

MATTHEW ROBINSON, *A Commentary on Ovid's Fasti, Book 2*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. xii + 572, ISBN 978-0-19-958939-5.

Matthew Robinson's (hereafter R.) long-awaited commentary on Book 2 provides an excellent addition to the growing number of scholarly resources for Ovid's most complex poem. Below I offer just some of the strengths and distinctive qualities of this monograph before concluding with a few further suggestions spurred on by the commentary itself.

Though R. purports that his interest in *Fasti* is "primarily a literary one" (p. 2), there is coverage of all important areas of concern, and R.'s distinctive contribution lies probably in the astronomical sphere, both technical (esp. pp. 13-7, drawing on his earlier published work) and mythological (esp. pp. 17-8, in terms of the influence of Eratosthenes' *Catasterismoi*). R. is generally correct to suggest (p. 3) that astronomical aspects of *Fasti* have been less well served in previous commentaries, and his expertise in this area enriches his comments on a book of the poem which has particular stellar leanings (see e.g. 75n., 245n.).

On the thorny issue of the poem's politics, R. draws a neat but effective distinction between readers/individual readings who/which are either 'supportive' or 'suspicious' towards Augustus. Both sets of readers are given space in the commentary with no evident authorial bias expressed; see e.g. 18n. (critique of Augustan 'peace'), 55-72n. (critique of Augustus' record on restoring temples), 119-44n. (effect of comparison between Augustus and Romulus), 583-616n. (Augustus' personal investment in the revitalisation of the cult of the Lares).

Turning to matters of the calendar, R. handles with an admirable sense of balance both (traditionally important) issues of Ovid's dating and (more recent) scholarly concerns with the status of Ovid's text as a continuous poem which offers playful readings across different calendar 'entries'. R.'s particular contribution to this growing area of scholarship concerns the sequence of entries following the deification of Romulus (2.475-512), a 'suspicious' reading of which might cast doubt on Romulus' rule, the uniqueness of his apotheosis, and the wisdom of those who believe in it (The Feast of Fools, esp. 513-32n., and the Feralia, esp. 533-70n.).

Through the diversity of Book 2, R. effectively locates and focuses on common threads, most notably the book's obsession with its own generic identity and the ways in which it oscillates between traditional notions of epic and elegy: the lyre-playing of Arion, the 'epic' failure of the Fabii, the Raven's ill-advised lofty endeavour, Hercules' in his mistress' dress, and the 'elegiac' stature of the captured Gabii all admit of complex metapoetic readings in this regard. To add to this generic thread, it would have been interesting to hear from R. his thoughts on the contribution made by the Callisto episode, especially in view of the fact that it is the (only) story in Book 2 to appear also in Ovid's own epic. The

works of Heinze and Hinds are curiously muted in the relevant notes (pp. 162-4), and it might have been worth asking whether the many similarities between each version of the story (duly remarked upon in individual notes) represent a bold claim to extending the boundaries of elegy here: this would certainly be pertinent in light of the placement of the Callisto episode straight after the panegyric to the Pater Patriae, in which Ovid had expressed anxiety at the burden placed upon elegy by his endeavour (2.123-6). Standing back, it might also have been worth assessing just how far Ovid is working strictly within a (Heinzian/Hindsian) epic/ elegiac dichotomy, in light of, for example, the bucolic overtones in the Raven story (as noted in 255n.) and the strong overtones of mime/ sexual comedy in Tarquin's assault of Lucretia.

In fact, the one area I do think would merit further exploration is the potential of the text for sexual innuendo, an area in which I think R. is too coy. The naked *inguen* of 2.346 requires some comment on the generic appropriateness of phallic exhibition in elegy, and I wonder if there is any metapoetic irony in his member becoming *durius* ('more epic')? Moreover, though an instance of sexual innuendo is noted in *vagina* (2.493-4), the entire episode of the assault on the open gate of Collatia (785-90) surely mirrors through innuendo the rape of Lucretia to follow: cf. esp. *ense* (784), *porta* (785), *init penetralia* (787).

These suggestions and observations speak to the richness of R.'s commentary and to the ideas they provoke. Furthermore, and something one does not necessarily expect of a commentary, this makes a good read from cover to cover: if one is not amused by some witty turns of phrase (e.g. *Fasti* as a 'chocolate-box of narratives' (p.8); 'it would not even make it to the foothills of Parnassus in terms of its generic geography' (p.229)), then some lively and unexpected links to modern ways of killing a chicken (p.132, n.15) and guides to understanding the behaviour of crows (p.121, n.7) are sure to do the trick. Overall, I can recommend R.'s commentary most highly as a work of masterly scholarship that will serve classicists richly.

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