The Bavarian Commentary and Ovid

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The Bavarian Commentary and Ovid is the first complete critical edition and translation of the earliest preserved commentary on Ovid's Metamorphoses. Today, Ovid's famous work is one of the touchstones of ancient literature, but we have only a handful of scraps and quotations to show how the earliest medieval readers received and discussed the poems—until the Munich Bayerische Staatsbibliothek clm 4610. This commentary, which dates from around the year 1100, is the first systematic study of the Metamorphoses, founding a tradition of scholarly study that extends to the present day. Despite its significance, this medieval commentary has never before been published or analysed as a whole. Böckerman's groundbreaking work includes a critical edition of the entire manuscript, together with a lucid English translation and a rigorous and stimulating introduction, which sets the work in its historical, geographical and linguistic contexts with precision and clarity while offering a rigorous analysis of its form and function.

The Bavarian Commentary and Ovid is essential reading for academics concerned with the reception of Ovid or that of other ancient authors. It will also be of great interest for Classical scholars, those investigating medieval commentaries and media history, and for anyone intrigued to know more about how the work of Ovid has echoed through history.

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General Conclusions: Clm 4610, Contexts and Connections

This book is first and foremost an edition of a text. As such the first part has aspired to open up the text to the reader by providing it with a context and by analysing its content. The four chapters in the first part of this book have served the function of introducing the commentary in the manuscript clm 4610, and the reception of Ovid leading up to the twelfth century.

Although the commentary is a copy, it has not been possible to find any predecessors or near relatives to it in the marginal glosses transmitted in the early Metamorphoses manuscripts or other near-contemporary commentaries, as demonstrated in Chapter 5. This chapter also briefly presented the remaining known twelfth-century commentaries on the Metamorphoses and explored some of the connections between the different commentaries. Among these connections are what I call ‘common places’, which tell us about the shared material all these commentaries built their texts on, and so-called ‘focal points’. The latter are the most interesting since it allows us to isolate certain passages in the Metamorphoses that attracted attention during the period in question.

The edited text provides the tool for a detailed analysis of the commentary. In Chapter 4 I described its function by sorting its explanations into categories, and by analysing its sources and relationship to the Metamorphoses. The commentary makes use of explicit sources and also suggests a number of implicit sources, of which I have traced a number. The function of the commentary proves to be quite heavily oriented towards explaining the mythological background of the Metamorphoses, while at the same time providing help with the grammatical understanding of the text, which indicates a text used for teaching. Chapter 4 explored the commentary as a technology by discussing different ways of thinking and talking about a text of this type, but also by dissecting the commentary, and by so doing providing the reader with a heuristic aid to enter into the text.

In Chapter 3, the commentary was situated in the context of a Bavarian monastic or cathedral school. However, the question of what role exactly the commentary played in the schoolroom, also explored in Chapter 3, still remains open. Although attempts at contextualising an anonymous commentary composed at an unknown time at an unknown place may lead to more questions than answers, this chapter,
hopefully, provided the reader with some clues to what questions to ask.

The detailed analysis of the commentary also allows us to better understand the place of clm 4610 in the general resurgence of Ovid at the time. Besides the increased copying of the *Metamorphoses* at the end of the eleventh century, a marked interest in Ovid in contemporary literature has been observed, which I explored in Chapter 2. This literature was usually also conceived in the monasteries or cathedral schools. Another important factor of this period, treated in Chapter 2, is the renewed interest in neoplatonic cosmology and transformations of different kind. The *Metamorphoses* and the commentary treat both of these, especially in the *accessus*, which is almost completely dedicated to discussing philosophy. The commentary does not, however, treat neoplatonic material to an extent where it can be considered a philosophical commentary, although it still displays an interest in engaging with the pagan mythological world in a neoplatonic framework, which is also something that can be observed in the poetry of the time.

There remains much work to be done both where the reception of Ovid is concerned and where the more general study of medieval commentary culture is concerned. A single text will never be able to answer all the questions raised in these endeavours, but it is my hope that this text will provide a new piece of the puzzle.