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Aggressive Elegy. The Politics of Communication in Ovid's *Ibis*

Francesca Salvatori

A thesis submitted for the qualification of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Classics and Ancient History

Durham University

2026

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Abstract

This thesis, entitled ‘Aggressive elegy. The politics of communication in Ovid’s *Ibis*’, analyses Ovid’s *Ibis* as a true example of Roman elegy by combining the traditional exegetical approach with a linguistic pragmatic approach (linguistic politeness and impoliteness, non-verbal communication and gesture, and pathological communication). In a tripartite structure, the thesis addresses the many interpretive questions related to this still understudied poem by confronting it with other types of elegy (Roman love elegy and the rest of Ovid’s exile poetry). Part One (“The *Ibis* and Roman love elegy: (unexpected) continuity?”), divided into Chapters One and Two, discusses the relationship between the *Ibis* and Roman love elegy, by arguing for the existence of a form of elegiac communication, shared between curse and love spell. Part Two (“Lament and invective: the *Ibis* and the politics of exile”), divided into Chapters Three and Four, addresses the role of the *Ibis* inside Ovid’s exilic corpus, and Ovid’s communication towards Augustus in the *Ibis*, which ultimately leads to Ovid challenging Augustus’ power. In Part Three (“Manipulating emotions and knowledge: the catalogue and the labyrinth of references”), divided into Chapters Five and Six, this thesis analyses the catalogue of myths that occupies the majority of the poem. The analysis shows and explains the inconsistencies in Ovid’s choice of examples, which often prove to be unsuitable for the representation of an enemy, and presents the *Ibis* as an attempt, by Ovid, to claim again his role of *uates*. Ultimately, through the case of the *Ibis*, this work argues for a new understanding of Latin elegy as a genre in which, besides love, invective finds its rightful place as well.

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Perfection, of a kind, was what he was after,
and the poetry he invented was easy to understand;
he knew human folly like the back of his hand,
and was greatly interested in armies and fleets;
when he laughed, respectable senators burst with laughter,
and when he cried the little children died in the streets.

W. H. Auden, *Epitaph on a Tyrant*.

From *Another Time*, New York 1940.

Introduction

Elegy, curse and communication

It seems very difficult to consider the *Ibis* an elegiac poem. With its 644 lines¹ – 322 elegiac couplets – used to attack an enemy whose identity is never revealed, the poem is unparalleled in the field of Latin poetry. Its violent invectives seem to recall iambic poetry, and its iambic nature is generally what attracts the most attention, despite the metrical choice. Its relationship with Hellenistic poetry and curses – literary and popular curses both in ancient Greek and Roman societies – points in this direction. As far as Latin literature is concerned, the well-known connection with Horace’s *Epodes*, starting with the opening lines of *Epode* 1 (*Ibis* is the very first word of Horace’s first epode) is one of the main clues to its iambic content and its precedents in the Latin context.²

And yet, is the *Ibis* really so distant from the elegiac genre? Is the metrical choice the only element that traces the poem back to the generic pattern of elegy? This work challenges the idea that the *Ibis* is, at its core, an iambic poem and aims to shift the focus to emphasise instead continuity between the *Ibis* and the elegiac setting: that is, continuity with Ovid’s exilic poems, of course, but also with the realm of Roman love elegy. Scholars like Philbrick, who argues that the *Ibis* extends the traditional boundaries of elegy,³ have shown how promising this field is: as Philbrick puts it, “love and hatred are not wholly alien to erotic elegy”, and

¹ According to La Penna’s 1957 edition.

² On intertextual references to Horace’s *Epodes* see esp. Schiesaro 2011, 95-101. On iambic presence in the *Ibis* see also Schiesaro 2001.

³ Philbrick 2021, 135.

Tibullus' elegies anticipate features that will be crucial in Ovid's *Ibis*.⁴ Pushing this argument further, what I argue is that invective is part of love elegy, and indeed of the elegy of lament: hate speech, love speech and speech of lamentation can coexist and embody each other. Love speech, hate speech and lament are three different modes of communication that must be understood together. This means understanding the *Ibis* as a type of elegy, but also seeing its contribution as crucial to our understanding of the elegiac genre.

According to Ovid's statement, the poem was written after Ovid's fiftieth birthday (1: *Tempus ad hoc lustris bis iam mihi quinque peractis*), although this does not particularly improve our understanding of the internal chronology of Ovid's exile works.⁵ Various attempts to place the *Ibis* in a more specific time period have been made,⁶ but, since it is impossible to be sure that *Ibis* is one of the enemies mentioned in the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*, the issue remains essentially unsolved. In addition, the complexity of its generic pattern, the peculiarity of the poem itself, the impossibility of resolving the question of *Ibis*' identity and, above all, the striking contrast between invective content and elegiac form, are all contributing to the interest, but also the difficulty, of this unique Ovidian work.

Because the attack is so violent and personal, but the identity of the enemy remains unknown, identification is one of the points that has historically attracted a lot of scholarly attention. Against those, like Ellis, who approach the problem by

⁴ Philbrick 2021, 139. Another significant antecedent to mention is Catull. 85.

⁵ See La Penna 1957, VII.

⁶ A comprehensive discussion of the matter, with reference to previous positions, is in Gatti 2014. The same topic is extensively addressed in La Penna 1957, Williams 1992 (later republished 2006) and Hinds 1999 too.

trying to identify a specific figure among Ovid's known enemies,⁷ Housman's statement that Ibis is "Nobody. He is much too good to be true" changed the contemporary view on the poem.⁸ As far as the issue of identification with an actual individual is concerned, the most recent, and probably most influential, hypothesis is that of Schiesaro, who famously argues that Ibis could be Augustus himself.⁹ Abandoning the attempt to identify Ibis with a specific person, the path of identification has indeed found new roots among those who look for a different kind of embodiment: e.g., Ovid treats Ibis as he treats his own poetry in exile for Krasne,¹⁰ while the enemy is the very experience of exile for Vial.¹¹ On the other hand, Williams' seminal 1996 monograph proposes a very different approach to the problem: could Ibis not be a fictional creation symbolising the real enemies?¹² Building on this argument, I argue that Ibis' fictitious nature is essential for understanding his role in the poem and broadening our interpretation of Ovid's approach to elegy. The way in which Ovid uses Ibis as a character sheds light on the poem's interpretation, as well as on the value of autobiographical implications. This is the path on which I place my work: instead of focusing on identification, this thesis aims to advance this vision of Ibis by exploring the role of the enemy within the elegiac genre and thus Ovid's use of the relationship between the elegiac pattern and autobiographical content.

⁷ The hypotheses have been countless: e.g., C. Iulius Hyginus (Salvagnius 1633, 11-16), the poet Manilius (Merkel 1837, 400), Cassius Severus, Titus Labienus, Trasillus (Ellis 1881, XXIII, XXIV, and XXVI respectively).

⁸ Housman 1920, 316.

⁹ Schiesaro 2011. Previous mentions of the idea are in Casali 1997, 107-8; 112, note 68.

¹⁰ Krasne 2012.

¹¹ Vial 2020.

¹² Williams 1996, 19.

If the question of *Ibis*' identity is complex, the pattern of the possible generic connections of the poem may seem overwhelming at first sight. In his fundamental edition of the *Ibis*, Antonio La Penna reinforces its relationship to the lost poem of Callimachus. The importance of the *Ibis* is also largely understood in terms of how it can help us to make assumptions about the poem of the same name by Callimachus, and more generally as a literary document of the Hellenistic period.¹³ This applies to the alleged role of the *Ibis* in relation to the Hellenistic *Ἀραΐ*, curse-poems that contained obscure erudite references and catalogues of *exempla*. Watson understands them as “erudite *jeux d’esprit*”, distinct from the popular *defixiones*, while Williams disputes the possibility of making such a clear distinction.¹⁴ But, as Williams puts it, “given that Ovid never wrote a ‘typical’ poem about anything, how safe is to assume that the *Ibis* yields straightforward evidence of the Hellenistic state of the art?”¹⁵

Continuity between the concepts of “elegy” and “iamb” has been used to argue for the clearly iambic character of the *Ibis* by Schiesaro: “Despite all proclamations to the contrary *Ibis* is very much a *carmen maledicum*, incorporating on a grand scale typical features of *arai* and *dirae* and, if anything, pushing the *iambike idea* far beyond anything we find in Archilochus or Hipponax (or, for that

¹³ “Resta il suo valore di documento letterario, di mosaico, cioè, di pezzi provenienti da letteratura ellenistica, di frutto d’una tradizione che risale fino a Callimaco” (“What remains is its value as a literary document, as mosaic of elements of Hellenistic literature, outcome of a tradition that can be traced back to Callimachus”) (La Penna 1957, LXXIV). According to Ingleheart (2011, 120-1), the strong link to Callimachus is among the factors that contributed to the neglect of the poem among Ovid’s exilic corpus: the possibility that it is an imitation or a reworking has been perceived as a minus to Ovid’s creativity. For example, Rostagni 1920 (harshly criticised by Housman 1921, 67-68) saw the poem as a plain translation of Callimachus’ *Ibis*. For further discussion on this see Williams’ 2008 introduction to Ellis 1881.

¹⁴ Against Zipfel’s (1910, 12-7) theory that the *Ibis* sourced from the *tabellae defixionis*, La Penna adds to the Hellenistic context the idea that the *Ibis* produces a solemn Roman *deuotio* (La Penna 1957, XXVII-XXIX).

¹⁵ Williams’ 2008 introduction (XVII) on Ellis’ 1880 edition.

matter, Catullus or Horace)”.¹⁶ In this context, Schiesaro also links this iambic presence to parallels in the *Tristia*.¹⁷ Elsewhere, intertextual references to poems of attack in Ovid’s exile poetry include in the discussion Catullus 16, *Tristia* 2 and the *Ibis*. This leads Ziogas to conclude that “Ovid’s opposition by imitation revolves around a generic shift from iambic/masculine provocation to an elegiac/effeminate appeal”¹⁸. However, the presence of elegy in the *Ibis* has been acknowledged, albeit with the conclusion that this may mark the end of Ovid’s elegiac voice.¹⁹ By contrast, what I intend to do in this thesis is to argue for continuity with elegy, against the idea that the *Ibis* is fundamentally an iambic poem.

What is more, conflict is an integral part of elegy. Without looking at the idea of an elegy of invective, more “traditional” examples of elegies, such as love or lament, do hold in themselves a clash between opposing forces. At the very heart of elegy, regardless of its specific context, there is a striving towards a goal. This goal can be the love of an object of desire, or a wish that is yet to be fulfilled. In each of these instances the effort towards an aim is obstructed by opposing forces, whether it is the object of desire’s refusal, the presence of antagonists, or the suffering caused by the harm endured (hence the lament). This happens in invective elegy as well, and the *Ibis* is the most extreme example of this approach.

My analysis focuses on the possibility of identifying in the elegiac genre a pattern of relationships between characters embodied by the use of poetic language as aimed at delivering a specific communication. The *Ibis* builds on some specific

¹⁶ Schiesaro 2011, 95.

¹⁷ Schiesaro 2011.

¹⁸ Ziogas 2017, 214-5, with reference to intertextual considerations made by Ingleheart 2010.

¹⁹ Battistella 2011, 6.

features that are shared by elegy as a genre and that become evident if language is analysed as a tool to deliver communication and literature – poetry in particular – as a communicative setting. In other words, it is possible to look at poetry as the communicative context of the poet’s argument. Elegies can be addressed to specific characters, and Ovid pushes this possibility to its extreme consequences. However, while it is obviously normal that two or more recipients are involved in the same elegies at different moments, what I argue is that elegy has different addressees at the same time, during the same communication: while one of the addressees is the explicit one, there is an additional one that remains implicit.²⁰ At the same time, the relationships between characters are varied and the poet has different messages for different addressees. Pushing this point further, this thesis argues that the use of a method that focuses on how language, on the one hand, and communication, on the other, work in the framework of elegy reveals the presence of a layered communication. Not only does the elegiac poet address the direct target of his poems: I argue that in addressing someone the poet can also send different messages to someone else.

In its traditional main aspects of love and lament, Roman elegy sets specific roles for its characters. They signify specific figures, irrespective of the type of elegy which they belong to: the poet, who pursues something; the object of his (or her) desire; the final aim; a number of enemies. This is the same structure that underlies both Roman love elegy and Ovid’s exile poetry: I argue that this is the same structure that shapes the *Ibis*. Elegiac poets, both lovers and exiled, share one

²⁰ See Miller 1993 on implicit and explicit addressees in *Ars amatoria* 3.

specific feature: they are outcasts of society.²¹ Love places its poets in a different context and gives them a special point of view on society. The poet lover is in this sense like an exile not simply because, in short, he pursues love over society, but because he presents his life as determined by the *puella*, the beloved woman, and this places him in a position that is incompatible with the normal social standing of a Roman man. In this context, poetry is presented as the only and ultimate weapon in the poet's hands. The poet himself describes his own authority as coming from poetry, a source of knowledge and power that puts him in a position of superiority not only over the rivals, but the *puella* too, despite the fact that she is the one who is apparently represented as being in control.²²

What about the exiled poet? The semiotics of Ovid's characters in his exilic corpus follows the same structure. Ovid, the outcast, presents his identity of poet as the source of his superior knowledge and thus power. However, he is an outcast not only because he is an exile: he is an outcast as an elegiac poet and his condition as exile provides a specific context to poetry. The exiled Ovid has an object of desire too: Augustus, who, like the elegiac *dura puella*, harshly exercises his power over the poet, while he shows off his own superiority²³. To conquer Augustus means to achieve the final aim of poetry: Rome.²⁴ The ambivalence of the male and female roles is also reflected by the examples that Ovid uses: the well-known metaphor of

²¹ "Self-proclaimed outcasts" is the definition for elegiac poets in Valladares 2012, 334 (and see Gold [ed.] 2012 in general). See also e.g. Thorsen 2013, 9 and Sharrock 2013, 151-65 (in Thorsen [ed.] 2013). On the social background of elegy and its characters, see James 2003a. On powerplay in Roman love elegy see also Blanco Mayor 2017. In Ziogas 2021 the position of the elegiac poet as an outcast from law grounds his relationship to legal power.

²² See e.g. Prop. 2.5.27-30 where the Propertius presents his poetry as having the power of establish even how Cynthia will be perceived in the future.

²³ On the identification between Augustus and the elegiac *puella* see Nagle 1980, 43; Ingleheart 2012.

²⁴ Roma is the anagram and the palindrom of *amor*.

the dove and the lamb against the wolf and the sparrowhawk in *Trist.* 1.1.75-78, representing Ovid and Augustus respectively, is used in *Ars* 1.117-18 and 2.363-4 to indicate the relationship between the woman (dove and lamb) and the man (wolf, eagle and sparrowhawk). Who is the harsh one and who the weak one? Finally, there are the enemies that prevent the poet from winning over the object of desire: Ibis among them. To this aim, besides the traditional intertextual and philological approach to the analysis of the text, I submit the *Ibis* and its elegiac elements to a specific focus on the pragmatic aspect of language and communication.

Why is it necessary to include pragmatic theories in the methodology? By focusing on how language and communication work in context, linguistic pragmatics and pragmatics of communication provide a method for identifying and analysing the multiple layers of our verbal and non-verbal interactions with others. The challenge of applying these techniques to literary texts, particularly classical literature, has been taken up in recent years and has already proven its worth.²⁵ I use linguistic pragmatics and pragmatics of communication for different purposes, depending on the specific focus of each method.

In the very wide field of linguistic pragmatics, I particularly focus on linguistic politeness and impoliteness, irony, and their relationship with power, as well as the pragmatical analysis of the elements of discourse. The field of pragmatics of communication, on the other hand, is concerned with the broader functioning of communication. In this respect I analyse the *Ibis* and its elegiac context with a focus on the non-verbal communication it contains. This means

²⁵ For a general and wide overview see Ricottilli 2009.

looking at the research of Paul Watzlawick, Janet Helmick Beavin and Don D. Jackson, from the Palo Alto School,²⁶ but also building on more recent works on Latin literature, starting with Ricottilli's work on the *Aeneid*, a comprehensive study of a fundamental Roman epic text with pragmatics.²⁷ From Watzlawick, Helmick Beavin and Jackson's work also comes the definition of disconfirmation, which, showing the point of view of the one who sees the affirmation of his own identity declared to be impossible, helps us analyse Ovid's account of his own experience in exile.²⁸

Combining these two approaches I implement a focus on the psychological implications of communication (from Watzlawick, Helmick Beavin and Jackson) with the attempt of working on a text, like Ovid's elegies, where action is narrated, rather than staged. Differently from dramatic texts, where words represent the actual staging of conversations and actions, epic and elegiac poetry give an account of actions through a literary form.²⁹ My challenge is to apply conversational analysis – methods, therefore, that are normally used to interpret spoken conversation – to a literary text where the poetic persona has a unidirectional conversation with an absent interlocutor.

As Unceta Gómez and Berger explain, politeness and impoliteness theories are a broad field of studies, characterised by several lines of research throughout

²⁶ Watzlawick – Helmick Beavin – Jackson 1967 use the definitions of digital (i.e. verbal) communication and analogical (i.e. non-verbal) communication. For recent applications to classical literature see Lentini (ed.) 2021; Ricottilli – Raccanelli (eds) 2023.

²⁷ Ricottilli 2000; on the gesture of laughter and crying see Calabrese 2020 and 2021 respectively; on the use of proxemics see Raccanelli 2022.

²⁸ Watzlawick – Helmick Beavin – Jackson 1967 84-90.

²⁹ And, differently from prose text, poetry particularly has to comply with stylistic and metric requirements, which influence the way in which events are narrated.

the years.³⁰ My main theoretical frameworks fall into the so-called “first wave”,³¹ and ‘second wave’,³² and I particularly apply the concept of face-threatening act. Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson narrow the field of politeness down to the attempt to protect the addressee’s desire to be appreciated and accepted in the social context (positive politeness) and to have his or her freedom of will and movement respected (negative politeness): positive politeness seeks to avoid offending (face-threatening acts) the addressee’s positive face (desire to be appreciated); negative politeness seeks to avoid offence (face-threatening acts) to the addressee’s negative face (freedom of will and movement)³³. An attack at either the positive or the negative face of the interlocutor is a face-threatening act. The concept of “face” comes from the work of Erving Goffman. As Goffman puts it, “The term face may be defined as the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. The face is an image of the self – delineated in terms of approved social attributes”.³⁴ If linguistic politeness

³⁰ See Unceta Gómez – Berger 2022 for a detailed review of the field, with further bibliography. For the application of politeness and impoliteness theories to classical texts, see e.g. Hall 2009, who has created a theoretical framework of politeness for Latin texts, proposing the categories of politeness of respect, affiliative politeness and redressive politeness; Dickey 2012 on politeness expressions in Latin texts; Iurescia 2019 with a linguistic pragmatic analysis of conflict in Latin literature; Unceta Gómez 2019, who has produced a lexicological analysis of ‘im/politeness’ terms in Latin.

³¹ Brown – Levinson 1987.

³² Locher 2004; Bousfield 2008; Bousfield – Locher 2008; Culpeper 2011.

³³ Brown – Levinson 1987. Brown and Levinson combine the theories of speech acts (Austin 1962; Searle 1969) to Paul Grice’s theory of implicatures and of the “cooperative principle”, which is the principle observed by the participants of a conversation should observe to carry on a conversation. In Grice’s words, “our talk exchanges (...) are characteristically, to some degree at least, cooperative efforts; and each participant recognizes in them, to some extent, a common purpose or set of purposes, or at least a mutually accepted direction” which could be established from the start of a conversation, or could change during it. The cooperative principle states: “Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged” (1989, 26). Later discussions have recognised that the principle enables the interlocutor to understand what is said or implied (Bousfield 2008).

³⁴ Goffman 1967, 5.

protects the face of the addressee and minimises the attack, linguistic impoliteness targets specific aspects of it.

Some of the main points of criticism against Brown and Levinson have concerned their claim to present the “universals” of language usage, while politeness and impoliteness are highly related to the cultural background of the interlocutors, and the fact that they do not dedicate space directly to impoliteness. Despite this, Brown and Levinson provide a framework of analysis that is very useful for the classical languages, and have in fact been widely applied to them.³⁵ Moreover, the concept of face-threatening act proves to be extremely relevant for Ovid’s relationship with both his enemies and Augustus, as it explains both the attempt to affect the interlocutor’s reputation (attack on the positive face), and to influence his behaviour (attack on the negative face). This approach overcomes the absence of a direct treatment of impoliteness in Brown and Levinson.

From the “second wave” of politeness theories I draw the focus on the relationship between (im)politeness and power.³⁶ My interpretations of Ovid’s relationships with his enemies and former friends, as well as with Augustus, are based on negotiations of power. Ovid claims a powerless condition, which is inherent in the role of the elegiac poet, and reaches its peak in the *exiled* elegiac poet. In this sense exile becomes a tool of poetry: it merges with the core features of elegy and becomes a literary tool itself. At the same time, Ovid challenges both

³⁵ “It is a predictive model based on three clearly defined parameters, recognizable in ancient linguistic systems, and includes certain analytical tools, such as the concepts of positive and negative politeness, which, if not universal, are at least so basic that it is hard to imagine that they were not exploited also by the Classical Mediterranean cultures” (Unceta Gómez – Berger 2022, 32).

³⁶ See Locher 2006 on the idea that politeness comes from a form of negotiations between the parties.

his enemy's and Augustus' power, as he claims control over the realm of poetry in narrative and communication.

What is power? As it has been acknowledged, power is considered to be a social phenomenon,³⁷ with fundamental linguistic manifestations. For Brown and Gilman, “one person may be said to have power over another in the degree that he is able to control the behavior of the other”,³⁸ for Max Weber, “‘power’ is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests”.³⁹ What these definitions have in common is the idea of power as a relationship, and the idea of control. If power comes from relationship and control, it also comes from a negotiation: the actors involved negotiate their power dynamics by confronting not only their real status, but also other forms of power manifestation. I argue that this model can be applied to the relationship between Ovid and Ibis, and Ovid and Augustus: even when it comes to dealing with the power of the *princeps* there is a negotiation in place, whose outcome is not guaranteed.

As Ziogas has shown, “Augustan poets blend the politics of poetry with the poetics of empire and pit themselves against the *princeps*. Such a daring pose inevitably creates tension between poetic influence and imperial authority”.⁴⁰ Given these premises, is it possible to discern a dynamic of power in which control is actually in Ovid's hands? In my view the answer is clearly yes. I will try to

³⁷ Locher 2004, 2.

³⁸ Brown – Gilman 1960, 254.

³⁹ Weber 1947, 152.

⁴⁰ Ziogas 2015, 115 with bibliography.

demonstrate this by building on the well-known scholarship on the relationship between the Augustan poets and power, with a particular focus on the dynamics of the communication of elegiac language.⁴¹

To put it in Barchiesi's words, "(...) poetry, compared to other communicative media used in Augustan society, has greater potential for conflict and dissent, as well as less stability. It is in the literary documents that the picture of universal and extended consensus offered by historical studies can find its limits (...). Propaganda is not only a circular verification of the consensus that it is intended to bring about by exploiting ideas and language codes that are already widely used: it is also violently biased, while claiming to be the expression of values that are impartial, universal, and natural".⁴² Elegy has a role in this relationship with power:⁴³ I argue that elegy has its particular way of dealing with power that is based on a specific use of communication.

We can start from one passage of the *Ibis* that exemplifies quite clearly how pragmatic theories work and interact with each other:

Tot tibi, uae misero! uenient talesque ruinae, 205
ut cogi in lacrimas me quoque posse putem.
Illae me lacrimae facient sine fine beatum:
dulcior hic risu tunc mihi fletus erit.

So many and such calamities will befall you, miserable man! 205
that even I could think that I might be moved to tears for you.
Those tears will bring me endless happiness:
to me, this crying will be sweeter than laughter.

(*Ibis* 205-8)⁴⁴

⁴¹ Barchiesi 1994 (=1997), Hardie 1997, Feldherr 2010 and Ziogas 2015.

⁴² Barchiesi 1997, 10-1 (=1994, XIV-XV).

⁴³ On the relationship between love elegy and Augustus' authority see Davis 2006.

⁴⁴ The English translations of the *Ibis* are mine. I quote the text of the *Ibis* according to La Penna 1957.

Ovid combines a topical scene (the enemy arousing compassion) with a pragmatic use of gesture and language. The dialectic between the gestures of crying and laughing involves the pragmatic use of non-verbal communication. Watzlawick, Helmick Beavin and Jackson call all forms of non-verbal communication “analogical communication”. What I use directly in my analysis is Ricottilli’s method and the definition of gesture: “By gesture we denote a behaviour of the body or the face that assumes communicative, informative or interactive significance towards a direct, intended recipient or a possible observer and over which the sender can exert control”.⁴⁵ In the case of the *Ibis*, there is a dialectic between what is expected and what is not, especially in terms of gesture.⁴⁶ The construction of an elegiac character perfectly fitting the idea of compassion-worthy figure as foundation for his attack against him is a crucial pattern in Ovid’s invective in the *Ibis* and also a crucial element to marking its elegiac setting. In this case, the intertextual reference to a topic scene reinforces the expectations: *Ibis*’ misery should arouse compassion in terms of literary patterns. The pragmatic focus shows the implications of depriving him of compassion and the coexistence of lament and invective.

Ovid’s power is all in his words. My approach differs from that of Williams, who emphasises the lack of correspondence between Ovid’s curses and their (non-existing) real power, in arguing that the elegiac linguistic power that Ovid claims

⁴⁵ Ricottilli 2000 translated by Calabrese 2021. Crucial for its analysis of gesture, although applied to ancient Greek literature and Homer in particular, is Lateiner 1995.

⁴⁶ Studies on this respect but in ancient Greek literature can be found in Boegehold 1999. On psychological and social foundations of gestures see Enfield – Levinson (eds) 2020 (2006¹).

nurtures itself of its own helplessness and its own poetic dimension.⁴⁷ He had already expressed this linguistic and poetic power at the beginning of this passage as he foretold or threatened the multiple calamities that would befall Ibis (205: *Tot tibi, uae misero! uenient talesque ruinae*). This and similar expressions of future events have nothing to do with the poet's real power of making them happen.

Moreover, unexpected reference to joy and laughter at *Ibis* 207-8 does not end in itself. Jonathan Culpeper, who, with Derek Bousfield and Miriam Locher,⁴⁸ has been among those developing the field of linguistic impoliteness, classifies mocking among the strategies of linguistic impoliteness aimed to show the relative power of the speaker over the addressee. That the theories of politeness and, above all, impoliteness are relevant to the *Ibis* will come as no surprise.

The act of depriving a person who deserves it of compassion shows an additional aggressive aim against Ibis in the fact that it takes him away from the right to the truthful manifestation of himself. Building on Cumming, Watzlawick, Helmick Beavin and Jackson note that “on the relationship level people do not communicate about facts outside their relationship, but offer each other definitions of that relationship and, by implication, of themselves”.⁴⁹ This means that whatever the content of the communication, metacommunication will always follow the prototype “This is how I see myself *in relation to you in this situation*” (italics are by the authors).⁵⁰ The addressee can respond to this definition by confirmation,

⁴⁷ Williams 1996, 74-5; 128-9.

⁴⁸ On the pragmatic interpretation of mockery see Culpeper 1996. For a systematic treatment of linguistic impoliteness: Bousfield 2008; Bousfield – Locher 2008; Culpeper 2011. Applications to classical literature can be found, for example, in Lentini 2018 as for ancient Greek literature (Homer).

⁴⁹ Watzlawick – Helmick Beavin – Jackson 1967, 83-4; cf. Cumming 1960 113.

⁵⁰ Watzlawick – Helmick Beavin – Jackson 1967, 84.

rejection or disconfirmation of the speaker.⁵¹ The latter, which I explain further below, is the most important from a pragmatic point of view, but also the most relevant to explain how Ovid describes his own experience as a *relegatus*.

The authors give a quote from William James that seems tailored to what Ovid wrote of his exile experience: “No more fiendish punishment could be devised, even were such a thing physically possible, than that one should be turned loose in society and remain absolutely unnoticed by all the members thereof”.⁵² In the case of disconfirmation, when the speaker gives a definition of him or herself (“This is how I see myself”) the counterpart negates the reality of the speaker “as a source of such a definition. In other words, while rejection amounts to the message ‘You are wrong,’ disconfirmation says in effect ‘You do not exist.’”⁵³ This condition is associated with a loss of self by the one that is subject to it, and therefore with what is called “alienation”.⁵⁴ This proves to be the light through which we can understand Ovid’s description of his feelings in exile. As Gareth Williams has shown, focusing on the dichotomy of melancholy and mania, Ovid’s mental state is a fundamental part of his narrative in exile. My work builds on the linguistic and communicative implications of Ovid’s expression of emotion by introducing a pragmatic approach to the analysis of the communication conveyed by that narrative, with the aim of broadening the connections between that aspect of Ovid’s representation of himself and the elegiac literary context.

⁵¹ Watzlawick – Helmick Beavin – Jackson 1967, 84-90.

⁵² Watzlawick – Helmick Beavin – Jackson 1967, 86, referring to Laing 1961, 89 quoting James.

⁵³ Watzlawick – Helmick Beavin – Jackson 1967, 86.

⁵⁴ Watzlawick – Helmick Beavin – Jackson 1967, 86.

As for the structure of this work, this thesis is divided into three Parts, with an introduction and an epilogue. Each part has its own introduction and conclusions and is divided into two independent chapters. Part One (“The *Ibis* and Roman love elegy: (unexpected) continuity?”) addresses the problem of the relationship between the *Ibis* and the genre of elegy by demonstrating the fundamental continuity between the poem and Roman love elegy. The comparison of the *Ibis* with Roman love elegy leads to two main conclusions: first, that invective is a crucial part of elegy – even of elegies that seem to have very different aims – and, in the case of love elegy, is a crucial, and not incidental, part of love as the Roman elegists narrate it; second, that there is a common pattern of relationships between elegiac characters that can be detected.⁵⁵ The interactions between the characters of the poet, his enemies (the rival and the *lena*), and the *puella* follow the same model that underlies the relationship between the poet, the enemies and Augustus in Ovid’s exile poetry, and thus in the *Ibis*. However, this pattern of correspondences is tangled. While the link between the object of desire and Augustus on the one hand, and that between the enemies/rivals of the elegiac poet and *Ibis* on the other hand is clear, the identifications can actually switch in a moment. Both the *puella* and the poet himself can be characterised as a *lena*, the rival and the poet can share the same destiny inflicted by fickle fortune, and the roles can switch more easily than we might expect.

⁵⁵ Throughout this thesis, I will often use quite direct expressions to indicate these correspondences, such as “*Ibis* is Ovid”, “Ovid is *Ibis*” or “Augustus is the *puella*”. I am aware that such direct identification is over-simplified and not completely accurate – what I mean is that they are presented as acting a certain role. However, I find this language to be a useful shorthand to draw attention to the complexity of these references. The fact that the characters are often presented with features and roles that break expectations is a fundamental aspect of Ovid’s take on elegy and my choice of simplified expressions is aimed at highlighting this.

Chapter One (“The making of an outcast”) discusses the common ground between love elegy and invective elegy based on the characterisation of poet as outcast (I.1 “The most subversive act is reconciliation”), the rituality of love and of curse (II.2 “Prayer and curse: an elegiac ritual”), and the creation of a form of poetic power, directly related to Ovid’s characterisation as *uates* (I.3 “*Euenient: poetry and reality*”). The conflict between elegy and reality is a fundamental feature of Roman love poetry. The case of Ovid, however, has a peculiarity: his poetry deals with reality since the very beginning of his love elegy. It does not seek a separation from the city, since the *Ars amatoria* proposes ways of living in the Roman world and making the most of it.⁵⁶ This attitude establishes the subversive character of Ovid’s elegy and is consistent with the real disruption of the life of the poet, who is sent to exile.⁵⁷

Chapter Two (“Roleplay and powerplay in elegiac curses”) discusses roleplay in love elegy and its implications in connection with the *Ibis*. The correspondence between the characters in love elegy and those in Ovid’s exile poetry has already been pointed out.⁵⁸ I aim at pushing this analysis further by showing how these correspondences switch. The *lena* is the most direct referent for *Ibis* in love elegy (II.1 “The *lena*, or on destruction”). However, the poet (who in the *Ars amatoria* also teaches women how to attract men) can act like a *lena* and the *puella* (in Tib. 1.6) can be punished with the same violent language that the poem normally

⁵⁶ See e.g. *Ars* 1.59-60 (*quot caelum stellas, tot habet tua Roma puellas: / mater in Aeneae constitit urbe sui*) and the subsequent list of places to approach women: Ovid’s poetry lives inside society.

⁵⁷ The reality of Ovid’s exile is now generally accepted. The first expression of the controversial idea of it being a complete literary fiction is attributed to Hartman, in lectures and newspaper articles (see van der Velden 2019). The idea has been occasionally followed (see e.g., famously, Fitton Brown 1985; most recently, Fontaine 2018). In this thesis I consider Ovid’s exile as a real event that has an impact on Ovid’s poetry and therefore also a poetic manifestation.

⁵⁸ See Nagle 1980, 43; Ingleheart 2012.

addresses to the *lena*. Ibis is punished in the same realm of themes as the *lena*: destitution, dehumanisation, exclusion from human society. But is this banishment not similar to that suffered by the poet? The intricate pattern of correspondences affects the rival as well, whether the *uir* or a new lover (II.2 “The rival, or on fortune”). Fickle fortune threatens the new lover and the husband, but it threatens the poet as well, who has often already experienced the cruelty of fate. Similarly, Ibis and Ovid share the imminent risks of the reversal of fortune: Ibis’ powerful position allowed him to contribute to Ovid’s ruin, and yet everything that is said of the enemy’s misery could easily be applied to Ovid’s unfortunate destiny. There is one more correspondence to consider: that between the *puella* and Augustus (II.3 “The *puella*, or on Augustus”). Comparing Ibis to the *lena* immediately shows one additional layer of communication: by stigmatising the *lena* and Ibis as bad advisors, Ovid is at the same time criticising the *puella*’s and Augustus’ judgment. The relationship between poetry and life, which is part of the light and potentially subversive charm of love elegy, in exile poetry becomes a matter of life and death, where the object of criticism is the *princeps*.

Part Two (“Lament and invective: the *Ibis* and the politics of exile”) addresses the relationship between the *Ibis* and Ovid’s other works from exile, once again looking at how the characters’ role can switch. Williams has established the importance of restoring the *Ibis* to the place it deserves within Ovid’s exilic corpus, overcoming the idea that the poem can be neglected in the general interpretations of that section of Ovid’s production.⁵⁹ I build on Williams’ thesis that Ibis is not

⁵⁹ Williams 1996, 5. That the *Ibis* is “a fully functional part of Ovid’s poetic corpus and the exilic corpus specifically” is also the thesis of Krasne 2012, 12.

necessarily a real person, but could rather be “a fictional creation who nevertheless symbolically represents real people”;⁶⁰ however, my approach follows a different path in the understanding of Ovid’s claim for power in the *Ibis*: Williams concludes that “if in *Tr.* 4.9 Ovid tries to bluff his enemy into submission by laying claim to devastating powers of retribution which even Augustus cannot match, the poet succumbs to the illusion of his own omnipotence in the *Ibis*”⁶¹ and that “this illusion of omnipotence must from the outset (21-8) face up to the harsh fact that the ‘omnipotent’ poet is powerless to control his own fate, that Ibis has nothing to fear from Ovid’s distant fury, and that if the Pontic shore will resound with praises of Augustus (...), the poet will scream his curse into the same empty breezes”.⁶²

What I argue instead is that the idea of the powerless poet needs to be reintegrated into the generic pattern and understood as part of it. Being an outcast from society is something that Ovid does not only experience as an exile, but also takes from the literary context of elegy: the elegiac poet is already and always an outcast; Ovid pushes this condition to its extreme consequences by using his biographical experience to enhance it. The comparison between the *Ibis* and the collections of exilic elegies shows that lament and invective are not mutually exclusive: they are in continuity with one another, and moreover, they are integral parts of each other. Invective has a specific role in the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* as lament has a role in the *Ibis* and this role is determined by the audience that Ovid wants to reach.

⁶⁰ Williams 1996, 19.

⁶¹ Williams 1996, 128.

⁶² Williams 1996, 128-9.

In Chapter Three (“Aggressive lament: using emotions to cause harm”) I argue for an aggressive use of those typical elegiac features, like lament and compassion, in the *Ibis*. We are used to seeing the *Ibis* as a poem of unadulterated invective. Instead, I believe that a fundamental part of the aggressiveness of the poem in its first part (1-250) is the construction of the character of Ibis as a compassion-worthy character, and substantially Ovid’s Doppelgänger. Emotion and specifically compassion therefore become a means of attack inside an elegiac setting (III.1 “Lament and invective in the *Ibis*”). Conversely, the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* present cases of brutal attack against enemies (III.2 “Attacking enemies in the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*: pragmatics of invective, gestures and use of space”). These passages have been often interpreted as lamentations from Ovid for the betrayal of former friends. I argue that a communicative analysis of their use of lament, together with a focus on the language of law, reveals in fact a fundamentally aggressive aim.

Part of Ovid’s competent use of language can be connected with his use of the language of law. This is particularly relevant for this work, because its presence in the *Ibis* and in the elegies from the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* that are aimed at a former friend or enemy can normally be associated with the identification of an attack, where it is the element of lament that is usually highlighted. A pragmatic approach can shed new light on these dynamics. A pragmatic analysis of Ovid’s communication in his exile poetry shows that, as in the case of love elegy, it is possible to identify different layers of communicative aims, with different addressees. This is consistent with the well acknowledged role of the audience in

Ovid's poetry⁶³ and with the crucial presence of Augustus. What a pragmatic and communicative approach allows is to show the specific directions that Ovid's communication takes in addressing specific messages to different audiences, regardless of who the explicit addressee of a communication is. In the *Ibis*, the attack against the enemy becomes a way of speaking to the audience and to Augustus, and lament plays a fundamental part in this dynamic, just as in the collections of elegies Ovid's lament is addressed to both the *princeps* and the public, and makes a crucial use of attack.

In Chapter Four ("The outcast and the *princeps*") I deal directly and systematically with the relationship that Ovid establishes with Augustus in his exile poetry from the point of view of linguistic pragmatics and pragmatics of communication. I ultimately argue in this chapter that Ovid's poetic communication challenges Augustus' power. Firstly, I analyse how Ovid builds a communication to Augustus in the *Ibis* that is both direct and indirect (IV.1 "Speaking to the *princeps*"). Augustus is never named in the *Ibis* and his only mention in lines 23-4 does not explicitly state his name either (*Di melius, quorum longe mihi maximus ille est, / qui nostras inopes noluit esse uias*). However, I argue that Ovid constantly talks to him through his portrayal of Ibis. This communication takes the constant form of criticism towards Augustus' judgment. Ovid pushes this criticism of the *princeps*' behaviour to an extreme: he offers an alternative. In other words, he ultimately competes with Augustus for power (IV.2 "The poet as *princeps*?"). Ovid's poetic power challenges Augustus' ruling and this takes a form that is eminently Augustan: that of mercy. *Clementia* is one of the fundamental

⁶³ See the seminal work by Citroni 1995, 431-73; Ciccarelli 2003, 5.

propagandistic values of Augustus' regime. In his exile poetry Ovid seizes it. In the *Ibis* this takes an extreme form: the poem itself is presented as an act of mercy towards the enemy, who will be punished with a far crueller (iambic) poem if he continues with his attacks.

And yet, in the clash between the poet's expression of power through elegy and his plea for mercy lies the failure of his attempt to restore his life in Rome. As I shall demonstrate, by creating a poetic realm in which the power is in his hands, and which therefore constitutes a challenge to Augustus' absolute power, Ovid jeopardises his own aim. He creates a pragmatic paradox:⁶⁴ in the realm of poetry Augustus is not attributed that condition of superiority that he has in reality and is the premise for mercy; but if Augustus grants mercy in real life, where he does have the superior power to do so, he recognises the capacity of poetry to influence real life. Therefore, if Ovid's plea is successful, Augustus must recognise a power, to poetry, to influence his behaviour. As a result, for Augustus' position to be untouched, Ovid's plea cannot be granted. The success of his poetry once again damages Ovid.

Now, what of the catalogue of myths? This is the topic of Part Three ("Manipulating emotions and knowledge: the catalogue and the labyrinth of references"). The incredible variety of the catalogue has led to Ellis' attempt to decode each and every one of the myths, which he meticulously does in his

⁶⁴ Described by Watzlawick – Helmick Beavin – Jackson 1967 as a situation in which these three conditions apply: a) there is strong complementary relationship between the interlocutors; b) the injunction given must be obeyed but must be disobeyed to be obeyed; c) the person in the one-down (i.e. less powerful) position cannot step outside of the frame and dissolve the paradox by commenting on it.

commentary.⁶⁵ In his own in-depth treatment of the catalogue, Williams recalls André's exemplary statement that "la recherche systématique d'un ordre est vaine".⁶⁶ Williams defines the catalogue as "a dream-like fantasy in which all temporal distinctions cease to apply",⁶⁷ and considers it "symptomatic of the irrational mentality which is explored and delineated in the *Ibis* as a whole".⁶⁸ In Williams' view, the catalogue reflects the enraged mind of an obsessive hater, "an avenger who will go to any lengths to exact retribution",⁶⁹ but also "becomes exposed to the dangers of self-damaging obsessions".⁷⁰ Ovid's rage and obsession with the enemy run the risk of becoming more dangerous for him than they are for Ibis. The connection between the encyclopaedic mythography of the *Ibis* and that of the *Metamorphoses* is addressed by Hinds while discussing the role of time in the poem;⁷¹ Krasne addresses the thematic correspondence between the catalogue and the prologue,⁷² and later provides a systematic analysis of the structure of the catalogue itself,⁷³ while Battistella focuses on specific thematic references;⁷⁴ the role of this section is also discussed by Vial:⁷⁵ scholarly interest in it has been consistent over many years.

The threads of my analysis of the catalogue are the use of knowledge as an expression of poetic power inside the realm of Ovid's elegy, the role of the myths

⁶⁵ Ellis 1881.

⁶⁶ André 1963, IX: "the systematic research of an order is vain" (see Williams 1996, 81).

⁶⁷ Williams 1996, 101; on this definition by Williams see also Hinds 1999, 64-6.

⁶⁸ Williams 1996, 101.

⁶⁹ Williams 1996, 102.

⁷⁰ Williams 1996, 102. On the idea of the catalogue as obsessive and hyperbolic see also Battistella 2011, 6, who also considers a possible parodic aim.

⁷¹ Hinds 1999, 62.

⁷² Krasne 2012.

⁷³ Krasne 2016.

⁷⁴ Battistella 2013.

⁷⁵ Vial 2015 and 2019.

in the characterisation of Ibis, and its communicative aims. In continuity with Krasne's statement, I agree on the close relationship between the catalogue and the prologue.⁷⁶ What is more, I think that in many cases the catalogue provides examples to support the general curses of the prologue. My approach to the structure of the catalogue is to shift the focus from the *thematic* to the *communicative* value of the myths. Therefore, part of this section is dedicated to discussing the links between the myths and specific portions of the monologue and their role in our understanding of the *Ibis*.

One example is Irus, who appears in line 417 (*qualis erat nec non fortuna binominis Iri*) and has a history that starts with Homer: in the *Odyssey* he is a beggar who is beaten up by Odysseus, who had just arrived in Ithaca disguised as an old beggar himself (*Od.* 18.1-107);⁷⁷ however, he is also the symbol of the twists of fortune in *Trist.* 3.7.42 (*Irus et est subito qui modo Croesus erat*). The reference to fickle fortune in *Trist.* 3.7.42 adds a further layer to the attack against Ibis that, as an example of negative impoliteness (an attack against the target's negative face), attacks his claim of freedom of will and movement: not only is Ovid threatening Ibis with the prospect of ending up as a beggar; he is also threatening him with the everlasting feeling of instability that being aware of the inconsistency of fortune brings, which will always be able to subvert any attempt to freely determine his own destiny, just as has happened to Ovid.

I focus on the characters present in the catalogue and their possible role within Ovid's poetry. Shifting the focus from the punishments to the stories of the

⁷⁶ Krasne 2012, 12.

⁷⁷ Odysseus himself is the *Ibis*: 277-8; 391-2 with reference to his killing of the disloyal servants.

characters, my aim is to address the reason behind the choice of each myth and what they might tell us about Ibis. In this context I combine conversational analysis and the analysis of the *loci* of invective. Christopher Craig has categorised several *loci* of invective – standard themes of accusation – based on Cicero’s speech *In Pisonem*.⁷⁸ These are two very different fields, but both contribute to our understanding of the role of the catalogue and connect it to the prologue. At least eight (embarrassing family origin, physical appearance, pretentiousness, sexual misconduct, hostility to family, cruelty to citizens and allies, plunder of private and public property) of the seventeen *loci* recur in the catalogue and are embodied by different characters, each of them saying something about Ibis. This approach is not unprecedented: Grazia Maria Masselli has proposed a reading of the *Ibis* as an oratorical invective, but has not applied that approach to the catalogue.⁷⁹ What I aim to do is move forward on this path with a pragmatic approach, showing that the myths are at the same time proofs of Ibis’ character, attacks against him, and examples of Ovid’s idea of attack, punishment, innocence and poetic authority.

Ovid’s poetic authority is another fundamental aspect of the *Ibis* in connection with the use of knowledge as an expression of power in the framework of elegy. Ovid’s role as a *uates* has been jeopardised by the relegation. I argue that the *Ibis* and the attack against the enemy offer him the opportunity to again claim this role for himself. The encyclopaedic knowledge of myth and history becomes the tools with which Ovid, in attacking his enemy, also restores himself in the role of *uates* he achieved with the *Fasti*. The specific use of the Roman background,

⁷⁸ Craig 2004, 190.

⁷⁹ Masselli 2002.

expressed by the fact that the catalogue begins and ends with Roman examples, qualifies his claim to be a Roman *uates*.

In Chapter Five (“Exemplary punishment and compassion: a structural anomaly”) I focus on one fundamental anomaly in the selection of the examples. Some of the characters belong to the category of those who deserve punishment. Others, however, are not guilty of anything, but nevertheless suffer: one example is Philoctetes. This second category recalls the strong link between Ibis’ future punishment and the present condition of Ovid, who is suffering beyond what he deserves (V.1 “The inextricable bond of pain and relief”). Even love finds its place in the catalogue, often in disturbing and disruptive ways (V.2 “The pattern of compassion through the catalogue”). Once again, the balance between guilt and innocence is fickle. Characters who are actually victims, or not explicitly guilty, are treated cruelly and punished. Compassion becomes a way of enhancing the evil nature of the punishment: as is the case with the fathers who unknowingly have sexual intercourse with their daughters, or are betrayed by them, the link between Ibis’ guilt and his punishment becomes evanescent. What is more, the gods, whose relationship with the poet is unmatched, enter the picture as playful interlocutors, or merciless executioners (V.3 “Constructive and disruptive relationships with the gods”).

Chapter Six (“Negative aetiology, rulers and the *uates*”) addresses Ovid’s display of erudite knowledge in the *Ibis*, which takes the form of negative aetiology, deals with the representation and punishments of rulers, and reveals the process of Ovid’s claiming the role of Roman *uates* that seems lost in exile. Rulers have a fundamental role in the catalogue and their relationship with their (over)devoted

artist seems to recall not only Ibis' behaviour with Augustus, but Ovid's too (VI.1 "Rulers, devoted artists and self-harming art"). However, Ovid pushes this relationship with power further and ultimately uses the catalogue to judge the rulers' power and punish it (VI.2 "Punishing the ruler: poetry as a judge of power"). This is the practical expression of what was theorised in the first part of the *Ibis*: these are really, technically, examples of how the poet judges the power of the ruler and replaces it. His power comes from his superior knowledge, which he applies in his role as *uates*. In VI.3 "The making of a *uates*: Greece and Rome" I argue that in the *Ibis* Ovid claims again that role of *uates* that he considers lost in exile, by recovering his privileged relationship with aetiology, which he had first claimed with the *Fasti*. He is guardian of history, myth and tradition, which even includes the personal stories of Greek poets, but he is a Roman *uates*, as both the beginning and the end of the catalogue show: all his all-comprehensive knowledge is aimed at claiming this role.

In representing his enemy, Ovid represents himself, just as he does in the whole corpus of his exilic works through his poetic narrative.⁸⁰ The relationship between himself and the other characters is reinforced by the literary pattern on which they rely: beyond a direct correspondence of crime and punishment, the relationship between the characters belongs to the very pattern of the elegiac genre. And yet in associating himself with the enemy he ultimately undermines his own argument. As is evident with the exemplary case of Actaeon (*Ibis* 479: *quique uerecundae speculantem labra Dianae*), who in the *Ibis* is much less innocent than

⁸⁰ On Ovid's self-representation see Tola 2024.

he was in Ovid's own self defence (*Trist.* 2.105-8),⁸¹ Ovid is ready to undermine the argument in his own favour in order to attack his enemy. But is not this play between control and lack of control a very Ovidian feature?⁸²

There is a kind of playfulness on the part of Ovid in undermining his own argument. And playfulness is a delicate and yet fundamental theme in the *Ibis*. The reader could be surprised to see this concept associated with this poem. And yet this crucial feature of Ovid's poetry is not missing from the *Ibis*. As Tiresias (*Ibis* 263-4) is both damaged and created in a new identity by the gods – becoming blind and a prophet – when he is invited to judge the playful quarrel (263: *lite iocosa*) between Juno and Jupiter, Ovid's Musa is *iocosa* (*Trist.* 2.354: *uita uerecunda est, Musa iocosa mea*), and yet brings ruin to his poet.

The epilogue addresses my thesis' contribution to the integral place of the *Ibis* inside the genre of elegy and how this affects our general understanding of elegy itself. Reading the *Ibis* inside the genre of elegy serves to add further elements to the characterisation of the genre. The first point concerns the role of invective. Pushing forward the path of analysis undertaken by scholars like Philbrick,⁸³ I argue that invective is a crucial part of elegy, just as love and lament, and just as love and lament it takes place in different proportions according to the type of elegy. In Ovid's case, this means that the corpus of his exilic works sees lament and invective

⁸¹ Cf. the Actaeon of *Met.* 3.138-253, possibly reworked in exile. On the relationship between the two versions of the character see now Ziogas 2023.

⁸² Cf. Arachne's episode in *Met.* 6.87-128 and her obscure choice of examples, or *Ars* 1.687-704, where to sustain his argument that women enjoy to being forced to sexual intercourse, Ovid mentions the case of Deidamia and Achilles. The point should be to highlight Achilles' violent behaviour as a virtue, but Ovid actually starts with describing Achilles' disguise as a woman to escape the Trojan war. This ends up ridiculing the male figure and actually underlining his feminine behaviour, as in 597: *uiribus illa quidem uicta est (ita credere oportet!)*.

⁸³ Philbrick 2021.

as a *continuum*, which affects all the three works with specific aims.⁸⁴ Ovid's condition as the powerless poet has a role to play inside the genre of elegy too: I argue that the elegiac poet is the outcast, powerless poet. In this sense, elegiac poetry should be understood as powerful poetry which gains its power from the helpless condition of its poets.

Both threads are linked by Ovid's pervasive use of language as a tool of communications: the use of linguistic elements, verbal and non-verbal interactions offers a view of Ovid's poetry as a complex communicative system which embraces all aspects of communication. This does not mean that this work interprets the elegiac field as the only source of the thematic and generic pattern of the *Ibis*. It is very difficult, in general, to draw any Ovidian work back to a single element. However, within this framework the *Ibis*' unity of invective – with all its iambic connotations – and elegiac metre can be seen in the light of a clear collocation within the elegiac field, with a complex pattern of additional generic references as it is consistent with Ovid's approach to poetry.

The other fundamental aspect is how Ovid deals with the relationship between poetry and power. As I argue in Part Two and Part Three, the outcast poet ultimately challenges Augustus' power, albeit only in the realm of poetry. I argue that a communicative analysis of this attempt proves it to be so successful that it jeopardises Ovid's chances of ever seeing the end of his exile. As we shall see, Ovid's plea for mercy clashes with his own manifestations of mercy in his exile

⁸⁴ The corpus of Ovid's exilic works may be wider, since parts of the *Metamorphoses*, *Fasti*, and indeed double *Heroides* have all been argued to be exilic. However, I focus on the poems that present themselves explicitly as first-person exilic productions in Ovid's own voice.

poetry. Ovid and Augustus become Doppelgänger like Ovid and Ibis: we have two rulers in the realm of Ovid's exile poetry. As mercy must be granted by someone in a superior position to someone in a lower position, Ovid should give up his challenge to Augustus' power in order to be a suitable candidate for mercy. But as Ovid does challenge Augustus' power by acting as the ruler in his poetry, Augustus is faced with the choice of either refusing mercy and therefore leaving Ovid as the ruler of the realm of poetry, or granting it and thus proving that poetry in fact has power over reality. We all know what the ultimate choice was.

Part One

The *Ibis* and Roman love elegy: (unexpected) continuity?

Introduction

How can a poem of invectives be related to love elegy? The *Ibis* belongs to the elegiac genre, as evidenced by its metre and approach to language, and this is supported by early scholarship: in the *Poetices libri septem* 3.125 Julius Caesar Scaliger considers the *Ibis* as an example of elegy containing desperation and curses (*desperatio cum imprecationibus*).⁸⁵ The fact that the *Ibis* can be an example of Ovid's tendency to cross literary genres has been acknowledged,⁸⁶ as well as the fact that it differs from Roman elegy while remaining connected with the Greek model of Callimachus.⁸⁷ But if integrating the *Ibis* in Ovid's exile poetry is reasonable, the attempt to link it to Roman love elegy appears much more complicated. This is the aim of Part One.

When observing that the *Ibis* bears “no obvious relationship to canonical Roman elegy”, Farrell also questions whether Ovid's exile poetry belongs to the elegiac canon.⁸⁸ In other words, although signs of generic continuity have been recognised,⁸⁹ the issue of the relationship with the elegiac genre is one that shapes the whole exilic corpus, including the *Ibis*. My analysis aims at showing the existence of this link based on a communicative and semiotic approach.

⁸⁵ See Parker 2012, 476 with English translation.

⁸⁶ Helzle 2009, 185.

⁸⁷ Ingleheart 2011, 120-1 on the consequences of Ovid's identifying Callimachus as his model in scholars' misconceptions of the poem.

⁸⁸ Farrell 2012, 20-3.

⁸⁹ Harrison (2002, 92-3) interprets the poem as an Ovidian generic experiment; Battistella 2011 on intertextuality between the *Ibis* and *Her.* 10.

First of all, invective, which is the most apparent feature of the *Ibis* and is present in the exilic corpus in general, is part of love elegy too. By this I mean that it plays a crucial role for the communicative environment created by the poets in their erotic elegies. Invective is most straightforwardly the communicative feature of the poets' relationship with their antagonists: the *lena*, the *diues amator* and the *uir*. However, the poets' aggressiveness attacks the objects of desire too – usually the *puella*. The comparison between the patterns of aggressiveness in the *Ibis* and those in love elegy, which I propose in this section, shows how much the *Ibis* draws from the relationship between the lovers and their objects of desire.

In this context, one fundamental premise concerns the nature of invective. This concept can be examined from several angles – content, mode and the use of language, as well as generic collocation – and all of these must be included in its definition. Invective has a history as a rhetorical and oratorical feature, but it also plays a role in poetry and elegy. In this thesis, I intend to analyse the role of invective as a linguistic and poetic tool used to create a poetic narrative that conveys a specific message. I am looking for elegiac communication, i.e. communication that employs the features of elegies for its purpose. Love, lament and invective are three domains with specific communicative roles in elegy that contribute to the poet's communicative purpose.

This is a journey to uncover how the *Ibis*' elegiac features shed light on the interpretation of the poem and the elegiac genre itself.⁹⁰ The elegiac poets present themselves as outcasts whose only source of power is poetry. Their access to poetry

⁹⁰ Even love elegy's complexity in terms of generic influences has been recognised: see e.g. Heslin 2018, 97-138 on Propertius.

is regulated by knowledge – a superior knowledge that is unattainable for ordinary people. In the world they create for themselves, poetic language is their only weapon with which to conquer an object of desire and achieve their ultimate goal, while several antagonists hinder them.

The hostile characters who are the target of the poet's invective are closely linked to him. The poet links his enemies to himself by cursing them with the same miserable fate that he has. However, he has access to superior knowledge through poetic language, which gives him an advantage over them. Elegiac language can become violent in order to convey the poet's superiority and emphasise his role as the holder of superior knowledge, which strengthens his curses.

How does this relate to the relationship between the characters? The most straightforward way of transposing the dynamic between the characters from love elegy to exile poetry is to see Augustus as the object of desire, Ovid as the poet lover and Ibis, together with the unnamed enemies that occasionally appear in the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*, as the blocking character (i.e. the *lena*, the *diues amator* and the *uir*). I build on studies of the relationship between Augustus and the elegiac *puella*⁹¹ in order to push this approach further: what if, when elegy moves from love to exile, every character corresponds to every referent?

In other words, the first aim of Part One is showing how the communicative role of invective is a continuing factor between love elegy and the *Ibis*. The second aim is to show how tangled is the pattern of correspondences between the characters

⁹¹ Nagle 1980, 43: "in these elegies Ovid woos not a mistress, but Augustus (...)"; Ingleheart 2006, 80, paralleling *Trist.* 1.2.3 with Prop. 1.17: "The Propertian allusion implicitly and comically equates Augustus with the angry *domina* of elegy (...)".

of love elegy and those of exilic elegy. Invective is the means through which the realm of love elegy shows a glimpse of this pattern: the *puella* can be the object of aggression. Transposed in exile poetry, this pattern translates into a tangled flipping of roles: it is not only possible to argue that Augustus is treated as the elegiac *puella* in Ovid's exile poetry, but also that he is sometimes treated as the enemy; the enemy can be treated as the object of desire; finally, the poet's curses can damage the poet himself. This last hypothesis might seem the most difficult to imagine, and yet this is also one of the most prominent features of Ovid's *Ibis*. In fact, many of the examples of the catalogue, far from being appropriate to an enemy, do actually belong to Ovid's own set of examples, which he uses multiple times in both his love elegy and exile poetry, to refer to his own poetry.

Part One is divided into two Chapters. Chapter One ("The making of an outcast") deals with the role of curses in love elegy and their relevance to the curses in the *Ibis*. A link can be drawn between the use of curses in the context of love and their use in an aggressive text such as the *Ibis*, with recurring themes, imagery and communicative implications (I.1 "The most subversive act is reconciliation"). The words of invective are powerful, and the elegiac invective has a specific kind of power. This power stems from the poet's unique status as a *uates*, his relationship with the gods and his superior knowledge.

I then explore the fine line between prayer and curse, as well as the unique communicative pattern of the elegiac curse in love elegies and the *Ibis* (I.2 "Prayer and curse: an elegiac ritual"). Ritual is a fundamental part of delivering curses. Following the rules of the ritual enables the officiant to perform it effectively. In the *Ibis*, Ovid invents a new ritual specifically for *Ibis*. In Roman love elegy, curses

adhere to specific processes, to the extent that ritual and magic overlap (I.3 “*Euenient: poetry and reality*”).

Chapter Two (“Roleplay and powerplay in elegiac curses”) shifts the focus from explaining how curses work to analysing the internal changes in roles and power relationships between characters. Curses against the elegiac blocking character par excellence, the *lena*, share some of the main features of curses against Ibis and appear to play a role closely akin to that of Ibis (i.e. the one who keeps the object of desire away from the poet). However, there are cases in which similar attacks are directed at the *puella*, demonstrating the blurring of the line between the object of love and the object of hate (II.1, “The *lena*, or on destruction”). The main themes in the relationship between the poet and the rival concern the mutability of fortune and the poet's superiority over the new lover or husband. Nevertheless, love poetry shows cases of affinity between the two, as well as cases of violent attacks resembling those against the *lena*. This happens particularly when the rival is a woman or when retribution takes the form of a shared fate with the poet (II.2 “The rival, or on fortune”).

Finally, there is someone who, despite being the opposite of a blocking character, is the target of a whole range of attitudes, from love to curses: the *puella* (II.3 “The *puella*, or on Augustus”). If the elegiac *domina* is the target of curses and the poet's claims to superiority, can she still represent Augustus? In my view, love elegy constitutes an earlier form of the complex process of role-play that I argue is fundamental to Ovid's exile poetry. By examining how the *puella* can be the target of love, hatred and attempts at education, we can observe the initial stages of the intricate pattern of references that Ovid establishes in relation to Augustus.

Chapter One

The making of an outcast

Introduction: love, curse and everything in between

Conflict, aggression, curses and even violence are all part of Roman love elegy. One obvious form of attack is against figures who hinder the love affair between the poet and the *puella* in some way. However, the poet can also be aggressive towards his beloved woman. Elegists, to varying degrees, are accustomed to criticising women's behaviour, complaining and even resorting to violence. A third, more general conflict concerns the relationship between the elegiac poet and society. The elegiac poet is an outcast whose dedication to elegy prevents him from fulfilling his social duties.⁹² The morals and values to which his elegiac persona adheres may conflict with those prescribed by law and society. The elegiac male lover is the source of an alternative code of conduct.⁹³

Even the choice of writing elegiac poems is portrayed as conflictual, and not by Ovid alone. In Prop. 1.1.3-4 Propertius represents himself as physically subdued by Amor, who is stepping on the poet's face: *tum mihi constantis deiecit lumina fastus / et caput impositis pressit Amor pedibus*. The proxemics embodies the poet's feeling of submission: there is a physical superiority of Amor, who oppresses the poet by stepping on him.⁹⁴ This event is attributed to Cynthia's power to conquer

⁹² The elegist is a "self-proclaimed outcast" in Valladares' words (2012, 334).

⁹³ On love elegy and law, including the elegist as a source of law see Ziogas 2021.

⁹⁴ Ovid repurposes this image of submission in his exile poetry: *Trist.* 2.571 (*nec mihi credibile est, quemquam insultasse iacenti*); *Ibis* 29 (*at tibi, calcasti qui me, uiolente, iacentem*) *Pont.* 4.3.27 (*uix equidem credo: subito insultare iacenti*). On this see Part Two. For a discussion on the passage alongside its parallel by Meleager (*Anth. Pal.* 12.101) and in connection with Virgil and Catullus see Heslin 2018, 67-9.

the poet through her eyes and the condition of the poet is marked by a negative choice of vocabulary. The poet is *miser* (*miserum me*: 1) and Amor is *improbus* (6), as his aim is to teach the poet to hate chaste girls, and, by implication, favour promiscuous ones instead, with a further implication that Cynthia falls into this latter category. These opening lines provide the coordinates for many of the ambiguities of Roman love elegy, and for the role of aggressiveness in it: the poet presents a woman who is depicted as superior to him, and himself as subdued to Amor; however, he also stigmatises the woman's behaviour, imposing his own point of view on her and of her. Everything is in the hands of the poet.

Ovid describes his encounter with elegy in similar terms. His intention was to write solemn epic verses, had not Amor decided otherwise. In *Am.* 1.1.25-6 Ovid is forced to abandon epic poetry for elegy by Amor himself, who literally *hits* the poet with a love dart: *me miserum! certas habuit puer ille sagittas: / uror, et in uacuo pectore regnat Amor*. The poet is *miser*, again (cf. Prop. 1.1) and Amor reigns (*regnat*: 26): the power dynamics are the same as it is for Propertius.⁹⁵ The act of composing in elegiac couplets does not look like a choice: it seems to be something that poets cannot avoid.

The elegists are subject to love elegy, they do not choose it. This is connected with the fact that elegiac poets are often portrayed as outcasts. They build their lives based on elegiac values: their lifestyle is countercultural.⁹⁶ This is also true for Tibullus, who contrasts his chosen poetic life with the "regular" life, but does not

⁹⁵ Moreover, the girl is removed from these power dynamics at this point in Ovid's *Amores*, as he does not even yet have a beloved (which makes his poetic power even stronger, as he toys with the readers' expectations with a boy or a girl as the object), and at *Am.* 1.3, when we finally get a *puella*, the poem openly boasts about the power of poets.

⁹⁶ See e.g. Keith 2008.

represent this choice as difficult. His claiming a sheltered life in the countryside, alongside the practice of love constitutes a complete life choice, which makes Tibullus heavily inclined to contrast his ‘elegiac’ life to the ‘social’ one.⁹⁷

Ovid takes this process further. Society has a fundamental role in his elegies. As Gibson has discussed, Ovid is the elegist for whom elegy does not offer an alternative way of living as opposed to society: Ovid’s love elegy takes place in society, in the city of Rome; moreover Ovid is the poet that, with the *Ars amatoria*, adopts “an ‘aristocratic’ attitude – only to be punished for it immediately”.⁹⁸ Ovid’s “flirtation with adultery” in the *Ars amatoria* finds its place in what must have been the reaction of Roman élite to Augustus moral legislation. In Gibson’s words, “The determination of the *Ars* to mock and flout these limiting laws – playfully, but without cancellation or contradiction – represents perhaps a piece of traditional aristocratic hauteur and contempt for ‘rules’”.⁹⁹ Consistently with his unique approach, Ovid’s exile poetry pushes the subversive potential of elegy further: poetry really becomes a matter of life and death.

I.1 The most subversive act is reconciliation

In Wilson’s words, “The elegists take advantage of this natural incompatibility between their genre and public life, appropriating the military and political activities of their addressees into the elegiac world view, making of them an incompatible ‘other’ continually evoked in order to be continually rejected”; this is

⁹⁷ Cf. the very opening lines of Tibullus’ first book: 1.1.1-6.

⁹⁸ Gibson 2009, 285.

⁹⁹ Gibson 2009, 286.

a means of “validating and strengthening the poet’s commitment to poetry and love”.¹⁰⁰ The conflict and its literary manifestation are integral to the elegists’ literary project.

Tibullus and Propertius

Sometimes, as in the case of Propertius, the expected subversiveness is in fact more limited than we would believe, and takes the form of a substantial inconsistency, as Gibson has shown.¹⁰¹ In Prop. 3.13, for example, Propertius’ blame of what he considers wrong values of the *puella* (greed, *avaritia*) turns into blame of women in general and society as a whole (Propertius “has turned into Cato for the moment”, Gibson notes)¹⁰².

And yet the poet does act in contrast of the laws and values of society – and he is aware of that. And while he does express regret for his own behaviour (e.g. 2.29.41-2, when Propertius finds out that his suspicions of Cynthia’s betrayal were unfounded), he seems “perfectly prepared to use this rejected morality to control the behaviour of Cynthia”:¹⁰³ the conflict bursts between morals and values, between the poet and society, between the poet and the *puella*, between the poet and himself.

Tibullus, whom Quintilian considered the highest exemplar of the genre of elegy,¹⁰⁴ is the one who more clearly contrasts the elegiac lifestyle to the ‘regular’

¹⁰⁰ Wilson 2009, 276.

¹⁰¹ Gibson 2009.

¹⁰² Gibson 2009, 276.

¹⁰³ Gibson 2009, 275.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Quintilian, *Inst.* 10.1.93. For a comprehensive discussion of the author see Miller 2012.

one.¹⁰⁵ Tibullus presents a real life choice from the very beginning of his collection. In 1.1.5-6 he envisions a humble life for himself, in the countryside (*me mea paupertas uita traducat inerti / dum meus assiduo luceat igne focus*), devoted to love (1.1.73-4: *nunc leuis est tractanda Venus dum frangere postes / non pudet et rixas inseruisse iuuat*), as opposed to the life of a rich landowner, whose wealth comes from war for which he is thus always in fear (1.1.1-4).

Paradoxically, the subversive character of elegy finds its place in Tibullus and Propertius' poetry without damaging its authors precisely because they claim separation from society. It is its merging with society that brings Ovid down. The "aristocratic attitude", discussed by Gibson,¹⁰⁶ translates into Ovid's ambiguous relationship with political power in exile. Throughout this thesis I argue that the subversive character that is inherent in love elegy is pushed to its extreme in Ovid's exile elegy.

Ovid's love elegy is the most integrated into society. And yet Ovid is also the poet of exile elegy, where he presents his love poetry as part of the cause of his misfortune (*Trist.* 2.207). The poet whose life and poetry ultimately lead to real separation from society is damaged by his poetry because it did not respect the boundary between poetry and life. In other words, the fact that his love elegy does not seek separation from society is ultimately among the causes of his separation from society in both life and poetry. Yet this does not merely happen because of the more prominent autobiographical matter present in Ovid's exile poetry. My point is that it is Ovid's own take on elegy, made of a specific use of communication and

¹⁰⁵ However, on the complexity of Tibullus' poetry see Miller 2012; on political insights in Tibullus Jansson 2021.

¹⁰⁶ Gibson 2009, 285.

a pattern of relationship between the characters, that leads elegy to maximise and exploit its subversive potential. The core of the political and subversive character of the Ovidian elegy is neither merely in its author's life experience nor just in the contents of its poems – including the *Ars*: it is in Ovid's *ars*, meaning in his own peculiar way of writing poetry.

Ovid's innovation

What is Ovid's position on this matter? It has been acknowledged that with Ovid, elegy begins a journey towards reconciliation with society.¹⁰⁷ A clear distinction – or even opposition – between life and poetry protects the latter because it never challenges the superiority of the former. However, when poetry touches the realm of reality while treating it as a literary device, the subversive potential of the poetic persona poses a threat to real people, including the poet himself. The attempt to reconcile poetry and society leads to subversion.

In *Trist.* 2 Ovid recalls that none of his fellow elegists was punished for his poetry (not even Gallus – there were other reasons).¹⁰⁸ Speaking of Tibullus and then of Propertius, Ovid states:

Scit cui latretur, cum solus obambulat ipse
et totiens clausas excreat ante fores, 460
multaque dat furti talis praecepta, docetque
qua nuptae possint fallere ab arte uiros.
Non fuit hoc illi fraudi, legiturque Tibullus
et placet, et iam te principe notus erat.
Inuenies eadem blandi praecepta Properti: 465
detractus minima nec tamen ille nota est.

¹⁰⁷ Gibson 2009. On the approach to love in the *Ars amatoria* as a cultural construct tailored on Augustan Rome see Volk 2007. On an comprehensive interpretation of Ovid's poetry through the concepts of relativism and innovation see La Penna 2018.

¹⁰⁸ *Trist.* 2.445-6: *non fuit opprobrio celebrasse Lycorida Gallo, / sed linguam nimio non tenuisse mero.*

He knows for whom there is barking, since he himself paces about alone
and so often coughs in front of closed doors, 460
and he gives many instructions for adultery of this sort, and teaches
by what art brides are able to deceive their men.
This did not cause damage to him, and Tibullus is read and
pleases, and when you were already the first citizen, he became famous.
You will find the same instructions in charming Propertius:
nevertheless he was not grazed by even the tiniest black mark.

(*Tristia* 2.459-66)¹⁰⁹

As has been noted, Ovid here exaggerates the didactic aspect of Tibullus' poetry, substantially misrepresenting it. Far from writing his own *ars amatoria*, Tibullus occasionally incorporates didactic features, as seen in elegies 1.4 and 1.6, on which Ovid focuses.¹¹⁰ By emphasising the very different way in which Augustus treated Tibullus compared to himself, Ovid implies that Augustus' exercise of power was fundamentally arbitrary.¹¹¹ The case of Propertius is similar: Ovid highlights the erotodidactic elements of his poetry.¹¹²

And yet nothing in Tibullus or Propertius resembles Ovid's *Ars amatoria*:

Dum facit ingenium, petite hinc praecepta, puellae,
quas pudor et leges et sua iura sinunt.

While the goddess inspires my art, do seek precepts here, girls,
whom modesty, laws and having own rights permit.

(*Ars* 3.57-8)¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Text and translation of *Tristia* 2: Ingleheart 2010. Here my translation is modified: "adultery" instead of "intrigue", to give *furtum* the same meaning as in love elegy.

¹¹⁰ Ingleheart 2010, 350.

¹¹¹ Ingleheart 2010, 356.

¹¹² Ingleheart 2010, 356-7.

¹¹³ Text of the *Ars amatoria*: Ramírez de Verger 2006. Translation of the *Ars amatoria*: a modified version of Mozley 1939 rev. Goold 1979.

Ziogas notes that, while Ovid may try to narrow down his audience, “in fact it is up to any female readers to decide whether they are interested in playing Ovid’s game or not”.¹¹⁴ Moreover, Ziogas highlights the antithetical nature of the concepts of *pudor* (a paradoxical quality to use to define women who can follow Ovid’s instructions) and law (the *lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus* from 18 BC), where “modest behaviour (*pudor*) is internally regulated, while the law, the *lex Iulia* in particular, is an external imposition of chastity”.¹¹⁵ not only does *pudor* suggest a reference to respectable women, but Ziogas’ interpretation of *sua iura* also associates it with women who are not under the guardianship of a male figure, such as a husband or father. In summary, Ovid’s approach to elegiac love is unique, and has a subversive potential that sets him apart from Tibullus and Propertius. He advises, with some ambiguity, a wide audience of Roman women on how to conduct liaisons that are illegal at this time. Ovid’s love elegy does not look for an escape from reality, nor does it refuse it. In his exilic self-defence, he unconvincingly argues from a fundamentally identical core to their poetry. Paradoxically, Ovid’s inclusion of his *ars* into society ultimately leads to his exclusion.

I.2 Prayer and curse: an elegiac ritual

Ovid’s invectives in the *Ibis* are not merely hostile words from one person to another. Rather, they are presented as ritual words pronounced with the favour of the gods. As Rachel Philbrick demonstrates in her analysis of Tibullus’ invective

¹¹⁴ Ziogas 2021, 290. On Ovid’s use of the category of *puella* here see also Gibson 2003, 30-1.

¹¹⁵ Ziogas 2021, 290.

against the *lena* in 1.5, the elegiac poet adopts the persona of a “divinely-inspired prophet”, which allows him to claim “privileged knowledge of – and even the ability to control – the future”.¹¹⁶ Tibullus anticipates Ovid in posing as a poetic persona that switches from prophecy to invective, incorporating magical and religious elements, but also technical language.¹¹⁷ Ovid takes on this poetic persona of prophet of curses¹¹⁸ and enhances it, by making it the main poetic persona of a whole poem, the *Ibis*.

However, there is obviously also a tradition of Roman love poetry unrelated to curses. Philbrick mentions Tibullus 2.5.114, Propertius 3.8.17, and Ovid’s *Ars amatoria* (2.165) in this regard. Building on the themes identified by Philbrick, this section examines how the *Ibis* employs the prophetic persona of the elegiac poet in the broader context of elegiac language as a means of non-institutional power. Additionally, it analyses the pragmatic value of language related to ritual, religion, and magic as a distinctive feature of Roman elegy.

A complex pattern of sources: searching for an elegiac prayer

Back in 1910, Karl Zipfel argued that *defixiones* had to be a major source for Ovid’s *Ibis*.¹¹⁹ He based this argument on a number of thematic connections, the elegiac metre and his own identification of the catalogue of myths as a counterpart to the obscurity that often characterises *defixiones*. However, one point is particularly relevant at this stage of our discussion: the depiction of the gods.

¹¹⁶ Philbrick 2021, 145.

¹¹⁷ Philbrick 2021, 146.

¹¹⁸ Definition by Philbrick 2021, 146.

¹¹⁹ Zipfel 2010.

In response to Zipfel's observation that almost every god invoked by Ovid in 67-92 appears in the *tabellae defixionum*, La Penna highlights the significant absence in the *Ibis* of those deities that are most frequently invoked in *defixiones* (Hermes, Pluto, Persephone and Demeter). Furthermore, in addition to La Penna's observation regarding the presence of gods, Watson cites the absence of a tangible use of magic in the *Ibis* as another reason for rejecting Zipfel's thesis: "nothing in the *Ibis*, unless the natal horoscope of 208ff. is viewed in this light, suggests that Ovid was employing magic against his enemy".¹²⁰ While I agree that identifying in *defixiones* a major source for the *Ibis* would be misleading, I argue that a deeper analysis of the semantics of magic in the poem is crucial to its interpretation.

In her chapter on the interaction between elegy, epistolography and magic ritual in *Her.* 6,¹²¹ Zara Chadha applies to the epistle of Hypsipyle to Jason the category of "prayer for justice", which are "curses which ask a god for vengeance or justice, to redress a wrong suffered by the practitioner, or a combination of these".¹²² These "prayers for justice" have a number of elements in common with the *Ibis*. First, there is the clear mention of the name of the practitioner, as well as the clear statement of the reasons for the curse. In the *Ibis*, Ovid presents himself as the officiant of the ritual against Ibis (97: *nulla mora est in me: peragam rata uota sacerdos*) and from the very beginning of the poem, he clarifies the reasons for the punishment of the enemy (e.g. 7-10).

Finally, a prayer for justice should include an invocation to the gods, but not the chthonic ones. It should aim to flatter them and state their superiority, appeal

¹²⁰ Watson 1991, 204.

¹²¹ Chadha 2023.

¹²² Chadha 2023, 184.

for the practitioner's protection, and clearly display the concepts of justice, injustice and punishment. Early in the poem, Ovid invokes as many deities as possible to introduce and reinforce his curses:

Di maris et terrae, quique his meliora tenetis
inter diuersos cum Ioue regna polos,
huc, precor, huc uestras omnes aduertite mentes,
et sinite optatis pondus inesse meis. 70
Ipsaque tu tellus, ipsum cum fluctibus aequor,
ipse meas aether accipe summe preces.

(...)
Denique ab antiquo diui ueteresque nouique
in nostrum cuncti tempus adeste Chaos,
carmina dum capiti male fido dira canuntur, 85
et peragunt partes ira dolorque suas.
Adnite optatis omnes ex ordine nostris,
et sit pars uoti nulla caduca mei.

Gods of the sea and the land, and you who hold realms greater than these,
between the opposite poles, with Jupiter,
here I beg you, turn all your attention here,
and let my vows carry some weight. 70
And you, land, and you sea with your currents,
and you too, highest ether, accept my prayers.

(...)
And in the end, from the ancient Chaos, old and new gods,
come and support me in our time,
while dangerous poems arise against his evil head 85
and rage and pain play their roles.
Accept, all together, my desires one by one,
and do not let any part of my vow go unfulfilled.

(Ibis 67-72; 83-8)

In Ovid's attempt to involve any known god in his prayer Williams sees a case of poignant irony.¹²³ In his desperate attempt to reinforce his curses by appealing to the divine world, the poet ends up weakening his plea by mentioning too many gods

¹²³ Williams 1996, 42.

without giving a specific reason for calling upon them. Ultimately, while trying to emphasise Ibis' loneliness, he highlights his own isolation.¹²⁴

My analysis builds on Williams' conclusion that the poem reveals Ovid's weakness, by arguing that this weakness forms part of Ovid's argument. This conclusion stems from the role of elegy in interpreting the *Ibis*, as analysed by Chadha in the context of the "prayer for justice". Ovid's curse draws on various sources, such as *defixiones* and iambic invectives, blending these references within an elegiac framework. Therefore, the involvement of the gods in the *Ibis* is inconsistent with the tradition of curses; however, it belongs to a category of elegiac curses that combine prayer and attack.

Ovid presents a narrative of his experience, including his own portrayal and role. In this context, he presents himself as powerless, isolated and defeated. As a poet, Ovid actively pursues this self-depiction in the *Ibis* through his poetic language, exaggerating the features of isolation and separation from the civilised world that are characteristic of the elegiac lover. This specific use of language, linked in this case to the relationship between the semantic domains of magic and prayer, is a tool that empowers the powerless.

The verb *precor* (69; 89) and the noun *prex* (72), which share the same root, appear three times in fewer than 30 lines. In all its senses, *precor* is frequently used in religious contexts to indicate the act of praying or making entreaties to someone.¹²⁵ It also fulfils the speech act of request in an established setting and from a pragmatic point of view. Moreover, it can be seen as an attempt to influence

¹²⁴ Williams 1996, 42.

¹²⁵ *OLD*² 1596 s.v. *precor* 1 and 2; see also *ThlL* s.v. *precor* 1153.20.

the actions of the gods by affecting their negative face (desire for freedom of will and movement).

As a speech act, prayer can be defined as both illocutionary and performative, because it performs an action rather than describing reality. In order to successfully perform the action, a performative speech act must fulfil certain conditions; otherwise, it falls under what Austin termed “infelicities”.¹²⁶ It must adhere to precise existing conventions (A.1) and involve the appropriate people (A.2). The procedure must be executed correctly and completely by everyone involved (B.1 and B.2). If it is intended for individuals with specific thoughts or feelings, the participants must possess those thoughts or feelings (Γ.1) and behave accordingly (Γ.2). If the conditions in groups A and B are not met, the act will not be performed successfully (Austin refers to these cases as “misfires”). If the conditions in Γ are not met, the act will be performed successfully, but since the participants were insincere, it will be an abuse of the procedure.

As expected in this context, the first person *precor* is a key term in the elegiac discourse of wooing. It appears with particular frequency in Tibullus (and the *Appendix Tibulliana*), where it occurs 16 times, and in Propertius (five occurrences).¹²⁷ This trend continues with Ovid, who uses the term eight times in the *Amores*, 27 times in the *Heroides*, and 57 times in the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*. In the *Ibis*, the term appears five times (lines 69, 89, 476, 626 and 638),¹²⁸ which is quite significant in a poem of 644 verses.

¹²⁶ Austin 1962, 14-45.

¹²⁷ According to the online databases *Musisque deoque*, *The Library of LatinTexts* and *PHI*.

¹²⁸ Plus, a doubtful lectio at 98 (*quisquis ades sacris, ore fauete, meis*): manuscript **T** (Turonensis 879, approx. 1200) reads *precor* instead of *meis*. None of the modern editors include *precor* in their

In terms of politeness theory, prayers can be equated with requests as linguistic acts that may threaten the dignity of both interlocutors. Making a request implies an attempt to influence the addressee's behaviour and therefore their negative face. At the same time, prayers pose risks to the speaker, too, because acceptance of their prayer by the addressee can threaten the speaker's positive face, i.e. their social position and dignity.

From prayer to curse

An exemplary case is the use of *precor* in association with appeals for mercy, especially in the fixed formula *parce, precor*. With its numerous occurrences in elegy, it is possible to draw a line that brings us from love elegy, through Ovid's exilic elegies of lament, to the *Ibis*. This is the line of the use of emotions and especially compassion. In Tibullus 1.8.51 (*parce precor tenero. Non illi sontica causa est*) and 2.6.29 (*parce, per immatura tuae precor ossa sororis*) the use of the expression is paired with a portrayal of the woman as *dura puella* (1.8.50 and 2.6.28 respectively): the poet tries to gain her mercy, for a young lover in the first case and for himself in the second.

In both occurrences the lover cries profusely at the woman's cruelty (1.8.53-4: *uel miser absenti maestas quam saepe querellas / coniicit et lacrimis omnia plena*

texts. Manuscript **T** is the most important testimony for the *Ibis* alongside manuscript **G** (Galeanus 213, XII century) and often records very significant *lectiones*. It is tempting to consider **T**'s reading. The presence of a term belonging to the realm of prayer would also be consistent with an Ovidian parallel for the passage: *concipiamque bonas ora fauente preces* (*Trist.* 3.13.18), and it would recall *preces* at *Ibis* 96. Moreover, the structure imperative plus *precor* is attested in Ovid, with *precor* in the same metrical position too (*Fast.* 3.428). However, a parallel for the structure with *meis* in the last metrical collocation is offered by *Her.* 19.194. The intertextual and intra-textual parallels could also indicate that *precor* should not be included in the text: *precor* could in fact easily be merely a corruption encouraged by the parallel passage of the *Tristia* (3.13.18) and by the proximity of *preces* at line 96 of the *Ibis* itself. For these reasons I would not read *precor* here.

madent and 2.6.31-6, esp. 34: *et madefacta meis sarta feram lacrimis*; and 35: *illius ad tumultum fugiam supplexque sedebo*). The prayer is therefore directly related to the attempt at provoking the woman's mercy by insisting on the consequences of her behaviour on the poet. This attitude constitutes a form of negative impoliteness because it aims at influencing the target's freedom of movement through the use of emotions.

At the same time, this attempt is pursued through the humiliation of the speaker (or of the person to whom the speaker refers). This pattern is applied quite consistently in love elegy, which includes the peculiar case of the *Heroides*: it is, for example, the strategy used by Dido towards Aeneas (*Her.* 7.163: *parce, precor, domui, quae se tibi tradit habendam!*)¹²⁹ and, in a much lighter context, by Paris towards Helen (*Her.* 16.11, with again a reference to the woman's harshness: *parce, precor, fasso, nec uultu cetera duro*). It is also employed, as we shall see in the next chapter, in the curses against a rival: in *Amores* 1.4.1-2, Ovid uses this expression to evoke an ambiguous and ominous wish upon the woman's husband (*Vir tuus est epulas nobis aditurus easdem; / ultima cena tuo sit, precor, illa uiro*). He then applies the same strategy to his exilic relationship with Augustus, but he upgrades his communicative aim by reinforcing the use of the semantic domains of prayer and compassion:

Parce, precor, fulmenque tuum, fera tela, repone,
 heu nimium misero cognita tela mihi! 180
 Parce, pater patriae, nec nominis inmemor huius
 olim placandi spem mihi tolle tui!
 Non precor ut redeam, quamuis maiora petitis
 credibile est magnos saepe dedisse deos.

¹²⁹ Text of the *Heroides*: Showerman 1914, rev. Goold 1977.

Spare me, I pray, and lay aside your thunderbolt, savage weapons,
 alas weapons too well known by wretched me!
Spare me, father of the fatherland, and do not, unmindful of this name
 remove from me the hope of placating you at some time!
I do not pray for my return, although greater things than those petitioned for
 it is believable that the great gods often have granted.

(*Trist.* 2.179-84)

The formula *parce, precor* first appears in its traditional form at line 179, where Ovid urges Augustus to spare him. The poet is familiar with these weapons, just as he is with the harshness of the elegiac *domina*. Just as in love elegy, Ovid's prayer puts the speaker down so that the addressee is persuaded to exercise mercy from a higher position. The adjective *miser* ("the one to be pitied")¹³⁰ guides the reader's attention towards the realm of suffering and the right to compassion. However, it also directs the reader's attention towards the concept of an unmerciful Augustus, whose severity is emphasised by the parallel with love elegy.¹³¹

The next two couplets break down the expression *parce, precor* into its two main aspects: compassion and prayer. In lines 181-2, it is suggested that Augustus can only truly be considered the "father of the fatherland" (*pater patriae*) if he shows compassion. This statement is fundamental: although Augustus is not compassionate towards Ovid, who fears his power, Augustus' mercy is a prerequisite for him to be considered *pater patriae*. The poet reminds the *princeps* of the conditions of his role, implying that Augustus is not living up to the standards of *pater patriae* until he shows compassion to Ovid.¹³² Paradoxically, the poet

¹³⁰ *OLD*² s.v. *miser*, 1.

¹³¹ Ingleheart 2010, 186-8. On Ovid's portrayal of Augustus' *clementia* in exile see Barden Dowling 2009, 109-22.

¹³² Ingleheart 2010, 187.

challenges the emperor's superiority and yet urges him to exercise a power that can only be executed by someone in a higher position. This literary relationship between the poet and the *domina* becomes something much more dangerous when it is transferred and adapted to the relationship between the poet and his *princeps*.

After the theme of compassion, the power of prayer is revisited at 183-4 to demonstrate its ability to achieve more than was intended. In the *Ibis* Ovid attributes this power to himself: he achieves more by depriving the enemy of compassion and filling him with pain than by showing compassion. At 89-92, Ovid's prayer explicitly reveals its aggressive aim:

Quaeque precor fiant, ut non mea dicta, sed illa
Pasiphaes generi uerba fuisse putet. 90
Quasque ego transiero poenas, patiaturs et illas:
plenius ingenio sit miser ille meo.

And may what I pray for happen, so that he believes them to be
not my words, but the words of Pasiphae's son-in-law. 90
And may he also suffer whatever punishments I neglect:
may he be more miserable than my imagination can conceive.

(*Ibis* 89-92)

Ovid prays, but not, as a love poet, for a merciful *domina*, nor, as the exiled poet, for a merciful *princeps*. Instead, he prays for the power to annihilate his enemy. Here, the pitiful one is Ibis, who must not only be punished, but also suffer. Ovid's hope is for his prayer to be more effective than he could have imagined, and concerns the power to harm, not heal. Ultimately, Ibis embodies both Ovid and the elegiac poet suffering for love, while Ovid embodies both Augustus and the cruel *puella*.

Finally, the verb *precor* seals the poem at its very end:

Denique Sarmaticas inter Geticasque sagittas
his, precor, et uiuas et moriari locis.

Ultimately, I pray that you live and die
in these places, surrounded by Sarmatian and Getic arrows.

(*Ibis* 637-8)

This curse is the final one in the catalogue, and it has to be understood as the most intense expression of Ovid's anger. It is the most significant invective because it explicitly states the correspondence between Ovid and his enemy: exile. Each of Ovid's attempts to remove Ibis from society culminates in this wish for Ibis to suffer the same fate as Ovid in Pontus. It is also the climax of the prayer, as it conveys the true meaning of Ovid's invocation to the gods. With five total occurrences¹³³ (six if we include the reading of manuscript **T** at 98), the term *precor* is very present in the *Ibis* as both a way of guiding the ritual (*Ibis* 69: *huc, precor, huc uestras omnes aduertite mentes*) and to curse Ibis. The language of prayer becomes therefore another tool to empower the words of the powerless poet.

First and foremost, Ovid represents himself as an outcast, isolated and exiled, because this allows him to reinforce the power of his poetic language and the tragedy of his situation at the same time. Not only does he want Ibis to suffer the same fate as him in exile, but he also wants to emphasise his own situation. For a powerless man like Ovid (but also like Ibis in the future), elegiac language is real power, and this power comes from the tradition of the elegiac genre.

¹³³ *Ibis* 69, 89, 476, 626, 638.

Ovid's wishes are destined to come true. This will happen during a ritual in which he will be both the officiant and the beneficiary. Although the ritual against Ibis is a ritual of death, the elegiac poet learns the importance of ritual through love. In fact, we could say that love is a ritual. In the *Ars amatoria*, Ovid reveals the secrets of the rituals of conquest and resistance in love.¹³⁴ As the keeper of these secrets, he enables men and women to learn them as an art form. The ritual can be learned and the poet is the one who can share the knowledge. He decides to make that knowledge widely available and in this lies the rebellious character of his action: in making his knowledge available to a wide audience.

Siquis in hoc artem populo non nouit amandi
me legat et lecto carmine doctus amet.
Arte citae ueloque rates remoque mouentur,
arte leues currus: arte regendus Amor.

If anyone among this people does not know the art of love,
they should read me and, having read the poem, they will skilfully love.
By skill swift ships are sailed and rowed,
by skill nimble chariots are driven: by skill must Love be guided.

(*Ars amatoria* 1.1-4)

Ovid's authority stems from his knowledge (*doctus*: 2). This knowledge makes the poet superior to other men and women, establishing a privileged relationship with the relevant deity – Amor, in this case.¹³⁵ Evidence of this approach to poetry, and its reinterpretation of life, can be seen in Ovid's unique take on the love elegy. The

¹³⁴ On the application of mystery cult language to Ovid's erotodidactic poetry in the *Ars amatoria* see Vazquez 2024. On the *Ars amatoria* in general see Gibson – Green – Sharrock (eds) 2006; Green 2006 in the same volume for an overview of the main scholarly approaches.

¹³⁵ On *citius* and *leuis* as attributes of Ovid's own idea of love see Hollis 1977, *ad loc.*

first point, then, is knowledge. The second, however, is a more subversive point: interpretation.

Ovid's *ars* does not come from a god. It comes from the poet's own expertise:

Non ego, Phoebae, datas a te mihi mentiar artes, 25
nec nos aerae uoce monemur auis,
nec mihi sunt uisae Clio Cliusque sorores
seruanti pecudes uallibus, Ascra, tuis.
Vsus opus mouet hoc: uati parete perito;
uera canam: coeptis, mater Amoris, ades. 30

I will not lie, Phoebus, by saying that my arts come from you 25
nor am I prompted by the voice of a bird of the air,
neither did Clio and Clio's sisters appear to me,
while I guarded flocks in your valley, Ascra;
experience inspires this work: listen to the experienced poet;
I will sing the truth: protect my undertaking, mother of Love. 30

(*Ars amatoria* 25-30)

Ovid is a *uates*, but this title does not come from a superior relationship with the traditional gods of poetry, but from Venus, for her link to love. This claim for an original poetic operation should be understood in the same framework as Tibullus' reference to Venus in 1.5.57-8 (*eueniet: dat signa deu. Sunt numina amanti, / saeuit et iniusta lege relicta Venus*). As the goddess of love, Venus becomes the protector of didactic love elegies and curses within them (cf. also Venus' punishment of the unfaithful woman in Tib. 1.6). In the *Ibis*, Ovid links his role as *uates* to Apollo (127-8: *eueniet: dedit ipse mihi modo signa futuri / Phoebus*), and also grounds his curse by invoking all the deities. He expands and emphasises the approach to elegy as he developed it in love poetry. As a *uates*, he enjoys the privilege of a special relationship with the entire divine world.

However, in the *Ars*, Ovid does more than just share his superior knowledge. He also offers his own moral perspective on it. As Gibson has demonstrated, in the third book of the *Ars*, Ovid presents his own “middle way” approach to adulterous love, focusing on moderation.¹³⁶ This could suggest potential competition with Augustan moral categories and authority regarding what constitutes moderation.¹³⁷ In the *Ibis* this approach is once again brought to the extreme consequences: poetry becomes the instrument to stigmatise wrongdoing and punish it. Ovid combines knowledge, authority, and ritual to create a world in which the elegiac word is a source of power.

I.3 *Euenient*: poetry and reality

Ibis’ death is characterised as a mournful sacrificial rite, officiated over by the poet (97-102). Ovid’s role as a minister of the sacrifice comes directly from his identity as a *uates*, which allows Ovid to know Ibis’ fate (247: *ille ego sum uates: ex me tua uulnera disces, / dent modo di uires in mea uerba suas*). Knowledge comes from poetry and becomes a means of revenge, not just because the poet is able to make something happen, but because the knowledge that something will happen makes it true. This section explores the relationship between knowledge and divine inspiration. As *uates*, the poet has a privileged relationship with the gods and the elegiac poets consistently claim this privilege as the ground for their superiority.

Finding the source of poetic power

¹³⁶ Gibson 2006; Gibson 2007, esp. 71-114

¹³⁷ In the form of a possibility in Gibson 2007, 114.

Where does Ovid's poetic language take its power from? In the *Ibis*, the poet makes it very clear which pattern of sources his poetry draws from:

Euenient: dedit ipse mihi modo signa futuri
Phoebus, et a laeua maesta uolauit auis.

These things will happen: Phoebus himself recently gave me signs
of the future, and an ominous bird flew from the left side.

(*Ibis* 127-8)

The meaning of this couplet and its connection to Tibullus 1.5, as well as the presence of Apollo, have been subjects of discussion for a long time. While investigating possible parallels between the *Ibis* and the Homeric hymn to Apollo, Battistella points out that Apollo represents an anti-model for Ibis, and his presence informs the entire poem.¹³⁸ Battistella depicts Apollo as the inspiration for both epic and elegiac poetry. In this context, he is associated with Tibullus' Venus in 1.5. Furthermore, Ovid presents Ibis as impure, claiming that he inherited this trait from his mother (221). According to Battistella, this could be an explicit contrast with the purity of Apollo, as can be inferred from his name, *Phoebus*. However, it could also be a reference to the "pureness of Ovid's works prior to the *Ibis* (cf. line 8 *candoris*)".¹³⁹ At the same time, Ovid's claim to a privileged relationship to Apollo stigmatises the lack of purity of the *profani*, the uninitiated to Ovid's elegiac rites.

The reference to ominous signs, which are consistent with the presence of Apollo – the god of oracles – is another possible link to Tibullus 1.5. This is not

¹³⁸ Battistella 2013, 82.

¹³⁹ Battistella 2013, 83, also recalling Schiesaro 2001, 125, Williams 2006, 460 and n. 36 (=1992, 182 and n. 55) and Degl'Innocenti Pierini 2003, 132 and 136. The name Phoebus is connected with Greek φοῖβος, with reference to the Homeric hymn to Apollo, lines 115-126 (Battistella 2013, 82). On wordplay related to Apollo named Phoebus in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (and further insight in Ovid's wordplay) see Ahl 1985, esp. 124-40.

only because the text openly mentions the signs that the god gave to the poet, but also because it alludes to bad fortune associated with the object of curses. I argue that Apollo's presence should not be dismissed as a mere formulaic reference. This couplet also recalls the ritual context created by Ovid in lines 95-104, but with additional significance. Ovid reinforces his violent curses by claiming that they are true due to inspiration from the god Apollo. In other words, the reference to bad luck and the reprise of the elegiac context of Tibullus, with all the references to the *lena* and the implications that we have already identified, introduce new information into the communicative context, with a precise objective and specific meaning. Ovid reaffirms his determination to deliver the curses and their significance.

In Tibullus 1.5 the poet's special relationship with a god(dess), Venus, reinforces his prediction:

Eueniet: dat signa deus. Sunt numina amanti,
saeuit et iniusta lege relictia Venus.

This will happen: a god gives me signs; a lover has his deities
and Venus, when neglected under an unjust law, becomes savage.

(Tib. 1.5.57-8)¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ Text of Tibullus: Maltby 2002. This translation is mine. Over the lectio of the *codices eueniet* Luck 1998 prefers *euenient*, correction made by Heinsius (as in the Broekhuizen's *codices*). However, in his 1988 edition he prefers *eueniet*. The parallel with *Ib.* 127 has been recently stressed by Philbrick (2021, 158) as a supporting element for the lectio *euenient* in Tibullus starting from an interpretation of La Penna's observation that *euenient* in *Ib.* 127 is a clear imitation of Tib. 1.5.57. However, it seems to me that La Penna's observation, does not necessarily need to be interpreted as supporting the correction. First, the parallel between the two passages stands even without the correction and taking into account La Penna's note, as we should, does not require us to emend Tibullus' text. Second, under this prospect I would consider the choice of *euenient* in Tibullus close to a banalisation of Ovid's technique, aimed at searching for a perfect match between two passages which is unnecessary (since, as mentioned above, their connection is undeniable).

These two lines are subject to a long scholarly debate, considering their acknowledged link to *Ibis* 127-8.¹⁴¹ Philbrick focuses on the magical and prophetic characteristics revealed by the poet in this passage. The poet and the *lena* in Tibullus both have an indirect connection with magic and prediction, and the poem seems to depict the poet as being able to counteract the *lena*'s curses on a higher level. This starts with magic but ultimately rejects it because it is unnecessary. However, Tibullus presents the poet's relationship with the goddess as stronger than that of the *lena*. Firstly, he has a direct relationship with her, based on a form of communication (*dat signa deus*). Secondly, the very structure of the couplet reinforces the idea of a link. There is an etymological wordplay that frames the couplet in the first and final words *eueniet-Venus*, which is consistent with Venus' etymological interpretation from the verb *uenire*. The elegiac poet plays with his enemies and plays with his reader, showing his superiority through a clever use of poetry.

This couplet marks a break in the invective, while simultaneously recalling the mystical elements of the previous curses. *Euenio* can signify the fulfilment of a prayer or prophecy, and this is reinforced by the subsequent statement that those who love receive signs from the deities (*dat signa deus. Sunt numina amanti, 57*). Venus is the one who instructed Tibullus and reinforced his knowledge of the future, allowing him to free himself from the need of magic and divination: he is inspired by the goddess Venus herself.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ La Penna 1957, 28 – mentioning that the point was already noticed by the XV century humanist Costanzo da Fano (see on him also Ellis 1881 VI-VIII; Kenney 1959) – also recalls Callimachus' hymns to Apollo and *On the bath of Pallas*. Philbrick 2021 develops this aspect extensively. On the connections between Roman love elegy and Callimachus see Hunter 2006 and 2012.

¹⁴² Philbrick 2021, 158-9.

Tibullus' use of the verb *saeuio* (58) in this context is connected to Venus' reaction to being neglected. *Saeuio* is a verb of rage, indicating the act of behaving ferociously, whether by humans, animals or natural forces, or of venting one's rage on someone.¹⁴³ While the adjective *iniusta* suggests that Venus' rage is justified, *relicta* implies that her act is a reaction: she executes punishments when her rule is neglected. In other words, Venus is not only the deity who protects lovers; she is also the source of her own law, which involves punishing those who break it. This confirms that violence and aggression are inherent aspects of love poetry.

Ille ego sum: the poet's claim

When comparing the two passages, Philbrick also recalls that in *Ibis* 246 and 247-8 Ovid calls himself *uates* and states that as a *uates* he will sing Ibis' fate:

Et, ne longa suo praesagia diceret ore, 245
 "fata canet uates qui tua" dixit, "erit."
 Ille ego sum uates: ex me tua uulnera disces,
 dent modo di uires in mea uerba suas;
 carminibusque meis accedent pondera rerum,
 quae rata per luctus experiere tuos. 250

249 accedent **h1p5** *Berolinensis Creuennae (teste Merkel) ed. Ven. 1484* :
 accedant *codd.*

And, so that I do not make a long prophecy, 245
 she said: "A poet will sing of your fates".
 I am that poet: you will learn of your misfortunes from me,
 and I pray the gods grant my words strength;
 the weight of reality will be felt in my poems,
 and it is a weight that you will experience through your pain. 250

(*Ibis* 245-50)

¹⁴³ OLD² 1850 s.v. *saeuio*, 1 (humans), 2 (animals), 3 (natural forces).

Clotho, one of the Parcae, predicts to Ibis that a poet will come to speak about Ibis' tragic destiny: that poet is Ovid. The overlapping between the meaning of *uates* as a divinely inspired poet and as prophet is again anticipated by Tibullus, e.g. in 1.7, while a specific intertextual reference in a different context is found in 1.6.31, where Tibullus uses the phrase of himself speaking to Delia's husband.¹⁴⁴

However, I argue that there are more occurrences that should be included in the discussion, especially those in the *Epistulae ex Ponto*. In *Pont.* 1.2, which is addressed to Paulus Fabius Maximus and asks for his support in Ovid's dealings with the emperor, the formula *ille ego sum* appears three times: in the first two, 33-4, it is part of Ovid's description of his feelings in exile, where Ovid states that he would rather have the fate of Phaethon's sisters¹⁴⁵ or Medusa's victim¹⁴⁶ because, although dead, he would find relief from his pain (*ille ego sum, lignum qui non admittor in ullum; / ille ego sum, frustra qui lapis esse uelim*). The final two instances refer directly to Ovid's role as a poet, demonstrating his awareness of this particular usage of the formula. In his attempt to persuade Maximus to intercede on his behalf, Ovid reminisces about his loyal friendship and the nuptial poems he composed for Maximus' wedding (129-32). A further step in the development of this phrase can be found in *Pont.* 4.3.11-18. I argue that these prior cases show how Ovid plays with the various meanings and sources of the phrase and how the

¹⁴⁴ For a discussion of the intertextual relationship see Philbrick 2021, 156-57: a link between *Ib.* 247 and Tib. 1.6.31 is recognised through the formulation *ille ego sum*. On the image of the poet as *uates* in Ovid (in particular in the *Metamorphoses*) see also Davis 2016.

¹⁴⁵ See *Met.* 2.346-66.

¹⁴⁶ See *Met.* 4 and 5.

presence of *ille ego sum* in the *Ibis* has a well-established tradition of elegiac uses that must all be considered when interpreting the passage:¹⁴⁷

Ille ego sum, quamquam non uis audire, uetusta
 paene puer puero iunctus amicitia,
 ille ego, qui primus tua seria nosse solebam
 et tibi iucundis primus adesse iocis,
 ille ego conuictor densoque domesticus usu, 15
 ille ego iudiciis unica Musa tuis,
 ille ego sum, qui nunc an uiuam, perfide, nescis,
 cura tibi de quo quaerere nulla fuit.

I am he, although you do not want to hear it, you, united to me
 by an old friendship, almost boy to boy,
 I am that one who used first to hear your serious thoughts,
 first to listen to your pleasant jests,
 I am that one who lived in close union with you in the same household, 15
 I, who in your judgment was the one and only Muse,
 of whom you know not, traitor, whether I am now alive
 about whom you have been at no pains to inquire.

(*Pont.* 4.3.11-18)¹⁴⁸

The formula *ille ego sum*, with its shortened version *ille ego*, finds application in a context that joins recrimination, lament and courting movements. Ovid's communication to his former friend turned enemy repurposes a dynamic that belongs to love elegy.¹⁴⁹ Moreover, playing with the addressee's name, using pseudonyms is obviously an acknowledged feature of Roman elegy.¹⁵⁰ It is thus quite clear how the very choice of having a false name for the enemy – *Ibis* – is

¹⁴⁷ For a comprehensive analysis of the formula, especially in light of the evolution of Ovid's relationship with Virgil, see Farrell 2004: "Ovid's strategy of self-representation, both in the more ludic early phase, when he would vaunt himself explicitly as the elegiac Virgil, and in the later, more rueful phase that hovered between posthumous fame and humiliation in the here-and-now, represents not only what is probably the earliest, but also one of the more complex reactions to what has been seen as the simple, ideal pattern of Virgil's career" (53).

¹⁴⁸ Text of the *Epistulae ex Ponto*: Richmond 1990. Translation: a modified version of Wheeler 1924, rev. Goold 2023.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Tib. 1.5.9 (*ille ego, cum tristi morbo defessa iaceres*): the poet reminds the *puella* that he was the one who brought her back to life from her sickness with his vows, just like Ovid reminds his former friend of how close he was to him in the past.

¹⁵⁰ See Miller 2013.

something that connects the *Ibis* to Roman love elegy. The name *Ibis* is the bridge to the Greek model of Callimachus and to the Hellenistic poetic environment – one fundamental aspect of the literary tradition which Ovid claims for his poetry. However, the playing with the name the bridge to the model of Roman love elegy for all Ovidian exilic poetry: as the false name is part of the game between the poet lover and the *puella*, it can also become part of the game between the poet in pain and his friends, and of the game between the poet hater and his enemy.

From love to exile

I would argue that Ovid's exile poetry builds on his approach to love elegy, incorporating elements from the work of other elegists. In other words, patterns and semiotic relationships between characters in Ovid's love elegies are later exploited by him in a much more subversive and political context in the *Tristia*, the *Ibis* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*. This subversion originates from love elegy. As Drinkwater has argued, although the male elegiac poet depicts himself as subdued to the *puella*, "he maintains his control over their fictional relationship".¹⁵¹ At the same time, the poet's submission is crucial to Roman elegy's success.

The layers of communication can overlap. For example, there is a level of role-play change within the genre of love elegy; between the characters of love elegy and their potential external references (e.g. Augustus); and between love elegy, exile elegy, and real-life references. This complex, tangled pattern of references is what I aim to shed light on in terms of its communicative role in our understanding of the *Ibis*. The key to interpretation lies in the relationships between

¹⁵¹ Drinkwater 2013, 330-1. On the construction of the character of the *docta puella* and its independence from the male poet see instead James 2003a.

Ovid (the poet), Ibis (the enemy), Augustus (the object of desire) and Rome (the ultimate goal), and how these roles evolve. Both love elegy and Ovid's exile poetry end in failure, which is the paradox of elegiac poetry's strength.

In love elegy, the relationships between poets, *puellae* and antagonists are subject to an early form of mutability. Firstly, some features that describe a character can be transferred to another character. For example, the semantic domain of destitution, which typically threatens the *lena*, is transferred to the *puella* in Tib. 1.6. Secondly, the relationship between the poet and the *puella* is based on a layered pattern of communication. In other words, when the poet explicitly addresses a character – typically a blocking character – he has an additional message for the *puella*.

In a similar way, Ovid's exile poetry stems from an ambivalent relationship between the poet and his reference point: Augustus. Although only two elegies explicitly address Augustus (*Tristia* 2 and partially *Tristia* 5.2),¹⁵² the ruling *princeps* is consistently the main implied addressee, as Ovid's declared goal with his elegies is to be granted the return to Rome.¹⁵³ When Ovid addresses friends, but also when he addresses disloyal friends and enemies, his additional addressee is always the emperor. In the *Ibis*, it is also Augustus. Ovid attempts to move or persuade the *princeps*, as he attempts to educate him. It can even be the attempt to criticise him. This chapter – and Part One in general – is the first step towards the general analysis of how Ovid relates to Augustus through his poetic

¹⁵² As it is well known, there is a fundamental exegetical problem on *Trist.* 5.2, which could be understood as a complete poem or as the combination of two different poems – where the second one would be the one addressed to Augustus. On this see Ursini 2015.

¹⁵³ See e.g. Hinds 2007 on Augustus' being Ovid's reader in the previous works as well (210: "that demonstrably unsympathetic First Reader on the Palatine")

communication. And the first question that helps us to understand this is: is love a form of power?

In *Ibis* 248 and 249 Ovid highlights the real power which he claims for his poetry. First, he wishes the deities to give strength, real capacity to his words (248) and then he states that the load of reality will come (*pondera rerum*, 249). The wish he expresses in the distich 247-8, that his words (*uerba*) can have strength (*uires*) from the gods, is semantically charged: *uires* in the plural form indicates physical powers, strength, that can also be hostile;¹⁵⁴ this is appropriate to Ovid's words because of the poet's special relationship with the divine word. As for 249-50, La Penna accepts the future *accedent*, a lectio of *codices* Londiniensis Musei Britannici Harleianus 2538 and Vaticanus Palatinus 1790 instead of *accedant* from the rest of the *codices* with the explanation that Ovid can doubt his poems' effectiveness of expression, but he cannot doubt that Ibis' destiny will happen as it was predicted by the Parcae.

While I agree with the reading *accedent*, I also believe that Ovid does not really doubt the effectiveness of his poetry, neither as literary works nor as predictions. On the contrary, the future marks that his wish for the gods to make his words effective is considered granted: reality will join his poems. To sum up, these lines embody Ovid's claim for his superior power which is granted by knowledge and by the poet's privileged relationship with the gods.

¹⁵⁴ OLD² 2286-9, 20, 21.

Conclusions: ritual of love, ritual of curse

There is a ritual behind Ovid's poetic invective in the *Ibis*. The grounds of this ritual are in Ovid's conception of his role of *uates*, which includes its complex pattern of literary backgrounds. In this background, Roman love elegy plays a fundamental role in providing Ovid with a communicative and semiotic pattern of relationships between the characters. Chapter One has addressed the creation, development and implications of this pattern.

The effectiveness of the elegiac poets' curses has the same grounds as the effectiveness of their expertise in love: their role as *uates*. They claim their status as *uates* precisely as elegiac poets, demanding for elegy a role that makes exclusion and apparent destitution a sign of superiority. In this context Ovid, with his attempt to integrate elegy into society, ultimately turns a literary matter into a political one. This process has undoubtedly already started with his love elegy, whose overlapping with reality is not only clearly signalled by the very real problems it will later cause to its author: most of all it is Ovid's attitude towards law that reveals his attempt to act like a ruler.¹⁵⁵

What happens with the *Ibis*? In the *Ibis* Ovid repurposes the prerogatives of the poet *uates*, which claimed in love elegy, and lost in the *Tristia* and in the *Epistulae ex Ponto*, to the aim of attacking the enemy. He therefore claims back his power, with an aim that constitutes the other face of love: attack. Instead of being a minister of love, he becomes a minister of hatred. In the *Ibis*, the ritualistic aspect of love is repurposed to the aim of creating a ritual, specific to *Ibis*, whose aim is to

¹⁵⁵ See Ziogas 2021.

destroy the enemy, and which has the same claim of effectiveness as Ovid's instructions in the realm of love. His knowledge is again a fundamental aspect of his superiority, and therefore of his claim to a role of power. Ritual, close relationship with the gods and knowledge are all aspects which Ovid masters in his approach to erotic elegy, this being the elegies of the *Amores*, but also more unorthodox examples of elegy, like the didactic poem of the *Ars amatoria*, or the letters from the *Heroides*.

Chapter Two

Roleplay and powerplay in elegiac curses

Introduction: nurturing love with conflict, conflict with love

Conflict is an inherent part of love elegy. This is evident in the relationship between the poet and society, as we discussed in Chapter One, as well as in the relationship between the poetic persona and other characters. The most straightforward internal conflict in elegy is that between the poet and the blocking characters: the *lena* and the rival. When both the poetic persona and the rival are male, there is a clear distinction in the themes and semantic domains involved in the attacks.

Against the *lena*, Tibullus' language is violent,¹⁵⁶ and dehumanising.¹⁵⁷ Propertius' *lena* will experience Cerberus' frightening barks after death;¹⁵⁸ he and Ovid share a specific attention to punishment after death and to the theme of deprivation of means (particularly thirst).¹⁵⁹ The procuress being a target of gender-specific attacks is a topic that has been addressed in detail.¹⁶⁰ The curses include traditional attacks against women, but also the wider theme of exclusion from human society. This exclusion takes the form of physical banishment, dehumanisation, as well as deprivation of expected funerary rituals, desecration of the grave and prospect of a destitute life. Moreover, the references to these animals in close connection with the *lena* evokes the iambic trope of using animal imagery

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Tib. 1.5.49-50: *sanguineas edat illa dapes atque ore cruento / tristia cum multo pocula felle bibat*;

¹⁵⁷ Especially with reference to wolves and dogs: cf. Tib. 1.5.53-6.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Prop. 4.5.3-4: *nec sedeant cineri Manes, et Cerberus ultor / turpia ieiuno terreat ossa sono!*

¹⁵⁹ The reference to drinking is also a typical motif of attack against women. Cf. Prop. 1.4.1-2 (*terra tuum spinis obducat, lena, sepulcrum, / et tua, quod non uis, sentiat umbra sitim*); Ov. Am. 1.8.113-14 (*Di tibi dent nullosque Lares inopemque senectam / et longas hiemes perpetuamque sitim!*).

¹⁶⁰ See e.g. Myers 1996.

of this kind for one's enemies. A Roman example is Catull. 42, but there are many Greek iambic examples, such as Semonides' fr. 7 W., with the misogynistic catalogue of women compared to animals, or Archilochus' fr. 185-187 West, on the fox and the monkey.

When it comes to the male rival, the male poet often has a sense of superiority, which is connected to the knowledge that fortune is fickle and unreliable (*nescioquid furtiuus Amor parat. Utere, quaeso, / dum licet: in liquida nat tibi linter aqua*: Tib. 1.5.75-6). The other means to assert superiority is ridiculing the rival: in Prop. 2.16 the rival is a *praetor* strongly indebted to the descriptions of soldiers in comedy (the *miles gloriosus*). Compared to the *lena*, the rival is the target of more diverse attacks. Ovid refers to the future of the *uir* in ambiguous terms in Ov. *Am.* 1.4.1-2 (*Vir tuus est epulas nobis aditurus easdem; / ultima cena tuo sit, precor, illa uiro*),¹⁶¹ which could also imply a wish for his death. One fundamental aspect of the attacks against the rival, however, is mockery. The pragmatic aspect of mockery clearly demonstrates its relationship with power: ridicule is an impolite strategy aimed at emphasising the speaker's superiority over the addressee.¹⁶² Although the rival poses a threat, the elegiac poet exhibits an intrinsic superiority.

This is not the case when the poet and the rival are both female figures. In [Tib.] 3.9.21-2 Sulpicia speaks to her lover Cerinthus and addresses the possibility of a new female lover with these words: *et quaecumque meo furtim subrepet amori, / incidat in saeuas diripienda feras*. With a violence that surpasses those of the male poets against the *lena* – upon whom they never wish for death – Sulpicia expresses

¹⁶¹ See McKeown 1989, 79.

¹⁶² Culpeper 1996, 358.

blind and ferocious fury against her female rival. The reference to a rival being torn to pieces is here linked to the broader context of the poem, which is on the theme of Cerinthus going hunting (*furtim subrepet* suggests that Sulpicia is an erotic hunter before the tables are turned in Sulpicia's imagination and she becomes the prey). This work does not focus on a gender-specific independent analysis; what I do want to note is how Ovid's *Ibis* will end up drawing from attacks that come from both male and female poetic figures.¹⁶³

The poet's relationship with the object of desire is also conflicted. The harshness of the *puella* is a common theme in Roman love elegy. As we have seen, the *puella* is often described as *dura* (e.g. Tib. 1.8.50 and 2.6.29). However, recent scholarship has challenged the idea that elegy reverses traditional gender roles by giving women power. Speaking of Cynthia in Prop. 4.8, in comparison with Marathus in Tib. 1.8, Drinkwater says that her "part in this drama is limited to a very restrictive script, one that allows the male speaker to retain his dominance".¹⁶⁴ Sometimes, as in Tib. 1.6.69-76, violence appears to be an inherent part of the relationship between the poet and the *puella*.

In this complex web of relationships, the poet is violent towards those who prevent the *puella* from giving him her undivided attention or influence her with morals and behaviour that contrast with his own. He is also violent towards the *puella* herself. What is more, he portrays her as violent towards him. So, my question is not who *Ibis* is in reality, but who *Ibis*, the poet, Augustus and the

¹⁶³ On gender-related aspects of love elegy see Wyke 1987 and 1989, James 2010, Drinkwater 2013, O'Rourke 2018, Zimmermann Damer 2019, Ingleheart 2021. On the issue of Sulpicia's possible identifications see Fulkerson 2017.

¹⁶⁴ Drinkwater 2013, 337.

enemies are in Ovid's elegiac narrative, and what role they play in his elegiac argument.

II.1 The *lena*, or on destruction

Ibis shares many themes with the attacks against the *lena*. These can be summarised as the prospect of a life in poverty, isolation and hunger; dehumanisation through references to animals (particularly wolves and dogs) and feral behaviour; and exclusion from human society. These fundamental aspects of Ibis' treatment find direct correspondence in the *lena*'s treatment. Ibis and the *lena* also have one thing in common: they both have a negative influence on someone the poet cares about (the *puella* and Augustus). The obvious conclusion would be to see Ibis as a reflection of the *lena* and Augustus as a reflection of the *puella*. However, I would argue that Ovid plays with this direct correspondence, hiding further levels of references, and therefore further levels of meaning. When claiming Callimachus' poem as a model (59-60: *illius ambages imitatus in Ibide dicar / oblitus moris iudicii que mei*) Ovid explicitly links his *Ibis* with the idea of riddles, and then draws the readers' attention to the issue of the name (61-2: *et quoniam, qui sis, nondum quaerentibus edo, / Ibis interea tu quoque nomen habe*). Ovid himself plays with the readers' curiosity, implies that the *Ibis* is a riddle to solve and drives them to wonder about his identity. He uses the reference to his source as a means for his very own project, while the framework of elegy enhances the *Ibis*' riddle.

Exile, destitution and exclusion: Ibis' own *paraclausithyron*?

After summoning all the gods to assist his deadly ritual against Ibis (97-106), Ovid calls nature to act:

Terra tibi fruges, amnis tibi deneget undas,
deneget adflatus uentus et aura suos.
Nec tibi Sol clarus nec sit tibi lucida Phoebe,
destituant oculos sidera clara tuos. 110
Nec se Vulcanus nec se tibi praebeat aer,
nec tibi det tellus nec tibi pontus iter.

May the earth withhold her fruits from you, the river its waves,
the wind and the breeze their air.
May the Sun not shine for you, may the Moon not be bright,
may the shining stars abandon your eyes. 110
May Vulcan and the air not offer you help,
may the earth and the sea not pave any way for you.

(*Ibis* 107-12)

The curse has a pervasive scope: the earth, the river, the water, the wind, the sun (Sol), the moon (Phoebe), the stars, the fire (Vulcanus), the air, the earth again, the sea. In a ring composition, the river water of line 107 is repeated – a possible hint at the denial of water to the exile in Roman practice (along with fire) –, and all must refuse Ibis their good deeds. This overturns the rules of hospitality completely.¹⁶⁵ From the outset, Ibis' destiny is different from that of Ovid: Ibis suffers what Ovid was spared (thanks to Augustus' mercy: 23-6). Nevertheless, the following couplet highlights the fundamental aspect of exile in relation to poverty and hunger:

Exul inops erres alienaque limina lustres,
exiguumque petas ore tremente cibum.

May you wander, exiled and poor, visiting the doorsteps of others
and begging for a little food with trembling mouth.

(*Ibis* 113-14)

¹⁶⁵ Ovid's seems to almost raise the exilic concept of *aqua et igni interdicere* to a higher, even cosmic level.

This representation offers examples of both positive and negative impoliteness. Positive impoliteness involves demolishing the target's position and reputation in society, such as making Ibis a homeless and starving outcast. An attack on someone's negative face jeopardises their self-control, freedom of movement, and will, such as when they are forced to beg for food at other people's doors. Therefore, the combination of the two elements can be understood as an attempt to annihilate the target.

The adjective *inops* linguistically indicates deprivation but can also refer to a condition of inability to act.¹⁶⁶ This is fundamental to elegiac curses, and, together with the images of exile and the necessity to beg, it highlights the essence of Ovid's work. Rather than accepting the straightforward link between fault and retribution, Ovid connects himself to Ibis: Ibis becomes Ovid. But how does this go beyond simply wishing direct retribution on the enemy? The use of compassion as a means of attack, and its connection to love elegy, sheds light on the complexity of Ovid's work.

Within the representation of Ibis' destitute future Ovid makes the *paraclausithyron* merge with the *topos* of the attack against the *lena*.¹⁶⁷ In 1.2.5-14 Tibullus first attacks and then prays at Delia's door:

Nam posita est nostrae custodia saeua puellae, 5
clauditur et dura ianua firma sera.
Ianua difficilis domini, te uerberet imber,
te Iouis imperio fulmina missa petant.
Ianua, iam pateas uni mihi uicta querellis,

¹⁶⁶ OLD², 1009 s.v. *inops*, 1 (“lacking wealth, poor, destitute”), but see also 5 (of persons etc. “powerless to act, impotent, ineffectual”). The same adjective was rejected by Ovid for himself, at *Ibis* 23-4, when he praises Augustus for granting him means to survive.

¹⁶⁷ For a use of *paraclausithyron* outside the context of love elegy (namely Ovid's *Fasti*) see Ziogas 2021.

neu furtim uerso cardine aperta sones; 10
et mala siqua tibi dixit dementia nostra,
ignoscas: capiti sint precor illa meo.
Te meminisse decet quae plurima uoce peregi
supplice, cum posti florida sertae darem.

For a cruel watch has been set upon my girl, 5
and the hard door is shut and bolted against me.
Door of a harsh master, may rain lash you,
the bolts, sent by Jupiter's command, hit you.
Door, now open up only to me, to my complaints,
make no sound as your hinge turns stealthily to let me in.
And if I ever insulted you in my folly,
forgive me: let that fall, I pray, on my own head.
It suits you to remember the many prayers I said to you
in suppliant tones, when I laid flowery garlands at your jamb.

(Tib. 1.2.5-14)¹⁶⁸

After evoking nature and Jupiter's lightning against the door, Tibullus changes his tone and focuses on a supplicating representation of himself. The semantic domain of *ignosco* implies a face-threatening act of Tibullus against his own positive face, as this plea for forgiveness includes acts of humiliation: lamentations (*querelis*), discredit on his own actions (*mala ... dementia nostra*), pleas to be punished (*capiti sint precor illa meo*), supplicatory expressions (*voce ... / supplice*), acts of service (*cum posti florida sertae darem*). Because of this, we must note that through the threat to his own positive face the poet threatens the woman's negative face: the self-humiliation is aimed at influencing the woman's choices and behaviour. The poet places himself in a subordinate position in front of the door to achieve the attention of the *puella*.

¹⁶⁸ Translation: modified from Cornish – Postgate – Mackail 1913, rev. Goold 2017.

Is this not what Ovid does in the *Tristia* while speaking to Augustus? Could *Tristia* 2 not be interpreted as one long *paraclausithyron*?¹⁶⁹ Ovid's unidirectional communication to Augustus is made up of prayers (*his, precor, exemplis tua nunc, mitissime Caesar, / fiat ab ingenio mollior ira meo!*), self-deprecation (*cur aliquid uidi? Cur noxia lumina feci? / Cur imprudenti cognita culpa mihi?*), but also a form of self-defence to support his requests:

His, precor, atque aliis possint tua numina flecti,
 o pater, o patriae cura salusque tuae!
 Non ut in Ausoniam redeam, nisi forsitan olim, 575
 cum longo poenae tempore uictus eris.

By these and other things, I pray, may your divine powers be moved,
 O father, O care and salvation of your fatherland!
 Not so that I might go back to Italy, unless perhaps at some time in the future,
 when you will have been prevailed upon by the long time of my
 punishment.

Tristia 2.573-6

Augustus, like the door, guardian of the *puella*, should be won over by the poet's pain. But Ibis too must be treated in a similar way as the door: not begged, but cursed, for keeping his bad influence on Augustus: *et, qui debuerat subitas extinguere flammis, / hic praedam medio raptor ab igne petit (Ibis 19-20)*. Just like the *lena*, a different guardian of the *puella* must be cursed for her influence over the woman (Tib. 1.5.47-8). Ibis is the *lena*, Ibis is the bad advisor, but Ibis is also Ovid. While the centre of the poet's world is the *puella*, the centre of Ibis' life must be survival.

Feral pain: dehumanising the enemy

¹⁶⁹ See Ingleheart 2010, 255.

These are the key elements of the initial long curse, which plays with the relationship between elegy and pain:

Nec corpus querulo nec mens uacet aegra dolore, 115
noxque die grauior sit tibi, nocte dies.

May your body and sick mind never be free from wailing pain, 115
and may the night be heavier than the day and the day heavier than the
night.

(*Ibis* 115-16)

Ibis should experience constant and overwhelming pain, both physical and mental, day and night. But how can this be linked to love elegy? One way is through language, which I will address by examining both semantics and communication. The adjective *querulus* evokes *queror*, the elegiac verb of lament, connected to the genre's origins in funeral lament, and the characteristic Roman love elegy verb of lament, particularly used by Propertius (with 33 occurrences including also derivative terms, like the already mentioned *querulus* and *querela*) but also present in Tibullus (7 occurrences including derivatives) and in Ovid's *Amores* (12 occurrences including derivatives). The verb occurs twice in the *Ibis*: at 158 and 638.¹⁷⁰ At 158 (*et querar, et nulla sede quietus eris*) the pentameter specifies the destiny of Ibis. Putting the verb in the pentameter, the distinctively elegiac line, makes a generic link, consistently with the elegists' habit of putting particularly elegiac generic words in the pentameter, and Ovid even spells out for his reader that he is making generic play here – *sedes* is a word that is linked to metre. Ibis will be tormented even by Ovid's laments and will not be able to find peace anywhere. The

¹⁷⁰ According to the online databases.

second occurrence is at 638 (*inmemores ne nos esse querare tui*) where Ovid ironically dedicates the poem to his enemy so that he will not lament that the poet forgot about him. Therefore, Ovid reinterprets a term which has a history in Roman love elegy and not only in the rest of his exile poetry.¹⁷¹

Ibis' mental suffering will be made heavier by Ovid himself who, after death, will never stop chasing his enemy:

Me uigilans cernes, tacitis ego noctis in umbris 155
excutiam somnos uisus adesse tuos.
Denique quicquid ages, ante os oculosque uolabo
et querar, et nulla sede quietus eris.
Verbera saeua dabunt sonitum nexaeque colubrae,
conscia fumabunt semper ad ora faces. 160
His uiuus Furiis agitabere, mortuus isdem,
et breuior poena uita futura tua est.

You will see me when you are awake, in the silent shadows 155
of the night I will appear and drive away your sleep.
Finally, whatever you will do, I will fly around before your face and eyes,
I will moan, and you will never be at rest.
Lashes and tangled snakes will make a cruel sound,
torches will produce smoke before your regretful face. 160
You will be tormented by these Furies both alive and dead,
and your life will be shorter than your punishment.

(*Ibis* 155-62)

Ovid's lament becomes a means of attack. The verb *queror* here describes the action of Ovid, not Ibis, but becomes the way in which Ovid can torment Ibis: lament becomes a never-ending curse, in the sense that its target is cursed for life with a torment. Not only Ibis is suffering the same physical and mental pain as Ovid: he is tormented by visions of his misfortune (cf. *Trist.* 3.8.35-6: *haeret et ante oculos*

¹⁷¹ On the use of pain and compassion in comparison to Ovid's *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* see Part Two.

ueluti spectabile corpus / astat fortunae forma legenda meae) but those visions are embodied by the one whom he ruined.¹⁷² Ibis, again, *is* Ovid here, and Ovid is his persecutor.

Not even death will give Ibis rest:

Ipsae te fugient, quae carpunt omnia, flammae,
respuet inuisum iusta cadauer humus;
unguibus et rostro tardus trahet ilia uultur,
et scindent auidi perfida corda canes, 170
deque tuo fiet (licet hac sis laude superbus)
insatiabilibus corpore rixa lupis.

Even the all consuming flames will avoid you,
the righteous land will reject your hateful body;
the vulture will wrench your hips with its claws and beak,
and greedy dogs will tear your wicked heart. 170
On your body (and of this you should be proud)
there will be a fight among insatiable wolves.

(*Ibis* 167-72)

Ibis' dead body will be refused by the pyre and by the earth: even in death he is not allowed to be part of the human community and of its rituals. Instead, he will be torn apart by vultures, dogs and wolves. This is a drastic form of contempt, given the importance that ancient Greek and Roman cultures give to burial. Of this Ibis should be proud (*licet hac sis laude superbus*: 171). While the adjective *superbus* indicates someone with a high self-esteem, who possibly looks down on others (and therefore places himself in a higher position),¹⁷³ here Ovid is the one granting a possibility (*licet*) and therefore defining the realm of what is possible and what is not. What is more, because Ibis should be proud of something humiliating (the

¹⁷² A similar use of "lament" to actually indicate an aggressive act (in that case to report the enemy's crimes) is in *Trist.* 4.9.23-4: *trans ego tellurem, trans altis audiar undas, / et gemitus uox est magna futura mei.*

¹⁷³ OLD² 2065-6 s.v. *superbus* 1, 2.

wolves fighting for his corpse), the attacks, brought with irony, aim at dehumanising and annihilating the enemy. The ambiguity of presenting Ibis as proud of something degrading also relies on the negative connotation that the adjective traditionally has.¹⁷⁴ Is it not also Ovid, then, the one who appears *superbus*, when he places his enemy in this category, and even decides how to reinterpret it? Ovid casts the meaning of the adjective with the specific aim of humiliating his target.

Ovid is Ibis and Ibis is Ovid in many ways. The idea of a never-ending pain, which affects both the body and the mind and never rests, neither by day nor by night, is mentioned directly in Ovid's own description of his condition in exile, for example in *Trist.* 3.8.29-34:

Quique per autumnum percussis frigore primo
est color in foliis, quae noua laesit hiems, 30
is mea membra tenet, nec uiribus alleuor ullis,
et numquam queruli causa doloris abest.
Nec melius ualeo, quam corpore, mente, sed aegra est
utraque pars aequae binaeque damna fero.

And such a hue is in autumn, when the first chill has smitten them,
shows on the leaves that young winter has marred, 30
that spreads in my body, no strength brings relief,
and I never lack cause for a mournful pain.
And I am no better in mind than in body, but both
alike are sick and I suffer double hurt.

(*Trist.* 3.8.29-34)¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ Cf. *Aen.* 6.853: *parcere subiectis et debellare superbos.*

¹⁷⁵ Text of the *Tristia* (except *Tristia* 2): André 1968. Translation: modified version of Wheeler 1924 rev. Goold 2023.

Nature is hostile to Ovid, nothing brings him joy, everywhere there are reasons to complain and his mind is as sick as his body.¹⁷⁶ Like Ibis, Ovid is unable to enjoy what nature has to offer and has no control over his condition. This lack of control is a fundamental aspect of their punishments. Being both physically and mentally unwell causes a person to lose control, as Ovid states in *Trist.* 3.3, where he declares that he cannot write his own letters.

What do we make of love elegy in this context? It is very clear that Ibis embodies many features that belonged to the treatment of the *lena* and of the curses against her. In Tibullus, curses involving eating cause the dehumanisation of the *lena*:

Sanguineas edat illa dapes atque ore cruento tristia cum multo pocula felle bibat.	50
Hanc uolitent animae circum sua fata querentes semper et e tectis strix uiolenta canat.	
Ipsa fame stimulante furens herbasque sepulcris quaerat et a saeuis ossa relictas lupis;	
currat et inguinibus nudis ululetque per urbes, post agat e triuiis aspera turba canum.	55

May she feed herself with bloodstained meals and drink with her bloody mouth bitter cups full of bile.	50
May souls moaning their fates always fly around her and may an inauspicious owl sing from the roofs.	
May she hunt for grass and bones left by savage wolves tormented by hunger, mad, among the graves;	
may she run and howl around the cities with her naked groin, and may a fierce crowd of dogs chase her far from the crossroads.	55

(Tib. 1.5.49-56)

¹⁷⁶ For Ovid accounting his sickness see also *Tristia* 3.3.

In this poem, the typical elegiac feature of the poet's lament outside the door is combined with perhaps the most violent invective in love elegy. The excluded poet attacks a greedy *lena* and blames her for helping a new rich lover, the *diues amator*, to conquer the *puella* (although a third man seems ready to take over).¹⁷⁷ Connections between the curses against the *lena* in Tibullus 1.5 and the *Ibis* have been recognised with reference to the use of magic and the figure of the poet as *uates*.¹⁷⁸ However, the magical/prophetic element is not the only aspect that links the two poems.

Extremely (and unusually)¹⁷⁹ abusive language shapes this passage with a specific communicative aim. The brutal image¹⁸⁰ presents the same themes as in the *Ibis* with a similar attack against the target's positive and negative face. Depicting her as a monstrous, beastly creature and realising exclusion at first as dehumanisation, the topic of bad eating and starving appears at 49-50, where she is represented eating bloodstained meals (*sanguineas ... dapes*)¹⁸¹ and drinking bile (*tristia cum multo pocula felle bibat*);¹⁸² at 53-4 she is forced by hunger to look among the graves for bones left over by wolves.

¹⁷⁷ On this elegy, Smith 1913, 290-307; Stroh 1971, 111-13; Della Corte 1980, 176-87; Murgatroyd 1980, 159-85, 310-13; Maltby 2002, 240-61.

¹⁷⁸ Philbrick 2021, 159. For the *lena* embodying traditional elements of invective against women and old women, Myers 1996, 6. See also Ziogas 2016, 213 on the aggressive nature of Roman elegy; Zimmermann Damer 2019, 66, 89-96, 144-5, 200-1, 212-15, 218-19, 222, 277 n. 23 on curses in Latin love elegies and Ziogas 2021, 151-61 on the presence of wooing and cursing as characteristic of the genre. On iambic presence in Tibullus, Goh 2021.

¹⁷⁹ Spentzou 2013, 25 sees Tibullus' poems as "almost polite complaints".

¹⁸⁰ The image of the *lena* feeding herself with remains of bodies already eaten by wolves also suggests the abhorrent act of cannibalism (Zimmermann Damer 2019, 214).

¹⁸¹ The adjective *sanguineus*, referred to the moon, also occurs in *Am.* 2.1.23, where Ovid claims his poetic weapons (see McKeown 1998, 17-18).

¹⁸² Murgatroyd 1980, 178, suggests that the *lena* is forced to eat substances connected with her own craft.

Dehumanisation meets social exclusion in 55-6, where she is explicitly depicted as naked, running and howling (*ululat*),¹⁸³ chased by dogs and pushed away from the city. The representation of the *lena*'s non-human behaviour is reinforced by the phrase *inguinibus nudis*, the only explicit anatomical reference to private parts in Roman love elegy,¹⁸⁴ which unsurprisingly appears only in a curse, because its meaning is not sexual,¹⁸⁵ but conveys a beastly representation. In the end, as for this first analysis, not only does the *lena* appear as an outcast from her very species, but she is also unable to find her place in any other. If Ibis was tortured by vultures, dogs and wolves after death, the *lena* is surrounded by ominous birds and wolves and chased by dogs. She embodies feral features.

However, she is a social outcast as well. In 51-2 Tibullus' linguistic impoliteness is effective in attacking the *lena*'s rightful desire to be recognised in human society by depriving her of good fortune, setting a ritual context (an ominous owl, *strix uiolenta*, is seen on her roofs),¹⁸⁶ which is a feature in the *Ibis* as well (*ominibus malis* at 99). More than showing the poet's superiority, as *uates*, over the *lena*,¹⁸⁷ this indicates the *lena*'s and *Ibis*' exclusion from human society. The unexpected linguistic characterisation of the *lena* opens a discussion of the genre of

¹⁸³ *Ululare*, when used alone, can refer to both humans and animals: for animals (or ghosts), the first meaning in the *OLD* is specific for the act of howling, when referring to humans it means "to utter drawn-out cries, howl, yell" in grief or distress, in battle-cries and similar situations or in religious and ritual contexts, "with religious excitement" (*OLD*², 2301 s.v. *ululo*, 1; 2).

¹⁸⁴ Zimmermann Damer 2019. Even at the end of *Ars* 3, when Ovid provides women with advice for sexual intercourse, references to private parts are utterly proper: 799-800 (*locus ille [...] / quo pariter debent femina uirque frui*) with *locus* as a medical term (Gibson 2003 400-1). On the treatment of vocabulary referring to female private parts in Latin love elegy see Adams 1982, 224-5.

¹⁸⁵ For the role of the sexual element see Myers 1996. For the peculiarity of this curse: Philbrick 2021, 141.

¹⁸⁶ Owls were generally considered ominous: see Maltby 2002, 255.

¹⁸⁷ Philbrick 2021, 145-7.

elegy in general¹⁸⁸ and possible meta-poetic moments: the *lena* is presented as an outcast even as a character, just like Ibis has been seen as an iambic character¹⁸⁹.

It seems very clear that invectives are structural features of elegies. This means that they are a linguistic tool used by the poets for their own purposes. However, they are also disruptive elements, introducing traces from different genres and causing the genre to reflect on itself and its features. As elegy is a clash of different influences, i.e. a relationship between opposing features that deliberately reveals conflict, we should understand conflict as an integral part of elegy.¹⁹⁰ The *Ibis* takes this characteristic to the extreme, becoming an elegy of invective. However, the interaction between invective and love discourse in Roman love poetry, and between invective and exilic lament, which I shall discuss in Part Two, demonstrate this blended characterisation very clearly.

The *lena* experiences humiliation in death as well. The invectives of Propertius 4.5, a text usually linked to Callimachus' iambic invectives,¹⁹¹ display and develop a similar pattern of topics. Again, the theme of exclusion is developed with reference to the world of the dead, while the deprivation of nourishment is specified in the form of thirst:

Terra tuum spinis obducat, lena, sepulcrum,

¹⁸⁸ Zimmermann Damer 2019, 214 for possible comic intentions behind the “surprising and unmotivated appearance of the *lena*, and the virulence of this curse” and connections with Horace *Sat.* 46-50 overcoming the representations by Plautus and Terence.

¹⁸⁹ For an in-depth treatment of the *Ibis*' iambic elements see Schiesaro 2001 then reworked in 2011 (e.g. 2011, 85: formulas like *atri uersus* can be identified as iambic lines based on a parallel with Hor. *Epist.* 1.19.30 and *Epod.* 6.15, which lead the reader towards dark and aggressive genres while Ovid himself refuses the definition of iambic poetry for his poem; 91: “In fact, ‘elegy’ and ‘iambic’ came to be considered as points on a continuum rather than starkly opposed forms”).

¹⁹⁰ See the Introduction.

¹⁹¹ Gutzwiller 1984, 113 n. 5; Fedeli – Dimundo – Ciccarelli 2015, 722. According to Myers (1996, 4), Propertius' *lena* also refers to her literary origins in comedy. Connections between elegiac *lenae* and comedy in James 2012, 253-68.

et tua, quod non uis, sentiat umbra sitim;
nec sedeant cineri Manes, et Cerberus ultor
turpia ieiuno terreat ossa sono!

May your grave be covered in thorns, procuress,
and your shadow endure an unwanted thirst,
and may the Manes avoid sitting near your ashes
and may avenging Cerberus terrify your vile bones with hungry
howl!

(Prop. 4.5.1-4)¹⁹²

Targeting the *lena*'s ghost (*umbra*) and ashes, the invective makes the *lena* an outcast even from the world of the dead, preventing her from sharing the religious aspects of society (a fundamental feature of identity and belonging): she will be refused the *Parentalia* libations¹⁹³ and her *Manes* will neglect her. This is also a perversion of the positive formulas usually included in epitaphs, such as *sit tibi terra leuis*, and this perversion sets the context of the curse against the *lena*: exclusion means also to be deprived of the traditional burial rituals. Even her bones are cursed and will be tormented by Cerberus (another reference to a hostile dog). In the *Ibis*, Ovid wishes for his enemy's innards to be devoured by vultures and dogs, and he imagines wolves fighting over his dead body (169-72). In both cases, the poet attacks the target's positive and negative aspects within a ritual context, aiming to deprive the person of their share of the religious aspects of belonging to a human community.

Both themes (thirst and deprivation of the rights of the dead) come back in the second invective, which closes the elegy. Propertius describes the *lena*'s grave

¹⁹² Text of Propertius: Fedeli 1994. Translation: modified version of Goold 1990.

¹⁹³ Fedeli – Dimundo – Ciccarelli 2015, 723-4.

as an old amphora with a broken neck; this can symbolise the *lena*'s state of destitution (*uetus* is used both with the meaning of "old" and of "overused"¹⁹⁴ and the neck of the amphora is broken, suggesting that Propertius wishes this on her) but also her drinking habits (with a specific use of low language *curto ... collo*),¹⁹⁵ recalling the topic of thirst:

Sit tumulus lenae curto uetus amphora collo: 75
 urgeat hunc supra uis, caprifice, tua.
 Quisquis amas, scabris hoc bustum caedite saxis,
 mixtaque cum saxis addite uerba mala!

Let the procuress' tomb be an amphora with a broken neck:
 and upon it, wild fig-tree, exert your might.
 You all, who love, hit this grave with sharp rocks,
 and mingled with the stones cast curses!

(Prop. 4.5.75-8)

The growth of a wild fig tree on the grave, which reverses the positive image of plants growing on tombs, is another ominous sign (see Tib. 1.5.52 and *Ibis* 99). Lines 77-78 depict a physical representation of the *lena*'s exclusion, with a group cursing her grave and throwing stones against it, which leads to two points: first, the face-threatening act establishes the exclusion from the community of the dead, which is anticipated by the involvement of the religious aspect in the first invective. Moreover, this passage anticipates a topic of *Ibis* 115-22, i.e. exclusion from human compassion.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁴ *OLD*², 2261 s.v. *vetus*, 4 ("[of artefacts] old [with the implication of wear, deterioration or. sim]" e.g. Prop. 4.5.75 "~us amphora collo"). See Fedeli – Dimundo – Ciccarelli 2015, 796.

¹⁹⁵ See *ThlL* IV, 1540, 1-2 s.v. *curtus* and *ThlL* III, 1663, 11-8 s.v. *collum*.

¹⁹⁶ Pietropaolo 2020, 114-38 for Acanthis' representations as grotesque because of the poet's merciless punishment.

While Ibis was deprived of compassion during his lifetime, Acanthis is attacked after her death, when the poet encourages people to throw stones against her grave.¹⁹⁷ This gesture is particularly relevant due to its theatrical and performative nature. From a pragmatic point of view, gestures are a form of communication:¹⁹⁸ language turns into actions and the act of insulting the *lena*'s tomb by stoning it embodies the attempt to exclude her from society. Identity is defined by the physical space that a character occupies. Acanthis' physical presence is here replaced by her tomb. The act of stoning it deprives Acanthis' of the right of occupying the space that defines her identity – the space of death. By urging other to stone her tomb, the poet is physically depriving her of the right to exist and be recognised as a rightful member of the community.

Ovid's *lena* belongs to the same framework of references:

Di tibi dent nullosque lares inopemque senectam
et longas hiemes perpetuamque sitim!

May the gods give you no Lares and helpless old age
and long winters and everlasting thirst!

(Ovid, *Amores* 1.8.113-14)¹⁹⁹

Ovid's curse completes the thematic pattern. As Acanthis is deprived of the *Manes* on her grave, Dipsas will not have a home with *Lares*: her old age, which should be

¹⁹⁷ The gesture has a tradition in ancient Greek tragedy. In Euripides' *Electra*, Aegisthus is said by Electra herself to insult Agamemnon's tomb by stoning it (327): see Cropp 2013² (159: "Stoning the tomb is a substitute for stoning the man, expressing hatred and contempt"). This reinforces the link between elegy and ancient drama, but highlights also the importance of performance and gesture in elegy, which needs to be developed (on a pragmatic analysis of gesture, applied in this case to scenes of recognition in Sophocles' and Euripides' *Electra*, see Capponi 2021).

¹⁹⁸ This is a recent discussion: see Capponi 2021.

¹⁹⁹ Text of the *Amores*: McKeown 1987. Translation of the *Amores*: modified version of Showerman 1914, rev. Goold 1977.

a moment of security,²⁰⁰ will be destitute and afflicted by never-ending thirst. The idea of thirst, developing the concept of starvation, has multiple meanings in elegy: love thirst (e.g. *Rem.* 247, 533, 632), poetic inspiration or lack of it in Prop. 3.3.5-6, but also punishment and threat, in addition to being a traditional motif of attack against women and with relation to the *lena*'s typical representation as an alcoholic.²⁰¹ Her fate will fulfil the prophecy contained in her speaking name – which is also true of Acanthis and the thorns that will be round her grave. This connects to Ovid's visions of Ibis' future exile: the wordplay on the enemy's name brings us the idea that *ibis* can also mean "you will go (into exile)".

Propertius uses this image in 1.17.6 as Tantalus' punishment, which is however not as hard as the poet's suffering from the reversal of fortune with the *puella*.²⁰² In *Trist.* 3.11.57-8, Ovid points out his enemy's thirst for his blood: he could be satisfied with his blood and rejoice in his greedy heart, but Ovid's misfortunes were so arduous that even he would pity the poet. In the end, thirst is another elegiac theme with different connotations in different types of elegy and with an important role in elegiac invectives too, as Prop. 4.5.1-2 and *Trist.* 3.11.57-8 show.

The enemy's words

Thirst, however, is also coherent with the portrayal of Ibis. First of all, it is consistent with his future as a destitute outcast (*Ibis* 113-14; 415-18). As drinking is a common feature of curses against women, destitution and loss of means also

²⁰⁰ But it is also an invective *topos*: as for women, they can be attacked as old and therefore undesirable, as it happens in Archilochus' iambic poetry and in Horace's *Epodes* (e.g. *Epod.* 8).

²⁰¹ Cf. *Ov. Am.* 1.8.114 for the theme of thirst referred to the *lena*.

²⁰² See 1.2 for this theme in invectives.

play a fundamental role in the attack on the *lena*. This leads to the notion of being denied the proper funeral rites, which are a key aspect of Ovid's punishment of Ibis (cf. also the adjective *indeploratus* at 164). Finally, Ibis is not lacking in evil thirst either. At lines 229-32, Ovid recounts Ibis' birth. To the infant Ibis the Parcae gave milk from a female dog, which is why he barks (*latrat*) in the forum:

Gutturaque inbuerunt infantia lacte canino
– hic primus pueri uenit in ora cibus: 230
perbibit inde suae rabiem nutricis alumnus,
latrat et in toto uerba canina foro.

And his infant throat was soaked in dog's milk,
this was the first food to enter the child's mouth: 230
hence, the nursling drank his nurse's fury
now barks canine words in the whole forum.

(*Ibis* 229-32)

The dehumanised, feral representation keeps recurring: Ibis has behaved like a dog ever since he was born because he is thirsty. Ovid does not simply insult Ibis in a violent way. His subtle work aims to discredit Ibis. Ibis' way of communicating is still made of words (*uerba*); however, he does not speak, he barks. The metamorphosis of Ibis is incomplete: he is a person whose words have no meaning. In terms of the pragmatics of human communication, what Ovid does to Ibis is a form of disconfirmation.

As we discussed in the general introduction, according to Watzlawick, Helmick Beavin and Jackson's analysis, any communication includes, at the level of metacommunication, a definition of the self. Whatever the topic of a conversation in terms of contents, the prototype of the speaker's

metacommunication will be “This is how I see myself in relation to you in this situation”. The success of the conversation depends on the reaction of the recipient to this statement, which can be of confirmation (the recipient acknowledges the speaker’s definition of himself/herself and accepts it), rejection (the recipient acknowledges the speaker’s definition of himself/herself and rejects it) and disconfirmation (the recipient does not acknowledge the speaker’s definition of himself/herself). In Watzlawick and his colleagues’ words: “Disconfirmation, as we find it in pathological communication, is no longer concerned with the truth or falsity – if there be such criteria – of P’s definition of himself, but rather negates the reality of P as the source of such a definition. In other words, while rejection amounts to the message ‘You are wrong,’ disconfirmation says in effect ‘You do not exist’”.²⁰³

Although at the beginning of the poem the enemy’s words were very much recognised by Ovid (*uulneraque inmitis requiem quaerentia uexat, / iactat et in toto nomina nostra foro*: 13-14), now the dehumanisation of the enemy reaches the point where his words cannot communicate. He tries to speak, but only a bark comes out. Ovid refuses to give Ibis any dignity and, at the same time, presents himself as the one who can grant or take away that dignity. Given how much struggle to be understood matters for the exiled Ovid himself (e.g. *Trist.* 5.10),²⁰⁴ the act of

²⁰³ Watzlawick – Helmick Beavin – Jackson 1967, 83-6 (for the quotation: 86). Their study of the topic relates to the understanding of schizophrenia. The letter P stands for the person expressing themselves.

²⁰⁴ Cf. e.g. *Trist.* 5.10.37-8: *barbarus hic ego sum, qui non intellegor ulli, / et rident stolidi uerba Latina Getae*. I wrote on Ovid experiencing disconfirmation himself in the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* in Salvatori 2024.

depriving Ibis of the effectiveness of his words must be seen as both an exhibition of power and a form of attack equivalent to annihilation by Ovid.

But is Ibis really equivalent to the *lena*? In terms of semiotics and characters, Ibis is much more similar to the *lena* than to other antagonists because of the influence attributed to him over the object of desire (Augustus). However, there are also significant differences between Ibis and the *lena*, as well as significant similarities between the *lena* and other characters. One significant difference from the treatment of the *lena* in both Propertius and Ovid himself in *Am.* 1.8 is that in these cases the *lena*'s words are acknowledged. Propertius lets the *lena* speak, introducing her didactic role towards the *puella* (4.5.27-8: *sperne fidem, prouolue deos, mendacia uincant, / frange et damnosae iura pudicitiae!*).²⁰⁵ This statement causes a disruption of the character and unveils the narrator's voice: Acanthis delivers a true manifesto of anti-values which goes far beyond practical advice on how to treat a man. Propertius shows an upside-down world of moral values embodied by the *lena*. We can therefore identify another example of two crucial categories: meta-poetic reflection (as in Tibullus) and indirect communication.

Lines 27-8 show Propertius making his character, Acanthis, speak as the embodiment of a system of anti-values reflecting on itself. At the same time, their deliberate inconsistency with the context uncovers a stratification of messages and speakers (and not addressees!). Acanthis is encouraging the *puella* to follow her reprehensible model. The poet, through Acanthis' speech, is showing the *puella*

²⁰⁵ Myers 1996, 1-2 on the *lena* becoming a double (and a rival) of the poet in being a *praeceptor amoris* for the *puella*: the *lena* is a counter-ego and can convey poetical, but also moral and political ideologies (on this, Wyke 1987, 167); she is a model of anti-elegiac values, but also a means for the poet to show the contradictions of these values (Myers 1996, 1).

how the model is in contrast with the values he thinks the *puella* should follow. For this reason Acanthis' speech can be an indirect message to the *puella*: to avoid what is praised.

What is more, the fact that the *lena* can be the nemesis of the elegiac *praecepta amoris*²⁰⁶ has another important communicative implication: the poet can become the *lena*. In *Am.* 3.12, where Ovid blames himself and his poetry for the woman's betrayal:

Quis fuit ille dies, quo tristia semper amanti
omina non albae concinuistis aues?
(...)
Fallimur, an nostris innotuit illa libellis?
Sic erit: ingenio prostitit illa meo.
Et merito! quid enim formae praeconia feci?
Vendibilis culpa facta puella mea est. 10
Me lenone placet, duce me perductus amator,
ianua per nostras est adaperta manus.

What day was that, in which you birds, not white,
sang bad omens to me, the poet ever in love?
(...)
Am I mistaken, or was it my books that have made her known?
So will it prove: due to my genius she offered herself up for sale.
And I deserve it! Why did I praise her beauty?
Through my fault my girl became a thing of sale. 10
Her lover had me as a procurer, he followed my guidance,
by my hands her door was opened.

(*Am.* 3.12.1-2; 7-12)

Ovid calls himself a *leno* for the *puella*, because his books have celebrated her to the point that she became the object of desire of others.²⁰⁷ The elegiac game got out

²⁰⁶ Fedeli – Dimundo – Ciccarelli 2015, 751-2 on the anti-elegiac values in this statement.

²⁰⁷ Cf. the beginning of *Ars* 3, especially 97-8, where Ovid claims that his precepts do not ruin women's morality, therefore distancing himself from the role of the *lena* (*nec uos prostituit mea uox, sed uana timere / damna uetat: damnis munera uestra carent*).

of hand and harmed the player. Here, in the light and playful tone that distinguishes Ovid's love elegy from that of Tibullus and Propertius, we see an aspect fundamental to understanding the elegiac context of the *Ibis*: not only can Ibis be Ovid, Ovid can be Ibis as well, because he can be a bad influence for the woman. As a *leno*, Ovid is tormented by ominous signs represented by birds, just like Ibis' life is marked by bad omens. What is more, as happens in his exile, this is also a case in which poetry harms Ovid and brings punishment upon him.

Finally, the poet can wish for the *puella* to become destitute and poor. The most violent curse by Propertius is in 3.25:²⁰⁸

At te celatis aetas grauis urgeat annis,
 et ueniat formae ruga sinistra tuae!
 Vellere tum cupias albos a stirpe capillos,
 a! speculo rugas increpitante tibi,
 exclusa inque uicem fastus patiare superbos 35
 et quae fecisti facta queraris anus!
 Has tibi fatalis cecinit mea pagina diras:
 euentum formae disce timere tuae!

But may old age oppress you, with the burden of your hidden years,
 and may ugly wrinkles come upon your beauty!
 Then may you wish to tear out the white hairs by the roots
 now that the mirror chides you with your wrinkles,
 Shut out yourself in turn, may you suffer another's haughty scorn 35
 and, now old, complain that what you once did yourself is done to you!
 Such are the deadly curses my page prophesies for you:
 learn to dread the end that awaits your beauty.

(Prop. 3.25.31-8)

After recalling, at the beginning of the poem, how the poet was the object of ridicule by everyone on social occasions, Propertius says goodbye to Cynthia despite his

²⁰⁸ Fedeli 1994 signals the beginning of 3.25 but keeps the count of verses going from 3.24.

own pain in doing so.²⁰⁹ He then curses her, wishing that old age will take away her beauty and in that miserable condition she will be mistreated just like she used to mistreat the ones who loved her, like the poet himself. This invective conveys a face-threatening act on record against Cynthia, because it wishes her to be deprived of what allows her to have her place in the society in which Propertius places her in his poems: her beauty and appeal.²¹⁰

Again, however, the curse keeps preserving a warning trait, which was not present in the curses against the *lena* and the *diues amator*: the poet attacked the *lena* to destroy her; the *diues amator* was reminded of the instability of his position. Both types of invectives conveyed an implicit attack against the *puella* for falling for such characters, and the final goal to take her back.²¹¹

Elegiac poems reveal a special relationship with the future. Propertius presents his poem as prophetic, which recalls the mystic power of curses in poetry. Like in Tibullus 1.5 and in *Ibis* 127-8, this power of poetry that transcends the human world keeps manifesting itself. At the same time, as clearly stated by the imperative *disce* in the last line, elegiac poets have a goal. After cursing her and wishing her to lose everything which her social position was based on, Propertius

²⁰⁹ As he does in 3.24. Prop. 3.24 and 25 may be one poem, as printed by their most recent editors, including Heyworth 2011 (and already Fedeli 1985).

²¹⁰ In *Ars* 3 a warning about approaching old age becomes an invitation to enjoy sex (on Ovid's invitation to go to bed with older partners in book 2 see Ingleheart 2021): there will be the time of cold old age and humans cannot free themselves from it like snakes when they change their skin, so the best thing to do not only for men but for women too is to enjoy love as long as one can (69-82). This passage is reminiscent of what the *lena* advised the *puella* (e.g. Prop. 4.5.59-60: *dum uernat sanguis, dum rugis integer annus, / utere, ne quid cras libet ab ore dies*; Ov. *Am.* 1.8.45-54). This shows a different side of the didactic aspects of love elegy: in the *Ars* Ovid encourages women to enjoy love and sex before old age deprives them of all of that, while the *lena*'s advice does not bear this idea of fun and enjoyment; Propertius' invective in 3.25 (but also Tibullus' representation of the old *puella* in 1.6), on the other hand, presents an overturned situation where what the *puella* is taught is to avoid multiple relationships, in order to not end up miserable in old age.

²¹¹ This seems not to be the case in Prop. 3.25, however we could make the case that in fact it is, given that Cynthia and Propertius seem to be back together in Book Four.

recalls the fundamental aim of any curse against the *puella*, even the most violent ones: teaching her how to avoid pursuing a course of action that leads to the life of a *lena*. Moreover, if it is true that the lesson seems to be one that the girl should have learned, but has not, the present tense could also mean that, implicitly, for Propertius there is still hope that the *puella* will learn and prevent the curse from coming true.

In conclusion, is Ibis truly equivalent to the *lena*? Ibis certainly develops themes, features and communicative behaviour belonging to the *lena* as created by the elegists. However, elegy itself reveals a complex framework of references in which the correspondence between characters and roles can change. For example, the poet can be a male *lena* and the *puella* can become a *lena* in the future. By combining exile and love elegy, Ibis can embody the *lena*, and yet there is something of the *lena* in Ovid, as well as something of Ibis in him. In the next two sections (II.2 and II.3), I will explore the framework of references involving the rival and the *puella* herself.

II.2 The rival, or on fortune

The other great enemy of the elegist is the rival, a category that encompasses both new lovers and husbands. The poets' approach to their male rivals focuses on themes such as the instability of fortune and the poet's exhibition of superiority over the rival. This is a crucial theme in Ovid's attack on Ibis, too, and it is directly connected to the power he claims for his poetry.

From Irus to Croesus

Showing a clear link between the first section of the poem and the catalogue of myths, the same semantic pattern of references appears in this second part of the *Ibis* in the form of a list of *exempla*,²¹² which is another elegiac feature:²¹³

Qualis Achaemenidis, Sicula desertus in Aetna 415
Troica cum uidit uela uenire, fuit,
qualis erat nec non fortuna binominis Iri,
quique tenent pontem, †quae tibi maior erit†.²¹⁴

As was the fate of Achaemenides, who was left on Aetna in Sicily, 415
when he saw the Trojan sails approaching,
as was the fate of the two-named Irus,
and of those who occupy the bridge, so yours will be worse.

(*Ibis* 415-18)

Ovid's Achaemenides comes from the Roman tradition:²¹⁵ in *Aen.* 3.599-606 this Virgilian creation grabs Aeneas' knees and begs to be taken with the Trojans or to be killed, before proceeding to narrate his story; in *Met.* 14.158-222 he praises Aeneas for saving him and curses Odysseus (defining himself, at 217, as *inops* in the same metrical position as *Ibis* 113: *solus, inops, exspes, leto poenaque relictus*). Irus is a beggar beaten by Odysseus in Ithaca. There, Irus denies Odysseus who is disguised as a beggar himself, a place on his territory (*Od.* 18.1-107); however, Irus also appears in *Trist.* 3.7.42, a letter to the poet Perilla.²¹⁶

²¹² The catalogue reprises and reinforces the contents of the curses (see Part Three).

²¹³ For mythical *exempla* as a feature of elegy: Thorsen 2013, 15; Bessone 2013, 39-40; Cairns 1979 for a wide discussion of the debate on the topic. See also O'Gorman 1997 for mythical *exempla* in Ovid's *Ars amatoria* and *Her.* 14.

²¹⁴ It is necessary to put the text between *crucis*, given its problematic and now unsolved interpretation, but I agree with Krasne 2016, 159-60, n. 30, who interprets *fortuna maior* as worse misfortune.

²¹⁵ Achaemenides is one of Odysseus' companions who is abandoned during the escape from Polyphemus and he does not appear in the Homeric poems.

²¹⁶ Krasne 2016, 161, n. 36, for Irus representing here the image of destitution.

Instability proves a fundamental aspect of Roman elegy. We are seeing how unstable the association between different players in the elegiac communication really is. This instability is of programmatic importance for curses and their communicative situation, as is underlined by the motif of the uncertainty of fortune. Warning her against the uncertainty of fortune, Ovid states that fortune makes Croesus an Irus in a moment (42): Irus has a history in Ovid not just as one despicable, destitute man, but also as an example of the tragic twists of fate.²¹⁷ The two couplets also show that the themes of curses with *exempla* need to be understood within the Roman literary tradition: being excluded and forced to beg an enemy (Achaemenides); reversal of fortune and ruin (Irus); exclusion from society and segregation (the reference to the *pons Sublicius*,²¹⁸ the most ancient bridge in Rome).²¹⁹ As Ingleheart has shown, Perilla can be considered a *scripta puella* like the women of love elegy: “Perilla is written to meet the modified poetic programme of Ovid’s elegies from exile”.²²⁰ Again, love elegy provides the framework in which exile can find a new way of doing elegy.

Instability of fortune is a fundamental feature of the attack against the rival in Tibullus:

At tu qui potior nunc es mea fata timeto:	
uersatur celeri fors leuis orbe rotae.	70
Non frustra quidam iam nunc in limine perstat	
sedulus et crebro prospicit ac refugit	
et simulat transire domum, mox deinde recurrit	
solus et ante ipsas excreat usque fores.	
Nescioquid furtiuus amor parat. Utere, quaeso,	75

²¹⁷ A few lines below (*Trist.* 3.7.47-8) there is an unusually hostile expression against Augustus: even in exile, Ovid still has his talent, which is also the only thing that the emperor did not have any power over.

²¹⁸ See La Penna 1957 and Della Corte – Fasce 1986 for further details and *loci similes*.

²¹⁹ Cf. Varro, *De lingua latina* 5.15.83.

²²⁰ Ingleheart 2012, 228.

dum licet: in liquida nat tibi linter aqua.

But you, who now are in a more favourable position, fear my fates:
Fate turns lightly on her swift-rolling wheel. 70
Not without reason even now some one stands patient
on the threshold, looks oft in front, retreats,
feigns to pass by the house and soon runs back again alone,
and hawks without cease before the very door.
Stealthy Love has some scheme afoot. make the most of it, I beg, 75
while you can; for your boat sails in calm water.

(Tib. 1.5.69-76)²²¹

The *at tu* in l. 69 is anticipated by another *at tu* at 59, addressed to the *puella* (59-60: *at tu quam primum sagae praecepta rapacis / desere: non donis uincitur omnis amor*). While this repetition with the variation of addressee is significant from a stylistic point of view,²²² it also shows the presence of an embedded communication. The expression *at tu*, in fact, is directed at the *puella* in line 59 and at the new lover in line 69. This reinforces the structure of the elegy as a simulated dialogue and its aim to actually reach its addressees. Not only does Tibullus seem to have his two targets in front of him and speak to both, but he also shows that the elegy is supposed to be understood to involve this layered structure of addressees.

Although lines 69-75 do not present a proper curse, they in fact contain a form of impoliteness and a face-threatening act off-record (indirect) against the new lover's positive face: the poet presents himself as more expert than the rival, he is more knowledgeable of the behaviour of fortune and therefore places himself in a higher position. From this position he looks down on the rival. This has also

²²¹ In addition to regular changes, my translation differs from Cornish – Postgate – Mackail 1913, rev. Goold 2017 in the interpretation of *liquida*, which I translate as “calm” instead of “running”.

²²² See Maltby 2002, 258.

relevance for the presentation of the relationship between the poet and the *puella*: the poet claims a superior knowledge than the *puella* herself.

This is not particularly flattering for the *puella* either: what Tibullus claims to know more than the rival ultimately is that she tends to be unfaithful. The implication reveals a specific problem that is consistent with Ovid's experience with Augustus: to attack the enemy leads to an attack against the object of desire. Similarly, Ovid's attacks against Ibis as a bad advisor to Augustus (*Ibis* 19-20: *et, qui debuerat subitas extinguere flammis / hic praedam medio raptor ab igne petit*) imply an attack against Augustus not because Augustus is Ibis,²²³ but because Augustus seems unable to decide for himself and to choose the right entourage – which places the poet in the position of being more knowledgeable than the emperor even in ruling.

This layered communication displays Ovid's superior knowledge to Augustus, laying the foundations for his argument. Attacking someone who supports the emperor's position that Ovid is guilty of something worthy of exile is a way of criticising and questioning that position. However, the emperor's praise and the reference to Apollo suggest that Ovid's aim is not merely to criticise Augustus, but also to influence his behaviour. In other words, Ovid presents himself as someone who knows that Ibis is in the wrong and is trying to show Augustus the truth.

²²³ As it is well known, however, this is a position authoritatively argued: Schiesaro 2011. See also Casali 1997 on how Ovid challenges his readers into wondering about the identity of his addressees in the *Tristia*, thus creating not only “a certain climate of interpretation” but “a certain political climate, a climate of anguish, oppression and fear” (84). For a discussion of Ibis' concealed identity as a case of Ovid's characteristic feature of dissimulation in the exilic corpus (esp. *Trist.* 4) see Ursini 2021b, 88-90.

Moral behaviour, reputation and the Ovidian approach

I argue that the nature of the relationship between Ovid and Augustus stems from Roman love elegy. It is the same relationship that the poet-lover establishes with the girl, who is criticised – sometimes violently – but never with destructive intent, unlike the *lena* or the rivals. This is the connection with Augustus. Ovid reinterprets his relationship with the object of his desire, using poetic ambiguity as a tool for communication to reach his addressee. However, as the love elegist does with his *puella*, his ultimate aim is to win her over, not to get rid of her.

This pattern is similar when the object of desire is not the *puella*, but a *puer*:²²⁴

At te, qui puerum donis corrumpere es ausus,
rideat assiduis uxor inulta dolis
et, cum furtiue iuuenem lassauerit usu, 55
tecum interposita languida ueste cubet.
Semper sint externa tuo uestigia lecto
et pateat cupidis semper aperta domus.
Nec lasciuia soror dicatur plura bibisse
pocula uel plures emeruisse uiros. 60

But you, who dared to corrupt the boy with your gifts,
may your wife unpunished deride you with her many intrigues,
and once she has worn the boy out with a covert affair, 55
may she lie languid with you, with the coverlet between.
Let there be always stranger tracks upon your bed
and your house be always free and open to eager men;
Nor let it be said that her lascivious sister
can drain more cups or exhausts more men. 60

(Tib. 1.9.53-60)

²²⁴ And a brief case of curse related to someone taking away another *puella*, Nemesis, is in 2.3.61-2: *at tibi dura seges, Nemesim qui abducis ab urbe, / persoluat nulla semina terra fide* (on Nemesis taken to the countryside).

In elegy 1.9 the object of Tibullus' desire is not Delia but the *puer* Marathus. Nevertheless, the communicative structure is comparable to the one directed at the *puella*. Tibullus is wishing for a punishment for the *diues amator* who captured Marathus' attention (although the *puer* has also been having an affair with a woman). The rich male rival seems recognisable by the presence of a wife and a sister of ill repute, and the curse revolves around them.²²⁵

By mentioning the wife's cheating and the sister's promiscuous behaviour the poet attacks the rival's positive face: when he makes public the fact that the rival has an unfaithful wife and a promiscuous sister in the Augustan social context he diminishes the rival's good name and position in society.²²⁶ The first aspect, his wife's cheating, presents itself of course as linearly connected to the idea of receiving a fair punishment for one's acts and is connected to mockery. Not only will the rival have an unfaithful wife, he will be also mocked by her who will be able to continue having affairs without being caught: the offence received will not therefore be compensated for in any way and being offended will not bring him revenge, but social denigration. The sister's behaviour reinforces the idea that the corruption of moral values is inherent in his family, but also the characterisation of him as less knowledgeable: he already had experience of such behaviour seeing his sister, and yet was not able to notice it (showing little perspicacity: *stultissime*, 65).²²⁷

²²⁵ On this poem see Della Corte 1980; Maltby 2002; Murgatroyd 1980.

²²⁶ See on this Zimmermann Damer 2019, 89-90.

²²⁷ Pietropaolo 2020, 171 recalls how *stulte* is the term that Tibullus, the poet lover, uses for himself in 1.9.45 and considers this a case of what Eve Kofsky Sedgwick (1992, 22) calls "mutual inscription", i.e., in Pietropaolo's words, "a literary form in which the narrator's language makes a full circle back to himself as speaker": another sign of the interrelation between the poet and his enemies.

Reprehensible sexual behaviour is featured in the *Ibis*' catalogue several times. This includes characters who actively engaged in such behaviour and were punished (various cases of incest, like Byblis and Canace at 357-8, Thyestes at 359, Myrrha at 360, Lycaon at 431), but also characters who suffered the consequences of other people's immoral behaviour (like Pterelas, 361, and Nisus, 362, both betrayed by their daughters). Like the rival, Ibis is surrounded by immorality both because he performs it himself and because his family is affected by it.²²⁸

In 1.9, Tibullus reaches the point where he hypothesises that Marathus would be able to have sex with a beast, if he is having it with that new lover:

Nec facit hoc uitio, sed corpora foeda podagra
 et senis amplexus culta puella fugit.
 Huic tamen accubuit noster puer! hunc ego credam
 cum trucibus Venerem iungere posse feris. 75

Nor does she do this out of depravity; but the dainty girl
 shuns bodies disfigured by gout and the embraces of an old man.
 Yet by him has my own boy lain: I could believe that he 75
 would make love with savage beasts.

(Tib. 1.9.73-6)

The references to gout and to a beloved boy with a rival who is disparaged as old and not good-looking clearly evoke Catullus,²²⁹ who also performs indirect attacks on his targets (e.g. Catull. 37, attacking the rivals explicitly but also implicitly his *puella*, who is sexually involved with them). If the *lena* was directly depicted as a beastly creature, the rival's description is indirect and deductive. Just as happened with the *lena*, the criticism against an enemy implies a criticism towards the object

²²⁸ On the issue of the "innocence" of some characters see Part Three.

²²⁹ Cf. e.g. Catull. 71, possibly addressed to Rufus, rival of Catullus as lover of Lesbia, to whom the poet addresses other poems as well: here both the addressee and their rival has gout.

of desire, who gets blamed for following wrong examples. Furthermore this is again consistent with the representation of Ibis, who was brought up drinking the milk of a female dog and instead of speaking he barks (*Ibis* 232).²³⁰ Differently from the more frequent treatment of the rival, Marathus' new lover is therefore pushed away from the realm of humanity and associated with beasts. He is also subject to a physical degradation, as he is represented as affected by gout. As Pietropaolo puts it, the disease "casts him as spent, aching, and awkward of movement".²³¹ The indirect aim is however to attack Marathus' judgment, which is parallel to the interaction with the *puella* when the *lena* is the target of curses.

I argue that the treatment of these characters depends on an elegiac tradition. As Pietropaolo has suggested,²³² Propertius' attacks against the rival point out his ignorance and foreignness, ending up degrading him:²³³ Propertius' representation of the rival in 2.16 as a *praetor* from Illyria insists on his coming from a distant context; this implies also possible allusions to ignorance.²³⁴ The degradation of the rival seems confirmed by his association with elements of the rural world (*messis* and *pecus* in Prop. 2.16.7-8):²³⁵

Praetor ab Illyricis uenit modo, Cynthia, terris,
maxima praeda tibi, maxima cura mihi.
(...)
quare, si sapis, oblatas ne desere messis
et stolidum pleno uellere carpe pecus.

A praetor has just returned from Illyria, Cynthia,
enormous prey for you, enormous concern for me.

²³⁰ Cf., not in elegiac couplets, Catull. 60.

²³¹ Pietropaolo 2020, 172.

²³² Pietropaolo 2020.

²³³ Another representation that is consistent with Catullan invectives.

²³⁴ Based on the hypothesis of a word play that phonetically evokes as a pun the formula *haud lyricis*: Hendry 1997, 5. Against the interpretation Fedeli 2005, 475.

²³⁵ Pietropaolo 2020, 160-2.

(...)
thus, if you are sharp, neglect not the proffered harvest
and pluck the foolish full-fleeced sheep.

(Prop. 2.16.1-2; 7-8)

This description of the rival has precedents in comedy:²³⁶ while the *miles gloriosus* is not characterised by a specific place of origin, it has been argued that the military profession causes them to be considered outsiders even at home.²³⁷ Moreover, the comedic military rival ends up defeated by a clever plan from the male protagonist and his servant, and ultimately mocked. I would therefore like to emphasise the presence of a tradition, in elegy, of stating superiority in the form of mockery as a way of attacking the rival, which has a role in love elegy as part of the complex pattern of influences, including comedy. Propertius especially applies this approach: while being highly critical towards the *puella*, he prefers to state superiority over his rival by ridiculing him.

In 2.9.47-8 he wishes that the man will be turned into a stone during sexual intercourse with Cynthia:

Atque utinam, si forte pios eduximus annos,
ille uir in medio fiat amore lapis!

And how I wish that, if I have given you years of loyalty,
that man might turn to stone in the midst of love!

(Prop. 2.9.47-8)

²³⁶ On the relationship between Roman elegy and comedy: Yardley 1972; McKeown 1979; Thomas 1979; James 2003a and 2012; Trinacty 2017; Sharrock 2021; Brecke 2023. The topic is also the subject of the panel “Living, Laughing, Loving: Roman Elegy in Light of New Developments in Roman Comedy” organised by Jay Houston and Will Lewis at the 2026 meeting of the Society of Classical Studies in San Francisco.

²³⁷ Brown 2004, 3 and Pietropaolo 2020, 162 building on Brown.

It has been pointed out that the transformation into stone, while having several dramatic parallels in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (Battus, 2.706; Aglaurus, 2.830; Niobe, 6.303; the Propoetides, 10.220-41), brings to the passage a tone of amusement, "divertissement", as Fedeli puts it.²³⁸ Pushing this argument further, I argue that the apparent "lightness" of the tone is part of a wider context aimed at ridiculing the rival. The idea of the lover turning into stone right in the middle of a sexual encounter is quite odd and even grotesque and the fact that the scene is deprived of the tragic nature it might have should not, in the end, be considered a sign that Propertius is not attacking his rival: he is attacking him, with a strategy of negative impoliteness and focusing on mocking him. Depriving his experience of its dramatic quality and making a discomfoting moment funny means depriving the target of the right to be comforted for a misadventure and this is, again, a demonstration of power by the poet.

Ovid too is used to addressing his rivals, as we have previously seen. In *Amores* 1.4 he advises the *puella* on how to behave during a dinner which they will both attend, but with her being with another man.²³⁹ Although Ovid does not tell us if he is her husband or not – and scholarship does not consider it clear that he is – it is widely recognised that he must have some rights over her.²⁴⁰ In 1-2 Ovid wishes that the dinner they are all going to attend will be the last one for that man. The

²³⁸ Fedeli 2005, 303, also discussing Enk who pointed out the dramatic parallels in the *Metamorphoses*, and Richardson's criticism of Enk who denies the tragic context. A different interpretation of the motif is provided by Greene 2012, 363, who sees a parallel between the rival's transformation into a stone with the fact that the elegiac *puella* is often depicted as a statue: in this way Propertius would imply that the *amator* takes revenge over his rival by feminising him and turning him into an art-object, just as the male lover does with the woman.

²³⁹ On the issue of the identification of the woman, see McKeown 1989, 77-102 and especially the introductory section 77-9.

²⁴⁰ McKeown 1989, 76-9.

phrase *ultima cena*, which in the *scholia* to Juvenal 11.20 is referred to the gladiators' last meal before their fight, would be consistent, according to McKeown, with "Ovid's disparaging comments on his rival".²⁴¹ But if this expression recalls the gladiators, then Ovid's attacks are aimed at degrading the rival and excluding him from polite society (gladiators were also branded with *infamia*).²⁴² Ovid's rival shares a lot of the features of the *lena* and a clear thread links them to Ibis.

The similarities in the treatment of the rival and of the *lena* in Ovid appear more than once:

Ecce recens diues parto per uulnera censu,
praefertur nobis sanguine pastus eques. 10

Here he is, a newly-rich man, who won his rating by dealing wounds,
a knight fed with blood, who is preferred to me. 10

(*Amores* 3.8.9-10)

As Pietropaolo puts it, the rival is here characterised as "a purely physical being who has engaged in savage acts of mercenary violence through which he has obtained his riches. Ovid finds him disgusting and presents him as a man fattened on the blood that he has spilled".²⁴³ Pietropaolo analyses the use of the past participle *pastus* as a reference to animality,²⁴⁴ with a grotesque connotation, because it "also refers to the feeding of slaves and soldiers, who come in herds, like animals" and "it expresses the rival's accumulation of wealth as a form of unnatural

²⁴¹ McKeown 1989, 79.

²⁴² On gladiators and *infamia* see e.g. Futrell 1997, Kyle 1998.

²⁴³ Pietropaolo 2020, 175.

²⁴⁴ A strong thematic connection with the iambic genre.

ingestion, it casts him as a grazing animal, it further degrades him socially as a slave (...).²⁴⁵ This is a further case of vilifying the enemy where some crucial aspects of the offence come from the typical attacks on another blocking character: the *lena* (i.e. social exclusion and a bestial nature link them to the achievement of richness): the superior power of the rival, which relies on money, comes from his intimate degradation and exclusion.

Zimmermann Damer has noted that the language of the body with which Ovid describes his disgust for the soldier's achievements in this elegy "echoes contemporary Roman law and Roman discussions of the dishonour of prostitution".²⁴⁶ Moreover, the description "strikingly evokes real bloodshed and military violence and associates the blood of warfare with Roman *infamia*".²⁴⁷ This scene once again leads the poet to implicitly challenge the Augustan reforms, as a character who gained social recognition under Augustus is portrayed with infamous connotations, including a reference to prostitution. According to Zimmermann Damer, the expression at *Am.* 3.8.20 *quaesitum est illi corpore, quicquid habet* ("he has earned through that body whatever he has") in fact equates the equestrian soldier to a prostitute, a gladiator or any other figure that would be considered *infamis* and marginalised in the Roman society. The attack against the rival takes on again a trait of the attack against the *lena*, but also a trait that the elegiac poet attributes to himself: the characterisation as an outcast.

The attack on one's reputation as a form of negative impoliteness based on suffering betrayal by loved ones without being granted compensation takes us back

²⁴⁵ Pietropaolo 2020, 175-6.

²⁴⁶ Zimmermann Damer 2019, 233.

²⁴⁷ Zimmermann Damer 2019, 232.

again to the *Ibis*. The relevant passages are 307-8 and 347-54. At 307-8 we see Leucon, a king of Pontus, who according to the *scholia* killed his own brother in order to seduce his wife, but she killed him in the end (*aut pia te caeso dicatur adultera, sicut / qua cecidit Leucon uindice dicta pia est*). Ovid wishes for Ibis to find a wife no more innocent than the one who made her father-in-law, Tydeus, blush (i.e. be ashamed), or a woman from Locris who had an adulterous relationship with her own brother and killed a servant to lay the blame on her (347-50); to have had a wife as loyal as Eriphyle for Amphiaraus and Clytemnestra for Agamemnon, or similar to the Danaids (351-4); after that there are two more examples of sisters with incestuous relationships (or wishing to have one, like Byblis) with their brothers (then reprised in 559-60). In the *Ibis* the attack on one's reputation by means of the sexual life of the target or of their relatives becomes a curse.²⁴⁸ Ovid claims the use of a very relevant Roman *topos* and makes it his own weapon against his enemy.

Female poets and female rivals: an insight into gender-based invective

Attacking a rival, however, is not a prerogative of the male poetic persona. The aspect of gender shows how the invectives against the *lena* and the rival can share themes and communicative approaches. The third book of the *Corpus Tibullianum* includes those poems on the love between Sulpicia and Cerinthus written for the most parts in first person by the female poetic persona of Sulpicia herself.²⁴⁹ The

²⁴⁸ Attacks on sex life and on that of relatives is another Catullan trait: cf. e.g. Catull. 74.

²⁴⁹ On Sulpicia see now Celotto – Fulkerson 2025 and the introduction to Fulkerson's edition of the third book of the *Corpus Tibullianum* (2017 1-60). For a comprehensive overview of the third book of the *Corpus Tibullianum* and a commentary on each poem see also Maltby 2021. On the characters of the third book of the *Corpus Tibullianum*, including Sulpicia and Cerinthus, see Maltby 2021, 111-27. The discussion of the identification of the hands behind the poems is complex, and so is the issue of the date: they can date after Ovid's poems and, given the many similarities, it seems possible

point of view here is similar to that we have assumed regarding the *Ibis*: regardless of the historic presence of these figures, what matters is their poetic reality. Sulpicia's poems are mostly the expression of a female poetic voice.

In 3.9.19-24 of the *Corpus Tibullianum* Sulpicia speaks to her lover Cerinthus, lamenting that he is leaving her alone to go hunting in the countryside:

Nunc sine me sit nulla Venus, sed lege Dianae,
caste puer, casta retia tange manu; 20
et quaecumque meo furtim subrepat amori
incidat in saeuas diripienda feras.
At tu uenandi studium concede parenti
et celer in nostros ipse recurre sinus.

But now without me let there be no Venus; but, according to
Diana's law, chaste boy, touch the nets with chaste hands 20
And if a girl steals upon my love by stealth,
let her fall among wild beasts and be torn to pieces.
But leave the pursuit of hunting to your father
and you yourself run back quickly to my embrace.

(Sulpicia [Tib.]. 3.9.19-24)²⁵⁰

During the time he will spend far away from Sulpicia, Cerinthus must avoid sexual relationships, represented by Venus, according to Diana's law. The one who is cursed, however, is the hypothetical rival woman, who could try to conquer the man while his poet lover is absent – and whose presence, as it has been noticed, comes quite unexpectedly.²⁵¹ As we have already discussed, Sulpicia wishes for the woman to be torn apart by feral beasts (*incidat in saeuas diripienda feras*, 22) and

that their authors are reworking Ovid – or, less probably, that Ovid is alluding to them. See on this also Maltby 2009.

²⁵⁰ Text: Maltby 2021. Translation: a modified version of Maltby 2021.

²⁵¹ Fulkerson 2017, 245.

the curse recalls Tibullus' invectives against the *lena* much more than the ones against the *diues amator* or the *uir*.²⁵²

As we noticed, although this curse is addressed to a rival, it reproduces the same semantics of the curses against the *lena*. In Prop. 4.5 and in Ovid *Am.* 1.8 she is represented as dead and in Ovid's passage the act of throwing stones against her grave is particularly violent; however, it is with Tibullus that the semantic connection is the clearest: in Tib. 1.5.49-56, the *lena* is represented as wandering among graves, looking for bones left over by wolves (*saeuis lupis*, 54), running and howling naked, hunted by dogs. The correspondence between the passages has important implications in terms of gender studies in relation to Roman elegy and I would argue that it demonstrates different semantic patterns in elegiac curses aimed at women compared to those aimed at men.

II.3 The *puella*, or on Augustus

It has been suggested that the relationship between the exiled Ovid and Augustus can be understood in the light of the relationship between the love elegist and the *puella*.²⁵³ I argue that this relationship should be understood within the context of elegy; however, this framework contains a complex pattern of references. This structure is layered. Firstly, the relationship between the poet and the *puella* is complicated by their relationship with the enemies; both share themes and communicative patterns with the blocking characters. Secondly, the relationship

²⁵² On how gender influences the type of invective in a different context (in Catullus) see Myers 2021.

²⁵³ Nagle 1980, 43; Ingleheart 2012.

between the exiled Ovid, Augustus and Ibis, and their elegiac counterparts is characterised by a pattern of tangled references. Questions such as “Who is Augustus?”, “Who is Ovid?” and “Who is Ibis?” have no straightforward answers.

The *lena* and the bad advisor

In 1.5.59-60 Tibullus explicitly urges the woman not to follow the precepts of the *lena*:

At tu quam primum sagae praecepta rapacis
desere, non donis uincitur omnis amor. 60

But refuse the precepts of the rapacious sorceress
as soon as possible, for not every love is conquered with gifts. 60

(Tib. 1.5.59-60)²⁵⁴

The expression *at tu* shows the *lena* as *rapax saga*, a rapacious, greedy sorceress, which expands on the beastly characterisation we have examined before. The adjective *rapax*, which can be attributed both to humans and animals, joins the feral appearance to its moral implications. Tibullus paves the way for a new – though ineffective – invocation of the *puella*, based on the argument that the love of a *pauper amator* is more sincere than that of a *diues amator*.²⁵⁵

The characterisation of the enemy as a bad advisor and the consequent representation of Augustus as someone choosing bad advisors, within a setting that recalls love elegy, are features of Ovid’s exile elegies:

A! ferus et nobis crudelior omnibus hostis,
delicias legit qui tibi cumque meas,

²⁵⁴ This translation is mine.

²⁵⁵ See Stroh 1971, 111-24 who also discusses the so-called *carmina-munera* topos, according to which poetry and money are considered the main ways to conquer the girl.

carmina ne nostris quae te uenerantia libris
iudicio possent candidiore legi!

Ah! Savage and a crueller enemy to me than all,
was whoever he was who read my erotic poems to you,
so that such songs as venerate you in my books
could not be read with a more sympathetic judgment.

(*Trist.* 2.77-80)

Ingleheart has highlighted the framework of references coming from erotic elegy. *Ferus* is a word of erotic elegy, and it can connote love itself (in exile poetry Ovid's enemies are characterised with this adjective: cf. *fera gaudia* in *Trist.* 5.8.21). *Crudelior* recalls the elegiac theme of cruelty and *crudelis* can identify the behaviour of the lover towards the beloved (in both directions: Cynthia is *crudelis* in Prop. 1.8.16; Dido disputes the possibility of Aeneas' cruelty in *Her.* 7.182). *Hostis* is a figure of love elegy and it can identify rivals or angry lovers (cf. Prop. 1.11.7-8; Ov. *Am.* 1.9.18).²⁵⁶

Ovid's enemy is a rival, because he defeated the poet in gaining Augustus' trust and has managed to cast Ovid in a bad light. These dynamics take place in the framework of love elegy. Inside this same framework Ovid builds an attack against Augustus. As Ingleheart has pointed out, Ovid is stating that Augustus did not read his verses first-hand, but he had someone else read them to him.²⁵⁷ If we consider that, in lines 237-8, Ovid implies that Augustus condemned him without reading his poetry, criticism of the emperor's actions is evident. I argue that the framework

²⁵⁶ Ingleheart 2011, 108.

²⁵⁷ Ingleheart 2011, 109.

of the elegy of love provides the basis for the challenge that the poet will pose to the emperor in exile poetry.

Ovid is not merely criticising Augustus' judgement and behaviour. By stigmatising the emperor's decision to follow a bad advisor, which ultimately resulted in an apparently unjust punishment, Ovid presents himself as the true source of justice and moral behaviour.²⁵⁸ This challenge appears to be directed at the enemy, but the real target is Augustus. This framework is based on the tradition of love elegy, in which the poet presents himself as the true and only source of moral behaviour. One especially useful parallel is offered by Tibullus' representation of the future of the unfaithful *puella* in 1.6.77-84:

At quae fida fuit nulli, post uicta senecta
ducit inops tremula stamina torta manu,
firmaque conductis adnectit licia telis,
tractaque de niueo uellere ducta putat. 80
Hanc animo gaudente uident iuuenumque cateruae
commemorant merito tot mala ferre senem.
Hanc Venus ex alto flentem sublimis Olympo
spectat et infidis quam sit acerba monet.

But she whom no one has found true, thereafter poor and bowed with age
draws out the twisted yarn with shaking hand
and for hire fastens firm the leashes to the loom,
and pulls and cleans the handfuls of snowy wool. 80
Young men in crowds are glad at heart to see her plight,
and declare that she deserves to suffer so many woes in age.
Venus from her throne on high Olympus looks upon her weeping,
and bids us mark how sharp she is with the faithless.

(Tib. 1.6.77-84)

Ibis' future seems reminiscent of Tibullus' depiction of the destiny of destitution which awaits the old *puella* (*Ibis* 113-14): *exul inops erres alienaque limina lustres*,

²⁵⁸ See Part Two.

/ exiguumque petas ore tremente cibum. The destiny of destitution is marked again by the adjective *inops*, which proves to be a crucial semantic reference for elegiac curses. A secondary element is also the adjective *tremula*, which recalls *Ibis* 114 *tremente* (to describe Ibis' trembling mouth begging for food). Although the connection is fainter, the shared root between *tremula* and *tremente* aims at a similar portrayal of the character: the ones who were once secure in their position – the *puella* for her beauty, Ibis for his political influence – are now unsure, trembling, trying to make up with a life of poverty (the *puella*) and begging for food (Ibis). In both cases, fate is turned upside down (the young men deride the woman and approve of her misery; Ibis is destitute and powerless), and the deities (Venus for Tibullus, Apollo and a whole pantheon selected by Ovid in the *Ibis*) provide the poets with their authority.

The argument is clear: the *puella* should not follow the example of the *lena* if she does not want to end up like her. Consequently, the poet casts himself as the one deciding what the appropriate behaviour is and stigmatising what does not comply with his rules. The divine presence, as in Tib. 1.5 and in the *Ibis*, strengthens the claimed power of the poet. The goddess of love sides with the poet and punishes the ones who betray her values. The attempt to educate the *puella* is inherently an exhibition of superiority and destroys any possible reciprocity between the lovers. This relationship, transferred into exile poetry, becomes inherently subversive, as the poet attempts to influence not the behaviour of a lover but of the *princeps*.

Power and love: who controls the narrative?

The elegiac *puella* is also the target of direct invective, as happens in Prop. 2.5.27-30:

Scribam igitur, quod non umquam tua deleat aetas:
‘Cynthia, forma potens: Cynthia, uerba leuis.’
Crede mihi, quamuis contemnas murmura famae,
hic tibi pallori, Cynthia, uersus erit. 30

So I shall write what you can never live down or cancel:
‘Cynthia, powerful in her shape; Cynthia, fickle in her words’
Believe me, however much you disregard the mutterings of gossip,
this line, Cynthia, will make you pale. 30

(Prop. 2.5.27-30)

At the beginning of the poem, the poet announces terrible punishments (*perfidias poenas*, 3) against the woman, but these consist in finding someone else to make Cynthia jealous. This shows one crucial feature of this invective and of invectives towards the *puella* in general: the curses always keep aiming at winning the girl. The poet himself, throughout the poem, admits that he has not stopped loving Cynthia and would not actually harm her because of rage. Instead, he will use his poetry to write what has been seen as a possibly defamatory poem (*carmen turpe*). Again, we see a new version of a typical invective element: the power of poetry as a means of achieving something.

What is more, here the deprecation of the woman becomes the counterpart of poetry itself. The motif of poetry as *monumentum* is clearly evoked by the idea of a poetry that will last longer than all stages in the life of the woman. Whatever she will do with her life, the poet’s definition of her will haunt her. This leads to two points. First, this is something that Ovid repurposes in his exile poetry. In *Trist.*

3.3.77-80 Ovid, after dictating his own epitaph, declares that his poetry is the most important monument of his life:

Hoc satis in titulo est; etenim maiora libelli
et diuturna magis sunt monumenta mihi,
quos ego confido, quamuis nocuere, daturos
nomen et auctori tempora longa suo. 80

This for the inscription. Indeed my little books
are a greater and more enduring monuments for me.
Although they have injured me, I trust that they will give
a name and a long life to their author. 80

Trist. 3.3.77-80

The traditional claim for immortality through poetry, which draws on many similar statements in the same period, has been analysed in its subversive potential: as Ingleheart points out, “in order to appreciate the full force of Ovid’s claim to immortal fame, it is necessary to read it firstly in the context of the poetic models which it clearly draws upon and then against Augustus’ own major attempt at posthumous self-memorializing, the Mausoleum, to which I argue that it also alludes”.²⁵⁹ Ovid challenges Augustus’ own quest for a long-lasting memory of his life and actions.

I argue that an early form of this contrast is present in love elegy. At 2.5.27-30 Propertius claims the power of committing to memory what *he* wants to be remembered of Cynthia. The poet’s words are able to change reality because they are able to shape memory. What in love elegy is presented as a private love quarrel, becomes in the exiled Ovid a subversive act of power: again, Ovid seems to draw

²⁵⁹ E.g. Horace’s *Odes* 3.30, Prop. 3.2: for a wide discussion the passage from the *Tristia* in its Augustan setting and with reference to its models see Ingleheart 2015 (for the quotation: 296).

from literary frameworks and fill them with literary versions of reality, which leads to a clash with reality itself.

The poet is so powerful that sometimes he must regret his powers,²⁶⁰ as happens in Propertius 3.24 and 3.25, whose unity has been discussed by Fedeli:²⁶¹

Falsa est ista tuae, mulier, fiducia formae,
olim oculis nimium facta superba meis.
Noster amor talis tribuit tibi, Cynthia, laudes:
uersibus insignem te pudet esse meis.

It is a false confidence, woman, that you place in your charms;
your sparkling eyes have long since made you overproud.
It was my love that bestowed such honour on you;
and I am ashamed that you are renowned through my verse.

(Prop. 3.24.1-4)

As we have already mentioned, the poem is presented as a farewell to Cynthia (although she will come back in Book Four), and has been interpreted as an exit, for the speaker, from the elegiac genre:²⁶² *Mens Bona* (rationality personified, 19) is the one who drives him now. Propertius seems to disown Cynthia's importance in his verses and concentrates on her beauty, which inspired a false faith. Just like the success of the *diues amator*, the woman's beautiful looks, which will fade away, provide an illusionary certainty to their owner. At the same time, looks are presented as the one thing which the *puella* relies on, as the *diues amator* relied on wealth. That is the reason why, when the curse against the *puella* becomes real, the poet attacks that feature, her beauty, because attacking beauty means attacking what grants the *puella* her place in society and in poetry.

²⁶⁰ On the poet regretting the portrayal of the beloved woman see also *Am.* 3.12.

²⁶¹ See Fedeli 1985, 672-75 who supports the theory that the so-called 3.24 and 3.25 should be considered as one poem. Heyworth 2011 considers them as one poem, as we previously mentioned.

²⁶² See Zimmermann Damer 2019, 64-6.

Therefore, the expression *falsa ... fiducia formae* conveys, in my view, a strongly ambiguous significance and constitutes a face-threatening act off record against the girl's positive face – her desire to be accepted and approved in society. The real aim of this expression is not, as Propertius says, just to blame the woman for her behaviour: the real indirect face-threatening act conveys once again a didactic message. At the same time, the poet declares his blame for himself for the fame that his poetry has granted to Cynthia: that fame is undeserved. Again, the poet is exercising the power of deciding which behaviour is accepted and which one is not, what moral values Cynthia must comply with to *deserve* praise or not.

Is this very different to what Ovid does, when he reminds Augustus that his own poems were represented in his presence, together with pantomimes, which the *princeps* himself enjoys attending? This is what happens in *Trist.* 2.519-20 (*et mea sunt populo saltata poemata saepe, / saepe oculos etiam detinere tuos*). As Ingleheart puts it, “Ovid insinuates criticism of Augustus’ frivolity in repeatedly (*saepe*) watching Ovid’s poems being danced, rather than reading the *Ars* or devoting attention to more pressing concerns”.²⁶³ The poet is here challenging Augustus’ judgment, morality and management of power.

Acts of service in the *Ibis*: is this love?

As Alessandro Schiesaro has pointed out, Augustus is not actually named in the *Ibis*.²⁶⁴ Yes, the *maximus ille* mentioned at 23 *must* be the emperor, and yet he shares with *Ibis* the impossibility of being called by his own name. Augustus is evoked in the *Ibis* in his divine nature: he is the highest of the gods, he who granted

²⁶³ Ingleheart 2010, 377.

²⁶⁴ Schiesaro 2011, 82-3.

Ovid an exile without destitution (23-4: *Di melius, quorum longe mihi maximus ille est, / qui nostras inopes noluit esse vias*). But is Augustus really treated as the *puella* in the *Ibis*? The pattern of communication is more complex.

At 23-4 Ovid refers the semantic domain of *inopia* to himself. The power dynamics seem reversed in comparison to love elegy: in that framework, the *puella* should fear destitution and the poet, although unable to actively ruin her, often reiterates the power of his poetry to make the *puella* desirable (cf. *Am.* 3.12). This means that the poet claims the power of controlling the *puella*'s reputation (cf. Prop. 2.5.27-30). This overturning of power dynamics is consistent with part of Ovid's argument in the exile poetry. In *Trist.* 1.1.75-8 this is the poet's definition of his fear of power:

Terretur minimo pennae stridore columba 75
 unguibus, accipiter, saucia facta tuis;
Nec procul a stabulis audet discedere, siqua
 excussa est auidi dentibus agna lupi.

The least rustle of a feather brings dread upon the dove 75
 that your talons, O hawk, have wounded.
Nor does any lamb, once wrested from the teeth of a ravenous wolf,
 venture to go far from the fold.

(*Trist.* 1.1.75-8)

This imagery of hunting is reminiscent of erotic elegy. In *Ars* 1.117-18 this same imagery is used to describe the rape of the Sabines, and it especially reflects the women's perspective: *ut fugiunt aquilas, timidissima turba, columbae, / utque fugit uisos agna nouella lupos*. The exiled Ovid casts himself as the woman chased by the attack of a rapacious man. In this framework of correspondences, we should say that Ovid is the *puella* and Augustus is the chasing *uir*. Moreover, the similes appear

in connection with a tyrannical use of power in the *Metamorphoses*. It appears in *Met.* 6, in the context of the episode of Tereus, Procne and Philomela, at the time of Philomela's rape perpetrated by Tereus: *illa tremit uelut agna pauens, quae saucia cani / ore excussa lupi nondum sibi tuta uidetur*. In this setting, the pair lamb-wolf is associated with the pair victim-tyrant: the connection clearly shows the subversive potential of the simile.

In the *Ibis* love overturns expectations. Although he humiliates himself and enhances Augustus' merciful grants, Ovid does treat Augustus as the elegiac *puella*, to be educated, criticised and even threatened. He does so through Ibis. Ibis is a means of speaking to Augustus indirectly.²⁶⁵ When Ovid criticises Ibis as a bad advisor (19-20: *et, qui debuerat subitas extinguere flammis, / hic praedam medio raptor ab igne petit*), the secondary recipient of this criticism is Augustus, who allowed plunderers to rob Ovid.

When Ovid stigmatises Ibis' calumny (13-14: *uulneraque inmitis requiem quaerentia uexat, / iactat et in toto nomina nostra foro*), it is Augustus' choice to allow such figures to speak that Ovid criticises. What Augustus did not do – silence them – Ovid does, by depriving Ibis of the right of being recognised as a legitimate source of opinion (what we analysed as a form of disconfirmation at 231-2: *perbibit inde suae rabiem nutricis alumnus, / latrat et in toto uerba canina foro*). Ovid replaces Augustus as source of rightful punishments. He does so by stigmatising Ibis' crimes and by indirectly educating Augustus himself, just like the elegiac poet

²⁶⁵ On this see Part Two.

educates his *puella*, who can sometimes speak, but ultimately reflects the will of the poet.

Love, violence and power

That the relationship between the poet and the *puella* is not at all equal is quite evident in the expressions of violence. The poet uses violence or refers to the possibility of doing so against the *puella*.²⁶⁶ In Tib. 1.6.69-76 the poet describes the hypothesis of an apparent reciprocal violence between the lovers:

Et mihi sint durae leges, laudare nec ullam
possim ego quin oculos appetat illa meos; 70
et, siquid peccasse putet, ducarque capillis
immerito pronas proripiarque uias.
Non ego te pulsare uelim, sed uenerit iste
si furor, optarim non habuisse manus.
Nec saeue sis casta metu, sed mente fideli; 75
mutuus absenti te mihi seruet amor.

And for me let there be hard terms; let me never praise
a woman without her flying at my eyes; 70
and if she thinks that I have done her wrong, let me be taken by the hair
and dragged without deserving it down the street.
I would not wish to beat you, but if such madness
come to me, I would pray to have no hands.
Yet be not chaste through cruel fear, but by loyal heart; 75
and when absent, let love on thy side keep thee safe for me.

(Tib. 1.6.69-76)

The reciprocity is actually only apparent. The first thing the poet does is to represent himself in a position of inferiority towards the *puella*. He has rules to comply with, and if she thinks (*putet*) that he has broken them she can drag him by his hair across the public road. The prospective violence from the *puella* comes from an

²⁶⁶ On domestic violence in Roman love elegy see O'Rourke 2018.

assessment (*putet*),²⁶⁷ and is characterised as an act of law (*durae leges*). The proxemic relationship between the characters – i.e. the significance of space and distance between them – highly emphasises the submission and humiliation which the poet undergoes, as he is physically on the ground and dragged around (note too the passive voice: *ducar* and *proripiar*), even without being guilty (*immerito*).

Yet, when it is the poet's turn to be violent, the conditions are very different. His violence is not regulated by a law, but by fury (*furor*), and the punishment for the *puella* will not be specific – as the dragging around was – but a generic act of beating (*pulsare*). While the violence executed by the *puella* has borders and no specific agent (due to the passive voice), the violence executed by the poet does not and is active. The *puella* must conform to specific standards of punishment that are decided by the poet himself. He presents himself as unable to control his violent impulses. The blurring of lines, the lack of control and regulation, and the resulting arbitrariness make the poet's violence much more powerful and real than that of the *puella*.

Although they seem stricter (*laudare nec ullam / possim ego*), even the poet's wrongdoings are easier to identify than the ones that the *puella* could commit. Her chastity (*casta*) has no specification. Finally, the decision to mention the “terrible fear”, which should be interpreted as “fear of something terrible” is a highly impolite linguistic choice, because it implies a threat. The poet's punishment is a deal: there are rules (*leges*), indications of the wrongdoing to avoid (*laudare nec ullam*) and a specific punishment (*ducarque capillis*).

²⁶⁷ OLD² 1679 s.v. *puto* 3, 4.

The *puella*'s punishment is an unregulated, arbitrary act whose scope depends on the poet's ability to control his ferocious impulses (*furor*), without a clearly narrowed down behaviour to comply with, but just a general indication (*casta*), aimed at keeping the *puella* in terror: saying that she should *not* be afraid simply brings fear into the relationship. Ultimately, the *puella* is responsible for her actions and entitled to a supposed arbitrariness (*putet*), yet at the same time, she is not permitted any space for her own thoughts. In contrast, the poet presents himself as acting under the influence of fury, with no control over his actions, and even wishes to be physically prevented from harming the woman. The declared impossibility of controlling the consequences of irrational fury reinforces the fear.

As Cucchiarelli has noted in the case of Propertius, the diverse themes of his elegiac poetry are all employed through one single polarising centre: Cynthia, the *puella*, towards whom the poet has a relationship that combines attraction and repulsion.²⁶⁸ The *puella* is central in her presence, and is even more central in her absence: the literary love story is nurtured with love, but also with fight and repulsion.²⁶⁹ I build on this perspective on love elegy, for which invective and even hatred is not a problematic aspect of elegy, but an integral part of it. Curses are the expression of one of the inherent features of elegy – including love elegy.

What do all of these things have in common with the *Ibis*? More than we might think. The image of someone being dragged around occurs more than once in the *Ibis*. For example, at lines 165-6, Ovid imagines the dead body of Ibis being dragged around, beheaded, with a hook inserted into its bones (*carnificisque manu populo plaudente traheris, / infixusque tuis ossibus uncus erit*). At 331-4 there are

²⁶⁸ Cucchiarelli 2023, 365-6.

²⁶⁹ Cucchiarelli 2023, 365.

two examples of men being dragged: Eurydamas, whose dead body was dragged three times by Symus, the brother or Thrasyllus whom he had killed under the walls of Troy (331-2: *utque uel Eurydamas ter circum busta Thrasylli / est Larisaeis raptus ab hoste rotis*); and Hector, dragged around the walls of Troy by Achilles' chariot (333-4: *uel qui quae fuerat tutatus moenia saepe / corpore lustravit non diuturna suo*; see Verg. *Aen.* 1.483 for the specific detail that Hector was dragged three times).

Looking at these examples, one notices that they cover three different categories of reference: a direct reference to Ibis, an appropriate indirect reference to Ibis (as Eurydamas is punished for an actual crime) and a problematic indirect reference to Ibis, as Hector is the hero of the Trojans and the Trojans are obviously the ancestors of the Romans.²⁷⁰ In all three cases, the emphasis is on the submission of the person dragged, with the sense of humiliation reinforced by the contempt of the dead body.

The act of dragging something around is a way of emphasising submission and a complete lack of control on the part of the person being dragged (which, in the case of Ibis, is reinforced by the fact that the person is dead), and therefore signifies complete power on the part of the person doing the dragging. The comparable scene in Tibullus is meant to demonstrate the supposed superiority of the *puella* over the poet, a concept that we have examined in all its contradictions. In the *Ibis*, Ibis is dragged around in a powerless and humiliating state. Moreover, Hector, the courageous Trojan warrior who was defeated, bears a relevance for a Roman audience that makes him a not particularly straightforward choice as an

²⁷⁰ On Ovid's use of problematic and even unsuitable examples in the catalogue see Part Three and particularly Chapter Five.

example of deserved retribution. Choosing an ancestor of the Romans as example for an enemy inevitably poses issues. To sum up, love itself paves the way for a tangled pattern of power dynamics. Violence is part of Roman love elegy as a weapon against the poet, and as a weapon for the poet. The *Ibis* incorporates love in the form of praise, but also makes the enemy the focal point of a whole work, just like the *puella* is the core of love elegy. Both love and invective rely on manipulation.

Conclusions: a pattern that should *not* be untangled

Can the *puella* therefore be associated with Ibis, the enemy? My answer is yes. Ibis and the *puella* share their fundamental role in their elegiac sub-genre. This is a prerogative shared by another character, whose role is fundamental in Ovid's exile poetry: Augustus. We seem to have three sub-genres and three main interlocutors for Ovid: love elegy/the *puella*, elegy of lament/Augustus, invective elegy/Ibis. We could be tempted by a direct association between the three interlocutors. And yet, the pattern of relationships between the characters is tangled. Even the poet can become a *lena* – and he can consequently be ruined by this transformation – as happens with the *Ars amatoria* – like Tibullus' old *puella*, not loved by anyone anymore (cf. Tib. 1.6).

And yet we should not try to untangle this pattern of references. In other words, the correspondence between Augustus and the elegiac *puella* can – even must! – coexist with that between the poet and the *lena*, the *lena* and the rival and Ibis, Ibis and the elegiac *puella*. The impossibility of narrowing down the

correspondence to one single option, which is already in place in the relationship inside Roman love elegy (e.g. the treatment of the *puella* like a *lena*) and between the *Ibis* and Roman love elegy, becomes the main feature of the *Ibis* itself. The *Ibis*, in other words, seems to repurpose and enhance some features which we see first in Roman love elegy.

To sum up, there are two directions in this tangled pattern of references. The first one reveals that correspondences are problematic inside the genre of Roman love elegy. The *puella* can become the target of the same type of attacks as the *lena* and the *lena* could have been a *puella* once (Tib. 1.6). The rival can be treated like a *lena* when it is a female rival ([Tib.] 3.9). The poet can act like a *lena* and be punished accordingly (*Ars amatoria*). The second one reveals that Ovid's exile poetry inherits, enhances and repurposes from Roman love elegy. Augustus is the object of desire, the *puella*, but, as the *puella*, he can be attacked and criticised in his behaviour and morals. He can even become the predator (*Tristia* 1.1.75-6). *Ibis* embodies both the masculine and the feminine features of the enemies and the gender-based attack on them: he is dehumanised, made an outcast from society, imagined dead and torn apart, but also victim of fate and of the superior knowledge of the poet, who knows that fortune can be volatile. Ovid himself has experienced the instability of fortune and has been made an outcast, an exile, a destitute man who looks back at his past fortune, like the old *puella* of Tibullus 1.6.

Conclusions to Part One

It is worth reiterating that the power that Ovid attributes to his curses is similar to the power that the love elegist attributes to his love spells. Both types of language aim to create a world separate from the social environment – a world created by outcasts and based on its own rules, where the poet is the source of law, values and behaviour.

The transition from love elegy to exile elegy introduces an additional layer of complexity in the form of autobiography. The extent of the autobiographical element in love elegies is a matter for discussion. What changes in Ovid's exile poetry is how fundamental the autobiographical element is not only for the development of poetry, but for its efficacy as well. Autobiography becomes a poetic tool, and poetry becomes the means through which the poet pursues a change in his personal life. Elegy's reconciliation with life, which Ovid already showed in his love poetry, turns into the interference of poetry with life. Poetry allegedly caused a disaster in Ovid's real life and now poetry becomes the tool for salvation – only a failing one.

This means that the levels of interpretation multiply. In love elegy, we can ask ourselves what of the poetic persona is in the *lena* or the *diues amator*. In Ovid's exile poetry, however, we must ask what of the characters of love elegy is in the characters of exile elegy. We must also ask what of the real Augustus is in the character Augustus, and what of Augustus is in Ibis, who is a real enemy. Finally, we must ask what of Ovid is in the poetic persona, in Ibis, and even in the figure of Augustus as represented by Ovid himself.

So, what should we make of the *Ibis*? Is *Ibis* anyone in particular? I would argue that *Ibis* is the cornerstone of elegy. It is a character that embodies all others and is the recipient of all messages, whether they are addressed to enemies, friends or Augustus himself. The political and subversive potential which was inherent in love elegy becomes a real matter of life and death for the exiled poet. Examining how Ovid repurposes themes and patterns from love elegy in his exile poetry reveals that he renders his exilic works incapable of fulfilling their apparent aim of securing his safety. The *Ibis* is the culmination of this repurposing of love elegy, and the epitome of its subversive consequences. As we have noted, the poet never wants to lose the *puella*. Even his aggressive words are aimed at maintaining the relationship. However, this dynamic fails in the relationship between Ovid and Augustus. By summoning all the characters, arguments and relationships of elegiac poetry, *Ibis* embodies the subversive potential of Ovid's poetry: Augustus is the enemy, rival and object of desire; Ovid is the poet. The poem and the mistake (*carmen et error*) that brought ruin upon Ovid is paired, as we shall see, by the mistake of combining life and poetry in exile.

Part Two

Lament and invective: the *Ibis* and the politics of exile

Introduction

What is the role of invective in Ovid's exilic poetry? This is the question that this section seeks to answer by analysing the *Ibis* and its connections with the rest of Ovid's poems from exile. The importance of restoring the *Ibis* to its rightful place within Ovid's exilic corpus is one of the main points made by Gareth Williams in his seminal book *The Curse of Exile: A Study of Ovid's Ibis*:

The *Ibis*, it will be argued, plays an integral role in creating the 'wholeness' of the poetic persona featured so centrally in the exilic corpus; for the broader context of an all-pervading melancholy, the curse takes on a special significance as the expression of a manic, desperate and inevitably futile frustration.²⁷¹

Identifying and overcoming the limitations of Housman's interpretation that *Ibis* is entirely a fiction,²⁷² and changing the terms of the scholarly discussion completely, Williams suggests that *Ibis* is "a typological embodiment of all that the poet's various enemies in the *Tristia* cumulatively represent";²⁷³ possibly a "fictional

²⁷¹ Williams 1996, 5.

²⁷² Housman 1920, 316: saying that *Ibis* is "nobody. He is much too good to be true", Housman ends up negating the very existence of *Ibis*, based on the implausibility of his date and place of birth, the inconsistency and extensiveness of the curses, and the fact that in *Pont.* 4.14.44 Ovid claims that nobody has been hurt by his words (*extat adhuc nemo saucius ore meo*). Williams refutes his arguments and counters them with the idea of the enemy as a literary embodiment of possibly real figures. Housman applies a similar approach to the catalogue too, which he dismisses as to "neither be read nor written seriously" (Housman 1920, 316); Williams, on the other hand, explains it in the framework of Ovid's rage and obsession, which threatens to destroy the hater – Ovid – himself (Williams 1996, 102: "The result is that the catalogue bears witness to a state of fascination with the very process of torture; and Ovid's irrational persona thus becomes exposed to the dangers of self-damaging obsession").

²⁷³ Williams 1996, 19.

creation who nevertheless symbolically represents real people”.²⁷⁴ Taking the analysis further into the psychological realm, Williams also links the *Ibis* to the rest of Ovid’s exile poetry through the categories of melancholy and mania, and interprets the *Ibis* as “a manic outburst within a general context of melancholy”. This view contributes to the generic discussion by distinguishing “the poem from the Hellenistic *Ἄρα*”,²⁷⁵ “an entirely self-absorbed effusion whose sole efficacy lies in the exploding of tensions (...) which are never far from the surface throughout the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*”.²⁷⁶

My approach builds on Williams’ foundational study by arguing that the *Ibis* plays a crucial role within the exilic corpus, one that may indeed change our general understanding of the poetry from exile itself. However, the overall interpretation of this role and of the poem itself leads my analysis to differ from Williams: while he concludes that Ovid’s attacks have no practical force,²⁷⁷ I argue that the self-presentation of the poet as powerless should be understood within a literary – specifically elegiac – context, which provides the framework for a specific form of elegiac power that comes from social exclusion, and that in this context invective proves to be an essential part of lament. Lament and invective are part of a specific communication, addressed to different addressees with different aims. Ovid’s presentation of his powerless condition as ground for his curses is a fundamentally elegiac feature, which may both reinforce the elegiac context of the *Ibis* and broaden our understanding of elegy itself in Rome. What I want to show in this section is

²⁷⁴ Williams 1996, 19.

²⁷⁵ Williams 1996, 125.

²⁷⁶ Williams 1996, 125.

²⁷⁷ Williams 1996, 128-9.

that there is a pattern of recurrence in terms of vocabulary, imagery, themes, and communicative structures that links invectives in Ovid's exile poetry to the *Ibis*. Regardless of the internal chronology of Ovid's poems from exile,²⁷⁸ this pattern finds its pivotal manifestation in the *Ibis*, but in fact plays a crucial role in Ovid's exile poetry as a broader corpus.

As in the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*, in the *Ibis* Ovid addresses an explicit addressee.²⁷⁹ An analysis of Ovid's poetic communication, however, reveals the presence of additional intended addressees of the message that he conveys in various forms. What I aim to show in the case of the *Ibis* is, first, that invectives provide what might be called a secondary communication, directed at secondary addressees; second, that this layered communication leads to a much more complex interaction between lament and invective in Ovid's exile poetry. A comparison of the *Ibis* with the invectives against enemies and unfaithful friends in the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* shows that a clear demarcation between lament on the one hand (the collections of elegies) and attack on the other (the *Ibis*) diminishes the prismatic pattern of themes and aims of the exilic corpus: because the communication is layered, lament and invective are linked by a fundamental continuity.

Chapter Three ("Aggressive lament: using emotions to cause harm") addresses continuity between lament and invective in the layer of communication that is aimed at multiple addressees. It is not surprising that exile poetry needs to be understood as addressed to an audience, just as Ovid's pre-exilic works were.

²⁷⁸ See on this, e.g., La Penna 1957, VII-XII; André 1963, VI-VIII; Delbey 2009, 211-12.

²⁷⁹ On how marginalisation shapes the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* and how the works influence Ovid's identity as a poet see McGowan 2009 (on the concept of *uates* in exile esp. 121-67).

Scholars have recognised the role of the contemporary and future audience.²⁸⁰ That invectives are mere outbursts of frustration and emotions is the idea I intend to challenge. If we compare the portrayal of Ibis with that of the other enemies who appear in the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*, we will see that the pattern of themes and movements of invective reveals an important element of aggressiveness in the collections of elegies, and a fundamental role of lament in the *Ibis*: the interaction between the two, and between the levels of addressees, tells a unitary story. Chapter Four (“The outcast and the *princeps*”) examines the implications of the contemporary presence of lament and invective in Ovid’s argument in relation to Augustus.²⁸¹ I argue that Augustus is one of the addressees of the communication that Ovid constructs through invectives. I do not insist on the problem of the identity of the enemy, which has been the main focus of the scholarship on elegies of attack, leading to the idea that the enemies (including Ibis) could be Augustus.²⁸² The grounds of my argument are Ovid’s attempt to make Augustus the indirect recipient

²⁸⁰ Scholars have recognised the importance that the relationship with his audience has for Ovid, especially in the context of his poems from exile. Ciccarelli 2003, 5 interprets the project of the entire collection of the *Tristia* as an attempt to restore that communication with the audience that was interrupted by Ovid’s relegation. On the importance of the relationship between Ovid and his audience see Citroni 1995, 431-73.

²⁸¹ This also includes the role of the iambic references (see on this esp. Schiesaro 2001 and 2011) which I analyse in an elegiac setting.

²⁸² See Schiesaro 2011 for a broad and comprehensive analysis in support of this identification. For hints at the possibility that Ovid’s enemies can be identified with Augustus see also Casali 1997, 107-8; 112, note 68. For general considerations on the issue of Ibis’ identity, see Ellis 1881, XIX-XXVII (and Williams’ 2008 new introduction [XII-XX]), La Penna 1957, XVI-XIX, André 1963, XXIV-XXVI, Watson 1991, 130-1. Housman’s statement that Ibis does not exist is well known (“Ibis is much too good to be true”: Housman 1920, 316). This approach is supported by Wilkinson 1955, 355, and Williams has a similar view, expressed in both his 1992 article (172 and n. 4 [184]) and 1996 monograph: in the latter, he speaks of Ibis as a “purely notional character” (22), while discussing the relationship between Ibis and the other enemies of Ovid’s exile poetry (19-22). On the contrary, Helzle (2005) proposes the figure of a friend, Sabinus, and generally supports the hypothesis of a real person, or group, behind the figure of Ibis (2009, 185). Against the search for Ibis’ identity Battistella 2010 (reviewing the 2008 re-edition of Robinson Ellis’ edition of Ovid’s *Ibis*).

The problem of not naming the enemy is the subject of Vial 2020. A more recent treatment of the discussion is in Galfré 2023, 131 in the context of the discussion of *Trist.* 3.11.

of his elegiac communication, and the fact that Ovid's poetic attempt becomes a subversive act against Augustus' authority.

As for my methodology, Part Two focuses on three key points: communication, vocabulary and argument. To this aim, I combine the methods of linguistic pragmatics, which detect and identify the structure of communication, its aims, contents and targets, and, equally important, its implications, with those of pragmatics of communication, with a particular focus on non-verbal communication.²⁸³ This means looking at Ovid's use of language in context from the general to the particular, i.e. from the broader ways in which communication works (which is the object of pragmatics of communication), to the specific use of language and vocabulary and the linguistic contribution to communication (which is what linguistic pragmatics deals with). In this context, the analysis of Ovid's vocabulary will lead to a discussion of the possible use of legal terminology and structures, which turns out to be linked to legal terminology in invectives as much as it is in laments.

It has already been noted that Ovid uses elegy to support his self-defence,²⁸⁴ and Grazia Maria Masselli has presented an analysis of the *Ibis* as an example of oratorical invective.²⁸⁵ The fundamental role of law in elegy has been demonstrated by Ziogas with reference to love poetry.²⁸⁶ I build on Ziogas' analysis to show that

²⁸³ Culpeper 1996 and 2011, Bousfield 2008, Bousfield – Locher 2008 (impoliteness); Watzlawick – Helmick Beavin – Jackson 1967, Ricottilli 2000, Calabrese 2021, Raccanelli 2022, Ricottilli – Raccanelli (eds) 2023 (non-verbal communication, gesture and proxemics).

²⁸⁴ Ciccarelli 2003, e.g., describes *Tristia* 2 as structured as a forensic oration, where Ovid presents to the emperor a plea for clemency (Ciccarelli 2003, 6); Inglehart 2010, 12-21 discusses forensic oratory in the context of the models for *Tristia* 2.

²⁸⁵ Masselli 2002.

²⁸⁶ Ziogas 2021, who, against previous interpretations such as Kenney's (1969), argues for the view of law as a fundamental aspect of Ovid's poetry (2021, 4). For a reference to poetry of curse as a

legal terminology profoundly shapes Ovid's attacks on his enemies and is part of his strategy to build his argument: as "love poetry is often a normative discourse that legitimizes or outlaws desire",²⁸⁷ Ovid's invectives legitimise his wishes and show their power in being the expression of his desire. Ovid grounds the power of his curses on his authority as a poet. His role of *uates* gives his will the power of action.

Attacking the enemy is a means of reaching Augustus, of speaking to him and of him, indirectly. The portrayal of the enemy as a bad advisor and an evil henchman does not match that of Augustus, who is the ruler, the one who disposes of advisors and henchmen. And yet there is an accusation against Augustus: that of surrounding himself with inadequate advisors and of employing evil people and informers. This is the first of Ovid's subversive statements: in making this statement Ovid is questioning Augustus' authority and judgment. What is more, if Augustus' character does not match Ibis' features, it matches another character: Ovid's poetic persona. By questioning Augustus' authority Ovid ultimately casts himself as a competitor – in the realm of poetry – for the place of Augustus himself.

complement to poetry of wooing in Ovid's exile poetry see 151-2. On law in Ovid in relation to wordplay see also Ziogas 2016.

²⁸⁷ Ziogas 2021, 2.

Chapter Three

Aggressive lament: using emotions to cause harm

Introduction: manipulative emotions

Elegiac lament always has a purpose. It can be to soften the objects of desire and bring them back to the poet. It can be to punish them for the pain they have inflicted by rejecting the poet. In the *Ibis* elegiac lament becomes a means to attack the enemy through the emotional impact of suffering. While aggressiveness seems the main feature of the *Ibis*, one would be surprised to notice how extensive the presence of pain in fact is, in terms of both vocabulary and imagery. Ibis, the enemy, is constructed as a figure in pain, a perfect counterpart for Ovid's suffering. Far from being the mere representation of retribution (the enemy who will be punished like the poet), the correspondence between Ovid and Ibis becomes a communicative tool. By inflicting pain, and by reacting inappropriately to his enemy's suffering Ovid engages in a claim for power which has poetic, but also political implications.

What is more, invective is not exclusively characteristic of the *Ibis*. Some of the letters from the exilic collections of elegies do have – not always recognised – aggressive tones and aims which anticipate or corroborate the operation which Ovid attempts with the *Ibis*. My aim is not to compare the enemy as Ovid portrays him in the exilic elegies to Ibis, nor is it to investigate his identity. The *Ibis* repurposes some crucial elegiac features to its aggressive aims. In this chapter my goal is to show how lament becomes a tool of attack. This does not mean that in the *Ibis* Ovid distorts the features of elegy. On the contrary, he pushes the boundaries of elegy by taking to its extreme the potential that those elegiac features already had in their

‘regular’ use. In this way, he achieves what seems to be such an unorthodox elegy that its very generic collocation is a matter of discussion.

This chapter investigates this repurposing of the elegiac key element of lament as an aggressive tool moving towards two directions. First, the focus is on the *Ibis* and on its use of lament as a pervasive way to achieve invective. I present an analysis of *Ibis* as a compassion-worthy character: the authenticity of this compassion-worthy depiction provides the grounds for the effectiveness of Ovid’s curse. Second, the analysis shifts the focus to the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*. Ovid uses poetic language as a comprehensive communicative tool. Poetry becomes a means to describe actions, to convey messages and achieve a layered communication. A fundamental role is played by emotions and, in the setting of exile elegy, by pain. This communicative approach is exploited in the *Tristia* and in the *Epistulae ex Ponto* as well. Ovid’s poetic approach in the collections of elegies shows similar patterns to the *Ibis*, but shows as well an intricate pattern of relationships between himself – his character we could say – and the character of the enemy.

III.1 Lament and invective in the *Ibis*

The common assumption that lament belongs to the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* and attack to the *Ibis* needs to be challenged, and with it the assumption that Ovid’s exilic corpus can be firmly divided between the epistolary collections of poems on one side and the *Ibis* on the other. In a poem of only 644 lines,²⁸⁸ for example, references to crying occur with considerable frequency: the term *lacrimae* appears

²⁸⁸ According to La Penna’s 1957 edition.

five times, the term *fletus* and the verb *flere* twice each.²⁸⁹ Tears as a visual representation of pain are obviously a familiar elegiac feature.²⁹⁰ What I propose here is an analysis of the implications of a number of devices of non-verbal communication used by Ovid in the context of a communicative use of language. This means that I will consider how Ovid describes both verbal and non-verbal interactions as part of the communicative environment of his poem. My aim is to show first how an analysis of both language and gesture as tools of communication sheds light on Ovid's powerful use of poetry; and, second, how this use of poetry as an inclusive source of powerful communication, i.e. communication that aims at achieving a result, is something that connects, rather than distances, the *Ibis* and the elegiac genre. As for the analysis of gestures, I refer to Licinia Ricottilli's definition²⁹¹, while the core of this analysis is Watzlawick, Helmick Beavin and Jackson's analysis of the so-called 'analogical communication', which broadly identifies any kind of non-verbal communication within the field of pragmatics of communication.²⁹²

An elegiac revenge?

It could be argued that revenge, which is obviously prominent in the *Ibis*, is antithetical to its nature as an elegiac poem. What I intend to demonstrate, on the contrary, is first that lament has a specific role in the *Ibis* and that the elegiac setting

²⁸⁹ According to the online databases.

²⁹⁰ See e.g. James 2003b; on tears in Ovid see Fögen 2009; a wide and systematic analysis of tears and crying specifically in Ovid's exile poetry is in Tola 2004.

²⁹¹ See the general Introduction.

²⁹² Watzlawick – Helmick Beavin – Jackson 1967, 60-7.

is crucial to the revenge that follows Ovid's laments. In *Ibis* 117-22 Ovid wishes his enemy, who will be destroyed, to receive hatred instead of compassion:

Sisque miser semper nec sis miserabilis ulli:
gaudeat aduersis femina uirque tuis.
Accedat lacrimis odium, dignusque putere
qui, mala cum tuleris plurima, plura feras. 120
Sitque, quod est rarum, solito defecta fauore
fortunae facies inuidiosa tuae.

May you be always pitiable, but pitied by none:
men and women may rejoice in your woes.
May hatred join your tears, and may you be considered
worthy to bear more sorrows, having already suffered so many. 120
And, which is rare, the sight of your misfortune,
deprived of the favour it should normally receive, may arouse hatred.

In this passage, Ibis is shedding tears, and this seems to offer a representation of the enemy as deserving compassion (because he will suffer unbearable misery). The easiest way to interpret it is to see it as a direct revenge for the misery that Ovid himself has suffered, and therefore as an aggressive statement. What I argue is that Ovid is in fact creating a character that seems to have all the characteristics to make it an elegiac character worthy of compassion. In this context, tears belong to the category of "affect display" gestures, gestures that express emotions and feelings.²⁹³ They are also one of those elements of non-verbal communication that can activate in the reader what is called "mediated associative perception":²⁹⁴ what we call non-verbal communication is in fact something that readers experience through the author's account, but the perception of it is offered to the reader *as if* it were a direct

²⁹³ On the categorisation of gestures see Ricottilli 2000, 22.

²⁹⁴ Ricottilli 2000, 40-54.

experience; in other words, as readers, we are inclined to experience what the author is describing as a gesture, as if we could actually see it. In Ovid's case, the experience is unique because his account is given in a monologue and concerns a future event. This particular perception of the gesture allows the author to evoke the reader's emotional involvement: tears are among the gestures that can raise – or, when performed deliberately, are used with the purpose of raising – empathy in the interlocutor or the audience. That is known as “contagion of tears”²⁹⁵ and refers to the fact that seeing someone else crying can cause tears in the viewer. The first element of the elegiac representation of Ibis as a figure in pain is therefore the empathetic potential of tears.

While the non-verbal communication connotes a pathetic character, the elements that insist on the linguistic characterisation of the scene evoke the deprivation of compassion. On the linguistic side, Ibis is defined with the term *miser*, “that is to be pitied, poor, wretched, unfortunate”,²⁹⁶ but not *miserabilis*, “deserving or exciting compassion, pitiable, pathetic”²⁹⁷: he should be worthy of pity, but he is not. On the contrary, his misery will raise joy (*gaudeat*) and hatred (*odium*), explicitly in contrast with normal expectations (121-2). There is a strong visual element in these lines: *facies*, the sight of Ibis' misfortune, therefore also the opportunity to see the physical manifestation of that misfortune, will be a moment of shared hatred between those who witness it, not a shared pain. Everything that characterises the expected response to suffering, in terms of emotional

²⁹⁵ Ricottilli 2000, 192-3.

²⁹⁶ *OLD*², 1229 s.v. *miser*, 1.

²⁹⁷ *OLD*², 1229 s.v. *miserabilis*, 1.

participation, collective and ritual experience, is undermined.²⁹⁸ This is an extremely significant statement, because the absence of compassion (*nec miserabilis*) is pushed to the point where it becomes a factual presence of two emotions that in different ways oppose the idea of compassion: joy and hatred for one's misery. Not only is the 'contagion of tears' missing, but tears provoke two different, but in both cases opposite, reactions.

The deprivation of compassion is pushed to its limits and reinforced by a paradox that builds on the one of 116 (*noxque die grauior sit tibi, nocte dies*), and becomes deprivation of the acknowledgement of the target's very experience: he should be condemned to be miserable, but without the deserved recognition and therefore empathy. To understand the full scope of this statement, we can include in our discussion the concept of disconfirmation, developed by Paul Watzlawick, Janet Helmick Beavin and Don D. Jackson in the field of pragmatics of communication applied to the study of mental illness (especially schizophrenia).²⁹⁹ The premises of this discussion are that, in any communication, the speaker is first of all providing the addressee with a concept of himself or herself: before the content of the message, the premise for a communication to be effective is that the addressee receives our concept of ourselves ("This is how I see myself *in relation to you in this situation*").³⁰⁰ The addressee can confirm this point of view (confirmation),³⁰¹ reject it (rejection),³⁰² or deny the speaker the very right to be a

²⁹⁸ On the analysis of a selection of scenes, in this case from ancient Greek Literature, where the expectations in terms of gestures are failed see Boegehold 1999. The collective expression *femina uirque* (*Ibis* 118) is an Ovidian elegiac expression very frequent in the *Ars*.

²⁹⁹ Watzlawick – Helmick Beavin – Jackson 1967, 86-90.

³⁰⁰ Watzlawick – Helmick Beavin – Jackson 1967, 84. Italics are by the authors.

³⁰¹ Watzlawick – Helmick Beavin – Jackson 1967, 84-5.

³⁰² Watzlawick – Helmick Beavin – Jackson 1967, 85.

source of communication: this is the disconfirmation. Wishing Ibis to be miserable but not recognising the pity he deserves means that Ovid wishes for Ibis to be denied the acknowledgement of his very condition. Not only does the poet desire that Ibis' claim to be worthy of pity be refused, but he also wants the enemy to be deprived of the right of being recognised.

Empathy as weapon to inflict harm

One could argue that wishing Ibis to be refused pity and, what is more, receiving joy and hatred for his suffering, is actually an acknowledgement of his suffering: people see him in pain and for that rejoice, or hate him. This is not, however, the target's point of view. What I argue is that Ovid is here showing Ibis what it is like to experience from the inside that reaction from someone else: from the internal point of view of the target, being refused the right to receive a reaction that is coherent with the feeling that the target is expressing is the peak of exclusion. Since disconfirmation is a category used to understand how mentally ill patients feel a sense of incommunicability with and incomprehension from the world around them, it is very useful to describe the depth of Ovid's curse. It is not like the people will not actually know that Ibis is suffering: just as Ovid feels that he has been completely excluded from the world he belongs to, although everybody knows about his condition,³⁰³ Ibis will feel that nobody acknowledges his right to state his own feelings and receive an adequate response, although they see and are aware of his pain.

³⁰³ Cf. e.g. *Trist.* 5.3 where Ovid complains about his exclusion from the celebration of the feast of the *Liberalia*; *Trist.* 5.10.37: *barbarus hic ego sum* where Ovid attributes the definition of *barbarus* to himself to explain his feeling of exclusion.

Therefore, at 118 the people's attitude towards Ibis should reach the point of rejoicing in his misery, while at 119-122 the absence of pity turns into hatred. Lack of empathy, joy and hate are the feelings that Ibis' misery should arouse. This matches Ovid's own experience and develops it. In *Trist.* 2.571-2, which we will examine later, Ovid expresses the wish that no Roman citizen would ever rejoice in his misfortune. Elsewhere, the enemy himself is said to rejoice at Ovid's fate, but is urged to beware of such a behaviour, because everything could change in a moment (*Trist.* 5.8.33-4: *ergo ne nimium nostra laetere ruina, / restitui quondam me quoque posse puta!*).

The absence of the "contagion of tears" is central to my next passage, *Ibis* 163-6, where tears that belong to those who witness Ibis' ruin are not shed:

Nec tibi continget funus lacrimaeque tuorum:
 indeploratum proiciere caput,
 carnificisque manu populo plaudente traheris, 165
 infixusque tuis ossibus uncus erit.

You will not receive a funeral or the tears of your loved ones:
 your head will be abandoned unmourned,
 and you will be dragged by the executioner's hand, amidst the cheering
 crowd, 165
 and a hook will be inserted into your bones.

Again, the context is set to very different expectations: Ovid presents a reversed funerary scene. Ibis is dead, and as a dead Roman citizen it is a funerary ritual, *funus*, that would be expected. By contrast, the ritual dimension of mourning, to which both *lacrimae* and *indeploratum* refer, connotes an absence. With the purpose of indicating their absence, Ovid ends up mentioning all the elements that are necessary to create a perfect funerary scene. A parallel for an elegiac funerary

scene which shows all the elements that in the *Ibis* are mentioned to be denied is Tibullus' funeral in *Am.* 3.9: Tibullus was mourned as Achilles was by his mother (*mater ploravit Achillem:* 1), his body was burning on the pyre (while fire would avoid Ibis' dead body: 167-6), Amor himself cried (*excipiunt lacrimas sparsi per colla capilli:* 11) as he did when Aeneas, his brother, passed away. Both the references to non-verbal and verbal communication cooperate to deprive Ibis of compassion. On the contrary, the *Ibis* seems to pick up distinctive features of elegy – tears, lament, death – and use them as weapons by subverting them. Tears do not belong to the elegiac poet, but to the enemy. They do not provoke compassion, but its opposite. Ovid subverts elegy by pushing its features to their extreme: hatred has replaced love, and yet the communicative pattern is elegiac. In this way, with the *Ibis* Ovid exploits elegy to its limits, but the *Ibis* becomes also the poem that subverts the very core and identity of elegy.

Unmourned

Verbal and non-verbal communication play complementary roles in the linguistic and communicative pattern that shapes the *Ibis*. Through non-verbal communication, we are presented with a character who has all the features of a character who is worthy of compassion, also with strong links to what we could consider a typical elegiac character. It is, however, the elegiac feature of Ibis that makes the vengeful act of depriving him of compassion really powerful. The adjective *indeploratus* is likely to be an Ovidian formation and recurs only three times in Latin, all of them in Ovid and in the same metrical position, which highly emphasises it, because, given its length, the word occupies the whole first half both

of a hexameter (as we shall see) and of a pentameter (before the main caesura).³⁰⁴ In addition to the *Ibis*, it appears in one of the most intense monologues of the *Metamorphoses*, the one of Morpheus disguised as Ceyx to Alcyone (*Met.* 11.670 – therefore an episode that evokes marital love), and in *Trist.* 3.3.46, when Ovid addresses his wife.

In *Tristia* 3.3.45-6 it is Ovid the one who dies unmourned: *sed sine funeribus caput hoc, sine honore sepulcri / indeploratum barbara terra teget!*, “but without funeral rites, without the honour of a tomb, / this head shall lie unmourned in a barbarian land!”. In the *Tristia*, Ovid describes his exilic death as already not-mourned and therefore encourages his wife to restrain the ritual display of grief for the one who has just died (*parce tamen lacerare genas nec scinde capillos!*: 51), because his death had already happened at the time of the exile (*non tibi nunc primum, lux mea, raptus ero*: 52). However, she should make sure that at least his bones are properly collected and brought back (*ossa tamen facito parua referantur in urna: / sic ego non etiam mortuus exul ero*: 65-6) and perform other ritual gestures that belong to the remembrance of the dead and that include shedding tears (*tu tamen extincto feralia munera semper / deque tuis lacrimis umida sarta dato!*: 81-2). At the same time, those elements of the funerary rite that Ovid mentions to stress that he will not receive them – because his death would happen in exile – end up being even more emphasised. Ovid again plays with the expectations and uses them to place the focus on his destitute condition.

³⁰⁴ On the adjective see also Ingleheart 2015, 11-12. A list of Ovid’s coinages beginning with the prefix *in-* has been made by Housman (in Diggle – Goodyear 1972, 168 = Housman 1890, 148).

I argue that the passage from the *Tristia* is the closest scenario to the one created by *indeploratum* in the *Ibis*. The elegiac setting of the *Tristia* is shared by this scene, which implies three points. First, the specific funerary setting, made of both specific language and gestures, traces the *Ibis* back to generic patterns of elegy: as I show in my discussion of the first passage (*Ibis* 117-22), Ovid's revenge through poetry happens in a context that is strongly connected to the elegiac one, and where the elegiac elements are crucial to the full, complete achievement of revenge. Second, and subsequently, the *Ibis* plays a crucial role in our understanding of Ovid's exile poetry and is linked to the collections of elegies from exile as to a wider project. Third, the obvious link between Ovid and Ibis, who should suffer the same destiny, the first as a victim, the latter because he suffers a deserved revenge, is not a superficial connection, limited to the reference to exile and to a general overturning of destinies. The pattern of references between characters and roles is again tangled: Ovid and Ibis are each other's Doppelgänger. Should not be the enemy the furthest character from the poet, who is his victim? And yet Ovid's attempt to link his own destiny to that of the enemy ultimately leads to show the reader how *similar* Ovid and Ibis are, instead of emphasising their irreconcilable differences.

The funerary scene evoked in lines 163-4 is paired with a different ritual scene, which however combines two gestural behaviours, in the couplet 165-6. Ibis will be dragged by his executioner by hand and with a hook inserted into his bones. This has been recognised to be a Roman custom, inflicted on those who died in prison.³⁰⁵ Ibis is portrayed as a convicted criminal. There is also a ritual element to

³⁰⁵ La Penna 1957, 34.

be highlighted: the people applauding (*populo plaudente*). This very rare expression appears twice in Ovid (and has only one further occurrence in imperial poetry: Petronius *sat.* 119.1.18; cf. later Prudentius *Contra Symmachum* 1.525): before the *Ibis*, it appears in *Am.* 3.13.13, in the same metrical position.³⁰⁶ In the *Amores*, Ovid is referring to a feast for Juno in the city of *Falerii Veteres* and uses the expression to indicate how the jubilant people attend the procession of the beasts that will be sacrificed to the goddess. The elegy is highly specific in its references to the gestures of the rite: at other moments of the rite the people must be silent (29-30), and at that point the animated applause is required. Hinting again at other types of elegy, Ovid seems to be creating a new ritual, specifically for *Ibis*: a funeral in which tears and grief are replaced by applause and where death is not mourned but approved, as a step towards something good, like a sacrifice that propitiates the gods. At the same time, this is the joy that the people feel before the vilifying – but lawful – treatment of the corpse of convicted criminals (*Ibis* 165-6): law is made of rituals and codified gestures and the Roman way of treating the body of those who died in prison involves popular joy. Ovid is here creating a system of rituals, gestures and expectations which, just like in the love elegy of the *Ars* it placed him in charge of love, here places him in charge of punishment: elegy becomes a microcosm in which law, decision, ritual and expectations come from the will of the poet.

Mocking the enemy: tears of joy

³⁰⁶ La Penna 1957, 34.

The deprivation of compassion using the gestures of tears reaches a peak in *Ibis* 205-8:

Tot tibi, uae misero! uenient talesque ruinae 205
 ut cogi in lacrimas me quoque posse putem.
Illae me lacrimae facient sine fine beatum:
 dulcior hic risu tunc mihi fletus erit.

So many calamities will befall you, miserable man! 205
 that even I could think that I might be moved to tears for you.
Those tears will bring me endless happiness:
 to me, this crying will be sweeter than laughter.

In these lines the poet manages to summarise the core of his own lament, and uses it as a weapon against Ibis. As has been acknowledged, feeling compassion for the enemy when witnessing his misery is a literary *topos*.³⁰⁷ It happens, for instance, in the *Iliad* at 24.516-51, where Achilles is compassionate of the enemy Priam; in Sophocles' *Aiix* 121-6, in Ennius' *Annals* 50 V., in Virgil's *Aeneid* 11.259. The idea that his misery could bring tears to the enemy too is present in Ovid's exile poetry. In *Trist.* 1.8.19-20 the poet urges the enemy to at least feign his grief for his fate, if he could not shed genuine tears (*inque meos si non lacrimam demittere casus, / pauca tamen ficto uerba dolore pati*). In *Trist.* 5.8.5-6 Ovid's misfortunes are said to be those that could make even fierce beasts cry (but are not raising compassion in the enemy): *nec mala te reddunt mitem placidumque iacenti / nostra quibus possunt inlacrimare ferae*. Compassion appears to be a kind of rightful compensation for his misery, marking Ovid's feeling of exclusion: more than

³⁰⁷ On these lines: La Penna 1957, 41. On the theme in general, starting from its presence in the *Iliad*, to trace its reprise in the *Aeneid*, Ricottilli 2000, 191.

relegation, what affects Ovid is the fear of not having the empathy of his fellow citizens.

Ovid brings into his poetry a well-established theme and reinforces it with references to both language and non-verbal communication. Ibis is again *miser*, as he is defined at 117, to highlight that the premises for compassion are there: he would be worthy of compassion, because he is actually suffering. Then, the second part of 205 and the pentameter (206) introduce the gesture of compassion: crying. This seems a typical case of the “contagion of tears”: the sight of an enemy’s ruin makes even the counterpart feel their misery and cry with them. Note the passive voice of *cogo*:³⁰⁸ Ovid would feel forced to cry, as an uncontrollable impulse determined by the feeling of compassion that is due even between enemies. The gesture of tears in one character tends to infect the other characters. However, whereas in the previous two examples the deprivation of pity was achieved through the deprivation of tears, here the contagion is not eliminated, but reversed: there will be tears, but tears of joy.

Ovid turns the gesture of crying into its opposite, the gesture of laughter,³⁰⁹ which is the other crucial gesture among those that fall into the category of “affect displays”. As for the use of non-verbal communication, the association of the gesture of crying with that of laughter attacks the very idea of the ritual and symbolic acts of mourning and showing compassion for the suffering. Given the crucial meaning of tears as a gesture that is part of the specific ritual of mourning, the fact that they become the bearer of joy rather than the gesture that would be

³⁰⁸ *OLD*² 380 s.v. *cogo*, 1.

³⁰⁹ An analysis of the pragmatic value of the gesture of laughter in a different context (the *Cena Trimalchionis* in Petronius’ *Satyricon*) is in Calabrese 2020.

expected undermines the very basis of the rituality of gestures and creates a ritual that applies to Ibis' ruin. The idea of a positive attitude in the laughter can also allude to the image of the applauding crowd (*populo plaudente*) at *Ibis* 165, which again has a specific ritual function. Not only does the 'contagion of tears' not occur: seeing the enemy crying brings a "contagion of laughter" more than an actual display of happiness. This is reflected in the linguistic choices: the recurrence of the adjective *miser* (205) is paired with the presence of its exact opposite, *beatus* (207).

There is one last element to analyse: Ovid's mocking attitude towards Ibis in these lines. The visual gestural manifestation that laughter or smile provide can take different paths. It can refer to joy of course, but also to laughter and mockery.³¹⁰ While what Ovid is saying is that Ibis' cry will produce a 'contagion of laughter' on him much more than laugh would have done, he brings into the discussion a tone of disrespect towards Ibis' ruin, a tone of mockery, leading to the idea that laughter and smiles are what Ibis' ruin will provoke. With a brief excursion into linguistic pragmatics, what I would like to highlight about this hint of mockery is its connection with the exercise of power: mockery, ridicule, and being contemptuous are strategies of linguistic impoliteness that are aimed at emphasising the relative power of the speaker over the target.³¹¹ And this, again, highlights the grounds of Ovid's vengeful use of poetry, both through its capacity to create communicative environments that include non-verbal communication, and to use language to display its power.

³¹⁰ *OLD*² 1825 s.v. *risus*, 1 a and b.

³¹¹ Culpeper 1996, 358.

This is connected to the discussion in Part One: a lack of ‘contagion of tears’ linked to the idea of retribution, if not complete revenge, can be traced back to love elegy too. For example, as we have seen in Part One, in 1.6.77-84 Tibullus portrays an old unfaithful *puella*, now lacking in means and beauty, mocked by young men. Venus witnesses her crying, from the heights of Olympus, but is not moved: on the contrary, she reaffirms how harsh she is on unfaithful women (83-4). Again, a scene that is expected to raise pity fails to do so and receives, by contrast, rejoicing and indifference. Furthermore, instead of encouraging the audience’s indignation, deprivation of compassion looks for the audience’s approval, and the one to be excluded even more is the one who has denied compassion.

Ibis’ power

Lament, however, has a role in the *Ibis*, even in direct accusations against the enemy, as happens in *Ibis* 19-20:

Et, qui debuerat subitas extinguere flammās,
hic praedam medio raptor ab igne petit. 20

And he who should have extinguished the sudden flames
seeks plunder from the midst of the fire like a robber. 20

Ibis is not described as a friend. However, lines 19-20 suggest that Ovid had expectations of him. He should have extinguished the fire (*qui debuerat subitas extinguere flammās*: 19), and instead he acted as a brigand trying to steal the poet’s possessions (*hic praedam medio raptor ab igne petit*: 20). The key term to identify the presence of an expectation on *Ibis* is the indicative pluperfect *debuerat*. The

verb *debere* means “to be under the obligation to do something”.³¹² Therefore, Ovid connotes Ibis’ behaviour as contrasting with an obligation which he is expected to fulfil, and this is the premise of the punishment and retribution he shall receive. The possible legal implications of the term, which can specifically refer to the obligation to pay³¹³ or to provide,³¹⁴ work to deepen the seriousness of Ibis’ fault. Ibis’ guilt is personally and socially serious, for by violating a fundamental value of society it violates the foundations of society in general.

The semantic domain of the verb *debere*, with all its implications, suggests that Ovid is playing more than one role: he is not only the victim now seeking revenge; he is also leading the charge against Ibis. He is the victim, but he is also the one who points out Ibis’ crimes to show how Ibis is a threat to society. Furthermore, pointing something out requires a recipient. In other words, Ovid includes his audience in the narrative and tries to reach them through his communication. It is to an audience that he points out Ibis’ behaviour. This use of both personal and legal references continues in the pentameter and the attention that Ovid pays to the emotional potential of his argument is reinforced by the use of the terms *praeda* and *raptor*. What Ovid does here is to give a specific characterisation of himself and Ibis as victim and oppressor. Again, his own role is doubled: he is the prosecutor and the victim. Although this portrayal of himself and his enemy has not been particularly emphasised,³¹⁵ Ovid’s choice of vocabulary is highly specific in terms of semantics and serves several purposes: first, it creates the link between

³¹² Cf. *ThLL* V.1.98.11: “i. q. per leges vel propter mores obligatum esse”, with mention of the *Ibis* 19 at 67.

³¹³ *OLD*² 534 s.v. *debeo*, 1. See also Berger 1991, 425 s.v. *debere*.

³¹⁴ *OLD*² 534 s.v. *debeo*, 2: “(esp. leg.) To be under an obligation to give or provide”.

³¹⁵ La Penna 1957, 8 focuses on the possible parallel with *Trist.* 1.6.13, where Ovid states that his wife prevented his enemies from stealing his properties.

victim and oppressor, which is the basis of Ovid's revenge; second, it provides a specific portrayal of the characters and the setting; third, as a consequence, it reinforces the idea that Ibis' behaviour goes beyond the limits of a personal issue and makes him an enemy and a threat to society in general.

The portrayal of Ibis as a plunderer, a robber,³¹⁶ represents him both as a low-level bandit and an external enemy. This can be analysed as an attack on Ibis' positive face, meaning his reputation in society:³¹⁷ even as an enemy he is mocked and presented as deprived of any value. The attack on Ibis' positive face happens at a second level too: he is presented as dishonouring his Roman background by becoming a brigand against Ovid, a Roman victim made a prey (*praeda*). Pushing this argument to its extreme consequences, I would argue that Ovid represents Ibis as an external enemy and is therefore recreating the (contrasting) connection between himself and Ibis: Ovid was banned from Rome but still had his rights as a citizen. The implication is that, unlike Ibis, Ovid does behave up to the standard of a Roman citizen. Ibis, on the contrary, by trying to take advantage of Ovid's ruin and to deprive him of his ultimate rights, becomes himself an enemy of Rome and loses his place as a true Roman citizen (and this concept is reinforced by the choice of his name, Ibis, again a foreign one). Being a "plunderer of private and public property" is also one of the typical characterisations of the target of an invective speech in a forensic context, one of the *loci* of invective.³¹⁸ Moreover, as we shall see later, this recalls the portrayal of the *delator*, whose presence in the Roman

³¹⁶ *OLD*² 1734 s.v. *raptor*, 1. The term also applies to beasts and birds of prey in 1b, which can connect to the feral representation of enemies in elegy in general.

³¹⁷ On the concept of face, see Goffman 1967, 5-45. On strategies for face-threatening acts see Brown – Levinson 1987, 68-71.

³¹⁸ Craig 2004, 190. Craig provides a categorisation of the *loci* based on several previous proposals (e.g. Nisbet 1961).

power dynamics implies an attack on both Ibis, for being one, and Augustus, for using *delatores*.

The main thing about the *loci* is that they correspond to the jury's expectations in hearing a speech: the argument *ad hominem* is expected to fulfil some requirements, which can be summarised by the *loci*. In deliberative questions and questions of fact the argument must be plausible or, better, convincing,³¹⁹ because the character of the defendant should match his crime: Ibis' description, as we shall see in the third section, is extreme, because his crime is extreme too. The presence of a specific representation is crucial in two ways: first, for Ovid's characterisation of himself,³²⁰ which is that of a victim, the injured party against a defendant; second, for the characterisation of the defendant, which is crucial as well, because for the attack to be effective it must comply with the expectations of the audience.

This presentation has implications for the way in which Ovid's argument is constructed. Although aggressiveness seems to dominate the poem, the combination of emotional and aggressive aspects is balanced. The idea of himself as prey and Ibis as plunderer has the additional aim of arousing pity in the reader, for a prey is always the object of someone else's action – even as potential prey: “that which is available for plunder, (potential) loot”³²¹ –, as it refers to objects stolen in plundering,³²² but also people.³²³ This representation conveys the message that Ovid as a character is the passive victim of an injustice committed by an

³¹⁹ Craig 2004, 199.

³²⁰ On Ovid's self-representation, in connection with the concepts of paradox and dissimulation, see Tola 2024.

³²¹ *OLD*² 1570 s.v. *praeda*, 1b.

³²² *OLD*² 1570 s.v. *praeda*, 1.

³²³ *OLD*² 1570 s.v. *praeda*, 2.

external and brutal enemy. Now this representation seems to contrast with the idea that Ovid is demonstrating the power of his poetry as a legal source of punishment.

In fact, this is the premise of the description: the power of elegy comes from the fact that the elegiac poet is an outcast and has no other means of power than his poetry. The world of poetry is thus untouched by other forms of power, and independent, but shows its influence. Now my point is that this influence shows itself through a layered communication. Although Ovid is speaking directly to Ibis, this representation of himself and his enemy is not addressed to Ibis; it is part of a different message aimed at different addressees: in this case, the audience. It is the presence of emotional elements, the search for the reader's compassion that reveals the additional layer of communication: the pity Ovid wants to arouse is not Ibis', but the audience's, the readers'. In other words, lines 19-20, while looking terribly aggressive, introduce a tone of lament in an attempt to gain the audience's compassion.

The victim's power

Ovid's combined use of lament and attack to build his argument against his enemy takes a specific form in a scene that directly links it to collections of poems:

At tibi, calcasti qui me, uiolente, iacentem,
qua licet et misero, debitus hostis ero. 30

But to you, cruel man, who trampled on me when I was on the ground,
as even a miserable man is allowed, I will be the enemy you deserve. 30

(Ibis 29-30)

Ovid combines the attempt to elicit pity from the audience with a portrayal of Ibis that both sets up the poet's revenge and presents the public with an image of the

enemy. At this stage we can identify two levels of communication: to Ibis and to the audience. Ovid vividly describes his condition through a way of occupying space, through proxemics, i.e. the use of space and distance between the characters. Ovid is lying on the ground, with *iaceo* indicating both the physical act of lying down and the specific condition of those who “lie prostrate or helpless” or are “prostrate, overthrown, brought low”.³²⁴ There is one person who is physically on the ground and another who is hovering over him. The verb *calco* indicates the general act of trampling on, also with disrespect.³²⁵ The use of space and of the spatial relationship between the two characters embodies the metaphorical level and conveys the intended communication: consistent with Ovid’s description of Ibis’ behaviour elsewhere (e.g. 19-20, just discussed), the enemy is placed in a position of real superiority over the poet, with real power to act against him. This is also quite similar to the way in which Propertius describes Amor’s power at the beginning of his first book: *tum mihi constantis deiecit lumina fastus / et caput impositis pressit Amor pedibus* (3-4). The elegiac pattern turns to Roman love elegy again: Ovid seems to be evoking the powerplay of elegy in a new elegiac situation. Proxemics and spatial relationships are used by Propertius to signify his own feeling towards his poetic inspiration: Amor is physically looming over the poet by pressing his feet over the poet’s head, in a scene of submission. Again, Ovid’s communicative choices are set in an elegiac framework and his relationship with the other characters follow a path that is made to a large extent of elegiac literary devices.

³²⁴ OLD² 893 s.v. *iaceo* respectively 1, 3, and 5.

³²⁵ OLD² 291 s.v. *calco*, respectively 1 and 7.

Ovid's communication creates a perfect recipient of compassion as a premise for his own revenge. In this case, the first step is reinforcing his representation as worthy of compassion, just as he does with Ibis. The use of proxemics gives a visual representation of the helpless condition of Ovid, who is therefore worthy of compassion, and is done for the benefit of his readers. Ovid represents himself to an audience as the perfect figure deserving compassion and on this he builds his revenge. The linguistic element contributes to the communicative representation of this aim. We can see the recurrence of the adjective *miser*, which I consider connected with Ovid and not with Ibis.³²⁶ The ruined Ovid, as is allowed to him (*licet*), will be to Ibis a *debitus hostis*, a deserved enemy, which plays with *debuerat* at 19: as in lines 19-20 Ibis was the one who should have extinguished the flames that threatened him (*et, qui debuerat subitas extinguere flammam*) and instead tried to plunder him, now he will have the enemy he deserves (*debitus*). Ovid's revenge is deserved, and more, it is a matter of duty: the duty of the *miser*. Compassion and lack of compassion are tools to shape both his own character and that of the enemy. Ovid depicts both Ibis and himself as physically and morally destitute, but he also depicts both Ibis and himself as able to exercise a form of power on the other. In sum, compassion and deprivation of it become both the tools to shape the characters and the weapons against them.

III.2 Attacking enemies in the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*: pragmatics of invective, gestures and use of space

³²⁶ Whereas Mozley 1939 (revised by Goold 1979) has *ei* for *et* and therefore refers *miser* to Ibis, and not to Ovid.

Attack has a crucial role in Ovid’s collections of elegies from exile. I will address the thematic recurrences that can be found in the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* with reference to enemies or unfaithful friends. The aim of this section is first to show how the role of invective is crucial in Ovid’s works that are primarily considered as expressions of lament – and therefore how there is continuity between lament and invective works in the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*; second, how invective is aimed at an audience just as lament is – and therefore which layers of communication can be identified in this respect. The character that is constructed as a perfect recipient of compassion in this case is Ovid. If in the previous section we saw how the attack is conveyed by depriving of compassion the one who seems to need it, now we will see how Ovid’s own deprivation of compassion itself conveys an attack.

Depicting friendship through proxemics: *Tristia* 1.8

In *Trist.* 1.8.15-24 the vivid representation of Ovid’s miserable condition is conveyed by the metaphorical reference to the relationship with his former friend.³²⁷

Illud amicitiae sanctum et uenerabile nomen	15
re tibi pro uili sub pedibusque iacet?	
Quid fuit, ingenti prostratum mole sodalem	
uisere et adloqui parte leuare tui	
inque meos si non lacrimam demittere casus,	
pauca tamen ficto uerba dolore pati	20
idque, quod ignoti faciunt, uale dicere saltem,	
et uocem populi publicaque ora sequi,	
denique lugubres uultus numquamque uidendos	
cernere supremo dum licuitque die.	

Does the sacred and revered name of friendship

³²⁷ According to André’s text, I translate from the Latin *uale dicere saltem*, while the Loeb edition has “*factum male*” *dicere saltem*.

lie, a cheap thing, beneath your feet?
 What trouble was it to visit a comrade overwhelmed by a mighty disaster,
 to encourage him with your share of comfort,
 and if not to let fall a tear at my misfortune,
 yet to express a few words of feigned sorrow
 and, as strangers do, at least to say “Goodbye”
 and to copy the people’s speech, the public phrases –
 finally to look upon my sad features
 never to be seen again, on the last day.

In this context it is friendship that is trampled on by the enemy, and at the same time the poet himself is oppressed by a heavy burden, which the enemy himself could lighten. This image again juxtaposes two concepts that are very close in the *Ibis*: the idea of trampling on – the poet or the relationship with him – and the portrayal of the enemy as someone who could be able to help, but does not. Then there are the tears and the scenario of the manifestation of pain. In the context of the creation of a funerary scene, this time as a figure for exile, Ovid’s reference to a feigned grief (*ficto ... dolore*), which he would find sufficient as a sign of participation from the former friend turned enemy, is particularly relevant. We are again in a ritual environment, characterised by specific language and, above all, gestures: tears are expected even if they are faked, and simulated grief is as good as real grief, because what counts is the performance of shared pain.³²⁸ This characterisation of mourning as a shared experience is clearly indicated by the expression *uocem populi* (22) and this recalls the other collective expression we found in the *Ibis* (*populo plaudente*, 165) and their fundamental ritual role: grief, as joy, can be collective experiences, which make a group of people part of the same society, sharing common values, of course, but also expectations in terms of what

³²⁸ Cf. *Ars amatoria* 1.613-14 on simulated love becoming true love (*saepe tamen uere coepit simulator amare; / saepe, quod incipiens finxerat esse, fuit*).

is considered appropriate behaviour. In this sense, the cheering crowd of *Ibis* 165 was required to applaud in that stage of the ritual of punishment of the criminals who died in prison, as a crowd is required to mourn the misfortune of their citizen: we are in the context of the performance of a ritual, and the enemy is found guilty of failing to comply with it.

This representation of the former friend contains an interference in his freedom of action (negative impoliteness) and in my view shows the presence of a clear attack between the lines of lament. The additional level to be addressed is that the representation is again made for the benefit of the audience. By stigmatising the former friend's behaviour in contrast to the good practice of others, Ovid represents the enemy's non-belonging to the community by showing his failure to perform the required gestures; at the same time, by praising some members, he also provides a model for the community and sets expectations, which, as we have just seen, is another case of linguistic impoliteness, because it links the acceptance of someone to their ability to conform to certain expected behaviour. To conclude, all of this takes place in the framework of elegy and, in my view, contributes to supporting the necessity of exploring the *Ibis*' connections to its elegiac genre.

The second point involves the *adynaton* that opens this same elegy:

In caput alta suum labentur ab aequore retro
flumina, conuersis Solque recurret equis,
terra feret stellas, caelum findetur aratro,
unda dabit flamma et dabit ignis aquas,
omnia naturae praepostera legibus ibunt, 5
parsque suum mundi nulla tenebit iter,
omnia iam fient fieri quae posse negabam
et nihil est de quo non sit habenda fides.

To their sources shall deep rivers flow, back from the sea,

and the sun, wheeling his steeds, shall hurry backwards;
the earth shall support stars and the sky shall be cloven by the plough,
water shall produce flame and flame water;
all things shall proceed reversing nature's laws
and no part of the universe shall keep its path;
everything that I once called impossible shall now take place,
and there is nothing that one ought not to believe.

(*Trist.* 1.8.1-8)

Williams describes this feature as “used to make natural disorder a macrocosmic paradigm for the disordered psyche of a faithless friend”,³²⁹ but he is not entirely convinced by “the rhetorical ploy of representing the undesirable by the impossible”.³³⁰ From a pragmatic point of view, these two elements are not contradictory, but on the contrary can merge – and this is the core meaning of the feature that I think should be highlighted. The “rhetorical ploy of representing the undesirable by the impossible” is, as we will see in the next section, a recurring element of the attack against the enemy, usually within scenes that make a wide use of space. Here the element is anticipated in a purely literary fashion: the poetic pattern conveys the attack. Declaring something to be impossible is a form of linguistic impoliteness in the sense that it sets expectations. In other words, the poet declares what is admissible and what is not in a realm where he has the power to decide this. Declaring something to be impossible establishes the conditions under which the target can be accepted into society: those who try to do what is deemed impossible do not exist. In this sense it is a high form of negative impoliteness, as it aims at influencing the target's behaviour by stigmatising their possible actions as unacceptable in the realm governed by the poet. In this case, the hostility of a friend is compared to the very definition of impossible and in this sense shows

³²⁹ Williams 1994, 119.

³³⁰ Williams 1994, 119-20.

Ovid's power as a poet to convey the attack: a literary feature becomes a tool to attack the enemy.

Compassion as a weapon of protest: *Tristia* 2

Ovid expresses the idea of impossibility using his poetry to create real scenes and using space too. In *Trist.* 2.571-2 the use of space embodies the relationship between the characters and the scene presents a hypothesis which the poet refuses to believe (this time directly and without the mediation of metaphorical references):

Nec mihi credibile est quemquam insultasse iacenti,
gratia candori si qua relata meo est.

Nor is it believable to me that anyone has mocked me as I lie prostrate,
if any thanks is owed to my good nature.

(*Trist.* 2. 571-2)

Ovid declares that he cannot believe that anyone could actually “trample on”, “mock”, or “insult”³³¹ him while he lies on the ground.³³² What we inevitably lose in translation – because we need to choose one particular interpretation – is actually crucial to the understanding of this passage. Again, proxemics embodies semantics: the idea of the enemy physically invading Ovid's personal space and trampling on him provides a visual representation of the exercise of a relative, perceived power, which is inherent in the concept of mockery.³³³ Visualising Ovid's helpless position obviously reinforces his portrayal of himself as a character worthy of compassion.

³³¹ *ThL* 2042.69, *OLD*² 1025 s.v. *insulto*, 1;3. For the discussion on *insulto* meaning both “jeer” and “jump up and down” and its connection with the image of Ovid fallen on the ground (*iacenti*) as a sign of his exilic death see Ingleheart 2010, 402. Ciccarelli 2003, 274: “mentre *insultare* esprime un'idea di irrisione e di superba superiorità che si oppone a quella suggerita da *iacere*”. Against the majority of translations, Mazzanti in Bonvincini's 2018⁶ edition translates “to insult”: “né posso credere che qualcuno abbia insultato alla mia caduta” (79).

³³² On *credibilis* see *OLD*², 499 s.v. See also Ciccarelli 2003, 79 and 274.

³³³ Culpeper 1996, 358.

However, it also conveys an indirect attack, which can be defined as a passive-aggressive type of attack, an example of a kind of elegiac soft-power. The statement of the implausibility of a situation that we know is or will be in fact part of Ovid's experience is aggressive in any case. If we assume that Ovid is intentionally lying, this is quite a harsh attack against those he knows are trampling on his misfortune, even though conveyed with an indirect formulation: there is someone who is actively damaging Ovid, and both the poet himself and his readers know it. If we consider Ovid sincere, this statement breaks the rules of politeness anyway, because, again, the poet is setting expectations: by declaring it outside the realm of reality that someone can insult him in that position, he makes it inexcusable and thus implicitly creates his own world of what is acceptable and what is not, attacking and excluding those who might behave in this manner.³³⁴

The main point I want to make concerns continuity. Ovid's narrative representing his enemies varies in detail but proves consistent. Unbelievability and mockery aim at the same time at lamenting Ovid's fate by evoking pity in the reader and reinforcing the attack against the enemy. The couplet appears at the end of the poem, after Ovid has noticed that among the other poets he is the only one who has been harmed by his poetry, and therefore hopes that no Roman citizen will rejoice in his misery (569-70: *non igitur nostris ullum gaudere Quiritem / auguror, at multos indoluisse malis*). What Ovid is doing here is in fact rejecting for himself the destiny that he wishes upon Ibis: no Roman citizen will rejoice at his misery;

³³⁴ Cf. *Trist.* 2.213-20 where Ovid blames his relegation on the fact that Augustus was not able to find the time to read the *Ars* (and therefore understand that it did not bear any offence against him): controlling expectations can be also a way of criticising and influencing Augustus' behaviour, as we shall see in Chapter Four.

on the contrary, many will suffer with him. As happens in the *Ibis*, the collective and social dimension is crucial (the explicit reference to the Romans – *ullum ... Quiritem* – identifies those by whom Ovid wants to be recognised), and the contrast is between a reaction that is deserved and expected (compassion) and another one that is disruptive and therefore unexpected (joy).

While Ovid is directly speaking to Augustus to support his own claim for clemency, not only the emperor, but also the audience is called to judge on the poet's situation. Ovid is certainly seeking the readers' compassion in showing how he is the only one who is paying a price for art; however, by mentioning the citizens' hostility – and even joy toward his misery – he is indirectly reporting what he might, and actually already has, faced on top of being relegated: he is attacked by his own fellow citizens. Saying that he wishes that something will not happen, and that it would be actually unbelievable if it did, is therefore a way of reporting what has already happened, and this is an aggressive aim. The rest of Ovid's exile poetry (as we have seen with *Trist.* 1.8, and as we are about to see again) shows that Ovid is facing enemies and the unbelievable has happened. This is certainly a way of lamenting his own condition and seeking empathy from the readers, but the goal of his communication goes beyond that and includes an attack against his enemies.

This is not a lament: *Tristia* 3.11

The scope of the attack conveyed by what is formally a lament is reinforced in *Trist.*

3.11.21-6:

In causa facili cuiuis licet esse deserto
et minimae uires frangere quassa ualent.
Subruere est arces et stantia moenia uirtus:
quamlibet ignaui praecipitata premunt.
non sum ego qui fueram. Quid inanem proteris umbram?

quid cinerem saxi bustaque nostra petis?

In an easy cause anybody may be eloquent;
the slightest strength is enough to break what is already shattered.
To overthrow citadels and upstanding walls is valour;
the worst of cowards press hard upon what is already fallen.
I am not who I was. Why do you trample on an empty shadow?
Why attack with stones my ashes and my tomb?

While recognising the strong link between this elegy and the *Ibis*, scholarship still tends to emphasise the character of lament of *Trist.* 3.11 as opposed to the future aggressive reaction in the *Ibis*:³³⁵ if the aggressive character of the elegy is recognised, it is also attributed to the enemy, and not to the poet, who is seen here as responding with lament, whereas later (in the *Ibis*) he will attack. I argue that the aggressive aim in *Trist.* 3.11 belongs to the poet, and that the account of the enemy's wrongful behaviour is part of the poet's argument in this context. In the *Tristia* it is common that Ovid tries to defend himself in front of his readers; instead, the trial (*causa*) to which the couplet 21-2 refers is a prosecution charge, not a defence. Ovid contrasts the easy trial attempted by those who hit the one who has already been beaten – again using space to embody the relationship between characters that he wants to achieve – with the valorous mission of those who try to tear down what is solid (23). The image of 21-2 is reinforced first by 24 and then by 26-7: those who trample on those who are down (notice the insistence on proxemics) are cowardly, or ignoble,³³⁶ but also sacrilegious (as represented³³⁶ by the act of stoning Ovid's tomb).

³³⁵ See Galfré 2023, 135 associating the enemy with the emperor, stating the correspondence between his refusal to end his rage and the poet's determination not to end his lament.

³³⁶ *OLD*² s.v. *ignauus*, 3; 4.

If the sacrilegious man is explicitly the enemy – who is therefore also one of those who make easy accusations and should be called *ignavi* –, we should consider Ovid’s implicit reference to himself as the one who tries to tear down what is well established like strongholds and walls, and this is an attack. Pushing this argument further, we should also note that this is an attack delivered within the framework of elegy and with a thematic ramification within the genre. Ovid’s profession of powerlessness (25: *quid inanem proteris umbram?*) should not lead us to conclude that he is merely lamenting his condition. The adjective *inanis* also appears in *Ibis* 152, again with reference to Ovid (in this case his body, which could be given to a meagre pyre, among other options: *et dare plebeio corpus inane rogo*) and connotes the physical emptiness of Ovid’s dead body, but also its uselessness, now that the poet is only a ghost.³³⁷

This may look like nothing more than a lament, but I argue that it should be seen as part of a wider pattern that involves attack in two ways. First, because the portrayal of the enemy as acting cruelly against a helpless target is done for the benefit of an audience and attacks the enemy’s good reputation in his own society (positive impoliteness); second, because it belongs to the same pattern as a line like *Ibis* 30 (*quod licet et misero, debitus hostis ero*): Ovid’s condition as an outcast and a miserable man is the premise and the ground of his vengeful attack and this is a fundamental elegiac device for the poet to convey his message. As I tried to show in Part One, this pattern also involves Roman love elegy. The act of stoning a tomb

³³⁷ OLD² 945, s.v. *inanis* 1; 13.

depicted in *Trist.* 3.11.25 has a crucial place in the attacks against the *lena* in Propertius 4.5.75-8.

Trist. 3.11 offers two main themes of invective that are present in the *Ibis*: lack of compassion in the form of trampling on (plus the additional theme of stoning, which is peculiar of the *Tristia*), and the enemy as an outcast from society. In this latter case especially, I argue that the reference to Hector interacts with *Ibis* 165-6, where Ovid predicts Ibis' body to be dragged with a hook in his bones in front of the applauding crowd. References to cases of deprivation of compassion appear again at lines 37-8, where Ovid states that his misfortune might sound worthy of crying to an oppressor, and yet the enemy only still thinks that it is not enough (*carnifici fortuna potest mea flenda uideri: / et tamen est uno iudice mersa parum*). In this context, the definition of the enemy as *unus iudex* does not only generically refer to his merciless attitude in considering Ovid's misery not heavy enough, but could also incorporate its legal value.³³⁸

The single judge, *unus iudex*, was the judge who assessed the cases alone, or with the help of some *assessore*s, and he could also be the emperor. If he was not the emperor or the *praefectus urbi*, the single judge usually assessed private cases.³³⁹ I will come back to this later in the second section, the one addressing the figure of Augustus, but what should be emphasised now is first the strong aggressive aim conveyed by the reference to the legal context: there is not only lament for his fate, in Ovid's words, but also a harsh attack against the enemy,

³³⁸ *OLD*² 1074 s.v. *iudex*, 1. See also Berger 1991, 518 s.v. *iudex*. On the legal concept and role of the single judge (*unus iudex*) in court see Bablitz 2007.

³³⁹ Bablitz 2007, 51-2.

because what goes to court is inevitably broken;³⁴⁰ second, that Ovid and his enemies are inevitably connected at a deep literary level: in *Ibis* 165-6 Ibis is represented as dragged by the same figure, *carnifex*, before the applauding crowd and the deprivation of compassion is, as we saw, a crucial element of the attack against the enemy in the poem. Finally, in *Trist.* 2.95-6 Ovid recalls when he served as a judge in private conflicts, thus operating like the *unus iudex* whom he mentions in *Trist.* 3.11. Again, the pattern of references is tangled: portraying the enemy as *unus iudex* reinforces the links between Ovid and the enemy. At the same time, the portrayal as a judge suggests the link between the enemy and Augustus, but also between Augustus and Ovid himself. This is not a direct correspondence between two characters, but a tangled interweaving between three figures competing for power, between reality and poetry.

Furthermore, *Trist.* 3.11.21-6 reinforces the idea that the connection between the *Ibis* and the rest of Ovid's exile poetry should not be understood in terms of opposition (the *Ibis* brings the attack that the *Tristia* anticipates in terms of lament): the *Ibis* takes on an attack already present in the *Tristia* and intensifies it. Ovid consistently uses space and gesture to describe both the enemy's behaviour and his own (cf. *Ibis* 29-30), using this communication not only to present to his audience his own lament, but also to attack his enemy before them. By using the opposition between the term *uirtus* and the adjective *ignauus*, Ovid again sets expectations about what is right and wrong, acceptable and unacceptable. This act of linguistic impoliteness, which in my view includes both negative and positive impoliteness

³⁴⁰ On the incompatibility of court with affective relationships in Ovid see later in this section and Ziogas 2021, 270-2.

because it attempts to interfere with the addressee's freedom of action in order to create the conditions for his acceptance in society, is directed not only at the enemy, but also at the audience: this is how those who behave like that will be regarded.

Lament as an act of protest: *Tristia* 4.9

That lament can be in continuity with invective is something that *Tristia* 4.9 states quite clearly:

Nostra per immensas ibunt praeconia gentes,
quodque querar, notum, qua patet orbis erit. 20
(...)
Trans ego tellurem, trans altas audiar undas,
et gemitus uox est magna futura mei.
Nec tua te sontem tantummodo saecula norint: 25
perpetuae crimen posteritatis eris.

My herald-call shall pass through limitless peoples,
my complaint shall be known wherever the world extends.
(...)
Across the land, across deep waters I shall be heard,
and mighty shall be the cry of my lament.
Not alone your own age shall know you guilty;
to everlasting posterity you shall be a criminal.

(*Trist.* 4.9.19-20; 23-6)

What will be heard everywhere in the world and in any time, in Ovid's words, is his lament (*querar*, 20), his moaning (*gemitus*, 24). However, the content of this lament is stated clearly: the enemy's fault (*crimen*, 26). Is this not the concept that underlies the *Ibis*? A lament that conveys an attack? Lament and invective are not necessarily separated nor in opposition in Ovid's own statements inside his works that are *not* the *Ibis*. In this sense the connection with the *Ibis* of an elegy whose link to the poem is recognised,³⁴¹ becomes part of a pattern that does not oppose the

³⁴¹ Luck 1977, 163; Gatti 2023, 413-33.

two works based on the idea that the *Ibis* develops in the form of attack something that the *Tristia* announced in the form of lament, nor does it lead to difficult discussion on chronology and identity (and identification). This helps to place the *Ibis* within Ovid's exilic corpus in the sense of continuity: the poem uses the same elegiac approach as the collections of elegies, only with different proportions of the elements that are part of elegy; neither lament nor invective, however, are incidental elements in any of Ovid's works from exile.

Beyond retribution: *Tristia* 5.8

In *Trist.* 5.8 the act of trampling on Ovid's misfortune is linked to the possible future retribution of the enemy:

Quae tibi res animos in me facit, inprobe, curae
 casibus insultas quos potes ipse pati?
 Nec mala te reddunt mitem placidumque iacenti 5
 nostra quibus possunt inlacrimare ferae.
 (...)
 Exigit a dignis ultrix Rhamnusia poenas.
 Imposito calcas quid mea fata pede? 10

What stirs your spirit up against me, shameless man? Why
 do you mock misfortunes which you yourself may suffer?
 My woes do not soften you and placate you towards one who is prostrate –
 woes over which wild beasts might weep
 (...).
 Avenging Rhamnusia exacts a penalty from those who deserve it.
 Why do you set your foot and trample upon my fate?
 (*Trist.* 5.8.3-6; 9-10)

The recurrence of the idea of trampling on, insulting or mocking, conveyed by the verb *insulto*, brings back all the implications in terms of the exercise of power: ridicule is a strategy of linguistic impoliteness aimed at showing the speaker's

relative power.³⁴² In this case, Ovid shows the enemy's display of power over him just to reverse it: the theme of fickle fortune is particularly evident here. Rather than focusing on the direct link between Ovid and the enemy – which also means to involve Ibis –, I want to emphasise the aggressive, but also elegiac nature of the theme of instability of fortune. As I argued in Part One, instability of fortune is one of the threats that the poet uses against the rival or the *uir* in love elegy.³⁴³ Now we can see that it has a further specific meaning within Ovid's exile poetry. Its aggressive character is conveyed by the attack it makes on the target's sense of freedom of movement and will (negative impoliteness), because it implies the uncertainty of the future.

Once again I think that it is clear that these elegies addressed to former friends and enemies do more than lament Ovid's fate and pave the way for the "real" attack of the *Ibis* (which Ovid himself presents, however, as a first attack, to be followed by a proper one, as he announces at the very end of the *Ibis*: 443-4): they do convey an attack that is part of Ovid's communication to his audience. In this communication Ovid plays with compassion as a tool to cast himself in a powerful or in a powerless position. This constant switching of roles runs through the genre of elegy and finds its highest expression in Ovid. In *Trist.* 5.8 Ovid is in a subdued position, trampled on by an enemy who ignores how fickle fortune is. Here the power is in the end of the enemy, who is physically in a dominant position, with

³⁴² Culpeper 1996, 358.

³⁴³ In this respect, see also the reference to beggars in *Trist.* 5.8.13-14 and its possible connections to the old *puella* in Tibullus 1.6.77-84, who is punished for her infidelity with an old age of begging and deprivation of compassion. This is relevant in the *Ibis*, both in the wish that Ibis will end up exiled and poor, begging for food (113-14), and in the presence of Irus in the catalogue of myths, who also appears in *Trist.* 3.7.42 in association with Croesus, who again is used as an example of fickle fortune in *Pont.* 4.3.37.

proxemics embodying the power dynamic. At the same time, the reference to fickle fortune is an act of linguistic impoliteness exercised by the poet and based on knowledge. Although defeated, the poet retains a form of superiority over the enemy, given by his superior knowledge of the future, and uses this knowledge as a form of threat.

Stigmatising the impossible: *Epistulae ex Ponto* 4.3

The final case I want to address, from *Pont.* 4.3.27-8, combines the concept of unbelievability, which we have seen in *Trist.* 2.571-2, with that of fickle fortune, from 5.8:

Vix equidem credo: sed et insultare iacenti
te mihi nec uerbis parcere fama refert.

I can scarce believe it – but rumour says that you are even mocking me
in my fall, that you do not spare words.³⁴⁴

(*Pont.* 4.3.27-8)

While this elegy is often interpreted as a lament for the betrayal of a former friend and an attempt to change his mind and win back his friendship,³⁴⁵ the connection with the *Ibis* in the interpretation of this recurring image is one of the – various, as we will see – elements that might suggest that the presence of an attack should be more strongly emphasised. The well-acknowledged mortifying nature of the representation can well be interpreted as part of the trend of “lament”, which is

³⁴⁴ I translate *insultare* as “mocking”, to highlight this specific nuance of the meaning. The Loeb edition has “insulting”.

³⁴⁵ See Helzle 1989, 87-90; Galasso 2008, 302-3.

clearly evident in the two collections of elegies.³⁴⁶ The visual representation reinforces the image of a compassion-worthy Ovid, while also depicting his former friend as disrespectful and aggressive in his use of space too. As an extension of Ovid's criticism, we should consider the reference to the implausibility of his friend's behaviour (*uix equidem credo*), which has been well acknowledged as a sign of "the outrageous nature of whatever is called into doubt", to put it in Helzle's words,³⁴⁷ the union of the verbs *insultare*, both in the sense of "to jeer" and "to jump up and down", and *iacere*, which is linked to the description of exile as death, has been interpreted as aimed at presenting "a situation of utter humiliation".³⁴⁸ However, the expression *uix equidem credo* also conveys the same aggressive implication that I highlighted through a pragmatic analysis in *Trist.* 2.571-2. To reinforce the aggressive aim is the feature of fickle fortune, which is a theme coming from Greek tragedy and passing through Hellenistic literature and then Horatian thought,³⁴⁹ but whose aim should not be seen as only directed at arousing compassion:³⁵⁰ as we have discussed, mentioning the sudden changes of fortune is a form of threat and at the same time a display of superiority by the poet over the target. To sum up, the construction of a compassion-worthy character is not necessarily in contrast with the possibility of an aggressive aim: it can be part of it. This is consistent with and helps to explain the other aggressive parts that can be found in the elegy.

³⁴⁶ According to Helzle 1989, in *Pont.* 4.3. Ovid both "exploits this notion of elegy as a lament" (86) and tries "to appeal to his friend not to abandon him; this he does by arousing his pity" (87). For a reading of the elegy as less focused on personal invective, see Galasso 2008, 303

³⁴⁷ Helzle 1989, 97.

³⁴⁸ Helzle 1989, 97.

³⁴⁹ Helzle 1989, 89.

³⁵⁰ As it is in Helzle 1989, 89.

At 19-20 Ovid presents two possible interpretations of his former friend's deceitful behaviour: *siue fui numquam carus, simulasse fateris: / seu non fingebas, inueniere leuis*, "if I was never dear to you, you confess pretence; if you were not feigning, you will be proved faithless". While this elegy is generally considered highly emotional,³⁵¹ the use of legal language in fact lowers the use of emotionally charged arguments in favour of a much more aggressive and cold expression. From this perspective, the comparison between this passage and *Ibis* 19-20 shows how aggressiveness has a role in Ovid's exile poetry other than the *Ibis*. Legal terms are remarkably present in this elegy: *simulasse, fateris, fingebas, inueniere*. To simulate (*simulasse, fingebas*) is one fundamental rhetorical technique for the orator, who should learn how to simulate to persuade a jury of his position.³⁵² *Fateor* is the verb of admission in the court of law.³⁵³ *Inuenio* is verb of finding the truth (cf. *Rhet. Her.* 2.10), to find out the identity of someone,³⁵⁴ and therefore here to find the former friend guilty of being inconsistent.

In addressing the possible oratorical implications of the elegy, Martin Helzle interprets it as a form of *conquestio* (from the first word of the elegy, *conquerar*):³⁵⁵ Ovid's aim is gaining back his former friend's favour by inspiring pity in him.³⁵⁶ The final point of Helzle's analysis is to sustain that "Ovid is therefore appealing to someone who was his friend, rather than attacking somebody as he does in the

³⁵¹ Helzle 1989, 87; Galasso 2008, 303.

³⁵² See Ziogas 2021, 266 on the relationship between this legal approach and Ovid's precepts in the *Ars amatoria*, where he advises women to be hurt and cry to provoke pity in a man (*Ars* 3.677-80).

³⁵³ See Berger 1991, 406 s.v. *confessio*. See Ziogas 2021, 82 on Ovid instructing the mistress never to confess her crimes.

³⁵⁴ *OLD*² 1052 s.v. *inuenio*, 5.

³⁵⁵ Cicero describes *conquestio* in *De inuentione* 1.106.

³⁵⁶ Helzle 1989, 86-7.

Ibis".³⁵⁷ This is the same conclusion reached by Galasso, who understands the core meaning of the letter to be Ovid's thought on the instability of fortune, rather than a personal invective.³⁵⁸

I argue that focusing on the role of legal vocabulary in the context of a comparison between *Pont.* 4.3 and the *Ibis* shows how Ovid's aim in this elegy could be not to raise pity but to attack an enemy instead. As we have already seen, the reference to a legal environment is in contrast with the idea of friendship. What happened in *Trist.* 4.9.3-6 recurs here too: there cannot be friendship in court. One further point recurs from the roles that the characters play in this context. If the former friend is the defendant, Ovid is explicitly the prosecutor, and not the judge as he was in *Trist.* 4.9.3-6. And yet, playing with the aim of the prosecutor, which is to see his accusation prevail, Ovid does attempt to influence the judge. But who can the judge be, if there are no more characters in the elegy? I argue that the judge is outside of the poem, and it is the audience.

The poet's communicative use of poetry shows the implicit presence of an audience, who is not relevant only to the context of lament (Ovid moans his own misfortune for the benefit of his readers and to achieve their sympathy): contemporary and future reader are also called to judge – and condemn – his enemies. Additionally, Ovid's aim is again to set an example. The elegiac poet has laws and rules about what is acceptable behaviour and what is not. His attempt to achieve the public condemnation of his former friend is a way of imposing a view of the world: a set of values and rules of which the poet himself is the source and

³⁵⁷ Helzle 1989, 87.

³⁵⁸ Galasso 2008, 303: "Prevale poi non tanto l'invettiva personale, quanto la riflessione sull'incostanza della sorte".

the guarantor. Therefore, Ovid will not be explicitly the judge in this case, but is this not similar to the role of Augustus, who retains the presence of courts and judges, but is himself the source of law? Once again, the roles overlap, and this dynamic will reach its peak and its clearest demonstration in the *Ibis*.

Conclusions: lament and invective as a spectrum

Lament and invective have traditionally been seen as two separate and antithetical features. This section argued against this assumption and for the idea that lament and invective, in Ovid's elegies from exile, are in continuity with each other, co-present, and can ultimately embody each other. The invectives in the *Ibis* contain lament, and Ovid's sorrow in the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* conveys an aggressive character. Lament and invective are part of the narrative that Ovid constructs, and he constructs this narrative for the benefit of various addressees; one, analysed in this section, is the present and future audience. The audience is made to experience the visual and physical representation of the misdeeds of the enemies and their punishment. The specific communication aimed at the audience forces it into the role of judge of the enemies' crime, or of public jury, when the poet himself assumes the power of justice.

There is, finally, one central figure in Ovid's exile poetry that has only been hinted at in this section: Augustus. My argument ends up challenging the view that the enemies in Ovid's exile poetry, and *Ibis* in particular, can be identified with Augustus. However, it is not the aim of this thesis to challenge this identification or to propose an alternative one. My point is to show that the enemy is a character

taken from the elegiac genre with a specific role. This does not mean that Augustus has nothing to do with it. On the contrary, what I want to address in the next section is how the presence of an enemy speaks of, and to, the emperor.

Chapter Four

The outcast and the *princeps*

Introduction: more than a character

The presence of Augustus in Ovid's elegy cannot be reduced to that of simply one of many characters that feature there. Not a king, not a tyrant, not just any man, but the first among men, the *princeps* Augustus is the first among the readers and the most important of them, too, but also part of the tangled pattern of references that shapes Ovid's approach to elegy. Augustus is the central figure of all of Ovid's attempts to communicate through his poetry, but he is also a character created by Ovid's poetic art and within his poetic world. What I present in this section is an analysis of the presence of Augustus *as a character* in the *Ibis*, looking at how Ovid relates to him. More specifically, I see Augustus as an elegiac character, whose role can be explained in terms of the relationship between characters as we understood it when we looked at love elegy in Chapter Two. His relationship to Ovid follows two paths: first, I present Augustus as the main implicit addressee in the *Ibis* – as he is in the rest of the elegiac corpus;³⁵⁹ second, I will show how Ovid seems to assume the language, gestures and communication in general that normally belong to Augustus, replicating in his dealing with *Ibis* the relationship between himself and the *princeps*, only with the roles reversed.

³⁵⁹ See Drucker 1977, Claassen 1987 (and 2016 on Ovid appropriating the Augustan discourse), Gaertner 2005.

Despite his fundamental role in Ovid's exile poetry, Augustus' presence in the *Ibis* is unusually faint. Apart from the well-known reference in lines 23-8, Augustus does not appear in the poem – and even in those famous lines he is never explicitly named.³⁶⁰ As I have already pointed out, the main focus of contemporary scholarship on the *Ibis* in this respect has been the possibility that Augustus was the direct recipient of the poem: in other words, the possibility of identifying Ibis as Augustus.³⁶¹ Building on those, like Williams, who see Ibis as the embodiment of various enemies,³⁶² my approach focuses on the figures who appear in Ovid's poetry – in this case Ibis, Augustus and Ovid himself – as literary characters defined by the relationships they establish with one another.

While Augustus remains the centre of Ovid's exile poetry as long as he lives, the semiotic relationship between his character and that of Ovid changes constantly. This also happens in the *Ibis*. The elegiac characterisation of Augustus varies: he is the object of desire for the poet, but he is also criticised, and sometimes attacked as if he were an enemy. In Part One we have identified this switching pattern of references as a feature of elegy, which Ovid picks up and expands. In the *Ibis* this approach is pushed to its extreme – consistently with the extreme violence and even obsessive approach of the poem.³⁶³ The autobiographical element was a factor of lightness and playfulness in love elegy, making the readers feel as if the agonies of the poets-lovers did not really matter in the end. In Ovid's exile the autobiographical element becomes both crucial to the literary interpretation of the poems and a mark

³⁶⁰ See Schiesaro 2011, 82-3: "There can be little doubt in any reader's mind that *ille* must be the emperor, and yet, conspicuously, he is not named".

³⁶¹ Casali 1997, 103 and 107-8; Schiesaro 2011.

³⁶² Williams 1996, 19.

³⁶³ On Ovid's obsessive and maniac behaviour in the *Ibis* see Williams 1996, 121-9.

of their *grauitas*. Finally, Augustus, pursued, praised and criticised, is also challenged by the poet, whose poetic embodiment of the power of the ruler reaches the point where the elegiac dimension challenges the power of the *princeps*.

Ovid's relationship with Augustus is thus all-pervasive: he is the one to be pursued, persuaded, criticised, influenced – so he is someone *to whom* the poet wants to speak, directly and indirectly – but he is also the one whose power can be taken over by the poet. Speaking to Augustus is not the only way in which Ovid enacts his relationship with the *princeps*: Ovid as a poet usurps the role of Augustus as emperor. His communicative strategies mimic those of Augustus, presenting the poet's behaviour not only as that of a powerful figure, but as that of the *princeps*.

IV.1 Speaking to the *princeps*

This section deals with Ovid's layered communication to Augustus: I argue that just as Ovid's attacks on his enemies conceal an additional communication to his audience, they also conceal an additional communication to Augustus. The poet speaks indirectly to the *princeps* with different aims, blurring the lines between lament and attack and at the same time going beyond both: the direct attack on an enemy can imply both criticism of the emperor and an attempt to influence his behaviour, and in both cases the combination of lament and invective is used as a tool to achieve a result through poetic communication.

Ovid's implicit communication to Augustus serves two main purposes: first, Ovid's defence of his own poetry, and second, his criticism, which could sometimes be termed an attack on the *princeps*. As a result, when the poet is dealing with the

figure of the ruler, lament and attack are again not two separate aspects of Ovid's exilic poetry (as they are not in elegy in general): lament has a role in the *Ibis*, just as invective has a role in the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*.

Carmen inerme: a harmless attack?

Ovid begins a poem of invective by claiming harmless for his poetry (*Ibis* 1-6):

Tempus ad hoc lustris bis iam mihi quinque peractis
omne fuit Musae carmen inerme meae;
nullaque, quae possit, scriptis tot milibus, extat
littera Nasonis sanguinolenta legi;
nec quemquam nostri, nisi me, laesere libelli, 5
artificis periit cum caput Arte sua.

Up to this moment, after ten *lustra* have already passed for me,
the song of my Muse has always been unarmed;
and among the thousands of works not a letter
by Naso can be read that is stained with blood;
no one but me was harmed by my little books, 5
the life of the Artist died with his Art.

(*Ibis* 1-6)

In the definition of *carmen inerme* scholars usually see the premises of the attack: Ovid declares that his poetry has always been unarmed. Williams interprets "Ovid's protestation of innocence" in terms of "a strategic emphasis which disarms the reader right at the outset".³⁶⁴ Masselli refers to Ovid's previous innocence ("innocenza pregressa")³⁶⁵ as a means of presenting the subsequent attack as part of a "carmen iustum", written in self-defence in response to the enemy's first attack

³⁶⁴ Williams 1996, 37, also referring to the link between this passage and Prop. 4.6.31-2, on which see also La Penna 1957, 3-4.

³⁶⁵ Masselli 2002, 51.

against him³⁶⁶. For Schiesaro the reference to Ovid's innocence, reiterated in *Ibis* 8 with the mention of *candor*, and recalling the end of *Tristia* 2 (569-78), indicates that "Ovid's wish at 569-73 has not been granted and, specifically, his (poetic) *candor* – resurfacing at *Ib.* 8 – has failed to ensure him *gratia*".³⁶⁷

I build on these three different approaches, which show that the *Ibis* is linked to the collections of elegies and is part of a wider strategy on Ovid's part. If it is true that in this poem the expression anticipates and justifies the attack, however, one further level of interpretation can be added, which pertains to the communicative aim of the poem. I argue that Ovid is not only preparing his attack against Ibis. On the one hand, the poet is still defending himself and trying to obtain easier conditions of exile; on the other hand, his self-defence has the same ambiguous and potentially negative character against Augustus that it has in the collections of elegies.

My point is that the explicitly aggressive aim against the enemy in the *Ibis* that he disclaims for his earlier poetry does not necessarily mean that Ovid has stopped speaking to Augustus with the same communicative pattern that comes to light in the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*. The idea of a harmless poem (*carmen inerme*) should therefore also be related to another thematic field of Ovid's exile poetry: that in which Ovid questions whether his poetry is in itself worthy of punishment. The most prominent example of this argument is the catalogue of

³⁶⁶ Masselli 2002, 55: "la condizione di innocenza [...] sta per essere rinnegata, trovandosi il poeta in una situazione di legittima difesa, che [...] farà del suo *carmen* un '*carmen iustum*'".

³⁶⁷ Schiesaro 2011, 87. On the idea of being "unarmed" cf. the reference to Mars as *inermis* at the start of *Fasti* 3 (Fast. 3.7-10). As we shall discuss in Part Three, Ovid's claim to his role as *uates* in the *Ibis* recalls the project of the *Fasti* in a reversed use of aetiology as a means to both attack the enemy and retrieve the power of poetic knowledge.

literary works whose authors did not suffer any consequences for their erotic or ethically compromised content. This argument is again both defensive and aggressive, since it challenges Augustus' judgment, and rests on the basis of the difference between the author and his work, as Ovid explicitly states in *Trist.* 2.353-8:

Crede mihi, distant mores a carmine nostri:
uita uerecunda est, Musa iocosa mea.
Magnaque pars mendax operum est et ficta meorum: 355
plus sibi permisit compositore suo.
Nec liber indicium est animi sed honesta uoluptas
plurima mulcendis auribus apta feret.

Believe me, my morals are different from my poem:
my life is seemly, my Muse playful;
and a great part of my works is untrustworthy and made up;
it permitted more to itself than it did to the one who composed it.
Nor is a book evidence of the mind but a harmless pleasure:
it will offer many things suited to soothing the ears.

(*Trist.* 2.353-8)

As Ingleheart has shown, Ovid's defence here "is problematic for various reasons, not least because it is otiose", since the cause of the accusation against Ovid is his poetry, not his life.³⁶⁸ As if that were not enough, the ambiguity is compounded by the poetic assertion that his life is innocent, coming so close to the statement that his verse is not to be trusted.³⁶⁹ This problematic statement leads to the long catalogue of authors whose lives were not threatened by the morality expressed in their works (359-496) and then to the mimes (497-518), whose popular – but not exclusive – theme of adultery Ovid presents as characteristic of the genre; including the mimes that Augustus himself did not disdain to attend (511-4: *haec tu spectasti*

³⁶⁸ Ingleheart 2010, 285.

³⁶⁹ Ingleheart 2010, 288.

spectandaque saepe dedisti ... scaenica uidisti lentus adulteria). The aggressiveness of these lines against Augustus is striking: to put it in Ingleheart's words, "Augustus, himself corrupt, corrupts others". At the same time, while the explicit addressee *is* Augustus, the attack is conveyed through an apparently different mode of communication: Ovid's explicit intention is to defend himself, but what he also does is to criticise the *princeps*.

In the *Ibis* Ovid does not stop addressing Augustus nor does he abandon his complex communicative patterns. If an aggressive purpose can be discerned in the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*, why can a defensive purpose not be recognised in the *Ibis*? I argue that the idea of innocence, inherent in the adjective *inermis*,³⁷⁰ plays with the description of his life and poetry in *Tristia* 2. The concept of *uerecundia* (*Trist.* 2.353-4: *crede mihi, distant mores a carmine nostri – / uita uerecunda est, Musa iocosa mea*) involves an idea of restraint in relation to moral values,³⁷¹ but also an idea of being appropriate to a social context. As Kaster notes, "*uerecundia* animates the art of knowing your proper place in every social transaction and basing your behavior on that knowledge; by guiding behavior in this way, *uerecundia* establishes or affirms the social bond between you and others, all of whom (ideally) play complementary roles". In other words, *uerecundia* is the art of occupying the proper place in order for the actors involved in an interaction to play complementary roles, which makes the interaction successful. By defining his life as *uerencunda*, Ovid is stating something very specific: his life is not disruptive; on the contrary, it contributes successfully to society.

³⁷⁰ See *ThlL* VII.1, 1307,56-8: "de rebus, i. q., pacificus, innoxius (inefficax l. 59)" and *OLD*², 979 s.v. *inermis* 3 both citing *Ibis* 2.

³⁷¹ *OLD*² 2243 s.v. *uerecundus* 1.

Ovid's poetry is innocent too and this is not at odds with its being "playful" and "untrustworthy". On the contrary, these are all aspects of the same argument and interact with the juxtaposition of lament and invective: when the explicit aim is to defend his cause before the emperor, in the context of lamenting his condition, Ovid shows self-restraint and exposes Augustus' failings; when the explicit communicative context is an invective against another figure, he insists on a pathetic and harmless presentation of his poetry. But what does the innocence of Ovid's poetry and life have to do with Augustus' failings? If *uerecundus* is the one who knows his place in society and acts accordingly, in order to retain the social order, then not only was Augustus' punishment too harsh: it also hit someone who is actually safeguarding the moral values of society, and its very existence. Ovid's defending of the morals of his life and the playfulness of his poetry stigmatise Augustus' lack of judgment. Moreover, Ovid ultimately casts himself as the guarantor of values.

The definition of *carmen inerme* is therefore also directed at Augustus, not just at Ibis, and this proves to be the case if we look at the various ways in which it recalls the vocabulary of his descriptions of his poetry to Augustus in *Tristia* 2.³⁷² It is true that it can serve the purpose of justifying his attack and establishing the difference between himself and the enemy, but we must also acknowledge that it says something *to* Augustus and *about* Augustus and this "something" is potentially an attack against him, based on lamentation. The adjective *inermis*, which literally indicates the lack of arms,³⁷³ embodies the gestural representation of harmlessness.

³⁷² Cf. *Fast.* 3.7-10 on the portrayal of Mars unarmed, on which we shall come back in Chapter 6 regarding the aetiological aspect of the *Ibis*.

³⁷³ *ThlL* VII.1.1304.71: "*ab in et arma*".

As we have seen in 2.1, Ovid repeatedly creates representations that are expected to evoke pity in the reader. In the case of Ibis, these expectations are disappointed, for his pitiful figure's end is intended to provoke contempt in the reader; in this case, describing his own poetry, Ovid actually expects to provoke empathy, with two aims, according to the recipient. Speaking *to* Augustus, he implicitly criticises the decision to punish him with exile, because his poetry is harmless (and so Augustus rages against a defenceless poet); speaking *of* Augustus, he again tells his own story, his own version of the history for the benefit of his audience in Rome, which again is an implicit attack and display of power against the *princeps*.

Lack of judgment is therefore one of the main attacks which Ovid directs at Augustus. In the *Ibis* this critique comes through a specific characterisation of Ibis. We have already seen how compassion is a tool for Ovid to cast the enemy as his own Doppelgänger. However, Ibis is also presented as able to exercise power to a certain extent. Is this the kind of power that could overlap with that of Augustus? I would argue against this idea. It does appear, however, to be the kind of power which a man who has the trust of the *princeps* could exercise.

Qui debuerat subitas extinguere flammis: the trustworthy Ibis

We have already seen that in lines 19-20 Ibis is defined by Ovid as “the one who ought to have extinguished the sudden flames”:

Et, qui debuerat subitas extinguere flammis,
hic praedam medio raptor ab igne petit. 20

And he who should have extinguished the sudden flames
seeks plunder from the midst of the fire like a robber. 20

This very original representation of Ovid's ruin presents Ibis as a plunderer. Consequently, this portrayal is consistent with that of an informer (*delator*), who

would benefit from turning in a victim, as he would have gained their fortune.³⁷⁴ Ibis' alleged capacity to avoid Ovid's ruin, or help him in some way, does not concern his relationship with Ovid himself: it means that he could have had access to Augustus. The sudden flames – which could refer to Augustus' rage, as consequences of his thunderbolt, as his aggressive power is often represented – could very well refer to Ovid's abrupt downfall. The tense of *debuerat* is linked to the fact that Ibis was in the position to influence Augustus' behaviour. In other words, Ibis had a role in Ovid's ruin and to some extent had Augustus' trust, as I go on to argue.

This argument follows the steps of a broader narrative that emerges from Ovid's exile poetry: the questioning of Augustus' judgment. This is particularly evident in *Tristia* 2, where Augustus is first influenced by a fierce enemy (77-80):

A! ferus et nobis crudelior omnibus hostis,
 delicias legit qui tibi cumque meas,
 carmina ne nostris quae te uenerantia libris
 iudicio possent candidiore legi! 80

Ah! Savage and a crueller enemy to me than all,
 was whoever he was who read my erotic poems to you,
 so that such songs as venerate you in my books
 could not be read with a more sympathetic judgment. 80

As we have discussed in Part One, these lines share much of the vocabulary and imagery of love elegy: the adjective *ferus* (77), the cruelty of the lover (*crudelior*: 77), the rivals and enraged lovers characterised as enemies (*hostis*: 77), Ovid's

³⁷⁴ Rostagni 1920, 30, who considers Ibis to be an undefined and artificial figure, designed to have the conventional features of an informer and an ungrateful person: “Era una persona indistinta, inqualificata, fittizia; coi caratteri convenzionali del delatore e dell’ingrato”. La Penna focuses instead on the affective element and thinks that Ibis was probably a friend of Ovid's, as we have seen in 2.1 (La Penna 1957, 8).

poems called *delicias* for their erotic theme, possibly alluding to the sense of “love affairs” (78),³⁷⁵ which I think underlines the portrayal of the enemy as an elegiac character. Schiesaro discusses this passage in connection with the *Ibis* (the iambic features of which he emphasises):³⁷⁶ drawing a connection with the case of Gallus, as recounted in Suet. *Aug.* 66.2, he stresses the role of those who do not hesitate to show their subservience by attacking those who have lost the favour of the *princeps*; this dynamic benefits the *princeps*, who can hide behind this zeal and avoid acting personally against his opponents.³⁷⁷

The main point in terms of implicit communication to Augustus here concerns Augustus’ judgment. As we have seen, it appears that Augustus had Ovid’s love poetry read to him by someone else (consistent with Suetonius’ account that Augustus was in the habit of summoning readers: *Aug.* 78).³⁷⁸ This idea is then repeated in lines 237-8, where Ovid implies that Augustus punished him without having read his works.³⁷⁹ This is a severe attack on the prince, as it paints him as an unfair tyrant, and the argument that Ovid implicitly makes in the *Ibis* can be understood in the light of this aggressive communication in *Tristia* 2.

Returning now to *Ibis* 19-20, the lines against Ibis show an additional level of communication directed at Augustus with a strongly aggressive purpose. The portrayal of Ibis as someone who has the power to help the poet, but instead acts as a plunderer, is consistent with the characterisation of the *delator* and at the same

³⁷⁵ See Ingleheart 2010, 108 with further bibliography.

³⁷⁶ See Schiesaro 2001 and 2011.

³⁷⁷ Schiesaro 2011, 118.

³⁷⁸ Ingleheart 2010, 109.

³⁷⁹ See Ingleheart 2010, 109 and 225-6. On Ovid’s argument that if Augustus had read the *Ars*, he would not have punished it and that possibly he did not know the *Ars* particularly well, see Barchiesi 1994, 22 (=1997, 31).

time compounds Augustus' responsibility: it is reasonable to assume that Ovid portrays Ibis as someone who has access to the *princeps* and is trusted by him. The trust placed in Ibis is Ovid's first criticism against Augustus. The second level of criticism concerns the very fact that Augustus' regime encouraged denunciations: in 8 BC Augustus had issued a law, the *lex Iulia maiestatis*, which included rewards for the informers.³⁸⁰ This possibility was apparently averted in Ovid's case, because his punishment was *relegatio* and not *exilium*, and because his wife continued to fight for his property (see e.g. *Trist.* 5.14.15-16).

To sum up, then, despite the constant praise of Augustus' mercy, the *Ibis* is a criticism of the prince's judgment in choosing the people to trust, and, even more so, of his very political decisions. Ovid's statement that Ibis had the power to help him implies an additional, indirect assertion that there is someone who is subject to his influence: Augustus. In such a complex political framework, in order to gain and – which is more important but also more difficult to obtain – to retain power, Augustus had to delegate, and something slipped out of his control. The *Ibis* is part of a wider framework of argument: between the lines of apparent lament (in the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*) and between the lines of attack against the enemy (in the *Ibis* and the relevant elegies of the collections) lies a pattern of criticism of the prince's shortcomings.

Publica damna: the trustworthy Ibis is a danger to the community

³⁸⁰ See Petraccia 2014, 14 on this and in general on the figure of the *delator* and the distinction from that of the *index*. On *delatores* see also Berger 1991, 340 s.v. *accusatio*; 489 s.v. *delatores*; Rutledge 1999; Ros Gil 2021. On the complex interpretation in the system of rewards concerning *delatores* see Lintott 2023. On the *maiestas* laws under Augustus and Tiberius (through Seneca's *Controuersiae*) see now Leigh 2025.

Ovid provides very specific information about the biography of Ibis. However, because this information is symbolically charged, scholars have interpreted it either as a sign of the fictional nature of Ibis,³⁸¹ or as a possible indication of his real identity:³⁸²

Natus es infelix, ita di uoluere, nec ulla
 commoda nascenti stella leuisue fuit. 210
 non Venus adfulsit, non illa Iuppiter hora,
 Lunaque non apto Solque fuere loco.
 Nec satis utiliter positos tibi praebuit ignes
 quem peperit magno lucida Maia Ioui.
 Te fera nec quicquam placidum spondentia Martis 215
 sidera presserunt falciferique senis.
 Lux quoque natalis, ne quid nisi triste uideres,
 turpis et inductis nubibus atra fuit.
 Haec est, in fastis cui dat grauis Allia nomen,
 quaeque dies Ibin, publica damna tulit. 220

You were born ill-fated, as the gods intended, and no
 star was favourable or propitious at your birth. 210
 At that time, neither Venus nor Jupiter shone,
 and the Moon and the Sun were not in the right place.
 He, whom Maia birthed to the great Jupiter,
 did not offer you fires usefully positioned.
 Fierce stars, which promise nothing peaceful, influenced you: 215
 that of Mars and that of the old man bearing the scythe.
 Even the day of your birth was an ugly day, dark because of
 the gathered clouds, so that you would see nothing but evil things.
 This is the day to which the grave Allia gives its name in the calendar,
 and the day that brought Ibis to life brought destruction to the people.

(*Ibis* 209-20)

³⁸¹ Housman 1920, 316. Williams 1996 discusses the section as part of a progressively more evident process of delusion: “Such creatures exist only in the darker recesses of the imagination, which is of course where Ovid fathers his own unnatural monstrosity” (74) and “as the catalogue begins, Ovid’s self-delusion that he is the harbinger of vatic truth is but the latest in a long series of vengeful gestures which are as inconsistent as they are practically futile” (75).

³⁸² La Penna 1957, XIII considers it reasonable to believe that Ibis is African (also on the basis of line 501) and refutes the idea that Ovid’s claim about his birth on the day of the defeat by the Allia is necessarily a sign that Ibis is not a real figure. Schiesaro 2011, 124-9 discusses Ibis’ ill-omened birth in the context of his identification with Augustus.

These lines have been linked to the figure of Augustus, but, again, in the context of a possible identification between Ibis and the prince.³⁸³ Schiesaro points out that “both the unusual reference to the dies Alliensis and the other negative details which Ovid volunteers about Ibis’ ominous birth suggest a reversal of topoi usually employed in the celebration of the emperor”.³⁸⁴ In addition, he notes that “equating Ibis’ birthdate with the memory of one of the most devastating Roman defeats reinforces the suspicion that more than a mere turncoat friend is at stake here”,³⁸⁵ since not even public enemies like Mark Anthony had received a comparable treatment in the sources.³⁸⁶ The reference to the defeat on the river Allia, on the 18th of July 390 BC, when the Romans were defeated by the Senones (but also when the Fabii were killed on the river Cremera), which led to the sacking of the city of Rome, was marked as *dies nefastus* in the Roman calendar.³⁸⁷

Ovid builds on a use of astrology that in fact began with Julius Caesar. As Green notices, it is the appearance of the comet during Caesar’s funeral games (July 44 BC) that marks a turning point in the appreciation of astrology in Rome.³⁸⁸ Before Caesar, astrology was an art which posed major issues and clashed with the Roman approach to religion. It was considered something to benefit the individual, rather than the state.³⁸⁹ Augustus is the one who makes an effective use of astrology in his regime.³⁹⁰ In the *Ibis*, astrology appears with the function which it holds from

³⁸³ Again Schiesaro 2011, 124-9, with further bibliography.

³⁸⁴ Schiesaro 2011, 124.

³⁸⁵ Schiesaro 2011, 127.

³⁸⁶ Schiesaro 2011, 127.

³⁸⁷ La Penna 1957, 43. On Ibis’ birthday see also Williams 1996, 73-5; Hinds 2005 with the definition of the *Ibis* as “another Ovidian anti-genethliakon” (205); Klodt 2007, pointing out that, in addition to Ibis’ birthday, the beginning of the year (*Iani Kalendae*) becomes “der zweite jour fixe für die jährliche Verfluchung” (“the second fixed date for the annual curse”): 140 note 96.

³⁸⁸ Green 2011, 130-2; Green 2014, 151-72.

³⁸⁹ Green 2011, 130.

³⁹⁰ See Green 2014, 97-108.

Caesar on, but instead of indicating a good omen, it corroborates and stigmatises the inherent evilness of the enemy. In this way, we can see a new, different association in our tangled pattern of references: Ibis becomes a double of Augustus. The reference to an ill-omened birth, disregarded by the gods (209-18), and associated with a date that symbolises the ruin of Rome, suggests the characterisation of an *anti-Augustus*: not someone who is destined to benefit the community, but someone who is destined to ruin it.

Now does this mean that Ibis is in the end Augustus? In my opinion the idea of a direct correspondence should be resisted. This presentation of Ibis is meant for Augustus to read. By building on the idea that Augustus is a privileged addressee of these lines, Ovid's message must reach him indirectly. The association of Ibis with *publica damna*, harm to the community, is a clearly disproportionate definition for a personal enemy.³⁹¹ It necessarily implies an association with power. This is a significant attack against Augustus and against his management of power, but the attack is not conveyed by the direct association between Ibis and Augustus. In other words, Ovid does not attack Augustus under the name of Ibis: in this specific point Ovid attacks Augustus through the embodiment of an evil and tyrannical use of power which Ibis represents.

The defeat of the Allia is considered to be "one of the most dramatic episodes in Roman history"³⁹² and, although it is believed that the sources have exaggerated the extent of the disaster that followed the sack,³⁹³ this exaggeration nevertheless proves the importance of the event in the collective memory of the Romans. The

³⁹¹ Schiesaro 2011, 126-7.

³⁹² Cornell 1990, 302.

³⁹³ Cornell 1990, 307. The part played by Camillus, who appears in the *scholia in Ibin ad 217* (see La Penna 1959, 21), has been demonstrated to be untrustworthy (see Cornell 1990, 306).

association of the birth of Ibis with this event reveals a peculiarity: it is linked to an event that is a national misfortune shared by all Romans. At once Ovid expresses his power as *uates* by recalling the importance of a history of origin – Ibis’ birth and its link to a crucial and unfortunate date for Rome – and claiming again that role not through a history of joy, but through a history of ruin.³⁹⁴ Poetry and attack are programmatically united.

At the same time, this unfortunate condition seems to have a “personal” character.³⁹⁵ Both the adjectives *infelix* and *tristis* are part of the vocabulary that Ovid uses to describe his own condition as an exile. And while both adjectives are used in the *Ibis* in the sense of being “ill-omened”,³⁹⁶ they often convey a deeply emotional character when referred by Ovid to himself, which I think should be taken into account when interpreting these lines.

An exemplary case comes from the very first book of the *Tristia*. In *Trist.* 1.1.4, Ovid defines the book itself as *infelix*: it appears as miserable as the book of an exile should be:

Vade, sed incultus, qualem decet exulis esse.
infelix, habitum temporis huius habe!

Go, but go unadorned, as becomes the book of an exile;
in your misfortune wear the garb that befits these days of mine.

(*Trist.* 1.1.3-4)

³⁹⁴ See Hinds 2023 and his definition of these lines as “zombie *Fasti*”.

³⁹⁵ The idea of a birth connected with tragic episodes also contributes to the tight connection between Ovid and his enemy. In *Trist.* 4.10.5-6, Ovid identifies his year of birth (43 BC) with the tragic death of both the consuls, Aulus Hirtius and Vibius Pansa, in the context of the Battle of Mutina (Hirtius died on the battlefield, Pansa a few days later). Although this is a specific episode of a wider context of conflict, the death of both consuls in the same occasions had broad resonance in the Roman memory. On *Trist.* 4.10 and this matter see Gatti 2022, 442 and 456-7.

³⁹⁶ See *ThlL* VII.1.1363.5-19 s.v. *infelix*: “de iis, quae mala portendunt”, mentioning *Ibis* 209; *OLD*² 2179 s.v. *tristis* 5b (not mentioning the *Ibis*).

These lines share with the *Ibis* the reference to pain and to a kind of ritual performance, which we have already seen at work in Chapter Three. The book should be unadorned (*incultus*), because that is what suits (*deceat*) the book of an exile, and *infelix*, because it should have the appearance that again is appropriate to its condition. This relationship between the feeling of emotions and their display is once again fundamental in Ovid's exile poetry, and it reaches the *Ibis*. *Ibis* is *infelix* because his birth is ill-omened, but this definition should also bring back the emotional connotation of the misery that *Ibis* should suffer, as Ovid repeatedly states in the poem (e.g. *Ibis* 117-22; 163-4; 205-8).

Again, an emotional connotation that is supposed to evoke compassion is instead located in a context that leads the reader to despise the subject and becomes a tool to attack. But to attack whom? *Ibis*, of course, but not *Ibis* alone. In the famous opening lines of *Tristia* 1.3 *tristissima* is the superlative used to describe the sight of the night in which Ovid left Rome, and the memory of which still makes him weep: *Cum subit illius tristissima noctis imago / qua mihi supremum tempus in urbe fuit* (1-2). At the same time, *tristia uerba* is the expression used in *Tristia* 2.133 to indicate the words with which Augustus condemned Ovid to exile, without a decree from the senate, but simply, as said, with his own words: *tristibus inuectus uerbis – ut principe dignum – / ultus es offensas, ut deceat, ipse tuas*: 133-4. A thread links Ovid, his enemy and the *princeps*. Firstly, the sinister signs linked to the day of *Ibis*' birth are as sinister as Augustus' words against Ovid, and as sad as the sight of the exile's last night in Rome. Secondly, Augustus, it turns out, is also an author of 'Tristia': words not of lament, but punishment.

The emotional element thus conveys an attack against Ibis, an attack that recalls Ovid's own experience, but also points to a political core: Ibis is a public danger (*publica damna*). Ovid's invective against Ibis becomes an attack on Augustus himself: it is not Ibis alone, then, who is attacked, but the *princeps* as well. Ibis is associated with a date shared by the Roman society as a public symbol of misfortune (*dies Alliensis*: 219). Ibis suffers, but unlike Ovid he does not deserve compassion. Ibis is a threat to Roman society itself. However, he is also someone who was influential enough to help Ovid in his misery. I argue that Ibis becomes a means of communication to Augustus and this additional communication conveys a critique: the people the *princeps* trusted more than Ovid are actually a danger to Roman society. The criticism is clear because Ovid would not need to criticise Augustus' ability to choose his people in order to defend himself. On the contrary, such a criticism contradicts both the explicit purpose of the collections of poems (to persuade his friends to speak to Augustus on his behalf and regain his favour) and of the *Ibis* (to attack an enemy who is particularly harsh towards the poet): in both cases, such a communication is completely inconsistent with an argument that points to Augustus' own negligence and, moreover, to what we could consider a genuine display of inadequacy to his role.³⁹⁷

IV.2 The poet as *princeps*?

³⁹⁷ Cf. *Trist.* 2.213-24 on how Augustus could not find time to read Ovid's poems, as oppressed as he was by the responsibilities of the Empire. On the interpretation of these lines and the – quite harsh – criticism they convey against Augustus see Ingleheart 2010, 207-15. Ciccarelli (2003, 166) identifies a juxtaposition between Ovid and Augustus as two 'exceptional' individuals: Augustus who heroically guards the empire and Ovid, the only elegiac poet accused of having transformed his disengagement from the public duty in a "didactics of adultery" ("didattica dell'adulterio"). For a pragmatic interpretation of the passage see Ursini – Salvatori 2024.

As we have seen in IV.1, the tangled pattern of references between Ovid, Augustus and the enemy leads to ambiguous, if not openly critical messages towards Augustus. Ovid's communication towards the *princeps* takes the form of an indirect presentation of the poet's expectations of the Augustan power. In this section I argue that this pattern of references ultimately provokes a competition for power between the poet and the *princeps*. By setting expectations of what is acceptable and what is not in his realm, Ovid ultimately casts himself as the powerful figure, whose role challenges, in the context of elegy, that of Augustus.

Part of this specific communication deals with the poet's ability to cast himself as the powerful figure. In this section I address the ways in which Ovid presents himself as a double of the *princeps* in the context of poetry, which results in a potential challenge to the power of the *princeps* himself. I specifically take into account two sides of power: mercy and punishment. These are the two ends of Ovid's own relationship to Augustus in his exilic poetry: he begs for and praises the prince's mercy, and he accepts or laments his punishment. This same relationship is at work when Ovid deals with his enemies and most evidently with Ibis.

A merciful *princeps*, a merciful poet

Coming to the *Ibis*, although Augustus is evoked by the famous lines 23-6, he is never explicitly named within the poem, as has been noted:³⁹⁸

Di melius, quorum longe mihi maximus ille est,
qui nostras inopes noluit esse uias.
Huic igitur meritas grates, ubicumque licebit, 25

³⁹⁸ Casali 1997, 107-8; Schiesaro 2011.

pro tam mansueto pectore semper agam.

Gods forbid! And for me the greatest of them all is he,
who did not want my journey to be destitute.
Therefore, wherever I can, I will always render due thanks 25
to him for such a merciful heart.

The reference to Augustus' *clementia* (*mansueto pectore*: 26)³⁹⁹ clearly places the *Ibis* in the same linguistic and political context as the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*, where the concept of the prince's mercy is crucial and frequently involved in Ovid's argument. *Clementia* is obviously a sign of superiority, maybe *the* sign of superiority, first because it can only be granted from someone holding a higher position to someone of lower status; second, because it belongs to the one who can own and transcend the idea of right and wrong: it denotes the one who can not only judge what is right and what is wrong, but also condone the wrong behaviour. In *Ibis* 25-6, as in other passages in the exile poems (e.g. *Trist.* 1.2.61, *mitissima Caesaris ira*), Ovid expresses gratitude to Augustus for the mercy he has already shown the poet by punishing him with lesser punishments. The expression of gratitude is clearly a form of humiliation, in pragmatic terms a threat to the speaker's face because, as a feature that is frequent in apologies and confessions, it again diminishes the speaker's position and in this case the humiliation is increased by the following sociological variables: firstly, social distance, as the relationship between Ovid and Augustus is obviously asymmetrical; secondly and consequently, the relative power of one part over the other; thirdly, what is called absolute ranking of imposition, that is the level of difficulty of the situation in which the communication is occurring in the relevant culture: in other words, Ovid is a Roman

³⁹⁹ *Mansuetus* is a word of Ovid's exile (*Trist.* 3.6.17; *Pont.* 4.5.27; *Ibis* 26): no occurrences can be found in his previous works (research through the online databases).

citizen punished with relegation, which makes his interaction with the *princeps* particularly difficult and dangerous.⁴⁰⁰

My point concerns the possibility of applying this model, which is clearly relevant for describing Augustus' power over Ovid, to an exhibition of power *by* Ovid, mimicking that of Augustus. As Miriam Locher has shown, there are a few points to be made about the relationship between language and power: first that "language is one of the dominant means through which power is exercised"; second that power is "*relational, dynamic and contestable*", so "it is constantly negotiated in and around relationships" and "negotiating power in interaction is thus part of how interactants shape and present their identity";⁴⁰¹ finally "power cannot be reduced to a variable that is supposed to reflect status (hierarchy/authority) differentials, because interactants (...) can exercise power although they have a comparably lower status".⁴⁰² The social variables that define the relationship between Ovid and Augustus do not exclude the possibility that a form of power is exercised by the poet.⁴⁰³

The *Ibis* is in fact presented as a lighter version of the real invective that is yet to come, starting with a focus on the opposition between iambus and elegy:

Prima quidem coepto committam proelia uersu, 45
non soleant quamuis hoc pede bella geri.

⁴⁰⁰ Brown – Levinson 1987, 74.

⁴⁰¹ Locher 2004, 37.

⁴⁰² Locher 2004, 208.

⁴⁰³ Cf. *Ibis* 27-8, where the Pontus is called as a witness of Ovid's praise of Augustus' mercy (*audiet hoc Pontus, faciet quoque forsitan idem / terra sit ut propior testificanda mihi*), and *Trist.* 4.9.19-26, where Ovid, conversely, evokes the landscape as a witness of his lament-attack. Ovid uses poetic communication to achieve a result. As his lament can convey an attack and become a means of denouncing the injustice suffered by the poet, so praise can influence the behaviour of the *princeps* by showing him how poetry can invoke the audience as a witness. Poetry is in fact a means to narrate, and therefore establish a reality (cf. *Prop.* 2.5.27-30 and *Ov. Am.* 3.12, where love poetry has the power to establish the reputation of the *puella*).

Utque petit primo plenum flauentis harenae
 nondum calfacti militis hasta solum,
 sic ego te nondum ferro iaculabor acuto,
 protinus inuisum nec petet hasta caput, 50
 et neque nomen in hoc nec dicam facta libello,
 teque breui qui sis dissimulare sinam.

I will begin this first battle with the metre with which I started, 45
 although words are not usually fought with this foot.
 And as the spear of the soldier, who is not yet inflamed by warrior passion,
 is first aimed at the soil, covered in yellow sand,
 so I will fire against you with a dart not yet sharpened,
 and the spear will not immediately hit your hateful head, 50
 and I will not reveal your name or your deeds in this little book,
 and, for a short time, I will allow you to pretend not to be who you are.

(*Ibis* 45-52)

The various and diverse interpretations of these lines point to the possible customs, usually with a military background, to which Ovid seems to refer.⁴⁰⁴ Williams highlights the “malicious ironic effect” the poet “strives for (...) by trying to intimidate through understatement, but the attempt has mixed results”.⁴⁰⁵ The value of Ovid’s argument, beyond the specific, possible real references that Williams introduces into the scholarly discussion, is the same path on which I want to take this analysis. Pushing the analysis further, I interpret the decision to write an elegiac poem and conceal the true identity of the enemy (51-2) as the exhibition of a merciful act: Ovid’s weapon is not aimed at the target (47-8), it is blunted (49-50). Ovid’s decision to conceal the enemy’s real name is a concession: Ovid will grant (*sinam*: 52) *Ibis* dissimulation.⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰⁴ One of them being the symbolic declaration of war that was traditionally performed at the temple of Bellona from the age of Pyrrhus (see La Penna 1957 registering the positions of Merkel and Lenz; Della Corte – Fasce 1986, 351). La Penna’s interpretation agrees with that of Salvagnio and Ellis, based on Cic. *De or.* 2.78.316: Ovid would announce the attack without performing it yet, as soldiers and gladiators do (La Penna 1957, 13).

⁴⁰⁵ Williams 1996, 15.

⁴⁰⁶ On dissimulation in this passage see Ursini 2021, 89-90.

Ovid appropriates an action that belongs to the ruler. The verb *sino* is the one used in *Tristia* 4.4.18 with reference to Iuppiter⁴⁰⁷ (here probably a figure for Augustus, but certainly presented as a parallel to the *princeps*, mentioned in the immediately preceding lines: 13-6)⁴⁰⁸, who infuses (*praebet*: 17) his power into the minds of the poets and grants the possibility of celebrating him to any poet who wishes (*Iuppiter ingeniis praebet sua numina uatum / seque celebrari quolibet ore sinit*: 17-8). At the very moment of his violent attack, the poet casts it as an act of mercy and therefore of power.

It is a demonstration of power not only because of the asymmetry of the relationship between the parties that is inherent in the concept of clemency, but also because it is a demonstration of control over events and this exhibition of power can take place because of the poetic context. The poetic environment of elegy is the one that allows this powerful use of language especially when the reality places the speaker in a powerless state and this happens within the framework of elegy: the idea that anticipation (the moment before the actual attack) is more important than fulfilment goes back to Ovid's *Amores*, and *Am.* 1.5 in particular, with its emphasis on the prelude to lovemaking.⁴⁰⁹ Ovid shows himself restraining his poetic capacity to attack, while actually performing a real attack: although elegy is the proper weapon to attack his enemy and what Ovid is doing is carrying out a specific elegiac

⁴⁰⁷ *Iuppiter ingeniis praebet sua numina uatum, / seque celebrari quolibet ore sinit.* Augustus' portrayal as Jupiter is topical in Ovid's exile poetry (cf. e.g. *Trist.* 2.33-4: *si, quotiens peccant homines, sua fulmina mittat / Iuppiter, exiguo tempore inermis erit*).

⁴⁰⁸ *Ipse pater patriae (quid enim est ciuilius illo?) / sustinet in nostro carmine saepe legi.*

⁴⁰⁹ See Williams 1996, 16; Ingleheart 2024, 98.

attack, he also presents it as an act of restraint, which is an intrinsic part of *clementia*.⁴¹⁰

The *Ibis* as an act of mercy

The characterisation of the *Ibis* as an exhibition of mercy is reinforced in the lines that follow those we have already discussed. In *Ibis* 53-4 (and the concept is reiterated at the end of the poem, at 643-4), the poet seems to threaten his enemy: if he continues his hostilities, an iambic poem will replace his elegies and carry out a “real” attack:

Postmodo, si perges, in te mihi liber iambus
tincta Lycambeo sanguine tela dabit.

Afterwards, if you continue, the outspoken iambic verse will give me
arrows tinged with the blood of Lycambes against you.

Ibis 53-4

Ovid does discuss the generic ambiguity of the poem. After recognising the anomaly of choosing elegy for an aggressive aim (*Ibis* 45-6), he explicitly differentiates the *Ibis* from the iambic poem that will due, should *Ibis* continue with his attacks.⁴¹¹ The very translation of the expression used by Ovid in this context, *liber iambus*, has been subject to dispute, between the two options of “iambic book”⁴¹² and “free iambus”.⁴¹³ I translate “outspoken iambus” to play with the combination of the two possible translations with “book” and “free”. At the core of iambic poetry is the idea of a poetry that exercises free speech and *liber* is also the

⁴¹⁰ On this Galfré 2023, 68-72.

⁴¹¹ On the genre of the *Ibis* in connection with Ovid’s experience of time in exile, including the literary prospect of the future iambic poem see Radiminski 2022.

⁴¹² Like this for example Krasne 2012.

⁴¹³ Like this for example the Loeb edition (“satire unrestrained”), Hawkins’ “unleashed *iambus*” (2014), but also the Italian translation “giambo libero” in Della Corte – Fasce 1991.

definition of the free citizen. Elegy is for Ovid the weapon of the outcast, of a man whose freedom has been limited, who speaks through those boundaries. As I shall explain further, Ovid's powerful statement is that writing the *Ibis* (and not an iambic poem) is already an act of mercy. The *Ibis* has boundaries, those of elegy. What awaits the enemy, should he keep harassing Ovid, is a free attack.

The mention of Lycambes serves as a reference to iambic poetry.⁴¹⁴ This seems to me a form of anticipation of the catalogue: Ovid builds a connection between his own poetry to Archilochus' iambic punishment against Lycambes, guilty of promising his daughter to the poet and then of breaking his word. The reference to Lycambes' blood is motivated by the common belief that Lycambes was driven to suicide by the violence of Archilochus' invective. However, I argue that the meaning of the reference to Lycambes goes beyond the traditional presentation of iambic violence. Lycambes is a punished perjurer and this sets the tone of the poem in various different ways. It emphasises both the personal character of Ovid's rage, its public value, as breaking one's word is a matter of moral and values. In this way it paves the way for Ovid's challenge against Augustus' role as guarantor of justice: with *Ibis* as a perjurer and a trustworthy person for Augustus, the implied judgment on Augustus is not positive.

If the threat in these lines is explicit, what is implicit is Ovid's demonstration of power over *Ibis*: the poet is giving his enemy one last chance to repent and stop his harassing behaviour, under the threat of a future punishment. As an example of linguistic impoliteness that threatens *Ibis*' face (both as reputation – positive face –

⁴¹⁴ La Penna 1957, 14 explains it as a typical way of referring to iambus. Williams 1996, 15-16 presents it as a form of "sadistic converse of erotic anticipation", where Ovid "revels in the fantasies associated with preparing the 'victim' (...) for 'treatment'".

and as freedom of will and movement – negative face), the setting of a condition (if you do not stop, something worse will come) is not only a threat for the future, it is also an attempt to influence the enemy’s behaviour (and therefore a threat against his negative face).

In discussing this section of the poem, Schiesaro poses the question of why Ovid would deny the iambic nature of “what is for all intents and purposes a truly iambic attack”:⁴¹⁵ Schiesaro identifies the persistence of iambic themes and topics in Ovid’s *Ibis*, from Archilochus, Hipponax, Callimachus, to the Roman experience of Horace, going far beyond the opening lines of *Epode* 1.⁴¹⁶ Darcy Krasne points out the disingenuousness of Ovid’s claim that elegy is unsuitable for his purpose: “First, Catullus used elegiacs as well as hendecasyllables in an iambic mode, so even Ovid’s application of them to verbal warfare is not so unprecedented as he claims. Moreover, Ovid’s own elegiac lover is a soldier, albeit in the camp of Cupid”.⁴¹⁷ In other words, using elegiac couplets in an iambic mode is not an unprecedented choice. Ovid’s repurposing of elegiac features to an invective aim is, I argue, what makes Ovid’s work with the *Ibis* unprecedented.

The issue of the meter retains its fascination to these days. In this respect, Tom Geue has recently analysed how the peculiarity of Ovid’s elegiac couplets enhances the content of the *Ibis*.⁴¹⁸ My reading of these lines aims to propose the existence of an elegiac way to communicate, which includes invective: Ovid builds

⁴¹⁵ Schiesaro 2011, 91.

⁴¹⁶ Schiesaro 2011, 89-101. See also Schiesaro 2001, reworked in 2011.

⁴¹⁷ Krasne 2012, 11. See on this also Nagle 1980, 41. On the relationship between the *Ibis* and iambic poetry see also Hawkins 2014, 32-86.

⁴¹⁸ Specifically, how the repetitive nature of Ovid’s elegiac couplet produces a “sadistic sense of constraint” (Geue 2024, 215).

his argument using elegy as a tool to combine influences and convey his message, to create a powerful communication that shapes the reality of poetry. This is the context in which he manages to cast himself as the *princeps*, as he does when he speaks to his enemies in the collections of elegies too.

Mercy, memory and power

In *Tristia* 1.8.49-50 the reconciliation with a former friend touches the topic of memory:

Effice peccati ne sim memor huius et illo
officium laudem, quo queror, ore tuum. 50

See to it that I forget this sin and praise your service
with the same lips with which I now complain.

In these lines Ovid does not mention the concept of *clementia*, but he does describe its results. In urging his former friend to make him forget his wrongful behaviour (*peccatum*, a term that is part of the vocabulary of guilt that Ovid usually applies to himself),⁴¹⁹ Ovid refers to the same idea of restraint that is inherent in the concept of *clementia*. The enemy's guilty act is not denied. While the verb *queror* might suggest that this is merely a lament for the betrayal of the former friend, I argue that this passage has a fundamentally aggressive purpose. The juxtaposition of *peccatum* and *officium*, together with the idea that the enemy should gain Ovid's forgiveness, shows that Ovid's apparent lament for the enemy's wrongdoing is actually an accusation: *clementia* reaffirms guilt through the very act of forgiving, which would otherwise be unnecessary.

⁴¹⁹ Six more occurrences in the *Tristia* and four in the *Epistulae ex Ponto* (plus one occurrence of *peccare*) according to the online databases.

This is anticipated in lines 15-22:

Illud amicitiae sanctum et uenerabile nomen 15
 re tibi pro uili sub pedibusque iacet?
Quid fuit, ingenti prostratum mole sodalem
 uisere et adloquii parte leuare tui
inque meos si non lacrimam demittere casus,
 pauca tamen ficto uerba dolore pati 20
idque, quod ignoti faciunt, uale dicere saltem,
 et uocem populi publicaque ora sequi.

Does the sacred and revered name of friendship lie,
 a cheap thing, beneath your feet?
What trouble was it to visit a comrade overwhelmed by a mighty disaster,
 to encourage him with your share of comfort,
and if not to let fall a tear at my misfortune,
 yet to express a few words of feigned sorrow
and, as strangers do, at least to say “Farewell”
 and to copy the people’s speech, the public phrases.⁴²⁰

As we discussed in Chapter Three, there are two aspects to underline, communication-wise. First, the use of space and proxemics (the dynamics of the distances between the characters) to describe on the one hand the “active” guilt of the former friend (the fact that he has trampled on the sacred name of friendship: 15-6) and, on the other hand, his failure to help (while Ovid was oppressed by a heavy burden, he failed to alleviate his suffering: 17-8). In both cases, the metaphorical representation of the relationship between the characters has a fundamentally physiological character: their friendship lies under the feet of the former friend, now enemy; Ovid is physically crushed under the weight of his misfortune.

⁴²⁰ As I previously noted, in line 21 Wheeler has: *idque, quod ignoti, “factum male” dicere saltem*, transl. “and, as strangers do, at least to say “Hard luck!”.

The second aspect concerns the use of gesture as a social and ritual norm. In 19-22, Ovid urges his friend to at least show an expression of pain – even if he has to fake it! – (20) if he cannot shed tears (19), and to express the ritual farewell, as even strangers do (21), and join the public expression of sorrow, with both words and facial expressions (22). The focus here is on the performativity of the expression of grief: what Ovid wants from his former friend is not necessarily genuine empathy. He wants for him to conform to social expectations in terms of the display of sorrow using both verbal and non-verbal expressions of sympathy: what is required is the social performance that uses both gesture and verbal communication.

This leads us to address a passage, *Trist.* 4.9.3-4, where the issue of Ovid’s attitude towards his enemy overlaps with a significant textual problem:⁴²¹

Nostraque uincetur lacrimis clementia seris.
 Fac modo te pateat paenituisse tui!
 Fac modo te damnes cupiasque eradere uitae 5
 tempora, si possis, Tisiphonea tuae.

3 iungetur *Watt* : sententia *Alton*

And my mercy will be overcome by tears that are overdue,
 if only you make it clear that you have repented,
 if only through self-condemnation you show yourself eager to erase
 from your life, if but you can, that period of Tisiphone.

(*Trist.* 4.9.3-6)

This is a reverse approach to the same theme that Ovid addresses in *Ibis* 205-6: the sight of the enemy’s suffering would move the counterpart to compassion despite

⁴²¹ Text: André 1968 with *clementia* (whereas Goold’s revised text for the Loeb edition has *sententia*).

their opposition. We could hypothesise that this is a form of preparation for what happens in the *Ibis*. An analysis of the combination of verbal and non-verbal communication shows that there is also a significant aggressive aspect. While the non-verbal communication insists on the idea of compassion and seems to suggest that Ovid is open to forgiveness, the semantic choices are quite contrary to this option. The first obvious point to make is the powerful place that Ovid occupies with his enemy. *Clementia* is something that belongs to the *princeps*, not to the poet,⁴²² and by definition it must be given from someone in a position of superiority to a subordinate. This is of course completely in contrast with Ovid's position as an exile, but extremely interesting for – and consistent with – the elegiac approach to poetic language and its power, which derives precisely from the fact that the poets are outcasts. The exercise of power over the addressee is clearly an example of negative impoliteness, and in being as such it is also a way of communicating a form of attack. In this context, it could also be seen as an indirect reference to Augustus himself.

To use the term *clementia* would be a bold and almost subversive choice by the poet, obviously because of the role that the word has within Augustus' regime and propaganda. For this reason the vulgate *clementia* is not accepted by all editors. Many proposals have been made to replace it, including *sententia* by Alton (1922), accepted e.g. by Luck in the sense of opinion (“Meinung”), and by Goold in his revision of the Loeb edition, where he accordingly translates it as “opinion”.⁴²³ A

⁴²² Cf. e.g. *Trist.* 2.125: *cuius in euentu poenae clementia tanta est*; 4.4.53-4: *quantaque in Augusto clementia, si quis ab illo / hoc peteret pro me, forsitan ille daret.*

⁴²³ Wheeler's previous version, instead, had *clementia* in the text and consequently “mercy” in the translation.

focus on Ovid's presentation of himself to his enemy as merciful could contribute to a reevaluation of *clementia*. The idea that mercy can be overcome by someone's actions has a parallel in Ovid's relationship to Augustus (see *Trist.* 4.8.39 and *Pont.* 2.2.119) in the sense that some actions cannot be forgiven. Ovid could therefore be playing, at the level of language, with the fundamentally arbitrary nature of *clementia*: it can be overcome and *therefore* refused; it can be overcome and *therefore* granted.

However, *sententia* can play a role in establishing Ovid's powerful position (and this is the option that I would personally prefer): as it is well-known, *sententia* can indicate an opinion⁴²⁴ (1), an intention (2), but also an authoritative decision, a juridical pronouncement (5). There is a thread that connects opinion, intention and decision: the thought of the one who has power becomes a decision and the decision becomes an action, making the thought effective and powerful. In favour of *clementia*, however, Hall revises the first half of the hexameter by accepting Watt's proposal *iungetur* (with which the sense would be that the tears of the enemy will join Ovid's mercy).⁴²⁵ Gatti convincingly argues for the highly pathetic value of the expression *uinctur lacrimis*, which is consistent with the use of emotions that I have tried to show in connection to this passage.⁴²⁶

Finally, the aggressive aim is embodied in the use of legal language. The enemy must profess repentance (*paenituisse*, 4)⁴²⁷ and explicitly condemn himself

⁴²⁴ *OLD*² 1913-14 s.v. 1

⁴²⁵ In the very brief critical apparatus I provide I only mention of the corrections I am discussing here. For a wide discussion of the issue see Gatti 2022, 422.

⁴²⁶ Gatti 2022, 422 with a discussion of the textual problem and *loci similes*.

⁴²⁷ *OLD*² 1411-12 s.v. *paeniteo*, 3 (1412).

(*damnes*, 5)⁴²⁸ to receive Ovid's clemency. This is not a reconciliation between friends or peers in general. Ovid is in a position of power, that of the figure who, arbitrarily, grants or refuses mercy. This is the Ovidian tangled pattern of references. Moreover, in *Rem.* 659-72 Ovid argues against lawsuits between spouses and lovers, because the court is not the place to resolve conflicts of love and once a conflict is brought to that point there is no going back.⁴²⁹ This antithesis between the bond of love – and friendship – and court is a significant indication of the aggressive scope of these lines: it is difficult to see human forgiveness in them, despite the pathetic tone; exercise of power and punishment are much more evident.

Ovid does display, however, a claim to the effectiveness of his own will. This happens explicitly in the *Ibis*, in a passage that has been analysed mainly for the difficulties it poses for its interpretation as a *defixio*:

Illum ego deuoueo, quem mens intellegit, Ibin, 95
qui se scit factis has meruisse preces.

I curse him, whom I have in mind as Ibis,
the one who knows that his actions deserved my curses.

Ibis 95-6

Ovid states that the problem of his not naming the enemy, which was mandatory in ritual curses, does not affect the power of the curse itself and Williams points to Ovid's cursing imagination as the source of the "reason" of these lines.⁴³⁰ Building on this, I would add a focus on the connection between Ovid's thought and the

⁴²⁸ *OLD*² 531 s.v. *damno*. 1.

⁴²⁹ See Ziogas 2021, 270-2.

⁴³⁰ Williams 1996, 44.

effectiveness of the curse: it is not necessary to reveal the true identity of Ibis, because the poet's willpower is enough for the curse to be effective.⁴³¹ This is a demonstration of power which in fact underlines one fundamental characteristic of the power of rulers: their will turns into action.

The avenging poet

Ovid's word is powerful: his curse consists in a claim to turn what is said into an inevitable event. In this section I show how Ovid's claimed power acts in the form of search for revenge, affecting both the enemy and the poet. In the *Ibis* Ovid presents himself as the centre of Ibis' life: he is the one who can give comfort and torment. Ovid shows that he is in full control through his knowledge of the ritual (*Ibis* 97-106):

Nulla mora est in me: peragam rata uota sacerdos:
 quisquis ades sacris, ore fauete, meis.
Quisquis ades sacris, lugubria dicite uerba,
 et fletu madidis Ibin adite genis, 100
ominibusque malis pedibusque occurrite laeuis,
 et nigrae uestes corpora uestra tegant.
Tu quoque, quid dubitas ferales sumere uittas?
 iam stat, ut ipse uides, funeris ara tui.
Pompa parata tibi est: uotis mora tristibus absit: 105
 da iugulum cultris hostia dira meis.

I have no hesitation: as priest I will perform the established prayers:
 anyone who attends my rite, restrain your mouth from inappropriate
words.
Anyone who attends my rite, speak words of sorrow,
 and address Ibis with your cheeks drenched in tears, 100
go to him with bad omens and with your left foot,
 and have black garments cover your bodies.
You, why do you hesitate to wear the sorrowful garments too?
 Your funeral altar is already ready, as you can see for yourself.

⁴³¹ Ibis' name is not the only specific piece of information which Ovid refuses to provide: throughout the collections of poems from exile he also consistently avoids spelling out the offence (the *error*) that he committed against the emperor, stating that this is so that he will not distress or harm Augustus.

The procession has been prepared for you: let nothing delay my sorrowful
vows. 105
submit your neck to my knives, you dire victim.

Ovid's representation of himself as the priest performing the ritual must be understood as a display of power. The priesthood is one of Augustus' prerogatives (as noted for example in *Res gestae* 7.3 and 10.2, where Augustus recalls that he only assumed the role of chief priest after the death of the previous one). The first source of this power in Ovid's hands is knowledge: Ovid knows the ritual, he knows the appropriate behaviour, and urges those present to perform the right gestures.

The vows (*uota*) that Ovid is about to perform against Ibis are defined as established, true (*rata*, see *OLD*² s.v. 2 and 2b), which is the same term as that used in 76 to describe the thread of life assigned to everyone and spun by the Parcae. This creates a context with two main characteristics: rituality and a clear source of power (Ovid's knowledge). The expression *ore fauete* has given rise to much debate, in particular as to whether it should be interpreted as an injunction to be silent, or to avoid speaking words inappropriate to the rite.⁴³² This is paired with the following admonition to speak words of sorrow (*lugubria dicite uerba*).⁴³³

There is a fundamental interaction between silencing the wrong words and speaking the right ones.⁴³⁴ Silence has a communicative value: as Watzlawick, Helmick Beavin and Jackson have shown,⁴³⁵ the first axiom of communication is

⁴³² See La Penna 1957, 21.

⁴³³ See *OLD*² s.v. 1 citing *Ibis* 97; *ThL* VI.1.377.19 s.v. *faueto* citing *Ibis* 98; *ThL* VII.2.1084.11 again citing the same lines.

⁴³⁴ See Calabrese's work on silence in Seneca's *Phaedra* (2007). On absence and silence in Latin literature see now Geue – Giusti 2021.

⁴³⁵ Watzlawick – Helmick Beavin – Jackson 1967, 48-51.

that it is impossible not to communicate; therefore, silence, like other attempts to negate verbal communication, can be a form of communication even against the will of the speaker.⁴³⁶ Silence has also been analysed in relation to power:⁴³⁷ ultimately, there is a pragmatic use of silence – meaning the use of silence with communicative purposes depending on the context of communication – closely related to power dynamics. Silence is pragmatically defined not only at the level of the content of communication, but also at the level of the relationship, that is, at the level where communication says something about the relationship between the actors involved, and not just about what is said. Therefore, I argue that we should understand Ovid’s command to those present at the sacrifice not only as a formality, part of the ritual, but also as a display of power, of control over what is said and what is not said, covering all possibilities: even if the identity of the enemy remains unknown, Ovid has pervasive control of everything concerning the ritual sacrifice and this is what matters for it to be effective.⁴³⁸

Moving from verbal to non-verbal performative communication, the ritual requires specific gestures and movements. Those who witness the ceremony must approach Ibis with tears on their faces, start walking with their left foot, a known sign of bad luck, and wear black clothing. The ritual requirements are extremely precise and specific, but this should not lead us to believe that what Ovid here describes is an empty formality or a theatrical display of anger that ends in itself. Rather, I argue, the ritual should instead be understood as part of a larger pattern of

⁴³⁶ Calabrese 2007, 172.

⁴³⁷ Strocchio 1992 on Tacitus.

⁴³⁸ On the importance of following the right procedure in Latin prayers see Masselli 2002, 138-9.

empowerment in elegy: a tool for the effective display of power within a genre that draws its energy from the powerless position of the elegiac poet.

Ovid also has control over the victim of the sacrifice: the specific phrase with the imperative *da iugulum* is extremely rare in Latin literature: it appears only here in Ovid (its sole occurrence in poetry) and once in Cicero (*Tusculanae disputationes* 2.14.33), where it refers to the act of surrendering to pain when one does not have enough strength to bear it⁴³⁹. The idea of surrender is conveyed through an image that combines physical elements and proxemics. This image reverses, in terms of proxemics, the relationship between Ovid and Ibis as described in 29-30 (*at tibi, calcasti qui me, uiolente, iacentem, / qua licet ei misero, debitus hostis ero*), where Ovid was at the mercy of his enemy, but it also recalls the one between Ovid and his enemy in *Trist.* 1.8.

The word of the *princeps*, the word of the poet

At the same time, this representation recalls the proxemics of the relationship between Ovid and Augustus, as expressed, for example, in *Trist.* 1.1.71-2, which combines the reference to *clementia* with the idea of punishment:

Ignoscant augusta mihi loca dique locorum!
uenit in hoc illa fulmen ab arce caput.

May those places of awe and the gods of those places grant me pardon!
It was from that citadel that the bolt fell upon this head.

Here we see the same proxemic relationship at work: Augustus is physically placed in a higher position, on the Palatine, and from this position he is presented as

⁴³⁹ *ThlL* VII.2.638.38-9 and the online databases.

attacking Ovid. The physical representation embodies semiotics, and it embodies the very relationship between the characters. This brings us to one further point: rage in connection with punishment is another aspect that Ovid exploits. In 4.9.9-10, in the same elegy where we saw the possibility of *clementia*, Ovid expresses anger, *ira*, against his enemy:

Sim licet extremum, sicut sum, missus in orbem,
nostra suas isto porriget ira manus.

Though I be banished, as I have been, to the edge of the world,
to where you are shall my wrath stretch forth its hands.

Trist. 4.9.9-10

In the context of Ovid's use of emotions with communicative purposes, *ira* has a role, just as lament does. *Ira* is a word that belongs to Augustus and embodies the power of punishment, the other side of power.⁴⁴⁰ In the same elegy (4.9) we have seen at work one of the possibilities of the use of pain and lament in aggressive passages, which is another fundamental aspect of the *Ibis* too (as can be seen in lines 117-22, where Ibis' pain is said to be unworthy of compassion and inspire hatred; 163-4, where he is deprived of the right to be mourned; 205-8, where his ruin will make Ovid cry with joy).

And it is with the verbal, harsh, expression of his will that Augustus condemned Ovid to the fate of the exile:

Tristibus inuectus uerbis – ut principe dignum –
ultus es offensas, ut decet, ipse tuas.

Having attacked me with grim words – how worthy of the leading man –
you avenged your own wrongs, as is proper.

⁴⁴⁰ Cf. e.g. *Tristia* 2.21-2; 27-8; 123-4.

It was not a judge or the senate that decided Ovid's punishment: it was the word of Augustus.⁴⁴¹ His words are described with the same adjective, *tristis*, used in *Ibis* 217 to indicate the sorrowful visions which Ibis was to have, and in 105, during the procession for Ibis's sacrifice, to indicate Ovid's ominous vows. Again, the semantic choice implies emotions with a strong communicative purpose. The adjective *tristis*, which both introduces a note of lament into the discussion, connected to an attempt to evoke pity in the reader, but also implies a grim and dreadful context.⁴⁴²

At the same time, it also refers to Augustus' aggressive use of words,⁴⁴³ which has a powerful force. The phrase *ut principe dignum*,⁴⁴⁴ which could potentially be read ironically,⁴⁴⁵ strikes a polemical note, but also prepares the description of Augustus as a vengeful ruler: the act of avenging Ovid's offences, which were

⁴⁴¹ Luck 1977, 109 refers to the prince's magisterial coercive power: "(...) sondern durch kaiserliches Edikt aufgrund der magistratischen Coercitionsbefugnis des *princeps*"). See Ciccarelli 2003, 123 on how the stylistic emphasis on *senatus* shows that Ovid could have had the right to claim a juridical decision by the senate, but was deprived of this option by Augustus. Ingleheart 2010, 149 notes that if this was a case of punishment through *coercitio* or *amicitiam renuntiare* "this constituted a tyrannical exercise of personal power". On Augustus' will having the force of law, Ziogas 2021, 42, commenting on *Trist.* 2.139-40, points out that Ovid says "that displeasing Augustus is in and of itself a punishment for the offender, but also points to the fact that actual punishments such as relegation are now meted out on the basis of whether the *princeps* is pleased or displeased".

⁴⁴² *OLD*² 2178-9, s.v. respectively 1 ("depressed, gloomy, unhappy") and 5 ("unhappy in effect or outcome, grim, dreadful").

⁴⁴³ See Ingleheart 2010, 149, who notes Augustus' invective poetry.

⁴⁴⁴ Conjectured by Burmann over the vulgate *ita principe dignum*. On this see Ingleheart 2010, 150.

⁴⁴⁵ Ciccarelli 2003, 124; Ingleheart 2010, 150: "*ut principe dignum* can be read ironically in light of Augustus' invective poetry, in particular the verses quoted at Mart. 11.20.3-8".

somehow “personally connected”⁴⁴⁶ with him, is consistent with his presentation of himself even before he gained absolute power.⁴⁴⁷

In this exercise of power, words have the power of law but are able to transcend it, because “grim words” are words of grief and misfortune, of abuse and punishment. Their result affects the target’s life in all its aspects: the personal side is affected (exile makes Ovid’s physical, emotional and mental state fragile: cf., for example, *Trist.* 3.3), his social condition, though formally preserved, is constantly threatened, and at the same time the present misfortune constitutes a form of mercy to be praised.

As has been acknowledged, revenge is part of the characterisation of Augustus, and Ovid’s depiction of him has played an important role in such connections.⁴⁴⁸ In *Fast.* 3.697-710 Ovid briefly recalls the assassination of Caesar and Augustus’ punishment of the conspirators at Philippi, and defines Augustus’ vengeance as his first steps (*Fast.* 3.709-10):⁴⁴⁹

Hoc opus, haec pietas, haec prima elementa fuerunt
Caesaris, ulcisci iusta per arma patrem. 710

This, this duty, this first task, this was
Caesar’s work: to avenge his father by righteous arms.

There is fundamental ambiguity in the passage, starting with the fact that such a dramatic moment in Roman history is recounted in a very short passage (slightly

⁴⁴⁶ Ingleheart 2010, 151.

⁴⁴⁷ Ingleheart 2010, 150.

⁴⁴⁸ Ingleheart 2010, 151.

⁴⁴⁹ Text of the *Fasti*: Alton, Wormell, Courtney 1997⁴. Translation of the *Fasti*: modified version of Frazer 1931, rev. Goold 1996.

over 10 lines long) and is juxtaposed with the episode of Anna Perenna, which ends with the deception of Mars (who wanted to marry Minerva and instead finds himself with the old Anna, who teases him).⁴⁵⁰ Octavian's first steps (*prima elementa*: 709) towards his identity as Augustus are his acts of revenge, presented as part of his piety (*pietas*): avenging Caesar's assassination is an act of favour towards Rome.⁴⁵¹ The direct speech of Vesta that is quoted within this passage has been of interest to scholars because of the ambiguity of its scope.⁴⁵² It seems however convincing that only the couplet 709-10 can be attributed to Ovid:⁴⁵³ the gap between the words spoken by the goddess Vesta and the poet's statement reinforces the poet's power to determine the interpretation of the passage.

Ovid's portrayal of himself as using his power with a vengeful purpose is consistent with his portrayal of Augustus.⁴⁵⁴ First, as vengeance – in association with *pietas* – is a fundamental part of how Octavian became Augustus (*hoc opus, haec pietas, haec prima elementa fuerunt / Caesaris*: 709-10), it is also a crucial aspect that Ovid takes up to demonstrate the power of his exilic elegiac poetry. Second, it is the voice of the poet that contributes to this narrative of Augustus'

⁴⁵⁰ See on this at least Barchiesi 1994 114-19 (=1997, 124-30), Newlands 1996, Pfaff-Reydellet 2002, Heyworth 2019, 225-8, Ursini 2024, 724-28 on the peak of episode of the deceit against Mars; 729-43 on the episode of the Ides of March and especially 741-3 (on lines 709-10). Herbert-Brown 1994, 129 sees instead the weakness of Caesar's commemoration in the passage as part of Ovid's celebration of Augustus.

⁴⁵¹ With an open reprise, in 709, of Verg. *Aen.* 6.129 (*hoc opus, hic labor est*), which might suggest an implicit association between Octavian and Aeneas (see Ursini 2024, 741).

⁴⁵² On the history of the problem see Ursini 2024, 731-2 with further bibliography.

⁴⁵³ See Ursini 2015, 181, who attributes only the final couplet 709-10 to Ovid: "quanto infine all'ultimo distico, in esso sarà probabilmente da scorgere un commento conclusivo dell'autore". Newlands 1992 sees the narrator of the *Fasti* as a creation of his author (and therefore not to be necessarily identified with Ovid): while the issue of the identification of the elegiac poet with his poetic persona is complex, and regardless of the actual autobiographical references, my approach tends to look at the poetic persona as a form of self-representation by the poet.

⁴⁵⁴ In the *Ars* both Ovid (1.24) and Augustus (1.181) are characterised with the term *ultor*.

power, whether sincere or ambiguous, and creates a context in which this narrative becomes available to the poet himself.

Moreover, before spending some time on the episode Ovid moots the idea that he might pass it over in silence. This in itself is a statement of poetic power. It embodies in fact the power of choosing what receives the reader's attention and what does not. What is more, it shows the power of deciding what gets to be remembered and what does not. This is the power of poetry and the reason why he claims the immortality of his identity as *uates* through his poetry – cf. *Tristia* 3.3).⁴⁵⁵ The poet who, as *uates*, unveils and recounts rituals and cults in the apparently positive – but often interpreted as ambiguous – narrative of the *Fasti* is the same poet who performs the deadly rituals in the *Ibis*. Ovid as an elegiac poet seems to lose his voice in the exile poetry, but through the powerlessness of his figure he reinforces his poetic power.⁴⁵⁶ Ovid creates the vengeful figure of Augustus who benefits Rome by punishing his father's murderers. Then, he becomes Ovid's own punisher. The *princeps* takes upon himself the task of avenging his offences, punishing not by law, but by his own will (2.133-4).⁴⁵⁷

However, the poet can forgive and punish on the basis of his own will too. Ultimately, it is Ovid who becomes the one avenging offences: not only those he has suffered himself, but also those of society as a whole. To describe *Ibis* as a

⁴⁵⁵ On Ovid's claim to immortality in exile in *Trist.* 3.3 see Ingleheart 2015.

⁴⁵⁶ On the wider narrative that connects Ovid as a *uates* in the exile poetry and the figure of the *uates* in the *Fasti*, represented by the case of the female *uates* Carmentis, see Walter 2020a: "(...) the breaking off of the *Fasti* at the end of Book 6 forms part of a wider complex of meaning, initiated by Carmentis and revolving around the power or powerlessness of poetic speech and the poet himself. At the same time, even while Ovid mourns his exile and the fact that he will be silenced, he argues his own case with his characteristic ingenuity", 393-4. On the problem of free speech, and specifically on how the *Fasti* could be seen as the work of a poet forced to silence, see Feeney 2021.

⁴⁵⁷ Moreover, Ovid alleviates the scope of his own guilt when he presents it in his exile poetry.

danger to society (*haec est, in fastis cui dat grauis Allia nomen, / quaeque dies Ibin, publica damna tulit: Ibis* 219-20) is not necessarily disproportionate for a personal enemy, because his characterisation goes beyond the limits of a personal matter. The context is still that of the poet, the *uates*, who speaks to the *princeps* to influence and criticise him, exercising his power through his poetic narrative, thus challenging the power of the *princeps* himself. After all, in *Ibis* 127-8 it is the god Apollo who is invoked as the guarantor of Ovid's power against Ibis: a god who recalls the privileged relationship of the elegiac poets with the deities, but also a god with a fundamental role in the narrative of Augustus' ideology.⁴⁵⁸

Introducing the catalogue: the power to punish the *inscius*

In the *Ibis*, this approach finds its exemplification in the catalogue. If we look not at the choice of punishments, but at the people chosen as examples, we notice one crucial element: not everyone is actually guilty. Some of the chosen characters are punished without being voluntarily guilty. This is the case from the first examples in the catalogue: Oedipus is among those punished with blindness, as many scholars have already noted,⁴⁵⁹ and he is presented as guilty. However, his fault is not really a voluntary act (*Ibis* 261-2):

Nec plus adspicias quam quem sua filia rexit,
expertus scelus est cuius uterque parens.

Nor may you see more than the one who was guided by his daughter,
whose crime both parents experienced.

⁴⁵⁸ On Apollo in the *Ibis* see Battistella 2013. On the relationship between Apollo and Augustus, and his presence in the *Metamorphoses* see Roccella 2022. In 28 BC Augustus had dedicated a temple to Apollo on the Palatine, as part of a vow, and it was part of a wider construction including two libraries, which recalls the Hellenistic sites: see Cucchiarelli 2018, 245; see also Graf 2009 esp. 63, 72-3, 102-3.

⁴⁵⁹ See Krasne 2012.

I argue that Oedipus is presented through a kind of passive characterisation, which again uses the potential of non-verbal communication. He is described as the one who is guided by his daughter, which deprives him even of the right to be the subject of his own lines and places him in a position of complete subordination. One would expect the poet to use this system of gestures to evoke compassion in the readers for the poor blind man who is at the mercy of his daughter. This does not happen. The audience is led not to pity his fate, but to approve it: he is physically directed by someone else because of the *scelus* he has committed, a word that Ovid explicitly refuses for his own guilt (see e.g. *Trist.* 1.3.38). But is the use of the term consistent with what Ovid has done to himself?⁴⁶⁰

The absence of intention is precisely what should make Ovid's guilt excusable in his own self-defence:

Inscius Actaeon uidit sine ueste Dianam: 105
praeda fuit canibus non minus ille suis.
Scilicet in superis etiam fortuna luenda est,
nec ueniam laeso numine casus habet.

Unintentionally Actaeon saw Diana divested of her clothes: 105
no less was he the prey for his own dogs.
It is clear that among the gods even misfortune must be atoned for,
and an accident does not have forgiveness when a divinity is injured.

(*Trist.* 2.105-8)

⁴⁶⁰ Cf. *Trist.* 1.1.113-14 where Ovid calls *Oedipodas* the books of the *Ars amatoria*, because they harmed their author-father (*hos tu uel fugias, uel, si satis oris habebis, / Oedipodas facito Telegonosque uoces*).

The use of the myth of Actaeon, which has fuelled speculation about the nature of Ovid's real fault,⁴⁶¹ is also a form of criticism against Augustus. In Ingleheart's words, "the Actaeon myth criticizes Augustus obliquely, by assimilating him with another angry and implacable deity".⁴⁶² But it also underlines a specific feature of power: the will of the one who has power establishes what is right and what is wrong. If the one who is powerful so decides, even misfortune is a crime. With the *Ibis*, Ovid is the one who determines what is a crime and what is not. Oedipus was unaware that he was killing his own father and having sexual intercourse with his mother, but for Ovid he is nevertheless guilty. I would argue that Ovid is not simply applying a double standard: he is effectively exercising the power to decide what is to be punished and what is not, what is to be considered *scelus* and what is not.

If power is the ability to impose one's will and influence the behaviour of others, and it is also relational, dynamic and contestable, what happens with Ovid is that the poet demonstrates power in his ability to control the narrative within the context of elegy. This is particularly relevant in an elegiac context, because Ovid as an elegiac poet presents himself as an outcast, powerless figure, and from this he derives his power, which becomes a challenge to the "real" power of the ruler himself. Ultimately, the *Ibis* itself is presented as an act of mercy in the very moment in which it communicates its violent attack, and is therefore an act of power whose strength comes from, and not in spite of, its elegiac nature.

Conclusions: two forms of power

⁴⁶¹ On the discussion see Ingleheart 2010, 124-6.

⁴⁶² Ingleheart 2010, 125.

In the *Ibis*, as part of a pattern of communication that unites it with the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*, lament and invective are both present as tools for the poet to express his powerful use of poetry. When it comes to Ovid's relationship with Augustus, lament and invective become communicative tools for the poet to speak to the *princeps* and to challenge his power. Their fundamental role as part of the ritual that Ovid creates and performs is explicitly stated by the poet himself in *Ibis* 83-6:

Denique ab antiquo diui ueteresque nouique
in nostrum cuncti tempus adeste Chao,
carmina dum capiti male fido dira canuntur, 85
et peragunt partes ira dolorque suas.

In the end, old and new gods, from the ancient Chaos
to our age, all of you, be present,
while fierce songs are chanted against a faithless head 85
and anger and pain play their parts.

Ovid's lines are both a song and a spell against Ibis (*carmina*). Poetry, created by a poet, *uates*, becomes a magic spell able to wound a faithless man (*male fido*). Ibis is excluded from the knowledge and the poetic expertise of the poet, who draws his power from his art. *Ira* and *dolor* are introduced at the end of the section in which Ovid invokes all the gods to be present at his rite, which La Penna considers a *deuotio*.⁴⁶³ Williams points to the "indiscriminate excess of Ovid's prayer"⁴⁶⁴ in the context of the hopelessness of the poet's situation,⁴⁶⁵ which "marks only the beginning of a sustained outburst which is seemingly never-ending".⁴⁶⁶ The

⁴⁶³ See La Penna 1957, XXVII-XXIX; 16. On possible epic intertextuality in the *Ibis* through the concept of *ira* see Battistella 2012.

⁴⁶⁴ Williams 1996, 40.

⁴⁶⁵ Which Williams sees in parallel with that of Shakespeare's *Lear* (1996, 42-3).

⁴⁶⁶ Williams 1996, 43.

expression *peragere partem* refers to the act of playing a part in the theatre and occurs three times in Ovid, including that of the *Ibis*.⁴⁶⁷ The explicit mention of *ira* and *dolor* as playing a part is consistent with the fundamentally performative character of Ovid's elegiac communication in the *Ibis* and in the rest of his exile poetry. In the *Ibis*, Ovid is the one who directs and performs the ritual against his enemy (*Ibis* 97-106) and at the same time rituality plays a crucial role in the offense he suffers at the hands of his former friends and enemies in the collections of elegies (*Trist.* 1.8.17-22).

In this performance, both *ira* and *dolor* play a role assigned to them by the poet, who masters emotions as a means of communication. These are the grounds of his power, from his powerless position as an outcast elegiac poet. Anger and pain merge and overlap in the *Ibis* (as in Ovid's exile poetry as a corpus), subverting expectations of emotional responses (see *Ibis* 121-2: *sitque, quod est rarum, solito defecta fauore / fortunae facies inuidiosa tuae*; 208: *dulcior hic risu tunc mihi fletus erit*); in short, they offer the poet the communicative tools to create a form of elegiac communication in which the elegiac Ovid, *because* he is an outcast, is able to create a poetic world in which his communication poses a challenge to the power of the real ruler.

⁴⁶⁷ See *ThlL* X.1.1178.65-73 mentioning all three occurrences of the expression in Ovid: besides *Ibis* 86, *Rem.* 383 and *Am.* 2.15.26. Two of the three occurrences (*Ibis* and *Remedia*) are mentioned in *OLD*² 1463, s.v. *perago*, 8. The occurrences are three according to the online databases of *Musisque deoque* and *PHI Latin Texts*; *LLT* registers only those in the *Amores* and the *Ibis*.

Conclusions to Part Two

In Part Two I have presented an analysis of the relationship between the *Ibis* and the rest of Ovid's exilic production based on a use of emotions, and particularly compassion, aimed at communicating with an audience and with the *princeps*. Firstly, this approach has shown a fundamentally aggressive aim of Ovid's expressions of suffering in the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*, often misunderstood as mere lament. Ovid's interpretation of a very traditional type of elegy, that of lament, takes in fact an unexpected turn when pain becomes a weapon for the poet to denounce his own condition and attack his enemies.

In Chapter Three I therefore have shown how both Ovid's *Ibis* and his collections of elegies addressed to (former friends turned) enemies share a similar approach in the portrayal of emotions and particularly compassion. This approach makes a pervasive use of communicative tools, including verbal and non-verbal communication, gesture and proxemics. Ultimately, Chapter Three leads to an interpretation of *Ibis* and Ovid as *Doppelgänger*, which goes beyond a mere interpretation of the curses against *Ibis* as a form of retribution for Ovid's misery. Their treatment as characters, in the portrayal of their suffering, constantly overlaps, sharing themes, emotional characterisation and the typical features of their misfortune.

In Chapter Four the tangled pattern of references involves Augustus. While in Chapter Three Ovid's portrayal of himself ultimately led to an overlapping with the enemy, in Chapter Four Ovid's attempt to reach the *princeps* with his exile poetry ends up challenging Augustus' power. Ovid consistently tries to speak to

Augustus over his exile poetry and the *Ibis* is no exception. If we analyse the way in which Ovid behaves towards Ibis, by casting himself as the one accusing, condemning, punishing him and leading his public sacrifice, we cannot help notice that Ibis casts himself as a ruler. In other words, in the tangled pattern of references which underlies the *Ibis* and interacts with the rest of Ovid's exile poetry, Ovid places himself in an ultimately subversive position.

Ibis is Ovid, Ovid is Augustus, but what about Augustus and Ibis? I argue that Ovid's attack against Augustus does not imply an identification of Augustus with Ibis. Ibis is a means to attack Augustus, surely. Ovid criticises Augustus' judgment, as Ibis was a trustworthy man of Augustus and is characterised as a plunderer and a *delator*. Ovid replaces Augustus in inflicting on the enemy the punishment he deserved and never received from the *princeps*. Ovid casts himself as the one re-establishing the rightful balance between right and wrong. In this sense Ibis is a means to attack Augustus, but not, in my view, by being literally a false identity for the *princeps*. In Part Three we discuss the widest section of the *Ibis*: the catalogue, a prismatic list of references, stories, and examples. The tangled pattern of references between Ovid, Augustus and Ibis reaches its peak with the catalogue, where Ovid plays with characters and referents to an overwhelming extent.

Part Three

Manipulating emotions and knowledge:

the catalogue and the labyrinth of references

Introduction

The aim of Part Three is to offer a reading of the role of the catalogue in the *Ibis* as a tool of Ovid's elegiac poetry, based on a complex pattern of references which shapes the relationship between Ovid, Ibis, Augustus, and the choice of myths.⁴⁶⁸ My thesis is that the catalogue is the ultimate expression of Ovid's presentation of himself as *uates* in the *Ibis*, and therefore as the guardian of customs, norms, and rituals, by virtue of his superior knowledge as a poet. This means that the catalogue is part of Ovid's exhibition of poetic power, a power which, as I have tried to show in the previous sections, draws its energy from the powerless position of the elegiac poet. I focus on the interplay between aetiology, use of emotion and poetic communication, which provides the catalogue with its effectiveness as a tool of poetic power.

Once we manage to navigate the overwhelming feeling of drowning in the succession of *exempla*, we notice one main element in the catalogue: not every example is a good fit for Ibis. If we think that a direct connection is needed, examples of deserved punishment are what we expect from the catalogue. That is not always the case. Overcoming the idea that there should be a straightforward

⁴⁶⁸ This section does not attempt to sort out the many threads of Ovid's sources, nor to provide solutions to some of the most controversial identifications.

relationship between the choice of examples and *Ibis*, I propose a layered pattern of references. Just as I argued for a constantly changing pattern of roles in the first part of the *Ibis*, with Ovid as the victim, but also the prosecutor, the begging exile, but also the figure of power, and just as I argued that this is a characteristic of Ovid's elegiac poetry in Part One and Part Two of this thesis, I argue that the use of examples supports this constant change of roles too. Many questions surround the interpretation of the catalogue, but my research question concerns the possibility that Ovid is doing more with the catalogue than merely listing punishments that are suitable for *Ibis*.

The meaning of the catalogue has long been a major question, to which many answers have been given, starting from its problematic generic positioning. In Williams' words, the catalogue, in which he sees "a new kind of *carmen perpetuum*",⁴⁶⁹ "becomes all the more interesting and extraordinary when we recall that Ovid would shortly embark on, and may perhaps have been simultaneously engaged with, revision of the *Fasti*, his other great experiment in constructing a narrative sequence in elegiac verse".⁴⁷⁰ The *Ibis* relates to both the *Metamorphoses* and the *Fasti*, incorporating both epic and elegiac features in a poem that has its foundation in the role of *uates* that Ovid has claimed in his pre-exilic work.⁴⁷¹ Therefore, the approach to the use of knowledge and aetiology, established in different ways in both the *Metamorphoses* and the *Fasti*, as tools of the superiority of the poet merges with the elegiac use of roles and emotional manipulation. I aim

⁴⁶⁹ "Ovid is experimenting with a new kind of *carmen perpetuum* (...), one in which we find a drastic pruning of the familiar narrational devices employed in that earlier *carmen perpetuum*, the *Metamorphoses*" (Williams 1996, 90). Differently from the *Metamorphoses*, however, "Ovid's approach in the *Ibis* is to exploit the disconcerting potential of elliptical narrative" (90).

⁴⁷⁰ Williams 1996, 90.

⁴⁷¹ See Chapter Five and Chapter Six.

to show that aetiology, knowledge and use of emotion in the choice of each myth play a role in Ovid's argument. The catalogue is consistent with the first part of the poem, in that it maintains Ovid's exhibition of a specific kind of power, that poetic power which comes from the powerless position inherent in the elegiac poet, and which can end up challenging the 'real' power of the emperor.

Both the content and the structure of the catalogue are long-standing issues, among the many that shape the poem. "Non un principio, né un mezzo, né un fine. È chiaro che l'autore a bello studio intese sorprendere, quasi nel labirinto della sua erudizione, il lettore" is Rostagni's interpretation.⁴⁷² As for the structure, as we discussed André concluded that "la recherche systématique d'un ordre est vaine".⁴⁷³ La Penna, who saw in Ovid "il divulgatore e banalizzatore della complessa letteratura alessandrina e del suo gusto",⁴⁷⁴ offers a detailed sketch of the structure of the catalogue, coming to a similar conclusion: "un filo dal principio alla fine non c'è; ma per lo più i fatti mitologici o storici sono raggruppati secondo criteri vari".⁴⁷⁵ A systematic approach, which anticipates more recent developments in research, is that of Bernhardt, who includes the *Ibis* in her work on the role of the catalogue in Ovid's exilic poetry, addressing both the microstructure of the catalogue and the broad division into themes and characters.⁴⁷⁶

This labyrinth of stories, myths and punishments produces the overwhelming feeling that the catalogue is meant to evoke. It is on this sense of "disorder" that

⁴⁷² Rostagni 1920, 40: "not a beginning, nor a middle, nor a final aim. It is clear that the author deliberately chose to surprise the reader, almost in the labyrinth of his erudition".

⁴⁷³ André 1963, IX (see Williams 1996, 81).

⁴⁷⁴ La Penna 1957, LXXIV: "the one who disseminates and trivialises Alexandrian literature"

⁴⁷⁵ La Penna 1957, XLVI: "a thread connecting the beginning to the end is absent; but the mythological or historical events are mostly divided according to diverse criteria".

⁴⁷⁶ Bernhardt 1986, 328-95.

Williams builds to propose a comprehensive interpretation of the catalogue that includes both literary focus and psychological insight.⁴⁷⁷ In recent years, Darcy Krasne has systematically explored the traces of an internal coherence in the catalogue, identifying the presence of major themes, reflected in sub-catalogues.⁴⁷⁸ She argues for a thematic division of the catalogue, which renders it not an erratic sequence of examples, coming from an enraged and mad mind, but a well-structured section. To highlight a method in Ovid's treatment of the catalogue in the *Ibis*, Battistella suggests the label of "textual dynamism": the tendency of the couplets to point at the text before and anticipate what is coming next, to be considered as a narrative device that the interpretation of the *Ibis* cannot disregard.⁴⁷⁹

The threads of Ovid's possible sources for the catalogue are a tangled knot. Callimachus obviously occupies the largest space. Not only for his *Ibis*, which has not reached us, but also for the *Aitia*.⁴⁸⁰ However, the Alexandrian influence takes various forms (e.g. Euphorion, Nicander, Eratosthenes and others unknown).⁴⁸¹ Building on Zipfel, La Penna argues that Ovid drew his stories from a mythographical companion,⁴⁸² while more recent approaches have focused on connections with iambic⁴⁸³ and hymnodic poetry.⁴⁸⁴ Rostagni devotes a great deal

⁴⁷⁷ Williams 1996, 81-111.

⁴⁷⁸ Krasne 2012.

⁴⁷⁹ Battistella 2013, 87. Battistella mentions the example of 265-6 and 275-6.

⁴⁸⁰ The broadest treatment of the relationship between the *Ibis* and Callimachus is in La Penna 1957, XXXII-LV.

⁴⁸¹ La Penna 1957, LVI-LVII.

⁴⁸² Zipfel 1910, 48. La Penna 1957, LVIII.

⁴⁸³ Schiesaro 2001 and 2011.

⁴⁸⁴ Battistella 2013, who addresses the reminiscence of the Homeric Hymn to Apollo (80-3) and the relationship between 259-60; 263-6, clusters of the sub-catalogue of blinding, and 275-8, cluster of the sub-catalogue of drowning (83-7).

of space to the role of historical examples, attributing the most prominent role to the Hellenistic and the Thessalian and Macedonian dynasties, which had particularly close relations with the Hellenistic ones.⁴⁸⁵

Although the issue of Ovid's sources is a huge question, my analysis will not focus on it. I argue that the width of Ovid's display of knowledge influences the interpretation of the *Ibis*. My thesis is that the question of Ovid's sources merges with the sense of overwhelming rage and madness that the catalogue reveals. It is possible to combine the presence of madness and rage, on the one hand, with method and internal consistency, on the other. Throughout this thesis, the characterisation of the elegiac poet as an outcast has been consistently identified as the source of a specific power, which comes from poetic language and poetic communication. As we have seen in the previous sections, as a communicative device invective plays a crucial role in elegy just as love and lament do: not only do they coexist in different types of elegy, they also overlap and can be present at the same time, bearing different communicative aims. Exemplary cases are *Ibis* 117-22, 163-6 and 205-8, in which the poet actively plays with the readers' expectations in terms of funerary scenes: the sympathetic reaction, which is expected and justified, since Ibis is explicitly described as pitiful, does not arrive and is even used as a means of attacking Ibis himself.

The thread that links these seemingly incompatible aspects is the poet's control of the narrative. While this may seem an obvious point, the very fact that the elegiac *puella* owes her portrayal to the elegiac poet himself should be seen as

⁴⁸⁵ Rostagni 1920, 41-52.

part of a pattern of narratives in which the poet demonstrates his control.⁴⁸⁶ This pattern is based on the communication that the poet establishes with the other characters of his elegies and on the role of this communication for the wider narrative he is conveying. And as rage plays a role in the poet's communication with other characters, including the *puella* and Augustus, in love elegy and exile poetry, so lament and love play a role in the *Ibis*.

La Penna stresses Ovid's innovation of replacing the obscurity related to magic, which was part of *defixiones*, with obscurity related to erudition, stating that Ovid took this up from Callimachus.⁴⁸⁷ If we do not know Ovid's sources for all the myths he chooses, what we do know is that in drawing out and selecting this immense amount of information he shows off his erudite knowledge of historical and mythical stories. I build on Williams' analysis of Ovid's demonstration of superiority over Ibis through obscurity and erudition,⁴⁸⁸ but my approach differs in that I do not conclude that Ovid is a victim of his own rage and that his invectives are useless.⁴⁸⁹ Instead, I propose to focus on how erudition merges with Ovid's use of emotions, especially pain. As we have seen in Part Two, Ovid uses pain as an aggressive device and this is an eminently elegiac element – as per our discussion in Part One. This elegiac feature provides a portrayal of Ovid as demonstrating control over his argument and exercising a form of power. The catalogue itself is

⁴⁸⁶ Cf. Drinkwater 2013.

⁴⁸⁷ La Penna 1957, XLIV argues that Callimachus had the idea of replacing the magical obscurity of *defixiones* with that of erudition: “egli [*Callimachus*] ebbe l'ingegnosa idea di sostituire l'oscurità magica a cui, come abbiamo visto, tendevano le *defixiones*, con l'oscurità dell'erudizione”. On the relationship between the *Ibis* and the genre of Greek and Latin curses see Williams 1996, 8-14, 24, 40, 44, 52.

⁴⁸⁸ Williams 1996, 95-7.

⁴⁸⁹ Williams 1996, 102-3; 128-9: “And yet this illusion of omnipotence must from the outset (21-8) face up to the harsh fact that the ‘omnipotent’ poet is powerless to control his own fate, that Ibis has nothing to fear from Ovid's distant fury”.

an example of Ovid's command of both the literary and the communicative aspects of his poetry. In this way, it shows the side of poetic power expressed through knowledge.

This power does not belong to the realm of reality, and yet, as we saw in Chapter Four, Ovid's elegiac communication poses a challenge to the 'real' power, that of Augustus, both in what the poet communicates to the prince, and in how he casts himself in the role of the prince. Obscurity and pain are communicative devices by which the poet claims his role as *uates* and as *uates* he claims his superiority too, not only over Ibis, but also over the ruler.

My thesis is that the *Fasti* provide not only one of the intertextual references for the poem, but also a parallel for Ovid's elegiac communication aimed at demonstrating power. As we shall see in the next two chapters, the claim to the role of *uates*, which Ovid is deprived of in his exile, has already been asserted through the *Fasti*. This, I argue, provides the justification for the claim in the *Ibis*. Like the *Ibis*, the *Fasti* can be seen as an 'elegiac anomaly': Ovid casts himself as the *uates* of the Roman nation as an elegiac – instead of an epic – poet. In the catalogue of the *Ibis* Ovid exploits both knowledge and emotion – particularly pain and compassion – to control the narrative and manipulate the readers' response. The grounds of this approach lie in the claim to be the holder of knowledge and tradition which Ovid pursues with the *Fasti*. In fact in the calendrical poem Ovid does not merely enumerate dates and events; rather, through the choice of the events and of the narrative, he establishes his readers' interpretation of Roman history and present tradition. To some extent, we could say that he is even the inventor of the tradition.

A structural element of the catalogue, which transcends the efforts of scholars to categorise the catalogue in terms of different types of punishment, is the use of emotion in presenting the narratives of the myths, which is the subject of Chapter Five (“Exemplary punishment and compassion: a structural anomaly”). This also connects the catalogue directly to the first part of the *Ibis*, analysed in Part Two (Chapters Three and Four), and with its elegiac manner of communication, which I explored for its relationship to love elegy in Part One (Chapters One and Two), and to exile poetry in Part Two. If we look at the choice of myths, some of them are not what we would expect to find. Moreover, some of them are simply unfit to represent *Ibis*. Sometimes, the main reference seems to be Ovid, at other times even Augustus. Finally, sometimes more than one character has a relationship with the chosen example.

Some of these characters are guilty, some are innocent, and in other cases the attribution of guilt and innocence is not so straightforward. The main thread that holds the catalogue together, I therefore argue, is the poet’s manipulation of the readers’ response through the communicative use of emotion. I address these communicative roles through the concepts of positive and negative impoliteness, gesture and non-verbal communication, to show how Ovid plays with control and loss of control. This reaches the point where he himself will seem at a loss of control over his own argument, and using examples that actually diminish it, instead of enhancing it. We will therefore also need to look at previous Ovidian treatments of these myths and what they communicate. The intertextuality within the Ovidian corpus is a crucial tool for interpreting these myths within the *Ibis*.

By reworking myths that he had already treated in his own verse, Ovid owns both the material and the readers' reaction to it. He draws from both the Greek and the Roman world, founding his right to manipulate the material on his role as *uates*, established through both the *Metamorphoses* and the *Fasti*. In the *Ibis* Ovid merges these sources to produce a proper elegy. Chapter Six ("Negative aetiology, rulers and the *uates*"), therefore, addresses Ovid's use of knowledge, which involves rulers, tyrants and dynasties too. Ovid's approach to his poetry leads him to challenge the power of the authority and his treatment of tyrants in the catalogue shows a new side of that challenge to Augustus' role. Treating the origin of punishments and tortures, but also of simple rituals and customs, Ovid again claims the role he established for himself in the *Fasti* and turns it into a tool to attack his enemy.

In this way, he ends up communicating to Augustus as well, the additional addressee of his exile poetry, including the *Ibis*. What this analysis ultimately demonstrates is that Ovid exposed Augustus' shortcomings in dealing with power, but in doing so he also compromises the possibility for his exile to end. Ovid's communication to Augustus through the use of myths is based on a pragmatic paradox:⁴⁹⁰ Augustus cannot comply with Ovid's request of mercy for himself and punishment for Ibis because Ovid claims for himself a role of power, inside the realm of poetry, that challenges the power of the ruler. Therefore, for Augustus to exercise mercy Ovid needs to give up his claim to a powerful position inside the realm of poetry. Otherwise, Augustus should grant mercy in order to re-establish his superior position, but this would mean, first, to acknowledge Ovid's attempt to

⁴⁹⁰ See the general Introduction.

achieve power and, second, to acknowledge the influence of poetry on reality. Ovid establishes his own power through poetry from his inferior position: to grant Ovid's request, Augustus must acknowledge that poetic power has an influence outside the borders of poetry.⁴⁹¹ Ovid mixes everything up within the *Ibis*: the relationships of inferiority and superiority are inconsistent and volatile, he falls victim to his inconsistencies and at the same time ties his interlocutors up in them: therefore Augustus cannot obey his injunction, to use pragmatical terms, without letting Ovid's poetic power leave the poetic setting and enter the realm of reality. The only possibility for the injunction to exist is that it is rejected.⁴⁹²

⁴⁹¹ See Lowrie 2009 and 2016.

⁴⁹² On clemency in Rome see Barden Dowling 2009 and Ziogas forthcoming. Ambiguity in the relationship between poetry and reality is present in Ovid's own poetry: cf. e.g. *Trist.* 2.

Chapter Five

Exemplary punishment and compassion: a structural anomaly

Introduction: a catalogue of extremes

The prevailing view concerning the catalogue is that it focuses on retribution as a form of punishment for Ibis' crimes. However, the intricacy of the underlying pattern of references that governs the catalogue is evident from its very beginning: the catalogue incorporates the primary themes of both innocent and guilty characters. The intricate network of references suggests that the characters are selected not only as exemplars of guilt, meriting comparison to Ibis. The case study relates to Ovid and to Augustus too, and consequently demonstrates the complex and fundamental role of the catalogue in the *Ibis*.

Although I do start with the first part of the catalogue, one thing the reader can easily notice is that I skip its very opening example: Trojans. In fact, my thematic analysis of the catalogue does not strictly follow the 'order of appearance' of the myths, although it does give importance to the positioning of each example. I purposely avoid starting with the Trojans, because their role in the structure of the catalogue is fundamental for the interpretation of the *Ibis* as a Roman poem, which I discuss in Chapter Six, where I present their role in dialogue with the final example, Remus.

This chapter deals with the use of emotions in the catalogue. The catalogue reveals itself as a place where every feature of the *Ibis* appears exaggerated. It delivers the highest version of every characteristic. Therefore, as curse becomes mad, violent rage, the elegiac use of other emotions, including pain and

compassion, pushes its limits further. Love, too, is featured, in sometimes disturbing ways. In the catalogue, everything is taken to extreme, and the tangled pattern of references too becomes impossible to untangle. What I argue in this chapter is that emotion, and particularly compassion and pain, has a crucial elegiac manifestation in the catalogue as it does in the first part of the *Ibis*. The catalogue therefore finds its rightful aim in the structure of the poem by putting into what we could consider a form of ‘reality’ the theoretical assumptions which Ovid makes in the first part of the poem. In sum, in the catalogue Ovid deals with his chosen characters applying the same approach to compassion – and deprivation of it – as he does directly with *Ibis*. In doing so, however, he practically reveals the tangled pattern of relationship between himself, the enemy and the *princeps*, on the one hand, and the mythical/historical characters on the other.

V.1 The inextricable bond of pain and relief

The first examples in the catalogue, up to Polymestor (267-8), who is guilty of killing Polydorus to steal his wealth and was ultimately blinded by Hecuba, Polydorus’ mother, are not guilty at all, or their guilt is disputable. The first specific characters, Philoctetes and Telephus, have a consistent history as examples for Ovid’s own misery in exile. Here is how they appear in *Ibis* 253-6:

Quantaque clauigeri Poeantius Herculis heres,
 tanta uenenato uulnera crure geras.
 Nec leuius doleas quam qui bibit ubera ceruae 255
 armatique tulit uulnus, inermis opem.

As many wounds the son of Poetas, heir to the club-bearer Hercules, suffered
 may you suffer so many wounds in your poisoned leg.
 May you feel no less pain than the man who drank from the deer’s breast, 255

who was wounded by the armed man and by the same man, unarmed,
was healed.

The fundamental element of these cases is not guilt but pain. The character of Ibis must undergo a similar experience to that of Philoctetes and Telephus. The characters of Philoctetes and Telephus are also subject to a reversal of fortune: after prolonged pain, they both benefit from those who either harmed them or caused them pain. In the case of Philoctetes, there are two levels of pain to be considered: the physical pain of injury and the emotional pain of abandonment.⁴⁹³ It is evident how the narrative resonates with Ovid's own exilic experience. In *Trist.* 5.1.61-2 Philoctetes is among the examples used to justify Ovid's right to express his lament: *hoc erat in gelido quare Poentius antro / uoce fatigaret Lemnia saxa sua*. The depiction of Philoctetes' cave evokes parallels with the Pontic landscape⁴⁹⁴ and the character is there to support Ovid's right to lament, like Niobe (57), Procne and Alcyon (60), among others. And those examples are there to provide justification for a poetic question too: Ovid's work cannot be other than lament (although we have seen in Part Two that they are not at all *just* lament, as the very word *tristis* suggests).

In *Trist.* 5.4.12 (*quidue Philoctetes ictus ab angue gemat*), again in a very short catalogue of both naturalistic and mythical examples, Ovid uses Philoctetes to state the obvious feature of his pain: those who ask why he is in pain would be

⁴⁹³ As is well known, Philoctetes was abandoned by the Achaeans on the isle of Lemnos (especially at the wish of Odysseus) because his wound emitted a nauseating odour. Then, ten years later, they came back for him, because an oracle had predicted that Troy could not be conquered other than with Philoctetes' bow. He was then persuaded (possibly by a disguised Odysseus according to Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, which emphasises the element of pain, and to what we know of the lost *Philoctetes* by Euripides according to Dio of Prusa) to come back and was healed.

⁴⁹⁴ E.g. *Trist.* 5.13.21: *cana prius gelido desint absinthia Ponto*.

surprised at Priam's pain at the sight of his son's murder. If it is not obvious, the spectator does not want to understand. But a further element is added in *Trist.*

5.2.13-6, where Philoctetes and Telephus appear together:

Paene decem totis aluit Poeantius annis
 pestiferum tumido uulnus ab angue datum.
Telephus aeterna consumptus tabe perisset.
 si non, quae nocuit, dextra tulisset opem.

For almost ten whole years the son of Poeas
 nursed the baneful wound given him by the venom-swollen snake.
Telephus would have died, destroyed by his eternal disease,
 had not the hand that harmed him borne him aid.

The couplet on Telephus is based on gesture. The idea of healing that comes from the same source of pain is embodied by the hand that causes harm. This tangible element contributes to the characterisation of Telephus' and therefore also of Ovid's misery. Representing Telephus as a figure in pain implies a form of criticism against the one who opened the wound, Achilles. Consequently, the attack against Achilles leads us to the figure which Achilles mainly references: Augustus.⁴⁹⁵ Here are the lines that follow (*Trist.* 5.2.17-18): *et mea, si facinus nullum commisimus, opto / uulnera qui fecit, facta leuare uelit*. Ovid establishes a direct link between his misery and the possibility of freedom, and this link is the person who both condemned him and would be able to free him.

The unwillingly immoral

⁴⁹⁵ Telephus was injured by Achilles' spear and later healed by rust on the same spear. Telephus appears in *Trist.* 2.19-20, where the one who should be healed by the same spear that wounded him is Ovid (*forsitan ut quondam Teuthrantia regna tenenti / sic mihi res eadem uulnus opemque feret*).

Bellerophon and Phoenix are the first (but not the only) examples of characters who suffer pain for being involved in immorality which they did not actively bring about (*Ibis* 257-60):

Quique ab equo praeceps in Aleia decidit arua,
 exitio facies cui sua paene fuit.
Id quod Amyntorides uideas trepidumque ministro
 praetemptes baculo luminis orbus iter. 260

(May you suffer no less than) the man who fell ruinously from his horse in the Aleian fields,
 to whom beauty was almost lethal.
May you see what the son of Amytor saw, and seek your timorous way,
 deprived of light, with the help of a stick.

Bellerophon is said to have been damaged by his beauty because his stepmother fell in love with him and, rejected, defamed him and ensured that he was sent away at the risk of his life.⁴⁹⁶ The son of Amyntor is Phoenix, who, similarly, rejected his father's concubine and because of that was slandered by her and blinded by his father.⁴⁹⁷ Both Bellerophon and Phoenix could be seen as victims of the events that befell them, but in keeping with the treatment of similar cases the punishment falls on those who are the victim of sexual crimes. This is often the case in ancient literature, where women usually play the role that Bellerophon and Phoenix have here.

This is the case with Callisto in the *Metamorphoses* (2.401-507), who was banished from the entourage of Diana's nymphs after Jupiter raped her,⁴⁹⁸ but the reason why a form of punishment is perceived as necessary is clear from Lucretia's

⁴⁹⁶ Similar is the case of Tenes (463)

⁴⁹⁷ Although other versions have him sleep with the concubine, but in this context I believe that Ovid follows the tradition for which Phoenix had rejected the concubine.

⁴⁹⁸ Callisto appears later in the *Ibis* too, again as an example of punishment: 474. Similar is the case of Nyctimene, raped by her father and punished for the act she suffered (*Ibis* 360).

story in the *Fasti*, which we will come back to in Chapter Six. In the *Fasti* Lucretia is threatened by the same possibility of being defamed, this time in death (*Fasti* 2.807-10):

“Nil agis: eripiam” dixit “per crimina uitam:
falsus adulterii testis adulter ero:
interimam famulum, cum quo deprensa fereris.”
succubuit famae uicta puella metu. 810

“Resistance is vain,” said he, “I’ll rob you of honour and of life.
I, the adulterer, will bear false witness to the adultery.
I’ll kill a slave, and rumour will have it that you were caught with him.”
Overcome by fear of infamy, the woman gave way.

Any action of the woman would be in vain: calumny would have robbed her of her honour anyway. This attempt to save her honour is what makes Lucretia innocent, but what sets off her devotion is the decision to kill herself: “*quam*” dixit “*ueniam uos datis, ipsa nego*”, “The pardon that you give, I do refuse myself” says Lucretia to her father and husband before stabbing herself to death (830).⁴⁹⁹ This view of sexual crimes makes punishment acceptable for the victim too, as a way of claiming their innocence. However, no claim to innocence should be granted to Ibis.

In this way punishment can be seen as a way of dignifying the character, because it is the moment when innocence is proven: through punishment, the characters are not criticised, they are praised. This is not a form of linguistic impoliteness, a face-threatening act against Ibis’ positive face, therefore a threat against his position and good name. On the contrary, the final acceptance of punishment is a way of restoring one’s name. This is not relevant to Ibis’ story: Ibis

⁴⁹⁹ Cf. Livy 1.58.10: “*uos*” inquit “*uideritis, quid illi debeatur; ego me etsi peccato absoluo, supplicio non libero; nec ulla deinde impudica Lucretiae exemplo uiuet*”.

cannot seek praise for his actions in the narrative that Ovid controls. On the contrary, it is relevant to Ovid's own story. It is Ovid who accepts his punishment, while contradictorily pleading his case and asking for forgiveness.

Up to this point, the main emotion that all these characters evoke, directly or indirectly, is pity. Philoctetes is the innocent one who is only recognised when he is useful, Telephus is the one who can be healed by the hand that wounded him, Bellerophon and Phoenix are the victims of slander because they refused something to someone in a position of power. All these characters could easily be read as referring to Ovid's own situation, and what is more, they would be much better examples of Ovid's own situation than of that of Ibis.⁵⁰⁰ And this situation continues in the lines that follow.

The crime of knowledge

Oedipus and Tiresias, the next characters in the catalogue, are among those punished with blindness.⁵⁰¹ But it is perhaps more interesting to ask what they are punished for. Their crimes are mirrored: Oedipus' crime comes from a lack of knowledge, Tiresias' from the use of his superior knowledge. We looked at Oedipus at the end of Chapter Four. On that occasion we introduced the theme of Ovid's control over the interpretation of the myths, making an unwitting character as guilty as one who has committed a crime voluntarily. Ovid's Oedipus is an inherently passive character, led by his daughter (*quem sua filia rexit*: 261), but he is clearly defined as guilty: *expertus scelus est cuius uterque parens* (262). Now *scelus* is a

⁵⁰⁰ Also, as is well known, the vocabulary of sight is fundamental in Ovid's exile poetry to indicate Ovid's *error*.

⁵⁰¹ On the blinded as a sub-catalogue, particularly valued in the context of a wider proposition of structure for the catalogue, see Krasne 2012.

word that Ovid explicitly rejects as a definition of his own guilt (e.g. *Trist.* 1.3.38; 3.6.25). And yet he attributes it to Oedipus, who, like Ovid himself, has unwittingly committed a crime.

As we saw in Chapter Four, the theme of sight is central to Ovid's narrative of his exile, which leads us to the figure of Actaeon. Ovid, like Actaeon, has seen something he should not have seen and is punished for this (*Tristia* 2.105: *inscius Actaeon uidit sine ueste Dianam*). Actaeon's ignorance (*inscius*) is the core of Ovid's argument: his own crime was committed without deception. Loss of sight is a punishment, but seeing too much is punishable. It is so punishable that Actaeon is included in the catalogue (*Ibis* 479-80):

Quique uerecundae speculantem labra Dianae,
quique Crotopiaden diripuere Linum. 480

(May you be the prey of) those who tore to pieces the man who spied on the
baths of chaste Diana,
and the descendant of Crotopus, Linus.⁵⁰² 480

Ibis should be prey to those (*praedaque sis illis*: 477) who tore Actaeon to pieces. There are fundamental differences in vocabulary between the passage of the *Ibis* and that of the *Tristia*. In the *Tristia* the focus is all on the lack of awareness of the poet, with the emphasis on *inscius* and the verb *uideo* to indicate a general act of seeing.⁵⁰³ On the contrary, *speculo* can indicate the act of actively observing, spying.⁵⁰⁴ Diana is described neutrally as *sine ueste* in *Tristia* 2, while in the *Ibis*

⁵⁰² In terms of use of compassion, it is worth noting that Linus, together with Opheltes (483) and Astyanax (496; 563-4), represent a case of a child used to represent *Ibis*' punishment. Being an exemplary case of innocent death (cf. *Her.* 11, Canace to Macareus), it is one more time – and quite dramatically – stated how far Ovid can go in the use of emotions.

⁵⁰³ See Ingleheart 2010, 126-7. On the passage see also Luck 1977, 105-6; Ciccarelli 2003, 104-8.

⁵⁰⁴ *OLD*² 1987, s.v. *speculo*, resp. 1 and 2.

she is defined as *uerecunda*. The choice of the adjective shifts the focalisation to Diana's point of view: through *uerecunda* we see the effect of Actaeon's observation of Diana and the virgin goddess' feeling of distress in realising that she has been observed. The emotion of *uerecundia* is a very accurate choice in characterising Diana's discomfort, as it emphasises that seeing her naked is as inappropriate for Actaeon as it is for her to be seen like that as a goddess.⁵⁰⁵

In other words, in the *Ibis*, Ovid emphasises the face-threatening act against the face, that is, the impoliteness, inherent in Actaeon's act, thus increasing his responsibility and guilt. On the contrary, in the *Tristia*, where the aim is to defend himself, the offence and therefore the responsibility are minimised. Ovid manages to take the archetype of his own self-defence and use it against Ibis, but in doing so he undermines his own cause. For the example to be effective as an attack, it must be stripped of all the qualities that helped Ovid to make it a good example of self-defence: now that Ibis is Actaeon, Ovid has a bit of Ibis in him too. This repurpose of a mythical example for Ovid's innocence earlier in the exile poetry can cause us to reassess Ovid's earlier protestations of innocence, and see that Ovid may not have been quite as innocent as he claims to be.⁵⁰⁶

And Tiresias? First of all, Ovid shows his control as a poet over his choice of examples, using the punishment to show how the character actually became the blind prophet, the identity for which he is best known. At the same time, the reason for his punishment, which precedes his most famous identity as a prophet, is something that signifies his whole identity before and after the drastic change:

⁵⁰⁵ On *uerecundia* in the Roman world see Kaster 2010, 13-27 (on *uerecundia* in connection to the body and nudity esp. 23).

⁵⁰⁶ Actaeon's innocent mistake appears in *Met.* 3 as well.

knowledge. Tiresias is compensated for his blindness with the ability to make correct prophecies.⁵⁰⁷ But the possession of superior knowledge is also what brought him harm.

The word choice for the event that caused Tiresias to be punished is significant too (*Ibis* 263-4):

Qualis erat, postquam est iudex de lite iocosa
sumptus, Apollinea clarus in arte senex.

As was he, after being appointed judge of a playful quarrel,
the old man famous for the art of Apollo.

The dispute between Jupiter and Juno over whether it is the man or the woman who enjoys sex more is defined as a playful debate (*litis iocosa*), with *iocosus*, in its sense of jesting,⁵⁰⁸ being what we would define as an unexpected definition for an episode that will cause this unusual judge to lose his sight forever, if only we would not have read *Met.* 3.319-20 (where Jupiter and Juno are bandying about *remissos... iocos*, “good-humoured jests”). As the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* shows, *iocosus* is not a new adjective in Ovid’s exile poetry. Rather, it is the word which Ovid uses to define his own poetry, as we have discussed, while defending himself against charges of immorality, in *Trist.* 2.353-4:

Crede mihi, distant mores a carmine nostri:
uita uerecunda est, Musa iocosa mea.

Believe me, my morals are different from my poem:

⁵⁰⁷ This is his presentation in *Met.* 3.336-8: *at pater omnipotens (neque enim licet inrita cuiquam / facta dei fecisse deo) pro lumine adempto / cire futura dedit poenamque leuauit honore*: “But the Almighty Father (for no god may undo what another god has done) in return for his loss of sight gave Tiresias the power to know the future, lightening the penalty by the honour”. Transl.: Miller (1916) rev. Goold (1977).

⁵⁰⁸ See *ThlL* VII.2.284.75 citing *Ibis* 263 and *OLD*² 1059 s.v. *iocosus*, which instead cites *Tristia* 2.354 and Ovid’s *Musa iocosa*.

my life is seemly, my Muse playful.

Just as the playful quarrel caused Tiresias to lose his eyesight, so the playful Muse damaged her poet. The quarrel is playful for the gods who indulge in it – but with serious negative consequences for the human who gets dragged into the business of the gods, and when the human says something offensive he is punished for it by the vengeful deity. So if Ovid calls his Musa, another deity, *iocosa*, it is again very evident how he plays with examples that have a crucial meaning for his own experience, rather than for that of the enemy.

At the same time, the adjective *iocosus* could be seen as offensive, and the scope of the offence is widened by the comparison between the *Ibis* and the *Tristia*. The adjective embodies both the idea of playfulness and that of immorality, which pairs with the difference between Ovid's (playful) poetry and his (pristine) life.⁵⁰⁹ The use of this word is primarily an insult to Jupiter and Juno, whose 'silly' or immoral argument has caused a man to lose one of his senses: in the first sense, the linguistic impoliteness is conveyed by the diminution of the dignity of the argument; in the second sense, it is conveyed by a direct attack on the appropriateness of the argument. But it is the first meaning, the idea that the quarrel is playful, silly, that conveys most of the attack, and this has implications for the relationship between Ovid and Augustus: if the reason that led to the punishment is playful, the punishment is unbalanced. This is true of Tiresias and the quarrel, but also of Ovid and his *Ars*.⁵¹⁰

⁵⁰⁹ See Ingleheart 2010, 288-9 on the passage and on Ovid's use of the adjective *iocosus* and related terms in connection to his poetry and with a broader pattern of intertextuality.

⁵¹⁰ See Giusti 2018.

So, again, is Tiresias really a good choice for Ibis? I would argue that he is a much better choice for Ovid, whose playful Muse was among the factors that caused him harm – together with his Actaeonian *error*. Like Tiresias, Ovid was brought into a dangerous playfulness by the same qualities that now give him the chance to exercise power. This power stigmatises the punishment itself, which is presented as excessive, contrasting the playfulness which should shape the setting. Therefore, poetic power is a means to attack the one who imposed it: the gods – Juno, Augustus or perhaps someone close to him (the role of Livia, for example, is discussed⁵¹¹). The attack against the emperor goes through the *Ibis* without the need of a direct identification with Ibis.

The first examples in the catalogue are characters where compassion outweighs their punishment. Because they open the catalogue, it is difficult not to ascribe a kind of programmatic function to them: where we would expect to find the clearest arguments for Ibis' guilt – literally the examples that support his punishment – we find examples that would easily (and probably much better) fit Ovid's own self-defence. The thread of 'inapplicable examples' runs through to the end of the catalogue and these examples are actually there to be applied to Ibis too, in three ways: because of the elegiac nature of the *Ibis*, because of Ovid's communication through poetry, and in light of a certain consistency, in Ovid's poetry, in mixing control and loss of control, cohesiveness and self-sabotage.

⁵¹¹ On Ovid's portrayal of Livia in his exile poetry see Johnson 1997 and Thakur 2014. On Livia in general Barrett 2002. In favour of the role of Livia in Ovid's fate see Radulescu 2019, but against it see Claassen review of the same work. On Livia in connection to the *Ars amatoria* see Barchiesi 2007.

V.2 The pattern of compassion through the catalogue

Many examples in the catalogue would fit a claim to compassion, much more than a claim to punishment. For example, Ceyx (275-6), the pious king who died in a shipwreck leaving Alcyone inconsolable; Pterelas, Nisus (361-2), Pelia (441-2), Servius Tullius (363-4), the deceived and betrayed fathers, or a mourning father, like Evenus (513-4) of Attis, victim of the wishes of a goddess (455-6; 507-8), Tenes (463), defamed like Bellerophon, Palamedes, differently but also defamed (619-20), and Callisto (474). The pattern includes even children, like Linus (480, plus the story of his mother, Psamas, at 573-4) and Astyanax (496), and some of the most famous compassion-worthy women of myth (and of the *Metamorphoses*), like Eurydice (481-2) and Philomela (437-8). Men involved in an unfortunate love are included too, like Haemon (561), Amphion (583-4), Leander (589-90). The examples are clearly spread throughout the whole catalogue. Thus, although it is possible to divide the catalogue into sub-sections based especially on punishments, if we look at the pattern of references which the stories imply, each type of story is quite spread out throughout the catalogue. Some of these examples, in particular, stand out as peaks of a specific use of compassion and I focus on those in this analysis.

Dysfunctional father-daughter relationship

In the frame of three couplets Ovid addresses two specular issues in an incestuous father-daughter relationship, with opposite and specular uses of compassion. The first concerns Thyestes and Pelopea, Cinyras and Myrrha, Epopeus and Nyctimene (359-60):

Filia si fuerit, sit quod Pelopea Thyestae,
Myrrha suo patri Nyctimeneque suo.

If you have a daughter, may she be like Pelopea to Thyestes,
like Myrrha to her father and Nyctimene to hers.

While Myrrha actually tricks her father in order to sleep with him, both Thyestes and Epopeus rape their daughters.⁵¹² In this couplet, however, the correspondences are not straightforward, because Ibis is indeed associated with Thyestes, Cinyras and Epopeus, but not as perpetrators of a crime (incest): instead, the crime is used as if it were the actual punishment. Having a daughter like Pelopea, Myrrha and Nyctimene is considered a disgrace for Thyestes, Cinyras and Epopeus even though only one of these men experiences the act without being aware of the incest: the other two pursued it. In *Met.* 10 Cinyras is tricked into the incest, but also partially blamed for it. He is drunk when the nurse tricks him and this is an example of lack of self-control. He goes on to have sex with a girl who he knows to be the age of his daughter, and the incestuous pair even call each other “father” and “daughter”, (which can suggest a kind of penchant for dodgy quasi-incestuous sexual role play on his part). In other words, his portrayal includes a kind of involvement on his part in the responsibility of the act, even though he is actually unaware of the incest.

The other theme, which is also related to immorality, is the deceiving of fathers. Now we would expect that the deceivers would offer examples for Ibis’ punishments, but this is not the case: it is the deceived. This happens, for example, in the cases of Pterelaos and Nisus (king of Megara):

Neue magis pia sit capitique parentis amica

⁵¹² On Thyestes and Pelopea: Hyg. *Fab.* 87-8; Lactantius Placidus *ad Stat. Theb.* 1.694. On Myrrha and Cinyras *Met.* 10.298-524; on Nyctimene and Epopeus *Met.* 2.589-95; Hyg. *Fab.* 204; Lactantius Placidus *ad Stat. Theb.* 3.507. See La Penna 1957, 89-90.

quam sua uel Pterelae, uel tibi, Nise, fuit.

And may she not be more devoted and caring for her father's life
than his daughter to Pterelaos, or yours, Nisus, to you.

(*Ibis* 361-2)

Ovid wishes for Ibis to have a daughter like Comaetho (to Pterelaos) and Scylla (to Nisus): they both betrayed their fathers for an enemy.⁵¹³ Whereas in the previous group of examples the guilt was misplaced, here the characters are again not guilty at all. They are only 'guilty' of trusting someone who should have been inherently trustworthy: their daughters. They are certainly victims in this dynamic, and yet they are used as examples for Ibis. Moreover, their status as victim is reinforced by their portrayal as characters worthy of pity, based on two aspects: the semantic domain of piety (*pia*) and poetic style, namely the decision to address Nisus directly (*tibi, Nise*).

The reference to piety can obviously be seen as ironic in a very traditional way: Comaetho and Scylla were not devoted to their fathers at all, and so the meaning of the phrase is the opposite of its content. On the one hand, there is the moral aspect of wishing the enemy to be involved in an impious act and to suffer the consequences of an impious daughter. On the other hand, the attack against Ibis is carried out through mockery, which, as we have already seen, is a way of demonstrating power over the counterpart.⁵¹⁴ This attack is reinforced by the fact that both Pterelaos and Nisus are constructed as characters worthy of compassion.

⁵¹³ Comaetho, in love with an enemy, decided to cut off from his father's head the hair that kept him alive (cf. e.g. *Apollod.* 2.60). Similarly, Scylla cut off the golden hair which her father's life depended on because she fell in love with Minos (*Met.* 8.6-151), as we have previously discussed. See La Penna, 1957, 90.

⁵¹⁴ Culpeper 1996, 358.

The direct invocation to Nisus adds to the pathos of the scene, while the backstory highlights the absence of guilt: again, as it is consistent with Ovid's communicative approach, Ibis is shaped by the association with compassion, only to be deprived of it and even ridiculed.

Finally, the father-daughter relationship can be linked to Augustus and Julia. Suet. *Aug.* 65 presents Augustus' experience with Julia as one of a series of events he experienced as generically tragic – and it is worth noting that he wished that those who begged for leniency for Julia would be visited with such wives and daughters: it is exactly the form of the curse which Ovid presents here (*nam ut omnino reuocaret, exorari nullo modo potuit, deprecanti saepe p. R. et pertinacius instanti tales filias talesque coniuges pro contione imprecatu*s: “But he could not by any means be prevailed on to recall her altogether, and when the Roman people several times interceded for her and urgently pressed their suit, he in open assembly called upon the gods to curse them with like daughters and like wives”).⁵¹⁵

Augustus could be seen as a father betrayed by his own daughter, who ends up punished for his laws. Augustus, who based so much of his legislation on morality, had to deal, with the issue of Julia's behaviour. At the same time Ovid consistently criticises Augustus for misplacing his trust: Ibis is the wrong choice which Augustus made in terms of trust. Ibis here is the fittest reference for Comaetho and Scylla, while Augustus is the fittest for Pterelaos and Nisus, who – explicitly – are compared to Ibis: by overcoming straightforward correspondences, Ovid criticises Augustus through Ibis.

⁵¹⁵ This could also connect with Ovid's insistence on Scylla as a tragic character at *Tristia* 2.393-4.

Love, violence and compassion

Who would have thought that Eurydice could be a good example for Ibis? A group of examples concerns figures whose destiny, often related to love, readers have always famously pitied. It proves very difficult to imagine them as references for a deserved punishment and the first one we are going to analyse is therefore Eurydice (481-2):

Neue uenenato leuius feriaris ab angue,
quam senis Oeagri Calliopesque nurus.

May you be wounded by a poisonous snake not lighter
than the old Oeagrus' and Calliope's daughter in law.

The wish for the enemy's death is quite clear: Ibis shall not be hurt less than Eurydice (Oeagrus and Calliope's daughter in law). The story of Orpheus and Eurydice is not only one of the most famous and significant myths of the *Metamorphoses* and of Latin literature in general. It is also a story intimately linked to sight. Orpheus is the only one who could be considered guilty of something: it is because he turned around to look at Eurydice that she could not return from the Underworld. His crime, if it is possible to call it so, is that he needs to see that Eurydice is really behind him, and, just as he sees her, he loses her (and after Orpheus' death what is highlighted is the freedom to look at her: *Eurydicenque suam iam tuto respicit Orpheus*, 11.66). It is not Orpheus, however, who is compared to Ibis (who may appear in the unidentified episode of lines 525-6 and again indirectly in 599-600 where the protagonists are the Thracian women who kill him). It is Eurydice, who on the contrary should only evoke pity in the reader, as the one who died innocently and who was then failed by her husband.

Ovid's use of the story of Orpheus and Eurydice in the *Metamorphoses* has been much debated, especially in comparison with its presence in the *Georgics*.⁵¹⁶ It is now time for the *Ibis* to enter a discussion that is long established for the rest of Ovid's work.⁵¹⁷ The presence of Eurydice, another reference to the *Metamorphoses*, in dialogue with other related examples (e.g. the already mentioned Thracian women who killed Orpheus: 599-600) alludes to the role of poetry, another fundamental aspect of Ovid's poetry that persists in exile: the very first addressee of Ovid's exilic elegiac letters is his own book. By comparing *Ibis* to Eurydice Ovid recalls the ruin to which his poetry and himself were subjected: an undeserved misery for an innocent poet and an innocent art. The tangled pattern of references that Ovid builds up in the catalogue parallels the complex argument he creates in his exile poetry and at the same time replicates the complexity and even the inconsistency of his art both before and after relegation.

The restorative power of art returns in another recollection of the *Metamorphoses*: Philomela (*Ibis* 537-8).

Quodque suae passa est paelex inuita sororis,
excidat ante pedes lingua resecta tuos.

And, as happened to the woman who unwillingly was the rival of her sister,
may your cut tongue fall before your feet.

⁵¹⁶ Fränkel declares that he never responded to the episode, despite its intent of being very moving (Fränkel 1945, 219); Otis thought it was aimed at parody and comedy (Otis 1970, 184); A famous article by Charles Segal from the seventies (Segal 1972) responded to the long-running dispute over the episode: building on Norden (Norden 1934), Segal appreciates Ovid's deliberate originality in the use of the episode and interprets it as a narrative of the "restorative power of his own art" (Segal 1972, 491).

⁵¹⁷ In terms of involving the *Ibis* in Ovid's poetic *corpus*, Vial argues that the *Ibis* is precisely a response to the accusation of monotony made against to Ovid's exile poetry (Vial 2015, 47). See also Krasne's point on *Ibis* being identifiable with the Muses (Krasne 2012).

The one who unwillingly became her sister's rival is Philomela, who was raped by her brother-in-law, Tereus, and then mutilated (he cut off her tongue) to prevent her from reporting the crime: *Met.* 6.424-74. The term *paelex*, which refers to the mistress or a female rival of a legitimate wife, is usually an offensive word, and a strange choice for a rape victim. In the *Ibis* it is programmatic for the reference to the *Metamorphoses*.⁵¹⁸ In both of its occurrences in the *Metamorphoses* the term is used when the characters announce their revenge, first by Philomela, then by the narrator describing the interaction between Philomela and Procne, after the former has been freed by the latter.

At 6.537-8, in rather tormented lines, Philomela, who has just been raped, stigmatises Tereus' perversion of all lawful relationships:

Omnia turbasti; paelex ego facta sororis,
tu geminus coniunx, hostis mihi debita Procne.⁵¹⁹

You have confused all natural relations: I have become a concubine,
my sister's rival; you, a husband to both. Now Procne must be my enemy.

Philomela ends the speech by threatening Tereus that she will expose his crime (544-8: *ipsa pudore / proiecto tua facta loquar: si copia detur, / in populos veniam; si silvis clausa tenebor, / inplebo silvas et conscia saxa movebo; / audiet haec aether et si deus ullus in illo est!*). This pairs with the other occurrence of the term *paelex*, used by the narrator to describe Philomela's attitude once Procne frees her.

⁵¹⁸ Cf. *ThL* X.1.39.40 quoting both occurrences in the *Metamorphoses* (6.537: Philomela labels herself as such; 6.606: the narrator describes Philomela as her sister's *paelex*) and that in the *Ibis*; and *OLD*² 1411 s.v. *paelex* quoting *Met.* 6.537.

⁵¹⁹ This is the Loeb text, which accepts Withof's emendation *hostis mihi debita Procne* (against *hostis mihi debita poena* of the majority of the *codices*). Tarrant excludes the lines, building on Heinsius' suggestion. Translation: modified version of Miller 1916, rev. Goold 1977.

Because she might seem a rival to her sister, Philomela is too ashamed to raise her eyes (6.605-6):

sed non attollere contra 605
sustinet haec oculos, paelex sibi uisa sororis.

But Philomela could not lift her eyes to her sister,
feeling herself to have become her sister's rival.

This is again the premise for a plan of revenge. Whereas in 537-8 it was Philomela herself who was about to reveal her intention to Tereus to broadcast his crime – who decides to mutilate her tongue in order to prevent this – here it is Procne who reveals her plan of revenge, simultaneously taking control of the narrative and deciding who is actually guilty and therefore needs to be punished: not Philomela, but Tereus. Procne takes over the narrative and in this sense she antagonises Tereus: the natural relationship between the sisters, which he attempted to destroy, is restored by Procne's terrible revenge, which in turn is again an attack against natural relationships (between parents and children). The theme of making justice and seeking revenge is obviously very relevant to Ovid's *Ibis* and crucial to our understanding of the presence of Philomela as an example. As we noted in the case of Eurydice, this does not seem to be a suitable reference for *Ibis*: the barbarous Tereus, on the contrary, would have been a much more relevant example. Why choosing Philomela, the one who (cruelly) takes revenge over someone who has wronged her, as an example for *Ibis*?⁵²⁰ Philomela would be a closer fit for Ovid's role, whereas Tereus would be a better fit for *Ibis*.

⁵²⁰ On the episode see Ursini 2021, 15-58.

I argue that this shows how much the *Ibis* is integrated into Ovid's poetry and is structured within a complex pattern of intertextuality. Ovid looks back at the *Metamorphoses* and rethinks his characters within the new elegiac plan, merging their story with the exilic literary story that draws from autobiography. Philomela is a much better reference for Ovid, who overcomes the silence to which the exile condemned him through his own art, and at the same time shows the poet's ability to influence the reader's response to a story. He uses an unsuitable example and introduces inconsistency into his own poetry, just as he did in his pre-exilic work, referencing his own art and at the same time showing the power of manipulating the reader's interpretation, of directing the narrative.

Finally, love poetry is not absent from the *Ibis*. At lines 589-90 we find Leander, whose presence brings back the characters worthy of compassion:

Si qua per alternos pulsabitur unda lacertos,
omnis Abydena sit tibi peior aqua.

If you ever hit the waves with alternate arms,
may those waves be more dangerous to you than the water of Abydos.

The water of Abydos is the one that kills Leander, while he swims, as he does every other night, to reach Hero. This time *Ibis* is compared to someone who risks his life for love. Leander is a frequent presence in Ovid's elegy: he appears in the *Ars* (2.249), in the *Amores* (2.16.31), in the double *Heroides* (18 and 19 are letters between Leander and Hero), and finally in the *Tristia* too, in a reference to the frozen Pontic landscape (*Trist.* 3.10.41-2). Leander is another relevant figure for Ovid's exile, which now, again, is being repurposed as an aggressive tool against the enemy.

In *Her.* 18.119-20 Leander compares his condition on leaving Hero to that of a shipwrecked man (as opposed to that of a swimmer as he swims towards her), which is tragically ironic given that he will drown on reaching Hero rather than on leaving her:

Siqua fides uero est, ueniens hinc esse natator,
cum redeo, uideor naufragus esse mihi.

Believe me, it is true: going hence, I seem a swimmer,
but, when I return, a victim of a shipwreck.⁵²¹

Departing from the loved one is compared to a shipwreck, because of the sense of loss this provokes. The reader is drawn to support the couple and empathise with them. Leander's death is clearly an event to be interpreted as an example of the fury of fate. The theme of shipwreck stems from that of compassion and provides another parallel with Ovid's own condition. Moreover, it is a well-established theme in connection with exile:⁵²² leaving Rome, like leaving one's true love, is a devastating shipwreck to the exiled elegiac poet.

However, Leander's story is relevant for Ovid's experience of the land to which he has been relegated too. In *Trist.* 3.10.41-2, after describing the frozen landscape of Pontus, Ovid compares it to the sea which Leander had to cross:

Si tibi tale fretum quondam, Leandre, fuisset,
non foret angustae mors tua crimen aquae.

If you, Leander, had once had such a sea, your death
would not have been a charge against the narrow waters.

⁵²¹ Text of the *Heroides*: Showerman 1914, rev. Goold 1977. Translation: modified version of Showerman 1914, rev. Goold 1977.

⁵²² Cf. e.g. *Trist.* 1.3

Ovid claims to have seen the sea frozen to the point where it was possible to walk on it: if Leander had been able to cross such a sea, he would not have died. This statement, in a way bitterly ironic, recalls the story of Leander and Hero, but focuses on its epilogue without insisting on its pathetic aspect. In both cases, Ovid demonstrates his ability to adapt his examples to his own narrative, either in a compassionate way or not. He resorts to the same tactics in the *Ibis*, but to deny compassion to his enemy where he had tried to evoke it for himself.

Leander is again a character who easily channels Ovid's experience, much more so than Ibis. However, in mixing up the pattern of references, Ovid shows both poetic invention and the exercise of power. Leander is a character worthy of pity, and therefore he must refer to Ibis: for pity is what Ibis will need but never receive, and this is his punishment. At the same time, the threads of the correspondence must be tangled, for Ovid's revenge is to apply to his enemy what was once relevant to his own misery, demonstrating the elegiac poet's ability to twist and manipulate stories and interpretations. This power runs the risk of inconsistency and self-sabotage, which is another characteristic of Ovid's poetry that makes the *Ibis* a relevant and integrated part of his poetic corpus.⁵²³

V.3 Constructive and disruptive relationships with the gods

Our last series of case studies showing the tangled relationship between punishment and compassion, as well as its implications for Ovid's own argument, concerns

⁵²³ Cf. how Ovid's undermines his argument through his choice of examples in *Met.* 6.87-128 and *Ars* 1.687-704.

specifically the relationship between humans and deities. This relationship can take a playful and witty turn, as is the case of Numa and Jupiter in the *Fasti*: the human capacity of outsmarting the god, or the god's will to play along with a human. On the other hand, the cases of Lycaon and Marsyas show the disruptive consequences of the attempt to outsmart or defeat the gods, ultimately showing a loss of effective communication which pairs with the tragic outcome of the stories.

Playful wordplay: Numa and Jupiter

My case study to show the switch of roles and of power relationships in the *Fasti*, as a precedent for the *Ibis*, concerns the relationship with the gods, and particularly the dialogue between Numa and Jupiter at *Fast.* 3.259-392. Numa does not relate to the god as an equal; on the contrary, he has a reaction of dismay.⁵²⁴ The dialogue between Jupiter and Numa is an incredibly sophisticated expression of the power of communication. As Raccanelli has noted, Numa performs a metalinguistic operation in three stages, by which he is able to discover the linguistic code and to rephrase Jupiter's commands: in this way he forges a new formulation that preserves the essence of the original one but erases its deadly elements.⁵²⁵ This is the first aspect of Ovid's demonstration of the power of communication and the possibility of manipulating it: the core meaning of a statement can be both achieved and concealed by a simple manipulation of the message.

⁵²⁴ Which is an Ovidian innovation: Ursini 2024, 421.

⁵²⁵ Raccanelli 2017, 266. Jupiter first requests an head, and Numa replies that he will cut off an onion. Then Jupiter clarifies that it must be a man's head; to this Numa offers a man's hair. Finally Jupiter demands a life, and Numa proposes that of a fish. The king's wit makes the god laugh and approve of his attitude.

Pushing this analysis further, this is also a case of pragmatic paradox. Jupiter's injunction can only be obeyed by Numa if it is disobeyed. To prove his worth to Jupiter, Numa must identify the true meaning of the god's message. To do so, however, means to disobey the literal meaning of Jupiter's injunction: Numa should not kill a man for Jupiter to fulfil his request.⁵²⁶ By responding to the god with clever alternatives to his requests, Numa gains Jupiter's respect and achieves his own aim. Ovid's version of the dialogue between Numa and Jupiter has a specific element of difference from the other accounts: unlike those of Valerius Antias (*Hist.* 6, HRR I², 240-1) and Plutarch (*Numa* 15, 8-10), Ovid's Jupiter seems to have already decided not to demand a human sacrifice.⁵²⁷ So, Ovid displays power and control in innovating with his own variant of the story.

At the same time, his variant concerns a continuous exchange of power roles between Numa and Jupiter. The god himself plays with the king, testing him and hiding his true request with his deadly obscurity.⁵²⁸ In the end, Jupiter laughs and proclaims Numa worthy to enter into conversation with the god: 343-4: *risit, et 'his' inquit 'facito mea tela procures, / o uir conloquio non abigende deum (...)'*. Jupiter's laughter breaks the obscurity and solves the riddle and, instead of being a means of impoliteness, as it could be, opens the way for Numa to be accepted by the god.

The poet's complex control over the narrative also extends to the realm of time.⁵²⁹ As Walter notes, "Ovid's aetia do not only enable the crossing of these two

⁵²⁶ A similar case of paradox is proposed by Ursini 2021 for the episode of Deucalion and Pyrrha in *Met.* 1.

⁵²⁷ See Raccanelli 2017, Driediger-Murphy 2021, Ursini 2024, 425-8.

⁵²⁸ See Raccanelli 2017, 271, proposing a pragmatic reading of the episode. For a wide and recent treatment of the passage see Ursini 2024, 425-8 with further bibliography.

⁵²⁹ On time in aetiological stories see Walter 2020b (esp. on the *Fasti*: 176-92).

axes, the horizontal axis of the passage of days, and the vertical axis of each day's history. They also allow the poet to bring this very dynamic framework of time in contact with the eternal time of the gods, whom the poet regularly invokes in the context of his aetiological calendar entries".⁵³⁰ In the *Ibis*, Ovid pushes his relationship with both time and the gods by presenting himself as able to use his special connection with both, as *uates*, to attack his enemy. The poet is in charge of the ritual and has a superior knowledge of events, both past, present, and future, which will bring ruin to the enemy. Finally, being in charge of the narrative, the poet controls the power exchange too: Numa tricks Jupiter who wants to be tricked and challenges the king to do so; the poet plays with gods and kings, and in fact with his own poetry, by including a pattern of control and loss of control into his version of the story.⁵³¹

In the catalogue, humans try to challenge the superiority of the gods or even deceive them, which is the cause of their downfall: this is the case, for example, in the myths of Adeimantus (327-8), Erysichthon (425-6), Lycaon (431-2), Semele (471) and Salmoneus (473). Another case is that of Lycurgus (345-6), king of Thrace, who dared to deny the divinity of Dionysus. The god then drove him mad (this is the beginning of the sub-catalogue of the mad: 343-8). The torment merges with the history of causes, but also with a display of superior knowledge. It is not said what Lycurgus did to be punished, leaving a space of ambiguity, but the torment provides both the threat to *Ibis* and the reason why Lycurgus wore only one sandal.

⁵³⁰ Walter 2020b, 192.

⁵³¹ Particularly peculiar is the absence of awe in Ovid's relationship to Mars (cf. *Fast.* 3.5-6): Ovid's displayed familiarity with the god borders on patronising (Ursini 2024, 88).

Lycaon: who controls the narrative?

My case study for comparison to what happens in the *Fasti* with Numa and Jupiter is Lycaon, whose story is based on deception (*Ibis* 431-2):

Foeda Lycaoniae repetes conuiuia mensae
temptabisque cibi fallere fraude Iouem.

You will repeat the shameful banquet of Lycaon's board
and you will try to deceive Jupiter with dishonest food.

Lycaon was king of Arcadia and had Jupiter as his guest. In order to test Jupiter's divinity, he offered him human flesh.⁵³² In Ovid's account, in *Met.* 1, Jupiter strikes Lycaon's palace with his thunder, killing everybody inside except for Lycaon, who runs into the bushes in terror and, without any specified external intervention, turns into a wolf.⁵³³ This is also the first human metamorphosis of the poem, which makes it programmatic.⁵³⁴ My thesis is that Lycaon's case is exemplary of how Ovid builds his elegiac invective by incorporating the background of the *Metamorphoses*, which the reader is supposed to know, in a poetic operation that has its precedent in the *Fasti*. This is done by exploiting three main characteristics of the story of Lycaon in the *Metamorphoses*: the relationship between the external narrator (Ovid), the internal narrator (Jupiter) and the antagonist (Lycaon); the role of ritual and punishment; the issue of the spontaneity of Lycaon's metamorphosis into a wolf.

⁵³² Sources for this episode are Apollodorus 3.98, Hyginus *Fab.* 176 (attributing the act to Lycaon's son). Ovid himself narrates the episode in *Met.* 1.216-52.

⁵³³ On Lycaon Haarberg 1983; Anderson 1989; Griffin 1992; Wheeler 1999, 32, 106, 129-30, 164, 169-70, 171-81, 199-200, 236; Feldherr 2010, 37-40, 42, 53, 131-43, 146-7, 149, 162, 273-5, 343, 345, 347; Apostol 2014; Casanova Robin 2017.

⁵³⁴ Anderson 1989, 92 suggests that Ovid is pretending to give Lycaon's story a programmatic and paradigmatic character, in order to "shift the paradigm to the more disturbing, but productive, form that Ovid impresses on his *Metamorphoses*".

These features interact with the archetype of the dialogue-challenge between the man and the god provided by the interaction between Numa and Jupiter in the *Fasti*. The revelation of the god is accompanied by a violent natural phenomenon (the earthquake in *Fasti* 3.329-30: *constat Auentinae tremuisse cacumina siluae / terraque subsedit pondere pressa Iouis*); the collapse of the palace due to the thunder in *Met.* 1.230-1 (*quos simul inposuit mensis, ego uindice flamma / in domino dignos euerti tecta penates*), which causes terror in the man (Numa in *Fasti* 3.331-2: *corda micant regis totoque e corpore sanguis / fugit, et hirsutae deriguere comae*; Lycaon in *Met.* 1.232-3: *territus ipse fugit, nactusque silentia ruris / exululat, frustra loqui conatur*). While Numa's clever use of language allows him to engage in an effective dialogue with Jupiter, who seems amused by his counterpart's wit (*risit et: "his", inquit "facito mea tela procures, / o uir colloquio non abigende deum!"*: *Fasti* 3.343-4), Lycaon loses his human form, without being able to articulate his speech (*nactusque silentia ruris / exululat, frustra loqui conatur*: *Met.* 1.232-3).

At the same time, the relationship between the god and human king is complex in both stories. In Numa's case, Ovid suggests that Jupiter is testing the king with scary riddles that propose human sacrifice, and is willing to be defeated; Lycaon is the one testing Jupiter, who narrates the event as the story of the sinner being punished, using a ritual that again involves human sacrifice. Ricardo Apostol explains the relationship between Lycaon and Jupiter with these words: "Lycaon puts himself in the place of Jupiter both as aggrieved party and as dispenser of

retribution”.⁵³⁵ The idea of ‘doubles’ for both the pair Lycaon-Jupiter and Numa-Jupiter is appropriate and relevant to the background of the *Ibis* and lies beneath the couplet in which Ibis is paired with Lycaon as someone worthy of punishment for the impious attempt to deceive a god.⁵³⁶

But what is Ovid’s role in this context? In the *Ibis*, Ovid is the one in charge of the ritual. The one who is inventing and leading a human sacrifice specifically for Ibis, and whose authority is based upon poetic power. So, if it is true that Ovid is Numa, having an effective relationship with the gods that allows him access to power through language, Ovid is also Lycaon, in that he attempts – and, unlike Lycaon, succeeds – to perform his own, deadly ritual.⁵³⁷ However, Ibis is Lycaon too. Not only shall Ibis be rejected from society: he was not part of humankind from the beginning: *gutturaque inbuerunt infantia lacte canino / – hic primus pueri uenit in ora cibus: / perbibit inde suae rabiem nutricis alumnus, / latrat et in toto uerba canina foro* (229-32). Ibis’ metamorphosis into a dog is determined since his birth and intertextually interacts with both Ovid’s elegiac (the *Fasti*, where words are a means of power) and epic work.

This complex pattern of intertextuality is designed to reinforce Ovid’s demonstration of power and thus his attack. Ibis’ connection to Lycaon reinforces

⁵³⁵ Apostol 2016, 113. From Apostol’s wider explanation, *ibidem*: “As king, he is closely identified with Jupiter as guarantor of both his place in society and the law that he administers. The very name of the god in his Arcadian cultic association, Jupiter or Zeus Lykaïos, symbolically inscribes the interrelatedness of the two figures as mirror doubles. Furthermore, Lycaon’s self-stated motivation as the desire to prove that the putative god is actually a charlatan could be seen as the drive towards a pious act on Jupiter’s behalf”.

⁵³⁶ The tales of Lycaon-Jupiter and Numa-Jupiter are also linked by the fact that they both look like versions of the story of Zeus and Prometheus from Hesiod’s *Theogony*. See Van Noorden 2014, 204-60.

⁵³⁷ Lycaon howls (*exululat*): Ahl 1985, 72 notes the pun on *exul*. Note also that, in David Malouf’s *An imaginary life* (1978), the exiled Ovid looks a lot like a wolf, or Lycaon.

the loss of the ability to speak effectively and interacts with the feral representation of the enemy in *Ibis* 229-32. Ovid's connection to Numa, however, also indirectly links him to Lycaon. Moreover, Ovid is himself an outcast, and the similarity between Ovid's fate and the one that attends Ibis is obviously part of Ovid's argument. Ovid shares Ibis' fate as an outcast, but his condition is the basis of his ability to use poetic language as a weapon. There is a complex dynamic of roles between the characters: Ovid and Numa, Ibis and Lycaon, Lycaon and Ovid, but there is more too.

The role which Ovid claims for himself poses a challenge to Augustus.⁵³⁸ While Numa is in harmony with the gods, to the point of being granted the right to speak as an equal to Jupiter, Ibis is represented as incompatible with social and religious life: in Ovid's ritual, he must be sacrificed; therefore, his death must not be understood as an occasion for mourning, but as an act that satisfies the gods. Why should this portrayal of Ibis be offensive to Augustus? The issue in Ovid casting himself as the minister of the ritual, but also as the one deciding Ibis' guilt and punishment is that Ovid is casting himself in the role of Augustus: the powerful figure. In this pattern of references the problem is not that Ibis could be Augustus, but that *Ovid* is Augustus to Ibis. In other words, Ovid casts himself as the figure of power, and he does so through the control of the narrative, with an effective use of elegiac language. We could say, thinking back to the *Fasti*, that Ovid, and not

⁵³⁸ As Feeney 2021 has shown, in the *Fasti* too Ovid has to deal with the problem of having limited freedom of speech.

Augustus, is Numa in his relationship with the gods: he is the human who is able to speak to the gods as an equal.⁵³⁹

Marsyas: punished for his art

The case of Lycaon is not isolated: the theme of a character punished for disrespecting or entering into conflict with gods has a constant and evenly distributed presence in the catalogue, with Lycaon in the middle, at 431-2.⁵⁴⁰ We have seen the case of Actaeon (479), punished for actively watching (*speculantem*) the chaste Diana (*uerecundae... Dianae*), and we have addressed its implications for Ovid's argument, namely the fact that using Actaeon as a figure for Ibis undermines Ovid's own self-defence, in which Actaeon has a fundamental role. I propose an analysis of the case of Marsyas (*Ibis* 343-4; 551-2), who is punished for daring to compete in his art with a god. In this section I explain why once again Marsyas the artist leads us to witness a tangled pattern of references between Ovid, Augustus and his enemy.

Marsyas is a well-known character from the *Metamorphoses*: the satyr who dared to challenge Apollo with the flute and, defeated, was skinned alive and turned into a river (*Met.* 6.385-400). He appears twice in the *Ibis* catalogue:

Mens quoque sic furiis uecors agitetur, ut illi
unum qui toto corpore uulnus habet⁵⁴¹

May your insane mind be tormented by the furies, just like that one

⁵³⁹ For a connection between the episode of Numa and Jupiter and Ovid's attempt to establish a communication with the emperors during his exile see Heyworth 2019, 151.

⁵⁴⁰ Phineus (265-6), Tamira (272), Prometheus (291-2), Adimantus (327-8), Marsyas (343-4; 551-2), Lycurgus (345-6), Aegiale (349-50), the women from Lemnos (396), Erysichthon (425-6), Lycaon (431-2), Hippomenes (458), Semele (471), Actaeon (479), an unknown character (499-500), a hunter (505-6), Battus (586). Adimantus offers a case of double for Lycaon, to the point where some critics have proposed to identify both characters with Lycaon himself.

⁵⁴¹ Note the strong recall of *Met.* 6. 388: *nec quicquam nisi uulnus erat*.

whose whole body suffers one wound.

(*Ibis* 343-4)

Nudaue derepta pateant tua uiscera pelle,
ut Phrygium cuius nomina flumen habet.

May your flesh be exposed with your skin ripped away,
like that of the man whose name a Phrygian river holds.

(*Ibis* 551-2)

These couplets refer to the *Metamorphoses* through the two main elements relevant to Marsyas' story: the pain of his flaying and the metamorphosis itself. From the *Metamorphoses* we know that it is Marsyas' pain that activates the transformation (6.396-8):

Fertilis inmaduit madefactaque terra caducas
conceptit lacrimas ac uenis perbibit imis;
quas ubi fecit aquam, uacuas emisit in auras.

The fruitful earth was soaked, and soaking caught
those tears and drank them deep into her veins.
Changing these then to water, she sent them forth into the free air.

Marsyas in the *Metamorphoses* is a character deserving compassion. His ability to communicate with words turns into a pervasive expression of pain through its physical manifestation (tears).⁵⁴² This non-verbal expression communicates Marsyas' pain as effectively as words and its effectiveness proves itself in becoming the trigger to the metamorphosis.⁵⁴³ Specifically, Marsyas' suffering is

⁵⁴² On the episode see Anderson 1972, 203, Bömer 1976, 108-12, Rosati 2004 (310 for the lines), Ramírez de Verger 2021, 107-9 Galasso 2022, 1040-3.

⁵⁴³ See Williams 1996, 81-4 for a focus on the cruelty and vividness in Marsyas' torment in the *Metamorphoses*, with a comparison between the different styles of narration in the *Fasti*.

determined by his art (“*non est*” *clamabat* “*tibia tanti*”: 386), which makes him again a figure for Ovid, not just for Ibis.⁵⁴⁴

And, in fact, the very last line of the *Epistulae ex Ponto* offers an image that closely recalls the portrayal of Marsyas: *non habet in nobis iam noua plaga locum* (Pont. 4.16.52). Although the wording is not identical, the concept of a body that has taken the maximum amount of pain is the same. This is Ovid’s body, after the unbearable pain of the exile, depicted as a body that cannot take one more wound. It is very close, actually, to the depiction of Marsyas’ body as one wound. It is not possible to ignore the relevance of this example for Ovid’s presentation of his experience and of his pain, and yet in the *Ibis* this is the reference to an enemy.

On the one hand, the depiction of Ibis tormented by the Furies looks back to the first part of the poem and Ovid’s threat there (*Ibis* 161: *his uiuus furiis agitabere, mortuus isdem*). Ibis is also constructed as a character who deserves but does not receive compassion (cf. 117-8). In the case of Ibis, his deserving compassion is the premise for Ovid’s attack, which deprives him of what is due to him.⁵⁴⁵ Marsyas then becomes a figure for Ibis as Ovid looks back on the *Metamorphoses* and uses the memory of pain that is inherent in the character of Marsyas to magnify the extent of Ibis’ misery. On the other hand, Marsyas is also consistent with Ovid’s representation of his condition as an exile: Ovid looks back at the *Metamorphoses* for his own portrayal. In *Trist.* 3.8, for example, Ovid describes himself as ill in

⁵⁴⁴ On Marsyas and his complex relationship to Ovid see Feldherr – James 2004. On Ovid’s depiction of an increasingly constraint atmosphere in *Metamorphoses*, linked to the contemporary increasing autocratic character of the Augustan regime as a prelude to Ovid’s exile see Johnson 2008. On Marsyas in the wider context of artist-figures in the *Metamorphoses* and in comparison with the episode of Pyreneus see Cowan 2020.

⁵⁴⁵ On this see Part Two.

both body and mind and subject to an unending pain, which is another Leitmotiv from exile: *nec melius ualeo, quam corpore, mente, sed aegra est / utraque pars aequae binaque damna fero* (33-4). The constant and unbearable pain that Marsyas experiences physically in the destruction of his body becomes for Ovid an inner pain, invisible but excruciating, and as for the *Ibis*' Marsyas, it affects both the body and the mind (*mens quoque*: 343). Finally, Marsyas suffers because of his art, and this makes him a figure for Ovid, which, as I have been arguing, is another theme running through the catalogue.

Conclusions: emotions, knowledge and genre

The *Ibis* is an elegy, admittedly one that, as is often the case with Ovid, experiments with other genres, but an elegy – and this can be seen in the treatment of the characters, be they Ovid himself, Ibis, Augustus or the mythological/historical examples. We have seen in Part One and in Part Two how Ovid plays with the three elements of love, lament and attack, comparing the *Ibis* both to a love elegy and to Ovid's exile poetry. Here we can see how the use of examples also deals with these three elements, so that the *Ibis* fits perfectly into Ovid's exilic work. Ovid looks back on his pre-exile poetry, reinterpreting it in a new and much more lifelike way, especially in the case of the *Metamorphoses*: Ovid seems sometimes to embody the characters of the *Metamorphoses* in exile.⁵⁴⁶ It is also the case with the *Fasti*, which

⁵⁴⁶ See e.g. the case of Ceyx, whose scene of shipwreck in *Met.* 11 is referenced consistently in *Tristia* 1.3 and 3.6 and whose character is among those to whom Ovid looks back from his exile, in what we could call a rethink of his *Metamorphoses* from exile. Ceyx is one of the examples used later in the catalogue (275-6) to wish Ibis a similar death. On Ovid's reinterpretation of his pre-exilic works in exile, see Hinds 1985.

together with the *Metamorphoses* establish his right to claim a role of *uates*: in epic and in elegy.

At the same time, Ovid's communication is based on this use of elegiac elements. As we saw in Chapter Three, compassion, and the violent act of depriving the enemy of the right to receive it, is the fundamental way in which Ovid attacks his enemy – but it is also the basis of his own self-defence. The link between Ovid, Ibis and Augustus goes far beyond simple retribution and a prayer for a new turn of events. Ovid's examples embody the communication that passes through poetry and establishes a layered pattern of correspondences between Ovid, Ibis and Augustus himself. As we shall see in Chapter Six, this also happens when the examples involve rulers and tyrants.

Chapter Six

Negative aetiology, rulers and the *uates*

Introduction: stories of origin and stories of power

Discussing the relationship between Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and the Callimachean aetiology of the *Aetia*, Sara Myers comments that "Ovid's display of recherché mythological learning, his novel versions of traditional stories, his modernizing treatment of myth, his ironic distance, and his very frustration of narrative and generic expectations place him in the Alexandrian tradition".⁵⁴⁷ My thesis is that the same approach can be found in the *Ibis*. If we look at the aims of Ovid's choices rather than the internal organisation of the catalogue, the erudite nature of this section of the poem can be explained as having different aspects and aims. Each of these turns out to have a specific role to play in a wider narrative internal to Ovid's exile poetry and in Ovid's poetic representation of himself. I argue, however, that the broader approach into which all these cases fall is that of aetiology.

In Chapter Six I explore the mutable correspondence of roles between the characters of Ovid, Ibis and Augustus, on the one hand, and the examples used in dark aetiological and genealogical stories on the other. My point is that the tangled pattern of references concerns both the unexpected and the "straightforward" cases in the catalogue: those where tyrants or cruel men are in fact punished for their crimes. Some of them actually have a history of being mentioned in Ovid's poetry, whether in the exilic poems, the pre-exilic elegies, or the *Metamorphoses*. Others appear here for the first time. However, what is not straightforward is the way in

⁵⁴⁷ Myers 1994, 15.

which their stories are presented and the connection which Ovid establishes between himself, Ibis and Augustus, and the examples in the catalogue. While we would expect a direct link between the cruel tyrant and Ibis, on the one hand, and between the victims and Ovid, on the other, the links between the victim and the enemy and the victim and the ruler make things much more complicated. The enemy can have something of the victim, Ovid of the oppressor, and Augustus can be ruthless.

The presence of an aetiological (and genealogical) interest is something that reinforces the bonds between the *Ibis* and the corpus of Ovid's poetry in both the generic directions which aetiology normally takes: epic and elegy.⁵⁴⁸ Lauren Curtis argues that Io's story in the *Metamorphoses* should be considered the aetiology of the human practice of lament.⁵⁴⁹ Lament has an elegiac connotation in Anke Walter's interpretation of it in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: "Ovid creates what could, rather tentatively and for want of a better term, be called 'elegiac aetiology': narratives in which past emotions, lament and tears live on in the present".⁵⁵⁰ If Ovid's epic embodies features that connect it to elegy, Ovid's *Ibis* needs to claim its role in the genre of elegy, to which it belongs by meter, but from which it is traditionally excluded due to content. And since generic complexity is most certainly one of Ovid's eminent characteristics, the *Ibis* embodies both the elegiac core of aetiology and the features that are normally on display in epic.

⁵⁴⁸ Cf. e.g. *Ibis* 443-4 on the *deuotio* of Marcus Curtius, whose name is legendarily linked to the Lacus Curtius: see La Penna 1957, 112-13; or the reference to the rites of Abdera (467-8), one of the couplets that have been connected to Callimachus' *Aitia* (see La Penna 1957, 118-19).

⁵⁴⁹ Curtis 2017.

⁵⁵⁰ Walter 2023, 28.

The common thread is Ovid's representation of himself as *uates*, repository of a superior poetic knowledge and mastery of the poetic means, which in exile expresses itself in a destitute and marginalised condition, and through that identity as an outcast he provides the source for his display of power. This poetic creation is based on the establishment of Ovid's position as *uates* in the *Fasti*.⁵⁵¹ I argue that Ovid's claim to be the inventor of a deadly ritual and to use his superior knowledge, including histories of origins, to attack his enemy in an elegiac framework has its direct precedent in the *Fasti*.

The proem to the first book of the *Fasti* (1.1-2) claims a special relationship with time (*tempora*) and with a Callimachean aetiological interest (*causis*). At the same time, the framework of this operation is eminently Roman (*annalibus* refers to the Roman traditional approach to historiography). This programmatic statement is not detached from the context of elegy. Aetiology is a special interest of Propertius, as is well known, in his fourth book.⁵⁵² And if we do not know much about Callimachus' *Ibis*, the presence of the *Aitia* in this poem is certainly pervasive – as it is in the *Fasti*, which Miller sees as a project “inspired by Callimachus' *Aitia*”.⁵⁵³

Among the features that link the *Fasti* to the *Aitia*, Miller sees the variety of Ovid's personae as a narrator: “As in the ‘Aitia’, the persona of the speaker is

⁵⁵¹ Fabio Stok sees the *Fasti* as an alternative to epic (Stok 1990, 198). Fantham 1998, 45-48 links the feature of the catalogue in the *Fasti* to the influence of epic. On the relationship between epic and elegiac character see also Merli 2000. For a broad approach to the *Fasti*'s generic collocation: Hinds 1992a and 1992b. For wide and detailed treatment of the topic see now Ursini 2024, 1-13.

⁵⁵² See Green 2004, 29-30. On aetiology in Propertius see Heyworth 2007a. See also Garani 2007, O'Neill 1995. On Hesiod's presence in Ovid see Ziogas 2013 (esp. as for the *Metamorphoses*) and 2018. On Propertius and Callimachus Hutchinson's 2006 commentary, Heyworth 2007b.

⁵⁵³ Miller 2013, 239.

multifaceted and flexible, easily shifting from explanation to prayer or Augustan panegyric, from a casual to an angry or sympathetic address to a character. In fact, the range of Ovid's subjectivity as a narrator seems to exceed that of Callimachus in the 'Aitia'.⁵⁵⁴ Variety is what the *Ibis* is said to lack. It is my thesis, however, that the *Ibis* reveals a much more complex pattern of the ways in which Ovid uses knowledge to deliver his aggressive message.

Ritual needs control. What is more, following Smith's and Feeney's discussion of his point, it can be argued that rituality tries to control the uncontrollable.⁵⁵⁵ Ovid's claim to control is at the core of the *Ibis*: control of the ritual, control of the narrative, control of the material and its interpretation. As central as control, however, is the fact that control slips away from Ovid: in the *Ibis* just as in the *Fasti*. Not only does Ovid claim that time exerts an external pressure on him to sing of a certain god or a certain day at a given time. This lack of control in the *Fasti* is also embodied by the so-called multiple aetiologies, meaning the choice of giving more than one possible story of origin for the same event: as Feeney notes, the presence of multiple alternatives, among which the truth is sometimes impossible to decide, is one of the ways in which "Ovid keeps the door open for disruption and loss of control".⁵⁵⁶ Furthermore, as Green has noticed, "though Ovid is deeply conscious of his poem's 'elegiac' status, he is equally keen to push the generic boundaries as far as possible, with the result that some of his narrative reaches 'epic' dimensions".⁵⁵⁷ Ovid's innovative approach to genre

⁵⁵⁴ Miller 1982, 401.

⁵⁵⁵ Smith 1982, 65; Feeney 2021, 380.

⁵⁵⁶ Feeney 2021, 380. On the relationship between the narrator and loss of control in the *Fasti* see Newlands 1992 and 1995, 51-86. The issue of control is relevant for the dichotomy between claiming and losing control in the *Ibis*.

⁵⁵⁷ Green 2004, 28.

ultimately leads to another level of complexity and contributes to the dichotomy between control and lack of control. Speaking of the second half of the *Fasti*, Newlands even points out cases where the Ovidian narrator “appears as weary and confused with a subject whose complexities seemingly begin to lie beyond his control”.⁵⁵⁸

The intricate relationship between control and lack of control is expressed in the layered pattern of correspondences between the examples and the characters they refer to. My aim is to show how the communication associated with each story reveals a more complex pattern of correspondences, in which criticism against Augustus is not eliminated, but made broader and more specific than a general association with histories of tyrants. Moreover, the catalogue embraces the history of Rome from the crucial moments of its creation: the escape of the Trojans and the death of Remus. The Roman examples might seem a minor aspect of the catalogue, but they bear a fundamental aspect of its significance: Ovid displays a comprehensive knowledge which from the East and the Greeks leads him to claim back his role as Roman *uates* established with the *Metamorphoses* and the *Fasti*.

VI.1 Rulers, devoted artists and self-harming art

The key theme of art harming its artist, which we have seen at work in the case of Marsyas, takes a specific turn in the relationship between the ruler and his talented subjects. In this inverted aetiology, Ovid uses his superior knowledge to attack by manipulating the stories. However, beneath the apparently straightforward

⁵⁵⁸ Newlands 1992, 47.

correspondence between Ibis and the examples, the pattern of the relationship between the roles is tangled and involves the wider context of Ovid's poetry. This is the case with two pairs, consistently present in Ovid's poetry: Busiris and Thrasius (399-402), and Phalaris and Perilaus (437-40).⁵⁵⁹

Busiris and Thrasius, Phalaris and Perilaus: the best victim is the inventor

Busiris, a king of Egypt, had to deal with nine years of drought. So Thrasius invented a new sacrifice, that of a foreigner, to propitiate the gods and cause rain, but when he proposed his invention to Busiris, the king decided to sacrifice Thrasius himself, as he was a foreigner (*Ars* 1.645-50). Thrasius and Busiris are mentioned in the catalogue (397-400) – the latter as part of the sub-catalogue of Heracles' victims – as examples, I argue, of stories where someone became a victim of his own invention:

Ut qui post annum, sacri monstrator iniqui,
elicuit pluuias uictima caesus aquas;
frater ut Antaei, quo sanguine debuit, aras
tinxit et exemplis occidit ipse suis. 400

As the one who, having taught a cruel rite, after one year,
having been killed as a victim himself, enticed down rain;
as the brother of Antaeus stained the altars with the blood he himself owned
and fell victim of his own example. 400

(*Ibis* 397-400)

⁵⁵⁹ La Penna 1957, 82 places lines 459-60 on Limon and 439-40 on Phalaris after 335-6 (another couplet on Limon), based on the proximity of the reference to another tyrant, Apollodorus of Cassandreia, and on *Pont.* 2.9.43-4, which is considered reminiscent of the *Ibis*, and pairs the two. The reasons are given in the *Prolegomena* (see LXXVIII-LXXXI for a comprehensive discussion). Based on stylistic reasons Housman (1918, 225) rejects the collocation of lines 439-40 after 437-8.

Thrasius is explicitly qualified as the one who was the first who showed (*monstrator*)⁵⁶⁰ a new cruel sacrifice (*sacri ... iniqui*), while the pentameter focuses on the consequence of his death: it caused rain. The next couplet, on Busiris, emphasises the fact that his violent end was well deserved (*debut*) for his past cruelty. In both cases there is no reference to the characters' pain, but their deaths are described for their result (Thrasius) and for their cause (Busiris). This is consistent with two features of the curses against Ibis: the idea that his death would not be an occasion for mourning, but a propitious sacrifice;⁵⁶¹ and the element of retribution that characterises his prospective punishment. But who else could be the referent for the inventor punished for his own invention, if not Ovid?⁵⁶² Comparison with the case of Phalaris and Perilaus (439-40; 437-8) adds to the tangled pattern of correspondences:

Utque ferox Phalaris lingua prius ense resecta
more bouis Paphio clausus in aere gemas. 440

Aere Perilleo ueros imitere iuuenos 437
ad formam tauri conueniente sono. 438⁵⁶³

And like the ferocious Phalaris, with your tongue already cut with a sword,
may you moan like an ox, locked in the Paphian bronze. 440

May you, in Perilaus' bronze, imitate real bullocks 437
with a cry fitting the shape of a bull. 438

⁵⁶⁰ *ThlL* VIII.1439.31: *qui monstrat ... inventa* and *OLD*² 1244 s.v. *monstrator* 2 "a person who shows (for the first time)" both quoting *Ibis* 397.

⁵⁶¹ See the discussion of Ibis' death as compared to a sacrifice and not to a moment of grief in Part Two.

⁵⁶² Cf. *Trist.* 3.11.49 where Ovid compares his enemy to Busiris; *Trist.* 5.1.53, where Ovid compares his being deprived of the right to lament his fate to the fact that Perilaus was granted that right by the cruel Phalaris; *Pont.* 3.6.41 where Ovid, urging his friend to plead in his favour, rejects the parallel between Busiris and Augustus.

⁵⁶³ I follow here La Penna's arrangement: although both couplets refer to Phalaris and Perilaus, 439-40 are placed after 337-8 and 459-60. See on this La Penna 1957, LXXVIII-LXXX and 81. On the episode see also Rimell 2015.

The story of Phalaris, Perilaus and the creation of the brazen bull in which Perilaus was the first to die are told by Callimachus fr. 45-47 Pf. However, we do not have a source for Phalaris' own death in the bull. The principle of the brazen bull is that the victim was placed inside the bull, then a fire was lit under it, so that the victim was roasted like meat. Perilaus invented the bull to amuse the tyrant Phalaris, but was then condemned to be the first to try it. Ovid says that Perilaus' screams fitted the shape of the bull because the machine was built so that the victim's screams resembled the noise made by a bull.⁵⁶⁴

What I want to focus on is the language used to describe the torments of Perilaus and Phalaris. The linguistic representation of their deaths aims both to dehumanise the characters and to emphasise the pathetic nature of their deaths. The use of the machine transforms both Perilaus and Phalaris into bulls (*ueros imitere iuuencos*: 437; *tauri*: 438). Both this and the background story contribute to a tone of mockery that I think should be emphasised. The first element concerns the unexpected reversal of fortune that affects both characters. Perilaus expected the favour of the tyrant for his invention, but the invention was actually the cause of his own death.

Ovid makes the tyrant and his subject share this ironic twist of fate, as they both die in the bull. The element of ridicule is particularly evident in the case of

⁵⁶⁴ The brazen bull has been of interest for historians in connection to Phalaris' power. A recent reevaluation that takes into account previous interpretations is in Dudzinski 2013. On the right to express lament see *Trist.* 5.1.51-4, where Ovid claims that right for himself, using Phalaris and Perilaus as examples: even Phalaris let Perilaus scream in pain.

Phalaris. The adjective *ferox*, used to describe Phalaris, gives an account of the character and his cruelty, implicitly making his death a form of punishment, emphasises the pathetic end to which he is condemned, and hints at his own dehumanisation: *ferox* is an adjective suitable for a bull, and it therefore suggests a feral portrayal of the character.⁵⁶⁵ This attack against the face of both the victims takes different forms.⁵⁶⁶ In the case of Perilaus it anchors the unexpected outcome of his actions in the so-called irony of fate. In the case of Phalaris, it deprives the tyrant of his identity as a cruel man of power: it highlights his cruelty at the very moment when he is powerless and harmless.

The element of ridicule is combined with a miserable and pathetic characterisation of their deaths. Their almost-metamorphosis into animals is intended to emphasise their screams at the moment of their deaths. Phalaris, whose tongue has already been cut off (*lingua prius ense resecta*: 439), moans like a bull (*more bouis ... gemas*: 440). The verb *gemo* is used for sounds made by animals,⁵⁶⁷ but also specifically for the expression of grief and pain.⁵⁶⁸ I argue that this is a case of non-verbal communication being employed. The cries of Perilaus and the moans of Phalaris can be classified, on the basis of Argyle's analysis of verbal vocalisation, as emotional cries or noises, which are considered independent from speech.⁵⁶⁹ As Argyle records, there are similarities between "screams, groans, and other emotional noises made by men" and the sounds made by animals (he mentions apes

⁵⁶⁵ *OLD*² 757, s.v. *ferox* 1. Cf. Lycaon's portrayal at *Met.* 1.198 and the fact that he had a savage nature before being transformed into a wolf.

⁵⁶⁶ For ridicule as an example of linguistic impoliteness used to show power see Culpeper 1996, 358 and in 2011 (esp. 4, 64, 162, 246).

⁵⁶⁷ *OLD*² 831 s.v. *gemo*, 2.

⁵⁶⁸ *OLD*² 831 s.v., 1, 3, 4.

⁵⁶⁹ Argyle 1988², 139-41.

and monkeys, lions and bears). The difference is that animals make sounds only in connection with an emotion, whereas humans have developed the ability to use sounds (especially of disgust or satisfaction) as controlled “social emblems”.⁵⁷⁰

The dehumanised characterisation embodies the focus on the characters’ misery and therefore the emotional characterisation, because it presents them as showing primary emotions.⁵⁷¹ But if the vocalisations are the result of a primary emotion, would it be possible to interpret them as non-verbal communication? They are communicating, but, because there is no intention, it is not possible to read this as a way of voluntarily conveying a message. So, for example, this would not be a case of gesture as defined by Ricottilli.⁵⁷² However, this can be considered non-verbal communication because it is part of a wider argument: the one that we can attribute to Ovid as the narrator of the *Ibis*.

The intertextual relationship of this text with the rest of Ovid’s exile poetry provides the background to fully understanding the implications of the mention of these characters in the *Ibis*. Besides the passage from the *Ars* already cited, Busiris appears in *Her.* 9.69; *Met.* 9.183; *Trist.* 3.11.39; *Pont.* 3.6.41. But Busiris and Phalaris appear together in the *Ars*, in *Tristia* 3.11, which is one of the elegies addressed to an enemy, and in *Pont.* 3.6. In *Trist.* 3.11.39-42, the enemy is compared to (and outweighs in cruelty) Busiris and Perilaus, the inventor of the bull, *not* Phalaris:

⁵⁷⁰ Argyle 1988², 142. On this also Scherer 1981.

⁵⁷¹ Williams 1996, 32 looks at “the reduction of the written word to the level of the irrepressible, yet futile, scream” in Ovid’s poetry, with the presence of the victims of Phalaris, but also Procne, Alcyone, Niobe, Priam and other mythical examples who express pain in a similar way in Ovid’s works. Cf. *Trist.* 4.9.17-24 where Ovid’s own groan and lament becomes a means of protest (on which see Part Two).

⁵⁷² Ricottilli 2000, 16.

saeuior es tristi Busiride, saeuior illo
qui falsum lento torruit igne bouem, 40
quique bouem Siculo fertur donasse tyranno
et dictis artes conciliasse suas.

You are crueller than harsh Busiris, crueller than he
who heated the artificial bull over a slow fire
and gave the bull, they say, to the Sicilian lord
commending his work of art with words.

Therefore, the first correspondence we can build between the use of those characters in the *Ibis* and in the *Tristia* is that Ibis has in himself the destiny of the one (Perilaus) who, in the attempt to gain the favour of the ruler (Phalaris), ends up punished and killed. This attack takes a specific form if analysed as a form of linguistic impoliteness: as an example of positive impoliteness, it threatens Ibis' wish to enjoy a rewarding position in society. What Ibis does, contributing to Ovid's misery, is meant to win him Augustus' favour: using Perilaus as a referent for Ibis conveys the message that Ibis is employing his deadly ability in order to please Augustus. This is obviously also highly problematic for what it says about the *princeps*: if the enemy is Perilaus, Augustus is Phalaris. Instead, the intertextual background for the use of Phalaris and Perilaus tells us something about the punishment for the one who tries to gain favour through a deadly invention.

Using Perilaus as a figure for the enemy seems to put the ruler in a better light. However, Busiris is involved in *Pont.* 3.6.39-42 too, where Ovid urges his friend to support his cause before the emperor who is *not* a Busiris or a Phalaris:

At tu, cum tali populus sub principe simus,
alloquio profugi credis inesse metum? 40
Forsitan haec domino Busiride iure timeres,
aut solito clausos urere in aere uiros.

But you, when we, his people, live under such an emperor –
do you believe that comforting an exile is dangerous?

Perhaps under the dominion of Busiris you might rightly fear
this or under him who was wont to burn men within the bronze.

The simple mention, however, could be considered excessive, because it cannot fail to recall the pattern of intertextuality. We could think that the offensive approach would be to compare Augustus to Busiris or Phalaris. On the contrary, if Augustus is *not* a Busiris or a Phalaris, then he is not going to punish the one who proposes a deadly ritual or weapon: he is not going to make a Thrasius or a Perilaus of Ibis, and this is the real attack, because it challenges Augustus' judgment and exercise of justice. In other words, once the reference to the tyrannical figures has been brought up, although in order to deny it, it is already too late. Ovid is already associating certain expectations towards Augustus' power: he must not be a tyrant (but therefore he is at risk of being so), but he is also not going to punish Ibis as he should.

Then it makes sense for the poet to use his poetic authority to create a world in which things both follow and innovate upon the tradition. Thrasius and Busiris both die, and the death of Busiris clearly features as a form of retribution for the numerous murders he had committed. The death of Perilaus is not mentioned, but his invention survives and becomes the tool for Ibis' agony. Phalaris is the one who dies in the bull as well, which is a completely new element: as far as we know, this could be a minor tradition, or something Ovid himself came up with. The poet's display of knowledge shows power by creating new knowledge.

Tangled roleplay

Who, then is Ovid in this dynamic of roles and parts? As is clear since the *Ars*, the story of Thrasius and Perilaus is that of someone who is punished for his invention.

We could say the same for his *art*. And this means that there is something of Ovid, the one ruined by his *Ars*, in Thrasius and Perilaos. However, there is something of Ovid in Busiris and Phalaris as well. Busiris and Phalaris are the rulers who violently punish, whose role should more straightforwardly be taken by Augustus, and Ovid is the one who challenges Augustus' power in the framework of poetry: he is in charge of the ritual and of the knowledge of the past, he criticises Augustus' judgement and implies that there is a responsibility by the ruler in the success of Ibis' influence. In fact, if these are examples of those who were armed by their own art, then Augustus *is* Busiris or Phalaris, in the very moment in which he is explicitly separated from them, and this is consistent with Ovid's contradictory and indirect way of attacking the prince.

Saying that Augustus is not a Busiris or a Phalaris is an attack against both his positive and negative face, because his reputation is conditioned to the fact that he complies with the expectation of not being a tyrant, and because it attempts to influence his decision ("if you are not a tyrant, you will be merciful"), but it also places Augustus in an impossible position. Being a Busiris and a Phalaris means to be unnecessarily cruel against someone who is actually doing nothing wrong, since both Perilaos and Thrasius have only tried to please their tyrants. Therefore, the first problem with the association is that just bringing into the conversation the two tyrants is enough to connect Augustus to them (in *Pont.* 3.6) and associating the two subjects with Ibis reinforces the correspondence.

The second problem concerns Augustus' *clementia*. The premises for mercy are the clear guilt of the recipient of mercy and an affirmation of power from the one who exerts mercy. If Augustus is *not* like Busiris or Phalaris, he is not that cruel

a tyrant but, as for Ovid's representation of him, he is not in the powerful position of exerting mercy either. That is because Ovid never completely admits his guilt (he refuses the term *scelus* for his fault), which is the premise for full mercy, but never completely negates it (he does admit a fault, due to negligence). Such an attitude means that Ovid is questioning Augustus' judgment at the time of the decision to relegate him. If Ovid was never guilty, and Augustus misjudged him because he trusted bad advisors, such as Ibis, then *not* being a Busiris or a Phalaris is not a compliment: if Augustus had been like Busiris and Phalaris, he would have got rid of his cruel and obsequious subjects.

To conclude, there is a tangled pattern of correspondences between the characters and the examples. Through this communicative use of language Ovid manipulates the aetiological material by manipulating the readers' response to it. Lament becomes a means of attacking the enemy. Ovid demonstrates his power by casting himself as the keeper of tradition, which is in itself a challenge to the authority of the ruler. The basis of this self-representation is in the *Fasti*, where he presents himself as the guardian of Roman traditions mostly in a positive light. The *Fasti* are also the origin of Ovid's effective use of language in connection with aetiology, as the case of Numa and Jupiter shows. This is reflected in the *Ibis*, which presents the catalogue as a place where the poet can propose his own version of origins, events, genealogies, myths, histories and erudite knowledge on which his power as a powerless poet is based. This reinforces the complex generic environment to which elegy relates, as the elegiac poet casts himself as the one who not only possesses the traditions, but can also manipulate them and use them as a means of attack.

VI.2 Punishing the ruler: poetry as a judge of power

As Williams has pointed out, Ovid's narrative technique aims to demystify the stories, to give reasons for names, to distinguish the characters, to provide specific information;⁵⁷³ but, in his words, "this demystifying process fails to clarify everything".⁵⁷⁴ This approach is part of the poem's aggressive aim. In the *Ibis* Ovid's aetiological knowledge is based on a combination of the known and the unknown. Ovid deals with very famous and obscure stories, only known to the erudite, combines common knowledge and specific literary and historical sources, shows an ability to pick out the less known elements in a widely known story. In this section I propose that, in the *Ibis*, Ovid's erudition is a means of attacking the enemy.

This is evident in the presence of genealogies. Genealogy, as aetiology, is a phenomenon that, to put it in Walter's words, "establishes a connection between past and present, and that equally aims at justifying certain claims for the present from a particular representation of the past".⁵⁷⁵ This is the case with the Thessalian Aleuades: Thessalus (285-6),⁵⁷⁶ Eurilochus (287-8),⁵⁷⁷ Echekratides (293-4),⁵⁷⁸

⁵⁷³ Williams 1996, 95.

⁵⁷⁴ Williams 1996, 95.

⁵⁷⁵ Walter 2019, 611 with further bibliography. A collection of studies on aetiological presence in antiquity is in Chassignet 2008. On aetiology and narrative Reitz, Walter 2014. On a form of elegiac pattern in the aetiological aspects of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Walter 2023.

⁵⁷⁶ Thessalus bears the eponymous name of the Thessalian dynasty and is probably the founder, whose story has been widely discussed: see La Penna 1957, 59 on this and for comprehensive treatment of Thessalus' possible genealogies. Interesting as for the aetiological aspect is also the testimony of Hyginus stating that he built a temple to Jupiter in Dodona (*Fab.* 225). While Thessalus is actually said to have jumped in the sea (*utque dedit saltus a summa Thessalus Ossa*: 285), Ibis should be thrown in the waters (*praecipitere*: 286).

⁵⁷⁷ Son or generally heir of Thessalus, he was killed by snakes: La Penna concludes that the *Ibis* offers us a version of the story for which the *Ibis* is our only source (1957, 61).

⁵⁷⁸ This is a case of aetiology in the *Ibis*: Echekratides is said to belong to the Heraclids' lineage and might be a Thessalian member of the Alevades, who claimed to descend from Heracles. Echekratides

Aleuas (323-4).⁵⁷⁹ Now my point is that Ovid shows his control over the use of genealogy in the poem by exercising the power to use the rulers as examples and therefore punish them. He punishes them based on their guilt, but also without an explicit fault by them: the focus is on the poet's capacity to judge and exercise punishment whether there is a fault or not.

This pattern of punishment takes specific forms in the *Ibis*, analysed here through some key case studies. Kings' crimes normally have an impious character, which takes the form of an offence to the gods or of sexually unacceptable behaviour. Criticism of kings can however also challenge their own judgment in their ability to choose trustworthy people. Finally, kings can be miserable characters too; and, just as Ibis, their misery can subvert expectations and be associated with punishments instead of comfort. Here the focus is on how the poet uses histories of families to exercise his power.

Finally, in this exercise of power I see another side of Ovid's challenge against Augustus' own power, which we have addressed in Chapter Four. Ovid uses examples, a well-established technique in legal oratory to support the lawyer's argument, but again, from a different angle than in Chapter Four, it also shows Ovid's playing all parts: he is the prosecutor, but he is also the judge, and he is the judge of kings. In Ovid's narrative, kings become examples of the punishment of his personal enemy. In doing so, Ovid attacks Augustus, but not in the sense that Augustus is the personal enemy: what the pattern of roles unveils is a competition

gave an *ex uoto* to Apollo in the temple of Delphi (Pausania 10.16.8), which could be the first known *ex uoto*.

⁵⁷⁹ According to Rostagni 1920, 105 this is the mythical founder of the dynasty, mentioned in various Greek sources, including Pindar *Pyth.* 10.5, *Her.* 7.130 and 9.58, Plutarch *De frat. am.* 21.492a (but La Penna 1957, 76, doubts this identification).

between Ovid and Augustus for power and control. Ovid's weapons concern the genre of elegy and the possibility of innovating the generic pattern while using its main features: love, lament and attack.

Impious rulers: cruelty and sexuality

The key case for this specific theme is that of Leukon (309-10). As we discussed in Chapter Five, both dysfunctional sexual and parental relationships have a place in Ovid's *Ibis*, where women usually play a negative role, but Leukon's case is peculiar. What we know of this Leukon (309-10), member of a Pontic dynasty, is that he killed his brother and seduced (or possibly raped) his wife but was then killed by her:⁵⁸⁰

Aut pia te caeso dicatur adultera, sicut
qua cecidit Leucon uindice, dicta pia est. 310

Or may an adulteress be called pious because she killed you, as
pious is called the one under whose vengeance Leukon fell. 310

The paradoxical definition of an *adultera* who is in fact *pia* because she killed Leukon (*pia te caeso dicatur adultera*: 309) is quite striking. The definition of the woman as virtuous is not ironic: Leukon's murder is enough to turn an adulterous woman into a pious one, which increases the offensive scope of the couplet. There are two main aspects of this couplet's significance for our understanding of Ovid's poetic communication: the poet casting himself as upholding moral values, which

⁵⁸⁰ Among the scholia, this is the version of P, the one that best fits Ovid's account. On this and on possible identifications see La Penna 1957, 70-1, who considers this extremely erudite information (70).

could imply a form of criticism and challenge to Augustus' power, and the indirect, layered structure of the pattern of roles.

Given the Augustan moral legislation, the reference to adultery and piety seems to have broader relevance than just to myth. Now, just as the *Fasti*'s Numa offers the context for the poet's narrative of the dialogue between the ruler and the gods, and Anna Perenna that of an innocent trick against a god, the impiety of a ruler has its Roman archetype in the *Fasti* as well, in a text that we have already discussed in connection with innocent characters: the rape of Lucretia and the end of Tarquinius Superbus' reign (2.685-852). This narrative should not be seen as a direct reference to Leukon, but as a sign of Ovid's poetic argument: Ovid can use Leukon as an example of both his superiority based on knowledge and his power as holder of moral values and therefore stigmatise the impious behaviour of the ruler, providing *de facto* rules of what a ruler should or should not be; and the premise for this display of power is the claim to be the Roman *uates* achieved with the *Fasti*. However, now the *uates* is able to draw his examples from an encyclopaedic database of knowledge, overcoming the borders of Roman history and myth.

Ovid narrates the rape by focusing on the aggression that precedes it and Sextus Tarquinius' threat, so that Lucretia is described as having to choose between rape and dishonour in death (he threatens to kill her and her servant and tell everyone he found them together: lines 793-810); then he is extremely reticent about Lucretia's account of the rape (2.825-8) and, as has been noted, in both Livy's and Ovid's Lucretia the focus is obviously on her *pudicitia* (Liu. 1.58.7 *amissa pudicitia*; 1.58.10 *nec ulla deinde inpudica Lucretiae exemplo uivet*; 1.59.1 *castissimum ... sanguinem*; *Fast.* 2.841 in Brutus' words: *fortem castumque*

cruorem), which is confirmed by the final decision to kill herself. In the *Fasti* Lucretia explicitly denies herself the ‘forgiveness’ granted to her by her husband and father.⁵⁸¹

In the story of Lucretia, the rape perpetrated by the son of Tarquinius Superbus signals that Tarquinius’ lineage is unfit to rule, which ultimately leads to the republican government.⁵⁸² Ovid incorporates a fundamental episode of the Roman tradition in an elegiac narrative, presenting Lucretia not only as a *matrona* (with the famous reference to Lucretia as *matrona uirilis*: *Fast.* 2.847), but also as an elegiac *puella* (2.810: *uicta puella*).⁵⁸³ The expulsion of Tarquinius Superbus is the direct effect of Lucretia’s revenge through her husband’s men and a punishment for rape that comes from Sextus Tarquinius’ disappointment at Lucretia’s marital fidelity: the sight of the impossibility of having the woman reinforces his desire to take her with violence. Sextus Tarquinius’ tyrannical lack of moral value is the issue, more than the violence itself, as it anticipates the risks of monarchy becoming a tyranny. Ovid is the one who claims the right to judge and stigmatise this

⁵⁸¹ On Lucretia as embodiment of *pudicitia*, in comparison to the figure of Procris in the *Metamorphoses*, see Scolari 2021. On Ovid’s representations of Arachne and Lucretia as archetypes of impiety and piety as influences on Martial’s epigrams and on material culture of the Domitianic period, Buckley 2021. Entirely on the figure of Lucretia, Tanev’s 2022 and Lentano’s 2021 monographs. On the manner of communication, and specifically on the rhetoric of reticence in several Ovidian figure including Lucretia, Bonandini 2020.

⁵⁸² Robinson highlights Ovid’s attempts to reference Caesar’s murder: for example, Lucretia’s modest fall at 833 seems to recall the traditions of a similar way of falling by Caesar at the time of his death (Robinson 2011, 501). On the other hand, Brutus’ gesture of extracting the bloodstained knife and holding it seems to recall the figure of Marcus Brutus, murderer of Caesar; and his speech seems reminiscent of that of Marcus Antonius after Caesar’s death (see Robinson 2011, 505). Dolansky 2020 connects Lucretia’s suicide to the death of Remus and the murder of Servius Tullius in light of the relationship with Augustan power.

⁵⁸³ See Robinson 2011, 495: “it is a striking example of the extent to which he has reimagined his Lucretia to fit an elegiac context”. Livy’s Lucretia, on the contrary, is a far more resolute and almost bellicose character.

behaviour by narrating the story in his own elegiac manner, which challenges historiography.

Now as we have seen happen in a recurring pattern in the *Ibis*, the characterisation of characters as immoral occurs at different stages of the catalogue, but with peaks. In the case of dynasties, one is definitely Leukon, who is a king, and exemplifies a fault that turns his own murder into an act of devotion. This is consistent with Ovid's characterisation of Ibis as a danger to society (*publica damna*: 220), but it is also vulnerable to the objections of those who consider precisely the definition of public danger as out of proportion for a personal enemy. The wide scope of this presentation should again be justified by the layered pattern of references between the examples and the roles they refer to. In sum, one explicit meaning of the example of Leukon is to stigmatise a behaviour that disrupts the social order and poses a threat to society, represented in this case by the figure of an adulterous king.

Leukon is a figure for Ibis, in his capacity as public enemy, but he is also a king who subverts moral values, a crucial element of Augustus' social legislation. He is not a Roman king though, which could be seen as an attempt to diminish the attack on Augustus' face: the example comes from far away, it does not refer to a Roman context and, moreover, it is explicitly other than Roman. And yet, as happens when Augustus is explicitly said not to be like Busiris, or Phalaris, or Therodamas, the reference raises the possibility even as it denies it.⁵⁸⁴

⁵⁸⁴ Leukon is also the name of one of Diana's dogs in *Met.* 3.218: after seeing her bathing naked, Actaeon is chased and torn to pieces by Diana's dogs. Actaeon is a privileged figure for Ovid's depiction of his exile (*Trist.* 2.105-6) and his example is used to reference Ovid's guilt, which is

In the case of the widely famous Macedonian dynasty, the identification of the characters in lines 295-6 is fairly certain: the *Amyntiades* is almost certainly Philip II of Macedon, son of Amyntas; the young boy described as loved with a depraved love (*turpi dilectus amore*: 295) is Pausanias, who was raped and publicly shamed by Attalus, swordsman of Philip. Pausanias went to Philip to seek punishment, but Philip delayed his intervention, possibly deriding Pausanias in the process. In the end, Pausanias killed Philip during the wedding of his daughter Cleopatra to the king of Epirus Alexander:⁵⁸⁵ *aut, ut Amyntiaden, turpi dilectus amore / oderit et saeuo uulneret ense puer*. In addition to the clear intertextual reference to *Aen.* 1.344,⁵⁸⁶ the definition of *turpi dilectus amore* for Pausanias is semantically charged in terms of elegiac language. The elegiac *puella* is referred to as *dilecta* in *Am.* 1.4.3, *Rem.* 655, *Epist.* 19.205, and in *Epist.* 17.197-198 (Helen reminds Paris that he loved Oenone for many years and abandoned her). *Dilectus* appears in the *Fasti* (4.102) and is also part of the vocabulary of exile, with various occurrences.⁵⁸⁷ In *Pont.* 1.8.1, for example, Ovid uses the term for himself, writing to a Severus (1-2: *A tibi dilecto missam Nasone salutem / accipe, pars animae magna, Seuere, meae*): it reinforces the bond shown between the exiled poet and

again connected to moral values both for the *Ars* and for the unknown mistake (*carmen et error*: *Trist.* 2.207) committed by the poet.

⁵⁸⁵ See La Penna 1957, 65 for sources and discussion. The first one to propose this identification was Codros Urceus at the end of the fifteenth or at the beginning of the sixteenth century. A different interpretation, dismissed by the other scholars, is Ellis', who identifies the king with Archelaos of Macedon (V/IV century BC), killed by the *puer* Crateuas/Crateas (Ellis 1881, 119; for sources and more details see again La Penna 1957, 65).

⁵⁸⁶ La Penna 1957, 65.

⁵⁸⁷ Two in the *Tristia* (1.6.1 and 4.5.1) and three in the *Epistulae ex Ponto* (1.2.139, 1.8.1, 3.6.32) for *dilectus*; two in the *Tristia* (1.2.87 and 4.5.29) and one in the *Epistulae ex Ponto* (2.3.23) for *diligo* (*Musisque Deoque* following Owen 1915; *LLT* and *PHI* do not record *Pont.* 3.6.32, as Richmond, their edition, reads *delectus*).

his friends, who are dear to him as part of a closed circle, separated from society, as are the elegiac poet, his *puella* and the other elegists.

In particular, in *Rem.* 655, Ovid urges a man not to hate a woman he once loved, because “that is an end fitting to savage minds”:⁵⁸⁸ *sed modo dilectam scelus est odisse puellam: / exitus ingeniis conuenit iste feris*. The passage shows the connection between love, hate and impiety: to combine hate with love is a crime that suits savage beasts. I see here the same elegiac environment as in the *Ibis*, where an impious love turns into hatred and murder. Finally, the pentameter, with the contrast between *amore* at the end of 295 and *oderit* at the beginning of 296 within the military image, strongly recalls elegy. *Vulnus* is an eminently elegiac word, with several occurrences in Tibullus and Propertius and many more in Ovid, to indicate both the wounds of love and those of exile.⁵⁸⁹ These references to the possibility for love to turn into hatred, and their link to Ovid’s exile, brings Augustus back into the conversation. As we saw in Part One, the links between the *Ibis* and Roman elegiac love poetry are numerous, and there are many patterns of correspondence between the elegiac characters and the autobiographical elements in Ovid’s exile poetry. If Augustus can be the object of desire of the exiled Ovid, he can also be the object of criticism and even hatred. The *Ibis* becomes a way of communicating with the *princeps* in an indirect way: could we see this as a way of dealing with the pain of exile, as the *Remedia* respond to the pain that comes from love? Poetry is an elegiac way for the poet of constructing and owning the narrative.

⁵⁸⁸ This is the Loeb translation by Mozley 1939 revised by Goold 1979.

⁵⁸⁹ See e.g. Tib. 1.6.53; Ov. *Am.* 1.2.29; *Trist.* 1.1.99.

Turpis is also an eminently elegiac word, prominent in Tibullus and Propertius, and with more than a hundred occurrences in Ovid, of which only 15 are in the hexametric poem of the *Metamorphoses*, confirming its mainly elegiac flavour. In Propertius 2.16.36, for example, *turpis* is used to characterise elegiac love itself (35-6: *at pudeat! certe pudeat, nisi forte, quod aiunt, / turpis amor surdis auribus esse solet*). Propertius replies to the protests of an imaginary interlocutor who points out the shame of the poet's behaviour (tolerating a betrayal) by admitting his guilt: it is true, he should be ashamed, but "a scandalous love is usually deaf", so it does not hear criticism, even when it is correct. Again, in *Am.* 3.11.2 Ovid defines as *turpis amor* his relationship with the woman he loves, once he has decided to end it because he can no longer bear her betrayal.

The adjective *turpis* allows the poet-lover to attack his own positive and negative face in two different ways. He is attacking his positive face, because he admits that his elegiac love for the *puella* diminishes his position and respectability (due to the semantic domain of *turpis*: from the physical sense of disgusting and repulsive to the sight, to the moral connotation of shameful, to the sexual meaning of obscene).⁵⁹⁰ He is attacking his own negative face by admitting that he is persisting in a behaviour that he himself disapproves of, thus showing a lack of control over his freedom of will. The expression, however, reappears in the moment when the elegiac poet shows that he is regaining control, bearing in mind the alternations and changes of mind that characterise the relationship with the *puella*.

⁵⁹⁰ See *OLD*² 2197 s.v. *turpis*: 1 "offensive to the senses"; 2 "repulsive to the sight"; 3 "shameful to do"; 4: "guilty of disgraceful behaviour"; 5: "indecent".

The broader elegiac context therefore charges the communicative scope of the couplet 295-6. The definition of *amor* as *turpis* shapes both the elegiac setting and the prelude to the hatred that will cause the death of Philip II of Macedon. The association of love and hate is part of the elegiac setting, and at the same time hate is labelled as negative in the context of liberation from love.⁵⁹¹ In this poetic setting, it is part of the story of a man who has failed in his duty as a ruler because he has abandoned a subject and failed to punish wrongdoing, but who has also specifically failed to punish a crime committed within an elegiac system of values.⁵⁹²

Ovid shows awareness of the gravity of the expression. In the *Ibis*, he does not present the stories with positive judgement, nor does he remove elements that could arouse the readers' sympathy for the dead. On the contrary, although Philip bears a guilt that makes his murder a revenge, the sword that killed him is cruel and the murder therefore does not seem to be supported by the voice of the poet. The reference to the gesture of wounding Philip with a cruel sword (*saeuo ... ense*) ultimately provides the readers with a scene that could evoke their empathy. While it might seem counterintuitive, the communicative aim of the poet is actually to increase the perception of Ibis' suffering: him being a figure in pain triggers the expectation of a compassion that will be negated and the attack stems from this failure of expectations. The more Ibis is consistent with the expectations of compassion, the harsher is the attack delivered through deprivation of compassion.

⁵⁹¹ Cf., for both cases, *Am.* 3.33-4: *luctantur pectusque leve in contraria tendunt / hac amor hac odium, sed, puto, vincit amor*; and 35: *odero, si potero; si non, invitus amabo*.

⁵⁹² La Penna (1957, 65) discusses (and tends to dismiss) the hypothesis that, against the tradition, according to Ovid Philip himself is the one who raped Pausania. However, I do not think it is necessary to accept this interpretation: the mention of the situation is enough to stain Philip's behaviour with an aura of impiety.

Another level of interpretation is that of Ovid's claim to his elegiac means. By combining mythical-historical notions that draw one back to the Greek tradition with the vocabulary and imagery of Roman elegy, Ovid reclaims his place as a poet, and claims for his elegiac poetry the status of erudite poetry that it deserves. In doing so, Ovid speaks to present and future readers, as well as to his community of friends in Rome. Secondly, we need to consider the use of elegiac features to establish a system of values, judge and separate what is right from what is wrong, and to establish a link between what is wrong and the negative outcome. Again, this can be a message relevant to the prince: if the ruler is unable to identify the wrong and punish the guilty, power is weak and will not last.

The Macedonian genealogy finds a brighter figure in Alexander the Great (297-8) and with him shows the theme of misplaced faith:

Nec tibi fida magis misceri pocula possint,
quam qui cornigero de Ioue natus erat.

No more loyal cups may be mixed for you,
than for him who was born of the horned Jupiter.

Obviously, *fides* is a crucial theme in love elegy.⁵⁹³ Ovid applies it to the power of the ruler in order to highlight a problem that he presents as characteristic of the role. Poison is in itself a treacherous way of killing, and the choice of the story of Alexander the Great highlights the contrast between the power of the ruler and his death. Moreover, Ovid reinforces this contrast by characterising Alexander as “the one born from Jupiter”. This is based on the fact that Alexander was proclaimed

⁵⁹³ As e.g. in Tib. 1.5 and 1.6, but also in Ovid's *Ars* 1.643-4: *ludite, si sapitis, solas impune puellas: / hac minus est una fraude tuenda fides.*

son of Jupiter Ammon during his visit to his temple.⁵⁹⁴ Given the Roman context and the presence of Augustus, I think it is worth noting that Jupiter plays such a crucial role in Augustan propaganda (and in the *Ibis* Alexander is indeed defined simply as the son of Jupiter).⁵⁹⁵

Both Philip and Alexander represent cases of great rulers, whose fame outlasted them for thousands of years, rather than of obscure and almost unknown figures, chosen for their deaths. The privileged audience for these examples is clearly Augustus, not Ibis. But if someone were to take this as proof that Ibis is actually Augustus, I would argue, again, that the indirectness of the allusion is crucial to the effectiveness of the communication: if Ibis were Augustus, the reference would be so direct as to overcome any limit of caution. On the contrary, the relationship between Ovid and his emperor is only occasionally in direct opposition: more often it is indirect.

Challenging the rulers' judgement

The theme of misplaced trust has a consistent presence in connection with genealogy, as this sequence of three couplets (*Ibis* 321-2; 323-4; 325-6) shows:

Inque tuo thalamo ritu iugulere Pheraei,
 qui datus est leto coniugis ense suae.
Quosque putas fidos, ut Larisaeus Aleuas,
 uulnere non fidos experiare tuo.
Utque Milo, sub quo cruciata est Pisa tyranno, 325
 uiuus in occultas praecipiteris aequas.

May you be slaughtered in your bed like the one from Pherae,
 who was murdered by his wife's sword.
May you find those you thought loyal to be disloyal,
 like Aleuas of Larissa, by your own wound.

⁵⁹⁴ See La Penna 1957, 66.

⁵⁹⁵ Augustus is also linked to the figure of Alexander: Suetonius *Aug.* 18.1.

And like Milo, under whose tyranny Pisa was tormented, 325
may you be thrown into obscure waters.

Alexander of Pherae was killed by his wife's brothers or, maybe, in Ovid's version, by the wife herself.⁵⁹⁶ He is often portrayed as a suspicious king (Cic. *De officiis* 2.25) and La Penna⁵⁹⁷ notes the irony of him being killed by his own wife. The subjunctive *iugulere* recalls the context of sacrifice (cf. *Ibis* 106: *da iugulum*), presenting the tyrant as the victim of a ritual, which is indeed consistent with the context of the *Ibis*. The contrast between the setting in the bedroom and the murder at the hands of his wife reinforces the idea of the overturning of fate, which is also present in the couplet on Hermias (319-20).

Genealogy merges with the pathetic portrayal of each character, victim of disloyalty. Roles are confused and expectations are disappointed: Ibis is the one who betrayed the value of friendship, but Ovid wishes that he will be the one who is betrayed. At the same time, the betrayed provides the exemplary punishments for the guilty. Ovid plays with stories and narratives, and in the end casts himself as the one deciding who and what is to be punished.

Elegy's play with reality becomes clearer with Ovid's exile poetry and informs the whole poem where riddles and wordplay become the essence of an entire work. For example, based on this aspect of Ovid's approach we could propose a different interpretation of Milo's torment at 325-6. We have no information on a

⁵⁹⁶ According to the Greek sources (Xenophon *Hell.* 6.4.35; Diodorus 16.14.1; Conon *Narrat.* 50), Alexander's wife made him drunk and removed the guardians, in order for her brothers to come into the bedroom and kill him in bed. Because her brothers were afraid, she incited them towards the murder (see La Penna 1957, 75). La Penna thinks that Ovid is here following a different tradition, according to which it is the wife herself, Tebe, who kills Alexander.

⁵⁹⁷ La Penna 1957, 75.

Milo tyrant of Pisa, in Elis. He has been identified with various characters, which includes the hypothesis of a different tyrant of Pisa: Pantaleo.⁵⁹⁸ The scholia, and La Penna himself, suggest that his death by being thrown into “hidden waters” (*occultas ... aquas*: 326) may simply refer to a well. However, it could also convey the additional meaning of another story of betrayal, linked with the adjective *occultus* to indicate hidden plots, which would be consistent with Ovid’s play with stories and interpretations: the Ibis is, in the end, an exaggerated version of the intricate pattern of correspondence that is inherent in the genre of elegy.

Punishing the rulers in pain

Another elegiac representation is that of Achaeus (299-300), son of Andromachus, cousin of Seleucus Ceraunus (because his father’s sister had married Seleucus Callinicus), who was favoured by him and by Antiochus III the Great.⁵⁹⁹

More uel intereas capti suspensus Achaei,
qui miser aurifera teste pependit aqua. 300

May you die hanging like the captured Achaeus,
who, miserable, hung before the water that brings gold. 300

Antiochus III had given Achaeus the *δυναστεία* over a portion of Asia, but he rebelled against Antiochus, suffered the siege of Sardis, was then betrayed and brutally murdered.⁶⁰⁰ Achaeus is defined as *miser*, a word that again links the *Ibis* to its elegiac context, and brings back the use of emotions for communicative purposes, which is a key element of Ovid’s exilic poetry and of the *Ibis* in particular.

⁵⁹⁸ Merkel amends the text from *utque Milo* in *ut Patalon*: Ellis 1881, 125; La Penna 1957, 76 against the identification.

⁵⁹⁹ See La Penna 1957, 66.

⁶⁰⁰ La Penna 1957, 66.

The story of Achaeus could easily be told as the story of someone who turned against those who gave him power and whose death was his punishment, but Ovid describes him as *miser*, thus emphasising the suffering he endured.

Since Achaeus was beheaded and mutilated, then hanged from a tree or crucified with his head sewn into the skin of a donkey (Pol. 8.17-23), *miser* is certainly a good choice of word for him. However, Ovid's description of his torment also shows the three elements we have concentrated on in these pages: an aetiological interest focused on death, the use of emotions, and the use of gesture in narrative. The torment of Achaeus offers a case of display of superior knowledge on the part of the poet, as this is not a well-known tale. The description of his condition and the definition of him as *miser* reinforce a pitiful, emotionally charged portrayal that is not in keeping with the communicative purpose of the poem. Finally, Achaeus suffers a passive representation (the past participle *suspensus* refers to Ibis). But is it really inconsistent with the scope of the *Ibis*? Again, the correspondences are tangled. The insistence on pity is something that resonates with Ovid and his own self-defence, much more than with the attack against Ibis. But at the same time, constructing Ibis as an elegiac character worthy of compassion is the narrative which Ovid has been consistently pursuing.

The catalogue is the place where rage flares up, playing with control and lack of control, and Ovid's poetry does not forget the presence of elegiac elements. On the contrary, the catalogue is again an example of the poet's control over his material, and of a form of power that draws its energy from the powerless position of the elegiac poet. This power, though confined to the poetic world, poses a challenge to the "real" power of Augustus, not only because in this section Ovid

speaks of punished tyrants and, paradoxically, uses genealogy to tell stories of death, but also because Ovid casts himself as the one who can use the death of a ruler as a threat, and secondly because he is the one who decides what to punish and what not to punish, what the audience must think of a death – and he thereby usurps the prerogatives of the emperor.

The emotional characterisation takes on a peculiar tone in the case of Sardanapalus (311-12):

Inque pyram tecum carissima corpora mittas,
quem finem uitae Sardanapallus habet.

May you place the bodies you hold most dear on the funeral pyre:
this is the end of life that Sardanapalus had.

Unlike some other historical characters, this king of Assyria is widely known. Besieged in the city of Nineveh, he thought he was safe because an oracle had predicted that he would not be defeated as long as the river Euphrates did not turn hostile. However, the Euphrates did overflow and destroyed part of the city wall. Sardanapalus took this as a sign of his defeat and had a funeral pyre built with a wooden house on top in which he, his wife and concubines were burnt (Athenaeus 12.529b).⁶⁰¹

The decision to use a very famous story shows Ovid's ability to navigate between well-known and lesser-known material and to choose from both groups. Moreover, he is able to make his own mark by using poetic choice for communicative purposes. The adjective *carissima* used to describe the bodies of

⁶⁰¹ See La Penna 1957, 71 for more details.

those whom Sardanapalus brought with him on the pyre (*carissima corpora*: 311) gives the lines a pathetic and emotional quality. In this example too emotions prepare a certain expected reaction, which is actually disappointed by the communicative aim: Sardanapalus, as Ibis, should be pitied, but he is used instead to increase the audience's understanding of pain, only to have this compassion taken away.

This is consistent with the representation of Mithridates VI Eupator (329-30):

Aut ut Amastriacis quondam Lenaeus ab oris,
nudus Achillea destituaris humo. 330

Or like once Lenaeus, from the shores of Amastris,
may you be abandoned naked on the Achillean soil. 330

Here we see the famous king of Pontus, enemy of Rome, who called himself Dionysus (*Lenaeus*) and who, after being defeated by Pompey, ended up abandoned by his subjects, without means; as a result, it is said, he killed himself.⁶⁰² Again, note the reversal of fortune, with the king dying naked. Again, we have a pitiful portrayal that is not really meant to attract pity. The verb *destituo* is used here for its proxemic value: Mithridates is physically thrown to the ground. But it also indicates a state of destitution (as in the participle *destitutus*). This is the same semantic process we have seen in Ovid's exile poetry (*Trist.* 2.571: *nec mihi credibile est quemquam insultasse iacenti*; *Pont.* 4.3.27-8: *uix equidem credo: sed et insultare iacenti / te mihi nec uerbis parcere fama refert*), which we have linked to *Ibis* 29-30: *at tibi, calcasti qui me, uiolente, iacentem, / qua licet et misero, debitus hostis ero*. Proxemics embodies semantics and conveys the visual

⁶⁰² For a wide treatment of the discussion see La Penna 1957, 79.

manifestation of this misery, making communication much more effective: the character of Mithridates embodies an almost scenic representation of pain, which enters into dialogue with those representing Ovid and thus becomes a weapon against Ibis.

The focus was different in the couplet 315-6, where Ibis is compared to the victims of a tyrant, not to the tyrant himself:

Utque necatorum Darei fraude secundi, 315
sic tua subsidens deuoret ora cinis.

As the ash consumed the faces of those deceived by the second Darius 315
so the ash may settle on your face and devour it.

Darius II, known as Nothus or Ochus, king of Persia in the fifth century BC, wanted to kill those who helped him to suppress the revolt of the seven Magi, so he locked them in a room and covered them with burning ashes. The theme of misplaced trust is here reversed: those who supported Darius receive death in return. This theme suits a victim with whom one can empathise – Ovid himself, for example, who claims he always supported Augustus (cf. *Trist.* 2.51-66) and in return received relegation. On the contrary, however, the example is used to support the punishment of Ibis, thus reinforcing the antinomic dichotomy between pain and lack of compassion that we have seen throughout the *Ibis*. It therefore demonstrates Ovid's control. Finally, this is the story of an ungrateful king, another case study in a multi-layered communication to Augustus. The indirect attack against Augustus' face is carried out through the poet's positioning himself as a judge of the king's behaviour: while the victims are used as reference for the punishment of an enemy,

the perpetrator is explicitly judged as having inflicted an act of wickedness (*fraude*) on the victims (*necatorum*).

VI.3 The making of a *uates*: Greece and Rome

I argue that Ovid's combination of display of knowledge and elegiac means makes the *Ibis* a poem in which Ovid claims again his role as Roman *uates*. In this role, one fundamental aspect lies in the mastering of the Greek tradition. The complex and tangled pattern of intertexts, and of generic and literary reminiscences – even more significant if we think of the conditions in which Ovid had to compose the *Ibis*, with arguably a more difficult direct access to sources – proves the *Ibis* to be the product of an erudite poet and elegiac *uates*. In this last section I discuss the Greek and the Roman contribution to Ovid's self-portrait as a *uates* in exile.

Poet against poets: Ovid and the Greeks

Ovid's examples are not exclusively mythical or historical. A small but significant – in terms of Ovid's argument – part of the catalogue concerns the stories of poets, and especially Greek poets. Their presence appears not to be linked to their artistic merits, but, as it is the case for the rest of the catalogue, to their deaths. Given these premises, two main issues have traditionally been linked to the catalogue: the identity of the poets and Ovid's sources for their deaths. However, I argue that if we switch the point of view from *what* Ovid knows to *why* Ovid exhibits knowledge, we will find that firstly, we do not necessarily need to know who they are and what sources Ovid uses; and secondly, that sometimes we can make reasonable hypotheses on the who and the what as well.

The first point to make concerns the relationship between the poetic examples in the catalogue and the generic issue that concerns the *Ibis*. As Nicolosi has pointed out when discussing the role of Archilochus' elegies in his *corpus*, elegy shares the subject with iambic poetry – this applies to the case of Archilochus, but seems plausible for Semonides and Hipponax as well.⁶⁰³ This subject is everyday life. An indication in this respect has been found in Archil. fr. 215 West: *καί μ' οὔτ' ἰάμβων οὔτε τερπωλέων μέλει* (“and I have no interest in iambs or amusements”⁶⁰⁴). According to Carey,⁶⁰⁵ the word *ἰάμβοι* does not indicate the specific metric choice: it would be a general definition for Archilochus' poetry and his own peculiar way of doing poetry.⁶⁰⁶ In the clearly complex generic pattern of references on which the *Ibis* relies, the poetic examples neither exclude the role of elegy nor point at a necessarily iambic predominance.

Through the variety of poetic examples Ovid claims his own place in a tradition made of famous poets, inventors of genres and innovators. By focusing on Ovid's peculiar choice of sharing information about the poets' death that is otherwise unknown, the interpreters tend to bring their attention to the exhibition of knowledge, the challenge of tracing the sources. I think we should start from La Penna's hypothesis that the poets to whom Ovid refers are all famous or at least commonly known.⁶⁰⁷ This hypothesis is normally applied to those episodes where the identity of the poet mentioned is difficult to identify. In those cases, La Penna

⁶⁰³ Nicolosi 2013, 19. See also Nicolosi 2016. The thesis of a shared topic between elegy and iambus is already in Della Corte 1940, and Dover 1964, while arguing for a difference in the context of the two genres, admits their unity in terms of contents and language.

⁶⁰⁴ Transl. Gerber 1999.

⁶⁰⁵ Carey 2009, 149.

⁶⁰⁶ See Degani 2007 for the idea that *ἰάμβοι* does not define the iambic trimeter, but any meter that characterises poems aimed at derision and offence.

⁶⁰⁷ La Penna 1957, e.g. p. 145 on the unidentified poet of 541-2.

is inclined to suggest the identification with famous figures. I argue that we should look at this as the way in which Ovid applies the poetic examples to his argument: he uses famous poets to claim back his own place in a tradition and adds unknown and unverifiable information to show a superior knowledge.

My approach differs from Williams' in that I do not see these tangled threads as a symptom of Ovid's *caecitas animi*. On the contrary, I argue that the elements of erudition, use of emotions and the semiotics of the relationship between the characters are tools that the poet uses with a communicative aim: to present his own poetic statement drawing on his destitute position, to reclaim his poetic role and ultimately to demonstrate a form of power that comes from his powerless position. In this sense, I do agree with Williams that reality does not match the poet's claim to power, and that "Ibis has nothing to fear from Ovid's distant fury".⁶⁰⁸ However, these are the grounds for a poetic expression of power that is in fact a challenge for the real power and has already caused real problems to its poet.

The stories of Archilochus (521-2), Hipponax (523-4), the unknown poet possibly identified with Stesichorus (525-6), and the Roman poet Cinna (539-40) all have complex, and far from straightforward, connections with Ovid's own experience as he recounted it in his exile poetry:

Utque repertori nocuit pugnacis iambi,
 sic sit in exitium lingua proterua tuum.
 Utque parum stabili qui carmine laesit Athenin,
 inuisus pereas deficiente cibo. 525
 Utque lyrae uates fertus periisse seuerae
 causa sit exitii dextera laesa tui.
 (...) 525
 Conditor ut tardae, laesus cognomine, Myrrhae,
 urbis in innumeris inueniare locis. 540

⁶⁰⁸ Williams 1996, 129.

As it harmed the inventor of the pugnacious iambus,
 so may a shameless tongue be the cause of your ruin.
 And like the one who attacked Athenis with unsteady verses,
 may you die, hated and starving.
 And as it is said that the poet of the inflexible lyre has died, 525
 may a broken promise be the cause of your death.
 (...)

And like the author of the slow Myrrha, damaged by his surname,
 may you be found in countless places of the city. 540

The expression *lingua proterua* occurs only in this passage of Ovid's *Ibis* among classical Latin literary texts. However, the adjective *proteruus*, with reference to *os*, is present in the *Metamorphoses* (14.63) and refers to the jaws of the monsters that grow out of Scylla's body after her metamorphosis. The adjective indicates the violent, but also the shameless.⁶⁰⁹ The adjective is, in fact, also present in *Rem.* 362, where Ovid refuses this definition that has (wrongfully) attributed to his poetry. Now this image of violence and shamelessness is in complete contrast to Ovid's representation of his own guilt too. Ovid insists that his *Ars* is not aimed at respectable women (cf. *Trist.* 2.241-56) and rejects an immoral portrayal of his work, even when he admits his guilt (cf. *Trist.* 2.105-6 and the comparison to Actaeon): *proteruus*, as "violent", or "shameless", is definitely not a characterisation that fits the one that Ovid wants to give of himself.

Should we think that Ovid is deliberately undermining his own argument? This would actually be an Ovidian feature, if we think of the parallels in *Met.* 6.87-128 and *Ars* 1.687-704 where Ovid chooses examples to support his argument that actually end up undermining it. There are three points I want to focus on here: Ovid

⁶⁰⁹ *OLD*² 1655, s.v. *proteruus* respectively 1 and 2. The *ThlL* X.2.2274.27 mentions *Ibis* 522.

indirectly recalls his own life; he also distances himself from iambic poetry; and, finally, he presents Ibis as *proteruus*: the poetic statement merges with an aggressive communicative aim.

The image of the poet being punished for his poetic *ars* brings Archilochus, Hipponax and Ovid closer together, and in particular indirectly recalls and reinforces Ovid's claim to have been punished for his *Ars*. Of Archilochus Ovid does not even tell us how he died, and we have no other information that can be consistent with a punishment for his poetry:⁶¹⁰ the focus is on the reason why he was punished. Ovid's communicative ability in this respect is therefore expressed in the fact that he suggests the idea of his own condition (being punished for his *Ars*) in the context of an example that actually portrays a very different type of character.

Not only is the character different, but his very poetic choice is rejected. Before describing the character, the adjective *proteruus*, which refers to *lingua*, can be seen as part of the poetic statement and an expression of Ovid's distancing from the iambic genre. While Ovid's language in the *Ibis* is violent, he rejects the iambic genre and chooses elegy, presenting it as a sign of mercy towards the enemy, as we have seen in Chapter Four. Here, with a similar contrast, he refuses to be equated with an iambic poet at the same time bringing himself and that poet closer together in their fates. It is a persistent tangling of threads.

Then comes personal offence. If *proteruus* is also judgmental in terms of poetry, but its scope can be limited to its stylistic features, the adjective used for

⁶¹⁰ The lexicon *Suda* and other sources report that Archilochus died on the battlefield. See La Penna 1957, 138 for further information.

people can be offensive.⁶¹¹ It is Ibis' *lingua* that is defined as *proterua*, not Archilochus'. And, again, Ovid never describes his own poetry in these terms: on the contrary, his main point is that his poems do no harm to moral customs. It is Ibis who says shameful things, and, I argue, not just because we should consider him a rival poet, but because he is the shameful one who should be exiled, not Ovid. This verbal aggression conceals, under the veil of poetry, a specific moral attack aimed at Ibis' positive face – his reputation –in order to undermine it.

The case of the unidentified poet of 525-6 introduces another element, which, as I have tried to show, is present throughout the catalogue: betrayed trust (*dextera laesa*). Many hypotheses have been put forward as to his identification: Alcaeus, who broke his word, given to Pittacus, Stesichorus who invented the epic-lyric genre, Linus, killed by Heracles because of the reproaches he gave him, Orpheus, killed by the Thracian women.⁶¹² It is not even clear whether the poet is the one who has betrayed the trust or the one who suffers from the broken trust. This is again an indirect reference to Ibis' guilt: he, the one who could have helped, has broken Ovid's trust (*Ibis* 19-20) and for this he must be punished. In this context, the placement of emotions points to Ovid as the one to be pitied.

This is not the case with our Roman example: Cinna. Cinna was killed and dismembered because he was mistaken for another man, Lucius Cornelius Cinna, one of Caesar's assassins.⁶¹³ The premise of this death is a misunderstanding, as in the case of Ovid according to the argument he makes in his exile poetry. The poet Cinna's death is completely free of fault on his part, because it comes from his

⁶¹¹ *OLD*² 1655, 2 s.v.

⁶¹² See La Penna, 139-40 for a comprehensive discussion of the problems.

⁶¹³ For a connection between Cinna, Orpheus from the *Metamorphoses* and Ovid see Ziogas 2025.

murderers' lack of knowledge. How can this be a good example for Ibis? It can, because in undermining his attack Ovid emphasises the idea that Ibis should bear the same injustice that Ovid has suffered. In this way the *Ibis*' argument fits into Ovid's portrayal of his experience in exile. At the same time, it encounters the same ambiguities as the rest of Ovid's exile poetry: if Ovid's destiny is marked by injustice, the ruling of the powerful man who decided that punishment is marked by injustice as well.

In *Trist.* 2.213-40 Ovid defends his *Ars* by saying that it was only the fact that Augustus did not find the time to read it that caused the exile, with a clear form of criticism of the *princeps*. The criticism becomes even clearer when Ovid recalls that Augustus financed pantomimes in which adultery was one of the main themes (*Trist.* 2.497-20): Augustus is the one who actively supports immoral activities.⁶¹⁴ Again, there are very tangled threads between Ovid, Ibis and Augustus: the one who speaks with a shameless mouth is Ibis, the one who effectively supports immoral events is Augustus, Ovid is the exile, but also the one who expresses his judgement through poetry. His attack is not diminished by its fictional context: the poetic environment is the realm of possibilities, and Ovid's attacks are not weaker because they pass through this system. In conclusion, the relationship between the examples and the two characters of Ovid and Ibis is constantly changing. The stories seem to be a good reference for one or the other, but the common thread is that, firstly, they

⁶¹⁴ See Ingleheart 2010, 208-28 on *Trist.* 2.213-40 and 369-77 on lines 2.497-20. Ingleheart notes (on 509-14) that "Ovid now makes explicit the insinuation that Augustus promotes adultery" (373). For a pragmatic interpretation of the passage and, more broadly, of Ovid's use of the concept of *otium* as a weapon against the *princeps* see Ursini – Salvatori 2024, 82-8.

play a role in Ovid's argument and, secondly, they have a connection with Ovid's poetry.

The Roman *uates*

Up to this point we have mainly looked at examples taken from the Greek and Eastern tradition. But what of the Roman tradition? As we have noted, with the *Fasti*, Ovid has claimed and established his role as Roman *uates* and in the *Ibis* he extends it. Does this mean that Rome is not in the *Ibis*? Has the relationship with Callimachus erased the Roman identity? Certainly not. The Roman examples are crucial to the economy of the catalogue – and, like the other categories, they are spread throughout the whole catalogue.

It is finally time to say that the catalogue begins with the Trojans:

Neue sine exemplis aevi cruciere prioris,
sint tua Troianis non leuiora malis.

So that you do not suffer without the examples of the past,
may your troubles be no lighter than those of the Trojans.

(*Ibis* 251-2)

On the one hand, it could be argued that the reference to the Trojans is there to emphasise the very idea of retribution: Ibis should suffer as the ancestors of the Romans did, while he constitutes a public danger (*publica damna: Ibis* 220). However, the choice of employing this argument is not without a cost: that of comparing Ibis, again, to wretched figures who did not merit the suffering that fell upon them. A comparison of Ibis to the Trojans could even be regarded as a mark of linguistic politeness to Ibis: in fact, the comparison serves to reduce the severity of the attack against Ibis' face, as his pain is dignified by the allusion to the Trojans'

suffering. The Trojans are an archetype of excruciating, never-ending pain that ultimately leads to the destruction of their own existence. However, they also represent the very origin of the Roman empire, the foundation of the Roman epic interpretation of their history and their relationship with the Greeks and the Carthaginians: foundations which Virgil had posited with the *Aeneid*.⁶¹⁵

The following is an exposition of the manner in which numerous layers of interpretation combine. Firstly, Ovid employs emotions and pain to provide Ibis with a pitiful and miserable characterisation. This characterisation engenders expectations of compassion; however, it functions as the foundation for an even more intense critique. Secondly, Ovid employs a characteristic poetic device by referencing the epic genre, but situating it within an elegiac setting.⁶¹⁶ The premise for the effectiveness of the attack is established in Virgil's work, which elevated the once-defeated Trojans to the status of Roman heroes. It is evident that Ovid assumes ownership of the tradition and asserts his role in reinterpreting it for his own objectives.

The semantic area of crucifixion as a metaphor for pain has been exploited in the context of elegiac erotic suffering already by Catullus (99.12: *suffixum in summa me memini esse cruce*). However, its presence in the verb *crucio* (*Ibis* 251) also recalls the fundamental Roman character of this poem. Crucifixion was an established punishment in Rome for a very long time and it was associated with

⁶¹⁵ Cf. e.g. *Aeneid* 2 and the account of the fall of Troy: pain is one of the main features to characterise the Trojans.

⁶¹⁶ Cf. e.g. the reinterpretation of Dido and Aeneas' story in the *Heroides* (*Her.* 7), where the references to the *Aeneid* are mostly used to reinforce the persuasive aim of the abandoned heroin and shift the focus on the emotional, rather than the political, aspects of the story (cf. Rosati's 1989 introduction to the letter, pages 158-9).

humiliation (the condemned was naked), also used for slaves and non-Roman citizens.⁶¹⁷ The joint presence of humiliation and profound pain makes the idea of crucifixion extremely fitting to describe both Ibis and Ovid's punishments and suffering. What is more, the word choice shows a claim to power on Ovid's part: he is the one who is inflicting on Ibis his punishment in the form of *excruciating* pain.

This first couplet establishes the tone for Ovid's approach to the catalogue. The goal is to analyse the manner in which Ovid employs the catalogue to assert his superiority based on knowledge, poetic communication and manipulation of the reader's response. This is achieved by the employment of emotions to convey specific messages and demonstrate the poet's mastery over both the content and interpretation of the poem. Simultaneously, the dichotomy between control and lack of control – a fundamental element of Ovid's poetry⁶¹⁸ – is manifested through the layered structure of references, interests and examples. From the outset, the association of Ibis with such a controversial example as the Trojans establishes the complexity of the catalogue.

This is not, however, the only case in which a Trojan character is brought up and in each case those characters are never actually guilty. We have king Priam (283-4), who died besides the altar of Jupiter Herceus:

Nec tibi subsidio praesens sit numen, ut illi,
cui nihil Hercei profuit ara Iouis.

And may no god help you, as no god helped him,

⁶¹⁷ On crucifixion see Hengel 1977.

⁶¹⁸ Since the very beginning of his love poetry, as we discussed in Part One: cf. *Amores* 1.1 with Ovid overpowered by Amor. And yet it is Ovid the one who control this narrative of being powerless and has the last word.

to whom nothing good came from the altar of Jupiter Herceus.

Ovid combines the use of erudite knowledge, in dialogue with the epic tradition, and his own communicative use of the example. The death of Priam is narrated by post-Homeric sources,⁶¹⁹ and above all the *Aeneid*, with which Ovid is once again in dialogue and competes. Here, the goal is to apply the misery of the old king's death to the humiliation of Ibis, while at the same time using an unexpected example as archetype. Priam is old, helpless, looking for shelter at the altar, but this search for divine help is diminished and ridiculed when it applies to Ibis: no god can help him, just as no god could help Priam, despite his attempts.

This description of Priam's destiny is at the same time a deprivation of the right to compassion, which breaks the expectations created by the use of Priam as an example, with mockery against that pain, and a display of the power of the poet, whose curse overcomes the gods. This is itself a face-threatening act not just against Ibis, but against the one who could actually protect him, Augustus. The poetic curse places the poet in a position of superiority over anything else, gods (and equivalents) included.

Even the Roman emblem of someone who was right from the beginning and was never believed comes up (483-4): *qui caua primus acuta / cuspide suspecti robora fixit equi*.⁶²⁰ *Aeneid* 2 establishes the character of Laocoon as that of a sacrificed hero. He pronounces some of the most famous expressions of the poem (e.g. the renowned *timeo Danaos et dona ferentis*: 2.49). His death together with

⁶¹⁹ Eur. *Troad.* 16; Verg. *Aen* 2, also with Serv. *ad Aen.* 2.506.

⁶²⁰ The most direct reference is *Aen.* 2.229-31: *et scelus expendisse merentem / Laocoonta ferunt, sacrum qui cuspide robur / laeserit.*

those of his children is a sacrifice that will lead, in Virgil's reinterpretation of the Trojan War in a way that would be acceptable to a celebration of the rise of Rome, to a greater good, passing through the greatest devastation.⁶²¹

Della Corte and Fasce's notes⁶²² indicate as the reason for his punishment the fact that Laocoon had actually desecrated Apollo's temple (*Aen.* 2.40-1; 201-2), but I would not consider this to be the most relevant reason for including Laocoon in the catalogue, not least because there is no trace of it in Ovid's account. His communicative role and therefore his use in Ovid's argument is much clearer. First, Ibis' death too is not treated like a case of sorrow, but like a necessary death, as a sacrifice would be (and a sacrifice is performed in the first part of the poem). In this respect, the death of Laocoon, as necessary to the future creation of Rome, is a relevant reference for Ibis. Second, this is yet another stage of Ovid's depriving Ibis of compassion: the systematic association of Ibis with characters who evoke pity contributes to the impact of his punishment. And the punishment comes through the attack against his pain.

Virtue, vice, and aetiology

When it comes to the Roman examples, they are also not immune to the idea of innocence. In some cases, characters even display heroism, as with Marcus Atilius Regulus (281-2):⁶²³

Vel quae, qui redimi Romano turpe putavit,
a duce Puniceo pertulit, ipse feras.

⁶²¹ And Ovid does address several characters that have been made famous in the Roman world by the *Aeneid*, like Palinurus (593-4) and Nisus.

⁶²² Della Corte – Fasce 1986 *ad loc.*

⁶²³ Who appears immediately after a traitor: Mettius Fufetius at 279-80.

Or, like the one who thought it shameful for a Roman to be ransomed,
suffer the same pain from the orders of the Punic commander.

Atilius Regulus was taken hostage during the first Punic war but he encouraged Rome to continue to fight, which ultimately led to the Roman victory in this first war (but also to his death). Regulus becomes an example, often quoted for different purposes, and an archetype of heroism and devotion to Rome.⁶²⁴ Here, Ovid appropriates a traditional Roman example, a well-known and well-established traditional figure, and uses it for his own, very different purposes. The paradox is that the poet shows the highest level of control in using knowledge for his own purposes in the very moment in which his choice of example diminishes his argument and reveals a lack of control. In other words, Ovid's choice of example appears again unsuitable for an enemy: why would Regulus be a suitable referent for Ibis? And yet, the very bold choice of repurposing the Roman tradition to his own aims shows Ovid's display of confidence as a *uates*.

We have seen the cases of Pterelaos and Nisus, deceived by their daughters, but one case was missing from that group: the Roman example of Servius Tullius, killed by Tarquinius Superbus with the help of Tullia, his own daughter and the wife of Tarquinius. The couplet dedicated to this scene (363-4), where Tullia runs over her father with the chariot, also refers to the origin of the name of the place where the impious murder happened (the *uicus sceleratus*):

Infamemque locum sceleris quae nomine fecit,
pressit et inductis membra paterna rotis.

And she who made a place wicked with a name,
she who crushed her father's body with driven wheels.

⁶²⁴ E.g. in Hor. *Carm.* 3.5. See Nisbet – Rudd 2004 *ad loc.* for further discussion and bibliography.

The episode is extensively narrated in *Fasti* 6.587-624, where Tullia (as in Livy 1.42; 46-8) is described as the true mastermind behind Tarquinius' violent takeover of power. It is not surprising that Ovid refers to one of the crucial and most ferocious events in the Roman monarchy to reinforce his attack against Ibis, who, like Tarquinius, brings danger and violence. What is surprising is that Ovid wishes Ibis to be in the place of Servius and to have a daughter like Tullia. The reason, in my view, lies in the scope of Ovid's revenge. The retribution for Ibis' fault pairs with the destiny of the innocent ones, who were victims of shameless people like Ibis. The foundation of this punishment is the poet's knowledge of things: the reference to the aetiology of the toponym brings the poet's role as *uates* into the conversation, which is also the source of his power.

The end of the catalogue: Remus

The catalogue begins and ends with the history of Rome: it begins with the Trojans and it ends with Remus (635-6):

Utque Remo muros auso transire recentes 635
noxia sint capiti rustica tela tuo.

And as happened to Remus, who dared to cross the new walls, 635
may a rough weapon wound your head.

Ovid has given extensive accounts of the death of Remus in the *Fasti*, with different implications. In *Fast.* 2.143 the comparison between Romulus and Augustus, in favour of the latter, includes Remus: *te Remus incusat, ueniam dedit hostibus ille*. Romulus killed his own brother for disobeying, whereas Augustus forgives his

enemies. In *Fast.* 4.841-50 Remus is killed by Celer for crossing the walls that were being built there and Romulus needs to hold back tears, which he finally sheds during his brother's funeral. Remus' death is the model for what will happen to any enemy who crosses the walls: "*sic*" que "*meos muros transeat hostis*" ait (848).⁶²⁵

Closing the catalogue with Remus has a programmatic force. Remus is the emblem of the necessary punishment, that punishment with which society strengthens itself (as Ibis should be punished). At the same time, he represents a failed occasion of mercy, which in the *Fasti* is the sign that Augustus is superior to Romulus because he is able to exercise his superior power through mercy (and therefore his power is stronger), and this too has obvious application as a reference to Ovid's own condition. Who is Remus then in this scenario? Is he really just a figure for Ibis and his future punishment? My thesis is that the examples of the catalogue are a way of conveying an argument. Therefore, Remus cannot be just Ibis or just Ovid, nor it is possible to identify Ibis as Augustus with a straightforward correspondence. The choice of Remus as the final example both marks the programmatic reference to the Roman context, and makes the catalogue inherently ambiguous: Remus is his brother's victim, but also his first traitor (cf. *Fast.* 2.143; 4.841-62).

Conclusions: the *uates*' weapons

The centre of Ovid's attention is Augustus, who, as we have seen, should be identified as the additional addressee of the *Ibis* just as he is always present as an

⁶²⁵ On the episode see Fantham 1998, 248-51; Krasne 2012.

additional addressee in the collections of elegies. So, the mention of Remus is a message to Augustus, not because Augustus is Ibis, but because the examples remind Augustus when it is time to punish and when to exercise mercy. In this respect, what looks like a form of flattery towards Augustus' merciful power (by recalling his superiority over Romulus) is in fact a form of linguistic impoliteness aimed at influencing Augustus' behaviour (negative impoliteness), and this is the expression of the power of the poet: from a powerless condition, poetry turns into the tool through which Ovid becomes the figure of power towards his enemy and in so doing he both challenges and tries to influence the power of the real ruler. Augustus as a character in Ovid's poetry is the recipient of Ovid's flattery, criticism and instructions. When poetry clashes with reality this powerful use of language cannot avoid showing that the poet claims for himself a pervasive role in which he both controls the argument and suffers the inconsistency and slips of control which he himself has created.

The *Ibis*, then, follows in the footsteps of Ovid's exile poetry, but at the same time establishes its own direction, influencing our interpretation of the entire exilic corpus. Ovid focuses on the explicit aim to attack and uses the examples to push to its extreme the confusion between the layers of correspondence that connect the mythical characters with their "real" references. This does not come at the expense of Ovid's style. The confusion, the lack of control, the inconsistency between the examples and Ovid's apparent aim, are all consistent with Ovid's poetic work before and after exile and even with the playfulness and self-mockery of his love poetry. This game of control, however, has a crucial consequence at the level of the relationship with Augustus.

We have seen how Ovid decides who is to be punished and who is not, regardless of the subjects' actual guilt. Ovid bestows clemency and refuses it, and reaches the point where he judges the ruler's choices. He is the prosecutor, the judge, the extra-legal avenger, the helpless victim: he plays all the roles and plays with the other characters' roles. He is even subject to his own kaleidoscopic exchange of correspondences. In so doing Ovid even challenges Augustus' position of power, because he ultimately casts himself as the ruler within the microcosm of his poetry. And this is the step forward which the *Ibis* makes and which can change the perspective on Ovid's exilic work: Augustus is not in his expected position of power in the *Ibis*. He is not begged for mercy, because to give mercy the ruler needs a position of absolute power which Augustus, within the defined borders of poetry, does not have. He is ambiguously praised (23-6) for his mercy, but he is deprived of the position to exercise it. Punishment, mercy, narrative and interpretation of each target's story come from the poet and *Ibis* is the tool to show it. *Ibis* is the one who should be punished by Augustus and yet he is punished by the poet.

In pragmatic terms, Ovid tries to establish with his interlocutors a relationship in which the poet himself is in the strong position and the interlocutor is in the weak one. This includes Augustus: even in this relationship, Ovid is in the power position. From the collections of elegies, we know that Augustus must be merciful to Ovid and – from the *Ibis* – punish *Ibis*, but we also know that Augustus has always been merciful in the fact that he allowed Ovid to keep his rights. However, inside Ovid's poetry Augustus is deprived of his right to exercise mercy: the poet never completely admits his guilt (by refusing the idea of *scelus*) in his collections of elegies, and in the *Ibis* he ceases to pray. Instead, he gives his own account.

Therefore, inside the borders of his exile poetry, Ovid places Augustus in a quite uncomfortable position. He is praised for a mercy that led to such excruciating pain that it can be used as a threat against an enemy (*Ibis* 37-8: *denique Sarmaticas inter Geticasque sagittas / his precor ut uiuas et moriari locis*). The punishment he inflicted is both accepted and refused, since Ovid both admits a fault and therefore accepts the punishment as deserved, but also refuses what would make a mistake really guilty and therefore highlights the disproportion of the punishment. He begs for mercy, but also casts himself as the figure in control in the same poetic context with which he should be asking for mercy.

This causes a pragmatic paradox which involves the whole corpus of exilic elegies:⁶²⁶ Augustus cannot comply with Ovid's request (mercy towards Ovid and punishment against Ibis) because he is not anymore the powerful figure inside the poetic context. A request for mercy cannot come from someone in a higher position: mercy *is* something to be granted only from above. But Ovid casts himself as the figure of power in his exile poetry, establishes this position in the *Ibis* and from that position he speaks to Augustus inside the borders of poetry. From this position Augustus can only refuse a request for mercy (disobey the paradoxical injunction) in order to maintain superiority. In doing so, however, Augustus also reiterates Ovid's reasons for pleading for mercy for himself and punishment for the enemies, ultimately nourishing the very attack against himself, the ruler, whose judgment is questioned. The ultimate conclusion is that Ovid's exile poetry prevents the exile from ending and the poet from coming back to Rome. Ovid's request for mercy can coexist with Augustus' power only as long as the *princeps* rejects it. If Augustus

⁶²⁶ See the Introduction to Part Three.

granted the poet's prayer, he would allow the reversal of power dynamics to leave the confines of poetry and enter the realm of reality. In other words, the end of the exile would mean the real confirmation of the argument that Ovid has developed in his poetry and that has lived only as a poetic feature: that poetry can exercise (and overthrow) power.

Conclusion to Part Three

The *Ibis*' catalogue presents itself as a prismatic, never-ending flow of cruelty and erudition. The amount of information floods the reader, giving the impression that any research for order is in vain. Scholarly attempts to structure the catalogue based on the type of death have provided valuable insight in Ovid's range of punishments. My approach moves on a parallel route, trying to discern the choice of the example based on each character, instead of their punishment. Shifting the focus on this approach, the range of examples appear differently organised. Opened and closed by a reference to the Roman tradition (the Trojans at 251-2 and Remus at 635-6), under this light the catalogue offers examples of various ranges of guilty people, including rulers, but also people whose guilty can be doubted, and others who are completely innocent, if not even heroic (like Regulus at 281-2). This unexpected variety in the type of example is a consistent feature of the catalogue. I interpret it as the peak of the tangled pattern of references with which Ovid has shaped his approach to elegy from the very beginning of his love poetry.

In Chapter Five I have discussed the significance of those examples in which emotion merges with knowledge. We noticed how important the use of emotion, and especially of compassion, is for Ovid's argument, both in the collections of exilic elegies and in the *Ibis*. The catalogue pushes this approach to its extreme. Pain is probably the most prominent feature of the characters in the catalogue: guilty and innocent ones suffer enormously throughout the whole catalogue. Through the double perspective of the untangled bond between pain and relief, and of the pattern of compassion – and deprivation of it –, this chapter has focused on how pain becomes a means for attack in the catalogue.

Chapter Six has focused on power. It is the power of rulers, who are significantly present in the catalogue, and harshly punished. Ovid stigmatises the cruelty of their power, criticises their judgment, but also replaces them in the ability to decide, punish and forgive. It is also, however, the power of the poet, a Roman *uates* surely, whose superior knowledge and thus superior position comes from the combination of Greek and Roman tradition. Here the presence of Greek poets and Roman examples in the catalogue find their explanation.

If we look at the choice of examples, the most prominent feature which we can notice is its tendency to disappoint expectations. Surely Ovid must have chosen the most cruel and guilty characters of the Greek and the Roman mythical-historical tradition we would expect. And yet many of the examples chosen have in fact a strong and consistent history of employment in Ovid's own self-defence. In other words, they are traditionally associated with Ovid. In other cases, the characters are simply innocent. At times they represent the ruler's cruelty and immediately appear as a much better fit for Augustus, than for a personal enemy. And yet is it not the most Ovidian thing of all to play with his own poetry, undermine his argument with unexpected and unsuitable examples, overwhelming his reader with the serious cruelty of a short, but never-ending poem? Playfulness is certainly not the first word anybody would associate with the *Ibis*, and yet Ovid's Musa appears to be still *iocosa*, even after everything that happened to its author.

Epilogue

As Gareth Williams notes, “the *Ibis* is a distinctively ‘Roman’ poem”.⁶²⁷ Its complex pattern of generic contributions and its wide links to both Greek and Latin traditions are undeniable. I argue that Ovid merges this broad collection of references with the aim of creating the *Ibis* as a learned poem which should in fact be considered one of the highest peaks of the poetry of its author. The *Ibis* inserts itself into the Alexandrian tradition.⁶²⁸ It deals with the genre of traditional curses, drawing from both its Greek and Latin expressions. It plays with the interaction between elegiac and iambic poetry, once again involving both Greek and Latin sources. And yet, the outcome of this encounter between Greece and Rome is an eminently Roman poem. This comes to light from the intricate bond between the *Ibis* and Roman elegy, including the rest of Ovid’s own exilic corpus, and from the *Ibis*’ catalogue.

Why has the Roman character of the *Ibis* a lot to do with elegy? I argue that in the complex generic pattern of the poem Roman elegy has a fundamental role. In fact, the *Ibis* pushes the boundaries of elegy to their extreme, emphasising its main features of love, lament and invective. This is the first point: love and lament are not the only paths that an elegiac work can take. Rage, in the form of curse or invective, is part of elegy too. Each type of elegy emphasises a specific trait. Thus, in Roman love elegy, which we have discussed in Part One, love is obviously the main trait, but lament for the lover’s suffering and invective against the rivals, the

⁶²⁷ Williams 1996, 81.

⁶²⁸ And especially Callimachus, surely, but the links are not limited to this author.

enemies, and even the *puella* herself also has a fundamental role.⁶²⁹ In Ovid's *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* the main trait cannot help but lament, and yet love – in the form of praise for Augustus, nostalgia towards Rome, affection for his wife and friends – and rage – as invective against former friends and enemies, but also as criticism towards Augustus – should not be ignored if we are to have a comprehensive understanding of Ovid's exilic works. In the *Ibis* it is undoubted that rage, in the form of curses and invectives against the unknown enemy, is the main protagonist; however, lament and even love also find their rightful place, and their role is fundamental for the interpretation of the poem.

In Part Two we have dealt with the intricate and strong relationship between the use of lament as a means of attack, and the use of invective as a means to evoke compassion. Both in love elegy and in exile poetry, it appears very clear that every character can be the subject of very different forms of communication. The *puella* is the object of desire, but can be also criticised, or even violently attacked, and portrayed as a *lena*. The poet can become a *lena*. Augustus can be the object of desire and can be treated in similar terms as the *puella*. However, he can be attacked, as the *puella*, or as a blocking character, who prevents the poet from fulfilling his desires. And even the very powerful role of the *princeps* can be challenged. In judging his former friends turned enemies, Ovid reveals the process of questioning Augustus' judgment and behaviour, which will reach its peak in the *Ibis*. A process which ultimately leads to Ovid competing with Augustus for power, in the closed realm of poetry. This pattern blooms with the catalogue.

⁶²⁹ The role of invective in love poems is anticipated by Catullus.

Part Three has been devoted to the catalogue. The catalogue exploits to the maximum extent a well-established poetic feature, making it a tool to bring overwhelming distress instead of clarity. “Cruel pleasure”, as Williams titles his chapter on the catalogue, is surely an appropriate definition for the impression which the list of mythical and historical examples gives to the reader. Ovid seems to enjoy the sequence of torments, which are very difficult to organise within a structured pattern. In this thesis I have shifted the focus from the type of punishment to the choice of the catalogue. Instead of organising the examples based on the fate suffered by each character, I have analysed their stories, focusing on the reason why Ovid might have chosen a certain character.

Applying this approach raises one immediately evident issue with the catalogue: not all the characters are guilty. In fact, many of them are actually innocent, or with stories that leave their guilt questionable. Many characters have been consistently employed by Ovid in his own self-defence, in the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*. Others are figures of tyrannical rulers, whose violent deaths resemble a warning to Augustus himself far too closely. In the catalogue the pattern of references between Ovid, Augustus and Ibis reaches its culmination.

The other fundamental link between the *Ibis* and the elegiac genre is the characterisation of the elegiac poet as an outcast. In this thesis I have argued that being an outcast is the premise for the elegiac poet’s claim to a specific form of power. That is the power of the excluded artist, who draws his strength from being excluded from society. Roman love elegists play with this self-portrait. In this context, however, Ovid stands out. As Gibson has argued, Ovid’s love poetry

appears to be one that searches for reconciliation with society.⁶³⁰ And it is precisely this attempt to coexist with reality that leads to punishment.

As a result of this punishment, Ovid finds himself really excluded from society. In his works from exile the link between being an outcast and expressing poetic power gets stronger. Elegy becomes in fact the only means for the poet to express his voice and to reach an audience. This applies to the collections of elegies, where Ovid's lament is not only an attempt to regain his position in Rome, but also becomes a means of denouncing his condition (cf. *Trist.* 4.9.19-20; 23-6). And it applies to the *Ibis*, where the attack against the enemy provides Ovid with the chance of claiming again that role of *uates* that he feels to be lost with his exile.

I have analysed Ovid's claim to the role of *uates* from the point of view of communication, arguing that Ovid's attempt to find again his poetic voice reveals the existence of a specific elegiac form of communication, which provides the elegiac poet with a power impossible to achieve in reality. I have analysed the patterns of this communication using the categories of linguistic politeness and impoliteness, non-verbal communication and gesture, pathological and paradoxical communication, to show how pervasive Ovid's elegiac expression is in terms of communication: Ovid's elegy is a form of communication aimed at achieving a result.

By analysing Ovid's claim to his role as *uates* with this method, we found out that in claiming this role there is another role which Ovid challenges: that of Augustus. Within the realm of poetry, Ovid plays a role of all-pervasive power. He

⁶³⁰ Gibson 2009.

is the prosecutor, the judge, and the executioner; he is the one who decides the features of the rituals and the one who performs them.⁶³¹ He questions Augustus' own judgment when he describes Ibis as someone who was considered trustworthy enough to have been able to protect Ovid at the time of the punishment (*Ibis* 19), but was actually a plunderer and possibly a *delator* (*Ibis* 20).

I argue that in the *Ibis* Ovid pushes to its extreme the potential of elegy, revealing the presence of an elegiac poetic communication, made of a kind of soft power aimed at influencing the interlocutor, but also of direct attacks. And yet, what makes Ovid's poetic expression of power effective is also what determines the failure of any real possibility of his returning to Rome. Once Ovid has effectively established a position, within the realm of poetry, which mimics that of Augustus in real life, the *princeps* cannot grant any mercy. This is the pragmatic paradox which we have identified in Chapter Five. The condition for mercy to exist is that it is granted from someone in a higher position to someone in a lower position. By placing himself in a position of power, Ovid makes it impossible for Augustus to exercise mercy. In fact, if Augustus granted mercy on the grounds of his superiority in reality, he would at the same time legitimise Ovid's position of power within the realm of poetry.

Ovid's injunction to Augustus (the plea "be merciful") becomes a pragmatic paradox: should it be obeyed, it would imply the end of the distinction between life and poetry. In the realm of poetry Ovid casts himself in a position of power. For Augustus to grant mercy, the first condition is that he is in a higher position. In the

⁶³¹ Notice how this is a reversal of how Ovid presents Jupiter (a very Augustan figure) as witness, prosecutor, judge, jury and the one to impose punishment in the story of Lycaon in *Met.* 1.

realms of Ovid's poetry, he is not. This type of communication aims at influencing Augustus' behaviour: to reiterate his *real* superiority, Augustus should be pushed to grant mercy to Ovid in real life – the realm where he *is* superior. However, if Augustus did show him mercy in real life, he would be legitimising the influence of poetry over life: in other words, Ovid's poetry would *really* enter the realm of reality and claim actual power. But this would undermine Augustus' real power. Therefore, paradoxically, Ovid's plea cannot be obeyed, because complying with it would imply a declaration of weakness from Augustus and a real wound in his power. It is a loop: the effectiveness of Ovid's argument makes his claim for mercy unacceptable. Ovid's *ars* has, once again, condemned him.

I argue that the *Ibis* truly encapsulates the essence of his poetry. This includes Ovid's playful approach to poetry. It may sound unexpected to associate playfulness with the *Ibis*, a poem in which rage arises to the point where it borders on madness. And yet, is it not very Ovidian to choose examples that come to the reader as complete surprises? And is it not very Ovidian to push poetry so far that it ultimately sabotages itself?⁶³² There is a peculiar sense of humour in writing a poem of 644 lines that is able to push the limits of a genre, elegy, to the point where it ends up destroying the grounds of the genre itself, and with those grounds its own author's chances of ever regaining his real life, consolidating at the same time the fame of his poetry. The *Ibis* is a poem of paradoxes and in this sense it embodies the core of Ovid's poetry: a playful, self-sabotaging and everlasting *ars*.

⁶³² Cf., as we have already discussed, *Met.* 6.87-128 and *Ars* 1.687-704.

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