

Bartolomeo Merula: Renaissance Editor of Classical Texts

Little is known about the life of the Mantuan-born humanist Bartolomeo Merula or about his role as editor of classical texts for the Venetian printer Giovanni Tacuino at the end of the fifteenth century. Virtually no scholarly research has been done on Merula's editing, and not much on his output as a commentator. Merula's commentaries on Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* and *Remedia Amoris* (published Venice, 1494) are well known; they became central, standard reading in the Renaissance period. Merula's status as Renaissance commentator on Ovid's *Tristia* (Venice, 1499) is also documented (Fuchs, 2013). These commentaries gained Merula a certain degree of fame in the intellectual culture of patrician-dominated Venice. Much of Merula's thought evolved at the time that he was employed as tutor in the household of the noble Corner family. He advanced to become secretary to his former protégé Marco Corner upon the latter's cardinalcy in 1500, and he was later made apostolic protonotary.

But what can we make of Merula's work specifically as *editor*? Scholarship on Renaissance commentaries has been rapidly emerging, stating the claim for and evidence of the humanists' extensive classical learning (Fritsen, 2015; Enenkel, 2014; White, 2013). The hermeneutical opinions of an editor arguably had lasting impact as well. Among the many books corrected by Merula for the Tacuino press are a Persius (1494), Curtius Rufus (1494), Diodorus Siculus (1496), Ausonius (1496), and *Fasti* by Ovid (1497) (Perosa, 1981). Merula's own philological inquiries and a concern to put forward his ideas can be found in his prefaces to texts and commentaries that he prepared for Tacuino's firm. This paper will concentrate in particular on the 1497 Venetian composite commentary edition of Ovid's *Fasti*. Contrary to what one might expect, Merula's prefatory remarks are not on Ovid. Rather, Merula introduces philological excurses on passages in Catullus, Livy, and Pliny.

The first part of this talk will focus on the textual criticism in Merula's editorial preface to the *Fasti*. In the second part of the talk, I will examine the editorial preface as paratext. I will pose questions and seek preliminary answers for the following: can an editor function as commentator? What was his authority in his role as editor? Can we call the editorial preface a literary genre?

Bibliography

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