

MELANIE MÖLLER, ed., *Excessive Writing. Ovids Exildichtung*, Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2020, 198 pp., 38,00€, ISBN 978-3-8253-7951-3.

This collection of papers, edited and briefly introduced by Melanie Möller, is the result of a meeting of the *Réseau de Poésie Augustéenne* in 2017 and takes Ovid's exile poetry as its theme. The first six chapters are concerned with aspects of the *Tristia*, the *Epistulae ex Ponto*, and parts of the *Fasti* (the *Ibis* is conspicuous in its absence); the next four chapters consider the reception of the exilic oeuvre in a number of contexts; and the closing paper offers a summative reading of the end of Ovid's career through the lens of Roland Barthes' 'la fatigue'.

The chapter by Jacqueline Fabre-Serris considers the representation of exiles arriving in Latium before the foundation of Rome by Ovid in the *Fasti*. She usefully points to a number of ways in which the poet associates the future growth of Rome with Evander, rather than with Aeneas, as we might have expected from the familiar account in the *Aeneid*. The engagement of parts of *Fasti* 1 with Tibullus 2.5 is suggestively handled. Fabre-Serris then goes on—implausibly—to argue that the significance given to Evander in the *Fasti* allows Ovid to make much of his mother Carmentis' role in being hospitable toward exiled strangers; through this treatment of Carmentis, Fabre-Serris posits, Ovid seeks to make a veiled petition to Livia, also the mother of a ruler, in the hope that she may bring about some mitigation in his circumstances. It seems to me, rather, that Ovid's challenge to the *Aeneid's* association of Rome's future growth with its hero through his aligning of the city's development with Evander may be a typically Ovidian inversion of one of his predecessors' accounts. If there is a political undertone in the greater prominence given to Arcadian Evander in the *Fasti*, it may be to suggest that there are other ways of telling the story of Rome's foundation and expansion than through the version that seems to culminate in, and to prioritise, the descendants of Aeneas.

Maria Luisa Delvigo explores the generic choices made by Ovid in his exile poetry against the background of the Virgilian poetic *cursus*. Since Ovid was denied an ascent to the lofty heights achieved by Virgil in his epic because of the rupture caused by relegation, Delvigo draws attention to an almost surrogate inclusion of epic themes in the poet's account of his journey into exile in *Tristia* 1, while setting his use of them against his engagement with them in earlier works—the many-mouths motif, for example. Her main interest is in the use of the imagery of a (metaliterary) journey by boat,

and the storm at sea looms large in her discussion of *Tristia* 1. It is perhaps surprising, in considering the imagery of a boat tossed between elegiac and epic, that Propertius 3.21, in which that elegist imagines a future epic voyage for himself, is not mentioned, nor are Catullus 4 and the *Argonautica*, both of which are relevant to Ovid's portrayal of his storm-tossed boat.

In her chapter, Melanie Möller considers the nature of exile literature and the confrontation between, and conflation of, its representations of reality and possibility as rhetorical devices. Juxtaposition of Ovid's own fate with the mythological lends itself to such an analysis. She revisits the comparison—made frequently throughout the exilic corpus—of Ovid's own situation with that of Odysseus and usefully demonstrates that the poet seeks to outdo the hero of epic in a genre-centred *agon* that emphasises the greater hardship endured by the elegist apropos his relationship to the gods, the duration of his suffering, and his separation from his wife. In place of Odysseus, whom he satirises, Ovid holds himself up as an *exemplum* of one who suffers.

The contribution by Mario Labate revisits *Tristia* 2 and its engagement with Horace's *Epistle* 2.1, also addressed to Augustus. He argues that the exiled poet constructs himself as a poet who has failed to live up to the status of a poet laureate in the light of his exile: Ovid portrays himself as a sort of 'Orazio mancato'. The motif of the *clementia Caesaris* looms large throughout Ovid's exilic poetry, despite the fact that the elegist does not succeed in being a beneficiary of it (as Horace had been). Though Ovid does not experience the emperor's clemency, Labate suggests—to my mind, implausibly—that the outlook of the poet, as regards the power of the sovereign, corresponds to that of a loyal citizen.

Gianpiero Rosati turns his attention to the Pontic epistles in particular, and reflects on the nature of power and on the dynamics of the 'microfisica del potere' that affects Ovid and his addressees. He argues that, while the poet's letters are *prima facie* addressed, for the most part, to friends and acquaintances, they are also public documents, inasmuch as many of their addressees are close associates of the *domus Augusta*. These addressees constitute many of the nodes in a network of relationships that centres on Augustus, who is portrayed by the poet as an all-seeing Argos and the apex of power. Ovid has been excluded from this network on account of his relegation, and, Rosati argues, his acquaintances and friends seem to be disinclined to fulfil the *officium* due to him (by seeking some mitigation of his punishment) on account of the more significant duty that binds them to the emperor.

In a chapter that focusses on Germanicus' putative triumph in *Pont.* 2.1, Edoardo Galfré sets out the ways in which Ovid's predictions of future triumphs for the various members of the *domus Augusta* often end up being inaccurate. Through a close reading of the end of *Pont.* 2.1, it is plausibly demonstrated that Ovid aligns himself with Germanicus, as they are both

fighting for their lives, in a manner of speaking, on the fringes of the Empire. Ovid—in hoping to secure his own return—makes his presence in Rome a precondition for Germanicus' imagined triumph. It seems to me that we can go further than this, and suggest that particular attention is drawn to Germanicus by the elegist, as this Caesar was himself a poet, and the triumph envisioned for him in *Pont.* 2.1 may also be thought of as a metaliterary triumph for the poet. The emphasis given to Germanicus in this triumph-poem when Ovid names him and moves on to treat his putative triumph, rather than the Tiberian one with which he is initially concerned, is marked. In earlier triumph-poems, as Galfré notes, there is some ambiguity about which of the *Caesares* is (or are) under discussion at a given moment, and so the weight lent to the naming of Germanicus is considerable; we may compare the slippage between Julius Caesar and Augustus that occurs at *Met.* 1.199–206. It is a shame that N. Pandey's *The Poetics of Power in Augustan Rome*, Cambridge 2018, on poets' depictions of the triumph was not available to Galfré.

Philip Hardie's rich chapter opens the second section of the volume that contains discussions of the reception of Ovid's exile poetry. He attractively juxtaposes studies of intertextuality and allusion in Rutilius Namatianus' *De reditu suo* and in Paulinus of Nola's propempticon for Nicetas of Remesiana (*Poem* 17), in order to show how both poems make use of Ovidian representations of exile. Rutilius' characterisation of Rome, and his relationship with it as he travels to his native Gaul, is partly expressed through a marriage of Vergilian imagery and of Ovid's articulation of his own departure from Rome and the imagined presence of the city after he has left it. The Rome that Rutilius leaves behind, Hardie suggests, is also a figurative locale in the newly forged Christian world of late antiquity: it is a lost sphere of the pagan that can only be realised through the longing of those exiled from it. In discussing Paulinus' poem, attention is drawn to the importance of Ovid's literary description of the exilic climate and landscape as a source for Paulinus' account of Dacia; *Tr.* 3.10 is particularly important. The idea of metamorphosis is thematised here, as Paulinus transforms the landscape into a Christian terrain. Hardie also considers the manner in which Ovid's frequent use of memory to imagine himself still with his friends (and his friends with him) is transformed by Paulinus into an account of spiritual presence-in-absence through the communal bond brought about by *caritas Christi*: the two men are united by the presence of Christ with each of them.

In a dense chapter of two parts, Alessandro Barchiesi first discusses the reception of Ovidian authorial voice in several of Boccaccio's writings, paying close attention to the interaction between poetics and (constructed) biography. He refers to the literary product of this interaction as 'autography' and usefully explores the ways in which autographies rely on the existence of models on which one may draw, or to which one may react; Ovid is an

important one of these for Boccaccio. Ovid's own autography, with the breach caused by the exile of the poet, has proven to be a particularly fruitful model for later writers in providing a clear moment of fracture and transition. In the second section of his chapter, Barchiesi reflects that greater importance ought to be given to a poet's various audiences, particularly in relation to that poet's original socio-political and cultural milieu, in order that we may better position ourselves as interpreters of a given text. He weighs new evidence that has come to light about possible revisions to the *leges Iuliae* in the first decade of the common era and asks us to consider that the audience of Ovid's *Ars amatoria* was likely to be the same as (or, at least, very similar to) the audience for these laws, which did not constitute 'reproductions of reality', but were, like poetry, a discursive practice (p. 152). The importance of the audience of Ovid's works, as well as that of Augustus' legislation, to our interpretation of the former's poetry cannot be understated in relation to his erotodidactic work, nor apropos his exilic works that so frequently speak of *carmen* alongside *error*.

William Fitzgerald eloquently explores some of the ways in which the state of being an exile coincides—essentially—with that of being a writer. He considers a number of the tensions that this overlap brings about in Ovid's self-presentation as poet and as exile, and how these play out in relation to his (expectations about his) readership. Particular attention is given to what seems to be the inevitable distinction between a poet's account of their experience and what may be understood of their experience by a reader of that account. In the light of this divergence of understanding between author and reader, Fitzgerald sensitively explores Ovid's exploitation of the polysemy of a number of important terms—such as *numerus*, *fama* and *Musa*—in several exilic poems, and considers how the poet's status as exile causes him to have to take into account the distinct context of his reader in relation to potential interpretations of his writings.

In a chapter that most explicitly deals with the idea of 'excessive writing' that Möller adumbrates in her brief introduction to the volume, Maximilian Haas provides attractive close readings of *Tr.* 4.1 and parts of *Pont.* 1.2 that explore the ways in which Ovid seemingly transgresses the bounds of the poetics of moderation that he outlines in the opening poem of his fourth book of *Tristia*; the poet does so, Haas suggests, on account of his perception of the boundlessness of his suffering. In articulating these readings, Haas relies, to some extent, on using Christoph Ransmayr's novel *Die Letzte Welt* as a productive focaliser for the modern reader of Ovid's exile poetry.

In the closing chapter of the volume, Jürgen Paul Schwindt takes Barthes' concept of 'la fatigue' as the basis for growth and creation, and uses it as a starting point for a consideration of Ovid's exile poetry as driven by an impetus toward novel creativity that arises from the poet's (figurative) death in exile—a species of 'la fatigue'. The pun available to German speakers of 'die

Schöpfung' being an integral part of, and hence inherent to, 'die Erschöpfung' is grist to Schwindt's mill. Schwindt explores the playing out of 'la fatigue' in the exile poetry on three levels: (i) the repetition of themes and imagery within the poems; (ii) the dissipation of the body to leave only the voice in all its elegiac intensity (he appositely introduces the *comparanda* of Orpheus, Canens, and Echo from the *Metamorphoses*); and, (iii) the conflation of the poet with his verse in the exilic poetry, such that he will go on living in the new creation that was compelled by the circumstances of his relegation, his 'fatigue'. This third level is, in Schwindt's view, particularly noteworthy, given that it seems, as he suggests, to reject the idea espoused in *Tristia 2* (Schwindt's *lex Catulli*) that a poet's work is not necessarily indicative of his way of life. There is, however, no contradiction between the argument of *Tristia 2* and the rest of the exilic corpus: to distinguish between the content of one's poetry and one's way of life (as in *Tristia 2*) is different from distinguishing (or not) between a poet's self and his poetry.

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