

OVID'S AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL POEM, *TRISTIA* 4.10*

Ovid's *Tristia* 4.10 has in the past chiefly been considered as a source of biographical information rather than as a poem, but increasing interest in the poetry of Ovid's exile has now at last started to promote serious efforts to appreciate its literary qualities.¹ The poem presents a formidable challenge to the critic: at first reading it seems a singularly pedestrian account of the poet's life and, although one may adduce plenty of parallels for details in its phrasing elsewhere in the poetry of Ovid and the other Augustans,² it is clear that Ovid's thought-processes are not to be explained solely in terms of the main stream of Greco-Roman poetic tradition. Prose biography and autobiography, rhetorical apology and eulogy, subliterate epitaphs and inscriptional lists of achievements: all these types of writing could have influenced Ovid's selection of data.

The poem is the final one in *Tristia* book 4, and therefore must be seen as belonging to the ancient tradition of '*sphragis*' poems.³ Most immediately comparable are the lines at the end of *Georgics* 4 setting Virgil's signature on his work (4.559–66); the last poem of Propertius' first book of elegies (1.22), which, like *Tristia* 4.10, opens by answering an imagined enquiry about the poet's origins, and, the closest parallel of all, the concluding poem of Ovid's own *Amores* (3.15). Where *Tristia* 4.10 differs from other *sphragis* poems is in its great length. The last section of Propertius 4.1, where Horos addresses Propertius on the subject of his life, provides some precedent for Ovid's expansiveness, but this passage runs to a mere thirty lines, as opposed to the 132 of *Tristia* 4.10. Where we do find a poem of over a hundred lines concluding a book and consisting of an *apologia pro vita sua* is in Propertius 4.11.⁴ The speaker in it is not Propertius but a deceased Roman lady, Cornelia. Nevertheless the position of this poem in Propertius' fourth book must surely be considered as one possible factor that induced Ovid to place his *apologia* – for so, as we shall see, it may fairly be described⁵ – last in the fourth book of the *Tristia*.⁶

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¹ B. R. Fredericks (now Nagle), '*Tristia* 4.10: Poet's Autobiography and Poetic Autobiography', *TAPA* 106 (1976), 139–54, is the most important of these appreciations and includes a survey of earlier interpretations; valuable insights into the poem may also be gained from G. Misch, *A History of Autobiography in Antiquity* (English trans. from ed.³, London, 1950).

² For these, see the commentaries of T. J. de Jonge, *Publii Ovidii Nasonis Tristium Liber IV* (Groningen, 1951); G. Luck, *P. Ovidius Naso: Tristia II* (Heidelberg, 1977).

³ See W. Kranz, '*Sphragis*', *RhMus* 104 (1961), 3–46, 97–124; E. Paratore, 'L'evoluzione della "*sphragis*" dalle prime alle ultime opere di Ovidio', *Atti del Convegno internazionale Ovidiano* (Rome, 1959), 1.173–203, especially p. 201 for a list of motifs from earlier Ovidian *sphragis*-poems which recur in *Tristia* 4.10.

⁴ On this elegy see P. Fedeli, *Properzio: Elegie libro IV* (Bari, 1965); E. Reitzenstein, 'Über die Elegie des Properz auf den Tod der Cornelia', *Abhandlungen der geistes- und sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse: Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, Mainz* (1970), no. 6.

⁵ See Paratore, *Atti* 1 (see n. 3), 196, on *Tristia* 4.10 as *sphragis* and *apologia*; as he notes, *Tristia* 2 is another case where Ovid uses the apologetic mode very expansively.

⁶ Cf. H. B. Evans, *Publica Carmina: Ovid's Books from Exile* (Nebraska, 1983), 87: 'It might

Ovid addresses his poem ostensibly to *posteritas* (line 2) and represents himself (lines 91f.) as responding to a purely academic request from *studiosa...pectora* for information about his life. He thus disguises any affinities his poem may have with the tradition of defence orations. It is, however, appropriate to attempt a rhetorical analysis of the poem, and to consider what it has in common both with Propertius 4.11 and with certain earlier Greek prose works in which the *apologia* form is used as a vehicle for autobiography.

Lines 1–2 constitute a brief *prooemium*. Then begins a *narratio* (3–80), the first of two, which deals with events up to the time of Ovid's exile. Lines 81–4 contain a *μακαρισμός*⁷ of Ovid's parents, which leads into a *testificatio*⁸ (85–90), calling the dead to witness that he has committed no crime; this section taken as a whole (81–90) replaces the full-scale argumentation and the calling of living witnesses which a real speech for the defence would require at this juncture. A transition (91–2) takes us into the second *narratio*, which describes Ovid's life since his downfall (93–114); Ovid pretermits the topic of the causes of his exile (99–100), substituting an *indignatio* (101–2). A concluding section of thanksgiving to his Muse serves as an *epilogus*.

The structure of Propertius 4.11 is similar, though the proportions of its constituent parts are quite different. Cornelia's *prooemium* (1–28) is much longer than Ovid's, but her life has been singularly uneventful, as a Roman matron's life should be, so her first *narratio* is very brief (29–36). There follows a *testificatio* (37–44) in which Cornelia's ancestors are called to witness to her virtue. The section that follows is not so much a *narratio* as a protestation of her honour as a Roman lady, worthy to be considered sister even to Caesar's daughter, as the mother of two sons and a daughter, and as the sister of a distinguished man (45–72). She moves into exhortations (73–84), and good wishes for her family (85–98), before concluding with a very brief peroration (99–102). This monologue is no ordinary defence oration, for it is hard to imagine what charge the paragon Cornelia could ever have faced and she is in any case dead, but the poem's status as an *apologia* is made explicit in line 29, *ipsa loquor pro me*, and 99, *causa perorata est*. Propertius 4.11 and Ovid, *Tristia* 4.10 are thus generically equivalent: both constitute the *apologia* of a defendant for whom normal channels of appeal are blocked.⁹

In his *narrationes*, Ovid mainly relates events in chronological order, with frequent indications of date, most ingeniously varied in expression.¹⁰ But there are certain occasions when chronological sequence is set aside and others when events are given rather more cursory, or more amplified, treatment than one might have expected. These will repay close examination.

Ovid begins by telling us his place and date of birth: Sulmo, in the year when both consuls (Hirtius and Pansa, 43 B.C.) fell in battle (3–6); he is brief on the subject of his ancestry, merely assuring us that he was from a well-established equestrian family

even be suggested that Ovid planned his collections from exile as a four-book block of poetry, analogous to the four books of Cornelius Gallus and Propertius. The poet indeed refers to *Tristia* 1–4 as a separate corpus in the first couplet of his next collection from Tomis.¹¹ This is, however, an overstatement: compare *Tristia* 5.1.1f. *Hunc quoque de Getico, nostri studiose, libellum | litore praemissis quattuor adde meis*, with *Am.* 2.1.1f.: *Hoc quoque composui Paelignis natus aquosis | ille ego nequitiae Naso poeta meae*.

⁷ On this rhetorical device see Arist. *Rhet.* 1367b34.

⁸ See OLD s.v. *testificatio* a; also *testatio* a.

⁹ One would give much to know whether Gallus, too, concluded his fourth book with an *apologia*.

¹⁰ Dating by consular year (5f.); by months (10); by days (11f.); by the religious calendar (13f.); by Roman clothing customs (27f.); by years of a man's age (31f.); by stages in a man's physical development (58; cf. 93f.); by *lustra* (77f.); by Olympiads (95f.).

(7–8); he dwells more on the fact that he had a brother exactly a year older than himself and specifies their exact birth-date (9–15).¹¹ Ovid treats his boyhood and education quite fully by the standards of Hellenistic biography, in which there seems to have been a tendency to skip from birth to manhood with little information about the intervening years.¹² He relates how he and his brother showed different aptitudes, his brother for oratory, he himself for poetry – an occupation which his father warned him was unlikely to prove lucrative – , and how at first he tried to follow his father's advice, despite his Muse, who was making it impossible for him to write prose (15–26). The inevitable crisis ensues, and it is described in some detail. Both Ovid and his brother assume the *tunica laticlavica* (being destined for public office), but the brother dies at the age of twenty (27–32). Ovid at that time – we are able to calculate that he must have been nineteen – started work as a minor public official; he was one of a board of three, presumably *tresviri capitales* or *monetales* (33–4).¹³ But he did not proceed to the expected senatorial career – he explains that he was physically and mentally unsuited for it – and instead opted for *otium* and the Muses, as he had long wished to do (35–40).¹⁴ He recalls the enthusiasm with which he listened to the leading poets of the time, Macer, Propertius, Ponticus, Bassus and Horace (41–50); how he saw Virgil, but evidently did not meet him; how he was denied the chance of becoming a friend of Tibullus (51–2). The mention of Tibullus prompts Ovid's first departure from chronological order: he takes a brief retrospective look at the order in which Roman elegists succeeded one another, first Gallus, then Tibullus, then Propertius, then Ovid himself (53–4). After recalling that he too had followers among the younger generation, Ovid returns to chronologically ordered narrative and relates how his poems about the pseudonymous Corinna brought him early popularity (55–60); he then writes in very summary fashion about his prolific output of poetry¹⁵ and his use of emending fires to destroy sub-standard verses, and, before his exile, some that had the potential to please (61–4). Having thus summarized his poetic career up to the exile, Ovid back-tracks once more, this time to tell us about his private life, never a scandalous one: the loves of his youth were light-hearted affairs; as for his three marriages, which he anatomizes with unsparing precision,¹⁶ the first was a failure, the second brief, but

¹¹ About Ovid's brother B. R. Fredericks, *op. cit.* (n.1), 146, comments: 'The facts about him are not included for their intrinsic interest, but for their function in elucidating Ovid's poetic career.'

¹² The four Gospels provide the best known instances of this tendency. In biographies of Greek literary men there were sometimes elaborate infancy narratives (see my 'Fiction in the Biographies of Ancient Writers', *Ancient Society* 5, 272–4); anecdotes about the boyhood and adolescence of poets do occur, but they are not plentiful. In Ovid's autobiography we may perhaps discern the beginnings of that greater interest in the psychology of the young which we find in the later Roman empire, notably in St Augustine's *Confessiones*.

¹³ See E. J. Kenney, 'Ovid and the Law', *YCS* 21 (1969), 243–63, on the various official capacities in which Ovid is known to have served. Ovid's account of his public career in *Tristia* 4.10 is highly selective.

¹⁴ Compare Sallust, *Cat.* 3.3ff. *sed ego adolescentulus initio, sicuti plerique, studio ad rem publicam latus sum, ibique mihi multa adversa fuere* etc. Misch, *op. cit.* (n. 1), I, 119f., 327f., sees a prototype for this kind of narrative in Plato's account of his decision to leave politics for philosophy in the *Seventh Epistle* 324b ff.: *νέος ἐγὼ ποτε ὡν πολλοῖς δὴ ταῦτόν ἐπαθὼν ὥθηθην, εἰ θάπτον ἐμαυτοῦ γενοίμην κύριος, ἐπὶ τὰ κοινὰ τῆς πόλεως εὐθύς ἵεναι. καὶ μοι τύχαι τινὲς τῶν τῆς πόλεως πραγμάτων τοιαῖδε παρέπεσον* etc.

¹⁵ Note in particular that he omits all specific reference to poetry other than the *Amores*. No explanation for this baffling fact so far advanced has seemed very satisfying; see B. R. Fredericks, *op. cit.* (n.1), 144f.

¹⁶ I know of nothing remotely comparable in any other ancient poets' *Lives*; remarkably little attention is paid in them to wives and mistresses.

the third enduring (65–74); we learn that Ovid had a daughter with two children by different marriages, and that his nonagenarian father died before the exile, as did his mother (75–80).

At this point Ovid moves away from the narrative mode, but he resumes it in lines 93ff., where he enables us to date his exile by telling us periphrastically that his age at the time was fifty (93–8). He excuses himself from mentioning the cause of his exile, all too well known among his contemporaries, restricting himself to a complaint that he had been wronged by certain friends and servants (99–102). Instead he tells how he resolved to put up a fight against adversity, then how he endured countless sufferings by land and sea before arriving at his remote place of exile among the Sarmatians and Getae (103–10). He finally describes himself in exile surrounded by warfare but alleviating his sad plight by writing poetry (111–14).

Comparison of Ovid's *narrationes* with those in earlier examples of *apologia* sheds a certain amount of light on the principles of selection and arrangement of his material. For instance, Ovid's temporary shift from chronological order 53–4, where he looks back at the succession of Roman elegists, may be compared with a section in Isocrates' self-justificatory display speech, the *Antidosis* (231–4), where we are presented with a succession of Isocrates' four greatest predecessors in oratory – Solon, Cleisthenes, Themistocles and Pericles. Earlier in this long-winded *apologia* Isocrates has also touched on the topic of the relative rewards of rhetoric and poetry, as Ovid does in lines 21ff. Isocrates argues the opposite side of the case from that taken by Ovid's father, who used the argument that even Homer made no money out of poetry. Sophists, says Isocrates (*Antid.* 155ff.), do not normally make large sums of money, whereas, he asserts (166), Pindar was once rewarded with ten thousand *drachmai* for one poetic phrase eulogizing Athens.¹⁷

Ovid's second case of chronological back-tracking, in his move from the narrative of his poetic career to the account of his private life at line 65, also needs looking at in the light of the technique of *apologia*. That is not to say that I disagree with the suggestion¹⁸ of B. R. Fredericks (Nagle), in her pioneering article on the poem, that this transition is at one level related to the type of biographical *divisio* where aspects of a man's life were treated by topic rather than in chronological order, *per species* rather than *per tempora*, as Suetonius (*Aug.* 9) puts it. I will, in fact, be suggesting later the identity of an autobiographical work, possibly in this form, to which Ovid was often alluding covertly in this poem. But it is fair to say that on the surface Ovid's transition at line 65 does not greatly resemble the bald type of *divisio* characteristic of biographical arrangement *per species*. Consider, for instance, Suetonius, *Aug.* 61: *quoniam qualis in imperiis ac magistratibus regendaque per terrarum orbem pace belloque re p. fuerit exposui, referam nunc interiorem ac familiarem eius vitam quibusque moribus atque fortuna domi et inter suos egerit a iuventa usque ad supremum vitae diem*. If Ovid had wished to flaunt his indebtedness to this type of biographical transition he would have written after line 64 something like: 'These are my achievements in poetry; I shall now give an account of my private and domestic life'. In fact he does something more subtle, and the transition is so smooth as to be almost imperceptible. We may compare the passage in Plato's *Apology* (33a–34d) where Socrates first talks about his philosophical activities, arguing against the charge that he has corrupted

¹⁷ How standard it was in *apologia* to refer to one's illustrious predecessors and to deny that one had been motivated by financial considerations is a question which calls for further investigation. However, the notion that Ovid might have specifically remembered Isocrates' *Antidosis* is not inherently absurd, as will emerge in due course.

¹⁸ Op. cit. (n. 1), 142 n. 12.

the youth of Athens, and then moves on to talk about the common practice among Athenian defendants of bringing their children, together with other relatives and friends, before the court, in a bid for compassion. In 34d he turns to address an imaginary juror and says: 'My friend, I do have a family, if I am not mistaken. For indeed even I was not born, to use Homer's phrase "from oak or stone", but of the human race, and as a consequence I have a family; to be precise, men of Athens, I have three sons, one almost a man, the other two still boys...' ¹⁹ Socrates declines actually to bring his family into court in ostentatious mourning; Ovid is unable to do so, but parts, at least, of his description of his family life, the mention of his present wife, his daughter and her children, who have made him a grandfather, serve as a subdued variant on this traditional method of arousing sympathy.

Tristia 4.10 has affinities, then, with *apologia*. To state the obvious, Ovid is concerned to present the facts of his life in a favourable light. One may go further and describe the tendency of his *narrationes* as tragic. At first we are told how Ovid moved from unpromising beginnings – parental opposition and the first steps in an uncongenial career – to the achievement of success in his true vocation, together with a successful marriage. He moves, in fact, to use terms from Aristotle's *Poetics* (1451a14), εἰς εὐτυχίαν ἐκ δυστυχίας. In the second *narratio* we have the reverse pattern: Ovid narrates the catastrophe of his exile, describing its cause as *errorem...non scelus* (line 90). Thus, in Aristotelian terms, he presents himself as a man thrown into misfortune μήτε διὰ κακίαν καὶ μοχθηρίαν...ἀλλὰ δι' ἁμαρτίαν τινά (*Poet.* 1453a8ff.). It is reported by Seneca the Elder (*Contr.* 2.2.12) that Ovid as a student of rhetoric declaimed, besides *suasoriae*, only those *controversiae* which were classed as 'ethicae'. The distinction between *error* and *scelus* is paralleled in Cicero's speeches and was no doubt commonplace in the forum, but one need not doubt that Ovid, like Cicero, knew something of Peripatetic ethical and literary theory, even if Aristotle's *Poetics* itself was not available to him. ²⁰

For all the tragic implications of the *narrationes*, though, *Tristia* 4.10 is not a forthright harangue in self-defence such as Ovid, trained as an orator, was perfectly capable of composing. Most of the time he maintains the outward demeanour of a person answering a request for biographical data, and by no means all the literary background to the poem lies in the *apologia* tradition. For instance, when he writes about the enthusiasm with which he listened to other poets in his youth (41ff.), he recalls the theme and tone of a piece of Socratic narrative which is ironically

¹⁹ I cite this instance of a type of transition commonplace in defence orations merely *exempli gratia*, though actually there is no need to doubt that Ovid might have studied Plato's *Apology*, as we shall see.

²⁰ See e.g. Cic. *Marcell.* 13 *etsi aliqua culpa tenemur erroris humani, ab scelere certe liberati sumus*; *Lig.* 17 *alii errorem appellant (sc. Ligarii causam)... scelus praeter te nemo*. It would be highly controversial to suggest that Cicero or Ovid had a direct knowledge of Aristotle's *Poetics* (see D. W. Lucas, *Aristotle, Poetics*, Oxford, 1968, xxiiff.; R. Janko, *Aristotle on Comedy*, London, 1984, 64f.), though it was in Rome in the first century B.C. that Aristotle's esoteric writings were restored to circulation after long neglect (see P. Moraux, *Der Aristotelismus bei den Griechen*, Berlin/ New York 1973, vol. 1, 1–94; W. K. C. Guthrie, *History of Greek Philosophy* vi, Cambridge, 1981, 59–65; F. H. Sandbach, *Aristotle and the Stoics*, Cambridge, 1985, 1–3). But Cicero certainly knew the *Rhetoric* (see e.g. *De Inv.* 1.5.7; *Brut.* 46; *Or.* 114, 228), where the antithesis ἁμαρτεῖν ἀλλὰ μὴ ἀδικεῖν occurs in 1.12.14 (1372b18); he also knew the *Nicomachean Ethics* (see *De Fin.* 5.12) with its important classification of types of harmful action (5.8, 1135b11ff.). General awareness of the concepts of Aristotelian dramatic theory is shown e.g. by Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who in *De Thuc.* 5 refers to θεατρικαὶ τινες περιπέτειαί in early Greek historiography. Another older contemporary of Ovid, Nicolaus Damascenus, wrote an autobiography influenced considerably by Peripatetic ethics *FGrHist* 90 F 131–9, discussed by Misch, op. cit. (n. 1), 1, 307–15).

self-deprecating, namely the passage in Plato's *Phaedo* (96a) where Socrates describes his interests at the beginning of his philosophical career: 'When I was young, Cebes, I was prodigiously keen on that part of learning which they call natural history; for it seemed to me very splendid to know the causes of things, why each thing comes to be, why it is destroyed and why it exists' (διὰ τί γίγνεται ἕκαστον καὶ διὰ τί ἀπόλλυται καὶ διὰ τί ἔστι). Recalling the poets important to him in his youth, Ovid mentions first (43f.) one Macer, whose subject was natural history and who was given to asking large general questions about it, 'What snake is harmful (*nocet*)? What plant is beneficial (*iuvat*)?'²¹ Throughout his account of his poetic career up to the exile (39–64) Ovid appears to narrate the facts plainly, portraying himself in all his humanity, making no marked appeal for sympathy. It is only when he comes to talk of his private life that a trace of defensiveness rises to the surface: *nomine sub nostro fabula nulla fuit* (68).

Tristia 4.10 is thus outwardly a straightforward commemoration of Ovid's life,²² but with a rhetorical structure and certain undertones derived from *apologia*. The idea of using *apologia* for commemorative purposes was not new: Isocrates hoped that his *Antidosis* would be regarded as a monument to himself much more beautiful than bronze statues (*Antid.* 7).²³ Ovid expresses a similar idea in *Tristia* 1.7.11f.: *carmina maior imago | sunt mea*, and of course the notion that a great poetic *opus* could constitute a monument was resonantly proclaimed both in the last poem of Horace's third book of *Odes*, *exegi monumentum aere perennius* (*Carm.* 3.30.1), and in the epilogue to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: *iamque opus exegi, quod nec Iovis ira nec ignis | nec poterit ferrum nec edax abolere vetustas* (*Met.* 15.871f.).

It is in the light of this tradition, together with Ovid's representation of his exile as a species of death (for example in *Tristia* 1.7 and 5.1), that we need to examine certain phrases at the beginning of *Tristia* 4.10 with reference to the language of Roman commemorative inscriptions. Propertius 4.1 provides an earlier example of the use of epigraphic language in a poetic *apologia*: Cornelia refers at one point (line 36) to her epitaph: *in lapide hoc uni nupta fuisse legar*; the phrase, *sine crimine*, applied by Cornelia to herself (line 45) and by Ovid to his second wife (*Tristia* 4.10.71), was conventional in the epitaphs of faithful wives.²⁴

The opening lines of Ovid's autobiography run as follows:

Ille ego qui fuerim, tenerorum lusor amorum,
quem legis, ut noris, accipe posteritas.
Sulmo mihi patria est, gelidis uberrimus undis,
milia qui noviens distat ab urbe decem.

Two phrases here, *ille ego qui* and *mihi patria*, have parallels in Roman grave-inscriptions, but it is unfortunately not possible to determine with precision just how far the language of these lines was derived from inscriptional conventions known to

²¹ Note the bold imitation here of the Greek 'vivid' indicative in indirect questions. The idiom is one that Ovid uses elsewhere: see *Her.* 16.78; *Met.* 10.637; *Tristia* 1.3.52; *Ex P.* 1.8.25, but specific reminiscence of the *Phaedo* need not be ruled out. Misch, op. cit. (n. 1), i, 106f. sees the *Phaedo* passage as the prototype behind a number of later autobiographical narratives concerned with stages in intellectual development.

²² It was recognized in the ancient theory of rhetorical *conquestio* set out by Cicero in *De Inv.* 1.106–9 that one might arouse sympathy either (*locus* I) simply by pointing a contrast between one's present misfortune and past good fortune or (*locus* V) by narrating one's calamities straightforwardly without specific appeals for sympathy.

²³ διὰ τούτου γὰρ ἡλπίζον καὶ τὰ περὶ ἐμὲ μάλιστα γνωσθήσεσθαι καὶ τοῦ αὐτὸν τούτων μνημεῖόν μου καταλειφθήσεσθαι πολὺ κάλλιον τῶν χαλκῶν ἀναθημάτων.

²⁴ See R. Lattimore, *Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs* (Urbana, 1962), 279 n. 108.

Ovid and his audience: relatively few Roman epigraphic finds can be firmly assigned to the period prior to Ovid's *Tristia*,²⁵ and verse epitaphs of the subsequent era cannot be assumed to be innocent of Ovidian influence. However, that Ovid to some extent had grave-inscriptions in mind when he wrote the opening of *Tristia* 4.10 seems evident if we compare the opening line of the epitaph which he proposes for himself in *Tristia* 3.3.73ff.: HIC . EGO . QVI . IACEO . TENERORVM . LVSOR . AMORVM. We need to give our lines detailed, phrase by phrase, consideration in relation to epigraphic parallels.

(1) *Ille ego qui*

The tortuous sentence structure of *Tristia* 4.10.1–2 seems contrived to thrust 'Ille ego qui' to the beginning of the poem. ILLE . EGO . QVI is not attested in any inscriptions of Republican date reported by Degrassi, but this lack of early attestation may be due to pure chance; HIC . EGO . QVI, the opening of Ovid's epitaph in *Tristia* 3.3, similarly appears not to have any known subliterate precedent; we *do* have from the Republic [H]AEC . QVAE and HAEC . EST . QVAE,²⁶ and also epitaphs in which the deceased is made to speak in the first person singular.²⁷ Certainly ILLE . EGO (with or without QVI) is formulaic in later Imperial epitaphs,²⁸ and, without QVI, it is attested as the opening of an inscription beneath a poet's portrait-bust in the proem to Martial, book 9. *Ille ego* also had main-stream literary precedent, for instance, in Ovid's statement of name, birthplace and profession at the beginning of *Amores* 2.1. However, the fact that *Tristia* 4.10.1 alludes distinctly to *Tristia* 3.3.73 (Ovid's epitaph-opening) weighs somewhat in favour of the supposition that initial 'Ille ego qui' already carried the resonances of an epigraphic formula. The words would also have these resonances in the other well-known poem-opening where they occur, the alternative opening of the *Aeneid* reported in ancient *Vitae* of Virgil.²⁹

(2) *qui fuerim*

The enquiry which Ovid imagines in *Tristia* 4.10.1f. may be compared with the indirect questions sometimes found in Roman epitaphs where the deceased is represented speaking in the first person singular. One such inscription of Republican date contains the lines:

si quaeris quae sim, cinis en et tosta favilla,
ante obitus tristes Helvia Prima fui.³⁰

(3) *tenerorum lusor amorum*

Coming from Ovid's proposed epitaph, this phrase may strike the reader as lapidary in quality, but it would not by itself convey obvious epigraphic associations. Certainly one does find in epigraphic lists of achievements, besides the official titles, QVAESTOR, CENSOR, DICTATOR, occasional use of masculine nouns in -or with dependent genitives: for example C. Cornelius Gallus is described in *CIL* III.14147 as

²⁵ For these see A. Degrassi, *Inscriptiones Latinae liberae rei publicae* (Göttingen, 1957–63).

²⁶ Degrassi 793, 982.

²⁷ Degrassi 817, 932, 977, 985.

²⁸ Four examples are cited in E. J. Jory and D. W. Moore, *Inscriptiones Urbis Romae Latinae: Indices* (Berlin, 1974): *CIL* VI.11407, line 1; 33961 = 10098, line 5; 1372, line 1; 34066 + A = 13481, line 3; 1692, line 2; for further examples from outside Rome see index to *CLE* (*Anthologia Latina, pars posterior: Carmina Epigraphica*, ed. F. Buecheler, Leipzig, 1930–47).

²⁹ Donat. *Vit. Verg.* 42, p. 16.165ff.; Servius, *Vit. Verg.* p. 23.33ff. Hardie.

³⁰ *CIL* IX.1837 = *CLE* 960, Degrassi 985.

the successful besieger of five cities, V.VRBIVM.EXPVGNATOR. But such phrases are not particularly common in inscriptions, and certainly not peculiar to them: compare Ovid's *tenerorum mater Amorum* (*Am.* 3.15.1) and his phrase *desultor amoris* in *Am.* 1.3.15, which has a parallel in a phrase of Messala's lampooning Dellius, *desultor bellorum civilium* (*Sen. Suas.* 1.7).

(4) *accipe posteritas*

This phrase has been noted by de Jonge (*ad loc.*) to have an epigraphic parallel (*CIL* XIV. 2852 = *CLE* 249, line 19), but the inscription in question is dated to A.D. 136 and the versifier responsible for it is likely to have been indebted to *Tristia* 4.10, for he elsewhere uses a Virgilian line-ending, *tutissima nautis* (line 11, cf. Verg. *Georg.* 4.421). Jory and Moore's indices to *CIL* VI contain thirty-five pages devoted to forms of *poster* but give only three examples of forms of *posteritas*, none of them being vocative. It therefore seems unwarranted to surmise that *accipe posteritas* was an epigraphic formula in Ovid's day.

(5) *mihi patria*

This combination of words is attested three times in *CIL* VI,³¹ so deserves to be considered formulaic in later Imperial epitaphs, but we are not in a position to assume it was so already before Ovid wrote *Tristia* 4.10. For instance the memorable line, *Roma mihi patria est, media de plebe parentes* (*CIL* VI.10097 = *CLE* 1111, line 5), is likely to have been composed with Ovid's poem in mind: it comes from the epitaph of a minor poet. Even so, the possibility that Ovid's phrasing had inscriptional precedent is not to be ruled out completely.

Thus, allusion at the opening of *Tristia* 4.10 to Ovid's proposed epitaph for himself is certain, and it may well be that various other elements in its phrasing would have had epigraphic resonances for his audience, though one must be careful not to overstate the case for assuming this. At all events Ovid is far from heavy-handed in his exploitation of inscriptional devices, and does not depart violently in these lines from his normal poetic diction.

It would be a large undertaking to discuss fully the complex network of allusions to earlier poetry in *Tristia* 4.10, and, as commentators on the poem provide ample guidance to this aspect of the poem's literary texture, it would be otiose to repeat their findings here. But one question which has not been sufficiently investigated is whether Ovid, in his selection of data for his autobiography, was aiming to remind his readers of the life-story of some famous poet of the past, with whom he wished to be compared. One might expect him to do something of the sort, given his witty and allusive cast of mind, even though in the *Ars Amatoria* he had firmly dissociated himself from the autobiographical fancies characteristic of Greek poets:

non ego, Phoebe, datas a te mihi mentiar artes,
nec nos aerae voce monemur avis,
nec mihi sunt visae Clio Clisue sorores
servanti pecudes vallibus, Ascra, tuis. (*Ars Am.* 1.25–8)

A rationalistic attitude towards the writing of autobiography is in fact the posture affected by Ovid through most of *Tristia* 4.10, and the poem, taken as a whole, does

³¹ *CIL* VI.17985 + A = 34112, line 1; 33960 = 10097, line 7; 34066 + A = 13481, line 5.

not seem framed to correspond in detail to any other poet's *Life*.³² However, the events described in the first *narratio* are in a sense very fitting for a poet who belonged to the traditions of Archilochus, according to some the inventor of elegy,³³ and Hesiod, the founding father of didactic poetry.³⁴ Both these poets, so the story goes, were engaged in an ordinary job of work –taking a cow to market, shepherding on the mountainside –when confronted with an unavoidable vocation from the Muses.³⁵ Ovid unbends from his rationalistic pose to the extent of referring to a Muse (line 20), *Aoniae...sorores* (39), *Thalia mea* (56), and in his *epilogus* even to Helicon (120), and he gives us to understand that it was the Muses who were responsible for deflecting him from a conventional career. Thus he aligns himself inconspicuously with the Hesiodic tradition, and it may be that there is more allusion than we can now detect in this poem and elsewhere in the exile poetry to the life and work of Archilochus, poet of love and war, whose fragments include references to the Thracian North.³⁶

hic ego, finitimis quamvis circumsoner armis,
tristia, quo possum, carmine fata levo.

(*Tristia* 4.10.111f.)

Is Ovid here recalling the stance of Archilochus, who described himself as a servant both of the god of war and the Muses?

³² I make this assertion on the basis of the study of Greek poets' *Lives* which gave rise to my publications 'Fiction in the Biographies of Ancient Writers', *Ancient Society* 5 (1974), 231–75, and 'Traditional Narrative, Inference and Truth in the *Lives* of Greek Poets', *Papers of the Liverpool Latin Seminar* 4 (1983), 315–69. See also M. R. Lefkowitz, *Lives of the Greek Poets* (London, 1981). Recent editions of Greek and Roman poets' *Lives* are scattered through editions of the separate poets. There is no modern comprehensive collection to replace A. Westermann, *Biographi Graeci Minores* (Braunschweig, 1845, repr. Amsterdam, 1964), and there has never been a Latin counterpart. As 'complete' *Vitae* need to be studied in relation to more fragmentary *testimonia*, comprehensive collections of *testimonia* such as S. Radt's for Sophocles (*TGF* vol. 4, Göttingen, 1977) and G. Tarditi's for Archilochus (*Archilochus: Fragmenta*, Rome, 1968, 3–55) represent the most valuable modern contributions to the presentation of the material. The Hellenistic *Lives* of poets are only extant in epitomes and fragments and, as much Greek and Latin poetry is also lost that could have contained quasi-autobiographical pronouncements influential in a poet of Ovid's date, the gaps in our knowledge of the intellectual background to his poetic self-presentation are huge; for instance we do not know which of the Greek poets Ovid is referring to in the line, *nec nos aerae voce monemur avis* (*Ars Am.* 1.26).

³³ See Orion s.v. *ἔλεγος*, 58.8 Sturz = Archilochus T 118 Tarditi: *εὐρετὴν δὲ τοῦ ἐλεγείου οἱ μὲν τὸν Ἀρχιλόχον, οἱ δὲ Μίμνερμον, οἱ δὲ Καλλῖνον παλαιότερον* (sc. *φασί*): cf. Hor. *Ars Poet.* 77f. *quis tamen exiguis elegos emisit auctor | grammatici certant et adhuc sub iudice lis est*.

³⁴ He was also reckoned a transmitter of the poetic tradition which was passed down from Linus eventually to Gallus (*Verg. Ecl.* 6.64ff.).

³⁵ Hesiod, *Theog.* 22ff., cf. *Vitae Hesiodi* in Hesiod, ed. F. Solmsen (Oxford, 1969), 1–3; A. Colonna, 'I prolegomeni ad Esiodo e la Vita Esiodea di Giovanni Tzetzes', *Bollettino del comitato per la preparazione della edizione nazionale dei classici greci e latini* n.s. 2 (1953), 27–39. For the vocation of Archilochus see the inscription of Mnesiepes, Archilochus T4 Tarditi, first edited by N. M. Kontoleon, 'Νέαι ἐπιγραφαὶ περὶ τοῦ Ἀρχιλόχου ἐκ Πάρου', *Eph. Arch.* (1952), 32–95.

³⁶ See especially frs 120, 193 Tarditi. Plutarch quotes in his *De exilio* 12 lines by Archilochus unfairly alleging that Thasos was wild and bleak (fr. 17 Tarditi): ἀλλ' ἡμεῖς, καθάπερ Ἀρχιλόχος, τῆς Θάσου τὰ καταφόρα καὶ οἰνόπεδα παρορῶν διὰ τὸ τραχὺ καὶ ἀνώμαλον, διέβαλε τὴν νῆσον εἰπὼν. "ἦδε δ' ὥστ' ὄνου ῥάχιν | ἔστηκεν ὕλης ἀγρίης ἐπιστεφής.", οὕτως τῆς φυγῆς πρὸς ἓν μέρος τὸ ἄδοξον ἐντεινόμενοι παρορῶμεν τὴν ἀπραγμοσύνην καὶ τὴν σχολὴν καὶ τὴν ἐλευθερίαν. Here is an observation to bear in mind when considering the discrepancies between Ovid's statements about Tomis and the geographical realities, on which see A. D. Fitton Brown, 'The Unreality of Ovid's Tomitan Exile', *LCM* 10,2 (Feb. 1985), 18–22.

εἰμὶ δ' ἐγὼ θεράπων μὲν Ἐνναλίοιο ἄνακτος
καὶ Μουσέων ἐρατὸν δῶρον ἐπιστάμενος (fr. 1 Tarditi)

Perhaps, but there was in addition a more recent soldier–poet whose phrases may have been in Ovid's mind when he wrote these lines. For Gallus is represented by Virgil in the tenth *Eclogue* as bewailing his lot in the midst of warfare;

nunc insanus amor duri me Martis in armis
tela inter media atque adversos detinet hostes (44f.).

It should also be noted that *tristia*, the first word of the 'Gallus papyrus', may very well have agreed with the noun *fata*.³⁷

Ovid's career bore certain resemblances to that of his older contemporary and friend, Propertius. Both were of equestrian birth, as, indeed, was Tibullus.³⁸ Both rejected a public career in favour of poetry. How far Ovid in *Tristia* 4.10 wished specifically to remind us of autobiographical passages in Propertius' elegies is another matter. Propertius 1.22, like *Tristia* 4.10, opens with an indirect question about the poet's identity:

Qualis et unde genus, qui sint mihi, Tulle, Penates,
quaeris pro nostra semper amicitia (1f.).

Propertius' phrasing here, as in the opening line of his preceding poem (1.21), has epigraphic precedent: both poem openings call for close comparison with the Republican subliterary epitaph of Helvia Prima, cited above.³⁹ Whatever the extent of Ovid's indebtedness to inscriptional clichés in *Tristia* 4.10 init., he clearly avoids imitating Propertius' earlier exploitation of them too closely. Again, Ovid's description of his birthplace may be compared with Propertius' two descriptions of his: both poets use the adjective *uber* in this context (Prop. 1.22.10; Ovid, *Tristia* 4.10.3); both poets remark how well watered their birthplaces were (Prop. 4.1.123f.; Ovid, loc. cit.), but here we must remember that fertility and water-supply were conventional topics in ancient encomia of places.⁴⁰ As Propertius' childhood was much more troubled than Ovid's, owing to the early death of his father, their narratives of this period do not correspond closely. However, Propertius' brief account in 4.1.131ff. of his assumption of a *libera ... toga* and subsequent rejection of public life in favour of elegy does call for comparison with *Tristia* 4.10.19–64:

mox ubi bulla rudi dimissa est aurea collo,
matris et ante deos libera sumpta toga,
tum tibi pauca suo de carmine dictat Apollo
et vetat insano verba tonare Foro.
at tu finge elegos, fallax opus: haec tua castra! – 135
scribat ut exemplo cetera turba tuo.
militiam Veneris blandis patiere sub armis,

³⁷ This is especially probable if lines 2–5 (with *fata...dulcia* in line 2) are an amoebean response to a quatrain ending with our line 1, as I suggest in 'The "Gallus Papyrus": a New Interpretation', *CQ* 34 (1984), 167–74. I also suggest very tentatively (p. 172 n. 34) that Verg. *Ecl.* 10.37–9 might reflect stages in an amoebean contest poem prior to those found in the papyrus fragment. Ovid's use of *circumsoner armis* and *tristia fata* in consecutive lines fits in well with this hypothesis, for what it is worth.

³⁸ Ovid, *Tristia* 4.10.8; Propertius 4.1.131: *Vita Tibulli* in e.g. J. C. Rolfe (ed.), *Suetonius* (Cambridge, Mass., 1914), II.492.

³⁹ P. 187.

⁴⁰ See Menander Rhetor, 344.31ff.: τὴν δὲ φύσιν τῆς χώρας δοκιμάζομεν ἀπάσης ἐκ τῶν ἐξ τόπων τούτων, ἥ γὰρ ὀρεινὴ τίς ἐστιν ἢ πεδινή, ἡ ξηρὰ καὶ ἄνυδρος ἢ λιπαρὰ καὶ εὐνδρος. καὶ ἡ εὐφορος καὶ πολυφόρος ἢ ἄφορος καὶ δύσφορος.

et Veneris pueris utilis hostis eris.
nam tibi victrices quascumque labore parasti,
eludit palmas una puella tuas.

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The only close verbal correspondence is that between line 132 and Ovid's line 28: *liberior fratri sumpta mihiq[ue] toga est*, and that could be merely because variety of expression on this topic was hardly possible. Elsewhere the two poets choose differently from the available stock of phrases when describing similar events: thus Propertius speaks of dictation from Apollo (line 133), Ovid of persuasion from the Muses (line 39, cf. 20); Propertius refers to *militiam Veneris...sub armis* (line 137), Ovid to *arma fori* (line 18). In thought, however, there are noteworthy correspondences: the idea conveyed by Ovid's line 55, *utque ego maiores, sic me coluere minores*, may be compared with Propertius' line 136, and it may well be that Propertius' representation of himself as having rejected the forum in favour specifically of love-elegy and 'one girl' is the reason why Ovid in his account of his poetic career (lines 55ff.) strangely glosses over the fact that by no means all his pre-exilic poetry was concerned with Corinna.

Thus Ovid in his autobiography narrates events not unsuitable for one who was the successor in elegy of Gallus, Tibullus and Propertius and the Greek founding father of the genre, Archilochus. In the Hesiodic tradition he receives a calling from the Muses and alludes to Helicon. Does he likewise point to similarities between his life and that of other poets he admired, Virgil, say, or Callimachus?

The opening words of *Tristia* 4.10, '*Ille ego qui*' are, as we have observed, also the first words of the alternative opening of the *Aeneid* reported in ancient *Lives* of Virgil.⁴¹ Is it possible that Ovid is making here an allusion to this version of the *Aeneid*-proem? Have we proof here that he knew the lines by hearsay or from some early grammarian's biographical work on Virgil? Whatever one's personal views may be on the authorship of the *Aeneid*-supplement,⁴² the answer to the second question has to be that there is no such proof here. If, as in later times, the words '*Ille ego qui*' already had the resonances of an epigraphic formula, it would be impossible for one poet's use of the words to be taken unambiguously as an allusion to an earlier poet's literary adoption of them. Nor is it the case that Ovid in *Tristia* 4.10 consistently aligns his life-history with that of Virgil. True, he refers in lines 61–4 to the burning of certain of his books, and elsewhere in the exile poetry Ovid's mentions of the symbolic burning of his *Metamorphoses* prior to his exile have been seen as alluding covertly to Virgil's instructions, before his last journey, that the *Aeneid* should be burnt.⁴³ Allusion in *Tristia* 1.7, in particular, to Virgil's last request need not be doubted, even though this is by no means the only association that Ovid conjures up there by the symbolism of book-burning.⁴⁴ Whether we should read *Tristia* 4.10.61–4 as alluding in any way

⁴¹ *Ille ego qui quondam gracili modulatus avena | carmen et egressus silvis vicina coegit | ut quamvis avido parerent arva colono, | gratum opus agricolis; at nunc horrentia Martis | arma virumque cano...*

⁴² The classic expositions of the case for and against authenticity, J. Henry, *Aeneidea* 1 (London, 1873), 1–123 and R. G. Austin, '*Ille ego qui quondam...*' *CQ* 18 (1968), 107–15, by no means cover all the ramifications of this complex problem. For further bibliography see W. Suerbaum, *ANRW* II.31.1 (1980) 206f.

⁴³ See e.g. L. P. Wilkinson, *Ovid Recalled* (Cambridge, 1955), 238; S. Mariotti, 'La carriera poetica di Ovidio', *Belfagor* 12 (1957), 631; A. Grisart, 'La publication des *Métamorphoses*: une source du récit d'Ovide', *Atti del Convegno Internazionale Ovidiano* (Roma, 1959), II, 142–9; Brooks Otis, *Ovid as an Epic Poet* (Cambridge, 1966), 89–90 n. 1.

⁴⁴ B. R. Nagle, *The Poetics of Exile* (Brussels, 1980), 29f., makes the valid point that the analogue for Ovid's book-burning to which he overtly draws our attention in *Tristia* 1.7.17f. is a mythological one.

to the near-destruction of the *Aeneid* is another matter. In the account of his poetic career of which these lines form part, Ovid, as we have seen, slants the narrative so as to emphasize his role as a love-poet, thus bringing out correspondences between him and Propertius. In doing so he completely glosses over the fact that he was ever a writer of any species of *heroicum carmen*; he does not specify, as he had done in *Tristia* 1.7, that it was the *Metamorphoses* that he burnt before going into exile, and he does not represent his pre-exilic book-burning as an isolated, highly symbolic, incident, but as just another instance of a destructive self-criticism which had always been his practice. Why he chooses to lay such emphasis here on his habit of periodically purging his work is not clear: it is possible that he had in mind Virgil, a self-emending poet *par excellence*, but the true explanation for the slant in his narrative may be quite different. It always has to be remembered that not all the literary background to *Tristia* 4.10 is extant.⁴⁵ To return to the question of *ille ego qui* in *Tristia* 4.10.1, neither Ovid's deployment of quasi-titular *arma virumque* in *Tristia* 2.534 (preceded by *ille* in line 533) nor his use of initial *arma* in *Am.* 1.1 (preceded in his second edition by a four-line epigram) constitutes absolute proof that Ovid did not know the *Aeneid*-supplement. Nor is one obliged to infer from the free paraphrase of the *Aeneid*-proem by his friend Propertius in 2.34.63f that Virgil's epic must have begun with the word *arma* before Varius and Tucca edited it. Nevertheless, there is no compelling need to view *Tristia* 4.10.1 init. as alluding to the alternative *Aeneid*-opening, so it would be inappropriate here to discuss the extremely controversial question of the lines' date and authorship in any detail. We need look no further than one of Ovid's own poem-openings (*Am.* 2.1) for literary background to the first words of *Tristia* 4.10:

Hoc quoque composui Paelignis natus aquosis
ille ego nequitiae Naso poeta meae.

At the other end of our poem, however, we do find Ovid alluding to the self-representation of one of his poetic forerunners, namely Callimachus. The reference in line 123 to *Livor* would not on its own, perhaps, be sufficient basis for this assertion, for *φθόρος* was a concept known to poets before Callimachus wrote *Hymn. Ap.* 105, and to orators too: Isocrates is concerned to shield himself from it in the prologue to his *Antidosis* (8).⁴⁶ But Ovid's reference in his *epilogus* to *Livor* follows closely after the unmistakably Callimachean motif of the poet transported to Helicon from outlandish parts. Ovid, giving thanks to his Muse, declares:

tu dux et comes es, tu nos abducis ab Histro
in medioque mihi das Helicone locum (119f.).

From an anonymous epigram (*Anth. Pal.* 7.42) it appears that at the beginning of the *Aetia* Callimachus related how in a dream he was transported from Libya to Helicon and was set down in the midst of the Muses; how they together wove the fabric of the *Aetia*, he telling of ancient heroes, the Muses in reply telling of the gods.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ For example, out of the Roman poets singled out by Ovid as important to him in *Tristia* 4.10.43ff., Propertius, Horace, Virgil and Tibullus are extant, but very little indeed remains of the works of Macer, Ponticus, Bassus or Gallus.

⁴⁶ εἰ μὲν οὖν ἐπαινεῖν ἑμαυτὸν ἐπιχειροῖν, ἐύρων οὔτε περιλαβεῖν ἅπαντα περὶ ὧν διελθεῖν προηρούμην οἷός τε γενησόμενος, οὐτ' ἐπιχαρίτως οὐδ' ἀνεπιφθόνως εἰπεῖν περὶ αὐτῶν δυνησόμενος.

⁴⁷ Ἄ μέγα Βαττιάδαο σοφοῦ περίπυστον ὄνειρ, | ἧ ῥ' ἐτεὸν κεράων οὐδ' ἐλέφαντος
ἔης· | τοῖα γὰρ ἄμμιν ἔφηνas, ἄτ' οὐ πάρος ἄνδρες ἴδμεν, | ἀμφί τε ἀθανάτους, ἀμφί τε

Callimachus returned to the subject of Helicon in the epilogue to the fourth and last book of the *Aetia* (fr. 112 Pf.).

It was not entirely mistaken, then, to surmise that Ovid's autobiography would be to some degree allusive to the lives and self-representation of his poetic predecessors. However, the life-story with which *Tristia* 4.10 displays most correspondences is, surprising though it may seem, not that of a poet. The most illustrious autobiographer of Ovid's time was none other than Augustus Caesar, and it is to his oeuvre that we must now turn.

The version of the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* now extant⁴⁸ is one which was completed by Augustus in his 76th year, that is, after 23 September, A.D. 13, and supplemented and revised after his death the following year. It is therefore later in date than *Tristia* book 4, which, on the basis of chronological references in 4.6.19f., 7.1f. and 10.95ff., has been calculated to belong to A.D. 11. Earlier versions of the *Res Gestae*, a draft of 2 B.C. and another from 28 B.C., are postulated by recent editors, but as what Augustus was writing was essentially his own funeral *elogium*, to be inscribed on bronze tablets and set up in front of his mausoleum, it is improbable that these earlier versions would have been inscribed for public reading. Where Ovid is most likely to have come across wording comparable with that of the *Res Gestae* was in Augustus' lost autobiography, *De vita sua*, a work in thirteen books covering the period up to the Cantabrian war (25 B.C.).⁴⁹

Section 1 of the *Res Gestae* runs as follows. The restoration can be taken as certain in view of the parallel Greek text.

Annos undeviginti natus exercitum privato consilio et privata impensa comparavi, per quem rem publicam a dominatione factionis oppressam in libertatem vindicavi. Eo [nomi]ne senatus decretis honorif[i]cis in ordinem suum m[e] adlegit C. Pansa et A. Hirti[o] consulibus, con[sula]rem locum s[imul] dans sententiae ferendae, et i[m]perium mihi dedit. Res publica n[on]e quid detrimenti caperet, a) me pro praetore simul cum consulibus pro[viden]dum [iussit]. P[ro]pulus autem eodem anno me consulem, cum [cos. uterqu]e in bell[o] ceci[disset], et triumvirum rei publicae constituend[ae] creavit[is].

In this account of the beginning of Augustus' career we are told how he became consul and triumvir after the death of both the previous consuls in battle: *cum [cos. uterqu]e in bell[o] ceci[disset]*; the Greek has ἀμφοτέρων [τῶν ὑπάτων ἐν π]ολέμῳ πεπτωκότων, and no other restorations are conceivable.⁵⁰ Ovid's date of birth is given in *Tristia* 4.10.6 as *cum cecidit fato consul uterque pari*.⁵¹ The correspondence is striking. Augustus gives prominence to the fact that he was nineteen years old at the time; Ovid too, in *Tristia* 4.10.31–4, views the year when he was nineteen as a major turning point in his life. This was the year of his brother's death. Ovid was starting out on his brief public career, and in what capacity? He was a member of a triumvirate: *eque viris quondam pars tribus una fui* (34).⁵² There the correspondences between the

ἡμιθέους, | εὐτέ μιν ἐκ Λιβύης ἀναείρας εἰς Ἑλικῶνα | ἡγάγες ἐν μέσσαις Πιερίδεσσι φέρων· αἱ δὲ οἱ εἰρομένῳ ἀμφ' ὠγγύων ἡρώων | Αἴτια καὶ μακάρων εἶρον ἀμειβόμεναι. Cf. Callim. fr. 2 Pf.

⁴⁸ Text in *Acta Divi Augusti* 1 ed. S. Riccobono (Rome, 1945); cf. *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, ed. P. A. Brunt and J. M. Moore (Oxford, 1967).

⁴⁹ Note the literary tone of such phrases as *rem publicam a dominatione factionis oppressam* and *cum consul uterque in bello cecidisset*. On the *De vita sua* and other prose works of Augustus see Suet. *Aug.* 85; on the *Res Gestae* and its purpose, *ibid.* 101.4.

⁵⁰ Cf. Plut. *Cic.* 45 (a passage where Augustus is later acknowledged as a source): ἐπεὶ δ' Ἀντώνιος μὲν ἤττητο, τῶν ὑπάτων ἀμφοτέρων ἐκ τῆς μάχης ἀποθανόντων.

⁵¹ This line is also found in Lygdamus (Tib. 3) 5.18, to designate his date of birth.

⁵² N.b. Ovid does not mention all the official capacities in which he served. We know him to have been also a *decemvir stlitibus iudicandis* (*Fasti* 4.383f.) and an orator in the centumviral

Res Gestae and *Tristia* 4.10 end, but further parallels between Augustus' life and self-representation and Ovid's are evident if we study Suetonius' *Augustus* and consider in particular what is known about the Princeps' lost *Commentarii de vita sua*.⁵³

Suetonius, who begins his own *Life of Augustus* with a wealth of information about the past history of the *gens Octavia*, remarks that all Augustus himself wrote about the subject was that he was *equestri familia natus*, and that his family was an ancient and rich one of which his father was the first member to become a senator (*Aug.* 2.3). Ovid similarly abstains from detailed genealogy at the beginning of *Tristia* 4.10, and merely gives the information that he was from an old equestrian family: *si quid id est, usque a proavis vetus ordinis heres | non modo fortunae munere factus eques* (line 7f.).⁵⁴

For further resemblances between Ovid and Augustus we may turn to the opening of Suetonius' description of Augustus' private life (*Aug.* 61–5). How much of the information in this section was derived from Augustus' own writings is uncertain, but one item is certainly credited to him, and it concerns his second marriage. Augustus wrote that he divorced his second wife '*pertaesus morum perversitatem eius*'. Conceivably, this might have come from, for instance, a letter, rather than from the *De vita sua*, but it seems very possible that Augustus, like Ovid, dissected his three marriages in his autobiography. Suetonius also writes about bereavements suffered by Augustus, one being the loss of his mother when he was nineteen; Ovid, too, was bereaved at nineteen and seems concerned to emphasize the importance of his late brother to him.⁵⁵ In the format of his autobiography as well, Ovid may have owed something to Augustus' *De vita sua*: if Suetonius' *divisio* in *Aug.* 61, distinguishing public achievements from private matters, had a precedent in Augustus' autobiography, it may be no coincidence that there is a comparable move, with chronological back-tracking, in *Tristia* 4.10.65, from the narrative of Ovid's poetic career up to the exile, back to the topic of his private life, specifically the casual affairs of his youth and his three marriages.

The marital histories of Augustus and Ovid call for close comparison. Suetonius in *Aug.* 62 relates first how Octavian was betrothed to the daughter of P. Servilius Isauricus. Ovid in the lines immediately after the chronological shift at line 65 talks about his light-hearted and unscandalous early loves. Then the coincidences become striking. Augustus, like Ovid, has two unsuccessful marriages and then a successful one. His first venture into matrimony is described as follows:

...reconciliatus post primam discordiam Antionio, expostulantibus utriusque militibus ut et

court (*Tristia* 2.93–6); see E. J. Kenney, 'Ovid and the Law', *YCS* 21 (1969), 243–63. Now we can see why he suppresses such information in this context!

⁵³ Fragments in H. Malcovati, *Caesaris Augusti Imperatoris Operum Fragmenta* (Torino, 1928).

⁵⁴ Suet. *Aug.* 2.3: *Ipse Augustus nihil amplius quam equestri familia ortum se scribit vetere ac locuplete, et in qua primus senator pater suus fuerit*. Ovid's words also allude to earlier lines of his own in the *sphragis* to the *Amores*: *si vita sua*. Suetonius' information here cannot therefore simply have been lifted from that source, and it is not to be ruled out that Augustus referred to the loss of his mother, as Ovid wrote about his brother, in connection with a narrative of his rise to office, rather than at the start of a distinct section devoted to his private life. The death of Augustus' father, omitted in *Aug.* 61.2, has been mentioned earlier (8.1) in its chronologically proper place just after the account of his birth and naming.

⁵⁵ Two bereavements are mentioned in Suet. *Aug.* 61.2: *matrem amisit in primo consulatu, sororem Octaviam quinquagensimum et quartum agens aetatis annum*, but the latter one occurred later than the period covered by the *De vita sua*. Suetonius' information here cannot therefore simply have been lifted from that source, and it is not to be ruled out that Augustus referred to the loss of his mother, as Ovid wrote about his brother, in connection with a narrative of his rise to office, rather than at the start of a distinct section devoted to his private life. The death of Augustus' father, omitted in *Aug.* 61.2, has been mentioned earlier (8.1) in its chronologically proper place just after the account of his birth and naming.

necessitudine aliqua iungerentur, privignam eius Claudiam, Fulviae ex P. Clodio filiam, duxit uxorem vixdum nubilem ac simulate cum Fulvia socru orta dimisit intactam adhuc et virginem.

Ovid's first marriage (lines 69f.) was likewise brief and disastrous; he was very young at the time. The Princeps' second marriage, to Scribonia, was a failure: he became 'tired of the perversity of her ways'; Ovid's second marriage likewise soon came to an end, though he states (line 71) that his wife was *sine crimine*. Both Augustus and Ovid find lasting happiness with their third wife.⁵⁶ Coincidences continue: Ovid and Augustus both have a daughter, married more than once; they are both grandfathers (Suet. *Aug.* 63–4; *Tristia* 4.10.75f.).

Obviously Ovid could not have engineered coincidences of this kind, but he does seem to be deliberately selecting for emphasis in *Tristia* 4.10 those elements in his past which most closely correspond to the life of Augustus. Why should he have done this? What he is doing, I think, is attempting a subliminal approach to Augustus, an under-cover mission up the Palatine, as envisaged in *Tristia* 1.1.⁵⁷ Within this innocent-seeming autobiographical narrative addressed ostensibly to *posteritas*, to *studiosa pectora* and to any *candidus lector*, there is a special message contrived to play on the emotions of one particular reader. Ovid is, in effect, giving a new dimension to the *topos* exemplified in Plato's *Apology* where Socrates appeals to his jurors' human nature by saying: 'I was not born "from oak or stone", but of the human race... I have a family...'. Ovid goes several steps further, conveying to Augustus the following secret message: 'I am a man like you. Just how much like you perhaps you have never considered. I too am *equestri familia ortus*; the year when both consuls fell in battle was important to me too: that was the year I was born. At the age of nineteen, like you, I was bereaved and, like you, I entered public life. I was actually a *triumvir*. Can you imagine it? What a laugh! And then, consider my private life. I too have been married three times, and it is my third wife who has brought me happiness. I too have a daughter, married more than once. I too have grandchildren.'

Reflecting on the topic of the emotions aroused by tragedy, Aristotle had once remarked that pity is caused by a man's unmerited misfortune, fear by the fact of its happening to a man like ourselves, τὸν ὁμοιον (*Poet.* 1453a5).⁵⁸ Ovid in *Tristia* 4.10 aspires in his secret message to Augustus to play on both these emotions. The possible value of such an approach was no doubt something he had learnt as a student of rhetoric. Quintilian (9.2.65ff.) refers to exercises called *controversiae figuratae*, declamations in which the outward tenor of one's words concealed a hidden meaning, and discusses how the techniques learnt through these exercises might sometimes be useful in the lawcourts.⁵⁹ In certain of these *controversiae* one was barred by a legal fiction from making one's charges against a tyrant in a straight-forward manner (loc. cit. 67). The two treatises on 'figured' speeches (*Περὶ ἐσχηματισμένων*) ascribed to

⁵⁶ Suet. *Aug.* 62.2: *Mox Scriboniam in matrimonium accepit nuptam ante duobus consularibus, ex altero etiam matrem. cum hac quoque divortium fecit, 'pertaesus', ut scribit, 'morum perversitatem eius', ac statim Liviam Drusillam matrimonio Tiberi Neronis et quidem praegnantem abduxit dilexitque et probavit unice ac perseveranter.*

⁵⁷ See *Tristia* 1.1.69ff. (Ovid addresses his book): *forsitan expectes, an in alta Palatia missum | scandere te iubeam Caesareamque domum. | ignoscant augusta mihi loca dique locorum. | venit in hoc illa fulmen ab arce caput.*

⁵⁸ In *Rhet.* 2.8.13 (1386a) Aristotle elaborates on this topic and specifies the various respects in which one man may be like another; these include his public offices and his family! καὶ τοὺς ὁμοίους ἐλεοῦσι κατὰ ἡλικίας, κατὰ ἥθη, κατὰ ἔξεις, κατὰ ἀξιώματα, κατὰ γένη...

⁵⁹ Quintilian introduces the subject of figured rhetoric, evidently something very popular in his time, as follows: *iam enim ad id genus quod et frequentissimum est et expectari maxime credo veniendum est, in quo per quamdam suspicionem quod non dicimus accipi volumus,*

Dionysius of Halicarnassus⁶⁰ discuss, among other works, Plato's *Apology* and Isocrates' *Antidosis*. The *Antidosis* is considered a veiled self-eulogy (p. 347.3ff.). Plato's *Apology* is seen as having four functions: it is a defence of Socrates, an accusation of the Athenians, a eulogy of Socrates and a paradigmatic exhortation to philosophers (p. 305.8ff.). Considered in similar terms, *Tristia* 4.10, besides being a source of useful biographical information, serves as a memorial to Ovid, as a tribute to his Muse, as a public vindication of his innocence and as a private appeal to Augustus.

Such, it seems, was the intellectual background to Ovid's covert plea to the man responsible for his exile. The plea failed, for all its humour and subtlety, but it is there, and accounts for much that has seemed puzzling in Ovid's choice of material for his autobiographical narrative. How seriously he can have expected it to succeed is a difficult question. Surely it was a risky procedure to address Augustus by means of a device recommended in the rhetorical schools as suitable for use in declamations concerned with tyrants? Was it really diplomatic in A.D. 11 to remind Augustus, however obliquely, of Julia and her children, of wars on the frontiers of the Empire, and of the downfall which could come to a man like himself? It is worth noting that *Tristia* 2, that longer and more overt example of Ovidian *apologia*, raises similar questions about the poet's seriousness of intent.⁶¹ I find it impossible to conceive that Ovid was not concerned, obsessively concerned, in the *Tristia*, with securing his return from exile,⁶² but whatever his hopes and fears, he seems to have been too much in love with wit and rhetorical virtuosity to resist the temptation of amusing himself to the detriment of his cause.⁶³ We, at least, nearly two thousand years removed from the events, are in a position to enjoy the long-hidden subtleties of *Tristia* 4.10.

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non utique contrarium, ut in εἰρωνεία, sed aliud latens et auditori quasi inveniendum. quod, ut supra ostendi, iam fere solum schema a nostris vocatur, et unde controversiae figuratae dicuntur. eius triplex usus est: unus si dicere palam parum tutum est, alter si non decet, tertius qui venustatis modo gratia adhibetur et ipsa novitate ac varietate magis quam si relatio sit recta delectat (9.2.65–6).

⁶⁰ Dionysii Halicarnasei *Opuscula* II ed. H. Usener and L. Radermacher (Leipzig, 1904–29), 295–358.

⁶¹ See T. Wiedemann, *CQ* 25 (1975), 264–71.

⁶² Theories that Ovid never went into exile at Tomis are not for me. See n. 36 above. The Roman empire was far too well organized for such a thing to be credible.

⁶³ Seneca the Elder, *Contr.* 2.4.12–13, touches interestingly on several aspects of political sensitivity in the time of Augustus: an unintended political meaning is read into a declamation by Porcius Latro (one of Ovid's teachers); another prosecutor deliberately takes the risk of insulting Agrippa. *Mihi videtur admiratione dignus divus Augustus sub quo tantum licuit, sed horum non possum misereri qui tanti putant caput potius quam dictum perdere*, comments Seneca. It seems that Ovid's attitude to risk-taking was not unparalleled in contemporary Rome.