

Frederick A. de Armas, ed. *Ovid in the Age of Cervantes*.

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From the twelfth century onward Ovid has been one of the most influential authors in European culture; his position in Spanish literature is no exception. Since Rudolph Schevill's *Ovid and the Renaissance in Spain* (1913), however, there has been no attempt to cover such a complex subject comprehensively. *Ovid in the Age of Cervantes* focuses on the age of *Don Quixote*'s author, and reaches to the end of the

seventeenth century. In the introduction, the editor argues cogently against the denomination “Golden Age,” because it implies a biased vision of this period — though one that reflects the perspective of its contemporaries — while his title highlights the centrality of Cervantes’ innovations, a standpoint that may be considered as anachronistic.

The fifteen studies included are nicely arranged into four sections. Part 1 is the most diverse. It runs from an overview of the influence of the *Remedia amoris* on the *Libro de Buen Amor* and *Celestina*, necessarily superficial, to a loose comparison between the *Metamorphoses* and *Jardín de flores curiosas*. In the only essay centered on translations of Ovid, John Parrack underlies how Sánchez de Viana’s *Metamorfosis* (1589) tries with its glosses to emulate and displace Ovid. This section ends with an erudite search for traces of the *Fasti* in *Silva de varia lección* and *Agudeza y arte de ingenio*, which allows Frederick de Armas to explore subtly the mark of the little-known Ovidian work both in the structure and in the poetics of the mysterious and the wonderful in seventeenth-century Spanish literature.

Part 2 offers three studies on the pervasive influence of the Roman writer in Cervantes through the examination of three myths. Narcissus and the third book of Ovid’s masterpiece are present in *El curioso impertinente* as a theme and as a way of construing the narrative, consisting, as Timothy Ambrose shows, in the interweaving of a series of stories as a source of deception. Keith Budner’s analysis of the fulling hammers episode as a conflation of the myths of Vulcan and the ages of humankind underscores the errant knight’s rejection of new technology. In fact, as illustrated in William Worden’s essay, *Don Quixote* can be regarded as a sort of an alternative to the *Metamorphoses*, in the sense that all main characters are subjected to transformations of a dubious nature.

Part 3 turns to specific myths in the poetry and prose of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Mary Barnard turns to the well-known use of Echo and Narcissus in Garcilaso’s *Second Eclogue* as the key to showing how Albanio and Camilla create two distinct and distant self-portraits. In her approach to *Circe*, Kerry Wilks proposes a political reading and relates the poem to Lope’s attempts to win the favor of the Count-Duke of Olivares, and as an emblem of creation itself that leads also to the development of a laudatory image of the poet. Over-interpretation and a oblique use of Ovid as an excuse mar Steven Wagschal’s interpretation of Castillejo as a cosmopolitan poet: travelling through Europe, living in Vienna, and a knowledge of Ovid do not transform — if I am allowed the irony — the traditionalist poet into a “problemized cosmopolitan.” The temptation of overstepping the limits of the texts to pose seemingly tantalizing questions with obvious answers, a temptation to which some of the essays are intermittently prone, is best illustrated in Pablo Restrepo-Gautier’s study, which takes as a point of departure the monster of Ravenna in *Guzmán de Alfarache*, and links it to Ovid’s myth of Hermaphrodite to point out the fascination and abhorrence toward intersexuality in early modern Spain — quite a blatant conclusion!

The last section is devoted to Ovid as a model for Spanish writers on issues of poetic fame and self-fashioning. As a whole it makes for the most nuanced and

consistent section of this compilation. Thus, Benjamin Nelson offers a painstaking examination of the Orpheus myth in Garcilaso's and Montemayor's poetry, disclosing Virgil's presence beside Ovid. If the first is the main figure on which poets model their careers, playwrights tend to follow Ovid. Christopher Weimer exemplifies this in Tirso de Molina, who however turns into an anti-Ovidian and fashions himself as a poet of pious exile after not a completely voluntary retirement from the court. Equally nuanced is Julio Vélez-Sainz' inquiry of the myth of Apollo of Daphne, for while in Lope's *El amor enamorado* is used to create the figure of a comical poet, in *El laurel de Apolo* Calderón dramatizes it as mirror for princes. Finally, Jason Macloskey studies Juan de Miramontes Zualozala's *Armas antárticas*, a poem where an African slave explains to an English pirate how his community are descendants of Andromeda and Apollo, thus ennobling its origins.

Despite a certain disparity in the essays included, this collection a valuable approach to the subject. It is not an overview; for that, Schevill's book remains unsurpassed. Possibly the authors could have been more careful in the use of contemporary sources to back some of their interpretations, and more rigorous in following the complex and not always easy threads that weave classical tradition into the vernacular literatures. But this compilation is certainly a huge step forward in realizing the importance and richness of what still lies ahead in relation to the study of Ovid in Spanish literature before, during and after the age of Cervantes.

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