Exile has been one of the most productive literary topics in twentieth century literature. Together with the related themes of distance, separation, displacement, detachment, and diaspora it features prominently in the oeuvres of writers who fled from the totalitarian regimes of central and eastern Europe such as Thomas Mann, Nabokov, or Brodsky; more recently, exile has become a central theme in postcolonial literature, and, in addition, at least from Nietzsche onwards, exile is a common metaphor for the alienation of modern and postmodern intellectuals.

This increased reflection on exile in the twentieth century has not only influenced research in social sciences and modern languages, but it has also left its mark on the classics, where interest in the exiles of antiquity has grown continuously over the past fifty years. This scholarly interest has, however, been largely confined to the three most prominent ancient writers who went into exile, the ‘exulum trias’ Cicero, Ovid, and Seneca the Younger; moreover, modern concepts of exile literature have been applied to classical literature without the necessary caution. In what follows I shall first point out some of the problems involved in recent approaches to exile in Greek and Latin literature; then I shall briefly explain the aim, concept, and structure of the present volume; finally, I shall give an outline of the development of ancient discourse on exile.

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1 The literature on these and the following authors and groups of authors is vast; cf. e.g. Bevan et al. (1990), Roth-Souton (1994) and the collection of documents written by German exiles in Spalek et al. (1976 ff.). Guida-Laforgia (1995) draws attention to the often forgotten female German writers in exile in the USA.


4 Cf. the title of Leopold (1904).
Apart from the mostly historical study of Grasmück (1978), there have been so far two main attempts to describe and analyse the treatment of exile in classical literature on a broader scale. Influenced by studies on twentieth century exile literature and based on a “phenomenological” (Walde (2000) 299) or, more precisely, a psychological approach, Doblhofer (1987) has tried to demonstrate that the psychological condition of exile is responsible for many similarities between the literary works of ancient and modern exiles; more recently Claassen (1999a) has presented another assessment of ancient discourse on exile, in which she takes up some of the psychological explanations of Doblhofer but organizes the literature according to the narrative perspective, or rather the grammatical person, of the respective works (first-person, second-person, and third-person discourse on exile). Both Doblhofer and Claassen view ancient discourse on exile, or at least parts of it, as part of a wider genre or mode of exile literature. Claassen ((1999a) 241) for example explicitly credits Ovid with the “creation of the literary genre of exilic poetry”, and Doblhofer even supplies a list of typical features of exile literature—ancient and modern. However, for several reasons the transfer of the modern concept of exile literature to Greek and Roman antiquity proves to be problematic.

First of all the English word ‘exile’ is far more precise than the corresponding Greek and Latin terms. Whereas the modern derivatives of the Latin word *exilium* imply an involuntary departure, sanctioned by political or judicial authorities, the ancient usage of the corresponding terms *ฤษ, fuga, exilium*, and their derivatives is less strict. *ฤษ* and *ודא* cover both the expulsion of groups or individuals and their voluntary departure. Possibly influenced by this Greek usage, Latin

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5 On the historical and legal aspects of exile, which are only occasionally touched in the present volume, cf. also the studies by Balogh (1943), Seibert (1979), Cawkwell (1981), Roisman (1982), (1984–6), Brown (1988), McKechnie (1989), Bearzot (2001), Forsdyke (2005) (Greece) and Grasmück (1978) (Italy); cf. also Sordi et al. (1994).

6 Cf. Claassen’s emphasis on experience (1999a) 2: “Quellenforschung is not the major object of the work. Of importance is rather the manner in which each exile experiences his condition and the way in which his reaction is put into words”. Cf. also Claassen’s interpretation of Ovid’s persona/personality (p. 31) and of Cicero’s use of invective (p. 133).

7 Cf. Claassen (1999a) 15.

8 I just mention in passing that in the study of modern literatures, too, the term ‘exile literature’ has been questioned (cf. e.g. the discussion in Stern (1971)) and is, apart from that, usually not employed for a genre or mode but merely indicates a set of authors who have been in exile.