Preface: Ovid and Identity in the Twenty-First Century

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Abstract

Through six case studies in contemporary receptions of Ovid, this special issue, *Ovid and Identity in the Twenty-First Century*, asks why the Roman poet is still ‘everywhere’. The collection develops and complicates perspectives on the now time-honoured concept of the ‘postmodern Ovid’, and also of postmodernism itself. Articles address dialogues with Ovid in work by the German poets Barbara Köhler and Anja Utler; the American novelists E. L. Doctorow and Jeffrey Eugenides, the Scottish novelist Ali Smith; the Israeli artist and intellectual Bracha Ettinger, and in the Titian 2012 project, particularly the *Machina* ballet. The final article surveys and critiques the last thirty years of Latinist scholarship on Ovid, in particular its evolving engagements with postmodernism. This final article then proffers new ways to read Ovid. Each article constitutes, either explicitly or implicitly, fresh insights into the role of Ovid in the reinscription of, or the modification of, or the rejection of and the turning away from, the fleeting-and-yet-tenacious moment of the postmodern. As a whole, this special issue demonstrates that while certain versions of Ovid enable the rebooting of postmodernism in newly-politicized modes, in other guises he plays a crucial part in recent cultural forms that reject postmodernism altogether. These essays testify, therefore, to the role of classical reception studies in critiquing and modifying postmodern thought.

Keywords Ovid · Reception · Postmodernism · Postmodernist · Contemporary · Twenty-first century

‘What sort of Ovid will the new millennium bring forth?’, asks Theodore Ziolkowski at the end of his 2005 study, *Ovid and the Moderns*. Would receptions of the Roman

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poet continue to be ‘frothy’ and ‘trivial’ (as Ziolkowski perceived those at the very end of the twentieth century to be)? Or would the twenty-first century herald ‘a new and perhaps more serious *aetas Ovidiana*’?¹ Our aim in this special issue is not to define the character of an ‘age’, be that a new century or a new millennium. Rather, it is to demonstrate, through a series of case studies, the fact that Ovid is *still* ‘everywhere’.² The common theme in these diverse analyses of the uses and abuses of the *Metamorphoses* (and, in the final article, of the love poetry and the *Heroides* too), is this: a developing and complicating perspective on the now time-honoured concept of the ‘postmodern Ovid’, and also of postmodernism itself. Each article offers, either explicitly or implicitly, new insights into the role of Ovid in the reinscription of, or the modification of, or the rejection of and the turning away from, the postmodern. That is to say, each article tells a story about Ovid’s place within and/or against the movement and moment that is now, in Linda Hutcheon’s provocative phrase, ‘gone forever but here to stay’.³

The essays here examine the reception of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* by contemporary writers and artists of various provenances who are working in a range of forms: by two German poets, by two American novelists, by one Scottish novelist, by one Israeli visual artist and intellectual, and in one ballet executed at the Royal Opera House in London. Following these explorations of poet’s presences in recent verse, fiction, visual art and dance, the closing article, ‘After Ovid, After Theory’, provides a critique of the relationship between Ovid and the intellectual thought of the last thirty years. This last piece speaks to all five that precede it, in that the themes of the theory that are its subject – the struggles for power inherent in identity, language, representation, the body, desire and so on – also motor the poetry, novels, artwork and performance that the previous essays discuss.

In 2014, John Miller and Caroline Newlands published their *Handbook to the Reception of Ovid*. Their thirty-one chapters map out a nearly two-thousand-year trajectory that begins with Ovid’s self-reception in the early first century CE, and that charts his ongoing presence through the ages, showing in its last chapter that he is very much in evidence in films as recent as Rupert Wyatt’s 2011 ‘redux’, *Rise of the Planet of the Apes*.⁴ Amply covering the centuries over which, in Ziolkowski’s self-consciously florid terms, the Roman poet in turn becomes ‘*Christianus*, ... *moralisé*, ... *redivivus*, ... *travesti*, ... *baroque’d*, ... *rococo’d*, ... *eroticized*, *nationalized*, *psychologized*, and *trivialized*’, one of this collection’s great strengths is the

¹ T. Ziolkowski, *Ovid and the Moderns*, Ithaca, 2005, p. 225. Our thanks to Stephen Harrison for his support of the ‘Ovid and Postmodernism’ symposium at Corpus Christi College, Oxford in 2014; to the anonymous readers of these articles for their time and very helpful suggestions; and to Jill Kraye for her patient assistance in bringing this special issue to fruition.

² Cf. C. Martindale, ‘Ovid is Everywhere’, in *Ovid Renewed: Ovidian Influences on Literature and Art from the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge, 1988, p. 1.

³ L. Hutcheon, ‘Gone Forever, But Here to Stay: The Legacy of the Postmodern’, in *Postmodernism: What Moment?*, ed. P. Goulimari, Manchester, 2007, pp. 16–18 (16).

⁴ *A Handbook to the Reception of Ovid*, ed. J. Miller and C. Newlands, Hoboken, 2014. Chapter 1 is S. Myers, ‘Ovid’s Self-Reception in His Exile Poetry’, pp. 8–21; Chapter 31 is M. Winkler, ‘Ovid and the Cinema: An Introduction’, pp. 469–84.

space and attention it devotes to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.⁵ Among these, the illuminating chapter ‘Alter-Ovid’, by Jill Casid, for example, is a detailed discussion of his reception in a range of contemporary art. Such chapters (Brown’s discussion of contemporary poetry in the same volume is another) are a welcome complement to the often necessarily-brief, compressed and broad-brush summaries of recent and current cultural production that characterize many prior surveys of the field.⁶

The Miller and Newlands *Companion* is primarily concerned with literary and cultural reception rather than with theoretical reception or with the history of scholarship itself. It is nonetheless noteworthy that an inevitable effect of its regional and/or thematic organizing structure for the chapters on the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (Kahn’s on Russian poets, for example, or Godel’s on novels about Ovid’s exile) is an obscuring of the fascinating scholarly moment that is the mid-twentieth-century or post-World-War-II Ovid.⁷ This moment is relevant to our concern with ‘Ovid and identity in the twenty-first century’ for the ways in which it anticipates future theory and practice. Most noticeably, it often identifies in the texts qualities which we would now call ‘postmodern’. Hermann Fränkel, in his 1945 study, *Ovid: A Poet Between Two Worlds*, observes that ‘the brilliant surface causes us to wonder how much, or how little, may lie hidden beneath. If we do probe and bore through we shall not always come upon a substantial core’.⁸ And L. P. Wilkerson, writing ten years later in his *Ovid Recalled* (1955), cites Goethe’s autobiographical account of the criticism that Herder brought to bear against the Roman poet who was Goethe’s own ‘favourite’. ‘There was no genuine, first hand truth to be found in these poems’, Herder claimed, but instead ‘mere imitation throughout of what already existed, such as one could expect only of an over-cultivated man’.⁹ Moving forward another twenty years, key works of the 1970 s (such as Karl Galinsky’s *Introduction to the Basic Aspects* of 1975, and John Barsby’s *New Surveys* study, *Ovid*, of 1978) evidence a new (or renewed) formalist preoccupation with Ovid, in response to new historicism. Their approaches might in retrospect be defined as ‘postmodern’, or are at least indicative of a postmodern ‘ambiance’, but they do not attempt to engage

⁵ Ziolkowski, *Ovid and the Moderns* (n.1 above), 225.

⁶ J. Casid, ‘Alter-Ovid – Contemporary Art on the Hyphen’, in *Handbook to the Reception of Ovid*, ed. Miller and Newlands (n. 4 above), pp. 416–35; S. Brown, ‘Contemporary Poetry: After *After Ovid*’, in *Handbook to the Reception of Ovid*, ed. Miller and Newlands (n. 4 above), pp. 436–53. Examples of brief sections on the contemporary within broad surveys include S. Brown, ‘Ovid Today’, in her *The Metamorphosis of Ovid: From Chaucer to Ted Hughes*, London, 1999, pp. 217–27; D. Kennedy, ‘Recent Reception’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Ovid*, ed. P. Hardie, Cambridge, 2002, pp. 32–5; and Ziolkowski’s ‘Ovid in the New Millennium’, in his *Ovid and the Moderns* (n. 1 above), pp. 211–25. See also F. Cox, *Ovid’s Presence in Contemporary Women’s Writing: Strange Monsters*, Oxford, 2018, which was published just as this special issue went into production.

⁷ A. Kahn, ‘Ovid and Russia’s Poets of Exile’, in *Handbook to the Reception of Ovid*, ed. Newlands and Miller (n. 4 above), pp. 401–15; R. Godel, ‘Ovid’s “Biography”: Novels of Ovid’s Exile’, in *Handbook to the Reception of Ovid*, ed. Newlands and Miller (n. 4 above), pp. 454–68.

⁸ H. Fränkel, *Ovid: A Poet Between Two Worlds*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1945, p. 72.

⁹ L. P. Wilkerson, *Ovid Recalled*, Cambridge, 1955, pp. xiv–xv. Wilkerson is quoting Goethe in *Dichtung und Wahrheit* Book I.

beyond or outside of classical philology.¹⁰ Indeed, as late as 1988, Charles Martindale draws attention to Ovid's 'wit and detachment', the elements of parody and reflexivity in his work, and the 'dance of language' and the 'unruffled stylishness' of his poetry, without once using the specific adjective or noun, 'postmodern'.¹¹

As Victoria Rimell documents (and problematizes) in the final article of this special issue, it was not until the late 1980s that Latinist scholarship unambiguously established the 'postmodern Ovid' and deployed these actual terms to do so. This postmodernist 'wave' was then abundant through the 1990s, flowering well into the first decade of the 2000s.¹² Its advocates were not wholly unaware of the charges levelled against it, however: Don Fowler concedes in his *Roman Constructions: Readings in Postmodern Latin* (2000), for example, that 'the commonest criticism of postmodernist anti-foundationalism is that it makes political action impossible'.¹³ Here he reflects the convictions of those who either critique the movement and/or attribute its demise to its 'lack of a theory of political agency', 'its tendency to deconstruct but never to reconstruct',¹⁴ and to its 'problematic political stance of indecision'.¹⁵ These limitations of postmodernism (perceived or otherwise) obviously account, at least in part, for the significant body of concurrent and recent scholarship in Ovid that directly challenges, consciously ignores or moves beyond its infinite self-reflexivity and its valorization of the rhetorical. Selected examples (among many others) range from feminist critiques such as Amy Richlin's 1992 essay, 'Reading Ovid's rapes', via Denis Feeney's cultural-materialist approach, *Caesar's Calendar* (2007), right up to Shane Butler's recent sound studies/voice theory reading, *The Ancient Phonograph* (2015).¹⁶

¹⁰ G. Galinsky, *Ovid's Metamorphoses: An Introduction to the Basic Aspects*, Oxford, 1975; J. Barsby, *Ovid* (Greece and Rome: New Surveys in the Classics), Oxford, 1978. In support of this thesis, see. C. Martindale, *Redeeming the Text: Latin Poetry and the Hermeneutics of Reception*, Cambridge, 1993, p. 61 n. 8 (in relation to Galinsky's work): 'a rather more "postmodern" Ovid has been emerging since 1975, mainly in scholarly articles, but it has not been consolidated as a rival "orthodoxy", at least in Britain'. We are grateful to Victoria Rimell for conversations on this topic.

¹¹ Martindale, *Ovid Renewed* (n. 1 above), pp 4 and 17.

¹² See V. Rimell, 'After Ovid, After Theory' in this special issue. For an earlier account of Latinist postmodern scholarship on Ovid, see E. Spentzou, 'Theorizing Ovid', in *A Companion to Ovid*, ed. P. Knox, Oxford, 2009, pp. 455-68. Among the many works in the field of the 'postmodern Ovid', key publications include: D. Fowler, *Roman Constructions: Readings in Postmodern Latin*, Oxford, 2000; I. Gildenhard and A. Zissos, "'Somatic Economies": Tragic Bodies and Poetic Design in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*', in *Ovidian Transformations: Essays on Ovid's Metamorphoses and Its Reception*, ed. P. Hardie, A. Bar-chiesi and S. Hinds, Cambridge, 1999, pp. 162-81; S. Hinds, *The Metamorphosis of Persephone: Ovid and the Self-Conscious Muse*, Cambridge, 1987; P. Hardie, *Ovid's Poetics of Illusion*, Cambridge, 2002; and V. Rimell, *Ovid's Loves: Desire, Difference and the Poetic Imagination*, Cambridge, 2006.

¹³ Fowler, *Roman Constructions* (n. 12 above), p. 31.

¹⁴ Hutcheon, 'Gone Forever' (n. 3 above), p. 17.

¹⁵ G. Matthews, *Ethics and Desire in the Wake of Postmodernism: Contemporary Satire*. London, 2012, p. 2. On the demise of postmodernism see McKenzie Wark, 'Goodbye to All That', in *Postmodernism: What Moment?*, ed. P. Goulimari, Manchester, 2007, pp. 146-53.

¹⁶ A. Richlin, 'Reading Ovid's Rapes', in *Pornography and Representation in Greece and Rome*, ed. A. Richlin, Oxford, 1992, pp. 158-79; D. Feeney, *Caesar's Calendar: Ancient Time and the Beginnings of History*, Berkeley and London, 2007; S. Butler, 'Falling in Love Again', in *The Ancient Phonograph*, New York, 2015, pp. 59-88. For a more detailed account and discussion of scholarship that challenges the 'postmodern Ovid', see the second part of Rimell's essay in this special issue.

The anxieties and reservations about postmodernism voiced by its sceptics and discontents (both Latinists and non-Latinists) – concerns about identity agency and embodiment, about historical specificity and accountability, and about triviality and political seriousness – of course find ample and simultaneous expression in the literary, visual and performing arts of the first two decades of the twenty-first century. Some recent receptions of Ovid ignore or turn away from the central dilemmas of postmodernity altogether: for example, in Minna Moore Ede's reading of Chris Ofili's work for the Titian 2012 project, Ofili's work is figurative but not abstract, and is committed to a reinscription rather than a dissolution of agency¹⁷; and Josephine Balmer's 2013 poetry collection *The Word for Sorrow* transposes the *Tristia* to the historically specific site of World War One's Gallipoli. But a brief comparison of two other contemporaneous works of poetry – Clare Pollard's 2013 translation of the *Heroides* entitled *Ovid's Heroines*, and Kate Tempest's *Hold Your Own* (a dynamic conversation with the *Metamorphoses* published in 2014) – illuminates the dilemmas about identity that epitomize the most prevalent version of the 'twenty-first century Ovid'.

In *Ovid's Heroines*, Pollard translates the Latin in a way that emphasizes Ovid's act of 'literary transvestism', his emphasis on the disparity between the women speakers' restricted physical situations, the freedom and flexibility of their thoughts, and the 'visceral and muscular' nature of their language.¹⁸ In Pollard's own mind, Ovid's work is at once sexist and feminist, serious and silly. Its women are both 'strong and remarkable' and 'carping bores'.¹⁹ To Pollard this fluidity articulates and demands the requisite social generosity from others that enables fulfilled selfhood and equality. In a striking contrast to the Pollard, meanwhile, Tempest's *Hold Your Own* (discussed further by Rimell in the final article in this collection) acknowledges the inevitability of fluidity and change, but at the same time endorses, even pleads for, the idea of commitment to an essential self or agency. In dialogue with Ovid's well-known account of Tiresias in *Metamorphoses* III, in her twenty-four-page poem, 'Tiresias', Tempest charts in agonizing detail the Theban prophet's involuntary and painful transition from both the physical body of one sex to the other, and from the socially-constructed and externally-imposed identity of one gender to another. Yet despite the trauma of these cataclysmic changes, Tiresias 'holds his own'; he maintains strong selfhood and power in contrast to the emptied-out, socially-networked but identity-less ordinary mortals of the twenty-first century:

Tiresias, you hold your own

¹⁷ M. Moore Ede, 'Chris Ofili and Ovid', Paper delivered at the 'Ovid Beyond Postmodernism: Continuity and Change' Symposium at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, 6 November 2014. For a contrasting view of Ofili's work for the *Titan 2012* project, see Casid, 'Alter-Ovid' (n. 6 above). Moore Ede returns to a discussion of Ovid's influence on Ofili in her National Gallery catalogue essay on the 2017 *Weaving Magic* exhibition: *Chris Ofili 2017: Weaving Magic*, London, 2017.

¹⁸ C. Pollard, *Ovid's Heroines*, Tarset, 2013.

¹⁹ C. Pollard, Commentary on *Ovid's Heroines*, written in 2015 (unpublished), pp. 2-3.

Each you that you have been.
 ... While we assemble selves online
 And stare into our phones
 You are bright and terrifying
 Breath and flesh and bone.
 Tiresias, you teach us,
 What it means to hold your own.²⁰

The tension between Pollard's and Tempest's perspectives – between the potential inherent in a fluid selfhood and the imperative to 'hold one's own' – resonates in all the contemporary cultural receptions of Ovid that are addressed in this special issue. All six of the essays are concerned, to a greater or lesser degree, with the ways in which the Roman poet is enlisted to negotiate the conflict between inescapable indeterminacy and contradiction on the one hand, and a clearly-defined selfhood, agency and value on the other. As our collection is in no sense a survey or an overview, its constituent essays are characterized by expansiveness about and in-depth analysis of a specialist subject rather than the compression and sometimes over-simplifying sweep that broad-brush summaries require.²¹ Our contributors focus on two poets (Georgina Paul); two novels (Tessa Roynon); one novelist (Holly Ranger), one artist/intellectual (Efrossini Spentzou) and one ballet (Fiona Macintosh). Together, they illuminate the shifting political and aesthetic implications of Ovid in contemporary cultural explorations of feminism, gender, race, desire, conflict, technology and the limits of 'the human'. Victoria Rimell's concluding essay then provides a critique of the scholarly and theoretical constructions and receptions of Ovid that have both shaped and been shaped by such cultural production, and that epitomize the shifting identities, over the last thirty years of the disciplines of both Classics and classical reception studies in themselves.

In the first article in this special issue, 'Material Metamorphoses', Georgina Paul examines reworkings of Ovid in two contemporary German poets: Barbara Köhler and Anja Utler. Paul demonstrates that in motivated allusions to figures from the *Metamorphoses* both poets challenge 'the cultural process by which artificial media have divorced words from the corporeality of the speaker'. Analysis centres on Köhler's engagement with Echo and Narcissus in her 2006 work *ECHOS. QUELLE*, and on Utler's allusions to Daphne, Marsyas, and the Cumaean Sybil in her 2004 collection, *münden – entzüngeln*. Deploying the work of philosopher Adriana Cavarero, Paul argues that in both poets' emphasis on vocality and sound-patterning, Ovid's work 'is found to preserve crucial traces of the transformation of living entities into disembodied forms'. The poems thus constitute a memorial to the processes of dematerialization.

²⁰ K. Tempest, *Hold Your Own*, London, 2014, pp. 23–4.

²¹ In their 'small-canvas' approach, the articles herein follow the example set by Sebastian Matzner's discussion of Malouf and Horia; or Andreas Michalopoulos's discussion of Ransmayr in Jennifer Inglehart's volume on the exile poetry and its receptions: *Two Thousand Years of Solitude: Exile after Ovid*, ed. J. Inglehart, Oxford, 2011.

Tessa Roynon's essay explores the effects of the explicit engagement with Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in two much-celebrated American novels: E. L. Doctorow's *Ragtime* (1975) and Jeffrey Eugenides's *Middlesex* (2002). The article demonstrates that a specific late twentieth-century reading of Ovid's epic informs both of these post-modern chronicles of transforming and transformed individual and national identities. Focusing on the role of what she terms the 'Ovidian dynamic' in the politics of each text, in particular in the representation of black Americans and the struggle for black equality, Roynon draws out significant contrasts between the novels. She argues that *Ragtime* successfully deploys the radical potential of the thematics of transformation and the stance of playfulness, and in so doing envisions a transformed racial landscape. The racial politics of *Middlesex*, on the other hand, thanks to Eugenides's ambivalent and limited deployment of the dynamics of transformation, and to his treatment of race as a metaphor or surrogate for more pressing concerns, are ultimately conservative, if not regressive.

Next, Holly Ranger demonstrates the fundamental but hitherto underdiscussed role of Ovid in the ethical and activist postmodernism that characterizes the *oeuvre* of the Scottish novelist, Ali Smith. This essay (together with Ranger's postgraduate work on which it builds) is significant as a critical 'first' – the first to demonstrate and explore in detail the sheer extensiveness and widespread implications of Smith's engagement with the *Metamorphoses*.²² Through its focus on three novels – *Like* (1997), *Girl Meets Boy* (2007) and *How to Be Both* (2014) – and on the trope of *ekphrasis* in particular, the article argues that the author uses her Ovidian viewing-scenes to politicize the role of the reader and to construct a gendered ethics of reception. Through her close reading of the Ovidian intertexts within *How to Be Both*, Ranger suggests that Smith's invitation to 'be both' is a framework for rewriting the past. Smith's 'Ovidianism', moreover, constitutes a crucial contribution to contemporary politicized understandings of the Roman poet.

In her article, 'Towards a Matrixial Ethics of Encounter', Efrossini Spentzou places the *Metamorphoses*'s stories of Orpheus and Eurydice, of Byblis and of Myrrha in dialogue with the feminist art and critical thought of the Israeli-born artist and psychoanalyst Bracha Ettinger. This discussion builds on Ettinger's reconception of gender and subjecthood as neither distinct, nor fixed nor binary, but instead as co-emergent and in continuous engagement with each other. In light of this formulation of subjecthood as 'I and non-I' (as opposed to Self and Other), first Spentzou examines the contrast between Ovid's representation of Orpheus and Eurydice and Ettinger's series of Eurydice paintings, illuminating as she does so the artist's conception of identity as a 'matrixial borderspace of relations'. Next, she re-reads the tales of Byblis and of Myrrha in light of Ettinger's theoretical paradigms of 'borderlinked part-subjects and part-objects', thereby arguing for a new interpretation of Ovid as a 'compassionate artist'.

²² See H. Ranger, 'An Intertextual analysis of Ali Smith's *Girl Meets Boy* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 9.666-797', unpublished MPhil dissertation, University of Birmingham, 2013. Available at: <http://theses.bham.ac.uk/4294> [accessed 8 September 2018], and H. Ranger, "'Reader, I married him/her": Ali Smith, Ovid, and Queer Translation', forthcoming in *Classical Receptions Journal*.

Fiona Macintosh, in ‘Ovid and Titian 2012’, begins with a brief account of the Royal Ballet/National Gallery collaboration as a whole. She then moves on to an invaluable survey of the history of epic on stage (including the relationship between Ovid and ballet) over the centuries. The primary focus of her essay, to which she now turns, is an in-depth analysis of one of the three ballets: *Machina*. Taking as her starting point ‘the sinewy and seductive robot’ which performs as ‘the vast and mechanical Diana’ in this work, Macintosh constructs a new genealogy of the relationship between epic on stage, tragedy, and technology. Concerned less with questions about the effects of technologies on epic than with their inverse, ‘what does epic do to stage technologies?’, this article examines the implications of a performance in which the god is not ‘out of the machine’ but ‘*is the machine*’, and in which the world appears veritably posthuman.

Thus far, this special issue demonstrates the significance of Ovid in a range of current debates about selfhood and identity: Ovid is in dialogue with contemporary feminist theory and poetics, with contemporary discourses on race, and with contemporary anxieties about human identity and the posthuman. The final essay both reviews the past and previews the future. ‘After Ovid, After Theory’ provides a panoramic analysis of scholarship on Ovid over the last 30 years. Victoria Rimell examines the emergence of the postmodern Ovid alongside the reaction it provoked, which sought to place Ovid within a history of Western misogyny. In the sections ‘V. Ebb-Flow’ and ‘VI. Empathy’ Rimell goes on to offer her own examples of how to read Ovid after this exciting and highly contested episode in the history of Ovid studies. She reflects on what it means to be a scholar reading Ovid *with and beyond* postmodernism in the twenty-first century.

In its entirety, then, *Ovid and Identity in the Twenty-First Century* constitutes a constellation of Ovidian receptions that each in its own way attests to the ongoing seriousness of the Roman poet’s playfulness. To analyse this range of contemporary invocations of Ovid is to perceive once more the fruitful commonalities between reception theory and postmodernist theory – namely in their shared convictions that a text’s meaning is constructed at the moment of its interpretation, rather than being intrinsic and dependent on either authorial intention or historical origin. These essays implicitly demonstrate why and how it was that reception studies emerged at a time when postmodern theory was a crucial force in the academy. Yet while our collection obviously testifies to this important symbiosis, at the same time it testifies equally (if not more so) to the role of classical reception studies in critiquing and modifying postmodern thought. For while certain versions of Ovid enable the rebooting of postmodernism in newly politicized modes, in other guises he plays a crucial part in recent cultural forms that reject postmodernism altogether. In sum, these varied and contradictory receptions of Ovid – this showcase of his continuously changing presence – epitomize and animate the central theoretical and political dilemmas of our times.