The *Praeceptor Doloris*: Ovid's Persona in the *Ars* and the Letters from Exile

The impulse to read Ovid's exile poetry as autobiographical unlike his other playful and unquestionably fictive poetry has resulted in inconsistent ways of reading the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*, with some scholars going so far as to suggest the poet was never in exile at all (notably, Hartman (1905) Fitton Brown (1985), Little (1990). While I do not seek to challenge the historicity of Ovid's exile, I wish to further complicate the autobiographical readings of the exile poetry through an examination of Ovid's exile persona. The poet's literary personae in the *Amores* and *Ars Amatoria* are generally considered to be the same, but, if the speaker of *Tristia* 1.1 is to be taken at his word like the *praeceptor amoris* when he claims the *Amores* as his own (*Ars*. 3.329-480), we can connect the personae of perhaps all of the Ovidian corpus as 'written' by the same speaker. This paper will argue that the opening, programmatic poems of the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* contribute to a carefully crafted literary game by the poet in the form of a stylized reflection of the mutability of narrators to match their aesthetic goals; this game, which often takes the form of a repudiation of his earlier love poetry and the amorous *praeceptor,* only succeeds in aligning the exile poetry with that of the *praeceptor*, thus undermining the speaker's overtures of moral and poetic reformation.

Ovid's *praeceptor* identifies himself as the speaker in the *Amores* (*Ars*. 3.329-480), claiming both the *Amores* and *Heroides* as his own. Previously, the *amator* of the *Amores* similarly laid claim to the *Heroides* (*Am*. 2.18). Likewise, the speaker in *Tristia* 1.1 claims the *Amores, Ars, Remedia Amoris, Metamorphoses,* and now *Tristia*, as brothers and himself as their parent (*parentis*, 115), thus recalling the speaker's characterization of his works as the children of an exile (*ortos exule*, 22-3) earlier in the poem, uniting them under his authorship, and

developing them as related in nature. While the speaker in exile claims all these works as his own, he habitually spurs the reader to recognize the divergent natures of his love and exile poetry.

     Epistulae 1.1 frames the work as a sort of *Ars* redux, with the speaker going so far as to recommend that Brutus place the new collection where his *Ars* once stood (1.1.12), but readers familiar with Ovid's literary games and often dubious sincerity were likely conditioned to question the speaker's clear-cut dichotomy of licentious love poetry versus his chastened exile poetry. Although the speaker continues to develop the exile poetry as differing from his mischievous works on love, this straightforward reading is undermined by the fact that the speaker recommends that his friend Brutus slide the *Epistulae* into the very spot on the shelf where the *Ars* once resided (*ExP*. 1.1.11-2) and the assertion that the *Tristia* and his other more problematic works were composed by *idem studium* (the same craftsmanship, *Tr*. 1.1.118). Furthermore, while the speaker of the *Epistulae* suggests there is a vacant space on the shelf because the *Ars* presumably has been removed because of its injurious nature to its readers and author (1.1.14), the speaker of *Tristia* imagines the books on love occupying the same bookcase, albeit with ineffectual attempts at hiding themselves. The failed attempts at hiding their identities implicitly acknowledge the renown of these works and the ineffectualness of their damnation.

     The speaker's assertion in *Tristia* 1.1 that he should be read as having changed his form like his *Metamorphoses* can be seen as a breakdown of the delineation between author and work, or rather a conscientious statement about how a persona is shaped in conjunction with the literary work in which he is found. This conflation of the speaker and his poetic production also is concretized in the physical representation of the book (1.1.1-14), which mirrors the bedraggled nature of the exile himself. Newlands (1997) has suggested that the appearance of the book in *Tr*.

1.1 advertises its difference from the sophisticated narrative personae of the *Amores* and the *Ars*, but we must not lose sight that this is a directive from a speaker who 'shapes' his book to match his poetics in much the same way as reshapes himself. The cover of the book, like a clever speaker, may repackage truth, but the contents within betray its true identity and that of its narrator.

Select Bibliography

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