

# Burning for You: A Reconsideration of Incense in Ovid

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## 1. *Met.* 6.170-83

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| <p>“quis furor, auditos” inquit “praeponere visis 170<br/>caelestes? Aut cur colitur Latona per aras,<br/><b>numen adhuc sine ture meum est?</b> Mihi Tantalus<br/>auctor,<br/>cui licuit soli superiorum tangere mensas,<br/>Pleiadum soror est genetrix mea, maximus Atlas<br/>est avus, aetherium qui fert cervicibus axem; 175<br/>...<br/>In quamcumque domus adverti lumina partem, 180<br/>immensae spectantur opes. Accedit eodem<br/>digna dea facies. Huc natas adice septem<br/>et totidem iuvenes et mox generosque nurusque.<sup>1</sup></p> | <p>“What madness is this,” she said “to prefer the gods you’ve<br/>heard about to the ones you’ve seen? (170) Otherwise why<br/>is Latona worshipped at altars, <b>while my numen is still<br/>without incense?</b> Tantalus is my father, who alone is<br/>permitted to touch the tables of the gods, my mother is the<br/>sister of the Pleiades, and greatest Atlas is my grandfather,<br/>who bears the celestial axis on his neck; (175)<br/>...<br/>Into whichever part of the palace I turn my eyes, (180) I see<br/>immense wealth. Augment it with my beauty, worthy of a<br/>goddess. Add to this my seven daughters, as many sons, and<br/>soon as many sons and daughters-in-law.</p> |
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## 2. *Met.* 6.204-17

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| <p>Indignata dea est summoque in vertice Cynthi<br/>talibus est dictis gemina cum prole locuta: 205<br/>“En ego vestra parens, vobis animosa creatis,<br/>et nisi Iunoni nulli cessura dearum,<br/>an dea sim dubitor perque omnia saecula cultis<br/>arceor, o nati, nisi vos succurritis, aris.<br/>Nec dolor hic solus: diro convicia facto 210<br/>Tantalus adiecit vosque est postponere natis<br/>ausa suis, et me, quod in ipsam reccidat, orbam,<br/>dixit et exhibuit linguam scelerata paternam.”<br/>Adiectura preces erat his Latona relatis:<br/>“desine!” Phoebus ait: “poenae mora longa querella<br/>est.” 215<br/>Dixit idem Phoebe: celerique per aera lapsu<br/>contigerant tecti Calmeida nubibus arcem.</p> | <p>The goddess was offended and on the summit of Cynthus<br/>she spoke such words to her twin children (205):<br/>“Behold, I, your parent, proud to have born you, and about<br/>to yield to none of the goddesses except Juno, whether my<br/>status as a goddess is in doubt or I am to be deprived of<br/>worship at altars through all ages, unless you, my children,<br/>assist me. Nor is this (my) only grief: the daughter of<br/>Tantalus (210) has added insults to injury and she has dared<br/>to consider you of less account than her children, and she<br/>said that I am childless, may that rebound on her, and she<br/>being wicked has used the tongue of her father.” Latona<br/>would have added her entreaties to what she had said but<br/>Phoebus said, “Stop! A long complaint delays her<br/>punishment.” (215) Phoebe said the same: and flying<br/>swiftly through the air hidden by clouds, they reached the<br/>citadel of Cadmus.</p> |
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## 3. *Met.* 14.123-31

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| <p>‘seu dea tu praesens, seu dis gratissima,’ dixit,<br/>‘numinis instar eris semper mihi, meque fatebor<br/>muneris esse tui, quae me loca mortis adire, 125<br/>quae loca me visae voluisti evadere mortis.<br/>Pro quibus aérias meritis evectus ad auras<br/><b>templa tibi statuam, tribuam tibi turis honores.’</b><br/>Respicit hunc vates et suspiratibus haustis<br/>‘nec dea sum,’ dixit ‘nec sacri turis honore 130<br/><b>humanum dignare caput,</b> neu nescius erres...</p> | <p>‘whether you are a goddess present or very pleasing to the<br/>gods,’ he said, ‘you will always be equal to a <i>numen</i> for<br/>me, and I will confess that I am at your service, who was<br/>willing for me to approach the places of death (125), and<br/>after seeing it to escape the places of death. In return for<br/>these services, when I have returned to the aerial breezes <b>I<br/>will build you a temple, I will give you offerings of<br/>incense.</b>’ The prophetess looked at him and with drawn out<br/>sighs she said, ‘<b>I am neither a goddess,</b>’ she said, ‘<b>nor is<br/>a human head worthy of the honor (130) of sacred<br/>incense,</b> nor you unknowingly make this mistake...</p> |
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<sup>1</sup> The omitted lines continue Niobe’s divine pedigree and what the Phrygian people owe her and her husband. All translations are my own.

#### 4a. *Tristia* 1.2.103-4

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| ... proque Caesare tura pius Caesaribusque dedi, | ... I give incense in devotion on behalf of Caesar and the family of Caesars |
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#### 4b. *Tristia* 2.1.57-60

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| ... pia tura dedi pro te, | ... I give pious incense on your behalf |
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#### 4c. *Ex Ponto* 1.4.55-6

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| ... turaque Caesaribus cum coniuge Caesare digna,<br>dis veris, memori debita ferre manu, | ... offer with grateful hand incense owed to the Caesars,<br>true gods, together with a wife worthy of Caesar. |
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#### 5. *Ex Ponto* 4.9.105-12

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| nec pietas ignota mea est: videt hospita terra 105<br>in nostra sacrum Caesaris esse domo.<br>Stant pariter natusque pius coniunxque sacerdos,<br>numina iam facto non leviora deo.<br>Neu desit pars ulla domus, stat uterque nepotum,<br>hic aviae lateri proximus, ille patris. 110<br><b>His ego do totiens cum ture precantia verba,</b><br>Eoo quotiens surgit ab orbe dies. | Nor is my piety unknown: this foreign land (105) sees the shrine to Caesar in my home. His virtuous son, Tiberius, and priestess-widow, Livia, stand beside him, their <i>numina</i> no less now he's become a god. So none of his House is absent, Drusus and Germanicus are there, one by his grandmother's side, one by his father's (110).<br><b>I offer incense to them and words of prayer,</b><br>every time the sun rises in the East. |
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#### 6. *Ex Ponto* 4.8.55-6

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| Di quoque carminibus, si fas est dicere, fiunt,<br>tantaque maiestas ore canentis eget. | The gods are made by songs, if it is <i>fas</i> to say, and such divine majesty needs a singing voice. |
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