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CHAPTER 5

THE BRIEF OVIDIAN CAREER OF ISABELLA WHITNEY: FROM HEROIDEAN TO TRISTIAN COMPLAINT

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Abstract

Calling attention to the Ovidian contours of Isabella Whitney's *cursus litterarum*, this essay reconsiders the literary heritage of the personae she adopts in *The Copy of a Letter* (c. 1566) and *A Sweet Nosgay* (1573). Existing analyses of Whitney's Ovidianism have tended to emphasize her debts to the female-voiced epistles of the *Heroides* while simultaneously overlooking profound intertextual connections between *A Sweet Nosgay* and Ovid's exilic writings. In contrast, this essay argues that the outlines of a self-consciously classical career trajectory (its stages demarcated by Whitney's subtle aesthetic shift from Heroidean amatory complaint to Tristian exile complaint) can be detected when *The Copy of a Letter* and *A Sweet Nosgay* are read contiguously.

Since the publication of Lawrence Lipking's *The Life of the Poet* and Richard Helgerson's *Self-Crowned Laureates* in the early 1980s, "career criticism" has increasingly emerged as a distinct branch of literary scholarship.¹ As Philip Hardie and Helen Moore define it, such criticism "takes as its starting point the totality of an author's textual output and asks how that oeuvre as a whole shapes itself, both in its intratextual relationships (what kinds of beginnings, middles, and ends are traced in the pattern of an oeuvre), and in the claims it makes to reflect or mould extratextual conditions of production (whether located in the personal history of the author, or in the relationship of the author to political and cultural structures of power and authority)."² Holistically attuned to "the intensely intertextual (or perhaps interauthorial) quality of literary careers" as well as meaningful aesthetic shifts within a single author's corpus, career criticism's concerns are often inseparable from those of classical reception studies.³ It is widely acknowledged, for example, that early modern English authors such as Edmund Spenser and John Milton may have self-consciously emulated the *rota Virgiliana*, while others like Ben Jonson and Christopher Marlowe are alternatively believed to have aligned their literary outputs with the Horatian or Ovidian *cursus litterarum*.

To date, studies of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century authorial career trajectories—and the presumed classical paradigms for these careers—have been overwhelmingly gendered in orientation. Nearly two decades ago, a piece on "Renaissance Englishwomen and the Literary Career" by Susanne Woods, Margaret P. Hannay, Elaine Beilin, and Anne Shaver began by asserting that "English Renaissance women writers were not Virgilians who styled their lives from low to high, Horatians who taught by delighting, [or] self-crowned laureates."⁴ Woods et al. instead proposed that, while historical women did sometimes "acknowledge or even celebrate their authorship," they "seldom seemed conscious of constructing a *career path*" as such.⁵ More recently, Hardie and Moore have fleetingly raised, though failed to fully pursue, the related question of "whether and to what extent ... classically sanctioned (and implicitly male) career models" are even "open to" or ever "embraced by women once they enter the world of public writing."⁶ The brief yet decidedly Ovidian career of Isabella Whitney serves

to challenge such assumptions about the general irrelevance of the classical *cursus* for historical women writers, however.

Linda Gregerson's assessment that Whitney "invented a public self and a mode of public speaking-on-the-page that England would not see again for nearly a hundred years" is typical of contemporary scholarship.⁷ In the ever-increasing body of work on this Elizabethan poet, her striking singularity is routinely emphasized. So too is her Ovidianism. Whitney is, after all, the only female author known to have written secular poetry for print publication in sixteenth-century England, and allusions to Ovid's Roman works permeate her lyrics. Although scholars customarily locate Whitney's poetry within the Ovidian, and specifically the Heroidean, complaint tradition, Patrick Cheney—whose own research career has been largely founded on early modern career criticism—is the only prior critic to have directly entertained the possibility that we might detect in her writings the "fragmentary . . . traces of a proto-laureate career" based on a classical authorial exemplar. To this effect, he has passingly observed that Whitney's widely remarked "adoption of an Ovidian persona, especially as borrowed from the *Heroides*," may indicate that this author envisaged for herself something of an "Ovidian career frame."⁸

In this essay I seek to reassess the character of Whitney's Ovidianism in the two published works that can be definitively attributed to her, *The Copy of a Letter* of c. 1566 and *A Sweet Nosgay* of 1573.⁹ In so doing, I argue that analyses of Whitney's Ovidiana remain all too narrowly focused on her intertextual engagements with the *Heroides*, especially considering that the earliest English translations of Ovid's exilic writings began to appear in print in the years between the publication of *The Copy of a Letter* and *A Sweet Nosgay*. Furthermore, I aim to extend the scope of Cheney's embryonic commentary on this female poet's "Ovidian career frame." Tracing the shifting contours of Whitney's Ovidianism across her two printed anthologies, I suggest that the outlines of a self-consciously classical career trajectory—its stages demarcated by a subtle aesthetic shift from amatory lyrics to the "weeping verse" of exile—can be detected when *The Copy of a Letter* and *A Sweet Nosgay* are read contiguously.¹⁰ Put otherwise, I seek to illuminate an issue that has been absent in readings of Whitney's oeuvre to date: the author's symbolically calibrated turn from Heroidean to Tristian complaint.

The Ovidian *Cursus* in Mid-Tudor Thought

Before launching into my main argument regarding Whitney's neo-Ovidian career trajectory, I want to lay some preliminary foundations by examining, in general terms, how she and her sixteenth-century contemporaries likely understood the shape of Ovid's anterior *cursus*. The *rota Virgiliana*'s tidy, three-stage generic climb from lowly pastoral to middling georgic to the dizzying heights of epic grandeur frequently features in scholarly discussions of authorial career paths. Trying to resolve Ovid's diverse, often experimental outputs into a parallel schema based on the poet's linear progression through ascending developmental or generic stages is like trying to fit a square peg into a round hole, however. In the most detailed existing account of the Ovidian *cursus* in early modern English thought, Cheney valiantly sought to demonstrate that Marlowe's movement from amatory poetry to tragedy to epic was founded upon a highly sophisticated, generically sensitive understanding of Ovid's.¹¹ I would argue, however, that mid-Tudor conceptions of the Ovidian career model were often less conceptually complex—and less generically rigid—than Cheney's well-known Marlovian account allows, and I here turn to four biographies of Ovid published in England during the late 1560s and early 1570s for further insight. Two of these appeared as paratexts in Ovidian

translations, Thomas Underdowne's *Ouid his Inuectiue against Ibis* of 1569 and Thomas Churchyard's *Thre First Bookes of Ouids De Tristibus* of 1572. The third takes the form of an entry in Thomas Cooper's famed *Thesaurus* of 1565, while the fourth had previously circulated in numerous continental humanist editions of Ovid's Latin works before being reproduced in John Kingston's *P. Ouidii Nasonis Opera* of 1570.

"The Preface to the Gentle Reader" at the start of *Ouid his Inuectiue against Ibis* contains the following account of the Roman poet's life:

He was a gentleman of a good house, borne at *Sulmo*, who rather to please hys father, then for any loue he bare thervnto, studyed the lawe. But after his decease, he returned to his olde study of Poetry againe, wherin he profyted so much, that excepte *Virgill*, I dare call him péerelesse. He was fiftie yeres in prosperitie, & good credyte with *Augustus*, but was afterward banyshed into *Pontus*, where he liued eyght yeres, and then dyed, & was buried in *Dorbite*, a Citie of *Hellespont*. The cause of his banishment is vncertayn, but most men thinke, & I am of that opinion also, that it was for vsing too familiarly *Iulia*, *Augustus* his daughter, who of hir selfe too much enclined to lasciuiousnes, was the more incensed therto by him, vnto who[m] he wrote many wanton *Elegies* [i.e. the *Amores*], vnder the name of *Corinna*.¹²

Readers of Underdowne's *Ibis* are informed that, "after his banishment," a former friend of Ovid's "whispered lyes and vntrue tales into *Augustus* the Emperour his eares, therby to kepe him the longer in exile"; this "lyttle péece of *Ouyd*" penned by the exiled author is thus said to represent an invective that "hée wrote a gaynst [this] fayned friend."¹³ Churchyard's partial translation of the *Tristia* opens with similar scene-setting material. A short prefatory notice called "The Occasion of this Booke" explains:

Of Ouidius Naso his banishment, diuers occasions be supposed: but the commo[n] opinion and the most likely is, that Augustus Caesar the[n] Emperour, reading his bookes of the art of loue [i.e. the *Ars Amatoria*], misliked them so much that hee condemned Ouid to exile. After which time the said Ouid as well in his passage on the sea, as after arriued in the barbarous countryes, the rather to recouer the Emperours grace, wrote these *Elegias*, or lame[n]table verses [i.e. the *Tristia*], directing some to the Gods, some to Cæsar, some to his wyfe, some to his daughter, some to his frendes, some to his foes &c. And called this booke the booke of sorrowes: In latin, de *tristibus*.¹⁴

Crucially, both Underdowne and Churchyard single out Ovid's banishment to Tomis on the Black Sea by none other than Augustus Caesar as the defining feature of his authorial career. Moreover, although these two sixteenth-century translators advance different theories for what led to Ovid's exile, they cast his pre-exilic writings as predominantly amatory: whereas Underdowne repeats the oft-referenced but almost certainly spurious tale that "Corinna," Ovid's mistress in the *Amores*, was a pseudonym for Augustus' own daughter Julia, Churchyard instead reports that it was the emperor's dislike of the *Ars Amatoria* that resulted in Ovid's forcible removal from Rome. It is worth noting, as well, that the source of Underdowne's and Churchyard's disagreement on this point can be traced to hints and ambiguities in Ovid's own poetry. Famously, in Book 2 of the *Tristia*, the poet's authorial persona claims "*perdiderint cum me duo crimina, carmen et error, / alterius facti culpa silena mihi*"—or, as Churchyard would translate it, "Two faults there are that haue me slaine, error, and my verse. / All other faults I thincke it good, that I do not reherse."¹⁵ Ovid's first-

person writings thus invite readers to conjecture the identity of his offensive *carmen*, and, as Jennifer Ingleheart observes, establish the nature of his biographical *error* “as a topic for speculation and voyeuristic interest.”¹⁶

If we turn to the “Ouidius” entry in the “Dictionarium Historicum & Poëticum” of proper names that concludes Cooper’s *Thesaurus*, we find remarkably similar material. In full, this entry reads:

Ouidius, surnamed *Naso*, Borne in *Sulmo*, brought vp in Rome, and dyligentlye instructed in latyne letters from his tender age, he gaue most dyligente studye to the makyng of verses, from the whiche he was withdrawen by his father, and put to learne Rhetorike, wherin a while he muche profyted, and was in the number of the best oratours of that tyme, and was aduanced to sundrye authorities, and made a Senatour. Not withstandyng he chiefly dedicated himselfe to poetrie, wherein by nature he was excellent in facilitie and abundance of sentences. He was in good fauour with the emperour Augustus, of whom at the laste he was exiled into Pontus, where he spente the reste of his lyfe in a towne called *Tomos*, among people moste barbarous, who not withstandyng lamented his death, for his courtesie and gentle maners. The cause of his exile is vncertaine, sauynge some suppose it was for abusyng Iulia, daughter of the emperour Augustus, although the pretence of the emperour was for the makyng of the booke of the crafte of loue [i.e. *Ars Amatoria*], whereby yonge myndes myght be styrred to wantonnes. He lyued at the tyme when Christ our sauour was conuersaunt with vs here on earth.¹⁷

The much lengthier Latin-language “Ovidii Nasonis vita” that prefaces Kingston’s *P. Ovidii Nasonis Opera* shares with all three of the above biographies an emphasis on Ovid’s exile as the most significant event in his literary career; it also repeats rumors that the salacious content of the *Ars Amatoria* and/or an ill-advised love affair with Julia—as supposedly documented in the *Amores*—may have precipitated his mysterious banishment.¹⁸ Saliently, though the *vita* aims to identify all works associated with this Roman author (even non-extant, unfinished, and pieces judged too “*ridicula*” [ridiculous] to reasonably ascribe to the “*diuino Nasonis ingenio*” [divine genius of Ovid]), relatively little attention is paid to issues of chronology within the Ovidian corpus.¹⁹ While mention is made that Ovid wrote the *Heroides*, *Amores*, *Ars Amatoria*, and *Remedia Amoris* “*ante exilium*” [before exile], this *vita* observes that his epic-length *Metamorphoses* was unfinished when he reached this crucial juncture in his career, and the poet is said to have continued producing poetry in multiple veins following his banishment: this includes his *Fasti*, *De Piscibus*, and a work in the Getic tongue, as well as his exilic writings the *Tristia*, *Ibis*, and *Expistulae ex Ponto*.²⁰ Notably, no attempt is made in this *vita* to retrospectively organize Ovid’s oeuvre into progressive stages *à la* the *rota Virgiliana*. Taken collectively, then, these four biographies suggest that most audiences of Whitney’s era would have understood Ovid’s authorial *cursus* as loosely bipartite. That is, it was divisible into the broad categories of pre- and post-exilic texts, with the Roman poet’s early works being chiefly amatory in nature and the latter part of his career definitively shaped by the author’s cryptic, speculation-inducing *error* and his consequent removal from Rome.

Whitney’s Life and Works

Very few details about Whitney’s life can be established with certainty. She is known to have been one of the many sisters of Geoffrey Whitney, a figure who would eventually rise to

prominence as the author of *A Choice of Emblemes* in 1586. Although it seems reasonable to surmise that Whitney was London-based when she produced her two volumes of poetry in the late 1560s and early 1570s, her relatively middle class family had substantial Cheshire connections. As Averill Lukic has shown, local records affirm that the poet was residing at her family's home in Ryles Green in 1576. In July of that year, her father was both "excused from manorial jury service and fined a total of 20 shillings because his two unmarried daughters Isabella and Dorothea [were] each with child," and Whitney's own daughter Elinor (fathered by one John Lovekin) was baptized roughly two months later.²¹ It is possible that at some point between 1576 and 1600, when her brother Geoffrey composed his will, Whitney married a man by the name of Evans or Eldershae, making her either the "sister Evans" or "sister Eldershae" that he references therein.²² Beyond this, nothing certain is known of the author's biography, except that she was apparently still alive in 1624, at which date her brother Brooke mentioned his "sister Isabell" in another legal document.²³ What are often passed off as further "facts" about Whitney's life derive from her anthologies of first-person poetry and the highly characterized female personae she adopts in these texts.

Observing that "[c]ritics have granted an authenticity to earlier women poets that they have infrequently conceded to men who ventriloquized female voices," M. L. Stapleton submits that "[p]robably no early modern poet of either sex has been credited with quite as much genuineness as Whitney."²⁴ Bolstered by the fact that many of the addressees named throughout her works appear to correspond to the historical poet's known associates (e.g. "her Brother. G. W." = Geoffrey Whitney, "her Brother. B. W." = Brooke Whitney, "her Sister Misteris A. B." = Anne Baron *née* Whitney, and so on), scholars have often been inclined to categorize Whitney's verse as autobiographical—a tendency palpably evinced in both Elizabeth Heale's *Autobiography and Authorship in Renaissance Verse* of 2003 and Meredith Anne Skura's *Tudor Autobiography* of 2008.²⁵ Most recent Whitney criticism has rightly shied away from a simplistic elision of the female speakers in her lyrics with the historical author, yet it is clear that Whitney—along with her printer-publisher Richard Jones, who provocatively sought to market *The Copy of a Letter* as a work both "fained" and "true"—was attuned to and habitually exploited what Heale has termed "[t]he autobiographical potential of first-person verse."²⁶ In so doing, she would have found models not only in the auto-miscellanies being produced by her male counterparts in the wake of Richard Tottel's influential *Songes and Sonettes* of 1557, but also in the ancient poetry of Ovid. Ovid is, after all, a classical poet who deserves "to be singled out as a major influence on career autography" and whose own *cursum* was bookended by experimentation "with first-person genres that test the relationship between literature and life in various ways."²⁷

Often confounded by what has been called Whitney's "studied mischaracterization of herself as a 'simple soule'" in both *The Copy of a Letter* and *A Sweet Nosgay*, readers have been divided on how to interpret the disenfranchised authorial personae that she crafts for herself within these works.²⁸ Given that, as Crystal Bartolovich puts it, Whitney regularly "positions herself as emphatically nonelite, if not exactly typical," scholars have sometimes speculated that her choice of "a poor, female persona incurs certain problems of poetic authority" or perplexedly remarked that "[i]f Whitney wished to establish herself as a credible poet worthy of remuneration, her choice of persona—as a single woman of the lower orders—seems counterproductive indeed."²⁹ I would alternatively argue, along with readers such as Allison Johnson, that Whitney, in fact, uses her supposed biographical suffering to "authorize her poetic project" across her two volumes of poetry.³⁰ In what follows, I press this line of reasoning further by positing that her poetic authority and credibility, in fact, largely derive from Whitney's alignment of her public-facing literary personae with a shifting

series of Ovidian authorial precedents. This includes both the Heroidean model of the romantically abandoned woman writer invoked in *The Copy of a Letter* and the conceptually related yet distinct Tristian model of the poetic plainant-in-exile that Whitney alternatively assumes in *A Sweet Nosgay*.

Whitney's Heroidean Engagements

In contemporary scholarship, it has become *de rigueur* to refer to Whitney's autobiographical-sounding poems in *The Copy of a Letter* as Ovidian and, more particularly, Heroidean. *The Copy of a Letter*, which may well have been composed while Whitney was still a teenager, is essentially a short anthology containing an address from "The Printer to the Reader" and four verse missives. While the collection's first two epistles, "To her Vnconstant Louer" and "The Admonition by the Auctor," are written from the perspective of a forsaken woman and credited to Whitney (as "Is. W." / "I. W."), the third and fourth epistles are male-voiced and alternatively attributed to "W. G." and "R. W." / "R. Witch."³¹ Not only do the letters within this collection replicate the first-person epistolary format of the poems in Ovid's *Heroides*, but Whitney's opening piece also seems to "reproduc[e] the pleading of Ovid's abandoned mistresses" for which this Roman work is best remembered.³² "To her Vnconstant Louer" is, as its title would suggest, purportedly written to the female epistoler's one-time beau, who has left her to marry another.³³ In this letter, Whitney's authorial persona pointedly identifies herself as "as true a Love, / as dwelt in any Coast," and—lest the Ovidian resonances of this statement be lost on her audience—she buttresses our sense of her own affiliation with the fictive female authors of Ovid's *Heroides* via frequent allusions to their tales of abandonment by seafaring heroes.³⁴ Amongst other classical references, we are reminded of Aeneas's legendary desertion of Dido (recounted in *Heroides* 7), Theseus's desertion of Ariadne (recounted in *Heroides* 10), and Jason's serial desertions of both Hypsipyle and Medea (recounted in *Heroides* 6 and *Heroides* 12).

"The Admonition by the Auctor," Whitney's second piece in *The Copy of a Letter* (nominally addressed to other young women that "good aduice do lacke" rather than a duplicitous male abandoner), continues to mimic the epistolary format of the *Heroides* and is copiously garnished with mythological allusions.³⁵ Here, though, Whitney's epistoler mingles Heroidean poetics with references to the mock didactic poetry amatory of Ovid's early career. "[S]hift[ing] the voices of Ovid's solitary heroines into the speaking position of a marriage counselor," she makes a direct and disparaging reference to "Ouid[']s ... Arte of loue."³⁶ It has been said of Whitney that she therefore "attacks erotic Ovidian literature" by "develop[ing] a contrast between the virtuous advice that she bestows upon her female readers and the deceptive tricks that Ovid teaches to his male readers" in the *Ars Amatoria* and that her authorial persona "demonstrate[s] a sort of female hermeneutics that will allow women to be the best possible readers of unreliable men and the literary texts that help create them."³⁷ Rather than simply castigating Ovidian erotodidactics, however, Whitney's epistoler in "The Admonition by the Auctor" recognizably takes on and modifies for her own purposes the Ovidian role of "*praeceptor amoris*" [Love's teacher], replicating, albeit in an overtly Heroidean form, something of the Roman poet's own authorial posture even as she challenges the misogynistic messages of his amatory work.³⁸

Roughly a half a dozen years after *The Copy of a Letter* seems to have first appeared, Whitney's printer-publisher Jones published a significantly longer anthology of her poetry, *A Sweet Nosgay*. This collection contains a variety of prefatory materials, including a dedication to George Mainwaring, an address from "The Auctor to the Reader," and a

commendatory paean by Thomas Berry (a figure variously identified throughout the volume as “T. B.” / “Tho. Bir.”). The remainder of this auto-miscellany falls into three main sections: a selection of 110 Senecan *sententiae* in fourteen couplets (based on prose models from Hugh Plat’s 1572 *The Floures of Philosophie*); an array of “Certain Familier Epistles and Friendly Letters by the Auctor: With Replies”; and, finally, a mock “Wyll and Testament.”

It is, no doubt, because Whitney’s earlier *Copy of a Letter* is so unambiguously *Heroides*-like in form and content that literary critics have often sought further connections between *A Sweet Nosgay* and this same Ovidian pretext. Patricia Phillippy, for instance, submits that the “Wyll and Testament” that concludes *A Sweet Nosgay* “cast[s] the city [of London] as a faithless erotic partner modeled on those of Ovid’s *Heroides*.”³⁹ Arguing that “Whitney’s persona shares the mode of complaint ... common to Ovid’s heroines,” Phillippy claims that the Elizabethan author “reformulates that inconstancy” of male lovers so frequently reiterated in Ovid’s *Heroides* into “an economic betrayal.”⁴⁰ To similar effect, both Wendy Wall and Paul Glead concur that Whitney “rewrites the role of abandoned lover into that of evicted citizen” in the “Wyll and Testament,” with London itself figuring as “the last and greatest in a sequence of cruel male lovers.”⁴¹ Others emphasize related continuities between the *Heroides*’ rhetoric of abandonment and the tenor of *A Sweet Nosgay*’s “Familier Epistles,” wherein “[m]ost of Whitney’s letters to and from male friends take the form of complaints” and we are given the “impression that the medium of exchange ultimately cannot mitigate Whitney’s situation.”⁴² An especially good case has been made for the Heroidean quality of the letters written on “Paper weake” by Whitney’s authorial persona to her siblings.⁴³ These missives showcase the inscribed author’s “estrangement from her immediate family[,] ... none of [whom] writes back, despite Whitney’s evident longing to hear from them.”⁴⁴ “Cannot I once from you heare,” Whitney’s persona beseeches her “owne good brother” Geoffrey, informing him it “would [her] hart delight” to “se [him] oft” or “answers haue” of him.⁴⁵ In a subsequent letter to her brother Brooke, the maudlin epistoler similarly indicates that she “often looke[s] / to heare of [his] returne” and frets that she does not know “if [he] be well / nor where [he] do[es] soiuerne.”⁴⁶ In discussing these missives, Raphael Lyne, for example, sees the “*Heroides* pattern” being “transposed onto quotidian concern[s],” with Whitney’s epistolary persona employing “a classic *Heroides* tone ... to articulate a mundane (though acute) rather than legendary anxiety.”⁴⁷

Whitney’s Tristian Turn

It is impossible to determine whether or not Whitney envisioned herself embarking upon an Ovidian career path when she first penned the amatory epistles “To her Vnconstant Louer” and “The Admonition by the Auctor” in *The Copy of a Letter*. However, Whitney (who was demonstrably conversant in modish humanist registers and had, as she unequivocally reminds her audience, read enough Virgil, Ovid, and Mantuan to have grown “wery” of them) is textually constructed as a poet following just such a classically resonant *cursus* in *A Sweet Nosgay*.⁴⁸ Notably, this collection is paratextually presented to its readers as Whitney’s “second worke”: it is so called by Whitney’s literary advocate Berry, who also pointedly associates her with the traditional “Laurell greene” of poetic accomplishment.⁴⁹ Berry’s prefatory remarks in “T. B. in Commendation of the Author” highlight those matters of authorial chronology so fundamental to career criticism, for he expressly places *A Sweet Nosgay* in relation to *The Copy of a Letter* and intimates that Whitney thoughtfully plotted the sequence of her publications. Significantly, this succession of outputs was projected to also include what is alternatively described throughout the volume as a “dayntier thing” or “longer worke” that unfortunately never appears to have come to fruition.⁵⁰ I would,

moreover, echo Stapleton's comments about the repeated representation of Whitney's persona as an *auctor* (however socially disempowered or isolated) in both *The Copy of a Letter* and *A Sweet Nosgay*. Stapleton writes that, in "reconfiguring the traditional maleness of the key term [*auctor*] and extend[ing] its honors to herself," Whitney drew upon and strategically redefined a form of established—or, as Hardie and Moore would put it, "classically sanctioned (and implicitly male)"—literary authority.⁵¹ "[L]ike so many men before her," this female poet, aided by her literary advocates and publisher Jones, thus crafted an authorial persona and a neo-Ovidian career arc for herself that tactically appropriates "the customs of pseudo-antiquity."⁵²

When Whitney composed her "second worke" she sought to aesthetically distinguish it from her first in a variety of ways. Perhaps most obviously, while the social bonds of friendship, employment/patronage, and kinship are all important, recurring concerns throughout *A Sweet Nosgay*, Whitney's sophomore anthology is little concerned with the sorts of romantic, amatory relationships that were so central to *The Copy of a Letter*. Moreover, although epistolary exchanges continue to feature prominently in *A Sweet Nosgay*, I would submit that the collection's female-voiced complaint poetry is far less straightforwardly Heroidean than has often been assumed. In support of this position, we might consider the taxonomical lines that Whitney herself draws between her present and past uses of Ovid in "A Careful Complaynt by the Vnfortunate Auctor," one of the thirteen pieces in the "Familiier Epistles" section of *A Sweet Nosgay*. In their attempts to accentuate the Heroidean character of this volume, twentieth- and twenty-first-century readers have sometimes honed in on the Dido allusions in this verse letter. Positing thematic connections between this poem and Whitney's earlier pieces in *The Copy of a Letter*, Lyne, for instance, classifies "A Careful Complaynt" as one of Whitney's "numerous citations of *Heroides* material," and Cheney argues that it "associates [Whitney] with an Ovidian persona" in such a manner that readers are encouraged to detect conceptual links between *A Sweet Nosgay* and her "first volume of poetry ..., which is more formally modeled on the *Heroides*."⁵³ What readings such as Lyne's or Cheney's tend to downplay, however, is the extent to which Whitney's return to the subject of *Heroides* 7 in "A Careful Complaynt" signals not so much a continuity as a shift in the character of her Ovidianism.

Whereas Whitney's persona had earlier equated her own alleged love tragedy with Dido's in *The Copy of a Letter*, something markedly different occurs in *A Sweet Nosgay*. In "A Careful Complaynt," the Carthaginian queen is instructed to "stint [her] teares / and sorrowes all resigne."⁵⁴ Whitney's speaker in this poem grants that Dido was hard done by in love by one who "fowly brake his oth," yet she is insistent that *she* now has "greater cause of grieffe" than the legendary author of *Heroides* 7.⁵⁵ As Johnson summarizes, Whitney essentially "rewrites her classical source by replacing Ovid's suicidal Dido with a woman who will eventually recover from Aeneas's infidelity."⁵⁶ Whitney alleges that "in tyme," had Dido been longer lived, Aeneas' "absence might well [have] salued] the sore, / that earst his presence wrought."⁵⁷ The implication is that Whitney's own "endles griefes," as represented throughout *A Sweet Nosgay*, are far more serious in nature than mere amatory betrayal.⁵⁸ I am in full agreement with Laurie Ellinghausen's assessment that Whitney's text fosters "the impression that ... conventional literary tropes ... for female suffering insufficiently represent her experience," and I would propose that she achieves this via competitive reference to Ovid's *Heroides*.⁵⁹ Indeed, Whitney's claims to overgo rather than replicate Dido's pain indicate that she is also, by extension, conceptually distancing the Ovidianism of *A Sweet Nosgay* from that of *The Copy of a Letter*. In so doing, she retrospectively trivializes the pains of unrequited love that featured so centrally in her first work. This is a classic

example of one of those self-conscious aesthetic shifts so often discussed in career criticism, for Whitney signals to her readers that she has moved on from *The Copy of a Letter's* Heroidean imitation and erotodidacticism to a new—and purportedly more deeply sorrowful—form of Ovidian complaint.

That Whitney was responsive to the latest trends in mid-Tudor literary culture is evident throughout her oeuvre. Bearing this in mind, I want to suggest that the novel form of Ovidianism that runs throughout *A Sweet Nosgay* derives not so much from the *Heroides*, as prior scholarship has so often argued, as it does from Ovid's exile poetry, which was just then coming into vogue. To wit, English translations of both the *Ibis* and the *Tristia*—pseudo-autobiographical works that Ovid famously composed from the far edges of the Roman Empire at the end of his own career—were first published in the years just prior to *A Sweet Nosgay*. While it is a text little discussed in contemporary scholarship, Ovid's *Ibis* (a curse poem directed at a pseudonymous enemy) was, as previously mentioned, translated by Underdowne in a heavily annotated edition of 1569. Underdowne's *Ouid his Inuectiue against Ibis* proved vendible enough to warrant reprinting at least once in 1577. As Ingleheart speculates, this work no doubt “played a prominent role in receptions of the figure of the exiled Ovid” in this period.⁶⁰ The *Tristia*, which was partially translated by Churchyard and published as *The Thre First Bookes of Ouids De Tristibus* in 1572, 1578, and 1580, has received considerably more attention as a literary model for the “fashioning of exilic, predominantly masculine, subjectivities” in the Elizabethan era.⁶¹ It has been claimed that Ovid's poetry “is unique in ancient literature for the sheer number and quasi-systematic regularity of [its] autobiographic situations” and that, in particular, his “exilic poetry seems to give his readers direct, unmediated access to his experiences and thoughts.”⁶² It is little wonder, then, that Ovidian exile was hailed widely as “a master-trope that could be used to express all forms of ... dissatisfaction” in the late sixteenth century: it provided “an important cultural paradigm for ... authors who ... found themselves subject to exile or similar experiences,” including “alienation within a community that fails to recognize or reward one's presence or labours.”⁶³

Exile and Error in *A Sweet Nosgay*

It seems likely that, in crafting *A Sweet Nosgay*, Whitney was consciously drawing on the trope of the writerly Ovidian poet who was likewise “loth ... to leaue [his] countrye” yet found himself in exile with neither “frendes and dere alyes” nor “wealth to serue [his] neede[s]” in the latter part of his career.⁶⁴ Consider, for instance, the final section of *A Sweet Nosgay*, where we are told that, “though loth to leaue the Citie” of London, the Elizabethan *auctor* is nevertheless “constrained to depart.”⁶⁵ “It is,” as Helen Wilcox pertinently discerns, “from this perspective of looking back on the city, *in actual or imaginary exile from it*, that Whitney constructs a remarkable early modern cityscape” in the collection's concluding “Wyll and Testament.”⁶⁶ This final portrait that Whitney (whose persona has only her “bookes and Pen” to sustain herself) offers of her alienation and forced banishment from London is intrinsically related—and, indeed, replies upon—what has been called the “carefully calibrate[d] ... marginalized and disenfranchised poetic voice” that she cultivates throughout earlier sections of the work.⁶⁷ Socially, this “louyng ... Sister,” “poore Kinsewoman,” and “vnfortunate Friend” is “all sole alone,” spatially disconnected from her own family members and lacking “a Husband, or a house.”⁶⁸ She is also “servicelesse,” “very weake in Purse,” and suffering from ill health and “endlesse miserie.”⁶⁹ Whitney's authorial persona is, in short, depicted as a woman for whom “no lucke wyll byde, / nor happye chauce befall.”⁷⁰

Amongst many other Tristian resonances that we might detect in *A Sweet Nosgay* is Whitney's self-presentation as a "lucklesse" victim of fate who has fallen out "of Fortunes fauour."⁷¹ This tangibly reprises Ovid's persistent characterization of himself in the *Tristia* as a man to whom "fortune so vnfriendlye is" and his attendant literary explorations of how, as Matthew Woodcock puts it, "a reversal of fortune can be transformed into a self-promotional opportunity."⁷² So too does Whitney's representation of exile as a figurative form of death (which reaches its climax when the ailing and impecunious *auctor* "fayneth as she would die" in the volume's final mock testament) appear to pick up on a similar equation found throughout the *Tristia*, wherein Ovid even goes so far as to compose an epitaph for himself (which he imagines inscribed in "letters great ... / ... on [his] Tombe" to be read by "passers by").⁷³ In fact, even the superficially "Heroidean" rhetoric and format of the "Familiere Epistles" might be better classified as "Tristian" since the first-person pieces in Ovid's so-called "booke of sorrowes" likewise take the form of complaints addressed not only to Augustus Caesar, but also to a wide range of the poet's friends (both current and former) and beloved family members.

Arguably, the most remarkable of the many parallels that can be drawn between Ovid's exile poetry and *A Sweet Nosgay*, however, is Whitney's attribution of her own miserable state in her "second worke" to a mysterious, pseudo-Ovidian-sounding *error*. This idea recurs throughout the "Familiere Epistles" that precede the ultimate, unwilling banishment of Whitney's authorial persona from London in *A Sweet Nosgay*'s final pages. As previous critics have sometimes observed, Whitney "refers several times explicitly to a falling out with her lady of service."⁷⁴ In her letter "To her Brother G. W.," Whitney's epistoler mentions "a vertuous Ladye" who formerly employed her; she may drop further tantalizing clues about the dissolution of this relationship in "To her Brother B. W.," wherein she obliquely promises to reveal something "more" of her situation—something that she dares not commit to writing—to Brooke "when [they] do speake" in person next.⁷⁵ The early modern *auctor*'s letters to her sisters invite only further speculation about the nature of Whitney's supposed *error*—an *error* that appears, like Ovid's similarly opaque crime, to have a possible whiff of sexual impropriety about it. I am not the first reader to note that Whitney uses the provocative phrasing "I know you huswyfery intend / Though I to writing fall" in the missive addressed to her married sister Anne Baron as she compares their respective estates.⁷⁶ Commenting on these lines, Lynette McGrath, for example, posits that the "fall" of Whitney's persona may well "ha[ve] a sexual connotation uniquely applicable to women, as in the phrase 'a fallen woman'."⁷⁷ Another epistle addressed by Whitney to "two of her younger Sisters seruinge in London" seems to contain additional hints of this nature.⁷⁸ Existing scholarship has called attention to how "Whitney ... emphasizes the heightened sexual vulnerability of women in service positions" in this letter, and it has stressed the preoccupation with "sexual risk" at "the center of the poem."⁷⁹ Even as the epistoler warns her "good sisters" to internally "exile out of [their] minde[s]" any and "All wanton toyes," she also gestures towards the externalized dangers posed by male sexual predation.⁸⁰ Ann Rosalind Jones suggests that Whitney's allusions to the "many ... / that would ... soone infect" young women and to those who "would ... / Procure [their] shame" evoke "the domestic discord caused by the seduction, impregnation, and firing of maidservants," and I would further propose that her persona's sisterly words of admonition in this piece may be calculated to raise readers' suspicions that Whitney's own unspecified *error* is not unrelated to such matters.⁸¹

In Whitney's didactic letter to her "younger Sisters seruinge in London," elliptical references to maidservants' precarious position in the social and sexual economy are closely

intertwined with concerns about reputation and the destabilizing power of rumor. “[W]ords may hurt you” cautions Whitney’s all-too-experienced epistoler, and her specific instruction that her siblings should “listen to no lyes: / Nor credit euery fayned tale” intimates that her own loss of service may stem from verbal defamation *à la* those “whispered lyes and vntrue tales” that Underdowne claims the exiled Ovid was subjected to.⁸² Indeed, the role that vicious slander played in facilitating her purported downfall is seemingly confirmed later in the “Familiere Epistles.” She complains to one C. B., for instance, that he “know[s], how some [her] spite.”⁸³ In C. B.’s subsequent reply, he acknowledges that there are, indeed, “euell words” circulating that may have brought Whitney “to this woe”; he is, however, personally confident that her “enemies lye” and tries to reassure his correspondent that her other “Friends” who have similarly known her “of long, / Wil not regard [her] enemies tong.”⁸⁴

The various “interactions with Augustus” that Ovid scripts throughout his canon of exile poetry have been identified as “an important part of the model that Ovid provide[d] to later authors,” and Whitney seems to have recognized and adapted the “dramatic appeal of a scenario in which the apparently powerless author addresses Rome’s sole ruler.”⁸⁵ In *A Sweet Nosgay*, it is the early modern *auctor*’s lamentable exile from London that replaces Ovid’s banishment from the Roman metropolis and Whitney’s former employer who stands in for the antagonistic, god-like Augustus. What is more, the text of *A Sweet Nosgay* is itself framed as an “elaborate, indirect, ... [and] hope[fully] pleasing message to [the] offended lady.”⁸⁶ This idea finds its most explicit treatment in “To her Brother. G.W.,” where Whitney’s epistolary persona writes:

Receaeue of me and eke accept,
 a simple token heare:
 A smell of such a Nosegay as
 I do for present beare.
 Unto a vertuous Ladye, which
 tyll death I honour wyll:
 The losse I had of seruice hers,
 I languish for it styll.⁸⁷

Articulating the hope that this work might function as a “simple token” or “present” affirming her enduring goodwill, Whitney conceptualizes her own composition of *A Sweet Nosgay* as a redemptive activity. As Louise Schleiner has previously argued, the future reception of this text by Whitney’s erstwhile mistress is optimistically figured by her authorial persona as a possible “way to get back her post.”⁸⁸ Here, as well, we should detect a distinctly Tristian theme, for Ovid’s expatriate persona extensively develops the equivalent conceit that, once completed, the book of the *Tristia* will be able to circulate where he cannot. Even as he pens it, he imagines this work traveling “in [his] steede, [to] royall Rome” to convey its author’s “vnfriendlye fate” at large.⁸⁹ To this effect, the Augustan poet memorably personifies and addresses the “selye booke” itself in the *Tristia*’s famed (and much-imitated) opening elegy:

Some shall thou [my book] finde that will bewayle, me thus in exile sent,
 And reading thee wyth tricklinge teares, my carefull case lament.
 And in their muttringe mindes will wishe (lest wicked men may heare)
 That *Cæsars* yre once set a syde, from paynes I may be cleare.⁹⁰

Such ideas about “poetic presence in place of physical absence” have been identified as “the quintessential feature of his poems from exile,” and Ovid directly anticipates Whitney—who

likewise, as McGrath has phrased it, “works from the premise that writing may function as a compensation for presence”—in his expectation that a sympathetic future textual reception might help to mitigate the poet’s unspecified *error*.⁹¹

Conclusions

Classicist Ellen Oliensis writes that, in the *Tristia*, Ovid investigates how “the pose of impotence may be more efficacious ... than the pose of omnipotence,” and Woodcock has called attention to the analogous, if seemingly paradoxical, truism that “[a]ssuming the pose of the poet in exile could actually be a highly empowering move” for Ovid’s early modern successors, as well.⁹² Germane to my own broader argument is Woodcock’s related proposition: “even though its ostensible context is a departure or displacement, Ovid’s *Tristia* offered an alternative ... model of a text with which to signal one’s ‘arrival’ as an author” that stands in contrast to the best-known classical “template for launching a literary career,” the “programmatically Virgilian *rota*.”⁹³ As my above readings of *A Sweet Nosgay*’s Tristian aesthetic would indicate, Whitney appears to have been sensitive to both of these points.

By way of conclusion, it is worth asking *why* the contours of Whitney’s Ovidian career arc from amatory to exilic poetry have gone largely unremarked in contemporary scholarship. One obvious answer, of course, is her gender. The fact that she was a woman has, no doubt, facilitated the rich body of work relating the marginalized female personae that Whitney routinely activated in her writing to the ventriloquized voices of Ariadne, Medea, Hypsipyle, Dido, and others in Ovid’s *Heroides*. That said, I would suggest that scholarship’s ongoing fascination with the ways in which “the *Heroides*’ voluble female speakers, stylistic virtuosity, and range of narrative and emotional” registers “offered a site of possibility for women writers” of the early modern era has inadvertently served to limit the parameters of investigations into Whitney’s classical intertextuality.⁹⁴ An overemphasis on her female voice and attendant Heroideanism has helped to eclipse Whitney’s equally potent self-affiliation with Ovid’s Tristian persona—a crucial interauthorial relationship that elucidates the aesthetic deviations between her first and second works. In considering the implications of this point, Spenser provides a useful male foil, for discussions of his classically inflected *cursus* often invoke Ovid’s exilic persona. Syrithe Pugh—who sees Spenser’s apparent Virgilian career as a “veil thrown over [his] provocative self-alignment with Ovid”—has argued, for example, that he deliberately affiliated himself with “the exiled Ovid, a figure of political alienation and punished speech” to announce his own “career of ideological independence and scrutiny of political power.”⁹⁵ In a similar vein, Stapleton claims that Spenser’s poetry exhibits the same “interpenetrations between love, amatory poetry, and career building” modelled in Ovid’s final works.⁹⁶ Perhaps, then, it is because the Tudor reception of Ovid’s exile poetry has been so closely aligned with the figure of Spenser and with what Liz Oakley-Brown pertinently identifies as “*patriarchal* discourse articulating spatial, cultural, and temporal dislocations” that the Tristian dimensions of Whitney’s poetry—and, indeed, her own brief Ovidian *cursus*—have remained virtually unexplored.⁹⁷

More than this, prior critics’ failure to appreciate the nuances of Whitney’s tactical move from love plainant in *The Copy of a Letter* to exilic plainant in *A Sweet Nosgay* may also stem, more nebulously, from the profound aesthetic congruence between Ovid’s own early-career Heroidean and late-career Tristian elegies—or, as Ellen O’Gorman alternatively phrases it, “the similarity of terms with which both erotic and exilic writing [are] figured” in the Augustan author’s own canon.⁹⁸ Ovidian scholars frequently remark upon the multitude of “suggestive links” between the male persona “of the exilic letters and the mythological

heroines who act as internal authors of [the] *Heroides*.”⁹⁹ It has been said, for example, that the “*Tristia*’s first-person complaints are ... similar in structure and theme to [the] *Heroides* ... , not the least in the way they seek a form of rehabilitation through literary expression” and that the literary obsessions of his early career “reappear, though typically metamorphosed” in Ovid’s final writings from Tomis: that is, “the frustrated sexual desire of the erotic verse becomes the longing to return home and the disdainful mistress is replaced by the *princeps*” Augustus who ordered the poet’s expulsion and prevents his repatriation.¹⁰⁰ Just as Ovid’s Heroidean poetry is “predicated upon the idea of absence, the severance of the relationships that connect the [writing] women to the world of their heroes” so too is his exilic poetry centrally concerned with the author’s absence from Rome, his severed interpersonal relationships, and his resultant grief.¹⁰¹ I wish to end, then, with the final observation that it may be not *only* this Elizabethan poet’s gender, but also the potency of Ovid’s own intracanonial recursivity that has helped to obscure for posterity the movement from Heroidean to Tristian complaint that informs Whitney’s subtle yet tangible Ovidian *cursus*.

Notes

- ¹ See Lawrence Lipking, *The Life of the Poet: Beginning and Ending Poetic Careers* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981) and Richard Helgerson, *Self-Crowned Laureates: Spenser, Jonson, Milton and the Literary System* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).
- ² Philip Hardie and Helen Moore, “Literary Careers—Classical Models and their Receptions,” in *Classical Literary Careers*, eds. Philip Hardie and Helen Moore (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1.
- ³ Hardie and Moore, “Literary Careers,” 2.
- ⁴ Susanne Woods, Margaret P. Hannay, Elaine Beilin, and Anne Shaver, “Renaissance Englishwomen and the Literary Career,” in *European Literary Careers: The Author from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, eds. Patrick Cheney and Frederick A. de Armas (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 302.
- ⁵ Woods et al., “Renaissance Englishwomen,” 303 [emphasis my own].
- ⁶ Hardie and Moore, “Literary Careers,” 9-10.
- ⁷ Linda Gregerson, “Life Among Others,” *The Virginia Quarterly Review* 83, no. 1 (2007): 208.
- ⁸ Patrick Cheney, *Reading Sixteenth-Century Poetry* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 240, 236, 239. Cheney again advances a similar argument about Whitney’s Ovidianism in “Literary Careers,” in *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature, Volume 2: 1558-1660*, eds. Patrick Cheney and Philip Hardie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 182. Cheney’s extensive work on career criticism also includes *Spenser’s Famous Flight: A Renaissance Idea of a Literary Career* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993) and *Marlowe’s Counterfeit Profession: Ovid, Spenser, Counter-Nationhood* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).
- ⁹ As Whitney has ascended from obscurity to canonicity over the past four decades, there have been numerous speculative attempts to expand her oeuvre. This began with R. J. Fehrenbach’s propositions that she might have anonymously contributed a number of items to Richard Jones’s printed miscellanies *A Gorgeous Gallery of Gallant Inventions* and *A Handful of Pleasant Delights*: “Isabella Whitney and the Popular Miscellanies of Richard Jones,” *Cahiers Elisabéthains* 19 (1981): 85-7 and “Isabella Whitney, Sir Hugh

- Plat, Geoffrey Whitney, and Sister Eldershae,” *English Language Notes* 21, no. 1 (1983): 7-11. Building upon this work, Lynette McGrath has even speculated that “Whitney seems to have had a more or less regular place among a group of writers tapped by Jones to supply poems for his publications”: *Subjectivity and Women’s Poetry in Early Modern England: “Why on the Ridge Should She Desire to Go?”* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 126. One of Fehrenbach’s suggestions was also championed by Randall Martin: “Isabella Whitney’s ‘Lamentation upon the death of William Gruffith’,” *Early Modern Literary Studies* 3, no. 1 (1997): n.p. More recently, Raphael Lyne has advanced the theory that a translation of Ovid’s *Heroides* 7 and corresponding “answeare thereunto” appended to F. L.’s translation of the *Remedia Amoris* in 1600 might be Whitney’s work: “Writing Back to Ovid in the 1560s and 1570s,” *Translation and Literature* 13, no. 2 (2004): 155-64. Given the tentative nature of these attributions (and the fact that all of these poems are, unlike *The Copy of a Letter* and *A Sweet Nosgay*, relatively short, standalone pieces), I limit my own analysis in this essay to the two substantive volumes of poetry that Whitney is definitively known to have authored.
- ¹⁰ Thomas Churchyard (trans.), *The Thre First Bookes of Ouids De Tristibus* (STC 18977a; London, 1572), sig. B2r.
- ¹¹ See Cheney, *Marlowe’s Counterfeit*, 3-48. Cheney argues that the Ovidian career paradigm offered at early modern authors at least two possible genre-based models: the trajectory from amatory poetry to tragedy to epic (that Ovid initially intended for himself, as outlined in the *Amores*) or the alternative trajectory from amatory poetry to epic to exile poetry (that the historical poet unexpectedly found himself following after his unanticipated banishment). Another attempt to define the Ovidian *cursus* can be found in Alessandro Barchiesi and Philip Hardie, “The Ovidian Career Model: Ovid, Gallus, Apuleius, Boccaccio,” in *Classical Literary Careers*, eds. Hardie and Moore, 59-88.
- ¹² Thomas Underdowne (trans.), *Ouid his Inuectiue against Ibis* (STC 18949; London, 1569), sig. A7r.
- ¹³ Underdowne, *Ibis*, sigs. A4r-A4v.
- ¹⁴ Churchyard, *Tristibus*, np.
- ¹⁵ Churchyard, *Tristibus*, sig. B6v. I cite the corresponding Latin text of the *Tristia* from Ovid, *Tristia; Ex Ponto*, ed. Jeffrey Henderson, trans. Arthur Leslie Wheeler, rev. G. P. Goold (1924; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 2.207-8.
- ¹⁶ Jennifer Ingleheart, “Introduction: Two Thousand Years of Responses to Ovid’s Exile,” in *Two Thousand Years of Solitude: Exile after Ovid*, ed. Jennifer Ingleheart (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 4.
- ¹⁷ Thomas Cooper, “Ouidius,” in *Thesaurus Linguae Romanae & Britannicae* (STC 5686; London 1565).
- ¹⁸ Ovid, *P. Ovidii Nasonis Opera* (STC 18926.1; London, 1570), sigs. 4r-6r.
- ¹⁹ Ovid, *P. Ovidii Nasonis Opera*, sig. 8r.
- ²⁰ Ovid, *P. Ovidii Nasonis Opera*, sigs. 6v-8r.
- ²¹ Averill Lukic, “Geffrey and Isabella Whitney,” *Emblematica* 14 (2005): 397.
- ²² This possibility was first suggested in Fehrenbach, “Isabella Whitney, Sir Hugh Plat.” Jessica L. Malay has pursued this line of enquiry further: “Isabella Whitney, ‘Sister Eldershae,’ and Cheshire Recusancy,” *English Language Notes* 43, no. 2 (2005): 18-22.
- ²³ Lukic, “Geffrey and Isabella,” 406.
- ²⁴ M. L. Stapleton, “Letters of Address, Letters of Exchange,” in *A Companion to Renaissance Poetry*, ed. Catherine Bates (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2018), 367.
- ²⁵ Isabella Whitney, *A Sweet Nosgay* (STC 25440; London, 1573), sigs. C6r, C7r, D1v; Elizabeth Heale, *Autobiography and Authorship in Renaissance Verse: Chronicles of the*

- Self* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 34-40; Meredith Anne Skura, *Tudor Autobiography: Listening for Inwardness* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 149-67. Along similar lines, see Jean E. Howard, "Textualizing an Urban Life: The Cases of Isabella Whitney," in *Early Modern Autobiography: Theories, Genres, Practices*, eds. Ronald Bedford, Lloyd Davis, and Philippa Kelly (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 217-33.
- ²⁶ Isabella Whitney, *The Copy of a Letter* (STC 25439; London, c. 1566), sig. A1v; Heale, *Autobiography*, 11.
- ²⁷ Barchiesi and Hardie, "Ovidian Career Model," 65, 64.
- ²⁸ Stapleton, "Letters of Address," 367.
- ²⁹ Crystal Bartolovich, "'Optimism of the Will': Isabella Whitney and Utopia," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 39, no. 2 (2009): 414; Elaine V. Beilin, "Writing Public Poetry: Humanism and the Woman Writer," *Modern Language Quarterly* 51, no. 2 (1990): 253; Laurie Ellinghausen, *Labor and Writing in Early Modern England, 1557-1667* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 20.
- ³⁰ Allison Johnson, "The 'Single Lyfe' of Isabella Whitney: Love, Friendship, and the Single Woman Writer," in *Discourses and Representations of Friendship in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1700*, eds. Daniel T. Lochman, Maritere López, and Lorna Hutson (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 117.
- ³¹ Michelle O'Callaghan has persuasively argued that the single extant copy of *The Copy of a Letter* likely represents not the first but an expanded and revised later edition, for "[b]ibliographic evidence suggests a publishing history in which a single-authored collection [featuring the two letters attributed to Whitney] was subsequently turned into a little anthology of female and male complaints": "'My Printer must, haue somewhat to his share': Isabella Whitney, Richard Jones, and Crafting Books," *Women's Writing* 26, no. 1 (2019): 18. That Whitney may have written the two male-voiced letters as well as the two female-voiced epistles ascribed to her in *The Copy of a Letter* is a possibility entertained by Maggie Ellen Ray, "'The Simple Fool Doth Trust / Too Much before He Try': Isabella Whitney's Revision of the Female Reader and Lover in *The Copy of a Letter*," *Early Modern Women* 6 (2011): 130, 141.
- ³² Ann Rosalind Jones, *The Currency of Eros: Women's Love Lyric in Europe, 1540-1620* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 47.
- ³³ I borrow the useful term "epistoler" from William C. Dowling, *The Epistolary Moment: The Poetics of the Eighteenth-Century Verse Epistle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 12.
- ³⁴ Whitney, *Copy*, sig. A2r.
- ³⁵ Whitney, *Copy*, sig. A5v.
- ³⁶ Jones, *Currency of Eros*, 43; Whitney, *Copy*, sig. A6r.
- ³⁷ Johnson, "Single Lyfe," 123; Ray, "Simple Fool," 137-8.
- ³⁸ Ovid, *Ars Amatoria*, in *The Art of Love and Other Poems*, ed. Jeffrey Henderson, trans. J. H. Mozley, rev. G. P. Goold (1929; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 1.17.
- ³⁹ Patricia Phillippy, "The Maid's Lawful Liberty: Service, the Household, and 'Mother B' in Isabella Whitney's *A Sweet Nosegay*," *Modern Philology* 95, no. 4 (1998): 440.
- ⁴⁰ Phillippy, "Maid's Lawful Liberty," 440.
- ⁴¹ Wendy Wall, *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 306; Paul Glead, "'I lov'de thee best': London as Male Beloved in Isabella Whitney's 'The Manner of her Wyll'," *The London Journal* 37, no. 1 (2012): 11.

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- 42 Johnson, "Single Lyfe," 127; Ellinghausen, *Labor and Writing*, 27.
- 43 Whitney, *Nosgay*, sig. C7r.
- 44 Ellinghausen, *Labor and Writing*, 26.
- 45 Whitney, *Nosgay*, sigs. C6r-C6v.
- 46 Whitney, *Nosgay*, sig. C7r.
- 47 Lyne, "Writing Back," 158.
- 48 Whitney, *Nosgay*, sig. A5v.
- 49 Whitney, *Nosgay*, sigs. B1v, B1r.
- 50 Whitney, *Nosgay*, sigs. A5r, B1v.
- 51 Stapleton, "Letters of Address," 368.
- 52 Stapleton, "Letters of Address," 368.
- 53 Lyne, "Writing Back," 158; Cheney, *Reading Sixteenth-Century Poetry*, 239.
- 54 Whitney, *Nosgay*, sig. D3r.
- 55 Whitney, *Nosgay*, sig. D3r.
- 56 Johnson, "Single Lyfe," 123.
- 57 Whitney, *Nosgay*, sig. D3v.
- 58 Whitney, *Nosgay*, sig. D3v.
- 59 Ellinghausen, *Labor and Writing*, 27.
- 60 Ingleheart, "'I shall be thy devoted foe': The Exile of the Ovid of the *Ibis* in English Reception," in *Two Thousand Years*, 120.
- 61 Liz Oakley-Brown, "Elizabethan Exile after Ovid: Thomas Churchyard's *Tristia* (1572)," in *Two Thousand Years*, ed. Ingleheart, 103.
- 62 Barchiesi and Hardie, "Ovidian Career Model," 59; Ingleheart, "Introduction," 6.
- 63 Richard A. McCabe, *Spenser's Monstrous Regiment: Elizabethan Ireland and the Poetics of Difference* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 3; Ingleheart, "Introduction," 10; Matthew Woodcock, *Thomas Churchyard: Pen, Sword, Ego* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 159.
- 64 Churchyard, *Tristibus*, sigs. A3r, A4v.
- 65 Whitney, *Nosgay*, sig. E2r.
- 66 Helen Wilcox, "'Ah Famous Citie': Women, Writing, and Early Modern London," *Feminist Review* 96 (2010): 22-3 [emphasis my own].
- 67 Whitney, *Nosgay*, sig. D2r; Gleed, "I lov'de thee," 2.
- 68 Whitney, *Nosgay*, sigs. C6v, C7r, D2r, D2v, D6v, A6r, D2r.
- 69 Whitney, *Nosgay*, sigs. A6v, E3r, D6r.
- 70 Whitney, *Nosgay*, sig. C7r.
- 71 Whitney repeatedly describes herself as "lucklesse" throughout *A Sweet Nosgay*: sigs. A6r, C6v, D3r, D6r. For her claim to be out "of Fortunes fauour," see sig. C6r. Elsewhere in the collection, Whitney's persona blames "Fortune fell" for "conuert[ing] / [Her] health to heapes of payne" (sig. D3r), and her various correspondents in the "Familiier Epistles" frequently echo this imagery of Whitney's victimization by Fortune.
- 72 Churchyard, *Tristibus*, sig. A1v; Woodcock, *Thomas Churchyard*, 159.
- 73 Whitney, *Nosgay*, sig. E2r; Churchyard, *Tristibus*, sig. C4r. Intriguingly, in 1575 Churchyard published an autobiographical-sounding poem entitled "A Tragical Discourse of the Vnhappy Mans Life," which incorporates testamentary rhetoric reminiscent of Whitney's "Wyll and Testament" in *A Sweet Nosgay*. Woodcock has previously gestured to a possible connection between these roughly contemporary pieces, and Churchyard's status as translator of the *Tristia* invites speculation that he and Whitney were inspired in analogous ways by Ovid's exilic writings: *Thomas Churchyard*, 276 n 33.

- ⁷⁴ Louise Schleiner, *Tudor and Stuart Women Writers* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 4.
- ⁷⁵ Whitney, *Nosgay*, sigs. C6v, C7r.
- ⁷⁶ Whitney, *Nosgay*, sig. D2r.
- ⁷⁷ McGrath, *Subjectivity*, 155-56.
- ⁷⁸ Whitney, *Nosgay*, sig. C7v.
- ⁷⁹ Michelle M. Dowd, *Women's Work in Early Modern English Literature and Culture* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). 33; Ann Rosalind Jones, "Maidservants of London: Sisterhoods of Kinship and Labor," in *Maids and Mistresses, Cousins and Queens*, eds. Susan Frye and Karen Robertson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 25.
- ⁸⁰ Whitney, *Nosgay*, sig. C8r.
- ⁸¹ Whitney, *Nosgay*, sig. C8r; Jones, "Maidservants," 25.
- ⁸² Whitney, *Nosgay*, sig. C8r.
- ⁸³ Whitney, *Nosgay*, sig. D6r.
- ⁸⁴ Whitney, *Nosgay*, sig. D7r.
- ⁸⁵ Ingleheart, "Introduction," 15.
- ⁸⁶ Schleiner, *Tudor and Stuart*, 5.
- ⁸⁷ Whitney, *Nosgay*, sig. C6v.
- ⁸⁸ Schleiner, *Tudor and Stuart*, 5. Whitney's figuration of *A Sweet Nosgay* as gift at this juncture in the collection also echoes (albeit somewhat distortedly) a similar formulation found in her dedication to Mainwaring.
- ⁸⁹ Churchyard, *Tristibus*, sigs. A1v, A1r.
- ⁹⁰ Churchyard, *Tristibus*, sigs. A1v, A1r.
- ⁹¹ Matthew McGowan, *Ovid in Exile: Power and Poetic Redress in the "Tristia" and "Epistulae ex Ponto"* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 3; McGrath, *Subjectivity*, 146.
- ⁹² Ellen Oliensis, "The Power of Image-Makers: Representation and Revenge in Ovid *Metamorphoses* 6 and *Tristia* 4," *Classical Antiquity* 23, no. 2 (2004): 297; Woodcock, *Thomas Churchyard*, 159.
- ⁹³ Woodcock, *Thomas Churchyard*, 160.
- ⁹⁴ Rosalind Smith, Michelle O'Callaghan, and Sarah C.E. Ross, "Complaint," in *A Companion*, ed. Bates, 340.
- ⁹⁵ Syrithe Pugh, *Spenser and Ovid* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 12, 4.
- ⁹⁶ M. L. Stapleton, *Spenser's Ovidian Poetics* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2009), 47.
- ⁹⁷ Oakley-Brown, "Elizabethan Exile," 103 [emphasis my own].
- ⁹⁸ Ellen O'Gorman, "Love and the Family: Augustus and the Ovidian Legacy," *Arethusa* 30, no. 1 (1997): 104.
- ⁹⁹ Ingleheart, "Introduction," 6.
- ¹⁰⁰ Woodcock, *Thomas Churchyard*, 159; Maggie Kilgour, "New Spins on Old Rotas: Virgil, Ovid, Milton," in *Classical Literary Careers*, eds. Hardie and Moore, 182.
- ¹⁰¹ Danielle Clarke, "Ovid's *Heroides*, Drayton and the Articulation of the Feminine in the English Renaissance," *Renaissance Studies* 22, no. 3 (2008): 392.