The Ovidian career model: Ovid, Gallus, Apuleius, Boccaccio

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I. THE OVIDIAN CAREER

Ovid has the historical privilege of being next in line and the first to react to what had been the boom in poetic self-reference and auto(bio) graphy in the times of Catullus, Virgil, Propertius and Horace. He is also the one who does the most to continue Horace's invention of a 'literary system' and a 'school' and an 'Augustan age' model of Roman poetry (compare e.g. Horace, *Serm.* 1.10.31–50 with Ovid, *Tristia* 4.10.41–56; *Ex Ponto* 4.16.5–40).

Furthermore, Ovid is unique in ancient literature for the sheer number and quasi-systematic regularity of autographic situations: in his extant production, every single work (with the exception of genres that cannot accommodate authorial self-expression: his heroic epic, and presumably his lost tragedy *Medea*) has a space of self-expression and, often, of recapitulation. Equally important, there is no single poetic text by Naso that remains 'unsigned', either through the inclusion of the author's name, or by explicit reference in another Ovidian text, or, often, both. In other words, there is almost no Ovidian poem that remains unacknowledged. Even more important, in a number of cases his texts 'talk to each other' (Hinds 1985; Barchiesi 2001; compare Frings 2005), with the result that each work is positioned within a career: for example, the *Fasti* engage the earlier elegiac/erotic work with the question 'Who would believe that a path could lead from there to here?' (2.8).

Central to Ovid's construction of his poetic career is the model of Virgil, exploited in different ways in different contexts. In histories of western literature the Virgilian and the Ovidian have recurrently been elevated to opposing ideological and formal principles. On the one hand a Virgilian poetics evolving in symbiosis with the construction of the Augustan principate and working towards the achieved monumentality of the *Aeneid*, a totalizing epic that sums up and contains

both Virgil's own earlier works, the *Eclogues* and the *Georgics*, and the previous Greco-Roman literary tradition as a whole. On the other hand an Ovidian poetics whose invention and humour feed on a detachment from the political goals of Augustus, and which in formal terms is characterized by a drive to repetition that undermines teleology and closure, the 'evolutions of an elegist', to use Stephen Harrison's phrase,[1] a poet who does not forget that he is an elegist even in the hexameter *Metamorphoses*, and who in the exile poetry returns to a pure strain of elegy of unending lament.[2]

Ovid himself is the first to write the literary history of this opposition, but the opposition itself is subject to the same lack of finality and closure that characterizes other aspects of Ovid's literary activity. There are times when Ovid aspires to an enduring monumentality perhaps greater even than Virgil's, for example in the Epilogue to the *Metamorphoses*, and times when Ovid imputes to Virgil a changeability and antifoundationalism that licenses Ovid's own shifting standpoint.

A similar oscillation[3] characterizes Ovid's construction of his own literary career, which contains moments of a rise through the genres in conscious emulation of the Virgilian career pattern, moments of unchanging continuity, as well as moments of regression. But the Virgilian model is always present, whether through affirmation or negation, and the Ovidian career is the first episode in the long history of the reception of the Virgilian career. The first word of the *Amores*, *Arma*, notoriously repeats the first word of the *Aeneid*, so highlighting the sharp generic contrast between the career of love elegist forced on Ovid by Cupid in *Amores* 1.1 and Virgil's national epic. That is the contrast which Ovid presents in self-assertive mode in his defence against Envy at *Remedia* 361–96, culminating in the expansive claim at 389–96:

> rumpere, Liuor edax: magnum iam nomen habemus;
>   maius erit, tantum quo pede coepit eat.
> sed nimium properas: uiuam modo, plura dolebis;
>   et capiunt animi carmina multa mei.
> nam iuuat et studium famae mihi creuit honore;
>   principio cliui noster anhelat equus.
> tantum se nobis elegi debere fatentur,
>   quantum Vergilio nobile debet epos.

[1] S. J. Harrison 2002: 79–94.
[2] On the history of this Virgilian/Ovidian polarization see Hardie 2007a.
[3] 'Oscillation' is the term of Cheney 1997: ch. 1.

Burst, devouring Envy; I already have a great name, and it will be greater, if only its feet continue on the path on which it began. You are in too much of a hurry; if only I live, you will have more cause for pain, and my genius has room for many songs. I enjoy my appetite for fame, which has grown with recognition; my horse pants at the beginning of the ascent. Elegy admits that it owes me as much as noble epic owes Virgil.

Here Ovid is at the beginning of a course that will lead to yet greater things in the future, but which will not diverge from its present metrical and generic track (*tantum quo pede coepit eat*). The language of 393–4 echoes Propertian formulations of elegiac ambition; 4.1.70 *has meus ad metas sudet oportet equus*, 'this is the goal towards which my horse must sweat'; 4.10.3–4 *magnum iter ascendo, sed dat mihi gloria uires: / non iuuat e facili lecta corona iugo*, 'I am set on a great climb, but glory lends me strength; a crown plucked from an accessible hill gives no pleasure'; but where Propertius speaks of the elevation of his elegy to national and epic themes, Ovid looks forward to increasing fame within the narrow limits of his habitual *lasciuia* 'playfulness' and *materia iocosa* 'jesting subject-matter' (385, 387).

On the other hand Joseph Farrell has argued that the allusion to the *Aeneid* in the first word of the *Amores*, followed by the scene in which Cupid thwarts Ovid's epic ambition, is a moment of poetic initiation that corresponds to Virgil's reworking of the Callimachean *Aitia* prologue in Apollo's warning in *Eclogue* 6 to the pastoral poet not to sing of epic kings and battles.[4] With hindsight Ovid's reader knows that that had been only the first stage in a career that *would* culminate in the grandest of Roman epics, and the same might be expected of Ovid in due course. Indeed, as Ovid tells us himself in *Amores* 2.18, by the time of the publication of the three-book second edition of the *Amores* he had already branched out beyond personal love elegy into didactic, with the *Ars Amatoria*, corresponding to the second of the three major works in the Virgilian career, the *Georgics*, and also into a form of erotic elegy focused on the great legendary figures of epic and tragedy, the *Heroides*.[5]

[4] Farrell 2004. In this article Farrell also traces the apparent echoes in the Ovidian corpus of the *Ille ego* proem to the *Aeneid*, and the implications for Ovid's retrospective construction of his own career.
[5] Discussion of the actual sequence of works in Ovid's career is bedevilled by problems of dating: *Amores* 2.18 speaks of a tragic venture followed by a relapse into love poetry, while *Amores* 3.1 and 3.15 look forward to the writing of tragedy. For the issues of dating see Hollis 1977: 150–1; McKeown 1987: 74–89. Ovid is more interested in the gesture politics of career construction than in presenting a consistent and coherent account of the chronology of his works.

Book 3 of the *Amores* is framed by poems that announce a generic ascent, after the completion of the business of love elegy, to the greater work of writing tragedy, an *area maior* (3.15.16) for the exercise of the horses that pull the chariot of Ovid's poetry.[6] The loss of Ovid's *Medea* may lead us to underestimate the importance of tragedy for Ovid's sense of his own career; Patrick Cheney argues that it was given full weight in Marlowe's construction of his own 'counter-national' career.[7] At *Amores* 3.1.24 it is tragedy that is the *maius opus* 'greater work', a phrase used by Virgil of the greater business of the second half of the *Aeneid* (*Aen.* 7.44–5 *maior rerum mihi nascitur ordo, / maius opus moueo*), and echoed by later poets with reference to the bold epic ambitions of the *Aeneid* as a whole.[8] At *Tristia* 2.63 Ovid, addressing Augustus, uses the phrase of his own long hexameter poem, the *Metamorphoses*: *inspice maius opus, quod adhuc sine fine reliqui*, 'look at the greater work, which to date I have left unfinished'.

If the *Ars Amatoria* is Ovid's answer to the *Georgics*, the hexameter *Metamorphoses* together with the *Fasti* in elegiac couplets constitute Ovid's complex and confident rewriting of the *Aeneid*: the long narrative poem that covers the history of the world from creation to the genesis of the Augustan imperial cosmos, together with the aetiological poem that focuses the Callimachean interest in origins exclusively on the matter of Roman and Augustan history. Together the *Metamorphoses* and the *Fasti* form the monumental climax to a career that begins in *Amores* 1 with Cupid's sabotage of the poet's epic project. Intense intertextual engagement with the *Aeneid* characterizes both poems, but for explicit comparison of the careers, as opposed to the works, of Ovid and Virgil we must look not to programmatic statements about the coming ascent to the greater works of the *Metamorphoses* and the *Fasti*, but to Ovid's textual processing of the event that interrupts their completion, his exile (in the qualified form of relegation) to Tomis on the Black Sea in AD 8. Ovid was exiled in his fifty-first year (*Trist.* 4.10.95–6); Virgil died in his fifty-first year (so, correctly, *Vita Probiana* 17). According to the biographical tradition Virgil left the *Aeneid* lacking the *summa manus*, and on his deathbed asked to burn the poem (for the longer history of the reception of this deathbed gesture see Krevans below, Ch. 10). Out of this Ovid fashions

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[6] Ovid alludes to this passage at *Fasti* 4.10 *nunc teritur nostris area maior equis*, in another restaging of a generic ascent, this time within the elegiac metre, to aetiological didactic; at the same time, in typical Ovidian fashion, he protests that in fact it is more of the same, continued devotion to the goddess of love (8 *tu mihi semper opus*).

[7] Cheney 1997.   [8] Starting with Prop. 2.34.66 *nescio quid maius nascitur Iliade*.

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the myth of his own exile as a form of death, the exequies of which are conducted on the night of his departure from Rome (*Trist.* 1.3), leaving behind the unfinished *Metamorphoses*, which, Ovid tells us, he placed on the fire as he left Rome, in conscious fulfilment of Virgil's deathbed wish (*Trist.* 1.7.15–22).[9] Death, the biological fact that ends and comes after the literary career of Virgil, figuratively becomes exile, another brutal fact of a writer's biography but one which Ovid transforms into the last stage of his own literary career (fittingly enough, since, according to Ovid, his poetry, specifically the *Ars Amatoria*, was one of the causes of his real-life exile).

A number of further points may be drawn out with regard to exile and the literary career. First, Ovid incorporates exile into poetry with such intensity that readers are almost forced to situate every text as 'pre-exilic' or 'exilic'. This has interesting consequences: the impact of exile is so strong that when we discuss the chronology of the so-called double *Heroides* (16–21), a series of poems surely written later than the single *Heroides*, and we find metrical and stylistic clues indicating a late composition, we are reluctant to accept this fact, simply because in his 'sad' poems Ovid is explicit that erotic poetry is over for him and only a poetics of gloom can suit his changed circumstances. Since the double *Heroides* are about love, although with an interesting atmospheric mix of the gleeful and the doomed, critics have preferred (we think wrongly) to assign them to the pre-lapsarian career of Ovid; in so doing, they show the power of Ovid's model of poetry as a coherent response to changing circumstances in life.

The second point is to note the significance of Ovid's exile, and of Ovid's literary representation of his exile, for the later history of exile, literal or figurative, in the self-representation of writers and intellectuals.[10] Sometimes this is a matter of a persona, permanently or temporarily adopted, but sometimes exile forms a stage in a larger pattern. Janet Smarr argues that Boccaccio sees Dante's journey in the *Commedia* as a reversal of the tripartite career of Ovid, viewed as successively poet of love, poet of transformations, and poet of exile; the three cantiche move from the realm of exile, through the realm of transformation, into the realm of love.[11]

The third point concerns the relationship between literary career, viewed as a consciously literary construction, and the historical biography

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[9] See Hinds 1985: 21–7 on *Trist.* 1.7.   [10] See Lyne 2002.   [11] Smarr 1991.

of the poet. The literary career is by definition not the same as the life of the poet, but the extent to which elements of a 'real-life' autobiography may be woven into the pattern of a literary career varies from author to author. In the *Eclogues* Virgil exploits pastoral's generic predisposition to the allegorical in order to define his version of pastoral in part through a veiled account of a personal history of exile from a rural home, as a result of historical land-confiscations. In the *Georgics* Virgil eschews the licence for the autobiographical granted by Hesiod in the *Works and Days*; the most extensive passage of first-person self-representation, the triumph of poetry at the beginning of *Georgics* 3, is a fantasy on the parallel courses trodden by *princeps* and poet. In the *Aeneid* Virgil's cameo appearances are limited to moments of metapoetry. Horace by contrast writes mostly in first-person genres which elicit the construction of an autobiography (see Harrison above, Ch. 2). Ovid begins and ends his career with first-person genres that test the relationship between literature and life in various ways. Where Horace for the most part claims to be in control of the shifting directions of the paths through his life (with the notable exception of the complaint at the beginning of *Odes* 4 of a forced return to a former state of slavery to love), Ovid presents himself as the unwilling victim of circumstances at the beginning and end of his career. The author of the *Amores* serves up for the nth time, and now in not very convincing terms, the love elegist's complaint that the force majeure of the god of love and of the mistress prevents him from pursuing a more respectable and more Roman path in his poetic and non-poetic careers. For this unserious flirtation with the inexorability of real life when it comes to poetic choices, reality takes its revenge with the relegation of AD 8, a thunderbolt of a blow which interrupts Ovid's upward course (graphically in the truncation of the *Fasti* at the poem's halfway point) and knocks him back to his elegiac beginnings. The tears of the elegist are now for real.

The exile poetry also gives a more veristic account of the relationship between life and literature at the beginning of Ovid's career, in the autobiographical *Tristia* 4.10. Here the young Ovid attempts to obey the superior power of his father's argument for the uselessness of poetry, but is thwarted not by the counterforce of a divinity or personification, but by the spontaneous flow of metrical words from his lips (*Trist.* 4.10.21–6). After this scene in the family home, the young poet next gives up on the *cursus honorum* after embarking on the first stage (33 *cepimus et tenerae primos aetatis honores*, 'I undertook the first office for a young man'), finding body and mind inadequate to the labour. At a similar stage of his life

history Propertius had combined Callimachean divine machinery with Roman topography, 4.133–4 *tum tibi pauca suo de carmine dictat Apollo / et uetat insano uerba tonare Foro*, 'then Apollo dictated a few words from his song and forbade me to thunder in the mad Forum'. Ovid gives the reader what appears to be unadorned autobiography. This divergence from the public *cursus honorum* onto an alternative path of poetry is perhaps in conscious rejection of a conception of a Roman literary career as equivalent to the public *cursus honorum*, in Joseph Farrell's suggestive formulation (see Introduction above).

2. OVIDIAN AUTOGRAPHIES, FROM CORNELIUS GALLUS TO BOCCACCIO

The life of our poet ... was bisected.
Rand 1925: 8

i. Gallus in Ovid

Ovid needs to be singled out as a major influence on career autography. He teaches by example not just because he talks a lot about his career at different times, not just because he reacts at lightning speed to the first fallouts of the Virgilian boom, but also because he is ready to compare his mix of biography and authorship to other examples, and to enhance patterns of 'exemplary' careers in his models. As a test case of what might be labelled 'retrospective reception', we will examine what can be recuperated about the case of Cornelius Gallus, according to Ovid the father of Roman elegy. We will focus not just on what can be inferred from Ovid about Gallus, and about Ovid's relationship to him: our central interest is in the use of intertextual connections in a dynamic and almost narrative way, so as to suggest the evolution of a career, not just an individual, textual model.

Now Gallus was without doubt a striking early example of what Farrell 2002 might call a *cursus litterarum*, a mix of the traditional Roman *cursus honorum* and literary career. The two paths converge for example in the breathtaking moment when the most famous love poet of Rome has the duty of arresting Cleopatra, the future dark lady of Roman elegy (Plutarch, *Antony* 78, although we can only speculate on what younger Roman elegists made of this), but there is a problem: this elegiac poet seems to have had no occasion to register his own downfall in poetry – this is precisely where Ovid jumps in and completes the job. We are

convinced (thanks also to Ingleheart forthcoming, who contributes two of our observations on lines 1–8) that there are traces of Gallus in Ovid's apology to Augustus, *Tristia* 2. This is how the poem begins, with an apostrophe by Ovid to his books of poetry, and indeed to his entire career (*Trist.* 2.1–8):

> Quid mihi uobiscum est, infelix *cura*, libelli,
>   ingenio perii qui miser ipse meo?
> cur modo *damnatas repeto, mea crimina, Musas?*
>   an semel est poenam commeruisse parum?
> *carmina fecerunt*, ut me cognoscere uellet
>   omine non fausto femina uirque meo;
> *carmina fecerunt*, ut me moresque notaret
>   iam demi iussa Caesar ab Arte mea.

What have I to do with you, my books, ill-starred labour? Why do I return to my condemned Muses, the causes of my guilt? Is it not enough to have earned one punishment? It was my poems that made women and men want to know me, an unlucky undertaking; my poems that made Caesar brand me and my ways, commanding that my *Art of Love* be removed.

In spite of our huge ignorance of the poems of Gallus, there is a cluster of details that point in his direction. The appositional use of *cura* in the first line of *Tristia* 2 is found in a crucial passage of Virgil's *Eclogue* 10 in a context addressing Gallus and his beloved Lycoris (22): *tua cura, Lycoris.* It has been clear since Servius that Virgil in *Eclogue* 10 is interested in Gallus' career and also in intertextuality with his elegies. Virgilian commentators suspect that the erotic connotation of *cura* was in itself a Gallan innovation.[12] Ovid uses *cura* in a different sense, but of course the context requires that we identify the dangerous *libelli* as erotic elegy. In the next hexameter, another appositional construction, *damnatas … mea crimina, Musas*, puts the downfall of Ovid in a nutshell. The stylistic device has been labelled by modern critics 'schema Cornelianum' (Skutsch 1956). The attribution to Gallus rests on the combination of passages such as Virgil, *Eclogue* 1.57 *raucae, tua cura, palumbes* 'the hoarse doves, your love' (again with appositional use of *cura*), Propertius 3.3.31 *et Veneris uolucres, mea turba, columbae*, 'Venus' birds, my flock, the doves' (explicitly about erotic poetry). The repetition of *carmina fecerunt* in the next two hexameters offers a parallel to one of the few lines of Gallus known to us though direct transmission, fr. 2.6 Courtney *tandem fecerunt carmina Musae*, 'at last the Muses have made songs'. Considering the proximity of the Muses

in Ovid's context, it may well be that he is thinking of Gallus: translators normally assume that in Ovid *carmina* is the subject, but the memory of Gallus' model could suggest an ambiguity: 'my poems' as subject, but also as object, with *Musae* understood as the subject from the previous couplet (as argued by Hollis apud Ingleheart: after all, the Muses' involvement makes them as guilty as the poems).

In the same fragment, Gallus had expressed self-assurance in the face of a judge, presumably in a context of aesthetic criticism (*non ego … iudice te uereor*, 'I have no fear if you are judge'). Ovid's *damnatas Musas* might be a bitter rejoinder to Gallus' statement, now that the circumstances of life have brought about the downfall of two love poets through the verdict of a judge, Augustus, who cannot be ignored. *damnatas Musas* expresses the unexpected result of Gallus' stance, one that Ovid had largely adopted in his early poetry: 'not being afraid of a *iudex*' because of the quality of the creation made by his Muses. Now Ovid's Muses have been put on trial and a much harsher kind of judgement has been made, by the same judge who had caused Gallus' political downfall – the same person is now judge, emperor and supreme critic of Roman literature, and this is a crucial idea for *Tristia* 2.[13] Ovid wants his readers to recall not only the poetic model of Gallus the elegist, but also his entire 'cursus of dishonour'.

In the juvenile *Remedia* the Ovidian Muse had been acquitted (387–8) *si mea materiae respondet Musa iocosae, / uicimus, et **falsi criminis acta rea est***, 'if my Muse meets the charge of mirthful subject matter, I have won, and she is accused on a false charge'. Now she is guilty. Now, according to the only substantial fragment we have from Gallus' poetry there was a certain dynamics in his work, an intertwining of two life choices, poetic and political career:

> – SAD FATE because of Lycoris
> – SWEET FATE because of Caesar
> – And nothing to worry from a 'judge':
>
> *Tristia* nequit[ia …]a *Lycori* tua.
> ***
>
> *Fata* mihi, *Caesar*, tum erunt mea *dulcia*, quom tu
>   maxima Romanae pars eri<s> historiae

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[12] Clausen 1994 on 10.22; Skutsch 1956: 198–9; Ross 1976: 69.

[13] The elegiac tradition had made much of the *puella* as a judge of poetic quality, in self-conscious modification of the theatrical tradition in which the audience was 'the judge': Terence is our crucial witness to the use of judicial discourse in a context of evaluation and competition of poetic texts (see Focardi 1978).

postque tuum reditum multorum templa deorum
fixa legam spolieis deiuitiora tueis.

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] ... tandem *fecerunt c[ar]mina* Musae
quae possem domina deicere digna mea:
] . atur idem tibi, non ego, Visce,
] ..... Kato, *iudice te* uereor

... sad because of your naughtiness, Lycoris. Caesar, my fate will be sweet when you are the greatest part of Roman history, and when after your return I read of the temples of the gods enriched with the spoils you have fixed to them... At last the Muses have made songs that I can sing as worthy of my mistress .... the same to you, I do not, Viscus, ... Cato, fear you as judge. (C. Cornelius Gallus fr. 2 Courtney)

This is now reconfigured in Ovidian exile poetry as

– SWEET FATE as a love poet
– SAD FATE (*Tristia*) because of Caesar
– And a judge to worry about (not Cato but Caesar)

Even the title *Tristia* in this context retains some implications from Gallus' career, except that this new Gallus 'talks back', *Tristia* 2 being in part an experiment in alternative history: what if Gallus the inventor of Roman elegy had used elegy as a way to react against the Augustan indictment? *Tristia, quo possum, carmine **fata** leuo*, 'I lighten my sad fate in the only way I can, through song' (*Trist.* 4.10.112). Another indication that Ovid is meditating on the pattern of Gallus' career is his use of the Virgilian 'epitaph' of Gallus in his own death fantasy, now set in Pontus not Arcadia:

tristis at ille 'tamen cantabitis, Arcades,' inquit
'montibus haec uestris; soli cantare periti
Arcades. o mihi tum quam *molliter ossa quiescant*,
uestra meos olim si fistula dicat *amores!*'

In his sadness he said 'But you, Arcadians, will sing these songs to your mountains, Arcadians alone skilled in song. Oh how softly would my bones then rest if only your pipe were to sound my loves in future.' (Virg. *Ecl.* 10.31–4)

hic ego qui iaceo tenerorum lusor *amorum*
ingenio perii Naso poeta meo
at tibi qui transis ne sit graue quisquis amasti
dicere 'Nasonis *molliter ossa cubent.*'

I who lie here once played with tender loves, Naso the poet who perished by my own genius. Passerby, if you have loved, do not begrudge the words 'May Naso's bones lie softly.' (Ov. *Trist.* 3.3.73–6)

As a poet of *amores* (like Gallus) Ovid will be remembered in the same soft elegiac language that Virgil's Gallus had used about his own death.

Tristia 2 is in fact the only text in Roman poetry where the author dares to speculate on why Gallus had been forced to commit suicide, 445–6 *non fuit opprobrio celebrasse Lycorida Gallo, / sed linguam nimio non tenuisse mero*, 'Gallus was not blamed for celebrating Lycoris, but for not holding his tongue under the influence of wine'.[14] The disclosure, allusive and abrupt as it is, almost forces one to think about possible analogies. If we try to think of an implied model, where a friend – because of too much wine – provokes the destructive reaction of a 'king', we end up with a famous episode (indeed a turning point) in the career of Alexander the Great:

These and similar things the young soldiers heard with pleasure, but they were odious to the older men, especially because of Philip, under whom they had lived longer, when Clitus, who was himself by no means wholly sober, turned to those who were reclining below him, and quoted a line of Euripides in such a tone that the sound could be heard by the king rather than the words made out, to the effect that it was a bad custom of the Greeks to inscribe on their trophies only the names of kings; for the kings stole the glory won by the blood of others. Therefore Alexander, for he suspected that the words had been somewhat malicious, began to ask those next to him what they had heard Clitus say. (Curtius Rufus 8.1.27–9, trans. J. C. Rolfe (Loeb))

A sinister analogy for Octavian in the early 20s, especially because what Clitus had said, with the help of Euripides, is not so different from what people, at least in hindsight, must have speculated about, in the absence of official disclosure, as to the crime of Gallus – when he had inscribed on stone in three languages 'not even kings have dared to tread the land I have conquered',[15] did people argue *post factum* that he had been stressing his proud autonomy vis-à-vis Octavian's growing monopoly on far-off victories? As Euripides would have said, the victory monuments are only for kings, but the blood is always someone else's.

Thus Ovid constructs a narrative of Gallus' career, the *princeps* of elegy becoming a victim of the *princeps*, and *Tristia* 2 is implicitly structured as a supplement to Gallus' career, an opportunity for a victimized elegiac poet to talk back. This link is also credible on the 'juristic' level – Roman historians have independently argued that the model of 'imperial displeasure' used in Ovid's case has a precise precedent in Gallus (cf. Rogers

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[14] On the frequency of Ovidian allusions and references to Gallus see Barchiesi 1981.
[15] See *IG Philae* II 128.

1966) even if Gallus had only been forbidden from imperial provinces and declared *odiosus, persona non grata*, to the emperor. Therefore, the beginning of *Tristia* 2 is even more sensitive to 'Gallan' resonance.

A 'career man' himself, Ovid is especially sensitive to the career of his predecessors: he imitates predecessors not only through textual memories, but by constructing a mix of poetic utterances and (auto)biography.

ii. Ovid and Lucius Apuleius

We turn to Apuleius, intense reader of Ovid. Ovid's approach to his own poetic career is influential on Apuleius, but with a twist: the Ovidian career model is now adapted not to authorial self-fashioning but to a fictional plot: the plot of the novel *Metamorphoses*. Apuleius alludes to Ovid not only as a major influence on his novel, but as a dynamic model of evolution from one text to another. Thus he continues the strategy we have encountered in Ovid's recreation of Gallus in his exile poetry, that of inscribing a career within literary allusions. This time, of course, Ovid's exile poetry begins to assert its influence.

The hotspot for Ovidianism in the *Metamorphoses* (we have a vested interest in preferring this title to *The Golden Ass*: more on titles below) is the description of the wealthy house of Byrrhena at the beginning of Book 2 (4):[16]

The atrium was particularly beautiful. Columns were erected in each of its four corners, and on these stood statues, likenesses of the palm-bearing goddess; their wings were outspread, but, instead of moving, their dewy feet barely touched the slippery surface of a rolling sphere; they were not positioned as though stationary, but you would think them to be in flight. Next I saw a piece of Parian marble made into the likeness of Diana, occupying in balance the centre of the whole area. It was an absolutely brilliant statue, robe blowing in the wind, vividly running forward, coming to meet you as you entered, awesome with the sublimity of godhead. There were gods protecting both flanks of the goddesses, and the dogs were marble too. Their eyes threatened, their ears stiffened, their nostrils flared, and their mouths opened savagely, so that if the sound of barking burst in from next door you would think it had come from the marble's jaws. Furthermore that superb sculptor displayed the greatest proof of his craftsmanship by making the dogs rear up with their breasts raised high, so that their front feet seemed to run, while their hind feet thrust at the ground. Behind the goddess's back the rock rose in the form of a cave, with moss, grass, leaves, bushes, and here vines and there little trees all blossoming out of the stone. In

[16] For a rich commentary and bibliography see van Mal-Mader 1998.

the interior the statue's shadow glistened with the marble's sheen. Up under the very edge of the rock hung apples and the most skilfully polished grapes, which art, rivalling nature, displayed to resemble reality. You would think that some of them could be plucked for eating, when wine-gathering Autumn breathes ripe colour upon them; and if you bent down and looked in the pool that runs along by the goddess's feet shimmering in a gentle wave, you would think that the bunches of grapes hanging there, as if in the country, possessed the quality of movement, among all other aspects of reality. In the middle of the marble foliage the image of Actaeon could be seen, both in stone and in the spring's reflection, leaning towards the goddess with an inquisitive stare, in the very act of changing into a stag and waiting for Diana to step into the bath. (trans. J. A. Hanson (Loeb))

The Ovidian allusion is well known, as is its impact on the plot of the novel. The subject of the décor in the atrium is the myth of Actaeon and Diana as told in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (3.137–252), and the complex poolside sculpture in the atrium imitates the setting of Actaeon's transformation:

> Vallis erat piceis et acuta densa cupressu,
> nomine Gargaphie succinctae sacra Dianae,
> cuius in extremo est antrum nemorale recessu
> arte laboratum nulla: simulauerat artem
> ingenio natura suo; nam pumice uiuo
> et leuibus tofis natiuum duxerat arcum;
> fons sonat a dextra tenui perlucidus unda,
> margine gramineo patulos incinctus hiatus.

There was a valley thick grown with pine and cypress, called Gargaphie, sacred to high-girt Diana. In its inmost recess there was a woodland grotto, worked by no artist's hand. Nature by her own cunning had imitated art: for she had shaped a native arch out of the living pumice and soft tufa. On the right side sounded a clear spring with its slender stream, widening into a pool surrounded by grassy banks. (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 3.155–62)

Apuleius turns a passage of obvious ecphrastic quality into the ecphrasis of an actual work of art, and the intertextuality is sealed by the wonderful meta-allusion whereby the marble fruits in the statuary complex within the atrium are the product of 'art imitating nature' while the cave of the nymphs in Ovid is a product of 'nature imitating art without any artistic labour' (Hinds 2002: 146).

We might consider this simply as a homage to Ovid, but the sequel shows that this episode is less decorative and digressive than it seems. At this very moment – when we begin to feel that the narrator is a little too absorbed in the activity of viewing this sensual and enchanting work of

art – the owner of the house, Byrrhena, appears and announces to Lucius, her nephew, that 'all you see is yours' (2.5):

I was staring again and again at the statuary enjoying myself enormously, when Byrrhena spoke. 'All that you see', she said, 'is yours.' And with that she ordered everyone else to leave so that we might talk in private. When all had been dismissed she began. 'My dearest Lucius', she said, 'I swear by this goddess that I am very worried and afraid for you, and I want you to be forewarned far in advance, as if you were my own son. Be careful! I mean watch out carefully for the evil arts and criminal seductions of that woman Pamphile, who is the wife of that Milo you say is your host. She is considered to be a witch of the first order and an expert in every variety of sepulchral incantation, and by breathing on twigs and pebbles and stuff of that sort she can drown all the light of the starry heavens in the depths of hell and plunge it into primeval Chaos.

The situation somehow combines thoughts of sensual desire with ideas of appropriation, and *tua sunt quae uides* could well be a pointer towards what is going on at the level of programmatic allusion: the appropriation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as a central model for the entire work.[17] But the situation is also seminal at the level of plot, because Byrrhena immediately adds a warning about Pamphile and her sensual magic: in other words, she warns Lucius about the imminent turning-point of the plot, the magical metamorphosis of the narrator into an ass. The two fields of reference converge because of course metamorphosis is what links Apuleius to the Ovidian model. It is also important to realize that when Byrrhena dramatically warns that the sorceress is able to bring down the daylight of the upper world into Tartarus, and to bring back primeval chaos (*chaos uetustum*), she is using Ovidian language: at a dramatic moment in Book 2, the goddess Tellus warns Jupiter that the cosmic crisis brought about by Phaethon's skyride will 'bring back ancient chaos' (*Met.* 2.298–300):

> 'si freta, si terrae pereunt, si regia caeli,
> *in chaos antiquum confundimur!* eripe flammis,
> si quid adhuc superest, et rerum consule summae!'

If the sea perish and the land and the realms of the sky, we are hurled back into primeval chaos. Save from the flames whatever remains, and take thought for the safety of the universe.

[17] The analogous expression in the Psyche tale, *tua sunt haec omnia* (5.2.1), is also used to cap an ecphrasis of a wealthy palace, and the entire situation is based on an intertext from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the description of the Sun's palace and Phaethon's reactions to its cosmic setting (see *Met.* 2.31; 95–7).

For readers of Ovid's epic, the threat of a regression to 'old' chaos is a powerful one, since chaos had been the first form of reality evoked in the work at the beginning (1.4–5: 'before sea, lands, sky, there was only one face of nature ... chaos'). Even the location of Byrrhena's utterance, the magnificent atrium dedicated to Diana, is affected by the resonance of the Ovidian model: a couple of lines before the menace of chaos appears, Tellus had warned the gods that the disaster will strike even their magnificent atria and provoke a celestial collapse (*Met.* 2.294–7):

> at caeli miserere tui! circumspice utrumque:
> fumat uterque polus! quos si uitiauerit ignis,
> *atria uestra ruent!* Atlas en ipse laborat
> uixque suis umeris candentem sustinet axem!

Take pity on your sky ! Look around: both poles are smoking. If fire weakens them, your homes will fall in ruins. See, Atlas himself is labouring and can scarcely hold up the white-hot vault on his shoulders.

The pattern of Ovidian negotiations also extends back to the beginning of Book 2, in the description of Lucius' emotions after waking up in Hypata, just before he enters the suburban villa of his aunt (2.1–2):

As soon as night had been scattered and a new sun brought day, I emerged from sleep and bed alike. With my anxiety and my excessive passion to learn the rare and the marvellous, considering that I was staying in the middle of Thessaly, the native land of those spells of the magic art which are unanimously praised throughout the entire world, and recalling that the story told by my excellent comrade Aristomenes had originated at the site of this very city, I was on tenterhooks of desire and impatience alike, and I began to examine each and every object with curiosity. Nothing I looked at in that city seemed to me to be what it was; but I believed that absolutely everything had been transformed into another shape by some deadly mumbo-jumbo: the rocks I hit upon were petrified human beings, the birds I heard were feathered humans, the trees that surrounded the city wall were humans with leaves, and the liquid in the fountains had flowed from human bodies. Soon the statues and pictures would begin to walk, the walls to speak, the oxen and other animals of that sort to prophesy; and from the sky itself and the sun's orb there would suddenly come an oracle. I was in such a state of shock, or rather so dumbfounded by my torturous longing, that, although I found no trace or vestige whatever of what I longed to see, I continued to circulate anyway. As I wandered from doorway to doorway, like a man bent on prodigal extravagance, suddenly without knowing it I stumbled upon the provision-market. There I saw a woman ...

Guided by his long-standing fascination with magic, Lucius accepts the idea that the Thessalian city of Hypata is the capital of magical arts: he starts looking at everything in a spirit of credulity as well as curiosity

and sensual desire, and sees magical transformation wherever he looks – stones, birds, trees, fountains, statues. In Hypata, nothing is what it seems, everything is the result of metamorphosis, and metamorphosis is the revelation of magic in natural life. More exactly, the mental state of Lucius could be summed up in the words used by Leonard Barkan to explain the huge influence of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in later ages: 'The extraordinary fascination that the Ovidian poem has exercised over two millennia can be traced in large part to this paradox: it proves the natural world magical and the magical world natural' (Barkan 1986: 19). So when Lucius insists that in Byrrhena's atrium it is all about stone and art imitating nature, he is not being totally sincere: in Hypata, he believes, statues are transformations of humans, and are ready to change again.

Lucius has whetted his appetite for magic through avid assimilation of Ovidian metamorphic ideology;[18] only this Roman text, not the novelistic models in Greek, could have prompted such a cosmic and euphoric belief that everything is in fact a transformation of something else, or bound to become something else. Of course, there is the Apuleian twist, and Lucius is in a sense a naïve, literal-minded reader of Ovid; he is trivializing the Ovidian idea, he thinks that metamorphosis is the result of magical acts, while the Ovidian approach is that nature is magic because *storytelling* can be attached to it.

The next question is how far the specific choice of the Ovidian version of the Actaeon myth contributes to the programmatic importance of the ecphrasis, with its undertones of magic. The first aspect is of course the idea of human consciousness in an animal body. This is one of the few Ovidian transformations[19] in which the focus is on the enduring human consciousness of the animal. The image of Actaeon as a human body with stag horns is of course relevant here – one might debate whether this common iconography aims to make the subject immediately recognizable, or to illustrate a pregnant moment in the narrative, or even to make the point that the final result of the metamorphosis will be not just game, but game with human feelings. This last approach is clearly a link between Apuleius, Ovid and the visual tradition of the story. So the main narrative strategy of the novel,

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[18] Penwill 1990: 8 n. 'Lucius is suffering from lurid imagination arising from too literal a reading of Ovid's *Met.*' (a Petronian approach to narrative intertextuality).

[19] The other obvious example being the story of Io, the Argive heroine transformed into a cow and striving to get free of this animal body which does not match her identity. The plot provides the clearest mythical parallel to the story of the human ass which Apuleius found in his Greek models (including retro-morphosis, see Bandini 1986), and offers the aetiology for a goddess who will prove to be the most compassionate and helpful in the divine cosmos of the poem – Isis (see *Met.* 9.686–701; 773–81).

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that Lucius is still 'himself' in the body of an animal, is recapitulated in advance through the encounter with an Ovidian monument.

The second factor is the framing of authorial irony as a passive, not (as usual) active, concept. Actaeon has a special status in the Ovidian model not only because he is one of the few characters who focalize their stories from within an animal body – but also because he is the only character of the poem who has a proleptic control, a magnetism over the destiny, of the unwitting narrator. In a weird postscript to the poem in his exile poetry, Ovid will explain that he has become Actaeon, and not just any version of this character, but his own version, the innocent victim[20] of arbitrary divine retribution:

> cur aliquid uidi? cur noxia lumina feci?
> cur imprudenti cognita culpa mihi?
> inscius Actaeon uidit sine ueste Dianam:
> praeda fuit canibus non minus ille suis.
> scilicet in superis etiam fortuna luenda est,
> nec ueniam laeso numine casus habet.

Why did I see anything? Why did I make my eyes guilty? Why did I thoughtlessly become privy to a fault? Actaeon saw Diana naked, unwittingly: none the less he became prey to his dogs. Clearly with the gods even bad fortune must be paid for, and chance is no excuse when a god is offended. (*Trist.* 2.103–8)

Now if Ovid's downfall and punishment is the story of Actaeon, the author is entering the human and animal body of his mythic character; he is being trapped within one episode of his epic and becoming the subject and victim of the most insane metamorphosis of them all: being punished by becoming a part of his own creation (the innocent version of another favourite mythologeme of Ovid's exile poetry, the Phalaris–Perillus story). Lucius is a Milesian narrator about to be swallowed up by his own fiction, just as the Pontic Ovid is a narrator trapped within a stag's hide, a poet in exile experiencing humiliation and loss of civilized life. In other words, and this is for us the relevant aspect, Apuleius has used as a model not only Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, but Ovid's reinterpretation and revision of the *Metamorphoses* in exile (see Hinds 1985).[21] He has combined localized allusion with an idea of authorial career, which

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[20] His own version because Ovid's Actaeon is the most innocent in the entire history of the motif, while Apuleius is more interested in innuendoes of sinful voyeurism: see Schlam 1984 and Heath 1992.

[21] There had been a comparable tendency in Neronian and Flavian poetry, see Hinds 2007 and forthcoming, on Seneca and Martial imitating Ovid. Sometimes one suspects that intertextual contaminations between the Ovidian epic and the exile poetry are enough to suggest a similar

is what Ovid had been doing with Cornelius Gallus, with Virgil and of course with his own earlier self. The difference is that the author is now more protected than Ovid, through the fictional character of the work and the more ambiguous relationship between author, narrative voice and protagonist.

This revealing episode encourages us to look for other points of contact between Apuleius and his Ovidian model. Apuleius' novelistic plot is dominated by a single instance of metamorphosis, but the author broadens and multiplies the concept of metamorphosis – and so justifies the plural in the title – by extending it to ideas of translation, style, change of fortune and transition from life to book. He is in fact justifying the plural of his title by using Ovidian strategies. The idea of reversal of fortune (Greek *metabolē* or *peripeteia*) as a further revelation of metamorphosis is fundamental to the novel's programme from the prologue on, and it betrays the influence not just of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, but of Ovid's rereading of his epic in the elegies of exile: the author's change of fortune should now be inscribed into his poem of changes, and will retrospectively transform its originary meaning (*Trist.* 1.1.117–22):

> sunt quoque mutatae, ter quinque uolumina, formae,
>   nuper ab exequiis carmina rapta meis.
> his mando dicas, inter mutata referri
>   fortunae uultum corpora posse meae,
> namque ea dissimilis subito est effecta priori,
>   flendaque nunc, aliquo tempore laeta fuit.

There are also fifteen rolls about changing shapes, poems recently snatched from my funeral. I bid you tell them that the appearance of my own fortune can now be counted as one of the changed bodies, since it has suddenly been made different from what it was, a cause of tears now, though once of joy.

Thus when Apuleius announces a work about shape-shifting but also change of fortune (1.1),[22] *figuras fortunasque hominum in alias imagines*

scenario. For example, the only substantial fragment we have of Lucan's poem on Troy, the *Iliacon* (fr. 7 Morel; 6 Courtney), comments on the catastrophic paradox of *natura uersa* after the fall of Phaethon, with a clear allusion to *Met.* 2.329–32, contaminating this model with the expression *uice mutata* from a crucial passage of the exile poetry, Ov. *Trist.* 4.1.99. Perhaps Lucan wanted to reinscribe the fallen Ovid into his own Phaethon myth, which is what Ovid had done with the Actaeon story; Lucan's situation was no less tense than Ovid's, if one considers that the *Iliacon* was itself in competition/collusion with Nero's Trojan epic, the *Troica* (see Dio 62.29.1), and that Nero himself was often identified as a modern Phaethon.

22 Once again, as we remarked about the Actaeon episode, the new version of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is an ameliorative one: there is nothing in the Ovidian model to balance the idea of 'restoring the original shape'; in Boccaccio, as we will see, the idea of an improved and safer version of Ovid's career is again important.

conuersas et in se rursum mutuo nexu refectas ut mireris. exordior, 'so that you may be amazed at men's forms and fortunes transformed into other shapes and then restored again in an interwoven knot. I begin my prologue', he alludes to Ovid's 'first-person' exilic version of the *Metamorphoses*, and the prologue of the novel takes on not only the prooemium of the epic, but the prooemial elegy of the *Tristia*.[23]

The prologue to the novel is also remarkable for extending to the level of linguistic and literary form the theme of metamorphosis. This is again an Ovidian programme: the prooemium to the Ovidian *Metamorphoses* had implicitly commented on how metamorphosis extends from the level of mythological narrative to that of poetics.[24] The prologue of Apuleius similarly foregrounds the idea of *uocis immutatio* as a thematic but also formal aspect of the work (see also Shumate 1996), and even alludes to code-shifting from Greek to Latin as a related issue, just as Ovid had implied that the transition from Greek to Latin, as seen in the juxtaposition of the paratext *Metamorphoseon libri* with the incipit *formas mutatas in noua corpora*, 'forms changed into new bodies', is itself an instance of metamorphosis. In Apuleius, the principle of *uocis immutatio* goes hand in hand with the perception of the story as an example of *mutatio* of body (as in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*) and also of fortune (as in Ovid's *Tristia*, where again the style has to morph accordingly and change; cf. Apuleius 3.9 *dii boni, quae facies rei? quod monstrum? quae fortunarum mearum repentina mutatio?*, 'Good gods, what a sight! What an apparition! What a swift transformation of my fortunes!').

On the other hand, the characterization of the work as intended to provoke amazement and curiosity (*ut mireris*) has a precise match not just in the Ovidian epic but in Ovid's interpretation of his epic from exile: Ovid had categorized his epic of change as a poem of *non credendos ... modos*. The correspondence becomes very precise when, in a unique episode of foreshadowing, Lucius receives a prophecy about his future (2.12):

When I asked him about the outcome of this trip of mine, he gave several strange and quite contradictory responses: on the one hand my reputation will really flourish, but on the other I will become a long story, an unbelievable tale (*incredunda fabula*), a book in several volumes.

> quid referam libros, illos quoque, crimina nostra,
>   mille locis plenos nominis esse tui?

21 Tatum 1972.

24 On the implications of 1.2 *nam uos mutastis et ista* see Tarrant 1982: 351 and n. 35; Barchiesi 2005 ad loc., with further references.

inspice maius opus, quod adhuc sine fine tenetur,
in non credendos corpora uersa modos.

Why should I say that my books, even those that accuse me, are full of your
name in a thousand places? Look at the greater work, which is as yet unfinished,
on bodies changed in unbelievable ways. (Ov. *Trist.* 2.61–4)

ut mireris and *incredunda fabula* confirm that the rereading of the Ovidian
epic from exile is important to Apuleius. If the reference to the 'incred-
ible' (Greek *apiston, paradoxon, apithanon*) fits the status of both works as
fantastic fiction, the reference to 'I will become books' anticipates the fate
of Lucius by activating a link with Ovid's nightmarish 'metamorphosis
in exile': the transformation of authorial humiliation into additional
material for the author's own texts. The Apuleian novel can be seen as a
first person version of the Ovidian epic, one in which the narrator fails
to keep a safe distance from the metamorphic narrative[25] – and the basis
for this self-destructive strategy is precisely Ovid's construction (or per-
haps destruction) – through his exile poetry – of his career as supplemen-
tary metamorphosis and as reinscription of the author within a narrative
of woe. The shared idea of seeing as a crime or error is programmatically
mythologized in the shared iconography of Actaeon and Diana. Ironically,
this new first-person version of *Metamorphoses* brings ordeals to the narra-
tor, but final redemption for the author, while Ovid the author, after his
safe joyride through the metamorphic stories, ends up as a victim. In the
endgame, the author Lucius Apuleius will reap profit from Lucius' trans-
formation into 'books'. This is the glorious prospect entertained by the
author Naso at the end of *Metamorphoses* ('Ovid will go higher than the
stars, and become a book', Feeney 1991: 249; 'Hercules and the others may
have become gods in eternity, but Ovid will become his poem', Barkan
1986: 88), but the exile poetry had changed this outcome. The novel turns
Lucius into metamorphic books of exile from himself, only to reward him
with the safe prospect of becoming the author.

iii. Boccaccio and Ovid

Ovid in the Middle Ages is an author perpetually falling foul of
authority.

                                                              Dimmick 2002: 264

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[25] On the idea of danger and the transgression into the fantastic mode see the incisive comments of
Laird 1993.

Ovid and Apuleius are favourite authors for Boccaccio, and, like Apuleius,
Boccaccio reacts not just to individual models in Ovid but to the whole
career. Even more than Apuleius, Boccaccio has invested Ovidian
memories[26] with the problems and dangers of being a prose author: the
author of *Decameron*, a programmatic work of fictional prose. The import-
ance of authorial voice is already clear in the rich Proemio, which is a real
author's foreword:

From my tenderest youth until today, I have been aflame with love ... This
love has ... proved wellnigh unendurable ... my disordered appetite has
ignited in my heart an uncontrollable fire which has refused to leave me satis-
fied with moderate expectations but has caused me constant and quite needless
vexations ... my love, then, was passionate beyond all measure. (Proemio § 3
(Boccaccio 1993: 3, trans. Waldman))

This is the initial drive of Ovid's career, from the programmatic *uror* of
the *Amores* to the confession of the prooemium to the *Remedia* (7–8: *ego
semper amaui, / et si, quid faciam, nunc quoque quaeris, amo*, 'I have always
loved, and, if you ask what I am doing now, I love': cf. *Decameron* IV
Intro. 32 and 42). Boccaccio continues straight into the signature success
of the early Ovid, the *Ars Amatoria*:

And who is going to deny that this offering, such as it is, should properly be
devoted to the fair sex very much in preference to the men? It is women who
timorously and bashfully conceal Love's flame within their tender breasts;
and those who have had experience of him know well enough how much
harder it is to control the suppressed than the open flame. (Bocc. *Dec.*
Proemio § 9–10)

This is typical *Ars* material (cf. 1.275–88., esp. 276 on gender and dissimu-
lation), already revised by Ovid in the prologue to *Ars* 3,[27] and Boccaccio's
reasoning soon embraces the related subject matter of the *Remedia*, the
therapy for men in love (*Rem.* 151–224):

If a man is down in the dumps or out of sorts, he has any number of ways to
banish his cares or make them tolerable: he can go out and about at will, he can
hear and see all sorts of things, he can go hawking and hunting, he can fish and
ride, gamble or pursue his business interests. (Proemio § 12)

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[26] There is already a distinguished bibliography on Ovid in the *Decameron* (we have profited espe-
cially from Mazzotta 1986; Smarr 1987 and 1991; Hollander 1997; S. Marchesi 2001 and 2004): we
will not list individual contributions below for reasons of space; the focus of our discussion is on
the cumulative effect of the allusions.

[27] See Gibson 2002 on *Ars* 3.29–30 and 30, and also on 31–2 for the revision of *Ars* 1.645–6, 657–8.

But what about women? If the *Ars* already rewrites men-oriented arguments for a female audience, can one extend this approach to the *Remedia*?

Now since Fortune has tended to be at her most niggardly in that one quarter where strength has proved the most defective, as is evident in the gentle sex, I will to some degree make amends for her sin: to afford assistance and refuge to women in love – the rest have all they want in their needles, their spools and spindles – I propose to tell a hundred tales (or fables or parables or stories or what you will). (Proemio § 13)

This decision to provide assistance and therapy for a female audience is consonant with Ovid's surprise gambit of tucking in a book for women after the conclusion of the 'official' programme of the first two books of the *Ars Amatoria* (cf. *Ars* 3.29–52); equally important is the recollection of a programmatic passage of *Remedia amoris* – a text that turns out to be relevant to Boccaccio's poetics precisely for its central positioning in the Ovidian *Lebenswerk* (49–52):

> sed quaecumque uiris, uobis quoque dicta, puellae,
>   credite: diuersis partibus arma damus,
> e quibus ad uestros siquid non pertinet usus,
>   attamen exemplo multa docere potest.

But whatever is said to men, consider it said to you as well, girls; I give weapons to opposing sides, and if any of this does not serve your needs, yet it can teach much by example.

The echo of the prooemial section of the *Remedia*, a text that is in itself another surprise coda to the *Ars Amatoria*, a 'fourth' book on antidotes after two books on male and one book on female seduction, is interesting, because Boccaccio is framing the *Decameron* as a substitute for a missing 'fifth' book in the erotic cycle: a text offering remedies to a female audience, a text that for Ovid's audience had existed only in a potential state of readerly reception. In Ovid, women had been invited to respond to a text written for men, using strategies of 'exemplary' interpretation for their own benefit (there is perhaps an innuendo that men can apply a similar strategy, with even more profit, to the 'women's studies' department of *Ars Amatoria* 3).[28] Now Boccaccio will step in and offer guidance, although by using examples and 'parables' (not without a memory of the Ovidian *exemplo … docere* project).[29]

[28] On this approach see Gibson 2002, passim.

[29] The issue of examples and parables is of course much broader, and a crucial one for the poetics of narrative in Boccaccio, see e.g. Marchesi 2004: 1–8, with bibliography and new suggestions.

After this eloquent prooemium, the existence of a second prooemium, located at the beginning of the Fourth Day in the ten-day festive cycle of the *Decameron*, comes as a real surprise: this proem in the middle disrupts the narrative program, forcefully projects the authorial voice into the progress of the work, constructs the author as commentator of his own text, and the book, 'after being presented as an *opera-sistema*, begins to appear as a work in progress';[30] it merges women as addressees of the work and women as represented in the work.[31] There is also an apologetic style that surprises a reader who has been influenced by the 'early Ovidian' enthusiasm of the first prooemium:

I always assumed that it was only the high towers, the loftiest tree-tops that bore the brunt of the searing blasts of envy; this is what I have read and myself observed, and what I have heard from the lips of wise men. (*Carissime donne, sia per le parole de' savi uomini udite …*). But I find myself gravely deceived. I avoid, and have indeed always striven to avoid, the fierce onslaught of this rabid spirit of envy: to do so I've made a point of sticking to the low ground, of stealing in furtive silence along the valley floor. (Bocc. *Dec.* IV 2–3)

By now, it should be clear that 'savi uomini' is a reference to a poet who did famously[32] say that thunderbolts strike high places, but precisely by saying this got himself into further trouble with Jupiter – once again, this had happened in the proem-in-the-middle of the *Remedia* (369–71):

> summa petit liuor; perflant altissima uenti:
>   summa petunt dextra fulmina missa Iouis.
> at tu, quicumque es, quem nostra licentia laedit …

Envy seeks the heights, the winds blast the highest points, thunderbolts cast by the hand of Jupiter seek the highest points. But as for you, whoever you are, who find my licence offensive …

– the same context where Boccaccio found the image of a literary career as a journey, *Rem.* 394 *principio cliui noster anhelat equus*, 'my horse is panting at the beginning of the hill' (see p.61). This is an interesting prophylactic use of literary appropriation: the dangerous results of the thunderbolt image – so obsessively reworked in the exile poetry – have now taught Boccaccio's literary horse to 'stick to the valley floor' instead of proudly striving for the mountain tops.

[30] Baratto 1982: 35.   [31] Forni 1992: 58.

[32] On the importance of this Ovidian formulation in medieval literature, note e.g. Modoin of Autun on Ovid's exile, Dümmler 1881: 371 *Livor edax petit alta fremens* (and compare Dimmick 2002: 267 on Ovid as an 'indispensable' but also 'acutely combustible' author).

Now the apology in the *Remedia* is framed by two significant passages, closely related to each other. The defence speech – if this is what it is – actually interrupts a sequence that goes beyond the usual, almost ascetic limits of Roman elegy in describing love as a physical activity: nausea, body odour, even bowel functions will not be screened off this time, and this choice is empowered by the advertisement that more is to come, and by the dangerous hermeneutic principle of 'readers are to imagine more than my words suggest' (*Rem.* 357–60):

> nunc tibi, quae medio Veneris praestemus in usu,
> eloquar: ex omni est parte fugandus amor.
> multa quidem ex illis pudor est mihi dicere; sed tu
> ingenio uerbis concipe plura meis.

Now I will tell you what I recommend in the middle of sex; love must be routed on every side. Much of this I am ashamed to speak; but use your wit to understand more than I say.

Those are the last words before Ovid confronts his detractors and censors in 361–98. There is a clear symmetry with the restarting of the didactic plot after the long proem-in-the-middle[33] (both passages stretching sexual *licentia* in elegy almost as far as it will go), with its blunt use of *concubitus* and the technical advice about bedroom strategies, *Rem.* 399 *ergo ubi concubitus et opus iuuenale petetur*, 'so when you get down to copulation and the work of youth'.

The *Decameron* mirrors this structure with a parallel symmetry of risqué narratives. Before the prologue to Day Four (which will be, by the way, the occasion for 'Stories about People whose Love Has Ended in Tears') there has been an unforgettable end to the narrative of Day Three, amid gales of inexhaustible laughter of the audience at the level of first and second narrative instance: 'Learn therefore, young ladies, as you stand in need of God's favour, to put the devil back into hell.' Alibek, a very naïve 14-year-old, retreats into the Thebaid only to discover the well-known secret of how to restore the Devil to hell. Before the regular beginning of the narrative, the prologue to Day Four incorporates the truncated little tale of the goslings: 'do let's bring one of these goslings back with us, and I'll see to feeding it grain.' 'Absolutely not,' said his father, 'you don't know which end to feed it.' The son of Filippo Balducci, raised in absolute ignorance of women in the Apuleian location of Monte Asinaio, goes

[33] On the extreme character of the framing passages in the *Remedia* and their intentional recuperation of the most explicit sexual material in the whole *Ars* see Gibson 2007: 134.

to Florence only to discover the not-so-secret art of love. These two tales are not only parallel at a narrative level: they push the envelope of the *Decameron* towards a level of licentiousness very rarely achieved elsewhere in the collection.

Again, however, Boccaccio not only alludes to the *Remedia*'s proem-in-the-middle and its framing in the poem; he also learns from the atmosphere of looming danger and the courting of disaster that every post-exilic reading of the *Remedia* is bound to sense. So the author substitutes the deft and unassuming parable of the dust for the proud image of envy's thunderbolt striking high places:

I shall turn my back on this squall and leave it to rage, for I can't see myself faring any worse than a handful of dust: when the wind blows, either the dust remains undisturbed or else it's caught up into the air and deposited, more often than not, on people's heads, *on the crowns of kings and emperors, on the roofs of lofty palaces and high towers; and if it is dislodged from these places it cannot fall lower than whence it was scooped up.* (Bocc. *Dec.* IV, 40)

He also begins adopting, in a timely way, defensive strategies from *Tristia* 2, the Ovidian exile text that functions as a remedy to the crisis caused by the *Ars* and exacerbated, not palliated, by the ironically named *Remedia*:

these little tales of mine – not only are they written in the vulgar tongue and in prose (rather than in a high-flown Latin verse) *not only do they lack even a title*, but they're couched in as humble, unassuming style as could be. None of this has saved me, however, from being savagely buffeted by this storm-wind, nay, I've been practically torn up by the roots, I'm totally lacerated by it … nothing is beyond the reach of envy save poverty. (Bocc. *Dec.* IV § 3–4)

When claiming, in the manner of *Tristia* 2, that a humble genre is not safe from the highest authority, Boccaccio anticipates Ovid's late turn to humility: in so doing, he uses one more Ovidian allusion, perhaps a double one. On the one side, talking about a work that 'lacks even a title' is a loaded Ovidian move in the Middle Ages, when Ovid's *Amores* was both famous and circulated with the unpretentious – but famous – title 'sine titulo'. On the other, Boccaccio knew Ovid so well that he may have been impressed by the importance of titles in the exile elegies. In the *Tristia*, Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* is the one text that does not dare to display its title, now that it has been punished:

> aspicies illic positos ex ordine fratres,
> quos studium cunctos euigilauit idem.
> cetera turba palam *titulos ostendet apertos,*
> *et sua detecta nomina fronte geret;*

> tres procul obscura latitantes parte uidebis;
>   sic quoque, quod nemo nescit, amare docent.
>
> ...
>
> deque tribus, moneo, si qua est tibi cura parentis
>   ne quemquam, quamuis ipse docebit, ames.

You will see your brothers arranged in order, the products of the same sleepless toil. The rest of the band will display their titles openly, bearing their names on their exposed edges, but you will see three lurking in a dark distant part; even so, as everyone knows, they teach how to love ... And I warn you, if you have any concern for your father, do not love any one of them, although he himself teach you. (*Trist.* 1.1.107–12, 115–16.)

As one who goes one better (or worse) than Ovid, Boccaccio now realizes that repression is on the cards:

For if before I've completed even one-third of my labour they're already such a swarm and lay such claims upon me, I suspect that before I reach the end, if they're not stopped in their tracks, they will have increased and multiplied to a point where they could trample on me without the smallest effort. (Bocc. *Dec.* IV § 10)

In fact his farewell to the incomplete story of the ducks bears a clear sign of self-repression, a virtue that had been clearly lacking in the *Ars* and *Remedia* ('But that's as far as I ...' [Bocc. *Dec.* IV § 30]).

Next, the final chapter of Day Ten, the author's Afterword, immediately confronts the dangers of authorship:

Conceivably some of you ladies will observe that in writing these stories I have made a little too free, occasionally putting into my ladies' mouths, and frequently having them listen to, things that no reputable woman should say or hear. (Bocc. *Dec.* Conclusione dell'autore § 3)

After mobilizing the 'generic' defence typical of the *Remedia*:

To begin with, supposing there *were* something off-colour in any of the stories, the nature of those stories required it, and any reasonable person considering the matter objectively would readily grant that there was no other way in which I could have told them without distorting them out of their proper form. (Concl. § 4)

Boccaccio begins adapting arguments from *Tristia* 2:

Besides, my pen should be accorded no smaller licence (*auttorità*) than is granted to the brush of the painter who attracts no criticism – at any rate, no justified criticism – if he shows Saint Michael piercing the serpent with a sword or lance, and Saint George striking the dragon here, there, and everywhere, and, what is more, *if he portrays Christ as a male and Eve as a female*; why, he will stick sometimes a single nail, sometimes two, through the feet of the One

who was ready to die for the salvation of human kind, to fasten him to the cross. (Concl., § 6)

The example of painting 'Christ as a male and Eve as a female' is the Christian version of a famous defensive argument from *Tristia* 2 (287–90, 301):

> quis locus est templis augustior? haec quoque uitet,
>   in culpam si qua est ingeniosa suam.
> cum steterit Iouis aede, Iouis succurret in aede
>   quam multas matres fecerit ille deus.
>
> ...
>
> omnia peruersas possunt corrumpere mentes.

What place is more august than temples? But these too should be avoided by any woman whose nature inclines to fault. When she stands in Jupiter's temple, in the temple of Jupiter she will think of all the women made mothers by that god ... All things can corrupt perverted minds.

Boccaccio's familiarity with this line of argument is confirmed by another of his main works, the *Genealogie* (14.18), where the discussion of the frescoes of Castelnuovo in Naples, 'in the rooms of the king and of the nobles the same painter is allowed to paint the loves of the ancient gods and the crimes of men, and any other invention he likes, without any ban', looks back to a related (and even bolder) argument in *Tristia* 2.521–8:

> scilicet in domibus uestris ut prisca uirorum
>   artificis fulgent corpora picta manu,
> sic quae concubitus uarios Venerisque figuras
>   exprimat, est aliquo parua tabella loco.
> utque sedet uultu fassus Telamonius iram,
>   inque oculis facinus barbara mater habet,
> sic madidos siccat digitis Venus uda capillos,
>   et modo maternis tecta uidetur aquis.

To be sure in your houses, just as figures of old heroes shine, painted by an artist's hand, so there is a small panel somewhere that represents the various copulations and sexual positions. There sits not only Telamonian Ajax with a look confessing anger, and the barbarian mother has crime in her eyes, but dripping Venus too wrings out her wet hair and seems barely covered by her maternal waves.

This way the crux of the apology in the Afterword requires identification not with the authorial voice of the *Remedia*, but with that of *Tristia* 2:

Now whether those stories, for what they are worth (indeed whether anything of any description) prove wholesome or noxious depends entirely on the hearer. (Concl. § 8)

– this being of course the core argument of the entire epistle to Augustus, *Trist.* 2.255–66 (esp. 264 *posse nocere animis carminis omne genus*).

This evolution from *Remedia* to *Tristia* is glossed by a famous[34] series of exempla, where the two sources are layered:

> We know that wine is highly beneficial to sound constitutions – we have it on the authority of Messrs Bacchus and Silenus, to name only two – but it is harmful to those with fever ... and fire, fire is undeniably an asset, indeed vital to human life. Are we going to condemn it because it burns down houses and villages and entire cities? Again, weapons safeguard those who wish to live in peace, but they also slay people all too often, and not because those weapons are evil – the evil resides in those setting hand to them. To the corrupt mind nothing is pure. (Concl., § 9–10)

The emphasis on wine as a danger and a therapy comes from the *Remedia*, 131–2:

> temporis ars medicina fere est: data tempore prosunt,
>   et data non apto tempore uina nocent.
> quin etiam accendas uitia inritesque uetando,
>   temporibus si non adgrediare suis.

The art of timeliness is almost a medicine; wine given timely helps, untimely harms. Indeed you would inflame and irritate the disease by forbidding it, should you attack it at an unfitting time.

and is seamlessly joined to the argument about fire, weapons, and a reader's responsibility, from *Trist.* 2.263–76:

> persequar inferius, modo si licet ordine ferri,
>   posse nocere animis carminis omne genus.
> non tamen idcirco crimen liber omnis habebit:
>   nil prodest, quod non laedere possit idem.
> igne quid utilius? siquis tamen urere tecta
>   comparat, audaces instruit igne manus.
> eripit interdum, modo dat medicina salutem,
>   quaeque iuuet, monstrat, quaeque sit herba nocens.
> et latro et cautus praecingitur ense uiator;
>   ille sed insidias, hic sibi portat opem.
> discitur innocuas ut agat facundia causas;
>   protegit haec sontes, immeritosque premit.
> sic igitur carmen, recta si mente legatur,
>   constabit nulli posse nocere meum.

34 Mazzotta 1986: 39; Smarr 1987: 248–9.

I will show later, if only I can present it in order, that every kind of poetry can harm the mind. But not on that account will every book be held guilty. Anything useful can also harm. What is more useful than fire? But whoever sets out to burn a house, arms his criminal hands with fire. Medicines sometimes remove, sometimes bestow health, teaching which plant cures, and which harms. Highwayman and the cautious traveller alike gird on a sword : the one carries it to attack, the other for protection. Eloquence is learned for the conduct of just cases; yet it protects the guilty and crushes the innocent. Just so if a poem – one of mine – is read with upright mind, it will clearly harm no one.

Now Boccaccio is also able to confront what is a signature obsession in Ovid's late work, the complex of *frons* (front, frontmatter, forehead):

> In order to deceive no one, my stories all carry signed on their front (*nella fronte*) that which they hold concealed in their bosom. (Concl., § 19)

Frons in Ovid's exile work is a very representative word: technical 'frontmatter' of a book + place of textual manipulation, as well as 'forehead', the locus of shame/public image/ageing/sincerity.[35] Now Boccaccio's *novelle* can forestall this forehead complex: they are innocent, because they may lack a title, but they always carry 'frontally' their own description as 'frontmatter', without deceiving, or hiding any dangerous secrets.

We have registered the Ovidian invocations in the sequential order they have in the text of the *Decameron* because our interest is in the dynamic effect that those intertextual contacts create, both in Boccaccio's text, and as a rereading of Ovid's career and its unforgettable *consecutio temporum*. In the unruly appropriative culture of the Middle Ages, the very fact that the Ovidian texts are being alluded to in their unmistakable proper autobiographical order (*Ars – Remedia – Tristia*) should give one pause.

Once again, exile is being used as a hinge. The sequence of Ovidian allusions mobilizes a series of Ovidian models that are recognizably organized in a biographical sequence and an argumentative evolution. The author's prooemium finds a keynote in the early amatory works, including the first part of the *Remedia*, a work whose positioning in Ovid's oeuvre had always instigated creative revisions in medieval authors ('The acutely unstable relationship between *Ars* and *Remedia* in medieval readings', Dimmick 2002: 273). The proem-in-the-middle prefixed to Day Four is modelled on the apologetic – but also bold, in-your-face – oration

35 See e.g. *Trist.* 1.1.8 *candida nec nigra cornua fronte geras*; 1.1.11 *nec fragili geminae poliantur pumice frontes*; 1.1.110 *et sua detecta nomina fronte geret*; 1.7.33 *hos quoque sex uersus, in prima fronte libelli*; 3.7.34 *rugaque in antiqua fronte senilis erit*; *Pont.* 4.13.7 *ipse quoque, ut titulum chartae de fronte reuellas*.

that functions as a proem-in-the-middle to the *Remedia*, but it also antici-
pates the growing censorial reactions that will lead to the late and exilic –
therefore more oblique and cautious – defence speech of *Tristia* 2. In the
Afterword, the *Remedia* lead into the recreation of *Tristia* 2, and the effect
is now clear, especially if one thinks of previous modifications of the
Remedia model, such as the 'envy strikes high places' topos turning into
the 'dust' parable, and the 'uphill journey' being replayed as a safer *non
solamente pe' piani ma ancora per le profondissime valli* kind of journey (see
pp.81, 83 above).

This revised Ovid turns out to be a great poet of mediation: now he
knows that the blunt formalistic defence of the *Remedia* must be com-
pleted by the oblique and ironic judicial defence of *Tristia* 2: the Ovidian
strategies had been incompatible in their original contexts (the *Remedia*
proem-in-the-middle claiming that every genre should be evaluated
according to its own decorum, *Tristia* 2 that sexual content is endemic to
every act of communication and that responsibility should be laid at the
reader's door) but now they can be combined into a more mediated and
sly forestalling of future censorial interpretations.

The point, for us, is not just that Boccaccio at times likes to imagine
himself as a new Ovid; it is more about his dynamic reimagining of Ovid's
entire career as the story of an 'improved Ovid', a poet of moderation,[36] in
fact an author of fictional prose who discovers a safer, remedial approach
to writing about love, yet combines it with Ovidian edginess: one of the
peculiar 'judicial' responsibilities typical of the implied reader of the
Decameron is that of having to arbitrate between dangerous and safe
interpretations of Ovid's model.

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[36] Gibson 2007 shows the importance of recuperating moderation and *medietas* in Ovidian
poetics.

CLASSICAL LITERARY CAREERS AND THEIR RECEPTION

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