

BOOK REVIEW

Two Thousand Years of Solitude: Exile after Ovid. Edited by JENNIFER INGLEHEART. Classical Presences Series. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. Pp xvi + 353. Hardcover, £70.00/\$125.00. ISBN 978-0-19-960384-8.

My initial assumption that the title of this book derives from the title of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel García Márquez was disabused by the epigraph on the first page of Ingleheart's Introduction to this volume of essays discussing exiled authors who each in some way reflected Ovid's exilic works in their own. The epigraph, a quotation from Hayden Carruth's 1992 "Ovid, Old Buddy, I would discourse with you a while" is clearly the source: "You speak to me of two thousand years of solitude." That sentence adequately epitomises the volume as a whole.

Scholars from various fields (French and Italian literature, and, in English, Milton and Shakespearean studies) as well as Classicists, all participants at a 2009 conference held at St John's College, Durham, contributed the 17 chapters that comprise the two parts of this fascinating volume. Ingleheart's Introduction gives a good overview of the aims of the work, as well as providing a basic theoretical framework for consideration of the related phenomena of exile and exilic literature.

The twelve chapters of Part I, "Ovidian Exile and the Poets," feature, in roughly chronological order, poets whose reactions to various forms of displacement overtly (and sometimes more covertly) refer to our prototypical exiled poet and/or his works.

Space precludes inclusion of the apt titles chosen by each expert to characterize the chapter each presents. Readers must be content with the name of each exiled poet, followed by a word or phrase highlighting his particular debt to Ovid, with (in brackets) the name of the author of the chapter. These are, in order: Dante, mostly echoes (Efreem Zambon); Petrarch, vocabulary, tropes (L. B. T. Houghton); Du Bellay, linguistic alienation (Stephen Hinds); Milton, topographical inversion (Mandy Green); Thomas Churchyard, translation of the *Tristia* as reflection of Elizabethan exile (Liz Oakley-Brown); Thomas

Underdowne's 1569 "anonymous" translation of the *Ibis* as reception (Jennifer Ingleheart); Marvell, "generic variety in a single poem ... read in the frame of Ovidian exile poetry" (p. 136, Philip Hardie); the Polish Chevalier de Boufflers in Senegal, writing to his beloved (Barbara Witucki); Victor Hugo, "trumping" Ovid at every literary turn (Fiona Cox); Pushkin, geographical proximity to Tomis leading to imitation of Ovid's exilic tropes (Duncan Kennedy); exiled poets from the 1970s to 2000 and beyond: Heaney, Brodsky, Walcott, Reed, Carson, Purcell and, finally, Bob Dylan, all "using a set of three key themes" of "dislocation, politics and lament" (p. 207, Stephen Harrison). Dylan's thirty-second "studio album" pays homage to Ovid via Green's translations, so Harrison. Finally, Jennifer J. Dellner discusses "formation of a unique poetics of transformation qua exile" (p. 223), in particular as marking linguistic displacement, with the Irish poets Eavan Boland and Derek Mahon.

Part II, "Ovidian Exile in Modern Prose," comprises five chapters that review various novelists' interpretation of Ovid's exile in their works, starting, however, with Helen Lovatt's discussion of Thibault's well-known *The Mystery of Ovid's Exile* as a form of sleuthing. This serves as introduction to Lovatt's further analysis of two "detective novels" that feature Ovid, respectively by David Wishart and Benita Kane Jaro. Next follows analysis by Charilaos N. Michalopoulos of Jane Alison's *The Love Artist*, a work that deals less with Ovid's life at Tomis than (in various flash-backs) with his carefree life before the blow of banishment was struck. Apparently Ransmayr's *Last World* pervasively influences Alison's presentation of Tomis as a place "where anything can happen" (p. 267).

The next three chapters are concerned with the novels of Ransmayr (again), Malouf and Horia, who have widely diverging takes on Ovid's life at Tomis: Chapters 15, by Andreas N. Michalopoulos on *The Last World*, and 16, by Ioannis Ziogas on Malouf's *An Imaginary Life*, each gives a brief summary of the work and then discusses salient issues. In the final chapter Sebastian Matzner compares Malouf's *Imaginary Life* with Horia's 1961 *God Was Born in Exile* (translated from his *Dieu est né en exil*, 1960) showing how each author rewrites Roman peripherals into new, essentially post-colonial centralities. The title of his chapter neatly points Matzner's assertion that these works allow Rome to be usurped by its furthest outpost as the center whence the "(dis)location of exile" (p. 321) may be viewed: "Tomis writes back ..."

A five-page, double-columned Index facilitates reference. A generous bibliography of twenty-five pages lists all works cited, offering a useful overview of both the latest publications and standard works on Ovid's exile, as well as critical

books and articles devoted to the two-thousand-year panoply of other “exiled” authors and the works of each as discussed. My only quibble regards the dating of the works by these “exiles,” both as listed here and as cited in footnotes, clearly an editorial decision. To read “Milton 1998:4” (p. 87), “Milton 1970:1.3” (p. 88), “Bouffleurs 1998” (p. 157 n. 12), or “[Victor] Hugo 1985a” (p. 173) is jarring to the *cognoscenti* and confusing to tyros. Harvard-style citation of modern editions of authors from earlier eras should more happily include the name of the editor before the date of such an edition; hence “Milton (Hughes *et al.* 1970) 1.3” or “Milton (Flannagan 1998) 4.”

However, if ever the concept of each reader’s (re)creating a literary work by the act of reading (and writing about) it needed validation, this useful compendium of readerly and scholarly opinions offers that validation. The Ovidian exile(s) that emerge(s) from these pages are as many and as varied as the sum of the authors discussed and the scholars discussing them, serving to enrich the target reader’s own conception of the first, multi-faceted, star-crossed poet of exile.

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