

ROBIN WAHLSTEN BÖCKERMAN, *The Bavarian Commentary and Ovid: Clm 4610, the earliest documented commentary on the Metamorphoses*, Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2020, 398 pp., £33.95, ISBN 978-1-78374-576-0.¹

Böckerman's new study, edition and translation of the Latin commentary to the *Metamorphoses* transmitted in Munich, BSB, clm 4610 is a most welcome and very good addition to the growing literature on the medieval Ovid. The text of the commentary has been carefully transcribed and edited, the accompanying English translation opens up this somewhat abstruse Latin material to a wider audience, and the study which introduces the text and translation grounds the work fully in its intellectual milieu. The book represents a substantially revised version of Böckerman's doctoral dissertation defended at the University of Stockholm in 2016 (and also available on-line).

The commentary in clm 4610 was first introduced to the scholarly world in 1885 by Carl Meiser who presented the lemmata of the commentary but made little attempt to place the commentary *in situ*. Fortunately, since 1885 interest in commentaries has progressed, and scholars now plumb these texts for what they can tell us about the pedagogical techniques and interests of medieval scholars, as well as for what new light they shed on the reception of classical literature from the fall of Rome to 1600 (for a true measure of the importance of these commentary texts, one need only read the late Peter Dronke's published article on clm 4610, "*Metamorphoses: Allegory in Early Medieval Commentaries on Ovid and Apuleius*"). Nevertheless, the state of scholarship on commentary texts on canonical Latin authors is still in its infancy. For many commentaries, we lack critical editions and in-depth studies. The thirteen volumes of the *Catalogus translationum et commentariorum*, so ably edited by Greti Dinkova-Bruun, provide scholars with a preliminary overview of the development of commentary on select authors (the article on commentaries on the *Metamorphoses* is forthcoming in volume 12 of the series) and should spur future editions and commentaries.

The commentary in clm 4610 is of fundamental importance for our knowledge of the school tradition on the *Metamorphoses* for several reasons. First, it is the first truly medieval commentary on the *Metamorphoses*; secondly, it was written in Bavaria and thus may bear witness to the revival of learning in German monasteries of the late eleventh and twelfth century;

¹ Full disclosure: "I am personally acquainted with the author of the work under review and was listed in the acknowledgements section of his dissertation. The author also contributed to a recent Festschrift in my honor. My review is not influenced by these factors."

and thirdly, as Böckerman so ably demonstrates in his introduction, it can be linked to a number of Bavarian commentaries on the *Metamorphoses* all written roughly contemporaneously with clm 4610.

The book is divided into two broad sections: an introduction wherein Böckerman places the commentary of clm 4610 in its intellectual setting, describing quite thoroughly the types and function of the glosses, as well as comparing the commentary of clm 4610 to other Latin commentaries on the *Metamorphoses*; and the edition and translation of the commentary. The introductory material is comprehensive, and Böckerman is particularly good at assessing the other extant twelfth-century commentaries. It is worth pointing out that before Böckerman, these manuscripts had been discussed rather vaguely, with a tendency to gravitate to the introductory material (*accessus*). After Böckerman, we are able to group this “raw and undivided mass” into family groups, and to establish a semblance of order amongst the various strains. To his great credit, Böckerman has done his homework, and his intro sparkles with many hitherto unknown gems (my own favorite is the 8 folia booklet of a twelfth-century commentary on the *Metamorphoses* now housed in the Biblioteca Guarneriana at San Daniele). The other area where this edition deserves high praise is for its scrupulous reporting of sources. Böckerman does not just give the reader a reference, but he furnishes substantial portions of the source text. Perhaps the fact that the edition is on-line allowed the editor greater freedom.

Let us now turn to the edition and translation of the commentary itself. In preparation for this review, I read the Latin and English translation in its entirety and I checked the transcription of roughly half the Latin text against a microfilm of clm 4610. I can report that the transcription of the text is virtually flawless. Sources used by the commentator have been scrupulously tracked down. And the apparatus criticus at the bottom of each page helpfully records editorial interventions on the part of the editor. Anyone who has edited and/or translated a Latin commentary will appreciate the tremendous difficulties which the editor must confront. First, the hand of the scribe is often crabbed and highly abbreviated. The individual lemma may not be written out in full. The scribe may be prone to nod and make mistakes. And the editor must transfer the mise-en-page of the medieval manuscript into a twenty-first century page layout that will be comprehensible and meaningful for the modern reader. How successfully has Böckerman accomplished these *desiderata*? On the whole, I think quite well indeed. The modern page layout is clear and easy to navigate. Each lemma is given in caps with the commentary text in smaller letters, promoting ease of comprehension. The editor follows in the main modern conventions of punctuation (the comma was a little overworked for me, but this may be an individual preference). The editor, at least to my eye, seems to have adopted a relatively conservative approach to emendation (of which I heartily approve). As Böckerman

points out in his introduction, the commentary exists in a single manuscript written by a scribe prone to error in nearly 300 places. There are naturally a few places where I might have printed a different text, but these are really quibbles in what is a well-constructed text.

Böckerman has fearlessly produced an English translation for the entire Latin commentary. In a world of decreasing training in Latin, this is certainly a *desideratum*, but as the author of an English translation for the Vulgate Commentary on the *Metamorphoses*, I am fully in agreement with Böckerman's own lament in his introduction:

“To transfer the commentary into English is no easy task, since Latin and English, in general, offer very different possibilities for authors to express themselves; in the commentaries in particular the ability of the Latin language to be compact is sometimes taken to an extreme. Furthermore, the explanations in the commentary are composite in nature and often consist of several explanations linked together (sometimes in a less obvious way).” (p. 185)

His translation of the commentary is on the whole accurate and makes no claim to elegance of English style. I found very few places where I would challenge the accuracy of the translation. Sometimes the translation of the Latin is so literal that the reader with no Latin may have some initial bewilderment (as at gloss 1.32, *When the thus arranged*). Infrequently one may not grasp the import of a gloss in translation, as at 1.113 where the phrase ‘saturans homines’ is an etymology which attempts to explain the noun ‘Saturnus’. Here a note to the reader might have been helpful.

There are (as always) a few typos that we hope can be corrected in the on-line edition.

Böckerman's Bavarian Commentary is then a very well-produced addition to the scholarly literature on Ovidian reception. It is thorough, accurately transcribed, and equipped with an English translation. The introduction links the commentary to the many commentary texts produced in southern Germany in the twelfth century. Let us hope that this first study of an early commentary on the *Metamorphoses* will encourage other young scholars to follow in Böckerman's footsteps.

FRANK T. COULSON
The Ohio State University
coulson.1@osu.edu

