

a rare full-scale treatment of the *Amores*, concentrating mainly on literary sources. Mack's general introductory book (1988) is a good starting place for all aspects of Ovid. On the *Ars*, there is a fine book in Italian (Labate, 1984). Myerowitz (1985) is particularly concerned with the poem as about 'serious play' and the interactions of nature and *cultus*, while Sharrock (1994a) looks at the aesthetics of repetition in *Ars* 2.

As regards articles, the chapters by DuQuesnay and Hollis in Binns (1973) make good readable introductions to the amatory works. Crucial to the reading of Corinna as poetry is Wyke (1989) and (1990), with also Greene (1998) and Keith (1994), while there have been several important pieces on Ovid's amatory poetry in *Helios*. Finally, on a topic which has always been in the background but never quite made it to centre-stage, Barsby (1996).

IO

ANDREW FELDHERR

Metamorphosis in the *Metamorphoses*

As Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from uneasy dreams, he found himself transformed in his bed into a monstrous insect.

The first sentence in Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, a work whose moral seriousness has sometimes seemed to place it at the opposite pole from Ovid's epic in the literature of transformation, is as baffling for the reader as the event it describes is for Gregor Samsa. As he has become a monstrous insect so we are immediately confronted with the question of how to make sense of and interpret this monstrous and bizarre subject. The first words, with their resemblance to the classic fairy tale beginning 'once upon a time', seem to offer one possibility: we can normalize this supernatural event by assuming the story belongs to a genre that doesn't ask us to take it seriously, and even rejoice in the distance that separates us from a fictional world where such things are possible. So for Samsa there is the fleeting possibility that he is still dreaming. But if the time when this event takes place is re-assuringly indeterminate, other elements of the story bring it much closer to home. Gregor Samsa is too specific to be the name of a fairy tale prince, and the transformation takes place in his own bed – it could indeed be ours. Throughout the story, the particularity with which Gregor's condition is described suggests a kaleidoscopic variety of strategies for making sense of it. Perhaps one of the most tempting is to neutralize its strangeness by treating it as a figure of speech, so that its significance becomes symbolic rather than literal. Gregor Samsa is merely like an insect – because of the alienating effects of bourgeois culture? because he is going through some psychological transformation? What we decide the image means matters less than the initial decision that it means something other than that one Gregor Samsa really did turn into an insect. After this move, the possibility of identifying with Samsa, seeing his condition as one that we somehow share, becomes much easier.

The opening lines of Ovid's poem make it even more explicit that the comprehension of metamorphosis provides a crucial analogue for the reader's

experience of the poem:

In noua fert animus mutatas dicere formas
corpora: di coeptis (nam uos mutastis et illa)
adspirate meis primaque ab origine mundi
ad mea perpetuum deducite tempora carmen.
(1.1-4)

My spirit impels me to speak of bodies changed into new forms: gods, inspire my beginnings – for you have changed even those – and draw my song without breaks from the first beginning of the world to my own times.

The text itself, like the bodies it announces as its subject matter, has been transformed. Indeed the syntax of the opening sentence changes shape before the eyes of the reader, who might initially have taken the first line as a self-sufficient whole meaning 'my mind prompts a new venture, to speak of changed forms' but must reconstrue it upon seeing *corpora* (bodies) at the beginning of the second verse.¹ The kind of changes the poem exhibits on a larger scale include shifts in tone, subject matter, and even generic affiliation, among the 250 or so narratives of metamorphosis it contains. Thus in the first book we move suddenly from Apollo's destruction of the monstrous dragon Python to the story of Daphne, in which the same god figures not as a heroic bringer of order but as a lover, reminiscent of the protagonists of contemporary elegy. Yet this tale itself ends with a panegyric to Augustus and a glimpse ahead to the time when the laurel tree into which the resisting Daphne is transformed will adorn the emperor's triumphs.

Paradoxically, recognition of this metamorphic aspect of the text's construction has sometimes gone together with an undervaluation of the thematic centrality of transformation itself, which becomes a narrative leitmotif valuable solely because its omnipresence allowed the poem to travel freely among the varied stories of Greek myth. Indeed those occasions when the poet can be seen bending over backwards to slip a reference to metamorphosis into a story where it seems to have little place draw attention to his own invention and away from the story he is telling. Correspondingly, according to this view, the fairy-tale elements of metamorphosis distance the reader from the story by neutralizing the tragic and distressing. Thus in a story like that of Myrrha (10.298–502), who succumbs to sexual passion for her father, consummates it under cover of darkness, and is driven into exile when discovered, her final transformation into a myrrh tree acts as a kind of narrative *deus ex machina*. As opposed to the nightmarish overtones of Gregor Samsa's metamorphosis, Myrrha's leaves the real conflicts and consequences

of the human situation far behind.² Yet using Kafka's tale as a positive model reminds us that the choice of metamorphosis as a subject transforms a narrative in far more complex ways than simply providing for frequent changes of subject. Each individual metamorphosis opens up possibilities for contrasting responses: humour, terror, allegorization, even boredom. Of course these responses are largely conditioned by the text itself – if a story begins 'once upon a time', for example, we have a pretty strong clue about how to read it. On the other hand, the changing implications of metamorphosis among the many kinds of literary discourse in which it occurs make it a narrative element that invites contrasting readings and opens out interpretative possibilities. Ovid himself participates in this process by introducing multiple points of view on transformation itself as well as raising questions about the generic status of his work. Thus metamorphosis continually compels readers to refigure their relationship to the text, their understanding of the narratives it contains, and ultimately how it functions as a literary representation.

The tradition of using the metamorphosis theme to emphasize the *Metamorphoses'* essential lack of seriousness begins with Ovid himself, who in a later work tells us that his tales of transformation were 'not to be believed' (*Trist.* 2.64), a claim that highlights the first assumption a contemporary reader might bring to any such story. The rhetorical training that played such a crucial role in informing ancient responses to literature divided narratives into three classes according to their relationship to reality: histories (*historiae*) told what actually happened; *argumenta*, exemplified by the plots of new comedy, presented plausible stories, things that might have happened, and finally 'tales' (*fabulae*) describe events that are not only 'untrue, but separated even from the appearance of truth' because they are unnatural or impossible.³ Illustrations of this last category often include tales of transformation.⁴ Yet for all Ovid's overt acceptance of the 'fairy tale'

² For the classic statements of this position, see Fränkel (1945) esp. 97–100 and Galinsky (1975) 62–9.

³ For examples of this classification see Sext. *Math.* 1.263, *Rhet. ad Her.* 1.13, Cic. *Inu.* 1.27, and Quint. *Inst.* 2.3–4 (quoted in the text); see Graf in this volume, p. 109.

⁴ Thus Sextus (1.264) includes the tales 'of the companions of Diomedes changed into sea birds, of Odysseus changed to a horse, and of Hecuba to a dog', in this class, and Martianus Capella (550) presents the transformation of Daphne as a paradigmatic *fabula*. Ovid himself explicitly alludes to the generic distinction in an earlier poem (*Amores* 3.12) where he protests that poets should not be treated as if they were witnesses in a courtroom (19–20). He then proves his point that the 'licence of poets' is not constrained by the criterion of credibility that applies to the genre of history (*historica fide*, 42) by cataloguing the miraculous mythological stories to be found in their works. In most of these tales, the unbelievable element is precisely metamorphosis. Yet the context of the poet's plea not to be believed undercuts its ostensible message: Ovid has portrayed his (fictional) mistress in such terms that now everyone is in love with her and he himself is jealous. He therefore demands that his readers understand his

¹ For the fullest treatment of these lines' shifting meaning, see now Wheeler (1999) 8–20.

status of his narrative, other aspects of his poem suggest that in raising such traditional distinctions between fiction and reality he also challenges them. Thus while the second word of his poem, *nova*, which in Latin can mean not only 'new' but also 'strange' or 'unattested', perhaps hints at the miraculous nature of the stories to follow, the progress 'into the new' also points forward to the overall chronological schema of his work. This organizational pattern itself connects the 'fabulous' to the real world of the poet, the 'my times' that mark the poem's conclusion: rather than being limited to an undifferentiated mythical past, the miraculous transformations will be integrated into a framework that can also be described historically. Indeed throughout the poem, mortals will be punished precisely for failing to recognize that their capacity for metamorphosis allows the Olympian gods of legend to appear as unremarkably realistic figures. When, for example, the character Pirithous explicitly rejects a story as a fiction because it describes the gods changing shape,⁵ he is admonished to be more careful with the story of Baucis and Philemon, which describes the punishment of those who failed to offer hospitality to gods disguised as mortals and the rewards of those who did.

In defining the place of his poem in the poetic tradition, Ovid challenges readers' expectations in another way by suggesting his allegiance to two kinds of poetry often opposed – and again his choice of metamorphosis as a topic accentuates this ambiguity. The verb *deducere* (1.4), used in the poem to describe how the gods 'draw out his song', was frequently used programmatically by Augustan poets to summon up the taste for short, elaborately refined poems codified above all by the Alexandrian Greek Callimachus (see also Harrison in this volume, p. 87). Yet in the same sentence Ovid describes his poem as *perpetuum*, continuous or unbroken, a translation of the Greek word used by Callimachus of the kind of chronologically arranged, loosely composed narratives that he defined his work against. While it is certainly possible to reconcile these characteristics, and as a Callimachean scholar has recently pointed out, no reader could bring against Ovid's poem the charges of monotony and sloppy construction that lay behind the rejection of 'continuous' poems, the reader continually experiences a tension between the epic architecture of the poem and the artful episodes of which it is made up.⁶

praise of her as false. For the poem's manipulation of the rhetorical categories of believable and unbelievable stories see McKewen (1979).

⁵ 'ficta refers nimiumque putas. Acheloe, potentes / esse deos' dixit 'si dant admittuntque figuras.' ('you retail fictions, Achelous,' he said, 'and you think the gods too powerful if they give and take away shapes.') (8.614–15) – lines that refer back to the *Metamorphoses*' programmatic description of its subject matter.

⁶ Cameron (1995) 359–61.

The claims to alternative generic allegiances in these lines open up very different possibilities for understanding the poet's choice of metamorphosis as a subject. If we are to read the poem as a series of discrete, refined narratives such a topic would seem entirely appropriate.⁷ Although their works are almost completely lost, Ovid's most important predecessors for building tales of metamorphosis into larger poetic units seem to have worked very much in the tradition of Callimachean brevity. In the second century BCE, for example, Nicander of Colophon, whose only surviving works are a pair of didactic poems about snakebites and antidotes, produced the *Heteroiumena* (*Transformations*), in which he collected what seem to have been particularly obscure metamorphoses associated with the monuments and rites of far-flung cities and usually featuring local rustic divinities rather than the Olympian gods. While we are not in a position to tell what kind of larger structures Nicander used to organize his material, it is fairly clear that the poem was on a significantly smaller scale than Ovid's: five books, probably, as opposed to fifteen. Nothing can be said for certain about the scope, or even the date, of another source and antecedent of the *Metamorphoses*, the *Ornithogonia* (*Bird Origins*) of Boios, but his apparent aim of demonstrating that every species of bird was at one time a man again indicates a much more restricted canvas than Ovid's universal history.

By contrast to its suitability for these catalogue poems, the fabulous aspect of metamorphosis tales made them very difficult to reconcile with the aesthetic principles of serious epic, where supernatural solutions to human problems are pointedly avoided. In the Homeric poems, for example, stories of metamorphosis occur either in Odysseus' account of his wanderings, a narrative space reserved for all sorts of miraculous figures, or their very strangeness marks them out as communications from the gods, like the serpent and the bird's nest turned to stone mentioned in *Iliad* 2.301–29. And even these examples do not form a part of the poet's own narrative; they are described and interpreted by characters within the poem.⁸

In the works of Ovid's immediate epic predecessor, Virgil, the phenomenon of metamorphosis assumes a more prominent but deeply ambiguous role, one that in many respects looks ahead to its complex function in the *Metamorphoses*.⁹ On the one hand Virgil seems to give an ideological dimension to Homer's reticence about transformation stories. Beyond raising questions about the plausibility of the narrative, metamorphosis suggests a

⁷ For a general discussion of the treatment of metamorphosis in earlier literature, and detailed accounts of Nicander and Boios see Forbes-Irving (1990) 7–37. See also Hardie (1999a) for a discussion of metamorphosis as a way of commenting on the representational strategies of earlier epics.

⁸ On the avoidance of the miraculous in Homer see Griffin (1977).

⁹ For a fuller treatment of metamorphosis in the *Aeneid* see Hardie (1992).

world of unstable ephemerality that can only be at odds with the poem's motion towards the foundation of Rome as the centre of a stable cosmos, and indeed comes to be associated with the dehumanizing violence and immorality of Rome's civil wars. The bleeding bush that manifests the presence of Polydorus, a Trojan prince murdered by an avaricious and impious Thracian king, at the beginning of book 3, and the howling of the bestialized inhabitants of Circe's realm (*Aen.* 7.10–24) signpost regions where neither Aeneas' mission nor Virgil's narrative should go.¹⁰ Virgil swerves just shy of metamorphosis in another sense when one of the poem's final similes figures Aeneas and Turnus, in the climactic duel that decides the fate of Italy, as battling bulls (*Aen.* 12.715–22). Animal rage and undifferentiated violence are hardly the stuff from which the reader expects the tapestry of Roman history to be woven. But since this is just a figure of speech, it can always be read as but a partial, imprecise image of the combatants, or even as a foil to them. Metamorphosis within Virgil's poem is not, however, merely the favoured *modus operandi* of the forces of darkness and dissolution. On the contrary, the victory of Aeneas, and by implication the emergence of Roman order from the chaotic final books of the poem, is in a sense a tale of metamorphosis, requiring the hero's transformation from the last remnant of a city doomed to fall to the founder of a civilization fated to endure. And in one important instance, his account of how the goddess Cybele saves the Trojan ships from destruction by turning them into nymphs (*Aen.* 9.77–122), Virgil highlights his inclusion of a miraculous transformation to make clear the special status of his epic. The passage has jolted Virgil's readers since antiquity, and even within the poem characters struggle to make sense of it.¹¹ The poet himself seems to hold the story at arm's length, presenting it as a legend, yet the transformation as an event is anchored in the plot of his epic.¹² But rather than regard Virgil's treatment of the episode as either halfhearted or misjudged, we can rather take it as a self-conscious deployment of the vexed status of metamorphosis within epic, alerting readers all too ready to dismiss the tale as fantasy that Aeneas' divinely guided foundation of Rome requires a different poetics than do the exploits of Homer's mortal

heroes. As Ovid will later, Virgil here makes metamorphosis an occasion to reorient his readers' expectations of the poem.

If metamorphosis generally marks the limit of what is consistent with the moral seriousness of heroic epic, this is the line on which *Metamorphoses* dances. The poem's metre, size, and its incorporation of the Trojan and Roman subject matter of epic invite the reader to view the work in its entirety as a rival to those earlier works. Yet within that tradition, especially in the *Aeneid*, metamorphosis denoted a world of instability distinctly at odds with the clear and stable endings to which those works aspire – even if they notoriously fail to attain them. Should we read metamorphosis through epic eyes, with an even greater awareness of its essential unbeliability and trivializing effect? Can the epic form even save the work from itself by transfiguring its fabulous subject matter into a grand history of the Augustan world, just as Virgil allows metamorphosis a new role in his poem? Or is the work fundamentally an anti-epic, lending the gravity of the Homeric and Virgilian form to an antithetical vision of man's place in the cosmos? Or, a final alternative, should we simply avoid the question by allowing the poem to decompose itself into a Hellenistic assemblage of separate tales? Since Ovid often positions metamorphoses at the end of episodes, the transformations within the narrative tend to occur precisely where the structure of the work as a whole is most up for grabs. In deciding whether each metamorphosis marks an ending, or merely a transition, readers are continually confronted with the question of what kind of work they are reading.

To get a sense of what is at stake ideologically in the differing responses to metamorphosis offered by the poem, let us take a look at the poem's very first account of the transformation of a human being into an animal, the tale of Lycaon (1.209–43), an episode whose prominent position invites us to treat it as a paradigm for what is to come. This story follows after the poem's account of the formation of the cosmos, a process which involves not the creation of new substances out of nothing but rather a sorting into an ordered hierarchy of elements already present in the confused mass of primordial chaos. At first this story will seem to further the suggestion that metamorphosis itself serves as a tool for imposing a familiar, stable order on things, as opposed to representing the irruption of the unaccountable as it does in Kafka. Jupiter has heard of the impious behaviour of human beings, and in hopes of finding the story is false, he disguises himself as a mortal and descends from Olympus to investigate. When he enters Lycaon's realm, he gives signs of his divinity and begins to receive the worship of the people. The king, however, refuses to acknowledge Jupiter as divine and

¹⁰ For the re-emergence of these Circean dangers later in *Aen.* 7 see Putnam (1995) 100–20.

¹¹ Thus the ancient body of Virgilian commentary known as 'Servius Danielis' mentions two slightly different objections to the passage: one implies that the poet should never make up anything so remote from truth (3.4.6), and the other, though allowing poetic fictions, insists that they should have some precedent in earlier authors (9.81).

¹² The verb *fertur* ('it is said', 9.82) provides the most obvious sign of this authorial distancing – although even that can be treated as a learned reference to an earlier poetic authority. According to Servius Danielis, 'some have objected to this "fertur" because it denies authority to the tale; others have praised it as a sign that the poet was unwilling to lend authority to an unbelievable event.' (*Ad Aen.* 9.81).

plots to prove him mortal by killing him in his sleep. He also kills a hostage and attempts to serve his cooked limbs to the god. In punishment, the god destroys the palace and Lycaon is driven into exile, at which point 'he wails and tries in vain to speak. His countenance takes upon itself all his madness; he turns his innate love of slaughter against sheep and even now rejoices in blood. His clothes turn into hair; his arms into legs. He becomes a wolf and preserves the traces of his old form. There is the same grayness, the same violent countenance. His eyes still gleam, and the appearance of bestiality remains.' (1.233–9)

Jupiter's account suggests that Lycaon has been quite literally put in his place. He had violated human norms by murdering a hostage and even attempted to usurp Jupiter's prerogative here by imposing his own test on the god. He subsequently undergoes a transformation that seems at once to punish his attempt to take on the god's role in the story and to express his own innate bestiality. (Notice that Jupiter never claims responsibility for the transformation, which appears to happen spontaneously, as if nature were simply taking its course.) Just as the creation of the world involved the separation of the lighter elements from water and earth, so here this wild beast who had somehow been grouped among men has finally been returned to his rightful category. The change that has taken place is merely one of form. And Lycaon's new shape not only more clearly reveals his essence, it also manifests and enforces the cosmic hierarchies he has violated. The wolf itself becomes a reminder of the consequences of behaving as either a beast or a god. There is also a more narrowly political significance to the metamorphosis. Before recounting this story Jupiter had been compared to the emperor Augustus, and the assembly of gods he addresses takes on the form of the Roman senate. The little epiphany of order that results from this metamorphosis, in which the natural world as we know it becomes a sign of the proper distribution of authority among gods and men, also serves as a reminder of the specifically Roman order that now, as Augustan artistic imagery so often implied, had embraced the cosmos itself.¹³ The very name Lycaon derives from the Greek word for wolf (*lykos*), again suggesting that metamorphosis is above all a clarification of who he really is,¹⁴ and that because of metamorphosis even verbal signs now more clearly represent the world. But of course in Ovid's text, Lycaon hasn't become a *lykos* but a *lupus*: metamorphosis as cosmic clarification depends upon the translation of Greek into Latin.

¹³ For a good introduction to this pattern of imagery in the visual arts see Zanker (1988) 183–92 and Nicolet (1991) 29–56, and for an example of its development in literature see Hardie's (1986) 336–76 reading of the Virgilian shield of Aeneas.

¹⁴ Solodow (1988) 174 defines 'clarification' as the central function of metamorphosis.

Such readings as this have produced a sense that the real emphasis in Ovid's poem of changes should be on stability. Far from suggesting a world of flux and shifting appearance, metamorphosis, which is always to be located in the past, results in a firm natural and political order in the present. The human beings who undergo metamorphosis, an emphatically final process that leaves no possibility of a return to their prior shape,¹⁵ do not lose the enduring aspects of their being, rather they take on a form that reveals them – an idea that closely resembles influential stoic accounts of identity.¹⁶ And indeed by narrating stories of this type, Ovid seems to be contributing to the semantic clarification and revelation that Jupiter sets in motion, by offering a world whose natural elements, like wolves, become transparent to human qualities and divine actions. But the very neatness of this interpretation results precisely from the tale's univocality and from the erasure of alternative points of view. Indeed this is the one story in the poem narrated by Jupiter himself, the ultimate representation of authority in the epic universe. Yet the metamorphosis that seems to provide such unanswerable closure in fact allows competing readings back into the text precisely because it makes the shutting down of alternative points of view so explicit. The first thing that happens to Lycaon is that he loses his power to speak – precisely the eloquence that allows Jupiter to tell his version of events. The last body parts mentioned are Lycaon's shining eyes, eyes that are depicted only as seen, not as seeing. Points of view opposed to Jupiter's would have been ready to hand for an informed reader of the text. For, as nearly as we can tell, no other account of Lycaon is so relentless in its condemnation of the king. Greek versions, in fact, present a highly ambivalent figure whose outrageous treatment of the gods is balanced by his role as a civilizing hero, an institutor of religious practices, whose name would be preserved not just by the wolf, but by the cult of Zeus Lykaeos which he founded.¹⁷ Even within Ovid's Jovian account, the boundaries between gods, humans, and animals seem dangerously permeable. Jupiter sets the plot in motion by his own shape-shifting, the assumption of human form – a disguise that anticipates the paradox of the final metamorphosis by simultaneously masking and revealing his divine nature. It might even be argued that Lycaon's outrage results less from his

¹⁵ Though even to the 'rule' that metamorphosis for humans is irreversible, there are occasional exceptions like Mnestra, the daughter of Erysichthon (8.843–78). When her father sells her into slavery as a way of supporting his insatiable hunger, the god Neptune gives her the power to change shape as a way of escaping from her buyers.

¹⁶ Dörrie (1959) connects the perpetuation of such an essence after metamorphosis with the view represented by the philosopher Posidonius (fr. 96) that each individual possesses a distinctive quality independent of his material existence.

¹⁷ For earlier accounts of the Lycaon story see Forbes-Irving (1990) 90–5 and 216–18; see also Barkan's (1986) 24–7 integration of the legend of Lycaon the sacrificer with Ovid's story.

attempt to deprive the gods of the honour due them than from his scrupulous belief in the reality of appearances and his efforts to use those appearances to distinguish different orders of being. His very plot to kill Jupiter shows that he has taken his disguise seriously: far from attempting to dishonour the god, he assumes that the figure before him is a mortal impostor. And if Lycaon's error is really a failure to recognize that gods can disguise themselves as men, his experience is very relevant to Ovid's own readers who are making their first acquaintance with anthropomorphized gods in the work.¹⁸ If they were to attempt to apply the same criterion of truth to their reading, then the entire epic machinery that underlies the moralizing/politicizing interpretation of the story would be called into question. To expose the gods as mere projections of human authority is to short-circuit their political use to glorify any individual human potentate – a central issue in Augustan iconography.¹⁹

Another tale from the first book reveals even more clearly how interpretation of the poem's thematic emphases hinges on the reading of a metamorphosis. When the nymph Daphne realizes that she will never win the foot-race against Apollo and will forfeit her virginity, she prays to be transformed and so to lose the external form (*figura*) that has caused her downfall by arousing the god's desire.

Scarcely had she ended her prayer when a heavy sluggishness took possession of her limbs; her soft breast clothes itself in thin bark. Her hair grows into leaves, her arms into branches. Her foot once so swift cleaves to sluggish roots. A bough holds her face; only her beauty remains. (1.548–52)

Here the relationship between the new shape and the old becomes much more complicated. Far from fixing her in a state that permanently expresses her essential qualities, Daphne's metamorphosis strips her of the swiftness by which she has been characterized in the narrative; Ovid figures the transformation itself as a process of occlusion and possession. To try to read this metamorphosis according to the Lycaon paradigm by stressing the persistence of her beauty raises new problems, for it was her external attractiveness that warred against her desire to remain a virgin (*uotoque tuo tua forma repugnat*, 1.489). Indeed if anything has been preserved of Daphne it is the tragic discrepancy between her inner will and outer appearance. To read her metamorphosis as a clarification, then, implies that her essence lay in what she seemed to others to be rather than recognizing her as subject in her own right.

¹⁸ For another adversarial reading of Jupiter's account of Lycaon see Anderson (1989); for the balance between contrasting readings in the story see Wheeler (1999) 171–81.

¹⁹ For a discussion of how Ovid's hyper-anthropomorphized gods undercut imperial religious innovations see Feeney (1991) 205–24.

Such a reading is put forward by the divine interpreter within the poem, none other than Apollo himself, the god who pursued her on account of her form:

'Though you cannot be my wife, you will be my tree. My locks will always possess you, laurel, so will my lyre and my quiver. You will accompany the Latin chiefs when the joyful voice sings "Triumph" and the Capitoline witnesses long (triumphal) processions . . . And as my youthful head is perpetually unshorn, so you will always retain the honour of leaves.' (1.557–65)

Apollo's response to Daphne's metamorphosis in a sense completes the processes of the transformation by converting her form into a symbol, yet a symbol that recalls not so much who Daphne was as who Apollo is. It is his hair that her leaves are now made to recall, not her own once disordered tresses. Apollo's strategy also bears on the question of the poem's genre: by placing Daphne's transformation in an extensive historical context, recalling the broad temporal sweep proclaimed in the poet's prologue, and converting her into an instrument of praise, Apollo epicizes her story.²⁰ In doing so he fits it into the continuum prepared for by the poet himself, who introduced the story as an explanation for how the laurel tree came to be the sign of victory in the games that celebrated Apollo's conquest of the Python. Thus the tale that might have been thought to show how the god lost an archery contest with Cupid, and was forced to shed his typical attributes by assuming the role of a lover, becomes instead a celebration of his once and future triumphs. For Daphne, though, does her metamorphosis mark the beginning of her epic significance, or is it in fact the end of the story? Again her changed form holds the key. The final lines at first appear to close the gap between Daphne's perspective and Apollo's by suggesting that Daphne herself consented to the role Apollo offered her by nodding her bough 'as if it were a head'. But perhaps the bough is just a bough. In other words, perhaps Daphne's will has been masked completely by her new form, and the attempt to claim her participation in this future as though she were still there marks merely the final stage in her possession.

The readings offered so far suggest that the event of metamorphosis in Ovid mobilizes two coherent interpretations of the poem, and that the choice between them depends on the point of view adopted on the transformation itself. First, to focus on the new shape, which is often a form familiar from the actual experience of the reader, in several senses normalizes metamorphosis, subordinating a manifestly unbelievable process to an undeniably real product. The world is, reassuringly, not a place where metamorphosis

²⁰ For an introduction to the sophisticated pattern of generic play in this story see Nicoll (1980).

happens every day, and the very stories Ovid tells about wolves and laurel trees gives them a new significance as the manifest products of cosmic and political order and as *exempla* that perpetuate that order by recalling the consequences of violating it. In depicting metamorphosis from this perspective not only is Ovid in several senses doing the Lord's work, but he is also making his poem function like Virgilian epic, granting legendary events a privileged function for explaining the here and now, and conversely exalting the here and now by linking it to the grand sagas of past myth.²¹ The reader's distance from the narrative, his recognition that this story by its nature must be a fiction, becomes anything but a disadvantage. Lycæon's tale, for example, readily lends itself to allegorization, an interpretative strategy that allows the dubious motives of Jupiter as character to fade from view. The alternative, to continue to recognize the human subjects of metamorphosis, dissolves the epic structure of the poem by making metamorphosis seem ultimately both inexplicable and very much the end of the story. Each transformation appears less a stage in the history of the cosmos than the shutting down of an individual consciousness, locked in opposition to the ordering forces of the universe. Here, far from retaining a comfortable position in the world after metamorphosis, the reader is drawn back into the unstable past, entering into the fiction rather than marking it off as such.

The pair of internal *Metamorphoses* that Ovid places at the beginning of his sixth book, in which the goddess Minerva and her human rival Arachne assemble stories of transformation for the two tapestries they weave in competition with each other, enshrine these polar alternatives for interpreting the process, for again the ideological differences between the two 'texts' result not just from the discursive use each artist makes of metamorphosis, but from the perspective they present on the process itself (6.1-145).²² Minerva depicts four tales of metamorphosis, designed explicitly to warn Arachne of the dangers of rivalling the gods, symmetrically at the corners of a tapestry whose centrepiece shows her own triumph in a contest with Neptune for possession of Athens. In each case only the names of the victims and the final form they have assumed are indicated. By contrast the gods themselves are depicted in forms that, like the disguise Jupiter assumes in the Lycæon tale, are presented as at once anthropomorphized and authentic: 'His own appearance marks each god: Jupiter's is the image of a king' (6.73-4). In answer to Athena's use of metamorphosis as a warning against human presumption, Arachne presents a catalogue of the animal forms the gods

have used to deceive the victims of their lust. Here, rather than manifesting an essentially immutable hierarchy of powers, metamorphosis destabilizes such structures by revealing how the gods themselves can quite literally turn into beasts. Far from offering an absolute guide to behaviour, the visual forms that result from the god's metamorphoses highlight the shifting and uncertain nature of appearances; only the spatial settings of the crimes and the human faces of the victims preserve constant and reliable markers of identity.²³ A heavy emphasis in the account of Arachne's portrayal of these scenes falls on the verb *reddidit* (6.122) which here means 'render', but whose primary force is 'give back', as though her artistic depiction were returning countenances that these women had lost. While obviously this is not the case here – the victims she depicts never underwent metamorphosis – this nuance shows how Arachne's choice to portray rapes where the god changes form pointedly reverses the programmatic rape narrative of book 1, where the object of the god's passion does indeed lose her form. There the reader's 'recognition' of the victim under her new shape was a possibility that, if realized, radically reoriented his/her response to the tale. In Arachne's more one-sided presentation it is impossible not to see the rape victim as a human subject. Indeed Arachne's realistic descriptive technique – or rather Ovid's technique for presenting her depiction as narrative – works to draw the viewers into this world of deceptive fictions precisely by granting them access to the victim's point of view: thus in describing how the god Jupiter took on the form of a bull to abduct Europa, he comments that 'you would think it was a real bull', as if 'you' were Europa.

The tapestry's demonstration of the dependency between the work's competing ideological strands and the antithetical strategies of representation it employs takes us back to the point where we began, the analogy between making sense of the process of metamorphosis and interpreting the text that represents it. Here I want to go further by suggesting that changed appearances are even more closely connected to artistic representations of change. If metamorphosis produces an apprehensible trace of distant or incredible events in the real world of the readers, so too does a statue, a painting, or the book-roll before them. Thus metamorphosis becomes a way of dramatizing the act of representation itself and the alternative political valences the process of transformation acquires within the work apply also to what Ovid's own text is doing. As Solodow and others have shown, much of the poet's vocabulary for the product of metamorphosis, such as the word *imago*, overlaps with terms for artistic depictions.²⁴ And in cases of petrification, the

²¹ On aetiology in Ovid see Myers (1994) and Graf (1988) 62.

²² Leach (1974), Vincent (1994), and Feeney (1991) 190-4 offer particularly stimulating readings of this much discussed episode.

²³ *omnibus his faciemque suam, faciemque locorum reddidit*, 6.121-2.

²⁴ Solodow (1988) 203-6; see also Anderson (1963).

frozen forms, like those produced by the head of Medusa (5.177–209), are essentially indistinguishable from statues. Another way of suggesting the same point is by alluding to the visual iconography of the figures described: so the second book ends with a description of Europa riding on the bull's back, her clothes billowing behind her in the breeze, precisely the aspect in which she was most commonly shown in actual paintings.²⁵ The connection between representation and the ordering, clarifying aspects of metamorphosis can apply to literary as well as visual representations. This becomes particularly clear when we examine the relationship between metamorphosis and metaphor. Niobe's transformation into a stone begins when she 'stiffens with evils' a common Latin metaphor. Thus not only does her final form again appear motivated by some essential quality of her experience – as Lycaon's innate bestiality makes him a wolf – it also offers a means for the figurative to become something more than figurative, for a trope to become reality.²⁶

But as with the process of transformation itself, there is another side to the story. If metamorphosis figures the production of images it also resembles the subsequent transformation these images themselves undergo when they evoke the very figures they represent: just as the laurel tree can be read as Daphne, so an image or indeed a story of Daphne can be perceived as what it really is – a statue, painting or a text – or as the nymph it depicts. For statues and images do not only appear within the poem as the final products of metamorphosis, they also undergo metamorphosis by coming to life. Throughout the work, art and nature are notoriously unstable categories: elements of the natural world seem to aspire to the perfection and order of art, but the ultimate manifestation of artistic excellence is the illusion of reality.²⁷ So too the static, plastic images Ovid evokes ultimately contrast with the flow of the narrative in which they are embedded.²⁸ It thus seems better to speak of an oscillation between two processes: the distant and other becomes 'real' through translation into an artistic product, which in turn becomes 'real' in

the opposite sense, in the sense that its illusion works, that it ceases to be a representation and gives the viewer/reader access to what it represents.²⁹

The deployment of artefacts in the story of Phaethon illustrates just such an oscillation (1.747–2.366). Phaethon approaching the palace of the sun encounters a set of images that represent nothing less than the ordered cosmos whose construction we witnessed in the first book.³⁰ These images are embossed on the very door of the palace, and when Phaethon passes through it he moves into a world of animated artistic figures, beginning with his father himself, who with his radiate crown is not so much the sun as it really is as a symbol of the sun endowed with autonomous existence, very like the Tritons who represent the sea on the doors. So too on his wild ride through the cosmos, Phaethon will encounter the constellations not as clusters of stars but as the animals that represent them. The allotted boundaries between things are only restored when Phaethon is killed by Jupiter's thunderbolt, buried, and quite literally replaced by an inscribed tombstone. Thus the story achieves its ending, and the world returns to its regular form, when the one whose adventures animated the static image of the cosmos is himself transformed into a text. Yet this is not quite the end of the sequence of metamorphoses, for if the tombstone will not exactly come back to life, so powerfully does it evoke the absent figure it represents that Phaethon's mother actually treats it as a substitute for her lost son, covering it with tears and clasping it to her breast. So too the funerary rituals that his sisters undertake at his tomb prompt their own metamorphosis into poplar trees.

In an earlier chapter in this volume Thomas Habinek pointed out the paradoxical status of Ovid as at once a member of the Roman elite and as a subject, indeed a prominent victim, of the imperial order. This discussion of the poet's treatment of metamorphosis has pointed toward a corresponding set of ambiguities in the way the poet positions his audience in relation to the hierarchies depicted within the poem, and in how he portrays his own representation of that cosmos alternatively as a form of participation in the creation of the structured world we know, and as an exposure of the flux, change, and victimization that underlies it. My own experience as a reader of the work convinces me that an interpretation that privileges one tendency at the expense of the other remains fundamentally incomplete.

²⁹ Indeed one wonders whether the tapestries of Arachne and Minerva would have been quite so clear if they had depicted whole narratives rather than just scenes from narratives. Then Minerva might have had to show her criminals as human subjects, and conversely Arachne's work might have depicted the various civilizing heroes whose birth resulted from the gods' deceptions. For a fuller discussion of the relationship between metamorphosis and literary and artistic representation see Sharrock (1996).

³⁰ On this image see Brown (1987).

²⁵ Kenney (1986) 390.

²⁶ For the relation between metaphor and metamorphosis see especially Pianezzola (1979), Barkan (1986) 20–5, and Hardie (1999a). The extension of this thesis, most fully developed by Schmidt (1991) is that Ovid's text invests reality with a set of metaphorical meanings, translating the world as it is into a storehouse of images which can be read as tropes for human qualities and experiences.

²⁷ See the examples collected by Solodow (1988) 210–14, in particular the description of the setting for Actaeon's encounter with Diana: 3.157–64. The conundrum of the priority of art over nature receives special attention already in the initial description of the ordering of chaos, where as Wheeler (1995) has shown, the terms in which the actions of the creator god are described are themselves modelled on Homer's account of the crafting of the shield of Achilles.

²⁸ Cf. Hardie (1999a) for a complementary treatment of the effects of metaphor and allegory.

The challenge of comprehending metamorphosis means that each instance compels the reader to make a choice between different interpretations of the poem that bring into play all its discursive levels – the literary, the political, the theological. Some readers may make the same set of choices every time and achieve a remarkably consistent reading of the work, others will have more difficulty negotiating its transformations. Yet if such a proliferation of competing points of view seems but a new route to an impasse of equivocation all too familiar to students of Latin poetry, where every positive thesis the work advances about the world necessarily implies its own antithesis, Ovid's emphasis on metamorphosis suggests an antidote by refocusing our attention on the processes of representation and reading. Rather than search for the poem's political dimension in the propagation of a particular ideological stance, we might rather observe that the very task of interpreting Ovid's involves the vivid experience of contrasting perspectives on many different manifestations of authority. As the author can 'play god' by measuring his creation against the cosmos, so the reader can assume the role of Apollo, or of Daphne. By marking out the poem as a set of fictions, metamorphosis may indeed facilitate such play by reminding the reader of the distance that separates Ovid's text from the real centres of seriousness and significance in the Augustan world. Yet the same phenomenon also points out the poem's capacity to redraw the line between reality and mere representation and so between Ovid's cosmos and Augustus's. The fundamental ambiguity of metamorphosis thus at once reflects, and helps bring about, the transformation of Ovid's text into a dynamic locus for defining and codifying political and social roles.

FURTHER READING

Wheeler's (1999) application of reader-response criticism to the *Metamorphoses* offers a fuller development of many of the issues and approaches discussed here. Two more general book-length studies of the *Metamorphoses* presenting highly contrasting views of metamorphosis are Galinsky (1975) and Solodow (1988). Tissol (1997) and Ahl (1985), a still controversial book, explore in different ways the manifestations of metamorphosis in Ovid's language and style. Though they focus less directly on the metamorphosis theme, both Otis (1970) and Due (1974) offer stimulating book-length readings of the poem. The essential modern works on Ovid's manipulation of genre in the poem are Knox (1986b) and Hinds (1987). Barkan's (1986) dazzling history of metamorphosis in medieval and Renaissance culture commences with an extensive treatment of Ovid's poem. Feeney (1991) similarly includes an important chapter on Ovid, addressing both the poem's status as fiction and its relation to Augustan politics. For more on reception of the poem as a fiction, see the article by Konstan (1991), and, on ancient attitudes to fiction more generally, the collection edited by Gill and Wiseman (1993). On the relationship between metamorphosis and

the body, see both the older article of Curran (1978) and Segal (1998). Forbes-Irving (1990) treats the religious and mythical aspects of metamorphosis in Greek culture and catalogues earlier versions of many of Ovid's tales. Antoninus Liberalis' *Metamorphoses*, a compendium of Hellenistic metamorphosis narratives that provides our evidence for the works of Nicander and Boios, is available in English translation by Celoria (1992). For those with the relevant languages, Rosati's (1983) treatment of illusion and representation, Schmidt's (1991) account of metamorphosis, and Galand-Hallyn (1994), on metamorphosis and poetic creation, are especially recommended.

- The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare
Comedy*
edited by Alexander Leggatt
- The Cambridge Companion to Spenser*
edited by Andrew Hadfield
- The Cambridge Companion to Ben Jonson*
edited by Richard Harp and Stanley Stewart
- The Cambridge Companion to Milton*
edited by Dennis Danielson
- The Cambridge Companion to Samuel
Johnson*
edited by Greg Clingham
- The Cambridge Companion to Keats*
edited by Susan J. Wolfson
- The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen*
edited by Edward Copeland and
Juliet McMaster
- The Cambridge Companion to Charles
Dickens*
edited by John O. Jordan
- The Cambridge Companion to George Eliot*
edited by George Levine
- The Cambridge Companion to Thomas
Hardy*
edited by Dale Kramer
- The Cambridge Companion to Oscar Wilde*
edited by Peter Raby
- The Cambridge Companion to George
Bernard Shaw*
edited by Christopher Innes
- The Cambridge Companion to Joseph
Conrad*
edited by J. H. Stape
- The Cambridge Companion to D. H.
Lawrence*
edited by Anne Fernihough
- The Cambridge Companion to Virginia
Woolf*
edited by Sue Roe and Susan Sellers
- The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*
edited by Derek Attridge
- The Cambridge Companion to T. S. Eliot*
edited by A. David Moody
- The Cambridge Companion to Ezra Pound*
edited by Ira B. Nadel
- The Cambridge Companion to Beckett*
edited by John Pilling
- The Cambridge Companion to Harold Pinter*
edited by Peter Raby
- The Cambridge Companion to Tom Stoppard*
edited by Katherine E. Kelly
- The Cambridge Companion to Herman
Melville*
edited by Robert S. Levine
- The Cambridge Companion to Edith
Wharton*
edited by Millicent Bell
- The Cambridge Companion to Henry James*
edited by Jonathan Freedman
- The Cambridge Companion to Walt
Whitman*
edited by Ezra Greenspan
- The Cambridge Companion to Henry David
Thoreau*
edited by Joel Myerson
- The Cambridge Companion to Mark Twain*
edited by Forrest G. Robinson
- The Cambridge Companion to William
Faulkner*
edited by Philip M. Weinstein
- The Cambridge Companion to Ernest
Hemingway*
edited by Scott Donaldson
- The Cambridge Companion to F. Scott
Fitzgerald*
edited by Ruth Prigozy
- The Cambridge Companion to Robert Frost*
edited by Robert Faggen
- The Cambridge Companion to Eugene
O'Neill*
edited by Michael Manheim
- The Cambridge Companion to Tennessee
Williams*
edited by Matthew C. Roudané
- The Cambridge Companion to Arthur Miller*
edited by Christopher Bigsby

CAMBRIDGE COMPANIONS TO CULTURE

- The Cambridge Companion to Modern
German Culture*
edited by Eva Kolinsky and
Wilfried van der Will
- The Cambridge Companion to Modern
Russian Culture*
edited by Nicholas Rzhevsky
- The Cambridge Companion to Modern
Spanish Culture*
edited by David T. Gies
- The Cambridge Companion to Modern
Italian Culture*
edited by Zygmunt G. Baranski and
Rebecca J. West

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO OVID

EDITED BY

PHILIP HARDIE

*University Reader in Latin Literature
in the University of Cambridge,
and Fellow of New Hall*



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS