



PROJECT MUSE®

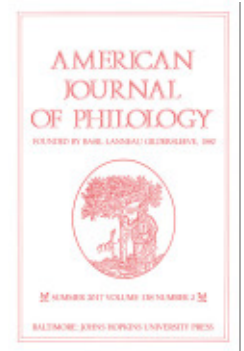
---

*Ovid and Hesiod: The Metamorphosis of the Catalogue of Women*  
by Ioannis Ziogas (review)

Dan Curley

American Journal of Philology, Volume 138, Number 2 (Whole Number 550),  
Summer 2017, pp. 382-384 (Review)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/ajp.2017.0018>



➔ *For additional information about this article*  
<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/667004>

IOANNIS ZIOGAS. *Ovid and Hesiod: The Metamorphosis of the Catalogue of Women*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. xii + 247 pp. Cloth, \$99.00.

These days a book on Ovid, whose recuperation as an author of the first rank has long since been accomplished, ought to have something new to offer. *Ovid and Hesiod* is such a book, not least because it defamiliarizes the familiar Roman poet. Ziogas has the daunting task of tracking Ovid's debt to the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*—not only its succession of stories about women taken by gods, but also its program of destabilizing the martial epic of Homer. Ziogas succeeds admirably, bringing to bear attentive readings of the *Catalogue's* fragments as well as (primarily) the *Metamorphoses*, and broadening the Hesiodic-Ovidian dialogue to include other authors as needed, among them Homer, Callimachus, Apollonius, and Vergil.

Ziogas' introduction lays the critical foundation for the chapters that follow, the pillars of which are essentially (by this reviewer's count) four. (A) Close attention to Hesiod, both the texts and the tradition, the latter encompassing the reception of Hesiod from Homer to the Hellenistic period and beyond. (B) Sustained engagement with Hesiod on Ovid's part across his career. (C) Ovid's engagement with Hesiod as an intersection of the textual (words, subject matter, themes) and the generic. (D) Hesiodic poetry as a gendered *ēhoie*-strain of epic—one concerned with "female excellence and renown" rather than "glorious deeds of men" (13)—which serves as a master or "host" genre (14) for the spacious and often erotic Ovidian epic that is the *Metamorphoses*. Ziogas shows these pillars functioning in various Ovidian passages, from the *Heroides* to the *Amores* to the *Metamorphoses*, and aptly suggests "how. . . interrelated texts influence each other" (2). Particularly striking is how the legendary contest between Homer and Hesiod has echoes in a similar rivalry between Vergil and Ovid (14–15).

At times the introduction feels a little piecemeal, a mild critique that

applies to the book as a whole. For example, Ziogas dutifully gives *Ēhoiai* as the alternate title for the *Catalogue of Women* (1), but gets around to etymologizing the title five pages later (ἦ' οἴη, 6, and even then without much context for the important but formulaic nature of these words). Ziogas discusses the Homeric/Hesiodic *Certamen* by way of a Dio Chrysostom anecdote about Alexander and Philip (11–12), but re-introduces the *Certamen* a little further on, almost as if it hadn't been mentioned before, when discussing Vergil and Ovid (14–15). The alignment of intertextuality with questions of genre might have been handled more explicitly, as opposed to initially being relegated to a footnote (n. 49, p. 14). Admittedly, this is quibbling, and Ziogas' ideal readers should already be well acquainted with Hesiodic reception and with strategies of reading ancient authors. On the whole, Ziogas demonstrates deep awareness of previous Hesiodic and Ovidian scholarship and sets up the rest of the book with intriguing case studies (some of which are expanded in later chapters).

Chapter 1 makes various connections between the *Catalogue* and *Heroides* 16 (and 17). These include Paris' phrase *Venus aurea* (16.35), which not only translates the Hesiodic formula χρυσῆς Ἀφροδίτης (fr. 196.5 M-W), but also recalls how Hesiod frames the wooing of Helen as a contest of wealth among her suitors; and Paris' genealogy, which is problematic if Homer is taken as Ovid's model, but patently unproblematic if Ovid has followed the Hesiodic stemma. Ziogas' argumentation here is nuanced but convincing and avails itself of established intertextual theories (such as Ross' Alexandrian footnote) that Ovidians have come to expect from their poet—nowhere more so than in the suggestion that Paris and Helen themselves are among Hesiod's readership and cite his text to further their rhetorical claims (38–43 *passim*).

Chapter 2, by far the longest in the book, lays out a case for the *Theogony*, *Works and Days*, and especially the *Catalogue* as thoroughgoing intertexts for the *Metamorphoses*—most obviously in book 1, which contains the cosmogony, the ages of mankind, and the attempted rape of Daphne (an *ēhoie*-type story). But Ziogas elucidates Hesiodic detail and patterning also in books 2–6; for instance, in the Perseus narrative (book 4), and in the song of Calliope (book 5). Most compelling is Ziogas' discussion of Arachne (book 6), whose weaving contest with Minerva pits (along the lines of Barbara Pavlock's work) Arachne-Ovid-Hesiod against Minerva-Vergil-Homer in a *certamen* of poetics. A “miniature of the *Metamorphoses*” (100), Arachne's tapestry enacts a Hesiodic, *ēhoie*-program that recalls Ovid's own program on ample display in earlier books; and, just as Hesiod defeated Homer, Arachne trumps Minerva, who is outraged because the girl's “flawless art is a denunciation of an oppressive regime” (97). Thus Ziogas indicates political and personal consequences for Ovid's Hesiodic epic in the Augustan era: “Spinning a Hesiodic world from Chaos to divine loves can be extremely dangerous if the voice of the Muses who praise the Olympians is replaced by the more subversive perspective of an independent artist” (109).

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 focus, respectively, on the narratives of Coronis and Mestra, Atalanta, and Caenis/Caeneus in the *Metamorphoses*. Chapter 3

recuperates the two narratives, whose indebtedness to Callimachus' *Hecale* has previously received much attention, back to their Hesiodic source. Chapter 4, which does justice to Atalanta's narrative as part of the song of Orpheus, also strengthens the parallels Ziogas has already drawn between Homer-Vergil and Hesiod-Ovid: "Ovid is engaged in a poetic competition with Vergil, hoping that in the end he, like Hesiod, will be crowned with the victory laurel" (179). Chapter 5 continues in a narratological vein by revealing Nestor as a highly manipulative narrator in view of the *Catalogue*, which—to judge from the fragmentary evidence and quite unlike, e.g., what Nestor says in *Iliad* book 1—preserves the story of Caenis' transformation from a woman into a man, Caeneus. At stake here is not merely how Ovid's Nestor "turns a footnote into the main text" and vice versa (218, though this conclusion would have been satisfying in itself), but also "the incorporation of *ēhoie*-poetry into Ovid's version of the Trojan War" (180)—that is, the most ostensibly Homeric section of the *Metamorphoses* (books 12–13).

Some brief concluding remarks round out the volume. At the end of these, Ziogas returns to a theme sounded in the introduction, namely how hearing the *ēhoie*-strains of Ovid's poetry affords a new appreciation of Hesiod: "Hesiod's deconstruction of traditional epic diction, his metamorphic wit, and his subversion of the male-oriented agenda of heroic epic are some of the *Catalogue's* features which must have appealed to Ovid's genius" (221).

Overall, Ziogas abundantly reveals to Ovid's readers, or perhaps recalls for them, the fundamental importance of the *Catalogue* in the *Metamorphoses* and elsewhere. This revelation does not come without work on the reader's part, as the threads of Ziogas' arguments can sometimes be challenging to gather, such that the book overall is best suited to professional classicists at the graduate level and beyond. Granted, some of the challenge stems from the plain fact that the *Catalogue* is fragmentary. On the one hand, its precise details are less well known to the scholarly community than to specialists. On the other hand, its remains require a good deal of contextualization in order to be productively deployed and appreciated, and sometimes this contextualization unavoidably bogs down Ziogas' argumentation. Nevertheless, *Ovid and Hesiod* is a sorely needed study in a field dominated by Homeric and Callimachean intertexts, and it sets the bar high for future studies of these kindred, Protean poets.

DAN CURLEY

SKIDMORE COLLEGE  
e-mail: dcurley@skidmore.edu