THE POLITICAL BACKGROUND TO OVID'S *TRISTIA* 2

ALTHOUGH the view dies hard that the poetry which Ovid wrote during his years in exile at Tomi consists largely of the 'querulous and sycophantic' complaints of a weak man unable to come to terms with a personal disaster,[1] it has been recognized for many years that the *Tristia* and the *Epistolae ex Ponto* are not mere expressions of emotion but are as well thought out and constructed as any other of the *doctus poeta*'s products.[2] Of these poems, *Tristia* 2 must be placed in a category by itself—if only because of its length (578 lines—four times the length of the next longest of the poems from exile) and because it purports to be a plea by Ovid to Augustus, the man responsible for his exile, on the very practical matter of mitigating the sentence. But with some notable exceptions[3] classical scholars have been more interested in Ovid's attempt to justify the poet's freedom of expression by appealing to the *exempla* provided by earlier Greek and Latin literature[4] than in analysing what light this particular poem throws on Ovid's own feelings for Augustus and his regime. Radically different opinions have been expressed on Ovid's attitude to Augustus; on the one hand he has been described as a political conformist whose eulogy of the emperor at the end of the *Metamorphoses* (for example) was 'the result of serious conviction',[5] and on the other we have the view that a large part of the *Metamorphoses* could only be interpreted as 'an anti-Augustan poem'.[6] Whether *Tristia* 2 was simply an attempt by an isolated if brilliant intellectual to justify the independence of the artist, or whether what the poet wrote may have been influenced by political considerations, is a question which belongs to political history rather than literary criticism, and perhaps the political context of the years immediately before Ovid wrote this poem can throw some light on the poet's intentions.

[1] B. Otis, *Ovid as an Epic Poet* (ed. 1, Cambridge, 1966), 339; cf. Schanz–Hosius, *Geschichte der römischen Literatur*, ii (Munich, 1935), 243–9.

[2] e.g. W. Kraus, s.n. P. Ovidius Naso, *R.E.* xviii (1942), 1961; E. J. Kenney, 'The poetry of Ovid's exile', *Proc. Camb. Philol. Soc.* N.S. xi (1965), 37–49.

[3] R. Marache, 'La révolte d'Ovide exilé contre Auguste', in *Ovidiana* (ed. N. I. Herescu, Paris, 1958), 412 ff.; W. Marg, 'Zur Behandlung des Augustus in den "Tristien" Ovids', in *Ovid* (ed. M. v. Albrecht and E. Zinn, *Wege der Forschung* xcii [1968]), 502 ff.; E. Meise, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Julisch-Claudischen Dynastie* (Munich, 1969), esp. Anhang I (p. 223): 'Die Verbannung Ovids'. [4] 313–572.

[5] Otis, op. cit. (ed. 1), 339. The suggestion that literary opposition might be combined with political conformity had been made by others, e.g. Gardthausen, *Augustus und seine Zeit* (Leipzig, 1904), 1243 f. The conservative position that Ovid was an Augustan *vates* in the line of Vergil and Horace who had no interest in politics has recently been restated by N. V. Vulikh in *Vestnik Drevnei Istorii* ciii (1968), 151–60: 'In the "Letters" Ovid speaks as a loyal citizen who serves his state and *princeps* in the city of Tomi . . . In the 'Tristia', Ovid speaks out against the despotism of Augustus, attacking him not for his statesmanship, but for his attitude to literature and poets. Here, for the first time in literary history, Ovid sets the theme of 'emperor and poet' and dwells on the conflict between despotism and poetic genius.'

[6] Otis, op. cit. (ed. 2, 1968), 351, 368. Cf. Marache, loc. cit. 416, who says that the reference to dice in *Trist.* 2. 471 f. 'est une attaque ouverte'. L. P. Wilkinson, *Ovid Recalled* (Cambridge, 1955), 303, says that in *Tristia* 2 Ovid attempts 'to discomfort his not invulnerable oppressor' and perhaps to 'appeal over the emperor's head to public opinion'.

Ovid was certainly not the only one to be discontented with Augustus' rule after his exile in December of A.D. 8. Much of the evidence for opposition to Augustus' policies in these years is associated with the attempts to introduce legislation to encourage marriage and the bringing up of children—understandably unpopular with the propertied classes in Italy, since the *Lex Iulia de Maritandis Ordinibus* of 18 or 17 B.C. contained clauses restricting the right to accept legacies, with the intention of encouraging *caelibes* to marry, and other provisions favouring large families; a costly business for a land-owning gentleman.[1] There had been considerable opposition to the *lex* when it was originally introduced, and Augustus had been forced to compromise and accept substantial amendments.[2] In A.D. 9 he was induced to allow this *Lex Iulia* to be replaced by a much weaker law backed not by his own authority but by that of the two suffect consuls, M. Papius Mutilus and Q. Poppaeus Secundus. Dio suggests that this revision of the law was forced upon Augustus as the result of an open demonstration against the earlier legislation by the equestrian order,[3] and Suetonius also mentions a demonstration by the *equites* on the occasion of a public spectacle attended by Augustus with Germanicus and his sons.[4] Some commentators have found it somewhat surprising that so late in Augustus' reign there should have been a substantial body of opinion among the propertied classes hostile to his attempt (whatever his real motives may have been) to restore that *prisca virtus* which the Italian municipalities are supposed to have approved of, and which Last seems to suggest was symbolized by the choice of a namesake of the Samnite chieftain Papius Mutilus as one of the sponsors of the final stage of Augustus' 'attempt of unprecedented daring to change the outlook of society'.[5] How are we to explain the fact that it should have been just twenty-six years after the original *leges Iuliae* had been promulgated that this opposition finally became too strong for Augustus to be able to ignore?

The general historical context of the years A.D. 6 to 9 may provide an answer. These years were extremely critical for Augustus; they were years of military disaster abroad coupled with famine at Rome, and rumour had it that Augustus even contemplated suicide: 'iuncta deinde tot mala, inopia stipendii, rebellio Illyrici, servitiorum delectus, iuventutis penuria, pestilentia urbis, fames Italiae: destinatio expirandi, et quadridui inedia maior pars mortis in corpus recepta; iuxta haec Variana clades et maiestatis eius foeda suggillatio.'[6] For some years now the emperor had found it difficult to find recruits for his apparently never-ending wars in the north,[7] in spite of the new conditions of service that had been instituted in 13 B.C.[8] If Dio is right in saying that it was to avoid disorders that Augustus omitted persons worth less than 200,000 HS in his partial census of A.D. 4, then there may have been fears on the

[1] See, for example, H. Last, 'The Social Policy of Augustus', in *C.A.H.* x (1934), 425–64; P. A. Brunt, *Italian Manpower* (Oxford, 1971), Appendix 9 (p. 558): 'The Augustan Marriage Laws'.

[2] Suetonius, *Div. Aug.* 34. 1.

[3] Dio 56. 10. 1.

[4] Suet. *Div. Aug.* 34. 2 'abolitionem (legis) publico spectaculo pertinaciter postulante equite . . .'. Since Dio 56. 11. 1 explicitly states that Germanicus was in Dalmatia during the demonstration which he describes, there may (if Dio's chronology is right) have been two separate incidents.

[5] Loc. cit. 455.

[6] Pliny, *N.H.* 7. 149.

[7] On the question of whether Augustus had any clear idea of calling a halt to Roman expansion at any particular point cf. P. A. Brunt, *J.R.S.* liii (1963), 170–6, and C. M. Wells, *The German Policy of Augustus* (Oxford, 1972).

[8] Dio 54. 25. 5 f.

part of the peasants that he intended to conscript them for service in northern Europe.[1] In the following year, unwillingness on the part of the soldiers to serve for longer than the term set in 13 B.C. forced Augustus to promise increased donatives to those who would serve for an extra four years;[2] the alternative would have been to increase the rate of conscription. The revolt in Pannonia left him no choice but to take some unprecedented and humiliating steps, which had to be repeated after the Varus disaster in A.D. 9: the lack of sufficient volunteers and the need to enlist and train men in the shortest possible time meant that freedmen and others from Rome itself were called up—a 'vernacula multitudo' in Tacitus' words.[3] Suetonius refers to the two occasions in A.D. 6 and 9/10 when Augustus enlisted freedmen to serve in the army, and it is interesting how these troops were raised: 'servos adhuc viris feminisque pecuniosioribus indictos, ac sine mora manumissos.'[4] Velleius also describes the measures taken in A.D. 6: 'habiti itaque delectus, revocati undique et omnes veterani, viri feminaeque ex censu libertinum coactae dare militem. audita in senatu vox principis, decimo die, ni caveretur, posse hostem in urbis Romae venire conspectum. senatorum equitumque Romanorum exactae ad id bellum operae: pollicitati.'[5] Velleius is of course keen to stress the seriousness of the situation in order to enhance Tiberius' achievement in putting down the rebellion—and no doubt Augustus himself had some interest in leading the senators and *equites* to believe that their property might soon be overrun by the Pannonians if they did not contribute to the war. In any case it is clear that it was the landowners who had to foot the bill when Augustus' expansionist policy ran into trouble. Certainly this policy brought glory to the Roman commonwealth as a whole, but however many *nobiles* might be awarded triumphal honours, it was a policy calculated to increase the prestige of the Julio-Claudians to the point where no other family would be in a position to challenge it. Now that that prestige was threatened, the wealthy generally had to provide their own slaves to fight (even if compensated).[6] They had to serve themselves as officers—it is hardly surprising that there should have been attempts to evade this.[7] And when more money was needed to keep the legions up to strength, the propertied classes had to pay. At first they were very uncooperative: μηδεὶς πόρος ἀρέσκων τισὶν εὑρίσκετο.[8] To finance the increased *praemia*, Augustus had to institute an *aerarium militare* on his own account, but not even this led to sufficient spontaneous generosity on the part of individual senators, and the Senate's own proposals to raise funds were unsatisfactory.[9] Finally a 5 per cent tax on inheritances by others than near relatives was instituted (A.D. 6)[10] followed by a 2 per cent sales tax on slaves (A.D. 7).[11]

[1] Dio 55. 13. 4. On conscription in the early empire cf. P. A. Brunt, 'Conscription and Volunteering in the Roman Imperial Army', *Scripta Classica Israelica* i (1974), 90 ff.

[2] Dio 55. 23. 1. On the need to revise the terms of service cf. P. A. Brunt, *Italian Manpower*, 334 f.

[3] Tac. *Ann.* 1. 31. The call-up is also mentioned by Macrobius *Sat.* 1. 11. 32. Cf. P. A. Brunt, *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* xiii (1974), 161 ff.; Dio 56. 23. 2 f. It is hardly surprising that the Pannonian legions were continually on the point of mutiny: Dio 56. 12. 2, 13. 1 (A.D. 9).

[4] Suet. *Div. Aug.* 25. 2.

[5] Velleius 2. 111.

[6] Dio 55. 31. 1.

[7] Suet. *Div. Aug.* 24. 1 tells of an *eques* who was punished 'quod duobus filiis adulescentibus causa detrectandi sacramenti pollices amputasset'.

[8] Dio 55. 24. 9 and 25. 1. Dio notes in this context that ex-quaestors and ex-tribunes had to be forced by lot to take on the expensive office of aedile in A.D. 5.

[9] Dio 55. 25. 2. Cf. *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* 17. 2.

[10] Dio 55. 25. 5.

[11] Dio 55. 31. 4.

With this background of increasing taxation on senators and *equites*, it is less surprising that a period of military disasters in Pannonia and Germany should have been the occasion for the opposition to express itself openly. In A.D. 7, Augustus cancelled the *travectio equitum*[1]—perhaps he was afraid of just such a demonstration as did actually occur in A.D. 9.[2] It became clear to the emperor that he would have to compromise. Since any concessions with regard to the new taxes might impair the efficiency of the armed forces, the courses open to him were very limited. One thing he could do was remove the least popular provisions of his social legislation while widening the scope of the privileges, and this was what the *Lex Papia Poppaea* in fact did.[3]

Augustus' position was not assisted by the famine from which Italy was suffering during these years. In A.D. 6, after a particularly serious fire at Rome, Augustus conscripted seven thousand freedmen to form the *vigiles*;[4] although it was officially claimed that their function was merely to prevent further conflagrations, and that they were soon to be disbanded, the sudden realization that Rome's fire-brigade required seven thousand men under the central control of a *praefectus* responsible directly to Augustus, rather than the six hundred slaves granted to the curule aediles for this purpose in 22 B.C.,[5] may well reflect the need to control serious disorders among the disaffected urban population—as our sources realize.[6] Reynolds's surprise[7] that the *vigiles* should from an early date have had police functions like the urban cohorts is surely misplaced. The same fear of major disturbances as a result of the famine will have lain behind Augustus' decision to expel gladiators, most categories of aliens, slaves on sale, and even some domestic slaves from Rome; arrangements were made to enable as many senators to leave the city with their households as was possible without disrupting the business of government.[8] To symbolize his concern for the well-being of the Roman people, Augustus thought it advisable to dedicate an altar to Ceres and to the earth-goddess under the title of 'Ops Augusta' on 18 October A.D. 7.[9]

There were some who were not displeased at the fact that Augustus found himself in a precarious position. There were disorders in several areas during these years, involving members of the provincial aristocracies.[10] In Rome too there are hints that the discontent was fomented or at least exploited by those hostile to Augustus. Admittedly we do not hear of the elimination of a whole group of aristocrats as had occurred in 2 B.C., when, with Augustus' 'climacteric' sixty-third year approaching, members of several distinguished families tried to take advantage of Tiberius' disgrace to manoeuvre into a position where they could possess Augustus' daughter Julia and through her, after the emperor's death, control the fortunes of his grandsons and of the empire.[11] One at least

[1] Dio 55. 31. 2 says that this was due to the 'needs of the war'; in the context, it could be taken to refer to the need to avoid unrest during the crisis.

[2] Cf. Dio 56. 1. 2–10. 3 and Suet. *Div. Aug.* 34. 2.

[3] *C.A.H.* x. 452 ff. Cf. Dio 56. 10. But discontent at the high level of taxation continued: Dio 56. 28. 4 (A.D. 13).

[4] Dio 55. 26. 4. [5] Dio 54. 2. 4.

[6] Dio 55. 27. 1; cf. Suet. *Div. Aug.* 25. 2, where the clause 'praeterquam incendiorum causa et si tumultus in graviore annona metueretur' presumably refers to the *vigiles*.

[7] P. K. B. Reynolds, *The Vigiles of Imperial Rome* (Oxford, 1926), 17 f.

[8] Suet. *Div. Aug.* 42. 3; Dio. 55. 26. 1.

[9] Dio 55. 31. 3 f.; cf. J. Wilhelm, 'Das römische Sakralwesen unter Augustus als Pontifex Maximus' (Diss. Strassburg, 1915), 84 f.

[10] Dio 55. 28. 2; cf. G. Bowersock, *Augustus and the Greek World* (Oxford, 1965), 105 (Thessaly), 105 ff. (Athens, A.D. 13).

[11] Velleius 2. 100 names Iullus Antonius, Quinctius Crispinus, Appius Claudius,

of these conspirators actually wanted to kill Augustus.[1] Later, after the plot of Pompey's grandson Gnaeus Cornelius Cinna Magnus,[2] Dio tells us that in A.D. 6 one Publius Rufus was involved in organizing a conspiracy, although it is not clear on whose behalf he was operating.[3] And then in A.D. 7 Augustus was forced to remove his grandson Agrippa Postumus out of the reach of any conspirator who might use him as a figure-head.[4] Others too were exiled in this year, including the orator Cassius Severus, who had written verses attacking certain aristocrats.[5] In the following year Julia the Younger was sent into exile for virtually the same reasons as her mother had been. It is of course conceivable that Livia's machinations on behalf of her son Tiberius played a part in these events; but surely only the fear that his grandchildren might become focal points of opposition can have induced Augustus to take such drastic measures.

Perhaps we should not overestimate the extent of opposition to the policies of the regime;[6] it is sufficient to note that, for a variety of causes, discontent was more widespread than it had been for many years. In the event, Augustus was able to weather the storm, and members of his family and of Livia's continued to direct the destinies of the empire for a further sixty years. But that may have been far from obvious to Ovid in A.D. 9; and it was in this context that he decided to circulate a major work setting out to show that it was unreasonable and unjust for Augustus to punish one particular poet on the grounds that his verses were immoral.

In support of his argument, Ovid makes a number of interesting references to Augustus himself. It would be rash to assume that every rhetorical comparison of the princeps to Jupiter is bound to be sarcastic in intention, meant as an attack on a claim to which the emperor's actual behaviour does not entitle him, rather than as a serious rhetorical adornment. Thus he tells Augustus 'utere more dei nomen habentis idem' (33–4)—it is not easy to make up one's mind whether this is meant to be criticism or flattery.[7] This is equally true of

Sempronius Gracchus, and a Scipio. Cf. Meise, op. cit. (above p. 264 n. 3), 5–27.

[1] Pliny, *N.H.* 7. 149 'consilia parricidae palam facta'; Seneca, *de brev. vit.* 4. 6 confirms that Augustus was threatened ('iterum timenda cum Antonio mulier'). Cf. Dio 55. 10. 15.

[2] Dio 55. 14 f. Cf. Groag, *R.E.* iv. 1288.

[3] Dio 55. 27. 2; if this is the Plautius Rufus of Suet. *Div. Aug.* 19, the plot will have involved L. Aemilius Paullus (cos. A.D. 1) and his wife, Augustus' granddaughter Julia, who—according to the Scholiast to Juvenal 6. 158—had already been banished once before she was finally exiled in A.D. 8. Perhaps this was the occasion in A.D. 6 to which Suetonius refers in *Claud.* 26: 'Aemiliam Lepidam Augusti proneptem . . . quod parentes eius Augustum offenderant, virginem adhuc repudiavit.' Suetonius' comment suggests that Julia's husband shared her disgrace. The L. Aemilius Lepidus who died as an Arval Brother in A.D. 13 or 14 (*C.I.L.* vi. 2023) was not the same person: cf. Fritzler, *R.E.* x (1917), 906 ff., and Meise, op. cit. 35–48, who suggests that Julia was only banished once, the Scholiast being confused by the fact that there was an 'official' as well as a 'real' explanation for her banishment. He also thinks that Ovid was involved (223 ff.).

[4] Cf. Gardthausen, *R.E.* x (1917), 183 f.

[5] Tac. *Ann.* 1. 72. 4.

[6] Tacitus, in his summary of the hostile comments at Augustus' death (*Ann.* 1. 10), does not give the impression that he thought the regime was threatened in these years (he only mentions the Varus disaster and Livia's machinations).

[7] Another Augustan poet to liken the princeps to a god was Horace (*Odes* 3. 5. 1, 1. 12. 49). Such comparisons were not made only of emperors—cf. Horace, *Sat.* 1. 7. 24 (Brutus, while in Asia). Regrettably, there seems to be no evidence that the attitude of Augustan poets was inspired by Hellenistic panegyric. There is epigraphical evidence that divine honours were still being paid to proconsuls in their own provinces as late as 8 B.C., and it was not until A.D. 11 that

the passage where he says that, once Augustus had been deceived into condemning Ovid by a personal enemy of the poet's, most Romans had no choice but to accept his authority (77–88), or the references to Augustus' much-vaunted *clementia* towards political enemies (43 ff., 139 ff.)[1]—although he insists that, since 'causa mea est melior' (51), the emperor was being inconsistent in punishing him. Even the passage in which Ovid appeals to be given a lighter sentence and prays for the whole of Caesar's household might just be genuine flattery; after all, the lines (161–4):

> Livia sic tecum sociales compleat annos
> quae, nisi te, nullo coniuge digna fuit,
> quae si non esset, caelebs te vita deceret,
> nullaque, cui posses esse maritus, erat,

which he must have written in full knowledge of the fact that Scribonia was still alive and that Livia's sons were the children of a Claudius Nero, are no more absurd than Horace's Livia 'unico gaudens mulier marito'.[2] But need Ovid really have told Augustus that under different circumstances he ought to have remained a bachelor? And it is interesting that in this prayer, written at a time when Tiberius was just with some difficulty putting down the Pannonian revolt, the poet should go on to emphasize the 'adsueta tuis semper Victoria castris' (169) and the 'saeva bella' Augustus was fighting through Tiberius far away (176)—only to take up the point (which appears in others of the exile-poems) that Tomi, on the edge of the empire, was not safe from barbarian attack. One wonders just why Ovid wished to remind the reader that the frontiers were insecure and the lives of Roman citizens endangered in the context of Tiberius' campaigns[3]—just as he is keen to remind us of the recent famine in Italy by mentioning the ceremonies that Augustus had performed in A.D. 7 to appease the goddess Ops.[4]

Ovid goes on to make his famous distinction between *carmen* and *error*, and claims that he will discuss only the former; we may take it that, whatever the 'real' reason for his banishment,[5] the *Ars Amatoria* was at least one of the grounds which Augustus had in fact chosen to cite. Ovid begins by excusing Augustus' failure to judge his case adequately by comparing him to the gods, who cannot be expected to think of everything.[6] Augustus has the whole empire to look after; Ovid mentions some traditional enemies (Armenia and Parthia), but he is not silent on the thorny problem of the northern frontier (229 f.):

> nunc te prole tua iuvenem Germania sentit
> bellaque pro magno Caesare Caesar obit.

(It is unlikely that Ovid can have heard of the Varus disaster, which occurred in late September A.D. 9, and he must be referring back to the campaigns of Drusus and Tiberius many years before.) It is noteworthy that when Ovid

Augustus established a monopoly (Dio. 56. 25. 6). Cf. Bowersock op. cit. 119.

[1] Cf. *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* 3. 1; 34. 2.

[2] *Odes* 3. 14. 5.

[3] Cf. Marache, op. cit. 413.

[4] S. G. Owen notes in his commentary (Oxford, 1924) that the rituals Ovid had in mind ('Ausonias matres') must have been quite exceptional for the Magna Mater, but does not place the occasion in the context of the famine of A.D. 5–8.

[5] The reader may consult J. C. Thibault, *The Mystery of Ovid's Exile* (Berkeley, 1964). The evidence from Ovid's own poems is assembled by Owen in the introduction to his commentary.

[6] A traditional *topos*: cf. Cicero, *N.D.* 2. 167 'magna di curant, parva neglegunt'.

describes Augustus' care for Rome, it should be precisely the moral legislation which encountered such opposition during these years that he mentions:

> Urbs quoque te et legum *lassat* tutela tuarum
> et morum, similes quos cupis esse tuis (233 f.).

In the next couplet of this appeal, Ovid leaves us with the impression that Augustus' foreign policy has yet to be brought to a satisfactory conclusion:

> nec tibi contingunt, quae gentibus otia praestas,
> bellaque cum multis inrequieta geris (235 f.).

The implication is that the emperor is occupied with wars and social legislation when he should rather be examining carefully the cases he has taken it upon himself to judge:

> at si *quod mallem*, vacuum tibi forte fuisset (239).

In the following section, Ovid claims that, if his poetry was morally undesirable, so was the story of Ilia in Ennius' *Annales* or that of Venus and Anchises referred to in Lucretius' *de Rerum Natura*. There were other 'semina nequitiae'; why had Augustus not acted against these (280: 'tolli tota theatra iube')? The temples are another source of vice (a theme later taken up with glee by Christian writers)—but Augustus himself had built so many of them (295: 'tua munera'). Ovid's assertion may, as a matter of fact, have been true, but it does seem peculiar that he should repeat many of the points he had made as witticisms in the *Ars* in a work in which he is supposedly asking Augustus to pardon him for writing this *carmen*.[1] He goes on to list all the foreign writers who had dealt with erotic themes and then says (419 f.):

> suntque ea doctorum monumentis mixta virorum
> muneribusque ducum publica facta patent

—one of these *duces* was Augustus, who had founded a famous library in the temple of Apollo on the Palatine. Ovid then lists Roman poets who had treated similar themes, ending with Tibullus (463 f.):

> non fuit hoc illi fraudi, legiturque Tibullus
> et placet et iam te principe notus erat.

He then notes that there were other pastimes 'ad nostros non leve crimen avos' (472), including swimming, ball games, playing with a hoop, and particularly dice, all of which had been described in verse. As Marache points out, this cannot but have reminded the reader that Augustus himself enjoyed gaming immensely, in complete defiance of the standards of *prisca virtus*: 'aleae rumorem nullo modo expavit, lusitque simpliciter et palam oblectamenti causa etiam senex . . .'[2] But there are worse things even than gaming—mimes, for instance:

> nubilis hos virgo matronaque virque puerque
> spectat, et ex magna parte senatus adest (501 f.).

[1] It may of course be that in the absence of opportunities for research at Tomi Ovid had to make as much use as he could of his own works.

[2] Suet. *Div. Aug.* 71. 1, who goes on to quote a letter of Augustus' to Tiberius. Cf. Plut. *Ant.* 33, *Moralia* 319 f–320 a; Marache, 416; K. Scott, 'Another of Ovid's Errors', *C.J.* xxvi (1930/1), 293 ff.

Not only had Augustus not forbidden mimes; they were actually paid for by state officials:

> quodque minus prodest, scaena est lucrosa poetae,
> tantaque non parvo crimina praetor emit (507 f.)

and attended by the emperor:

> et mea sunt populo saltata poemata saepe,
> saepe oculos etiam detinuere tuos (519 f.).

Not to mention pornographic pictures in the houses of the aristocracy (whether we read 'domibus *vestris*' or '*nostris*' in 521). In other respects too Augustus' patronage of the arts might be thought liable to the charge of aiding and abetting immorality:

> et tamen ille *tuae* felix Aeneidos auctor
> contulit in Tyrios 'arma virumque' toros (533 f.)

and Ovid reminds the emperor that Vergil had written erotic pastoral poetry, too:

> Phyllidis hic idem teneraeque Amaryllidis ignes
> bucolicis iuvenis luserat ante modis (537 f.).[1]

If we are to assume that Ovid's intention really was to flatter Augustus in order to obtain a mitigation of his sentence, we must conclude either that the poet was somehow unable to hide his bitterness towards Augustus in a poem intended to be read by him, or that he thought the princeps would for some reason not notice the embarrassing references to famine, wars, and unpopular legislation. No doubt any conclusion we may reach on this subject is bound to be subjective, but neither of these solutions seems very convincing. The alternative is that *Tristia* 2 was not intended for Augustus' eyes at all; it was meant to influence the circle of educated Roman aristocrats to whom Ovid's other poems from Tomi were addressed, and Ovid hoped that *they* would be the ones who, recognizing the absurdity of Augustus' grounds for exiling Ovid, would do their best to see that he was recalled.[2] In reminding those of his admirers who were in a position to put some pressure on Augustus just how weak the emperor's political position had become, and just how much discontent there was in these years of famine and military disaster, Ovid may have hoped that they would exploit this political weakness to force Augustus to accept a compromise. If Ovid in A.D. 9 thought that he had nothing more to hope for from a direct appeal to Augustus himself, his pessimism turned out to be entirely justified.

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[1] It is interesting that when Pliny defends himself against the charge that as a senator he should refrain from writing poetry, he refers to the precedent of Augustus, among others (*Ep.* 5. 3. 2). The specimen of Augustus' verses quoted by Martial 11. 20 suggests that these compositions could be as spicy as anything we find in Ovid; but this example was written as propaganda during the war against M. Antonius, and belongs to the different, and traditionally Roman, genre of political invective.

[2] For Ovid's connections with the aristocratic family of M. Valerius Messalla Corvinus, in whose household he had been educated, cf. A. L. Wheeler, 'Topics from the life of Ovid', *A.J.P.* xlvi (1925), pp. 1–28.

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