

Nature Art

Ovid's Poetics of Creation in the *Metamorphoses*

by

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This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to and quotation in this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, cited and referenced.

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Man ist um den Preis künstler, dass man Das, was alle Nichtkünstler "Form" nennen, als Inhalt, als "die Sache" selbst empfindet. Damit gehört man freilich in eine verkehrte Welt: denn nunmehr wird einem der Inhalt zu etwas bloss formalen, - unser Leben eingerechnet.

What it takes to be an artist is that one experience what all non-artists call "form" as content, as "the matter itself". With that, of course, one is relegated to an inverted world. For from now on one takes content to be something merely formal- including one's own life.

Friedrich Nietzsche¹

The mysteries of mimicry had a special attraction for me. Its phenomena showed an artistic perfection usually associated with man-wrought things. Consider the imitation of oozing poison by bubblelike macules on a wing (complete with pseudo-refraction) or by yellow knobs on a chrysalis ("Don't eat me- I have already been squashed, sampled and rejected"). Consider the tricks of an acrobatic caterpillar (of the Lobster Moth) which in infancy looks like bird's dung, but after moulting develops scrabbly hymenopteroid appendages and baroque characteristics, allowing the extraordinary fellow to play two parts at once (like the actor in oriental shows who *becomes* a pair of intertwined wrestlers): that of a writhing larva and that of a big ant seemingly harrowing it. When a certain moth resembles a certain wasp in shape and colour, it also walks and shakes its antennae in a waspish unmothlike manner. When a butterfly has to look like a leaf, not only are all the details of a leaf beautifully rendered but markings mimicking grub-bored holes are generously thrown in. "Natural selection", in the Darwinian sense, could not explain the miraculous coincidence of imitative aspect and imitative behaviour, nor could one appeal to the theory of "the struggle for life" when a protective device was carried to a point of mimetic subtlety, exuberance and luxury far in excess of a predator's power of appreciation. I discovered in nature the nonutilitarian delights that I sought in art. Both were a form of magic, both were a game of intricate enchantment and deception.

Vladimir Nabokov *Speak, Memory*²

¹ Kaufmann (1968) *Der Wille zur Macht* 818 7N

² (1951), 124 - 25

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Introduction

Aetas Ovidiana

The writing of a thesis, like any extended adventure, is a mix of excited discovery and rediscovery with occasional disappointment and misgiving (one is seldom either as original or as precise as one had hoped to be).³ As I approached the final stages of this small homage to a favourite poet, I experienced one of those happy co-incidences, which seem to be one among the many unforeseeable delights of literary activity. I chanced upon a recent edition of Yevgeny Zamyatin's novel *We*. In his introduction to this dystopian classic, the translator seems to be invoking my Ovid, that is my imagined poet, the one I have conjectured from sayings and doings and writings into an atmosphere or personality, over years of reading and these latest of intense research. "Yevgeny Ivanovich Zamyatin was born . . . in the small provincial town of Lebedyan, which lay on the bank of the River Don 200 miles to the south of Moscow . . . He died in exile in Paris on March 10, 1937. Memoirists recall him as an infinitely civilized man, dapper to a fault, and as elegant in manner as in dress . . . The point is that he combined in his person the two belligerents, the City and the Country . . ." ⁴ Provincial youth, outstanding urbanity and final exile is nice co-incidence. Combining the belligerents of country and city is family likeness. In science fiction on the one hand, in eclectic hybridity of science, myth and philosophy on the other, both are artists who deliver portraits of their present world through images of another fantastical time. The spirit of imagination, invention and creatively sustained paradox endures.

The second year of work on this project also saw me moving from my (relatively) cosmopolitan home city to a lovely country campus, an idyllic *locus amoenus*, set

³ I am both pre-empted by and indebted, above all, to Hardie, Solodow, Knox, Segal and especially in the later stages to Nikopoulos and to Spahlinger. The last two more or less wrote the books I had in mind to write. I discovered Hardie and Spahlinger's work on a semester sabbatical in Paris very shortly before submission, perhaps that were better in any case. Even in title my work seemed if not an *imitation*, a weaker emanation of Spahlinger's study: *Ars latet arte sua: Untersuchungen zur Poetologie in den Metamorphosen Ovids* (1996).

⁴ Brown, C. [trans.] *Yevgeny Zamyatin- We* (1993), xiv-xv

in the rugged Eastern Cape, with its bristling, horrible veldt surrounding, so wild and exciting with hundreds of untamed species. Long walks with Ovid on my mind and a volume in my pocket have been excursions into an unpredictable landscape, where every mountain, rock formation, deserted beach, glade, lagoon, pool, night sky, shadowless noon, flowering tree and mute, chirping, singing or braying creature have seemed brilliant, witty inventions, evocations in a richly allusive environment of animate signs and beings. I like to think that it is not simply that I have been transformed by too much contact with the verse into some form of the monomaniac thesis writer. No, I prefer to enjoy the feeling of volatility and kinship between bodies, the pleasure of recognition and coincidence and the sense of the land as a kind of living language that reading Roman verse has stimulated in myself. If anything, I suffer only from a kind of temperamental ovidianism. There are worse afflictions. Much recent Ovid scholarship is devoted to the reception of the poet's work. Such is the influence and the variety of fashions associated with Ovid that this is a rich field for some and particularly amenable to the student of comparative literary studies. A word one encounters is 'rehabilitation'. Perhaps it is that I am one of a new generation of keen Ovid students to whom it seems absurd that this poet ever had a reputation that needed either to be justified or rehabilitated.⁵

⁵ Boillat (1976), 109; in 1999 Sara Myers could write in a survey article 'The Metamorphosis of a Poet: Recent Work on Ovid' *The Journal of Roman Studies* Vol.89 (1999), 190-204, "It is by now true that Ovidian studies have 'arrived', apologies are no longer issued, nor are defences launched at the beginning of books. The nineties alone have so far seen the appearance of over fifty new books in English, French, Italian, and German, and not just on the *Metamorphoses* . . ." and more along those lines; also Myers' review of Tissol, Myers (1998).

I have approached this very brief study as an exercise in research and close reading, preparatory to doctoral work and, hopefully, a lifetime of reading and meditating on literature. What follows is a fugue, an étude rather than a concerto. I have tried to be broadly informed but rigorous in practice and focussed in scope and attention to the text itself. I examine specific motifs in the *Metamorphoses*, motifs revealed in the forms of Ovid's language, motifs that reveal themes and themes that must be fascinating to any student of the history of Roman and Greek culture and ideas. I have followed the paths that interpret the *Metamorphoses* in terms of its art and the representations of nature and landscape, artist and production.

It has seemed most attractive and defensible to me to work out of an immersion in the work itself, its substance, which is language. Through closely observed commentary, lexical floodlighting and etymological sifting then, I have sought to discover and explain the sensibility or aesthetic disposition out of which the work was formed. If, however, mine is a study of the artistry and aesthetic ideas of Ovid through philological observation and literary interpretation, it is not one that takes an 'aestheticist' line any more than a 'socio-historical' one (and those are not mutually exclusive approaches anyway). I have tried less to 'take a line', for now, than to be an open-minded detective following the *vestigia* of Ovid's weightless feet.

If in critically developing the ideas others have already articulated I occasionally stumble into a clearing of fresh insight, though this would make me very happy, I could still not deny that it is from those excellent works of many other better and wiser minds that I have derived my good fortune and often my inspiration. It is exciting to be a young, aspirant scholar and see how others have gone before oneself so often with such imaginative sensitivity to the poetry. My whole, humble work, no doubt, must read as an acknowledgement of the influence and education I have received from others. Of that at least, I hope, I may be proud.

i

Prisca iuvent alios, ego me nunc denique natum
 gratulor: haec aetas moribus apta meis

AA 3.121-2⁶

Consistently, Ovid's work demonstrates an interest in artifice and an exploration and exploitation of all the possibilities offered by the meeting of human and non-human, the tension between natural and normal, being and becoming. In the poet's deft hands tradition and invention, narrative device and linguistic play- all the shining machinery of a sophisticated, sleek mimesis- comes into smooth action. It would not be quite correct to say that his *Metamorphoses* is *about* anything as such or that it has a special lesson. Its subject is revealed in its form and style. It is surely arguable that his extended, episodic *tour* reveals an underlying fascination with art, the artist and artistry. It is a thematic fascination. There are many returns to scenes and motifs of perilous and charged contact between the human and non-human, between the formless and the fabricating hand. The present which is the luminous, evanescent threshold of past and future, is an identically elusive and bright two-dimensional curtain to the baseless fabric of Ovid's visions: his poem has the same density, the same fleeting achronic irreality as the *present*. In the *Metamorphoses*, the naïve and the self-conscious meet and in the narrative equivalent of seduction, of the encounter of experience and innocence, things yield their forms through gracefulness of style, through the persuasion of suggestion and the plausibility conferred by the control of language. Love and metamorphosis, Ovid is the expert and *praeceptor* in both kinds of transformation.⁷

⁶ Kenney (1961)

⁷ This is a subject I would like to pursue further, this relationship between love, rhetoric, transformation and seduction. Note Anderson's comments: "The power of love to transform their ideas, its impetus to reshape words and names (*nomina*), illustrated in the mutual love of Cephalus and Procris, manifests itself most clearly in the soliloquies attributed to various heroines.", Anderson (1963), 15.

The poem, one may say, is like a new kind of cosmographic shield: in it time is momentary, simultaneously images and narratives take place within the borders of the work, a world of artificially coeval time and contiguous space. It is a synoptic chart of myth, history and philosophy; an encyclopaedic compendium and incorporation of literary versions and allusions. Like any interesting work of art, it is also the elaboration of a particular *Weltanschauung*, wealthy in points for interpretation and investigation as a cultural map, a cross-sectional image of its historical moment. The *Metamorphoses* is an inset narrative within the larger one of Roman history: a description of a specifically Augustan historical, geographical and intellectual imagination. That imagination was constructed from the scaffold of certain important norms, values and ideas, one of which was the universality of Roman *imperium* and, more broadly, a sense of globalism, a 'world-consciousness' which designated Rome the mastering centre of a universe of centripetal varieties. Augustan power well appreciated the imperatives of power and its entrenchment through physical realization: values must be made visible, the world must be remade, made new even as it claims the authority and dignity of the past. Change and continuity, their inherent tensions, these were the topics and energetic forces of the *Zeitgeist* out of which Ovid's new epic emerged.

ii

Language itself the secret protagonist

expedit esse deos et, ut expedit, esse putemus

AA I.637

Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is a synthetic and paradoxical work. It is literary and oratorical; ironic and self-conscious; fabulous and atmospheric; delicately Callimachaeian and ambitiously epic; irreligious and mythological it aims to entertain and mockingly excel its predecessors, to win immortal literary *fama* or *kleos*,-

quid petitur sacris, nisi tantum fama, poetis?
hoc votum nostri summi laboris habet.⁸

It must assure indestructible, changeless fame for its author out of the light, unstable stuff of passing and change and immaterial *logos*. The display of learning, the bemused and amusing agonistic touches, the marshalling of philosophy, lore, history and myth as a vehicle for virtuoso poetic innovation and brilliant vividness of representation, all combine to form a Taj Mahal for P. Ovidius Naso in an age of private and public memorialism, civic and literary monumentalism.

Words, language itself, have a strange duplicitous character. Language is both eternal form and transient current. In good poetry shimmering potential energy is conducted and transmitted in vividly kinetic *enargeia*. Words themselves perform and dissipate, as they live they pass away until recalled again. *Mimesis*, representation and the arts of the imagination summon what is absent and make present, by illusion and the suspension of disbelief. Just as road-side tombs and statues recall patrons and families long stilled by death so do actors, words, narratives, images, *ekphrases*: all the simulacra of invention evoke, make visible and instantaneously real.⁹ Exactly as language itself does, *mimesis* bodies forth the bodiless. This parallelism between language and representation more generally, the ontological duplicity, their phantom mnemonic lightness did not escape Ovid. This electric charge that runs between absence and presence, between ideal and real, form and thing is the static electric force with which the *Metamorphoses* crackles.

The *Metamorphoses* in its delicate playfulness is rich in the involuted controversies of relativist subjectivism and realist objectivity. Composed as it is of the modified mythical it relies on a kind of ontological discrepancy between man and nature, presence and absence, being and becoming. It extends ideas and words to their illogical conclusions, and enjoys extending metaphors into

⁸ AA. III 403-4

⁹ To my chagrin, I only read Hardie's Ovid's *Poetics of Illusion* (2002), in the late stages of editing this thesis. The images, interests and the leads I follow often chime with his, here I think of his Chapter 3 "Death, desire and monuments", 62-105 and this from his introduction: "To put it another way, while much recent criticism has been concerned with the epistemological moment of Ovidian poetics, this book focuses more on the ontological moment . . .", 6, etc.

realities, confusing the divisions between appearance and reality, words and things.¹⁰ This explains, for example, the taste for pun, syllepsis and zeugma. Ovid plays with language and thus makes a play of reality, merging and articulating before our eyes. His work's first reality is verbal. The world is always unravelled by and woven out of language. Language, whose particular character is style, and the poet himself who survives so vividly in that his personality is transmogrified into this distinctive style: these are the protagonists that draw together the threads of the poem.

¹⁰ Cf. "The tendency to expose the ambiguities of language, to discover the proper sense behind a figure and restore it to its original sense in order to show the paradoxes to which it can give rise, or to reconstruct the aetiology of a metaphor, is abundantly active within the poem: often the metamorphosis itself is nothing but a metaphor in narrative form (telling a metamorphosis, says Barkan, 'is to make flesh of metaphors'), . . .", Rosati, 240; and "Changing names, changing the meaning of words can therefore produce results as drastic as those caused by changing forms.", Anderson (1963), 20.

iii

Procedure

*haec tibi erunt artes*¹¹

In the present study I am necessarily circumscribed. I limit myself to an examination of certain most pertinent passages from the *Metamorphoses*, intending to test through a close study of specific episodes in the text itself a fairly simple suspicion: Ovid is conspicuously interested in art and the nature and meaning, or at least effect, of his own enterprise as artificer, the status of art/invention and artist, the durable and the transient, the natural and the made and the interpenetration, even interdependence, of these categories. This is evidenced in the returns to images of stasis and flux; the animated and inanimate; the real and the reflected; the apparent and the hidden; the singer and story teller and the mute; the given or natural and the made or unnatural; and the thematization of storytelling. My reduced range of study has at its centre the opening lines of the work and the first cosmogony in Book I and proceeds to some study of passages from III and X. These books are particularly rich in images and motifs, which I find exemplary. This is a selectiveness, however, informed by a familiarity with the entire work and an awareness of all the examples possible to adduce.

From the suggestive cosmogonic accounts of Book I and the re-editing of creation in the flood with its human involvement to the scenes of divine, human and chthonic contest and the repeated episodes of innocents, pristine and resolutely virginal forest-dwelling beauties and glamorous natural sanctuaries violated; to episodes of petrification and allusions to statuary (inchoate or over-formed); *ekphrases* and high-resolution *enargeia*, like densely pixelated images, there is a great deal in Ovid to take in and discuss. There are recondite catalogues and many instances of exhibited Hellenistic erudition. There are potentially emblematic tales of singers like Apollo and Orpheus. Intrusions, inversions, transgressions: the division of country and town is fraught and insecure. There is a strong feeling of exotic dislocation combined with a tendency to

¹¹ *Aen.* VI 852

anachronistically or anomalously Romanize. Lust, perverse love, a certain natural order implied by the sense of the monstrous and the somewhat transgressive - too god-like - quality in the act of invention, the *Metamorphoses* in its suggestiveness seems to ramify infinitely. I divide the study into five short chapters.

Chapter I, *Tempora & Ars*, closely examines the opening and closing lines of the work, its various scholarly interpretations and literary precedents with a view to understanding the poet's attitude to his material, sources and genre. It concludes with remarks on the subject of point of view in the *Metamorphoses*.

Chapter II continues this discussion taking in a critical appreciation of style, and the place of imitation in Ovid's work. The idea is to try to establish from these a sense of how to proceed to read and engage with the broader work. The career and status of Ovid's poem itself is one of transformations: transformations and incorporations of other works and inspirations for many other later versions.

The third chapter, *Forma*, is a close reading of the cosmogony of Book I, that is lines 5-88. Drawing on, balancing and evaluating various scholarly opinions on this creation account and moving steadily through the verse I discover, what I argue are features that may be said to explicate an Ovidian poetics for the *Metamorphoses*. This is a poetics of creation and fabrication, of material and its *formation* by a mastering human subject. We are in a world of time and space which takes shape and meaning from man and his craft.

Imago, chapter IV, takes up the question of the artist and his relationship to art and artistic product. I study the episodes that relate the fates of Orpheus, Pygmalion and Narcissus as types of artist and consider what these reflect about Ovid himself and what they may contribute to our understanding of his poetics, how he conceived his role and his work. In conclusion of this I offer a discussion of the term *imago*, one that is recurrent enough in the work to qualify as a notable motif.

The final chapter before a dense, if brief, conclusion is *Locus - au jardin des Métamorphoses*. There I consider what may be termed a poetics of place as revealed in the poem. I examine, from Book III, some type-scenes of *locus amoenus* violated and consider the significance of Ovid's style of evocation of landscape and place for our general reading and interpretation of the poem.

Town and country, boundary and continuity, normal and abnormal, desire and control, *rudis* and *cultus*, wild and artificial: it is a work of shifts, of opposites, the cinematic flux and the static picturesque. *Ars* and *natura* and the interpenetration of these conditions are the sustained tensions and recurring theme in Ovid's work. Vividly collocated, pathetically and comically related, all are antitheses found abundantly throughout the work and though I shall not hesitate to refer to books outside of those mentioned, they will be my focus.

I try to show how important is Ovid's pre-occupation with form and content in shaping the work and yielding its meaning. The poet takes pleasure in illusions, their technique and deft execution. It is a pleasure that betrays a mind fascinated by the strange powers of *diegesis*, *mimesis* and *poiesis* and the quasi magical human capacity for suspension of disbelief. *Ars*, the *artifex* that never becomes simplistically self-referential yet is ever conscious of the paradoxical character of himself and others (poets and readers) as, almost mysteriously, fabricators of a world which is nevertheless given. It is by the evidence of Ovid's interest in the making of the world, of images of the world and that great, disturbed and shifting limen of *natura* and *imago* that the following discussion is inspired.

I

Tempora & Ars

Beginning & End

quid agatur prohoemio, quae ratio et quam varia narrandi

Quintilian *Inst.* X ii. 27

But in speeches and epic poems the exordia provide a sample of the subject, in order that the hearers may know beforehand what it is about, and that the mind may not be kept in suspense, for that which is undefined leads astray; so that he who puts the beginning, so to say, into the hearers hand enables him, if he holds fast to it, to follow the story.

Aristotle *Rh.* 3.1415a12f¹²

We will remember the peculiar notes struck, quite deliberately, by Ovid in the proem to his work. These are much discussed lines,¹³ characteristically programmatic¹⁴ they are extremely succinct and flash several signals of quite novel intent. We take special care over this very concise introduction, knowing the function of the epic proem as a kind of manifesto of poetics and intent, its role as an atrium to the labyrinth of song, a literary setting for all that follows.

In nova fert animus mutatas dicere formas

¹² Freese (1947)

¹³ Bömer and Diller in von Albrecht (1968); Kenney (1976), 47-53; Gilbert (1976); Relihan (1984); Kovacs (1987); Barchiesi (1991) *inter al.*

¹⁴ Van Tress (2004), 24-5 sums up the development of the epic proem from Homer to the post-Hellenistic and Virgil. Her description of Virgil's proem as of the *quis* and *quale* kind might be equally said of Ovid's and "The movement of the entire poem, from Troy to Rome, is anticipated with the long relative clause beginning with *Trioae* and ending with *Romae...*" brings to mind *ab origine mundi/ ad mea...tempora*; cf. also Kenney (1976).

corpora: di, coeptis (nam vos mutastis et illa)
 aspirate meis primaque ab origine mundi
 ad mea perpetuum deducite tempora carmen.

I. 1-4¹⁵

The first words of his work, *in*, a preposition and *nova* form a phrase, which must set a tone almost immediately and distinguish the following work from other epics. The line is run-on and the sense is only fully disclosed with the emphatic *corpora*. Shapes or forms changed into new or strange bodies is the subject.¹⁶ *fert animus...dicere*¹⁷ in keeping with the initial hint of *in nova* makes an unexpected and first appearance in poetry, 'my spirit is borne to tell'.¹⁸ The two most

¹⁵ Poor Ovid, from exile, worried for his greatest creation, of which he was clearly so parentally proud -

. . . sed carmina maior imago
 sunt mea, quae mando qualiacumque legas,
 carmina mutatas hominum ducentia formas,
 infelix domini quod fuga rupit opus. (*Tristia* I vii 11-14),

but anxious for its reception and durability of reputation, he asks us to append a six line *captatio benevolentiae* to the opening of his *rude carmen* at *Tristia* I vii 33-40, of which I give the last two lines:

quicquid in his igitur vitii rude carmen habebit,
 emendaturus, si licuisset, erat.

¹⁶ *Novus* is tantamount to '*alius*', cf. Bömer (1969), 11

¹⁷ Bömer (1969), 11: "*fert animus* ist eine ursprünglich prosaische Wendung, die nur vorübergehend poetisch gebraucht worden ist."; Due (1974), 95 "Ovid says *fert animus* and this combination contains an element of arbitrariness, which is absent from Virgil's *cano*"; Anderson (1997), 150, "*fert animus*: in this unusual and untraditional phrase (which works with the infinitive *dicere*) Ovid declares that the primary force behind his poem is his own rational intelligence." But what voice is *fert*? Is it active with *me* to be understood or is it a middle, 'my mind is borne'? It is an apt ambiguity perhaps, characterizing Ovid and his work as intermediary here at the beginning between traditionally inspired and a new work of very particular and individual agency.

¹⁸ Anderson (1997), 150 "Beginning with a preposition and delaying the noun...tends to puzzle expectations"; Glenn (1986), 1: "... Ovid is delivering a serious poem in the epic tradition, ... At the same time this statement is comic because it is flat, and it is flat because it is circular. For saying that the subject is forms changed into new bodies is rather like saying that it is circles becoming rings ... Hesiod's didactic epic promises revelations, and Lucretius' the truth about Nature. Ovid's promises precious little ... vague, abstract and bloodless ... the chief annoyance created by the statement of subject is its lack of meaning ... the reader has the feeling that either he is the victim of a hoax or his intelligence is being ridiculed ... " I do not feel that this is the case at all. Surely Glenn misses the operative word of the opening lines and the

important aspects of these opening lines are the unusualness of diction and tone, a design to set apart this work from Virgil's¹⁹ and establish its unique character. As *dicere* also is not Virgil's *cano*, in the one place where an ordinary epic poet may speak in the first person, the prologue, Ovid ironically, pointedly distinct, uses an impersonal construction. Significantly, as Anderson puts it "...Ovid declares that the primary force behind his poem is his own active rational intelligence."²⁰ There is no claim of higher or even merely exterior inspiration, no call to muse or god to speak through him, no ἄειδε θεά or Μουσάων Ἐλικωνιάδων ἀρχώμεθ' αἰδεῖν, Ἀρχόμενος σέο, Φοίβε, or *Aeneadum genatrix...alma Venus* or *Musa mihi cause memora*.

The poet, his own *animus*, bears him off to tell, to speak. The word by which this quasi arrogation of the Apolline genius to himself is expressed, *dicere*, is not, Bömer shows,²¹ in itself unpoetical, citing instances in Virgilian Bucolic and Horation Ode of its use. It is however remarkable for its context here at the opening of a hexametric work where we conventionally find *canere* and αἰδεῖν. Ovid is deliberately unconventional, *novus*.

The apostrophe to the gods generally, not to the specific muses or a god, further draws our attention and begins to establish the poet as standing in peculiar relation to higher powers and to his own work.²² *Di* again, is unusual and original, "Es ist ganz ungewöhnlich, dass zu Beginn eines literarischen Werkes *alle* Götter, ohne Ausnahme oder nähere Charakterisierung, angerufen werden.

defining theme of the larger work: *nova*? Ovid's work is of new versions, strange, awful, other forms. This is not a flat and tautological opening at all, even if it is new and unusual for epic.

¹⁹ "Ovid hat damit offenbar dem Anfang eine besondere Prägung geben wollen, die sein Werk, obwohl epischen Charakters, beispielsweise sofort von Vergil unterschied." And Kenney (1973), 117 "In setting out to write the *Metamorphoses* Ovid was attempting something for which, as he envisaged the undertaking, no precedents existed; and those readers who instinctively sense in the first four words of the poem, *in nova fert animus*, read autonomously, a proclamation to that effect are, I think, following a hint intended by him."

²⁰ Anderson (1997), 150

²¹ *dicere* is not "anspruchloser", less ambitious than *canere* as it may seem. See OLD s.v. 2. *dico* 4 a. Hor. *carm. saec.* 8. 75 and Virg. *Ecl.* 4. 53

²² Perhaps implicitly, these are worldly as well as divine powers. The *Metamorphoses* is never really convincingly the kind of work that autocrats would love, with its heterogeneities, ironies and gratuitous, humorous and very independent sensibility, it is both highly individualistic and in its polyphonies almost anarchic.

Ovids Invokation ist die erste dieser Art."²³ Again, this will be Ovid's deliberate point: his work is of its own kind he says, it is new and original and is formed by the genius of P. Ovidius Naso. The apostrophe to gods, as if a *de rigueur* generic convention, since it must be made, is done so in these unusual terms, *ohne Ausnahme oder naehere Charakterisierung*,²⁴ the poet is deliberately vague and surely also subtly defiant in this self-assertion.

Breathe on, blow kindly on these undertakings, here at least the use of the substantive *coeptis*²⁵ and *aspirate*²⁶ are uncontroversially in the tone of poetic invocation, but this suitably epic phrase encloses and stands in only stronger contrast with what is really a very cheeky touch. *Nam vos mutastis et illa* is wonderfully a compact expression of attitude taken, tonal nuance, epic usage, rhetorical deftness and humour.²⁷ It is also as many commentators have pointed

²³ Bömer (1969), 12; cf. Newman (1967) on *canere* and the poet as *vates*, but also Perkins (2000) and O'Hara (1990) for revision and development of his ideas; also the interesting point in Kenney (1976), 49 "...the gods, not only Apollo on this occasion but the whole of Olympus (perhaps...a deliberate programmatic perversion of the topos: an implicit denial of Apollo's exclusive right to dictate the poet's course?)..."; "Ovid is reticent but certainly not dismissive about the role of the gods in his poem . . . : the shortest divine invocation in world literature (two letters, *di*) is by no means the least relevant." Barchiesi (1999), 113; "En premier lieu, la clarté du prologue (1,2) dispense le poete de faire intervenir les dieux en chaque episode, si le ressort de l'action ne réclame pas leur présence. On peut minimiser leur rôle; la nature pourtant ne les exclut pas." Boillat (1976), 34-5

²⁴ Bömer (1969), 12

²⁵ Though even on this use, Due (1974), 95 will point out the "...not very distant echo of Virgil, not from the *Aeneid* but from the *Georgica*, where the poet addresses Caesar, a god to be, and prays for his favour: *da facilem cursum atque audacibus adnue coeptis* (Virg. *Georg.* 1.40) Ovid's undertaking was perhaps not less daring than Virgil's but he does not adopt Virgil's self-confident modesty implied in the use of the adjective *audax*; he proudly puts forward his own person and says *coepta mea*."; also Lee (1953), 69.

²⁶ Lee (1953), 69-70, thinks that *aspirate* is the sailing metaphor, poem as vessel and prayer for good winds, echoed in the following *deducere*, which can also mean launch a ship. On this idea, Bömer (1969), 15 after lengthy discussion of the associations of *perpetuum deducere carmen*: "Es besteht demnach keine Veranlassung, *deducere* als Übernahme einer Vorstellung aus der Schifffahrt (I3) zu verstehen; sehr mutig Lee z. St., der in *deducere* Schifffahrt und Spinnen gleichzeitig erkennen will: das ist ein zu einfaches Rezept für jede Interpretation."

²⁷ Bömer (1969), Vol. I, 13, citing Luck amongst others speaks of Ovid here allowing himself "echt ovidischen Scherz (typical ovidian horseplay) und mit genialischer Frechheit gesagt: *et illa*". This 'congenial sauciness' is exactly very Ovidian, this deliberate ambiguity is in itself much of the point of the work. It must surely underline at every point the poet's authority, the role of his subjective imagination constructing and controlling the diverse material of the work.

out, the point at which the audience knows certainly for the first time that the elegist has turned to epic with four long syllables after the caesura in line 2 making it clear that this is also an hexameter line. *coepta* too suggests the common trope of theme diverted, intention deflected by meddling gods.²⁸ We think of course of earlier *recusationes* such as:

Arma gravi numero violentaque bella parabam
edere, materia conveniente modis.
par erat inferior versus; risisse Cupido
dicitur atque unum surripuisse pedem.

Am. I 1-4

Ovid himself at the opening of the *Amores*, but also initially Callimachus' advisory Apollo in the contentious introductory lines of *Aetia* I telling the poet to keep it slender – θρέψαι τὴν Μοῦσσαν δ' ὠγαθὲ λεπταλέην.²⁹ The god who must take formal responsibility, by this elegant self-exculpation becomes, from Callimachus, a Roman motif. Horace at *Odes* I.6, Propertius at III.3 and most resonantly for Ovid's *Metamorphoses* Virgil at *Eclogue* VI.3-6,

cum canerem reges et proelia, Cynthus aurem
vellit et admonuit: "Pastorem, Tityre, pingues
pascere oportet oves, deductum dicere carmen"

It is difficult not to feel that in some way Ovid is using the same technique in the opening lines of his epic in the reverse: have the gods transformed the noted elegist's lines into hexameters now? Is he deflected once again from his intended strain in the opposite direction, from the lilt of elegy back to the mode of epic and its *arma gravi numero violentaque bella . . . materia conveniente modis* by gods who must take the blame? Is there anticipated surprise or retrospective inquiry from the poem's projected audience as to why now if not then?

²⁸ " . . . the word is ambiguous . . . If the literal sense of '*coeptis*' is pressed, the words imply that he had actually embarked upon another kind of poem but the gods had deflected his purpose. We have, that is to say, the adumbration, faint but in the context unmistakable, of the now classical theophany and divine admonition." Kenney (1976), 49

²⁹ *Aetia* I 24

The use of *nam* at I.2, I find, is marvellously loaded. It is typical of the parenthetical phrase,³⁰ to be sure and hardly out of place in invocation, (“gehört zur Parenthese überhaupt und insbesondere zur Götteranrufung”).³¹ But doesn't it also have a strong forensic texture? It is after all more common in verse to make the particle, either mild adversative or emphatic as it is, to follow the first word of the parenthesis. In prose however *nam* typically introduces such a clause, often one that aims to disarm anticipated reservation or disagreement.³² One may argue that Ovid here is at once epical and delicately oratorical³³ in this cunning gesture. *Nam vos et* is not merely invocatory pleading, but also gently argumentative. The narrative voice seems to anticipate concession to the poet's point, from the gods. Ovid does not speak very much like a simple, self-effacing servant of divinity.³⁴

³⁰ “...a technical device which Ovid was to make peculiarly his own: the important point that we have just discussed is communicated not merely allusively but in parenthesis.” Kenney (1976), 50

³¹ See Bömer (1969), Vol.I,13; on Hymnal resources and *Metamorphoses* see Barchiesi (1999); von Albrecht (1968).

³² See OLD s.v. *nam* B. 5

³³ Because rhetoric, oratory and the suasions of elegy, especially in the hands of Ovid, are at little pains to disguise it themselves, or admit a subjective point of view. Epic language and account is traditionally, on the other hand, designed to be experienced as having the authority of nature itself, unambiguously ontologically pure so to speak. Cf. Herter (1948), 129 “Der epischen Objektivität steht also von jeher eine ebenso ausgesprochene elegische Subjektivität gegenüber.”

³⁴ A note on *et* and *illa*: the *illa-illas* dispute is hot if cooling amidst the détente of recent scholarly consensus and ascription to Kenney's argument for *illa* rather than *illas*, Anderson (1997) 151. Though, ‘consensus’ is too strong perhaps. Lee (1953), for example still followed Housman in arguing “...that ‘et’ here emphasises ‘mutastis’ rather than ‘illas’”. The logical structure is: ‘Inspire me to tell of transformations, for you were also the cause of them’.” I would tend to follow those like Anderson who argue that *illa* complements *coepta*, and the phrase that the parenthesis interrupts, if I were forced to say one or the other, but I am not. The point once again is the ambiguity of the phrase. We witness a witty allusion to the the generic and stylistic transformation that Ovid, a new kind of poet, is undertaking: “...the witty change that seems to be transforming the expected elegiac meter into hexameter points to *illa*; and the *et* before the demonstrative would seem to be more logical if it means ‘those beginnings also’ rather than ‘those forms also’”, Anderson (1997)151; but Knox (1986), 9 “The metrical sleight of hand recalls the earlier representation of divine intervention in *Amores* 1.1 . . . It does not necessarily follow that by the change of meter in the *Met.* Ovid means to suggest a corresponding change of style from the elegiac to epic. Here he intends only to provoke; . . .”; see Tarrant's apparatus criticus: *illa* (sc. *Coepta*); see also Kovacs (1987) ‘Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.2’; Bömer (1969), 13 - 14 as ever gives a comprehensive account of the different views on disparate readings.

The impersonal construction of *fert animus dicere* is set off by the use of the two personal possessive pronouns *meis* and *mea* in lines 3 and 4. By this point the role of the epic poet is being established as atypically involved, his ownership of the work is openly declared. *Primaque ab origine mundi*, the remote, impersonal, very earliest beginnings of the world stands in contrast with the personal *mea tempora*. The temporal circumscription of *ab origine mundi . . . ad mea tempora* is significant in that it forms part of a proem, which delimits and characterizes the following work very roundly and with brevity. It is a surprisingly inclusive and ambitious ambit to which the poet must live up or seem the victim of literary hubris. There is suspense in such promise. *primaque ab origine mundi* is the kind of echo with which Ovid's personal *Weltgedicht* will be heard to vibrate.³⁵

The proem is establishing a personal authorial voice and simultaneously determining the object: the transformation of forms into new bodies; preliminary protagonists in the form of the gods whose very blessing is being invoked and an attitude to those gods and their role in the creation of this work - for the voice does not invite the muse to sing through him, nor to inspire him, but to breathe over his undertaking - and a delimitation of time scale from the origin, the creation of the world, 'to my own time'. It is four lines of high cheek, rich innuendo, multiple allusion and quite precise self-definition in smoothly rhythmical lines that climax in the golden verse of line 4.

Mea tempora discloses again the spirit of self-regard in which the work is to be achieved.³⁶ It is a typically insolent trajectory, *primaque ab origine mundi . . . ad mea tempora*, it is proprietary and defines the scale of universal time in terms of the poet himself. There is a sinister metamorphosis that we know will come about, but of which Ovid at this stage is still tragic-pathetically unaware, the transformation of this phrase into the *tua tempora* of the exilic Epistle to Augustus, where describing his *Metamorphoses* at *Tristia* 2.559-60, he writes:

pauca quibus prima surgens ab origine mundi

³⁵ Cf. Lucr. V 548, 678 & III 331, 771; Virg. *Georg.* III 48 & IV 286 where the idea of a history from primordial beginnings is expressed similarly in different variations.

³⁶ Feeney citing the social scientist Helga Nowotny discusses power and the constructions of time in detail, "...not just 'my times', 'the era I happen to live in', but, as Barchiesi further demonstrates, 'my Times', with a capital 'T', ie., the *Fasti*, whose first word and alternative title is *Tempora*. The arrow of Ovid's hexametric time will carry on down until it hits the circle of his elegiac time.", Feeney (1999), 14.

in tua deduxi tempora, Caesar opus.³⁷

Even by slow death and certainly not by commanded suicide Augustus could not have devised so exquisitely painful a form of torture for Ovid as the Pontic exile. The poet, himself and his corpus, is so much the peculiar product or effect of Roman *urban* existence, the cultural, personal and intellectual context in which develops that complex set of relations, which is his becoming. The nature of the transition is evident and depends upon a shift in ownership of *auctoritas*.³⁸ The Ovid of the *Metamorphoses*, it should be clear, is transgressively a free agent of his own will, of his own world of time and space. It is provocative again when we think of time in the *Aeneid*: teleological and climaxing in Augustus, a Roman, historicized and fatalized time identified with nature. Ovid's climax as he suggests here in the proem, will be in himself - indeed the epilogue leaves us in no doubt - and concomitantly his Nature is random, ahistorical, it trips along like his hexameters, coloured, stylish and amoral; rather than working towards an end it merely works out its own momentary logics in fleeting achronic scenes.³⁹

Ovid's introduction does not speak of place, except obliquely in the Latin poet's use of *mea tempora* and in all the assumptions he can make of a Roman audience, even if he is quite definite about temporal panorama. A Roman poet writing in Latin, alluding *harum scarum* to other recent Roman poems, addressing the

³⁷ On *mea tempora* see Due (1974); Galinsky (1975); Gilbert (1976); Anderson (1997); Feeney (1999), 25-6; Zissos & Gildenhard (1999); Nikolopoulos (2004).

³⁸ Feeney (1999) 25 "It is vital, then, for Ovid to make his own time and to break down the domination of the accepted patterns of time. He wants to create a space for uncertainty, for contingency, for unreality, for a different construction of the individual self in time...". One feels that among the valuable contributions there is too strong an insistence here on Ovid as politicized iconoclast, militating in his work for some set of ideas. The problem that Ovid must have represented for power was just that he was not properly political, admittedly itself a kind of politics. He blunders into his destiny, Actaeon-like, too caught up in a private universe, he represents in his style and interest a threat to hegemonic vision and a threat to the power, here the great paradox, of symbols, as fundamental to the Augustan propaganda programme as they were. For a sophisticated contribution to the "... somewhat sterile debate over the 'Augustan' or 'Anti-Augustan' nature of the poem . . .", see Galinsky (1999), 4, where he argues that "Continuity through change, rather than a rigid adherence to traditional forms, is as typical of Augustus' own constitutional and religious policy as it is of the *Metamorphoses* . . ." and for larger discussion of this see Galinsky (1996).

³⁹ Kenney is eloquent here: 'For him the Augustan settlement was not as it had been for Virgil, the start of a new world, *novus saeculorum ordo*, but another sandbank in the shifting stream of eternity' (1983), 441.

Caesar, speaking in the first person: the physical context of contemporary Rome is very real (the usually quite nonsensical phrase 'very real' makes so much sense in a discussion of the *Metamorphoses*), if not spelled out. It will be interesting for us to go on to see just how he does handle physical description⁴⁰ and natural setting, and in what ways that reveals how Ovid conceives of *natura* and the relation in which his mind and work and perhaps, man the fabricator generally, stands to the violent and unpredictable world of nature.

Perpetuum deducite carmen, as dense in meaning and as much discussed as it is brief, is another important clue about how we are to read the poem. I would argue that while it is a hint about the work's ancestry and kind as well as the poet's freely acknowledged literary debts, rather more than just a self-associating allusion and fairly direct translation from the Greek,⁴¹ it is foremost the first of many paradoxes in the poem, and a calculated double entendre. It sets

⁴⁰ Hardie *et al.* (1999), 4 "The chorographical project's contrary pressures of, on the one hand, the antiquarian's awareness of the diversity and changeability of the landscape and its inhabitants, and, on the other hand, of the mapmaker's desire for fixity and permanence replicate the central tension in the *Metamorphoses* between structure and anti-structure...an aspect of the Ovidian text that has received little attention from classicists: as well as tracing the history of the universe in time, the *Metamorphoses* also charts the spatial co-ordinates of the world, reflecting an Augustan interest in imagining a Roman mastery of space as well as of time..." A remarkable statement to one, like myself, one of whose principal interests is the representation of place in the *Metamorphoses*. Solodow writes admirably on this question in his *The World of Ovid's Metamorphoses* (1988) but above all Charles Segal in his monograph *Landscape as Symbol in Ovid's Metamorphoses* (1969) makes a brilliant analysis of place and object. The thought that Ovid's work is above all a cosmic calendar is almost perplexing, considering that endless mutability is its continuous thread, its theme and motif. The 'historical' episodes are hardly History. The treatment is still mythical and the implication seems to be that history has the same atomic mass as myth. The *Metamorphoses* for all its concessions to the contemporary, the placating gestures to power, is really most interesting for what it reveals of the poet's unchecked sense of self and personal drama. The chief teleology is not a Virgilian vision of Roman historical fate, that is not what one comes away with from reading the poem. Natural reality is not thematically Romanized in Ovid, on the contrary even, its one consistent lesson is arbitrariness. From this point of view at least, Ovid does indeed prematurely straddle, as Fraenkel (1945) puts it, two worlds: the Roman and Christian. On the one hand, the anthropomorphosing imagination of the pagan, Epicurean materialism, on the other the self-dramatizations of the Stoic and Christian. Though to give full justice to Virgil's art, we must note that his poem does realize magnificently the complex vision of man's two-fold being: historical and personal, always modes of the same experience of reality.

⁴¹ Bömer(1969) Vol. I,14 "eines der viel besprochenen Themaworte aus den Dichtungen Ovids".

the tone, expects the bemused recognition of the educated audience and in its provocation, as no doubt Ovid would have enjoyed, commands the attention of generations of scholars. Ovid is always inclusive, even, especially when that may seem antithetical. His ambition is global even as his voice is so distinctly local. This is the production of cosmopolitan Augustanism and private, personalized *urbanitas*.

The phrase is Callimachean and appetizingly equivocal⁴²- *perpetuum* may stand in counterpoint to *deductum*, that is continuous, epic, grand in the indicative Homeric voice or finely spun out, polished, subtle in the middle or reflexive voice of a Callimachus.⁴³ Even as he addresses the vague, general 'gods' in established epic topoi of address to Muses, he is quoting in translation the scholar poet of Alexandria who famously disputed the value of extended epic writing with another important Alexandrian model. Apollonius is important for thinking about Ovid not only in that in the *Metamorphoses* we will discover a mini-Argonautic cycle and some echoes of Apollonius' cosmogony in Ovid's own but also when we remember that Ovid's much admired and sadly lost tragedy was a *Medea*, and that so much in the *Metamorphoses* echoes tragic literature. Above all, Apollonius, or an early part of him, represents to the neoteric imagination, a literary-theoretical or aesthetic antiposition to Callimachus' orthodoxy.

Carmen perpetuum translates Callimachus' ἐν ἄεισμα διηνεκέες in the prologue to his *Aetia*.⁴⁴ There is one other instance of this particular phrase, Horace in *Odes*

⁴² Though Knox (1986) 10, contends that "there is no paradox".

⁴³ *deducite* is '...intended to modify the effect of '*perpetuum...carmen*' with its apparent defiance of Callimachean principles. In this context *deducite* would assure Ovid's readers that there would be no betrayal of Callimachus' Gilbert (1976), 112 n.4. One hardly feels that Ovid's audience would need such mollification. The *carmen deductum et perpetuum* is the first of many paradoxes in the work, which are witty and amusing and brilliantly clever because, though they seem antithetical, are quite compatible. This paradox stands almost as the defining trope in Ovid's work. This delighted ambiguity is much more demonstrably the point than placating alliance to a literary theoretical school of thought; note also Rosati (1999), 24, on *deducere* a term for spinning and 'weaving of texts' (the Minyids, Arachne): "In Latin the most common image for writing poetry is *deducere* (*carmen*), drawn as is well known from the technique of spinning; the most famous example is in the programmatic proem of the sixth *Eclogue*, . . . In rhetorical terms one could say that spinning corresponds to the *inventio* . . . weaving to the *dispositio* . . . and *elocutio*." Q. v. OLD s.v. *deducere* B. 4

⁴⁴ *Aetia* Fr. 1.3

1.7.6 *carmine perpetuo* - "the phrase implies the epic genre".⁴⁵ *Deducite* also is notably allusion to Callimachus' τὴν . . . λεπταλέην,⁴⁶ with its connotation of "spin out" and "refine", "draw out" and "lead down"⁴⁷ and as we have already seen above is as much lifted from those opening lines of *Eclogue VI*, which of all predecessors, to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is genetically the closest.⁴⁸ *Deducite* is suitably Ovidian in its polyvalence, its ambiguous status as uncertainly metaphorical or literal that provokes so much discussion: is it 'bring down', 'lead down' or does it connote any of those metaphorical senses of the term, 'colonize', 'launch' nautically, 'lead troops', 'spin'.⁴⁹ It is probably too strong to say of Ovid that "use of this word in his epic's introduction implies that he is adhering to the poetic ideals of Callimachus."⁵⁰ Ovid rather evokes Callimachus as he does Virgil and Horace to assert his place in established tradition through his use of conventional turns and highly charged expressions but he does not adhere to poetic ideals, he fixes his own poetics. Ovid, again, is in his literary *romanitas*, supremely traditional, his work is not some *res novae*, but has antecedent and place in the established line, traditional even as it strikes out with bold invention, deriving both meaning and admiration from the poet's handling of this inherent tension. What is more, in this preface Ovid is opening a pre-eminently Augustan work, imperial in its breadth, its geographical and temporal stretch, hegemonic in its unifying and unmistakable authorial voice.⁵¹

⁴⁵ Anderson (1997), 151

⁴⁶ *Aetia* Fr. 1.24

⁴⁷ Gilbert (1976), 111: ". . . subtle and polished writing of the kind associated with Callimachus." He offers four examples of its use from Cornificius, Horace, Virgil, Propertius.

⁴⁸ For Virgil's tone there, his scenes of sweet, rustic pantomime, his song within song, and lexically very similar cosmogony is a much discussed, conspicuous predecessor and inspiration for Ovid's work.

⁴⁹ See *OLD* s.v. *deduco* I B. 1, 2, 3. a., 3. b., 4, 7, II B. 2., 3.

⁵⁰ See van Tress (2004), 26. I would tend to follow Anderson (1997), 152 "Ovid might allude to Virgil's creed, but he combines Callimachus with his own program in a different way. . ."

⁵¹ See Otis (1938), 229, "We have seen then two Ovids: the urbane and witty amatory elegist whose whole career was in essential opposition to his contemporary Augustans and to Augustus himself; and the sympathetic connoisseur of the master passion as it met him in the field of legend and myth."; also Galinsky in 'Augustan cultural thematics'. On the other hand the school that sees in *Metamorphoses* a dissident, iconoclastic fragmentation of narrative that reveals symbolic deconstruction of the official Augustan vision, or the likewise symbolic disobedience in the centrality of the poet in his epic narrative; for further work on "Ovid and the Augustan Discourse" Barchiesi (1997).

Van Tress does, to be fair, continue in her discussion of the proem as definition of scope with "...at the same time, however, [the proem] is *not* adhering to Callimachus' poetic ideals, for in using the phrase *perpetuum...carmen...* Ovid seems to suggest that the poem he introduces is of the type which Callimachus disavowed."⁵² We should follow van Tress and the many other scholars⁵³ who read paradox in Ovid's choice of diction in his proem, itself signal of his intent to fuse traditionally opposed styles, genres: the polish of elegy with the rugged magnitude of epic. The most sensible discussion of this phrase is Due's⁵⁴ in which considered and sensible effort is taken in questioning "whether the expression *carmen perpetuum* was a *terminus technicus* in the vocabulary of a Roman and that it would be taken as more than the words say in themselves: that the *Metamorphoses* will be a long, connected poem." Granted the programmatic character of the proem and the weight of each phrase, the objective effect is allusive and suggestive before it is technical in its appeal. Still, though the frisson of paradox in *perpetuum deducite carmen* should not be denied, Due's argument that the proem cannot be extracted and analyzed in separation from the poem is very strong.⁵⁵

One may think of Callimachus as an intermediary for the Roman poet, in whose life and work the transmission of the idealized and revered tradition of the distant classical period becomes possible. He seems to stand half-way between Athens and Rome and plausibly relays between. His real appeal though, must be in the similarity of his position to that of the Roman. He is identifiably at a remove, set apart from the tradition even as he continues it; he is pre-eminently literary, marked by the universal variety of his reading experience; and stands in relation to political power, to Hellenistic kingship as the Roman poet to the Hellenistic kingship of Augustan principate. He translates a distant world into the modes of a modern temperament 'the Ezra Pound of his day' as Denis

⁵² Van Tress (2004), 26

⁵³ See Bömer (1969), Hinds (1989), Heinze (1993), Anderson (1997) *inter al.*

⁵⁴ Due (1974) 95-6

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 96 "As the expression may not have had the force of a *terminus technicus* it seems safer to say that the degree and character of the epic pretensions in the *Metamorphoses* are defined by the whole bulk of the poem rather than by single words in their preface, or - in other words - that the meaning of *carmen perpetuum* here would appear from the actual execution of it and that the term should not, by a definition derived from literary history, be taken in advance as a clue to the interpretation of the poem. The *Metamorphoses* are obviously a poem and equally obviously a connected poem in a perfectly non-technical sense of the word."

Feeney⁵⁶ has recently, not inappropriately, called him. Tradition is material for reformulation, a complex set of relations, there is no longer really the credible possibility of inspired, vatic⁵⁷ outpouring; tradition and form is established and the new poet must be learned enough to meet the new demand: which is now for originality of version.

From the historical consciousness of the scholar, the world historical irony of the new creative artist, from this developed sense of the old and distant, similarly the feeling of the new, the being-not-old. In this climate, pure objective-realism, the heroic epic apparently uncomplicated by historical awareness would seem disingenuous anti-intellectualism, a kind of spurious naivism.⁵⁸ Naivism is precisely one of the sources of humour and self-ironizing for Ovid. He can appeal to an audience for whom the tensions inherent in the magnificence of tradition and its compromised believability will be very rich. The sophisticated Augustan is in that peculiar position of appealing to the past, being made, he senses, out of the past, even as he is bemused by its difference, its old-fashion, its comparative self-unconsciousness, *simplicitas*⁵⁹, *simplicitas rudis ante fuit* (AA III, 113),

prisca iuuent alios, ego me nunc denique natum
gratulator: haec aetas moribus apta meis

AA III 121-122

The Augustan poet stands himself in a symbolic relationship with Callimachus and even further, 'Callimachus' is itself really a symbol. The Alexandrian consciously inherits and consciously transmits his inheritance, he scholarly scans all that precedes himself and through this universal perspective, in his historicized, theorized attitude anticipates to some degree all that will follow.

⁵⁶ Feeney (2007), 1

⁵⁷ On the Augustan poet as *vates* see Newman (1967), O'Hara (1990) and Perkins (2000).

⁵⁸ Which once again must not be read as an implicit comment on the nature of either Homeric or Virgilian epic (which overcame all obstacles), but as a remark on the apparent impasse that must have been so clear to writers of and after the Hellenistic world. This question is further developed below in my section on *imitatio*.

⁵⁹ One may think also of a Cicero in the *Pro Caelio* performing his prosopopoeia, appealing to his audience' shared sense of the solid, rugged, rustic, morally sound and bemusing men of the past, shaggy-bearded *patresfamilias* and idolized, loyal cut-out *matronae* or Horace at *Epistles* 2.1 "Agricolae prisci, fortes parvoque beati . . ." lines 139ff.

The historical maturity of Hellenistic culture expresses itself in the synoptic and polymathic intelligence of Callimachus. Callimachus looks out over all of time past because he catalogues and knows all literature, time and song: the two are very nearly identical. There can be no more historical virginity and thus neither can there be a literature that stands itself purely, outside of history, free of some irony. For irony is precisely the effect of this irreversible historical maturity.

Callimachus' proem is indeed polemical but Knox argues the use of the word *διηγεκῆς* is neutral, "referring not to a unified plot, but to a coherent structure".⁶⁰ Knox' interpretation rides on his closer reading of Callimachus, what the Alexandrian actually said in that Ovidian model the *Aetia*. Is Callimachus not closer to the canonical assumptions of Aristotelian poetics than Knox grants? As Due expresses it: "It is generally and correctly believed that by ἐν ἄεισμα διηγεκῆς Callimachus understood an epic poem in the Homeric tradition and conforming- at least in intention as Apollonius' *Argonautica*- with Aristotelian ideas of epic unity: epic unity requires not a single hero, or place but a single action, one that is a complete whole in itself with a beginning, middle and end...it seems obvious that *carmen perpetuum* is a "translation" of the Callimachan term . . . Herter observes that ἄεισμα διηγεκῆς cannot mean a collective poem like the *Aetia* and that διηγεκῆς implies that the poem is on a grand scale and that there is a chronological sequence; he implies that Callimachus refers to the 'Aristotelian' principle of one plot . . .".⁶¹ While it may be true that "Callimachus' criticisms of bad poetry are concerned with style, not length and certainly not genre", Knox' argument, and he is mostly a brilliant reader of Ovid, is not completely convincing here. Our interest is more with what Ovid and the Augustans thought Callimachus meant, than what we may wish to argue he definitely did mean.⁶² Besides, our most important consideration here is the nature of allusion and genre in Ovid, what they mean or what he sets them up to mean. Ovid is confusing expectations⁶³ and thereby preparing his audience for a work that will indeed be seen to be a fusion, continuous just as much as episodic.

⁶⁰ Knox (1986), 10

⁶¹ Due (1974), 95

⁶² For the Augustans he was the *fons et origo* of so many motifs, a model for aesthetic attitude, cultural disposition.

⁶³ Anderson (1997), 151 "Ovid, however, seems to have aimed to surprise and tantalize his audience. How can changed forms produce a continuous song?"

Compare, for example, the claims of another Augustan poet, Horace at *Odes* III 30. 13-14:

princeps Aeolium carmen ad Italos
deduxisse⁶⁴ modos.

and Virgil's pastoral Tityrus at *Eclogue* VI 5-6 we have heard say:

"Pastorem, Tityre, pingues
pascere oportet oves, deductum dicere carmen"

One is almost tempted to see in *deducere* a code for 'translate'. Roman cultural endeavour is so clearly aware of itself as translation of the Greek, incorporation of the Hellenistic, the Italian, and the distant ages of myth and legendary history. The Roman poet re-interprets and adapts traditions, he reconfigures the symbolic relations of the past to the demands and pleasures of the present, a practice which, fundamentally, can scarcely itself have any meaning outside of this standing in regard to the symbolic past. The Roman present is the savour of a crowded past. A past that the Roman will see, by the late First Century BC, can have any number of versions, its plasticity begs questions of the present, destabilizes one's self no less than it does the common sense and infects aesthetic tastes as much as it does moral disposition. The translated nature of knowledge and cultural form, the malleability of language, the changeability of histories and rituals descended through time, interpreted and reformulated by living minds all imply a complex and shifting ontological status.

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This is to be certainly a distinct epic,⁶⁵ for while it takes the traditional hexametric, heroic form it breaks from convention in important ways and the tone, that most interesting and elusive Ovidian quality, is all the while being set. This tone is really that of a versatile, rhetorically sharp and suggestively

⁶⁴ In his 1914 translation for the Loeb edition, Bennet renders this *deduxisse* 'adapt'. In his commentary on the *Odes*, Page (1883), 394 quotes Wickham: 'the use of *deducere* seems akin to that of *deducere coloniam*'. That would be a most appropriate connotation, one feels.

⁶⁵ 'ein epos sui generis', von Albrecht quoted in Kenney in Binns (1973) 117

idiosyncratic⁶⁶ voice. This is the voice of a specific living man who is conscious of being in a specific moment in history, his moment. Demands are made on us the readers to be quick to his meanings, his associations, the tonal colourations of his poem and its world of involuted surfaces. As Kenney writes: “The *doctus poeta* has the right to expect a *doctus lector*.”⁶⁷ He is conscious of a tradition of epic and address and of universal histories. He knows precisely the effects of his small breaks with the traditional. He addresses the gods with confidence if also with cool urbanity. Ovid acknowledges conventions while he toys with them and in this way he very briefly is instructing his auditors and readers how to read and what to expect.

Something new, something borrowed, bodies given new shapes just as this body of verse is an old form given a new shape. An arrogation, an assumption of now demiurgic, now mischievously Jovian, status. There is that in Ovid which seems gleefully and blasphemously equivalent with the divine. Ovid’s role and powers are godlike as his poetry is like nature and time. This is no new observation, to be sure, and made only to further advert the reader’s attention to the kind of relationships that Ovid implicitly forms:⁶⁸ this is the poet’s work, recent scholarship, especially with its interest in narration, seldom fails to show how Ovid draws attention to his authority, his own bright presence throughout the work. The poet’s voice will draw out in unbroken or continuous song the serial transformations wrought through all time: this promises encyclopaedia and universality in a manner unexpected in epic which is traditionally and at least comparatively locally and individually concentrated in a single action. A burden to be taken on not lightly, not lightly a promise to be made. Still, here, made and taken with all the customary lightness of touch.

Within the first lines he works a generic and tonal transformation, scuppers or dazzles expectations, defines himself with amazing refinement⁶⁹ and subtly

⁶⁶ Too suggestively idiosyncratic unfortunately not to be construed as iconoclastic, (or is this the wisdom of hindsight?), *carmen et error*. See Galinsky (1999), 108, on the *mixtum compositum* as the “perfect expression of Augustanism conceived as a wider cultural phenomenon . . .”.

⁶⁷ Kenney (1976), 50

⁶⁸ See notably for a recent study, Nikopoulos’ *Ovidius Polytropos- metanarrative in Ovid’s Metamorphoses* (2004).

⁶⁹ “In the proem to the *Metamorphoses* he has refined and compressed to an almost incredible degree the scheme which in his first work had been developed through entire elegies. The conventional apparatus- theophany and admonition, the poet’s reaction, resistance,

asserts himself among poets, insinuating himself into tradition, among the gods, and onto the upper slopes of Helicon. Is this not manifestly a new vision of the poet and man, of individual powers made to serve personal ends, all perfectly in keeping with the nascent new man, product of his age, politically and socially loyal above all to a private rather than a public life? Is this not the unconscientious objector who did not see why he should give himself over to the futilities of public service and the worn out *cursus honorum* when he could devote himself to the intensities and dramas of the urban love elegist? If so, then we find this strategy fully realized in the final nine lines of the poem, where Ovid is unambiguous at last, if still a blithe pilferer from his seniors.

compliance- is taken for granted; the merest suggestion, three words, 'mutastis et illa', suffices to convey the point." Kenney (1976), 50.

Epilogue

Iamque opus exegi, quod nec Iovis ira nec ignis
 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.

Met. XV 871-879

“ . . . we have discovered in the first book an attempt by Ovid to provide a recognizable context for his collection of stories by drawing upon the structure and content of Vergil’s Sixth *Eclogue*. Ovid’s own poem is presented as the consummate example of the *deductum carmen*, in which he further elaborates the themes that concerned him as an elegist. It is therefore reasonable to expect that the last book of the poem will have a similar programmatic purpose.”⁷⁰ Ovid does accomplish a ring effect through this return in his final book to the recapitulation of programme. Yet, the ring composition that the epilogue completes is not so much the interest for us here as the lyric individualism, the undisguised subjectivism at this crest of the song.⁷¹ Ovid has woven out and repeatedly ruptured a web of realistic and melodramatic, naturalistic and fabulous scenes. He has relied on life size, larger-than-life, life-like and caricature, giant, grotesque effects. This tone, this persona has been all in keeping with the elegiac, dramatizing and learned Ovid of the earlier poetry.

His body of works grow out of one another, he does indeed in the *Metamorphoses* “further elaborate the themes that concerned him as an elegist”, displays Alexandrian polymathy and license and even lightly incorporates the apparatus of tragedy in those fabulous reversals of fortune and moments of grotesque

⁷⁰ Knox (1986), 65

⁷¹ “. . . in den *Metamorphosen* liegt das Schwergewicht *nicht* auf dem Ringthema des *Carmen perpetuum*, sondern auf der Erzählung. Quintilian spricht ganz richtig von der *necessitas res diversissimas in speciem unius corporis colligendi* (*Inst.* IV 1,77)” Diller (1968); Bömer (1969), Vol. V, 488

anagnorisis that make up so much of the content of the *Metamorphoses*.⁷² In addition, Ovid by an almost incredible twist will become transformed by his poetry and the larger mechanisms of power will detach him from the centre of the universe, the centre of his narrative, to outside and exile. It is always in the shadow of this strangely appropriate stroke of pathetic irony that we cannot help but read his poetry.

After the encomium of Augustus⁷³ (Jupiter controls the palaces of heaven and 'the threefold universe', *et mundi regna triformis*, echoes the primitive triad of *et tellus illic et pontus et aer* of the opening lines of Book I) at the end of the fifteenth book the final 9 lines of the poem represent an epilogue in which the poet returns to sustained first person expression for a coda that again is unconventional in its personal lyricism. It defines a work striking for its finish with a ring effect induced through the echoes of the opening lines with its apostrophe of now better defined godhead; its conscious authorial note, the poet's disarming confession of his presence, his active, individual role in making up and concatenating these stories. Bömer says of this conclusion, "Ovid liefert hier ein letztes, eindrucksvolles und viel beachtetes Kabinettstück seiner ungebrochenen Schaffenskraft, der Stärke und einer unhörten Gewandheit des Ausdrucks".⁷⁴

A story of gods and men, of sweep and magnitude, of tragic outcomes but also of pastoral and elegiac passion, epic in form but formed out of almost post-romantic sensibility and guided by a poet who does not hesitate, even seems to delight in, breaking with impersonal, epic naturalism. The proximity with the

⁷² Indeed, metamorphosis is precisely what all tragedy enacts, and more, it is the matter or phenomenon of all narrative. That Ovid should make it his central motif only goes to further illustrate the literary instinctiveness of the poet. It is as if in some way he has devised a sophisticated story about stories, an experiment or exhibition of the ἀρχή or first principle of narrative. He manipulates formal convention so dexterously as to play at its very limits.

⁷³ Through the Hellenistic literary device of the *gnome* that makes the emperor analogous with Jupiter:

denique, ut exemplis ipsos aequantibus utar,
 sic et Saturnus minor est Iove: Iuppiter arces
 temperat aetherias et mundi regna triformis,
 terra sub Augusto est; pater est et rector uterque. *Met.* XV 857 - 860

A topos of Augustan poetry, cf. Horace Odes i. 12 lines 49-60. Again we are reminded how much Augustan power styles itself on an economy of signs it learns from Hellenistic kingship. See also Bömer citing Dahlmann (1969), Vol. V, 488, "Dieser Gedanke des *totum legitur sine fine per orbem*... ist ein topos, den Dichter besonders gern verwenden".

⁷⁴ Bömer (1969), Vol. V, 488

penultimate encomium of Augustus, the polished vaunt at the ultimate point of the work does unfortunately read, in retrospect, as unadvisedly provocative. That said, this final seal or *sphragis*, does not, to my mind, read as expression of anti-Augustanism. It is, in keeping with the whole work, a literary device. Ovid blunders into imperial disfavour - *carmen*⁷⁵ *et error* - he courts it by omission rather than from principle.⁷⁶ Here as ever he is making his poetry - and thus himself - out of the same stuff as the melodious poet laureate, Horace.

⁷⁵ There is no evidence to suggest that *Metamorphoses* was 'the' *carmen*.

⁷⁶ I would follow Bömer, "Sicher aber ist es, als Abschluss einer Sphragis, die sich mit Horaz auf die gleiche Stufe stellt, der Ausdruck eines stolzen und begründeten Selbstbewusstseins" (1969), Vol. V 490-1.

It may be helpful here to give in full Horace's magnificent ode, the architectural model of Ovid's lyric mausoleum piece:

Exegi monumentum aere perennius
 regalique situ pyramidum altius,
 quod non imber edax, non Aquilo inpotens
 possit diruere aut innumerabilis
 annorum series et fuga temporum. 5
 Non omnis moriar multaue pars mei
 uitabit Libitinam; usque ego postera
 crescram laude recens, dum Capitolium
 scandet cum tacita uirgine pontifex.
 Dicar, qua uiolens obstrepat Aufidus 10
 et qua pauper aquae Daunus agrestium
 regnauit populorum, ex humili potens
 princeps Aeolium carmen ad Italos
 deduxisse modos. Sume superbiam
 quaesitam meritis et mihi Delphica 15
 lauro cinge uolens, Melpomene, comam. ⁷⁷

Note especially *exegi* (1) and *comam* (16), how Ovid suggestively will have *opus* for Horace's *aere monumentum*; *dicar* (10); and of course most striking: *carmen ad Italos/ deduxisse modos* (13-14). The parallels are obvious but Ovid's monument, by contrast, is more idealized, more super historically transcendent where Horace's Romanisms are pronounced.

Ovid echoes his own opening as well as this closing ode of Horace's third book—a beautiful farewell to lyric compared with the royal seal of self-approval in Ovid. His sphragis begins:

⁷⁷ Hor. *Odes* III xxx, Rudd (2004), 17 on Ovid's *sphragis* and Horace's ode "the pair, despite their very different meters, exhibit a number of verbal and pleonastic similarities"; see also Bauer (1962) in his essay on Pygmalion and the theme of love and art as animation of the static.

Iamque opus exegi, quod nec Iovis ira nec ignis⁷⁸
nec potuerit ferrum nec edax abolere vetustas.

Met. XV 871- 72

Carmen perpetuum deducite has become *opus exegi*, *iam* modifies *mea tempora*, and further, the Augustan moment is transformed into *quaeque patet domitis Romana potentia terris / ore legar populi, perque omnia saecula fama*, or that part which is Ovid is transformed, for the chase of time and violence and love are powerless to capture and hold what the poet has changed into himself. He is no longer a mere *corpus* over which the forces of nature have all jurisdiction and power but immortal in that better aspect of himself, his *melior natura*.⁷⁹

parte tamen meliore mei super alta perennis
astra ferar, nomenque erit indelebile nostrum;

Met. XV 875 - 876

Aside from the undisguised debts to Horace there must be a note of the Virgilian, possibly outshone, in *super alta astra ferar*, when we recall how we hear in the *Aeneid* that the domain of the Julian-Aenean line will reach only to (*ad*) the stars. *ferar*, of course recalls *fert animus dicere* and the first person passives of *ferar* and *legar* anticipate the future timeless and sidereal status of the poet. *mei* and *nostrum* (enallage for metrical reasons) set the familiar tone. The higher part is unending, Ovid's life, a small polished episode in Roman history will become nevertheless perennial, continuous as his *carmen perpetuum*, which has travelled from Chaos to Cosmos. *indelebile*,⁸⁰ formed as it is from *in-*, *de-* and *-le-* being the *li-* of *lino*: to smear, to daub down and thus to erase by smoothing down wax with the end of the stylus, is vivid with *nomen*. 'Ovidius' will remain uneffaced. The man is now metamorphosed, he has indestructible, symbolic reality.

quaeque patet domitis Romana potentia terris
ore legar populi, perque omnia saecula fama

⁷⁸ *nec Iovis ira*, if one follows the logic of the earlier *gnome*, is another example of tragic irony. It is unnecessarily and tactlessly provocative when scrutinized but I still do not think it forms part of an insidious attack on Augustus.

⁷⁹ Cf. the initial description of the *mundi fabricator* at Met. I 21 *deus et melior . . . natura*.

⁸⁰ See OLD s.v. *indelebilis*. One of those typical Ovidian neologisms; Carcopino on 875-6 notes: "c'est le credo des néopythagoriciens", Bömer (1969) Vol.V, 489.

(si quid habent veri vatum praesagia) vivam.

Met. XV.877 - 879

fama is the kleos on which the work and his survival –these of course by now mingled into indentity- depends. In this absolutely delectable phrase, (*si quid habent veri vatum praesagia*),⁸¹ the self-fulfilling prophecy of the poet, a characteristic *trompe l'oeil* we read a clause interposed and creating an almost crescendo suspense for this perfect period, the seal that seems to clasp the entire argument and perhaps teaches us much of the meaning of the poem: *vivam*.

Ovid lives in his poem and by his poem, which is a complex satisfaction of the demands of tradition and originality, formal convention; the natural impulse to self-preservation and the assertion of his own value. He is made word, his personality is interfused in myth and history as girl or boy might be into the landscape as flower or tree. It is clear that Ovid is a bookish, mythophilic, Alexandrian Roman writer. He styles himself, his work is a set of stylizations. It is an astonishing technology, a magical surface which echoes and reflects with perfectly controlled distortions and likenesses. It is not a simple reality that he wishes to re-present but a world composed of images, multiplied images of itself, broken and perpetually reconstituted. Keeping this in mind we read and listen for the echoes, in this palace of resonances and reflections, echoes of other poems, other *imagines mundi* of other *mundi fabricatores*, we try to discover the peculiar values of *natura* and *ars* and the assumptions and ideas inherent in the composition and we are not disappointed.

Point of View

ex sua persona

If the epilogue at the end of Book XV is also the apex among instances of direct, extended, first-person address in the *Metamorphoses* there is throughout the work

⁸¹ Bömer (1992): "Vergil ist der Prophet, Ovid der Erzähler - er ist, wie das W. Fauth sogar für die Fasten feststellte, 'naturgemäß zunächst einmal Erzähler', wobei, so E.A. Schmidt in seinem neuesten Buch über Ovid, die kallimacheische elegische Tradition 'episch transzendiert wird'." One may also think of those moments of similar rhetoric such as at Shakespeare's *Sonnet* 116 lines 13-14, "If this be error and upon me proved/ I never writ, nor no man ever loved".

a guiding and discreet, if not bashful, *daemon*, which is the unconcealed narrator and poet Ovid. Some remarks are in order on the narrative disposition of Ovid, his conspicuous omnipresence in the narrative and the different touches by which this presence reveals itself in the *Metamorphoses*. Solodow⁸² treats the subject of Ovid's narrative divergence with traditional epic and the various means by which he makes himself personally felt, radiating through all the poem, as he intrudes upon or interrupts the illusions just as he conjures them throughout the fifteen books.

The study of his narrative has been perhaps one of the busiest branches of Ovidian scholarship.⁸³ Much discussion is devoted to the ingenuity or facility, depending on the peculiar taste of the given scholar, of his transitions and variations. He offers a great deal for narratological study in his hybrid, post-Virgilian, Hellenistic epic that is both large and continuous, *perpetuum* and episodic, *deductum*. The pertinent point for our study is the subversive artificiality of Ovid's style. A subversion that as it destabilizes the reality of the work, enhances that of the author.

We should, to begin with, agree that there is one narrator. His is a complex voice and it does tell many different stories from many perspectives, but a unique and recognizable tone is undoubtedly the uniting thread of Ovid's work. This distinctly toned narrative voice raises itself in more and less obvious ways.⁸⁴ Solodow methodically isolates and categorises the glancing 'winks', the various ways by which Ovid invests the narrative atmosphere with his own personal presence.⁸⁵

That "multiplicity of ways in which his presence is felt" can be distinguished and exemplified but should also be remembered as more generally inseparable

⁸² Solodow (1988), 37-73; also Frécaut (1972), 135-74.

⁸³ Kenney (1973), 117 "However, there is one point on which the interpreters seem to be unanimous, and that is the dominant importance of narrative in the *Metamorphoses*, its status as what has been called 'the very soul of the work'." (my italics); note also Nikopoulos (2004)

⁸⁴ Solodow (1988), 41

⁸⁵ Many commentators refer to these authorial gestures of Ovid's, though I don't like the terms, as "winks", "tongue in cheek".⁸⁵ To my mind these terms smack too much of burlesque when Ovid is really a very straight-faced and sophisticated *high-comedy* writer. His appeal is always cerebral and not the heavy handed B-grade enticement of the Latin canon's class clown. That said we do take the point.

elements of an irreducible whole.⁸⁶ While we may trace the instances of ‘authorial presence’ we never experience these in the reading of the poem as grosser interpolations but rather as perfectly smooth and controlled aspects of a coherent formal vision. Solodow identifies transitions, their conspicuous cleverness, the evident and undisguised manipulation, as clear signals of an authorial intelligence. Similarly “transition through absence” (Solodow’s *transitio per absentem*) and “transition through contrary-to-fact condition” as too “epigram”⁸⁷ and “paradox and other epigrammatic expressions”, all work through their manifest artificiality to leave the sustained impression of the work as an object having been carefully made.⁸⁸ These techniques, interestingly, draw attention to the narrative voice⁸⁹ while also in their pithily compressed and swiftly transitional effects also enhance the celebrated narrative cadence of the *Metamorphoses*, smooth and fluent episodes borne on a rapid hexameter that manages to be more light and clear than solemn. This is one more example of the inherent tensions of the work: without cancelling each other out, Ovid seems capable of including apparently contradictory effects, by which the work shimmers brilliant, with variety and abundance even as it glances lightly off the page.

While it is most useful to show these individual types of narrative-alert, as it were, it is also worth noting that they all have in common the apparent lack of camouflage of artifice, which one should not have associated with the sublime styles of epic or tragedy. We should add also that intertextual allusion is another very important kind of signal of presence. Here in the *Metamorphoses* it is not merely a case of abstruse, esoteric reference to obscure works but quite obvious public address of famous works, styles and topoi, (as we have seen above). This allusive habit must surely count as one of those ways by which that “insistent” presence makes itself felt. Likewise the consistent and unmistakable sense of Ovidian humour.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Solodow (1988), “The central importance of the narrator, the fact of his ubiquitousness is indicated by the multiplicity of ways in which his presence is felt”, 41.

⁸⁷ Ibid. “play upon the verbal surface”, 46

⁸⁸ Ibid. quoting Kraus Solodow, 46: “(Ovid) . . . has recourse to the imaginary connections of analogy and antithesis, which are not always set in the consciousness of narrating characters but are expressed by the poet himself: thus in place of the usual historical connection there appears one with merely that of discourse.”

⁸⁹ Ibid. “a very insistent one”, 46

⁹⁰ Solodow does devote some space to wit and humour in his chapter on Mythology and the working over that gets from Ovid (1988), 101 - 109 . Several studies have been made of

The text is shadowed by other texts, fringed with the penumbra of the poet's personality and becomes itself not merely the momentary expression of a persona but the persona itself. A persona, ironically as ever, that curtails itself by its own presence, neutralizes any possible heroic quality even as it weaves a work that Ovid trusts will bring him immortal renown. Ovid works himself into the text even as he seems to happily distance himself and the audience from its 'reality'. This is a studied development in mimetic complexity from *si latet, ars prodest*. It really is very cunning.

With this brief summary of those self-revealing narrative techniques I would like to discuss at a little more length the character of narrative point of view in the *Metamorphoses* taking many cues again from Solodow and Frécaut. The former is quite accurate in his description of the textural markings of narrative commentary that can come only from the omnipresent voice of the poet: "These interruptions, as is natural, often take the form of a parenthesis or an apostrophe; they are often expressed grammatically. But the manifestations of the narrating voice are legion."⁹¹ He further suggests the range of kinds of manifestation of interruption, most obvious of which must be those instances of first and second person address. Then there is the tying up of loose ends in episodes by the narrating voice, the unanonymous similes, the "contrary to fact conditions", use of future participles and *nondum* expressing very unconventionally a knowledge of future events and entrenching that sense of narrative omniscience⁹². Finally, the instances of apparent self-doubt and self-criticism, the detachment of teller

humour in Ovid in the twentieth Century: Frécaut (1972), von Albrecht (1968), Galinsky (1975) and many others. The outstanding effect of humour in any narrative, it must be clear, is that of the distance of narrator and audience from the events narrated. Humour is really the spirit in which a work and its reality is experienced, the engine of humour is awareness, consciousness of the mediated character of the given experience. Hence its normal place in the work of a poet like Ovid, who displays such pre-eminent self and world- historical irony.

⁹¹ Solodow (1988), 52

⁹² Barchiesi (1999), 113-4, makes a nice contrast of narrative character: "In general I would say the narrative world of the poem suggests a multiplicity of voices striving to get out of control: for the construction of an authorial voice, the result is an ambivalent one. If we take the *Aeneid* as a point of reference, we may say that the Ovidian narrator has as much authority as the Virgilian narrator - that is, a lot of it - but much less responsibility. . .".

from tale and the expression of disbelief, all work in concert to form the contours of the Ovidian voice.⁹³

Lucretius addresses Memmius, writes in the first person, writes an earnest, (and is thus perhaps too easy a target for satire), didactic epic and creates little in the way of generic controversy. While there is much that seems to serve as cue for Ovid in *De Rerum Natura*, he at any rate has no Memmian effigy for the reader, no audience of fellow singing herdsman, no projected disciple sits at his feet, no people united by his book. Whom is he addressing in those apostrophes: Rome, an ideal reader - someone rather like himself, or some projected ahistorical silhouette? What in fact is he doing so prominently authorial in these fifteen books of hexameter?

What is most interesting in this is that Ovid's presence is so emphatically undisguised, so advertised that one begins to suspect that as a strategy it is caught up in the very meaning of his work. It is not merely the self-referring quirk of a decadent but, again, a significant gesture to the audience and to himself. Even the most naturalistic of forms is artficed, Ovid seems to say. All forms of representation are mimetic and require precisely the same qualitative effort or relaxation of disbelief from an audience. This is the strange power of art and of the artist, even as the spectator is consistently reminded that all is artifice, even as the poet pinches you and plays to your pricked ears, since you probably need pinching and you have such a discerning ear, he draws you into his strange worlds of fantasy and illusion, which disarm you, affect you and charm you. The illusion of Ovid feels so true as we seem together with him to smile on the spectacles he narrates, and presumably we are smiling at ourselves, our childlike ability to identify with the spectacular.

This is Ovid's subtextual comment on himself and his role, his work and his audience, and on the nature of art and representation. It is useful to believe an illusion, thus we consent to believe. Ovid is playful, but not in the vacuously ludic manner that Glenn⁹⁴ would imply or that so many suspiciously humourless scholars have castigated him for. No, he is playful in keeping with his insight

⁹³ On story-telling, narration as itself a theme of the work see Nikopoulos (2004) esp. 257-262.

⁹⁴ Glenn (1986), *passim*.

into the nature of human relations, institutions and symbolic systems as being substantially the constructions that humans put on things.

II

Imitatio

mimesis/metamorphosis

Imitatio autem (nam saepius idem dicam) non sit tantum in verbis. Illuc intendenda mens, quantum fuerit illis viris decoris in rebus atque personis, quod consilium, quae dispositio, quam omnia, etiam quae delectationi videantur data, ad victoriam spectent: quid agatur prohoemio, quae ratio et quam varia narrandi, quae vis probandi ac refellendi, quanta in adfectibus omnis generis movendis scientia, quamque <prosit> laus ipsa popularis utilitatis gratia adsumpta, quae tum est pulcherrima cum sequitur, non cum arcessitur. Haec si perviderimus, tum vere imitabimur . . . Nam erit haec quoque laus eorum, ut priores superasse, posteros docuisse dicantur.

Imitation - I shall often make this point - should not be restricted to words. What we must fix our minds on is the propriety with which the great men handle circumstances and persons, their strategy, their arrangement, the way in which everything (even what seems to be a concession to entertainment value) is aimed at victory. We must note what they do in the *Prooemium*, how they manage and diversify the Narrative, the effectiveness of their Proofs and Refutations, their skill in appealing to every kind of emotion, and how they <make practical use> even of the applause of the public; for this is a very splendid thing if it comes spontaneously, but not if it is courted. If we thoroughly grasp all this, we shall be "imitators" in the true sense of the word. . . These masters will acquire another glory too: that of being said to have surpassed their predecessors and taught their successors.

Quint. X.ii 27-28⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Russell (2001), 335-37

"In material, structure and intention Ovid's independence from Virgil is almost complete. In language it seems at first sight to be otherwise: for all Ovid's work is shot through and through with Virgilian reminiscences. Closer analysis, however, shows that this is not a matter of straightforward borrowing and adaptation, but rather what might be called a consistent and calculated process of denaturing has been at work."⁹⁶

Verisimilitude in the *Metamorphoses* is literary rather than actual, that is: the plausibility of Ovid's imaginative universe depends not on its likeness to the worlds of lived experience but to other works of poetry. This is a fundamental point about the work that must be understood if one is not to be deceived by apparent psychological depths, where there is only glittering, involuted surface: Ovid and language, these are the protagonists. The credibility of the poetry is not as a vehicle for moral lesson nor a moral or philosophical investigation of any kind, but rather lies in its mastery of style and form, its polymathic and seemingly effortless allusiveness. Its likelihood is in its likeness to other poems, other works of art.⁹⁷

We should briefly note the function and effect of imitation in the *Metamorphoses* both as a contemporary literary convention and as an implicit expression of Ovidian poetics. Thereafter we will consider the role that oratory and current rhetorical precepts may have played in the formation of Ovid's aesthetics.

Ovid's style, his imitation and allusiveness together are the index of the poet's traditionality. His work is supremely rhetorical, oratory is a resource for register, in the *Metamorphoses* almost something of an epideictic habit. Highly demonstrative, even performative in his extended development of tropes and images, ideas and verbal usages, Ovid plays to the ear while he draws out to their logical extremes the fates and conclusions of his characters and scenes. His

⁹⁶ Kenney (1973), 118

⁹⁷ Cf. Russell's *De imitatione* in West (1979), 1-16; "Heraclitus also wrote Menippean texts . . . (another example of which is) Ovid's *Metamorphoses* . . . through the status of its words, it is politically and socially disturbing. It frees words from historical constraints, and this entails a thorough boldness in philosophical and imaginative inventiveness . . . Its language seems fascinated with the 'double' (with its own activity as graphic trace, doubling an 'outside') and with the logic of opposition replacing that of identity in defining terms. It is an all inclusive genre, put together as a *pavement of citations*.", Moi (1986), 52-3, (my italics).

characters are given to extensive deliberative monologue, in which they convince themselves as skillfully as some very precocious Roman schoolboy might have, taking both sides of an argument of a particular action. Think of Medea, for one example among many, in long soliloquy at VII 11-71 "*frustra, Medea, repugnas:...*", the more wordy literary offspring of Apollonius' acutely observed girl-in-a fix.⁹⁸ This use of speaking of oneself in the third person, this objectification as it were of oneself, is an expression of the self-consciousness of the speaker, the awareness of alternative selves, personas⁹⁹: this parallels the very activity of Ovid's own writing, in kind and effect these literary characters, in their taste for the rhetorical riff and in their Hellenistic self-awareness are models of Ovid.¹⁰⁰ There is this sustained tone of the convincer in his work. Suavely appealing, the thread of fantasy is woven on the frame of internal logic - hence the aetiologies and etymologies. Every kind of oratorical exercise is deployed.¹⁰¹

In his essay 'The Style of the *Metamorphoses*', Kenney notes that "...the existence and instant canonization of the *Aeneid* confronted all subsequent aspirants to epic

⁹⁸ The aroused and stirred Medea of *Arg.* III 464-70 and 636-44, whose mind quivers so delicately, in that famous image taken up by Virgil later for his own disturbed heroine.

⁹⁹ Helen does the same when addressing Telemachus on his visit to Menelaus in the *Odyssey*, saying to tell his future wife that "Helen herself" had given those robes for her. There also, I think, her sense of herself as a figure, legendary already, is an echo of the mytho-historico self-awareness demonstrated at *Il.* III by the woman who is found by Iris in her hall weaving images of the very scenes for which she is to some degree responsible,

τὴν δ' εὖρ' ἐν μεγάρωι ἦ δὲ μέγαν ἰστὸν ὕφαινε
 δίπλακα πορφυρέην, πολέας δ' ἐνέπασσεν ἀέθλους
 Τρώων θ' ἱπποδάμων καὶ Ἀχαιῶν χαλκοχιτώνων,
 οὓς ἔθεν εἶνεκ' ἐπασχον ὑπ' Ἄρηος παλαμῶων· *Il.* III 125-7

The same woman who, in the *teichoskopia* of *Il.* III, had narrated the identities of the characters of the primary narrative on the plain below.

¹⁰⁰ See Nikolopoulos in his comprehensive study of Ovidian metanarrativity (2004), 260, "Our research has confirmed that internal narrators mirror the extradiegetic narrator (Ovid) in more ways than one. It has been frequently noted in the previous chapters that, irrespective of the age, gender or status of the individual narrator, the text of their narration exhibits the same interest in aetiology and etymology as well as many of the mannerisms of presentation that are evident in the primary narrative."

¹⁰¹ Cf. *ibid.* 260-1, "...the use of internal narrators gave our poet the opportunity to present his readers with an encyclopaedia of narrative forms . . . Thus the *Metamorphoses* become not only a universal chronicle *ab origine mundi/ ad mea tempora* (1.3-4), but also a history of narrative forms and contexts from Olympus to Italy, from *Palati caeli* (1.176) to "the deep woods that grow in the valley of Aricia" (15.488), from Homer's *Odyssey* and Lucilius' *Satires* to Vergil's *Aeneid*."

with an intractable problem."¹⁰² Many readers and commentators did see the *Metamorphoses*, unfortunately, as above all not the *Aeneid*, something like a shadow of, or even a satyr play to Virgil's epic.¹⁰³ Who would deny that Ovid is demonstrably unvirgilian, and that his choices are informed by the existence of that great poem, but is it that he is facilely governed by an imagined need to be different from Virgil, like some contrary youngest sibling always striking out in the opposite direction? He is, rather, freed by Virgil and his work, from having to write a Romanized martial, national epic that would satisfy a Maecenas or glorify and appease his emperor. Ovid is not Peter Schaeffer's frustrated Salieri in the master's shadow. It was not only through imitation that he paid Virgil homage but in *Ars* III.338 says of the *Aeneid* *quo nullum Latium clarius exstat opus*, and he considers himself not Virgil's epic but his elegiac equivalent. In fact, not too close a reading of Virgil and Ovid will show how their likenesses are far more in the pastoral moments than in the epic. The fact is that the overt allusions to the

¹⁰² See Kenney's brief survey (1973), 116 "Often he has been criticized for not being Virgil. So Mackail speaks of 'the tripping movement...into which [the hexameter] was metamorphosed...by the facile adroitness of Ovid'. Similarly Green's verdict that Ovid's verses are 'under-enjambed' and 'over-dactylic' can only mean 'compared with Virgil's'. Glover called them 'often only elegiac couplets in disguise', . . . echoed by Wilkinson . . ." The dichotomy is common-place though perhaps fading with late rehabilitation of Ovid's reputation. It seems a comparison that has lost its head that forces this binary and makes of the two works and the two poets, polarities. Perhaps we ought not to underestimate the complexity of these poems and the relations in which they stand to the authors, audience, tradition and to one another, by imposing our schemas on them. For more on the relationship between the two, see Segal (1972), Bömer (1968), and Diller (1968) writes: "Und doch, um schon einige Fragen anzudeuten, gibt es charakteristische Unterschiede: Vergil ist der Meister des großen heroischen Geschichts- und Weltbildes - in den *Metamorphosen* liegt das Schwergewicht *nicht* auf dem Ringthema des *Carmen perpetuum*, sondern auf der Erzählung, Quintilian spricht ganz richtig von der *necessitas res diversissimas in speciem unius corporis colligendi* (*Inst.* IV 1,77), ohne daß jedoch das "Kollektivgedicht" - wir sehen, der moderne Terminus ist bereits von Quintilian "vorformuliert" - in einzelne Gedichte zerfiele. Vergil ist - er ist, wie das W. Fauth¹ sogar für die *Fasten* feststellte, "naturgemäß zunächst einmal Erzähler", wobei, so E.A. Schmidt in seinem neuesten Buch über Ovid, die kallimacheische elegische Tradition "episch transzendiert wird". So steht Ovid - wenn auch nicht in den weiten Dimensionen und anders als im Sinne des bekannten Buchtitels von H. Fränkel, der Ovid zwischen Antike und Christentum stellte - "zwischen zwei Welten". Man kann diesen Unterschied aber auch noch anders, mit den Maßstäben ihres Jahrhunderts, charakterisieren, mit Horazens *aut prodesse volunt aut delectare poetae* (*ars* 333): Vergil will das eine, *prodesse*, Ovid das andere, *delectare*." Diller, (1968)

¹⁰³ The excellent article by Hardie (1990) asks: "Ovid's Theban history: the first anti-*Aeneid*?"; Bömer (1968) addresses their 'charakteristische Unterschiede'; Ovid also, as is well known, has been the object of much critical scorn cf. Newman's (1967) 'Ovid as nadir to Virgil's zenith' & Henry in *Aeneidea* (1873).

Aeneid in Ovid make comparative studies of the two, both similarities and differences, fruitful. We may deduce how Ovid has read all of Virgil, how he would write Aeneas and how he would have us read his own versions. Our interpretation of each is somewhat in the light of the other, they are inextricably linked intertextually.¹⁰⁴

Ovid is as much free through his predecessors and the tradition, free to adapt and experiment, to blend genres, to master forms, to Romanize or Latinize the bodies of Greek cultural pasts, to invert and to convert all the while exercising and realizing his special genius for formal control and renewal. This is really what Ovid's game is and in this light we should read the many moments of literary *imitatio* in his work.

Immediately succeeding the proem *Met.* I 5 - 88, to take passages I shall later examine closely for example, there is the part Lucretian, part Virgilian, part Hellenistic general knowledge cosmogony; then the Hesiodic story of ages. The *Georgics* are repeatedly called to mind. The account of Orpheus in Book X reads clearly as an elaboration and attempted revision of Virgil's *Eclogue VI*.¹⁰⁵ Ovid has a little *Aeneid* in his thirteenth book, an *Argonautica*, a *Thebaid*. His epilogue brightly renders for a coda to Ovid's epic, Horace's famous ode.¹⁰⁶ These are just a few examples of the poet's basic technique of model and composition. There is much that brings musical invention to mind, the fantasies on a theme, the astonishing transitions, which are somehow never dissonant, the invigorated baroque.

It might very well be pointed out that imitation is hardly avoidable in epic mythic poetry, amongst a Roman set that styles itself on the Alexandrian. Yes, and that is much to the point in this discussion of Ovid particularly, since he is a supremely traditional artist, in the sense that he understands himself so

¹⁰⁴ For a recent study that brings modern hermeneutic notions of the interconnection of literary history to bear on Roman poetry see Stephen Hinds' *Allusion and intertext: dynamics of appropriation in Roman poetry*. Research on allusion and intertextuality in Ovid is exhaustive. He is a poet who appealed to the very Alexandrian tastes and preoccupations of the cosmopolitan twentieth century's scholar.

¹⁰⁵ Spahlinger (2004), 9-14

¹⁰⁶ Hor. *Odes* III xxx

consummately as in a tradition, which is a past as well as a future,¹⁰⁷ appropriation as much as imitation.¹⁰⁸ Imitation, like most things in Ovid, plays a very complicated role. Ovid is not merely telling the same stories but deliberately conjuring up those other texts through his diction and phrasing. He is not merely displaying wide reading but forcing comparison. Like a magician, by this protean craft, Ovid is changing himself into what Callimachus is, what Virgil had become: a symbol. Most interestingly for this study, this undisguised taste for *imitatio* situates the interests of the author and the awareness of the audience in the formal rather than the moral.

With the technology of literature the past and language are no longer simply transmitted but translated, consciously modified and interpreted. The past does not seem any longer to come down *naturally*. Man knows himself involved in it, as a process he sees it is guided. Imitation and adaptation are functions of historical maturity, the consciousness of tradition that makes the mind ironical. Tradition itself ignites the desire for invention, for novelty. That is an appetite for which Ovid certainly caters.

The intelligence of the erudite *doctus poeta* is reflexively allusive and synthesizing. Language, his material, is an ancient coin that many hands have pressed. He recognizes in diction and syntax the varieties of register and tone and hears the resonance of other poems; words conjure other words as the faces of one's contemporaries conjure their family and kind, their origins and ancestors. His control of form and effect stems from his sensitivity to nuance and meaning. Language under poetic experiment regenerates old lexical forms or incorporates new meanings. In this work of miscegenating genres Ovid also achieves a blend of register and diction, marshalling the archaic and lofty along with the mildly colloquial and neologistic. Allusion and imitation, narrative detachment and pathetic verisimilitude, all are techniques and attitudes caught up with the artificialities of late classical style.

The broad use of imitation in his work is in keeping with the permeated sense of mediation throughout the poem. The world of the *Metamorphoses* is not one of simple direct experience as is that of Homer's poems. Perhaps such comments

¹⁰⁷ Ovid refers often to his own posterity, that of his poetry, in his several works, at length in *Tristia*. Note also Feeney's recent review essay (2006).

¹⁰⁸ For an interesting related discussion see Barchiesi (1993) 333-65.

about earlier poems should make one feel uncomfortable. I hope to be able to more subtly characterize the *Metamorphoses* without over-simplifying the character of other great works referred to. What I have in mind here is the meaning in the Homeric style so beautifully characterized by Auerbach in his *Mimesis: the representation of reality in western literature*: "...externalized, uniformly illuminated phenomena, at a definite time in a definite place, connected together without lacunae in a *perpetual foreground*; thoughts and feeling completely expressed; events taking place in a leisurely fashion and with very little of suspense... The Homeric poems, then, though their intellectual, linguistic, and above all syntactical culture appears to be so much more highly developed, [the comparison is with Judaic, Old Testament poetry] are yet comparatively simple in their picture of human beings; and no less so in their relation to the real life which they describe in general. Delight in physical existence is everything to them, and their highest aim is to make that delight perceptible to us. Between battles and passions, adventures and perils, they show us hunts, banquets, palaces and shepherds' cots, athletic contests and washing days - in order that we may see the heroes in their ordinary life, and seeing them so, may take pleasure in their manner of enjoying their *savoury present*, a present which sends strong roots down to social usages, landscape, and daily life."¹⁰⁹ It is rather a world intermediated by that omnipresent and distinct narrative voice. Equally, the past, literary and historical tradition is a story of forms revived and reinterpreted, modernised and reinflected over many hundreds of years by the inventions of a succession of artists. Imitation is a function of the inherited character of form and the attitude taken towards that inheritance: an attitude at once of subjective involvement and timeless contribution, likeness to and difference from, respectful submission and proud even competitive authority.

Furthermore, Ovid's work suggests the mediation of all personal experience by convention, by language; the figurative, hermeneutic and agent character of human experience - our relation to language mirrors our relation to world, even *is* that relation. His is a strangely successful and paradoxical conjuring of urbane modernity through the stylizations both of that illuminated foreground, its Homeric realisms, its reproduced "savoury present" and of those tragic-comic *pathetica* of the elegy and epyllion.

¹⁰⁹ Auerbach (1968), 9-10 [my italics]

The art of allusion is somehow the outcome of the naturalizing¹¹⁰ effect of the past. Predecessors are established and authoritative, their works with all the innovation and archaisms (though there was not so much of the linguistic archaism amongst the Romans as there was amongst the Greek poets),¹¹¹ the neologisms and styles become *normal* parts of the larger culture, they *become* the culture. A new work stands in relation to great ones of the past as a man does to the world around him. Man and world is a transforming, living and mutual relation not a static set of simple identities. Ovid's vision, to use so vatic a term, is one of a reality of endless generation and undoing, perpetual becoming on the electric current of this dynamic relation.

¹¹⁰ And here we may recall Kenney on Ovid's "denaturing" of Virgil.

¹¹¹ Russell (1979), 2-3

STYLE

*quo ars non penetrat?*¹¹²

Est enim finitimus oratori poeta, numeris astrictior paulo, verborum autem licentia liberior, multis vero ornandi generibus socius ac paene par; in hoc quidem certe prope idem, nullis ut terminis circumscribat aut definiat ius suum, quo minus ei liceat eadem illa facultate et copia vagari qua velit.

The truth is that the poet is the very near kinsman of the orator, rather more heavily fettered as regards rhythm, but with ampler freedom in his choice of words, while in the use of many sorts of ornament he is his ally and almost his counterpart; in one respect at all events something like identity exists, since he sets no boundaries or limits to his claims, such as would prevent him from ranging whither he will with the same freedom and licence as the other.

Cic. *De Oratore* I 70¹¹³

So, in accomplishing this enterprise of conversion, this appropriation and Romanization of eclectic indigenous and exotic *mythoi*, how did Ovid work, one may ask. With all the important guiding masters spread out on the desks about his study, choosing models, editing, recasting, drawing out felicitous phrases? Did usages once established in the works of Ennius¹¹⁴ then later Catullus, Lucretius, Horace, Gallus, Tibullus, Propertius and one's own earlier more youthful verse become a *natural*, an instinctive literary way of expressing common ideas, common moods.¹¹⁵ Were the nuggets of Greek idiom smelted in Roman memory and cast in Latin moulds? Did they become established fixtures of the language that came naturally to the lips, to be inflected with one's own

¹¹² A.A. III 291

¹¹³ See Sutton (1942)

¹¹⁴ For Newman (1967): "There is no roman poetry after Ennius..." this is true in a limited sense. The Hellenistic cosmopolitanism of Ovid and his contemporaries, while marking a break with earlier Roman ways and forms is also an updating of *romanitas*. If there poetry is eclectic and ironic it is surely also redefining.

¹¹⁵ On self-imitation in Ovid, see Cairns (1979)

accents, refracted in the prisms of one's own imagination? Or were they the traps and treasure eggs of an habitually allusive, synthesizing, intertextualizing taste, carefully set in the brush of language, to waylay and entertain the enchanted reader? Did the original artifice of one's predecessors, like the aboriginal utterance of one's ancestors, become the *prima materia*, the lexical *natura* of one's own moment?

However the process of creation was organized, the arts of Roman poetry are achieved with practised technique and an artificiality that reads off the page, for all, like natural grace. Ovid grafts shoots from every other species of flowering tree onto the branches of his very robust and also flexuous mother trunk, like the trees in Virgil's second *Georgic* (no doubt an image well enjoyed by Ovid). He assimilates all manner of strain into the lines of his robust mythical animal, his half-creature, a monster of doubles: a hybrid epic.

The striking accomplishment is unity without homogeneity, eclectic that is never loose nor chaotic, the exotic and esoteric domesticated or, better, urbanized.¹¹⁶ Formally, in this way, the work can stand as a new image of the imperial city: its famous and sacred walls are breached, it admits all kinds, it gathers hungrily into itself all the heterogeneous shapes of human life and culture, all the exotic and rare merchandise of the world.¹¹⁷ Rome, like the poet's voice, is a mastering order: absorbant and excessive, it is nevertheless controlled and to some extent also determined by a manipulating intelligence. The social engineering of Augustus is a political analogy - but only an analogy - for Ovid's poetic project. In this way the *Metamorphoses* really is a response to Virgil's vision of Rome as world, for his *Aeneid* is just that, the story of the immortal city. Ovid's is an updated, modernised, less Romantic vision. For Virgil's dignity we often find absurdity in Ovid, for fate the arbitrary, for pathos the pathetic grotesque.¹¹⁸ In the *Aeneid* Virgil seems to be elaborating a conciliation of town and country,

¹¹⁶ Bömer (1969), 7 in his 'Vorwort' to Vol. I "... sie sind nicht nur Epos, sondern auch Epyllion, carmen perpetuum und eine bunte Folge von Idyllen, heroischen und burlesken Szenen, Liebesgedichten zur gleichen Zeit . . ."

¹¹⁷ See Galinsky (1996) on Augustan culture generally.

¹¹⁸ As noted above Barchiesi (1999) makes that contrast of narrative character: "the narrative world of the poem suggests a multiplicity of voices striving to get out of control: for the construction of an authorial voice, the result is an ambivalent one. If we take the *Aeneid* as a point of reference, we may say that the Ovidian narrator has as much authority as the Virgilian narrator- that is, a lot of it- but much less responsibility. . .", 113-14.

personal fate with historical destiny, ancient values with the troubling exigencies of the present or recent. Ovid's is a world of irrational forces, of violence and power, accident and unconcealed 'fabricatedness', baroque delight in illusion and grace for their own sake. There is no conciliation, the silk is shot with tense cords. Nature and culture, city and country are poorly separated and neither is idealized. The *Metamorphoses*, one fancies, is Rome: teeming, paradoxical, copious, it contains all the world but is itself uncontained, self-aware, self-concerned, a dazzling and eclectic model, insatiably incorporating the peoples and histories and goods of the world, endless, immortal and new. For all the world it is *like* nature. This is Ovid's ultimate verisimilitude.

Within the four lines of the proem we have seen the opposite extremes of the demonstratively renegade break with epic convention in the epic mode and also, beyond even simply imitation, direct translation from Callimachus. The rest of Book I and the entire work, like a digest of the most effective oratorical forms, a kind of highly coloured, breathing progymnasma, delivers a variety of examples of famous works, assumed and treated by Ovid. *Oratio, declamatio, imitatio, controversia*, love elegiac, epyllion, epicist and scientist- highly rhetorical, Ovid has it all. Not only does he blend genre, Greek, Roman and Near Eastern tales, the tragic and funny¹¹⁹ but he effects coherently a mix of tone and styles. All this is accomplished in the suave, individual voice of the courtly, best-seller and connoisseur poet.

"The Ovidian manner as generations of clever English schoolboys have discovered, is imitable; Virgil's is not."¹²⁰ The outstanding feature of the

¹¹⁹ One thinks of all those moments of pathetic recognition, (as in so many episodes throughout the work such as those of Actaeon, Narcissus, Orpheus and Pygmalion, to name some that I deal with here), inverted anagnorisis, when his figures realize what they are not.

¹²⁰ The following remarks on style owe much to Knox (1986) esp. his chapter "Style & Variation in the *Metamorphoses*"; Kenney (1973), from which this comment is drawn, 119; and Kenney's entry on Ovid (1983). On Ovid's imitability he cites G.B. Pighi in his article 'La Poesia delle "Metamorfosi"' *Atti del convegno internaz. Ovidiano*, I (1959), 16 'tutta la dizione epica latina, dopo l'inimitabile Virgilio e l'imitabile Ovidio, è più ovidiana che virgiliana.' but cf. Auerbach (1968), 11: "The oft-repeated reproach that Homer is a liar takes nothing from his effectiveness, he does not need to base his story on historical reality, his reality is powerful enough in itself; it ensnares us, weaving its web around us, and that suffices him. And this "real" world into which we are lured exists for itself, contains nothing but itself; the Homeric poems conceal nothing, they contain no teaching and no secret meaning. Homer can be analyzed...but he cannot be interpreted." If Ovid is imitable is he not also better analysed than interpreted in the sense

Metamorphoses is its stylism, its unmistakable satin texture of a synthetic fabric. If it seems imitable, that is because its artificialities are salient. It would be hard to capture Virgilian mood, it is more a spirit that distinguishes his work, that spiritual elusiveness and ambiguity is, of course, much of the meaning of the *Aeneid*. Ovid's ambiguities are visible¹²¹, all his idiosyncrasies manifest. Linguistic wit, verbal dexterity, lexical borrowing and invention, the paradox, syllepsis, the ornamental golden line, parenthesis¹²², repetition, the swift hexametric rhythm, the digression, the clarity and illumination (which gives the narration such translucence), the playfulness: all are the ostensible features of the superficies, which the poem is, all are detectable and can be imitated as they have been devised.

Discussions of Ovidian diction¹²³ tend to highlight Ovid's differences from Virgil and his own discreet exploitation¹²⁴ of the variety of lexical forms, his timing in deploying certain streaks of lexical colour and his artfulness. A distinctive character of Ovidian style is the modernity of his language. One recalls Ovid's advice to ladies at *A.A.* III 479-80 *munda sed e medio consuetaque verba, puellae, / scribite: sermonis publica forma placet*. For a writer so severally chastized for his gratuities, his exaggerating humour, the hyperboles of over literalism and melodramas of fantasy, it is nicely noted by recent scholars¹²⁵ that there is much

Auerbach here claims for Homer? By that reading at any rate, Ovid in his 'narrative primacy', is closer to Homer than Virgil.

¹²¹ "To the suggestive ambiguities of Virgil, Ovid prefers the virtues of clarity and simplicity. This stance is consistent with the pervasive pattern of allusion to the neoteric and Alexandrian background traced in the programmatic first book" Knox (1986), 27.

¹²² The unobtrusiveness of which is demonstrated by von Albrecht (1968). The parenthesis is always clearly signed and contained within verse or main caesura. Again Ovid's resources are clearly focussed on smooth narrative continuousness.

¹²³ "Ovid learned much from Virgil- the shaping of the hexameter, the matching of sense to verse period; in matters of diction and style though, he is largely independent, adopting an eclectic method to suit the changing content of the narrative." Knox (1986), 27; and recall Kenney (1973), 119 "In material, structure and intention Ovid's independence from Virgil is almost complete. In language it seems at first sight to be otherwise: for all Ovid's work is shot through and through with Virgilian reminiscences."; cf. also Solodow (1988), 74-154.

¹²⁴ "such innovations as were made by Ovid on the stock of epic diction inherited from his great predecessor were in the main unobtrusive, but appear to be designed to adapt it to the purposes of 'modern' epic . . ." Kenney (1973), 120.

¹²⁵ Kenney (1973), 120; Knox (1986), 27-28

restraint in his style. He is sparing in 'true'¹²⁶archaisms- eg. infinitives in *-ier*, rare verbs like *scitari* or *adoleo*- and shades in *color epicus* rather by drawing on a stock of established poeticisms than merely 'speaking old fashioned'.

Ovid commonly coins words by modifying prefixes and suffixes - a technique that both brings the diction closer to the identical habit in *sermo plebeius* (and comedy) of adding intensifying prefixes, (such as *de-*, or privative *in-*, and other prepositional tags) and enlarges the fund of short syllables - and appending these to past participles as well as generally forming new words by compound¹²⁷ (a nice analogue to the innovations and techniques of the larger composition). Ovid can be seen to be working at meeting various objectives: he wishes to enlarge 'the compass of the poet's linguistic resources' and sustain a smooth and accelerated narrative. He needs to retain epic mood while he writes in contemporary language, a code that for all its artificiality does not read as the preposterous irrelevancy of tired, anachronistic bombast. The consensus among Augustan poets¹²⁸ not to borrow Greek words, which Ovid 'predictably' obeys, is a striking example of the consciousness of Ovid and his contemporaries of their identity and even their role in the formation of a Roman cultural identity. Latin is a language aware of itself. Rome, Ovid, Latin: all are marked by historical self-consciousness, increasing in breadth, sophistication, flexibility and expressive potential. Ovid, Knox shows,¹²⁹ draws not only on the type scenes but also the emotive language of elegy, a register much closer to ordinary speech than the stylization of epicism. The archaic note struck on the cord of established poeticism; the neologism; the expansion of the poetic common and the induction into poetry of profane or vulgar formulations, that conflation of emotive high-colouring not typically associated with epic and the solemn literary vocabulary of the *genus nobile*, all are evidence of a considered and scintillating kind of experimentation and innovation in the elastic limits of the language. As Kenney phrases it so well, "In general it may be said that they [the features of Ovid's diction] were all directed to extending, within the limits of linguistic and literary propriety (ie. without substantially trenching on either the colloquial or the archaic or the hyperpoetic resources of Latin) the poetical *koine* that in his

¹²⁶ "It is not always easy to decide how to decide how to classify certain isolated words, or what is more important, how to assess their intended effect." Kenney (1973) 120; cf. again Russell (1979), 2-3

¹²⁷ *indelebilis, innabilis,*

¹²⁸ Knox (1986), 126

¹²⁹ *ibid.* 37-43

amatory works he has already gone a long way towards establishing as what might be called a standard literary dialect of Latin."¹³⁰

Syntactically Ovid is uncomplicated, nothing, he knows, must impede the fluent narrative. There are, however, all the identifiable figures of developed style: hyperbaton, anaphora, enallage and so on but surely the most characteristic is syllepsis. Depending as it does on ambiguity, on the *natural* coincidences of language, it has that class of cerebral appeal that delights Ovid and lights the passages of his poetry. His work is rhetorical and has the finish of elegance. The adversative particle and signal parenthesis, cola formed to match sense, the liberal apostrophe and the polished, balanced dialogue of his characters: all reflect the education in oratory and the eloquent, rhetorical poise.

Theme and variation, in micro- and macrocosm, Ovid develops and elaborates the recurring theme and the rich variation. He has formidable descriptive power. Below I take special care in the study of his natural descriptions, which are so scenic. He snaps and zooms on details, and here is that quality for which he is sometimes called cinematographic. Ovid develops scenes as *enargeia*, ultimately, the effect is a fusion of the stylized and the realistic, a style that is richly visual and also literary. He accomplishes the evocation of an atmosphere of endless variation, copiousness and surprise in a language that is concise. Clause, prosodic and lexical analysis all reveal over and again two priorities: firstly, for vividness of effect and secondly, for the smooth, uninterrupted poetic texture. Ovid takes great care with that uniform, rippling and pellucid film, the floating stream just beneath which all the transactions and adventures of his myths take place.

*

Ovid synthesizes and transforms: elegy, epic, Virgil, Callimachus, myth and treatise, the colloquial, the lofty, the archaic and the contemporary. His *prima materia* is language, plastic and versatile. His verisimilitude, as I have been arguing, is to other poets, other styles, other works. He knows that he too will be absorbed into that alternative landscape of literature. He himself will become a

¹³⁰ *ibid.* 126; and Knox (1986), 42 "Ovid's poetic vocabulary is an intelligently constructed assembly of words taken from all spheres of the language, aiming at liveliness, and fully exploiting every opportunity for vivid description . . ."

name, a word and a body of texts as those poets before himself, thus he is working out his immortality in this synoptic and catholic poem. He integrates all the modes and styles of the Latin language and poetry into his voice and thus is absorbed himself, as landmark feature, into the landscape of all succeeding Latinity.

The emphatic point must be his consciousness of language, or the status that language has in his imagination.¹³¹ Language is the form that the mediation of reality takes, so much so that it becomes almost indistinct from reality. He is a man of his age (no less than also timeless). Words are not simply objects that one exchanges with others, that fall and drift like snowflakes from the eloquent mouth. The human world seems to be made on and endure by language. Memory and ideal, form and meaning live by language. After the originals, Homer and the Tragedians, Hesiod, the Lyricists and the great inheritors of the arriving Latin literature, there is no possibility of a being, as the gods and god-like heroes have, that is apparently never ambiguously constructed out of a past;¹³² mediated by past forms, by language. This sophistic care with logos, this fascination for its plasticity and power, this rich rhetorical sense alone, would make Ovid just another Hellenistic artificer. What makes him so much more though, is the force and life allowed nature in his work.

That vulgar taste for verisimilitude is, apparently effortlessly, mastered, excelled and satirized. The complex texture of the work has been formed on the counterpoint of, on the one hand, convincing and even seductive narrative, which draws the audience in and guides the willing imagination and, on the other, the interruptive, witty and omniscient authorial voice.

Nevertheless, the world for all it seems the web of human language, a library city built over previous cities, present causes risen out of past episodes, practices and names derived from the circuits of earlier ages, does nevertheless have an extra-human reality, a violent, *physical* and animate power utterly indifferent to the human. It is at once independent and inalienable from human experience, it controls man and is temporarily shaped and controlled as its meaning is drawn

¹³¹ Poetry, we are told, came *naturally* to Ovid:
sponte sua carmen numeros veniebat ad aptos,
et quod temptabam scribere versus erat. *Tristia* IV x 25-6

¹³² Auerbach (1968), 2-3 again: "But Homer...knows no background. What he narrates is for the time being the only present, and fills both the stage and the reader's mind completely."

out by his imagination. Founders of cities, hunters, lovers, aristocratic youths and heroes stumble through the world of passion and form, they interrupt nature, ignorantly disrupt established orders and their own identities become grotesquely perverted. Twists of language and turns of fate, the contact of the human and the natural and divine is fraught and dangerous as each infects the other. There is a strange, perilous fluidity over their boundaries and in Ovid's vision, as we shall see in further detail below, the world is neither exclusively human and artificially construed by the dreaming subject nor only blindly, willfully, organic.

III

FORMA

The Poetics of Creation

'make it new': innovations

By now it is clear that this work *in ambiguo est*, our poem is eclectic and complex. Ovid succeeds in retaining a generic epic identity while also mutating the interior content and challenging the expectations¹³³ of his audience. This is no radically new observation. Of course, it may not be exactly what an Augustan propaganda machine might want or need but the episodic narrative, slender, polished and refined is the stuff of Alexandrian aesthetic convention, if not even orthodoxy. Ovid, as Knox (1986) argues so well, is that very sophisticated and self aware animal, a Roman Callimachus. For the grandeur and concentration of traditional (Homeric) epic, Ovid offers the breadth and variety and beauty of concatenated stylisations. No need to entrench too deeply the artificial moat that keeps apart absolutely the neoteric epyllia and canonic epic, Ovid is proof of the tenability of the fusion of these styles, the happy cohabitation of two aesthetic dispositions.

His 'epic pretensions' are justified by his dexterous appropriations of themes and techniques and the mastering of precedent and variety through style. He is a child of his age and of his city, centre of the world, imperial and assimilating under its imperium all the world's variety, Rome annexes time and space, achieving the state of self-consciousness or world historical irony that comes with experience, success and the lessons of corruption and spent ideals. Ovid likewise, gathers plastic diversity into a synthesized unity and invites us to enjoy the ironies and tensions of this eclecticism. He cannot be denied his status as an epic poet.

¹³³ Just as figures will retain their human consciousness even as they are bewitched into trees and stags and heifers.

On the woof of tradition Ovid unwinds the warp of fresh and original tellings and associations. We see also that he stands in a particularly complex relation to his predecessors, that his style of promiscuous *imitatio* and his licentious delight in literary resonance and appropriation presents the commentator and curious reader with much to recognize and consider. We will find in the cosmogony of lines 5 – 88 in the first book, for example, Lucretian and Hesiodic references, Virgilian image and style, Apollonian adjusted, Homeric technique, pre-Socratic echoes and references to his own works all compressed, converted and repacked: a "pavement of citations" indeed. It is highly allusive, even quotational writing riding on suave dactyls. This will be seen to be exemplary absorption of assorted other works with their distinct agenda into his own narrative, typical of the accomplishment of Ovid's poetic intelligence, always somehow both epic and neoteric, dynamic and picturesque, one and many, the integration of all predecessors, a synthetic incorporation and mastery of forms under one imperious, panoptic prerogative of style. Ovid throughout asserts his place in tradition as if the culmination of all great works, the combination of all skills, the suitable and worthy heir of all worthy and suitable mythological traditions.

Forma occurs eleven times in Book I¹³⁴ and three in the opening cosmogony, lines 5-88. The first metamorphosis of the work, (not counting the implicit transformation of literary type of the first four lines), is that from chaos to cosmos, from formless, indistinct matter, to the recognisable and pristine natural scenery of discrete elements. Here is a continuation of the elaboration of Ovid's *ars poetica*, the opening of the work that, I hope to show convincingly, may be justifiably read as a demonstration of Ovid's principles or, more accurately, his attitude towards his work itself, its composition, the role of the poet and the nature of his activity.

Here at the outset of his work, we find the famous cosmogony echoing his own Roman predecessors and allusively summarizing centuries of mythic, scientific, traditional and experimental Classical and Hellenistic speculation. Bömer's memorable words are worth quoting: "Die ovidische Kosmogonie ist eines der am meisten interpretierten Stücke antiker Dichtung. Der Gründe dafür gibt es viele, vor allem aber waren und sind es der Ruhm des dichters und seines berühmtesten Werkes, und die gelehrte Überzeugung, hier einmal eines der

¹³⁴ 1, 17, 73, 237, 248, 402, 405, 416, 489, 530, 743

meisbehandelten Probleme antiker Philosophie und Theologie geradezu wie eine reife Frucht greifen zu können, die alles Licht vergangener Jahrhunderte auf sich vereine..."¹³⁵

A.G Lee¹³⁶ makes a helpfully neat précis of what traceable philosophical outlooks are present in Ovid's Cosmogony: the Empedoclean four elements; Anaxagoras' *Nous* that first imposed order on Chaos; the Platonic stars that are divine beings and Socratic upright man superior to other animals; the Pythagorean five zones; and most importantly, the Stoic view¹³⁷ which took in all of these and held the identity of God and Nature. Bömer as ever is more exhaustive,¹³⁸ a fine resource. Tempting as it is to consider and evaluate more fully some of the contributions to Classical scholarship on this question of philosophy in Ovid, let us note that it has exercised the pens if not always the minds, of very many scholars. It is a discussion vexed by the need so many have felt to find 'depth' in Ovid's outlook and anticipate thereby vindication of his project and justification¹³⁹ of the product.

Ovid's Pythagoras of Book XV is unconvincing as the mouthpiece of some Ovidian metaphysical doctrine, for Ovid is no more a Pythagorean than he is an Orphic.¹⁴⁰ Sara Myers¹⁴¹ discusses at length the important literary, scientific and philosophical aspects of the poem. The Alexandrian interest in *causae*, or *aetia* is a spoor identified and tracked. Myers makes much of the use of natural philosophy in Ovid, in the cosmogony of the first book and the Pythagorean section of the last. The important point is that Pythagoras and his lengthy disquisition serve a literary function. Myers is quite accurate when she says, "Ovid's inclusion of the figure of Pythagoras at the end of *Metamorphoses* will provide us with another overtly cosmogonic narrative with which we may compare the rest of the poem. Between the two philosophical passages that frame

¹³⁵ Bömer (1969), Vol.I, 15

¹³⁶ Lee (1953), 70

¹³⁷ On Ovid's use of Stoic teaching: Robbins (1913), 401 ff. and P. DeLacy (1947), 153ff.; McKim (1984-1985), 97-108 amongst many others.

¹³⁸ Bömer (1969), Vol. I, 15-47 here esp. p.16

¹³⁹ For a representative list of the kinds of opinion and ascription see McKim (1984 -1985), 97-108

¹⁴⁰ See also Robbins (1913), 401, for Ovid's "... determining authority ... Among those that have been put forward are the Egyptians, Empedocles, Anaxagoras, and Varro.", it seems a wrongheaded line of inquiry, to try to trace Ovid's 'true' scientific position.

¹⁴¹ Myers (1994)

and create, as I have suggested, a sort of force field of scientific resonances . . .".¹⁴² 'Force field of resonances' is an excellent way to put it, the poetry is generally electro-magnetic, so to speak, conducting other works, transforming and emitting its own characteristic static electricity. Does Myers, however, not make more of the Philosophical episodes in the *Metamorphoses* than we should? Philosophical material is not necessarily philosophical seriousness. Its role is to give the work, firstly, the atmosphere of timelessness and the universality of physics and secondly, (as Myers does correctly note), to frame the great narrative: it is a literary, a rhetorical device. Phillip DeLacy¹⁴³ is excellent here, rightly discussing the Heraclitean content of Pythagoras words and its obvious *usefulness* to Ovid. On the catalogue of changes that Pythagoras makes he writes "He probably took this list from some Hellenistic book of marvels. . . . all the parts of the speech bear on the central theme of change of form . . . The criterion of appropriateness is therefore once more applicable to Ovid's selection and adaptation of philosophical doctrines . . .".¹⁴⁴ Ovid lends a richness through these moments of philosophical colouring, to his work and in this mythological context, for DeLacy, a characteristic and entertaining incongruity of effect.¹⁴⁵

The richness of suggestion and borrowing in Ovid may waylay many scholars but we must keep returning to the poetry itself, both in close textual analysis and continuous, uninterrupted readings that allow us to hear the tone of the work. Reading through the Pythagoras passages (XV 75-478), one is struck by Ovid's tonal consistency (which is not lack of variety) over fifteen books. Pythagoras declaims with all the exempla and brilliant argumentation of, well, a Roman poet. His words are laced with humour and the total effect is of suasive facility and thematic unity. It is a passage in key with all that has preceded, part of the crescendo of Book XV, not a philosophical re-inforcement or summing up but an opportunity for the restatement of motif.

Certainly Pythagoras' speech is one of the ring devices of the opening and closing books. A facet of this twinness is the common language of scientific and cosmological speculation, in which we find, for example the recurrence of

¹⁴² Myers (1994), 59

¹⁴³ DeLacy (1947)

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 157

¹⁴⁵ See also McKim (1984 - 1985) for the argument against those who claim on their readings of *Met.* I and XV that "Ovid is trying, however incompetently, to provide a "theoretical" background for *Metamorphoses*", 98.

familiar nomenclature, specifically the term *natura*, here in the introduction to the speech:

. . . quae natura negabat
visibus humanis, oculis ea pectoris hausit

63-4

dictaque mirantum magni primordia mundi
et rerum causas et quid natura docebat,
quid deus, unde nives, quae fulminis esset origo,

67-8

In the speech itself:

vela dedi nihil est toto quod perstet in orbe;
cuncta fluunt, omnisque vagans formatur imago.

177 – 78

Natura, as ever, is an artist:

. . . fuit illa dies, qua semina tantum
spesque hominum primae matris latitauimus aluo.
artifices natura manus admouit et angi
corpora uisceribus distentae condita matris
noluit eque domo vacuas emisit in auras.

216 – 20

Nec species sua cuique manet, rerumque novatrix
ex aliis alias reparat natura figuras;

252 - 253

Humour and irony is unmistakably present, features as we shall continue to see of the self-conscious style of the entire work. Here on the heinous non-vegetarianism of men:

Nec satis est quod tale nefas committitur; ipsos

inscripsere deos sceleri numenque supernum
 caede laboriferi credunt gaudere iuueni.
 victima labe carens et praestantissima forma
 (nam placuisse nocet)...

127 - 131

Sceptically, playfully modern we have narrative irony, once again, a rhetorical feature which so suffuses the work as to be, I argue, an important element of the poetics that shape the composition and therefore, the reading of the work:

O genus attonitum gelidae formidine mortis,
 quid Styga, quid tenebras et nomina vana timetis,
 materiem vatum, falsique pericula mundi?¹⁴⁶

153 - 155

The possibilities for entertainment offered by metempsychosis are brought out, this typical of Ovidian technique generally, by taking the idea to its logical conclusions and bringing these extremes to life through cleverly imaginative detail:

ipse ego (nam memini) Troiani tempore belli
 Panthoides Euphorbus eram, cui pectore quondam
 haesit in adverso grauis hasta minoris Atridae;
 cognoui clipeum, laeuae gestamina nostrae,
 nuper Abanteis templo Iunonis in Argis.

160 - 64

Note particularly the unanticipated but not unlikely realism of *cognovi clipeum...templo Iunonis in Argis*.¹⁴⁷ Line 160, with the emphasised pronouns and the parenthetical construction with *nam* of course recalls the proem of Book I.¹⁴⁸ The following lines evoke the final ones of the poem and thus echo Ovid's personal poetical programme and hope for immortality through this his imperishable monument rather than stand as as a serious synopsis of

¹⁴⁶ For Augustan poet as *vates*, see Newman (1967), O'Hara (1990), Perkins (2000).

¹⁴⁷ For a good discussion of these lines in terms of the literariness of Ovid's universe see Solodow (1988), 226-8.

¹⁴⁸ . . . di, coeptis (nam vos mutastis et illa) *Met.* I. 2

Pythagorean doctrine or vindicating substantiation of supposed philosophical position:

omnia mutantur, nihil interit. errat et illinc
huc venit, hinc illuc et quoslibet occupat artus
spiritus eque feris humana in corpora transit
inque feras noster, nec tempore deperit ullo.

165 - 168

Images of being, as ever, are described in terms of art, the rhetorical tropes are conspicuous. The language reflects the process, describing, grammatical forms themselves undergoing changes and repetitions:

utque nouis facilis signatur cera figuris,
nec manet ut fuerat nec formas seruat easdem,
sed tamen ipsa eadem est, animam sic semper eandem
esse sed in uarias doceo migrare figuras.

169 - 172

With a kind of adaptive, almost Ciceronian, wit and a clever perversion of that Augustan moral catchword *pietas*:

ergo, ne pietas sit uicta cupidine uentris,
parcite, uaticinor, cognatas caede nefanda
exturbare animas, nec sanguine sanguis alatur.

173 - 175

And, finally, always the nod to fellow poets, which is also a golden glance at the listener or reader (for Ovid anticipates the pleasure in recognition we derive in reading a work so rich with allusion):

nec catulus, partu quem reddidit ursa recenti,
sed mala uiua caro est; lambendo mater in artus¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹

One thinks of Virgil's verses licked into form as does a bear her cubs.

fingit et in formam, qualem capit ipsa, reducit.

379 - 381

Present too in Pythagoras' sermon are the Elements 237-251 (*Haec quoque non perstant, quae nos elementa vocamus . . .*); a descent of man and primitivist decline of ages, both echoes of the initial sections in *Met. I*; a depiction of primordial scenery. All together, here is a recapitulation of motifs, a further model for universal time and eternal, re-incarnate recurrence: a brilliant treatment of Pythagorean lore - whether esoteric teaching or Hellenistic religious general knowledge - to suit Ovid's own narrative design and aesthetic purposes.

Returning to Book I and the opening Cosmogony, for another good discussion of which, fully in the spirit of its time and of most recent discussion we could turn to Richard McKim.¹⁵⁰ He argues for an ironic Cosmogony that draws on physics and philosophy only to demonstrate the superiority of myth and imagination.¹⁵¹ He points out that "three philosophical sources are the maximum number necessary to account for everything Ovid says: a) Stoicism as found in Cicero and in the air...; b) Lucretius, from whom Ovid could easily got all he knows about the Presocratics...; and c) Cicero's translation of the *Timaeus* . . ." ¹⁵² I will examine the Lucretius and Virgil connection in greater depth, though the Platonic demiurge of the *Timaeus* and the Posidonian Stoicism of Cicero are not negligible precedents. At any rate, the *Quellenfrage*, is a complex one. Many industrious, scholarly skeletons lie in the frustrate corridors of that labyrinth. Most late research seems to focus on the more productive investigation into the literary rather than supposed philosophical nature of Ovid's work. I hope to be able to show the intellectual and emotional disposition that takes the form of this Ovidian literariness.

Contrast Glenn¹⁵³ however, for whom in the Cosmogony, "The list of ideas and their logical extensions is sufficient to show that Ovid's account of the creation is philosophical enough." Glenn is uncontestable on certain points - yes, this creation is materialistic; dynamic; not chaotic but always changeable, not ordered in an absolute way; change and even conflict is implicit in matter made up of

¹⁵⁰ McKim (1984 - 1985), 97-108

¹⁵¹ Cf. also Myers (1994) passim

¹⁵² Ibid. 97, n. 2

¹⁵³ Glenn (1986), 2-3

sometimes incompatible elements; material is related to character (though this is obviously suggested by the first point); and there are elemental polarities and balances. Certainly these are some of the points about the universe that unfolds in the opening lines, these are the epiphenomena of natural history, but what do they mean to the poem and what bearing does the enumeration of these effects have on the meaning of the poem and the activity of the poet? Glenn sees the *deus et melior natura* of 21 as a witty, temporary convenience, 'whimsically' brushed off "...one of Ovid's expedient gods; indeed, he is expendable, for after the creation, Ovid never refers to him again. As Sterne remarked, 'Vive la bagatelle.'" There is both less going on in the poetry and far more than Glenn seems to perceive. The creation is really a poiesis of the world and is a reflection of the poiesis of the poem. Just as the first person of the proemium dissolves into the complex voice of the undisguised contrivances of style so does this image of an original maker recur in the form of various other artificers - Vulcan, Minerva and Arachne, Pygmalion, Orpheus, Narcissus - throughout the poem, all iterations in various ways of the one inclusive artist Ovid.

Suffice it to be seen that whether carefully and systematically learned or simply as the synthesis of received opinions (but really both, of course), the poet summons centuries of imaginative physical and metaphysical speculation to weave as glittering strands into the technicolour fabric of his text. He is, as is thankfully now recognised by most scholars, neither a didactic writer, nor a serious student nor, indeed, is he commenting ironically on the inferior value of philosophy and science as a vehicle for expressing the truths of human life¹⁵⁴. Due puts it better when he writes, "The answer is close at hand: just like the *opifex rerum* himself. With humorous and good-natured scepticism Ovid seems to hint that philosophy may after all be *equally close to and equally far from the truth*. Ovid refuses to make a choice between them . . ." ¹⁵⁵ Bömer for me, once again, represents in his opinion and formulation the type of informed, sensible balanced opinion, here also citing Spoerri: "Was die eigentliche 'Quellenfrage' für Ovid angeht, so bleibt sie so ungelöst wie zuvor..., abgesehen vielleicht von

¹⁵⁴ McKim (1984 - 1985) I think is guilty of too misleadingly clear a distinction from the outset in his article between 'myth' and science or philosophy, assuming an attitude towards 'myth' on Ovid's part, which rings anachronistic. Did Ovid, for all his worldly scepticism, use these conceptual categories in the way received opinion in our age does? Perhaps for Ovid science and philosophy are both forms amenable to poetic treatment. There is not that antagonism between imagination and intellect that is our dreary inheritance.

¹⁵⁵ Due (1974), 100, my italics.

geringen und ganz unsicheren Schritten vorwärts...Je gründlicher die Beschäftigung mit der ovidischen Kosmogonie in die sachlichen Einzelheiten eindringt, desto verdichtet sich die Erkenntnis, dass Gedanken an philosophische 'Systeme', poetische 'Vorlagen', systematische 'Handbücher u. dgl. zurückzutreten haben gegenüber der poetischen Konzeption des Dichters, oder, um Spoerri 34 zu zitieren: Lucrez hatte bei seiner Kosmogonie V 416ff. ein philosophisches System vor Augen, 'Ovid dagegen will Dichter und nur Dichter sein und ist daher nicht bemüht, Lehren vorzutragen...; er nimmt seinen Stoff, wo er ihn findet . . .'"¹⁵⁶ From the learned allusions of the *doctus poeta* here in Book I through the Pythagorean speech of the closing book, philosophy, science, is the *Stoff* which Ovid takes up opportunistically. Ideas for Ovid, causal explanations and legendary aetiologies just like puns and all the felicitous ambiguities and coincidences of language, are exploited to lend the veneer of plausibility to the fantastic, to give coherence to the sensationally fabulous and serve as the cords from which we suspend belief.

I personally am not sure I would call this Creation section, brilliant as it is, the glory of the poet and of this most famous of his works but it is certainly a very dense, inclusive and amazingly succinct piece of imaginative evocation, literary suggestion and careful arrangement. It is a much studied section and justifiably so, with its layers, signals and complex messages. Naturally, readings are varied. As in so many instances I have been influenced or found support for my intuited interpretations in the work of Solodow, who finds in the cosmogony an 'important hint' about the role of the artist in Ovid's vision. He cites the vagueness with which the poet invokes the god¹⁵⁷ and discusses the revealing references thereafter to a demiurgic figure the *fabricator* and *opifex*. In image and language, as we shall see, all commentators trace an admixture of philosophies: the Pre-Socratic legacy, Lucretian, neo-Stoic, the Platonic in the demiurge of the *Timaeus*, but once again, this eclecticism is itself the proof of the philosophical indifference of Ovid.¹⁵⁸ The diction, vernaculars and explanatory *mythoi* of various schools or traditions are his resources, "His description seems to owe

¹⁵⁶ Bömer (1969), Vol.I, 16

¹⁵⁷ Solodow (1988), 214-15

¹⁵⁸ See also Due (1974), 97, "For a moderately well-educated reader there would be nothing new in Ovid's cosmogony; in his earlier works Ovid had revealed a considerable indifference to abstract truth, and here, too, there is no trace of any deeper interest in the scientific, philosophical and theological aspects of the problem..." Anderson, 1997, 152; Bomer 1969, Vol.I 15-17 inter alios.

most to Stoic teaching, though it omits Stoic technicalities. It probably embodies the popular view of the world's origin current among those educated Romans who were not Epicureans or Sceptics"¹⁵⁹. Ovid relies on readily recognisable and just conceivable stories and registers, whose very commonness of place to his audience make them ripe for serving. As Solodow has it, ". . . since no poet can be imagined to whom philosophy was more uncongenial than to Ovid, it is difficult to believe that he was aiming at a particularly philosophical portrayal of the Creation. The choice of terms suggests rather that the creator of the world is an artist himself; not only the first metamorphoses in the universe, but presumably, the others that follow as well are the handiwork of the Great Artist."¹⁶⁰

Stephen Wheeler makes much of the apparent affiliation of the opening cosmogony with that of Homer's on the shield of Achilles in *Iliad* 18.¹⁶¹ It is a fine article and clearly also (as the present work) indebted to Segal, Solodow and Knox with its demonstrations of Ovid's interest in art and artistry. The argument for an invitation by Ovid to direct comparison, equation even, with Homer's ecphrasis may not always be entirely convincing.¹⁶² The 'reference to the tripartite division of the universe' with which Ovid's and Apollonius' accounts open may in Greco-Roman literary historical terms 'originate with Homer'¹⁶³ but it is not exactly a counter-intuitive division, least of all when one is painting a scene of the whole universe. Certainly I would agree that the cosmogony is epic-ecphrastic with more than tenuous associations to Homeric, Hesiodic and so many model predecessors, but it is not a conventional ecphrasis. Ovid's poetry generally relies on the illusionary resources of ecphrastic technique. It is a normal habit of Alexandrianism: variety of detail, catalogues of enumeration, the happily artificial, the narrative presence. This Roman inheritance of Hellenistic stylisation is, so to speak, natural to Ovid. It lends to his work the element of visual poignancy and detached formal delight but it is, again, a complicated feature of that elusive quality we call style. More and less pronounced at

¹⁵⁹ Lee (1953), 70

¹⁶⁰ Solodow (1988), 215

¹⁶¹ Wheeler (1995)

¹⁶² In fact the threefold universe is likely as not a commonplace of the Indo-European imaginative vocabulary, cf. the *Mahabharata*, also Burkert (2004), 62-3, Hinds (1999), 203. Besides, the resonances are dense, even comprehensive. One hears no less the Hesiodic strains and always Lucretius: V 195- and Virgil in his sixth *Eclogue*.

¹⁶³ See *Il.* 18. 483

different moments, while I admire most of Wheeler's conclusions¹⁶⁴ I am uncomfortable to think in too strict terms of the cosmogony as an ecphrasis within the poem, rather it is a kind of physical or landscape *dramatis personae* revealing the symmetrically arranged, vividly realised scenery that is the mark of the whole work.

The cosmogony of book I is, Wheeler contends¹⁶⁵, parallel with Vulcan's *imago mundi*, the universal engraving on the doors of the palace of the sun at the opening of *Met.* II and, equally, inspired by Hephaestus' shield of Achilles in *Iliad* 18. The fundamental and quite acceptable implication of this parallel is really the one that identifies the demiurgic figure of Vulcan- Hephaestus, with the *deus...melior natura*, and the cosmogony with the coming into being of the work of art. The ecphrasis in Homer is the exploration of the process of artistic invention and arrangement and an image of the cosmic order of meaningfulness of the larger work. Ovid's similarly ecphrastic opening cosmogony is a demonstration of, if not a conscious self-identification with Homer, his interest in poiesis, the ontological status of the invention and a clue to the listener about how to enjoy his artifices. The cosmogony can serve, in a sense, as a kind of manifesto enacted, an *ars poetica*, for in it we witness in action the most ordinary operations of the artist: the gathering of materials, separation and identification of forms, vivid enumeration of parts and scenic arrangement of a whole; a movement from the blind- *caecus*- indistinct, meaningless and nameless to the clear, articulated and meaningful.

Many recent writers on *Metamorphoses* take the line of inquiry and explication that views Ovid's chief interest in art and his consciousness of work as artefact, himself as *miglior fabro*. It is a more pertinent or appropriate style of reading than that of say Fränkel, Otis or in some ways even Galinsky, who in their earlier well intentioned attempts to rehabilitate the (now safely rehabilitated, thanks to their very work in part) reputation of the latest poet of Rome's magnificent age of great poets, sought to demonstrate the humanity of Ovid, his sympathy. I find it hard to trace much in the way of tragic interest, of almost proto- Christian,¹⁶⁶ pathetic fellow-feeling in this poet. There is much pathos in the works of exile, of course, but that is something else. No doubt I am merely a child of my age in my

¹⁶⁴ See below.

¹⁶⁵ Wheeler (1995), 98

¹⁶⁶ Fränkel (1945), 81-2

eagerness to find in Ovid the *dilettante* for whom the *diletto* of form is primary and who needs no late-Romantic justification through moral or ideological substance. I hope however to show through the evidence of the text itself the real basis for this reading of the work.

There is much of value and superb literary and philological insight in Wheeler's article but for me one particularly outstanding moment is the recognition of the difference between Ovid's and so many other creation accounts: our poet's is not evolutionary. Why not? The reason is crucial. As we have seen, and it is following Feeney¹⁶⁷ that Wheeler suggests it, the work opens "as if it were an epic ephrasis." There is a noted "lack of temporal duration"¹⁶⁸ as we shall observe in a close study of the passage itself "giving the impression of the cosmogony's *suddenness*" (my italics). Here is the point: the cosmogony is a description of a thing, an object of instantaneous magic of the poet's and the demiurge's hand.

We recognise in this account of the Creation Virgil, Apollonius Rhodius, Hellenistic popular science, Presocratic redaction, Plato. Fundamentally, the difference, aside from the intellectually eclectic or encyclopaedic character of Ovid's account, is its conjured quality, those others evolve, Ovid's is undeniably a made object: "Whereas they describe the evolution of the universe through purely physical causes, he depicts the same event as the work of a divine craftsman."¹⁶⁹ The world of Ovid's metamorphoses is one of fashioned backdrops coming to life and receding into decorative background until the next cue. Directionless, more edited than evolved, Ovid's Creations are in the category of what Walter Burkert recently called the Technomorphic.¹⁷⁰ Otto Steen Due and

¹⁶⁷ Wheeler (1995a), 97; Feeney (1991), 189 n.4

¹⁶⁸ Wheeler (1995a), 104 n.31 citing Lämmler.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 95

¹⁷⁰ Burkert (2004) 63, identifies two models of Cosmogony, "... two narrative options, two models: one might be called biomorphic, the other technomorphic. The biomorphic model introduces couples of different sex; it has insemination and birth. The technomorphic presents a creator in the function of a superb craftsman." For further fascinating discussion see pp. 49-71 but especially pertinent here are pp.62-5. Another technomorphic model would be Genesis, while "... it is tempting to call the biomorphic model the Greek one, ...", 63. Then recalling our discussion above of the Heraclitean Pythagoras and as further testimony to the actual philosophical incongruence of the ideas of Books I and XV: "Heraclitus explicitly rejects the concept of creator of the world: "This world order . . . no one of gods or men has made" (B 30). He seems to develop the biomorphic model into a phytomorphic one, the principle of growing according to inner laws, as the plants do; the Greek word for such growing is *physis*, which later was translated into Latin

William Anderson also detect and acknowledge the emphases that reveal Ovid's Creation to be in fact an Invention. For Anderson "...Ovid downplays the god and divine purpose, attention dwells on the clarity, speed and self-assurance with which the poet records these cataclysmic changes of form."¹⁷¹ Yes, there is a demiurge maker and it is the poet Ovid more so than this vague *deus et melior natura* (21) ...*quisquis fuit ille deorum* (35). Due notes the important point of humanism underlying it all, "Ovid managed to write a quite acceptable synopsis of the most widespread theory of the creation; it has swiftness and a certain solemnity and the aesthetic qualities of it conceal rather effectively the lack of philosophical coherence and *prevent the reader from feeling a strong need of it* [my italics, for an excellent point]. . . The gods are either loosely attached to the outskirts of the system or dissolved into a vague and non-personal spirit of the world [35]. They can be replaced at any time by 'nature' or 'destiny'. One might say that in reality Hellenistic philosophy has but one god: the human soul. The crown of creation is not really the gods, but man."¹⁷² Here Due is touching quite accurately on the complex anthropocentrism and subjectivism manifested in Ovid's outlook or the moral system that seems to underpin his aesthetic choices. It is precisely this humanistic impulse that inspires the playful, encyclopaedic, humorous compendium of ideas and beliefs and myths by the mastering and central narrative voice.

The creation account here is spatially specific and detailed if temporally vague and supernatural. Again, this reflects and is a consequence of the ecphrastic character of the passage. As in the ecphrasis here are the pictorial qualities of the static and dynamic, the cinematic sequence of statuary scenes¹⁷³. Similar comments bring Wheeler to the assertion of, what for myself, is the most important point about this cosmogony, "In his cosmic setting Ovid introduces the theme of art, representing the creation of the universe as the manufacture of

as *natura* . . . the very catchword of Greek philosophy of nature . . . Heraclitus thus rejects cosmic craftsmanship. But hardly any of his successors can do without the concept of creator . . . Plato's *Timaeus* finally established the term "creator" *demiourgos*, in Greek philosophy", 64-5

¹⁷¹ Anderson (1997), 152

¹⁷² Due (1974), 98-9

¹⁷³ Though again it is not an ecphrasis, it is only ecphrastic. There are three descriptions of works of art in *Met.*: in Book II Vulcan's doors of the palace of the Sun; two in Book VI in the Arachne-Minerva contest; Book XIII's mixing bowl given to Aeneas. Ovid transforms into art and artful image all he touches. His description of nature is of something realized through art. Art makes real and ultimately Ovid's *natura* will come into being like a work of art. This is not the same as to say his cosmogony is an ecphrasis.

an artefact....we might venture to say that Ovid's cosmogony activates both literal and allegorical levels of meaning in the Homeric shield but *reverses them so that natural philosophy veils the deeper truth of art.*"¹⁷⁴ (my italics). This is exactly right and here the scholar uncovers the open secret which is the meaning of Ovid's work: the deeper truth of art¹⁷⁵.

In the cosmogony then we find a model of the artistic undertaking itself and through the implicit identification of demiurge, artist, *mundi fabricator* and poet, Ovid's own characterisation of himself as maker. If it is apparently through the effects of visual immediacy that he achieves the desired *enargeia*, we remember that these are always only apparent. The truth that underlies all the illusions and materialising and dematerialising visions of the work is the truth of language, which is infinite but without dimension, changeless but living, subtle, paradoxical, miraculously yielding but more substantially real than any other real material.

How are we to think of Ovid's Cosmogony? I argue that, for Ovid, metamorphosis is the ἀρχή or first principle of literary matter, the universal key by which he enters the gates to indestructible literary *kleos*. His work is the discovery and demonstration of this principle. Even more fascinating though, the central paradox of the work, the motor that transmits to it its bristling, electric charge is this delight in that basic character of art and the work of art: it is both static and dynamic. The epic of transformations is also a series of statuesque moments, painted scenes which come alive and recede into stasis. As Wheeler says, "... Homer and Ovid exploit the paradox between the dynamic process of creation and the static quality of the finished product" and Hubbard, quite perfectly, "This paradox is in some sense at the root of all great works of art, which constitute themselves as both action and artefact, process and product, becoming and being."¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ Wheeler (1995a)

¹⁷⁵ And see for the debt to Solodow (1988), 210-14 such passages as "... the poem ... embraces a doctrine that is astonishing for its novelty and unexpectedness - namely, that nature imitates art. In this view art becomes the norm, the prime definer or creator of reality ... The doctrine that art follows nature is a kind of foil: in the doctrine that nature follows art we have a valuable clue for understanding metamorphosis", 214.

¹⁷⁶ Wheeler (1995a), 106, cites Hubbard's wonderful formulation of this in (1992) his article "Nature and Art in the Shield of Achilles".

The focus of this section is, now beyond the exogenous considerations of literary historical category, or any investigation into the philosophical tenets or moral sympathies of Ovid, rather on the recurrent interest of the the poet in form. Form arising primarily out of formlessness, shape becoming character, the passing into and out of form, the identity of the act of separating, making distinct, and forming or creating.¹⁷⁷ Ovid has reduced all ideas, myth and the collected tradition of Hellenic, Roman and Mediterranean imagination to the basic, underlying formal principal: transformation, the underlying 'being' and character of all narrative. This is reflected in his cosmogony but the more interesting for our current discussion is the implicit relation of the poet or artist to his material in the language and stylized contours of his synthesis of creation accounts. Ovid's ecphrastic and evocatively literary cosmogony, I argue, reveals suggestively the identity of *poeta* and *mundi fabricator*, Ovid as complex, literary craftsman: *demiourgos*. This is not, I have discovered, an original contention but I would be happy for the opportunity to emphasise some of the implications of this assertion. Most notably, the scenic or designed character of the writing reinforces the argument for the thematic centrality of the preoccupation with art and artistry. The identity of *mundi fabricator* and poet is not a lesson or philosophical message but reveals the disposition of the poet, his attitude towards *reality* and construction. This identity of cosmic demiurge and epic poet implies, of course, the identity of world and art. Throughout, the poetry throws off the sparks from that contact of form which is discrete, substantial and integral but shimmers in an imaginary world of loss of form, of shifts, metamorphoses.

Again and again we will see how verisimilitude in Ovid is literary, which is to say: the truth to which we find likeness in his work is not the truth of rational, philosophical likelihood, of likeness to substance, no actual 'life-like' reflection, but that of art, of the internal plausibilities and consistencies of this invented, virtual world and the suitable external credential of likeness to the works of other poets.¹⁷⁸ The *Metamorphoses* reads as amoral, its vision of nature and man is

¹⁷⁷ Cf. Anderson remarks, "Ovid's focus rests on the development of form: that, rather than the agent promoting the change, dominates his and our attention. Thus the important feature of things at the start is that they were formless or incapable of maintaining a form (17)...stimulates the poet to playfully explore the state of formlessness' (1997), 152.

¹⁷⁸ Solodow (1988), 226-28, "Literature forms a more important background to the poem. Ovid is at pains to remind the reader of this body of art which lies behind the world and art of the poem . . . the present telling takes its rise from earlier tellings, not from any particular thematic concerns . . . Ovid tends to identify characters periphrastically and sometimes not at all,

amoral. It is not prescriptive nor does it describe any redeeming meaning or exploration of man's pathetic predicament. Ovid's literary thematic interests are in the foreground - and there is only foreground here - this is no substantially philosophical or religious account.¹⁷⁹ Let us rather consider at more length Creation as a literary and artistic theme, as *poiesis*, and discover what the most important 'poetische Parallelen' may reveal about the construction and meaning of this particular Cosmogony. The relation of any Roman poet to his antecedents provides an extremely challenging and complex question. In the next section I will proceed to comment carefully on the lines of Ovid's first Cosmogony, *Met. I* 5-88, and observe family likeness with this work's closest siblings and cousins: the *Ars Amatoria*, *Amores*, *Fasti* and *Eclogue VI*, *De Rerum Natura V* and *Argonautica I*.

The initial creation of the world takes place chronologically, following the rationale of a materialist progression, easily divisible into evident sections 'unkompliziert und im wesentlichen durch den Stoff gegeben':¹⁸⁰ in the beginning, 5-20, a transformation of original, Hesiodic Chaos into the separate elements; then a middle section in which first the heavier elements are assigned their places, 21- 31, and the earth divided into the five zones, 32- 51, then the lighter elements set in order, 52-68; and the end, in which living beings take stage, 69-75, culminating, 'in poetischer *exaggeratio*' with man, 76-88.

Met. I 5-21: In the Beginning...

Ante mare et terras et quod tegit omnia caelum
unus erat toto naturae vultus in orbe,
quem dixere Chaos;

Met. I.5-7

as if the *Metamorphoses* directly continues earlier literature and its reader can be expected to follow it with familiarity . . . literary art is a principal background to the poem". Solodow cites several examples of the inherent literariness of the poem displayed by the unspoken expectations and assumptions of the poet of his readers.

¹⁷⁹ Barchiesi (1999), 112: "Licentious, wandering and restless, unpredictable, bringing closure and cutting long stories short..."

¹⁸⁰ See Bömer (1969), Vol.I, 18; Wheeler (1995a)

The creation of the world here will be a great act of discretion. The language throughout realises this transition from indistinct, massive meaningless to knowable, conceivable entities; this sets the stage for a world of transformations, fusions of states. The world exists as matter, as elements that wait to be given form, to be made discrete, realized. In this first instance matter itself is the material the artist Ovid draws on for his first sequence of episodes of transformations. The infinite forms of this world are separated and drawn out from a basic matter *quem dixere Chaos*.¹⁸¹ *unus erat* the initial unity of reality is in contrast with the multiform universe that will emerge but even here it is the suggestive *unus...vultus*, nature has uniform countenance, a single surface, a face; and this impersonal, even anti-personal condition, is rendered, with this stroke, as the proto-surface of reality.¹⁸² *Vultus*,¹⁸³ we note, is synonymous with *forma* and *species*: all things had the same 'look' or 'appearance', all had the same 'aspect', the same *form*. This initial homogeneity will of course eventually take on that threefold division common, as noted above, to so many cosmogonic schemas: Homer, Hesiod and not least Lucretius before Ovid, *principio maria ac terras caelumque tuere:/ quorum naturam triplicem, tria corpora...* (DRN V 92-3). For Anderson *orbe* is 'equivalent to *mun-do*...the circular implication of the noun should not be pressed' while for Lee on *orbe*, "Ovid uses a word that suggests Chaos had a definite shape either because *orbis* was the only one available for the vague *world* of Chaos (*mundus* would imply order), or because the circle is a symbol of infinity."¹⁸⁴

rudis indigestaque moles
nec quidquam nisi pondus iners congestaque eodem
non bene iunctarum discordia semina rerum.

Met. I 7 - 9

¹⁸¹ Cf. *Principium cuius hinc nobis exordia sumet, nullam rem e nihilo gigni divinitus umquam.*

Lucret. I. 149-150;

Hesiod *Theog.* 116 Ἦτοι μὲν πρῶτα Χάος γένηται

Bömer (1969), Vol. I, 17

¹⁸² Anderson (1997), 153 "the metaphor of the human face does not personify Chaos but implies Ovid's thematic interest in forms and appearance."

¹⁸³ The recurrence of *vultus* in *Met.* I, (6, 86, 238, 265, 611, 731, 738), is noticeable.

¹⁸⁴ Anderson (1997), 153; Lee (1953), 70-1 It is true that *mundus* is κόσμος, hence a phrase like *imago mundi*, ordered image of the order of things. *Orbis* and *mundus* then are synonymous without being exactly equivalent. At line 10 Ovid is speaking of a *mundus* as yet unachieved, so perhaps something like "no sun shone forth yet upon any/a World."

This is primordial scenery, before even the four most basic elements are drawn out; the alien pre-human atmosphere is evoked through negative description. The world is *moles* massive, shapeless bulk, the language suitably heavy and sluggish, describes *moles* that is rough, unwrought, raw: *rudis; indigestaque* and undivided, undistributed, not arranged or set in order. An introductory passage rich in negatives and here initially in the apparent neologism of *indigesta*.¹⁸⁵ Again, Ovid's language is littered with new and unique forms, *indigestus* appears here for the first time in Literature and after is only seen in prose. Comparing line 5 with line 87 *rudis et sine imagine tellus* we discover that this is the first parenthesis of a neatly formed ring composition, the cosmogony is a carefully designed opening piece. In the sluggish line 6 we find *pondus iners; pondus* for Ovid is synonymous with *moles*¹⁸⁶ as *orbis* with *mundus*. *Iners* is very revealing, literally the negative prefix *in* and *ars*, it demonstrates the very meaning of this whole section, which is 'the need of art to turn this Chaos into form (like a statue, cf. *Fast.* I. 108)'.¹⁸⁷ There is a nice coincidence of senses in 'artless' and 'idle, inactive, inert'. Ovid's artistry is so much in its animation. Here we see as so often Ovid revealing the nature of art and imagination through its opposite, think for example of a Midas: greedy, insensitive and unimaginative his effect on things is to make them static, so contrasted with the artist Pygmalion who brings stone to life, or Orpheus' virtuosity that unlocks and draws after him all who experience his music. On the universal scale Ovid is the artist who animates the world and its beings, organising and giving them their motive, transformative energy.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ Lee (1953), 71 and Henderson (1979), 43 on Ovid's tendency to coin with negatives of past participles; cf. *OLD* s.v. 1. *indigestus* I.

¹⁸⁶ Bömer, (1969), Vol. I, 19: 'Ovid hat die Bedeutungen 'Masse' und 'Gewicht' nicht geschieden'.

¹⁸⁷ Anderson (1997), 153; furthermore, see the apparently very influential Solodow (1988) and Wheeler (1995), 105, "Ovid makes a pun on *iners* meaning both sluggish and lacking art, which clarifies the lack of *ars* in *rudis indigestaque moles*. The phrase *pondus iners* itself derives from *Ars Amatoria*, where Ovid describes the formless stone that is improved by the sculptor's art: *quae nunc nomen habent operosi signa Myronis, / pondus iners quondam duraque massa fuit* (3.219-20). What distinguishes chaos from cosmos, then, is the ameliorating influence of art."

¹⁸⁸ See also for a similar point about Aglauros and Anaxerete in Solodow (1988), 204

Non bene is in keeping with a description in necessarily negative terms. *Discordia*, 'ein philosophischer Terminus',¹⁸⁹ with Empedoclean overtones, is 'conflict', the notion of which will appear again below in lines 17-18 and again in line 433 at the second creation after the Flood. *Semina rerum* is pure Lucretius, (*quae nos materiem et genitalia corpora rebus/ reddunda in ratione vocare et semina rerum/ appellare suemus . . .* I 58-60). Lee, as Bömer, thinks that "Ovid probably has the four elements in mind here".¹⁹⁰ The notable point though, is the ready inclusion or deployment of Lucretian phrasing. The poetic traditions yield forms redolent with useful associations: philosophical, scientific, epic, poetic. Ovid relies on this established literary appropriateness. Not far removed, a means to the same end, is the observable finish of lines 10-14. Lee remarks on their "studied symmetry . . . fine poetic effect."¹⁹¹ Here the appropriateness is prosodic or aural. These lines in their studied orderliness underline the choppy, fragmented surrounding lines and form a model contrast for effect between 'the confusion of Chaos . . . (and) the order and regularity of the created universe.'¹⁹² For us the important fact is the care, the very special effort for evocative effect at these different levels with which this poetry is crafted.

They are, furthermore, replete with negatives. This initial state is one of absences, formations that have not yet taken place, indistinct, inhuman conditions that require the human eye, the human imagination to bring them to the higher state of intelligibility, thus here in the beginning: *nullus adhuc . . . nec . . . nec . . . nec*.

nullus adhuc mundo praebebat lumina Titan,
nec nova crescendo reparabat cornua Phoebe,
nec circumfuso pendebat in aere Tellus
ponderibus librata suis, nec bracchia longo
margine terrarum porrexerat Amphitrite;

Met. I 10-14

The repetition does also have that desired effect of enhanced rhythmical symmetry, combined with the proper names of Greek deities closing the three

¹⁸⁹ Bömer (1969), Vol. I, 20 "Ovid verwendet den lucrezischen Terminus ...dreimal in derselben Stellung am Versende, stets im philosophischen, aber durchaus nicht im lucrezischen Sinne, sondern eigentlich auf die vier stoischen Elemente bezogen...".

¹⁹⁰ Lee (1953), 71

¹⁹¹ Ibid. 71

¹⁹² Ibid. 71

end stopped lines; *mundo* and *crescendo* and *circumfuso* all followed those verbs in the unfinished tense of the imperfect: *praebebat, reparabat, pendebat*.

These are scenes that take place before even the gods are about, before the moon took to repairing her horns. This is a wonderful and ingenious image.¹⁹³ Ovid has up to now mixed in scientific vocabulary and with this picturesque conceit and the following one of *Amphitrite*, metonymous sea wife, who has not yet embraced the coast, he is bringing in typically poetical images. This idea of the threshold of land and sea is established and similarly formulated elsewhere in Ancient Literature. Most relevantly, remembering Wheeler's (1995) discussion of the Cosmogony and its relation to the Shield of Achilles, we hear the echo with *Il.* 18. 607.¹⁹⁴ This is signalled no less by the three Greek nominatives. With the scientific reference to gravitational equipoise of *ponderibus librata suis* ("balanced by her own gravitational forces" as Lee has it (1953), 71-2) we see again to what extent the two modes are perfectly fused: poetic and philosophical fantasy. Ovid is casual about the specific identities of gods and divine bodies. The Greek nominative *Phoebe*, here transliterated, for moon is also used by him for Diana,¹⁹⁵ as *Phoebus* is used both for sun and Apollo, not originally the same pairs. This is an indicative indifference common among the Roman poets of the Augustan Age. Greek religion in such instances is obviously well purged of emotional or metaphysical significance, it is merely an exotic resource, that is form without the depth of faith or awe. This semiotic vacancy is what makes mythology so plastic, so aptly versatile. The Hellenic traditions offer convenient forms, both recognisable and immediate and also exotic and dreamy. In this way, we should see that the virtual world of myth is analogous with the world of *natura* in Ovid.

Line 14 is a conspicuously spondaic hexameter noticeably achieved with only four words. The practised metric variation is deliberate, (but not heavy-handed), the contrast with line 15 is sharp.

utque erat et tellus illic et pontus et aer,
sic erat instabilis tellus, innabilis unda,

Met. I 15 – 16

¹⁹³ As Bömer (1969), Vol.I, 20 also acknowledges, a "sehr beliebtes und oft variiertes Bild" cf. Hor. *Odes* IV 7, 13 *damna tamen celeres reparant caelestia lunae*.

¹⁹⁴ On the recurrence of this image of the *πείρατα γαίης* variously reformulated in the Homeric *Nekyia*, Hesiod's *Theogony*, Virgil, Cicero and Ovid see Bömer (1969), Vol.I, 21.

¹⁹⁵ *Met.* I 476

There is here that very recognisable kind of playful elegance in the sound of the lines, which I find so characteristic of Ovid's poetry. It is verse apparently designed to be delicious in the mouth, as if the poet were a kind of ideal sommelier serving samples of all the best wines and vintages and mixing them in new and ingenious ways. The novelty is detectable at various levels. Here again, for example, in the neologism and hapax legomenon of *innabilis*: which cannot be swum; as the juxtaposed *instabilis*, with as Lee points out¹⁹⁶ the refreshed shade of meaning: unstable, where there is no standing, no foothold to be got, used innovatively here in a passive sense. These elements then as yet do not have what by later common sense could be thought of as their defining characters. These substances have not, as so many other figures in the *Metamorphoses*, yet become what they really are.

lucis egens aer; nulli sua forma manebat,
 obstabatque aliis aliud, quia corpore in uno
 frigida pugnabant calidis, umentia siccis,
 mollia cum duris, sine pondere, habentia pondus.

Met. I 17- 20

In these lines we return to the image of strife prepared in the earlier *discordia*. Nothing retains its form when all the disparate characteristics and qualities struggle together in the one body, which is given the name *Chaos*. It is interesting to think that the initial state of reality is chaos and that the nature of chaos is to be a confusion of forms, an untenability of substance. Ovid's world of metamorphoses will be seen to retain this underlying chaotic character, this instability, the threatening and constant potential of bodies to lose their form. If it is the case, as I have been suggesting it is, that this opening book is full of clues as to how we should read the poem, if Ovid is fascinated by form and exploits here the paradoxes of formlessness, while exposing the artist's project as one of form giving, separation and assignment, it is surely no less true that there is a conscious paradox about the world of discrete bodies invented. If in the beginning *nulli sua forma manebat*, it is not the case that ever after things retained their shapes, their formal integrity. The seed of chaos, of wild unpredictable

¹⁹⁶ Lee (1953), 72; cf. *OLD* s.v. *innabilis*

possibility is in all bodies. The point seems more about the control of the maker than anything else.

Significantly, from the beginning of his creation account there is no central motive agent, no supreme, individual deity, a focus for the narrative, who brings being out of non-being or cosmos out of nothing.¹⁹⁷ There is Nature rather, which is the world emptied of creative gods, of personality, that is: dehumanized. Matter exists and force, but with no form. What exists is latent and meaningless. The emphasis is on the undefined, the formless character of original matter and the expectation arises for one who comes and gives form to chaos, the implicit emphasis is on the process of arrangement. As we have seen, from lines 7-20 we find a passage littered with this underlining of the homogenous character of things, a world of instability and senseless energy *non bene iunctarum discordia semina rerum* 9; *instabilis tellus, innabilis unda* 16; a condition well summed up in *nulli sua forma manebat/ obstabatque aliis aliud*. It is the very vagueness of agency, which draws our attention to the poet and his careful invention of Creation.

Middle 21- 68

Hanc deus et melior litem natura diremit.¹⁹⁸

Met. I 21

Any who expected a regular theistic account are deceived when they read line 21. An indefinite *deus et melior natura* enters, Anderson's "a god and kinder nature" which as he explains in his commentary, and it is worth quoting "by not naming the god at work, Ovid keeps our attention fixed on formal change. Neither *god* nor *nature* is to be capitalized; nature is a condition...which now experiences improvement."¹⁹⁹ This is to the point, here is no philosophical or

¹⁹⁷ Lee (1953), 72: "The act of Creation is conceived as the imposition of order on Chaos. The Christian idea of creation out of nothing was foreign to the ancients; it is not to be found even in *Genesis*". Nicely analogous: the poet does not create his allusive work out of nothing, literary tradition is his pre-existing material.

¹⁹⁸ Lee (1953), n. 5-88, 70 "...the Stoics included all these points in their system, which has a fundamental tenet the identification of God with Nature"; Boillat (1976), 34-40; Spahlinger (1996), 201-63

¹⁹⁹ Anderson (1997), 152 and 155.

religious treatise.²⁰⁰ Nature is indeed a condition, in Ovid it is that from which man is excluded, which he can only violate or change. Man changes Nature and is changed by it, standing in a complex and fraught relation to it, a set of forms and forces that shapes and is shaped, that is transformed, by any contact. Lee in his commentary on these lines however, does want us to recognize that “The Stoic view was that God and the laws of Nature were synonymous, that the Divine Mind permeated every part of Nature . . .”,²⁰¹ which is quite correct but we must keep in mind that Ovid does not so much have views as take and exploit them or rely on received ideas to lend to his work the patina of reality with which he plays.²⁰² Apter to show that *melior*, as ‘better, kinder, finer’, reflects the appreciable improvement that the form-giving arranger brings to this inchoate world. There is a nice introduction of legal imagery here in *litem* line 21, from the warring elements and *discordia* of line 9, it is a humanising touch in the idea of a dispute that the *melior natura* ‘breaks up’: *diremit*.²⁰³ The most important point to note about this word is that it contains the idea of separation, interruption, taking apart, division: throughout, the world is formed by an act of making discrete that which formerly was meaningless energy and matter, *indigesta*. This section sees the setting in place of the elements. Early emphasis is consistently on the character of formation, not simply the emergence of form but the primary agency of the directing fabricator.

The primary separation is into that threefold division again:

nam caelo terras et terris abscidit undas

Met. I 22

*abscidit*²⁰⁴, ‘tore off, cut away’, is one of the many synonyms for ‘separate’ used throughout the Cosmogonic passage. The syntax seems to manifest the very

²⁰⁰ As Otis (1966), 94 “Ovid did not at this point want to compose a theological essay”

²⁰¹ Lee (1953), 72 “ . . . cf. Sen. *Ben.* 4,7,1: ‘quid enim aliud est natura quam deus et divina ratio toti mundo partibusque eius inserta?’”

²⁰² To see, as Norden and others have, echoes of cultic invocation here is to see more than we should, as Bömer (1969), Vol.I, 24, puts it “Man wird besser daran tun, alle kultischen Vorstellungen aus diesem Bereich fernzuhalten . . .”

²⁰³ Cf. *Fasti* 1,107 *ut semel haec rerum secessit lite suarum*. Lee (1953), 73, has “settled this dispute” for *litem diremit*, I prefer Anderson’s “broke up” (1997), 155. The ‘ganz vorwiegend prosaisches’ *diremit* is not the usual legal usage with *lis* and is elsewhere unattested, Bömer (1969), Vol.I, 25. See *OLD* s.v. *dirimo* I.

²⁰⁴ See *OLD* s.v. *abscindo* II

division itself: *caelo terras et terris* a progressive momentum with the dactyl *abscidit* making verbally real the distance between earth and water, for the word for earth is quite literally cut off from the word for sea in the line and makes what amounts to an enactment or performance of that separation.

et liquidum spisso secrevit ab aere caelum.

Met. I 23

There is increasing variety, a progressive accumulation of detail and variegation. The single *caelo* of line 22 is now divided into the clear, ethereal, upper air and the dense, lower air. Line 23 is well designed: abBA, the final *caelum* "...ringing with the first word of 22, makes the whole procedure of elemental separation very clear."²⁰⁵ As ever the careful contrivance of the lines is palpable. It is not an otiose contrivance either but does indeed lend an elegant clarity of expression and movement to the language.

quae postquam evolvit caecoque exemit acervo,
dissociata locis concordi pace ligavit:

Met. I 24- 25

The *deus et melior natura* unrolls and removes or frees these elements from a blind, dark, confused heap. I find *evolvere*²⁰⁶ suggestive, it is what one does with a scroll one is about to read, it is also what the Fates do with the thread of destiny. Making distinct is making intelligible, meaningful. *Eximere*²⁰⁷ (line 24), as *dissociata* (line 25), is another verb of separation. The recurrence of the idea is telling and necessarily in contrast with the earlier images of lumpish mass as evidenced in the repetition for example of *pondus*. Anderson thinks line 25 is an instance of the Ovidian taste for paradox, "*dissociata*...contains a metaphor that makes this line paradoxical: the alienated, politically disunited elements are "bound" by the god into lasting peace. Ovid touches on the philosophic paradox that War "creates" and that clearly "antagonistic" elements are the building blocks of our wonderfully complicated world."²⁰⁸ If Ovid does not quite have that 'philosophic paradox' in mind, certainly it is a case of sensitive and complex metaphorical nuance. The elements are disjoined, pulled apart from 'fellowship'

²⁰⁵ Anderson (1997), 155

²⁰⁶ See OLD s.v. *evolvere* IB. 1

²⁰⁷ See OLD s.v. *eximo* IA

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

and tied or bound in their places in united peace, of one mind *concors*. If not quite an endorsement of imperial authority, the language and imagery here might have resonated with the political discourse of Augustan mastery, the force that brings order, harmony and peace. Lines 26–31 elaborate the idea of 25 proceeding from lightest to heaviest elements.

igneae convexi vis et sine pondere caeli
 emicuit summaque locum sibi fecit in arce;
 proximus est aer illi levitate locoque;
 densior his tellus elementaque grandia traxit
 et pressa est gravitate sua; circumfluus umor
 ultima possedit solidumque coercuit orbem.

Met. I 26-31

Here is a neat, scaled arrangement of the four elements of received opinion.²⁰⁹ Apart from registering the neologism of *circumfluus* (30) and suggesting that the use of *orbem*, which exercises Lee²¹⁰ with its impreciseness, ('what is the meaning here?'), is a good argument in favour of Anderson's earlier assertion that the point about *orbis* as 'globe' should not be 'pressed',²¹¹ we may remember Wheeler's pertinent comments on the design of the *Cosmogony*. Citing Thomas²¹² Wheeler remarks on the poet's concern in ecphrasis for proper arrangement, co-ordination of parts, delimitation and scenic composition, "In the description of a work of art, Richard Thomas . . . observes that the poet's concern is to 'situate and relate to each other details appearing in the work.' The border is commonly defined, as is the relative position of details, including special references to centrality . . .' an image of vignettes, if not of the entire structure'. Ovid's presentation of the *imago mundi* exhibits the same attentiveness to borders, to structural arrangement of details, and to medial position, thereby giving the reader a sense of discrete parts within a consolidated whole. In this respect the cosmology anticipates the ecphrases of other works of art in the

²⁰⁹ Bömer (1969), Vol.I, 26 "Ovid gibt mit der *communis opinio* seiner Zeit die vier "empedokleischen" Elemente." bears comparison with Lucretius V 434, Cicero ac. I 26, Manilius I 137.

²¹⁰ Lee (1953), 73-4

²¹¹ This need not detract from the valuable insight of Feeney about the implication of *glomeravit in orbis* (1991), 35

²¹² Thomas (1983), 175- 84

Metamorphoses . . .".²¹³ The poet is philosophically and scientifically unsystematic but artistically meticulous. The poetry is carefully arranged and artfully ordered. Verse and world are simultaneously coming into being. Ovid's Nature is an eclectic composition of various sets of ideas about nature synthesised and stylised by the contrivances of poetic device. Ovid's nature is a literary landscape made out of allusion and *communis opinio* to form setting, perspective and scene. Lines 32-68 form the central section of the cosmogony in which the poet "elaborates and embellishes"²¹⁴ the visual framework he has established.

Sic ubi dispositam quisquis fuit ille deorum

Met. I 32

Lines 32-51 see the disposing of earth and water and the organization of the five climatic zones.²¹⁵ Thus when arranged, set in order, fashioned, described²¹⁶ whoever of the gods it was, cut out, divided, carved out that heap and, divided, drew it out into parts. The proleptic *dispositam* is evocative (I 21 *litem diremit*, 25 *pace ligavit* and echoed later in I 69 *vix ita limitibus dissaepserat omnia certis*); for Bömer it underlines the ordering activity of this indefinite god. One instance of the recurring lexicon of separation in the cosmogony section it has external resonance too, that is with the works also of other writers: Zeno, Lucretius, Manilius, Seneca and Tertullian,²¹⁷ where *disponere*²¹⁸ can be found used in the same sense of setting in place, in order, the things of nature; it is also suggestively equivalent with διακοσμεῖν. *Quisquis fuit ille deorum*, is found again at XV 104, falling in the same line-end position, early in Pythagoras' speech.²¹⁹ For Anderson, more than the mere anonymity of *deus et melior natura* of line 21, here at line 32 now Ovid "flaunts his ignorance and/ or indifference to the god's identity." and for Lee "Ovid's unknown god towers above the conventional

²¹³ Wheeler (1995), 108

²¹⁴ Ibid, 109

²¹⁵ "Auch hier geht Ovid nicht systematisch vor:..." Bömer (1969), Vol.I, 29; but Lee (1953), 74 "Ovid now goes on to deal with the Creation proper, ordering his ideas well."

²¹⁶ Corpora disponens mentem non vidit in arte:/ recta animi primum debuit esse via (Prop. III, v, 9-10).

²¹⁷ Bömer (1969), Vol.I, 29

²¹⁸ See OLD s.v. *dispono* I.A.

²¹⁹ Though there the textual tradition is uncertain, to be sure, *deorum* represents the consensus fragmentorum vetustissimorum, but instances of *virorum*, *leonum*, *ferorum*, *ferarum* can be found. See Tarrant (2004), 450 app. crit.

deities of the Pantheon that appear later in the poem."²²⁰ I agree and find this exemplary of the attitude of Ovid and the implicit humanism, to use an anachronism of a kind, inherent in his work. Man's fraught relationship with godhead, which plays out along the jagged shore of hubris and daring, so often demonstrated in mythology by the dangerous acquisition and mastery of technology (Prometheus, Icarus, Phaethon, the Achaean fortifications at *Iliad* VII 442-453 an anxiety for the Olympians), is in Ovid's work evidently resolved by a kind of late human scepticism. This indulgence of mythic gods in his work and regular reference to *natura* as the force and substance of being is possible after centuries of rational, imaginative speculation and not least after Lucretius. I think the indefiniteness of divinity and prominence of nature are corollary. Nature, as a category and being, is large and vague and impersonal. It requires the god-like intelligence and artifice of the human mind, as perhaps once man needed gods, to order it, name it, give it its history and meaning. *Natura* is mindless, fateless force, generation and becoming, dying away and transformation. It is primary, observable and universal and since it has been once investigated is ever after prone to self-confident, rational consideration. Compare Pythagoras at *Met.* XV 65 - 72:

cumque animo et vigili perspexerat omnia cura,
 in medium discenda dabat coetusque silentum
 dictaque mirantum magni primordia mundi
 et rerum causas et quid natura docebat,
 quid deus, unde nives, quae fulminis esset origo,
 Iuppiter an venti discussa nube tonarent,
 quid quateret terras, qua sidera lege mearent,
 et quodcumque latet . . .

Perhaps the defining characteristic of *natura* is that it is inhuman. Whatever man touches becomes less natural, (an axiom delightfully inverted in the paradoxical poetry of Ovid, where the touch of *natura* and fateful circumstance transforms man into nature). The thoroughly humanized atmosphere of city life is intrigued by its opposite, or more precisely, the *locus* where it is absent, that is the natural world, the untamed, the unritualized and unstyled. Ovid can write as he does because he and his audience have been primed by history and the intellectual and semi-secularising, cultural traditions of the Roman and Greek worlds. The

²²⁰ Anderson (1997), 156; Lee (1953), 74

technology of language has been mastered, innovated and in every poet re-invented. Ovid's control of this art and medium is a model for the achieved independence of the mind of man and this self-aware, self-directing attitude is responsible for the implicit identification of artist and creative demiurge. Out of the inordinate initial chaos, the artist articulates the world:

congeriem secuit sectamque in membra redegit,

Met. I 33

congeriem that chaos, the undifferentiated mass which is undergoing transformation into parts. The anadiplosis in *secuit sectamque* is characteristic of Ovid, which we note as an example of that unconcealment of narrative voice, the artifice is never disguised. In *membra [coegit]*.²²¹ If Nature is god then its parts are the limbs of the god, a commonplace image in antiquity to be found in Cicero's translation of the *Timaeus* 22, Ovid's own *Fasti* I 112 and Lucretius V 240, "Die Vorstellung lebt bis Spätantike".²²²

principio terram, ne non aequalis ab omni
parte foret, magni speciem glomeravit in orbis.

Met. I 34 - 35

principio, reminiscent of "die Terminologie exakter Wissenschaften"²²³ also recalls Cicero's dialogues and Lucretius' poem where it had become established as a means of introducing "a series of facts or arguments",²²⁴ it is extended by *tum* at 36 and along with the diction here and litotes of *ne non* certainly sets the tone of argumentary exposition. The attention is drawn especially here to *speciem glomeravit in orbis*, *speciem* here in notable anastrophe is a synonym for *forma*, for

²²¹ Only the Bern manuscript, the oldest, offers *coegit*: gathered, collected, compressed. Recent opinion - Tarrant [2004], Anderson (1997) - favours *redegit*, lead out, reduce. Anderson (1997), 156 suggests a careless scribe has repeated the co- of *coeruit* 31 but for Lee, 74 "...the verb is almost equivalent to *redegit*". I prefer *redegit*, as an image of better definition, for once not following Bömer (1969), Vol.I, 29, for whom "Das schlechter bezeugte *coegit* ist gegenüber *redegit* ohne Zweifel der prägnantere Ausdruck".

²²² See Bömer (1969), Vol.I, 29

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Anderson (1997), 156

Anderson "We might consider this the first metamorphosis, . . ." ²²⁵ *Glomerare* 'fast synonym ist I 34 *cogere*' ²²⁶ means 'gather, mould into a ball'. Ovid again is the first to use it of a planet (and his transformed *Chaos* at *Fasti* I 101-16, uses very similar language: *tunc ego, qui fueram globus et sine imagine moles/in faciem redii dignaque membra deo*) and it is a brilliant touch, "treating the action of the deity with an everyday nuance." ²²⁷ See, for example, the usage of it with regard to *Arachne* at Book VI 19 *sive rudem primos lanam glomerabat in orbis*, who is both a narrator and a spinner. Wheeler on these lines aptly points out that "Ovid alerts us to the demiurge's controlling perspective . . . when he shapes the earth into a perfectly spherical globe . . ." ²²⁸ The word is evocative and its usage here original and, as we have seen above, suggestive in its applicability to the gathering of yarn. *Natura* is a primary text for weaving inexhaustible, magically variegated fabrics.

tum freta diffundi rapidisque tumescere ventis
iussit et ²²⁹ambitae circumdare litora terrae;
addidit et fontes et stagna immensa lacusque
fluminaque obliquis cinxit declivia ripis,
quae, diversa locis, partim sorbentur ab ipsa,

²²⁵ Ibid. The synonymy of *forma* and *species* is significant, their recurrence indicative of the poets interest in appearance and shape-shifting, (we should bear this in mind also when considering the densities of *imago*). See , Vol.I, 29 for references to its uses in Ovid, Virgil and Lucretius; for him it is a practically synonymous with *forma* in the sense of the language of metamorphosis.

²²⁶ Bömer (1969), Vol.I, 29; see OLD s.v. *glomerare* A.

²²⁷ Anderson (1997), 157; Virgil is no less imaginative with *glomeratque . . . incendia ventus* at *Georg.* 2, 311. The imaginative but never outlandish use of diction recalls Kenney (1973), 126, "In general it may be said that they (the features of Ovid's diction) were all directed to extending, within the limits of linguistic and literary propriety (ie. without substantially trenching on either the colloquial or the archaic or the hyperpoetic resources of Latin) the poetical *koine* that in his amatory works he had already gone a long way towards establishing as what might be called a standard literary dialect of Latin. Most of his predilections are obviously dictated by the desire to make his verse more smooth and dactylic: eg. adjectives in *-ilis*, neuter nouns in *-men*."

²²⁸ Wheeler (1995), 107

²²⁹ On the repetition of *iussit et* Wheeler (1995), 107, writes "Especially striking...is Ovid's repetition of the phrase *iussit et* in the first foot of lines 37, 43 and 55..." going on to show that this kind of initial verbal phrase followed by a set of infinitives can also be found in the description of Achilles' shield and "This sort of repetitive introduction to each scene becomes a standard structural feature of post-Homeric ecphrases."

in mare perveniunt partim campoque recepta
 liberioris aquae pro ripis litora pulsant.

Met. I 36 - 42

The world is unfolding and progressing in name, character and diversity, parts are separating off (*diversa locis, partim...partim*) and variety increases (*addidit et...et*). The progress is in the advancing intelligibility of the world, of Nature. Line 39 has attracted insightful comment.²³⁰ There we find double enallage, "Ovid hier eine kunstvolle Vertauschung der Attribute vornimmt",²³¹ the surprising swop of customary adjectives instead of the more usual *flumina obliqua...ripis decliviis*, we read of sloping rivers and winding banks. It is another artfully arranged line and certainly does show "... one of the artful patterns of Neoteric and Augustan verse".²³² Kenney in his essay 'The Style of the "Metamorphoses"', after pointing out that this device of enallage was already known to Ovid's readership after Virgil and makes an excellent point, "But, once again, is this pure play? May there not be a deliberate stroke of wit, a hint of the chaos from which order was emerging and a suggestion of a period during which the rivers were still learning their place in the new order of things and in which, for the moment, stream and banks were as yet not clearly distinguished? It is at least a piquant thought".²³³ Not just a piquant thought this is a sensitive observation of the kind of complex literary and verbal intelligence with which Ovid brings ideas and scenes to life. It is an early stage in the movement towards the clarity²³⁴ that artifice bestows. I think it is worth keeping in mind also the care taken over aural effect. Much is made of the visual vividness of Ovid's work but another great pleasure of his poetry is in its recitation and remarkable mellifluousness. Here at line 42 as Lee notes of *pro ripis litora pulsant* there is "...a good rhythmical effect. The correspondence of metrical ictus and word accent suggests the regular beat of waves on the shore and makes a restful end to the long sentence".²³⁵

²³⁰ Kenney (1973), 131, Anderson (1997), 157, Vol.I, 31.

²³¹ Bömer (1969), Vol.I, 31.

²³² Anderson (1997), 157

²³³ Kenney (1973), 131

²³⁴ See also Solodow's (1988), 203- 31, final chapter 'Art' for the convincing argument for this evolution as "an advance in perception". The cosmogony, as art and the event of a metamorphosis, is a movement towards clarity.

²³⁵ Lee (1953), 75

iussit et extendi campos, subsidere valles,
fronde tegi silvas, lapidosos surgere montes,
utque duae dextra caelum totidemque sinistra
parte secant zonae, quinta est ardentior illis,
sic onus inclusum numero distinxit eodem
cura dei, totidemque plagae tellure premuntur.

Met. I 43 - 48

For an earlier description of this division into five Zones we could, as no doubt had Ovid, turn to *Georg.* I 233 (*Quinque tenent caelum zonae*) - itself modelled on Eratosthenes' *Hermes*²³⁶- and the *Panegyricus Messallae* 152. Note the symmetrical correspondence of five earthly and five celestial zones. If Ovid can exploit technical language - of *distinxit*, "Diese Verwendung von *distinguere* gehört ebenfalls zur 'Fachsprache' . . ." ²³⁷ - he can also, in the phrase *dextra...sinistra* of line 45 speak ". . . of directions in the sky like a layman, as if he were merely saying 'on either side'." ²³⁸ Again, this versatility with registers is most revealing. *Cura dei* (line 48) of course we cannot pass over in silence. The agent here is a *cura*, the concern or interest, of our familiarly indistinct or indefinite, demiurgic creator. It is a consistently vague and impersonal identification.²³⁹

quarum quae media est, non est habitabilis aestu;
nix tegit alta duas; totidem inter utrumque²⁴⁰ locavit
temperiemque dedit mixta cum frigore flamma.
Imminet his aer, qui, quanto est pondere terrae
pondus aquae levius, tanto est onerosior igni.
illic et nebulas, illic consistere nubes

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Bömer (1969), Vol.I, 35

²³⁸ Anderson (1997), 157

²³⁹ Bömer (1969), Vol.I, 33 "Nahezu unpersönliche Vorstellung von dem 'Weltschöpfer'"; and Anderson (1997), 157 "Ovid attributes 'concern' to the indefinite creator-god, but he does not attempt to define a purpose, and the zones do not achieve much more than some kind of symmetry." The point I would ask to be noted is the symmetry combined with purposelessness, which I find characteristic.

²⁴⁰ Tarrant (2004), 3 see crit. App.; as Anderson (1997), 157-8 accepts the Berne MS's *utrumque* but one feels one must register the divergence of one as formidable as Bömer (1969), Vol.I, 33, for whom "*utramque* ist seicher die lectio 'correctior'".

iussit et humanas motura tonitrua mentes
et cum fulminibus facientes fulgura ventos.

Met. I 49 - 56

The described physical centrality is matched by this centrepiece vignette in the cosmogony. *Habitabilis* is another of those 'Terminus kosmologischer Theorien'.²⁴¹ The correlative sentence of lines 52-3 is compact and elegant, so too the rhythmic line 54 with the anaphoric *illic* at the line beginning and again but differently stressed after the caesura. The hemistichs also significantly, for the rhythm of the line, end with the two variations of the same root *nebulas...nubes*,²⁴² it is a kind of playful trans-caesura variation, not uncommon in Ovid, compare *fulminibus* . . . *fulgura* of line 56. This kind of lexical play and finished metrical musicality demonstrates, as ever, the unconcealed narrative presence of the poet. Of the same spirit the future participle *motura* at line 55, as Bömer notes "Zusatz ex persona poetae (II 176)".²⁴³ Anderson finds "the prosaic pose of scientific language",²⁴⁴ relieved by the note of fantasy struck in *consistere* (line 54): the clouds are made by the deity to 'reside' in the sky. Ovid is never one thing very long.

Lines 57-66 dealing with the air and the striving cardinal winds summons both Virgil and Lucretius:²⁴⁵

His quoque non passim mundi fabricator habendum
aera permisit; vix nunc obsistitur illis,
cum sua quisque regant diverso flamina tractu,
quin lanient mundum; tanta est discordia fratrum.²⁴⁶

²⁴¹ On diction and style in the *Metamorphoses* see Kenney (1973), 116-54; we may note the dactylic usefulness of a compound such as *habitabilis*. The mix of registers all goes towards the 'poetical koine' Kenney speaks so well of; see *OLD* s.v. *habitabilis* A.I.

²⁴² Etymological siblings, cf. Sanskrit *nabhas*- 'vapour', 'cloud' and Greek νέφος, νεφέλη, see *OLD* s.v. *nubes* A.

²⁴³ Bömer (1969), Vol.I, 34. The authorial comment he refers to at II 176 is the apostrophe, *te quoque turbatum memorant fugisse, Boote*.

²⁴⁴ Anderson (1997), 158

²⁴⁵ For which see Wheeler (1995b), 203 "Ovid's use of Lucretius in lines 67- 68 represents a learned commentary on the winds in *Aeneid* I, in which Virgil imitates Lucretius to demonstrate the anti-Lucretian principle that the winds, and hence the universe, are under divine control."

²⁴⁶ Recall Virgil in *Aeneid* I. 58-9:

Met. I 57-60

The *mundi fabricator* of line 57 is of course the subject creator, the δημιουργός²⁴⁷ and *deus et melior natura* (21) and *opifex rerum* (79). *Fabricator* is rare but vivid. *Fabricare*²⁴⁸ has the rich, tactile texture of 'forge', cf. Met. I 259 *tela reponuntur manibus fabricata Cyclopum* and, rather significantly for us here, an object that is crafted, cast, carved is *fabricata* as at VIII 669- 670 *fabricataque fago/ pocula*. Here again the world is being made or forged as an object of art, which can be read and clearly perceived, we see the unmistakable simultaneity or co-incident of poetic invention and creation of world. The sententious epigram of line 60 sees the first surviving instance in Latin Literature of the image of the winds as brothers. The opening storm of the *Aeneid* is deliberately evoked here and if he constantly draws on, modifies and renews Virgil and Lucretius, Ovid surely also knew his Hesiod.²⁴⁹

Eurus ad Auroram Nabataeaeque regna recessit
 Persidaeque et radiis iuga subdita matutinis;
 vesper et occiduo quae litora sole tepescunt,
 proxima sunt Zephyro; Scythiam septemque triones
 horriferae invasit Boreas; contraria tellus
 nubibus adsiduis pluvioque madescit ab Austro.

Met. I 61 - 66

Ni faciat, maria ac terras caelumque profundum
 Quippe ferant rapidi secum verrantque per auras

on which Wheeler remarks that "It may not be accidental that Ovid treats the topic of the winds as potential destroyers of the universe in precisely the same book and lines as the *Aeneid*.". No it cannot be accidental, not least also noting the same phenomenon at *Aen. X 475 Vaginaque cava fulgentem deripit ensem* and *Met. X 475 pedenti nitidum vagina deripit ensem*. This observation belongs properly to Hardie (1986), 93 n. 23.

²⁴⁷ See Bömer (1969), Vol.I, 34-5 on the "poetische und philosophische Vorgeschichte" of this phrase.

²⁴⁸ See OLD s.v. *fabricor* A.I.

²⁴⁹ Ἀστραίωι δ' Ἡὼς ἀνέμους τέκε καρτεροθύμους,
 ἀργεστήν Ζέφυρον Βορέην τ' αἰψηροκέλευθον
 καὶ Νότον, ἐν φιλότῃ θεᾷ θεῶι εὐνηθεῖσα· (*Theog.* 377-80)

The lines as ever are artfully designed.²⁵⁰ As Bömer and Anderson following him observes, for example, the opposition of east and west winds is "...emphasized by being placed at the outer extremes of their connected clauses."²⁵¹ The same artistic delicacy in the next lines:

haec super inposuit liquidum et gravitate carentem
aethera nec quicquam terrenae faecis habentem.

Met. I 67 – 68

The 'dactylic lightness'²⁵² certainly does realize and enhance the ethereal sense of these lines, which form a small coda for the central vignette of the cosmogony. There is a similar enhancement of sense from the anastrophe of line 67, (*aethera* is uppermost, separate floating free above all others, the delaying word order seems to figure this) and the sense of closure achieved in the identical, rhyming line endings in – *entem*.

End 69- 88

Stars, gods, animals; before the culmination of creation in the human at lines 76-88, Ovid swiftly introduces inhabitants for these established zones and echelons.

Vix ita limitibus dissaepserat omnia certis,
cum, quae pressa diu fuerant caligine caeca,
sidera coeperunt toto effervescere caelo;
neu regio foret ulla suis animalibus orba,
astra tenent caeleste solum formaeque deorum,

²⁵⁰ "Die Verteilung der Winde innerhalb der folgenden kurzen Charakteristik ist eine Parastück kunstvoller Disposition:...", Bömer (1969), Vol.I, 35; "Ovid arranges his description of the four cardinal winds with fine poetic art." Anderson (1997), 158.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid. Much of Ovid's innovations and strategies are intended to sustain the dactylic fluency of the poetry, cf. Kenney (1973), 126.

cesserunt nitidis habitandae piscibus undae,
terra feras cepit, volucres agitabilis aer.

Met. I 69 - 75

Scarce had that *fabricator mundi* fenced off - *dissaepserat*²⁵³ is another word with an everyday nuance, it is a technical term used of the division of land, found also in Lucretius and Seneca. This is a very rare pluperfect in this earliest section of the *Metamorphoses*, that is a reflection of the complexity accruing from this increasingly variegated being, past is emerging out of the primal present of the initial Chaos, a temporal corollary of that advance in perception and definition – *limitibus . . . omnia certis* - which is the meaning of the cosmogony and its progressive metamorphoses. The stars do not come out of thin air but are allowed to emerge, we see them shine out from the obscurity where they had lain crushed or held down. That is a typical transition here: Ovid's art allows bodies to become what they are, which is simultaneous with 'be perceived for what they are'. *Efferuescere*²⁵⁴ (line 71) is another instance of Ovid's original verbal *ingenium*. He uses it only here, a prose word used in Ciceronian language used of 'boiling up' or inflaming anger. It had been used by Lucretius too.²⁵⁵ Ovid's innovation is to use it, and one feels it is such a strong imagistic usage, of the blazing out of the stars.²⁵⁶

The concern for proper arrangement of things requires that all parts be inhabited by their suitable beings. At line 72 there is the marvellous (and much discussed)²⁵⁷ *animalibus* for both gods and stars. Miller²⁵⁸ translates: "And that no region might be without its own forms of animate life, the stars and the divine forms occupied the floor of heaven..." I like the richness of *animalibus*, which "includes the gods and the stars."²⁵⁹ and suggestively recalls the first motive force of all: *in nova fert animus mutatas dicere formas / corpora . . .* We note the

²⁵³ See OLD s.v. *dissaepio* A. I.

²⁵⁴ See OLD s.v. *effervesco* A. I.

²⁵⁵ *De rerum natura* 3, 295

²⁵⁶ Virgil has used *efferuere* of Etna erupting at *Georg.* 1, 471: *quotiens Cyclopum efferuere in agros/ uidimus undantem rutis fornacibus Aetnam*, Lee (1953), 78. That usage is of course closer to the conventional, prosaic sense and takes nothing from the adventurous lexical originality of Ovid.

²⁵⁷ Bömer (1969), Vol.I, 40-1; Lee (1953) 78

²⁵⁸ Miller (1916), 6-7

²⁵⁹ Lee (1953), 78; and Anderson (1997), 159 "Ovid does not account for the gods or spend any effort defining their higher nature, physical or ethical: he has merely located them in *caelum*."

animation of beings and the plasticity of bodies, *corpora* after all is from *creo* and the opposite of *anima*, (hence *di, coeptis...adspirate meis*, 2-3). On this counterpoint is formed that universe of shade and nuance which is Ovid's world, the kinetic epic of picturesque epyllia. The phrase *formaeque deorum* (line 73) is obviously interesting. Not gods but the shapes of gods, the forms of divinities inhabit the *caeleste solum*. This recalls for me some of Solodow's comments on *imago*, "Things which appear real and natural turn out to be modelled on artefacts. That behind the world of phenomena there lies the world of art is also suggested by an odd use of the word *imago*. Several times we find *imago* with the genitive of a noun ("image of") where we would have expected the noun itself."²⁶⁰ In the cosmogony an operative idea is that of *forma*. There is a tension throughout the poem introduced in this opening section between the world of particularity, of *corpora*, and the eternal abstractions of *forma*. These first 88 lines are a perfect introduction to the poem of interchanging conditions, of transformations from motion to stillness and vice versa and its play with one and many, Parmenidean statuesque and Heraclitean cinema. There is such a philosophical complexity about Ovid's work, it is in his creative temperament and his consideration of the meaning and action of creation, of *poiesis*.

Not unusually we find that Ovid adverts to or draws as much on his own work as those of others. For *caeleste solum* we hear the echo of that other now quite familiar passage from Chaos to Cosmos in the *Fasti* at I 110 *sederunt medio terra fretumque solo* and *Met.* I 74-5 evoke the earlier lines of the brief creation scenes of *Ars Amatoria*.²⁶¹ *Agitabilis aer* is quite beautiful. The adjective *agitabilis*²⁶² is another of Ovid's coinages, this the unique occurrence in Classical Latin. Bömer's comments here are excellent.²⁶³

²⁶⁰ Solodow (1988), 227-6

²⁶¹ prima fuit rerum confusa sine ordine moles
unaque erat facies sidera, terra, fretum;
mox caelum impositum terris, humus aequora cincta est,
inque suas partes cessit inane chaos;
silua feras, uolucres aer accepit habendas;
in liquida, pisces, delituistis aqua. *AA.* II 467-72

²⁶² See *OLD* s.v. *agitabilis*; a very rare word, this its only instance in Ovid, see Deferrari, 56, s.v. *agitabilis*.

²⁶³ Bömer (1969), Vol.I, 41-2: "Ovid formt eine Alltagsvorstellung zu einer Wortneubildung um, die, ihrer Bedeutung entsprechend, am Abschluss des Abschnitts steht. Der Einschnitt an dieser Stelle wird durch den folgenden ungewöhnlichen Auftakt mit *sanctius* und durch die starken -s- Assonanzen des Verses hervorgehoben."

Whether explicable in divine or material terms - *sive hunc divino semine fecit . . . sive recens tellus seductaque nuper ab* (lines 78, 80) - the creation culminates in the mastering creature who is *sanctius*: nobler, more god-like, set apart. How significant it is that man is the crown of creation *sanctius his* (line 76), animals, bodies, gods; Ovid's vision is anthropocentric, Hellenistically humanist, this must be clear. More even than deities and the creative genius that composes the world, man has characteristic and quality.²⁶⁴

Sanctius his animal mentisque capacius altae
deerat adhuc et quod dominari in cetera posset:
natus homo est, sive hunc divino semine fecit
ille opifex rerum, mundi melioris origo,
sive recens tellus seductaque nuper ab alto 80
aethere cognati retinebat semina caeli.
quam satus Iapeto, mixtam pluvialibus undis,
finxit in effigiem moderantum cuncta deorum,
pronaque cum spectent animalia cetera terram,
os homini sublime dedit caelumque videre 85
iussit et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus.

Met. I 76 - 86

Man is marked by his intelligence, imagination - *mentisque capacius altae* - and potential for agency- *quod dominari in cetera posset*. I read that more so than the idea that here man is merely a vessel, "*capacius* implying that man of himself does not possess mind; he is a vessel able to receive a share of it."²⁶⁵ In *natus homo est* Anderson finds an especially interesting clue as to the tone of the following lines in "the abruptness of this short trihemimeral unit in strong asyndeton with 77,"²⁶⁶ Flippan or solemn in nuance he wonders. One can choose between the two options in "the long pseudo-philosophic development that follows to the end of 86" of lines 78-9 or the seven line explanation of lines 80-6, a comparatively detailed recapitulation of the creation involving Prometheus. I

²⁶⁴ Anderson (1997), 160 "Whereas Ovid had casually introduced the gods as mere living beings without defined qualities, he brings human beings on stage as superior entities, more holy and rational than other beings, and destined to rule them. That leaves the relationship between human and divine beings ambiguous, and ambiguous it remains throughout the poem."

²⁶⁵ Lee (1953), 79

²⁶⁶ Anderson (1997), 160

like the ambiguity of it, the Livian allowance of alternatives. The supercession of the poet's mastering intelligence can permit all, his scope is infinite. *Ille opifex rerum* is familiar by now, the old δημιουργός, Weltschöpfer, the *fabricator* of line 57 is here 'workman, maker, framer, artisan'. Ovid uses it again of another inventor and reshaper of the resources of *natura*,²⁶⁷ *geminas opifex libravit in alas Met. VIII 201*.

Ovid's role of Maker is a charming arrogation of the highest privilege, which is invention, giving forms and sense to the world of nature and man. We find an ironic apparent concession to the might of the gods, which ultimately must make us reflect on the power of creative man and poet, when we read, where Achelous has being telling tales, in Book VIII again,

"ficta refers nimiumque putas, Acheloe, potentes
esse deos," dixit "si dant adimuntque figuras."

Met. VIII 614-15

dant adimuntque figuras, is of course, precisely what Ovid does throughout.

In the ringing echo of line 21 *mundi melioris origo* we are prepared for the closure of this cosmogonic section as well as reminded that *ille opifex rerum* certainly is that *deus et melior natura*. *Recens* at line 80 is fresh or new: this is a new world, the paint is fresh on this scene of *nova corpora*, the scene, evident Nature, itself a new form. If this cosmogony has been a process of separation of the primal matter into the infinite variety of forms in the world, to be sure, all things contain the original chaotic seed of identity with all other things, hence *tellus... retinebat semina caeli* (lines 80 - 81). Note the *color epicus* of *satus Iapeto*²⁶⁸ at line 82, and this Prometheus behaves like a maker, an artificer, *finxit in effigiem*, when he makes the all governing-gods (for all powers, the Augustan poet must realize, are fabricated). Of a play like *finxit in effigiem*, we may note the slight lexical shift between verb and noun as a small model of transformation. As in the narrated metamorphoses there is an impressive sheen of plausibility and inevitability about this kind of change. Here language seems to have the inevitability of nature, elsewhere natural transformations are permitted.

²⁶⁷ Cf. *dixit et ignotas animum dimittit in artes
naturamque novat...* *Met. VIII 188-9*

²⁶⁸ On this kind of epical periphrasis, antonomasia and the unspoken expectations of the audience in Ovid see Solodow (1988), 226-8; Anderson (1997), 160.

Note how it is given to man to stand erect and look up at the stars, (true, “the thought occurs often in ancient literature”),²⁶⁹ one recalls *Met.* XV 875-6:

parte tamen meliore mei super alta perennis
astra ferar, nomenque erit indelebile nostrum;

Surely it is not a negligible point either that above all man is given to stand to see. He is special for this ability: to perceive by that clearest of senses, which makes meaning of the world, separating objects, setting phenomena in perspective, distinguishing the order and arrangement of the world - his sight. Contrast this *sanctius* being with that chaotic material from which all originally emanated: *nullus adhuc mundo praebebat lumina Titan* (10) *caecoque acervo* (24) and the stars out of *caligine caeca* (70). Precisely man’s highest ability is required to appreciate the vivid, luminous, artfully disposed poetry of Ovid.

If in *finxit in effigiem* we read the language of *poiesis* equally in the final couplet of the cosmogony we find that “The vocabulary includes some of the common language used to describe metamorphosis: *imagine, induit, conversa, figuras*”:²⁷⁰

sic, modo quae fuerat rudis et sine imagine, tellus
induit ignotas hominum conversa figuras.

Met. I 87-88

Of course it is no co-incidence that the “vocabulary of metamorphosis” matches the language of *poiesis*. Verbs of motion and transference- *addidit, induit, imposuit*- words for sign and image- *forma, vultus, imago*- are the province of any exploration of the artistic enterprise. Inherent in which enterprise is the lovely, paradoxical resolution or, better, living riddle of motion and stasis.

Ovid likes the little paradoxes such as in *ignotas*:²⁷¹ the compressed idea is ‘hitherto unknown’, thus, as so often becoming and becoming known are simultaneous. Here again is what above I have referred to as the enactment of a particular epistemological disposition. In the work of art we discover the

²⁶⁹ Lee (1953), 80

²⁷⁰ Anderson (1997), 160

²⁷¹ Cf. *Met.* III 25 *ignotos montes agrosque salutat*.

unfolding clarity and intelligibility of forms and meaning, perceiving and being are all of an instant. *rudis et sine imagine* at line 87 is resonant with line 7's *rudis indigestaque moles*, but more than seeing it as only an aspect of neat ring composition, we may perhaps detect the signs of the metamorphosis that has taken place: from *moles* to *imago*. The transition we have witnessed has been from the raw, unwrought, rough and indistinct formlessness to the pre-eminently perceivable, the formed, the made or fabricated, the intelligible and meaningful: *imago*.

IV

IMAGO

Ars & Artist

i

Orpheus

Book X opens with a deft transition to the story of the Thracian poet whose dead beloved he will seek to revive. As a poet who brings to life the dead and travels in this world and the underworld, who almost succeeds in reanimating the lifeless, Orpheus is an important image of the poet as perhaps Ovid would have us in his sophisticated way enjoy.²⁷² Pertinent to this discussion too, in which so much space has been given to Ovid's poetics as one of animation and definition, to the inherent paradoxes of mobile life and static beauty is this image of the singer who by his art draws after him what is naturally fixed or immovable, who revives and amazes. As a singer of tales, it is Orpheus, a bard who sounds very much like an urbane, sophisticated and ironical Augustan poet, who recounts the story of that epitome of artists Pygmalion.²⁷³ Orpheus moves with his words, it is only at the hands of the demented Bacchants when finally his beautiful voice loses its power:

²⁷² Cf. Segal (1972), 490: "Ovid's *Orpheus* exemplifies not only the victory of love, but also, in a certain sense, the victory of art. It is both as a poet and a lover that Orpheus wins over the deities of the underworld of book 10 . . . his rhythms move the natural world to spontaneous sympathy for his fate (*Met.* 11. 44-49). In this theme the story closely parallels the story of Pygmalion which soon follows it (*Met.* 10 243 ff.). Both men abstain from intercourse with women. Both, through the magical power of their art, *animate inert nature and break through the division between matter and spirit.*" (my italics).

²⁷³ Cf. (Galinsky) 1975, 86-7 on the Pygmalion episode as both coherent with and a departure in theme from Orpheus' other tales, which is given "a certain prominence that is fully warranted by its character as 'one of the finest apologues on the marvel of imagination' and by *its obvious revelance to Ovid's own achievement in the Metamorphoses*", my italics.

tendentemque manus atque illo tempore primum
inrita dicentem nec quidquam uoce mouentem

Met. XI 39-40²⁷⁴

For a consideration of the anti-heroic, counter-classical attitude of Ovid the comparison between Ovid's Orpheus account and that of Virgil at *Georg.* IV 453ff has been instructive. Virgil's has a moral density - the lesson is of the inflexible law of nature, the peril of transgression, the implication of a universal natural order. Ovid's is touched with humorous realism and a sense of underlying unpredictability rather than order. What a cheekily amusing vignette in,

²⁷⁴ Note also how Orpheus' spectacular death is likened to another spectacle:
... structoque utrimque theatro
ceu matutina ceruus periturus harena
praeda canum est . . . *Met.* XI 25-7

This is typical of Ovid in the *Metamorphoses*. The touch of realism is derived from a likening to some other art or form of representation, rather like when people today try to explain how vivid a sensation or experience has been by saying it was "just like in the movies". Ovid relies on the 'reality' of art throughout his work, another instance, the autochthonous sons of the serpent's teeth rising:

sic ubi tolluntur festis aulaea theatri,
surgere signa solent primumque ostendere uultus,
cetera paulatim, placidoque educta tenore
tota patent imoque pedes in margine ponunt. *Met.* III 111-14

For another of those recurring images of the transgression of boundaries between life and art, we could turn to one I have always found quite striking in his earlier elegiacs,

illa saepe puer Veneris pugnauit harena
et, qui spectauit uulnera, uulnus habet:
dum loquitur tangitque manum poscitque libellum
et quaerit posito pignore, uincat uter,
saucius ingemuit telumque uolatile sensit
et pars spectati muneris ipse fuit *AA* I 165-70

There is an analogue of this in the description of natural scenes described in terms of art and the artfulness of *natura*. (This phenomenon, also prefigured in the *Ars Amatoria*, is discussed below in Chap. V *Locus*.)

tunc neque marmoreo pendebant uela teatro,
nec fuerant liquido pulpita rubra croco;
illic quas tulerant nemorosa Palatia frondes
simpliciter positae scena sine arte fuit; *AA* I 103-6

Talia dicentem nervosque ad verba moventem
 exsanguis flebant animae; nec Tantalus undam
 captavit refugam, stupuitque Ixionis orbis,
 nec carpere iecur volucres, urnisque vacarunt
 Belides, inque tuo sedisti, Sisyphoe, saxo.
 tunc primum lacrimis victarum carmine fama est 45
 Eumenidum maduisse genas, nec regia coniunx
 sustinet oranti nec, qui regit ima, negare,
 Eurydicenque vocant: umbras erat illa recentes
 inter et incessit passu de vulnere tardo.

Met. X 40-9

The scene is typical in the use of realistic touches applied surprisingly and ingeniously to the fantastic. This is a continuation of the strain of realistic presentation used so amusingly and wittily in the episode recounted not long before this one of the pious peasant couple Baucis and Philemon told by the old man Lelex in rebuttal of Ixion's blasphemous remarks at VIII 614 - 615 . Books VIII through to X are full of tales, told by various narrators, of 'unnatural' loves (Scylla, Byblis and Caunus, Myrrha, the Propoetides); and loves 'against nature' (Iphis and Ianthe, Orpheus and Cyparissus, Jupiter and Ganymede, Apollo and Hyacinthus); mixed with stories of shape-shifters (Achelous, the daughter of Erysichthon, Proteus); artists possessed of the superhuman and dangerous knowledge of technology and the transformation of shapes (Daedalus, Orpheus, Pygmalion), the power of art, the deception of its failures (of Apollo himself *nil prosunt artes X 189*) and various figures that undergo transformations that excessively violate the laws of Nature (Eurydike and Iolaus). The common thread is of the transgression of limits, blasphemies, the breaking down of 'natural' boundaries, natural law. It is no co-incidence that in this underworld vignette we encounter the five stupefied victims of divine justice. There is a subtext of divine privilege, blasphemy, transgression and the significant association with these of creative enterprise. Artifice, these sequences seem to suggest, is in the category of acts that transgress natural and divinely established limits. Erotic, strange, artificial: the Pygmalion story is exemplary in its combination of these qualities.

In the humoresqueness of this scene, however, (the ridiculous sibilance of *inque tuo sedisti, Sisyphoe, saxo* (line 44); the hyperbolic realistic details of *tunc primum lacrimis victarum carmine fama est/ Eumenidum maduisse genas* (lines 45 – 46) is not

exactly serious in tone), and perhaps also in the triumph of Pygmalion, we may detect a freedom in the attitude of Ovid, cheerfully ironical fearlessness of any traditional superstitions about the wrongfulness of the human arrogation of divine privileges such as those of the invention of forms and reversal of *natural* configurations.

Instead of the pathos and more serious tones of Virgil, Ovid's version has rather the entertainment of images taken to their logical, realistic end. Compare Virgil,

Quin ipsae stupuere domus atque intima Leti
Tartara, caeruleosque implexae crinibus angues
Eumenides, tenuitque inhians tria Cerberus ora,
Atque Ixionii vento rota constitit orbis.

Georg. IV 481-84

The older poet is not looking out for the opportunity for wit but moving swiftly to the pathetic climax and the negative exemplification of *furor* gone all wrong (*cum subita incautum dementia cepit amantem*, (488) . . . *Illa, "Quis et me", inquit, "miseram et te perdidit, Orpheu, / Quis tantus furor? . . . (494-5)*). Instead of the gravity of Virgilian morality, I find diaphanous signs in Ovid, which is to say narratives, figures and scenes denatured, rinsed of overt didactic content, floating more freely. Both poets, however, have the edge of subsisting violence. Virgil's work may be informed by moral reflections but it is not sentimental. As Feeney has recently written of the *Georgics*²⁷⁵ (in a wonderfully titled review of Peter Fallon's new translation: 'Simile World'), "Virgil develops Hesiod's presentation of the relationship between human life and the world of nature, accentuating Hesiod's dogged view of humans needing to work continually to preserve a purchase in a world that is not necessarily hostile but that was not made for them. Virgil's humans are in a more profoundly estranged state, and the poem goes disconcertingly deep in its stripping away of the usual equation of the agricultural with the natural life". This is a very important and insightful point. The nostalgic rhetoric of any who would claim that the simpler, agricultural past was a more natural and better era, suppresses the fact that agriculture is also technological and requires the subjection and arrangement of land and creature - Virgil is keenly aware of this. Feeney goes on further, "The

²⁷⁵ Feeney (2007)

Romans, as much as us, knew that they had the tiger of technology by the tail and could not let go: there is no way back to a state of nature. The farmer is constantly resisting nature's tendency to entropy, and the products of the worked land are not nature's bounty but the result of unremitting human pressure, regularly characterised in the *Georgics* as violence".²⁷⁶ I have quoted at such length because I feel it such a well formulated and important remark about Virgil but it is illuminating in this consideration of Ovid too and the Augustan cultural context.

In Ovid's world too there is no kitsch (melodrama is not the same thing), sentimentalised version of nature as in our day, for many who consider themselves 'nature-lovers', forms a kind of fabulous, extinct or disappearing utopia. Man is estranged and marked by his transformative skill, his *techne* or *ars*. Violence, often in the shape of some chthonic, primaevial force, threatens all the artfully achieved sanctuaries of the *Metamorphoses*. The artist like Virgil's farmer must overcome that tendency to entropy, breakdown of meaning that is, and by his unremitting pressure delineate form, colour and sense to produce his cornucopia. I think the allegory is not at all far-fetched.

An admirer of so much in the work of Charles Segal, I feel that I cannot be convinced by the assertions made in his 'Ovid's Orpheus and Augustan Ideology'.²⁷⁷ Emotional identification in Ovid's account is scuppered by humour and of course we are meant to be reminded of *Georg. IV* 453- 527, which is here reformed and updated, but Ovid is not exactly "a poet in revolt."²⁷⁸ Anderson's commentary²⁷⁹ here is perceptive. He points out, an observation that has been made of many other sections in the work, that the story is well known to Ovid's

²⁷⁶ Feeney (2007)

²⁷⁷ *TAPA* Vol.103 (1972), 473-494

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 474-75, "In the Orpheus episode, it is not only the heroic style and the solemnity of tragic suffering and conflict that draw his fire, but also the self-importance of sacrifice and devotion to vast transcendent purposes. Ovid continues a direction in Roman literature firmly established by Catullus and continued by Horace (or one side of Horace) and the elegists. Here the individual voices his claim to privacy, autonomy and even to inactivity and directionlessness. On this view Ovid is a poet in revolt. The revolt is subtle and its weapons are wit and irony; but it is none the less real, as Augustus seems to have realized when he exiled the poet to Tomi." This would be easier to concede in its entirety if one felt that Ovid, Catullus, Horace and the elegists made those claims on behalf of 'the individual' and its rights or militated for something like 'freedom of speech', cf. Galinsky (1975), 210-65 and Galinsky, (1999).

²⁷⁹ Which came out just too late for Segal to use.

audience and “relying on that sophistication, (he) spends very little time on actual narrative. His efforts focus on interpreting the story in a typically playful way, raising realistic questions about its incredible facts, puncturing its sentimentality with courtly urbanity . . . Virgil, through Proteus, recounts with profound sympathy the love of Orpheus, his efforts to regain Eurydice from death, and the passion which led him to look back at her before reaching the upper air. Ovid, on the contrary, avoids any convincing sympathy and exploits almost every opportunity to circumvent pathos”.²⁸⁰

In Virgil, hard-won cosmic order, in Ovid, the underlying chaos, capricious gods. He “replaces the heroic and tragic *humanitas* of Virgil with a humbler, less heroic *humanitas*. It is no less compassionate than Virgil’s, but it operates on a smaller scale and in a lower key, and it makes greater concessions to the foibles and weaknesses and also the needs of individual life”.²⁸¹ We can never deny that Ovid freely revises Virgil as he borrows from his earlier self and Lucretius and dozens of popular and erudite Hellenistic documents, but if his vision has the colour of bemused, anthropocentric, secularist irony, still he never militates for Humanism as we have come to think of it after the Enlightenment. In both however there persists the underlying feeling for Nature as wild, violent and inhuman.

On the other hand, Ovid’s work is just so destabilizing to hegemonic power in effect as Segal argues it is in intention. This however has more to do with the unconcealed construction of Ovid’s work. It is, just as Kristeva and many others have characterized it, multi-tonal, shifting, polyphonous writing, which by implication seems to subvert the claims of the suppressive, autocratic voice.²⁸² This is because of the ambiguous status of language and substance in Ovid’s world. The identity whose memory endures, whose potential is most articulated and extensive is that of the making artist, the poet. In spite of the politic concessions to contemporary powers, Ovid’s work is convincing above all as a celebration of the artist’s powers to realize, to animate and make enduring images his lasting monuments. In the story of Pygmalion we discover an episode that reveals a great deal about Ovid’s poetics of artistry.²⁸³

²⁸⁰ Anderson (1972), 475

²⁸¹ Ibid. 476

²⁸² Kristeva in Moi, (1986), 52-3

²⁸³ For a substantial treatment of Orpheus as *Künstlergestalt* see Spahlinger (1996), 130-51 and especially 148-9 n. 43 for his views, at odds with Lateiner on artists as animators of the stone, his

ii
Pygmalion

It is both re-assuring and sobering to learn that one has been pre-empted in so many of one's opinions and readings by another. Solodow²⁸⁴ opens his *The World of Ovid's Metamorphoses* with two pages on *The Propoetides and Pygmalion* formulating yet again more concisely than I have, the main points of my own thesis.²⁸⁵ Well be it, let us move on with a look at the myth of Pygmalion, here made new²⁸⁶ and famous by Ovid and test our opinions against the text. Assuming, as the *communis opinio* does,²⁸⁷ that this modified treatment of the

excepting of Pygmalion who is discussed at length below as an image of the poet. Note also Bauer (1962), 12 on the importance of the motifs of stone and love, force of animation and petrification: "Pygmalion is the most conspicuous nexus between on the one hand (1) the stone imagery and (2) the love motif on the other: . . ."

²⁸⁴ Here the work of Charles Segal has also been a great help to me, even when I would not entirely agree with the way he formulates some of his assertions about a kind of underlying anti-authoritarian radicalism in Ovid, cf. rather "It would be forcing the evidence if we construed the absence of Roman-Augustan themes in most of the poem and their treatment in Book 15 as a polemical *engagée* antithesis between the Ovid of the *Metamorphoses* and the Augustan state." (Galinsky) 1975, 255.

²⁸⁵ His "Art and the artist are Ovid's special interests in the poem." *ibid.* 2, (cf. my introduction), is a tidy summary of my own thesis.

²⁸⁶ Anderson's comment (1972), 495, "This story existed in antiquity, but it is Ovid's narrative, the only truly literary treatment of the myth, that has transmitted it to us . . .", is noticeable. The "literary treatment of myth" is a good characterisation of Ovid's transformation of the materials at his disposal.

²⁸⁷ Anderson (1972), 495; Knox (1986), 52, who sees "the transformation of traditional material . . . It is not unreasonable to assume that the story as we have it in the *Metamorphoses* is his innovation", but Knox is more concerned to show the depiction of Pygmalion as a conventional elegiac lover than as an image of the artificing type; Solodow (1988), 215-16 "for so it is universally agreed"; Glenn (1986), 138, on the other hand treats the story as part of the characterization of Orpheus, "As mentioned above, Orpheus' homosexuality and misogyny qualify the point of his narrative about Pygmalion, making it in this context a fable against the innate integrity of women because it takes an artist plus a tender, devoted lover plus a pious male and a miracle to produce one pure and loving wife . . .". This misses the point about both Orpheus and Pygmalion. It is a reading distorted by its misapplication of contemporary indignation and primary interest in 'character' and its high premium on psychological depth. For a fine, comprehensive discussion see Bömer (1969), Buch X - XI, 93 - 97

earlier tale about the Cypriot king who falls in love and has litho-carnal knowledge of a statue of Aphrodite²⁸⁸ is Ovid's original invention, we find the Pygmalion story is especially illustrative of Ovidian poetics, as in his telling his peculiar thematic priorities are necessarily revealed. Ovid takes the merely quite kinky king of the Hellenistic telling and turns him " . . . into the sculptor himself, . . . made him the exemplar of the artist's power. *He has substituted artistic force for political.* The opposing views of art conveyed by the poem meet here, and the dominance of one of them over the other gives the story a special significance" (my italics)²⁸⁹. In Ovid's scenes of the artist and his verisimilar work transformed into the veritable thing, we discover a playful model of that Ovidian aesthetics that rides the tight rope strung between form and substance, the static eternal and the ephemeral kinetic. This conflation of being and becoming, the mysterious paradox of art, which is activated in relation, is joyfully unsuppressed in Ovid's work. Pygmalion, as we have noted, is the inverse of the *Propoetides*,

Quas quia Pygmalion aevum per crimen agentis
viderat, offensus vitiis, quae plurima menti
femineae natura dedit, sine coniuge caelebs
vivebat thalamique diu consorte carebat.

Met. X 243-6

²⁸⁸ Is not that kind of blasphemous fetishism the antithesis of the just seen blasphemy of the *Propoetides*?

Sunt tamen obscenae Venerem Propoetides ausae
esse negare deam; pro quo sua numinis ira
corpora cum forma primae uulgasse feruntur;
utque pudor cessit sanguisque induruit oris,
in rigidum paruo silicem discrimine uersae. *Met. X 238-42*

With his modifications to the myth Ovid makes the juxtaposed stories symmetrical narratives, the reverse of each other. His narrative here, as so often, is like a set of musical variations; cf. Bauer, 13, ". . . the figurative equation between sculpture and the art of the poet may be intentionally foreshadowed in our text by the appearance of the curious *Propoetides*, already a part of both the stone image and the love motif . . .".

²⁸⁹ Solodow (1988), 216

The idealism and consequent revulsion of Pygmalion²⁹⁰ is moral, but his celibacy and purity and disillusionment also recall that of those other figures like Orpheus;²⁹¹ the chaste devotees of Artemis and unyielding beauties like Atalanta, Adonis and the quite literally self-absorbed Narcissus. Pygmalion, however, is not legendary for his own personal, intact beauty nor takes refuge in the solitary *opacas silvas*, but in an exteriorized idealisation. He 'acts as the agent of metamorphosis'²⁹² softened and transformed –out of cynical scorners of womankind to more human lover- by the effects of his own art. Hear the note struck by *quae plurima menti/ femineae natura dedit. Natura*²⁹³ here will stand in opposition to the idealizing artificialities of human imagination.

interea niveum mira feliciter arte
sculpsit ebur formamque dedit, qua femina nasci
nulla potest, operisque sui concepit amorem.

Met. X 247-9

²⁹⁰ Here, incidentally, thinking of the artists in the *Metamorphoses* as effigies of the artist, I remember Peter Green's fascinating conjectures about the personal life and development of Ovid, with its suggestion of the hardening effects of early disappointment in love, "The autobiographical *persona*, however much or little of a fictional construct it may have been, abruptly vanished, to be replaced in due course by that of the urbane and cynical *praeceptor amoris*, the seducer's friend . . ." (1982), 24.

²⁹¹ The thematic continuities between the Orpheus and Pygmalion episode have been richly investigated and commented on, see Segal (1972), 473-494 especially section V 490 ff.; Bauer (1962) "the connection of the two episodes in terms of the art of love . . . the love of art"; Viarre (1968), 235-47; Anderson (1963); Otis (1970), 374; Coleman (1971); Fraenkel (1945), 93-93: regarding the Pygmalion story "In a word Ovid was a conscious enough artist to conceive one of the finest apologues on the marvel of creative imagination; and his *Metamorphoses* is, moreover, one of the greatest examples of just such creative imagination."; Hardie (2002), 173-226; Spahlinger (1996), 148-9 n. 43.

²⁹² Anderson (1972), 496

²⁹³ And *natura* will recur often in this tenth book, with its bard in Orpheus, its sexual transgressions that flout 'natural' law and its sculptor-king who performs the marvellous, supernatural feat of animating, giving life to the lifeless. See also X 304, 330, 353, 546 and *naturalis* at X 117.

Meanwhile, during a long erotic seclusion, Pygmalion *ebur*²⁹⁴ *formamque dedit*.²⁹⁵ The phrase in the same *sedes* as the *natura dedit* of 245 marks, by its echoing diction, the character of the undergoing change. The same point can be made of the succeeding line endings in *arte* and *nasci*, here of course are the two ideas that form a basic and rich antithesis for the whole work, between that which comes into being and that which is brought into being²⁹⁶. Rather than a story of some imperilled transgression of natural law, from the outset the marvellous skill of a man is shown to outdo *natura - qua femina nasci/ nulla potest* - the realm of generation and death, ontological density and formal imperfection by contrast with the world of imagination, which is the weightless world of ideal and perfections. Ovid's universe is a mingling of these two and their radiant collision.

virginis est verae facies, quam vivere credas,
et, si non obstat reverentia,²⁹⁷ velle moveri:

Met. X 250-1

In form, in appearance – *facies* here as elsewhere a synonym of *forma* - the work has the chastity of its maker, it is of the recognisable type of *virgo formosa*. One cannot help but feel the suitability here, in this episode of playful inflections of the images of artwork and artist, viewer and viewing act, of the likeliness of the apostrophe- as we have seen, a species of narrative disruption and witty admission, even reminder of mimetic status - by the poet to his audience in *quam vivere credas*.

²⁹⁴ In his version six references to Pygmalion's use of ivory "... doubtless the most challenging medium, for it exacted a skillful joining of numerous pieces and fragments", Bauer,(1962), 16. Bauer sees also the significance of the subsequent mention and association of wax, used in the cohering of ivory joints in a work of art, in a work of skillfully joined episodes.

²⁹⁵ For Anderson (1997), 496, "...the typical language of metamorphosis."

²⁹⁶ As Solodow (1988), 216: "...*arte* and *nasci* (247, 248) announce the terms of the argument: this is a story about the relation between art, that which is made by human skill, and nature, that which is born".

²⁹⁷ See Knox (1986), 52-1, for fascinating comments here on *reverentia* as a possible clue in the discussion of Ovid's sources for this myth and the nature of its transformation in his hands, into a literary account of a Pygmalion "...endowed with a character and the pose he assumes...that of the elegiac lover"; also Anderson (1972), 496-7 on *reverentia* "puzzling at first, for we might think our 'reverence' is invoked", a brilliant confusion, the ambiguity is demonstrative, another instance of narrative *trompe l'oeil*.

ars adeo latet arte sua. miratur et haurit
pectore Pygmalion simulati corporis ignes.

Met. X 252-3

Art's triumph here is to seem not art, skill is concealed by the amazing device of itself, its superbly versatile reflexiveness. Here Ovid relies on the conventional assumption that art always imitates nature.²⁹⁸ Simulation, like literary *imitatio*, is scarcely ever a straightforward matter though. It is not the case that nature lies out there inert and latent, an object simply acted upon by man. Man's works are the offspring of the dynamic, interfusing relationship of human and world. This is what the Pygmalion episode enacts.²⁹⁹ In the epigrammatic phrase *ars adeo latet arte sua* there is the not unusual playfulness and a lexical reflection that seems to manifest the reflexive relationship being described. This representation of a work so powerful to convince that it deludes its own maker, Solodow writes "might be called 'super-realism'".³⁰⁰ If there is any kind of realism in this it is in the hyper-reality of the virtual being and the joke is on all of us, lovers, spectators, audience who are so willingly and so humanly disarmed by images and 'truths' and 'realities' of our own devising.

Lines 254- 269 see Pygmalion depicted in the typical colours of the obsequious elegiac lover (*blanditias adhibet* 260, *grata puellis/ munera* 260-1, the earlier

²⁹⁸ Fränkel (1945), 94 "...the ancient theory of art was based on imitation, so that it knew no higher praise for a work of art than to declare that it seemed real except for its immobility", cf. Pliny the Elder's anecdote about the competition in painting verisimilitude between Parrhasius and Zeuxis in *HN* 35. 65.

²⁹⁹ See also below in chp. V *Locus* for some examples of Nature's imitation of art. Solodow (1988), 216-17 "... *sua* is crucial to the epigram, for over that art which imitates nature is an art which art serves. It is an extremely interesting doctrine that derives from the precepts of rhetoric. Yet at the same time . . . and less conspicuously, Ovid also suggests the other view, that art is superior to nature . . . The realism of the work, the power of its art, is carried so far as to reach the point where it surpasses what is real and natural". Ovid's work revels in the antagonisms of art and nature, their falling short of and rising above of each other. Anderson (1972), 497 also, from his perspective, detects the mutually reversing ironies of this scene and its language, "... but ironically, for the artificial metamorphosis of nature is so amazing that it awakens the natural passions which Pygmalion has repressed because of his misogynistic interpretation of nature. Art serves to make him more human."

³⁰⁰ Solodow (1988), 217

disillusion with general woman is replaced by the new illusion³⁰¹ of the statue's life, ideal woman - *nec adhuc ebur esse fatetur* (line 255). The *opifex* tests his work *operi temptantes* (line 254) with which he falls in love and fulfills all the conventional demands of the Roman lover as outlined by Propertius (3.13.25) and Ovid himself at AA. 2.254 - 269.

saepe manus operi temptantes admovet, an sit
 corpus an illud ebur, nec adhuc ebur esse fatetur. 255
 oscula dat reddique putat loquiturque tenetque
 et credit tactis digitos insidere membris
 et metuit, pressos veniat ne livor in artus,
 et modo blanditias adhibet, modo grata puellis
 munera fert illi conchas teretesque lapillos 260
 et parvas volucres et flores mille colorum
 liliaque pictasque pilas et ab arbore lapsas
 Heliadum lacrimas; ornat quoque vestibus artus,
 dat digitis gemmas, dat longa monilia collo,
 aure leves baccae, redimicula pectore pendent: 265
 cuncta decent; nec nuda minus formosa videtur.
 conlocat hanc stratis concha Sidonide tinctis
 adpellatque tori sociam adclinataque colla
 mollibus in plumis, tamquam sensura, reponit.

Let us not overlook the humour in all of this. There is no humour without also the adverse texture of significance. Here the amusement is surely in - a feature common, even thematically central, in the *Metamorphoses* - the confusion of literal and figurative. The *puella* of Roman elegy disdains, is hard as flint, unmoved by the obsequies of her idealizing admirer. As Knox writes of Pygmalion's *munera*,

³⁰¹ Cf. Anderson (1972), 497 "In this respect he differs little from the other major psychological characters of Ovid, who live in a world of illusion that gradually replaces reality for them . . . Pygmalion plays the lover, and Ovid's choice of verbs emphasizes his illusion: *putat* 256, *credit* 257, *metuit* 258". I would argue that to a great extent Ovid has been playing with the meanings and implications of the entire mimetic practice, of the suspension of disbelief for art to which we deliver ourselves. So many of his characters are themselves victims and spectators of *imagines*. Ovid is fascinated with the reality of illusions, their real consequences, the interpenetration of illusion and reality, as we see in imitation, disguise, similitude and all the fabrications and creations of art and nature.

"Convention requires that rustic gifts such as these go unappreciated", well this 'girl' is, after all, a statue, ". . . Ovid's Pygmalion adopts the pose of the elegiac suitor . . . who brings gifts of a sort traditionally ineffectual with an unfeeling mistress, as his mistress literally is (*tamquam sensura*, X 269)".³⁰² Knox demonstrates how Ovid's diction draws on that of elegy³⁰³ incorporating words used either very rarely or never in epic: *formosa* 266 ("an adjective rigorously avoided by the epic poets");³⁰⁴ *tori sociam* 268; *puella* 259.

At line 270 a swift cut to another type scene: the religious festival,

'Festa dies Veneris tota celeberrima Cypro 270
venerat, et pandis inductae cornibus aurum
coniderant ictae nivea cervice iuvencae,
turaque fumabant, cum munere functus ad aras
constitit et timide "si, di, dare cuncta potestis,
sit coniunx, opto," non ausus "eburnea virgo" 275
dicere Pygmalion "similis mea" dixit "eburnae."

Met. X 270-76

Here, too, at line 276 *similis* echoes the *simulati* of line 253 and soon after this *simulacra* at 280. All, like *imago*, the achievement of *imitatio* of one kind or another. You can hear ingenious comic timing in the interrupted direct speech of lines 274-6. I like Anderson's point on *timide* (line 274) and *non ausus* (line 275): Pygmalion is ". . . not suffering from *furor* or *insania* like Ovid's erotic heroines".³⁰⁵ It is true, the hesitation in the lines, in the hyperbaton of the syntax and in the language, reflects Pygmalion's self-possession as well as Ovid's feeling for comedy. The most interesting implication of his self-control is in this picture of a figure both wholly involved and expediently self-aware. This is a good parallel to the experience of the work of art generally, with which we become completely involved even as we remain intellectually critical and aware of it as constructed work that comes to life only through our animating imagination.

³⁰² Knox (1986), 53

³⁰³ Ibid. 52-4

³⁰⁴ The significance of *formosus* as a derivation of *forma*, does not go unnoticed, see also Anderson's lists of words for change and continuity (1963), 3-6.

³⁰⁵ Anderson (1972), 499

sensit, ut ipsa suis aderat Venus³⁰⁶ aurea festis,
 vota quid illa velint et, amici numinis omen,
 flamma ter accensa est apicemque per aera duxit.
 ut rediit, simulacra suae petit ille puellae 280
 incumbensque toro dedit oscula: visa tepere est;
 admovet os iterum, manibus quoque pectora temptat:

Met. X 277 - 282

Again, there are ambiguities in *simulacra suae... puellae* (line 280) and *sua vota retracta* at line 288 below. Ordinarily *simulacra puellae* would be understood as an actual statue of a real girl, here *suae* anticipates the transformation from actual (literal) statue to the real girl implied here. The *vota* of 288 is “generally taken in its concrete sense as ‘he handles the object of his vows.’ But perhaps it may also mean ‘he manages (handles, carries out) his vows’, which would suggest that in handling the statue he is himself bringing about what he prayed for”.³⁰⁷ In both cases the ambiguities, dependent as they are on the potential confusions of literal and metaphorical, and abstract and concrete, are characteristic.³⁰⁸ Note also the repeated use of terms proper to statuary in the following lines,

temptatum mollescit ebur positoque rigore
 subsidit digitis ceditque, ut Hymettia sole
 cera remollescit tractataque pollice multas
 flectitur in facies ipsoque fit utilis usu.

Met. X 283 - 86

³⁰⁶ Solodow (1988), 218-19 shows very well how despite the involvement of the goddess in the transformation, Ovid’s emphasis, in his manner of narration and choice of diction, is still on “the artist’s own creative power”. Besides, Pygmalion’s piety towards Venus underlines the symmetry of this tale with the preceding of the blasphemous *Propoetides*.

³⁰⁷ Solodow (1988), 219

³⁰⁸ Ovid finds such figures as the pun, syllepsis and the double entendre irresistible because the co-incident of sense in language mimics the internal duplicity or doubleness of our relation to meaning. Meaning in language is a conventional inheritance, it is given and apparently natural but must in fact be read or interpreted to be activated, to come into being. Likewise Nature stands in such a complex relation to the human eye. It is independent of man but without man is not fully realized, its art is merely accident.

mollescit...ut sole/ remollescit tractaque pollice multas/ flectitur in facies, the verbal parallelism as ever manifests the similitudes of the tale.³⁰⁹ By now the kind of clipped and compact tautology of *ipsoque fit utilis usu* is not unexpected. Here I think it also serves to tie up the illustrating simile of Hymettian wax and sets up the return to the narrative proper at line 287.

dum stupet et dubie gaudet fallique veretur,
rursus amans rursusque manu sua vota retractat.

Met. X 287-88

As in the Narcissus episode to which we turn next, the language turns and redoubles - *dum stupet et dubie gaudet, rursus amans rursusque* - and the phrases of the first section recur suitably reflecting the conversion that has taken place - *uirginis est uerae facies* (line 250) to *corpus erat* (line 289);³¹⁰ *aderat Venus* (line 277) is *adest dea* at line 295.

corpus erat! saliunt temptatae pollice venae.
tum vero Paphius plenissima concipit heros 290
verba, quibus Veneri grates agat, oraue tandem
ore suo non falsa premit, dataque oscula virgo
sensit et erubuit timidumque ad lumina lumen
attollens pariter cum caelo vidit amantem.
coniugio, quod fecit, adest dea, iamque coactis 295
cornibus in plenum noviens lunaribus orbem
illa Paphon genuit, de qua tenet insula nomen.

Met. X 289-97

The pre-eminent theme of the Pygmalion episode is the power of art and the complex relation of art and nature. Solodow asks, “. . . Pygmalion’s art is superior to nature in that it usurps what is properly and exclusively the function of nature, the creation of animate life; human life itself depends on art. What

³⁰⁹ Cf. *Fasti* III 832, *quique facis docta mollia saxa manu*; Bauer (1968) on the significance of the substances of ivory and wax above, my n. 275.

³¹⁰ A phrase such as this also recalls for me the point about the speed and even instantaneousness of invention as we saw remarked on in the cosmogony above.

more could Ovid do to establish the priority of art over nature?"³¹¹ I would go further to suggest that Ovid is attuned to the further complication of man's *naturalness*. Man's distinction from nature is not clean. There is a continuum of being and elements, man is quite ambiguous, both unnatural and natural, a deviser of artificialities whose devices are ultimately not extricable from nature which includes everything, not least man, from which man comes and into which he returns. Man's genius is the genius of *natura*.³¹²

iii

Narcissus

From one example³¹³ of the manifest reflexivities of Ovid's invention to another, in which the captivating *imago* comes to life in water³¹⁴ rather than stone. The story of Narcissus, in Book III, is as famous as that of Pygmalion and no less exemplary, in its way, of the leading Ovidian themes and techniques. It too, in plot³¹⁵ and lexical formulation, both exploits the playful possibilities of illusion and gently mocks the illusoriness, here of desire and beauty. While the Pygmalion metamorphosis was summoned in the most tactile terms and the infatuation there with a simulacrum, Narcissus is marked by his visual fixation, (as Pygmalion is distinct for his unwillingness to touch women after the *Propoetides* - and a prostitute is definitively available for touching - so is Narcissus contrasted with Echo, a figure bereft of visible dimensions, condemned to be a sonic image of other forms and symmetrically incapacitated).

³¹¹ Solodow (1988), 219

³¹² Ibid. 212 for a very apt extract from *The Winter's Tale* (4.4. 86-92, 95-97) in which the antithesis between art and nature is 'erased'; also on Pygmalion and *The Winter's Tale* see Hardie (2002), 193-206.

³¹³ There are others, like Perseus and his catalogued petrifications *Met.* V 177 - 235.

³¹⁴ For a good discussion of the symbolic values of water, the ambiguities of its purity and sensual eroticism exploited by Ovid, see Segal (1969), 23-32.

³¹⁵ Cf. Tissol (1997), 88 "Both the production and reception of narratives is potentially unstable, and the reader's judgement is consequently never at rest . . . Ovid perceived in narrative structure, no less than wit, an opportunity to embody metamorphosis and flux in the experience of his readers"; Galinsky (1975), 62, discusses Narcissus and the function of metamorphosis in the work: "There is no rigid formal scheme in the *Metamorphoses*. Everything is in flux, and the ever-changing structure of the poem, and of many individual stories, reflects metamorphosis and, metaphorically speaking, *is* metamorphosis.", 62.

hic puer et studio venandi lassus et aestu
procubuit faciemque loci fontemque secutus,

Met. III 413-14

Narcissus is drawn by the appearance or image of the place (*faciemque loci*) and its fateful water (*fontemque*) with its floating reflection.

dumque sitim sedare cupit, sitis altera crevit,
dumque bibit, visae correptus imagine formae
spem sine corpore amat, corpus putat esse, quod unda est.

Met. III 415 - 417³¹⁶

The beautiful boy's stupefaction,³¹⁷ (cf. Pygmalion at X 287 *dum stupet et dubie gaudet*), is the infatuated *insania* Pygmalion will escape. This scene surely also is coloured with a strain of mockery of the elegiac lover but also a kind of parody of tragedy and tragic desires. It is an episode that has been introduced with Tiresias' prophecy that the nymph's child would live a long life *si se non noverit* (line 348). This story is pertinent to our discussion for its demonstrable constructedness: it constantly calls attention to its authorship and to its author's conspicuous playfulness with the ironies of subjectivity and objectivity, its hallmark mix of the stereotypical elegiac scene and posture and the *color tragicus* of Ovid's hybrid epic. Narcissus is a kind of inversion of Pygmalion: where the Cypriot is an artist figure who fashions his beloved, the river nymph's son is an audience, marked by his rejection of real lovers but hopelessly fatuous

³¹⁶ Note that in fact Tarrant (2004) follows Merkel in excluding lines 415 and 417. There is also the alternative reading of *umbra* for *unda* at line 417, a nice confusion in *umbra* and *unda*, I cannot help feel, for it incidentally brings out the very play of substance and image underlying the episode.

³¹⁷ Anderson (1972), 500 "*stupet*: like verbs or adjectives from *mirari*, this verb commonly serves as a stage direction in scenes of metamorphosis." and further on the vocabulary of surprise: (Anderson) 1963, 4. The stupefaction of others stands in a relationship of inverse proportion to the bemused awareness of ourselves. Ovid's metamorphoses are both likely and surprising. To the sophisticated, self-aware artist and audience the sensational, pathetic-ironic gape of the figures of myth at their moments of more or less tragi-comic ἀναγνώρισις is a quiet, cerebral pleasure. This is certainly the case here in the Narcissus episode.

credulousness faced by illusion. Both however are smitten by images. Narcissus, (just as that other artist in stone, Perseus, who at *Met.* IV 676 sees Andromeda *et stupet et uisae correptus imagine formae*) is *visae correptus imagine formae* in line 416, it is a revealing phrase. We noted before the unusual use of *imago* with the genitive, here is such another example. The boy is deceived by the illusion of himself and this is realized in the mild tautology of the line. His own role in this delusion is unsuppressed as we see in *uisae*. Just as Ovid's language in the Pygmalion tale in Book X reveals the illusory character of the object of desire so too here: *putat* (417); and *uisae imagine formae/ spem sine corpore... quod umbra est*.

adstupet ipse sibi vultuque inmotus eodem

Met. III 418

The compound *adstupet*³¹⁸ (418), is Ovid's coining and original too its use with the dative *sibi*. All is calculated to enact, not only emphasize, the reflexiveness of the scene and Narcissus' dilemma.

haeret, ut e Pario formatum marmore signum;
spectat humi positus geminum, sua lumina, sidus 420
et dignos Baccho, dignos et Apolline crines
inpubesque genas et eburnea colla decusque
oris et in niveo mixtum candore ruborem,
cunctaque miratur, quibus est mirabilis ipse:

Met. III 419-424

Narcissus is transfixed, he is stuck,³¹⁹ immobile as a statue, (but *signum* like *imago* is in fact less specific and as a general term for "an image as a work of art"³²⁰ brings out both the material pose of the enchanted youth and the illusory condition). Narcissus, who is real, is likened to marble shaped and fashioned into

³¹⁸ See *OLD* s.v. *astupeo*; *TLL* s.v. *adstupeo*.

³¹⁹ Echoes Echo's condition at line 395 *sed tamen haeret amor*.

³²⁰ "a figure, statue, picture, etc. [syn: effigies, imago, simulacrum]" *OLD* s.v., how interesting to note that the radical might be cognate with Sanskrit *sag-*, to stick, cling to, adhere; see also Anderson (1963) for his discussion, list of synonyms and related terms.

the image of a boy as he gazes on the mere image of his image-like form.³²¹ This kind of dazzling involution and confusion of surfaces is mimicked and exploited throughout the account. It is all such a very Ovidian mix of conventional sensual detail, erotic tone, humour and linguistic deftness and in atmosphere and underlying paradox is thoroughly similar to the tale of Pygmalion in Book X. "Narcissus, who is real", I write, though I know he is not as Pygmalion never was. Both take on a 'super-reality' in the narrative because of their conjunction with illusions. Like a play within a play³²² that confers to the larger drama an apparent proximity to reality that is in fact a narrative *trompe l'oeil*.

How sophisticated this all is. Ultimately the 'most real' element in all of this is the creative master of these illusions, which all serve to make Ovid seem a more substantial, even a living presence. A brilliant mind seems to inhere in this work, to breathe life into these very unfolding scenes and it is a consistent presence: but it is not real, it is an ingenious illusion conjured out of the stuff of language and all its versatile power with images. This episode is a type of the narrative unconcealment practised by Ovid throughout. Here he has sought out opportunities for wit, for his famous *ingenium*, for the 'interconfusions' of signs and things, images and beings and brought about an example of their luminous transactions with a polish that calls attention to his art even as his art makes all the action and play seem to have risen 'naturally' out of the material of the story.

Imago

A few remarks are in order on *imago* - a word and set of ideas. It is a fundamental term, a revealing clue, in its recurrence and that of its synonyms,³²³ in our

³²¹ Hinds (2002), 137, "The *imago* in the pool (416) becomes a different kind of *imago* as Narcissus the viewer is immobilized (and himself objectified) by the spectacle of himself as art object; this thickening of the thematics of the gaze conditions and aestheticizes our own perception not just of Narcissus but also of the landscape which has made him its own."

³²² Shakespeare, cleverly and with great comedy, exploits precisely this effect in his own Ovidian transformation of the Pyramus and Thisbe farce in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as he does also in the use of *The Mousetrap* in *Hamlet*, a play if ever there was about substance and illusion; cf. also Hardie (2002), 15-16.

³²³ "forma, facies, effigies..., -o, exemplar, status...*de eo quod imitando assimilatum est alicui rei i.q. effigies, simulacrum sim.: definitiones et descriptiones...*Rufin. *Orig. princ.* 1, 2, 6 p.34, 11 -o

consideration of Ovid's appreciable fascination with the complex relation between art and nature. Implicit in *imago*, of course, is *imitor*, *imitatio*, *aemulus* (German, *ahmen*; English, *aim*; all related to Greek ἄμα, cf. *simul* and *similis*): imitation and similarity.³²⁴ Ovid's world grows and is constructed in that force-field between real and imaginary. The distance between forms of things and things is repeatedly closed in the *Metamorphoses*, image or form and particular thing become one. Appearance is of course the contiguous point of form and being, thus Ovid's constant return to the instabilities and ambiguities of *imago*, the threshold over which all the transferences of the *Metamorphoses* take place.

The received opinion of antiquity places, platonically, the highest ontological premium on *form* from which nature and all its items are at a remove and at a still further remove is the world of man's imitations. Is not this philosophical common sense and its epistemological implications, with its Parmenidean preference for immutabilities playfully reversed and manipulated in Ovid's work? Is this not why at the level of language as much as in the devices of narrative the poet practises deliberate confusions and returns to scenes of inversion and images of stasis and flux?

Solodow emphasizes the 'parallelism' in Ovid of Art and Metamorphosis: both provide a movement towards clarity, definition,³²⁵ Ovid's motif of metamorphosis is a feature of his fascination with art and form. I would go further to consider the implications of the plasticity of form. If man as artist, maker, *artifex*, quasi *demiurge* can re-invent and manipulate and modify the inherited images and language, (precisely what literary *imitatio* requires for example), if somehow, form is, like everything, part of a world of artificialities

interdum dicitur ea, quae in materia aliqua...depingi vel exculpi solet; interdum –o dicitur eius, qui genuit, is, qui natus est." *TLL Vol.7* 404-5; Anderson (1963).

³²⁴ "...μυμέομαι (Greek √με, Indo-European MA, "to measure"), which seems originally to have signified "I frequently measure myself," and thus in a restricted sense, "to measure myself by some one, to copy or imitate"... The Latin *imitor* and *imago* are not improbably blunted forms of *mi-mitor* and *mi-mago*, and so formed originally on the same principle from the same root, which is found in *me-tior* and strengthened in *mensa* and *mensura*" Peile (1875), 182.

³²⁵ "Art shares the qualities of metamorphosis which we have recognized in the poem, and our sense of them is re-inforced by special turns of phrase. The word *imago*, for instance is several times used to assert the connection between art and clarity." Solodow (1988), 206 14, who also gives a useful discussion of *imago* and its "... distinctively Ovidian semantic usage." Ovid uses *imago*, in several ways and often with the sense of 'deceptive appearance'. Solodow's survey is instructive for its evidence of Ovid's travelling over that "gap between thing and representation."

rather than a transcendent eternal category, then memory and art and nature and tradition are thrown into a kind of sparkling disarray of relations. That chaos would invite the ordering force of a new, confident and paradoxical subjectivity—that of a man as *mundi fabricator*.³²⁶

³²⁶ Where I would emphasize the opportunities for a joyful, energetic 'modernism' (experimental, self-aware, liberated by tradition rather than oppressed by it) and self-confident humanism in the implicit 'relativism' here, Segal sees more the decadence from the Classical outlook, "Ovid, then, with his working out of the implications of metamorphosis, represents the last phase in this pervasive ancient sense of a moral relation between man and nature. That relation is firm in the sea, sky, and earth of Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, in the echoing woods and mountains of Theocritus and Virgil, and even in the *Tellus mater* and life-giving *voluptas* of Lucretius. But as the vital Hellenic sense of the world as *kosmos* wanes, nature retires to the role of decorative background in the landscape painting of Ovid's time. The process is not yet complete in the *Metamorphoses*, but it is in the process of happening, as one can see in the stylization of the scenery" Segal (1969), 88-9.

V

Locus

Au jardin des *Métamorphoses*

A Poetics of Place

Scenery is stylized in Ovid and always reminiscent of the productions of the plastic and visual arts. Nature as a luxuriant, sensual, violent and unpredictable backdrop is also as consistent and providing of continuity as the individual heroic character, who undergoes some personal development or change,³²⁷ in more traditional epic.³²⁸ Ovid has an almost formulaic technique in evoking place. He designs living sets, as it were, by a kind of conventional construction and arrangement of parts and props - water, grass, shade, silence, foliage. These stages are described at first as ideal settings, small paradises no doubt informed by the Roman aesthetics of the garden.³²⁹ In the discussion I make below of some

³²⁷ Kenney (1973), 143, is eloquent on what he regards as an artistic failure in Ovid's depiction of natural bodies and scenery, "However far-fetched the premisses of Ovid's *ethopoeia*, he never parts company with the fundamental humanity of his characters: into whatever excesses of speech and behaviour their passions may carry them, the reader is never quite out of touch with the real world,... With what might be termed the *ethopoeia* of material phenomena Ovid is less successful. For him, this was essentially an extension of the rhetorical exercise".

³²⁸ Cf. Segal (1969), 6: "There is in fact a very good reason for Ovid to turn again and again throughout his poem to a stylized, recurrent landscape. Landscape helps him toward a subtle and elegant solution of his poem's greatest problem: unity... Such landscape, then, results less from an attempt to describe a real locale than from a need to create a poetical world, *an enclosed, self-contained realm where imagination and reverie are at home*" (my italics).

³²⁹ Pierre Grimal sometimes overstates their primacy in his nevertheless interesting work on *Les Jardins Romains*, "Comme les jardins de la Renaissance, les jardins romains de l'Antiquité expriment le système tout entier de la civilisation qui les a produits... De même, si, par leur aspect religieux, ils occupent une place privilégiée dans l'âme romaine, par leur esthétique raffinée et leur <<naturalisme>> savant, nous devinons qu'ils satisfont aussi les multiples aspirations à la <<culture>>, les goûts littéraires qui prévalaient dans toutes les classes de la société romaine... En particulier, la littérature *doit* avoir été marquée par eux, s'il est vrai qu'elle reflète avec fidélité les

typical scenes of such pleasant grottos in Book III especially, we shall see how the poet creates an atmosphere of quiet seclusion, a private and erotic chamber, a privileged, idyllic scene that is sensationally interrupted and transformed either into the site of some contrary chthonic monster (Cadmus) or some unnatural and grotesque surprise. In his way Ovid manages to fuse the conventional oppositions of inside and outside, the lover's chamber or lady's boudoir with the wilderness of *natura*. Initially the *loca amoena* of the *Metamorphoses* seem marked by their apparent purity. They are pristine and inviolate, as virginally intact as many of the intruding human figures. They become transformed and transform those humans who stumble upon them. Contact between humans and nature is fraught and often a catalyst for the transformation of both.

As *imago* intermediates between the world of form and thing, so stands the Ovidian garden-like grotto between the worlds of the cultivated and the born, *ars* and *natura*. The garden as an example of the transformation of nature; and nature as the materials for artistic representation, serves as an epitome of the interpenetration and mutuality of the two conditions: natural and artificial. Just as the neo-classicist aesthetics of 17th and 18th Century France and the Romanticism of 19th Century Germany and England are exhibited in the *ars topiaria* so too, as Grimal argues, is *la sensibilité romaine* expressed in its taming and arrangement of place and part - indeed, 'les jardins romains de l'Antiquité expriment le système tout entier de la civilisation qui les a produits'. In Ovid's scenes, however, there is not a simple representation of conventional, common or garden, aesthetics. Certainly Ovid relies, as we have seen, on the shared common sense and background of his audience, but he is also almost subversively surprising and the kind of artificial stillness and pristine idyll, which the comfortable, cool and restful grotto promises, will never last long before it must be transformed. Surely we must take into account the intrusion of violence and the ugly into these well set-up scenes when we consider their significance?³³⁰

variations du goût et de la sensibilité" Grimal (1969), 354-54; for a Roman's own comments on his garden see Pliny the Younger's letters 2.17 and 5.6.

³³⁰ Hugh Parry's excellent treatment of this very phenomenon "Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: Violence in a pastoral landscape" contains the following: "We shall find that for Ovid such landscapes more often than not form the essential backdrop for what may be described as variations upon the erotic connotations of the hunt whether it be . . . or Narcissus' self-pursuit" (1964), 269; and see also Hinds (2002), 122-149. He quite correctly identifies the stylization of scenic construction in the *Metamorphoses* as a "narratological cue", 131, for violent and erotic actions.

Narcissus, for example, immoveable and remotely beautiful, will inevitably become literally immoveable, a static flower by a pond. Tired and hot from the chase, the typically weary hunter, he comes to the beautified location of his final spell-binding and it is the stereotype of such ecphrastic stage designs,

fons erat inlimis, nitidis argenteus undis,
 quem neque pastores neque pastae monte capellae
 contigerant aliudve pecus, quem nulla volucris
 nec fera turbarat nec lapsus ab arbore ramus; 410
 gramen erat circa, quod proximus umor alebat,
 silvaque sole locum passura tepescere nullo.
 hic puer et studio venandi lassus et aestu
 procubuit faciemque loci fontemque secutus,

Met. III 407 - 414

Ovid typically designates the opening of an ecphrastic evocation (the abrupt cut, "the equivalent of a scene-change in a theatre")³³¹ with a phrase like *fons erat* (cf. *est nemus Haemoniae* I 568; *silva vetus stabat* III 28; *vallis erat* III 155) and the parenthetical close is in the demonstrative *hic* at 413.³³² As ever the truth of the lines is the truth of its language. It is a passage described entirely – except for *nitidis argenteus undis* at line 407- through negatives, including the neologistic litotes (and *hapax legomenon*) of *inlimis*³³³ that opens the passage: *neque...neque* (408)...*nulla* (409)...*nec...nec* (410) *nullo* (411) "negatives that end by making the pool an appropriate symbol of Narcissus' negativity".³³⁴ The poetry is very carefully arranged,³³⁵ beneath the artificiality of the scene, the 'unobtrusive'

³³¹ Henderson (1979), 45

³³² Hinds (2002), 127 "Ovid applies the same kind of interest in formular play to the particular distillation of local description which is (or, if you will, which becomes) the *locus amoenus*. Since Curtius a passage from *Met.* 10 has been a byword here. An *est locus-* type opening describes the landscape in which the Ur-poet Orpheus sits down...".

³³³ Bömer (1969), Vol. I, 551 "Dieser Ort war von ganz besonderer Art: Um den ungewöhnlichen Charakter zu schildern, bildet Ovid gleich zu Anfang ein neues und ausgefallenes Wort."; see *OLD* s.v. *illimis*.

³³⁴ Anderson (1997), 379, we saw precisely this technique at *Met.* I 10-14, a sequence of negatives there elaborating the as yet unrealized condition of forms.

³³⁵ For an analysis of the marked structure of sense units, patterned clauses and anaphora, see Henderson (1979), 82: "The effect of all this unobtrusive syntactical artistry is to produce a

artfulness of the language- *ars adeo latet arte sua*. The negativity of the language becomes itself an image of the startling absence-presence of Narcissus' situation. The function of the scenic representation is not simply allegorical, but an enactment itself of what is depicted. The language is itself reflective, summoning up its images through insubstantial opposites: the unrealized, the virginal, the pure unmuddied, untrampled, untouched, the unreal. Ovid's poetry here is not concerned so much with the representation of some 'natural' landscape reality, but with the paradoxical possibilities afforded by the versatilities of language and representation, reflection and substance.³³⁶

Think of the triumphs of Virgil and Horace in the evocation of place, the lyrical seriousness of their work stands in counterpoint to the plastic abstractions of Ovidian modernizations.³³⁷ As Williams writing of *Satire* I.5, "There follows a breath-taking description of Terracina that pierces straight to its target for anyone who has glimpsed from a distance that great cliff of rock and felt the surprise of its eminence and bright colour. Eduard Fraenkel says of this: 'Perhaps it was the first time in European poetry that so faithful and so suggestive a picture of a definite piece of landscape was given in a few words. The ability to achieve such a thing, though conspicuous in Horace, is not peculiar to him alone: we should perhaps rather regard it as one of the fresh conquests of the generation of Virgil and Horace'".³³⁸

The pre-eminent feature of Ovid's work is its 'literariness', it is always a verbal construction of images. In its form and content are indistinguishable, its magic is that of the externalities of form, its mysteries are those of light and surface. If we do recall the Roman garden as a space of sensuality, as instrument of the inner

sense of ordered calm that reinforces the verbal picture. By now the reader is prepared for such idyllic scenes to become the backdrop to some frightening or violent act."

³³⁶ Cf. Hinds (2002), 134, "An aspect of landscape symbolism peculiar to this poem (or at any rate to metamorphic myth) is the capacity of supernatural transformation *to cause the symbolic and the literal to collapse fully into one another*" (my italics). I would say that precisely this capacity is a guiding reason in the choice of metamorphosis as motif. It is precisely that collapsibility, on which Ovid relies for the intellectual pleasures of irony, humour and wit. The intermingling of literal and figurative is a fundamental aspect of the poem.

³³⁷ By contrast with those canonized poets, the late Classical - even post Classical? - Ovid has the syntheticism of a modernist. He is forced into a specific historico-poetical originality by their precedence just as he re-creates those predecessors and inflects them and our reading in ways only Ovid could control.

³³⁸ Williams (1968), 661

life, as reflection of Roman intellectual, moral and religious culture, scene of *luxuria* and as a privileged part of the countryside intended as 'reflet de la Nature entière'³³⁹ (*imago naturae*), we nevertheless are always reminded in the experience of his work that Ovid deploys ideas and scenic strategies, symbolic configurations and all the delicate potential of language for their ability to satisfy dramatic demands and to the ends of his poetical narratives which take such obvious pleasure in the spectacular. The ideal grotto, the nature scene descended from bucolic pastoral is a resource precisely because of its artificiality, the opportunity it affords for the flashing collision of opposites, the sensational violation. Here, it reflects the unreal inaccessibility of Narcissus. As ever, we should notice how the artificiality of the *Metamorphoses* always confers a powerful apparent reality on the authority, an imperious subjectivity that is worked out through the poem, of Ovid.

The first ecphrastic evocation of such a stylized scene in Book III is of the Boeotian serpent's sanctuary in the Cadmeian episode. Cadmus wishes to offer thanks to Jupiter so he sends his men out to find fresh spring water. They come upon an inviolate and pristine space:

sacra Iovi facturus erat: iubet ire ministros
 et petere e vivis libandas fontibus undas.
 silva vetus stabat nulla violata securi,
 et specus in media virgis ac vimine densus
 efficiens humilem lapidum conpagibus arcum 30
 uberibus fecundus aquis; ubi conditus antro
 Martius anguis erat, cristis praesignis et auro;

Met. III 26-32

Again, the representation of the place is marked, above all, by its artificiality, which is also an index of its 'traditionality':³⁴⁰ it has all the regulatory signs that

³³⁹ Grimal (1969), 355

³⁴⁰ Bömer (1969), Vol. I, 454 "Die Darstellung erhält dabei durchaus stereotypen Charakter; älterer, insbesondere vergilische Vorbilder sind vielfach greifbar...etwa einerseits den Typus 'heiliger Hain'; Curtius (1953); Hinds (2002), 136 "... as with any other ancient poet (except perhaps Lucretius) the topography, however attractive, remains generic, specifications of light, colour and spatial relation are conventional... and the botany on display is seasonally and climactically promiscuous.". Once more, it should be apparent that realism in Ovid is not simply

tell us it is a 'sacred grove'. It is not an 'unepic' practice to interrupt the narrative with small ecphrastic scenes like this but the particular usefulness for Ovid here of the description of an idyllic spot is in the narrative and artistic effects the interruption provides, rather than merely in the conforming to a generic style. The stasis of the scene is in sharp contrast to the violent action that will follow, it sets off sharply the events that it also 'cues'. The traditional items of such a scene are also modified by the Roman modernizing touch in *efficiens humilem lapidum conpagibus arcum* (line 30),³⁴¹ not an unironic touch, certainly one that betrays the delectable, old game with the artistry of nature, the naturalness of artifice.

The cue in the opening of an ecphrastic depiction of *locus amoenus* is not only to the precipitate violence or violation but also an *invitation to view*.³⁴² These are occasions for what Kenney has called 'set-pieces of *enargeia*'.³⁴³ We are, in imaginative terms, summoned to see and also drawn into the scene. The celebrated 'visual style' of Ovid, so demonstrable in the early books of the work and in his conventional conjuring of landscape, is interesting not only for the possible (tenuous, unverifiable) evidence of the influence of the plastic and visual arts on Ovid's compositional style. It is far more so for the inherent and quite deliberately achieved assimilation, or at any rate association, of seeing subject and spectacle. Ovid's writing is spectacular. He playfully explores the epistemological implications of vision and interpretation in the perceiving and/or construction of pattern and meaning. As I have been emphasizing, Ovid's poem is underpinned by a fascination with form and the *Metamorphoses* represents a series of explications and extrapolations of basic insights into the nature of art and human experience. Sight and vision, visibility and vanishings: these constitute elements of a thematic fascination with *imagines*, illusions that have real effects. Ovid's guiding intuition is of the *poetic* nature of perceiving and naming. Reality is relational, man stands in a dynamic mutuality with world, mutually creative and constructive. Man both makes the world and is made out of it, he is born and fashioned, a complex of nature and culture. Imagination and memory and meaning is the transformative substance out of which the world is constantly being made. The point of contact in this nexus is language.

'life-likeness', but 'art-likeness'. The plausibility is in being successfully traditional, the *mimesis* is to other works.

³⁴¹ ". . . which reflects the interests of contemporary artists and designers of rich gardens." Anderson (1997), 341

³⁴² Hinds (2002), 136 ff

³⁴³ Kenney (1973), 143

fons sonat a dextra tenui perlucidus unda,
 margine gramineo patulos incinctus hiatus.
 hic dea silvarum venatu fessa solebat
 virgineos artus liquido perfundere rore.

Met. III 155 - 164

There are our conventional parenthesizing cues in *vallis erat* (line 155) ... *hic* (line 163). It is another 'heiliger Hain' *succinctae sacra Dianae*, and charged with erotic sensuality and virginity - for which equivocal doubleness water is the outstanding image, hence its usefulness to Ovid. The most memorable touch is of course in the lines *arte laboratum nulla! simulaverat artem! ingenio natura suo; nam pumice vivol et levibus tofis nativum duxerat arcum* (lines 158 - 60).

Nature here is the witty designer whose skill is such as to have concealed her art *arte laboratum nulla*. The artistry of *natura* here is classic Ovidian paradox, a brilliant inversion of common sense which is not at all nonsensical: nature imitates art.³⁴⁹ If nature is an idea or set of ideas and assumptions, it will change through history,³⁵⁰ the way it is constructed will change. The Roman eye fills the world of nature with meaning and naturally, conventionally, will detect, for example, an arch in a likely configuration of trees and stone.³⁵¹ The *nativum arcum* can stand as a model of the conflatory imaginative habit of the poet. It is the thrilling co-incident of apparent opposites, here the most basic: born, haphazard and made, designed.

Place in Ovid then is often sexed. It is glamorous, sensual, but charged with underlying danger. In the episodes I have mentioned here, mostly from the third

³⁴⁹ Bömer (1969), Vol. I, 492-3, makes good comments here on the Hellenistic anthropocentrism in these lines: art and therefore man is the measure of things in Ovid. This depends on "einer Pervertierung des Naturgefühls". He quotes some marvellous extracts from Balzac and Baudelaire, two artists, cultured and urbane, who also, like Ovid, create entire imaginative worlds, one in prose epic and the other in the modern elegiac of lyric.

³⁵⁰ For an interesting recent discussion that challenges the latent essentialist assumptions in so many discussions of nature and landscape in art see Fitter (1995), eg. 2, "Reductive encoding of landscape in verse will be governed by the decorum of genre: landscape is amplified, for instance, in secondary epic but spare in the classical Ode." and "... the landscape-consciousness of every culture is historically distinct and subjective ...".

³⁵¹ Wright (1995), 67 "... wherever the eye turns there is a reminder of human life ...".

book, place and atmosphere are symbolic.³⁵² In their virginal purity they prepare for the intrusions and corruptions and sensational catastrophes that occur. Grimal detects in Ovid the spirit of the *petite bourgeoisie*³⁵³ in his delight in the quiet pleasures of the well arranged garden scene but there is something far more sophisticated here than just the love of the neatly unthreatening environment.³⁵⁴ Ovid's artifices underline themselves. His role in the creation of his various 'natures' is never disguised. The use of artificial, conventional landscape scene is a feature of the thematic interplay in the work between art and nature.

³⁵² It is Segal's thesis that shows a collusiveness between place and action, scene and narration (1969).

³⁵³ "Par des confidences des *Tristes* et des *Pontiques*, nous savons qu'il possédait un grand jardin dans la proche banlieue, à la jonction de la *Via Flaminia* et de la *Via Clodia*. C'est là, dans le loisir, qu'il écrivait ses poèmes, ... Chez ce Romain, ce poète alexandrin, dont le naturalisme est si artificiel quand il s'agit de donner un décor aux légendes qu'il raconte, se révèle tout d'un coup un trait qui le rapproche singulièrement des petits bourgeois que nous avons vu aller dans leurs *hortuli* de banlieue pour les petites fêtes du soir ..." (1969), 408.

³⁵⁴ For a view on this with which mine largely corresponds see Tissol (1997), esp. chap. IV.

Conclusion

Nature of Art Art of Nature

*tutta plasticità e dinamicità*³⁵⁵

In this study I have set out through a close reading of selected passages of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* to discover the ways in which the Roman's poetics is expressed in his work through his choice of narrative and the features of his style. Ovid is an artist demonstrably alive to the complexities of representation and its paradoxes. He also shows a particular interest in the tensions and resources for his poetic enterprise of the complicated relation between the natural and the artificial. *Forma* is the recurring motif of the artistic and the natural, as antithesis and synthesis, the unformed, the deformed, it may indeed be read as a special clue to the meaning of the work as it was undertaken. *Imago* with all its richness of sense, is a recurrent and significant motif for it draws out the central theme of likeness and similarity, of disguise and reflection and the relation between being and seeming.

I hope to have shown to some convincing degree that in the *Metamorphoses* narrative style, irony and humour, generic innovation, the proem and *sphragis*, *imitatio* and the allusive habit all constitute a unified message as to the poet's attitude towards this work and its composition. If this point is conceded, it must necessarily determine our approach to the poem and its meaning. I have studied the poem in a series of close readings of a few typical episodes from the primary text. In drawing broadly and liberally on a range of recent secondary scholarship on Ovid, his style, thematic interests and literary-historical position, I have discovered that many of my own ideas and insights were not the original contributions to the discussion that at first I thought they were and that in many things I had been pre-empted. This, nevertheless, has served more than anything as a stimulus to me to continue in my pursuit of various lines of discussion introduced here, in various articles and my next dissertation.

³⁵⁵ Ferrarino on the Pygmalion episode in *Ovidiana* (1958), 311 cited by Bömer (1969), Buch X - XI, 96.

There is a great deal of work to be done on the study of the history of the idea of Nature amongst the Greeks and Romans. In closer, rigorous philological and narratological studies of Ovid, his predecessors in the Hellenistic world and his Roman contemporaries and successors we may, I suspect, be able to develop an increasingly rich picture of Roman attitudes towards Nature and the concept of the natural and artificial as it may be revealed through the expression of these values. The relation of poetry to philosophy, can, as I hope to have shown in the case of Ovid, be rather complicated. Ovid, I have argued is not a philosopher, nor a moralist but he is moral and philosophical, for he expresses a view of the world in his attitude towards his poetry and art, he expresses an epistemology in his treatment of myth and language, and his work has important latent assumptions about Being, which are played out in his narratives.

I confess that I have not managed this discussion as well as I would have liked to and have been unnecessarily oppressed by the very tight constraints of word count. I should like to have drawn out more fully these questions which were the central inspiration of this thesis, that is, the extent to which we may discern if not an articulated philosophical position, at any rate the informing common sense and normative patterns assumed and projected or exploited merely as material by the poet. Through a study of Greek and Roman *mimesis*, attitudes towards art and the nature of representation and the representing sign, I argue, we may discern some fundamental points about the lived experience of the Ancient author and the audience on whose anticipated community of outlook he relied. Further, for understanding the values and common sense submerged in the life of people, it is most useful to study the works of culture, of *otium*, that eschew, as I have argued, the specific philosophical or ideological project in favour of that most revealing and profoundly ideological of pursuits, that of pleasure.

The great beauty of Ovid's work is in his successful rendering of a world of random, cruel forces in which dwell passionate and ignorant creatures whose fates seem not so much a convenient authorial mechanism as the very inevitable and irresistible momentum of nature itself. His is a rendering that is neither cynical nor sentimental. Thus the work unfolds before the imagination, with all the charm and beauty and terror of natural scene. All this is achieved in the open as it were, with humour and stagey asides. Ovid does not attempt to conceal his illusionist's sleeves, to retreat into the shadows of backstage and pretend that this in fact is nature. That really is the marvellous joke, the strength of his work is precisely what some may object to as its levity, its disrupted fantasies, its

author's intrusions. We believe the stories without believing in them. Ovid understands that we volunteer to suspend our disbelief- as, expediently, we might do about men in power and the gods themselves. If he is not politically radical however, his human sympathy is always evident.

Language is Ovid's golden ball, tossed in the air, unravelled and wound up again. His is an instinctive sense for the paradox and complex nature of language and representation. In the *Metamorphoses* the literal and figurative are collapsed, the relationship between names and things becomes unfixed, boundaries become porous and the bodiless is given and takes shape.

The *Metamorphoses* is a woven image of the literary imagination, the project of *poiesis* itself. Ovid does not avoid adverting the reader's thoughts to himself, the present *auctor*, the active representor of all these images and dreams. Perhaps we may say that the *Metamorphoses* is the work of an ambiguous epistemology, an equivocated ontology. For Ovid toys with realistic effects while simultaneously delighting in the fluidity of realities, and the unrealities of myth, image and idea. He is as disrespectful of the ontological integrity of creatures and things as he is of conventional generic limitations in his *Kreuzung der Gattungen*, his infiltration of the *genus nobile*; so too is he cavalier about the apparent truth or simple believability of his *Kollektiv-Weltgedicht*. The *Metamorphoses* is an image of the world in so much as it is itself a representation of the Roman's poetics, his giving shape to *materia*, his transformation of beings and deeds into continuous, everlasting song, which is at once also his giving his own shape to language; and his transformation of myth and tradition, image and form, which are the very substance of reality. In so doing Ovid expects a kind of glorious transmutation of his own person, to win undying glory that will make his name, and 'Ovid'- he was right - is a name, immortal, the better, undying part or form of the man. Power over language is mastery of effect. In this sense, for a writer like Ovid, there is surely the feeling that his is a mastery of reality, which for the Augustan Ovid, as for ourselves today, it must be clear, is a synthetic fabric shaped, organized and manipulated by those who control the signs and symbols of culture.

Nature in the *Metamorphoses* has no limits and its centre is everywhere, it is contiguous then, with imagination: both temporal and trans-historical. While rationalized and material in Lucretius, figurative and moralized in Virgil, Ovid's anthropomorphisms are literal and his *natura* is amoral. In the *Metamorphoses*

nature is scenic, atmospheric and also a living agent. Above all, Ovid's nature is a set of forms, of bodies unreduced to a unique first principle, an animate many. The style of evocation of place, of atmosphere, of figures marked by pathos and desire is a constant, vivid delight of point and counterpoint, tragic, elegiac and epic colouration. In this hybrid epic, there are unusual heroes, one of whom is the dark hero *natura*. This hero - if hero be that figure which holds together plot - however, is no moral teacher or exemplum, nor mere fantasy idyll of Arcadian luxury. It is not concerned with heroic obligations, or humans and their destinies, neither is it an austere, purely abstract backdrop for the majestic epic gesture or the tragic fates of a human centred universe. It is rather, a kind of virtual reality, a dream substance out of and into which figures slip and emerge. *Natura* is a beautiful, ruthless Achilles to Ovid's wily Odysseus.

Ovid's *natura* has at once a semiotic richness and a symbolic emptiness which is striking. Art and the artificial, on the other hand, are so often evoked in all of Ovid's work that we can hardly resist asking what Nature must be. What is that which is not art, especially in the *Metamorphoses*, which is a complete world, an *imago mundi*. Nature in Ovid is paradox: it follows its own inscrutable logic and force. It is plastic, given to shifts of shape, to being undone and remade, both self-animated and susceptible to the formative intentions of *ars*. Nature as it is represented in Ovid's poem is a material not unlike language in the hands of the form-mastering poetic voice. The energy and action in the synthetic world of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is created from and made out of the transactions of the natural and artful and it is from the rich mixture of their collapse that the Ovidian imagination draws and bodies forth.

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