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Cataloguing Contemporaries: Ovid *Ex Ponto* 4.16 in Context

1 'Oh so contemporary!'

At the 2005 Biennale in Venice, visitors entering the German Pavilion were confronted with the sculptures and paintings of Thomas Scheibitz. With their colossal proportions and loud colours, these attracted the gaze of the visitors and commanded their attention. Yet, in their extreme abstraction, Scheibitz' works remained curiously inaccessible. As a critic in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* wrote at the time, they were "completely introverted artifacts, far removed from current relevance or any referential framework".[1]

Only a few visitors will immediately have noticed the large number of museum attendants present, casually wandering through the rooms, with an encouraging smile for those contemplating Scheibitz' works or a mild rebuke if someone came too close to the exhibits. All of a sudden, however, they started dancing and broke into awkward sing-song, repeating, time and again, the phrase: "This is so contemporary! Oh, so very contemporary!"

The uniform-wearing men and women were not attending to the artworks: they were participating in a work of art themselves:[2] the second exhibit of the German Pavilion was a performance orchestrated by concept-artist Tino Sehgal. But what was the meaning of the attendants' chant? *What* was 'contemporary'? Was the litany of contemporariness an ironic comment on Scheibitz' abstract art? Or did the guards draw attention to the fleeting presence of their own performance?[3] And more fundamentally: what is 'contemporary art'? Is an artwork mediated by art historians, curators, critics and dealers, and indeed: watched over by museum attendants, still 'contemporary'?

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1 Richter 2005 ("in sich selbst zurückgezogene, jeder Aktualität und Bezüglichkeit enthobene Artefakte").

2 On the repercussions of such performances for the idea of 'the artwork', see e.g. Fischer-Lichte 2004, 9–30 and *passim*, as well as the contributions to Fischer-Lichte *et al.* 2010, esp. that of Gronau 2010 on performative space.

3 The curator of the Pavilion, Julian Heynen, speaks of a 'common interest' of the two artists: "One artist's work does not explain or reflect the other's, but at the intersection points a common interest, a common conviction is made apparent" (Heynen 2005, unpag.). For an analysis of Sehgal's *This is so contemporary*, see e.g. Umathum 2011, 123–128.

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Sehgal's *This is so contemporary* does not offer clear-cut answers. Rather, it enacts the contested status of the contemporary. Two aspects are central. On the one hand, the performance invokes but ultimately elides the division of labour in the art world: it both produces and criticises art (itself and the art of others) and it dispenses with the hierarchy between artwork and frame by usurping the exhibition context. On the other hand, it intimates that its own contemporariness primarily consists in an act of self-ascription — an act, of course, which by its very nature must fall short of the concept it seeks to capture: the ever-fleeting presence of the here and now. What remains is an ironic gesture, heightened by the self-defeating 'so' in 'so contemporary'. However, it is these gestures — the defiantly solipsistic take on the institutions of the art world and the exposed futility of its claim to contemporariness — which here become productive. They draw attention to the difficulties of defining the contemporary and expose that it is a relational concept which takes shape in exchange and interaction.[4]

With these considerations in mind, I shall now turn to a discussion of the contemporary in Ancient Rome, specifically in the poetry of Ovid, and its attitude to contemporary poets and writers. As I will argue, the seemingly self-obsessed debates that we find in the work of this most self-important of Rome's poets go far beyond any concern with positioning Ovid's poetry in Rome's literary landscape: they articulate a fundamental concern with the very idea of contemporary literature and its relation to literary history. Even if Ovid cannot rely on a unified terminology (*contemporalis* and *contemporaneus* are much later coinages),[5] his discussion of the literature of 'the living' (*uiui* or *uiuentes*), 'the younger' (*minores*), or 'the new' (*noui*) poets is never limited to noting factual contemporariness but rather engages with questions of how literature is received, read, defined and evaluated.

My focus here is on Ovid's *Ex Ponto* 4.16 — the elegy that has come down to us as the exiled poet's very last, placed at the end of what has often, but probably

4 Rebentisch 2013, esp. 9–24 offers a concise introduction to the concept of 'contemporary art' in art historical discourse; for the idea of 'contemporary literature', the recent debates in German studies are informative: see e.g. Klappert 2010 and the other contributions to Brodowski/Klupp 2010; van Laak 2013; Stüssel 2016. Underlying concepts of temporality and the contemporary (*Gegenwartskonzepte*) are explored by Stepath 2006.

5 Cf. *TLL* s.v. (IV, p. 652). Similarly, *coaetaneus* and *coaevus* only occur in late Latin (*TLL*, III, p. 1374–1375). On the vocabulary of 'old' and 'young' in ancient literary historical contexts, see e.g. Citroni 2017.

wrongly, been assumed to be a posthumous edition.[6] This poem features an extensive catalogue of 'contemporary' Latin poets, which does not merely exemplify the literary field of the day but in fact offers a nuanced critique of literary history, for which, in Graeco-Roman antiquity and beyond, enumerative practices — victor lists, *pinakes*, library inventories etc. — have long been of crucial importance. Ovid's poem puts a decisive spin on this tradition of lists and catalogues as it displaces its mechanisms from historical authors to contemporaries. The poem marks the culmination of a persistent Ovidian engagement with 'the contemporary' and not only offers an incisive criticism and corrective of ideas of literary history and canonicity but also sheds light on the emergence of the idea of 'post-Augustan literature'.

2 Untimely interventions: *Ex Ponto* 4.16

At the beginning of *Ex Ponto* 4.16, Ovid assumes a pose of defiant Callimacheanism to defend himself against an envious critic.[7] Drawing on the age-old topos that 'envy' can only affect the living, the poet declares that he is already dead and therefore ought to be beyond envy's reach (*Pont.* 4.16.1–4):[8]

> *Inuide, quid laceras Nasonis carmina rapti?*
> *non solet ingeniis summa nocere dies*
> *famaque post cineres maior uenit et mihi nomen*
> *tum quoque, cum uiuis adnumerarer, erat ...*

> Jealous one, why do you mangle the poems of Naso after he has been snatched away? The last day does not normally injure genius, and greater fame awaits after one is burnt to ashes. Moreover, I had a name already at the time when I could be counted among the living ...

The lines offer a defiant *argumentum a fortiori*. As Naso had already in his lifetime been an author of renown, the reasoning goes, the critic should certainly retract

6 Wulfram 2008, 259–279 casts doubt on the assumption of a posthumous edition; for similarly sceptical assessments, cf. Holzberg 1997, 47, 196–200; Galasso 2008 and most recently Franklinos 2019. Wulfram 2008, 259–260 n. 176 offers extensive doxography.
7 For the Callimachean backdrop, see Call. *Ait. fr.* 1 Pf.; *h.* 2,105–113, and *ep.* 21. Cf. Wimmel 1960, 61–64, 72–74, 100–101 and *passim*; Harder 2012 (2), 6–11, 50–51.
8 Cf. e.g. Nisbet/Hubbard 1978 *ad* Hor. *carm.* 2.20.4 (*invidiaque maior*); for related expressions see Otto 1890, 107 (s.v. *dens*), 176 (s.v. *invidia*) and the *addenda* in Häussler 1968, 55, 100, 152–153, 268. For the motif, see the introduction to *Ex Ponto* 4.16 in Helzle's commentary 1989, 178–181.

his criticism now that he, the poet, has seen the fatal day of his exile (*summa dies*).[9] The thrust of the argument becomes clearer when, at the close of the poem, the poet no longer addresses the envious critic but *Liuor*, envy or indeed Envy itself, and suggests that it follows from this that Envy must desist from his attack (*ergo submotum patria proscindere, Liuor,/desine*, "Therefore, Envy, desist from tearing into a man removed from his fatherland," 47–48). The critic and his criticism, by their nature secondary phenomena, are here emphatically *too* late.

Indeed, the positionality of the poem's speaker adds to the idea of untimeliness. The first two distichs are defined by a striking shift from the objectifying third-person description of the poet and his work (*Nasonis carmina rapti*) to the first-person account of the writer who authoritatively looks back on his own past (*mihi* and *adnumerarer*, 3–4) and thus paradoxically asserts his voice at the very time he declares its disappearance: these are words from beyond the grave.

The bulk of the poem, extending from lines 5 to 46, contains a long and intricately structured catalogue, which takes its cue from the poet's curiously displaced claim to contemporariness and presence (i.e. that the poet enjoyed success "when he could still be counted among the living," *cum vivis adnumerarer*, 4), and itself offers an attempt at "counting the living" — or, indeed, at cataloguing them.[10] In an extended temporal clause, this point in time is specified with the naming of no fewer than thirty poets, together with epigrammatically short, often riddling periphrases of their works (Ov. *Pont*. 4.16.5–36):[11]

cumque foret Marsus magnique Rabirius oris	5	(**1**), (**2**)
Iliacusque Macer sidereusque Pedo		(**3**), (**4**)
et qui Iunonem laesisset in Hercule, Carus,		(**5**)
Iunonis si iam non gener ille foret,		
quique dedit Latio carmen regale, Seuerus		(**6**)
et cum subtili Priscus uterque Numa,	10	(**7**), (**8**), (**9**)
quique uel inparibus numeris, Montane, uel aequis		(**10**)
sufficis et gemino carmine nomen habes,		

9 The trope of exile as death is introduced at the beginning of Ovid's exilic work (see e.g. *trist*. 1.1.177: *exsequiae*) and persists throughout. Cf. e.g. Videau-Delibes 1991, 333–368; Claassen 1996; Tola 2004, 228–241; Grebe 2010; Ingleheart 2015.

10 Cf. *adnumerare* in Ov. *trist*. 2.120 (below, p. 375). The verb *adnumerare* not only designates the idea of 'including something/someone in a number' but also of 'enumerating' (cf. *OLD* s.v. *adnumero* 1 and 2 as well as *TLL* s.v. *adnumero*, I, p. 785.71–787.29 [glossed as '2 *numerando addo aliquid, sive augendi causa sive in numero aliquo referendi*' and '3 *numerando complures in summam redigo*' and '4 *enumero*' respectively]) and gestures towards the terminological usage of the related compound *enumeratio* (on which, see e.g. Schöpsdau 1994).

11 For the affinity between the catalogue of authors and a series of epigrams, see below 373 with n. 35 on Ov. *am*. 1.15.

et qui Penelopae rescribere iussit Vlixem		(**11a**)
errantem saeuo per duo lustra mari,		
quique suam †trisomem† inperfectumque dierum	15	(**11b**)
deseruit celeri morte Sabinus opus,		
ingeniique sui dictus cognomine Largus,		(**12**)
Gallica qui Phrygium duxit in arua senem,		
quique canit domito Camerinus ab Hectore Troiam,		(**13**)
quique sua nomen Phyllide Tuscus habet	20	(**14**)
ueliuolique maris uates, cui credere posses		(**15**)
carmina caeruleos composuisse deos,		
quique acies Libycas Romanaque proelia dixit,		(**16**)
et Marius scripti dexter in omne genus,		(**17**)
Trinacriusque suae Perseidos auctor, et auctor	25	(**18**)
Tantalidae reducis Tyndaridosque Lupus,		(**19**)
et qui Maeoniam Phaeacida uertit, et, une		(**20**)
Pindaricae fidicen, tu quoque, Rufe, lyrae,		(**21**)
Musaque Turrani tragicis innixa coturnis		(**22**)
et tua cum socco Musa, Melisse, leui;	30	(**23**)
cum Varus Graccusque darent fera dicta tyrannis,		(**24**), (**25**)
Callimachi Proculus molle teneret iter,		(**26**)
Tityron antiquas Passerque rediret ad herbas		(**27**)
aptaque uenanti Grattius arma daret,		(**28**)
Naidas a Satyris caneret Fontanus amatas,	35	(**29**)
clauderet inparibus uerba Capella modis,		(**30**)

… when Marsus (**1**) lived and Rabirius (**2**) with his resounding voice, the Iliadic Macer (**3**), and heavenly Pedo (**4**); and Carus (**5**), who with his Hercules would have offended Juno if Hercules had not eventually become her son-in-law; and he who gave Latium a regal poem, Severus (**6**), [10] and both Prisci (**7, 8**) together with subtle Numa (**9**); and you, Montanus (**10**), who does justice both to uneven and to even metres and has made a name for himself in twofold poetry, and he who instructed Odysseus to write back to Penelope as he wandered over the savage sea for ten years (**11a**), and Sabinus (**11b**) [15] who in his untimely death left his †Trisomis† and the work on the days uncompleted; and Largus (**12**), called with a name formed after his own genius, who led the old Phrygian to the fields of Gaul; and Camerinus who sings of Troy after the downfall of Hector (**13**); and Tuscus (**14**) [20] who made a name for himself with Phyllis; and the singer of the sail-flying sea (**15**) whose verse could be mistaken for compositions by the sea-coloured gods themselves; and he who sang of Libya's armies and Rome's battles (**16**); and Marius (**17**) with his skill in every form of writing; [25] and Trinacrius (**18**), the author of his very own Perseid, and Lupus (**19**), the author of the return of Tyndarus's daughter with Tantalus' son; and he who translated the Maeonian Phaeacis (**20**), and you too, Rufus (**21**), the only one to play on Pindar's lyre; and Turranius's Muse that dons the tragic buskin (**22**), [30] and yours, Melissus (**23**), with her light slippers; — at the time when Varus (**24**) and Gracchus (**25**) gave cruel speeches to tyrants, Proculus (**26**) held course on the tender path of Callimachus, and Passer (**27**) returned to Tityrus and the ancient meadows, and Grattius (**28**) handed out weapons that suited the hunter, [35] while Fontanus (**29**) sang of Naiads loved by Satyrs and Capella (**30**) enclosed his words in uneven metre.

The poets are neatly itemised and embedded in the rigidly paratactic and polysyndetic sequence of the catalogue which develops and expands the original clause *cumque foret Marsus* (5), which is then repeated and re-emphasised once within the catalogue (*cum Varus Gracchusque darent fera dicta tyrannis,* 31) and again at its close (*Pont.* 4.16.37–40):

> *cumque forent alii, quorum mihi cuncta referre*
> *nomina longa mora est, carmina uulgus habet,*
> *essent et iuuenes, quorum quod inedita cura est,*
> *adpellandorum nil mihi iuris adest.*

> … and while there were many others. It would take too long to mention all their names but the people have their songs. And there were also youngsters whose work was still unpublished so that I had no right to call them out.

While the catalogue lacks any proper introduction, its conclusion seems to address the question of its limited scope and selectivity, thereby appealing to a set of (de)selection criteria: not every poet could be included. The implication of the lines is that some poets did not make the cut because (or perhaps: even though) their works were well known,[12] while others were still ‘unpublished’ at the time and had to be omitted for that reason (even if we cannot gauge what form of publication is envisaged here, the legalistic phrasing *nil mihi iuris adest* is striking). To include more of these ‘others’, or indeed all of them, would have taken ‘too long’ (*longa mora est*). Invoking the principle of economy, then, the catalogue ends with the topical *Abbruchformel*, i.e. the claim that it could be extended at will if it were not for the constraints of time.[13]

However, the fact remains that the catalogic *topos* is out of place here. What *are* the ‘constraints of time’ the exiled poet has in mind? After all, this is the very poet who tells us elsewhere, and repeatedly, that he does whatever he can to keep himself busy in the miserable state that is his exile. In fact, it would seem that composing catalogues is an ideal pastime — with the resulting catalogue doubling as the ultimate document, the material concretion, of the poet’s life lived

12 Helzle 1989 *ad loc.* rightly notes that the phrase *carmina uulgus habet* “recalls the Callimachean hatred of the masses”, which may follow on from the ‘*Liuor* theme’, see above nn. 7–8.

13 For similar *Abbruchformeln* in ancient catalogues, see e.g. Kühlmann 1973, 306. A case in point, if not a foundational moment, is of course the Homeric ‘many mouths’ topos at the outset of the Catalogue of Ships (*Il.* 2.487–493). For a systematic consideration of the dialectic between the finiteness and precision of the catalogic form and its open-endedness and potential for infinite expansion, see e.g. Mainberger 2003, 9–11; Sève 2010, 8 *et passim*.

and wasted. This point emerges very clearly from another elegy in *Ex Ponto* IV, 4.10, a poem addressed to one of the poets from our catalogue in 4.16, Albinovanus Pedo (no. **4**). In this letter, Ovid launches somewhat gratuitously into a lengthy geographical description, which includes a catalogue of rivers (4.10.45–58). The poet admits that this has little bearing on the situation at hand, and he anticipates his readers' surprise (*Pont*. 4.10.65–70):

> *si roget haec aliquis cur sint narrata Pedoni* 65
> *quidue loqui certis iuuerit ista modis:*
> *detinui, dicam, curas tempusque fefelli.*
> *hunc fructum praesens attulit hora mihi.*
> *abfuimus solito, dum scribimus ista, dolore*
> *in mediis nec nos sensimus esse Getis.* 70

> If anyone should ask why Pedo was told all this, or what good came of putting it into verse I can only say: I kept my sorrows in check and killed some time. This is the benefit I derived from the present hour: I take some distance from my familiar pain when I write things like that and forget that I am in the midst of the Getae.

The passage subscribes to criticism familiar from much scholarship on catalogues — that they are often nothing more than irksome and inert setpieces that do not add to the context at hand but have their purpose in allowing poets to parade their learning and metrical dexterity.[14] But it re-purposes the catalogue form in a striking way: it is *because* the list of rivers here is a de-contextualised, quite literally superfluous, set piece from epic,[15] and a mere exercise in versification (*loqui certis…modis*), that it is able to capture, and perhaps to soothe, the

14 In lieu of extensive doxography, I refer to the Edward Gibbon's notorious essay on epic catalogues: "A commentator is obliged to justify this practice [*sc*. of composing catalogues of troops]; but to what reader did it ever give pleasure? Such catalogues destroy the interest and retard the progress of the action, when our attention to it is most alive. All the beauties of detail, and all the ornaments of poetry, scarcely suffice to amuse our weariness; a weariness produced by such enumerations even in historical works, but which are pardoned in them, because necessary" (1814 [1763], 327).

15 Bernhardt 1986, 322–328 compares the catalogues in *met*. 2.241–259, 14.328–334, 15.273–286. On catalogues of rivers in epic, see e.g. Gaßner 1972, 111–117. One may also note a possible Callimachean backdrop, as the *Suda* (κ 227, s.v. Καλλίμαχος) records two works on rivers in Callimachus' œuvre (Περὶ τῶν ἐν τῇ οἰκουμένῃ ποταμῶν, *On the Rivers of the Inhabited World* and, possibly a subheading, Περὶ τῶν ἐν Εὐρώπῃ ποταμῶν, *On the Rivers in Europe*; schol. Ap.Rh. 1.1165a records the (additional) title of Περὶ τῶν κατὰ τὴν Ἀσίαν ποταμῶν, *On the Rivers of Asia*), cf. fr. 457–459 Pf. For our context, it is interesting to note Krevans' recent description: "… the impulse to collect and organize books, birds, rivers, marvels, nymphs, winds, place names, and

exile's suffering. Is the catalogue in *Pont*. 4.16 similarly therapeutic in nature? Does the dismissal of wasting time (*longa mora*, 38) invite us to ponder how time-consuming the production of the catalogue was? Arguably, the catalogic cliché leads right to the heart of the poem's obsession with questions of temporality.[16]

Having insisted both on the limitations of the catalogue and its potential for expansion, Ovid does in fact offer a brief continuation of his catalogue as he lists Cotta — the quasi-addressee of the poem — as contemporary number **31** before returning to himself (*Pont*. 4.16.41–46):

te tamen in turba non ausim, Cotta, silere, (**31**)
Pieridum lumen praesidiumque fori,
maternos Cottas cui Messalasque paternos,
Maxime, nobilitas ingeminata dedit.
dicere si fas est, claro mea nomine Musa 45 (**0/32**)
atque inter tantos quae legeretur erat.

However, in this multitude I would not dare to pass over you in silence, Cotta (**31**), light of the Pierids and champion of the forum; twofold nobility has blessed you with the Cottas on your mother's side and with the Messallas on your father's. [45] If it is permissible for me to say this, my Muse (**0/32**) was the one to be read among so many greats with a name of note.

It is a strangely backhanded compliment that Ovid pays to his addressee. While it is suggested that Cotta's distinctive qualities secure him a place in Ovid's list, the word *turba* makes the Ovidian roll-call look rather less exclusive — not, perhaps, the company usually enjoyed by Cotta, on whose superlative nobility Ovid insists. How does he plan to utter Cotta's name 'in such a multitude'? Will it strike a distinctive note or be drowned in the cacophony of all the other names? Ovid claims that it is only natural that Cotta is mentioned; or rather 'he would not dare (*non ausim*) to remain silent (*silere*),' a curious phrase which marks a clear contrast with Ovid's mention of himself *si dicere fas est*. Indeed, the double nobility (*nobilitas ingeminata*, 44) of the doubly named addressee (*Cotta*, 41, and *Maxime*, 44) contrasts with the vague circumlocution which Ovid uses for himself, "my Muse with a name of note", and also alerts us to the fact that the author does not name himself again. The name does appear at the outset of the poem, but less in

local dialects is an impulse born of loss. ...his research is a form of intellectual self-medication" 2011, 131.

16 Stratis Kyriakidis alerts me to the fact that the formula *mora est* is similarly de-familiarised in Ov. *met*. On the importance of *mora* in the catalogues of *met*., see Kyriakidis 2007, esp. 153–160.

its own right than as an attribute of *carmina* (*Nasonis carmina*, 1). The interlocking words *claro mea nomine Musa* at the end similarly indicate that his name is no longer fully his own, but his work's.

In the striking conclusion of the poem — and thus of Ovid's extant œuvre — Ovid returns to the theme of criticism and envy; the envious critic (*inuide*, the first word of the poem) has given way to Envy itself (Ov. *Pont*. 4.16.47–52):

ergo submotum patria proscindere, Liuor,
desine neu cineres sparge, cruente, meos!
omnia perdidimus, tantummodo uita relicta est,
praebeat ut sensum materiamque mali. 50
quid iuuat extinctos ferrum demittere in artus?
non habet in nobis iam noua plaga locum.

Therefore, Envy, stop tearing into a man far removed from his fatherland and stop scattering my ashes, bloodthirsty one! I have lost everything; life alone is left, [50] even if only to provide more feeling and material for my suffering. What pleasure do you get from plunging the sword into long-dead limbs? Already now, there is no space in me for a new wound.

At last, the speaker draws his conclusion and dismisses Envy's untimely attacks: as an exile (*submotum patria*, 47) he is dead (*cineres… meos*, 48) and thus removed from Envy's presentist purview, all the more so as Envy had failed to make its case when it would have been legitimate. While the familiar exile-as-death trope is fleshed out in drastic imagery — both *proscindere* and *cineres spargere* suggest mutilation and the refusal of a dignified burial —, it is immediately counteracted by the terse statement, in the next line, that the speaker has lost everything but his bare life. Is Ovid's death-like state exposed as a mere conceit? And yet, the poem immediately returns to Envy's violation of Ovid's corpse in a couplet which marks the culmination of the discourse of violence and suffering not only in the poem at hand but across the entire corpus of Ovidian exile poetry. As has been noted, Ovid's 'long-dead limbs' (*extinctos … in artus*, 51) lead back to the description of Absyrtus' murder at the hand of his sister Medea (*trist*. 3.9.31–32: *artus/… extinctos*),[17] which in *Tristia* was introduced as the foundational story of Tomis, and hence of Ovid's own suffering.[18] And similarly, the claim that the mutilated body 'has no space for a new wound' (*non habet in nobis iam noua plaga locum*, 52) — a different kind of *Abbruchformel* — not only echoes an earlier poem

17 Cf. e.g. Helzle 1989 *ad loc*.

18 On *trist*. 3.9 and the Ovidian aetiology, see Schubert 1990; Oliensis 1997, 186–190; Hinds 2007; Pieper 2016; Scheidegger Laemmle 2016, esp. 230–237, reads the *aition* against the discourse of textual fragmentation which pervades the exilic works.

of *Ex Ponto*[19] but evokes the myth of Actaeon who was lacerated (Ov. *met*. 3.250: *dilacerant*) by his dogs, as Ovid is by the envious critic (*Pont*. 4.16.1: *laceras*), and thereby wounded to such a degree that 'there was no space for further wounds' (*met*. 3.237: *iam loca vulneribus desunt*).[20] For all its seeming inconsistencies, then, the end of *Ex Ponto* 4.16 not only shows us Ovid in a state of living death but also caps two central mythical paradigms of the exilic poetry: Absyrtus, whose death is foundational for the place of Ovid's exile Tomis, and Actaeon, with whom Ovid identifies when he discusses the transgression for which he was punished (*trist*. 2.103–108).[21] Again, Ovidian biographical discourse is intricately connected with, and bleeds into, the reception of Ovid's works.

3 *Liuor* and lists

For all the intricacies of the poem's frame, however, it is the catalogue of poets which defines *Ex Ponto* 4.16. Arguably, it constitutes the single most important document for the late Augustan literary world, and as such has attracted significant scholarly interest. However, we are none the wiser for it. Of the thirty poets named or mentioned in the elegy, only thirteen are known from other sources and can be identified with a reasonable degree of certainty.[22] And only in the case of Grattius (number **29** in line 34) do we possess a significant portion of his literary

19 *Pont*. 2.7.41–42: *sic ego continuo Fortunae uulneror ictu,/uixque habet in nobis iam noua plaga locum* ("And so I am wounded by Fortune's continuous blows, and there is no more space in me for a new wound"). Noting the repetition, Akrigg 1985 *ad loc.* argued that *Pont*. 4.16.51–52 was a spurious interpolation. All recent editors, however, have adopted the transmitted text.

20 I am grateful to Carole Newlands for alerting me to this point. The parallel is noted by Theodorakopoulos 1999, 160–161; cf. Barchiesi/Rosati 2007 *ad* Ov. *met*. 3.237.

21 For the function of the Actaeon myth in Ovid's exilic poetry, see the concise discussion in Ingleheart 2010 ad *trist*. 2.105–108.

22 Following the order of the poem, these are: Domitius **Marsus** (**1**: H[ollis 2007,] 300–313), **Rabirius** (**2**: H 382–388), Macer (**3**: H 424–425; Ovid mentions him repeatedly: *am*. 2.18, *Pont*. 2.10), Albinovanus **Pedo** (**4**: H 372–381; addresse of *Pont*. 4.10), Carus (**5**: H 422; addressee of Pont. 4.13), Cornelius **Severus** (**6**: H 340–367; addressee of *Pont*. 4.2), Iulius **Montanus** (**10**: H 368–371), Sabinus (**11a/b**: H 427; also known from *am*. 2.18), Tuticanus (**19**: H 428; while he is not named here Tuticanus is the addressee of *Pont*. 4.12), Melissus (**23**: H 425), **Gracchus** (**25**: H 334–37) and **Grattius** (**28**: see below, n. 23); the identification of **Varus** (**24**) with L. Varius Rufus (H 253–281) remains problematic (Hollis 2007, 262, 275). Note that no known fragments have survived for Macer, Carus, Sabinus, Tuticanus, or Melissus; in Hollis 2007 they form part of the '*Appendix: Named Poets of Whom No Verbatim Quotations Survive*' for which Pont. 4.16 is "by far the richest source" (420).

output,[23] while we have scant fragments of another seven.[24] Thus only about half of the catalogue is devoted to poets that are known to us — even if generally not very well and always depending on scholarly conjecture. The rest of the catalogue refers to poets that are completely beyond our grasp. *Ex Ponto* 4.16 claims pride of place among the sources of, and "reads like",[25] Bardon's *La littérature latine inconnue*.[26]

Of the 'known' poets in the catalogue, six appear elsewhere in Ovid, but, significantly, they do so almost exclusively as dedicatees of poems in *Ex Ponto* IV itself:[27] as we have already seen, Pedo [**4**] is the addressee of *Ex Ponto* 4.10, which discusses the composition of catalogues (above, p. 367), Carus [**5**] is the addressee of 4.13, Severus [**6**] of 4.2, while poem 4.12 and 4.14 teach us that the anonymous translator of Homer in the catalogue [**20**][28] is to be identified with Tuticanus, whose bedevilled name just does not fit the dactylic metre (Tūticānus).[29] Not only, then, does elegy 4.16 mark the emphatic, quintessential ending of the preceding poetry book but it appears as the culmination of a general thrust towards contemporary poetry in the exilic collections at large; in no other Ovidian book from exile do we find as many poets amongst the addressees as in *Ex Ponto* IV, and in no other poem, of course, as many as in 4.16. At the same time, however, the Ovidian

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23 See now Green 2018 for text and up-to-date assessment of Grattius.

24 See above, n. 22 where names printed in bold indicate that fragments are extant.

25 Thus Nagle 1980, 164.

26 The volume on Augustan poetry in Bardon's *Littérature latine incconue* opens with the lapidary statement 1956, 12: "le catalogue des poètes, que dresse Ovide dans une de ses Pontiques, égrène des noms qui, d'ordinaire, n'éveillent plus d'écho."

27 Undoubtedly this adds to the 'cohesiveness' of the poetry book *Ex Ponto* IV: Franklinos 2019.

28 On the ambiguity of *vertit* (4.16.27), see e.g. Helzle 1989 *ad loc.* and, most recently, Feeney 2016, esp. 53–56.

29 Without doubt the extensive discussion of the problematic name and its metrical properties in this poem (*Pont*. 4.12.1–16, cf. 4.14.1–2, on which see e.g. Wulfram 2008, 270–272) must be seen behind *Ex Ponto* 4.16 and adds further twist to this poem's discourse on naming (on which see below, p. 386), and adds to the idea of the catalogue as a *tour de force* of versification (see above, p. 367). In addition to the four poets of the catalogue who appear in *Ex Ponto* 4.16, Macer (**3**) and Sabinus (**11a/b**) are both mentioned in *am*. 2.18 while Macer alone is the addressee of *Pont*. 2.10 (a poem which possibly looks back to *trist*. 1.2). Quintilian 6.3.96 offers the intriguing but elusive testimony that Ovid had once authored a kind of *cento* when he "composed a book *On bad poets* out of a poem of the *Tetrasticha* of Macer" (*…Ovidius ex tetrastichon Macri carmine librum in malos poetas composuerit*); the *Tetrasticha* are commonly attributed to Aemilius Macer who is most probably not to be identified with the Macer of *Ex Ponto* IV, 16 (Ovid mentions him in *trist*. 4.10.43–44 and describes him as *mihi grandior aeuo*; for full testimony and discsussion, see Hollis 2007, 93–117). However, it is not impossible that the *Tetrasticha* were, in fact, a work of the later Macer: Hollis 2007, 116–117.

catalogue offers little criticism or praise and certainly does not provide ringing endorsement of contemporary literature. Scholars have often wondered what might have led the exiled poet to compose a catalogue unprecedented in scale and scope. Why would he align himself with such a *turba* of fellow poets who have so obviously failed to leave their mark on Rome's literary history? Surely, the poets of *Pont*. 4.16 are cannon fodder, not canon fathers, as the old adage would have it. Does the poem reflect Ovid's resignation, and is he at last embracing his exilic position of insignificance?[30] Or does it rather insist on Ovid's own superior status which sets him apart from the lesser colleagues mentioned — a final act of self-aggrandisement and defiance?[31] There is certainly no clear consensus.

That both interpretations have found distinguished supporters, in fact, is evidence of the poem's ambiguities and its own distinctive 'suspension of judgment'. Any critical evaluation of the poets listed is strikingly absent from the text, as is in fact any explanation for the insertion of the catalogue in the first place. I shall therefore refrain from speculating on Ovid's motifs and intentions but assess the poem and its catalogue as an account of contemporary literature, or indeed as an exploration of the idea of contemporary literature itself, and ask about the cultural preconditions on which it is founded and how it interacts with them.

For all its distinctive and singular features, *Ex Ponto* 4.16 is far from isolated in Ovid's œuvre. It stands in an obvious dialogue with his previous works, a fact which obviously contributes to the poem's status as Ovid's last.[32] We have already noted the allusion to the central mythological *exempla* of Absyrtus und Actaeon in the last couplet of the poem but much more readily visible, and much more important, are the relations between *Ex Ponto* 4.16 and a series of earlier Ovidian poems which similarly adapt catalogic forms to write literary history: *am*. 1.15, *trist*. 2 and *trist*. 4.10.

30 Thus e.g. Syme 1978, 128 ("despairing apostrophe to *Liuor*"); Nagle 1980, 164 ("subdued and desperate conclusion", "an erosion of faith"); Doblhofer 1980, 79 ("müde Resignation").

31 Thus e.g. Paratore 1959, 200 ("vittoriosa apostrofe al *Liuor*"); Bernhardt 1986, 296 ("seine Vorrangstellung unter den zeitgenössischen Dichtern"); Martelli 2010, 149 ("...the final glimpse we get of Ovid shows him very much alive — already surpassing his 'successors', and knowingly outliving them in fame").

32 On Ovid's engagement with ideas of late works, see Scheidegger Laemmle 2016, 171–246; for Ovid's 'poetic career', see esp. Farrell 2004, Barchiesi/Hardie 2010.

Perhaps most obviously, the final poem of Ovid's last poetry book looks back to the final poem of his first.[33] In *Amores* 1.15, the poet who has just completed his work, is approached by personified Envy — *Liuor* — who reproaches him for composing light poetry while neglecting military and civic duties (*am*. 1.15.1–6). Of course, the elegist rejects these as ephemeral pursuits and, with overblown assertiveness,[34] declares that his, like all, poetry strives for immortality (*mihi fama perennis / quaeritur*, *am*. 1.15.7–8). He goes on to illustrate this claim in a catalogue of poets that extends over eleven distichs (9–30): the catalogue — "a rapid-fire sequence of well-turned epigrams on dead poets" —[35] predictably starts with Homer (9–10),[36] and then names another five Greek classics in a loose sequence which defies clear-cut chronology (Hesiod, Callimachus, Sophocles, Aratus, Menander)[37] before seamlessly moving over to Roman poets, with Ennius and Accius claiming pride of place (19) ahead of Varro, Lucretius, Virgil, Tibullus and Gallus. While the catalogue eschews straightforward chronological order, it nevertheless plays on the divide between older and more recent poets, and the slight asymmetry of the catalogue, which pits six Greeks against seven Romans, arguably draws attention to the Ovidian self-interest which lets the catalogue end with two practitioners of his own genre.[38] Such considerations, however, remain implicit; the catalogue's overt aim is to exemplify and thus substantiate the claim of poetry's privileged relation to immortality, as the conclusion makes explicit (Ov. *am*. 1.15.31–32):

ergo cum silices, cum dens patientis aratri
depereant aevo, carmina morte carent.

Therefore even if stones, even if the tooth of the enduring ploughshare perish over time, poems are untouched by death.

33 It has been argued that *am*. 1.15 had originally concluded the earlier five book edition, which Ovid mentions in his introductory epigram (*am*. epigr.), and was only subsequently moved to the end of the first book: cf. McKeown 1987, 75–78; Martelli 2013, 51–52, 54; Oliensis 2019, 70.

34 Cf. Oliensis 2019, 70–71 with further lit.

35 Oliensis 2019, 69. Cf. McKeown 1989 *ad loc.* for more on the relations to Hellenistic epigram

36 Quintilian will not just begin his own lists of canonical authors with Homer (*inst*. 10.1.45–131) but he (humourously) reflects on the topicality of such a beginning: *igitur, ut Aratus ab Iove incipiendum putat, ita nos rite coepturi ab Homero videmur* (10.1.45).

37 Noting the absence of any transparent order, McKeown 1989, 395 notes that "[t]he deviation from chronological order has the advantage of making the catalogue less predictable and perhaps creates an impression of abundance". On the order, see also Vessey 1989, 611–614.

38 Vessey 1981, 614: "Tibullus and Gallus establish Ovid's own poetic stemma, fixing him in the Roman tradition of which he was a direct heir"; cf. Tarrant 2002, 16.

Arguably, some of the authors listed are better suited to support Ovid's claim than others: while the poetry of a Homer, Hesiod or Ennius had already survived for a substantial amount of time, so that their future survival is an assumption more than a prophecy, the pronouncements about the immortality of more recent authors seem (and in the case of Varro or Gallus have proved) less well founded. What makes them suitable *comparanda* for Ovid, however, is the fact that they too have already died at the time he writes (*am.* 1.15.39–42):[39]

> *pascitur in vivis Liuor; post fata quiescit,*
> *cum suus ex merito quemque tuetur honos.* 40
> *ergo etiam cum me supremus adederit ignis,*
> *vivam, parsque mei multa superstes erit.*

> Envy feeds on the living but it rests after death [40] when his honour guards each man as he deserves. Therefore when the final fire will one day eat into me I, too, will live, and the greater part of me will remain.

As in *Ex Ponto* 4.16, Ovid invokes the idea that the dead are beyond the grasp of Envy as if a law written in stone, and hence reaches the confident (though perhaps not strictly logical) conclusion (*ergo etiam*) that he too will gain immortality: he will live on (*uiuam*) and yet, he will not be a *uiuus* exposed to Envy.

Ex Ponto 4.16 echoes this poem in obvious ways and shares central concerns and motifs. However, the exilic elegy assumes complementary perspective: while the poet of the *Amores* addresses *Liuor* in the prime of his life (*am.* 1.15.3: *strenua aetas*) and is concerned with his posthumous fame, the poet of *Ex Ponto* 4.16 speaks from the beyond and looks back on the fame he had enjoyed in life; conversely, the 'dead poets' society' of *Amores* 1.15 has been replaced by a catalogue of living poets. In a twist typical of Ovidian exile poetry, self-quotation has given way to *Kontrastimitation*.

Interestingly, however, the injunction not to mention contemporary poets which is operative in *Amores* 1.15 governs all other literary critical and historical catalogues of the exilic works. Even the Ovidian *apologia* to Augustus in *Tristia* II, which contains Ovid's most extensive commentary on the literary canon as well as his most elaborate attempt at self-positioning within it — it offers a fully fledged "history of ancient literature sub *specie amoris*" —[40], comes surprisingly

39 For dates and some speculation on "conspicuous absences", see McKeown 1989 *ad loc.*
40 Thus Doblhofer 1980, 62 ("eigenartige, teleskopisch verkürzte Geschichte der antiken Literatur *sub specie amoris*"); the phrase is variously used in scholarship on *trist.* II; cf. e.g. Tarrant 2002, 16 and Ingleheart 2010, 22 who both refer to Conte 1994, 357 ("this stoutly argued self-defense reviews *sub specie amoris* the chief Greek and Latin literary genres").

close to the self-interested catalogue of *Amores* 1.15. Here, too, no contemporaries are mentioned, but their absence is conspicuous. Early in the poem, Ovid claims that his position is conditioned by the judgment of others (Ov. *trist.* 2.115–120):

sit quoque nostra domus uel censu parua uel ortu,
ingenio certe non latet illa meo:
quo uidear quamuis nimium iuuenaliter usus,
grande tamen toto nomen ab orbe fero;
turbaque doctorum Nasonem nouit, et audet
non fastiditis adnumerare uiris.

It may be that my house is of small wealth and modest origins, and yet it is not obscure thanks to my abilities. Even if I may seem to have used them in an overly juvenile manner, I have made my name known in the wide world. And the throng of learned men well knows their Naso, and dares to count him among those who are not despised.

Ovid's humble origins (*domus parva*) and his great name (*grande nomen*) are pitted against each other before he once more speaks of himself in the third person, again using his name Naso which elides the difference between poet and work;[41] he stands at the centre, between two collectives that validate each other. The approval of the 'throng' of critics (*turba*), whom Ovid in turn acknowledges as *docti*, secures his position among the 'men who are not despised' (*non fastiditi uiri*). And their approval finds its expression in the verb *adnumerare*, which "evokes the importance of enumerations in canons"[42] and in fact anticipates the catalogic canon Ovid will himself offer later in the poem (*trist.* 2.359–468).[43] But unlike the poets and works listed there, Ovid specifies neither the collective of critics nor that of the approved authors. Instead, the catalogue itself ends on a note of coy reticence. The reconstruction of the history of Latin literature again ends with the love elegy of his predecessors, with Gallus (Ov. *trist.* 2.445–446), Tibullus (447–464), and now also Propertius (465–466). Afterwards, he names only himself as their successor (467–468):

his ego successi, quoniam praestantia candor
nomina uiuorum dissimulare iubet.

41 Cf. e.g. Ingleheart 2010 *ad loc.*; Oliensis 1997, esp. 186; Martelli 2010.

42 Ingleheart 2010 *ad trist* 2.120.

43 Cf. *adnumerare* in *Pont.* 4.16.4 (above, p. 364 with n. 10). On the conception and structure of the catalogue in *trist.* 2, see Bernhardt 1986, 280–294; Doblhofer 1987, 264–268; Gibson 1999; Ingleheart 2010, 21–24.

I was their successor, for my goodwill compels me to conceal the prominent names of living men.

Interestingly, he highlights and excuses the incompleteness of his account as he notes that 'kindness', or perhaps 'decency' (*candor*), keeps him from naming the living (*nomina uiuorum*). *Tristia* II explicates a rule (*iubet*) which *implicitly* has already governed the catalogue in *Amores* 1.15: living contemporaries *must not* be named.

As is well known, *trist*. 4.10, often dubbed Ovid's 'elegiac autobiography', continues this asymptotic approximation of the contemporary: it gestures towards, but ultimately shies away from, a fully fledged discussion of contemporary literature. At the same time, however, the poem ratchets up the complexity of such self-positioning (*trist*. 4.10.1–2):

ille ego qui fuerim, tenerorum lusor amorum,
quem legis, ut noris, accipe posteritas.

Listen now, posterity, that I was he, the playful poet of tender love, so that you may know whom you are reading.

Already the invocation of the pseudo-Virgilian *ille ego qui* introduces an intricate web of relations between poet, work and readership,[44] but this is compounded by the complex temporal *deixis*: the poem presents itself as the poet's account of his past and is emphatically addressed to posterity.[45] The account of literary history that follows later in the poem is firmly embedded in this play on the logic of chronology. As Ovid recalls his first attempts at writing poetry in what is now a distant past, he mentions the 'poets of that time' (*temporis illius… poetae*, line 41) whom he had worshipped like gods (Ov. *trist*. 4.10.41–42):

temporis illius colui fouique poetas,
quotque aderant uates, rebar adesse deos.

The poets of that time I revered and adored, and as many bards were present I thought to be present gods.

44 The phrase, which occurs at the beginning of the (spurious) pre-proem to the *Aeneid* transmitted in *VSD* 42, offers "…a curious combination of demonstrative and personal pronoun generally used by Latin authors to identify the speaker with, as it were, some particular manifestation of himself" (Volk 2005, 86); cf. e.g. Peirano 2013; Scheidegger Laemmle 2016, 12–18 (with further lit.). For Ovid's appropriations of the *ille ego* formula, see esp. Farrell 2004, 46–52.
45 Cf. Fredericks 1976, 152–154.

A brief catalogue ensues which names some of these god-like presences — Macer, Propertius, Ponticus, Bassus and Horace —[46] before it concludes with the overshadowing but distant presence of Virgil,[47] and, once more, the succession of the elegiac poets Gallus, Tibullus, Propertius (51–56):

Vergilium uidi tantum, nec auara Tibullo
tempus amicitiae fata dedere meae.
successor fuit hic tibi, Galle, Propertius illi;
quartus ab his serie temporis ipse fui.

Virgil I only saw, and the greedy fates gave Tibullus no time for friendship with me. He was your successor, Gallus, and Propertius his; then I was the fourth in order of time.

But the end of the catalogue immediately indicates its potential to be expanded (55–56):

utque ego maiores, sic me coluere minores, 55
notaque non tarde facta Thalia mea est.

And just as I revered the older poets so I was by the younger poets, and my Thalia was not slow to become famous.

Ovid's position within the continuum of literary history is defined by a dual temporal perspective that mirrors the communicative situation that governs the entire poem. Ovid stands between the times, he is the last of the Augustan greats and the first of the new generation; indeed, it is noteworthy that the respective attributes, *maior* and *minor*, shift between chronological description and aesthetic judgment. And of course, Ovid makes no effort to identify the *minores*.

When, later in the same poem, he mentions the great poets 'of his times' (*saecula nostra*, 125), it remains ultimately unclear whether he refers to the immediate predecessors whom he had enumerated one by one or to the *minores* that were only mentioned collectively (Ov. *trist*. 4.10.121–128):

46 Ovid here refers to Aemilius Macer (cf. Hollis 2007, 93–117) who is not to be identified with the Macer (**3**) of *Pont*. 4.16.6. Propertius is the only other 'source' for the poets Bassus and Ponticus (Bassus in 1.4, Ponticus in 1.7 and 1.9, cf. Hollis 2007, 421, 426). Heslin 2011 proffers the intriguing argument that Propertius invented the names Ponticus and Bassus as 'speaking names', and that Ovid here knowingly plays along.

47 Tarrant 2002, 23: "Ovid's terse disclaimer of personal acquaintance in *Trist*. 4.10.51 belies his lifelong fascination with Virgil's poetry and his even greater fascination with Virgil's place in Roman literary history".

tu mihi, quod rarum est, uiuo sublime dedisti
nomen, ab exequiis quod dare fama solet.
nec, qui detrectat praesentia, Liuor iniquo
ullum de nostris dente momordit opus.
nam tulerint magnos cum saecula nostra poetas, 125
non fuit ingenio fama maligna meo,
cumque ego praeponam multos mihi, non minor illis
dicor et in toto plurimus orbe legor.

You have — a rare feat — bestowed on me the lofty name when I was still alive which fame usually only gives after death. Nor has Envy, who always disparages what is present, cut into any of my works with its unjust teeth. For although this age of ours brought forth great poets, fame was not hostile to my genius, and while I would place many before myself, people say that I am not second after them and throughout the world I am read most of all.

Again, the poet's self-positioning is intricately connected with an apostrophe to *Liuor* and the proclamation of poetry's power to convey immortality. Ovid insists on the successes he enjoyed and possibly still enjoys (as the present tenses in 128 suggest) but he is quick to add that this is a rare exception (*quod rarum est,* 121). The status of contemporary literature remains contested, and Ovid is the only contemporary mentioned. His assessment is fundamentally ambiguous: The poem re-casts Ovid as an epigone and belated successor of the greats of the previous generation and yet insists that he is not *minor illis* — unlike the *minores* that follow after him.

Ex Ponto 4.16 as the ultimate Ovidian address to *Liuor*, then, concludes a series of poems that leads from *Amores* 1.15 to *Tristia* 2 and 4.10. It resumes and, after a fashion, answers the question of contemporary poetry that was raised in the earlier poems but left without answer, and it finally defies the rule that contemporary poets must not be named.

4 Contemporary literature in Augustan Rome

It is obvious that these Ovidian catalogues of poets, of which more can be found throughout his œuvre,[48] closely mirror and mimic the well-rehearsed procedures and routines of the institutions — antiquarianism and philology, grammatical and rhetorical teaching, and the administration of libraries — that deal with the

48 See esp. Ov. *ars* 3.321–348 and *rem.* 757–766, but also Ov. *am.* 3.9.21–6, 61–6, *am.* 3.15.7–8, *ars* 3.535–8, *trist.* 5.1.17–19. For a survey of these lists, see Doblhofer 1978, 268–271 and esp. Tarrant 2002, 15–17.

literature of the past and contribute to the establishment of and control over the literary canon. They all share a natural propensity for lists and catalogues: from the inscriptional records of poetic competitions to systematic forms of bio-bibliography such as the Callimachean *pinakes*, and their later adaptations and continuations in the works of scholars like Accius, Volcacius, Cicero or Varro, the enumeration of authors and works is a central means for sifting through, documenting, and classifying the literary heritage.[49] When Richard Tarrant in his seminal study on "Ovid and Literary History" notes that "Ovid's characteristic literary-historical gesture is the list" (2002, 15), we may add that Ovid thus appropriates a gesture which is, in fact, characteristic of any institution attending to literary history.

Inclusion in the inventories produced by these institutions ensures that a work remains visible and encourages their continuous treatment. Necessarily, such a process is highly selective. Quintilian, who himself offers an extensive list of model authors to be read and imitated by aspiring orators (*inst.* 10.1.45–131), bears eloquent testimony to the selectiveness and exclusivity of the literary canon when he describes the work of the Hellenistic grammarians (Quint. *inst.* 1.4.3):

> *quo [sc. iudicio] quidem ita seuere sunt usi ueteres grammatici ut non uersus modo censoria quadam uirgula notare et libros qui falso uiderentur inscripti tamquam subditos summouere familia permiserint sibi, sed auctores alios in ordinem redegerint, alios omnino exemerint numero.*
>
> The old grammatici indeed were so severe in their judgment that they not only allowed themselves to mark lines with a kind of censorial mark and disinherit, as it were, as bastards all those books which seemed to be wrongly attributed to an author but they also included some authors in a canon, and excluded others altogether from this number.

They exert their judgment severely and watch both over matters of the individual text and over the literary canon; not only do the words *ordo* and *numerus* which Quintilian uses to describe their canon evoke an enumerative model — a canon list —, but his metaphorical description of the sign that the grammarians use (*censoria quadam uirgula*)[50] does important conceptual work by approximating the

49 Regenbogen 1950; Blum 1977 and 1983; Mansfeld 1994, 117–131, 148–176 offer some anchoring points in a vast sea of literature. Krevans 2011, esp. 121–124 offers a concise introduction to Callimachus' *Pinakes*, Farrell 2010 to the Roman traditions of literary historical 'listing'; for a comprehensive account of literary history in Rome, see e.g. Schwindt 2000a.
50 Cf. Ax 2011 *ad loc.*

bookish world of Greek philology to the public office of the Roman *censor* which was, of course, itself fundamentally based on lists and tables.[51]

Later in his work — and perhaps significantly in the midst of his own list of model authors — Quintilian returns to the Hellenistic guardians of the canon and tells us about one criterion which, he claims, had informed their list. The precondition for an author's inclusion into the rank of the *enkrithentes* ('those reckoned in') was his death (*inst.* 10.1.54): *neminem sui temporis in numerum redegerunt* ("they included no one of their own time in the canon"), and Apollonius supposedly suffered the consequences.[52] Quintilian draws attention to the same self-imposed limitation to 'dead white males' which we have seen at work in the Ovidian lists. These are not isolated cases, but instances of a wide-spread critical practice. Cicero's great history of oratory in the *Brutus* is a case in point. As he draws close to the orators of the present, Cicero shies away (Cic. *Brut.* 231):

> *uides igitur ut ad te oratorem, Brute, peruenerimus tam multis inter nostrum tuumque initium dicendi interpositis oratoribus; ex quibus, quoniam in hoc sermone nostro statui neminem eorum qui uiuerent nominare, ne uos curiosius eliceretis ex me quid de quoque iudicarem, eos qui iam sunt mortui nominabo*
>
> You see, then, that we are finally coming to you as an orator, Brutus, now that we have treated so many orators between your début and my own! Of these, however, I shall name only those who are already dead for I have decided not to name anyone still living in this discourse lest you should over-curiously try to elicit my judgment of particular persons.

Cicero's justification once more explicates the nexus between literary critical *iudicium* and canon formation. The omission of contemporaries keeps Cicero from divulging his judgment and thereby possibly offending his peers; or at any rate,

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51 The Censors' task was "to review the membership of the citizen body and its various ranks" (Lintott 1999, 115) and to mark in their lists, especially in the senatorial list, the names of those whose membership was to be suspended for their infringement of the respective 'code of conduct'; cf. e.g. Livy 39.42.1 (*patrum memoria institutum fertur ut censores motis senatu adscriberent notas*). See Lintott 1999, 115–120 and the classic account in Mommsen 1952 [1887], esp. 359–424.
52 Quint. *inst.* 10.1.54: *Apollonius in ordinem a grammaticis datum non uenit, quia Aristarchus atque Aristophanes, poetarum iudices, neminem sui temporis in numerum redegerunt, non tamen contemnendum edidit opus aequali quadam mediocritate* ("Apollonius did not find his way into the grammarians' list, because Aristarchus and Aristophanes, who evaluated the poets, included no one of their own time; be this as it may, he authored a work which is by no means contemptible as it consistently adheres the middle style"). Such programmatic statements, of course, do not necessarily reflect actual practice: for nuanced accounts of the study of contemporary literature by the Hellenistic scholars, see e.g. Montanari 1995 and Rengakos 2000.

it prevents his audience from asking uneasy questions and indulging in speculation. And in fact, the little information we do get about contemporary orators in the *Brutus* is framed as statements by Cicero's interlocutors.[53] Quintilian, whose own canonical list is decidedly less reticent when it comes to contemporary matters (and decidedly less comfortable with the exclusivity implied by the canon list),[54] commends Cicero for the wisdom of his decision to limit the scope of the *Brutus*, and he gives another reason: only the restriction to dead authors made the task manageable (Quint. *inst*. 10.1.38).

Cicero's *Brutus* offers more than a mere parallel instance for the exclusion of contemporaries. His disclaimer is part of a sustained discourse on the precariousness of judging and assessing contemporary literature, and on inclusion and exclusion in the literary canon, which runs through the entire dialogue and crucially conditions the view of literary history that emerges from it.[55] Not only is Cicero's history of Roman oratory firmly set in the aftermath of the death of Cicero's great rival Hortensius, who casts a long shadow over the dialogue, but it has a strong teleological thrust towards his protégé Brutus and, of course, Cicero himself; — but the *telos* is indefinitely deferred. Cicero laments that the advent of Caesar's autocratic rule may keep Brutus and himself from bringing their oratory to full fruition; at the same time, he also refuses to include himself in the account of the oratory of the past. Repeatedly, Cicero shies away from speaking about himself and leaves this task to others (*Brut*. 232: *de me dicent alii si qui uolent,* "others may speak about me, if they insist"). Catherine Steel has famously de-

53 *Brut*. 252–253 (Atticus on Caesar), and *Brut*. 118, 212 and 249–250 (Brutus on Cato, Metellus Scipio, and Marcellus respectively); cf. Feeney 2002, 175.

54 Schwindt 2000a, 157 diagnoses Quintilian with "the unease of the canoniser with the canon" ("Unbehagen des Kanonikers am Kanon") and rightly notes the pragmaticism of Quintilian's canon who insists that his list is exemplary and therefore mutable and expandable (*inst*. 10.1.44–45, 56–57, 104). It is striking, however, that the prime example of contemporary poetry in Quintilian's canon is the emperor's, including the poetry, in fact, which the emperor *could* have written had he not been occupied by matters of the state: *inst*. 10.1.91–92. Shortly after, however, Quintilian treats the poetry of recently deceased Caesius Bassus as a late addition to Latin iambic and implies that he is excluding living poets in spite of their merits (10.1.96: *si quem adicere uelis, is erit Caesius Bassus, quem nuper uidimus; sed eum longe praecedunt ingenia uiuentium*, "if you want to add somebody, this will be Caesius Bassus whom I recently saw; but he is really by far surpassed by the talent of our contemporaries").

55 For the conception of literary history in the *Brutus*, see esp. Schwindt 2000a, 96–121; and, most recently, van den Berg 2019.

scribed the *Brutus* as a "suicide note left unsigned," arguing that Cicero's full inclusion in his own oratorical canon would have implied the dreaded admission that he was now shut out from the sphrere of political action and influence.[56]

But beyond such considerations for Cicero as political actor, his self-centred and yet curiously non-committal stance also reflects the precarious nature of engaging with contemporary literature. As Denis Feeney has argued, Cicero's autobiographically inflected history of oratory in the *Brutus* is likely to have had a formative influence on the Augustan poets and their understanding of the positionalities involved in writing literary history.[57] Indeed, Ovid seems to have been attracted by the autobiographical inflection of intellectual and literary history inherited from Cicero.[58]

In the increasingly virulent debates on the canon of Roman literatue, doubtless fuelled by the innovationalism of the 'cultural revolution' under Augustus and particularly by the establishment of Rome's first great libraries, the question of the relation between the literary tradition and the literary production of the day gained momentum. Whose work would be standing on the shelves of the Palatine? And whose works would be read? It is an ironical, and yet perhaps revealing, footnote in the history of Roman literary culture when Pliny relates in his *Natural History* that Varro, the foremost student of the *Remains of Old Latin* at the time, was the only living contemporary honoured with a statue in the first of Rome's libraries (Plin. *NH* 7.115). In fact, it may also relate to the uneasy relationship between the literary practitioner and the critic who passes his judgment: after all, Varro was also the scholar entrusted with curating the library collections.

As is well known, Horace relishes the opportunity to deconstruct the concept of the venerable classic. In his *sat*. 1.10 he takes a firm stand against the 'throng of older poets' (*poetarum seniorum turba*, 67) and confidently declares that someone like Lucilius would have produced rather better poetry "if only fate had held

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56 Steel 2003, here 211: "the suicide note is unsigned: the history of Cicero the orator cannot yet be completed. Cicero can achieve this wonderful and slightly menacing open-endedness by turning, as the leading practitioner of oratory, to writing its history: the genre enables him to decide what his place is, and it turns out not yet to be part of the canon". Cf. Schwindt 2000a, 115–121.

57 See Feeney 2014, the Sixth A.E. Housman Lecture (University College London, 20 March 2014), which unfortunately remains *inedita cura* (I am grateful to Denis Feeney for sharing with me a printed version of the lecture); it is now accessible at https://www.ucl.ac.uk/classics/sites/classics/files/housman.feeney.2014.pdf (not to mention https://youtu.be/zZ44J_ujdVg). For the impact of Ciceronian conceptions on Augustan poetry, see also Feeney 2002 on Horace.

58 Feeney 2014, 11–14 argues that "Ovid is working with Cicero, but simultaneously working with the way that Horace had already worked with Cicero" (here 11).

him back until our own age" (*si foret hoc nostrum fato dilatus in aeuum*, 68), before he goes on to give his endorsement of the 'here and now', first in a brief catalogue of poets (40–49, on which see below, p. 387) and then, characteristically, in a list of ideal critics (81–88): again, the boundary between practitioners and critics is blurred.[59] Similarly, he ridicules the canon of Old Latin in his 'Epistle to Augustus', mocking the idea that the mere death of a poet secures him a place among the 'perfect classics' (Hor. *epist*. 2.1.36–37, *perfectos ueteresque*) and sets him apart from the 'vile newbies' (*uilis atque nouos*), before enjoining his addressee to foster contemporary literary production by "giving the spurs to his bards" (*uatibus addere calcar*, Hor. *epist*. 2.1.215).

However, it would be misguided to take Horace's polemical stance, and similar interventions by others in the debates that surround Augustan canon formation, as evidence for the marginalisation and suppression of contemporary literature.[60] Ultimately, the classification of poets as *noui poetae* is only meaningful in a context where they are recognised as forming part of the literary landscape no less than the *ueteres*. To question and criticise the respective treatment of *ueteres* and *noui* in this manner is ultimately to draw attention to the place ascribed to literature in society and to the different modes of its reception. Suetonius sheds an interesting light on the practices of Augustan times when he credits Caecilius Epirota with being "the first to give lectures on Virgil and other contemporary authors" and corroborates his claim with a quotation from Domitius Marsus — incidentally, the first poet named in the catalogue of *Pont*. 4.16 (Suet. *gramm*. 16.3):

> [*Q. Caecilius Epirota*] *primus dicitur Latine ex tempore disputasse, primusque Vergilium et alios poetas nouos praelegere coepisse. quod etiam Domiti Marsi uersiculus indicat (fr. 3 FPL =):*
> *Epirota, tenellorum nutricula uatum.*
>
> It is said that Q. Caecilius Epirota was the first to give ex tempore disputations in Latin and the first to give lectures on Virgil and the other new poets. The following verse by Domitius Marsus illustrates this: "Epirota, little wet-nurse of delicate little bards"

In his commentary on the fragment, Hollis dismisses Suetonius' interpretation: "he errs in quoting this line as proof, since the hexameter seems rather to describe the teaching and encouragement of young poets" (2007, 309). But his reserva-

59 See the excellent introduction to the poem by Gowers 2012, 304–309.

60 For Augustan canon formation, see Zetzel 1983; Schmidt 1987; 2003; Citroni 2006; for the polemics that underpin the discourse: Schwindt 2000b and 2014.

tions may, in fact, point to the paradoxes inherent in the idea of the contemporary, where practice and criticism are co-constituents. It cannot be properly assessed from the outside: to teach others the work of contemporary poets is necessarily also to teach and encourage the poets themselves. The diminutive complicity of practitioners and critics (*tenellorum nutricula vatum*) may well capture this irreducible bond.

The same uneasy tension between *veteres* and *novi* is present and operative in Ovid's literary histories. Ovid also discusses the relation of old and new, classical and contemporary, in poems beyond the literary historical catalogues; and he does so explicitly in relation to the institutions that shape the field of literature. Thus he explores the idea of the library in *Tristia* 3.1 and emphatically describes the Augustan library on the Palatine as encompassing both *veteres* and *novi* (Ov. *trist*. 3.1.63–64), but shows how selective the attention is which contemporary literature is afforded there, as he immediately adds that his own works cannot (or can no longer) be found on its shelves (Ov. *trist*. 3.1.65–68). *Trist*. 5.3, in turn, assesses the idea of contemporary poetry from the vantage point of personal interaction: Ovid pictures an assembly of poets like the ones he himself used to attend in Rome, and imagines that his colleagues miss him (Ov. *trist*. 5.3.47–52):

uos quoque, consortes studii, pia turba, poetae,
haec eadem sumpto quisque rogate mero.
atque aliquis uestrum, Nasonis nomine dicto,
opponat lacrimis pocula mixta suis, 50
admonitusque mei, cum circumspexerit omnes,
dicat 'ubi est nostri pars modo Naso chori?'

And you, too, you poets, who share in my vocation, a loyal gathering, raise your glasses and make this same petition. When Naso's name is mentioned, one of you may be reminded of me and raise his cup mixed with his own tears. And once he has looked at all present, he may ask: "Where is Naso who was just now a part of our chorus?"

The text plays out a dynamics of interaction between collective and individual: only Ovid is individualised and given a proper name (twice, but also twice removed: it is the "imaginary quotation" of the utterance of another);[61] the other poets keep rank, and appear as a homogenous and cohesive group (*turba*, 47, *chorus*, 52). Even as one of them is imagined to step forward and ask for Ovid, he

61 Oliensis 1997, here 185. As Oliensis notes, the poem here revisits a conceit familiar from other exilic poems, cf. esp. *trist*. 1.7.9–10. On the 'name of the author' in the exilic works, see also Martelli 2010.

remains anonymous (*aliquis*) and anxiously 'looks at all present' (*cum circumspexerit omnes*) before speaking up.

In the very next lines, Ovid exposes his vision of memory and longing as a fiction, hoped for but as yet unfulfilled (53–58):

> *idque ita, si uestrum merui candore fauorem,*
> *nullaque iudicio littera laesa meo est,*
> *si, ueterum digne ueneror cum scripta uirorum,* 55
> *proxima non illis esse minora reor.*
> *sic igitur dextro faciatis Apolline carmen:*
> *quod licet, inter uos nomen habete meum.*

> And this may only come about if I have proved myself worthy of your favour with my goodwill and if no word has ever been harmed by my judgment, if, even though I justly admire the writings of men of old, I do not consider more recent writings inferior to them. Thus I wish that you may compose your poems with Apollo's favour. And then keep my name in your company, which is permissible.

It may yet come about but only if Ovid deserves it. He declares his loyalty to the poets at Rome: he has never judged their poetry harshly but with 'goodwill' (*candor*) and he is not only an admirer of the literary past (*veterum scripta virorum*, 55) but also a defender of the literature of the day (*proxima*). Again, contemporary literature emerges as something that needs to be defined against the literary tradition. And again, the position of the speaker is determined by a fundamental paradox. On the one hand, he forms part of the field of literary production of his time and shares in its endeavours (he is *consors studii*, 47). On the other hand, he is twice removed from the poets' assembly: first, he can no longer attend their meeting; secondly, and perhaps more tellingly, he also occupies the position of the literary judge (*iudicium meum*, 54). He too, however, is subject to the judgment of the pen club at Rome, as they will have to decide whether Ovid has indeed lived up to the conditions he sets out for himself (*si merui*, 53, *si ... reor*, 55–56).

Both *trist*. 3.1 and 5.3 discuss the disenfranchisement of the exiled poet who is cut off from Rome's literary scene: just as he is no longer a beneficiary of the nascent libraries, he struggles to maintain the exchanges that underpin and foster the literary production of the day. At the same time, however, the experience of loss and suffering empowers Ovid. As he laments his exclusion from Rome's *espace littéraire* he espouses the perspective of the outsider in order to offer a nuanced and critical account of the division of labour, and the crucial interactions, between the various actors in the field: poets, librarians, readers and critics.

5 Displaced contemporaries: *Ex Ponto* 4.16 (encore)

While all previous Ovidian reflections on literature avoided direct engagement with contemporary poetry, and never named any contemporary poets, *Ex ponto* 4.16 breaks the silence. Read against the backdrop of the pervasive Ovidian discourse on literary history, it becomes clear that the insertion of the catalogue of contemporary poets – which, on the surface of the text, merely specifies a point in time ('at the time when …') — is a stark gesture. Of the contemporaries who have previously only ever appeared as an anonymous mass, no less than thirty are now not only individualised but all but three are also mentioned by name (the exceptions are poets nos. **15**, **16**, and **20**). The poem's hypertrophy of names does not only contravene the injunction that contemporary poets may not be named, but it jars with the cautiousness and reticence of the exilic collections in general.

Naming names, in fact, is a source of perennial concern and unease in the Ovidian collections from exile. In the five books of *Tristia*, Ovid purports to write epistles to be sent back to Rome but explicitly refrains from naming his addressees. Insistently, he claims that the inclusion of their name and their association with himself, the poet fallen from grace, could have repercussions for them. Conversely, the exiled poet attacks unnamed people who have wronged him and declares that he issues a kind of last warning before naming and shaming them publicly, a gesture most forcefully exploited in his *Ibis*. It is only in his second collection issued from exile, the *Epistulae ex Ponto*, that he includes the names of his addressees — even if he still hints at the danger for those named (Ov. *Pont.* 1.1.17–20). This discussion casts "an aura of paranoia, secrecy, and dissimulation" over Ovid's exilic poetry which draws attention to the power of proper names.[62]

Such an understanding of proper names, however, is undermined by the catalogue in *Ex Ponto* 4.16. Rather than serving as a means of presenting information in an economical fashion – arguably a very basic function of many lists and catalogues —, the Ovidian catalogue leads to disinformation and confusion. Indeed, the trouble that classicists have incurred in identifying the poets in Ovid's list results not only from our lack of external testimony but is conditioned by the catalogue and its specific shape and order.

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62 Oliensis 1997, 179, in a ground-breaking study on the Ovidian discourse on names and naming, followed e.g. by Martelli 2010. But see also Citroni Marchetti 2000, 295–368 for the rhetoric of names in the context of the exilic discourse on interpersonal relations.

It is instructive to compare *Ex Ponto* 4.16 further with the short catalogue of contemporary poets which Horace incorporates at the conclusion of the first book of his *Satires* (*sat*. 1.10), perhaps the poem in Latin literature which shows the closest affinity to the aims and purposes of Ovid's catalogue (Hor. *sat*. 1.10.40–48):[63]

arguta meretrice potes Dauoque Chremeta 40
eludente senem comis garrire libellos
unus uiuorum, Fundani, Pollio regum
facta canit pede ter percusso; forte epos acer
ut nemo Varius ducit, molle atque facetum
Vergilio adnuerunt gaudentes rure Camenae. 45
hoc erat, experto frustra Varrone Atacino
atque quibusdam aliis, melius quod scribere possem,
inuentore minor ...

You alone of all living poets, Fundanius, are able to fill pleasant books with chatter of the cunning prostitute and Davus fooling old Chremes. Pollio sings of the deeds of kings, stomping his feet three times. Like no other zealous Varius composes grand epic, and to Virgil the Camenae, pleased with the country life, granted daintiness and charm. This then was the genre in which I could write something better than Varro Atacinus and some others who had tried it in vain, though I may be of lesser stature than the genre's inventor...

As many of Ovid's literary historical catalogues, Horace's survey of contemporary literature is informed by a self-interested perspective which puts Horace's own genre, the satire, last — leftovers from the feast of others, but also the *summa summarum* of their endeavours.[64] The list espouses a rhetoric of clarity and clear-cut order: on the surface at least, the literary system is neatly carved up into individual genres with one practitioner each, with the tags *unus uiuorum* and *ut nemo* (42, 44) emphasising the singularity of those listed. Even if later in the poem this first roll-call of preeminent poets of the day gives way to a rather messier

63 The affinities between the poems extend to questions of structure and position as Horace *sat*. 1.10 draws much attention to its status as the last poem in the poetry book, esp. in its very last verse which, however, curiously undermines the closural force of the poem (92: *i, puer, atque meo citus haec subscribe libello* — "Off you go, then, boy and quickly add this to my book"): "The final poem is appended as a last-minute supplement, a postscript that H[orace] must urgently put into the collection before publication, which masks its status as a composed summing-up" (Gowers 2012, 304). Cf. e.g. Holzberg 1997, 196–200 on *Ex Ponto* IV as 'continuation of a continuation' ("Fortsetzung einer Fortsetzung").

64 See the excellent discussion by Gowers 2012 *ad loc.*, here 308: "The modest claim that he is simply taking the untouched leavings from the literary heap (46 *hoc erat*, 88 *sint qualiacumque*) conceals a different truth: satire is a self-sufficient compendium of all stylistic registers".

catalogue of ideal readers and critics (81–88), its insistence on the order of the list and the exemplarity of those listed stands in striking contrast to Ovid's catalogue in *Ex Ponto* 4.16 from which both features are notably absent.

Instead of transparent order, Ovid's catalogue only shows a vague tendency to present clusters of poets; some appear to be working in the same genre, but in most cases the underlying criteria remain obscure. And the distribution of the names within the catalogue follows no apparent pattern; there is no thrust towards the beginning or the end of the catalogue nor a clear centre to which it gravitates.[65] In my introductory assessment of the catalogue I have already noted that the names are arranged in rigid parataxis (above, p. 366); in fact this is so pronounced that the names cannot be disentangled from this parataxis. The specific form and arrangement of the catalogue defies the possibility of reading the names individually; they are inextricably tied up in the syntagmatic relations conditioned by the catalogic form.

The first distich of the catalogue is a case in point. It mentions Marsus, Rabirius, Macer and Pedo. While at least two of them are known to have authored different works in different genres,[66] it appears that here they are cast as a group of epic poets (*Pont.* 4.16.5–6, translation above, p. 365):

cumque foret Marsus magnique Rabirius oris 5 (**1**), (**2**)
Iliacusque Macer sidereusque Pedo (**3**), (**4**)

The attributes which point towards epic must be pieced together: *Iliacus*, the attribute given to Macer, hints at the subject matter of Homeric epic but does not explicitly touch on the question of form; this may be supplemented from

65 This distinguishes this catalogue from other catalogues of proper names where the distribution of names (including the density of names per line) often follows meaningful patterns, as Kyriakidis 2007 has shown for Latin epic.

66 Domitius **Marsus,** who is remembered by Martial as an epigrammatic predecessor (e.g. Mart. 1 *praef.*, 2.71.2–5, 7.99.1–8 *et saepius*), published a multi-volume collection of the title *Fabellae* (Charisius, GL I, p. 72), the polemical collection (?) *Cicuta* (Philarg. Verg. *ecl.* 3.90 ≈ fr. 174 Hollis), the prose treatise *De urbanitate* (Quint. *inst.* 6.3.102) as well as an epic entitled *Amazonis* (Mart. 4.29.7–8). **Rabirius** is variously remembered as the author of an epic (Vell. 2.36.3, Quint. *inst.* 10.1.90), apparently on the subject of Roman history (cf. Sen. ben. 6.3.1, on the death of Mark Anthony); the attribution of a satire to Rabirius in Fulg. *Expositio sermonum antiquorum* 58 (p. 125–126 Helm) appears problematic (cf. Bardon 1956, 73 n. 8). **Macer** is not known beyond Ovid's testimony (in addition to *Pont.* 4.16 also *am.* 2.18.37–38 and *Pont.* 2.10.13–14) which consistently points in the direction of *Ante-* and *Posthomerica*. Albinovanus **Pedo** is variously remembered as an epic poet (Sen. *suas.* 1.15 ≈ fr. 228 Hollis suggests an epic on recent history, Ov. *Pont.* 4.10.71–76 also suggests a *Theseis*) as well as an epigrammatist (Mart. 1 *praef.*, 2.77.1–6, 5.5.1–6).

Rabirius' attribute *magni oris* ('high-sounding') which often describes the style of epic poetry.[67] Pedo is only given the unspecific epithet *sidereus* ('heavenly'),[68] while Marsus is not afforded any epithet at all; it is only by association that all four can be presumed as epicists. What is more, the poets' names lend themselves to re-semanticisation and paronomastic play. Thus, the cacophonic consonance of the liquids in *magn**i** **R**ab**iri**us o**ri**s*, no less than the guttural *Ili**ac**us**qu**e Ma**c**er*, suggests a necessary relation between the poet and his poem. In the case of the former, this is reinforced by etymological play: the juxtapposition to *magni oris* ('the big mouth') activates the etymological affinity of Rabirius to *rabies* – savageness, frenzy, or indeed rabies, the disease transmitted by biting dogs.[69] This is not as far-fetched as it may seem; in fact, it finds a close parallel in the world of Roman oratory where names were routinely reinterpreted and satirised.[70] Seneca the Elder tells us of the orator T. Labienus (Sen. *contr*. 10 *praef*. 5) who was so outspoken in his criticism of others that he was said to savage everyone (*passim ordines hominesque laniabat*) and earned himself the *nom de guerre* Rabienus.[71] Labienus, the 'Lip-man', bites.

Inevitably, the majority of names and descriptive tags in *Pont*. 4.16 are similarly caught up in a net of interrelations which impact on our understanding of their place in Ovid's catalogue. In the case of Grattius (**28**), the only poet of whom we have a significant portion of his work, Ovid's description seems to allude to the proem of the work at issue (*Pont*. 4.16.34: *aptaque uenanti Grattius arma daret* ~ Gratt. 23: *carmine et arma dabo et uenandi persequar artes*). But can we assume that Ovid did the same in the case of other poets too?

The couplet on Cornelius Severus (**6**) and his fellow poets warrants some caution (*Pont*. 4.16.9–10):

quique dedit Latio carmen regale, Seuerus (**6**)
et cum subtili Priscus uterque Numa, (**7**), (**8**), (**9**)

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67 Akrigg 1985 *ad loc*. notes the parallels in Verg. *georg*. 3.294 (*magno nunc ore sonandum*), Prop. 2.10.12 (*magni nunc erit oris opus*), and Ov. *ars* 1.206 (*et magno nobis ore sonandus eris*). One may add Ovid's mock-epic pretensions in Ov. *am*. 2.1.11–12 (*ausus eram, memini, caelestia dicere bella/... et satis oris erat*).

68 For discussion, see Helzle 1989 *ad loc*. who takes *sidereus* as a generic compliment but notes that it might also hint at an astronomical work.

69 Cf. OLD s.v. rabies.

70 On the phenomenon, see the excellent discussion by Corbeill 1996, 57–98.

71 Sen. contr. 10 praef. 5: *[T. Labieni] libertas tanta, ut libertatis nomen excederet, et, quia passim ordines hominesque laniabat, Rabienus vocaretur* ("T. Labienus was of such outspokenness that it was seen to go beyond the bounds of outspokenness and because he savaged all ranks and all men far and wide he was called Rabienus").

One of the better known poets in Ovid's list, Cornelius Severus is variously attested as the author of historical epics; their scope, however, remains somewhat unclear — the attested titles, *Res romanae* and *Bellum Siculum*, and extant fragments (the longest of which discusses the death of Cicero)[72] suggest a comprehensive treatment of Roman history which included more recent events.[73] Even though the Ovidian description of Severus' work as *carmen regale* ('a regal song') is consistent with Ovid's address to Severus in *Pont*. 4.2.1 (*o uates magnorum maxime regum*, "O greatest singer of great kings"), we are in no position to gauge whether it adequately captures the work or not. Nor do we know whether Ovid's tag refers to a work of Severus which is not otherwise attested, or merely to a portion of a more comprehensive work.

Significantly, however, the description of Severus' work as *carmen regale* encroaches on that of the poets in his vicinity. In immediate juxtaposition the names Priscus and Numa (**7**, **8**, **9**) cannot fail to evoke the second and fourth king of Rome: Numa Pompilius and Tarquinius Priscus. There is no way of knowing whether their poetry had any affinity with the scope and style of Severus' poem, as the syntagma of the catalogue seems to suggest, or whether the metonymic relations intimated by the catalogue form are innocent and inconsequential puns.

In the syntagma of the catalogue, the referential power of the names is curtailed, and they are signifiers strangely detached from the signified. In our example, the doubling of Priscus (**7** and **8**) is especially striking. Not only does *uterque* curiously undermine the semantic value of *priscus*, which often differentiates between two things ('old', but also 'former', 'previous'), but it may again look back to the Roman kings. After all, the differentiation between the fourth king Tarquinius and his namesake, Tarquinius the seventh and last king, is a notorious problem in Roman historiography. As Ogilvie once observed in his commentary on Livy's first pentad (1965, 145):

> If there were two Tarquins the Romans knew nothing that could be pinned to one or the other in such a way as to give their reigns separate characters. Their very names, Priscus and Superbus, are the work of subsequent differentiation and a comparison of the deeds attributed to them displays an unhealthy duplication.

72 Sen. *suas*. 6.26 ≈ fr. 219 Hollis.

73 The title *Res romanae* is preserved in Prob. GL IV, p. 208; Bellum Siculum in Quint. *inst*. 10.1.89. For full discussion, see Bardon 1956, 61–64; Hollis 2007, 340–367. It is unclear if *Res romanae* was a comprehensive collection of Severus' historical poems (thus Bardon 1956 II, 62).

Does Ovid's *Priscus uterque* appropriate this 'unhealthy duplication' in a way that further calls into question the value of names and suggests that the poetry of *Priscus uterque* lack distinction? Paronomastic games indeed pervade the catalogue, and in many cases, we struggle even to distinguish pseudonyms from proper names. Again, our failure is not a mere symptom of our lack of sources but conditioned by the catalogue itself, which gleefully draws attention to its own onomastic games. In verse 17, we learn that Largus (**12**) is so called because of his 'large' talent (*ingeniique sui dictus cognomine Largus*) — a somewhat gratuitous pun, of course, but as it contains the onomastic *terminus technicus* '*cognomen*', it "may justify further speculation in this direction",[74] and encourage us to look for similar relations between name and talent, poet and poem, elsewhere in the catalogue. A similar hint may be implied in the mention of Tuscus (**15**), who 'has his name from his Phyllis' (*sua nomen Phyllide Tuscus habet*, 20). While this could just refer to the 'renown' (*nomen*) he has achieved with a work of the title *Phyllis*,[75] it has been suggested that it could hint at a work of erotic elegy where poet and *puella* were cast as the lovers in the mythical roles of Phyllis and Demophoon: were this the case, the literal meaning of *nomen habere* might indicate that Tuscus chose the *nom de plume* Demophoon, and that he could be identified with the Demophoon Propertius addresses in 2.22.[76] For all the speculation involved in this 'identification', it is still worthwhile to consider that Ovid's somewhat laboured explanation of the poet's name (*nomen*) may, in fact, lead to a pseudonym.

Many of the names are absorbed by the surrounding descriptions and, thus, appear as utterly redundant. Given that Turranius' Muse (**22**) dons the high cothurnus (*Pont.* 4.16.29: *Musaque Turrani tragicis innixa coturnis*), it may be unsurprising that the poet appears as a *towering* figure (Turranius < *turris*, 'tower'). Conversely the *soccus* of his antipode Melissus (**23**) is light (*levis*, 30) as it befits a man who derives his name from the Greek for the little 'bee' (Melissus < μέλισσα/μέλιττα). Is it a coincidence that 'Far-away-man' Proculus (**26**, Proculus < *procul*, 'far away') '*holds course* on the Callimachean path' (32, *Callimachi Proculus molle teneret iter*)? Is it surprising that Fontanus (**29**) sings of Satyrs and Naiads (*Naidas a satyris caneret Fontanus amatas*, 35) if we think of the association of such deities with 'fountains'? And if in his case name and attributes are evocative of a

74 Helzle 1989 *ad loc.*

75 *Nomen habere* is a common collocation: cf. *OLD s.v. nomen* 11b.

76 Cf. Hollis 2007, 428: "Phyllis' mythical lover — one of the most notorious examples of male perfidy — was Demophoon son of Theseus, and Tuscus was probably so called in his own poems". Cf. Helzle 1989 *ad loc.* for further doxography.

bucolic landscape, are we similarly supposed to subsume the Capella (**30**) of the next line (*clauderet inparibus uerba Capella modis*, 36), who has his own 'speaking name' (Capella < *caper*/*capella*, 'goat'), under the same paradigm?

This list, too, could be expanded. Time and again, names and descriptions in Ovid's catalogue appear as mere tautology, and the over-abundance of names, arranged in quick succession and entangled in a dense web of semantic relations, *a priori* frustrates any attempt at writing the prosopography of Ovid's panorama of contemporary literature. A brief note, found among the unpublished papers of the French philosopher Voltaire, captures the overwhelming but ultimately self-defying quality of Ovid's name-dropping:

> *Ovide nomme une foule d'écrivains illustres de son temps, inconnus aujourd'hui (ultima de Ponto), Marsus, Rabirius, Macer, Priscus, Pedo, Carus, Severus, inventeur du chant royal, Sabinus, Largus, Turranus, fameux tragique, Melissus, fameux comique, Proculus égal à Callimaque etc., etc., etc.*[77]

Of Ovid's thirty poets Voltaire dutifully takes down the names of twelve and paraphrases the descriptions of four before he sets down his pen, one imagines in exasperation, and then makes short shrift of 'the rest': "etc., etc., etc." — in its threefold repetition, the shorthand enacts the idea of futile repetition. In the end, the specifics of the catalogue do not matter much: what matters is the gesture of cataloguing.

6 Literary history as provocation

The results of our discussion of the catalogue are sobering, at least for students of late Augustan literary culture with a strong investment in the idea of an Ovid who takes stock of, and provides reliable information on, the works of his colleagues and rivals. In spite of the dearth of information that can be extracted from the poem, however, *Ex Ponto* 4.16 is nevertheless the most informative account of contemporary literature that we have from classical antiquity. While it holds back with the tidbits of literary historical fact, it is all the more revealing of the idea of contemporary literature itself and of the stakes involved in defining and

77 Voltaire, 'Piccini notebooks' (*c*. 1735–1750), in: Bestermann 1952 II, 384. Fittingly, Bardon printed the quotation as epigraph to the second volume of his *Littérature latine inconnue* (Bardon 1956).

discussing the contemporary. We have already seen that the insertion of the catalogue in *Pont.* 4.16 seems somewhat gratuitous. Its only explicit aim is to indicate a specific point in time: "I had a name already at the time when I could be counted among the living, when there were…" (3–5). With its vague and selective, often tautologous, mention of poets, however, the catalogue falls gloriously short of providing any clear-cut information on the date when Ovid 'last felt alive'. Instead of setting out anchoring points for an absolute chronology, the catalogue is rather more eloquent on issues of relative chronology, and it makes a virtue of its own under-determination. While the catalogue expressly aims at listing Ovid's living contemporaries, their contemporariness is oddly displaced: after all, it is situated at an unspecified time in the past. Inevitably, this raises the question of whether the poets listed are still alive when the now exiled Ovid addresses *Liuor*? The entry of Sabinus (**11**) brings this to the fore (Ov. *Pont.* 4.16.13–16):

et qui Penelopae rescribere iussit Vlixem (**11a**)
errantem saeuo per duo lustra mari,
quique suam †trisomem† inperfectumque dierum 15 (**11b**)
deseruit celeri morte Sabinus opus

The passage twice disrupts the logic of the enumeration. First, Sabinus is the only poet afforded two couplets in the entire catalogue; indeed, if the transmitted text can be trusted, the second couplet, too, begins with a coordinated relative clause (*quique* …, 15, cf. *et qui* …, 13). In all their other occurrences in the poem these are used when another poet is inserted into the list. Indeed, a reader without prior knowledge of Sabinus' foray into post-Ovidian epistolography (immortalised at *am.* 2.18) would think of **11a** and **11b** as two different poets. Secondly, this defamiliarization of the catalogue structure corresponds to a factual irregularity: as Sabinus' "untimely death" (*celeri morte*, 16) is brought up, death intrudes into the catalogue of the living. The mention of Sabinus, the one poet in the catalogue whose work shows the greatest affinity to Ovid's own œuvre,[78] highlights the temporal ambiguity of the entire catalogue.

The paradoxical structure that governs the catalogue at large, the preposterous idea of past contemporaries, resonates with Ovid's self-depiction, which frames the poem, as both long dead and only just left with his bare life (*Pont.* 4.16.1–4, 47–52, cf. above p. 369). This vignette of the living, dead, undead Ovid both marks the culmination of the Ovidian *leitmotiv* of exile-as-death, and it relates the poem in obvious ways to the idea of the literary canon. As we have seen, the discussion of the canon at the time is heavily invested in the twin ideas that

78 Cf. e.g. Helzle 1989, 176–177.

dead authors of the past receive preferential treatment, while any engagement with living contemporary poets runs the risk of freezing them in a state of death-like monumentality.

But the intermediate position of Ovid the undead classic further resonates with the specific historical situation at the dusk of the Augustan age. The poetry book *Ex Ponto* IV has variously been said to lack the care and sophistication which Ovid otherwise afforded his poetry books; as it is also slightly longer and covers more time than the other poetry books from exile many have taken it to be a posthumous edition.[79] Although recent studies have cast serious doubt on this hypothesis,[80] the chronological anomaly noted by modern critics, and explained away as a mere symptom of the careless work of the posthumous editor, is palpable even for a casual and cursory reader of the book *Ex Ponto* IV: it contains both elegies that depict Augustus in his lifetime *and* elegies that refer to his death; as Holzberg has argued, the book as a whole hinges on the chronological caesura of Augustus' death and dramatises the changed circumstances of life under 'the second prince'.[81] In one of his last poems in our book, Ovid tells us of a song of praise for the emperor which, he claims, he composed in Getic language (Ov. *Pont.* 4.13.21–26):

> *et placui – gratare mihi! – coepique poetae*
> *inter inhumanos nomen habere Getas.*
> *materiam quaeris? laudes: de Caesare dixi!*
> *adiuta est nouitas numine nostra dei.*
> *nam patris Augusti docui mortale fuisse* 25
> *corpus, in aetherias numen abisse domos.*

> And I found favour — congratulate me! — and I began to make myself a name as a poet among the inhuman Getes. You will ask what subject matter I chose? You would certainly approve: I spoke of Caesar; and the novelty was supported by the power of the god himself. For I told that the body of father Augustus was mortal but that his divine power had ascended to the heavenly spheres.

The poem, too, relates to the discourse on contemporary literature that we have traced through Ovid's œuvre. Here, too, the poet is keen to make a name for himself (*nomen habere*, 22), albeit among the Getae, and his endeavour is pointedly

79 The extant text of *Ex Ponto* IV amounts to 930 verses as opposed to around 750 verses in the other books of *Tristia* and *Ex Ponto*, while datable poems of *Ex ponto* IV cover a span of almost four years (13–16 AD) while no other exilic books spans more than two years: Wulfram 2008, 260–262 provides the most concise account.

80 See above, n. 6.

81 Holzberg 1997, 198f; for the broader context of Ovid and Tiberius' succession, see Knox 2004.

'novel' (*nouitas*, 24). Ultimately, Ovid's claim to novelty — or contemporariness? — is a poem that comments on the deification of Augustus. There is a fundamental symmetry here between the poet and the prince: the princeps is dead, yet divine, absent, yet powerful — just as Ovid is absent from Rome, yet exerts his influence, just as he counts among the poets of his day *and* is already aligned with the great classics of the past, both living and dead.

Ovid's foray into Getic poetry is a resounding success: his listeners are moved "and one among them declared 'if you write such things about Caesar, you have to be restored on Caesar's orders' " (4.13.37–38: *atque aliquis 'scribas haec cum de Caesare' dixit/'Caesaris imperio restituendus eras.'*). The Gete's encouraging words entail a striking ambiguity: which Caesar does he have in mind? Augustus, Tiberius, or both? *Caesar uterque*? The peculiar properties of the princeps' name reverberate with the idea of succession in Ovid's literary histories. Augustus is succeeded by Augustus, Caesar by Caesar. His is "not just a name but an event", a name which encodes change and continuity, absence and presence.[82]

Ovid shows himself both as a shareholder in Rome's *espace littéraire* and as an outcast, a contemporary very much alive and kicking and a classic who has outlived himself, both as literary practitioner and as critic and judge. And crucially, he discusses literature both as transcendent and detached from time and as the the fruit of the pregnant historical moment. The tension between these perspectives is not dissolved. And perhaps this is Ovid's ultimate claim to contemporariness. Giorgio Agamben defines the contemporary as follows (2009, 41):

> Contemporariness is [...] a singular relationship with one's own time, which adheres to it and, at the same time, keeps a distance from it. More precisely, it is that relationship with time that adheres to it through disjunction and anachronism. Those who coincide too well with the epoch, those who are perfectly tied to it in every respect, are not contemporaries, precisely because they do not manage to see it; they are not able to firmly hold their gaze on it.

Ovid has certainly 'firmly held his gaze'; in fact, Agamben's "relationship with time that adheres to it through disjunction and an anachronism" as the quintessentially contemporary attitude aligns itself perfectly with the perspectivism that necessarily underpins the writing of literary history. In his 1970 landmark study 'Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory' (*Literaturgeschichte als Provokation der Literaturtheorie*) Hans-Robert Jauss postulated a radical overhaul of traditional concepts of literary history "since it can no longer remain satisfied

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82 Cf. Martelli 2010, here 137.

with considering a chronological series of literary 'facts' as the historical appearance of literature" (1970, 27). From the perspective of Jauss' aesthetics of reception, the contemporary is a necessary constituent of a literary history, which can only ever take shape in the continuous process of confronting and integrating the literary past with the literary present (1970, 27):

> The new becomes an historical category when the diachronic analysis of literature is forced to face the questions of which historical forces really make the literary work new, to what degree this newness is recognizable in the historical moment of its appearance, what distance, route, or circumlocution of understanding were required for its full realization, and whether the moment of this realization was so effective that it could change the perspective of the old thereby the canonization of the literary past.

Ovid's exilic works, it would seem, provide eloquent testimony on "which historical forces really make the literary work new" and on how the new "could change the perspective of the old". They critically reflect the process of canonisation.

Oh so contemporary.

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