

OVID'S *TRISTIA*: RETHINKING MEMORY AND IMMORTALITY IN EXILE

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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In my research, I take up the questions of Ovid's relationship to his poetry and the rethinking of exilic motifs and poetic motifs through the lens of exile. Throughout the *Tristia*, in particular, Ovid illustrates a complex series of questions on why he writes in exile. He writes, "What have I to do with you, little books, my unlucky obsession, I, wretched, who was destroyed by my talent?" Ovid provides two direct answers to his own question: first, writing brings him comfort in exile, and second, it keeps his name alive in Rome. I explore how Ovid adapts the motif of poetic immortality to the exilic motif of exile as death and employs the act of writing as a resistance to Augustus.

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For Svetlana Lazarova, my mentor and friend

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
II. THE PURPOSE OF WRITING IN EXILE	3
An Exiled Poet's Relationship with Poetry.....	3
Ovid's Ambivalent Muse	8
Memory, Oblivion, and Mental Visualization.....	17
III. DEATH AND IMMORTALITY IN EXILE	23
IV. CONCLUSION.....	42
REFERENCES CITED.....	43

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In 1980, Betty R. Nagle wrote in her comprehensive work on Ovid's exile poetry that literary criticism on the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*, "still remains one of the last frontiers of classical scholarship, for there remains a whole general area open for fresh consideration."¹ Previous scholarship focused on Ovid's exile poetry as a source for historical, biographical, and ethnographical information. Traditional inquiries included the cause of Ovid's exile (his elusive statement "carmen et error"), Ovid's legal status as a *relegatus*, Ovid's adjustment to life in exile, and the reality of Ovid's descriptions of the Pontic regions and its inhabitants, a mixture of Greeks, Getae, and Sarmatae.²

In the 35 years since Nagle published her monograph, literary criticism on the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* has flourished. Scholars have begun to question the previously held assumptions that the exile poetry reflects Ovid's artistic demise, as Ovid purports in his work. According to Gareth Williams, generations of modern critics dismissed Ovid's exilic verse for its "monotonously plaintive tone, seemingly tedious repetition of standard devices...[and] constant appeals for help in verse which claimed no artistic merit or ambition."³ However, recent literary approaches to the *Tristia* and *Epistulae*, have "seen behind the mask" and have begun to examine how Ovid's self-purported "artistic decline" may, in fact, be a part of a complex artistic design of a new persona of *poeta relagatus*. Recent literary criticism has focused on a variety of questions including Ovid's poetic persona, his self-depreciation, the incorporation of exilic themes,

¹ Nagle (1980), 5.

² Cf. *Tristia* 5.7.

³ Williams (1994), 1.

and the relationship between poet, reader, and poetry (to name a few).⁴

In this project, I take up the questions of Ovid's relationship to his poetry and the rethinking of exilic motifs and poetic motifs through the lens of exile. Throughout the *Tristia*, in particular, Ovid illustrates a complex series of questions on why he writes in exile. Ovid was exiled, in part, because of his earlier writing,⁵ yet nevertheless, he continues to write from exile. He asserts that his writing brings him consolation by allowing him to forget his current miseries and to remember Rome. Moreover, by sending poems back to Rome, Ovid can ensure that he is remembered in Rome. Several passages of the *Tristia* echo Ovid's earlier works including the *Amores* and the *Metamorphoses*, and in this way, he reminds his audience of his earlier works and maintains his name in Rome. Furthermore, I explore the poetic themes of death and immortality in the *Tristia*, and how Ovid adapts these themes to the exilic experience. Ovid draws from the established metaphor of exile as death and complicates it by combining it with another common poetic motif – that of poetic immortality. This immortality, moreover, is dependent upon the expanse and durability of the Roman empire. Since Ovid was exiled to the edge of the world, in Tomis on the Black Sea, he experiences the breadth of the empire. For an exile, poems have to reach across a wide space to reach their intended audience in the center of the empire.

⁴ See Evans (1983) 1-3 for a thorough survey of the scholarship on Ovid's exile poetry.

⁵ See below on discussion of the cause of Ovid's exile.

CHAPTER II

THE PURPOSE OF WRITING IN EXILE

As a *poeta relegatus*⁶ sent to the edge of the Roman empire, Ovid defines a new relationship between himself as poet in exile, his poetry as a vehicle for communication in Rome, and his reader. Throughout the *Tristia*, Ovid utilized the circumstances of exile to rethink his purpose for writing poetry and the dangers of public reception. For a poet in exile, poetry functions as his mouthpiece in Rome, defending him and his earlier writings. Yet, in order for poetry to defend poetry, the poetry sent back to Rome from Tomis must also distinguish itself from the earlier poetry which it is defending. The relationship between the poet and his poetry and the purpose of writing in exile are a central concern in the *Tristia*.

- An Exiled Poet's Relationship with Poetry

The opening lines of *Tristia* 1.1 establish a theme which runs throughout the work, namely that the poet is sending his books to the city to which he is forbidden to return:

Parve – nec invideo – sine me, liber, ibis in urbem,

ei mihi, quo domino non licet ire tuo!

vade, sed incultus, qualem decet exulis esse;

⁶ See Claassen (1996) 571 for a brief description of the difference between exile and relegation. Ovid says that he was not an exile, but that he was “relegated.” Cf. *Tr.* 2.137, 4.4.45, 4.9.11, 4.5.7, and 5.11.21. Wheeler (1988) in his introduction writes that “*Relegatio* was milder than the *exilium* of the late republic in that the poet’s property was not confiscated and his civic rights were not taken from him.” Although Ovid makes this legal distinction, more frequently, he refers to himself as an exile (*exul*); cf. *Tr.* 1.1.3, 1.2.37, 1.2.74, 1.3.82, 1.5.66, 3.1.1, 3.3.36, 3.3.66, 3.13.3, 3.14.11, 4.1.13, 4.3.49, 4.10.74, 5.9.6, 5.11.2, 5.11.9, 5.11.29. In my discussion of Ovid’s relegation, I use Ovid’s word ‘exile.’

infelix habitum temporis huius habe....
felices ornet haec instrumenta libellos;
 fortunae memorem te decet esse meae. (*Tr*: 1.1.1-4, 9-10)

[Little book, you will go without me – and I don't begrudge you –
to the city where alas your master cannot go!
Go, but go unpolished, as it is fitting for the book of an exile;
keep the sad appearance of this time...
May these ornaments adorn fortunate little books;
it is fitting that you remember my fortune.]

The first two lines highlight the simple fact that the book can go where the poet cannot and in doing so distinguishes poet from poetry book. In these lines Ovid employs a common motif of love elegy, namely that the book can go as a spokesman for the poet, which he used earlier in the *Amores*:

cum pulchrae dominae nostri placuere libelli,
 quo licuit libris, non licet ire mihi (*Amores* 3.8.5-6)

[Though my little books please my beautiful mistress,
where the books can go, I cannot go]

The opening lines of *Tristia* 1.1 recall this passage of the *Amores* by echoing his words *quo...non licet ire*. Through this allusion, Ovid likens Rome (*urbs*) to the mistress (*domina*) who receives the book of the poet. Unlike those *libelli* which he sent to his *domina* to please her, this book is intended for Rome. Ovid uses this motif from love elegy and alters it to suit the conditions of exile. For a poet in exile, Rome is forbidden and the book alone can go there.

Furthermore, this book will not be as pleasing to the city as Ovid's earlier books were to his *domina*. This book is unpolished with a plain covering, no ivory handles, unsmoothed edges, and tear-stained pages (*Tristia* 1.1.3-14).⁷ This description of the book contrasts with the clean and polished book of Catullus:

Cui dono lepidum novum libellum
arido modo pumice expolitum? (Catullus 1.1-2)

[To whom do I present my charming new book,
newly polished with a dry pumice stone?]

In these lines, Catullus uses the physical description of the bookroll to characterize the aesthetic nature of its content.⁸ Catullus's book embodies in its outward appearance its

⁷ On the appearance of the book-roll in antiquity, see Williams (1992), 184 and Green (2005), 203.

⁸ Williams (1992), 178 writes, "Modern scholarship on Catullus 1 unanimously accepts this correspondence between the appearance of the book and the stylistic complexion of its contents." Williams offers a detailed analysis on how descriptions of the bookroll by Catullus in 1.1-2, Ovid in *Tristia* 1.1, and other poets become analogies for the (supposed) content of the poetry. See Mordine (2010), 527 with n.9 for a more updated discussion.

charm (*lepidum*), innovation (*novum*), and elegance (*expolitum*). Ovid writes, in contrast, that he wishes his book to appear shaggy and disordered (*Tristia* 1.1.11-12).

Ornamentation is meant only for fortunate books, and his fate does not warrant refined books. Ovid's book from exile is as unkempt as its author who is writing from Tomis, far from the refinement of Rome. Through this inversion of Catullus's description of the bookroll, Ovid asserts that this book will deviate from conventional poetry. Mordine writes that this description of the bookroll "is itself transgressive, challenging assumptions about what a poem 'should' look like."⁹ Ovid takes up a motif of love elegy and adapts it to fit the conditions of exile. As a poet in exile, he needs his poetry to reflect his circumstances.

Many have noted that these first lines of *Tristia* 1.1 are modeled on the epilogue of the first book of Horace's *Epistles*, in which the personified book wishes to leave its master, the poet.¹⁰ As Geysen remarks, by using the pun on *liber*, as both a 'book' (*liber*) and 'free,' (*liber*), Horace compares his book to a freed slave eager to leave its old master.¹¹ In the *Tristia*, Ovid establishes a similar relationship of master and freed slave. He names himself master (*domino tuo*) and subordinates his book to him (*parve*)¹², which suggests a master-slave relationship; additionally, he employs the same pun on *liber* as Horace does, and in doing so likens his book to a freed slave. This analogy, as Mordine

⁹ Mordine (2010), 527.

¹⁰ On Ovid's allusion to Horace in this poem, see Nagle (1980), 83 with n.24; Davisson (1984), 111-112; Hinds (1985), 13; Williams (1992), 181; Geysen (2007), 376 with n.5.

¹¹ Geysen (2007) provides a detailed comparison of Horace's *Epistles* 1.20 and the introduction of Ovid's *Tristia* 1.1. The same poem of Horace is alluded to in *Tristia* 3.1. See Newlands (1997), 58-59.

¹² I follow Mordine (2010) on the master-slave relationship which Ovid sets up between poet and book. Mordine writes that "*parve*, the very first word of the poem, underlines the book's ostensibly subservient status to the author," 534.

remarks, implies that the book, like a freedman, retains the ties of a *cliens* to its old master, but it is no longer completely under the master's control.¹³ Yet, Ovid's exilic state adds more meaning to the pun on *liber*. Although Ovid is the master, his book has more freedom than he does because it can go where he cannot. Ovid uses his condition as an exile to invert the role of master and slave. The poet as master has lost his freedom to go where he wishes and becomes a slave to his poetry which goes to Rome and speaks for him. His poetry can communicate with his audience in Rome.

By sending his book back to Rome, Ovid demonstrates an attempt to control public reception of his work. As Kenny points out, after publication, a poet cannot control the reception of his work.¹⁴ He sends his book to the city as his mouthpiece with orders to "greet the pleasing places with my words" (*verbisque meis loca grata saluta*),¹⁵ carefully instructing to his book on what to say and what not to say, as if his book can speak autonomously of its author. Ovid instructs his book not to say anything which might remind the Roman people of his crimes:

atque ita tu tacitus quaerent si plura legentes,¹⁶

¹³ On the complex relationship between freedman and former master, see Wiedemann (1985), Watson (1987), and Bradley (1994).

¹⁴ Mordine (2010), 534-535 cites Kenny (1982), 19, on the relationship of the author to his work after publication: "Publication...was less a matter of formal release to the public than a recognition by the author that this work was now, so to speak, on its own in the world: the word usually translated 'publish' (edere = Greek ἐκδιδόναι) connotes the resignation of rights and responsibilities."

¹⁵ *Tristia* 1.1.15. Mordine (2010) in n.32 comments that *grata* could possibly be taken in its passive sense, and thus becomes "greet the places that have taken pleasure in my words."

¹⁶ I take Luck's emendation here: *quaerent si plura legentes* (if readers demand more). The manuscript reads *quaerenti plura legendum* (anyone who wants to know more must read you). Diggle (1980), 401 and Green (2005), 204 endorse Luck's emendation – although Green writes that he does so "with some

ne, quae non opus est, forte loquere, cave!
protinus admonitus repetet mea crimina lector,
et peragar populi publicus ore reus. (Tr. 1.1.21-24)

[And otherwise be quiet, if readers demand more details,
take care that you not by chance say what is not the work!
Immediately a reader, once reminded, will remember my crimes,
and I will be condemned by the voice of the people as a defendant.]

Ovid perhaps playfully warns his book to be silent, as if it can say what he does not want it to say. By this personification of the book, Ovid endows his book with a voice separate from his own.¹⁷ In these lines, Ovid stresses the power which the reader holds over him by emphasizing the reader (*lector*) and the people's capacity to condemn him (*populi ore*). If his book says what it should not say, the reader will remember what the poet does not wish his audience to remember and the people will condemn him once again. Thus, in this personification of the book, Ovid highlights his own loss of autonomy and the danger presented by his "free" book's autonomy. His fate depends on his book's ability to speak for him and the reader's interpretation of his writing. Thus, Ovid is at the mercy of his writing and his reader.

misgivings." The manuscript reading detracts from the meaning, especially since the following line instructs the book against unnecessary revelations.

¹⁷ Cf. *Tristia* 3.1 wherein the book itself speaks and walks around Rome.

- **Ovid's Ambivalent Muse**

Having set the stage in *Tristia* 1.1 with a meditation on the ability of the book to go where he cannot and speak for him, Ovid then asks himself throughout the *Tristia* why he writes in exile, when writing was the very cause of that exile. In the beginning of Book II of the *Tristia*, a book dedicated to appealing to Augustus and defending himself, Ovid emphasizes this contradiction:

Quid mihi vobiscum est, infelix cura, libelli,
ingenio perii qui miser ipse meo? (Tr. 2.1-2)

[What have I to do with you, little books, my unlucky obsession,
I, wretched, who was destroyed by my talent?]

The phrase “destroyed by my talent” (*ingenio perii meo*) appears again in *Tristia* 3.3.¹⁸ Ovid draws our attention to the fact that writing and his *ingenium*, the very thing which brought him fame, caused his exile, although the exact cause of Ovid's exile still remains shrouded in mystery.¹⁹ He famously alludes to the cause of his crimes in *Tristia* 2:

perdiderint cum me duo crimina, carmen et error,
alterius facti culpa silenda mihi. (Tr. 2.207-208)

¹⁸ Ovid echoes this phrase in his epitaph in *Tristia* 3.3.74. I discuss this epitaph further in chapter 3.

¹⁹ Surveyed by Thibault (1964); see also Syme (1978), 215-229 for a detailed discussion and Green (1982) for an updated political angle.

[Although two crimes have destroyed me, a poem and a mistake,
on my fault in the second one, I must keep silent.]

On the ‘error,’ Ovid claims that he must remain silent.²⁰ Yet on the matter of the poem (*carmen*), several times in the *Tristia*, he alludes to the fact that the poem is the *Ars Amatoria*.²¹ He is paying the price for writing this poem, and yet, this admission appears repeatedly in his exile poetry, underscoring the fact that, even in exile, he continues to write.

Ovid takes up this seeming contradiction and describes his ambivalent feelings towards his poetry and his Muse. *Tristia* 4.10, Ovid’s “autobiography,”²² describes how exile caused him to feel both anger and joy:

tunc quoque, cum fugerem, quaedam placitura cremavi,
iratus studio carminibus meis. (*Tr*: 4.10.63-64)

[Then also, when I was setting off into exile, I burned certain verses which
would have been pleasing, because I was angry with my pursuit and poems]

Since his exile was caused by his poetry, as he purports, Ovid describes conveying his

²⁰ Ovid also writes in *Tr*: 4.10.99-100, “The cause of my ruin, but too well known to all, must not be revealed by evidence of mine,” (*causa meae cunctis nimium quoque nota ruinae/ indicio non est testificanda meo*).

²¹ Cf. *Tr*: 1.1.67-68, 2.7-8, 3.1.7-8, 3.14.17-18, 5.12.67-68.

²² Fairweather (1987) provides an excellent close reading of *Tr*: 4.10.

anger against his poetry through the burning of verses. Yet despite his anger toward his poetry, poetry still brings him pleasure. There is a certain bitter irony in the poet's use of writing for solace since writing, as he claims, is the very thing which brought him to the pain of exile. At 4.1.30, Ovid writes, "As a madman, though I was injured by song, I still love song" (*et carmen demens carmine laesus amo*). The juxtaposition of pain (*laesus*) and love (*amo*) highlight the poet's ambivalent relationship with his poetry. His books have wounded him, yet poetry still brings him pleasure:

sentit amans sua damna fere, tamen haeret in illis,
materiam culpae persequiturque suae.
nos quoque delectant, quamvis nocuere, libelli,
quodque mihi telum vunera fecit, amo. (Tr: 4.1. 33-36)

[The lover often senses his own ruin, yet he clings to it,
and he pursues the stuff of his own fault.
My little books also delight me, although they harmed me,
and I love the weapon that made my wounds.]

In order to describe his relationship with his poetry, Ovid uses an erotic motif of a lover (*amans*), maddened by passion, who pursues the very thing which brings him harm. This erotic reference implies that the 'stuff of his fault' (*materiam culpae*) refers to his love poetry.²³ Ovid's books have pierced him like an arrow (*telum*), which implies the arrows

²³ See Williams (1994), 70 for further analysis on *materiam culpae* as love elegy.

of Cupid. He makes a similar analogy in *Tristia* 4.10.65 when he writes that his heart has always been soft “not impenetrable against Cupid’s arrows” (*Cupidineis nec inexpugnabile telis*). Thus, by writing love elegy, the poet has fallen in love with his poetry and pursues it to his own destruction.

Despite the pain that poetry brings, however, it also eases the pain of exile. When Ovid describes the pain brought on by his poetry, he alludes to love elegy; however, when he describes the comfort that it brings to him as well, he alludes to philosophical language. In *Tristia* 4.10, he thanks his Muse for bringing him relief:

gratia, Musa, tibi: nam tu solacia praebes,
tu curae requies, tu medicina venis. (*Tr.* 4.10.117-118)

[Thank you, Muse. For you offer solace,
you come as a relief from pain, a cure.]

He states a similar sentiment in *Tristia* 5.1:

tot mala pertulimus, quorum medicina quiesque
nulla nisi in studio est Pieridumque mora. (*Tr.* 5.1.33-4)

[I have endured so many evils, from which there is no cure or relief,
except there is a pause in devotion to the Muses.]

Nagle notes that Ovid's use of *requies* and *medicina* echoes Cicero's language used with reference to philosophy.²⁴ When Ovid discusses how his poetry is a consolation to him, he draws upon philosophical language, rather than elegiac motifs previously seen. Ovid uses the conditions of exile to rethink the purpose of his writing, and so he alludes not only to the genre of his earlier writings, but also to authors who have also experienced exile, as Cicero had.

Ovid also echoes the motif of writing as a consolation (*consolatio*)²⁵ from Cicero's letters from exile. In a letter to Atticus Cicero describes the therapeutic effect of letter writing:

ut nihil ad te dem litterarum facere non possum et simul, crede mihi, requiesco paulum in his miseriis, cum quasi tecum loquor, cum vero tuas epistulas lego, multo etiam magis. (*Att.* 8.14.1)

It is impossible for me not to write to you, and at the same time, believe me, in these miseries, I gradually find consolation when I am, as it were, talking to you, and truly when I read your letters, I even find much greater consolation.

For Cicero letter writing is as close as he can get to actually speaking to his friend in person (*cum quasi tecum loquor*), a vehicle of communication between the exile and those at home. In thinking about his purpose for writing from exile, Ovid employs

²⁴ Nagle (1980), 100 with n. 50 compares *requies curarum* (*Off.* 2. *proem* 6) and *animi medicina* (*Tusc.* 3. *proem* 1). Nagle argues that these echoes are purely literary and do not reflect Ovid's real psychological or philosophical attitudes.

²⁵ See Claassen (1999) 22-26 and 85-102 on the formal elements of *consolatio ad exilem*.

Cicero's theme of writing as a consolation while in exile. Ovid explains that writing alone can lighten his grief:

me quoque Musa **levat** Ponti loca iussa petentem:

sola comes nostrae perstitit illa fugae. (*Tr.* 4.1.19-20)

[The Muse also relieves me on my way to the appointed lands of the Pontus:

she alone stood fast as a companion of my flight.]

Writing eases the very pain which writing has caused him. Ovid uses the verb *levare* (to relieve) throughout the *Tristia* to describe the comfort which his Muse brings:

hic ego, finitimis quamvis circumsoner armis,

tristia, quo possum, carmine fata **levo**. (*Tr.* 4.10.111-112)

[Here, although surrounded by the din of nearby arms,

I relieve my sad fate with what song I may.]

The use of *levare* recalls Cicero's comments on the alleviation of pain (or lack-of-it) in *Atticus* 3.15:

dies autem non modo non **levat** luctum hunc sed etiam auget. (*Att.* 3.15.2)

[No day, however, relieves this sorrow but even increases it.]

Writing is the only way of relieving sorrow for an exile. Even the passing of time does not bring relief.

In *Tristia* 4.6, Ovid takes Cicero's complaint that the passing of time does not bring relief for an exile, and he makes it the theme of an entire poem. He writes that time has the power to tame the bull, the horse, Phoenician lions, and the elephant²⁶; time has the power to develop the grape and grain, to sweeten fruit, and to wear down the plow.²⁷ However, time cannot relieve his sorrowful heart:

cuncta potest igitur tacito pede lapsa vetustas
praeterquam curas attenuare meas. (*Tr.* 4.6.17-18)

[The silent passage of time, therefore, can diminish by its passing everything except my cares.]

Just as Cicero lamented, the passing of time does not relieve his grief and, in fact, even increases it, as Ovid writes a few lines down:

tristior est etiam praesens aerumna priore:
ut sit enim sibi par, crevit et aucta mora est. (*Tr.* 4.6.25-26)

²⁶ Cf. *Tristia* 4.6.1-8

²⁷ Cf. *Tristia* 4.6. 9-16

[My present woes are more sorrowful than even before:

for although it is still like itself, it has grown and increased with time.]

Ovid draws on Cicero's sentiment and exaggerates it in his poetry. This exaggeration of Cicero's earlier writing indicates that Ovid uses the theme as a literary device, so it is not to be taken as an indicator of Ovid's true psychological condition. Instead his purpose is to take up Cicero's exilic motif of consolation and use it in order to rethink his purpose for writing in exile because conventions are yet another source from which Ovid can draw and play with in his exilic poetry. In addition, many poems of the *Tristia* are also written in epistolary form, and in this way, Ovid fuses epistolographic conventions and exilic motifs through echoes of Cicero's letters from exile.²⁸

In the *Tristia*, we see a process whereby Ovid questions his purpose for writing in exile and highlights the contradiction inherent in finding relief through the very thing that caused his pain. In the process of considering such questions, we see allusions to authors of love elegy, including his own, and to Cicero, another exile. By fusing elements of his own earlier works with Cicero's laments, Ovid demonstrates his rethinking of the purpose of writing. Thus Ovid writes as more than just a love elegist, more than just an exile; rather, he is an poet in exile who must continue to write, the very action which caused his exile.

²⁸ See Claassen (1999), 83-84 for discussion on Cicero's letters from exile and the theme of *consolatio*. See also Gaertner (2007) for discussion on Ovid's use of epistolographic conventions and comparisons with Cicero.

- **Memory, Oblivion, and Mental Visualization**

In the *Tristia*, Ovid explores three reasons for writing: first, to forget his current miseries, second, to remember Rome, and third, to be remembered in Rome. Much of the *Tristia* is concerned with memory and forgetfulness. Ovid uses the noun *oblivium* (forgetfulness) and the participle of *obliviscor* (to forget) eleven times throughout the *Tristia*.²⁹ Oblivion can both help the exiled poet and it simultaneously can harm him, and this is also true of memory. Ovid makes clear that it is important for a poet in exile to remember home, the place he cannot go, and to forget his current surroundings. At the same time, the reader in Rome must also forget Ovid's past crimes and remember his name.

One way in which his writing brings Ovid relief is by making him forgetful of his present woes:

semper in obtutu mentem vetat esse malorum,
praesentis casus inmemoremque facit. (Tr. 4.1.39-40)

[It forbids the mind from always looking at its troubles,
it makes it forgetful of its present misfortune.]

Poetic composition brings about oblivion and the ability for the mind to forget the current surrounding circumstances. Ovid further reiterates this point in the final lines of *Tr.* 5.7:

²⁹Cf. *Tristia* 1.5.13, 1.8.11, 3.11.65, 4.3.24, 4.5.9, 4.10.105, 5.5.5, 5.7.21, 5.7.29, 5.7.67, 5.12.17.

carminibus quaero miserarum obliviam rerum:

praemia si studio consequar ista, sat est. (*Tr.* 5.7.67-8)

[I am seeking oblivion from my wretched state through songs:

If I should obtain that reward by study, it is enough.]

In this final distich of *Tristia* 5.7, Ovid calls oblivion (*obliviam*) a reward (*praemia*) to be obtained. Oblivion is the only reward the poet can now achieve. McGowan argues that Ovid's attempt to forget his present memories "is an attempt to gain control over what in effect lies beyond his control."³⁰ Relegated by Augustus, Ovid has no control over his current circumstances, but he can write and through this pursuit (*studio*), he can strive for the reward of oblivion.

Writing can bring oblivion of present misfortunes in Tomis by fantasizing about Rome. In *Tristia* 4.2, Ovid mentally reconstructs the triumphal procession for Tiberius' triumph over Germany:

inde petes arcem et delubra faventia votis,

et dabitur merito laurea vota Iovi.

haec ego summotus qua possum mente videbo :

erepti nobis ius habet illa loci :

illa per inmensas spatiat libera terras,

in caelum celeri pervenit illa fuga,

³⁰ McGowan (2009), 148 explains that against Augustus's right to kill, save, or banish "the poet has no recourse except oblivion, which he seeks in the writing of poetry."

illa meos oculos mediam deducit in urbem,
immunes tanti nec sinit esse boni. (Tr: 4.2.55-62)

[Then you will seek the citadel and the shrines that favor prayers,
and the votive laurel will be dedicated deservingly to Jove.
These things I, exiled, will see with my mind, my only way:
my mind holds the right to that place which has been snatched away:
it travels freely throughout vast lands,
it reaches heaven in swift flight,
it leads my eyes to the center of the city,
and does not allow them to be deprived of so great a good.]

Ovid uses *Tristia* 4.2 as a vehicle for mental transposition, to see with his mind, what he cannot physically see. The juxtaposition of mind (*mente*) and seeing (*videbo*) at the end of the line in 57 emphasizes that this poem is an exercise in seeing with the mind rather than the eyes. Only through mental visualization can the poet enter the city. McGowan sees this as a response to Augustus' control of the legal workings of the Roman state.³¹ Ovid reclaims his right to enter the city (*ius loci*) through his imagination; he enacts resistance to his physical ban by means of his mind. Likewise, lines 55-62 emphasize his mind's capacity to transcend space. Through his mind, the poet can freely travel across vast space (*per immensas spatiatur libera terras*), and he can also go back to the very center of the empire, the center of Rome (*mediam in urbem*). *Libera* recalls that the book

³¹ See McGowan (2009), 138.

is ‘free’ (*liber*), and demonstrates that Ovid’s mind has the same freedom that his writing has. In these lines, Ovid sets up an image of the Roman empire which spreads out across vast lands with the city at its center.

Ovid constructs this image of Rome as the center of the world in several other passages as well. In *Tristia* 1.5, Ovid compares himself to Odysseus and asserts that his misfortunes are even worse than those of Odysseus because his home is not Ithaca, some place from which absence is no great punishment, at least from Ovid’s point of view since he calls Rome home:

sed quae de septem totum circumspicit orbem
montibus, imperii Roma deumque locus (Tr. 1.5.69-70)

[but Rome which looks out on the whole world from seven hills,
the seat of power and the gods]

While Ovid is mentally looking back at Rome, Rome looks out on the whole world. The verb ‘to look out on’ (*circumspicere*), with the prefix ‘around’ (*circum-*) implies that the viewer is at the center.³² Ovid, however, is at the edge of this world, mentally visualizing being back in the center. Throughout the *Tristia*, Ovid describes himself as being at the farthest edge of the world.³³ In this way, Ovid creates a spatial dichotomy between Rome, at the center of the world, and Tomis, at the edge of the world. Rome’s rule spans the

³² Cf. OLD entry 1 for *circumspicio*.

³³ Cf. *ultimus orbis* at *Tristia* 1.1.127 and *extremus orbis* at *Tristia* 3.3.3, 3.13.12, 4.9.9, 5.5.4.

entire world, but Ovid is relegated to the furthest reaches of that power. Nevertheless, Ovid can still access the city, the seat of power, through his writing. As discussed above, his book can go the city, although he cannot. In addition, as shown by Ovid's mental transposition in *Tristia* 4.2, through writing, Ovid can mentally visit Rome. The poet can obtain relief from present miseries through his mental capacities and his writing, and he can forget the woes of being at the edge of the world by remembering and fantasizing about the center of the world.

Yet, although Ovid claims to seek personal oblivion from his present circumstances, he appears quite concerned that his name not fade into oblivion at home in Rome. When Ovid mentions in *Tr.* 5.7 that his friend has written to him that his poems are being performed in theaters in Rome, he draws our attention to his distance from Rome and, in turn, his loss of authority over his own works:

carmina quod pleno saltari nostra theatro,
versibus et plaudi scribis, amice, meis,
nil equidem feci (tu scis hoc ipse) theatri,
Musa nec in plausus ambitiosa mea est.
non tamen ingratum est, quodcumque oblivia nostri
impedit et profugi nomen in ora refert. (*Tr.* 5.7.25-30)

[You write that my songs are being danced³⁴ in a full theater,
and my verses, friend, are being applauded,

³⁴ Green (2005), 285 suggests that the most likely texts for such adaptations are the *Heroides*.

but I have composed nothing (you yourself know this) for the theater,
nor is my Muse ambitious for applause.

Nevertheless I am not ungrateful for anything which impedes oblivion of me
and brings back the name of the exile onto men's lips.]

Ovid highlights a predicament of a poet in exile. He insists that he never intended his verses to be performed in a theater. Nevertheless, while the poet is at the edge of the world, he has lost authority over the performance of his text in the city. Yet, despite the loss of authority, even if it is against his wishes, Ovid claims to be grateful for anything that hinders forgetfulness (*oblivium*) of his name. Thus, writing poetry serves a double purpose. It brings the exiled individual oblivion from his present circumstances and it prevents the collective oblivion of the exile's name for those in Rome.

Two of the most significant purposes for writing in exile are to forget present miseries and to be remembered. The ban on Ovid's returning to Rome does not extend to his mind. Ovid exercises his poetic abilities to defy the emperor's ban by means of writing. By writing about his mental trip to Rome and then sending his book to Rome, Ovid continues to maintain a presence in the city. His books go home to Rome and keep the memory of the poet alive there. The poet in exile loses the authority to control the use of his text, but he strives for what little control he can have through his poetic powers.

CHAPTER III

DEATH AND IMMORTALITY IN EXILE

J.F. Gaertner writes that “there has been a long tradition of viewing Ovid’s exilic works as fundamentally different from his earlier poetry.”³⁵ However, as Gaertner demonstrates, several features of Ovid’s exile poetry follow close precedents from earlier exilic literature including motifs of endless weeping, “stereotypical descriptions of his surroundings,” and “repeated comparisons between the poet’s plights and the wanderings of mythical characters such as Odysseus and Aeneas.”³⁶ Reading Ovid’s exile poetry alongside common exilic motifs helps us to move away from viewing it as a true stylistic decline, as Ovid so often proclaims,³⁷ but rather as a part of reworking of traditions of writing in exile.

One element of exilic writing that Ovid incorporates throughout the *Tristia* is the motif of exile as a living death. Many scholars have discussed how Latin literature equates exile with death. Claassen writes that since exile was often a substitute for the death penalty, it was often portrayed in literature as a living death.³⁸ Ingleheart adds to Claassen’s point by writing that in addition to the legal reasoning, “death provides an effective metaphor for the catastrophe of exile.”³⁹ Furthermore, Gaertner and Ingleheart both agree that the connection between death and exile owe something to the close

³⁵ Gaertner (2007), 155-6 briefly surveys the scholarship that differentiates the style of the *Tristia* and *Epistolae ex Ponto* from Ovid’s earlier works.

³⁶ Gaertner (2007), 157 with n.12 compares Ovid’s use of exemplary exiles with those found in Teles, Musonius, Plutarch, Favorinus, and Cicero. For detailed analysis on the affinities between Ovid and Cicero, see Nagle (1980), 33-385 and Claassen (1999).

³⁷ Cf. *Tr.* 1.1.45-48, 3.14.33, 5.12.21-2. See Williams (1994), 50 on the “pose of poetic decline.”

³⁸ Claassen (1996), 571.

³⁹ Ingleheart (2015), 287.

connection between *exitium* (death) and *exilium* (exile).⁴⁰ Nagle, Claassen, and Gaertner also point out that Ovid's choice of elegiac pentameter for the meter of the *Tristia* reflects elegy's supposed origin in funeral dirge.⁴¹ The exile as death theme is best exemplified in *Tristia* 1.3, a poem which recounts Ovid's last night in Rome, wherein Ovid depicts his departure as a funeral procession and describes his wife mourning as if he had died. By incorporating this theme of exile as death and writing in the meter of love elegy, which reflects a funeral dirge in order, Ovid establishes death as a major exilic theme in the *Tristia*.

However, in conjunction with the theme of death, Ovid also draws from a poetic tradition of looking forward to one's own immortality through poetry.⁴² This is a tradition already familiar from Augustan verse, where in the final poem of *Odes* 3, Horace famously predicts immortality which his poetry will confer onto him:

non omnis moriar multaque pars mei
vitabit Libitinam (Odes 3.30.6-7)

[I will not die wholly and a great part of me
will avoid Libitina⁴³]

⁴⁰ See Gaertner (2007) 160 and Ingleheart (2015) 288.

⁴¹ Cf. Nagle (1980) 22-32, Claassen (1999) 211, and Gaertner (2007) 160 with n.25.

⁴² Poetic immortality was a poetic convention in Greek and Latin poetry. See McGowan, 112n. 61 for a list of passages on poetic immortality. I focus specifically on Horace's *Odes* 3.30, Ovid's *Amores* 1.15, and *Metamorphoses* 15.871-9.

⁴³ Libitina is the goddess of funerals and is here a metonym for death.

The final lines of Ovid's *Amores* 1.15 echo this line of Horace:

ergo etiam cum me supremus adederit ignis,
vivam, parsque mei multa superstes erit.

[Therefore, even after the final fire has consumed me,
I will live, and a great part of me will survive.]

Ovid echoes Horace's words *multaque pars mei* (a great part of me) as a signal of his allusion to Horace's epilogue. Ovid's emphatic assertion that he will live (*vivam*) is more forceful and more positive than Horace's claim that he will not die wholly (*non omnis moriar*). Ovid alters Horace's language to focus on living rather than dying, and in this way, he perhaps playfully implies that his work will survive even more than will Horace himself through his poetry. *Amores* 1.15 catalogues the names of Greek and Roman poets who will have immortality through their poetry: Homer, Hesiod, Callimachus, Sophocles, Aratus, Menander, Ennius, Accius, Varro, Lucretius, Virgil, Tibullus, and Gallus. Through this catalogue, Ovid inserts himself into the lineage of immortal poets. Moreover, Ovid proclaims that songs are free from death (*carmina morte carent*, 32). Thus, a poet can live on through his poetry because people read it and so he is not forgotten.

In the final passage of the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid again echoes this passage of Horace:

parte tamen meliore mei super alta perennis
astra ferar, nomenque erit indelebile nostrum,
quaque patet domitis Romana potentia terris,
ore legar populi, perque omnia saecula fama,
siquid habent veri vatum praesagia, vivam. (*Meta.* 15.875-9)

[yet with the better part of me, I will be born, everlasting,
above the lofty stars, and my name will be indelible,
and wherever Roman power extends over conquered lands,
I will be read upon the lips of the people, and throughout all the ages with fame,
if the prophecies of poets hold anything of truth, I shall live.]

Ovid's use of *parte meliore mei* again recalls Horace's *multaque pars mei* and his own *parsque mei multa* in *Amores* 1.15. He also emphatically uses *vivam* again, as he did in *Amores* 1.15, and positions it as the final word of his work. Ovid also parallels *legar* (I will be read) with *vivam* (I will live), thus creating a relationship of dependence between himself, his poetry, and the empire: his poetic immortality depends upon his poems being read, for a poet can live on in name so long as his poetry lives on. His poetry will be read as long as Rome's power makes Latin the empire's dominant language. Thus, the immortality of the poet is ultimately dependent on the longevity and reach of the Roman empire. In this final passage of the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid writes, "wherever Roman power extends over conquered lands, I will be read." This recalls *Amores* 1.15. 25-6, where Ovid wrote that Virgil will be read, "as long as Rome is the head of the conquered

world,” (*Roma triumphati dum caput orbis erit*). The passage of the *Metamorphoses* defines the spatial extent of the poets’ immortality, while the passage of the *Amores* defines the temporal boundary. Poetic immortality extends as far as the Roman empire and lives as long as Rome survives.

As previously discussed, Ovid was exiled to the furthest reaches of the empire and banned from the center. Through exile, he comes to find out what *quaque patet domitis Romana potentia terris* truly means. McGowan points out that poetic power “was measured in terms of posterity, that is, in terms of general readers and future writers to come after the poet and the *princeps*.”⁴⁴ The power granted to poets transcends that of emperors, since the power of the *princeps* is limited by the emperor’s length of rule. The power of the poet lives on past the death of the poet.⁴⁵ In exile, this poetic convention of referencing poetic immortality takes on a new meaning. McGowan pointedly writes, “In Ovid’s particular case, the art of poetry provides the exile with the power to speak after death and always gives him the last word.”⁴⁶ Although Augustus had the power to banish the poet from Rome, effectively causing an exilic death⁴⁷, the poet can continue to speak through his poetry after his exilic ‘death’ and after his physical death. In *Tr.* 3.7, we see echoes of *Amores* 1.15:

⁴⁴ McGowan (2009), 204.

⁴⁵ Ovid references poetic immortality multiple times throughout the *Tristia*: *Tr.* 1.6.35-60; 3.3.77-8; 3.4.45-6; 3.7.49-54; 4.9.19-26; 4.10.2; 4.10.127-32; 5.14.5-6.

⁴⁶ McGowan (2009), 204.

⁴⁷ See below for a more in depth explanation of exile as death. On the recurring theme of exilic death, see Nagle (1980), 23-35; Helzle (1988), 78 with n.29; Williams (1994), 12-3; Claassen (1999), 239-41 with n.37; Gaertner (2007), 160 with n.26; McGowan (2009), 12 with n.44.

quilibet hanc saevo vitam mihi finiat ense,
me tamen extincto fama superstes erit,
dumque suis victrix septem de montibus orbem
prospiciet domitum Martia Roma, legar. (Tr. 3.7.49-52)

[Let whoever it pleases end this life for me with a cruel sword,
nevertheless, after I have died, my fame will survive,
and as long as the conqueress, Martian Rome, looks out from her seven hills
at the conquered world, I will be read.]

Ovid repeats the final two words from *Amores* 1.15, *superstes erit* (it will survive), in this passage. As in the final line of *Amores* 1.15, *superstes erit* ends a line of pentameter in an elegiac couplet. The metrical placement mirrors that of Ovid's earlier poem dedicated to the theme of poetic immortality. In addition, Ovid repeats his phrase from *Tristia* 1.5 in which he wrote that "Rome looks out on the whole world from seven hills." Furthermore, both of these lines also echo *Amores* 1.15.26 where he writes "as long as Rome is the head of the conquered world" (*Roma triumphati dum caput orbis erit*). The power which poetry confers onto the poet is dependent upon the power of Rome. The poet's fame spreads out as far as Rome's power spreads and lasts as long as Rome controls the world. As a final echo of the poet's earlier works, the word *legar* (I will be read) reminds the reader of *Am.* 1.15.38 in which he writes, "I will be read much by troubled lovers," (*a sollicito multus amante legar*) and the line in the envoi of the *Metamorphoses* where he writes, "I will be read on the lips of the people," (*ore legar populi*). If a poet continues to

be read after his death, his poetic power survives. These echoes serve to remind the reader of the poet's earlier poems, thus conferring immortality onto him. As Ovid plays with the theme of poetic immortality, he keeps his earlier works alive by echoing them in his poems from exile, demonstrating that his poetic power is greater than the emperor's power of banishment.

In *Tr.* 4.10, the poet's 'autobiography,' Ovid concludes his poem with additional echoes from his earlier passages on poetic immortality and focuses on thanking his reader:

si quid habent igitur vatū praesagia veri,
protinus ut moriar, non ero, terra, tuus.
sive favore tui, sive hanc ego carmine famam,
iure tibi grates, candide lector, ago. (*Tr.* 4.10.129-32)

[If then the prophecies of poets hold any truth,
even if I were to die immediately, I shall not, O earth, be yours.
Whether by favor, or by this song, I have received fame,
with justice I give thanks to you, dear reader.]

Ovid repeats his words from the last line of the *Metamorphoses*: "If the prophecies of poets hold any truth, I will live," (*si quid habent veri vatū praesagia, vivam*). Yet, here in the *Tristia*, he makes a pointed shift in emphasis. In the *Metamorphoses*, he concludes with absolute finality that he will live (*vivam*). In this passage, however, two more lines

follow the statement on the truth of poetic prophecy. Rather than accentuating that he will live, Ovid adds nuance to his previous statement. He emphasizes that he will in fact die, but he will not die wholly. The shift in emphasis reflects Ovid's exiled state. Since he was exiled, he has already experienced exilic death, and so he does not emphatically proclaim *vivam* here. Rather, the poet points to his poetic power which allows him to escape total death. *Tr.* 4.10 begins and ends with an address to the future reader: *quem legis...posteritas* in line 2 and *candide lector* in final line, 132. Claassen points out that through this address to the future reader, "the poet transcends both time and space."⁴⁸ The poet cannot physically go back to Rome, but his poems can, and although the poet will physically die, his *carmina* can keep his memory alive among his readers.

In his final poem of the *Tristia*, Ovid continues the theme of poetic immortality and again echoes the final lines of the *Metamorphoses*. The poet addresses his wife in *Tristia* 5.14 and writes that his own poetry can immortalize her as well:

Quanta tibi dederim nostris **monumenta** libellis,

o mihi me coniunx carior, ipsa vides.

detrahat auctori multum fortuna licebit,

tu tamen ingenio clara ferere meo;

dumque **legar**, mecum partier tua **fama** legetur,

nec potes in maestos omnis abire rogos. (*Tr.*5.14.1-6)

⁴⁸Claassen (1999), 123.

[How great a monument I have given to you in my little book,
oh my wife, dearer to me than myself, you yourself see.
Fortune will be allowed to take away much from the author,
but you will be carried illustrious by my ability;
And so long as I am read, your fame will be read equally with me,
and you will not be able to pass away entirely on the sad pyre.]

Here Ovid styles his poems as *monumenta* and implies that these are objects upon which a viewer can gaze, and by ending the second line with *vides*, he highlights this visual element of his *monumenta*. In the final poem of the *Tristia*, we see a reversal of the physical description of the book in the beginning of *Tristia* 1.1. Rather than describing his book as shabby and unpolished, Ovid now describes it as a great monument. Furthermore, the reference to the funeral pyre recalls that *monumenta* are also objects that serve as a means of remembrance. Ovid reminds his reader that his work can keep memory alive even after death. Let us recall, once again, the penultimate line of the *Metamorphoses*:

ore **legar** populi, perque omnia saecula **fama**,
siquid habent veri vatum praesagia, vivam. (*Meta.* 15.878-9)

[I shall be read on the lips of the people, and throughout all the ages with fame,
if the prophecies of poets have sometime of truth, I will live.]

Ovid places *legar* in the same metrical position in *Tristia* 5.14.5 as he does in *Metamorphoses* 15.878, and he includes *fama* at the end or near the end of both lines. So in the final poem of the *Tristia*, the poet once again reminds us of the ending of the *Metamorphoses* and his bold proclamation that he will live on through his writing. Yet, in the final poem of the *Tristia* he seems to have inverted his final words of the *Metamorphoses*. He speaks now of his wife's fame, rather than his own, as what will be immortalized through his work. Perhaps Ovid wryly recalls his boasts in the final passage of *Metamorphoses*, and here at the end of the *Tristia*, he turns towards the immortality of his wife rather than himself. Moreover, as Nagle notes, the fame which a poet can confer onto his beloved is a "commonplace" of Roman elegy.⁴⁹ Thus Ovid once again uses motifs from love elegy and gives them new meaning through the circumstances of exile.

Whenever Ovid references poetic immortality in the *Tristia*, however, there is an underlying reminder of his current exilic death. When Ovid refers to the poems of the *Tristia* as *monumenta*, as he does in *Tr.* 5.14, he recalls that he has already experienced death through exile, but that his writings will serve as a means of remembrance and through them, he will live on. Monuments are physical structures that remind the viewer of the past and can occupy a middle ground between death and immortality. It can be useful for us to look at another instance of an author referring to his work as a *monumentum* in order to fully grasp its implications.

⁴⁹ See Nagle (1980), 51 with n. 83.

Livy refers to his work as a *monumentum* in the preface to his *History of Rome*.⁵⁰ Andrew Feldherr comments on the visual language in Livy's preface, particularly his use of the verb *intueri*, which we might compare with Ovid's use of *vides*, and Livy's use of the adjective *inlustris* which characterizes the *monumentum*.⁵¹ Both authors imagine their written works a visible *monumenta* which the reader can look upon and, by so doing, remember the past. Gary Miles defines *monumentum* as "something that makes one think"⁵² based on the etymology of the word. Thus a *monumentum* is a physical object that causes mental reflection in the mind of the beholder. Feldherr elaborates on the usage of *monumentum*:

For the Romans, the fundamental task of a *monumentum* was to act as a prompt for memory, to remind; Varro defines the primary sense of *monimenta (sic)* as funeral markers or physical monuments, and from there extends the term to include "other things written for the sake of memory"...⁵³

Monumenta preserve memories across time and space, particularly after the death of the individual remembered. When Ovid writes '*quanta tibi dederim nostris monumenta libellis...ipsa vides*,' he suggests that his poems create a physical object for his reader to

⁵⁰*hoc illud est praecipue in cognition rerum salubre ac frugiferum, omnis te exempli documenta in inlustris posita monumento intueri; inde tibi tuaeque rei publicae quod imitere capias, inde foedum inceptu foedum exitu quod vites. [praefatio 10]*

⁵¹Feldherr (1998): 1

⁵²Miles (1995): 17

⁵³Feldherr (1998): 12 n.30

behold and thus carry his memory on after his death, both his physical death and his exilic death. Ovid cannot physically be in Rome, so the books go in his place and bring the poet to the mind of the reader, thus keeping his memory alive in Rome.

In *Tristia* 3.3, a supposed letter from the death bed addressed to his wife, Ovid writes out instructions for his burial and composes a four-line epitaph for himself. Although he cannot go back to Rome, he writes instructions for his bones to be taken back to Rome after his death:

ossa tamen facito parva referantur in urna:

sic ego non etiam mortuus exul ero. (*Tr.* 3.3.65-6)

[But see that my bones are brought back in a small urn:

Thus I shall not be an exile even in death.]

Here Ovid emphasizes his physical death over his exilic death and his desire to have his physical remains transported back to Rome. Moreover, Ingleheart points out that, “Ovid's desire for a small urn at line 65 reminds us that he is a love elegist and shares his predecessors' adherence to Callimachean programmatic principles even in death.”⁵⁴ Ovid focuses on his role as a love elegist in these lines, and at the same time, he reminds us of his desire to return home, even if only his bones may return. There is a pointed political subtext in these and the following lines when he alludes to Antigone's burial of Polynices:

⁵⁴ Ingleheart (2015), 291. When Ovid writes *parva...urna*, he recalls the *parva...urna* which holds the remains of Tibullus in *Am.* 3.9.40. See Huskey (2005), 380 for a comparative reading of *Tr.* 3.3, *Am.* 3.9, and Tibullus 1.3.

non vetat hoc quisquam: fratrem Thebana peremptum

supposit tumulo rege vetante soror. (Tr: 3.3.66-7)

[Nobody forbids this: the Theban sister laid her slain brother
in a tomb although the king forbade it.]

In this case, Ovid equates himself to Polynices and his wife to Antigone. This exemplum implies that Augustus might forbid Ovid's burial at Rome, as Creon forbade the burial of Polynices. If this should be the case, Ovid asks his wife to act as Antigone did and defy the ruler. This allusion to Antigone, Polynices, and Creon points out the extent and the limits of Augustus' power. Augustus can exile Ovid for the rest of his life, but if he should also forbid his burial in Rome, the *princeps* would become a tyrant.⁵⁵

Ovid's desire for his body to return to Rome reflects his wish to no longer be in exile, but also to be remembered in Rome. This funerary marker, *monumentum*, which the poet conjures up in the mind of the reader serves as both a reminder and a warning to the viewer:

quosque legat versus oculo properante viator,

grandibus in tumuli marmore caede notis

HIC·EGO·QUI·IACEO·TENERORUM·LUSOR·AMORUM

⁵⁵Ingleheart (2015), remarks that through this allusion to Creon "Ovid thereby implies that, were Augustus to try to bar him from his city even after death, the attempt would fail, and the behaviour of the *princeps* would be that of a tyrant" (292).

INGENIO·PERII·NASO·POETA·MEO
AT·TIBI·QUI·TRANSIS·NE·SIT·GRAVE·QUISQUIS·AMASTI
DICERE·NASONIS·MOLLITER·OSSA·CUBENT (Tr: 3.3.71-6)

[and verses which the traveler might read with a hasty eye,
on the marble of a tomb cut with large letters:

I WHO LIE HERE, A PLAYER OF TENDER LOVES
NASO THE POET, PERISHED BECAUSE OF MY TALENT;
BUT, TO LOVERS WHO PASS BY, MAY IT NOT BE BURDENSOME
TO SAY “MAY THE BONES OF NASO REST GENTLY.”]

In his imagined epitaph, Ovid presents himself as a love elegist, “a player of tender loves.” Herescu writes that many scholars have found it curious that in his funeral monument, Ovid seems to forget his *Fasti* and *Metamorphoses* and that he presents himself before eternity as the author of the *Amores* and *Ars Amatoria*.⁵⁶ The term which Ovid attributes to himself, player (*lusor*), recalls his earlier poem, *Tr.* 1.9.61, in which he describes the *Ars Amatoria* as a “game of my youth” (*iuveni lusum mihi carmen*). Since he describes the *Ars Amatoria* as a *lusum carmen*, when Ovid refers to himself as a *lusor* in the *Tristia*, he recalls to the reader's mind his earlier work, the *Ars Amatoria*. Thus, on his imagined funerary monument, he names the *Ars Amatoria*, rather than the *Fasti* or

⁵⁶Herescu (1958), 420. As Zielinski (in Herescu, 420) 1939, 17: “Étrange! Dans le quatrain funèbre qu'il composa dans son exil, il passe sous silence ses oeuvres sérieuses.” Rambsy (2005), 372 asserts that “the authority of the epitaph forces us to reconsider the importance or relative significance of Ovid's works.”

Metamorphoses, as his lasting legacy.⁵⁷ In the line immediately following, Ovid writes, “I perished because of my talent,” (*ingenio perii...meo*). This use of *perii* implies his exilic death, as well as his physical death, since his *ingenium* led to his exile.⁵⁸ This also seems to be a redrafting of a line in *Tr.* 2:

ingenio perii qui miser ipse meo (Tr. 2.2)

[I who perished because of my talent]

This line refers to the exilic death brought about by his poetry.⁵⁹ Thus, the use of *perii* in the context of an epitaph implies both the physical death and exilic death of the poet and thus includes the exile poems on the monument. Ovid's focus on his role as a love elegist in his epitaph is striking. Ingleheart compares Ovid's epitaph with those which Tibullus and Propertius composed for themselves and observes that neither of the earlier epitaphs record “the poet's chief claim to fame: that is, as a love elegist.”⁶⁰ This focus on his role as a love elegist has political implications since it reminds us that his love poems led to his exile. Ingleheart suggests that Ovid's epitaph “operates as an implicit defense of the

⁵⁷See Ingleheart (2015), 293-4 with note 45 for further analysis on Ovid's self-description as *lusor* and its connections to the *Ars Amatoria*.

⁵⁸Ovid refers to two crimes which brought him to ruin, a poem and a mistake. See *Tr.* 2.207, “perdiderint cum me duo crimina, carmen et error.” About the *error*, Ovid writes that he must remain silent. The *carmen*, however, was the *Ars Amatoria* in which he was a “teacher of obscene adultery” (*obsceni doctor adulterii*), *Tr.* 2.212.

⁵⁹Ingleheart (2015) notes that *Tr.* 2.2 refers to the “metaphorical death of Ovid's exile” while *Tr.* 3.3.74 refers “both to Ovid's poetic downfall, and also his literal death,” (294).

⁶⁰Ingleheart (2015), 293. See Tibullus 1.3.54-6 and Propertius 2.13.35-6.

Ars amatoria, implying that Augustus lacked a sense of proportion in punishing Ovid for writing what was merely playful poetry of love.”⁶¹ This monument, thus, stands as both a reminder and a warning. It reminds the passerby of the name of the poet and that the poet once existed and simultaneously reminds the passerby that he himself is mortal and subject to the power of the *princeps*.

Varro's definition of *monumentum* highlights the connection between the word *monumentum* and the word *monere*, “to remind” or “to warn,” and describes how *monumenta* in burial places perform both functions:

ab eodem Monere, quod is qui monet, proinde ac sit memoria; sic Monumenta quae in sepulcris, et ideo secundum viam, quo praetereuntis admoneant et se fuisse et illos esse mortalis. (Varro *De lingua latina* 6.49)

[From the same word comes *monere*, to remind, since he who reminds is just like memory; thus *monimenta (sic)*, memorials, which are in burial places, and therefore are beside the road, where they might remind those passing back that they themselves existed and that those passing by are mortal.]

Mary Jaeger points out that in Varro's definition, *monumenta* occupy a “middle ground.”⁶² Thus *monumenta* “remind people here and now of events and persons that are

⁶¹Ingleheart (2015), 294. Ingleheart approaches Ovid's epitaph as a political tool used “as a means of securing immortality over the massive self-aggrandizing tombs of rulers,” 287.

⁶² Jaeger (1997), 16-18.

remote in space and time.”⁶³ This analysis of the function of *monumenta*, as reminders of the past and warnings to the present, can be useful for studying Ovid's epitaph.

In the case of the funerary monument, the poet lives on because his monument reminds the passerby who reads it that Ovid once lived. Yet it also warns the traveler as he views the *monumentum* that he himself is mortal. The motif of poetic immortality underlies the epitaph, especially since Ovid stresses that the passerby will *read* the inscription. In *Tr.* 3.3.71 he uses *legat* which, as we have seen, recalls the end of the *Metamorphoses* and his claim that he will be read and live on through his fame. In addition, *legat* also recalls the opening lines of the *Ars amatoria*:

Siquis in hoc artem populo non novit amandi,
hoc legat et lecto carmine doctus amet. (*Ars.* 1.1-2)

[If anyone in this population does not know the art of love,
let him read this and having learned by reading this poem, let him love.]

This echo of the *Ars amatoria* in addition to the epitaph's focus on the poet as a love elegist, warns the passerby of the consequences of crossing the *princeps*. It is also important to note that the epitaph specifies the passerby as a lover (*quisquis amasti*). As Herescu points out, this phrase incorporates all of humanity as being on Ovid's side and

⁶³Jaeger (1997), 16.

against Augustus's attempt to control love through anti-adultery legislation.⁶⁴ Ingleheart suggests also that “the passer-by on his way to or from Rome is a lover precisely because he has read Ovid's *Ars amatoria* and taken its advice.”⁶⁵ Thus, this *monumentum* stands between the past and present, looking forward to posterity and inciting reflection by those who read it. The message it sends to posterity is to remember the poet and to beware of overstepping the boundaries of the *princeps*.

For a poet in exile, removed from the center of the empire, fear of being forgotten increases. The worry stems not just from fear of posterity forgetting the poet. In exile, Ovid also adds worry that those in Rome will not remember his name. This fear manifests itself in the *Tristia* from the first poem:

siquis, ut in populo, nostri non inmemor illic (Tr: 1.1.17)

[If there is anyone, in the throng, who has not forgotten me there]

The *poeta relegatus* is concerned with being remembered not only throughout time, but across space as well. The Roman empire stretches across vast lands, and Ovid depicts himself as living at the farthest reaches of it. His poetry from exile, unlike his earlier poetry, must reach across vast distances to reach its audience in Rome. Ovid often alludes

⁶⁴Herescu (1958), 440 writes “But who therefore has never loved in his life? Thus the poet put the whole world on his side: against Augustus, who had condemned him, humanity would absolve him” (Mais qui donc n'a jamais aimé dans sa vie? Ainsi, le poète mettait tout le monde de son côté: contre Auguste, qui l'avait condamné, l'humanité entière allait l'absoudre).

⁶⁵Ingleheart (2015), 295.

to his predecessors and to his own earlier poetry in order to emphasize that this poetry is different from previous poetry. This poetry transcends time as well as space.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

The *Tristia* represent a rethinking of poetic and exilic motifs. Ovid and his predecessors had considered the duration of their poetry and the fame which it could confer onto the poet. Yet, Ovid experienced a form of living death as a result of his writings, and he therefore uses the *Tristia* to reconsider the reason for writing poetry and to attempt to keep his memory alive in Rome. The *Tristia* are a form of resistance to Augustus who relegated him to the farthest regions of the empire. Augustus can prevent Ovid from returning to the city of Rome, but Ovid can return through his poetry. His poetry speaks for him, defending him and bringing his name to Rome, and is vehicle for communication between the poet and his audience. Like funerary monuments, poetry can speak across time and space, reminding and warning the reader of his own mortality.

Augustus may have the power to relegate Ovid to the ends of the earth, but Ovid is still a poet and he responds by continuing to write home. His frequent echoes and adaptations of his earlier writings and the writings of his predecessors represent a maintenance poetic power and a resistance to the power of Augustus. The *Tristia* should not be dismissed as a reflection of Ovid's poetic decline, but rather a poetic resistance to the power of the *princeps*.

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