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SUPPORTING CHARACTERS AND THE MAKING OF OVID'S MYTH OF EXILE

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ABSTRACT: This article explores the mythologization of Ovid's exile, focusing on the construction of supporting characters in his poetic narrative. Central figures such as Ovid's wife and the figure of the adversary are analysed as key players in his rhetorical and mythopoetic strategy, helping elevate his personal suffering into a universal paradigm. Through hyperbole, *adynata*, and mythological *comparanda*, Ovid reshapes his *relegation* to Tomis into a literary and symbolic *exemplum* of resilience. On the one hand, Ovid's wife emerges as an archetype of fidelity and virtue, surpassing mythological heroines like Penelope and Andromache in loyalty and fortitude. On the other hand, his adversaries, including Augustus, are portrayed as cruel tyrants, akin to figures like Busiris and Phalaris, whose legendary severity is reframed and surpassed in Ovid's characterisation. This duality of loyalty and cruelty underscores Ovid's innovation in reimagining *exempla*, allowing him to criticise political authority while asserting his poetic authority.

KEYWORDS: Ovid; exile poetry; mythic narrative; *exempla*; rhetorical characterisation.

FIGURAS SECUNDÁRIAS E A CONSTRUÇÃO DO MITO DO EXÍLIO DE OVÍDIO

RESUMO: Este artigo investiga a mitologização do exílio de Ovídio, com foco na construção das personagens secundárias em sua narrativa poética. Figuras centrais como a esposa de Ovídio e a figura do adversário são analisadas como peças-chave de sua estratégia retórica e mitopoética, contribuindo para elevar seu sofrimento pessoal a um paradigma universal. Por meio da hipérbole, dos *adynata* e de *comparanda* mitológicos, Ovídio reconfigura sua *relegatio* a Tomis, transformando-a em um *exemplum* literário e simbólico de resiliência. Por um lado, a esposa de Ovídio

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emerge como arquétipo de fidelidade e virtude, superando heroínas mitológicas como Penélope e Andrômaca em lealdade e firmeza de ânimo. Por outro lado, seus adversários – inclusive, Augusto – são retratados como tiranos cruéis, semelhantes a figuras como Busíris e Fálaris, cuja severidade lendária é reelaborada e superada na caracterização ovidiana. Essa dualidade entre lealdade e crueldade evidencia a inovação de Ovídio ao reimaginar os *exempla*, permitindo-lhe criticar a autoridade política ao mesmo tempo em que afirma sua autoridade poética.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Ovídio; poesia do exílio; narrativa mítica; *exempla*; caracterização retórica.

Introduction: mythologization and hyperbole[1]

After his relegation to Tomis in 8 CE, Ovid composed works that not only solidified his place in the poetic tradition but also reshaped his identity as a *poeta exul*. While his poetry failed to secure the pardon he sought, it achieved something equally enduring: the mythologization of his suffering. Ironically, Ovid used the very medium that caused his banishment – his poetry[2] – to defend himself against the punishment of *relegatio*. This reconstruction corresponds to what Claassen (1988, p. 168) calls the "myth of exile." Like all myths, Ovid's exile exists in multiple versions, with his own account functioning simultaneously as a personal and a universal narrative.

Concerns about the factual accuracy[3] or internal consistency of his poems become less pressing when they are understood within a mythological framework rather than as literal history. What emerges is a singular version of the story, centred on the poet himself. By positioning his *persona* at the core of the exile myth, Ovid asserts control over his narrative, transforming historical events into a mythic account that serves his own purposes. This process is both strategic and empowering, enabling him to respond to criticism and defend his reputation.

The use of hyperbole reinforces the mythologization of Ovid's exile. His situation demands a poetics of the extraordinary, prompting exaggerated descriptions of both his misfortune and the unfamiliar geography and ethnography of Tomis.[4] These hyperbolic portrayals deviate from realistic accounts of exile, making the experience appear incompatible with that of an ordinary individual. Critics who question the veracity of Ovid's narrative argue that hyperbole undermines its credibility, suggesting it distorts truth rather than conveying it. Yet such exaggeration aligns with the exceptional circumstances of the *persona relegata*, subjecting his account to the conventions of poetic creation and rhetoric.

[1] I gratefully acknowledge the support of the São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP), grant no. 2022/14566-5.

[2] Cf. *Tr.* 2.207, where the poet states the causes of his punishment as *carmen et error*, where the *carmen* is, most probably, the *Ars amatoria*.

[3] See, i.a. Castaño (2015).

[4] On Ovid's account of Tomis' geography and ethnography see Trevizam and Avellar (2016), Claassen (1999, p. 190ss), Thomas (1982), *i. a.*

Hyperbole, in particular, challenges readers who forget they are engaging with 1 poetry. The very conventionality of Ovid's exilic sufferings – their debt to prior literary descriptions of storms, barbarism, and the loss of speech – ensures that the learned reader recognises the artifice even as he is moved by it (Barchiesi, 1992; Williams, 1994; Prata, 2007; Trevizam; Avellar, 2016). Hyperbole and *adynaton* are thus double-edged: while they raise the poet's plight to mythic proportions, they simultaneously expose their own literariness, opening a gap between the empirical author, who seems to acknowledge the incredible character of the situation, and the *persona*, for whom that situation is simply reality (Ugartemendía, 2022, p. 13). In this interstice the heroic self-image is momentarily destabilised, and the reader is solicited not only to *pathos* but, at the limit, to a knowing smile or a flicker of distrust toward Naso himself. Crucially, this self-awareness does not cancel the "serious" functions of the device – protest, endurance, the assertion of poetic authority – but rather underwrites them. To flaunt the machinery of one's own myth, to let the *exemplum* waver and still command it, is itself a claim to poetic mastery; and the ironic distance that fragilizes the heroic pose is the same distance that lends the political critique its deniability. The mythologization of exile is, in this sense, knowingly artificial – and it is *as* artifice that it protests, endures, and immortalises its author.

For Ovid, hyperbole transforms personal suffering into mythic significance. As Quintilian notes, this rhetorical device is *decens veri superiectio* (*Inst.* 8.6.67), an amplification rooted in truth. In Ovid's hands, the desolate and hostile landscapes of Tomis, including its Scythian climate, are rendered in almost mythic terms, heightening his alienation and the extremity of his punishment (Ugartemendía, 2020). In this way, hyperbole dramatizes his experience and links it to mythological narratives, where extraordinary settings reflect extraordinary events.

Through hyperbole, Ovid situates his plight alongside – and often above – paradigmatic misfortunes. In this novel context of poetic production, the tradition of combining narrative with cultural authority (Scanlon, 2007, p. 9) is as prevalent as in the amatory elegies of the author's youth. However, the effectiveness of these *exempla* in exile poetry is questionable. Mythology, thus, is not employed as an illustrative example in itself but rather as a point of reference for comparison, thereby elevating the poet's present circumstances to a paradigmatic level. This strategy aligns his narrative with mythological[5] and historical suffering, enabling a *refutatio exemplorum* (Bernhardt, 1986, p. 40), a technique whereby the poet rejects the use of *exempla* of suffering to, instead, present himself as an *exemplum* of the suffering of an exile, allowing him to cast a subjective situation with a

[5] On the comic register of the *Tristia*, see Amann (2006); on hyperbole as constitutive of a self-consciously excessive persona, Philbrick (2016). The point is sharpest where the artifice becomes performative: Ovid claims to be composing amid the storm that hurls itself against him (*Tr.* 1.11.41-2, *improba pugnat hiems indignaturque quod ausim / scribere*) and to have forgotten Latin in verses of flawless Latin whose very cacophony mimics the barbarian sounds around him (*Tr.* 3.14.45-6; 5.7.56-8; 5.12.57-8) – a display of *ingenium* that quietly belies the loss it proclaims (Ugartemendía, 2022, p. 111-2).

universal dimension. Hyperbole, then, allows the poet to move from myth to legend, from legend to history, or from myth to history (Hardie, 1986, p. 252).

The insertion of mythological characters and the operation of comparison and rejection of these *exempla* have already gained attention. Of particular note is the appearance of figures such as Ulysses[6] – and with him, though not always, his wife Penelope –, Jason[7] and Medea,[8] and, to a lesser degree, Aeneas,[9] Iphigenia,[10] Actaeon,[11] Philomela,[12] Daedalus and Icarus,[13] to mention but a few.[14] All of them are compared to the poet to describe his suffering in terms familiar to readers. Nevertheless, sometimes they are no paragon for Ovid, who claims for himself the title of paradigm.

In the next sections, I focus on the supporting characters of Ovid's myth of exile – his adversaries and his wife – and their transformation into new *exempla* of cruelty and fidelity, respectively. Furthermore, I examine the literary techniques Ovid uses to immortalise these figures and their roles in his poetic narrative. By intertwining personal narrative and mythic tradition, Ovid redefines the role of poetry in shaping memory and reconstructing his poetic authority after death, represented by exile.

Friends and foes

In the construction of the exile myth, Tomis becomes an archetypal place of suffering, and its hostile environment amplifies the cruelty of Ovid's adversaries. *Fortuna* has been implacable toward the poet,[15] who regards as unjust the punishment inflicted upon him by the *deus praesens*[16] Augustus, whose wrath remains unwavering. He is experiencing a world of misfortune, and the situations he faces even bear striking resemblance to those recounted in the *gestae* of epic heroes, with whom he compares himself.[17] Additionally, Ovid

[6] See Davisson (1982), Williams (1994, p. 104-14), Tola (2001; 2004, p. 261-74), Seibert (2014, p. 215-50), Philbrick (2016, p. 112-45), Gatti (2022, p. 11ss), *i.a.*

[7] Tola (2004, p. 275-7), Claassen (2001), Philbrick (2016, p. 147-54).

[8] Tola (2001; 2004, p. 278-300), Claassen (2001).

[9] See Kenney (1965, p. 47, n. 1), Doblhofer (1980, p. 90); Evans (1983, p. 37; p. 489-90), Videau-Delibes (1991, p. 29-34), Prata (2007), Philbrick (2016, p. 148-55).

[10] Ramsby (2018).

[11] Tola (2008), Ingleheart (2006), Natoli (2017).

[12] Natoli (2017).

[13] Sharrock (1994).

[14] For a survey of mythological characters and the place in which each appears in Ovid's poetry, see Claassen (2001).

[15] Note also that *Fortuna* often has a double meaning, standing for the *princeps Tr.* 1.1.51; 3.11.37, 71; *Pont.* 2.7.15; 2.7.39-41; 3.1.151-2; 4.6.7-8; 4.8.15-6.

[16] See, *i. a.* McGowan (2009).

[17] See in particular Kenney (1965, p. 47, n. 1), Doblhofer (1980, p. 90); Evans (1983, p. 37, p. 489-90), Videau-Delibes (1991, p. 29-34), Prata (2007), Philbrick (2016, p. 148-55) for a comparison with

introduces paradigmatic loyal friends and adversaries (or perhaps merely one antagonist),[18] exhibiting unparalleled cruelty. Consequently, these figures shall be regarded as novel *exempla*.

The recurring mythical characters exemplifying the paradigm of friendship are particularly evident in the *Tristia*, as opposed to in *Epistulae ex Ponto*. Notable among these are Euryalus and Nisus (*Tr.* 1.5.23-4; 9.33-34; 5.5.26), Achilles and Patroclus (*Tr.* 1.9.29-30; 5.4.25; *Pont.* 2.3.41-2), and most notably Pirithous and Theseus (*Tr.* 1.3.66; 5.19-20; 9.31-2; 5.4.26; *Pont.* 2.3.43-4; 6.25-8; 3.2.33; 4.10.71,78) and Orestes and Pylades (*Tr.* 1.5.21-2; 9.27-8; 4.4.65-82; 5.4.25; 6.25-8; *Pont.* 2.3.43-4; 6.25-8; 3.2.33). As these *exempla* serve as accurate points of comparison, they are presented as objects for imitation, particularly by friends who have not demonstrated the expected level of fidelity.

Now, when friends do not respond as they should, their behaviour can only be compared with the impossible. One common form taken by hyperbole in Ovid's exile is that of that of the ἀδύνατον.[19] In order to provide a detailed and accurate representation of his experience, he deploys this stylistic device as the primary means of expression. As for his friends, the betrayal of trust by one of them causes Naso such distress that it renders the seemingly impossible a possibility. In his poem, he outlines his disappointment with the following words:

> In caput alta suum labentur ab aequore retro
> flumina, conversis solque recurret equis:
> terra feret stellas, caelum findetur aratro,
> unda dabit flammas, et dabit ignis aquas,
> omnia naturae praepostera legibus ibunt,
> parsque suum mundi nulla tenebit iter,
> omnia iam fient, fieri quae posse negabam,
> et nihil est, de quo non sit habenda fides.
> haec ego vaticinor, quia sum deceptus ab illo,
> laturum misero quem mihi rebar opem. (*Tr.* 1.8.1-10)
>
> To their sources shall deep rivers flow, back from the sea, and the sun, wheeling his steeds, shall hurry backwards; the earth shall support stars and the sky shall be cloven by the plough, water shall produce flame and flame water; all things shall proceed reversing nature's laws and no part of the universe shall keep its path; everything that I once called impossible shall now take place, and there is nothing that one ought not to believe. All this I prophesy because I have

Aeneas, and Davisson (1982), Tola (2001; 2004), Seibert (2014, p. 215-47), Philbrick (2016, p. 112-46), Ugartemendía (2022, p. 123) for Ulisses.

[18] See, for example, Helzle (2003) who identifies the enemy as Sabinus, the same from the *Amores* 2.18.17, who is said to have written letters that answer the *Heroides*.

[19] This resource appears many times throughout the two works, and more frequently than in any other Latin writer (Claassen, 2008, p. 70). For *adynata* em general, see Rowe (1965). For *adynata* in Ovid's exile poetry, see Claassen (1999, p. 231-3), Philbrick (2016), Davisson (1982).

> been deceived by that man who I thought would bring aid to me in my wretchedness.[20]

The *adynata* thus become a necessary resource, because they are the only descriptions that correspond to the exile's situation.[21] In the hyperbolic world of exile, the *adynata* not only takes the place of descriptions but also becomes the rule. A friend turning his back on someone who needs him is itself an *adynaton*. And the fact that this can happen opens the possibility of other horrors of nature.

As for his adversaries, they are crueler than those who are paradigmatic. To illustrate the character of his detractors and critics, the mythical figures that Ovid most frequently uses are those of the kings Busiris and Phalaris, and the inventor Perillus.[22] Claassen (2008, p. 282), in her detailed study of the appearance of mythological figures in the exile poetry, highlights the predominance of certain characters based on the frequency of their occurrence. According to her list, Busiris appears in *Tr.* 3.11.39 and *Pont.* 3.6.41; Phalaris in *Tr.* 3.11.42, 51; 5.1.53; and *Pont.* 2.9.44 and 3.6.42. Perillus, however, is not included in her list. This omission is noteworthy, since the passage in *Tr.* 3.11 places greater emphasis on Perillus than on Phalaris, who is merely mentioned there. In what follows, I will analyse these passages and add to Claassen's list *Tr.* 5.12.47, which also refers to Perillus. By aligning Augustus with these figures, Ovid recasts the *princeps* as a mythic adversary, thereby intensifying the sense of injustice surrounding his exile.

Busiris and Phalaris appear in *Ars Amatoria* 1.647-56 in a different light, representing justice rather than tyranny. In this passage, the *praeceptor* instructs his audience on how to deceive unfaithful women, using these figures not to illustrate brutality, but rather the rightful punishment of transgressors. However, in the *Tristia*, their roles shift significantly. Ovid presents them as archetypes of excessive cruelty, aligning their actions with unjust suffering rather than righteous retribution. To this, we must add Perillus, whose role is complex and dual. As inventor of the bronze bull used by Phalaris as an instrument of torture, he serves as an executioner, facilitating the king's brutal punishments. Yet, as the first to suffer within his own creation, he becomes a victim of the very cruelty he enabled. His presence in *Tr.* 5.12.47 reinforces this ambiguity. While the passage explicitly refers to Perillus, it also alludes to Phalaris, suggesting a deeper analogy. This verse opens the possibility of a comparison between Phalaris and Augustus, and, by extension, between Perillus and Ovid himself. Just as

[20] Unless otherwise noted, all translations of the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* are Wheeler's (1939).

[21] "Ovid juxtaposes conventional *adynata* with his own experience to insist that his sufferings, which sound impossible, are unfortunately real; to suggest that his addressees' disloyalty, which should be inconceivable, is unfortunately possible; and likewise, to suggest that his addressees may have shown a nearly inconceivable lack of sympathy" (Davisson, 1980, p. 128).

[22] Busiris, the Egyptian king, was told to sacrifice a foreigner to appease Jupiter during a drought but ironically sacrificed the prophet who gave him this advice. Phalaris, tyrant of Agrigentum, had a bronze bull built to execute prisoners; when Perillus – its inventor – asked for a reward, Phalaris tested the deadly device on him first.

Perillus suffered the consequences of his own invention, Ovid – cast as a poetic craftsman – finds himself a victim of the same regime he once served. This parallel, once established, will reappear elsewhere in the *Tristia*, reinforcing Ovid's critique of his exile and the *princeps*' role in his downfall.

A more explicit and rhetorically charged deployment of this logic can be observed in *Tr.* 3.11, a poem with iambic features in which the poet addresses his detractors. In verses 39-54, he describes his rival, emphasising the adjective *saevior* at the beginning of the hexameter 39 and reinforcing it by repeating it in the fifth foot of the same verse. In this way, Ovid presents a hyperbolic comparison, saying that his detractor is crueler than Busiris or Perillus:

> *Saevior* es tristi Busiride, *saevior* illo,
> qui falsum lento torruit igne bovem,
> quique bovem Siculo fertur donasse tyranno,
> et dictis artes conciliasse suas:
> "munere in hoc, rex, est usus, sed imagine maior,
> nec sola est operis forma probanda mei.
> Aspicis a dextra latus hoc adapertile tauri?
> Hac tibi, quem perdes, coniciendus erit.
> Protinus inclusum lentis carbonibus ure:
> mugiet, et veri vox erit illa bovis.
> Pro quibus inventis, ut munus munere penses,
> da, precor, ingenio praemia digna meo".
> Dixerat. At Phalaris "poenae mirande repertor,
> ipse tuum praesens imbue" dixit "opus".
> Nec mora, monstratis crudeliter ignibus ustus
> exhibuit geminos ore gemente sonos. (*Tr.* 3.11.39-54)
>
> Thou art more *cruel* than harsh Busiris, *more cruel* than he who heated the artificial bull over a slow fire and gave the bull, they say, to the Sicilian lord commending his work of art with the words: 'In this gift, O King, there is profit, greater than appears, for not the appearance alone of my work is worthy of praise. Seest thou on the right that the bull's flank may be opened? Through this thou must thrust whomsoever thou wouldst destroy. Forthwith shut him in and roast him over slow-burning coals: he will bellow, and that will be the voice of a true bull. For this invention pay gift with gift, and give me, I pray thee, a reward worthy of my genius.' Thus he spake. But Phalaris said, 'Marvellous inventor of punishment, dedicate in person thine own work!' At once roasted by the fires to which he had himself cruelly pointed the way, he uttered with groaning lips sounds twofold.

The comparison with Perillus is a warning: his adversary may receive a punishment similar to the one he is about to inflict. Moreover, in 67-8, the poet warns: *humanaeque memor sortis, quae tollit eosdem / et premit, incertas ipse verere vices* ("remember human fate, which lifts or lowers the same men, and fear for thyself uncertain change"). There is an underlying idea

that the enemy might suffer reprisals for his cruelty. It is also noteworthy that the episode of Phalaris and Perillus takes up the largest number of verses devoted to the exposition of an *exemplum* in all of *Tristia*. This underscores the importance of this *exemplum* and leads us to suspect that the poet may want to say more than is explicit. Let us see why.

In *Tr.* 5.1.53-4, Phalaris is cited as an example of cruelty for a second time. On this occasion, the king of Agrigentum is once more identified as a model of cruelty, though this time not by the adversary of the poet, but by a friend. The exile complains about his friend, who would not permit him to express his anguish, which makes him crueler than Phalaris himself. Phalaris at least allowed his victims to express their anguish while they were being incinerated:

> Ipse Perilleo Phalaris permisit in aere
> edere mugitus et bovis ore queri. (*Tr.* 5.1.53-4)
>
> Even Phalaris allowed within the bronze of Perillus to utter bellows of torture through the mouth of the bull.

The examples illustrate Ovid's *refutatio exemplorum* in action. From them, we can conclude that the figures of Busiris, Phalaris, and Perillus are insufficient as paradigms due to the revelation that not only adversaries but also friends of the *relegatus* have demonstrated greater cruelty and harshness. Consequently, we are presented with new models of cruelty, of which the poet is a victim.

The primary opponent of the poet throughout the corpus are not his detractors, though, but Augustus himself. The *princeps'* lack of *clementia*[23] emerges as a recurring motif in Ovid's poetry, allowing the poet to draw parallels between Augustus and Phalaris, the example of severity. This analogy reappears in *Tr.* 5.12.47-8, where the connection between Phalaris and Augustus is indirect, stemming from the parallel between Perillus and the poet:

> Utque dedit iustas tauri fabricator aëni,
> sic ego do poenas artibus. (*Tr.* 5.12.47-8)
>
> As the maker of the bronze bull paid the just penalty, so I am paying the penalty for my art.

Ovid's daring comparison casts him as Perillus, punished (*poenas*) for his *artes*: the three books of *Ars Amatoria*. Augustus, then, implicitly assumes the role of Phalaris, the punisher. This parallel is especially striking because, unlike in other instances, Augustus is not likened to a wrathful or vengeful deity but to a mortal tyrant.

The parallel between Augustus and Phalaris, both defined by their lack of clemency, resurfaces in *Pont.* 2.9. Here, Ovid appeals to king Cotys, seeking his support in enduring exile. To do this, he composes a eulogy to the sovereign Cotys, βασιλικὸς λόγος (Pérez Vega,

[23] For the *clementia principis* and its representation in the exile poetry, see Ingleheart (2010), Gaertner (2005) and Dowling (2006, p. 109-22).

2000, p. 93), invoking a motive that flourished during the Hellenistic period and became an integral aspect of the ideology of *clementia*. This ideology conceptualized the monarchy as an institution that assisted the most vulnerable members of society (Galasso, 1995, 380). These obligations are inherent to those who wield authority. The legitimacy of their actions is thereby justified when they use their power for beneficial purposes.

His praise of the Thracian ruler can be read as a covert critique of Augustus. Cotys is addressed in the vocative as *iuvenum mittissime* (5), a striking choice given that *mitis* frequently describes Augustus's clemency (e.g., *Tr.* 2.27, *mitissime princeps*; 147, *mitissime Caesar*). This takes part of a rhetorical strategy designed to persuade Cotys, as Ovid expresses hope that the king will embody the clemency denied to him by Augustus. He then outlines how a ruler – implicitly including Augustus – should act when called upon for aid (11-2). In verse 22, Ovid suggests that Cotys responds to such requests in a manner akin to a deity. Yet in making this claim, he simultaneously highlights Augustus's failure to grant him clemency.

To persuade Cotys to assist him, Ovid presents a series of *exempla* featuring figures who not only rejected offers of aid or reward but did so with cruelty and indifference. Once again, Phalaris appears in this list, following other notorious examples of brutality: Antiphates (41), Apollodorus of Cassandreia (43), and Alexander of Pherae (43). Phalaris is referenced indirectly in a paraphrased pentameter (44): *quive repertorem torruit arte sua* ("or him who burned the inventor by his own craft"), serving as the final figure in this sequence of tyrants. In this context, Ovid advises Cotys to embrace the same principles of clemency that he previously recommended for Caesar:

> Caesar ut imperii moderetur frena precamur,
> [...]
> Vtilitas igitur magnos hominesque deosque
> efficit, auxiliis quoque fauente suis.
> Tu quoque fac prosis intra tua castra iacenti,
> o Coty, progenies digna parente tuo. (*Pont.* 2.9.35-38)
>
> We pray that Caesar may guide the reins of the empire because he plans so wisely for his fatherland! Utility, then, renders great both men and gods, if each bestows in favour his own peculiar aid. Do thou also avail him who lies within thy camp, Cotys, son worthy of thy father.

According to Galasso (1995, p. 400), in verse 44, "parebbe difficile pensare ad un'allusione di Ovidio a se stesso, suggerita dal motivo dell'artefice che perisce a causa della sua arte". However, due to the recurrent appearance of the Phalaris example throughout the corpus it does seem plausible to posit one more assimilation of Phalaris – Augustus / Perillus – Ovid. Were this assimilation to be regarded as unintentional, it would represent a fortuitous addition to the established list of *exempla crudelitatis*.

The last reference to Phalaris and Busiris appears in *Pont.* 3.6.42, a text that stands out within the *Ex Ponto* collection. Unlike most epistles in the work, it lacks the customary

opening salutation. Moreover, Ovid explicitly refers to it as a *carmen* rather than an *epistula*. The addressee remains unnamed (1–2), a choice Ovid attributes to the fear that his friend might suffer repercussions for maintaining ties with an exile (5–10). This omission is particularly striking given the key difference between *Tristia* and *Ex Ponto*: while *Tristia* avoids naming addressees, *Ex Ponto* does not.

In this *carmen*, Ovid pointedly remarks that the gods are known to forgive (21–2). Moreover, he contrasts the limitations of Jupiter, Mars, and Neptune – who cannot restore those lost to their punishments (35–6) – with Caesar's superior power to either revive the condemned or lessen their suffering (37–8). This contrast underscores the notion that Augustus had the ability to ease Ovid's exile but chose not to do so. The poet's elaborate praise and exaggerated elevation of Augustus – placing him above the Olympian gods – ultimately lead to a curious conclusion: an exhortation to his friend not to fear the *princeps*, in a deliberate move that sets Augustus apart from tyrants like Busiris and Phalaris:

> At tu, cum tali populus sub principe simus,
> adloquio profugi credis inesse metum?
> Forsitan haec domino Busiride iure timeres
> aut solito clausos urere in aere uiros. (*Pont.* 3.6.39-42)
>
> But you, when we, his people, live under such an emperor do you believe that comforting an exile is dangerous? Perhaps under the dominion of Busiris you might rightly fear this, or under him who was wont to burn men within the bronze.

If the discourse on Augustus' clemency is read as ironic, the apparent contrast between Augustus and the tyrants takes on a new meaning. What initially appears to be a distinction instead reveals itself as an irony-laced comparison, highlighting a shared lack of clemency. Furthermore, the absence of an addressee's name opens the possibility that this *carmen* functions as an open letter, subtly exposing the potential repercussions faced by those who associate with someone subjected to Augustus' punishment.

In sum, Phalaris and Busiris are invoked not as ideal *exempla* but to expose their inadequacy in the context of the *poeta relegatus*' myth. The hyperbolic depiction of exile introduces an intensified sense of cruelty, one that extends beyond the expected hostility of adversaries to include even supposed allies. Furthermore, Ovid presents himself as the quintessential victim: like Perillus, he suffers the consequences of his own *artes*, ultimately falling prey to the very craft that defined him.

Area de nostra nunc est tibi facta ruina: the *exemplum coniugis*

Another key figure in Ovid's exile poetry is his wife, who occupies a central role in his narrative as a model of fidelity and virtue. Across nine poems addressed to her (*Tr.* 1.6; 3.3; 4.3; 5.2, 5, 11, 14; *Pont.* 1.4; 3.1), Ovid constructs an idealised portrayal that merges

poetic tradition with invention. Within this framework, she emerges as another paradigmatic figure – one who, despite her husband's exile, remained in Rome.[24]

Scholarship increasingly understands Ovid's wife as a literary construct rather than a strictly historical individual, an amalgam of elegiac archetypes – the *puella*, the *domina*, and the *matrona* (Petersen, 2005; Reeber, 2014; Natoli, 2017, p. 129). The degree of idealisation in her portrayal, together with her consistent presentation as a paradigm endowed with *pudicitia*, *probitas*, and *fides*, suggests a carefully crafted *persona* shaped to serve the poet's exilic narrative.

Ovid repeatedly emphasises that this *uxor* is his third and final wife, as in *Tr.* 4.10.75: *ultima, quae mecum seros permansit in annos, / sustinuit coniunx exulis esse viri* ("and last is she who remained with me till the twilight of my declining years, who has endured to be the mate of an exiled husband"). This specification naturally invites identification with Fabia. Helzle (2003, p. 139) argues that the omission of her name is understandable, since it would have been immediately recognisable to Ovid's contemporaries. I would add, however, that this anonymity also serves to reinforce her role as an exemplary figure, emphasising her exemplary status rather than her concrete biographical presence.

Ovid's elevation of women who embody *virtutes* is not new. In the *Heroides*, the arguments of abandoned heroines repeatedly hinge precisely on these qualities.[25] In exile, however, the poet goes further, elevating his wife above these figures and presenting her as the foremost among heroines: the embodiment of all the qualities required of a paradigmatic woman. Within this construction, *uxor* and *Naso* form a complementary pair, bound by loyalty, endurance, and poetic idealisation.

The following analysis of Fabia's presence in the exile poetry examines how Ovid develops this idealisation through explicit comparison between his wife and established mythical *exempla*. Although these passages have received attention before,[26] I offer new insights by considering each excerpt following the editorial structure of the books. Plus, it reassesses several traditional interpretations in light of the poem's broader exilic poetics.

The first elegy addressed to the wife, *Tr.* 1.6, opens with a comparison to earlier poets' relationships:

> Nec tantum Clario est Lyde dilecta poetae,
> nec tantum Coo Bittis amata suo est,
> pectoribus quantum tu nostris, uxor, inhaeres,
> digna minus misero, non meliore viro. (*Tr.* 1.6.1-4)
>
> Not so great was the love of the Clarian bard for Lyde or that of her own Coan for Bittis as the love that clings in my heart for thee, my wife, for thee who art worthy of a less wretched, not a better, husband.

[24] Years later, Tacitus would say that wives that accompany their husbands into exile are examples of virtue (*Ann.* 1.3).

[25] For the virtues of these heroines, see Ugartemendía (2017b).

[26] See, especially, Davisson (1984) and Larosa (2009).

Ovid first invokes Antimachus of Colophon (or Claros), a Greek poet of the pre-Hellenistic period known for his elegiac poetry addressed to his beloved Lydia, and the Hellenistic poet Philetas of Cos, whose verses celebrated Bittis. By aligning himself with these Greek predecessors only to surpass them, the poet asserts both the intensity of his love and the superiority of his poetic project. Unlike these poets, he writes for a wife whose worth exceeds even his own (*digna minus misero, non meliore viro*). The comparison thus elevates both the emotional bond and the poet's literary authority. Thus, this verse simultaneously contributes to Ovid's self-fashioning as an exemplary husband (*vir*), a necessary counterpart to the exemplary wife he constructs.

The first sign that his wife should be considered an *exemplum* of feminine virtue is in 1.6.13-8:

> Sic mea nescio quis, rebus male fidus acerbis,
> in bona venturus, si paterere, fuit.
> hunc tua per fortis virtus summovit amicos,
> nulla quibus reddi gratia digna potest.
> ergo quam misero, tam vero teste probaris,
> hic aliquod pondus si modo testis habet.
>
> So there was one, treacherous in my bitter fortune, who, hadst thou suffered it, would have come into my wealth. Him thy courage has repelled with the aid of spirited friends whom I can never thank as they deserve. Thus thou art approved by a witness as sincere as he is wretched, if only such a witness carries any weight.

Here Ovid praises his wife's *virtus* in safeguarding his property and resisting opportunistic intruders. The scene evokes, albeit implicitly, the suitors who surround Penelope during Odysseus' absence. Ovid presents himself as guarantor of her *virtus*, emphasising his role as *testis* through the polyptoton *teste* (17) / *testis* (18).

Having established his own poetic and moral authority, Ovid continues to elevate his wife above canonical models of conjugal fidelity. Drawing upon mythical *exempla* to describe her, the poet asserts that she transcends these figures in terms of *probitas*:

> Nec probitate tua prior est aut Hectoris uxor,[27]
> aut comes extincto Laodamia viro.
> tu si Maeonium vatem sortita fuisses,
> Penelopes esset fama secunda tuae:
> sive tibi hoc debes, nullo pia facta magistro,
> cumque nova mores sunt tibi luce dati,
> femina seu princeps omnes tibi culta per annos
> te docet exemplum coniugis esse bonae
> adsimilemque sui longa adsuetudine fecit,
> grandia si parvis adsimilare licet. (*Tr.* 1.6.19-28)

[27] See also *Tr.* 4.3.29-30.

> In uprightness neither Hector's wife excels thee, nor Laodamia, companion of her husband in death. If fate had allotted thee the Maeonian bard, Penelope's fame would be second to thine, whether thou owest this to thyself, schooled to loyalty by no teacher, and such character was given thee with life's earliest dawn, or whether that first of women, reverenced by thee through all the years, teaches thee to be the model of a good wife and by long training has made thee like herself if 'tis lawful to liken great things to small.

Andromache, Laodamia, and Penelope, figures already familiar from epic and elegiac tradition, are all invoked as *exempla* of conjugal devotion. Notably, both Penelope and Laodamia are authors of epistles in the *Heroides* (*Ep.* 1 and 13), with Penelope occupying a programmatic position as *exemplum coniugis bonae*.[28] Exile, however, allows Ovid to introduce a new *exemplum*. Echoing Propertius' praise of his beloved,[29] he claims that even Homer would have ranked his wife above Penelope (21–2). The lexical arrangement reinforces this hierarchy: *tu* comes before *Penelope* within the distich, subtly asserting Fabia's precedence. The claim is made explicit in line 26, where *exemplum coniugi* are placed prominently in the pentameter.

Various interpretations suggest that the *femina princeps* of line 25 refers to Marcia, the first cousin of Augustus (André, 1977, p. xxii; Luck, 1977, p. 61; Della Corte, 1973, p. 223), although others propose that it is Livia, the wife of Augustus (Owen, 1889, p. 71). Regardless of the specific identity, this reference to a high-ranking female figure situates the *coniux* within a continuum of feminine virtue.

The poet reinforces this elevation in the following couplet:

> Prima locum sanctas heroidas inter haberes,
> prima bonis animi conspicerere tui. (*Tr.* 1.6.33-4)
>
> Else thou wouldst hold first place amid the revered heroines, first wouldst thou be looked upon because of thy qualities of heart.

Had he the opportunity to (re)write his *Heroides* today, Ovid would place his wife in the programmatic position, granting her precedence – *prima* – a status underscored by the anaphoric repetition of the term in both lines of the couplet. The resulting syntactic pattern, with *prima* occupying the initial position in each verse, reinforces her structural priority. Assigning Ovid's wife this primacy would necessarily displace Penelope from her foundational role (Hinds, 1985, p. 28), thereby reenacting within Ovid's own corpus the very substitution he attributes to Homer (*Penelopes esset fama secunda tuae*).

As noted *supra*, Ovid fashions himself as a figure of epic stature; here, his wife is likewise assimilated to that sphere. By imagining her among the heroines in the *Heroides*, he symbolically incorporates her into the generic tradition of that work.

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[28] See Ugartemendía (2017a, p. 70-81; 2017b).

[29] Propertius 2.28.29-30.

The poem culminates in an assertion of poetry's power to immortalise virtue: *Tr.* 1.6.36, *carminibus vives tempus in omne meis* ("thou shalt live for all time in my song"). Here Ovid reaffirms the enduring force of his poetry, undiminished by exile, capable of transforming lived experience into myth and preserving exemplary figures *in omne tempus*. By inscribing his wife into this poetic *monumentum*, Ovid secures her place as a paradigm for future generations, confirming both her exemplarity and his own poetic authority.

This assertion is reiterated at the conclusion of *Tr.* 3.3, the second letter addressed to his wife. He asks his *optima coniunx* (55) to bury his bones in Rome, after accepting that his Roman shadow will wander among the Sarmatians (63). However, the trust in the *monimenta* (78) that his *libelli* represent appears to overcome his unease. Therefore, he hopes that he will be granted *nomen et tempora longa* (80).

Tr. 4.3, the third epistle to his wife, develops this theme further within a recognisably elegiac framework. The poem evokes the motif of the *exclusus amator*, recalling the *paraklausithyron* of love elegy; yet here the barrier separating lover and beloved is not a closed door, but the vast geographical distance imposed by exile. Once again, Ovid underscores his wife's *fides*: despite her grief over his misfortune, she continues to love him faithfully (20). Her suffering in Rome is compared to that of Andromache witnessing Hector's corpse being dragged by Achilles (29), aligning her experience once again with that of a tragic heroine.

The *exempla* introduced in lines 63-70 expand beyond conjugal devotion to include figures punished by Jupiter, among whom Ovid covertly includes himself. What unites these figures is that none disgraced those who loved them. The purpose of this *comparatio* is to highlight the role of misfortune in achieving glory. Thus, rather than feeling ashamed to be his wife (61), she should defend him (71). For this reason, the poet calls on her to be an *exemplum coniugis bonae* (72), echoing *Tr.* 1.6.26. This verse may be read both as a reaffirmation of her earlier consecration as a model and as a subtle reproach – an ambivalence that will resurface in *Pont.* 3.1.

Ovid emphasizes that the fall of Troy gave rise to Hector's fame (75), that the waves navigated by Tiphys, the helmsman of the *Argo*, made him renowned for his skill (77), and that the sickness of men makes the cure Phoebus provides all the more valuable (78). From these *exempla*, the poet concludes that it is his (mis)fortune as a poet that truly offers his wife the opportunity for glory (83-4). Exile is thus interpreted through the lens of *utilitas*: the poet's ill fortune becomes the *causa sine qua non* for his wife's elevation to paradigmatic status.

Tr. 5.5, the fifth poem addressed to the wife,[30] continues this logic in a different rhetorical key. Written in honour of her birthday, the elegy praises her *mores* (43), likening them to those of Andromache and Penelope (44), and praises her *pudicitia*, *probitas*, *fides* (45), and *pietas* (59). The poem is structured through a sequence of *sententiae* followed by *exempla*, a strategy that embeds epic and tragic figures within an elegiac framework and reinforces the heroic dimension of the wife's suffering:

[30] The fourth is *Tr.* 5.2. The subject is the poet's suffering and there are practically no references to his wife. Some editors (André, 1977, p. 134; Hall, 1995, p. 179) considered that a new poem begins in verse 45, a piece dedicated to Augustus.

Scilicet adversis probitas exercita rebus
tristi materiam tempore laudis habet.
si nihil infesti durus vidisset Vlixes,
Penelope felix, sed sine laude foret.
victor Echionias si vir penetrasset in arces,
forsitan Euadnen vix sua nosset humus.
cum Pelia genitae tot sint, cur nobilis una est?
nempe fuit miseronupta quod una viro.
effice ut Iliacas tangat prior alter harenas,
Laodamia nihil cur referatur erit.
et tua, quod malles, pietas ignota maneret,
implerent venti si mea vela sui. (*Tr.* 5.5.49-60)

Assuredly uprightness schooled by adversity in time of sorrow affords a theme for praise. Had sturdy Ulysses seen no misfortune, Penelope would have been happy but unpraised. Had her husband pressed victoriously into the citadel of Echion, perchance Evadne would scarce have been known to her own land. Though Pelias had so many daughters, why is one only famed? Doubtless because she alone wedded an ill-starred husband. Let but another be first to touch the sands of Ilium and there will be no reason why Laodamia should be remembered. Thy loyalty, too, as thou wouldst prefer, would remain unknown, if favouring winds filled my sails.

The passage explicitly articulates the principle underlying the previous poems: virtue trained through adversity furnishes the material for praise. Penelope would be happy but uncelebrated without Ulysses' trials; Evadne would remain unknown had her husband returned victorious; among Pelias' daughters, Alcestis alone is famous because she married an ill-fated man; Laodamia would not be remembered had Protesilaus survived. Ovid's wife concludes this sequence as yet another heroine whose fame depends on misfortune, specifically, on her husband's exile.

This poem continues in the tone of *Tr.* 3.3 and 4.3, further asserting that misfortune is the means by which the wife's fame will be established (and, by extension, the poet's *fama* as well). *Fama*, therefore, serves as a motivating force to endure the hardships they face, as it is what will ensure their survival in posterity.

This logic reaches its culmination in *Tr.* 5.14, the final poem addressed to Ovid's wife and the closing piece of the *Tristia* collection. The poem opens with a programmatic declaration: through his poetry, he has already offered her *monumenta* (1-2). Fame derives directly from his *ingenium*, which grants his wife a *perpetuum nomen* (14-5), the greatest gift the *relegatus* can bestow. Strikingly, the wife now appears as the force capable of reversing one of the poet's most persistent afflictions: muteness. Ovid insists, *quod numquam vox est de te mea muta* (17) ("for my voice is never silent about thee"), underscoring that, although exile has

rendered him *mutus*[31] in the civic and political sphere, his poetic voice remains active where his wife is concerned. Her *virtus*, then, symbolically annuls the silence imposed by the *princeps*.

The argument that fame follows misfortune reappears in an emphatic form:

> Area de nostra nunc est tibi facta ruina,
> conspicuum virtus hic tua ponat opus. (*Tr.* 5.14.23-4)
>
> "But now by my fall a space has been cleared for thee; here let thy virtue build a structure clear to see."

Placed at the exact center of the forty-six-line poem, this couplet crystallises the paradox of exile. *Nostra... ruina*, placed prominently, is the source of his wife's greatness. The image deliberately recalls *Tr.* 1.6.5-6, where exile first appears as total collapse and the wife as the sustaining force:

> Te mea supposita ueluti trabe fulta ruin(a) est:
> siquid adhuc ego sum, muneris omne tui est.
>
> "Upon thee as upon a supporting pillar my ruins rest; if even now anything of me exists, it is all thy gift."

The metaphor of collapse and support binds the opening and closing poems of the collection, framing the *Tristia* as a coherent *monumentum* constructed upon the poet's fall and sustained by the wife's fidelity. A similar logic appears, without the imagery of ruin, in *Tr.* 5.5.52, where Ulysses' hardships are presented as the source of Penelope's fame. Once again, the wife of the *relegatus* is aligned with the Homeric paradigm.

The final section of *Tr.* 5.14 reinforces this argument through a *sententia* on *rara virtus* (29), followed by a catalogue of exemplary women: Penelope, Alcestis, Andromache, Evadne, and Laodamia:

> Rara quidem virtus, quam non Fortuna gubernet,
> quae maneat stabili, cum fugit illa, pede.
> †siqua tamen pretii sibi merces ipsa petiti†
> inque parum laetis ardua rebus adest,
> ut tempus numeres, per saecula nulla tacetur,
> ut loca, mirantur qua patet orbis iter.
> aspicis ut longo teneat laudabilis aevo
> nomen inextinctum Penelopaea fides?
> cernis ut Admeti cantetur et Hectoris uxor
> ausaque in accensos Iphias ire rogos?
> ut vivat fama coniunx Phylaceia, cuius
> Iliacam celeri vir pede pressit humum?
> morte nihil opus est pro me, sed amore fideque:

[31] On the poet as *mutus* in exile, see Natoli (2017).

non ex difficili fama petenda tibi est.
nec te credideris, quia non facis, ista moneri:
vela damus, quamvis remige puppis eat.
qui monet ut facias, quod iam facis, ille monendo
laudat et hortatu comprobat acta suo. (*Tr.* 5.14.29-46)

Rare indeed is the virtue not piloted by Fortune, which remains on steady feet when Fortune flees. Yet whenever virtue is herself her own coveted reward and remains upright in adversity, though you count all time, she is passed over in silence by no age, she is given homage wherever the world's highway extends. Seest thou how Penelope's faith is praised in the long reaches of time and how her name never dies? How Admetus' wife and Hector's are sung, and the daughter of Iphis, who dared to mount the lighted pyre? How the wife of the hero of Phylacos lives, whose husband touched with his swift foot the soil of Ilium? I need not thy death, but thy love, thy faith; not by hard ways hast thou to seek for fame. Nor believe that I am reminding thee because thou art not acting: I am but giving sails to a bark that is already using the oars. He who reminds thee to do what thou art already doing, by so reminding praises thy acts and by his very exhortation approves them.

The presence of the heroines confirms that the poet's wife belongs to the same heroic genealogy. As Larosa notes, the didactic colouring of these verses is heightened by the verbs *aspicis* (35) and *cernis* (37), as well as by the rhetorical questions (35-40), which invite reflection rather than imitation (Larosa, 2009, p. 379). Crucially, Ovid insists: *morte nihil opus est* (41). His wife is not required to emulate the extreme sacrifices of these heroines, only to understand the true meaning of fidelity (Larosa, 2009, p. 379).

The closing lines clarify that this apparent instruction is in fact praise. The polyptoton *moneri* (43), *monet*, *monendo* (45) reveals that the poet is not correcting her behaviour but reaffirming it. To exhort her to do what she already does is to confirm her exemplary status. The poem thus seals her consecration as *exemplum coniugis bonae* and simultaneously culminates the *monumentum* of the *Tristia*.

In the *Epistulae ex Ponto*, however, this exemplary figure is subjected to a new tension. Only two letters are addressed to the wife – *Pont.* 1.4 and 3.1 – and both combine praise with reproach, testing the stability of the myth that the *Tristia* had constructed. Together, they offer a final, more complex portrait of the *exemplum coniugis*, now exposed to scrutiny. Much of the *persona*'s construction lies in its elevation to epic-tragic status, and *Pont.* 1.4 provides a striking illustration of this (Gaertner, 2005, p. 273). The poem foregrounds the passage of time and its visible effects on the poet's body. Although only four years have elapsed since he departed from Rome, Ovid's hyperbolic account suggests an exile of far greater duration. His face, disfigured by age (2), becomes unrecognizable (5): *nec, si me subito uideas agnoscere possis* ("on a sudden shouldst thou see me, thou couldst not recognize me").

While Gaertner notes the motif of recognition elsewhere in Ovid, the possible allusion to *Odyssey* 23 deserves emphasis, particularly in the epistle's second half. Just as Penelope fails to recognise Ulysses immediately upon his return, Ovid imagines that his wife, too, would not recognise him *subito*. The parallel subtly reinforces her identification with Penelope – and his with Ulysses.

This transformation is attributed not only to time but to relentless hardship (*curae*, 8). Ovid intensifies the claim through hyperbole: he has endured such suffering that he must now be older than Nestor himself if he has managed to survive it (9-10). A catalogue of forces worn down by *labores* – oxen, land, horses, ships (11-7) – culminates in *me quoque* (19), asserting that misfortune has aged him prematurely. The extended *comparatio* with Jason (23-44), echoing *Tr.* 1.5's comparison with Ulysses, serves the same purpose: heroic suffering is relativized and surpassed. The conclusion is unambiguous:

> Durius est igitur nostrum, fidissima coniunx,
> illo quod subiit Aesone natus opus. (*Pont.* 1.4.45-6)
>
> Harder then is my task, my faithful wife, than that which Aeson's son endured.

Durius[32] (25) reminds us that neither Ulysses nor Jason can be considered paradigmatic sufferers anymore, since Ovid now claims that his *opus* is *durius*. This sense of hardship is also reinforced by the long hyperbaton,[33] separating *durius* at the beginning of the couplet from *opus* at the end.

The poem closes by extending the effects of exile to the wife herself. *Te quoque* (47) recalls *me quoque* (19), aligning their experiences. When Ovid left Rome, she was young (*quam iuvenem discedens urbe reliqui*, 47); now she too has aged under the weight of misfortune. As Helzle (2003, p. 152) observes, this recalls the closing lines of Penelope's letter in *Heroides* 1 (115-6), reinforcing once again the Penelopean model: when her beloved departed (*te discedente*, 115), she was a *puella*, but now she is an *anus* (116).

Yet the authority of poetry to elevate is inseparable from its power to judge, a tension fully exposed in *Pont.* 3.1. As the final poem addressed to the wife, and one of the longest in the exile corpus, it adopts a markedly reproachful tone, touching on themes central to the entire work, such as a geographical description of Tomis and the absence of *pax* in the region – an absence that can always be read as a direct critique of the vaunted *pax Augusta*. Additionally, this poem contains the most extensive discussion of Livia, Augustus's wife, in the entire corpus. It has also been noted for its didactic tendency (Nagle, 1980, p. 44-6), which Claassen (1987, p. 38) interprets as an *ars precandi*, in which the poet teaches his wife how to approach Livia. Due to its dense content, this piece has drawn significant scholarly attention and is one of the few with its own commentary (Larosa, 2009). Positioned programmatically

[32] On Ulysses as *durus* in Ovid, see Davisson (1980).

[33] Gaertner (2005, p. 297): "[t]he present hyperbaton of a noun and its epithet spanning a whole couplet is extremely rare".

at the opening of Book 3,[34] it makes explicit the poet's authority over the figures he has created, and no praise turns into demand.

Here Ovid adopts a markedly harsher tone toward his wife, openly reproaching her attitude and insisting that, having been raised by his poetry to the status of an *exemplum*, she must now demonstrate that she truly deserves this representation, since the judgment of posterity may yet question or undermine it. With his characteristic poetic *ingenium*, he writes:

> Quid facias quaeris? Quaeras hoc scilicet ipsum,
> inuenies, uere si reperire uoles.
> Velle parum est: cupias ut re potiaris oportet
> et faciat somnos haec tibi cura breues. (*Pont.* 3.1.29-36)
>
> What art thou to do, thou askest? Ask thyself this very question; thou wilt discover, if thou hast true will to find it out. To wish is not enough; thou shouldst have a passion to win thy end, and this care should make thy slumber brief.

Quid facias quaeris? (33) inaugurates the voice of the *praeceptor*. Fidelity now requires effort, urgency, and visible engagement. The reproach is severe precisely because of the prior exaltation: an *exemplum coniugis* must continue to suffer, to act, and to plead. The reason for the reprimand was the inaction of his wife, evidenced by the fact that the poet has still not received the *princeps*' pardon. Immediately afterwards, Ovid foregrounds the stakes of poetic immortality as follows:

> Magna tibi inposita est nostris persona libellis:
> coniugis exemplum diceris esse bonae.
> Hanc caue degeneres, ut sint praeconia nostra
> uera; uide Famae quod tuearis opus.
> Vt nihil ipse querar, tacito me Fama queretur,
> quae debet fuerit ni tibi cura mei. (*Pont.* 3. 1. 43-8)
>
> Great is the role imposed upon thee in my books: thou art called the model of a good wife. Beware thou fallest not from that: that I may have proclaimed the truth, look to the work that fame has wrought and guard it well.

Here the poet refers to his own corpus through an autotextual allusion: *coniugis exemplum bonae* in verse 44 reprises the designation first applied to his wife in *Tr.* 1.6.26 (*exemplum coniugis… bonae*), a formulation later reiterated as an exhortation in *Tr.* 4.3.72.

The autotextual allusion does more than validate the importance of his books as a *monumentum*: it reveals a deliberate concern with the internal organisation of the exile corpus and an invitation to read the poems sequentially, tracing connections across them.

[34] Froesch (1968) suggests that the editorial organization of this book was premeditated by Ovid.

Full recognition of this allusion, therefore, presupposes familiarity with the earlier *Tristia*, where the model was first articulated and the *monumentum* initially established.

The warning intensifies with further autotextual allusions:

> Nec te nesciri patitur mea pagina, qua non
> inferius Coa Bittide nomen habes.
> Quidquis ages igitur, scena spectabere magna
> et pia non paucis testibus uxor eris. (*Pont*. 3.1. 57-60)
>
> And thou art not permitted by my pages to be unknown; thou hast a name not inferior to that of Coan Bittis. Whatever therefore thou shalt do, thou shalt be viewed upon a mighty stage, thou shalt be to many witnesses a loyal wife.

Mea pagina (57) recalls *Tr*. 1.6.2 and its reference to Bittis (*nec tantum Coo / Bittis amata suo est*). The allusion is further strengthened by the parallel positioning of *Coo Bittis* in *Tr*. 1.6.2 and *Coa Bittide* here: in both cases, the name appears symmetrically on either side of the pentameter's dieresis, reinforcing the deliberate autotextual echo. This underpins the idea that the poet's pages both create and expose their subjects. The *exemplum*, once established, becomes vulnerable to scrutiny:

> Crede mihi, quotiens laudaris carmine nostro,
> qui legit has laudes, an mereare rogat.
> Vtque fauere reor plures uirtutibus istis,
> sic tua non paucae carpere facta uolent. (*Pont*. 3.1.61-4)
>
> I assure thee, as often as thou art praised in my verse, he who reads the praise asks whether thou dost deserve it. And just as many, I think, approve such virtues, so women not a few will seek shortcomings in thy deeds.

Posterity will decide whether she deserves the praise or not. Her behaviour, thus, can jeopardise her position as *exemplum coniugis*. Exemplarity is thus dynamic, contingent, and perpetually at risk. The same contingency attaches to the poet himself: the *exemplum coniugis* and the *exemplum* of the *poeta relegatus* rise and fall together, and Ovid's willingness to let both images waver is, paradoxically, the surest evidence of his control over the myth that sustains them.

The final appearance of the list of virtuous women – including Alcestis (106), Penelope (107-8), Laodamia (109-10), and Evadne (111-2) – serves a different purpose. No longer presented as models to be emulated, they are now invoked to illustrate what Ovid's wife does *not* need to do. Echoing *Tr*. 5.14.41, he states explicitly: *morte nihil opus est* (113). The wife's task is practical and political: to approach Livia, and plead for help. In this context, Ovid assumes the role of a *praeceptor*, guiding his wife in approaching the *Caesaris coniunx* (114-64). However, his instruction is not intended for *her* benefit but for his own; it is his fate that depends on her actions.

In this way, *Pont.* 3.1 does not dismantle the *exemplum coniugis* but subjects it to its ultimate test. Poetry grants immortality, but it also imposes responsibility. The wife's potential to endure as an *exemplum* depends on her ability to inhabit the role her husband's poetry has assigned to her. At the same time, this final tension reasserts the authority of the *poeta exul*: it is his voice that creates, sustains, and can ultimately revoke the myth he has composed.

Conclusion

Ovid's construction of his wife and adversaries as *exempla* serves a dual function: it mythologizes his exile and affirms the enduring authority of poetry. Throughout the exile corpus, the poet's self-awareness as a *vates* is evident in his sustained use of autotextual allusion, intertextuality, and rhetorical control, through which personal suffering is reshaped into a mythic narrative.

Exile becomes the condition under which poetry demonstrates its greatest power. Figures surrounding him are integral to this process, allowing Ovid to frame his relegation as both an experience of extreme injustice and a site of creative resilience. By aligning Augustus with legendary tyrants and contrasting him with merciful rulers such as King Cotys, Ovid critiques imperial authority and reflects on the ethical responsibilities of power.

Conversely, Ovid elevates his wife beyond traditional models of conjugal fidelity, presenting her as a new paradigm forged through exile. Her fame, like his poetic authority, arises from suffering, underscoring their interdependence within the myth of exile. Ultimately, Ovid's exile poetry asserts poetry's capacity to transform loss into *monumentum*, immortalising virtue, judging power, and transcending the historical moment that produced it. By transforming personal history into a poetic narrative steeped in mythological *exempla*, Ovid claimed control over his story, casting his exile as both a tragedy and a triumph.

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