

## BOOK REVIEW

*Ovid's Revisions: The Editor as Author.* By FRANCESCA K. A. MARTELLI. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. Pp. xi + 260. Hardcover, \$95.00. ISBN 978-1107037717.

This book's simple title belies the complexity of its topic. In its six chapters and epilogue, Martelli surveys the different kinds of revision to which Ovid subjects individual poems, collections of poems, and even his entire oeuvre, not to mention his persona and the person we know (or think we know) as Ovid. As both author and editor, Ovid even revises his readers' perceptions and interpretations of his texts—we read the erotic poetry differently through the lens of the exilic works, for example.

Martelli expertly marshals a number of theoretical approaches in her examination of how revision manifests itself in Ovid's work. She wisely restricts her treatment to the types of revision "that fall within the author's editorial remit" (238), leaving aside, for example, Ovid's revision of other poets' work through intertextual reference, and focusing instead on the works in the Ovidian corpus that evince internal intertextuality. For this reason, she devotes chapters to the *Amores*, the *Ars amatoria* and *Remedia Amoris*, the *Fasti*, the *Tristia*, and the *Epistulae ex Ponto*, i.e. the works where Ovid the author and Ovid the editor are most evident. Along the way, Martelli addresses some familiar issues in new, intriguing ways. As she writes in her introduction, she does not intend her readings of any passages to be definitive; rather, she offers them as "one possible route among many into the hermeneutic horizons" (29) Ovid's revisory practices open up for his texts.

For example, her discussion of the structure of the "second edition" of the *Amores* is interesting because it highlights the similarities and differences between Ovid as author and Ovid as editor of his own work. Her argument is frustrating at times, since it is based, necessarily, on conjecture about the first edition, which we do not have, and thus it is prone to begging the question. Nevertheless, by focusing on revision and editorial activity, Martelli adds much to the discussion about Ovid's motivation for revising the *Amores* and drawing our attention to his editorial activity. She also brings new insight to the problems of the *Fasti*, in particular the question of its completeness. She argues that Ovid's editorial hand is especially

active in this text, revising not only the addressee, but also the idea of a calendar, and even the very Roman religious traditions that are the subject of the poem. Although she does not devote a chapter to the *Metamorphoses*, Martelli also finds a rich vein of material on revision in that poem's final lines, on the immortality of the poet and his work, which become problematic after Ovid's exile and, in particular, in light of what he says about the *Metamorphoses* in the *Tristia*.

The book is uneven in some places. Often Martelli seems distracted by the opportunity to meditate on a passage, and she sometimes loses sight of the subject of revision. The chapter on the *Epistulae ex Ponto*, for example, has much to contribute to the discussion of that work in general, but it seems only tangentially related to the subject of revision. That would be a bigger problem if she were not such a sensitive and subtle reader of Ovid, for even when she goes off subject, the reader profits from the discussion. However, in other places, she cedes too much ground to other scholars. That is one of the reasons why the chapter on the *Ars amatoria* and *Remedia amoris* is so frustrating, since it is more about how Peter Brooks<sup>1</sup> might read the poems through a Freudian lens than what Martelli herself has to say about them, which would be much more interesting. Another reason is that much of her argument depends on acceptance of the two works as a unified whole, which she refers to in several places as "the *Ars-Remedia* in its longest format." If the reader is not prepared to think of the two works as a four-book collection, the argument fails.

But, since the point of this book is to take an expansive view of Ovid's editorial activity and to challenge accepted notions of the Ovidian corpus, readers willing to explore Ovid's work anew will appreciate what Martelli is trying to do. If she does not always keep revision in focus, she does succeed in offering fresh, provocative readings of Ovid's poetry. And when she does focus on revision, as in her epilogue, she has remarkable things to say. Indeed, the epilogue should be required reading for anyone interested in Ovid.

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<sup>1</sup> Martelli draws from Brooks' *Reading for the Plot* (Cambridge, MA 1992) and *Body Work* (Cambridge, MA 1993).