

PART TWO

Spectacle

CHAPTER 3

Homo Spectator: Sacrifice and the Making of Man

As we saw in the preceding chapter, the multiplicity of points of view available on Daedalus's flight also conveys the instability of the poet's own status. At times, his creative abilities make us look up to him as a god; at other times, we see him as a servile craftsman whose skills at best allow him to imitate his betters. But the uncertain, intermediate position occupied by Daedalus, and through a further "imitation" by Ovid himself, mimics in turn the originary position of all human beings within the cosmic order. So too does the poet's double role as a maker of images and as someone who is subject to scrutiny in the very process of doing so. The next three chapters will broaden the focus from Ovid's reflections on his own role as creator to consider the wider mythical and social implications of the "double vision" constructed by Ovidian fiction. I begin with Ovid's account(s) of human creation to demonstrate how the poem presents the human form itself as subject to the same pattern of contrasting readings as the miraculously transformed beings who populate the rest of its pages and how Ovid's account privileges vision as the index of the human condition: men at once are measured and evaluated by how they are seen and measure their own ambiguous place in the cosmos by means of their gaze. This emphasis on visual cognition as the mode for human appraisal of themselves and their world lends a new importance to the poem's construction of its narrative as a series of hermeneutic challenges based on contrasting perspectives. For the most frivolous of ancient epics from such a point of view acquires a uniquely powerful ability to reproduce those experiences and judgments that define the human. Its narrative becomes the ideal vehicle for transmitting the full power of myth. After such general considerations, the next two chapters return us to the specific historical context of the poem's first audience to ask how Ovid's translation of religious and social experience into sight allows us to relate his poem to contemporary uses of spectacle as a means of representing and enacting Roman conceptions of the world.

I. CREATIONS

As Ovid's poem repeatedly confronts us with miraculous and unbelievable changes of shape, the human appearance can come to define the nor-

mal and recognizable, what Daphne loses when she becomes a tree. Yet Ovid's presentation of human origins invests even the most identifiable of forms with uncertain and contrasting meanings. By including even one account of human creation, Ovid would ensure the human shape its place among the *nova corpora*, the "unfamiliar bodies" he claims as his subject. But Ovid gives no less than three such stories (1.76–87, 1.156–61, and 1.395–415), and thanks to the complex interrelationship between these different alternatives, the human body prompts the same questions as the poem's more fabulous phenomena: What does "form" reveal about identity? What narratives give it meaning? What connects, and what separates, the resulting physical form from the marvelous history of its origins?¹

Let us begin by looking more closely at these three accounts of the creation of human beings and the very different implications of each for understanding the nature of man; for the narrative presents each story as an etiology explaining what man is. Thus, after the flood, Deucalion and Pyrrha recreate the race of men out of stones: "From this cause we are a hard race, having experience of labor [*experiensque laborum*], and we give proof [*documenta damus*] of our origin" (1.414–15). The prior account of human origins, to which this final one is linked by reference to earth as the "great mother," is the most alarming of all: Earth covered with the bodies and drenched with the blood of her offspring, the rebellious giants, animates this blood and transforms it into human shape.

On one level, the contradiction between these two accounts of human origins is easily reconciled. The terrible humans created from giants' blood were wiped out by Jupiter in the flood, and "we" are the hard-working descendants of the stones. But this simple solution based on the order of cosmic history cannot so easily separate "us" (and note how Ovid uses the first person only of the later race, 1.415) from the victims of Jupiter's wrath. Elements both in the surface of Ovid's text and correspondingly in the phenomenal world bind the two races of man. As we have seen, the description of earth as our *magna parens* in the final creation story stresses its connection to what went before. More important, both races share the same human form. Thus, to one looking at the

¹ For another view of the contrasting origins of the human race as a programmatic introduction to the poem's anthropology, with a fuller account of the intellectual background of the concepts presented in the poem, see Schmidt 1991.25–36. Schmidt includes each of the ages of man as a new origin, and so comes up with eight different accounts, which together offer "a treasure house of human history, his encyclopedic-narrative anthropology" (30), in which each resulting impression of mankind illustrates a part of the story he will tell. Cf. also Tarrant's (2002a) programmatic reading of Ovid's creation story as predicting the continual reemergence of a chaos of collapsing distinctions in the human narratives that follow.

surviving traces of both these primeval acts of generation—that is, to an audience whose perspective is anchored in the present—the "content" of our human "form" remains an open question. And if Deucalion and Pyrrha ensure that our shape is a proof of our harsh origins, so in that earlier creation Earth gives a contrasting significance to our human appearance (*faciem ... hominum*, 1.160), making it "a memorial" of the race of giants she created (*ne nulla suae stirpis monimenta manerent*, 1.159).²

When we turn to Ovid's account of the creation of the human form itself, we find a similar set of contradictory possibilities. For Ovid again offers two alternatives for the first creation of man, and the choice between them raises questions about man's relationship to the gods above and the beasts below like those we met in the Daedalus story. Mimicking the later struggle between Earth and the flood survivors over what our appearance recalls, this first creation again juxtaposes two different readings of the human form, each of which can be allied with the intentions of an alternative "creator":

*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
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
iussit et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus.
sic, modo quae fuerat rudis et sine imagine, tellus
induit ignotas hominum conversa figuras.*
(1.76–88)

A more sacred creature than these and one more receptive of a lofty mind was still lacking, and one that could be lord over the others. Man was born, whether that craftsman of the universe, origin of a better world, molded him of divine seed, or the earth still new and just separated from the lofty aether still retained the seeds of her kin, the sky, and the son of Iapetus molded that earth, mixed with rain water, into the form of the gods who temper all things. And though the other creatures are prone and look upon the earth, he gave man a face looking up and ordered him to see the sky and to lift his upright

² For a complementary reading of the multiple creations of man, see Wheeler 2000.33–35.

countenance towards the stars. Thus, what had been rude and formless earth was transformed and put on the unknown shapes of men.

The *sive ... sive* construction articulates the two possibilities Ovid offers: we were created either by the “first maker of things” or by Prometheus, son of Iapetus. The first version makes man an integral part of the plan of the cosmos and consubstantial with the gods themselves—born from divine seed. The very differentiation of the maker of the world from those gods enhances this sense of parity: we are not the creations of the gods but creations like the gods. The second, though, relegates human origins to chance, and to the actions of a suspect, and inferior, maker. Ovid’s account of creation has stressed above all the discrimination and ordering of the elements, the separation of air from earth and of earth from sea. From this perspective man appears not as the next stage in a process of forming a better world but as the residue of chaos that has escaped the ordering hand of the creator. Rather than relating us to the gods, this second alternative stresses the resemblance between “most divine of animate beings” and “all the other animals” (*sanctius animal*, 1.76 ~ *cetera animalia*, 1.416).³ They too percolate upward from a mixture of elements within the earth after the flood sent by Jupiter has erased the differentiation first imposed on chaos.⁴ These offspring of earth are not only alien from the gods but literal rivals to them. The climax of this account of natural history is the generation of the chthonic serpent Python, which Phoebus must defeat to win the oracle of Delphi. The transforming craftsman that shapes man from earth in this second version bears a mythical history that only reduplicates those questions raised about the position of man. For Prometheus himself can be described as born from the divine seed because he was a Titan and therefore a cousin of the Olympian gods. And despite other more positive views of his role as a benefactor of man fulfilling the instructions of Zeus (e.g., Plato *Prot.* 320c–322d), he more commonly appears as the rival and victim of the highest god (e.g., Hes. *Theog.* 536).

The nature of this second maker, then, is as ambiguous as the very uncertainty about who did in fact create us renders our own. And this is appropriate because Ovid’s account makes man at once a crafted product⁵ and himself a craftsman, resembling both of his possible creators. Thus, the case of the phrase *mundi melioris origo* renders it just possible

³ Cf. Barchiesi 2005.164: “D’altra parte la differenza assoluta fissata tra uomo e animale ... è un presupposto carico di ironia tragica, in un poema in cui la frontiera tra animale e uomo si rivelerà così permeabile alla violenza trasfigurante della metamorfosi.”

⁴ So too Wheeler 2000.21–23.

⁵ For the significance of man as the product first of pottery (*finxit*, 1.83), then of sculpture (*simillima signis*, 1.406), see Barchiesi 2005.164.

that the words refer not to the numinous *artifex* but to man himself, the grammatical subject of the main clause. The second creation shows man as an image, *effigiem*, but an image of those who themselves order and regulate others.⁶ So in the last two lines of the description, it is unclear whether the earth “once rude and formless” being “transformed by put[ting] on the unknown shapes of men” refers to the creation of man or the creation wrought by man changing the appearance of the land through distinctive human arts like agriculture. Both passages similarly point the resemblance between the human animal and his poetic creator Ovid: the verb used of Prometheus, *finxit*, also gives us the word fiction, and the references to transformation belong to the standard language of metamorphosis in the poem.⁷

If man then appears as transformer, and transformed, he occupies a similar double position in relation to the visual processes that become increasingly more prominent as the passage progresses. Man appears as both subject and object of sight, as distinctive for what he looks at as what he looks like. We differ from other animals because of our resemblance to the gods and because we look up at the sky rather than down at the ground.⁸ The intermediacy implied by being at once gazers and subject to the gaze of others emerges again from both aspects of vision. Man’s resemblance to the gods contributes to his own status in relation to animals, but it throws into relief his subordination to the gods, whom he can merely imitate. He himself becomes a kind of visual puzzle, like another metamorphic product, Daphne, whose form can represent either Apollo or herself. This description of man made in the image of the gods, though, might have recalled to an ancient reader an alternative prioritization of man and god: as we have seen, Xenophanes (fr. 15 DK), had argued that gods resemble men only because they are made by them. If horses had hands, they would show the gods as horses. And so this point of view again exposes the human creator, Ovid, whose own exaggerated anthropomorphization of the divine will be especially evident in his virtuosio presentation of the houses of the better sort of god clustered “on Heaven’s Palatine” (1.176).

Man may look like the gods, but he does not look as the gods look, down from the heavens onto earth. In this sense, to make man, as viewing subject himself, the object of an external gaze erases that first sense of likeness to the gods and stresses the difference, again highly marked in all metamorphoses, between how the transformed looks to others and

⁶ On the Platonic history of this idea, see Robinson 1968.258–59.

⁷ Anderson 1996.160.

⁸ Schmidt 1991.29 claims that this passage represents the first attestation of the connection between man’s resemblance to the gods and his erect posture.

his own point of view. Ovid's account of man looking at the sky opens yet more possibilities for understanding man's place in the cosmos. Does he look up at the sky in wonder and awe or with a Promethean sense of rivalry? And the command that the maker (Prometheus or the *opifex*?)⁹ gives man to "raise his countenance to the stars" bears a similar double edge: to look up at the stars from below—compare the similar command Daedalus gives to Icarus—or to raise his visage up to the heavens, so that he is seen as a god himself, as Caesar in the poem's final metamorphosis will be set among the stars. The language of the last line and the situation it describes take us back to the very first element in the description of Chaos itself, which consisted of "one face in the whole circle of the cosmos" (*unus toto naturae vultus in orbe*, 1.6). The blurrings of identity that come about because man shares his countenance with the gods result in an epistemological confusion that gives special point to making him the physical product of chaos.

Ovid was not the first to employ vision in this way to diagnose the position of man. Cicero in the *de legibus* uses very similar language, including the same essential contrast between man's sight and appearance, to clarify our purpose.

Nam cum ceteras animantes abiecisset ad pastum, solum hominem erexit et ad caeli quasi cognationis domiciliue pristini conspectum excitavit, tum speciem ita formavit oris, ut in ea penitus reconditos mores effingeret. (leg. 1.26)

For when [nature] had cast all other animals down to seek food, she raised up man alone and roused him to gaze upon the sky as upon his ancient origin and dwelling place, then she formed the appearance of his face in such a way that she might mold in it his concealed character.

Humans here exist both to see and to be seen. We look upon the sky as a sign that our motives are not limited to the physical sustenance of our bodies, and while Cicero does not here spell out the similarity of our appearance in this regard to the gods, he does take our upward gaze as a proof of divine origins. He is therefore defining us by looking at us looking, and this process leads strikingly into his next point, which is precisely that nature made the face to be an index of who we are. That Cicero

⁹ Fantham 2004.25 suggests that Ovid with *iussit* in line 86 has returned to his first account of human creation and made the *opifex rerum* the source of this command. If so, it is very suggestive that he has left so open the possibility of reading the much less authoritative Prometheus as the source of this injunction. In support of attributing the command to *natura* is the passage of Cicero's *de legibus* (1.26) discussed below, where our erect posture is part of nature's design (Lee 1953.80).

segues so easily from the appearance of man in general to the physiognomic decipherment of face and deportment that played so large a part in Roman invective links grand philosophic speculation to the very practical use of appearance as a determinant of status and character in Roman public life, a connection we also find operative in Ovid's programmatic account of the loss of human form.

Because the act of gazing and the interpretation of appearances from outside play such a pivotal role in fixing man's place in the hierarchy of the cosmos, it is appropriate that the first of the poem's myths of metamorphosis should narrativize these processes by making man's primal encounter with the divine a tale of misperception and mistaken identity. We have already discussed the Lycaon story as an example of how Ovid charges the visual aspects of metamorphosis with an uncertainty that in turn carries the reader toward the investigation of political questions on the grandest scale. Here I want to stress the importance of problems of reading appearances within the narrative and to argue that the story continues a pattern set up in the account of human origins that places vision at the center of man's relations with his superiors and inferiors. J.-P. Vernant famously analyzed the complex of myths that Hesiod tells about Prometheus in his own portrait of the origins of the human condition to demonstrate that binary oppositions within the narrative between giving and not giving and between revelation and concealment bind together essential human practices like fire, sacrifice, sexual reproduction, and feasting.¹⁰ The Lycaon story, I suggest, can be read in similar terms as Ovid's equivalent to the Prometheus story.¹¹ It mobilizes the same constellation of actions—feasting, sacrifice, and even fire—to depict the interactions of gods and men in a way that can, as much as anything in the poem, be called normative for the events that follow. But the special emphasis Ovid places on problems of recognition within the encounter between Jupiter and Lycaon creates a parallel between deciphering the hierarchies of the cosmos and discovering the "truth" in the appearances presented by his poem. And if the creation story opposes the visual appearance man offers others to his own role as gazer, so here we find the human Lycaon in the same double situation: he tries actively to penetrate the disguise of others while his own visual contrivances are tested by the king of the gods and his appearance is put on display as a proof of who he really is.

The similarities between this tale and the accounts of Prometheus in the Hesiodic poems derive from the structural and thematic positions the narratives occupy in their respective poems, but they are also—to adopt the terms used by Vernant—syntactic and sociocultural. Both narratives

¹⁰ Vernant 1988.183–202.

¹¹ A Vernantian reading of the Lycaon episode was anticipated by Feeney 1991.194–95.

operate through establishing a similar pattern of oppositions between parallel actions, and both ultimately function to differentiate man from beasts and gods.

Hesiod divides his account of Prometheus's rivalry with Zeus and its consequences for mankind between his two didactic poems. Thus, the *Theogony* (509–72) tells how, at the assembly of gods and men at Mekone, Prometheus set two deceptive portions of a sacrificed ox before Zeus. A tempting layer of fat concealed only bones while the flesh was wrapped in the meager looking stomach. Zeus accepts the first portion and, in his anger at Prometheus's deception, takes away from mankind the gift of fire. Prometheus steals fire back concealed in a fennel stalk, and Zeus gives an equally deceptive evil in place of the good that has been stolen. That evil is woman, who conceals a "dog's mind" within an attractive form to which all of the gods have contributed enchantments. As the *Theogony* focuses on the choice Zeus makes at Mekone and presents the evil gift he gives to man as the narrative coda, the *Works and Days* (66–125) merely refers to the division of sacrifice and concentrates on the bad choice Epimetheus makes in accepting the gift from Zeus. In the *Theogony*, the stories are presented from a divine perspective, as a proof of Zeus's power, specifically to show that "it is not possible to deceive the mind of Zeus." By contrast in the *Works and Days* the emphasis falls on the consequences for man: Prometheus's trick is the reason that the gods have hidden our livelihood. As such, the Pandora story parallels "another myth" that Hesiod gives as a description of the condition of man, the myth of the ages.

Ovid's Lycaon narrative combines aspects of both Hesiodic stories; indeed, the difference between how the story fits into human history and the uses the gods make of it animates Ovid's tale. Like the Prometheus narrative in the *Theogony*, Lycaon's is a story of crime and punishment deployed by its Jovian narrator with heavy-handed didacticism: "I shall teach what the crime was, and what the vengeance" (*quod tamen admissum, quae sit vindicta docebo*, 1.210). When the king of the gods arrives in human disguise, Lycaon tries to prove his guest's mortality by killing him and his lack of divine omniscience by serving him the flesh of a slaughtered hostage. But Jupiter, at least in the hindsight his position as omniscient narrator allows, was not fooled for an instant. Lycaon's punishment also marks an epoch in human experience—the total destruction of the race. So the presence of destructive evils as an integral element of the cosmos, albeit in the slow-acting form of toil and disease, is the essential message of the Pandora story in the *Works and Days* (101–4). And like the Pandora story, Lycaon's is paired with the account of the ages of man, though placed after rather than before it. Other significant Hesiodic themes in the Lycaon episode are the role of justice—as a Greek king

punished by a present Jupiter, Lycaon would be a good warning for the corrupt *basileis* in the *Works and Days*—and the emphasis on concealment. The first word of the Pandora story is *krupsantes*, the gods have concealed from men the means of life, whereas the god here hides himself. Finally, the fate of Lycaon, fleeing from the house to wander in the wilderness deprived of the power of speech bears some resemblance to the conclusion of the Pandora story, as the evils released from Pandora's jar wander abroad in silence "for Zeus in his wisdom took away their voice" (104). Even the account of Jupiter's destruction of Lycaon's house forms a variation on a Hesiodic theme: Zeus had punished man by depriving him of the gift of fire; Jupiter retaliates against Lycaon by giving him fire in its most destructive guise, as a punishment (*vindice flamma*, 1.230).

The mythical history of Lycaon also well fits him to take on the role of a Prometheus in setting deceptive meats before the king of the gods, and within Ovid's tale the essential symmetry between the protagonists matches the one Vernant has found in the Hesiodic myth. Like Prometheus, Lycaon was renowned as the inventor of sacrificial practices. In the precivilized world of Arcadia, a place that in Augustan literature takes on many of the characteristics of the Hesiodic golden age through its absence of agriculture and meat eating, Lycaon founded the first city, Lycosura, and established the important cult of Zeus Lykaeos.¹² Forbes-Irving describes him as a "founder and creator of the present order of human culture" and specifically likens him to Prometheus in the ambiguity with which his innovations are regarded.¹³ For as in the case of Prometheus, mythical traditions preserve diametrically opposed accounts of this king as, on the one hand, one who is singled out for his justice and, on the other, one whose desecration of the table of the gods through cannibalism reenacts the separation of gods from men.

But the central point of rivalry in Ovid's account, and the one that brings it closest to the Hesiodic emphasis on concealment and the discrepancies between appearance and substance, is that both the human king and the king of the gods act to distinguish truth from falsehood and to disseminate the resulting truth among their audience. As in the Hesiodic story, the two protagonists play both active and passive roles in relation to appearances, at once acting as creators of illusion and as the audience for the productions of others. Ovid's casting of this opposition between appearance and reality in terms of truth and falsehood, though, relates this mythic theme closely to the problems raised by his own narrative. Jupiter comes to earth because he has heard a terrible report about

¹² For the contrasting traditions relating to this ambiguous figure, see Forbes-Irving 1990.90–95 and Piccaluga 1968.31–38.

¹³ Forbes-Irving 1990.90.

the age (Ovid's own account of the Iron Age?), which he hopes will prove false (1.212). But not only was the account true; it was less than the truth (1.215). Jupiter's method of proof involves creating a fiction of his own. He will wander the earth in human disguise—*humana ... sub imagine* (1.213).¹⁴ As a result of his experiences, Jupiter claims to have fixed the truth about mortals and requires the assent of the divine audience to the tale that he is even now putting forth. Yet his own use of disguise, or rather of a combination of truth and falsehood (for at the same time that he has disguised himself he also produces signs of his true identity, *signa*, 1.220),¹⁵ inspires a process of testing and proclamation of "truth" on the part of his human audience. Lycaon, who is inspired by a faith in appearances, determines to prove (*experiar*) that the god really is what he appears to be, that Jupiter's own fiction is true.¹⁶ And he will also make what he discovers believable to his subjects: the proof will be clear and public (*aperto*) so that "the truth will not be doubtful" (1.222–23). Again this act, which Jupiter presents as at once impious skepticism about divine communications and a testing of reality through deceptions to rival his own, from a human perspective looks a lot like the way we might expect a pious reader to respond to Ovidian fictions, with the knowledge that they are such because the representation of the gods in human form, as Xenophanes and others insisted, only proves that human workers created them in their own likeness. The importance of this rivalry for Jupiter is signaled by his ironic repetition of the crucial words of the king, *experientia veri*, in describing his impious preparations (1.225). These twin processes of learning and teaching anticipate precisely the language that will be used to interpret the nature of human appearances in the account of the men created by Deucalion and Pyrrha. Derived from the hard realities of rock, we are *experiens laborum*, and we give proof (*documenta damus*) of our origin, 1.414–15. Lycaon's attempt to gain experience of the truth will lead ironically to humanity's unwelcome experience of labors, which confirms their essential condition in the Hesiodic world, and the teaching that the human race will do comes not from the specific publication of what they themselves have learned about divine reality but from furnishing *documenta* to those who look at them. Thus, even as Lycaon attempts to produce his clear proofs, he is being used as a lesson in human impiety by a divine observer.

It has been argued that the presence of such elements as cannibalism, feasting, and sacrifice in Ovid's tale of Lycaon are mere narrative surviv-

als. In some archaic period, the Greeks may have used myths like those of Lycaon and Prometheus to explore and describe how vital practices like feasting and sacrifice affirm and define relations between man and the gods. But Ovid, however many details of these myths his learning might recover for us, treats such stories above all as a literary phenomena, or morality tales, or psychological case studies, rather than as a complement to a living tradition of ritual. Thus, Forbes-Irving remarks that Ovid's Lycaon story, like his account of Lyncus, has simplistically replaced the ambiguity inherent in Greek accounts of "culture heroes" with morally clear-cut accounts of villainy.¹⁷ But a second look at the Lycaon story can help close this gap by pointing out that Ovid's narrative does indeed demonstrate an interest in the social practices that give such tales a role in defining the very nature of human civilization. And not only does the *Metamorphoses* here reproduce the ambiguity looked for in myths that grapple with man's separation from the gods; the Lycaon myth illustrates precisely how the poet has transferred the ambiguity inherent in practices like sacrifice to the specific phenomena that complicate a reader's response to his own text: the visual uncertainties produced by metamorphosis and the questions of credibility raised by his literary account of it.

As Vernant describes, a fundamental effect of sacrifice, as of the various culinary and reproductive practices Hesiodic myth relates to it, is to "provide the frame of reference within which the human condition is defined in its distinctive characteristics insofar as man differs from the gods and from the beasts."¹⁸ Sacrificial ritual and the meal that follows are thus to be distinguished from the "omophagy and allelophagy of the beasts that devour each other,"¹⁹ as well as from the appetites of gods whose share of the sacrificial meal retains no trace of its fleshliness but has been reduced by fire to pure essence. The sacrificial process thus inevitably makes the definition of man an uncertain and relative one, superior to the beasts but inferior to the gods, and continually invokes this ambiguity through the pattern of partial resemblances that make man at once look like the victims and honorands of the ritual. Like the gods, man shares in profit from the killing of the animal. The extent to which he shares in the responsibility for killing has been a key issue in a variety of modern studies of sacrifice. The god may be said to order the killing and man to be his agent; the animal may itself seem to ask for death by violating some divine injunction.²⁰ On the other hand, however the killing may be mitigated or justified, the act itself, performed by human agents

¹⁴ Note again the "metamorphic" term *imago*; Anderson 1996.173.

¹⁵ A contradiction noted by Due 1974.106.

¹⁶ *experiar deus hic, discrimine aperto, / an sit mortalis; nec erit dubitabile verum*. 1.22–23: "I shall test, with a public proof, whether this is a god or mortal; and the truth will be beyond doubt."

¹⁷ Forbes-Irving 1990.95. Cf., though, his comments on Ovid's narrative skill at 1990.37.

¹⁸ Vernant 1988.197.

¹⁹ Vernant 1988.198.

²⁰ Burkert 1983.1–12, e.g.

on a being that despite its differences nevertheless shares our essential presence in the flesh, forms the focus of sacrificial ritual.²¹ Hence, an important aspect of sacrificial ambiguity: the ritual establishes differences between the participants only via potential confusion. As many theorists, especially Rene Girard, have stressed, the ordering violence of sacrifice is always shadowed by the possibility of a corrupt sacrifice that erases the set of distinctions that make human civilization possible.²² These shifting identifications between man, beasts, and gods help to explain why such divergent traditions cluster around the figures, like Prometheus and Lycaon, who are associated with the foundation of sacrifice. The ritual seems to reinforce all the qualities and practices that elevate human life from bestial indiscriminacy but that also keep us from ever attaining the state of the immortals. And, of course, many of the cultural practices that make man unlike beasts, such as the avoidance of incest, are also sources of difference from the gods. In historical terms, sacrifice may provide an essential means of communion with the immortals in the Iron Age present, but it also marks off that present from an ideal golden age—at once a time of divine happiness and bestial simplicity—in which man lived in much closer connection with the gods and in a way that more closely resembled their own mode of existence. Hence, figures like Prometheus and Lycaon are made responsible in myth both for the very institutions that make mortal life possible and for the initial ruptures that separated man from the gods.

This highly schematic overview of what sacrifice might have signified to an ancient participant will already have recalled a number of the central concerns in Ovid's own treatment of man's place in the cosmos. There too we found an interest in establishing the human condition in contradistinction to both gods and beasts, and there too a fundamental ambiguity emerged in the double depiction of humans as kin and agents of the divinities and, alternatively, as their Promethean rivals. These themes also punctuate the Lycaon story, as the king's dangerous resemblance to the gods at the beginning of the narrative gives way to his unequivocal designation as a beast at its conclusion—with the important caveat that both the impiety of his rivalry and the semantic clarity of his transformation emerge from the highly partisan narrative of his divine opponent: if the social and theological function of sacrifice depends on the partici-

²¹ For the idea of "the comedy of innocence" designed to pretend that human sacrificers bear no guilt for the victim's death, see Meuli 1946.

²² Girard 1977.36–38; the ambiguities in Girard's interpretation of sacrifice involve the social roles of the participants, specifically the difficulty of fully excluding the sacrificial victim from membership in the community constituted when its violent impulses are united against him, and so of socially constructive violence being distinguished chaotic and indiscriminate violence. See the further discussion in the following chapter.

pants' perception of it, we already see how narrative's capacity to influence its audience's view of its own relationship to the events described can determine their alignment within the hierarchies sacrifice puts in play, and Ovid shows us this by making us so supremely conscious of Jupiter's status as narrator.

Lycaon's attempts to locate his visitor in relation to the community of men also involve the two central acts of sacrificial ritual—killing and eating. Both the king's plots, to kill his divine visitor and to make him the participant at a cannibal banquet, work to the same end of convincing the humans that make up his audience of the stranger's essential likeness to themselves. And yet, if pointing a resemblance to the divine is always available as a positive interpretation of sacrificial ritual, here in the corrupted sacrifice that results from the slaying of an innocent, indeed a human, victim, the arrows are all made to point in the opposite direction. Rather than mortals becoming more like divinities, Lycaon tries to prove that divinities are after all like mortals, and the result is to reduce mortals themselves to the level of beasts. An appropriate result for an action that in its application of the traditional sacrificial procedures of boiling and roasting to the very unsacrificial killing of a human victim not only confuses the tripartite boundaries that legitimate sacrifice reinforces but also erases the distinction between killing and eating in a sacrificial context and mere violence.

But if Lycaon's actions emerge as violations of essential sacrificial prescriptions for establishing the legitimacy of the victim, Jupiter himself deploys two strategies recognized as important to the logic of sacrifice to ensure that the audience views the violence inflicted on Lycaon as justified. By violating the rites of hospitality, Lycaon, like the ox who was made to eat grain at the altar during the Athenian Bouphonia, has earned the wrath of the divinity.²³ At the same time, though, Jupiter downplays his own instrumentality in inflicting violence on the king. Solodow has noted that Jupiter is at pains to present Lycaon's metamorphosis as the spontaneous result of his character, a natural process that provides independent confirmation of Jupiter's judgment of his actions.²⁴ But the rhetorical effectiveness of the ploy goes hand in hand with its role in justifying sacrifice by making the victim himself responsible for his own death. Jupiter, then, tailors his account of Lycaon's transformation to make us

²³ Interestingly, more positive accounts of Lycaon as a Numa-like inventor of religious institutions makes him responsible for the very conception of the "truce" (Plin. *NH* 7.202: see Piccaluga 1968.34.). The justification of sacrifice through the guilt of the victim, most famously exemplified by the Athenian Bouphonia (see, e.g. Meuli 1946, Burkert 1983.36–38), also figures in the explicit account of sacrificial origins offered by Pythagoras toward the poem's conclusion (15.111–15, *et prima putatur hostia sus meruisse mori* ...).

²⁴ Solodow 1988.168–69.

respond to it with neither sympathy for the “beast” Lycaon nor blame for his own actions, which we hear as part of an audience of gods.

Such manipulation of perspective becomes all the more striking when we consider the story not within the frame of Jupiter’s argument for cosmic destruction but within the larger one of Ovid’s presentation of the gods. For here we meet a glaring contradiction of one of the tenets of sacrifice most frequently affirmed in the Roman epic tradition, that of substitution. In the *Aeneid*’s account of the foundation of the Roman state, the logic of sacrifice allows a single victim to absorb the vengeance that a divinity would otherwise visit on the entire community. Thus, Palinurus, and—ironically—many others, becomes the “one” whose life is claimed in place of the many.²⁵ But Ovid’s Jupiter does not make Lycaon into a scapegoat. He does the exact opposite by treating him as an *exemplum* whose individual conduct demands the death of many: *occidit una domus, sed non domus una perire / digna fuit* (1.240–41). And this occurs despite the fact that according to Jupiter’s own narrative the populace did not share in the king’s impiety but rather properly recognized the divinity and performed *pia vota*. We may also note that if the god’s own view of what Lycaon has done stresses the bestial aspects of Lycaon’s actions as a sign and corollary of his perversion of sacrificial ritual, Ovid’s account of the god’s speech effects a similar boundary crossing by lowering gods to the status of men. Nowhere are the gods more ruthlessly anthropomorphized than in this opening scene, and no more problematic human characteristic emerges from Ovid’s depiction of them than the very human passion that inspires Jupiter’s revenge plot, which as we have seen is also the point where his own observance of sacrificial principles breaks down. One objection that the minority raises to Jupiter’s plan is that it will lead to a cessation of (bloodless) sacrifice: *quis sit laturus in aras tura* (1.248–49), a question that is as relevant outside the frame of its narrative context as within. If these are the gods, why do we worship them?

My analysis has so far shown that references to ritual practices, especially to sacrifice, within the Lycaon narrative are more than inert survivals. Considering the whole of Jupiter’s narrative in light of the sacrificial patterns alluded to within the story helps to clarify both the god’s rhetorical strategies and their weaknesses. But the relationship between sacrifice and narrative proves even more profound. A larger interdependence and, indeed, equivalence emerges between the acts of representation and the performance of sacrifice. Within the frame of Jupiter’s own tale, accounts of sacrificial violation serve to depict Lycaon as Jupiter wants him to

²⁵ *Aen.* 5.815, *unum pro multis dabitur caput*. On the theme of sacrificial substitution in Roman epic, see Hardie 1993.19–56.

appear. But to recognize such a device at work is also to recognize its reversibility. Lycaon’s sacrifice is corrupt only if we accept the god’s depiction of it. Assenting to the truth of the god’s representation of Lycaon as a wolf necessitates and reinforces the coloring that Lycaon’s actions take on when viewed in the light of sacrificial practice. On the other hand, to adopt Lycaon’s point of view and see Jupiter as a man—and the contrivances of the human narrator and Ovid themselves abet such a reading—levels the playing field between them and reduces sacrifice to mere rivalry. The truth of Jupiter’s account is thus bound up also with a reading of the image that concludes it, of seeing the fantastical metamorphosis of Lycaon as not only factually true but also telling the truth about Lycaon. Earlier I observed that Ovid particularly highlighted the credible representation of reality as a point of overlap between divine and human capacities and hence at once a point of resemblance and rivalry between god and man. Within the Lycaon story, our uncertainty about how to judge Lycaon’s *experientia veri* offers another essential parallel between this process of constructing truth and the ambiguous Promethean practices that at once bring us closer to and mark us off from the divinity. All the more so since Lycaon’s *experientia veri* consists in the plan to kill one man and the actual sacrificial treatment of another. Ovid’s narrative framework here shows yet another way in which the very process of representation assumes a sacrificial dimension, for while beasts are present as neither narrators nor narratees, the overlap between Jupiter’s divine audience and Ovid’s human one raises the possibility of hearing Jupiter’s account as a god or of supplying the very different human perspective that an awareness of Ovid’s own narrative role promotes.

But if the act of balancing the different available narrative perspectives on Lycaon—Ovid’s, Jupiter’s, and indeed Lycaon’s own—requires a working out of the likenesses and differences between man and gods resembling that at the center of sacrificial ritual, precisely the same procedure is required in the case of the different visual perspectives whose narratives make available the spectacle of Lycaon’s metamorphosis. The greatest “proof” Jupiter offers of the bestiality of man is in fact the transformation of Lycaon. Believing that Jupiter’s story is true requires believing that Lycaon is a true wolf, that his new visual appearance, like the *humana imago* Jupiter takes on as a disguise, nevertheless exposes *signa* that confirm his essential identity. That this view of Lycaon in turn requires the shutting out of other ways of perceiving his appearance, as well as of other points of view for telling his story, shows the reversibility of the relationship between seeing and believing here, anticipating the mutual implication of interpreting image and interpreting narrative to be developed in the Io story (see chapter 1). If you do not believe Jupiter, you are less likely to see Lycaon as really a wolf; if you see Lycaon as some-

thing other than really a wolf, you are less likely to endorse Jupiter's view of the necessity of a universal cataclysm to wipe out the human species. Thus, not only does this first example of the most common metamorphic pattern in the book, where divine action imposes an irreversible transformation on mortals, signal the essential contrast between subjective and objective perspectives on the images that result from metamorphoses, but its juxtaposition with the various accounts of the creation of man connects this contrast with the uncertain nature of the human condition itself and identifies the viewing of metamorphosis—which is bound together with the acceptance of fictions—as the poem's distinctive means of addressing the larger issue of man's place in the cosmos. In the account of the creation of the human form—and note again how much this account is focused precisely on external appearance—we observed the essential difference between looking at man and looking as man and traced the different implications each perspective possessed for seeing humanity. This double perspective, of course, easily translates to the experience of Ovid's readers who are—with the possible exception of the imperial family!—all human, and who will also be reading about humans. And if, as I suggested in the previous chapter, the reception of such external images becomes itself an act of creation and construction, then the similar double role of man as both created object and, by extension, a creator and transformer of the world, whose own maker Prometheus is in turn simultaneously divine maker and victim, adds a further connection between the reception of Ovid's poem and the processes he has singled out as essentially human.

The seemingly abstract parallels I suggested between the functioning of sacrificial ritual and the reception of Ovidian narrative can also be seen in action in Lycaon's transformation. Indeed, the visual process we have defined as crucial to reading metamorphosis was also a potentially important determinant of the participant's response to sacrifice. I say potentially because we have no real first hand Roman accounts of what being at a sacrifice was like and must therefore rely on theoretical deductions from the nature of the ritual itself, which can also be supplemented by fictional narratives of mythical sacrifices. The very appearance of the victim in sacrifice comprises elements that blur the distinction between bestial victim, divine honorand, and human celebrant. As domestic animals, the victims occupy an intermediate category between truly wild and unmodified nature and the humans whom they aid in transforming nature through agriculture. Their decorations, such as fillets and crowns, also echoed the visual differentiation that set apart the very religious officials who would preside over their death and consumption. At the same time, basic elements in the victim's appearance, like its sex, age, and color, recalled the form of the divinity to whom it was offered. Sacrificial ritual,

like Ovidian metamorphosis, also drew attention in a more literal fashion to the relationship between outer appearance and inner substance. Walter Burkert's suggestion that the exposed viscera of the victim resemble those of man creates another visual bridge between the human and the bestial.²⁶ The killing of the victim inevitably fosters a similar identification because it affirms that the animal shares the essential characteristic that defines humanity in relation to the gods, mortality. The inner form of the victim, however, also provides the most explicitly hermeneutic moment of the ritual, for the appearance of its organs is read by the *haruspices* as a sign of the state of relations between gods and man. Looks alone could be deceiving: an unblemished heifer might bear a diseased liver. Thus, this glimpse within, even as it potentially unites spectator and victim, affirms the truth about the human community and its standing in respect to the gods.

What Ovid's audience sees in Lycaon similarly unites visual experience with religious understanding. To affirm the essential bestiality of Lycaon, that his outer form reflects his inner form, consolidates solidarity between man and the gods—who are appearing in their own most human guise. Lycaon was fundamentally cut off from the very category of the human even when he looked like one: his genesis from the blood of giants and the destruction of virtually the entire race in consequence of his crime further insulate us from him. Indeed, like many a sacrificial victim, Lycaon in this regard bears comparison to the scapegoat figure that, by being made responsible for the pollution afflicting the community, purifies it by his death. His very punishment and the results that follow exempt us from accepting his cannibalism and hubris as tendencies that all humans share. Except, as always, Ovid has complicated things, for Lycaon is also the polar opposite of a scapegoat. Not only will his crimes recur among generations after the flood, but, more important, he does not die on behalf of the many. Rather his crime leads to the destruction of his entire society. The recognition of Lycaon, by contrast, as still fundamentally human despite his shape, like the overidentification with the sacrificial victim, has the effect of realigning the human reader's sympathies by exposing the bestiality of the gods. Indeed, Jupiter's last words highlight the phenomenon of bestiality itself in a way that makes it uncertain whose "face" manifests it. In describing how Lycaon's behavior indicates the character of the entire human species, he exclaims, "as far as the earth extends, the fierce Erinyes holds sway" (*fera regnat Erinyes*, 1.241). This attempt further to put a bestial face on humanity can do so, however, only by creating a "wild" divinity. And because the Erinyes herself appears as a representative not only of mad criminality but

²⁶ Burkert 1983.20.

of revenge, and specifically of revenge that repays crime with crime, the characterization seems to reflect back on the god who produces it, inviting us to ask how far the civilizing “justice of Zeus,” whereby punishment sanctioned by the highest divinity preserves the rules and distinctions of the human community and the cosmos, stands from the wild justice of vengeance that erases the lines between victim and killer.

The attempt that I have made to show Ovid’s creative engagement not just with the narrative details of myth but with its theological dimensions and the ritual practices that inform them stands in contrast to much recent work on the mythical aspects of the *Metamorphoses*. It may seem to many readers to pull against the tone of the poem by freighting with seriousness a work that in these very passages questions whether it can ever be taken seriously. At the same time, the readings of sacrifice that I have put forward may seem doubly remote from Ovid’s world, first, because they were originally developed to interpret the practices of archaic Greece and, second, because of the great gulf that is felt to divide the Roman experience of myth, whose narratives and human actors were overwhelmingly Greek, from any cult practices. For Ovid, myths were “texts,”²⁷ not only because he acquired them from his reading or because they were perceived as elements that relate his work to literary predecessors but more fundamentally because the very edifice of myth as a discourse about the gods was perceived to belong intrinsically to the realm of reading and performance.²⁸ Thus, Varro in his influentially systematic treatment of Roman theology famously broke his subject down into three theologies: the gods of the state (the focus of cult), the gods of nature (the allegorical use of the gods to describe the cosmos), and the gods of the stage (the representation of the gods familiar from poetic and dramatic representations of myth). Varro’s approach to the gods stands behind an important modern assumption about how the ancients organized their religious experience, which has come to be known as “brain balkanization.” This attractive term, first developed by Paul Veyne and influentially applied to Roman literary experience by Denis Feeney, assumes a radical separation between the ways the Romans conceptualized the gods on the basis of discursive context. Thus, a Roman who was philosophically skeptical about the existence of the gods could nevertheless participate actively in cult or enjoy—and think seriously about—the representation of the gods in tragedy. The model of the “balkanized brain,” while very productive for the study of Roman literature in

general,²⁹ has nevertheless served to reinforce a preexisting *relegatio* of Ovid to the shores of the literary. Thus, while Ovid’s use of myth is often viewed as nothing short of revolutionary, his accomplishment, however differently defined, always consists in reestablishing myth within a new system of meaning to compensate for its separation from cult. Ovidian myth becomes a medium for anthropological description, manifesting a compendium of human behaviors that provide a new and culturally free-floating source of value for myth, but one directed above all at human experience and relying on essentially narrative properties.³⁰

However, there are limits to how absolute such intellectual segregation can be, and Ovid’s treatment of the gods does not restrict itself to the territory of the mythical. On the contrary, throughout his poem he invites readers to measure very different conceptualizations of the gods against one another. Jupiter as the sky god, as the head god of the state religion, and as the rambunctious rapist of Greek myth may well all exist in different spheres of experience, but the very fact that they share the same name necessarily problematizes their relationship to one another. All provide competing answers to the question of who or what Jupiter is. I have already looked at how Ovid’s exaggeration of the problem of the “split divinity” provokes theological speculation within the text. And the first book of the poem abounds in similarly striking juxtapositions of the philosophical, cultic, and “mythic”: the very council meeting where Jupiter recounts Lycaon’s crimes raises precisely these issues by its relentless imposition of contemporary social and political fashions on the Olympians. Such hyper-anthropomorphization might at first seem precisely to establish Ovid’s works within the realm of the “fabulous” and deflect serious theological speculation even as it seems to turn aside a political reading of Jupiter. But I would argue that the effect of this description is precisely to put the Greek gods in the center of contemporary Rome, to foreground questions not only about how Greek myth describes imperial Rome but also about the connections between literary descriptions of the gods and immediate human experience. The whole phenomenon of divine metamorphosis, which throughout the poem forms an essential complement to the metamorphosis of humans, programmatically addresses this issue, for in taking on human form, the divinities are also moving precisely into the sphere of the mythical. And the error that leads to Lycaon’s destruction comes from his unwillingness to recognize the possibility of such divine boundary crossing. Thus, while Ovid certainly

²⁷ A definition that must be expanded to include “images,” as we discuss in the next chapter.

²⁸ Graf 2002.110.

²⁹ Especially with the qualifying recognition that these discursive spheres can never operate in isolation from one another, see Feeney 1998.21. For the concept itself, see Veyne 1988.41–57 and Feeney 1998.14–21.

³⁰ See Feeney 1998.70–74, citing Schmidt 1991.70–78.

expands the relevance of myth as a means of describing human action, as Feeney and Schmidt describe, he does not also strip it of its theological significance or of its relation to cult.

On the contrary, I find Ovid's most striking transformation of myth is precisely his use of metamorphosis to reproduce the open-ended and immediate experience of the divine offered by sacrifice through purely narrative means. Ovid's treatment of the gods, then, rather than making the best of the cultural isolation of myth from other forms of religious experience, actively challenges such absolute distinctions and ultimately appropriates for his own literary representation the issues and very modalities of cult. Indeed, the traditional decoupling of myth from religion only gives greater power to the effect Ovid achieves. For the preconception that mythical gods cannot be "real" at once contributes the alternative perspective that lends complexity to Ovid's mimesis and, at the same time, makes the emergence of some element of divine power in a fictional context all the more astonishing.

But what might the significance of this move be for a Roman audience? How relevant are Vernantian and Girardian readings of Greek sacrifice for understanding its role five hundred years later in a different society? Put in even larger terms, what precisely is it that ritual might contribute to the reading of Ovid? In terms of the central moments of sacrifice, there are no essential differences between Roman practice and Greek.³¹ There were, of course, infinite ritual variations within as well as between each culture, and it is probably fair to say that, from the point of view of the individual participant, every single experience of sacrifice was different. But the essential modes of participation, as spectators, consumers, and beneficiaries of the accord with the gods bought through the victim's life, were the same at Rome as at Greece, and so too were the three essential actors, the human sacrificers, the animal victim, and the divine honorand. Of course, these similarities do not imply that sacrifice "meant" the same thing in every circumstance.³² It almost certainly did not have the same effect on any two participants at any given sacrifice, and recent anthropological studies of ritual have stressed not its conservatism but its extraordinary adaptability to changing historical contexts.³³ Nevertheless, what I might call the syntax of sacrificial practice, the process of balancing identification with and difference from victim and honorand through which the participant interprets the experience, remains essentially the same.

³¹ "In structure, though not in detail, the ritual was closely related to the Greek ritual of sacrifice": Beard, North, and Price 1998.1.36.

³² See Feeney 1998.120.

³³ Bloch 1986.

Nor is it the case that sacrifice played a less important role in the more "sophisticated" culture of Augustan Rome with its complex systems of religious thinking than it had in Hesiod's Ascræ. The imagery of the new principate abounded in representations of sacrifice, making this ritual process an essential component of how Augustus defined his own position in the community.³⁴ And lest we think that these images were aimed at a very different audience from the cultural elite addressed by epic poetry, sacrificial imagery figures largely throughout Vergil's *Aeneid*. How one makes sense of that epic's final act, the killing of Turnus, will depend in large measure on the response generated by these sacrificial patterns.³⁵

Recent attempts to interpret the function of representations of religious ritual in Latin poetry have met with criticism from a number of perspectives. Scholars who make such arguments are accused of overlooking both the representational aspect of literature and, even more crucially, the ancient authors' awareness of the distance that separates text from reality.³⁶ Thus, even passages that seem to locate their reader at an actual ritual performance can do no such thing and make their failure as apparent as they make their ambition. More fundamentally, the very impetus to develop such arguments has come under attack as a diminution of the power of literature itself, which, especially to scholars dazzled by the results of anthropological approaches and dissatisfied with the strongly formalist bent of Latin literary studies in the middle years of the past century, can be redeemed only by embedding it in other cultural practices that seem somehow more real.³⁷

In light of these challenges, let me be more precise about the role I am claiming for sacrificial imagery in Ovid's poem. It does not consist in the subordination of the reading experience to some direct encounter with reality. There is no master sacrifice that will function as touchstone for understanding Ovid's effects properly, or that will clarify the poem's ambiguities. It is, however, important not to overstate the limits to the mimetic powers of the poem. Of course, when a poet asks his audience to "behold" a ritual procession, the injunction can always remind his audience that such direct visual experience is just what a poem cannot offer. But to concentrate only on the "absence" of the represented strips all mimesis, not only textual and not only of rituals, of its power. A museum visitor standing before a Vermeer will hardly thank a cicerone for reminding her that the people in the painting are not actually there. And no artist was more interested in the simultaneous affirmation and denial

³⁴ See esp. Zanker 1990.102–35 and Elsner 1991a.

³⁵ E.g., Hardie 1993.19–56 and Bandera 1981.

³⁶ See esp. Feeney 2004.4–5.

³⁷ E.g., Feeney 1998.116.

of the magic of mimesis than was Ovid. It is precisely the tension between acceptance of and resistance to the represented world that energizes all of the interpretations I have and will offer throughout this book. The impetus to move through the text into a “real” world beyond is not a historical accident of our contemporary intellectual climate but a response that Roman literature itself invites, even as it invites interrogation of it.

What I am arguing here is not for the erasure of literary illusion to recover some fundamental and explanatory authenticity but for the mobilization of references to this experience to create a dialogue between reading and ritual through which the responses generated by each are at once transformed and delineated. The reader of the Lycaon story would never confuse what the narrative describes with any ritual she had witnessed. The transformation of a human being into a wolf cannot happen in reality; wild animals were excluded from the list of sacrificial victims, nor are there any ritual preparations that would help locate what Lycaon suffers as part of a sacrifice. There are, however, internal allusions to elements of sacrificial practice—the *pia vota* of the crowd, the combined boiling and roasting of the Molossian hostage, the shared feast between Jupiter and Lycaon, and the equivalences between Ovid’s Lycaon and his Hesiodic counterpart Prometheus further underline the significance of these references. This in turn prepares the reader to recognize both how questions potentially generated by sacrifice—for example, the guilt of the victim, the legitimacy of the killing—are reproduced from such literary devices as the introduction of a highly partisan internal narrator (Jupiter) and, crucially, the combination of distance and identification allowed by contrasting visual perspectives on transformation.

The deployment of the sacrificial dynamic as a comparand for what Ovid achieves through these literary strategies, however, gives them a distinctive importance, and this is not simply because of some innate glamour of ritual experience. Precisely because a recognition of sacrificial experience within this highly different scene represents such a dramatic crossing of boundaries, it helps to ensure that we do not read the transformation of Lycaon as an unbelievable *fabula*. It makes clear, in purely literary terms, that Ovid’s problematic epic can also address the themes of a Hesiod and, like its Vergilian predecessor, invite reflection on the relationship between the individual and community through depictions of ambiguous victims. At the same time, it also becomes a demonstration of the capacities of literary representation—and of its incapacities as well—in relation to other contemporary modes of display and performance. For, as we consider more fully later in this chapter, sacrificial ritual functioned not only to define the hierarchical position of humanity but also to delineate hierarchical relations within human society. The boundary crossing at work in reading literary representations of meta-

morphoses as comparable to sacrificial ritual thus also relates to a claim to social authority on the part of its author. In the following chapters, we will look more at how Ovid generates a dialogue between what his text can make a reader see and other forms of ritual that operate largely through vision, such as theatrical performances, triumphs, and gladiatorial displays. But to recognize the importance of such a dialogue within the Ovidian corpus as a whole, there is no need to look farther than the *Fasti*. One important result of the interpretation that I offer here will be to recover a new element of complementarity between Ovid’s twin poetic encounters with myth and with ritual. Briefly, if the *Fasti* textualizes ritual, transforming the significance of actual ritual practices by embedding them in a complex and open-ended nexus of explanatory narratives, the *Metamorphoses* ritualizes texts, by making clear that the very phenomenon of literary representation can inspire in its audience the same kinds of social and theological speculation as ritual.

But if the means by which sacrificial ritual poses questions remain fairly constant, at least within the scope of Greco-Roman culture, the questions themselves, together with the answers provoked and even the interest in addressing them at all, vary with time and circumstance.³⁸ Thus, beyond registering an alertness to the deep structures of sacrifice, Ovid brings his own distinctive emphases to its representation and embeds it in the very contemporary thematic interests of his poem. Two interrelated issues emerge in connection with sacrifice in the episodes we have just examined that in turn clarify their significance for the work’s larger political concerns. The first is an analogy with sensory and cognitive perception. Within the Lycaon narrative, the king’s ritual innovations all have a heuristic aim; he wants to affirm something about the place of man in the world and at the same time demonstrate it to others. So too in the rival demonstration Jupiter offers to his audience, the meticulously cataloged phenomenology of Lycaon’s transformation has a similar function of revealing a truth that his own audience will accept as true. Because Ovid’s audience would not be able to taste the meat at a sacrificial feast, can come closer to realizing a visual description, and closest of all to sharing in evaluating the plausibility of a narrative, this centering of sacrifice on what is seen and what is described, in place of, for example, what is consumed, enhances his own audience’s potential participation in the event. But such an emphasis on the visual is more than a matter of authorial convenience. Through sculptural representations like the Ara Pacis, as well as literary ones like the bougonia at the end of the *Georgics*, and Livy’s account of the fetial sacrifice, mediated depictions of sacrifice became focal points of Augustan culture, all the more valuable perhaps

³⁸ A point repeatedly stressed by Feeney, e.g., 2004.11.

because their potential audience surpassed the limits of space and time that bound even the grandest and most frequently repeated ritual. In highlighting the overlaps between sacrificial experience and the reception of representations, Ovid thus draws attention to an important aspect, even transformation, in the means by which ritual reached its community.

This leads into the second of our larger themes: Ovid's emphasis on the role of art in both human creation and the creation of humans and the consequent designation of artistic representation as a sphere of rivalry between man and the gods. Obviously, this is not an Ovidian invention—think only of the role of mimetic technai in Hesiodic accounts of the struggle between gods and man, or the Aeschylean Prometheus's invention of all the arts by which man modifies nature. But from the beginning of Ovid's account of human origins, the fundamental nature of human identity is approached through questions about the identity of our creator and what we ourselves are meant to create. Equally significant is our simultaneous adoption of an active and passive creative role; human beings' intermediate cosmic status finds a mirror in the indeterminacy of their position as something made by others and something that constructs its own images. As we have seen, this introduces a fundamental competition in perspectives both within Ovid's poem—between the perspectives of human characters and the perspectives adopted by the narrative on human characters—and in our evaluation of the status of the poem itself—between an acceptance of Ovid's representation as the truth about the world and an awareness of it as a highly personal poetic construct. But again it would be misleading to deduce from this that Ovid has simply made his poem about poetic creation. For, as we saw in the preceding chapter, the figure of the craftsman becomes in Ovid's hands an essential tool for describing the conditions of identity in Augustan Rome. Not only has the simultaneous reception and reprojection of images become itself an important means by which each individual conveys who he is. In metaphorical terms as well, the extreme hierarchization of levels of creation within the poem, where no figure can escape contextualization in someone else's story and everyone, even Augustus, is liable to be judged a mere imitation of his betters, also links problems of representation to contemporary status anxieties. That Ovidian man should encounter the gods only through a mutual struggle to establish the truth of images thus seems a very Augustan updating of archaic creation myth.

Here, however, it is again important not to impose restrictive limits on the poem's scope by reading its theological dimension simply as a projection of the political. That the terms in which Ovid defines god and man are conditioned by circumstances of history and class does not mean that they are not legitimate attempts to investigate the categories of god

and man. Characteristically, Ovid combines in this very section of his poem his most overt attempt to address "timeless" questions of human identity with the narrowest and most topical political allegory. Thus, the first appearance of the Olympian gods in the poem, the very assembly at which Jupiter presents his tale of Lycaon, introduces the gods tricked out with all the manifestations of political status in the new empire. They dwell on heaven's Palatine, they conduct business according to the procedures of the Senate, and they display an exaggerated horror at Jupiter's personal endangerment that calls to mind the public displays of outrage after attempts on the life of Caesar. This is not the place to offer a prolonged analysis of the scene, but its role in energizing a number of the poem's central narrative strategies should be clear. Again the contemporary frame of reference draws attention to Ovid's role in fashioning his gods at the very moment when his Jupiter most demands acceptance of his own "truth." At the same time, this investigation of the authority of the Ovidian narrator has implications outside the frame of the poem as well. For the diminution of the gods to pale imitations of the imperial Senate also offers a way of responding to the actual uses of Olympian divinities in self-glorifying depictions of the new imperial order. However, the narratological and political implications of how we read these gods form a piece with the creation as a whole. As we have seen, the problems of accepting gods who look too human again forms a bridge between the response generated by Ovid's poem and the problem facing a Lycaon. And our own inclinations simply to dismiss this Jupiter on the Palatine as the most secondary and derivative of any conceivable "gods" powerfully demonstrate larger questions about the possibility that man has never done anything other than invent gods after his own image and that human beings can never achieve any apprehension of the divine through human craft. Here as well, to catch some trace of religious experience in Ovid's poem illustrates another dimension of the marvelous paradox of finding truth in fiction.

II. PYTHAGORAS

The most explicit presentation of "sacrificial theory" in the *Metamorphoses*, indeed anywhere in extant Latin poetry, comes as part of Pythagoras's four-hundred-plus line attack on meat eating. Here I want to show first how closely this passage engages with the themes and images developed in the poem's opening presentation of the origins of man and the transgressions of Lycaon. Again, contrasting focalizations articulate the radically different alternatives that sacrificial ritual makes available

for “reading” the place of man in the cosmos. Finally, I consider how the use of Pythagoras as an internal narrator affects our understanding of the relation between Ovid’s text and real ritual performance.

However one understands the relationship between the character of Pythagoras, the *Metamorphoses*’ narrator, and Ovid’s authorial perspective, there is no doubting the structural importance of the speech within the work.³⁹ Taking up the entire first half of book 15, Pythagoras’s speech bridges an essential transition between Greek legendary material and Roman history and, within itself, recapitulates the movement of the entire poem from the first beginnings of humanity to the poet’s own present. Pythagoras’s very identity and his mystical subject matter link Ovid’s work to key moments in the Roman epic tradition that focus specifically on the authority of the poet.⁴⁰ Thus, Ennius evokes Pythagorean eschatology to justify his writing of epic as the reincarnation of Homer. Critical response to the passage has been as varied as its own contents and stylistic registers and ranges between those who regard it as Ovid’s exposition of a theory of nature that gives new seriousness to his theme of transformations and those for whom the parody of philosophical epic by one of the weirdest figures in ancient philosophy provides a final deflationary move. A full assessment of Pythagoras’s credibility and its impact on Ovid’s construction of his own poetic voice would go well beyond the scope of this argument. What I would assert here, though, is that Ovid’s Pythagoras offers a comprehensive reading of the poem, and the act of assessing that reading allows each member of the poet’s audience to retrace in turn her own experience of the work.

Pythagoras intends his instruction to have an impact on two practices, dining and sacrifice. His notorious insistence on abstinence from animal food made Pythagoras seem something of a crank, and the prominence of this motif here has been cited as evidence that Ovid presents him from the outset as a figure not to be taken seriously.⁴¹ Yet it is important to remember that meat eating signified much more than a life choice or wellness regimen. It was intimately connected with the ritual of sacrifice in two important senses. First, “metonymically” the consumption of victims formed an important element in Roman public sacrifice, and one that, as John Scheid in particular has emphasized,⁴² acted especially to establish social solidarity within the community of sacrificers. These sacrificers became “participants” in the sense that they literally received a part of the victim for consumption. Second, the Roman use of meat eat-

ing to establish the boundaries between insider and outsider corresponds to a conceptual and “metaphoric” connection between sacrifice and meat eating traceable in Greek literature and thought. Like sacrifice, humans’ consumption of cooked meat marks their intermediate position between gods and beasts. And Pythagoras’s argument against meat eating makes as much of this distinction as any Vernantian student of ancient religion might wish. To consume flesh is potentially to consume not “another” but a member of the same species as you. It means therefore to take on the characteristics of wild beasts. Similarly, using the gods as justification for sacrifice collapses the divine into the human by attributing our own (bestial) emotions to them. The result of meat eating, then, becomes a conceptual chaos mirroring the physical one produced by the very process of ingesting animal flesh.

And this alternative view of the “proper” rituals of ancient and religious and social practice is rooted in turn in a more fundamental set of assumptions about one of the central epistemological questions raised by the poem, the relationship between appearance and identity. Thus, one could argue, against Pythagoras’s practical teaching, that it is merely his own distinctive and “antisocial” assumption of an essential sameness—where, if one accepts appearance as a valid index of reality, only difference appears—that brings such moral confusion to practices that would otherwise offer a clear map of the hierarchies both within the cosmos and within Roman society. And here it is important to note that the exiled Pythagoras brings the same perspective to appearances as the rebel Arachne. Things are not what they seem, and very different beings can look out from the forms that they bear. Where Arachne placed divine subjects in wolf’s clothing and preserved human identity by presenting victims as unchanging, Pythagoras goes a step closer to Ovid by embedding human consciousnesses in nonhuman forms, and a step closer to “us” by insisting that human identities potentially look out not only from the specific cows figured in the myth of Io, for example, but from “real” cows like the ones lowing on their way to the altar.

This transition from the mythical, specific, and fictional to the present, general, and real corresponds with many other structural features of Pythagoras’s discourse. As we have seen, the speech comes at the moment when the poem’s focus shifts notably from Greek myth to Roman history. And as Pythagoras himself moves from the distant origins of sacrifice and the nature of man to predict Rome’s future, he provides one possible model for how the reader might understand her own historical context in light of what she has so far read in Ovid—a notoriously problematic model as we have seen, because it presents Roman power as paradoxically unchanging in a world where everything is transformed. The pas-

³⁹ On this subject, see esp. Segal 2001 and Myers 1994.136–66.

⁴⁰ Hardie 1995.

⁴¹ Solodow 1988.163–68.

⁴² Scheid 1984.

sage's generic nature comes into play as well, for didactic poetry insists more explicitly than any other genre on the connection between text and practice. The reader having received instruction from the poem must then go out and apply it in the conduct of his life and the performance of his work. Pythagoras's particular insistence on the practical consequences of his teachings, the avoidance of animal food, receives an additional didactic immediacy through the intermittent presence of an addressee, Numa, who like the high-status Memmius in Lucretius's epic, comes in and out of focus as a possible reference for the second-person pronouns in the teacher's speech—an indeterminacy fully appropriate to Numa's own quasi-fictional status.

Thus, both the form and content of Pythagoras's speech invite attention to the relation between text and context, and this has a particular importance for understanding the representation of sacrificial ritual in the passage. As part of his effort to recontextualize literary production in ancient Rome, Thomas Habinek has recently suggested that sacrificial ritual was an important area of mastery for the poet (*vates*) within archaic culture.⁴³ If so, the poet or singer was significantly present at the performance of public rites in a way that, with the possible exception of Horace's role at the secular games, cannot be matched in any better-attested period. Here I suggest that within Pythagoras's speech Ovid creates analogies between the visual dynamics of sacrificial practice and the ambiguities of his own narratives of metamorphosis that allow his own vatic utterance to be recentered in the religious life of the larger community.⁴⁴ In presenting sacrifice, as we shall see, from the visual perspective of the victim, Ovid's Pythagoras on the one hand demonstrates how to write sacrifice, by concentrating on an aspect of actual ritual experience that can be reproduced in literature, as opposed again to the consumption of sacrificial meat that is Pythagoras's actual subject. At the same time, he allows for authentic sacrificial practice to be seen as an extension of the metamorphic theme of the poem and so to echo and reinforce its own negotiations of the place of the individual within the physical and political worlds.

Ovid relates the ambiguous narratology of metamorphosis to ritual experience in Pythagoras's account of the sacrificial act itself, which concludes the opening indictment of meat eating:

*nec satis est, quod tale nefas committitur: ipsos
inscripsere deos scelerei numenque supernum*

⁴³ Habinek 2005.226–33.

⁴⁴ Though I would not go so far as to argue that this recentering derives from a desire to reclaim a vatic role that was actually known to have existed at an earlier phase of Roman history.

*caede laboriferi credunt gaudere iuveni!
victima labe carens et praestantissima forma
(nam placuisse nocet) vittis insignis et auro
sistitur ante aras auditque ignara precantem
inponique suae videt inter cornua fronti,
quas coluit, fruges percussa que sanguine cultros
inficit in liquida praevisos forsitan unda.
protinus ereptas viventi pectore fibras
inspiciunt mentesque deum scrutantur in illis;
inde (fames homini vetitorum tanta ciborum)
audetis vesci, genus o mortale! quod, oro,
ne facite, et monitis animos advertite nostris!
cumque boum dabitur caesorum membra palato,
mandere vos vestros scite et sentite colonos.*

(15.127–42)

Worse than the commission of such a sin, the gods themselves are enlisted in the crime, and they believe that the heavenly power rejoices in the death of a labor-producing bullock. A victim without a blemish, of surpassing beauty (for it works harm to have pleased), decorated in fillets and gold, halts at the altar and, unknowing, hears the priest praying and sees placed on her own forehead, between her horns, the very grain that she cultivated, and struck, she stains with blood the knives already seen, perhaps, reflected in the clear water. Straightway, they inspect the organs wrenched from her living breast and examine within them the intentions of the gods. And thence (so great a hunger do men have of forbidden food) you dare to eat, o mortal race! Don't do this, I beg you, and turn your minds to my warnings! And when you put your mouth to the limbs of slaughtered oxen, know and perceive that you are chewing your own co-farmers.

Here, in discussing the very same outward form with which in book 1's account of Io Ovid produces one of his most elaborate exercises in shifting focalization, we find an equivalent sudden shift from looking at the cow's remarkable *forma* to seeing what the cow sees, the knife reflected in the water—the context in which Io saw her own bovine image and so became aware of her transformation. Or, rather, what takes over from the view of the cow is a kind of double vision, allowing the reader to see with the cow or to see the cow seeing. The connection between this passage and the programmatic metamorphosis of Io becomes even closer when the sacrificial victim is described in terms of her beauty in language also used when females attract the erotic interest of the gods (*placuisse nocebat*). Conversely, Io herself, like the victim, was presented as a gift to the goddess Juno (*munus*). And, as in that earlier passage, the visual

shift at the center of the account goes together with an encouragement to identify more broadly with the female victim by attributing human motives to her—subtly anticipating the didactic point of the scene, which is precisely to perceive (*sentite*) the victim as human. Thus, the description of her as *ignara*, while literally connoting the befuddlement of a brute beast—what does a cow know about sacrifice?—nevertheless creates a sympathy for her ignorance by inviting the reader to anticipate a poignant human anagnorisis. Similarly, the phrase *quas coluit* hovers delicately between Pythagorean editorializing and mimesis of the cow's own developing awareness.

This reverse metamorphosis that makes a maiden of a cow also takes place through a clever intertextual gesture; for Ovid's cow sacrifice recalls Lucretius's description of the maiden Iphigeneia, who was herself ruthlessly undeceived about her fate, when, before the altar (*ante aras*), she sees her weeping father and concealed knives (*DRN* 1.84–101).⁴⁵ Iphigeneia too had been described previously in terms of her external decoration (*infula virgineos circumdata comptus*, 1.87); it is again at the moment of sacrifice that the poet suddenly makes her the subject of a verb of perceiving (*sensit*, 1.90). Where Lucretius takes sacrifice with a human in place of an animal as victim as a measure of the horrors of *religio*, Ovid's Pythagoras trumps him by transforming the maiden Iphigeneia into a cow, or, better, lets us recognize the human antecedent lurking beneath the victim in a sacrificial act not by itself marked out as extraordinary or monstrous—making the Lucretian sacrifice at once more “fabulous” (cow turns into girl) and more “everyday” (happens all the time, not just at Aulis).⁴⁶ At the same time, the doubling of Io and Iphigeneia as the maidens within the cow further connects and complicates both episodes in Ovid's poem: the reference to water as the medium through which the cow sees the knives reflected also now summons up a “paternal” presence, because Io's father is the very river in which she saw her own reflection, and his immediate concern that his daughter has now lost the chance of a marriage recalls the nature of Agamemnon's deception of his own daughter.⁴⁷ And if Pythagoras here uses intertextuality

⁴⁵ Segal 2001.73 calls the account of sacrifice “highly Lucretian” but does not pursue the specific comparison.

⁴⁶ Ovid also reintroduces the metamorphosis that Lucretius leaves out of his account by not mentioning the climactic substitution of a deer for Iphigeneia, but the effect of reinserting metamorphosis into the story is not to lessen the horror of a fictional sacrifice but to increase the horror of “real” sacrifice.

⁴⁷ Ovid deploys another Lucretian intermediary in making this link between the human Iphigeneia and the bovine Io. In *DRN* 2.350–66, Lucretius, having argued that animals can recognize one another as individuals, develops the example of a mother cow seeking a

to prove his point about humans reborn as cattle, he also compels the shift in focalization that Lucretius opens up for his own readers. Lucretius lets his audience share the victim's viewpoint with the emphatically placed *sensit*. Pythagoras makes the same verb, here transformed to an imperative, his final injunction to his audience: “Perceive, *sentite*, that you are chewing your fellow *coloni*,” as though we have completed the metamorphosis hinted at when we see and hear what the victim sees by now becoming Lucretius's Iphigeneia, whom we have simultaneously transformed into a cow. See these cows as yourselves, he tells his hearers, even as he transforms them by making them see as Lucretius's victim while they see cows.

The consequences of Pythagoras's effort to transform the way we see sacrifice by literally introducing a new visual perspective on the act extend beyond the sympathy it mobilizes for the animal victims in the ritual and the analogy it suggests with the transformed victims of divine power within the poem. Another question of equal importance to Ovid's text and Pythagorean philosophy is also at stake: the representation of the gods. Pythagorean teaching was as noted for its rejection of anthropomorphized divinities as it was for vegetarianism, and according to Plutarch's life of Numa, the originally aniconic nature of religion at Rome was a legacy of his teaching.⁴⁸ So in our passage Pythagoras describes the divinity simply as a *numen supernum*, suggesting a single, formless, divine power that is physically above us.

This is another way in which the philosopher imposes contrasting visions on the sacrificial experience. Not only does the death of the victim become a double spectacle when we see both the visual effects of her

calf that has been slaughtered at the altar. The combination of the description of sacrifice with the presence of a parent—though here with the genders precisely reversed, even as the emotion of loss so strikingly absent on the part of the human father emerges poignantly in the cow mother—recalls Lucretius's earlier treatment of Iphigeneia. Ovid's earlier account of Io in turn contains some echoes of this second Lucretian scene. The “complaints” of Lucretius's mother are specifically re-“edited” to moos in the case of Io (*querellis*, *DRN* 2.358 ~ *conata queri mugitus edidit*, 1.637); the situation of foiled contact between parent and child is the same in the two scenes, as is the riverbank setting. Indeed, Ovid's allusion almost certainly plays on a recognition that Lucretius himself adapts a previous Io narrative here, having converted the erotic language and the imagery of wandering torment to the situation of a mother deprived of her calf. I owe the suggestion to look at this second Lucretian passage in these terms to an unknown audience member when I presented an earlier version of this argument in a lecture at the University of Leeds.

We should also observe that Ovid elsewhere adapts this Lucretian simile in a context that links it to the erotic preoccupations of his Io scene: Apollo laments his own destruction of the unfaithful Coronis like a heifer watching her son being slain by the sacrificial hammer (2.623–25).

⁴⁸ Plut. *Numa* 8.7.

death (*inficit*) and her own vision flickering out (*praevisos forsitan*), but the gods too become something we can see in different forms. We watch the ritual authorities literally seeking out the minds of the gods by looking down and into the organs of the victim (*scrutantur, inspicunt*). Here Pythagoras, though, sees only human folly and hubris (*audetis ... o genus mortale!*), for the *numen* is above. In this sense, too, Pythagoras's representation of sacrifice contrasts directly with the revelations offered by its practitioners. The latter's misguided sense of cosmic direction has led them to conflate god and beast in a transgression of boundaries precisely complementing what occurs when humans behave like animals by eating a cow that is really human. In ritual terms, then, Pythagoras's viewpoint alienates his audience from two fundamental ways in which sacrifice offers the possibility of communion between human society and its divine benefactors, by physically consuming the victim together and by looking on the victim as different from the assumption of a superior position.

Yet it is important to remember that this game of looking up or looking down is not one that Pythagoras can ultimately control. For, especially if we recall the language of human creation at the poem's inception, to look at things as a beast seems essentially to violate divine injunctions to men to raise their gaze. The philosopher may blame sacrificial participants for reducing humanity to bestiality, but he does so by means of an even more radical and, if we keep our own perspective anchored in the real world of Roman opinions, harder-to-accept assertion of an essential identity between the human and the animal.

But it is not only the *haruspices'* view of the gods that is at stake. Their cow-dwelling divinities mirror another mistaken way of seeing the gods that Pythagoras makes responsible for the very existence of sacrifice, the presentation of the gods as driven by human motives. And if the diviner's perspective recalls real-world ritual practice, it is now paired with a "poetic" strategy everywhere at work in Ovid's poem. In lines 15.127–29, the justification for sacrifice depends on viewing gods as rejoicing at the death of the victim, so that we have "enlisted" them in our crime. To press the metaphor of *inscribere*, the human gods who validate sacrificial ritual recall the all-too-human "written" gods we meet in book 1 of the poem. The sacrificial lesson of Pythagoras then, reechoes the tendencies of Ovid's excessive anthropomorphization of the divinities and underlines how distant such literary divinities are from philosophical conceptions. Io's divine suitor, caught as he is between the twin compulsions of shame and love, seems from this perspective even more a parody, and the narrator of such a *fabula* an equivalent to the misguided instigators of sacrifice in his criminal misunderstanding of the nature of the gods. The lovestruck king of the gods needs a Platonic philosopher to remind him

that the divinity, being perfect, can desire nothing; a schoolboy could have told him and Juno that the gods have nothing to fear.

This latest element in our analysis suggests an important way in which the character of Pythagoras acts as a mediating figure to help us understand the poem's larger negotiations with external reality. As a man who has left his own state, whose prescriptions are also alien from the Roman practices they are supposed to inform, and whose message of political mutability inevitably bears troubling consequences for the prospects of Roma Aeterna, Pythagoras can seem a very "anti-Augustan" figure. And this position seems confirmed by his explicit attack on a practice, sacrifice, crucial to the new principate's self-representation in ritual and iconography. We have also seen that the techniques Pythagoras applies to revealing sacrifice resemble those deployed by another Ovidian rebel, Arachne, in the sphere of visual arts—showing the human faces of the victims of the gods. But the reference to Arachne reminds us how hostile Pythagoras would be to her own misrepresentation of the divinities as criminals—*ipsos inscribere deos scelere*. Of course, as the fate of Arachne's tapestry shows, artistic forms are as impermanent as any others. For Pythagoras's perspective is emphatically not that of a poetic outsider to the rituals of the state. On the contrary, his speech here symbolically equates a poetic "theology" like Ovid's, which shows the gods as human, with the ritual practices of extispicy, which, again like Arachne, imagines the gods as beasts. His philosophical perspective can also make Ovid's fiction seem very "politically correct" in the Augustan sense especially because the first context in which we see humanized divinities makes them transparently figures of political authority. All of this should remind us that Varro's "three theologies," the theory obviously in play here, never exist in their pure states. Rather the "public theology" always borrows from both the "poetic" and the "philosophical." Here, to see with Pythagoras, poetry can align itself with philosophy to reveal the anthropomorphic fictions of religious practice or, on the contrary, can appear as the ally of ritual and exile the philosopher from the fabric of the poem as he has been exiled from his native polis.

Finally, it is important to remember how Pythagoras's position as internal narrator can have a similar triangulating effect, making Ovid's narrative by contrast potentially seem more real, or conversely highlighting Ovid's own exile, as just another storyteller, from contemporary reality. We have seen the many ways in which Pythagoras does not resemble the author of the poem—his own unwillingness to represent the gods and, as strikingly, his own obvious presence as a narrator directly addressing an audience and guiding its interpretation of his words. Indeed, Ovid seems to hold the philosopher at narratological arm's length by never explicitly

naming him, so that the most famous ventriloquist and shape changer in Latin literary history never quite emerges in the poem or becomes Ovid. But perhaps the absence of naming makes the point that this "soul" has abandoned only the name of Pythagoras to achieve a literary metempsychosis in Ovid's representation of his words; in this sense, so completely has he become Ovid that he can no longer be called Pythagoras. The paradox generated by the absent name of Pythagoras reminds us that throughout the poem Ovid has complemented both the awareness of his narrative's fictionality and the double vision his text generates on scenes of transformation, through the use of internal narrators. Thus, in the case of Marsyas, we have seen an explicitly didactic narrator slanting his audience's response to the event away from sympathy with the victim. Pythagoras's account of sacrifice offers another didactic reading that pulls in the opposite direction. In both examples, accepting the lesson offered by the internal narrator means seeing precisely half of what Ovid's text has to show. And the recognition of their partiality can reveal by contrast the wholeness of Ovid's poetic representation and suggest its closeness to an objective reality rather than a contingent and limited human representation of that reality. But, of course, the alternative to this reality effect is to remember that Ovid is human too and to recall the similarities he often stresses between his internal narrators and his own historical persona. Like Orpheus, for example, he tells metamorphosis stories after turning away from love. And, if we imagine the postexilic composition, or at least reception, of the poem, Pythagoras's own status as exile—the first thing we learn about him—cannot but recall the *relegatio* of the poem's own author.

But if Pythagoras's narratological impact on the poem's audience resembles those of earlier narrators, the scale and the stakes of the dilemma he poses have escalated. Pythagoras offers a complete *Metamorphoses*, from the beginning of time to the present, and the reader who takes this as the *Metamorphoses*, and Pythagoras as a mouthpiece for Ovid, will need to unread a great deal of what has gone before. This involves at once an alienation from the earlier part of the poem and a positioning of Ovid as an outsider to his own society. Witness the many times that an acceptance of Pythagoras as a mouthpiece for Ovid's philosophy of change has gone together with an anti-Augustan interpretation of his work. Correspondingly in prophesying the Ovidian present, and perhaps in claiming as his subject not what happened in the mythical past but how the world always is, Pythagoras's speech claims to write the author's and audience's own experience in a way that no other speech in the poem does so explicitly. The remedy, though, to allowing Pythagoras into history and letting him write Ovid for us is, as always, to remember that he is embedded in a fictional poem. Ovid's own language in his account of

the creation of man condemns him as someone who rejects the human duty of looking up by adopting the point of view of prone animals. Thus, on the one hand, seeing Ovid's gods as gods and his poem as the world helps keep Pythagoras in his place, while following Pythagoras's bovine gaze keeps Ovid's own historical status before our eyes by showing us an unexpected human self "reflected" at the center of multiple levels of representation, all of which contribute to affirm the otherness of their object.

Playing Gods

OVID'S METAMORPHOSES AND
THE POLITICS OF FICTION

Andrew Feldherr

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