Sed sum quam medico notior ipse mihi:
Ovid's Use of Some Conventions in the Exile Epistles

Admirers of Ovid's epistles from exile often emphasize their unusual place in the history of Latin literature. For example, R. J. Dickinson's recent essay states that the poems are uniquely personal and continues: "A clear line can be drawn between tradition and originality, mainly because literary tradition had not sufficiently catered for the expression of such a tragic personal experience." On the other hand, Dickinson adds that the originality of the poems should not be exaggerated, since the exiled poet was clearly influenced by both traditional love elegy and his own Heroides. In what follows I shall argue that Ovid also uses the traditions of exile literature, of consolation, and of geographical description; and that his very use of these traditions, most interestingly in Pont. 2.7 and 1.3, emphasizes his unique situation, his sufferings, and his endurance.

Of these three traditions, consolation, particularly the consolation of the

bereaved, is the oldest and best known. Homer’s Achilles reminds Priam that he is not the only parent to have lost a child (I. 24.602ff.); Euripides’ chorus similarly reminds Admetus that he is not the first to be bereaved (Alc. 892), and Heracles predicts that time will soften the blow (1085). The later Consolatio ad Apollonium first states that χρόνος and λόγος can mitigate the grief of bereavement (102) and then cites Homer, tragedy, and Plato. The Latin tradition of consolation, which has been surveyed by Sister Mary Fern, includes letters of Cicero and others, the Tusculanae, and Seneca’s consolations to Marcia and Polybius.² Although consolation is generally associated with death rather than exile, the fact that Cicero treats the wise man’s response to both in the same work, the Tusculanae, suggests that we may reasonably expect similar consolations to be applied in both situations.

Dickinson presumably refers specifically to exile when he states that a literary tradition was not available to Ovid. Earlier examples of exile literature are, admittedly, scarce. Alcaeus, whose departure was much less mysterious than Ovid’s, does not seem to have influenced the exile epistles, nor are there striking parallels between Cicero’s letters—which Ovid may never have read—and Ovid’s poems.³ However, Cicero does provide us with a brief summary of traditional consolations intended specifically for exiles (Tusc. 5.106–109; cf. 3.81). Important earlier evidence for the exile tradition comes from Teles, a third-century Cynic (quoted in Stobaeus 3.40.8). In addition, several works written within a century or two of Ovid—Seneca’s Consolatio ad Helviam, Musonius’ Ὅτι οὗ κακὸν ἢ φανή, Plutarch’s Περὶ φανῆς, and Favorinus’ Περὶ φανῆς—seem to reflect a common and probably long-established tradition of exile literature.⁴

Finally, Cazzaniga has pointed out correspondences between Ovid’s systematic criticisms of his setting and Menander’s prescriptions for praising a place.⁵ Like the consolatory and exilic topoi, geographical topoi are used effectively to emphasize the individuality and the unparalleled sufferings of the relegatus.

2. Sister Mary Edmond Fern, *The Latin Consolatio as a Literary Type* (St. Louis 1941). Particularly important letters include Cic. Fam. 4.5 and 5.16 and Pliny 5.16. Cf. Lucr. 3.1024–52 and the commentaries.

3. A thorough catalogue of similar passages on exile in Cicero, Ovid, and Seneca appears in Henry Martin Reger Leopold, *Exulum trias* (diss. Gouda 1904); however, I find it hardly striking that, for example, both Cicero and Ovid claim to miss their families (pp. 112–29). More recently, similarities between Cicero and Ovid have been discussed by Hartmut Frosch, *Ovid als Dichter des Exils* (Bonn 1976) 79–83, who stresses Cicero’s emphasis on his overwhelming sorrow and its effect on his letters; and by Nagle (supra n. 1) 33–35, who includes Cicero’s thoughts of suicide, his tears, and his praise of his wife. Again, Ovid could easily have drawn on his own experience, rather than Cicero’s, for such topics.

4. For a study of the exile tradition emphasizing Greek sources, see Alfred Giesecke, *De philosophorum veterum quae exilium spectant sententiiis* (Leipzig 1891).

The most important use of exilic topoi occurs in the second half of Pont. 2.7. Ovid opens this poem by questioning Atticus’ concern, apologizing for his fears, and justifying these same fears. The first half, which I can only summarize here, suggests that the relegatus resembles the typical victim of violent or unhappy love: he is like a fearful sail or animal (7–12); he has been wounded (13–16); Fortune is, ironically, not as fickle in his own case as he would like (21–22); he is full of vain fear, despite many pignora of Atticus’ amor (35–37); the laeitiae ianua has long been closed (38); like a rock worn by water, he is constantly wounded (39–42). As the poem progresses, the poet grows less apologetic about his fears. Whereas the opening implies that he may be unable to recognize available help (opem, 12) and that his gloomy fears result partly from his own overactive imagination (16), the middle section simply states that he has been wounded and trampled (41, 45) and can find no help (opem, 46).

In lines 47ff., the relegatus emphasizes what is not typical about his unhappy experience, by contrasting it with that of other exiles or culprits (multis, 47; aliquos, 53) or with what could have happened. The list of advantages that he has not enjoyed is a characteristically thorough Ovidian catalogue, and omnia deficiunt (75) takes care of whatever has been omitted. Many of the advantages which Ovid methodically eliminates resemble the consolations traditionally used of exile. Both Teles and later writers point out that exile need not rob one of ἀφετή or virtus; Ovid views his past virtuous life only as something that should have helped him but did not (49–50). Traditional philosophers see exile as a chance to find out which friends are truly loyal; Ovid simply complains that no one spoke up on his behalf (51–52).

After claiming to have endured a worse voyage than that of the most famous

6. To lines 7–8 (a nautical comparison), cf., e.g., Hor. Carm. 1.5; 9–10 (fishing), Ars 1.393; 11–12 (lamb and wolf), Ars 1.118, Met. 1.505, 5.626–27; 13–16 (a wound), Prop. 2.1.57 ff.; 22 (levis, constans, certa), Cat. 61.97 and Prop. 2.34.11; 36 (amor . . . pignora), Ars 2.248, Her. 4.100, Met. 3.283. None of these images or terms is unique to love poetry, but their cumulative effect is noteworthy, particularly in view of lines 37–40. Although the importance of the closed door may be exaggerated by Frank O. Copley, Exclusus Amator, Philological Monographs 17 (1956) 70–90, it is nonetheless prominent in Ovid; for example, he not only wrote a paraclausithyron (Am. 1.6) but also claimed to have turned from gigantomachy back to elegy because clausit amica fores (Am. 2.1.17). In Ars 2.523 the clausa . . . ianua follows adunata that characterize the infinity of the dolores amoris, similar to the adunata characterizing the dolores exilii in Pont. 2.7.23–30. For laetus and laetitia in an amatory sense, see Lucr. 4.1200, Ars 2.485, and Her. 13.116; for the hollowed rock (39–40), see Lucr. 4.1286–87. On other similarities between the dolores amoris and the dolores exilii, see Nagle (supra n. 1).

7. On Ovid’s long lists, see G. Karl Galinsky, Ovid’s Metamorphoses (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1975) 195; Ovid draws attention to them in Rem. 461 and Met. 3.225.

8. Teles p. 22 Hense; Musonius pp. 43–44 Hense; Favorinus V. (Citations to all three of these writers refer to their works on exile. For Teles, I use the page numbers of Otto Hense [Tübingen 1889] [e.g., 22H for p. 22], as does Edward O’Neill, ed., Teles [Missoula, Montana 1977]. For Musonius, I use Hense’s [Leipzig 1905] page numbers; a text, with different numbering, appears in Cora Lutz, “Musonius Rufus: ‘The Roman Socrates,’” YCS 10 [1947] 68–76. For Favorinus, I use Adelmo Barigazzi, ed., Favorino di Arelate: Opere [Florence 1966].)

traveler, Ulysses (57–60), Ovid returns to the topic of disloyal friends, here lamenting that they grew rich at his expense (61–62). Unlike Seneca, Ovid does not see exile as an opportunity to learn how few possessions are really necessary; nor does he here concede that one’s animus should overcome the disadvantages of one’s locus. Instead, he complains that location (loca) can alleviate exile, but that he lives in the most disagreeable land in the world (63–64). Several aspects which Ovid criticizes are included in Menander’s instructions for praising a place: position with respect to neighbors (65–68), the land and its crops (69–70), climate (71–72), and the sea (73–74). These same aspects are said in exile literature either to be unimportant or to be the same everywhere. For example, Cicero and Plutarch praise Socrates for calling himself a world citizen rather than identifying himself with any one group of people; Musonius likewise insists that one cannot be banished from one’s fatherland, since Socrates said that the universe is the κοινή πατρίς ἀνθρώπων ἀπάντων. Plutarch states that we should recognize as the same everywhere τὴν γῆν, τὴν δαλαταν, τὸν ἄγορα, τὸν οὐρανόν, and Musonius similarly claims that exile does not deprive us of ὀδατος . . . γῆς . . . ἄρος . . . ἡλίου. However, Ovid longs for temperies caeli (71) and mentions the sea only as something that freezes (72) and ruins his drinking water (74).

It is interesting that Ovid concludes his list with an entire couplet on his lack of fresh drinking water, surely a non invidiosa voluptas (73–74). Plutarch mocks Persian kings who supposedly drink water from only one source, and Musonius states that all we need is bread and water. Here and elsewhere (Pont. 3.1.17–18), Ovid reminds us that he lacks even this simple pleasure.

Ovid’s despairing summary, omnia deficient (75), is scarcely surprising. What follows is less expected: animus tamen omnia vincit: ille etiam vires corpus habere facit (75–76). The same corpusque animusque which were just

10. Trist. 1.5.57–84 and Pont. 4.10.9–28 cite Ulysses as the obvious parallel; see H. Rahn, “Ovids elegische Epistel,” Antike und Abendland 7 (1958) 115–18; and my “Duritia and Creativity in Exile: Epistulae ex Ponto 4.10,” CA 1 (1982) 32. One might have expected the Odyssey to be cited in line 34 of Pont. 2.7, but there the relegatus emphasizes that he deserves universal sympathy (even barbarians pity him), and so he appropriately cites the Iliad, by common consent the greatest and most serious of poems. He does not mention the Odyssey in 2.7 until he complains about the voyage itself. For complaints about rough voyages in Cairns’ “inverse epibateria,” cf. Prop. 1.17. Two other travel genres, the propemptikon and the syntaktikon, frequently include prayers or wishes for a good voyage (Cairns [supra n. 5] 130; Menander 433).


13. See Menander 383–84 on neighbors, land, botany, climate, and sea in epibateria. On similarities between other classical descriptions of Scythia and Ovid’s descriptions of Tomis, see E. Lozovan, “Réalités pontiques et nécessités littéraires chez Ovide,” in Atti (supra n. 1) II, 357–62.

14. Cie. Tusc. 5.108; Plut. De exil. 600f; Musonius 42H.

15. Plut. De exil. 601c; Musonius 41H.

16. Plut. De exil. 601d; Musonius 45H.
said to be suffering from the climate (71–72) are here triumphant and strong. Although any traditional philosopher could have suggested that Ovid’s animus could overcome adversity, the poet proclaims his victory only on his own terms, after ruling out many traditional consolations. This victory is the more impressive because his sufferings are unprecedented.

The unusual victory to which the poet lays claim lends credence to the authoritative posture of the following couplet: Ovid uses three generalizing second-person verbs and a gerundive to explain how adversity should be born (77–78). Ovid has already named Caesar twice, once mentioning his ira (55) and once addressing him directly about the limitations of peace (67–68); in this respect as in others, the second half of the poem is bolder than the first, which only vaguely blamed Fortuna (15, 41). Now, in lines 79–80, Ovid dares to hope that the principis ira will soften and announce that he has not lost the will to live. Finally, whereas Ovid opened by questioning Atticus’ loyalty and stressing his own tendency to doubt everyone, he closes by stating that there is a group (vos) whose loyalty has been proven and by implying that Atticus could abandon Ovid only at the cost of his own iudicium (81–84). At first reading, these relatively confident lines seem an odd conclusion to a generally despairing poem. However, the poet’s mastery of exilic and geographical topoi, his proclaimed ability to do without the consolations traditionally available to exiles, and his suggestion, made increasingly boldly, that he has been uniquely persecuted exemplify both the intellectual ability and the courage associated with the term animus; and the unusual resilience of this animus justifies his authoritative conclusion.

In Pont. 1.3, Ovid not only shows his mastery of consolation, of geographical description, and of exile exempla, but also explicitly compares his knowledge with that of his addressee. He concludes that Rufinus’ consolations are wise and kind but probably useless, because Ovid knows himself better than any physician does (86–94). In view of this conclusion, the opening couplet is particularly interesting. After reading Hanc tibi Naso tuus mittit, Rufine, salutem, / qui miser est, ulii si . . . (1–2), one might expect Ovid to conclude, “If a wretched man can send anyone ‘health’” (cf. Trist. 5.13.1–2, Pont.


18. Line 75 echoes Virg. Ecl. 10.69 and Geor. 1.145 in wording and rhythm. However, in Pont. 2.7 Ovid is not a part of the omnia which are overcome (e.g., by labor); instead, his animus overcomes everything.

19. The spirited quality of Pont. 2.7—and much of the Pont.—is often not adequately appreciated. For example, the recent Cambridge History of Classical Literature, II, ed. E. J. Kenney and W. V. Clausen (Cambridge, England 1982) 445, acknowledges that Ovid presents himself as “a victim of tyranny and injustice” in much of the Trist., but later (p. 453) characterizes the Pont. as less ironic in its allusions and less forceful.

20. Many parallels between Pont. 1.3 and other works on exile and consolation have been collected by Friedrich Wilhelm, “Zu Ovid. Ex Ponto 1.3,” Philologus 81 (1925–1926) 155–67.

21. CHCL (supra n. 19) 443 calls Pont. 1.3 “a perceptibly ironical” poem, evidence that “Ovid was not a philosopher and did not endure his fate philosophically”; the poet’s display of his knowledge of the philosophical consolations which he rejects is not fully discussed.
1.10.1–2). Instead, the couplet ends: *qui miser est, utti si suus esse potest.* As the poem proceeds, Ovid shows that he is very much his own man and is experiencing a unique misery, which not even a close friend can argue away.

Medical imagery, which dominates lines 3–26 and appears elsewhere in the poem, is traditional in discussions of grief in general and of exile in particular. However, unlike traditional philosophers, Ovid insists that his condition is difficult or impossible to cure: his *cura* is infinite (13–14); some troubles are stronger than any physician’s *ars* (17–18, 25). Especially interesting in these lines are Ovid’s insistence on proper timing and his use of traditional *exempla.*

On the subject of timing the cure for a psychological affliction, ancient writers were divided. Seneca says that he knew better than to apply *immatura medicina* to his mother’s *dolor,* which needed to lose some of its *vires* first. Similarly, Pliny notes that fresh grief rejects consolation just as a new wound fears treatment, and the *Consolatio ad Apollonium* states that the best doctors do not use medicine immediately. Others emphasize that philosophical or psychological healing should be begun as quickly as possible: Lucretius states that new wounds of love should not be allowed to grow, and Cicero applied consolatory *medicina* to his own *dolor* as quickly as possible, although he admits that Chrysippus would not approve. The *praeceptor* of the *Remedia* tries, typically, to have it both ways: either one should take drastic action, such as amputation, as soon as the wound is noticed (101–102, 111–112), or one should wait till the wound is less painful (125). The exile corpus is also inconsistent: Ovid says in *Trist.* 4.4.41–42 that one should not touch open wounds, and in *Pont.* 4.11.17–20 that one should not touch old ones. *Pont.* 1.3.15–16 is unusually pessimistic: Ovid not only rejects hasty treatment but also hopes for nothing better than a scar in the distant future—maybe (*tempore ductetur longo fortasse cicatrix*). There is no certainty that time will heal and no suggestion that it will aid Rufinus’ own medical efforts. Ovid simply notes that fresh wounds cannot bear to be handled (16) and adds gloomily that some illnesses are incurable (17–18). In fact, Aesculapius himself could not cure *vulnera cordis* (21–22). We have already learned that, although Rufinus is a Machaon in his healing efforts (5–10), his *facundia* nonetheless has not effected a cure (11–12). If, as we learn here, Machaon’s divine father could not succeed, it seems unlikely that Rufinus will ever be totally successful.

22. Ovid *Rem.* passim compares unhappy love to a wound or disease; Cic. *Fam.* 4.6.2. and Ovid *Pont.* 4.11.19 compare bereavement to a wound; Sen. *Cons. Helv.* 1.1–2 compares his mother’s grief to a wound or illness. Both Cic. *Tusc.* 2.19 and Ovid *Rem.* 111 cite Philocetes as an example of suffering (cf. *Pont.* 1.3.5). Anton Scholte, *Publīi Ovidii Nasonis Ex Ponto Liber Primus* (Amersfoort 1933), shows in his commentary on 1.3 that even some apparently nontechnical words in this poem occur commonly in medical writing; for example, commenting on *auxilium* in line 4, Scholte cites Cels. 2.11.5.

23. Sen. *Cons. Helv.* 1.2; Pliny *Epist.* 5.16.11; *Consolatio ad Apollonium* 102a. The general notion that time heals all is, of course, very common; see Menander, fr. 677 Kock (which uses medical terminology) and below on *Trist.* 4.6

In the following lines (23–42), Ovid in effect, by means of several comparisons, refuses the role of the noble sufferer. He implies that his condition is as difficult to cure as gout (23), a prosaic ailment sometimes associated with a lack of self-control. Rather than justify his *amor patriae* (29) by hymning the grandeur of Rome, he admits that his behavior could seem *muliebre* rather than *pium* (31); cites Ulysses as an example of homesickness, not of patriotism or heroic endurance (33–34); and compares love of home to an animal instinct (35–36, 39–42). Interestingly, Evander’s mother in the *Fasti* cites animals’ natural habitats (e.g., air for birds) in arguing that *omne solum forti patria est* (1.493–494); by contrast, the poet in exile defines animals’ homes (e.g., birds’ own nests) and his own much more narrowly. Despite his attachment to his *patria*, he praises it only briefly (*quid melius Roma*?), in order to emphasize the astonishing fact that Scythians prefer Scythia (37–38). Whereas Seneca stresses that people find reason to move even to apparently unpleasant places, Ovid insists that Romans, barbarians, and animals prefer home, whether it is intrinsically pleasant or unpleasant.

Before explicitly rejecting numerous *exempla* of noble exiles, the poet both challenges his audience and systematically describes his wretched setting. Lines 43–44, beginning emphatically with *tu tamen*, sound slightly critical after Ovid’s long complaint about homesickness: you hope to soothe me in spite of all this. Although the following couplet compliments Rufinus and unnamed others (*vos, 45*), the wording shifts responsibility: you should be less lovable, to make me feel better. *At puto* (47) is used here, as elsewhere in *Pont.* 1 (1.2.41–42, 1.5.25, 1.8.39–40) to deny that Ovid enjoys any advantage. Whereas Socrates is said to have called himself a world citizen, and Seneca insists that no place of exile in the world is truly *alienum homini*, Ovid denies that he is *in humano loco* (48). By way of proof, he criticizes the local climate, land, crops, sea, and people. Wording such as *non . . . non . . . non* (51–52), *neve fretum laudes terra magis* (53), *dextra laevaque a parte* (57), and *altera . . . altera* (59–60) makes this description more conspicuously methodical than *Pont.* 2.7.65–74.

Traditional consolations proceeded from *praecpta* to *exempla*. Ovid

25. Cels. 4.31.1–2.
26. For various evaluations of Odysseus’ behavior during his wanderings, see Dio Chrys. 13.4; Epictetus 3.24.18–19, 3.26.33–34, fr. 174 Schweighäuser; Favorinus IV.
27. *Cons.* Helv. 6.
28. On Socrates see supra n. 14. The text of Sen. *Cons.* Helv. 85. is uncertain: Vahlen supplied *potest; nihil enim quod intra mundum between nullum inveniri exilium intra mundum* and *est alienum homini est*. In any case, the basic notion seems to be that no place to which we can go is alien to us.
29. Cf. the thoroughly negative description that opens *Pont.* 3.1: Ovid goes through all four seasons (11–15), three of which Pontus lacks, and he effects a neat transition from water to land (20).
virtually dares Rufinus to cite a noble example: \textit{i nunc et vetterum nobis exempla vivorum / qui forti casum mente tulere refer} (61–62). The list that the poet himself provides shows no obvious organizational pattern except that four historical characters (63–72) are followed by five mythological characters (73–80) and one group, the Romans themselves (81–82); nor does it provide any clue about the nature or degree of Ovid’s guilt, since the causes of exile here vary.  

The comprehensive quality of this catalogue—most of whose examples appear in traditional exile literature—functions chiefly to impress the reader both with the poet’s learning and with the uniqueness of his sufferings. Like Cicero when confronted by actual (not hypothetical) \textit{dolor}, Ovid is certain that no more wretched sufferer could be found: \textit{persequar ut cunctos, nulli datus omnibus aevis / tam procul a patria est horridiorve locus} (83–84).  

In his conclusion as in his opening, Ovid uses medical imagery both to praise Rufinus’ efforts and to deny their ultimate efficacy. The poet is gracious: Rufinus could heal his wounds if anyone could (87–88), and his efforts are appreciated (93–94). However, Ovid fears that he is too sick to be helped (89–90). The explanation lies in lines 91–92: \textit{ nec loquor haec, quia sit maior prudence nobis, / sed sum quam medico notior ipse mihi}. Although the poet has nowhere denied Rufinus’ learning (8, 27, 85, 91), he has stated that Rufinus’ consolations have not succeeded (11–12, 29–30, 89), insisted that no consolation could work (18, 21–22, 25, 87), attributed excessive optimism to his addressee (43–44, 47–48), and, finally, challenged him to find any adequate precedent in the exile tradition (61–62). Rufinus may be well schooled in the traditional means of consoling exiles, but Ovid can refute his arguments because he both knows the tradition—as he proves in his catalogue—and enjoys an added advantage: he knows himself. Although the poet describes himself as a helpless victim and concludes on a thoroughly negative note, he achieves a victory of sorts over his addressee by combining mastery of a tradition with unique personal experience. Interestingly, the other poem to the same addressee, \textit{Pont.} 3.4, uses poetry more positively, to proclaim a
victory of the poetic imagination rather than a victory of misery. Ovid opens again with medical imagery (7–8) and apologies for his weakness (11–14), but he concludes by prophesying a new triumph (87–90), vividly describing an event that has not yet happened, and challenging Livia herself to match his optimism (95–96).

Although Pont. 2.7 and 3.1 best exemplify Ovid’s mastery of the topoi of exile, consolation, and geographical description, several other poems are of interest for their rejection of exempla, rejection of the consolation of time, and insistence that the poet’s location is unbearable. I have argued elsewhere that in Pont. 4.10 Ovid conspicuously minimizes Ulysses’ trials and chooses points of comparison between Ulysses’ sufferings and his own in a deliberately arbitrary manner. For example, despite the second-person verb in line 27, one may question whether the addressee ever intended to compare the Achai to Charybdis. An earlier systematic treatment of the Ulysses example, Trist. 1.5, differs in that it implicitly mentions Augustus’ wrath (the ira Iovis surpasses Neptune’s wrath, 77–78); it adds that the example is fictitious as well as inadequate (79–80); and it mentions Ulysses’ most obvious advantage, his nostos (81–84). Pont. 1.4, an equally elaborate rejection of Jason as a parallel, specifically mentions the ira Caesaris (29); the poet’s intrusion of his own Ars into the midst of this legend (illum furtivae iuvere Cupidinis artes / quas a me vellem non didicisset Amor, 41–42) adds a touch of bold humor. All three of these poems, like Pont. 2.7.47–74 and Pont. 1.3.61–84, state or imply that Ovid has been uniquely singled out.

Some exile poems concentrate on the praecepta rather than the exempla of exile. A particularly familiar consolatory topos, which even Seneca admits to be trite, is the healing power of time. Ovid himself—like Cicero consoling Titus and Sulpicius consoling Cicero—implies in a consolatory epistle that virtually any dolor can be alleviated by a combination of ratio and mora (Pont. 4.11.13–14). However, in lamenting his own dolor, Ovid—like Cicero in exile—insists that he is an exception to the rule about time. For example, Pont. 4.10 uses the familiar images of the worn stone, ring, and plow to argue that the long-suffering relegatus is unique in that tempus edax and mors have not overcome him (5–8).

An earlier poem, Trist. 4.6, develops more elaborately the negative effects

35. See supra n. 10. Ovid’s conspicuously arbitrary rejection of the Ulysses example in Pont. 4.10, his flowing description of a “hardened” sea, and his imposition of the Theseus example on his addressee all demonstrate the poet’s control over his environment and over traditional material by means of poetry. The comparison to Ulysses in Trist. 1.5 seems less arbitrary; for example, it is perfectly reasonable to point out that Ulysses was not so far from home as Ovid is (59–62).
37. Cic. Fam. 5.16.5, 4.5.6; cf. Att. 12.10.
38. Cic. Att. 3.15.2.
39. Cf. Lucr. 1.312–14, Tib. 1.4.18, Ov. Ars 1.473–76. Although in Pont. 4.10.5–8 Ovid sounds discouraged by his victory over time, I argue elsewhere (supra n. 10) that the poem becomes increasingly positive: a poetic description of the very place that has made the poet wretched actually helps him pass the time and forget his usual wretchedness.
of time. The poet concedes that time causes many positive changes, specifies himself as an exception, reminds us that time causes negative changes as well, and predicts an early death—a prediction which, as we have just seen, is gloomily contradicted in Pont. 4.10.7–8. The opening catalogue of things that are tamed (1–8), ripened (9–12), and worn (13–14) is conspicuously systematic, with tempore opening the first three couplets (1, 3, 5), tempus opening the two agricultural couplets (9, 11), and hoc (i.e., tempus) appearing five times in the next two couplets (13–16). Most of Ovid’s physical examples recall Lucretian passages on attrition or elegiac passages on the taming effect of love.40

Of particular interest for the poet’s own situation are his last two examples: time softens iras (15; cf. Pont. 2.7.79) and sorrow (16). Ovid concludes that everything (cuncta, 17) can be softened by time. However, rather than include Caesar’s wrath or his own sorrows, he adds praeterquam curas . . . meas (18). Instead of trying to benefit by a combination of ratio and mora, he insists that his mens feels his trouble as if it were fresh (22).

Now the poet reverses some of his opening topoi: bulls and horses do not always give up the struggle (23–24; contrast 1–4). Mora has made his woes all too familiar (26–28); he and his vires are worn by the temporis . . . malis (29–30). After noting that wrestlers, gladiators, and ships are stronger when they are fresh, Ovid insists that his woes are longa multiplicata die (38).41 Fortunately, he has little time left (tempora parva, 40; cf. 49–50). He repeats, more elaborately than before, that his vires and mens are suffering (41–44; cf. 22, 29). He is lonely, and can only hope that death will prevent his mala (50; cf. 22, 27, 30, 38, 40) from being diuturna.

Although this conclusion is more negative than the proclamation of self-knowledge in Pont. 1.3 and much more negative than the triumph of the animus, spes, and the will to live in Pont. 2.7, Trist. 4.6 resembles Pont. 1.3 and 2.7 in its adroit manipulation of a topos. Ovid makes this manipulation more transparent here than elsewhere: he focuses on a single topos, the effect of time; he uses anaphora and numerous examples to make this focus very obvious (1–16); and he uses the contrast between lines 1–4 and 23–24 to underline his shift from a positive to a negative evaluation of time.

In the last poem which I shall discuss, Trist. 3.8, the relegatus criticizes his locus and insists that his mens cannot overcome its evils (cf. Pont. 2.7.63–64, 75, and my comments, above). The poet opens by citing legendary human flights and wishing that he, too, could fly away (1–10).42 Unlike Horace and Seneca,

40. To Trist. 4.6.1–2, cf. Prop. 2.3.47–48, Ars 1.471; 3–4, Ars 1.472; 5–6, Tib. 1.4.17; 9–10, Tib. 1.4.19; 13, Lucr. 1.313–14, Ars 1.474, Pont. 2.7.43, 4.10.6; 14, Lucr. 1.315–16, 4.1286–87, Tib. 1.4.18, Ars 1.476, Pont. 2.7.39–40, 4.10.5. Georg Luck, ed., P. Ovidius Naso: Tristia II (Heidelberg 1977), is useful on parallels to this passage and others.
41. On distress increasing over time, cf. Trist. 5.10.7–8, Pont. 1.2.38, and Cic. Att. 3.15.2.
42. On the significance of the examples (all are exiles who were able to travel easily), see A. G. Lee, “An Appreciation of Tristia III.viii,” G&R 18 (1949) 115. Lee presents a skillful analysis of the poem’s structure and diction.
he does not suggest that his animus or ratio is more important than his locus. Instead, he turns from mythology to a possible real-life source of help, Augustus (13); fears that his mens will remain sollicita even after Augustus’ wrath has abated (19–20); and hopes, if not for return, at least for a change of locus (22). His list of aspects that do not suit him is characteristically thorough: nec caelum nec aquae faciunt nec terra nec aurae (23); here as elsewhere, Ovid does not admit the universality of nature stressed in traditional exile literature. His corpus is weak (24), and his mens, far from overcoming the evils of the regio, may be contributing to his poor health (25–26). Whereas traditional philosophers see exile as a chance to enjoy leisure and to eat more sensibly, Ovid claims here and elsewhere that he cannot sleep or eat (27–28).

Ovid summarizes his condition by complaining, more emphatically than before, that he is sick in mind and body: nec melius valeo, quam corpore, mente, sed aegra est / utraque pars aequa binaire damna fero (33–34). Again he lists disadvantages of his locus, this time emphasizing the people, whom he does not seem to view as fellow-citizens of the universe of mankind: cumque locum moresque hominum cultusque sonumque / cernimus . . . (37–38). Finally Ovid returns to the wrath of Caesar (Caesaris ira, 39); here, rather than hoping that it will lessen (cf. 19), he complains that it is too mild, since he would have preferred death (40). However, he concludes by wishing after all that Caesar will change his place of exile: the words mutato . . . loco frame the last line (42). According to this poem, then, the ills systematically catalogued can be overcome not by the poet’s mens but by a change of locus, which in turn can be decided upon only by Caesar himself. Pont. 2.7 similarly singles out Caesar’s wrath (55, 79) and systematically denounces the evils of Tomis, a uniquely wretched locus of exile (63ff.). However, even though Ovid insists that the duration of his exile has worn him down (39ff.), this poem is ultimately stronger than the earlier Trist. 3.8: the poet shows himself equally adept at pessimistic description in both poems, but whereas the earlier poem continually places responsibility on his locus, the later poem affirms the victory of his animus (75). Ovid does not conclude the later poem by wishing that Caesar’s ira had brought about his death, but still hopes that his ira will soften and still retains the will to live (79–80).

The exiled poet claims repeatedly that time has treated him worse than anyone else, that he lives in the worst place in the world, that every other exile was more fortunate than he, and that no one else understands his position. However, Ovid’s admittedly novel circumstances should not blind us to the fact that an

43. See supra on Pont. 2.7.63–64.
44. See supra on Pont. 2.7.69–74 and 1.3.49–60; cf. Trist. 3.3.7–8.
45. On leisure in exile, see Cic. Tusc. 5.105, De rem. fort. 8.3., and Musonius 43H; on diet, see Sen. Cons. Helv. 10.3 and Musonius 44–45H. For Ovidian complaints about restless nights and lack of appetite, see Pont. 1.2.41 ff., 1.10.7 ff.
46. On the whole world as the common fatherland of all men, see supra on Pont. 2.7.65–68 and 1.3.48.
exile tradition was known to the Romans by Cicero’s time; nor should we be surprised if a poet who is variously described as producing a “light-hearted reworking of the [amatory elegiac] genre,” as having “killed Roman elegy,” as effecting a “radical deformation of elegiac convention,” and as using epic conventions to write a sort of anti-epic turns once more to convention.47 Once more his use of convention is no mere idle display of learning but an achievement of considerable originality, at least partly because he combines here a knowledge of past exempla with a knowledge of propria mala (Trist. 1.5.31–32). Rather than simply count exempla or divide the exile corpus between poems that use commendably few conventions and those that use regrettably many,48 we need to examine how Ovid uses these conventions. Such examination reveals that the poet who claims to live in uniquely defeating circumstances is not too defeated to display a mastery of exilic, consolatory, and geographical topoi as well as unique insight into the experience of exile. Sometimes he calls attention to his command of topoi by conspicuously methodical catalogues; sometimes he challenges his addressee’s understanding of his situation; sometimes he boldly asserts himself in the face of allegedly unparalleled imperial wrath.

Although Ovid’s Tristia have generally attracted more attention than his Ex Ponto, the later poems discussed here are both more complex in their use of topoi and, ultimately, more victorious. In these later poems, Ovid still complains that time is wearing him down, but he uses a variety of topoi in more interesting and positive ways: in Pont. 1.3 he contrasts the knowledge of various topoi with self-knowledge; in Pont. 4.10 he proclaims the power of poetry to help pass the time—even though he has both complained about time and rejected poetic parallels; and, most defiantly, in Pont. 2.7 he proclaims his will to live despite unprecedented sufferings and imperial anger. Particularly in those poems written after years of harsh exile, the poet’s animus does in fact help him overcome his locus by means of poetry. Although superiority in misery is scarcely a victory to be prized above all others, Ovid demands our respect for his superior ability to understand and to describe the misery of exile. His poetic victory is evident in both his skillful exploitation of a variety of traditions and his insistence on his own unique insight and endurance.

University of Virginia

47. John Barsby, Ovid, Greece and Rome New Surveys in the Classics 12 (Oxford 1978) 7 (on reworking elegy); Robert M. Durling, “Ovid as Praeceptor Amoris,” CJ 53 (1958) 158 (on killing elegy); Florence Verducci, “The Contest of Rational Libertinism and Imaginative License in Ovid’s Ars Amatoria,” Pacific Coast Philology 15.2 (1980) 36 (on deforming elegy); Brooks Otis, Ovid as an Epic Poet (Cambridge, England 1970) 332, 354 et passim. My brief citations are intended only to show that critics have recognized and variously evaluated Ovid’s use of conventions in other works; I have not done justice to these scholars’ complex arguments.

48. See supra n. 1 on Wilkinson and Evans.