

K. SARA MYERS (ed.), *Ovid: Metamorphoses Book XIV*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 248, ISBN 9780521007931.

This slim volume covers a lot of ground, contains a wealth of detail, and will be an invaluable tool for readers interested in the *Metamorphoses* in general and its move towards treating Italian and Roman material in its later books in particular (a subject which, as Myers' preface notes, has received increased critical scrutiny in recent years, at least with reference to Ovid's reworking of the *Aeneid*). Myers, as the author of a well-received monograph on aetiology in the *Metamorphoses* (*Ovid's Causes: Cosmogony and Aetiology in the Metamorphoses*, Ann Arbor 1994) which treated at some length the Italian legends of book 14, is the ideal choice of author for a commentary on this portion of the *Met*.

The brief but informative introduction treats (1) book 14 and its place in the *Metamorphoses*, under a number of different headings (one of the most helpful of these sub-sections treats the way in which Italian and Roman myths are introduced to the epic - something which has been overlooked in previous discussions, as Myers' preface notes); (2) Ovid's 'annexation' of the *Aeneid* in books 13 to 14; (3) Virgil's *Aeneid* in *Met.* 13.623-14.573 (a handy table of the Virgilian episodes in Ovid's version); (4) Ovid's style (where the comments on the pervasive Grecising features in this strongly Italian portion of the epic are particularly useful in suggesting how *Met.* 14 fits into the *carmen perpetuum* as a whole). There is a separate, short section on the text and *apparatus*, which Myers prints selectively with the Latin text in the next section. Then follows the Commentary itself (by far the largest component of this book), to which are appended a Bibliography and Indices ('Subjects'; 'Latin words'; 'Passages discussed').

In the Commentary, Myers' notes provide introductions to sections (perhaps somewhat artificially breaking up the *carmen perpetuum* into discrete 'chunks') as well as detailed and knowledgeable comment on selected lemmata. Myers' notes focus on a variety of phenomena flagged up as being of particular interest in the Introduction: there are exemplary and frequent comments on such aspects of the book as programmatic poetics, Ovid's engagement with previous poetry (and the *Aeneid* in particular), the movement and tempo of Ovid's narrative, aetiologies, etymological play, and other stylistic elements. Evidence of Myers' sensitivity as a reader can be found throughout: for example, there is good discussion of the effects of conjectures and alternative readings (for example, in her note *ad* 32), and the note discussing Richard Tarrant's theory that 651 is an interpolation based on Prop. 4.2.27 plausibly suggests that the 'lack of logic and Vertumnus' implied desperation may instead be a touch of Ovidian humour'. Rarely did I look in vain for comments; a few examples must suffice here. In her note on 20-1, Myers notes that the polyptoton *carmine, carmen* provides emphasis, giving

references to secondary reading on Ovidian repetition with variation; more revealing would have been some comment on the incantatory aspect, in light of the meaning of *carmen* as ‘magical song’ here. Again, I would have welcomed comment on the elegiac connotations of *mollit sermone laborem* (120-1), given that the discourse which softens the epic task of ascending from the Underworld here is erotic (and hence *mollis*) in nature.

The necessarily limited scope of Cambridge’s ‘green and yellow’ commentary series means that information is throughout concisely conveyed, yet rarely at the expense of full argumentation or at the risk of confusing the reader. Indeed, Myers’ commentary keeps its readers’ interests in mind to an admirable degree. Two elements which should be particularly valuable to the advanced undergraduate readers envisaged as part of the audience for volumes in this series are the identification of grammatical forms and the frequent glosses on the literary terms which Myers employs (although on occasion she avoids technical terminology where it could usefully be employed to expand such readers’ critical vocabulary); help of such a nature well equips undergraduate readers to tackle this text independently. One aspect of this slim volume which this reviewer found unhelpful, however, is the minute typeface employed in the Introduction and Commentary proper. The slightly larger typeface used for the text is much less of a strain on the eye. But this minor quibble should not detract from the considerable achievement of this volume, which will be a useful and thought-provoking resource for scholars and undergraduates alike.

I detected only a very few minor typos and factual errors, the most serious of which was a reference (in her note *ad* 823) to the singular form of *Quirites* at *Am.* 3.14.19 (instead of 3.14.9).

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