

Centering from the Periphery in the Augustan Roman World:

Ovid's *Autobiography* in *Tristia* 4.10 and Cornelius Nepos' Biography of Atticus

Andrew Walker, "Oedipal Narratives and the Exilic Ovid," *Ramus* 26 (1997) 194-204.

195: "This passage [*Epistulae Ex Ponto* 2.8.11-13, 15] builds on a contrast, frequently employed in the exile elegies, between the poet's marginal existence at the 'end of the earth' (*ultima tellus*) and the sense of grounded centrality that citizens enjoy in Rome as the city that rules the world (cf. *Tr.* 3.7.51 f.)"

200: "Unique to the exile elegies may be the multiple meanings of *corpus*, used to denote the physical body of the poet Ovid, but also the body of Ovid's literary works, the Ovidian *corpus* as a collection of poems that the poet has written or is writing at a distance from Rome. The poet delights in the ambiguities of *corpus* that collapse the distinction between self and text, while preserving, at the same time, a sense of difference, pitting the self (or *corpus*) that writes the text on the shores of the Black Sea against the *persona*-fied written text that returns and sees Rome... As the final elegy in this book, *Tr.* 3.14 returns the reader to the introductory narrative of the Ovidian *liber* denied entry to the libraries at Rome and to the issues its denial raises, namely that of the poet's fame and the fate of Ovid's body/text in the wake of his censure and exile by the *princeps*. For the *corpus* to 'remain in the City' is for Ovid to live on as a text read, although that other body—the poet's own self—may die ignominiously..."

"The Rome imagined here is very much the City of *Ex Pont.* 2.8 with which we began: a place of plenitude and power, the centre at the centre..."

Ovid, *Tristia* 4.10:

Addressed to *posteritas* (line 2) ; *studiosa pectora* (91-92); and *candide lector* (132)

97-98: *cum maris Euxini positos ad laeva Tomitas/quaerere me laesi principis ira iubet*

107-108: *totque tuli terra casus pelagoque quot inter/occultum stellae conspicuumque polum*

93-94: *iam mihi canities pulsus melioribus annis/venerat, antiquas miscueratque comas*

117-120: *gratia, Musa, tibi: nam tu solacia praebes, tu curae requies, tu medicina venis, tu dux et comes es, tu nos abducis ab Histros/in medioque mihi das Helicone locum*

129-130 *si quid habent igitur vatum praesagia veri/protinus ut moriar, non ero, terra, tuus*

For Cornelius Nepos and his life of Atticus, see *Cornelius Nepos: A selection, including the lives of Cato and Atticus*. Translated with Introductions and Commentary by Nicholas Horsfall

(Oxford 1989) xvii, 104 and the article on Cornelius Nepos in the third edition of the *Oxford*

Classical Dictionary (Oxford 1996): xv-xxi, 7-14.

For Atticus' voluntary exile in Athens, see Nepos, *Atticus* 2-4:

2. *Itaque interfecto Sulpicio, posteaque vidit Cinnano tumultu civitatem esse perturbatam neque sibi dari facultatem pro dignitate vivendi quin alterutram partem offenderet, dissociatis animis civium cum alii Sullanis, alii Cinnanis faverent partibus, idoneum tempus ratus studiis obsequendi suis, Athenas se contulit...*

Hic ita vixit, ut universis Atheniensibus merito esset carissimus; nam praeter gratiam, quae iam in adulescentulo magna erat, saepe suis opibus inopiam eorum publicam levavit...

3. *Hic autem sic se gerebat, ut communis infimis, par principibus videretur. Quo factum est ut huic omnes honores, quos possent, publice haberent civemque facere studerent; quo beneficio ille uti noluit, quod consulti ita interpretantur amitti civitatem Romanam alia ascita...*

Igitur primum illud munus fortunae, quod in ea urbe potissimum natus est in qua domicilium orbis terrarum esset imperii, ut eandem et patriam haberet et domum; hoc specimen prudentiae, quod, cum in eam se civitatem contulisset quae antiquitate, humanitate doctrinaeque praestaret omnes unus ei fuit carissimus.

4. *Huc ex Asia Sulla decedens cum venisset, quam diu ibi fuit, secum habuit Pomponium, captus adulescentis et humanitate et doctrina. Sic enim Graece loquebatur, ut Athenis natus videretur; tantam autem suavis erat sermonis Latini, ut appareret in eo nativum quendam leporem esse, non ascitum. Idem poemata pronuntiabat et Graece et Latine sic ut supra nihil posset addi. Quibus rebus factum est ut Sulla nusquam eum ab se dimitteret cuperetque secum deducere. Qui cum persuadere temptaret: 'Noli, oro te, inquit Pomponius, adversum eos me velle ducere cum quibus ne contra te arma ferrem, Italiam reliqui'...
...et omnia reliqua tempora aut litteris aut Atheniensium rei publicae tribueret...*

Cf. Ovid, *Tristia* 4.10.111: *hic ego, finitimis quamvis circumsoner armis/tristia, quo possum, carmine fata levo./quod quamvis nemo est, cuius referatur ad aures./sic tamen absumo decipioque diem.*

"Suetonius", *Life of Vergil* 35: *Anno aetatis quinquagesimo secundo impositurus "Aeneidi" summam manum statuit et Graeciam et in Asiam secedere triennioque continuo nihil amplius quam emendare, ut reliqua vita tantum philosophiae vacaret. Sed cum ingressus iter Athenis occurrisset Augusto ab Oriente Romam revertenti destinaretque non absistere atque etiam una redire, dum Megara vicinum oppidum ferventissimo sole cognoscit, languorem nactus est et eumque non intermissa navigatione auxit ita ut gravior aliquanto Brundisium appelleret, ubi diebus paucis obiit XI Kal. Octobre...*

On Nepos' shortcomings, see Horsfall xix: "Since the Renaissance N. has regularly, and throughout Europe, been used as a school author. The plainness of his style and the intensity of his moral tone... will have endeared him to educators, and they evidently outweighed his historical inaccuracy... and stylistic ineptitude. Yet voices were raised in protest: one Harnow, in Germany in 1850, in his essay 'on removing Nepos from the place he holds in schools' wrote 'that he is to be kept away from boys of twelve like the plague.' But the *Atticus* is by far the best thing he did to survive, and the deficiencies of his Latin are inevitably mitigated in translation."

Catullus on Nepos in *Catullus* 1. 3-8: *Corneli, tibi, namque tu solebas/meas esse aliquid putare nugas/fiam tum cum ausus es unus Italorum/omne aevum tribus explicare cartis/doctis, Iuppiter, et laboriosis!*

Nepos on Catullus, *Atticus* 12.4: *Idem L. Iulium Calidum, quem post Lucreti Catullique mortem multo elegantissimum poetam nostram tulisse aetatem vere videor posse contendere, neque minus virum bonum optimisque artibus eruditum...*

Cf. *Tristia* 4.10. 125: *nam tulerint magnos cum saecula nostra poetas*

For the stylistic parallel between Nepos, *Atticus* 13-18 and Ovid, *Tristia* 3.3, see R. Stark, *RhM* 107 (1964) 175 ff. For some parallels and counterparts in Augustan literary texts to Nepos' assertions in the life of Atticus, see, e.g., Horsfall 59 (Horace, *Carmina* and *Epodes*); 64 (Vergil *Aeneid* 6. 847 ff.); 65 (Horace, *Sermones* 1.5); 68 (Horace, *Sermones* 2.6.75); 69 (Horace, *Carmina* 1.14); 74 (Horace, *Sermones* 1.4. 96 and 6.47); 87 (Horace *Sermones* 1, *Carminā* 3.24 and *Epistles* 2.2.158) and 91 (Livy 7.10.5). See also Horsfall 96 (Vergil, *Aeneid* 1.10 ff., on *pietas*); 106 (Livy 1.10 and Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.855, on Romulus and the temple of Jupiter Feretrius); and 107 (Livy, *Praefatio*, Vergil, *Georgics* 1.498 ff. and Horace, *Epode* 7).
For Ovid's addresses to an Atticus, see Ovid, *Amores* 1.15; *Epistulae Ex Pontō* 2.4 and 2.7

Ovid, *Tristia* 4.10. 7-8: *si quid id est, usque a proavis vetus ordinis heres/non modo fortunae munere factus eques*

Cf. Ovid, *Amores*. 3.15.5-6 *si quid id est, usque a proavis vetus ordinis heres/non modo militiae turbine factus eques*

Nepos, *Atticus* 1: *T. Pomponius Atticus, ab origine ultima stirpis Romanae generatus, perpetuo a maioribus acceptam equestrem obtinuit dignitatem.*

Cf. 19 *Namque hic, contentus ordine equestri quo erat ortus, in adfinitatem pervenit imperatoris, Divi filii, cum iam ante familiaritatem eius esset consecutus nulla alia re quam elegantia vitae... Nata est autem Attico neptis ex Agrippa, cui virginem filiam collocarat. Hanc Caesar vix anniculum Ti. Claudio Neroni, Drusilla nato, privigno suo, despondit; quae coniunctio necessitudinem eorum sanxit, familiaritatem reddidit frequentiore.*

Ovid, *Tristia* 4.10.9-33: *Nec stirps prima fui: genito sum fratre creatus/ qui tribus ante quater mensibus ortus erat./ Lucifer amborum natalibus affuit idem:/ una celebrata est per duo liba dies./ Haec est armiferae festis de quinque Minervae,/ quae fieri pugna prima cruenta solet./ protinus excolimur teneri curaque parentis/ sumus ad insignes Urbis ab arte viros./ Frater ad eloquium viridi tendebat ab aevo,/ fortia verbosi natus ad arma fori;/ at mihi puero caelestia sacra placebant, inque suum furtim Musa trahebat opus./ Saepe pater dixit, "studium quid inutile temptas?/ Maeonides nullas ipse reliquit opes."/ motus eram dictis, totoque Helicone relicto./ scribere temptabam verba soluta modis./ Sponte sua carmen numeros veniebat ad aptos,/ et quod temptabam scribere versus erat./ Interea tacito passu labentibus annis/ liberior fratri sumpta mihi que toga est./ Induiturque umeris cum lato purpura clavo,/ et studium nobis, quod fuit ante, manet./ Namque decem vitae frater geminaverat annos,/ cum perit, et coepi parte carere mei./ cepimus et tenerae promissis aetatis honores...*

Nepos, *Atticus* 5: *erat nupta soror Attici Q. Tullio Cicero, easque nuptias M. Cicero conciliarat, cum quo a condiscipulatu vivebat coniunctissime, multo etiam familiarius quam cum Quinto* 16. *Quamquam eum praecipue dilexit Cicero, ut ne frater quidem ei Quintus carior fuerit aut familiarior... Sic enim omnia de studiis principum, vitis ducum, mutationibus rei publicae perscripta sunt, ut nihil in iis non appareat et facile existimari possit prudentiam quodam modo esse divinationem. Non enim Cicero ea solum quae vivo se acciderunt futura praedixit, sed etiam quae nunc usu veniunt cecinit ut vates.*

Ovid, *Tristia* 4.10. 35-40: *Curia restabat: clavi mensura coacta est:/ maius erat nostris viribus illud onus/ nec patiens corpus, nec mens fuit apta labori/ sollicitaeque fugax ambitionis eram/ et petere Aeoniae suadebant tuta sorores/ otia, iudicio semper amata meo.*

Nepos, *Atticus* 6: *Honores non petiit, cum ei paterent propter vel gratiam vel dignitatem... qui ne cum Q. quidem Cicerone voluerit ire in Asiam, cum apud eum legati locum obtinere posset. Non enim decere se arbitrabatur, cum praeturam gerere nolisset, ad seclam esse praetoris. Qua in re non solum dignitati serviebat, sed etiam tranquillitati...*

and 15: *Ex quo iudicari poterat non inertia, sed iudicio fugisse rei publicae procuratorum.*

Ovid, *Tristia* 4.10. 43 ff.: *quot aderant vates, rebar adesse deos [Macer, Propertius, Ponticus, Bassus, Horatius, Vergilius, Tibullus, Gallus and Propertius again] :55: utque ego maiores, sic me coluere minores*

cf. Nepos, *Atticus* 16: *Humanitatis vero nullum adferre maius testimonium possum, quam quod adolescens idem seni Sullae fuit iucundissimus, senex adolescenti M. Bruto...*

Nepos, Atticus 19: *Quamvis ante haec sponsalia non solum cum ab urbe abesset, numquam ad suorum quemquam litteras misit quin Attico scriberet quid ageret... nullus dies temere intercessit quo non ad eum scriberet... Neque vero a M. Antonio minus absens litteris colebatur, adeo ut accurate ille ex ultimis terris quid ageret curae sibi haberet certiore facere Atticum. Hoc quale sit, facilius existimabit is qui iudicare poterit quantae sit sapientiae eorum retinere usum benevolentiamque....*

Nepos, Atticus 20. 3 *Ex quo accidit, cum aedis Iovis Feretri in Capitolio, ab Romulo constituta, vetustate atque incuria detecta prolaberetur, ut Attici admonitu Caesar eam reficiendam curaret.*

Cf. Propertius 4.10. 1 ff. *Nunc Iovis incipiam causas aperire Feretri/... imbuis exemplum primae tu, Romule, palmae/... Acron Herculeus Caenina ductor ab arce/... Claudius a Rhodano traiectos arcuit hostes...; Propertius 4.11 29 ff. si cui fama fuit per avita tropaea decori/nostri Numantinos signa loquuntur avos/... testor maiorum cineres tibi, Roma, verendos/sub quorum titulis, Africa, tunsae iaces/... vel cui us rasos cum Vesta reposceret ignes,/exhibuit vivos carbasus alba focos [Vestal Aemilia]*

Nepos, Atticus 18: *fecit hoc idem separatim in aliis libris, ut M. Bruti rogatu Iuniam familiam a stirpe ad hanc aetatem ordine enumeraverit, notas qui a quoque ortus, quos honores quibusque temporibus cepisset; pari modo Marcelli Claudii de Marcellorum, Scipionis Cornelii et Fabii Maximi Fabiorum et Aemiliorum.*

Nepos, Atticus 17: *De pietate autem Attici quid plura commemorem? Cum hoc ipsum vere gloriantem audierim in funere matris suae, quam extulit annorum XC, cum esset VII et LX, se numquam cum matre in gratiam redisse, numquam cum sorore fuisse in similitate, quam prope aequalem habebat. Quod est signum aut nullam unquam inter eos querimoniam intercessisse, aut hunc ea fuisse in suos indulgentia, ut, quos amare deberet, irasci tibi nefas duceret.*

Propertius 4.1a 64 ff. *ut nostris tumefacta superbiat Umbria libris,/Umbria Romani patria Callimachi/... sacra diesque canam et cognomina prisca locorum....* 4b. 133 ff. *tum tibi pauca suo de carmine dictat Apollo/et vetat insano verba tonare Foro/... eludit palmas una puella tuas/... illius arbitrio noctem lucemque videbis...*

For Ovid on Messalla see *Epistulae Ex Ponto* 1.7, 2.2 and 2.3

Suetonius, Tiberius 70: *Artes liberales utriusque generis studiosissime coluit. In oratione Latina secuta est Corvinum Messalam, quem senem adulescens observaret... Composuit et carmen lyricum... Fecit et Graeca poemata imitatus Euphorionem et Rhianum et Parthenium, quibus poetis admodum delectatus scripta omnium et imagines publicis bibliothecis inter veteres et praecipuos auctores dedicavit...*

Suetonius, De Grammaticis 16: *Q. Caecilius Epirota, Tusculi natus, libertus Attici equitis Romani, ad quem sunt Ciceronis epistulae, cum filiam patroni nuptam M. Agrippae doceret, suspectus in ea et ob hoc remotus, ad Cornelium Gallum se contulit vixitque una familiarissime, quod ipsi Gallo inter gravissima crimina ab Augusto obicitur. Post deinde damnationem mortemque Galli scholam aperuit, sed ita ut paucis et tantum adolescentulis praeciperet, praetextato nemini, nisi si cuius parenti hoc officium negare non posset. Primus dicitur Latine ex tempore disputasse, primusque Vergilium et alios postea novos praelegere coepisse, quod etiam Domitii Marsi versiculus indicat: 'Epirota, tenellorum nutricula vatem'. Cf. Ovid, Amores 3.15 1 (*Quaere novum vatem, tenerorum mater amorum*); Tristia 4.10.1 (*tenerorum lusor amorum*)*

**Centering from the Periphery in the Augustan Roman World:
Ovid's Autobiography in *Tristia* 4.10 and Cornelius Nepos' Biography of Atticus**

I have taken the theme of this conference literally. My topic is the literary self-centering, by the peripherally physical Ovid, in his most memorable poetic effort to situate his life and work in the Augustan Roman world. Both this literal approach to our theme, and my literary perspective on one text by this author (which, as you will soon see, is a highly historicist literary perspective), were facilitated by some striking observations in Andrew Walker's 1997 essay on "Oedipal Narratives and the Exilic Ovid." The first is Walker's claim that a passage in *Epistulae Ex Ponto* 2.8 builds on a contrast frequently employed in Ovid's exile elegies. As Walker puts it, the contrast between Ovid's "marginal existence at the end of the earth (*ultima tellus*) and the sense of grounded centrality that citizens enjoy in Rome as the city that rules the world."

Walker later observes. "Unique to the exile elegies may be the multiple meanings of *corpus*. [The word is] used to denote the physical body of the poet Ovid, but also the body of Ovid's literary works, the Ovidian *corpus* as a collection of poems that the poet has written or is writing at a distance from Rome." He then proceeds to offer a nuanced reading of *Tristia* 3.14 which itself incorporates Ovid's Romanocentric prediction of his poetic immortality in *Tristia* 3.7. Through such descriptions, according to Walker, Ovid projects that his *corpus* will "remain in the city", "the centre at the centre," but solely as a text that is read. Walker goes on to emphasize that Ovid's exilic narrative stresses his own physical decline, and notes that Ovid even forecasts his own physical absence from life itself in the final couplet of *Tristia* 3.3.

Ovid's autobiographical elegy *Tristia* 4.10 also merits close scrutiny in the context of these observations. Addressed to the open-minded reader of the future (so *candide lector* in the final line, 132, and *posteritas* in the opening couplet), *Tristia* 4.10 may not, at first glance, seem particularly relevant to Walker's analysis. For one thing, it does not foreground Ovid's physical absence from Rome. Ovid merely asserts in lines 97 through 98 that the anger of an injured *princeps* ordered him to Tomis, and, in a later couplet, alludes to the hardships that he himself endured in his wanderings to distant shores (evoking Vergil's description of Aeneas' travails in the process). So, too, in *Tristia*

4.10 Ovid barely mentions his physical deterioration, save at lines 93-94, where he refers to the whitening of his hair at the time of his exile. Furthermore, in the poem's final lines, Ovid depicts the remoteness of his exile in positive terms. He imagines his current locale as also away from the Hister river, and "virtually" in the center of Mount Helicon, owing to the comfort and rest provided by his Muse. Ovid then prophesies that he will physically transcend earthly bonds by achieving poetic immortality.

Nevertheless, I would like to argue that *Tristia* 4.10 reflects upon Ovid's present, past and future role in Roman urban cultural and intellectual life: upon his influence in the center of empire not only as a created object but also as a creative agent. After all, in this poem the marginalized Ovid has apparently selected several facts about himself that recall details attributed, in an earlier literary work, to an earlier historical figure central to the cultural and intellectual ambience of urban Rome in the mid-first century BCE. The work to which I refer is the biography of Titus Pomponius Atticus by his near-contemporary Cornelius Nepos. It celebrates Atticus as a man who had opted for political exile, flourished during his time away from Rome, and, after returning to the capital city, was widely cherished, by the man who would become Augustus among others. What is more, with its reminiscences of Nepos' biography, *Tristia* 4.10 further develops and complicates the contrast noted by Walker. These intertextual elements allow the elegy to oppose, and yet mediate between, the grounded centrality in the imperial capital that Ovid has lost and the placelessness he now occupies, a physical reality from which he distances himself emotionally.

Evidently Nepos wrote his biography of Atticus—who was born in 110 BCE, and took his own life when he became incurably ill in 32 BCE—in two spurts, or at least two parts. Nepos clearly completed the first eighteen chapters during Atticus' own lifetime, the final four after Atticus' death (although before Octavian assumed the name of Augustus in 27). Atticus' voluntary exile in Athens from approximately 86 through 65 BCE gets immediate attention, occupying as it does chapters 2 through 4. These decades are proclaimed a fortunate interlude noteworthy for Atticus' financial generosity to and popularity with the Athenian people, Atticus' refusal to accept Athenian (and thereby forfeit Roman) citizenship, and Atticus' devotion to literary, linguistic and philosophical

studies. In these three chapters about Atticus' stay in Athens, however, Nepos also stresses the central importance of Rome to Atticus, and indeed to the rest of the world.

For Nepos asseverates: "Thus it was first of all a gift of good fortune (*munus fortunae*) that [Atticus] was born in that city in which was the domicile of rule over the world, so that he had the same place as native land and home. And it was a sign of his wisdom that, when he had taken himself into the city which surpassed all others in its antiquity, culture and learning, he was uniquely dear to it." Significantly, too, Nepos relates that Atticus' graceful and charming use of the Latin language, and his recitation of poems in both Greek and Latin, so impressed the dictator Sulla when he visited Athens in 84 BCE that Sulla wished to take Atticus back to Rome in his company. But Atticus demurred, on the grounds that he had left Italy to avoid bearing arms against Sulla in the company of the men against whom Sulla would lead him.

Nepos' characterization of Atticus' years away from Rome as heavily involved in literary activity resembles Ovid's own description of his stay at Tomis in *Tristia* 4.10, lines 111 and following. There Ovid claims to "use up and deceive the day" "lightening his sad fate with whatever song he can," even though no one may hear him. What is more, Ovid had good reason to recall, albeit subtly, to his readers, Augustus among them, Nepos' portrayal of Atticus in Athens: as valued by the most powerful Roman political figure of his day because of his literary talents, and consequently needed in the capital city. In 19 BCE Augustus himself had insisted that Vergil accompany him back to Rome from Athens: Vergil of course complied, and died. Not only did Sulla's request to Atticus furnish a precedent that Augustus had already emulated with Ovid's most esteemed poetic predecessor. This time Augustus could show his appreciation for a poet who would actually return with him to Rome.

The writings of Cornelius Nepos, once popular as school texts because of "the plainness of his style and the intensity of his moral tone" (to quote Nicholas Horsfall), do not attract much of a readership nowadays. On what grounds can we Latin teachers justify spending precious classroom moments on an author assailed for historical inaccuracy and stylistic ineptitude by his most recent scholarly translator and commentator and champion (Horsfall again)? Especially an author whose uncritical

attitude toward his subject in his life of Atticus—regarded by Horsfall and many others as “the best thing he did to survive” —far exceeds the tolerable bounds of sycophancy.

But Nepos’ well-earned present-day obscurity does not mean that he went unread during his own lifetime, nor in the decades after his death in the mid-twenties BCE. A man of immense erudition, he enjoyed impressive political and literary connections. Perhaps the most notable were with a fellow Transpadane much esteemed by Ovid himself. Having dedicated his learned *libellus* to *Corneli, tibi*, in gratitude for Nepos’ longtime support, Catullus received posthumous, if indirect, accolades from Nepos in chapter 12 of the life of Atticus. There Nepos calls one Calidus “the most elegant poet that our age has produced”, *elegantissimum poetam nostram tulisse aetatem*, since the deaths of Lucretius and Catullus.

Now it is possible that line 125 of *Tristia* 4.10, stating that “our age has produced great poets” (*tulerint magnos...saecula nostra poetas*) deliberately recalls Nepos’ words on the poets produced by his own era. A 1964 study by R. Stark posits a parallel between the style of chapters 13 through 18 of Nepos’ *Atticus* and *Tristia* 3.3: both texts employ past tenses, in the manner of a funeral poem, to describe individuals still living. In citing counterparts to various assertions made by Nepos in his life of Atticus, Horsfall’s commentary lists a number of passages by Vergil, Horace and Livy. Even if Horsfall does not explicitly say so, such evidence would imply that these authors were acquainted with Nepos’ assertions (especially since the life of Atticus makes much of the close ties between Atticus and Augustus). All the same, we can at best conjecture, and never conclusively prove, that Ovid is indebted to, even familiar with, Nepos’ life of Atticus. While Ovid may address a man he calls Atticus in such *Amores* 1.9, and *Epistulae Ex Ponto* 2.4 and 2.7, Ovid never mentions Nepos, or Nepos’ Atticus in his poetry (Nepos’ Atticus died when Ovid was eleven, and left no sons: only a daughter, by that time married to Augustus’ close friend Marcus Agrippa).

Still, so many details in *Tristia* 4.10 specifically call Nepos’ *Atticus* to mind that we must seriously entertain the possibility not only of Ovid’s close acquaintance with this biography, but also his assumption that his target audience knew both the text and the man it honors. One of these details is Ovid’s initial emphasis on the longstanding nature of his family’s equestrian rank, *si quid id est, usque a proavis vetus ordinis heres/non*

modo fortunae munere factus eques, at lines 7 through 8. The very first sentence of Nepos' *Atticus* notes that his subject, though of the oldest Roman stock, never abandoned the equestrian rank inherited from his ancestors. At the beginning of chapter 19, the section of the life added after Atticus' death, Nepos again observes that Atticus was content with the equestrian rank to which he was born. This time, though, Nepos makes this observation while reporting that Atticus attained relationship by marriage (*adfinitatis*) with Augustus when his year-old granddaughter, whom his daughter had born to Agrippa, was betrothed to Augustus' stepson, the future emperor Tiberius.

Strikingly, lines 7 through 8 of *Tristia* 4.10 are repeated from a couplet in an earlier, strategically positioned, also autobiographical Ovidian poem: indeed the last of the *Amores*, 3.15, lines 5 through 6. But Ovid has substituted two words in the pentameter, *munere fortunae*, "gift of fortune", for the earlier *militiae turbine*, "upheaval of fighting." When returning to complete his life of Atticus after Atticus' death, therefore, Nepos also immediately returns to the theme of Atticus' pride in his equestrian origins, a theme that was spotlighted in the first chapter of the biography. In much the same way, when writing *Tristia* 4.10, Ovid returns to his words on the very same theme from an earlier autobiographical elegy. Ovid's alteration to those words through the mention of *munus* and *fortuna* merit particular notice. Nepos, as we have seen, calls Atticus' Roman birth a *munus fortunae* in chapter 3; the noun *fortuna* appears with some frequency later on in Nepos' biography, four times alone in chapter 19 (where Nepos resumes his account of Atticus' life after Atticus' death).

From lines 9 through 32 of *Tristia* 4.10 Ovid describes his close emotional ties to his elder brother. He emphasizes that the two of them were born on the same date, March 20, a year apart, and celebrated their birthdays together. He relates that they received the same education from "men of the city distinguished by their talent." He reports that when they both assumed the *toga virilis* he, unlike his oratorically gifted brother, had by this point long harbored literary rather than political aspirations. And he claims "I began to lose a part of myself" when his brother died at age twenty (*cum perit, et coepi parte carere mei*). So powerful is his identification with his brother that he admits to taking a stab at a political career at this time himself. In fact, when describing his desultory political efforts in line 33, Ovid does so in the first person plural — with *cepimus*

—employing a verb form he previously used to describe the pursuits that he and his brother undertook together.

Ovid's testimony in *Tristia* 4.10 to his closeness with his brother deserves attention not only because it takes up a substantial portion of the poem, but also because he does not mention his brother elsewhere. It may thus be significant that Nepos earlier, and twice, portrayed Atticus as even more beloved to his dear friend Cicero than Cicero's own brother Quintus. In chapter 5 he does so while noting that Atticus lived *coniunctissime* with Cicero from the time of their schooling together; at 16 while praising the historical value of Cicero's letters to Atticus, and Cicero for "singing like a seer" (*cecinit ut vates*) in predicting the political future.

At lines 35 through 40 of *Tristia* 4.10, Ovid recounts how he abandoned the burdens of public life and ambition, refusing to become a senator and assume the burdens that such a role would entail. Nepos devotes the entirety of chapter 6 to Atticus' refusal to pursue the political opportunities available to those of his social station. Both descriptions feature similar words and ideas.

At *Tristia* 4.10 line 40 Ovid claims to have preferred the moments of peace, *otia*, that the Muses encouraged him to seek, over a political career. Nepos relates that Atticus turned down the chance to accompany Cicero's brother to his post as proconsul in Asia out of his concern not only for *dignitas*, worthy behavior, but also *tranquillitas*. "peace and quiet". In chapter 15, moreover, Atticus is said to have fled political responsibility not out of laziness, but judgment, *non inertia sed iudicio fugisse rei publicae procurationem*. Ovid characterizes himself in line 38 as *fugax*, fleeing from worrisome ambition, and in 40, speaks of the *otia* he was encouraged to seek as always beloved in his judgment, *iudicio meo*.

In hailing the group of poets he cherished as gods at *Tristia* 4.10.43, Ovid refers to them with the literarily-loaded label *vates*. Nepos, as we have seen, applies the same word to Cicero in his role as valued correspondent to Atticus in chapter 16—and endows Cicero with further prophetic and poetic dimensions with the verb *cecinit*. What is more, when enumerating the poets that he himself esteemed, and those that he himself was esteemed by, Ovid equates his own affection for those of the previous generation with the affection felt for him by those younger than himself. At line 55 he asserts that "just as I

cherished those older, so those younger cherished me”, *utque ego maiores, sic me coluere minores*). In chapter 16 Nepos, admittedly (and characteristically) in less elegant language, makes the same point about Atticus’ relationship to those older and younger than himself. For he adduces as the “most important testimony to Atticus’ humane character” the fact that the aged Sulla cherished the young Atticus in the same way that the young Brutus cherished the aged Atticus.

Why, though, would the exiled, aging Ovid have regarded the long-dead Atticus as role model, an urban and urbane presence with personal qualities worthy of evocation and emulation, one to whom he likens his former, Rome-situated self? I suggested earlier that Ovid may have hoped Augustus would remember, and imitate, the self-exiled Atticus’ generous treatment by Sulla, especially as Augustus had previously followed Sulla’s example in this instance by insisting that Vergil accompany him back from Athens to Rome. Calling to mind this conduct toward a literarily linked figure of the recent past may have seemed to Ovid a viable strategy for obtaining a future in Rome.

But there are other possibilities worthy of consideration, having to do with Ovid’s Roman past and present. None of them precludes the others. Most obviously, Ovid was appealing to Augustus’ mercy by representing himself much as Nepos had portrayed the unconventional Atticus several decades earlier. And Atticus was someone that Augustus himself apparently held in high esteem. In chapter 19, after reporting that Atticus attained *adfinitas* with the man who would become Augustus through the betrothal of his wife’s young son to Atticus’ year-old granddaughter, Nepos observes the intimacy (*familiaritas*), frequent exchange of correspondence, and mutual goodwill (*benevolentia*) between the two men. Furthermore, Nepos relates that Mark Antony and Atticus simultaneously enjoyed a warm friendship as well. While Nepos views this friendship as proof of Atticus’ wisdom (*sapientia*), Ovid might have regarded it as a reminder of Augustus’ generosity and tolerance.

It warrants note that Propertius, for whom Ovid himself voices high personal and literary esteem at *Tristia* 4.10. lines 45 and following, evidently associates himself with Atticus in his poetry too. First and foremost, several of Propertius’ elegies deal with topics of antiquarian interest, and people from Rome’s leading families, that Nepos mentions as valued by Atticus himself. In chapter 20 of his life of Atticus, Nepos relates

that Atticus was instrumental in convincing the then-Octavian to repair the temple of Jupiter Feretrius; Propertius devotes the tenth poem of his fourth book to this cult. Nepos asserts in chapter 18 that Atticus researched and wrote up the histories of such families as the Claudii Marcelli, Cornelia Scipiones, Fabii and Aemilii. Propertius 4.10 describes the exploits of the Claudius Marcellus who won the *spolia opima* in the third century BCE; Propertius 4.11 the achievements of several bygone Cornelia Scipiones (ancestors of the subject, the noble matron—and Augustus' stepdaughter—Cornelia) and Aemilii (forbears of her husband).

In addition, Propertius depicts himself in the first poem of Book Four as a learned, literarily inspirational Roman antiquarian, who is compelled to labor, unconventionally, outside of the forum, and who submits to the whims and will of a demanding woman. These details call to mind the qualities that Nepos emphasizes in portraying Atticus as an admirable man. Not only does he stress Atticus' unwillingness to take part in Roman political life. In chapter 17, after praising Atticus' *pietas*, devotion to his family (and anticipating both Augustus and Vergil in representing this trait as highly desirable in mature, familiarly responsible males), Nepos cites Atticus' accommodating and submissive conduct to his demanding mother and sister. In line 64 of 4.1 Propertius voices his aspirations to be a Roman Callimachus. We might argue that in Book Four Propertius also proved himself an elegiac, and erotic, Atticus. Propertius' apparent efforts to evoke Atticus as he is portrayed by Nepos would both help to explain, and render more likely, Ovid's having done the same.

Finally, there is what we might call the Tiberius connection. Born in 42 BCE, Tiberius was only one year Ovid's junior. In such elegies from exile as *Epistulae Ex Ponto* 1.7, 2.2 and 2.3, Ovid represents himself—just as Suetonius represents Tiberius in chapter 70 of his life of Tiberius—as in his younger days closely connected with the statesman, orator and literary patron Marcus Valerius Messalla Corvinus. And even though Suetonius merely mentions Tiberius' emulation of Messalla's oratorical practices, he also reports that Tiberius not only wrote Latin lyric verse, but also imitated and promoted various learned Hellenistic poets. In other words, Tiberius would have shared literary interests with Ovid, and Messalla's other literary protégés at the time, in the late

twenties and early teens BCE. Chief among these protégés were the elegist Tibullus (who also merits mention in *Tristia* 4.10) and Messalla's own niece and ward Sulpicia.

Atticus, of course, was technically Tiberius' grandfather-in-law. Atticus' daughter Attica—whom Agrippa divorced in order to marry Augustus' niece the elder Marcella in 28 BCE—was mother of Tiberius' wife Vipsania and grandmother of his sons. Might Ovid have tried to ingratiate himself in *Tristia* 4.10 with Augustus' stepson as well, a man with whom he had both learning experiences and intellectual pursuits in common?

And, for that matter, how much in common were these learning experiences and intellectual pursuits? I think it quite possible that Atticus' freedman Caecilius Epirota, whose intimacy with the poet Cornelius Gallus Suetonius relates at *De Grammaticis* 16, numbered Ovid and even Tiberius among his pupils soon after Octavian became Augustus in 27 BCE. Suetonius states that Epirota, who had attached himself and lived on most intimate terms with another elegist Ovid mentions in *Tristia* 4.10—Cornelius Gallus—began his own school after Gallus' conviction and death in 27 BCE. There Epirota limited enrollment to young men who no longer wore the *toga praetexta*, and launched the practice of reading Vergil and other new poets. According to Suetonius, Domitius Marsus spoke of Epirota as *tenellorum nutricula vatum*, “dear womanly nurturer of tender little bards.” Ovid may well identify himself in this number when he begins *Amores* 3.15 by ordering *tenerorum mater Amorum* to *quaere novum vatem*, and when he refers to himself as a *tenerorum lusor amorum*, educated by *insignes Urbis ab arte viros* in that poem which echoes *Amores* 3.15, *Tristia* 4.10.

To be sure, some other information also furnished by Suetonius at *De Grammaticis* 16 complicates this supposition. Namely, that Epirota had originally been Atticus' freedman, was suspected of improper sexual conduct toward Atticus' daughter (and Tiberius' future mother-in-law) when he was teaching her, and subsequently dismissed by Atticus. Furthermore, Suetonius reports that Epirota's subsequent intimacy with Cornelius Gallus was regarded by Augustus as one of the most serious charges against Gallus himself.

Still, Tiberius' marriage to Atticus' granddaughter did not actually take place until 20 or 19 BCE, several years after he and Ovid would have studied under Epirota. And even if neither Tiberius nor Ovid studied with Epirota, Suetonius' description of

Epirota's dismissal by Atticus—like Suetonius' account of Tiberius' own self-imposed departure from Rome—has a certain relevance to Ovid's situation. These reports remind us that other literarily-minded individuals living under Augustus also underwent exiles, albeit not Ovid's form of physical relegation to the edges of empire, from the center of Rome's political and intellectual establishments. And that they drew on literary connections and resources to sustain and assist them in their altered circumstances. Relegated to Rome's periphery, Ovid had good reason to identify with them as well as with Atticus in pressing claims on Augustus' sympathy.