

A full-page background image of a classical marble sculpture. It depicts a man and a woman in an intimate pose. The man is seated, leaning forward, and the woman is standing behind him, her body pressed against his. The sculpture is made of light-colored marble and is set against a dark, solid background. The lighting highlights the contours of the figures' bodies.

OVID

A Poet on the Margins

LAUREL FULKERSON

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Ovid

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Ovid: A Poet on the Margins

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Preface

This study presents Ovid as a poet animated by a unified set of concerns throughout his long and prolific career, rather than as a man destroyed by circumstances. As such, it is a study of poetics much more than a biography. My goal in this volume has been to offer what I see as the most compelling interpretative tools for understanding Ovid. I am well aware that some of them, taken together, seem mutually contradictory, but I believe that the ambiguities can be reconciled. Above all, I hope to encourage all readers of this work to devote more of their energies to Ovid, who will richly reward any attention paid to him.

Working on the Ovidian oeuvre as a whole in the synoptic way required for this book has confirmed a long-held belief that Ovid is the ideal combination of fox and hedgehog: he has more than one good trick up his toga, but he repeats some of them an awful lot. Readers should be aware that I have tried to cover the most prevalent features of Ovidian style and poetics, such that nearly every example from Ovid's work could have been replaced with several others. I have tried to mix well-known passages with obscure ones, preferring those that allowed me to discuss more than one topic at a time. And, of course, a number of them are personal favourites. The *Metamorphoses* is by far Ovid's most famous work, and quite possibly his best; I have tried to balance this fact with the equally compelling imperative to introduce less familiar moments and characters to a wider audience.

In keeping with the aims of this series, the Further Readings section bears the scantiest possible testimony to the richness and variety of excellent work being done on Ovid. I hereby apologize to all who feel slighted by my omissions, which are enormous. Translations are mine, with the hope of capturing a small portion of what is so marvellous about Ovid's Latin.

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My first debt of gratitude is to Mark Petrini, under whose tutelage I began reading Ovid, and my second to Gareth D. Williams, for nurturing my Ovidianism, and providing encouragement and structure for this project at its early stages. Thanks are due too to several readers of earlier drafts: Jessica H. Clark, Megan Drinkwater, W. Jeffrey Tatum and Gareth D. Williams, and to the graduate students in my *Metamorphoses* seminar at FSU in the spring of 2013, who were the first auditors of my nascent thoughts and who, with their extremely varied interests, made me aware of just how much Ovid has to offer. My scholarly debts and influences will probably be obvious to professionals; interested amateurs will find some hints in the Further Readings section. I thank too my students Andrew Ficklin and Bart Natoli for written work and discussions which have helped me to frame my thoughts on Germanicus's triumph and on Ovidian silences (the latter now a Texas dissertation, 'Speech, Community, and the Formation of Memory in the Ovidian Exilic Corpus,' 2014). The dedication reflects a personal obligation, but also my hope that, finally, I have written something that normal people might enjoy reading.