Ovid's wife and the limits of fiction

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The puzzling appearance in Ovid's *Amores* 3.13 of his wife accompanying the poet to a festival of Juno has been explained either as a playful intrusion of reality into the world of “free love” or, more adventurously, by identifying Ovid's (first?) wife with Corinna. In his lecture Prof. Marinčič explores the role played by Ovid's *third* wife in his exile poetry, provocatively asking whether this writing can be read as an inverted palinode of the characteristic relationship between (erotic) fiction and (conjugal) reality in the poet's pre-exile works. The figures of the wife and of Livia, as they are staged in *Tristia* 1.6 and in the *Pontic Letters* 3.1, shed some light on rhetorical strategies and poetological reflection involved in Ovid's auto-apology from exile. The rhetoric of *captatio benevolentiae*, as Mrs. Naso is enjoined to approach the empress, reminds us of the *Amores*. “Livia is very unlike the mythological monsters of my own metamorphic poetry,” Ovid seems to be suggesting to his wife, “but I can understand your being afraid of a living ‘monster of virtue’.”