

STRUCTURE AND INTENTION IN THE METAMORPHOSES

Ovid's great poem has held its place in the European artistic and literary tradition primarily as a collection of superbly told individual stories, in which successive generations have found inspiration and pleasure. But the poet himself clearly thought of it as something more than a series of detached narratives. In fact he describes it (1. 4) as *perpetuum carmen*. The object of the present essay is to inquire into the nature of this *perpetuitas* and to suggest some of the implications that it has both for the poem as a whole and for the appreciation of its individual parts.

The phrase *perpetuum carmen* has interesting ideological connotations. The mutilated first fragment of Callimachus' *Aitia* clearly formed a poetic manifesto. The author proclaims his antipathy to the fashion of writing *ἐν αἰσμα διηγεκές* in which the deeds of kings and heroes were extolled *ἐν πολλαῖς χιλιάσιν. βροντᾶν*, he declares, *οὐκ ἔμὸν ἀλλὰ Διός*, so he rejects *μέγα φοβέουσιν ἀοιδήν* in favour of the delicate cicada's *λιγὺν ἤχον* which is heard at its best in *ἔπος τυτθόν* and other poetic genres that are *κατὰ λεπτόν*.¹ Three separate but related targets are singled out for attack: long continuous poems,² epic subjects, and the grand style.

Ovid like most of the Latin 'Alexandrians' belonged to the Callimachean allegiance. So of course did the poet of *Bucolics* and *Georgics*. But in *Aeneid*, though much of the detail would have had the master's approval, Virgil had made a fundamental break with the canons of the movement. How far does Ovid's *perpetuum carmen* represent a similar apostasy?

Metamorphoses is certainly a long poem. But the subject, which seems to have been popular with the Alexandrians,³ cannot be described as epic; it does not portray the heroism of *reges et proelia* or expound heroic ideals of human life and conduct, nor does it develop its theme on the grand scale in the manner of didactic *ἔπος*. The point hardly needs argument if one comes to the poem from a reading of *Aeneid* or *de Rerum Natura*. The theme of the poem *in noua . . . mutatas . . . formas corpora*, briefly announced in the opening lines, is illustrated by a series of *exempla* which does not possess even the unity of a common hero

¹ *Aitia* i, fr. 1 (Pfeiffer). The militant tone of the passage indicates that an orthodoxy is being challenged, and this is confirmed by the evidence from papyri of a flourishing epic tradition throughout the Hellenistic period. Apollonius' *Argonautica*, with its reduced scale and careful diminution of much of the essentially heroic tone of the saga, especially the stature of Jason himself, certainly seems to have been influenced by Callimachean doctrine; but it is difficult to assess its typicality for the period as a whole.

² It is still impossible to determine how continuous the different parts of *Aitia* in fact were; but there can be little doubt that, taken as a whole, it was not *ἐν αἰσμα*

διηγεκές but a loosely structured collection in the tradition of Hesiod's *Eoiai* and (later) Ovid's *Fasti*.

³ Cf. the *Ῥομιογονία* of Boio (if this is the correct spelling of his name), which was translated by Ovid's friend Aemilius Macer (*Tr.* 4. 10. 43-4), Nicander's five books of *Ἐπεροούμενα*, the prose collection of *Καταστερισμοί* by Eratosthenes and Parthenius' *Μεταμορφώσεις* (probably, like the extant *Ἐρωτικά Παθήματα*, a mixture of prose and verse), Calvus's *Io*, and Cinna's *Smyrna*. Our knowledge of these depends on *testimonia* and fragments. Extant examples include Moschus' *Europa* and Silenus' song in Virgil's sixth *Eclogue*.

and continuity of plot exhibited in episodic epic like the narrative of *Odyssey* 5 to 12.

The *Cosmogony* in Book 1 and the *Sermon of Pythagoras* in Book 15 have sometimes been interpreted as providing a serious philosophical setting of *res prudentes* for the intervening *fabulae*.¹ But close examination reveals that neither passage has more than a superficial relevance to the mythological theme.

The transition from primeval chaos² through the four elements to the *mundus* in all its ordered variety is of course in the broadest sense of the term the first metamorphosis. However, in the course of it every living species is assigned precisely and permanently to its appropriate habitat, lest *regio foret ulla suis animalibus orba* (1. 72). The rich diversity of the *mundus*, governed by natural law, in fact constitutes the prevailing order of existence against which the fabulous transformations are to be seen as occasional miraculous intrusions, violating the natural boundaries of the *regiones*. Cosmogony and Metamorphosis are thus essentially antithetical processes; the resemblances between them misleading.

The *Sermon of Pythagoras* begins with an attack on the eating of flesh as a mark of man's fall from Golden Age innocence (15. 83 ff.).³ The detail recalls the *Saturnia regna* following the *Cosmogony* (1. 89 ff., esp. 101-6). A denunciation of the fear of death in Ovid's best Lucretian manner culminates in the unexceptionable doctrine of universal flux: *nihil est toto quod perstet in orbe: cuncta fluunt* (178-9). This would have been an excellent point at which to make the connection between *res prudentes* and *fabulae*,⁴ had Ovid chosen some other philosopher than Pythagoras. As it is, he is saddled with a highly idiosyncratic version of the doctrine of flux, metempsychosis, which does not accord at all well with his fabulous transformations. Many of the latter are from human to non-sentient modes of existence—to rocks, rivers, plants, etc., and although vegetative life at least was, notoriously, included in the cycle of rebirth by some philosophers of the school, Ovid's Pythagoras explicitly restricts metempsychosis to human and animal species (167-8). Moreover, metempsychosis is a condition of all life (158 ff.), a continuous process through which all of us

¹ Cf. D. A. Slater, *Ovid in the Metamorphoses* (Cambridge, 1912), and the essays by L. Alfonsi and R. Crahay-J. Hubaux in *Ovidiana* (ed. N. I. Herescu, Paris, 1958).

² The definition *rudis indigestaque moles* is justified neither by the etymology of *χάος* nor by its use in Hesiod or other early Greek writers. It is specifically Stoic and can be traced back to Zeno; see H. Fränkel, *Ovid, A Poet between Two Worlds* (Berkeley, 1945), 208, and for the Stoic rejection of *Void* see Coleman, *Mnemos*. 13 (1960), 34-8.

³ Great stress is placed throughout the sermon on this doctrinaire vegetarianism, which 'seems to have been a point of special ridicule in Roman literature'. See Charles Segal, 'Myth and Philosophy in the Metamorphoses', *AJP* xc (1969), 257 ff., esp. 278-89, for a convincing refutation of the lofty philosophical interpretation of Pythagoras' sermon.

⁴ This is not the only place in the sermon

where Ovid could have made the link, if he had really been concerned to do so. For he often gives the changes in his stories a symbolic character; *formas in noua corpora mutatas*—the essential form abides, the material embodiment is altered (the language here is quite Aristotelian). Clytie pines in jealousy at Phoebus' love for Leucothoe and becomes the heliotrope (4. 169-270), the daughters of Minyas who stay at home in the service of Pallas during the festival of Bacchus are changed into bats (4. 1-42, 389-415), and so forth. This could easily have been related to the version of metempsychosis that assigned destinations according to men's behaviour in this life. But *quoslibet occupat artus spiritus* (15. 166) from the mouth of Pythagoras deliberately rejects any such connection, and only the superficial resemblance to the theme of the poem, *animam sic semper eandem / esse sed in uarias doceo migrare figuras* (15. 171-2), is in fact taken up.

must pass. By contrast metamorphosis is a fate reserved for particular persons in particular circumstances; its significance resides precisely in the fact that it is not something in which we all share, and once complete, its effects are permanent and immutable. Niobe has been changed to marble (6. 301–12), Hecuba to a dog (13. 565–75), and that is their lot for the rest of time.

Ovid was of course no philosopher, but if he had wished to give his fables a more profound philosophical basis, he could surely have done better than this. But he did not wish to do so.¹ The superficial relevance of traditional Cosmogony and Pythagoreanism to his theme was enough to justify their inclusion, and the elaboration of these set pieces provided the poet with an opportunity to display his skill in the didactic manner and to bring to his *perpetuum carmen* a variety that reflects at the stylistic level the very theme of metamorphosis itself.

A similar intention may be discerned in the essays in the grand narrative manner that are scattered through the work. Some of these are developed on a scale and tone that is wholly disproportionate to the subsequent transformations which justify their inclusion. Thus *Phaethon* (1. 747 ff.) leading to *Heliades* and *Cycnus* (2. 329 ff.), *Althaea and Meleager* (8. 445 ff.) leading to *Meleagrides* (526 ff.), *Lapiths and Centaurs* (12. 210 ff.) and *The Judgement of the Arms* (12. 620 ff.), which we shall consider more closely later. In any case not all the longer episodes are epic in tone (one thinks, for instance, of *Narcissus and Echo* in Book 3, *Ceyx and Alcyone* in Book 11), and those that are cannot be detached from their contexts to carry a burden of high seriousness over into the rest of the work.

Turning to the structure of the poem, we can observe an obvious vehicle of *perpetuitas* in the chronological progression—*ab origine mundi ad mea . . . tempora* (1. 3–4). This is straightforward enough in the opening and closing sections of the work.² From the *Cosmogony* to the end of *Callisto* (2. 530) the linear sequence is interrupted only once, by *Syrinx* (1. 682–712). But with *Coronis* (2. 531–632), which vaguely predates *Callisto*, the chronology becomes blurred and is re-established clearly only with *Europa* (2. 833–3. 2) and the following *Family of Cadmus* group, which brings us right into the Heroic Age. An inevitable problem was of course posed by the need to incorporate temporally parallel sequences of stories belonging to different geographical locations into a linear narrative line. However, *Perseus* (4. 610 ff.), *Tereus* (6. 433 ff.), *Medea* (7. 1 ff.), and *Hercules* (9. 1 ff.) provide familiar landmarks along the way to the *Troy–Rome* sequence (12. 1 ff.), which is prepared by the building of Troy and the wedding of Peleus and Thetis (11. 194–265). But while the internal chronology of particular groups of stories is usually clear, the placing of these groups relative to one another or of individual stories in one group relative to those in others is often difficult to establish.³ Thus Atlas, carrying the heavens on his shoulders in

¹ As E. de St. Denis noted, 'Le génie d'Ovide d'après le livre XV des *Métamorphoses*', *RÉL* xviii [1940], 111. Ovid's own rationalistic attitude to metamorphosis and the figments of the mythological tradition generally is clearly revealed in *Tr.* 2. 64, 4. 7. 11–20. In treating these *fabulae* in his earlier work the poet is inviting us to share his own suspension of disbelief and his delight in the fantasies of the creative imagination.

² As Fränkel noted, *op. cit.*, p. 75. However, even here the linear sequences are interrupted by flash-backs.

³ Many of the problems of chronological reconciliation belong to the tradition itself, for instance how to make Theseus and Hercules contemporary and yet preserve their associations with so many different stories. Ovid's attempts to cope with these difficulties, especially in Books 5 and 6, are

2. 296, does not receive the burden in fact until 4. 632; Hercules, who has undergone his fiery apotheosis in 9. 229 ff., reappears to sack Troy in 11. 213 ff. Even where the progression is clear, as it is in the *Troy-Rome* sequence, the line is deliberately broken by flash-backs, like the *Scylla-Galatea* group in 13. 730-14. 74 and the *Vertumnus-Iphis* group in 14. 623-771. This is a convenient device for introducing stories that have no definite place in time;¹ but it is still worth while to inquire why Ovid has chosen to put them where they are in his poem.

Two criteria immediately suggest themselves. First the grouping together of stories relating to one person or family or to a particular locality or region.² Of the former some clearly fit without difficulty into an ordered chronological sequence—*Medea* (7. 1-403) for instance—but others, like the Cadmean group (3. 3-4. 603), do not. In the geographically ordered groups the chronology is usually disturbed, as in the Sicilian group (5. 319-641) and the Anatolian one (6. 1-411), where the continuity from *Niobe* to *Pelops* is interrupted by *The Lycian Peasants* and *Marsyas*.

The second criterion becomes apparent as soon as we look closely at the insets and digressions that disrupt the chronological line. For these usually contain stories that have some special association with those of the immediately surrounding context, providing points of similarity or contrast in mood, emotional tone, or narrative pattern.³

The tale-within-a-tale, a narrative device as old as Homer, was developed by the Callimacheans as one form of the short narrative poem or 'epyllion', as it has come to be called in modern times.⁴

There is a famous instance of the tale-within-a-tale in the very first Book. Io, the daughter of the Argolid river-god Inachus, has been raped by Jupiter (1. 600). Juno, suspicious from past experience at the sight of the splendid cow into which the wretched girl has been hastily transformed, asks for the animal as a gift. Jove's dilemma provides an opportunity for a witty reminder of the incestuous relationship between the royal couple (616-21) and some irreverent

well discussed by P. Grimal, 'La chronologie légendaire dans les *Métamorphoses* d'Ovide', in Herescu's *Ovidiana*, 245-57.

¹ A characteristic of many of the stories in the collection, as L. P. Wilkinson observed, *Ovid Recalled* (Cambridge, 1956), 147.

² Geographical groups were apparently employed by Nicander in his *Ἐρεποιοῦμενα*, though like the other pre-Ovidian poems on the subjects (see p. 461 n. 3) it seems to have been a catalogue work in the manner of Hesiod.

³ Grouping by thematic association has been considered in a general way, e.g. by M. M. Crump, *The Epyllion from Theocritus to Ovid* (Oxford, 1931), 195-242, Wilkinson, op. cit., 148, and Brooks Otis, *Ovid as an Epic Poet* (Cambridge, 1966), 81-90, to establish large structural divisions in the work. Thus Wilkinson: (a) 1. 1-451 Prologue and Cosmogony, (b) 1. 452-6. 420 The Gods, (c) 6. 421-11. 193 Heroes and Heroines, (d) 11. 194-15. 870 Historical

Personages. Otis: (a) 1-2 The Divine Comedy, (b) 3. 1-6. 400 The Avenging Gods, (c) 6. 401-11. 795 The Pathos of Love, (d) 12-15 Troy and Rome. The objections to this mode of analysis are twofold. First that the sections themselves do not form self-evident and compelling structural units; the disagreements as to where the divisions fall is in itself significant. Secondly, many of the individual stories in any given one of these sections could be more appropriately placed under the heading of one of the others.

⁴ An instance occurs in Callimachus' fifth Hymn with *Artemis and Actaeon* inset within *Pallas and Teiresias*. Crump, op. cit., recognized the importance of the epyllion for the composition of *Metamorphoses*, but her discussion is marred by a failure to appreciate that it is this particular form of epyllion, as further exemplified in Moschus' *Europa* or Catullus 64, and not the single-tale form represented by Theocritus, *Id.* 13, that provided the effective structural unit in a *perpetuum carmen* of this kind.

amusement at the unfaithful husband's plight.¹ The clinical precision with which Ovid depicts Io's new condition (632–41), as all too often in the poem, completely upsets the delicate balance of humour and pathos that the situation might have produced.

Juno entrusts her prize to the monster Argus and the inset tale begins. Mercury is sent by Jove to overpower the guard and at his own request (687–8) tells him a story—an inset to the inset—which has the effect of sending him to sleep. The monster is killed and his hundred eyes are taken up by Juno to adorn the tail of her favourite bird. She then sets about punishing Io,² who is at last released by Jove and reverts to her original shape—a restoration that is rare for mortals in the poem.³

Mercury's tale is neither as soporific⁴ as its narrative role requires nor is it incomplete, although we are told that Argus dozed off before the god had finished. Syrinx, an Arcadian nymph, is the very replica both in appearance and character (694–8) of the goddess Diana to whom she is devoted. She escapes the unwanted attentions of the local god Pan by the aid of her sisters the Naiads, and is changed into the marsh-reed, which the god then fashions into the pastoral pipes.

The inset technique of the whole group (583–746) enables a dramatic change of tempo towards the end, with the completion of all three tales following swiftly upon one another in the space of forty lines. Moreover, as in earlier examples of this form of epyllion, there is a close thematic relation between the outer and inner tales (*Argus* which is short, covering less than sixty lines, serves as a purely narrative link between the two). Jove is successful, Pan is not, Io's change into an animal is temporary, Syrinx's change into a plant is permanent; Io's change is a torment to her, Syrinx's a release. The pattern is thus organic, enabling the poet to point up those aspects of the two stories that he wishes us to regard as significant.⁵

The simple inset pattern recurs throughout the poem,⁶ always with a thematic association of similarity or contrast. In itself it would in fact work against the *perpetuitas carminis* by marking off an internally close-knit unit. Hence Ovid takes great care to establish links from within the pattern to what precedes and follows it. Thus *Daphne*, the tale of Apollo's first love, which precedes the

¹ Wilkinson's admirable discussion of Ovid's gods (op. cit. 190–203) ought to have effectively put paid to the view, held by Heinze and others, that the poet was 'clearly striving to sacrifice as little as possible of the divine sublimity'.

² Strangely there is no mention of the traditional gadfly—*tabanus* or *asilus*. Io is pursued by an *Erinyes* and tortured by *stimulus in pectore caecos*. H. Fränkel, op. cit., p. 211, plausibly suggests an echo here of *Heroides* 14. 85–109, where Io's sufferings are similarly psychological. Her wanderings enable Ovid to account for the Egyptian Isis; he seldom misses the chance to gather in incidental metamorphoses!

³ Tiresias in Book 3 is another instance.

⁴ The instances of verbal repetition from the preceding tale of *Apollo and Daphne* noted by Fränkel, op. cit., p. 85, are surely too trivial

and infrequent to create a sense of wearisome monotony capable of inducing slumber in any reader attentive enough to notice them.

⁵ It is instructive in this respect to compare *Io* here and *Europa* in 2. 833 ff. with the two stories as told by Moschus, where the association of the two in a single narrative poem brings out quite different aspects of both. A similar comparison can be made between *Athena and Teiresias*, with the inset *Artemis and Actaeon*, in Callimachus' fifth *Hymn* and the more dissociated versions of the two tales here in 3. 138–252, 316–38, though the comparison is made less effective by the fact that Ovid adopts a different variant of the former.

⁶ The next instance is *Apollo and Coronis* (2. 531–632) enclosing *Neptune and Corone* (547–95).

epyllion (1. 452–567) is closely related in theme to *Syrinx*. In both stories a god of pastoral life and music pursues a chaste nymph. Both are set in traditional *loci amoeni*, Tempe and Arcadia. In both the god is thwarted and the transformation, answering the girl's prayer, produces a plant that is perennially associated with the pastoral music inspired by the god.¹ There is thus a pattern,

A (*Daphne*) — B (*Io*) — C (*Argus*) — D (*Syrinx*) — C — B,

in which D, the central panel of the inset-group, is closely linked thematically to A outside it. The narrative link between A and B is, as often, very tenuous: Inachus' absence from the crowd of river-gods who call on Daphne's father *nescia gratentur consolenturne parentem* (578).² For the narrative joins are less important structurally than the thematic relationships between individual tales. Again the inset group is tenuously joined to the following *Phaethon* by the fact that Io's son Epaphus was, at least for the purpose of the poem, a companion of Phaethon (748–51), but a strong thematic link across the inset is provided by the prominence of Apollo.

Far more complex elaborations of the inset technique occur now and again. *Orpheus* (10. 1–11. 66) provides a good illustration.³ That Ovid intended the whole of this section to be seen as a single organic unit is suggested by his careful separation of the *pathos* of Orpheus from his subsequent death and the insertion between them of a series of stories forming the singer's grief-stricken recital.

The tone of the introductory narrative is, as Otis has pointed out, far removed from the *pathos* of the fourth *Georgic*. It is set by Orpheus' explanation to Pluto and Proserpina (20–2) that he has not come on a Cook's Tour of the Underworld. He is overcome by Love (26), and the thought prompts him to recall to the royal couple the circumstances of *their* first meeting (28–9).⁴ Passing reference is made (64 ff.) to the petrifications of a former anonymous intruder into Hades and of Olenus, who had prayed to share the fate of his wife Lethaea,⁵ both in different ways relevant to Orpheus' present plight.

¹ The connection between the bay and poetry is admittedly alluded to very briefly (559), while its associations with Roman triumphs and Augustus are elaborated. At first sight this seems an intrusive piece of flattery to the emperor, a 'bow to Augustan convention'. Yet can Ovid really have intended to honour Augustus—as distinct from seeming to honour him!—by thus introducing him into the context of a fanciful tale of metamorphosis and a god's frustrated amours, especially when that god is none other than the chosen imperial patron?

² Similarly tenuous narrative links recur throughout the poem, e.g. 6. 412–23, which links the Anatolian group, beginning with *Arachne* (6. 1–145) and concluding with *Pelops* (401–11), to *Tereus*, *Progne*, and *Philomela* (433–721). At 15. 622, as L. P. Wilkinson has pointed out to me, there is in fact no narrative link at all. However a thematic link is established between *Aesculapius*, which begins here, and *Hippolytus*, the inset (497–546) to *Egeria* (488–550), by the fact

that both are divine migrations to Italy. This would have justified placing it immediately after *Egeria*; but Ovid clearly thought the juxtaposition of *Aesculapius aduena* and Caesar, *in urbe sua deus* (745–6), more important at this stage of the Roman sequence.

³ What follows in pp. 466–9 is a more detailed discussion along the lines briefly sketched in *CR* n.s. xvii (1967), 48.

⁴ The *fama . . . ueteris . . . rapinae* was told at 5. 339 ff. Cross-references of this kind, which are common enough in the poem—the *Heliades* in 10. 91 and 2. 329–66 is another—also contribute to its *perpetuitas*.

⁵ The vast wealth of the traditional metamorphosis literature is frequently indicated by incidental references of this kind that are not elaborated in the poem. Elsewhere in Book 10 we find allusions to *Attis* (104–5), *Icarus* and *Erigone* (450–1), and *Proserpina's* love for *Menthe* (728–30); and no account is given of how the *Cerastae* acquired their horns (223–3).

After the second loss of Eurydice the Thracian poet seeks consolation in pederasty and music. The catalogue of trees charmed by his song includes the Heliades (poplars), Attis (pine), and the Cypress, all appropriate auditors for the pessimistic recital to come.

The tale of Cyparissus is told at some length (109–42). It has particular relevance both to Orpheus' own situation and to one of the major themes of his recital. For the Cean boy had accidentally caused the death of the Nymph's pet stag, which had been especially dear to him (121–2); and overcome with grief he had sought death for himself (131–2). Apollo's love for him illustrates the theme of pederasty, and the fact that the divine lyrist (106–8) is as powerless as his musician son (cf. 11. 8) to save his beloved from death demonstrates that the gods too can be victims of the sorrows of love.

The recital begins (147–53) with an appeal for the inspiration of Jupiter, indispensable to the poet, whether his theme is epic, *plectro grauiore*, or erotic, *leuiore lyra*. We are thus reminded that the King of the gods appears throughout the poem not as the victorious Olympian champion of the forces of light and order but as the archetypal lover. The two major themes of the recital are explicitly announced, *puerosque canamus / dilectos superis inconcessisque puellas / ignibus attonitas meruisse libidine poenam*, unmistakably reflecting Orpheus' own state of mind, already depicted in 78–85. The story of Jupiter's consummation of his desire for the Phrygian boy Ganymede is narrated briefly and allusively (155–62) and the contrast with *Cyparissus* is underlined by a second tale of Apollo's misfortunes in love.

The accidental killing of the Spartan Hyacinthus again recalls Orpheus' own suffering and the themes of *Cyparissus* are repeated in detail—the divine lyrist (170), responsible for the death of his beloved (199–201), powerless to save him (187–9) or to share his fate (202–3). The floral transformation—for Apollo is too slow to follow Jupiter's example and translate his minion to immortality in Heaven—is anticipated by an exquisite reworking of a traditional image of youthful death (190–3), and the flower, like the cypress (141–2), becomes a permanent memorial of the god's grief.¹

The A₁BA₂ thematic pattern which links the two opening tales of the recital, *Ganymede* and *Hyacinthus*, to the preceding *Cyparissus* serves like the thematic link between *Syrinx* and *Daphne* in Book 1 to establish *perpetuitas* between an otherwise self-contained unit, the recital of Orpheus, and the introductory narrative-description.

A slender narrative thread (217, 221) links *Cyparissus* to the first of the Cyprian stories (220–37). The horned Cerastae of Amathus had offended against the sanctions of Iuppiter Hospes by murdering strangers. They were punished by the island's patron goddess Venus, who changed them into *torui iuueni*, a fate appropriate both to their former physiognomy and to their barbarous behaviour. Their essential nature remains, subsumed in a new form: once again *in noua . . . mutatas . . . formas corpora*. The ruthless punishment of impiety recalls Orpheus's tragic disobedience of the injunction of Pluto and Proserpina.

In the next brief tale (238–42) Venus' wrath is visited upon those whose impiety directly concerns herself. The Propoetides, also from Amathus, denied her divinity and were changed first into strumpets and then, when they

¹ 207–8 allude ingeniously to the alternative fable of the *hyacinthus*, which Ovid is to treat specifically in Book 13.

had lost all tenderness and shame, into *rigidus silex*.¹ Orpheus too has put himself in danger by defying the goddess, not in his love of Eurydice (61) but in his subsequent hardening of heart against all women.

But Venus can reward as well as punish. Pygmalion (243–97), disgusted by the Propoetides, carved himself an ideal woman in ivory, which the goddess then brought to life. The contrast between *Pygmalion* and *Propoetides* is emphatic: human shamelessness and depraved love turned to stone, idealized human love portrayed in inanimate matter is brought to life.² Moreover, the reward for the sculptor's *pietas*, which recalls that conferred on the pious Deucalion and Pyrrha (1. 320–3, 367–8, 395–415), exhibits a translation from death to life that is against the normal direction of metamorphosis and so underlines by contrast Orpheus' loss of Eurydice. Finally it is significant that this story, like *Ganymede* the only other happy one in the recital, depicts an unnatural passion,³ a flight from normality akin to Orpheus' renunciation of women.

The longest tale (298–518), which occupies the central position in the recital, is of Myrrha's incest. A narrative link is provided by the fact that her father Cinyras is the grandson of Pygmalion. However, Ovid is at pains to set the story apart from what has gone before. He stresses the horror of it (300–7) and places it not in Cyprus but in the remote Orient, *Panchaia tellus* (309), *agri . . . Arabes* (477–8). Although Myrrha's love for her father is something for which the goddess of love must accept ultimate responsibility (cf. 323–4)—a fact that Ovid exploits in the next story—it is represented by the girl herself as an affront to *pietas*, as *nefas*, *scelus* (321–4, cf. 225: *sceleris*, 232: *gens impia* of the Cerastae whom Venus punished), and can only have been inspired by the Furies (311–12).

The conflict of *pietas* and *amor* is a recurrent theme in the central books of the poem—*Medea*, *Scylla*, *Byblis*, *Myrrha*. Indeed the comparison with Byblis' love for her brother Caunus is particularly striking here. In both stories Ovid draws heavily on Euripides' *Hippolytus*. Caunus is depicted very much as a Hippolytan character and his reaction to his sister's letter, which owes a great deal more to Euripides' Nurse than to his Phaedra, is violent and uncompromising (9. 633–4). Byblis, after frantically pursuing him collapses in tears and is changed into a fountain (9. 657–65). By contrast Myrrha is portrayed in the manner of Euripides' Phaedra, wrestling with the desire whose monstrosity she sees all too clearly (320–55);⁴ but her *discordia mentis* (445) is finally resolved and her desire accomplished by the agency of the Nurse,⁵ who devises the trick that gives her Cinyras. Pregnant and in flight from her father's wrath, Myrrha craves for a fate that will place her neither among the living nor among the dead, and her metamorphosis, at the hand of *numen . . . aliquod* (488), robs

¹ For the symbolic character of petrification cf. the similar fates of the stubborn and jealous Aglauros (2. 819–32) and of Niobe, so paralysed by grief that the only movement left was that of her tears (6. 303–12).

² See further the sensitive discussion by Fränkel, *op. cit.*, 95.

³ As Otis points out (*op. cit.*, 389 f.), Ovid has suppressed the brutish agalmatophilia of the original version of *Pygmalion* in order to heighten the contrast with *Propoetides*.

⁴ Like the soliloquies of *Medea* (7. 11–71), *Scylla* (8. 44–80), and *Byblis* (9. 487–516)

this one reveals the same morbid interest and skill in exploring the psychopathology of women in love that Ovid had shown in *Heroides*.

⁵ Although Myrrha's conflict is not externalized, like Phaedra's in the two great scenes that Euripides devoted to her and the nurse, the decision here is clear-cut, and there is none of the pathos of that terrible final question *πότ' ἔστιν ἢ ποτὶν τὸ φάρμακον*; with which the dramatist reveals Phaedra's bewildered and desperate capitulation.

her of all senses save that of sorrow (499–500). Once again the themes of the story—the excesses of suffering that love can cause, the sin against *pietas* and the pursuit of unnatural desire, the final hovering between life and death—take us back in different ways to the plight of Orpheus himself.

Although Venus had taken no part in *Myrrha*, love even in this horrible form was still her department, and Myrrha's child *sorore natus auoque suo* (521) will be the instrument of Myrrha's revenge. Adonis is the very image of Cupid (516)¹ and, once grown to manhood, *iam placet et Veneri matrisque ulciscitur ignis*. Just as Apollo had deserted Delphi and his lyre and bow to hold the hunting-nets for Hyacinthus (167–73), so Venus in her infatuation with Adonis becomes a huntress, assuming the manner and garb, if not quite the character, of Diana (536). The comparison with Apollo is significant; the goddess of love is as helpless as her victims in coping with the power of love, just as the god of healing was powerless to save his beloved. The anemone created from the blood of the dead Adonis symbolizes, like the hyacinth and the cypress, a deity's thwarted love and everlasting grief.

Ironically inset into *Adonis* (519–739) is Venus' cautionary tale to the boy against excessive daring in the hunt (560–707). Hippomenes the suitor of Boeotian Atalanta is rewarded for his *pietas* to Venus by the gift of the golden apples. After his victory in the famous race he forgets his debt to the goddess (682) and is punished by a violent lust, which drives him to desecrate Echion's shrine to Cybele² by making love to Atalanta there. Cybele promptly turns them both into savage lions. The ostensible moral of the tale, that Adonis should avoid lions when he is out hunting (705–6), cannot on any interpretation bear the weight of the preceding narrative of *Atalanta*. Nor is it intended to; for the real moral of the story is that the goddess who rewards piety can also punish lapses from it. *Atalanta* is thus thematically linked to the Cyprian group, *Cerastae*, *Propoetides*, *Pygmalion*. At first sight Atalanta herself seems the innocent victim of Venus' anger, caught up accidentally in the punishment of Hippomenes. But then we recall that in an attempt to thwart the oracle (564–6) Atalanta had renounced all association with men and lived her life *per opacas innuba siluas*. Like the Propoetides she has been guilty thus of flouting the goddess's authority. However, it is primarily Hippomenes' fate that is relevant to Orpheus; aided by divine power he has been brought to disaster by refusing to accept the obligation that this assistance has imposed on him.

The juxtaposition of these examples of Venus' power and impotence, with their respective climaxes following upon each other so rapidly, has the effect of enhancing both stories. There is too, no doubt, some consolation for Orpheus in contemplating the fact that the gods who cause such suffering to mortals can themselves be the helpless victims.

Orpheus' grim recital is now concluded. He soon reaps the reward of his misogyny at the hands of the Maenads, who in contrast to the rocks and trees of Thrace remain impervious to the charm of his music (11. 1–66). The divine retribution that destroyed Actaeon and Pentheus in Book 3 at last destroys him. In death he is, however, united with Eurydice and the *Pathos of Orpheus* is over.

¹ Leaving aside the possible incestuous implications of the line, it is an ironic mode of revenge on the goddess who had employed her son in the exquisitely cruel assault on Dido in *Aeneid* 1, a passage that Ovid may

have intended his readers to recall here.

² A link here with the *Cadmus* group in Book 3, since Echion was one of the five survivors of the serpent's teeth sown by Cadmus.

The whole sequence forms an inset pattern with the sorrows and death of the poet (10. 1–11. 66) enclosing his recital (10. 143–607). The structure of the inset itself is highly complex. (a) *Ganymede* (b) *Hyacinthus* form, as we have seen, a neat A_1BA_2 group on the contrasting fortunes of the gods' love affairs with boys. The Venus group, (c) *Cerastae* (d) *Propoetides* (e) *Pygmalion* (g) *Adonis* (h) *Hippomenes*, though its narrative link with what precedes is exceedingly perfunctory, has a thematic connection with it through (g), the tale of the goddess's ill-fated love for the handsome shepherd, which encloses (h) the concluding *exemplum* of her power to reward and punish. (f) *Myrrha*, which stands apart thematically from the Venus sequence has a close narrative link both with (e) and (g) within the sequence. As the most horrific piece in the whole recital it occupies a central position, effectively placed between the brief tales (c) (d) (e) and the inset group (g) (h). Each of the stories is enhanced by the patterns of similarity and contrast established by the immediate sequence within which it occurs; each serves to focus attention on one or more aspects of the plight of Orpheus himself—the death of a loved one, the punishment of impiety, conversion to homosexuality with its concomitant attribution of depravity to woman's love, and transformations that exhibit a special relationship between life and death.

Once again the danger of discreteness, arising from the closely knit internal organization of the group is skilfully avoided by the narrative and thematic links between different parts of the group and the stories preceding and following it.

The narrative connection with *Iphis* (9. 666–797) is the tenuous one of Hymen's presence (9. 796–10. 3); but the thematic links are considerable. The Cretan *Iphis* by showing *pietas* (745 ff.) in seeking to suppress her passion for her sister contrasts with *Byblis* on the one hand and *Myrrha* on the other. The motifs of *pietas* and homosexuality (rejected by *Iphis*)¹ already look forward not only to Orpheus' recital but to his own situation. Like *Pygmalion* *Iphis* is rewarded by a miracle that converts the unnatural into the normal. Even further back in Book 9 the phrase *ut ament concessa puellae* (454) at the start of *Byblis* anticipates *inconcessis puellas ignibus attonitas* in Orpheus' enunciation of his themes, as *Byblis*' passion looks forward thematically to *Myrrha*'s.²

The narrative link with what follows is much firmer. *Bacchus* is represented as *dolens sacrorum uate suorum* (11. 68). Like *Apollo* and *Venus* he has lost a favourite. He punishes the *Maenads* by turning them into oaks, an ironical fate for those who had refused to succumb to the musical charms that had moved the *Chaonians* . . . *arbor* and other trees of *Thrace* (10. 90 ff.). *Bacchus* himself leaves *Thrace* for *Tmolus* and *Pactolus*, and the absence of *Silenus* from his company is introduced by *Ovid* as a preparation for *Midas* (11. 89 ff.). Here a thematic link is established with Orpheus' recital; for the King, lured as *Atalanta* had been by gold, is punished for his greedy folly by a fate that is the reverse of *Pygmalion*'s: all that he loves is turned to inert matter.

There are a number of long sequences elsewhere in the poem defined as

¹ The model of animal behaviour invoked by both *Iphis* (9. 731–4) and *Myrrha* (10. 322–8) brings out the point that homosexuality is more unnatural than incest. *Myrrha*'s *pathos* is in the actual consummation of her desire, as *Otis* notes (op. cit., 226).

² The thematic sequence of unnatural passion exhibited in *Tereus*, *Scylla*, *Byblis*, *Myrrha*, and *Ceyx*, analysed perceptively by *Otis*, op. cit., 205 ff., plays an important part in joining together the various groups to which each of these stories organically belongs.

structural groups by an enclosing story, which the poet holds in suspense through the intervening episodes.¹

The *perpetuitas carminis* is thus established by a combination of linear sequences, which follow a straightforward chronological progression carrying the poem steadily forward *ab origine mundi ad mea . . . tempora* and inset patterns of both the simple and complex type, which enable the poet to resolve difficulties of chronology and to bring together stories that are thematically related in one way or another. To be sure, thematic correspondences occur in different parts of the collection, but it is to the immediate environment that we must attend if we are to catch the emphases and nuances to which Ovid wishes us to respond. The groups themselves seldom, if ever, exhibit neat mathematical symmetries. The size of a group or tale is dictated solely by the requirements of the narrative material itself and, presumably, by the degree of interest that the poet himself had in it. For this reason *Hyacinthus*, for instance, is longer than *Ganymede*, *Hippomenes* than *Adonis*. One unit of structure Ovid has ignored, namely the division into books, which Virgil had exploited so effectively in *Aeneid*. Not only do closely knit groups run over from one book to another, as *Cadmus* in 3 and 4 and *Orpheus* in 10 and 11, but even individual stories as well, like *Phaethon* in 1 and 2, *Achelous* in 8 and 9, and *Iudicium Armorum* in 12 and 13. In this too the poet shows his concern for the *perpetuitas carminis*.

What Ovid has done, with characteristic ingenuity, is to take the narrative forms of which Callimachus and his school approved, the simple and inset epyllia, and, by elaborating them in more and more complex patterns against a general chronological drift, to produce a *perpetuum carmen* in apparent defiance of Callimachean principles. Apparent but not real; for the Master would surely have applauded the structural devices by which Ovid has developed his collection of fables into a full-scale *ἄεσμα διηγηκῆς* that is the antithesis of the *μέγα φοφέουσιν ἀοιδήν*.

As we have already noted, these structural devices not only weld the individual tales into a *perpetuum carmen* but they also serve to highlight those aspects of each that the poet wishes to attend to most closely. With this in

¹ For instance the *Family of Cadmus* (3. 1-4. 603) begins with the hero's arrival in Thebes and his slaughter of Mars' sacred serpent and ends with the fulfilment of the resultant prophecy in the transformation of Cadmus and his wife Harmonia into serpents. The long inset within this story begins with a linear sequence *Actaeon, Semele, Teiresias, Narcissus*, and *Echo* (138 ff.). There follows a simple inset group, with *Pentheus* (511-733) enclosing *Acoetes and the Tyrrhenians* (582-691), and then a more elaborate one, with *Minyades* (4. 1-415) enclosing *Pyramus and Thisbe, Clytie and Leucothoe, Salmacis and Hermaphroditus* (55-388). The whole major inset ends with *Ino* (416-562). The closely knit group has a narrative link with the preceding *Europa* (2. 833-75), since Cadmus is the heroine's brother, and a thematic one with the group that follows, since its hero Perseus was conceived in miraculous circumstances closely parallel to those of Bacchus. The chronological diffi-

culties obviated by the inset technique here are well discussed by Otis, op. cit., 130.

A briefer but no less complex structure is exhibited by the contest between the Pierides and the Muses (5. 294-678). The representative of the Pierides is given a single tale *Typhoeus* (319-31). Calliope begins her contribution with *Ceres and Proserpina* (341-571). This is interspersed with digressions, first on the punishment of Typhoeus (346-58) which completes the earlier tale, then *Cyane, The Lizard* (409-61), and finally *Ascalaphus, Acheloides* (539-63). There follow *Arethusa* (572-641), already begun in *Ceres and Proserpina* (487-508), and *Triptolemus* (642-61). The contest itself is part of an even longer group concerned with Pallas and the Muses, beginning with the goddess's visit to Helicon (5. 250 ff.), ending with her victorious contest with Arachne (6. 1-145), and ingeniously linked, as always, to what precedes and follows it.

mind, we may profitably return to the essays in the grand style with which we began, in order to see whether they are anything more than *tours de force*.

Lapiths and Centaurs (12. 210–459) and *Iudicium Armorum* (12. 612–13. 383) are remarkable not only for their epic manner but also for their proximity to each other. No pair of tales of comparable length occur so close together anywhere else in the work. They have often been held to mark a change of direction in the poem. ‘With the twelfth book the poem changes its character and enchanting caprice gives way to an ambition for grandeur’, says Fränkel;¹ and many would agree with him. But how different is the tone of the last four books? Besides the two epic pieces in Books 12 and 13 there is only one other extended essay in the grand style, the *Sermon of Pythagoras* in the last book of all (which is surely proof that Ovid’s delight in invention was very far from being exhausted): if anything a slightly lower proportion over the four books concerned than in some of the earlier parts of the poem. Furthermore there is still plenty of enchanting caprice to come, including the most famous of all Ovid’s characterizations, Polyphemus’ serenade in Book 13.

Indeed Ovid’s *Aeneid* (13. 623–14. 608) apart from its chronological function in providing a transition from the Heroic Age to Roman legend and history serves merely as a bare narrative framework round which to construct patterns of fables in no essential respect different from those in the earlier part of the poem.² Some of these, like Macareus’ group of *Circe* stories (14. 242–434) and *Diomedes, Acon* (457–511), are more relevant to Ulysses than to Aeneas, and even those that bear directly on the founder of Rome, like *The Sibyl* (101–53) or the transformation of the Trojan ships into water-nymphs and of Ardea into a heron (527–80) hardly belong to the epic part of the saga. Indeed only Achaemenides’ encounter with the Cyclops (167–222) offers a passage of any length that can be set beside Virgil’s narrative (*Aen.* 3. 612–54) and this, significantly, is a minor episode in the latter, linking the wanderings of Aeneas and Ulysses.

It might be argued that the story of Aeneas was too well known to justify repetition at this date. But Ovid has not merely avoided reworking the theme;³ he has so wrapped it up in enchanting caprice as to diminish its epic stature. What then of the three epic passages themselves?

Let us begin with the last of them, the *Sermon of Pythagoras*. Although, as we

¹ Op. cit., 101; cf. Wilkinson, op. cit., 221: ‘It looks very much as if his delight in invention was flagging [sc. by Book 15], as well it might be by now, so that he made haste to his designed conclusion. But this decline really began with Book 12, in which we are aware of a conscious effort to raise the poem into a “higher” strain.’ As Segal observes, loc. cit. 257, the ‘historical’ section actually begins at 11. 194 with Laomedon’s founding of Troy.

² Thus Aeneas’ encounter with Anius in Delos (13. 631 ff.) leads to an account of the miraculous powers enjoyed by the King’s daughters and their transformation into doves (650–74), the brief tale of Orion’s daughters and the Coroni on the presentation cup (685–701). The Sicilian part of Aeneas’ journey (13. 705 ff.) is the occasion

for the *Scylla–Galatea* sequence (13. 730–14. 74), enclosing *Polyphemus and Acis* (750–897) and *Glaucus* (917–65) and linked by the role of *Circe* in the transformation of *Scylla* herself to the *Circe* group later in Book 14. For the remoteness of the latter, with its emphasis on lust and violence, from the Roman–Augustan themes of Virgil’s *Aeneid* see Segal, loc. cit., 270 ff.

³ That Ovid should be unwilling to challenge comparison with Virgil is not only out of character in a poet who was *nimium amator ingenii sui* but flatly contradicted by the evidence of *Dido* (*Her.* 7), *Cacus* (*Fast.* 1. 545–78), and *Orpheus* and *Achaemenides* in the present poem. He was perfectly capable of treating familiar subjects in his own way, and this is just what he has done with Aeneas’ journey.

have seen, its relevance to metamorphosis is at best superficial, it nevertheless stands out as one of the most brilliant *tours de force* of the whole poem. But there are marked fluctuations within it both of stylistic tone and level of seriousness. The Lucretian manner that we noted earlier as particularly characterizing the exposition of the doctrine of universal flux (176–306) passes into a series of travellers' tales (307–60),¹ which, while not belonging to the same fabulous tradition as the metamorphoses themselves, nevertheless allude to them explicitly here and there, e.g. Salmacis (319), whose story had been recounted in full at 4. 285–388. Next comes a quasi-scientific² catalogue of spontaneous generation and of creatures which *ex aliis generis primordia ducunt* (361–417). Once again this slips away into fable with the climactic account of the Phoenix (393–407), a phenomenon belonging neither to metempsychosis nor to metamorphosis in the strict sense of these terms. Then back again to *res prudentes* with a catalogue of the life-cycle of nations (418–52), hardly the most reassuring context for Pythagoras to prophesy the Augustan zenith of Roman power.³ The Sermon ends with an impassioned recapitulation of specifically Pythagorean doctrine (453–78), which has been rather pushed into the background since line 176. This combination of *res prudentes* and *fabulae* would not seem incongruous for observers of contemporary Neo-Pythagoreanism, which besides its core of philosophy and mysticism was embellished with a great deal of superstitious mumbo-jumbo, not to say downright charlatanry.⁴ But there may be a more general verdict implicit in the combination here, namely that philosophy for all its claims to rational argument and de-mythologized conceptual thinking was after all no less fanciful than the fables of the poets.⁵

Furthermore, one of the leitmotifs of the *Troy-Aeneas-Rome* sequence is, appropriately enough, migration into Italy. Besides Aeneas' settlement we have Evander (14. 456) and Diomedes (457 ff.), Hippolytus deified as Virbius (15. 487 ff.), and Aesculapius (622 ff.).⁶ Pythagoras' Sermon is part of the education of Numa—Ovid follows the traditional anachronism here⁷—and is

¹ The transition from science to mythology is more abrupt in Book 1, where the *Cosmogony* is followed by *Saturnia Regna, Concilium Deorum, Lycaon* (the first fabulous transformation), *Diluvium, Deucalion and Pyrrha*. More abrupt but less significant; for the distinction between *res prudentes* and *fabulae* there reflects a stage in human thought that had de-mythologized the origins of the physical world but not the prehistory of the race. Even Lucretius' anti-mythological evolutionism still allowed its picture of primitive human brutishness to be coloured by lingering hints of the Golden Age tradition (cf. *De rer. nat.* 5. 1390–1435).

² That some of this at least would have been taken seriously in Antiquity is clear from Var. *R.* 3. 4. 1 and Virg. *G.* 4. 543 ff., Sext. *Emp. P.* 1. 11 and a number of passages in Pliny, e.g. *Nat.* 8. 105, 122, 137.

³ As was emphasized by W. S. Anderson, 'Multiple Change in the *Metamorphoses*', *TAPA* xciv (1963), 27, the absence of any reference to the concept of *Roma aeterna*, in contrast to *Fast.* 3. 72, is so remarkable as to

be surely of calculated significance.

⁴ A point well made by Wilkinson, *op. cit.*, 215, who nevertheless sees the doctrine of transmigration as 'an imposing climax to the stories of metamorphosis'. As Segal observes, *loc. cit.* 280, the emphasis of the Sermon is less on metempsychosis than on vegetarianism—which was precisely the doctrine of the Pythagoreans that attracted most ridicule and satire in the Latin literary tradition.

⁵ Cf. Otis, *op. cit.*, 302.

⁶ Neither Apollo nor Cybele, two of the most obvious migrating deities, are included here. But they are treated fully in *Fasti*. Indeed, the somewhat slender representation of specifically Latin or Italian fables is certainly to be explained by their presence—actual or intended at this time—in the poet's elegiac calendar. So Wilkinson, 'The World of the *Metamorphoses*', in Herescu's *Ovidiana*, 231–44, especially 240.

⁷ As in *Fast.* 3. 153; cf. Cic. *Rep.* 2. 28–30, Liv. 1. 18. 2, where the chronological error is castigated.

introduced by Myscelus' migration to Croton (15. 19 ff.). The instruction of the native Italian King by the immigrant Greek sage, *exul* (61), is therefore perhaps symbolic. Rome had received its philosophy and its mythology from Greece; native beliefs and fables had been infused by imported material from the earliest times. But the imports had come as a package; the Cosmogony with the Golden Age and the tale of Deucalion and Pyrrha, Pythagoreanism with Salmacis and the Phoenix. And who could say which of the ingredients was the more fanciful? Some may choose to take one seriously, some the other, but to the poet of *Metamorphoses* all are equally suitable material for a fanciful poem.¹

Reverting to *Lapiths and Centaurs* and *Iudicium Armorum*, it is at first sight strange that Ovid should go to such lengths to sustain a tone of epic grandeur in Books 12 and 13 *before* the Aeneas-Rome sequence actually begins, especially as neither of these two episodes has any direct relevance to the sequence. The clue to his intention is, as always, to be found by taking account of the environment in which he has placed the two pieces.

Lapiths and Centaurs (12. 210-459) forms an incident within *Caeneus* (189-531), the tale with which Nestor, the prize bore of the *Iliad* and a proverbial dissenter from the Ovidian profession that *haec aetas moribus apta meis*, seeks to cap the preceding *Cycnus* (12. 86-170; this Cycnus of course is quite different from the one in Book 2). The *Caeneus* is unusually fanciful, even by Ovid's standards. Born a girl (12. 189, cf. 8. 305) Caenis was raped by Neptune and by way of indemnity granted a wish, which not unreasonably in the circumstances she exercised by asking for a change of sex (201-2). Caeneus, as she now becomes, is subsequently killed in the battle with the Centaurs and transformed into a unique bird (531). The setting Ovid has chosen for the epic battle² is thus incongruous; significantly so. Frequently celebrated in art³ and literature, the battle is put into the mouth of the Homeric Nestor and so presented, at a superficial level, as an extended glorification of heroic warfare. Yet it was one of the least edifying incidents of the epic tradition, a brutal and gory battle of a particularly futile kind,⁴ and by selecting it as his sole representative of heroic warfare, expounding it as the mere exhibition of brute force and senseless slaughter that it was and associating it with the fantastic story of Caeneus, he is in reality pouring scorn upon the whole epic tradition of the aggrandizement of war. The epic tone here is therefore parodic.⁵

Similarly in Ovid's *Iudicium Armorum*, an incident that traditionally portrayed

¹ Here Segal, loc. cit. 288-9 strives unconvincingly for a serious and profound interpretation of the synthesis—a meeting of 'Greek theory and Roman practicality, philosophy and actual government'.

² Although Caeneus is already associated with the battle in *Il.* 1. 264 ff., this metamorphosis appears first in Hellenistic literature, Ap. R. *Arg.* 1. 57-64. In Apollod. *Epit.* 1. <21>, 22 *Lapiths and Centaurs* is catalogued immediately before *Caeneus*. Although this may have inspired Ovid, it is the tonal contrast of the two tales and the effect produced by the inset-technique of throwing the emphasis on *Caeneus* that are important here.

³ Cf. the famous sculpture from the West end of the temple of Zeus at Olympia.

⁴ Cf. Horace's *Centaurea . . . cum Lapithis rixa super mero debellata* (*Carm.* 1. 18. 8-9) as a warning of the dangers of excessive drinking, which is of course the context in which Antinous introduces his reference to the tale in *Od.* 19. 293 ff.: οἶνός σε πρῶει μελιγδής, ὅς τε καὶ ἄλλους / βλάπτει ὅς ἂν μιν χανδὸν ἔλῃ μηδ' αἴσιμα πίνῃ. But Homer does not give it the extended heroic treatment, as Ovid does.

⁵ The tedious exaggeration and frigid epic manner of which Otis complains (*op. cit.*, 283, 314) are thus revealing of the poet's intentions.

the heroic devotion to the ideal of αἰὲν ἀριστεύειν has been reduced to an unseemly squabble about status and recognition calculated to alienate civilized sensibility. A tragic ἀγών has been transposed into a pair of opposing *suasoriae*,¹ in which the poet's sympathies are aligned, in defiance of tradition, not with Ajax, who is presented as a doltish thug, but with the ἀνὴρ πολύτροπος, the archetypal *Graeculus esuriens*, who claims even Achilles' great exploits as due to himself (178, 348–9, 373–4).² The climax of the whole narrative comes when Ajax, deservedly outwitted in the debate, kills himself, and his blood is changed into the same pretty flower as Apollo's minion Hyacinthus had become (394–8). A typically heroic incident has once more been deflated both by the style of its exposition and the setting in which it is placed.

What Ovid has done in fact is to deflate the whole heroic ideal, as set forth in the Homeric tradition and recently restated by Virgil in close and complex symbolic relation with the Augustan myth. For to the eye of civilized sensibility these deeds of the great heroic past, once divested of their glamorous aura, were nothing but the manifestation of brute force, a catalogue of lust, treachery, and senseless slaughter, and the vain and absurd preoccupation with honours and status. Surely an ominous preparation for the coming *Aeneas–Rome* sequence!³

The epic treatment of *Phaethon*, which we also remarked earlier, has a different parodic significance; the grand manner, in keeping with the heroic, indeed divine, aspirations of Apollo's son, throws into relief the catastrophic incongruity of the boy's behaviour and the absurdity of a theocracy that could allow such things to occur. It is, no doubt, part of Ovid's purpose that we should relate *Phaethon* thematically to other deification stories in the poem, notably the fiery consummation of Hercules in Book 9 and the assumption into heaven of Aeneas (14. 600–8), Romulus (14. 772–804), and Julius Caesar (15. 745–870).

Deification was a hallowed theme indeed in the Rome of Virgil's *Aeneid*, ruled over by a prince who like Phaethon and the others was himself *divi filius*. But what is the effect of making its latest *exemplum* the finale to a series of fanciful tales of metamorphosis that none of Ovid's sophisticated readers would have taken as anything but imaginative *divertissements*? Aeneas' deification had followed hard on the change of his ships into water-nymphs and of Ardea into a heron, Romulus' is preceded by the fables of Vertumnus and Pomona, Iphis and Anaxarete, and the Naiads' miracle at the gates of Janus, Julius Caesar's by the naturalization of Aesculapius, Coronis' son, whose tale had been told in Book 2, and by the stories of how a clod of earth became the prophet Tages and the praetor Cippus sprouted horns. (His reaction to the

¹ As Wilkinson (op. cit., p. 230) well observes; cf. also Otis, op. cit., p. 285.

² It is part of the anti-epic character of this whole epic section that Ovid takes care to include Achilles' craving for his rightful honour even after death, when his ghost rises up indignantly to demand the sacrifice of Polyxena (13. 441–8). The incident was traditional, but the contrast between the petulant ghost and the noble dignity of Polyxena (456–73) is very striking. For the similar function of the Polyxena episode in belittling the epic tradition cf. Cat. 64.

363–70, on which see now J. C. Bramble, 'Structure and Ambiguity in Catullus LXIV, *PCPS* cxcvi (1970), esp. 25–6.

³ Otis correctly noted that 'the net result of the three pieces [including *Hecuba*] thus arranged was to destroy the significance of the Trojan theme' (op. cit., 282); but found this baffling, since he started from the assumption that the apparently intrusive 'epic panels' in this poem of fanciful caprice were meant to be taken, out of their context, as a serious contribution to the Augustan Myth.

portent *multoque ego iustius aeuum / exul agam quam me uideant Capitolia regem* has an uncomfortable relevance to the Augustan principate.¹ Moreover Caesar's translation to the Heavens, while it links him with Hercules, Aeneas, and Romulus, is after all no more glorious a consummation than had been granted to Callisto and Arcas. Deification, astrification—what are these but two more varieties of metamorphosis, to be treated with as much or as little suspension of disbelief as all the rest?

And Augustus himself is next in line for metamorphosis, though the poet dutifully prays *tarda sit illa dies et nostro senior aeuo* (868). The absurd exaggeration of the concluding eulogy jars only if we take it out of context as a serious expression of Augustan orthodoxy. If we do, we can of course relate such a passage as *denique, ut exemplis ipsos aequantibus utar, / sic et Saturnus minor est Ioue; Iuppiter arces / temperat aetherias et mundi regna triformis, / terra sub Augusto est; pater est et rector uterque* (857–60) to the celebrated enunciations of that orthodoxy in Virgil and Horace.² But can we detach Jupiter here from the associations left in our minds by his role in the poem, where his paternity has been prodigious indeed and his rule over the world all too often directed towards the satisfaction of his own lusts and the resolution of the disasters brought about by his dalliance in a series of miraculous transformations?³ This Jupiter seems far more relevant to the scurrilous reports of Augustus' private life preserved in the pages of Suetonius.⁴

The epilogue to the poem looks forward confidently to the fulfilment of the prayer at the start. There Ovid had sought the inspiration of the gods, to transform his lines in some way—*nam uos mutastis et illas*. Now the work is over, he can look forward to that transformation more explicitly: *alta perennis / astra ferar . . . / ore legar populi perque omnia saecula fama / . . . uiuam*. He too will be up there, with Julius and Augustus;⁵ fire and sword, which yielded to Aeneas (861), will have no power to harm him (871–2), nor will the wrath of Jupiter—or, we may surmise, his earthly counterpart.⁶ The self-confident assertion that a poet will live on in his work was commonplace enough (cf. *Am.* 1. 15, *Prop.* 3. 1. 35–8), but a note of tendentious defiance is added by the explicit echoes of Horace's *exegi monumentum aere perennius* (*Carm.* 3. 30) and Ennius' *uolito uiuos per ora uirum* (*ap.* Cic. *T.D.* 1. 34). For Ovid thus sets his long poem of fanciful caprice up against both the heroic mythology of the Ennian epic tradition⁷ and

¹ See further G. K. Galinsky's discussion of *Cipus* in *TAPA* xcvi (1967), 181–91.

² e.g. Virg. *G.* 4. 560–2, *Aen.* 6. 791–7; Hor. *Carm.* 1. 2, 3. 3, 4. 5.

³ The same kind of overtone is surely to be apprehended in Venus' patronage of the *gens Iulia*. The epithet *Cythereus* applied to Aeneas (13. 625, 14. 584) belongs stylistically to the epic conventions of the patronymic, *Laomedontius* and *Anchisiades* in the *Aeneid* for instance. But it calls our attention not to the hero's epic heritage as a prince of the Trojan royal house but to the fact that he was his mother's son, Dido's lover. Nor is there after all so much to boast about in genealogical descent from a goddess who, in pleading for the life of Julius Caesar, couples her rescue of Aeneas from Diomedes

with that of the unheroic Paris from the Greek king that he had cuckolded (15. 805–6), and who throughout the poem has appeared as the inspiration of suffering and catastrophe to gods and men alike.

⁴ *Aug.* 68–9, 71.

⁵ Cf. the echo in *parte tamen meliore mei* (875) of *parte sui meliore uiget* (9. 269), *pars optima restitit illi* (14. 604), from the apotheoses of Hercules and Aeneas.

⁶ Cf. *Am.* 1. 15. 33: *cedant carminibus reges regumque triumphis* and the passages from the *Tristia* cited by Segal, loc. cit. 291.

⁷ Cf. the echo of this same phrase in Virgil's announcement of his intention to write epic in *G.* 3. 8–9: *temptanda uia est, qua me quoque possim / tollere humo uictorque uirum uolitare per ora*.

the Augustan orthodoxy represented, at least on occasion, by Horace. The new mythology is already associated with the old in the *Concilium Deorum*, where the indignation of the gods, assembled in the *magni . . . Palatia caeli* (1. 176), at the impious savagery of Lycaon is compared to the horror felt by the whole human race at the assassination of Caesar, and the comparison of Augustus to Jupiter is made explicitly for the first time in the poem (200–5). But it emerges more prominently in the *Aeneas–Rome* sequence, once the anti-epic position has been established clearly by *Lapiths and Centaurs* and *Iudicium Armorum*, and it is this piquant juxtaposition rather than any flagging in Ovid's creative powers or inability to sustain some notional endeavour to raise the poem to a loftier tone that gives the last four books their distinctive and, for some readers, less satisfying character. Ovid was 'playing the Augustan game' all right, but he was playing it in his own way.¹

Here once more he showed himself a true disciple of Callimachus. For not only had he brilliantly demonstrated how *ἐπη τυτθά* could be welded together to produce an unheroic *ἄεισμα διηγεκές* but he had proved that the epic themes of *μέγα ψοφέουσιν αἰοδὴν* can be effectively toppled not by rejecting them but by presenting them in mock-heroic tone within a context of capricious fable. The poet of *The Bath of Pallas* would have enjoyed it all immensely. How many of Ovid's contemporary readers would have appreciated what he was up to we can never know. That Augustus himself was not among them is perhaps suggested by the poet's protestations in *Tr.* 2. 63–6: *inspice maius opus, quod adhuc sine fine tenetur, | in non credendos corpora uersa modos; | inuenies uestri praeconia nominis illic, | inuenies animi pignora multa mei. Animi pignora mei* indeed! *Ars Amatoria* was, no doubt, the *carmen* that helped to banish him, but in *Tomi* he could reflect at leisure that it was not the only *magnum opus* from his pen that might justifiably have attracted imperial displeasure.²

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¹ Here Segal seems to hold back from the logical conclusion to his own preceding discussion of the poem (loc. cit. 292): 'It may well be that Ovid felt it necessary or expedient to adopt a façade of Augustanism at the end of his work', a façade that is no more than 'a polite nod to the official attitudes over the resistant amorality of the tales which after all constitute the bulk of the poem. . . . The Augustan seriousness is

offset at least in part by the continuing un-Augustan vividness of Circean passion.' Rather it is drastically undercut both by the absurd exaggeration of its style and by its very introduction into a context of enchanting caprice.

² As E. K. Rand acutely observed a long time ago, *Ovid and His Influence* (Boston, 1925), 92.