CIL	*Corpus inscriptionum Latinarum*, Berlin, 1862–
GRF	*Grammaticae Romanae fragmenta*, ed. H. Funaioli, Leipzig, 1907
ILS	*Inscriptiones Latinae selectae*, ed. H. Dessau, Berlin, 1892-1916
LSJ	*A Greek-English lexicon*, edd. H.G. Liddell, R. Scott, H. Stuart-Jones, R. McKenzie (9th ed. with supplement, Oxford, 1968)
OLD	*The Oxford Latin dictionary*. Oxford, 1968-82
RE	*Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, Stuttgart, 1893–1978
TLL	*Thesaurus linguae Latinae*, Leipzig, 1900–
TLL Onom.	*Thesaurus linguae Latinae onomasticon* (C-D), Leipzig, 1909-23

Abbreviations used in citing Latin texts are generally those of *TLL*, in citing Greek texts, those of LSJ. My occasional departures from those systems are intended to achieve greater clarity.

1

Tenerorum Lusor Amorum

It is hardly surprising that Ovid began his poetic career by writing love-elegies. He must have been anxious to sustain and extend the celebrity which he had acquired through his success in the schools of declamation[1], and no poetic form can have seemed more likely to further that ambition than did the extremely fashionable genre of love-elegy. That genre had not only brought fame to Gallus, Tibullus and Propertius, but was practised by numerous other poets also. It may indeed be significant that many of those lesser known poets seem to have stood in Tibullus' shadow in the literary circle of Messalla[2], for Messalla was the patron who encouraged Ovid's first attempts at poetry; cf. *Trist.* 4.4.27ff., *Pont.* 1.7.27ff., 2.2.97f., 2.3.75ff. (to Messalla's son, Cotta Maximus):

> me tuus ille pater...
> primus ut auderem committere carmina famae
> impulit: ingenii dux fuit ille mei.

Love-elegy, however, was not merely in vogue among the *literati*. It could also appeal more immediately than most genres to a wider public, in particular to the younger members of Roman high society. That consideration probably weighed heavily with Ovid, for he clearly came to revel in his position as a leading figure among the

[1] Cf. Sen. *Contr.* 2.2.8ff.

[2] I accept the view that Lygdamus was a member of Messalla's circle, but the matter is controversial; see Erath (1971) 4ff. and 297ff., Hooper (1975). Note also Messalla's niece, Sulpicia, the anonymous author of the elegies *de Sulpicia* and the poet or poets responsible for [Tib.] 3.19 and 20. One may perhaps add Valgius Rufus, who not only wrote love-elegies (cf. Hor. *Carm.* 2.9, with Nisbet-Hubbard's introduction), but is also commended by the author of the *Panegyricus Messallae* as being competent to commemorate Messalla's achievements in an epic (179f.). Messalla himself wrote light verse, perhaps love-elegies; cf. Plin. *Epist.* 5.3.5 and, if that poem refers to him, [Verg.] *Catal.* 9.23ff. The Servius whom Ovid mentions as the author of *improba carmina* (*Trist.* 2.441f.; cf. Plin. *loc. cit.*) seems to be Servius Sulpicius Rufus, either the father or, more probably, the grandfather, of Sulpicia; see Syme (1981) 426ff.

jeunesse dorée. Popularity through poetry would grant him admission to circles from which, as a *domi nobilis* from a rather remote region of Italy, he might otherwise be excluded.

Moreover, writing love-elegies may have seemed to Ovid a particularly natural progression from his activities in the schools of declamation[3]. The composition of poetry on the narrow range of themes established and made familiar by the older exponents of the elegiac genre offered very much the same challenge to his ingenuity and inventiveness as did the composition of declamations on the well-worn themes handled in the schools. Being small in scale, love-elegies could be produced quickly and their recitation could win rapid acclaim to match that accorded to Ovid's declamations.

Convention, of course, will also have helped to draw Ovid towards love-elegy. He began writing the *Amores* while still in his teens (see pp. 74f.), and even Tragedy herself concedes that love-elegy is an appropriate genre for a young poet:

> quod tenerae cantent lusit tua Musa puellae,
> primaque per numeros acta iuuenta suos (3.1.27f.)[4].

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Ovid's personal temperament should be taken into account. The elegist was conventionally devoted to a life of love, and that devotion prevented him from aspiring to high achievement in public affairs. In the case of Ovid, as will be argued below (pp. 28ff.), such rejection of ambition was no mere literary pose, but symptomatic of his actual outlook on life. The *persona* of the elegiac lover suited him particularly well.

Originality

The contemporary vogue for love-elegy not only encouraged Ovid to embark on that genre, it also presented him with a problem which might have daunted a poet less gifted than he was. Vergil achieved originality in all his great works by adapting Greek genres to a new, Roman, context. Horace did the same in his *Epodes* and *Odes*, and his *Satires* are modelled on those of Lucilius, who was writing a century earlier in very different social and political circumstances. Ovid, by contrast, was embarking on a genre the essential characteristics of which had only recently been formulated

[3] For the links with declamation, see pp. 68ff.

[4] For the view that different genres suit different periods of a poet's life, see the note *ad loc.*

by three masterly exponents. Gallus, Tibullus and Propertius were all not only almost contemporary with him, but they also lived in much the same social *milieu* as he did. There was therefore no marked change of context which would inevitably accord Ovid a degree of originality, as it did to Vergil and Horace.

The difficulty which Ovid faced in finding an original approach to his chosen genre was intensified by the fact that the basic subject-matter of elegy, the poet's own experiences in love, was more restricted and specific than that of almost any other genre of ancient poetry. One might have expected Ovid to innovate by expanding the genre's range of subject-matter. In fact, he did quite the opposite. A considerable proportion of the elegies of Tibullus and Propertius have little or no personal amatory content; in particular, one may note Tib. 1.7 (Messalla's birthday and triumph), 2.2 (Cornutus' birthday), 2.5 (Messallinus' induction as a *XVuir sacris faciundis*), Prop. 1.20 (Gallus' homosexual affair), 1.21 (the death of Gallus), 1.22 (Propertius' origins), 2.31 (the portico of Apollo), 3.7 (the death of Paetus), 3.12 (Postumus and Galla), 3.18 (the death of Marcellus), 3.22 (Tullus in Cyzicus) and all the poems in Book 4 except 1, 5, 7 and 8. The *Amores*, by contrast, are almost exclusively concerned with Ovid's own experiences as a lover and as a love-poet. There are only two exceptions: 3.9 (the death of Tibullus) and 3.13 (the rites of Juno at Falerii). Both of those exceptions can be considered to be special cases: since Tibullus was a love-elegist, the lament for his death is easily accommodated in a collection of love-elegies and the non-amatory elegy on the festival of the goddess of marriage, which mentions Ovid's wife so prominently and unexpectedly in its opening line, is deliberately inserted towards the end of the collection in order to anticipate Ovid's farewell to the genre.

Love-elegy before Ovid was fundamentally paradoxical. The genre was conventionally regarded, even by its exponents themselves, as being light and lacking in seriousness[5], but the elegists nevertheless write about their love-affairs in an essentially serious manner. Hence, for example, Propertius confesses to Maecenas in 2.1 that he lacks the ability to write a grand epic on a subject so weighty as the achievements of Augustus:

> nec mea conueniunt duro praecordia uersu
> Caesaris in Phrygios condere nomen auos (41f.).

[5] See on 1.1.19 *numeris leuioribus*.

That confession, however, does not inhibit him from devoting the rest of the elegy to sombre reflections on his own death, which will inevitably be brought about by his love for Cynthia. The originality of the *Amores* lies largely with Ovid's resolution of this paradox: he handles the light genre with unrelenting lightness. The emotional intensity which characterises the great majority of the elegies of Tibullus and Propertius is entirely absent from the *Amores*, being replaced by a robust and cheerfully detached attitude to the sufferings which love inflicts.

The contrast with Propertius is particularly marked. It is apparent already in the opening words of their respective collections: Propertius' first word is *Cynthia*, emphasising immediately his preoccupation with his love-affair; Ovid, however, begins with *Arma*, humorously raising a false expectation of a grand martial epic[6], and he does not mention his mistress until the third elegy nor name her until the fifth. *Am.* 1.8 and Prop. 4.5 are more closely comparable in content than are any other two poems by different elegists, but there is a radical difference in tone. Propertius conveys an impression of genuine hatred of the *lena* who is attempting to deprive him of his mistress, whereas Ovid does not. For example, Propertius curses Acanthis' powers of persuasion with vehement hyperboles:

> docta uel Hippolytum Veneri mollire negantem,
> concordique toro pessima semper auis,
> Penelopen quoque neglecto rumore mariti
> nubere lasciuo cogeret Antinoo (5ff.);

Ovid, by contrast, is objective enough even to admit a grudging admiration for Dipsas' baneful eloquence:

> haec sibi proposuit thalamos temerare pudicos,
> nec tamen eloquio lingua nocente caret (19f.),

and it is Dipsas herself who exploits the Penelope-paradigm, in a humorously cynical manner:

> has quoque, quae frontis rugas in uertice portant,
> excute: de rugis crimina multa cadent.
> Penelope iuuenum uires temptabat in arcu;
> qui latus argueret corneus arcus erat (45ff.).

Propertius' description of Acanthis is vivid and disgusting:

[6] For the conventions underlying this joke, see pp. 106f.

> uidi ego rugoso tussim concrescere collo,
> sputaque per dentis ire cruenta cauos,
> atque animam in tegetes putrem exspirare paternas:
> horruit algenti pergula curta foco.
> exsequiae fuerant rari furtiua capilli
> uincula et immundo pallida mitra situ (67ff.),

but the corresponding physical details which Ovid gives of Dipsas:

> quin albam raramque comam lacrimosaque uino
> lumina rugosas distraherentque genas (111f.)

suggest a relatively harmless decrepit old alcoholic, to be mocked rather than feared and abominated.

Wit

The extent of Ovid's originality in adopting this detached and cheerful tone should not, however, be exaggerated. Not only was it conventionally acknowledged that the genre was basically lacking in seriousness, but much of the light-hearted humour of the *Amores* is to be found, in a scarcely more subdued form, in the poetry of the other elegists, especially Propertius[7]. Ovid's first elegy does much to establish the tone for the collection as a whole: he wanted to be an epic poet, but was forced by Cupid to write love-elegies, even though he did not yet have a beloved. There is an obvious contrast with the urgency and conviction of Propertius' first elegy, which laments passionately the sufferings which his love for Cynthia causes him. Nevertheless, the two main features of the humour in Ovid's poem, his undignified portrayal of himself as the helpless victim of a deity who deflates his pretensions to epic and the off-hand manner in which he announces the genre in which he will write, have a close parallel elsewhere in Propertius. In 3.3, Propertius presents himself in a humorously undignified light when he describes how Apollo unceremoniously denied him access to the epic springs of inspiration and brusquely bade him be a love-elegist; like Ovid, Propertius makes no claim in that poem that his motivation for writing love-elegy is his passion for his mistress. Moreover, the rough treatment to which Propertius is ignominiously subjected by the Amorini in 2.29 is described in the same witty manner as the cherubic Cupid's imperious interference with Ovid's epic poem.

In 2.1, Ovid gives a different, but equally witty, explanation for his being a love-elegist rather than an epic poet. It was conventionally

[7] On this generally underestimated aspect of Propertius' poetry, see Lefèvre (1966).

held that epic was a useful genre of poetry, because it provided moral edification[8]. Ovid changes the criterion by which the usefulness of poetry is to be determined, and argues that it is love-elegy which is useful, because it provides success in love. This perversion is not original to him; it had been exploited already in the seventh and ninth poems of the *Monobiblos*, in which Propertius banters the epic poet Ponticus that his *Thebaid* will be of no use to him when he falls in love.

Similarly, Propertius was no less willing than Ovid to exploit the comic possibilities afforded by the komos. In 1.16, a snobbish but seedy house-door laments that drunken lovers pound it with their fists and pin their vile garlands on it every night. It singles out one particular lover (presumably Propertius himself), who is especially troublesome, and quotes at length the sort of drunken complaints which he is forever making in a shrill wheedling voice (*arguta... blanditia* [16]). Propertius' portrayal of himself as morally inferior to the pretentiously puritanical door is at least as broadly humorous as Ovid's demeaning and unavailing attempt in 1.6 to persuade the door-keeper to allow him access to his mistress.

In 1.14, Ovid delivers a pompous high-flown tirade against his mistress, who has become bald through attempting to dye her hair. The situation and its treatment by Ovid are thoroughly comic, but the humour is matched by Propertius in his attack on hair-dyeing in 2.18B. Like Ovid, Propertius strikes a morally pretentious posture which is incongruous with the triviality of the issue. For instance, his imprecation against the practice of hair-dyeing is inappropriately solemn and formal:

> illi sub terris fiant mala multa puellae,
> quae mentita suas uertit inepta comas! (27f.)

Moreover, when he suggests that, if his mistress is so keen to look like the Britons, she might as well go so far as to dye her hair with dark-blue woad:

> an si caeruleo quaedam sua tempora fuco
> tinxerit, idcirco caerula forma bona est? (31f.),

the implied comparison of the sophisticated Cynthia to savages smeared with war-paint[9] is extremely amusing.

[8] See the introduction to 2.1.

[9] Cf. Caes. *Gall.* 5.14.3 *omnes uero se Britanni uitro inficiunt, quod caeruleum efficit colorem, atque hoc horridiores sunt in pugna aspectu.*

Parody?

It is widely supposed that the *Amores* are a parody of the genre of love-elegy, and of Propertius in particular. Certainly, it is true that Ovid often relies on his readers' awareness of the other elegists' essential seriousness, to act as a foil to his own humour. As is illustrated above, however, there is no straightforward and clear-cut antithesis between introspective Propertian passion and urbane Ovidian objectivity. Propertius is, at times, as urbane and objective, as Ovidian, as Ovid himself. Just as Ovid restricts the genre's range of subject-matter, so he also restricts the range of tone with which he handles that subject-matter. This difference in range of tone can be appreciated readily through a comparison of *Am.* 1.14 with Prop. 2.18B. Any residual temptation which we may feel to interpret Ovid's poem as anything more than mere playfulness is unambiguously dispelled by the concluding couplet, in which he acknowledges that the issue is, after all, very trivial, for his mistress' hair will soon grow again:

> collige cum uultu mentem: reparabile damnum est;
> postmodo natiua conspiciere coma (55f.).

Propertius, on the other hand, concludes his poem on an altogether more serious note, arguing that fidelity to him is the only beauty-aid which his mistress needs:

> ipse tuus semper tibi sit custodia lectus,
> nec nimis ornata fronte sedere uelis.
> credam ego narranti, noli committere, famae:
> et terram rumor transilit et maria (35ff.).

Against the view that the *Amores* are a parody of their genre, one may also advance the negative argument that common themes which the other elegists treat seriously and which, if presented in Ovid's usual light-hearted manner, would inevitably involve parody, are conspicuous by their almost total absence from the *Amores*. Propertius displays a neurotic fascination with the idea of death, particularly his own death. The theme recurs again and again in his poetry; he even devotes an entire elegy (2.13B) to explaining to Cynthia the observances which he wishes to be carried out at his funeral. Ovid gives prominence to this fundamental elegiac theme by including it in the programmatic third poem of Book 1:

> tecum, quos dederint annos mihi fila sororum,
> uiuere contingat teque dolente mori (17f.).

If, however, one discounts passing references in the context of his claims to immortality through his poetry, he mentions his own death only once elsewhere in the *Amores*. In the concluding lines of 2.10, he prays that death may come to him through excessive indulgence in sexual intercourse as he attempts to sustain two love-affairs simultaneously:

> at mihi contingat Veneris languescere motu,
> cum moriar, medium soluar et inter opus;
> atque aliquis nostro lacrimans in funere dicat
> 'conueniens uitae mors fuit ista tuae' (35ff.).

That passage does indeed parody the conventional elegiac attitude to death, but it is brief and quite exceptional, and does not, as far as we know, draw on any specific model. The morbid elegiac preoccupation with death would have been a particularly easy target for a poet intent on parody, but there is no poem in the *Amores* comparable to Vergil's tenth *Eclogue*, which apparently makes fun of an elegiac lament by Gallus that he is dying of love for Lycoris.

The elegists' portrayal of themselves as abjectly enslaved to their mistresses would have been equally vulnerable to parody. The programmatic third poem of Book 1 also gives prominence to this important concept:

> accipe, per longos tibi qui deseruiat annos (5),

but *seruitium amoris* occurs only very occasionally elsewhere in the *Amores*, almost always as little more than a figure of speech, and it is of significance to the general structure of only one other elegy, 2.17, and even in that poem there is no perceptible parody.

A further obstacle to the view that the *Amores* are a parody of their genre is the fact that there is a considerable number of elegies in the collection which are light and graceful variations on standard elegiac themes but which, so far from being parodic, rely little or not at all on humour of any kind: for example, 1.5, an account of an afternoon of love-making with Corinna; 1.15 and 3.15, epilogue-poems boasting of Ovid's achievements as a love-elegist; 2.11, a propemptikon to Corinna, and 2.12, its sequel; 2.13 and 2.14, on Corinna's abortion; 2.16, an invitation to his mistress to join him in Sulmo.

Corinna

It is the prevailing modern opinion that Corinna[10], the mistress whom Ovid celebrates in the *Amores*, either did not exist or is, at best, a *Konzentrationsfigur*[11], compounded of several different women, a literary equivalent to Zeuxis' Helen[12]. It is perhaps this opinion which has given the greatest impetus to the view that Ovid is intent on parody. If one reads them with the presupposition that no real and individual woman lies behind the *persona* of Corinna, the *Amores* will seem to differ in an essential respect from the rest of Augustan love-elegy. Gallus' mistress, Lycoris, was a freedwoman of P. Volumnius Eutrapelus[13] and, although we now know so little about them, no one seriously doubts that the mistresses celebrated by Tibullus and Propertius actually existed. If Ovid's elegies are thought to have no such basis in reality, the emotions which they express will seem insincere and it is all but inevitable that their light-hearted tone should be regarded as parodic.

It should, however, be noted that Ovid never denied Corinna's existence, even when to have done so might have assisted his prospects for recall from exile; cf. *Trist.* 4.10.59f.:

> mouerat ingenium totam cantata per Vrbem
> nomine non uero dicta Corinna mihi.

Moreover, his contemporaries were in a much better position than we are to assess this problem, and it is by no means certain that they regarded her as fictitious. Ovid twice tells us that her identity was unknown: at 2.17.29, he claims to know a girl who asserts falsely that she is Corinna and, at *Ars* 3.538, he boasts that many people ask him who Corinna is. At least if taken at face-value, those passages suggest

[10] Corinna is a highly controversial figure. We do not know whether or not she existed nor what status Ovid portrays her as having. Fortunately, however, although these problems have a certain historical and sociological interest, they are not of primary importance to the literary appreciation of the *Amores*. What really matters is the credibility of the *persona*, not its reality. Note the younger Pliny's encomiastic comment on the elegies of Propertius' descendant, Passennus Paullus: *amat ut qui uerissime* (*Epist.* 9.22.2). For a brief discussion of Corinna's status, see the introduction to 1.4 and see also Oliver (1945) 198ff., Sullivan (1961) 522ff., Sabot (1976) 441ff., Stroh (1979). On the problem of the mistress' status and relation to reality in love-elegy in general, see Syme (1978) 200ff., Lyne (1980) 1ff., Veyne (1983) *passim*, Griffin (1985), esp. 27ff.

[11] The term is taken from Martini (1933) 11.

[12] Cf. Cic. *Inu.* 2.1.

[13] See *RE* 12.218f., 2.9.883.

that Corinna was considered to be a real woman no less than were the other elegiac mistresses, and there is no external evidence to contradict that view. Discussing the use of sobriquets in erotic literature at *Apol.* 10, Apuleius, with some plausibility, identifies Propertius' Cynthia as Hostia and Tibullus' Delia as Plania. From his silence about Corinna, however, we can infer, at most, that he could not identify her; we cannot infer that he regarded her as non-existent. In any case, he is being selective, for he says nothing about Gallus' Lycoris either, even though her real name was so well known. The only extant attempt to identify Corinna is, of course, a mere wild speculation, but it is still of some significance that she seemed real enough to Sidonius Apollinaris, five hundred years later, for him to suggest, presumably under the influence of speculation about the *error* which led to Ovid's relegation, that she was no less a person than Augustus' daughter, Julia:

> et te carmina per libidinosa
> notum, Naso tener, Tomosque missum,
> quondam Caesareae nimis puellae
> ficto nomine subditum Corinnae (*Carm.* 23.158ff.).

Corinna is not portrayed as living in cloistered seclusion. Ovid claims, for example, to have attended banquets with his mistress (esp. 1.4 and 2.5), to have lain at her door-step (esp. 1.6), even to have escorted her in public on many occasions for all to see:

> quando ego non fixus lateri patienter adhaesi,
> ipse tuus custos, ipse uir, ipse comes?
> scilicet et populo per me comitata placebas:
> causa fuit multis noster amoris amor (3.11.17ff.).

It is difficult to understand how Ovid could have kept the identity of a real mistress secret for any length of time from his friends who lived in the very *milieu* in which the love-affair is set. One might suppose that they must very quickly either have discovered her identity or realised that she did not exist. Nevertheless, Ovid wrote Corinna-poems for more than a decade (see pp. 74ff.), and still claimed that her identity was controversial. Perhaps we must assume that he was regularly seen about with a number of different women, any one of whom might be thought to be Corinna. Certainly, the conventions of the genre would have assisted Ovid considerably in maintaining Corinna as an enigmatic but plausible *persona*. Above all, the practice of disguising the mistress' identity under a sobriquet automatically ensured a degree of mystery. The sobriquets *Lycoris*,

Delia and *Cynthia* all recall titles of Apollo, the god of poetry[14]. *Corinna* has similarly elevated connotations, since that was the name of a Greek poetess renowned for her beauty and for the complexity of her poetry[15]. For such associations with a Greek poetess, one may compare Varro of Atax' *Leucadia*[16] and Catullus' *Lesbia*, both of which sobriquets recall Sappho. If Apuleius is correct in identifying Delia as Plania (see above), Tibullus has devised a clever bilingual pun, playing on δῆλος and *planus*. In choosing the name *Corinna*, Ovid may be teasing and frustrating attempts to find a clue of that sort to his mistress' identity, for *Corinna* is cognate with κόρη and can always be replaced with *puella*, which has exactly the same prosody.

Ovid portrays Corinna's physical appearance and character in general terms, giving no information which would distinguish her as a recognisable individual. This does not throw doubt on her reality, for the other elegists portray their mistresses in the same vague manner. Tibullus tells us nothing of substance about Delia and the only detail which seems to individualise Nemesis is the reference to her sister's death in unusual circumstances (2.6.39f.). Although Cynthia plays such a prominent role in Propertius' elegies, very little specific information can be gleaned about her, perhaps only that she had a *doctus auus* (3.20.8)[17]. As well as being vague, the portrayal of an elegiac mistress was not necessarily true to life. At 3.24.5f., Propertius seems to be making an explicit acknowledgment that his encomia of Cynthia have been to some degree fictitious:

> mixtam te uaria laudaui saepe figura,
> ut, quod non esses, esse putaret amor.

Ovid refers to the same convention in 3.12, where he argues that he

[14] See Randall (1979) 30ff.

[15] For the former quality, cf. Pausan. 9.22.3 ἦν γυναικῶν τότε δὴ καλλίστη τὸ εἶδος; for the latter, cf. Stat. *Silu.* 5.3.156ff. *pandere docti / carmina Battiadae latebrasque Lycophronis arti / Sophronaque implicitum tenuisque arcana Corinnae.* This Corinna also is very obscure (see Segal [1985] 749f.), but the Latin elegists had at least a superficial knowledge of her; Propertius compares Cynthia's poetry to hers (2.3A.21).

[16] Sappho is said to have jumped from the Leucadian cliff; see Palmer on *Epist. Sapph.* 171. Varro may have chosen the name also because of its associations with Apollo, who had a shrine there.

[17] That detail adds weight to Apuleius' identification of her as Hostia, for a certain Hostius is known to have composed epic poetry at some time in the preceding century; see *RE* 8.2516.

has lost Corinna to other lovers because they have accepted his encomia of her at face-value, instead of assuming that he has taken advantage of poetic licence to diverge from the truth:

> nec tamen ut testes mos est audire poetas...
> exit in immensum fecunda licentia uatum,
> obligat historica nec sua uerba fide (19, 41f.)[18].

Even if, therefore, Ovid's friends detected inconsistencies in the portrayal of Corinna, they would not necessarily suspect her of being fictitious.

Not only is Corinna portrayed in a conventionally imprecise manner, but she also plays a relatively inconspicuous role in the *Amores*, more akin to that of the mistresses in Greek epigram or in Horace's *Odes* than to that of, in particular, Cynthia in Propertius' elegies. It is Ovid who dominates the centre of the stage, and the prominent roles attributed to third parties (the rival, the door-keeper, the procuress, the maid, the parrot etc.) push Corinna still further from the limelight. (For Ovid's treatment of love from a feminine perspective we must look to the *Heroides*.) Corinna's lack of prominence by comparison to Cynthia can perhaps be seen most clearly in the sharp contrast between their speaking roles. Propertius' frequent direct quotation of Cynthia's words helps to give a vivid impression of her personality; cf. esp. 1.3.35-46, 2.29.31-38, 3.6.19-34, 4.7.13-94, 4.8.73-80. Ovid, with his rather more dramatic style, generally makes slightly more use of direct quotation than does Propertius; see p. 68. One might therefore expect Corinna to have a significant speaking part. In fact, however, although Ovid occasionally enlivens his own addresses to his mistress by the direct quotation of sentiments which she might utter (1.14.48-50, 2.11.30, 3.14.48), Corinna is little more than a κωφὸν πρόσωπον, speaking only at 2.18.8, a total of six words[19]. Since she remains so much in the background, we have the less reason or opportunity to scrutinise closely the plausibility of the manner in which Ovid portrays her.

Corinna's credibility is further protected by the infrequency with which Ovid refers to her by name. He does so in only twelve poems in the collection, at 1.5.9, 1.11.5, 2.6.48, 2.8.6, 2.11.8, 2.12.2, 2.13.2 and 25, 2.17.7 and 29, 2.19.9, 3.1.49, 3.7.25 and 3.12.16. We

[18] Cf. also *Trist.* 2.340, 355.

[19] I do not include 3.2.84; see the note. The mistress who speaks at 3.7.77-80 is not Corinna (cf. 25f.). Note that even in 2.18 the mistress is not necessarily Corinna, for she is not named in that elegy (see below).

must, of course, assume that she is the mistress involved in the majority of the other poems also, for Ovid repeatedly emphasises that she is the subject of his poetry: he assures her that he will write about her alone (2.17.31ff.), he laments that his *libelli* have attracted other lovers to her because they praise her beauty (3.12) and he equates her role in the *Amores* with that of Nemesis, Cynthia and Lycoris in the elegies of Tibullus, Propertius and Gallus (*Ars* 3.535ff.; see p. 24). There are, however, some elegies in which it is clear that the mistress is definitely not Corinna, because the woman involved is contrasted with her: 2.19 and its sequel, 3.4 (cf. 2.19.9ff.), 3.7 (cf. 25f.). At 2.2.3ff., Ovid describes how he fell in love with a girl at first sight in the portico of the temple of Apollo on the Palatine, whereas 3.2 concerns an encounter in the Circus with a girl who was apparently unknown to him previously; it seems, therefore, that either 2.2 and its sequel, 2.3, or 3.2 cannot concern Corinna. The presence of such elegies within the body of the collection prevents us from assuming automatically that elegies which refer to an unnamed beloved are Corinna-poems, and this may be a calculated ploy designed to inhibit any attempt to fit them into the broad context of Ovid's account of his love-affair with her.

It seems reasonable to conclude that Corinna is not transparently a fictitious *persona*, invented by Ovid with the intention of parodying the genre, but rather that she is portrayed as differing from the other elegiac mistresses only in that her identity was kept secret. If that is the case, one must ask why Ovid should have introduced this variation. It seems hardly likely that his life was actually so puritanical that he was constrained to fabricate an imaginary love-affair. Having an unidentifiable mistress allowed him unhindered freedom to develop conventional scenarios at will: no one could object that Corinna had not become bald as a result of dyeing her hair (1.14) or that her pet parrot was still in good health (2.6). That consideration, however, is not likely to have carried much weight, since love-elegy was not expected to be a faithful record of real events. It may be that Ovid simply enjoyed the gossip and speculation which the Corinna-controversy seems to have engendered. The most probable explanation for the portrayal of Corinna as an enigmatic figure, however, is that Ovid was intent on exploiting a paradox inherent in the conventions according to which the elegists describe their love-affairs. The elegiac love-affair is a *furtiuus amor*[20].

[20] See on 1.4.64 *quod mihi das furtim.*

The mistress' identity is accordingly disguised under a sobriquet. Moreover, the elegists do not represent their mistresses in a precise manner, being content to praise their beauty and delineate their character in general terms. Nevertheless, despite the secretive nature of their love-affairs and the inexactness with which they portray them, the elegists conventionally claim that their purpose in writing love-elegies is to win their mistresses' love by bestowing immortal fame on them through their poetry[21]. This is paradoxical, for the immortal fame to be gained through imprecise encomia under a sobriquet is immortal fame of a very qualified kind. Ovid emphasises this paradox in both of the passages which inform us that Corinna's identity was unknown. At 2.17.27ff., he attempts to persuade her to accept him as her lover by holding out the promise of fame, but the threat to transfer his devotion to another girl if she does not comply reveals the limitations of that fame:

> sunt mihi pro magno felicia carmina censu,
> et multae per me nomen habere uolunt.
> noui aliquam, quae se circumferat esse Corinnam;
> ut fiat, quid non illa dedisse uelit?

The same limitations are again revealed at *Ars* 3.533ff., by the manner in which Ovid formulates his boast that he has bestowed fame on Corinna:

> carmina qui facimus, mittamus carmina tantum:
> hic chorus ante alios aptus amare sumus.
> nos facimus placitae late praeconia formae:
> nomen habet Nemesis, Cynthia nomen habet,
> Vesper et Eoae nouere Lycorida terrae,
> et multi, quae sit nostra Corinna, rogant.

The contemporary world

Whether or not a real woman lies behind the *persona* of Corinna, the insubstantiality with which she is portrayed accords well with the generally vague setting for the *Amores*. The real Augustan world features much less prominently than in the elegies of Tibullus and Propertius. Ovid never brings his mistress into such definite contact with reality as Propertius does when, for example, he criticises the iambic poet Bassus for interfering in his love-affair with Cynthia (1.4)[22], or even as Tibullus does when he dreams of a time

[21] See on 1.3.21-24.

[22] Contrast the lack of specificity in Ovid's attack on his audience for stealing Corinna (3.12).

when Delia will entertain Messalla in the countryside (1.5.31ff.). Propertius' friends, Tullus, Bassus, Gallus (or the Galli) and Ponticus are addressed in eleven of the twenty-two poems in the *Monobiblos*. By contrast, only three poems in the *Amores* name friends of Ovid, 1.9 (Atticus), 2.10 (Graecinus), 2.18 (Macer and Sabinus), and none of these people has an integral role to play in the poem in which he appears. Although he had connections with the literary circle of Messalla, whom Tibullus praises so fulsomely, Ovid mentions neither Messalla not any other patron by name[23]. An oblique compliment to Messalla can be detected only once: at 1.3.15, the phrase *desultor amoris* is an amusing echo of a ***bon mot*** by Messalla (see the note). It may be significant that that passage occurs in a poem which seems to have been among the first to be written (see p. 75). One might suppose that Messalla featured with some prominence in the original first book or books, when Ovid may have felt a need for patronage at the outset of his career. If such references to Messalla ever existed, their absence from the second edition is easily accounted for: the early poems are presumably the least well represented in the second edition (see p. 83) and, in re-editing the collection, Ovid may have felt it judicious to dissociate Messalla, an increasingly estimable pillar of the Augustan establishment, from his own *nequitia*.

There are remarkably few allusions to specific contemporary events: the defeat of the Sygambri (1.14.45ff.), the death of Vergil (1.15.25f.), of Tibullus (1.15.27f., 3.9), of Gallus (3.9.63f.); see pp. 78ff. 3.2, in which Ovid attempts to seduce a girl at the Circus, and 3.13, in which he describes the festival of Juno at Falerii, are exceptional in the collection, being the only elegies to exploit in detail a specific and distinctive contemporary setting. Whereas Propertius expresses a desire to write an epic on a subject which would reflect the spirit of the age, the achievements of Augustus (2.1.25ff.) or of the kings of Alba Longa, from whom the Julii claimed descent (3.3.3f.), the subject of Ovid's abortive martial epic remains unspecified in 1.1 and 2.18; at 2.1.11ff., it is the Gigantomachia, a subject which Propertius had rejected in favour of Augustus' achievements (2.1.19f.). When Ovid does mention Augustus' achievements as a possible subject for an epic, he does so with the utmost brevity and without distinction from the mythological subjects of Thebes and Troy,

[23] In contrast to all the other great Augustan poets, Ovid shows little or no sign of patronage in any of the works written before his relegation.

subjects which Propertius had rejected along with the Gigantomachia (2.1.21):

> cum Thebae, cum Troia foret, cum Caesaris acta,
> ingenium mouit sola Corinna meum (3.12.15f.).

The absence of patronage, the inconspicuous role of friends and the generally vague setting for the *Amores* are bound up with Ovid's unparalleled emphasis on strictly personal amatory themes (see p. 13). In one important respect, however, the *Amores* could not escape the real world. Love-elegy, with its devotion to an idle life of *furtiuus amor*, was inevitably at odds with the Augustan programme of social and moral reform and a subsequent work in the same genre, the *Ars Amatoria*, was ultimately to contribute to Ovid's relegation[24]. In his speech to Cupid at *Pont.* 3.3.29ff., Ovid specifically distinguishes the *Amores* as trivial but innocuous in contrast to the *Ars Amatoria*, the *stultum carmen* which led to his downfall:

> tu mihi dictasti iuuenalia carmina primus:
> apposui senis te duce quinque pedes.
> nec me Maeonio consurgere carmine nec me
> dicere magnorum passus es acta ducum.
> forsitan exiguas, aliquas tamen, arcus et ignes
> ingenii uires comminuere mei.
> namque ego dum canto tua regna tuaeque parentis,
> in nullum mea mens grande uacauit opus.
> nec satis hoc fuerat. stulto quoque carmine feci,
> Artibus ut posses non rudis esse meis.
> pro quibus exilium misero est mihi reddita merces,
> id quoque in extremis et sine pace locis.

In fact, however, it is somewhat surprising that it should have been the *Ars Amatoria* rather than the *Amores* which fell foul of the regime, for the *Amores* seem to be rather more out of line with Augustan ideals. It is a frequent theme of Ovid's poetry from exile that he did not deserve to be punished for writing the *Ars Amatoria*, since that poem does not encourage adultery[25]. That protest has at least some slight validity, for Ovid had explicitly attempted to forestall just such

[24] For a rather more detailed discussion of the political background to Ovid's poetry, see McKeown (1984), esp. 174ff. The *Ars Amatoria* may not actually have contributed as significantly to Ovid's relegation as he claims that it did; for recent discussions of this point, see Syme (1978) 215ff. and (1986) 412f., Goold (1983).

[25] Most notably, Ovid's great apologia addressed to Augustus, *Trist.* 2, is largely devoted to countering the charge that the *Ars Amatoria* is morally subversive.

a charge in several passages in the poem itself, most notably at 1.31ff.:

> este procul, uittae tenues, insigne pudoris,
> quaeque tegis medios instita longa pedes:
> nos Venerem tutam concessaque furta canemus
> inque meo nullum carmine crimen erit[26].

There are no such disclaimers in the *Amores*. On the contrary, so far from declaring that he is writing solely about relationships with prostitutes, Ovid prays that his *nequitia* may find a readership among the *pueri uirginesque*, who will see their own experiences of love reflected in his poetry:

> Hoc quoque composui, Paelignis natus aquosis,
> ille ego nequitiae Naso poeta meae.
> hoc quoque iussit Amor; procul hinc, procul este, seueri!
> non estis teneris apta theatra modis.
> me legat in sponsi facie non frigida uirgo
> et rudis ignoto tactus amore puer;
> atque aliquis iuuenum, quo nunc ego, saucius arcu
> agnoscat flammae conscia signa suae
> miratusque diu 'quo' dicat 'ab indice doctus
> composuit casus iste poeta meos?' (2.1.1ff.)

That prayer is rendered the more deplorable by its parodic echo of Horace's pious exhortation to the young people of Rome in the first of the 'Roman' odes (see pp. 42f.). Moreover, although Ovid does not present his love-affair with Corinna as an overtly adulterous relationship, he does portray himself as an adulterer very explicitly in the pair of elegies 2.19 and 3.4, in which the woman involved is not Corinna; note the use of the terms *uxor* (2.19.46, 3.4.45), *maritus* (2.19.51, 57, 3.4.27), *adulter(a)* (3.4.5, 8, 29, 37).

The unprecedented awareness which Ovid shows in the *Ars Amatoria* of his vulnerability to charges of moral subversion may be attributed to the increasingly repressive nature of Augustus' regime, and perhaps to one incident in particular: Ovid and the other members of the fashionable circles in which he moved must have suffered a profound shock when Augustus reacted to the scandal of 2 B.C. with an untypically open and unrestrained show of force, having his own adulterous daughter Julia banished to the island of Pandateria and punishing those implicated with her, among them perhaps as many as five *nobiles*, with death or exile[27]. It seems more

[26] Cf. also 2.599f., 3.483.

[27] On this scandal, see McKeown (1984) 175f.

likely that it was these events which led Ovid to give a veneer of respectability to the *Ars Amatoria* than that he was influenced by the *leges Iuliae*, which made adultery, at least with a high-born *matrona*, a criminal offence. Those laws were promulgated in 18 B.C., probably well before Ovid had completed the original books of the *Amores* (see pp. 74ff.). The explicitly adulterous elegies 2.19 and 3.4 were apparently among the last poems to be composed, since 2.19.9ff. refers to the Corinna-affair as a thing of the past. It is therefore unlikely that Ovid wrote those poems before 18 B.C. Certainly, he would not have allowed them to appear in the second edition if the *leges Iuliae* had exerted a sobering influence on his *nequitia*.

Augustus can hardly have welcomed the lax moral *ethos* of the *Amores*, which ran so blatantly counter to official policies. Moreover, he was particularly sensitive about his own *dignitas*:

> componi...aliquid de se nisi et serio et a praestantissimis offendebatur, admonebatque praetores ne paterentur nomen suum commissionibus obsolefieri (Suet. *Aug.* 89.3),

and he would therefore have been offended by such frivolous and trivialising allusions to his carefully nurtured propaganda as 1.2.51f. (addressed to Cupid):

> aspice cognati felicia Caesaris arma:
> qua uicit, uictos protegit ille manu

and 2.14.17f.:

> si Venus Aenean grauida temerasset in aluo,
> Caesaribus tellus orba futura fuit.

We need not infer, however, that Ovid was actively opposed to the regime. For an indeterminable, but probably quite substantial, part of the period during which the *Amores* were being composed, he seemed set to play a part in ensuring the success of Augustus' policy of integrating the Italian communities into Roman political life[28], by becoming the first Paelignian member of the Roman senate. He actually held some of the minor posts in the *cursus honorum* which would have led him eventually to the senate:

> cepimus et tenerae primos aetatis honores,
> eque uiris quondam pars tribus una fui (*Trist.* 4.10.33f.).

[28] On Augustus' exploitation of the concept of *tota Italia*, see Syme (1939) 276ff.

Ovid's public career and poetic activities in those years therefore display a familiar contradiction[29]. Gallus, the first of the great exponents of the decadent and non-conformist genre of love-elegy, came to be one of Augustus' most successful generals and was deemed trustworthy enough to be appointed as the governor of the vitally important new province of Egypt. Tibullus proclaims his dedication to the conventional elegiac *uita iners* in contrasting his own behaviour as a lover with the strenuous military career of Messalla:

> te bellare decet terra, Messalla, marique,
> ut domus hostiles praeferat exuuias:
> me retinent uinctum formosae uincla puellae,
> et sedeo duras ianitor ante fores.
> non ego laudari curo, mea Delia: tecum
> dum modo sim, quaeso segnis inersque uocer (1.1.53ff.),

and yet, in the same book, he boasts of his contribution to Messalla's military glory:

> non sine me est tibi partus honos: Tarbella Pyrene
> testis et Oceani litora Santonici,
> testis Arar Rhodanusque celer magnusque Garunna,
> Carnutis et flaui caerula lympha Liger (1.7.9ff.)[30].

Ovid did not, of course, fulfil his initial promise, and the honour of being the first Paelignian member of the senate fell, at some date before 9 B.C., to a certain Q. Varius Geminus[31]. The

[29] This contradiction is by no means confined to the Augustan elegists; cf. Plin. *Epist.* 5.3. A further contradiction, perhaps peculiar to Ovid among the elegists, should also be noted. Ovid married three times, probably twice before the *Amores* were complete, and had a daughter who presented him with at least two grandchildren; cf. *Trist.* 4.10.69ff. There is no evidence that either Gallus or Tibullus ever married. In a relatively early poem (2.7), Propertius had spoken strongly against marriage, as an institution designed simply to ensure that the army was well provided with soldiers. (On the context in which that elegy was written, see Badian [1985].) He may, however, have married eventually, for the younger Pliny's friend, the elegist C. Passennus C. f. Serg. Paullus Propertius Blaesus, from Assisi, Propertius' home-town, seems to have been a direct descendant; cf. Plin. *Epist.* 6.15.1, 9.22.1f., *ILS* 2925.

[30] The precise significance of this passage is problematic. It is uncertain whether Tibullus was actually in the army or simply accompanied Messalla as a civilian member of his *cohors*. The *Vita Tibulli* reports that *Aquitanico bello militaribus donis donatus est*, but that may be nothing more than an inference drawn, via the Suetonian *De poetis*, from these lines. It is not known whether or not Propertius embarked on a public career, but one might infer from 4.1.133f. *Apollo / ...uetat insano bella tonare foro* that he had some experience as a lawyer.

[31] See Wiseman (1971) 270, Syme (1978) 97.

Paeligni had played a prominent part in the struggle against Rome during the Social War; cf. 3.15.8ff. (with the note on 9-10):

> Paelignae dicar gloria gentis ego,
> quam sua libertas ad honesta coegerat arma,
> cum timuit socias anxia Roma manus.

Moreover, resistance to the Caesarian forces had been centred in their territory for a brief but crucial period in 49 B.C.; cf. Caes. *Ciu.* 1.15ff., Appian *BC* 2.38, Lucan 2.478ff. One might therefore speculate that Augustus placed special importance on winning that region over to his own concept of *tota Italia*, and that he was particularly vexed by Ovid's failure to cooperate. In declining a political career, however, Ovid need not have been registering opposition to the regime. He tells us himself that he withdrew from public life because he found politics uncongenial to his temperament:

> curia restabat: claui mensura coacta est;
> maius erat nostris uiribus illud onus.
> nec patiens corpus, nec mens fuit apta labori,
> sollicitaeque fugax ambitionis eram,
> et petere Aoniae suadebant tuta sorores
> otia, iudicio semper amata meo (*Trist.* 4.10.35ff.).

There is no strong reason why we should not take this declaration at face-value, even though it must be treated somewhat circumspectly, since Ovid's desire to obtain a recall from Tomis made him particularly anxious to persuade Augustus that he had always been devoid of political ambitions; he had made substantially the same declaration in happier times many years earlier, when he had no such ulterior motive:

> Quid mihi, Liuor edax, ignauos obicis annos
> ingeniique uocas carmen inertis opus,
> non me more patrum, dum strenua sustinet aetas,
> praemia militiae puluerulenta sequi
> nec me uerbosas leges ediscere nec me
> ingrato uocem prostituisse foro?
> mortale est, quod quaeris, opus; mihi fama perennis
> quaeritur, in toto semper ut orbe canar (*Am.* 1.15.1ff.).

Ovid was born a year after the assassination of Julius Caesar and was only twelve years old when the battle of Actium was fought. His indifference to politics is often attributed to the fact that he can have had little personal experience of the horrors from which Rome had at last been freed. Little weight can be attached to that argument.

The mere institution of the *Pax Augusta* could not have removed at a stroke the factional hatred and bitterness which had tortured Rome for generations. Many of Ovid's contemporaries must have fostered inherited political prejudices. The *Pax Augusta*, with its *dulcedo otii*, did not cause, but merely encouraged, the temperamental indifference to politics for which we have Ovid's own testimony.

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