Latin Elegy and Narratology
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Fragments of Story

Edited by

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and
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To Ken Mitchell, Alex Mitchell
and Richard Huxtable
Acknowledgments ix

Introduction  Narrating in Couplets  
Genevieve Liveley and Patricia Salzman-Mitchell 1

Part I. Unveiling the Body of Elegiac Narrative:  
Two Narratological Approaches to Ovid’s Amores 1.5

Chapter 1  Elegy and the Erotics of Narratology  
Duncan Kennedy 19

Chapter 2  Snapshots of a Love Affair: Amores 1.5 and the  
Program of Elegiac Narrative  
Patricia Salzman-Mitchell 34

Part II. Telling Times: Elegy and Temporality

Chapter 3  Chronological Segmentation in Ovid’s Tristia:  
The Implicit Narrative of Elegy  
Eleonora Tola 51

Chapter 4  Women’s Time in the Remedia Amoris  
Hunter H. Gardner 68

Chapter 5  Paraquel Lines: Time and Narrative in Ovid’s Heroides  
Genevieve Liveley 86
Part III. Plots across Poems: Elegy and Story

Chapter 6 Self-Reflections on Elegy Writing, in Two Parts: The Metapoetics of Diptych Elegies in Ovid, Amores 1.11 + 12
Sophia Papaioannou 105

Chapter 7 Narration in a Standstill: Propertius 1.16–18
Christine Walde 123

Chapter 8 Platonic Strategies in Ovid’s Tales of Love
Vered Lev Kenaan 142

Part IV. Seeing and Speaking the Self: Elegy and Subjectivity

Chapter 9 Cornelia’s Exemplum: Form and Ideology in Propertius 4.11
Michèle Lowrie 165

Chapter 10 The Expert, The Novice, and the Exile: A Narrative Tale of Three Ovids in Fasti
Steven Green 180

Chapter 11 The Potentials of Narrative: The Rhetoric of the Subjective in Tibullus
Benjamin Todd Lee 196

Part V. Narrative at the Receiving End: Elegy and Reception

Chapter 12 Narrating Disiecta Corpora: The Rhetoric of Bodily Dismemberment in Prudentius Peristephanon 11
Christian A. Kaesser 223

Chapter 13 Telling Sulpicia’s Joys: Narrativity at the Receiving End
Mathilde Skoie 241

Bibliography 257
Contributors 274
Index Locorum 277
General Index 279
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In recent decades literary studies have shown great interest in issues concerning the elements of narrative: What are the central pieces of a plot? How do stories begin and end? What is the role of the “point of view” or focalization in a story? What are the functions of description? How does the reader participate in the construction of a story? The study of narrative, or narratology, particularly as theorized in the writings of Mieke Bal, Gérard Genette, and Paul Ricoeur, has inspired many productive readings of classical texts. However, for the most part these studies have centered on genres that are deemed as “essentially” or “straightforwardly” narrative, such as epic, history, and the novel.\(^1\)

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1. Massimo Fusillo’s 1985 study of *Il tempo delle Argonautiche*, informed by the narratological theories and methodologies of Genette, has been identified as “the first published narratological study of a Classical text” (Nikolopoulos 2004, 17). However, John Winkler’s 1985 *Actor and Actor: A Narratological Reading of Apuleius’ The Golden Ass* might have an equal claim to this pioneering label. These key works were shortly followed by Irene De Jong’s 1987 groundbreaking *Narrators and Focalizers: The Presentation of the Story in the Iliad*. For more recent narratological studies of Greek texts, see Richardson (1990), Rood (1998), Morales (2004), and Doherty (1995). In Latin literature, interest in narratological approaches to textual criticism similarly emerged in the late 1980s. In fact, Alessandro Barchiesi locates “one of the first Genettian moments of Ovidian criticism” with Stephen Hinds’s 1987 study of Ovid’s epic *Metamorphoses in The Metamorphosis of Persephone: Ovid and the Self-Conscious Muse* (Barchiesi 2002, 188 n.19). Yet, as with narratological approaches to Greek literature, such studies in Latin literature have tended to focus primarily upon the straightforwardly narrative genre of epic. For recent narratological studies of Latin texts see Hinds (1987b), Laird (1999), Sharrock and Morales, eds. (2000), Barchiesi (2001), and Nikolopoulos (2004).
This volume explores how theories of narrative can promote further understanding and innovative readings of a series of texts that are not traditionally seen as narrative: the corpus of Latin elegy. Although this body of literature does not tell a continuous story in the sense of Callimachus’ ‘aisma dienekes, yet many stories surface in the web of the poems at different narrative levels. We have, for example, quasi-narratives like the overarching “story” of Tibullus’ relationship with Delia, of Propertius’ affair with Cynthia, or of Ovid’s life in exile—which are, however, often interrupted and infiltrated by other tangential plots. Throughout elegy there are many embedded tales—narratives in their own right—located within and interacting with the primarily nonnarrative structure of the external frame-text. The essays in this volume discuss several aspects of how such stories are formed, presented, and read in Latin elegy.

The thirteen essays collected here address a series of interrelated questions: Can the inset narratives of elegy, with their distinctive narrative strategies, provide the key to a poetics of elegiac storytelling? How, as readers of erotic elegy, should we respond when we find ourselves positioned as eavesdroppers or voyeurs? Can narratology and its concepts of framing and focalization provide a critical vocabulary with which to explore these effects? In what ways does elegy renegotiate the linearity and teleology of narrative? Does the idea of death in elegy work to fix or destabilize its narratives and supply or deny closure? How do the concepts of time and space shape the way we read Roman elegy? In what ways does elegy use the dynamics of narrative to manipulate the relationship between reader, poet, character, and text? Why are women in elegy characterized by narrative circularity and repetition rather than by forward momentum in story, time, and space? Can formal theories of narratology help to make sense of the temporal contradictions and narrative incongruities that so often characterize elegiac stories? What can the reception of Roman elegy tell us about narratives of unity, identity, and authority?

But first, we might ask: Does elegy actually narrate? Does the elegiac genre provide an appropriate vehicle for telling stories? Or does the “closed” form of the elegiac couplet impose structural limitations upon the development of narrative, marking a metrical barrier to an effective narrative continuum, as Brooks Otis once maintained? Is the elegiac meter with

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2. The focus of this volume will be primarily the poetry written in elegiac couplets that flourished between 30 BCE and 30 CE at Rome. While love was the central theme of most authors, other topics such as exile, politics, and even the Roman calendar were treated as suitable elegiac materia by the poet Ovid and his successors.
Narrating in Couplets

its characteristic rise and fall “anti-narrative”? The answers to these questions are intimately linked to the history of literary criticism on this genre. Scholars of elegy from antiquity to our own century have endeavored to link the characters, incidents, and plots described in the elegiac collections to people and events in the “real” lives of the poets Tibullus, Propertius, Ovid, Sulpicia, and others. From such a perspective, the Tibullan corpus is seen to trace the story of the poet’s life and loves and, on the basis of discrete details provided in individual elegies, a coherent story—a quasi-autobiographical narrative—can be read. In this view, it matters not that Tibullus’ poetry is characterized by its lack of narrative unity and continuity, described by W. R. Johnson as “a sheer discontinuum, fragmentations of self and work and love”\(^4\)—the overarching story of the poet and his mistress(es) is seen to tie these fragments together, creating a narrative continuum out of elegiac shards.\(^5\)

Critical hostility to such a viewpoint has been widespread for at least the last sixty years, however. In his highly influential 1945 study *Ovid: A Poet between Two Worlds*, Eduard Fränkel denied that there was any sense of narrative continuity and chronology in the collections of the elegiac love poets, maintaining that: “there is little continuity in the volumes of Roman erotic poetry, and scholars who have tried to piece together the history of one individual affair have wasted their labor.”\(^6\) In 1965, Jean-Paul Boucher roundly denied that Propertius’ *monobiblos* narrated a story of love, claiming that the first book of the Propertian corpus “has no beginning, no ending analogous to that of a novel” and that the second “is completely independent of any novel-like chronology.”\(^7\) And in 1988 Paul Veyne made the scathing declaration in his seminal *Roman Erotic Elegy: Love, Poetry, and the West* that: “[t]o believe that our elegists tell the story of their affairs, one must not have read them. The ‘Story of Tibullus and Delia! It comes down to five poems. . . . The poems do not present the episodes of a love affair—beginnings, declaration, seduction, a falling out. Time does not pass at all.”\(^8\)

Veyne is highly censorious of readers and critics who try to find a narrative continuation in any of the elegiac collections. Indeed, he insists that, without exception, elegy is: “a poetry without action, with no plot leading to a denouement or maintaining any tension, and this is why time has no

\(^4\) Johnson (1990), 108.
\(^5\) For a recent illustration of this approach see Lee (1990), xiv–xv. See also Griffin (1985), 118 on Propertius 2.20.
\(^6\) Fränkel (1945), 26.
\(^7\) Boucher (1965), 401.
\(^8\) Veyne (1988), 50.
reality in it. . . . An event . . . is not really an event. Before and after do not exist, any more than does duration.”

But Veyne overstates the case. Certainly, the elegiac genre seems to invite and authorize the conventional view of its “anti-narrative” status, and to an even greater degree than its generic “neighbors,” lyric and epigram, elegy seems particularly antithetical to narrativity. So, where readers of elegy look for consistency of viewpoint or voice, for unity of time, place or action, for plot and progress, for time passing and movement toward a final telos, we find instead inconsistency and disunity, inconsistency and incongruity, fragments of self and work and love and story. But this does not tell us the “whole” story about elegy’s narrativity.

It has become a critical commonplace to acknowledge that “sincerity” and “reality” are elegiac tropes effected and exploited by the elegiac ego and his (or her) first-person poetry, and to appreciate that behind the pseudonyms Delia, Cynthia, Corinna, Cerinthus et al. lie not “real” women of flesh and blood, or even invented characters, but rather poetic figures, representations, embodiments of elegiac poetry and its programs. Similarly, contemporary critics offer increasingly convincing affirmation that plot, character, action, and chronology are themselves also effects produced in and by elegiac poetry—that “story” is a fundamental part of elegiac textual discourse, no less than “reality” or the elegiac ego.

W. R. Johnson has reminded us that, although there may be no overriding narrative sequence or thread that ties together the individual poems that make up the Propertian corpus, individual elegies and individual books lose something of their “resonance and bite” if read outside of the wider narrative context offered by their position within the collection as a whole. Emphasizing the role of the reader and the process of reading in the configuration of elegiac stories, James Butrica goes further, to argue that:

Propertius’ elegies are not discrete entities but are meant to be read together in a linear progression for cumulative meaning; each elegy, each book in fact, is only one element of the tribiblos and achieves its full significance only when read in sequence together with all the other elements. Of course, such a linear reading is virtually demanded by the format of the ancient bookroll, which offered little scope for browsing back and forth. [. . . ]

9. Ibid., 51.
There is no narrative thread as such, and no “message” or “meaning” is spelled out explicitly; rather the reader is left to extract the cumulative meaning from the multiple resonances created by sequence, juxtaposition, echoing, or cross-reference within the whole.

Most recently, Niklas Holzberg has claimed that “Ovid tells vividly realistic stories about people in love” and expounds the thesis that Ovid’s elegiac works can be read like novels. Indeed, he repeatedly describes the *Amores* as an “erotic novel,” a “romance,” and a “novel in poems,” arranged in order to tell an “ongoing story.” What is more, in his discussion of *Amores* 3.7, he explains that what we have here is: “... not only a poem, but also an exciting first-person verse narrative. Indeed, because *Amores* 3.7 takes its place in a sequence of elegies in which the speaker reconstitutes his erotic experiences in chronological order, what we have, in fact, is one episode of a first-person novel.”

This “fictive chronology” is, he affirms, “typical of Roman verse collections” and he even goes so far as to suggest that “the borderline between elegy and epic is crossed in certain passages” and that some narrative features of these elegies might even be compared to those of the Greek novel. As Johnson and Butricia claimed for the Propertian corpus, so Holzberg emphasizes that stories are told across poems in the *Amores*, and that while an individual elegy may lay claim to its own status as narrative, it is primarily through its relation to other poems and other parts of a wider narrative scheme that it is able to tell a story.

However, what Holzberg underplays somewhat here is the important consideration that some of the extant “sequence of elegies” that we read are, or appear to be, the products of their author’s devising (such as Ovid’s *Amores*), while others (such as Propertius Book 4 or the fragments of Sulpicia)

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13. Holzberg (2002), x. He goes on to argue (2002), 2 that “He manages to present even the oldest Greek myths in such a way as to make us feel that we are reading about the everyday experience of characters in a modern novel.”


15. Ibid., 16–17. Holzberg even draws a link between the *Amores* as a “novel in poems” and the modern epistolary novel. He also sees “novelistic structures” in *Heroïdes, Fasti, Ars, Remedia, Metamorphoses* and the exile poetry.

16. Ibid., 47–48. Yet, while Holzberg certainly places the focus on the importance of narrative, plots and narrative structures, he does not do so from a theoretical perspective and does not use the tools and terminology offered by modern theories of narrative. In fact, narratologists such as Barthes, Genette, or Bal do not figure at all in his bibliography.

17. Barchiesi claims (2001), 32f.: “There is no doubt that a single elegy can project its own narrative context, by laying down the tracks for a temporal development, by taking its place in a plot already known in part.”
are evidently the products of later editors and their efforts to arrange a collection of poems into a coherent sequence. This raises an important question concerning elegy’s narrative potential: What differences are entailed in reading the narrative of a single poem and in reading that poem as part of a narrative sequence or continuum across poems—which may or may not have been arranged by the author? The role of the reader in configuring elegy’s narratives is brought to the fore in such considerations, reminding us that, in elegy’s complex relation to narrative, the roles of reader and elegiac poet-lover are intimately intertwined.

What “story”—if any—are we trying to tell, then, about the relationship between narrative and Latin elegy in and across the forthcoming chapters? Can narratology simply aid us in understanding the “grammar” of how stories are composed in the corpus of Latin elegy? Can it help to forward new interpretations of elegiac texts? The various theories of narrative employed in the following chapters—ranging from Plato to Prince—each present narratology as an essential critical tool for the study of literary texts. Indeed, Bal’s account of what the use of this tool might entail illustrates well the aims of this volume:

Readers are offered an instrument with which they can describe narrative texts. This does not imply that the theory is some kind of machine into which one inserts a text at one end and expects an adequate description to roll out at the other. The concepts that are presented here must be regarded as intellectual tools. These tools are useful in that they enable their users to formulate a textual description in such a way that it is accessible to others. Furthermore, discovering the characteristics of a text can also be facilitated by insight into the abstract narrative system. But above all, the concepts help to increase understanding by encouraging readers to articulate what they understand, or think they understand, when reading or otherwise ‘processing’ a narrative artifact.

The essays that make up this collection use the tool(s) of narratology in different ways and to varying degrees. Some of the papers aim to explore

18. Skoie, in this volume, explores this question in relation to the corpus Tibullianum.
19. Bal (1997), 3f. A detailed survey of narratology and its theories is beyond the scope of this volume, but Bal’s *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* is an excellent starting point for the neophyte narratologist. For a good overview of narratology and narratological analysis, see Herman et al. (2005), Herman and Vervaeck (2005), Phelan and Rabinowitz (2005), Onega and Landa (1996), and Toolan (1988). For an interesting study applying the tools of narratology to lyric poetry, see Hühn and Kiefer (2005).
and explain the dynamics and mechanisms of elegiac narratives using the instrument(s) and theories of narratology in a systematic way. Others offer new readings and interpretations of elegiac stories prompted by the insights that narratology offers into (amongst other motifs): narrators and levels of narration, actors and characters, focalization and temporality, readers and reception. The essays are organized broadly according to narratological theme rather than by text or author—although, inevitably, there is productive interplay not only between these themes but also between individual essays.

Part I, *Unveiling the Body of Elegiac Narrative: Two Narratological Approaches to Ovid’s Amores 1.5*, offers an extended introduction to the subject of elegy and narratology. Intended as a critical orientation for both the practiced and the neophyte narratologist, two essays focusing upon Ovid’s programmatic *Amores* 1.5 demonstrate the rich potential in bringing the tools of narratology to bear upon elegiac poetry. Aply enough for a collection primarily concerned with the genre of erotic elegy, this section begins with a new reading of *Amores* 1.5 inspired by the work of American critic and theorist Peter Brooks. Brooks draws both upon the insights of narratology and Freudian psychonalysis in his exploration of the “erotics of narrative,” arguing that what moves us as readers forward through any narrative is our desire for the end, for closure, and *telos*—a desire that Brooks sees as analogous to a desire for sexual consummation and orgasm. Integrating Brooks’s ideas on the intimate interrelations between narrative and erotics into his own innovative reading of Ovid, Duncan Kennedy in “Elegy and the Erotics of Narratology” traces desire as a dynamic of narrative signification to show how the poet, his narrated self, and the reader move together, through a series of delays and descriptions that mutually excite and frustrate, toward a desired end-point.

Coming at Ovid’s programmatic *Amores* 1.5 from a different narratological perspective, Patricia Salzman-Mitchell in “Snapshots of a Love Affair: *Amores* 1.5 and the Program of Elegiac Narrative” offers an alternative—and complementary—reading of this poem. Again emphasizing the eroticized participation of the reader in the “story” of *Amores* 1.5, Salzman-Mitchell

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20. Ovid’s dominant position in the collection is worthy of note here. An attempt to cover all of the principal works encompassed in the sphere traditionally labeled as “Latin elegy” necessarily entailed that we include essays devoted not only to Tibullus and Propertius, but to Ovid’s *Amores, Heroides, Ars* and *Remedia Amoris, Fasti,* and *Tristia*—hence his expansive profile in this collection. However, as Barchiesi has observed (2002, 180): “The poet who minted Latin words like *narratus* ‘narrative’ and *narrabilis* ‘narratable’ is no passive participant in the modern debate about story-telling and its techniques . . . the study of narrative and Ovidian poetics continue to be mutually illuminating.”
takes the concept of “event”—a term central to definitions of narrative from Aristotle through to Genette and Bal—to propose that elegy presents its narratives in a succession of fragmented “states” or “snapshots,” leaving the linking events to the imagination of the reader. Corinna’s body, as presented in Amores 1.5, is thus seen to inscribe the program of elegiac narrative, and elegy itself is seen to tell fragmented narratives with missing “holes” and “gaps” that require the active engagement of the reader to be satisfactorily completed and filled.

Part II, Telling Times: Elegy and Temporality, considers the important relationship between elegy, narrativity and time, with three essays exploring different aspects of time and narrative in Ovid’s elegiac writing. Indeed, an understanding of time and temporality is shown here to represent a sine qua non in the appreciation of elegiac narrativity. In his study of the interrelations between plot, story, and narrative, narratological pioneer Gérard Genette focused upon the ways in which narrative discourse works to subvert and replay the passage of time in order to explore the links and differences between “what is told” and “its telling.” And, like Genette, French narratologist Paul Ricoeur maintained in his seminal work Time and Narrative that “Everything that is recounted occurs in time, takes time, unfolds temporally.” For, as Ricoeur argued, “the common feature of human experience, that which is marked, organized and clarified by the fact of storytelling in all its forms, is its temporal character.” 21

In this light, Eleonora Tola considers “Chronological Segmentation in Ovid’s Tristia: The Implicit Narrative of Elegy,” looking at the temporal play evident in Ovid’s exile poetry. Ovid’s Tristia is traditionally seen to tell the “story” of its narrator’s exile. Nevertheless, the insertion of this story within the elegiac genre confers on it a narrative modality that differs from that of more traditional storytelling. In particular, Tola shows how temporally confused and contradictory poems about Ovid’s journey into exile are interspersed throughout the Tristia, fragmenting the Ovidian narrator and his narratives. Employing the narratological insights of Genette to focus upon the text’s temporal configuration, this chapter proposes that the implicit and a-chronological narrative of the Tristia can be read as a mise en abyme of the poetics of a genre—that elegy is founded, as is Ovid’s exilic experience, on (textual) fragmentation and dislocation.

Next, Hunter Gardner looks at the subject of “Women’s Time in the Remedia Amoris,” using Julia Kristeva’s concept of women’s time and Paul Ricoeur’s description of the teleology that gives narrative meaning to forward

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a fresh interpretation of Ovid’s poem—focusing in particular upon the exemplum of Phyllis. Gardner argues that Kristeva’s understanding of “women’s time,” which posits female subjectivity as marginal to the linear movement of syntax and symbolic language, offers a persuasive explanation for the properties often attributed to women in elegy, such as delay, repetition, and enclosure—properties that retard the elegiac narrative and become especially problematic in Ovid’s antidote to elegiac love, the *Remedia Amoris*.

Genevieve Liveley in “Paraquel Lines: Time and Narrative in Ovid’s *Heroides*” similarly explores the delays, the “frozen moments” and “stopped clocks” in Ovid’s elegiac narratives. Liveley considers the *Heroides* as narrative “paraquels” or “side-narratives,” occupying space upon parallel chronologies and narrative lines to their original narrative models, short stories that telescope out from a moment in another tale to project alternative pasts and futures. Focusing upon the alternative futures, counterfactual histories, and virtual lives imagined and written by Ovid’s heroines, she identifies the *Heroides* as “What if?” narratives—plausible but speculative side-shoots from the established time-lines and the established versions of familiar master-narratives and canonical source texts.

Part III, *Plots across Poems: Elegy and Story*, focuses upon different strategies of elegiac storytelling, drawing broadly upon a range of insights into “action” and “plot” offered by narratological theory. In his *Poetics* (considered by some critics to be “the first narratological treatise” in Western literature22), Aristotle indicated that genres such as epic and drama are structured upon the arrangement of events—and that such stories need a beginning, middle, and end. Thus, he coined key “narratological” terms such as *mythos* (“plot”), and *praxis* (“action”), defining *mythos* as “the combination of incidents or things done in the story,”23 and observing that “plot” is the essential element of tragedy—in Aristotle’s view, the highest form of narrative. Further, Aristotle introduced the well-known ideas of unity of time and space, maintaining that the action of tragedy must be complete in itself, having a beginning, middle, and end.

Subsequent classical literary critics and theorists were all influenced profoundly by Aristotle’s thinking on narrative. Thus, Horace’s *Ars Poetica* considered some of the narrative techniques appropriate to different literary genres and styles—perhaps most famously, advising that the proper way to begin an epic narrative is *in medias res* (as in Homer’s *Odyssey*) so as to allow for the development of plot through the heightening of narrative inten-

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INTRODUCTION

In her chapter, “Self-Reflections on Elegy-Writing in Two Parts: The Metapoetics of Diptych Elegies in Ovid, Amores 1.11 + 12,” Sophia Papaioannou argues that this Ovidian diptych comprises a unified story, and that its narrative continuity is principally determined by the poetics behind the identification of Nape, the maid/messenger with the tablets/love-messages that she is entrusted to carry. Drawing particularly upon Bal and Barthes, Papaioannou’s reading of Amores 1.11 and 1.12 as a narrative unit examines the mechanics of elegiac storytelling alongside the performance of elegiac mimesis and role-play.

Christine Walde’s “Narration in a Standstill: Propertius 1.16–18” proposes that this thematically organized group of poems provides a key not only to the Propertian concept of love, but also to a poetics of elegiac storytelling. She argues that Propertius’ use of the literary device of soliloquy profits from the narrative unity of time, place and action. Yet, at the same time, the temporal, spatial, and geographical liminality of the spaces from which these soliloquies are delivered (such as doorway and seashore) seem to preclude narrativity in that they proliferate possibilities both past and present, slowing the first person narrator’s story to a standstill.

Next, Vered Lev Kenaan’s “Platonic Strategies in Ovid’s Tales of Love” engages Barthes’s notion of a “nonnarrative” erotic discourse and Kristevesan ideas of love and storytelling to illuminate some of the critically neglected narratological conventions at work in and across Ovid’s Ars Amatoria and Remedia Amoris. She focuses upon Ovid’s rejection of a linear form of storytelling and upon his choice of an alternative cyclical narrative to show that Ovid adopts two of his major narratological strategies from Plato’s erotic dialogues, the Symposium and the Phaedrus, in configuring his own erotodidactic “tales of love.”

Part IV, Seeing and Speaking the Self: Elegy and Subjectivity, deals with a subject that both underpins contemporary studies in narratology and is fundamental to contemporary studies in Roman elegy: subjectivity. The question of who sees, who speaks, and who tells in elegiac narratives has been at the forefront of classical scholarship in the field since the 1980s—to such a degree that any meaningful analysis of Latin elegy is now unthinkable without due consideration of issues (primarily) of gender, but also (more gener-
ally) of historical, cultural, and local contexts. Feminist critics of the 1970s and 80s complained that early narratology, in its desire to be objective and descriptive, and in its primary focus upon the “mechanisms” of story-telling, was too little concerned with the subjective and personal implications of narrative to provide an effective critical tool. However, in no small part due to the writings of Mieke Bal, Teresa de Lauretis, and Laura Mulvey, feminist criticism and gender scholarship have asserted a considerable influence upon the contemporary shape of narratology. In particular, feminist analyses of the construction of gender have encouraged critics to rethink notions of textual authority and authorship, focalization and characterization, reading and reception. And, as several of the essays in this collection demonstrate, cognizance of gendered subjectivities can direct readers of Latin elegy and its narratives to rethink (and reread) not only gendered points of view, but also gendered expectations and desires.

This section opens with Michèle Lowrie, “Cornelia’s Exemplum: Form and Ideology in Propertius 4.11,” a rereading of Propertius 4.11 in the light of formal analyses of the narratological unities of time, place, and character. Lowrie’s reading of 4.11 reveals that Propertius grants Cornelia consistency in none of these. She speaks on different occasions and in different places. These inconsistencies alert us to Cornelia’s greater role as an exemplum rather than as an individual, but the exemplum is both a narrative category that mediates between singularity and the general, and a moral category that sets up a model to be imitated. Cornelia emerges in this reading not merely as an exemplum of Augustan morality, but as a paradigm for the dynamic principles of representation informing the Augustan age and Augustan elegy.

Next, Steven Green in “The Expert, The Novice, and the Exile: A Narrative Tale of Three Ovids in Fasti” focuses on the opening sections of Ovid’s Fasti (1.1–288) in an attempt to tease out the multilayered character of its homodiegetic, and at times autodiegetic, speaker (“Ovid”). As a mature work from a self-consciously experienced poet, the Fasti can be seen to pull “Ovid” in different directions: “Ovid” can be viewed simultaneously as a poet-expert steeped in personal and literary experience; a complete novice in matters of religious inquiry; and a Black Sea exile struggling to keep his emotions in check and his mind on the Roman literary project to hand, presenting (at least) three different—and competing—levels of narration and focalization in this text.

24. Bal was among the first theorists to forward a specifically feminist approach to narrative and narratology with her 1987 study of Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories. For a good overview of feminism and narratology see Nikolopoulos (2004), 135–41.

25. See in particular, Kennedy, Papaioannou, Gardner, and Skoie in this volume.
Then, in Benjamin Lee’s chapter “Potentials of Narrative: The Rhetoric of the Subjective in Tibullus,” we investigate the narrative function of subjective withdrawal and private thought in the elegies of Tibullus. Lee argues that there are two forms of narrative in the elegies of Tibullus: a narrative of real events, public events that unfold in public time, and a narrative of subjectivity, a depiction of the imagination that happens in private time. He concludes that, from the perspective of narratology, the principal function and effect of Tibullan elegy is to generate a rhetoric of subjectivity, which makes the narrative of public or “real” events coordinate with, and perhaps even subordinate to, the narrative of the imagination.

Part V, Narrative at the Receiving End: Elegy and Reception, turns finally to examine the role of narrative and narratology in the reception of Roman elegy, following its demise in the early first century CE. Ricoeur identified three key temporal components of narrative: prefiguration, configuration, and refiguration. Prefiguration is our practical pre-understanding of how characters are likely to behave in a narrative, our beliefs and expectations regarding the motivations, values and behaviors that, for example, lovers and ex-lovers may exhibit in Roman elegy. The next mode, configuration, describes the relation of “agents, goals, means, interactions, circumstances, unexpected results,” however diverse and contradictory, through the processes of emplotment. As with prefiguration, there is a key temporal dimension to the mode of configuration, concerning (to borrow Frank Kermode’s phrase) “the sense of an ending” in which meaning is made by and as a story progresses toward an end point, and is only understood retrospectively from that end point when the story can be seen as a whole. Following on from the configuration of a narrative, refiguration is seen to involve “the intersection of the world of the text and the world of the hearer or reader,” that is, the impact of the text upon its audience to bring about new or increased understanding—an important narratological consideration for the “reception” of Roman elegy.

This section offers innovative analyses of two poets whose work is often neglected in studies of Latin elegy: Latin literature’s only extant female poet, Sulpicia, and the early Christian elegist Prudentius. Christian Kaesser in “Narrating Disiecta Corpora: The Rhetoric of Bodily Dismemberment in Prudentius Peristephanon 11” sets out to examine Prudentius Pe. 11, one of only two elegiac poems in Prudentius’ book of martyrdom poetry, to show how a late antique and Christian example of the elegiac tradition

both reworks narrative strategies of previous elegiac poetry (particularly Ovid) and reflects these strategies through its imagery. Here, Kaesser draws innovatively from ancient narratological and rhetorical theory, particularly the tradition that figured literary works and their parts as corporeal entities, to highlight the suitability of the “disfigured” elegiac meter (famously characterized by Ovid as being deprived of one foot) as a vehicle to carry narratives of dismemberment and fragmentation. Engaging with the ancient narratological theories of Plato and Quintilian rather than Bal and Genette, Kaesser traces a convincing concordance between the form and content of Prudentius’ elegiac writing.

Finally, Mathilde Skoie in “Telling Sulpicia’s Joys: Narrativity at the Receiving End” offers an analysis of the reception and narrative reconfiguration of Sulpicia’s elegiac fragments in three translations of the *corpus Tibullianum*—viewing these translations themselves as “narratives” in their own right. These translations variously rearrange the poems and fragments attributed to Sulpicia so as to emplot a (morally) satisfying narrative sequence of events—with beginning, crisis-ridden middle, and happy ending for Sulpicia and her beloved. Skoie’s close analysis of these translations shows how the translator’s—like any reader’s—desire for a coherent narrative (with the concomitant sense of a unified narrative voice and stable point of view that this entails) inevitably directs and structures his or her readings. She returns, thus, the readers of this collection of diverse narratives to its beginning, and to Duncan Kennedy’s “tale” of elegy and the erotics of narratology, where a desire for knowledge and satisfaction drives the reader to read on.
PART I

Unveiling the Body of Elegiac Narrative

Two Narratological Approaches to Ovid’s Amores 1.5
Ovid, Amores 1.5

Aestus erat, mediumque dies exegerat horam;  
adposui medio membra levanda toro.  
pars adaperta fuit, pars altera clausa fenestrae;  
quale fere silvae lumen habere solent,  
qualia sublucuent fugiente crepuscula Phoebo,  
aubi nox abiit, nec tamen orta dies.  
illa verecundis lux est praebenda puellis,  
qua timidus latebras speret habere pudor.  
ecce, Corinna venit, tunica velata recincta,  
candida dividua colla tegente coma—  
qualiter in thalamos famosa Semiramis isse  
dicitur, et multis Lais amata viris.  
Deripui tunicam—nec multum rara nocebat;  
pugnabat tunica sed tamen illa tegi.  
quae cum ita pugnaret, tamquam quae vincere nollet,  
victa est non aegre proditione sua.  
ut stetit ante oculos posito velamine nostros,  
in toto nusquam corpore menda fuit.  
quos umeros, quales vidi tetigique lacertos!  
forma papillarum quam fuit apta premi!  
quam castigato planus sub pectore venter!  
quantum et quale latus! quam iuvenale femur!  
Singula quid referam? nil non laudabile vidi  
et nudam pressi corpus ad usque meum.  
Cetera quis nescit? lassi requievimus ambo.  
provenient medii sic mihi saepe dies!
It was hot, and the day had passed its middle hour.

I lay my body in the middle of the bed to rest.

One shutter was open, the other was closed, giving

The kind of light that woods have;

The kind of twilight that glows when the sun sets,

Or when the night has passed but the day has not yet begun.

That is the kind of light to offer to shy girls,

In which their timid modesty can hope to find a hiding place.

Look! Corinna comes, wearing an unbelted tunic,

Her parted hair touching her pale neck,

Just as they say lovely Semiramis looked going into her bedroom,

Or Thais loved by so many men.

I tore off her dress. It was thin so wasn't much ripped.

Still, she fought to cover herself with it.

But because she fought like someone who doesn't really want to win,

She was easily beaten in her own surrender.

As she stood undressed before my eyes,

I saw there was no mark on her whole body.

Such shoulders, such arms I saw and I felt.

Her breasts just asking to be touched.

So smooth the belly beneath that perfect bosom.

So long and lovely her sides. So youthful her thigh.

Why should I list everything? I saw nothing to complain about,

And I pressed her naked body to mine.

Who doesn't know the rest? Worn out, we both slept.

My middays–let them often turn out this way.

(Translation, G. Liveley)
For all that narratology can seem a “hard” and austerely formalistic pursuit, prominent literary theorists, from Roland Barthes in *S/Z* and *The Pleasure of the Text* through Peter Brooks’s *Reading for the Plot* and *Psychoanalysis and Storytelling*, each building on Freud’s assumption that sexuality and narrative form are analogous, have intimately probed the associations of erotics and the analysis of narrative. Brooks in particular sought to move beyond formalist narratological models, which he sees as “excessively static and limiting,” toward a concern with plotting, namely, “with the activity of shaping, with the dynamic aspect of narrative—that which makes a plot ‘move forward,’ and makes us read forward, seeking in the unfolding of the narrative a line of intention and a portent of design that hold the promise of progress toward meaning.”¹ He continues:

Whatever its larger ambitions, narratology has in practice been too exclusively concerned with the identification of minimal narrative units and paradigmatic structures; it has too much neglected the temporal dynamics that shape narratives in our reading of them, the play of desire in time that makes us turn pages and strive towards narrative ends.²

A move beyond pure formalism involves attempting to talk of “the motor forces that drive the text forward.” The “drive” to follow a narrative has two aspects that are in tension with each other, Brooks suggests. On the one

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¹. Brooks (1984), xiii.
². Ibid., xiii.
hand, we seek to discover bounded and totalizing order to the chaos of life in some sort of “closure.” But the order provided in closure must not come prematurely; it is most satisfying after the delays and detours that we associate with plot. Brooks expresses his doubts that we can ever “understand” force, but in seeking to characterize the “force” which keeps the reader moving on toward the fulfilment of closure, Brooks associates it with Freud’s understanding of desire, and he fashions a model of “textual erotics” by aligning the forward momentum with Eros, the pleasure principle, and the will to closure with Thanatos, the death drive. Brooks puts it thus:

The paradox of the self becomes explicitly the paradox of narrative plot as the reader consumes it: diminishing as it realizes itself, leading to an end that is the consummation (as well as the consumption) of its sense-making. If the motor of narrative is desire, totalizing, building ever-larger units of meaning, the ultimate determinants of meaning lie at the end, and narrative desire is ultimately, inexorably, desire for the end. (emphasis in original)³

Brooks’s use of the term “consummation” is hardly coincidental, as he is fully aware that if desire structures narrative, it also structures the analysis of narrative, and both theory and scholarly method are themselves brought within the more general ambit of “textual erotics.”⁴

Of course, narratology arises out of such intellectual movements as Russian formalism and French structuralism; of course, Freud’s key metaphor of “drives” comes out of the machine age.⁵ Nonetheless, it is possible to tell a story in which this is not entirely new. It was observed some time ago that grammar and rhetoric on the one hand and sexual position on the other share a common vocabulary in the ancient languages.⁶ The slippage between erotics and rhetoric is nowhere more pronounced than when Ovid seeks to codify and theorize the techniques of elegiac love in his Ars Amatoria; much of the pleasure of this text lies precisely in the way in which it plays with the interaction of erotics and its own literary form. Erotic activity is not simply illustrated by narratives (the extensive exempla that punctuate the work and contribute so much to the rhythm of its exposition), but is conceptualized and articulated in terms of standard story patterns: thus lovemaking is variously figured as a journey or a race, as in the advice of the praeceptor

3. Ibid., 51–52.
4. “The plot of my own argument in this study will make loops and detours in pursuit of its subject,” Brooks (1984), xv.
5. See Culler (1981), 169–70 for a brief historical contextualization of narratology; and Brooks (1984), 41–48, on the importance of the metaphor of the “motor” for Freud’s thought.
*amoris* in the closing lines of Book 2 on how to achieve simultaneous orgasm (725–28):

> sed neque tu dominam uelis maioribus usus
deisce, nec cursus anteeat illa tuos;
ad metam properate simul: tum plena uoluptas,
cum pariter uicti femina uirque iacent.

but neither should you let out your sails and leave your mistress in the lurch, nor should she race ahead of you; pick up speed together toward the winning-post; pleasure is only full when woman and man lie overcome together.

Viewed in terms of their associated narrative structures, journeys and races are emphatically end-directed. But argument is similarly figured in the *Ars Amatoria*: the *praecceptor* alludes to his progress through his argument by describing it either as a sea voyage *en route* to port at the end of the poem (the poem rides at anchor at the end of Book 1 [772], waiting for the next stage of the journey), or as a chariot race, where the books are the equivalent of laps (e.g., 1.39–40). Form and content are fused in the term *opus* (“work of literature”/“sexual act”) as the work moves toward its “climax” in the discussion of sexual intercourse leading to orgasm: *finis adest operi* (“the end/goal of the job is at hand,” 2.733). If the *Ars Amatoria* is a text about sex, as a didactic poem it is no less a text about knowledge, and the two are never wholly distinguished. It enacts desire, in respect of both sex and knowledge, and moves toward satisfaction of that desire, in its literary form. From this perspective, it seems no accident that one expression for sexual fulfilment is “carnal *knowledge,*” and it is not difficult to experience a momentary sexual frisson in such technical terms of narratological analysis as “frequency,” “duration,” “retardation” or “interruption technique.” On the back of such theorization, venturing into some of the murkier sexual resonances of scholarly method has become a cottage industry. The scholar and the lover are united in the desire to “know.”

“Narratives both tell of desire—typically present some story of desire—and arouse and make use of desire as dynamic of signification,” Brooks

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7. See Kövecses (1988), 16.
8. See Kennedy (1993), 50.
9. These terms are taken from the glossary to De Jong (2001), xi–xix.
10. See Jed (1989), who traces connections between the “discipline” of philology, with its “correction” of the text, and the reader’s implication in scenes of sexual violence.
Narratives of desire work to entice the reader into the very dynamics of desire they seek to represent. How is this theorized? In the *Ars Amatoria*, the *praecceptor amoris*, in seeking to represent erotic pursuit as knowledge, tells the reader who wants to be a lover to “act the role of the lover and to imitate the wounds of love in his words” (*est tibi agendus amans imitandaque uulnera uerbis*, 1.611), that is, to position himself within stories of desire and act them out, whilst cautioning him that lovers can so internalize the role they are playing that they end up by becoming what they had started out by pretending to be (*saepe tamen uere coepit simulator amare; / saepe, quod incipiens finxerat esse, fuit*, 1.615–16). Roland Barthes speaks in terms of identification. In *A Lover’s Discourse*, itself a web of repeated allusions to Goethe’s *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, Schubert’s *Winterreise*, and other famous exemplars of romantic passion. Barthes suggests that the lover, like Werther, ceaselessly identifies himself with other lovers: “I devour every amorous system with my gaze and discern the place which would be mine if I were part of that system.”  

By writing thus in the first person, Barthes’s voice identifies itself as that of the desiring subject caught up in the very dynamics of desire that it is trying to understand, and enacts a dramatic mimesis of a lover’s discourse as it obsessively stages repeated scenes of absence and abandonment. But how is narrative to be conceived of as capturing its reader? Elsewhere, Barthes speaks of a “contract” between the narrator and his listener: the story seeks something in exchange for what it supplies, whether that be a story in exchange for a night of love, as in the case of Balzac’s *Sarrasine* which Barthes discusses, or, as in the *Thousand and One Nights*—“a story instead of a simple night of love (ended by a beheading), a story to keep desire alive, to prolong and renew the intersubjective and interlocutionary relation.” For Brooks, “contract” is too static a notion; the listener is bound in, to be sure, but it is precisely the prolongation and renewal of this relationship that for Brooks is the focus of enduring fascination. The key, he suggests, lies in Freud’s realization that “the relation of teller and listener is as important as the content and structure of the tale itself. Or rather: the relation of teller to listener inherently is part of the structure and the meaning of any narrative text, since a text . . . exists only insofar as it is transmitted, insofar as it becomes part of a process of exchange.” Most narratives, he believes, speak of their “transferential condition—of their anxiety concerning their transmissibility, of their need to be heard, of their desire to

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become the story of the listener, something that is most evident in ‘framed tales’ . . . which embed another tale within them, and thus dramatize the relation of tellers and listeners.”\(^\text{15}\) This is applicable, of course, no less to Brooks’s own *Reading for the Plot*, which embeds tales of desire from the classic novels of the nineteenth century within it so as to discuss their interpretation, than to Ovid’s *Ars Amatoria*, where such tales are incorporated into an eroticized pedagogical dynamic of teacher and pupil that Alison Sharrock has aptly characterized as the “seduction of the reader.”\(^\text{16}\)

It is somewhat odd, then, that narratologists have paid so little attention to elegy, a genre which historically, whether in lamenting the dead or appealing to the beloved, has absence and desire as its central preoccupations: coming to terms with them is the “force” that “drives” it. Indeed, in many circumstances for elegiac lovers—notably the narrators of the *Heroïdes*—their only available means of erotic expression lies either in the telling of their stories, or, as Laurel Fulkerson has argued, identifying themselves, sometimes disastrously (as Madame Bovary was to do), with the protagonists of stories to which they feel especially powerfully drawn.\(^\text{17}\) Furthermore, a key feature of the *ego* of Roman love elegy is that he is not only a lover but a storyteller, and doubly so: in the first person about himself, and, mainly through the *exempla* that he adduces, in the third person, about others. Moreover, the elegiac lover’s implied addressee is very often not his beloved, but the reader, conceived of precisely as a subject similarly caught up in the dynamics of desire. The Propertian lover offers his poems as accounts which subsequent lovers will be able to identify with and benefit from (1.7.13–14):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{me legat assidue post haec neglectus amator} \\
\text{et prosint illi cognita mala nostra.}
\end{align*}
\]

Let the spurned lover read me with constant attention hereafter, and may the knowledge of my sufferings be of help to him.

This recalls Brooks’s comments about the “transferential condition” of narratives of desire, “their need to be heard, their desire to become the story of the listener”; and, just as the *exempla* narrated by the lover are “framed tales” which he tells for his own benefit *within* individual poems, so the interpella-

\(^{15}\) Brooks (1994), 50–51.

\(^{16}\) See Sharrock (1994), esp. 21–86.

\(^{17}\) See Fulkerson (2005). Thus, for example, Phyllis, the author of *Heroïdes* 2, in what seems a fatal misprision, identifies herself with Ariadne, and her beloved, Demophoon, with the treacherous Theseus (22–39).
tion of his anticipated readership transforms those poems into “framed tales” within the context of that relationship.

The Propertian lover speaks of his experiences as “sufferings” (mala), and his anticipated reader as a “spurned lover” (neglectus amator). The elegiac lover’s discourse is normally one of dilations, detours, and delays; the “benefit” gained by the “spurned lover” who reads these poems is troped as knowledge (cf. cognita). Roland Barthes characterizes the issue the lover continually agonizes over as “not: make it stop! but: I want to understand (what is happening to me)!”\(^\text{18}\) Brooks spoke of narrative desire as “ultimately, inexorably, desire for the end” and the “end” to which the elegiac lover looks forward (for, like Barthes’s first-person lover in A Lover’s Discourse, he is characteristically “placed” in the midst of his story) in his narrative of, specifically, erotic desire, finds manifestations both in knowledge and in sexual intercourse. However, only two elegies, Propertius 2.15 and Ovid Amores 1.5, describe at any length a sexual encounter that has led to “consummation.” My major concern will be with the latter poem, and my recollection of that term which Brooks self-consciously used in his discussion of the dynamics of narrative desire and its fulfilment suggests the role that Ovid’s poem can play in my argument—which will be to explore Brooks’s ideas in the context of a narrative of erotic desire and its fulfilment.

Amores 1.5 has been often admired for its vividness and explicitness. It is a triumph of immediacy, arguably love elegy’s most effective foray into what Barthes termed “the reality effect.” However, this very immediacy for long discouraged closer analysis of a poem that does not parade its artistry.\(^\text{19}\) “What if criteria other than naturalistic description were relevant?” asked Stephen Hinds in 1988 in his brilliantly succinct demonstration of the poem’s word play, its exploitation of the literary tradition, and in its subtle manipulation of the conventions of divine epiphany in the sudden appearance of Corinna.\(^\text{20}\) If this poem represents erotic desire and its “consummation” on a referential level, the “metaphors” involved in its use of the language of desire may allow us to read it also as an exploration of some of the questions raised in the discussion of textual erotics.

The poem has often been admired for the elegance of its form, with three passages of eight lines followed by the coda of a triumphant couplet. The

\(^{18}\) Barthes (1978), 60.

\(^{19}\) See, for example, Peter Green’s introduction to the notes on his translation of Amores 1.5 (1982), 273: “This is a straightforward account of a successful act of love.” Patricia Salzman-Mitchell, in her essay in this volume, tracks how this picture has been complicated in the scholarship that has appeared since.

first eight lines describe the atmosphere in the bedroom, with the opening of the second section of eight lines marked by the apparition of Corinna (ecce, Corinna uenit, 9) and the struggle to remove her tunic. Ovid’s commentator, James McKeown, comments of 11–12 that “[a]s in 4ff., the comparisons here delay the action, thus creating dramatic tension. They also heighten our expectation of a lively account of the meeting by their contrast with uere-cundis . . . puellis (7).”

The third section of eight lines focuses on Corinna’s naked body, with the consummation coming in the final coda (25–26):

cetera quis nescit? lassi requievimus ambo.
proueniant medii sic mihi saepe dies.

McKeown, as we have just seen, draws attention to some of the strategies of delay in the narration of this scene (the descriptions of the light, the comparisons of Corinna with Semiramis and Lais), and explicitly sees them as devices to heighten the reader’s (“our”) expectation. The description of Corinna’s body, for all the pleasure that is invoked in describing its detail, might also be included in these strategies of delay, for where is this narrative going? What is its end? To consider this, let us turn to David Lodge’s marriage of the romance and campus novel, Small World, in which the thrusting critic Morris Zapp scandalizes his provincial English audience by developing his theory of interpretation through a detailed and explicit exploration of what he calls in this passage “a valid metaphor for the activity of reading,” the way “a striptease dancer plays upon her audience’s curiosity and desire”:

Now, as some of you know, I come from a city notorious for its bars and nightclubs featuring topless and bottomless dancers. . . . This is not striptease, it is all strip and no tease, it is the terpsichorean equivalent of the hermeneutic fallacy of a recuperable meaning, which claims that if we remove the clothing of its rhetoric from a literary text we discover the bare facts it is trying to communicate. The classical tradition of striptease, however, which goes back to Salome’s dance of the seven veils and beyond, and which survives in a debased form in the dives of your Soho, offers a valid metaphor for the activity of reading. The dancer teases the audience, as the text teases its readers, with the promise of an ultimate revelation that is infinitely postponed. Veil after veil, garment after garment, is removed, but it is the delay in the stripping that makes it exciting, not the stripping itself;

because no sooner has one secret been revealed than we lose interest in it and crave another. When we have seen the girl’s underwear we want to see her body, when we have seen her breasts we want to see her buttocks, and when we have seen her buttocks we want to see her pubis, and when we see her pubis, the dance ends—but is our curiosity and desire satisfied? Of course not. . . . To read is to surrender oneself to an endless displacement of curiosity and desire from one sentence to another, from one action to another, from one level of the text to another. The text unveils itself before us, but never allows itself to be possessed; and instead of striving to possess it we should take pleasure in its teasing.\footnote{22. Lodge (1984), 26–27.}

I have purposefully left some gaps in this citation, one of which I shall return to in a moment. The argumentative end to which Zapp is himself moving is the infinite postponement of a final and definitive interpretation of a text, the “ultimate revelation of meaning.” Like the dancer, he suggests, the text unveils itself, but never allows itself to be possessed; “when we see her pubis, the dance ends—but is our curiosity and desire satisfied?” We may now partially fill in that ellipsis, as Zapp remorselessly pursues the logic of revelation:

\[\ldots\] Of course not. The vagina remains hidden in the girl’s body, shaded by her pubic hair, and even if she were to spread her legs before us [at this point several ladies in the audience noisily departed] it would still not satisfy the curiosity and desire set in motion by the stripping. Staring into that orifice we find that we have somehow overshot the goal of our quest, gone beyond pleasure in contemplated beauty; gazing into the womb we are returned to the mystery of our own origins. Just so in reading. The attempt to peer into the very core of a text, to possess once and for all its meaning, is vain—it is only ourselves we find there, not the work itself.

As the description of Corinna’s body in \textit{Amores} 1.5 moves toward the moment of sexual “consummation,” to cite the words of McKeown: “With the brief question \textit{cetera quis nescit?} in the final hexameter, Ovid abruptly disappoints our expectations of further revelations.”\footnote{23. McKeown (1989), 104.} But with Zapp’s comments in mind, perhaps “further revelations” are not the point, for where is such a narrative to stop? The rhetorical question deftly negotiates this issue by \textit{troping} sexual consummation as “knowledge,” rather than by \textit{narrating}
it as, say, penetration, position and orgasm,\textsuperscript{24} even as the text immediately, and eagerly, anticipates the resumption, indeed the repeated resumption, of desire (\textit{proueniant medii sic mihi saepe dies}, 26). Are the reader’s expectations “disappointed”? Narrative is abandoned before “fulfilment,” perhaps, because the point of this narrative may be not so much to represent fulfilment (\textit{cetera quis nescit?}) as to enact desire.

The mode of narration in \textit{Amores} 1.5 is first-person, but that first-person is a complex construct in this poem. The elegiac \textit{ego} is both character and narrator as he reviews with a sense of satisfaction an experience represented as now in the past. Such narratives of the self combine two temporalities, that of the narrated self and that of the narrating self who looks back on the narrated self. Each has a “now.” These two temporalities can be manipulated in different ways to different effects. The opening lines are marked by a succession of verbs in the past tense which mark the distinction between the “now” of the narrated self and the “now” of narration:

\begin{quote}
Aestus \textit{erat}, mediamque dies \textit{exegerat} horam;
\textit{apposui} medio membra levanda toro.
\textit{pars adaperta \textit{fuit}}, \textit{pars altera clausa fenestrae}. . . . (1–3)
\end{quote}

The progress of the narrated action is marked by these past tenses: \textit{deripui} (13), \textit{pugnabat} (14), \textit{uicta est} (16), \textit{stetit} (17), \textit{fuit} (18), \textit{uidi tetigique} (19), \textit{fuit apta premi} (20), \textit{uidi} (23), \textit{pressi} (24), \textit{requieimus} (25). The “now” of narration is equally clearly signalled by the present tenses in the deliberative question \textit{singula quid referam?} (23), in the rhetorical question \textit{cetera quis nescit?} (25), and in the optative \textit{proueniant medii sic mihi saepe dies} (26).

But the distinction between these two temporalities can be blurred. How are we to interpret the present tenses in the comparisons of light and shade in 4–8 and of Corinna with the famous females in 11–12? Are they “gnomic” presents, to be associated with the “now” of narration, or are we to regard them as focalized through the narrated self so as to represent Ovid’s thoughts and desires at the time? A clear distinction cannot and perhaps should not be drawn. The deictic exclamation and the present tense in \textit{ecce, Corinna uenit} (9) seem to represent a momentary fusion of the two temporalities as the narrated self’s surprise or pleasure at Corinna’s apparition in the narrated past is represented as powerful enough to impress itself on the narrator’s present. The narrated self is represented as a desiring subject in the midst of the action, whose thoughts may be revolving around the prospect of sex.

\textsuperscript{24} Though these are implied, of course, by \textit{lassi requievimus ambo} (25).
(1–8), and who is thus captured in a moment of anticipation. The narrating self from the vantage point of his temporality retrospectively knows the outcome for he is narrating in its aftermath, and so strictly speaking is not experiencing the suspense of desire (“for the end,” to cite Brooks), which is part of the temporality of his narrated self. This has implications for our reading of the poem. Brooks ponders the “interesting and not wholly resolvable question how much, and in what ways, we in reading image the pastness of the action presented, in most cases, in verbs in the past tense.” Do we realize the action as a kind of present in terms of our experience of it? Do we do so in anticipation of a structuring conclusion, given that we would find frustrating an interminable narrative, one in which the end we desire is indefinitely postponed? He concludes:

If the past is to be read as present, it is a curious present that we know to be past in relation to a future we know to be already in place, already in wait for us to reach it. Perhaps we would do best to speak of the anticipation of retrospection as the chief tool in making sense of narrative, the master trope of its strange logic. (emphasis in original)

In the first-person narrative in Amores 1.5 that looks back on looking forward to sexual consummation, the combination of the anticipatory and retrospective viewpoints, associated with the narrated self and the narrating self respectively, offers a striking dramatization of the dynamics of reading proposed by Brooks. Brooks sees the sequentiality of narrated events in terms of metonymy: the chronological and causal sequencing of distinct events in a plot are seen as “metonymic” moves on the part of the narrator, in the sense that they take the readers from one event to another, with the events acting as contiguous “parts” evoking a larger “whole” that (like Corinna’s person in 19–22) is not explicitly or exhaustively represented. Still, however much we enjoy the associated dilations and delays, we would not want them to go on forever, as a metonymical chain might. The closural quality we anticipate and desire Brooks associates with metaphor, and in Amores 1.5, that is supplied in the rhetorical question cetera quis nescit? The eventual metaphorical meaning of a narrative retrospectively makes sense of the metonymical dilations and delays of the narrative, Brooks suggests: “the metaphorical work of eventual totalization determines the meaning and status of the metonymic

26. Ibid., 23.
27. Brooks thus aligns metonymy and metaphor respectively with the pleasure principle and the death drive.
work of sequence—though it must also be claimed that the metonyms of the middle produced, gave birth to, the final metaphor.”28 So, what is involved in *Amores* 1.5’s metaphorical closure?

Brooks takes his cue from Roman Jakobsen’s argument that narratives (and prose more generally) are characterized by the rhetorical figure of metonymy since narratives tend to proceed by moving from one connected event to another.29 Metonymy is, in Jakobsen’s term, “syntagmatic” because it works in temporal sequence, like the syntax of a sentence. For Jakobsen, poetry is characterized by metaphor, since it is concerned with tying together all its metrical features and images into a single atemporal, “paradigmatic,” unity. The “reality effect” may lead us to forget that, in reading *Amores* 1.5, we are reading a poem, and that our elegiac *ego* is a poet. Let us pursue these issues of temporality by looking more closely at the exclamations in 19–22:

> quos umeros, quales uidi tetigique lacertos!  
> forma papillarum quam fuit apta premi!  
> quam castigato planus sub pectore uenter!  
> quantum et quale latus! quam iuuenale femur!

They incorporate a narrative element (*uidi tetigique*, 19; *fuit apta premi*, 20), as the perfect tenses indicate, but the exclamations function as intensifiers in a way that is highly significant for this text and its authorial “voice.”30 Reducing exclamation to description and narrative will help to make the point. For the narrating self to say that “Corinna had lovely shoulders, arms, and breasts, and I looked at them and touched them,” though (possibly) an adequate paraphrase, lacks the investment of passion associated with exclamation. Exclamations act rhetorically as signifiers of the emotion that caused them, but here they shift that investment of emotion from the “now” of the narrated self (who, even if he made some comparable exclamations at the time, was, the perfect tenses suggest, keenly occupied with looking, touching, and caressing) to that of the narrating self, from the temporality of action to the temporality of writing. The investment of passion associated

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29. Ibid., 56; for a more extended discussion of Jakobsen’s theories, see Lodge (1977), 73–124.  
30. Compare the apostrophes and exclamations with which Propertius 2.15 begins: *O me feli-
   cem! nox o mihi candida! et o tu / lectule deliciis facte beate meis! / quam multa apposita narramus verba
   lucerna, / quantaque subtus lume rixa fuit! “O lucky me! O shining night! And O you / little bed
   made blessed by my delights! / How many stories we told each other by lamplight, / And how many
   fights we had when the lights were turned down (1–4).” My argument in this paragraph is profoundly
   influenced by Culler’s discussion of apostrophe (1981), 135–54.
with the exclamations is one marker of the “now” of writing. The rhetoric of line 20 (forma papillarum quam fuit apta premi) works toward this end also. McKeown notes that the expression forma papillarum “seems rather grand, and not simply equivalent to formosae papillae.” The expressions forma papillarum, “the shape of her breasts,” and apta premi, “ripe to be caressed,” have a generalizing quality, and relate not to the temporality of action but to that of writing, transporting Corinna’s beauty out of the particular event in the past and into a timeless present, “that special temporality which is the set of all moments at which writing can say ‘now,’” and which is particularly developed in “poetic” uses of language and associated with a “poetic” voice. An expression that “seems rather grand” is precisely an element of that voice. Exclamation can also have an invocatory function. The optative explicit in the final line (proueniant medii sic mihi saepe dies, 26) is implicit in these exclamations, and further works to associate desire with the “now” of narration and the temporality of writing. The optative dimension of this discourse expresses the renewal of desire and looks forward to bringing into being what it refers to, repeated coupling with Corinna. But nothing need happen (or need have happened), because the poem itself is to be the event, and the ring composition (Aestus erat, mediamque dies exegerat horam [1], proueniant medii sic mihi saepe dies [26]) swings the cycle into action as often as one wants. The exclamations, and the other rhetorical devices which enact the “now” of writing such as the rhetorical questions in 23 and 25, run athwart the narrative drive of the poem. They work to make the poem not (simply) the representation of a past sequence of events, but to generate a discursive event that involves both writer and reader. They complicate the narrative, with its sequentiality and teleological drive, because their “now” is not a moment in the narrative’s temporal sequence (contrast the emphasis on temporal sequence in the opening lines of the poem). In the discursive event that the poem creates, these rhetorical features allow the writer and the reader precious moments of shared simultaneous pleasure. The slyly collusive rhetorical question cetera quis nescit? (25), in troping “consummation” as “knowledge” to enact closure, appeals to the poet’s and reader’s shared competence in recognizing narrative form. The rhetorical question allows writer and reader together in one deft move to sidestep the problems involved in working out (if, as is often supposed, narrative is a form of explanation and understanding) precisely what sort of “knowledge” this is and what sort of

31. McKeown (1989), 117 ad loc.; my emphasis.
32. Culler (1981), 149.
closure it offers (a consideration we shall return to presently). These rhetorical figures seek to displace desire from empirical time, the “metonymical” experience of time associated with the narrated self, into discursive time, the “metaphorical” experience of time associated with the narrating self. They look to govern the interplay of absence and presence, lack and satisfaction, desire and fulfilment, not by the dictates of experiential time but of poetic and rhetorical power. Even better than sex?

My theme has been the erotics of narratology. Where desire and knowledge are coupled, neither ends up on top as of right. Thus Brooks resists the reductionist claim that Freudian psychoanalysis explains narrative or provides a metalanguage for it; rather, he suggests that they are homologous or isomorphic in structure\(^34\)—spoons in a drawer, if you will. He concludes:

> One can, then, resist the notion that psychoanalysis “explains” literature and yet insist that the kind of intertextual relation it holds to literature is quite different from the intertextuality that obtains between two poems or novels, and that it illumines in quite other ways. For the psychoanalytical intertext obliges the critic to make a transit through a systematic discourse elaborated to describe the dynamics of psychic process. The similarities and differences, in object and in intention, of this discourse from literary analysis creates a tension which is productive of perspective, of stereoptical effect. . . . The detour through psychoanalysis forces the critic to respond to the erotics of form—that is, to an engagement with the psychic investments of rhetoric, the dramas of desire played out in tropes.\(^35\)

Brooks’s emphasis here on “the erotics of form,” “an engagement with the psychic investments of rhetoric,” and “the dramas of desire played out in tropes” have been explored in our reading of *Amores* 1.5. The juxtaposition of Brooks’s theories with Ovid’s poem plays out the problem Brooks grapples with in the quotation above about the intertextual relation of psychoanalysis and literature. Brooks’s theories do not offer a final “explanation” of *Amores* 1.5 (or vice versa, for that matter), any more than psychoanalysis “explains” literature; rather “the detour forces the critic to respond to” (we might put it more positively: “enables the reader to enjoy”) “the erotics of form.” With this in mind, let us turn to reflect on the “erotics” of Brooks’s text. As analysts of literature, we may construct arguments that, in the midst of their detours, look toward the *end* of explanation. Brooks’s insistence that psycho-

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\(^34\) Ibid., 37.

\(^35\) Ibid., 43–44.
analysis does not provide a final explanation expresses in relation to theory and argument his more general perception of desire, that there is nothing that will ultimately satisfy it; any sense of closure that we experience contains within it a lack that will continue to drive us on to resume our quest for knowledge, just as the Ovidian ego’s “knowledge” is not going to be wholly satisfied by one tryst with Corinna. This arouses considerable anxiety in Brooks about “the ‘status issues’ involved in the meeting of psychoanalysis and literary study.” Is psychoanalysis a model? Is it a metaphor? On the one hand, “[e]ven if one begins with the idea that the model is a heuristic fiction, there generally comes a moment of ‘ontological commitment’ to the model, where ‘We pin our hopes on the existence of a common structure’ in the model and its field of application.” Brooks is wary of such an “ontological commitment” associated with the notion of a model, a moment of intellectual closure that would give psychoanalysis a privileged status such that literature was to be explained in terms of it. On the other hand, he cites with approval I. A. Richards’s description of metaphor as a “transaction between contexts,” a fluid exchange between domains of signification, and he is intrigued by the etymological connection between transference and the term in Latin (translatio) that renders the Greek “metaphor,” drawing attention to it in both Reading for the Plot and Psychoanalysis and Storytelling. Metaphor, on this definition, resists the idea that a journey is the model for love, that sex is the model for knowledge, that psychoanalysis is the model for literature (or vice versa); the ontological commitment that worried him in the case of models is deferred, as signification slides to and fro between the domains in an ongoing “transaction of contexts.” In his discussion of metaphors and models, Brooks articulates precisely that tension between the pleasure principle and the desire for the end, between, as he would put it, Eros and Thanatos, that for him is the force that drives narrative.

Wherever two things are not seen as identical and one tropes them as having a “relationship” with each other, as Brooks wants to “establish” a “relationship” between psychoanalysis and literature, the potential for seeing

36. Or, as Morris Zapp would have it: “[t]he text unveils itself before us, but never allows itself to be possessed” (Lodge [1984], 27). Not finally, at any rate; but if the text is that good (if, as it were, one’s response to its forma is quam fuit apta premi), one is always left looking forward to the next time one gets one’s hands on it.
38. Brooks (ibid., 36–44) devotes a whole section to the question: “Psychoanalysis: Model or Metaphor?”
39. Ibid., 38; Brooks is citing Black (1962).
that relationship in erotic terms is released. But what sort of relationship? Brooks agonizes that he cannot display the “ontological commitment” that Max Black says one must have to constitute the relationship as a “model.”

But perhaps that kind of definitive knowledge can wait. Some metaphorical flirting will do quite well in the meantime: *proueniant medii sic mihi saepe dies!*

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Snapshots of a Love Affair

Amores 1.5 and the
Program of Elegiac Narrative

PATRICIA SALZMAN-MITCHELL

IN MODERN scholarship, the main critical focus of Ovid’s Amores has been on issues of gender, genre, the “reality”/“textuality” of the mistress, and on its pervasive metacritical content. Through a reading of Amores 1.5, this essay draws heavily on these insights in order to explore what the nature of elegiac narrative might be and how it might differ from the ways in which more traditionally narrative genres tell stories.

At first sight it can be said that there are two overarching stories—inter-twined and inseparable—in the Amores: that of the poet struggling to write and battling with Cupid in his search for an adequate subject matter for the new genre (especially in Am 1.1 and 1.2), and that of the affair between the lover and his mistress—though we may decide to read this last story as a mirror of the first. Yet these stories can rarely be envisioned as a linear chronology with a clear teleology.¹ This essay suggests that the Amores (and Latin love elegy more generally) narrates stories through a succession of snapshots without explicit links and that it is the task of the reader to connect the pictures and imagine the events that operate as transitions. He/she must “fill in the gaps” between the frames of these snapshots, demanding a high level of collaboration from the reader in the development of the story line. Moreover, I will suggest that Amores 1.5, the first full presentation of Corinna, inscribes the program of elegiac narrative in her fragmented body, thus acting as a powerful and programmatic figure for the fragmented and “chopped-up” narratives of Ovid’s elegiac body of poetry.

¹. Various critics deny the possibility of a chronology in love elegy. See in particular Veyne (1988). On the subject of this lack of continuity in the ‘stories’ of elegy see also Fränkel (1945), 26; Boucher (1965), 401; and the introduction to this volume. Contrast these views with Holzberg’s (2002), esp. 16–17.
1. “It is not a story at all . . .”: The Elements of Narrative

Most attempts at defining narrative envision it as a succession of events. Already Aristotle in his *Poetics* introduces the concept (*pragma*) and affirms that “tragedy is the imitation of an action and is enacted by men in action. . . . The imitation of the action is the Plot . . . the combination of events” (vi.6). The actions imitated are the basic events of the plot. Gérard Genette also refers to narrative as a succession of events and as “the narrative statement, the oral or written discourse that undertakes to tell of an event or a series of events.” Gerald Prince, in his dictionary of narratology, in his turn, defines narrative as “the recounting (as product and process, object and act, structure and structuration) of one or more real or fictive events communicated by one, two or several (more or less overt) narrators to one, two or several (more or less overt) narratees.” In the same vein, Mieke Bal states:

*A narrative text* is a text in which an agent relates (‘tells’) a story in a particular medium, such as language, imagery, sound, buildings, or a combination thereof. A *story* is a fabula that is presented in a certain manner. A *fabula* is a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors. An *event* is the transition from one state to another state. *Actors* are agents that perform actions. They are not necessarily human. *To act* is defined here as to cause or to experience an event. (emphasis in original)

As we observe in these definitions, the concept of event is tightly linked to the idea of narrative. Of course, the episodes narrated in the *Amores* happen in a certain time and space, and several interrelated events form the outlines of stories. Yet, the concept of event, though key to the development of a plot or fabula, is perhaps the most problematic one to work with in Latin elegy and thus it will be a central concern of this essay. Bal defines

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2. See Hutton’s (1982), 50, translation with notes on p. 90.
5. Bal (1997), 5. Bal (1997), 6–7 draws a distinction between story and fabula based on “the difference between the sequence of events and the way in which these events are presented” (6; emphasis in original)
6. James (2003), 27 asserts that “Elegy qualifies as narrative” and that the most important narratological concepts in dealing with elegy are character and language rather than plot.
7. Veyne (1988) believes that elegy has no events, or actions: “it is a poetry without action, with no plot leading to a denouement or maintaining any tension.” (51). . . . This is not the story of a single Ego, it is not a story at all.” (52).
an event as “the transition from one state to another, caused or experienced by actors. The word ‘transition’ stresses the fact that an event is ‘a process, an alteration.” Yet, as Bal observes, it is not always easy to recognize what sentences in a text represent an event.\(^8\) Not every verb of action or apparent action necessarily constitutes an event. Bal mentions at least three elements to take into account in defining whether an action is a functional event of the fabula: change, choice, and confrontation.\(^9\) According to the criterion of change, it is only in a series that events become meaningful for the fabula and an action is an event only if it produces a change in the narrative. A good example is seen in *Am.* 1.1. Ovid is about to write epic, but Cupid steals a foot and this is the event that produces a change in the narrative and makes the poet compose elegy. Barthes distinguishes between functional and nonfunctional events in that the latter open up a choice between two possibilities. “Once a choice is made, it determines the subsequent course of events in the developments of the fabula.”\(^10\) This can be seen in *Am.* 2.13 where Corinna has made the choice to end her pregnancy. This choice drives the events of the story in a certain direction, which would be entirely different if she had chosen to have the baby. Ovid would thus have written a completely different poem. Hendricks believes that “the structure of the fabula is determined by confrontation.” Thus in every functional event every actor or groups of actors must be confronted by another.\(^11\) At the beginning of *Am* 1.12, for example, we see an event which conveys a confrontation between the poet and his mistress. His tablets have been returned and his invitation to meet has been rejected. The wills of the lover and the mistress clash and this gives place to the poem.

This succession of events that forms a fabula is told by a narrator from a certain narrative position. After Bal and Genette, this very important idea in narratology is now referred to as focalization, a technical term derived from photography and film, which more traditionally was known as “point of view” or “narrative perspective.”\(^12\) In Bal’s words, “whenever events are presented, they are always presented from within a certain ‘vision.’ A point of view is chosen, a certain way of seeing things, a certain angle, whether ‘real’ historical facts are concerned or fictitious events.” “Focalization is,  

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9. Ibid., 183–95.  
12. Genette’s (1988) ideas on “perspective” were groundbreaking, especially his distinction between mood and voice, that is, the difference between “who is the character whose point of view orients the narrative perspective? and . . . who is the narrator?” (186; emphasis in original). See also his views on focalization (189ff.).
then, the relation between the vision and that which is ‘seen,’ perceived.”

Since “description” (“a reproduction of what a character sees” [37]) is the “privileged site of focalization” (36), both concepts are tightly intertwined.

A passage where the descriptive function (ascribing features to objects) is dominant is, accordingly, descriptive. Descriptions in general, and especially in the realistic tradition, have often been considered problematic and in a sense, antinarrative, as they are seen to “interrupt the line of the fabula.”

Our next challenge will then be to analyze, from a narratological perspective, a poem such as Am. 1.5 where scant events are interwoven in a canvas of (heavily focalized) visual descriptions. Is there a story at all in Am. 1.5? Many of the poems of Latin elegy set scenes, present situations, but do not convey a story in the traditional way. In this strict sense, Veyne may be right, and elegy conveys “no story at all.” Yet, once we have finished each poem and the whole collection, we are able to tell what happened, we have a sense of a chain of events and developments from beginning to end. In this sense, the case of elegy challenges narratological views and the centrality of the event as the guiding element of the story.

If a “narrative,” as critics propose, is a succession of states linked by events, the transitions and links between those states become very relevant in typically narrative genres like epic. In the Aeneid, for example, we see that after leaving the underworld in book 6, Aeneas sails and anchors his ships at Caieta. The beginning of book 7 tells us how Aeneas performed funeral rites there and then sailed away from it. There is a clear mention of narrative events that join states. In Ovid’s Metamorphoses, where a succession of different and somewhat disjointed myths is presented, Ovid strives to forge narrative links between diverse stories, even when these narrative hinges seem a bit strained. For example, the episodes of Daphne and Io are linked only by the fact that their fathers were river gods whose daughters were raped. Io’s father does not show up to the meeting of rivers that come to console and congratulate Peneus (Met. 1.568–87). This is not quite the case in elegy where we have fragments of short narratives, which often lack links between them. For example, in Am. 1.6 we see the lover trying to open the mistress’s doors with his song and in the next poem we see a man tortured and ashamed for having been physically violent with his puella. But how has this happened?

15. Bal (1997), 37. Bal (1997), 37, mentions how in the Republic Plato tried to rewrite parts of the Homeric epics, getting rid of descriptions, so that they would be “truly” narrative. Even Homer attempted to disguise his descriptions by making them narrative, as when he includes the description of Achilles’ shield while narrating its making. See also Genette (1988), 93–94 on descriptive pause.
What has Corinna done? Or how and why did the poet become violent? What is the event that is missing here which triggered the new, changed emotional state in the lover? We are not told by the elegiac narrator and it is left up to the reader to imagine and invent these transitions in the love affair. Likewise, in Am. 1.14 Corinna seems to have lost all her hair. Yet we are not told how or why and neither Am. 1.13 nor 1.15 makes any mention of this. However, the use of the imperfect in Am. 1.14.1–2 seems to imply previous events to this state of Corinna’s “baldness,” in which Ovid kept confronting her about not dying her hair so much: *dicebam ‘medicare tuos desiste capillos! / tingere quam possis, iam tibi nulla coma est,’* thus revealing yet not narrating previous events, a previous history. Thus, each poem of the collection can be seen as a snapshot, a state, a captured moment in the life of the love affair. Because we are not told or shown many significant parts of the tale and because many poems are not directly addressed to “us” and assume other internal audiences, we readers frequently find ourselves as spies and almost secretive voyeurs of the whole affair. We are told and shown part of the story, but the rest we must imagine because we are unable to “catch sight” of it in its entirety—like a voyeur who, with eye pressed to the window, keyhole, or door crack, is able to witness only partial glimpses of the scene unfolding within. This feature, so clearly seen in *Amores* 1.5, I will suggest, is a central trait of elegiac narrative.

### 2. *Amores* 1.5: Story and Image

*Amores* 1.5 tells the story of a sexual encounter between the poet/ *amator* and his *puella*, now for the first time named Corinna, one early afternoon. The fabula of the poem could be summarized as follows: the poet/lover reclines on his couch, Corinna comes, the lover tears her tunic, she seems to struggle, but then surrenders, she stands naked before the lover’s eyes. He embraces her. The narrator hints that they have made love, though he doesn’t narrate it. They both lie together in repose. This is, in short, what we could call the sequence of events in the poem although, as we shall see, the status of these ostensible “events” in the fabula of *Amores* 1.5 can be brought into question.

The figure of Corinna is usually recognized as a metaphor for the genre of elegy. Maria Wyke, among others, argues that “we should read Cynthia, Delia, Nemesis, and Corinna as textual bodies bearing both poetic and

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16. For gaze and voyeurism in elegy see Buchan (1995) and Greene (1999).
political meanings” and that “the body of a woman may be read uncon-
tentiously as the anatomy of a text.”

Thus the corpus of his mistress is his literary corpus. She is both “girlfriend and literary project.” If Corinna is elegy and in her body we can read the “anatomy of a text,” then her “narrative” description must tell us something about what the “anatomy” of elegiac narrative constitutes. I will here focus on the visual presentation of Corinna in order to see how the model for the type of narrative that we find in the collections of Roman elegy is inscribed symbolically in her body itself.

**Ecce, Corinna venit.** Look, Corinna comes! This is apparently the central event of the poem and is narrated in a highly visual way. Yet, as Bal points out, not every verb of action necessarily conveys an event. Should we take this *venit* as an event or simply as the beginning of Corinna’s visual presenta-

ve nit, as we will see, is a verb that indicates the idea of visual appearance as well as the act of coming. Under Bal’s criterion of “change” her coming/appearance could be considered an event since the situation is altered with her presence, but not under Hendricks’s “confrontation” clause, where two opposed elements are needed, because the act of coming or appearing does not seem to have an opposing actor. As we can observe in this example, whether an act is a functional event of the narrative or not is a matter of interpretation and depends on the reader’s perspective and the narrative context.

Buchan sees in the name Corinna not only an allusion to the Greek word for girl, “kore,” but also to its meaning “pupil” (of the eye). Thus he proposes that “in 1.5, the punning on pupil suggests the total identification of poet and beloved: Corinna simply is what Ovid gazes upon, as she stands directly in front of his eye.”

While this interpretation is certainly sharp and thought provoking, it somehow obliterates the gender struggles that one may see in the poem; the fact that there is a male who controls the gaze and “reifies” (perhaps oppressively) the image of the woman. We as readers, focalizing with the narrator, are asked to look with the narrator’s eye (Ecce). Ovid thus frames the narrative as if through the lens of a camera. *Ecce* can also be seen to act as a visual frame and thus to direct our view of what will happen.

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in this scene. Ecce Corinna venit has (at least) a twofold meaning, then. Within the fabula of Am. 1.5, Corinna comes—after a long delay of eight lines—as the expected puella. Within the larger narrative of the collection, this is the first time that her name is mentioned and thus this “spectacular” arrival announces, in a metanarrative way,\(^{21}\) the character that will be the central literary subject of the Amores. But her sudden apparition may surely also be seen as the arrival of inspiration, of the poet’s Muse.\(^{22}\) Hinds, who supports the idea that Corinna’s sudden appearance is suggestive of a divine apparition, remarks: “Another circumstantial hint may be felt in the manner of Corinna’s arrival. No knock at the door, no explanation of her sudden presence, half clothed (tunica velata recincta), in Ovid’s chamber: just (1.5.9) ecce, Corinna venit. Simple narrative economy—or a hint also of dream-like epiphany?”\(^{23}\) Whether, with Hinds and Nicoll, we decide to believe that her entrance has divine overtones, or, with Greene, that the passage does not resemble the entrance of a deity; we observe that Hinds notices a certain absence in the narrative. He wonders whether it is “narrative economy” and points to the many missing details (or events, we should say) that lead us to her appearance.

Immediately upon Corinna’s entrance to Ovid’s bedroom, to the narrative, and to the poem, we focus on the image of her body—she is loosely draped in a tunic girded around—and then on her parted hair hanging down her neck.\(^{24}\) It is the eye of the “camera,” again which, in a very haptic way\(^{25}\) begins to trace this segment of the story on Corinna’s body, moving

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21. Just as “metalanguage is a language in which one speaks of another language” (Nikolopoulos [2004], 31–32), I use metanarrative here to indicate the author’s references to the act of narrating. For other understandings of the word see Nikolopoulos (2004), 31–32.

22. Papanghelis (1989), 57, draws a possible comparison between the time of Hesiod’s encounter with the Muses and Corinna’s arrival in the poem. He discusses the puella as poetic inspiration.

23. Hinds (1988), 10. Nicoll (1977), 46 also suggests that “With ecce Corinna venit Ovid again reverts to a familiar feature of the Virgilian apparition—the dramatic epiphany introduced by ecce.” See also Nicoll for connections between epic apparitions in Virgil and Am. 1.5. As Keith (1994), 30, notes, there are many links between the figure of Elegy as she appears in Am. 3.1 and Corinna in Am. 1.5. Elegia recalls with tunica velata soluta (Am. 3.1.51) the way Corinna appears in Am. 1.5: tunica velata recincta (Am. 1.5.9). Rara and tenuissima are also usually applied to the “finely-crafted poetry the Latin elegists championed.” Hinds (1988) states that the goddess-like Corinna anticipates Elegia, who later enters the Amores as a goddess.

24. Greene (1998), 80 notes how the poem is full of binary oppositions: the window is partly opened and partly closed, the hair is parted. Yet the oppositions represent further ambiguities. For example, the loose tunic suggests a “laxity of virtue,” but the parted hair suggests “modesty and restraint.” Holzberg (2002) points out that “an elegant coiffure also emblematizes minor poetry in the Alexandrian tradition” (52) and that hair imagery occurs frequently in Roman literary theory (53).

25. Alois Riegl proposed the dichotomy optic and haptic. One can read a picture haptically (by touch) or optically (“according to the pure vectoriality of outlines”), or in a dialectal combination of both. In a haptic way the eye is considered a “tactile creature, an agent of human contact.” See Gandelman (1991), chapter 1, quoted on p. ix.
from her body up to her head. Then the narrator tells that he tore her tunic away (*deripui tunicam*). So from Corinna’s entrance we move to another event in the narrative that initiates the lovemaking. The “state” of Corinna’s frozen picture (Corinna wrapped in her tunic) that the viewer/narrator has framed for us, is linked to the next “state”: Corinna without the tunic.\(^{26}\) She responds with a new event. The *puella* playfully struggles to be covered by the tunic. While Corinna struggled as one who did not want to be overcome, we are told, she indeed gave herself up. These are clearly narrative moments, events that satisfy the three conditions of change, choice, and confrontation.

Lines 17 and 18 bring us back to the narrator’s focalization and the cinematic/photographic presentation of Corinna, centered once more on her body: *Ut stetit ante oculos posito velamine nostros, / in toto nusquam corpore menda fuit.* She “stood,” a verb that indicates a state rather than an event. *Stetit ante oculos* will act as the visual frame in which the description to follow is enclosed. We see and focalize with the narrator’s *oculus*. *Toto corpore* is important since it makes us view Corinna’s body as a whole, perhaps hinting at the entire corpus of the elegiac story, which later will be broken up into smaller parts. Likewise, in view of the assimilation of Corinna’s body to the body of poetry, it is worth recalling that, as Keith reminds us, *menda* is often used as a metaphor for literary faults.\(^{27}\) “By employing the diction of Latin literary criticism to characterize Corinna’s *corpus*, Ovid implicitly conflates the physique of his elegiac girlfriend and the poetics espoused in his elegiac collection.”\(^{28}\) And this poetics must include indications of how stories will be told in the genre.

### 3. The “Chopped-up” Body

What happens next is a perfect example of narrative focalization. We know that Corinna could be a whole person and that one *could* look at different parts of her body in a different order. Yet, we are directed to focalize with the viewer/narrator and follow his visual/narrative order: from head to toe the narrator will “chop” her body and delay the narrative in various body

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\(^{26}\) While Veyne (1988), 52, recognizes the strong and “frozen” visual power of images in elegy, he finds this “antinarrative”: “In some instances their immobility paralyzes each elegy taken for itself, and the poet hesitates, caught between the anecdote and the tableau.”

\(^{27}\) Ovid himself uses *emendo* to describe the revision of his poetry in exile. See Ovid, *Tr.* 1.7.4 and 4.10. For more on this question see Keith (1994), 31 and n.19. Holzberg (2002), 49 observes that in Ovid’s case the Callimachean tradition which advises that the poet should carefully “file and polish his texts” is at play.

If the body of the puella is a reflection of the body of elegiac poetry, including its narrative aspects, then the way the body is presented can also be seen as a representation of the way in which stories in Amores are told. Indeed, there are virtually no true narrative events in this section, and these few lines with their focus on Corinna’s body, I suggest, emblematize the mechanisms of elegiac narrative.

As Greene has clearly shown, “Corinna is a spectacle, the fixed object of the amator’s ravishing gaze.” The narrator’s way of visually dissecting Corinna’s body parts can be assimilated to “close-ups” of women in films or to the technique of “body chopping” used in photography. In the narrative of Amores 1.5, a series of snapshots takes place and we see fragments of Corinna in successive pictures, where even the series of Q-words give, for a modern reader, the hint of an onomatopoeic clicking of a camera. Quos umeros (10) visually focuses on her shoulders. It is worth here noting that there is no head in this framed description (before only her hair, a locus of sensuality, is mentioned), and thus, no subjectivity and identity of the puella. The narrator has visually beheaded her. We move then to her arms, which the narrator has seen and touched (vidi tetigique) and with him the reader experiences this imaginary (and haptic) viewing and touching. The next snapshot is of her breasts, which, the narrator tells us, were fit for touching, and under them, the flat stomach. In apta premi the narrator seems to imply a general condition of Corinna’s breasts, which leads us to imagine that this is not the first time he has seen her naked and touched her papillae. Again we see here that the narrator alludes to previous events yet he does not explicitly tell us about them. This is, however, our first encounter with Corinna. Then, the ideological perspective of the narrator intrudes in the way that he focalizes on her body. While the “eye of the camera” was up to now presenting top-to-bottom, frontal snapshots of the puella’s body, he now turns aside to avoid offering us a glimpse of her pudenda. While it seems to have been decorous and acceptable in classical poetry to talk about women’s breasts, the genitalia seem to have been off limits and thus, the poet is forced to use unlikely euphemisms that do not follow the graphic

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29. Regarding the dismemberment of the body as an action of delay in the narrative one can recall one of the versions of Apsyrtus’ death, which delays Medea’s father’s pursuit of his daughter. Greene well recognizes that Corinna “is all parts—dismembered and fragmented by the amator’s controlling gaze.” See Greene (1998), 77. Wyke (2002b), 116 gives a thorough analysis of the presentation of the female as fragmented body parts in Propertius 2.3.

30. Greene (1998), 82. James (2003), 174 also refers to the “fetishistic attention to Corinna’s own body parts (at least those below the neck) in Amores 1.5.”

31. For the comparison with close-ups in film see Greene (1998), 82. For “body chopping,” used particularly in advertising, see Adams (2003).

32. For Corinna’s dehumanization and lack of ‘head’ here see Greene (1998), 83.
and clear terms used for the other body parts (umeros, papillae, venter, femur, etc.). The linear description from head to toe is momentarily disrupted and the viewer’s vertical gaze is forced to turn to an undefined “side.” Or is it? Does the viewer really gaze at the latus or does he rather stay put where the genitalia should be (in the gap between venter and femur)? This second possibility would exemplify the role of the reader in elegy. He should stay focused where there is a gap in the narrative and fill it with his imagination. Then the narrator continues to mention Corinna’s youthful thigh.

In principle, we ought to consider the description of Corinna’s body as “antinarrative,” a series of “states” without linking events or at least with very weak ones. However, her body is the prelude to lovemaking and entices the reader/viewer to continue reading/looking. The presentation of her body is an ekphrasis or framed description, the symbolic frame being given by Ecce, Corinna, which focuses and frames our imaginary vision. In classical poetry, an ekphrasis is usually a description of a work of art and thus ekphrases are often loaded with metacritical references to the poet’s own artistic ideology. They are a mise-en-abyme that mirrors the author’s poetics. An excellent example is the tapestry of Arachne in Ovid’s Metamorphoses 6, showing gods transforming into other creatures to rape women. However, in a more general sense, we could have ekphrases of natural events, such as the description of Diana’s grove in Metamorphoses 3. These framed descriptions can convey a powerful metacritical meaning. The brief description of Corinna’s body that follows is an ekphrasis that presents metapoetic views about the way elegy narrates its stories. The presentation of Corinna’s body in snapshots reflects how elegy also provides snapshots of stories rather than one continuous and well-articulated fabula.

4. The Final Gap

With typically Ovidian humor, after the amator has described individual parts of the girl’s body, he questions why he should tell us about each of

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33. It is somewhat disconcerting that the most thorough commentator of the Amores, McKeown (1989), perhaps prudishly, avoids any comment about latus, thus reflecting in his commentary the same gap in the narrative that the text proposes.

34. For a good general discussion of ekphrasis see Elsner (1995), 23–27. In Latin epic ekphrases of natural events or persons (very commonly women) are often introduced with phrases involving some form of the verb sum and a noun that denotes place or environment. Ovid himself uses this type of formula profusely to introduce ekphrases in Met. 3.1.155; 3.708–9; 5.385, 409–10; 9.334; 11.229; and 5.586 which is particularly relevant since the narrator begins Arethusa’s ekphrasis with aestus erat as frame and then moves on to the visual description of the lanscape. For more on ekphrasis in Metamorphoses see Salzman-Mitchell (2005). I believe that Ecce, Corinna! also serves this function as its meaning is indeed equal to saying “Here is Corinna!”
them: *singula quid referam? nil non laudabile vidi.* The narrator tells only in part about the *singula* of Corinna’s body, the rest, the reader must imagine herself/himself. As with *latus,* we find here a gap in the narrative. One can draw a symbolic parallel between the *corpus* of elegiac narrative and the body of Corinna, on which the story of this afternoon of lovemaking is inscribed. There are parts of Corinna’s body that will not be “told,” and which the reader is invited to imagine and complete. These series of snapshots of Corinna’s “chopped” body, a series of states without transitional events, tells us something important and programmatic about the way Latin elegy constructs its narratives. Elegy’s narrative has a tendency to fragmentation and lack of explicit transitions. Each poem is truly a snapshot, a tableau or moment in a series, a state in the life of the love affair.

After the framed description of Corinna’s body, which has somewhat delayed, yet at the same time intensified, the climax of the narrative, we return to the thin events of the fabula: the narrator pressed her naked against his body (24). But instead of moving on to further details about the lovemaking scene, he claims that he will not bother to tell us what happened, since “who doesn’t know the rest?” Every linear narrative strives for an “end,” a climax, and both Barthes and Todorov propose that: “narrative is essentially the articulation of a set of verbs. These verbs articulate the pressure and drive of desire. Desire is the wish for the end, for fulfillment, but fulfillment must be delayed so that we can understand it in relation to origin and to desire itself.”

In Latin elegy the goal, often frustrated, is to achieve sexual intimacy with the beloved and the relation between text and reader can be viewed in erotic terms. Yet, very few poems actually expose this desired moment. From the very beginning we envision that the goal of *Am.* 1.5 is lovemaking. We have here a new gap in the fabula, the intense action expected in the intercourse scene is missing. Again, the narrator places the command of the narrative in the hands of the reader. In this, reader and narrator collapse and it is now the reader who must bring together in his/her mind the events of

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35. Greene (1998), 83, very interestingly remarks that Corinna’s scattered body parts only appear to have meaning when they are assimilated to the body/corpus of the narrator. She is thus *his* body, his text.

36. See Brooks (1992), 111.

37. Based on Barthes’s concept of “passion of (for) meaning,” Brooks (1992) conceives the “reading of plot as a form of desire that carries us forward, onward, through the text. . . . Desire is in this view like Freud’s notion of Eros, a force including sexual desire but larger and more polymorphous . . .” (37). For more on Brooks’s model of “textual erotics” see Kennedy’s chapter in this volume. On this point one can recall *Am.* 2.10.35–38, where the poet/lover conflates the ideas of sexual climax with completion of a work of art. See Keith (1994), 37.
the story. The narrator makes us work, and collaborate, and more than that, he frustrates our desire as well. While he has shown us the girl and will now enjoy her and the “climax” of his narrative, the reader is not allowed to do so, not even as a participating voyeur. While the “eye of the narrator” had allowed and encouraged us to follow every detail of the puella’s body/story, the reader is now left alone, and deprived of the pleasure of at least viewing the scene and partaking in the narrator’s pleasure. Just as in the rest of Latin elegy, we are rarely allowed to see the lovemaking scenes. Instead, the narrator jumps to the afterthoughts: Lassi requievimus ambo. “We both lay exhausted.” While the poet/narrator may be peacefully lying exhausted, yet satisfied, the reader isn’t since he or she has missed the climatic event. The poem concludes with some wishful thoughts for the future of many more occasions like this to come: proveniat medii sic mihi saepe dies! / “May middays like this come to me often!,” thus closing the ring of the poem and returning to the idea of midday as a happy setting for erotic pleasure, mentioned in Am. 1.1.1 (aestus erat, mediamque dies exegerat horam). At the same time, this closure can be understood not only as the wish for many more middays like this, but also, in a programmatic way, for many more poems like this—poems/love stories in which there are narrative holes and in which not all events will be told.

5. Elegy and Narrativity

In my analysis of Amores 1.5 I have observed that the fabula was composed of events that linked various “states.” These “states” were presented as snapshots, yet the events were often not explicit and the reader had to collaborate in the completion of the story by filling the gaps of the narrative. Let us now move for a moment to the beginning of the story of the Amores. Am. 1.1 openly displays much of what Ovid’s poetic program in the collection will be. The book begins:

arma gravi numero violentaque bella parabam
edere, materiam conveniente modis.
pars erat inferior versus—risisse Cupido
dicitur atque unum surripuisse pedem.

I was preparing to compose weapons and violent battles with their heavy

38. On the frustration of the audience at this point see Huntingford (1981), 110.
measure, a subject appropriate to the meter. The second line was unequal (to the first)—it is said that Cupid laughed and stole a foot. (Am. 1.1.1–4)

The poet was preparing to sing of arms and violent wars. Arma and violenta bella refer to the most “narrative” genre in antiquity: epic. Arma, of course, is an appropriation of the first word of Virgil’s epic poem.39 Arms and violent wars immediately make us think about the stories of the Iliad and the Aeneid in particular. Dactylic hexameter, as the poet mentions, is the meter appropriate for these essentially narrative poems. But Cupid laughs and steals a foot. We have a gap in the meter—where we had six feet, we now have five. Something essential and appropriate for narrative has been disturbed and altered: the hexameter. We can then propose that the many gaps and lack of events in elegiac narrative stem, to start with, from a gap in the meter. The missing foot that created the appropriate environment for a linear and well-articulated narrative is now missing a linking element—thus making the meter conducive to a narrative with “holes.”

It is then logical that in Am. 3.1 Elegia limps, as one of her “feet” is shorter than the other (pes illi longior alter erat, Am. 3.1.8). The narrator even recognizes that there is a fault, a certain lack, in her, but this “fault” makes her even more attractive (to read): et pedibus vitium causa decoris erat (Am. 3.1.10). In this poem the poet hears the speeches of Tragedy and Elegy and thus he appears as model reader of both genres. Yet, when he “reads” Elegy he struggles to decipher her meaning: “altera si memini, limis subrisit ocellis— / fallor, an in dextra myrtea virga fuit?” / “If I remember, the other cast sidelong eyes at me—am I mistaken, or was a branch of myrtle in her hand?” The reader of Elegy seems to doubt and has to make efforts to uncover her entire sense. There is something in her hand, and the reader believes it to be a myrtle branch, yet he himself recognizes that this is his own recollection, his interpretation. We see here the reader at work, filling the gaps of the story. As mentioned before, Corinna herself is here closely identified with the genre of Elegy and its elusive nature (Am. 3.1.49–52). Just as the reader needs to complete and fill in the gaps in the body of elegiac narrative when he strives to complete in his mind and his recollection the details of Elegy in Am. 3.1, he must also fill in the gaps in the erotic narrative inscribed on Corinna’s body in Am. 1.5.

As we have seen, important critics of Latin elegy have argued against any possible narrative content in the genre. It should be clear by now that I

39. See Stroh (1971), 144ff. and Kennedy (1993), who thinks that arma is less of a false start than we may think, given all the erotic connotations of love–war. For a discussion of arma see also Buchan (1995), 54–56.
disagree with them. Instead, using the narratological concept of event, central to the conformation of a fabula, I have shown how elegy indeed constructs stories. However, it does so by omitting many events and thus leaving gaps in the narrative. The narrator provides snapshots, frozen states with weak links between them. This does not mean that the events have disappeared, but rather that they are required to be imagined by the reader, who therefore strongly participates in the construction of the story, filling the gaps out of snapshots of a love affair.
PART II

Telling Times

Elegy and Temporality
Chronological Segmentation in Ovid’s *Tristia*

The Implicit Narrative of Elegy

Eleonora Tola

Ovid’s two collections of exilic texts have been rehabilitated by scholarship in the last four decades. Since this resurgence of interest, the *Tristia* and the *Epistulae ex Ponto* are studied as innovative Ovidian productions from various perspectives whose common axis is, generally, the overcoming of a dominant autobiographical reading.¹ They are particularly examined in relation to various aspects of their poetic construction. Scholars also stress their connection with the rest of the Ovidian literary writings as well as with the elegiac genre.² Nevertheless, these collections are not often approached from a narratological perspective, since, like other texts belonging to the same genre, they don’t seem to display the characteristics of what, traditionally, scholarship considers a “story.” In fact, although many stories can be found throughout Latin elegiac texts,³ they often interact with other nonnarrative aspects. In the particular case of the *Tristia* and the *Epistulae*

1. Ripert (1921), Fränkel (1945), Lee (1949), Wilkinson (1955). Fränkel (1945) and Wilkinson (1955) had already recognized the literary values of these Ovidian texts, despite their criticisms as to some of their aspects.

2. In 1965, Kenney considered the Ovidian exilic collections as “poetic experiments” and demonstrated their literary merits. This was also Viarre’s approach (1976). Nagle (1980) suggests, for the *Tristia* and the *Epistulae ex Ponto*, a reading that focalizes the poetics of exile and tries to point out its mechanisms. This author examines precisely the relations between this poetry and the genre of Roman love elegy, from lexical and thematic repetitions that link the *dolor exilii* to the *dolor amoris*. Previously, Rahn (1958) had drawn attention to the continuity between the last Ovidian collections and the poet’s earlier works. More recently, Videau (1991) has pointed at the construction of a narratological poetics inscribed in the situation of rupture provoked by exile. I have examined the Ovidian exilic texts (Tola 2004) focusing on the notion of “poetic metamorphosis,” intending to highlight the specific poetics of Ovid’s last literary production.

3. The story of Tibullus’ relationship with Delia, of Propertius’ affair with Cynthia, etc.
ex Ponto, their double status of epistolary and homodiegetic experiments further complicates any attempt of analysis from the point of view of narratology. However, it is worth inquiring if these texts display, perhaps, some other kind of narrative conception, according to the horizon of reception of the genre in which they are inscribed. In other words, if their inclusion within the elegiac genre, and especially in a sort of variation of Roman love elegy, could suggest a new and different narrative modality which could be characteristic of the whole genre if we understand it as a plural construction of poetic subjectivities.

Focusing attention upon the Tristia and using narratological insights, I will here consider what kind of narrative this text presents (a text not traditionally read from such a perspective), and what poetic design it embodies. I will use fundamentally the categories that Genette proposes in his Figures III (1972) to provide not only a definition of “story,” but also additional concepts key to narratological theory.

First, we can certainly assert that Ovid’s Tristia tells the “story” of its narrator’s exile, if we agree, following Genette, that story “indicates the succession of events, fictitious or real, that are the subjects of this discourse, and their several relations, of linking, opposition, repetition, etc.” Such a story consists of two major moments: the poet’s trip to Tomis and his life in the new space. These two great textual frames include several aspects associated with exile and its physical, moral, and poetic effects. In this sense, the text is crossed by some recurrent themes and images that contribute to present the story of Ovid: the motifs of his physical weakness and deterioration and of his new vital and poetic condition. The multiplicity of motifs that construct the narrator’s story somehow blurs the linear sequence of his exile, as much as they seem to be patched one next to the other without any apparent connection, in a puzzling literary structure. Despite this apparent “disorder,” we should, however, pose a question: to what specific design does this configuration relate, one that confers to the text a narrative modality which differs from other more traditional storytellings, like those of epic, novel, or

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4. I follow Genette’s classification (1972), 251–67, of the narrator’s status according to his relation with the story. The homodiegetic narration is that in which the narrator is also the hero of his story.

5. The restriction of this study to the first Ovidian exilic collection is due to the fact that, as I will show in my analysis, the narrative of the Epistulae ex Ponto can be understood in the light of the Tristia’s narrative conception.


history? Furthermore: is this puzzling literary structure a narrative marker peculiar to the textualization of subjectivity that crosses, in different ways, all the texts belonging to the elegiac genre?

One point from which to study the mechanisms and strategies of such narrative modality in the *Tristia* is its temporal configuration, since it shows a fragmentary textuality that breaks with the linear and chronological sequence of traditional narrations. In terms of Genette, manipulations of order, duration, and frequency complicate the relation between the level of story and that of narration. The different forms of discordance that those manipulations generate between the two levels entail, as we shall see, a more “syncopated” narrative, in which major events of the story are passed over briefly to concentrate on descriptive passages and emotional confrontations or monologues. Let us remember that, from a thematic viewpoint, time in the *Tristia* presents two movements: toward the past of the narrator’s memories and toward the present of enunciation from his exilic place. At the diegetic level the text displays a temporality fragmented in two heterogeneous and antagonistic instances (the before at Rome/the after at Tomis). Such temporal fragmentation relates to the narrativity of the text, since a possible definition of a “story” is that which links it with the idea of a “passage from a state to another.” As Courtés observes when he examines the temporal dimension which involves in all narration the image of a succession, “... to tell about something is only possible according to the relation between the instances of before and after...” (emphasis added). Furthermore, if we keep in mind that from the beginning of the *Tristia* the narrator’s situation is presented as a new metamorphosis of the poet, this temporal configuration seems to adapt itself naturally to the writing of a transformation that implies those two moments (before/after):

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10. See Genette (1972), 79.
11. I use the term “syncopated” in the sense of a rupture of rhythm generated by the introduction of descriptive elements in the story’s sequence of events.
12. Genette (1972), 72 defines diegesis as the narrative content or the story, i.e., the whole of the narrated events.
15. The importance of time in the Ovidian exilic texts was observed by Feeney (1999), 29: “Time itself is always a loaded term as the *Tristia* get under way, a term which moves between Ovid’s lived experience and his poetry; negotiating a transition from the world-views of Ovid’s own Roman past to the world-views of his Pontic present and future. Ovid puts life and art in dialogue not only to construct his exiled self, but to construct the time-frame which his exiled self must inhabit.” For a fragmented temporality in Ovid’s exile, see Schiesaro (1997), 99–100. On the same subject, Hinds (1999), 52, remarks: “... Ovid’s exile is a kind of incarnation of a disruption in the spatio-temporal
There are also thrice five rolls about changing forms, poems recently saved from the burial of my fortunes. To these I bid you say that the aspect of my own fate can now be reckoned among those metamorphosed figures. For that aspect has on a sudden become quite different from what it was before—a cause of tears now, though once joy.16 (Tr. 1.1.117–22)

The opposite nature of these two temporal shifts (priori / fuit; nunc) is made explicit by the adjectives flendaque and laeta that frame the pentameter 122, in a passage that, because of its opening position, frames, at the same time, the whole text. It is worth observing, through the web of verbs and adverbs of the Tristia, that such opposition infiltrates Ovid’s narration and amplifies, through different aspects of exile, the temporal fragmentation which is set from the beginning to define the poet’s subjectivity.17 The trigger of this contrast is the narrator’s displacement to his new space. This journey, which is only presented, as is well known, in the first exilic collection,18 can be read as the physical and geographical form of the poet’s change of condition. From a narratological viewpoint, it is also what generates the plot’s temporal configuration.

1. The Trip toward Exile: The Dismembered Writing

Ovid’s trip toward exile is a good example of the temporal dynamics that weave in the Tristia the story of his banishment at macro- and micronarrative levels. The text, which appears as the literary testimony of a definitive journey toward exile, escapes the linear and chronological succession that characterizes this type of narration.19 It is interesting to observe that this universe which has already been perpetrated, at the theoretical level, by the Metamorphoses2 (emphasis in original). See also Tola (2004).

16. All translations of Tristia and Ex Ponto are taken from Wheeler (1996 [1924]).
18. For an interpretation of this point from a poetical perspective, see Tola (2004).
19. For many critics, this textual distribution of the journey is seen in relation to criteria of variety and symmetry. See Dickinson (1973), 154–90 and Evans (1983), 45–49, 69–73, 87–91, 105–109. Claassen (1992), 111, notes that: “... consistent attention should be paid not only to
form of deconstruction of the linearity of narrative time is also a central aspect of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, with which, as we have seen, the *Tristia* raises a connection. The temporal disturbance imposed by exile entails a dispersion at the level of the organization of the plot, so that this one is characterized from the beginning by its narrative discontinuity. This disruption in the linearity of the story of Ovid’s trip operates basically in two instances: in the instance of narrative chronology, as a result of the discordance between the time of plot and that of narration, and in the instance of the “realistic subjectivity” that the text tries to restore, since the insertion of different literary and linguistic aspects in the speech of Ovid (i.e., direct speech, mythical *exempla*, etc.) breaks also its pretended immediacy. Let us consider then how this narrative disruption is constructed.

Ovid’s journey is presented in four elegies of the first book of the collection. Elegies 1.2, 1.4, and 1.11 display the sea trip, whereas poem 1.10 insists on the terrestrial section of the narrator’s route. So, the story of this journey is not continuous, but it is segmented by the insertion of other elegies.

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<th>Sea journey</th>
<th>Sea journey and mention of terrestrial places</th>
<th>Other motifs</th>
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<tr>
<td><em>Tr.</em> 1.2</td>
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<td><em>Tr.</em> 1.4</td>
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As can be observed in the table, the story of the poet’s journey is far from the narration of a chronological event. After having presented his exilic condition in *Tr.* 1.1, Ovid introduces the sea trip in the second elegy of the first book. Nevertheless, this story is interrupted by the retrospective narration of the departure from Rome, in *Tr.* 1.3. The trip is taken up again soon in *Tr.* 1.4, but it is “broken” again by five elegies (*Tr.* 1.5, 6, 7, 8, 9) in which the narrator integrates other subjects in a series of letters addressed to his friends (*Tr.* 1.5, 7, 8, 9) and to his wife (*Tr.* 1.6). Elegy 1.10 incorporates the detailed description of the terrestrial stage of the trip and, finally, the first book of the *Tristia* ends with poem 11, which revisits the story of the

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20. It is worth remembering also that one of the principal themes of the *Metamorphoses* is precisely “continuity through change.” See Farrell (1999).

21. This is what Genette (1983), 180 calls the “motivation réaliste.” See *Tr.* 3.1.5–10, 5.1.5–6 and *Pont.* 3.9.49–50.

22. These elegies introduce three major motifs in Ovid’s story: that of *fides* among friends, that of glory issued from misfortune, and that of writing as a form of memory.
maritime route begun in Tr. 1.2. Thus the text returns to the departure point in a ring that is closed after a series of multiple inserted motifs. Ovid’s displacement entails, then, a fragmentation in its textual disposition. As Anne Videau notes, continuity is only configured by the reader—who must complete any “gaps” and “holes” in the story using details gathered from other poems in the collection.23

Furthermore, such dispersion in the textual space produces several gaps in the temporal configuration of Ovid’s story. It complicates its chronological succession even more. Only in the last elegy of the first book of the Tristia is the reader able to reconstitute the journey’s linearity, since the narrator specifies the moment of enunciation of the preceding poems:

\[
\begin{align*}
littera quaecumque est toto tibi lecta libello, 
est mihi sollicito tempore facta viae. 
aut haec me, gelido tremerem cum mense Decembri, 
scribentem mediis Hadria vidit aquis; 
aut, postquam bimarem cursu superavimus Isthmon, 
alteraque est nostrae sumpta carina fugae, 
quod facerem versus inter fera murmura ponti, 
Cycladas Aegaeas obstupuissete puto. 
\end{align*}
\]

Every letter that you have read in my whole book was formed by me during the troubled days of my journey. Either the Adriatic saw me writing these words in the midst of his waters, while I shivered in cold December, or when I had passed in my course the Isthmus with its two seas and had taken the second ship of my journey into exile, my writing of verses amid the wild roar of the sea brought wonder, I think, to the Aegean Cyclades. (Tr. 1.11.1–8)

The temporal position of the previous story explains why the storm narratives (1.2 and 1.4) are written in present tense although they are inserted within a retrospective story, since writing is said, at a number of points, to have emerged in the place of exile.24 That present which characterizes the discourse in opposition to the time of the plot recalls certainly the realistic motivation of Ovid’s story, since it allows him to display the moment in its immediacy, thus making it more “real.”25

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24. This is what Genette (1972), 229 calls, when he refers to the “times of narration,” an ulterior narration, i.e., written after the events it narrates.


Only elegy 1.11, which closes at the same time as the first book of the *Tristia* and the story of Ovid’s trip, allows us to reconstruct the chronology of that story. Nevertheless, the temporal configuration of this last elegy is complicated since it combines textual traces that recall doubly the time of plot and that of narration:

```system
saepe ego nimbosis dubius iactabar ab Haedis,

saepe minax Steropes sidere pontus erat,

fuscabatque diem custos Azanidos Vrsae,

aut Hyadas seris hauserat Auster aquis,

saepe maris pars intus erat; tamen ipse trementi
carmina ducebam qualiacumque manu.

nunc quoque contenti striduntAquilone rudentes,
inque modum tumuli concava surgit aqua.

ipse gubernator tollens ad sidera palmas

exposcit votis, immemor artis, opem.
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**Often** my perilous tossing was caused by the storm-bringing Kids, **often** the constellation of Sterope caused the sea to threaten, or the day was darkened by the guardian of the Arcadian bear, or Auster had drawn from the Hyades an autumnal flood. **Often** part of the sea was within our ship; nevertheless,

with shaking hand I continued to spin my verses such as they were. Now too the ropes drawn taut by Aquilo are shrieking, and like a hill swells the curving surge. The very helmsman lifts his hands to the stars imploring aid with prayer and forgetful of his skill. (Tr. 1.11.13–22)

This interweaving of tenses (imperfect/present) generates a true chronological counterpoint due to the proximity between story and narration: the direct experience interacts with the differed one, the inner monologue with the narration that comes after the events. As Genette remarks, this narrative situation, which approaches the instances, breaks the internal balance and allows the story to oscillate between both levels.\(^{27}\) From this kind of gap in the temporal succession of the travel story rises a dislocated and interrupted narrative. It is exactly in this sense that we could read the allusion that opens its narration:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{di maris et caeli—quid enim nisi vota supersunt?—} \\
\text{solvere quassatae parcite membras ratis!}
\end{align*}
\]

O gods of sea and sky—for what but prayer is left?—break not the frame of our shattered bark! (Tr. 1.2.1–2)

The breakup of the ship recalls\(^{28}\) (\textit{quassatae . . . membras ratis} 2), according to what the reader understands as the narration progresses, the narrative discontinuity of the plot, whose “parts” can only be reconstructed in its closure.

This segmentation operates as much in relation to the chronological linearity of the plot as with its realistic motivation; the narrator inserts the story of his departure from Rome after the presentation of the first storm. From the viewpoint of the narrative chronology, this elegy should have appeared at the beginning of the text, since it is, at the diegetic level, a previous instance of the trip. Because of the discordance that this generates in the order of the plot, it constitutes a narrative flashback or analepsis.\(^{29}\) Elegy 1.3 clearly displays such narrative issues. It is dominated by verbal forms in perfect and

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\(^{27}\) Genette (1972), 230.

\(^{28}\) The two exilic collections present several examples that insist upon the metaphorical disintegration of the narrator’s ship. See Tr. 1.1.85 (\textit{cumba . . . percussa}); 1.2.2 (\textit{quassatae . . . ratis}); 4.5.6 (\textit{percusae . . . ratis}); 5.5.17–18 (\textit{quassata . . . navis}); 5.11.13 (\textit{quassa . . . navis}); Pont. 1.2.60 (\textit{frangor}); 1.10.39 (\textit{fracto . . . phasel}); 2.3.58 (\textit{quassae . . . ratis}). With regard to the descriptive and symbolic values of the verb \textit{quatere}, see Görler (1999).

\(^{29}\) Genette (1972), 90ff.
pluperfect and by adverbial marks that recall the level of the story: aderat 5, iusserat 6, fuerat 7, torpuerant 8, fuit 10, removit 13, convaluere 14, erat 16, tenebat 17, aberat 19, sonabant 21, erat 22, quiescebant 27, regebat 28, iam 5, iamque 27, iamque 32, quotiens 51, quotiens 53, saepe 57, saepe 59, tum 77, tum 79. Nevertheless, the plot is once again interrupted, this time by the recurrent insertion of direct speech: Tr. 1.3.31–40 (Ovid’s prayer), 51–52, 61–68, 73–76, 81–86 (dialogue with his wife).

It is interesting to recall one of those direct speeches of the narrator since it contributes to the text’s narrativity through an image which is parallel to that of quassatae membri ratis (Tr. 1.2.2):

\[
\text{dividor haud aliter, quam si mea membra relinquam, et pars abrumpi // corpore visa suo est.}
\]

I am torn asunder as if I were leaving my limbs behind—a very half seemed broken from the body to which it belonged. (Tr. 1.3.73–74)

A series of sound repetitions through the words of the passage focus attention upon the imagery of a fragmented body: the syllabic play of—me (mea membra) is echoed by the comparative quam, phonically reproduced at the end of the verb relinquam. Moreover, the “members” of the poet (mea membra) are disposed between two key verbs: divisor, which suggests a tear and relinquam, which evokes a separation as well as a change of condition. This image of division finds a form of accomplishment in the pentameter 74, where Ovid’s membri disiecta are repeated twice in the line: Et pars a\text{brump}i // corpore visa suo est. The sequence pars . . . // corpore and the verb a\text{brump}i emphasize the dismemberment (rumpo) and the distance of exile (ab-). This is accentuated by the fact that the central caesura of the pentameter distributes textually the fragmented body. The idea of dispersion is referred to by the accumulation of successive syntactic dissociations: Et pars a\text{brump}i // corpore visa suo est. Finally, it is worth observing that the whole narration

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30. The elegy of Ovid’s departure displays a web of verbal tenses which are able to illustrate, as Aroumi (1992) has shown, the duality implied by this moment of transition. The construction of the departure is thus cut in two parts: the variety of times accentuates the fluctuations of a retrospective account, where the present of discourse is combined with the past of events for better underlining the impression of a body tearing.

31. Cf. Fowler (2000), 264: “Direct speech sometimes is classified as representing a ‘scene’ by narratologists, since it takes just as long to narrate as it did to be uttered. But its effect is in fact to slow down a narrative, since its content can often be narrated more economically by indirect speech or narrator’s report of speech-act. Direct speech, one of the great markers of the epic style, is thus ambiguous in its effect on the progress of the narrative.”
of elegy 1.3 is dominated by the representation of a body mentioned in its parts, far from a unity: oculis 4, 60; membra 64, 73, 94; pectora 8, 66, 78; ore 44; ora 90; manus 78, 88; genas 18; pes 56; umeris 79.

As well as the journey toward Tomis, the departure from Rome is then close to the image of a physical and narrative segmentation. Its narration is also characterized, as I have drawn attention to, by a chronological perturbation. In fact, the different membra of the story are dispersed in the textual space and only the reader is able to collect them in order to reconstruct it. This discontinuity is even more complicated by the interactions between the time of the story and that of narration in that Ovid’s departure adds new ruptures to the journey’s chronology. This one is constructed through temporal gaps and narrative pauses that generate a discontinuous narrativity. In short, the poet’s story emerges from a temporal counterpoint that narrativizes the imagery of corporal rupture implied by exile. The story of life at Tomis seems to share a similar dynamic.

2. Scenes of Life in Exile

The story of life in exile is another interesting example of the Tristia’s temporal dislocation: the chronology of events is replaced by the recurrence of scenes and descriptions with which the reader has to reconstruct the sequence of the narrator’s new life.32 The temporal succession of the story in relation to the first moment of the trip is marked in the text through the distinction between the “before” of the trip and the “now” of the present of enunciation at Tomis:33

32. As Genette (1969), 59–60 points out, every story entails a part of narration and a part of description.
33. This distinction does not respond to a chronological criterion either, since between the end of the story of the trip (Tr. 1.11) and the narration of life in exile Ovid inserts the one elegy of book 2. This poem breaks also the narrative plot because it is a prayer addressed to Augustus and its content is mainly metapoetic.
Yet while I was being driven through the perils of land and wave, there was beguilement for my cares and my sick heart in the hardship; now that the way has ended, the toil of journeying is over, and I have reached the land of my punishment, I care for naught but weeping; from my eyes comes as generous a flood as that which pours from the snow in springtime. Rome steals into my thought, my home, and the places I long for, and all that part of me that is left in the city I have lost. (Tr. 3.2.15–22)

Ovid’s displacement is presented within a later narration, that is to say, from a retrospective glance: iactabar 15, fallebat 16, finita est 17, est tacta 18. This contrasts with the juxtaposed use of the present tense (libet 19, manat 20, subit 21, restat 22) which insists again, through the simultaneity that rises with the action, on the immediacy of the story of the narrator. This second stage of his story works, as we have noted, from the iteration of several motifs that form a cyclical temporal succession through the text. As the narrator observes, the temporality of his new condition is connected more with the idea of an almost static slowness that with that of a dynamic principle:

stare putes, adeo procedunt tempora tarde,
ct peragit lenti passibus annus iter.

One would think that time stood still, so slowly does it move, and the year completes its journey with lagging pace. (Tr. 5.10.5–6)

If we read these lines beyond the diegetic level, i.e., from the viewpoint of the temporal construction of the story, we understand that such delay (procedunt tempora tarde) is exactly what annuls a linear and progressive narrativity (stare putes). This one is replaced, in fact, by a cyclical and repetitive dynamics, since it works by means of systematic subjects that make reference to Ovid’s new space. The macro-scenes that configure such dynamics are fundamentally three: the ferocity of the inhabitants of Tomis, the hostility of the climate, and the physical and vital deterioration of the narrator. These segments are repeated under different forms throughout the text and perform therefore a narrativity that Genette, when studying the frequency of stories, calls iterative. Hence the permanent oscillation between the narrative and descriptive tone that underlies the plot of Ovid’s account can be understood in this way. This movement generates, as well, a narrative

34. Genette (1972), 145.
discontinuity since the repetition of such segments breaks the linearity of the story and disturbs it at different levels. Indeed, the discontinuity operates not only on the chronological axis, but concerns also a superposition of narrative registers. Thus, the corporeal dismemberment of the narrator displayed at the level of the story (Tr. 1.3: dividor) interacts with a mythical dismemberment when Ovid talks about the origin of Tomis: this city would be linked etymologically with the idea of a rupture. When introducing the mythical intertextuality in his subjective story, the narrator breaks at the same time the realistic motivation of his pretended autobiographical account. Throughout one elegy (3.9) he evokes the mutilation of Absyrtus by Medea when she flees from her country after deciding to leave her family to support Jason in his heroic expedition:

protinus ignari nec quicquam tale timentis
innocuum rigido perforat ense latus,
atque ita dividit divulsaque membra per agros
dissipat in multis invenienda locis.
neu pater ignoret, scopulo proponit in alto
pallentesque manus sanguineumque caput,
ut genitor luctuque novo tardetur et, artus
dum legit extinctos, triste moretur iter.
inde Tomis dictus locus hic, quia fertur in illo membra soror fratris consecuisse sui.

Forthwith while he in his ignorance feared no such attack she pierced his innocent side with the hard sword. Then she tore him limb from limb, scattering the fragments of his body throughout the fields so that they must be sought in many places. And to apprise her father she placed upon a lofty rock the pale hands and gory head. Thus was the sire delayed by his fresh grief, lingering, while he gathered those lifeless limbs, on a journey of sorrow. So was this place called Tomis because here, they say, the sister cut to pieces her brother’s body. (Tr. 3.9.25–34)

The polyptote of the verb dividelo / divulsaque distributed on both sides of the caesura P (27) has for referent the word membra, applied to the lacerated body of Absyrtus. Furthermore, the bodily mutilation of Medea’s brother is illustrated in the text by a dispersion of the syllabic “members” of writing: the prefix di-, doubly exploited by the polyptote dividelo / divulsaque,

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36. According to Ovid, the city of Tomis derives its name from the Greek témmo (“cut”). See Videau (1991), 171.
includes also the verb *dissipat* of the pentameter in line 28. The meaning of this prefix, implying the idea of dispersion, seems even to generate a syntactic dissociation between *multis* and *locis* (28), which suggests the spatial extent of the mythical dismemberment. Related to the same idea of corporal dislocation we find the phonic inversion of the words which complete line 27 (*membra per agros*): final sounds of the word *membra* (-ra) are disseminated in the following phonic unity (*per agros*), like the body of Absyrtus, torn by Medea and dispersed through the fields.

The lines that close elegy 3.9 stress the tragic origins of the city while insisting on the *membra disiecta* of Absyrtus. Through a web of sonorous echoes is displayed, once again in the text, the image of a segmentation:

\[ \text{inde Tomis dictus locus hic, quia fertur in illo} \]
\[ \text{membra soror fratri} / \text{consecuisse sui. (Tr. 3.9.33–34)} \]

The verb that makes reference to the mutilation of the mythical character (*consecuisse*) suggests the same imagery of fragmented body and sounds (*consecuisse / sui*). From a syntactic viewpoint, the framing dissociation (*membra . . . fratri*) continues the image of Absyrtus’ corporal dissemination through the verses. Such fragmentation in the textual space echoes the rupture that generates in the *Tristia* the introduction of mythical intertextuality which breaks, as we have remarked, the continuity of the “real” story of Ovid.\(^37\) Factual time and mythical time are thus combined in a new form of narrative discontinuity. Like Medea with the members of her brother’s body, this kind of narrativity works through dispersed “members” that the reader has to “find” (and put together): *dissipat in multis invenienda locis* (Tr. 3.9.28).

The segmentation idea crosses, too, the subject of the physical and moral deterioration of the poet: his body is affected in its different parts or *membra* by the hostility of his new space:

\[ \text{nec caelum nec aquae faciunt nec terra nec aurae;} \]
\[ \text{ei mihi, perpetuus corpora languor habet!} \]
\[ \text{seu vitiant artus aegrae contagia mentis,} \]
\[ \text{sive mei causa est in regione mali,} \]
\[ \text{ut tetti Pontum, vexant insomnia, vixque} \]
\[ \text{ossa tegit macies nec iuvat ora cibus;} \]

\(^37\). Other marks in *Tr.* 3.9 illustrate the image of a fragmentation which characterizes this mythical account: two couplets of the elegy introduce a direct speech of the heroine. The first (19–20) displays Medea’s *timor vis-à-vis* the persecution of his father as well as the meditation of her stratagem; the second (23–24) presents the moment when she decides on her crime.
Neither climate nor water suit me, nor land nor air—ah me! a constant weakness possesses my frame. Whether the contagion of a sick mind affects my limbs or the cause of my ills is this region, since I reached Pontus, I am harassed by sleeplessness, scarce does the lean flesh cover my bones, food pleases not my lips; and such a hue as that in autumn, when the first chill has smitten them, shows on the leaves that young winter has marred, o’erspreads my body; no strength brings relief, and I never lack cause for plaintive pain. I am no better in mind than in body; both alike are sick and I suffer double hurt. (Tr. 3.8.23–34)

The insistent marks of negation (nec 4 times repeated in line 23) suggest the privative condition of the poet and, because of their brevity, the “pieces” of a torn body. In addition, the rest of the passage insists on these negative monosyllables (7 occurrences in 12 verses) that are connected with the evocation of each corporal part (artus; ossa; ora). Once again, the body is not presented in its unity but through its dispersed members, in a sort of mise en abyme of the narrative conception of the Tristia. A similar image is displayed, under another form, by the motif of the hostility of the climate, as the following passage shows:

A foe this region either sees or fears when it does not see; idle lies the soil abandoned in stark neglect. Not here the sweet grape lying hidden in the leafy shade nor the frothing must brimming the deep vats! Fruits are denied in this region nor here would Acontius have anything on which to write the
words for his sweetheart to read. One may see naked fields, leafless, treeless—a place, alas! no fortunate man should visit. (Tr. 3.10.69–76)

The obsessive repetition of the idea of negation (non 69, non 71, nec 72, negat 73, nec 73, sine 75, sine 75, non 76) focuses attention, this time, upon the deprivation which characterizes the aridity of a sterile and static space (iners) as well as upon the image of corporal dispersion that results from the distribution and accumulation of negative monosyllables (non; non; nec; nec; non). More precisely, any movement disappears to give place to a sterile fixity. The static features of Ovid’s new space recall his exile’s temporality, which, as we have observed, is far from the dynamics of a linear progression. The repetition of different scenes of life in exile tied to the idea of a fragmentation creates a kind of “narrative in imagery.” Furthermore, recurrent imagery operates a sort of passage from a direct narrative to a more implicit one. The imagery becomes the medium of the text’s narrativity. The descriptions and the cyclical rhythm of the motifs seem to suspend the course of time (stare putes . . . Tr. 5.10.5) to highlight, on the contrary, the expansion of the story through the space. Such expansion is framed by a temporality that breaks its linear configuration and suggests rather the image of a circle.

At this point of my analysis in which I have explored this dynamic in the two major moments of the story of exile (journey/life in Tomis), we should ask ourselves what kind of poetic design is conveyed in this narrativity of the Tristia in which discontinuity interacts with iteration, breaking thus the linear succession of the text and opening it rather to a cyclical temporality. When talking about the representations of time in Greece, Calame reminds us that the idea of a cyclical time, in opposition to a linear one, is linked to some funeral rituals given to Lethe and to Mnemosyne, intended as the divine instances of Memory. The ritual aspect of this kind of temporality becomes even more marked if we think of the annual or quadrennial reiteration of the great festive celebrations and of the circular alternation of seasons. From this perspective, we could think that, in the Tristia, the cyclical temporality due to repetition and nonlinearity, has some ritual features. We know in fact that repetition is in ancient Rome a mark of ritual language. Further, far from being a simple ornamental element, it can generate, in the poetic message, effects of charming torpor since repeating—a word, a theme, an image—is to repeat a sense that we want to transmit. In the

38. I take this expression from Lyne (1989).
case of Ovid’s *Tristia*, the linear and progressive chronology characteristic of traditional storytelling is replaced by a cyclical time in order to record on the reader, by iteration, both at stylistic and narratological levels, the narrator’s wish to leave a poetic memory at the moment in which his poetry risks being passed over, silenced by exile.\(^{42}\) In this sense, the narrative conception would move away from linearity to insist rather on a memorial effectiveness.

From a narratological viewpoint, the temporality implied by this dynamics is displayed, as I have shown, by effects of extension, suspension, analepsis, repetitions, and so on. If we extend this idea to the elegiac genre in general, it would be possible to examine, through the different texts, what forms assume this sort of narrative which is far from the traditional idea of linear storytelling. Furthermore, this narrative, founded doubly on segmentation and iterability, refers not only to the thematic level of exile as an affective and temporal rupture, but also to elegy’s specific storytelling. In fact, the texts inscribed in this genre show also the same idea of segmentation and iterability in their configuration. We see segmentation in that Latin elegiac texts present the “story” of some erotic situations not through a linear continuity but rather through the juxtaposition of several codified scenes (the *servitium amoris*, the *paraclausithyron*, etc.), and iterability because elegy is really a repetition with variations of the story of an *amator* and of his relationship with a *puella*. So, the implicit and achronological narrative of the *Tristia* could be read as a *mise en abyme* of the poetics of a genre: Ovid’s dismembered body can be understood as the “textual body” of the fragmented story, i.e., not only at the diegetic level but from the point of view of elegy’s narrative conception. Moreover, the diegetical and narratological disruptions of the *Tristia* evoke a specifically elegiac modality that we could call “fragmentary” in the sense that the whole genre could be read as the *mise en scene* of multiple fragments of subjectivity.

In the particular case of Ovid’s *Tristia*, which inscribes itself in that genre but, at the same time, modifies it by introducing the homodiegetic and epistolary registers, such “fragmentary” modality is related to the specific poetics of the text. If, as the narrator himself observes, time in exile seems delayed (*Tr*. 5.5–6), we could think, in a narratological sense, that the cyclical rhythm of the plot suspends, on the one hand, the course of time in order to extend the story through space—making it thus more “real” according to its “realistic motivation.” On the other hand, if every story is supposed to

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\(^{42}\) We recall, for instance, the insistence with which the theme of glory and immortality crosses the whole exilic poem. It emphasizes the possibility, given by poetic writing, of remaining in the memory of others, i.e., of preventing oblivion. See Tola (2004).
imply a symbolic function, and let us say a poetic one, the chronological segmentation generated by the iterability of the text seems to adapt naturally to the safeguard of a poetic memory at the moment in which Ovid’s literary production emerges in the borders of life and death, of writing and silence. Then, it is no longer about merely “telling” a story, but mainly to repeat, to seduce by iteration and through temporal deconstruction to produce a subversion in the process of reading. Likewise, this operation consists in implicating the reader in the reading act, making him or her a story’s active participant. What way could be more effective than that which involves us completely in a process that we have constantly to reconstruct?

43. See Adam (1984).
While writers of elegy occasionally treat a story within the scope of a single poem (e.g., Prop. 1.20, 3.15, 4.4; Tib. 2.5.19–66; Ov. Ars 1.101–32), the overarching love affair to which the poet-lover constantly refers is hardly shaped by a linear sequence of events. Efforts to reconstruct a chronology of the elegiac love affair, especially in the case of Propertius, have met with frustration and failure. A. W. Allen, who soundly refuted attempts to reconstruct a chronology of Propertius’ relationship with Cynthia, concluded that Propertian elegy needs no temporal progression, since it is not concerned to tell a story, but rather “to impart the quality of an experience.” Paul Veyne has echoed Allen’s arguments by emphasizing the repetitive nature of elegiac situations; in his reading of elegy, poems “repeat their initial conventions or play variations on [them] . . . before and after do not exist, anymore than does duration.”

Confirming such an estimation is the lexicon of elegy, crowded as it is with terms that essentially connote a lack of forward, and (by implication) temporal, movement: mora, inertia, and desidia all mark elegy’s lovers as

1. In accordance with Bal’s terminology, a fabula describes a series of chronologically related events; these events are arranged into a story whose sequence may be different from that of the fabula, and whose arrangement is such that they “can produce the effect desired, be this convincing, moving, disgusting, or aesthetic.” Both fabula and story should be distinguished from the narrative text, i.e., the medium through which the story is told. See Bal (1997), 3–10.
4. A necessary relationship between movement and time was acknowledged in the ancient world, though the exact nature of that relationship was subject to debate. Paul Ricoeur, whose work on time and narrative is cited below, summarizes Augustine’s argument on time and movement (especially the movement of the heavenly bodies) in response to Aristotle and Plotinus; see Ricoeur (1984b).
static, especially when compared to those compatriots engaged in military and civic life, such as Tullus, Maecenas, and Messalla (e.g., Prop. 1.6, 1.7, 2.10, 3.9; Tib. 1.1.53–6). The poet-lover regularly complains of obstructions as he defends his lack of progress away from erotic entanglements and toward the realm of res gestae. The conflict between civic expectations and private inclinations is perhaps most commonly voiced in the form of the elegiac recusatio, where the poet-lover denies his ability to tackle historical and military themes, because, at least for the time being, his love for a puella prevents him (cf. Prop. 2.1.1–16, 3.3.15–50, 3.9.35–46; cf. Tib. 2.6.1–12; Ov. Am. 2.1.11–12).

Such a refusal of those activities and literary genres associated with teleological movement, combined with the repetitive nature of elegiac scenarios mentioned by Veyne, would appear to disqualify elegy from status as a narrative text, particularly when the genre is considered in the light of canonical theories of time and narrativity. In Paul Ricoeur’s formulation, for instance, there is an important linear aspect of the emplotment of a narrative; the succession of episodes in a narrative “draws narrative time in the direction of the linear representation of time.” Moreover, a story must be going somewhere, or bear some aspect of “followability,” in order to convey meaning:

To follow a story is to move forward in the midst of contingencies and peripeteia under the guidance of an expectation that finds its fulfillment in the “conclusion” of the story. This conclusion is not logically implied by some previous premises. It gives the story an “end point,” which, in turn, furnishes the point of view from which the story can be perceived as forming a whole. To understand the story is to understand how and why the successive episodes led to this conclusion.

If some end-point allowing us to grasp the “how and why” of successive episodes is what gives a narrative its meaning, or, to use Riceour’s term,

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5. Propertius recommends mora (delay) to lovers in the first poem of the Monobiblos (1.1.35–36; on the passage, see below, 8; for mora as prolonging the elegiac relationship, cf. also 1.8.1–2, 1.13.6; Tib. 1.3.15); P. tries to defend himself against charges of desidia at 1.1.2–1 (cf. his response to charges of indolence at 3.11.3: crinamaque ignavi capitis mihi turpia fingis). Tibullus famously champions the life of inertia at 1.1.5 (cf. Prop. 3.7.71–72). For Ovid’s playful corrections of his predecessors’ use of desidia and inertia, cf. Am. 1.9.31–2, 2.10.19; Ars 2.229; Rem. 139, 780.

6. E.g., Tibullus seeks “slowing delays” (moras tardas) when he is called away by Messalla on a military campaign, Tib.1.3.15.


8. Ricoeur (1984b), 66–67; R. relies to an extent on Kermode (1968), for his connection between a story’s conclusion and its power to convey meaning. This is not to say that R. does not acknowledge a distinctly nonlinear process of reception, as his emphasis on the hermeneutic circle demonstrates; see esp. 71–76. See also Simms (2003), 83–86.
allows a “configuration” of the plot, then elegy, in its capacity as a narrative structure, means very little indeed.

At the same time, the poet-lovers of Propertius and Ovid both speak of a time when they will have departed from their puellae and taken up a different sort of poetry (Prop. 3.5.23–48, 4.1.57–70; Ov. Am. 3.1.65–70, 3.15.15–20). Propertius, moreover, clearly signals his departure from Cynthia in a bitter farewell poem (Prop. 3.24). David Konstan has described the general shape of events implied in elegiac discourse: “[I]n the last analysis, it falls to the lovers themselves to take a stand against marriage. . . . And the master plot of elegy has as its denouement not the conversion of the status of the beloved to that of a marriageable citizen, but her final rejection on the grounds of inconstancy.” This narrative scheme is certainly plausible, especially if we (like Konstan) are attempting to assimilate elegy with other traditionally narrative forms. The notion that this love-story just might be going somewhere, might possess some end-point that allows us to “configure” its plot, saves it from the meaninglessness it risks in accordance with Ricoeur’s formulation of time and narrative.

How, then, are we able to reconcile the tendency of elegiac poetry to resist linear chronology and at the same time assume a world outside of, and after, elegy that operates in linear time? Because elegy quite self-consciously draws a parallel between its subject matter, the puella, and its generic conventions, a departure from the genre necessarily entails departure from the beloved. The elegists explicitly distinguish a type of poetry that dwells on the life of love from verse that follows a more narrative and progressive course, such as tragedy or epic (e.g., Prop. 2.1.1–4, 3.3.18–20; Tib. 2.5.111–20; Ov. Am. 3.1; cf. Tib. 2.6.8–12). The speaker’s predictions of departure from his puella and the genre simultaneously suggest that one source of elegy’s resistance to narrativity is found in the role it assigns to women as love objects.

To understand why the puella provides an ideal figure of resistance, by which elegy’s speaker forestalls any venture into more narrative genres, we might turn to Ovid’s Remedia Amoris. Ovid’s “remedies” against elegiac love forcefully conclude the often-inconclusive laments of elegy’s poet-lover and clearly illustrate the problematic relationship between time’s linear movement
and the elegiac *puella*. Conte has argued persuasively for Ovid’s critique of the elegiac code, especially apparent in his didactic works. He describes how the poet’s irony “is the sign of a critical consciousness that observes the text’s formation from outside and reveals its implicit practices.” Insofar as the *Ars* and *Remedia* make explicit the conventions of elegiac discourse, they serve as an ideal introduction to the conventions of time governing the progress (or lack thereof) of the elegiac affair. The *Ars* resolves the tension arising from the elegiac poet-lover’s simultaneous desire for erotic *inertia* and his wish to move beyond it by assigning the would-be lover an overtly teleological course. The *Remedia* aggressively concludes that course for its male pupils, and leaves female pupils to flounder inconclusively in the sort of erotic snares at once reviled and celebrated by the poet-lovers of previous elegy.

This essay argues that the respective positions finally assumed by men and women in Ovid’s *Remedia*—women suffer confinement and repetition as men make narrative progress—emerge from the temporal properties that determine the movements of male and female pupils in Ovid’s *Ars*, properties that are themselves a response to the conflicted attitudes expressed in previous love elegy. Such temporal attributes may be explained, in part, by Julia Kristeva’s concept of women’s time: her theory severs the traditional coincidence of space and time, aligning women with the spatial and generative properties of the *chora*, a designation she appropriates from Plato and uses to describe the locus of a speaking subject’s pre-linguistic drives. Temporality as it does apply to the female subject is described as cyclical, in its accordance with biological rhythms; and, perhaps because of its cyclicity, it is also “monumental,” in that it is all-encompassing, and lacks the outlets that linear movement affords. Kristeva associates masculine subjectivity with “cursive” time, in other words, the time of linear history. Masculine temporality is defined by the same teleological properties that she uses to define symbolic language, insofar as language is considered the enunciation of a sequence of words.


13. The *chora* is a concept that Kristeva articulates in her doctoral dissertation (1974); Kristeva’s dissertation was translated into English (notably by M. Waller in 1984) as *Revolution in Poetic Language*. Waller’s translation has since then appeared in various anthologies of Kristeva’s work, including *Moi* (1986), the text I make use of in this discussion. Kristeva’s essay on women’s time was originally published as “Le temps des femmes” in 33/44: *Cahiers de recherche de sciences des textes et documents* 5 (Winter 1979). In the present discussion I make frequent use of the English translation of A. Jardine and H. Blake (“Women’s Time”), also included in *Moi*’s anthology.

14. For the relationship between linear time and symbolic language, see “Women’s Time,” 192. Both are described by Kristeva as characteristics “readily labeled masculine” (*qu’on qualifie facilement de masculine*), “Les Temps des Femmes,” 8. A qualification may be in order: Kristeva has refused to define woman, other than “that which cannot be represented, that which is not spoken, that which
Kristeva is by no means the first or only thinker to articulate the different experiences of men and women in terms of time and space. Her concept of a “monumental” time that is elided with spatiality and exists above and beyond historical time is indebted to Nietzsche;\(^{15}\) she cites Joyce in commenting on traditional associations of women with generative space, and men with linear time.\(^{16}\) What Kristeva adds to our understanding of these conceptual categories is how those temporal properties used to describe women also contribute to the status of women as marginal to the symbolic order; and she does this by revealing how operations at the linguistic level are relevant to power relations at the ideological level. For our experience of language at the individual level—each one is, in Kristevan terms, a “subject on trial,” or *sujet-en-procès*—cannot but inform the way we view ourselves in communal and global terms.

1. **Gender and Time in the *Ars Amatoria***

Before turning to the *praeceptor*’s cures for love, we should consider the male and female lovers whom he has designed in the *Ars Amatoria*. In the *Ars*, male pupils, in contrast to the elegiac poet-lovers of Propertius and Tibullus, are closely associated with a progressive notion of time. Accordingly, Ovid’s *praeceptor* and his successful *amator*, who are cast initially as ships’ captains and chariot drivers, chart a steadily linear course throughout the poem.\(^{17}\) remains outside naming and ideologies,” citation in Moi (1985), 163, taken from “La Femme, ce n’est jamais ça,” *Tel Quel* 59 (1974): 19–24. Her view that woman’s struggle is identical to that of other oppressed social classes, though subject to criticism, reminds us that the *chora*’s feminine properties mark it as that which is marginal to the dominant symbolic order, rather than as the property of either gender.

15. For differences between Kristeva’s “monumental” temporality and Nietzsche’s use of the term, see Wolfenstein (2000), esp. 113–14.

16. “Women’s Time,” 189–90. For a more recent approach to the metaphorical associations between women and space, as well as those between men and time, see also Shlain (1999). Salzman-Mitchell (2005), esp. 67–116, provides a brief summary of such approaches and links woman’s spatial qualities with her role as a (passive) visual object, and one whose presence retards narrative progress in Ovidian epic.

17. Ovid’s sailing metaphors are particularly relevant here, e.g., *Ars* 1.3–4, 1.771–72, 2.429–432. Cf. also *Rem.* 13–14, 811–812. Ovid assigns these metaphorical roles to his students in part because he has written a didactic poem, and some of the *Ars*’ teleological language has been borrowed from Lucretius’ *De Rerum Natura* and Vergil’s *Georgics*. On the relationship between the *Georgics* and the *Ars*, see Leach (1964), esp. 150–51. Leach notes the high frequency of *opus*, *labor*, and *via* in both poems. Myerowitz (1985), 79–103 argues that “love’s journey,” also a commonplace in Hellenistic epigram, is the defining topos of the *Ars Amatoria*. While Ovid’s predecessors often use images of physical progress to emphasize the difficult aspects of *eros* (e.g., for love as a difficult sea voyage, *AP* 5.169, 190; cf. *AP* 5.156), Ovid’s use of metaphors related to love’s journey is overwhelmingly
The *praeceptor*, beginning with directives regarding the selection of prey and concluding with optimistic triumphal images, inscribes for his pupils a smoothly consecutive beginning, middle, and end to their love stories. For Kristeva, this is time as it is most often associated with a masculine subject: “time as project, teleology, linear and prospective unfolding; time as departure, progression and arrival—in other words, the time of history.” Ovid highlights the relationship between time and conquest in advice (directed to his male audience) regarding the appropriate seasons (*tempora*) for girl hunting (1.399–418), where again the lover is likened to a ship’s captain who must avoid certain ill-omened days (1.400, 402). He also emphasizes the success won through temporal endurance (471–72), claiming that Penelope herself could be overcome through the steady progress of time: *Penelopen ipsam, persta modo, tempore vinces* (477).

Ovid’s *praeceptor* epitomizes the tension between properly timed progress and its antithesis, sluggish delay, in advice regarding the stealthy conquest of a recently rejected *amica*:

\[\text{sed propera, ne vela cadant auræque resident;}\]
\[\text{ut fragilis glacæs, interit ìra mora.}\]

But hasten, lest the sails fall and the winds settle down; just as brittle ice, anger perishes with delay. (1.373–74)

The very delay that might save the elegiac *puella* from erotic conquest threatens the designs of Ovid’s male pupils. At the end of *Ars* 1, we find a similar opposition between masculine haste and feminine delay, here presented as a desirable model of conduct that illustrates the utility of force (*vis*). After raping Deidamia, Achilles hurries back into battle (*properaret*, 701) and leaves behind a victim begging him to stay:

\[\text{vis ubi nunc ìllæ est? quid blandæ voce moraris}\]
\[\text{auctorem stupri, Deidamia, tui?}\]

Where is that force now? Why do you delay the author of your own disgrace, Deidamia? (1.703–4)

As the hero who, after triumphing over Deidamia, hurries off to triumph in positive. Myerowitz also argues that the topos is less suitable to Ovid’s female addressees, since “female eros is a priori destructive” (84).

the battlefield, Achilles represents an ideal model of conduct that requires the swiftly executed conquest and abandonment of a woman.

On the other hand, Ovid’s female addressees are reminded that delay is their “greatest procuress”: *grata mora venies, maxima lena mora est* (3.752); and the *puella*-in-training is taught that her delayed response to a letter only goads the male *amator* further: *postque brevem rescribe moram: mora semper amantes / incitat* (3.473). Yet it is perhaps because of the female pupil’s reliance on *mora* in her efforts to seduce a lover that she fares so poorly when Ovid reshapes elegiac *topoi* in didactic form.¹⁹ Propertius had programmatically introduced delay as part of the elegiac code in the first poem of the *Monobiblos*, *sua quemque moretur / cura* (1.1.35–6), a reference suggesting that *mora* is an unqualified boon to the lover. And yet the meaning of *mora*, which Pucci explains as an “odd temporality, implying a sort of lingering in view of a future thing or detention from something,” is itself fraught with ambiguity, and can imply the absence of a lover as well as the uninterrupted presence suggested in Propertius’ poem.²⁰

Delay is essentially an act of deferral and,²¹ as Pucci argues in his discussion of the veiling, silence, and absence of Cynthia in Prop.1.8 and 2.15, such a “putting-off” or detention from erotic fulfillment may be interpreted as an act of seduction. As Cynthia seduces her *amator* by refusing him, so, too, the elegist seduces his reader by promising to divulge but forever delaying (“by a shrewd balance of exposing and covering”) the culmination and denouement of the elegiac affair.²² By appointing *mora* the *puella*’s “greatest procuress,” the *praeceptor* assigns to his female pupils the role not only of detaining erotic fulfillment, but also of slowing narrative progress, a role perhaps suitable for elegy, but no longer appropriate for the teleologically shaped curriculum Ovid’s *praeceptor* hopes to advance.

Other precepts offered to women in the poem confirm the *puella*’s role in deferring the progress of the love affair, and thus deferring the narrative of the love story. Because women are reminded repeatedly of the activities,

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¹⁹. The problems faced by women in Ovid’s erotodidaxis have been examined largely with a focus on the *Remedia*, though, as the studies of Myerowitz (1985) and Downing suggest (1990), female pupils are denied a viable approach to love in the *Ars* as well. For women in the *Remedia*, see especially Davison (1996), esp. 240–45, who argues that the *exempla* of the *Remedia* reveal that escape from painful love is often impossible or wrought with disastrous consequences, especially for women; for bias against female addressees in Ovidian erotodidaxis, see also Brunelle (1997), esp. 90–107.

²⁰. Pucci (1978), 52–73. For *mora* as an indication of absence, see, e.g., Cynthia’s complaint of “long delays” (*longas moras*) at 1.3.44.

²¹. As suggested by the primary meaning given at OLD s.v. 1: “Time which elapses before an event takes place, loss of time, delay.”

movements, and speech in which they cannot engage, their instruction is largely one of containment rather than expression or action. Downing has argued that the praecceptor’s endorsement of different postures to hide the body’s flaws (3.261–90), as well as his recommendations that women conceal themselves under layers of makeup and hairpieces (cf. 3.129–68, 193–250), bring about the puella’s transformation into a lifeless work of art. Moreover, when the praecceptor does recommend some positive action, rather than negative reaction, the female pupil makes little physical or temporal progress beyond the threshold of her domus. As Myerowitz-Levine has noted, the “course” women chart in the Ars is circular rather than progressive. Book 3 begins with advice on hair, dress, and cosmetics, to be carried out explicitly behind closed doors (claude forem thalami, 3.228), and concludes with advice on sexual intercourse, again focusing our attention on the carefully concealed interior of a woman’s boudoir: nec lucem in thalamos totis admitte fenestris, 3.805.

At this point Kristeva’s concept of women’s time may shed light on the sort of confinement and cyclical course experienced by the praecceptor’s female addressees:

As for time, female subjectivity would seem to provide a specific measure that essentially retains repetition and eternity from among the multiple modalities of time known through the history of civilization. On the one hand, there are cycles, gestation, the eternal recurrence of a biological rhythm which conforms to that of nature and imposes a temporality. . . . On the other hand, and perhaps as a consequence, there is a massive presence of a monumental temporality, without cleavage or escape, which has so little to do with linear time (which passes) that the very word ‘temporality’ hardly fits. (emphasis in original)

Ovid’s third book of the Ars defines the puella’s life in terms of rhythm, repetition, and confinement, spatiotemporal properties whose application to the beloved is provocatively consistent with the experience of female subjectivity that Kristeva outlines (cf. la répétition et l’éternité . . . sans faille et sans fuite). Fictive female readers of the Ars feel the pressures of their own biological rhythms, most obviously in the form of pregnancies to be avoided (3.82–83), though the praecceptor also implies that the inevitable

23. Downing (1990), 239.
failure of those rhythms (3.61–64; cf. 3.77–78) will hasten the processes of physical deterioration (3.69–80). The roles assigned to women are often illustrated through metaphors taken from the markedly seasonal, and thus cyclical, provinces of agriculture and animal husbandry. Ovid’s praeceptor virtually denies them a role in actively pursuing their prey; instead, female addressees are to use passivity to attract a mate.

The puella’s passive condition, confinement, and delaying tactics amount to a kind of stasis—analogous to Kristeva’s “monumental temporality”—that threatens the identity of the male amator by slowing the course of his progress and hindering the activities that define him as a masculine subject. The conversation between Odysseus and Calypso along the seashore at the beginning of Ars 2 (123–44) perhaps best illustrates the different behaviors prescribed for men and women in Ovid’s erotodidactic project. Calypso repeatedly (iterumque iterumque, 127) employs delaying tactics, while Odysseus reviews his heroic deeds, all the time remaining focused on departure. The praeceptor has poised both characters appropriately on the shore (litore constiterant, 129), between the course of history and the stasis of elegiac love. The ocean’s waves, a marker of nature’s own cyclical rhythms, erase the hero’s deeds drawn upon the sand (2.139–40) and enact a momentary triumph for women’s time, but one that fails to alleviate the frustration arising from the irreconcilable natures of the two characters involved. In the Remedia, the tale of Phyllis (591–608) again places a heroine upon the sea shore, but her solitary state both reminds us of how the tale of Ulysses and Calypso must end and more fully explains the disastrous results of interaction between men who need to be moving along and women who want them to stay.

2. Women’s Time in the Remedia Amoris

The momentary delay that allows a semidivine woman such as Calypso and a man like Ulysses to maintain a relationship in the Ars proves most inconvenient for the man in the Remedia who is ready to reenter the world.

27. For Ovid’s use of agricultural imagery and its systematic application to women, see Leach (1964), esp. 150–54.
28. See Myerowitz-Levine (1981–82), 46–47, who notes that women are instructed to be “actively passive.”
30. On the Calypso and Ulysses scene as paradigmatic of the opposition between culture and nature in Ovid’s Ars, see Myerowitz-Levine (1981–82), 54–56.
of linear time and its adjunct game of sexual conquest. While the Remedia is ostensibly addressed to both men and women, most of the praeceptor’s advice is aimed at men managing with difficulty the domination of a cruel or simply unworthy (indigna) mistress (Rem. 15–16). To cure the afflicted, the praeceptor prescribes a rigorous program of activities appropriate for men in public life (forms of negotium, ranging from the political [151–68] to the agricultural [169–212]) and insists upon an emphatic rejection of both leisure, or otium (135–50), and its more threatening alter ego, mora (76–106).

While both sexes attempt to ward off emotional diseases associated with love, Ovid’s exempla reveal a scenario in which men, such as the Greek hero Philoctetes (Rem. 111–15), manage to overcome the infection caused by delay, rejoin the historical flow of time, and help bring the Trojan war to a conclusion. Conversely, women such as Myrrha are left behind to suffer an eternity, entombed in the rigid bark of the Myrrh-tree (Rem. 99–100). As a perverted anagram of amor, mora betrays the linchpin in the praeceptor’s artfully contrived system of conquest. For the male amator, to delay in love is tantamount to considering it a state of being, rather than an activity or an art that can be practiced and effectively controlled. In the praeceptor’s formulation of love, the very inertia or “artlessness” championed in previous elegy becomes a clear liability.

It is not surprising, then, that mora, as the turning point between love as ars and love as morbus, is a leading cause of illness among lovers in the Remedia:

nam mora dat vires: teneras mora percoquit uvas
et validas segetes, quae fuit herba, facit.

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31. For the praeceptor’s address to both genders, see Rem. 49–50, 813–14. On male bias (in terms of both form and content) in the Remedia, see above, n.17.
32. For Conte (1994c), 61, such advice is a way of opening up the solipsistic generic closure of elegy, or “reintegrating the rhetoric of elegiac love into a varied and manifold ideological horizon.” Fulkerson (2004) argues that, instead, the Remedia complete an inescapable circle of elegiac love, 221–23, noting that most of the advice recommended to the sick amator may be understood metaphorically as the same advice given to the healthy amator in the Ars. Her points about the relationship between the Remedia and the Ars are well taken, though I would agree with Conte that the vita activa espoused in the Remedia contradicts the stance of relative inactivity advocated throughout the larger corpus of elegy (though not necessarily in Ovid’s own Amores; on inertia and desidia, see n.5).
33. For a brief discussion of the elegists’ deployment of mora as an anagram of amor, and Ovid’s use of the same in the Pyramus and Thisbe episode of the Metamorphoses, see Keith (2001), 310.
34. See OLD etym., in + ars, 1 “lacking skill,” 891. Cairns (1979), 28 notes the irony of the Hellenistic poet’s espousal of life without artistic labor. In the Amores, Ovid points to the paradox of the artless poet-lover by noting that saevus amor has interrupted his somnes inertes (Am. 2.10.19).
For delay adds strength: delay ripens the tender grapes and makes what was once young shoots strong crops. (83–84)

principiis obsta; sero medicina paratur,
cum mala per longas convaluere moras.

Stand firm from the beginning; treatment is applied too late when troubles have grown strong through long delays. (91–92)

As Myrrha’s fate suggests, women, as well as men, are threatened by mora; and yet the heroine’s transformation into a firmly rooted tree implies that mora is somehow in her very nature. Though delay was integral to the seduction that constantly deferred fulfillment in the elegiac affair, in the Remedia it becomes emblematic of the spatiotemporal problems faced by women when they are written into an ideological context that views stasis, repetition, and delay as liabilities rather than assets.

Here, Kristeva’s link between women and the Platonic chora illuminates Ovid’s own configuration of men and women in the Remedia. Kristeva’s gendering of time emerges from her doctoral dissertation, Revolution in Poetic Language, a study of the prelinguistic forces that motivate language, forces especially evident in the poetry of some modernist writers. In her dissertation, Kristeva argues for a semiotic (le sémiotique) component of language that is grounded in the speaking subject’s biological drives; she locates these drives or “pulsions” in a receptacle she calls the chora. The semiotic pulsions of language operate in a productive tension with language’s symbolic components, those components that constitute the realm of comprehensible signs and signification governed by the linear movements of grammar and syntax. Thus the symbolic is a category Kristeva assimilates to the other teleologically oriented projects—such as the processes of narrative outlined by Ricoeur—characteristic of masculine subjectivity.

At the same time, Kristeva feminizes the semiotic chora in Revolution in Poetic Language, where she follows Plato’s own description in characterizing it as maternel. Perhaps more significantly, in her essay on “Women’s Time,” as she describes a “problematic of space,” Kristeva links woman’s generative properties with those of the chora, properties:


37. For a critique of arguments that Kristeva associates semiotic drives with the feminine, see Moi (1986),165. Moi notes that, since the chora’s pulsions exist prior to the subject’s experience of the Oedipal phase (and corresponding introduction of symbolic language), the semiotic also precedes
... which innumerable religions of matriarchal reappearance attribute to woman, and which Plato, recapitulating in his own system the atomists of antiquity, designated by the aporia of the *chora*, matrix space, nourishing, unnameable, anterior to the One, to God and, consequently defying metaphysics.\(^{38}\)

Kristeva’s account of female subjectivity suggests that conceptual categories linking woman with the space of reproduction are to some extent responsible for her position marginal to the symbolic order and to time insofar as time is defined as “project and history.”\(^ {39}\) In Ovid’s poem, women are constantly the spaces left behind, while men move about in time, acting as the very antithesis of delay. Throughout the *Remedia*, we find men on a careful path of avoidance, while their *amicae* remain posited in familiar spaces, such as a favorite *porticus* (627–30) or, more often, her *domus*, that immobile realm marked by an impassable threshold (785–86), and insulated by a hardened doorkeeper (*ianitor*) and an equally hard door (*postis*).\(^ {40}\)

Despite the restrictions on female motility in Ovidian erotodidaxis, however, women are not uniformly static, immobile, or lifeless, but instead have drives and desires, *pulsions* (in Kristeva’s term) that are to be carefully repressed. Again, we may assume a descriptive model for such behavior in Kristeva’s appropriation of the *chora*. Like Plato’s *chora* in the *Timaeus* (52a–b), Kristeva’s *chora* designates an inherently unstable entity that suffers regulation and repetition during the language process:

Discrete quantities of energy move through the body of the subject who is not yet constituted as such and, in the course of his development, they are arranged according to the various constraints imposed on this body—always already involved in the semiotic process—by family and social structures. In this way the drives, which are ‘energy’ charges as well as ‘psychical’ marks, articulate what we call the *chora*: a non-expressive totality formed by the drives and their stases in a motility that is as full of movement as it is regulated.\(^ {41}\)

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\(^{38}\) Kristeva, “Women’s Time,” 191.

\(^{39}\) Ibid., 193.

\(^{40}\) Ovid’s most extensive description of the door and door keeper is *Am*. 1.6, but both elements recur throughout his didactic poems, e.g., *Ars* 2.259–60, 522–25, 635; 3.633–41.

\(^{41}\) Kristeva, “Revolution in Poetic Language,” 93.
The example of Phyllis (Rem. 591–608), who treads repetitively along the shore (as full of movement as she is regulated), may be understood as illustrating these restricted impulses, for it demonstrates that women who attempt to leave their well-defined spaces don't get very far, but instead remain stuck—like a skipping record needle—in a groove they are bound to repeat.

The tale of Phyllis’ solitary abandonment is the heroine’s fifth appearance in Ovid’s didactic poetry. While she is consistently depicted as an abandoned woman, her story has been used to explain a recommendation for absence (Ars 2.353), the deceptive nature of men (Ars 3.37–38, 459–60), and the necessity of heeding the praeceptor’s advice (Rem. 55–56). Her insertion at the end of the Remedia constitutes the sort of characteristic repetition of a myth Veyne assigns to elegy. Yet in this instance Ovid draws out her tale so that it becomes one of only three exempla of significant length in the poem.

In a work filled with pithy statements and almost obscurely brief references to the mythological tradition, Phyllis’ tale delays the didactic process, a function of exempla Ovid’s praeceptor explicitly confirms: quid moror exemplis? (Rem. 461). Rather than offering only a recondite allusion to her status as a relicta puella, Ovid at last endows her fabula with a story and narrative structure. And yet content fails to mirror form, since Phyllis lacks the very progress through space and the time that her narrative now assumes.

A full understanding of the significance of Phyllis’ story at this point in the Remedia requires us to examine its context, an exhortation to friendship and sociability. In Kristeva’s terms, the praeceptor is endorsing the sociosymbolic contract, the social order upheld through “language as the fundamental social bond.” As with the examples of Myrrha and Philoctetes, the praeceptor contrasts positive masculine action with negative feminine reaction. He uses the tale of Orestes, encouraged by his comrade Pylades to win back Agamemnon’s kingdom, as a foil to Phyllis’ lonely isolation. Essentially, Orestes reinserts himself within the sociosymbolic contract, where Phyllis fails to do so:

42. Veyne (1988), 117. For Veyne, the mythical exemplum is itself a symptom of elegy’s lack of chronology, since allusions to myth conjure a virtually atemporal realm, “in an ocean of time without measure or form,” 118.

43. See Davisson (1996) on the unusual length of the Circe and Phyllis exempla, and their status as symptomatic of the poem’s tendency to offer advice to women only through negative examples, 243 n.11, 252–53.

44. Ibid., 247.

45. Kristeva, “Women’s Time,” 199. According to Hollis (1989), ad 601, the story of Phyllis’ return to the beach to look for Demophoon probably originated in Callimachus. Hyginus (Fab. 59) also refers to the legend.
Always have around some Pylades, the sort who stood by Orestes: this also is an important use for friendship. What ruined Phyllis, other than the isolated forests? The cause of her death is certain: she was unaccompanied. She used to go about, just as the foreign throng was accustomed to go about, with hair streaming, celebrating triennial rites for Bacchus. (589–94)

Thus Orestes, because he has assumed a place in the sociosymbolic contract, evolves from an exile trapped in time by the dictates of Clytemnestra into a successful hero who slays his mother, reclaims his rightful title, and re-establishes the supremacy of the male parent.46

Phyllis, likened to a bacchant and mourned only by the woods hidden (secretae) beyond the civilized realm, suggests the potential to undermine the sociosymbolic contract by acting out aggression against the male.47 As a bacchant, her socially marginal position is, in fact, not unlike that of Clytemnestra, whose presence is felt implicitly in the text: both women serve as reminders of how woman’s traditional position outside the realm of men’s time incites their alliance with (often violent) revolutionary movements. Paradoxically, while the simile defines Phyllis as part of a crowd, barbar turba, the very foreign and female status of that crowd is used to reiterate her condition marginal to the symbolic order. The praeceptor arranges his material in a way that contrasts men’s time—linear, heroic, and an integral part of the social contract—with the space of women—foreign, immobile, abandoned, and ultimately alone; in other words, what Kristeva describes as “the unnameable repressed by the social contract.”48

Phyllis is indeed “unnameable” insofar as her literally marginal status on the seashore, in harenosa humo (596), designates her as a subject without

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46. For an analysis of gender in the myth of Orestes as well as in Aeschylus’ Oresteia trilogy, see Zeitlin (1978), 149–84. Zeitlin calls attention to the “dysfunction of the social order” (156) resultant from Clytemnestra’s rule and the correction of that dysfunction enacted in the Eumenides.

47. On the symbolic inversion of the Dionysiac ritual, see Keuls (1993), 349–79. Keuls does recognize a conciliatory function in these rites, which “promoted a resolution of antagonism in harmonious family life,” 373.

access to symbolic language. As such she is emblematic of a sexual difference that: “. . . is translated by and translates a difference in the relationship of subjects to the symbolic contract which \emph{is} the social contract: a difference, then, in the relationship to power, language, and meaning.”\textsuperscript{49} The social bonds and shared language of Orestes and Pylades allow them to move forward in time, to complete the heroic act of matricide. Because Phyllis lacks such a bond, she has no place in the sociosymbolic contract, and eventually no access to language or the syntactical and linear progress that it enables:

\begin{quote}
'\textit{perfide Demophoon}' surdas clamabat ad undas,  
ruptaque singultu verba loquentis erant.
\end{quote}

"Faithless Demophoon," she kept shouting to the unhearing waves, and her words were broken off in midsentence by a sob. (597–98)

After she cries out the name of her faithless lover, Phyllis’ identity begins to merge with the very sea that bars her access to the social contract. The waves are unhearing (\textit{surdas}), but also, like Phyllis, unheard.\textsuperscript{50} The repetitive nature of her actions, marked here and throughout the passage by the imperfect tense (\textit{clamabat}; cf. \textit{ibat} 593, \textit{spectabat} 595, \textit{iacebat} 596, \textit{terebatur} 601), mirrors the constant crashing of the waves upon the shore. The heroine’s words are broken by her own incomprehensible sob, or \textit{singultus}, a word that also suggests the gurgling sounds of water.\textsuperscript{51} Again, Phyllis’ difficulty with symbolic language may be clarified by Kristeva’s explanation of the semiotic drives: “rhythmic, unfettered, irreducible to its intelligible verbal translation; it is musical, anterior to judgment, but restrained by a single guarantee: syntax.”\textsuperscript{52} Because Phyllis has been estranged from the symbolic order and the syntax integral to it,\textsuperscript{53} her own semiotic rhythms become indistinguishable from the rhythmic repetitions of the ocean.

In her distress, Phyllis treads a curious foot-path, the tangible inscription of her anxiety:

\begin{quote}
limes erat tenuis, longa subnubilus umbra,  
qua tuli illa suos ad mare saepe pedes.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{49} Kristeva, “Women’s Time,” 196.
\textsuperscript{50} For \textit{surdas} as “unheard,” cf. \textit{OLD}, s.v. 3–4.
\textsuperscript{51} For \textit{singultus} as a reference to the gurgling sounds of water, \textit{OLD}, s.v. 1a.
\textsuperscript{52} Kristeva, “Revolution in Poetic Language,” 97.
\textsuperscript{53} Kristeva, “Revolution in Poetic Language,” 96 on the relationship between the symbolic and syntax, as well as all linguistic categories.
nona terebatur miserae via: ‘viderit’ inquit,  
et spectat zonam pallida facta suam.

There was a footpath, clouded over by the long shadows, where she often bore her own feet to the sea. The wretched girl wore away nine paths: “He’ll see,” she said and, growing pale, looked down at her belt. (599–602)

As the praeeceptor describes it, this limes marks an effort to escape that is constantly (saepe) thwarted by the ocean. Ovid’s praeeceptor deliberately exploits the ambiguity of the somewhat “clouded” (subnubilus) limes, which as a “footpath” represents a way out, but as a “boundary line” suggests division, isolation, and entrapment.54 Nine paths she treads before at last looking with resignation at the belt, or zona, around her hips.55 Curiously, an earlier reference to these paths in the Remedia suggests that, had she lived, Phyllis, trapped in the repetitive enclosure of women’s time, would only tread them more often (saepius) rather than ever escaping her plight (Rem. 55–56).

Our last glimpse of Phyllis leaves her rehearsing and rejecting her plans for suicide, rather than completing them: 56

aspicit et ramos: dubitat refugitque quod audet,  
et timet et digitos ad sua colla refert.

She sees the branches: she hesitates and shrinks back from the deed, and now she fears and brings her hands to her own neck. (603–4)

Here Ovid’s praeeceptor offers another option available to women encountering the difficulties of linear time. Phyllis’ final actions deviate from the revolutionary leanings of Clytemnestra and the mob of bacchants, and instead find common ground with the behavior of those women described by Kristeva who are “more bound to the mother.” These women, when faced with the option of gaining access to the temporal scene, “refuse this role and sullenly hold back, neither speaking nor writing, in a permanent state of expectation, occasionally punctuated by some kind of outburst; a cry, a refusal, ‘hysterical symptoms.’”57 Rather than granting his heroine the

54. OLD, s.v. 1 for limes as “boundary”; s.v. 3 for limes as “foot-path.”
55. The detail is aetiological, and used to explain the name of the “Nine Roads” on the Strymon, see Henderson (1979), ad loc.
56. Cf. Henderson’s (1979) comment (ad loc.) on the scene: “This is a subtle touch by Ovid, who breaks off his narrative while the girl is still rehearsing the act and steeled herself to perform it.”
teleological closure of suicide, Ovid’s *praeceptor* leaves her in a similar state of frantic indecision.

With the (mock-) pathos of direct address (*Sithoni*) and a regrettably unfulfilled wish, the *praeceptor* drives his point home. It was Phyllis’ isolation that sealed her fate:

*Sithoni, tunc certe vellem non sola fuisses;
non flesset positis Phyllida silva comis.*

*Phyllidis exemplo nimium secreta timete,*

*laese vir a domina, laesa puella viro.*

Sithonian, then surely I would have wished you were not alone; the forest shedding its leaves would not have wept for Phyllis. By the example of Phyllis, fear excessively secluded places, man wounded by a mistress, girl wounded by a man. (605–9)

Yet the *Remedia*, as well as the *Ars* in its entirety, reminds us repeatedly that women most often exist in isolation, behind locked doors, remaining fixed in time and space. Though women threaten to delay their lovers in this sort of atemporal existence, as Calypso did with Ulysses, they are almost inevitably abandoned. Men, on the other hand, as the ship’s captains in Ovid’s sailing metaphors, are rarely left behind, but are constantly moving forward to rejoin the progress of history and the social contract that accompanies it. As these male pupils move forward, so, too, do their love stories progress and achieve the very “followability” of which Ricoeur speaks.  

Thus it appears that while the *praeceptor* addresses both men and women, his lessons are not equally applicable. By hinting at the Amazonian sexual equality that posits women well armed in *militia amoris*, the *praeceptor* points to the contrast between a mythical unreality where women and men engage one another in linear time and a neatly segregated reality where there is no possibility for a fair “battle of the sexes.” Women are armed only so that they may prove worthy opponents for men in the game of love.  

Sufficient enticement amounts to a sufficient challenge, but, as the *Remedia* reminds us, that challenge inevitably concludes with the defeat of the woman,

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examines the relationship of woman to the symbolic order and includes a chapter on femininity and time, which, as Moi notes, 139, lays the groundwork for her arguments in “Les Temps des Femmes.”


60. On the game of love in the *Ars* and the *praeceptor*’s need to arm men and women equally, see Romano (1972), 814–19.
likened to the sack of a city, and the triumph of her suitor. Ovid has already brought the very different experiences of his male and female lovers (and implicitly their elegiac forerunners) to a painfully logical conclusion in the segregated world of the *Heroides*, where Phyllis is allowed to speak what she cannot in the *Remedia*.

The properties that Kristeva attributes to the temporal experiences of women—circularity, repetition, eternity, and a link with the semiotic aspects of language—allow us to understand better why women are so easily defeated when elegy is rewritten as didactic poetry. The *puella*, at least as she is drawn in the narrow view of her poet-lover, loses her powers to seduce through constant lingering and deferral, when the closed circuit of elegiac love is opened up to a greater world filled with competing ideologies, ideologies that value military and political affairs—as well as the narrative projects that underwrite them—more highly than the life of *otium* and *inertia*. With this point in mind, we might consider elegy before it became subject to Ovid’s amusing didacticism, and question how the stories of Cynthia, Delia, Nemesis, and Corinna end, once their poet-lovers leave women’s time for the more historical and epic projects they often promise their readers (cf. Tib. 2.5.113–18; *Corp. Tib.* 3.7; Prop. 3.5, 4.1; Ov. *Am.* 3.1, 3.15). Perhaps even more importantly, we might also ask ourselves why our elegists found women’s time so enticing in the first place.

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61. Cf. *Ars* 2.741–44, where the *praecceptor* likens the *puella’s* defeat to the sack of a city. See also Cahoon (1988), 293–307. The author examines military metaphors in the *Amores* to demonstrate that erotic warfare reveals the destructive nature of *amor*, 294, which commonly casts the male *amator* as the soldier, while the *puella* functions as loot (*praeda*).

62. *Her.* 2; cf. Spentzou (2003), 99–104, who uses the Kristevan *chora* to explain the isolated space of the abandoned woman in the *Heroides*.

63. For elegiac closure, see Conte (1994c), esp. 36–40 and above, n.24.

64. I would especially like to thank Sharon James for encouraging me to participate in the conference at Princeton. I am also grateful to the useful comments of an anonymous reader and to the editors of this volume, whose patience and insight have greatly improved my essay.
Ovid’s poetry has power over time. Or so he tells us time and again. His epic *Metamorphoses* will—along with his name—live forever. Or at least as long as Roman *imperium* and the Latin language last (15.871–79). His elegiac *Amores*, like the magical *carmina* of the witch, bear the power to draw down the moon, slow the sun in its course across the sky, and turn back time. To say nothing of seducing married women (2.1.21–28). His epistolary *Tristia* offer the poet the power and opportunity to escape from his Tomitian exile, and to transcend both time and space. At least, for a little while (4.1.41–48). And his epistolary/elegiac/epicizing *Heroides* appear to make time stand still, freezing both time and narrative.¹ Yet, as we shall see, in the alternative futures, counterfactual histories, and virtual lives imagined and written by Ovid’s heroines, time and narrative move in unexpected directions. Indeed, I will argue here that the interplay of time and narrative in the *Heroides* invites us to identify the heroines’ epistles as narrating “What if?” stories, virtual histories, or *counterfictional* narratives—side-shoots from the established time lines and the established narratives of canonical tales and classical source texts.

Critics repeatedly describe the *Heroides* as poems which “freeze” the master narratives of Homer, Virgil, et al. In particular, the epistolary form of the *Heroides* is seen to freeze its heroines and their narratives at a pregnant

moment in their source texts, “stopping the clock” in the story time of their external “master” narratives. So the reader knows (even if the letter writer herself may not) that Penelope writes at the very moment of Ulysses’ return to Ithaca; that Briseis writes on the very day—or night—of the infamous doloneia at Troy, having heard of Agamemon’s failed embassy to Achilles and fearing that he is about to set sail for home; and that while Dido writes (between the lines of Aeneid 4.413–15), Aeneas is at that very moment preparing his ships to leave Carthage. Moreover, as if to draw attention to the static “time out” which their epistles represent, some heroines explicitly evoke a temporary suspension of time and concomitant hold-up of temporality in their letters. So, Penelope writes of her continuous delay in putting off the suitors in the expectant hope of Ulysses’ return. So, Dido attempts to slow down time, narrative, and Aeneas himself, begging her lover for a brief delay (exiguas moras 7.176) and a little more time (tempora parva 7.178). Indeed, in her analysis of the Heroides, Efi Spentzou suggests that: “this mora is the appropriate time for the stories under discussion here. During its reign and under its influence, action is suspended and time moves slowly. [ . . . ] the Heroides’ short stories are a delay in the charting of what we may call ‘official time.’”

However, Jacobson complains that this is “the one great disadvantage that the genre-form inevitably entailed” for Ovid’s retelling of his heroines’ stories. For, he argues, “in freezing the poem at one particular moment, he seemingly condemned it to bear a static character.” Jacobson sees the restricted temporality of the Heroides as the principal barrier stopping the development of dramatic narrative, with the time interval suggested by the letter-writing fiction necessarily limiting the passage of time within each poem.

Yet, at the same time, the epistolary mode of the Heroides points to the possibility of transcending time, of escaping from the confines of the present

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2. On the complex temporal relationship between Heroides 1 and the Odyssey, see Kennedy (1984). On the significant timing of Heroides 3, see Barchiesi (2001), 11–12, 30. Barchiesi notes (163 n.6) that: “the letter’s temporal frame coincides with the short pause before the Iliad’s plot reaches its dramatic resolution. Briseis writes after having been informed of the failed embassy (I 11. 9), and she fears that Achilles may set sail the next morning (v.57: cum crastina fulserit Eos). Homer’s reader knows, on the contrary, that the morning will bring an unexpected resolution: it is the day of battle when Patroclus dies and Achilles’ wrath comes to an end.”


4. Spentzou (2003), 175. See also Stroh (1991), 201–44.

5. Jacobson (1974), 363. Jacobson quotes Otis (1966) on this subject: “The chief inspiration of the Heroides is the neoteric short epic, and the device of the letter served to enhance and focus the fundamental weakness of this model—that is, its lack of real dramatic quality, its reduction of a story to one or two disconnected moments of static pathos.”
moment. For just as a letter creates an illusion of spatial connection between writer and addressee by evoking the fantasy of dialogue between them, so it also suggests that the temporal gap between the two may be bridged.\(^6\) Its correspondents necessarily separated by and in time and space—the condition that calls for a letter to be written and sent in the first place—an epistle allows its writer to imagine herself (through her letter) in the presence and the present of her addressee. Yet the temporal delay that must necessarily come between the present moment of writing and the future moment of reading the letter is at once conceded and elided according to the conventions of the epistolary form. So, an Ovidian heroine can bid her addressee to respond or to act “now”—eliding the temporal space between them—while simultaneously acknowledging the delay that must intervene between the present “now” of her writing and the future “now” of any such response when the moment of crisis is “now” passed and past. As Duncan Kennedy has noted of *Heroides*:\(^7\)

> Penelope does not know where Ulysses is; she writes a letter to give to every passing sailor who visits Ithaca in the hope that he will be able to give it to Ulysses (1.59–62). The implication of her words is that she does not know when Ulysses will read it. . . . Epistolary discourse must manipulate both space and time in order to overcome these barriers so as to make communication relevant rather than anachronistic at the moment when the letter is read.

At the time of writing, then, each of the heroines must look ahead to the future time at which her letter may (or may not) be read, anticipating the shape of an unknown future and writing, as it were, under the shadow of that future. Yet, that future is in part determined and foreshadowed by a further chronological tension between the divided temporalities of letter writer and reader—in this case the external reader rather than the letter’s addressee. For the stories from which Ovid draws his heroines and their letters are already familiar to the external reader of the *Heroides*. The external reader of the epistles already knows that Ulysses has just arrived home, that Bacchus

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\(^6\) See Lindheim (2003), 19: “While absence is the condition that engenders the necessity of an epistle, presence is the illusion the letter writer attempts to create. And yet, the epistle itself, an attempt to bridge the gap separating writer from addressee, points, by its very existence, to the distance—spatial, temporal, emotional—between the correspondents.”

\(^7\) Kennedy (2002), 221. He suggests that: “the epistle is ever caught up in the logic of its temporality, as it attempts to bridge the ‘present’ of writing and the ‘future’ of reading, and to elide that tense distinction.” See also Hardie (2002a), 227–57 on absences and presences in Ovid’s writing.
will imminently rescue Ariadne, and that Dido is about to die—because, in the anterior source texts, these future events have already been narrated. In a literal sense, the futures of Ovid’s heroines have been foretold.

By playing with his readers’ foreknowledge of these future events, Ovid effectively bridges the temporal gap between each of his heroines’ narrative past and future, connecting the “now” of her present moment of writing to the chronological “past” and “future” of her (his)story. By playing with his readers’ foreknowledge of these future events, Ovid effectively bridges the temporal gap between each of his heroines’ narrative past and future, connecting the “now” of her present moment of writing to the chronological “past” and “future” of her (his)story. But this is not to say that this temporal gap is therefore sealed. Or that the outcome of each heroine’s story is concomitantly closed. Indeed, the dramatic tension of each epistle clearly depends upon a degree of “openness” in the outcome of its heroine’s fate. Barchiesi suggests that, “the letters are much more interesting if they are allowed to play not only with the past but also with a still undecided future.”

In the case of Heroides 1, we know from our prior reading of Homer’s Odyssey that, at the moment of Penelope’s writing, Ulysses is just about to make himself known to his long-suffering, patient, and faithful wife and then to rout the suitors who have been pressing for her hand. But in altering what we thought we knew about the past—that is, Penelope’s unwavering chastity and devotion to her absent husband—Ovid simultaneously alters what we think we know about her future—that is, a happy (if impermanent) reconciliation with the errant Ulysses. Recast in the Heroides as an elegiac puella (1.115), Penelope’s letter is full of sexual puns and double-entendres which challenge her idealized image as a virtuous and faithful wife. She describes her suitors in erotically charged language as a “lustful crowd” who “press against” or even “press into” her (turba ruunt in me luxoriosa proci—1.88), and who, in Ulysses’ absence, “plunder” and pillage his possessions—including his wife’s “body” (viscera nostra, tuae dilacerantur opes—1.90). Chaste Penelope, Ovid’s narrative hints, may not have held out against the suitors, resisting their sexual advances and offers of marriage, quite as virtuously or as successfully as literary history tells us—and her imminent reunion with her husband may yet surprise us too.

The fact that Ovid’s heroines write not only epistles but also elegiac epistles is central to the strategic renarrativization in the Heroides of familiar stories such as these. Yet, at the same time, the bifurcated elegiac/epistolary form threatens to undermine the authority of Ovid—and his heroines—as storytellers. As with all poetry in this genre, the question of whether and how the elegiac Heroides narrate—of whether and how they tell stories—is

8. On the subject of Ovid’s gendered “ventriloquism” in the Heroides see in particular Spentzou (2003), Lindheim (2003), and Fulkerson (2005).
far from straightforward. Florence Verducci observes “Four Seminarrative Passages” in *Heroides*—Sappho’s letter to Phaon—but sees *Heroides*—the letter from Canace to Macareus—as the only epistle in the collection to effectively succeed in overcoming what she describes as “the limits of elegiac discontinuity” by following a “strict narrative unparalleled in the *Heroides*.” Citing Brooks Otis, she notes that:

though the limits of elegy might be stretched, they remain a barrier to both effective continuity of narrative and serious treatment of major themes. It is true that some short elegies do express grief or passion, but these are not usually narrative in any strict sense. Ovid perhaps came nearest to such narrative in a letter like that of Canace to Macareus.

But in the case of the *Heroides*, the always already problematic notion of elegiac narration is further complicated by the epistolary form in which Ovid sets out his heroines’ letters. The epistolary discourse employed by the letter writers of the *Heroides* offers each heroine the opportunity to play with time and temporality, to bridge the gaps between past, present, and future through textual discourse and so to narrate her own story. Yet, according to Efi Spentzou, within such discourse “there is no centre and no great moments around which the narrative is constructed, only retrospective memories of past landmarks and excited anticipation of delightful events to come.” For all their discursive manipulation of time, the heroines are necessarily restricted in what they can tell of their own stories in their epistles. Their letters can offer only fragments of a story—partial (in every sense) bits and pieces of (a) narrative. It might be argued then that the elegiac *Heroides* cannot be regarded as narrative poems because they do not “narrate”; the heroines do not tell their own stories so much as fragmented and discrete parts of other(s’) stories. Each poem in the collection offers us a tragic monologue or an elegiac complaint set out in letter form but not a conventional narrative. Yet, as Alessandro Barchiesi points out:

Any telling of a story is partial, made up of stories and diverse, autonomous parts thereof. The Muse at the beginning of the *Odyssey* is asked to tell from

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10. On elegy as "anti-narrative," see the introduction to this volume.
12. Ibid., 234.
15. Barchiesi (2001), 15. He goes on to suggest that: “A text such as the *Heroides*, which emphasizes in its poetics the arbitrary nature of beginnings and endings, comes very close to evoking the ‘continuous’ poetics of the *Metamorphoses*.” Barchiesi (2001), 25.
somewhere \((\text{hamothen: v.10})\) in the macro-text of Odysseus’ heroic adventures. At the beginning of the \textit{Iliad}, the Muse will tell from where \((\text{ex hou: v. 6})\) a partial story begins. This is how one narrates.

From such a perspective, Penelope’s epistle to Ulysses and Briseis’ epistle to Achilles are no less autonomous, partial stories than the epic “master” narratives from which they are developed. Yet, the conditions for narrative are usually considered to presuppose a succession of events in time, a movement in chronology. The events that constitute a narrative are deemed to happen in some kind of developmental order and within some kind of unfolding time period.\(^\text{16}\) The events narrated in the \textit{Odyssey}, for example, construct a story or fabula that occupies the temporal space of twenty years—spanning the long twenty years of Odysseus’ absence from Ithaca and the final forty-one action-packed days of his homecoming.\(^\text{17}\) Indeed, as Irene de Jong has shown, it is possible to map a chronological timeline tracing all the events that are presented in the \textit{Odyssey}, temporally locating each event to a specific year or day in what de Jong terms the “Odyssean fabula.” Thus, Odysseus departs for Troy in year 1; Troy falls in year 10; Odysseus visits Circe in year 12, and then the Underworld and Calypso in year 13; he is washed up on Scheria on day 31 of year 20; and lands back on Ithaca four days later. Upon this detailed timeline we can confidently locate the precise temporal point at which Penelope pens her Heroidean epistle: day 39 of year 20—the very point at which the disguised Odysseus/Ulysses himself has just returned to the palace.\(^\text{18}\) Effectively presenting just a single event—the writing of her letter—in contrast to the successive relation of events presented in the epic narrative of the Odyssean fabula, Penelope’s Heroidean epistle seems to encompass too brief a time-span to admit the unfolding of a narrative. Jacobson notices that:\(^\text{19}\) “the flow of the letter is the progress of Penelope’s emotions over a period of twenty years. But nothing really happens from within the poem itself. That is, the dynamics of the poem do not generate any such movement.” That is, Penelope first recalls the distant past, and her fears for Ulysses’ safety while he was fighting at Troy (1.1–56); she then reflects upon the more recent past and complains about Ulysses’ continued absence (1.57–80), before moving chronologically into consideration of her present unhappy circumstances in Ithaca (1.81–116). But nothing

\(^{16}\) This is precisely the narrative model to which Jacobson appeals in his consideration of the \textit{Heroides}’ “dramatic structure.” Thus, Jacobsen writes (1974), 365: “In examining the structural dynamics of the \textit{Heroides}, certain (overlapping) questions must be kept in mind: (1) Does anything happen, is there any development within the poem? . . .”

\(^{17}\) See de Jong (1987), Appendix A.

\(^{18}\) See Kennedy (1984).

\(^{19}\) Jacobson (1974), 369.
happens—except the writing of a letter and the recounting of a brief history of Penelope’s emotions—within the temporal frame of the epistle. Here, as in the other epistles of the *Heroides*, chronological movement appears to have been checked, story and time simultaneously stopped.\(^{20}\)

However, as Mieke Bal has illustrated, a story that covers but a single moment—representing a moment of crisis rather than a development of chronology—may also constitute a narrative. Bal identifies certain features characteristic of this type of narrative, which prove especially instructive in thinking about the narrativity of the *Heroides*. According to Bal, in contrast to a developmental narrative such as that presented in the *Odyssey*,\(^{21}\)

> a crisis form implies a restriction: only brief periods from the life of the actor are presented. In narrative painting the crisis is a privileged form for the obvious reason that a still image can only accommodate a limited number of events. What art historians call “the pregnant moment” is the pictorial equivalent of a crisis. Such paintings represent a single moment, but one which can only be understood as following the past and announcing the future.

Indeed, there is one epistle in particular that illustrates Bal’s model of the crisis narrative form perfectly—Ariadne’s letter to Theseus—an epistle, moreover, that is composed by a heroine who has been seen to cast both herself and her letter as a self-reflexive paradigm for the other abandoned women of the *Heroides* (10.79–80).\(^{22}\) Drawn substantially from the source text of

\(^{20}\) Byblis’ letter to her brother Caunus in *Met.* 9.530–63 offers an interesting parallel against which to assess the narrative qualities and qualifications of the elegiac *Heroides*. Like the heroines’ letters, the narrative context for Byblis’ epistle is configured as a moment of crisis, a “pregnant moment,” which the epic narrator freezes in order to permit Byblis the opportunity to reflect and comment upon her difficult situation. Byblis’ letter thus forms a clear part of the narrative of Book 9, but in that it functions to interrupt the development of that story it also seems temporarily—and temporally—to be separated from that surrounding narrative. And yet, as part of Ovid’s epic *carmen perpetuum*, this epistolary “break” in the narrative might as readily be seen as another of the author’s innovative storytelling devices—a narrative bridge no less than a narrative aporia. The letters scripted by Ovid’s elegiac heroines similarly form discrete parts of other larger narratives and, at the same time, also bridge gaps in the external stories (or master narratives) that surround them. See Knox (1995), 24 n.54.


\(^{22}\) “*nunc ego non tantum quae sum passura recordor, / sed quaecumque potest ulla relicta pati.*” (Now I recall not only the things that I am about to suffer, / But whatever things any abandoned woman may suffer.) Knox (1995), 247 (following Palmer), suggests that the lines may be spurious: “the Latinity is suspect: *recordor* with reference to future events, ‘to ponder,’ is unparalleled in the classical period. The couplet perhaps originated in a comment in the margin.” Verducci (1985), Lindheim
Catullus 64, Ovid’s Ariadne is more than an intertextual heroine—she is an ekphrastic heroine, the paradigmatic feminine subject of Roman narrative art. Catullus famously presents Ariadne as the focus of a decorative bed-covering and the point of crisis, the “pregnant moment,” at which Ovid elects to represent his heroine writing coincides with exactly the same moment depicted in Catullus’ ekphrasis.

Thus, in both epyllion and epistle, we see the image of Ariadne represented at the very point at which she becomes aware of Theseus’ departure and her own abandoned status, calling out to the disappearing ship, tearing at her hair in grief, and raging like a bacchant. So much is compressed into a single extended moment of crisis. But that present moment, Ovid makes us understand, is to be read as “following the past and announcing the future.” Ariadne tells us in her letter the history of how she came to be abandoned on the lonely shore of Naxos, of how she helped Theseus slay her half-brother the Minotaur, and of how Theseus had promised to marry her. She even introduces her analepsis with a familiar formula for introducing a narrative in epic: tempus erat . . . (10.7).

Ariadne also looks forward to the future, not only in anticipating the horrible death that she imagines must await her on the uninhabited island, but in foreshadowing the futures that the reader of her epistle knows lie ahead for her and for Theseus. Thus, Ariadne begs Theseus to turn his sails and his ship, to come back for her and avert disaster—that is, her death: “flecte ratem, Theseu, versoque relabere velo” (10.151)—“Turn around your ship, Theseus, change your sail and come back.” But her words also warn him to “change” his sails, to swap the black sails that she can hardly see against the dark sky (10.30f.) for the white sails that will forewarn his father of success, and so avert another disaster—the death of Aegeus. Ariadne’s prediction of the multiple possibilities for her own “end” and for the end of her story makes similar use of foreshadowing. Enumerating just some of

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(2003), and Kauffman (1986) take the couplet to be genuine and as evidence for the view that Ariadne is Ovid’s paradigm of the abandoned woman in the Heroides.


the thousand ways of dying (pereundi mille figurae, 10.81), she focuses upon her most vivid and present fear (10.83–86):

\[
\text{iam iam venturos aut hac aut suspicor illac,}
\]
\[
\text{qui lanient avido viscera dente, lupos.}
\]
\[
\text{quis scit an et fulvos tellus alat ista leones?}
\]
\[
\text{fortisan et saevas tigridas insula habet.}
\]

Now, now, here and there I look to see wolves rushing up, to tear at my flesh with their greedy fangs. Who knows whether this shore also breeds the tawny lion? And perhaps this island also has the savage tiger.

As Barchiesi has reminded us, Ariadne’s reference to her fear of tigers is highly significant:\(^{27}\) “Roman poets mention tigers only in a specific mythological context, the same in which their Greek predecessors mention panthers instead: the retinue of the god Bacchus.” Ariadne’s fear of wolves and lions on the island may be reasonable given her present circumstances, but her fear of tigers, given the imminence of Bacchus’ arrival along with his retinue of wild animals, is also fair—in its foreshadowing of a familiar “end” to her story. In fact a few lines later, Ariadne literally “foresees” Bacchus’ arrival from the sky. Looking out to sea and over the land, she sees nothing but danger: “caelum restabat—timeo simulacra deorum” (10.95)—looking to the sky, she is frightened by proleptic visions of gods.\(^{28}\) Catullus, of course, steps outside of his ekphrasis to give us the story of Ariadne’s rescue by Bacchus, but Ovid maintains the epistolary fiction of her letter to the end, revealing (or rather projecting) his heroine’s future—just as he reveals her past—through the narrative of a single moment.

The ekphrastic source text for Ariadne’s epistle, and the parallels that this source invites us to draw with narrative painting, makes Heroides 10 an obvious exemplar for Bal’s model of the crisis narrative. Yet each of the Heroides might similarly be identified as corresponding to this crisis form, and the dramatic moment at which each epistle is shown to intersect with its source text can be seen to represent precisely the “pregnant moment” to which Bal refers. Thus, as we have seen, Penelope writes at the moment of Ulysses’ return; Dido, sword in lap and pen in hand, writes in the minutes before her suicide as Aeneas prepares his ships to leave her; and Canace too writes in the final moments before her suicide, as her brother and lover Macareus rushes to save her. Indeed, Barchiesi appropriately employs Bal’s

\(^{27}\) Ibid., 24.
very phrase when he suggests that “[e]ach letter is meant to occur at a precise
temporal intersection, a ‘pregnant moment’ taking its place in a narrative
continuum.” In these epistles, the reader’s understanding that the present
moment of crisis follows on from events in the past and looks forward to
events yet to come is necessary to locate that moment in a narrative contin-
num. In fact, as we shall see, the reader’s prior familiarity with these events
will contribute significantly in the configuration of that sense of narrative
and continuity.

With significant parallels to Bal’s model of the crisis narrative, Paul
Ricoeur’s theory of narrative similarly stresses the importance of recollection
and anticipation, and their role in bridging the gaps between past, present,
and future in storytelling. Ricoeur’s hypothesis in Time and Narrative main-
tains that narrative is dependent on time—in order for there to be narrative,
there must not only be events, but events unfolding in time. Summarizing
this hypothesis in From Text to Action, Ricoeur maintains that:

... the common feature of human experience, that which is marked, organ-
ized and clarified by the fact of storytelling in all its forms, is its temporal
character. Everything that is recounted occurs in time, takes time, unfolds
temporally; and what unfolds in time can be recounted. Perhaps, indeed,
every temporal process is recognized as such only to the extent that it can be,
in one way or another, recounted. This reciprocity between narrativity and
temporality is the theme of my present research. (emphasis in original)

For Ricoeur, such reciprocity between narrativity and temporality is what
makes storytelling possible. In order for stories to be recounted through
and in narrative they must negotiate any “aporias,” any paradoxes, gaps or
discontinuities in time, to constitute a coherent and “joined-up” temporal

29. Barchiesi (2001), 19. See also Spentzou (2003), 162, who argues that “while the letters posi-
tion themselves within pre-existing longer stories, the positions they occupy are blank points in the
narratives of the arch-models, interstices between the ‘major,’ ‘important’ events.”

30. According to Bal, there are many possibilities for extending the chronological compass of the
crisis narrative, primarily through “asides,” through “recollection,” and through “references to past and
future.” What is more, with particular relevance to the Heroides, she suggests that (1997), 211: “There
is another kind of diversion that can also serve to extend the time span of the crisis form: a minor actor
can become the protagonist in his own fabula.” This style of “diversion” precisely describes the kind
of narrative that we typically see in the Heroides: a bit part actor or minor character from one of the
master narratives of the classical canon is transformed into the protagonist of her own narrative. Her
crisis, her moment, thus represents a diversion or deviation away from that master narrative, but at
the same time it also represents a related part and a continuum of that narrative—an event branching
out from the original time-line of the fabula narrated in the source text.

experience for both their characters and readers. Adopting an Augustinian model of time and temporality, Ricoeur suggests that attention, memory, and expectation are the “connectors” with which both storytellers and readers close the gaps between past, present, and future, and with which they bridge the aporias of time and narrative to effect a narrative continuum. Thus, even when presented with an isolated part of a story, a single moment or event extrapolated from a broader narrative—as in the *Heroides*—it is possible to view that fragment as part of a narrative continuum: a continuum that is enabled by the memory and recall of the familiar master narratives that have inspired that fragment. Augustine’s reflections on the nature of time nicely narrativize this aspect of Ricoeur’s theory:

Suppose I am about to recite a familiar psalm. Before I begin, my expectation is directed towards the whole. But when I have begun, the verses from it which I leave in the past become things in my memory. The life of this act of mine is stretched in two ways: into my memory, because of the words I have already said, and into my expectation, because of those I am going to say. But my attention is on what is present: and so the future shifts to become the past. As I move further ahead, the shorter the expectation and the longer the memory becomes, until all expectation is consumed, the entire work is done and has passed into my memory. What happens with the psalm as a whole happens also in its particular parts and individual syllables. The same is true of a longer work in which perhaps that psalm may be just a part. It is also true of the entire life of an individual person, in which all actions are part of a whole, and of the entire history of “the sons of men” in which all human lives are but bit-parts.

Applying this paradigm to Ovid’s *Heroides*, we can see clearly that, through her own attention to the present moment, recall of past events, and expectation for the future—and, crucially, through the attention, recall, and expectation that she evokes in the external readers of her elegiac letter—each of Ovid’s heroines is also a (short)storyteller, effectively producing a complex but complete fabula through her fragmented epistolary narration. But what kind of stories do Ovid’s heroines tell? What kind of narratives tell of a crisis, of a moment, an event that simultaneously seems both a continuum of and

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32. See Ricoeur (1984b) and (1979).
35. See Spentzou (2003), 161–96 on the *Heroides* as short stories. Indeed, as Barchiesi claims (2001), 32, “There is no doubt that a single elegy can project its own narrative context, by laying down the tracks for a temporal development, by taking its place in a plot already known in part.”
a branching out from the time line of a familiar fabula narrated in another text? If the *Heroïdes* are not to be read as intertextual anomalies but as narratives in their own right, how are we to read them?

Narratologists have identified as a relatively recent modern phenomenon the trend for writers to continue, fill in, or offer a prehistory to a well-known story written by another author. Jean Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Alexandra Ripley’s *Scarlett*, and Tom Stoppard’s *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* are oft-cited examples of such “apocryphal” narratives that seek to satisfy our desire for additional information about familiar fictional heroes and heroines, grafting new developments onto a well-known story line. Indeed, such stories depend considerably upon the reader’s familiarity with an original fabula—a possible world in which alternative histories, futures, and presents can be imagined.

However, this phenomenon has its own ancient history: speculative, counterfactual, and apocryphal narratives considering a possible world in which characters may have behaved otherwise and events may have happened differently can be traced back to Livy, who wonders what might have happened if Alexander the Great had lived longer and, having subjugated Asia, had then turned his attentions to Europe and to the might of Rome (9.16–18). Indeed, one of the earliest examples of such “What if?” speculation appears in Ovid’s own *Amores* 2.14.9–22, where the poet speculates provocatively on what might have happened to mankind, to the outcome of the Trojan war, to the foundation of Rome, to the Julian line, to his own and Corinna’s lives, had abortion been practiced more widely in the past. But it is not until the *Heroïdes* that we see this style of literary counterfactual/counterfictional narrative fully sustained and developed into a form close to its modern parallels. Thus, Spentzou describes the *Heroïdes* as stories that represent “the traces and drifting aspirations of what could have happened in a different wor(1)d.”

According to narratologist Gary Saul Morson, reflecting upon the contemporary shape of counterfactual/counterfictional stories:

> These continuations may be set after the events in the original work (sequels); there are also “prequel[s],” taking place before, and “interquel[s]” . . . which fill in temporal gaps within the original story. The precise timing is largely irrelevant to the interest that sustains the form: what is important is that

37. Spentzou (2003), 194.
there be more events, other events, “side” events that could have happened. Because these [stories] usually do not explicitly raise philosophical questions about time—they presume but rarely discuss hypothetical temporality—a place must be found for them somewhere on the established time line. They are, in the root sense of the word, parodies—“beside songs”—but because that term has taken on the meaning of discrediting an original, the form might best be called paraquels.

The characteristics that Morson attributes to contemporary narratives of this form might similarly be applied to an ancient text like the Heroides. For in the sense that the Heroides fit into or fill-in temporal gaps in the “original” or source narratives, they too might be identified as narrative “interquels.” And in the sense that they occupy space upon a parallel chronology and narrative line to those originals, “parodying” them in this respect and more, the Heroides also correspond closely to Morson’s model of the paraquel narrative. We might identify the Heroides, then, as “What if?” stories, as virtual histories, or counterfictional narratives—plausible but speculative side-shoots from the established time lines and the established narratives of familiar tales.

Barchiesi, however, advises against seeing the Heroides as an early prototype of the sort of narrative form we find in Tom Stoppard’s play Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead, which offers us a new look at Shakespeare’s Hamlet “from the wings”—an alternative history for two minor characters from a familiar story. He maintains that:

Such literary operations in general presuppose that one perceive within the models an empty space to be filled (whether before the fact, after, or within the very body of the story), or at least that the plot may be supplemented in one of its interrupted branches. Silius Italicus 8.50ff., for example, fills us in on what happened to Anna, Dido’s loving sister, after we last saw her by the pyre in Aeneid 4. With Ovid it is not even the case that the narrator conceives a completely alternative plot to the traditional story line, using the latter as a ‘possible world’ into which new developments can be grafted. . . . The poetics of the Heroides suggest, more simply, that new windows can be opened on stories already completed.

Yet, as we have seen, it is precisely within the blank spaces within the body of familiar stories that the heroines’ letters are written, and it is upon the interrupted (because not yet written) lines that branch off from the plots of

those familiar stories that Ovid locates his own newer narratives. It is true that neither Ovid nor his heroines seem to conceive or project an entirely different plot or alternative history to that with which we and they are already familiar—Ariadne does not think about building a raft, Penelope does not consider marrying one of the suitors, Dido does not plan to raise her unborn child. But this does not necessarily limit the treatment of Ovid’s literary models as “possible worlds” in and about which other possibilities, other possible stories, can be told. Following Vaihinger, Kermode argues that “the fictional as if is distinguished . . . from hypothesis because it is not in question that at the end of the finding out process it will be dropped.”  

In reading the Heroides we may wonder (among many other speculative and counterfactual/counterfictional possibilities) what if Aeneas were to stay in Carthage, and Dido were to have his child, what if Theseus were to turn his ship around and come back for Ariadne, or Hippolytus were to accept his stepmother’s improper invitation. Yet, we know that “in the end” these things did not and will not come to pass; in the end, we drop the what if and we accept the familiar ending, the story as we know it. But this does not negate the significance of the speculation. For we have realized that what did happen may have been otherwise and that other outcomes were—for a time—possible.

As we saw in the case of Ariadne’s epistle, foreshadowing in the Heroides works to remind us that the future for each of Ovid’s heroines is predetermined, always already foretold in the original source texts that Ovid employs. Both time and narrative, from this perspective, are linear—moving forward along predetermined track lines already laid down by Homer, Virgil, Catullus, and others. The reader knows what will happen in the end of each heroine’s narrative—but to the heroine herself many possible futures may seem open at every present moment. Indeed, it is significant in this light that Ovid’s Oenone—famous in the literary tradition for her power to see and predict the future—has none of these powers of foresight in the Heroides.  

For Oenone, as for the other heroines, the future is not predetermined, somehow and somewhere already prescribed, it is unknown and open in many different possible directions.

We can see this most clearly in the alternative futures that some of the heroines sketch out for themselves in their letters. Phyllis imagines throwing herself into the sea to die—but she also writes of poisoning, stabbing, or hanging herself, all to punish Demophoon for his perceived neglect by

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dying before what she sees as “her time” (2.131–43). If Achilles will not consent to take her home as his bride, Briseis imagines following him as his captive slave to be ill-treated—or not—by his future wife (3.67–82). And Laodamia seems to speak for all of the heroines in the collection when she writes (13:149f.)

nos sumus incertae; nos anxius omnia cogit,
quae possunt fieri, facta putare timor.

We are unsure; anxious fear forces us to imagine all things which might happen to have happened.

Ariadne, as we have seen, imagines the various different ways that she might meet her death (10.79–88); there are, she believes, at least a thousand possibilities (*mille figuræ*–10.81), but she also fears another alternative—that, instead of meeting her death on the deserted island, she might instead be captured and enslaved (10.89–92). For Ariadne then, there are a thousand and one possible futures open to her, each one branching off from the present moment, the “now” of her writing. But for the reader of her letter, there is only one future awaiting her—time and narrative can and must move ahead in one direction only.

In line with her projection of many possible futures, Ariadne also imagines an alternative history that might have brought her to a different present moment. She imagines what might have happened if her brother Androgeos were still alive and if Minos had not sought retribution from Athens for his son’s death there (10.99–104):

*viveret Androgeos utinam, nec facta luisses
impia funeribus, Cecropi terra, tuis;
nec tua mactasset nodoso stipite, Theseu,
ardua parte virum dextera, parte bovem;
nec tibi, quae reditus monstrarent, fila dedissem,
fila per adductas saepe recepta manus.*

I would that Androgeos had lived! And that you, land of Cecrops, had not been made to atone for your impious deeds with the death of your children. And that you, Theseus, had not slaughtered with gnarled club in your hard right hand the thing that was part man and part bull. And that I had not given you the thread to show you the way back, that thread that was so often taken up through the fingers it led.
Had the past been different, then so, too, would be the present and, Ariadne logically surmises, so, too, would be her future.

Penelope also imagines an alternative or virtual history for herself and Ulysses, wondering “what if” Paris had been shipwrecked on his way to Sparta and there had been no Trojan war (1.5–10). Medea similarly wishes that she and Jason had both perished at sea (12.121–26) so that she might not have had to suffer as she does now. In each of these circumstances, the virtual past is imagined as branching out in various different possible directions. These heroines know of course—as do we—that actual events followed only one course and one history, but in their analeptic projections and consideration of counterfactual alternatives to the past, the heroines show us both what did happen and also what might have happened. And in their proleptic projections of future possibilities, they remind us that what is to happen may happen otherwise. These effects, according to Morson, are the result of “sideshadowing”—a side projection, not from the future or past as in a foreshadowing or backshadowing, but from an alternative present:42

Sideshadowing reminds us that the presentness we so palpably experience pertained as well to earlier moments and will characterize future ones. In this respect, it calls attention to the ways in which narratives, which often turn earlier presents into mere pasts, tend to create a single line of development out of a multiplicity. Alternatives once visible disappear from view and an anachronistic sense of the past surreptitiously infects our understanding. By restoring the presentness of the past and cultivating a sense that something else might have happened, sideshadowing restores some of the presentness that has been lost. It alters the way we think about earlier events and the narrative models used to describe them.

Thus, although each of the Heroidean narratives unfolds, to use Frank Kermode’s phrase, “under the shadow of the end,” and we read them fully conscious that the predetermined future for each heroine will unfold as it has always unfolded before, we also read as if other possibilities were also available, as if something else might happen. What is more, in the case of the Heroïdes, sideshadowing also alters the way that we think about the earlier source texts and the literary models that Ovid employs for his heroines’ letters. The intertextual Heroïdes cast a sideways shadow that falls upon each of the “original” stories from which Ovid’s narratives branch out, so that our future rereading of those stories is adumbrated by our prior reading of his

paraquels. And an anachronistic sense of what might have been, what will be, and what is, surreptitiously infects our understanding of time and narrative. We, like the heroines themselves, are unsure. For sideshadowing forces us to imagine that all the things which might happen, have happened—quae possunt fieri, facta. Or might yet.
PART III

Plots across Poems

Elegy and Story
Chapter 6

Self-Reflections on Elegy Writing, in Two Parts

The Metapoetics of Diptych Elegies in Ovid,
Amores 1.11 + 12

Sophia Papaioannou

Ovid’s so-called diptych poems are pairs of poems often in successive or proximal order, which either display a dramatic sequence or are variations of the same theme. These poems could be seen as bipartite narratives, treating a single story from the standpoint of different (parallel or even juxtaposed) poetic voices. In the following pages I would like to explore some aspects of the narrative dynamics in Am. 1.11 + 12, which I read as two parts of a single story. In my analysis the narrative continuity of Am. 1.11 + 12 is established through a study of the poetics in the characterization and performance of Nape, the maid/messenger, and in her identification with the tablets/message she is entrusted to carry. A common story line that runs through the two poems traces the various stages of an effort to define “artistry” simultaneously with the construction of the poet through whom this “artistry” is exhibited. The poeticizing of these interactive, branching developments, which deemphasize the traditional primacy of the poet/auctor’s voice, allows the poet-under-construction to control the narrative, and so defines the narrativity of the Ovidian text. The diptych at hand, I will argue, traces this complex literary process. My reading of

2. Both Propertius and Ovid are fond of diptychs. Propertius 1.7 + 9 and 3.4 + 5 are considered typical examples. In the Amores significant diptychs include 1.11 + 12, 2.7 + 8, 2.13 + 14.
3. Prince’s dictionary (1987) offers the following entry for narrativity: “The set of properties characterizing NARRATIVE and distinguishing it from non-narrative; the formal and contextual features making a narrative more or less narrative, as it were. The degree of narrativity of a given narrative
poems 1.11 and 1.12, both independently and as a narrative unit, introduce the mechanics of construing elegiac poetry. Ovid, by assimilating Nape to the *tabellae* (poem), breathes life into them, giving them an identity and a mind of their own, and in doing so, he also stages his own literary “failure”; this allows him to experiment with elegy writing as a form and an illusion of identity, and to appreciate the challenges that a potential independently minded rival composer could present. Overall, this simulated competition in both halves of the diptych may reflect a subconscious, yet real and serious cause of anxiety on the author’s part: the concern about the survival and dissemination both of his text and of the story recorded in this text once, posthumously, his writing truly escapes his control.

In *Am.* 1.11 Ovid instructs Nape, Corinna’s hairdresser, to deliver a letter to his mistress. The diction and thematic subtext of these instructions allude to the process of composing an elegy. This composition process is projected into a dramatized situation in which the poet is a lover who strives to conquer his mistress, and more specifically, to talk her into having sex with him, and, in order to attain his goal, he enlists the assistance of the mistress’s faithful maidservant. This process of conquest is also laid out as a metadramatic competition that operates on two levels. On the first level, Ovid’s self-projection as the poet/lover stages a “conquest by persuasion” of the *puella.* His effort to script the mistress’s act is resisted, however: first, because his script runs the risk of being intercepted by the maid who may alter it in her own wishful effort to take control over the reaction of her mistress, and second, because the mistress may develop critical thinking of her own and as such offer no guarantees of her compliance.

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4. On the identification of the *tabellae* with the composition of elegy, Wyke (2002a), 164, commenting on the function of the writing-tablets in the Sulpicia poems in Tibullus Book 3, is compelling: “following the elegiac trope of identifying love and poetry, writing-tablets (*tabellis*, 3.13.7) signify both erotic messages to a beloved and book-publication; the beloved’s name, *Cerinthus* (3.14.2; 3.17.1), the honey-sweetness of both a lover and a poem [sc. etym. from *cera*].”

5. On love elegy as persuasion, see Stroh (1971); James (2001). James (2003) adds the antagonistic element to the drawing of the male-female relations, for she reads the elegiac game of persuasion not merely as an interaction or exchange but as a clearly defined partnered opposition motivated on both sides by self-interest: the poet/lover wishes to persuade the *puella* to have sex with him for free, while the *puella* resists because she wishes to be paid for offering her favors. This opposition introduces, and to some extent imposes, the female perspective in the interpretation of an elegy, and it ascertains that a successful generically centered elegy will always employ one. According to James, the prominence of this female point of view, albeit motivated strictly by utilitarian expectations, first, stresses the importance of the role of the female in the process of persuasion, and second, introduces the female object as an actively participating second reader who makes clear and particular responses.
own, and, accordingly, reject the poet’s advances. On the second level, Ovid studies the infrastructure of elegy: he dramatizes his experimentation with elegiac poetics, and he identifies the vantage point of view of his metapoetic self (or the auctor who designs this elegiac sample of male persuasion) with the homodiegetic perspective of his lover self (or the actor who undertakes to realize this elegiac synthesis). The acting of both roles takes place simultaneously, and this results in an incessant shifting of roles and corresponding voices. A similar twofold role, however, is something that the puella, too, is expected to seek, but so too can Nape, the hairdresser—depending on Ovid’s literary identity (auctor-elegiac poet or actor-poet/lover) at the time, which specifies the interpretive perspective. Naturally, both the plot of the diptych and the acting of the characters in it have been fully developed in the mind of the auctor Ovid well before they are sketched out to produce the text of Am. 1.11 + 12. The great Augustan elegist, however, adroitly fuses his auctor self with his actor character of a poet/lover: he directly convinces the female subjects of his narrative that they have the power to seek and achieve their poetic enfranchisement and character independence, and he convinces indirectly his readers to read with interest through an elegy that unravels a well-known fabula—that is, the failure of the male poet/lover to secure from his puella the sexual favors he is after, because every time this fabula is “textualized” in elegiac verse, it appears as a different story.

In his metaliterary interpretation of the role of the slave as the go-between facilitating the communication between the poet and his mistress, Fitzgerald has argued that Nape the maid/carrier and the tablets/carriers of the

6. A narrator is the speaker of the narrative discourse. He or she is the agent who establishes communicative contact with an addressee (the “narratee”), who manages the exposition, who decides what is to be told, how it is to be told (especially, from what point of view, and in what sequence), and what is to be left out. The two types of narrators are first-person/homodiegetic narrators and authorial/heterodiegetic narrators. Homodiegetic narrators narrate first-person narrative situations, that is, situations they actually experienced. Authorial or heterodiegetic narrators narrate figural narrative situations, that is, situations wherein they did not participate in person.

7. In referring to the written form of an elegy as the text, its standardized plot as the fabula, and its different dramatizations in the different poems of an elegiac corpus as the story, I follow Bal’s (1985) terminology. Overall, unless otherwise indicated, I understand the Ovidian elegiac text, and in particular the Am. 1.11 + 12 diptych, as narrative, on the basis of Bal’s definition of narrative and narratology.

8. Lindheim (2003), 5–6, 75–77, 80–82, 180–84, specifies repetition as the single most decisive characteristic in the self-portrayal of the female heroines in the Heroides, which inevitably stymies the illusion Ovid so diligently tries to convey—namely, that we are auditing authentic female voices and patterns of behavior. Lindheim graphically captures Ovid’s simulation of the female voice as “transvestite ventriloquism,” a phrase she borrows from Harvey (1992). Lindheim’s thesis about the seminality of repetition, and occasionally even repetitiveness, in the engine of the Heroides, also applies to the structure of love elegy as a genre.
recorded text are mutually variable media of Ovid’s communication strategy. This “constant slippage between tablets and maid,” Fitzgerald argues, conveys the impression that the former is an extension or a substitute of the latter. Such conflated writing, the creation of a “multiple texture/text,” represents, in Barthes’s definition of the text, “not a coexistence of meanings but a passage, an overcrossing; thus it answers not to an interpretation, even a liberal one, but to . . . a dissemination.” Ovid’s staging of his lover’s negative reaction in 1.12 captures the frustration of the elegiac poet who has produced a “bad” elegy—an elegy that has failed to move, and so to “construct” successfully, a puella. For the poet/lover, the homodiegetic impersonation of Ovid, the agent responsible for the abortive elegiac poem is the messenger who, in addition to forging his letter, is to blame also for assuming, ironically, unauthorized authorial initiatives. Yet, instead of the suspected forger Nape, our poet/lover in 1.12 blames the tablets, which, thus personified, replace the maid both as target of blame and as the masterminding mediator deserving critique. The objectification of the mediating servant, I propose, as she gradually identifies with the writing tablets, poeticizes the literary author’s labor to master his inspiration, and allegorizes the author’s anxiety over the reception of his literary composition.

The narrative sequence of the two poems is forged on the last four verses of 1.11. There the tablets clearly take the place of Nape as the poet’s direct addressee:

Non ego victrices lauro redimire tabellas
   nec Veneris media ponere in aede morer;
   subscribam VENERI FIDAS SIBI NASO MINISTRAS
   DEDICAT. AT NUPER VILE FUISTIS ACER.

11. Bal (1985), 13 groups together as objects both the actors in a fabula, whom she perceives as a set of more or less standardized characters, and various factors such as locations and things. The fusion of the tablets and Nape in the literarily self-conscious elegiac poet harmonizes ideally with this narratological conception of objectification.
12. In proposing the dissociation of the tabellae from gender I suggest an original, poetically oriented, reading of the diptych. The diptych opens with Am. 1.11, a poem that observes the rules of a typical love elegy and welcomes a reading from a gender-defining perspective. As the poem unravels and the emphasis moves from the puella to the maid to the tabellae, gender is progressively replaced by poetics as the primary interpretive parameter. The two fuse again toward the end of Am. 1.12, where a statement on the inextricability of gender and poetic self-consciousness in the infrastructure of elegiac poetry recurs in the conclusion.
Without wasting a second I would take the victorious tablets, and bind them all around with laurel, and place them at the center of Venus’ shrine. I would write underneath: “TO VENUS NASO DEDICATES HIS FAITHFUL MINISTERS—YOU, WHICH UNTIL NOW WERE ONLY VILE MAPLE-WOOD.”

The tablets are labeled “faithful servants,” not unlike Nape in the opening section of the poem (3 ministeris . . . cognita, “known for [your] ministry”; 6 fida reperta mihi, “often proven faithful to me”). For Fitzgerald, this form of ring composition places the inanimate and animate ministers on the same level, implying that once the service is executed the mediator returns to the status of the tool. His analysis of 1.12, focusing on the vocabulary that describes the curses and accusations against the tablets, identifies linguistic and stylistic tropes reminiscent of the opening lines of 1.11, which first introduced Nape’s character.13

Fitzgerald’s discussion on the tablet-ification of Nape presupposes an earlier analysis of the diptych by Henderson.14 The latter, commenting primarily on the other prominent diptych of the Amores, 2.7 + 8, traces the closeness in the description of Nape and the tablets, and how Ovid has magisterially brought the two together. The careful selection of words and phrases to refer alternatively to the maid and the tablets, mirrors the constant fusion of the two throughout the diptych: in 1.11, Nape, tabellas, cera, tabellas, cera, littera, tabellas, fidas . . . ministras, vile . . . acer; in 1.12, tabellae, littera, Nape, ligna, tabellas, tuque . . . cera, inutile lignum, vosque . . . hae cerae, vos . . . duplicates . . . vos . . . cera. Henderson baptizes this phenomenon “oneness-and/as plurality” or “bifurcation of duplicity.”15

This similar, mediating role of Nape and her substitutes, tabellae, cera, and lignum, is deliberately pronounced, in the placement of ACER as the concluding word of 1.11. The term means a type of maple wood noted for its firmness that made it especially suitable for writing tablets (LS s.v.), and in this sense it becomes synonymous with the writing tablet. The specification of the maple wood as the raw material for the tablets is part of a witty

14. Henderson (1991), 38–88. Nape, discussed on pp. 74–81, is considered a forerunner of Cypassis, the so-named hairdresser of Corinna, and Ovid’s accomplice in 2.7 and 2.8. The crucial difference, however, that separates the two characters, and hence their broader symbolism, relates to the fact that Cypassis has clearly slept with Ovid, representing an erotic substitute of her mistress (albeit forcibly so), while there is nothing in Am. 1.11 + 12 to make us believe that Nape has ever shared Ovid’s bed.
wordplay. *Acer* is a relatively rare form; beyond the particular passage only one other source, Pliny *NH* 33.11.52, specifically refers to the use of maple in writing tablets.16 Once Nape delivers the message to Corinna (1.11.15ff.), she fulfills her function as message carrier. In the remainder of the diptych this role is taken by the *tabellae*, which are conspicuously celebrated, by being promised a public offer of thanksgiving in the form of an epigram (a memorialized, indestructible text). The closing of the poem with the word *ACER* bespeaks the poet’s confidence in the effectiveness of the tablets as facilitators of communication. The next line, the opening verse of 1.12, features the *tabellae* as the last word, linking the first part of the diptych to the second. Additionally, *ACER* anagrammatized reads *CERA*. The entwining of *ACER* and *CERA* portrays in an original fashion the actual indivisibility of wooden frame and waxy writing surface, a requirement for the *tabellae* to exist. The Latin readers accustomed to recite the elegiac texts, should identify an additional aspect of the *ACER/CERA* wordplay, and a different ‘link’ between wood and wax, when they spell out uninterrupted two or more times the form *ACER* in succession (*ACERACERACER . . .*). Nape and the *tabellae* are transformed into abstract symbols typical of their original identities; this, conveniently, makes their union logically possible.

Once effected, the seamless unity between the two parts of the diptych is maintained on the basis of a series of antitheses. Language and thematics jointly participate in reversing in the latter poem, motifs and ideas set in the former. The keenly anticipated “victorious tablets” (*victrices . . . tabellas*) at 1.11.25 are discarded as “cruel,” *tristes . . . tabellae*, on the top line of 1.12. The commanded “VENI,” “Come!” (1.11.24), is not obeyed (1.12.2, *infelix littera . . . negat*, “the unhappy letter says no!”). The promised offering to Venus (1.11.26) is, instead, tossed away (1.12.29–30, *quid precer . . . nisi . . . immundo cera sit alba situ?* “what should I pray for . . . unless that . . . your wax turn colorless from foul abandon?”), and the *splendida cera* that is expected to host the mistress’s much awaited response (1.11.20) is cursed to rot (1.12.13, *proiectae trivis iacatis*, to “lie there, outcasts, at the crossroad”; 1.12.29–30, *vos cariosa senectus rodat, . . . cera sit alba*, “[unless that] rotten old age gnaw you away . . . and your wax turn colorless”). The “faithful servants” of 1.11 (1.11.27, *fidas . . . ministras*), moreover, have betrayed the poet; 1.12.27, *ergo ego vos rebus duplices pro nomine sensi* (“indeed, I have realized that you are ‘duplicitous’ in your dealings—just as your name tells”), punning on the duplicity and untrustworthiness of the tablets as messengers. Then, the “tenderness” of the erotic language of the poet’s invitation

(1.12.22, *molliaque ad dominam verba ferenda dedi!*, “[to these tablets] did I give my tender words to be carried to my mistress!”; cf. 1.11.14, *cetera fert blanda cera notata manu*, “as for the rest, it is all cut in the wax by my caring hand”), is juxtaposed with the “harsh” words (1.12.24 *duro . . . ore*) of Corinna’s rejection, which are likened to the speech of a legal text (1.12.23, *aptius hae capiant vadimonia garrula cerae*, “more aptly would these tablets receive the verbose legal documents”), dry and often long-winded in style, but, interestingly, also fixed and precisely prescribed, unlike the vague, easily adaptable, and prone to shape-shifting, “tender” promises of love.

The concatenation of antitheses in the Ovidian text does not just reflect the potentially duplicitous character of the text cut on the *tabellae*; more than that, it highlights the variability factor that distinguishes an epistolary text.\(^\text{17}\) This finds an apt description in Altman’s words as follows: “The letter . . . does tend to define itself in terms of polarities such as . . . presence/absence, bridge/barrier. These polarities guarantee the letter’s flexibility. . . . The definition of epistolarity is . . . charged with paradox and contradiction. The opposite of almost any important trait can be equally a characteristic of the letter form.”\(^\text{18}\) The epistolary factor, then, introduces to the overall theoretical appreciation of the Ovidian diptych structure additional aspects, which determine the interpretation of a deliberately fluid fabula. The textual rendering of this fabula in the *Am.* 1.11 + 12 diptych aims precisely at integrating in verse-narrative some of the theoretical conventions of the epistolary genre.

Since narrative continuity depends on the logically coherent development of the recorded story line, it is important for the reader of the diptych to realize that the text of *Am.* 1.11 is, partly, also the text inscribed (or intended to be so) by the poet/lover on the tablets in order to serve as means of communication between two persons who cannot be together physically at the same time. In this respect, the *duplices tabellae*, which are literally folded together in double-jointed shape to hold the message-bridge between the “absent” poet and the “present” *puella* reader, operate as substitute for the poet. Therefore, the written text they carry creates the illusion of the poet’s presence and allegedly replaces his actual words—a metaphor of two parts

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17. The contemporary debate on epistolary poetry as distinct literary genre, is briefly mentioned in Kennedy (2002), 220–21; Kennedy’s piece offers a good introduction to Ovid’s embrace in the *Heroides* of the conventions that distinguish epistolary writing as literary genre; it further advances ideas originally argued in his (1984) article.

18. Altman (1982), 185–87. Altman’s book and, more recently, McArthur (1990) are two classic theoretical works on epistolarity, and particularly on the epistolary novel; both are among the texts recommended as material for further reading by Kennedy (2002), 232.
coming into one. The literal and metaphorical process of the “translation” (transferre) of the written text, which is realized when the catalyst/messenger delivers the message and the content of the text is communicated, constitutes a narrative. What happens, though, when the go-between nurtures authorial ambitions of her own, and thus contests the poet’s control of the puella? The prospect of a message manipulated by an ambitious messenger, and the impact of this on redirecting the focus, the ends, and the control of a narrative, should remind us of the literary culture of Plautine comedy with its forged identities and competing scripts—a culture where character manipulation and character shape-shifting is the core of the genre’s literary success.

The literary precedent of the servus callidus who intercepts or forges the scripts/letters of others raises the possibility that Ovid/the poet, operating under the assumption that his audience acknowledges the strong presence of theatricality in the world of the Amores, encourages the idea that Nape/the letter carrier could well act on her own volition to access the content of the tabellas. This introduces new criteria in the appreciation of the elusive dimensions of Nape’s literary role which, as aforementioned, is founded on two premises: first, Nape is Ovid’s creation and her complex role is designed foremost to serve Ovid’s literary interests, to celebrate his authorial wit; second, Nape, set in the dramatized environment of a diptych, leads the action in a two-part script marked by plot turnaround.

Ovid/the love-struck poet acts in a love elegy of his own creation which develops around a typical elegiac moment: the erotic appeal to his beloved via a letter whose delivery is entrusted to the lady’s loyal ancilla. And as if struck by the realization that this is a popular and frequently revisited theme, he decides to follow a new approach. He designs his messenger in

19. The relationship between Roman (and Greek New) comedy and elegy is widely acknowledged, and there are several examples of antagonistic exchanges between eloquent young lovers and their countervailing courtesan addressees in Plautus that could have influenced directly the dramatic nature of the elegiac amatory exchanges; see detailed bibliography on the relationship between the palliata and love elegy in James (1998 and 1997). The character of the maid as intermediary, in particular, calls to mind the role of the lena of the palliata; the latter, in addition to a greedy, drunken bawd, may also be a trusted advisor of the puella, and a facilitator in her secret meetings with her young lover; in her elegiac metastasis, the lena is a formidable opponent of the poet/lover, while the part of the female confident/intermediary is acted out by the maid; on the relationship between the lenae of comedy and elegy, see, for example, Myers (1996). Nape’s suggestive comparison to a “lena” by the rejected poet/lover in Am. 1.12 is discussed later in this chapter.

20. The casting of a mistress’s maid as the go-between in a love-affair is a common motif in Latin literature, attested at least as early as Terence (Heaut. 300f.), and likely inspired by Hellenistic models. A list of well-known Latin adaptations of this motif is discussed in McKeown (1989), 308–10, who suggests Meleager AP 5.182 as the leading model behind Am. 1.11.
the pattern of the Plautine *callidus servus*, but reverses the character’s sex: thus, his *servus* becomes an *ancilla*, who, further, serves not one but two masters, and whose loyalty is anything but a given for either of them. 21 This go-between, empowered by her role as *callidus(a) servus(a)*, develops unanticipated playwright skills that seriously question her trustworthiness. And so, the script finally enacted is outright innovative—precisely the opposite of the stereotypical, code-conforming “elegiac-invitation” scenario, which one might have expected at the opening of *Am.* 1.11: as the reader of *Am.* 1.12 comes to realize, the letter, written to solicit an erotic invitation and demonstrate the lover’s persuasive skills, was intercepted by the go-between in order to serve her own authorial ambitions and her wish to assert character independence.

In this case of an intermediary of disputed loyalty, the author’s effort to communicate effectively is subject to forgery. 22 It was remarked earlier that Nape’s skill qualifies her as *docta*, a standard modifier for the elegiac mistress in Roman erotic poetry. Nape’s superior intelligence and discretion (1.11.2, *docta*, “expert”; 3 *cognita*, “known for”; 4, *ingeniosa*, “skilled”) are mentioned repeatedly, precisely because “knowledge” actually is a “written-up acting part,” an alternative form of narrative. According to Prince’s definition, narrative always recounts one or more events; but as etymology suggests (the term narrative is related to the Latin *GNARUS*), it also represents a particular mode of knowledge. It does not simply mirror what happens; it explores and devises what can happen. It does not merely recount changes of state; it constitutes and interprets them as signifying parts of signifying wholes. 23

In this view, the catalytic authorial role of the “unpredictable” go-between Nape projects to her own *ingenium*—the *ingenium* of the fictive narrative agent—the narrative knowledge of the poet who consciously created this agent.

21. The metadramatic character of the *callida ancilla* is actually present in the *palliata*: Milphidippa in the *Miles Gloriosus* also acts as the servant of two masters. The loyal maid of Acroteleutium in Plautus’ script, and in the embedded script put together by Palaestrio to fool the miles, fakes the betrayal of her mistress and transfers her favors onto Palaestrio, who in turn fools the braggart soldier when he promises to use his control over her to serve the soldier’s interests.

22. Letters and letter-writers go to great lengths to secure protection against interception and forgery: personalized modes of address and salutations, emphasis on individualized handwriting, trusted messengers, coded language, personal seals; see Nicholson (1994), 33–63.

In addition, the maid’s occupation, hairdressing, is also tied to metapoetics: elegiac poetry is particularly attentive to language descriptive of the physique of the elegiac puella, because the technical language of the poetics of the elegiac genre often identifies with the vocabulary of the feminine physique. The hair of the elegiac mistress, specifically, is a prominent carrier of metaliterary significance, encouraging experimentation with the idea of equating the character in control of hairstyling with the composer of an elegiac text. The emphasis on sorting properly the “disheveled hair” (incertos crines) as early as the opening verse of the poem, underscores precisely the hairdresser’s literary aptitude. Colligere, “to gather, pull together,” never before refers to hairstyling and hair arrangement, nor does incertos elsewhere mean also untidy hair; yet, it also frequently translates as “dubious,” “ambivalent,” and “uncertain.” A literary composition depends on the collectio of raw material followed by careful arrangement (in ordine ponere, “to set in order”) of the randomly sorted (incertos); or, in the language of poetics, by infusing written, and hence prescribed and restricted speech, with options of alternative meanings. In short, a messenger can be seen more broadly as a reflexive allegory for the complex process of verbal communication. The narrativity of Am. 1.11 + 12 mirrors, as much as it depends on, this anxiety over language control and meaning. The intercepting go-between, who identifies with the letter she carries, redefines the elegiac conventions when she is cast as an auteur; alternatively, if she is appreciated at face value, namely, as the sophisticated construction she truly is, she encapsulates the inventiveness of Ovid’s elegiac artistry.

24. Keith (1994). Keith’s comments are corroborated by Wyke, whose study of Am. 3.1 has discussed the significance of focusing on individual characteristics in order to construct credible personifications of Tragedy and Elegy; these same characteristics throughout the Amores are attributed to various puellae. Elegy in particular is portrayed as the epitome of the puella, and conversely, Elegy’s physiognomy in Am. 3.1 could well be observed in any elegiac puella; see Wyke (2002b), 115–54.

25. On the hair and particularity of hairstyle as distinguishing feature of Elegia in Am. 3.1, see Wyke (2002b), 122. On the witticism and Alexandrian-like erudition in the three successive metaphors applied to Corinna’s hair in Am. 1.14, and on the poem hosting a particularly eloquent literary portrayal of the elegiac puella’s hair, see Boyd (1997), 117–21. Kennedy (1993), 71–77 offers an interesting reading of the semiotics of the hair and its role in the debate over the elegist’s control over his work and his puella.

26. McKeown (1989) ad loc. In Am. 1.7, the disheveling of the puella’s hair is a key theme, appearing in a curious context at the very end of the poem. There, the lover urges his mistress to compose herself, to tidy up her appearance (especially her disheveled hair), as if the entire apology he just offered to her were an exercise upon a standardized literary theme. The mere straightening of the mistress’s hair brings everything back in order, and the relationship between the poet and the puella seems as undisturbed as ever. On the poetics of self-reference in Am. 1.7, see Morrison (1992), 571–89.

27. The study of messenger scenes as some form of mise en abyme was first undertaken by Plato; cf. Sedley (1998), 140–54.
Nape’s very name is subject to etymological wordplay; yet, it is not her function as messenger that is played upon, but her role as the *materia* on which the message is transported, in both its literal and metaphorical sense. In Greek, *nape* is a “bush,” a thicket of vegetation or the foliage of trees. The latter is a common metaphor for unkempt hair, and, occasionally, it is referred to as *coma*. There is little doubt, then, that hairdressing is an art, just like writing elegy, and Nape, who by virtue of her name’s etymology identifies herself with her art, is an artist, much like the poet/lover—and no less eager and able to compete.  

Furthermore, *nape* in Greek means also a woodland glen, a grove. This term literally bespeaks the material (*acer*) of which the tablets/messenger carriers are made, but an erudite reader of poetics could also translate “raw material for poetry.”  

Nape is the carrier of *duplicates tabellae* (literally “double tablets,” but also “tablets carrying texts that read on two levels”), and is herself referred to as someone whose “simplicity” is “not inferior to that deemed appropriate to your rank” (1.11.10 *nec tibi simplicitas ordine maior adest*). The particular phrase is deliberately vague as to the status of this “simplicity” of rank. It is my belief that Ovid is making a pun with the “duplicity” of the *tabellae*, and that Nape’s sophistication concerns her skill to assist and challenge alike the poet in composition. The reference to *militiae signa . . . tuae* in 1.11.12 (*in me militiae signa tuere tuae*, “guard the standards of your own army by defending me”) makes little sense in terms of comparing the erotic experiences of the poet to that of the *ornatrix*. A metapoetic interpretation, on the other hand, makes perfect sense. Only in assisting the poet to get his message through (or, in terms of literary reflexivity, in becoming the mask under which the poet will succeed unobtrusively to reinvent himself as composer of a new, more intelligent version of love elegy on the subject of two lovers’ communication via an intermediary), will Nape maintain both a literary existence as elegiac character and, more importantly, the status of the independent “author.” She allows the poet to use her in order to usurp his identity by means of forging the text of his message to his mistress.

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28. Consider Papaioannou (2006), a close exploration of the poetics that underline Ovid’s amatory poetry as manifested in the metaphor of hairstyling and the art of occupying oneself with hairdressing.

29. The latter identification is suggested by Henderson (1991) further comparing Nape’s case to that of Cyparissus in *Metamorphoses* 10.106–40, who inspires Orpheus to compose a song out of his personal plight.

30. A famous messenger figure/allegory, Vergil’s *Fama*, rumor or transportation of human word, was dealing along similar lines in *multiplici sermone* (“talk on many levels”); on the messenger in Latin literature, especially epic, as allegory of representation and rephrasing, see Laird (1999), 259–305.
In this respect, the poet/lover’s directing of Nape simulates a *palliata* scene in which an *auctor* empowers another character’s auctorial genius. As such, the homodiegetic lover who scripts Nape’s role as intermediary in an amatory affair may simultaneously stand next to the heterodiegetic Ovid who experiments with a dramatized literary competition between two fictional characters rivaling over the control and the development of the same fabula:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{si quaeret quid agam, spe noctis vivere dices;} \\
\text{cetera fert blanda cera notata manu.} \\
\text{dum loquor, hora fugit; vacuae bene redde tabellas,} \\
\text{verum continuo fac tamen illa legat.} \\
\text{aspicias oculos mando frontemque legentis:} \\
\text{et tacito vultu scire futura licet.} \\
\text{nec mora, perlectis rescribat multa iubeto;} \\
\text{odi, cum late splendida cera vacat.} \\
\text{[ . . . ]} \\
\text{quid digitos opus est graphium lassare tenendo?} \\
\text{hoc habeat scriptum toda tabella ‘VENI.’}
\end{align*}
\]

If she asks how I fare, you should tell her that I live with the hope of the night [sc. her nocturnal visit]; as for the rest, it is cut in the wax by my caring hand. While I speak the hour is fleeing. Give her the tablets while she is happily free, but make sure, all the same, that she reads them at once. Observe her eyes and brow, I command you, as she goes through them; it is possible to garner knowledge of what would happen next from her silent countenance. Do not linger, but urge her, once she has finished the entire reading, to write much in reply; I hate it when a splendid writing surface of wax remains all blank. [ . . . ] Why does she need to tire her fingers by holding the pen? Let the whole tablet have written only this word: “COME!”

*Am.* 1.11.13–20, 23–34

The phrase “*spe noctis vivere dices*” is a scripted, erotic text, to be delivered orally by Nape simultaneously with the poet/lover’s written erotic message. The maid, further, should insist that Corinna reads the letter “at once” (*continuo*, 15) and “thoroughly” (*perlectis*, 18). The emphasis on thoroughness underlies the importance of close reading. It also reveals that much in the text is not to be communicated to us but addresses the mistress exclusively. Nape will become a reader in her own right, too, and the text she is instructed to “read” is the face of the *puella* at the moment the latter
goes through the message (16). This text Nape will later “translate” for the poet (17).

In this couplet (1.11.16–17) the poet acknowledges more than one level of reading—apart from Nape’s skill in “meta-reading.” As an eagerly expectant lover involved in the drama of his poetic narrative, the poet is concerned about the appropriate length of the beloved’s reply. His initial reaction reveals that he revels in wordy, densely written love letters, and the four lines (19–22) describing the joy of reading such an eloquent response suggest his preference for full-fledged confessions of love. Yet, in the end he settles for the one-word “VENI.” The reason for this sudden change of heart is not merely the impatience to receive a reply as soon as possible (and to spare the puella the effort of writing).

Nape’s own superior reading skills, and her influence over Corinna—obviously the maid can influence both the puella’s mind and her conduct as elegiac puella—raise the probability of her potential interference with the text of the puella’s reply. As a result the poet foregoes his original request for a detailed letter, asking instead for a reply that he can more fully control. Nape ceases to symbolize the poet’s “eyes,” so that the poet/lover and the readers may vicariously observe the puella’s face at the exact moment she reads the love letter. As 1.11 draws to its close, the poet/lover dictates a terse, easy-to-memorize, one-word reply, and, by divulging its content, he communicates this knowledge to his reader directly, eliminating the need for an intermediary: the disclosure of the message disempowers the forgery-minded messenger/aspiring auteur, and so safeguards the poet’s control in the twofold process of composing an erotic-invitation elegy and constructing a puella in it (1.11).

31. According to Farrell (1998), an Ovidian female in love (and not only a heroine of the Heroides), who confesses her feelings and inner thoughts to her lover in writing, is more forthcoming, emotional, and usually even more sincere and honest, than she might wish. Lindheim (2003), following Lacan’s theory about the structure of the feminine identity (“to structure a woman is to manufacture an illusion, a fantasy”; Lindheim, 137), has argued that Ovid’s women, as embodied by the Heroides, in their desire to be desired by their beloved, systematically construct themselves as objects of masculine desire. Female desire is iterative, because it always seeks to satisfy the narcissism of the male addressee; accordingly, the Ovidian female portrays herself and her inner world in the way she believes her male addressee would envision them—a most accurate “belief,” since it is Ovid, the male poet, who both constructs her and guides the logic behind her self-constructing. Even though Lindheim’s analysis is restricted to the Heroides, her overall theoretical structure of the female identity self-portraying could apply to other letter-writing puellae of Ovid’s corpus—and particularly the anonymous ones, such as the puella of the Am. 1.11 + 12, for in their case self-construction is not subject to the additional constrictions of generic transformation.


33. Cf. Lindheim (2003), 20–22 for the letter as the illusion of physical interaction, and specifically dialogue, between interlocutors separated by spatial distance.
And yet, the poet relies on Nape’s authorial ambitions, challenging his own authorial control over the manipulation of the puella’s behavior, and, by extension, over the plot development of the elegiac narrative. Combating an antagonist, and in particular an erotic one, is a prime topic to include in a fabula in order to raise suspense. As a result of Nape’s portrayal as the poet’s competitor, the rivalry revolves around a potential metadramatic competition. The poet implicitly acknowledges the hairdresser’s access to Corinna’s writing as an avenue through which the maid could advance thoughts of her own; he proposes as possible reality the scenario of his illusory elegiac drama, namely, that the docta ornatrix, his own creature—and partly his minister, being the carrier of his words—may betray her master in order to gain independence from the latter’s pen. Thus, he stages himself as a suspicious and perceptive lover, who effectively interferes with the effort of Nape’s character to break away from the prescribed margins of her ancilla role, by divulging to the readers the text of his message. Under the fear of authorship usurpation, the poet opts for an “eager” (reflected in the fixed, dictated, one-word reply, and thus, one hard to forge) over a “docta” (expressed in the composition of a lengthy, laboriously dense, and hence, “genuine” letter, but one susceptible to forgery) puella.

In theory, a written response is a powerful means to express individuality and character independence, for it allows a writer to publicize him/herself as a thinking personality, and even to become a competing auteur. The reply, further, constitutes a form of commentary or interpretive reaction to the content of the received letter, and, in the case at hand, to the poet/lover’s “writing himself up.” The unexpected, for the poet/lover, consequences of his addressee’s authorial empowerment is the theme of Am. 1.12. In the second half of the diptych the puella proves to have sent back a negative reply, dismissing not only the content of the inviting message but also the “guidelines” on the formation of her written response. Clearly shocked by this, Ovid’s lover-self is unwilling to continue his game of metapoetics: he abruptly terminates it by eliminating the mistress and objectifying the maid.

34. For DuPlessis (1985), 32, to break a sentence in the midst of a woman’s speech blatantly violates “the structuring of the female voice by the male voice, female tone and manner by male expectations, female writing by male emphasis, female writing by existing conventions of gender—in short, any way in which dominant structures shape muted ones.”


36. To some degree, the figurative objectification of Nape in Am. 1.12, the second part of the diptych, echoes the treatment of Cypassis, the other ancilla ornatrix in the Amores, who likewise stars in a diptych, Am. 2.7 + 8, in the course of which she undergoes a similar reshaping of her identity, but in reverse: she is dehumanized in 2.7, and altogether deprived of individuality, while in 2.8, the poet/lover begins by praising her in an effort to resurrect her as personality, but for the purely selfish reason...
gradual conversion to the *tabellae* becomes the principal structural force unifying the two plates or poems of the diptych.

In *Am.* 1.12 Nape appears only in the earlier section (3–6), in order to be held accountable. Her stumbling at the threshold translates as a sign of bad luck, yet the cautionary advice, *iterum . . . memento . . . alte sobria ferre pedem,* “the next time . . . remember . . . to lift your foot soberly all the way up and over” (5–6), suggestively questions her mental lucidity; suspected of drunkenness, Nape is put “on a par with such alcoholic go-betweens as Dipsas.” The allegation casts Nape in the role of the drunken hag—often identified with a procuress or *lena*—another typical confidant and advisor of the elegiac *puella.* In fact, only two poems earlier, in *Am.* 1.9, an old *lena* instructs Corinna on how to handle her affair with Ovid. Nape’s implicit characterization as a *lena* redefines her role as principal director of the *puella*’s response. The poet appears to be calling out at her: “I directed you to act the part of the *ancilla,* loyal to your mistress but also to me; evidently, by twisting my script you have acted out a different version of the trusted advisor, that of the *lena.*” The poet’s frustration, however, is an act in itself, for it is he who has composed this fluid script that allowed Nape to shift her elegiac identity, while the repudiation of Nape as a *lena* emphasizes the theatricality (and the fictitiousness) of the character.

In the remainder of 1.12, the *tabellae* gradually supplant the *ancilla* as the poet’s addressee, in language that becomes increasingly more poetically charged in order to restore the poet to the position of the uncontested auteur of the diptych. The bearer of the negative response, the *cera,* is dismissively likened to the wax produced by the Corsican bee, infamous for its bitter honey (9–10). Indeed, the poetological significance of the bee is a well-known *locus communis.* Wordplay enhances this. Bees never actually visit the flower of the hemlock. Nor is the gathering of wax from hemlock attested anywhere. Still, hemlock, sharp, “*acer,*” in taste, reminds us of the type of wood, *acer,* that frames the comparably infamous *cera* of the duplicitous tablets.

The reference to the black and red colors (11–12) elaborates the link to the poetics of the elegiac mistress’s hair in *Am.* 1.14. There, Corinna’s...
initiative to have her hair dyed against the poet’s wishes has catastrophic consequences, but it records clearly the elegiac puella’s determination to take control of her body.\footnote{On the fashioning of the female flesh in Latin elegy to suit the politics and poetics of the particular author, see Wyke (2002b), 138–45 and 145–54, respectively discussing the cases of Ovid’s puella, as reflected in the portrayal of Elegia in Am. 3.1, and Propertius’ Corinna (with full bibliography in the footnotes).} Besides, the combination in the same couplet of minium and medicari, intending to bring the two forms next to each other,\footnote{McKeown (1989), 329 ad 1.12.11–12.} stirs up medical imagery, and so it facilitates the mental connection to the hemlock-based (hence poisonous) cera.\footnote{Accomplished by extensive use of amphisemous language in ingenious combinations: the poet’s affection is captured in mollia verba (22). These verba are “soft” because they are scribbled on soft, malleable wax, and this makes them subject to forgery.} Then, at 1.12.23, the intersection of mistress and/or maid, on the one hand, and the tablets, on the other, has inspired the use of the curious phrase garrula vadimonia: the treacherous tablets, ironically, are also demanding, “binding legal texts” and “garrulous” at once.\footnote{The observation by McKeown (1989), 333 ad 1.12.23–4, that the term garrula had been used only once before in elegy, by Propertius (3.23.17–8), likewise for the description of an elegiac mistress’s (Cynthia’s) written reply, supports this allusive antithesis between the eagerness of the poet and the lightness of the mistress’s attitude.} Their “long-windedness,” moreover, implies that the puella’s written response was certainly not the one-word “VENI” the poet had dictated. The acknowledgment of the duplicitous nature of the tabellae, finally, at 1.12.27–8 (pro nomine duplices, “duplicitous, as befits your name”), confirms again the primacy of this theme in the diptych, while the femina-tabellae fusion returns once again at the conclusion of 1.12, recasting 1.11.27–28, the close to the first poem, where woman and tablets are inextricably brought together.

At 1.11.27–28 the tablets, still believed to carry a positive reply/invitation, are labeled “faithful ministers” (27, FIDAS SIBI . . . MINISTRAS). At 1.12.29–30, the concluding couplet of the diptych, the tablets are compared to a graying and fragile old lady, and the narrative ends with the vivid comparison of the rotting wood to a decrepit hag for a second time, in 1.12. The curse against the tablets, especially the last words (immundo . . . alba situ, “[to turn] colorless due to foul abandon”) reaches backwards to Am. 1.8 and the old lena Dipsas, whom the poet there considers a bad influence on Corinna and the cause behind his separation from his mistress. Needless to say, it also reaches the puella, whom the old hag at 1.8 pushes away from the poet, exactly in order to prevent her from offering her favors to him without securing a steady monetary reward in return, which would in
turn prevent her from turning into an ugly and poor hag.\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Immundus situs}, notably, occurs elsewhere only once, in Propertius 4.5.72 (\textit{immundo pallida mitra situ}, “a headband, colorless from foul abandon”), and in strikingly similar context, being part of curses against Propertius’ famous \textit{lena}/old hag, Acanthis. Naturally, the character of Nape, who earlier in 1.12 was compared to a \textit{lena}, brings all these literarily interchangeable females together.

As elegiac criticism has recently argued, the \textit{lena} represents the polar opposite to the elegiac mistress, and the abuses against a \textit{lena} attribute to her perversions of a \textit{puella}'s idealized beauty: a \textit{lena}/hag is the archetype of ugliness next to the \textit{puella}'s archetype of beauty.\textsuperscript{45} This is particularly clear in a Propertian diptych, 3.24 + 25, where the heartbroken poet breaks up with his mistress, and in order to “punish” her, he “transforms” her prematurely into a hag, her elegiac opposite, by predicting the loss of her beauty and the arrival of old age. This transformation of the \textit{puella}-character is a sign of closure: Propertius signals the end of his “affair” with love elegy and with Cynthia, and he rapidly “ages” his mistress in order to reject her once and for all—as captured in 4.5, the last erotic elegy of the poet. In this, Cynthia is a pale figure, “relegated to an insignificant spot in the landscape of the poem,” and in her place the poet has installed a wrinkled hag.\textsuperscript{46}

In conclusion, by improvising upon an elegiac script where he casts himself as a poet/lover fighting off a negative self-portrayal as writer of a “bad” elegy (viz. an elegy that has failed to “move” a \textit{puella}), Ovid effectively argues against the risk of literary “saturation.” The diptych elegies 11 and 12 in the first book of the \textit{Amores} become the testing ground for an experiment against the norms of elegiac predictability. Ovid discusses the poetics and the anatomy of the “successful” elegy, by dramatizing in 1.11 the “failure” of a typical elegiac theme, the love-message delivery process. Following along the same path of approaching critically one’s own poetological allegories, Ovid in 1.12 turns the tables to what he introduces as his “failure” in terms of conventional elegiac poetics, by recontextualizing the definition of “success.”

Ovid makes a literary virtue of the surprise he causes to the reader; he condemns repetitiveness and simultaneously promotes alternative manifestations of repetitiveness. The duplicity of the \textit{duplices tabellae}, the writing

\textsuperscript{44} See the full argument in James (2001), esp. 239–50.
\textsuperscript{45} Richlin (1984), 69–72.
\textsuperscript{46} Wyke (2002a), 99–108 (the quoted phrase is taken from p. 103); also Janan (2001), 94–96, commenting specifically on Acanthis’ speech as a commentary on the artificiality of gender relationships, where the female construction provides the appropriate mask/persona to complement the male/elegiac poet’s performance.
material for a poem, and the duplicitous *puellae* protagonists in the poem, are hardly separable. The imaginary mistress and her imaginary hairdresser star in an elegy that is unconventional, and the emphasis on the unexpected outcome of the plot outlines the narrative possibilities emerging from the “liberation” of a character from inflexible poetic molds. As he struggles to define a new success in elegiac composition, in terms of experimenting with innovative employment of familiar motifs and rephrasing the constraints of the genre, Ovid converts his repudiated erotic advance into a diachronic metaphor for the process of composing a multilayered and multivocal elegiac narrative.\(^47\)

\(^{47}\) It is a pleasure to thank Theodore Papangelis, whose judicious and substantial comments on an earlier draft improved and strengthened my argument; and the two editors of this volume for recommending additional important reading material.
It has been noted before that Propertius, more frequently than the other elegists, evokes situations where the poet-lover is separated from the *puella*—even if conflict and separation is the stuff that (good) love poetry is usually made of. Going beyond this general position, I would define the Propertian elegies as poems of absence and separation in a deeper existential sense: to Propertius, love can be nothing but dolor and distance—eventually (perhaps) to be confirmed by death. Most attempts at communication between poet and beloved do not work out (e.g., 1.3) and even in her presence the lover seems somehow separated from his *puella*. Propertius’ elegies, I will suggest, rehearse ways toward communication and contact, and by doing so they convey a lack of communication and isolation. In fact, one cannot help getting the impression that in Propertius’ elegies only with the *puella* absent or in conflict is the poet-lover able to invent and narrate images of his love.

1. The Elegies 1.16–18: Evocation of Time, Place, and Action

The elegies 1.16–18, forming a triad near the end of the *Monobiblos*, are a poetic laboratory for Propertius’ intertwining of love as separation/absence and poetic image/narration. Indeed, each of them challenges master-inter-
texts in one way or another, and most significantly, they each profit from the synergetic and narratological interplay of time, place, and action, featuring remarkable and identifiable situations—principally of a “liminal” nature. In contrast to epic, where the narrator “frames” and introduces the speaker, the elegies feature a poetic ego or “I” speaking in free direct speech and always present the speaker’s situation in medias res. Thus, the reader has to extract crucial data from the poems themselves in order to reconstruct the dramatic and narrative situation of the elegiac speech.

The speech situation of Propertius 1.16–18 has mostly been identified as “monologue” or “interior monologue.” But here precision of terminology is indispensable: they are rather “soliloquies.” Soliloquies are not identical with monologues, which can be any speech—including that delivered in the presence of other people. In contrast, a soliloquy in its pure form has no intended outreach to other people and no intended audience. Though perhaps directed in imagination to another person or persons, these speech acts are highly self-reflective. Should there happen to be an eavesdropper, he/she is not necessarily configured as an intended audience for the speech—although certainly there are elegiac soliloquies where the speaker counts on being heard.

In elegy (in a very similar way to dream narratives), soliloquies offer the perfect means of making known the otherwise unknown motivations and emotions of a character. With the soliloquy, the elegiac poet can thus take advantage of an inward-reflecting communication system in which speaker, addressee, and object are the same person. Moreover, in relation to this concept and model of the soliloquy, one can refer to Plato who, in his Sophistes (263e), points out the dual dialogic and soliloquizing nature of thought as a type of dialogue with oneself. Frequently, soliloquies are seen as the verbal performance of deliberative acts or self-definitions. Yet, soliloquies promi-

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4. Rieks (1986) states that both 1.17 and 18 rework Catullus 76 (though “split up”): both poems have in common the argumentative structure of imagining different explanations of the present conflict situation. If we consider that Catullus 72 certainly stands behind 1.16 (alongside other intertexts), this marks 1.16–18 as a Catullan triad.

5. See Camps (1961), 10. On the special nature of 1.16 as double soliloquy see below.


7. Ibid., 8.
nently integrate dialogic elements. In poetry these are realized, for instance, in apostrophes—a device embracing a wide compass for outward-looking creative potential, since in this respect nearly everyone and everything can be included in the speech. This advantage, of course, is of tantamount importance for the integration of a narrative in a short form.

Propertius stands in a long tradition of using soliloquies as a narrative strategy. Though the term soliloquium is only attested as late as Augustine, ancient poetry offers a poetic theory of the soliloquy well before its exploration in philosophical, psychological, and narratological theory. Whereas in the Homeric epics it is employed as a quasi-dramatic entity, with any direct speech spoken by a character necessarily interrupting the flow of epic narration, in early Greek lyric poetry, especially Sappho and Archilochos, it appears in shorter, self-contained, and subjective forms. Of course, in the dramatic genres the performative potential of the soliloquy was fully realized and explored. In his elegiac soliloquies Propertius takes up the self-contained subjectivity of early Greek lyric but enriches this short form with elements of other genres—profiting from the use of soliloquy in Hellenistic epigram, drama, and epic to develop his own coherent narrative synergy of time, place, and action. Thus, the soliloquies of 1.16–18 always take place in a clearly defined space. Because poetical landscapes (whether urban landscape, seashore, or grove) are evoked, the spatial dimension plays a crucial role in the creation of sense and meaning. The surroundings of the narrator are encapsulated and integrated in his speech, but tinged with his own subjective, selective perception and interpretation.

In narratological terms, one has to differentiate among chronological time, aspect, and the time of performance of these elegies. In this respect, the elegies use relatively vague indicators of chronological time: they take place at night/dawn (1.16), darkness/night (1.17), and daylight/twilight (1.18). Furthermore, the poems can only vaguely be situated at some point in the lifetime of the speaker/narrator/poet and are regulated by a relative “interior” time system. That is, the dominating time-coordinates are the past and present of the poet’s (love) life, supplemented by an imaginary projection toward an uncertain and open future. These elegies do not rehearse the temporal or chronological unfolding of any action or events in the obvious sense.

8. See Walsh (1990); Fusillo (1985); and Walde (2001b), 175–84. Next to Callimachus’ epigrammatic experiments in soliloquy, the epicotragical soliloquies of Medea in the Argonautica of Apollonius Rhodius are the most prominent examples.
9. See Lefèvre (1977); Warden (1980), 90; and Benediktson (1989), 18–51 on Propertian speech situations.
10. For different approaches to time and narrative, see Genette (1990, 1988) and Bal (1997).
But, due to their obvious spatio-temporal and dialogical dimensions, they can be seen to represent dialectics in a standstill, snapshots of a life, taken at one decisive moment in time—and yet still open to new developments. The elegiac narrator in each of these elegies proposes and reflects alternative potential plots, constituting a past and future through the reference to other elegies and to various intertexts, if only in a vanishing line.

2. Doorstep Lyrics (1.16)

(a) Narratology of the speech situation

Elegy 1.16, often seen as the most witty and “artificial” of the triad, is a paradox: in a collection of subjective love elegies showing us the restricted perspective of the lover-poet, we are unexpectedly invited to listen to a door endowed with remarkable powers of speech. In 1.16, in a sophisticated poetic mirror technique, a soliloquizing door reports a lover’s complaint in direct speech. In fact, the elegy is like one of those Russian dolls: it includes not only two direct speeches, but also the poet’s rendering of the door’s complaint, which in turn is a reproduction of the lover’s complaint. The embedded lover’s complaint—a *paraclausithyron*—is a song in solitude (a soliloquy) masked as dialogue between a human being and a supposedly mute and unfeeling inanimate entity—namely, the door, but more likely the hard-hearted *puella* who will not open the door—as the elegy’s intended audience. Seen from the standpoint of this indirect communication with the *puella*, the door, assuming that it (in Latin *she*) is the addressee of the elegiac poet-lover, reads it all wrong. Her amusing misinterpretation of the dialogic situation presented here compels the (external) reader to his or her own assessment of the speech situation. The lover may complain that the door does not give an answer, but it is only the door’s voice we are listening to—quoting the lover complaining that the door doesn’t answer. Indeed, we may wonder: who narrates the door’s lament, and who is its/her intended audience? This effect refers us to an agent outside of the immediate frame of the poem, pointing to the creative potential of elegy and to the elegiac poet himself.

The remarkable speech act—a talking door—represented in 1.16, compels the reader to look for parallels. Seen from a narratological standpoint, the door’s rendering of the lover’s complaint in direct speech is analogous to the way a speaking person is introduced in epic. And in transferring this

device into a “small” elegiac form, Propertius has prominent predecessors: Polyphemus’ speaking in Theocritus *Id.* 12, Gallus’ lament in Virgil *Eclogues* 10, or Ariadne in Catullus 64. Aptly, Theocritus, Catullus, and Virgil feature complaints of unsuccessful lovers—with perhaps the closest parallel to Propertius being Virgil’s lamenting lover-poet Gallus. The most important difference here is that, unlike the narrators of these intertexts, Propertius presents an inanimate yet humanized *persona*—a talking door. In Propertius 1.16 we perceive the lover-poet from a distance through the eyes of a door. His fractured voice marks the unmediated voice of the other elegies, the free direct speech, as a mediated artificial product. Indeed, the subsequent poems 1.17 and 1.18 similarly feature the soliloquies of a lover lamenting his lost love.

**(b) The creation of literary personae in place and time**

The process of endowing a door with a voice and speech parallels the poetic creation of any literary *persona*. In respect to talking doors, Propertius could turn for inspiration to Catullus, who in poem 77 rehearses an amusing dialogue between the poet and a telltale door. With his own audacious *proso-popóia*, Propertius seems to step back from realism (a dialogue between a door and a human is not “really” possible, as the poet-lover in 1.16 reminds us). But at the same time he counters this realism by giving the door the character and emotions of an unhappy human being. In a remarkable gender-blurring, the door, as intermediary between inside and outside, displays characteristic traits of both the * domina* and the poet-lover. The door (gendered feminine in the Latin) argues just as a woman (specifically, as Cynthia) might argue. Indeed, “she” too has been the victim of male aggression, has lost her good reputation as a result of the unruly attentions of disappointed young men. But “she” too is also a victim of the * domina’s* harsh treatment and *duriitia*—just like the excluded lover, who has similarly lost time, health, and reputation.

The interlocking of two direct speeches allows a dual perspective on the event narrated in 1.16. The door’s self-description establishes the spatial and temporal narrative dimensions of the elegy. That is, its/her memory and immobility serve as a foil to the lover’s life dedicated to love and poetry. Indeed, there has to be a fixed point in this elegiac narrative (as in any narrative), if any movement or nonmovement is to be illustrated. The door is a very well-chosen image in several respects: through this figure, an entire

urban landscape is evoked in and through which the lover-poet and other protagonists move. Indeed, the door serves as a symbol of the history and changing use of such urban spaces (here a private domus) and “through the door” we are shown a potent indicator of social change in and through time. Because the door looks back to its/her own glorious past linked to the importance of her former owners, the Roman triumphatores, the elegy attains a historical and sociological dimension to complement its poetological dimension. For, in its/her long lifetime the door (fixed in space) could not but witness the events unfolding within and outside of the house. And over time, it/she has somehow adopted the conservative values of its/her human occupants. The door complains that in (golden) times past when military success was the marker of Romanitas, it/she was opened for triumphphi: on her doorstep the victor’s golden chariot stopped and she was suffused with the tears of supplices (that is, of conquered people, enslaved and in supplication). But now (whatever time that “now” may be), due to social changes, a woman owns the house and men serve in the “urban” military service of militia amoris; the now discredited door is not opened, but thronged by the rejected admirers of the house’s domina. They fix garlands and leave burnt-out torches on the doorstep as signs of their futile attendance.

Propertius’ prosopopoia here is successful to such a degree that most of his interpreters accept the authority of the door’s complaint regarding the (complaining) poet-lover and his puella levis. But should we really trust the door? A close reading of the elegy reveals that the door’s narrative of its/her change of circumstances tells a subtle story, as the general pattern of its experience effectively remains unchanged over time: the powerful triumphatores are replaced by a no less powerful woman; weeping supplices still crowd the doorstep; and songs, albeit of a different tone and nature, still celebrate both the house and its inhabitants. What seems to be the usual vituperatio morum is, in fact, here reduced to the temporal difference between the door “once-upon-a-time” being opened (and famous) versus the door “now” not being opened (and notorious). And crucially, this is the point where the lover’s and the door’s narratives and complaints coincide: though the lover blames the door for not opening, we learn from the door’s complaint that it/she would willingly open to the lover (and perhaps even to other people), if it/she were able to, in order to save her reputation.

(c) The poetological reading

The sophisticated echo technique of the lover’s and the door’s complaint(s) has been noted before. Its effect is a sort of interior self-reflective intertex-
tuality, with the door as both audience to and commentator on the poem of the lover—who in turn reworks this configuration in his own poem. This points beyond the immediate context of elegy 1.16 itself to the intratextual narratological techniques employed in the Monobiblos as a whole. The embedded poem provides a key to the interpretation of the door’s framing speech which, when read from the perspective of the embedded poem—in a pendulum motion—provides clues for the interpretation of the poet-lover’s own complaint.

Singing to the door (i.e., before the house of the domina) the poet has to endure long cold nights, the hardship and rejection he experiences forcing him to compose new songs (carmina) which might persuade the door (or the puella) to let him in. In this context he says: tibi saepe novo deduxi carmina versu (for you I have often drawn out new verses)—an expression used in other contexts in relation to the production of innovative (Hellenistic) poetry. The anonymous rejected lover inventing ever new love-songs to win over door or domina stands for the poet and the necessity to write ever new versions of his or others’ love stories—love seeming to offer eternally productive materia. Therefore, elegy 1.16 alludes not only to other versions of the paraclausithyron-motif in elegy, but also to the other poems of the Monobiblos and, ultimately, to poetry in general. Poets of all ages are forced to be innovative, and the carmen featuring a soliloquizing door is per se proof of this ever renewed force of poetic production. This interpretation is confirmed by further poetical markers in the door’s speech: not only are carmina mentioned (10, 16, 41), but the terms celebrata and tradita refer to a quasi-literary poetic production. Garlands and obscena carmina are set in contrast to the chariots of past triumphantes arriving at the doorstep. In particular, “garlands” evoke multifarious metaliterary associations: there are garlands at symposia, as gifts to a beloved or as offerings to the gods; and garlands of flowers woven together serve as both symbol of poetic production and a terminus for a collection of poems—an “anthologia” in the etymological sense. Furthermore, a ride in a carriage is also a familiar symbol of poetic—including elegiac—production: although here the chariots of the triumphantes seem to evoke Roman historical epic and its narratives celebrating Rome’s famous imperatores and their military feats. Beyond the superficial meaning, then, we can discern a poetological program setting the

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13. Whereas it is suspected that Virgil used Gallus’ poetry in Eclogue 10, Propertius uses his own poetry (or a poem made up for this purpose) for this device.
14. See Ovid, Met. 1.4 with Bömer (1969), 13f., who (in contrast to Horace 3.30) sees Propertius’ deducere carmina as “quasi-ironisch” (and also refers to Horace 2.1.4ff.). See also Rothstein (1920), who compares spinning a thread to composing a song.
15. On poetological imagery see Nünlist (1998), 220 (on garlands), 255 (on chariots), 162 (on torches).
traditional (and public) master genre of Roman poetry—historical epic—in contrast to the new (and private) genre of love-elegy. But one that is here able to grant the poem’s subject (whether seen as the poet-lover, beloved woman, or door) no less fame than the subjects celebrated in the epic tradition. Indeed, the door’s complaint that *differor aeterna invidia* (I am forever constantly defamed) is fulfilled in the fact that we read the elegy “now.”

(d) Other narratological perspectives

Apart from very few allusions to mythology both Greek (*Eous, 24; Zephyro, 34*) and Roman (*Tarpeia, 3*), this elegy has no obvious mythological framing. The intertextual dimension offered by Catullus and Virgil or the Hellenistic versions of *paraclausithyra* are decisive in enabling a metapoetical discourse on the nature and creative potential of poetry in a diachronic development. Yet, the liminal situation of the closed door, as the suspended situation par excellence, is chosen well here, because it evokes a situation of separation (albeit only across a very small spatial distance); one that makes direct communication impossible and encourages the imagination of other potential plots. For the situation could change any moment: the door might be flung wide open, or cracked slightly open—with different consequences to each possibility. Alternatively, the door might stay just as it is: it might never open to the rejected lover, or to anyone. But the reader will never know whether our poet was ever allowed to enter the house (in the past) or whether he will again or for the first time enter the house—or whether the *puella* really lies in the arms of another lover, whether she would pity the poet if she heard his song, or whether she listens to his songs with annoyance and/or amusement. Any of these possibilities could serve as *materia* for an infinite number of elegies, which can only be fulfilled in and by the readers’ imagination.

3. The Absent Muse (1.18)

The evident reworking of traditional material and motifs is central for 1.16. It not only refers back to the preceding elegies, but as a “door” to interpretation, it also develops a close relation to the subsequent elegies of the *Monobiblos, 1.17 and 1.18*. And as 1.18 realizes the intertextual impulses of Virgil’s tenth *Eclogue* again, in the triad 1.16–18, we might consider

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16. See Baker (2001); Prinz (1932); Stahl (1968); and Grant (1979).
poem 1.17, the most innovative and arguably most “Propertian” elegy, to be framed by two poems reworking well-known *topoi* with strong poetological and narratological dimensions.

(a) *Speech situation*

Elegy 1.18 is a soliloquy in the strict sense—that is, without an intended audience, at least in the beginning.17 Now, “this time” the poet-narrator apparently does not want to produce an effect upon a second or third-party with his *carmen*—he desires only to ease his heart. Again the reader has to construct the time, moment, and place of this elegy’s narrative. The deictic *haec*, with which the elegy opens, especially invites the reader to form a visualization of the narrative scene. We can surmise from lines 1–4 that the speaking *ego* is in a grove, where he has found at last the appropriate location for his elegiac lament. Furthermore, we learn from lines 5ff. that the poet seems to have fallen out of grace with his beloved Cynthia.18 Indeed, the second word of the opening line, *certe*, then seems to conclude his thoughts up to that point—as if the poet had been searching for a place such as this for a long time. When the poet-narrator has found and established this place in the readers’ imagination with this equivalent of an introduction by a third person, he then begins his self-reflective dialogue. His first apostrophe to the absent Cynthia is in both form and content the equivalent of an epic proem, in which he asks the Muses to refresh his memory and/or to provide suitable poetic (epic) *materia* for his poem (5–6):

unde tuos primum repetam, mea Cynthia, fastus?
quod mihi das flendi, Cynthia, principium?

From what first cause, dear Cynthia, should I recount your scorn? What first reason, Cynthia, do you give for my tears?

With this vaguely familiar programmatic gesture Propertius reclaims as his subject, not heroic feats, but the couple’s painful relationship, a constant

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17. See Warden (1980), 88, who votes for a silent interior monologue classified as “sort of law-court debate.”
18. Cynthia is referred to by name twice at the beginning (5 and 6); the *mea Cynthia* (5) denotes a close attachment on the side of the devoted speaker. In the course of the poem the name occurs in the context of the poetical production (the poet writing her name in the bark of trees, 21f.; calling out her name aloud to provoke an eternal echo, 22 and 31).
source of dolor and materia for the lover-poet. Through the generic markers supplied here, these lines offer an indirect recusatio of the great form of epic (with Cynthia replacing the inspiring divinities) in accordance with a familiar elegiac pattern. Of course, the lover does not get an answer to his (rhetorical) questions. He has to rely on his own evaluation of the situation narrated here. After establishing the current status quo (Cynthia has rejected him after an indeterminate period of presumed happiness), he develops several conflict scenarios detailing different degrees of guilt on his part and different degrees of Cynthia’s supposed heartlessness. Structured by questions in lines 9, 10, 17f., and 23f., the poet-lover’s thoughts show a constant pendulum-swing between his own emotions and the suspicion that Cynthia has fallen out of love with him.

Though he denies the first two alternatives (that is, Cynthia’s present indifference to him as due to his misbehavior or the magic incantations of a rival), the idea that Cynthia is indeed indifferent and estranged from him, makes him consider that she might really have found fault with him—or perhaps she is simply jealous of another girl (10). He admits to several offenses (not described) in the past, including that he professed his dolor strongly in other situations (cf.1. 3), but he insists that (unlike Cynthia) never has he behaved so badly as to make his beloved cry or give her reason to bear a lasting grudge against him. This puts the blame squarely on Cynthia and on her unreasonable behavior. But this attribution of blame is paradoxically rejected as the poet describes his repeated laments in the past for her absence and loss, viz. loudly crying out his woe in nature’s solitude and cutting Cynthia’s name in the bark of trees—to which the trees, he claims, could testify. This leads to—a not entirely logical conclusion—the question (23) of whether Cynthia was perhaps offended by complaints about her uttered in other (urban) surroundings which were not intended for her to hear.\footnote{Certainly, as Stahl (1968) proposes, this refers to 1.16, but it also evokes situations of a different kind, e.g., complaining behind closed doors.}

As, upon reflection, these offenses turn out to be very small or no offenses at all (if we can trust the poet’s own “reading” here), there is only one possible conclusion: the narrator does not know why this present conflict has come about—and as a consequence the reader, too, is none the wiser.

One might expect several possible outcomes now (the poet might leave the unfair puella for good). But, with the apostrophic self-assurance of his own devoted love and consequent guiltlessness, the poem takes an unexpected turn. The poet’s declaration of his unswerving love turns out to be the program for his poetic production. The reward for his love and servile
obedience, namely, that he is now alone in the solitude of a *vacuum nemus*, a deserted grove with divine fountains, not inhabited by other human beings or gods, is only insufficient at first glance. In spite of scholarly protestations to the contrary, the *divini fontes* (27) here can only be the fountains of poetic inspiration, whereas the *frigida rupes* are an explanation of the nature of his unrequited love and his poetry as a substitute. The *trames incultus* (28), the untrodden way far from civilization, is a common poetological metaphor in ancient poetry, with *incultus* denoting the innovative character of his poetry, and *dura quies* his tough existence as lover and poet. The *materia* for his poetry will be his *querelae*, then, and Cynthia in all her moods (*qualiscumque es . . .*) will be his Muse after all. With his self-ordination as a poet, wondering in solitude, he makes up for the lack of communication that characterizes his relationship with Cynthia. But at the same time, his calling out her name means using her and possessing her—even against her will—as *materia* for his elegiac poetry. The grove is no longer *vacuum* but filled with the poet’s voice and marked with his inscriptions on the trees. It is his grove now.

As in 1.16, in this narcissistic, monadic cosmos, the rocks bounce back the poet-lover’s own voice—calling out for Cynthia in a mediated form that he is able to hear himself. This echo, this bouncing back, is poetry—representing a sort of splitting from the poet himself, a setting free of words and ideas, no longer only his, as a means of transgressing individuality and making available experience to a wider public. In a poetic paradox, he is himself and another. And alongside Cynthia he too has become a literary *persona*.

*(b) Sense construction in 1.18*

The temporal dimension of 1.18 is in the form of a comparison between a happier past and an unhappy present, with the indication of repeated actions and intentions for the future. It is situated at an interstice, at one decisive point in a longer “frozen” process. For, even if he sketches several scenarios that could serve as *materia* for his elegies, due to the inherent ambiguity of the situation, the narrator (and with him the reader) will never break through to Cynthia or achieve perfect communication with her. He (and we) will have to make do with approximate images of her alone.

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20. See Grant (1979), 53, who takes in consideration that this somehow could refer to the *fons Musarum*, and Allan (1985).
22. Note: *modo; 8 nunc, 15 semper, 21 quotiens, 25 consuevi, 31 resonent.*
The spatial dimension of the elegy and the “event” it narrates can be reconstructed with reference to several decisive intertexts and allusions to a series of mythological figures who give shape and contour to the figure of the Propertian lover-poet. This works along the associative chain: grove—unrequited love—soliloquy—poetry. A major reference point here is the poet Gallus in his role in Virgil’s tenth Eclogue—and still vividly present in the mind of Propertius’ contemporary readers. Whereas in Eclogues 10 the lament of Gallus vis à vis nature is embedded in a narrative frame providing information on the current situation and the eventual death of Gallus, in Propertius’ elegy we are confronted with a free direct speech without a framing narrative. Indeed, alongside Gallus, Propertius’ soliloquy in the woods also conjures the figure of Orpheus; Cephalus, and Procris (for whom a similar soliloquy turns out to be fatal for the couple); poets meeting with Muses; and also, perhaps, metamorphic trees who were formerly lovers.24

4. Des Meeres und der Liebe Wellen (1.17)

Elegy 1.17 is a masterpiece of imagination: the ego or ‘I’ of the elegy is alone, at the seashore, presumably after a shipwreck, or perhaps only on a break in a voyage forced by a stormy sea. His soliloquy is again structured by questions in lines 7, 12, and 18—crucial turning-points in the argumentation.25 Although here Cynthia and other figures are imaginary addressees, this speech act is highly self-reflexive.26 Indeed, the narrator subjectively blurs the boundaries between himself and the absent Cynthia, taking her part too. This blending of roles is conveyed by the evocation once again of situations and protagonists from the mythological-poetical tradition. These associations help us reconstruct the narrator’s situation and consequently reevaluate the innovative nature of the poem.

(a) The status quo in lines 1–5

The first line—et merito quoniam potui fugisse puellam (and I deserve it,
since I could bring myself to run away from my girl)—neatly summarizes a wealth of narrative information in just six words. From the perspective of the reader an indeterminate past is cited as the cause for a no less indeterminate present. The potui here refers back to a past situation, while fugisse marks a completed process (the halt of flight or even a decision not to flee any longer). Even with the short exclamation of et merito, a sense of narratological temporality is opened. Whatever the poet-lover is going through, it is deserved (due to an event in the past), because he dared to leave (in the past) his puella. An exclamation at the beginning of an emotional direct speech is common in epic, but here it introduces a free direct elegiac speech without a framing introduction. Furthermore the conjunctive et at the beginning of the poem implies that the speaker has been silent for a while and only now, after long pondering, begins his querela. Moreover, puellam functions here as a one-word program. It is an affectionate term for the girl the poet loves and especially a terminus technicus in Roman love elegy. Yet here, puella stands in contrast to fugisse. Why should one try to escape from a puella? Behind potui fugisse puellam a whole world of conflicts in this couple’s narrative history is hidden—as we will find out when we read on and see that in line 15 the puella suddenly appears as a domina. The term fugisse also implies a movement in space, an intention and a cause. The narrator is the agent of this movement in space—and, at the same time its victim. The reader understands that his flight is somehow interrupted or prevented. The et merito is taken up by the nunc phrase which provides us with information about the present and “deserved” situation of the narrator.

Alloquor Alcyonas is at once a description of this situation and its performance. The kingfishers (desertas . . . Alcyonas) that he addresses carry multiple associations and provoke a variety of connections. The kingfishers, which breed only when the sea is calm and the winds still—identified since Homer (Il. 9, 561–64) as the transformed lovers Ceyx and Alcyone—are a symbol of love crossing the border between life and death. Is Alcyonas desertas here, then, a mythological allusion to the devoted lovers Ceyx and Alcyone or simply a reference to the real-life birds? This ambiguity, on which a lot of scholarly ink has been spilled, cannot be easily resolved. Perhaps only a general notion of the Alcyonae as lovers connected with storms and shipwrecks is needed to understand the poem, in the same way that an Aeschylean chorus evokes subtle associations that help us to grasp the tragedy. As the (real) kingfishers normally live beyond human civilization (and that is what desertas entails), at least we can now see more clearly the location in which to imagine the narrator of this soliloquy. But in fact the

27. Cf. the soliloquies of Juno in the Aeneid 1.37ff. and 7.293ff.
28. See Gutzwiller (1992) on the several uses of kingfishers in Greek poetry.
poem will allow for other interpretations of the Alcyonae too—as we will see.

(b) Poetic sense construction

The first four lines establish the action, place, and time of the elegy, as the poetic image of a lonely figure on a stormy beach emerges. This combination of ship, beach, love, separation (and possible death) of the speaker/narrator leads to several realizations of these motifs in other famous intertexts: namely, the story of Ariadne left behind by Theseus in Catullus 64.29 This reference to Catullus enhances the ecphrastic picture-quality of the elegy. It is also an allusion with an illuminating gender-reversal: in literature, leaving the girl behind is a common way to finish conflicts (and this is perhaps what the speaker here intended and desired—to leave Cynthia behind and so put an end to their relationship); but all the same, this lover is as lonely as the girl traditionally left behind30 with only his querela on the seashore.

But a man loudly crying out a querela on the roaring seashore suggests an epic intertext too: the homesick and crying Odysseus of the Odyssey (5.82), who wants to go home to Ithaca and his beloved Penelope. Odysseus does not have to escape in silence from his lover Calypso, but with her aid, when he bids farewell to the lover left behind, he makes her swear (Od. 5.173) that she will not do him any harm—that is, create a storm to wreck his raft, as angry gods and goddesses in epic are wont to do. Calypso complies, but to no avail: Poseidon sends a storm anyway (Od. 5.285ff.). In the end Odysseus laments on a rocky beach and Ino Leukothoe (Od. 5.334ff.), in the guise of a sea bird, comes to his aid. If we now return to 1.17 with this configuration of intertextual allusion in mind, we find a hidden rationale behind the argumentation and the fantasies of the narrator. Perhaps the narrator talks pleadingly to the Alcyonae because he hopes that they might help him, as Ino Leukotheo helped Odysseus. Indeed, the Alcyonae are famous escorts for sailors in distress.31 With his resigned exclamation, the narrator not only synaesthetically (aspice and increpat) evokes his position on the roaring seashore, but he also defines the storm as a punishment and his interrupted flight as one interrupted by the will and design of Cynthia:

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29. Before Propertius, aequo (25) is only used in Catullus 64.
30. In fact Cynthia is called absent (tibi absenti 5), although the lover himself is the voluntarily absent one (potui fugisse).
31. See Gutzwiller (1992), 206 on Theocritus Id. 7.
Even in your absence, the winds act still to your advantage, Cynthia. See the terrifying howl the storm roars out.

This idea is the intertextual pivot of 1.17. The fantasies and imaginations of the narrator seem to encapsulate the whole narrative of the parallel Odyssean episode: the lover left behind; the voyage; the “flight” interrupted by a sea storm roused by the ill will of another actor; despair, and eventual salvation. Indeed, the narrator seems to perceive Cynthia as a combination of Calypso and Poseidon: as Poseidon, Cynthia was initially unaware of her lover’s flight but, after noticing his escape, sent the storms as an obstacle. Or, like Calypso, he attributes to Cynthia the power to rouse storms and shipwrecks—but in this case Cynthia/Calypso somehow did not keep her promise, in an innovative and very “Ovidian” reworking of the story of Calypso and Odysseus. In the poet’s fantasy, Cynthia is stylized as a divinity or a quasi-mythical figure endowed with magical powers—as a Circe or a Calypso. In this way, the reader gets a glimpse of the couple’s conflicts, of the power and the bad temper of the puella or domina who has here transformed her lover into a runaway slave. The crucial question is: how far would Cynthia go? Will she or will she not shrink back from killing her lover? The narrator takes the extreme view: having caused his death, could she really bear to listen to narratives about his death and not to bury his bones and ashes—here viewing Cynthia as a sort of reverse Penelope, happy that her lover did not return? A curse of the primus inventor of ships follows, but here we read only the abridged version of a fuller and more logical argumentation: “If only I had not tried to escape. But I am not to blame: I could only escape because ships as means for distancing oneself from home were invented. Blame the inventor of ships.” Contra Leach, I do not read the curse as simply a conventional epigrammatic line. Certainly it lifts the stream of thought here to a more abstract level and “docks” the story into mythological stories in which ships similarly play a crucial role (notably, the stories of Odysseus, Jason and Medea, Ariadne and Theseus, Ceyx and Alcyon), consequently “mythologizing” the narrator and his beloved puella too. But the curse also serves as testimony that the narrator regrets his escape, which leads to a reflection upon how everything might have turned out differently, if only he had stayed in Rome (15–17):

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32. Yet, reposcere (instead of reponere) in 11 is plausible, considering that 1.16–18 are concerned with storytelling and narrations.
nonne fuit levius dominae pervincere mores
(quamvis dura, tamen rara puella fuit),
quam sic ignotis circumdata litora silvis\(^\text{33}\)
cernere et optatos quaerere Tyndaridas\(^\text{34}\)?

Would it not have been easier to overcome the moods of my mistress
(although hard, she was a girl rarely to be found), than to prospect a
shoreline surrounded by unknown woods and to look out for the desirable
Dioscuri?

Here the reader not only gets another hint as to why the relationship between
Cynthia and Propertius did not work out (the undefined \textit{mores} and the
\textit{amator}’s lack of dynamism),\(^\text{35}\) but we understand better why the Alcyonae
are the narrator’s perfect audience for his soliloquy: in Hellenistic literature
they are a symbol of marital devotion and love.\(^\text{36}\) Certainly throughout the
\textit{Monobiblos}, Propertius emphasizes the nonmarital relationship of \textit{puella} and
poet-lover, but the qualities of love and \textit{pietas} are crucial to this extramarital
\textit{foedus amoris} too. Neither lover quite lives up to the standards of this \textit{foedus
amoris}—as the lover-poet’s flight shows. Yet, the juxtaposition of (imagined)
death in a foreign country (7) alongside (imagined) death at home (19ff.,
\textit{illic} here designates Rome) refers us back again to the Homeric intertext, in
which, tormented by Poseidon’s storm, Odysseus wishes that he had died
fighting in Troy and received an honorable funeral as a war hero. In contrast,
Propertius imagines his own death had he stayed in Rome instead of daring
this unsuccessful escape from Cynthia: he cannot but imagine a love in \textit{dolor},
eventually leading to his death as veteran of love, since death from love is
as much a risk to the elegiac lover-poet engaged in \textit{militia amoris} as to the
epic hero engaged in military service.

The description of a funeral in Rome may seem to add simple local col-
oring here, but there are remarkable divergences from the common burial
practice: instead of his family, Propertius imagines Cynthia at his funeral
in distress, identifying her as the one significant relationship of his life.
Because this is nothing but the narrator’s fantasy, the reader never learns

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\(^{33}\) \textit{ignotis silvis} is to be seen in contrast to the known \textit{silvae} in 1.18.

\(^{34}\) The \textit{Tyndaridae} are mentioned not only in their role as escorts for shipwrecked sailors, but
also in their function as the Roman army’s helpers in crucial battles (taking up once more the meta-
phor of love as military service).

\(^{35}\) The \textit{realis in nonne fuit} implies that the narrator has decided already that this would have
been the better solution.

\(^{36}\) Gutzwiller (1992), 206ff. They were also used for a paradigmatic male behavior in this con-
text.
about Cynthia’s motives or her attitude toward the narrator. However, in the end, the narrator opts for a positive version of his love-story: in a prayer he asks the Nereides to escort him to mansueta litora, if ever they have felt love themselves. This prayer not only alludes to the episode of Odysseus and Galatea in the Odyssey, but evokes marine frescos in contemporary Roman villas—again demanding a visualization of this elegiac scene.

The prayer to the Nereides links to another famous intertext—to Sappho, who prays for the safe return of her brother (5 Voigt/L.-P. = 193 LGS) by invoking the aid of Kypris and her consorts, the Nereides. In this poem, Sappho explores the possibilities of the imagery of the sea and of a sea voyage as symbolizing love, by blending a real voyage, now separating brother and sister, with the idea of an unhappy love affair. Consequently she prays for both: for her brother’s safe return and for him to find the love he is longing for. In 1.17, the narrator is in the situation of Sappho’s brother, now praying himself to the Nereides for a successful love affair and a return to friendly seas and seashores. We know from secondary sources that Sappho, too, in another famous poem similarly mentioned kingfishers in an amatory context.37 That Propertius takes up both motifs, the sea of love and the Alcyoneae, is no coincidence: in a gender reversal he establishes himself as the poetic brother of Sappho, presenting us with a male instead of a female subjectivity. But whether he was granted a safe return, we will never know.

5. Conclusions

(a) Soliloquy and dialectic in a standstill

Due to their use of unmediated soliloquy, elegies 1.16–18 evoke eternal presentness by simultaneously reaching out dialectically in time. The reader witnesses quasidramatic soliloquies in a motionless, yet decisive moment.38 Through open questions, projections, and fantasies, the narrator creates a virtual context of possible pasts and futures. And because all three elegies feature moments in time connected to a certain place, as movements in a standstill, they have great potential for generating ever-new versions of the love story of Cynthia and Propertius the poet-lover. They can invite new stories “in contrast to . . .,” or “in sequel to . . .,” and also leave room for radically different interpretations. This open, suspended construction

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37. Frg.195 LGS (= Demetrius, eloc. 166).
38. This use of ‘fruchtbare Momente’ (“fertile moments”) in this sense is explored similarly in Ovid’s Heroides. See Seeck (1975), Walde (2000), and Liveley in this volume.
invites the reader to question how their relationship will continue, or what really happened before—questions only to be answered by inventing other (new) versions of the love-story. This incalculable surplus production of associations—personal, mythological, poetical, generic—makes up for the information missing in the elegies which so often renders it difficult to sum up the action narrated in them in a precise way.

(b) Mythological and literary intertexts and generating stories

The “narration” of the individual poet-lover’s subjective story (or rather, stories) paves the way to programmatic statements that are also part of “his” poetic story. Behind nearly every elegy stand mythological and/or intertextual models that only flash or glimmer for a moment’s recognition, conveying a certain timeless quality to the elegies, even if the recognition of “uncanny” similarities in the sense of Freud cannot be accounted for in every case. The effect is a sort of clear ambiguity, with Propertius counting on recognition as a means of exploration of his poetological cosmos—but at the same time countering this recognition by ambiguity, unusual contexts, and—sometimes—gender reversals. In this respect, Propertius could profit from a privileged Roman perspective toward Greek myth and literature. The Romans exploited, as Blumenberg showed in his 1984 seminal study “Arbeit am Mythos,” new dimensions of interpretability of Greek myth by linking it up to psychological states and “using it” deprived of its former context as materia for new interpretations.

Propertius’ use of mythology is not restricted to Hellenistic allusions as a badge of erudition and poetic mastery: deeper analogies between myth and poetical vitae can be observed. Propertius transfers the mechanism of a quasi-structuralistic generation of versions in Greek mythology where various, even contradicting versions of a myth exist next to each other, to invented/fictitious literary personae of his own time. The individual (contemporary) experience is—analagous to different, co-existing, even contradicting versions of a myth—laid out in no less “structuralistic” multiplicity based on very few and often ambiguous fixed points. Each individual elegy is not only a particular version in a context of co-existing versions, but together with others constitutes a poetic laboratory of a theoretically infinite number of versions. Propertius marks poetry as a narrative “realm of possibilities,”

40. On intertextuality and the Freudian Uncanny, see Perri (1978).
providing his readers with an encyclopedia of experience similar to that
provided by Greek and Roman myth. In this respect, the “invention” of
Cynthia is a similar process of creation to that, for instance, in constructing
mythological figures or endowing inanimate things with speech and life.

(c) Narratological perspectives

The range of “photographically” fixed moments in which we see Propertius
and Cynthia—set, as Genette would say, in a situation intercalée—allows for
the narration of ever new individual stories, offering a kaleidoscope of expe-
rience. Even if the elegies of the Monobiblos seem to complement each other,
they do not add up to an obviously coherent love story. The collection of
elegies emerges as a laboratory of narratological experiences, yet each elegy,
in fact, is part of a larger virtual context that has to be imagined and supple-
mented. Consequently, a high degree of audience-participation is required.
To make the heterogeneous and sometimes seemingly incompatible levels
of meaning readable, decipherable, narratable, Propertius uses images and
situations in a standstill, but situated in the interstices of a longer narrative
process. The interstice position of the individual, manifesting itself through
the inward-looking, self-reflexive form of the soliloquy, and enhanced by the
liminal situations of door, seashore, and grove, is also used as an interstice
in regards to the literary tradition. Apparently allowing us access to the
inner emotions and thoughts of the narrator-poet-lover, Propertius’ elegies
1.16–18 simultaneously offer us a manifest and a literary theory of love elegy
as the Monobiblos rehearses and narrates small epics of the self.
1. Introduction

What kind of love narratives do the Ars and Remedia produce? This question, for a variety of reasons, has not always been considered relevant for the study of Ovid's erotodidactic works. In the philological tradition of the commentary, the Ars and the Remedia are studied in a discrete manner, independently of each other. Commentaries on these works are usually dedicated either to the books of the Ars or separately, to the Remedia. Furthermore, in spite of the general acceptance that the Ars and the Remedia are thematically and discursively intertwined, the internal logic connecting these works has not been carefully studied. When these works are read together, the Remedia is typically understood as the Ars' afterthought; this is probably due to the fact that the publication of the Ars preceded the Remedia and because it seems so natural to understand the decay and death of love as a sequel to the blossoming of love. This leads to a reading of the Remedia as an optional coda, one that gives expression only to the life of the unhappy lover.

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1. Although the Ars and Remedia are often put together, encompassing a didactic cycle, or an erotic “trilogy,” they are not traditionally treated as consecutive parts of the same grand narrative. See Conte (1994b), 346, who includes the Medicamina in the didactic cycle. Henderson’s (1979; 1980) “trilogy” refers to the Ars as two parts (distinguishing between the first two books addressed to men and the third book which addresses women), and finally to the Remedia as the trilogy’s third part.


3. The first two parts of the Ars Amatoria were published around the end of 2 BCE, and were followed by the publication of Book 3. We know that the Remedia Amoris was written after Book 3 since it draws on the three books of the Ars. On the chronology, see Henderson (1979), xi–xii.

4. Henderson, for example, considers the programmatic paragraph in Rem. 13–16, where Ovid
considered in terms of its didactic value, the *Remedia* thus seems to have no necessary and general standing, as it seems to speak only to those readers who have lost love. For the happy lover, the *Remedia* offers a completely irrelevant narrative.

Unlike the *Ars*, which leads the reader through the developing course of love, the instruction of the *Remedia* has an entirely different goal. The gist of the remedial process is renunciation, toward a perspective that allows the wounded lover to see love as a malaise. Hence, when juxtaposed as two independent texts, as two equally legitimate perspectives on the experience of love, the *Ars* and *Remedia* create an unsettling palinodic structure.⁵ This tension is accentuated by the tendency to read the *Ars* and *Remedia* as manifestations of two different literary traditions: the *Ars* is considered a natural progeny of the Roman love elegy, while the *Remedia*, with its Stoic and Epicurean sentiments, is much more akin to philosophical literature.⁶ This alleged difference between the generic provenances of the *Ars* and the *Remedia* seems to stand in the way of a unified reading of the works. Given the presence of an apparent tension—even a contradiction—between the *Ars* and *Remedia*, there seems to be hardly any room for reading these works as part of one cohesive love narrative.

In current treatments of his erotodidactic works, Ovid’s conception of the love narrative remains unexplored. This is indicative of the clear influence that poststructural theory has had on the study of Ovid. In the context of new perspectives on love as a literary phenomenon, a strong “linguistic turn” is commonly assumed in various postmodern readings of the Roman love elegy.⁷ Hence, the framing of the experience of love as a discursive phenomenon has carried no implications for an understanding of the significance of the love story as a unified structure. In Julia Kristeva’s *Tales of Love*, for example, the language of love is severed from the idea of a homogeneous or a coherent speaking subject; speaking of love, language lacks a unified voice since it is couched in an experience in which “the limits of one’s own

 addresses his curing guide specifically to unhappy lovers, as an indication that “Ovid saw the *Remedia* as a sequel to the *Ars*, and perhaps also as a reversal of it.” Henderson (1979), xii.

5. The palinode is a poem retracting an earlier poem written by the same poet. The *Remedia* can be seen as a palinode since its didactic speaker renounces his previous work, i.e., the *Ars*.

6. “The title of the poem,” writes Henderson on the *Remedia*, “immediately indicates that we are dealing with a different notion of love from that in the *Ars*: love as a disease or hurt (*vitium, morbus, vulnus*), instead of a skill or social activity.” Henderson (1979), xii. See also the consideration of the thematic connections of the *Remedia* to the Roman satirists in Brunelle (2005), 141–58.

7. Groundbreaking studies, such as those by Veyne (1988), Myerowitz (1985), and Kennedy (1993), have led to a reassessment of the genre’s aesthetic value by redefining the concept of love as a linguistic and literary phenomenon.
identity vanish.” The banishment of a stable self from the discourse of love is implicit with the departure from the traditional view of narratives as stable and unified structures. Hence, while searching for ways of integrating the ordeal of love into the communicative order, Kristeva deliberately resists the singular structure of a coherent and cohesive tale. As the book’s title suggests, a lover’s discourse must consist in more than one narrative. Love narratives are essentially in the plural.

Questioning the possibility of a unified self, postmodern writing on love no longer sees in linearity a central form for narrating love. Instead of a linear history of love, tales of love are interpreted today with an emphasis on the multiplicity of moods, situations, and cultural references that constitute the love experience. One of the most influential texts in articulating the fragmentary character of a lover’s discourse is, of course, Roland Barthes’s *Fragments d’un discours amoureux* (1978). No longer dominated by the traditional question of what love is, Barthes allows a new question to take its place: How do we speak of love? What is the lover’s language? His aim is not to understand the essence of Love, but to decipher the “grammar” of the discourse of love. And in this sense, he studies love as a linguistic phenomenon: “Amorous *dis-cursus* is not dialectical; it turns like a perpetual calendar.” Barthes composes a love discourse, a mélange of fragments which catch the lover in action. These fragments could be used by readers in filling in their own history. And yet, Barthes’s figures resist the order of linearity.

Throughout any love life, figures occur to the lover without any order, for on each occasion they depend on an (internal or external) accident. Confronting each of these incidents (what “befalls” him), the amorous subject draws on the reservoir (the thesaurus?) of figures, depending on the needs, the injunctions, or the pleasures of his image-repertoire. Each figure explodes, vibrates in and of itself like a sound severed from any tune—or is repeated to satiety, like the motif of a hovering music. No logic links the figures, determines their contiguity: the figures are non-syntagmatic, non-narrative.

For Barthes, the logic of love is precisely “non-narrative.” His account of that logic is therefore not synoptic but takes the form of a lexicon arranged

9. See how Currie (1998), 3 describes the shift from modern to postmodern approaches to narrative: “Like the physicist, the chemist or the microbiologist, the role of the narratologist was traditionally to uncover a hidden design which would render the object intelligible. For the traditionalist critic, the most profound hidden design in a narrative was its unity. . . . In the view of the poststructuralist critic, this was just a way of reducing the complexity or heterogeneity of a narrative.”  
alphabetically: i.e., arranged in a manner that would circumvent the old story of how love “develops, grows, causes suffering, and passes away.”

2. Ovid’s Love Story

Ovid’s work on love is completely absent in Barthes’s and Kristeva’s discussions of love. This is surprising, since both Barthes and Kristeva make it a point to return to the texts of antiquity as a backdrop for their discourse of love and, in this sense, need to circumvent Ovid’s authority as a magister or praeceptor amoris. At the same time, however, the exclusion of Ovid from the definitive textual core of the Western discourse on love is not uncharacteristic of a tradition that has consistently consecrated the metaphysical and spiritual dimensions of love. As suggested, the tendency to dismiss the value of the Ovidian teaching in the Ars and Remedia is an integral part of the history of Ovid’s reception.

The dismissal of Ovid’s works on love—the frivolity and lightness traditionally ascribed to these works—is the mirror image of an opposite tendency of appraisal that is just as symptomatic of the tradition: the canonization of the Platonic doctrine of love. Indeed, on the question of love, Plato and Ovid seem to stand out as mutually exclusive options, as opposites. Describing Ovid’s rhetorical position as conflicting with Plato’s philosophy of love, Richard Lanham, for example, writes: “Ovid’s strategy in both the love poetry and in the Metamorphoses stands opposite to Plato’s. Plato sought an externally sanctioned center beyond language; Ovid writes poems that have holes in the middle. He denies any sanctions his poetry itself has not created.”

Charging Ovid as a writer of “poems that have holes in the middle,” Lanham seems to suggest that the ethical force of Ovid’s poetry is

11. Barthes dismisses from his discourse the grand structure of narratives of transcendence, deliverance and other sorts of moral tales of love, and creates an ahistorical portrait of the speaking lover. Yet, as I read it, the arbitrary alphabetical order which is not free of repetitions and contradictions, creates a story, which following Barthes can be coined as the narrative of “perpetual calendar.” Paradoxically, the reading of Barthes’s A Lover’s Discourse finds itself oriented toward the structure of story. See, for example, Donnelly’s conclusion in her essay on the structure of Barthes’s A Lover’s Discourse: “It is a book that has the power to tell a story and to analyze itself” (emphasis added). Donnelly (1988), 180. For the way Barthes employs the terms “narrative” and “story” in his love grammar see the section on Novel/Drama (1978), 93.

12. For Barthes and Kristeva, Plato is the fundamental ancient source for discussing love. In the programmatic chapter “How this Book is Constructed,” Barthes specifically mentions Plato’s Symposium as a fundamental text for composing his “amorous subject.” (1978), 8. He also refers to Phaedrus in the figure titled “I am Odious” (165). Kristeva dedicates the second chapter of Tales of Love (59–82) to Plato’s Symposium and Phaedrus.

problematic since it is bound to an illusionary image of the world. Ovid’s poetic world is understood as morally dangerous since it lacks any metaphysical foundations. This world not only lacks a specific moral design, but is, moreover, completely severed from the eternal dominion of the Good and the True. In a similar manner, for traditional readings of Ovid, the narrative framework of the *Ars* and *Remedia* appears to be arbitrary and whimsical—the kind of poetry ruled by voids in the scheme of meaning and narrative. Furthermore, Lanham characterizes the irreconcilable difference between Ovid and the Platonic Socrates as teachers of love in terms of the opposition between *homo rhetorius* and *homo seriosus*. This opposition clearly underscores, as Molly Myerowitz shows, the longstanding reception of Ovid’s erotodidactic poetry as insincerely didactic.\(^{14}\)

At this point we need to pause. Ovid’s derogatory characterization as *homo rhetorius* should in no way mislead us. Rhetoric, as Plato teaches us, is vain unless it serves the desire of knowledge, philosophy. But philosophy is not the only possible mode of writing which seeks knowledge, especially not self-knowledge. By the same token, philosophy is not the only authorial framework within which rhetoric can escape the charge of emptiness. In Ovid’s erotodidactic writing, the lover’s rhetorical skills are subjected to a deep motivation of gaining self-knowledge. The reader who begins as an ignorant of the art of love (*artem . . . non novit amandi, AA.* 1.1) would become through the process of reading a skilled lover (*hoc legat et lecto carmine doctus amet, AA.* 1.2).\(^{15}\) Reading of the erotodidactic text is, according to Ovid, a transformational experience: the lover becomes aware of the power of words, expressions, and above all, the language of poetry.\(^{16}\) The skilled lover, the master of words, uses his art in order to seduce his object of desire, and to become a skillful narrator as well. In making the lover aware of the logic of love, that which puts the love experience into a comprehensible order of transitions, the lover not only gains mastery in the field of love, but realizes the best of his seductive powers. The lover who knows himself knows the ways of love, and hence he knows how to fashion a love tale. As we shall see, Ovid’s *doctus* reader is not trained to become a whimsical narrator, or a narrator who tells a story lacking a structure. Ovid’s lover is one who can

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\(^{14}\) Myerowitz (1985), 17–40. The reason why Ovid was not considered to be a natural heir of Plato is connected to the way his didactic position was understood. In the context of the important changes brought about by the discursive approaches to Ovid, the didactic claim of the *Ars* and *Remedia* has been unable to call for any serious attention to itself. Exceptional treatments of Ovid’s didacticism are Downing (1999), 235–51; Kennedy (2000), 159–76.

\(^{15}\) I am speaking here of “the naïve Reader in the text.” See Sharrock (1994), 16 for the distinction between the naïve Reader in the text and the sophisticated reader.

\(^{16}\) The transformational effect is a central theme of the double *Heroides* where the female readers become manipulative and seductive authors.
compose from the different amorous segments (*Ars* and *Remedia*) a unified structure of a love story.

Indeed, unlike the Platonic Socrates, Ovid practices an art for which the absolute, eternal form of the good is not at all a desired goal. Ovid’s art seems to lack the ethical dimension of the Socratic art of love and, subsequently, appears as an antimetaphysical approach to love, one which the Platonic tradition could only reject. However, despite the clear opposition between a Platonic and an Ovidian conception of love, I would like to show that these conflicting perspectives, nevertheless, present themselves—surprisingly—through common structures.

While Ovid’s didactic framework makes no room for a metaphysical revelation of love, it is not altogether severed from the Platonic language of love. Furthermore, I believe that Plato’s philosophical language of love provides an important source of influence for Ovid’s erotodidactic elegies. As suggested, the guides provide an actual narrative of love which readers can use as a biographical model. Moreover, the structure of this narrative, its constitutive tropes, can be traced back to Plato. In this respect, we would be able to re-appreciate Ovid as Plato’s successor and, perhaps, find a serious way of embracing Ovid’s postulation of the Delphic imperative, “know thyself,” as the lover’s main concern. That is, once we recognize the affinity between Plato’s and Ovid’s narratological frameworks, we shall also be in a position to see that the erotodidactic goal of self-knowledge is also fundamental to Ovid’s teaching. And it is this goal that the divine intrusion of the Apollonian message into the text of the *Ars* (AA. 2.498–502) is meant to incite: the lover should become *sapiens* (2.501).

In establishing the affinity between Ovid’s and Plato’s narratives of love, I shall focus on two narrative strategies that are central to Plato’s major dialogues on love: *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*. I will be concerned with (1) the palinodic structure of a love narrative as it is expressed in Socrates’ speeches of the *Phaedrus* and in the contradiction between *Ars* and *Remedia*, and with (2) the structure of the transformational narrative which we find in the *Symposium*’s image of the ladder of love and in the Ovidian shift from an art of love to techniques of remedy against love.

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17. In calling attention to Ovid’s narrative strategies I do not refer to the praeceptor’s specific advices, i.e., to his specific *præcepta amoris*. I wish, rather, to focus here on patterns of narrativity that are embodied in the form and structure of Ovid’s *Ars Amatoria* and *Remedia Amoris*.

18. Green (1982), 376 reads Ovid’s “know yourself” as a prescription to adopt “favourable, self-flattering positions.” In other words, according to him, Ovid ridicules Apollo’s wisdom by giving it a pragmatic and physical twist. For a different view see Myerowitz (1985), 130 and Sharrock (1994), 245–56. See also Dillon (1994) who explored the philosophical sources of Ovid’s *Art of Love* in the philosophical tradition, and in particular in that of Platonism.
3. Narrative and Contradiction

“Do we speak of the same thing when we speak of love?” asks Julia Kristeva in *Tales of Love*. “The ordeal of love,” she replies “puts the univocity of language and its referential and communicative power to the test. . . . Trying to talk about it seems to me different from living it, but no less troublesome and delightfully intoxicating.” Despite the differences between being in love and talking about love, Kristeva points to a strong effect which she finds to be dominant in both experiences. Being in and speaking about love are experiences that are distressing, just as they are exhilarating. Kristeva’s understanding of the oxymoronic nature of the love affect is not new and is perhaps best captured in Sappho’s poetic language through a metaphor of taste: *glukupikron*. That bittersweet taste of love does not seem to disappear from the lover’s mouth as he or she begins to speak. Touched by this dominant taste of love, our tongue produces contradicting and perplexing utterances which today are called “a lover’s discourse.”

Let us read Sappho’s fragment 130, in which she uses the figure, *glukupikron*, in describing the paradoxical experience of love:

> Eros once again limb-loosener whirls me
> Sweetbitter, impossible to fight off, creature stealing up.

*(tr. Anne Carson)*

Sappho captures a moment in a love experience. What happens in this particular moment is that the lover experiences the fierce effect of Eros through language. In naming Eros the “bittersweet,” Sappho is not making a reflective statement. “Bittersweet” is an instinctive response to the effect of Eros. It is not a descriptive but an expressive utterance (just as “it hurts!” is primarily an expression of pain rather than its description). For Sappho, the taste of Eros is familiar. But, what are the grounds for this familiarity? In ordinary circumstances, we are used to encountering the tastes of sweetness and the bitterness; but where do we encounter the bittersweet? For Sappho, love itself is the origin of this paradoxical taste. The moment of naming Eros is the very one in which Eros has seized and whirled the lover. The movement is sudden, unpredictable, and therefore hard to defy. Although unexpected, Eros is not a stranger. He is familiar in his sudden appearance each time anew.

How can we make sense of the paradoxical experience of the lover? How can the speaker’s words be meaningful? And how can we decide whether

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“bittersweet” is desirable or distasteful? The speaker loves what causes pain and she detests what brings her pleasure. In representing Eros as a contradictory phenomenon, Sappho’s glukupikron impedes the unfolding of a narrative. Anne Carson puts this in the following way:

Her poem begins with a dramatic localization of the erotic situation in time (deute) and fixes the erotic action in the present indicative tense (donei). She is not recording the history of a love affair but the instant of desire. One moment staggers under pressure of eros; one mental state splits.20

Yet, if Sappho’s glukupikron is indeed so revealing, if it touches the heart of a lover’s experience, then we may, nevertheless, wish to examine the role it has in shaping “the history of a love affair.” If, as Sappho claims, glukupikron regulates the beginning of love, how does such a beginning determine the story’s progression? This question becomes even more complicated as the story is constructed by a didactic author. A didactic perspective should be able to release us from the paradox of love, and it paradigmatically does so in one of two ways: by doing away with either love’s sweetness or its bitterness, i.e., by renunciation or by the embracing of love. The reliable teacher cannot afford to be ambiguous here; the love guide must point to one—and only one—narrative track.

Ovid’s Ars and Remedia complicate this dilemma rather than solve it. The Ars encourages the lover to enter into a love relationship. But the Remedia—if we take its curative position seriously—renounces it. Things become even more complicated as we realize that the Ars’ enthusiasm about the domain of love nevertheless admits love’s painful aspects. The writer of the Ars is fully aware of love’s problematic nature. In this sense, the Ars anticipates the need for a Remedia. The Ars tells of dangerous moments in which love weakens the mind (AA. 1.230–52). It also makes frequent allusions to ferocious expressions of passion and to unhappy examples of love stories (AA. 1.283–350); it refers to the financial losses (AA. 1.399–436) and to the psychological damage brought about by the illusory power of erotic language (AA. 1.437–58). While the Ars teaches self-control in the practice of language (as a measure against erotic risks), Ovid, at the same time, recognizes that the refined lover is ultimately defenseless against the seduction of his own words:

saepe tamen vere coepit simulator amare,
saepe, quod incipiens finxerat esse, fuit.

Many times indeed the imposter begins to love. Many times happens what he has fabricated. (*AA. 1.615–16*)

But as the lover falls into his own rhetorical trap by falling in love, he realizes the Ars’ vocation. Ovid tells us in the *Remedia* that the main motivation of the Ars is to teach loving, not feigning love: *Discite sanari, per quem didicistis amare* (*Rem. 43*). But as Ovid exhorts, “Learn healing from whom you learned to love,” he confuses the reader with the love story’s riddle: To be or not to be in love?

While the Ars favors love despite its predictable ending, the Remedia’s didactic value corresponds to the successive stage where love is lost. Once we try to integrate both the Ars and Remedia into the same didactic space, we seem to lose the possibility of creating a coherent love story. When juxtaposed, the two parts do not seem to belong to the same story. They are rather read as two equally relevant perspectives on love which create a puzzling literary structure: a palinodic structure, a contradiction. What, then, can the didactic value of the Ars and the Remedia be when these works are read together? No doubt, Ovid wrote the two parts—the pursuit of and then the recovery from love—as texts to be read together. As such, he was also aware that these works create a unique reading experience. Ovid begins the Remedia with an explicit reference to the contradiction generated by his two poems:

legerat huius Amor titulum nomenque libelli
bella mihi, video, bella parantur ait.

*Amor read the name and title of this book and said: “I see that wars are prepared against me.”* (*Rem. 1–2*)

Ovid is uncomfortable about the apparent contradiction existing between the Ars and Remedia. He understands that the Remedia threatens to undermine the value of the Ars, and yet, he reassures his reader, again and again, that the reading of the Ars is not a pointless exercise.

nec te, blande puer, nec nostras prodimus artes,
nec nova praeteritum Musa rexit opus.

*I do not betray you nor my own arts; this new Muse does not unravel my past work.* (*Rem. 11–12*)
He promises that the advice he gave in the first work will not lose its meaning or validity in the face of the ultimate curative antithesis of the second work. Both parts of the project, he declares, both the “pro” and the “con,” can still be seriously read.

Naso legendus erat tum, cum didicistis amare
idem nunc vobis Naso legendus erit.

Just as in the past the reading of Naso was invaluable for you to learn how to love, so reading Naso now will be invaluable for you. (Rem. 71–72)

But Ovid’s authorial reassurances do not, in themselves, provide any solution to the literary puzzle, the tension, created by the juxtaposition of Ars and Remedia. How can we interpret Ovid’s double gesture? How can Ovid’s didactic position be taken seriously if his didactic text is self-contradictory? Or in other words, how can the author claim authority for his writing if his text produces an ambiguous structure for a love narrative?

The contradiction between the Ars and Remedia is not something that can be easily dismissed. Its presence calls for reflection. And yet, in reflecting on this contradiction, we need to resist the temptation of doing away with the contradiction on which we reflect. The contradiction that surfaces in reading Ars and Remedia is a real one and should be addressed as such. Any interpretation of these works must rest on a reading that embraces the structure of contradiction as being integral to them. More specifically, I think that the palinode created by Ars and Remedia must be understood within the horizons of a narrative underlying Ovid’s articulation of the paradoxical experience of love. That is, the paradoxical structure of the Ars and Remedia reflects, in my view, a new kind of textual awareness on Ovid’s part, one that is inseparable from his understanding of what a love narrative is.

Here, we may return to Plato and recall how Phaedrus with its erotic palinode, with Socrates’ opposing orations on love, provides Ovid’s Ars and Remedia with an antecedent. As they leave the city and submerge themselves in nature, Phaedrus tells Socrates of Lysias’ speech which poses at its center the question of who the better lover is; is he the disinterested or the passionate one? Lysias constructed an argumentative case to support the supremacy of the nonlover. Recognizing the extent to which Phaedrus is impressed by Lysias’ rhetoric, Socrates hurries to show that he can surpass Lysias and composes a competing speech on the subject. He endorses Lysias’ position while showing that his argumentative and rhetorical powers are superior to
Lysias’ (235a). However, once he succeeds in enchanting Phaedrus and in proving himself as a superior rhetor, dissatisfaction takes hold of Socrates, who turns to deliver a second speech. In this speech, Socrates repudiates his former claim by making a stronger case for the supremacy of the passionate lover. Hence, Socrates’ first speech represents an indifferent lover whose deep disdain for passion is translated into a strictly instrumental approach to love. The second speech, in contrast, assumes the voice of a passionate lover defending erotic madness. Like *Ars* and *Remedia*, both speeches are didactic in character. And, again like the case of the Ovidian guides, a contradiction becomes apparent. The *Ars* and *Remedia* consist in inverting the Platonic order of the two Socratic speeches, against and then in favor of, passionate love.

Socrates attempts to justify his rhetorical gesture of reversal. In a non-Socratic manner, he turns to the poetic tradition as a source of authority. According to him “There is an ancient purification for those who have erred in muthologia, one which Homer did not perceive, but Stesichorus did” (243a). Socrates ties the palinode’s rhetorical provenance with the ancient authority of the poet Stesichorus who blamed Helen for the Trojan War. Having lost his eyesight, Stesichorus realized that his defamation of Helen is a blasphemous error. He consequently composed a poem of recantation which exonerated Helen, thereby also recovering his sight. The palinode is reflective of Stesichorus’ moment of enlightenment. Socrates explains that this form of writing justifies Stesichorus’ reputation as *mousikos* (243a), a poet whose drive is akin to philosophy.

Furthermore, the palinode of Stesichorus serves Socrates in dramatizing his own moment of self-realization. In presenting Stesichorus, Socrates quotes only the second part of the poet’s palinode, implicitly suggesting the possibility of completely forgetting the impact of the first part:

This is not a true story,
You did not embark in the broad-benched ships,
You did not reach the citadel of Troy. (*Phaed.* 243a–b)

21. In both of his two orations, Socrates assumes the role of an older lover addressing an adolescent. But Socrates, who uses a rhetorical “you,” is speaking at the same time to his actual listener, Phaedrus.


25. Plato mentions Stesichorus’ palinode as a victorious poetic fight against the ignorance of truth in *Rep.* 586c and again in *Epis.* 3.319e.
Stesichorus’ clear denial of his previous position is a model for Socrates who strives to leave his first speech behind, as if it did not exist. It allows him to denounce his speech against love as one might “wash the bitter taste out of . . . [his] mouth” (243d). With this declaration Socrates commences a philosophical Ars Amatoria, a miniature treatise in praise of love.

Yet, despite his explicit intention, the relationship between Socrates’ two speeches is more complex than he is willing to admit. In particular, as can be seen by a close reading of the second speech, the strong presence of the first speech is never done away with. We should notice that Socrates’ defense of love is not simply a reversal of his earlier speech. Indeed, opposite conclusions can be drawn from the two speeches, but Socrates’ psychological description of the lover’s tormented soul in the first speech remains the grounds for his argument in the second speech. The agonies, follies, and shortcomings of the condition of being-in-love are recounted in both speeches. The irrational force of desire plays a crucial role in both. In the attempt to save passionate love, the second oration not only returns to, but also penetrates deeper into, the bittersweet taste of falling in love: the two contrasting logoi leave a contradicting experience of taste. Socrates promises that with the second speech the bitter taste of salty water will be washed out with the sweetness of drinkable water. Socrates is saying that the bitter taste of love (halmuran aken 243d) produced by the first speech will be overcome by a talk (potimo logo 243d) that underscores the sweet effect of love. Yet, as we read the second speech, we realize that eros is no more sweet than bitter. Socrates does not solve the oxymoronic description of eros; he does not overcome Sappho’s glukupikron, but taints his second speech with an even stronger impression of the tantalizing effects of eros:

Above all other does she [the lover’s soul] esteem her beloved in his beauty; mother, brother, friends, she forgets them all. Naught does she reckon of losing worldly possessions through neglect. All the rules of conduct, all the graces of life, of which aforetime she was proud, she now disdains, welcoming a slave’s estate and any couch where she may have suffered to lie down close beside her darling. (252a)

Reading this passage independently of its immediate context makes it difficult to ascertain whether it is being spoken by an advocate or an opponent to passionate love. The miserable and ethically problematic condition of the lover who abandons his closest relatives (like the Homeric Helen), betraying them and, above all, betraying himself, is not a favorable description. And
yet, this description is a necessary starting point also for Socrates’ attempt to redeem love. The traumatic sides of the amorous experience are presented as essential to the phenomenon of love. Hence, for example, betrayal and ingratitude, poverty and humiliation, immoderation and obsessed servitude which were integral to the first speech (238d–241d) are all recurrent in Socrates’ second speech as well.\(^{27}\) If we then bracket the apparent conclusion of the two speeches, we see that Socrates’ position remains consistent. In regards to the problematic nature of love, Socrates has never really changed his mind. What, then, is the meaning of Socrates’ gesture of recantation in Phaedrus? Does Socrates see his speech against love as a sacrilegious act, if he generally affirms the pathological aspect of love? Does Socrates make a true reversal?

In the second speech Socrates does not deny the disappointments lovers undergo. Love is illusory and yet—and this is one of the key points of this speech—it can also be a source of great enlightenment. Responses to love alternate according to the lover’s personality. Love has the potential of tying the mortal experience to immortality, of letting the finality of human life be touched by the immortality of the divine realm. Few lovers, we are told, have the privilege to acknowledge the metaphysical dimension of their erotic suffering. Those who suffer from erotic torture (sexual longing) and who at the same time are able to identify in the exquisite image of their beloved a primordial memory of the soul’s immortal beauty, are genuine philosophical lovers. Socrates’ second speech opens up the metaphysical dimension of eros which is missing in the first oration. Yet, it does so by intrinsically tying eros’ metaphysical force to the illusionary and irrational experience of love.

As we have seen, Plato’s conception of the exuberance involved in erotic suffering is tied to the way Sappho fathoms the erotic experience as bittersweet. Socrates’ palinode aims in my view to capture this paradigmatic moment as the source of an enlightening process which structures the lover’s transformational narrative. The story of the lover’s recognition of his immortal soul resides in the paradox that expresses the intertwining of two essential dimensions of eros. Eros functions concomitantly as a blinding and as a revelatory force. As much as it calls for regret, eros is the object of our longing. In this sense, Socrates’ palinode is not simply a rhetorical exercise. It aims rather to structure a new narrative pattern for love which is based on the paradox of love. As such, Socrates’ love narrative stands in opposition to Lysias’ narrative which lacks in contradictions. Lysias’ constructs a coherent

\(^{27}\) Hence, it is not only that Socrates’ two speeches are in agreement about the damage done by love, but they are also, in this respect, “in rough agreement” with Lysias’ speech. See Carson (2003), 154.
story. In his story there is no room for the seductions of the bittersweet experience of love which would lead the lover to a fatal end.

Ovid was clearly not attracted by Lysias’ calculated form of rationality. As we have seen, he fashions the relationship between the Ars and Remedia through a paradox. Hence, the implicit contradiction underlying Socrates’ speeches in Phaedrus become an explicit part of Ovid’s understanding of the experience of love. In Ovid the paradoxical experience of love has a role in shaping the lover’s narrative. Following Plato, Ovid uses the palinode as a regulating principle in the structuring of his Ars and Remedia, and concomitantly the different stages of the love life. The palinode thus offers a narrative structure which allows the lover to express a contradictory experience. The lover regrets a love affair which is a source of happiness, and at the same time, he craves to be in love again although the pain of love still hurts. Hence, the Ars and Remedia are intertwined: each of them foreshadows the other.

By juxtaposing the Ars and Remedia, Ovid creates a retrospective narrative framework within which a lover can escape the grip of the past. For Ovid, healing requires the rejection of a lover’s prior amorous experience. This renunciation is a strategy for coping with the painful past. In this sense, Ars and Remedia present a chronology of two fields of consecutive, albeit separate, forms of experiences. The Ars comes first, representing an erotic experience that ultimately fails. And the Remedia provides a perspective by which the “now” of the Ars can turn into a past. The Remedia can serve as a remedy for the failures of the Ars precisely in the manner it puts the present of the Ars into relief.

But, following our discussion of Phaedrus, can we think of the present of a Remedia as simply canceling the presence of an Ars? Can the relationship between the Ars and Remedia be read only in terms of the sublimation of Ars by Remedia? Clearly not. This would leave the Ars bereft of any genuine significance. And, furthermore, this would dissipate the sense of contradiction so central to the Ovidian text. While couching his didactic elegies on love in a contradicting structure, Ovid explicitly resists any privileging of one temporal stage over the other. Ars and Remedia are both present to the reader as legitimate possibilities. Hence, making a dormant Platonic theme explicit, Ovid is unwilling to grant the second part of his palinode any absolute priority. On the contrary, for him, only the juxtaposition of Ars and Remedia can reflect the conflicting character of the experience of love.

Ovid is indeed concerned with the possibility of redeeming the sick lover of his predicament.
utile propositum est saevas extinguere flammamas,
nec servum vitii pectus habere sui.

To quench savage flames is a useful objective, also not to have a heart sub-
jected to its weakness. (Rem. 53–54)

Yet, his articulation of a place and time in which the lover is no longer
enslaved by a painful love does not imply that the possibility of love should
be altogether forsaken. Remedia is not meant as a cure from a stage in human
life that must be overcome and left behind forever. It denotes, rather, the
possibility of freeing oneself from specific love episodes by allowing them to
become part of the past. But what kind of wisdom does the lover gain from
the Ovidian tale of love? We should recall, that, on the one hand, Ovid’s
story does not renounce love (as Lysias does), and on the other hand, it
does not sanction erotic suffering as a means of a transcendental experience
(as the Platonic Socrates does). How can the transition from the Ars to the
Remedia be narrated, and how can our love experience be narrated from the
Remedia’s point of view?

4. Narrative and Transcendence

In the Remedia, the story of love comes to its end. By adding the Remedia to
his three Artes, Ovid integrates the theme of love’s finitude into the story of
love. The notion of love as an accomplished event is essential to the Reme-
dia’s teaching: a love affair is destined to decline. In Barthes’s words, Remedia
performs the declamation of a fait accompli. But Remedia also specifies a
stage of time in which the lover gains a distance from the experience of love.
In elaborating methods for achieving a proper distance from the beloved,
Remedia’s narrative strategy performs its therapeutic utility. The precepts
speak of the importance of creating a new life for the lover, alter . . . orbis
habendus erit (630). The lover’s new life is an indication of his or her ability
to create a different world (alter orbs), one which is exempt from the pain-
exerting presence of the beloved. In this new surrounding, the avoidance of
eye contact is a necessary measure (615). The lover should remove himself
from Rome and the neighborhood of the beloved and hence is advised to
travel as far as possible: i procul, et longas carpere perge vias (214)—“go far
away, and make a long journey.” Geographical distance is only one of sev-
eral tactics by which a lover could develop indifference toward a previous
beloved. But time alone is the ultimate test: nam mora dat vires (83)—“For
time gives strength.” Time is the essence of emotional distance.
From the vantage point of time, love—always a previous love—is traditionally narrated as a folly, a mistake. “Every amorous episode can be . . . moralized,” remarks Barthes and he cites the conventional manner in which narrators fashion their love story: “I was out of my mind, I’m over it now”; “love is a trap which must be avoided from now on.” Likewise, Ovid deals with the lover’s curative stage in terms of modifying one’s misperception. The precepts which concern the beloved’s limitations (309–38) and destruction of the lover’s illusions (339–54 and 401–34) are all cases that refer to a healthier position, the construction of which depends on a retrospective standpoint. As we shall see, however, in teaching the lover a technique of retrospective narration Ovid does not demand the lover denounce completely an old love.

The trope of temporal distance is already employed by the Homeric epic (Il. 3, 171–76). For Homer, the passage of time is indeed crucial for the depiction of Helen’s experience. Ten years have passed since Helen’s arrival in Troy. As the end of the war approaches, Helen’s anxiety concerning her own fate intensifies. Anxiety calls for self-reflection. And Priam’s inquiry about the identity of the Greek warriors thus serves as a good pretext for recalling Paris and a love experience that is past. Helen’s response to Priam has been interpreted as a manipulation. But it is, at the same time, no less important to see that her response opens up a unique pattern. Helen considers her life in retrospect and proclaims she regrets the famous love affair. At present, she wishes she could alter the past. It would have been better to die back then, instead of leaving her homeland following Paris to Troy. The tragic consequences of that love are made clear only within the horizons of the present. It is the present which allows Helen to acknowledge the fact that her erotic experience was consequential for those she cares about most. She now sees that her amorous affair consisted in a betrayal of her Greek family. As Helen narrates her life, her passion for Paris loses its burning effect because it is no longer at the focus of her gaze. Recalling how she abandoned home, relatives, friends, and above all, her beloved daughter, Helen rearticulates the passions of her past, presenting them as an erroneous experience. Aware of this structure of Helen’s self-realization, the Homeric narrator sets the stage with particular care: looking at events from a high tower, from above, Helen occupies a perspective by which she is released from the grip of love. Helen’s spatial distance from events enhances the temporal distance that separates her from her love and allows for the creation of what we today call emotional distance.

30. This emotional distance is further explored by Homer through means of a geographical dis-
Helen’s elevated position is significant for the history of love narratives and is reformulated by Plato through the image of the ladder of love. In Diotima’s speech in Symposium, Plato develops a new erotic ethos, which surprisingly sets for the pathology of eros an optimistic ending. For Diotima, eros is not a specific domain of desire but, rather, the very movement of transcendence. Eros transcends the domains of objects, beautiful bodies, beautiful souls, worthy actions and laws, the beauty of knowledge in order to fully realize itself, face to face, with the Idea of Beauty. Diotima’s philosophy of love offers a liberating process by which the lover may shun the tragic twist of worldly love and open the alternative possibility not only of truth but also of a “happy” kind of love.

Erotic education begins at the bottom of the ladder, a first stage (proton) consisting in the experience of falling “in love with the beauty of one individual body” (210a6). From there on, the various stages are connected by consecutive clauses (opening with hoste 210b5; ina 210c3, 5, 7). While this progression reflects an intellectual development of a mind acquiring the capacity of making logical moves from concrete to abstract forms of thought, it concomitantly depicts a progression in time. That is, the shift from one stage to the other creates a continuous sequence which is based on both logical and temporal orders: “Then (epeita 210a8) he should realize . . . (210a), “next he must grasp . . .” (210b), “and after . . .” (meta de 210b6, c6). In this sense, Diotima’s ladder provides an archetype for a narrative structured as a lover’s biography, as stages on a lover’s path.

The form of a lover’s narrative is teleological. The erotic goal is achieved once the lover is released from the grip of the world of appearances to which the mundane eros belongs. To put this differently, Plato sees Diotima’s art of love as the art of transcending worldly eros:

Always upwards for the sake of this Beauty, starting out from beautiful things and using them like rising stairs: from one body to two and from two to all beautiful bodies, then from beautiful bodies to beautiful customs, and from customs to learning beautiful things, and from these lessons he arrives in the end at this lesson, which is learning of this very Beauty, so that in the end he comes to know just what it is to be beautiful. (Sym. 211c32)

31. Although the term ‘ladder’ is not explicitly mentioned in Diotima’s speech, its image can nevertheless be captured by the reader who follows the lover’s ascending steps (epanabasmoi 211c) from the bottom to the utmost stage of Love.

The invaluable significance of Diotima’s ladder of love for the history of love is commonly recognized within the context of the Neo-Platonist and Christian traditions. Denouncing earthly passions and glorifying the love for God, Christian writing develops a narrative of self-realization that leads to a complete renunciation of the amorous past. The religious conversion narrative privileges the present over the past. Hence, the linearity of the conversion story is utilized to sanction the religious move from past to present. But should we really understand the Platonic ascension up the ladder of love as a story of conversion? In my view, that would be an overinterpretation, or even, a misunderstanding of the Platonic narrative of love.

Diotima offers an infrastructure for a lover’s biography, patterns of personal growth. The protagonist of such a biography is expected to undergo a series of different stages before he reaches the ultimate goal of love. However, unlike the paradigm of a conversion narrative, the personal transformation delineated by Diotima is more complex than that of a simple temporal linearity. First, in prescribing the move to higher forms of love, Diotima does not commend a total renunciation of the amorous past. Growing out of the love for bodies and climbing up toward the love of laws, for example, the lover is not said to negate the desirability of bodies. Instead of negation, Diotima speaks of sublation. Transcending the love for particular bodies, the lover is in a position which allows him to perceive the concrete beautiful body as small (smikron 210e5). From this higher position the grandiosity of the desired object is trivialized. In other words, Diotima uses the rule of perspective in order to point at the insufficiency of an old love. As a lover’s narrative develops, the loves of the past can show themselves as partial and incomplete. Eros is a movement perpetuated by a form of lack. And lack is indeed fundamental for the ascendance to the new stage of love. But it is only through perspective that the lover can recognize his previous amorous experiences as lacking.

Furthermore, the passage from an object-centered desire of the past to an enlightened present is not described by Diotima as a singular event in a lover’s life. The narrative scheme delineated by the ladder of love is based on multiplicity. Transcendence does not consist in a singular break in one’s life, but appears throughout life in the plural, i.e., as context-dependent cases of transcendence that create a converging sequence. Although the

33. An example is Augustine’s Confessions, which is a narration of a self whose present only becomes meaningful through a critical review of the past, through recognition of one’s past as flawed. In the intellectual histories written by Blumenberg and Taylor, for example, the temporal structure of the Confessions is presented as the key for understanding the new mode of reflexivity created by this first autobiography. Blumenberg (1983), 309–23; Taylor (1989), 127–39.
ascendence to the final metaphysical stage of love is described as an ideal leap, the form of that leap is made possible only through its recurrent reverberation within the sensual domain. The lover’s readiness to undertake the ultimate metaphysical stage is conditioned by his familiarity with the form of transcendence underlying a succession of erotic experiences. While Diotima constructs the metaphysical goal as the climax of the philosopher’s erotic biography, that endpoint is governed by the same principle regulating the entire course of the lover’s life. Transcendence is not a singular event but, as suggested, a life composed of a series of infinite transcendental events. For each and every amorous event the strategy of release from an earlier erotic servitude is fundamental. And thus a narrative is created which consists of repetitive moves, falling in and out of love: thus requiring an *ars* and a *remedia*.

For the Ovidian love narrative, the replacement of one love with another is central: *successore novo vincitur amnis amor* (*Rem.* 462), “All love is overcome by a new love.” Or put in a different perspective: *alterius vires subtrahit alter amor* (*Rem.* 444), “One love undermines the other’s force.” The Platonic influence on Ovid can be seen here in the dialectical relationship between the *Remedia* and *Ars*: the end of love is never final, but always in itself, a point of departure. In this sense we might understand Ovid’s unfavorable reaction toward those who hate the one once loved, as Platonic. A healthy kind of love is one that withers while allowing for a new love experience to grow. It allows for a fading away of the amorous obsession without damaging the larger course of a love life. For both Diotima and Ovid the idea of a spiral sequence is an essential erotic expertise. In this respect, we may say that, although the life of the Ovidian lover lacks a metaphysical goal, its inner form is, nevertheless, like the Platonic narrative, the form of transcendence.

Grounded in a narrative of transformation, the lover’s passage from the *Ars* to *Remedia* is not, however, conversational. Instead of a linear form of

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34. Diotima delineates the path by which a lover could transcend bodily love and earthly desire and reach the only stage where “man’s life is ever worth the living,”—i.e., when one “has attained this vision of the soul of the very beautiful” and hence “will never be seduced again by the charm of gold, of dress, of comely boys, of lads just ripening to manhood.” *Sym.* 212d. Yet, other objects of love that seduce the lover, such as beautiful customs and learning beautiful things, are not referred to as objects that lose their appeal in the eyes of the enlightened lover.

35. This understanding is also shared by Aristophanes’ speech in 192c–d. See Halperin (2005) on the metaphysical structure of desire.

36. A release from servitude is mentioned in 210d1 and is strategically incorporated by Ovid in *Rem.* 54, 73, 90, 293–94.

37. See *Rem.* 653–55.
transformation in which one stage in life completely gives way to another, Ovid presents a cyclical narrative that embraces both the *Ars* and *Remedia*.

Or, in other words, he thinks of the life of the lover as a perpetual oscillation between the two passages. In this context, we may better understand such Ovidian exhortation that may have otherwise seemed awkward within the framework of the *Remedia*:

> quaeris, ubi invenias? artes, i, perlege nostras:
> plena puellarum iam tibi navis erit.

You ask where you can find a new love? Go read my *Ars* again: your ship will be soon full of women. (*Rem.* 487–88)

Returning to the *Ars* after reading the *Remedia*, readers will find themselves led again to the *Remedia* which, in turn, opens itself to the *Ars*, and so on. The way in which Ovid stipulates a cycle for the reading of his erotodidactic works epitomizes his understanding of love as a nonending cycle. Ovid’s theory of love is reinforced by a personal narrative, reflecting the instructor’s exemplary love life: *ego semper amavi, et si quid faciam, nunc quoque, quaeris, amo* (*Rem.* 7–8)—“I’ve always loved, and should you ask what I am doing now, I love.” Ovid’s words level the difference between past and present loves. There is no trace of the pain caused by old loves. “I’ve always loved and I now love” implies that the process of remedy, the *Remedia*, is no more than a strategy for stabilizing the amorous subject. According to Ovid, eros functions as a unifying principle through which the ego’s distinct temporal stages, its past and present, are integrated into a meaningful life.

The rejuvenating force of love finds its clear expression in Ovid’s literary career, in the trajectory of his writing. Ovid’s poetic career discloses a sequence of literary episodes of fallings in love. His infatuation with various literary genres reflects a diverse form of creativity. Ovid was challenged by tragedy (his lost *Medea*), was devoted to love elegy, and experimented in elegiac epistles. He then made a final transition within the field of love elegy by exploring didactic poetry. The *Remedia*, too, marks another important literary change. As Ovid’s passion for love elegy is worn out, he falls in love again, this time with a new form of love, the epic. The *Remedia* releases its author from his old love, announcing “the end of elegy.”

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38. For the significance of Ovid’s erotodidactic writing for the emergence of autobiography, see Lev Kenaan (2005), 167–84.

Ovid, or rather, his extrapolator, affirms the existence of a new passion.  
The repeated affirmation of “amo” underlies therefore the structure of the  
Ovidian love story, one which is, after all, captured by Barthes’s figure of  
affirmation:

What I have affirmed a first time, I can once again affirm, without repeating  
it, for then what I affirm is the affirmation, not its contingency: I affirm the  
first encounter in its difference, I desire its return, not its repetition. I say to  
the other (old or new): Let us begin again. (emphasis in original)  

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40. The quotation is from Mozley (1947). See also Henderson’s edition which reads et capiunt  
anni carmina multa mei. Henderson comments on this line in (1980), 168.  
PART IV

Seeing and Speaking the Self

Elegy and Subjectivity
THE ORIGINAL focus of narratology as developed by Gérard Genette and Mieke Bal was formalistic. Since then, interest has shifted to the ideological burden of storytelling, and in the 1990s formalism was reviled. The turn toward the social was a salutary move, given its varied degrees of neglect by formalism, the New Criticism, narratology, and early deconstruction, but at the beginning of the twenty-first century, form has again become interesting. The question facing critics of literature today is whether formal and ideological analysis can be reconciled. This essay is an experiment in such an endeavor. I will attempt a reading of Propertius 4.11, the Cornelia elegy, within the framework of an ancient rhetorical figure that has attracted considerable recent attention: the exemplum.1 This figure brings together a strong, formal narrative element with considerable ideological power. Cornelia has long been identified as an exemplum.2 What I hope to demonstrate is how this critical tool can help overcome the divide between formalism and ideology in the study of narrative. As often with critical frameworks, the interest of their practical applications lies in the gaps—the places where the individual instance challenges the model.

Quintilian’s definition of the exemplum separates out the figure’s component parts: the narration (commemoratio), the content (res gesta), and the reason for its use—in a rhetorical context, persuasion.3

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1. To name only a few signal instances: Bloomer (1992); Agamben (1998), 21–22; Chaplin (2000); Roller (2004); Kraus (2005), 181–200; Lowrie (2007).
2. See below, notes 21 and 30.
3. Lausberg (1960), 1: 227–28. A somewhat different scheme can be found in Roller (2004),
what we properly call an *exemplum*, that is, the recalling to mind of something done, or as if done, that is useful for persuading what you intend (*IO* 5.11.6).

Although the literary use of the *exemplum* may not be persuasive, a fundamental critical task will be to determine what pragmatic end the figure serves. Before approaching this analytic goal, however, I will first cover the more traditional ground of narratology. Quintilian anticipates the Russian formalist division between *fabula* and *sujet*, the story and its telling. While it is tempting to align a story’s form with its telling and its ideological import with the *res gesta*, a story’s telling will necessarily both be shaped by and itself inform the social function it carries. The separation of these categories is heuristic. Although it is possible to abstract a story from its telling, the result will be another telling and no story will ever exist on its own outside some form of telling.

A further heuristic separation has been happening in classical scholarship: the *exemplum* is an important category for both representation and ethics. As a singular instance, it represents the category from which it has been removed in order to represent it. The word derives from *eximo* (“to remove”), and Ernout-Meillet defines it as “properly the object distinguished from others and set aside to serve as a model.” Its phenomenology, however, surpasses the aims of mere representation. Livy understands the *exemplum* as an instance to be imitated or avoided, and Augustus’ presentation of his own actions as exemplary and therefore to be imitated will be discussed below. The *exemplum*’s moral weight comes out precisely at the moment it stops being conceived of as an entirely singular phenomenon: it provides a

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4–6, who isolates an *exemplum*’s component parts as: action, audience, commemoration, and imitation (positive and negative). The pragmatic effect Quintilian envisages is spread between Roller’s audience and imitation, but sometimes an *exemplum*’s persuasive force is merely to prove that something is the case, in which case it functions more like our “example” or “instance,” and is not meant to be imitated. Roller considers only the stronger cases.


6. Livy, Preface 10: *Hoc illud est praecipue in cognitione rerum salubre ac frugiferum, omnis te exempli documenta in industria posit a monumento intueri; inde tibi tuaeque rei publicae quod imitere capias, inde foedum inceptu foedum exitu quod vites.* ("This is especially healthy and fruitful in the understanding of things, for you to consider the evidence of every example placed on a shining monument; from there you may take what you may imitate for yourself and the republic, from there what you should avoid—foul in its beginning, foul in its outcome.")
model and therefore is to some degree repeatable. As with the distinction between form and content, narrating and story, the division into representation and ethics is an abstraction helping us understand the manifold functions encompassed by this figure.

To analyze Cornelia as an *exemplum*, it will be necessary to break down the figure into its component parts, but to fully appreciate the poem in which she is represented, all of the elements will, in a second move, need to be conjoined. Following Quintilian, I will first treat the how (*commemoration*), then the what (*res gesta*), and then attempt to understand the poem’s pragmatic aim.

### 1. Form

Narratology takes as its premise the unities of time, place, and voice. Its real interest lies in departures from the norm, but these cannot be defined without the presuppositions of linear time, the inability to be in two places at once, and the persistence of identity within the speaking voice. Only these presuppositions lend value to anachronism, dislocation, and the ripples in identity found in focalization. Narratology is not antithetical to the reading of nonnarrated literature because these same presuppositions are necessary to make sense of any enacted speech situation. The first task in reading lyric and elegy, for instance, is to figure out what occasion—by which I mean both social context and literal position in time and space—would allow the utterance to take place. This endeavor has given rise to the classification of the subgenres and rhetorical genres common to both lyric and elegy (e.g., sympotic poem, *werbende Dichtung*, propemptikon, *recusatio*).8

Death challenges these unities. Time and place are problematic for the dead—are they here at the tomb, or somewhere in Hades? What does “now” mean for those for whom there is no “here”? Persistence of identity might be easier to maintain while dead, except that the closure of death makes any

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7. The unities of time and place go back to Aristotle’s *Poetics*, though these are not legislated as they were understood to be in the Renaissance, but, as Lucas (1968), 94–95, observes, were “merely a consequence of unity of action.” See also his comments on the relation of time and place in different genres (222–23). Unity of action is treated below. Genette (1972) devotes chapters 2 and 3 to issues of time, 4 and 5 to variations in voice. Narrative order often has to do with place, see, e.g., “cette succession n’a aucun rapport avec l’ordre temporel des événements qui la composent, ou seulement un rapport de coïncidence partielle. Elle dépend essentiellement de l’emplacement des sites” (120). Bal (1984), 21–58 analyzes and refines Genette.

8. Classic works on this subject are: Heinze (1972); Cairns (1972); Fowler (1982), 67–68; Davis (1991); Edmunds (2001), 83–94.
persistence moot. The best way to keep the dead in their place is to relegate them to the past, but ghosts have an uncanny way of crossing spatial, temporal, and logical boundaries. A related challenge to the unities is writing, which allows for the displacement of the utterance from the time and place of speaking, even beyond the life of the speaker. The severance of the utterance from the speaking voice subjects the speaker’s identity to doubt. How do we know an imposter has not intervened?

Propertius’ Cornelia elegy (4.11) challenges the unities on numerous levels, both in Cornelia’s speech, and as a poem. For one thing, no situation would allow the utterance to take place. I do not mean the mere banality that ghosts do not exist and cannot, therefore, speak. In literature, there are plenty of narratologically sensible ghosts who speak logically in well-defined nonexistent places—I think of Anchises in Aeneid 6. Creusa’s ghost (Aen. 2) provides a model for a departed wife’s visit to her grieving husband in the place where he happens to be. Cornelia, however, straddles two incompatible speech situations in (at least) two incompatible places. About a century ago, Butler made this comment on what we would now call the poem’s speech genre: “This elegy takes the form of a funeral laudatio of a noble Roman lady, Cornelia, spoken by herself. It is possible that it may have formed the inscription of her tomb.”9 These terse two sentences require a lot of unpacking, since, while true, they contain many incompatibles.10

Cornelia speaks her praises in a speech of defense to the judges of the underworld. The pragmatic stakes of Cornelia’s court speech are clear, since her treatment in the underworld depends on the judgment passed on her life. She herself raises the possibility of her failure to convince, in which case she would accept the punishment of the husband-slaying Danaids, in direct contradiction to her life of marital faithfulness and fertility (4.11.27–8).11 This is a reductio ad absurdum presupposing her success, and the end of the speech assumes as much: causa perorata est. flentes me surgite, testes, / dum pretium vitae grata rependit humus / moribus et caelum patuit (“My case has

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10. The scholarship has not sufficiently differentiated between these modes. Hubbard (1974), 146, sees “the address to the bereaved husband that we find on ancient tombstones” as an introduction to “Cornelia’s speech in defense.” Wyke (1987), 170–71 moves seamlessly from the one to the other. For the complex relation of speech to writing in archaic Greek funerary epigram, see Svenbro (1993). Steiner (2001), 154 draws a link between the speaking monument and defense and suggests that a statue’s epitaph “acts in the manner of the spokesman or prostates whom those barred from speaking in the fifth-century polis would later employ: stating the claims, merits, and achievements of the silenced party, it makes the case on his or her behalf.”
11. For the expectation that she would be punished as for adultery should she fail, see Janan (2001), 157.
been made. Rise, witnesses, who weep over me, while the grateful earth repays the price of my life. Even the sky is open to good morals,” 4.11.99–101).  

The poem opens, however, with an address to Cornelia’s husband, asking him not to mourn. Propertius could have organized the poem so as to frame the speech of defense within the larger address to her husband; instead, the two speeches are intertwined in such a way that they cannot be extricated one from the other. The first address to Paullus comes in line 1; at line 27 she announces she will speak as her own lawyer (ipsa loquor pro me, “I myself speak for myself”); a further address to Paullus comes at line 73 and she continues speaking to family members until line 98, when she announces the close of her speech (causa perorata est, “[my] case has been argued,” 99). We could suppose that the words directed to husband and children within the underworld speech are apostrophes; that is, Cornelia addresses people represented as absent.  

Then there would be a difference between the initial address to Paullus, imagined as present in line 1, and the later apostrophes, but this avoids the question. Ghosts blur the difference between presence and absence so that we cannot draw a sharp line between present address and absent apostrophe. Furthermore, the transition between speaking to Paullus and to the judges happens over a number of lines and the section addressed to Paullus does not make sense even as a one-sided frame (with the address to Paullus at the beginning, then the speech to the judges with the apostrophes to family members, then the conclusion of the speech without a return to the opening to Paullus).  

Before turning to the question of the time and space of Cornelia’s speech, a further problem with the speech genre needs to be addressed. Roman funeral laudations are not conventionally in the voice of the deceased, but are usually given by their sons.  

Propertius certainly enlivens the genre by not uttering the praise in his own voice, or even imagining a family member speaking at his mother’s funeral, whether a son or, as in the voice of the Laudatio Turiae, her husband. A canonical technique for avoiding the social difficulty of self-praise is to put the praise in the mouth of another. Quintilian cites Cicero for this: he often puts praise of himself in dialogues

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12. Camps (1965) ad loc., sees this as her anticipation of a favorable verdict.
15. Flower (1996), 131–32 notes that the Laudatio Turiae probably belongs “to a more private context than the public speeches on the rostra.”
in the voice of Atticus, or Brutus, or Quintus, or some other interlocutor.\textsuperscript{16}

Propertius does the opposite. He lends his own words to the \textit{laudanda} as if she were speaking them herself. This fiction creates a narratological conundrum. In a third-person omniscient narrative, focalization occurs when some coloring lets readers know that the point of view of one of the characters is being expressed. Here it goes the other way around. The fictive speaker focalizes the author’s point of view.

A further inconsistency in Cornelia’s speech genre is the deployment of the conventions of grave epigram, which sit strangely with the speech of defense. The poem opens with her telling Paullus to stop pressing her grave with tears. An option is to imagine him at the tomb, with her hovering as a ghost uttering the words or conveying her words through an inscription. But neither he nor she has to be at the tomb. He could be dreaming or daydreaming her words. One of the characteristics of tomb inscriptions is that they localize the speech and the buried corpse in a particular place.\textsuperscript{17}

Here, however, Cornelia wanders off to the underworld and deictics explicitly locate her rather in Hades: \textit{immatura licet, tamen hoc non noxia ueni: / det Pater hic umbrae mollia iura meae} (“Though before my time, I did not come to this place guilty: here let the Father give soft laws to my shade,” 4.11.17–18). But if we use this information to conclude that she is really in the underworld and that the conventions of the inscription are dislocated from the grave, another deictic later pulls us back to the tomb: \textit{in lapide hoc uni nupta fuisse legar} (“I will be read on this stone to have been married to one man,” 4.11.36). Well, maybe her ghost is in the underworld, and Paullus is off moping at home, and the poem’s readers are the ones to be imagined at the tomb, poring over the inscription. We readers are certainly reading the poem, and the tomb inscription has an uneasy relation with the poem itself; there is a suggestion of identity, although the poem cannot be imagined as being transcribed verbatim on stone.\textsuperscript{18}

Still, the poem conveys what Cornelia attributes to the inscription, namely, her status as \textit{univira}, and to that extent, the deictic moves at least partially over to our frame of reference. If there is a disparity between the deictic Cornelia uses to place herself in the underworld and the one that locates her at her own tomb, the

\textsuperscript{16} Quintilian, \textit{IO} 11.1.21: \textit{in epistulis aliquando familiariter apud amicos, nonnumquam in dialogis, aliena tamen persona, serum de eloquentia sua dixit} (“He spoke the truth about his eloquence sometimes in his letters, familiarly among friends, occasionally in the dialogues, but in another voice”). This passage is discussed in Lowrie (2007), 98.

\textsuperscript{17} This holds whether or not they speak in their own voices. Svenbro (1993), 30 notes that for Greece, “Egocentric inscriptions are staged by an author who is systematically considered absent.”

\textsuperscript{18} For the appropriation of tomb inscription conventions in Roman poetry, see Woodman (1974), 116–17.
latter is even more equivocal in making a partial link between the inscription and the poem, a particular place and one that is both metaphorical and movable.19

The equivocation between whether we are hearing Cornelia speak or reading her inscription matches her implication of speech with writing within her speech of defense. Although these first appear to support one another, here too a logical discrepancy makes the speech act inconsistent. Cornelia proudly describes the two sides of her family: the *fama* of her paternal side, victorious in Africa, lines up with speaking (*loquuntur*, “they speak,” 4.11.29–30), while both sides of her lineage can boast of inscriptions (*et domus est titulis utraque fulsa suis*, “and each house rests on its own inscriptions,” 4.11.31–32). Oral testimony and honorary inscriptions at least tell the same story of her ancestors’ greatness, and when she calls on the ashes of her ancestors to witness her obedience to the censor’s law (41–42), their testimony would appear to emerge from the inscriptions: *testor maiorum cineres tibi, Roma, colendos, / sub quorum titulis, Africa, tunsa iaces* (“I call to witness the ashes of my ancestors, which should be worshipped by you, Rome, and under whose inscriptions you lie beaten, Africa,” 4.11.37–38). Logically, however, the inscriptions cannot attest to Cornelia’s virtue and obedience to the censor’s law, but only to the glory of her family.20

The disparity between Cornelia’s various speech modalities covers many categories. She seems to be in two places at once, but furthermore, the relationship of the speech to the inscription sets up not only antithetical occasions, but antithetical temporal spheres. The speech to the judges is, properly speaking, an occasion. She utters it only once, and she will be judged as a consequence. The speech is intended to achieve a specific result. The inscription, however, exists, or is imagined to exist, for all time. Readers can return to it to check her list of virtues and accomplishments, just as reading the poem itself can reactivate her utterance again and again, outside the context of the speech. The result of the reading is not judgment, at least

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19. I treat a comparable instance of a slide between deictics referring to the text in both the author’s time and in our own, and also provide a larger account of deixis in Lowrie (2006a), 115–32. A difference between *haec carta* at Catullus 68.46 and *in hoc lapide* at Propertius 4.11.36 is that paper applies both to the poem’s original and subsequent material of transmission, while stone does not pertain to either. For the problem of deixis in performance texts, see Felson (1999), and her introduction in Felson (2004), 253–66.

20. Flower (1996), 159 links the funeral oration with grave inscriptions in a single event: the oration was followed by a procession to the family plot, where the inscriptions on ancestors’ tombs could be read. The *imagines* (“funeral masks”) of the ancestors also had their own inscriptions (180–84). These masks normally were kept in a house’s atrium (chapter 7), but also accompanied the dead to the tomb.
not in the technical sense of a judge passing sentence, though anyone may
in fact make a moral adjudication of Cornelia on reading the inscription.
Rather, the inscription serves to commemorate the dead, and this memorial-
izing role is linked to the genre of the laudatio, a speech of praise given on a
single occasion, the funeral, and later inscribed. Commemoration obviously
also has ties to the poem’s own pragmatic ends. While the laudatio and the
inscription work toward the same aim (praise) in contrast to the speech in
defense, whose aim is to win a favorable judgment, they still offer different
temporal frameworks: the single event and the timelessness of repetition.

What about identity? Aristotle in the Poetics remarks that the unity of
a plot does not reside in its being about one individual, but about a single
action (chapter 8). The action the poem represents, Cornelia’s speaking, as
discussed above, is hardly single. Aristotle also remarks that the poet should
as far as possible keep the scene before his eyes (chapter 17), and this is
exactly what does not happen. If there is any unity to this poem, it consists
in its being about a single individual’s life.

However, it is not clear there is even a character here. Cornelia is defined
by her historical accomplishments—as a man is on an inscription.21 Her life
consists of a list of Roman female virtues and social desiderata. She comes
from a long aristocratic line; she is related to the imperial family; her close
male relatives have recently held prestigious offices; she has won the ius
trium liberorum (“law of three children”), unlike some, by actually having
three children. Furthermore, she has an ideal selfless character: she releases
her husband from mourning, and wishes him and the children well with
the putative new stepmother. Compared to Cynthia, Cornelia is historically
specific, but as a character, even that cipher Cynthia, with her passion and
jealousy, appears emotionally fuller than Cornelia, who seems to be nothing
more than a symbolic representation.22 Her emotions, pride in her social
standing, and concern for her children do not mark her out as an individual,
but reinforce her paradigmatic status. Cornelia functions as an exemplum of
female virtue rather than as a well-rounded character.23

The exemplum is a figure with a complex relation to narrativity. On the
formal level, exempla are often narrated and set into some larger discursive

21. Wyke (1987), 173 regards the woman here as “everywhere organized in relation to the male”; metaphorically, she appropriates the roles of orator, magistrate, and triumphant general.
22. The bibliography on Cynthia as a cipher is long; analysis and bibliography can be found in Miller (2004), 60–68. For critiques of his Lacanian frame, see Buchan’s review (2005), 198–202, and my review article (2005b), 108–16.
23. Janan (2001) refers to Cornelia’s “exemplary virtue” (147) and “exemplary maternity” (160).
frame where they may have a persuasive function.\textsuperscript{24} As nodes of ideology, they offer story patterns that are not inert: they are to be imitated or avoided. Poem 4.11 gives no frame to guide interpretation. Rather, readers tend to adopt the whole book as a frame,\textsuperscript{25} and here the contrast with Cynthia and other demimondaines has produced various interpretations of how Cornelia’s story functions within elegy’s generic code. She is an “anti-elegiac woman” to be scorned; she’s a paragon of Roman virtues to be admired; she is a locus of covert elegiac resistance to such Roman virtues.\textsuperscript{26} These interpretations depend on reconstructing the poet’s attitude toward Cornelia, whether pro or con, and they founder on the fact that the poem does not offer that kind of evidence. Even where the poet in his own voice, or a character in his or her voice, offers some guide to interpretation, \textit{exempla} have a tendency to escape their users’ intentions. Here, however, the lack of a discursive frame makes the comparison of the narrative to the teller’s ostensible reason for telling it impossible.

The question of authorial control opens up the concomitant issue of judgment. The best ancient description of how \textit{exempla} escape their authors’ original intentions is Velleius Paterculus, 2.3.4:\textsuperscript{27}

\begin{quote}
non enim ibi consistunt exempla, unde coeperunt, sed quamlibet in tenuem recepta tramitem latissime evagandi sibi viam faciunt, et ubi semel recto deerratum est, in praeceps pervenitur, nec quisquam sibi putat turpe, quod alii fuit fructuosum.
\end{quote}

\textit{Exempla} do not stop where they have begun, but in however small a path they have been received, make for themselves a way of wandering off very far, and once one has wandered from the right way, it goes headlong, and no one thinks foul for himself what was fruitful for another.

Velleius’ moral language shows that interpretation and judgment are intimately related. As a historian, he was aware that stories are not neutral, but models for behavior, and this is where ideology rears its head.

\textsuperscript{24} Roller (2004), 2 and 10 comments on how even just the mention of an exemplary name implies a narrative the reader is meant to supply. The relation of the narrative to the frame is a pervasive theme of Lowrie (1997). \textit{Odes} 1.15 is anomalous as an extended narrative in Horace because it lacks a frame (1997),123–35. More usual and paradigmatic is \textit{Odes} 1.7, discussed in Lowrie (1997), 101–23.

\textsuperscript{25} Stahl (1985), 262; Wyke (1987), 171–72; Janan (2001), 147 comments on interpretations that view 4.11 as reversing a stance articulated earlier in the book.

\textsuperscript{26} Janan (2001), 147 summarizes these interpretations and their history.

\textsuperscript{27} This passage provides the interpretive frame of Lowrie (2007).
2. Ideology

So far, I have given some formalistic remarks on Cornelia and her speech situation according to narratological premises. Where narratology as a method of formal analysis becomes less useful is at the moment where critical analysis passes from the situation represented within the poem or story, to the literary event itself, from the exemplum as a formal structure to the exemplum as ideology. What is to be gained from representing Cornelia’s utterances in such a disunified fashion?

Micaela Janan offers a powerful reading of the poem as ideology. Cornelia’s obsession with her imminent judgment in the underworld sets in motion a representation of the twofold nature of the Law. Janan capitalizes this word to differentiate earthly formal legal codes from a broader category that includes “all social constraints.” In Janan’s analysis, Cornelia embodies the two reciprocal aspects of the Law, so that she is an honorable paradigm on the one hand, and shows up the Law as “meaningless horror” on the other.28 The Law, like other systems of signification, is an arbitrary realm where distinctions are produced by difference. Janan sees Cornelia’s selfless sacrifice as a critique of the Law: she gives up her life and asks for nothing in return, such as a vow of chastity from Paullus.29 Cornelia, however, did not choose death willingly or, like Alcestis, make a bargain. She merely and contingently died. I would also argue that the Law may have its horrors, but even these produce meaning. In the end, Janan joins those who put the poem down on the side of elegiac critique, although she does not reconstruct authorial intention. The question remains whether analysis necessarily requires judgment. Can an exemplum ever escape its own moral weight to become pure form?

To read poetry as ideology need have little if anything to do with its form. Such narratives are social constructs regardless of their aesthetic value, and they do not require an extensive act of narration to produce stories.30 The form of the act of narrating plays second fiddle to the content. Aesthetic quality plays as ideological value, without conveying particular meanings. Janan is herself sensitive to the poem’s formal features—as in her reading of the poem’s repetition of *urna*—and her emphasis on the Law comes as a result of the remarkable repetition of *lex* and other words having to do with the law (*iura, iudex, tabellae, testor, testis*). These words, however, structure

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28. Janan (2001), 147 (other quotations above are from the same page). This is the law in the Lacanian sense. For an assessment of Janan’s theoretical frame, see Lowrie (2002), 63–65.
30. See n. 24 above for Roller’s remarks about minimal narration in exempla.
the poem in addition to conveying the ideology’s content and revealing the structure of the law.

I would like to attempt an experiment in bringing the form of the speech genre back into relation with the poem’s ideological burden. This attempt turns on a flimsy pun, but one that, I think, cuts to the heart of the way the Romans formulated their understanding of the media of representation, and hence form, during the Augustan age. In addition to numerous references to leges, Cornelia also speaks of herself twice with the passive of legere, once meaning “gather” and once meaning “read.” Magdelain argues that the etymological link between reading and the law, legere and lex, has to do not with the fact that laws were fixed by being written on tablets, but with the way laws were ratified: by being read aloud in the Senate before the vote. Reading, according to this interpretation, at least at its inception falls on the side of the performative, rather than aligning with a static text, though it would be impossible to limit the relation of reading to the law to this originary moment. I would like to argue that the duality of Cornelia’s utterance as a speech and as an inscription corresponds neatly to the double status of the law as fixed, to be read on tablets, and as something that comes into being through performance. The law enacted in the vote Cornelia imagines will be taken about her is a speech act to be written on tablets (tabellas, 4.11.49). It is exactly this combination of the fixed and the newly created in the context of processes of representation—aesthetic, social, and political—that is particularly Augustan.

The two passages where Cornelia uses legere of herself align reading with death, but also set a contrast between the differing materialities of physical and textual existence. Cornelia’s body has been reduced to a handful of dust:

    et sum, quod digitis quinque legatur, onus (4.11.14)

    and I am a burden which could be gathered in five fingers.

But she can project a future existence for herself through reception by a reader.

    in lapide hoc uni nupta fuisse legar (4.11.36)

31. Horace and Ovid are similarly interested in the law’s medium and its performativity. Magdelain’s interpretation is discussed in Lowrie (2006b), 333 and (2005a), 412–18 especially n. 50, and it forms a cornerstone of interpretation of the final chapter of my book Writing, Performance, and Authority in the Age of Augustus (2009).
It will be read on this stone that I was married to one man.

The writing up of the life, in a laudatio, on an inscription, in a poem, comes about on the condition of death. It fixes Cornelia’s life in a complete narrative that the reader views after the fact and that can be presented as a whole to the judges in the underworld for judgment. Reading compensates for the body’s dissolution.

By contrast, the law (lex) in Cornelia’s usage appears as a code that informs living behavior. When Cornelia faces the judges in the underworld, she speaks of iura and wishes the ones Father Dis will give her be soft (molliæ, 4.11.18). She claims never to have herself “softened” (mollise, 4.11.41) the law of censorship, as, say, an elegist might, since elegy presents itself as a “soft” genre. It is the lawgiver’s prerogative to make the laws soft or harsh; her job is to obey. The difference between these two passages is that lex implies a set of social constraints and expectations—Janan’s definition—in the second passage rather than a set of specific codified prohibitions. Cornelia refers to the censor’s role in overseeing morality. These are expectations to be lived out dynamically. Her other mention of the law supports this understanding. At line 47, the laws are located in nature and in her patrician class; they are not formal statutes.

This dynamic and fluid understanding of the law as custom, however, meets up with an actual governmental law in the ius trium liberorum, and the crux of Cornelia’s status as an exemplum has much to do with the Augustan marriage legislation. It is this legislation that paradigmatically brings together law as fixed statute and law as lived social expectations; these particular laws are pathbreaking in legal history precisely in intervening in biopolitics. Augustus must have been thrilled that at least one female member of his close family, his ex-stepdaughter, in fact, met the legal standards he established. Finally someone fit the requisite story pattern and neatly died before any of life’s unanticipated twists could alter the narrative. Cornelia is a perfect candidate for being written up and for being read as instantiating in her life the very laws that intervened in life.

3. Representation

The attraction of Cornelia for Augustus is evident. She exemplifies the ideology his marriage legislation attempts to reinforce. But what is the attraction

32. Stahl (1985), 262 calls Cornelia a “flesh-and-blood paradigm of the legislated Augustan womanhood.”
for Propertius? I don’t think this poem either forwards or opposes Augustan ideology, but rather makes an intervention that exposes how this kind of story works, particularly as a form of representation. I see it less as critique than an analysis that turns on the way the *exemplum* functions as a narrative device. The *exemplum* mediates between singularity and repeatability. Cornelia is the singular instance, but her usefulness as an *exemplum* stems from the imitability of her actions. She emphasizes that she was “a part to be imitated of a great house” (*erat magnae pars imitanda domus*, 4.11.44). Her third-person use of her own name accords with the objectivization that happens when she turns herself into an *exemplum*. She herself has already lived up to the model set by others, since she can stand in the company of the great past examples of female virtue, Claudia and Aemilia (51–55). She enjoins her daughter to imitate her in having only one man (*filia, . . . / fac teneas unum nos imitata virum*, “daughter, make sure to have one man in imitation of me,” 4.11.67–68). She lies at the turning point between past, her lineage, and future, her daughter.

Propertius sets Cornelia up as a singular, but repeatable instance; he locates her at the fulcrum of past and future; she is a speaker who performs a singular speech on an individual occasion, but whose utterance has another modality in writing; she lives in accordance with the law understood both as written statute and as social expectations; the story of her life is told on the occasion of her death. This intermingling of life and death, of singularity and iterability, of writing with performative utterance and social performance, cuts to the heart of the way the Augustan age figures representation. A tight encapsulation of this understanding of representation occurs in fact in Augustus’ own *Res gestae*, where his self-presentation bears many points of resemblance to Propertius’ Cornelia. He says:

> legibus novis me auctore latis multa exempla maiorum exolescentia iam ex nostro saeculo reduxi et ipse multarum rerum exempla imitanda posteris tradidi.

With new laws passed under my authorship, I brought back many examples of our ancestors already fading away from our age, and I myself handed down examples of many things to be imitated by posterity. (*RG* 8.5)

The laws in question are generally agreed to be the moral legislation, of

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33. She speaks of herself by name at lines 13 and 43. The first person *habui* would retain the same scansion as *habuit* in 13, as would *eram* for *erat* in 44, since syllables which are long by position would become long by nature. I discuss in greater detail the split between speaker and person spoken of in Lowrie (2007).
which the marriage laws were the centerpiece. Augustus sits at the fulcrum between the exempla of the past and the exempla handed down to the future for imitation. His singularity is emphasized again and again in the Res gestae, yet he offers a model for imitation. His performance as emperor finds a record in the inscription of the Res gestae, itself a text to be iterated through copying and dissemination to at least the Eastern province of Galatia. Suetonius’ record of Augustus’ last words tells us that he conceived of his life as a theatrical role in the mime. Cornelia’s performance venue is rather the law court, though her conclusion of her speech with causa perorata est (“the case has been spoken,” 4.11.99) and the release of her audience resembles in structure the formal conclusions of Roman comedy. Both Cornelia and Augustus fill roles that are largely already scripted, though Augustus certainly surpassed Cornelia in his ability to control his own script. A thorough analysis of the relation of writing and performativity in Augustus’ own self-representation would be a different, though related story. Let this gesture toward the parallels between Cornelia and Augustus suffice to show that Propertius is creating a version of what Augustus at any rate would have conceived of as the master narrative of his age.

So much for the poem’s pragmatic purpose on ideological grounds. One could argue that some of the formal features emphasized above—the repetition and association of words having to do with the law, the exemplary form itself whatever its intricacies—serve the greater purpose of making a representation that sums up the complexity of its age. The narrative illogicalities emphasized at the beginning of this paper, however, set any straightforward ideological representation at a distance. The dissonances do not so much undermine the represented ideology, as emphasize the poem as a medium. Propertius’ task of persuasion is not a persuasion to—that task falls rather to Cornelia—but a persuasion that, namely, the analysis he makes that the ideology is such. In addition to the what of artistic representation, Propertius also considers the how. Quintilian’s formulation makes narrative a component of an exemplum, but there is also a discourse conveying the exemplum itself. Cornelia functions once more as a figure, this time of the challenge facing poetry, to communicate beyond death.

At the poem’s beginning, death appears as a brick wall: its immutable,
infernal laws (*infernas . . . leges*, 4.11.3) withstand any pleas (*preces . . . exorato . . . orantem*, 4.11.2–5). Against death, no discourse is effective, nor are institutions or public performances or other sorts of speech acts, such as marriage, the triumphal chariots of one's ancestors (*currus auorum*, 4.11.11),\(^{38}\) and pledges. Communication of the living with the dead, however, seems to be possible, and is a recurrent concern in Propertius.\(^{39}\) He lends Cornelia a voice in death through his poem; in addition to speaking to Paullus, the judges, and later readers, she addresses or apostrophizes myriad objects and persons throughout the poem.\(^{40}\) Despite the complexities of his representation of her speech genre, the voice is static, since it cannot respond. It is in fact written. Although Propertius cannot reach out of the confines of his representation to make what he represents happen, he suggests that there can be a countervailing assumption on the part of the audience of a work of art’s responsiveness. Cornelia asks Paullus to speak to her statue as if it would respond: *atque ubi secreto nostra ad simulacra loqueris, / ut responsurae singula uerba iace* (“and when you speak in secret to my statue, throw out each utterance as if to one about to respond,” 4.11.83–84).\(^{41}\) I take this as an allegory of reading. Even more than Cornelia, Propertius lends himself a voice after death. The inert statue is a work of art that preserves Cornelia’s memory and stands for her completed narrative and her completed life. She takes it for granted that Paullus will speak to it. The statue simply exists and cannot give a response, but he is to leave pauses in his speech to it as if it could. Janan reads this passage as empty and horrific: Cornelia occupies the gaps in conversation.\(^{42}\) The passage could be rather half full. Although art or poetry cannot be expected to speak on its own, posterity can continue to address it as if it could.

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38. I take these as triumphal with Rothstein (1924) and Camps (1965).
39. As in Cynthia’s return from the dead in 4.7.
40. Address: Paullus (1, 35, 73, 81), *mater Scribonia* (55), her sons Lepidus and Paullus and daughter (63, 67, 87), the *testes* (“witnesses,” 99). Apostrophe: *noctes et . . . paludes* (“nights and swamps,” 15; Sisyphus, 23; Tantalus’ water, 24; the exemplary Claudia, 51–52; personified lands (Rome, 37; Africa, 38). Several of these apostrophes countervail the assumption that the figure is directed to people or objects who cannot respond (see note 13, above). Cornelia enjoins silence on some of the standard inhabitants of the underworld in a convention offering them reprieve from their travails (*taceant, “let them be silent,” 23; tacita, “silent,” 26); the assumption is that they could in fact speak.
41. Rothstein (1924) reads *tace* (“be silent”) for *iace* (“throw out”), with no essential change in the meaning. Steiner (2001), 151 calls attention to the consolatory aspect of the negation of loss made by archaic Greek statues and inscriptions that represent the dead in motion and speaking. She sees the images put up in honor of dead wives as attempts to restore what was lost and to preserve the social relations that defined the dead woman in life (13). This instance goes beyond its predecessors in the “typical dialogue motif” between lovers and the absent portrait of the beloved, for which, see Bettini (1999), 118.
42. Janan (2001), 162. Bettini (1999), 119 suggests rather that Paullus is meant to engage in *sermocinatio* and bestow speech on someone without a voice.
The search for “Ovid,” whatever we may understand by that multi-
faceted term of reference, is as elusive as it is alluring in modern critical
studies of his poetry. At one time, we seem to be tempted with glimpses
of a “historical” narrative, Ovid the Roman whose talents lifted him to the
pinnacle of Augustan literary circles, before his indiscretions reduced him
to a bleak lifestyle in exile on the Black Sea. At another time, we seem to
be listening to a different sort of narrative, that of “Ovid the journeying
poetic persona”—which may or may not be easily mapped onto the histori-
cal author—who is ever conscious of the poetic road that has been traveled
and excited by the new twists and turns which lie ahead. An awareness
of these different “Ovids” which operate in his poetry might enable us to
uncover hidden meanings and ironies.

In the present essay, I will examine a complex work of the poet’s mature
years, namely, the poem devoted to the Roman religious calendar, Fasti.
Whilst much recent scholarship has focused on the (sometimes complex)
characterization of internal narrators and informants within the poem,1 little
attention has been given to the multilayered character of “Ovid,” by which
I mean here the homodiegetic (and at times autodiegetic) speaker of the
Fasti. I will focus on the first 288 lines of Book 1, which present three
different types of homodiegetic narrative: “Ovid” and his patron Germani-
cus (1.1–26), “Ovid” and his (implied) didactic addressee (1.27–62), and
“Ovid” conversing with the god Janus (1.63–288).2 Genette and Bal, among

2. In this essay, the text of Fasti is taken from Alton et al. (1988). The poem will be referred
to by book and line number only; for all other works, the title will be given. All translations are my
own.
others, draw attention to the importance of focalization in the construction of meaning(s) in a text.\(^3\) By close analysis of the text, paying particular attention to lexical choice and intertextual resonance, I will discuss the ways in which these first sections of *Fasti* reveal to the astute reader (at least on a second reading of the poem) a multilayered “Ovid”—simultaneously, as poet-expert, poet-novice, and “historical” exile.

1. Ovid as Poet-Expert:  
   **Another Doorkeeper, and the Progression from *Exclusus Amator* to *Inclusus Praeceptor***

Ovid, the ancient poet probably most self-conscious about his poetic career, is acutely aware during his composing of *Fasti* that he has traveled a long way down the literary road. Composing *Fasti* some time after his amatory works, Ovid sees himself/his character as an experienced lover, love poet and love teacher, for whom his present endeavor marks a distinct progression and maturation from his earlier days. For example, in the opening lines to Book 2, Ovid boasts (3–8):

\[
\begin{align*}
nunc primum velis, elegi, maioris itis: \\
\text{exiguum, memini, nuper eratis opus.} \\
\text{ipse ego vos habui faciles in amore ministros,} \\
\text{cum lusit numeris prima iuventa suis.} \\
\text{idem sacra cano signataque tempora fastis:} \\
\text{ecquis ad haec illinc crederet esse viam?}
\end{align*}
\]

Now for the first time, my elegiacs, do you move with greater sails: until recently, as I recall, your work was insignificant. I myself regarded you as pliant attendants in love, when in the prime of my youth I played around with its verse. The same man now sings of sacred rites and the times marked in the calendars: who would believe that there existed a road from that place to this?

The progression from youthful play to serious national purpose is all too clear in such direct expressions of Ovid’s poetic self-consciousness in *Fasti*.\(^4\) But it is important to bear such sentiments in mind for the entirety of the

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\(^4\) For other examples in *Fasti*, cf. esp. 4.1–18 where the poet converses with Venus about his former and present lifestyles and poetic endeavors.
poem, as they can help uncover more complex readings. Let us now consider the conversation between Ovid and the god Janus on January 1 (1.63–288) in the light of Ovid’s professed poetic maturity.

Janus himself is a very complex god. Many ancient thinkers marked him out as one of the oldest and most revered deities, perhaps god of gods or ultimate controller over time and beginnings. It is with some surprise, therefore, that Ovid’s Janus identifies himself on several occasions with the mortal doorkeeper, an occupation typically associated with the most menial of servile duties. At one point, Janus specifically refers to himself as ianitor (1.137–40):

\[
\text{utque sedens primi vester prope limina tecti} \\
\text{ianitor egressus introitusque videt,} \\
\text{sic ego perspicio caelestis ianitor aulae} \\
\text{Eoas partes Hesperiasque simul.}
\]

And just as your doorkeeper, sitting near the threshold of the door, sees those who go in and out, so I, doorkeeper of the heavenly hallway, take in a wide view of Eastern and Western parts at the same time.

The term ianitor has distinctly love-elegiac overtones, where it usually refers to the (slave) doorkeeper who guards the elegiac mistress. As such, the scenario here of Ovid conversing with divine ianitor invites comparison with the famous occasion on which he last conversed with a doorkeeper: namely, outside his mistress’ door in Amores 1.6.

If we take the intertextual bait given to us by both the elegiacally loaded ianitor and Ovid’s general poetic self-consciousness, an amusing sense of continuity is forged: in light of the poet’s purported maturation from the world of love poetry, it is ironic that his new project should see him (straightaway) having to negotiate a strangely familiar, love-elegiac scene. That said, the connection forged between these two phases of the homodiegetic narrator’s experience does, ultimately, draw attention to progression on his part. Some general overriding differences may be observed first. The love-elegiac Ovid is defined by his exclusivity, locked outside his lover’s house, appealing to

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5. See esp. Macrobius, Saturnalia 1.9.
6. For Janus’ identification with the doorkeeper, cf. 1.117–26, 135–40, 173–74. For the lowly status of the doorkeeper in antiquity, cf. e.g. Arist. Oec. 1345a; Sen. Ep. 12.3; see further McKeown (1989) on Am. 1.6 (introduction).
7. Cf. Am. 1.6.1, 27; Ars 2.260, 3.587; Prop. 4.5.47; for a novel reversal, whereby the ianitor is the persistent lover, cf. Tib. 1.1.56.
the doorkeeper who is inside; in Fasti, Ovid is defined by his inclusivity, as the conversation takes place face to face, apparently within his own house (1.94). In Amores, Ovid belittles himself by appealing to the servile doorkeeper as if he were a god; in Fasti, the hymnic language used to address Janus is entirely appropriate and casts the poet in a respectful light. In Amores, the poet never receives a reply from the ianitor; in Fasti, the poet is able to command the divine doorkeeper into appearing to answer his questions directly.

But more specific instances of intertextual dialogue between our episode and Amores 1.6 may be detected. Having answered the poet’s initial inquiry about his shape and function (1.89–144), Janus promises not to be “obstinate/difficult” (1.146 difficilem) to any further questions that Ovid may have. The use of difficilis fits the religious context, as facilis is often used in prayer to ask for a favorable reception from a divinity. In the process, however, the use of difficilis signposts a major difference between Ovid’s present and former experiences. The ianitor of love elegy, traditionally one of the obstacles to the beloved, is typically rebuked for his harshness and obstinacy. As if mindful of Ovid’s prior experience and the adverse tradition surrounding his character, the present doorkeeper promises to be different, the very model of congeniality and cooperation.

It is also fruitful to consider Ovid’s inquiry about Janus’ temple in the light of his former amatory exploits. At 1.277, Ovid asks Janus:

‘at cur pace lates, motisque recluderis armis?’

“But why do you hide in times of peace, and why are you closed when arms have been taken up?”

Ovid’s inquiry is understandable enough: not only does the custom surrounding the temple of Janus seem to reverse the more natural course of

8. For hymnic overtones to the lover’s address to the doorkeeper, see McKeown (1989) on Am. 1.6.3–4.
10. In fact, some of the language used suggests real power on Ovid’s part to elicit a response from the god; for the ‘magical’ force of elicierte at 1.256, see Green (2004), 120.
11. Cf. e.g. 2.451 parce, precor, gravidis, facilis Lucina, puellis (Juno); Am. 2.14.43; Anthologia Latina 1.877.3.
12. For the obstinacy and hardness of the doorkeeper, cf. Am. 1.6.62: o foribus durior ipse tuis; Ars 3.587 duro dicat tibi ianitor ore. This characteristic is regularly transferred to the other obstacles of the elegiac lover, namely, the door or the mistress herself; cf., e.g., Am. 1.6.2 difficilem moto cardine pande forem with McKeown (1989) ad loc., 73–74; Tib. 1.2.7 ianua difficilis dominae; Prop. 1.16.18, 30.
action in peace and war—why is there any need to hide in peacetime?—but the reason for the custom was itself a subject of continued negotiation. But Ovid’s inquiry gains more poignancy if it is considered against the backdrop of *Amores* 1.6. Speaking back then, Ovid had asked a similar question of a doorkeeper, arguing that his lover’s doors should be kept open precisely because it was peaceful, and that closed doors were only suitable in time of warfare (*Am.* 1.6.27–30, 33):

> ferreus orantem nequiquam, ianitor, audis:  
> roboribus duris ianua fulta riget.  
> urbibus obsessis clausae munimina portae  
> prosunt: in media pace quid arma times?  
> [. . .]  
> non ego militibus venio comitatus et armis.

You, doorkeeper, hear my pleading with a heart of iron, and the door is stiff, strengthened with hard oak. When cities are under siege, the defense of a closed door is useful; but, in the middle of peace, why do you fear arms? . . . I do not come here accompanied by soldiers and arms.

In light of this argumentation from his elegiac youth, it is all the more fitting for Ovid to register his surprise to Janus when the reverse occurs later in his career: the same sense of logic drives him now as it did then.

In summary, one can detect in Ovid’s discussion with the divine doorkeeper an underlying negotiation between the speaker’s former and current experiences. It is clear from his success in eliciting information from Janus the doorkeeper that Ovid has progressed from his forlorn days as the *exclusus amator*, though it is also apparent (from the last example) that the same general consciousness operates now as it did during his days as the lover.

### 2. Ovid as Poet-Novice:
The New Recruit in the Role of Interviewer

Despite his undoubted literary experience, however, Ovid does admit that *Fasti* is something quite new to him. This is certainly true, as he will have to fulfill new roles as an antiquarian researcher and an interviewer. Before *Fasti*,

14. The following section is a summary of a more extensive analysis which can be found in Green (2001), 603–12.
Ovid had never needed to seek information from others. On the contrary, his previous didactic works on love (Ars Amatoria and Remedia Amoris) are marked by a boastful and supremely confident poet who is the center of knowledge: he has to do nothing but consult his own (sometimes bitter) experiences of love. But the subject matter of Fasti—religion, customs, and origins—is less personal to Ovid and is typically subject to debate and competing interpretations: there are few absolute and easily accessible ‘facts’ for Ovid to grasp. Consequently, and for the first time, Ovid feels the need to interview a series of (potentially) knowledgeable individuals in order to access relevant information for his research. The conversation with Janus allows Ovid the first opportunity to test out his skills as interviewer, and it is clear that he has a lot to learn: he can be seen at this early stage as a naïve and, at times, tactless interviewer.

In his first direct question to the god, Ovid is in a confrontational mood, challenging the deity on a point of practice: the New Year should begin in spring, thinks Ovid, and not winter (1.149–60). The god replies by calmly correcting the poet (1.161–64), but what is important here is that, in his very first question in his first interview, Ovid can be seen to be acting rashly and rudely by assuming that he is better informed than his interviewee, who is after all the god of January. It is also a somewhat tactless move: by suggesting that spring should open in another month, Ovid effectively attempts to cheat Janus out of his primary role as opener of everything, a role already (boastfully) related by the god at 1.117–20:

\[
\text{quicquid ubique vides, caelum, mare, nubila, terras,} \\
\text{omnia sunt nostra clausa patentque manu.} \\
\text{me penes est unum vasti custodia mundi,} \\
\text{et ius vertendi cardinis omne meum est.}
\]

Whatever you see everywhere—sky, sea, clouds, lands—all of these are opened and closed by my hand. Guardianship of the vast world is my responsibility alone, and the power to turn the (celestial) hinge—all that is mine.

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15. For the supremely confident persona of the praeceptor amoris in Ovid’s erotodidaxis, see Durling (1958), 157–67; for the ways in which Ovid’s amatory experiences in Amores are reworked into directives to students in his erotodidactic works, see Dalzell (1996), 138–46.

16. As Roman religion does not have an underlying orthodox source, interpretations of religious events are multiple and subject to change over time; see especially Beard (1987), 1–15; Beard, North, and Price (1998); and Feeney (1998).

17. For a list of mortal and divine informants in the poem, see Green (2004), 69–70.
With Ovid’s unimpressive interviewing technique in the exchange with Janus, compare a much later interview with Flora, which is in fact the last in the extant poem (5.369–72):

‘est breve praeterea, de quo mihi quaerere restat,
   si liceat’ dixi: dixit et illa ‘licet.’
‘cur tibi pro Libycis clauduntur rete leaenis
   inbelles capreae sollicitusque lepus?’

“There is one more small matter on which it remains to ask a question, if you permit me,” I said. And she replied, “You have my permission.”
“What, instead of Libyan lionesses, are unwarlike roes and the anxious hare ensnared in nets for you?”

As with the inquiry in 1.149–60, Ovid’s question here is confrontational in that he believes more appropriate animals might be caught in nets for Flora instead of the roe and the hare, which he labels with pathetic epithets (*inbelles, sollicitus*). But notice how much more diplomatic Ovid is here compared to 1.149–60. Ovid does not jump in rashly and bombard his interviewee with argumentation: he predicates his slightly awkward inquiry with a further appeal to the goddess’s mercy and does no more than register his surprise concerning the particular custom. He has, by now, grown in interviewing experience, aware of the need to respect an addressee and not simply assume that he knows best.

Another area in which Ovid shows his naivety as interviewer during the Janus episode is in his inability to make correlations between the modern-day custom and the reasoning behind it. So, for example, on January 1, sweet food is offered as gifts (dates, honey, figs) in the hope that the whole year will turn out sweet. Ovid cannot make the correlation for himself, and has to have it spelled out for him by Janus (1.185–89). But later, a wiler Ovid will be able to make such correlations for himself. He will work out for himself that Cybele has a turreted crown because she gave towers to the first cities (4.219–20), and he will successfully work through a double correlation with regard to Flora (5.355–59): white robes are given to Ceres and multicolored robes to Flora to correspond to the color of their respective gifts (corn and flowers).

Ovid’s behavior as interviewer of Janus, therefore, is meant to mark a very early stage of a new career: he is a novice, he is at a beginning, and his unenlightened interviewing style provides us with a starting-point from which his subsequent improvements, through experience of further interviews, can be charted.
3. Ovid as ‘Historical’ Exile: Keeping the Emotions at Bay

Even if the precise details will always elude us, it is now generally agreed that the historical poet Ovid was exiled or, more correctly, “relegated” from Rome by Augustus in late 8 CE, and ordered to live in Tomis on the Black Sea. Despite numerous petitions to the Emperor at Rome, in the form of some of the exile poems in the *Tristia* and *Epistulae Ex Ponto* collections, he never left Tomis and died there in either 16 or 17 CE.

*Fasti* is inextricably linked up with Ovid’s exile, as the poem’s opening lines attest. In the third line of the poem, we learn that *Fasti* is dedicated to Germanicus (*Caesar Germanice*), young prince and adopted grandson of Augustus; and yet this appears to be in direct conflict with another Ovidian statement, in *Tristia* 2 (549–52), which singles out the addressee of that poem, Augustus, as the literary dedicatee of *Fasti*. The most popular theory is that Ovid revised from exile the original dedication of *Fasti*—from Augustus to Germanicus—at some time after the composition of *Tristia* 2, possibly after the death of the Emperor in 14 CE, in an attempt to curry favor with the young, politically powerful prince and secure a return to Rome denied him by Augustus.

It is now generally accepted, then, that *Fasti* is part of Ovid’s exilic dialogue: but how far does this dialogue extend? The question of the extent to which Ovid revised *Fasti* from exile has agonized scholars for several decades, and no consensus has been reached precisely because there are so few reliably dateable details in the poem. Even when we have been able to date certain aspects of the text to a year after 8 CE, the resultant theory has often been, in my view, unacceptable: that Ovid simply tacked couplets or short sections here and there onto an essentially pre-exilic text. In my recent commentary, I set out a potentially more fruitful approach to the issue of exilic revision which moves away from authorial intent and concentrates instead on reader response: as it is most likely that the poem was only ever read after Ovid’s exile (from c. 16 CE onwards), it follows that all parts of the text have the potential to admit an exilic reading.

I will now put this approach to the test in my reading of *Fasti* 1.1–288. In the following section I will argue that the opening invocation to Germanicus (1.3–4), far from being one of a few “post-exilic addenda” to an

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18. Fitton Brown is, to my knowledge, the only scholar to put forward an interesting case for Ovid’s not being exiled at all, but this extreme approach has persuaded few in its entirety; see Fitton Brown (1985), 18–22.
20. Ibid., 18–24.
otherwise pre-exilic text, serves to focus our mind directly on the potential exilic resonance of the poem, and invites us to search for a more developed and dynamic exilic persona for the homodiegetic narrator in the poem as a whole.

First, one needs to draw attention to an important and consistent trait of Ovid’s exilic persona in *Tristia* and *Ex Ponto*. In his exile poetry, Ovid speaks on several occasions about Rome. The most sustained treatments are his ‘tours of Rome,’ either in his own voice or that of his traveling *liber* (*Tr*. 1.1 and 3.1); his descriptions of consular processions on the first day of the year (*Pont*. 4.4.27–46 and 4.9.37–56); and his description of seasonal changes in the city (*Tr*. 3.12.1–26). From his land far away on the Black Sea, Ovid engages with Rome for a variety of reasons: nostalgia; a cultural lifeline to a ‘more sophisticated’ social milieu; and as a distraction from the bleak picture of Tomis he constantly paints. But one thing is always apparent. Just as Ovid is contemplating Rome to any serious extent, he is quickly brought back to the harsh reality of exile. Tomis’ harshness ultimately overrides any positive benefit gained from memories of Rome: contemplating Rome is but a brief solace from exile, not a lasting substitute.

This train of thought is particularly apparent in *Tr*. 3.12, a poem whose intricate and deceptive structure allows us some insight into the emotional make-up of the narrator. The opening lines introduce us to the coming of spring, and we assume, at this stage, that Ovid is talking about an experience at Tomis. The description of spring which follows (5–13) evokes attractive images of playing children (5–6), colorful flowers (7), and singing birds (8–10). It is only at line 14 that we realize that the author is not talking about Tomis: he is talking about a land far away from his barren shores (*nam procul a Getico litore vitis abest*, “for the vine grows far away from the Getic shore”). The same sentiment is repeated in line 16. So, Ovid is, contrary to our initial expectations, thinking about spring somewhere else, but where? It is only in lines 17ff. when we find out that he is talking about Rome: this is given away with details such as the forum (18) and the reference to Rome’s famous aqueduct Aqua Virgo (22 *Virgine . . . aqua*). Only now, then, do we fully realize that what we have been reading about at the start of this poem is Ovid’s mental vision of life at Rome, as he longingly hangs on every individual detail. But this pleasant scene is not allowed to last

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23. Especially given the description of the previous season as a “winter longer than those of former times” (*Tr*. 3.12.2 *longior antiquis . . . hiemps*). For the motif of the extremely long winters in Tomis, see esp. *Tr*. 3.10.
long, as reminders of Tomis creep into lines 14 and 16 before a full-blown reality check in lines 27ff.: all Ovid has to look forward to in Tomis is the odd break in the ice and snow, and the occasional traveling sailor.  

I would argue that this general observation on Ovid’s complex exilic persona in *Tristia* and *Ex Ponto* might be equally fruitful for our reading of the “post-exilic” *Fasti*. We might put forward the case that in *Fasti*, the exiled Ovid is attempting his most sustained meditation on Rome yet, in the form of a poem about the religion, buildings, and cultural practices of the great city. Indeed, Ovid seems to have developed from *Tristia* and *Ex Ponto* in his ability to sustain his Roman focus and curb the bitterness of exile. Nonetheless, Ovid’s thoughts of exile still reveal themselves intermittently in *Fasti*. This is seen most directly in Book 4. In the midst of compiling a list of Italian cities with Greek founders (4.63ff.), Ovid’s dealings with his birth city, Sulmo, unexpectedly lead to thoughts of his current plight (4.79–84):

> huius erat Solimus Phrygia comes unus ab Ida,  
> a quo Sulmonis moenia nomen habent,  
> Sulmonis gelidi, patriae, Germanice, nostrae.  
> me miserum, Scythico quam procul illa solo est!  
> ergo ego tam longe—sed suprime, Musa, querellas:  
> non tibi sunt maesta sacra canenda lyra.

One of (Aeneas’) companions from Phrygian Ida was Solimus, from whom the walls of Sulmo derive their name—of cool Sulmo, Germanicus, my fatherland. Poor me! How far away she is from Scythian soil! And consequently how far away I am . . . but stop your complaints, my Muse: sacred rites are not to be sung on a mournful lyre.

From a solemn and detached contemplation of matters pertaining to Italy (4.79–80), Ovid moves quickly into a more personal and emotional mode of complaint, as he contemplates the sheer distance between his place of exile and the city he loves (4.81–83).  

24. For other examples of the shattering of the mental vision of Rome, cf. e.g. *Tr.* 4.2.67–70 (a triumph for Germanicus); *Pont.* 4.4.43–46 (consular inauguration of Sextus Pompeius); cf. also Ovid’s comment on the point of exile that Rome will soon be visually lost to his eyes (*Tr.* 1.3.31–34).

25. The “emotional” nature of this section is effectively conveyed by: the disjointed word-order of line 81; the breaking of the sentence in mid-flow in line 83; the way in which Ovid’s sentiments on Sulmo spill from one couplet to the next as part of the same sentence; for the rarity of this in Ovidian elegy, see Platnauer (1951), 27–33.
I would suggest that we view 4.79–84 as the clearest sign of a consistent persona for the narrator in *Fasti*, rather than an isolated outburst. We could read *Fasti* as an extension of, and in some ways the inverse of, *Tristia* and *Ex Ponto*. In the exile letters, it is the topic of exile which dominates, whilst Rome is marginalized as the subject of sporadic flights of nostalgic fantasy. In *Fasti*, Rome dominates, as Ovid tries hard to keep his thoughts of exile at bay: but it is always just beneath the surface, and detectable to the astute reader. I will now attempt to elucidate some aspects of this exilic persona in *Fasti*—beyond the initial exilic cue in line 3 of the poem—by analyzing the ways in which seemingly straightforward narrative might in fact be focalized through the character of the exiled narrator.

The very next line (4), in fact, might be read as a subtle exilic comment. Ovid encourages Germanicus as patron to “direct the voyage of [his] timid ship” (*timidae derige navis iter*). The ship of poetry is, of course, a well-established metaphor by Ovid’s day. But it might also not escape the reader, just attuned to potential exilic resonance from line 3, that Ovid’s journey into exile was (largely) by ship and that, on its outward journey, this ship regularly lacked a confident helmsman to direct its progress. The choice of metaphor, therefore, fits the speaker very well in that it admits a literal as well as metaphorical reading: a plea for Germanicus to guide not only the poem but also a real, frightened vessel back to Rome from Tomis.

More interesting examples emerge from 1.27–62, the section which details the origins of the Roman year and the reasons behind the names of the months and system of days. This section looks quite perfunctory at face-value, and certainly masquerades as a short introduction to the calendar before the “real” business begins on the first of January at 1.63ff. But a closer examination might reveal a significantly focalized narrative.

Ovid traces the origin of the year to Romulus, who set up a ten-month system (1.27–28). After lightheartedly mocking Rome’s first king for not basing the human year on the natural regulation of time, the stars (1.29–30), the poet comes to Romulus’ defense with an earthly rationale for his decision: he might have based it on the gestation period of a child (1.31–34). What is interesting for our purposes is the way in which Ovid pleads the case for Romulus’ innocence (1.31–32):

26. Ovid tells us on three occasions that his ship’s helmsman was at a loss during storms. He describes the helmsman’s skill as *ars*, a term which creates slippage between navigational and poetic skill; cf. *Tr.* 1.2.31–32 *rector in incerto est nec quid fugiatis petatis invenit: ambiguus ars stupet ipsa malis*, 1.4.11–16 esp. 12 *non regit arte ratem*, 1.11.21–22 *ipse gubernator tollens ad sidera palmas / exposit votis, inmemor artis*, opem. For Ovid’s trip into exile by sea and land, cf. *Tr.* 1.10.
There is, however, reason indeed, O Caesar, which might have moved him, and he bears an error of his own for which he might be pardoned.

Two features interest me here: the direct address to Caesar and the description of Romulus’ decision as an error. On their own, neither of these features is particularly significant. But taken together, a plea, addressed to a Caesar, to excuse an error might well recall Ovid’s own plea to Caesar Augustus to excuse the error which appears to have been part responsible for his exile. The narrator, then, finds himself excusing Romulus in a language and style informed by his own relationship with the Roman princeps: contemplation of Romulus’ ignorance leads (subconsciously?) to a reminder of his own exilic predicament.

An examination of lexical choice is also instructive in other parts of the introductory section on the calendar (1.27–62). In general, this section is very concise and logically structured, as it offers guidance on the set-up of the year (1.27–38), followed by the months (1.39–44) and then individual days (1.45–60). No superfluous detail or significant elaboration is allowed in this section: that is, except on two occasions, both of which merit examination.

In the discussion of the make-up of the year (1.27–38), Ovid focuses on the two mythical contributors to the calendar, Romulus and Numa, and their reasoning behind the number and naming of months. Romulus’ reason for setting up a ten-month calendar is, as we have already seen, based on the gestation period of a child (1.33–34). The next couplet reads as follows (1.35–36):

per totidem menses a funere coniugis uxor
sustinet in vidua tristia signa domo.

For the same number of months after the death of her husband does a wife maintain the marks of sadness in her widowed house.

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27. For error as a key (if elusive) term in references to Ovid’s exile, cf., e.g., 1.3.37–38, 2.207 perdiderint cum me duo crimina, carmen et error; 3.1.52, 3.6.25–26, 3.11.34. For Caesar as the standard address to the Emperor Augustus in the exile poetry, cf., e.g., Tr. 2, where Augustus is referred to eleven times as Caesar and only once as Augustus (2.509).

28. For the deceptively “didactic” nature of this introductory section, see Green (2004), 44–45.
The introductory connective *per totidem menses* serves notice that what follows is not part of Romulus’ original rationale behind the ten-month calendar: whereas Romulus might have been guided by a natural measurement of time in the gestation period (1.33–34), lines 35–36 clearly refer to a custom *subsequent* to the institution of the year. Lines 35–36 are to be understood, therefore, as a comment from the narrator, who is providing, with hindsight, additional evidence for the sanctity of the ten-month period. But why should Ovid intrude into this concise “historical” section with such an anachronistic comment? A closer look at the language might suggest an influence from his exile. First, the theme of the widowed wife is one very close to Ovid’s own exilic plight. Ovid’s wife remained at home in Rome while Ovid was sent to Tomis, and their separation is often likened to a separation by death.29 It is only a small conceptual step for Ovid, therefore, to refer to his wife as a widow (*Tr.* 5.5.46–48, to his wife on her birthday):

\[
\text{at non sunt ista gaudia nata die,}
\text{sed labor et curae fortunaque moribus inpar,}
\text{iustaque de *viduo* paene querella toro.}
\]

But such joys as those do not meet you on your birthday, but toil, anxieties and a lot unequal to your good character, and justified complaints from a bed which is almost widowed.

Secondly, Ovid’s use of *tristia signa* to refer to the dark clothing worn by a widow during the mourning period does allow direct play with the title of Ovid’s first set of exilic poems, *Tristia.*30 I would suggest, therefore, that the discussion of the conventions surrounding the ten-month period has (unwittingly?) brought the exiled narrator’s mind back to aspects of his own sorry predicament: again, experience of exile lies beneath the surface of *Fasti* and can influence the sentiment and language of the speaker as he struggles to keep his emotions at bay for his solemn, Roman project.

The second occasion in the introductory section (1.27–62) on which Ovid allows himself elaboration is during the discussion of sacred days (1.45–60). In this section, Ovid lists a whole variety of days which carry with them certain religious obligations: *dies nefasti* (47), *dies fasti* (48), *Q.R.C.F.*

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29. For Ovid’s departure from Rome as a funeral and his exile as death, cf. *Tr.* 1.3, 22, 23–24, 77–78, 97–98, 5.1.48; Pont. 1.9.17, 2.3.3 *quid enim status hic a funere differt?*; see further Williams (2002), 354–60. Consequently, Ovid’s place of exile is often compared to the Stygian Underworld; cf. *Tr.* 3.10.71–76; Pont. 1.3.51–52, esp. 4.14.11–12.

(49–52), dies comitales (53), nundinae (54), Kalends (55), Ides (56), Nones (57), dies atri (57–60). In all but one case, Ovid simply lists the day-type and explains briefly what can or cannot be done during that day. Only on one occasion, and for no immediately obvious reason, does Ovid choose to explain the origin of a particular day-type. This is the last example, the case of the so-called dies atri, “black days” (57–60):

... omnibus istis
(ne fallare cave) proximus ater erit.
omen ab eventu est: illis nam Roma diebus
damna sub averso tristia Marte tulit.

The day after all of these days [i.e., Kalends, Ides, and Nones] will be black: be wary that you are not deceived! The omen comes from the event: for on those days Rome suffered sad losses under the frown of Mars.

Why the elaboration of origins for this particular day and no other? I would suggest that Ovid has again allowed himself an opportunity to focus on sadness (1.60 damna . . . tristia) using words which directly play on the title of his exile poetry, Tristia. Throughout this introductory section (27–62), one might argue that the narrator is being as disciplined as possible in his new Roman project: but his predilection for focusing on scenes of general sadness, and drawing on motifs and even the title of his exilic epistles of Tristia, betray an emotional exile just below the surface.

As a final example of this exilic character in Fasti, we should look again at Ovid’s first direct question to Janus during his conversation with the god (1.149–60). We saw it earlier in relation to Ovid’s naïve and potentially rude beginnings to a career in interviewing, but it may also shed light on an exilic mentality. This first question to an informant is by far the longest in the poem—others are four verses at most—and is unique in its setting out of a detailed case to refute a given convention, namely, the idea that winter is the best season in which to start the New Year (1.149–60):

‘dic, age, frigoribus quare novus incipit annus,
qui melius per ver incipiendus erat?
omnia tunc florent, tunc est nova temporis aetas,
et nova de gravido palmitae gemma tumet,
et modo formati oportet frondibus arbor,
prodit et in sumnum seminis herba solum,
et tepidum volucres concentibus aera mulcent,
ludit et in pratis luxuriatque pecus.
tum blandi soles, ignotaque prodit hirundo
et luteum celsa sub trabe figit opus:
tum patitur cultus ager et renovatur aratro.
haec anni novitas iure vocanda fuit.’

“Come, tell me, why does the new year begin in the cold season, when it
ought to have begun more fittingly during spring? Then all things are in
bloom, then is the new period of time, and the new bud swells from the
heavy vine-shoot, and the tree covers itself with leaves newly formed and
the shoot from the seed comes forth from the surface of the soil, and the
birds soothe the warm air with their musical strains, and the herd plays and
frolics in the meadows. Then the sun’s rays are coaxing, and the stranger
swallow comes forth and composes its muddy structure under a high beam:
then the land submits to tillage and is renewed by the plough. This season
ought to have rightly been called the New Year.”

Ovid’s rhetorical flourish here, with its focus on newness and beginnings,
certainly drives home the suitability of spring as the season for the New
Year.31 But why has Ovid chosen to be confrontational to his informant only
on this one occasion in Fasti? And why does he set aside so much space,
relatively speaking, to build up a detailed picture of spring?

If we read Fasti within the context of Ovid’s exile, an answer becomes
apparent. It is clear that the exiled Ovid is particularly vexed by the seasons
at Tomis. He is always hatefully depicting Tomis as a place of prolonged,
if not perennial, winter. As such, if he wants to experience a proper spring,
he can only do so through mental vision by contemplating spring at Rome.
This is most apparent in Tr. 3.12 which, as we have seen before, offers a
window onto the emotional state of Ovid’s exilic character, and his desire
for the warmer, gentler climes of a Roman spring.

The similarity in subject matter, phraseology, and sequence of thought
between Fasti 1.149–60 and Tr. 3.12.8–13 is particularly noticeable. Both
descriptions draw on common motifs from laudes veris, such as the new
blade of grass (herba: Fast. 1.154; Tr. 3.12.11–12) and the vine-shoot (Fast.
1.152; Tr. 3.12.13).32 The two descriptions do, however, share a unique
sequence of thought, in that they both evoke the charming image of the
bird song of spring, before going on to specify the antics of one particular
bird, the swallow, as it builds its nest under a beam. Compare Fasti. 1.155–58
with Tr. 3.12.8–10 below:

31. For the popular rhetorical exercise of the laus veris, cf. also 3.235–42, 4.125–28; Verg. G.
2.323–35; Calp. Ecl. 5.16ff.;Anthologia Latina I.1.227.
32. For these features of spring in other Ovidian laudes veris, cf. 3.238–40, 4.127–28.
indocilique loquax guttren vernat avis;
utque malae crimen matris deponat hirundo
sub trabibus cunas tectaque parva facit.

. . . and the chattering bird hails the spring with its unskilled throat; and
when the swallow lays aside the accusation of being a bad mother and makes
its nest and small house under the beams.

One way of making sense of this apparently inappropriate outburst from
Ovid in *Fasti*, then, is to read it as a subtle key to his exilic emotional state:
Ovid the exile, thoroughly opposed to winter, has a vested interest in the
coming of spring and, in the midst of his questioning, becomes (once again)
lost in its nostalgic charm. His praise of spring is out of place in a conversa-
tion with the god of January: it belongs, more properly, to March and April,
where it is also duly found; cf. 3.235–42, 4.125–28.

**4. Conclusion**

Ovid at the time of *Fasti* is a mature poet who has experienced much, both
on a literary level and on a personal level, with regard to his exile. From the
second line of the poem, with its first-person singular verb (*canam*), I would
argue that “Ovid” the narrator invites us to reconnect with other homodi-
egetic (and autodiegetic) narratives of his past and present: the narrator of
this poem is to be understood as a perennial poet, a former lover and love-
teacher, and a current exile living a life of misery in Tomis. On a literary
level, *Fasti* simultaneously represents a work of maturity and a completely
new and tentative enterprise. I have also argued that *Fasti* should be classed
as a true work of Ovid’s exile, whether we understand that in terms of a work
written/revised in exile (authorial intent) or a work read later with consider-
able knowledge of Ovid’s exile from *Tristia* and *Ex Ponto* (reader response).
The aspects of the poem which can be dated to a time after A.D. 8 are not,
on this reading, sporadic comments in an otherwise “pre-exilic” text, but
rather the most visible tip of the exilic iceberg. Look beneath the surface
and one can detect ways in which the narrator’s sentiment, lexical choice,
flow of argument—and even the breaking of that flow of argument—might
all emanate from a consistent exilic persona. Of all the many internal nar-
rators in *Fasti*, the multilayered “Ovid” is undoubtedly the most dynamic
and fascinating.
1. On Tibullus’ Dreaminess

Divitias alius fulvo sibi congerat auro
et teneat culti iugera multa soli,
quem labor assiduus vicino terreat hoste,
Martia cui somnos classica pulsa fugent:
me mea paupertas vita traducat inerti,
dum meus assiduo luceat igne focus.

Let another man collect riches for himself in a golden heap,
and let him hold on to many acres of land for farming.
Constant labor accompanies him, with the enemy near;
the blaring trumpets of war put his dreams to flight.
May my poverty lead me through a lazy life,
so long as my hearth provides a constant light. (Tibullus 1.1.1–6)  

Tibullus seems to withdraw from the world, and as his first elegy proudly
boasts, he would rather be home than out getting rich and fighting Rome’s
wars. This aversion to “getting things done” has been interpreted negatively
for as long as his poetry has been read: one could argue, as Horace seems
to, that the poet wallows in his misery and inaction, and that his dreaminess

1. This essay is dedicated gratefully to my amicus eruditissimus, Dr. Julian Levinson, of the
department of English at the University of Michigan.
2. For the Latin text of Tibullus I have used Maltby (2002). The translations that follow are my
own, and are very free, but I have taken much inspiration and borrowed freely from the admirable
is useless. The circularity of Tibullus’ poetry, its lack of closure and its failure to do anything, seem to prompt Horace to chide Tibullus in *Odes* 1.33.13–16:

Albi, ne doleas plus nimio memor  
immitis Glycerae, neu miserabiles  
decantes elegos, cur tibi iunior  
laesa praeniteat fide.

Tibullus, don’t grieve, mindful more than too much  
of harsh Glycera, while you sing  
your miserable elegies over and over,  
asking why a younger man outshines you,  
and why your trust has been wounded.

Horace describes Tibullus as *plus nimio memor*, “mindful more than too much,” a repetition past what was already enough. The pleonasm of the phrase itself seems to recognize a circularity in Tibullus’ thought, and suggests it is problematic: Tibullus is overmindful. He admonishes Tibullus further with the phrase *miserabiles decantes elegos*, “singing your miserable elegies over,” suggesting a fruitless repetition, as if Tibullus were caught in a rut. Similarly, *Epistulae* 1.4.8–11 would seem to rebuke Tibullus for his inability to appreciate his good fortune. Instead, Horace implies that Tibullus constructs a pitiable situation for himself:

quid voveat dulci nutricula maius alumno,  
qui sapere et fari possit quae sentiat, et cui  
gratia, fama, valetudo contingat abunde,  
et mundus victus non deficiente crumina?

What else would a fond nurse pray that her sweet ward might have, than that he could think wisely and utter his thoughts—that he might have an abundance of favor, fame, and health, with a seemly living and a never failing purse?

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3. Jacoby (1909–1910) is now the *locus classicus* for hostility to Tibullus. For an analysis of more recent attitudes toward our author, see Lee-Stecum (2000), especially 177 n. 2; and Putnam (1982), 163–74.
4. See Halporn, Ostwald and Rosenmeyer (1963), 13 and 71.
5. The repetition implied in *decantes* could also be an allusion to the circular structure and repeating element of the elegiac couplet, inasmuch as the second verse of each distich is itself the duplication of a half verse (*hemi-epes*).
Horace here presents an image of a man who has nothing to complain about, who thinks wisely (sapere) and utters his thoughts (fari possit quae sentiat). This implies perhaps that though Tibullus certainly utters his thoughts, they are too self-pitying to be wise. Tibullus is trapped in his lamentations.

What are we to make of Tibullus’ strange kind of withdrawing into his own subjectivity and away from the world? By taking a hint from Genette, we might be able to see more in Tibullus by reconsidering the function of withdrawing into subjectivity. From a narrative perspective, we could embrace and read the particular form of narrative that a withdrawal into subjectivity creates, and find, perhaps, a new narrative potential for Latin love elegy. In this essay I will analyze how Tibullus manages to weave together the narrative threads of talking and telling, of the internal and the external, by means of what I call a rhetoric of subjectivity. This rhetoric includes a narrative not only of what was or what is, but also, of what could have been, what may yet be. As Genette pointed out, indicative statements tend to play a narrative function of telling, while subjunctive and conditional verbs betray the subjectivity of their locutor, or talking. Focusing on Tibullus’ use of the subjunctive, I will argue that the conflict of the two modes, or more properly moods of representation, actually generates a “master narrative,” which pits the mood of the poet against the narrative framework of the poetry. One could even argue, then, that the poems narrate a struggle between narrative and subjectivity.

First I will analyze Tibullus’ subjective rhetoric as a form of grammar, shown best by a close analysis of 1.1. In this poem Tibullus employs the subjunctive and imperative in place of the indicative. This substitution can be considered as a projection of internal narrative, and of the subject, onto the external narrative of the poems. Next, I will analyze the subjective rhetoric employed by Tibullus in his narration of the Delia cycle of book 1. Tibullus consistently resists narration of public events, and subordinates his interactions with Delia almost exclusively to functions of subjectivity, either memory, imagination, or wish. Third, I will look at the closing poem of the collection, 2.6. This poem comments directly on the process of wishing with an extended address to Hope (Spes), and despairs that it is ineffective and deceptive. I read this passage as a commentary by the poet on one of the dominant projects of his program. In turn, the inefficacy, but also the persistence, of wishing can be looked to as a model for explaining the circular, unresolved nature of the Tibullan corpus itself: the work is structured around the subjective rhetoric of the existential concerns of the poet, as much as around external events. Finally, I will look at recent critical studies

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of the poems that address Tibullus’ relationship to the “real,” and to history. From the perspective of narrativity, Tibullus’ subjective rhetoric can be read as a poetic and aesthetic project of preserving subjectivity in the face of history.

Miller’s challenging article asks us to interpret the Tibullan corpus as a dream-text. He would relate Tibullus’ conflicting ideological depictions of wealth to the conflicted nature of desire itself, a force that is always present if sometimes kept at bay, in his reading of Lacan and Freud. For Miller, the poems are unresolved, always in conflict, multivalent. He suggests that “These texts are indeed wish-fulfillments, containing multiple and mutually exclusive determinants, such as poem 1.1’s unprecedented—and logically impossible—combination of . . . mutually conflicting desires.” Miller argues (pace Jameson and Žižek) that the relationship between the real and poetic is in fact an unconscious model, which gains its condensed nature by the mute projection of breakdowns in syntax and contradictory images. He argues that Tibullan ideology reveals itself in incompatibilities and contradictions.

I am offering here a way of reading the subjunctive mood in Tibullus not merely as signaling something about desire (which Miller seems to emphasize), but also as signaling something about narrative. From a narrative perspective Tibullus’ poetry can be read to represent a project of working in, folding in, the real events of the world, into the world we experience as subjects. Tibullus creates a narration, ultimately, not only of events with a plot, but more impressively, more poetically—a narration of subjectivity, that is, being for us in the world. Tibullus enfolds wishing and dreaming of what was and what could be into what is for us. A Tibullan narrative depicts not only what was or what is, but also other narrative possibilities: particularly what could have been, and what might still be.

2. The Grammar of 1.1

Tibullus’ narrative of external events is frequently derailed from its progress by subjective digressions, optative subjunctives and also imperatives, which

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8. Ibid., 189.
9. He suggests that logical conflicts in the poem are like a parapraxis, or a “Freudian slip” (Miller [1999], 182).
10. Caveat lector: in this essay I contend that what is narrated in Tibullus is a poetic subjectivity—the ‘I.’ Obviously this is not a real historical artifact, a transcript of the poet’s “real” thoughts; rather the poet uses the poems to provide a model of subjectivity.
stall or even rupture the “story to tell.” The repeated interjection of these moods creates a pervasive tension between narrative of plot and narrative of subjectivity. We could go further and claim that the Tibullan poems introduce the subjunctive (and imperative) as a sort of resistance to the narration of a plot: the poet’s subjectivity stubbornly reasserts itself, and refuses to give way.

An overview of Tibullus’ use of mood in 1.1, particularly the subjunctive and imperative, shows that the poem can be described as a succession of wishes, or prayers, that alternate with clusters of verbs in the indicative. These contrasting modal sections pit the contents of Tibullus’ wishes with the content of what is depicted as real (or going to be real). Below I have put subjunctive and imperative main verbs in italics. A review of the progression of thought in 1.1 will demonstrate the following observation: the poem arranges clusters of moods together, and with one exception (sedeo, “I sit” in line 36), indicative verbs are kept separate from subjunctives and imperatives. These modal clusters can be read as a representation not of external narrative, but of subjectivity itself; further, perhaps, internal narrative in opposition to external narrative.

1–10: congerat (1), teneat (2), traducat (5), seram (7) (could be future, but probably subjunctive to parallel destituat), destituat (9), praebeat (10)
11–14: veneror (11), and ponitur (13)
15–19: sit (15), ponatur (17)
21–23: lustrabat (21), nunc . . . est (22), cadet (23)
24–31: clamet (24), possim (25), pudeat (29), pigeat (31)
34–38: soleo (36) parcite (34) and adsitis (37), sper nit (38)
39–48: fecit (39), composuit (40), requiro (41), est (43), iuvat (45)
49–52: contingat (49), sit (49), pereat (51)
53–60: decet (53), retinent (55), sedeo (56), curo (57), quaeso (58)
58–59: te spectem (58), te teneam (59)
61–65: flebis (61), dabis (62), flebis (63), sunt (63), stat (64), poterit (65).
67–69: ne laede, parce (68), iungamus (68)
70–74: veniet (70), subrepet (71), decebit (73), est tractanda (73), non pudet (74)
76–77: ite . . . ite (76), fer te (76), ferte (77)
77–78: despiciam (77), despiciam (78)

The poem begins with an unbroken series of main verbs in the subjunctive, in which Tibullus disavows the pursuit of wealth and hopes to be content with his own humble estate: 1–10: congerat (1), teneat (2), traducat
Lee, “The Rhetoric of the Subjective in Tibullus”

(5), seram (7) (could be future, but probably subjunctive to parallel destitutat), destitutat (9), praebet (10). At lines 11–13 we switch to the indicative, as Tibullus describes his religious piety (veneror [11], ponitur [13]), but we quickly return to the subjunctive in lines 15–19: sit (15), ponatur (17). To describe his diminished estate, we have a cluster of indicatives at lines 21–23 (lustrabat [21], nunc . . . est [22], cadet [23]), followed again by a cluster of subjunctives and imperatives from 24–31, to express more wishes: clamet (24), possim (25), pudeat (29), piget (31), parcite (34), soleo (37), adsitis. At 36, we find the only indicative main verb interspersed with subjunctives and imperatives: soleo (36) stands between the imperative parcite (34) and the subjunctive adsitis (37).

Again, in a cluster of indicatives to describe the present of his poem and the pleasures of his diminished estate, we find a series of indicative verbs unbroken by a subjunctive or imperative from 39–48: fecit (39), composuit (40), requiro (41), est (43), iuvat (45). This section is followed by a cluster of subjunctive wishes from 49–52: contingat (49), sit (49), pereat (51). Tibullus switches back to a series of unbroken indicatives from 53–58, as he describes the situation before him: decet (53), retinent (55), sedeo (56), curo (57), quaeso (58). Two wishes follow in 58 and 59: te spectem, te teneam, and again, a return to the indicative, showing a series of futures: flebis (61), dabis (62), flebis (63), sunt (63), stat (64), poterit (65). Finally, two imperatives (ne laede [67], parce [68]), and another wish at 69 (iungamus) are followed by a group of indicatives in lines 70–74, with a preponderance of verbs in the future: veniet (70), subrepet (71), decebit (73), est tractanda (73), non pudet (74). The poem ends with a series of imperatives in 76–77: ite . . . ite (76), ferte (76), ferte (77), and despiciam, repeated in 77–78.

This last line is of particular interest because the repeated verb could be either future or subjunctive, and so manages to meld the future and a wish into the same form: despiciam is thus both prediction and wish. This last verb, then, is indicative (so to speak) of the larger function of the poem in this modal reading: it is to somehow harmonize the disparity between present and wish by preserving both indicative narrative and other versions of narrative, or other potentials of narrative. The fact that these moods appear in identifiable patterns should discourage the hypothesis that the arrangement is a matter of chance; rather, it is clear to me that the manipulation and arrangement of moods is part of the poet’s art.

What is the effect of so many subjunctives in the opening poem? First of all, it leaves us without a firm footing; while we are aware of many of Tibullus’ desires, all we know about what actually is, is confined to the few indicatives: that he venerates the household gods (veneror, 11); that offerings
are made (*ponitur*, 13); that his estate is diminished (*nunc est*, 22). And, significantly, that he is held bound by the shackles of a lovely girl, and has taken up a seat outside her locked doors (*retinent 56, sedeo 57*). The verbs of the rest of the poem are his wishes and projections. By intertwining moods of representation, Tibullus presents a composite narration of both facts and subjectivity, events and wishes. These wishes in particular amount to a new form of narrative.

To illustrate what poetic construction I am describing in Tibullus, I turn to a modern poetic context. In her book *On Extended Wings*, Helen Vendler analyzes the syntax of Wallace Stevens’s longer poems (such as “The Man with the Blue Guitar,” “Le Monacle de Mon Oncle,” and “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird”). Her thesis is that Stevens uses the subjunctive and conditional verbs to describe the potential of what could be (rather than what actually is):

> By this skeptical music Stevens can be chiefly distinguished from the other poets who share his theme, not only by the words of uncertainty, but by syntactic uncertainty . . . Stevens resorts to may, might, must, could, should and would to resolve his poems. . . . In fact, his constant sense of disparity between the thing and his description of the thing is bridged only by his notion of possibility, that perhaps some day one name might be accurate. (Vendler, 14–15)

Precisely the same dynamic use of grammar is at work in articulating Tibullus’ vision. As much as to the content of thought, I would like to draw attention to the mode or mood in which that content is relayed; for in addition to the meaning of the wish, the poet’s relationship to that content is also defined. Tibullus suggests, by employing this grammatical strategy, that dreaming itself is an integral part of conceiving of the world and a critical component to structuring the individual’s experience of history. For Tibullus, the narrative of these wishes must somehow be folded into the “plot” of history, and his poetry strives to retain both narrative elements.

### 3. Narration and the Delia Cycle

In this section I propose to excavate the narrative passages from book 1 concerning the elusive object of the poet’s affection, Delia.\(^{12}\) These passages

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12. Unfortunately a complete consideration of the oscillation between public and private in the Tibullan corpus, particularly the “public” poems 1.7 and 2.5, is beyond the scope of this essay. For
do indeed transmit information and present images about her, but they are embedded in a rhetoric of subjectivity. The plot, what actually happens, is almost exclusively relayed as private thoughts, that is, as memory, or especially imagination and wish. Where concrete actions are described, they are depicted with a generalizing force, and are often modulated by an adverb such as saepe (“often”) that strips the moment of its specificity. The end result is that as readers we deduce a master narrative of the poet’s relationship with Delia, but can partake only in the subjective narrative Tibullus offers us.

The Delia narrative consists of five poems, and perhaps a brief review would be helpful. In poem 1 the poet imagines and longs for a life with his mistress Delia on his rural estate; in poem 2 we learn that Delia is locked away by her husband, and though he claims to have resorted to magic through a saga (a witch) who has promised Delia to him, he continues to wish for a happy result and none is shown. Poem 3 shows Tibullus again wishing for reunion with Delia, though here the poem betrays more of a present: he has been dragged off with Messalla to serve on a military campaign, and has fallen sick mid-journey on the island of Phaeacia (in Roman times known as Corcyra, and now as Corfu). Poem 4 drops the Delia narrative to relate Priapus’ advice on seducing boys. The Delia narrative is resumed in poems 5 and 6, where we learn at line 47 that Tibullus has been ousted by a rich rival, and his fantasy with Delia of living in the country is impossible (the famous haec mihi fingebam [“I was imagining these things”] of line 35). He can only wish Delia will come around but claims that his poverty has cost him access to her. After 1.6, Delia’s name is no longer mentioned, and the corpus moves on to the central poem to Messalla’s triumph (1.7), the Marathus cycle (1.8. and 1.9), and the closing poem of book 1, which lacks the erotic themes of elegy, but does return to many themes related in the other poems.¹³

1.1

Let us look at these passages with an eye toward the narrative role of subjectivity. After forty-two lines on pastoral themes, Tibullus shifts to erotic themes, which is our first real “encounter” with Delia:

quam iuvat immites ventos audire cubantem
et dominam tenero continuisse sinu,
aut, gelidas hibernus aquas cum fuderit Auster,
securum somnos igne iuvante sequi!

How pleasing it is to hear the winds blow while you lie in bed
and hold your mistress, clasping her tenderly,
or to dream easily, with a fire to help,
if the southwest wind slings frozen rain in winter. (45–48)

Delia is not named; but Tibullus provokes the reader to wonder who this
*domina* is. The grammar of the lines leaves it vague whether this embrace is
really an event that has occurred or whether it is one that could occur. This
second possibility is shown especially by the *cum* clause of line 47, which
imagines a wintry alternative to his first thought. A close reading of the lines
shows that these thoughts are a daydream: when Tibullus says, “how nice
it is to hold,” he is imagining what it is like to be grasping. But the poem
itself reveals that he is not actually doing so: according to the indicative of
the poem at 1.55, he has no access to her.

Tibullus turns to Delia again without naming her at 1.55 (*me retinent
vinctum formosae vincla puellae,* “the chains of a lovely girl hold me, shackled”)
at the first and last lines of 57–68. This is our first encounter with Delia
(except by implication). Of all the forms of narration that he could imme-
diately associate with her, why does Tibullus choose to represent his own
death (*te teneam moriens deficiente manu*), and Delia mourning over his
death? Inasmuch as this event frames the Delia narrative, we never escape
the associations of the elegiac genre in Tibullus, as essentially a meter of
*lamentation*, especially as a reaction to death. From a narrative perspective
this vision provides an inflexible model of interaction with Delia: they do
not share the sexual embrace dreamt of in 1.46, but the weak grasp of a
dying man. When Delia does actually do something, and Tibullus is careful
to convey that image (*flebis . . . flebis*), the poet is merely a corpse. What a
start to the relationship!

14. To translate *domina* I might have preferred to use an idiomatic term (“lover”), though the
word cannot escape its connotations of domination. On the technical valences of *domina* see Maltby
(1991), 138: it is used throughout elegy but already for a lover in Lucilius 730 M.
15. On the intertwined origins of inscriptionsal epigrams and literary epigrams, see now Brill’s
16. I would like to point out that, particularly from the first moment we meet her, Tibullus’ nar-
rations of Delia are strictly imagined. She exists as a character reacting to an imagined future event.
Furthermore the sphere of his interaction with her is only in a catastrophic vision of future. The logic
of the poem, its rhetoric and plot, confines the dramatic action of the Delia narrative to Tibullus’
1.2

We see how ineffective Tibullus’ daydreams of 1.1 are in 1.2, where the poet depicts himself getting drunk to soothe the pain of his isolation from Delia. So far, this is the strongest narrative moment in the poems: he is actually doing something, calling for a stronger mix of wine in the present tense (adde merum, 1). Adde “add” implies some wine has been mixed already, and that it is too weak for his purposes. He continues talking as he describes the source of his woe at lines 5–6:

nam posita est nostrae custodia saeva puellae,
clauditur et dura ianua firma sera.

For a cruel guardian has been placed over my lover,
and her door is locked with a harsh bolt.

With these lines Tibullus invokes the genre of the paraclausithyron, the poem sung outside a lover’s door. His access is blocked, and we infer that he engages with Delia in the second poem only through exhortations to do something (since nothing is happening). And so he even appeals to the door itself in lines 9–10. The paraclausithyron of 1.2 can provide a good model for Tibullus’ interaction with Delia, since it is predicated on separation, and the isolation of the subject from his desire. In order for Tibullus to address Delia directly, he would first have to penetrate the door. But the door remains bolted shut, and his appeals to his lover amount to a rhetorical figure of apostrophe.

This sense of isolation, and consequently of interiority, are confirmed in the beguiling fractured verses at 25–27, which depict him wandering alone:

en ego cum tenebris tota vagor anxius urbe
. . . . [lost verse]
neec sinit occurrat quisquam qui corpora ferro
vulneret aut rapta praemia veste petat.

Look at me wandering distraught through the whole city in the shadows,
. . . [lost verse]
and doesn’t allow anyone to meet me that might stab me or steal my
clothes.
And when he does seem to encounter Delia, his admission into the house is narrated as a contingency (33–34):

non labor hic laedit, reseret modo Delia postes
et vocet ad digiti me taciturna sonum.

This labor doesn’t hurt, as long as Delia unbolts the door and calls me with the silent sound of her finger.

The poem flirts with narration, but a close look reveals the encounter may never happen. Like Tibullus’ dream in 1.44 of hearing of the winds while holding his mistress, this image preserves a delicious ambiguity, the pleasure of the daydream. It is true for the moment it is dreamt. It stops being true when we realize “the real”: Tibullus, of course, is sitting locked out, without access to her. This is not to say that 1.2 does not contain a narrative of external events. Tibullus does tell of his consultations with a *saga* to reverse his luck, and the prayer he made:

non ego totus abesset amor sed mutuus esset
orabam, nec te posse carere velim.

I prayed that our love would not be absent, but shared by us both; nor would I wish to be able to go on without you. (65–66)

These strategies, love spells, and charms, however, all show their futility in the closing of the poem (lines 99–100):

at mihi parce, Venus. semper tibi dedita servit
mens mea. quid messes uris acerba tuas?

But spare me, Venus: my mind has always been devoted to you, and serves you now.

Why do you burn your own harvest? Out of bitterness?

The present tense of the concluding thought, “why do you burn [me],” renders Tibullus in a helpless state of inaction. He attempts to influence a sphere of action over which he has no control, and in which he plays no part in the present, other than suffering. Far from acting, 1.2 depicts the poet being consumed in flames, and the events which the poem describes are no more than the burning of his desires.
1.3

Poem 1.3 shows an even longer subjective element, which is framed, however, by a dramatic event: we learn that the poet has been separated from both Rome and from Messalla’s campaign (1–4). He claims that he is stuck in Phaeacia, and so begins a series of references to Homer in this poem.\textsuperscript{17} The \textit{Odyssey} is a provocative text to invoke at this point, inasmuch as the plot of that epic is an endless set of stallings and digressions from the main event, the return of Odysseus to Penelope.\textsuperscript{18} As the poem continues, we find three vivid descriptions of Delia, first preparing for Tibullus’ departure by drawing lots, then sitting in supplication to Isis to pray for Tibullus’ return, and finally, greeting Tibullus on his return. Thus the poem is in part about Delia, but I would like to stress that all three interactions with Delia are subordinated to functions of his memory, imagination, or wish.

The first “encounter” comes (again) after Tibullus laments having no one to bury him. He shows Delia drawing lots, and then approaches a narration of exchanges between them, but they are buried in the phrase \textit{ipse ego solator, cum iam mandata dedissem} (“I her comforter, after the last farewell”) in line 15. Here (1.3.11–20) we are provided with images of interaction, enough to reconstruct a narrative, but the narrative itself is hazy. It seems to have happened in the past, but any narrative moment is stripped of its specificity, particularly by the adverb \textit{quotiens} (“how often”). Similarly, the second narrative of Delia shows her in Isis’ temple praying for Tibullus’ return, and a promise of future worship by Delia for a favorable result. “I remember” (\textit{memini}) is particularly striking here: Tibullus remembers not the many nights he spent with her, but rather the many nights she spent \textit{in chaste isolation} from him. He imagines her in the future with loosened tunic, but does not narrate loosening her tunic in his past.

The poem then turns to a description of the lost golden age (35–52) and the poet’s epitaph (55–56). Continuing his program of Homeric allusion, Tibullus imagines a description of Hades (cf. the progression of ghosts in \textit{Odyssey} book 11), and finally, a projected future reunion with Delia at 83–95. This most vivid picture, really the closest we have to a narrative of an embrace with Delia, is a function of his wish, clearly marked as such by

\textsuperscript{17} On the Odyssean allusions of 1.3, see Maltby (2002), 183; Bright (1971); Mills (1974). Phaeacia alludes to Odysseus’ shipwreck on that island in \textit{Odyssey} books 6 and 7, and the end of 1.3 alludes to Odysseus’ reunion with Penelope in book 23.

\textsuperscript{18} Tibullus certainly plays with this idea further in his simile of Delia nodding off at the loom (spending her nights weaving) and his return in 1.2.85–88: see below. On subjective narrative functions in the \textit{Odyssey}, see De Jong (1992), 10–11.
If we accept the poem’s premise, he is prevented from any interaction with others by his isolation. Whereas the Odyssey actually narrates the reunion of Odysseus and Penelope, in Tibullus’ elegy any reunion is just a dream. If Tibullus is alluding to epic, his epic takes place in the imagination, in the world of wish.

1.5

Elegy 1.5 in all its complexity also narrates subjective reactions to external events, events we can deduce, but which are narrated indirectly. In fact 1.5 takes particular pleasure in contrasting earlier subjective positions, related in 1.1 and 1.2, with the subjective positions of the present. The poem actively reflects on the dreams related in 1.1 and 1.2:

Asper eram et bene discidium me ferre loquebar:
   at mihi nunc longe gloria fortis abest.
   namque agor ut per plana citus sola verbere turben
   quem celer assueta versat ab arte puer.
   ure ferum et torque, libeat ne dicere quicquam
   magnificum posthac: horrida verba doma.
   parce tamen, per te furtivi foedera lecti,
   per Venerem quaeso compositumque caput.

I was angry and declared that our breakup did not hurt.
But that bragging is way beyond me now.
I am driven like a top spun on a flat surface,
quickly and artfully, by a boy who has practiced.
Sear my pride and torture me, so I never want to say
anything so arrogant again. Tame my ranting.
But forgive me, I beg you, by the bonds of hidden love,
by Venus, and our heads that once shared an embrace. (1.5.1–8)

The poem in its first line refers to talking (loquebar), but it is not clear if Tibullus was talking to himself or to Delia: the poem will enumerate things he has done to get over their separation. Further complicating the poem’s narrative ambiguity is the fact that the addressee of the poem, first shown in line 7, would seem still to be Marathus from 1.4, not Delia. Tibullus seems to be playing with this ambiguity: the simile of lines 3–4 shows a

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boy spinning the author like a top, just as the reader is thrown back into the Delia cycle.\footnote{On this point see Maltby (2002), 241 and Mutschler (1985), 86.}

The passage describes a subjective stance and includes a plea for action (“Burn . . . spare” ure . . . parce). The beginning of 1.5 flirts with narrative, but it is buried in the last couplet (7–8): “forgive me, I beg you, by the bonds of stolen love, by Venus, and our heads that once shared an embrace” (parce tamen, per te furtivi foedera compositumque caput). The participle compositum (literally “put together,” or less literally “having shared an embrace”) invokes perhaps such a remote strand of narrative: we imagine the lovers lying intertwined after they make love.\footnote{But the double entendre of compositum in the literary sense of “constructed” or “composed” is also hard to ignore.} But again this is a narrative strand we as readers have to unbury, if not recreate.

The most prominent element of narrative in the poem is Tibullus’ participation in religious rites to cure Delia of an illness, which he frames with a triple anaphora (ipse . . . ipse . . . ipse ego), calling attention to his own active participation in something. In an inversion of what he had hoped Delia might do for him in 1.3, Tibullus is now in linen and has unbound his tunic. We see Tibullus in action, but he is separated from what he is acting upon. If this were a narrative of his “quest” after Delia, we could not say it is marked by interacting with her, or even others. This sense of isolation is most poignantly reinforced by the nocturnal rites to Diana (Triviae, line 16). As Tibullus says in lines 19–20, \textit{at mihi felicem vitam si salva fuisses fingebam, demens} (“I was out of my mind whenever I imagined a happy life if you could be saved”). With the term \textit{demens} Tibullus seems to recognize that his imagination cannot square with things as they are.

The most significant part of 1.5, from the standpoint of subjectivity, is the famous dream passage of 21–34, which is marked by the repetition of fingebam in line 35. Tibullus takes stock of what he had been dreaming, and reflects on it in the present:

\begin{verbatim}
haec mihi fingebam, quae nunc Eurusque Notusque
iactat odoratos vota per Armenios.
\end{verbatim}

It was all a figment of my imagination, dreams that the East and South winds now toss over the perfumed plains of Armenia.

This is a moment when the narrative action is the recognition in the present time (\textit{nunc}) of a subjective change, and the two meld: he narrates a
past thought and then comments on it. The present is a rejection of earlier subjective positions, a sense of realization, of progress of the subject. 22

The poem drifts to threats against the *lena* who has helped Tibullus’ rival (49–58); it closes with an appeal to Delia (59–60) to stop listening to her *saga rapax*. Tibullus finally offers himself to her as a servile pauper, a solution that would obliterate his social standing altogether, in order to gain interaction and access to her (61–66). The concluding couplets of the poem contrast our poet in isolation, singing in vain, while his counterpart actively pursues Delia. This is marked by repetition of *frustra* (“fruitlessly”):

> heu canimus frustra, nec verbis victa patescit
> ianua, sed plena est percutienda manu.
> at tu, qui potior nunc es, mea fata caveto:
> versatur celeri Fors levis orbe rotae.
> non frustra quidam iam nunc in limine perstat
> sedulus ac crebro prospicit ac refugit . . . (67–72)

Damn it, there is no use to my singing. The door does not open, unmoved by my words. It has to be shaken by a hand full of money. But you, her darling for the day, beware of my fate. Fortune is a wheel that spins quickly. Not in vain, already now someone stands on her doorstep, and first looks about him, and then backs away . . .

Here we have a narrative of the present, and action in the present; but it is the action of Tibullus’ replacement, while Tibullus can only sing his poetry. This juxtaposition of action and poetry is the focal point of a clash between internal and external narratives. We could argue that the plot of 1.5 describes not the external plot of his quest after Delia, but the plot of his internal narrative, and of his subjectivity. We see in this internal narrative a return to earlier beliefs, a revision of ideas, and a negation of them.

The narrative of subjectivity in 1.5 does not resolve into a conclusion, as much as a negation: it would be better described as dissolving into other forms, other people, and other narratives. In other words, 1.5 satisfies the dramatic structure of subjectivity, but not of external plot. Whereas the plot of the external events should happen through interaction with others and progresses linearly (like a quest), internal narrative, and its corresponding

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22. Significantly, some editors put this passage in quotation marks, as if to depict Tibullus’ memory as a dialogue with himself: cf. Luck (1988), 21.
representation in a rhetoric of subjectivity, is by its nature circular, structured around the concerns of the subject. The poem closes ominously, with a murky vision of the rival’s success with Delia (75–76).

nescioquid furtivus Amor parat: utere quaeso, dum licet: in liquida nat tibi linter aqua.

I don’t know what Love plans—he is a thief. Take pleasure in your moment while you can—your boat floats on unsteady water.

These verses show the poet reflecting on the fluidity of the present, a present that recognizes its lack of agency over the future. This idea was brought to the fore already in 69–70 (versatur celeri Fors levis orbe rotae, which I have freely translated “Fortune is a wheel that spins quickly”). I would note that the present of the poem is referred to as a time of inaction and lack of agency, essentially a disconnectedness from the external narrative of the plot. This isolation is driven home ultimately by the fact that the “now” of the poem is a lonely state of singing in vain (heu, canimus frustra).

1.6

Just as 1.5 displays a rhetoric of the subjective in its conclusion with an elegiac present, poem 1.6, the end of the “external” Delia narrative, shows a subjective style of dissolving into projections of the future, or wishes, rather than resolving as a plot. Let us end this section by looking at the conclusion of the Delia narrative, to see how it dissolves. I argue that Delia is finally rhetoricized in the manner of her exit from the dramatic stage—she echoes away without interaction.

Elegy 1.6 begins with the vocative of Amor. The dramatic setting is again a conversation with self, in the form of prayer. It betrays a strong present, but inasmuch as there is no interaction but for apostrophes to other characters, it is an interior present:

23. This point will be addressed in the conclusion.

24. Cf. Barthes (1974), 75 on the conflict between narrative progress and the arresting function of hermeneutic processes (such as Tibullus’ evaluation of his earlier held beliefs): “Whereas the sentences quicken the stories’ ‘unfolding’ and cannot help but move the story along, the hermeneutic code performs an opposite action: it must set up delays . . . in the flow of the discourse; its structure is essentially reactive, since it opposes the ineluctable advance of language with an organized set of stoppages.”
nam mihi tenduntur casses: iam Delia furtim
nescio quem tacita callida nocte fovet.
illa quidem tam multa negat, sed credere durum est:
sic etiam de me pernegat usque viro.
ipse miser docui quo posset ludere pacto
custodes: eheu, nunc premor arte mea.

The nets are set out for me. Already Delia is fondling
some man, secretly, silently in the night.
She swears it isn’t so, but how could I trust her?
She still says the same thing to her husband about me.
I am the one who taught her how to trick her guard,
and now I am crushed by my own art. (1.6.5–10)

The present, the plot, is happening in isolation from him: *nescio quem* . . . *fovet* (“I don’t know whom she is fondling”). But the phrase *pernegat* . . . *usque* (“She keeps denying”) implies that Tibullus interacts with Delia enough to know her words, and to hear her oath. Why don’t we hear about their encounter? Once again, this is an action we as readers need to excavate: we have no access to the events as they happened. Tibullus bitterly reflects on having himself taught Delia to deceive her husband, now that she is using those tricks with another lover. He turns then to Delia’s husband:

at tu, fallacis coniunx incaute puellae,
me quoque servato peccet ut illa nihil.
neu iuvenes celebret multo sermone caveto,
neue cubet laxo pectus aperta sinu,
neu te decipiat nutu, digitoque liquorem
ne trahat et mensae ducat in orbe notas.

I am talking to you, careless husband: your wife is cheating.
Keep an eye on us both to make sure she doesn’t stray,
or talk too much with young men, or wear a dress to dinner
that shows her breasts. Make sure she doesn’t
fool you with a nod, or use her finger to trace
a message in the wine, on the tabletop.

But we cannot suppose Tibullus is sending this poem as an actual letter to the husband: this amounts to an apostrophe to another person who is not
present. The advice that he gives to the husband here fuses with memories of his own past interactions with Delia; the following sequence of “don’ts” become a subjective substitute for what Tibullus has done. And in 1.6.25–32 we approach another asymptotic narrative of Tibullus’ affair with Delia. It is a fleeting reference, and again, an implied narration, that approaches but never actually intersects with her:

saepe velut gemmas eius signumque probarem
   per causam memini me tetigisse manum;
saepe mero somnum peperi tibi, at ipse bibeam
   sobria supposta pocula victor aqua.
non ego te laesi prudens; ignosce fatenti.
   iussit Amor; contra quis ferat arma deos?
ille ego sum, nec me iam dicere vera pudet,
   instabat tota cui tua nocte canis.

I remember that I touched her hand many times
as if to admire the gem and its carving.
Many times I provided you sleep with pure wine,
while I drank cups of water, slipped in—and then I had my triumph.
My sin wasn’t cold blooded and confession earns forgiveness.
Amor gave the orders—who would battle with a god?
That was me, whom your dog menaced all night long,
and I am not afraid to tell the truth anymore.

This might be the only place in the entire Tibullan corpus where we have a narration of an embrace with Delia, but the consummation of the affair, predictably, is relegated to the indirect phrase *victor*, “I had my triumph,” at line 30. Even the memory of touching her hand is robbed of some of its specificity by the phrase *saepe*, which is repeated again to describe the trick that allows Tibullus to be *victor* after the drunken husband passes out. This is not an actual event, so much as a composite of many interactions. Though we have access to a general picture, we are again denied the pleasure of any one moment as it happens.

In 1.6.31 we have a particularly poignant description of the poet: *ille ego sum* (“I am the one who . . .”). Even this admission in the present, however, is described through past action. Tibullus presents himself to the husband as he is, and offers to serve as a slave; but the poem dissolves into threats and appeals to Delia’s mother, and then into threats revealed to him by a priestess.
of Bellona. The poem concludes with a final appeal to Delia to remain faithful to Tibullus, and a threatening description of what befalls a woman who has not remained loyal. The final couplet ends the poem with a wish:

haec aliis maledicta cadant: nos, Delia, amoris
exemplum cana simus uterque coma.

But let these curses fall on others. You and I, Delia,
let us be a paradigm for Love even when we both have white hair.
(1.6.85–86)

The conclusion of 1.6, the last mention of Delia, must then serve as our plot resolution: it dissolves into a wish, but clearly, with a weak probability of success. His wishes echo and fade away without affecting the external world, though they find a voice in his internal narrative.

4. Wishing in the World (2.6)

So far I have argued that the poems, and the Delia narrative in particular, show a rhetoric of subjectivity, which functions to represent and retain internal narratives amidst external ones. Does Tibullus himself address this project? One of the primary modes of this subjective narrative was wishing, as we saw throughout 1.1, or 1.3, where his encounter with Delia is actually the dream of a sick man. At 1.6 the Delia narrative is simply dropped, and so I will turn to the conclusion of the poems, 2.6, to look at what the poet concludes about wishing.

The closing poem of the collection addresses the theme of wishing directly, with the hymn to Hope (2.6.21–28). This passage is a form of comment on subjectivity, in that hoping or wishing is the very action that pervades the two books of poems, and especially 1.1 and 2.6. In fact, this passage can be read as an exploration by our author of the adequacy of subjectivity itself, and by the end of the collection, it remains very much in doubt whether the imagination succeeds in transforming reality as experienced by the subject. Tibullus seems to imply that the imagination is a necessary component that structures experience, but it also seems to be an essentially flawed one, capable of deception and failure.

Elegy 2.6 is marked by a series of subjective reactions to an external event, that Macer follows arms, and Tibullus too. In 2.6.9–12 we find:
castra peto, valeatque Venus valeantque puellae:
et mihi sunt vires, et mihi facta tuba est.
magna loquor, sed magnificae mihi magna locuto
excutiunt clausae fortia verba fores.

I’m off to war. Goodbye to Venus and the girls.
I’ve got guts, I can take the trumpet.
I make my boasts, but after all my grand speeches,
the door slams and scatters all my big talk.

Lines 11–12, especially the phrase *magna mihi loquor*, “I make my boasts,”
articulate the same process we saw at the close of 1.6—the assertion of
subjectivity in reaction to an external event, the production of an internal
narrative in reaction to an external one. Here we find internal narrative in
the form of a protest or complaint:

acer Amor, fractas utinam tua tela sagittas,
   si licet, extinctas aspiciamque faces!
tu miserum torques, tu me mihi dira precari
cogis et insana mente nefanda loqui.
iam mala finissem leto, sed credula vitam
   Spes fovet et fore cras semper ait melius.

Cruel Amor, I wish your arrows and weapons were broken,
and if it is right, your torches put out.
You torture my unhappiness. You make me curse myself
and coerce me into saying insane things, unspeakable things.
I tried to put an end to my misery, but hope is gullible.
Hope nurses life, and keeps saying “tomorrow will be better.” (2.6.15–20)

Hope, whose mood would be the optative subjunctive, compels a subjective
narrative, *insana mente nefanda loqui*, a sort of oxymoron (“to say the unsay-
able”), which calls into question the compatibility of the imagination with
the poem’s external reality. In Putnam’s words,25 the hymn to Hope (21–28)
shows “a decrease in optimism as well as a lessening of trust in the efficacy
and quality of Hope’s methods.” As Putnam emphasizes, the verbal progres-

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Spes alit agricolas, Spes sulcis credit aratis
semina quae magno faenore reddat ager;
haec laqueo volucres, haec captat harundine pisces,
cum tenues hamos abdidit ante cibus.
Spes etiam valida solatur compede vinctum:
crura sonant ferro, sed canit inter opus.
Spes facilem Nemesim spondet mihi, sed negat illa.
   ei mihi, ne vincas, dura puella, deam!

Hope feeds the farmer, and entrusts to the plowed field
the seeds which the field will repay at compound interest.
She’s the one who captures birds in a net, or fishes
by covering the slender hook with a morsel.
Hope even consoles the slave in his tough shackles.
The iron clanks on his ankles, and he sings while he works.
Hope promises me Nemesis, but she says no.
Please, cruel lover, don’t overcome a goddess! (2.6.21–28)

I would focus especially on the grim image of the slave in chains, a stand-in,
of course, for Tibullus: just as Tibullus had described himself as bound in
1.55, *me retinent vinctum formosae vincla puellae*, the slave is bound *valida
solatur compede vinctum*. This equation of poet and slave is further provoked
by the verb *canit*. The slave’s work song is a projection into the world of
an internal song, the forceful introduction of meter and melody onto what
reality compels. This is of course a figure for none other than the poet
himself.

Elegy 2.6 closes with another subjective reaction to an external event. A
wish (a curse) is generated as a result of experience, almost a song in reaction
to the world (2.6.45–54):

lena vetat miserum Phryne furtimque tabellas
occulto portans itque reditque sinu:
saepe, ego cum dominae dulces a limine duro
agnosco voces, haec negat esse domi,
saepe, ubi nox mihi promissa est, languere puellam
nuntiat aut aliquas extimuisse minas.
tunc morior curis, tunc mens mihi perdita fingit
quisve meam teneat quot teneatve modis,
tunc tibi, lena, precor diras: satis anxia vivas,
moverit e votis pars quotacumque deos.
The pimp, Phryne, obstructs me. She carries secret messages, coming and going, letters hidden in her toga’s fold. From outside the harsh threshold I often recognize my mistress talking sweetly, but Phryne denies she’s home. She often comes to tell me that my girl is sick, or that she fears some other threat. Then I die from cares, mind lost, split apart: Who is holding her, how many lovers, what are the positions? Then I curse you, pimp, you’d live anxiously enough if a fraction of my prayers moved the gods.

By ending the poems in this manner, Tibullus presents the reader with a problem of closure. Rather than any suggestion of a progress or result, the poem’s last words are the wish generated by a reaction to a remembered event, one that even lacks a discrete time value: tunc. In a sense, the collection of poems, like the Delia narrative, simply dissolves away into subjective processes.

This quality of dissolution has prompted many scholars to suggest that Tibullus’ second book is unfinished, perhaps left in that state by the untimely death of the author. I would point out that, if we pay attention to the Delia narrative in book 1, we are confronted with the same lack of resolution as we encounter in book 2. It might be more productive to embrace this aspect of Tibullus’ poetry, rather than to explain it away. The poetry of Tibullus is organized around an external narrative, but also, as we have seen, internal narratives. Since the form of these internal narratives is structured around the existential concerns of the poet, much of his poetry will not achieve a resolution that would be afforded by a plot, but instead dissolves away in the circular and fading pattern of subjective elements.

5. Conclusion

We keep coming back and coming back To the real: to the hotel instead of hymns That fall upon it out of the wind. We seek

26. The organization of the poems is a well-researched topic (a most useful summary can be found in Maltby (2002), 28–35; Wimmel (1976); Cairns (1979); Gaisser (1983); Mutschler (1985). Many earlier scholars worked on the assumption that our current book order is a re-organization of individually published poems, and so attempted to come up with the “real” order (i.e., the chronological order of composition).
In this poem from 1949, Wallace Stevens underscores our inability (or unwillingness) to transform reality through the poetic imagination. He complains, “we seek the poem of pure reality, untouched by trope or deviation straight to the word . . . we seek nothing but reality.” For Stevens, it seems that one of the primary functions of poetry is to engage and preserve the imagination in daily experience. At the same time as he describes our failures, however, he includes figures of language that do in fact enact a linguistic transformation of reality: the falling winds become “hymns” to the poet. This term signals that, after all, the poetic imagination may or might be able to provide some redemption for reality.

Is it through dreaming that the poet engages reality, and history? Bright (1978) and Wimmel (1976) represented a major reversal of the Horatian critique of Tibullus’ dreaminess, and began to read the elements of wishes, dreams, and even circularity itself as productive and meaningful elements of the poems. Wimmel even creates a new subjunctive category for the indicative in Tibullus, a “hyper-subjunctive” (“Überkonjunktive”). Several other recent scholars have also addressed the withdrawal of Tibullus in positive terms. Boyd has argued that Tibullus uses the landscape of his elegies to articulate a vision that succeeds at “maintaining a poetic balance between optimism and idealism,” though she recognizes that “the security and permanence of the rustic life depicted in the first half of 1.1 are thematized in the second half of the poem, and the elegy comes to a close with tensions

27. See also Stevens’s unpublished early play “Bowl, Cat and Broomstick,” written for the 1917–1918 Wisconsin Players festival, in which the character Broomstick ponders how difficult it is to be oneself in one’s own day (on which see Opus Posthumous, xxvi–xxvi); the play can also be found in Stevens (1971). See also the aphorism in Steven’s Adagia: “In poetry the imagination must not detach itself from reality” (Opus Posthumous, 161).

28. Contemporary critics’ most common complaint about Stevens was his “dramatic weakness,” on which see the introduction to Opus Posthumous.

29. Cf. Aristotle Poetics 1457b: the hallmark of the poet is to substitute the unreal for the real, and the poet will call “evening” the “old age of the day.”

30. Cf. also the eighth stanza of “The Man with the Blue Guitar.”

31. On the Überkonjunktive at 1.35–36, see Wimmel (1976), 11–14, 30; Bright (1978), 130.
In this vein, Van Nortwick’s article suggests Tibullus shows an awareness “of the fragility of his dream, and of the paradoxes that lay at the center of the dream.”

I think that the same question, i.e., how the poems engage history, can be productively addressed by considering the kind of narrative Tibullus’ poems create. In such a reading we would look at the narrative qualities of Tibullus’ text as an aesthetic and poetic project similar in the scope of its ambition to his Hellenistic and Roman intertextual allusions. The peculiar right of poetry, from this perspective, is the rhetoric of subjectivity.

Here I look to Paul Ricoeur’s essay from Critical Inquiry, “Narrative Time,” in which he maps Heidegger’s Being in Time onto narrative theory. The most useful aspect of this essay for our purposes is the notion that experience can be described either as a public phenomenon—understood along temporal constructions we all share as public moments of interaction—or as a private one, which is constructed around the individual’s existential concerns. He distinguishes the narrative element of a plot as external and as taking place in “public time”:

In other words, narrativity, from the outset, establishes repetition on the plane of being-with-others . . . the narrative of a quest . . . unfolds in public time. This public time, as we saw, is not the anonymous time of ordinary representation but the time of interaction. In this sense, narrative time is, from the outset, time of being-with-others. (Ricoeur, 184)

But Ricoeur also calls attention to private time, contrasting “interaction” with others, and the “anonymous time of ordinary representation,” in order to elucidate the “temporal implications of narrativity” (171). He warns that, as critics, we tend to ground our narrative analysis either entirely in the public dimension of plot, or “dismiss” narrative as we favor an achronological model. Instead, Ricoeur calls for a consideration of the “phenomenology of time experience,” an experience that is construed simultaneously in both public time and private time. Literary analysis should consider both forms of narrative time, before rejecting one in favor of another, and should be grounded in the individual’s preoccupation and circumspection, as much as in things that happen on the plane of “being with others.” Ricoeur draws on Heidegger’s Being in Time to claim:

However inauthentic our relationship to things, to ourselves, and to time may be, preoccupation, the everyday mode of concern, nevertheless already includes characteristics that take it out of the external domain of the objects of our concern [i.e., public], referring it instead to our concern in its existential constitution. (Ricoeur, 171)

Similarly, the elegies of Tibullus are not constructed exclusively around a temporal structure of public events and characters (i.e., Delia, Messalla, Messalinus, Marathus, Nemesis, and Macer); their structure is equally informed by Tibullus’ atemporal, “existential” concerns, and above all, his dreams in the subjunctive.

I have suggested in this essay that there are two forms of narrative in the elegies of Tibullus, a narrative of real events (what we would call a plot, public events that unfold in public time), and a narrative of subjectivity, a depiction of the imagination that happens in private time. The principal function and effect of the elegies, from the perspective of narrativity, is to make the narrative of public or “real” events coordinate and perhaps even subordinate to the narrative of the imagination, to private ones. And if we wanted to read Tibullus’ text as a romance, we could even see the poet rescuing an internal narrative from the external narrative of history.

The nature of private events is by definition different from the nature of public events. A private event has not yet realized itself in objective reality; the subjunctive is its mood, and therefore its narrative is inherently multiple in its projections. In representing more than events, and rendering an imagined world, a longed-for world, Tibullus has also succeeded in creating a new narrative potential for Latin love elegy. Stevens, perhaps, would have recognized this aspect of the Tibullan corpus as a poetic act:

By ‘poetic act’ I mean an act that is a projection of poetry into reality . . . a poetic act engages all those that participate in it with at least the idea of poetry, for at least a moment, that is to say it engages them with something that is unreal, as if they had opened a door and stepped into another dimension not immediately calculable. What is unreal here is the idea of poetry and the projection of that idea in this present place. (“Honors and Acts,” Stevens [1957], 236–37)
PART V

Narrative at the Receiving End

Elegy and Reception
NARRATING DISIECTA CORPORA

THE RHETORIC OF BODILY DISMEMBERMENT

IN PRUDENTIUS PERISTEPHANON 11

CHRISTIAN A. KAESSER

IN THE eleventh poem of his Peristephanon, Prudentius celebrates the passion of the martyr Hippolytus. It was conventional of late antique martyrdom literature to consider the martyrs’ capacity to endure physical sufferings on their way to death a token of their spiritual power; and in accordance with this convention Hippolytus’ death is narrated by Prudentius not only at great length, but in all its gruesome detail. Having been sentenced by the pagan prosecution to a death that befits his name, Hippolytus is killed by two horses that drag his body through the countryside until it is completely dismembered. Hippolytus’ fate is recounted in the central section of the poem in two long ekphrases, the first of which describes how the horses drag the martyr across woods, forests, and rivers, not being stopped by fences or other obstacles, while the second confronts us with the result of their ghastly course, namely, Hippolytus’ completely dismembered body. I begin this paper by quoting in full this second ekphrasis, whose source Prudentius claims to be a painting he has allegedly seen at the martyr’s shrine which he visited on his pilgrimage to Rome, and which contains a vivid description of the dismemberment of Hippolytus. I do so partly to convey some
of Prudentius’ art of gruesome description; but a more important reason is that Pe. 11’s rhetoric of bodily dismemberment, of which this passage is such a striking exemplification, and this rhetoric’s effect on the poem’s narrative of Hippolytus’ martyrdom, will be the central theme that this essay seeks to explore (119–32):

scissa minutatim labefacto corpore frusta
carpit spinigeris stirpibus hirtus ager.
pars summis pendet scopulis, pars sentibus haeret,
parte rubent frondes, parte madescit humus.
exemplar sceleris paries habet inlitus, in quo
multicolor fucus digerit omne nefas.
picta super tumulum species liquidis viget umbris
effigians tracti membra cruenta viri.
rorantes saxorum apices vidi, optime papa,
purpureasque notas vepribus impositas.
docta manus virides imitando effingere dumos
luserat e minio russeolam saniem.
cernere erat ruptis conpagibus ordine nullo
membra per incertos sparsa iacere situs.5

The body is shattered, the thorny shrubs which bristle on the ground cut and tear it to little bits. Some of it hangs from the top of rocks, some sticks to bushes, with some the branches are reddened, with some the earth is wet. There is a picture of the outrage painted on a wall, showing in many colors the wicked deed in all its details; above the tomb is depicted a vivid likeness, portraying in clear semblance Hippolytus’ bleeding body as he was dragged along. I saw the tips of rocks dripping, most excellent Father, and scarlet stains imprinted on the briers, where a hand that was skilled in portraying green bushes had also figured the red blood in vermilion; one could see the parts torn asunder and lying scattered in disorder up and down at random.

This is, in fact, not the only scene of bodily dismemberment in Pe. 11. At the beginning of the poem, Prudentius employs a different kind of source to acquaint his readers with another part of Hippolytus’ passion. The poem is presented as a response to Valerianus, bishop of Calahorra,6 who had asked

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5. All quotations from Prudentius are from Cunningham (1966). Translations are adapted from the Loeb Classical edition, of Prudentius, edited by H. J. Thomson (1966).
the poet to inform him about the names and number of Christian martyrs that he had seen on his pilgrimage to Rome. It was hard, Prudentius says in the opening lines of the poem, to comply with this request, since tombstones on burial sites often would not indicate the names of the martyrs buried. However, he eventually claims he encountered a tomb that not only specified the name of the martyr, but was adorned with an inscription that, while hard to decipher for reasons of its age, provided information about a striking aspect of Hippolytus’ life:

haec dum lustro oculis et sicubi forte latentes
rerum apices veterum per monumenta sequor,
invenio Hippolytum, qui quondam scisma Novati
presbyter attigerat nostra sequenda negans,
usque ad martyrii proiectum insigne tulisse
lucida sanguinei praemia supplicii.

In surveying these memorials and hunting over them for traces of any letters telling of the deeds of the old, that might escape the eye, I found that Hippolytus, who had at one time as a presbyter attached himself to the schism of Novatus, saying that our way was not followed, had been advanced to the crown of martyrdom and won the shining reward for suffering bloodshed. (17–22)

That a schismatic cleric could be celebrated as a martyr is striking in itself; and in the next couplet Prudentius in fact attempts to mitigate our surprise: *nec mirere senem perversi dogmatis olim / munere ditatum catholicae fidei* (nor is it surprising that an old man who had once been a follower of a vicious doctrine was enriched with a gift which belongs to the orthodox faith, 23–24). But the significance of Hippolytus’ schismatic biography must also be sought within the context of the particular—and literally particularizing—kind of death he will eventually suffer. On a general level, the fragmentation of the Catholic Church engendered by a schismatic cleric mirrors the fragmentation to which Hippolytus’ body is subjected in the poem’s central scene. More specifically, the Catholic Church resembles Hippolytus’ body because it was itself often metaphorized as a body. In a well-known passage of *Cor.* 1, for instance, St Paul, discussing the unity of the congregation, writes (12.13–14): “For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether

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8. On the schism, which evolved over readmittance of *lapsi* into the church, see Vogt (1968) and Grattarola (1984).
we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have all made to drink into one spirit. / For the body is not one member, but many.” And, St Paul continues, schisms threaten such unity of the body, suggesting (12.25): “That there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another.”

The first information the poem tells us about Hippolytus, then, prefigures metaphorically the dismemberment of the martyr’s literal body, and prepares its readers for the key role that bodily fragmentation, both metaphorical and literal, will play in the poem. Moreover, when dealing with the prominence of bodily fragmentation in Pe. 11, it ought to be kept in mind that the historical tradition on Hippolytus is extremely confused. It has been convincingly suggested that Hippolytus’ adherence to Novatus’ schism can for chronological reasons not be a historical fact, and that his death by bodily dismemberment can at least not be historically verified. Thus, historical fact cannot account for the presence in Pe. 11 of either the fragmentation of the church’s metaphorical body or of the fragmentation of the martyr’s literal body.

Questions of historical accuracy, of course, have long ceased to worry students of late antique martyrdom literature. Contrary to what seems an almost historiographic eagerness of the poet to ground his narrative of Hippolytus’ death on accurate reports of sources, it was not the purpose of the Peristephanon, nor of late antique martyrdom literature in general, to present historically accurate accounts. What was important instead, at least in the Peristephanon, is pointed out by Prudentius in a passage from the collection’s first poem, where he discusses the extent to which historical sources are relevant for the purposes of his poetry. Speaking of a case where the pagan prosecution has destroyed the accurate documents, thus depriving the poet of the details of a martyr’s suffering, he nonetheless asserts that this will not at all prevent him from celebrating that martyr’s passion (73–84):

\[
o vetustatis silentis obsoleta oblivio!
invidentur ista nobis fama et ipsa extinguitur,
chartulas blasphemus olim satelles abstulit,
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9. Discussion and bibliography of Hippolytus’ historical identity can be found in Brent (1995), Cerrato (2002), and Fux (2003), 345–46.
11. Delehaye (1966) is usually cited as exemplifying the older approach; Cameron (1999) outlines more recent scholarly trends in the wake of Peter Brown’s work. New directions are explicitly pursued by Castelli (2004) and Grig (2004).
ne tenacibus libellis erudita saecula
ordinem tempus modumque passionis proditum
dulcibus linguis per aures posterorum spargerent.
hoc tamen solum vetusta subtrahunt silentia,
iugibus longum catenis an capillum paverint,
quo viros dolore tortor quave pompa ornaverit.
illa laus occulta non est nec senescit tempore,
missa quod sursum per auras evolarunt munera
quae viam patere caeli praemicando ostenderent.

Alas for what is forgotten and lost to knowledge in the silence of olden time! We are denied the facts about these matters, the very tradition is destroyed, for long ago a reviling soldier of the guard took away the records, lest generations taught by documents that held the memory fast should make public the details, the time and manner of their martyrdom, and spread them abroad in sweet speech for posterity to hear. Yet all the silence of the old days takes from us is the knowledge whether their hair grew long with constant imprisonment, and what pains the tormentor laid on the heroes, or rather with what triumph he furnished them. One honor at least is not hidden from us nor wanes through lapse of time, how the offerings they sent up flew off through the air to show, as they went shining on before, that the path to heaven was open.

It is, of course, precisely the purpose of Prudentius’ martyrdom poetry to do what the pagan prosecution wanted to prevent from happening—to spread the sufferings of the martyrs abroad and for posterity to hear: such a proselytizing function he defines for his poetry in the Praefatio to the omnibus edition of his works,\(^{13}\) declaring that his poetic soul fights heresies and spreads the catholic faith (\textit{pugnet contra hereses, catholicam discutiat fidel}, 39). Yet if the “facts” of a martyrdom are either, as in \textit{Pe. 1}, not available or, as in \textit{Pe. 11}, deemed unimportant, then this purpose of his martyrdom poetry must be achieved by means other than relying on historical accuracy. And when Prudentius suggests in \textit{Pe. 1} that the glory of the martyrs is spread by “sweet speech” (\textit{dulcibus linguis}, 78), he tells us freely what these means are: the moving power of rhetorically crafted speech, which has been designated as “sweet” by a long tradition of ancient literary and rhetorical texts.\(^{14}\)

\(^{13}\text{Cf. Palmer (1989), 87.}\)

\(^{14}\text{\textit{dulcis} as applied to rhetorical power: \textit{OLD} s.v. 7c; Cic. \textit{De or.} 3.161 discusses \textit{dulcitudo} as a rhetorical category.}\)
It is, then, no surprise, and in fact a reminder of what should guide any reading of the poetry of his *Peristephanon*, that Prudentius, in a programmatic passage from *Pe.* 2, draws his readers’ attention specifically to the rhetorical design of his poetry (33–36):

\[
\text{qua voce, quantis laudibus}
\]
\[
\text{celebrabo mortis ordinem?}
\]
\[
\text{quo passionem carmine}
\]
\[
\text{digne retexens concinam?}
\]

With what voice, what praises, shall I celebrate the events of his death in their order? In what verses shall I worthily sing the story of his passion?

But this passage, far from merely alerting us to the importance of his martyrdom poetry’s rhetorical and narratological design, both in its more specific (such as the poet’s fashioning of his *vox*)\(^\text{15}\) and its more general aspects (the fashioning and quality of the *carmen* in general), also informs us about the principle applied in fashioning the rhetorical design of the *Peristephanon*’s narratives: it is supposed to fit *digne*, in an appropriate manner, with the passion whose *ordo* he recounts.

The rhetorical elaboration of the narratological design of *Pe.* 11 is apparent from the poem’s very beginning. In the course of the *Peristephanon*, Prudentius assumes a huge variety of poetic *personae*. Yet given that poetic celebrations of martyrdoms, as used in church liturgy,\(^\text{16}\) were traditionally given in hymnic form, and that the poet’s voice was usually the voice of the hymnic celebrant,\(^\text{17}\) *Pe.* 11 emerges as Prudentius’ most radical departure from the established rhetorical conventions: in fashioning himself at the very beginning of the poem as the writer of a letter, he chooses a kind of voice that is as far removed from the traditional paradigm of the hymnic celebrant as can be.

This, however, is not the poet’s only extravagant move in designing the rhetorical structure of *Pe.* 11. As the programmatic passage from *Pe.* 2 points

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\(^{15}\) Thompson’s (1953) Loeb translates *vox* as “words,” and I do not want to rule out the possibility that Prudentius refers here to his *compositio verborum*—after all, not the least important aspect of ancient rhetorical theory. However, if that is correct it seems odd that Prudentius uses the word in the singular (it is a contradiction in terms to speak of *compositio verbi*!), and hence my suggestion to take *vox* as a reference to the kind of voice that the author adopts for himself, approximating the sense of *persona*.

\(^{16}\) On Ambrose’s hymns and more generally the tradition of liturgical martyrdom hymns, see Fontaine (1981), 177–94 and Palmer (1989), 62–67.

\(^{17}\) A stance frequently assumed by Prudentius, e.g. at the end of *Pe.* 1 (118–20).
out, the fashioning of his voice is not the only way in which the poet exerts his rhetorical creativity. Hence, to do justice to the rhetorical design of a poem from the *Peristephanon*, and to make it bear on our understanding of the poem’s narrative, it is necessary, as we have seen, to take into account the more general quality of the poem’s design (*quod carmine*), to discuss it in terms of its appropriateness with the passion that it recounts (*digne*), and, specifically, to pay attention to the way the poem’s presentation of the *ordo* of a passion is affected by such choices. It is from these considerations that I take my clue in this paper’s discussion of the rhetorical design of *Pe*. 11. Ancient rhetorical theory discussed a narrative’s *ordo* as an aspect of *enarratio*, and accordingly, my reading of *Pe*. 11 will be centrally concerned with the way Prudentius presents the narrative of Hippolytus’ death. This will include a discussion both of the narrative itself, which Prudentius presents in the first half of the poem, but also of the way that some of the key features of this narrative are transformed in the poem’s second half, which contains a profuse description of the celebration of the martyr at his shrine. Yet before we can discuss the poem’s narrative, and in order to stake a frame for understanding how this narrative can be seen as appropriate or fitting with the passion it describes, it is necessary to draw attention to one outstanding characteristic of the rhetorical design of the poem as a whole: its meter.

The meter in which *Pe*. 11 is composed is a rhetorical choice at least as remarkable as the construction of the poet’s voice as the writer of a letter. If Prudentius has been described by Richard Bentley as “Christianorum Maro et Flaccus” (“the Virgil and Horace of the Christians”), the mostly lyrical meters employed in the *Peristephanon* evidence the Horatian side of this statement. Among these poems, *Pe*. 11 stands out as one of only two poems written in elegiac couplets.

It is not the case that Prudentius took lightly the issue of the metrical design of his poems. Quite the contrary: the frequency of explicit references with which he alerts his readers—at a time when the quantitative metrical system was giving way to accentual rhythms and rhymed poetry started to become more and more popular—to the meters in which the poems are composed, shows how vigorously Prudentius inserts his *Peristephanon* into a tradition of ancient poetry that accorded great significance to a poem’s metrical design. In *Pe*. 3, for instance, he reminds us that his poem is composed in dactylic meter (208–9); and in *Pe*. 4 he even points out that

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he has to disrupt the poem's Sapphic strophes in order to admit the name of the martyr Saturninus (161–64). Such references are not mere reminders of the poet's prowess in metrical schemes and the occasional license that he took in overstepping them. Concluding Pe. 6, and expressing the hope that his poem may compel Christ to have mercy with his torments, the poet refers to this poem by the meter in which it is composed, thus suggesting that a poem's metrical design is instrumental for its purpose (162–64).

Pe. 11 contains no such explicit reference to its meter, and it is left for the reader to find out in what ways the poem's meter—significant as it is within the corpus of the Peristephanon—is instrumental in the design of the poem. In the case of Pe. 8, the only other poem in the collection written in elegiac couplets, it is not hard to account for Prudentius' metrical choice. As the poem displays many features that can be assigned to the tradition of the tombstone epigram, such as the address to a passerby by which it concludes (Ibitis hinc, ut quisque potes, per vulnera Christi / evectus gladiis alter et alter aquis, when you pass from here you will have been raised up through Christ's wounds, each as he is able, one by the sword, another by water, 17–18), it is only apt that it is written in the meter most commonly used for such inscriptions.

It has been suggested that the elegiac couplets of Pe. 11 can be explained in a similar way, since this poem too cites, at its very beginning, a tombstone inscription. But if a poem cites a text that belongs to a specific genre, that does not of course mean that it is written in the same genre as that text. In fact, unlike Pe. 8, Pe. 11 displays none of the features peculiar to such inscriptions; rather, it exhibits several features that point in altogether different directions. Addresses to passersby are absent; but the poem is written as a letter addressed to an absent bishop, and the poem's 246 lines exceed by far the ordinary length of a tombstone inscription (which is well observed by Pe. 8's mere eighteen lines).

How, then, can we come to terms with the elegiac couplets of Pe. 11? Given that the poem's second half recounts the establishment of Hippolytus' shrine and describes the way it is celebrated, it is suggestive to consider the elegiac aetiological poetry of Propertius 4 and Ovid's Fasti as a model. However, while it is impossible to deny that Pe. 11 borrows heavily from Propertius' and Ovid's aetiological poetry, these borrowings are by no means specific to Pe. 11; rather, they pervade the entire corpus of the Peristephanon. What is more, given the name of the martyr Prudentius celebrates,

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Phaedra’s letter to Hippolytus in the *Heroides* is an important intertextual link here.

However, within Ovid’s oeuvre, it is the opening of the *Amores* rather than *Her.* 4 that provides a clue to coming to terms with the fact that Prudentius’ poem on Hippolytus’ death by bodily dismemberment is written in elegiac couplets. To be sure, Prudentius is not trying to woo a *domina* in his martyrdom poetry (instead, as he informs us in the *praefatio* to the omnibus edition of his works, he composes poetry in order to celebrate his *Dominus* [38]). But more important than such thematic links is the way in which Ovid, at the beginning of his career as erotic poet, describes the meter in which his poetry is composed.

Under the influence of Callimachus’ *Aetia* prologue, Augustan elegists have defined their genre as determined by slenderness, brevity, and abridgment. Ovid, in the famous opening lines to *Amores* 1, introduces the elegiac principles of brevity and abridgment not by programmatically announcing them, but by presenting them as a consequence of an externally caused physical abridgement of his verse.

\[
\text{Arma gravi numero violentaque bella parabam edere, materia conveniente modis.}
\]
\[
\text{par erat inferior versus; risisse Cupido dicitur atque unum surripuisse pedem.}
\]

Arms, and the violent deeds of war, I was making ready to sound forth, in weighty numbers, with matter suited to the measure. The second verse was equal to the first—but Cupid, they say,23 with a laugh stole away one foot.24

It should be noted that Ovid’s elegiac verse is abridged in a very specific way. Claiming that Cupid had snatched away a foot, Ovid presents his verse as a body that has been dismembered by Cupid’s violent intervention. There is, of course, a long tradition in ancient literature that imagined literary works or their parts as corporeal entities, and Ovid was especially keen on exploring this metaphor, particularly in the *Metamorphoses*.25 Moreover, such bodies can be disfigured: Callimachus is the first (attested) author to

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25. See Barkan (1986); Farrell (1999); Enterline (2000); and in general on the metaphor Birt (1882), 36–43.
have called Hipponax’ iambics “limping” (fr. 203.13–14 and 65–66), an image that Cicero had already used for disfigured rhetoric in his De oratore (3.198). And these bodies could not only be affected with disabilities, but utterly dismembered: Horace uses the poet’s body as a metaphor for the dismemberment of Lucilius’ verses in Sat. 1.4.62 (disiecti membra poetae), and the Latin poets of the imperial age were all too fond of presenting their frequent scenes of bodily mutilation—Hippolytus’ dismemberment in Seneca’s Phaedra is only one such scene—in a rhetoric drawing heavily on tropes characterized by contemporary theory as fragmented. But no poetic body was as explicitly dismembered as the elegiac verse that, according to Ovid, was deprived of one of its feet. Pe. 11, then, being part of a poetic book that advertised in Pe. 2 its concern with finding appropriate rhetorical forms for the passions it celebrates, could not have been composed in a meter more appropriate than elegiac couplets: for what verse other than one metaphorized as bodily dismembered would be a better fit for a poem on the dismemberment of bodies, both literal and metaphorical? Ironically, in view of the role played by metaphors in this conceit, Prudentius thus manages to suggest a much more literal correspondence between poetic form and subject matter than Ovid’s elegiac poetry ever did: though suggesting that he writes poetry materia conveniente modis, none of Ovid’s elegies presents us with a body as dismembered as Hippolytus’ in Pe. 11.

Fragmentation, a key characteristic of Pe. 11’s subject matter and reflected in the poem’s meter, is also a prominent feature in the presentation of Hippolytus’ death. Throughout the Peristephanon, Prudentius treats the narrative sections of his martyrdom poems in a fairly standardized way. First, they largely follow a schematized pattern, which Ilona Opelt summarizes as follows: “‘Exposition’: Beginning of a general or merely partial prosecution of Christians. Request to the future martyr to sacrifice to the pagan gods. His refusal and confession. The confession mostly grows out of the dialogue with the prosecutor. The real passion consists in the fight during the affliction and suffering of bodily pain. The torture, endured by the martyr with resolution, is finally crowned by his death.” Furthermore, Prudentius’ aesthetic presentation of this basic plot scheme is guided by a fairly standardized set of rhetorical techniques, making large use of the conceit of enargeia as defined by ancient rhetoric in order to intensify his accounts.

26. For the history of the term and a good discussion of ancient theories about choliambics see Masson (1962), 21–29.
27. See Most (1992).
28. Opelt (1967), 243; see also Roberts (1993), 41–42.
In fact, the narrative of the death of Hippolytus partly reenacts these two general characteristics of the Peristephanon’s martyrdom narratives. On the one hand, it has already emerged that ekphrasis, a rhetorical conceit considered in antiquity peculiarly suited to the creation of enargeia, plays a prominent role in Prudentius’ presentation of the death of Hippolytus. 30 On the other, Prudentius follows fairly closely the standardized pattern in which he usually presents the passions: the emergence of a more general persecution (41–76) is followed by a confrontation of martyr and pagan persecutor (77–88); then Hippolytus is seized and tied to the wild horses (101–4) before his physical suffering begins (like many of Prudentius’ martyrs, he gives a speech, if a short one) and he finally dies.

Yet this brief summary of Prudentius’ presentation of the ordo of Hippolytus’ passion also lays bare immediately the fact that the narrative deviates from the standard scheme in one obvious point. Hippolytus never confesses his Christian faith in the face of the pagan persecutor. The martyr’s confession, moreover, far from being a negligible part of a passion narrative, forms part in fact of its most crucial elements. It was there that a martyr could pronounce his resistance to pagan religion, and hence it was ideally suited to convey a Christianizing message in opposition to traditional paganism. 31

Yet the martyr’s confession is not completely absent in Pe. 11; rather, it is integrated into the poem in a way that accords with the peculiar fact that, uniquely in the poems of the Peristephanon, Prudentius celebrates a martyr who had adhered to a schism. In such a case, more important than confronting the Christian martyr with the representative of pagan religion is to establish that the martyr had been an orthodox Christian in the first place. Accordingly, Prudentius’ Hippolytus, unlike many other of the martyrs celebrated in the Peristephanon, never converses directly with the prosecution. The only speech the martyr gives in the poem (apart from one line uttered shortly before his death) is directed at his own Christian community, and extols not the superiority of the Christian faith over pagan religious practices, but the superiority of the unified orthodox church over schisms (29–34):

. . . “fugite, o miseri, execranda Novati
scisma, catholicis reddite vos populis.
una fides vigeat, prisco quae condita templo est,
quam Paulus retinet quamque cathedra Petri.

31. Altman (1975) and Elliott (1987), 16–41, highlight the importance of this stage.
quae docui, docuisse piget: venerabile martyr
cerno quod a cultu rebar abesse Dei.”

“O my poor friends, shun the accursed schism of Novatus\(^\text{32}\) and return to the orthodox people. Let the faith be strong in its unity, the faith that was established in the early Church and which Paul and the chair of Peter hold fast. What I taught, I regret having taught; now that I am bearing witness I see that what I thought foreign to the worship of God is worthy of reverence.”

Prudentius thus departs in Pe. 11 from the standard plot of his martyrdom narratives for a reason. The same, I believe, holds true for the way he expands this poem’s narrative with the intensifying, energetic power of an ekphrasis. Ecphrastic description is treated in the poem in such a way as further to illustrate the poem’s overall concern with fragmentation.

The poem’s first ekphrasis occurs in the opening lines when Prudentius describes the site on which he finds the inscription from which he learns that Hippolytus was a schismatic. Significantly, it is when the poet describes the letters of this inscription as consisting of mere \textit{apices}\(^\text{33}\) that we encounter the poem’s first instance of fragmentation. The exact force of this word has been ingeniously illuminated by Michael Roberts with reference to a passage in Aulus Gellius.\(^\text{34}\) Commenting on a Spartan technique of transmitting secret messages, whereby strips of parchment were wound around a stick and then written upon, so that when unwound the letters would be mutilated and rendered illegible, Gellius refers to the letter fragments as \textit{apices} (17.9.12):

\begin{quote}
resolutio autem lori litteras truncas atque mutilas reddebat membraque
earum et apices in partes diversissimas spargebat.
\end{quote}

Unwinding the strip rendered the letters mutilated and deformed, and scattered over various sections their limbs and constituent parts.

Given Pe. 11’s overall concern with bodily fragmentation, it is not insignificant that Gellius refers to the fragmented bits of letters as \textit{membra} that have been, to complete the implicit metaphor, torn apart from the bodies of the letters to which they initially belonged. And just to make sure that we get the fact that the dismembered letters prepare us for the martyr’s

\(^{32}\) See n. 7, above.
\(^{33}\) Cited above.
\(^{34}\) Roberts (1993), 150.
dismembered body, Prudentius uses the same word *apices* when he later refers to the sharp edges of the rocks that mutilate Hippolytus (and adds, in further expanding on the relationship between body and writing, that these rocks bear *notae* of the contact with the martyr’s body).  

The impact of these observations is in fact increased when we take note of the fact that the inscription that Prudentius was most likely to have seen in truth appeared not at all the way in which it is described in the poem. It is generally assumed that the inscription Prudentius refers to is one of those set up by Pope Damasus in an effort to stimulate and invigorate the cult of the martyrs, and beautifully carved by the calligrapher Filocalus. By a stroke of luck, parts of that original inscription are still extant, because they were used as pavement in later periods. As the plate on the following page shows, the letters in those fragments of the inscription where the written side was walked upon are slightly worn. Yet where this is not the case, the letters are perfectly legible still today and not at all fragmented into *apices*—which means *a fortiori* that they were no more fragmented when Prudentius saw them in late antiquity. Prudentius has, almost certainly, made up the fragmentation of the letters, so that it serves better as presenting at the beginning of the poem its key theme to the reader.

But if the fragmented letters that we encounter in the poem’s first ekphrasis prepare us for the poem’s key theme, they *a fortiori* also serve, as we will see now, as an apt introduction to the fact that Prudentius’ narrative of the death of Hippolytus is a body at least as fragmented as these letters. This narrative is disrupted at precisely the point where Hippolytus’ body is dismembered. Prudentius had suggested at the beginning of his poem that his account of Hippolytus’ death is derived from the inscription he had seen among the numerous and often insufficiently informative inscriptions described in the opening lines of his poem. Damasus’ inscription mentions nothing more than the fact that Hippolytus was a martyr who had been a schismatic, and is wholly silent on the ways in which the martyr died; hence, it could have functioned as a source only for vv. 23–40 of Prudentius’ poem. However, Prudentius never revokes this inscription as a source, and so his readers, who have not the luxury of examining the inscription for themselves and hence rely on Prudentius, would assume that the following narrative of Hippolytus’ dismemberment is derived from this source as well. Yet at precisely the moment at which this dismemberment occurs, Prudentius introduces as a wholly unexpected new source the image which depicted so vividly the martyr’s scattered body.

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35. See Thraede (1965), 126.
Fragmenta elogii S. Hippolyti
If ancient rhetorical theory demanded that a narrative be lucid so that it can easily be understood by a speech’s audience, 38 Prudentius’ interest in Quellenforschung in this passage is surely counterintuitive. For how does it contribute to a lucid presentation of a given event if the audience’s attention is diverted to the ways in which the author learned of that event? Moreover, if ancient rhetorical theory demanded, in the interest of this very same lucidity, that a narrative be confined to what the audience needs to know in order to understand what the speaker recounts, is it necessary for us to know Prudentius’ sources?

Defying these rules does not just entail interrupting what one could call the “flow” of the narrative. More importantly, Prudentius diverts our attention, at the pinnacle of the narrative, away from that very narrative: we question role, function, and in fact content of the first source in its relation to the second source. Also, Prudentius never closes the ekphrasis of the painting, thus failing to specify in the case of this source no less than in the case of the first source what its exact content is. 39 Moreover, we also question how it came about that Prudentius could move with such seeming ease from one source to another—his description certainly suggests that, while at the beginning of the poem he described a site where tombs of numerous martyrs are found, now we have moved to a space wholly dedicated to Hippolytus. 40 The narrative of Hippolytus’ death, then, is as fragmented as the body of which it informs us: it is scattered across various spaces, and needs to be derived from sources of a different nature—both pictorial and written—and provenance. It is this aspect of the narrative to which Prudentius’ presentation of his sources alerts us: the rhetoric of his narrative engrosses our attention at least as much as that which is narrated.

The way the fragmentation of Hippolytus’ literal and the poem’s figural bodies coincide in Pe. 11 must be seen against a long habit of ancient rhetorical and literary theory to conceptualize a literary work, whether poetic or composed in prose, figuratively as a human body. In a famous passage from Plato’s Phaedrus, Socrates introduces the body as a paradigm for a text’s internal, structural harmony (264c2–5):

This much I think you would say: that every speech should be put together like a living creature, as it were with a body of its own, so as not to lack

38. Quintilian cites with approval Isocrates’ request that a narrative be lucid, brief, and plausible (Inst. or. 4.2.31).
40. The original location of Damasus’ inscription cannot be determined with certainty: Bertonnier (1985), 28. In any case, what counts for readers of Pe. 11 is the poem’s own description.
either a head or feet, but to have both middle parts and extremities, so written as to fit both each other and the whole.

But the *Phaedrus* does not only evoke the body of a living being as a metaphor for a literary text’s *corpus.* It also discusses the conditions under which such figurative bodies may be chopped up again. A moment later, when Socrates uses the butcher who cuts an animal as a metaphor for his philosophical method of division and collection, Socrates only insists that such chopping occurs in accordance with the body’s natural joints (265e1–3): “Being able to cut it up again, form by form, according to its natural joints, and not try to break any part into pieces, like an inexpert butcher.”

Ancient rhetoricians were keen to pick up not only on Plato’s illustration of a literary text by the body of a living being, but also on his warning that if such a metaphorical body be cut apart, it must be cut along its natural joints. Quintilian, for instance, comments on the effect caused by a writing that packs its sentences too thickly with material (8.5.27):

facit res eadem concisam quoque orationem: subsistit enim omnis sententia, ideoque post eam utique alius est initium, Unde soluta fere oratio et e singulis non membris sed frustis conlata structura caret. . .

Such density also produces a fragmented effect, because each sentence stands on its own, and there must therefore be a fresh beginning after it. This leads as a rule to a broken style, made up not of individual limbs but of tiny scraps, and being devoid of structure.

Acting just like Socrates’ bad butcher, the author of such sentences disregards the natural joints and cuts his text into fragments much tinier and of unnatural size.

The opposition between natural limbs (*membra*) on the one hand and the tiny fragments (*frusta*) resulting from unnatural division on the other that Quintilian employs in his discussion of sentences, he also uses when discussing the partition of a narrative. Cautioning against too many such divisions, he writes (4.5.24–25):

Nam est suus et in digestu modus et vitanda utique maxime concisa nimium et velut articulosa partitio. Nam et auctoritati plurimum detrahunt minuta

41. Socrates makes it clear at its beginning that his discussion covers rhetorical prose and poetry (257d8–11).
42. See Most (1985), 6–9 and in general Heath (1989).
illa nec iam membra sed frusta: et huius gloriae cupidi, quo subtilius et copiosus divisisse videantur, et supervacua adumunt et quae natura singularia sunt secant, nec tam plura faciunt quam minora.\textsuperscript{43}

For even organization has its limits, and we must in any case avoid too much fragmentation and, as it were, overarticulation, in partitions. Do not these tiny scraps—rather than single limbs—detract very much from one's authority, while those who covet this sort of fame, wanting to be seen to have made ever more subtle and exhaustive divisions, both include things that are irrelevant and subdivide what are by nature single units, so that they produce not more, but too small items?

Now what happened to Hippolytus' body according to Prudentius' narrative of his martyrdom is precisely that it has been fragmented, not merely into single limbs, but into tiny fragments. Prudentius in fact begins his ekphrasis of Hippolytus' body by pointing out that it has been fragmented precisely into single frusta:

\begin{equation}
\text{scissa minutatim labefacto corpore frusta}
\text{carpit spinigeris stirpibus hirtus ager.}
\end{equation}

The body is shattered, the thorny shrubs which bristle on the ground cut and tear it to little bits.

Cannot exactly the same observation be made regarding the narrative that Prudentius has produced for Hippolytus' martyrdom? What is an ekphrasis that is never closed other than a limb of the text that has not been completed, but cut off? What are the scattered bits of evidence that Prudentius produces for his narrative other than incomplete and too small scraps? And do not the single apices into which Prudentius says Damasus' inscription has been fragmented serve as an almost ideal embodiment of complete units that have been fragmented into unruly parts?

These questions should, I think, be answered in the affirmative. And if this is so, then the effect that Pe. 11's rhetoric of bodily fragmentation produces is paradoxical. On the one hand, it displays many features that ancient rhetorical theory of narratives recognizes as evidencing a fragmented...

\textsuperscript{43} Strictly speaking, Quintilian's treatment of partitio is distinct from his treatment of narrative. However, it is found in the same book; and in any case what Quintilian discusses as partitio is well within the scope of modern narrative theory's concern with narrative units. See, e.g., Barthes (1978), 91–97.
style. Yet on the other hand, on a different level it is precisely this fragmentation which produces unity. As we have seen, Prudentius was keen to find a rhetoric appropriate (digne) for the subject matter he treats; and the rhetoric of fragmentation he employs in Pe. 11 makes the formal structure cohere indeed with the poem’s theme. His formal and thematic concern with fragmentation produces an overall effect of unity between form and theme. When fragmentation as subject matter is presented in a rhetoric of fragmentation, when a martyr’s fragmented literal body is combined with the fragmented corpus of a poem, the result is that fragmentation becomes incorporated in a dialectic of which it is only one pole. The other pole is constituted by its opposites, unity and harmony.

44. Most (1992), 408 observes this paradox well for Silver Latin poetry: “The result is paradoxical: these fictions may well be filled with scattered limbs, and their style and architecture may well tend to sacrifice large-scale structure for momentary effects; but on a more profound level there is an astonishingly rigorous coherence between precisely these phenomena of dissolution and dismemberment.”
Chapter 13

Telling Sulpicia’s Joys

Narrativity at the Receiving End

Mathilde Skoie

In poem 3.13 Sulpicia urges those who have no love of their own to tell of her joys (mea gaudia narret, / dicetur si quis non habuisse sua, 5–6). Although in the following lines she is slightly more careful, not entrusting anything to tablets (non ego signatis quicquam mandare tabellis, / . . . velim, 7–8), many have taken this urge literally: poets and scholars have told Sulpicia’s love from the very first moment—possibly starting already with the so-called Amicus-poet within the Corpus Tibullianum itself (poems 3.8–12).1 In this essay I want to look closer at some of these narratives or, more precisely, at three translations of the poems concerning Sulpicia, and I want to look at them specifically as narratives. My approach is based on the basic premise not only that narrative structures form texts and authors, but also that they form readers and their poetic competence. Narratology and reception theory may be seen as able to meet in the notion of the implied reader,2 but lately, the cognitive/contextual turn in narratology has provided further common ground.3 Finally, it may be argued that translations hold a double position both as readings of other texts (part of their reception) and

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1. Hinds (1987a), 46 makes the suggestion that the amicus could be a “reader who picks up and embroiders the poems.”

2. Although Darby (2001) argues that the only place a negotiation between textual and contextual worlds can take place is in the concept of the implied author (829), he later on shows how the structuralist-narratologist paradigm could import ideas from reception theorists such as Iser. What is incorporated is, not unsurprisingly, theorizing on reading and the implied reader (837–38). On the interaction between the text’s structure and its reader, see Iser (1980).

3. For an overview of the cognitive turn, see Ibsch (1990) and Fludernik (2005), 48–51. For the contextualization of narratology in the form of ideological criticism, see Darby (2001) on feminist narratology.
texts in their own right, and, therefore, solicit analyses informed by both reception studies and more text-internal approaches. The following analysis is supposed to form an empirical argument for the usefulness of narratological tools when looking at reception.

Micaela Janan argues in the case of Catullus that “the text solicits the reader’s desire for narrative closure and completeness.”4 The poems concerning Sulpicia in the third book of the Corpus Tibullianum (3.8–18)—hereafter called the Sulpician poems—lack an obvious chronology, but by their recurring names and themes they create a desire in the reader for a logical narrative.5 Accordingly, editions, commentaries and translations of these poems frequently rearrange them in a narrative sequence. However, why stop with the rearrangement of events? The text does not only solicit narrative closure and completeness, it demands a full narrative response pertaining to the narrative voice (who is speaking?), the narrative situation (in particular the question of narratee), and the tense (in particular duration).

The Sulpician poems are narrated from different perspectives (an external narrator, Sulpicia, and perhaps Cerinthus) and have been attributed to several different authors, the most popular idea being that we are dealing with two sets of poems; the so-called Amicus-poems 3.8–12, and Sulpicia’s own poems 3.13–18.6 Ideas of authorship have already been recognized as crucial to the reception of these poems, e.g., the treatment of the sexually explicit poem 3.13 has depended much upon whether it was written by a male poet or by Sulpicia herself.7 A male poetic mimesis of a female voice has proved more palatable to scholars than an explicit female. Yet, it is not only a question of who writes, but also who speaks and the narrative situation itself which is important to the reception of these poems. On this text-internal or narrative level, commentaries and translations of the poems show much variation—often indicated in the titles they give the different poems.

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5. The Corpus Tibullianum is sometimes divided into three books and sometimes four. In this essay I follow the OCT and stick to the three-book division. In quotations from works which have other numbering systems, e.g., Smith (1913), I will give the three-book division numbers in brackets.
6. See, e.g., the most recent editions of OCT and Loeb. Lately, however, this communis opinio has been contested. Parker (1994) argues that 3.9 and 3.11 might also be by Sulpicia; Holzberg (1998–99) argues that all the poems in the third book are a second-century forgery; Hallett (2002) argues that all of the Sulpician poems, i.e., 3.8–3.18, are by Sulpicia herself, while Hubbard (2004/5) suggests that all the Sulpician poems might rather be regarded as small presents in the fescennine tradition. The Amicus-poems are also sometimes called “The Garland of Sulpicia.”
7. For an analysis of the reception of poems 3.13–18 see my discussion of commentaries from 1475–1990, Skoie (2002), where I provide more relevant historical context than there is room for here. In this article the scope is broadened to encompass poems 3.8 to 3.12 as well. Furthermore, the main emphasis is on translations rather than commentaries. For a reading of commentaries with particular emphasis on narrativity, see Skoie (2008).
In relation to the morality of the Sulpician poems an important issue has been linked to the narrative situation: is Sulpicia soliloquizing or is she actually addressing someone in poem 3.13? While a soliloquy or diary entry can be viewed as youthful exaggeration or wishful thinking, the idea of an addressee or intradiegetic narratee has seemed to make the poem more morally questionable. Likewise, the timespan or duration is also an important factor in the construction of Sulpicia’s morality. How long did she wait before she gave in? This can be solved on the story-level through the ordering of events—creating a decent timespan and placing the surrender-poem 3.13 at the end.

In the present essay I shall look at three of the earliest translations of poems 3.8–18: James M. D. Grainger, A Poetical Translation of the Elegies of Tibullus, and the Poems of Sulpicia (London, 1759), Frederik Høegh-Guldberg, Tibulls Elegier (Copenhagen, 1803), and Johann Heinrich Voss, Albius Tibullus und Lygdamus (Tübingen, 1810). These three translations show a great narrative variety. The aim of the analysis is to point out how the different narrative elements are important keys to the overall interpretation of these translations, and, in particular, how narrative strategies are crucial when looking at the ways in which the translations deal with morality.

1. The Narrative Urge:
Poems 3.8–18 as Fragments of a Love Story

Throughout history the Sulpician poems have been the subject of numerous different interpretations and judgments. The poems’ ambivalent status as poetry, the uncertainties surrounding authorship, and the female intrusion in a male-dominated world of Roman elegy make them perhaps particularly interesting as a showcase for some of the processes involved in the reception of Roman poetry. Due to their transmission in the Corpus Tibullianum the Sulpician poems have been duly edited and commented on alongside Tibullus since the editio princeps in 1472. Likewise, translations of the Sulpician poems have appeared in translations of Tibullus from the early eighteenth century onwards. Doubt as to their Tibullan authorship started emerging in the eighteenth century, yet it was not until the nineteenth century that the attribution to Sulpicia herself and an interested third party became the norm. Yet, despite debates about authorship and different treatments of
the representational status of the poems (their literary and fictional versus factual and sincere status), there is one clear tendency that runs throughout the reception of the Sulpician poems: it is full of references to reading the poems as some kind of narrative.

The poems were recognized as a somehow connected group already by Scaliger (1577) and have since even been published as a separate entity. However, the poems have not only been seen as a connected group, commentators and translators have compared them to narrative genres, primarily the modern novel. The following paragraph from the introduction to Kirby Flower Smith’s 1913 commentary on the Corpus Tibullianum, although more explicit than usual, is quite representative:

The next eleven elegies (4,2–12 [3.8–18]) . . . are by far the best and most interesting in the entire collection. They tell us the charming story of the two young lovers, Sulpicia the ward and probably the niece of Messalla himself, and the young man whom she calls “Cerinthus.” The elegies in question are our only documents in the case. . . . [T]hey fall into two groups, 4,2–6 [3.8–12] and 4, 7–12 [3.13–18], the first by some sympathetic poet and friend, the second by the heroine herself. Each is to a certain extent an independent version of the same story, but the relation of the two is such that both are needed to complete this romantic chapter in the history of Messalla’s own household.

To Smith, the poems are particularly interesting because they tell a “charming story” and the poems are to be regarded as “documents” in the case. Furthermore, the story makes up a “romantic chapter.” It is as if the reader is to think about the poems in terms of a fragmented novel. Indeed, a couple of pages later, Smith describes Sulpicia’s last distich in poem 3.18 as material for at least a chapter in a modern psychological novel. Accordingly, the elegiac lover is turned into the heroine of just such a novel. As mentioned, Smith is not the only one to make such a connection. A century earlier, two of the translators I am going to look at in more detail below, the German translator Johan Heinrich Voss and the Danish translator Frederik Høegh-

attributes poem 3.13 to the Amicus-poems, not to Sulpicia.

11. E.g., Michaelis (1921); Sandre (1922); Heath-Stubbs (2000). It is perhaps worth noticing that the French translation, Sandre (1922), is presented in a numbered luxury version.


13. Smith (1913), 83.

14. More specifically I have argued that an apt parallel is the American girl Daisy Miller, the eponymous heroine of a short story by Henry James. Skoie (2002), 252.
Guldberg, call the cycle a “little novel” (kleiner Roman/Smaaroman). Voss argues that Tibullus has written this “little novel” from the real love letters of his friends Sulpicia and Cerinthus. Høegh-Guldberg ends his commentary by claiming that the Sulpician poems constitute “one of the most beautiful little novels Antiquity has left us.”

Yet, the modern novel is not the only narrative form which has acted as an important inspiration for the reading of the Sulpician poems. Throughout the history of their reception the poems have also been called epistles. Thus we easily get a little epistolary novel in verse. Of course, this might be seen as a consequence of giving the poems titles referring to their addressees, but it is quite striking how the most extant labeling of the poems as epistles appeared in Voss’s German translation of the poems just after the heyday of the epistolary novel. The epistolary genre may also seem to offer particularly appropriate grounds for comparison due to the many female heroines and actual female authors. Another related narrative genre is the diary. Kirby Flower Smith suggests that poem 3.13 may be read as a diary entry. The diary is yet another genre conventionally connected to women’s writing—as well as another form of first-person narrative.

The important point is to recognize these pronounced parallels to narrative genres as manifestations of a general narrative urge in the reading of these poems. In the following analysis of translations of the Sulpician poems I shall accordingly treat these new texts as narratives in the Genettian sense, i.e., as narrative signifiers. These new narratives then relate to different stories, that is, the signified or narrative content. The stories are versions of the development of the affair which can be reconstructed from the new narrative, but they are often further clarified in the translator’s notes.

The most obvious consequence of the narrative urge is an attention to the action or development of the affair, and this takes place primarily on the story level. For this I will use the un-Genettian terms plot and emplotment. By this I want to indicate a dynamic concept pertaining precisely to

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15. Voss (1810), xxx; Høegh-Guldberg (1803), part II, 188.
16. Høegh-Guldberg (1803), part II, 188.
17. See Heyne (1755) and Voss (1810).
18. A few famous examples of epistolary novels with female protagonists: Samuel Richardson, Pamela (1740) and Clarissa (1749); Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Julie ou la nouvelle Héloïse. A famous female author of an epistolary novel had appeared already in 1684–87: Aphra Behn, Love Letters between a Noble-Man and his Sister.
19. Smith (1913), 504.
20. While the translations dealt with here offer the best possible correspondence between the story and the narrative, narrativizing commentaries on Sulpicia may be seen as producing new competing narratives based on the story they extract from the original text; see Skoie (2008).
this causality or logic which works as a driving force in the text and for the reader.\footnote{The attentive reader will have noticed an allusion to Peter Brooks's (1992) psychoanalytic study \textit{Reading for the Plot} in my subheading. Although not endorsing the full range of his concept of plot, I find his emphasis on the plot as a drive for the reader important. As such, plot is also an important meeting point for theories of reading and theories of narrative. In the following I also use the term "emplotting," by which I mean the active process of ordering the events in a plot. I find this particularly apt for translations and commentaries as this is a term also used in historiography; cf., e.g., White (1978).} The poems as transmitted to us do not offer an obvious plot, neither chronologically nor causally. Poem 3.8, the first poem in the Amicus-cycle, is a homage to Sulpicia on the unlikely elegiac festival of \textit{matronalia}; 3.9 utters concern for Cerinthus who is on a boar hunt; in poem 3.10 Sulpicia is ill; 3.11 celebrates Cerinthus’ birthday; and 3.12 Sulpicia’s birthday. When moving on to what is usually considered Sulpicia’s own poems, the first poem, 3.13, is about the happy consummation of the love between Sulpicia and her beloved; the next two poems, 3.14 and 3.15, are about a trip to the country and its happy cancellation on the occasion of a birthday and concern a possible separation of the two. Poem 3.16 ironically suggests infidelity from the beloved; in 3.17 Sulpicia is ill; and the final poem, 3.18, is Sulpicia’s apology for having left her beloved the night before in order to hide her passion. Here we have bits and pieces of a love plot, but we lack an obvious narrative sequence apart from 3.14 and 3.15, the proposed trip and its cancellation. There are, however, certain recurring themes and correspondences, such as birthdays and Sulpicia’s illness. In addition to these eleven poems some scholars have wanted to identify Cerinthus with the metrically identical Cornutus mentioned in Tibullus 2.2 and 2.3, thus offering further fragments of the affair.\footnote{A move made in Voss’s translation (1810); see below. The connection has been recently supported in Stevenson (2005), 37–38. Some even print Cerinthus for Cornutus in 2.2 and 2.3; see, e.g., Cyllenius’ 1475 commentary and Gruppe (1838).}

Most editions and commentaries print the poems in the transmitted order.\footnote{The only exception I have seen is Gruppe (1838), but one might argue that this is not an edition or a commentary proper, even though it gives a text and structures the argument as a line-by-line commentary (without lemmata). Yet, I have chosen to treat his work as a commentary. In his edition of the text, poem 3.13 is placed as the last of the Amicus-poems, then he prints Tibullus 2.2 before 3.14–18, which he attributes to Sulpicia.} Yet, they do not abstain from rearranging and emplotting the poems in their commentaries.\footnote{For an analysis of the emplotting commentaries, see Skoie (2008).} Arguing that the present arrangement is editorial and based on variety, they construct a new continuous narrative in the commentary. This new narrative is reconstructed from the clues found in the poems. This, as it were, gives us two narratives of the same story—the poems and the commentary. When turning to translations, however, many
of these also change the order on the textual or narrative level, thus making a narrative order in textual time as well as in the story, leaving us with only one narrative—the new narrative of the translation.\textsuperscript{25}

A common feature in the emplotting of the Sulpician poems—whether on the text or commentary-level—is the concern not only for narrative closure, but moral closure as well. As the German scholar Otto Friedrich Gruppe notes, the poems contain material for a “histoire scandaleuse.”\textsuperscript{26} The main problem is the sexually explicit poem 3.13. In this poem Sulpicia rejoices in having “been with” her man and wants people to tell about this—although her own telling is rather convoluted.\textsuperscript{27} This poem is therefore often regarded as the culmination of the affair.\textsuperscript{28} It seems more satisfactory to scholars and poets that the sexual intercourse comes at the end and after some time. She yielded, but not at once! Thus most of the editions or translations which change the order of the poems place this at the end. But this is not the only solution or change made to the order.

25. When also equipped with commentaries, this is part of the same narrative as the text and not a completely different narrative, as in the commentaries that do not change the order.
27. On this, see, e.g., Lowe (1988) and Flaschenriem (1999).
28. A typical example is Currie (1983), 1760: “The arrangement of the pieces is editorial, seemingly based on the usual plan of variety and importance, without regard to chronological sequence. Poem 4.7 [3.13], which introduces the series, in reality marks the culmination of the affair, having ostensibly been written after the consummation of her love (for she is in a very ecstatic mood)” (emphasis added).
29. On general aspects of Grainger’s translation and further references to Grainger’s life, see Gilmore (1999).
30. Grainger concludes his speculation on authorship as follows: “The reader must determine for himself. But if the translator might be permitted to pronounce on the subject, he would say, that if any weight might be laid on difference of style, and especially on thought, the following poems cannot be the work of Tibullus—but whether Martial’s Sulpicia or who else wrote them, is not in his power to determine. But as Sulpicia is the only person to whom the critics attribute them, the translator, not knowing anyone else, who can show a preferable claim, has retained her name on the title page.” (182).
One of Grainger’s principles of ordering seems to be grouping similar events together. He basically follows the order of the Amicus-poems, but supplies the relevant poems from the Sulpicia-group, i.e., after the illness poem (3.10) he adds what he regards as a corresponding illness poem in the Sulpicia-cycle (3.17). Likewise he makes the birthday poems (3.14 and 15) follow the corresponding Amicus-birthday-poem 3.12 and, finally, moves poem 3.13 to the end.

This gives the following narrative order: First, a presentation of the heroine (3.8), followed by a declaration of love to Cerinthus who is out on a boar hunt (3.9). Then sudden illness involving a further declaration of love from Sulpicia (3.10 and 3.17), followed by Cerinthus’ and Sulpicia’s birthdays (3.11–15)—the birthday in 3.12 is to be held in the country, thus entailing a separation of the lovers, but is fortunately canceled (in Grainger’s version a decision taken by Sulpicia herself). So far, the reader has been presented with an increasing degree of involvement and passionate declarations, but then we are presented with an unfaithful Cerinthus (3.17), followed by a repenting shy Sulpicia (3.18). However, rumor now has it she has been unfaithful too, but this rumor is told to shut up (3.20). The final poem (3.13) also pays attention to rumor, but this time wants to set it right, in Grainger’s words: “Know, with a youth of worth the night I spent, / And cannot, cannot, for my soul repent.” The basic plot is a love story of gradual intensification with obstacles (illness, hiding of love, and unfaithfulness) before a final culmination and happy ending.

Grainger on the one hand does not hide the sexual implications of 3.13, but on the other hand he makes clear that all would not necessarily approve. In his general manner of expanding the Latin in his English version he translates these ten lines of Latin elegiacs into fourteen English iambic pentameter lines as follows:

Tandem venit amor, qualem texisse pudori
quam nudasse alicui sit mihi fama magis.
exorata meis illum Cytherea Camenis
attulit in nostrum deposuitque sinum.
exsolvit promissa Venus: mea gaudia narret,
dicetur si quis non habuisse sua.
non ego signatis quicquam mandare tabellis,
ne legat id nemo quam meus ante, velim,

31. The poems follow Grainger’s own numbering, 1–12.
sed peccasse iuvat, vultus componere famae

taedet: cum digno digna fuisse ferar.

Let other maids, whose eyes less prosperous prove,
Publish my weakness, and condemn my love,
Exult, my heart! At last the Queen of joy,
Won by the music of votary’s strain,
Leads to the couch of bliss herself the boy,
And bids enjoyment thrill in every vein:
Last night entrance’d in ecstasy we lay,
And chid the quick, too quick return of day!
But stop my hand! beware what lose you scrawl,
Lest into curious hands the billett fall.
No—the remembrance charms!—begone, grimace!
Matrons! be yours formality of face.
Know, with a youth of worth, the night I spent,
And cannot, cannot, for my soul repent!

The repetitions and exclamation marks are typical of Grainger’s style. The reader who compares this with the original immediately notices how the sexual intercourse is made more explicit already in verses 5–7. In the Latin the boy is brought into Sulpicia’s sinum and only in the final line do we learn that she has “been with” her man (cum digno digna fuisse). At the same time the outsider-perspective (the unspecified quis non habuisse sua) is not simply telling Sulpicia’s joys, but publishing her weakness and condemning her (vv. 2–3). Likewise he introduces matrons as an opposition to Sulpicia in verse 12. In this way Grainger can recount Sulpicia’s joys while at the same time offering another perspective on it. Quite a neat strategy!

The other strategy is, as pointed out, to place this poem as the final one. The surrender comes after a longish story with several obstacles. And it is sanctioned by “the Queen of joy” who has given in after her “music of votary’s strain” (meis Camenis)—easily taken to be the preceding nine poems (even the same number as the Muses!). Thus we have a happy ending with an awareness of its own immorality.

3. Reading for the Plot II: Høegh-Guldberg (1803)

Although 3.13 as an end is the most usual emplotting of the poems, this is not the only way to arrange the story. The Danish translator Frederik
Høegh-Guldberg even offers his readers an unhappy ending!\(^{32}\) Filling in with extensive prefatory comments to each poem, he weaves the poems into a neat entity. This seems to him necessary, not least because he assumes that we lack many poems which the couple wrote to each other in the initial phases of the relationship (158). Like Grainger, Høegh-Guldberg groups all the poems in a separate fourth book and reads them as written by four parties: Sulpicia, Cerinthus, Tibullus, and an anonymous author. Cerinthus and Sulpicia are writing most of the poems in the cycle and Tibullus and the anonymous author are friends of them both.

Høegh-Guldberg's order of the poems is as follows: 2.2; 3.19; 3.13; 3.9; 3.8; 3.12; 3.17; 3.10; 3.9; 3.14; 3.15; 3.20; 3.16. This is a much more radical change of the transmitted order than Grainger offers. The only feature the two translations share is the linking of the two small birthday poems, 3.14 and 3.15. Høegh-Guldberg's own explanation for his order is that he wanted to keep the poems by Tibullus together (2.2 and 3.19) and then that he wanted Sulpicia's and Cerinthus' poems to make one continuous chain.\(^{33}\) Høegh-Guldberg opens the cycle with a birthday poem to Cerinthus (2.2).\(^{34}\) Although this is placed first for reasons of authorship, it does make perfect sense as an introduction to the following poems. With this ordering he starts his fourth book with a poem which he reads not only as Tibullus' congratulation on Cerinthus' birthday, but also as an expression of Cerinthus' unarticulated wish for a faithful bride. Yet, the wish for true or faithful love (v. 10) may also be seen as an awareness or a premonition of the opposite alternative, unfaithful love—particularly as Høegh-Guldberg ends the cycle with the poems about unfaithfulness (3.20 and 3.16). Poem 3.20 he reads as Cerinthus' discrete warning to Sulpicia about rumours of her infidelity.\(^{35}\) He then reads 3.16, the very last poem in his version, as an accusation and final dismissal of Cerinthus which he explains as follows in his commentary:

> Han har altsaa sin Afsked, og med vemodig Deeltagelse for begge disse Elskende, der i en sædeligere Tidsalder vilde have været skabte til hinandens

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\(^{32}\) On Høegh-Guldberg, see Ersløw (1962) and Hansen (1892).

\(^{33}\) “Desuden har jeg i fjerde Bog søgt samle de Digte, der med Vished ere Tibulls, for sig på eet Sted, og tillige at knytte Sulpicias og Cerinths Digte, saavidt muligt, sammen i een forenet Kjæde” (part II, 7). Høegh-Guldberg also changes the order of the first books of Tibullus. There he explains that he realized that if he printed the poems in the order in which, according to their contents, they were presumably written, he would avoid repetition in his comments (part I, 12–13).

\(^{34}\) For 2.2 as moral closure, see Gruppe (1838), 61–62.

\(^{35}\) “Cerinthus suspects that his girl might show a greater love/affection for someone else than for him. He wants to warn her of this, but in the least painful way . . .” (Cerinth har sin Pige mistænkt for at hun maaske viser en anden større Kjerlighed end ham. Han vil advare hende derom, men saa lidt stødende mulig . . .) (Part II, 186).
Lykke, see vi her Enden paa en af de nydeligste Smaæromaner, Oldtiden har efterladt.

So he is dismissed, and with wistful concern for both these lovers, who in a more moral age would have been made for each other’s happiness, we here see the end of one of the most beautiful little novels Antiquity has left us. Part II, p. 188.

In Høegh-Guldberg’s rich Germanizing prose, which is hard to render in English, this is not only the end of the affair, but this sad ending is primarily caused by the low moral standards of the age.36 This low moral standard must be read as a reference to the unfaithfulness referred to precisely in poems 3.19 and 16, thus making the prayer for faithful love in poem 2.2 particularly pertinent—although unsuccessful.

Within this movement from hope of faithful love to infidelity (perhaps on both sides) and fatal disappointment, Høegh-Guldberg orders the events of the story in a chronological sequence. Apart from the second poem in his collection, 3.19, which he thinks is a lover’s sigh from and for Tibullus himself and therefore does not try to fit in with the rest of the poems, the other poems are neatly linked together through his ample introductions, including temporal markers. The first poem by Sulpicia, the explicit 3.13, is introduced as follows:

Længe, længe have Sulpicia og Cerinth elsket hinanden lønligt, og i Digte, der ere tabt for os, tolket Haab og Ønsker. Det første Kys har forenet dem sammen; og den hæftige Romerinde er idel Lue.

For a long, long time Sulpicia and Cerinus have loved each other in secret and, in poems now lost to us, expressed hopes and wishes. The first kiss has united them and the excited Roman lady is all fire. Part II, p. 158.

Although poem 3.13 is placed as the first of the Sulpician poems, Høegh-Guldberg is eager to emphasize that this poem is not really an expression of the first stage of the affair. The young couple has been in love for a long time—as suggested by the emphatic repetition in the opening, Længe, længe

36. He also exploits the opening couplet for what it is worth in explaining a breakup: “Neither the above declaration from Cerinthus, nor the indifference about her doings which she seems to have found lately suits Sulpicia. She wanted him to be more concerned about her every step, that words and glances worried him” (Ikke ovenstaaende Erklæring av Cerinth, ei heller den Ligegyldighed for hvad hun foretager sig, som hun paa senere Tid synes at finde hos ham, høver Sulpicia. Hun vilde: at han var mere bekymret for et hvert av hendes Skridt, at Ord og Blik ængstede ham) (part II, 187).
(for a long, long time). What is more, Høegh-Guldberg’s Sulpicia gives in only after some time. Thus his plotting does not seem so very far away from Grainger’s after all. Furthermore, the morality of Sulpicia is strengthened as Høegh-Guldberg specifies the actual event (the *amor* which has arrived and what happened when Sulpicia was “with her worthy”) as a kiss (“the first kiss has united them”). This is also emphasized twice in his translation as well as in the commentary part of the introduction to this poem.\(^{37}\)

The rest of the narrative goes as follows: Sulpicia greets Cerinthus on his birthday (3.9), Cerinthus greets Sulpicia on the matronalia (3.8), Sulpicia’s birthday is celebrated by an unknown character? (3.6). Then Sulpicia is ill: she declares her love (3.17) and Cerinthus asserts his concern (3.10). Next Sulpicia misses Cerinthus while he is hunting (3.9); here she is boldly sure of his love. Then—after a year has passed—we have the planned trip to the country on Sulpicia’s birthday (3.14) and its cancellation (3.15).\(^{38}\) The last poem before the two unfaithfulness poems is Sulpicia’s passionate apology for having left Cerinthus (3.18).

Both Grainger and Høegh-Guldberg make explicit what other scholars have done implicitly—that is, reading the Sulpician poems as narratives. It is interesting to note how the different orderings of the poems give completely different plots with quite different implications, though in relation to the morality of 3.13 they unite in rescuing Sulpicia through time.

4. **Narrator, Narratee, and Narrative Situation:**
   **Voss 1810**

The treatment of the sexually explicit poem 3.13 has depended much upon whether it has been read as a male fantasy of an ecstatic girl or the explicit fantasy of a Roman *puella* herself.\(^{39}\) Yet, it is not only a question of who writes, but also who speaks, that is, the narrative voicing of the poems. Furthermore, the idea of a specific addressee on the fictional level, which I here choose to call narratee, has been found controversial.\(^{40}\) The tradition of

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\(^{37}\) Translation: verse 1: *Ham har jeg kysset og hvilt i hans favn!* (Him I have kissed and dwelled in his arms!). Verse 9: *Jeg, var Kysset og Synd, dog jubler og leger ei ærbar.* (If the kiss was a sin, I rejoice and don’t play honorable). Commentary: *Var der end Synd i det Kys, hun havde givet ham . . .* (And if there were sin in the kiss she had given him . . .).

\(^{38}\) By not grouping this poem with the other birthday poems Høegh-Guldberg also creates a longer time span.

\(^{39}\) Significantly Gruppe (1838)—the father of the current division into two groups: Amicus and Sulpicia—places 3.13 in the Amicus-group, i.e., as not written by Sulpicia herself.

\(^{40}\) On this kind of intradiegetic narratee, see Genette’s revisit to the term in Genette (1990),
giving ancient poems small headings indicating either speaker or addressee or both contributes to the exposure of the editor’s choices.  

While Grainger does not specify the speakers, the attentive reader may already have noticed several differences from modern editions in Høegh-Guldberg’s translation. Most significantly, perhaps, Høegh-Guldberg gives Cerinthus a voice (3.8; 3.10; 3.20). For the reading of the poems within the framework of love elegy, this voicing gives a unique situation; not only do we have a female elegiac ego (unusual enough), but we also have two sides of the same story. The beloved answers back! And the beloved comes with signs of his own love (3.10) and suffering (3.20), as well as a change of the elegiac ego Sulpicia into his own beloved object (3.8). Høegh-Guldberg’s near contemporary Johann Heinrich Voss also gives a voice to Cerinthus, but only within the fiction of Tibullus and only in poem 3.8. Unfortunately this voicing and its implications for the understanding of elegy do not seem to have been picked up in the later reception.

Unlike Grainger and Høegh-Guldberg, Johann Heinrich Voss was a professional classicist. This might perhaps explain his reluctance to change the transmitted order of the poems. His translations are also, in general, much closer to the Latin text than those of Grainger and Høegh-Guldberg. However, he gives the poems his own numbers and offers the reader quite substantial and imaginative notes (Anmerkungen) with a great preponderance for narrativizing. So, he introduces Sulpicia’s mother, and he specifies that the meeting Sulpicia left in 3.18 was a dinner (Nachtessen) with Sulpicia’s parents, thus turning the story into a bourgeois idyll. While Voss argues that the Lygdamus-poems (3.1–6) are not the work of Tibullus, he does not doubt Tibullan authorship of the Sulpician poems. His theory of origin is that these poems are the poets’ “paintings from life.” And the life is that

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130–34. The role of the narratee here is perhaps closest to what Gerald Prince calls a “character-receiver.” Chatman (1978), 253.

41. In the case of the Sulpician poems, already the editio princeps—Catullus, Propertius, Tibullus et Statius (Venice: Wendelinus de Spira, 1472)—gives these kinds of headings.

42. He explains the address to Cerinthus in 3.10.15 as Cerinthus hearing Apollo’s voice in the middle of his own prayer.

43. He was a prolific translator of both Greek and Latin; his translation of the Odyssey (1781) was regarded as particularly successful. He also published a text of Tibullus based on his reading of the manuscripts, Albius Tibullus und Lygdamus nach Handschriften berichtiget (Heidelberg 1811). However, he was also a poet in his own right. His most famous poem was the bourgeois idyll Luise (1795). This is a poem in three parts, respectively, revolving around Luise’s eighteenth birthday, her engagement, and her marriage. It might, therefore, be quite appropriate to read the filling in of circumstances such as family dinners and concerned parents in light of this poem and the bourgeois idyll. On Voss, see Sandys (1967).

44. Thus more like the alternative narrative given in commentaries.
of his friends, Cerinthus and Sulpicia. However, he prints them under the separate heading “Tibulls Episteln” and equips each poem with a sender and addressee.

In Voss’s view, the poems follow the couple from their secret but chaste love to their engagement. In his final comment he gives the complete chain of events in what he calls their natural order (natürliche Zeitfolge) (318–19). Here he argues that poem 3.18 is the first poem in the cycle (the most shy), then follow the birthday poems 3.11 and 3.12, then the ironic and angry 3.16, followed by the illness poems 3.17 and 3.9. Poem 3.13 announces that Sulpicia cannot keep her love to herself anymore. Then follow 3.14 and 15 about the planned trip to the country and its cancellation. On a later trip to the country with the parents and Cerinthus she misses him when he is out hunting and writes poem 3.9. Poem 3.8 then is the final poem and this is a present for Sulpicia, who is now, according to Voss, Cerinthus’ bride. The next birthday as newlywed is celebrated in Tibullus 2.2.

In the German debate over Voss’s translation of the Sulpician poems which followed, it was not his emplotting but his labeling of the poems as epistles which caused heated response. I have argued elsewhere that this may be linked to the possible identification with the epistolary novel and the proximity this would give the poems to a genre where women traditionally could have a say.\footnote{Skoie (2002), 199.} However, I think an important additional reason may be seen when looking at this from a narrative perspective. More specifically, it was the envisioning of an addressee for some of these fictional letters which seemed to provoke the commentators—the explicit intradiegetic narratee.

The two German commentators of the 1830s, Ludolph Dissen and Otto Friedrich Gruppe, both polemicize heavily against Voss in their works.\footnote{Dissen (1835), 429–59; Gruppe (1838), 29–38. For these commentaries in general, see Skoie (2002), 162–212.} They argue against the general letter theory.\footnote{For Gruppe this only concerns the poems in the amicus-group as well as 3.13 (which he places in the Amicus-group). Poems 3.14–18 he himself calls small letters (Briefchen).} To Dissen and Gruppe it is impossible for some of the poems to be letters—even fictional or poetic ones. Although Gruppe recognizes that poems 3.9 and 3.11 are in the voice of Sulpicia, and poem 3.11 even gives a second-person addressee (v. 1), for him they are not letters, but secret wishes spoken to Sulpicia herself only. Likewise, he finds it utterly appalling that poem 3.13 should be a letter, as it leads to putting the most untender and impossible (das Unzarteste und Unmöglichste) language in the mouth of Sulpicia (p. 37). This had already been suggested by Dissen, who in his introduction to 3.13 explained that
Sulpicia in this poem is talking to herself (*secum loquitur*). This is obviously important to him as he particularly pointed out in his preface that this poem is not to be read as a letter.\(^{48}\)

What is at stake here? Why so much fuss? Dissen and Gruppe both want a chaste Sulpicia, but so does Voss. Gruppe, as mentioned above, even argues that she and Cerinthus did get married in the end. Furthermore, since Voss, as well as Dissen and Gruppe, attributes poem 3.13 to Tibullus, we are dealing with a female narrator mediated through a male author. The problem here is thus found on the narrative level. And on this level, the commentators find it hard to swallow that Sulpicia's love is actually told to someone. As long as her boldness is no more than wishful thinking, her chastity can be rescued. Imagining a specific reader within the fiction hearing or reading this makes the situation less easy to get away from. Thus the question is not so much the content, but the telling—through which the titles of Voss' translations are made into a particular narrative situation, namely, that of a letter-writer and receiver. Dissen explains the *esse cum*—phrase (v. 10) as sexual, but it is really only the exaggeration of a maiden “in the highest state of girlish ardour” (451). The problem is whether this heat of the moment could last so long that she could put it into a letter and Cerinthus be confronted with it. My guess would be that Dissen did not quite think so. Similarly, the much later American commentator Smith argues that 3.13 reads more like a diary entry than a letter. Here, too, the poem is only to be read by Sulpicia herself. Furthermore, to Smith also this poem appears as “ostensibly written just after the consummation of her love, for she is still in a highly exalted mood. She has yet to be assailed by the afterthoughts inevitable in such an affair.”\(^{49}\)

Voss, who sticks closely to the Latin in his translation, solves the problem in another way in his commentary. First, he does not interpret the *esse cum* phrase as any kind of debauchery (*Ausschweifung*, 301). In fact, he asks his female readers to forgive earlier commentators for doing so (according to Voss they have only done this in order to make the poem sweeter [*holdseliger*] [301]). Second, he argues that the very fact that this was an open letter without a seal led to marriage. To manage this he needs to fill in quite a few gaps. According to Voss, therefore, Sulpicia’s mother was the first reader of 3.13. Precisely this letter convinced Sulpicia’s parents of their daughter’s decisiveness and sincerity (300–301) and made them agree to marriage. However, to all but Voss the explicit narrative situation is problematic, something the

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48. *Nec carmen VII. pro epistola haberi potest, ubi secum loquitur Sulpicia laetabunda* (Nor is poem VII [3.13] to be read as a letter, as a happy Sulpicia talks to herself). Dissen (1835), 427.

49. Smith (1913), 504.
harsh criticism directed against him proves. In the light of the convoluted narration of 3.13, the narrator, Sulpicia herself, might not completely have disagreed with this criticism.

5. *Quis mea gaudia narret*: Sulpicia and Narrativity

The different narrative responses to Sulpicia’s urge to the reader in poem 3.13 reflect a narrative desire both in Sulpicia and her readers. Whether on the level of commentary or text, this narrative urge can be seen in the desire to organize the poems in a chronological sequence as well as in the drive toward closure both on the moral and narrative level. Yet, the responses looked at above also reflect the mixed message inherent in Sulpicia’s own rather convoluted poem about the telling of her love, poem 3.13. In the reception of this poem the narrative situation is not clear-cut, nor is it easy or uncontroversial. And, as seen above, the question has often been whether the translators are dealing with a proper narrative situation or whether they are eavesdroppers to Sulpicia’s lonely soliloquy or illegitimate readers of her diary. A clear instance of how the narrative situation is crucial to the reception of an individual elegy and an elegiac corpus.

Whatever the narrative situation and the different plotting of the narrative, someone has told Sulpicia’s joys. A twentieth-century translator wished that her love “might live through our pleasure long after the last of the Sulpicii has given the last funerary offering to the ancestors.” And so it has. This pleasure is, I would argue, very much a narrative pleasure. Regarding these as narratives, and using narratological tools may therefore enable us to get a better grasp of important aspects of Sulpicia’s reception.

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50. “... Und so mag denn, lange nachdem der letzte Sulpicier den Ahnen das letzte Totenopfer gespendet, zu unser Lust ihre Liebe dauern.” Michaelis (1921), 13.


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Aristotle  
   *Poetics*, 35, 167n7, 172, 218n29
Augustine  
   *Confessions*, 11.38, 96
Augustus  
   *Res Gestae* 8.5, 177–78
Aulus Gellius  
   *Noctes Atticae* 17.9.12, 234
Catullus  
   *Poems* 64, 92–93
Cicero  
   *De Oratore* 3.198, 232
Homer  
   *Iliad* 3, 157; 9, 87n2  
   *Odyssey* 1, 91; 4, 158n30; 6, 23; 7, 23; 11, 207
Horace  
   *Odes* 1.7, 173n24; 1.33, 197  
   *Epistles* 1.4, 197
Livy  
   *Preface* 10, 166n6  
   *Ab Urbe Condita* 9.16–18, 97
Lucilius  
   *Satires* 1.4.62, 232
Ovid  
   *Amores* 1.1, 34, 36, 45–46, 70n11, 231; 1.2, 34; 1.5, 19–47; 1.6, 37, 79n40, 182–84; 1.7, 114n26; 1.8, 120; 1.9, 69n5, 119; 1.11, 104–22; 1.12, 36, 104–12; 1.13, 38; 1.14, 38, 114n25, 119; 1.16, 38; 2.1, 69, 86; 2.7, 105n2, 109, 118n36; 2.8, 105n2, 109, 118n36; 2.10, 44n37, 69n5, 77n34; 2.13, 36, 105n2; 2.14, 97, 105n2; 3.1, 40n23, 42n29, 46, 70, 85, 114n24, 114n25, 120n40; 3.7, 5  
   *Ars Amatoria*, 142–62; 1, 21–22, 68, 72n17, 73, 146, 149–50; 2, 21, 69n5, 72n17, 76, 79n40, 80, 85n61, 147, 182n7; 3, 74–76, 79n40, 84n59, 80, 182n7  
   *Epistulae ex Ponto* 1.2, 58n28; 1.3, 192n29; 1.9, 192n29; 1.10, 58n28; 2.3, 58n28, 192n29; 3.9, 55n21; 4.4, 188, 189n24; 4.9, 188; 4.14, 192n29  
   *Fasti* 1, 180–95; 2, 181, 183n11, 191n27; 3, 191n27, 194n32, 195; 4, 181n4, 186, 189–90, 194n32, 195; 5, 186  
   *Heroides* 1, 87–89, 91, 94, 101; 2, 23n17, 85n62, 100; 3, 87, 100; 7, 87; 10, 92–94, 100; 11, 90; 12, 101; 13, 100; 15, 90  
   *Metamorphoses* 1, 37; 3, 43; 5,
INDEX LOCORUM

43n34; 6, 43; 9, 43n34, 92n20; 10, 115n29; 11, 43n34; 15, 86
Remedia Amoris, 68–85, 142–62
Tristia 1.1, 54–55, 58n28, 188; 1.2, 55–58, 58n28, 59, 190n26; 1.3, 55, 58–60, 62, 189n24, 192n29; 1.4, 55–57, 190n26; 1.5, 55; 1.6, 55; 1.7, 41n27, 55; 1.8, 55; 1.9, 55; 1.10, 55, 190n26; 1.11, 55–58, 60n33, 190n26; 1.12, 2, 187–88, 191n27; 1.13, 52n7, 55n21, 188; 1.14, 52n7
Remedia Amoris, 68–85, 142–62

Plato
Phaedrus, 145n12, 147, 151–54, 236
Symposium, 145n12, 147, 158–60
Timaeus, 79

Plautus
Captivi, 178n37
Miles Gloriosus, 113n21

Propertius
Poems 1.1, 69n5, 74; 1.3, 74n20; 1.6, 69; 1.7, 23, 69, 105n2; 1.8, 69n5, 74; 1.9, 105n2; 1.12, 69n5; 1.13, 69n5; 1.16, 123–41, 183n12; 1.17, 123–41; 1.18, 123–41; 1.20, 68; 2.1, 69–70; 2.10, 69, 70n11; 2.13, 70n11; 2.15, 24, 29n30, 74; 2.24, 70n11; 3.3, 69–70; 3.4, 105n2; 3.5, 70, 85, 105n2; 3.7, 69n5; 3.9, 69; 3.11, 69n5; 3.15, 68, 70; 3.23, 120n43; 3.24, 69n5, 70, 121; 3.25, 121; 4.1, 70; 4.4, 68; 4.5, 121, 182n7; 4.7, 179n39; 4.11, 164–79

Prudentius
Peristephanon 1, 227–28; 2, 228, 232; 3, 229; 4, 229; 6, 230; 8, 230; 11, 223–40

Quintilian
Institutio Oratoria 4.5.24–25, 238–89; 5.11.6, 165–67; 8.5.27, 238; 11.1.21, 170n16

Sappho
Fragment 130, 148–49, 153–55

Seneca
Phaedra, 232

Suetonius
Augustus 99, 178n36

Sulpicia
Poems 3.1–6, 253; 3.8–18, 106n4, 243–56; 3.19, 251

Terence
Heauton Timorumenos, 112n20

Tibullus
Poems 1.1, 69, 182n7, 196, 199–204, 208, 214, 216, 218; 1.2, 183n12, 205–6, 208; 1.3, 69n5, 69n6, 207–9, 214; 1.4, 208; 1.5, 208–11; 1.6, 211–15; 1.7, 202n12; 2.5, 68, 70, 70n9, 85, 202n12; 2.6, 69–70, 214–17; 3.7, 85

Velleius Paterculus
History of Rome 2.3.4, 173

Vergil
Aeneid 2, 168; 4, 87–88; 6, 37, 168; 7, 37
Georgics, 2.323–35, 194n31
absence, 22–23, 31, 40, 74, 80, 88n6, 89, 91, 111, 123, 132, 137, 169
action, 3–4, 9–10, 25–30, 35–36, 39, 42n29, 44, 61, 75, 80, 82, 87, 95–96, 112, 123–25, 133, 136, 140, 144, 149, 158, 166n3, 167n7, 172, 184, 203, 204n16, 206, 209–10, 211n24, 212–14, 245
actor, 1n1, 7, 35–36, 39, 92, 95n30, 107, 108n11, 137. See also character
addressee, 23, 73n17, 74–76, 88, 107n6, 108, 112n19, 117n31, 118–19, 124, 126, 134, 180, 186–87, 208, 243, 245, 252–54. See also narratee
Alcyonae, 135–36, 138–39
allegory, 114, 115n30, 119n38, 179
anachronism, 167
analepsis, 66, 93, 101. See also flashback
anti-narrative, elegy as, 3–4, 90n10
apostrophe, 29n30, 125, 131, 169, 179n40, 205, 211–12
Aristotle, 8–10, 35, 68n4, 167n7, 172, 218n29
atemporality, 29, 80n42, 84, 220
Augustine, Confessions, 68n4, 96, 125, 159n33
Augustus, 60n33, 166, 176–78, 187, 191
authority, 2, 11, 89, 128, 145, 151–52, 239
autobiography, 159n33, 161n38
autodiegetic, narrator, 11, 180, 195
Bal, Mieke, 1, 5n16, 6, 8, 10–11, 13, 35–37, 39, 68n1, 92, 94–95, 107n7, 108n11, 125n10, 165, 167n7, 180, 181n3
Barthes, Roland, 5n16, 10, 19, 22, 24, 36, 44, 108, 144–45, 156–57, 162, 211n24, 239n43
bifurcation, 109
bipartite, narrative, 105, 134n25
Briseis, 87, 91, 100
Brooks, Peter, 7, 19, 20, 21–24, 28–29, 30n33, 31, 32, 33, 44, 246n21
Callimachus, 2, 80n45, 125n8, 231
Calypso, 76, 84, 91, 136–37
Canace, 90, 94
Catullus, 93–94, 99, 124n4, 127, 130, 136, 171n19, 242, 253n41
Cerinthus, 4, 106n4, 242, 244–46, 248, 250, 251–55
character, 2–4, 5n13, 7, 11–12, 27, 35n6, 36n12, 37, 40, 63, 76, 86, 95n30, 96–98, 107, 108n9, 109, 111–16, 118–19, 121–22, 124–25, 127, 170, 172–73, 180–81, 183, 190, 193–94, 204n16, 211, 218n27, 220, 252, 253n40. See also actor chronology, 3–5, 34, 55, 57–58, 60, 66, 68, 70, 80n42, 91–92, 98, 142n3, 155, 242

circularity, 2, 85, 197, 218

closure, 2, 7, 20, 29, 30–32, 45, 58, 77n32, 84, 85n63, 121, 167, 197, 217, 242, 247, 250n34, 256

comedy, 112, 178

commentary, 43n33, 118, 121n46, 142, 198, 244–47, 250, 252, 255–56

communication, 88, 107–8, 110–11, 114–15, 123–24, 126, 130, 133, 179

complaint, 74n20, 90, 126–30, 132, 189, 192, 215

configuration, narrative, 4, 8, 12, 52–54, 56–57, 65–66, 70, 78, 95, 129, 136

conflict, 69, 71, 106n3, 123, 124n4, 132, 135–37, 145, 147, 155, 187, 198–99, 211n24

confrontation, 36, 39, 41, 53, 185–86, 194, 233

consummation, 7, 20, 24–26, 28, 30, 213, 246, 247n28, 255

continuity, 3, 10, 34n1, 51n2, 56, 63, 66, 90, 95, 105, 111, 182

continuum, 2–3, 6, 95–96

contract, 22, 80–82, 84


Cornelia, 11, 165–79

counterfactual, narrative, 9, 86, 97, 99, 101

Creusa, 168

crisis, narrative, 13, 88, 92–96

Cynthia, 2, 4, 38, 51, 68, 70, 74, 85, 120n43, 121, 124n3, 127, 131–34, 136–39, 141, 172–73, 179n39

deadth drive, 20, 28n27
dictics, 27, 57, 131, 170, 171n19

Delia, 2–4, 38, 51n3, 85, 198, 202–14, 217, 220
detour, narrative, 20, 24, 31
diary, as narrative, 243, 245, 255–56

Dido, 87, 89, 94, 98–99

Dionysia, 158–60
diptych, 105–22
discontinuity, 55, 58, 60, 62–63, 65, 90
dislocation, 8, 60, 63, 167
distance, 59, 88n6, 117n33, 123, 127, 130, 156–57, 178, 189
dream, 40, 124, 170, 196, 199, 202–6, 208–9, 214, 218–20
duality, 59n30, 175
duplicity, 109–10, 115, 121
duration, 4, 21, 53, 68, 242–43
eavesdroppers, 2, 124, 256
economy, narrative, 40, 59n31
ego, elegiac, 4, 23, 27, 29, 32, 35n7, 124, 131, 161, 253
ekphrasis, 43, 93–94, 223, 233–35, 237, 239
elegy. See meter
embedded narrative, 113n21, 126, 129, 134, 203
emplotment, 12, 69, 245. See also mythos; plot
enclosure, 9, 83
endings, 90n15. See also closure
epic, 1, 5, 9, 36–37, 40n23, 43n34, 46, 52, 59n31, 70, 72n16, 85–86, 87n5, 91, 92n20, 93, 115n30, 124–26, 129, 130–32, 135–36, 138, 141, 157, 161, 207, 208
epigram, 4, 72n17, 110, 125, 137, 168n10, 170, 204n15, 230
epistle, 86–95, 99, 161, 193, 245, 254. See also epistolarity
epistolarity, 111
epyllion, 93
Eros, 20, 32, 44n37, 72n17, 148–49, 153–54, 158–59, 161
erotodidaxis, 10, 74n19, 76, 79, 142–43, 146–47, 161, 185n15
exclamation, 27, 29, 30, 135–36, 249
exemplum, 9, 11, 80n42, 165–79, 214
exile, 2, 5n15, 8, 41n27, 51–67, 81, 86, 180–95
external narration, 2, 87, 92n20, 144, 198–200, 206, 208, 210–11, 214–17, 219–20, 242
fabula, 35–38, 40, 43–45, 47, 68n1, 80, 91, 95n30, 96–97, 107, 108n11, 111, 116, 118, 166
feminist, criticism, 11, 79n37, 241n3
film, 36, 42
flashback, 58. See also analepsis
flashforward. See prolepsis.
focalization, 1–2, 7, 11, 36–37, 41, 167, 170, 181
formalism, 10, 19–20, 165–66, 174
Freud, Sigmund, 7, 19–20, 22, 31, 44n37, 79n37, 140, 199
futurity, 9, 28, 45, 53n15, 70n9, 74, 86, 88–90, 92–97, 99–101, 125–26, 133, 139, 175, 177–78, 201, 204n16, 207, 211, 232
Gallus, 127, 129n13, 134
gaps, in narrative, 8, 26, 34, 43–47, 56, 58, 60, 88–90, 92n20, 95–98, 165, 179, 255
gender, 10–11, 34, 39, 72–78, 81n46, 89n8, 108n12, 118n34, 121n46, 127, 136, 139–40
Genette, Gérard, 1, 5n16, 8, 13, 35–37, 52–53, 55n21, 56–58, 60n32, 61, 125n10, 141, 165, 167n7, 180, 181n3, 198, 252n40
gnomic present, 27. See also tense
grammar, 6, 20, 78, 144, 145n11, 198–99, 202, 204
happy ending, 13, 89, 203, 246, 248–50
Helen, 152–53, 157–58, 202
heterodiegetic (authorial) narration, 107n6, 116
Hippolytus, 99, 223–40
history, 1, 3, 38, 53, 71, 73, 75–76, 79, 84, 89, 92–93, 96–101, 128, 135, 144–45, 149, 158–59, 176, 199, 202, 218–20, 244–45. See also counterfactual
Homer, 9, 37n15, 86–89, 99, 125, 135, 138, 152–53, 157, 207
Hippolytus, 99, 223–40
history, 1, 3, 38, 53, 71, 73, 75–76, 79, 84, 89, 92–93, 96–101, 128, 135, 144–45, 149, 158–59, 176, 199, 202, 218–20, 244–45. See also counterfactual
Homer, 9, 37n15, 86–89, 99, 125, 135, 138, 152–53, 157, 207
homodiegetic (first-person) narration, 11, 52, 66, 107–8, 116, 180, 182, 188, 195
Horace, 9, 129n14, 173n24, 175n31, 196–98, 229, 232
hyper-subjunctive, 218
identity, 2, 42, 76, 82, 106–7, 115, 117n31, 118n36, 119, 144, 157, 167–68, 170, 172, 226n9
ideology, 43, 165–79, 199
imagery, 13, 35, 40n24, 59–60, 63, 65, 76n27, 119n38, 120, 129n15, 139
imitation, 35, 166n3, 177–78
inaction, 196, 206, 211
intended audience (reader), 124, 126, 131–32
interaction, 12, 20, 60, 76, 106n5, 117n33, 198, 204–8, 210–11, 213, 219, 241n2
internal audience, 38
internal narrative, 180, 195, 198, 200, 210, 214–17, 220
intertextuality, 31, 62–63, 93, 97, 101, 130, 136–37, 140, 181–83, 219, 231. See also master narratives
Janus, 180–93
journey, 8, 20–21, 32, 54–56, 60–62, 65, 72n17, 124n3, 156, 180, 190
Kermode, Frank, 12, 69n8, 99, 101
knowledge, 21–26, 30–33, 89, 113, 116–17, 146–47, 158, 185, 195, 227
Kristeva, Julia, 65n41, 71–85, 143–48
lament, 23, 70, 126–27, 131, 134, 136, 198, 204, 207
landscape, 121, 125, 128, 218
law, 131n17, 158–59, 170–72, 175–79
Law, Lacanian, 174
liminality, 10, 124, 130, 141
Livy, 101, 166
lover’s discourse, 22, 24, 144, 145n11, 148
lyric, 4, 6n19, 125, 167
Marathus, 203, 208, 220
master narratives, 9, 86–87, 91, 92n20, 95n30, 96, 123, 178, 198, 203. See also intertextuality
Messalla, 69, 203, 220, 244
metanarrative, 40
metaphor, 20, 25, 28–29, 32, 38, 41, 111, 115, 122, 133, 138n34, 148, 190, 231–32, 234, 238
metapoetics, 105–22
metonymy, 28–29
meter, 2, 13, 46, 204, 216, 229–32
militia amoris, 84, 128, 138
mimesis, 10, 22, 242
monologue, 53, 58, 90, 124, 131n17
mood, 36n12, 55n19, 144, 198–202, 215, 220
morality, 11, 13, 52, 63, 145n11, 146, 157, 166, 169, 172–77, 243, 247, 249, 250n34, 251–52, 256
mourning, 81, 169, 172, 189, 192, 204
Mulvey, Laura, 11
Myrrha, 77–78, 80
myth, 1, 5n13, 37, 55, 62–63, 80–81, 84, 94, 130, 134–35, 137, 140–41, 191
mythos (plot), 9
Nape, 105–22
narratee, 35, 107n6, 242–43, 252, 253n40, 254
novel, 1, 3, 5, 23, 25, 31, 52, 111n18, 145n11, 244–45, 251, 254
now. of narration, 27, 29–30, 54, 60–61, 80, 88–89, 94, 100, 109, 128, 130–31, 151, 155, 157, 161, 167, 181, 206, 209, 211, 254
objectification, 108, 118n36
Oenone, 99
oscillation, 61, 161, 202n12
paraclausithyron (exclusus amator), 66, 126, 129, 181, 184, 205
paradox, 20, 77n34, 111, 126, 133, 149, 154–55, 240n44
paraquel, narrative, 9, 86, 98
Penelope, 73, 87–91, 94, 99, 101, 136–37, 207–8
persona, 121n46, 127, 133, 180, 185n15, 188–90, 195, 228n15
persuasion, 106–7, 165, 178
philosophy, elegy and, 145–46, 152, 158
Phyllis, 9, 23n17, 76, 80–58, 99
Plato, 1, 6, 13, 37n15, 71, 78–79, 114n27, 124, 142–62, 237–38
poetics, 2, 7n20, 8, 10, 39n18, 41, 43, 51n2, 66, 90n15, 98, 105, 107, 108n12, 114–15, 119, 120n40, 121
point of view, 1, 13, 36, 52, 66, 69, 106n5, 107, 156, 170. See also focalization
praxis, 9. See also action
pregnant moment, 86, 92–95
Prince, Gerald, 6, 35, 113n23, 253n40
progress, narrative, 4, 19, 21, 27, 59n31, 69, 71, 72n16, 73–76, 80, 82, 84, 91, 190, 199, 210, 211n24, 217
prolegs, 94, 101. See also flashforward
Propertius, 2–5, 7n20, 24, 29n30, 51n3, 68, 69n5, 70, 72, 74, 105n2, 120n40, 120n43, 121, 123–41, 165–80, 230
Prudentius, 223–40
psychoanalysis, and story, 7, 19, 31–32, 125, 140, 149, 153, 246n21. See also Freud; Lacan; Kristeva
Quintilian, 13, 165–69, 170n16, 178, 237n38, 238, 239n43
reader, intended. See intended audience (reader)
reality effect, 4, 24, 29, 34, 84, 118, 188–89, 214–16, 218, 220, 247n28
recusatio, 69, 132, 167
renarrativization, 89
res gesta (content), 165–67
resistance, 70, 173, 200, 233
retardation, of narrative, 9, 21, 72n16
retrospective, 12, 28, 90
retrospective narration, 55, 56, 59n30, 61, 155, 157
reversal, 136, 139–40, 143n4, 152–54, 182, 218
Ricoeur, Paul, 1, 8, 12, 68n4, 69, 78, 84, 95–96, 219–20
role-play, 10, 22, 43, 70, 72n16, 74, 76, 83, 106n5, 107, 109–10, 112–19, 134, 152n21, 172n21, 178, 184, 253n40. See also mimesis
rumor, 115n30, 247–48
Sappho, 90, 125, 139, 148–49, 153–54
script, 106, 112–13, 119, 121, 178
seduction, 3, 23, 74, 78, 149
seeing, 32, 36. See also focalization
segmentation, 40, 51–67
self, narrated, 3–4, 7, 20, 27–29, 31, 53n15, 92, 106–7, 114n26, 117n31, 118–19, 121, 133, 141, 144, 159n33, 177, 211
sideshadowing, 101–2
snapshots, 8, 34, 42–47, 126
Socrates, 146–47, 151–56, 237–38
soliloquy, 10, 124–26, 131, 134–35, 138–41, 243, 256
space, and narrative, 2, 9, 35, 56, 60, 63, 65–66, 71–72, 78–81, 84, 86, 88, 91, 98, 125, 128, 135, 150, 167, 169, 194, 237
speaker, 5, 11, 70, 71, 107n6, 124–27, 131, 135–36, 148–49, 168, 170, 177, 180, 184, 190, 192, 237, 242, 252–53
stasis, 76, 78
structuralism, 10, 20, 140, 144n9, 241n2
subjectivity, 9, 12, 42, 53–55, 66, 71, 75, 78–79, 125, 139, 165–220
sujet, 166
Sulpicia, 3, 106n4, 241–55
syncopated, narrative, 53
syntax, 9, 29, 78, 82, 199, 202
teleology, 2, 30, 34, 69, 71, 72n17, 73–74, 78, 84, 158. See also telos
telos, 4, 7

tense, 27–29, 56–57, 61, 82, 88n7, 149, 205–6, 242
tension, 3, 19, 25, 31–32, 35n7, 71, 73, 78, 88–89, 143, 151, 200
testimony, 54, 137, 171
textuality, 20, 24, 34, 38, 44n37, 52–54, 56–57, 60, 63, 66, 90, 111, 145, 151, 175, 241n2, 247
Tibullus, 2–3, 7n20, 51n3, 69n5, 70n9, 72, 106n4, 196–220, 243, 245–47, 250–51, 253–55
timespan. See duration
tragedy, 9–10, 35, 46, 70, 114n24, 135, 161
transition, narrative, 35–36, 53n15, 59n30, 156, 161, 169

translation, 82, 112, 243–47, 252–55
unity, 2–4, 9–10, 29, 60, 63–64, 110, 144n9, 167n7, 172, 225–26, 234, 240
ventriloquism, 89n8, 107n8
viewpoint, 3–4, 28, 53–54, 58, 61, 63, 66. See also focalization
Virgil, 40n23, 46, 86, 99, 127, 129n13, 130, 134, 229
voyeurism, 2, 38, 45
women, 2, 4, 8–9, 42–43, 68–85, 86, 92, 117n31, 142n1, 161, 192n30, 245, 254. See also time, women’s