Two Thousand Years of Solitude

Exile after Ovid

EDITED BY JENNIFER INGLEHEART

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Contents

articulation of his own broader literary and cultural programme, a programme to be achieved through the resources of poetic memory— or, to use a more tendentious synonym, of poetic recall. More than thirteen hundred years after his relegation from Rome, the exiled Ovid (conveniently ignoring the claims of Dante and other predecessors, as Petrarch does elsewhere) is very much back in business.

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Black-Sea Latin, Du Bellay, and the Barbarian Turn

Tristia, Regrets, Translations

Stephen Hinds

The momentum of the present volume will allow me to be brief in establishing some initial terms of reference. The *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* are full of professions by Ovid of his own physical, mental, and artistic decline in exile at Tomis, in the 'barbarian locale' of the Black Sea frontier.[1] The poet, so he himself tells us, has lost his inspiration;[2] he has lost his technique;[3] and (the point which prompts

[1] *Tr.* 3.14.30 'exilium tempus barbariamque locum' (translated in context below).
[2] e.g. *Tr.* 3.14.33–4 'ingenium fregere meum mala, cuius et ante | fons infecundus paruaque uena fuit' ('Misfortunes have broken my talent, whose source even before then was unproductive and whose stream was meagre').
[3] e.g. *Pont.* 1.5.15–18 'cum relego, scripsisse pudet, quia plurima cerno | me quoque, qui feci, iudice digna lini. | nec tamen emendo. labor hic quam scribere maior, | mensque pati durum sustinet aegra nihil' ('When I read it over, I am ashamed

the present chapter) he is losing his ability, with the alien languages of Pontus surrounding him on all sides, to speak and be understood in correct and fluent Latin:[4] he feels he could almost write verse in Getic.[5] For Ovid, the exile's alienation on the margins of civilization is manifested, strikingly, in a sense of alienation from his native tongue; and, under pressure from the broader anxieties which pervade Ovid's exile poetry, this comes to define a wholesale crisis of linguistic capacity and intelligibility.

However disingenuous this professed crisis of Latinity (the qualification is by now obligatory),[6] we are looking here at one of the most distinctive strands in Ovid's legacy as a writer of exile poetry. My chapter will treat the appropriation of this Ovidian motif by the French sixteenth-century poet Joachim Du Bellay, who finds in it a paradoxical point of access to some pressing programmatic concerns in his own oeuvre, and in his own time. Other episodes in the reception of the motif will be more briefly adduced. A comparativist coda will consider an Ovidian moment of passage between languages in the work of the modern Irish dramatist Brian Friel; and an initial foray into the (surprisingly muted) tradition of response to the exile poetry in the first century after Ovid's death will find the possibilities of Pontic linguistic alienation already receiving attention from Seneca and Martial.

of my writing, because I note so much that even in my, the maker's judgement, deserves to be erased. Yet I do not correct it. This is a greater labour than the writing, and my sick mind has not the power to endure anything hard').

[4] *Tr.* 3.1.17–18 and 3.14.43–50 (both passages treated below); cf. 5.7.51–64, esp. 55–8 'ille ego Romanus uates—ignoscite, Musae!— | Sarmatico cogor plurima more loqui. | et pudet et fateor, iam desuetudine longa | uix subeunt ipsi uerba Latina mihi' ('I, that great Roman bard—forgive me, Muses!—am forced to utter most things in Sarmatian fashion. I admit it, though it shames me: at this point long lack of practice makes Latin words, even for me, hard to recall'); 5.12.53–8.

[5] *Tr.* 3.14.48 '. . . et uideor Geticis scribere posse modis', translated in context below; cf. *Pont.* 3.2.40. Ovid's eventual claim (*Pont.* 4.13.19–22) to have composed an actual book 'Getico . . . sermone' (19) will enter my discussion later on.

[6] Critical caution about the circumstances of Pontic life as presented by Ovid and about the extent of his own loss of poetic competence there: Williams (1994: 3–99) (= ch. 1 'The "unreality" of Ovid's exile poetry' and ch. 2 'Ovid's pose of poetic decline'). On the linguistic issues, specifically, see Williams (1994: 91–9), and now (since my chapter took shape) Stevens (2009: esp. 165–9); cf. Casali (1997: 92–6). For David Malouf's modern novelistic reading of Ovid as 'exiled from language itself' see the chapters in the present volume by Ziogas and Matzner at 290–1 and 315–17.

It is well known that Ovid's exile leaves few ripples in the ancient historical record. In Sir Ronald Syme's words, 'That Caesar Augustus consigned the foremost of poets to exile on the far edge of the Roman dominions was an action that *ought not* [emphasis mine] to have escaped the attention of historians, biographers, and moralists.' Syme registers just one passing reference to Ovid's trademark 'sadness' in Tomis in Statius' *Siluae* (1.2.254–5), almost ninety years later, and then nothing at all until the *Chronicle* of Jerome in the late fourth century. (He has overlooked another incidental first-century reference in the Elder Pliny (*NH* 32.152); but the larger point stands.[7])

For whatever reason, then, references to Ovid's exile in antiquity are strikingly few. But we should be more specific: *explicit* references to Ovid's exile in antiquity are strikingly few. In the generation since Syme wrote *History in Ovid*, a small but growing body of work has arisen on the *implicit* life of Ovid's exile in the first-century imagination;[8] and one of the authors on whom this recent attention has focused is Seneca.

Seneca's is an interesting case to think about, because, some thirty years after our poet's relegation to the Black Sea, he himself spent eight or nine years in exile on the Mediterranean island of Corsica (AD 41–9), while out of favour during the principate of Claudius.[9] And these Corsican years yielded two prose treatises more or less substantially concerned with the issue of exile, the *Consolatio ad Heluiam* and the *Consolatio ad Polybium*—neither of which makes any overt mention of Ovid. While it has always been evident that the

[7] Syme (1978: 215); Stat. *Silu.* 1.2.254–5 (Ovid listed among a catalogue of poets who would have been glad to write an epithalamium for Stella and Violentilla) 'nec tristis in ipsis | Naso Tomis' (on this reference, see Ingleheart, 122–3 in this volume); cf. Plin. *NH* 32.152 (*testimonium* of [Ovid's] *Halieutica*, included e.g. in Owen's OCT) 'his adiciemus ab Ouidio posita animalia, quae apud neminem alium reperiuntur, sed fortassis in Ponto nascentia, ubi id uolumen supremis suis temporibus inchoauit' ('We will add to these some animals mentioned by Ovid, which are found in no other writer, but which are perhaps native to the Black Sea, where he began that unfinished book in the last days of his life'). See *NH* 32.11 for the title of this 'uolumen' as *Halieutica*; widespread modern scepticism about the attribution does not affect the point at issue here, namely the inference that Pliny is bearing witness to Ovid's Pontic exile. In addition Hollis (1996a: 26) has drawn attention to an apparent subliterary reference to Ovid's exile in a graffito from Herculaneum (first-century, of course): *CIL* 4.10595 'morieris Tomi' ('you will die in Tomis').

[8] Gaertner (2007a: 18–19 and nn.).

[9] Further discussion, contexts, and bibliography in the final section of Hinds (2011), to which the treatment here of *Polyb.* 18.9 is an addendum.

relentlessly upbeat moralizing about exile in the *ad Heluiam* breathes a different air from the *Tristia*, recent discussions have plausibly argued that the complaints of the *Tristia* do serve here and there as an implicit foil.[10] Actual Senecan identification with the plight of Ovid is something else; and for this we must turn to the epilogue of the *ad Polybium*, in which the philosopher does seem to succumb, just for a moment, to the *Tristia*-blues (right after urging his addressee to avoid 'tristitia' (18.7) in his own situation). The passage in question yields my first ancient vignette of linguistic anxiety:

I have put these things together, as best I could, with a mind now weakened and dulled by long rusting. If they shall seem to you to be ill suited to your intelligence, or to ill supply the healing of your sorrow, consider how he who is held fast in the grip of his own misfortunes is not at leisure to comfort others, *and how Latin words do not readily suggest themselves to a man around whom the disordered jabbering of barbarians is ever ringing* (et quam non facile Latina ei homini uerba succurrant quem barbarorum inconditus ... fremitus *circumsonat*). (Seneca, *De Consolatione ad Polybium* 18.9)

Seneca, remember, is in Corsica. Even allowing for the fact that then, as for much of its history, this was an island more resistant than most to the Mediterranean mainstream, the reference to barbarism sounds like overkill. The *Oxford Classical Dictionary*'s entry for Corsica contains the following caveat about Seneca as source for the island (emphasis mine): 'The younger Seneca's picture of Corsica as inhospitable and unhealthy is untrustworthy: Corsica *was* his place of exile.' Rita Degl'Innocenti Pierini has led the way in suggesting that we can be more specific: what Seneca is really thinking about is Ovid in Tomis, and specifically about the elegy which closes Ovid's third book of *Tristia*:[11]

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[10] On Ovid and the *ad Heluiam* (*Dial.* 12): Degl'Innocenti Pierini (1990: 122–34); Williams (2006: 149–50); more in Hinds (2011).

[11] On *Tr.* 3.14 and the epilogue of the *ad Polybium* (*Dial.* 11): Degl'Innocenti Pierini (1990: 112–22); Fantham (2007: 190–1). My interest here is in the resumption of the *Tristia* poem's themes of language and geography. However, allusion to *Tr.* 3.14 is already indicated by another apparent echo with tantalizing prosopographical implications. Seneca's addressee in *Polyb.* 18.9, as throughout the dialogue, is Polybius, freedman secretary of Claudius, described at *Polyb.* 8.2 as the 'antistitem et cultorem' of letters; the two epithets take us back to the anonymous addressee of *Tr.* 3.14.1 'Cultor et antistes doctorum sancte uirorum' ('patron and reverend protector of learned men'); for the point, and the associated attempt to unmask an Ovidian

Whoever reads this (if anyone does), let him first evaluate at what time, in what place it was composed. He will be fair-minded to writings which he knows were composed *in time of exile, in a barbarian locale* (*exilium tempus barbariamque locum*) ... Often I am at a loss for a word, a name, a place, and there is none who can inform me. Often when I attempt to say something— I'm ashamed to admit it—words fail me: I have unlearned my power of speech. *Virtually all around me, Thracian and Scythian voices are ringing* (Threicio Scythicoque fere *circumsonor* ore); I think I could make an attempt at Getic verse. In truth, I fear that in my writings you may read Sintic and Pontic words *mingled with the Latin* (mixta Latinis). (Ovid, *Tr.* 3.14.27–30, 43–50)

The template is clear. Ovid, like Seneca, had found himelf exiled to a locale inimical to literary composition. And Ovid, like Seneca, had claimed to be losing his grip on his native Latin, with the hubbub of alien tongues 'ringing' all around him; the later writer's resumption of the distinctive verb *circumsonare* (italicized above) seems to confirm the allusion to *Tr.* 3.14. Now, as already noted, Ovid's Tomitan complaint about the insidious effects of barbarism upon his linguistic capacity is often argued to contain an element of geographical exaggeration. (More on this later.) What, then, of Seneca's echo of that complaint, uttered in a 'barbarian' enclave no further away than the middle of the Mediterranean?

Seneca himself seems to have been conscious of the element of overstatement. Michael Dewar has rightly drawn attention to an interesting qualification in the Corsican exile's reuse of the Ovidian motif, concealed by the ellipses in my Latin quotation above.[12] Here is the end of the Senecan sentence (and dialogue) again, with the missing words restored:

... a man around whom the disordered jabbering of barbarians is ever ringing, *distressing even to the more civilized barbarians* (... quem barbarorum inconditus *et barbaris quoque humanioribus grauis* fremitus circumsonat). (Seneca, *De consolatione ad Polybium* 18.9)

Philosophically, the remarkable qualification which allows an intermediate class of 'more humane barbarians' to be embarrassed by the

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addressee who might be an Augustan 'equivalent' of Polybius, see Degl'Innocenti Pierini (1990: 115–16); Dewar (2002: 390–3).

[12] Dewar (2002: 392–3), with a reading of the allusive twist in terms of a shared Senecan and Polybian interest in social hierarchy.

uncouthness of the Echt-barbarians may speak to a broader Senecan interest in making distinctions about the effects of civilization upon human behaviour.[13] However, at the level of the Ovidian allusion, what Seneca's qualification surely betrays is some specific embarrassment at his assimilation of an island in the Mediterranean centre, however rough and rugged, to the non-Latinate periphery.

Seneca is probably not alone among first-century authors in picking up on the exiled Ovid's professed crisis of alienation from his native tongue: two passages in Martial are worth a quick look. Once again, and in contrast to the two post-antique cases to be treated below, the allusion to the case of Ovid is oblique and implicit, not overt.

Martial presents himself throughout his career as a low-status writer working in a low-status genre (i.e. epigram): and this gives rise to a distinctive pattern of engagement with the *Tristia*'s peculiar anxieties about the maintenance of poetic quality and prestige in adverse circumstances.[14] In the formulation of Luke Roman (Roman 2001: 124), 'Martial adapts motifs formed in the context of "poetry in exile", and rewrites them in terms of "poetry as usual".' In other words, some Martialian allusions to the *Tristia* do the job of suggesting that the marginalization of the exiled poet and the debasement of his art offer an apt model for the *literary* marginalization of the low-prestige epigrammatist—who encounters *his* professed disadvantages without even leaving Rome. And so it is in *Epigram* 2.8, when the motif of impaired Latinity comes up. Here is Ovid, offering through the personified voice of one of his *Tristia* books a succinct version of his complaint about loss of linguistic capacity:

> *siqua uidebuntur casu non dicta Latine,*
> in qua scribebat, barbara terra fuit.

If some things [in this book] *seem perhaps non-Latin in their diction*, the land in which the poet wrote was a barbarian one. (*Tr.* 3.1.17–18)

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[13] I owe this suggestion to Alexander Dressler. Such relativism can sit well, e.g., with some of Seneca's arguments in the *ad Heluiam* for the viability of virtue even in seemingly adverse environments.

[14] Martial's epigrammatic oeuvre contains many rich veins of allusion to Ovid's pre- and post-exile works: Hinds (2007b). My two discussions here are lightly amplified from that recent article, to which I refer the reader for further context and bibliography.

And here now is Martial:

> *siqua uidebuntur chartis tibi, lector, in istis*
> *siue obscura nimis siue Latina parum,*
> **non meus est error:** nocuit librarius illis
> dum properat uersus annumerare tibi.

If some things in these pages, reader, *seem* to you either too obscure *or not quite Latin*, the error is not mine: the copyist did the damage in his hurry to tell out the verses for you. (Martial 2.8.1–4)

What has happened between the above passages? Martial recycles for himself—with unmistakable verbal echoes—the exiled Ovid's apology for garbled Latinity. Only now the defect in the poetry book is blamed not on the malign influence of a barbarian environment but on an incompetent book-copying service right here in Rome: the implication is that Martial's (alleged) position in the bottom tier of the publishing world does just as much damage to the style and finish of his poetry book as if he too were undergoing debasement and linguistic alienation on the Black Sea frontier. Martial's phrase *non meus est error* (in bold) may even encode a 'footnote' to the *Tristia* allusion: the bad Latin is not the result of any *error* of *mine* . . . in contrast with Ovid's bad Latin, ultimately attributable to that famous '(carmen et) error' of his.[15]

If the general rule is that Martial's allusions to the *Tristia* apply the motifs of poetic exile to poetic life at home, one might expect the *Tristia* to register in another way if Martial should ever himself actually leave the city of Rome. And just such a departure is announced in the prose preface to his twelfth book, written some time after the death of Domitian; perhaps the epigrammatist left Rome under a cloud, perhaps he just retired. The interesting complication of the Pontic dynamic in this case is that the remote provincial locale to which Martial withdraws is his own small-town Spanish birthplace: a combination, then, of exile and reverse-emigration.

In one sense, what Martial has achieved here is the perfect Juvenalian wish-fulfilment of escape from the madness of the Big City; but

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[15] For Ovid's (obsessively invoked but never specified) *error* see *Tr.* 2.207–8; cf. e.g. *Tr.* 1.2.99–100, 4.10.89–90. The 'footnote' would show Martial (characteristically) alert to the potential in Ovid's own poetics for imaginative slippage between the canonical *error* and other kinds of failure (including artistic failure) associated with life in exile.

in another sense this is the Ovidian nightmare of banishment to the back of beyond. Here (in Shackleton Bailey's Loeb translation) are some of the epigrammatist's complaints in the book 12 preface:

I miss the ears of the community to which I had grown accustomed. It is like pleading a case in a strange court. For if there is anything to please in my little books, the audience dictated it. The subtlety of judgements, the inspiration of the themes, the libraries, the theatres, the gatherings where pleasure is a student without realizing it, to sum it all up, all those things which in my fastidiousness I forsook, I now regret as though *they* had deserted *me*. Add to this the tartar of municipal teeth, envy in place of judgement, and one or two malign individuals—in a tiny place a large number . . .

And the post-Ovidian feel of these 'tristia' becomes especially pronounced when Martial's preface ends by expressing a fear about the impairment—and specifically, I think, the linguistic impairment—of his poetry's metropolitan touch, so far from the *Urbs*. Where Ovid had written from one end of the empire about his fear of falling from pure Latinity into Ponticism,

I fear that in my writings you may read Sintic and Pontic words mingled with the Latin (ne Sintia mixta Latinis | . . . Pontica uerba legas) (*Tr.* 3.14.49–50)

Martial writes, ninety years later, from a less remote end of the empire, about *his* fear of falling into Hispanicism:

I hope that you will judge my trifles without favourable bias, lest I send to Rome . . . a book that is not only from Spain but actually Span*ish* (ne Romam . . . non Hispaniensem librum mittamus, sed Hispanum). (Martial 12 *praef.*)

Two equivalent moments of anxiety at the loss of linguistic competence away from Rome: but the twist is that the corruption of pure Latinity would in Martial's case be a corruption into the speech patterns, distant yet familiar, of his own childhood.

Besides their intrinsic interest, these first-century vignettes already bear witness to a certain malleability in the Ovidian motif of linguistic alienation as reappropriated by others, geographically and otherwise. With this in mind we may now leap one-and-a-half millennia forward to meet another writer with a stake in the *Tristia*—this one quite ready (unlike Seneca and Martial) to invoke the exiled Ovid by name.

Joachim Du Bellay was one of the founding members of the Pléïade, that celebrated group of sixteenth-century poets whose main agenda

was to assert the artistic stature and to explore the artistic potential of French, as language and as literature, distancing themselves from humanist composition in Latin; the goal was to demonstrate that the French vernacular could emulate and indeed surpass the classic poetic models in Latin, Greek, and fourteenth-century literary Tuscan. In the 1550s Du Bellay spent more than four years in Rome, serving as secretary to an uncle who was a high-ranking cardinal; and it was there that, in growing disillusionment with the degeneracy of modern Rome and the vanity of the papal court (intensified by the frustration of his own hopes for political advancement), he gave shape to his *Regrets*, a sonnet collection overtly modelled in title and in initial set-up upon the *Tristia* of Ovid.[16]

Here, one under the other, are the opening addresses of the ancient and the early modern poet to their respective books:

Parue (nec inuideo) sine me, liber, ibis in urbem,
ei mihi, quo domino non licet ire tuo!

O little book (and I grudge it not), you will go without me to the City, whither, alas, your master is not allowed to go! (*Tr.* 1.1.1–2)

Mon livre (et je ne suis sur ton aise envieux)
Tu t'en iras sans moy voir la court de mon Prince.

O book of mine (and I do not begrudge your good fortune), you will go without me to see my prince's court. (Joachim Du Bellay, *Regrets*: 'A son livre' 1–2)

Du Bellay, alienated by everything in the realm of papal politics, misses his life back in France, from the royal court to his birthplace in Anjou: and of course the governing paradox is that *his* post-Ovidian place of exile—*his* Black Sea—is the very city *from* which Ovid was exiled and *to* which he longed to return, Rome.

The particular sonnet I want to spotlight in the *Regrets* is one in which Du Bellay responds to an accusation in verse from his fellow Pléïade-poet Ronsard that in Rome he has begun to stray from the French language, seduced by the upmarket attractions of Latin. Here are the first eight lines:

[16] Most (but not all) of the texts of Du Bellay to be discussed here are available to the anglophone reader in the annotated bilingual edition of Helgerson (2006). Helgerson's introduction to the volume offers excellent orientation both for specialists and for newcomers to this literary milieu; introduction to *Regrets* at 9–18.

Ce n'est le fleuve Thusque au superbe rivage,
Ce n'est l'air des Latins ny le mont Palatin,
Qui ores (mon Ronsard) me fait parler Latin,
Changeant à l'estranger mon naturel langage.

C'est l'ennuy de me voir trois ans et d'avantage
Ainsi qu'un Promethé, cloué sur l'Aventin,
Ou l'espoir miserable et mon cruel destin,
Non le joug amoureux, me detient en servage.

It is not the Tuscan river with its proud banks, it is not the Latin air or the
Palatine hill, that now, my Ronsard, makes me speak Latin, changing my
native language for a foreign tongue.
   It is the misery of seeing myself three years and more, *like a Prometheus,
nailed to the Aventine,* where a wretched hope and my cruel fate, not the yoke
of love, hold me in servitude. (Du Bellay, *Regrets* 10.1–8)

In passing, we may register a twist on the paradox of geographical
reversal (line 6, in italics). Du Bellay suffers in exile 'like a Pro-
metheus, nailed to the Aventine', one of Rome's seven hills. Where
would Prometheus' rock more usually be situated? In the Caucasus, of
course; that is, on the Black Sea, the region more appropriate to exile
suffering on the Ovidian model.[17]
   But our main concern is with the sonnet's argument about linguis-
tic lapse: Du Bellay's Roman model is about to be invoked, and
overtly so. Ovid had repeatedly apologized for his inability to main-
tain correct and fluent Latin while surrounded by Black Sea barbar-
ians to whom Latin was unintelligible. But, more than that, in a
posthumously published elegy he admits to having actually composed
a book of poetry in the local barbarian language, Getic:

   a, pudet: et Getico scripsi sermone libellum,
      structaque sunt nostris barbara uerba modis:
   et placui (gratare mihi) coepique poetae
   inter inhumanos nomen habere Getas.

*Ah! It brings me shame: I have even written a book in the Getic tongue, setting
the barbarian words to our measures.* I even found favour—congratulate
me!—and began to achieve among the uncivilized Getae the name of poet.
(Ovid, *Pont.* 4.13.19–22)

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[17] On Ovid and Promethean geography see now a suggestive note in Ingleheart
(2010a) on *Tr.* 2.195.

What of Du Bellay? Here is the rest of *Regrets* 10, the sonnet's sestet:

   Et quoy (Ronsard) et quoy, si au bord estranger
   Ovide osa sa langue en barbare changer
   Afin d'estre entendu, qui me pourra reprendre

   D'un change plus heureux? nul, puis que le François,
   Quoy qu'au Grec et Romain egalé tu te sois,
   Au rivage Latin ne se peult faire entendre.

And yet, Ronsard, and yet, if on a foreign shore Ovid dared to trade
his language for a barbarian tongue so as to be understood, who can blame me.
   For a more fortunate trade? No one, since French, though you have made it
the equal of the Greek and Roman tongues, cannot be understood on this Latin
shore. (Du Bellay, *Regrets* 10.9–14; trans. Helgerson, modified)

When charged by Ronsard with linguistic snobbery, his response is
that he *cannot* stick to *his* proper language, French, while he is in
Rome. Instead he is forced by the misery of his servitude and by the
incomprehension of the locals to fall—like Ovid—into the language
of *his* place of exile ... which is of course (within the papal court, at
least) none other than Latin: by no means a barbarian language,
certainly, but alien in its own way to the linguistic principles of a
Pléiade poet. The sestet of Du Bellay's sonnet adds a new dimension
to the Ovidian precedent for the *Regrets*, then, and further compli-
cates the collection's inversion of its *Tristia*-derived terms.
   At this point we can dig a bit deeper; for the fact is that this vignette
of slippage from French into Latin in *Regrets* 10 is more than just a
passing conceit. A closer look will show why Ronsard's reported
criticism of his fellow-poet has legs.
   The first point to emphasize is that Du Bellay had gone very firmly
on record some years before his adventure in Rome as a standard-
bearer of writing in French: in 1549 he had published a programmatic
treatise entitled *La Deffence et illustration de la langue françoise*
('The defence and illustration [or 'enrichment'] of the French lan-
guage'), which served as a manifesto, for Ronsard as well as for
Du Bellay himself, of the new poetry which would use the French
language to appropriate and renew the classical tradition within the
vernacular;[18] polemicizing on the one hand against the cultural dead-

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[18] French text and English translation: Helgerson (2006: 317–417, with introduc-
tion, 26–32); cf. Bizer (1995: 50–9) ('Imitation et traduction chez la Pléiade').

end of attempts to match the ancients in their own Latin, and on the other hand against the folkish uncouthness (as he professed to see it) of earlier French-language verse unable or unwilling to engage in artistic dialogue with ancient or Tuscan Italian models. (Large parts of Du Bellay's treatise were a reapplication to French of a manifesto published seven years earlier on behalf of Italian vernacular literature, the *Dialogo delle lingue* of Sperone Speroni; an incidental wrinkle, but one which will come up again in my discussion below (Helgerson 2006: 28–30).) Du Bellay's championship of French is initally defensive in posture:[19] the fourth chapter is entitled 'Why the French language is not as poor as many judge it'. The core business of the manifesto is emerging by chapter 8 'On amplifying the French language by the imitation of ancient Greek and Roman authors'. And, again, it is emphasized that this new appropriation of the classical tradition is *not* to be achieved through the medium of Latin: thus chapter 11 'On the impossibility of equalling the ancients *in their own languages*' (emphasis mine).[20]

Back at the start of *Regrets* 10, then, Ronsard's reported charge is that Du Bellay has now been seduced by the pomp and circumstance of Rome into backsliding from this epoch-making championship of his native French into the humanist default of discourse in Latin. Here is the original reproach, itself in the form of a sonnet, tracked almost word for word (as we can see) in Du Bellay's response:

> Ce pendant que tu vois le superbe rivage
> De la rivière Thusque, et le mont Palatin,
> Et que l'air des Latins te fait parler Latin,
> Changeant à l'estranger ton naturel langage,
>
> Une fille d'Anjou me detient en servage ...

While you go to see the proud banks of the Tuscan river, and the Palatine hill, and while the Latin air makes you speak Latin, changing your native language for a foreign tongue,

[19] ... and, inevitably, *offensive* to many of his countrymen and fellow-writers: for contemporary French literary factionalism, and for perceived disingenuousness in the *Deffence*, see Helgerson (2006: 5–6, 27–8).

[20] *Deffence* livre 1 ch. 4 *Que la Langue Françoyse n'est si pauvre que beaucoup l'estiment*, ch. 8 *D'amplifier la Langue Françoyse par l'immitation des anciens Aucteurs Grecz et Romains*, ch. 11 *Qu'il est impossible d'egaler les Anciens en leurs Langues*.

A girl of Anjou holds me in thrall ... (Ronsard, *Continuation des Amours* [1555] 3.1–5)

Now, there is substance to the charge: Du Bellay has indeed been speaking and, more to the point, has indeed been *writing* Latin in Rome, alongside the French of the *Regrets*.[21] Indeed, in the first four lines of Ronsard's and Du Bellay's sonnets, the digs about the proud Tuscan river, the 'air des Latins', and the Palatine show the first poet to have been an attentive reader of a rapturous 148-line elegy in Latin ostensibly written by the second soon after his arrival in 1553, *Romae descriptio*, in which these and other attractions of the City are fêted in language reminiscent of Virgil's 'Praises of Italy';[22] with an upbeat peroration which embraces the freedom and inspiration of the Roman climate, and asks the Latin-speaking *Camenae*, in partnership with Du Bellay's French Muses, to grant favour to this new poetic enterprise in their language:

> saluete o cineres, sancti saluete Poetae,
>   quos numerat uates inclyta Roma suos.
> sit mihi fas, Gallo, uestros recludere fonteis,
>   *dum caeli Genio liberiore fruor,*
> hactenus et nostris incognita carmina Musis
>   dicere, et insolito plectra mouere sono.
> *hoc mihi cum patriis Latiae indulgete Camoenae,*
>   *alteraque ingenii sit seges ista mei.*

Hail, o ashes, hail, sacred poets, whom glorious Rome counts as her prophets. Would that I, man of Gaul that I am, might make your fountains flow once again, *while I enjoy the more bountiful genius of this clime.* Would that I might utter verses still unknown to our Muses, and wield the plectrum with

[21] Two-volume edition of Du Bellay's Latin works, with French translation and commentary: Demerson (1984, 1985). Both of the longer Latin elegies from which I quote substantially (*Eleg.* 2 and 7) are included in Helgerson (2006); with minor modifications, the English translations here are his.

[22] Du Bellay, *Descriptio* 17 'uidimus ... flaui contortas Tybridis undas' ('we saw ... the whirling currents of the golden Tiber'), 19–20 'moenia quae ... antiquas spirant imperiosa minas' ('those walls which ..., domineering, still breathe out ancient threats'), 27–32 'adde tot augustas aedes ...' ('add, too, so many august residences ...'); cf. Virgil, *Georgics* 2.136–76, esp. 155–7 ('adde tot egregias urbes ...' ('add, too, so many noble cities ...')); NB also (at Demerson 1984: 44–53) the subsequent *ad Ianum Auansonium* (*Eleg.* 3, datable to 1555) in which the Tiber is not only celebrated but stages an epiphany (as river-god) to voice the praise of the elegy's honorand, Jean d'Avanson.

an unfamiliar sound. *To my ambition, Latin Camenae, grant your indulgence, join with the Muses of my fatherland, and here may a second harvest of my talent spring forth.* (Du Bellay, *Romae descriptio* (*Eleg.* 2) 137–44)

Despite Du Bellay's claim to have been coerced rather than seduced into Latinity, then, Ronsard clearly has a case. But there is a strong element of disingenuousness in all this. When the focus is broadened to embrace the entire poetic output of the Roman years it is evident that Du Bellay himself, far from losing focus on the issue of language choice, was obsessively concerned to foreground it, and to revisit it in a number of different ways.[23] And so too it is likely that Ronsard's ostensible call to order is complicit with the terms of this conversation, and contributes just one more playful move to his friend's unfolding rhetorical meditation on the language issue.

'Cur intermissis Gallicis Latine scribat': the issue of language choice is spelled out quite explicitly in the title of the poem which comes first in Du Bellay's published arrangement of several extended Latin elegies from Rome.[24] However, for another programmatic vignette let me turn instead (via a brief preamble) to an epigram positioned just after these collected elegies, and just before a further set of Latin poems (all themselves epigrammatic), which finds a more arresting way to frame the issue.

In his poem of reproach (quoted above), Ronsard had implicitly eroticized the issue of language choice by contrasting Du Bellay's Latin-writing activities beside the Tiber with his own erotic *servage*, starting in the fifth line of his sonnet, to a young woman of Anjou. It is no great stretch to read Ronsard's home-grown *fille d'Anjou* as an allegory for his own poetic choices (to write love poetry, to write in French), as contrasted with Du Bellay's.[25] Now when in his rejoinder Du Bellay allusively picks up this language of *servage* to describe the imperatives which force *his* Roman literary choices upon *him*, it will be remembered that he explicitly disavows the 'yoke of love' as a factor (*Regrets* 10.8, quoted earlier, '*non* le joug amoureux').

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[23] Fundamental treatments of these issues of artistic self-definition in Du Bellay: Tucker (1990: 8–13, with 12 n. 22 on *Regrets* 10); Bizer (1995: 61–107).

[24] 'Why the poet has interrupted his French to write in Latin', title of *Eleg.* 1 (Demerson 1984: 34–7); English translation at Hawkins (2004: 26–7); a later footnote will touch on some of this elegy's themes.

[25] Cf. *Regrets* 90 for fresh-complexioned *Nymphes Angevins* 'nymphs of Anjou' in Du Bellay's own *Regrets*, contrasted there with the painted courtesans of Rome, in a more jaundiced vision of the erotic possibilities of the *Urbs* than in the epigram under discussion below.

Interestingly, however, and again despite his denial, Du Bellay's intermittent choice of the classical language in Rome *is* elsewhere quite specifically implicated in eroticism. Most notably, he produces yet another Latin book of elegies and hendecasyllables, entitled *Amores*, at once post-Catullan and post-Ovidian in manner, to dramatize a probably apocryphal affair with a certain Faustina (not his best writings, perhaps, though they later made an impression on Goethe).[26] But also—and this is the vignette towards which the present paragraph has been leading—Du Bellay follows his first book of extended non-erotic Latin elegies with a brief allegorical address to the reader which represents the choice between French and Latin as, precisely, a sexual one: between a tried and tested French wife, on the one hand, and an exciting young Roman mistress on the other.

> AD LECTOREM
> cum tot natorum casto sociata cubili
>   Musa sit ex nobis Gallica facta parens,
> miraris Latiam sic nos ardere puellam,
>   et ueteris, lector, rumpere iura tori.
> Gallica Musa mihi est, fateor, quod nupta marito:
>   pro domina colitur Musa Latina mihi.
> sic igitur (dices) praefertur adultera nuptae?
>   illa quidem bella est, sed magis ista placet.

TO THE READER
Given that my Gallic Muse, joined with me in modest union, has been a parent to so many children of mine, you are surprised that I am thus aflame for a Latin girl, o reader, and that I break the vows of my long-time marital bed. My Gallic Muse (I confess it) is to me what a wife is to a husband: my Latin Muse is cultivated by me as a mistress. So then (you say) the adulteress is preferred to the wife? That one indeed is fine, but this one attracts me more.

In this epigram, then, unlike in Ronsard's sonnet about the 'fille d'Anjou', the erotically exciting choice is the Latin one. But the pleasure does not come cost-free. Du Bellay's *domina* is a guilty pleasure, involving unfaithfulness to the Gallic 'nupta' who has given him so many children (1–2). The final couplet (7–8) expresses

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[26] *Amores* to Faustina: text in Demerson (1984: 134–67) (with English translation in Hawkins 2004); cf. Bizer (1995: 82–107).

the conflict epigrammatically: the French Muse is 'bella' ('fine', and
also, through the name-play, appropriate to Du Bellay),[27] but, for now
at least, the adulterous Latin Muse attracts him more. Line 8 offers a
clear verbal echo of Ovid, *Amores* 2.10, in which the poet finds
himself enamoured of two girls at the same time;[28] and it may be
that a further reverberation from the *Amores'* own meta-erotic
allegory of divided loyalty, 3.1, encourages us to read Du Bellay's
Latin 'domina' as a short-term indulgence en route to a longer-term
(re)commitment to the Gallic 'nupta'—as with (*mutatis mutandis*)
that famous Ovidian decision between the contrasting charms of
Elegy and Tragedy.[29] Be that point as it may, it is typical of the later
poet's manoeuvrable way with questions of classicism that, paradoxi-
cally, the younger language, French, corresponds here to the older
woman, and that the classical Muse is allowed less *gravitas* than the
vernacular one.

A final look at Du Bellay's Latin output will return us to the nexus
of language and post-Ovidian exile. Here is a passage just before the
end of the long elegy *Patriae desiderium*, 'Longing for the Fatherland':

> nunc miseri ignotis caeci iactamur in undis,
>   credimus et Latio lintea nostra freto.
> hoc Latium poscit; Romanae haec debita linguae
>   est opera; huc Genius compulit ipse loci.
> *sic teneri quondam uates praeceptor Amoris,*
>   *dum procul a patriis finibus exul agit,*
> *barbara (nec puduit) Latiis praelata Camoenis*
>   *carmina non propriam condidit ad citharam.*

Now, miserable, we are blindly tossed on unknown seas and entrust our sails
to Latin straits. Latium demands it; it is the service owed to the language of
Rome; the genius of this place himself compelled me to it. *Thus the poet who
once taught the art of tender love, when he lived in exile far from his*

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[27] For overt Latin punning on Du Bellay's name cf. the epigram by Charles
Uytenhove included in Du Bellay's *Xenia* as *Xen.* 60: Demerson (1985: 102) (annota-
tions at 197–8).

[28] Verbal echo in line 8 of Ov. *Am.* 2.10.7–8 (where the poet's preference remains
more evenly poised) 'pulchrior hac illa est, haec est quoque pulchrior illa; | et magis
haec nobis, *et magis illa placet*' ('that one is fairer than this, and yet this one is fairer
than that; this one attracts me more, and yet so does that one, too'): Bizer (1995: 83);
independently noted by Philip Hardie at the Durham conference.

[29] Fun-loving Elegy as a short-term indulgence in Ovid's poetic career before a
promise of lasting commitment to the graver charms of Tragedy: *Am.* 3.1.61–70.

*fatherland, composed songs in a barbarous tongue to the sound of a foreign
lyre, preferring them to his Latin Muses—and was not ashamed to do so.* (Du
Bellay, *Patriae desiderium* (*Eleg.* 7) 69–76)

Throughout its course, this elegy closely shadows the pessimistic exiled
mood of the French-language *Regrets*, and, when viewed alongside the
Romae descriptio (excerpted earlier), conspicuously lacks that earlier
Latin elegy's optimism about the geographical and linguistic possibilities
of Rome. The first couplet quoted above (lines 69–70) gives a glimpse of a
vein of voyage allegory repeatedly employed by Du Bellay to describe the
vicissitudes of his expatriate experience.[30] Evocation of Ovid's exile
poetry here skews towards the first book of *Tristia*: the rough Latin seas
which afflict Du Bellay's poetological ship are clearly those of Ovid's
simultaneously literal and allegorical voyage to the Black Sea (all the more
so in that Du Bellay's actual passage from France to Italy is elsewhere
described as a land journey across the Alps).[31] And the rest of the passage
above (esp. lines 73–6, with emphases) brings us back full circle to the
overtly Ovidian moment in the *Regrets* with which we began:

> Et quoy (Ronsard) et quoy, si au bord estranger
> Ovide osa sa langue en barbare changer
> Afin d'estre entendu, qui me pourra reprendre
>
> D'un change plus heureux? (*Regrets* 10.9–12)

Here as there, only now in Latin rather than in French, Du Bellay sets
out his claim that local pressures have estranged him from his native
Muse, compelling his switch in allegiance to the language of Rome;

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[30] The voyage allegory, with its Ovidian subtext, is resumed from *Eleg.* 1 ('Cur
intermissis . . .'); NB esp. 1.18 'tunc me *tristis hyems* in uada caeca tulit' ('At that point
a sorrowful storm bore me into blind shoals'). In that earlier elegy, as Du Bellay's 'ship'
leaves behind Gallic seas en route for Latin ones, the safe tutelage of his French
patroness, the king's sister Margaret, yields to the uncharted hazards of 'uada caeca',
'tumidae aquae' ('swollen waters') and (above all) 'tristis hyems'; the conditions for
composition in Latin are unpropitious, not least because of the taint of the *Tristia*'s
own anti-poetics. The combination of dangerous voyage and 'longing for the father-
land' is also, for Du Bellay as for Ovid (e.g. *Tr.* 1.5), archetypally Odyssean: see Tucker
(1990: 14–21; 2003: 253–6) and Helgerson (2006: 15), all drawing attention to a
moment in the celebrated *Regrets* 31 ('Heureux qui, comme Ulysse . . .') when Du
Bellay can be seen to cite the *Odyssey* (1.57–9) via Ovid, *Pont.* 1.3.33–4.

[31] *Romae descriptio* (*Eleg.* 2) 15–16 'duras superauimus Alpeis | et pulchrae campos
uidimus Hesperiae' ('we crossed the harsh Alps and saw the plains of beautiful
Hesperia'); cf. *Elegia ad Ianum Morellum* 141–2 (= *Élégie testamentaire*; text at
Demerson 1985: 104–25).

here as there, the appeal is to the precedent of Ovid's Black Sea slippage *from* Latin *into Getic*:

> *a, pudet*: et Getico scripsi sermone libellum,
> structaque sunt nostris barbara uerba modis.
> (Ovid, *Pont*. 4.13.19–20)

But this time around, the closeness *of Du Bellay's Latin to Ovid's* throws into relief an interesting intervention by the modern poet in his reportage of the ancient one. Consider the Latin verbs emphasized above at *Desiderium* 75 and *Pont*. 4.13.19. Under the pressure of exile and linguistic alienation, *was* Ovid 'ashamed' to abandon his native language to write poetry in the local barbarian tongue? 'No', says Du Bellay ('nec puduit'); but, actually, 'yes', says Ovid himself ('a, pudet!'): perhaps what we should take from this rewrite is that Du Bellay has enough lingering embarrassment about his own switch in poetic language to have coached his ancient character witness towards a more unequivocal statement of support.

A few summary observations may be attempted. First, the conceit of Ovid as a writer of Getic verse is an oddity within Ovid's own exile oeuvre, even odder than a post-antique imitator like Du Bellay will have appreciated. In the real world of Ovid's exile, the language which will have filled up the gap left by any lack of local Latinity, in Tomis as anywhere else in the eastern empire, is not Getic but Greek. (That is the language of the local elite, the language of the surviving epigraphic record at Tomis.[32]) But Greek will not 'do' for Ovid's purposes, because Greek is not, for an upper-class Roman, a language of linguistic alienation. The very outlandishness of Getic in one sense diminishes the usefulness of the Ovidian analogy as a point of reference for Du Bellay's more mainstream linguistic switch between French and Latin, but in another sense opens the reference up to all kinds of possibilities for paradox.

Second, identity and difference. When we read Du Bellay's poetry of exile *in* Rome as a kind of reproduction of Ovid's poetry of exile *from* Rome,

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[32] For a useful (and for the most part properly wary) treatment of the evidential value of Ovid's account of the linguistic picture in his place of exile see Adams (2003: 17–18, 105–6, 283); esp. 105–6 for the poet's few acknowledgements of traces of Greek in Tomis, albeit (on his disingenuous account) a Greek corrupted by barbarism (*Tr*. 5.7.51–2, with 5.2.67–8).

Du Bellay's native French corresponds to Ovid's native Latin
and
Du Bellay's alien Latin corresponds to Ovid's alien Getic;
but at the same time, paradoxically,
Du Bellay's alien Latin more literally corresponds to Ovid's native Latin,

thereby short-circuiting the terms of the linguistic analogy. In other words, when Du Bellay is furthest from himself, he is closest to his model, thus calling into question the alienness of his alienation from the classical language. For the author of the *Deffence*, this instability in the analogy is perhaps perfectly judged. Where another early modern writer might seek to present his Latin as unproblematically contiguous with the Latin of his classical model, Du Bellay problematizes the humanist contiguity of language, foregrounds the issues of translation and linguistic impersonation, and presents his own post-Ovidian Latin as at once something familiar and something far from home.

Finally, a little more on the question of linguistic shame or embarrassment. There is a suggestive moment in the fifth book of the *Tristia* when Ovid, the Roman stranded amid barbarian otherness, does something quite unexpected to drive home the topos of linguistic alienation. The poet suddenly perceives that in this alien world *he himself*, paradoxically, the speaker of Latin, is the one who sounds like a barbarian:

> barbarus hic *ego* sum, quia non intellegor ulli

In this place *I* am the barbarian, because I am understood by nobody (Ovid, *Tr*. 5.10.37)

For Ovid to say that his Latin speech marks him as a barbarian in a getophone world is a pretty paradox, whose charm perhaps lies in the impossibility of its being taken seriously: in real-world terms, the cultural hegemony of Latin over Getic is not in doubt; Ovid is in no real danger of being branded as a barbarian—at least by anyone who counts.

But how would Ovid's paradox unpack for a French-speaking Pléïade poet out of his element in sixteenth-century Rome? What would the real-world linguistic stakes be? Well, perhaps rather higher than in the Ovidian original. When Du Bellay worries in *Regrets* 10 about his poetic French being unintelligible in Rome, the idea that the *litterati* of the *Urbs* might mock this unintelligibility as, specifically, a *barbarian* unintelligibility is not in fact a far-fetched one. Sixteenth-

century Italians were fully alive to the fact that their prestige had been severely compromised by recent invasions of foreign powers, especially French, and they had a vocabulary in place for salvaging their pride. Here, symptomatically (in a reference adduced in Richard Helgerson's fine discussion of Du Bellay's *Deffence*), is how one Italian humanist contemplated the imposition of rubbing shoulders with all these transalpine invaders:

'To live and talk continually with barbarians, without ourselves having the slightest share of barbarism.'

The source of the quotation is none other than Speroni's *Dialogo delle lingue*, mentioned above;[33] so Du Bellay was certainly aware of the available slur. In fact, four years before his epoch-making arrival in Rome, here is the title which he himself had given to an early chapter of his own polemical treatise:[34]

'That the French Language should not be called barbarous'

Regrets 10 compares Du Bellay's recourse to Latin with Ovid's recourse to a barbarian language, Getic, while acknowledging the inexact fit of the analogy ('... d'un change plus heureux ...');[35] but under the surface there may lurk the suppressed thought that for him the real imputation of barbarism might be triggered, not by the switch to Latin, but by a retention of French; and that in *his* case, unlike in Ovid's, the barbarian label might actually stick.

In the event, Du Bellay does not reproduce the Ovidian paradox of *Tr.* 5.10.37, overtly at least. Although the opening section of *Tristia*

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[33] '... il vederci continuamente vivere et parlare con barbari, et non haver punto del barbaro'; part of a speech assigned to Pietro Bembo on the second page of Speroni's dialogue. Recent critical edition: Sorella (1999).

[34] 'Que la Langue Françoyse ne doit estre nommée barbare' (Du Bellay, *Deffence* livre 1, ch. 2). The chapter ends thus: '... these reasons seem to me sufficient to make any equitable judge of things understand that our language (though we have been called barbarous ("nommés barbares") either by our enemies or by those who had no right to give us this name) should not be scorned ("que nostre langue ... ne doit pourtant estre deprisée"), especially by those to whom it belongs and is natural ("aux quelz elle est propre et naturelle") and who are in nothing inferior to the Greeks and Romans ("et qui en rien ne sont moindres que les Grecz ou Romains")' (trans. Helgerson). For the likelihood that the slighting comment in Speroni directly influences the terms of Du Bellay's polemic in this chapter of the *Deffence* see Helgerson (2006: 29).

[35] 'Inexact': as noted by Tucker (1990: 12 n. 22).

5.10 is singled out for especial attention elsewhere in the *Regrets*,[36] nowhere in the collection does Du Bellay *actually* say, after Ovid, as a French speaker in Rome, 'in this place *I* am the barbarian'. But perhaps the missing allusion, through its absence, adds something to the undertow of linguistic anxiety.

I promised a comparativist coda. A writer who does overtly cite Ovid's 'barbarus hic ego sum ...', who makes it (indeed) his singular point of access to the *Tristia*, is Brian Friel, in his now-canonical twentieth-century play about language and identity in nineteenth-century Ireland, *Translations*. One final leap across time and space will set the scene.[37]

Friel's acclaimed historical drama was the inaugural production of the Field Day theatre company in 1980, in the then deeply divided Northern Irish city of Derry.[38] The play is set just across the modern border in the Donegal village of Baile Beag (or Ballybeg), in 1833, at the time when English first began to supplant Gaelic Irish as the language of rural Ireland, under the impetus (so the play suggests) of two major developments: first, the advent of English-speaking 'national schools' (i.e. government-run grade schools), replacing the unofficial Irish-speaking 'hedge schools'; and, second, the systematic remapping of Ireland by the British Army's Royal Engineers (in the so-called 'Ordnance Survey')—which involved the translation of Gaelic Irish place names into more English-sounding 'equivalents'. The hedge-schoolmaster Hugh O'Donnell is the idiosyncratic spokesman of the rural Irish-speaking world which is about to undergo this irreversible linguistic change. Hugh composes verse in his spare time, not in Irish, oddly enough, but in *Latin*—after the manner of Ovid, as he himself says (Friel 1981: 41–2)—and can embroider any occasion with a classical etymology or quote.

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[36] *Regrets* 36 is a sustained reworking of Ov. *Tr.* 5.10.1–10; only a small number of Ovid's exile poems receive this level of attention in the *Regrets* before the initial *Tristia*-agenda is diluted in later sections by other, less Ovidian concerns.

[37] The vignette in *Translations* discussed here gives its opening to John Kerrigan's fine essay 'Ulster Ovids', to which I was introduced by Michael Hinds: Kerrigan (1992). Cf. now Chapters 12 and 11 by Dellner and Harrison in the present volume. Kerrigan employs Friel's *Tristia* citation synecdochically, to elicit a broader sense of Ovid and of Ovidian exile in the poetry of Ulster at large; my interest is in the specific accent lent to such Ovidianism by Friel's choice *of this particular Tristia moment.*

[38] I cite the play from the Faber edition: Friel (1981).

In the stylized world of Friel's *Translations*, one of the governing conceits is that Greek and especially Latin *complement* Gaelic Irish as part of the linguistic terrain of rural Ulster, lined up against a monoglot English-language invasion of national schools, Royal Engineers, and name-altering mapmakers. A representative passage of dialogue will show how this is imagined (the schoolmaster Hugh is holding forth, with an occasional interspersed question to his pupils):

HUGH: Indeed—I encountered Captain Lancey of the Royal Engineers who is engaged in the ordnance survey of this area. He tells me that in the past few days two of his horses have strayed and some of his equipment seems to be mislaid. I expressed my regret and suggested he address you himself on these matters. He then explained that he does not speak Irish. Latin? I asked. None. Greek? Not a syllable. He speaks—on his own admission—only English; and to his credit he seemed suitably verecund—James?
JIMMY: *Verecundus*—humble.
HUGH: Indeed—he voiced some surprise that we did not speak his language. I explained that a few of us did, on occasion—outside the parish, of course—and then usually for the purposes of commerce, a use to which his tongue seemed particularly suited . . . and I went on to propose that our own culture and the classical tongues make a happier conjugation—Doalty?
DOALTY: *Conjugo*—I join together. (Friel 1981: 24–5)

Discernible here is the strong gravitational pull upon the play exercised by the modern 'troubles' of 1970s Ulster; but my focus is upon the language conceit itself. Let us turn to the passage which speaks directly to our Ovidian theme.

Near the end of the play the hedge-schoolmaster, about to be rendered obsolete by the advent of the English-speaking school, has just received confirmation that someone other than himself will get the new teaching position. Here are the words in which Hugh (with some drink taken) expresses a now-sharpened sense of alienation from this new world order—drawing on Latin rather than Irish, and Ovidian Latin at that:

HUGH: [Reporting his conversation with the local Justice of the Peace] 'Master Bartley Timlin has been appointed to the new national school.' 'Timlin, who is Timlin?' 'A schoolmaster from Cork. And he will be a major asset to the community: he is also a very skilled bacon-curer!'
JIMMY: Hugh—

HUGH: Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha! The Cork bacon-curer! *Barbarus hic ego sum quia non intelligor ulli*—James?
JIMMY: Ovid.
HUGH: *Procede.*
JIMMY: 'I am a barbarian in this place because I am not understood by anyone.' (Friel 1981: 64)

This is the crisis in which Hugh lines himself up with the exiled Ovid, in a striking moment of Hiberno-Latin identification: each of them a poet threatened with the loss of linguistic identity and capacity in the face of a barbarian Other.

And it is significant, I think, that Friel has his schoolmaster cite the Ovidian topos of linguistic alienation at the moment when Ovid, threatened by the barbarian otherness all around him, perceives that in this alien world *he himself* paradoxically, the Roman, is the one who sounds like the barbarian. Here is the Ovidian tag in its original context:

> exercent illi sociae commercia linguae:
>   per gestum res est significanda mihi.
> *barbarus hic ego sum, quia non intellegor ulli,*
>   et rident stolidi uerba Latina Getae;
> meque palam de me tuto mala saepe loquuntur,
>   forsitan obiciunt exiliumque mihi.

They hold converse in the tongue they share; I must make myself understood by gestures. *In this place I am the barbarian, because I am understood by nobody*; the Getae laugh stupidly at my Latin words; and in my presence they often talk maliciously about me in perfect security, perchance reproaching me with my exile. (Ovid, *Tr.* 5.10.35–40)

Friel's focus on this particular Ovidian moment of paradox (*'barbarus hic ego sum'*) seems symptomatically important. The plot of *Translations* is sensitive throughout to the instability across place and time of all its categories of linguistic selfhood and otherness, of linguistic centre and periphery. And also, as a work which had its 1980 première in the culturally divided city of Derry or Londonderry (*Doire Cholm Cille* in the old language),[39] *Translations* is very self-aware of the modern-day paradox of its status as a drama about an Irish-speaking world which uses an English-language script to portray

[39] 'Oak-wood of Colm Cille (= St Columba)'.

English as the unintelligible 'Other'—even when staged within a few Irish miles of the fictional Baile Beag.

So too, then, in the case of Hugh's identification with the Latin of Ovid, Friel's play knows well, from its late twentieth-century vantage point, that Latin is not a stable linguistic entity, any more than is Gaelic Irish. The schoolmaster inhabits a nineteenth-century world in which his own Irish can rub shoulders as a living language with Ovidian Latin;[40] but, even in the play's own stylized terms, he is something of an old-fashioned pedant, and in his constant quoting of Latin tags (so exotic to a modern theatre audience), we also get a glimpse of a possible future (not unfamiliar to us) in which Latin and Irish may be conjoined not as living languages but as dead ones.

And herein (as in the case of Du Bellay) lies the lingering sting of the Ovidian allusion. For Ovid to say that his Latin speaking marks him as a barbarian in a getophone world is a mere passing conceit, as noted before: there is little risk that this bearer of the imperial tongue will be branded as a barbarian by anyone who counts. But what of Hugh's moment of post-Ovidian self-recognition? In a sense the anglophone invasion *will* make him a 'barbarian' in his own country. The decline of the Irish language will accelerate precipitously in the century following the dramatic date of *Translations*. Hugh cannot know, but Friel's audience does, that, as the generations wear on, the depopulated and famine-ravaged countryside of Ireland's Atlantic seaboard will increasingly become a laboratory for English and continental European linguists and anthropologists in pursuit of the last traces of a vital Gaelic-language culture; and these researchers will bring to their fieldwork the same sense of exoticism as if they were telling their readers about the South Sea Islands or the Amazon Rain Forest. In a sense, the shrinking Irish-speaking fringe of Ireland *does* become, by the time of this 1980 play, an exotic, internal 'other', a last frontier in which tourists (and groups of schoolchildren) from

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[40] Kerrigan (1992: 237–8 and n. 2) aptly quotes from W. B. Stanford's *Ireland and the Classical Tradition* an observer of 1824 according to whom 'a tattered Ovid or Virgil may be found even in the hands of the common labourers': Stanford (1976: 25), in an extended discussion (25–8) of many such reports. Similar anecdotes of un-affected rural Latinity (farmhands reciting Horace from memory) still circulated a century later in the branch of my own family involved in farming and teaching near Derry; but that is not to say that (as their very persistence should serve to indicate) such stories are entirely free of an element of romantic idealization.

anglophone Ireland can have the denaturing experience of hearing their native Gaelic used as a living and breathing language.[41]

For just one telling moment, then, late in Brian Friel's drama of language and identity, a displaced schoolmaster speaks in the words of our *Tristia* poet. Other exiles haunt *Translations* too, not least the pair of chieftains, one of them a more famous bearer of the same name, Hugh O'Donnell, who in the early 1600s had become Ulster's most mythologized exiles in the events which culminated in the so-called 'Flight of the Earls'—events to which Friel will devote his final Field Day drama, simply titled *Making History*, eight years later.[42] *Translations* is not, except in this one speech, a play about Ovid:[43] the Tomitan thread patterns with others and recedes into Friel's rich weave of human and literary history. However, as in my other case studies (whether or more or less specifically invested in Ovidianism), the larger lesson of 2,000 years of Black-Sea Latin remains operative: that there is more than one way to live the language of exile, and to reinvent the Pontic barbarian.

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[41] Such imaginative 'futurology' will come very naturally indeed to a reader or viewer familiar with Friel's dramatic oeuvre, in which Baile Beag/Ballybeg recurs as a setting several times, and at several different points in history: Bertha (2006: 156–8). Indeed, two years after *Translations*, Friel's next play *The Communication Cord* (also for Field Day) stages as comedy a modern 1980s Ballybeg peopled by bourgeois Dublin weekenders and a German tourist on a mission to buy an authentic Irish cottage: Pelletier (2006: 71–3).

[42] Hugh's first name, with or without his last, O'Donnell (Friel 1981: 26), associates him with the events leading up to one of Irish history's iconic episodes of exile, the Flight of the Earls (1601–7). Two Ulster chieftains, Hugh O'Neill and Hugh O'Don-nell, after several years of not uncomplicated interaction with the English crown, were forced into exile in continental Europe; *Making History* dramatizes the life of Hugh O'Neill (Earl of Tyrone), and meditates on the processes whereby his life was written into history: Pelletier (2006: 75–7).

[43] Even in terms of the play's citations and invocations of Greek and Latin literature, this one reference to the *Tristia* must position itself within a more sustainedly Homeric and Virgilian conversation about exile, empire, and the quest for home.

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