

films upside down because their justification was not the story, the screenplay or the acting but “the phenomenon of visual style”. You could say that he wrote with the camera - and he often achieved poetry.’ There is a tension in Virgil’s visually charged words beyond narrative coherence, but not beyond the poetic, or the political. It may not go there, but *Virgil’s Cinematic Art* points to the ability of feminist and queer film theory to explore this tension.

University of Arkansas
dfredric@uark.edu

DAVID FREDRICK

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MEGAN O. DRINKWATER, *OVID’S HEROIDES AND THE AUGUSTAN PRINCIPATE* (Wisconsin Studies in Classics). Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2022. Pp. 192. ISBN 9780299337803 (bound). \$79.95.

The relationship between Ovid’s poetry and Augustan politics has been much debated. Was Ovid’s unwillingness to promote Augustan propaganda an expression of a general lack of interest in political matters, or did he actually take an anti-Augustan stance? Are there critical messages in his works?

In her book *Ovid’s Heroides and the Augustan Principate*, Megan O. Drinkwater, Professor of Classics and expert on Roman Elegy with a special interest in Ovid, claims to take a new approach to the political reading of the *Heroides*. The premise of the analysis is that Ovid, who wrote and published his famous works in the aftermath of what was the most turbulent time in Rome, was so strongly influenced by the dramatic historical changes around him that this must have affected his writing, intentionally or not. In these Ovidian poems, D. detects veiled critical comments on the recent civil wars and the subsequent proscriptions and land confiscations that affected Roman citizens.

The poems selected for this study include Penelope (letter 1), Briseis (letter 3), Oenone (letter 5) and Dido (letter 7), women from the single collection who, according to D., all give voice to this crisis of civic identity, and Paris (letter 16) and Helen (letter 17) from the double collection. The letter-writers have in common experience of the Trojan War, the myth that formed the basis of the foundation and greatness of Rome. The letters of Acontius (letter 20) and Cydippe (letter 21), though not concerned with the Trojan war, are included in a coda, as D. in her interpretation draws a parallel to Octavian’s loyalty oath in 32 B.C.

Like much recent scholarship on the *Heroides*, D. focuses on the poems’ translation from epic into elegy as well as the shift from a masculine to a feminine perspective, offering a fresh and unexpected explanation of these Ovidian deviations from ordinary literary conventions. In her view, Ovid’s literary inventions represent the changed conditions for individual citizens in the new age of Augustus. By constructing a new literary landscape, Ovid reflects the disorientation in the new political landscape. Victimized women writers serve as parallels for the Roman people when they express anxieties felt by Ovid’s contemporaries. Ovid’s prioritisation of elegiac heroines instead of epic heroes becomes in this way an attempt to demonstrate how the *servitium amoris* of elegy symbolises a seduction into slavery orchestrated by the princes.

D. starts her analysis by examining the widely discussed letters of Dido and Penelope and their epic counterparts in Virgil and Homer respectively. She interprets the former as a questioning of the whole Roman project, a critique of the ideology of Rome represented by Augustus’ ancestor Aeneas. Similarly, Ovid uses Penelope as a tool for expressing the exhaustion and frustration caused by war. In this chapter, D. discovers eye-opening references to Virgil’s first eclogue and *Georgics* 1, which contain overt comments on the land confiscations after the civil wars. I find this observation particularly valuable since Penelope’s letter starts the whole collection and can thus be read as programmatic for the *Heroides*.

Briseis and Oenone also offer lamentations, but their new situation has made them powerless and unable to communicate or act. They are left behind, stuck in the world of elegy in its *servitium amoris*, dreaming nostalgically of a better past while looking on as their partners advance from

their pastoral, elegiac past towards an epic future. Before moving on to the epic world, however, Paris, the former husband of Oenone, writes to his new love Helen. Here, D. questions the stereotype of Paris as the skilful and successful seducer who knows his *Ars amatoria*. Instead he is a headstrong young man, determined to achieve power and glory, regardless of its cost or consequences for his country and its inhabitants, claiming his right to pursue what he wants. He symbolises the young and ambitious new generation of Romans, or perhaps even Augustus himself. Helen, on the other hand, is the cautious and clear-eyed reader who warns her admirer of his short-sightedness, perhaps the *alter ego* of Ovid himself.

D. herself admits that these interpretations may seem audacious. Still, what seems far-fetched in the first instance becomes convincing when the pieces are joined together into an intriguing pattern. Sometimes, though, I wonder if she perhaps goes too far. That Apollo in the letter of Oenone is said to represent Augustus does not convince me. My other reservation regarding this otherwise commendable project concerns the selection of poems. Only four of fifteen letters in the first collection are included, and this seems insufficient as a basis for a general interpretation of the whole collection. Neither is the letter of Laodamia (letter 13) included, although it concerns the Trojan War.

Despite these reservations, *Ovid's Heroides and the Augustan Principate* is a welcome addition to the ongoing discussion on Ovid's sceptical attitude towards Augustan politics. Moreover, D.'s book is clearly structured and well written, offering a careful and serious analysis grounded in solid scholarship.

Lund University
martina.bjork@klass.lu.se
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MARTINA BJÖRK

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FABIO GATTI. *OVIDIO, TRISTIA 4: INTRODUZIONE, TESTO E COMMENTO* (Millennium 13).
 Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2022. Pp. 582. ISBN 9788836133031. €50.00.

This excellent new commentary on *Tristia* 4 is a welcome addition to the growing scholarship on Ovid's exile poetry. Recent commentaries on the *Tristia* include Ciccarelli (2003) and Ingleheart (2010) on *Tr.* 2, Luisi (2006) on *Tr.* 4.10, while the Green and Yellows by Stephen Hinds on *Tr.* 1 and Lauren Curtis on *Tr.* 3 are eagerly awaited. The expansive format of this commentary allows for copious exposition, discussion and citation of bibliographical references, making it an especially valuable resource for further research.

The general introduction (3–42) does an excellent job of presenting the major themes and scholarly issues of the *Tristia* as a whole and of situating Book 4 within the collection, tracing connections to other poems in Book 4, the rest of the exile poetry and Ovid's earlier works. After the intense descriptions of the exilic landscape of Tomis in Book 3, Ovid is now in his second year of relegation and his focus is more inward-looking. G. detects, particularly in the second half of the book, 'un tono di totale scoramento' (7). G. helpfully lays out the structural features of *Tr.* 4 (10 poems, the shortest book in the collection), addressing issues of poetic arrangement (ring-composition between 4.1 and 4.10, 4.6 as a 'proemio in mezzo', paired poems (4.4, 4.5), juxtaposition and contrast) and addressees. It is particularly illuminating to consider Ovid's famous autobiographical poem 4.10, which is usually read as self-standing, within the context of *Tr.* 4. G. elucidates the poem's closural function and the effect of its climactic assertion of poetic autonomy (particularly as read after the threatening 4.9). Among the major themes of Book 4 and the *Tristia* that G. discusses are: Ovid's identification with the sufferings of literary heroes (4.1, 3, 6, 8), his insistence on the 'reality' of his unbelievably bad exilic situation (4.1.66 *vera quidem, veri sed graviora fide*), the unsolvable problem of the '*carmen et error*' (see on 4.1, 4, 8, 10), and the prominence of Ovid's reflection on the nature and function of exilic poetry (as consolation (e.g. 4.1, 4.10), praise (4.2), fame (4.10), apology, revenge (4.9)). G. argues that the book seeks to address Ovid's public (4.1.2, 4.10.132 '*lector*'; 4.9.19 *per immensas ... gentes*), thus denying the emperor the power of determining Ovid's literary fame.