

# The Year Ovid went into Exile; the Astronomical Importance of Tristia 1.3

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***Abstract** We adopt the premise that Ovid left Rome to travel to Tomis late in the year 9 CE, This dating runs counter to the general consensus which sees Ovid being exiled in 8 CE. By assuming that all Ovid's references to the night sky in Tristia 1.3 are intended to be taken literally rather than as decorative flourishes we use the online planetarium, Stellarium, to help us plot the timing of the events that led to Ovid's departure from Rome in the early morning of 7 December 9 CE. We verify our findings by reference to Ovid's date of birth and by an astrological investigation of the night sky as it manifests itself on that date. We conclude that it is difficult to argue that Ovid arrived in Romania earlier or later than December 9 CE. This article also has three further agendas, namely to attract attention to (a) the ragged state of our literary texts which are more corrupt than we realise (b) the need to encourage anyone competent in handling the elegiac metre to feel they have a role to play in emending these texts (c) the need to pay more than mere lip-service to the notion of the 'doctus poeta'*

***Key-words:** Venus; star; planet; December; time; text; night; sky; Sun; Moon; Earth*

## 1. The 'Doctus Poeta' and the Copyists

We believe Ovid left Rome and arrived at Tomis within the month of December during the last days of the year 9 CE. The evidence we will present for this finding will be based on a reading of the poem Tristia 1.3. In a future article we intend to examine the rest of the Tristia and the entirety of the Ex Ponto from the same angle. The majority of scholars hold that Ovid left Rome in 8 CE. The difficulty we will encounter in defending our position is not that we will be swimming against the scholarly tide. In fact it should be reasonably straightforward to verify the chronology of Ovid's departure from Rome based on his references to the night sky. The availability of online planetaria enables us to check whether, for instance, the poem Tristia 1.3 can be relied upon when it suggests that from the environs of Rome, Venus rose as the Morning Star less than an hour before dawn during early-to-mid December in one particular year.

Instead, the difficulties we face are either of Ovid's - and of the superficial reader's - own making, or are caused by the processes by which the texts have come down to us. Ovid is a poet who enjoys setting the reader a challenge. Ironically, he will be particularly difficult to fully grasp by the reader who perfectly construes the superficial meaning of a passage. The complacency of the reader is this author's greatest weapon in the battle to keep his wider meaning hidden. For instance, to the superficial reader, at Metamorphoses 8.182, Ovid will be in error in placing the constellation Corona Borealis between the Serpent-Holder (Ophiouchos) and Hercules (the 'One who Leans on a Knee' or 'Engonasin'). In fact Corona's position is correctly identified by Ovid. Three of Corona's stars, Iota, Epsilon, and Delta huddle near the 16-hour line of Right Ascension. Further north beside this same line is the star Chi Engonaseos. Further south is the three-star Serpentis Caput. A straight line will join all three constellations at this point. This line does not connect the principal areas of these three constellations, but that is not the issue.

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There is a second difficulty in proving 9 CE is the year in which Romania's first national poet arrived on the shores of Constanța. Ovid cannot be held accountable for the process of textual corruption that has affected the *Tristia* and *Ex Ponto* disproportionately. Yet the condition of the texts also presents an opportunity. Amateurs in the field of textual criticism, particularly those who have no background in Palaeography are likely to have a more panoramic perspective upon the search for the parameters of a particular crux, and upon the identification of candidates for the roles in any subsequent emendation. Moreover, amateurs may be more inclined to doubt a passage that has hitherto provoked no suspicion. They may also have the temerity to challenge and provide solutions for entire lines rather than a word here or there. For our view is that the results achieved by applying traditional methods of textual criticism to the rectification of ancient texts have been so meagre that Palaeographers should positively welcome an influx of creativity into all stages of the process of defining the text.

We do not underestimate the size of the task facing textual critics. Along with others, for instance, we dispute the reading of *Tr.* 1.3.99-100, where the speaker threatens suicide only to withdraw the threat under advice. On the narratological and psychological levels the lines are perfectly coherent. We expect more of a great poet however and would question their failure here to make literary capital out of the convergence of the themes of death, delay, and recalling to mind, the words for which in Latin are very similar ('*morior, moror, memoro*'). Meanwhile scribes tend to attempt monolinear clarification of difficult passages through appending synonyms or etymological roots. There is an inevitable drift towards the easily comprehensible which is exacerbated by the scribe having to hand the clarificatory (i.e. 'simplificatory') marginal thoughts of his predecessors. In the end the interlinear gloss becomes part of the text and perhaps even vice versa. At the same time we have long advocated the ametrical redivision of the texts of Ovid and others as a methodology for - almost literally - reading between the lines. Passages that contain such double readings are almost inevitably going to betray a slight awkwardness as the poet effectively struggles to convey two texts (or more) at the same time. Readers of Aratus may recognise the same lack of fluency in his work. The failure of an excerpt - especially an Ovidian one - to flow will render an over-zealous scribe very ill-at-ease. We would therefore put the need to recapture such subtextual passages high on the list of Palaeographical priorities. There is much to be gained here. To give a small example, we will suggest that the passage '*contigit extinctos ore tremente focus*' (*Tr.* 1.3.44), can be emended both to rescue the narrative from illogicality, and to preserve a subtextual redivision of the letters as a comment on the narrative, and to engage with the well-established literary interface between *Tristia* 1.3, the Sack of Troy, and the theme of literary retrospection.

Lastly, part of the responsibility for leaving ancient texts severely under-appreciated is ours for not having taken on the mantle of the ideal reader that Ovid would have us be. Here we refer to the '*candidus lector*' of *Tristia* 1.11.35 and 4.10.32. This reader is one who takes the author at his word. He or she is committed to the belief that everything the poet says is true, to the extent that they will interpret the poet's figures of speech or Alexandrianisms literally. Thus if Ovid were to suggest that *Ursa Major* had turned around on its axis ('*versa ab axe suo ... erat*': *Tr.* 1.3.44), we should make it our business to identify in what sense *Ursa Major* owns an axis which it uses as a hinge in order to turn 180 degrees.

## **2. Venus Rising: the Astronomical Evidence for December 9 CE**

The ancients plundered the world around them for signs of the future. They had a deep attachment to omens, of which many would arise from verbal double meanings. However reliance on visual omens garnered from the night sky was also widespread. Indeed the

proactive search for more or less out-of-the ordinary celestial phenomena was embedded in the Roman political system<sup>2</sup>. This brings us to the more or less routine omen of the imminence of dawn in the person of and in the appearance of Venus, the Morning Star. We say 'routine' because, remarkably, between 4 April 9 CE and 7 December 9 CE, Venus had been faithfully heralding dawn by appearing daily in the darkness of the eastern skies. Towards the end of this long 'reign' she had also presided over the period from 31 October to 7 December during which the waiting time between her rising and the Sun's appearance had fallen from 96 minutes to 45.5 minutes. She had been working on two levels. Her daily chore was to introduce the rising of the Sun. However on a day-to-day basis she was also concerned to keep shortening the time the public would have to wait to see the Sun rise, once she had made her own appearance. Eventually on the morning of 6 December Venus rose only 48 minutes ahead of the Sun<sup>3</sup>. Here the routine comes to a halt. As Pliny tells us at NH 19.218, even Venus becomes invisible once the Sun rises less than 45 minutes behind her. Thus it is the eventual non-appearance of Venus that will have concentrated minds, never more so than on December 6th and 7th CE 9.

At this point we should inject some verisimilitude into events taking place in Ovid's house. It is situated high on the Capitoline Hill, though not so high that those inside could see the waters of the Adriatic from which Venus was expected to appear. That is, although forty-five minutes before dawn on the 7th December Ovid's 'familia' will be huddled around any and every vantage point with a view towards the skies over Bari or Brindisi, they will not be expecting to see Venus. Rather they will be awaiting what the Romans called 'iubar' ('the first glimmer of sunlight'). To explain we begin with the length of that December day. From empirical experience, the Romans will have known the length of each calendrical night throughout the year. This one was scheduled to last 14 hours and 53 minutes from sunset to sunrise, though this figure falls to 14 hours 8 minutes for the period star-rise to sunset. Meanwhile on the basis of the period from 31 October to the current night (a period when the Sun was overhauling Venus dawn by dawn) Ovid will have known that Venus was scheduled to be briefly visible as it rose almost exactly 45 minutes and 30 seconds ahead of the Sun at 05.47. That rising will not have been witnessed by anyone in Rome since to have had any prospect of seeing the - in any case fleeting - appearance of Venus, a Roman resident would have to have been able to peer over the Apennines in the direction of Brindisi. Yet despite this, those in Ovid's household will have known when Venus had risen thanks to the 'iubar' or 'first gleam of the Sun' which will have accompanied Venus' rising. This 'iubar' is what sparks Ovid's Mettus-like sense of separation and provokes the ululations and breast-beating of the women (Tr. 1.3.73-78). To summarise, unseen by anyone in Rome, Venus rises from the Adriatic horizon at 05.47 on December 7th. The Sun will not be seen in Rome until an hour later given (a) the further 45 minutes it requires for the Sun, following Venus' appearance, to be seen emerging from the Adriatic from e.g Bari and (b) the extra 15 minutes it needs to become visible from Rome over the crest of the Apennines<sup>4</sup>. On this one day, because Venus is only 45 minutes ahead of the Sun, the Sun's 'iubar' from behind the Apennines will effectively inform Ovid that Venus has risen.

It had been while Ovid was still talking that Venus had been reported to have risen. Moreover the only speaker at the time will have been Ovid ('dum loquor ...'). His words seem to have caused general grief ('flemus'). The poet must be referring to the emotive speech contained in lines 61-68 and particularly the last 7 words in which there would have

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<sup>2</sup> 'Servare de caelo'. See Cicero *ad Atticum* 4.3.3

<sup>3</sup> Routines came and went in astral circles. From late Summer 7 CE to April 8 CE Venus is again the Morning Star. From then until April 9 CE she does not spend even one day introducing the Sun. Thus December 8 CE is astronomically not a possible date for Ovid's journey into exile. In December 10 CE however Venus does rise ahead of the Sun

<sup>4</sup> To clarify, the official and only recordable rising of Venus will be its oceanic rising. By contrast the timing of the Sun's risings and settings in any one place, will be much dependent upon the local terrain.

been no mention of ‘the single hour’ remaining unless just at that moment Ovid had been apprised of Venus's rising by the first flicker of the ‘iubar’ catching his eye. This is why Ovid stops speaking before line 69. The first glimpse of sunlight means that Venus **had** already risen at least 30 seconds earlier and **while** Ovid **was** speaking<sup>5</sup>. This is when we should locate the women’s self-flagellation and Ovid’s feelings of dismemberment. Simultaneously Ovid will be embracing everyone there (70) and giving them the ‘oscula summa’ (58)<sup>6</sup> even as they are in the rapture of their grief. This is crystallised by his wife's actions as Ovid goes to her last to hold her before leaving (‘umeris abeuntis inhaerens’: 79). She clings on to him in despair.

We will continue to go backwards in order to clarify Ovid’s timetable for departure. He becomes very exercised when he realises there is only an hour left before sunrise. At the risk of creating bathos we would point out that the Caesarian Law on the Municipalities introduced in 44 BCE. had banned ‘plaustra’ from the streets of Rome during daylight hours. This had the eminently foreseeable result of causing queues at the city gates as the country folk hurried to leave the city before sanctions were imposed after dawn. The law did not apply to litters but neither would Ovid have wished to risk delay at the beginning of a journey on which his life depended.

Ovid next notes that the ‘hour that is given [to him] is to be entered in the profit margin’ (1.3.67-68). On the face of it, this is merely a gnomic aide, articulating a sense of ‘carpe diem’ (‘dum licet amplectar; numquam fortasse licebit / amplius: in lucro est quae datur hora mihi; ‘while it is allowed, let me embrace [you] for never perhaps will it be allowed again; the hour that is given me is chalked up to profit’). However certain aspects of the line recall Lucretius. Firstly there is the rapid repetition of a word in ‘licet... licebit’ as affected by Lucretius at 2.4-5 ‘suave est / suave’; and 2.80-83: ‘rerum.../... rerum... vagaris .../... vagantur’). Secondly ‘snatching the hour’ is the *bete noire* of Lucretian philosophy. Yet Ovid does not snatch his hour for personal pleasure. He has an hour left which like an accountant he chalks up to clear profit (‘in lucro est ... hora’). This in itself constitutes a rejoinder to Lucretius’ presentation of men bemoaning their brief enjoyment of life at 3.914-915. Indeed the phrasing of DRN 3.916 is so close to Ovid’s text that we can be confident Ovid has Lucretius in mind (‘neque post unquam revocare licebit’ = ‘numquam fortasse licebit). In contrast to those who live regretting that the pleasures of a fleeting hour on Earth cannot be repeated after death, Ovid is determined to make use of the hour to embrace everyone. In this respect his leave-taking is not an activity that he will ‘miss’ when dead (as distinct from the targets of Lucretius’ satire). For Ovid his farewells are preparation for death. Meanwhile the word ‘perhaps’ (‘perhaps it will never be permitted to embrace again’) is a wry glance at the eternal, insensate death Lucretius envisages for everyone. Ovid’s death is not necessarily one that comes under the terms of the *De Rerum Natura*. It is a death with hope of a form of reincarnation since there might be life again in Rome if he is ‘recalled’. ‘Revocare’ is precisely the verb that Ovid does not quote from DRN 3.916 (‘revocare’) making it all the more emphatic. To ‘recall [to mind]’ could reasonably be considered the

<sup>5</sup> The description of Venus as ‘stella gravis’ is unexpected. One would have thought Ovid’s patroness goddess from the early lines of *Fasti* 4 would be a good omen for the poet. Perhaps the association of Venus with the Caesarian power faction in Rome will have rendered Venus as ‘oppressive’ as Augustus. Equally however the nexus can be interpreted as a reference to a creative etymology of the word ‘gravastellus’ (P. Festus 96M) which surely derives from ‘gravis’ and ‘tellus’ not ‘gravis’ and ‘stella’. Ovid had turned 50 in the year he was exiled (see below), making him officially a pensioner. The word ‘gravastellus’ (‘old-timer’ lit. ‘heavy earth’) puns on the traditional ‘adieu’ to the Roman dead of ‘sit tibi terra levis’ (‘may the earth lie lightly upon you’). Logically this suggested that the earth was most likely to lie heavily upon the dead as otherwise the prayer would be otiose. Thus the ‘old’ as the ‘nearly dead’ will be comically targeted by a word that means ‘heavy earth’, Ovid often refers to his quinquagenarian status (Ibis 1) and, punningly, to his desire for a ‘lighter’ and ‘less heavy’ earth (i.e. ‘land’) in which to spend his ‘living death’ (Tr.3.8.42).

<sup>6</sup> Note that the poetics of exile-as-death lie behind these ‘final kisses’. The deceased were kissed as they expired in order that their departing ‘spirit’ (‘anima’ - ‘breath’ ‘soul’) be caught.

main theme of *Tristia* 1.3. It surfaces as early as line 1 ('cum subit tristissima imago'). It resurfaces allusively through near-synonyms at lines 60 and 100 ('respiciens', 'respectu'). Similarly at 1.3.55 ('ter sum revocatus') Ovid is also 'recalled' from his abortive attempts to leave the house<sup>7</sup>. In clasping his nearest and dearest to his heart ('complectens proxima meo animo') he is also 'retaining them in mind' and 'gathering them to his thoughts' ('revoco')<sup>8</sup>.

Ovid's earlier vignette in which he is denied for eternity his 'living' wife along with the 'sweet members of the faithful household' (1.3.63-64) strongly recalls the Lucretian passage 3.894-896 where the soon-to-be deceased father imagines the same eternal loss. In Lucretius' eyes, neither Ovid nor the Lucretian *paterfamilias* realise that Death is obliteration, such that no one will be any more or less dead than anyone else in the context of eternity (DRN 3.1091-1094). However Ovid envisages an immortal bond between himself and his 'sodales' of Thesean-Pirithoan proportions. Like Pirithoos Ovid has friendships that will transcend the parameters of the particular Hades to which the poet is consigned (Tr.1.3.64).

The most telling allusion to Lucretius is mediated by the word 'hora', namely the one hour that is still available to Ovid before, as it were, he passes away. This conjures up lines 3.1073-1074 of Lucretius' epic where a man's state over the length of an hour should, he argues, be of no consequence viz-a-viz his condition over the course of eternity ('status ... unius horae'). Lucretius illustrates his theme by reference to the terminally bored who flit from town to country seeking an elusive 'better state' in the short (one-hour) term (3.1053f). Ovid by contrast creates an eternal bond during the first few minutes of the hour he has been gifted (Tr.1.3.69f). We calculate that in no more than three minutes after ceasing to talk when Venus rises, Ovid is gone from the house. He leaves with 57 minus of his 'bonus' hour unused. As we discuss elsewhere he will need these minutes in order to complete his journey to Tomis<sup>9</sup>.

### 3. The Construction of the word 'Lucretius'

With Lucifer risen (72) Ovid has the time and inclination for a brief pun on 'exoritur', which articulates the fact that 'the wailing and groaning arises' ('tum vero exoritur clamor gemitusque meorum': Tr.1.3.77) at the same time as Lucifer itself 'arises' ('ortus erat')<sup>10</sup>. However, much more significant are the repeated references to 'embracing' in lines Tr.1.3.67-70 which we consider to play a metapoetic role in the same context ('dum licet, amplectar: numquam fortasse licebit / amplius, in lucro est quae datur hora mihi.'/ nec mora, sermonis

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<sup>7</sup> With the subplot of a recall to Rome

<sup>8</sup> 'Revoco' is a verb the reader has 'to recall to mind'. With 'lumina' and 'gradum' as objects the verb also means to 'walk' or 'gaze' backwards' (see 'respiciens' and 'respectu' above). Ovid is also *repeatedly* recalled from the threshold as he tries to leave

<sup>9</sup> See *Disiecta Membra* (2019)

<sup>10</sup> Note that an anagram of '**Lucifer ortus erat**' produces a sepulchral leave-taking between Ovid and Lucretius ('**Lucretio, frater! s[alve] v[ale]**'). See Servius' commentary ad Aeneid. 5.81 & 11.98. The dead were bidden farewell with the formula 'salve, vale'. Its popularity is shown by the Greek translation 'χαίρε και ὑγιαίνε' By the syntactical logic of Virgil's 'salve aeternum mihi, maxime Pallas ... vale' (Aeneid 11.97-98) and Achilles' address to the dead Patroclus ('χαῖρέ μοι ὦ Πάτροκλε': Iliad 23.19), our anagram could be addressed **to** Ovid **by** Lucretius. There is some humour in the notion that Ovid had been talking ('dum loquor') only to be interrupted by Lucretius' 'farewell'. Ironically Lucretius finds himself 'living' an afterlife after all despite his literary insistence on the illusoriness of the Underworld. See also ILLRP 208 (CIL 1<sup>2</sup> 819). Another possibility lies in 'Lucretio frater s(olvit) v(otum)' meaning 'his brother [Ovid] has discharged his promise viz-a-viz Lucretius'. Such an inscription, would commonly be attached to whatever monument was meant to pay the promise. Ovid has made good his promise in trying to promote the DRN through his monument of literature. The original text taken in tandem with the anagram is intended to draw attention to Lucretius' Prologue and the effervescence of Spring. At *Fasti* 2.149-150 Ovid confirms Lucifer's role in the beginning of Spring at the start of 'iubar', 'iubar' being precisely the moment we are dealing with here. In our book *Disiecta Membra* (2019) we further discuss the service Ovid does to Lucretius by intextualising at the start of *Fasti* 4. Lastly, the text of the anagram could also sardonically mean 'his brother wishes Lucretius *'health'* ['Lucretio frater s(alutem) v(ult)'].

verba imperfecta relinquo / complectens animo proxima quaeque meo')<sup>11</sup>. That is, Ovid may be about to wrap letters around other letters to lock them in an eternal 'embrace' such as those present have experienced.

We begin with the heavily stressed word 'amplius' ('any more' 'any further'). Ovid manages to redouble the emphasis it enjoys by virtue of its position by insinuating a reference to its positive adverb 'ample' which lurks 'wrapped' inside the word 'AMPLEctar' the meaning of which ('let me wrap one thing around another') articulates allegorically the procedure about to be followed here. Now in Greek, 'amplius', in the sense given it here, could be translated by the word 'ἔτι' ('any longer'). If we now read line 68 in isolation we hear Ovid making textual realignments. Thus if 'amplius' is literally in 'lucro' we might, as the 'candidus lector' be tempted to put its synonym 'ἔτι' ('eti') inside 'lucro'. This will produce the word 'LUCRETIO'. Ovid has therefore successfully ensconced letters within the embrace of other letters. The operation of Lucretius' atomic universe has just become manifest with pieces of text 'tearing' their way like the atoms of Lucretian absinthia into the inner workings of Ovid's poem. If we now understand 'amplius in lucro est' as an off-stage direction we can introduce the word 'Lucretio' into the text to produce the following passage: 'numquam fortasse licebit Lucretio quae datur ora mihi'. This makes excellent sense and indeed the syntax of 'quae datur' has become more limpid ('perhaps the hour that is given me will never be permitted to Lucretius?'). This has the potential to express not just meaning but profound meaning. Firstly there is a tongue-in-cheek reference ('perhaps') to the deceased Lucretius who did not believe in reincarnation yet who (if he were wrong) might be recycled for perhaps even less than an hour as a new soul on earth. Meanwhile the quality of the hour is uppermost in Ovid's mind. The truncated hour given Ovid (of which perhaps only three minutes have been spent in the warmth of final embraces) is unlikely to be experienced by anyone again, never mind Lucretius<sup>12</sup>. More poignantly we suggest that these last minutes spent in Ovid's house were of a kind that could only be experienced by those whose emotions were not as restrained as those exhibited by Lucretius. Ovid recalls how his friends all hugged him even as he now allows alphabetic letters to hug other letters in order to express the warmth of human solidarity through the new text that emerges. To recapitulate, such an hour will perhaps not be accorded the long-dead Lucretius if one assumes that (a) reincarnation does not exist, and that (b) even if it did, Lucretius would be incapable of experiencing such an hour. Further insight into this 'hour' can be gained by transliterating 'hora' into Greek letters just as we transliterated 'ἔτι' into Latin. The word ὥρα in Greek means 'care' 'concern' 'attention' which qualifies the sort of treatment Ovid receives from his friends during this time. Meanwhile according to Hesychius the word 'ὥρα' also means 'εὐμορφία' or simply 'μορφή' ('shape, beauty, form'). This would most happily relate to the extraordinary re-shapeliness or re-form-ulation of Ovid's words which is born of an artistic gift unlikely to be enjoyed by anyone else, Lucretius excepted perhaps.

The Latin word 'ora' should not be omitted from the list of candidates to replace 'hora' in the text. In the early empire the absence of the aspirate will not have caused a Roman any difficulty in receiving the word 'ora' as though it were 'hora'. 'Ora', as a feminine substantive, means 'a coastal stretch of land' 'a country' 'region'. This brings us to Pontus on the left of the Euxine Sea and the area of Tomis itself. Lucretius was not exiled, nor was he sent to the far parts of the empire (i.e. that particular 'ora' was not given to him). Furthermore, the meaning of 'ora' as 'margin' 'edge' will remind us that Pontus lay at the farthest extremes of the empire.

<sup>11</sup> See above for translation.

<sup>12</sup> It is important to recall that of this promised hour ('quae data ora') Ovid does not get to enjoy more than a fraction. This in itself constitutes a critique of Lucretius' argument. Far from time being important to the non-Epicurean, Ovid does not require even a fraction of the Lucretian atomic particle of time in order to acquire peace of mind.

#### 4. Roman Nocturnal Time-Keeping; Ovid's Abortive Attempts to Leave Rome

We mentioned Ovid's 'familia' peering towards the Apennines, waiting for the 'iubar'. If there are any members in the atrium they may be paying particular attention to the compluvium. For, we suggest that the Romans could calculate the passage of nocturnal time based on markings (perhaps detachable, movable ones, though also of the painted variety) along the edge of the square aperture in the atrium roof called the 'compluvium', which is normally associated with directing rain water into the 'impluvium' below. The stargazer from a particular position on the atrium floor could have aligned these markings with the stars of the Great Bear in order to determine the passage of the night in units of an hour or perhaps much less<sup>13</sup>. The Greeks and Romans, as we shall argue, could have extrapolated the line Merak-Dubhe in Ursa Major towards Polaris to create an effective clock-hand on a clock-face. Polaris would have constituted the fulcrum. From the more or less maritime position of Rome, the Romans would have witnessed daily (weather permitting) the sun sinking into the Tyrrhenian Sea. They knew the stars would begin to appear 45 minutes later. This would have been the effective beginning of the measurable night. For the rest of the night, the hours could have been marked off by calibrating the angle of Ursa Major's last two stars viz-a-viz the pole-star. As we shall see there is much evidence of the use of such a 'clock' in Tristia 3.

We continue plotting the time-scale of the events of Ovid's last night in Rome. Firstly we find it impossible to reconcile Ovid's words at Tr.1.3.53-54 with Roman practices unless we assume that our thesis that the Romans could calculate the passage of single hours at night is correct. If Ovid claims there were specific times ('certam ... horam') at which his departure was well-omened, he would have seemed foolish in not being able to support that claim. In fact in 'touching the threshold three times' (55) it is clear that Ovid did take action at 'fixed times'. These 'fixed times' will have been the exact times of the individual hours calculated by reference to Ursa Major ('certam ... horam' = 'definable time' 'top of the hour' 'reliable fixed hour'). Now if the first hour of definable darkness on December 6th 9 CE began at 16.24 UTC (45 minutes after sunset) then all the succeeding fixed hours will end with the figure .24 according to our clocks (19.24, 20.24 and so on). The last such hour before dawn (06.32) will have been 06.24. But Ovid leaves three minutes after Venus rises at 05.50. Thus his last 'top of the hour' spent in the house will be 05.24.<sup>14</sup>

We will now assume 05.24 is the time when Ovid makes his last half-hearted attempt to leave at a fixed hour. The problem is that on each of these three occasions Ovid reaches the threshold and having said 'farewell' at the right time (05.24 for example) he then says a lot more ('vale dicto sum multa locutus': 57). He repeats his instructions ('eadem mandata': 59) looks back at his dependents, and even gives the last formal kiss. But on each occasion we must assume that he cannot tear himself away and decides to touch the threshold (55) in order that the ill-omen should override the obligation to depart. Thus on each occasion having arrived at the threshold at 24 minutes past the hour Ovid finds himself, we think, returning at 46 minutes past the hour. On the last such occasion ('denique': 61) he makes the speech recorded at lines 61-68. As he reaches the end of line 68 he notices the faint 'iubar' outside. It is now 05.47 and Venus has just risen over Brindisi. Ovid must leave. He knows he has exactly one hour before the Sun rises over the 7 hills of Rome.

We will also assume that another such *ersatz* departure took place at the previous 'top of the hour' at 04.24. However at 03.24 something else is afoot. At lines 47-48 Ovid peers up

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<sup>13</sup> The military 'night-watch' was divided into hours.

<sup>14</sup> If one follows the night, hour by hour, the clock-hand of Merak-Dubhe-Polaris will mark off the hours (moving anticlockwise) in units of what appear to be half-hours according to our clock faces. Thus by 21.39 this clock-hand will have reached the position of three o'clock, our time. That is, six hours have passed in what appears (visually) to be three hours (six of the Merak-Dubhe-Polaris half-hours). Thus in fact, each hour that passes on the ancient night sky according to the schema we are familiar with from our clock faces, represents two hours in reality.

through the compluvium and looks at Ursa Major. What he sees is the hand of Merak-Dubhe stretching towards Polaris at a position slightly towards the 11.00 side of strictly vertical. In other words it is already later than 03.24 because as Ovid says the Bear ‘had already turned on its axis’.(anticlockwise). This latter phrase requires elucidation. Ursa Major seems to own the pole-star at Tr.1.3.48 (‘ab axe suo’). And elsewhere in Ovid, the northern polar star is similarly thought to belong to Ursa Major in the sense that (a) the constellation represents Callisto the descendant of Lycaon, and (b) the constellation is described as ‘Lycaonian’ (‘quaeque **Lycaonio** terra sub **axe** iacet’: Tr.3.2.2; ‘**Lycaonian** .... **Arcton**’:Fasti 3.793).

Effectively at 03.24 plus several more minutes Ovid notices that the Great Bear has rotated viz-a-viz its Polaris by just over 180 degrees. That is the degree of turn that such as Janus would find normal. One assumes Ovid has just re-entered the atrium and now glances up at the Great Bear. There are two other instances when Ovid returns to the atrium and they have been described above. This current one, we suggest, is, chronologically, the first, during which Ovid makes stringent efforts to leave. That is, Ovid has just been to the fauces to say his final prayers to the Lares. To judge by the other abortive attempts to leave, Ovid will have returned to the atrium from the fauces’ threshold at 03.24 plus 22 minutes (03.46). Anyone consulting Stellarium will find that the Merak-Dubhe-Polaris line is slightly to the left of vertical at 03.46. It had therefore already ‘turned on’ [i.e. turned viz-a-viz] its axis, namely Polaris (line 47).The sense that this line is about to topple to the left is tangible and has inspired Ovid to describe Night (rather than ‘Ursa Major’ ) as ‘having fallen from a height abruptly’ (‘praecipitata’).

We would now wish to know when Ovid left to go to the fauces (‘entrance hall’) on this first occasion. The ‘top of the hour’ will have been 03.24 but Ovid we think has formalities to perform on this occasion which will not require repeating on the second and third occasions. Principal among these is a prayer to the Lares of the fauces. For these formalities we think Ovid approaches the Lares shrine high up to the left of the fauces fifteen minutes early at 03.09. How Ovid knows that the hour is 03.09 must be a function of the accuracy of his compluvium clock.

## 5. Ovid’s prayer to the Capitoline Temple and what he could not see

We know that Ovid’s wife may still be (or ‘also be’: 43) in front of these Lares which are not those of the main shrine in the ‘tablinum’. With her prostrate in the fauces, we can reconstruct the circumstances of Ovid’s address to the gods. He has left the atrium and now takes his stand in the fauces before the left-hand *lararium*. As in the House of the Faun in Pompeii, there are two shrines facing each other high up on the wall of the ‘fauces’ just inside the twin doors or ‘fores’. The two shrines mimic the façades of a temple and readily bring the Capitolia to mind.

Now on the basis of Tr. 1.3.30-31, Ovid’s house is, we think, the last on the left of the *angiportus* Clivi Capitolini, mentioned by Festus. This cul-de-sac climbs from the level of the forum to traverse the face of the Capitoline hill. At the last minute, it turns 90 degrees to the right to meet the gate that leads into the temple precinct. Thus Ovid’s house, if it is the last house on the left at the top, will face north-east (not north-west as in the case of the rest of the houses on the left). Ovid, standing beside the lararium, turns 90 degrees to his left to face the lararium head on. The Capitoline temple meanwhile will be immediately behind the lararium to the north-west in the distance. Had the poet been able to look just to the south of northwest past the left side [from Ovid’s perspective] of the pediment of the Capitoline temple, he would have seen an unusual alignment, assuming the night in question were 6-7 December 9 CE and the clocks were now striking 03.09. Given that the events of lines 29-30 precede those

of 47-48, the time will be about fifteen minutes before Ursa Major has turned on its polar axis (03.24). We have examined the exactness of these timings above.

All we are told by Ovid is that the voices of ‘dogs’ and ‘humans’ are beginning to grow quiet (‘iamque quiescebant voces hominumque canumque’: Tr.1.3.27). However this situates us comfortably within an *angiportus* for in Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* there are four references to dogs in an *angiportus*<sup>15</sup>. Ovid essentially will be gazing westwards past the last column of the Capitoline temple. Low in the sky to the southwest is Sirius, the principal star of the constellation Canis Major or the Greater Dog. In fact the tip of the Dog’s rear left paw is touching ground level which naturalistically represents a terrestrial dog running along the *angiportus*. However, as in the case of all constellations situated to the west, Sirius will be setting. In front of him the Hare or Lepus is already more than half buried in a rabbit-hole. As we now look upwards from Sirius our gaze falls on Procyon, the Fore-Dog, and the principal star of the Lesser Dog constellation of Canis Minor. As our eyes continue to scan upwards, we see the planet Juppiter in the constellation of Cancer. It lies almost directly above Sirius and Procyon. Juppiter will appear to Ovid (if he could see him) to be aligned with the spot where Juppiter’s statue stood high within the pediment<sup>16</sup>. That is, ‘the dogs and the men’ in the ‘*angiportus*’ seem to have their counterparts not only in the sky but perhaps on the temple too. Meanwhile there is a triangular or ‘pedimental’ schema emerging from the positions of the celestial actors in this narrative. The edge of the celestial pediment is articulated by the lower slanting horn of Taurus which connects Jupiter’s head to the Pleiades. On the other side the gunwale of the Argo and its lower sail takes the eye down to the other corner of this celestial pediment marked by the star Markeb<sup>17</sup>. Thus a celestial pediment has been outlined. Below and to the other side of Jupiter is Orion. As the hunter, with club raised, he is thought to be trying to catch the Pleiades, the star-grouping known also as the Seven Sisters, but typically represented as ‘doves’. Orion is the hunter out with his two dogs trying to catch a small flock of birds. Both the star Rigel (Orion’s left knee) and the Pleiades are on the horizon. Like the dog Sirius they are about to ‘go quiet’ (‘hominum’ = ‘men’ and ‘women’).

Now Catullus (poem 58) describes a type of priapic upper-class male that frequents the ‘angiporti’ in the early hours of the morning. They (‘the great-hearted descendants of Remus’) are there to copulate with Catullus’ former love Lesbia. The scene in Catullus is a chastening tale of loving the wrong sort of girl. Meanwhile it does not take much imagination to read *Tristia*’s Orion as the alcohol-fuelled aristocrat chasing a gaggle of girls (the Pleiades) through the back lanes of Rome. As we have seen his amorous quest is at an end as he ‘grows quiet’. The ‘howling of men and dogs’ in the text is thus defined as coming from two celestial curs, a beefy club-wielding (= ‘penis-wielding’)<sup>18</sup> patrician, and a bevy of young women. All of them are about to call it a night (‘quiescebant’)<sup>19</sup>. Before they disappear however, the uproarious Orion and perhaps barking dogs have another need to attend to which will produce its own

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<sup>15</sup> Met. 1.21 (a mad dog escapes from the next parallel *angiportus* by a back door) ; 3.2; 4.20; 9.25.

<sup>16</sup> See however the figures adorning the corners and apex of the Capitolium pediment in Pompeii. Jupiter could be a free-standing statue in Ovid’s schema though we think the celestial ‘diagram’ places Jupiter within the pediment

<sup>17</sup> The staged ‘setting’ of all these constellations together reminds us that the Pleiades set with Orion on 11<sup>th</sup> November accompanied by a storm (Geminus, following Eudoxus). Meanwhile Sirius was typically thought to set in the morning on 1 December (e.g. the Aetius ‘*parapegma*’) when it brought on disturbed conditions. In Clodius Tuscus, Orion does the same on 1 December accompanied by an arctic wind. Geminus has Orion and Sirius setting together in the morning of 28 November whilst signalling ‘storminess’. If Ovid could see the omens he might choose a different day for his journey. These are ‘stormy’ constellations.

<sup>18</sup> See the Greek ‘*κορυνη*’ (‘club’) and its uses at Nicander *Alexipharmaca* 409; *Anthologia Palatina* 5.128. The latter is an obscene epigram of Automedon’s which talks of the courtesan bringing back an old man’s prick from Hades. More importantly we suggest the word ‘*κορυνη*’ or ‘Koryna’ is the etymologising inspiration for the name of Ovid’s girlfriend ‘Corinna’ in the *Amores*. That is, in sex it is not so much the girl as the effect she has on you.

<sup>19</sup> The later ‘morning setting’ of the Pleiades is anticipated here. Columella calls the day ‘stormy’ when the Pleiades set in the morning on VI Ides November. Columella associates the Argo ship with storminess (s.v. 10 Kalends October). Clodius Tuscus mentions rain on the same day.

sound in the darkness. The dead-end *angiporti* were populated with large amphorae in the hope that passers-by would relieve themselves before continuing on their daily business. The pots were placed there by the fullers who prized urine as a cleansing and extracting agent in their cleaning and dyeing of woollen garments (Macrobius: 3.16.15). However, Orion's visit to the public convenience in Tr.1.3 would be mere speculation on our part were it not that the name 'Orion' is etymologised as deriving from 'οὐρον' ('urine') in the *Fasti* (5.531ff). The name given to the child at birth is 'Urion'. In being subsequently pronounced 'Orion', the first letter (originally 'u') is said by Ovid to have lost its sound.

The moment when 'the dogs and men' go quiet must be aligned with the coincidence of Sirius' back left paw, Orion's left knee and the Pleiades as a whole reaching the horizon (03.09 Stellarium). Ovid will have reached the fauces fifteen minutes early for his 03.24 departure time, pretending to have received an omen that that was the propitious time to leave (Tr.1.3.53). This will be the first of three such omens relating to 'a fixed hour'. It is after settling himself to pray and delivering the prayer to the Capitoline Gods in the 'fauces' (the text is contained in Tr.1.3.31-40) that Ursa Major 'turns on its axis' having reached its culmination at 03.24. It is now that Ursa Major is likely to be seen directly overhead through a hole in one's atrium roof. However Ovid is delayed in the fauces and only sees Ursa Major when it had already turned beyond 180 degrees.

Before we continue we make two clarifications. Firstly, in order to calculate the three 'tops of the hour' (demanded principally one imagines by oracles and omens) it stands to reason that amongst the Romans there must have existed a nocturnal counterpoint to the diurnal Sundial. Thus we suggest that the nocturnal purpose of the compluvium (besides letting the rain in) was to permit a horological view of the stars (under clear skies). Secondly on a more specific note, Ovid touches ('infringes') the threshold three times. It must be the case that Ovid has included in his calculation his original visit with his wife to the 'fauces' to pray to the 'aedicula' in the doorway. This first visit will have been timed at 03.09 (taking account of 15 minutes preparation time). The other attempts to leave will have been timed at 04.24 and 05.24. Ovid will have kept a close eye on Ursa Major as his main indicator of time (1.3.47-48)<sup>20</sup>

## 6. The Moon, the Capitolium

For the time being, we assume that Ovid left Rome in 9 CE on a day in early December when Venus was still the Morning Star. Whether that day was 7th December or earlier in the same month remains to be argued further. The astronomical evidence reveals that Venus was rising closer and closer to the Sun in the first seven days of December but at no stage would the Sun have obscured the planet's rising with its brilliance. It seems that other criteria are required now to restrict the date of Ovid's departure to one single day. Yet when we turn to the position of the Moon on the night of Ovid's departure our entire thesis seems to come under threat on more than one count. In line 28 of *Tristia* 1.3 it appears that the Moon is riding high in the sky. Yet on the night of 6-7 December 9 CE according to Stellarium the Moon spends virtually no time at all above the horizon. On the evening of December 6th the Moon had set only shortly after the sun. It rises much later than the sun on the following morning. Certainly there is no time during the night hours of 6-7 December 9 CE when the Moon could be said to be 'reining in its nocturnal horses high in the sky' ('lunaque nocturnos alta regebat equos': Tr.

<sup>20</sup> There is some significance in the fact that at dusk the Merak-Polaris hand is exactly perpendicular to the Earth on December 6-7 of 9 BCE, This makes reading the nocturnal clock easier (12 hours later the Merak-Polaris hand will be perpendicular again but now the constellation will be upside down. At other times of the year at dusk the angle of Merak-Dubhe-Polaris may be, say, 135 degrees from the perpendicular. One had to verify the position of Merak-Dubhe-Polaris as soon as dusk fell in order to be able to orient oneself during the rest of the night.

1.3.28). At the same time Ovid is thought to have seen the vast Capitolium temple by moonlight ('hanc ego suspiciens et ad hanc Capitolia cernens': 1.3.29). Indeed these moments are thought to be the last ones in which Ovid will have sight of his monumental surroundings ('iamque oculis numquam templa videnda meis'). Ovid's house, we think, adjoined the perimeter wall of the Capitoline temple's precinct. We take him at face value when he says the Capitolia was joined to his Lar and that the gods lived in a neighbouring house (Tr.1.3.30-31).

There are therefore serious grounds for supposing that our dating of Ovid's departure is wildly inaccurate. To rebuff these counter-arguments we begin with the words 'iamque ... numquam' which do not necessarily mean 'never now again' in line 32. Indeed the three bodies addressed, namely 'numina, templa, di' each have their own narrative which is linked to the others by the simple 'que'. Thus 'iam ... nunquam' should simply mean 'already ... never' ('O temples, already never to be seen [again] by my eyes'). The meaning now seems to be that, even as it is, Ovid has seen his last of Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva, the Capitoline triad. Meanwhile the Moon's presence is also far from guaranteed, as we have already seen. It is described as 'alta' ('lofty') but this word could just as well mean 'situated at a great depth'<sup>21</sup>. Ovid has a very pertinent example of this usage at *Metamorphoses* 1.630 where however the adjective is transferred from the Sun to the Earth ('cum sol tellure sub alta est'; 'when the Sun is beneath the deep Earth / deep beneath the Earth'). Moreover the word 'rego' regularly means 'I control'. The control of horses is normally associated with reining them in or preventing them from becoming agitated before a journey. It certainly does not evoke the Moon's progress over the sky. We suggest that here 'rego' indicates that the Moon's charioteer is preventing the horses from springing above the horizon.

Finally the epithet 'nocturnos' does not necessarily locate its accompanying substantive in the night sky. Pliny mentions the isle of Hiera, which was holy to Vulcan. One of its hills belched flames 'nocturnas' or 'under conditions of night' ('Hiera, quia sacra Volcano est, colle in ea nocturnas evomente flammis': NH 3.93). It is inconceivable that in this context the word 'nocturnas' means 'at night'. Indeed it will be deleterious to Pliny's didactic argument if the word 'nocturnas' does not refer to the day. The fact is that sulphur clouds in Hiera will have produced nocturnal conditions by blotting out the Sun. Thus 'nocturnas' here means 'producing darkness'.

In divorcing 'nocturnus' from any necessary connection with 'night' we may be thought to have compromised our own argument. After all, the action of *Tristia* 1.3 takes place during the night. However the word 'nocturnas' also has a technical, astronomical meaning. In our passage in *Tristia* 1.3 the time is what we would call 'night'. It is (we think) the early hours of 7th December. The Moon lies beneath the horizon. This is the subterrestrial area to which Aratus alludes in describing the lower part of Bootes as being 'benighted' or 'nocturnal' ('ἔννοχος') in line 580 of the *Phaenomena* ('μείων ἡμάτιος, τὸ δ' ἐπὶ πλέον ἔννοχος ἦδη'). Meanwhile Aratus' adjective 'by day' refers to Bootes upper body appearing 'above the horizon' at night. The scholiast puts it succinctly 'ἡματιος ὑπεργειος, ἔννοχος ὑπογειος' ('by day' means 'above the horizon'; 'by night' means 'below the horizon'). The 'nocturnal Bootes' is simply the part of Bootes that does not rise above the horizon into the night sky. This is also the case with the horses of Ovid's Moon. In being 'nocturnos' they are below the horizon.

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<sup>21</sup> The Romanian equivalent of 'altus -a -um' is 'înalt-ă' which can mean metaphorically 'profound' (see DEX s.v. 'înalt').

## 7. By the Light of the Moon

Now whilst Tristia 1.3.29 suggests that Ovid sees the Capitolia by the light of the Moon, the line must nevertheless strike the reader as ungainly with its repetition of ‘hanc’. We suspect its corruption is deep-rooted. Firstly, a line used to support the unusual sense of ‘ad hanc’ here as ‘by the light of this [Moon]’ has been misinterpreted. In *Metamorphoses* 4.220 (‘bis sex Leucothoen famulas ad lumina cernit / seria versato ducentem stamina fuso’) we suggest that the phrase ‘ad lumina’ simply means ‘at their individual oil-lamps’. It is pointless to observe that spinstresses would be seen ‘by their lights’ for there is no other means by which they could be seen. In any case one light would be sufficient for one to see a room of 12 spinstresses. By contrast, ‘at their lights’ evokes their concentration and the atmospherically divided pockets of light within the room. A similar passage in the *Fasti* (2.743: ‘lumen ad exiguum famulae data pensa trahebant’) does not mention the spinstresses ‘seeing’ but rather ‘weaving’ ‘by a meagre light’. Here the light is singular and the word ‘lumen’ evokes the sense of both ‘light’ in general and ‘individual oil-lamps’. Lucretia is nothing if not the thrifty housewife but even she would apportion one lamp each to her workforce. However our main point is that the sentence contains no overt connection between sight and light precisely because making such a connection would be otiose. There are other contexts in which ‘ad’ is related to ‘lunam’ in the sense of ‘by the light of the Moon’ but none of these mentions a verb of ‘seeing’ precisely because it is obvious that ‘seeing’ is the purpose of having the light. Thus Cicero says ‘I wrote this by the light of a lamp’ (*Ad Atticum* 13.38). ‘What is seen’ is important not ‘that one sees’. Thus Ovid might have been expected to write a line such as ‘he prayed to the Capitoline by the light of the Moon’. He will not have written the words ‘he saw the Capitoline by the light of the Moon’.

## 8. Recovering the Text

However, more than one emendation is required in line 1.3.29. Firstly those who hold that Ovid went outside to address his prayer directly to the temple, must explain why Ovid, having described members of the household crying in every corner, does not then lead the reader’s eye outside so that we are prepared for his view of the Capitoline. As the text stands, it is as if Ovid is still indoors when he gazes towards the Capitoline temple. Thus some textual way of locating Ovid’s position inside the house at his doorway is required. The first three words (‘hanc ego suspiciens’) should be replaced, we suggest, by ‘Inque fore institeram’. It does not seem unlikely that in ‘scriptio continua’ the letters INQUEFO could have been corrupted to ANCEGO especially because the letters QU were the equivalent of C. Thus in effect, the first error occurred when the initial I became an A. INQUEFO became ANQUEFO. Following this, the letters ANQU would then have been rationalised as ANC, that is, HANC. The aspirate will have been added as a hypercorrection by the scribe who will have been aware of the decline in pronouncing the ‘spiritus asper’ by late Republican times. The scribe, that is, commits the same error as Catullus’ Arrius in poem 84.

This multiple corruption of the text will have started an irreversible domino-effect forcing the scribes to make further changes which will have taken the text still further out to sea. Thus the next scribe will have assumed that EFO was a mistake for EGO persuading him to write ANCEGO (= ‘HANC EGO’). The coincidence of EFO and EGO is particularly striking. These all-too-easily made initial corruptions will have led to further alterations in order that some sense should be injected into this half-line and into the passage as a whole.

In Ovid’s *Fasti* meanwhile, at line 2.738 the phrase ‘in fore’ means ‘at the doorway’ or ‘in the doorway’. Moreover, ‘institeram’ (‘I had stopped’ but also ‘I had stood fixedly’) appears at *Fasti* 4.357 where it means ‘I had set myself to ask [a question]’. This nuance is

extremely apposite in our passage since Ovid is preparing himself for his last address to the gods of Rome, during which he has requests to make. Effectively the underlying nuance we require here is ‘I had set myself to ask through prayer’. Meanwhile the sequence of tenses (two imperfects followed by a pluperfect) with the repetition of ‘que’ three times, is a very Ovidian way of constructing a temporal vignette (‘and now.... they were growing quiet, and the Moon was restraining its steeds..., and I had set myself to speak in the doorway’). If we now punctuate with a semicolon or a full-stop after ‘institeram’ the entire passage will begin to appear much more Ovidian. However the second half of the line is also corrupt. Indeed the *Metamorphoses*’ line mentioned above (4.220), may have contributed to the infiltration of ‘cernens’ into our text. We suggest the following half-line was in Ovid’s mind: ‘meque ad Capitolia versus’ (‘and having turned towards the Capitolia, I said ...’). Virgil uses ‘meque ad’ in the same *sedes* and in a very similar context (‘meque ad tua limina, Phoebus’: *Aeneid* 3.370). In the *Aeneid*, Aeneas is being led to Phoebus’ temple. His hesitancy and awe before the god is palpable and informs Ovid’s even more understandable fear in *Tristia* 1.3. He is taking his leave of a god whose earthly equivalent, Augustus, has proved inimical. Now the deliberate way Ovid ‘takes his position’ and then turns himself towards the Capitolia is suggestive of the fact that he is orienting himself according to ritual act of observance. He finds a fixed point of repair and then turns in the direction of the Capitolia. Ovid positions himself formally for prayer but at the same time he cannot see anything of Rome.

Thus line 29 should read:

***‘inque fore institeram; meque ad<sup>22</sup> Capitolia versus /... inquam’.***

*‘And I had set myself [to speak] in the hall: orienting myself towards [where] the Capitolia [will have been], I said...’*

## **9. The Events in the ‘Fauces’**

There is much to suggest that Ovid’s wife caused such pandemonium during her stay in the ‘fauces’ that Ovid was forced to short-circuit his departure by treading on the threshold deliberately, thereby, creating an ill-omen for his departure (1.3.29-46). Indeed we suggest that his wife was kissing the doorposts (‘fores’) as well as the ‘thresholds’ but not the ‘altars’ or ‘hearths’. As it stands, the line ‘contigit extinctos ore tremente focus’ (‘she kissed the extinguished altar with trembling lips’) should be considered in the context of the extreme height at which the door-way Lares presided over the ‘fauces’. Even if there were a brazier of some small dimensions situated within reach so that one could light a speck of incense with outstretched arm, the shrine would have remained out of reach of any human lips. It is much better to emend ‘extinctos’ to ‘extremas’ whilst ‘focus’ is an understandable error for ‘fores’ (‘**contigit extremas ore tremente fores**’). Ovid’s wife (not for the last time) has prostrated herself in her transports of grief and has begun kissing the symbols of her domestic happiness. In keeping with the overt thrust of the whole poem, this deliberately recalls the behaviour of the Trojan matronae on the night Troy was sacked. ‘They wander the buildings embracing door-posts and planting kisses on them’ (*Aeneid* 2.489-490: ‘pavidae tectis matres ingentibus errant;/ amplexaeque tenent postis atque oscula figunt’).

It is important to identify the ‘extremas ... fores’. We should point out first that the word ‘extremas’ implies the presence of three sets of doors. Otherwise we would be dealing with the word ‘exteriores’. Evan Proudfoot mentions that the entrance halls often had inner doorways with a door to the atrium and a threshold. There would then be, at the end of the

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<sup>22</sup> It seems quite possible to us that Virgil was the first to think of using the phrase ‘meque ad’ (= Mecca) to articulate the name of the most famous of those religious sites that demand their worshippers always turn their faces in their direction. The Greek historian Diodorus Siculus, a contemporary of Virgil’s, speaks of a city called Bak’kah and its holy shrine in a narrow valley on the Arabian Peninsula. This may be the site of the ancient Muslim shrine of Mecca.

entrance hall, a bivalve door with its own threshold leading to the vestibule which had a trivavle door and a [stone] threshold. Thus we have the schema 'atrium / fores / entrance hall / fores / vestibule / fores / street. In Ovid's house the first interior doors could only be termed 'extremae fores' if one's perspective were from the outside of the house looking in.

The dramatic show of emotion from Ovid's wife seems however to have taken place in the central entrance hall. For line 43 suggests that she is 'even now' or 'still' ('etiam') 'in front of the Lares' ('ante Lares'). She did not accompany Ovid and the others into the fauces at 03.09. She had been praying there a long time. Her sobbing interrupting her words is typical of one who has been crying a long time (42). One must assume she had been supplicating these Lares from the very beginning. It is now after Ovid's own prayer (31-40) that she kisses the 'last doors' or 'the back of the doors' or 'the bottom of the doors'. Certainly Ovid's wife is prostrate ('adstrata': 43). Her hair is spread-eagled across the entrance hall. But whilst she does not seem to move, the tense of 'contigit' is all-important. As a perfect it suggests another phase of activity. We think it likely she will have got up to go to the 'last' doors that gave onto the street and kissed them 'on the bottom edges' and 'on the back' She kisses the stone and door simultaneously. She will not have opened these doors. The references given below reveal that thresholds as much as doorposts were the object of kissing during the proskynesis.

It is of some note that the doors leading from the entrance hall into the Vestibule opened outwards towards the Vestibule thereby allowing a distraught person to barge through into the vestibule without much ado. Perhaps having her in front of the shrine to which Ovid was praying was inconveniencing the poet. Ovid's wife, we think, gets up, and continues brusquely through the fores of the entrance hall to reach the 'fores' nearest the street where ironically in the case of the House of the Faun in Pompeii there is the inscription 'HAVE' ('welcome!'). She is desperate to interpose herself between the poet and his access to the main exit from the house. She prostrates herself for at least the third time, at which point Ovid, disinclined to step over her to leave the house, steps, as a virtual formality, onto the threshold and bows to the ill-omen by returning to the atrium and compluvium. There he sees that according to Ursa Major that he still has just missed the culmination of Ursa Major at the 'top of the hour'<sup>23</sup>.

The act of proskynesis (prostration and kissing of thresholds, doors) was well-known in ancient societies. In an amatory context, Tibullus playfully declares he would not shrink from such self-abasing behaviour were he to have deserved such a thing ('Non ego, si merui, dubitem procumbere templis / Et dare sacratis oscula liminibus': Elegies 1.5.85-86). Whilst Lucretius ('foribus oscula figere': 4.1175), followed by the Augustan poets, transformed the act of kissing doors into an aspect of the 'locked-out lover', in Virgil the original emotiveness of the act crystallises the grief of losing home as well as husband. On a more playful level, the contiguity of 'tremente' must be considered subtly etymologising of 'extremas' which will evoke 'violent trembling' ('ex' = 'extreme' and 'tremo' = I tremble). Such a symptom is another expression of extreme female passion.

The text has its quota of redivided forms. The words 'ore tremente' lend themselves to being reformed as '**oret re mente**' ('[she kissed the backs or bottom edges of the doors] **in practice, she should supplicate with composure**'). Here Ovid looks askance at effusive displays of grief and realises that the only way his wife can help him is to supplicate (Augustus) in a measured way.

To touch the threshold was an unlucky omen. Not surprisingly the invariable procedure when setting out on a journey was to avoid putting a foot on the stone at all. Ovid effectively 'cancels' his '[avowedly]' favourable temporal 'omen' by stepping on the threshold. The

<sup>23</sup> 'Extremas' will also have a sepulchral tone given that it means 'the last rites' as a neuter noun. As in the scene from Aeneid 2, These kisses are those of farewell to what is already conceived as lost.

point is however that he surely does this deliberately on each of the three occasions he tries to leave ‘at a fixed hour’. To touch the threshold on every occasion takes us beyond the realm of carelessness (‘ter limen tetigi’: 55). Nor does Ovid try to hide from the reader the fact that he had devised his own propitious times of departure. The reader knows Ovid had been deliberately postponing his departure. Yet the irony is that those present in the house will know that too. No one will believe him when he returns ‘having stubbed his toe’, just as no one will believe him when he claims that one fixed hour after another fixed hour was propitious for departure. Yet his self-deception will be all the more poignant for being understandable. The poignancy is increased by his admissions to the reader, for an admission implies that Ovid presumes those in the house were unaware of his disingenuousness. In fact we suggest there was a great deal of pantomime taking place. Ovid may well have been ‘called back’ (‘revocatus’) verbally by those in the house when they saw or heard him stepping (hard?) on the stone step. If everyone knew that their master was theatrically improvising, then their best response was to play their part. Clearly the verb ‘revocatus est’ also has a technical sense of being ‘stopped’ by the omen, but this does not obviate the intrusion of other nuances amongst which will be those of being ‘summoned back to life’ and ‘recalled from exile’. Ovid’s slowness of foot meanwhile, is not just a pathetic fallacy. It is also part of an allegorical schema. Ovid’s metrical feet are ‘consciously’ slower (and indeed deliberately ‘clumsier’) in their syllabic lengths than they should be, for this allows the poet to create new meanings from unmetrical and unconventional combinations of letters freed as they are from the constraints of the metrical ‘foot’ (as in ‘oret re mente’). Meanwhile references in the exile poems to ‘pede [in] offenso’<sup>24</sup> or ‘[pede] offenso’ (= ‘tripping’ but also ‘breaching the rules pertaining to a metrical foot’) will have a metapoetic charge. It is in more ways than one that Ovid drags his feet in leaving for Tomis.

### **10. 7 December 43 BCE and 20 March 42 BCE**

There are other reasons why Ovid may have wished to leave Rome on 7 December 9 CE. Infamously, on this date in 43 BCE, 51 years earlier to the day, Mark Anthony enforced the proscription on the life of Cicero. The next day Cicero’s severed head and right hand were displayed on the rostra in Rome. Cicero was not merely a staunch Republican, he was a fellow poet. For Ovid, something of Rome itself will have died with Cicero that day. Meanwhile it may well be that the display of Absyrtus’ head and hands by Medea in the very middle of the *Tristia* (poem 3.9.29-30) is meant to evoke the manner of Cicero’s degradation. Secondly, and more puzzlingly, were Ovid to have left Rome in 9 CE that would make him 51 on arrival in Tomis. Yet he repeatedly insists (e.g. *Ibis* 1 and *Tristia* 4.8.33) that he had reached the Roman age of retirement (50) by the time he was exiled (see the gravestone of Gaius Iulius Mygdonius [CIL 11.137; ILS 1980]). At one point Ovid refers to the passage of 10 Olympic chariot races since his birth. (*Tr.*4.10.95-96). He later confirms his understanding of the gap between two successive Olympiads as being five years (*Ex Ponto* 4.6.5).

Ovid was born on March 20 (*Tr.*4.10.13-14) in the year when both consuls met the same fate (‘cum cecidit fato consul uterque pari’: *Tristia* 4.10.6). This year has always been assumed to be that of 43 BCE when the consuls Hirtius and Pansa both died of wounds incurred in the battle of Mutina. The precision in this reference to the consuls has always appeared to make any further debate otiose. However, in 42 BCE, Caesar’s assassins, Brutus and Cassius, the former by seizing back control of Macedonia, the latter by re-appropriating Syria, presented the Senate with a virtual military ‘fait accompli’ which eventually led to both being confirmed as proconsuls in these provinces. Both subsequently perished later that year

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<sup>24</sup> *Tr.*1.9.1

by their own hand at the battle of Philippi. Thus, they, like Hirtius and Pansa, also meet their end ‘in a like manner’ (‘pari ... fato’: Tr.4.10). Just as importantly, the word ‘consul’ is commonly used by Cicero and others in describing ‘proconsuls’. Thus in practice nothing prevents us from averring that Ovid was born in 42 BCE. It was his brother in fact who was born in 43 BCE on the same date. If then Ovid was born in 42 BCE, he will have been exiled in 9 CE, the year in which he reached his 50th birthday.

## 11. Vesta and Ovid’s Date of Birth

At Tristia 1.2.74-75 (‘non ego divitias avidus sine fine parandi / latum mutandis mercibus aequor aro’) there is verbal play involving the metapoetic ‘endlessness’ of words. Here the nexus ‘sine fine’ (‘endless’) may be construed as a grammarian’s annotation on the word ‘divitias’. For, the meaning of the sentence obliges us to apply the force of ‘endlessness’ to the ‘riches’ (‘I am not greedy in amassing endless riches’). The word ‘divitias’ (‘riches’) may be interpreted then as having ‘no ending’. This would produce the nexus ‘di! vitia’. In inserting this nexus into the line, we now hear Ovid’s naturalistic wish that he bring no more ‘mala’ upon himself (‘non ego di! vitia avidus ... parandi ‘Ye gods! I am not eager to procure for myself any [further] ill-effects’). Given the storm raging around Ovid’s ship, one can understand the sentiment. These ill-effects could be those engineered by either his verse or his behaviour which have already proved ‘injurious’ to the author (Tristia 5.11.16; Ex Ponto 2.2.121; 2.7.49). However ‘vitium’ also means ‘solecism of speech’ and we know from Tristia 4.1.1 that such ‘vitia’ are avowedly to be found in Ovid’s work (‘ut erunt’). At Ex Ponto 4.12.15 meanwhile the word ‘vitium’ is securely to be translated as ‘metrical fault’. Nevertheless, in wishing away such textual ‘vitia’, Ovid is simultaneously guilty of corrupting his text by docking a letter from the end of a word, thereby producing collateral ‘vitia’.

The new collocation of ‘di! vitia avidus’ creates a hiatus which imposes an elision. Thus, the reconstituted text now reads ‘non ego di! vitia [a]vidus... Now if we redivide these words and factor in a ‘littera communis’ we arrive at a collocation that can hardly be fortuitous, ‘non ego di! vitiavi [I]dus’ (= ‘it was not I, ye gods, that rendered the Ides ‘vitiosa’). Here Ovid can only be referring to a change in the status of the Ides of March (already ‘nefastus’, as all Ides were) to ‘vitiosus’ following the murder of Julius Caesar which occurred two years before the change of the day’s status in 42 BC when we think Ovid was born. According to Cassius Dio (47.19) the decree was introduced in July of 42 BCE when Caesar’s birthday will have coincided with the Ludi Apollinares festival. However Dio goes on to say that, following refurbishment, the scene of the crime became a public privy (‘τό τε οἶκημα ἐν ᾧ ἐσφάγη, παραχρῆμά τε ἔκλεισαν καὶ ὕστερον ἐς ἄφοδον μετεσκεύασαν’: Histories 47.19).

Dio, in order to articulate the Senate’s re-categorisation of this day, uses the term ‘ἀποφράδα’ or ‘not to be spoken of’ which Ovid here now seems to equate with ‘vitiosa’. This ‘not-to-be-spoken-of’ ‘nota’ attached to the day may explain Ovid’s real reason, when composing the Fasti, for passing over [in silence] the subject of Caesar’s murder on the same day (‘praeteriturus eram gladios in principe fixos’: Fasti 3.695). Ovid’s motives may have nothing to do with a sense of collective Roman shame for Caesar’s murder and all to do with the meaning of a further schedos (‘redivided word[s]’) which provides the pretext we have hinted was in Ovid’s mind above. Even as Vesta intervenes to tell Ovid not to hold back from recording the murder, the previous line is already moving the issue in a different direction. The letters of that line (‘cum sic a castis Vesta locuta focus’) could be rearranged to spell out the following observation: ‘**cum si[c] ‘caca[vi]stis [s]ues**’ (‘I was about to pass without paying a visit to [the scene of] the murder of the Leading Man, **on the grounds that you**

**Romans have crapped just like pigs**: Fasti 3.697-698)<sup>25</sup>. Suddenly the reason for Ovid's failure to fact-find at Pompey's Theatre has all to do with the stench of a public latrine and nothing to do with collective shame. There is a hint that Vesta is aware of Ovid's thought processes. Her response ('ne dubita meminisse': Fasti 3.699) could be translated 'do not doubt that he [Caesar] will remember' [your squeamishness and lack of respect]. Ovid's squeamishness is well documented in Tomis (e.g. Tr.3.3.8-9). When Ovid says he was about to pass by the scene of the crime, we should assume he means he was literally about to keep walking, holding his nose.

Returning to 'non ego di! vitiavi [I]dus', the point Ovid is making here (in conjunction with Fasti 3.697f) is that he cannot be blamed for failing to research and record an event rendered 'unspeakable' (and thus 'unrecordable in print') not only through the attached 'nota' but also through the lavatorial fate of the scene of the crime. In saying it was not he that had abased the memory of the day, Ovid brings us rather obliquely to the date of his birth. The deflection of blame becomes much funnier if we imagine Ovid was in his earliest weeks of life when the abasement of the site took place. For Ovid, like any infant will be doing little else but suckle and defecate. Yet even so, says the poet, it was not an infant with no fecal control that relieved himself where Caesar fell but [all you] 'swinish Romans'. The privy must have been a public one and it must have been opened as a latrine shortly before the approval of the decree to render the Ides 'vitiosus'. We base this on the fact that (a) any other timescale detracts from the humour of Ovid's '*schedos*' and (b) Dio says the room where the murder took place was shut 'forthwith'. Clearly this must mean it was shut immediately after the assassination in order to deter gatherings, perhaps political ones. The lavatory may then have been fitted out around the time of Ovid's birth. The Loeb translation of Dio's account makes it seem as if the room was only closed in July 42BC which sounds implausible. In our view Ovid was born on March 20th 42 BC not 43 BC, and he would have been defecating throughout the early days of the latrine leading up to the affixing of the vitiosus 'nota'. Ovid, the new-born, could have been forgiven for being responsible for the vitiating of the place with his continual passing of faeces. Yet he was not to blame.

## 12. 'Respectu': Ovid in Retrospect: Tr.1.3.100 and Ex Ponto 4.9.100<sup>11</sup>

There is a certain mutual regard between the Tomitans and Ovid that manifests itself during the later poems of the Ex Ponto. At 4.9.100, in a letter from Ovid to Graecinus, we learn that the Tomitans are sympathetic to Ovid's wish to live out his exile in a safer place than Tomis. At the same time they would prefer, for their own sake, that Ovid should stay in Tomis. Their 'selfishness' in this regard emerges from the phrase 'respectu ... sui' ('out of regard for themselves': Ex P.4.9.100). Now, the word 'respectus', as a 'candidus lector' would hasten to point out, also means 'a looking backwards'. Appropriately, this takes us back to Tristia 1.3.100 where, as Ovid leaves for exile, his wife is said to have been unable to die 'out of her regard for [Ovid]'. His wife, despite having a death-wish, decides to remain alive to serve and promote Ovid's interests in Rome ('respectu ... [mori] non potuisse mei' = 'she was not able to die out of her regard for me'). Thud the same phrase that we saw used in the Graecinus poem is used of Ovid's wife though this time the genitive is objective and relates to Ovid ('respectu ... mei'). His wife is thinking altruistically of her husband ('mei'), whilst the Tomitans are thinking of themselves ('sui').

However if at Tr.1.3.100 we were to insist on the literal meaning of 'respectu' ('a looking behind one') then the genitive case of the pronoun could now be parsed as possessive.

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<sup>25</sup> The mention of 'ioci' and 'obscena ... dicta' ('jokes' 'obscene language') with which the previous story (on Anna Perenna) comes to a close is an omen of what is to come. It will soon be Ovid's turn to use the same language to make fun of the great god, Julius Caesar.

The new translation ‘yet she was not able to die as a result of my glance backwards’ opens an unexpected mythological perspective on the scene unfolding before us. Ovid’s ‘glance backwards’ will be directed at his wife, who now takes on the mantle of a Eurydice manquée. As Ovid is carried in a litter through the dark ‘fauces’ of the house, passing the guard-dog and exiting onto Rome’s still dim back-streets, it is as if he is a latter-day Orpheus escorting the still limping Eurydice back to the Upper World, and passing a latter-day Cerberos *en route*. In the myth, Orpheus’ hopes of bringing his wife, the deceased Eurydice, back to the Upper World had depended on him not looking back at Eurydice from his leading position. Orpheus however was unable to resist the temptation. In turning his head towards his wife, he inadvertently condemned her to remain deceased. Ovid is being carried out of the house. In line 89 he defines his situation as that of a corpse being carried to burial without a funeral ceremony. This observation has little point unless Ovid is being carried in a litter. If he were walking out of the vestibule, there would be no handle on which to hang the conceit that a man being borne out of his house in a litter could be a man being buried without ceremony. Ovid’s last night in Rome is described in terms of a poorly-attended wake (Tr.1.3.16).

We are to imagine Ovid thrusting his head out of the litter and turning round to look back along the ‘fauces’. However the glance back clearly did not have the capacity to kill his Eurydicean wife because (a) she was already *quā* Eurydice technically ‘deceased’ and (b) as Ovid’s wife she remained, in any case, alive (‘vivat’:101-102). This paradoxical state renders Ovid’s wife doubly useful to him. She returns along the benighted ‘fauces’ to, as it were, continue with her allegorised Eurydicean life as a quasi-ancestor to whom prayers may be addressed by the living (Tr.1.3.101-102). However she will also ‘live’ to petition Augustus for her husband’s restoration to Rome.

There is a tragi-comic angle to this scene, Ovid’s hysterical wife is threatening to accompany him to the Tomitan Hades (Tr.1.3.81: ‘simul ibimus’). One could therefore interpret Ovid’s ‘look back’ as a deliberate ploy to ensure his Eurydicean wife remains in the ‘Underworld’, namely Ovid’s house in Rome. Ironically and paradoxically, whilst she will be alive in her Hades in Rome, Ovid will be, as it were, ‘dead’ in the living city of Tomis which is described as being part of Hades (‘precor ...// exeat e Stygiis ut mea navis aquis’; ‘I pray ... that my boat should leave the waters of the Styx’: Ex Ponto 4.9.72 & 74). Life in Tomis is a form of death (Ex Ponto 1.7.10: ‘si vita est mortis habenda genus’; ‘if life is to be accounted a type of death’).

The line Tr.1.3.100 is particularly nuanced. The words ‘[se] respectuque tamen non potuisse mei’ could mean (a) ‘yet my wife was incapable of dying from [the effect of] my backward glance’ or (b) ‘yet **thanks to her regard for me** she could not bring herself to die’. The second version could undergo a subtle change in meaning if ‘mei’ were to modulate into a Possessive Genitive (‘yet **thanks to my regard for her** she could not bring herself to die’). In these latter versions under (b) Ovid’s wife determines to continue living in order to reciprocate her husband’s concern for her but also to demonstrate her own concern for him. In essence, despite Ovid’s mythological attempt to keep his wife in Rome by returning her like Eurydice to her Hadean home, it is her own decision to remain alive for personal reasons that wins the day. Furthermore her ‘*incapacity to die*’ also alludes to the *immortality* that Ovid will confer on her ironically by comparing her to Eurydice (who is very much dead). Ovid guarantees his wife a permanent reputation from now onwards because she has been mentioned in the same breath as Eurydice, whose story was one of ‘immortal love’. Thus Ovid also means that ‘by his glance back at her [‘respectu’] he rendered her incapable of dying [as a subject on people’s lips]’. The ablative ‘respectu’ (‘thanks to my regard for her’) is now one of Instrument. Ovid presents his wife as the Roman ideal ‘univira’ matron (Tr.4.3.72). She is a ‘supporting beam’ (Tr.1.6.5) amid Ovid’s collapsing ruin. As we have mentioned, her regard for him (‘tui memorem ... te ... si modo vivit, amat’: 4.3.17-20) is

complemented by his regard for her (Tr.5.13 1-4; 'non inferius Coa Bittide'). Ovid frequently refers to her in mythological terms as a type of 'heroic' womanhood, thereby consolidating the immortality created by his books as her 'monumenta' (Tr.5.14.1). She is deserving of a place amongst his 'Heroides' (Tr.1.6.33).

Ironically it is the poet who is carried out to his premature death in Tomis. His 'respectus' ('look back') towards his Eurydice is intended to consign her to a 'deadly form of living' until Ovid's own 'living-death' is resolved. One wonders if indeed Roman matronae did consider their own homes to be a form of 'Upper World' Hades.

The Tomitans meanwhile take on the mantle of Orpheus in the Graecinus poem. Armed with the details of the allusions triggered by 'respectu' in Tr.1.3 the reader now finds that the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice has been appropriated to express the delicate relationship between the guest who wishes to be gone (Ovid as a much more proactive Eurydice) and the sympathetic but enamoured host (the Town Council in Tomis)<sup>26</sup>. From the Eurydicean Ovid's perspective, this proud 'Boule' ('Council') of the 'Most Illustrious Metropolis of Tomis' consists of dwellers in the Hades from which escape is sought. Ovid underlines the fact that it is the place Tomis not its population from which he seeks deliverance (Ex P. 4.9.99-100; 4.14.23-24). Indeed he declares his affection for the people. The Boule however face a dilemma. In adopting an Orphean posture, they are in large part expressing their 'love' of Ovid as someone whose absence they will feel unable to tolerate. However Orpheus' solution to Eurydice's absence was to bring his beloved from the Underworld to the Upper World. This translates into bringing Ovid from Tomis to Rome. However the Tomitans cannot join Ovid in Rome. They themselves are the residents of Ovid's living Hades and as such they are anxious to keep Ovid in their Underworld whilst showing their concern for his own wish to be elsewhere. The Tomitans cannot leave this 'Hades' but they can as it were, escort Ovid to the exit. They can perhaps 'lead him on' (as far as Cerberos). The one trump card they have is their 'glance backwards' ('respectus') which will guarantee Ovid-Eurydice remains in his (and their) Hades. (Ex P.4.9.100). However they play this card in their own, sophisticated way. Their version of 'a backwards glance' is a sublimation of Orpheus' inadvertent 'respectus' into a raft of pre-planned civic awards that amount to an expression of overwhelming civic regard for Ovid ('respectus'). Nor are the Tomitans satisfied with a cursory 'glance backwards' as it were. They want to ensure Ovid's continuing patronage as a *de facto* 'proxenos' whose fame as a *Getic* poet is spreading through Pontus in the wake of his poem composed in *Getic* which is soon to be recited at a local poetry reading (Ex P. 4.13). The Boule are generous in their 'respect' for Ovid. They grant him a remission of taxes ('ἀτελεια' (Ex P.4.9.102; 4.14.53) and the sacred chaplet (Ex P.4.15.55). They confirm these measures through wax inscriptions (Ex P.4.9.102).. These councillors are Orphean by committee. They shower Ovid with expressions of their 'regard' as they 'look back' ('respectus') over his five-year 'lustrum' spent in Tomis which has added lustre to even this self-proclaimed 'most illustrious metropolis'. Tomis enjoys being 'on the map' and wishes to stay that way. From Ovid's perspective he will be naturally flattered by these civic awards. The more 'regard' the Tomitans show to Ovid the more they trust their 'look back' - both at him and at his services to the community - will be powerful enough to keep Ovid-Eurydice in his adopted Hades.

Meanwhile, now that the poet has donned the mantle of Eurydice in Ex Ponto 4.9, he will inherit her lameness from the snake-bite which caused her demise. In Ovid's case this lameness represents another allegorical plank in his exilic poetics, one which represents the

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<sup>26</sup> See the Ammianus inscription from Tomis in the British Museum 1864,0331.6. This records the civic offices held by Ammianus (including the position of Chief Priest of the Emperor Cult). Ovid's 'wax decrees' may have been similar. Ammianus' wife is also praised. Ovid is feeding into a culture of intense local pride in holding civic office: 'BOYAH KAITWΛAMIPOTATW ΔHMW THC ΛAM / ΠOTATHC. MHTPOΠIOΛEΩC .KAI .A. TOY EYWNMOY ΠONTOY.TOMEWC'

poetic ‘feet’ of his metre as being gravely compromised. As opposed to the limp suffered by Elegy in the Amores, Ovid’s exilic foot problems (he is in danger of stubbing his toe again at Tristia 2.16) do not allegorise the elegiac couplet as having one foot less in the pentameter viz-a-viz the hexameter. It is rather the swelling or damage caused to Ovid’s metrical feet that are metapoetically indicated by the damage to both to his own feet and to the feet of those to whom he compares himself, sometimes highly allusively (the unexpressed ‘bad leg’ of Thersites which underlies his ‘ugliness’: Ex Ponto 3.9.10; Philoctetes’ infected heel to the pain of which his cries give vent: Tr.5.1.61ff; Hephaestus’ lameness which underlies the god’s initially more serviceable ‘storm-soothing’ etymology (‘Mulciber’): Tr.1.2.5). These metapoetic references to the pedestrianly-afflicted conspire to create a continuous undertow in the direction of metrical (‘pedestrian’) shortcomings in the verse. From the superficial point of view the metre shows no signs of decay. However there is more than one way to read Ovid’s feet.

Ovid and his wife have both played the role of Eurydice. For different reasons neither has succeeded in escaping the Hades which is represented respectively by the ‘faucis’ of Ovid’s house and the environs of Tomis. However in conscripting Eurydice as yet another totem of ‘pedestrian’ damage Ovid will have brought that much closer the day when his pedestrian poetics will be generally acknowledged<sup>27</sup>.

### 13. Looking back into Literary History

There is another example of ‘looking back’ at Tr.,1.3.60 (‘saepe eadem mandata dedi meque ipse fefelli,/ respiciens oculis pignora cara meis’). Here ‘respiciens’ may have a grammatical nuance. For Ovid had used the expression ‘pignora cara’ before at Met 3.133-134 (‘huc adde genus de coniuge tanta / tot natos natasque et, pignora cara, nepotes’) and at Fasti 3.218 (‘inque sinu natos, pignora cara, tenent’). In one sense the poet may now be thought to be ‘*looking over the words ‘pignora cara’ again with his mind’s eyes* (not his ears) on the basis that the prefix ‘re-’ (‘respiciens’) regularly means to do something ‘again’(in this case ‘look’). He now reconsiders the letters as a visual phenomenon not as an aural one. In revisiting the words he is also, we suggest, ‘paying heed’ to them (‘respiciens’). Meanwhile, in the previous line Ovid says that he ‘deceived him [my] self’ (‘me fefelli’) in the sense that ‘he got something wrong’ or ‘he [deliberately] tricked himself’ or ‘failed to support himself’ whilst at the same time giving the same orders often’ (‘saepe eadem mandata dedi’). Nothing in principle forbids ‘me fefelli’ and ‘mandata dedi’ from arising from the results of the present participle ‘respiciens’. Thus we can assume that in paying heed with his eyes to [the possibilities inherent in] ‘pignora cara’, Ovid frequently, it seems, gave the same commands and, in making mistakes, he proved to be his own worst enemy<sup>28</sup>.

The words ‘pignora cara’ themselves are an image for children, in this case, probably the ‘pueri’ (‘household slaves’) of line 23<sup>29</sup>. In the Metamorphoses the term is applied specifically to ‘grandchildren’. In looking over his words afresh however, Ovid finds they could also be construed as ‘P. ignora cara!’ The initial P. could stand for ‘Publi!’ That is, Ovid is addressing himself (‘Publius!’). This is followed by an imperative ‘ignora’ (‘have

<sup>27</sup> Behind Ovid’s exile poetry there is what may be described as an implied poetics of pedestrian deformation. At Tr.1.10.23 the poet expresses his intention to ‘pluck Bistonian fields on foot’ by walking the final stage of his journey to Tomis from Tempyra. We argue elsewhere that Ovid does not act on this whim. Nevertheless we are left to ponder the likely state of Ovid’s feet after 400 kilometres of walking. They will be gashed, swollen, and deformed. That will also be the state of Ovid’s elegiac ‘feet’

<sup>28</sup> Ovid’s literal backwards gaze to his dear charges has its own importance. It anticipates and validates his backwards glance to his Eurydicean wife on departure.

<sup>29</sup> Pignora (‘pledges’) in Augustus’ Res Gestae refers to ‘children’ of client kings deposited with Augustus and raised in Rome as ‘guarantees’ of their fathers’ good faith (chapter 32)

nothing to do with' or 'ignore') after which we find a neuter plural 'cara' ('things that are dear to you'). In these words then we hear a despairing *paterfamilias* who in being forced to leave his home behind tells himself to be cruel to be kind in forcing himself to cut all ties with that which is dear to him ('Publius, have nothing to do what is dear to you!'). This is the sense in which Ovid construes the words 'pignora cara' to his personal disadvantage. The results of the injunction 'ignora!' which he repeats to himself ('saepe mandata dedi'), are to deny himself the physical support of his nearest and dearest to his own detriment ('me fefelli' 'I harmed my own interests').

However since we could interpret Ovid as giving himself more than one command, both of which are repeated ('saepe + neuter plural 'eadem mandata'), we are bound to seek another injunction in 'P. ignora cara!'. We can relate 'cara' to Ovid's wife as follows: dear one, have nothing to do with Publius!'. The initial 'P' leaves the ending of the word ('Publius') susceptible to different interpretations. There is no reason why it cannot be an accusative. This second injunction also causes Ovid to risk losing the physical support of his wife to his own detriment ('me fefelli')<sup>30</sup>

Lastly Ovid may also be telling himself to 'have nothing to do with what is expensive' ('cara' [n.pl]). He may be aware already that there were those seeking to plunder his estate on the (false) grounds that he had no claim on his own property once exiled. This might make him anxious to minimise costs even as he sets out for Tomis. We know that his circumstances had become straitened even at the time of his banishment. The letter to Suillius speaks of his 'downfall' snatching away his wealth ('... carpsit opes ruina mea meas': Ex P.4.8.32). In general it is during Ex Ponto 4 that we discover the extent of the practical aid afforded him particularly by Sextus Pompeius the consul. Ex Ponto 4.5, narrated by the libellus itself, refers to both Ovid and Sextus by the third person singular. It is possible therefore to construe line 14 '... servet sua dona rogate' as referring to Ovid. This produces the translation 'ask [Sextus] that Ovid should keep his [Sextus'] gifts'. This would seem to be a coy request that the financial gifts given by Sextus should not be refundable. Sextus' 'munera' ('gifts') to Ovid include protection from Bistonian swords, directions as to the safe route through barbarian lands, and gifts of money ('munera') that allowed the voyage to be completed without Ovid becoming impoverished (Ex P.4.5.33-38). Originally Ovid had benefitted from the 'gratia' or 'kindness' shown by Sextus in gifting him money even before Ovid's exile (Ex P.4.1.23-24). These gifts had continued during Ovid's voyage to, and residence in, Tomis.

#### **14. Leaning out of a Litter and Looking Back**

The deeply-buried image of Ovid being carried to his 'death' from his home in a litter whilst (necessarily) leaning out in order to glance back at his Eurydicean wife, is intimately connected to a totemic predecessor in the ranks of Late Republican historical events. Cicero's death occurred when he was being carried by litter down to the sea from his villa at Caieta. Antony's men catch up with him, upon which Cicero, supporting his chin on his left hand in a characteristic gesture, fixes his murderers with his gaze. This action naturally requires the head to be turned round so that the individual can look into the eyes of his pursuers (Plutarch: Life of Cicero 48.3: 'ὡςπερ εἰώθει , τῆ ἀριστερᾷ χειρὶ τῶν γενείων ἀπτόμενος ἀτενὲς ἐνεώρα τοῖς σφαγεῦσιν'). Plutarch also mentions that Cicero stretched his head forth from the litter (Life of Cicero 48.4: 'τὸν τράχηλον ἐκ τοῦ φορείου προτείνας ...'). This was clearly an invitation to the soldiers to strike. The date was 7 December 43 BCE. The next day Cicero's

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<sup>30</sup> Note that the epigraphical character of Latin abbreviations such as P. seasons the text with an air of the monumentum-as-inscribed-tombstone. As the creator of his own 'monumentum' whilst still alive, Ovid is allegorically aligning himself with all those retired Romans who erect a mausoleum for themselves their wives, children, and freedmen (represented in Ovid's case by his wife and his books)

head and hands were mounted on the Rostra in the Roman Forum. In poem Tr.3.9.29-30 Ovid tells the story of the dismemberment of Absyrtus whose head and hands were displayed from the tumulus in Tomis. In sum we suggest that Ovid was determined to align his escape from Rome with the death of Cicero. Both men are fleeing oppression. Their lives have been proscribed. They are both carried in litters. Both men look out of their litter and turn their heads around to look someone in the eye. On both occasions the date is 7th December. The poet suffered ‘deminutio capitis’ or ‘the loss of civic rights as an exile’. Cicero suffered the literal ‘diminution of his head’ (‘deminutio capitis’). He was beheaded<sup>31</sup>.

### 15. Tr.1.3.99: ‘et voluisse mali [mori], moriendo ponere sensum’

We first suspect Tr.1.3.99 of corruption when we realise ‘voluisse’ has a homonym in the perfect infinitive of ‘volvo, volvere’. This verb, along with the reflexive pronoun ‘se’ will epitomise the main feature of the behaviour of Ovid’s wife in Tr.1.3. Particularly in the passage before us, she spends a lot of time ‘rolling on the ground’ [in an act of ecstatic grief] (‘se voluisse’). This finding encourages us to replace ‘et [voluisse]’ with ‘se [voluisse]’ especially as this alteration will not materially affect the regular interpretation of ‘voluisse’ which is thought to depend on the ‘se’ in line 95, the line on which the long ‘oratio obliqua’ following ‘narratur’ (91) hinges (‘it is said that she had wanted ...’). The ‘se’ before ‘voluisse’ can be interpreted as either repeating the ‘se’ from line 95 or as creating a passive formation with ‘voluisse’.

The desire to die on the part of Ovid’s wife comes across strongly especially in the context of the following lines 100-102) which are intended as a life-affirming reassessment: ‘[mori] non potuisse .../ vivat .../ vivat...’. These succeeding lines serve to confirm the heavy emphasis on death in line 99. Meanwhile there seems likely to have been a reason expressed for the death-wish such that there will be mention of death on both sides of the clausal divide (‘... to die so that by dying ...’). Thus we suggest the following is the original text: ‘**se voluisse obitum ut ... moriendo**’ (‘it is said that she had desired death so that by dying ...’). The rest of the sentence may be completed with an eye on the interdivisional possibilities of the text. We suggest ‘**de me memoret**’ as the most fruitful collocation which gives the following texts. The textual changes (if any) are underlined. There are attempted translations:

‘**se voluisse obitum ut de me memoret moriendo**’ ‘

it is said

‘**that she desired death so that by dying she might call me to people’s minds**’

‘**se voluisse obitum ut de me [‘eset’] memor et moriendo**’ ‘

memoret > memor et; ‘eset’ understood’ ‘it is said

‘**she desired death such that even in dying she might be mindful of me**

‘**se voluisse obitum ut de me memoret me! oriendo**’

‘memoret’ > memor et; ‘se voluisse’ = from ‘se volvit’; ‘moriendo’ = ‘m’oriendo

**she fell forwards on the ground as a dead person such that by rising she might call me to people’s minds, ah me!**

<sup>31</sup> Seneca *Suasoriae* 6.17: [on Cicero] ‘He leaned from where he sat’

**‘se voluisse obitum ut de me memor [‘esset’ understood] et m’ oriendo’**

se voluisse’ = ‘se volvit’; ‘moriendo’ = ‘m’oriendo’; ‘esset’ understood

**... she fell forwards as a corpse so that ah me! even in rising she might keep me in mind’**

Eurydice’s return to the Underworld is expressed by the compound verb ‘*revoluta*’ (Met. 10.68) which has ‘*volvo*’ as its root. The repeated falling and rising of Ovid’s wife has been plentifully illustrated in this article. As Ovid leaves she embraces the ultimate in self-degradation by fouling her hair with the detritus on the floor. Her return to her feet will proleptically allegorise Ovid’s hoped-for restoration after his own ‘*ruina*’. That is, the scene she acts out is intended to omenise Ovid’s fate as an exemplum of goodness ultimately prevailing. Ovid’s wife’s dramatic re-enactments are also a means of imprinting forcibly on her own memory his fate (his ‘*ruina*’ or ‘fall’) and hoped-for restoration. Meanwhile Ovid’s wife asserts her commitment to living in order to ‘lighten Ovid’s cares by her help’ (Tr.1.3.102). She will keep him in mind.

**‘seu o! luisse obit[um] ut de me memor [‘esset’ understood] et me!’ oriendo’**

‘se voluisse’ = ‘seu o! luisse’ = ‘or o! she had averted’; obitum = ‘obitu’; ‘moriendo’ = ‘m!’oriendo’.

**‘or [it is said that] ah! she suffered my death such that even in rising she was mindful of me, ah me!’**

Here we take Ovid’s ‘*ruina*’ (‘fall’) and his survival to be the subject of his wife’s re-enactment as she falls to the floor and rises again. This re-enactment also dramatises Ovid’s living death at the end of Tr.1.3, the ‘death’ element of which is expressed in ‘*desertos modo plorasse Penates*’ and especially in her formal and repeated calling out of his name. Her actions are also intended to rescript Ovid’s future destiny as a well-omened resurgence.

**‘se voluisse obitum ut de me me moret moriendo’**

‘memoret’ = ‘me moret’; non-deponent form of *moror* she desired death in order that by dying over me, she might delay /prevent / obstruct / me [leaving]’

Ovid has temporised throughout the night of his departure but he has also been obstructed by his wife who now proposes to perform the ultimate delaying tactic.

**‘se voluisse obitum ut de me me me oret moriendo’**

voluisse’ = ‘to ponder in the mind; ‘ut’ = ‘with the result that’;  
‘de, me memoret, moriendo’ = ‘de, me me m’oret, moriendo’ she pondered in her mind [my] death with the result that in relation to me dying she should declaim ‘me’ ‘me’ ‘me’,<sup>32</sup>

Ovid intrudes a cultural note on the Roman custom of verifying death by crying the deceased’s name three times (‘*me ! me! me!*’). Ovid’s wife calls out his name repeatedly at the end of Tristia 1.3 (96: ‘*nomen et erepti saepe vocasse viri*’). Calling out Ovid’s name produces the text ‘*ovidi ovidi ovidi*’ = ‘O I have seen, O I have seen, O I have seen’. We know that Ovid saw something he should not have seen and that this was the root cause of his exile. Augustus’ use of the ‘obscene’ *Ars Amatoria* as a public stick with which to beat Ovid served to disguise any other motive for his banishment<sup>33</sup>.

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<sup>32</sup> The verb ‘*oro*’ is linked to declamation (‘*ars orandi*’ ‘the art of declamation’),

<sup>33</sup> See William Smith Dictionary s.v. ‘*funus*’: ‘the recall of the dead by uttering his or her name three times, in order to ascertain the fact of death if there was no answer, a custom still in use at the death-bed of a pope’

**seu oluisse obitum ut de me memoret m'oriendo'**

se voluisse' = 'seu oluisse'; 'moriendo' = 'm'oriendo'

**or [it is said that] she gave off the smell of death in order that by rising, she might call people's minds to remembrance**

Here Ovid's wife has been abasing herself mixing the dust and debris on the Roman floor with her hair, which commonly retains odours. Again her enactment of the fall and subsequent imagined rise of Ovid is intended to create a culture of long-term salvation. The story of his wife's enactments will soon do the rounds in Rome. The sense of smell is said to be the strongest stimulus to memory-recall.

**16. Corrigendum**

We would take this opportunity to revisit the article published last year entitled 'Ovid's Poetics of Dismemberment: Fasti 2.73-121'. In a postscript (p.162f) we attempted a wide-ranging emendation of the text of lines Fasti 2.109-110 ('flebilibus numeris veluti canentia dura / traiectus penna tempora cantat olor'). On reflection it is not so much that we believe our version strayed too far from the original to be likely to gain acceptance. Indeed we have unashamedly made wholesale changes to one particular line of the Tristia in the current article. Instead, our main source of discontent is the ungainly word order in the pentameter which Ovid would never have countenanced. Bearing that in mind we have attempted one further emended version of the line in the hope that its relative propinquity to the received text will recommend it to readers. We have also appended some subtexual translations that can be produced by taking all syllable lengths as 'jarring' or 'harsh'. That is, all lengths of syllables are to be considered ancipites for the purposes of accessing subtexual meanings. This metapoetic instruction is articulated by more than one of the translations thrown up by the text. The 'lamentable' state of the metres in which the swans sing is intended to allegorise the uncertain grasp of syllable length betrayed by the text's subterranean meanings. The superficial translation is given first:

**flebilibus numeris veluti canentia olores, / pinna traiecta, tempora dura canent'**

*Just as the swans will sing as to [i.e. from] their hard, temples grey with age in mournful metres their wings having been pierced<sup>34</sup>*

*Just as the swans in elegiac strains will give voice to their hard times, their wings having been pierced ah! by a grey arrow ('canentia = canenti ... a!)*

*Just as the swans will sing harsh metrical lengths in lamentable metres their greying wings ah! having been pierced ('canenti a!... pinna traiecta')*

*Just as the swans shall sing in mournful metres from their insensitive temples, their greying wings ah! ('canenti a!') having been pierced*

**17. Appendix: An astrological interpretation: Rome, 7 December 9 CE**

With the exception of Jupiter lying far off on the forehead of Cancer, the planets are in alignment on the evening of December 6th. Lowest in the sky is Mars, positioned on the hindquarters of Capricorn; next comes the Moon which at dusk sits on the beard of Capricorn near Mercury, but by dawn on the 7th has migrated to the side of Mars on the composite beast's piscine hindquarters. As is well known Augustus was born with the Moon in

<sup>34</sup> The elision within 'canentia olores' papers over the original harshness of three juxtaposed vowels (i,a,o). It is not fully understood how swans emit a creaking sound in flight (Aeneid1.397 : 'alis stridentibus'). The theory expressed here relates to wind passing through the temples which may give the impression that the sound is coming from the wings

Capricorn's hindquarters just before dawn. This was on 22nd (not the 23rd) September 63 BCE when Mercury was on Virgo's elbow, Venus and Jupiter were lodged in the pincers of Scorpio and Cancer respectively, Mars and Saturn were side by side in the chest of Taurus.

In astrological terms, the Moon represents one's emotions and inner character. In Capricorn the Moon is in its so-called 'Detriment' which makes the person's 'soul' vulnerable to stronger astrological influences. Mars, by contrast, is in its Exaltation (at its strongest) when in Capricorn. Both the Moon and Mars are also in their 'Trine' (number II Trine) and are the night rulers of that Trine along with Venus. This will increase their influence within the horoscope. Thus the violent, oppressive, warlike ('Martian') traits will tend to dominate and mis-channel the 'lunar' emotions of the person involved. Augustus' 'Ovidian' horoscope (6-7 December 9 CE) reveals his inner core as being dominated by urges towards Martian violence, enslavement, and arson (Firmicius). These instincts will affect those nearest to him given that the Moon is the luminary that reflects the expression of the Self that lies behind closed doors. Augustus' treatment of Ovid, who was related by marriage to the Imperial House, shows these traits in abundance. In the exile poems Ovid is often described in terms of the 'arson' occasioned by a thunderbolt hurled by Augustus/Jove. In the meantime Augustus has an alter ego in the shape of the god Jupiter which, like Mars viz-a-viz Capricorn, is in its exaltation in Cancer, both at the birth of Augustus and at the departure of Ovid.

Within ancient astrology one must also take account of the so-called Mundane Houses and 'cardines'. On 7 December 9 CE with the Sun and Venus in Sagittarius and in the Ascendancy (or 1st Mundane House), there is much that seems life-affirming since Venus represents children, marriage, abundance, order whilst the Sun rules over life itself. However, the position of Jupiter is not well aspected viz-a-viz the Mundane Houses. Towards dawn throughout December 9 CE, Jupiter was close to the western horizon which put it in the 8th Mundane House, close to the Descendant. This House was known as the House of Death and it related to the demise of worldly power and material possessions. By contrast at the hour of Augustus' birth, Jupiter had been in the very favourably aspected Midheaven. MidHeaven occupied the 10th Mundane House, a House which favoured the acquisition of power and possessions.

That is, if Jupiter stands for 'worldly fame, prosperity, happiness, political power and greatness' then all these qualities are moribund in Augustus' 'new' Ovidian horoscope. Meanwhile Mars and the Moon in Capricorn will occupy the 2nd Mundane House. This was known as the House of either 'Hope' or the 'Gate of Death'. These labels referred to 'personal hopes' and 'material possessions and livelihood'. In general then Augustus is revealed as possessing a character (represented by the 'Moon') which is dominated by a thirst for (a) worldly success in war ('Mars') and (b) earthly riches, both of which are now less well aspected.

Lastly the very well-aspected Mid-heaven position of Saturn in Virgo is as striking as anything we have discussed so far. Saturn is the planet of 'fear, famine, destruction, death, illness'. Many of these will be aspects of Ovid's 'persona' in Tomis. However the 10th Mundane House was very powerful in assisting one's personal career, dealings with others, actions, vital life-force, home, country. In the light of the favourable aspect of Venus, Ovid's poetic Muse, which (with Mars and the Moon) ruled Trine II (Virgo, Taurus, and Capricorn), we must wonder if the poet himself was using the 'Tristia' (ostensibly that which is 'grievous, harsh, cruel') as a poetic strategy which in fact led to a sense of reassertion and inner achievement.

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