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WARREN G. MOON

The Offense of Love

Ars Amatoria, Remedia Amoris, and Tristia 2

OVID

A verse translation by Julia Dyson Hejduk,
with introduction and notes

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Introduction

WHY READ THIS BOOK (AND THIS INTRODUCTION)?

Ovid carried the elegiac couplet to a perfection beyond which it could not go and his work remains the standard of excellence.

—Gerard Manley Hopkins, letter to R. W. Dixon

Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* (Art of Love) has one of the funniest premises of any work of literature: namely, that Love—by which he means the initiation and maintenance of sexual relationships—is a field of study, like chess or astronomy or agriculture, whose strategies can be analyzed and taught.¹ Ovid's narrator figures himself as the confident *praeceptor Amoris*, the “tutor of Love” in complete control of his subject;² yet as the power struggle between Art and Love unfolds in the course of the poem, we find the know-it-all *praeceptor* increasingly incapable of managing his intractable pupil.³ The “Remedies for Love” (*Remedia Amoris*), we come to realize, do not work (despite the Love Doctor's extravagant claims for his own skill).⁴ The poems are masterpieces of irony. In their ruthlessly clinical analyses of flirtation, self-deception, jealousy, and all the other absurdities of our species's mating behavior, they also happen to be an insightful exploration of the human heart.⁵ It is both amusing and sobering to see how Ovid's basic premise that sexual love is teachable powers so many modern magazines and self-help books, which make billions by packaging his tactics for manipulation, minus the irony, as new and exciting keys to happiness.⁶

What makes the *Ars Amatoria* even more enticing is that it was, according to the poet, part of the reason he was exiled by the emperor Augustus.⁷ The poem was allegedly said to encourage and teach adultery, an affront to Augustus's moral program, which sought to bolster marriage and procreation (especially among the upper classes) and imposed strict punishments for sexual misbehavior.⁸ Yet as Ovid points out in *Tristia* (Sad Things) 2, the longest and most entertaining of his exile poems, *everything* is saturated with illicit sex: why single out the *Ars Amatoria*? His brilliantly mischievous reading of life and literature as one long erotic adventure (what is the *Aeneid* but Virgil sending his "Arms and the Man" into Dido's bedroom? etc. etc.) is so funny partly because, like all funny things, it is partially true. And his ostensibly craven supplication to the emperor—"I'm so very sorry, it was all my fault! I made the mistake of thinking you were an intelligent reader and a decent man with a sense of humor, not the irascible tyrant you obviously are"—is surely one of the cheekiest pseudoapologies ever penned.⁹

The present volume is the first to bring together the offense and the defense. I believe Ovid would have appreciated the ambiguity of those words: Is it OFFense, as in the aggression of a football team (or army or lover), or offENSE, as in the transgression that (allegedly) enraged the emperor? The double meaning captures Ovid's twin roles as the Professor of Love (in the *Ars* and *Remedia*) and the Suffering Artist who ran afoul of a tyrant (in the *Tristia*).¹⁰ In this introduction, after a brief refresher course in classics for the modern reader ("Myth and Lit 101"), I sketch some of the ways our growing understanding of these roles increases our delight in the poems: the Professor's incompetence as a literary critic ("When the *Praeceptor* Reads"), his success (?) in permanently eroticizing the world ("Fifty Shades of Metaphor"), and the consequences of this eroticization for the Augustan program as the Suffering Artist argues from exile that he did nothing but point out what was already there ("The Illicit Sex Tour of Roman Topography and Religion").

The student of Latin literature soon comes to realize that some ambiguities can never be resolved—and some mysteries never solved. I noted

above that the *Ars* was "part of" the reason for Ovid's exile; he mentions "a song [poem] and a mistake" (*carmen et error*, *Tr.* 2.207), and despite millennia of eager sleuthing and speculation, the mistake, if there was one, has yet to be definitively identified. The introduction's final section ("Ovid's Exile: Fact and Fiction") gives an overview of various theories, but the reader who hopes to learn from this volume the "real" reason for Ovid's exile will probably be disappointed. On the other hand, if you're looking for a wickedly witty poetic tour of the literature, mythology, topography, religion, politics, and (of course) sexuality of ancient Rome, you'll be 100 percent satisfied or your money back!

MYTH AND LIT 101

Ovid's *praeceptor* treats seduction as a respectable science, with mythology and literature its respectable data. The principal researcher's blatant misuse and misinterpretation of that data completes the joke, and it gets funnier the more one knows about his background material. I have attempted in the present section to refresh the modern nonclassicist reader's knowledge of some of the major genres, authors, and characters in our extremely learned poet's universe. As the reader of *Tristia* 2 will discover, the list of authors and genres could go on nearly indefinitely; I have merely tried to hit the highlights here, with others footnoted in the appropriate places.

Unless otherwise noted, like Ovid, I refer to the gods and heroes by their Roman names (even though most of the stories about them are of Greek origin). Authors not designated Greek are Roman (writing in Latin). On common poetic meters, see "Meter" under "Some Notes on the Notes and the Translation."

MAJOR GODS

In addition to having anthropomorphic appearances and personalities, many of these divinities also function as metonymies for objects or activities (for example, Bacchus = wine). Here is a bare-bones summary of their most important characteristics for understanding Ovid's poetry:

- (*Phoebus*) *Apollo* (same in Greek; Phoebus = Greek “shining”). God of the sun, healing, and poetry (and not bad with a bow and arrow). *Metonymy*: the sun.
- *Bacchus* (Greek *Dionysus*). God of wine, poetry, and ecstatic (sometimes violent) frenzy. *Metonymy*: wine.
- *Ceres* (Greek *Demeter*). Goddess of agriculture. *Metonymy*: grain.
- *Diana/Trivial/Luna* (Greek *Artemis/Hecate/Selene*). Complex goddess with triple function represented by her three names: hunting/the wilderness, the underworld/magic, and the moon (and she is also associated with childbirth). *Metonymy*: the moon.
- *Juno* (Greek *Hera*). Queen of the gods and goddess of marriage (ironically, given her husband Jupiter’s lecherous proclivities). Persecutes heroes who are, or are associated with, Jupiter’s bastard children. *Metonymy*: none (though she increasingly comes to be associated with Livia, Augustus’s wife).
- *Jupiter/Jove* (Greek *Zeus*). King of the gods, the sky, and philanderers; drives his wife Juno insane with his constant infidelities. His thunderbolt represents absolute power. He also increasingly comes to be associated with Augustus. *Metonymy*: the sky/weather (also Augustus, especially in the exile poetry).
- *Mars* (Greek *Ares*). God of war (though Ovid likes to focus on his sex life). *Metonymy*: war.
- *Mercury* (Greek *Hermes*). God of commerce, boundaries, messages, and practical jokes. *Metonymy*: money.
- (*Pallas*) *Minerva* (Greek [*Pallas*] *Athena*). Goddess of weaving, wisdom, and war. *Metonymy*: weaving.
- *Neptune* (Greek *Poseidon*). God of the sea. *Metonymy*: the sea.
- *Pluto/Dis* (Greek *Hades*). God of death and the underworld. *Metonymy*: death.
- *Venus* (Greek *Aphrodite*). Goddess of love, beauty, and, especially, sex. *Metonymy*: sexuality/sexual attractiveness/sexual intercourse.
- *Vesta* (Greek *Hestia*). Goddess of the hearth. *Metonymy*: the hearth/fire.
- *Vulcan/Mulciber* (Greek *Hephaestus*). God of fire and technology; became crippled when Jupiter threw him out of Olympus for trying to protect his mother, Juno. *Metonymy*: fire.

MAJOR HEROES

In addition to the heroes highlighted in the four great epics discussed below—Achilles (*Iliad*), Ulysses (Greek Odysseus, *Odyssey*), Jason (*Argonautica*), and Aeneas (*Aeneid*)—two others recur frequently enough in Ovid’s works to merit a billing here. Their individual deeds will be recounted as they occur.

Hercules (Greek *Heracles*). This son of Jupiter (who impregnated Alcmena by impersonating her husband Amphitryon) was the greatest of all Greek heroes. He was constantly persecuted by his jealous stepmother, Juno, who forced him to perform numerous labors. He died when his wife Deianira gave him a robe smeared with poison (thinking it was a love charm), but was made a god—one of the few mortals to achieve this distinction (Aeneas, Romulus, and Julius Caesar are others, according to Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*).

Theseus. This son of Neptune, the greatest hero of Athens (some of his deeds bear a suspicious resemblance to those of Hercules), had a checkered history with women. After accepting the Cretan princess Ariadne’s help to navigate the Labyrinth and slay the Minotaur, he abandoned her on an island; he also had a rather troubled marriage with Phaedra (see “Plot” under “*Hippolytus*”).

MAJOR LITERARY WORKS AND AUTHORS

Epics

Long narrative hexameter poems telling mainly of wars and journeys.

Iliad, by Homer (Greek; Ilium is another name for Troy). But it’s complicated. Modern scholars recognize this monumental epic—the beginning of Western literature—as the culmination of a centuries-old oral tradition. Some believe it was written down (or at least composed with the aid of writing) by a single author in the eighth century BC, around the time, not coincidentally, that Greek alphabetic writing came into being. Others see it as the work of many singers, ever changing and perhaps not even

written down in its more-or-less final form until the sixth century BC. Ovid would simply have viewed it, along with the *Odyssey* (the second great epic, with pervasive allusions to the *Iliad*), as the work *written* by *Homer*.

- *Backstory*: In the infamous Judgment of Paris, that son of Priam (the king of Troy), tending flocks on Mount Ida (he had been exposed and left to die as an infant because of his mother's prophetic dream that he would destroy Troy, but shepherds found and raised him), was asked by the goddesses Juno, Minerva, and Venus to decide which of the three was most beautiful (an apple marked "for the fairest," from the goddess Discord, was at stake). Juno attempted to bribe him with power, Minerva with wisdom, and Venus with the most beautiful woman in the world, who, of course, was Helen (already married to Menelaus of Sparta). In the immortal words of Elaine Fantham, "The ninny chose sex, which shows how very young he was." After Paris, visiting Menelaus's house, took Helen home to Troy with him, most of Greece (which had sworn to support whichever man Helen married) went to war against Troy, led by Menelaus's brother Agamemnon (see "Backstory" under "*Oresteia*").
- *Plot*: Chryses, a Trojan priest of Apollo, prays to that god to make the Greeks return his daughter Chryseis ("daughter of Chryses"), who is currently Agamemnon's concubine. When Agamemnon refuses to return her to her father, Apollo sends a plague until he does; the Greek leader then makes the mistake of taking a replacement prize, Briseis ("daughter of Briseus"), from Achilles, the best Greek warrior. Achilles sulks for most of the epic and then makes a spectacular comeback after his best friend, Patroclus, is killed by Hector, the best Trojan warrior (and husband of Andromache; their love scenes are among the most moving in literature). Achilles goes on a rampage that culminates in his killing of Hector. Hector's father Priam comes to Achilles's camp to ransom Hector's body, and the poem closes with Hector's burial.
- *Sequels*: The *Odyssey*, the *Oresteia*, the *Aeneid*, and a slew of lost poems.

Odyssey, by Homer (see "*Iliad*").

- *Backstory*: While Ulysses is away—fighting for ten years in the Trojan War (see "Plot" under "*Iliad*"), wandering for three, and sojourning for seven on the nymph Calypso's island—his wife Penelope has spent the past two decades fending off her suitors, who are feasting on Ulysses's estate. She's pretty sick of it.
- *Plot*: Ulysses finally leaves Calypso's island (thanks to Jupiter's intervention, via Mercury) and washes up in the quasi-paradisical land of the Phaeacians. There he relates his pre-Calypso adventures, such as blinding the Cyclops (which earned Neptune's wrath), staying with Circe (a witch who changed his men into animals; protected by a magical herb, Ulysses got her to change them back, then enjoyed sleeping with her for a year before finally leaving), and visiting the underworld. After he returns home to Ithaca disguised as a beggar (with Minerva's help), he gradually reveals himself to the people there, last of all to Penelope (once he has slaughtered all the suitors, with some help from his son and father). She tells the servants to move their marriage bed; he gets angry, because their marriage bed is (or should be) drilled into a tree that grew up in their bedroom. By this test, which proves that her cleverness matches his own, she knows he has come home at last. There's some mopping up afterward, but the real highlight is their first night in bed.

Argonautica, by Apollonius (Apollonius Rhodius, Greek, third century BC).

- *Backstory*: When their stepmother Ino plotted to sacrifice Phrixus and Helle (to save Boeotia from a famine, which she herself had engineered by secretly roasting all the seed corn), a golden ram (source of the Golden Fleece) was sent by their real mother Nephele, a cloud goddess, to carry the twins across the sea (though Helle fell off and gave her name to the Hellespont). They land in Aia (at the edge of the Black Sea; the region is also called "Colchis," or "[the land of the] Phasis," after its chief river), ruled by Aeëtes (son of Helios, the Sun); Phrixus sacrifices the ram.
- *Plot*: Sent by Pelias, king of Iolcus (in Thessaly), to retrieve the Fleece, Jason and his crew of heroes sail the Argo (supposedly the first ship) to

Aia, having several adventures along the way: dallying with Hypsipyle, queen of Lemnos; killing the Harpies plaguing the blind seer Phineus; getting through the Clashing Rocks; and losing Hercules when he went to look for his boy toy Hylas, who had been abducted by naiads (water nymphs). Aeëtes's daughter Medea falls in love with Jason and assists him in gaining the Fleece by using her magic to help him pass seemingly impossible tests (protecting him from fire-breathing bulls, putting to sleep the dragon guarding the Fleece). She leaves her family (and kills her brother, to slow down pursuit by her father) to marry him.

Aeneid, by Virgil (Publius Vergilius Maro, 70–19 BC), the Classic of Classics even before it was completed: as Propertius famously commented, “Step aside, Roman writers, step aside, Greeks! / Something greater than the *Iliad* is being born” (2.34.65–66).

- *Backstory*: The backstory comes mainly from the *Iliad*. A prophecy therein states that Aeneas and his descendants will survive the fall of Troy and continue ruling indefinitely (*Il.* 20.302–8).
- *Plot*: Aeneas, leader of the Trojans who survived the sack of Troy, gets blown off course to Carthage (thanks to his nemesis Juno) as he is attempting to follow prophecies and find his new home in Italy. There the queen Dido falls madly in love with him (thanks partly to manipulations by several gods) as he tells about the fall of Troy (including the story of the Trojan Horse full of Greek soldiers, source of the saying “beware of Greeks bearing gifts”) and his wanderings. During a hunting expedition, they end up in a cave together and consummate a weird “marriage” arranged by Juno and Venus. When one of Dido's former suitors blows the whistle on their relationship, Jupiter sends Mercury to tell Aeneas to leave Carthage, which he does. Dido, betrayed and bereft, kills herself with the sword Aeneas had given her as a gift. (And then he visits the underworld and wins a war in Italy and stuff—but the Dido episode is what really matters.)
- *Sequel*: The Roman Empire. As the founder of the city (Lavinium) whose residents founded the city (Alba Longa) whose residents founded Rome, Aeneas is considered the protofounder of Rome.

Tragedies

Dramas, in a variety of meters, usually about doomed love and dysfunctional families whose members sleep with and/or murder one another (often because of Fate or manipulation by gods). Of the numerous surviving tragedies, the poems in this volume allude most frequently to the ones below.

Oresteia (comprising three plays: *Agamemnon*, *Libation Bearers*, and *Eumenides*), by Aeschylus (Greek, ca. 525–455 BC). Sophocles also wrote an *Electra*, Euripides an *Electra* and an *Orestes*.

- *Backstory*: Agamemnon, king of Mycene (in the northeastern Peloponnese), sacrificed his daughter Iphigeneia to gain favorable winds to sail to Troy (see “Backstory” under “*Iliad*”). After the Greeks won the Trojan War, he returned home with Priam's daughter Cassandra, a priestess of Apollo (who, after she rebuffed him, cursed her with always giving true prophecies that would not be believed). Also, Aerope, the wife of Atreus (king of Argos and father of Agamemnon and Menelaus), had an affair with his brother Thyestes and helped him usurp Atreus's kingdom by treachery; when Atreus found out, he killed Thyestes's children (Aegisthus alone survived) and served them to him in a stew. The sun turned back in horror.
- *Plot*: Agamemnon's wife Clytemnestra (Tyndareus's daughter, like Helen) is having an affair with Aegisthus; she kills Agamemnon and Cassandra upon their return from Troy. To avenge their father, Clytemnestra's son Orestes and daughter Electra kill her. Orestes is driven crazy by the Furies (goddesses of vengeance), but eventually regains his sanity when pardoned by Minerva at Athens (after a trial by jury). The Furies (Greek *Erinyes*) become Eumenides (“Kindly Ones”) who will safeguard fertility and justice.

Ajax, by Sophocles (Greek, ca. 496–406 BC).

- *Backstory*: After the death of Achilles, the Greeks gave his armor to Ulysses as prize for the best (remaining) hero, choosing Ulysses's cunning and verbal dexterity over Ajax's stalwart strength. Enraged, Ajax attempted

to slaughter the Greek commanders, but was deflected from this atrocity by Minerva, who created a delusion that caused him to slaughter sheep and cattle instead (thinking they were Greeks).

- *Plot*: When he returns to sanity, Ajax is so horrified and ashamed that he resolves to commit suicide. After some rather nasty speeches to his wife, Tecmessa, he leads her to believe that he will get over it, but in fact goes off and kills himself. Tecmessa's grief is nearly unbearable. The Greeks debate what to do with his body and ultimately grant him burial.

Hippolytus, by Euripides (Greek, ca. 480–406 BC).

- *Plot*: Theseus's son Hippolytus insists on worshipping the huntress goddess Diana, scorning Venus, who is not pleased. His stepmother, Phaedra, falls in love with him (through Venus's machinations), attempts to seduce him, and accuses him of molesting her when he refuses her advances. Cursed by his father, Hippolytus dies when his chariot horses get spooked by a sea monster (sent by Neptune, Theseus's father) and drag him to death.

Medea, by Euripides.

- *Backstory*: See "*Argonautica*."
- *Plot*: When Jason abandons Medea to marry Creusa, princess of Corinth, for political reasons, Medea kills their two sons (along with Creusa and her father) in revenge, then escapes to Athens in a chariot drawn by winged serpents. She is the ancient paradigm for the fury of a woman scorned.

Didactic poems

Longish poems, usually in hexameters, purporting to teach a particular subject (farming, poisonous snakes, philosophy, etc.).

Works and Days, by Hesiod (Greek, eighth or seventh century BC). This work on farming, addressed to the poet's good-for-nothing brother, includes much homespun wisdom and several mythological digressions.

Hesiod's other surviving work, *Theogony* (Births of the Gods), is an extended family tree and compendium of Greek mythology.

De Rerum Natura (On the Nature of Things/the Universe), by Lucretius (Titus Lucretius Carus, ca. 94–55 BC). This six-book poem explains the atomic theory underlying the philosophical school of Epicureanism, which posited that the gods don't care what humans do and the soul is mortal, so no need to worry about punishment after death. Ovid likes to emphasize his own "scientific" credentials by peppering his work with Lucretian language and mannerisms.

Georgics (Working the Land), by Virgil (see "*Aeneid*"). Four books roughly cover field cultivation, viticulture and trees, livestock, and bees (with a long digression on Orpheus and Eurydice in book 4). While ostensibly teaching farming, this work really ponders the great questions of human existence, including the terrible dangers of erotic love. Much of the agricultural imagery in the *Ars* has a mock-serious Virgilian flavor. Virgil's first work, the *Eclogues* (Selections), sometimes called the *Bucolics* (Cowherd Things), sings of life and love among shepherds (and cowherds) in a pastoral setting.

Elegies

Poems of varying length in elegiac couplets. Originally associated with funeral laments, most surviving elegies are first-person accounts of love affairs. The "canon" of Roman elegy, according to Ovid, goes (1) Gallus, (2) Tibullus, (3) Propertius, (4) Ovid.

Gallus (Gaius Cornelius Gallus, ca. 70–26 BC), considered the founder of Latin love elegy, though only a few of his lines survive. He was unique among major Latin poets in that he also held high military and political offices: after a victorious generalship in the Alexandrian War (the tail end of the civil war between Augustus and Mark Antony), he was made the first prefect of Egypt in 30 BC. He did or said something to offend Augustus—possibly erecting a statue to himself or otherwise boasting about his accomplishments—and was condemned by the senate in 27/26

BC, which led to his suicide in that year. As a poet punished by the emperor, he was an important model for Ovid.

Tibullus (Albius Tibullus, ca. 50–19 BC), author of two surviving books of elegies. His primary love objects are Delia, the boy Marathus, and the menacing woman Nemesis.

Propertius (Sextus Propertius, ca. 50–15 BC), author of four surviving books of elegies. His most famous poems are about his mistress Cynthia (the first word of Elegy 1.1, and hence the title of his collection), though later ones veer into other topics involving Roman history, topography, and religion.

Ovid, Amores (see under “Ovid’s Works”).

Ovid’s Works

For completeness, I include here all of the surviving works of Ovid (Publius Ovidius Naso, 43 BC–AD 17), including those written after the ones in this volume.¹¹ His most important lost work is his tragedy, *Medea* (ca. 12 BC); we also have 100 lines of his *Medicamina Faciei Femineae* (Concoctions for the Female Face), a work on cosmetics that prefigures some of the themes of the *Ars Amatoria*.

The dates are often uncertain, partly because “publication” was a less definitive process in the ancient world. Typically, a poet would recite early drafts at dinner parties and give more polished versions to a few friends (who would perhaps have copies made), but still continue to revise (especially when circumstances changed: many of Ovid’s later poems appear to have been revised from exile). The book could be considered “published” at the point when enough friends of friends had made copies that the original author did not know personally all the possessors of his work.¹² A poetry “book” would be anywhere from about 500 to 1,500 lines (most falling in the 700–1,000 range), approximately the length that would fit on a single scroll. Apart from the *Metamorphoses* (which is in hexameters), all of Ovid’s surviving works are in elegiac couplets.

Heroides (Heroines). The chronology is complicated; the first set—consisting of “single *Heroides*” (1–15)—was written around 20–13 BC, and the second set—consisting of “double *Heroides*” (16–21)—around the

time of Ovid’s exile in AD 8. (The Ovidian authorship of several of these has been disputed, most of all no. 15, the letter from Sappho, which does not appear in the manuscripts containing the others.) The single *Heroides* purport to be letters from famous abandoned women to their absent lovers; the double *Heroides* are letters with responses (Paris–Helen, Leander–Hero, and Acontius–Cydippe). All of them play off literary models (for instance, no. 1, from Penelope to Ulysses, alludes to Homer’s *Odyssey*; no. 4, from Phaedra to Hippolytus, alludes to Euripides’s *Hippolytus*, etc.).

Amores (Loves/Love Affairs). The chronology is complicated; most likely there were some recitations in the 20s BC followed by the first published edition in 16 BC and the second edition (five books pared down to three) in 8–3 BC. These short first-person poems follow the ups and downs of a lover’s progress into and out of love (especially with a fictional woman named Corinna) while simultaneously depicting a poet’s progress into and out of love elegy (though does either one ever really graduate?).

Ars Amatoria (The Art of Love/The Amatory Art) and *Remedia Amoris* (Remedies for Love). *Ars* 1–2 (to men, on how to catch and keep a girl) was probably published in 2 BC; *Ars* 3 (to women, on how to catch and keep a man) and *Remedia* (on how to unlearn to love) in AD 2.

Metamorphoses. The chronology again is somewhat complicated; the poem was probably composed in AD 3–7 and published in AD 8, but also tweaked during Ovid’s exile. This sprawling fifteen-book narrative traces human (and divine) history from the origin of the world to the poet’s own day, loosely organized around the theme of “metamorphosis,” or change of form (such as from human to tree or animal). Though epic in form (that is, a long hexameter narrative), it makes forays into all the generic categories outlined above and then some.

Fasti (Calendar; *fasti* literally means “days on which it is right [*fas*] to conduct business”). Composition dates are probably similar to those for the *Metamorphoses*. Though Ovid claims to have written one book for

each month of the year (*Tr.* 2.549), only the first six months (January–June) survive, and it is questionable whether he wrote or even intended to write any others (there are many closural elements at the end of book 6). The poem goes through the Roman calendar year, exploring the origins of constellations and religious festivals.

Tristia (Sad Things). This five-book collection of letters, prayers, and occasional poems, probably published in AD 9–12, tracks Ovid’s exilic journey and settlement in Tomis. *Tristia* 2 is unique in having a named recipient (Augustus) and in taking up an entire book with one long letter; the other four books consist of a series of shorter elegies (like those in the *Amores*) mainly addressed to anonymous friends.

Ibis (The bird “Ibis,” title of a lost poem by Callimachus cursing a pseudonymous enemy under that name; also Latin for “you will go”). This one-book poem, probably written along with the *Tristia*, is an elaborate and extremely erudite curse addressed to an unnamed enemy; it alludes to just about every bad thing that has happened to anyone throughout history, literature, and mythology.

Epistulae ex Ponto (Letters from the Black Sea). This sequel to the *Tristia* was probably written in AD 13 (books 1–3) and 14–16 (book 4). Ovid abandons the commitment to anonymity and addresses these letters to friends back in Rome, begging them to plead with the emperor for his return. By now, the poet has settled into the Tomitan community, learning the languages of the hirsute natives well enough to compose a poetic encomium of Augustus in Getic. (If you believe that, then Ovid has done his work well.)

Other Important Authors

Remember that “Myth and Lit 101” is just an intro course! Here are a few more authors who should not be left out, with apologies to the many who have been.¹³

Plato (Greek, ca. 429–347 BC), the philosopher whose account of his master Socrates’s dialogues formed the basis for the Western philosophical

tradition. His *Phaedrus*, which has Socrates’s defense of passionless sexual pursuit followed by a palinode (a song taking something back) praising passionate love, resembles the *Ars–Remedia* trajectory in reverse. His *Symposium* presents a “ladder” of ascending forms of love culminating in contemplation of The Good; the *praeceptor* depicts a somewhat similar progression, except it culminates in A Good Time.¹⁴

Callimachus (Greek, ca. 310–240 BC) supposedly wrote over eight hundred books, including epigrams, hymns to various gods, and the *Aitia* (Causes, about the origins of various Greek cults, festivals, and cities). He was associated with the court of Alexandria (a city in Egypt founded by Alexander the Great), capital of the kingdom whose Ptolemaic dynasty was fathered by Alexander’s friend Ptolemy I and culminated in the famous Cleopatra (VII). He is the poster boy for “Alexandrian” poetry, the name given to the slender, allusive, learned style much admired by Augustan poets like Ovid.¹⁵

Cicero (Marcus Tullius Cicero, 106–43 BC), the most famous of all orators (and after he allegedly retired from politics, not a bad philosopher). Ovid was trained in rhetoric, and his strategies of verbal persuasion have many affinities with Cicero’s.¹⁶

Catullus (Gaius Valerius Catullus, ca. 84–54 BC), author of epigrams (short, punchy poems in elegiac couplets), protoelegies, a mini-epic, and lyric love poems (lyric poems, originally sung to the lyre, are generally short, often personal poems in a variety of meters). His most famous poems are those about his affair with Lesbia (a pseudonym for Clodia Metelli [“wife of Metellus”], an aristocratic woman ten years his senior).¹⁷ He is an important precursor of love elegy and a pioneer of Alexandrian poetry in Latin (see “Callimachus”).¹⁸

Horace (Quintus Horatius Flaccus, 65–8 BC), author of the *Satires* (Latin *Sermones*, “Conversations” on a variety of subjects), *Epodes* (primarily a mixture of humorous and serious invectives), *Odes* (lyric poems on topics

such as love, wine, gods, and death), *Epistles* (verse letters to friends, including one to Augustus [2.1] that is a model for *Tristia* 2¹⁹), and an *Ars Poetica* (Art of Poetry) that in some ways prefigures Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*.²⁰ The freedman's son who penetrated Augustus's inner circle and became the poet laureate of Rome, Horace is the model for the kind of success and social status Ovid wishes for, especially in exile—and yet even in the fairly exhaustive list of authors in *Tristia* 2 he is never named.

WHEN THE *PRAECEPTOR* READS

With the possible exception of Chaucer, it would be difficult to find a more skilled presenter of the art of misreading than Ovid. Such is one of the overarching jokes of the *Ars-Remedia* sequence: the narrator's claim that Love is entirely subject to Art—and hence can be deliberately learned and deliberately “cured”—is undermined by the narrative itself, as well as by the process of constructing it. What he does on a grand scale he also does in miniature. I give here some samples of three things that can happen when the *praeceptor* reads: telling a story that negates its own point, treating “his” previous experience in the *Amores* as a textbook case, and deriving ludicrously inappropriate and bathetic conclusions from mythological exempla.

Misreadings provide the punch lines to several of the historical and mythological digressions. The first such set piece, on the Rape of the Sabine Women by Romulus and his crew to bring females to Rome (the founder had neglected that important component), illustrates this phenomenon. The scene functions as an “anti-exemplum,” an illustration of the precise opposite of the techniques the poem seeks to inculcate.²¹ The Romans had invited their female neighbors to a primitive theatrical show, a crude setup completely lacking in “art” (1.106, 113). Then Romulus's warriors brutally grab the women like predatory animals (117–18). The moral the *praeceptor* derives?

Romulus, you alone knew how to give soldiers benefits.
Give me benefits like that and I'll join the army!

With that precedent, naturally, theatrical shows
remain a snare for beautiful girls even now. (1.131–34)

Like the other mythological digressions in *Ars* 1, as Alison Sharrock (2006:27) observes, the episode is a “romanticization of force”—hardly the artful seduction that was advertised at the poem's beginning.

Next, the *praeceptor* employs cheap wordplay to segue into the “benefits” (*commoda*) of going to chariot races. The ensuing scene showcases another of Ovid's favorite techniques: turning apparently spontaneous episodes from his own amatory past into normative scenarios.²² In *Amores* 3.2, a lover's flirtation with a girl at a race takes the form of a passionate monologue addressed to the girl herself: “I've come not to watch the horses (I don't care about those) but to speak with you, to sit by you, to show you the love you inspire in me,” et cetera. In *Ars* 1.135–62, every move that that lover made, from flicking an absent speck of dust off the girl's bosom to lifting her robe from the dirty ground so he can peek at her calves, is presented as part of a formula generalizable to all pupils. A. S. Hollis calls the *Ars* passage “a great disappointment” and “a pallid reworking of the brilliant and delightful *Amores* iii.2.”²³ This reaction demonstrates that Ovid has accomplished, brilliantly, precisely what he set out to do: to point out both the artificiality of seduction and the absurdity of treating it as a teachable discipline.²⁴

The *praeceptor's* readings of tragedy and epic are even more egregiously boneheaded.²⁵ For instance, after a catalog of the tragic horrors caused by disordered and thwarted love—including Medea's murder of her children, Clytemnestra's murder of her husband, and Hippolytus's dismemberment through his father's curse—the *praeceptor* interprets this as promising evidence for the strength of the female libido:

So, go on, don't be shy about hoping for girls, all of them!
There'll barely be one out of many to tell you “No.” (1.343–44)

What makes this so funny, of course, is the mixture of truth and lie: the truth that sexual attraction is a prime mover of human behavior, combined

with the lie that this force can be wholly controlled and manipulated by a skillful practitioner.

When it comes to full-blown mythological digressions, the longer and more elaborate they are, the more incongruous the *praeceptor's* reductive conclusions become. The story of Daedalus and Icarus is a case in point (2.21–98). Sharrock devotes over a hundred pages to her analysis of this complex and moving passage, which she sees as, among other things, “a reflection on poetic fame, the artistic process, stylistic levels, and Callimachean artistry.”²⁶ Even apart from the rich intertextuality and metapoetic subtext,²⁷ readers are seduced by images of the suffering artist struggling to break free from the Labyrinth (itself an incredibly rich and psychologically suggestive symbol),²⁸ of the pair testing their wings and leaving the earth behind, of the boy discarding safety for a few moments of supreme glory,²⁹ of the father grieving helplessly, the waters covering all but his son's name. . . . And the *praeceptor's* takeaway?

Minos had no power to imprison the wings of a man:

I'm trying to detain a winged god! (2.97–98)

Like Icarus, we go from soaring sublimity to a sudden cold plunge.

The final mythological digression in the *Ars*, the story of Cephalus and Procris (3.685–746), is a virtuoso display of misreading on every level,³⁰ as well as a parable about the deadliness of love (and love poetry) and the salvific power of art. But wait, why should I provide here a pallid reworking of my own article on the subject (Hejduk 2011a)? Better to close this section with the *praeceptor's* teaser, sound advice for anyone subjected to a seducer's—or a poet's—flattering charms: “Don't be too quick to believe” (3.685).

FIFTY SHADES OF METAPHOR

How come I know where your face picked up that radiant glow?

Keep your door shut! Why publish a rough draft?

Ars 3.327–28

This advice to women about the necessity of applying their makeup in private is one of the reasons for the present book. I felt that the last

sentence—Latin *quid rude prodis opus*, literally “Why do you bring forth an unfinished work”—simply *had* to be translated “Why publish a rough draft,” and it was worth doing the rest of the poem just so I could get that one in.³¹ But the idea expressed also encapsulates a crucial theme that animates all of Ovid's work: the analogy between the human body and a work of art, especially the poet's own. One could spin out dozens of examples (and a voluminous bibliography):³² a “body” of work, the “feet” of a poetic meter, characterization of unpolished verses as “shaggy” and polished ones as “combed.” Everything that Ovid says about personal “grooming,” *cultus*, flirts with his *ars poetica*. The basic premise of his erotodidactic works is that sexual beings must apply art to their appearance and behavior in order to please, just as a poet must apply art to his poem.³³ Yet paradoxically, the goal of art—whether applied to humans or to actual artwork—is to appear artless: “If it stays hidden, art works” (2.313); “it's through concealment that art makes beauty” (3.210); or, my personal favorite, “gain faith in your genuineness through lots of art” (1.612). The very concept of an *Ars Amatoria*, an Art of Love, rests on the assumption that spontaneous, heartfelt emotion takes meticulous polishing.

Ovid also delights in bringing in metaphors and analogies for amatory pursuit from multiple realms of human endeavor and the natural world.³⁴ By using many of the same metaphors for his own poetic process—such as the chariot race of poetic composition shading into the chariot race of sexual conquest and consummation—he reinforces the overlap between love and art. Latin *opus*, “work,” applies to both an artistic composition and sexual intercourse;³⁵ near the end of book 2, lover (730) and poet (733) both complete their “work,” and Ovid, in praising his own poetic accomplishment, designates himself the champion *amator*, “lover” (738).³⁶ War also has a way of invading and complicating other metaphors, especially those of hunting and sports: Cupid's arrows could be seen as those of a hunter or a warrior, the *praeceptor* figures himself as the driver of a chariot on both the battlefield and the racetrack, and horses could be used for war, farming, or chariot racing.

In this translation, I have tried my best to preserve these metaphors. To give an idea of their relative prevalence, to avoid clogging the footnotes,

and to satisfy my own and (I hope) the reader's curiosity, I present here a list of the principal metaphors Ovid employs in the *Ars*, in descending order of frequency (with [] around those used for poetic composition), by book and line number(s).

WAR³⁷

1. Love's bow, torches, and wounds: 1.21-23
2. lover as fresh recruit: 1.36
3. Venus quartered in her son's city: 1.60
4. squadron of women: 1.66
5. Romulus gives signal to grab "prize" (could also be hunting metaphor): 1.114
6. "prize" again: 1.125
7. spectator hit by Cupid's arrow (could also be hunting): 1.169-70
8. Trojan Horse: 1.363-64
9. "under my leadership": 1.382
10. Troy captured: 1.478
11. love is a military exercise: 2.233-38
12. jealous woman rushes to fire and the sword: 2.379
13. Venus wages just war: 2.397
14. when she seems your determined foe, go after the pact of sex: 2.461-62
15. love's arrows poisoned: 2.520
16. man besieging girl's door: 2.526
17. endure a rival and you'll be victor in Jupiter's Citadel: 2.539-40
18. shame flees in defeat: 2.556
19. I've supplied arms as Vulcan did for Achilles; Amazons, spoils: 2.741-44
20. I've given arms to Greeks, now time to arm the Amazons: 3.1-6
21. women can't shake off flames or bows: 3.29-30
22. Venus complains that unarmed women handed over to armed men: 3.46
23. Troy should have followed Priam's instructions: 3.439-40
24. law permits bearing arms against armed men: 3.492
25. Cupid ditches blunt weapons for sharp arrows: 3.515-16

26. good leaders station their men well: 3.527-28
27. lover as new recruit and "prize": 3.559-60
28. veteran soldier vs. new recruit: 3.565-66
29. I've opened the gate to the enemy: 3.577
30. time to put away blunt swords: 3.589-90
31. I'm meeting the enemy with chest exposed: 3.667-68
32. inscribe my name on the spoils: 3.812

FARMING/PLANTS/DOMESTIC ANIMALS³⁸

1. bull gets accustomed to plow, horses to bridles: 1.19-20
2. Rome's girls more plentiful than crops of Gargara, grapes of Methymna: 1.57
3. theater fertile place for your desires: 1.90
4. women heading to theater like ants and bees: 1.93-96
5. neighbor's grass greener, his cows have fatter udders: 1.349-50
6. crops most luxuriant in fertile ground: 1.360
7. Ceres shouldn't always be entrusted to treacherous fields: 1.401
8. barren field tricks its master by seeming about to produce: 1.450
9. bulls come around to the plow, horses to reins: 1.471-72
10. different grounds bear different things: 1.757-58
11. bull submits to plow: 2.184
12. sow something to reap with full sickle: 2.322
13. bulls and saplings get bigger: 2.341-42
14. let field lie fallow: 2.351-52
15. fields don't always return investment: 2.513
16. grafted sapling gains strength: 2.649-53
17. smell of leather no longer offensive: 2.655-56
18. older woman a field bearing crops, younger a field needing to be sown: 2.667-68
19. new vs. old wine: 2.695-96
20. young plane tree not shady, new meadow hard on feet: 2.697-98
21. flowers wither: 3.67-68
22. pluck the flower before it withers: 3.79-80
23. through childbearing, field wears out through harvests: 3.82

24. wine and crops helped by grooming: 3.101–2
25. hair falls like leaves: 3.162
26. baldness = sheep minus horns, field minus grass, shrubs minus foliage: 3.249–50
27. enclose the crop with a high fence: 3.562
28. older man's love burns slowly like damp straw, green wood: 3.573–74
29. older man's love more fertile, pluck the fruit on its way out: 3.575–76
30. Procris pales like fruit: 3.703–6

SAILING³⁹

1. [art moves ships, Ovid the helmsman of Love]: 1.3–8
2. don't have to give your sails to the wind looking for a girl: 1.51
3. maid should help out sails with oars: 1.368
4. don't let the sails go limp: 1.373
5. keels shouldn't always be entrusted to sea: 1.402
6. bad time for sailing if it's her birthday or other gift-demanding day: 1.409–12
7. let a letter test the waters: 1.437
8. [let my anchor be cast here]: 1.772
9. your boat's in the middle of the sea, the harbor I seek is far off: 2.9–10
10. don't use shore wind when on open sea: 2.337–38
11. ships don't always use the same wind: 2.429–32
12. breeze doesn't always help ships: 2.514
13. in bed, don't spread your sails too big . . . : 2.725
14. . . . unless there's time pressure, then use all your sails and oars: 2.731–2
15. [I'm not writing about great women: need smaller sails for my skiff]: 3.26
16. [after that argument, I'm about to encounter a gale]: 3.99–100
17. beautiful don't need to worry; sailor takes greater care during storms: 3.259–60
18. let a letter test the waters: 3.469
19. [spread my sails to the greater task of character]: 3.500

20. favoring winds make a boat sink: 3.584
21. [my weary keel trying to make it to harbor]: 3.748

HUNTING (BY HUMANS AND DOGS)⁴⁰

1. hunter knows where to look for deer and boars: 1.45–46
2. do your hunting in the theater: 1.89
3. (see under "war"): 1.114, 125, 169–70
4. female gatherings ripe for hunting—but hunter becomes hunted: 1.253–58
5. where to place your nets: 1.264
6. need to lay your trap: 1.270
7. boar escapes from net: 1.392
8. women should fall into their own traps: 1.646
9. seasoned doe spots a trap: 1.766
10. prey has fallen into my trap: 2.2
11. woman scorned like boar flinging off hounds: 2.373–74
12. traps, nets, and tracking: 2.593–96
13. hounds wander in vain, stag falls into net: 3.427–28
14. new lover resists if he sees the net: 3.554
15. lover falling into net: 3.591
16. your rabbit will be hunted by others: 3.662
17. doe doesn't teach dogs to run: 3.670

CHARIOT RACING/DRIVING

1. [art drives chariots, Ovid the charioteer of Love]: 1.4–8
2. [this is the course my chariot will mark]: 1.39–40
3. lover's reins still loose: 1.41
4. [Muse borne on unequal wheels]: 1.263
5. steeds like to be patted: 1.629–30
6. [my chariot should hug the post]: 2.426
7. lover should change course: 2.428
8. charioteers sometimes pull reins in: 2.433–34
9. in bed, don't let her pass you in the race: 2.726–28
10. in bed, give free rein: 2.730

11. [Muse, don't be hurled out by whirling wheels]: 3.467-68
12. different bridles for young and old horses: 3.555-56
13. race horse needs rival: 3.595-96
14. [time to get off swan-drawn chariot]: 3.809-10

RELIGION⁴¹

1. prophet shooing away respectable women from his mysteries:
1.29-32
2. Bacchus summoning his prophet: 1.525
3. more prophetic shooing: 1.607-8
4. girl came to you with me as prophet: 2.11
5. more prophetic shooing: 2.151
6. woman like Bacchant: 2.380
7. sex like rites of Ceres, Samothrace: 2.601-2
8. Venus's rites: 2.607
9. celebrate me as prophet: 2.739
10. to deceive, approach my rites: 3.616

NATURAL PHENOMENA

1. wrath melts like ice: 1.374
2. rocks hollowed out by water: 1.475-76
3. bank eaten by water: 1.620
4. compliance swims rivers: 2.181
5. river gets bigger by picking up waters: 2.343-44
6. adding sulfur makes weak fire blaze: 2.439-42
7. time like flowing water: 3.62-64
8. iron and flint get worn down, but torches and sea inexhaustible:
3.91-94

GAMES/GAMBLING

1. seducing the maid is a roll of the dice: 1.376
2. gambler keeps raising the stakes so he won't have lost: 1.451-52
3. pleasant games: 1.594
4. in bed, use words to fit the game: 2.724

5. pleasant games: 3.328
6. Venus has a thousand games: 3.787
7. in bed, naughty words in the middle of the game: 3.796
8. [end of my game]: 3.809

THEATER⁴²

1. women come to spectate and to be spectacles: 1.99
2. play the supporting role: 1.584
3. you've got to play the lover: 1.611
4. play the role she commands: 2.198
5. let her play the part of the one in control: 2.294
6. play scared, act out a comedy: 3.604-8

FISHING

1. fishermen know which waters have many fish: 1.47-48
2. Rome has as many girls as the sea has fish: 1.58
3. grasp a wounded fish firmly when taking it from hook: 1.393
4. different fish caught by different nets and hooks: 1.763-64
5. keep your hook dangling: 3.425-26

BIRD-CATCHING

1. bird-catchers know the right hedges: 1.47
2. Rome has as many girls as there are birds in the leaves: 1.58
3. Cupid's wings get soggy and stuck with wine: 1.233-35
4. don't let bird go free once its wings are limed: 1.391
5. bird doesn't show bird-catcher best place: 3.669

HUNTING (BY WILD ANIMALS)

1. Sabine women like doves fleeing eagles, lambs fleeing wolves:
1.117-18
2. Menelaus handing Helen to Paris like dove to hawk, sheep to wolf:
2.363-64
3. teaching women like giving poison to vipers, sheep to she-wolf:
3.7-8

4. she-wolf heads for many sheep, Jupiter's eagle for many birds: 3.419–20

ANIMALS

1. women like dangerous animals when scorned: 2.373–76
2. doves made up their quarrel and are now nuzzling: 2.465–66
3. animals mating: 2.481–88
4. serpents shed their skin, stags shed their horns and grow new ones: 3.77–78

DISEASE/MEDICINE

1. like girls, doctors are precise about times: 1.357
2. give her a short time to nurse her wound: 2.455
3. need strong medicines for a wrathful woman: 2.489–92
4. do no harm: 3.52

If nothing else, this quasi-exhaustive list sets up one of the big punch lines in the *Remedia*. Subtracting out from “sailing” the metaphors pertaining to poetic composition rather than sexual conquest shows the three most frequent metaphors for the lover's pursuit to be war, farming, and hunting. So when the Love Doctor wants to recommend some activities to distract his patient from his ailment, what does he choose? You guessed it: war, farming, and hunting—with a side order of bird-catching and fishing. Through his art, he has so thoroughly eroticized the world that there is, in fact, no possibility of escape from the dominion of Love. The *Remedia* has rightly been seen as alluding to works of the Alexandrian poet Nicander of Colophon (writing ca. 130 BC), the *Theriaka* (Poisonous Animals) and *Alexipharmaka* (Antidotes), which catalog poisonous plants and animals and then describe antidotes and cures. Yet as Gianpero Rosati points out, there is a crucial difference between these “cure poems” and Ovid's: “In the case of Ovid, the author himself is responsible for the poisons. Through his teaching he provoked the very illness of his readers whom he now addresses as therapist and saviour” (2006:148).

THE ILLICIT SEX TOUR OF
ROMAN TOPOGRAPHY AND RELIGION

If Ovid's overriding joke is the eroticization of everything, part of what makes it funny is that everything is already eroticized. Augustus boasted that he “found Rome a city of brick and left it a city of marble”;⁴³ his construction or refurbishing of monuments, temples, and other public buildings was an important aspect of his political program.⁴⁴ By turning all of these locales into potential pick-up spots, Ovid imposes a humorous veneer of sexuality—but he also points out the sexuality already latent in them.⁴⁵ In the exile poetry, he archly turns the pansexuality of Roman topography and religion brought out by the *Arts* into an argument in his defense.

Take the problem posed by Jupiter, for instance. The increasing concentration of power into the hands of one man led to a natural analogy between the Father of Gods and Men (Jupiter) and the Father of the Country (Augustus). What began as a tentative, implicit analogy in the earlier Augustan poets becomes almost an equation in Ovid, who refers quite openly to the edict sending him into exile as the thunderbolt of Jupiter.⁴⁶ But Ovid also uses Jupiter as a chief role model for adulterers, which obviously creates some tension with Augustus's War on Adultery. The poet's warning about women visiting Jupiter's temple—especially with its sneaky adjective “august”⁴⁷—makes this tension clear:

What place is more august than temples? She should avoid
these too, unless she's ingeniously plotting her sin.
She's standing in Jupiter's temple: in Jupiter's temple, it will
occur to her how many women that god made mothers!
Going to worship at Juno's temple next door, she'll be thinking
how that goddess fumed about her copious rivals. (*Tr.* 2.287–92)

Such passages make it hard not to see subversive hints in Ovid's ostensible flattery of the emperor, and his wife Livia, as the manifestations of Jupiter and Juno on earth.⁴⁸ They also remind us that religious monuments are subject to the same vagaries of “reader response” as written texts—that attempts to control morality through the manipulation of

images will inevitably run up against both the unpredictability and the intractability of human desire and imagination.⁴⁹

Or consider Ovid's mischievous fun with the temples of Mars Ultor ("The Avenger," commemorating Augustus's vengeance on the killers of his adopted father, Julius Caesar), in the Forum of Augustus, and Venus Genetrix ("The Mother"), in the adjacent Forum of Julius Caesar. Both deities played important roles in the mythical genealogy of Augustus's family, Mars as the father of Romulus and Venus as the mother of Aeneas.⁵⁰ Yet the aspect of Mars and Venus that Ovid consistently brings up is their adulterous affair—not to mention the illicit sex with mortals that gave rise to Rome's founders.⁵¹ He reduces the carefully planned temples to the dynamics of an adultery mime, with Mars the clever lover and Vulcan (whose temple stood at some distance) the cuckolded husband.⁵²

She's come into the temple of great Mars, your gift:

the Avenger's coupled with Venus, her man's outside! (*Tr.* 2.295–96)

The poet can't be held responsible for planting dirty ideas in anyone's mind, since the message conveyed by the monuments themselves is there for all to see! On one level, this brings to mind the rejoinder of the man criticized for perceiving obscenities in every Rorschach inkblot: "You're the one who keeps showing me these dirty pictures!" Yet on another level, some might argue that it reveals a deep truth about the sexual aggression lurking within Augustus's architectural performance of Roman power.⁵³

OVID'S EXILE: FACT AND FICTION

Evidently, so long as the secret exists, the fascination [Ovid's exile] exerts will continue to encourage scholars to combine the available facts of history with the amorphous and cryptic allusions of Ovid to form a coherent answer to the enigma.

John C. Thibault, *The Mystery of Ovid's Exile*

Fifty years ago, John Thibault made a heroic effort to assemble all the available evidence for the reason(s) behind Ovid's exile—and as the quotation above indicates, no compelling solution to the enigma emerged.⁵⁴ Aside

from the poet's own words, we have almost no evidence that the exile even happened, and none at all about its cause. Nevertheless, I shall attempt in this section to give a brief overview of Ovidian Exile Studies in the early twenty-first century: the reasons, the reality, and the rewards.

THE REASONS

Some of the relevant facts are (we think) these. First, what Ovid tells us: (1) the reasons are "a poem" (*carmen*), which he elsewhere clearly indicates is the *Ars Amatoria*, and "a mistake" (*error*); (2) the "mistake" was nothing criminal, but involved "seeing" something; (3) people knew what the "mistake" was, but Ovid refuses to name it in his poetry; (4) after a private meeting with him, Augustus banished the poet to Tomis, a small town on the Black Sea (Latin *Pontus*),⁵⁵ without trial or decree of the senate; (5) his exile was technically a *relegatio* (banishment), which involved leaving Rome but without loss of property or citizenship; (6) the *Ars Amatoria* was removed from the three public libraries in Rome, but not burned (which would require a decree of the senate). From other sources, we know that Augustus banished his granddaughter Julia the Younger (call her "J2") for adultery at or around the time Ovid was banished (AD 8); he had banished his daughter, Julia the Elder (call her "J1," J2's mother),⁵⁶ for adultery about ten years earlier (2 BC)—around the time *Ars* 1–2 was published (*Ars* 3 and *Remedia* were probably published about four years later). This tantalizing scenario has given rise to any number of speculations about the "mistake," theories that could be characterized loosely as political intrigue, sexual scandal, and "other."

The most vigorous and eloquent modern proponent of the "political intrigue" theory is Peter Green.⁵⁷ Augustus's unusual longevity meant that he outlived almost all of his desired heirs;⁵⁸ the question of who would be his successor, either after his natural death or through the expediting of that process, did in fact give rise to various plots and machinations, according to the ancient historians. Green starts from the assumption that what Ovid says about the reasons for his exile is basically true (an assumption I shall examine below), then searches for a solution that fits the "clues" (1982b:212–13):

We are looking, to recapitulate, for an indiscretion that took place in high society, was unpremeditated but part of a complex and dangerous situation, was not *per se* indictable yet could have brought Ovid a death sentence (not, perhaps, quite so paradoxical a claim as might at first sight appear to be the case), brought Ovid no profit, and in fact consisted simply of his having witnessed—perhaps without full understanding at the time—an offense committed by others. In particular he stresses the fact that he had taken no treasonable action against Augustus, that he was innocent of murder or forgery. Had he reported the incident he might have remained a free man, but he was afraid to do so. He was also, he admits, naïve and gullible. Further, his error wounded Augustus deeply and was, indeed, a direct offense against him.

He situates Ovid's mistake amid the "deadly factional struggle" between the "Julians" (Scribonia, Julia, and their descendants/adherents) and the "Claudians" (Livia, Tiberius, and their descendants/adherents); he sees the sexual promiscuity of the two Julias, and the alleged immorality of the *Ars Amatoria*, as a smokescreen. He speculates that Ovid "saw" or otherwise had knowledge of a Julian coup against Augustus, and that by refusing to name names when interrogated the poet incurred the emperor's lasting displeasure.

But the "sexual scandal" theory has an equally vigorous advocate in George Goold. Goold demolishes the idea that Ovid was in possession of some secret threatening to Augustus: "Certainly, to banish the most articulate of living Romans to a place beyond instant control and from which he could, and did, send a spate of missives to Rome was no way to keep his mouth shut" (1983:96). He sensibly argues that the two charges against Ovid were probably related: "If, possessing absolute power, you are minded to inflict summary punishment on a man who has mortally offended you, it hardly makes sense to charge him, for example, with (a) running away with your wife and (b) poisoning your cat ten years earlier" (103). He suggests that the "mistake" most likely involved Ovid's abetting J2's adultery in some way, such as offering his house for her affair. J2's lover, Junius Silanus, got off relatively light; he went into voluntary exile,

but was allowed to return when Tiberius became emperor in AD 14. Ovid was not so lucky: "Augustus's special animosity against Ovid is adequately explained by the latter's immoral verse and the pander's role he played, and it may well have been kept alive by his perpetual whining, whereas Silanus, for all his adultery, had the sense to accept exile and keep quiet" (106). We should also note that adultery by the emperor's direct female descendants did more than set a bad moral example: to a man obsessed with ensuring the succession of his own bloodline, J2's affair—negating the legitimacy of her children, who otherwise could have been her grandfather's successors—had serious political consequences. If Ovid had in some way colluded in this affair, then the *carmen* that teaches adultery (and yes, let us be honest, that is what it does) and the *error* of encouraging a politically charged adultery would dovetail quite nicely.

Yet somehow the idea of the fifty-year-old Ovid, whose life was poetry, being a major player in either a political intrigue or a sexual scandal among the super-elite just does not quite fit. We must also take seriously the argument of Peter Knox (2004) that the motivating force behind Ovid's exile was not Augustus, but his stepson Tiberius. Augustus displayed both taste—witness his patronage of "Augustan poets" like Horace and Virgil—and tolerance: when Tiberius reported to him a slander by one Aemilius Aelianus, Augustus responded, "[Don't] take it too much to heart if anyone speaks ill of me; let us be satisfied if no one can *do* ill to us."⁵⁹ Tiberius, it seems, had neither. Not a single major poet flourished during his reign, and he famously killed or forced suicide on many writers whom he perceived as critical of him. Knox argues that, in the last decade of Augustus's reign (he died in AD 14 at the age of 77), Tiberius's influence was increasingly felt; this could explain why the punishment for the *Ars* occurred so long after its initial publication. Most tellingly for our purposes, in AD 8, a historian named Titus Labienus, who had praised the younger Cato (the paradigmatic defender of the Republic against Julius Caesar during the civil war that brought Caesar to power in 49–46 BC), was forced to commit suicide; in the same year, an orator named Cassius Severus, who admired Labienus and was known for his

sardonic wit, was exiled for libel of Augustus. Ironically, the *Ars* may well have been a key factor in Ovid's punishment, but not for the reasons usually supposed: the poet would have run afoul of Tiberius with his lavish praise of Gaius as the emperor's heir apparent (*Ars* 1.177–228). In that hostile climate, any blunder could have precipitated the punishment.⁶⁰

THE REALITY

Amid all this speculation, we should be clear about one thing: Ovid makes nothing clear, if by “makes clear” we mean that his words have any necessary connection to objective truth. The goal of rhetoric is to persuade, not to inform. Ovid's rhetorical training would have included, among others, these time-honored strategies: (1) package lies in as much truth as possible, (2) engage sympathy with a moving story, (3) divert attention with an entertaining display, and (4) use sex.⁶¹ One of Ovid's most successful ploys is to argue that the *Ars Amatoria* should not be singled out for censure, since *all* of life and literature is saturated with sex—a topic he has no trouble expounding on for hundreds of lines. Scholars have taken him at his word about the “poem and mistake” because they have nothing else to go on, and because they assume that he “could not have dared to publish [certain things] if they were untrue.”⁶² But elegiac poets, and Ovid especially, dare to publish all sorts of things about “their” lives and loves that are of dubious veracity, to say the least; the personae and situations they create suit the demands of a good story, not those of an accurate autobiography. What if Ovid's goal was not, in fact, to secure his recall, but to capitalize on his exile as an opportunity to pioneer a new and exciting poetic genre, one starring himself as a martyr and hero surpassing all others?⁶³

What is also clear is that, in many demonstrable respects, his account of his exile is pure fiction.⁶⁴ Even a superficial reading suggests this: for instance, his long, elegant poem describing the violent storm pitching the ship he's on (*Tristia* 1.2) is self-refuting.⁶⁵ The “Scythian” landscape is a frozen wasteland where wine must be served in chunks; the enemy arrows sticking out of the roof have turned his house into a sort of hedgehog; when he finally learned the native tongue and composed a long

encomium of Augustus in Getic (!), the hirsute natives (who resemble bears more than humans) came to the poetry reading with quivers full of poisoned arrows; and so on. In fact, Tomis has (and had) a climate fairly similar to that of Central Italy, and in Ovid's day the Greek culture there was thriving.⁶⁶ When the poet Catullus served in a governor's retinue not far from there, his complaint was of insufficient opportunities to extort money from the natives, not of skin-clad barbarian hordes with poisoned arrows threatening him day and night. The fact that Ovid's copious letters survive at all indicates that the mail service was decent, and his protestations of failing powers are so artfully executed (as has been increasingly recognized in recent years) that he must have had plenty of leisure to refine them. Ovid may have been “exiled” from New York City, but it was hardly to Siberia.

In addition to the obvious hyperbole and literary construction of his poetry, suspicions are raised by the near absence of references to Ovid's exile in the ancient historical record. Tacitus (ca. AD 56–118), a historian cynically alert to the harsh exercise of power by Augustus and other emperors, could be expected to make at least a passing reference to the exile of Rome's leading poet, but he does not; Suetonius, whose life of Augustus refers openly to the emperor's exile of members of his own family, is similarly silent about Ovid. Writing several decades after Ovid's death, the court poet Statius (AD 48–96) in a wedding song says that on such an occasion “Ovid wouldn't have been sad [*tristis*, playing on his title *Tristia*] even in Tomis” (*Silvae* [Material] 1.2.254–55); but this would be equally applicable whether Ovid's setting were factual or fictional.

The other ancient reference to Ovid's time in Tomis, however, indicates that one of the greatest scholars of the ancient world believed that Ovid did indeed live his final days there. The immensely learned natural historian Pliny the Elder (AD 23–79), who was born just six years after Ovid's death, refers to the eleven species of fish named in a poem he believed to be by Ovid, “On Fishing” (*Halieutica*): “We'll add to these [species previously named] the animals mentioned by Ovid, which are found in no one else, but perhaps are native to the Black Sea, where he began that work in his final days: the sea-ox, [etc.]” (*Natural History*

32.152). Most modern scholars agree that the *Halieutica* was not by Ovid,⁶⁷ but that is irrelevant here.⁶⁸ Pliny clearly believed that Ovid died in Tomis, and though many of the natural phenomena he describes may seem incredible or ridiculous to us, the man was no fool. The “argument from silence” cuts both ways; to my mind, it beggars belief that, if one of Rome’s greatest poets had truly written his decade-worth of “exile poetry” from his armchair in the City or an Italian villa somewhere, not a single ancient source would have remarked on that fact.⁶⁹

On the other hand, when Ovid insists that his “mistake” involved inadvertently “seeing” something, I think we should take this with more than a grain of salt. He compares himself to Actaeon, a hunter who accidentally came upon the goddess Diana bathing in a woodland pool and was punished by being turned into a deer and massacred by his own dogs:

Why did I see that—something? Why did I make my eyes guilty?
 Why was that fault made known to me, all unawares?
 Actaeon didn’t mean to see Diana naked;
 that didn’t make him a prey for his dogs any less.
 Yes, among the gods even Fortune must be atoned for;
 wounded divinity shows no mercy to Chance. (*Tr.* 2.103–8)

The reason I am inclined to think Ovid is fibbing here is this: *no one can justly be punished for inadvertently seeing something*.⁷⁰ Ovid spells this out in the Actaeon episode in the *Metamorphoses* (a poem at least tweaked from exile) in a way that sounds just like his own self-justification in the exile poetry: “If you investigate carefully, you’ll find a reproach to Fortune in him, not a crime [*scelus*]; for what crime was there in a mistake [*error*]?” (*Met.* 3.141–42). It follows either that Ovid was *unjustly* punished (which he would have us believe), or that his punishment did *not* arise from him just seeing something. If what Ovid “saw” were dangerous or embarrassing information that needed to be kept under wraps, then he would have been killed or forced to commit suicide, not sent, pen in hand, somewhere beyond the emperor’s control. But suppose, instead, that Ovid wanted to engage our sympathy and divert our attention.

What better way could he have chosen than to identify himself with Actaeon, punished by a cruel divinity for an involuntary mistake? In one stroke, he turns himself into the paradigm of an innocent sufferer and us readers into sleuths and voyeurs (WHAT DID HE SEE???).⁷¹ By cloaking the reason for his exile in tantalizing mystery, he tempts us irresistibly to search for clues—and his very insistence on the need for secrecy testifies implicitly to the authoritarianism and injustice of the Augustan regime.⁷²

Many arguments asserting Ovid’s truthfulness tend to fall apart when we recognize that his “plea for recall” is actually a thinly veiled act of defiance. Thibault remarks that “Ovid estimated the delicacy of his situation well enough to employ a politic and psychologically sound appeal, through slavish protestations of his guilt, to the mercy of the despot who had personally condemned him” (1964:2). This very formulation in fact reveals that Ovid’s strategy is the opposite of “politic and psychologically sound”: instead, he has succeeded magnificently in casting Augustus as a capricious despot whose subjects must grovel slavishly, even when their “offenses” really are benign (as anyone with a sense of humor, proportion, and literary acumen could easily see!). By constantly harping on how he must remain silent about his “mistake” so as not to cause Augustus pain, Ovid aggravates the wound—a variation on the rhetorical device of *praeteritio* (passing by), through which one underscores something by saying one won’t mention it.⁷³

The hypothesis that Ovid’s aim was to needle the emperor rather than to mollify him, and at the same time to exonerate and exalt himself, helps to make sense of many puzzling facts. Most obviously, it would explain why the exile poetry, for all its ostensible flattery of that most wise and beneficent prince, consistently makes Ovid look as good and Augustus as bad as possible.⁷⁴ *Tristia* 2 alone states or implies that (1) Augustus did not in fact read the poems (and so his condemnation is completely unfair); (2) if he had read them, he would have realized that they are meant to be playful and are actually no more offensive than anything else (as anyone with literary knowledge and taste would recognize); (3) Ovid has strong support and popularity among educated people (so the only

ones turning against him are doing so to kowtow to a tyrant); (4) Ovid himself and his house have always been blameless and virtuous (unlike a certain adultery-ridden family); and (5) he alone is being punished as an old man for a peccadillo of his youth (a blatant act of caprice and inclemency).⁷⁵ In teaching Augustus both how literature should be read and how a ruler should behave, *Tristia* 2 is, in many ways, as didactic as the “real” didactic poems in this volume, with all that that implies about the power dynamics of teacher and student.⁷⁶ This does not exactly constitute contrition. The hybrid apology, “I’m sorry if I offended you” (“What I did was trivial and you’re a loser for blowing it out of proportion”), is effective approximately zero percent of the time. I have to think that Ovid—and Augustus, one of the shrewdest politicians in history—was smart enough to realize this.

THE REWARDS

Whatever the truth behind Ovid’s exile may be, his poetry adopts it seamlessly into a coherent and compelling narrative of his life.⁷⁷ Though the *Remedia* was probably published in AD 2, six years before Ovid’s exile, its rhetoric seems uncannily prescient:

For recently certain people have criticized my books;
 according to their strict standard, my Muse is a slut.
 But as long as I’m this charming, and sung all over the world,
 the one or two who want to can pick at my work! (*Rem.* 361–64)

Envy strikes peaks: winds blow through the highest points;
 thunderbolts sent by Jupiter’s hand strike peaks. (*Rem.* 369–70)

If my Muse is appropriate for frivolous material,
 I’ve won my case—she’s being tried on false charges.
 Devouring Envy, eat your heart out! I’ve got a great name now—
 and greater, if its feet just keep the same path. (*Rem.* 387–90)

Jupiter’s thunderbolt happens to be Ovid’s primary metaphor for the edict sending him into exile. Sergio Casali suggests that “Ovid wrote the

Ars, and then he devoted the rest of his poetic career, starting from the sequel itself of the *Ars*, the *Remedia*, . . . to constructing that poem as a poem that excited Augustus’ anger” (2006:220). The epic struggles of the elegiac hero⁷⁸—himself—offer limitless opportunities for the play of wit and shuffling of genres that contribute to his unique charm.⁷⁹ The inefficacy of the *Remedia* proved that the *Ars* had worked too well; similarly, the exile poetry shows the poet’s repeated attempts to employ the *Remedia*’s strategies for “unlearning to love” his mistress Rome, all in vain.⁸⁰ As in his hilariously lugubrious poem on his own sexual impotence (*Amores* 3.7), Ovid succeeds through failure.⁸¹

Perhaps most importantly, the isolation and loneliness he describes connect him to the lived experience not merely of actual exiles, but (at some times, anyway) of every thinking person. Surrounded by Latin-less barbarians, he has “unlearned how to speak”; his response is to pour out volumes of poetry, to cling ever more desperately to the Muses who got him into this mess and with whom he has a love-hate relationship as tempestuous as the most passionate elegiac affair.⁸² His exile poetry, as Gareth Williams notes, “is without parallel in classical Roman literature as a meditation on the state of exile itself” (2002a:338). The exile’s poverty opens up a treasure trove of ironic possibilities: the paradoxes of speechless eloquence, of isolation that unites him with all fellow sufferers, of a body chained to a wasteland while the mind soars beyond the limits of the known world. I have argued that the Jesuit priest and Christian poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, enduring near the end of his life a spiritual “exile” in Ireland from his native England, found Ovid’s late works a source of inspiration and solace in the darkness of his own “winter world” (Hejduk 2010). I believe both poets recognized that exile, fundamentally, is not an accident of geography, but a characteristic of the human condition.

As Aristotle famously remarked, “Poetry is something both more philosophical and more serious than history, for while history deals with the particular, poetry deals with the universal.”⁸³ Exile gives Ovid’s poetry a universal appeal even more compelling than that of his already universal theme of love. Jo-Marie Claassen expresses beautifully the importance of this timeless reach, to which the facts of the case are largely irrelevant:

Whether he was exiled (and why) or not is as immaterial to his poetic purpose as it should be to our purpose as readers of his poetry. What Ovid's poetry of exile conveys, the anguish of loss and the alienation felt by all exiles everywhere and in every era, is even more relevant in the twentieth century with its *final solutions*, its *ethnic cleansings*, its *total onslaughts* and its aeronautical mobility than ever it was in an era of ships and swords and the emperor's displeasure. (1994:110)

If Ovid's purpose was to persuade Augustus to let him return, then, obviously, he failed. But if his purpose was to persuade his readers that he was the innocent victim of a despot, a poetic genius whose alienation led to a triumph of art and the human spirit, then he succeeded. His exile poetry combines the allure of a mystery (what *was* that "mistake"?) with the excitement of an epic (how will the suffering hero overcome the wrathful god's persecution?) with the poignancy of a love story (will boy Ovid ever be reunited with girl Rome?), animated by a sly wit and verbal dexterity unequalled before or since. His courtship may not have won the emperor, but it did win everyone else.

NOTES

1. So vast is the scholarship on Ovid that I can give only a taste of it in this introduction. For those who want to delve deeper, Watson 2002 (on *Ars* and *Remedia*), Gibson 2009 (on *Ars*), Boyd 2009 (on *Remedia*), and Claassen 2009 (on *Tristia*) provide useful overviews and bibliographies. Gibson et al. 2006 (and especially its introductory essay, Green 2006) is a must-read for anyone interested in the *Ars* and *Remedia*. For detailed commentaries on individual books, see "Sources" under "Some Notes on the Notes and the Translation." On the reception of Ovid—after Virgil, probably the most influential of all Latin poets (sorry, Horace!)—the essays in Knox 2009 (McNelis 2009, Fyler 2009, James 2009, Braden 2009, Ziolkowski 2009, and Martin 2009) and Ingleheart 2011 are a good starting place; see also the timeline in Lively 2006:338–40.

2. See on 1.17 "tutor of Love" for a fuller explanation of the term. The artificiality of the *praeceptor's* persona has long been recognized as one of the poem's chief sources of humor (see, e.g., Durling 1958). Wright 1984:1 observes that "the poem is finally, we may conclude, as much about the narrator and his deceptions as it is about the lovers and their deceptions." On the *lena* (procuress) as alter ego of the *praeceptor* and other male elegiac narrators, see Myers 1996.

3. See Kennedy 2000:165–67 on the irony of love as a rational choice that can turn into an irresistible force when one "plays the lover" too well; Miller 1993:232 on the "increasing ironization of the teacher *qua* teacher"; and Myerowitz 1985:198n78 on passages that point up the "*praeceptor's* failure at total artistic control." James 2008:138 points out that, in addition to the many obvious failings of the *praeceptor*, his "imaginary audiences . . . are not merely improbable but impossible." Although the occasional admission of fallibility can be an effective didactic strategy that enhances rather than diminishes the teacher's authority (Volk 2002:165), Watson 2007 argues persuasively that Ovid's *praeceptor* in general meets the many criteria for the stock comic character of the "bogus teacher," contesting Volk's claim that "both teacher and students of the *Ars amatoria* are unequivocally successful" (2002:186). Clearly, modern scholars are not entirely in agreement, and one of the reasons to read these poems is to decide for yourself.

4. The dates of composition and the relationship of *Ars* 3 and *Remedia* both to one another and to *Ars* 1–2 are controversial; see Murgia 1986a and 1986b; Anderson 1990; Gibson 2000 and 2003:37–43; Nickbakht 2005; Miller 2006 (and below, "Ovid's Works"). But whatever Ovid's original plan may have been, the poems as they stand form such a coherent narrative (in my opinion) that it makes sense to treat them as such. On the "failure" of the *Remedia*, see Davisson 1996; Brunelle 2000–2001; Sharrock 2002:160–61; Fulkerson 2004; Hardie 2006; Rosati 2006. On different treatments of "love as illness" by poets and philosophers, see Caston 2006.

5. Myerowitz 1985:25: "We may admire the tragic intensity of Virgil's Dido, the passionate abandon of Catullus, the wholeness of the elegists' exclusive devotion, but it is Ovid's lover with the voice of his mean-spirited *praeceptor*, like the voice in our head forever directing us to choose one role or another, that must remind us most of our own secret selves."

6. Downing 1990 argues that the *praeceptor*—especially in book 3, addressed to women (books 1 and 2 are addressed to men)—functions as a sort of "anti-Pygmalion," turning living women into lifeless works of art. His striking phrase "artefaction of the self" (238) occurs to me sometimes as I peruse magazine covers in the grocery store checkout line (e.g., "The Making of Kim Kardashian"). On the crafting of women to conform to male desires in the *Ars* and *Remedia*, see James 2003a; Gardner 2008; Merriam 2011.

7. Rosati 2006:157: "Ovid was well aware that prohibition sharpens desire (*quod licet, ingratum est; quod non licet, acrius urit*, 'what is allowed is unwelcome; what is forbidden burns more fiercely,' *Am.* 2.19.3); and he also knew that proclaiming oneself a victim of censorship is the most effective tool of self-promotion that an artist can possess (anticipating the advertising techniques of modern mass media)." In the exile poetry, Ovid tells us that the *Ars* was banned from Rome's public libraries.

8. In 18 BC, Augustus had enacted the “Julian Law about the orders (socioeconomic classes) marrying” (*lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus*), which prescribed ages between which citizens were expected to marry, and the “Julian Law about restraining adultery” (*lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis*), which made adultery a criminal offense. The laws were, on the whole, unpopular and unsuccessful. See Treggiari 1991:277–98; Galinsky 1996:128–40; McGinn 1998. On the disingenuousness of Ovid’s claims not to be undermining Augustus’s moral reforms, see Davis 1995.

9. See Fulkerson 2012:339 on Ovid’s presentation of “an extremely irrational Augustus, and a wholly victimized poet.”

10. Discussing Ovid’s reception in the Middle Ages, Dimmick 2002:264 observes, “It is in this powerfully ambivalent role of the *auctor* [author] at odds with *auctoritas* [authority], just as much as (and indeed inseparable from) his expertise on mythology and sexuality, that he is most precious to the poets.” Ovid’s persona in the exile poetry is sometimes referred to as the *relegatus* (banished man), though not so universally as the *praeceptor* in the erotodidactic (“teaching love”) works, partly because the distinctness of the *relegatus* from “Ovid himself” is not quite so obvious. In addition to the Suffering Artist, the *relegatus* figures himself as a dead man, an *exclusus amator* (locked-out lover) of Rome, an epic hero persecuted by a wrathful god, and various other sorts of victim (see Nagle 1980:19–70 and Claassen 1999b on the “vocabulary of exile”).

11. For a fuller chronology and a parallel list of important events in Roman history and literature, see the helpful table in Knox 2009:xvii–xviii.

12. On this complex process of “publication,” see Starr 1987; Holzberg 2002:27–31.

13. I’ve provided just a bit of bibliography on these “extra” authors; the task of providing it for everyone above was too daunting for my meager powers.

14. See Lev Kenaan 2008. Dillon 1994 stresses the importance of the (to us) less famous *Alcibiades* in the formation of a “Platonist *Ars Amatoria*.”

15. See Miller 1983; Sharrock 1994a, esp. 198–204, 253–56, and 294–95; Acosta-Hughes 2009.

16. On Ovid’s debt to Cicero and forensic oratory in general, see Ingleheart 2010:12–21.

17. See Dyson 2007; Hejduk 2008; Skinner 2011.

18. See Miller 2007.

19. See Barchiesi 2001b; Ingleheart 2010:8–10.

20. See Toohey 1996:146–74.

21. For this interpretation and a nuanced discussion of the episode, see Labate 2006.

22. See Davis 2006:105–8 on the three passages (*Ars* 2.169–74, 2.545–54, and 3.659–66) in which the *praeceptor* specifically recalls “his” experiences in the *Amores*.

23. Hollis 1977:58. Wilkinson 1955:143 laments, “how could the author of the brilliant monologue at the races in *Amores* III, 2 bring himself to introduce a garbled summary in didactic form at *Ars* I, 135–62?” Otis 1970:18 characterizes the *Ars* as a “warmed-up and inferior version of the *Amores*.”

24. Modern scholars tend to be more willing to give Ovid (the actual person) credit for knowing what he’s doing. See Downing 1993:39: “The lifeless and mechanical is not *supposed* to be preferred to the natural and spontaneous, and if Ovid has instilled this attitude in his reader, then he has succeeded in the *Ars* passage, that is, succeeded in showing the failure of the system even in its success”; Dalzell 1996:141: “The comedy in the *Ars* lies in the very lack of liveliness, in the banal, matter-of-fact way of dealing with something which the poet and the reader both know cannot be reduced to a formula”; Greene 1998:113: “In refusing to perpetuate the illusions and self-deceptions that he believed were so much a part of love and love poetry, Ovid’s poems reflect a deep commitment to the moral responsibility of the poet to show the cruelty and inhumanity perpetrated in the name of culture, in the name of *amor*”; James 2003b:157: “Ovid does not add hypocrisy, exploitation, and pretense to Roman love elegy—he lays them bare.” Ironic and allusive writers can be particularly prone to misreading, however: as Sharrock 2012:77 rightly notes, “Ovid’s entanglement with the poetic tradition and exposure of its potential for shallowness forms part of his poetic-erotic program in the elegiac works—which is that you never quite know how to take it.”

25. Watson 1983:120 observes how the brief mythological exempla in the *Ars* generally “fail to fulfill their ostensible, corroborative function, either because the myths themselves are not taken seriously, or because they are essentially inappropriate to the context.” On continuities between Ovid’s amatory and exilic works in their (ab)use of mythological exempla, see Davisson 1993; on Ovid’s use of myth in general, see Graf 2002.

26. Sharrock 1994a:87–195 (quotation from p. 128).

27. That is, references to other texts (“intertextuality”) and coded discussion about the nature of poetry (“metapoetic subtext”). It would be impossible to give a full account of Ovidian intertextuality in the limited space of the present book, but those who wish for a taste of that kind of scholarship might take a look at Hinds 1998; Myers 1999:194–95 (for an overview); Kennedy 2006; Miller 2006; Casali 2009.

28. On resonances of the Cretan Labyrinth in everything from an ancient epic to a modern blockbuster, see Hejduk 2011b.

29. Anne Sexton’s (1928–74) brilliant poem “To a Friend Whose Work Has Come to Triumph” is my favorite modern reflection on the myth of Icarus, especially the ending:

Feel the fire at his neck and see how casually
he glances up and is caught, wondrously tunneling

into that hot eye. Who cares that he fell back to the sea?
See him acclaiming the sun and come plunging down
while his sensible daddy goes straight into town.

30. Bowditch 2005:283 notes that “Procris, inscribed as a reader within the poem, becomes emblematic of a reader’s experience of subjectivity as effected by the actual process of reading.”

31. An unsympathetic critic might object that the *rude opus* here refers more to visual than to verbal art. But since Ovid frequently uses visual art as a *mise en abyme* for his poetry—for instance, Arachne’s tapestry (*Met.* 6.103–28) as a *Metamorphoses* in miniature—it’s only fair that I should get to substitute a verbal image for a visual one. *Mise en abyme* (French for “placement in the abyss”), a trendy but useful term for “a work of art depicted within a larger work of art and reflecting on the ‘framing’ work,” derives from the heraldic practice of depicting a coat-of-arms shield at the center of a larger shield (*abyme* is the technical term for a shield’s center). French author André Gide (1869–1951) brought the term into use in literary theory.

32. For starters, see Helzle 1988; Keith 1994; Farrell 1999; Fear 2000; Hinds 2006.

33. As Solodow 1977:127 felicitously observes, “Venus is only nominally the subject of a poem that might instead of ‘The Art of Love’ be more fitly entitled ‘The Love of Art.’”

34. On the totalizing impulse of love elegy, Conte 1989:445 remarks, “the greater the closure of the world represented, the greater the effort language must make to reduce to its model all that would remain excluded from it, recuperating and converting it any way it can.” The *Ars* takes this “converting” process to its logical, if absurd, extreme.

35. See Kennedy 1993:58–63.

36. See Volk 2002:173–88 on “poetic” and “mimetic simultaneity,” as the writing of the poem coincides with the progress of the lover’s affair.

37. See Cahoon 1988; McKeown 1995; Gale 1997.

38. See Leach 1964.

39. See Murgatroyd 1995.

40. See Murgatroyd 1984; Green 1996.

41. See Ahern 1990.

42. Though no single author or work stands out as a clear model eligible for inclusion in “Myth and Lit 101,” the conventions and stock characters of comedy have a tremendous influence on Roman elegy in general and the *Ars Amatoria* in particular. See McKeown 1979; Currie 1981; Fantham 1989; Ingleheart 2008; James 2012.

43. Suetonius (Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus, ca. AD 70–130), *Life of Divine Augustus* 28. Much of our knowledge of the Roman emperors comes from his biographies.

44. On the transformative ideological implications of Augustus’s building program, see Zanker 1988; Galinsky 1996; Favro 1996; Pollini 2012. Boyle 2003 helpfully collects (with translation and commentary) all of Ovid’s references to Roman monuments.

45. Welch 2012:103 insightfully detects a quasi-erotic “rivalry”: “Indeed so frequent is mention of the monuments, in Propertius and Ovid at least, that one might call Rome the poet’s true beloved, whose affections are also sought by the poet’s supreme rival—the Princeps himself. At no other time in ancient Roman history was the city so lavishly wooed as it was during Augustus’ reign.” Welch 2005 provides an extended analysis of Propertius’s elegiac appropriation of the Roman cityscape, an important model for Ovid. See also Armstrong 2005:115–39.

46. On Augustus as Jupiter, see Mader 1991:145–48, esp. n. 18.

47. On the simultaneously flattering and ironic implications of this pun on Augustus in the context of Jupiter’s temple (one of the many religious monuments the emperor had restored), see Edwards 1996:24–25; Miller 2004:230–31.

48. On the delicate problem of Livia as Juno, who is generally portrayed as jealous and shrewish in Augustan literature, see Johnson 1997; Barchiesi 2006.

49. See Gibson 1999:37 on *Tristia* 2 as an elaborate demonstration that “it is not possible for Augustus to control interpretation.”

50. On the importance of Venus and Mars in “The Mythical Foundations of the New Rome,” see Zanker 1988:195–201.

51. See Miller 1997:386–87; Richlin 1992:156–58.

52. Sharrock 1994b:121–22 sees in Vulcan and Venus possible shades of Augustus and his daughter Julia: like Julia, Venus departs to an island after the discovery of her adultery (see the next section of this chapter).

53. See Kellum 1997.

54. Modern scholars have, alas, hardly fared better in settling anything definitively; see, e.g., Claassen 1994; Ezquerro 2010.

55. Tomis is “usually identified with Constanza, a Milesian Greek settlement on a small Pontic peninsula. Its hinterland is the Dobroudja, a flat stretch of coastal Romania bounded on the west and north by the coils of the Danube, and on the south-east by the Black Sea itself” (Claassen 1999a:29).

56. Before settling down with Livia, Augustus had a rather checkered history with women—not uncommon in a society where marriages were often determined by political convenience. Reading between the lines of Suetonius’s straightforward summary of Augustus’s “love life,” we can imagine why adultery in such an environment would be common: “In his youth he was betrothed to the daughter of Publius Servilius Isauricus, but when he became reconciled with Antony after their first quarrel, and their troops begged that the rivals be further united by some tie of kinship, he took to wife Antony’s stepdaughter Claudia [43 BC], daughter of Fulvia by Publius Clodius, although she was barely of marriageable age; but

because of a falling out with his mother-in-law Fulvia, he divorced her before they had begun to live together. Shortly after that he married Scribonia [40 BC], who had been wedded before to two ex-consuls, and was a mother by one of them. He divorced her also, 'unable to put up with her shrewish disposition,' as he himself writes, and at once took Livia Drusilla from her husband Tiberius Nero [38 BC], although she was with child [with Drusus, brother of Tiberius] at the time; and he loved and esteemed her to the end without a rival" (*Augustus* 62; translation by Rolfe 1914). His daughter Julia by Scribonia was his only biological child.

57. Green 1982b expands on the basic thesis of Sir Ronald Syme (from the chapter "The Error of Caesar Augustus" in Syme 1978), the great historian whose writings channel the acerbic spirit of the Roman historian Tacitus (ca. AD 56–118). A sample of Syme's reasoning and rhetoric: "Was it a matter of politics or of morals? The political aspect has been firmly discounted in some standard manuals. A false dichotomy. The two things are not easily dis severed, immoral conduct being normally alleged to disguise a political offence—or to aggravate it" (1978:219).

58. These included his sister's son Marcellus (d. 23 BC), his henchman and son-in-law Agrippa (d. 12 BC), and his daughter's sons Lucius (d. AD 2) and Gaius (d. AD 4). Agrippa Postumus, J2's brother, was banished to an island in AD 7, allegedly for his bad character.

59. Suetonius, *Augustus* 51.3.

60. During the reign of Tiberius himself, in AD 21, one Clutorius Priscus was killed for a "poem and mistake": he composed and recited a premature eulogy of Tiberius's mortally ill son Drusus, and when the boy (unfortunately, from Priscus's point of view) unexpectedly recovered, the senate voted and carried out the death penalty—not expressly with the emperor's consent, but anticipating his wishes (Knox 2004:11).

61. To readers of Cicero's *Pro Caelio* (Defense of Caelius), these strategies will seem eerily familiar (see Hejduk 2008 for a translation and bibliography). On rhetoric in Ovid's poetry, see Fantham 2009, esp. 42–44; on the formal rhetorical structure of *Tristia* 2, see Ingleheart 2010:15–21, an elaboration of Owen 1924:48–62.

62. Wilkinson 1955:734, quoted by Green 1982b:203.

63. On Ovid's exile poetry as an "invention without parallel," see Claassen 1999a:32–35.

64. On the "unreality" and literary aims of Ovid's exile poetry, see Fitton Brown 1985; Williams 1994:3–49. Rosenmeyer 1997:51 observes that "truth and fiction for Ovid function less as polar opposites and more as points on a continuum."

65. See Ingleheart 2006c on the literary and political implications of this extremely complex poem.

66. Habinek 1998:158: "One would never guess from Ovid's account that Tomis boasted a gymnasium and richly decorated civic buildings, that its epitaphs

give evidence of its inhabitants' familiarity with Euripides, Theocritus, and other Greek authors, or that it served as religious and civic center of the five Greek city-states in the immediate Danube delta."

67. See Knox 2009:212.

68. Many famous authors in antiquity had various spurious works attributed to them—a sort of reverse plagiarism in which a name brand was slapped on imitation goods.

69. There is also something in the argument of Holzberg 2002:26 that "if the theme of the poor banished poet had been a fiction, Ovid could hardly have held his readers' interest with it through nine books of verse containing a total of 6,726 lines."

70. Entertaining the possibility that Ovid may not be entirely truthful does unsettle the certainties of previous generations. Even if we cannot affirm the conclusions, we can still enjoy the rhetoric of passages such as Alexander 1958:321: "Can any one, on reflection, seriously question that Ovid saw, by an evil piece of luck, a goddess in the nude, a great lady, in all likelihood—in practical certainty, rather—a member of the imperial house (*O dea certe!*), and that the princess was, considering Ovid's political and social ties, the younger Julia? What else can justly be inferred from this passage? Who else upon whom Ovid unexpectedly and disastrously looked, could be rationally viewed as a goddess?" (Alexander appears not to have heeded the counsel of Avery 1936:100: "It has been seriously advanced that the poet had accidentally seen the empress Livia bathing. Anyone who can find in verse 105 of the poem, a verse in which Ovid compares his fate to that of Actaeon, any support for such a theory ought, for his own peace of mind, to close his Ovid and confine his reading henceforth to safer and more serious authors, such as Vitruvius or the *Auctor ad Herennium*.")

71. See Ingleheart 2006a and 2006b.

72. Hinds 2007. On Ovid's sly hints that people should read between the lines, see Casali 1997; Barchiesi 1997:15–44 and passim. On his fearful suppression of his friends' names in the *Tristia*, see Oliensis 1998.

73. On Ovid's extremely noisy "silence," see Forbis 1997.

74. Even Ovid's most lavish praise of the emperor can be seen to contain a barb and a challenge. As Mader 1991:149 points out, "Augustus is stylized as the kind of man whose continued animosity towards the exiled poet would be in contradiction to his own nature and publicly advertised persona." Nugent 1990 traces the growing scholarly recognition that *Tristia* 2, rather than being an unsuccessful attempt to secure the poet's recall, is actually a stunningly successful attempt to elevate himself and his art at the emperor's expense—a thesis also eloquently expounded by Johnson 2009:137–44. Green 2005:xxxix–xl gives a succinct list of Ovid's "snide hints" at Augustus's shortcomings, noting that the poet's "fury, contempt, and seething sense of injustice are unmistakable."

75. Such is a (partial) list of Augustus's shortcomings relating directly to Ovid; as Wiedemann 1975:217 notes, the poem also makes "embarrassing references to famine, wars, and unpopular legislation."

76. Davis 1999:802 observes that "Ovid's aim is not so much to flatter and cajole as to instruct and inform the emperor concerning the nature of literature and his own achievements"; Barchiesi 2001b:92 notes that Ovid figures Augustus as a "novice to be initiated into the reading of poets."

77. See Holzberg 2006:68 on the various ways Ovid "plays with the facts of his life and the facts of the background of his poetry."

78. See Claassen 2001:14 on Ovid's creation in the exile poetry of a coherent mythical world in which "Augustus takes the place accorded to the king of the gods in [Ovid's] other works."

79. On Ovid's complex and mischievous manipulation of genre and generic expectations throughout his works, see Harrison 2002; Farrell 2009. In his discussion of Ovid's affinity (but not identity) with satire, Brunelle 2005:154 remarks, "Generically speaking, Ovid is not a citizen of the world; he simply runs a lucrative import business."

80. See Fish 2004. O'Gorman 1997:120–21 discusses the parallel between the lover "unlearning to love" in the *Remedia* and the poet "unlearning to speak" in the exile poetry.

81. See Sharrock 1995; Hallett 2012.

82. See Hejduk 2009:57–58; Williams 2002b:241–42.

83. *Poetics* 9. Like the *praeceptor Amoris*, the great Greek philosopher who attempted to systematize all human knowledge was tutor to a headstrong boy bent on world domination (Alexander the Great, 356–323 BC).

Ars Amatoria

BOOK I

If any man in this nation doesn't know the art of loving,
 he needs to read this song—read, learn, and love!
 Art (and sails and oars) is what makes speedy ships move,
 art drives light chariots: art is the thing to steer Love.
 Autómedon was handy with chariots and pliant reins, 5
 Tiphys was pilot of the Haemónian ship:
 Venus has put me, the artist, in charge of tender Love;

2. **song:** Latin *carmen* (pl. *carmina*) can mean "song," "poem," or "magical incantation"; I have translated it throughout as "song," the only English word that will do for all of these meanings. (The Twelve Tables, Rome's first written law code [449 BC], declares that to sing or compose an evil *carmen* against someone is punishable by death.) The poet likes to contrast his own fail-safe, all-powerful *carmen* with the feckless *carmina* of (other?) enchanters.

3–4. **speedy ships . . . chariots:** The sea voyage and the chariot race are among Ovid's favorite metaphors for poetic composition (and also for sexual conquest), appearing especially at points where his poem is about to change course or enter dangerous waters. On these and other metaphors in the *Ars*, see "Fifty Shades of Metaphor" in the introduction.

5. **Automedon:** Charioteer of Achilles. On common mythological and literary references in Ovid's works, see "Myth and Lit 101" in the introduction.

6. **Haemonian ship:** The Argo. Haemonia = Thessaly (in northern Greece; Haemon was the father of Thessalus), birthplace of Jason.

7. **Love:** Cupid, son of Venus, was usually pictured by the Romans as a young man or an adolescent boy (not the cherubic toddler of Renaissance paintings and modern Valentines).