

All in all, Cairns' monograph is a comprehensive survey of the nature and background of Propertian elegy. The main argument – that Propertius' personal, social, and political background determined the patronage he enjoyed, which had an impact on his literary development – is straightforward and convincing. The insightful use of Propertius' poetry together with other sources, and the versatile methodological means utilized add to the prestige of the study. The book makes the reader reflect on the background of Roman poetry in general, and to consider more open-mindedly the people and the events that influenced the stylistic, thematic, and linguistic choices of the poets of this particular era. Hopefully Cairns' work will result in further research on this fascinating subject.

Elina Pyy

VICTORIA RIMELL: *Ovid's Lovers. Desire, Difference, and the Poetic Imagination*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge – New York 2006. ISBN 978-0-521-86219-1. VIII, 235 pp. GBP 50, USD 90.

Victoria Rimell's ambitious work tackles a difficult topic, namely issues concerning identities, intertextuality and intersubjectivity. This collection of six essays concentrates on the *Medicamina*, the *Ars Amatoria*, the *Metamorphoses* and the *Heroides*, offering fresh, but in some cases also controversial, perspectives on Ovid and his gender constructions.

Rimell harnesses the idea of intersubjectivity to study some central themes in Ovid. The concept of intersubjectivity is used in philosophy and psychology to describe a condition between subjectivity and objectivity, a kind of common sense or agreement between people that shapes our ideas and relations. From this perspective, Rimell presents desire subjects that seduce each other, the relationship between self and other, and especially the relationship between male and female worlds, which she considers to be the heart of Ovid's vision of poetry and imagination.

Rimell well shows how complicated it is to interpret Ovid. She challenges recent criticism of Ovid: "In this book, I want to sidestep the kinds of questions that have repeatedly been asked of Ovid in the last thirty years, by asking not (simply) about constructs of femininity, or of masculinity, or about whether Ovid can be judged a anti-, proto- or pseudo-feminist, but instead about relationally, about the desiring subject in Ovid's poetry as a being-in-relation." (pp. 3–4).

Rimell uses numerous quotations from Ovid to point out how the myth of Medusa and Narcissus can be seen in his texts in different forms. She emphasizes the meaning of gaze and asks, for instance: Who actually looks at whom and why? Who is the intended reader and who is actually vying against whom? And what were Ovid's ideas behind the scenes of desire and metamorphoses, which are often filled with snakelike and mirrorlike figures? (pp. 27–30).

In the first chapter ("Specular logics: *Medicamina*", pp. 41–69), Rimell examines Ovid's *Medicamina*. She points out that the text might be intended for both male and female readers, which could be interpreted as either a threat or a boost for the self-identity of both genders.

In the second chapter ("*Double vision: Ars Amatoria I, 2 and 3*", pp. 70–103), Rimell studies the only surviving Roman love manual, the *Ars*, and how the power between women and men changes constantly in this text. In her view, this is Ovid's way to manipulate male and

female audiences and to keep readers on their toes (pp. 74, 102).

The third chapter ("*Seeing seer: Metamorphoses 10–11.84*", pp. 104–22) deals with the *Metamorphoses*, which includes 15 books of narrative poems on the creation of the world, the gods and everything in between. Rimell concentrates on the married couple Orpheus and Eurydice, the gaze between them, and how different writers have interpreted the story. She reflects the story against other metaphors and connects them to her carrying theme, Medusa and Narcissus.

Chapter four ("*Co-creators: Heroides 15*", pp. 123–55) deals with the epistolary poems, the *Heroides*, which consist of letters written by mythical heroines to their male lovers. Rimell underlines the difficulty of writing about the "other", a concept that feminist theory has brought to Roman studies. Focusing on the "Sappho", she stresses the uncertainty of determining whose love affairs were actually portrayed. Are they Ovid's, Sappho's or those of the intended readers? Rimell shows the many different ways one can look at emotions, sexualities and genders. She also shows how Ovid's amatory poetry reflects the work of other writers, different forms of sexual passions and how intertextuality enacts intersubjectivity.

In the last two chapters ("*What goes around: Heroides 16–21*", pp. 156–179, and "*Space between: Heroides 18–9*", pp. 180–204), Rimell continues focusing on the *Heroides*. First she discusses marriage in general, and then Hero's and Leander's relationship which she connects with that of Narcissus and Medusa. The author also points out that water appears as a gendered element (pp. 187, 203).

In my view, Rimell offers a fresh interpretation of Ovid, but by doing so she endangers the structure and readability of her brilliant study. Her original interpretation offers a lot to the reader, but also asks in equal measure. The line of thought is at times overshadowed by the mass of brackets and quotations with even eight-line sentences (pp. 84, 100–1). But Rimell was conscious of these choices: "In particular, this book is meant to evoke complex, tangled and paradoxical nature of the Medusa and Narcissus myths, which to various degrees (as literal references and allusions, but also as wavering, mutating images and metaphors) scaffold my readings throughout. What will emerge, I hope, is not just a jigsaw of precise and detailed arguments, but a portrait of the proliferating and at times bewildering reflections that characterize Ovid's vision of the self, and of his own literary career" (p. 12).

Rimell portrays Narcissus and Medusa with the help of exiting and multidimensional observations. Medusa appears as a complex and contradictory figure, and the Narcissus of recent studies, in which he is seen as the poet and self-conscious reader, is challenged. Through Medusa and Narcissus, Rimell shows how the dialectic of Ovid's erotic discourse may be viewed in different ways.

Clearly, Rimell's book is not an average easy reading study on Ovid's view of lovers and desire. The in-depth analysis is often critical of the way Ovid has been viewed and favours a reader who has some knowledge on previous studies on the poet.

The book shows brilliantly that "writing" is a relative concept. All texts are written for someone, keeping in mind both past and future writers. The idea of "other" and "sameness" is always a puzzle for the mind. Rimell's analyses of intertextuality, intersubjectivity and gender are of interest to all those who study ancient Rome and wish to inquire into who actually wrote to whom and why.