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**AFTER EXILE:
TIME AND TELEOLOGY FROM *METAMORPHOSES* TO *IBIS****

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Descend again, be pleased to reanimate
This revival of those marvels.
Reveal, now, exactly
How they were performed
From the beginning
Up to this very moment.¹

(Ted Hughes, quoted from Hofmann and Lasdun (1994))

My paper will focus on the Ovid of the elegies from exile as the first extant reader (outside the epic itself) to interpret and reprocess the *Metamorphoses*; in this sense it may serve to mediate between Ovidian and post-Ovidian emphases in the present collection. More specifically, the paper will consider the poet's own reception and revision, after the catastrophe of 8 CE, of the temporal and teleological schemes of the *Metamorphoses* – and also of the *Fasti*, which must be considered alongside the *Metamorphoses* in such an enquiry.

a. Tristia 1

At a programmatically charged moment early in the *Tristia*, Ovid argues that the *Metamorphoses* needs to be quite literally revised to take account of the sudden 'metamorphosis' of the author's own fortunes:

* Standard works of reference cited:
Ernout-Meillet A. Ernout and A. Meillet, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine* ed. 4 (1959)
LS C.T. Lewis and C. Short, *A Latin dictionary* (1879)
Maltby R. Maltby, *A lexicon of ancient Latin etymologies* (1991)
OLD P.G.W. Glare (ed.) *Oxford Latin dictionary* (1968–82)
Walde-Hofmann A. Walde and J.B. Hofmann, *Lateinisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* ed. 3 (1938–54)

¹ I.e. '... Up to this very moment', a new *telos* for the *Metamorphoses* in Hofmann and Lasdun (1994). The change from *mea ... tempora* to 'this very moment' programmes the epic for perpetual update on every such 'reanimation' – including now the new present of Hughes (1997), where these verses are re-cited verbatim, minus the word 'very' (for documentation of all changes on Hughes' opening page between 1994 and 1997 see John Henderson's page in this collection).

sunt quoque mutatae, ter quinque uolumina, formae,
nuper ab exequiis carmina rapta meis.
his mando dicas, inter mutata referri
fortunae uultum corpora posse meae.
namque ea dissimilis subito est effecta priori,
flendaque nunc, aliquo tempore laeta fuit. (*Tr.* 1.1.117–22)

There are also the changed shapes, thrice five rolls of them, verses recently snatched from my obsequies. To these I bid you say that the aspect of my own fortune can now be reckoned among the changed bodies. For this has on a sudden become quite different from what it was before – a cause of tears now, though at one time a cause of joy.²

The conceit is a pointed one. As originally written, the epic brings fifteen books of supernatural transformations to a climax by concluding with a prediction of Ovid's own *post-mortem* 'apotheosis' into poetic immortality:

iamque opus exegi, quod nec Iouis ira nec ignis
nec poterit ferrum nec edax abolere uetustas.
cum uolet, illa dies, quae nil nisi corporis huius
ius habet, incerti spatium mihi finiat aeu:
parte tamen meliore mei super alta perennis
astra ferar, nomenque erit indelebile nostrum,
quaque patet domitis Romana potentia terris,
ore legar populi, perque omnia saecula fama,
siquid habent ueri uatum praesagia, uiuam. (*Met.* 15.871–9)

And now I have erected a work, which neither the wrath of Jove, nor fire, nor sword, nor devouring time will be able to abolish. When it will, let that day, which has no power save over this body of mine, terminate the course of my uncertain years. Yet in my better part I shall be borne immortal above the lofty stars, and indelible shall be my name. Wherever Rome's power extends over the conquered world, I shall be gathered on the lips of men, and, if the prophecies of bards have any truth, throughout all ages in fame I shall live.

Now, says the poet in *Tristia* 1.1, the 'aspect of his fortune' has changed, and the *Metamorphoses* needs to be emended accordingly. The poetic apotheosis at the end of *Metamorphoses* 15 represents the highest kind of transformation; now, in the bleak light of exile, Ovid proposes to pre-empt it with a dampened and downgraded version of metamorphosis, which will record the transformation of a happy authorial fortune into a sad one.

² English translations throughout are adapted more or less lightly from those in the Loeb Classical Library.

So, metapoetically, is the triumphant *Metamorphoses* epilogue rewritten in the inaugural elegy from exile; and it will be subject to other, less spectacular episodes of allusive revision throughout the poetry of the coming years. Thus, when *Tr.* 1.1.117 ff. is reinvoked in the final elegy of *Tristia* 3, it will be the turn of the epilogue's confident *ore legar populi* (*Met.* 15.878) to crumble into self-doubt:

sunt quoque mutatae, ter quinque uolumina, formae,
carmina de domini funere rapta sui.
illud opus potuit, si non prius ipse perissem,
certius a summa nomen habere manu:
nunc incorrectum populi peruenit in ora,
in populi quicquam si tamen ore meum est. (*Tr.* 3.14.19–24)

There are also the changed shapes, thrice five rolls of them, verses snatched from the funeral of their master. That work, had I not myself perished beforehand, might have gained a more secure name from my finishing hand: as it is, it has arrived uncorrected upon the lips of men – if anything of mine is on the lips of men.

Likewise, in *Tr.* 4.8.45–52 (one of many passages in which Ovid retrospectively authorizes an 'Augustan' reading of *Met.* 15.871–2), the poet will concede to the firepower of *Iouis ira* the very supremacy against which his epilogue had taken its final stand:

nil adeo ualidum est, adamas licet alliget illud,
ut maneant rapido firmius igne Iouis;
nil ita sublime est supraque pericula tendit
non sit ut inferius suppositumque deo.
nam quamquam uitio pars est contracta malorum,
plus tamen exitii numinis ira dedit.
at uos admoniti nostris quoque casibus este,
aequantem superos emeruisse uirum. (*Tr.* 4.8.45–52)

Nothing is so strong, though it be bound with adamant, as to withstand by greater might the consuming fire of Jove; nothing is so lofty or reaches so far above perils that it is not beneath a god and subject to him. For although by fault I drew upon me a part of my ills, yet more ruin has befallen me because of the wrath of a divine power. But you too, be warned by my fate to make yourselves worthy of that man who is equal to the gods above.

In short, the epic's final declaration of metamorphic immortality will be repeatedly compromised and alloyed in the writings from exile – though never quite relinquished (cf. e.g. *Tr.* 3.7.43–54).

That will serve as a brief snapshot of the reception in exile of *Met.* 15.871–9. For the purposes of the present treatment, however, I turn my attention to the opposite end of the *Metamorphoses*. The confident prediction of the poet's immortality in the book 15 epilogue represents the fulfilment of a teleological scheme set out in the book 1 proem, which engages to carry the epic's metamorphic theme from the first beginning of the universe *down to the poet's own times*:

... primaque ab origine mundi
ad mea perpetuum deducite *tempora* carmen. (*Met.* 1.3–4)

... and from the first origin of the world spin a continuous song
down to my own times.

So too the exile poetry's *rewriting* of that closural prediction of immortality, just sampled, will be found to correlate with some rewriting of the *Metamorphoses*' opening scheme for the organization of time. As the wording of *Tr.* 1.1.122 can covertly imply (in the first passage quoted above), the *mea ... tempora* anticipated in *Met.* 1.4 are no longer what they were *aliquo tempore*. Ovid's most overt revision of the chronology of his epic proem comes in his great address to Augustus, *Tristia* 2:

dictaque sunt nobis, quamuis manus ultima coeptis
defuit, in facies corpora uersa nouas.
atque utinam reuoces animum paulisper ab ira,
et uacuo iubeas hinc tibi pauca legi,
pauca, quibus prima surgens ab origine mundi
in tua deduxi tempora, Caesar, opus! (*Tr.* 2.555–60)

I told also, though the undertaking lacked my hand's final touch, of bodies turned into new appearances. And would that you might recall your mind awhile from wrath and bid a few lines of this be read to you at leisure, a few lines, in which starting from the first beginning of the universe I spun the work, Caesar, down to your times!

The passage begins with the relegated poet's recurrent claim that the interruption of exile cheated the *Metamorphoses* of their final polish; then some sustained paraphrase and requotation of the epic's first four lines ends with a notable modification of the programmatic teleology just quoted. A movement ... *ad mea tempora* has here become a movement ... *in tua tempora*, addressed to Augustus. As it happens, the triumph of Augustus was the penultimate event to be described in the *Metamorphoses*, so the exiled Ovid's requotation and revision of *Met.* 1.4 can be read as a rueful reordering of the hierarchy of his epic's final two 'paragraphs': it is not after all the triumph of Ovid which is the *telos* of metamorphic history, but the triumph of Augustus.³

³ On the hierarchy of the *Metamorphoses*' final two 'paragraphs' cf. Barchiesi (1994a) 261–5 and Feeney (1998) 74; on the revision of *Met.* 1.4 in *Tr.* 2.560 cf. now Denis Feeney's paper in this collection.

What I want to suggest here is that *time itself* is always a loaded term as the *Tristia* get under way, a term which moves between Ovid's lived experience and his verse, negotiating a transition from the world-views of his Roman past to world-views which will inform his Pontic present and future. The poet puts life and art into dialogue not only to construct his exiled self (as recent work on the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* has so well shown), but to construct the temporal frames which that exiled self must inhabit.

To some extent, my suggestion depends upon mere hints scattered here and there in the exile poetry. What emboldens me to try to gather these hints together is a new appreciation, on the part of Ovidian critics, of the intense thematization of time within Ovid's poetic universe in the two great poems which occupy the years immediately preceding his exile. This appreciation arises at a point of intersection between narratological criticism, with its interests in a poem's internal organization of information, and historicist (or neo-historicist) criticism, with its interest in relating the structures of a poem to the structures of the culture in which that poem is produced and first received. For the *Metamorphoses* such issues have been handled by many recent critics,⁴ and are foregrounded anew in the present collection in the papers of Denis Feeney, Karl Galinsky and Andrew Zissos & Ingo Gildenhard; for the contemporary, unfinished *Fasti*, they have been continuously on the agenda ever since the new wave of Roman religious studies exploded into Ovid's calendar poem with the 1987 interventions of Mary Beard and Andrew Wallace-Hadrill.⁵ The issues are now being conceptualized for Augustan and early imperial literature at large by Alessandro Schiesaro, who promises us a new study of the epistemology of Roman time; indeed a brief excursus within a just-published article (not on Ovid but on Senecan drama) offers a glimpse of how Schiesaro might treat Ovid's exile poetry in such a study. In a suggestive phrase he invokes

the violent spatio-temporal dislocation of exile, which carries Ovid backward and far away to the semi-barbarian periphery constituted by Pontus.⁶

⁴ See e.g. Hardie (1992), esp. 60–1; Barchiesi (1994a) 245–65 (a *tour de force* omitted from that book's English edition but included in Roberts, Dunn and Fowler (1997); Holzberg (1997) 153–8.

⁵ Beard (1987); Wallace-Hadrill (1987). The still-growing bibliography, containing some of the most distinctive work done on Latin poetry in recent years, is best approached via Newlands (1995) and Barchiesi (1997a); discussion continues in Volk (1997), Feeney (1998) 125–7. For the mutuality of *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti* where these issues are concerned, see esp. Barchiesi (1991) 6–7 and (1994a) 245–78.

⁶ Schiesaro (1997) 99–100 'Le *Metamorfosi* sono l'ultima opera compiuta da Ovidio a Roma: e di lì a poco la celebrazione teorica del non-spazio e del non-tempo si incarna nella violenta dislocazione spatio-temporale dell'esilio, che porta Ovidio indietro e lontano nella periferia semibarbara del Ponto.' On Schiesaro's emphasis, Ovid's exile is a kind of incarnation of a disruption in the spatio-temporal universe which has *already* been perpetrated, at a theoretical level, by the *Metamorphoses*. The *Metamorphoses* is of course a work which poses its own challenges to the linear unfolding of time (see again Feeney and Zissos & Gildenhard); but as a reader of the exile poetry I am here more interested in how Ovid *presents* the *Metamorphoses*, and the *Fasti*, as, in retrospect, works which rest on the stability and predictability of temporal categories – a stability and predictability now violently disrupted by exile. To explore the disingenuousness of that retrospective characterization (i.e. the 'always-alreadiness' of the exile poetry's disruptions) is a further step, and a worthwhile one, but not one which I shall venture here.

With that ongoing work as context and protreptic, then, let me find my own way in. 'Time' bulks large in the prefaces of both *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti*:

in noua fert animus mutatas dicere formas
corpora. di coeptis (nam uos mutastis et illa)
aspirate meis, *primumque ab origine mundi*
ad mea perpetuum deducite tempora carmen! (*Met.* 1.1–4)

My mind leads me to tell of shapes changed into new bodies.
O gods, breathe favour on my undertakings (for you have changed those too), and from the first beginning of the universe spin a continuous poem down to my own times!

tempora cum causis Latium digesta per annum
lapsaque sub terras ortaue signa canam. (*Fast.* 1.1–2)

The times, with their causes, distributed through the Latin year; of these I shall sing, and of the starry signs that set beneath the earth and rise again.

Each of the two great poems of Ovid's middle period can be read as a kind of attempt to organize time: diachronic time structuring a history of the universe in the case of the *Metamorphoses*, synchronic or recurrent time structuring the Roman calendar in the case of the *Fasti*. The *Metamorphoses* represents history as a chain of supernatural events culminating in Ovid's own 'apotheosis' and consequent release from time into eternity; the *Fasti* can be variously read as an Ovidian bid to celebrate, supplement, or replace the new Caesarian master-narratives of time constituted by the Julian and Augustan calendars.

What this means for the exile poetry is that mentions of time in these books have the potential to carry a certain Ovidian literary-historical freight (alike for author and for readers), a certain susceptibility to be measured against previous Ovidian characterizations of time. In places this potential will be realized in conscious allusion, in programmatic revision of previous programmatic Ovidian characterizations of time. In places, however, it will reside in a broader and more diffuse sense of intertextual possibility – for which blurring of philological certainties I offer no apology (other than the following).⁷ Fact 1: 'Time' is a term which comes up repeatedly in the exile poetry as the poet tries to make sense of the radical disruption of his own life in 8 CE. Fact 2: Ovid is a poet who was occupied, at the time of his catastrophe, by two major poems linked by a shared programmatic interest in ways of defining and framing time. Part of my argument here must be that it is in principle impossible for *any* subsequent Ovidian account of the workings of time to free itself entirely from the terms of those previously inaugurated discussions. As the composition of the *Fasti* means that for Ovid the word

⁷ With the methodological position negotiated here cf. Hinds (1998) 17–51, and esp. 25–34.

tempora henceforth specifies both ‘times’ and the *incipit* of a poem about ‘times’, so, more broadly, the ways in which Ovid’s personal and poetic history come together in 8 CE make it likely that any subsequent Ovidian meditation about time will at some level be interpretable as an Ovidian meditation about Ovidian meditations about time ... especially, perhaps, as long as one of those two prior meditations, the *Fasti*, itself stands interrupted half-way through its course.

At any rate, as in the prefaces of *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti*, so in the preface of the inaugural book and poem from exile (framed as an address by the poet to his *libellus*), ‘time’ comes up in the first four lines (*Tristia* 1.1 again; cf. 117–22, already discussed):

parue – nec inuideo – sine me, liber, ibis in urbem,
ei mihi, quo domino non licet ire tuo!
uade, sed incultus, qualem decet exulis esse;
infelix habitum temporis huius habe. (Tr. 1.1.1–4)

Little book, you will go without me – and I grudge it not –
to the city, whither alas your master is not allowed to go! Proceed,
but unadorned, as suits the book of an exile; in your infelicity wear
the style of dress appropriate to this time.

The first of two *Tristia* 1 passages which I want to investigate under the rules of engagement just outlined occurs a little farther on in this opening elegy, in a discussion of how changed times must bring a change – a change for the worse – in Ovid’s poetic ambitions:

ut peragas mandata, liber, culpabere forsan
ingeniique minor laude ferere mei.
iudicis officium est ut res, ita *tempora* rerum
quaerere. quaesito *tempore* tutus eris.
carmina proueniunt animo deducta sereno;
nubila sunt subitis *tempora* nostra malis. (Tr. 1.1.35–40)

Though you should carry out my instructions you will be criticized perhaps, my book, and regarded as beneath the glory of my talent. It is a judge’s duty to investigate both situation and timing; if the timing is investigated you will be safe from reproach. Poems come spun forth from a mind that is clear; my times are clouded with sudden woe.

Three mentions of *tempora*: I go straight to the third.⁸ 39 ‘*carmina* come spun forth from a mind that is clear’; 40 ‘my *tempora* are clouded with sudden woe’. *tempora*

⁸ The triple repetition of *tempus/tempora* interlocks with a triple repetition of *carmina* (39, 41, 43). Luck airs Heinsius’ *pectora* for the transmitted *tempora* in his (1967) text of 1.1.40, but his (1977) commentary tacitly restores *tempora* (and notes *nubila* ... *tempora* at 1.9.6). Goold’s revised Loeb and Hall’s new Teubner read *pectora* too, thus lending the revived conjecture a status beyond its merits.

nostra, ‘my times’;⁹ with a suggestion, surely (in anticipation of the explicit epilogue-revision coming up later in the elegy), of the *mea tempora* which were the predicted end of that recent Ovidian *carmen*, the *Metamorphoses*; and perhaps also with a suggestion of that other, unfinished *carmen*, the *Fasti*, which can be styled by its *incipit*-word as ‘my “*tempora*”’ (i.e. my *tempora cum causis*). Ovid must now adapt his *carmina* to gloomier times ... including those *carmina* which he writes concerning ‘times’: if the phrase *tempora nostra* is pressed, time thematizes itself here in the construction of a new frame of Ovidian chronology.

A resonance in the couplet under discussion tempts me to pursue this metapoetic reading a stage further. In its implicitly meteorological opposition with *nubila* (40), *sereno* (39) may offer a faint evocation of the compositional processes of Lucretius, whose concern for his addressee induces him to spend the clear nights in wakefulness, *inducit noctes uigilare serenas*, in order to invest his cosmic *carmen* with the light of understanding (Lucr. 1.142) – an evocation which can find its complement in an actual reference to all-night Ovidian composition later in our elegy, 108 *quos studium cunctos euigilauit idem* ‘[books] all of which are products of the same sustained wakefulness’;¹⁰ note too the Epicurean ring of the *secessum* ... *et otia* sought by the tempest-tossed Ovid just below in lines 41–2.¹¹ Underlying the Lucretian passage, of course, is the ‘intense sleeplessness’, the σύντονος ἀγρυπνίη, of Callimachus’ Aratus (*Epigr.* 27.4) – a poet who must needs wait until the constellations come out at night to work on his star-gazing verse.¹² Such literary-historical reverberations, however elusive, might help to activate an analogous suggestiveness in the *nubila* of Tr. 1.1.40 (‘clouded times’): what more apt metaphor could there be than ‘clouding’ for a blockage in the composition of the *Fasti*, itself a star-gazing poem whose preface (1.2) announces its intention to measure the passage of time by the rising and setting of constellations? To offer a programmatically-enhanced paraphrase of line 40, ‘my *tempora cum causis*, my Aratean star-poem, has been obscured by sudden clouds of woe’.

⁹ More literally, of course, ‘our times’, with a poetic plural at once conventional and precise: ‘my and my book’s’.

¹⁰ The language of the famous Lucretian passage may leave other, less analysable traces too: Lucr. 1.142–4 *et inducit noctes uigilare serenas* | *quaerentem* dictis quibus et quo *carmine* demum | *clara tuae possim praepandere lumina menti* (Tr. 1.1.38–41 *deducta sereno; quaerere/quaesito/quaerunt: carmina/carmina*).

¹¹ Tr. 1.1.41–2 *carmina secessum scribentis et otia quaerunt*; *me mare, me uenti, me fera iactat hiems* ‘poems require a writer’s withdrawal and tranquillity: I am being tossed by sea, by gales, by cruel storm’; for Epicurean *ataraxia* figured as an escape from sea-storms, see Lucr. 2.1–19 and 5.10–12 with Hardie (1986) 200–2, Gale (1994) 120–1.

¹² For this conceit in the much-discussed Callim. *Epigr.* 27.4 (= A.P. 9.507.4) cf. Bing (1988) 36, Cameron (1995) 379. For Callim. *Epigr.* 27.4 and Lucr. 1.141–2 cf. Gale (1994) 107 n. 41 ‘The references to *labor* and nocturnal cogitations [in Lucr. 1.141–2] recall Callimachus’ praise of Aratus’ σύντονος ἀγρυπνίη.’ Note too (with *euigilauit* in Tr. 1.1.108 and *uigilare* in Lucr. 1.142) the explicit evocation of Callimachus’ Aratean epigram at Cinna fr. 11.1–2 *haec tibi Arateis multum inuigilata lucernis* | *carmina* ..., with the observations of Courtney (1993) ad loc.

Another way of probing *Tr.* 1.1.39–40 is to register in the couplet a different kind of pun – itself an Ovidian favourite¹³ – between two distinct meanings of the word *tempora*: not just ‘my times are clouded’ but also (on this third of the word’s three repetitions) ‘my temples [i.e. the sides of my forehead] are clouded’. Such a reading allows *tempora* in 40 to continue from *animo* in 39 an emphasis upon the poet’s own person as the site of affective disturbance. And the resultant play in the couplet between chronological and somatic frames is further sharpened if modern etymological identifications of the latter sense (‘temples’) with the former (‘times’) – whether in terms of the perceptibility of a regular pulse in one’s temples, or through reference, as in Greek τὰ καίματα, to ‘critical points’ or ‘vital junctures’ in the body – are true to ancient (and Ovidian) perceptions of the word.¹⁴

The same pun is more clearly operative in a related passage later in *Tristia* 1, in which a portrait bust of Ovid becomes an index of the poet’s changed situation: here ‘temples’ is the foreground, and ‘times’ the background meaning:¹⁵

siquis habes nostri similes in imagine uultus,
deme meis hederas, Bacchica sarta, comis.
ista decent laetos felicia signa poetas:
temporibus non est apta corona meis. (*Tr.* 1.7.1–4)

If any one of you has a likeness of my visage in a portrait,
remove from my locks the ivy, the chaplet of Bacchus. Such
fortunate symbols are suited to happy poets: a garland does not
befit my *tempora*.

In bringing up *Tristia* 1.7 I am anticipating my second case-study below.¹⁶ What is of interest to me for now is that, as in 1.1.39–40, so here in 1.7.4 the larger context may further particularize within the ‘temples’/‘times’ pun a metapoetic reference to the ‘times’ – the *mea ... tempora* – of the *Metamorphoses* preface. An elegy which builds, as we shall see shortly, towards a sustained and explicit revaluation of the *Metamorphoses* in the wake of exile (1.7.11 *sed carmina maior imago | sunt mea ...*

¹³ With the discussion below cf. Hinds (1988) 21 for ‘temples’/‘times’/‘Times’ at *Tr.* 5.3.2–3. Note that for Henderson (1990) 20 the complex of puns negotiated below is already in play in the *mea ... tempora* of the *Met.* proem itself: Ovid ‘tells divine inspiration to “spin the yarn on and on to reach his *cranium*” (*tempora* in another sense, meaning “temples” of the head, the things successful poets have “garlanded”, i.e. “crowned”, on their triumph)’; so already Ahl (1985) 289–91.

¹⁴ For the latter approach to the identification see LS; for the former, which boasts (late) antique authority in Isid. *Orig.* 11.1.32, see Ernout-Meillet and Walde-Hofmann, along with Maltby (1991) (all s.v. *tempus*).

¹⁵ ‘Temples’, in that these verses visualize a bust crowned with ivy; ‘times’, in that lines 3–4 constitute a close variation of *Tr.* 1.1.3–4 *uade, sed incultus, qualem decet exilis esse: | infelix habitum temporis huius habe*.

¹⁶ ... but I am also building directly from Hinds (1985) 21–7, esp. 24 and n. 35.

‘but my verses are a greater portrait ...’), and which culminates in an actual rewriting of that epic’s proem (1.7.33–40, quoted later), can reasonably be understood in these opening lines to be sensitive to the language of ‘metamorphic’ teleology as it sets up its tensions.

However, the ‘temples’/‘times’ pun which implicates itself most overtly in the programmatics of Ovidian time occurs back in the scene of poetic initiation which inaugurates the fourth book of the *Fasti*:

*‘tempora cum causis, annalibus eruta priscis,
lapsaque sub terras ortaue signa cano.
uenimus ad quartum, quo tu celeberrima mense:
et uatem et mensem scis, Venus, esse tuos.’
mota Cytheriaca leuiter mea tempora myrto
contigit et ‘coeptum perfice’ dixit ‘opus’. (*Fast.* 4.11–16)*

‘The times, with their causes, extracted from the ancient annals; of these I sing, and of the starry signs that set beneath the earth and rise again. We have come to the fourth month, in which you are honoured above all others: you know that both the bard and the month, Venus, are yours.’ The goddess was moved, and touching my *tempora* lightly with Cytherean myrtle, ‘Complete’, said she, ‘the work begun’.

In lines 15–16, Venus sets the calendar poet on the path to completion by giving a consecrating touch to his ‘temples’ ... but also to his poem itself, his *Tempora* or ‘Times’, whose *incipit* has been quoted almost verbatim just two couplets above.¹⁷ Viewed in this context, a ‘temples’/‘times’ pun in the metapoetically resonant *Tr.* 1.1.39–40 is construable as a kind of post-lapsarian allusion to the *Fasti* 4 initiation-scene, in which the signs have become rather less auspicious for Ovid’s ‘temples’, his ‘times’ – and (of course) his ‘Times’.¹⁸

On now to my second case-study, which will explore the idea that ‘Ovidian time’ is densely operative at the beginning of the eighth elegy in *Tristia* 1. In the crisis of his exile, the poet has been deserted by a man whom he had thought to be his friend:

¹⁷ Hinds (1992) 87 and n. 7; Barchiesi (1994a) 49 (= (1997a) 58), who has the notable advantage of being able to deliver the pun in Italian (*tempi* invece che *temple*).

¹⁸ An intertextual reading of *Fast.* 4.15–16 and *Tr.* 1.1.39–40 sorts itself a little differently, by the way, if we entertain Denis Feeney’s suggestion that the *Fasti* 4 proem is one of a number of passages in the *Fasti* itself which contain a built-in allusion, (re)written by Ovid in exile, to the poem’s own interruption. ‘Complete the work begun’, enjoins Venus in *Fast.* 4.16, after touching the poet’s *tempora*. But her injunction is destined to find no fruition, as we know now, as *Tr.* 1.1.39–40 allusively adumbrates ... and as *Fast.* 4.15–18 may itself anticipate (so Feeney) by portraying a poet who is proceeding with marked caution: 4.18 *dum licet ... nauis eat, ‘while it is allowed ... let the ship go on.’* ‘The ship of the *Fasti* never does [get to port at the end]. The *opus* is never *perfectum*, it never gets beyond the *coepta* stage’: Feeney (1992) 16–17, adducing the same provisional language in the dedication (re)written to Germanicus at *Fast.* 1.25–6. On the whole matter of revisions to the *Fasti* in exile the work of Elaine Fantham is crucial: see most recently Fantham (1998) 2–4, with index s.v. ‘Ovid: exile, composition in exile’.

in caput alta suum labentur ab aequore retro
 flumina, conuersis Solque recurret equis:
terra feret stellas, caelum findetur aratro,
unda dabit flammās, et dabit ignis aquas,
omnia naturae praepostera legibus ibunt,
parsque suum mundi nulla tenebit iter,
 omnia iam fient, fieri quae posse negabam,
 et nihil est, de quo non sit habenda fides.
 haec ego uaticinor, quia sum deceptus ab illo,
 laturum misero quem mihi rebar opem. (Tr. 1.8.1–10)

To their starting-points shall deep rivers flow back from the sea,
 and the Sun shall run backwards, having turned his steeds; the
 earth shall bear stars, the sky shall be cloven by the plough, water
 shall produce flame and flame water; all things shall proceed
 reversing the laws of nature, and no part of the universe shall keep
 its path; everything that I once called impossible shall now take
 place, and there is nothing that one ought not to believe. All this
 I prophesy as *uates*, because I have been deceived by that man
 who I thought would bring aid to me in my wretchedness.

What starts out in the opening couplet as a standard battery of *adynata*¹⁹ develops, for
 a reader alert to Ovidian self-echo, into something grander and (I think) more specific:
 namely, a reversion of the cosmos from a state of order to the state of *original* Chaos
 ... which had marked the first point of departure (1.5–7) of Ovid's own universal history
 in the *Metamorphoses*:

nulli sua forma manebat,
 obstabatque aliis aliud, quia corpore in uno
 frigida pugnabant calidis, umentia siccis,
 mollia cum duris, sine pondere, habentia pondus.
hanc deus et melior litem natura diremit.
nam caelo terras et terris abscidit undas ... (Met. 1.17–22)

In no entity did a shape of its own abide; and one thing would
 obstruct another, for within the same body cold things fought with
 hot, moist with dry, soft with hard, things having weight with
 weightless things. God – in other words, stronger nature – settled
 this dispute at law. For he separated earth from sky, and waters
 from earth ...

¹⁹ For a general treatment of *adynata* in the exile poetry see Davison (1980–1).

In *Tristia* 1.1 Ovid had indicated that the *Metamorphoses* needed a new and gloomier
telos to reflect the grim change in its poet's fortunes. Now, it seems (see my emphases
 above), an altogether more radical revision of metamorphic teleology is required, in
 order to reflect Ovid's wholly unexpected betrayal by a previously trusted friend. If
 something like this can happen, the whole world must be reverting to Chaos – and the
 world which is reverting to Chaos is, specifically, the universe as constructed by Ovid:
 viz. the universe of the *Metamorphoses*. This world can no longer be relied upon to
 progress forward *prima ... ab origine mundi* / *ad mea ... tempora*; metamorphic time
 has been thrown into reverse.²⁰ The penultimate couplet of the elegy offers its own
 variation on this teleological theme:

sed quoniam accedit fatalibus hoc quoque damnis,
ut careant numeris tempora prima suis (Tr. 1.8.47–8)

But since this too has been added to my fated losses, that those
 early times should fall short of consummation ...

In the segment of temporal history which is Ovid's longstanding friendship for his
 betrayer, *tempora prima* can no longer be relied upon to find their due measure of
 fruition, *numeris ... suis*; the very word *numeris* can hint at the constructedness of time,
 and perhaps even (like the English 'measure') at an analogy between that
 constructedness and the constructedness of poetry.²¹

Now once again I am reading tendentiously, and it may be that I should discount
 specific allusivity here in favour of one of those impalpable senses of intertextual
 possibility which I took care to license earlier: perhaps Ovid has so internalized his
 own vocabulary of cosmic time from the *Metamorphoses* that it ends up quite uncon-
 sciously colouring his reverse-cosmogony here in *Tristia* 1.8. But two things make me
 suspect that the poet's allusion to 'metamorphic' cosmology is quite conscious: first,
 the way in which Ovid deliberately clothes himself in the mantle of the *uates* to predict
 this reversion to Chaos (1.8.9 *haec ego uaticinor*);²² and second, the placement of this

²⁰ Philip Hardie (in editorial correspondence) adds here a pertinent suggestion about the 'standard' *adynata*
 in the elegy's opening couplet: 'the first two *adynata* of *Tristia* 1.8 may be chosen precisely *because* they
 refer us to time, rivers being a common image of time, as in the Speech of Pythagoras at *Met.* 15.179 ff.
 (see Nisbet-Hubbard (1978) on *Hor. Carm.* 2.14.2; McKeown (1989) on *Ov. Am.* 1.8.49–50); and the Sun's
 horses marking the passage of time [as explored in Zissos & Goldenhard's paper in this collection].'

²¹ As in my reading of *Tr.* 1.1.39–40, an allusion to the temporal construction of the *Fasti*; line 48 could fleetingly (and
 illogically) invite the construal '... that the first month should fail to lead all the way to the last', '... that
 book 1 of the *Fasti* should miss its complete tally of successors'. For *tempora prima* = 'first month of
 the year' = 'first part of the *Fasti*' cf. *Fast.* 3.98 *tempora prima*, with 5.185 *tempora Maii*; OLD s.v.
primus 9b 'the first part of (a literary work, etc.)'.

²² Philip Hardie offers a suggestive parallel: '*uaticinor* (*Tr.* 1.8.9) is used of Lucretius at *Tr.* 2.426
casurumque triplex uaticinatur opus [...] and he prophesies as *uates* the destruction of the threefold work [...].
 again of a "prophecy" of the end of the world.' (On the general associations of the word *uates* see further
 n. 33 below.)

poem directly after *Tristia* 1.7, an elegy whose very theme is the poet's revaluation of his relationship with the *Metamorphoses* in the wake of exile. To be brief (since I have discussed *Tristia* 1.7 in print before),²³ this previous elegy describes Ovid's impulsive attempt to destroy his own epic.

sed carmina maior imago
sunt mea, quae mando qualiacumque legas,
carmina mutatas hominum dicentia formas,
infelix domini quod fuga rupit opus.
haec ego discedens, sicut bene multa meorum,
ipse mea posui maestus in igne manu. (*Tr.* 1.7.11–16)

But my verses are a greater portrait, and these I bid you read however poor they are – the verses that tell of the changed shapes of men, the work broken off by the unfortunate exile of their master. These verses upon my departure, like so much that was mine, in sorrow I placed with my own hand in the fire.

and his subsequent conditional reconciliation to the work's survival (lines 23–32). *Tristia* 1.7 ends, remarkably enough, by instructing the reader to attach a six-line preface to the *Metamorphoses* itself – a preface which will reintroduce the epic in the newly flawed mode of exile:

hos quoque sex uersus, in prima fronte libelli
si praeponendos esse putabis, habe:
'Orba parente suo quicumque uolumina tangis,
his saltem uestra detur in urbe locus.
quoque magis faueas, haec non sunt edita ab ipso,
sed quasi de domini funere rapta sui.
quicquid in his igitur uitii rude carmen habebit,
emendaturus, si licuisset, erat.' (*Tr.* 1.7.33–40)

Receive these six verses also, if you think them worthy to be prefixed to the book's first beginning: 'All you who touch these volumes bereft of their [poetic] parent, to them at least let a place be granted in your city. The more to ensure your favour, it is not by himself that they have been made public, but they have been snatched, as it were, from the funeral pile of their master. So whatever faults the rough poem in here shall have, he would have corrected them, had it been allowed.'

²³ Hinds (1985) 21–7; cf. Williams (1994) 80–3, and now the complementary emphases in Joseph Farrell's paper in this collection.

In a sequential reading of *Tristia* 1, the end of poem 7 has attached a downbeat preface to the *Metamorphoses*; how natural, then, that the beginning of poem 8 should proceed to a reversal of the epic's first, originary transformation ... with an opening phrase, *in caput* (1.8.1), which itself reverses the epistemological direction of the *Metamorphoses*' titular opening, *in noua*.²⁴

b. *Ibis*

For the latter part of my paper I shift my attention from *Tristia* 1 to the *Ibis*, a *tour de force* of late Ovidian elegy in which various preliminaries culminate in an almost 400-line catalogue of mythologically inspired curses. Those curses, of course, are directed at the persecutor whose identity lies concealed beneath the bird-name of the title – whom the poet blames for many of his woes in exile. At a key moment in the *Ibis*, Ovid harnesses all the divine powers in mythological history to underwrite his elegy's multiple execrations; and he does so by making an unmistakable verbal appeal to the cosmic-temporal scheme in the proem of the *Metamorphoses*:

denique ab antiquo diui ueteresque nouique
in nostrum cuncti tempus adeste Chaos,
carmina dum capiti male fido dira canuntur
et peragunt partes ira dolorque suas. (*Ib.* 83–6)

Gods lastly old and new from ancient Chaos down to our own time, be present all, while imprecatory verses are sung against that faithless head, and grief and anger play their parts.

'The *Metamorphoses* and the *Ibis* have more in common than has generally been realized' says Gareth Williams in a recent ground-breaking revaluation of the *Ibis*;²⁵ and (without explicitly invoking the lines above) he appeals to the proem of the *Metamorphoses* to get a handle on the curse-poem's deployment of its massive mythological freight:

With this seemingly unending catalogue of mythical *exempla*, each reduced to a single couplet, I suggest that Ovid is experimenting with a new kind of *carmen perpetuum* – a spell whose composite elements are interwoven in unbroken, unexhausted sequence, but one in which we find a drastic pruning of the familiar narratival devices employed in that earlier *carmen perpetuum*, the *Metamorphoses*.²⁶

²⁴ On the susceptibility of the opening *in noua* (or *in noua fert animus*) to construal as a titular phrase disengaged from its syntactical context, cf. Kenney (1976) 46.

²⁵ Williams (1996) 88.

²⁶ Williams (1996) 90.

There is much to be said about the various ways in which one can read the encyclopedic mythography of the *Ibis* with and against the encyclopedic mythography of the *Metamorphoses*;²⁷ but, for the purposes of the present paper, I shall limit myself to matters strictly chronological; and my first step here is to consider the *Ibis*' own proem.

If the accumulated precedent of *Metamorphoses*, *Fasti* and *Tristia* has generated an expectation that some reference to the organization of time will now inform any Ovidian poetic preface – a quasi-generic expectation, almost –, the *incipit* of the *Ibis* does not disappoint:

tempus ad hoc, lustris bis iam mihi quinque peractis,
omne fuit Musae carmen inerme meae. (*Ib.* 1–2)

Up to this time, twice five *lustra* having now been passed by me,
every verse of my Muse has been harmless.

tempus ad hoc ...: the *Ibis* is conventionally dated to *circa* 11 or 12 CE. However, the opening line's ten-*lustrum* count specifies a different date as foundational for the composition of the *Ibis*: Ovid's fiftieth birthday, in our calendar 8 CE, the year of the relegation itself.²⁸ That is the date which the poet clearly means to specify when he uses very similar wording to count his age on another occasion:

fata repugnarunt, quae, cum mihi tempora prima
mollia praebuerint, posteriora grauant.
iamque decem lustris omni sine labe peractis,
parte premor uitae deteriore meae. (*Tr.* 4.8.31–4)

The Fates opposed, who, though they brought gentleness to my
early times, are rendering my latter ones burdensome. Now, ten
lustra having been passed without any stain, I am being afflicted
in the declining part of my life.

Not only does the *incipit* of the *Ibis* mark a temporal crisis, then, as did many programmatic moments in *Tristia* 1, but it marks the *same* temporal crisis: however many years at Tomis Ovid may actually have spent meditating and then publishing the *Ibis*, the juncture which he *presents* as critical for this poem, the cue for this latest

²⁷ The oral version of my paper at the Craven Seminar ended with a brief treatment of Ovid's post-'metamorphic' approach to mythic exemplification in the *Ibis*: I hope to return to this material in the future.

²⁸ Most discussions are too much in a hurry to explain (away) this line's specification as a *terminus post quem* to which three or four (but presumably not five) years should immediately be added: see Williams (1992h) 178 for the consensus that 'Ovid ... was not yet fifty-five when he composed it (cf. *Ibis* 1–2).' For a less literal approach, which allows more attention to the couplet's actual wording and emphases, cf. Williams (1996) 37 on a possible evocation here of the age of fifty as a marked transition-point in the self-presentation of an earlier Augustan poet, Horace (*Carm.* 4.1.6).

reinvention of his Muse, is the same juncture advertised as critical in *Tristia* 1: not 11 or 12 CE but, as always, obsessively, in the exile poetry, the moment of relegation in 8 CE itself – the moment at which the confident teleologies of Ovid's life and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* are derailed. In this sense, the opening *tempus ad hoc* works to echo and redirect the closural *ad mea ... tempora* which were the predicted end of the *Metamorphoses*.

In focusing attention upon the chronological programmatics of the *Ibis*, I am again anticipated by Gareth Williams. For Williams, however, the *incipit* turns out to be something of a red herring as far as the epistemology of time in the major part of Ovid's new poem is concerned:

In contrast to the careful demarcation of age and time in the first line of the poem ... the catalogue is a dream-like fantasy in which all temporal distinctions cease to apply.²⁹

Although he does not quite say so, in offering this (very fair) characterization of the *Ibis* catalogue Williams is influenced by another programmatically charged couplet later in the poem – which is well worth a look. My own interest in the couplet in question is sharpened by its status as a kind of second proem for the *Ibis*: not so much a *proemio al mezzo*,³⁰ as we shall see, but rather a kind of anterior or pre-textual preface. Let me explain.

Just over 200 lines into the elegy, and just before the catalogue proper begins, Ovid offers an extended and lurid flashback to the birth of the man known as 'Ibis' – a birth presided over by both the Furies and the Fates. As the climax of the scene approaches (after the hooting owl, the Stygian water, the snake venom, and the mad dog's milk), smoking torches are applied near the new-born baby's face to make it cry. It is then that a Fate (or a Fury)³¹ steps in to utter a text for the infant's future; this once uttered, Clotho starts to spin:

flebat, ut est fumis infans contactus amaris,
de tribus est cum sic una locuta soror:
'tempus in immensum lacrimas tibi mouimus istas,
quae semper causa sufficiente cadent.'
dixerat: at Clotho iussit promissa ualere,
neu it infesta stamina pulla manu. (*Ib.* 239–44)

²⁹ Williams (1996) 101.

³⁰ 'Proem in the middle': for the phrase and concept see Conte (1992a).

³¹ *Ib.* 241–2 uttered by one of the three Fates: La Penna (1957) ad 240 and Williams (1996) 74; and cf. *Met.* 8.452–6 for a suggestive parallel. *Ib.* 241–2 uttered by one of the three Furies: Watson (1991) 118 and n. 275; and cf. (*pace* La Penna) *Met.* 10.313–14. What is not in doubt is that the Furies are in charge in lines 225–38 (but 'about to withdraw', *iamque recessurae*, in 237); and that Clotho, for the Fates, is in charge in lines 243–6. It seems not unlikely that the vexed reference to 'one sister of the three' in the transitional passage is precisely intended to highlight the mythological doubling between Fury and Fate at Ibis' birth – so that whether the reader opts to assign 241–2 to a Fate, or to a Fury speaking in the role of a Fate, the abiding impression will be of the ominous overlap between the two sets of sisters. (Again cf. *Met.* 8.452–6, this time in its conjunction with *Met.* 8.481–2.)

The infant cried, as soon as he came in contact with the pungent smoke; when thus spoke one sister of the three: 'Unto measureless time have we called forth those tears of yours, which, their cause remaining sufficient, shall always fall.' She had spoken: but Clotho bade her promise have power, and with her hostile hand spun dark-hued threads.

The metapoetic force of the italicized couplet is at once inescapable. Lines 241–2 mark an *incipit* for 'Ibis' the life, just as lines 1–2 marked the *incipit* of *Ibis* the poem: one need only appeal to the affinity in the Latin literary imagination between *Parcae* and poets as spinners of extended tales.³² Thus far intuition; but in the verses which immediately follow Ovid proceeds to work out the logic of this programmatic conceit with quite unexpected precision. Just when Clotho might have been expected to continue the *carmen* of Ibis' future, à la Catullus 64, she does something quite extraordinary: in what may be Roman poetry's most overt (or perverted) enactment of the *uates*-concept,³³ she turns the job over to Ovid:

et, ne longa suo praesagia diceret ore,
'fata canet uates qui tua', dixit, 'erit'.
ille ego sum uates: ex me tua uulnera disces,
dent modo di uires in mea uerba suas. (*Ib.* 245–8)

And, that her own mouth might not utter the long presage,
'There will be a bard', said she, 'who your fate shall sing'. That
bard am I: from me you shall learn your wounds, if the gods
but give their strength to my words.

What we have in these verses is a self-reflexive *aition* which both enlarges Ovid's curse-poem and accounts for its very existence and character.³⁴ And – here is my point – as a logical consequence of Ovid picking up the *carmen* which had been begun in lines 241–2, that couplet emerges as a kind of *Ur*-preface to this metapoetically enlarged *Ibis* – an *Ur*-preface whose first word doubles the first word of Ovid's actual *Ibis* preface. *Tempus* is the *incipit*-word of 'Ibis' the life, in line 241; but *Tempus* is already the *incipit*-word of *Ibis* the poem, in line 1: the verbal coincidence sharpens the impression of one preface supplementing or being superimposed upon another, and perhaps also sharpens the impression that what now *defines* an Ovidian preface is some kind of talk about 'time'.

Lines 241–2 can now be given their full weight. Remember Williams' characterization of the *Ibis* catalogue:

³² Cf. now Gianpiero Rosati's paper in this collection.

³³ 'uates-concept': Newman (1967), Nisbet-Hubbard (1970) on Hor. *Carm.* 1.1.35, Hardie (1986) 16–22; in Ovid, Keith (1992a) 332 and McKeown (1989) on *Am.* 1.1.5–6.

³⁴ On this kind of programmatic origin-myth in later Ovidian elegy, cf. Barchiesi (1993) 360–5; also his (not yet published) Dec. 1997 APA paper 'The self-positioning of *Heroides* 16–21 within the elegiac tradition'.

... a dream-like fantasy in which all temporal distinctions cease to apply.

Tempus in immensum ...: the status of this intervention as a virtual *incipit* offers a positional cue to read *Ib.* 241–2 alongside the great time-structuring prefaces of Ovid's happier days. On such a reading, if the couplet is given its full measure of programmatic suggestiveness, the *Ibis* catalogue can emerge as a kind of comprehensive renunciation of Ovidian narrative order. Here, as the 'text' of *Ibis*' future opens, the poet opens the way up to 'measureless time' for his evil twin; more specifically, he thus distances the notoriously unwieldy catalogue of *Ibis*' future torments (*Ib.* 251–638) from the great temporal schemes which introduce and organize Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti*. Not for this life a forward progress through history culminating in the triumph of personal immortality;³⁵ not for this life an ordered experience of life lived by the calendar, *tempora cum causis*:³⁶ just a big plot (or unplot) of suffering, unstructured, open-ended and incalculable, *tempus in immensum*.

What of the parallel here with the poet's own fate after exile, itself repeatedly framed (as we have seen) as a disruption of previous Ovidian protocols of time? Ovid often in this elegy makes of *Ibis* a kind of double of himself by wishing on his persecutor the same sufferings – and the same mythological analogies – which he himself suffers in the *Tristia*. There is, however, a difference in the present case. In condemning *Ibis* in lines 241–2 to an existence of endless tears – a life of *Tristia*, one might say³⁷ – , the poet may seem to be wishing no more on his adversary than he represents as having been wished on himself. But for Ovid a life of *Tristia* is something which begins with a catastrophe in 8 CE, disrupting a previously auspicious progress through time. Thus, e.g., *Tr.* 1.9.37–8 (with my emphasis):

is status, haec rerum *nunc* est fortuna meorum,
debeat ut lacrimis nullus adesse modus.

Such is my condition, such is *now* the state of my fortune that
there should be no limit set to my tears.

For *Ibis*, in contrast, in *Ib.* 241–2, there is no time before the time of tears. By extending his narrative back into his adversary's cradle, as well as forward to his death and beyond, Ovid succeeds in cursing *Ibis* with something worse than what the poet himself has suffered: Ovid's *Tristia* begin at the moment of his exile; *Ibis*' *Tristia* begin at the moment of his birth.

³⁵ (... though the 'measureless time' here might itself constitute a kind of perversion of Ovid's *Met.*-ending immortality.)

³⁶ Perhaps in specific perversion of *tempora cum causis*, the measureless *tempus* of this 'preface' is accompanied by its own version of an aetiological *causa* (*Ib.* 242): an aetiology of ever-falling tears.

³⁷ *Ib.* 217 (translated in my text two paragraphs below) comes close to making this programmatic analogy explicit: *lux quoque natalis, ne quid nisi triste uideres* ...; cf. *Tr.* 3.1.9–10 *inspice quid portem: nihil hic nisi triste uidebis*, 'I examine what I bring: you will see here nothing save sorrow, in verses befitted to their times'. On tears as a trademark of the *Tristia* see Nagle (1980) 22–32, esp. on *Tr.* 5.1; Hinds (1987) 103; also Hinds (1985) 14–15 and n. 7 on *Tr.* 1.1.13–14.

We can agree with Williams, then, that the *Ibis* catalogue is a zone without temporal distinction – so much so that it goes out of its way to make programmatic advertisement of its own ‘timelessness’. However, the pre-catalogue portion of the *Ibis* contains at least two notable allusions to specific dates. One, at which I have already glanced in the elegy’s opening couplet, names the year of Ovid’s exile. The other, which will conclude my paper, names the day of Ibis’ birth.

Critics have often commented on the remarkable coincidence – or, more likely, the remarkable invention – whereby Ovid’s reviled enemy is assigned the darkest and most ill-omened day in the Roman calendar year as his birthday. ‘Much too good to be true’, says Housman.³⁸ What has attracted less attention is the equally remarkable fact that the poet to whom it falls to exploit this calendrical coincidence is, precisely, the author of the *Fasti*, a poet with a vested interest in making Roman calendrical time his own. It is at *Ib.* 217–20 that the crucial piece of information emerges: Ibis’ date of birth is the *dies Alliensis*, July 18, the proverbially unlucky anniversary of a Roman army’s humiliation by the Gauls in 390 BCE:³⁹

lux quoque natalis, ne quid nisi triste uideres,
turpis et inductis nubibus atra fuit.
haec est, in fastis cui dat grauis Allia nomen,
quaeque dies Ibin, publica damna tulit. (*Ib.* 217–20)

Your natal day too, that you might see nothing save sorrow, was
foul and black with massed clouds. This is the day to which in
our Calendar grievous Allia gives a name: the day which brought
Ibis to birth brought destruction to our people.

This is the day which inaugurates Ibis’ future, a day which Ovid’s elegy goes on to imagine for us in all its lurid detail (see above), and – in terms of line 241 – the one measurable point in a life and afterlife of measureless suffering; but there is another reason too why the reader of the *Ibis* should remember it. A birthday is also itself an anniversary: and this is an anniversary which the author intends to make quite integral to his addressee’s experience of the poem. The opening section of the *Ibis* had ended by prescribing that, on two particular days each year, some surrogate should read Ovid’s curse-poem to its eponymous target:

utque mei uersus aliquantum noctis habebunt,
sic uitae series tota sit atra tuae.
haec tibi natali facito, Ianique kalendis
non mentituro quilibet ore legat. (*Ib.* 63–6)

³⁸ Diggle and Goodyear (1972) 1040; cf. Williams (1996) 18 for quotation and discussion.

³⁹ Lucan 7.409 *damnata diu Romanis Allia fastis*, ‘Allia, long cursed in the Roman Calendar’: Cic. *Att.* 9.5.2; Rüpke (1995) index s.v. *dies Alliensis*.

And just as my verses will contain an element of darkness, so let
your life’s whole tenor be black. See that someone read these
verses to you upon your birthday, and upon the kalends of
January, with lips that shall not lie.

The intertextual ironies here ricochet. In the perverse world of Ovid’s exile, it is this elegy, and not the *Fasti*, which is marked out for recurrent, annual performance. The *Ibis* shall be heard on two very specific days every year⁴⁰ – and each of the two performances will carry its own metapoetic reminder of another performance which might have been. Annually, on the kalends of January, an elegy by Ovid will be recited which will begin by naming ‘Time’ as its titular tag: not, however, the plural ‘*Tempora*’ of the *Fasti*, the more famous elegy which inaugurates itself on January 1 before proceeding thence in order through a plurality of days and months, but the singular, dead-end ‘*Tempus*’ of the *Ibis*. Annually, on July 18, the darkest day in the Roman year, a poem by Ovid will be recited: not, once more, the calendrical *Fasti*, but the blighted, accursed *Ibis*. How symbolic it is of the corruption of Ovidian time in Tomis that, with the *Fasti* having been interrupted at the end of June, this most ill-omened day in July should be the only one in the second half of the year to win the calendar poet’s treatment.⁴¹

Let us revisit the opening words of the *Ibis* (1), *tempus ad hoc*. Apprehended in the envisaged performance, within a momentarily free-standing *incipit*-phrase, the demonstrative *hoc* can perhaps be imagined as supplementing its overt reference to the fifty-year-old Ovid’s ‘time’ of catastrophe with a biannual deictic reminder of the elegy’s own recurrent ‘time’ of recital: *this* kalends of January; *this* day of Allia.

To conclude, the *Ibis* is a poem cursed by ‘bad timing’, diachronically, synchronically, intradiegetically, extradiegetically. In this most bitter revaluation and redirection of a poetic career which had previously culminated in the *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti*, Ovid’s perversion of chronological discourses, the world’s, Rome’s and his own, could hardly be more comprehensive and over-determined.⁴²

⁴⁰ Two days (New Year and birthday) which would normally be associated with expressions of good will. See La Penna (1957) ad loc.: ‘Ovidio vuole, con una beffa, fargli recitare queste sue *dinae* al posto degli auguri.’

⁴¹ As Gareth Williams remarks to me *per litteras*, there is a cue here for comparison and contrast with other ‘birthday poems’ written by the *Fasti*-poet from exile: in *Tristia* 3.13 and 5.5 ‘birthdays also function in a temporally irregular, “out of time” way’. Thus *Tristia* 3.13, in which the poet refuses the customary rites to his own birthday-god in Pontus, marks ‘Ovid’s estrangement from Roman time and the Roman calendrical cycle in Tomis – his birthday, codified by Roman time, *can* no more matter in this different place’. (Both quotations from his suggestive letter.)

⁴² My thanks for their comments and suggestions to Philip Hardie (to whose vision and sustained work this Ovidian collection is deeply indebted), to Alessandro Barchiesi, and to many in the paper’s original audience at the July 1997 Craven Seminar, including Ted Kenney, who chaired the discussion. I am indebted also to Gareth Williams for a stimulating set of comments on the paper’s penultimate draft.