

OVID, *METAMORPHOSES* 1.2

in nova fert animus mutatas dicere formas
 corpora. di coeptis (nam vos mutastis et illa)
 adspirate meis, primaque ab origine mundi
 ad mea perpetuum deducite tempora carmen.

2 illa e (v.l.) U³: illas ceteri codices

The purpose of this paper is, first, to demonstrate to future editors of the *Metamorphoses*, whether conservative or sceptical, just how improbable is the reading of the majority of MSS, *illas*, and how strong are the claims of the variant *illa*, first recommended by P. Lejay in 1894 and vigorously championed by E. J. Kenney in 1976; and, second, to suggest an interpretation of this reading that is open to fewer objections than the one proposed by Kenney.

I

I have given above the beginning of Ovid's longest poem as it ought to stand in all modern editions and as it stands in fact in only one, the French school edition of selections edited by Lejay in 1894: 'Gods, on my undertakings (for you have changed *them* as well) breathe your favour.' To be sure, all of Ovid's MSS read *illas* in line 2, and *illa* is attested only as a variant in two of them. But majorities, in textual as in other matters, are frequently wrong. Even before the minority report of the Urbinas had been heard, Lejay adopted *illa*, a v.l. in the Erfordensis.¹ There were good grounds for the proposal, for 'vos mutastis et illas' is extremely difficult. Of two theoretical possibilities, the one is ruled out by sense, the other made doubtful by grammar. For it makes no sense to say to the gods 'You have changed those (forms) as well (as other things)' because nothing else has been mentioned or can easily be supplied. On the other hand, those who translate 'inspire me to tell of transformations, for you were also the cause of them' ought to produce parallels for this position of *et*, and Kenney shows that they have so far failed to do so.² Ovid's word-order may be more flexible than Kenney implies, and in 8.279 'tangit et ira deos' surely means 'non homines tantum sed etiam deos tangit ira'. But surely in the second line of his longest poem we would expect Ovid to write with greater than usual care. And it is not only the position of *et* but the whole idea that is awkward, as the following paraphrase makes clear: 'vos enim formas [non solum oramini ut mutatas poetam canere adiuvetis sed] etiam ipsi mutastis.'

By contrast, *illa* makes satisfying grammar and sense alike. The gods are asked to inspire Ovid's undertaking, an undertaking they have changed just as they changed

¹ P. Lejay, *Morceaux choisis des Métamorphoses d'Ovide* (Paris, 1894). I was able to consult only the 4th edition (Paris, 1911), in which the discussion of 1.2 is on p. 67. W. S. Anderson, *Ovidius: Metamorphoses* (Leipzig, 1982) cites *illa* as a conjecture of Lejay. (Ironically, it was the Berkeley library, at Anderson's own university, that furnished on interlibrary loan the copy of Lejay I consulted.) It may be a conjecture, but if so it is no later than the Erfordensis, whose third hand, according to F. Munari, is contemporary with the other two, belongs to the 12th or 13th century, and added the variant readings: see *Catalogue of the MSS of Ovid's Metamorphoses*, BICS Suppl. 4 (1957), 21 and (on the Urbinas) 70.

² See E. J. Kenney, 'Ovidius Prooemians', *PCPS* n.s. 22 (1976).

the shapes of things that are its subject. It goes without saying that a metamorphosis into a different kind of creature is the work of the gods. What Ovid asserts is that the gods have *also* changed his work. Just what this refers to is the question addressed by the second part of this paper, but even before we answer it we can see that this is a piece of typical Ovidian wit, a sort of conceptual zeugma in which the poem and the things it is about are put on the same level.³

Illa therefore gives both unobjectionable grammar and typically Ovidian sense. But those are not its only merits. An examination of all the parentheses in the poem shows that the parenthesis resulting from the reading *illa* has numerous parallels, whereas the parenthesis resulting from *illas* has many fewer and in one important respect is without any parallel in the poem.⁴ On either reading the parenthesis explains the request 'di coeptis...adspirate meis'. But if we read *illa*, the position of the parenthesis immediately after *coeptis* is natural. It is quite characteristic of Ovid for a causal parenthesis to come one to three words after the word or phrase which it particularly explains, e.g. 4.43

illa, quid e multis referat (nam plurima norat)
cogitat

or 4.448

sustinet ire illuc caelesti sede relicta
(tantum odiis iraeque dabat) Saturnia Iuno.

The causal parenthesis, though explaining the whole surrounding sentence, tends to be anchored most firmly to an immediately preceding word or phrase. The following further examples (not all recognized as parentheses by all editors) bear this out: 1.318 (explains *hic*), 366, 687f.; 2.101, 283, 301f., 345, 370 (explains 'relicto...imperio' begun just before), 400, 621f., 766f.; 3.6f., 443, 524, 600f., 630, 658f., 687; 4.68, 234f., 330, 428, 528, 598, 653f., 661, 704; 5.280, 282, 433f.; 6.18, 102, 193, 194, 501, 502, 694; 7.116, 167, 660, 669, 816; 8.88, 145f., 721, 785f., 809f., 818, 860; 9.17, 114, 330, 344, 356f., 567; 10.61, 148, 214, 424, 562; 11.162, 316, 437f., 622, 630f.; 12.86, 88, 177, 191, 232f., 383; 13.14, 314f., 470f., 494 (explains the phrase 'tuae...matris' begun just before), 562, 564, 588 (fifth word back), 597, 748, 843f., 900f.; 14.246f., 285, 399f., 695f. (explains the source of Vertumnus' knowledge), 810, 813, 841f.; 15.131, 160, 503, 566, 623, 720. (In addition, some parentheses are anchored to the first word or phrase of a speech and explain how the speaker can speak on the subject at all, as at 7.813 and 13.870.) By contrast, causal parentheses not anchored to a preceding word or phrase are comparatively rare: 1.250, 392, 400, 3.336f., 354, 4.612, 5.273, 7.453f., 9.242, 679, 11.293, 12.389, 13.646, 14.25ff., 742. (In the italicized passages the parenthesis follows directly on *et*, *aut*, or *sed*.)

³ An abundant source of Ovidian wit is the sort of zeugma whereby the same action is performed (with differences deliberately suppressed) on both things or persons and words, e.g. *Met.* 1.525–6: 'Plura locuturum timido Peneia cursu/ fugit cumque ipso verba imperfecta reliquit.' Here Apollo is put on the same level with his unfinished speech. See also, e.g., 2.505. In the poem, the gods have changed both the world and the poem which describes the world. For further examples of this figure, see J.-M. Frécaut, 'Une figure de style chère à Ovide: le zeugma ou attelage', *Latomus* 28 (1969), 28–41.

Further confirmation of *illa* has been sought from Fulgentius by J. C. Relihan, 'Ovid *Metamorphoses* 1.1–4 and Fulgentius' *Mitologiae*', *AJP* 105 (1984), 87–90. The connection, to my mind, is hard to see.

⁴ For an account of the parenthesis in the poem, see M. von Albrecht, *Die Parenthese in Ovids Metamorphosen und ihre dichterische Funktion* (Hildesheim, 1964). Von Albrecht's list on pp. 29–35 of all the parentheses in the poem, supplemented by an examination of Anderson's edition, is the basis for the generalizations about parentheses below.

But conservative critics unimpressed by the claims of superior sense will not be moved by close parallels or comparative frequency. They will ask, before giving up *illas*, to be shown that it is impossible or at least unique. Absolutely impossible it may not be, though as Housman pointed out, to expect that where the best MSS give false readings they will be impossible and where they are possible they will also be true is to imagine that the textual critic is the darling of Providence. What we *can* say is that reading *illas* gives us something unexampled elsewhere in the poem, a parenthesis containing a word of demonstrative force (*hic, ille, is, ipse, tot, tantum, sic, tum*, or the like) which does not refer to a word or idea in the surrounding sentence. Consider 3.658f.:

per tibi nunc *ipsum* (nec enim praesentior *illo*
est deus) adiuro,

and the following further examples: 1.132f., 209, 243, 366, 400, 535ff.; 3.245, 268, 562, 687 (*tot*); 4.178, 234f., 363f., 448, 661; 6.102, 193, 194, 694; 7.588, 730f., 816; 9.17, 356f., 396; 10.214, 614; 12.197, 200, 305, 372, 440; 13.76, 203, 597, 748, 866. Two apparent exceptions prove the rule. In 3.687,

de modo *viginti* (*tot* enim ratis *illa* ferebat)
restabam solus,

the parenthesis contains two demonstratives, the one that connects it to its surroundings is *tot*, and *illa*, because it has a noun to make the reference unmistakable, need not refer to anything close by. In 11.243,

quodnisi venisses variatis saepe figuris
ad solitas artes, auso foret ille potitus;
sed modo tu volucris (volucrem tamen *ille* tenebat),
nunc gravis arbor eras; haerebat in arbore Peleus;

the repeated *volucrem* performs the same function as *tot* in 3.687, and *ille* is made instantly plain because the same pronoun stands in the previous line. Neither of these is a good parallel to our passage or overturns the rule above. By that rule *illas* is wrong.

Sense, grammar, and style are thus satisfied only by *illa*. We can also explain the mistaken reading. The ending of *formas* from the line above influenced the scribe as he was about to copy the end of line 2. Cf. 1.135, where the reading *aurae* seems to owe its existence to *carinae* above, and 1.155 where the impossible *subiecto* can only be explained as due to the influence of *misso* above. Those who believe that scribes would be unlikely at the very beginning of a long poem to miscopy should see Aesch. *PV* 2, the second line of the Byzantine triad, as well as the second line of the *Aeneid*, where either *Lavinique* or *Laviniaque* is wrong.

II

The gods, then, Ovid claims, have changed his undertaking, his work, and they are asked to breathe on it with their favour. How have they changed it? Kenney suggests that just as Callimachus and Vergil were diverted by Apollo from epic to a different kind of poetry, so Ovid may have had in mind some less auspicious plan (some Gigantomachy, mythological epic or catalogue poem) until he was deterred from it by 'the gods', i.e. his own careful thought and planning, his avoidance of the dangers that beset the writer of epic in the generation after Vergil. 'The conventional apparatus – theophany and admonition, the poet's reaction, resistance, compliance –

is taken for granted; the merest suggestion, three words 'mutastis et illa', suffices to convey the point.'

If one is inclined to marvel at this prodigy of compression, there is more. The allusion to Callimachus continues, Kenney argues, in the description of the poem as *perpetuum*. Callimachus had refused to write ἐν ᾄεσμα διηγεκές. Ovid takes up the attempt and yet (here I give a rough paraphrase of Kenney's subtle argument) by using the word *perpetuum* he implies that he feels the force of the Callimachean esthetic. His own poem, Ovid hints, though continuous in form, is a series of discrete episodes bound together much in the fashion of Callimachus' *Aetia*. And it is significant that *deducite* is the verb used in line 4 since, for all its length, the *Metamorphoses* is a 'deductum carmen', a fine-spun song, in the best Callimachean tradition.

Kenney is right to champion *illa*, as he does vigorously, but his interpretation of it is more ingenious than plausible. Why should Ovid be so oblique? If he wished to suggest a Callimachean-Vergilian theophany, at the very least he should have mentioned Apollo or made some other recognizable contact with this set of conventions. (In a parenthesis, Kenney suggests that leaving Apollo out was 'a deliberate programmatic perversion of the topos', but since the very presence of this topos here is doubtful, this is all too much like calling a blank piece of paper a drawing of the Cheshire cat with deliberate omission of the smile.)

Furthermore, although Ovid pretends in *Amores* 2.1 to have begun a Gigantomachy, he almost certainly did not actually do so. An oblique reference like that envisioned by Kenney could be understood only if it were to a fact outside the poem, known to at least some of its readers. If Ovid hinted so glancingly at another poem of his own making that did not really exist, not even his closest friends could have taken the allusion.

Kenney's discussion of *perpetuum* and *deducite* is likewise open to serious objection. Kenney is led by his Callimachean reading of the parenthesis in line 2 to assert that the proem is both Callimachean and anti-Callimachean at the same time, that Ovid only half means what *perpetuum* implies. Yet if one does not detect a Callimachean theophany in line 2, the most natural reading of line 4 is that Ovid is undertaking (despite Callimachus' strictures) to write a continuous narrative poem, that his response to the Callimachean esthetic is to deny that it has binding validity.⁵

Nor need we suppose that *deducite* has anything to do with Callimachean ideals of slightness. On the most natural reading, the *-que* in line 3 is explicative: 'coeptis...adspirare meis' and 'prima ab origine mundi...deducite carmen' are two ways of saying the same thing, of asking the gods' help in the composition of the poem. This would mean that the overriding meaning of *deducite* would be either 'draw the thread of the story down to the poet's own day' or 'compose' (the metaphor is likewise from spinning). (Alternatively, as A. G. Lee suggests in his edition of Book I, *adspirare* may suggest a favouring breeze and *deducite* mean 'bring [my ship of song] into port'. For the metaphor, cf. E. J. Kenney in *Ovidiana*, ed. N. I. Herescu [Paris, 1958], 205-6.) Either way little room is left for 'thin out, attenuate', an action which, it should be noted, is appropriate for the poet, not the gods, to perform. To clinch the matter, we have the same idea expressed in nearly identical words at *Tristia* 2.557-60:

atque utinam revoces animum paulisper ab ira,
et vacuo iubeas hinc tibi pauca legi,
pauca, quibus prima surgens ab origine mundi
in tua deduxi tempora, Caesar, opus.

⁵ See von Albrecht, 'Zum Metamorphosenproem Ovids', *RM* 104 (1961), 272: 'die Prägung *carmen perpetuum*...kündigt ausdrücklich an, was Kallimachos zu schreiben abgelehnt hatte.'

These lines are clearly a direct quotation from his own proem,⁶ yet the context requires only the meaning 'bring down' and seems to exclude any notion of 'making slender or slight'. And it is therefore reasonable to conclude that the gods in our passage too are bidden not to 'thin out' his song but to bring it down as a continuous thread from the beginning of the world to his own day.⁷ In short, to anyone not defending a thesis, lines 3–4 would seem to promise a long narrative poem, with no concession to – indeed, in deliberate defiance of – the Callimachean point of view.

Fortunately, there is a simpler answer – not involving curiously truncated theophanies, rejected Gigantomachies, or epics that are continuous and Callimachean at the same time – to the question what Ovid means by saying that the gods have changed his undertaking. R. J. Tarrant has noted that the parenthesis in line 2 occurs at the first place in the poem where the metre reveals itself as hexameters rather than elegiacs, and Luck argues reasonably on other grounds that the reference is to a change of *genre*, not, as Kenney would have it, to a change of subject within the epic genre.⁸ The change Ovid is alluding to is his new manner of writing: no longer light love poetry (or love letters from fictional heroines) in elegiac couplets but instead mythical narrative in hexameter.⁹ This is surely right.

The gods, Ovid says, are responsible for this change. What does he mean? In A.D. 8 Ovid was banished by a decree of Augustus to Tomis on the Black Sea. I suggest that he first published the *Metamorphoses* to the world after his exile, and that the parenthesis in the proem is meant to imply that his change of fortunes has wrought a change in the kind of poetry he writes.

We know that the *Metamorphoses* existed in a version Ovid regarded as unfinished at the time of his exile. Ovid tells us (*Tr.* 1.7) that before leaving Rome, he burned his manuscript (either from anger at the Muses as responsible for his plight or because it was unfinished) but that the poem somehow survived ('*pluribus exemplis scripta*

⁶ The sense of these lines has recently been recovered by D. R. Shackleton Bailey in *CQ* 32 (1982), 393: the *pauca* are not the whole fifteen books but only the end, and *surgens* is neuter, modifying *opus*.

If these lines are indeed a quotation, the date of *Tristia* II (A.D. 9 according to Syme) would be the *terminus ante quem* for Ovid's proem.

⁷ The primary meaning of *deduco* in the passage is 'bring down the story to a later time.' There is also a secondary meaning 'spin out a literary composition like a thread, i.e. to elaborate, prepare, compose' (L&S s.v. II.B.2). D. O. Ross, *Backgrounds to Augustan Poetry: Gallus, Elegy, and Rome* (Cambridge, 1975), 19, 26, 65–6, 134–5, and 140, discusses a number of occurrences, including our passage, of *deducere* in Augustan poetry, all of which, he claims, are allusions to the Callimachean topos. (I owe this reference to David Mankin.) Of these I find his discussion of Verg. *Ecl.* 6.71, Prop. 1.1.19 and 24, and Hor. *Car.* 3.30.14 particularly unconvincing. Where destination or point of departure are explicitly named, any notion of 'thinning out' seems excluded by the context: can Horace have meant that he took 'Aeolium carmen' and thinned it out to Italian verse? Horace is no slenderer than Sappho nor is Latin metre slighter or more refined than Greek. 'Brought it home (as a bride)' (L&S s.v. I.B.5c), or any other usage involving motion, would make better sense. See also C. D. Gilbert, 'Ovid, *Met.* 1.4', *CQ* 26 (1976), 111–12, who cites Horace, *Epist.* 2.1.225 and Propertius 1.16.41, neither plausibly. Callimachus' name should not be invoked on such slender grounds.

⁸ R. J. Tarrant, 'Editing Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: Problems and Possibilities', *CP* 77 (1982), 351 n. 35; G. Luck, 'Zum Prooemium von Ovids *Metamorphosen*', *Hermes* 86 (1958), 499–500. Note that Ovid is quite explicit in the *Amores* (1.1.4, 30 and 3.1.8, 37, 66) and the *A.A.* (1.264) that love poetry is connected with elegiac metre. As late as *Rem.* 390, Ovid expects his reputation to grow provided that he continues in the same metrical form.

⁹ Kenney well points out that 'in nova fert animus' plays a trick on the reader. It is syntactically complete and means 'My mind carries me on to new things'. This meaning is not wholly effaced when the rest of the line and the first word of the next are read. Note that this makes in the same direction as 'vos mutastis et illa'.

fuisse reor', he says). In effect, the rest of *Tr.* 1.7 gives his friend permission to circulate the poem, and he ends by adding a six-line proem of apology for its unfinished state, to be prefixed to the poem if his friend sees fit.

There is reason to be sceptical about the burning episode.¹⁰ The reasons Ovid gives for consigning the work to the flames do not really convince, and his professed ignorance that it was extant in more than one copy looks like a rhetorical fiction. But although as late as *Tr.* 3.14 he speaks of the poem as unfinished, it seems likely that it was revised to some extent after the sentence of banishment and published by Ovid himself.

The clearest evidence of this is 15.871ff, which can be satisfactorily explained only as an addition made subsequent to A.D. 8:

iamque opus exegi quod *nec Iovis ira nec ignes*
nec poterit ferrum nec edax abolere vetustas.
 cum volet, illa dies, quae nil nisi corporis huius
 ius habet, incerti spatium mihi finiat aevi:
 parte tamen meliore mei super alta perennis
 astra ferar, nomenque erit indelebile nostrum,
 quaque patet domitis Romana potentia terris,
 ore legar populi, perque omnia saecula fama,
 siquid habent veri vatum praesagia, vivam.

Here '*nec Iovis ira nec ignes*' seems a clear allusion to Augustus' banishment of the poet. Jove's wrath as a metaphor for the banishment is well attested: cf. *Tr.* 1.4.26, 1.5.78, 2.179, 3.5.7, 3.11.62, 4.3.69, 5.2.46, 5.14.27, etc. Note too that in the *Metamorphoses* Jupiter is explicitly compared to Augustus at 1.200–5 and 15.857–60. By contrast, if we try to read 15.871 without reference to the exile, we cannot make wholly satisfactory sense of Jove's *wrath* as one of the things that might consign the poem to oblivion. Fire, sword, and the tooth of time are natural enemies to the immortality of any human creation (cf. the rain, the wind, and the progress of time in Ovid's model, Horace, *Car.* 3.30). We may grant that lightning destroys great buildings, but lightning does not seem to belong to the *topos* of perishability. What we have is lightning sent by a wrathful Jupiter, and Jupiter's wrath comes into play only in quite specific circumstances like those of the poet.¹¹ Ovid therefore almost

¹⁰ See R. Syme, *History in Ovid* (Oxford, 1978), 17 and A. Grisart, 'La publication des "Métamorphoses": une source du récit d'Ovide', in *Atti del convegno internazionale ovidiano* (Rome, 1959), 2.125–56. Grisart believes that the story of the burning is an elaborate imitation of the story of Vergil's attempt to burn the *Aeneid*, a story intended by Ovid to attract the attention of Augustus to the work. (I owe this last reference to John Miller.) Cf. Hollis' edition of *Met.* 8, Intr. p. x, and Nisbet and Hubbard on Horace, *Odes* 1.16.3.

¹¹ The connection between *Iovis ira* and exile is suggested tentatively by Charles Segal, 'Myth and Philosophy in the *Metamorphoses*: Ovid's Augustanism and the Augustan Conclusion of Book XV', *AJP* 90 (1966), 290–2, who cites others less tentatively. See also R. G. M. Nisbet, *JRS* 72 (1982), 54. G. K. Galinsky, *Ovid's Metamorphoses: An Introduction to the Basic Aspects* (Oxford, 1975), 254–5, disputes this reading of 871, pointing out that between 15.857ff. which identify Jupiter and Augustus, and 15.871, there is a reference to Jupiter as purely divine in 15.866, and this means that the reader will understand *Iovis* in 871 as *Iovis*. But Jupiter in that passage is mentioned *en passant* in the company of many other gods, and such a reference is not likely to efface the memory of the pointed comparison just above it. Rather more plausible is his second point, that '*Iovis ira*' picks up the phrase '*fulminis iram*' of 811, one of the things – together with the fall of the heavens – against which the devices of fate are proof. I cannot see, however, that this is decisive. When Ovid says that Jupiter's wrath cannot destroy his work, having just said that Augustus is Jupiter on earth, it seems hard to deny that the phrase, which is unmotivated within the *topos*, looks like a reference to Augustus' wrath.

Max Pohlenz, 'Die Abfassungszeit von Ovids Metamorphosen', *Hermes* 48 (1913), 1–13, finds

certainly altered or added to the end of the poem. It would not be surprising if he wrote a new beginning as well.

Ovid had abandoned elegy and begun to write the *Metamorphoses* for his own reasons, reasons having nothing to do with a sentence of exile that still lay years in the future: perhaps he sensed that he had pretty well exhausted the amatory vein and that there were other fields where his talent could excel. But since he published the poem only after the wrath of Augustus had struck him, it was open to him to feign quite different reasons for his change of manner.¹² Ovid could imply that this, his first production since the decree and in a genre markedly different from anything he had written hitherto, was the result of the harsh experience he had undergone.

But, it will be objected, even if we grant that *di* rather than *Iuppiter* was needed for the conceit in 1.2, how could the audience without further help understand 'the gods' as a reference to his exile? All depends on context. Coming from a poet not known to have suffered any signal reverse, line 2 would strike its readers as either puzzling or vague. But if the poet is known to have met with misfortune, the reader will have ready to hand a common metonymic use of *di* to mean precisely a person's fortunes: cf. 'mutatosque deos' in Horace, *Car.* 1.5.6 and 'adversos...deos' in Propertius 1.1.8. This use is plentifully attested in Ovid's own verse. Throughout the exile poetry, when Ovid speaks of the gods he means in the first place the beings responsible for his changed circumstances and in the second their visible agent Augustus. The gods are used by metonymy for the fate they send in *Tr.* 1.9.4,

atque utinam pro te possint mea vota valere,
quae pro me duros non tetigere deos!

in 4.8.15,

non ita dis visum est, qui me terraque marique
actum Sarmaticis exposuere locis,

in 5.3.13,

sive mihi casus sive hoc dedit ira deorum,

and in numerous other places, and it is no far-fetched use of language for Ovid to allude to the change exile has produced in his writing by saying that the gods have caused it.

One last piece of evidence for this view is *Tr.* 1.1.117–22:

sunt quoque mutatae, ter quinque volumina, formae,
nuper ab exsequiis carmina rapta meis.
his, mando, dicas, inter mutata referri
fortunae vultum corpora posse meae.
nam quae dissimilis subito est effecta priori
flendaque nunc, aliquo tempore laeta fuit.

further evidence of post-exile revision in two lines in the Actaeon episode (3.141–2). The elaborate denial that Actaeon was guilty of crime seems internally unmotivated but explicable when read in the context of similar pleas in the exile poetry and in particular the use of Actaeon as a parallel to the poet himself at *Tr.* 2.103–8.

¹² His exile poetry, of course, already made it plain to his readers that the composition of the *Metamorphoses* was not the result of his exile but antedated it. But Ovid is always the rhetorician, shaping the facts to suit the plea of the moment, and his first audience would not be deterred from interpreting the poem as I suggest by the knowledge that line 2 was *secundum litteram* untrue. After all, even within the exile poetry Ovid's rhetorical fictions are not consistent: *Tr.* 1.1.117ff. seem hard to reconcile with Ovid's burning of his copy of the *Metamorphoses*. Ovid's audience would be used to some fudging of the facts and would furthermore realize that 1.2 expresses on another level the undeniable truth that exile changed forever Ovid's *coepta*, the kind of poems he wrote.

Addressing the personified *Tristium Liber Primus*, just about to depart for Rome, Ovid entrusts him with a message to his *Metamorphoses* (also personified), sitting on the shelf at home, the message that his own fortunes' features can be narrated in the company of the changes of shape the poem already tells of. These lines are a striking parallel to our passage, for just as Ovid in the *Tristia* passage zeugmatically joins the changed bodies of his mythological figures with the change, caused by exile, in the poet's own fortune, so in the *Metamorphoses* proem he joins the changed bodies and the change in the poet's work, likewise caused by exile. Obviously there was not going to be any place in the poem itself for a description of the metamorphosis of his own fortunes. If I am right, however, Ovid succeeded in adding a metamorphosis of a slightly different kind (poetic rather than personal) to the proem, inserting it into the parenthesis in line 2. The change is obliquely alluded to in lines 3–4 as well. Gone now is the studied frivolity of the *Amores*, with its deliberate rejection of sustained narrative and divine and heroic subject-matter. Now, says Ovid, I will give you a 'perpetuum carmen' extending from creation to our own day.

Self-reference is the privilege of lyric and not narrative poetry, and Ovid rightly confines such references to proem and epilogue. To catch their exact tone is not easy. We might be tempted to think that 1.2 was a disguised plea for the emperor's forgiveness on the ground that exile had changed Ovid. But it seems hard to reconcile contrition with the defiant prediction of immortality, despite the worst Jove can do to him, that he makes in the epilogue. Perhaps, however, the tone of the epilogue is not defiance but a warning to Augustus that the poet he has exiled is destined to be immortal and that Ovid's fate will matter to posterity. At the same time, the proem shows that he is not intransigent but has changed his poetic manner in response to Augustus' chastisement.

On another level proem and epilogue may suggest that Ovid has now become the poet he was fated to be, and that, just as so many of the heroes and heroines of his epic are changed into birds, beasts, trees, or flowers by the gods who have pity on the pain of their mortal existence, so the pain of Ovid's exile has changed him into a new kind of poet. And just as the heroes and heroines find relief from their mortal existence in the immortality and unchangeability of their non-human shape, so the poet's final metamorphosis into a 'nomen indelebile' is his consolation for the irretrievable ruin of his ordinary human happiness.*

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