

‘ GREAT AND LESSER BEAR ’ (OVID, *TRISTIA* 4. 3) \*

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When Ovid was relegated in A.D. 8, he left a notorious problem for scholarship. Some attribute his downfall to the *Ars Amatoria*, whose second edition appeared about 1 B.C.,<sup>1</sup> but that raises questions about the time-lag as well as about the misunderstanding of literature. Others emphasize the disgrace of Augustus’ grand-daughter Julia, banished for adultery in the same year as Ovid, but doubts remain about the degree of complicity needed to explain the poet’s punishment. Again it has been supposed that the domestic scandal masks a political plot, a possibility that has also been canvassed over the disgrace of the elder Julia in 2 B.C. Unfortunately the evidence for the various theories is so scattered that it may distract attention from the tone of particular poems, yet in this psychological drama over-all impressions ought to count as well as fragments of fact. Here I shall try to interpret a single elegy, *Tristia* 4. 3, looking at it in sections as it comes; though the debate about the exile will not be repeated in detail, a view will emerge at the end about what happened.

Magna minorque ferae, quarum regis altera Graias,  
 altera Sidonias, utraque sicca, rates,  
 omnia cum summo positae videatis in axe,  
 et maris occiduas non subeatis aquas,  
 aetheriamque suis cingens amplexibus arcem 5  
 vester ab intacta circulus extet humo,  
 aspice illa, precor, quae non bene moenia quondam  
 dicitur Iliades transiluisse Remus,  
 inque meam nitidos dominam convertite vultus,  
 sitque memor nostri necne, referte mihi. (1-10)

Ovid, in banishment at Tomis, is transmitting messages to his wife by the stars, a fantasy that it is not easy to parallel directly in ancient poetry.<sup>2</sup> The great beast is Ursa Major,<sup>3</sup> also called Arctos, Helice, Septentriones, the Wain, the Plough. The lesser beast is Ursa Minor, Cynosura, Phoenixe, the constellation that includes the Pole Star. It was a literary commonplace since Aratus that Greeks navigated by the Great Bear and Phoenicians by the Lesser Bear; <sup>4</sup> here the pedantic allusion (1 f.) helps to distance the heavenly bodies from the human suffering below. The stately period of ten lines, so unlike Ovid’s usual end-stopped couplets, suits the majestic spectacle of the skies,<sup>5</sup> just as at the beginning of Catullus’ poem on the Coma Berenices (66. 1 ff.).

Ovid chooses these particular constellations first because they belong to the far north,<sup>6</sup> as we are reminded by the Greek name for the Bear: though Tomis (Constanza) has about the same latitude as Rimini, its continental climate combined with the poet’s misery to make it seem truly Arctic. Secondly, as Homer already points out, the Bear never sinks in the waters of Ocean: <sup>7</sup> just as these constellations can see everything (*Fast.* 4. 577 f.), so they are available every night for the sending of signals. Thirdly, though they guide storm-tossed mariners, they are untouched by trouble themselves (2 *utraque sicca*); <sup>8</sup> it was sometimes regarded as a punishment for Arctos that she was not allowed to bathe in Ocean,<sup>9</sup> but the emphasis here is on immutability (cf. 15) and immunity from stress. In ancient love-poetry the stars are sometimes sympathetic confidants,<sup>10</sup> sometimes dispassionate observers: the latter attitude suits the lonely mood of the elegy.

\* This paper began in a graduate class at Oxford, under the impact of Sir Ronald Syme’s *History in Ovid* (1978), and was afterwards read in the University of Reading. I am grateful to all in both places who made suggestions, and especially to Colin Macleod, *in quo multum nuper amisimus*, for his comments on a later draft.

<sup>1</sup> For the date see below, n. 73.

<sup>2</sup> At Soph. *Trach.* 94 ff. the sun is asked the whereabouts of Heracles (as Mr. G. O. Hutchinson reminds me); cf. also Eur. *Med.* 1251 ff.; Enn. *Scen.* 284 ff. V.

<sup>3</sup> *RE* 9A. 1034 ff.; Roscher, *Lex. d. Myth.* 6. 873 ff.; Bömer on Ov. *Fast.* 3. 107.

<sup>4</sup> Arat. *Phaen.* 36 ff.; Pease on Cic. *Nat. Deor.* 2. 106.

<sup>5</sup> Note also the grandiloquent *Graias* (instead of the prosaic *Graecas*).

<sup>6</sup> *Trist.* 2. 190 (with Owen’s note); *RE* 9A. 1042.

<sup>7</sup> *Il.* 18. 489 = *Od.* 5. 275; Pease on Cic. *Nat. Deor.* 2. 105; Bömer on Ov. *Met.* 2. 171.

<sup>8</sup> *Trist.* 1. 2. 29, 4. 9. 18; Manil. 1. 610; Sen. *Med.* 404 f.

<sup>9</sup> *RE* 9A. 1044; G. Gundel, *De stellarum appellatione et religione Romana* (1907), 78 f.

<sup>10</sup> Meleager, *A.P.* 5. 191. 1; *Frag. Grenf.* 11 (p. 177 Powell) ἄστρα φίλα καὶ πότνια Νύξ συνερωσά μοι. Contrast Catull. 7. 7 f.

Ovid's theme is developed with the epigrammatic point that he took from declamation and made his characteristic mode of self-expression; there should be no feeling, any more than with Shakespeare, that seriousness and wit are incompatible. In line 4 *occiduas* means 'occidental', but there is a pun on the primary meaning of 'falling' (cf. *Fast.* 1. 314): the Bears do not wester in the western waves (there is also an antithesis with *summo*). In 4-6 the elements of water, aether, and earth are set against one another by their mention at the beginnings and ends of lines. In 9 the emphatic *meam* corresponds to the reciprocal *mihi* at the end of the couplet as well as to *nostris* at the break in the pentameter; the latter is an elegant variation for *mei*,<sup>11</sup> and is answered by 17 *tui memorem*. 9 *nitidos . . . vultus* is pointedly inappropriate for real bears, whose faces are not glistening but shaggy.<sup>12</sup> The manner of Ovid's verse will elude the reader who disregards such conceits, and so sometimes will matters of substance.

This is the case with line 5, where *suis* is marked as emphatic by its position two words in front of *amplexibus* ('with its embraces'); the word balances 6 *vester*, 7 *illa*, 9 *meam*, which are all similarly stressed. There may be a suggestion that the poet is denied *amplexus* of his own, but there is a more significant contrast between the circles that surround the heavenly *arx* (the part of the sky nearest the pole) and the walls that surround the Capitoline citadel.<sup>13</sup> The patterns traced by the two constellations are unimpaired by contact with earth: at least since Plato's *Timaeus* (41-2) and the pseudo-Platonic *Epinomis* (981-5) the stars had been associated with the perfect and the eternal,<sup>14</sup> the ground with corruption and mortality. On the other hand Remus violated the sanctity of his brother's walls by breaking the continuity of the circuit, always a serious offence for the Romans;<sup>15</sup> it is relevant that *transiluisse* can imply transgression as well as literal jumping, while *Iliades* recalls that Remus's mother also came to ruin by metaphorically overstepping the bounds. Ovid would not allude to these disturbing legends if he were simply seeking a grandiose periphrasis for Rome;<sup>16</sup> rather he is suggesting a comparison between the unchanging perfection of the celestial order and the primal fault in Rome's institutions, which was deplored by her critics from Horace to St. Augustine.<sup>17</sup> The founder of the city had killed his light-hearted brother in the supposed interest of discipline and religion. Is there not an unspoken thought that the new Romulus is destroying a well-intentioned man for his ill-timed mockery of decorum in the *Ars Amatoria*?

ei mihi, cur timeam? quae sunt manifesta, requiro.  
 cur labat ambiguo spes mea mixta metu?  
 crede quod est et vis, ac desine tuta vereri,  
 deque fide certa sit tibi certa fides;  
 quodque polo fixae nequeunt tibi dicere flammae, 15  
 non mentitura tu tibi voce refer:  
 esse tui memorem, de qua tibi maxima cura est,  
 quodque potest, secum nomen habere tuum.  
 vultibus illa tuis tamquam praesentis inhaeret,  
 teque remota procul, si modo vivit, amat. (11-20)

Ovid now describes only to dismiss his doubts about his wife's affection; he thus demonstrates his own loyalty while putting in a plea for sympathy and reassurance. He is

<sup>11</sup> cf. Prop. 1. 11. 5 'nostris cura subito memores a ducere noctes?'; Hor. *Carm.* 3. 27. 14. For memory as a theme in the poems of exile cf. B. R. Nagle, *The Poetics of Exile (Collection Latomus 170, 1980)*, 92 ff.

<sup>12</sup> At *Pont.* 1. 5. 74 'aspicit hirsutos cominus Ursa Getas' the epithet appropriate to the bear is applied to the inhabitants of the North.

<sup>13</sup> It is hardly relevant in this context that Romulus excluded the Capitoline from his walls (*Tac. Ann.* 12. 24. 2; *RE* 21. 2. 1872).

<sup>14</sup> M. P. Nilsson, *HTR* 33 (1940), 1 ff. = *Opuscula Selecta* 3 (1950), 31 ff. (with 255 ff.); E. Fraenkel, *CQ* 36 (1942), 10 ff. = *Kleine Beiträge* 2 (1964), 37 ff.; S. Weinstock, *Divus Julius* (1971), 371 f.

<sup>15</sup> *Dig.* 1. 8. 11 'si quis violaverit muros, capite punitur . . . nam et Romuli frater Remus occisus

traditur quod murum transcendere voluerit'; Pease on Cic. *Nat. Deor.* 3. 94; Bömer on Ov. *Fast.* 4. 809; Ogilvie on Liv. 1. 6. 3-7. 3.

<sup>16</sup> Contrast *Trist.* 1. 5. 69 f. 'sed quae de septem totum circumspicit orbem montibus imperii Roma deumque locus'.

<sup>17</sup> *Epod.* 7. 17 ff. 'sic est: acerba fata Romanos agunt scelusque fraternae necis, ut immerentis fluxit in terram Remi sacer nepotibus cruor'; Tert. *Nat.* 2. 9; Min. Fel. 25. 2; Aug. *C.D.* 3. 6; H. Wagenvoort, *Studies in Roman Literature, Culture and Religion* (1956), 169 ff.; H. Fuchs, *Der geistige Widerstand gegen Rom* (1964), 86 f. Ovid tactfully reserves any criticism for Remus, but for somebody of his temperament it must have been Romulus' conduct that raised doubts.

afraid for no definite reason, and keeps on asking about what is obvious; his anxiety is reiterated by *labat* (undoubtedly the right reading),<sup>18</sup> *ambiguo* and *spes mea mixta metu* (12). But as his wife's faithfulness is sure, he himself should have sure faith; though the meaning of *fides* shifts in emphasis, the chiasmus of 14 underlines its reciprocity. The stars are too remote to help in spite of their appearance of constancy (15),<sup>19</sup> and he will receive more reliable messages from an inner voice: here he recalls the passage where Lucretius asserted the supremacy of human reason.<sup>20</sup> Such soliloquies of the irresolute mind were characteristic of the *Heroides*, where no response was possible; they are particularly common in Seneca's tragedies,<sup>21</sup> from where they flowed to Shakespeare, and as the feature is also found in the *Medea* of Euripides, Ovid's own *Medea*<sup>22</sup> may have been an intermediate link.

equid ubi incubuit iusto mens aegra dolori,  
 lenis ab admonito pectore somnus abit?  
 tunc subeunt curae, dum te lectusque locusque  
 tangit et oblitam non sinit esse mei,  
 et veniunt aestus, et nox inmensa videtur, 25  
 fessaque iactati corporis ossa dolent?  
 non equidem dubito quin haec et cetera fiant,  
 detque tuus maesti signa doloris amor,  
 nec cruciere minus quam cum Thebana cruentum  
 Hectors Thessalico vidit ab axe rapi. (21-30)

Ovid now turns from addressing the stars and himself to addressing his wife directly, and again as in the love-elegies he aims not just to describe but to persuade.<sup>23</sup> As he professes to be lying awake at night, he plausibly imagines his wife's insomnia: 21 *incubuit* implies both reclining and brooding. 24 *tangit* not only means 'touches the heart' but recalls the physical contact of the past,<sup>24</sup> as does the discreet *lectusque locusque*.<sup>25</sup> Such passages should discourage us from underestimating the emotional content of Roman marriage; <sup>26</sup> though few writers have Ovid's excuse for breaking the conspiracy of silence, other hints may be found in Catullus' epithalamium to Manlius (61), Lucan's lines on Pompey and Cornelia (5. 805 ff.), and especially from the subtle scene where the widowed Dido feels the re-awakening of love.<sup>27</sup> The next couplet (25-6) significantly recalls the conventional agonies of the frustrated lover; <sup>28</sup> *inmensa* perhaps suggests not just the 'long night' of the commonplace but the vastness of the cosmos and the contrast with the narrow bed. When Ovid continues 'I don't doubt that *your* love shows tokens of sorrow', it is clear from the emphasis on the pronouns that he infers his wife's distress from his own; with a man's self-centredness he is thinking primarily of himself.<sup>29</sup> Mental suffering (as in 21) merges with physical pain (the five words of 26 support one another): when Hector was dragged behind Achilles' chariot (while still alive, according to post-Homeric accounts), Andromache felt the torture; <sup>30</sup> (*cruciere* is bound to *cruentum* by the alliteration). Again as in his love-poetry, Ovid relates his calamity to the paradigms of myth: Hector and

<sup>18</sup> cf. *Her.* 9. 42, 13. 124, 17. 178 'labant'.

<sup>19</sup> *fixae flammae* is an oxymoron, as flames normally flicker (*Virg. Ecl.* 8. 105 'tremulis . . . flammis'), but the point is purely verbal: the noun has no implication of uncertainty.

<sup>20</sup> *i.* 737 ff. 'ex adyto tamquam cordis responsa dedere sanctius et multo certa ratione magis quam Pythia quae tripode a Phoebi lauroque profatur'; *Ov. Trist.* 1. 9. 51; Housman, *Last Poems* 25. 6 'the heart within, that tells the truth and tells it twice as plain'.

<sup>21</sup> See Tarrant on *Sen. Ag.* 132 ff.

<sup>22</sup> One is tempted to suggest that Tomis was chosen for Ovid's banishment because it was where *Medea* chopped up her brother (cf. *Trist.* 3. 9); sadistic merriment is the prerogative of autocrats. Perhaps the elder Julia was sent to Rhegium because her promiscuity and unfilial behaviour recalled Scylla (for whom see Lyne on *Ciris* 67 ff.), and Cassius Severus to Crete (*Tac. Ann.* 4. 21. 3) because his gibes were regarded as lies.

<sup>23</sup> W. Stroh, *Die römische Liebeselegie als werbende Dichtung* (1971), 250 ff.; Nagle, op. cit. (n. 11), 43.

<sup>24</sup> cf. *Her.* 10. 53 'et tua, quae possum, pro te vestigia tango'.

<sup>25</sup> cf. *Met.* 11. 472; Plaut. *Amph.* 513 'prius abis quam lectus ubi cubuisti concaluit locus'.

<sup>26</sup> R. O. A. M. Lyne, *The Latin Love Poets* (1980), 18 'for ladies tradition prescribed knitting'.

<sup>27</sup> *Virg. Aen.* 1. 722 'iam pridem resides animos desuetaque corda'. See also Prop. 2. 6. 32 (which surely reflects the attitudes of marriage) 'orgia sub tacita condita laetitia' (where *orgia* is Ruhnken's conjecture for *iurgia*).

<sup>28</sup> There is a close reminiscence of *Am.* 1. 2. 3 f. 'et vacuus somno noctem, quam longa, peregi lassaque versati corporis ossa dolent'. See further Nisbet-Hubbard on *Hor. Carm.* 1. 25. 7.

<sup>29</sup> As Mrs. S. Hockley has emphasized to me.

<sup>30</sup> For Andromache's participation in Hector's sufferings cf. *Hom. Il.* 22. 463 ff., 477 ff.; *Enn. Scen.* 100 f. V.

Andromache were examples of marital fidelity,<sup>31</sup> Achilles a warning against the inhumanity of anger. The epithets *Thebana* and *Thessalico* (again connected by the alliteration) are not just metrically convenient periphrases, but give the allusion dignity and detachment.

quid tamen ipse precer dubito, nec dicere possum  
 affectum quem te mentis habere velim.  
 tristis es? indignor quod sim tibi causa doloris:  
 non es? at amisso coniuge digna fores.  
 tu vero tua damna dole, mitissima coniunx, 35  
 tempus et a nostris exige triste malis,  
 fleque meos casus: est quaedam flere voluptas;  
 expletur lacrimis egeriturque dolor. (31-8)

Ovid now purports to show his anxiety by a further display of irresolution, though here it assumes another form (31-4): whether his wife is sorrowful or not (cf. *Trist.* 3. 3. 26 ff.), he takes it amiss. In 35 his pretended self-sufficiency begins to weaken when he tells her to grieve at her own loss; *mitissima*, which is opposed to 33 *tristis* and 36 *triste* (they are words of taste like 'mild' and 'bitter'), encourages her actually to show the tender-heartedness that she is represented as possessing. In 36 he compromises further by speaking of joint troubles: between 35 *tua* and 37 *meos*, which are emphatic and balancing, *nostris* seems to fit best if it is not equated with *meis* (as the translators suppose) but rather applied to both parties. Then at 37 he reveals his true wish and asks her to weep at *his* sorrow, though he justifies himself by the commonplace that weeping can be a kind of pleasure; <sup>32</sup> (*voluptas* is opposed to the *dolor* that has dominated the poem since line 21). In 38 he makes the further excuse that grief is alike glutted and evacuated by tears (the verbs make yet another pointed antithesis): *egeritur*,<sup>33</sup> which is sometimes used of the body's waste products, recalls the Aristotelian theory of catharsis, and suggests that a medical interpretation of that word<sup>34</sup> may have seemed natural to the poet.

atque utinam lugenda tibi non vita sed esset  
 mors mea, morte fores sola relicta mea: 40  
 spiritus hic per te patrias exisset in auras,  
 sparsissent lacrimae pectora nostra piaae,  
 supremoque die notum spectantia caelum  
 texissent digiti lumina nostra tui,  
 et cinis in tumulo positus iacuisset avito, 45  
 tactaque nascenti corpus haberet humus;  
 denique, ut et vixi, sine crimine mortuus essem:  
 nunc mea supplicio vita pudenda suo est. (39-48)

Ovid now carries his *querimoniae* further and wishes that he had died rather than been exiled,<sup>35</sup> and he imagines how his wife would have mourned him; the morbid topic is conventional in elegy,<sup>36</sup> yet here it seems well suited to manipulate his wife's emotions, and through her those of the general reader. In this fantasy the personal bond is emphasized by the repeated contrast of 'I' and 'you' (39-44), but significantly at the return to reality in 48 the accented *mea* is offset only by *supplicio suo*. The section is given unity by other characteristic instances of correspondence and antithesis: the release of the soul to air (41 *spiritus* balances *auras*) is followed by the return of the body to earth (45), a sequence familiar from Greek sepulchral epigram; <sup>37</sup> the reference to place in 41 *patrias* is picked up by 43 *notum*, 45 *avito* and the whole of 46; 42 *pectora nostra* points to 44 *lumina nostra*, just as 42 *lacrimae* . . . *piaae* to 44 *digiti* . . . *tui*; <sup>38</sup> 45 *avito* is answered by 46 *nascenti* (which also

<sup>31</sup> For such *exempla* in the poetry of exile cf. Nagle, op. cit. (n. 11), 76 f.

<sup>32</sup> W. Stroh, op. cit. (n. 23), 32, n. 72.

<sup>33</sup> *TLL* 5. 2. 244. 7 ff. See also Juv. 5. 159 'per lacrimas effundere bilem'.

<sup>34</sup> For a summary of the issues see D. W. Lucas's commentary on the *Poetics*, Appendix II.

<sup>35</sup> For exile as a form of living death cf. Nagle, op. cit. (n. 11), 23 ff.

<sup>36</sup> *Trist.* 3. 3. 29 ff.; Prop. 1. 17. 19 ff., 2. 13. 17 ff.; Tib. 1. 3; Nagle, op. cit. 46 ff.

<sup>37</sup> See Luck ad loc., citing especially A. Dieterich, *Nekyia*<sup>2</sup> (1913), 106 f.

<sup>38</sup> One may again compare Ovid's love-romances (*Her.* 10. 120 'nec mea qui digitis lumina condant erit?')

looks back to 43 *supremoque die*), 45 *cinis* by 46 *corpus*, 47 *vixi* by 47 *mortuus* (so *vita* and *mors* in 39 f.), 47 *crimine* by the stronger *supplicio* in 48. Most significantly of all, 46 *humus* looks back not just to 45 *tumulo* but to 43 *caelum*. The dying eyes that gaze on the sky, like Dido's,<sup>39</sup> recall the spectacle of the constellations in the opening lines,<sup>40</sup> and this suggests a further back-reference from 46 'tactaque nascenti corpus haberet humus' to 6 'vester ab intacta circulus extet humo'.<sup>41</sup> The Bears are eternally immune from the contagion of earth, but a baby is doomed to mortality from the day he is born, when by Roman ritual he is formally placed on the ground.<sup>42</sup>

me miserum, si tu, cum diceris exulis uxor,  
 avertis vultus et subit ora rubor ! 50  
 me miserum, si turpe putas mihi nupta videri !  
 me miserum, si te iam pudet esse meam !  
 tempus ubi est illud, quo te iactare solebas  
 coniuge, nec nomen dissimulare viri ?  
 tempus ubi est, quo te (nisi non vis illa referri) 55  
 et dici, meminim, iuivit et esse meam ?  
 utque proba dignum est, omni tibi dote placebam :  
 addebat veris multa faventis amor ;  
 nec quem praeferres (ita res tibi magna videbar),  
 quemque tuum malles esse, vir alter erat. 60  
 nunc quoque ne pudeat, quod sis mihi nupta ; tuusque  
 non debet dolor hinc, debet abesse pudor. (49-62)

Ovid now shows increasing uncertainty about his wife's attitude: the relationship is underlined by a continuing contrast of personal pronouns as well as by a repetition of words like *uxor*, *coniunx*, *nupta*, *vir*.<sup>43</sup> Just as in the last line of the previous section (48), *pudor* replaces *dolor* as the dominant emotion (52, 61, 62): the lady seems to avert her face, and with an excessive regard for public opinion (49 *diceris*, 51, 55) to blush at her position as an exile's wife.<sup>44</sup> Yet Ovid himself has no consciousness of guilt (62), which coheres with what he says so often elsewhere: when he swears to his parents' shades 'errorem iussae, non scelus, esse fugae' (*Trist.* 4. 10. 90), it is difficult not to believe him. He had taken part in no plot, made love to no princess, broken no law (*Pont.* 2. 9. 71), uttered no indiscretion (*Trist.* 3. 5. 47 f.), and mocked Augustus in no charade; <sup>45</sup> such reprehensible activities all seem incompatible with his constant emphasis on what he has seen <sup>46</sup> rather than on what he has done (even other people's conspiracies are heard of rather than observed). Since the year of his banishment is fixed independently as also that of the disgrace of the younger Julia,<sup>47</sup> it seems certain that he was aware of some impropriety, but when he speaks of his *timor*<sup>48</sup> or embarrassment, that suggests that the mistakes which made Cotta Messalinus groan (*Pont.* 2. 3. 66) stopped short of active collusion (cf. *Trist.* 2. 104 'cur imprudenti cognita culpa mihi?'). In his own liberal circle no action was called for, but in the grim last years of Augustus the delation associated with later reigns was already a duty.<sup>49</sup>

cum cecidit Capaneus subito temerarius ictu,  
 num legis Euadnen erubuisse viro ?  
 nec quia rex mundi compescuit ignibus ignes, 65  
 ipse suis Phaethon infitandus erat.  
 nec Semele Cadmo facta est aliena parenti,  
 quod precibus periit ambitiosa suis.  
 nec tibi, quod saevis ego sum Iovis ignibus ictus,  
 purpureus molli fiat in ore pudor. (63-70)

<sup>39</sup> For this motif see Pease on Virg. *Aen.* 4. 692.

<sup>40</sup> I owe this point to Mr. D. P. Fowler.

<sup>41</sup> I owe this point to Mrs. S. Hockley.

<sup>42</sup> Suet. *Ner.* 6. 1; Aug. *C.D.* 4. 11; A. Dieterich, *Mutter Erde*<sup>2</sup> (1913), 6 ff.; *RAC* 9. 116.

<sup>43</sup> 57 *dote* (also used of accomplishments at *A.A.* 1. 596) may have a witty ambiguity in this context.

<sup>44</sup> For the shameful word *exul* cf. also *Trist.* 5. 11. 2; Cic. *Mur.* 61, *Dom.* 72.

<sup>45</sup> cf. R. Syme, *History in Ovid* (1978), 219 f.

<sup>46</sup> *Trist.* 2. 103, 3. 5. 49 f., 3. 6. 28; J. C. Thibault, *The Mystery of Ovid's Exile* (1964), 27 ff.

<sup>47</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 4. 71. 4; Syme, op. cit. (n. 45), 37 f., 207 f.

<sup>48</sup> *Trist.* 4. 4. 39, cf. *Pont.* 2. 2. 17.

<sup>49</sup> See especially Syme, op. cit. (n. 45), 214, for the suspicious atmosphere of the period.

In the manner familiar from his love-poetry Ovid now produces three mythological *exempla*, which illustrate his own case more precisely than is sometimes realized. Capaneus was scaling the Theban walls with fire when he was felled to the ground by an unexpected bolt from heaven; though his behaviour was reckless like Ovid's own,<sup>50</sup> Evadne did not blush like Ovid's wife (50) but immolated herself on her husband's pyre (cf. *Trist.* 5. 5. 54). The king of heaven 'checked fire with fire' (the words repeat *Met.* 2. 313) when he blasted Phaethon from the chariot of the sun; the emperor of the world curbed passion,<sup>51</sup> that is to say love-poetry, by burning<sup>52</sup> the offending poems. Semele was struck down because of her pretensions, and Ovid could attribute his own disaster to his literary ambition;<sup>53</sup> on the other hand it is implied by 67 *aliena* (which characteristically balances 68 *suis*) that he himself may be estranged from his wife (cf. 66 *infittandus*). In 69-70 he makes it explicit that he too was struck by the fire of 'Jove'; he thus suggests the unexpectedness,<sup>54</sup> the ferocity (*saevis*), and the capriciousness of his punishment, while not denying that Augustus had the right, or at any rate the authority, to punish. The metaphor is a persistent one in the exile poetry,<sup>55</sup> and it is hard not to recognize it at *Met.* 15. 871 f. 'iamque opus exegi quod nec Iovis ira<sup>56</sup> neque ignis nec poterit ferrum nec edax abolere vetustas' (if one can postulate a revised edition after the decree of banishment):<sup>57</sup> Ovid says elsewhere of his own genius 'Caesar in hoc potuit iuris habere nihil' (*Trist.* 3. 7. 48). At the end of the section Ovid contrasts his wife's gentleness (70 *mollis*) with the savage treatment he has received; the abstract *pudor* combines well with the alliterative *purpureus* just as in the *Amores* (2. 5. 34), and effectively rounds off this part of the poem (49-70 belong together).

sed magis in curam nostri consurge tuendi,  
 exemplumque mihi coniugis esto bonae,  
 materiamque tuis tristem virtutibus inple:  
 ardua per praeceps gloria vadit iter.  
 Hectora quis nosset, si felix Troia fuisset? 75  
 publica virtutis per mala facta via est.  
 ars tua, Tiphys, iacet, si non sit in aequore fluctus:  
 si valeant homines, ars tua, Phoebe, iacet.  
 quae latet inque bonis cessat non cognita rebus,  
 apparet virtus arguiturque malis. 80  
 dat tibi nostra locum tituli fortuna, caputque  
 conspicuum pietas qua tua tollat, habet.  
 utere temporibus, quorum nunc munere facta est  
 et patet in laudes area lata tuas. (71-84)

Ovid now exhorts his wife to forget her sensitive feelings and rise from her prostration: *consurge* has a literal dimension (like 21 *incubuit*), but is primarily psychological (high ideals suit the path to glory in 74 as well as the vision of the stars that set the mood of the poem). Once again he shows the egotism of a husband and a poet: *she* is to show her fine qualities in order to defend *him* (the emphatic *nostri* in 71 is here singular in reference and picked up by 73 *tuis*). Like the romantic mistresses of elegy<sup>58</sup> she is to derive her fame from the poems whose subject-matter she will supply: 73 *inple*<sup>59</sup> is a term of rhetoric no less than *exemplum* and *materiam*, and there is a wry reversal of *Amores* 1. 3. 19 'te mihi materiam felicem in carmina praebe'. Her task is both difficult (74 *ardua*) and dangerous (*praeceps*), but such is the way to glory: here Ovid gives a new turn to Hesiod's maxim on the uphill path to virtue (*Op.* 290).

<sup>50</sup> cf. *Trist.* 5. 3. 29 f. 'illo nec levius cecidi quem magna locutum reppulit a Thebis Iuppiter igne suo' (*suo* points a contrast with the fire that Capaneus carried).

<sup>51</sup> For *ignes* of love-poetry cf. *Trist.* 4. 10. 45 'saepe suos solitus recitare Propertius ignes'. *compescere* suits alike checking a fire (Plin. *Epist.* 10. 33. 2) and curbing licentiousness.

<sup>52</sup> For the burning of bad poetry cf. Nisbet-Hubbard on Hor. *Carm.* 1. 16. 3.

<sup>53</sup> *Trist.* 3. 3. 74 'ingenio perii Naso poeta meo', *Pont.* 2. 7. 48.

<sup>54</sup> If anybody had predicted that Ovid would be sent to the Black Sea, he would have told him to drink hellebore (*Pont.* 4. 3. 51 ff.).

<sup>55</sup> *Trist.* 1. 1. 72, 1. 3. 11 f. etc. (see de Jonge on our passage).

<sup>56</sup> For Augustus' *ira* cf. Syme, op. cit. (n. 45), 223 ff.

<sup>57</sup> M. Pohlenz, *Hermes* 48 (1913), 10 ff.

<sup>58</sup> For such a transference of motifs from the love-poetry cf. *Trist.* 1. 6. 5. 14 (with n. 31 above).

<sup>59</sup> *TLL* 7. 636. 34 ff.; *OLD* s.v. 6.

With his new-found conviction the poet next develops a Stoic doctrine expounded in Seneca's *De Providentia* and summed up by the aphorism 'calamitas virtutis occasio est' (4. 6).<sup>60</sup> He reverts in 75 to the paradigm of Hector (cf. 29 f.): nobody would have heard of him but for the proverbial 'Iliad of woes'.<sup>61</sup> Misfortunes can turn Hesiod's lonely path of virtue (cf. 74) into a public highway (76), where all may watch and follow; *publica* should be taken with *via* rather than *mala* (as many suppose), and balances 75 *quis nosset?* and 80 *apparet*. Yet even in his most significant examples (77 f.) Ovid cannot resist the elegance of framing his couplet with a repeated 'ars tua . . . iacet'; in line 77 *iacet*, with its suggestion of flatness, makes a clear contrast with *fluctus* (which is also set against *aequore*), and similarly in 78, with its possible meaning of 'lying ill', it seems to make a further contrast with *valeant*. But though the art of Phoebus must be primarily medicine (*Fast.* 3. 827), which is sometimes combined with navigation,<sup>62</sup> it is tempting to suspect a secondary meaning that is relevant to Ovid's own situation rather than to his wife's: poetry<sup>63</sup> as well as medicine may languish from too much well-being. In *The Wound and the Bow* Edmund Wilson exploited the myth of Philoctetes, who owed his pre-eminence in archery to his festering foot, and it might be argued that exile gave Ovid's writing a new seriousness and authority. Though he usually regards his misfortune as disadvantageous to poetry, in this elegy he takes a more constructive attitude.<sup>64</sup>

The last six lines of the elegy continue to combine noble sentiments with verbal wit, just as in Seneca. In good times *virtus* lies obscure and inert (as the noun implies energy, 79 *cessat* makes an oxymoron),<sup>65</sup> but in adversity it can no longer be concealed (80 *arguitur* would more usually suggest the detection of weakness). Ovid's fortune gives his socially ambitious wife<sup>66</sup> something to boast about (81): *nostra* is exultantly emphatic (leading to 82 *tua* and 84 *tuas*), and *fortuna* defiantly ironic. She should hold her head high (81 f.) instead of averting her gaze (50); her *pietas* (82) is best shown in fidelity to himself (cf. *Trist.* 1. 3. 86; 5. 14. 28), not in the religiosity of her friends at court. She now has space and scope for the exercise of her glory (84 *area*<sup>67</sup>), not just a *locus* (81) or a *via* (76, also combined with *facta est*); with further point 84 *patet* is opposed to 79 *latet*, and 84 *lata* balances 82 *tollat*. And though making use of misfortune was recommended by moralists,<sup>68</sup> there is a paradox in the wording *utere temporibus* (83), which naturally suggests opportunism and living for the moment. The elegy is not just an exhortation to the lady, but a self-justification to the world; as suits his invocation to the eternal Bears, Ovid has consciously reversed the cynicism of the *Ars Amatoria*.

For the *Ars* was the real cause of his ruin, not simply a convenient cover (cf. *Pont.* 2. 9. 75 f.) or a make-weight on the charge-sheet: if the later *error* had been the primary offence (thus *Pont.* 3. 3. 72), why was Ovid treated more severely than the younger Julia's lover Silanus, who simply got a hint from Augustus to go away and a hint from Tiberius to come back?<sup>69</sup> But the scandal of 8 A.D. caused the Princeps to relive his agony of 2 B.C., when the elder Julia had been the culprit and the victim. She had been a pawn in political strategies since the day of her birth, when her mother was divorced for producing a girl, and when she jumped over the wall, she felt a compulsion not just to defy but to desecrate.<sup>70</sup> Augustus saw great damage to his social and dynastic policies, and he did not like being made a fool of by his own daughter; his indignation was perfectly sincere<sup>71</sup> (the charges

<sup>60</sup> cf. also *Trist.* 5. 5. 49 ff. (with further *exempla*), 5. 14. 23 f.; *Sen. Prov.* 4. 4 'gaudeant, inquam, magni viri aliquando rebus adversis, non aliter quam fortes milites bello'; *Luc.* 8. 74 ff.; *Arr. Epict.* 1. 24. ἡ ἀπὸ περιστάσεων εἶσιν αἱ τοῦς ἀνδρας δεικνύουσσαι; A. Bonhöffer, *Die Ethik des stoikers Epiktet* (1894), 24.

<sup>61</sup> For troubles as a subject for song cf. *Hom. Il.* 6. 357 f., *Od.* 8. 579 f.; *Eur. Tro.* 1240 ff.

<sup>62</sup> Pease on *Cic. Div.* 1. 24.

<sup>63</sup> cf. *A.A.* 1. 25 'non ego, Phoebae, datas a te mihi mentiar artes' (with a pun on the title of his work), *Trist.* 3. 3. 10 'Apollinea . . . arte'; cf. *Hor. Carm.* 4. 6. 29.

<sup>64</sup> cf. *Trist.* 5. 1. 28 'materia est propriis ingeniosa malis'.

<sup>65</sup> For the collocation cf. *Cic. Post Red. in Sen.* 13; *Luc.* 3. 690.

<sup>66</sup> She was a dependant of Marcia, the cousin of

Augustus and wife of Paullus Fabius Maximus, cos. 11 B.C. and patron of poets (*Hor. Carm.* 4. 1. 10 f.; *Syme*, op. cit. (n. 45), 135 ff.).

<sup>67</sup> The word yields another pun at *Trist.* 5. 14. 23 'area de nostra nunc est tibi facta ruina', which confirms Ehwald's *facta est* in our passage (the MSS read *facta est* or *freta es*).

<sup>68</sup> See for instance *Plut. De Tranq. An.* 467 a-e.

<sup>69</sup> *Tac. Ann.* 3. 24. 4 'se quoque laetari quod . . . e peregrinatione longinqua revertisset'; *Syme*, op. cit. (n. 45), 207. Silanus' political importance would not have saved him if Augustus had been mainly concerned about the younger Julia.

<sup>70</sup> *Sen. Ben.* 6. 32. 1 (from Augustus' own report) 'forum ipsum ac rostra, ex quibus pater legem de adulteriis tulerat, filiae in stupra placuisse'.

<sup>71</sup> *Suet. Aug.* 65. 2 'abstinuitque congressu hominum diu prae pudore'; *Dio* 55. 10. 14.

were too embarrassing to have been trumped up), and though the episode had political consequences (notably the elimination of Iullus Antonius), there is no certain evidence for an anti-Augustan plot.<sup>72</sup> Livia must have been well satisfied at the disgrace of her step-daughter, the mother of the princes who had so recently supplanted Tiberius (on merely objective criteria the natural heir), but she would present her motivation to her husband, perhaps even to herself, as moral rather than political. The amiable and thoughtless Ovid, who seems to have been unconscious of these complexities, chose this moment to publish a second edition<sup>73</sup> of the *Ars Amatoria*, embellished by a third book addressed to *puellae*. The Princeps, who read poetry in a literal spirit, characteristically did not caution the poet, but nursed his fury<sup>74</sup> for some eight years and, when the new scandal provided a pretext, loosed his thunderbolt.

When Ovid was relegated, his wife offered to accompany him (*Trist.* 1. 2. 41; 1. 3. 81 f.), but it seemed more sensible that she should stay behind to protect the property (*Trist.* 1. 6. 7 ff.) and organize support; but when the poet on his sick-bed imagines her arrival at Tomis,<sup>75</sup> he reveals his true wish without daring to mention it directly. He even came to feel, quite unfairly, that she might have done more for him by a direct approach to Augustus (*Trist.* 5. 2. 37) or Livia (*Pont.* 3. 1. 114).<sup>76</sup> Yet for the purposes of our poem, confidence is still the dominating motif, even if there is an undercurrent of anxiety; by the conventions of ancient literature, exhortation does not necessarily imply that the other party needs exhorting.<sup>77</sup> Ovid's banishment produced a series of piquant ironies: the most frivolous and least autobiographical of the Roman elegists portrays a family relationship with a particularity unparalleled in ancient poetry; he gives an insight into the nature of power under the Principate which in spite of his necessary discretion is more revealing than anything in Virgil or Horace; he shows greater resolve than a moralist like Cicero under far more formidable persecution (for his adjurations are really saying something about himself). Most curiously of all, and surely deliberately, he professes an Augustan ideal of marriage,<sup>78</sup> even if the celestial pattern is marred by the imperfections of earth.

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<sup>72</sup> Sen. *Brev. Vit.* 4. 6 'iterum timenda cum Antonio mulier'; Syme, op. cit. (n. 45), 194 (with bibliography). Against a plot see A. Ferrill in *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History* (ed. C. Deroux), 2 (*Collection Latomus* 168, 1980), 332 ff.

<sup>73</sup> *A.A.* 1. 171-228 (which can be dated to about 1 B.C.) seem to be a later insertion (R. Syme, op. cit. (n. 45), 13 ff.), and were presumably added with the independent third book (cf. *ibid.* 19). If the first edition of the first two books is put back a few years, then Ovid's works are spaced more plausibly (cf. *ibid.* 18).

<sup>74</sup> Tiberius, who must have resented Julia's behaviour as a slight on himself, was equally unforgiving.

<sup>75</sup> *Trist.* 3. 3. 23 'nuntiet huc aliquis dominam venisse, resurgam'.

<sup>76</sup> cf. *Pont.* 3. 1. 31 ff., 3. 7. 12 'quam proba tam timida est experiensque parum'.

<sup>77</sup> *Trist.* 5. 14. 43 ff.; *Isoc.* 9. 78-9; Nisbet-Hubbard, *Horace, Odes* II, pp. 3 f.

<sup>78</sup> *Pont.* 3. 1. 73 ff. 'exigit hoc socialis amor foedusque maritum...'