

Cecilia Cozzi
University of Cincinnati
cozzica@uc.edu
CAMWS 2021

**Biological paternity and literary creation:
Ovid's meta-literary journey in the *Tristia***

link to the abstract:

<https://camws.org/sites/default/files/meeting2021/abstracts/2402TristiaPaternity.pdf>

1) *Tristia* 1.1. 107-116¹

*aspicies illic positos ex ordine fratres
quos studium cunctos evigilavit idem.
cetera turba palam titulos ostendet apertos,
et sua detecta nomina fronte geret;
tres procul obscura latitantes parte videbis,—
sic quoque, quod nemo nescit, amare docent.
hos tu vel fugias, vel, si satis oris habebis,
Oedipodas facito Telegonosque voces.
deque tribus, moneo, si qua est tibi cura parentis,
ne quemquam, quamvis ipse docebit, ames.*

You will behold there **brothers arranged in order**—brothers whom the same craftsmanship produced with toil and waking. **The rest of the band will display their titles openly, bearing their names on their exposed edges, but three at some distance will strive to hide themselves** in a dark place, as you will notice—even so, as everybody knows, they teach how to love. These you should either avoid **or, if you have the assurance, give them the names of Oedipus or of Telegonus.** And I warn you, **if you have any regard for your father,** love not any one of the three, though he himself teaches you.

2a) *Tristia*, 1.1. 1-3

*Di maris et caeli—quid enim nisi vota supersunt?—
solvere quassatae parcite membra ratis,
neve, precor, magni subscribite Caesaris irae!*
O gods of sea and sky—for what but prayer is left?—break not the frame of our shattered bark and second not, I implore, the **wrath of mighty Caesar!**

¹ for the *Tristia* translations by A.L. Wheeler.

2b) *Tristia*, 1.1. 11-12

*et nobis aliquod, quamvis distamus ab illis,
quis vetat irato numen adesse deo?*

And different though I am from them, who forbids a divine power from being of some avail to me **against the angry god?**

2c) *Tristia*, 2.2.27-28

*his precor exemplis tua nunc, mitissime Caesar,
fiat ab ingenio mollior ira meo.*

Such precedents now form the basis of my prayer, O merciful Caesar, that **my poetic gift may assuage your wrath.**

3) *Tristia*, 3.1. 47-58

*causa superpositae scripto est testata coronae:
servatos cives indicat huius ope.
adice servatis unum, pater optime, civem,
qui procul extremo pulsus in orbe latet,
in quo poenarum, quas se meruisse fatetur,
non facinus causam, sed suus error habet.
me miserum! vereorque locum vereorque potentem,
et quatitur trepido littera nostra metu.
aspicis exsanguis chartam pallere colore?
aspicis alternos intremuisse pedes?
quandocumque, precor, nostro placere parenti
isdem et sub dominis aspiciare domus!"*

The reason for the crowning wreath is shown by an inscription: it declares that by his aid citizens have been saved. **Add, O best of fathers, to those whom you have saved one citizen** who far on the world's edge lies in forgotten exile, the cause of whose punishment, which he admits that he has deserved, is not a deed, **but his own mistake.** Wretched me! **I fear the spot, I fear the man of power, my script wavers with shuddering dread. See you my paper pale with bloodless colour? See you each alternate foot tremble? Sometimes, I pray, may you, O palace, be reconciled with him who fathered me, and may it be his lot to behold you under the same masters!"**

4) *Tristia*, 3.1.65-68

*quaerebam fratres, exceptis scilicet illis,
quos suus optaret non genuisse pater
quaerentem frustra custos me sedibus illis
praepositus sancto iussit abire loco.*

I was seeking **my brothers, save those indeed whom their father would he had never begot** and as **I sought to no purpose**, from the abode the guard who presides over the holy place commanded me to depart.

5) *Tristia*, 3.1.73-76

*in genus auctoris miseri fortuna redundat,
et ferimus nati, quam tulit ipse, fugam
forsitan et nobis olim minus asper et illi
evictus longo tempore Caesar erit.*

The fate of our unfortunate sire overflows upon his offspring, and we suffer at our birth the exile which he has borne. Perhaps sometime **both to us and to him** Caesar, conquered by long years, will be less severe.

6) *Tristia*, 3.14.9-16

*est fuga dicta mihi, non est fuga dicta libellis,
qui domini poenam non meruere sui.
saepe per externas profugus pater exulat oras,
urbe tamen natis exulis esse licet.
Palladis exemplo de me sine matre creata
carmina sunt; stirps haec progeniesque mea est.
hanc tibi commendo, quae quo magis orba parente est,
hoc tibi tutori sarcina maior erit.*

Exile was decreed to me, **exile was not decreed to my books**; they did not deserve **their master's** punishment. Oft is a father exiled on a foreign shore, yet **may the exile's children live in the city**. **Pallas-fashion** were my verses born from me without a mother; **these are my offspring, my family**. **These I commend to you**; the **more bereft they are**, the greater burden will they **be to you, their guardian**.

7) *Tristia*, 3.14. 16-20

*tres mihi sunt nati contagia nostra secuti:
cetera fac curae sit tibi turba palam.
sunt quoque mutatae, ter quinque volumina, formae,
carmina de domini funere rapta sui.*

Three of my children have caught pollution from me: make the rest of the flock openly your care. There are also thrice five books on changing forms, verses snatched from the funeral of their master.

8) *Tristia*, 1.7. 15- 22

*haec ego discedens, sicut bene multa meorum
ipse mea posui maestus in igne manu
utque cremasse suum fertur sub stipite natum
Thestias et melior matre fuisse soror,
sic ego non meritos mecum peritura libellos
imposui rapidis viscera nostra rogis
vel quod eram Musas, ut crimina nostra, perosus,
vel quod adhuc crescens et rude carmen erat.*

These verses upon my departure, like so much that was mine, **in sorrow I placed with my own hand in the fire.** Just as **Thestius' daughter burned her own son**, they say, in burning the branch, and **proved a better sister than mother**, so **I placed the innocent books consigned with me to death, my very vitals, upon the devouring pyre**, because I had come to hate the Muses as my accusers or because **the poem itself was as yet half grown and rough.**

8a) *Met.* 8. 475-478

*incipit esse tamen melior germana parente
et consanguineas ut sanguine leniat umbras,
inpietate pia est. nam postquam pestifer ignis
convaluit, "rogus iste cremet mea viscera" dixit.*

At last the sister in her overcomes the mother, and, that she may appease with blood the shades of her blood-kin, she is pious in impiety. For when the devouring flames grow hot, **she cries: "Be that "the funeral pyre of my own flesh."**

8b) Met. 8. 497-498

*haud equidem patiar: pereat sceleratus et ille
spemque patris regnumque trahat patriaeque ruinam!*

I will not suffer it. Let the wretch die and **take with him his father's hopes, his kingdom and his ruined fatherland!**

9) Tristia, 3.7.15-20

*hoc ego Pegasidas deduxi primus ad undas,
ne male fecundae vena periret aquae;
primus id aspexi teneris in virginis annis,
utque pater natae duxque comesque fui
ergo si remanent ignes tibi pectoris idem,
sola tuum vates Lesbia vincet opus.*

This I was the first to guide to the stream of Pegasus lest the rill of fertile water unhappily be lost. **I was the first to discern this in the tender years of your girlhood when, as a father to his daughter, I was your guide and comrade.** So if the same fire still abides in your breast, **only the Lesbian bard will surpass your work.**

10) Tristia, 4.10.21-26

*saepe pater dixit "studium quid inutile temptas?
Maeonides nullas ipse reliquit opes
motus eram dictis, totoque Helicone relicto
scribere temptabam verba soluta modis
sponte sua carmen numeros veniebat ad aptos
et quod temptabam scribere versus erat*

Often my father said, "Why do you try a profitless pursuit? Even the Maeonian left no wealth." I was influenced by what he said and **wholly forsaking Helicon,** I tried to write words freed from rhythm, **yet all unbidden song would come upon befitting numbers** and whatever I tried to write was verse.

11) Tristia, 3.7.51-54

*dumque suis victrix septem de montibus orbem
prospiciet domitum Martia Roma, legar
tu quoque, quam studii maneat felicius usus,
effuge venturos, qua potes, usque rogos!*

As long as Martian Rome gazes forth victorious from her seven hills over the conquered world, **I shall be read. Do you too**—and may a **happier use** of your art await you—even **shun** what way you cant **the coming pyre!**

12) *Tristia*, 2.157-160

*per patriam, quae te tuta et segura parente est,
cuius, ut in populo, pars ego nuper eram,—
sic tibi, quem semper factis animoque mereris,
reddatur gratae debitus urbis amor;*

By our native land which is safe and secure under your fatherly care, of which I as one among the people was recently part:—as surely as there may be duly paid you by a grateful city that debt of love which your constant deeds and spirit deserve.

13) *Tristia*, 2.181-186

*parce, pater patriae, nec nominis inmemor huius
olim placandi spem mihi tolle tui!
non precor ut redeam, quamvis maiora petitis
credibile est magnos saepe dedisse deos;
mitius exilium si das propiusque roganti,
pars erit ex poena magna levata mea.*

Spare me, father of our country! Do not, forgetful of this name, take from me the hope that sometime I may appease you! I pray not for return, even though we may believe that more than the prayer has oft been granted by the mighty gods. **Grant me a milder and a nearer place of exile,** and a large part of my punishment will be lightened.

14) *Tristia*, 2.573-9

*his, precor, atque aliis possint tua numina flecti,
o pater, o patriae cura salusque tuae!
non ut in Ausoniam redeam, nisi forsitan olim,
cum longo poenae tempore victus eris;
tutius exilium pauloque quietius oro,
ut par delicto sit mea poena suo.*

May this, I pray, and other things have power to bend your will, O father, O protector and salvation of your native land: not that I may return to Ausonia, unless perchance some day you shall be overborne by the length of my punishment; **I only beg a safer, a more peaceful place of exile,** slight though the change be, that the punishment may match my wrongdoing.

15) *Tristia*, 2.37-40

*iure igitur genitorque deum rectorque vocatur,
iure capax mundus nil Iove maius habet.
tu quoque, cum patriae rector dicare paterque,
utere more dei nomen habentis idem*

Just it is, then, to call him the father and ruler of the gods, just it is that in the spacious universe there is not mightier than Jove. **Do you also, seeing you are called ruler and father of our native land**, follow the way of the god who has the same title

Select Bibliography

Boyden, B.W. 2017. *Ovid's Homer: Authority, Repetition, Reception*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Claassen, J.M. 2016. "Seizing the Zeitgeist: Ovid in exile and Augustan political discourse." *Acta Classica* 59: 52-79.

Davisson, M. 1984. "Parents and children in Ovid's poems from exile," *CW* 78: 111-14.

Fairweather, J. 1987. "Ovid's Autobiographical Poem, *Tristia* 4.10." *CQ* 37, no. 1: 181-96.

Fredericks, B. R. 1976. "Tristia 4.10: Poet's Autobiography and Poetic Autobiography." *Transactions of the American Philological Association* (1974-) 106: 139-54.

Geysen, J. 2007. "Ovid's Addresses to the Book in "Tristia" 1,1." *Latomus* 66, no. 2: 374-83.

Hinds, S. 1985. "Booking the return trip: Ovid and 'Tristia' 1" *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*, NEW SERIES, no. 31 (211): 13-32.

Ingleheart, J. 2016. "What the Poet Saw: Ovid, the Error and the Theme of Sight in *Tristia* 2." *Materiali E Discussioni per L'analisi Dei Testi Classici*, no. 56 (2006): 63-86

" " 2012. "Ovid 's scripta puella: Perilla as poetic and political fiction in *Tristia* 3.7." *The Classical Quarterly* 62, no. 1 (2012): 227-41.

" " 2010. *A commentary on Ovid, Tristia, book 2*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010

Lewis, A.M. 2012. "Reconsidering Ovid's relationship to Perilla (*Tristia* III, 7)", *Latomus* no.16 (338):367-397.

Mordine, M. J. 2010. "Sine me, liber, ibis": the poet, the book and the reader in *Tristia* 1.1." *The Classical Quarterly*, New Series, 60, no. 2: 524-44.

Wiedemann, T. 1975. "The Political Background to Ovid's *Tristia* 2." *CQ* 25, no. 2: 264-71.

Wyke, M. 1987. "Written women: Propertius' Scripta puella", *JRS* 77: 47-61.