A POETICS OF EXILE:
THE RECEPTION OF OVID’S TRISTIA IN TUDOR ENGLAND

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Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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August 2018

Word Count: 95,070

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CONTENTS

Abstract iv

Note on Editions Used v

Textual Note v

Acknowledgements vi

Introduction 1

Chapter 1 | Medieval and Early Modern Traditions of Reading Ovid’s *Tristia* 9

Early Printed Editions and the Commentary Tradition 10
Printed Editions of the *Tristia* Published in England 26
The *Tristia* in the Classroom 30

Chapter 2 | Case Studies 38

‘Tristian’ Variations 39
‘Go Little Book’: Traces of the Ovidian Envoy 48
John Skelton – *The Garland of Laurell* (1523) 60
Geoffrey Whitney – *Choice of Emblemes* (1586) 69
Ben Jonson – *Poetaster* (1601) 75

Chapter 3 | Wyatt 82

How Wyatt Knew Ovid 85
Petrarch as Intermediary 88
- ‘Pas fourthe, my wountyd cries’ 90
- ‘Goo burnyng sighes’ 97
- ‘My galy charged with forgetfulnes’ 98
- ‘Lament my losse’ 103
- ‘I fynde no peace and all my warr is done’ 106
Chapter 4 | Churchyard

The Formal Features of De Tristibus
Interpreting the Envoy
Ovid’s Influence on Churchyard’s Wider Works
  - Poetic Identity
  - Friendship
  - Triumphal Return

Chapter 5 | Spenser

How Spenser Knew Ovid
Du Bellay as Intermediary
The Shepheardes Calender
Amoretti and Epithalamion
Colin Clouts Come Home Again

Conclusion

Bibliography

Appendices
ABSTRACT

Using a combination of manuscript and printed sources, this thesis examines the ways in which Ovid’s *Tristia* was read and received in sixteenth-century England. This study challenges the presupposition that readers have perpetuated since the early twentieth century – that Ovid was a lascivious or scandalous poet, spreading works full of lust – and forwards the case for Ovid the family man, loving husband, defender of poetry and immortal fame. Its opening chapter gives the reader a thorough grounding in the reception history of the *Tristia* – how it was read and used in the medieval and early-modern period in both France and England, in its manuscript and printed forms. It proves that this text was much-appropriated for its moral standpoint well into the seventeenth century. Chapter two provides vignettes of three writers key to England’s continued engagement with the *Tristia* - John Skelton, Geoffrey Whitney and Ben Jonson - illustrating the work’s wide appeal to poets, emblem-book compilers and playwrights in the sixteenth century. The ways in which envoy and the ‘Go Little Book’ conceit emerge in English Renaissance literature begins to be traced here. Chapter 3 on Thomas Wyatt subreads the Petrarchan angle from which the *Tristia* was approached, forwarding the case for a repurposing of the exilic work in his amatory verses. Thomas Churchyard’s influence on the canon presents itself in chapter 4, as, significantly, the first translator of a three-book *Tristia* in 1572. Here the copy used is reidentified and Churchyard’s own imitative practice of translation examined. Finally, the work culminates with a chapter on Edmund Spenser’s *Amoretti, Epithalamion, Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* and the *Shepheardes Calender*, the ways in which they re-use the *Tristian* envoy, and how they approach monumentalising the poet through myth-making in a conscious attempt to confer immortal fame.
NOTE ON EDITIONS USED


In some instances there have been multiple translations consulted for clarity, and these are then noted in the accompanying footnotes. Finally, Edmund Spenser’s *Shepheardes Calender, Amoretti, Epithalamion* and *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* are all sourced from *The Shorter Poems*, ed. Richard McCabe (London: Penguin Classics, 1999).

TEXTUAL NOTE

*CCCHA* has been used as an abbreviation for *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* for ease of reference. All Latin contractions cited throughout this thesis contained within MS and early-printed texts have been expanded and placed in square brackets to aid clarity.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Matthew Woodcock, for his continued support throughout this PhD, without whom none of this would have been possible. Thanks also go to my proofreading team, Brenda Buckingham and Sarah Buckingham, to Andrew Buckingham and James Buckingham for their satire, and to those friends who have listened to drafts and plans over a long three years. Dr Anna De Vaul and Emma Mills deserve special mention for keeping my nose to the grindstone and providing respite when I was most in need of it. I should also like to thank all those who have listened to me and given advice and ideas at conferences across the UK and abroad, and Dr Kevin King, who always had faith in me. Finally, the biggest thanks go to the AHRC who have funded this PhD, enabling me to devote all of my time to the project, without the general distractions of life getting in the way.
for my father,

Alfred Buckingham

1948-2008