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**A Poet's Return from Exile: Contemporary Scholarship and the Teaching of Ovid**

After a chilly reception for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the last 20 years or so Ovid has received a warm critical welcome back from posthumous exile. In this talk, I shall look at several of the major critical shifts that have taken place in this period, using the three stereotypical criticisms of Ovid articulated by S. Hinds in a valuable article on this poet's recent reception (1987). These three categories of critical disapprobation are: 1) the "shallow and over-explicit" Ovid; 2) the "excessively literary" Ovid; and 3) the "passive panegyrist" Ovid. In addressing each of these, I shall include examples from across the full range of Ovid's corpus, rather than limiting myself to recent work on the *Metamorphoses* alone. In fact, I think that this is the next important direction for Ovidian scholarship to take, viz., towards a focus on themes in and features of Ovid's poetry that transcend the boundaries of a given work; and I shall attempt to illustrate the benefits of such work in this talk by looking at a number of selections from Ovid's poetry where more than one of these features comes to the fore.

Earlier criticism of Ovid as shallow and over-explicit has given way in recent years to an appreciation for the ways in which Ovid controls style and narrative techniques for particular effects. Tissol (1997) on syllepsis, Boyd (1997) on similes, and Rosati (1983), Keith (1992), and Wheeler (1999; 2000) on narratorial strategies have all looked at Ovid's careful structuring of everything from a single hexameter to individual episodes to an entire narrative arc. The result is a picture not of self-indulgence but of finely calibrated genius, always provoking a strong response from the reader.

The literariness of Ovid, previously dismissed as parody of Virgil and others, has since Hinds's book (1987) become clearly an index of Ovid's remarkable scholarly accomplishment. New studies of and commentaries on the *Heroides* (Barchiesi [1993]; Kenney [1996]; Knox [1995]; et al.) and Myers' book (1994) on Ovidian cosmogonies, among others, illustrate the depth of Ovid's reading, his engagement with Greek and Roman poetry, and his revisionist attitude towards his models, especially Virgil.

New attention given to both the *Fasti* and the exile poetry, earlier considered the least successful of Ovid's works, has shed important light on the complexity of Ovid's political balancing act. Barchiesi (1997), Newlands (1995), and Herbert-Brown (1994) on the *Fasti* demonstrate by their very lack of agreement the difficulty of distinguishing a literary from a political agenda, while also providing a point of entry into a consideration of the political underpinnings of Ovid's career over its almost 40-year span. This trend complements a growing sense, typified by Williams (1994), that the exile poetry is something more than the shameless whining of a political naif.

This talk will be accompanied by a handout of passages to be discussed and a bibliography of scholarly works, primarily in English, of value to new and old teachers of Ovid alike.