The End of the Road for Ovid the Elegist

This paper presents a new reading of Ovid’s *Amores* 3.13, the poet’s account of the Juno festival in Falerii. This poem has perplexed critics, who often describe it as the only non-erotic elegy in the collection (Miller 1991, Armstrong 2005, Volk 2010). Recent work has offered insights on Ovid’s use of the topology and ritual of Falerii (Joseph Farrell, forthcoming), but the poem’s situation within the *Amores* and its relationship to the collection’s erotic poetics remain obscure. Miller 1991 suggests that *Amores* 3.13 looks forward to the *Fasti* in its abandoning of the erotic and focus on ritual. I argue that the elegy can be understood as an essay on marriage. It does not, with *Amores* 3.15, look forward to tragic composition or to the *Fasti*, but rather looks back over the elegiac condition from the perspective of one who has outgrown elegiac lament and reconciled himself to a contented monogamy. Close readings of lines 1, 5, 7, 18, and 35-36 support this view. My reading distinguishes itself mainly for understanding the narrator of *Amores* 3.13 not as a married man, but as one contemplating marriage. The poem’s meditation on the married state is couched in metaphor. The narrator recounts the pilgrim’s journey and, in the process, enacts the ritual procession of Juno. The *via* (line 6) is both a ritual journey and a poetic journey. The elements of this procession represent elements of both the Roman wedding and the wedded state. The actions of Camillus are presented in terms of accommodation (*moenia iuncta*, line 2), and so the image of Concordia lurks within the ritual atmosphere. Concordia becomes a metaphor for marriage. By participating in the rituals of Juno and embracing concord (*sacra amica mihi*, lines 35-36), the poet bids farewell to elegiac poetry.

Works Cited

Armstrong, Rebecca. 2005. Ovid and His Love Poetry.

Miller, John F. 1991. *Ovid’s Elegiac Festivals*. Frankfurt.

Volk, Katharina. 2010. *Ovid*. Malden, MA.