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Technologies of the Self in Exile: Writing and Intertextuality in *Tristia* 2

In the last years of his life, Michel Foucault turned to the problem of self-fashioning as it was explored by the philosophers of the empire. In these writers, he discovers a new interest in what he terms "technologies of the self," methods of constructing a subject in much the same way as one might create a poem or other aesthetic object. This is a very different vision of what it means to be a subject from that of the classical Platonic model in which the self is a transcendent presence whose primary task in the labor of self-realization is the recollection of what it already is. In fact, Foucault argues, it is less the experience of dialectic that produces the ideal self of the philosophers of the empire than what we might term intertextuality. Thus Plutarch, he notes, recommends learning the discourses of others as a drug that guards the soul against illness. Subjectivity itself becomes a function of citation. Where Plato rejects writing, the philosophers of the empire, Foucault observes, directly advocate the keeping of *hupomnēmata* or notebooks. Writing, rather than undermining the presence of the logos to itself or representing a form of discourse whose author is never present to defend the integrity of his intentions, actually renders the absent party present, according to Seneca. Writing is not the foreign element that threatens the interiority of the soul, but rather the technology that makes the construction of subjectivity possible.

This vision of the self as the telos of a process of construction that is separate from experience, that is textual and intertextual rather than natural, opens a rift between the subject and the actual political, historical, and existential circumstances of its life. It is the vision of a self whose very presence is a kind of absence. As such, it is an ideal model for the subject of empire, a subject who is always already in exile, and one who is most resistant to power when absent, unreachable, elsewhere. This is also the model that most accurately describes Ovid's self-construction in *Tristia* II, the *Apology to Augustus*.

In this poem, perhaps more than any other, Ovid chooses to speak the truth to power. While ostensibly offering a humble defense of his life and art, the poet launches into what reads more like a satire than a petition for imperial clemency (Kenney). On the surface, however, the poetic persona appears not to be attacking but praising the emperor. Yet, as Claasen notes, "excessive adulation and lip-service to the emperor's ideal of national poetry, and also many examples of *praeteritio* create an atmosphere of criticism." Moreover, Ovid's veiled attack is constructed through a series of complex intertextual appropriations that allude not only to his own earlier offending works, particularly the *Ars*, but also to both Horace and the Callimachean tradition of the *recusatio* (Edwards, Nagle).

Ovid in this poem is most himself precisely when he appears to mean the opposite of what he says. He is most authentic when appropriates the words of others. His creation of this ironic textual subject allows him to be most fully present where he is absent and thus becomes the perfect metaphor for both exile and the subjections of empire.