In Ovid Revisited: The Poet in Exile, Jo-Marie Claassen (hereafter referred to as C.) defends the poet’s creative powers in his works composed in exile, in particular the Tristia and the Epistulae ex Ponto (the Ibis is not discussed). In the Preface, C. acknowledges her general debt to L.P. Wilkinson’s classic study Ovid Recalled, published in 1955, although she disagrees with his view of a decline in quality from the poet’s major works written before his exile. C. has brought together in this volume, which appeared in time for the bimillennium of Ovid’s relegation to Tomi, articles and reviews that she published over more than a twenty-year span and has integrated them into the material of the book’s six chapters and an excursus. A list of these various publications, along with references to the sections of the chapters in which they have been incorporated, follows the “Preface.”

The “Introduction” (pp. 1-28) notes that a major appreciation of Ovid’s exilic poetry occurred with the publication of an important article by E. J. Kenney in 1965, inaugurating a new movement in critical studies on these works. Acknowledging the difficulty of resolving the nature of the error, if not the carmen, that brought about Ovid’s relegation to Tomi in A. D. 8 or 9, C. briefly summarizes the main theories, ranging from sexual misconduct involving the younger Julia to profanation of a religious ritual to political intrigue. Avoiding a strictly biographical approach, C. defines her study as an exploration of the relation of Ovid’s style to his emotions, by considering in particular the poet’s response to his place of exile, his fluctuations between hope and despair, and his attitude toward Augustus. To this end, she divides the five books of the Tristia and the four of the Ex Ponto into five chronological phases of composition from late A. D. 9 to A. D. 16 or 17. She then provides a brief summary of the poems in each phase.

In spite of her laudable effort to provide a comprehensive view of Ovid’s poetic record of his experience as an exile, C.’s citation here of two influential
studies for her work, Archibald Allen’s article “Sincerity and Roman Elegists,” published in 1950, and Jasper Griffin’s *Latin Poets and Roman Life*, published in 1985, points to a pervasive problem in this book: C. does not reveal much awareness of scholarship in the past twenty or more years. Furthermore, her failure to engage with the published scholarship in her discussions of the specific poems from Ovid’s exile leaves the reader feeling dissatisfied, knowing that some of the points at hand have been examined in other works and wanting to know how C.’s views relate to those of other critics of the *Tristia* and the *Ex Ponto*. By eliminating footnotes, C. aims to make the work more accessible to a wider audience than specialists in Latin poetry. But the book overall does not seem written for general readers, eschewing as it does a focus on broad themes in favor of an approach by sequence or by stylistic devices. C.’s failure to include a list of works cited at the end compounds the problem of the lack of notes. The reader is left with no real resources for further investigation.

Ch. 1, “Persons and personalities” (pp. 29-51), raises the problem of Ovid’s attitude toward Augustus and the imperial family. C. points out how little the reader learns about the nature of the poet’s error, as evidenced by passages from the *Ex Ponto*. C. stresses the potential for irony through the personae of Ovid as poet-creator, suffering man, and heroic exile. The poet applies terminology of divinity to Augustus and his family, but often associates such language with words for “anger,” implying a negative view of the emperor as ultimately a “relentless silent thunderer.” In alluding to members of the imperial family, the poet makes numerous irreverent and tactless references. As C. points out, Ovid refers to Isis and the Magna Mater, a composite divinity favored by Livia, in a flippant manner in an extended passage in *Ex P.* 1.1 and describes Tiberius, adopted by Augustus and made his successor only very late, as “looking and acting just like his father” (*Ex P.* 2.8.31-32; 4.13.27).

Much of the material in this chapter is informative. C. sensibly suggests that Ovid’s hyperbolic flattery could safely mask impudent humor directed against the imperial family, that the poems may have been intended for private circulation in Rome, and that the poet may have realized early on that his relegation would never be revoked. Dismissing theories that Ovid’s exile was a fiction created when his *books* were banned, C. postulates an Ovidian “myth of exile” in which the poet-hero is persecuted by an angry god. C.’s view of the ironic implications of numerous allusions to the imperial family, including hyperbolic references to Augustus-Jupiter’s marriage to Livia-Juno, seems well taken.

Applying Herman Fränkel’s concept of “wavering identity” in the *Metamorphoses* to the poet’s self-image in the exilic poetry, C. points to an increased use of personification from the first book of the *Tristia* to the last book of the *Ex Ponto*. In particular, Ovid personifies his poetic creation, establishing in *Tr.* 1.1 the concept of the book as his child and surrogate, who sometimes grieves on his behalf, and cleverly adapting it in 3.14, where he observes that, like Athena, his “children” were born without a mother. C. pursues the implications of the latter example by suggesting that Ovid pointedly contrasts himself with Augustus as Jupiter-Zeus: whereas the emperor had no real progenies, the poet will live on and achieve immortality through his creations. C. also offers informative remarks on Ovid’s shifting use of the meaning of his Muse.