

TUTICANUS AND HIS SECRET:  
HYPOTHETICAL CONSIDERATIONS  
(OVID, *EX PONTO* IV 12, IV 14, AND IV 16)<sup>1</sup>

by

ELŻBIETA WESOŁOWSKA

**ABSTRACT:** This article attempts to examine the multilayered character representation of the addressee of two closing elegies (IV 12 and IV 14) of Ovid's *Epistulae ex Ponto*, Tuticanus, who is also alluded to in the final poem of this collection (IV 16). I seek to trace the elements of wordplay in the name of Ovid's mysterious friend, as well as in the poet's efforts to draw the reader's attention to the impossibility of fitting this name into the metre of the elegiac distich. What is also notable here are the close parallels between the lives of the formal addressee and the poet, including their keen interest in poetry. The fact that Tuticanus figures in elegies 12 and 14, and periphrastically in 16 of Book IV suggests that a special role has been assigned to him, namely that maybe he seems to epitomise the *Amores*, the first collection of poetry composed by Ovid. It is also argued that as an example of Ovid's late poetic works, the three elegies discussed in this article also mark the endpoint of the poet's oeuvre, the tone and mood of which no longer accords with the poems of the early period.

It could reasonably be argued that Ovid's poetic innovation and virtuosity shine most strongly in the ways in which he transformed the poetic form. Moreover, his exceptional ability to construct multi-layered meanings helped him to deflect the criticism of those who accused his exile poems composed in Tomis of being monotonous and sycophantic<sup>2</sup>. Ovid's poems are characterised by the use of wordplay such as so-called 'cacemphaton', which appears in *Heroides* X 71–72), acrostics, anagrams, and onomatopoeia – the latter in the famous passage dealing with Narcissus and Echo (*Met.* III 380–389)<sup>3</sup>.

In this article, I will analyse the semantic complexity in the name of the poet's friend, Tuticanus, who is the addressee of letters 12 and 14 in Book IV

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<sup>2</sup> WESOŁOWSKA 2022: 77.

<sup>3</sup> For more information on wordplay and jokes in Ovid's works, see: WINNICZUK 1974 (wit in the *Fasti*), Courtney 1998 (jokes in the *Amores*), Coleman 2010 (wordplays in the *Heroides*), DANIELEWICZ 2020 (acrostics in the *Ars amatoria*), and BATTISTELLA 2020 (literary games in the *Heroides*), among other scholars.