> ever to take him quite at face value. Reality, in Ovid's and his reader's shared experience of his poetry, long ago fused too intimately with the text to emerge now in its pristine and pretextual innocence. (pp. 284–5, original emphasis)

This is the fate of the illusionist.

The overlap of the exiled Ovid writing epistles to Rome with the bereft and desiring letter writers Ovid ventriloquizes in the *Heroides* led to the creation by Baudri of Bourgueil (to add a second medieval perspective) of fictional letters between one 'Florus' in Rome and Ovid on the Black Sea. H.'s treatment of both the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* is drenched with moments from the *Metamorphoses* as well, and it was at this point that, even without looking ahead, I knew that Ransmayr's *The Last World* had to be H.'s endpoint. In the tenth and final chapter, 'Ovid Recalled in the Modern Novel', H. ties off the ends of his thematic threads with, first, the Australian novelist David Malouf's *An Imaginary Life* (1978), and, finally, the Austrian Christoph Ransmayr's *Die letzte Welt* (1988). H. cites Malouf in his 'Afterword', where the novelist writes that 'the fate I have allotted him, beyond the mere fact of his relegation to Tomis, is one that would have surprised the real poet, since it attributes to him a capacity for belief that is nowhere to be found in his own writings' (p. 154, cited by H. on p. 327). To offer a third and final medieval note, this trope goes at least as far back as the thirteenth-century pseudo-Ovidian *De vetula*, an outrageous fiction wherein Ovid advances (after many adventures that, yes, a Fielding might appreciate) to Christian insight and prophecy. (For a brief summary, see my 'Ovid in the Middle Ages: Exile, Mythographer, Lover', in Barbara Weiden Boyd [ed.], *Brill's Companion to Ovid* (Leiden, 2002), pp. 413–42, esp. pp. 439–42.) Malouf's *An Imaginary Life* has always seemed to me to owe something to Hermann Broch's *Der Tod des Vergil* (1945), though it is neither magisterial nor Joycean, and more 'new age' than mystical. Ransmayr's is, in my view, the more powerful fiction. '*The Last World*', H. observes, 'is Ovidian in its obsession with issues of interpretation and authority' (p. 332). To H.'s description of it as a 'magic realist novel' (p. 337), I would add the adjective 'Kafkaesque'. The novel's conclusion, word-bearing banners fluttering in the strong breeze and 'an empty "name" ' (ibid.)—the name of the reader *that is not there*—forms a fitting conclusion to H.'s study of the now less elusive poetics of illusion.

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CANACE, LAODAMIA, HYPERMESTRA

J. REESON: *Ovid:* Heroides *11, 13 and 14. A Commentary.* (*Mnemosyne* Suppl. 221.) Pp. xii + 357. Leiden, Boston, and Cologne: Brill, 2001. Cased, €78/US$91. ISBN: 90-04-12140-4.

Ovid's *Heroides* have enjoyed a resurgence of scholarly interest since the publication of an important article by Duncan Kennedy (*CQ* 34 [1984], 413–22), in which the potential richness of Ovid's intertextual play was duly emphasized: we were encouraged to treat the source from which each mythical heroine has been lifted as an 'objective' and 'truthful' account of events; against this 'factual' backdrop, we were invited to assess the subjectivity of Ovid's female speakers, especially when they err in detail from the source original. It is very much in the spirit of Kennedy that James Reeson takes up the intertextual challenge with a new text and commentary on three epistles—11 (Canace to Macareus), 13 (Laodamia to Protesilaus), and 14

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(Hypermestra to Lynceus)—which have tended to get left behind in the current revival (especially 13 and 14) because of the loss or fragmentary state of the source(s) from which each heroine has been lifted. R.'s main concerns are clearly stated in the preface (p. ix) and introduction: the establishment of a reliable text, and an analysis of the sources on which Ovid's epistles are based and with which the poet encourages intertextual linkage.

This is, generally speaking, a very good commentary. Its special strengths are summarized below, sometimes with specific comparison with the recent (shorter-scale) commentary on Epistle 11 by Peter Knox (in *Ovid Heroides: Select Epistles* [Cambridge, 1995], pp. 257–77). First and foremost, R. is particularly sensitive to language and imagery, and the following represent just a few of his perceptive observations (on Epistle 11): the irony of Canace's describing herself as art, given that she is often represented in art form (note on l. 7); the foetus as siege victim during an abortion attempt (on ll. 45–6); sexual overtones to the meeting of Macareus and Canace, adding to the tension of whether or nor Canace was raped by her brother (on ll. 59–64); the suitability of the ash-tree simile for Canace (on l. 78); slippage between wedding and funeral imagery (on ll. 103–6). To a much greater degree than Knox, R. displays a keenness to entertain and work through the potentially more subtle intertexts: cf. e.g. 11.11 (intertext with *Am*. 2.9.49 and the significance of a change of adjective); 11.67 (an amusingly mundane modification of the statement of Aeolus' power found at Virg. *A*. 1.56). On occasions, however, this may be felt to go too far. In instances where Ovid may be tapping into a general motif, R. will often not mention this and instead privilege specific intertexts. For example, when commenting on 14.31–2, R. offers no examples of the general motif of a heroine's mental distress being mirrored in her physical disarray, opting instead for a specific allusion to a possible statue of Laodamia. It might have been more useful, perhaps, to comment on the general motif first before moving to (more contentious) specifics. On textual matters, R.'s critical notes are detailed and judicious: particularly convincing are the notes on 11.69 (*frondibus*), 11.105 (*atras*), and 13.43–4 (*Dyspari*). R. suggests in his introduction that 'the *Heroides* is no place for conservative criticism' (p. 9), and some of his suggestions are indeed quite radical: cf. e.g. 13.98–9 and, especially, 13.13, where the Heinsian conjecture *mandatrix* is chosen so as to give a new reading its turn in the text!

I have two minor criticisms with the commentary. The first is a point of style on which I have touched above. There is a general tendency not to give any ancient parallels for standard motifs, but instead to refer the reader back to listings in previous commentaries by S. Shuckburgh (London, 1879) and, especially, A. Palmer (Oxford, 1898). Given that the reader might not have immediate access to these dated editions, it would have been more useful to give some indication of the range of ancient parallels before deferring to more exhaustive listings. The second criticism is a point of thematic approach. The intertextual approach to the *Heroides*, as advocated by Kennedy and others, is certainly the most interesting way of contemplating the letters, but it will never be able to account for all the points of style/differences in detail between letter and source; at times, it is evidently the Roman Ovid who shines through his heroines' words. R. is (rightly) more enthusiastic about an intertextual approach, and is very strong on the potential resonances; R. is also prepared to concede that, in places, it is essentially Ovid to whom we are listening: cf. e.g. notes on 11.4–6, 11.15–16, and 11.29–34. However, there are more striking aspects of the 'Roman Ovidian' voice which are glossed over. For example, Laodamia prays that her husband will give arms to Jupiter Redux (13.150): a simple reference to Jupiter could have been taken as a neutral equivalent of Zeus, but the evocation of Jupiter Redux appears to tap into a

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distinctly Roman (and hence anachronistic) military practice. This is not an isolated incident: cf. e.g. the Roman-style colonization of Troy suggested by Penelope (1.51–6 with Knox ad loc.). More generally, the verbal wit and rhetoric of the epistles is more often attributed by R. to the heroines than to Ovid. Clever rhetoric is certainly required of Hypermestra, who, in a period of relative calm after the fateful wedding-night, has to use all her powers of persuasion to get the husband she had planned to murder to rescue her. But does clever verbal skill really fit the immediate emotional situation of Canace?

To summarize, R.'s commentary has its own thematic priorities and sees itself operating alongside the commentaries of Shuckburgh and Palmer. If one is looking for the potential richness of intertextual play in these epistles, and a steady guide through the textual complexities, this is an invaluable read (and I mean 'read': the commentary also works well read from cover-to-cover as a critical appreciation). R. should be congratulated for bringing these often-neglected poems into the mainstream.

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HEROINES REVOICED

E. Spentzou: *Readers and Writers in Ovid's* Heroides. *Transgressions of Genre and Gender*. Pp. xx + 231. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. Cased, £45. ISBN: 0-19-925568-7.

This book marks a turning point in the recent boom in studies on the *Heroides*. After roughly two decades of scholarship (beginning with a seminal article by Duncan Kennedy in 1984) which has profoundly renewed the interpretation of this Ovidian text by putting the 'interpretative conspiracy' (p. 2) between the author and the reader into centre stage, a sense of saturation and a reaction were inevitable. That kind of reading, largely prevalent nowadays, privileges a complicity which of course comes at the expense of the heroines: the result is a cold and detached attitude that gratifies the reader who is able to catch the author's nods and winks, and which turns Ovid's characters into the unconscious tools and victims of this literary game. S. vigorously reacts to this marginalization and devaluation: she rehabilitates the heroines and puts them once again into the centre of the work by conferring upon them a strong identity, both as individuals (as single voices with their own personality) and as a collective entity, as the voice of a gender—the female writers—which asserts itself in the face of its male readers–addressees. Yet this shift of emphasis is hardly a return to previous critical positions. S. knows all too well that the heroines are *scriptae puellae*, ventriloquized by their male author, but she does not resign herself to considering this condition an insurmountable obstacle to recovering something of their distinctly feminine voice.

For this purpose, she has recourse to a set of critical instruments provided by French feminist thought (Kristeva, Cixous). Through concepts like 'speaking subject' and 'Platonic *chora*', S. rescues the heroines' voice from Ovid's authorial/male control: 'there are parts where Ovid himself loses his assertive manner and in a moment of bewilderment and hesitation he allows the discourse (and the heroines) to be seduced by the irresistible vigour of the feminine *chora* that lurks behind the images that he thinks he skilfully manipulates' (p. 106). S.'s reading is attentive to perceiving the conflicting tensions that lie beneath the authorial voice and emerge as the evidence of the heroines' resistance against the strictures of the masculine discourse. Prisoners as

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