In a few short years we will celebrate, so to speak, the bimillennium of Augustus’ banishment of Ovid from Rome in 8 CE and the poet’s relegation to a far-flung outpost of the Roman Empire on the Black Sea. We will certainly not celebrate the act of *relegatio* itself. Whatever the actual circumstances that lay behind it, at this distance and given that virtually the only witness is Ovid, the edict perforce must seem to us the willful act of an autocrat. A view, to be sure, that, considering recent history, we have been inclined to credit. Through the twentieth century we—the ‘we’ of the ‘civilized world’—have often associated the exile or expulsion of artists with totalitarian regimes; likewise we regarded self-exile, voluntary exile in other words, as tarnishing the reputation of the abandoned country rather than that of the courageous artist who fled repression or censorship. By the end of the century, it had seemed as if such instances had grown quite rare and might soon cease altogether, extinct like smallpox, say, or polio. But, just as these viruses have proved more resilient than a confident twentieth century once thought, so we may well be entering upon a new phase of exile and self-exile. If this be speculation, it is the kind of speculation to which the Ovidian imaginary has also, at other times and places and *mutatis mutandis*, given rise.

One may, of course, celebrate the poetry that his removal from Rome, the city (*urbs*) and center of the world as he knew and imagined it, occasioned him to write, in particular the *Tristia* and the *Epistulae ex Ponto*, the two great collections (of five and four books, respectively) that

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1 Cf. nn. 9 and 10 below. On the relative mildness of *relegatio* in contrast to *exilium stricto sensu*, and Ovid’s clever tactic of blurring the distinction so that he might appear the greater victim, see Ehlers (1988) 150, 155–6.

2 Cf. Ehlers (1988) 151: “Verbannung oder Flucht stigmatisieren das verstoßene Land”. One thinks, for example, of Alexander Solzhenitsyn. Claassen (1999a) 256–8 describes the case of the Afrikaans writer Breyten Breytenbach who first entered into voluntary exile after marrying a non-white but ended up returning to South Africa only to be imprisoned.
first describe his journey to Tomis on the Black Sea and then transcribe aspects of his life there, with abundant and plangent appeals for recall or at least a resettlement to a somewhat more pleasant location. One may also celebrate the collective outpouring of sympathetic lamentation that has flowed ever since from the pens of those for whom Ovid became a mythic figure of exile, displacement, and despair. Most are sympathetic in the sense that they see him as the victim of the Roman ruler’s exercise of absolute authority; of these, some allege that the emperor was, hypocritically, seeking to cover up his own personal scandal. All, however, are sympathetic in the sense that one string is sympathetic with another, sounding in response. It is this genealogy of the exilic imaginary that I trace here, at least in part, for while I will concentrate on the medieval centuries, the name of Ovid as the exemplary banished poet lived on to be evoked by authors from du Bellay, Goethe, Grillparzer and Pushkin to Marx, Verlaine, Brecht and Brodsky.

The *Ibis* is also a product of this period, as are at least certain sections of the *Fasti* and possibly even portions of the *Metamorphoses* as we have it (see Harrison and Gaertner on pp. 135 and 155 above). On the *Ibis*, see now Williams (1996). I focus here on the two major collections as they constituted the prime canon of exile elegies for the tradition I will be tracing in this essay.—When I write ‘describe’ and ‘transcribe’, as here, or any other such verb, I do not mean to imply that these are ‘realistic’ representations. They are to be understood, rather, as ‘reality effects’ within a fictive and poetic realm. See Chwalek (1996), who argues cogently for the existence of an “elegiac ego” (“elegisches Ich”) that the poet Ovid created in the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* (just as surely as he created an amatory-elegiac ego in the *Amores*) and whose exaggerations and contradictions readers are supposed to appreciate as a product of that persona. The history of the reception of the poems is largely, of course, a history of misreading from Chwalek’s perspective, since the majority of readers before the late twentieth century seem to have fallen afoul of the autobiographical fallacy (for some exceptions, see Ehlers (1988)). Given the primary orientation of my study on that reception history, my own summaries usually reflect the less complex understanding of the readers I am studying, though were I writing a study of Ovid’s *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* directly, I would certainly use language much more in line with Chwalek’s formulations. Chwalek’s study also offers virtually exhaustive reference to relevant secondary literature up to the mid 1990s.

Bibliography is vast and largely scattered; I offer the briefest of beginnings in Hexter (1986) 83 n. 2. For a sampling of more, on Grillparzer and Pushkin, see von Albrecht (1971) and Smolak (1980) 174–5, on Goethe and Brecht, see Ehlen (2000) 152–3, on Brodsky, see Kennedy (2002). Late-twentieth-century novels by Malouf (1978) and Christoph Ransmayr (1988 and 1990) are the best well-known, in the English-speaking world, of fictions that are inspired by Ovid on the Black Sea; among discussions, see Hardie (2002b) 326–37, Kennedy (2002) and Ziolkowski (2005). Other novels include Horia (1960 [discussed by Smolak (1980) 176–84 and, yet more briefly, by Claassen (1999a) 254]) and the last tenth of von Naso [sic!] (1958).—Some portions of this essay cover ground explored more extensively in Hexter (1986) 83–107 (reprinted in abbreviated form as Hexter (1995)) and revisited, from different angles and in more summary