haec quoque ab Evandi dicta parente reor);
mox honor eripiut, matronaque destinat omnis
  ingratos nulla prole novare viros,
  neve daret partus, ictu temeraria caeco
  visceribus crescens excutiebat onus.
corripuisse patres ausas immitia nuptas,
  ius tamen ereptum restituisse ferunt ...
```

For of old Ausonian matrons drove in carriages,
Which I ween were also called after Evander’s parent.
Afterwards the honour was taken from them, and every matron vowed
Not to propagate the line of her ungrateful spouse by giving birth to offspring;
And lest she should bear children, she rashly by a secret thrust
Discharged the growing burden from her womb.
They say the senate reprimanded the wives for their daring cruelty,
But restored the right of which they had been mulcted.

This passage may be compared to a parallel account in Plutarch’s *Moralia* (*Roman Questions*, 56):
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There is a certain tale repeated that the women were prevented by the senate from using horse-drawn vehicles; they therefore made an agreement with one another not to conceive nor to bear children, and they kept their husbands at a distance, until their husbands changed their minds and made the concession to them.

It is notable that Plutarch represents the matrons as using various methods, including a sex-strike (the most traditional weapon in such cases), while Ovid mentions solely abortion. This may be an indication that in Ovid's time abortion was the commonest method of avoiding childbirth, and that it may have been used as a domestic weapon. Ovid's matrons also, like Corinna, use surgical methods rather than drugs to abort.

In Tristia II Ovid mentions a number of immoral writers whose indecencies exceeded his own but nonetheless were not punished. These include an unnamed writer on Achilles, Aristides (a writer of Milesian tales), Eubius, and Hemitheon, the author of the Sybaritica. Eubius seems to have written an amatory tale or tales in which the heroine has an abortion; he is described by Ovid as "the composer of a foul tale" (impurae conditor historiae, 416). In the Nux, perhaps written soon after, Ovid uses the contrast between fruitfulness and barrenness to praise the nut-tree and condemn abortion; he also refurbishes the "categorical imperative" argument with respect to crops ceasing to grow (Nux, 27-34). These changes would be in line with his desire to placate the hostile Emperor.

There are no examples of infanticide in the Amores, Ars, or exile poems, presumably because the issue did not arise there. In the narrative poems, however, there are references to both abortion and infanticide. In Heroides VII Dido, abandoned by Aeneas, complains that she may be pregnant by him and that her desperate suicide will doom the child as well (133-138):

For sit te gravidam Dido, scelerate, relinquas,
parque tui lateat corpore clausa meo.
accedet fatis matris miserabilis infans,
et nondum nato funeris auctor eris,
cumque parente sua frater morietur lui,
poenaque conexos auferet una duo.

Perhaps, too, it is Dido soon to be mother, O evil-doer, whom you abandon
now,
And a part of your being lies hidden in myself.
To the fate of the mother will be added that of the wretched babe,
And you will be the cause of doom to your yet unborn child;
With his own mother will Iulus’ brother die,
And one fate will bear us both away together.

_Heroïdes_ XI is the letter of Canace to her brother-lover Macareus, telling him of her
fate and the fate of the child of their incest. Canace tells how her nurse helped her to try to
abort the offspring (37-44):

iamque tumescabant vitiati pondera ventris,
aegraque furtivum membra gravabat onus.
quas mihi non herbas, quae non medicamina nutrix
attulit audaci supposuitque manu,
ut penitus nostris—hoc te celavimus unum—
visceribus crescens excuteretur onus!
a, nimum vivax admotis restitit infans
artibus et tecto tutus ab hoste fuit!

And presently there grew apace the burden of my wayward belly,
And my weakened frame felt the weight of its secret load.
What herbs and what medicines did my nurse not bring to me,
Applying them with bold hand to drive forth
Entirely from my womb—this was the only secret we kept from you—
The burden that was increasing there!
Ah, too full of life, the little thing withstood the arts employed against it,
And was kept safe from its hidden foe!

Canace and the nurse try to hide the baby’s birth from Canace’s father, Acolus, but the

_paterfamilias_ hears the cries of the child (83-90)

Iamque dari parvum canibusque avibusque nepotem
iussert, in solis destituique locis.
vagitus dedit ille miser—sensisse putas-
quaque suum poterat voce rogabatur avum.
quid mihi tune animi credis, germane, fuisse—
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nam potes ex animo colligere ipse tuo—
cum mea me coram silvas inimicus in altas
visci montanis ferret edenda lupis?

And now he had ordered his little grandchild thrown to the dogs and birds,
To be abandoned in some solitary place.
The hapless babe broke forth in wailings—you would have thought he
understood—
And with what utterance he could entreated his grandsire.
What heart do you think was mine then, O my brother—
For you can judge from your own—
When the enemy before my eyes bore away to the deep forests
The fruit of my womb to be devoured by mountain wolves?

Aelulus next sends Canace a sword, indicating that she must kill herself. As she reviews her
misfortunes she thinks especially of her poor baby (111-118):

nate, dolor matris, rabidarum praeda ferarum,
ei mihi! natali dilacerate tuo;
nate, parum fausti miserabile pignus amoris—
haec tibi prima dies, haec tibi summa fuit.
non mihi te licuit lacrimis perfundere iustis,
in tua non trossas ferre sepulcrum comas;
non super incubui, non oscula frigida carpsi.
diripiunt avidae viscera nostra ferae.

O my son, grief of thy mother, prey of the ravening beasts,
Ah me! tom limb from limb on thy day of birth;
O my son, miserable pledge of my unhallowed love—
This was the first of days for thee, and this for thee the last.
Fate did not permit me to shed o’er thee the tears I owed,
Nor to bear to the tomb the shorn lock;
I have not bent o’er thee, nor culled the kiss from thy cold lips.
Greedy wild beasts are rending in pieces the child my womb put forth.

Canace, as a final request in her letter (121-124), asks Macareus to find the remains of the
baby and join them with her own in the sepulchre.

This is high-class soap opera, but it is written with spirit and interest. It is pleasing to
see the cruelty of exposure condemned, if only in an imaginary instance.
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There are several tales of women killed during pregnancy, and a number of infanticides, but no abortions, in the *Metamorphoses*. Abortion is not a mythological subject, perhaps another reason why it is less current in literature.

In *Metamorphoses* II Apollo kills his mistress Coronis in anger because she slept with a mortal youth. The dying Coronis (608-609) tells Apollo of her pregnancy. As grief overcomes him for his deed Apollo resolves to save the baby (628-630), snatching him from his mother's womb as she lies on the funeral pyre. A somewhat similar tale of Jove and Semele is told in *Metamorphoses* III. Juno is upset that Semele is pregnant by Jupiter (something rarely her own fate, 268-270), and tricks Semele into asking Jove to reveal his full glory. When they next mate Semele is consumed by flame, and Jupiter snatches the infant Dionysus from her womb (308-312).

Ovid had referred to Medea and Procris in the *Amores* (II.14.29-36) as examples of mothers who killed their children. In the *Metamorphoses* he relates the mythological accounts of infanticide and exposure, usually without special emphasis on the deed. Juno in her rage against the house of Cadmus sends the Fury Tisiphone to drive Athamas and Ino mad. Athamas kills his son Learchus (*Met*. IV.512-519) by dashing his head against a rock, while Ino jumps into the sea with her daughter, Melicerta (IV.520-530). In a scene reminiscent of Euripides' *Medea*, Procris decides to kill her son Ilyss in revenge for Tereus's treatment of her sister Philomela. Procris allows her rage against her husband to overcome her motherly feelings, and then slays Ilyss with a knife (VI.619-646). She and Philomela enjoy Tereus's horror as he eats the flesh of his own son, and then realizes his deed (VI.647-666). The story of Medea's murder of her children comes near the end of a lengthy narrative of her crimes and
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adventures, and is referred to briefly (VII.396). These oft-told myths have little direct significance for Ovid's own time.

More relevant perhaps is the story of a humble couple from Chosus in Crete, Ligdus and Telethusa. The husband Ligdus, apparently because of their poverty and his feeling that girls are less useful, tells his wife to kill her expected baby if it is a girl (Met. IX.675-681):

"quae voveam, duo sunt: minimo ut relevere dolore,
utque marem parias. onerosior altera sors est,
et vires fortuna negat. quod abominor: ergo edita forte tuo fucrit si femina partu,—
invitus mando; pietas, ignoscere!—neeetur."
 Dixerat, et lacrimis vultum lavcre profusis,
tam qui mandabat, quam cui mandata dabantur.

"There are two things which I would ask of Heaven: that you may be delivered with the least possible pain,
And that your child may be a boy. Girls are more trouble,
And fortune has denied them strength. Therefore (and may Heaven save the mark!),
If by chance your child should prove to be a girl
(I hate to say it, and may I be pardoned for the impiety), let her be put to death."
He spoke, and their cheeks were bathed in tears,
Both his who ordered and hers to whom the command was given.

The speech of Ligdus seems to reflect Roman attitudes. Girls were troublesome in the sense that a dowry had to be provided for them, and that they added less to the family name and prestige than boys. A similar situation pertains today in India and China. P. A. Brunt concludes that the exposure of female babies was fairly common, perhaps several times more common than the exposure of male babies:

64Cf. E.M. Blaiklock, The Archaeology of the New Testament (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984), p. 111: "Hilarion, in search of work in Alexandria, wrote to his wife Alis at Oxyrhynchus: 'If by chance you bear a child, if it is a boy, let it be, if it is a girl, cast it out'." This papyrus letter dates from 1 B.C.
... only the hypothesis that [female] infanticide was common will explain
evidence for a dearth of women.\textsuperscript{65}

Ligdus regrets the decision, and his wife implores him to change his mind. Then one
night in a dream or vision the goddess Isis appears to Telethusa along with her train of
followers (cf. \textit{Am.} II.13.7-15). Isis tells Telethusa to go ahead and have the child, and not to
doubt that she herself will assist her (IX.696-701). After the mother gives birth, she dresses
the girl baby in boy’s clothes and thus deceives the father. When the girl who was named
Iphis reaches age thirteen she is betrothed to a beautiful girl named Lanthi. Both mother and
daughter are distraught at this, and the mother delays the marriage. At length she calls upon
Isis in prayer, and the goddess transforms Iphis into a boy.

Pity for the plight of pregnant women, especially those being persecuted by Juno, is
not uncommon in the \textit{Metamorphoses}, or their Greek sources. The difficulties of Latona in
her pregnancy and as a young mother are recounted (\textit{Met.} VI.184-192,332-370). Alcmena’s
difficult delivery of Hercules is told, when Juno and Iphthya opposed her prayers for an easier
labour (IX.281-319). Myrrha, guilty of incest with her father, flees from society, and is
metamorphosed into a tree from which a baby is delivered with Lucina’s aid (X.469-514).
Once again these appear to be traditional motifs without strong contemporary overtones.

There are several references in the \textit{Metamorphoses} to fetal development, which suggest
an interest on the poet’s part. In his account of Cadmus and the serpent’s teeth, he speaks of
the “sown-men” developing in the womb of the pregnant earth (\textit{Met.} VII.125-129):

\begin{verbatim}
  utque hominis speciem materna sumit in alvo
  perque suos intus numeros conponitur infans
  nec nisi maturus communes exit in auras,
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{65} Brunt, pp. 153-154. We might enlarge on this by suggesting that female babies reared by
slave-dealers to be slaves or prostitutes would not usually be encouraged to have children
themselves.
sic, ubi visceribus gravidae telluris imago
effecta est hominis, feto consurgit in arvo ...

And just as in its mother’s body an infant gradually assumes human form,
And is perfected within through all its parts,
And does not come forth into the common air until it is fully formed;
So, when the forms of men had been completed in the womb
Of the pregnant earth, they rose up on the teeming soil ...

A reference occurs in the speech of Pythagoras also to development in the womb (Met.
XV.216-220):

... fuit illa dies, qua semina tantum
spesque hominum primae matris habitavimus alvo:
artifices natura manus admovit et angi
corpora visceribus distentae condita matris
noluit eque domo vacuas emissit in auras.

... There was a time when we lay
In our first mother’s womb, mere seeds and hopes of men.
Then Nature wrought with her cunning hand, willed not
That our bodies should lie cramped in our strained mother’s body,
And from our home sent us forth into the free air.

In the Fasti there are numerous references to ten months as the period of gestation (I.39;
II.447-448; III.43-45; III.124), as well as to Juno Lucina, goddess of childbirth (II.451-452;
III.251-258).

It is worth remembering that Ovid was the only active Love Elegist to have children or
grandchildren, as far as is known. Some actual knowledge of pregnancy and infancy may be
supposed in his case. Ovid refers to his daughter in the course of questioning the wife of the
Flamen Diallis as to the most propitious time for marriage (Fasti, VI.219-222):

Est mihi (sitque, precor, nostris diuturnior annis)
filia, qua felix sospite semper ero.
hanc ego cum vellem genero dare, tempora taedis
apta requirebam, quaeque cavenda forest ...

I have a daughter, and I pray she may outlive me;
I shall always be happy while she survives.
When I would give her to a son-in-law, I inquired
What times were suitable for weddings and what should be avoided.

The poet appears here like a good conventional father, and it would be agreeable to know
more about the praecceptor amoris's family life. He mentions his daughter again in his
autobiographical account (Trist IV.10.75-76):

filia mea mea bis prima fecunda iuventa,
sed non ex uno coniuge, fecit avum.

My daughter, twice fertile, but not of one husband,
In her early youth made me grandsire.

More indicative of close feeling is the poet's concern at her absence when he is overwhelmed
by the prospect of exile (Tr. I.3.19-20):

nata procul Libycis aberat diversa sub oris,
nec poterat fati certior esse mei.

My daughter was far separated from us on the shores of Libya,
And we could not inform her of my fate.

The daughter is also absent from the rest of the exile poetry. Perhaps some indication of
Ovid's relations with his daughter may be gathered from his pleasing account of his tutelage of
his (presumed) step-daughter Perilla (Tr. III.7.15-26).

Pregnancy in the world of the Love Elegists is usually negative not only because it
may be troublesome, unaesthetic, and generally unwanted, but also because it often means
being found out. Although pregnancy rarely is mentioned in the Amores, Ars, or exile poems
(apart from the two abortion elegies), it plays a considerable role in Ovid's mythological
poems (Heroides, Fasti, and Metamorphoses). Jasper Griffin has recently argued for a close
connection between the two sets of poems, and has further stated that contemporary life often
lies behind both kinds of verse:
It is not without deliberate intention that such extensive use has been made here of the *Metamorphoses*. The implication is that Ovid's mythical narratives are in important ways illustrative of the poems which are set closer to contemporary life. The mythical element in elegy allows the poets to juxtapose a freer world to the restricted one of Rome; the *Metamorphoses* permit the unhampered exposition of that world, and so let the reader see some patterns which are present in elegiac poems, but which emerge with greater clarity and freedom from restraint in a universe created to the poet's own tastes.66

In his fictional narratives (apart from the need to touch base with his sources at times) the interests and wishes of the author may stand out clearer than in the quasi-autobiographical poems. Their central theme is of maidens seduced or raped and the usually unhappy aftermath. As has been noted, the pregnancy of Jupiter's mistresses often fired Juno's jealousy with greater rage. The story of Callisto's relationship with Jove emphasizes the dangers of being found out. It is told both in the *Fasti* (II.155-189) and *Metamorphoses* (II.409-507).

This story is a good example of sensual heightening, and, so that the reader will not miss any salient details, the poet takes pains to emphasize the sexual aspects. First, Callisto is a virgin among virgins, the special favourite of the virgin goddess Diana (*Fasti*, II.155-160). She would have kept her vow of virginity, says the poet, if she had not been fair (160). The *Metamorphoses* (II.419-438) tell in detail how she was raped by Jupiter. Her pregnancy is revealed, along with Diana's anger, when the nymphs bathe in a woodland pool (*Met*, II.450-465). In the *Fasti* (II.165-174) the bathing scene has overtones of a strip-tease. Callisto is ordered by Diana out of her sight, and is punished by Juno by being turned into a bear. When, years later, her son Arcas attempts unwittingly to slay her, they are both metamorphosed by Jupiter into constellations.

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As in the tale of Canace (Her. XI), Callisto's pregnancy leaves her open to punishment. Yet, except for these two stories, Ovid rarely heightens the connection between sex and pregnancy, and the resulting complications for the lovers. In the story of Coronis, for example, although pregnancy is a key element in the story, Coronis is punished for unfaithfulness to her lover Apollo, not for pregnancy (Met. II.542-632). In the story of Semele, although pregnancy is a contributing factor, Juno's jealousy is based rather on the very fact of an affair between Jupiter and Semele (Met. III.253-315). Pregnancy is, in any case, a traditional aspect of these stories. On the whole then it seems as if the poet is content to speak of sexual relations as non-procreative in preference to exploiting the melodramatic possibilities inherent in the pregnant mistress.

The Attraction of Youth and Virginity in Ovid

Because of the abundance of slaves and prostitutes the mere satisfaction of sexual impulses in Ovid's Rome was not difficult. As the cautious Horace points out (Sat. I.2.116-119), if one was willing to confine oneself to slaves and ex-slaves, sexual satisfaction was no problem at all:

    ... tument tibi cum inguina, num, si
ancilla aut vema est praesto puer, impetus in quem
continuo fiat, malis tentigine rumpi?
non ego: namque parabilem amo Venerem facilemque.

    ... if when your member swells
A serving girl or houseboy stands nearby, upon whom an attack may be made immediately,
Would you rather be torn with desire?
Not I; for I like my loves easy and trouble-free.

It is evident that affluent Romans could provide themselves with sex objects answering to their tastes, as the orator Labienus notes (Seneca the Elder, Controv. X.4.17):
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Principes viri contra naturam divitias suas exercent: castratorum greges habent, exoletos suos ut ad longiorem patientiam inpudicitiae idonei sint amputant, et quia ipsos pudet viros esse, id agunt ut quam paucissimi sint.

Distinguished men use their wealth to combat nature: they own troops of castrated youths, they cut their darlings, to fit them to submit to their lusts over a longer period; and because they are themselves ashamed of being men, they make sure that as few men exist as possible.

It is likely that the licentiousness which slavery permitted in time deeply influenced attitudes and relations among free-born Romans. An indication of this is that some noble women registered as prostitutes to avoid the legal penalties for adultery, while some men accepted loss of rank in order to appear on stage or in gladiator shows (Suet. Tib. XXXV.2; Tacitus, Annals II.85).

Ovid's Ars repeatedly emphasizes that some sexual contacts, such as spouses and captives, are too easy, or otherwise unsatisfactory. Horace's Satire I.2 is intended as a persuasion to Roman males not to risk disaster by chasing married women. It is evident that the very ease of servile loves made them less acceptable to some Romans. Since passionate relationships were the chief source of interest and excitement for the Love Elegists (and, by implication, for their audience), some additional interest beyond mere sexual satiety had to be present.

Value is readily placed on rarity. Since Roman girls were closely supervised by their family, and usually married by their mid-teens there were not many available virgins in Rome for extra-marital affairs. The nature of virginity itself restricts its currency. Augustus, moreover, had forbidden the seduction of a free-born maiden. All of which combines to make virginity and its loss a much larger theme in Ovid's mythological narratives than in his elegies. At the same time the emphasis on female virginity in Roman Literature, the preoccupation with incidents involving Vestal Virgins, and the scandals involving prominent men and virgins
(e.g., Augustus's taste for young maidens, Suet, *Div. Aug.* LXXI.1) indicate that young virgins were a special temptation for Roman men.

Youth was the traditional time for young Roman males to experience freely the sexual opportunities available. Roman adolescents adopted the toga of manhood in their middle teens, and their first sexual adventures usually followed soon after. These youthful exploits are treated with considerable tenderness by the writers of Comedy and Elegy. Propertius (III.15) tells about his own first experience with the servant-girl Lycinna. The love elegies themselves tend to recount the first grand passion of a young poet for an older woman (Catullus-Lesbia; Propertius-Cynthia). Although young women were not freely accorded the same licence, popular opinion may have covered young love for both sexes with some of the same forbearance. Messalla's niece Sulpicia (*Tib. Coll.* IV.7) certainly has few reservations about proclaiming her love affair.

In Elegy, however, the ideal mistress is certainly not a virgin; she is a talented, experienced, unconventional, and, usually married, woman who is an exciting challenge for the youthful poet. Ovid's stated preference for women over thirty-five (*Ars Am.* II.693-694) is not entirely exceptional in Elegy, but it would be in the genres of Comedy, Tragedy, and the Romances, where traditional attitudes are generally assumed. In his narrative poems, therefore, and especially in the *Metamorphoses* Ovid adopts the view of the special suitability of teenage girls for love, and emphasizes virginity accordingly. In the *Metamorphoses* then nearly all the lovers, both male and female, are adolescents, as Jasper Griffin points out:

The style of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* admits of numerals, and he likes to tell the age of his lovers. Thus Acis is sixteen, as are Narcissus and Athis; Hermaphroditus is fifteen, Iphis thirteen; Picus is "under twenty". Hippomenes and Iphis are both still in possession of an ambiguous beauty, still almost feminine; conversely, the beauty of Atalanta was "what you might call girlish in a boy, boyish in a girl". The beautiful Chione is fourteen; Proserpina, in
her puellibus annis, is so childlike that when she is abducted by Dis she sheds
ears at dropping the flowers she had picked; Pyramus and Thisbe were both
very young; and so on. The girls are virgins.\textsuperscript{67}

The youthful heroes and heroines of the \textit{Metamorphoses} nonetheless satisfy the chief
criterion of the elegiac lover in that they are passionately in love (but usually for the first
time). As in Elegy they are ready to cast the claims of family, society, morality and religion
to the wind in order to pursue their loves. As Griffin notes:

In the \textit{Ars Amatoria} Ovid writes for an audience with leisure, good health,
good taste, and not much to think about except making love ... The world of
the \textit{Metamorphoses} is just the same: gods look down and pick up girls,
heroines fall in love and are set upon in the most unlikely spots. And Ovid is
careful to give his mythical lovers not just the general psychology of men and
women in the grip of love, but the particular sensibility of his own time and
class. We see that with special clarity in his constant emphasis of \textit{culus},
elegance.\textsuperscript{68}

As Callisto was to Jove, so Daphne was the more desirable a conquest to Apollo
because of her virginity. Daphne’s virginity is dwelt on at some length (\textit{Met.} I.474-489), as in
her prayer to her father Peneus that she may be so perpetually (486-487); but, adds the poet
predictably (488-489), her beauty forbade the fulfilment of her wish. Both of Ovid’s accounts
of Pluto’s rape of Proserpina emphasize her childish innocence (\textit{Fasti} IV.417-618; \textit{Met.} V.363-
571); while the \textit{Metamorphoses} emphasize her desire to remain a virgin (V.376-377, cf. \textit{Fasti}
IV.417).

The death of Polyxena, daughter of Priam and Hecuba is more pathetic and sensational
on account of her virginity. Demanded as a sacrifice by the ghost of Achilles, she bares her
throat and breast for the sword (\textit{Met.} XIII.458-459). She requests that no one touch her virgin

\textsuperscript{67}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 133.

\textsuperscript{68}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 99.
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body (466-467) and, after the sword pierces her breast, she takes care to cover her body as she falls (475-480).

Virginity also assumes the negative connotation of refusal to love, or self-centredness. This is especially true of Narcissus who scorns Echo, and other nymphs, as well as men (Met. III.339-510). One scorned youth appeals to Nemesis to punish Narcissus for his indifference, and the goddess causes him to fall hopelessly in love with his own reflection in a woodland pool. In his treatment of the Hippolytus story (Metamorphoses XV.492-546), however, Ovid makes no special mention of the virginity theme.

The closest that the poet comes to a sentimental and sympathetic treatment of the loss of virginity is in Oenone’s letter to her unfaithful lover Paris (Her. V). There is the pathetic appeal not to think lightly of her because she has lain with him (87-88):

nec me, faginea quod tecum fronde iacebam,  
despice; purpureo sum magis apta toro.

Nor despise me because once I pressed with you the boughen frond;  
I am better suited for the purpled marriage-bed.

In reproaching Paris for attempting to corrupt Helen, Oenone is perhaps reflecting on her own case (101-106):

ut minor Atrides temerati foedera lecti  
clamat et externo laesus amore dolet,  
tu quoque clamabis. nulla reparabilis arte  
lasa pudicitia est; deperit illa semel.  
ardet amore tui? sce et Menelaon amavit.  
nunc iacet in viduo credulus ille toro.

Just as the younger Atrides cries out at the violation of his marriage-bed,  
And feels his painful wound from the wife who loves another,  
You too will cry. By no art may purity  
Once wounded be made whole; tis lost, lost once and for all.  
Is she ardent with love for you? So, too, she loved Menelaus.  
He, trusting fool that he was, lies now in a deserted bed.
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Oenone was a nymph, a minor goddess of a kind not generally noted for chastity. Her references to the Satyrs, Faunus, and Apollo (135 ff.) may indicate that she was not a virgin, but more like the older experienced woman of the typical love elegy pattern. Nonetheless this epistle demonstrates that Ovid could have treated the theme of virginity effectively had he so wished. That he didn’t wish to is evidence that to make much of this theme would run counter to the free love spirit of Elegy and its derivatives. In the numerous rapes of his mythological narratives, however, the virginity of the victim gives a more emphatic and sensational element to the incidents.

The Prominence of Rape in Ovid’s Mythological Narratives

The movement from elegy to narrative for Ovid is partly a move from adultery to rape as the predominant theme. The traditional themes of Elegy (and of Comedy before Elegy) included outwitting the husband, and the triumphant union of wife and lover. In Augustan Rome such themes were dangerous, especially as the government’s marriage legislation had created a body of informers who were rewarded from the proceeds of government exactions from adulterers and fornicators. In his final work in love elegy (Remedia Amoris, 361-396) Ovid had replied vigorously to those who had branded his poetry as wanton (proterva). In taking the offensive against his detractors Ovid had promised (391-394) further poems, presumably love elegies, along the same lines. In fact, Ovid turned to the antiquarian and mythological narratives of the Fasti and Metamorphoses. As the repercussions of the scandal of the Elder Julia worked themselves out, including the accusations against other women for adultery (Dio Cassius LV.10.16), and the return of Tiberius to favour, it must have become evident to the poet and his friends that the political climate had changed dramatically. It is
perhaps not coincidence that the Ovidian poem most in harmony with the Emperor's
programmes (the Fasti) was begun about this time.

Although elegiac in metre and not lacking in amorous escapades, the Fasti differs
significantly from earlier Ovidian works. It contains a substantial amount of Roman and
Augustan material (usually treated with respect), and quite lacks favourable notice of
adulteries. Fasti III.459-516 relates the story of Bacchus and Ariadne, and the unfaithfulness
of the former with an Indian princess. Ariadne reproaches him in the manner of the heroines
(cf. Her. X), but the passage ends with Bacchus embracing Ariadne and promoting her to the
heavens.

Highly traditional, but contrary to Ovidian tenets, is the elaborate account of the rape
of Lucretia by Sextus Tarquinius (Fasti III.685-852). Tarquin, the virile young prince, became
enamoured of Lucretia, wife of his comrade Collatinus, after a surprise visit in which the
husbands tested their wives' loyalty. Lucretia was found dutifully weaving a cloak for her
husband and bewailing his absence, while Tarquin's wife had been partying through the
evening. Inflamed by Lucretia's beauty and virtue, the prince returned secretly to see her, and
assaulted her in bed, while threatening to kill her and to slander her as an adulteress if she
refused. This is almost the opposite of the usual Ovidian account (e.g., Paris and Helen)
where the seducer is treated sympathetically, and the wife's scruples are ridiculed as
countrified and old-fashioned. The emphasis now is transferred to the rape itself and to other
sensational elements, such as Lucretia's suicide. The rape scene (792-810) emphasizes the
superior might of the attacker (especially his sword), the fear that Lucretia has, his
manhandling of her, his brutal threats, and her final submission.
Likewise in the *Metamorphoses*, rape replaces adultery as the sensational element. Rape is more compatible with youth, virginity, and sexual initiation than adultery, and for this reason the famous adulteresses such as Pasiphae and Phaedra play a smaller part in the *Metamorphoses*. Jasper Griffin notes:

The adulteress is an extremely rare figure in the *Metamorphoses*, where even incest is commoner (Byblis, Myrrha)—a fact which shows that the rarity of such as person as the voluptuous vamp Circe is not due to moral considerations but to aesthetic ones. Ovid who likes to make explicit what his predecessors left implicit, lets his incestuous Byblis plead that her youth makes a shocking love affair quite right and proper ... The amours and ardours of such a woman as Circe were not a right subject for the poem, and when adulterae are mentioned their emotions are not lovingly unpacked and displayed like those of the young heroines.69

Ovid was writing for an audience which enjoyed sensationalism. In nine of the *controversiae* recorded by Seneca the Elder rape plays a prominent part (seven are heterosexual, two homosexual). In another eight, adultery is a major factor. Both themes are similarly useful for sensational treatment, but the adultery theme was now unacceptable at Rome. Although rape was also punishable under Roman law it had not received so much attention from Augustan legislators as adultery. A few years earlier Cicero (*Pro Plancio*, 30-31) had treated the rape of a mime actress as a matter beneath the law, and, in fact, something permitted by custom at some festivals and games in the case of slavewomen and freedwomen. It is likely that, unless the woman (or boy) were of social status and of good reputation, rape was not an easy charge to convict one of. There is in literature and declamation a tendency to excuse the perpetrators. One declaimer, Junius Gallio, spoke thus in the *persona* of a ravisher:

Quadam nocte—quid dicam? iam non negare non pudet: nox, vinum, error—quid irasceris, puella?

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69Ibid., p. 133.
One night—what am I to say? Now I am not ashamed to affirm it: night, wine, a mistake—why are you angry, girl?

This is not to say that premeditated rape was not considered serious, but that there was considerable tolerance for acts that could be classed under the heading of youthful folly.

More important for Ovid was the remarkable prominence of rape in mythological and heroic Greek tales, which apparently go back to a time when war, piracy, and their side effects, including rape, were fairly common. The move towards mythology as a relatively safe subject became more and more insistent as contemporary themes became open to imperial criticism. In the Fasti and Metamorphoses, Ovid was already in retreat from quasi-autobiographical literature. His example became a pattern for imperial poets, as Gordon Williams notes:

From the time of Ovid, more and more poets took refuge in one or another of the escape routes he had established, but particularly in Greek mythology. Persius was hitting real targets in his first satire when he ridiculed, on the one hand, poetic composition in Greek, and, on the other, the use of hackneyed Greek myths as subject matter...70

Ovid, however, unlike some, but not all, later poets, also intended that elements of contemporary life would show through the mythological facade. A traditional story, such as the river god Alpheus's attempted rape of the nymph Arethusa (Met. V.572-641), is not only told with careful heightening of its sexual aspects, but may well reflect on incidents that happened at contemporary Roman watering places. Like many of Ovid's potential rape victims, Arethusa was a huntress nymph, beautiful, but modest, given to blushing, but of charming form (577-584). Her virginity (implied) and her avoidance of amours give piquancy to her assault. As frequently happens in Ovid, the heat of the day draws her toward a cool...

stream. The clarity and transparency of the water is especially emphasized (585-589).

Wishing to enjoy the water more, Arethusa first wades in, then strips off her garments, and plunges naked into the waters (590-595). Thereupon she begins to hear a murmur: "Whither in haste, Arethusa?" (quo properas, Arethusa), as the river god calls to her. Terrified Arethusa jumps from the water (making her nudity even more evident) and, by a nice touch on the poet's part, finds that her robes are on the opposite bank. Arethusa then tells how the god pursued her, and, in case anyone misses the point, she adds (603):

et quia nuda fui, sum visa paratior illi.

Naked I seemed readier for his taking.

She is pursued like a hawk chases a dove, and swiftly traverses a wide territory (604-609). Finally she begins to tire. She expresses her terror at the pursuer's long shadow, the sound of his feet, and his panting breath (614-617). She calls upon the virgin goddess Diana to help her and Diana veils her in a cloud of mist. Still she is fearful, like a hunted thing, as Alpheus searches for her (618-633). Her sweat begins her transformation into a pool, and when Alpheus changes back into his watery shape to mingle with her, Diana causes her to go underground and reappear safely in Sicily (634-641).

Ovid clearly enjoys the story and tells it with a mixture of sexual humour and pretty sentimentality. The reader is to sympathize with Arethusa, but not enough to interfere with the enjoyable picture of her naked form fleeing before the amorous god. The reader, therefore, is regularly reminded of her beauty, virginity, and especially her nudity, as well as her prospective fate. It is a tale told as entertainingly as possible, and Jasper Griffin suggests that for Roman readers it would also evoke scenes at Baiae, and other seaside resorts. Thus the
episode would have a direct interest for Ovid’s sophisticated audience, especially as they might imagine themselves playing roles similar to those of lovers in the Metamorphoses:

These elegant and leisured lovers are, of course, Ovid’s familiar metropolitan men and women, but transposed into a setting remote in time and place, and to some extent raised in level by being given mythical status. Much of the pleasure of the Metamorphoses, and some of that of the Heroides, comes from seeing how this is done. As for Arethusa, her adventure is intended to give us a glimpse of the familiar pleasures of a contemporary watering-place, the pretty girls bathing, the transient amours, which have been given novelty and dignity by being reflected back into primeval Arcadia.\footnote{Griffin, p. 100.}

The Metamorphoses then shrewdly combines contemporary interests with ostensibly traditional and innocuous subject matter.

The Physicality of Relationships in Love Elegy

While rape is not a major theme of Ovid’s love elegies, it is often not far from the poet’s imagination. Frequently rape is mentioned in close association with drunkenness (which releases inhibitions), with nudity (which stimulates desire), with lovers’ quarrels and passionate love-making (which may involve tearing garments, hitting, or biting), and with seduction (as a final step).

Throughout his career (unless we except the poems from exile) Ovid envisioned male-female relationships in very physical terms. As in other matters, the Amores and the Ars speak similarly about rape, sexual passion, and the physical aspects of love. Since the elegist desires relationships with maximum passion he feels attracted to the woman who is ready to toss caution to the winds in order to pursue an affair, and he himself is drawn to overcome the resistance of an apparently unmoved woman by his own passionate onslaught. As Jasper Griffin puts it:
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The demand that the woman take one's sexual demands seriously, not as a mere occupation as humdrum as any other, issues naturally in two directly opposite ideas. One is that of rape; the other that of the passionate woman who welcomes the act of love.\(^2\)

To further simplify this observation, it might be said that the two chief centres of elegiac concern are adultery and rape.

In Amores I.4 the jealous poet publishes his fears and desires as an envious onlooker at the banquet attended by his mistress and her husband. He compares himself to the lusty centaurs who tried to carry off the Lapith women at a wedding-feast (7-10):

\begin{quote}
desino mirari, posito quod candida vino
Atracis ambiguos traxit in arma viros.
nec mihi silva domus, nec equo mea membra cohaerent—
vix a te videor posse tenere manus!
\end{quote}

I no longer marvel that when the wine had been set
The fair daughter of Atrax drove to combat the men of ambiguous form.
My dwelling-place is not the forest, nor are my members partly man and partly horse—
Yet I seem scarce able to keep my hands from you!

Later in his jealous rage the lover warns his mistress (39-40):

\begin{quote}
oacula si dederis, flam manifestus amator
et dicam "mea sunt!" iniciamque manum.
\end{quote}

If you let him kiss you, I'll declare myself your lover before his eyes,
And say "Those kisses are mine!" and lay hand to my claim.

In Amores I.5 (the first poem of the sequence to name Corinna) we have elements that Ovid continued to use in the amorous escapades of the Metamorphoses (e.g., the Arethusa story). It was in the heat of the day, and the light inside was rather like in the woods, and such in which modest girls might hope to hide themselves (1-8). Corinna came to the poet in

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\(^2\)Ibid., p. 125.
an ungirt tunic and with untied hair. The poet immediately strips her of her tunic; Corinna struggles, but is easily overcome (13-16):

Deripui tunicam—nec multum rara nocebat;
pugnabat tunica sed tamen illa tegit.  
quae cum ita pugnaret, tamquam quae vincere nollet,  
 victa est non aegre proditione sua.

I tore away the tunic—and yet 'twas fine, and scarcely marred her charms;  
But still she struggled to have the tunic shelter her.  
Even while thus she struggled, as one who would not overcome,  
Was she overcome—and 'twas not hard—by her own betrayal.

The suggestion is that Corinna's resistance was token only, but the precipitous haste of the poet to disrobe her is also notable. Once she is disrobed the lover surveys all her physical attractions one by one (17-22). This passage, says Griffin,

and the whole tone of the inspection, recall the connoisseur who picks out his mercenary partners with discrimination.73

While rejecting the implication of prostitution, it is clear that the poem does not deal with sexual initiation.

Amores I.7 describes the poet’s ostensible remorse at tearing out his girlfriend’s hair, and marking her cheeks with his fingernails (49-50). Apparently the occasion was a lover’s quarrel rather than sexual violence, for the poet says that it would have been better if he had marked her in the course of love-making or had torn her garments (41-2,47-8):

aptius impressis fuerat livere labellis  
et collum blandi dentis habere notam ...  
aut tunicam a summa diducere turgiter ora  
ad mediam?—mediae zona tulisset opem.

More fit had it been for her to be marked with the pressure of my lips,  
And her neck to bear the print of caressing tooth ...

73Ibid., p. 107. For the aggressive desire to strip one's mistress cf. Properius II.15, especially lines 17-20.
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Or to have shamed her by tearing apart her gown from top to middle—
Her girdle would have come to the rescue there.

At the poem’s conclusion the lover asks his mistress to exact vengeance on him for his
treatment of her (63-66)—it will make him feel better. The poem concludes (67-68) with the
lover telling her to straighten her hair so she won’t look beaten up, thus trivializing the
incident.

*Amores* II.5 develops the jealous rage aspect of *Amores* I.7. The poet has observed
his mistress and a youth kissing at a party. He wishes to lay his hands on her, first to claim
the kisses for himself (29-32) and then to beat her (45-46). As in *Amores* I.7, he plans to tear
her hair and strike her cheeks. Instead, as she appears repentant, he kisses her, not without
misgivings about rivals. In the final Corinna poem (*Am. III.14*) he urges his mistress to
conceal from him the evidence of her love-making with others, including that she straighten
her hair better, and hide the tooth-marks on her neck (33-34). Thus these are considered
typical indications of a love affair; similarly, to attack one’s lover after evidence of infidelity
seems to be thought a normal, if not expected, reaction.

These themes reoccur in the *Ars*, along with Ovid’s contention that rivals and
jealousies add passion and excitement to sexual relationships. In *Ars Am. II*, however, he
commands the lover to let marriage be the scene of quarrels and to avoid them in free love
relationships; besides, he adds, quarrelling may be expensive, as he well knows (169-172):

Me memini iratum dominae turbasse capillos;
haec mihi quam multos abstulit ira dies!
nec puto, nec sensi tunicam laniasse; sed ipsa
dixerat, et pretio est illa redempta meo.

I remember how once in anger I disarranged my lady’s hair;
Of how many days did that anger rob me!
I do not think nor did I notice that I tore her vest;
But she said so, and it was paid for at my expense.
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In order to increase the passion of your mistress Ovid advises the lover to let her fear a rival. Then the lover can enjoy it if his mistress beats him, for it is a sign of renewed passion (*Ars Am.,* II.445-452):

> fac timeat de te, tepidamque recalface mentem:
> palleat indicio criminis illa tui;
> o quater et quotiens numero comprehendere non est
> felicem, de quo laesa puella dolet:
> quaec, simul invitas crimen pervenit ad aures,
> excidit, et miserae voxque colorque fugit.
> ille ego sim, cuius laniet furiosa capillos:
> ille ego sim, teneras cui petat ungue genas ...

See that she has fears about you, and fire anew her cooling thoughts;
Let her grow pale at hearing of your guilt;
O four times and unnumbered times happy is he
Over whom an injured woman grieves;
Who, as soon as the charge has reached her unwilling ears,
Faints away, and voice and colour leave her unhappy frame.
May I be he whose hair she furiously rends!
May I be he whose tender cheeks her nails attack!

Ovid tells the lover not to let suspicions, jealousies, and anger last too long, but to try to turn her passionate feelings in his favour (455-460):

> Si spatiun quæras, breve sit, quod laesa queratur,
> ne lenta vires colligat ira mora;
> candida iamdudum cingantur colla lacertis,
> inque tuos flens est accipienda sinus.
> oscula da flenti, Veneris da gaudia flenti,
> pax cert: hoc uno solvitur ira modo.

Should you ask how long, let the time for her to lament her injuries be short,
Lest anger gather strength by slow delay;
Long ere this let your arms encircle her white neck,
And gather her weeping to your bosom.
Kiss her as she weeps, give her as she weeps the joys of Venus;
Then there will be peace, in this way alone will anger be dispelled.

The poet interprets extreme jealousy as a sign of love and passion, and concludes that the jealous mistress will respond well to sexual intercourse. There is probably some psychological
basis for this assessment, but there may also be reservations about manipulating relationships
to provide for a maximum of sexual passion.

The preceptor amoris urges perseverance in love which includes submitting to bad
treatment and indignities in the pursuit of his mistress. Among these he advises the lover to
be willing to submit both to his mistress’s verbal abuse and physical blows, and to be willing
to kiss her feet. (Ars Am. II.533-534).

In his advice to women Ovid comments that older lovers will endure more, and treat
their mistresses better, than young men (Ars Am. III.565-572):

Ille vetus miles sensim et sapienter amabit,
multaque tironi non patienda feret:
nec franget postes, nec saevis ignibus uret,
nec dominae teneras adpetet ungue genas,
nec scindet tunicasve suas tunicasve puellae,
nec raptus flendi causa capillus erit.
ista decent pueros acetate et amore calentes;
hic fera composita vulnera mente feret.

But the veteran will come gradually and prudently to love,
And will bear much a recruit would not endure;
He will not break doors or burn them with fierce flames,
Nor attack with his nails the soft cheeks of his mistress,
Nor rend his own nor his lady’s clothes,
Nor will torn tresses be a cause for weeping.
Such doings suit lads aflame with youth and love;
But he will bear bitter smarts composedly ...

This passage clearly conveys the very physical nature of Roman sexual passion. The young
man especially was thought likely to pursue his passion beyond normally respectable
behaviour, and considerable tolerance was granted him because of his youth. In such a context
of passionate quarrels, determined pursuit, tearing off clothes, physical abuse, and (frequently)
drunkenness, rape would not be a distant prospect. A fine line would divide the passionate
attack on a mistress, and the rape of a non-mistress. Ovid, in recommending the older lover, suggests to his female readers that he would be easier to handle.

In giving women the same weapons as he had previously given the men, Ovid suggests that women should feign passion, with tears and anger about a rival (Ars Am. III.675-680). Let women scratch their lover’s cheeks to show that they are passionately concerned lest he wrong them (677-678). In this again Ovid believes that love is more satisfactory where it is more passionate, and passion should be feigned where it is not felt.

Ovid advises lovers to avoid physically abusing their mistresses, since that is counter-productive. If, however, their mistress attacks them, they should welcome it as a sign of her passionate involvement, and try to use it to their advantage. He indicates, however, that striking and hair-pulling was commonly done by both sexes. Young men may rather overdo this kind of physical behaviour, and a woman may well prefer a more sensible older lover. The credo that passion is what makes sex satisfying may lead young lovers to the borderline of rape, if not actually across it.

The Male Initiative in Seduction and Rape

Throughout the Ars Ovid maintains that men should normally take the initiative in love. The imagery of hunting and fishing suggests an active pursuit by the lover (e.g., Ars Am. I.45-50). The lover must go out and look for a mistress (43-44,89-92):

Haec tibi non tenues veniet delapsa per auras: quae renda est oculis apta puella tuis ... Sed tu praecipue curvis venare theatris: haec loca sunt voto fertiliora tuo. illic invenies quod ames, quod iudere possis, quodque semel tangas, quodque tenere velis.
She will not come floating down to you through the tenuous air,
She must be sought, the girl whom your glance approves ...
But specially do your hunting in the round theatres:
More bountifully do these repay your vows.
There will you find an object for passion or for dalliance,
Something to taste but once, or to keep, if so you wish.

His mention of the theatre leads Ovid into a mock-historical digression on the origins of danger to chastity at theatres. The poet traces it back to Romulus and the rape of the Sabine women (101-134). The imagery of this passage recurs in the narrative poems, especially the comparison of the fearful women to doves and lambs, and of their pursuers to eagles and wolves (117-118). Ovid emphasizes the maidens’ fear and its manifestations (119-126), and adds that fear made them more attractive. The passage concludes with a mock-panegyric on Romulus for his bounty to his followers.

A degree of pressure or coercion in love-making is alluded to on occasion in the elegies. In Amores II.8 the poet threatens Corinna’s maid-servant Cypassis if she does not sleep with him again (21-22,25):

Pro quibus officiis pretium mihi dulce repende
concubitus hodie, fusca Cypassi, tuos!
quod si stulta negas, index anteacta fater 

In return for these offices to you, dusky Cypassis,
Pay me to-day the sweet price of your caress!
But if you stupidly say no, I shall turn informer and confess all we have done before ...

This rather gratuitous attempt at sexual blackmail (since Cypassis had willingly slept with him before) is intended as a joke, although it hints at the insatiable and unscrupulous nature of the elegist.

In Amores II.4 the poet confesses his inability to refrain from love affairs. He also assumes that all women are ready to participate (7-8,13-16,47-48):
Morality in Ovid 337

Nam desunt vires ad me mihi iusque regendum;
aufor ut rapida concita puppis aqua ...
sive procax aliqua est, capior, quia rustica non est, 
speraque dat in molli mobilis esse toro. 
aspera si visa est rigidasque imitata Sabinas, 
velle, sed ex alto dissimulare puto ... 
Denique quas tota quisquam probet urbe puellas, 
noster in has omnis ambitious amor.

For I lack the strength and will to rule myself; 
I am swept along like a ship tossed on the rushing flood ... 
Whether 'tis some saucy jade, I am smitten because she is not rustic simple, 
And gives me hope of enjoying her supple embrace on the soft couch. 
If she seem austere, and affects the rigid Sabine dame, 
I judge she would yield, but is deep in her deceit ... 
In fine, whatever fair ones anyone could praise in all the city— 
My love is candidate for the favours of them all.

The assumptions of this poem: that the poet’s passions are too strong to control; that all 
women are desirable; that all women desire sex; that all activities in a male-female relationship 
are part of or prelude to sexual satisfaction; are the kind of extreme reductionism that is found 
only in certain genres (romances, soap operas), or in people who live in a world of their own 
fantasies. That Ovid should be rather consistent in such assumptions is noted by Peter Green, 
who comments on the poet’s interest in such a wide variety of women:

So wide-ranging a spectrum of types and interests (some, on the face of it, 
mutually exclusive) suggests, once more, that what turns Ovid on is sex, with 
all else ancillary to this one overriding concern—except literary creativity, 
which both feeds and feeds off the erotic preoccupation. A man who finds so 
many different women attractive must be drawn, ultimately, by the common 
factor of their femininity rather than by the individual traits which distinguish 
them one from another. They may be different to begin with, but refracted 
through Ovid’s gaze they are all alike: all serve the same purpose. Indeed, 
throughout the poem what Ovid repeatedly anticipates is getting the object of 
his affections into bed (see lines 14, 16, 22, 24, 33, 44-45) ..."74

The Ovidian lover is at work in Amores III.2. As the praeceptor amoris was later to 
expound, the chariot races at the Circus provided the right conditions for the lover to approach 

74Green, pp. 292-293.
a woman (Ars Am. I.135-164). First, if the lover were able to gain a seat next to a woman he
desired, they would likely be in bodily contact. Ovid, with his preoccupation with rivals,
cannot help warning off other surrounding males, including perhaps the lady’s husband. He
thus addresses the lady (Am. III.2.19-24):

Quid frustra refugis? cogit nos linea iungi.
haec in lege loci commoda circus habet—
tu tamen a dextra, quicumque es, parce puellae;
contactu lateris laeditur ista tui.
tu quoque, qui spectas post nos, tua contrahre crura,
si pudor est, rigido nec preme terga genu!

Why draw back from me? — ’twill do no good; the line compels us to sit
close.
This advantage the circus gives, with its rule of space-
Yet you there on the right, whoever you are, have a care;
Your pressing against my lady’s side annoys.
You too, who are looking on from behind, draw up your legs,
If you care for decency, and press not her back with your hard knee.

Then the lady’s cloak slips a little showing her limbs. Regularly in Ovid the sight of bare skin
inflames desire (33-36):

his ego non visis arsi; quid fiet ab ipsis?
in flammam flammas, in mare fundis aquas.
suspicor ex ipsis et cetera posse placere,
quae bene sub tenui condita veste latent.

I burned before, when I had not seen; what will become of me now that I
have?
You add flames to flame, and waters to the sea.
I suspect from them that all else, too, might please,
That lies well hidden under your delicate gown.

The poem details the lover’s various ploys to win the lady’s attention and approval. It ends
(83-84) with the lady’s apparent willingness to be loved:

Risit, et argutis quiddam promisit ocellis.
"Hoc satis hic; alio cetera rede loco!"
She smiled, and with speaking eyes promised—I know not what.
"That is enough for here—in some other place render the rest!"

Thus there is an apparent seduction, an example of the technique developed and systematized in the Ars. The lover adjusts all his actions to the goal of manoeuvring the lady into bed.

The same attitudes and assumptions are found in Ovid's narrative and dramatic poems such as the Heroides.

Oenone, writing to Paris, doubts that Helen was an unwilling party to her abduction by Theseus. The suggestion that women generally approve of male sexual aggression is a familiar one in Ovid (Her. V.129-132):

\begin{align*}
a iuvene \ et \ cupidio \ credatur \ redditia \ virgo? \\
unde \ hac \ conoperim \ tam \ bene, \ quaeris? \ amo. \\
vim \ licet \ appelles \ et \ culpam \ nomine \ veles; \\
quae \ totiens \ rapta \ est, \ praeuit \ ipsa \ rapi. \\
\end{align*}

Is it to be thought she was rendered back a maid, by a young man and eager?
Whence have I learned this so well? you ask. I love.
You may call it violence, and veil the fault in the word;
Yet she who has been so often stolen has surely lent herself to theft.

Paris, writing to Helen, approves of Theseus's abduction of her, and wonders that he returned her. Theseus's knowledge of Helen's physical charms is given as the reason for his abduction, and Paris maintains that he himself would not have returned Helen untouched (Her. XVI.149-154,159-162):

\begin{align*}
\text{ergo arsit merito, qui noverat omnia, Theseus,} \\
\text{et visa es tanto digna rapina viro,} \\
\text{more tuae gentis nitida dum nuda palaestra} \\
\text{Judis et es nudis femina mixta viris.} \\
\text{quod rapuit, laudo; miror, quod reddidit umquam.} \\
\text{tam bona constanter praedae tenenda fuit ...} \\
\text{si reddenda fores, alicuid tamen ante tulissem,} \\
\text{nev Venus ex toto nostra fuisset iners.} \\
\text{vel mihi virginitas esset libata, vel illud} \\
\text{quod poterat salva virginitate rapi.}
\end{align*}
And so Theseus rightly felt love's flame, for he was acquainted with all your charms.
And you seemed fit spoil for the great hero to steal away.
When, after the manner of your race, you engaged in the sports of the shining palaestra,
A nude maid mingled with nude men.
His stealing away, I commend; my marvel is that he ever gave you back.
So fine a spoil should have been kept with constancy...
If you must needs have been rendered up, I should first at least have taken some pledge from you;
My love for you would not have been wholly for naught.
Either your virgin flower I should have plucked, or taken
What could be stolen without hurt to your virgin state.

In her reply to Paris Helen defends her conduct regarding Theseus, and refuses to accept blame for the incident. Unless her elaboration of the episode is meant to undercut her words (as do perhaps her subsequent actions), this is the closest thing in Ovid to a rejection of female complicity in rape (Her. XVII.21-28):

an, quia vim nobis Neptunius attulit heros,
rapta semel videor bis quoque digna rapi?
crimen erat nostrum, si delenita fuisset;
cum sim rapta, meum quid nisi nolle fuit?
non tamen e facto fructum tulit ille petitum;
extero redi passa timore nihil!
oscula lactanti tantummodo paucav protervus
abstulit; ulceris nil habet ille mei.

Because the Neptunian hero employed violence with me,
Can it be that, stolen once, I seem fit to be stolen, too, a second time?
The blame were mine, had I been lured away;
But seized, as I was, what could I do, more than refuse my will?
Yet he did not reap from his deed the fruitage he desired;
Except my fright, I returned with no harm.
Kisses only, and few, the wanton took, and those despite my struggles;
Farther than that, he possesses naught of mine.

It seems likely that here Ovid is following the traditional story (that Helen remained a virgin till her marriage to Menelaus), as he is likely doing elsewhere (e.g., Tarquin and Lucretia, Tereus and Philomela) where women are portrayed as resisting or disliking male advances.
Ovid’s *Ars Amatoria* teaches a system of seduction; Book III of the *Ars* teaches women how to be fit targets for a seducer, or how to seduce him in turn. Ovid advises the male lover not to expect the girl to approach him, but to take the first step himself (*Ars Am.* I.707-714):

```
ae nimia est iuveni propriae fiducia formae,
expectat siquis, dum prior illa roget.
vir prior accedat, vir verba precantia dicat:
excipiet blandas comiter illa preces.
ut potiare, roga: tantum cupit illa rogari;
da causam voti principiumque tui.
Iuppiter ad veteres supplex heroidas ibat:
corrupit magnum nulla puella lovem.
```

Ah, too confident in his own charms is a lover,
If he wait until she ask him first.
Let the man take the first step, let the man speak entreating words;
She will listen kindly to coaxing entreaties.
That you may gain her, ask: she only wishes to be asked;
Provide the cause and starting point of your desire.
Jupiter went a suppliant to the heroines of old:
No woman seduced the mighty Jove.

If the direct approach doesn’t work Ovid advises the lover to try a more psychological or insinuating tactic (715-722):

```
si tamen a precibus tumidos accedere fastus
senseris, incepto parce referque pedem.
quod refugit, multae cupiunt: odere quod instat;
lenius instando taedia tolle tui.
nec semper veneris spes est profitenda roganti:
intret amicitiae nomine tectus amor.
hoc aditu vidi tetricae data verba puellae:
qui fuerat cultor, factus amat erat.
```

Yet if you find that your prayers cause swollen pride,
Stop what you have begun, draw back a pace.
Many women desire what flees them; they hate what is too forward;
Moderate your advance, and save them from getting tired of you.
Nor must the hope of possession be always proclaimed in your entreaties;
Let love find entrance veiled in friendship’s name.
Morality in Ovid

I have seen an unwilling mistress deluded by this approach;
He who had been an admirer became a lover.

Once the lover has made an impression on the girl he should follow up rapidly with promises,
tears, coaxing words, kisses, and finally intercourse. Lovers' perjuries, feigned tears, vows and
promises, and kisses are effective ways of breaking down resistance for the final event (Ars Am.
1.663-672):

quis sapiens blandis non misceat oscula verbis?
illa licet non det, non data sume tamen.
pugnabit primo fortassis, et "improbe" dicit:
pugnando vinci se tamen illa volet.
tantum ne noceant teneris male rapta labellis,
neve queri possit dum fuisses, cave.
oscula qui sumpsit, si non et cetera sumet,
haec quoque, quae data sunt, perdere dignus crit.
quantum defecerat pleno post oscula voto?
ei mihi, rusticitas, non pudor ille fuit.

Who that is wise would not mingle kisses with coaxing words?
Though she give them not, yet take the kisses she does not give.
Perhaps she will struggle at first, and cry "You villain!"
Yet she will wish to be beaten in the struggle.
Only beware lest snatching them rudely you hurt her tender lips,
And she be able to complain of your roughness.
He who has taken kisses, if he take not the rest beside,
Will deserve to lose even what was granted.
After kisses how much was lacking to your vow's fulfilment?
Ahh! that was awkwardness, not modesty.

Peter Green comments thus on this passage:

The axiom that a woman never means it when she says no—familiar to all
students of rape and its mythology—offers a perfect lead-in to the advocacy of
erotic violence that immediately follows (673-704), and automatically justifies
it. The man who fails to press home his advantage after stealing kisses can
now be described, without embarrassment, as guilty of the worst solecism Ovid
knows—rusticitas, here translated as "gaucheness", and broadly identified in
the poet's mind with either a conscience or else provincial naivety (the two
being interdependent) as regards illicit love-making (cf. Am. 3.4.37-40,3.10.18; 
Ars Am. 2.565-566).\(^{73}\)

\(^{73}\)Ibid., p. 360.
Since rape has admirable precedents in myth and legend, Ovid has no difficulty in justifying his axiom. His account of the rape of Deidameia, daughter of the king of Scyros, by Achilles (who was hidden on Scyros by his mother and disguised in women’s clothes) recapitulates the poet’s axiom (697-706):

forte erat in thalamo virgo regalis eodem;
haec illum stupro comperit esse virum.
viribus illa quidem victa est, ita credere oportet:
sed voluit vinci viribus illa tamen.
saepe “mane!” dixit, cum iam properaret Achilles:
fortia nunc posita sumpserat arma colo.
vis ubi nunc illa est? quid blanda voce moraris
auctorem supri, Deidamia, tui?
sclericit ut pudor est quaedam coepisse priorem,
sic alio gratum est incipiente pati.

It chanced that in the same chamber was the royal maid;
By her rape she found him to be a man.
By force indeed she was vanquished, so one must believe;
Yet by force did she wish to be vanquished all the same.
Often cried she, “Stay”, when already Achilles was hastening from her;
For the distaff put away, he had taken valiant arms.
Where is that violence now? Why with coaxing words, Deidamia,
Dost thou make to tarry the author of thy rape?
In truth, just as there is shame sometimes in beginning first,
So when another begins it is pleasant to submit.

Ovid may have noted a certain ambiguity in some women’s attitudes towards men, that a preference for sexually aggressive men is in conflict with a desire to avoid immediate physical contact. The poet interprets this as a secret liking that women have for forcible sex (673-678):

vim licet appelles: grata est vis ista puellis:
quod iuvat, invitae saepe dedisse volunt.
quaecumque est veneris subita violata rapina,
gaudet, et inprobitas muneric instar habet.
at quae cum posset cogi, non tacta recessit,
ut simulct vultu gaudia, tristis erit.

You may use force; women like you to use it;
They often wish to give unwillingly what they like to give.
She whom a sudden assault has taken by storm is pleased,
And counts the audacity as a compliment.
But she who, when she might have been compelled, departs untouched,
Though her looks feign joy, will yet be sad.

In this passage Ovid is describing what today is sometimes called "date-rape". Ovid's axiom, that all women either welcome rape or can easily be cajoled to accept it, would hardly be taken as an adequate defence in either a Roman or a modern courtroom. Rape may indeed result from an inability or unwillingness to communicate, and Ovid's generalisations lend themselves to misunderstandings. It is the seducer's interest which leads him to accept this axiom in order to rationalise his own activities. Just as Ovid had found ways to suggest that adultery is innocuous, so now he suggests that rape is mutually desirable. These attitudes are at the heart of the moral problem in Ovid's verse.

Contemporary parallels to Ovid's lover abound. Germaine Greer tells about a group of law students who had a competition to see who could seduce the most women in one university term:

one ploy that they all had in common was a trick of heavy breathing and groaning, as if they were writhing in torments of desire. As they were after quantity and not quality, this was not often the case ... The man who won that competition was an expert in exploiting women's fantasy and vanity, and their tendency to delude themselves that the contact they were experiencing was a genuine personal encounter and not a crass sexual rip-off. He and his friends were proud of their mastery of the gestures of tenderness, but their use of them was utterly self-centred.76

Greer calls the seducer's act "petty rape", and sees it as partly coercive and partly manipulative, as the seducer uses every weapon at his disposal to gain entrance to bed. Her comments would apply also to the preceptor amoris and his pupils:

...seduction ... is not regarded as a contemptible or particularly damaging activity. A woman who capitulates to a seducer is considered to do so because

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she really wanted to or because she is too silly or too loose to know how to resist. It might even be thought to be in her interest to overcome her prudishness or priggishness about sex. The man who excuses his unloving manipulation of women's susceptibilities in ways like these cannot honestly claim to have the women's interests at heart. His assumption that he knows what is good for them is overweening even if it is sincere, which it usually is not.\(^7\)

Ovid's usual attitude is that it is at best "gaucheness" (rusticitas), at worst mercenary selfishness, which leads women to refuse men sex. Ovid urges women to give their favours in exchange for their lovers' gifts, and considers it impiety to accept a gift without such payment (Ars Am. III.462-466). He maintains that women lose nothing from the sex act, and so should not be loath to enter into it. If they do wish to avoid rape, however, they should refrain from getting drunk or falling asleep at parties (Ars Am. III.765-768):

\[
\begin{align*}
turpe iacens mulier multo madefacta Lyaeo: \\
digna est concubitus quoslibet illa pati. \\
nec somnis posita tutum succumbere mensa: \\
per somnos fieri multa pudenda solent.
\end{align*}
\]

A woman lying steeped in wine is an ugly sight; 
She deserves to endure any union whatever. 
Nor is it safe when the table is cleared to fall asleep; 
In sleep much happens that is shameful.

**Distasteful Aspects of the Female Body**

As Peter Green points out, Ovid's attitude towards women in the *Ars* is not respectful.\(^8\) The poet frequently cautions women against chasing away lovers through outbursts of anger (Ars Am. III.235-250,269-380,499-524). He urges them to keep their beauty secrets and preparations hidden from their lovers lest they revolt them (Ars Am.

\(^7\)Green, p. 162.

\(^8\)Green, pp. 338-389, 395, 401-402.
Morality in Ovid

III.193-280). He would rather believe that his mistress were asleep, than see her putting on her make-up (Ars Am. III.227-230):

cur mihi nota tuo causa est canoris in ore?
claude forem thalami! quid rude prodis opus?
multa viros nescire decet; pars maxima rerum
offendat, si non interiora tegas.

Why must I know the cause of the whiteness of your cheek?
Shut your chamber door, why show the unfinished work?
There is much that it befits men not to know;
Most of your doings would offend, did you not hide them within.

Ovid makes fun of the woman whom he surprised at her toilette and who put her wig on backwards (243-250). He urges women to come late to a feast so that the tipsyness of the men and the subdued lighting will veil their physical blemishes (751-754). He then urges them not to eat clumsily or too greedily, and not to get drunk (755-766). He concludes his advice by saying that women are wise to have sexual intercourse in dimly-lit rooms so that much of their body will be hidden (807-808). All this supposes that many women are desperately in need of the praecceptor's art to remedy their deficiencies of body, education, and character.

It is a little surprising that Ovid emphasizes the importance of dim lighting during the sexual act, so that the genitals are not clearly seen (Ars Am. II.613-620):

ipsa Venus pubem, quotiens velamina ponit,
protegitur laeva semireducta manu.
in medio passimque coit pecus: hoc quoque viso
averit vultus nempe puella suas.
convenient thalami furtis et ianua nostris,
parsque sub iniecta veste pudenda later:
et si non tenebras, ad quidam nubis opacae
quae rimus, atque aliquid luce patente minus.

Venus herself, as oft as she lays aside her robes,
Half stooping covers with her left hand her secret parts.
Beasts unite everywhere and in public view;
And oft at the sight a maiden turns her face aside.
Chambers and a locked door be seem our secret doings.
The parts of shame are hid 'neath a covering garment,
And we seek, if not darkness, at least dim shadow
And somewhat less than open daylight.

On the other hand Ovid advises the lover to caress his mistress, and touch her genitals, just as Achilles may have touched Briseis (Ars Am. II.707-724). It is the sight, not the feel, of the female genitals which may offend the lover, as Ovid explains in the Remedia Amoris. Ovid bids the lover examine his mistress’s body carefully and dwell on its faults, if he wishes to break free from an unsatisfactory love affair (Rem. Am. 411-418):

\[
\begin{align*}
tunc etiam iubeo te, as aperiere fenestras, 
& turpiaque admissa membra notare die. 
& at simul ad metas venit finita voluptas, 
& lassaque cum tota corpora mente iacent, 
& dum piget, et malis nullam tetigisse puellam, 
& tacturusque tibi non videare diu, 
& tunc animo signa, quaecumque in corpore menda est, 
& luminaque in vitii illius usque tene. 
\end{align*}
\]

Then too I bid you open all the windows,
And by the admitted light observe unseemly limbs.
But as soon as pleasure has reached its goal and is spent,
And bodies and minds are utterly weary,
While boredom is on you and you wish you had never touched a woman,
And you think you will not touch one again for long,
Then mark well in your mind every blemish her body has,
And keep your eye ever on her faults.

The poet mentions examples where the lover’s passion was diminished because of his chance view of his mistress’s genitals, or the soiled couch (Rem. Am. 429-432). Ovid adds that such things will wound only a weak passion. He refers also to one lover’s attempt to free himself from his passion by secretly watching his mistress relieve herself (437-438), but adds that this is going too far.
Morality in Ovid

At first glance such advice would seem at odds with the frank delight in female nakedness which Ovid expresses elsewhere (e.g., Am. 1.5.13-16). The explanation perhaps is that the elegiac lover is not interested in the functional and anatomical aspects of the female body beyond what is necessary to arouse his passion. Of Corinna's charms Ovid catalogues her shoulders, arms, breasts, belly, sides, and thighs, but omits her genital area. Emphasis on the genitals, moreover, is more typical of Priapic poetry than other genres, and there interest tends to be rather on male than female body parts. It is worth noting that Ovid's obsession with the female body emphasizes the secondary sexual characteristics rather than the genitals, and indeed all those parts (except the genitals) which Roman matrons customarily covered.

The Importance of Female Nudity in Ovid

Nudity in Ovid is found in close relation to seduction and rape. It is frequently the chance sight of usually covered skin which inflames the lover. Nudity also has the literary function of directing the reader's imagination towards lust, and thus heightening his interest in the narrative. Nudity is also a kind of shorthand or signpost for pleasure since it suggests the pleasures of the beach, the water, the caress, and the bed. This is reflected in the fact that the lovers of the Metamorphoses often play out their drama on the beach:

Ovid constantly uses the shore as the setting for his mythological amours. It was on the beach that Comix was pursued by Neptune, and on the beach that Caenis was enjoyed by him. Thetis met Peleus on the sea-shore, and Aescacus saw Cebrenis drying her hair on the bank of a river; from the beach Europa was carried off; Scylla was seen by Glaucus as she walked and bathed naked on the beach.79

Frequently it is the sight of a girl bathing, which arouses the hero or god to pursue her. Nakedness, however, carries with it the stigma of slavery. Griffin notes that slave women

79Griffin, p. 79.
were sometimes sold naked on the beach (cf. Seneca *Controv.* I.2.3). The slave girl-harlot (*nuda scorta*) stood naked so that her customers could see what they were getting, while freedwomen engaged in prostitution frequently wore only a transparent or light gown (cf. *Horace Satires* I.2). The Roman matron on the other hand wore a long robe covering her from neck to foot, so that her body was not clearly discerned (unless, of course, she emulated a courtesan in her attire). This stimulated the imagination and interest of Roman men, and *Horace* writes against those who chased married women to the exclusion of easier game.

Female nudity, which made slow progress in Greek Art till the 5th century B.C., is rampant in the literature and art of Ovid’s day. Wherever possible mythological heroines in the paintings and poetry of Ovid’s day are portrayed as nude or with less than usual attire. Ovid himself is apparently the earliest source in which the swift Atalanta is represented as running naked. It had, by Ovid’s time, also become customary to portray the goddesses of the Judgment of Paris as nude (an unusual image for Minerva). Public entertainment, such as the mime, frequently included nude performances, while victims in the amphitheatre might also be naked. Griffin remarks:

In poetry, and particularly in Propertius and Ovid, we find a kind of idealising presentation of nakedness, as part of a life of love and pleasure which it is the poet’s intention to present as not sordid but splendid. Following Hellenistic precedents, the elegists go directly contrary to Roman tradition in which public female nudity is a sign either of slavery or indecency. The adoption of more revealing

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80Ibid. p. 98.


82Griffin, p. 104.
clothing by Roman matrons reflects the change of attitudes. It has been noted how Augustus disapproved of a dress that his daughter Julia wore (Macrobius, Saturnalia II.5.5).

The poets also pick out traditionally acceptable examples of nudity and give them a more modish sensuality. Ovid’s insistence on the bare breasts of mourning women becomes oppressively repetitive in the Metamorphoses. Jasper Griffin cites examples from Ovid:

The bare breasts of mourning women had an appeal for Propertius; with their combination of the gloomy and the sexy, they became a cliché with Ovid. Dwelt on with gusto in the Metamorphoses (2.584,2.178,4.590,8.530,9.636, 10.723,11.681,13.688) and Heroides (5.71, 6.27,10.15,12.153,15.123) they come in the Amores (2.6.5,3.9.10), the Ars Am., (1.535,3.707) and the Fasti (3.864,4.454). It is almost shocking that Ovid exploits the motif to describe a real scene of woe: his last departure from his home to exile (Tr. 1.3.78). 83

Ovid’s exploitation of such themes argues his self-conscious awareness of his audience, and his desire to spice up his writings in order to keep their attention and favour. In his longer narratives nudity and rape are two important ways in which Ovid keeps his reader’s interest. This naturally involves certain limitations in the significance and scope of his work.

The preeminent subject for the nude representation of the female body in art was the goddess Venus. Beginning in the late fifth century at Athens there were increasingly realistic (if idealized) attempts to sculpt the naked female body. The 4th century B.C. saw the nude Venus triumphant both in sculpture and painting, an interesting development in a society where respectable women always were fully clothed in public. Among the most famous representations was the painter Apelles’s Aphrodite Anadyomene, which Augustus had brought to Rome from Cos. This work, which represents a naked Venus (Aphrodite) wringing out her sea-drenched hair, is referred to by Ovid sufficiently often to indicate its impact on his imagination (Am. I.14.31-4, Ars Am. III.224,401-402, Tr. II.526-527, Pont. IV.1.29). It is

83Ibid., p. 148.
likely that Ovid intends his audience to visualize such representations when he talks about the charms of Corinna or of mythical heroines. In Amores I.14 he compares Corinna’s lost hair with that of Apelles’s Venus (Dione), and it is unlikely that the allusion is meant to limit the imagination to her hair, even though a woman’s hair held special attractions for the poet.

Ovid writes of Corinna’s hair (33-34):

illis contulerim, quas quondam nuda Dione
 pingitur umenti sustinuisse manu.

I could compare with them the tresses which nude Dione
Is painted holding up of yore with dripping fingers.

The word nuda here does not appear to be merely descriptive, but is perhaps meant as an aid to visualization.

Ovid often portrays his mistress as being lightly garbed, in anticipation of love-making (Am. I.4.47-50, I.5.5-14, III.1.49-52, III.7.81-82). In the last reference she leaves his couch with núdos pedes (“naked feet”). In approaching a desirable woman at the races, a glimpse of her limbs is sufficient to fire the poet’s imagination (Am. III.25-36). The sight conjures images of the legs of fleet Atalanta or of Diana hunting the wild beasts as portrayed in mythological paintings. Ovid suspects that the rest of this lady’s body would please equally well when seen, and refers to it again in lines 40-41 and 63-64.

In the Heroides nudity is also closely associated with passion and seduction. In Heroides XI Canace reminds her brother-lover Macareus of her difficult labour with their love-child, and how, during the labour, when she felt death was nigh, he leaned over her, tore away her robe, and pressed his own body to hers (55-58). This sensational passage concludes with Macareus’s bizarre proposal of marriage (59-62).
The heroine Helen of Troy is almost a second Venus with respect to her irresistible charms. Paris suspects that it was the Spartan custom of female nudity in athletics which led Theseus to abduct her (Her, XVI.149-152). To emphasize the point he describes her as a naked woman (nuda femina) mingling (ambiguous word) with naked men (nudis viris). Later Paris tells how entranced he was when he accidentally caught sight of Helen’s breasts at a feast. His goblet fell from his hand in amazement (249-254). Certainly, nudity is here the food of love. Helen’s response to Paris (Her, XVII.115-122) includes a reference to his judgment of the three goddesses who presented themselves to him unclad (nudas). Helen is surprised that heavenly bodies (caelestia corpora) should have presented their beauty (formam) to Paris for his arbitration. It is a powerful precedent for nudity unknown to the early poets. Leander, appropriately enough, swims naked to visit his mistress Hero (Her, XVIII.34).

In his advice to women Ovid allows that it is not fair that men armed (by the praeceptor amoris) should fight defenceless (nudas) women (Ars Am, III.5). Ovid nonetheless recommends that women contrive to show a little skin in order to get men’s notice (Ars Am, III.307-310):

pars umeri tamen ima tui, pars summa lacerti
nuda sit, a laeva conspicienda manu.
hoc vos praecipe, niveae, decept: hoc ubi vidi.
oscula ferre umero, qua patet usque, libet.

Nevertheless let the lower part of your shoulder and the upper part
Of your arm be bare and easily seen from the left hand.
This becomes you especially, you who have snowy skins;
When I see this, fain would I kiss that shoulder, wherever it is exposed.

Once again bare skin leads to an amorous response, or a desire to respond.

In his advice to women on how to outwit their husbands and guardians, the poet mentions how clothes and body can be used for messages (619-626). Your maidservant or
confidante, for example, can carry the message attached to her warm bosom (in tepido sinu).

Or she can hide it in her stocking, or under her foot. To be really safe, why not write the message on her back, so that her body will carry it to your lover? Ovid no doubt enjoys the image of reading the maid’s body.

Nudity, Titillation, and Rape in the Fasti

Since in the narrative poems nudity is very easy to conjure up (especially given the artistic representation of gods and heroes as naked), the references are legion in the Fasti and Metamorphoses. They tend to become somewhat inevitable, whether as throwaway indications of sorrow, or as signposts pointing to seduction and rape. In Ars Am. III Procris’s response on hearing that her husband Cephalus might be in love with another was to tear the frail garments from her breast (707-708). This is how sorrow usually affects mythological heroines in Ovid.

In Fasti I the poet tells the origins of the sacrifice of a young ass to Priapus, the god of male sexual excitement. Among the Bacchic train the nymphs settle down by a stream to feast in various degrees of disarray (405-411):

Naiades effusis aliae sine pectinis usu,
    pars aderant positis arte manuque comis:
illa super suras tunicam collecta ministrat,
    altera dissoo pectus aperta sinu:
exserit haec humerus, vestem trahit illa per herbas,
    impeditum teneros vincula nulla pedes.
hinc aliae Satyris incendia milita praebent ...

Naiads were there, some with flowing locks uncombed,
Others with tresses neatly bound.
Onewaits upon the revellers with tunic tucked above the knee;
Another through her ripped robe reveals her breast;
Another bares her shoulder; one trails her skirt along the grass;
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No shoes cumber their dainty feet.
So some in Satyrs kindle amorous fires ...

The careless drapery of the nympha provokes sexual interest in the Satyrs and the gods Pan,
Silenus, and Priapus. Indeed the minor goddesses in Ovid's narrative are mainly decorative—they are the objects of the lust of gods and men. Reclining on the grass or bathing in the stream they are chiefly "potential rape victims". As with Roman decorative painting, Ovid's mythological scenes are two dimensional only.

Although the Naiads were resting beside a stream they were not actually bathing as Diana and her followers do at Fasti II.165-174. Callisto reveals her pregnancy as Diana bids her disrobe and bathe in the fountain. It has been noted already how in this passage Ovid plays heavily on the themes of virginity, rape, disrobing, nudity, pregnancy, and punishment.

In order to liven up the antiquarian details of the Fasti narrative, Ovid injects humorous aetiological tales, some of which he seems to have invented for this purpose. The nakedness of the Luperci is explained with reference to Faunus's error in mistaking Hercules for Omphale by night, since they had exchanged clothing. Faunus attempts to attack Omphale while she sleeps but encounters Hercules instead (II.303-358). Likewise Priapus is foiled by a braying ass during his nocturnal attempt on the sleeping Naiad Lotis (I.415-440). Both tales end in laughter at the thwarted rapist's expense, and his resolve to take measures to improve his future chances.

Incidental to Jupiter's pursuit of Juturna (II.583-616) is Mercury's rape of Lara, mother of the Lares. Tarquin's rape of Lucretia is told at length (II.685-852).

Fasti III begins with the story of Mars and Rhea Silvia and their offspring. Silvia the Vestal is raped according to the usual pattern, although here legend helps the poet. Silvia is not only a virgin, but a Vestal Virgin. She lies down by the river's bank (water is usually
present). She is weary, and opens her robe to feel the breeze. She falls asleep, and is sighted by Mars. The poet notes (21-22):

Mars videt hanc visamque cupid potiturque cupidata
et sua divina furt a festellit ope.

Mars saw her; the sight inspired him with desire, and his desire was followed by possession, But by his power divine he hid his stolen joys.

Silvia awakes from her sleep alone, already pregnant, but not aware of what has happened except that she is worried because of a threatening vision that she received while she slept. Book Three continues with the story of Romulus, and refers to the Rape of the Sabines, and their reconciliation of their fathers and husbands (197-228).

Fasti IV recounts the ritual of washing the statue of Venus, and the goddess's decree that women bathe then under green myrtle. The poet explains this by telling how Venus screened herself with myrtle when a band of satyrs ventured to view her while bathing (IV.133-144). Ovid tells then of ritual bathing in honour of Fortuna Virilis who undertook to remove blemishes from the bodies of the women bathing (145-156). Venus, nudity, physical attractiveness, and success in love are here in close association.

The rape of Persephone by Pluto is told at length (IV.417-620). Introduced simply as "the virgin" (417), Persephone (Proserpina) is roaming barefoot (nudo pede) through the meadows, near a waterfall (425-428). The girls are gathering flowers some using baskets, others filling their laps or the folds (bosom) of their robes (435-436). Pluto sees her and immediately carries her off. In sorrow Persephone tears her robe open (448). In grief her companions smote their bare bosoms (pectora nuda). In her sorrow for her daughter Ceres is like a cow whose calf has been torn from her udder (459). She sees the prints of Persephone's
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feet and the mark of her figure on the ground (463-464). In her search Ceres passes several springs, and other water bodies. Then follows an account of Ceres's wanderings.

In the above passage (417-470) there are many elements of popular contemporary hot romance. There are a profusion of signposts that point towards sexual pleasure. That fleeting state of virginity or girlish adolescence is emphasized. Degrees of nudity, and parts of the body and its clothing are reiterated. Parallel references to the animal world are employed. Even the place where the heroine lay points us to her body. Water, used as a metaphor for sexual pleasure, is regularly mentioned.

Unlike pornography, popular romance strives to titillate rather than arouse. It works by suggestion and overtone rather than graphic imagery or obscenity. Words which remind the reader of the heroine's sexual or marital status, her clothing or body, her freedom or lack of it, or her villainous oppressors are especially welcome. Words such as "naked", "torn", "virgin", "body", scarlet", "mistress", "slave", "prisoner", "lover", "concubine", "captive", are used in novels to evoke images now graphically represented on the covers of paperbacks. The class of fiction known as "bodice-rippers"—steamy romances chiefly for female readers—usually portray an angry, muscular, handsome, often partly-naked man clutching a woman who swoons while her blouse falls open. Best-sellers of the past few decades have included such books as "The Naked Nun", "The Emperor's Virgin", "The Naked and the Dead", "Wives and Lovers", "The Gay Divorcee", "Sex and the Single Girl", and other titles which suggest sexual content. Since sex, violence, and sometimes blasphemy are traditional ingredients in popular writing, their presence often indicates a writer who is aiming at a large audience. A writer who can stimulate the sensual imagination without resorting to blatant sexuality is especially welcome, since the reader is less likely to be self-conscious or
uncomfortable in reading his work. Ovid seems to be aiming at such popularity in his mythological narratives.

Fæstī VI recounts the rape of the nymph Crane by Janus (101-130). She fits Ovid's preference for virgin nymphs, since she was the image of Diana herself. Rather than merely flee from men or repulse them Crane (or Carma) would pretend to lead her admirers into the woods and then hide herself from them. The sight of her roused Janus's passion (119). In a humorous touch Janus's ability to see in two directions permits him to spy her hiding herself. The god pounces on the hapless nymph, but as a compensation for her loss of virginity, he allows her to be the goddess of door hinges (125-128). This sop to offended honour should arouse a smile, seeing that it carefully imitates a familiar reward-motif in mythology.

Another merry story incongruously recounts Vesta's presence at a feast of Cybele along with the Bacchic train (VI.219-348). The gods spend the night drinking and at last lie down to sleep haphazardly on the grass. Vesta too slept carelessly on the ground. The ever-alert Priapus spies her and wishes to possess her. As in the tale of Priapus and Lotis (I.415-440), Vesta and the others are awakened in time by the braying of an ass. Thus Priapus in revenge demands the ass as his animal of sacrifice.

Rape, Romance, and Popular Women's Fiction

It is sometimes assumed that Ovid is writing of male interests to a male audience. The evidence that most contemporary fictional rapes are written by women for women suggests another possibility. By moving his focus from adultery to rape Ovid was only moving from one staple of hot romance to another. There are many hints in the Ovidian

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corpus that Ovid has a female audience at least partly in mind. The poet’s interest in hair-
dressing, cosmetics, adornment, and personal grooming runs through all his poetry, as Griffin
points out;

The theme runs right through his mythological poems; Byblis, in the grip of an
incestuous passion for her brother, adorns herself when she is to see him;
Polyphemus makes absurd attempts to prettify himself for Galatea; Mercury,
though confident in his own good looks, combs his hair and checks his
appearance before appearing to Herse; even a female centaur does what she
can to make the best of her looks ... 83

Ovid’s treatment of sexual themes also is provocative and self-conscious, suggesting that he
expects a female response (cf. Am. II.4.1-6,17-22). Love Elegy itself was a genre which
women wrote and in which women are said to have shown special interest. The influence of
the Elder Julia on contemporary taste is usually inferred. The fact then that Ovid writes of
adultery, seduction, and rape from a chiefly male viewpoint does not mean that his readership
was overwhelmingly male; indeed the very existence of the Heroides and Ars Am. III suggests
otherwise.

In her study of the female imagination Helen Hazen makes a distinction between the
physical fact of rape (which is often brutal and terrifying) and the fictional treatment of rape
(which is eagerly sought out by female readers). Part of the difference between rape and rape
fantasy is consent and control. Women who would be frightened at any approach to sexual
violence will nonetheless buy books which portray rape in a satisfactorily conventional
manner. As Mrs. Hazen puts it:

Most women state that they do not want to be raped, and it is probably safe to
accept their word at face value. But the world of the imagination is a different
matter, and there is plentiful evidence that both rape and a broader spectrum of
seemingly unpleasant impositions are forced onto women by themselves for the

83Griffin, p. 100.
sheer sake of enjoyment. This imposition occurs regularly in both the simplest and most sophisticated of women’s fiction.\(^86\)

In response to feminist critics who see the female fascination with literary rape as a evidence of male conditioning or masochism, Hazen states her own pleasure and excitement in such fantasies:

I would like to be raped, but I want it to happen to me exactly as it happened to Cressida in *Vice Avenged*. I want a marquis to come to my second-story window at night with a ladder. The house will be a country mansion. I will be asleep. He will put on a mask and stuff a handkerchief in my mouth. He will carry me down the ladder and onto his horse. I will be dreadfully frightened and in my fear I will only cling to him more tightly since his strength is my one antidote to that fear. We will travel across the moors to the hollow he has marked out. He will carry me to the bed of bearskin rugs and furs he has spread.\(^87\)

Here rape is pictured in the conventional manner of hundreds of romances, and the reader can feel comfortable that nothing very unusual or terrible is going to happen—eventually the marquis will come to his senses and marry his captive who will not only forgive him but help him to become a caring and compassionate lover. The same conventional sequence (though often without the marriage) occurs in Ovid’s portrayals of rape; indeed Ovid’s narratives share some common features with *Vice Avenged*. First, the rapist is highly desirable physically and socially—in romances he is usually a darkly handsome nobleman or heir; in Ovid he is a god or hero. Second, the heroine is often asleep, and thus quite free from any taint of compliance; she is, moreover, too startled to know how to react. The rape itself usually occurs in some completely deserted spot where no aid can be expected. Third, there is at least the suggestion that the heroine is young and innocent, and that what is happening is unprecedented and

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\(^87\) Ibid., p. 8.
unexpected. Fourth, the rapist may have to overcome some difficulties in order to possess the
eroine, thus demonstrating his talents and passionate interest. Fifth, the heroine is extremely
frightened and thereby she indicates her own innocence and vulnerability, and enhances the
emotional impact of the scene. These elements are intended to increase the reader’s interest in
the characters and the action, while avoiding gratuitous violence or obscenity.

As with other fiction these rape (or adultery) narratives are relished for providing an
easily-obtained excitement or emotional thrill of a kind not so readily available or so
uncomplicated in real life. Such fantasies also are written in a manner likely to engage the
reader without provoking unpleasant associations. Helen Hazen feels that women like these
sensual narratives because they appeal to their desire to be important to someone:

a man says to a woman that she is so desirable that he will defy all the rules
of honor and decency in order to have her.88

In this matter Ovid may be the better psychologist with his suggestion that women (indeed, all
people) desire pleasure but don’t wish to take responsibility for it (Ars Am., 1.705-706):

scilicet ut pudor est quaedam coepisse priorem,
sic alio gratum est incipiente pati.

In truth, just as there is shame sometimes in beginning first,
So when another begins it is pleasant to submit.

One of the chief attractions of literary rape for women is that it provides exciting sex without
disturbing the conscience. Popular authors, therefore, take especial care that there is no
possibility for the heroine to escape her fate. In real life, the possibility of complicity by the
female, and the frequency of violence by the male, make the situation much less satisfactory
both to the imagination and the conscience. In fiction, on the other hand, rape is a useful way
of involving the heroine in titillating sexual activity while maintaining her essential purity; in

88Ibid.
this it parallels the literary device of having the heroine frequently widowed so that she can
enjoy a plurality of males without intentional promiscuity. All this reminds one of
Montaigne's anecdote of the French woman raped by a battalion of soldiers who remarked that
it was the first time that she had had her fill without sinning. In sum, Ovid appears to be
appealing to a large audience, which may well be as much female as male, by using
sensational elements widely present in popular fictional narrative.

Rape, Nudity, and Sexual Violence in the Metamorphoses

Already flourishing in the Fasti, the incidence of rape increases in the Metamorphoses. As Griffin states:

The world of the Metamorphoses is one in which rape runs riot. Jupiter
pursues and possesses Io and forces Callisto ... Apollo chases Daphne, Pan
chases Syrinx, Boreas carries off Orithya, Apollo and Mercury both possess
Chione, Neptune pursues Comix and rapes Caenis and Mestra on the sea-
shore, Tereus violates Philomela ...

Whereas in the Fasti such activities appear to be chiefly insertions of the poet to liven up his
antiquarian lore, in the Metamorphoses they are often an intrinsic part of the traditional story.
The poet certainly makes the most of these opportunities, and perhaps adds some new
occasions to the old.

The first rape, or rather attempted rape, of the Metamorphoses is Apollo's pursuit of
Daphne (1.452-567), which provides a clear pattern for attempts to follow. Here, Apollo
himself is relatively innocent, since his responsibility is diminished by being victim of Cupid’s
irresistible shafts. Daphne is a virgin of virgins, another nymph closely resembling Diana
(474-489). Her father is a river-god, an appropriately watery origin for a "potential rape

89Griffin, p. 128.
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victim". Apollo loves Daphne at sight (490), but, surprisingly, first desires her in marriage.

Like Corinna’s lover or the gallant at the races he itemizes her physical charms, and believes
that the best remains to be seen (Met. I.497-502):

spectat ornatos collo pendere capillos
et "quid, si comantur?" ait. videt igne micantes
sideribus similis oculos, videt oscula, quae non
est vidisse satis; laudat digitosque manusque
brachiaque et nudos media plus parte lacertos;
si qua latent, meliora putat.

He looks at her hair hanging down her neck in disarray,
And says, "What if it were arrayed?" He gazes at her eyes
Gleaming like stars, he gazes upon her lips, which but to gaze on
Does not satisfy. He marvels at her fingers, hands, and wrists,
And her arms, bare to the shoulder;
And what is hid he deems still lovelier.

It is evident that Apollo is aroused by the features and skin which he sees, and these urge him
on to discover more. The parts revealed (hair, neck, eyes, lips, fingers, hands, wrists, arms)
are beautiful, and suggest that the rest is also. The importance of the sight of skin (nudos ...

lacertos) in arousing the Ovidian lover can hardly be overstated.

Then follows the chase in which the familiar imagery from the animal world is
employed (lamb/wolf, deer/lion, dove/eagle). Ovid has great fun with Apollo’s mixed motives
and helpless deity as he tries to persuade the fleeing Daphne to stop. Ovid then reiterates the
motifs of nudity and the chase. Daphne’s flight is revealing of her form, while her fear
confirms her virginity and youthful innocence (527-530):

nudabant corpora venti,
obvisque adversas vibrabant flamina vestes,
et levis impulsos retro dabat aura capillos,
auctaque forma fuga est.

The winds bared her limbs,
The opposing breezes set her garments a-flutter as she ran,
And a light air flung her locks streaming behind her.
Her beauty was enhanced by flight.

Ovid now adds the Gallic hound chasing the hare image, with the hound about to close his fangs on his prey. In the nick of time Daphne is metamorphosed into a laurel tree by her father.

This lengthy account is followed by an abbreviated version (600) of how Jupiter snatched Io, as she was fleeing from him, and raped her. Ovid here follows the traditional myth in concentrating on Io’s subsequent misfortunes. This daughter of a river-god was assaulted in the deep woods immediately upon Jove seeing her (588-600).

Following this, Mercury tells Argus, Io’s guardian, the story of the wood nymph Syrinx who was spotted one day by Pan. Syrinx was another who had hitherto eluded her lovers, and had patterned herself after Diana, so much so that she was often mistaken for her. Syrinx flees to the river Ladon where the nymphs of the stream aid her transformation into reeds (689-712).

In Book Two there is Clymene, Phaeton’s mother, lamenting the death of her son by striking her breast (335) and by fondling his tombstone against her breast (339). Phaeton’s sisters join her by beating their breasts (341), and are later metamorphosed into birds. Soon follows Jupiter’s rape of Callisto, one of Diana’s followers, whom the god spied as she was resting, unprotected in the forest (409-507). Jupiter approaches the unsuspecting nymph in the guise of Diana, and begins to kiss and embrace her. Startled, she struggles but has no chance against the god. Her pregnancy is revealed as the nymphs bathe in the brook. Misfortunes follow, somewhat assuaged by Jupiter’s transformation of her and her son into constellations.

Also in Book Two is the account of the attempted rape of the virgin Corone by Neptune (569-588). The sea god spies her beauty as she walks by the shore. At first he uses
prayers and coaxing words, but later offers force. As he pursues her, she cries out to Minerva who aids her virgin follower by metamorphosing her into a crow.

It is characteristic of Ovid's irreverence that the virgin goddesses Vesta, Minerva, and Diana should be treated with scant respect. Indeed Diana's virgin followers are the chief targets of aroused lovers, while the goddess herself is perhaps the leading strip-tease artist among the immortals. The account of Diana's discovery by Actaeon is told in an especially pretty and provocative manner (III.155-205). The scene is set in a well-shaded grotto, near where a stream widened into a pool. Here the weary goddess was accustomed to bathe her chaste limbs in the clear water (163-164). Her nymphs aid her by helping her off with her spear, quiver, and bow; one picks up her discarded robe; two remove her sandals; another binds up the goddess's hair; others bring water and pour it over her (165-172). Then inadvertently Actaeon stumbles upon the pool and spies Diana naked (177-185):

qui simul intravit rorantia fontibus antra,  
sicut erant, nudae viso sua pectora nymphae  
percussere viro subitisque ululatibus omne  
implevere nemus circumfusaque Dianam  
corporibus texere suis; tamen altior illis  
ipsa dea est colloque tenus supereminet omnis.  
qui color infectis adversi solis ab ictu  
nubibus esse solet aut purpureae Aurorae,  
is fuit in vultu visae sine veste Dianae.

As soon as he entered the grotto bedewed with liquid spray,  
The naked nymphs smote upon their breasts at the sight of the man,  
And filled all the grove with their shrill, sudden cries.  
Then they thronged around Diana, seeking to hide  
Her body with their own; but the goddess  
Stood head and shoulders above the rest.  
And red as the clouds which flush beneath  
The sun's slant rays, red as the rosy dawn,  
Were the cheeks of Diana as she stood there in view without her robes.
In this passage the poet skilfully extracts the maximum suggestiveness from the scene without venturing beyond the formal bounds of decency. The wetness of the location is noted (177), and the nudity of the nymphs is emphasized by their somewhat gratuitous action of beating their breasts (178). Then the naked nymphs generously screen the naked goddess with their bodies (180-181). Unfortunately, this attempt fails since the outstanding stature of the goddess makes their efforts unavailing (181-182). The complete nudity of Diana is then again reiterated (185,192). Certainly the picture painted here would not disappoint the reader’s voyeuristic tendencies.

Careful descriptions of nudity and rape are varied with perfunctory treatment of lesser characters. The story of Narcissus’s mother is thus described, with ties to the preceding narrative concerning Tiresias (III.341-346):

    prima fide vocisque ratae temptamina sumpsit
    caerula Liriope, quam quondam flumine curvo
    implicuit clausaeque suis Cephisos in undis
    vim tuli: enixa est utero pulcherrima pleno
    infantem nympha, iam tunc qui posset amari,
    Narcissumque vocat.

    The first to make trial of his truth and assured utterances
    Was the nymph, Liriope, whom once the river-god,
    Cephisus, embraced in his winding stream and ravished,
    While imprisoned in his waters. When her time came the beauteous nymph
    Brought forth a child, whom a nymph might love even as a child,
    And named him Narcissus.

Present here in abbreviated form are the passive nymph, a river-god, the water itself, the rape and captivity, pregnancy, and the child (fit for love even as an infant). Even here there are possible physical references to bodies in "the winding stream" (flumine curvo) and more clearly in Liriope’s delivery "from a full womb" (utero ... pleno).
The narrative of Narcissus introduces the variation of the coy boy who is chased by women (and sometimes men) but scorns his lovers. Along with others, the nymph Echo beholds him, and follows him (III.351-401). She has the disadvantage that she can only repeat others' words. She approaches him to throw her arms around him (388-389). He roughly spurns her and she wastes away to a mere voice (390-401). Narcissus himself suffers a similar fate, hopelessly in love with his own image (402-505). His sisters beat their breasts upon his death (505).

Other females who pursue males in the Metamorphoses include Byblis, who pursues her brother Caunus, until finally he flees from her (IX.454-634). The witch Circe, a notoriously aggressive female, importunes both Glauceus (XIV.8-69), whom she punishes for his reluctance by disfiguring his mistress, and Picus (XIV.346-396), whom she angrily transforms into a woodpecker when he scorns her.

Generally female rakes do not resort to rape when they behold the object they desire. An exception is Salmacis's attack on Hermaphroditus (IV.285-388). After allowing the naiads of Diana's train to fall like nine-pins Ovid introduces the very unvirginly Salmacis. The poet pointedly describes her as the only naiad not to follow Diana, or to join in the hunt (302-309).

As Griffin points out, Salmacis is portrayed as a sea-side vamp or courtesan, complete with transparent dress (310-316):

\[sed\ modo\ fonte\ suo\ formosos\ pertuit\ artus,\]
\[saepe\ Cytoriaco\ deducit\ pectine\ crines,\]
\[et,\ quid\ se\ deeat,\ spectatas\ consulit\ undas;\]
\[nunc\ perlucenti\ circumdata\ corpus\ amictu\]
\[mollibus\ aut\ foliis\ aut\ mollibus\ incubat\ herbis,\]
\[saepe\ legit\ flores.\ et\ tum\ quoque\ forte\ legebat,\]
\[cum\ puerum\ vidit\ visumque\ optavit\ habere.\]

---

90Ibid., p. 92.
But at times she bathes her shapely limbs in her own pool;
Often combs her hair with a boxwood comb,
Often looks in the mirror-like waters to see what best becomes her.
Now, wrapped in a transparent robe, she lies down
To rest on the soft grass or the soft herbiage.
Often she gathers flowers; and on this occasion, too, she chanced to be
gathering flowers
When she saw the boy and longed to possess what she saw.

Like Persephone, Salmacis is gathering flowers, an image which takes on sexual connotations.

In this reversal the nymph is the experienced and confident seducer, while the boy is the
innocent virgin. When words fail to gain her purpose, Salmacis approaches to embrace
Hermaphroditus, but he threatens to flee. Craftily she awards him the pool and hides herself
nearby until he is bathing. Then follows one of the more graphic sexual assaults in Ovid, all
the more entertaining since the would-be rapist is female (IV.344-347,350-351,356-360):

nec mora, tempéræ blandarum captus aquarum
mollis de tenero velamina corpore ponit.
tum vero placuit, nudaque cupidince formæ
Salmacis exarsit ...
viœque moram patitur, vix iam sua gaudio differt,
iam cupit amplexi, iam se male continet amens ...
"vicimus et meus est" exclamat nais, et omni
veste procul iacta mediis insinitur undis,
pugnamentque tenet, luctantiaque oscula carpit,
sublectataque manus, invitaque pectora tangit,
et nunc hac iuveni, nunc circumfunditur illac.

Then quickly, charmed with the coolness of the soothing stream,
He threw aside the thin garments from his slender form.
Then did he truly attract her, and the nymph’s love kindled
As she gazed at the naked form ...
Scarce can she endure delay, scarce bear her joy postponed,
So eager to hold him in her arms, so madly incontinent ...
"I win, and he is mine" cries the naiad, and casting off
All her garments dives also into the waters:
She holds him fast though he strives against her, steals reluctant kisses,
Fondles him, touches his unwilling breast,
Clinging to him on this side and on that.
Nudity again is a spur to love. The lust of the eyes leads to sexual assault. Hermaphroditus's beauty while swimming is emphasized in lines 352-355 also. Unlike male rapists Salmacis is unable to force sexual intercourse (368-370); she can only hold him as closely as possible, and pray that the gods may miraculously join their bodies into one.

Book Four also tells the story of the Sun-god's love for the mortal Leucothoe. The Sun-god sees her as he traverses the heavens and loves her (IV.192-204). He appears to her in the guise of her mother Eurynome, and declares his love for her (217-228). The element of surprise is frequently present in rape narratives since it partly removes the reader's expectation that the victim will respond effectively (228-233):

\[
\text{pavet illa, metuque} \\
\text{et colus et fusus digitis cecidere remissis.} \\
\text{ipse timor decuit. nec longius ille moratus} \\
\text{in veram redit speciem solitumque nitorem;} \\
\text{at virgo quamvis inopino territa visu} \\
\text{victa nitore dei posita vim passa querella est.}
\]

The nymph is filled with fear;
Distaff and spindle fall unheeded from her limp fingers.
Her very fear becomes her. Then he, no longer tarrying,
Resumes his own form and his wonted splendour.
But the maiden, though in terror at this sudden apparition,
Yet, overwhelmed by his radiance, at last without protest suffers the ardent wooing of the god.

This variation on the standard narrative describes the girl as being so surprised and overwhelmed by the god's advances that she makes no protest. When Leucothoe's father hears of this he: takes her alive (the traditional penalty for an unchaste Vestal Virgin), unhedging her claim that the Sun-god took her against her will (ille vim tuit invitus, 238-239).

The reader is left with the ambiguity whether this was rape or seduction, and how far the two differ.
A similar situation occurs in Book Fourteen (623-771) where the god Vertumnus approaches the nymph Pomona in the guise of an old woman, although in this case there is a happy ending. When the god fails to convince Pomona with words he assumes his true shape and radiance, and prepares to rape her. She, however, is so struck by his beauty, that she responds favourably (770-771).

The nymph Clytie (who tattled to Leucothoe’s father about her loss of virginity) was shunned by the Sun-god, and so pined away and died (IV.260-261):

nympharum inpatiens et sub Iove nocte dieque
sedit humo nuda nudis incompta capillis ...

Unable to endure her sister nymths, beneath the open sky, by night and day,
She sat upon the bare ground, naked, bareheaded, unkempt.

The sorrow of the Theban women at the fate of Ino produces bare breasts (IV.545-546,554-555) and likewise Cadmus’s wife feels sorrow when he is transformed into a serpent (590, cf. 595-597).

In Book Five even the Muses themselves are offered violence by the villainous king Pyreneus (264-293). The rape of Proserpina by Pluto is again recounted at length (376-571). The virginity of the girl and her wish to remain so are emphasized (376-377). There follow water, woods, springtime, flowers (gathered by basket and bosom), precipitate abduction, and tearing of garments (385-401). Her rape is opposed by the nymph Cyane who stands up in her pool as far as her waist (411-413). Cyane’s speech is a rare example of an argument against rape in Ovid (414-418). Cyane is promptly suppressed, and melts into water (420-437). Then follows Ceres’s search for Proserpina, not without beating her breast (473). Book Five also contains the elaborate narrative of Arethusa and Alpheus with its pleasures of visualization
(572-641). Nudity and rape are closely wedded in the light-hearted account of Arethusa's plight.

Book Six contains Ovid's sensational rendering of the already melodramatic story of Tereus, Procne, and Philomela. Tereus has the same passionate desires as Paris or the elegiac lover, but is more willing to be brutal in satisfying them. The moment that he sees his sister-in-law Philomela he is inflamed with desire for her (455-457). He is ready to corrupt her and her attendants with presents, or indeed to ravish her (461-464). Watching Philomela embrace her father he wishes that he were her father so that he could pursue an incestuous relationship with her (475-482). Tereus later in solitude recalls her features and imagines her naked beauty (490-493). Putting aside all familial feeling he plans to violate her, and exults in the prospect (511-518). He is compared to an eagle seizing a hare (516-517), and later the pair are likened to a wolf and a lamb, and a bird of prey and a dove (527-530). Tereus drags Philomela deep into the woods, and rapes the trembling girl, in spite of her cries to her father, her sister, and to the gods. Philomela reproaches Tereus and reiterates his crimes (533-548). Angry and fearful Tereus cuts off her tongue to prevent her speaking more (549-560). He continues to rape the girl afterwards (561-562). Eventually Procne learns the truth, releases Philomela, and avenges her sister by killing her son Itys and feeding him to Tereus (563-674).

Like the stories of Paris and Helen, and Tarquin and Lucretia, the story of Tereus and Philomela is one of passion gone wrong. Ovid is, of course, obliged to follow the traditional outlines of such stories. There is little evidence that they provoke any self-reflection in the praecceptor amoris. Tereus's crimes are attributed to his Thracian temperament and personal character (458-460). This is one of the few stories where the violence of the rape is indicated.
Boreas, god of the North Wind, was not favoured by the Athenians who were
suspicious of northerners after the Tereus incident. Boreas attempted to woo Orithyia, who
was, like Philomela, an Athenian princess. When his overtures were refused, he angrily
berated himself for not resorting to force in the first place (VI.687-690,700-701):

"et merito!" dixit; "quid enim mea tela reliqui,
saevitiam et vires iramque animosque minaces,
admovique preces, quorum me dedecet usus?
apta mihi vis est ...
hac ope debueram thalamos petisse, sacerque
non orandus erat mihi sed faciendus Erechtheus."

He said: "I have deserved it! For why have I given up my own weapons,
Fierceness and force, rage and threatening moods,
And had recourse to prayers, which do not at all become me?
Force is my fit instrument ...
But this means I should have sought my wife.
I should not have begged Erechtheus to be my father-in-law, but made him to
be so."

Boreas then approaches Athens in a dark stormy blast and snatches up the trembling girl (702-
706). He flies with Orithyia northward to the land of the Cicones where he begets the twin
heroes Calais and Zetes on her (707-716).

Book Eight contains the narrative of Meleager, whose mother Althaea beats her breast
(VIII.447) when the bodies of her brothers are brought in. She decides to destroy Meleager in
revenge and upon his death the Calydonian women beat their breasts (528). Meleager's sisters
also "careless of decency" (immemores decoris) beat and bruise their breasts (536). They
caress and kiss his corpse, and when he has been cremated, they press his ashes to their chests
(539).

Book Nine contains several rapes or attempts thereof. The centaur Nessus, "strong of
limb" (nembris valens, 108), offers to carry Hercules's wife Deianira across the Evenus River.
While Hercules is busy swimming the treacherous waters, treacherous Nessus is busy carrying
off his wife. An arrow from Hercules, however, stops the abduction, but the centaur finds a
mode of revenge before dying (IX.101-133). Alcmena relates the rape of her half-sister
Dryope by Apollo (331-332), and her subsequent career. While gathering a garland for the
nymphs she inadvertently plucks some blossoms of the water-lotus (actually the shape which
the nymph Lotis had taken to escape the pursuit of Priapus). Dryope is gradually transformed
into a tree herself, a fate made more pathetic because of the infant at her breast (339,357-358).
The same book contains Byblis's attempts to seduce her brother Caunus who at last flees from
her (631-634). In despair Byblis tears the garments from her chest, and beats herself (636-
637).

Book Ten contains the story of Myrrha's passion for her father Cinyras, and her
attempt at suicide when she despairs of her desire (X.298-518). Myrrha's old nurse discovers
her favourite trying to hang herself and beats her breasts and rends her garments (384-387).
When the girl will not speak the nurse bares her white hair and her thin breasts (again?) and
begs her, by her care for her in infancy, to tell her why she despairs (391-393). In the same
book the beautiful Atalanta competes naked against her suitors (578).

In Book Eleven the capture of Thetis by Peleus is recounted. Thetis, the virgin
Nereid, was fated to conceive a son greater than the father; Zeus, therefore, awarded her
the mortal Peleus rather than to himself (XI.217-265). Thetis's favourite resort was a sandy bay
on the Thessalian coast. Here there is a myrtle wood and a grotto. Hither Thetis would often
come, riding naked on her dolphin. There Peleus seized her as she slept, and when the
goddess refused his prayers, he prepared to force her; but by changing her shape several times
Thetis escaped. Calling on Proteus for aid, Peleus was told to use snares and thongs to bind
the nymph while she slept. When next Peleus laid hold of her virgin limbs (virgineos ...
artus), Thetis realised that she was caught, and acquiesced in the hero’s embrace. This typical rape narrative is varied by the traditional elements of reversal (mortal attacking goddess) and difficulties to be overcome (the goddess’s ability to change shape). Book Eleven also tells the story of the beautiful maiden Chione, who had many suitors when she reached the marriageable age of fourteen (301-317). Phoebus and Mercury, both beheld her at the same time. Mercury immediately put Chione asleep with his wand and then raped her. Phoebus (later that night) approached her in the guise of an old woman, and surprised the girl likewise. Both begat children on her (Autolycus and Philammon respectively). Chione was later punished by Diana for praising her beauty at the goddess’s expense. In the same book (with more cause than usual) Aleyone beats her breasts after having a vision of her drowned husband Ceyx (681-682).

Book Twelve narrates Caenis’s rape by Neptune. She would not marry any suitor, but while she was walking along the lonely shore she was ravished by the god (XII.189-207). As often in myth Neptune asks the girl to choose a gift in compensation for her injury. She protests vigorously against rape, and wishes to avoid it by being transformed into a male (201-203):

"magnum" Caenis alit "facit haece injuria votum, tale pati nil posse; mihi da, femina ne sim: omnia praestiteris."

Then Caenis said: "The wrong that you have done me calls for a mighty prayer, The prayer that I may never again be able to suffer so. Grant me that I be not woman: So grant all my prayers."

The last words were spoken in deeper tones as Caenis was changed into Caeneus, and was granted the additional gift of invulnerability to weapons. There is perhaps a joke here that he
would also be immune to homosexual rape, if "sword" (Lett. 207) may be given a phallic connotation. In the battle between the Lapith and Centaurs, Caeneus is taunted with his gifts from Neptune by Latreus and the other centaurs (470-476,499-501).

The attempt by the centaurs to carry off Hippodame, Pirithous's bride, from the wedding feast forms a major episode of this book (XII.210-535). The beauty of the bride, the power of wine, and the savage passions of the centaurs contributed to the act (219-226):

nam tibi, saevorum saevissimae Centaurorum,
Euryte, quem vino pectus, tam virgine visa
ardet, et ebrictas geminata libidine regnat.
protinus eversae turbant convivia mensae,
raptaturque comis per vim nova nupta prehensis.
Eurytus Hippodamen, alii, quam quisque probabant
aut poterant, rapiunt, captaeque erat urbis imago.
femineo clamore sonat domus ...

For your heart, Eurytus, wildest of the wild centaurs,
Was inflamed as well by the sight of the maiden as with wine,
And it was swayed by drunken passion redoubled by lust.
Straightway the tables were overturned and the banquet in an uproar,
And the bride was caught by her hair and dragged violently away.
Eurytus caught up Hippodame, and others, each took one for himself according
as he fancied
Or as he could, and the scene looked like the sack of a town.
The whole house resounded with the women's shrieks ...

It indicates the elegiac and personal overtones of Ovid's narratives that in spite of the profusion of rapes, brutal violence and especially mass violence is rare. Perhaps the poet is consulting the interests of his audience, who relate more readily to one-on-one encounters, and who are more stimulated by sexuality than mere brutality (in spite of the popularity of the Roman arena). It likely also reflects the poet's own preferences, and his distaste for war and military themes.

In Book Thirteen occurs the sacrifice of the Trojan princess Polyxena to the shade of Achilles (441-480). This follows soon after the sack of Troy and the capture of the Trojan
women, "an enviable booty" (invidiosa ... praemia, 414). As winds fail the Greek fleet the ghost of Achilles appears to demand the honour of a sacrifice. Polyxena bares her throat and breast for the sword-thrust. The sword is plunged deep into her breast, and there is the suggestion in this passage, and more so in others of a "sword equals phallus" equation. Where nudity and rape are in close association with the emphatic use of a sword, the imagery seems to suggest such overtones.

In Fasti II which recounted Tarquin’s rape of Lucretia there was repeated emphasis on the sword with which the king’s son threatened the matron (793-796,801-802):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{surgit et aurata vagina liberat ensem} \\
\text{et venit in thalamos, nupta pudica, tuos.} \\
\text{utque torum pressit, "ferrum, Lucretia, mecum est."} \\
\text{natus ait regis, "Tarquiniusque loquor!"} \\
\text{quid faciat? pugnet? vincetur anima pugnans.} \\
\text{clamat? at in dextra, qui vetet, ensis crat.}
\end{align*}
\]

He rose, and from the gilded scabbard he drew his sword, And came into thy chamber, virtuous spouse. And when he touched the bed, "The steel is in my hand, Lucretia," Said the king’s son, "and I that speak am a Tarquin." What could she do? Should she struggle? In a struggle a woman will always be worsted. Should she cry out? But in his clutch was a sword to silence her.

A similar juxtaposition occurs several times in the Metamorphoses. In the steamy and brutal story of Philomela’s rape, Tereus pursues Procne and Philomela with a "naked sword" (nudo ... ferro, VI.666) after the women have served him Itys’s body. After he discovers that his daughter Myrrha has deceived him into incest, Cinyras snatches his bright sword from the sheath in order to slay her (nitidum vagina deripit ensem, X.475). Ovid is fond of such jokes which undercut the seriousness of melodramatic episodes.

Elsewhere in Book Thirteen the women in mourning theme continues as King Anius gives Aeneas a cup depicting a Theban funeral (688). Later the Nereid Scylla represents
another nymph who enjoys bathing and wandering naked along the shore, or in some sheltered bay. The sea-god Glaucus sees and pursues her, but her fear aids her flight. Glaucus tries to persuade her but she scorns him (900-968). Like most "potential rape victims" she comes to a bad end (transformed into a monster) when she attracts the jealousy of the witch Circe (XIV.25-74).

Circe’s attempts to seduce Glaucus and Picus fail (XIV.8-74,320-415), indicating in Ovidian fashion that seduction and rape work best for the male. Picus’s wife Canens mourns and beats her breast when her husband (transformed by Circe) does not return home (420-421). The same book recounts the story of Vertumnus’s successful attempt to win Pomona.

Ovid’s rape narratives then are stereotypical in the manner of modern popular romances. The female victim is usually young, virginal, passive, and naive, primarily indeed a beautiful body needing employment. She is bathing or sleeping in an idyllic landscape, either naked or in less than full attire (e.g., the huntress nymphs); she has no duties, and is often weary from exercise or heat; she is ripe for marriage, but scorns the inevitable outcome of her beauty. She can rarely be described as a moral agent, or at times even an agent at all. While this might reflect a low opinion of the abilities of young women, it seems rather more directly a move to avoid raising moral or intellectual problems about rape and its cognates. Popular writing shuns introspection, and hastens after surface action. As in cartoons where the animated character is repeatedly shot only to reappear immediately unhurt, the reader is not to sympathize too much with the unfortunate maidens of the *Metamorphoses*. Interpreters who view the poet as indulging in a serious study of rape and its trauma are bringing their own sensibilities to bear on the carefree author.
As with the steamy romance and the soap opera the negative impact of such narratives is to accustom the reader to view a wide variety of sexual and social actions as outside the realm of morality. They tend to reinforce the popular Epicureanism of Ovid’s society and our own. Limited and passive characterization favours a retreat from individual responsibility, since important philosophical, theological, and moral questions are rarely entertained in relation to action. Surface actions attract superficial readers or lead readers to become so. Ovid’s own rationalisation of rape (in the Ars Am.), like his acceptance of adultery, is part of his acquiescence in the popular culture of his day.

Sexual Innuendo, Priapic Verse, and Obscenity in Ovid

Direct and sustained reference to the genitals or the sex act would also tend to raise issues and expectations which popular narrative generally avoids. While a writer in a popular genre, such as Elegy, may wish to point his readers towards sensuality he does not want to descend to Priapic writing or pornography, partly because women make up a goodly segment of his audience. He may also wish to challenge comparison with the great writers of the past (who were usually non-pornographic), and to avoid an easy dismissal by contemporary literary judges. Sexual innuendo, overtone, and double entendre, therefore, are much preferred to a direct discussion of sexuality, although there may be approaches to the latter. Once again such a strategy aids the reader’s insensitivity to the implications of the subject matter. The author can regularly remind the reader of sex and the genitals while narrating an apparently neutral tale of love and adventure.

Peter Green has incidentally mentioned a number of Latin words which Ovid uses regularly with double meaning, as he does membrum in Ars Am. I.412:
At line 412 Ovid’s use of the phrase “dismembered vessel” (naufragia membra
ratis) strongly suggests erotic: no less than maritime failure. Membrum, like
various other words in Ovid’s vocabulary (e.g., testis, nervus, latus, eoine,
miscere, surrent, cadere, lacere) is commonly exploited for suggestive double
entendre ... 91

A special favourite of the poet’s is testis. Green explains its use in Ars Am. Ill.398:

Line 398 offers yet another neat—and unmistakable—instance of sexual double
The Latin (fructus abst. facies cum bona testa caret) can mean either (i) “A
pretty face, unseen gets no results”, or (ii) “A pretty girl, if never balled,
won’t get pregnant.” The pun on testis (“witness” or “testicle”) is repeated
elsewhere (e.g., Am. 3.3.19, Ars Am. 1.632). 92

Occasionally an entire poem is based on sexual innuendo as is Amores II.15, where
the poet imagines himself the ring (anulus) which he has just given his mistress. As a ring,
the lover hopes to touch his mistress’s breasts, and fall into her bosom (9-14). He would
touch her lips when she seals her letters (15-18). Best of all he would watch her while she
bathes, even though the sight of her naked limbs would make the ring Priapic (23-26). Green
adds that, since anulus can be a synonym for anus, there is sexual humour running through the
entire poem. 93

Anus may also be used in two senses at Ars Am. Ill.69-70 on the fortunes of the
loveless old woman:

tempus erit, quo tu, quae nunc excludis amantes,
frigida deserta nocte iacebis anus ...

That day will come when you, who now shut out your lovers,
Will lie, a cold and lonely old woman, through the night ...

91Green, p. 352.
92Ibid., p. 394.
93Ibid., p. 304.
Green notes a possible innuendo in the description of the salacious mime (Rem.Am. 753-756) where the music and dancers "enervate the mind" (enervant animos): "nervus" frequently also means "penis".⁹⁴

Much of the innuendo is of a metaphorical kind, when the words used could have an anatomical equivalent. When the praecptor warns women (Ars Am. III.456) not to open their doors (ianua) to false lovers, something more might be understood. Sometimes nautical imagery may contain sexual overtones, as when Ovids talks of his vessel (puppis) being undisturbed by the swelling waters (tumescentes ... aquas, Am. III.11b.29-30). As with doors (ianua) above, the praecptor wishes that the instructed lover may pass the threshold (limina) of his mistress (Rem.Am. 785-786). Evidently phallic is the oath of Agamemnon by his sceptre (per sceptrum) that he never touched Briseis (Rem.Am. 783-784). Still more obvious is the joke with which Ovid introduces his section on sexual intercourse; he is now going to treat of "naked (or, unveiled) matters" (nudis rebus, Ars Am. III.747).

It has often been noted that for a poet whose primary concern is male-female relationships Ovid spends relatively little time describing sexual techniques and encounters.⁹⁵ The lack of graphic sex and blatant obscenity in the Ovidian corpus has often been approvingly remarked on, sometimes accompanied by a favourable comparison of Ovid to Martial, or other epigrammatic or Priapic writers:

Martial is a sort of proletarian Ovid. Like Ovid, he has a sprightly, kaleidoscopic mind, but is several grades beneath him, morally and spiritually. He is a parasite of greater appetite than taste, ready to feed on whatever is cast to him, offal or ambrosia ... He has Ovid's abandon, which is the ethical

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 423.

⁹⁵E.g., Green, p. 380.
corollary of a philosophy of metamorphosis, without that savoir faire which prevented Ovid from ever becoming vulgar.\textsuperscript{56}

It is a vain endeavour to praise one "morally and spiritually" by arguing that someone else is worse. Without completely denying Rand's statements it is also true that the matter is one of genre. Ovid's epigrams and Priapic pieces are mostly lost, but there is no special reason to believe them to have been free from vulgarity. When writing in a genre which permitted obscenity and which had chiefly an adult male readership, Ovid may well have written differently. Indeed there are indications in his surviving poems that he would not have been uncomfortable doing so.

Since Priapus is essentially the god of the personified phallus, it is difficult to refer to him in a non-sexual manner. By Ovid's time, however, he had become a familiar figure even in not strictly Priapic poetry. The statues of the god with his oversized phallus were popular garden ornaments, and his form was also common in painting and sculpture.

Ovid confesses his susceptibility to the female form in Amores II.4 (and especially to a female dancer) by saying that even the chaste Hippolytus would be changed into Priapus if he saw this girl (29-32). Late in his career on his way to exile Ovid happened to pass close to Lampsacus, the reputed home of Priapus in Asia Minor (Tr. I.10.26).

In the Fasti there are two quite untraditional tales of Priapus which hint at the god's popularity in Ovid's time. Fasti I.391-440 and Fasti VI.319-348 tell essentially the same story of Priapus with Lotis and Vesta respectively as the intended victim. Fasti I.391 begins with a reference to "the rigid guardian of the country-side" (rigido custodi ruris), a phallic allusion. The atmosphere of the story is in the tradition of the Bacchic orgy. There is a further reference to Priapus as one who scares the birds with his groin (400). Then the Naiads are

\textsuperscript{56}E.K. Rand, Ovid and His Influence (Boston: Marshall Jones Co., 1925), pp. 110-111.
described in their careless relaxation. Priapus singles out Lotis for his prey, but his attack on
the sleeping nymph is thwarted by the braying donkey. Priapus "too well equipped with his
indecent part" (obscena nimium quocue parte paratus) is laughed at by all. The treatment of
the story in Fasti VI is more decorous with no phallic references, perhaps in deference to the
virgin goddess Vesta.

Metamorphoses IX also refer to the story of Lotis. "Fleeing the obscene things of
Priapus" (fugiens obscena Priapi, 347), she changed herself into a water-lotus tree. Pomona
(XIV.640) is another nymph who receives the interest of the god "who warns off thieves with
his sickle and groin" (qui fures vel falce vel inguine terret).

It is, therefore, easy for a Roman writer wishing a sexual reference to mention Priapus,
but Ovid has other allusions to the genitals. These are presumably the efforts of a writer
familiar with popular taste, who wishes to casually direct the reader to "nuda res" ("naked
matters").

Amores I.4 recounts the poet's discomfort at the prospect that his mistress's husband
will have the full enjoyment of her after their banquet together. He wishes that neither the
husband nor she will have any sexual satisfaction (65-68). The poet brings attention to the
sexual area in Amores I.14.53-54, when he speaks of Corinna holding her hair in her lap, "a
gift unworthy of that place" (non illo munera digna loco). The two poems addressed to the
cunuch Bagoas (Am. II.2 and 3) naturally have reference to the genitals, and to castration
(II.3.1-9). The erection of the ring (anulus) in Am. II.15.25-26 has already been mentioned.
The most strictly priapic of the Amores, however, is III.7, in which Ovid discusses the
impotence which befell him on one occasion with his mistress.
The entire poem might be considered priapic, since it concentrates (for 84 lines) on the poet's lack of an erection. It includes an address to the penis (69-72), typical of priapic verse.

The entire poem, in fact, is a continual restatement with variations of the poet's embarrassing limpness, which persists until after his mistress has left. Then finally and irritatingly the poet gets an erection (69-74):

quin istic pudibunda iaces, pars pessima nostri?
sic sum polllicitis captus et antec tuis.
tu dominum fallis; per te depressus inermis
tristia cum magno damna pudore tuli.
Hanc etiam non est mea dedignata puella
molliter admoda sollicitare manu...

Lie down there, you shamefaced creature, worthless part of me:
I have been tricked by promises like this before.
You deceive your master; through you I have been caught defenceless,
And suffered a painful and humiliating reverse.
Moreover my playmate did not refrain from applying her hand
And gently coaxing it...

Ovid seems to be going beyond the usual topics of Love Elegy in this poem, and in spite of his excellent knowledge of his audience, the poem may have attracted criticism. In the Ars there is less direct reference to the sex organs, except where the praeceptor is suggesting that they be partly hid during love-making (Ars Am. II.615-621, III.807-808). It may be noted that Mars and Venus, caught in Vulcan's trap, are unable to cover their genitals (Ars Am. II.584). Ovid does, however, have a lengthy passage on the elasticity and durability of the vagina (Ars Am. III.89-98), but the treatment is much more indirect than in Amores III.7.

It is even possible that Ovid's increasing interest in Priapus was meant to give such references a more traditional and innocuous aspect, since references to the genitals are otherwise rare in the Fasti and Metamorphoses. Procne (Met. VI.616-617), as a punishment for Tereus, considers cutting off his genitals with a sword (quae tibi membra pudorum /
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absuturunt ferro raniam) a passage which perhaps also uses "sword" (ferro) as a phallic allusion.

There is no doubt that Ovid's reputation was widespread as an amatory poet. When a declaimer spoke about the hungry Erysichthon, who began to eat himself, Cestius reproved him for being too much a reader of Ovid (Seneca, Controv. III.7):

Apparet, inquit, te poetas studiose legere: iste sensus eius est qui hoc saeculum amatorii non aribus tantum sed sententiis implevit.

"It is obvious you are a careful reader of poetry. That idea came from a man who filled this generation with erotic handbooks—and erotic epigrams."

No doubt some disapproved of Ovid's verse, a disapproval perhaps more intense because of its popularity. The same work indicates that Ovid wrote priapic epigrams. The Elder Seneca tells how an ex-praetor wished to suggest, rather obscenely, in a declamation that a virgin bride might still have had some sexual experiences (Controv. I.2.22):

Novimus, inquit, istam maritorum abstinentiam qui, etiam si primam virginibus timidis remisere noctem, vicinis tamen locis ludunt. Audiebat illum Scaurus, non tantum disertissimus homo sed venustissimus, qui nullius unquam inpunitum stultitiam transire passus est; statim Ovidianum illud: "inepta loci", et ille excidit nec ultra dixit.

"We know", he said, "the kind of abstinence displayed by husbands who, even if they don't insist on the first night because the bride is frightened, nevertheless play about in the neighbourhood." Scaurus was listening—he was a witty as well as eloquent man, who allowed no folly to pass unpunished. At once he came out with "Wrong place" from Ovid, and the other lost his thread and said no more.

Scaurus was undoubtedly quoting from an Ovidian epigram or priapic poem, and the phrase refers to the "foolish woman" (inepta) who is unsure "of the place" (loci) which her husband or lover is aiming at. The context strongly suggests that the Ovidian poem is about a bride who is fearful of vaginal intercourse and is surprised when her husband penetrates her analy. The situation is not an improbable one in a society where men were commonly bi-
sexual, and easily lends itself to humour of the priapic kind. There is in fact a priapean poem
which uses this very situation, and these very words (inepta loci), namely the third poem in the
Priapean Collection. The situation and words occur in lines 7-8: 97

Obscure poteram tibi dicere: "da mihi, quod tu
des licet assidue, nil tamen inde perit.
da mihi, quod cupies frustra dare forsitan olim,
cum tenet obsessas invida barba genas,
quoque Iovi dederat, qui raptus ab alite sacra,
misceet amatori pocula grata suo,
quod virgo prima cupido dat nocte marito,
dum timet alterius vulner inepta loci."
simplicius multo est "da pedicere" Latine
dicere. quid faciam? crassa Minerva mea est.

In riddles I might speak to thee,
And say: "Give and again give me
That which to yield would mean no loss;
For which, when whiskers spoil the gloss
Of thy smooth cheeks, in vain, thou'll sigh;
That which the boy, who, snaich'd from high
Mount Ida's top to mix Jove's wine,
Gives to his lover lord divine;
That which the newly-wedded bride,
While striving hard one place to hide,
Will this then to her mate betray".
'Tis simpler in plain speech to say:
"Give entry, lad, to thy behind."
What else to do? I've but a dullard's mind.

The Ovidian elements in this poem include the observation that the object of affection
loses nothing by having intercourse (cf. Ars Am. III.90, etc.), and the use of Jupiter (Jove) as a
model for the lover to follow. While there is no way of disproving Ovid's authorship of these
verses, some would date the Priapea to a single author writing about the time of Martial. 98 In
this case, it is to be assumed that the author is imitating the Ovidian original, which may

70-71.

98 Ibid., pp. 32-37.
perhaps have become a sub-genre (the inepta loci) within the priapic tradition. There is an epigram by Martial (X.73) which deals with a homosexual who is getting married. Martial suggests that his inexperienced bride will probably let him have anal intercourse the first night (5-6), but when her family find out they will forbid it (7-8). The language used of the bride and the wedding night is similar to Priapea 3. This suggests that the Ovidian poem (quoted by Scaurus) became very popular, and influenced later priapic verse.

The objection that Ovid elsewhere puts only a secondary value on homosexual practices does not discount the possibility that the poet was active in writing epigrams with homosexual overtones. Priapic poetry was a different genre with different expectations from Elegy and had usually a more strictly male audience. Ovid's definite interest in such sexual matters as incest, bestiality, rape, and voyeurism do not rule out further possibilities. It seems unlikely that sexual epigrams were prominent in Ovid's contemporary reputation, but it remains possible that Ovid may not have skirted the obscene as completely as some admirers believe.

Homosexuality and Effeminacy in Ovid

Homosexual attraction was a major theme in Old Greek and Hellenistic poetry, although some important authors, notably Homer, have little to say about it. Although not much interested in the early Greek bards in general, Ovid makes an exception for Sappho on account of her susceptibility to love. In Heroides XV Ovid portrays her as his female alter ego, easily smitten by new love. Now (XV.9-12) she burns with love for the young man Phaon and neglects the many girls whom she used to love (15-20):

nec me Pyrrhaides Methymnaiadesve puellae,
nece me Lesbiadum cetera turba iuvant.
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villis Anactorie, villis mihi candida Cydro;
non oculis grata est Athis, ut ante, meis,
atque aliae centum, quas hic sine crimine amavi;
inprobe, multarum quod fuit, unus habes.

Neither the maids of Pyrrha charm me now, nor they of Methymna,
Nor all the rest of the throng of Lesbian daughters.
Naught is Anactorie to me, naught Cydro, the dazzling fair,
My eyes joy not in Athis as once they did,
Nor in the hundred other maids I loved here to my reproach;
Unworthy one, the love that belonged to many maids you alone possess.

Sappho has elements of the philandering elegiac lover along with some features drawn from Ovid's more typical heroines. The list of Sappho's pupil-loves suggests that Ovid had read her poetry with interest. Although the poem fits the general outline of the rebuke to the faithless lover (a common theme of the Heroides), Ovid takes care to remind the reader of Sappho's lesbian sympathies (e.g., 199-202).

Although overt lesbianism hardly occurs in Ovid, there are perhaps jocular references to it in those scenes where a god seduces or rapes a maid in the guise of a woman. In Met. II.435-433,441-446) the poet recounts how Jupiter, in the form of Diana, began to kiss and embrace the nymph Callisto until his ardour betrayed his identity. The joke is continued by the nymph's fearful flight upon seeing the real Diana shortly after her rape by the god. The sun-god appears to Leucothoe in the guise of her mother Eurynome, but resumes his own form before embracing her (Met. IV.217-233). In Book Nine Ovid tells the story of the girls Iphis and Ianthe, who fell in love, although Ianthe thought, deceived by Iphis's clothes and pretence that she was a boy (IX.712-725). Iphis then laments the unnaturalness of her passion which does not occur in the animal world (726-744). The goddess Isis answered at length the prayer of Iphis's mother and turned Iphis into a boy (770-797). Also the god Vertumnus approaches
the nymph Pomona in the form of an old woman, and kisses her (XIV.654-660). He too resumes his own form before attempting to embrace her (765-771).

References to effeminacy in Ovid are usually dismissive, and homosexuality is only sympathetically treated in a mythical context. This is in line with most public Roman sentiments on the subject from poets, declaimers, and philosophers (e.g., Seneca on Maecenas). In Ovid these objections to beauty and effeminacy in a man often reflect the female viewpoint that such a one is more a rival than a lover. The bawd Dipsas expects her protege to get cash from a handsome youth, as from anyone else (Am. 1.8.67-68):

qui, quia pulcher erit, posset sine munere noctem!
quod det, amatorem flagitet ante suum!

Let him who asks your favours without paying because he is fair, First demand what he may give from a lover of his own.

Phaedra in her love for the manly Hippolytus dismisses softer men (Heroides IV.75-76):

sint procul a nobis iuvenes ut femina complit—
fine coli modico forma virilis amat.

Away from me with your young men arrayed like women!— Beauty in a man would fain be striven for in measure.

The general theme of effeminacy receives its fullest treatment at the hands of Deianira in Heroides IX. She berates her absent husband Hercules for allowing himself to be put into women's clothes by Omphale, queen of Lydia (IX.53-118). Deianira reproaches Hercules with wearing necklaces (57-58), bracelets (59-60), a woman's headdress (63), and a Maenonian zone or fancy belt (65-66). She tells her husband that his victims would have been ashamed to have been vanquished by such a one as he now appears (69-72). Hercules now acts as a serving-maid for Omphale (73-74); he holds the wool-basket and draws out threads from the wool (75-78). In womanly garb he tells Omphale of his many labours (84-100). Deianira
asks how he can tell of manly toils wearing womanly clothes (101-102). Now, in her lion
skin, Omphale proves to be the better man; she has at least triumphed over Hercules (103-
114). Now she wears his trophies and carries his weapons (115-118).

Ovid naturally enjoys such incongruities, and works out in detail the Hercules-
Omphale role reversal. He returns to the subject in Fasti II (305-330) where Omphale
exchanges garments and weapons with Hercules. The unsuitableness of Omphale’s clothes and
jewelry for Hercules is developed at length (319-324). This leads to the humourous
conclusion in which Faunus, wishing to rape Omphale at night, seizes Hercules instead,
deceived by the exchange of garb (331-358).

Ovid’s didactic poems have a number of cautions against over-elegance in men. In the
De Medicamine Faciei (23-26) Ovid notes that contemporary men use traditionally feminine
techniques of beautification themselves:

nec tamen indignum, sit vobis cura placendi,
cum comitum habeas saccula nostra viros.
feminea vestri poliuntur lega mariti,
et vix ad cultus nupta, quod addat, habet.

Nor is that a fault, you must be anxious to please,
For men love elegance in these times of ours.
In feminine wise are your husbands made trim,
And the bride has scarce aught to add to their smartness.

Ovid’s basic advice to men in the Ars is to avoid assiduous care of your appearance since that
suggests effeminacy and homosexuality. He points to the heroes of mythology who were
unadorned but had a rugged handsomeness. He tells men chiefly to attend to cleanliness and
good grooming (Ars Am. I.505-509,523-524):

sed tibi nec ferro placeat torquere capillos,
nec tua mordaci pumice crura teras,
ista iube faciant, quorum Cybeleia mater
concinitur Phrygiis exululata modis.
forma viros neglecta decet ...
cetera lascivae faciant, concede, puellae,
et siquis male vir quae sit habere virum.

But take no pleasure in curling your hair with the iron,
Or in scraping your legs with biting pumice-stone.
Bid them do that by whom mother Cybele is sung
In howling chorus of Phrygian measures.
An uncared-for beauty is becoming to men ...
All else let wanton women practise,
And such men of doubtful sex as wish to have a man.

In his advice to women the praeceptor amoris urges them to avoid sleek dandified men
as a bad risk in love. He even suggests that such men, with their love of clothes and jewelry,
may cultivate women in order to steal their robes (Ars Am. III.433-438,443-448):

sed vitate viros cultum formamque professos,
quique suas ponunt in statione comas,
quae vobis dicunt, dixerunt mille puellis:
errat et in nulla sede moratur amor.
femina quid faciat, cum sit vir levis ipsa,
possit habere viros?
nec coma vos fallat liquido nitidissima nardo,
nec brevis in rugas lingula pressa suas:
nec toga decipiat filo tenuissima, nec si
forsitan et plures anulus in digitis alter et alter erit.
forsitan ex horum numero cultissimus ille
fur sit, et uratur vestis amore tuae.

But avoid men who profess elegance and good looks,
And who arrange their hair in its proper place.
What they tell you they have told a thousand women;
Their fancy wanders, and has no fixed abode.
What can a woman do when her lover is smoother than herself,
And may perhaps have more lovers than she?
Let not their hair, sleek with liquid nard, deceive you,
Nor the tongue of the belt tucked tightly into the creases it makes;
Let not the toga of finest texture play you false,
Nor if there be one ring and yet another on their fingers.
Perchance out of their number the most elegant will prove a thief,
And be inflamed by longing for your robe.
In speaking of sexual intercourse the *praecceptor* notes the advantages of older women, and indicates that sex with boys is less pleasing to him (*Ars Am.*, II.683-684):

odi concubitus, qui non utrumque resolvunt;
hoc est, cur pueri tangar amore minus.

I hate embraces which leave not each outworn;
That is why a boy's love appeals to me but little.

Ovid desires passion in his affairs, and, therefore, boys, like wives and captive women, are less interesting because they submit too easily. Some elegists, however, notably Caullus and Tibullus, found boys who were sufficiently coquettish to inspire interest. Ovid's emphatically-stated attraction to women, combined with his somewhat dismissive references to effeminacy and homosexuality, paint a portrait of one who is strongly heterosexually-oriented.

It is quite possible that Ovid, like many young Roman men, tried slave boys as an adolescent but developed no appetite for them. Since he wrote for an audience which included many women he had no literary motive to consider homosexuality. It is interesting that the possibility of writing about boy lovers apparently occurred to him at the beginning of his career, but, unlike some elegists, he never explored the subject (cf. *Am.*, I.1.19-20).

In his mythological narratives Ovid tends to follow traditional patterns to some extent even when they conflict with his own preferences. Hellenistic treatment of myth put special emphasis on sexual irregularities, including the love of boys among gods and heroes. Ovid does not appear to exploit these themes as fully as he might have done, if they were more to his taste. In the *Metamorphoses* the love of Phyllis for the beautiful boy Cyncus is briefly narrated (VII.371-381). Book Ten tells how Orpheus turned to boys and youths after the death of Eurydice (78-85). This would be a good introduction to the bard singing a series of homosexual loves, but the poet contents himself with telling rather decorously only of
Cyprissus and Apollo (106-142), Jupiter and Ganymede (155-161), and Hyacinthus and Apollo (162-193). This is a rather small return for Orpheus’s promise to tell of boys beloved by gods, and there is much more of his second promise (an arbitrary one) to tell of maidens inflamed by unnatural love (152-154). The poet’s interest is decidedly with the second kind of narrative.

After the homosexual loves the next important tale is of Pygmalion’s love for the statue he has sculpted. Rejecting real women, the sculptor falls in love with an idealised image of woman. Ovid portrays Pygmalion as a lover of the statue, kissing it and calling it his bedfellow (X.256-269). This interesting tale is transformed into a genuine love story as Venus more than grants his prayer for a wife resembling the statue (270-297).

Incestuous Relationships in Ovid

Orpheus’s tales of "maidens inflamed by unnatural love" (inconcessis puellas / ignibus attonitas, 153-154) include the lengthy tale of Myrrha’s love for her father Cinyras (X.298-518). Ovid’s interest in incest is probably inherited from the Hellenistic poets, and gives added piquancy to a number of Ovidian narratives.

Ovid develops the sensational aspects of the Myrrha-Cinyras story fully, taking care that the reader should dwell on the horror and excitement of the situation. The poet begins by warning the audience of the horrors he must relate, and telling fathers and daughters to absent themselves for this tale (X.298-303). Then follows a discourse on the geographical location and metaphysical origins of this sin, concluding with an epigram that loving one’s father in this case was worse than hating him (304-315). Myrrha’s soliloquy briefly rejects incest, then rationalizes it from the example of the animal world and barbarian races (324-333):
... coeunt animalia nullo
cetera dilectu, nec habetur turpe iuvenae
ferre patrem tergo, fit equo sua filia conjunx,
quasque creavit init pecudes caper, ipsaque, cuius
semine concepta est, ex illo concipiit ales.
felices, quibus ista licent! humana malignas
cura dedit leges, et quod natura remittit,
invita iura negant. gentes tamen esse fenuntur,
in quibus et nato genetrix et nata parenti
iungitur, ut pietas geminato crescat amore.

... Other animals mate
As they will, nor is it thought base for a heifer
To endure her sire, nor for his own offspring to be a horse's mate:
The goat goes in among the flocks which he has fathered,
And the very birds conceive from those from whom they were conceived.
Happy they who have such privilege! Human civilization
Has made spiteful laws, and what nature allows,
The jealous laws forbid. And yet they say that there are tribes
Among whom mother with son, daughter with father mates,
So that natural love is increased by the double bond.

Such arguments that laws were human constructs at odds with nature had been commonplace
since the early Greek sophists. They reflect a moral relativism which exists unchallenged in
Ovid's works. Myrrha considers further that she will confound all familial roles and
relationships by loving her father, but her love is too strong to listen to arguments (346-
348,355). As with the contemporary soap opera heroine, reason and morality exist only to be
swept away by blind and inexplicable passion.

Ovid gives an incestuous heightening to conventional discourse in the ironic exchanges
between Myrrha and Cinyras. When Cinyras asks Myrrha what kind of husband she would
like, she replies, "One like you" (similem tibi, 364). Such irony runs through the whole tale,
as in the nurse's kindly promise to the passionate girl that her father will never know of her
affair (409-410). In indicating her love, Myrrha tells the nurse only: "O mother, blest in your
husband!" (O felicem conjuge matrem!, 422). When the drunk king asks the nurse the age of
the maiden she is bringing him, the nurse replies: "The same as Myrrha’s" (*par est Myrrhae, 441). When the nurse leads Myrrha to Cinyras’s bed, she says "Take her, Cinyras, she is yours" (*accipe ista tua est, Cinyra, 463-464). In the guilty bed, they ironically call each other by their relational names (465-470):

accipit obsceno genitor sua viscera lecto
virgineosque metus levat hortaturque timentem,
forisit aetatis quoque nomine "filia" dixit,
dixit et illa "pater", sceleri ne nomina desint.
Plena patris thalamis excedit et inpia diro
semina fert utero conceptaque crimina portat.

The father receives his own flesh in his incestuous bed,
Strives to calm her girlish fears, and speaks encouragingly to the shrinking girl.
It chanced, by a name appropriate to her age, he called her "daughter",
And she called him "father", that names might not be lacking to their guilt.
Forth from the chamber she went, full of her father,
With crime conceived within her womb.

This is a skillfully told story, which carefully avoids any deeper meaning. The poet’s point indeed in such tales seems to be that of the praecptor amoris that women are more lustful than men; therefore, men need not entertain scruples about deception, seduction, and desertion. Throughout his work Ovid takes care that a goodly proportion of the statements in favour of untrammelled lust should be spoken by women.

In her enticements to her step-son Hippolytus, Phaedra argues that their kinship will make the concealment of their love even easier (*Her, IV.137-146). People will expect to see them embrace or kiss in public, and will praise them for their familial feeling. They live, moreover, under the same roof and have easy access to each other. Phaedra’s modesty has been overcome (153-155), and she begs Hippolytus to love her. Surely he can’t be more obdurate than the Cretan bull (165-166):
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Flecte, ferox, animos! potuit corrumpere taurum
mater; eris tauro saevior ipse truci?

Bend, O cruel one, your spirit! My mother could pervert the bull;
Will you be fiercer than a savage beast?

_Heroides_ XI is the letter of Canace to her brother Macareus recounting their incestuous love. Once again there is great emphasis on the familial relationships involved (e.g., 23-24):

> cur umquam plus me, frater, quam frater amasti,
et tibi, non debet quod soror esse, fui?

Oh why, my brother, did you ever love me more than brother,
And why have I been to you what a sister should not be?

Their father Aeolus’s cruelty in condemning Canace and her baby to death is also seen as unnatural and unpatrial (e.g., 5-16,93-100,107-108).

Ovid in the _Ars_ (I.269-282) argues that women are more lecherous than men, though they are better at concealing it. He urges the examples of Byblis, Myrrha, Pasiphae, Aprope, Scylla, Clytemnestra, Medea, Phthia, Phaedra, and Idaea. Six of these ten ladies were involved in some kind of intra-familial sexuality. As a major taboo of the Greek world incest figured very largely in mythology. It is doubtful whether Ovid exaggerates its prominence in myth, but he certainly welcomes it as a safely traditional form of sexual titillation.

The stories of Byblis and Myrrha are told at length in the _Metamorphoses_ (another link between that poem and the _Ars_). The later poem tends to reinforce the earlier one on the nature of women (_Ars Am. I._341-344):

> omnia feminea sunt ista libidoine mota;
acior est nostra, plusque furos habeit.
> ergo age, ne dubita cunctas sperare puellas;
vix erit e multis, quae neget, una, tibi.

All those crimes were prompted by women’s lust;
Keener is it than ours, and has more of madness.
Come then, doubt not that you may win all women;  
Scarce one out of many will there be to say you nay.

The *Metamorphoses* mention the story of Nyctimene, who in her guilt and despair  
about incest with her father, was changed into an owl by Minerva (II.589-595). More briefly  
the story of Menephron’s love for his mother is alluded to (VII.386-387). The tale of Tereus,  
Philomela, and Procris recounts not only Tereus’s love for his sister-in-law Philomela (VI.401-  
674), but reinforces its incestuous aspect by portraying Tereus as wishing to be Philomela’s  
father in order to be able to embrace her with impunity (478-482). The story of Byblis’s  
incestuous passion for her brother Caunus (IX.454-665) is told with the same emphasis and  
reiteration of the familial aspects as is Myrrha’s passion for her father Cinyras (X.298-518).  
As both tales are told from the feminine viewpoint they remind the reader of the *Heroides* with  
their mixture of overheated passion and sentimental despair.

**Human Sexuality, Animal Sexuality, and Bestiality in Ovid**

Not as prominent in traditional Greek myth as incest, bestiality (sexual relations  
between humans and animals) does occur, notably in the Pasiphae story, and, less directly, in  
the tales of gods who courted maidens in animal form. Ovid seems especially fond of  
comparing sexual relations among humans to sexual relations among animals, and indeed he  
generally equates the two. Only in his suggestion that humans naturally avoid total nudity  
(*Ars Am*, II.615-621) does the poet seem to distinguish pointedly between them. Usually his  
references to sex among animals are accepting, if not admiring.⁹⁹

⁹⁹We have noted how Myrrha rationalizes incest chiefly from the example of the animal world  
(*Met.*, X.324-333).
Ovid begins *Amores* I.10 by stressing that the beauty of his mistress is such that he fears that Jupiter will pursue her in the guise of an eagle or a bull (1-8). Now that his mistress wants payment for her favours, he reminds her of the unsavoury overtones of such a practice (9-24). He urges her to take the animal world as her model (25-30):

> Sumite in exemplum pecudes ratione carentes;  
> turpe erit, ingenium mitius esse feris.  
> non equa munus equum, non taurum vacca poposcit;  
> non aries placitam munere capiat ovem.  
> sola viro mulier spoliis exultat adeemptis,  
> sola locat noctes, sola licenda venit ...

Look for pattern to the beasts of the field, unreasoning though they are:  
'Twill shame you to find the wild things gentler than yourself.  
Mare never claimed gift from stallion, nor cow from bull;  
The ram courts not the favoured ewe with gift.  
'Tis only woman glories in the spoil she takes from man,  
She only hires out her favours, she only comes to be bid for ...

After his conquest of Corinna, Ovid reflects that women have always been the cause or goal of warfare and adventure. In the same way bulls fight over a cow, and the heifer watches them and inspires their passions (II.13.25-26).

In his quasi-autobiographical account of his affair the poet envisions himself and his mistress as bull and heifer (*Am*, III.5). He dreams that while they are sleeping a crow (panderess) comes and wakes the heifer (his mistress) who leaves the bull (poet) for the bulls of another herd. As Green points out, this dream of desertion is closely tied to the following poems in the sequence (III.6 to III.8) which further explain his mistress’s desertion.\(^{100}\)

In the *Ars* the comparisons of human love to animal love is a regular feature, greatly aided by Ovid’s tendency to view women as a natural phenomenon. The *praeco* refers to the lover as a hunter, fowler, or fisherman and to his prospective mistress as the game which

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\(^{100}\) Green, pp. 320-321. The authenticity of this poem ("The Somnium") has been denied by E.J. Kenney and others.
he is pursuing (e.g., *Ars Am.,* 1.45-50). He compares the numbers of women in Rome to ants or bees (93-90). In arguing that women desire sex as much as men, if not more, the poet refers to the animal kingdom for proof (277-280):

conveniat maribus, nequam nos ante rogemus,
   femina iam partes victa rogantis agat.
mollibus in pratis admügit femina tauro:
   femina comipedi semper adhinit equo.

Did it suit us males not to ask any woman first,
The woman, already won, would play the asker.
In soft meads the heifer lows to the bull,
The mare always whinnies to the horn-footed steed.

Among the evidences of female licentiousness is the story of Pasiphae’s lust for the bull of Minos. This tale is told partly in jest, partly for sensation, beginning with an account of the bull’s beauty (293-296):

illum Cnosiacesque Cydoneaeque iuvenae
   optarunt tergo sustinuisse suo.
Pasiphae fieri gaudebat adultera tauri;
   invidia formosas oderat illa boves.

Him would the Cretan and Cydonian heifers
Fain have borne upon their backs:
Pasiphae rejoiced to become the leman of a bull,
And regarded with envious hate the comely cows.

Pasiphae joins the herd and gathers grass for her new lord, forgetful of her husband King Minos (299-302). Pasiphae’s attempts to make herself beautiful for the bull are mocked (303-306), and her wish to look like a cow for his sake (307-308). Pasiphae’s jealousy of the favourite cows of the herd is detailed (313-316), and her orders that all such cows be removed from the herd either for farm work or as animal sacrifices are noted at length (317-322). The queen’s exultation at holding up as a sacrifice the entrails of her rivals involves both grim
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humour and sensationalism (320-322). Pasiphae’s lust is finally satisfied through a contrivance constructed by Daedalus, the great engineer (323-326):

et modo se Europen fieri, modo postulat Io, 
altera quod bos est, altera vecta bove. 
hanc tamen implevit, vacca deceptus acerna, 
dux gregis, et partu proditus auctor erat.

And now she craves to be Europa, and now to be Io, 
For the one was a cow, and the other was borne by a cow’s mate. 
Her none the less did the leader of the herd make pregnant, 
Deceived by a cow of maple-wood, and by her offspring was the sire betrayed.

Pasiphae is a favourite character in Hellenistic poetry, and as frequently referred to by Ovid. In a common amatory hyperbole Ovid’s heroines reproach their lovers with being less gentle and loving than the bull of Minos. Scylla tells Minos such things referring first to the account of his birth from Europa and Jupiter, and then to Pasiphae and the bull (Met. VIII.122-125,131-133,136-137):

Nec Jove tu natus, nec mater imagine tauri 
ducta tua est: generis falsa est ca fabula! verus, 
qui te progenuit, taurus fuit ...

... te vere coniuge digna est,

quae torvum ligno decepit adultera taurum 
discordemque utero fetum tuit ...

iam iam Pasiphaen non est mirabile taurum 
praeaposuisse tibi: tu plus feritas habebas.

You are no son of Jove, nor was your mother tricked 
By the false semblance of a bull. The story of your birth is a lie: 
It was a real bull that begot you ...

She is a true mate for you

Who with unnatural passion deceived the savage bull by that shape of wood 
And bore a hybrid offspring in her womb ...

Now, now I do not wonder that Pasiphae preferred 
The bull to you, for you were a more savage beast than he.

This well illustrates Ovid’s clever use of animal-human comparisons. Already notorious in his own day was the poet’s line describing the Minotaur at Ars Am. II.24 as “the man half-bull
and the bull half-man" (semibovemque virum semivirumque bovem). This line was quoted by
Seneca the Elder as one which Ovid's friends urged him to cancel, something which he
cleverly avoided (Contr. II.2.12).

_Ars Am._ II contains an important passage linking Venus as a civilizing influence with
human and animal love (477-488). The poet clearly enjoys speaking of sexual relationships
among animals, another safe topic for sexual titillation (481-488). _Fasti_ IV.91-118 is a similar
but more decorously traditional passage ascribing to Venus the benefits of love and society.

It has been noted that the mythological narratives often compare rape to the pursuit of
a herbivore by a carnivore. Apollo's pursuit of Daphne is compared to a wolf after a lamb, a
lion after a deer, an eagle after doves, and, at greater length, a Gallic hound after a hare (Met.
I.505-507,533-539). Jupiter takes the disguise of a bull (as beautiful as Pasiphae's lover) to
charm and carry off Europa (Met. II.836-875). The girl admires his appearance, offers flowers
to his lips, lets her hands be kissed, pats his chest, puts a garland on his horns, and finally sits
on his back with one hand holding his horn and one hand on his back (861-875). The
prettiness and preciousness of this picture suggests that artistic treatments of the myth lie
behind it (cf. 854-856).

Ovid's favourite analogy of the lover and his mistress with a bull and a heifer provides
a simile at _Met. _IX.46-49, where Hercules and Acheclus fighting over Deianira are compared
to two bulls fighting over a heifer. In _Metamorphoses_ XIII the Cyclops Polyphemus sings to
Galatea comparing her to a variety of natural phenomena, but especially calls her "more
obstinate than an untamed heifer" (_saevior indomitis invenci_, 798). Enraged by her lack of
response, the Cyclops wanders the woods and meadows, like a bull which is furious when the
cow has been taken from him (870-872).
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Myrrha refers to familial sexual relations among animals to rationalise her attraction for her father Cinyras (X.324-328). On the other hand Menephrion's incest with his mother is condemned as being "after the wild beasts' fashion" (saevarum more ferrarum, VIII.387).

The overall effect of Ovid's insistent use of animal analogies for human sexuality is to bring sexual relations among animals and among people into very close proximity. In the Ars especially the persistent comparison of women to wild game or to crops which must be either captured or harvested sets the moral tone for the poem. Ovid's views of sexual relations are ultimately anti-social, since they self-consciously ignore or ridicule social measures and conventions such as maidenhood and marriage which limit sexual activity to socially and morally justifiable areas. His point of view, therefore, is largely destructive in that it takes for granted that the abolition of moral and social sanctions on sexuality is desirable.

Altruism, Fides, Avoidance of Anger, and Self-Cultivation in Ovid

The absence of any commendation of traditional social, familial, or moral behaviour is indeed striking. Such commendation rarely occurs at all outside of the poems from exile, and even there it is far from common. When it does occur in the Fasti or Metamorphoses it seems to reflect the needs of the narrative or serve the poet's interests (e.g., the praises of the imperial household in the Fasti). Simple traditional altruistic imagery is so unusual in the love poems that it stands out quite plainly. When the praecceptor gives advice to wait until the fury of love has moderated before attempting to cure it, he uses the example of a mother's grief (Rem. Am. 127-130):

quis matrem, nisi mentis inops, in funere nati
fiere vetet? non hoc illa monenda loco est.
cum dederit lacrimas animumque impleverit aegrum,
ille dolor verbis emoderandus erit.
Who save a fool would forbid a mother to weep
O'er the body of her son? not then must she be counselled.
When she has shed tears and fulfilled her mind's distress,
Then may words set a limit to that grief.

Although the image of the weeping mother is one of the commonest in poetry, it rarely occurs in Ovid outside of traditional contexts. The use of a similar reference at 547-548 may suggest that Ovid was becoming more family-oriented as he grew older.

General statements of altruism are also so uncommon in Ovid as to be notable. The advice to women in the De Medicamina Faciei (43-50) to cultivate their character as well as their looks is quite unexpected:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{prima sit in vobis morum tutela, puellae.} \\
\text{ingenio facies conciliante placet.} \\
\text{certus amor morum est: formam populabitur actas,} \\
\text{et plactus rugis vultus aratus erit.} \\
\text{tempus erit, quo vos speculum vidisse pigitit,} \\
\text{et veniet rugis altera causa dolor.} \\
\text{sufficit et longum probitas perdurat in aevum,} \\
\text{perque suos annos hinc bene pendet amor.}
\end{align*}
\]

Think first, ye women, to look to your behaviour.
The face pleases when character commends.
Love of character is lasting: beauty will be ravaged by age,
And the face that charmed will be ploughed by wrinkles.
The time will come, when it will vex you to look at a mirror,
And grief will prove a second cause of wrinkles.
Goodness endures and lasts for many a day,
And throughout its years love securely rests thereon.

The rarity of such commonplace in Ovid suggest that neither the poet nor his audience had much affection for them.

In spite of recent attempts to portray Ovid as a moralist, there is hardly a moral sentiment in his poetry which is not undercut or negated either as soon as it is expressed or elsewhere in the corpus. His lovers cry out for "good faith" (fides) when it suits their
situation, but are quicker to practice duplicity when it serves their purpose. Acontius urges Cydippe to respect her oath of betrothal (Her. XX.181-182):

non bove macato caelestia numina gaudent,
   sed, quae praestanda est et sine teste, fide.

Not by slain oxen are the spirits of heaven made glad,
But by good faith, which should be kept even though without witness.

The reader may recall that Acontius led Cydippe to make this oath by a trick, and that his own interest in Cydippe is not necessarily high-minded (cf. 117-118,150). It may be significant that Cydippe replies to the charge in the very words of Euripides’s notorious line regarding oaths (Hippolytus 612, cf. Aristophanes, Frogs 101-102). She argues (Her. XXI.135-136):

   quae iurat, mens est, sed nil iuravisimus illa;
   illa fidei dictis addere sola potest.

   It is the mind that swears, and I have taken no oath with that;
   It alone can lend good faith to words.

Many a heroine laments the falseness of her lover, as Phyllis reproaches Demophon (Her. II.63-66). In the quasi-autobiographical poems, however, lovers’ oaths are regularly treated jocularly as having no import, and their falseness offends no gods. Dipsas naturally teaches that Venus lends a deaf ear to deceit in love (Am. I.8.85-86), but the same argument is common elsewhere. The poet congratulates himself for swearing false oaths to his mistress about his involvement with Cypassis (Am. II.8.17-20), and trusts that Venus will count them as naught. Ovid jokes about his mistress’s immunity from punishment for false oaths, since the gods themselves are taken with her (Am. III.3.1-2,9-14). In the Ars the praeceptor urges his pupils to use large promises (I.443-444). As is usual in Ovid, Jupiter himself is our example, who used to swear falsely to Juno about his adulteries, and now favours love’s perjuries (I.631-636).
The preceptor urges the lover to praise to the skies his mistress's beauty, attire, hair, talents, and love-making, whether he really admires or not (Ars Am., II.295-310). The lover, however, must be careful to feign well (311-314):

\[
\text{tantum, ne pateas verbis simulator in illis,} \\
\text{office, nec vulnus destrue dicta tuo.} \\
\text{si latet, ars prodest: ad fret deprensa pudorem,} \\
\text{atque adimit merito tempus in omne fidem.}
\]

Only while so talking take care not to show you are feigning, 
Nor let your looks undo your words. 
Art, if hidden, avails, if detected, it brings shame, 
And deservedly discredits you for ever.

The poet further instructs his pupil to deny everything even if caught in the act (409-414).

There are no doubt elements of humour and exaggeration in such advice, but they peacefully co-exist with evidence of real intent. Agamemnon's oath by his sceptre also indicates how Ovid uses oaths jocularly (Rem. Am., 783-784).

Ovid's predecessors in Elegy had generally invoked fides as an important aspect of their love relationship.\(^{101}\) Ovid's jocular dismissal of fides stands at the bottom of a lengthy moral descent which began soon after Polybius commended the Romans for using religion to bolster trustworthiness (Histories VI.56.13).

Ovid frankly treats the key religious, moral, and social concepts of the Roman tradition as utterly obsolete. There is, no doubt, some truth in what he says, but the poet's moral nihilism is clearly part of the problem (Ars Am., I.739-742, 749-750):

\[
\text{conquerar, an moneam mixtum fas omne nefasque?} \\
\text{nomen amicitia est, nomen inane fides.} \\
\text{ci mihi, non tutum est, quod ames, laudare sodali,} \\
\text{cum tibi laudasti creditis, ipse subit ...} \\
\text{nil nisi turpe iuvat: curae sua cuique voluptas:} \\
\text{haec quoque ab alierius grata dolore venit.}
\]

\(^{101}\)Fides was also an important political concept.
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Shall I complain, or warn you, that right and wrong are all confounded?
Friendship is but a name, faith is an empty name.
Alas, it is not safe to praise to a friend the object of your love;
So soon as he believes your praises, he slips into your place ...
Naught pleases but what is shameful, none cares but for his own pleasure,
And sweet is that when it springs from another’s pain.

The poet goes on to say (751-754) that your worst rivals will be friends, kinsmen, and brothers.

Peter Green comments thus on lines 739-754:

Right and wrong, friendship and honour (fas, nefas, amicitia, fides), the core-elements of Roman morality, are here re-defined in simplistic and far from elevated terms, based on the central criterion of not stealing your friend’s mistress. For the professional lover this is an understandable moral code. Few, however, if we are to believe Ovid, maintain even these standards. There follows (743-746) a list of mythical relationships marked by honourable restraint ... However, at 747-748 Ovid makes it clear that anyone who still believes in such honourable restraint is living in a fantasy world ...

More promising of altruism are the poet’s injunctions to men and women to avoid quarrelling, bad temper and cruelty. Though utilitarian in purpose, Ovid’s advice to men to avoid harshness and quarrelling is commendable (Ars Am, II.145-150, 167-176). This is somewhat undercut by the poet’s wry confession that a man’s past anger may be used against him, but it fits into his general philosophy. Women are thrice cautioned to avoid displays of anger which might offend their lovers. The praecceptor warns against the lady losing her temper with her hairdresser while her lover is present (Ars Am, III.237-242). Likewise when playing games the mistress must not show too great a desire to win, and must keep her temper (371-380). Indeed anger is hostile to one’s beauty, and is more fitting for beasts than for people (499-504).

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102 Green, p. 102.
This advice goes well with Ovid's general contention that love and the arts are great
civilizers, and render their devotees more peaceful and agreeable. These ideas are most fully
expressed in the poems from exile, but are to be found throughout Ovid's work. In rejecting
magic arts, the poet points to cultivation of the mind as an aid to love (Ars Am. II.107-

sit procul onne nefas; ut amenis, amabilis esto:
   quod tibi non facies solave forma dabit ...
ut dominam teneas, nec te mirere relictum,
ingeni dotes corporis adde bonis ...
iam molire animum, qui duret, et adstre formae:
solus ad extremos permanet ille rogos.
nec levis ingenuas pectus coluisse per artes
cura sit et lingus edidicisse duas.

Far hence be all unholy deeds! that you may be loved, be lovable;
And this nor face nor figure alone will bring you;
That you may keep your mistress, nor marvel to find yourself abandoned,
Add gifts of mind to bodily advantages.
Now make thee a soul that will abide, and add it to thy beauty;
Only that endures to the ultimate pyre.
Nor let it be a slight care to cultivate your mind in liberal arts,
Or to learn the two languages as well.

Self-cultivation is an important portion of the lover's art, but here at least is something that is
not solely useful for seduction. The poet, however, goes on to say how such arts will aid you
in love (123-128).

In a similar spirit he advises the lover to break off relations with a woman amicably if
possible; at least he should never let love turn to hatred (Rem. Am. 653-656). He anticipates
modern sophisticated divorce by advising peaceful separation rather than legal wrangling (669-
670).
Friends and Friendship in Ovid

Friendship and social reciprocity (amicitia) is another basic Roman social concept which finds little place in Ovid's individualistic teachings. References to friendship tend to be perfunctory, conventional, and cynical (e.g., Ars Am., I.739-754). The poet's advice to lovers to have a friend ready to talk to (Rem. Am., 579-592) is more positive.

Friends figure largely in the poems from exile because the poet is preoccupied with the desertion of fair-weather friends, and hopes that old friends will intercede for his release from exile. Enemies, detractors, and fair-weather friends loom large in Tristia I.5.27-34, I.6.7-16, I.8, I.9.5-22, II.77-80, III.11, IV.7, IV.9, V.6, V.8, V.13, Ex Ponto II.10, IV.3, IV.16, and Ibis. The addresses to friends and old acquaintances, however, are yet more numerous, especially if we include the nobleman Cotta Maximus, and some fellow literary men. In spite of this, the poet does not emerge as a "friend of friends" but rather as one with a few good friends and a large social acquaintance. Two letters at least breathe a spirit of friendship and gratitude; perhaps Tristia I.5 and III.6 are addressed to the same individual. This is perhaps Celsus whom Ovid warmly laments in Ex Ponto I.9.

Ovid emphasizes that upon his exile most of his old friends deserted him. He speaks (e.g., Trist I.5.33) of only a handful remaining loyal. A. L. Wheeler writes:

Examination of the Pontic Epistles shows that these few faithful ones were probably Brutus, Atticus, Celsus, and possibly Carus. To these we should add his patron friend Cotta Maximus ... It is particularly unfortunate that, with the exception of Cotta Maximus, the poet's best friends ... are known only from Ovid. All efforts to identify them with men of the same names mentioned elsewhere have proved unavailing.\(^{103}\)

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This wholesale desertion of friends might suggest that in many cases no close bonds existed, although Ovid reproaches some deserters with former intimacy (e.g., Tr. I.8, IV.7). Likewise of his social superiors only Cotta Maximus appears to have retained close ties after Ovid’s exile.

The poet complains that since his misfortune his friends no longer wish him to mention their names, unlike former times (Tr. III.4.67-68):

ante volebatis, gratique erat instar honoris,
versibus in nostris nomina vestra legi.

Of old you wished it, for it was like a grateful honour
To have your names read in my verse.

The inference that Ovid regularly included his friends’ names in his poetry would be mistaken. Amores II.10.1 refers briefly to Graecinus; fellow poets Macer and Sabinus are mentioned in Amores II.18; there is not much besides. Ovid’s friendship with Graecinus seems to have lapsed by the time Ovid addresses him in Ex Ponto I.6, and the soldier’s reply contains criticisms of the poet (cf. Pont. II.6).

In the Tristia Ovid warmly thanks the anonymous friends who had aided him or expressed sympathy when the blow fell. In Ex Ponto, when he is free to name his correspondents directly, he turns more to powerful politicians for help, as well as remembering himself to old acquaintances who might give assistance or sympathy. Many of these Pontic epistles have a certain awkwardness in that there is no real occasion for the poet’s address, and no invitation to write from the recipient.

His situation naturally leads Ovid to stress the importance and tenacity of friendship. Mythological models of fine friendships are not forgotten (Tr. I.5.19-24, I.9.27-34, etc.)

Ovid’s professions of friendship to those who helped him seem both warm and genuine, but
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his claims of intimacy with the distant and reserved must be excused by his urgent situation.

He continues to write as a friend to anyone who inspires the least glimmer of hope, including to one who continues unwilling to be named in his verses (Pont. III.4). Utility then somewhat distorts our picture of Ovid as a friend without obscuring the fact that he inspired genuine loyalty in a few people. How loyal the poet would have been himself to friends in trouble is not answered for us.

Slaves and Slavery in Ovid

As a distant disciple of Euripides and the sophists Ovid might be expected to occasionally invoke their social and political liberalism, but in fact he rarely does. His attitude towards slaves is sympathetic, if self-indulgent, but he never suggests a doubt about the institution. Not for Ovid, however, is the delight in cruelty towards slaves or enemies that we find in the Consolatio ad Liviam (279-280):

consistam lentesque oculis lactusque videbo
strata per obsenas corpora nuda vias.

I will stop, and leisurely with glad eyes gaze
On naked bodies strewn on the unsightly roads.

Instead he urges the would-be mistress to seem pleasing to her lover by treating her hairdresser well (Ars Am. III.239-242):

tuta sit ornatrix; odi, quae sauciat ora
unguis et rapta brachia fit acu.
devovet, ut tangui, dominae caput illa, simulque
plorat in invisas sanguinolenta comas.

Let the tiring woman be safe; I hate her who tears with her nails
Her handmaid's face, or seizing a needle stabs her arms.
That maid curses, as she touches it, her mistress' head,
And weeps the while, bloodstained, over the hated locks.
As a practical step Ovid’s praecceptor suggests that the lover win over his mistress’s slaves by gifts and condescension (Ars Am., II.251-260). He enjoys debating whether the lover should try to seduce the handmaid along with the mistress (Am. II.7 and 8, Ars Am., I.375-398). The praecceptor expresses his own weakness for serving-maids at Ars Am., III.665-666, while he maintains that war captives are too melancholy to make good mistresses (Ars Am., III.517-524).

If the poet were influenced by his noble friend Cotta Maximus, he might be more than usually tender to slaves. Latimore quotes a ten line memorial of a freedman of Cotta’s; he comments on the late Greek and Roman practice of furnishing a tomb for favourite slaves and freedmen with laudatory inscriptions:

It must be remembered, however, that all these allusions to kindness on the part of owners and patrons are inscribed, presumably, to the order of the owners and patrons themselves ... Still they at least postulate a standard; to be kind to slaves is here represented as a virtue ...\(^{104}\)

The epitaph on Cotta’s freedman Zosimus details how that nobleman raised his ex-slave to equestrian status by enriching him suitably, how he recognized and looked after the freedman’s sons, how he provided dowries for the freedman’s daughters, how he raised one son to the rank of military tribune, and how, after numerous acts of kindness, he at length provided a conspicuous tomb for his freedman. The epitaph is rather about Cotta than his ex-slave, but it does indicate a high level of philanthropy:

\[
\text{Libertinus eram, fator, sed facta legetur}
\]
\[
\text{patrono Cotta nobiliis umbra mea,}
\]
\[
\text{qui mihi saepe libens census donavit equistris,}
\]

---

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qui iussit natos tollere quos aleret,
quique suas commisit opes mihi semper et idem
dotavit natas ut pater ipse meas,
Cottanumque meum produxit honore tribuni,
quem fortis castris Caesaris emeruit.
quid non Cotta dedit? qui nunc et carmina tristis
haec dedit in tumulo conspicienda meo.

[I was a freedman, I confess; but my shade will be laid to rest
As one who has been made noble by my patron Cotta,
Who willingly to me often supplied the equestrian census,
Who bade me rear my sons, whom he used to provide for,
And who always trusted his substance to me, and who likewise
Provided dowries for my daughters, as if he were their father,
And he advanced my son Cottanus to the office of tribune,
In which position he served in the camps of mighty Caesar.
What has Cotta not given? who now also in his sorrow
Has set up this conspicuous inscription on my tomb.]

The last two lines, indeed, show that Cotta was not averse to publicity
concerning his doubtless genuine kindness.105

It seems likely that ostentatious benevolence to slaves was general in Ovid’s time.

Petronius later satirizes Trimalchio’s bad taste in this respect. Ovid himself urges the lover to
allow his mistress the privilege of liberating slaves whom the lover intended to free anyway
(Ars Am. II.287-294). He pictures his household slaves as greatly lamenting his own exile
(Tr. I.3.21-24,77-78). In his autobiography, however, the poet speaks of his household slaves
harming him (famulos nocentes, Tr. IV.10.101), presumably by giving evidence against him,
or helping those who wished to seize his property. As with Ovid’s friends, it is likely that he
could count on the loyalty of some but not of most.

In his poetry Ovid is not above threatening slaves with punishment if they do not do
his will; he threatens the eunuch Bagoas with chains or a flogging if he does not aid the

105Lattimore, p. 282, quoting Carmina Latina Epigraphica (ed. Bucheler and Lommatzsch),
no. 990. See also V. Ehrenberg and A.H.M. Jones, eds., Documents Illustrating the Reigns of
lover's amour (Am. II.2.41-62). The poet's attack on castration is rhetorical and self-serving (II.3.3-4). Likewise he threatens Cypassis with detection if she does not sleep with him again (II.3.21-28). In general the amatory references do not favour a very altruistic interest in the welfare of slaves. In Amores I.6, however, he urges the door-keeper to remember the poet rescuing him from the lash (19-20). Yet there are no protests about such cruel institutions as gladiator games; they are mere background for the lover and his mistress (Ars Am. I.165-170).

Ovid's Morality and his Modern Commentators

Ovid's views on slavery and the general advice of the Ars represents a popular sophism which is quite in tune with the Roman interest in results whether in politics, religion, war, or love. The didactic practical nature of the Ars is rather similar in spirit to such other Roman "how to" guides as the Commentariolum Petitionis ("Handbook of Electioneering") attributed to Quintus Tullius Cicero, the orator's brother. Ovid's lover is the politician metamorphized. His campaign uses such political techniques as putting the mistress (or voter) in your debt (Ars Am. II.287-288):

at quod eris per te facturus, et utile credis,
id tua te facito semper amica rogat.

But what you are going to do of yourself and deem to be useful,
See that your mistress always begs you do.

Like a candidate for office, the lover must always be visible (II.345-348):

fac tibi consuescat: nil adsueudine maius:
quam tu dum capias, taedia nulla fuge,
te semper videat, tibi semper praebeat aures;
exhibeat vultus noxque desque tuos.

See that she grows used to you: than use and wont naught is mightier:
Till you secure that, shun no weariness.
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Let her be always seeing you, always giving you her ear;
Let night and day show her your features.

The practical *Commentariolum Petitionis* emphasizes how important it is for the candidate to be visible and be surrounded by supporters (34-38), while Lucretius writes about the importance of habit in love and marriage (*De Renum Natura* IV.1283-1287). It is likely too that Ovid's military metaphors go deep, and touch the Roman love for conquest and success. Perhaps the Roman tenacity to win against all odds lurks behind Ovid's advice (*Ars Am.* II.409-414) to deny even blatant infidelities and to seek to overcome the resulting displeasure by sexual aggressiveness. Indeed one might suggest that much of the Roman aggressive spirit is being channelled by Ovid away from war and politics into love-making.

The revival of Ovidian studies since the 1950s closely parallels the movement of popular Epicureanism known as the Sexual Revolution. The insistent sexuality of Ovid is now not only "relevant", but Ovid himself has been viewed as an excellent instructor regarding the "liberated life-style". Much energy has been expended in extolling the real or imaginary virtues of the poet, especially as a warrior in the fight against sexual and artistic "repression". Even casual references to the poet's political and social views tend to suggest that they were of a high order as in Gordon Williams' statement:

... he was the first poet to fall a victim to the clash between republican ideals and the imperial system.\(^{106}\)

It might be difficult to enumerate the republican ideals which Ovid represents, except for an individualistic *gloria*, an ideal which greatly aided the Republic's demise.

More thorough-going is the "revisionism" of Irving Singer who puts forward a strong case for Ovid as an admirable moralist and realist, only to find that his assumptions are

\(^{106}\)Williams, *Change and Decline*, p. 52.
somewhat at odds with the text. Singer begins with an enlightened rejection of some old
censures of Ovid:

To say that Ovid is a mere sensualist, just a "clever dandy", as one critic puts
it, is to misconstrue the art he teaches. When he begins The Art of Love by
saying that his book is for the man who needs instruction and that love must
be guided by art, he speaks as a moralist ... he is not feigning moral discourse
while really doing something else, tickling our inclinations to pornography or
giving us hints about indiscriminate seduction. I take it as highly relevant that
after giving detailed advice to men in pursuit of women he offers similar,
apparently treasonous, counsel to the women themselves ... \(107\)

It will be agreed that Ovid is not feigning moral discourse, but neither is he participating in it.

Singer is impressed by the reciprocal nature of Ovid's advice to women (Ars Am. III), but
surely the preceptor gains by instructing his potential mistresses to meet him halfway. Singer
speaks in favour of Ovid's attitude to women:

In befriending women and realistically accepting them as they are, Ovid brings
us closer to the northern [courtly] tradition than almost anyone else in
antiquity. Together with his concern about reciprocity, there goes an obvious
fondness for the female sex, even a playful and gallant submissiveness, as if he
were a comic Tristan ... \(108\)

No one can doubt the poet's befriending of sexually attractive women, or that he has an
obvious fondness for the female sex. That he accepts them as they are is more doubtful if we
open the matter beyond its simplest terms. The idea that Ovid must be a realist because he is
not an idealist will not be readily approved.

Quoting Fasti IV.91-118 Singer argues that Ovid elevates sexuality to a highly
civilised level quite remote from animal gratification:

Without denying the biological function and material meaning of sexual desire,
Ovid bestows importance on the sport itself ... Ovid removes sexuality from

\(107\)Irving Singer, The Nature of Love, Vol. 1: Plato to Luther (Chicago: University of

\(108\)Singer, p. 128.
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the brutish realm of matter. The game he idealizes is an aesthetic activity ... not the instinct but the innocent merriment of sex, the sylvan loveliness of pursuit and sweet surrender.\textsuperscript{109}

It will be agreed that for the poet sexual pursuit is a game and partly an aesthetic activity. It may, however, be suspected that Ovid's forgetfulness of the biological function of sex resembles denying it. It may also be doubted whether the poems are "quite remote from love as 'the animal instinct between the sexes and its gratification',"\textsuperscript{110} given the recurring use of parallel imagery from the animal world to illustrate human sexual behaviour.

Dr. Singer is aware of some limitations in the poet's treatment of love:

... while some of the stories in Metamorphoses indicate that Ovid realized how people can love each other in ways that are constant and beneficial, albeit tragic, he does not formulate an art of love along these lines. He depicts the poignancy of defeated love with authentic understanding, but he never offers instruction in methods of obtaining love that can be both passionate and long-lasting.\textsuperscript{111}

In reviewing the themes of the Ars Singer is forced to a conclusion at odds with some earlier statements:

If such is the art of love, it amounts to little more than amoral seduction: pleasant indulgence and good sense perhaps, but only to a sense that shies away from considering the nature of human values. This complaint could not be made against high-minded Lucretius. It can be made against Ovid.\textsuperscript{112}

Thus the rehabilitation of Ovid as a moralist and a realist ends with a remark about his "shallowness of moral insight".\textsuperscript{113}

\textsuperscript{109}Ibid., pp. 140-141.

\textsuperscript{110}Ibid., p. 129.

\textsuperscript{111}Ibid., p. 144.

\textsuperscript{112}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{113}Ibid., p. 145.
If morality is a fly in the ointment of Ovidian criticism, then perhaps it can be strained out to the enhancement of the mixture. Joseph Solodow notes the lack of a moral scheme in Ovid’s Metamorphoses:

In short, he knows no morality, to use the term in a wide sense. This is true generally for the world of the poem, which lacks sense and meaning, discrimination of better from worse, or any single standard of judgment, and which refuses to authorize, much less prescribe, any course of human conduct.\(^{114}\)

Solodow approvingly quotes Charles Altieri’s view that this is a necessary response to reality:

There is no logic, no divine order or destiny which promises either a unified eternal story (in the Metamorphoses) or a pattern for the recurrence of particular stories. Ovid’s solution to the problem of continuing his tale may be makeshift, but it’s the only one available in a world without a God or other underlying patterns of meaning.\(^{115}\)

As with Singer, but with a difference, Ovid the Realist is invoked, and so criticism of Ovid becomes criticism of reality. Solodow especially commends Ovid’s use of humour to deflate grandiose schemes of interpreting life (such as that of Virgil’s Aeneid):

The injection of humour inoculates mythology against excessive solemnity; it shuts out interpretations which tend to reduce man to a figure within some abstract scheme, whether moral or historical, political or theological. Ovid’s version of mythology intimates that the past was not larger than life: it was like the present. There were no heroes: mankind was made up of men like ourselves. No gods preside over the course of events or represent a principle like justice.\(^{116}\)

To praise such an attitude in Ovid is to suggest that the poet had carefully considered the matter rather in the manner of Lucretius. Yet irreligion and immorality in Ovid appear rather as a deficiency than a positive acquisition. As Solodow admits:


\(^{115}\)Ibid., p. 27.

\(^{116}\)Solodow, p. 108.
... no poet can be imagined to whom philosophy was more uncongenial than to Ovid.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p. 215.}

This being the case it seems likely that Ovid's lack of a metaphysical base is a product of his education, culture, and audience, rather than an insight on the poet's part.

Singer, Solodow, and others are proof that many readers find Ovid so congenial an author that they wish to praise him even for qualities which he lacks. Here Ovid gives good advice. One should, he says (\textit{Ars Am}, II.641-662), forbear to blame the faults of one you love. Yet you may soften her short-comings by finding praiseworthy names related to her faults. Ovid's admirers have long done this. Yet the master also reminded the lover wishing to end an amour to attend most to those gifts that the mistress lacks (\textit{Rem Am}, 333-336):

\begin{center}
\textit{exige uti cantet, siquae est sine voce puella:}
\textit{fac saltet, nescit siquae movere manum.}
\textit{barbara sermone est? fac tecum multa loquatur;}
\textit{non didicit chordas tangere? posce lyram.}
\end{center}

Insist that she sing, if she be without a voice;
Make her dance, if she know not how to move her arms.
Has her speech an accent? make her talk much with you;
She has never learnt to touch the strings? Call for the lyre.

In the same way it is injudicious to praise Ovid's morality, and philosophy, since these are the areas in which he is most deficient. Many other famous poets (e.g., Burns and Byron) share such deficiencies, which do not, however, prevent them from being regarded as great poets.

\textbf{The Background to Ovid's Worldview}

How then can Ovid's lack of concern for these important matters be explained? An examination of four factors will contribute to an answer: his family and homeland; his education; his own times; and his literary interests.
Of Ovid's family and homeland the poems emphatically relate two things: that he was of an old equestrian family from rural Italy (as was his friend and role-model Propertius); and that he remembers especially the rivers of his homeland (four references attest to the well-watered nature of Sulmo, including the lengthy Am. II.16.1-10). Ovid's father was at least forty when his two sons were born, and it is suggested that he was extremely ambitious for them (Tr. IV.10.15-16, etc.). He seems to have intended that one or both become senators (cf. ibid. 35), or at least that they pursue a successful career (17-18). He urged his younger son to abandon poetry for public life (21-22). Some conflict between son and parents is very likely, especially given Ovid's devotion to Rome's "youth culture". The poet states that his parents were frugal (Am. I.3.10) and he may have had a love-hate relationship with them (cf. Am. 1.7.5).

Regarding morality, Ovid and his brother were removed from the influence of their home at a very early age (Tr. IV.10.15-17):

protinus excolimur teneri curaque parentis
imus ad insignes Urbis ab arte viros.
frater ad eloquium viridi tendebat ab aevo ...

While still of tender age we began our training, and through our father's care We came to attend upon men of the city distinguished in the liberal arts. My brother's bent even in the green of years was oratory ...

This suggests that Ovid's adolescence, if not his late childhood, was spent among teachers in Rome. Since Roman religion is essentially a rural and family matter this early transference to the city may help to account for Ovid's casual attitude to religion, and towards the traditional morality which accompanied it (cf. Polybius VI.56.13; Aulus Gellius I.6.8). There is also no evidence in the poems for any positive influence of Ovid's mother on his life, which may be a factor in the limitations of the poet's attitude towards women. The rather early death of the
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poet’s brother and the generation gap between Ovid and his parents may partly account for the lack of familial feeling and imagery in the poetry. It may also help to explain the emotional importance of an audience to the poet.

His rural background may have led the adolescent Ovid to overcompensate in the direction of modish modernity. (Catullus from Verona had the same concern with urbanitas).

There are at least twenty-eight passages in Ovid which deal with rusticitas, the quality of being countrified or old-fashioned. Only one of these passages (on Baucis and Philemon, Met. VIII.611-724) has anything positive to say about it, and that, like the story of Jupiter, Neptune and Mercury visiting Hyrieus in Fasti V, follows a traditional format. Basically rusticitas is the most scornful term in Ovid’s vocabulary, and it is likely that it earned this bad eminence partly through the youthful poet’s desire to distance himself from the customs of his family and homeland. It is plausible that the poet’s early exposure to the culture and amenities of Rome so impressed him that he afterwards maintained that the traditional or country life was not to be seriously considered as an alternative. It is notable that for Ovid defects of grooming are associated with rural areas, and definitely not with Rome. He absolves Roman women from the worst grooming defects, and associates such defects with rural areas (Am. III.193-196,289-290,303-304):

quam paene admonui, ne trux caper ired in alas,
neve forent duris aspera crura pilis!

sed non Caucasea doceo de rupe puellas,
quaeque bibant undas, Myse Caice, tuas ...
illa sonat raucum quiddam atque inamabile ridet,
ut rudit a scabra turpis asella mola ...
illa velut coniunx Umbri rubicunda marit
ambulat, ingentes varica fertque gradus.

How nearly did I warn you that no rude goat find his way beneath your arms,
And that your legs be not rough with bristling hair!
But I am not teaching girls from the cliffs of Caucasus,
Nor such as drink thy waters, Mysian Caicus ...
That one's laugh has a strident and unlovely harshness,
As when a mean she-ass brays by the rough millstone ...
That one walks like the sunburnt spouse of an Umbrian lord,
And takes long, straddling steps.

It is notable that Ovid's praise of personal grooming and modern culture (Ars Am. III.101-128) concludes with satisfaction that rusticity has not survived to the poet's own time.

Since Ovid was put early into the hands of professional teachers, the manner and content of his education was of special importance. It is suggested (Seneca Elder, Controv. 2.2.8) that his attachment to one of his teachers, the declamer Arelius Fuscus, was less than his admiration for the brilliant epigrammatic speaker Porcius Latro. Ovid is said (ibid.) to have transferred some of the latter's epigrams into his own verses. In neither case, however, is friendship mentioned, or continuing association.

The content of the arguments and cases which the students pursued was sensational and artificial, with such themes as familial betrayal, incest, rape, mutilation, torture, tyranny, piracy, suicide, parricide, insanity, disinheritance, and adultery. There is an evident correlation between the themes and attitudes of declamation and the subjects and their treatment in Ovid's verse. It is especially significant that student declamation was often practised before an audience which was eager for sensational details, epigrammatic cleverness, sophisticated twists of thought, and the novel treatment of old themes. Ovid's impetus towards popularity in his writing is probably an extension of the youthful declamer's efforts to please his audience.

The moral defects of such an education have long been recognized; not least among them is the divorce of education from reality, of art from life. Carcopino explains how rhetoric had turned its back on public life in late Hellenistic times:

Alexander's master, Aristotle, distinguished three types of eloquence: in the first the speaker sought to influence a decision yet to be taken; in the second
he justified a resolution already acted on; and in the third he narrated past history or awarded praise which had nothing to do with the march of events or the conduct of men. The philosopher had then recognised the superiority of the first over the second and of the second over the third. In the year 150 B.C. the rhetorician Hermagoras reversed this order of values and gave pride of place to the style which he called "epideictic", that is to say, to purely formal eloquence; this was meritorious in his eyes in proportion as it moved on a wholly unreal plane of its own, and its ostentatious self-sufficiency implied a theory of "art for art's sake" in a domain where this doctrine is indefensible.\textsuperscript{118}

The nature of the Hellenistic kingdoms and the new autocracy at Rome favoured the separation of eloquence from politics to a considerable extent. Thus the unreality of rhetorical themes was less open to objection; indeed they might be approved as safe areas to exercise invention, and as good motivational material for adolescents to try their skills on. Carcopino sees such unreal and sensational subject matter and the practice of declamation itself as symptomatic of a cultural decline at Rome:

The decay of a civilization is heralded by these laborious eccentricities, by the mental malnutrition to which the pick of Rome's youth was doomed, having no other intellectual sustenance than this thin soup. For fear of being accused of ignorance, the ambitious youth who wished to dazzle and astonish his audience substituted memory for thought, affectation for sincerity, grimaces and contortions for natural expression, and for a natural voice forced outbursts and calculated roars practised in advance. A morbid passion for the unusual and the extraordinary made common sense seem a defect, experience of real life seem weakness, and the sight of real life seem ugly.\textsuperscript{119}

Readers of Ovid will find food for thought in this indictment. Not only was the poet's actual education defective, but its heavily rhetorical nature involved the exclusion of wide areas of study. Except for hackneyed commonplace, philosophy played little role in Ovid's education, and he seems never to have developed an interest in it. Most of the educational influences

\textsuperscript{118}Carcopino, \textit{Daily Life}, p. 114.

were modern (i.e. sophistic), and this appears reflected in the poet’s knowledge of literature. Of the pre-Hellenistic Greek authors only Homer and Euripides (and perhaps Sappho) appear to be favourites of the poet, and Euripides is himself sophistic. Early Roman drama, however, seems to supply the poet with some ideas for the Heroides and his mythological narratives;\textsuperscript{120} Lucretius and Catullus are clear influences. Major figures of the Late Republic such as Cicero, Julius Caesar, and Cato the Younger are definitely not living presences for Ovid. The poet’s education then did nothing to aid Ovid towards a deeper understanding of religious, philosophical and moral issues.

Like most popular writers Ovid is in some sense representative of his own time. As T. R. Glover puts it:

\begin{quote}
Ovid congratulated himself on the perfect congruity of the age and his personal character—

haec aetas moribus apta meis—

and he was quite right. And precisely in the measure that Ovid was right in finding the age and his character in agreement, the age and national character were demonstrably degenerate.\textsuperscript{121}
\end{quote}

Writers on Ovid have differed on whether to use the poet as a text to condemn the age, or to excuse the poet because of the times in which he lived. That neither was a positive moral influence on the other is evident. Augustus’s woeful search (eventually abandoned) for someone to perform adequately the office of censor is an indication of how scarce men of recognized probity were at that time. The Emperor’s own minister Maecenas became a by-


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word for effeminacy and moral laxity. Augustus’s own attempts at moral and social reforms were demonstrably ineffective, with his own family members leading the opposition. The Emperor himself was unable to maintain the standards which he expected of others. In fact, the imperial moral legislation was fighting a strong current flowing in the opposite direction, and would probably have gone down to defeat much sooner were it not for the Emperor’s political skills, and the advocacy of Virgil, Horace, and Livy.

It is indeed some measure of excuse for Ovid’s casual morality to demonstrate that it is only what one would expect of a popular writer at that time. The chief prop of private morality was Stoicism, which had become largely the preserve of a few high-minded aristocrats and intellectuals. That Stoicism existed, however, deprives Ovid of the plea that he couldn’t have known any better. In the matter of sexual morality the Stoics maintained a high view of marriage, and considered sex as primarily a mode of procreation. Seneca the Younger treats marital fidelity as something which everyone knows is important but which nonetheless people have to be continually reminded of (Epistles XCIV.26):

Sci amicitias sancte colendas esse, sed non facis. Sci improbium esse, qui ab uxore pudicitiam exigit, ipse alienarum corruptor uxorum; sci ut illi nil cum adultero, sic tibi nil esse debere cum paetice, et non facis. Itaque subinde ad memoriam reducendus es; non enim reposita illa esse oportet, sed in promptu.

You know that friendship should be scrupulously honoured, and yet you do not hold it in honour. You know that a man does wrong in requiring chastity of his wife while he himself is intriguing with the wives of other men; you know that, as your wife should have no dealings with a lover, neither should you yourself with a mistress; and yet you do not act accordingly. Hence, you must be continually brought to remember these facts; for they should not be in storage, but ready for use.

It was likely the combination of Stoicism with Roman traditionalism, driven by the more visceral feeling of social pollution, which motivated the Emperor’s moral and marriage reforms. The Stoic philosopher Musonius Rufus, writing at the time of Nero and Vespasian,
commends such marriage legislation as well as laws forbidding contraception and abortion (Stobaeus IV.24.15), and speaks strongly of the beauty and utility of large families. Since Ovid was not Stoic, nor traditionalist, nor religious, nor superstitious, nor much influenced by the events and horrors of civil war, such arguments presumably were put into storage by him.

Ovid’s modernism takes it for granted that the present is superior to the past, and that the cultivated people and pleasures of modern Rome are better than their ancestors and the traditional ways. Commenting on Ars Am. III.101-132 Peter Green indicates how Ovid sets up "his own prime divinity cultus, cultivation or culture, equally applicable to girls, agriculture and urban life":

... From the advocacy of cultus for women—"care of the person" would be a fair equivalent—Ovid’s train of thought moves, by easy degrees, to another aspect of cultus, the sophisticated refinement achieved by contemporary society. This he much prefers to the crude arlessness it supplanted: indeed, lines 121-128 form a kind of personal credo. Once again we see Ovid actively rejecting, in his own terms, the whole Augustan programme of religious, moral and agricultural reform ... The contrast with a passage such a Virg. Georg. 2.458-532, that memorable encomium of country life, is both striking and pointed.\(^\text{122}\)

The poet rejects the traditional roles of the Roman male in order to pursue not just poetry, but love poetry (Am. 1.15.1-8,35-38). Resistant to the imperial desire for characteristically Roman verse, Ovid seems early to have pictured himself in the mold of Propertius and the Love Elegists (Tr. IV.10.45-46,51-60). This was partly because of the poet’s own susceptibility to love (ibid. 65-68). Important too was the popularity of the genre, especially among the well-to-do youth of Rome. The diluted Epicureanism of the day made more serious and strenuous poetry less acceptable, while the life of pleasure and personal cultivation was enhanced by witty commentary.

\(^{122}\) Green, pp. 385-386.
With Propertius, according to Kenneth Quinn, there is already a move away from "contact ... with worth-while levels of intellectual and social life." Ovid merely accelerates the flight from serious themes and from the poet as a significant commentator on contemporary life:

Ovid ... nonchalantly abdicates the moral stature Catullus, Horace, and Virgil had won for poetry, in order to assume, with panache and a terse verbal elegance, the role of entertainer to which the poet had been relegated by Roman society before the advent of Catullus and the poetae novi.\textsuperscript{124}

A writer who wishes supremely to be popular can rarely afford to cultivate poems of a carefully moral, religious, or philosophical nature, least of all in an age such as Ovid’s. Sex, violence, and wit at the expense of religion and morality are the staples of the best-seller; and Ovid’s love of literary success is evident even in his defence before Augustus (Tr. II.115-120).

The move of the popular writer towards a lower common denominator usually means a discounting of metaphysical matters in favour of pleasurable and exciting physical ones. Thus Jonathan Swift, also in a day of popular Epicureanism, ironically urges a young poet friend to forget his religious training as a first step to poetic success:

In the first place, I am not yet convinced that it is at all necessary for a modern poet to believe in God, or to have any serious sense of religion ... unless you will be content to pass for an insipid, or will submit to be hooted at by your fraternity, or can disguise your religion, as well-bred men do their learning, in complaisance to company ... Religion supposes heaven and hell, the word of God, and sacraments, and twenty other circumstances, which, taken seriously, are a wonderful check to wit and humour, and such as a true poet cannot possibly give in to, with a saving to his poetical licence ...\textsuperscript{125}


\textsuperscript{124}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{125}Jonathan Swift, "Letter of Advice to a Young Poet", in \textit{The Harvard Classics}, Vol. 27 (New York: P.F. Collier, 1910), pp. 112-130.
The young Ovid relates that he was overawed by the poets of the day (Tr. IV.10.41-42). Likely he was equally impressed by their patrons, including Messalla, who may have first given Ovid the opportunity to recite his verses to a select audience (Pont. II.3.73-78). The poets of Messalla's circle, including Tibullus, and Messalla's niece Sulpicia, would hardly have elevated Ovid's moral sights in amatory matters. Ovid, therefore, can refer to the lives and writings of his fellow elegists, including Tibullus and Propertius (Tr. II.447-470), in defence of his own practice. Indeed, since Ovid was not punished for his earlier verse, not even initially for the Ars, it seems that it was his persistence in pursuing love themes (i.e., in the Metamorphoses) well into middle age, contrary to Roman convention and the Emperor's wishes, which contributed to his punishment. Elegy and love were traditionally a young man's activities, after which he was expected to take at last a role of social responsibility. This is the pattern for Virgil and Horace, whose earlier personal and amatory verse, gave way to more serious social, moral, and political themes. The Metamorphoses, however, merely work the themes of Ovid's love poetry into a mythical narrative.

It has been customary to condemn Augustus roundly for the poet's exile. In some measure, though, the Emperor's punishment of Ovid is simply the obverse of his rewards to Virgil, Horace, and Livy. Always remembering that the direct cause of Ovid's exile remains unknown, Augustus's censure of Ovid can be partly justified by Roman tradition and the needs of the state. J. K. Newman also indicates how Ovid's verse abandons the significant elevation of poetic utterance won by the earlier Augustan poets and he comments:

... when one contemplates the grotesque indifference which Ovid had displayed towards all that was important in the literary struggles of the day, one cannot help having a certain sympathy with the emperor. Tantae molis erat ... nec
mens duit apta labor: here are the two opposing attitudes which had clashed head-on.\textsuperscript{126}

It is natural that Ovidian scholars should wish to find something nice to say about Ovid, and this does not change when they consider his religion, philosophy, and morality. Since Ovid is unusually deficient, for a great poet, in these areas, this leads to considerable tension regarding a positive assessment of the poet. It seems better to accept that not all great poets are great philosophers, great spiritual leaders, or great moralists, rather than to render these categories vacuous in order to accommodate Ovid. Those who appreciate the qualities which Ovid genuinely possesses will be less inclined to seek for imaginary virtues. Efforts to elevate Ovid above Virgil as the supreme exemplar of Roman \textit{humanitas} will then appear gratuitous. In an age of popular Epicureanism people will inevitably turn to a brilliant spokesman for that frame of mind, and it will be difficult at times for scholars to maintain a more balanced outlook. This thesis is intended to demonstrate clearly Ovid's worldview and, on examination, to suggest that it lacks a deep engagement with reality.

CONCLUSION

A persistent issue in Ovidian criticism is the proper evaluation of a poet whose morality, philosophy, and religion appear deficient. To suggest that such subjects are unimportant or unnecessary for poets is to lower unreasonably the standing of literature. As James McAuley writes:

This claim to complete irresponsibility is one that society concedes only to a privileged clown or a very young child or a moral defective or a lunatic; and it degrades the poet to this status by suggesting that literature does not really matter, has no influence on ordinary affairs, and no part in them.¹

On the other hand ethics and metaphysics are not all in all in poetry. Stringent, if perhaps arbitrary, criteria, such as Matthew Arnold's touchstone of "high seriousness", may exclude Chaucer and Burns from the very highest rank, but no one would claim that these were not poets, and very notable poets at that. William Chase Greene, for example, excludes Ovid from the circle of Lucretius, Virgil and Horace as not being fully a classic:

The aim of classical art is to present life as far as possible with an appreciation of the true relations of its parts, in recognition of what is central and normal in human nature and its environment. To this end it tries to profit by previous experience, and curbs and disciplines or satirizes eccentricities however arresting. Standards it regards therefore not as external or arbitrary but as deduced from the constants in human nature. Unlike romantic art, it is unfriendly to the crude, the infantile, the irresponsible, the merely spontaneous, though finding room within its limits for great variety of subject and form and mood ... Classical art, once more, tends to be objective, a little reticent, somewhat chary of exploiting the idiosyncrasies of its practitioners; it eschews posturings and rhetoric and lets the facts speak for themselves.²


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Greene nonetheless pays tribute to Ovid’s poetic skills and adroit handling of subject matter.³

Likewise Kenneth Quinn, while noting Ovid’s limitations, has praise for his wit, style, and occasional pathos:

No Roman writer writes neater Latin than Ovid. He exploits to the full the possibilities of tension between clean sobriety of statement and a line of sense that is based on a deadly accuracy of observation, bubbling sometimes with risqué innuendo, sometimes the purest fun ... But poetry that sets out to explore, unravel, record the problems of human experience (instead of achieving these things incidentally, through sheer genius) Ovid never writes.⁴

If this is indeed the case, how is Ovid’s impact on European culture (surpassed, if at all, only by such literary giants as Homer and Virgil) to be explained? Why (to take only the example of England) do such leading poets as Chaucer, Spenser, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Donne, Herrick, Milton, Dryden, and Pope boast of their debt to the Roman? The answer may be that this situation is not as contradictory as it appears, and that Ovid’s limitations may help to explain his continuing influence and popularity.

Ovid’s evident aim was to win literary popularity in his own day, and to strive that such fame would prove lasting. It was towards this goal that he discounted metaphysics and ethics, and exercised his wit, invention and eloquence on topics such as amatory adventures which had assured interest. Such interest, however, is certain only at such periods or among such groups as share at least some of the assumptions about way of life which Augustan Rome held. Certainly, periods of popular Epicureanism, especially those characterized by something approaching a “youth culture”, have been among the most fertile in appreciation of Ovid. Yet

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³Ibid., p. 500.

Ovid has more than survived even potentially hostile eras, and the reasons for this must be sought.

It was probably to Ovid's advantage to live in an epoch which has continued to attract the interest of posterity. Ovid's contemporary popularity ensured that his works were widely distributed, and Rome produced very few poets after Ovid who could challenge his status. As the knowledge of Greek departed the schools of Western Europe, Ovid's works became an important source for Greek mythology, which continued to have a place in literature and art. The *Metamorphoses* especially became a textbook for scholars, authors, and artists. The mediaeval taste for allegory was also favourable to Ovid, in that it allowed his admirers to put an edifying construction on his amatory narratives. The mediaeval traditions of courtly love, of wandering troubadours, and of poor student poets were much in tune with Ovidian attitudes, and owed some of their character to Ovid himself. The Italian Renaissance naturally claimed Ovid as its own, and found in him a key to the imaginative reconstruction of antiquity. As vernacular literature increased in scope and variety, many poets read appreciatively someone who had so urged the importance of the poet's art. While Latin and Latinist poetry remained central to education, the impact of Ovid's clear and beautiful language combined with the excitement of his subject matter to give the poet relative favour with generations of schoolboys. In fact, his lightness of touch and entertainment value were in marked contrast with the weighty verse of Lucretius, Virgil, Horace, Lucan, and Statius, and the other poets of the curriculum.

It may be significant that a decline in Ovid's popularity coincides with the rise of the novel in the 18th Century. Before popular fiction was readily available, light and escapist literary entertainment was difficult to obtain. There were relatively few theatres or other
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public entertainments. Folk culture, of course, provided oral poetry and song, but private
indulgence in a fantasy world of sex, adventure, and personal freedom was not much aided by
literature. In a world with rather few escapist texts it is not entirely surprising that the
amatory "Song of Solomon" was the most quoted Bible book during the Middle Ages. By the
late Middle Ages popular vernacular verse and narrative prose (e.g., the Decameron) were
becoming more evident. Vernacular writers including poets and dramatists such as Marlowe
and Shakespeare often turned to Ovid and other classical authors as sourcebooks for their
various works. In fact the Latin classics became the foundation both in formal style and in
subject matter for the new vernacular literatures. The vogue of the classics made translation,
imitation, and adaptation of the Latin authors a major aspect of literary endeavour from the
time of Petrarch right through the 18th Century.

Both the distribution and the impact of Ovid and his imitators may be hinted at by quoting
the recollections of Max Braithwaite regarding his discovery of Ovidian narrative in a volume
of the collected works of Shakespeare. Recalling his early adolescence in Saskatoon,
Saskatchewan during the 1920s, Braithwaite remembers idly leafing through his Shakespeare
volume in English class and glancing randomly at one of the poems:

This was the line that hit me:

"He on her belly falls, she on her back."

Holy prozotsky! I just about went up through the ceiling. A description of sexual
intercourse right here in a book—a legitimate book! Hurriedly I thumbed back to the
beginning of the poem. It was "Venus and Adonis" and right from the beginning it

Christopher Marlowe’s translation of the Amores and his Ovidian narrative poem Heroides and
Leander were important contributions to the flurry of Elizabethan imitations of Ovid. Unlike
mediaeval adaptations these imitations emphasized for the most part the sensuous, aesthetic, and
secular aspects of Ovid. Translated into the vernacular Ovid generated interest and controversy
once more. In 1599 Marlowe’s version of the Amores was among the books ordered burnt by the
Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London.
was perfectly plain that this beautiful voluptuous naked goddess of love was doing her best to seduce this beautiful youth, also naked. Man! This has got to be the sexiest situation in literature.⁶

After eagerly reading "Venus and Adonis" Braithwaite went on to read the even more Ovidian "Rape of Lucrece". Braithwaite comments on the present availability of sexually explicit novels to thirteen-year olds, and wonders if their impact is really more erotic than "Venus and Adonis" was for him.⁷

No doubt a good part of Ovid's continuing popularity was as one of the few available sources of sustained fictional narrative, and of hot fiction at that. In England as late as the 1730s and 1740s fiction was in rather short supply. In the library of Thomas Gray, for example, there are various fictional genres that might be dispensed with today. Besides a full collection of classical authors Gray kept such contemporary literature as the Spectator, Tatler, and Guardian (which often contained fictional narrative), and collections of plays, including volumes of Congreve, Etherege, Addison, Steele, a three volume set of popular plays, and another collection also.⁸ Gray's obvious interest in such minor dramatists as Southern and Lee suggests that theatre was one of the few fictional avenues of escapism. Theatrical entertainments were a usual part of his visits to London. Gray also possessed collections of voyages, Don Quixote, Persian Tales, Turkish Tales, a collection of novels, and translations of the classics.⁹

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⁷Ibid., pp. 154-155.


⁹Ibid., p. 155.
Conclusion

An especially vital interest for Gray and his friends were the spicy yet elegant novels of contemporary French writers, such as *Le Sophra* (1740) by Claude-Prosper Jolyot de Crebillon and *La Vie de Marianne* (1731-43) by Pierre Carlet de Chamblain de Marivaux. Gray's enthusiasm for these authors is evident in various passages from his letters, and is expressed archly in a letter of April 8, 1742 (to Richard West):

Now as the paradisaical pleasures of the Mahometans consist in playing upon the flute and lying with Houris, be mine to read eternal new romances of Marivaux and Crebillon.

Gray read these authors and other French novelists in French, and he and his friends eagerly awaited the newest best seller from Paris. Horace Walpole wrote to Horace Mann in Italy regarding the arrival of a new book in England (letter of February 9 and 11, 1742):

We have at last got Crebillon's "Sofa": Lord Chesterfield received three hundred, and gave them to be sold at White's. It is admirable! except the beginning of the first volume, and the last story, it is equal to anything he has writte.

In his next letters to Italy, Gray is concerned that his friends Chute and Mann should receive copies of these books as soon as possible (letters of May 1742 and July 1742), and they are part of the shipment of books sent with the second letter. In another letter (June 1747) Gray urges Walpole and Chute to send him the final volume of *La Vie de Marianne* without delay, since he is impatiently waiting for it.

In a later exchange of letters Walpole commiserates with Gray on the bad taste of a new generation of Frenchmen who have turned to new authors (letter of November 19, 1765):

I am as little pleased with their taste in trifles [as with their atheism]. Crebillon is entirely out of fashion, and Marivaux a proverb; Marivauder and Marivaudage are established terms for being prolix and tiresome.

Novel now rapidly displaced novel, and novelist displaced novelist, as fiction became the growth area of literature. England herself now had Richardson, Fielding, Sterne, Smollett,
Goldsmith, and even Horace Walpole to read. As a purveyor of fiction Ovid was being
displaced almost daily by new claimants for popular success, many of them employing arts
which he had developed.

Ovid is mentioned only three times in Gray’s Correspondence, and two of the references
come from Gray’s friend Richard West. West praises Ovid for his wit, but states his own
preference for Tibullus (letter of December 22, 1736). The scholarly Gray’s preference was
for Propertius whom he translates on two occasions.¹⁰ He and Walpole were much amused
by the Parisian operas which took their subjects from mythology (letter of April 12, 1739):

Imagine to yourself for the drama four acts entirely unconnected with each other, each
founded on some little history, skilfully taken out of an ancient author, e.g., Ovid’s
Metamorphoses, etc., and with great address converted into a French piece of gallantry
... The second act was Baucis and Philemon. Baucis is a beautiful young
shepherdess, and Philemon her swain. Jupiter falls in love with her, but nothing will
prevail upon her; so it is all mighty well, and the chorus sing and dance the praises of
Constancy. The other two acts were about Iphis and Ianthe, and the judgment of
Paris.

Ovid had become so well-known that he was no longer so much esteemed by
connoisseurs. Like most of the leading classical writers his influence had been so completely
absorbed by the new vernacular cultures that he now seemed rather redundant. Self-
consciously artistic genres such as opera continued to turn to Ovid for inspiration, but he was
no longer at the centre of popular culture. Nonetheless for those dealing with classical
mythology he was still the obvious source to turn to, although he was not free from attack
from those urging a return to an earlier and more traditional interpretation of Greek myth.

Even so, Ovid’s popularity through many ages is a phenomenon requiring explanation, and
perhaps the poet’s influence on opera is a hint of where to look. The Danish philosopher

¹⁰Gray does, however, use Ovid’s Heroides as models for one of his own Latin poems,
"Sophonisba Masinissae. Epistola."
Conclusion

Soren Kierkegaard argued that sensuousness was best expressed by music, and cited Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* as his chief example. The character Don Giovanni is sensuality personified, and completely unreflective:

He needs no preparation, no plan, no time, for he is always ready; that is, the power is always in him, and the desire also, and only when he desires is he in his proper element. He sits down to dinner; happy as a god he flourishes his goblet—he rises with the napkin in his hand, ready for the attack ... But this power, this force, cannot be expressed in words; only music can give us a notion of it; for reflection and thought it is inexpressible.\(^\text{11}\)

The character Don Giovanni then is the spirit of sensuality, much as Ovid’s gods, heroes, heroines, and lovers also are in more or less degree. This similarity was noted by Gilbert Higet who thus speaks of Ovid:

He perfectly expresses one aspect of the attitude of the Latin peoples towards love: not the overpowering, almost selfless passion of Romeo and Juliet, but the unscrupulous gaiety of Don Giovanni with his many hundreds of conquests. Both in the apparently pure lyricism of the song in which Mozart’s hero sets out to seduce the innocent peasant girl Zerlina ("La ci darem") and in the cynical humour of Leporella’s catalogue of his master’s triumphs throughout Europe ("Madamina"), we can hear the true Ovidian notes and recognize the true Ovidian charm. With all his naughtiness he is polite ...\(^\text{12}\)

Kierkegaard asks rhetorically what power is it by which Don Giovanni seduces:

It is the energy of desire, the energy of sensuous desire ... Just as the fire of the enthusiast envelops with a seductive luster even those uninvolved persons who have some relation to him, so in a far deeper sense he transfigures every girl, since his relation to her is an essential relation. That is why all the finite differences vanish for him in comparison with the main point: to be a woman. The old ones he rejuvenates into the beautiful middle age of womanhood; the child he almost matures in an instant; everything that is woman is his prey.\(^\text{13}\)

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Kierkegaard argues that the myth of Don Giovanni is not expressed well in words; items such as his 1003 conquests would tend to become comical. In comparing Mozart's Don Giovanni with Molière's more reflective character he notes that in the former the emphasis is on a generalized sensuality, in the latter upon the skill and deception of the seducer. Of Mozart's character he states:

... Don Giovanni is absolutely musical. He desires sensuously; he seduces with the demonic power of the sensuous; he seduces all. Words, lines, are not suitable for him, for then he immediately becomes a reflective individual.\(^\text{14}\)

Kierkegaard adds that the immediacy of sensuality is properly expressed only by music:

Music always expresses the immediate in its immediacy ... Reflection is implicit in language, and therefore language cannot express the immediate. Reflection is fatal to the immediate, and therefore it is impossible for language to express the musical ...\(^\text{15}\)

Kierkegaard's own attempt to portray the introspective seducer in "The Seducer's Diary" indicates, no doubt intentionally, what a repulsive figure the self-conscious seducer is.\(^\text{16}\)

Johannes, in the story, has elements of Faust in his willingness to manipulate the feelings of all around him in order to satisfy his own artistic and egoistic desire for the perfect seduction. Although based loosely on Ovid's \textit{Ars Amatoria} (which it quotes several times) "The Seducer's Diary" has an unwholesome psychological intensity which contrasts unfavourably with the relatively carefree Ovidian narrative. The self-centred aesthetic musings of the seducer on the morning after his conquest are especially disagreeable:

\begin{quote}
But now it is finished, and I never want to see her again. When a girl has given away everything, she is weak, she has lost everything, for in a man innocence is a negative element, but in a woman it is the substance of her being. Now all resistance is impossible, and to love is beautiful only as long as resistance is present; as soon as it
\end{quote}

\(\text{\^{14}}\)Ibid., p. 102.

\(\text{\^{15}}\)Ibid., p. 70.

\(\text{\^{16}}\)Ibid., pp. 301-445.
Conclusion

ceases, to love is weakness and habit. I do not want to be reminded of my relationship with her; she has lost her fragrance, and the times are past when a girl agonizing over her faithless lover is changed into a heliotrope. I shall not bid her farewell; nothing is more revolting than the feminine tears and pleas that alter everything and yet are essentially meaningless. I did love her, but from now on she can no longer occupy my soul. If I were a god, I would do for her what Neptune did for a nymph: transform her into a man.\(^{17}\)

Kierkegaard, in presenting more realistically (and potentially, more morally) the seducer's nature, inevitably alienates an audience which wishes to be excited and entertained in a conventional way. Like the female reader of steamy romances confronted with a genuine rapist (not a French nobleman in disguise), Kierkegaard's self-absorbed seducer upsets the Don Giovanni popular stereotype in which seduction is merely an overflow of boundless energy and enthusiasm. "The Seducer's Diary" then at the same time indicates the limitations and strengths of the Ovidian approach.

It may well be then that it is the very lack of reflection (and of ethics, metaphysics, theology, etc.) which ensures Ovid's continuing popularity. Kierkegaard indicates that the Ovidian subject matter would be intolerable if his heroes and heroines were deeply introspective and individualized. G. Karl Galinsky points out that Ovid emphasizes narrative qualities rather than deeper meaning in his retelling of myths:

Few myths seem to have been created simply because of their narrative and entertaining qualities. This is, however, precisely the function of myth that Ovid emphasizes most. As Georges Lafaye pointed out long ago in his discussion of the Erysichthon episode: c'est un conteur ... sans s'inquiéter beaucoup des grands problèmes. This does not mean that Ovid does not hint at them, but he refuses to develop this higher reality of myth. For Ovid, myth has its worth primarily because it can be told, and the manner in which it is told is of central importance. The charm and attractiveness of the Metamorphoses over the centuries have resulted exactly from the author's obvious delight in telling a story and his craftsmanship as a raconteur.\(^{18}\)

\(^{17}\)Ibid., p. 445.

Elsewhere Galinsky argues that by substituting metamorphosis for death as the eventual fate of the characters in the Metamorphoses, Ovid both downplays the tragic overtones of the stories and also their moral dimensions:

The untragic tone that is set by the metamorphosis theme has wider implications than a mere avoidance of a disastrous end. These implications ultimately are akin to the shunning of profound concern with grand moral problems or ideals ... He elaborately stages catastrophes, such as those of Meleager or Tereus and Philomela, with much emphasis on their external aspects. But the tragic spirit is missing, the desire to involve the reader deeply in the inner qualities of a profound problem that is developed and worked out in depth.\(^\text{19}\)

It is the attractive surface action of the Ovidian corpus rather than any deeper significance that wins readers. Lack of reflection on the audience’s part is aided by the mythological settings of the Heroides, Fasti, and Metamorphoses. Attacks on the gods and morality in such works can be put into the mouths of traditionally villainous characters. Even in the Amores, it is the bawd Dipsas who is the most outspoken opponent of morality, and the sentiments of the speaker vary, at least in intensity, with the dramatic situation. In all these works (except at times in the Amores) the reader may easily lull himself into thinking that the action is entirely literary and conventional, and that the licence allowed for seduction, rape, and adultery is merely to enhance the entertainment value of the narrative. Ovid indeed uses the literary tradition of amatory writing to defend his own use of these themes (Tr. II.361-470).

It is chiefly then in the Ars Amatoria that literary convention breaks down, largely because of the poet’s own insistence that he is writing about contemporary Rome, and that he himself Naso teaches the art of love from his own experience. It is one thing to imagine in a mythological narrative that all nymphs are ripe for rape, and it is quite another to assert that all women enjoy forcible sex in a poem with a realistic contemporary setting. It is one thing

\(^{19}\)Galinsky, pp. 63-64.
Conclusion

to joke about the adulteries of Jupiter, or even those of the conventional elegiac lover, but it is something else to instruct women how to deceive their husbands in a formally didactic poem. It is the mixture of realism and amatory conventions which makes the Ars a "fascinating yet repulsive poem" as Fowler calls it.\textsuperscript{20} No doubt Ovid deliberately cultivated the evidences of realism and reflection in the Ars to add to its shock value, but in doing so he produced his one work which posterity has had difficulty accepting or justifying. When, for example, Ovid argues that the elasticity of the vagina is reason enough why women should never refuse their lovers, his argument makes self-conscious the libertine philosophy which he is expounding. Such self-consciousness is fatal to the easy enjoyment of the poet's literary skills, even when the saving grace of humour is insinuated.

One characteristic of a thorough-going "youth culture" is the tendency of its members to act out their own fantasies. Fantasies of seduction, rape, adultery, priapic energy, nudity, and unconventional behaviour abandon their usual abode in the imagination and become the stated real goals of members of society. In the subjectivism of such pursuits reality and fiction merge, and it becomes not uncommon for people to attempt to live out the manner of life they find portrayed in novels, movies, soap operas, and popular music. In the Ars Ovid actually endorses the substitution of a sophisticated game of seduction for the realistic working out of genuine human relationships. The confusion between fantasy and reality which occur in the book as a result makes it dangerous to less mature readers.

In discussing the life of Oscar Wilde, W. H. Auden notes how Wilde combined the public life of a literary lion with the private life of a bohemian homosexual, and how elements from the latter emerge in the literary works of the former. Auden argues that Wilde's greatest asset,

his conversational wit, rarely shines through his rather conventional writings. Auden makes an exception for one play only:

But in "The Importance of Being Earnest", Wilde succeeded—almost, it would seem, by accident, for he never realized its infinite superiority to all his other plays— in writing what is perhaps the only pure verbal opera in English. The solution that, deliberately or accidentally, he found was to subordinate every other dramatic element to dialogue for its own sake and create a verbal universe in which the characters are determined by the kinds of things they say, and the plot is nothing but a succession of opportunities to say them. Like all works of art, it drew its sustenance from life, and, speaking for myself, whenever I see or read the play I always wish I did not know what I do about Wilde's life at the time he was writing it—that when for instance, John Worthing talks of going Bunburying, I did not immediately visualize Alfred Taylor's [male prostitute] establishment.  

The concept of "verbal opera" may be used to describe the more literary portions of the Ovidian corpus. These poems, whether mythological narratives or quasi-autobiographical love poems, are nonetheless ultimately based on the real life of Ovid's own time, as Jasper Griffin has pointed out for the characters of the Metamorphoses:

These elegant and leisured lovers are, of course, Ovid's familiar metropolitan men and women, but transposed into a setting remote in time and place, and to some extent raised in level by being given mythical status.  

Yet Ovid so standardizes their attitudes, behaviours, and situations, that reflection on their character and fate is not invited. In the attempted rape of Arethusa, for example, the reader is not much concerned for the nymph's prospective fate at the hands of the amorous river god; in fact, he enjoys her predicament, and the poet clearly intends that his readers should enjoy it.

By continually downplaying the tragic and moral aspects, and highlighting the amatory, literary, and humorous aspects of his subject matter the poet provides light entertainment which is nonetheless written with a great poetic skill.

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Conclusion

Ovid then found ways of enhancing the popular appeal of the leading genres of his time through wit, sentimentalism, sensuality, sensationalism, and sophistication. At the same time he avoids invoking moral, intellectual or spiritual concerns beyond a superficial level. Thus Ovid provides a recipe for a best-seller in his style, subject matter, and treatment. Parallels between his techniques and those of contemporary writers of hot romance are evident. Ovid's distinctiveness is a blend of popular sensuality with high literary values, which is somewhat rare in Western culture (Burns, Byron, and Wilde provide partial parallels).

The Sanskrit erotic literature of India provides a clearer indication that sensuality and literary seriousness can co-exist for a lengthy period of time. This was possible because Hindu religion and philosophy accepted the sexual area of life as a subject for study and meditation. Such has been less the case in the West, where love has been frequently distinguished from sensuality. The Sanskrit court poetry of the early Middle Ages and its antecedents offer considerable variations on the physical attractiveness of young women, and the pleasures of love-making. On the whole the Sanskrit corpus benefits from its relationship to society's traditions and norms, so that sensuality is related back to the larger themes of earthly existence. The individualistic tendencies of Western sensuality do not seem as well rooted in society, culture, and tradition as their Eastern counterparts. Referring to the Kama-sutra of Vatsayana (c. 3rd century A.D.), the Indian scholar Sushil Kumar De compares its tone favourably to that of the more sensual Latin poets:

... it must be said in Vatsayana's favour that he has none of the frank delight of Martial and Petronius in their descriptions of carnal scenes or love of obscene expressions. Nor has his work the sensuous levity of Ovid's Ars Amatoria, than which it is undoubtedly much fuller in content, more earnest in spirit, more precise and systematic in form and expression.23

Previously the same author had noted Vatsyayana's philosophical and scientific approach to his subject which raised his work to a serious level.\textsuperscript{24}

It is, however, not its intellectual or moral qualities, but its literary qualities which raise the work of Ovid above the level of the mere best-seller. In Ovid's work, as in Mozart's \textit{Don Giovanni}, the sensuous and the aesthetic are in harmony. Ovid's achievement was to express the unreflective life of sensuality effectively and artistically. He was able to do this because his devotion to the poetic art allowed him to subordinate sensuality to art without impairing either. The result is a rich "verbal opera", a pageant of gorgeous imagery but limited involvement.

Academic critics sometimes underestimate the importance of entertainment qualities in determining an author's continuing influence. The attempts to interpret Ovid chiefly in terms of ideology and politics are headed in the wrong direction. It is Ovid's willingness to subordinate such considerations to the immediate enjoyment of sensual imagery and suggestion that has contributed largely to his continuous popularity. At the same time his remarkable literary and verbal skills have attracted even the most fastidious of readers. There is within his skilful mixture of ancient and modern, wise and foolish, natural and artistic, true and false, light and serious, and good and bad much material for the moralist, philosopher, and theologian to work on.

Indicative of how Ovid's work has become part of the fabric of Western civilization is its use by theologians, moralists, and philosophers. Those who, according to strict reason, might be expected to reject him and his works often find him a delightful companion and a ready source for quotation. The eminent Anglican divine Jeremy Taylor (1613-1667) quotes from

\textsuperscript{24}Ibid., p. 91.
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every one of Ovid’s works. In his own voluminous writings which include such devotional classics as *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying* there are more than 83 Ovidian references. Any author who can inspire interest and affection among such a wide range of readers is, in a sense, beyond criticism. Ovid has long been a fact of Western culture, and is as much a part of its literary landscape as Homer, Virgil, Dante, or Shakespeare. The recent appearance of a best-selling novel dealing with his life is but another tribute by posterity to one already weighed down by recognition. Yet for all this, he was a man, with the limitations of human nature. These deficiencies are evident on every page that he wrote, and cannot be glibly dismissed. They must be balanced, however, against the magnitude of his literary and aesthetic achievement.
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