SHORTER NOTES

OVID, *TRISTIA* 1.2 AND ELEGY TRANSFORMED

ABSTRACT

This article discusses Ovid's allusive engagement in Tr. *1.2.75–80 with his own earlier works, as well as with the works of his elegiac predecessors—Propertius and Tibullus—and of Catullus. It is argued that this suggestive intertextuality may point toward Ovid's re-articulation of his conceptualization of elegy as it is now to be written from exile.*

Keywords: Ovid; *Tristia*; Propertius; Tibullus; Gallus; elegy

In *Tristia* 1.2, Ovid prays to the gods of the sea and the sky to restrain the storm that hinders him on his journey to Tomi, his place of relegation. His exile, he claims, is punishment enough and he need not be battered by tempestuous weather too; Augustus, indeed, intended Ovid's punishment to be one of exile, and the poet needs to be able to reach Tomi for the emperor's will to be carried out (1.2.59–68, 87–94). The complex programmatic relationship of the representation of the storm in Ovid's poem to the storms of epic poetry—notably, in *Aeneid* Books 1, 3 and 5, and in *Odyssey* Book 5, as well as in *Metamorphoses* Book 11—has been discussed at length by scholars, who demonstrate how Ovid casts himself both as a figure worthy of comparison with the heroes of epic and as a poet who continues to be unfazed by the idea of introducing generically weightier material into elegiac verse (cf. *Fast.* 2.3–4).[1] The use, throughout *Tristia* Book 1, of seafaring and the storm as a means of articulating the supposed effects of Ovid's relegation on his poetic talent and the apparent triumph of his *ingenium* has also been treated.[2]

Here, consideration will be given to a passage in which Ovid explains that his reasons for undertaking his voyage are not those that belong to 'a normal journey of the type any Roman might make':[3] however implausible it may seem, he is heading for exile in Sarmatian lands and is obliged to make it to the wild shores of Pontus (*Tr.* 1.2.73–84):

ut mare considat uentisque ferentibus utar,
ut mihi parcatis, num minus exul ero?
non ego diuitias auidus sine fine parandi
latum mutandis mercibus aequor aro,
nec peto, quas quondam petii studiosus, Athenas,
oppida non Asiae, non loca uisa prius.
non ut Alexandri claram delatus ad urbem
delicias uideam, Nile iocose, tuas,

[1] J. Ingleheart, 'Ovid, *Tristia* 1.2: high drama on the high seas', *G&R* 53 (2006), 73–91, at 73–80 (see here for references to more cursory earlier discussions); also of note, though less directly concerned with *Tristia* 1.2, is M.S. Bate, 'Tempestuous poetry: storms in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, *Heroides* and *Tristia*', *Mnemosyne* 57 (2004), 295–310.

[2] L. Morgan, 'On the good ship *ingenium*: *Tristia* 1.10', in R. Hunter and S.P. Oakley, *Latin Literature and its Transmission* (Cambridge, 2016), 245–62.

[3] Ingleheart (n. 1), 83.

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nunc faciles opto uentos: quis credere possit?
Sarmatis est tellus quam mea uela petunt.
obligor ut tangam laeui fera litora Ponti;
quodque sit a patria tam fuga tarda queror.

Ovid observes that, though the weather may settle through the favour of the sea- and sky-gods and he may not perish in the storm (1.2.74 *ut mihi parcatis*), he will none the less be an exile, as the emperor has wished. He is not travelling in pursuit of wealth (1.2.75–6), nor visiting various places—some of which he had seen before—for touristic purposes (1.2.77–8), nor pursuing (erotic) pleasures in Alexandria (1.2.79–80): he is, in fact, doing what he has been told and is heading to Tomi; he is thus justified, he implies, in complaining (1.2.84 *queror*) that his journey into exile is making progress too slowly (1.2.84 *tam fuga tarda*) in the light of the inclement weather.

In the three couplets introduced by negatives (1.2.75 *non*, 1.2.77 *nec*, 1.2.79 *non*), Ovid offers a priamel that not only emphasizes his actual reason for travelling abroad but also introduces a number of elegiac elements that allow him to make a broader point about the nature of his exilic elegy in relation to his earlier amatory verse. In her discussion of these verses, Jennifer Ingleheart has shown that the couplet on the pursuit of wealth (1.2.75–6) looks to a passage from *Amores* 2.10 (33–8):[4]

quaerat auarus opes et, quae lassarit arando,
aequora periuro naufragus ore bibat;
at mihi contingat Veneris languescere motu,
cum moriar, medium soluar et inter opus;
atque aliquis nostro lacrimans in funere dicat
'conueniens uitae mors fuit ista tuae.'

She notes that the image of a greedy man (*Tr.* 1.2.75 *auidus*; *Am.* 2.10.33 *auarus*) coupled with the idea of ploughing the sea (*Tr.* 1.2.76 *aro*; *Am.* 2.10.33 *arando*) is shared between these two elegies and plausibly proposes that Ovid may have had this love-poem in mind when writing his first book of the *Tristia*. She suggests that, in *Tristia* 1.2, the poet may be implying that he still rejects the life—and death—of an avaricious merchant and prefers a life of love in which he may hope to die while making love (cf. *Am.* 2.10.35–8).

Ingleheart further notes that *Tr.* 1.2.77–8, mentioning Athens and Asia Minor, also look to an important elegiac precursor in the form of Propertius 1.6, in which Tullus is told that, for a lover, it is not worth travelling by sea so as to acquaint oneself with learned Athens or the sites of Asia Minor, given the way in which one's beloved would react (Prop. 1.6.13–16):

an mihi sit tanti doctas cognoscere Athenas
atque Asiae ueteres cernere diuitias,
ut mihi deducta faciat conuicia puppi
Cynthia et insanis ora notet manibus . . . ?

Besides the coincidence of places, Ingleheart notes, the epithet *studiosus* (*Tr.* 1.2.77) may evoke the description of Athens by Propertius as learned (1.6.13 *doctas*), and *cernere* (1.6.14) is recalled in the sightseeing suggested at *Tr.* 1.2.77–8. She remarks that Ovid's allusion to Propertius is intended to point to similarities and differences between their circumstances, as Ovid was travelling eastwards thanks to some of his love-poetry (the

[4] Ingleheart (n. 1), 80–4, at 82.

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Ars amatoria that was an alleged cause of his exile), while Propertius, on account of his beloved, refused to travel to those eastern locations with Tullus.[5]

There is no doubt that these allusive gestures toward earlier amatory texts are present in these verses of *Tristia* 1.2, but there seems to be rather more at play as Ovid invokes a wider nexus of elegiac and amatory predecessors in *Tr.* 1.2.75–80 than has hitherto been noted. In the first instance, while the verses on the *auidus* merchant (1.2.75–6) do appear to look to Ovid's own earlier poem, they also borrow their opening words (1.2.75 *non ego diuitias*) from Tibullus' first poem, in which he programmatically eschews ancestral wealth, favouring the simple life of a rural *secessus* instead (Tib. 1.1.41–4):

> non ego diuitias patrum fructusque requiro,
> quos tulit antiquo condita messis auo:
> parua seges satis est; satis est, requiescere lecto
> si licet et solito membra leuare toro.

To this we might add that Tibullus' own use of *diuitias* at 1.1.41 echoes the opening of the selfsame poem (1.1.1 *Diuitias alius fuluo sibi congerat auro* . . .). Ovid, moreover, seems to recall this incipit in the collocation *diuitias auidus* (*Tr.* 1.2.75), where mention of the *auidus* may provide an explanatory gloss on the metrically equivalent 'other' (*alius*) whom Tibullus permits to pursue wealth, while he contents himself with his *paupertas* (1.1.5). It may be instructive to note here that Propertius also uses the word *diuitias* at 1.6.14: Ovid seems to be splicing together, in one couplet, moments from several programmatic poems—Propertius 1.6, Tibullus 1.1, *Amores* 2.10—that speak to similar concerns voiced by these amatory texts and their poets regarding the eschewal of wealth by lovers.[6] In all three of these elegiac precursors of *Tr.* 1.2.75–6, indeed, the poets claim, as we have already seen in *Amores* 2.10 above, that they would rather die as lovers than travel abroad away from their beloveds. Tibullus writes that no amount of gold or of emeralds is of such value that he could bear the thought of any girl weeping at his voyaging (1.1.49–52), and goes on to note that he would have Delia at his side when he dies and is carried out (1.1.59–62). Propertius, meanwhile, remarks that he would rather be buried among lovers (1.6.27–8) than accompany Tullus on his travels abroad in Ionia and Lydia, where the gold-bearing Pactolus flows (1.6.31–2).[7]

It seems, then, that Tibullus and Propertius are the primary points of reference in *Tr.* 1.2.75–6 and 77–8 respectively, though Ovid's own *Amores* are present too. There is a greater difficulty, however, in pinning down a principal referent in the final couplet of the priamel (1.2.79–80). Elements of theme and diction appear to be shared with Catullus' announcement of his departure from Bithynia,[8] when he says that he would haste in flight to the bright cities of Asia Minor (Catull. 46.1–6):

[5] Ingleheart (n. 1), 82–3.

[6] It may even be that Gallus is meant to be evoked in Ovid's verses, if, as has been suggested, *diuitiae* is a Gallan term; see F. Cairns, *Sextus Propertius. The Augustan Elegist* (Cambridge, 2006), 167–8.

[7] On the relationship between Propertius' and Tibullus' early poems, and for an account of the relationship between Tibullus 1.1 and Propertius 1.6, see R.O.A.M. Lyne, 'Propertius and Tibullus: early exchanges', *CQ* 48 (1998), 519–44, at 524–7.

[8] For standard accounts of Catullus 46, see R. Ellis, *A Commentary on Catullus* (Oxford, 1889^2), 164–6; C.J. Fordyce, *Catullus* (Oxford, 1961), 208–10; more recently, see R. Armstrong, 'Journeys and nostalgia in Catullus', *CJ* 109 (2013), 43–71, at 44–5.

Iam uer egelidos refert tepores,
iam caeli furor aequinoctialis
iucundis Zephyri silescit auris.
linquantur Phrygii, Catulle, campi
Nicaeaeque ager uber aestuosae;
ad claras Asiae uolemus urbes.

The descriptor of the *clarae urbes* for which Asia Minor was famous[9] is transferred to the peerless city of Alexandria by Ovid in *Tr.* 1.2.79, while Asia Minor is named in 1.2.78, with a nod to Propertius 1.6, as noted above. Catullus' hendecasyllables speak of good weather, of travel during a happy time in one's life, and of friends, in contrast to Ovid's stormy journey away from his friends and from every source of happiness in Rome: Catullus' is not the sort of voyage that the relegated Ovid is to take.[10]

That being said, in the light of the specificity provided by the mention of Alexandria and the Nile in *Tr.* 1.2.79–80, I have wondered whether we ought to discern a glance to Gallus, who was, after all, the first *praefectus* of Egypt, the principal city of which was Alexandria. (Were more of his poetry to survive, I suspect that there may be echoes of it in these verses.) Alongside Tibullus and Propertius, indeed, Gallus had been invoked by Ovid—from early in his career—as one from among the elegiac cadre to which the poet of the *Amores* also belongs;[11] the collocation of the four elegists occurs in the exile poetry too.[12] In *Tristia* 5.1, for example, we see Ovid, through his wish that he not be numbered among the love-poets, distance himself from the amatory themes that he suggests are partially responsible for his relegation (5.1.15–20):

delicias si quis lasciuaque carmina quaerit,
praemoneo, non est scripta quod ista legat.
aptior huic Gallus blandique Propertius oris,
aptior, ingenium come, Tibullus erit.
atque utinam numero non nos essemus in isto!
ei mihi! cur umquam Musa iocata mea est?

Ovid here names Gallus, Tibullus and Propertius, and claims, tongue-in-cheek, that he now wants to be removed from the canon of elegists at the culmination of which he had proudly placed himself in the final poem of his preceding book (*Tr.* 4.10.51–4 *nec auara Tibullo | tempus amicitiae fata dedere meae. | successor fuit hic tibi, Galle, Propertius illi; | quartus ab his serie temporis ipse fui*).[13] In *Tr.* 1.2.75–80, it may be that we should look for that fourth evasive elegist, Gallus, in the final couplet of the priamel too.

The allusions to Ovid's elegiac predecessors, as well as to Catullus, alongside his glance to *Amores* 2.10, could be thought of as indicating 'the enormous effect' that exile has had on Ovid's elegies: 'once [he] had lamented his erotic circumstances, but now he

[9] Cf. Cic. *QFr.* 1.1.9 *in luce Asiae, in oculis clarissimae prouinciae*; for *clarus* as an epithet of places, see also R.G.M. Nisbet & M. Hubbard, *A Commentary on Horace: Odes Book 1* (Oxford, 1970), 95–6 ad Hor. *Carm.* 1.7.1 *Laudabunt alii claram Rhodon aut Mytilenen*.

[10] The elegist is also not to travel in pursuit of pleasures either, and the (erotic) delights that belong to the Nile (1.2.80 *delicias … tuas*) recall the collocation of *deliciae* with the possessive adjective that is so familiar from Catullus' amatory verse: e.g. 2.1, 3.4, 6.1, 32.2 with the possessive; note also 45.24, 74.2.

[11] Cf. Ov. *Rem. am.* 763–6 and *Ars am.* 3.535–8.

[12] On the politically disgraced Gallus as a figure of interest to the relegated Ovid in his exile poetry, see J.-M. Claassen, 'The exiled Ovid's reception of Gallus', *CJ* 112 (2017), 318–41.

[13] On these verses and Ovid's conceptualization of the succession of the amatory elegists, see J. Ingleheart, 'The literary "successor": Ovidian metapoetry and metaphor', *CQ* 60 (2010), 167–72.

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must mourn his own death' as an exile.[14] There is, however, greater nuance to Ovid's plaint (1.2.84 *queror*). As we have seen, in *Amores* 2.10, Tibullus 1.1 and Propertius 1.6, each of the poets asserts that he would rather die at home with his beloved than abroad as a result of travel for financial or careerist reasons. In Ovid's recollection of these poems at *Tr.* 1.2.75–8, he notes that—like the elegists of the amatory texts cited—he himself does not voyage for such mercenary reasons: the elegiac decorum with regard to travel (*sc*. the poet–lover does not) is thus on the face of it maintained by Ovid. Yet, in emphatically negating each of these allusions to amatory texts, Ovid also seems to be turning his back on the very *materia*—the language and imagery—of his own earlier verse and on that of his amatory predecessors. He undertakes a similar rhetorical move to that made in *Tr.* 5.1.15–20, where he purports to wish no longer to be counted among lovers and love-poets, but, in doing so, reinforces his own status as a *poeta–amator*, or, more precisely perhaps, as an elegist *tout court*. His poetry from exile, he implies in *Tristia* 1.2, is not going to be like the amatory elegy that he and his forebears had previously written, is not to be concerned with the themes proper to love-poetry, but he is to remain an elegist and one who defiantly upholds his credentials as a sometime *tenerorum lusor amorum*.[15] When he remarks, indeed, that his reason for making a journey is that he is heading for the Sarmatian lands, he asks rhetorically, *quis credere possit?* (*Tr.* 1.2.81): who could believe that this is the direction in which Ovid is travelling, and who could believe that his poetry would take such a course? This brief question can usefully be compared to an earlier moment in Ovid's career when his elegy took an unexpected turn and he found himself writing of aetiological matters in the *Fasti*. In the proem to the second book of his calendar, Ovid notes that he is no longer a poet of love and wonders who would have believed that this would be the path his work would take (*Fast.* 2.5–8):[16]

> ipse ego uos habui faciles in amore ministros,
> cum lusit numeris prima iuuenta suis.
> idem sacra cano signataque tempora fastis:
> ecquis ad haec illinc crederet esse uiam?

Though he speaks of his love-poetry as something of the past (2.5–6), it is well known that the amatory is never very far from the surface of the *Fasti*, and the reader of Ovid's exile poetry—as *Tr.* 1.2.75–80 suggests—ought likewise to be unsurprised when on occasion the *poeta–amator* is once again at his exercise.

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[14] Ingleheart (n. 1), 84.
[15] Cf. Ovid's use of this phrase on the epitaph with which he provides himself at *Tr.* 3.3.73–6 in a poem in which he asserts the importance of his love-poetry to his place in posterity, and again in *Tr.* 4.10.1, as he begins his artful autobiography.
[16] Indeed, *Fast.* 2.8 takes on an even more pointed connotation when one reads Ovid's calendrical poem as a piece revised in exile.