

WAR OF THE WORDS:
AUTHOR ASSERTION AND READER RESPONSE IN OVID

by

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Abstract

The focus of this paper is the relationship between Ovid and his readers wherein each side vies for supremacy as the arbiter of the text and the chief interpreter of textual meaning. Through various rhetorical devices, Ovid exercises a type of control upon his readers, thus asserting primacy as the writer of the text. On the other hand, if the reader claims hermeneutical power, the result is a clash between author and reader; one notable instance of this is found in Augustus as reader of Ovid. This paper explores the typically Ovidian modes of reader control, and also presents thoughts regarding the effects of a non-compliant readership.

I. Introduction: The Duality of the Word

“I didn't know what was under the tape.”

...And he thought: *Or did I know? Who made this picture, me or the witch? Who formed it? How? Do I really want her dead? No! And yet...*

(Ray Bradbury, “The Illustrated Man”)

In his celebrated short story “The Illustrated Man,” science fiction author Ray Bradbury describes one man’s visit to a backwoods tattoo parlor, and the self-fulfilling prophecy that arises from it. At the hands of the tattoo artist—a peculiar old woman—the protagonist is metamorphosed into “the Illustrated Man,” a spectacle of color and design. Though the deft needles work their magic on most of the man’s body, there is a conspicuous absence of illustration on part of his skin. The old woman tells the man that pictures will fill the void after a time, pictures that will take shape according to a creative force within him. Tragically, her words come true: images reveal themselves, but take on forms of depravity and violence. The Illustrated Man comes to think of the tattoo artist as a witch, since he cannot conceive that anyone else could envision the future so clearly. One thing leads to another and eventually the Illustrated Man is driven to murder his wife: just as the tattoo image predicted. Bradbury leaves the reader wondering who ultimately was responsible for the killing: was it the man himself, who choked his wife to death in an act of frustration, or the old woman, who in essence determined the man’s actions by means of a self-fulfilling prophecy?

The premise implied in the “Illustrated” scenario is that through the fashioning of a mimetic product the artist necessarily leaves his or her mark, so to speak, upon the beholder, and that this “mark” elicits a certain action or reaction from that beholder. This is analogous to a salient, underlying point in the analysis of literature as a whole, namely that there is a dual presence of artist and viewer, writer and reader, and that through the creative process the former can impose certain demands upon the latter. The end result is that the viewer/reader may yield to

the influence of the artist/writer and consequently pursue a specific course of action. In the case of the Bradbury story, the (tattoo) artist literally imprints the subject with a set of images—images that, although incredibly dynamic, are lacking in significant meaning until they are actualized into a narrative by the Illustrated Man (who thus becomes both viewer and doer), reaching their full potential by some undefined generative force. And this force is not to the advantage of the one who (unconsciously) exerts it. Indeed, “The Illustrated Man” projects a tragic manipulation of the subject, culminating in his complete destruction. Extension of the “artist intention” analogy to the function of literature gives rise to a fundamental question: just how far does the influence of the creator have to extend? Must the viewer (or, in a literary sense, the reader) always be manipulated in such a drastic way? If not, then it must be asked to what extent the viewer has control over his reception of the images and the consequences that ensue from this reception.

In this paper, I aim to look at these questions in regard to Ovid and the impressions he leaves upon his readership. As I shall argue, the phenomenon of competitive interaction between writer and reader manifests itself in the Ovidian corpus as a constant tension, a fascinating duel between the two elements—a duel in which, as I shall show, ultimately the writer walks away victorious. I shall explore selected instances which highlight Ovid's fascination with the spectrum of writer-reader relationships. By turning to several *exempla* which span the generic and temporal gamut of Ovidian literature, I intend to establish the trend of author primacy projected in various modes. An exhaustive catalog of each and every instance of literary manipulation would be well beyond the scope of this paper; thus, I wish to clarify that my aim is to demonstrate the above tendencies rather than to generate a complete concordance of their frequency and occurrences.

After having demonstrated trends of authorial assertion, I shall illustrate some of the effects stemming from such manipulation. As the effects of such assertion manifest themselves, the readers find that they already have been exploited or deceived by Ovid. I shall demonstrate how Ovid directs the response of his readers so that he might eventually (and inevitably) have a laugh or two at their expense, but also (and more importantly) underscores his reputation for inventive literary genius.

At this point, I will turn my attention to a notable instance of a reader's resistance to an author's attempt at self-promotion. As detailed in the post-exilic correspondence, Ovid met with apparent opposition in the person of Augustus. An underlying and yet insistent motif in the letters from exile is that Augustus adopted a much different reading of Ovid's works from that which Ovid intended. I will demonstrate that there is a fundamental complaint that Ovid levels against his post-exilic construct of Augustus (as outlined particularly in the *Tristia*). This protest is aimed against a situation that Ovid views as particularly problematic, namely, the emergence of political leader as self-appointed literary critic. As Ovid views the situation, Augustus has allotted power to himself, not only in the political arena but also the literary. Ovid considers this a misappropriation of hermeneutic power, an attempt by a political figure to generate a final, canonical interpretation for a given text and to pass subsequent approval or censure over the text. To Ovid, this is tantamount to placing an individual reader not only above all other readers but even above the author himself in the hermeneutical hierarchy, merely because of a political title. And though this is not a new topic, it is nevertheless of key importance in the development of my next point. Based on instances particularly from the *Tristia*, I will argue that the Ovidian-constructed state literary critic—and literary censor—provokes in Ovid a resistance to a nationalistic variant of so-called reader-response theory, which subscribes to the notion that the

reader is more important than the author or text, but that in fact it is the reader who defines the text.¹ I shall proceed to illustrate how Augustus' "definitive" reading of Ovid (as projected by Ovid) indeed differs from the author's intended response. Finally, I shall enumerate various ways in which this lack of conformity between writer intention and reader response is problematic for Ovid on an ideological as well as purely practical level.

II. Preliminary remarks: reader response and author intention

Reader response and the converse consideration of authorial intention have long been popular topics in literary criticism, but have recently begun to receive greater attention in Classical studies.² As with visual art or any other communicative medium, literature both in its inception and its reception depends upon a duality of persons, since effective communication implies both a giving and a receiving. But, just as the writer initiates the creative process, he also has the power to shape a text's reception. Whether he chooses to address specific readers by name or to enumerate requisite qualities for acceptable readers, the author may set out both to draw in the readers he wants and to exclude those he doesn't; if an unintended reader does thumb through the text, he becomes essentially an interloper who is guilty of reading words intended for someone else's eyes, words whose meaning does not pertain to him and that he does not fully understand.

Of course, authors do not always go to such great lengths to influence the process of reception. Vague phraseology, for example, can contribute to multiple hermeneutic possibilities,

¹ *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature* (Guerin et al.), 357. Also see Stanley Fish's *Is There a Text in This Class?* for further reading on the topic of reader response criticism.

² See Gian Biagio Conte (*Genres and Readers*) on reader response in multiple authors and genres. For a detailed treatment of specifically Ovidian audience function, see Stephen Wheeler's *A Discourse of Wonders*, a multifaceted analysis of the reader of the *Metamorphoses*.

thus obfuscating any one primary, indisputable message.³ This of course implies that an author may intend that a certain, defined meaning be attached to the text in the first place. Whether this is invariably the case among authors is not my concern; what I do suggest is that this is the case with Ovid. That Ovid intended that a certain meaning be attached to his writing is attested in his lament in the *Tristia* over an “unfair judgment” passed on his verse by Augustus:

a, ferus et nobis crudelior omnibus hostis,
delicias legit qui tibi cumque meas,
carmina ne nostris quae te uenerantia libris
iudicio possint candidiore legi.

Oh, savage and crueler enemy to me than all is the one who read to you my fancies so that any verses honoring you in my books could not be able to be read with a more honest judgment. (*Tr.* 2.77-80)

His chief complaint, then, is that a “*iudicium candidius*” is not afforded him. At the same time there is an assumption that there may indeed be more than one possible interpretation of a text, and that problems ensue when writer and reader communicate at cross-purposes; an intermediary can also distort authorial intent, since a third party implies an additional textual filter and a less direct conveyance of information. Conceding “too much” power to the reader (or in a theatrical sense, the spectator) has the potential to annihilate art, Ovid says in essence at a later point in *Tristia* 2. Having already reminded the accuser that the *Ars* was addressed to men and to prostitutes,⁴ Ovid reduces *ad absurdum* the charge that his *carmina* can have a corrupting or even a merely empowering influence on respectable Roman *matronae*:

‘at matrona potest alienis artibus uti,
quoque trahat, quamuis non doceatur, habet.’
nil igitur matrona legat, quia carmine ab omni
ad delinquendum doctior esse potest.

³ For a contemporary analysis of (and critical response to) extreme variants of “reader reception” theory that diminish or ignore textual importance in favor of the reader, see *The Author’s Intention* (ed. Mitscherling, DiTommaso, and Nayed).

⁴ *Ars* 1.31ff., reiterated in *Tr.* 2.247-250.

“But a matron can use another’s arts, and she has means from which she might draw out, though it is not taught.” Then let a matron read nothing, for from every song she can become more knowledgeable in wrongdoing. (2.253-256)

If the *Ars Amatoria* has “corrupted” any *matronae*, it is because authorial intention has been ignored, if we are to believe Ovid. Moreover, almost any thing or place can be said to be “corrupting”—again, if the authorially-intended purpose is overlooked or obscured:

‘at quasdam uitio.’ quicumque hoc concipit, errat,
et nimium scriptis arrogat ille meis.
ut tamen hoc fatear, ludi quoque semina praebent
nequitiae: tolli tota theatra iube:
peccandi causam multis quam saepe dederunt,
Martia cum durum sternit harena solum.
tollatur Circus; non tuta licentia Circi est:
hic sedet ignoto iuncta puella uiro.
cum quaedam spatientur in hoc, ut amator eodem
conueniat, quare porticus ulla patet?
quis locus est templis augustior? Haec quoque uitet,
in culpam siqua est ingeniosa suam.

“But I debase certain women.” Whoever believes this is in error, and attributes too much to my writing. Even if I admit this, the games, too, furnish seeds of depravity: order all the theaters to be abolished! The arena of Mars, when it covers the hard ground, how often has given to many an occasion for sinning. Let the Circus be abolished! The license of the Circus is not safe: here a girl sits close to a man she doesn’t know. Since certain women stroll about in this place, that a lover might meet them there, why is any colonnade open? What place is more dignified than the temples? But let her avoid these, too, if there is any innate inclination to fault in her. (*Tr.* 2.277-288)

Thus Ovid clearly projects his disapproval of divorcing the writer’s purpose from literary reception, since authorial intention is discernable from context if it is not stated outright.⁵

However, as I shall discuss later in this paper, Ovid does not overlook or ignore the readers’ presence. On the contrary, he revels in it, seizing it as an opportunity both to display to a captive audience his writerly pyrotechnics and to amuse himself as he witnesses their reactions.

⁵ Moreover, Ovid’s use of *errat* at line 277 points an accusatory finger at those who have had a hand in his exile. Ovid pinpoints the dual causes of *carmen* and *error* as impetus for his relegation; here, the “error” is not his own, but that of whoever imputes “too much” power to the *Ars*.

Ovid wants an audience, but only insofar as it magnifies him. For Ovid, the purpose of a readership is to underscore his own supremacy in the hierarchy of hermeneutics.

In his own words Ovid himself, as quoted above and elsewhere, shows himself to be opposed to the school of thought that elevates the role of the reader over that of the writer in determining meaning in a text. This is to be expected, as Ovid defines himself as an author, and one who concedes particular importance to himself. Contra the viewpoint expressed both by the “New Critics” (who elevate text above reader or writer) and the extreme reader-reception theorists (for whom, as I have said, the reader is the default reference point), literary critic Eric Hirsch argues that not only is objective authorial intention a reality, it is also demonstrable and intelligible. The author constructs a text, and then the reader constructs an interpretation, says Hirsch, giving a nod of recognition to all of the elements of the writing/reading process. Without either human factor, the text is lacking.⁶

And so it seems that in order to approach a text with a sense of critical integrity, we must allow both reader reception and authorial intention to play a part. Complete endorsement of the so-called “New Criticism” implies a unidimensionality of text and results in estrangement of text from its origin. On the other hand, as the indeed the New Critics inadvertently remind us, a text can never fully unfold its meaning (in the Hirschian, authorially-defined sense) without a reader to realize its (author-intended) purpose. Literature, then, implies a bipartite process of creative inspiration and subsequent reception. This last statement of mine consequently stands in opposition to extreme New Criticism, which emphasizes the text alone, saying that author

⁶ Hirsch distinguishes between “meaning” (the “essence” of the text—synonymous with authorial intention) and “significance” (the attributes of the text that change accordingly with various contexts and interpreters), acknowledging the importance of both (Mitscherling, *The Author’s Intention*, 74).

intention, even if knowable, is irrelevant,⁷ and denying the possibility of a “correct” reading of a text.⁸

With this in mind, I will approach the issue of reader response relying on a few assumptions on the significance of text. Firstly, I will emphasize the semiotic nature of textual function; text is a form of communication, a medium by which information is conveyed. My second point—emerging as a consequence of the first—is that there is a hermeneutical duality of text; realizing that since text is a form of communication and that a message is conveyed, there is an underlying implication of both an agent of transmission and an agent of reception. Lastly, since two human elements are requisite for communication, there is necessarily a certain amount of bias that goes hand in hand with textual transmission.

Twentieth-century philosopher Josef Pieper says that the two elements of description of a phenomenon and transmission to an audience are so closely linked that one cannot exist without the other, bound up as they both are in language, which presupposes both a transmitter and a receiver.⁹ In regard to construction and analyses of texts, I am also in agreement with Pieper’s fellow philosopher Paul Ricoeur. Positing that the intended aim of mimesis (an artistic imitation of an action¹⁰) cannot be achieved solely by textual genesis, Ricoeur insists that a reader is needed to actualize the signification process within a given text.¹¹

Consequently, given the necessity within a literary experience of a duality of persons, no textual reception is neutral, no hermeneutic unbiased. In this regard, I agree with Charles

⁷ Martindale: “[W]e cannot get back to any originary meaning wholly free of subsequent accretions.” (*Redeeming the Text*, 7)

⁸ Martindale: “There is no Archimedean point from which we can arrive at a final, correct meaning for any text.” (*Redeeming the Text*, 4)

⁹ Pieper, *Abuse of Language, Abuse of Power*, 16.

¹⁰ Simms, *Paul Ricoeur*, 62. Cf. Aristotle, *Poetics* 4.

¹¹“Mimesis, we recall, as an activity, the mimetic activity, does not reach its intended term through the dynamism of the poetic text alone. It also requires a spectator or reader.” (Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. i, 46.)

Martindale and other reader-response proponents, but only up to a point. I am in accord with Martindale's insistence upon the reader's experience as shaping his reading.¹² However, the point of my divergence from Martindale is at the implicational level: namely, at the determining of consequences of reader-bias. In vehement opposition to what he calls "Old Historicism," Martindale not only does not wish to interpret literature in its original context but speculates that to do so is in fact impossible for us, steeped as we are in our own conventions.¹³ Contra Martindale, I say that though a reader views the world through his own glasses, and thus inevitably distorts to some extent the intention of the author, nevertheless all is not lost for the author as far as conveying a desired message. In fact, the egocentric reader can be extremely desirable to a skilled author who is able to use the reader's personal experiences and biases to underscore authorial control. Martindale overlooks this phenomenon of guided reception, whereby the writer aims to steer the reader's response to correspond with authorial intention. Ovid gives evidence of leading the reader to a specific conclusion or sentiment in many instances, a number of which I will detail in the next section of this paper.

To recapitulate, the basis of my methodology of textual treatment is as follows: 1) text is a form of communication, and 2) as such it depends on both transmitters and receivers, and 3) consequently no text is purely neutral, since text implies human creators and recipients who carry bias-engendering baggage; this in turn can be to the author's advantage in directing the first-time reader to a specific, desired response.

III. Directed reception: tools of the trade

¹² "Certainly we all approach the readings of texts with the baggage of our values and our experience, with certain categories, assumptions, prejudices, and fore-understandings...To have such baggage is what it is to be a human being in history..." (Martindale, *Redeeming the Text*, 47)

¹³ Martindale, *Redeeming the Text*, 62ff.

The truly masterful writer is perhaps the one most subtle in assuming direct control over his readers, who in fact may have no knowledge that they are being put through an emotional and psychological filter. Ovid steers the reader in a pre-determined direction through the use of vagueness, distortion, selective transmission, or other conflation of facts on both the textual and metatextual levels. Moreover, it is a brand of confusion that the reader is powerless to avoid. I say that the confusion cannot be avoided because such textual inconsistencies by necessity are not evident straight away. As limited readers, if we eventually are confronted with evidence that our previously-held assumptions were based on half-truths or outright deceits that the text presented as factual, we may well feel cheated. The shocking epiphany that the author lacks credibility makes us wonder why we keep on reading something that constantly redefines itself and renders us cynical. Even if we take pleasure in such an awakening to the truth, we are still beholden to the author, who chooses what bits of reality he wants to be distilled for us. It is my contention that this evident lack of definition is not—nor can it be—a means whereby the reader rather than the writer gains the upper hand.

Rather than existing as a sort of hermeneutical *smörgåsbord* from which the reader is at liberty to choose any or all offerings as he wishes, the bulk of Ovidian literature is instead characterized by the author's self-proclaimed liberty to choose what dispositions are to be seen in a reader. Typically, Ovid delineates this restriction of the reader proemically. For example, he identifies the intended audience of the *Ars Amatoria* in its very first couplet:

si quis in hoc artem populo non nouit amandi,
hoc legat et lecto carmine doctus amet.

If anyone doesn't know the art of loving, let him read this, and, instructed by this poem having been read, let him love. (*Ars* 1.1-2)

Likewise for the *Remedia Amoris*:

si quis amat quod amare iuuat, feliciter ardens
gaudeat et uento nauiget ille suo.
at si quis male fert indignae regna puellae,
ne pereat, nostrae sentiat artis opem.
cur aliquis laqueo collum nodatus amator
a trabe sublimi triste pependit onus?
cur aliquis rigido fodit sua pectora ferro?
invidiam caedis pacis amator habes.

If anyone loves what it is pleasant to love, may he, happily ardent, rejoice, and may he sail in a favorable wind. But if anyone with difficulty bears the domination of an unworthy girl, may he not perish. Let him perceive the aid of my poem. Why should any lover, having knotted his neck up with a noose, hang himself, like some sad weight, from a high beam? Why should anyone pierce his heart with a hard sword? Lover of peace, you possess hatred of violence. (*Rem. Am.* 13-20)

Regardless of the sentiments with which a particular reader might approach these works, Ovid clearly states his intention to address only a specific type of reader. If the actual reader does not meet the intended reader criteria but still chooses to pick up these volumes and read them, the implication is that such a reader won't be reading as one of the *élite* addressees singled out by Ovid.

Having culled his intended reader from the crowd, Ovid continues to reaffirm his own position as figure of authority (in every sense). What emerges is a continually reinforced sublimation of the reader's dispositions, in tandem with a carefully directed reception of the text according to an objective authorial intention. The boldly heterogeneous subject matter, stylistic treatment, and generic transcendence and exploration enable the author to enshroud his meaning in a veil of confusion; this is exactly what Ovid does, inducing bewilderment with a host of diverse tactics. I will cite a number of instances in which this studied elusiveness occurs, adding my commentary as I believe necessity dictates. And though the channels of reader sublimation are nearly limitless, I will focus my attention upon the following modes of mystification: 1) directed involvement of the second person; 2) thwarting of generic expectations; 3) selective

portrayal of reality through flattery and deceit; 4) authorial/narratorial conflation; 5) suspension of facts; 6) challenge of reader self-perception; and 7) appeal to external authorities.

Your Personal Invitation: Ovid's Use of the Second Person

Stephen Wheeler devotes much attention to what he calls the “generalizing second person” (i.e., direct address to the hypothetical audience/reader) specifically within the *Metamorphoses*. There are nearly fifty examples of the generalizing second person within the primary and embedded narrative.¹⁴ Considering the sheer vastness of scope, it seems appropriate to devote some attention to this device.

Within the context of epic poetry, direct address to a hypothetical reader is, as Wheeler is quick to point out, unusual. Comparing Ovid with several of his literary predecessors including Apollonius Rhodius, Vergil, and Homer, Wheeler demonstrates that not only the extent but also the role of the generalizing second person is revolutionary. Wheeler says that like his forerunners, Ovid uses second person to intensify perception of an event, to compare between appearances and reality, to emphasize the role of audience, or to align the audience's viewpoint to that of a specific character.¹⁵ However, he also uses this device to a new end, namely that of imputing a certain judgment or interpretation to the hypothetical listener. It is specifically this projection of judgment upon the second person—the strongest instance of boxing him in—which I intend to explore.

The first example I wish to ponder is the Marsyas episode in *Met.* 6. As Anderson says in his commentary on this incident, Ovid gives very little background information to the reader, choosing instead to detail a vivid account of the metamorphosis.¹⁶ Finding a set of pipes

¹⁴ Wheeler, *A Discourse of Wonders*, 151.

¹⁵ In *A Discourse of Wonders* (150ff.), Wheeler gives excellent examples and exegeses of each of these variants.

¹⁶ Anderson, *Ovid's Metamorphoses 6-10*, 201.

discarded by Minerva because they distorted her face when she played them (*Ars* 3.505), the satyr Marsyas challenges Apollo to a musical contest in which the god emerges the victor. According to Anderson, Apollodorus 1.4.2 and Hyginus 165 attribute Apollo's victory to his ability to play an upside down lyre, a feat that Marsyas can't equal with inverted pipes. By prior agreement, the winner could choose whatever punishment for the loser; Apollo decides to flay Marsyas alive. Though the story itself is one of the shortest of the entire epic (the complete Marsyas episode spans a mere 19 lines: 6.382-400), nevertheless Ovid devotes the bulk of the text (all but the first three lines) to the portrayal of the flaying and the metamorphosis of the mourners' tears into a river. By far the most visually-engaging details occur in the lines below, describing the gruesome penalty:

Clamanti cutis est summos direpta per artus,
nec quicquam nisi vulnus erat; cruor undique manat,
detectique patent nervi, trepidaeque sine ulla
pelle micant venae; salientia viscera possis
et perlucentes numerare in pectore fibras.

The skin of the one crying out is torn to pieces throughout his limbs, and there was nothing in him that wasn't a wound. Blood drips everywhere; the exposed tendons are in full view, the quivering veins gleam without any skin over them. You would be able to count the throbbing organs and glimmering fibers in his chest. (*Met.* 6.387-391)

Immediately following the graphic litany of wounds, Ovid seizes the opportunity to interpolate the reader in the midst of the violence. Subtly, through inviting the reader, as it were, to gape at the open wound that is Marsyas, Ovid accomplishes a dual purpose. Firstly, the reader is removed from the relative safety of distance and repositioned in close proximity to the events and characters; he is forced literally to look at the events as if they were unfolding in front of

him, as if he were participating in them. It is the same visual metamorphosis which occurs so many times in the *Metamorphoses*, and always with devastating consequences.¹⁷

And even more than this, Ovid has effectively asked the reader to call witness to the truth of his description—in all its graphic details—when the reader has not actually *seen* Marsyas at all. It is Ovid coaxing the reader: “Take my word for it; if you were there, you would certainly attest to my descriptions down to the last detail.” This is the same type of device that Wheeler says Ovid uses in the metamorphosis of Ino’s companions.

nam quae praecipue fuerat pia, ‘persequar’ inquit
‘in freta reginam’, saltusque datura moveri
haud usquam potuit scopuloque adfixa cohaesit;
altera dum solito temptat plangore ferire
pectora, temptatos sensit riguisse lacertos;
illa, manus ut forte tetenderat in maris undas,
saxea facta manus in easdem porrigit undas;
huius, ut arreptum laniabat vertice crinem,
duratos subito digitos in crine **videres**:
quo quaeque in gestu deprensa est, haesit in illo.

For the one who had been especially pious said, “I will follow my queen into the sea,” and as she was about to leap she could hardly be moved anywhere, and froze, stuck to a rock; another, as she tried to beat her breast in customary mourning, realized that having attempted this her arms had stiffened; one, as by chance she had stretched her hands into the sea’s waves, having turned into rock reached out her hands into the same waves; as one was tearing the hair seized from her head, you would see that her fingers suddenly had hardened in her hair: in whatever gesture any one of them was caught, she froze in it. (4.551-560) (my emphasis)

Again, as in the Marsyas episode, Ovid addresses his reader directly, in order to establish more firmly the veracity of his narrative. Wheeler asserts that the audience’s hypothetical presence presumed by the narrator helps lend credence to the poetic fantasy-aetiology (152). This is, of

¹⁷ Compare with the respective fates of Actaeon (*Met.* 3.138-252) and Tereus (*Met.* 6.412-674), both of whom find themselves in threatening situations because they each see something which, in some way, is forbidden to them to see. The latter is enflamed with lust as he gazes at Philomela. The very sight of Philomela, whose beauty and mode of dress make her enticing, is disastrous for Tereus, who is depicted as lecherous by nature, and subsequently for his entire family. Actaeon, whom Diana spitefully turns into a deer after, is guilty of nothing more than accidentally catching sight of the goddess while she was bathing.

course, despite the fact that the reader is aware that the aetiology is fictional. With Marsyas, as Andrew Feldherr is quick to point out, we as readers are torn between two contradictory judgments; in essence, we are compelled to categorize the satyr-flaying as either “pastoral lament or cautionary tale.”¹⁸

Another comparable incident (also from the *Metamorphoses*) is the ecphrasis on Arachne’s tapestry. As evidence of her quasi-divine skill at the loom, Arachne sets out to create woven images so lifelike that, even if just for a moment, an admiring onlooker would think that they were real:

Maeonis elusam designat imagine tauri
Europam: verum taurum, freta vera **putares.**

The Maeonian fashioned Europa as deceived by the image of a bull: you would think it a real bull; you would think the waves real. (6.103-4) (my emphasis)

In actuality, though, the reader is well aware that the bull isn’t real. In fact, the depiction of the bull (as well as that of the sea) is a “false image” for two reasons. Firstly and most obviously, it is a composite of threads on a tapestry, not a living, breathing bull or a pounding surf that Arachne crafts via Ovid. But, as is suggestive of the multi-layered nature of weaving itself, there is an additional stratum embedded within the narrative: that of intertextuality. The reader who has continued through the text from the beginning knows very well that the “bull” is a false image of a false image; that is, the tapestry depicts a fraudulent bull so lifelike that Europa, seeing it, had no reason to question its taurine appearances. It is not until the god in bull’s clothing seizes the opportune moment to rape her that Europa realizes her mistake. There is nothing “real” about this bull, either as depicted on the tapestry or as seen by Europa. Ovid in a sense sets us up to fall into the same trap as Europa did.

¹⁸ Feldherr, “Flaying the Other,” *Arethusa* 37.1, 83.

While Apollo is busy flaying, Ovid is busy playing—upon the senses and emotions of the reader-audience. Throughout the Marsyas narrative, Ovid in fact is simply giving an encore performance featuring the same type of reader manipulation as was evident at the outset of the Arachne tale:

...tantus decor adfuit arti,
sive rudem primos lanam glomerabat in orbes,
seu digitis subigebat opus repetitaque longo
vellera molliabat nebulas aequantia tractu,
sive levi teretem versabat pollice fusum,
seu pingebat acu; **scires a Pallade doctam.**

There was such great beauty to her art, whether she wound the raw wool into new balls, or she finished off her work with her fingers and softened the wool rivaling clouds as it was caught up again in a sweeping gesture, or twisted the smooth spindle with a nimble thumb, or embellished with a needle; **you would know that she had been taught by Pallas.** (*Met.* 6.18-23) (my emphasis)

And yet, as Patricia Johnson suggests, “taught by Pallas” is exactly what Arachne is not. Though her skill at the loom is beyond compare (indeed, it surpasses Minerva’s), Arachne’s art cannot be viewed as the product of Minervan influence. The violently graphic rape montage is comprised of images that are so realistic in every aspect (including the horror of the virginal victims) that it completely undermines the goddess’ existence as both guardian of maidens and loyal daughter of Zeus.¹⁹ The verisimilitude of Arachne’s tapestry is inconsistent with Minerva’s very identity; yet the narrator insists upon the pedagogical influence of the goddess. In these passages, we may well imagine Ovid as the puppet-master, pulling strings to control the (re)actions of the reader-puppet. Such is his masterful application of irony.

Didactic or Elegiac: Generic Branding

The author’s dominance over the reader as found in the device of generalizing second-person extends its sphere of influence even outside of Ovid’s epic. Adopting the subject matter

¹⁹ Johnson, *Ovid Before Exile: Art and Punishment in the Metamorphoses*, 87.

and metrical characteristics of elegy, Ovid adds a further layer—that of didacticism—and generates a completely new literature in the *Ars Amatoria*. G.B. Conte suggests that clues to a poem’s generic classification are found in the proem or at least early on in the body of the text: “The opening is the place where all the signals point to the originality of the work or to its position within literary production.”²⁰ With this in mind, we are surprised that in the *Ars Amatoria* Ovid begins not by professing to adhere to blueprints of one specific genre (elegy), but, as we shall see, by communicating to the reader that the *Ars* is something of elegy and something of not-elegy. The result of Ovid’s coquettish skirting of generic lines is a further dashing of his readers’ expectations.

To be sure, the *Ars* has many of the hallmarks of elegy. Its theme is love, its meter elegiac distich. But there are some striking differences between the elegiac paradigm that the *Ars Amatoria* might have been and the genre-blending opus that it actually is. To begin with, the addressee is not the mistress (the elegiac *puella*): in the *Ars Amatoria*, Ovid, the self-styled *praeceptor amoris*, addresses a hypothetical reader in quite the same way as he does in the previously seen examples from the *Metamorphoses* (i.e., as to a general second-person audience rather than one specific addressee). The opening lines set the stage for authorial selection of a potential readership; I repeat the initial couplet which I have already invoked as exemplar:

Si quis in hoc artem populo non nouit amandi,
hoc legat et lecto carmine doctus amet.

If anyone in this people doesn’t know the art of loving, let him read this, and, instructed by this poem having been read, let him love. (*Ars* 1.1-2)

So the poem is meant for the would-be lover who needs a little advice. Once this fact of intended readership is established, Ovid proceeds straightaway to instruct his amatory disciple:

²⁰ Conte, *The Rhetoric of Imitation*, 76.

principio, quod amare uelis, reperire labora,
qui noua nunc primum miles in arma venis;
proximus huic labor est placitam exorare puellam;
tertius, ut longo tempore duret amor.
hic modus, haec nostro signabitur area curru,
haec erit admissa meta terenda rota.

As a start, labor to find what you want to love, you who now for the first time come as a soldier into new arms. The next task for you is to entreat the girl that pleased you. The third is to see to it that your love should last for a long time. This is the way, this is the course which will be marked out by my chariot: this is the allowed goalpost that will have to be attained by the wheel. (*Ars* 1.35-40)

Clearly this is not the standard form of direct address within elegy. Elegy as a genre is, of course, characterized in part by address directed toward a second person, largely in consequence of the first-person narration typical of the genre. However, what Ovid does with the *Ars Amatoria* is much the same as he does with the *Metamorphoses*²¹ in that he both expands the scope and alters the function of genre, transcending the expectations of the reader and fusing generic conventions. In other words, Ovid takes the reader by surprise as he conforms just enough to generic convention to seem orthodox, only to make his iconoclastic ingenuity all the more apparent by contrast.

But delving beyond non-standard address and other rhetorical issues leads to even further validation of the demonstrated trend of authorial supremacy. Aside from rhetorical structure, theme also plays a key role in establishing generic identity. But a revolutionary genre, undefined and unprecedented, is capable of guiding the reader down the same misty path of misrepresentation as the other modes of authorial control that we have examined earlier. A hybrid genre effects such a detour chiefly by the raising and subsequent thwarting of the reader's expectations. If generic treatment supposes certain conventions, then Ovid is an iconoclast. So

²¹ Farrell's "Dialogue of Genres in Ovid's Lovesong of Polyphemus (*Met.* 13.719-897)" (*American Journal of Philology* 113) looks at an additional piece of multi-generic text, but from the (primarily) epic exempla.

it is (as we have seen) with the *Ars Amatoria*. It is elegy. Elegy implies distichs and distraught lovers. But the *Ars* is something different, something new and unexpected. In the first chapter of her monograph on Ovid's love poetry, Barbara Weiden Boyd enumerates some of the features of elegy, including prevalence of *otium* over *negotium*, emphasis on love rather than politics, inversion of accepted social *mores*, and so forth.²² Though the *Ars* has the requisite features of elegy, it also possesses something more, most notably a layer of didacticism. The reader's "horizon of expectations" (or *Erwartungshorizont*, as termed by literary critic Hans Robert Jauss²³), if it were based upon typical existing elegy, would be eclipsed by Ovid's seamless fusion of two (in some ways opposing) genres. Boyd's evaluation of the *Amores* as a test of generic boundaries can be applied to the *Ars* and indeed to all of Ovid's elegy in that he "looks beyond elegy's limits and so invests the genre with a new sense of range and purpose."²⁴

An even more compelling example of genre exploration/expansion is the *Remedia Amoris*. All of the hallmarks of elegy that I have detailed above are present in the *Remedia*, along with a didactic layer similar to that of the *Ars*. Yet there is a striking difference between the *Remedia* and any other elegiac poem that had ever been written: the elegiac lover of the *Remedia* no longer wants to love. The reader, coming to the end of the proem, is aware that the *Remedia Amoris* defies elegiac convention and identity. Below are the opening couplets:

Legerat huius Amor titulum nomenque libelli:
 'bella mihi, uideo, bella parantur' ait.
 'Parce tuum uatem sceleris damnare, Cupido,
 tradita qui toties te duce signa tuli.

Love read the title and the name of this little book: "Wars, wars are prepared against me, I see!" he said. "Cupid, stop convicting of crime your bard, I who so many times have carried standards given with you as leader. (*Rem. Am.* 1-4)

²² Boyd, *Ovid's Literary Loves*, 7.

²³ Jauss, *Literaturgeschichte als Provokation der Literaturwissenschaft*.

²⁴ Boyd, *Ovid's Literary Loves*, 12.

Love/Cupid perceives something in the *libellus* that is inimical to him, but Ovid assures him that he of all people, with his elegiac track record, has always stood beside Love, and will continue to do so now:

saepe tepent alii iuuenes; ego semper amaui,
et si, quid faciam, nunc quoque, quaeris, amo.
quin etiam docui, qua possis arte parari,
et, quod nunc ratio est, impetus ante fuit.
nec te, blande puer, nec nostras prodimus artes,
nec noua praeteritum Musa retextit opus.

Often other youths are lukewarm; I have always loved, and if you ask what I am doing now also, I love. Rather—even more—I have taught by what art you [i.e., Love] are able to be obtained, and what now is reason before was passion. Neither you, gentle boy, nor my art do I betray, nor does a new muse re-weave my past work. (*Rem. Am.* 7-12)

Ovid vows neither to betray Cupid nor his *artes* (which I read as a reference to the volumes of the *Ars Amatoria*), but states that he now writes for a different reader: the thwarted (and apparently suicidal) lover. The new readership shouldn't be a problem, says Ovid; after all, Love is a lover of peace, and would not wish to be the cause of anyone's death:

si quis amat quod amare iuuat, feliciter ardens
gaudeat et uento nauiget ille suo.
at si quis male fert indignae regna puellae,
ne pereat, nostrae sentiat artis opem.
cur aliquis laqueo collum nodatus amator
a trabe sublimi triste pependit onus?
cur aliquis rigido fodit sua pectora ferro?
inuidiam caedis, pacis amator, habes.
qui, nisi desierit, misero periturus amore est,
desinat, et nulli funeris auctor eris.

If anyone loves because it is pleasant to love, burning ardently let him rejoice, and let him sail in his own breeze. But if anyone ill sustains the dominion of an unworthy girl, let him not perish; let him feel the help of my art. Why does any lover, having knotted his neck with a noose, hang his sorrowful burden from a high beam? Why does anyone stab his heart with a hard blade? You have a hatred for slaughter, lover of peace. Whoever will die from wretched love unless he ceases, let him cease; and you will not be the author of a funeral. (*Rem. Am.* 13-22)

This sounds plausible enough, unless the reader stops to consider how these themes are different from those of Ovid's earlier elegy, and indeed from any poet's elegy. Disappointment in love, cruel and aloof *puellae*, sadness, violence: all these are functions of elegy, which would not exist without them. If Ovid truly does write a how-to manual for falling out of love, not only does he directly contradict the tenets he enumerated in the *Ars* (which he says he won't do) but also confounds elegy. The *Remedia* either fails in its stated purpose or fails as elegy.

As is clear already within the first several lines, the *Remedia Amoris* incorporates elements of elegy, didacticism, and even satire, thus presenting a challenge to the reader even in formulating any expectation. Furthermore, the *Remedia* proves again and again that it cannot assist the languishing lover out of his plight; on the one hand, the *praeceptor amoris* suggests means of "curing" the lover of his affliction, while on the other hand these same suggestions are bound within the framework of elegy, the essence of which genre is being in love (though such necessarily entails misery of some sort).²⁵ The *Remedia Amoris* is a challenge to its own existence; it is elegy, but its subject matter—how to fall out of love—is at odds with the very essence of elegy: the miserable yet pleasurable plight of being a lover, *à la* Catullus' "odi et amo."²⁶

G.B. Conte says that classification according to genre has a semiotic aim: it functions as a kind of encoded directive to the reader. Genres, according to Conte, are strategies by which an addressee might be reached. Thus not only a receiver but also a response is an integral extension and logical conclusion of genre. Because of the partial/selective representation of reality projected by the *Remedia*, Conte goes so far as to say that the reader is "provoked" to reaction. This complements Hinds, who says that in Ovid there is an endless deferral of a precise generic

²⁵ Fulkerson, "Omnia Vincit Amor: Why the *Remedia* Fail." *Classical Quarterly*, 54(1), 212.

²⁶ Catullus 85.

classification and an “elusiveness of idiom.”²⁷ Mixed signals coalesce to elude a response that Ovid expects but the reader does not.

And so we see in the examples of the *Ars Amatoria* and the *Remedia Amoris* that both rhetorical features (such as generalized second-person address) and genre are masterfully wielded by Ovid in the battle for authorial primacy.

Masterful Manipulation: Flattery and Deceit

Employed in a different manner, the device of second person elevation serves to induce a partiality toward the writer-narrator. This may be accomplished by the use of flattery, which term I will apply to language that is insincerely laudatory with the aim of playing into the hands of the addressee, who is often in a position of authority or influence and is capable of effecting something that the speaker desires. Likewise such language tends to neglect, omit, distort, and/or filter reality as the flatterer deems necessary to suit the liking of the person flattered. The philosopher Josef Pieper characterizes flattery by its inherent ulterior motive. He goes so far as to say that the one who is flattered cannot be superior or even equal to the flatterer; to the contrary, he becomes a victim of manipulation, and perhaps even of domination. The words of the flatterer, rather than conveying a straightforward message, are an instrument of power wielded with the final purpose not of pleasing the subject but of gaining some favor for oneself.²⁸ Again, the hallmark of this kind of rhetoric is that the favor sought is sublimated, embedded within the words but not actually articulated.

I will confine my evaluation of flattery to instances in the *Metamorphoses*. I choose to do so because the flattery in the *Metamorphoses* very often is situated within the context of imbedded narration, which is limited to third-person narrative and therefore is not exemplified in

²⁷ Hinds, *The Metamorphosis of Persephone*, 133.

²⁸ As found passim in Pieper, *Abuse of Language, Abuse of Power*.

elegy.²⁹ The subtle complaisance found within the textual examples from the *Metamorphoses* is reinforced by a theme of concealment, which manifests itself, for example, through a distancing of the primary narrator. In the following examples culled from the *Metamorphoses*, the narrators are internal ones rather than the universal narrator of the epic.

One instance of this type of flattery is found in *Metamorphoses* 5 at the recounting of the rape of Proserpina. Told within the framework of the competition between the Muses and the Pierides, the incident is recounted by the muse Calliope to the audience of nymphs who will arbitrate the contest. In Calliope's rendition, the heart of the matter—the actual rape—retreats to the background, giving precedence to other, seemingly arbitrary, aspects of the story. However, as Andrew Zissos demonstrates,³⁰ the internal narrator's filtering of the myth, is both intentional and successful in its aim of highlighting the exploits of nymphs in order to curry favor with the nymph-judges. Thus on the level of function Cyane, who reproves Pluto, and Arethusa, who saves the world from angry Ceres, trump Proserpina as the central figures of the narrative. The overall message is that one must play to the crowd in order to secure victory.

In a similar vein, the Mercury-Argus incident in *Metamorphoses* 1 illustrates another type of wish fulfillment for the manipulative storyteller. The strategy lacks the flattering tone that characterizes Calliope's recounting, but involves both deceit and exercise of narratorial dominance. Launching into a tedious and meandering aetiology of the panpipes, Mercury succeeds in putting Argus to sleep long before the story is over.

Talia dicturus vidit Cyllenius omnes
succubuisse oculos adopertaque lumina somno;
supprimit extemplo vocem firmatque soporem

²⁹ This excludes the *Fasti*, to which I shall turn my attention in the section of this paper dealing with external authority.

³⁰ This is a recurring theme in Zissos' "The Rape of Proserpina: Internal Audience and Narrative Distortion" (*Phoenix* 53, no.1/2, 97-113).

languida permulcens medicata lumina virga.
nec mora, falcato nutantem vulnerat ense,
qua collo est confine caput, saxoque cruentum
deicit et maculat praeruptam sanguine rupem.

As he is about to say these things, Mercury sees that all the eyes had given in and his eyelids had been closed in sleep; right away he stops his tale and deepens Argus' sleep, caressing his drowsy eyes with a charmed wand. Without delay, he wounds with curved sword the nodding one at the place where the head joins the neck, and he throws the head, dripping with blood, against a rock and splatters the steep cliff with blood. (*Met.* 1.713-719)

At the same time, though, perhaps Argus would have been more vigilant had he recognized Mercury. Ovid makes it clear that Argus assumed Mercury was simply a shepherd:

Voce nova et captus custos Iunonius arte
'quisquis es, hoc poteras mecum considerare saxo',
Argus ait, 'neque enim pecori fecundior ullo
Herba loco est, aptamque vides pastoribus umbram,'

Juno's guard was captivated by the new voice and art. "Whoever you are, you might sit down with me on this rock," Argus said, "for the grass isn't more plentiful in any other place, and you see that the shade is ideal for shepherds." (*Met.* 1.679-81)

This mistake as to Mercury's identity literally puts Argus off his guard, to his demise. Argus, as the receiver of the narrative, fails as an audience, because he does not hear the story out to its end; however, he reacts in exactly the manner Mercury counts on in order to abscond with Io. It is Mercury's accurate estimation of and influence over his audience that is pivotal to his success; this is parallel to the relationship between Ovid and his readers.

Whether he does so by flattery or by deceit and subsequent violence, Ovid—on both the textual and metatextual levels—demonstrates his facility in controlling his readers, telling them what they want to hear (or, as with Argus, what they cannot stay awake long enough to hear), and coming out on top, because he has been directing the reader all along. It is employment of words detached from their accepted significance that facilitates this brand of manipulation.

Semiotic function of the narrative, then, is sublimated to whatever ulterior motive the speaker-writer may have.

Whose Story Is It? Author vs. Narrator

We already have seen two examples of internal narration, wherein the raconteur (Argus) or raconteuse (Calliope) is distinct from the overall authorial persona (i.e., the voice of the primary narrator versus that of the author *qua* author). What I now will proceed to illustrate is that, particularly in Ovidian literature, the defining line between author and authorial persona may be tenuous, possibly even imperceptible. Throughout the corpus, there is a continual confusion between Ovid *qua* author and Ovid *qua* Ovid. Who is it, for instance, who narrates the *Ars Amatoria*? Whoever it is, he claims in the proem to be experienced in Venus' art:

non ego, Phoebæ, datas a te mihi mentiar artes,
nec nos aëriæ uoce monemur auis,
nec mihi sunt uisæ Clio Clîusque sorores
seruanti pecudes uallibus, Ascra, tuis.
Vsus opus mouet hoc: uati parete perito;
uera canam: coeptis, mater Amoris, ades.

I don't lie, o Apollo, and say that this art comes to me from you, nor am I warned by the voice of a bird in the air, nor were Clio and her sisters seen by me as I was keeping the flocks in your valleys, o Ascra; experience guides this work: obey the experienced bard. I will sing the truth; mother of Love, be near to my undertaking! (*Ars* 1.25-30)

And in *Ars* 3 we hear from the poet's own lips that this *vates peritus* is P. Ovidius Naso himself:

ut quondam iuuenes, ita nunc, mea turba, puellæ
inscribant spoliis NASO MAGISTER ERAT.

As youth once did write upon their spoils, so do you girls now, my crowd, saying "Naso was my master." (*Ars* 3.811-812)

Yet in *Tristia* 2, Ovid takes umbrage at being held an expert in the art of love:

sed neque me nuptæ didicerunt furta magistro,
quodque parum nouit, nemo docere potest.

But no brides learned deception with me as their teacher; no one is able to teach that of which he knows too little. (*Tr.* 2.347-8)

Furthermore, he says, even if his elegy is salacious, distinction must be made between art and life:

crede mihi, distant mores a carmine nostro
(vita verecunda est, Musa iocosa mea)
magnaue pars mendax operum est et ficta meorum:
plus sibi permisit compositore suo.

Believe me, my character differs from my poetry; my life is chaste, my muse lascivious. The great part of my works is fictitious and invented; it is more permissive to itself than its author to himself. (*Tr.* 2.353-356)

Vis-à-vis the reader, Ovid's vacillation between distortion and distinction results in disorientation. We can never really know when he is speaking *in propria persona*.

An additional note on identity obfuscation occurs in the same Marsyas passage that I have treated in connection with flattery. Feldherr argues that it is not immediately clear who it actually is who cries out "quid me mihi detrahis?"—the internal narrator or Marsyas himself—since this interjection follows the briefest of introductions without indication of the speaker's identity.³¹ Through a technique of purposeful ambiguity followed by an eventual revelation of facts (we realize that the internal narrator is quoting Marsyas directly only when we read "inquit"), the reader comes to know who the speaker is only with difficulty and delay.

Self-Contradiction, Serial Revelation, and Suspension

In *Amores* 2.7, the narrator complains that Corinna has accused him of sleeping with her maid, Cypassis.

ecce nouum crimen: sollers ornare Cypassis
obicitur dominae contemerasse torum.

Look, a new crime! Cypassis, the expert hairdresser, is accused of having dishonored her mistress' bed. (*Am.* 2.7.17-18)

³¹ Feldherr, "Flaying the Other," *Arethusa* 37.1, 78.

The lover has already said that she not only accuses him falsely, but also completely unfairly: her allegations are *frustra*:

nunc temere insimulas credendoque omnia frustra
ipsa uetas iram pondus habere tuam.

Now you rashly accuse me, and by believing every groundless point you yourself forbid your anger to have weight. (*Am.* 2.7.13-14)

Through a litany of endearments and pledges of sincerity, he presents his case and makes his plea: he's not guilty. Moreover, he's being persecuted. He'll even swear to it:

Per Venerem iuro puerique uolatilis arcus,
me non admissi criminis esse reum!

I swear by Venus and the bow of the flying boy that I am not guilty of the charged crime! (*Am.* 2.7.27-8)

He sounds convincing, if a little self-righteous and indignant. But, within the very earliest lines of *Amores* 2.8, the illusion has shattered. Addressed to Cypassis, the letter contradicts everything claimed in 2.7. The writer has indeed slept with the maid, and he's a little upset with the fact that Corinna suspects this; he had taken every precautionary measure feasible in order to prevent suspicion:

quis fuit inter nos sociati corporis index?
sensit concubitus unde Corinna tuos?
num tamen erubui? num, uerbo lapsus in ullo,
furtiuae Veneris conscia signa dedi?

Who was the witness of the allied flesh between us? Where did Corinna find out about your affair with me? I didn't blush, did I? Certainly I didn't give conscious signs of secret love, or slip up in any word? (*Am.* 2.8.5-8)

If Corinna's lover didn't let the truth slip out about Cypassis—the *num* leads us to believe that he thinks he did not—then he assumes that Cypassis must have let the cat out of the bag. It is possible even that the opening of 2.8 is simply a ruse on the part of the lover to get Cypassis to

sleep with him another time; he takes advantage of the situation by threatening exposure if Cypassis doesn't yield to him again:

pro quibus officiis pretium mihi dulce repende
concubitus hodie, fusca Cypassi, tuos.
quid renuis fingisque novos, ingrata, timores?
unum est e dominis emeruisse satis.
quod si stulta negas, index ante acta fatebor,
et ueniam culpae proditor ipse meae,
quoque loco tecum fuerim, quotiensque, Cypassi,
narrabo dominae quotque quibusque modis.

For which offices, dark Cypassis, pay me today the price of your sexual favors! Why do you renew and invent new fears, ingrate! It is enough to have earned only one of your masters. But if you foolishly refuse, I will bring proof of what was done before, and I myself will come as betrayer of my guilt, and I will tell your mistress where I was with you, and how many times, Cypassis, and how many ways, and what they were! (*Am.* 2.8.21-28)

The patent deceit of 2.7 (of which we are made aware in 2.8) logically gives rise to the question of how we are to know what really is true from one poem to the next. Though we may be hesitant to trust Ovid at all, we know he is not equally mendacious in every poem, but his fondness for obfuscation keeps us guessing when he is lying and when he is not. Aside from the fact that through suspended revelation Ovid makes us wary readers, we may well ask how it is that Corinna could be completely sure of her lover's veracity in the first place. After all, the couple arranged their very first *rendezvous* by similar deceit practiced upon Corinna's husband; if the lover successfully deceives the husband, he is capable of deceiving Corinna, should that be to his liking. And yet we might ask ourselves the same question: why would we have any reason to be surprised at the "revelation" of 2.8? If we are astonished at 2.8, then our first reading of 2.7 is accepted as factual the writer's expressed intent. Consequently we have fallen into the trap that Ovid has set for us; he has counted on a specific response from the reader in 2.7 (trust, to a greater or lesser degree, placed in the author) in order to subvert/invert it in 2.8.

Moreover, on the level of intertext, the pattern of studied deceit in the Cypassis poems reemerges as a tenet of the amatory pragmatism set forth in the *Ars Amatoria*. Ovid sifts out the underlying deception driving *Amores* 2.7 and 2.8 and recommends it as a *modus operandi* for the successful campaign on the battlefield of Love. In the passage on writing love letters, Ovid advocates the liberal use of promise-making, even if the hopeful lover does not intend to fulfill his promises:

cera uadum temptet rasis infusa tabellis,
cera tuae primum conscia mentis eat.
blanditias ferat illa tuas imitataque amantem
uerba, nec exiguas, quisquis es, adde preces.
Hectora donauit Priamo prece motus Achilles;
flectitur iratus uoce rogante deus.
promittas facito, quid enim promittere laedit?
pollicitis dives quilibet esse potest.
Spes tenet in tempus, semel est si credita, longum;
illa quidem fallax, sed tamen apta dea est.

Let the wax attempt an inroad, poured over smoothed slates: let the wax go first, knowing your mind. Let it carry your sweet-talk and words imitating a lover; whoever you are, add entreaties not small. Achilles, moved by entreaty, gave Hector back to Priam; an angry god is swayed by a beseeching voice. Make promises, for what does it hurt to promise? Anyone can be rich in promises. Hope holds for a long time, if once believed; indeed she is deceitful, but nevertheless a suitable goddess. (*Ars* 1.437-446)

This passage indicates that a lover is in essence an actor, putting on different performances (“imitataque amantem/uerba”) as the occasion demands and tossing about *bons mots* and empty promises calculated to make him look good. Laurie Churchill uses this passage as exemplar both of the theme of control (which she says runs throughout the *Ars*) and the tension that she sees between the *praeceptor amoris* and the language of the text, saying that what the narrator

upholds is different from and in opposition to the underlying suggestions of the text.³² Similarly, Patricia Watson assesses the *Ars* as a vacillation between elegiac passion and role play.³³

Thus, the motifs of acting and role-play are tantamount to motifs of deceit in these diptych poems from the *Amores*. In 2.8, Ovid puts on such a believable show that he is fairly certain that Corinna suspects him of infidelity despite his putting on a convincing act:

num tamen erubui? num uerbo lapsus in ullo
furtivae Veneris conscia signa dedi?

I didn't blush, did I? I didn't given conscious signs of stolen love, having stumbled in any word? (*Am.* 2.8.7-8)

The lover seems to have adhered to the script and played out the part to its completion; it must be that Cypassis is the culprit. Either that or the lover has slipped up but nonetheless hopes to gain something from the situation, in which case he is still assuming a role. Regardless of who divulged the truth to Corinna, the lover is the consummate actor. This diptych is so ingeniously artistic in its charade that it has been said that it is worthy to be the most celebrated pair of poems in Roman elegy.³⁴

Further, the acting-cum-deceiving signaled in the 2.7/2.8 pair culminates in violence. John T. Davis says that the *Amores* are really a series of *suasoriae*. Sometimes they “play up” to the audience; other times, they threaten the use of force (violence and/or blackmail).³⁵ As we have seen above in the example of *Am.* 2.8, Ovid plays several different roles in the course of

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Churchill, “Magisterial Voice and the Pleasure of the Text: Irony in the *Ars Amatoria*,” *Pacific Coast Philology*, Vol. 20, No. 1/2, 33-34. Churchill cites several passages from the *Ars* that challenge or even contradict each other.

³³ Watson, “*Praecepta Amoris*: Ovid’s Didactic Elegy,” in *Brill’s Companion to Ovid*, 149.

³⁴ Davis, *Dramatic Pairings in the Elegies of Propertius and Ovid*, 107.

³⁵ Davis views the *Amores* as a type of highly-embellished poetry intended to captivate the reader: “Many of the *Amores* are, in effect, *suasoriae* that have no chance of convincing their supposed addressee, but which nevertheless afford Ovid the opportunity of displaying his ingenuity and so amusing his audience and winning applause.” (*Fictus Adulter: Poet as Actor in the Amores*, 13.)

one letter as he writes to Cypassis. We established that one of the functions played out by the transition from *Am.* 2.7 to 2.8 was the lifting of the veil from the deceitful illusion of the fidelity claimed by the lover. However, there is an additional *raison d'être* for the suspense: the lover emerges as violent. He is the model lover if Cypassis yields to him in return, but if she is so foolhardy as to refuse his advances, then he becomes threatening and abusive. According to Davis, the Ovid of 2.7 is the *reus*, who balks self-righteously at Corinna's accusations; this Ovid presents himself in 2.8 initially as the sensitive and caring *amans*, who, upon being rejected, shows himself to be rather a cruel *dominus*, who is not above resorting to blackmail to get what he wants.³⁶ Whether to convey surprise, shock, or violence, Ovid uses suspense and delay tactics to cast flickering shadows of doubt upon his the sincerity of the lover, obscuring the reader's horizon of expectations. There is a sense of compulsion evident in the poems, especially if we consider their resemblance to *suasoriae*, which are calculated to effect in the listener a spirit of alliance with the author/speaker.

Challenge of Reader Self-Perception

Partial revelation followed by the unveiling of a crucial, unforeseen bit of information is not the only possible means of entrapping the reader into abruptly casting aside a set of judgments or perceptions. An equally sudden questioning of characteristics/credentials of the reader to which the writer had previously consented may be even more successful at achieving this end. *Heroides* 9, Deianira's letter to Hercules, is a case in point. Deianira initiates her missive by rejoicing at the latest feat of her husband, but mentions that she has heard rumor that her husband has recently engaged in certain extra-marital amorous escapades.

Gratulor Oechaliam titulis accedere nostris;
victorem victae succubuisse queror.
fama Pelasgiadas subito pervenit in urbes

³⁶ Davis, *Fictus Adulter: Poet as Actor in the Amores*.

decolor et factis infitianda tuis,
quem numquam Iuno seriesque immensa laborum
fregerit, huic Iolen inposuisse iugum.

I am grateful that Oechalia comes to be numbered among our honors, but I complain that the conquering hero has succumbed to the conquered woman. Rumor – of a cast hardly appropriate and not to be attested to by your deeds – suddenly has it in the Pelasgian cities that the one whom Juno and her series of immeasurable labors never crushed has had the yoke placed upon him by Iole. (*Her.* 9.1-6)

She tries to shame him, taunting him with accusations of effeminacy:

Meandros, terris totiens errator in isdem,
qui lassas in se saepe retorquet aquas,
vidit in Herculeo suspensa monilia collo
illo, cui caelum sarcina parva fuit.

Meander, a frequent wayfarer in those same lands, who often twists back upon himself the weary waters, has seen a necklace hanging from the neck of Hercules, that neck upon which even the sky was a small burden. (*Her.* 9.55-58)

Any of her husband's heroic exploits that Deianira recounts are not to the purpose of lionizing him. Her real motive is to fashion Hercules into an anti-hero: his flowing robes, which she mercilessly ridicules, and his attitude of servitude and submission to Omphale render him a parody of the "conquering hero" image which he has endeavored to project:

Haec tu Sidonio potes insignitus amictu
dicere? Non cultu lingua retenta silet?
se quoque nympha tuis ornavit Iardanis armis
et tulit a capto nota tropaea viro.
i nunc, tolle animos et fortia gesta recense;
quo tu non esses, iure vir illa fuit.
qua tanto minor es, quanto te, maxime rerum,
quam quos vicisti, vincere maius erat.
illi procedit rerum mensura tuarum –
cede bonis; heres laudis amica tuae.
o pudor! hirsuti costis exuta leonis
aspera texerunt vellera molle latus!
falleris et nescis – non sunt spolia illa leonis,
sed tua, tuque feri victor es, illa tui.
femina tela tulit Lernaëis atra venenis,
ferre gravem lana vix satis apta colum,
instruxitque manum clava domitrice ferarum,

vidit et in speculo coniugis arma mei!

Can you talk about these things when you're wearing Sidonian fashion? Does your clothing not keep your tongue silent? The nymph, daughter of Iardanus, has played dress-up in your armor and has carried away famous triumphs from the captive man. Go now, pluck up your spirits and recall your brave deeds; she has become a man by a right by which you were not. You are as inferior to her as it was greater to conquer you (o greatest of accomplishments!) than to conquer those whom you conquered. The measure of your accomplishments passes to her—yield to the good; your mistress is heir to your praise. The shame of it! The rough hide stripped from the sides of a hairy lion has covered her soft body! You are deceived, and you don't know it—those spoils aren't from the lion: they're from you; you're the winner over the lion, but she has won over you. The woman has taken weapons dark with Lernaean poison, scarcely fit enough to carry a distaff heavy with wool, and has equipped her hand with a club, the tamer of wild beasts, and she has seen in the mirror the weapons of my husband! (*Her.* 9.101-118)

Sara Lindheim points out that rather than tell her own story according to her own point of view, Deianira makes Hercules into the central character throughout the epistle, while she herself remains marginal. This, says Lindheim, is part of a clever strategy whereby Deianira, the letter-writer, ultimately triumphs over Hercules, the letter-reader. Letter-writer first engenders a sense of self-importance in letter-reader, only to effect a complete reversal of self-estimation in a brilliant stroke of humiliation. Lindheim also sees articulation of husband's or lover's tremendous influence as cunning and deceit in female epistolarity³⁷ and protests of helplessness/passivity as way of enkindling male desire (a form of manipulation) as well as a device used to portray the writer as a powerful figure.³⁸

Both women in *Heroides* 9 hold sway over Hercules. On the one hand, Omphale can bring him into submission more effectively than any rival warrior can; this is debasing enough for the hero *par excellence*. But the type of manipulation that Omphale enjoys over Hercules pales in comparison to Deianira's. The hero's wife emerges as a figure of power and influence in two ways. Firstly, early in the letter (as she gives the impression that she takes rumors of

³⁷ Lindheim, *Mail and Female*, 77.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 178.

Hercules' infidelity lightly) she projects herself as much the same type of manipulator as Calliope (*Met.* 5), who opens her story so as to endear herself to her audience, shaping the narrative according to what she thinks the addressee wants to hear, with the ulterior motive of self-advancement in mind.³⁹ Secondly, further in the narrative (as she imagines Omphale reducing Hercules to a parody of his heroic persona) she adopts a different strategy, one of open insult. The shift in tone is noticeable. It is as though Deianira were trying out a different tactic just in case the first (the more subtle) might not work. As long as Hercules keeps reading the letter, there is still hope for Deianira to get what she wants, namely for him to come back to her. And if Deianira can't cajole her husband into returning, she can certainly mar his self-image. Juxtaposing Hercules's characteristic masculinity and his current enslavement/passivity facilitates her plan of detraction from his hero status (and by comparison an elevation of her own).

One additional consideration is that Deianira (who, according to Lindheim, is a figure of passivity throughout the epistle) can bring about her husband's demise without even trying—in fact, without even being physically present—and we learn of this through the act of her writing. This fact is illustrated in a particularly vivid manner at the end of the letter, when Deianira receives word that the poison has taken its effect and Hercules is now dead. First, Ovid via Deianira recounts the back-story of the poison:

Me quoque cum multis, sed me sine crimine amasti;
ne pigeat, pugnae bis tibi causa fui.
cornua flens legit ripis Achelous in udis

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 62-63. Also 79: "The heroine goes to great lengths to emphasize her lack of importance and to underscore her complete preoccupation with her addressee. She repeatedly offers the impression through the story she tells and the characters she creates that she is single-mindedly guided in what she writes by the impact she imagines her words will have on her absent lover/husband. And yet, if rhetorical tactics motivate her choices for self-construction, perhaps her insistent denials of her own insignificance and her simultaneous proclamations of her addressee's all-encompassing importance represent the core of a strategy by which the heroine seeks to manipulate and control her reader, thus exerting her own power."

truncaque limosa tempora mersit aqua;
semivir occubuit in letifero Eueno
Nessus et infecit sanguis equinus aquas.

Me, too, you loved, among your many loves, but me without crime; let it not shame you that I twice was cause to you for a fight. Weeping, Achelous gathered up his horns on the wet banks and submerged his mangled brow in the muddy water; the half-man Nessus sat down in death-bearing Evenus, and his equine blood tinged the waters.

Having created an identity for herself as a liminal figure, Deianira continues her narrative with Hercules as the central figure, even though at this juncture she is offering an explanation as to why Hercules should not be ashamed of his love for her. Thus (as in Lindheim above), she is still a passive figure who nevertheless dominates her male counterpart.

External Authorities: Inspiration and Intertext

In addition to the various modes of reader subordination that we have already considered, Ovid reinforces his supremacy over his readership by making appeals to figures of authority so as to lend credence to his poetry. In this section, I will look at instances of Ovid's claims to divine inspiration and to immortality achieved through his poetic art.

In *Fasti* I Ovid relates how, as he sat pondering the unique qualities of Janus, he found himself face to face with the god. He tells how Janus himself answers all the questions and dispels all the doubts Ovid has about the cult of the deity:

Quem tamen esse deum te dicam, Iane biformis?
nam tibi par nullum Graecia numen habet.
ede simul causam, cur de caelestibus unus,
sitque quod a tergo, sitque quod ante, vides.
haec ego cum sumptis agitarem mente tabellis,
lucidior visa est quam fuit ante domus.
tunc sacer ancipiti mirandus imagine Ianus
bina repens oculis obtulit ora meis.
extimui sensique metu riguisse capillos,
et gelidum subito frigore pectus erat.
ille tenens baculum dextra clavemque sinistra
edidit hos nobis ore priore sonos:
'disce metu posito, vates operose dierum,

quod petis, et voces percipe mente meas.’

But what god should I say that you are, two-formed Janus? For Greece has no deity equal to you. Tell me, too, the reason why you alone of the inhabitants of heaven see both what's behind you and in front. When, with my tablets at the ready, I turned these things over in my mind, the house seemed brighter than it was before, and then sacred Janus, to be marveled at in his double appearance, suddenly brought both his faces before my eyes. I was terrified, and felt that my hair had gone stiff with fear, and my heart was frozen with a sudden chill. Janus, holding a staff in his right hand and a key in his left, spoke to me with his front mouth: “Having set aside fear, learn, o tedious singer of days, what you seek, and perceive my speech with your mind.” (*Fasti* 1.89-102)

Ovid’s structure of narrative here is very similar to the interview technique favored by Callimachus.⁴⁰ Thus the Janus interview serves two main purposes. Firstly, it is a bow to the originator of neoteric poetry, by which Ovid situates himself as successor in the tradition of Callimachus. Also, as Newlands posits, in choosing to begin the *Fasti* with Janus, Ovid hints at (and parallels) the trend that his poem will take, inviting as it does competing readings in many instances (for example, multiple festal aetiologies are often given without a final, definitive version ever being specified).⁴¹

Additionally, Ovid uses the “apparition” of Janus in order to add to his own credentials as calendrical *praeceptor*. Letting the Janus persona speak sets up Ovid as one chosen by the gods to receive knowledge of things divine. It also takes the onus off of Ovid, as it were; if anyone objects to the content of the *Fasti*, Ovid can claim that not he but a god is the author of the text. And so Ovid speaks not only by his own authority, but as empowered and enlightened by a plethora of deities. It is in fact Ovid who is the janiform apparition, manifesting himself as both *discipulus* and *praeceptor*.

Further in the *Fasti*, Ovid enumerates various possible etymologies for *Agon*:

Quattuor adde dies ductos ex ordine Nonis,
Ianus Agonali luce piandus erit.

⁴⁰ Newlands, *Playing with Time*, 66.

⁴¹ Newlands, *Playing with Time*, 6-7.

nominis esse potest succinctus causa minister,
 hostia caelitibus quo feriente cadit,
 qui calido strictos tincturus sanguine cultros
 semper agatne rogat, nec nisi iussus agit.
 pars, quia non veniant pecudes, sed agantur, ab actu
 nomen Agonalem credit habere diem.
 pars putat hoc festum priscis Agnalia dictum,
 una sit ut proprio littera dempta loco.
 an, quia praevisos in aqua timet hostia cultros,
 a pecoris lux est ipsa notata metu?
 fas etiam fieri solitis aetate priorum
 nomina de ludis Graeca tulisse diem.
 et pecus antiquus dicebat agonia sermo;
 veraque iudicio est ultima causa meo.

Add four consecutive days to the Nones, and at the Agonal dawn Janus must be appeased. It is possible that the source of the name is the vested attendant who strikes down the victim for the gods. Just as he is about to tinge the drawn swords with warm blood, he always asks whether he should do it, and doesn't do it unless his is told to. Some, because the sheep do not come but are driven, believe that the day is called Agonal on account of this driving. Some think that this festival was called by the ancients the Agnalia, or Festival of Lambs, as it might be that one letter was dropped from its place. Or, because the victim fears the knives reflected in the water, is the day itself known from the animal's fear? It might even be allowed that the day took its Greek name from the games accustomed to take place in the days of our ancestors. Also, *agonia* was an old word for sheep, and the last, in my judgment is the true reason [for the name *Agon*]. (*Fasti* 1.317-332)

This is a typical example Ovid's presentation of multiple etymologies in the *Fasti*, and is also in line with the practice Varro and other writers of antiquarian handbooks.⁴² Ovid gives the rationale behind each etymology one by one. By the time we reach the last, we have seen six possible etymologies for "Agon." The fact that Ovid gives us so many etymological possibilities (whence he has collected these, he does not tell us) is not necessarily helpful, as some of the choices clearly are less plausible than others (for example, the "agantur" suggestion is far too vague to be convincing). Moreover, Ovid gives us no reason for adopting the *agonia* explanation as his preference. He ultimately leaves us less certain than ever about festal origins.

⁴² Newlands, *Playing with Time*, 57-58.

Ovid's credibility as calendar-teacher diminishes further as we discover more about the authority figures to whom he turns for many of his etymologies. In *Fasti* 5, the Muses appear not as voices of inspiration but of discord; they cannot agree amongst themselves even upon the origin of the month of May:

Quaeritis unde putem Maio data nomina mensi?
non satis est liquido cognita causa mihi.
ut stat et incertus qua sit sibi nescit eundum,
cum videt ex omni parte, viator, iter,
sic, quia posse datur diversas reddere causas, 5
qua ferar ignoro, copiaque ipsa nocet.
dicite, quae fontes Aganippidos Hippocrenes,
grata Medusaei signa, tenetis, equi.
dissensere deae; quarum Polyhymnia coepit
prima (silent aliae, dictaque mente notant)...

You ask from where I think a name has been given to the month of May? The cause is not clearly enough known to me. As a traveler stands and uncertain does not know where he should go when he sees a road from every direction, so also, because it is given that it is possible to give diverse causes, I do not know where I should be carried, and the abundance itself is harmful. Tell me, you who hold the fountains of Aganippian Hippocrenes, the pleasing marks of the Medusaeian horse. The goddesses are in disagreement, of whom Polyhymnia first begins (the others are silent, and note her words in their mind). (*Fasti* 5.1-10)

Later in the same book, the Tiber River cannot even be sure he remembers his own name:

Albula, si memini, tunc mihi nomen erat.

Albula, if I remember, was my name then. (*Fasti* 5.646)

Squabbling Muses⁴³ and a senile Tiber are just two examples of the many unreliable witnesses in the *Fasti*. Both Ovid and his sources very often are reluctant to make a firm judgment about anything; in many words, they say very little.⁴⁴ And yet in the proem Ovid promised to

⁴³ See Alessandro Barchiesi's "Discordant Muses," *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philosophical Society* 37, 1-21.

⁴⁴ See Dennis Feeney's "*Si Licet et Fas Est: Ovid's Fasti and the Problem of Free Speech Under the Principate*" (in Anton Powell's *Roman Poetry and Propaganda in the Age of Augustus*), which looks at the unreliability of the narrators as well as Ovid's unwillingness to settle on aetiologies/etymologies as a form of protest against the loss of freedom of speech.

enlighten us as to the origins of the calendar. Not only does this promise go unfulfilled, but the further we plod through the *Fasti*, the less we know what the calendar is, though we know more and more about what the calendar could be. Guided by Ovid's hand, we eventually draw the conclusion that in fact no one, divine or human, knows anything about calendrical aetiology. Like the *Remedia Amoris*—which, as it is essentially a manual for falling out of love, is elegy that undercuts elegy—the *Fasti* is a didactic poem that does a lot of reaching but very little teaching. The magisterial voice resonates with chaos, not clarity, contrary to both Ovid's assurance and reader's anticipation. This is true even for the well-versed Ovidian reader, who may expect the unexpected but cannot know the precise manner in which the intended inconsistencies will reveal themselves.

The Immortality of the Written Word

However, it is not always so evident when Ovid clouds the vista of viewer expectation. Sometimes Ovid encrypts a message of blatant self-promotion within the text; in particular, words of obsequy toward others often cloak Ovid's primary motives from the reader. In the final lines of the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid wraps up the narration of Augustus' lineage and deeds thusly:

Iuppiter arces
temperat aetherias et mundi regna triformis,
terra sub Augusto est; pater est et rector uterque.

Jupiter subdues the heavenly citadels and the kingdoms of the triform world, while the earth is subject to Augustus; each is a father and a ruler. (*Met.* 15.858-860)

This sounds very pro-Augustan and tributary. But Ovid isn't finished. He builds up to a climax, ending with himself:

Iamque opus exegi, quod nec Iovis ira nec ignis
nec poterit ferrum nec edax abolere vetustas.

And now I have finished my work, which neither the wrath of Jupiter nor fire nor the sword nor ravenous time will be able to erase. (*Met.* 15.871-872)

And so not even Jupiter, who in the previous passage rules the heavens while Augustus merely rules the world, is able to blot out the name of Ovid—says Ovid. And so the dutifully tributary persona of 858-860 merely defers revelation of the true motive behind the ostensibly pious references to Jupiter and the *princeps*.

This sort of one-upmanship is likewise a feature of Ovid's elegy. In closing Book 2 of the *Ars Amatoria*, Ovid compares his great skill in love with other types of skill possessed by great heroes of legend (including Ajax's prowess in war); he even compares his writing the *Ars* with Vulcan's arming Achilles:

finis adest operi: palmam date, grata iuuentus,
sertaque odoratae myrtea ferte comae.
quantus apud Danaeos Podalirius arte medendi,
Aeacides dextra, pectore Nestor erat,
quantus erat Calchas extis, Telamonius armis,
Automedon curru, tantus amator ego.
me uatem celebrate, uiri, mihi dicite laudes;
cantetur toto nomen in orbe meum.
arma dedi uobis; dederat Vulcanus Achilli:
uincite muneribus, uicit ut ille, datis.
sed quicumque meo superarit Amazona ferro,
inscribat spoliis NASO MAGISTER ERAT.

The end is near for my work: give a palm, grateful youth, and bring woven myrtle for my perfumed hair. As great a man as Podalirius was among the Greeks for his skill at healing, Pyrrhus for his bravery, Nestor for his courage, as great as Calchas was with bodily organs, as the Telamonian in arms, as Automedon in racing, such a great lover am I. Celebrate me as a bard, men, and speak praises to me; let my name be sung throughout the whole world. I have given arms to you; Vulcan had given them to Achilles: conquer with gifts given, as he conquered. But whoever shall conquer the Amazon by my sword, let him inscribe on his spoils: Naso was my teacher. (*Ars* 2.733-744)

And so the poem ends as it began: with Ovid. The same sentiment is reiterated at the conclusion of the third book:

lusus habet finem: cycnis descendere tempus,
duxerunt collo qui iuga nostra suo.
ut quondam iuuenes, ita nunc, mea turba, puellae

inscribant spoliis NASO MAGISTER ERAT.

The game has its end: it is time for the swans to go down, who have led my yoke with their neck. Just as the youths once did, so now, my crowd, may the girls write upon their spoils: Naso was my teacher. (*Ars* 3.809-812)

It is interesting to note as well that at the conclusion of both *Ars* 2 and 3 the amatory pupils' writing/inscription is an additional means whereby Ovid's writing is perpetuated; writing about writing ensures lasting fame.

The poet's fascination with immortality permeates the *Amores* as well. Prior to the exposures of his many indiscretions and inconsistencies, Ovid *qua* lover persuades Corinna of the fame which shall be hers due to the services of his *carmina*:

te mihi materiem felicem in carmina praebe:
prouenient causa carmina digna sua.
carmine nomen habent exterrita cornibus Io
et quam fluminea lusit adulter aue
quaeque super pontum simulato uecta iuueno
uirginea tenuit cornua uara manu.
nos quoque per totum pariter cantabimur orbem
iunctaque semper erunt nomina nostra tuis.

Give yourself to me as happy matter for poetry; my poetry will show itself worthy of its cause. By a poem fame came to Io, frightened by her horns, and to her whom the seducer cheated in the form of a river bird, and to the one who was carried over the ocean by the bull as she held on to his bent horns with her maiden hand. We also will be sung of in equal measure throughout the whole world, and my name forever will be joined to yours. (*Am.* 1.3.19-26)

There are some problems here for Corinna, needless to say. Firstly, though the poet claims the ability to immortalize his mistress by his words, nevertheless the distinction so afforded is dubious at best. The short catalogue of heroines upheld as images of eternal glory reflected in the mirror of verse is also a catalogue of rapes. Io, Leda, and Europa were all three victims of Jupiter's lust, for which reason alone are their names important in mythology.

Comparing Corinna with these women not only sublimates her literary importance to Ovid's but also reveals that Ovid to some extent has no scruples about using her to achieve greater fame.

Another consideration is that the ultimate couplet of the poem seems to have Corinna playing second fiddle to her *amator*. I repeat the distich below:

nos quoque per totum pariter cantabimur orbem
iunctaque semper erunt nomina nostra tuis.

We also will be sung of in equal measure throughout the whole world, and my name forever will be joined to yours. (*Am.* 1.3.25-6)

In isolation, the distich seems to be laudatory to both Corinna and her lover. However, as it follows on the heels of Io, Leda, and Europa, I say that an alternate reading exists, revolving on the sense of *pariter*. In this context, I believe it is more plausible that the thrust of these lines is that Ovid and Corinna will both be remembered always and everywhere in song, just the same as the seduced women (and, more conspicuously, their common rapist) are remembered. Moreover, in doing so Ovid conveys the message that even such dubious fame is preferable to obscurity and oblivion. Thus not only does Ovid show that it is possible to gain fame by being victimized, he also slyly suggests that this might be just the kind of fame which Corinna is to enjoy. Following, too, is the parallel image of Jupiter and Ovid, the seducers so famous as to give automatic legendary status to the women they play with.

Suspending full revelation of the aim of his *carmina*, in the closing lines of *Amores* 1, Ovid states transparently that the ultimate glory is destined for him.

ergo cum silices, cum dens patientis aratri
depereant aevo, carmina morte carent:
cedant carminibus reges regumque triumpho,
cedat et auriferi ripa benigna Tagi.
uilia miretur uulgi; mihi flauus Apollo
pocula Castalia plena ministret aqua,
sustineamque coma metuentem frigora myrtum
atque a sollicito multus amante legar.

pascitur in uiuis Liuor; post fata quiescit,
cum suus ex merito quemque tuetur honos.
ergo etiam cum me supremus adederit ignis,
uiuam, parsque mei multa superstes erit.

And so, though rocks and though the tooth of the lasting plough may perish in time, my songs will not die. Let kings and triumphs of kings yield to poetry; let the fertile banks of gold-bearing Tagus yield as well. Let the masses marvel at cheap things; for me may golden Apollo tend to cups full with Castalian water, and let me wear cold-fearing myrtle in my hair and often be read by an anxious lover! Envy feeds among the living; after death he is still, when each one's honor will afford protection according to his merit. Therefore, when the last fire will have consumed me, I will live on, and the great part of me will remain. (*Am.* 1.15.31-42)

Not only *reges* but even Apollo himself must yield to Ovid, because his “greater part”—his honor and fame achieved through his poetry—will remain beyond rocks and ploughs and human existence.

Again, the crux of these lines is not easily discernible at first glance to the reader. Only after peeling back the layers of the text can the reader come to know the embedded significance of Ovid's words.

Enter Augustus, Exit Ovid? Concluding Thoughts

If we take Ovid at face value, we must nod in agreement to the idea that for Ovid the ultimate objective of this textual endurance is authorial fame. But fame, like literature, has a double nature: there are the celebrities, and there are those who idolize them. For Ovid, one of the main implications of this reality is the necessity of a readership. In other words, Ovid's achievement of fame is contingent upon the existence of readers for his poetry. This takes us full circle to my initial comments regarding the duality of language, considering both author intention and reader reception. As mentioned before, conflict can arise with the involvement of at least two separate persons, each of whom believes himself to have more hermeneutical say than the other. As Ovid's exile poetry would have us believe, the clash between Ovid and

Augustus leading to Ovid's *relegatio* is just such a divergence in hermeneutic, resulting from a reader's attempt at an alternate reading not sanctioned by the author.

There are several bones of contention that Ovid picks with Augustus, all based on a vast discrepancy between the two men's ideas of where interpretive power lies; that is to say, which side assigns a canonical meaning to the text. Tension mounts between Ovid and the *princeps* because each sees himself as the supreme arbiter in an area over which the other exercised undue influence. Morality was an area in which Augustus showed particular interest, as can be seen from his legal enactments.

perdiderint cum me duo crimina, carmen et error,
alterius facti culpa silenda mihi:
nam non sum tanti, renovem ut tua vulnera, Caesar,
quem nimio plus est indoluisse semel.
altera pars superest, qua turpi carmine factus
arguor obsceni doctor adulterii.

Although two crimes, a poem and a mistake, have ruined me, I must be silent about the blame of the one, for I am not of such worth that I should reopen your wounds, Caesar; it is more than too much that you have been pained once. The other matter remains, that I, by a base poem, am convicted of having become a teacher of obscene adultery. (*Tr.* 2.207-212)

Adulterium was a politically-charged word during the principate. As part of the *Leges Iuliae* of 18-17 BC, Augustus introduced the *Lex Julia de Maritandis Ordinibus* and the *Lex Iulia de Adulteriis Coercendis*, which (respectively) regulated marriage and prohibited adultery.⁴⁵ Consuls M. Papius Mutilus and Q. Poppaeus Secundus introduced the *Lex Papia Poppaea*, which reiterated the directives of the *Leges Iuliae* and made further restrictions against “unsuitable” marriage alliances.⁴⁶ Penalties were levied against men who did not marry, while there were economic incentives to produce offspring in large numbers. Given Augustus'

⁴⁵ Severy, *Augustus and the Family at the Birth of the Roman Empire*, 52-53 and 200-202.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

promotion and introduction of myriad laws encouraging marriage and forbidding adultery, any condoning of adultery or other risqué behavior was bound to come under fire.⁴⁷

It is also interesting to note that Ovid says he must be silent, that he would not presume to bring up a matter that has caused Augustus pain, when in fact Ovid is doing just that. This is reminiscent of Cicero's characteristic use of *praeteritio* wherein he claims to omit a specific piece of information and then proceeds to unveil it. Even more interesting to note is the fact that in Cicero *praeteritio* occurs very often in invective,⁴⁸ while Ovid ostensibly writes the *Tristia* as an encomiastic plea for mitigation of his *relegatio*.

his, precor, atque aliis possint tua numina flecti,
o pater, o patriae cura salusque tua!
non ut in Ausoniam redeam, nisi forsitan olim,
cum longo poenae tempore victus eris:
tutius exilium pauloque quietius oro,
ut par delicto sit mea poena suo.

By these and other things, I beseech you, may your will be able to be swayed, o father, o care of the land and salvation for your daughter! Not so that I may return into Ausonia, unless perhaps someday you will be overcome by the long time of my punishment; but a safer exile, and one a little more quiet, I request, so that my punishment might be equal to its offence. (*Tr.* 2.573-578)

But if Ovid wants to merit a reprieve from the harsh winters at Tomis, he nevertheless cannot repress the urge to offer a few suggests to Augustus. At times Ovid adopts a gentle, respectful tone that at first glance may not seem corrective. For example, in an ostensibly laudatory comparison of Augustus to Jupiter, Ovid indirectly reminds Augustus that it is concern for matters of state—not the reading of light poetry—that should consume the energies of the *princeps*:

fas ergo est aliqua caelestia pectora falli,
et sunt notitia multa minora tua;
utque deos caelumque simul sublime tuenti

⁴⁷ See Severy passim.

⁴⁸ Viz. *In Verrem*, *In Catilinam*, *Philippics*, etc.

non vacat exiguis rebus addressse Iovi,
de te pendentem sic dum circumspicis orbem,
effugiunt curas inferiora tuas.

Then it is right that some heavenly hearts be deceived, and there are many things too small for your attention; just as there is no leisure for Jupiter, watching the gods and sublime heaven, at the same time to attend to trivial matters, so also while you inspect the world depending upon you, lower things escape your attention. (*Tr.* 2.213-218)

The implication is two-fold. Most evidently, Ovid says that it is appropriate (the use of *fas* even suggests an aspect of religious sanction⁴⁹) for a ruler to tend to the “statelier” things in life; the trifles (*exiguis rebus*) are, presumably, left for lesser mortals. However, in the *Tristia* Ovid attributes passim the cause of his exile to Augustus’ keen attention to certain trifles, namely, Ovid’s poetry. This is Ovid’s first of several appeals to a policy of “domain containment,” subtle here but, as we shall see, increasingly bolder. (I employ the term “domain containment” in this context to refer to deliberate separation of, in this case, political and literary hierarchies, with the intent that art not be forced to undergo government censorship.)

Below the surface meaning of these few lines, though, is a sly insinuation that, in wasting his precious time reading Ovid, Augustus is acting counter to the way things should be—acting even in opposition to the gods (hearkening back to *fas*). Such a suspicion is confirmed by the lines immediately following:

scilicet imperii princeps statione relicta
imparibus legeres carmina facta modis?
non ea te moles Romani nominis urget,
inque tuis umeris tam leve fertur onus,
lusibus ut possis advertere numen ineptis,
excutiasque oculis otia nostra tuis.

Indeed, ruler of the realm, with your place having been vacated, should you read poetry fashioned in unequal measure? That weight of the Roman name does not press upon you, nor is so light a burden borne upon your shoulders that you are able to turn your majesty to unsuitable games, and scrutinize my leisure with your eyes. (*Tr.* 2.219-224)

⁴⁹The first OLD entry for *fas* is as follows: “That which is right or permissible by divine law.”

The tone is stern, even chiding. Ovid conveys his displeasure at Augustus for turning his attention to his poems when he really should be keeping his own court. Resentment turns to accusation of grave negligence as Ovid sharply contrasts statesmanship and leisure, concluding that they are incompatible activities; in order for Augustus to read Ovid, he must first relinquish his imperial role (*statione relicta*). Clearly this is not the ideal state of affairs, and points to an additional, more forceful insistence upon domain containment.

And though Ovid makes an unconvincing attempt at excuse for Augustus based on his many pressing duties of state, he nevertheless seems miffed at the possibility that Augustus may have written off his poetry without ever having read it:

mirer in hoc igitur tantarum pondere rerum
te numquam nostros evoluisse iocos?
at si, quod mallet, vacuum tibi forte fuisset,
nullum legissem crimen in Arte mea.
illa quidem fateor frontis non esse severae
scripta, nec a tanto principe digna legi:
non tamen idcirco legum contraria iussis
sunt ea Romanas erudiuntque nurus.

Then should I wonder that under this weight of such great affairs you never read my jests? But if, as I would prefer, there perhaps would have been free time for you, you would have read no crime in my art/*Ars*. Indeed, I confess these were not written to be of a serious face, nor are they worthy to be read by so great a ruler: nonetheless, they are not contrary to the dictates of the laws on account of this, nor do they teach Rome's young women. (*Tr.* 2.237-244)

And so as Ovid sees things, Augustus must be either a bad reader or, even worse, no reader at all. In either case, Augustus has no business acting as supreme arbiter over Ovid's writing, which will outlast not only Augustus but even Jupiter, as we recall from the final lines of the *Metamorphoses*.

Ovid also projects a sense of resentment toward the system of literary patronage characteristic of the time, which for him at least is synonymous with suppression of free

speech.⁵⁰ Furthermore, the problems he sees within the patron-writer system are overshadowed by what is perhaps simply a logical outcome of the system on the imperial scale. If the patron influences the client's writing, then Augustus, the *patronus patronorum*, clearly has a great deal of clout with all writers, at least in theory. But there is a further aspect of Augustan patronage, according to Ovid, that bears consideration: Augustus, as patron of all literature, creates a role for himself as "Prime Reader," the first and last end of every literary endeavor. Serving the patron first and foremost results in an inferior literature; no author is equally adroit at writing in all genres, not even Ovid, as Ovid claims:

forsan (et hoc dubitem) numeris levioribus aptus
sim satis, in parvos sufficiamque modos:
at si me iubeas domitos Iovis igne Gigantes
dicere, conantem debilitabat onus.

Perhaps—and I would doubt this—I am suited enough for lighter verses, and may suffice in small measures. But if you should order me to tell of the giants conquered by Jupiter's fire, the burden would weaken me trying to do so. (*Tr.* 2.331-334)

But in fact throughout his literary career Ovid has tried to be *the* omni-generic author, trying his hand at all the major genres of Latin literature and even creating some of his own (e.g., with the epistolary-elegiac *Heroides* and the didactic-elegiac *Ars Amatoria*). This is none other than the Ovidian "boxing-in" ploy that we have already seen, wherein Ovid raises our expectations only to dash them completely.

But if obeisance is the name of the patronal game, Ovid still plays to win. Confident that he has all bases covered, he reminds Augustus that he has sung diligently the praises of the *princeps*:

quid referam libros, illos quoque, crimina nostra,

⁵⁰ In addition to Feeney (*ut supra*), see also Joanna Niżyńska in the first part of her article "Marsyas's Howl: The Myth of Marsyas in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Zbigniew Herbert's 'Apollo and Marsyas'" (*Comparative Literature* 53.2, 151-169). In it, she discusses instances of artists' distrust of patrons in the *Metamorphoses* and the *Fasti*.

mille locis plenos nominis esse tui?
inspice maius opus, quod adhuc sine fine tenetur,
in non credendos corpora versa modos:
invenies vestri praeconia nominis illic,
invenies animi pignora multa mei.

Why should I report that my books, those too that are my crime, in a thousand places are full of your name? Look at the greater work, which still is kept without a conclusion, bodies changed in unbelievable ways: there you will find proclamations of your name; you will find many pledges of my spirit. (*Tr.* 2.61-66)

In recapitulation, then, the crux of Ovid's gripe with Augustus seems to be that Augustus concedes to himself power that Ovid considers rightfully his: that is, Augustus is keen to be for the entire world the "Prime Reader" who steals from Ovid the final say in evaluating the worth of his literature. This is odious to Ovid for two different reasons: 1) that Augustus dares to make himself a literary and hermeneutical rival to Ovid, and 2) and that Augustus misapplies political power, conflating his role as *princeps* with that of literary authority. Simply, Ovid demarcates the spheres of politics and arts. Those who wield civic power should not overstep their bounds by posing as artistic experts, nor should the artists masquerade as helmsmen at the ship of state, hearkening back to the sentiment (*Met.* 15.858ff.) that Jupiter has his place in heaven, Augustus in Rome, and Ovid in eternity.

And so it seems that in one sense Augustus is victorious in the hermeneutical conflict, as might makes right where power to exile is concerned. However, Ovid's Augustan construct is guilty as charged of superimposing his political stature upon the world of literature, imposing restrictions upon a domain outside his dominion. According to Ovid's rationale, Augustus breaks the rule of domain containment—the rule dictating that power in a given sphere does not automatically translate into equivalent power in another field.

But Ovid doesn't let relegation stop him from writing what he wants. Unwittingly, Augustus facilitates Ovid's continued genre-bending, reader-steering verbal manipulation by

giving him a new set of circumstances to explore and an authoritarian ruler's clemency to implore. Not only is Augustus incapable of stripping Ovid from Ovid, he is powerless to effect in him any transformation, save that wrought by exile—and this Ovid uses to his creative advantage. In the exile poetry, Ovid creates a poetic counterpoint of text and metatext in which his words convey something more than their surface meanings. Augustus, if he reads the wrong (i.e., encomiastic) set of cues, can't decipher this underlying message. In this way, Ovid succeeds both in paying lip-service to Augustus and in encrypting a subversive message within the same words of (ostensible) acclaim.

It is no wonder, with this richness of text and assemblage of mixed signals, that among scholars there has been—and continues to be—such a keen interest in Ovidian literature. The chutzpah that Ovid displays in such a revolutionary fusion of genres contributes to an unparalleled depth of hermeneutical possibilities. In such a complex tapestry of words, the threads of meaning are not always clearly discernible; the potential for scholarly debate is nearly inexhaustible. In this way, Ovid has done much both to perpetuate his song and to provoke his readers. Bringing his times to our own, Ovid has created an enduring text: his poetry is read even now, and, while its full meaning and impact may escape us, the greater part of him still remains.

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