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Review

Reviewed Work(s): Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Book XIII by Neil Hopkins

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*Ovid, Metamorphoses, Book XIII*, edited by NEIL HOPKINSON (Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics). Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000. 252 p. Pr. £14,95.

The attractive yellow and green volumes of the Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics have become a familiar sight in many personal and institutional libraries. The format of the series makes them suited for a broad readership. Students are greatly helped by the brief introductions, texts, and explanatory notes, while scholars can often profit from interpretative and literary notes, as well as up-to-date bibliographies.

The new volume on the relatively neglected thirteenth book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is a welcome addition to the series (which already contained a volume on his *Fasti* IV, and two on his *Heroides*). Ovid's book contains the stories on the Judgment of Arms, Hecuba, Memnon, Anius and his daughters, Acis, Galatea and Polyphemus, Scylla, Glaucus and Circe. It is a wide variety of episodes, without any apparent unifying theme, other than 'metamorphosis' in general. In his 43 p. introduction, Neil Hopkinson (H.) focuses on the individual tales, after two short paragraphs (nine pages in all) on the *Metamorphoses*, their structure and themes. The commentary takes up the greatest part of the book (150 p.).

Apart from providing brief grammatical and stylistic explanations as well as paraphrases, the commentator's main concern is clearly to highlight Ovid's use of earlier sources. On nearly every page, the reader is referred to Greek poetry (Homeric, classical and Hellenistic), and notably to the works of Virgil. These are, of course, Ovid's primary

examples and it is certainly worthwhile to point out what models Ovid strived to imitate or emulate. Nonetheless, one would have liked to read some more on Ovid's creativity and poetic genius. At times, the commentary creates an effect similar to collections of 'parallel places' from the 19th and 20th centuries: the suggestion is that the author represents merely the last stage in a long chain of cumulative, dependent sources, without much attention for his specific intentions.

To give an example, H.'s notes on the episode of Polyphemus and Galatea rightly adduce many parallel texts from Homer, Horace, Virgil, Theocritus, or Ovid himself, but often with apodictic phrases like "the Cyclops quotes Horace" (p. 218), "the opposition of positive and negative is inspired by Virg.Ecl. 7,37-44" (p. 219); "these lines are expanded from the brief reference to bearcubs at Theoc. 11,41" (p. 223), which suggest that the commentator knows with absolute certainty and in great detail what texts the poet is reworking.

On a minor note, H. seems rather too negative about Polyphemus, who is sometimes even ridiculed by him in the introduction and the notes. For instance, when Polyphemus sums up his gifts for Galatea, such as a nest of birds from a tree-top (line 833), H. notes "Even the risk involved here is trifling". Certainly, the picture of Polyphemus is presented to us in the words of Galatea (probably an innovation by Ovid), which may explain some of the negative aspects of the portrait. However, it might be worth considering the possibility that the poet Ovid also wishes to raise some sympathy for the lonely Polyphemus, at the expense of the rather merciless nymph Galatea. Brief discussions of such matters would have added to the liveliness of the commentary and made it even more stimulating.

As it is, the commentary will no doubt serve beginning and advanced readers of Ovid well. Particularly, they will become aware of the variety of literary sources which inspired and influenced his *Metamorphoses*. Meanwhile, one should not be tempted to stop asking further questions about the aims of this elusive poet.

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