In the present climate of rationalization and with the large-scale change over to the "Model C" system, smaller subjects like music, art and third languages generally have been feeling the pinch. In some cases Latin has been one of the subjects to fall by the wayside, but it is heartening to note that this is by no means the case throughout. At some schools parents have opted to finance Latin teaching themselves; in others enrolments justify retention of the Latin teacher. In still others, schools are contemplating joining forces to support teachers in the smaller subjects.

Latinists are however urged to note new developments in the Transvaal where the "Model C" system has freed all third languages teachers from former constraints preventing their doing "mission work" in their feeder schools. As a result 32 Transvaal schools are now offering audio-lingual Latin as part of the regular senior primary time-table, with resultant new enthusiasm in the high schools.

Enquiries about the implementation of the system and about suitable material may be addressed to Mrs. Corrie Schumann, Dept. of Latin, Pretoria University, Pretoria 0002. Tel.: 012-4202368 or 4202416 (W); 012-435491 (H).

BOOK REVIEW


Ovid's exile has captivated the imagination of his readers over the centuries. At least two other novels are based on the life of the exiled poet at Tomis.1 Woods' extremely competent translation from the Austrian German's 1988 novel, Die Letzte Welt (Frankfurt-am-Main, Eichborn Verlag) exposes the English-speaking world to a fascinating and thought-provoking view of the interaction of the poet's life and works.

In true "post-modern" style the author encapsulates time, in the sense that the book purports to be set in an unspecified "now" which oscillates between the 20th century, the exiled Ovid's world, the world of a contemporary Roman who has set out to find the exile and his lost work, and the mythical world of the poet's own Metamorphoses. In this the author is following the exilic fiction created by the exiled Ovid himself. As I have shown elsewhere, "Ovid's poetic Pontus"2 is a mythical world where time stands still and where fantasy and fact perpetually fluctuate.

The young Roman, Cotta, is searching for a real exile and his lost work, but gets caught up in a world peopled by squalid characters bearing the names of Ovid's mythical heroes and

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2 Papers of the International Latin Seminar 6 (1990), 65-94.
heroines from the *Metamorphoses*. Stories from this work are projected on the walls of the slaughter house by a travelling showman, a dwarf called Cyparis. That there is a horror in the past of the butcher Tereus and his wife Procone, is a constant theme. The truth emerges only when a mutilated wretch appears - her sister Philomela. The death of their son Itys retains the horror of the Ovidian telling. There are other characters - Battus, the epileptic, fascinated by a movie projector that he learns to work; Arachne the deaf-mute who weaves strange tales into stranger garments; Marsyas the charcoal-burner; Echo, who retells the exiled poet’s tales, a once beautiful woman who is disfigured by a scaly patch, a prostitute that sells her favours for “pieces of amber, hides, dried fish or pots of oil” (p.184); Fama, the grocer, who grows talkative after her son Battus has turned to stone; and the central figure, more *catalyst* than *hero*, Cotta, “one of many … fugitives of the state” (pp.181-182).

A useful index (pp.177-201) epitomizes the Ransmayr characters in relation to their Ovidian prototypes. Even without recourse to this “Ovidian Repertory” (sic) the discerning reader can unravel the intricate threads of Ovidian magic as reweened by a new master of imagined reality, the Austrian author. It takes more than one reading to do this unravelling satisfactorily. Ovid’s epitaph (*Met.* 15.871-872) is easily recognisable: why the stone upon which it is engraved should be covered in slimy slugs (pp.28-29) is less immediately discernible. The reader is left at the end with the desire immediately to begin rereading Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and his poems from exile, for he or she has joined Ransmayr’s “Cotta” in the ranks of those looking for the elusive exiled poet within his works.

J.M. Claassen

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**CERTAMEN LATINUM - THE LATIN OLYMPIIAD**

The familiar logo, showing a *Romanus togatus* sitting in front of a computer screen, is circulating in South African Latin schools again. CASA has launched its second biennial Latin Olympiad and is again offering computers as prizes in Stds. 9 and 10. The deadline for enrolments at R5 each is 28 February 1993. Late enrolments at R15 will be accepted if postmarked before 20 March 1993. The examination will be in April, and a prizewinners’ function will be held in August.

Teachers who have not yet applied for the study package, are urged to do so. Ideally, pupils should start preparing before the new school year begins.

This time round, by popular request, one quarter of the marks will be allocated for unseen translation from the set author. Prepared work will be based on 120 verses of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Book 6. The work is easy enough for Std. 9 pupils, and does not favour the particular syllabus of any one of the participating schools. A team of examiners from the three Southern universities will set the paper, with Dr. Sjarlene Thom of Stellenbosch as moderator.

As before, the biennial *Certamen* will be fair to all senior pupils, as two separate sets of prizes will once again be awarded in Stds. 9 and 10 respectively. CASA gratefully