

Zitierhinweis

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JULIA DYSON HEJDUK, *The Offense of Love: Ars Amatoria, Remedia Amoris, and Tristia 2. Ovid*. A verse translation by J.D. H., with Introduction and Notes, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2014, 268 pp., ISBN 978-0-299-30204-7.

Julia Dyson Hejduk has made an inspired choice in assembling into one attractive paperback her translations of the *Ars Amatoria*, the *Remedia Amoris*, and *Tristia 2*, the first such work, as she comments, “to bring together the offense and the defence” (p. 4). She thus offers her readers the opportunity to study in context Ovid’s dramatic reception of his didactic elegiac works. Its witty title, *The Offense of Love*, in Ovidian spirit plays off the double meaning of “offense” as an aggressive strategy or as a fault.

In her substantial Introduction, Hejduk claims that her imagined audience is “a college freshman or general reader” with little knowledge of the ancient world. This, as she acknowledges, poses several challenges that she addresses with attention to the imagined student’s needs. As well as providing an overview of Ovid’s works and career, the Introduction, which is divided into several clear sections, provides a basic background to the classical world in the form, for instance, of a helpful list of the major gods and summaries of major literary works and myths known to Ovid. There is much here to delight and interest readers beyond the freshman stage. For instance, Hejduk provides a list of the principal metaphors that Ovid uses in the *Ars Amatoria*, in descending order of frequency, and keyed to their lines. The Introduction also addresses in a clear and concise manner the chief critical problems surrounding these three works. Sometimes, however, Hejduk is so concise as to mask the poet’s complexities. For instance, she subscribes to the popular critical argument about the *Ars Amatoria* that the *praeceptor* is essentially a failure, a teacher who “misreads” his texts, particularly the mythological *exempla*. But since she does not explain the concept of an authorial persona distinct from the poet Ovid, the college freshman might not understand what Ovid is up to here. As for Ovidian irony, this key topic could have been explored in other regards as well. With *Tristia 2*, the debate over what we reasonably know about Ovid’s exile is carefully examined. However, there is no explanation of Augustus’ moral legislation, which would help put Ovid’s *carmen et error* in a clearer social and political context, one moreover that students today could readily comprehend, given the potential power of the state to regulate people’s sexual lives. Moreover, in discussing the possible role of Tiberius in Ovid’s punishment, Hejduk makes the surprising assertion that that not a single major poet flourished in Tiberius’ reign, thus overlooking Ovid’s didactic successor Manilius. Overall,

however, the Introduction provides a rich and useful approach to reading Ovid's three works. A teacher can cherry pick in the Introduction according to the needs of the students; the end notes that Hejduk provides, which refer to more detailed scholarly discussion, can invite the ambitious student to pursue more in-depths lines of inquiry.

One challenge faced by translators of Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* is the density of its mythological allusions. Indeed, Ovid's erotic poetry is distinguished by its literariness, despite its apparently practical aims and its boast that it is based on personal experience. Rather than inserting glosses into the main text, Hejduk has generally preserved the Latin names, footnoting where needed. These footnotes are both informative and concise; they do not clog the main text, and their presence on the page makes for much easier reading and comprehension on the part of the student. They also sometimes include Hejduk's own critical comments on the text. Also helpful for the student's comprehension is Hejduk's decision to divide the three poems into titled sections, such as "Step One: Finding the Girl." The student can follow the poem in "soundbites" that give the work the appearance of a self-help manual. These sections work particularly well also in the *Tristia*, where the titles demonstrate the poet's shifts in tone and strategy. In the *Ars Amatoria*, however, they sometimes seem to smooth out the poem's range of tonalities. For instance, "The Sad Story of Procris" has a light, even maudlin resonance that does not do justice to the complexities of this final mythological narrative of the *Ars Amatoria* which, in the tragic ending of a marriage, dramatizes the consequences of adultery and hints at the high personal stakes involved in the "game" Ovid teaches. Likewise, the jaunty title "Back to the Sufferings of Love" suggests an overall view of the poem as a lighthearted *jeu d'esprit*, a view that the myths generally belie.

The choice of verse form poses a perennial challenge to those translators of Ovid who wish to convey at least a sense of the poetic quality of the originals. As she explains in her prefatory notes to the college freshman (pp. xv-xviii), Hejduk opts for a kind of loose English-language equivalent to the elegiac metre. What this means in practice is that a line of six stressed syllables is followed by a line of five stressed syllables that is generally end-stopped. The text thus conveys, with much freedom, the efficiency of the elegiac couplet. Hejduk's translation is generally lively. She adopts a jaunty, sometimes colloquial style; for instance, "Devouring Envy, eat your heart out!" (*Rem.* 389) nicely conveys the poet's triumphant, defiant stance about the genius of his poetry. While it is not always possible to replicate in English Ovid's word play and puns, Hejduk comes up with some attractive equivalents. For instance, she writes of Bacchus that "he's a fan of the flame that heats his own blood" (*Ars* 1.526). However, some of the smooth sophistication and the semantic complexity of Ovid's verses are sacrificed here to readability. But my own reading of the *Ars Amatoria* is admittedly more serious than

Hejduk's and her purposes here are different.

In short, the clarity and immediacy of Hejduk's translation makes this book an attractive option for the college classroom, with the added benefit that the end notes, a full bibliography, and an index offer additional possibilities for critical exploration. I would add to the bibliography Charlotte Higgins' *Latin Love Lessons: Put a Little Ovid in Your Life* (London, 2007), which offers a witty updating of key features of Ovid's advice for would-be lovers and could make a good companion in the classroom to *The Offense of Love*. The book is carefully edited. I note here only the following. On p. 33, "pander" should be "panderer." On p. 35 there seems to be a copyediting error with "[Material]" printed after *Silvae*.

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