IV

The Augustan Context

We may safely believe that Ovid's readers would have been most surprised if the *Metamorphoses* had turned out to be an Augustan epic in any positive sense of that word implying a serious acceptance of the Augustan system of values. Brooks Otis once maintained [1] that "the *Metamorphoses* do achieve not only a patriotic finale but a fuller patriotic meaning as well", and further, that there is an essential difference in style and feeling between the *Metamorphoses* and Ovid's early elegiac production attributable to a change of interest on Ovid's part, largely motivated by the political atmosphere. The article, which is deservedly considered as a valuable contribution to Ovidian scholarship, has been revoked, as far as the pages on the *Metamorphoses* are concerned, by the author himself in the preface to his book *Ovid as an Epic Poet* [2], which he terms "in some sense a palinode, a solemn act of penance for that article" [3]. From the present writer's point of view Otis certainly overemphasized Augustanism in the finale of the *Metamorphoses,* but there may be some difference as far as the alternative solution of the problem is concerned. Having stated in his article that the speech of Pythagoras, besides giving philosophical import to the concept of metamorphosis as such, prepares the "Augustan" finale, *i. e.* the transformation of Rome from an insignificant Italic city to its present state of *caput orbis* [4], Otis continues: "And that the poem ends with Rome dominant and Augustus *princeps* does not prevent us from asking another question. Is not Rome—like all cities, like all things—subject to the law of metamorphosis? Must it not also perish? But this logical question is not answered by Ovid; he has ended his poem, his *carmen perpetuum,* and therefore has—in his way—made it what we may now call an Augustan epic". But is not the question, which is not only a logical one but an inevitable one for Roman readers to ask, implicitly answered by the poet? Could any reader, having read the words of Pythagoras:

> *Sic tempora verti*
> *cernimus atque illas assumere robora gentes,*
> *concidere has. Etc.,* [5]

have any doubts that the answer is in the affirmative: Rome, too, must be subject to the eternal law of change. Tactfully, but explicitly, Ovid reminds triumphant Rome that she is only a city. In their more rational moments all Romans, including the Emperor himself, would no doubt have agreed. But the very soul of that noble complex of national dreams and patriotic ideals, which makes up "Augustanism", is the idea that Rome is a unique phaenomenon in the history of mankind, a city which owes her power and prosperity to her own moral strength, to *pietas* as symbolized in Aeneas and now realized in the person of Augustus, rather than to any automatically operating law of nature [6]. According to this idea Vergil had made Jupiter solemnly declare:

> *His ego nec metas rerum nec tempora pono:*
> *imperium sine fine dedi* [7].

Just before the passage quoted, Otis drew attention to the fact that Ovid did not follow this line of thought. But he failed to see that in that case it may be equally correct to maintain that the poem is not an Augustan epic at all. Otis' own criticism of his earlier work does, however, follow entirely different lines. The error of the article is said to be an undue overstressing of the Roman-Augustan element in the *Metamorphoses* and a failure to account for their non-Augustan features. In the meantime Otis has discovered the "plan" of the poem. Such "plans" should always be regarded with some suspicion and the author himself is quite aware of that fact. Otis' plan constitutes one of the most sensitive and persuasive attempts to explain the architecture of the poem. I am, however, not so sure that the architecture of the *Metamorphoses* is the most important thing. But that it is important can hardly be denied. Although there is a number of points on which I cannot agree with Otis' plan, I can subscribe to Otis' own words: "On the whole it seems to me to be a reality" [8] but not to the reason given in a parenthesis: "it corresponds in some sense to Ovid's intentions", where I fail to understand the words "in some sense" unless they are to be taken as an indication that the writer feels uncertain about his own statement; nor is it clear to me how he has managed to obtain information about Ovid's intentions. From our point of view it may be questioned, too, if it is a sound way of defining the "Ovid-problem" to ask "why a good poet could write such an unconscionable amount of bad poetry" [9]. At the bottom of this definition there seems to be an idea that ultimately "good" and "bad" are terms to be used about poetry with an absolute value; and this idea cannot be said to receive much support from a historical study of taste. The value of Otis' plan is, as I see

it, that it gives us a clearer apprehension of what kind of poem the *Metamorphoses* really were, helps us to discover what Ovid actually did. According to Otis himself, the true value of knowing Ovid's plan "is that it enables us to discriminate between what he felt he had to do and what he really wanted to do". As suggested in the Preface and fully elaborated in the Conclusion of his book [10], Otis uses his analysis of the architectonic structure of the *Metamorphoses* as evidence for Ovid's failure to reconcile the latent anti-Augustanism of what Otis terms the amatory *Metamorphoses* with the Augustan *Metamorphoses*. The demonstration of compositional unity leads him to a denial of what might be called ideological unity in the poem. This somewhat embarrassing outcome of a book which sets out "to look for the shape and meaning of the whole poem—its principle of unity" [11]: that the very design ruined the poem's unity, is based, as far as I can see, on preconceived assumptions about what Ovid felt and wanted. Is there any reason to believe that Ovid really felt that when he conceived some kind of an Augustan plan he had to carry it out in a truly Augustan sense? And is there any reason to suppose that his readers would have expected him to do so? There is not. And in his Conclusion in the second edition of his book Otis himself fully admits that and wholly repudiates his earlier opinion [12]. As the idea of a conflict between the "amatory" and the "Augustan" *Metamorphoses* permeates his whole book I cannot but see in this a great retraction. Otis now thinks that Ovid is deliberately anti-Augustan and anti-epical in those portions of the poem in which he earlier saw a vain striving for real epic Augustanism. As can be seen from the rest of this chapter, I think that this is much nearer to the truth than Otis' previous opinion. But Otis has gone too far. Ovid is neither a satirist nor a parodist. There are elements of both satire and parody in his poem. But just as there is no indication that he did not like—and wanted his readers not to like—Vergil because he allows himself and his readers some smiles at his expense, so there is no reason to believe that he had anything against the New State in principle. His anti-Augustanism is not deliberate, as he had no choice. He was born too late and so were most of his readers. How could they possibly have been Augustans? Both Augustus and the Augustan literature were established facts for Ovid and his readers, but their problem was not so much to take a stand for or against as to find a way of living with these facts and yet assert themselves. There is no hatred—at least not before his banishment—neither in Ovid's anti-Augustanism nor in his "deflation" of Vergil. And however important these features may be in the *Metamorphoses* they do not form the cornerstone of the "plan" and "meaning" of the poem

as Otis tries to demonstrate. Whatever Ovid wanted to achieve with hi poem, it was not to criticize the government or detract from Vergil' *Aeneid*. The anti-Augustan and anti-epic features are important but addi tional elements in the *Metamorphoses*. What made Ovid suspect in th eyes of the government is not really that he was against, but that he wa not for. It seems to me that the general secularization of the world, whicl is so conspicuous in the *Metamorphoses*, is not a result of a deliberat choice. It would probably not have occurred to Ovid or his contemporar readers that any other attitude was possible—except as hypocrisy. There fore I cannot accept as valid Otis' theory that the tension between a mock heroic Ovid and a serious and truthful Ovid is so important for the poen as a whole. The two attitudes are not at all in conflict with each other It does not really matter so much which traditional status Ovid's char acters have, whether they are gods or heroes or just plain people. Ovi exploits fully the inherent possibilities of the traditional status of hi characters, but—as I hope to make clear—they are all fundamentall human in motives and behaviour.

I do not believe in the use of splitting up the *Metamorphoses* in epi or heroic (or anti-epical or anti-heroic) and serious, un-epic and amator elements. They are not juxtaposed in the poem but amalgamated. Ovi was not, however, allowed to remain Ovidian and un-Augustan in peace and thus his attitude to Augustanism remains an important contextua problem. The *volte-face* of Brooks Otis in this matter may not have elim inated the widespread belief that Ovid tried—although not very success fully—to become an Augustan or at least to appease his influential critic by claiming to have had such intentions. This theory is based upon th verses in Ovid's letter to the Emperor on the *Fasti,* the *Medea,* and th *Metamorphoses;* but, firstly, the principal point about that passage is th fact that these works are composed in a "higher" style than the rest o Ovid's poems; the fact that Ovid wasted some praise on the Emperor i the *Fasti* and the *Metamorphoses* is only an additional point. Secondly readers of the letter would recall how Ovid in this self-defence claims ful credit for his warning in the *Ars* to married women against reading tha work. There it is evident that the poet does not take the charge seriousl because he finds it absurd and, in a sense, ridiculous; by his procedur he invites his readers to find it ridiculous, too. His defence is as observec by Wilkinson "a riotous *reductio ad absurdum,* and what is meant t seem absurd is the attitude of the Emperor" [13]. The points Ovid score later in his apology by the apparent "Augustanism" of the *Fasti* and th *Metamorphoses* are of exactly the same nature. It may be added that it i

perhaps not quite without interest to observe that Ovid does not claim to have any deeper Augustan tendency in his two big works but refers only to the ostensible respect paid to the person of the Emperor, thus discretely accusing his oppressor of being *ingratus*. So Ovid's self-defence is not likely to have made his readers believe that the Augustan façade of the *Metamorphoses* was more than just a façade, or to have induced them to assume an Augustan purpose behind an apparent Augustan plan—they would have believed in this no more than they believed in a serious didactic purpose in the *Ars,* which has a perfectly didactic plan [14].

In view of the fact that readers would have some doubts in advance about Augustanism in the *Metamorphoses,* they would not [15] fail to discover the humour and irony in one of the first passages where the Roman-Augustan element is present, *viz.* the council of the gods in the first book [16]. This passage follows after *The four ages* and the brief survey of the *Gigantomachia.* There is an unmistakable Roman element in the first of these passages: the description of the Golden Age falls into two parts, one demonstrating how things were not [17] and one how they were [18]. The contrast used in the first part clearly reveals itself as contemporary Rome, which is, if not the exact opposite of, at any rate rather far from being a golden age. In the lost paradise men were righteous by nature but now they have to be coerced by a *vindex*. Every reader could be confronted with that word whenever he turned a coin in his hand [19]. Punishment, fear, and threatening words engraved on bronze tablets are now the guiding principle. In the good old Golden Age there was no commerce, no military forces, no agriculture. The Iron Age is characterized among other things by the discovery of—gold, another variation of the paradox *aurea nunc vere sunt saecula, etc.* [20], and the allusion to recent history: *non socer a genero, sc. tutus* [21] makes it evident that the model of the Iron Age is contemporary Rome. The line:

lurida terribiles miscent aconita novercae [22]

is uncautious if not directly mischievous viewed against the background of contemporary gossip about the Empress. And when Ovid declares that *victa iacet pietas* [23] readers would not forget that *pietas* was among the four cardinal Augustan virtues inscribed on the golden shield in the Senate-house. Ovid's tone when he declared his happiness at being born into his own age [24] and his motivation for that statement together with the rejection of those good old days about which others might have nostalgic feelings did not conform very well with Augustan sentiments. Here he reverses the statement without conforming any more. Once he

had been too fond of the present state of civilization, now he rejects it too violently. The survey of the Giants' rebellion carries the reader back to the mythological past and combines the degenerated human race with the offspring of the Giants' blood. In the fight against the Giants Jupiter triumphantly used his thunderbolt and destroyed his dangerous enemies [25]. But after that he had to face another and more difficult problem; rebellion can be fought and defeated, but what can be done about moral depravation? Jupiter is sad, but not until after Lycaon's *attentat* against himself he

ingentes animo et dignas Jove concipit iras [26]

and the reader might expect a violent deed from him; but instead follow the words:

conciliumque vocat.

Jupiter in this case finds it wiser to act like a constitutional monarch and to secure a kind of parliamentary backing. The setting of the *concilium deorum* has as its model Rome and the meetings of the Senate under presidency of Augustus. The parallel between Jupiter and Augustus becomes explicit in the description of the reaction of the gods to Jupiter's first speech and the news of Lycaon's attempt to kill him:

Confremuere omnes studiisque ardentibus ausum
talia deposcunt: sic, cum manus impia saevit
sanguine Caesareo Romanum extinguere nomen,
attonitum tanto subitae terrore ruinae
humanum genus est totusque perhorruit orbis;
nec tibi grata minus pietas, Auguste, tuorum est,
quam fuit illa Iovi [27].

It is generally believed that Ovid refers to the murder of Caesar, and a number of readers may have understood the passage in that way; it should not be forgotten, however, that there had been real or alleged conspirations against Augustus' life as well. Contemporary readers may have been disposed to think of them first; at any rate that interpretation would make the parallel much more striking: an unsuccessful attack against the life of Jupiter himself would be compared to an abortive conspiracy against Augustus himself; it is tempting to assume that the reference is to Fannius Caepio's conspiration of the year 23 B. C. The criminals were condemned in absence and put to death when trying to evade arrest. Their death was sanctioned by the Senate's *publica auctoritas* [28]. As suggested by

Syme [29] the government may have used the exposure of conspiracies to remove its opponents and to secure or enhance the loyalty of the masses. From the point of view of modern history there would be nothing surprising in that. There is an indisputable touch of humour in the distinction between *nobilitas* and *plebs* among the gods. It is more difficult to determine how the rest is likely to have been interpreted by the readers. Comparisons between secular rulers and gods have a tendency to produce a comical effect upon modern readers, and it is quite reasonable to warn, as witness among others M. v. Albrecht [30], against applying modern sentiments to the interpretation of Ovid's text. There were in Alexandrian literature two relevant attitudes to the gods. The Alexandrians enjoyed very much the humanization of the gods, the imbuing of these dying gods with everyday life of the bourgeois citizen, as *e. g.* the passage in Apollonius Rhodius on Hera, Athena, Aphrodite, and Eros [31]; but when they were praising their kings by comparing them to gods, these were lifted up into an abstract sphere, and emphasis was laid upon their inherited majesty [32]; an example of this is Callimachus' Hymn to Zeus or Theocritus' 17. idyl. But Ovid combines the two Alexandrian attitudes: he humanizes and modernizes the gods at the same time as he introduces Augustus as a parallel to them. To compare Jupiter with Augustus rather than *vice versa,* which was the traditional pattern, might be said to be something quite different. By turning the pattern upside down Ovid achieves a humourous effect [33], and the lines:

> *Hic locus est, quem, si verbis audacia detur,*
> *haud timeam magni dixisse Palatia caeli* [34]

leave the reader with an open question: is Ovid afraid of committing blasphemy by describing heaven in earthly terms or is he troubled by the possibility that he might detract from the *majestas* of Augustus by comparing him with the incredible king of the gods, protagonist in the divine comedy? The Roman-Augustan parallel is sustained in the description of the reaction of the gods after Jupiter's second speech [35]. There are divine senators entitled to make speeches and others who must content themselves with voting; there is—of course—no opposition but the gods are worried about their future revenue when the human race is destroyed. The last feature of humanization is the fact that Jupiter remembers—in the last moment—that he is only a god; he cannot use lightning because as an educated god he knows that according to Stoic theory the world will once be destroyed by fire: so, carefully, he decides to use water instead [36].—It would certainly be wrong to conclude from the analysis

of this whole passage that Ovid was disloyal to the *régime*. There is no indication of that at all. It is nearer to the truth to maintain that he accepted Augustanism as a matter of fact with no objections, too quickly and too readily—and, it might seem, without any deeper understanding of the problems. He once accepted the world of amatory elegy as it was left to him by his predecessors; however, he transformed it—as was necessary in order not to repeat what others had said better before him—according to his own new *Kunstwollen* by changing not the traditional motives but the poetic attitude in the direction of playfulness. In a similar way he accepts Augustanism but does not see any harm in allowing himself and his readers a smile or two at the expense of its traditional conventions. Augustanism had been formed among others by Vergil and Horace a generation before; to Ovid and his readers Augustanism was part of the established order, and that makes a difference. There are in the *Metamorphoses* a great number of more or less overt references to contemporary Rome, but they do not normally reveal any particular Augustan tendency; so, when Daphne has been transformed, Apollo prophesizes that there will be two laurels standing in front of Augustus' house [37]; this in only a neutral aetiology, but still it associates the sacred name of Augustus with Apollo's amatory adventure. When the reader learns about Callisto that

> *non erat huius opus lanam mollire trahendo*
> *nec positu variare comas* [38]

he may note with some pleasure that she did not correspond to either of the contemporary types of women, the Augustan ideal or the Ovidian reality. Another example is found in the beginning of the ninth book where Achelous applies modern or Augustan moral thinking to Hercules and with effective rhetoric places his opponent in an embarrassing dilemma:

> *Nam, quo te iactas, Alcmena nate, creatum,*
> *Iuppiter aut falsus pater est aut crimine verus;*
> *matris adulterio patrem petis. Elige fictum*
> *esse Iovem malis an te per dedecus ortum* [39],

to which Hercules has no answer but violent aggression. More important, however, than these details is the general plan of the poem to the extent that it can be said to concern Augustanism. According to Otis the so-called epic panels, *viz.* the *Creation* of Otis' first, the *Perseus* of his second, and the *Meleager* and *Hercules* of his third section are the main carriers of Ovid's Augustan plot; this is fully developed in the fourth section by

the apotheoses of Aeneas and Romulus which in turn lead up to the apotheosis of Caesar and the Augustan finale. As we have already hinted it can by no means be ruled out that from the beginning of the poem the reader would have been left with some suspicions about the nature of Ovid's Augustan intentions. When the whole of the first section (*i. e.* books I & II) is seen together the following observations may be made: The *Creation* does not contain any explicit indications that the transformation of chaos into order is to be understood as Augustan symbolism. The demiurge is only mentioned in rather vague terms [40], but clearly he is not identical with Jupiter or his predecessor as King of that *caeleste solum* which the demiurge filled with stars and gods in exactly the same way as he populated the water with fish, the earth with animals, and the air with birds [41]. The crown of the work is man, *sanctius his animal* [42]. After that we hear nothing about the demiurge. But his new order proves rather unstable. Through the *Four Ages* and the *Gigantomachia* man degenerates morally and Jupiter—who, it may be noted, does not make his appearance until after the Golden Age—is left with a problem which he solves summarily by destroying the human race. He swears that he has tried everything [43]—the reader wonders what that is supposed to have been—but the case is desperate. He promises the anxious gods a new and better mankind:

> *Rex superum trepidare vetat subolemque priori*
> *dissimilem populo promittit origine mira* [44]

but it may be seriously questioned whether the offspring of Deucalion's and Pyrrha's stones are really better; with a most charming self-irony Ovid declares:

> *Inde genus durum sumus experiensque laborum*
> *et documenta damus, qua simus origine nati* [45]

and every reader would recognize, as he did in the *Iron Age*, that this is his own race. Before the *Flood* Jupiter had solemnly declared that he had to take action in order to protect the safety of the *rustica numina*, nymphs, *etc.* Immediately after the *Flood* the gods—first Apollo, then Jupiter himself—chase these innocent nymphs whom they went so far to protect from others. The story about Phaethon begins as a childish quarrel, and by Phoebus' amatory and paternal sentiments, his ridiculous promise and oath, the whole world is placed at the mercy of an irresponsible boy [46]. There is a very strong contrast between the *maiestas* of the Sun-God's palace and the royal magnificence at his court on the one hand

and his only too human behaviour on the other. A clear indication of this incongruity is the fact that the god has to take off and put aside his crown —the sun-rays—in order to embrace his son [47]. The description of Phaethon's fatal drive contains a number of points which may have made Seneca and other serious people protest. Only at the last moment does Jupiter take action "not without a brief and absurdly unnecessary explanation of his purpose" [48], and, although Phoebus himself is responsible for the disaster, his grievance against the Almighty Father is likely to have provoked some sympathy from the readers: he may have acted foolishly, but still, his error was human; Jupiter is a powerful but rather incompetent ruler. This is quite evident from these verses—the situation being that the Sun is on strike:

> *missos quoque Iuppiter ignes*
> *excusat precibusque minas regaliter addit* [49].

That is divine authority! "We have", Otis observes [50], "described, as it were, the full circle that goes from the sublime to the ridiculous", but it seems, I might add, that the sublime was ridiculously sublime and the ridiculous sublimely ridiculous. The *pater omnipotens* then goes on to perform his duties as supervisor of the world like a busy engineer, but he is very ready to leave his job for another love-affair; the amatory adventures of the gods take up the rest of the section which ends with the King of gods transforming himself into a bull. The above observations are meant as a supplement to and confirmation of the analysis given by Otis in his chapter The Divine Comedy, one of the best chapters in his book. I can subscribe to his conclusion, which might be rendered in these few words: the section is a very able, consistent, and amusing experiment in incongruity. Ovid was here, as in his earlier works, fascinated (but not scandalized at all) by the gap between pretension and reality. Otis does not rule out the possibility of a subtile suggestion that also Augustan *maiestas* was only a sham and the Emperor himself as comically human as Jupiter. This being so, however, I fail to see that this passage can be used to substantiate the view that Ovid intended to write an Augustan poem [51]. If that was really his intention he certainly did not carry it out in this first section, nor did he prepare his reader for its being carried out later in the poem. It would be nearer the truth to say that Ovid uses and exploits Augustan values by pretending a kind of Augustanism; but the old Ovid is easily recognizable in this new disguise, and the incongruity between Augustanism and Ovid is part of the game. If the incongruity between an apparent Augustan plan and a thoroughly anti-Augustan (this word

taken in a non-political sense) performance is considered to be an integral element of the fundamental motive *maiestas* ~ *amor* it appears to be in full accordance with the structure of the section.

According to Otis the main exponent of the Augustan plot in the second section [52] is the Perseus-panel [53] because it "presents us with a hero who has unmistakable points of similarity with Aeneas" [54]. In his analysis of the passage [55] Otis has not much good to say about it: it is "cold and factitious, a kind of bravura piece or little *Aeneid* that does not come off" [56], and: "here Ovid is at his worst and his worst is very bad indeed" [57]. The very badness of this "Vergilian epic" of Ovid constitutes for Otis an argument that here Ovid did not follow his own feeling or inspiration but felt obliged to prepare his reader for an Augustan conclusion of his *carmen perpetuum,* indeed that Ovid was vainly trying to be an Augustan *malgré lui* [58]. It seems to me that Otis here comes dangerously near to a *circulus vitiosus:* he wants to discover why a good poet like Ovid could write such a considerable amount of bad poetry and finds the answer in the incompatibility of Ovid's genius with his Augustan intentions: hence a passage which is bad must be Augustan. Most modern readers, no doubt, would subscribe to Otis' disparaging criticism of this passage with its phantastic blend of ingenuity and grotesque macabrism [59]. But would ancient readers? The generation before Ovid knew war from experience and that may be one reason why Vergil's battle-scenes are more than Homeric imitations. In Ovid's time there had been peace, at least in Italy. That does not mean, however, that his generation was not familiar with blood-shed. The actual sight of men killing each other in various ways with various weapons was a perfectly normal thing for every Roman. The blood-dripping shows of the arena were a public and popular source of entertainment and this must have influenced the attitude towards descriptions like the fight in Cepheus' house. There is in the whole of the *Metamorphoses* no regular battlescene which may be compared with those of Homer and Vergil. The epic *tableaus* of violence in the *Metamorphoses* are comparatively rare and take place not on a battle-field but somewhere else where fighting is normally out of place, for example in a house during a feast, as in this case and in the fight between Centaurs and Lapiths, or in a training-field as in the case of Niobe's children. An exception is the struggle between Achilles and Cygnus, but there the main point of interest is the fact that Cygnus is invulnerable. There are many other violent scenes, Pentheus torn to pieces by the maenads, Actaeon by his dogs, Philomela mutilated by Tereus, Athamas killing his child, *etc.* But it seems that the background normally presupposed in Ovid is not "real" war nor "real" violence, but the arena with its ingenious shows, which, despite their cruelties, were only shows to the Romans. Ovid is equally far from Homer's naive realism and Vergil's sentimental realism, and he refrained from describing what he did not know: war, but displayed his virtuosity in describing the kind of violence he knew and which his readers knew; apparently he was fascinated by the phaenomenon in a way which we may dislike but nevertheless are sometimes able to recognize in ourselves [60]. In this respect he foreshadows the taste of the Neronian age, where Seneca and Lucan with a curious blend of horror and satisfaction indulge in the most grotesque and macabre descriptions. The *barrocchismo* of Ovid may appear perverse and repulsive to us but it may nevertheless have found favour with Ovid's contemporary readers. Otis' analysis of the Perseus-epic is short and inadequate, perhaps because he finds that it does not deserve more than a few and derogatory pages. This is to be regretted, not least because a more careful analysis would justify the passage as the centre of the section, whereas Otis considers it an intrusive element, introduced only because of the poet's alleged Augustan intentions and having the somewhat meagre function of dividing the section into symmetrical halves.

According to the good old principle of starting *in medias res* Perseus is introduced as being borne hither and thither through the air by the veering winds and carrying in his hand the severed head of Medusa [61]. When evening comes he happens to be in Atlas' realm; the King, afraid of an *oraculum,* which the readers know to be referring to Hercules [62], shuts him out, and then by means of Medusa's head Perseus turns him into a mountain. The vengeance theme here points back to the fate of Pentheus and the Minyeides who also fail to pay due respect to a son of Jupiter; the "petrification"-motive points forward to the use of Medusa's head in the fight with Phineus, to Perseus' revenge on Proetus and Polydectes, and more distantly to the fate of Niobe. At dawn Perseus continues his journey and comes to Aethiopia where he beholds the lovely Andromeda on her rock, falls in love immediately, and addresses her with an elegant compliment worthy of the *salons* in Rome [63]. There is rich humour in the description of Andromeda's reaction. It should be noted that Perseus has no "mission" and apparently comes to Aethiopia by chance and that his motive for killing the dragon and marrying Andromeda is love. After the fight Perseus washes his hands, and while doing that he puts Medusa's head on soft sea-grass in order not to damage this precious weapon; this leads to the transformation of the sea-grass into corals [64]; the story has the double function of providing an episode of relaxation and reminding

the reader of Medusa's head. At the wedding-party Perseus recounts his adventures. But his story is much shorter than those of his heroic prototypes from the *Odyssey* to the *Aeneid* and is told in *oratio obliqua* [65]. This is a remarkable fact. *Oratio obliqua* was characteristic of official style and in literature it was used especially by the historians, and among those notably by Caesar, a fact which, taken together with Caesar's free use of absolute ablative, might point to a connection between official language and the reports of the historians. When Ovid uses indirect speech in the end of the tale of Syrinx [66], which is a *doublet* of the recently narrated story of Daphne, he heightens the effect of dullness—which is, as frequently observed, very amusing in that context—by exploiting the lack of spontaneity inherent in *oratio obliqua*. Here, the use of indirect speech reveals the conventionality of "the hero's telling about himself at a banquet". Ovid follows epic practice but slyly makes fun of it by choosing an incongruous medium: *oratio obliqua*. No wonder that the audience is not satisfied and wants more; but the taste of the Aethiopians seems to be more Callimachean than Homeric or Vergilian; they want to know why only Medusa had snakes instead of hair; the aetiology given in reply by Perseus combines the two themes of love and vengeance. At this moment Phineus breaks into the merry feast and claims his right; in vain Cepheus tries to calm him down and withdraws from the scene when hostilities start. After a long fight Perseus decides to use his magic weapon because he realizes that his enemies are too many. Phineus asks for mercy in a dignified speech, but Perseus answers with harsh irony and transforms the suppliant into a monument to be placed in Cepheus' house as a remembrance for Andromeda. As epilogue to the Perseus-epic there follow two short vengeance petrifications, of Proetus and Polydectes [67]. The whole plot of this epic panel bears a rather close similarity to the *Aeneid:* a hero comes, obtains the princess and half the kingdom from the old king; the previous suitor claims what he thinks to be his right but is defeated after a violent struggle, pleads with his opponent, and is killed by him. That the similarity is not incidental is evident from a number of references to the *Aeneid* [68]. By this similarity Ovid suggested the Roman-Augustan theme and prepared the epic panels of the following sections with respect to this. So far Otis may be right. But he remains on the surface. Perseus is not an Aeneas after all; he has no mission, his motives are love and revenge, and his behaviour towards his defeated foe is ostensibly un-Aenean. Nor is Phineus a Turnus; true, Turnus fights for his own sake, but nevertheless in the *Aeneid* his fight has the deep and tragic function of reflecting the fight between Italia and Roma. There is no analogy to this in Ovid's

Phineus. So, here again, we meet with Ovidian ambiguity: by design and by a number of references the Perseus-epic ostensibly suggests the *Aeneid,* Aeneas, and through him points forward to Augustus and may in that way be said to be the exponent of an Augustan plot. Yet, in style and content the epic is un-Augustan and, indeed, must be so in order to perform its function as the centre of a section which by its subject-matter reveals itself as more "Alexandrine" than "classicistic" and whoses themes are dominated by the contrast between love and vengeance. The tension between the more distant Augustan function and the less distant function in the near context does not have to be taken as an artistic inconsistency, but may be interpreted in terms of Ovidian incongruity. In dealing with the *Metamorphoses* it seems advisable to remember the truism that the unity of a poem is not made up by harmonies alone but also by dissonances.

In the central panel [69] of Otis' third section [70] the same picture emerges: it is quite possible that the apotheosis of Hercules as such prefigures the later apotheoses of Aeneas, Romulus, Caesar and his son, but it seems quite unsatisfactory to see in this the major function of the panel [71]. One of the two major parts of it, *viz.* the story about Meleager, has no direct relation to the Augustan plot but forms a contrasting parallel to the Hercules-epic, the other major episode of the panel. Each hero is ruined by a woman whose love turns into hatred, and both Meleager and Hercules are consumed by fire. But Meleager is guilty: his anger, springing from his love to Atalanta, makes him kill his mother's brother; Hercules, on the other hand, is the victim of a false rumour. The difference of their respective fates, death and apotheosis fits well into the whole section, which has as one of its major motives theodicy. In between the two more "epic" parts of the panel are inserted the *Philemon and Baucis* and the *Erysichton* which are also theodicies but which in their whole mood form a "comic" contrast to the "tragic" scenes which end the Meleager and the Hercules episodes. Love is present in all the stories that make up the panel, a fact which contributes to the appropriateness of its central position. As observed by Otis himself [72] the two major episodes are parallel in construction, each being based upon a combination of epic and tragic sources. Perhaps too much importance should not be attached to the effect of the sources in view of the fact that Ovid normally shows great skill in transforming his sources so as to suit his own ends. When, as here, the "epic" parts (the hunting of the Calydonian boar and the wrestling of Hercules with Achelous) and the "tragic" parts (the Althaea passage with Meleager's death and the Deianira passage with the apotheosis of Hercules on Mount Oeta) correspond to the character of the sources, the reader

is more entitled to believe that the poet knows what he is doing than to assume that he is unconsciously dominated by his sources. Otis, too, arrives at the conclusion that the combination of epic and tragic elements in the *Meleager* and the *Hercules* is, as it were, intrinsically justified; as, however, he sees the justification in Ovid's intention to show the epic quality of these stories as a means of paving the way for the Roman dénouement of the whole poem [73], his conclusion does not seem quite satisfactory and does not square with the character of the text. Otis is too sensitive a scholar not to be aware of this fact, but instead of altering his conclusion he criticizes Ovid for not complying with it. There are in the epic parts of the *Meleager* and *Hercules* a rather great number of signals to the reader that he should not take the epicism too seriously. For example, Nestor is introduced in order to invent pole-vaulting as a means of very unheroic escape [74], Telamon, a great hero, is eliminated because he stumbles over a root [75], Atalanta hurts the boar as lightly as possible but the consequences are heavy: Meleager glorifies the heroic deed of the girl, the heroes are ashamed and shoot at random, Ancaeus rushes forward to his own death, Pirithous is about to do the same, but is then called back by Theseus with the not very heroic words *licet eminus esse fortibus* [76]. To these examples [77] may be added the use of *agricolae* in the very beginning of the *Meleager* [78]; a signal of another kind is the pompous pedantry of the lines:

> *misit aprum, quanto maiores herbida tauros*
> *non habet Epiros, sed habent Sicula arva minores* [79]

or the botanical completeness in the description of the marsh from which the boar rushes forward [80]. In the epic part of the *Hercules* the procedure seems to be similar. As aptly remarked by Otis [81]: "Instead of one of Hercules' authentic labours, Ovid only tells us how Achelous lost one of his horns". However, the framework of this story should not be forgotten. It is in a sense not Ovid who is the narrator; the story forms part of the conversation in Achelous' cave. This setting is discretly but consistently modernized; the cave seems to be, *mutatis mutandis* a Roman *villa marina* [82]. And as a rich Roman Achelous has pretty servants, nymphs of course [83], and costly wine-cups which might have interested a Verres. The praise of the poor but honest simplicity in Philemon's and Baucis' house [84] acquires as peculiar flavour under these circumstances. Horace! It is also worth remembering that the story about Erysichton, including the ecphrasis on *fames*, is told during a splendid dinner. Finally Achelous tells the story about his horn and ends with an aetiology: his

horn has become *cornucopia;* and what happens: one of the servants, a nymph, well girded like Diana, brings in the *mensa secunda:* a horn of plenty filled with fruit [85]. This frame may in itself have made some readers doubt that Ovid's pretensions in this whole passage were those of high epic alone. But there are other indications, too. I have already mentioned the peculiar effect of the "Augustan" moral reasoning of Achelous in his quarrel with Hercules [86]. The image of Hercules as a man with more brawn than brain is sustained in his boasting speech, beginning with the line:

> *cunarum labor est angues superare mearum* [87],

in the fact that he does not observe that Deianira is scared not only by the river but also by the carrier provided by her husband, *viz.* the centaur Nessus [88], and in his somewhat gladiatorial ostentation of strength:

> *"Quandoquidem coepi, superentur flumina" dixit,*
> *nec dubitat nec, qua sit clementissimus amnis*
> *quaerit et obsequio deferri spernit aquarum* [89].

In the subsequent verses Nessus is said to be about to *fallere depositum,* a not very epic metaphor the effect of which is heightened by Hercules who, tactlessly it may seem, refers to his wife as "my goods" and forbids Nessus to "embezzle" them:

> . . . *exaudi nec res intercipe nostras!* [90].

All these things would have made it rather impossible for the reader to think that he had to do with passages that really aspired to epic weight and gravity. If that was what he wanted he would be disappointed and say that Ovid did not know his own *vitia.* Others may have been fascinated by the blend of incongruous elements. Otis concludes that one cannot resist the truly Ovidian humour, but that it is fatal to the epic pretensions [91]. But he fails to see, apparently, that the epic pretensions form an inseparable element of this humour, and the bias that these episodes should be real and serious epic prevents him from drawing the correct conclusion from his observations: that this elusive poet shrewdly avoids the Scylla of trying to be an epic poet in the Vergilian sense of the word and the Charybdis of making parody [92]. The "tragic" parts of the *Meleager* and *Hercules,* especially the monologues of Althaea, Deianira, and Hercules are star-performances, abounding in ingenious, grotesque, and macabre *concetti.* We should remember that not only Ovid but his readers, too, had grown up in the auditoriums of declamation, a fact

which inevitably influenced their taste. Their attitude to these descriptions and soliloquies would therefore be somewhat ambivalent in the sense that, although they were impressed by the violent passion, they would still be able to enjoy the *virtuosismo* of the performance. If "baroque" is well defined as "strength at play" we have here, as in the fighting-scene of the *Perseus,* samples of Ovid's *barocchismo.* As for the Augustan message in the apotheosis of Hercules the following observations may demonstrate that there are certain reservations to be made, that here, too, Ovid maintains a balance between apparent good faith and latent scepticism. Hercules deserves apotheosis in return for his numerous labours, which he enumerates himself in his monologue ending with the desperate rhetorical point:

At valet Eurystheus; et sunt, qui credere possint
esse deos? [93]

but nevertheless he revenges himself cruelly and unjustly on Lichas, who had unwittingly [94] brought him the fatal garment, in spite of his begging for his life [95]. Ovid took over and elaborated this story from the *Trachiniae* of Sophocles, which is also the main source of the rest. But he did not follow Sophocles with regard to the cause of Deianira's reaction; in Ovid the report of Hercules' love for Iole is *false,* based upon rumour; Hercules is innocent of adultery, it seems, and Lichas is not a *conscius* in the plot against him. The consequences is that the punishment of Lichas in Ovid appears far more unjust than in Sophocles. Lichas could easily have been left out of Ovid's account, but on the contrary he elaborates upon the subject—and in a rather, as it were, surrealistic way: a technological comparison [96], a meteorological one [97], and a grotesque, pseudo-scientifical point [98], but their very "realism" makes any real illusion dissolve. The contrast to this bravura description of insane fury follows immediately after. Being calm and cool as the stoic sage Hercules builds his pyre, bequeathes his precious bow to Philoctetes who kindles the fire; then he makes his bed using the hide of the Nemaean lion as a mattress and the club as a pillow and lies down—merry and undisturbed as if he were participating in a dinner-party [99]. This contrast may be Ovid's epic irony at the expense of both classical tragedy and contemporary use of Hercules as a stoic symbol. Both the passion of Hercules and his suppression of it are carried to the extreme, but the Ovidian incongruity of the passage results also from their juxtaposition.

The following scene [100] is enacted in Heaven, and it seems that the gods are at least as human as Hercules, or even more so. Here, as in the *concilium deorum* in book I, the parallel to Rome is easily discernible and

the effect of this confusion of two levels is humorous. Jupiter's speech is political one. He takes full advantage of the situation to assert his ov prestige and supremacy, and his paternal feelings seem to be subordinat to these intentions. This is quite evident from the very political and ve Roman thought and expression in the words

. . . cunctisque meum laetabile factum
dis fore confido [101]

and from the subsequent clever anticipation of any objection Juno migl have. She on her part, not only the Queen of gods but certainly also grand political lady, accepts, as she must, the decision of the ruler, whic is approved by the authority of the *concilium;* however, she feels it woun ing to her pride and detracting from her *dignitas* that she has to lose fa by allusions to her hostility against Hercules. Significant details in tl passage are the replacement of *patres conscripti* by *O superi* [102] an the *abusus* of Vulcan's name although he is present himself [103]. Tl last lines of the whole panel and the transition to the next story seem t me to exhibit Ovid's ingenious subtlety. The comparison with a snake sloughing its skin is in itself epic and heroic [104]. But in this context rather detracts from the epic dignity of the apotheosis. The effect of th fine and august line:

coepit et augusta fieri gravitate verendus [105]

is considerably modified by the subsequent pun:

Sensit Atlas pondus [106]

Ovid may well be said to pave the way for the Augustan dénouement c his poem. But he seems here to employ this theme with his tongue in hi cheek. And the dominant function of the whole epic panel seems to m to be related to its own section, "the Pathos of Love", the preparation fo the Roman-Augustan message to come being only an additional elemen

There is a general trend to regard the last part of the *Metamorphose i. e.* Otis' fourth section [107], as the least successful portion of the poem and this judgment may be valid in the perspective of modern times. A long series of ages before us has had Vergil's *Aeneid* before their eyes a an undisputed masterpiece and the poem has become the story abou Aeneas and Rome to such an extent that any other poetic treatment of th subject inevitably seems wrong and unsatisfactory. For Ovid and hi readers the *Aeneid* had only recently asserted itself as the national epi poem; the quality of the poem would make it an impossible undertakin

to rewrite it, but, from a literary point of view, there would not yet be anything wrong in using the "story" as Ovid does in different terms and in another context, without retelling what had already been told by Vergil. Only to those readers who were conscious of and wanted to exploit the national idea and moral message of the *Aeneid* for political ends would Ovid's procedure seem to be something of a sacrilege. In connection with the *Ars* and the *Remedia* we have seen how little weight Ovid attributed to the judgments of those readers until it was too late. The story about Achaemenides is the only instance where Ovid could be said to retell Vergil [108]. A comparison reveals, however, a fundamental difference between the two passages. In Vergil Achaemenides is in the middle of his horrors and misery, squalid and desperate, and accordingly his address to the Trojans is high pathos. In Ovid Achaemenides is clean, safe, and far from the terrible dangers when he tells his story to Macareus, an invention of Ovid as Achaemenides himself is an invention of Vergil; his story has now become a sailor's tale and he tells it with considerable relish. Vergil had managed to use the *Odyssey* by letting us see the Cyclops through the eyes, not of Odysseus at the banket in Phaeacia, but of one of his men left alone with the monster. Ovid succeeds in using Vergil in that he makes the situation of Achaemenides similar to that of Odysseus, and by that procedure he returns in a sense to the *Odyssey*. It is probably wrong to brand Ovid's imitation as a parody [109]; it is rather a humorous compliment. Or is Briseis' letter to Achilles [110] a parody of the *Iliad?* Moreover, it should be noted that the function of the Achaemenides episode in Ovid is to introduce Macareus as a narrator, *i. e.* to escape from Vergilian subject-matter into a Homeric one [111]. In these four last books of the *Metamorphoses* both Homer and Vergil are used as frames, and to contemporary readers, and at least to some modern classical scholars, the very dexterity of the poet in filling these frames with anything but what they were originally designed to contain would be appreciated as an important element of the experience. So in this way Ovid places Vergil at the same level as Homer and obviously no greater respect could be paid to him; yet he does not abstain from making fun of both of them by shifts in tone or context and by introducing points which psychologically or rationalistically are perfectly justifiable in the context of "modern" concepts but which are incongruent with the conventional heroic worlds of Homer and Vergil [112]. By literary standards Ovid's peculiar brand of imitation would be as good as that of anyone else, but politically it might be suspect, especially in the case of the *Aeneid* which embodied—and, probably, to a great extent had created—the "ideology" of the regime. We have

seen that in the beginning of the poem Ovid slyly disguises himself as a Augustan simultaneously hinting at his audience that this *is* a disguise. W have observed that the Perseus-epic suggested only superficially the Au gustan theme, and, in the apotheosis of Hercules, that tragic passion an stoic *virtus* were both exaggerated almost into the ridiculous and the juxtaposed—after which the apotheosis was brought about by a divin political manoeuvre. As far as Augustanism is concerned the crucial pa sages in the last four books are the apotheoses of Aeneas, Romulus, an Caesar. The deification of Aeneas clearly echoes that of Hercules; bu there is the important variation that here the decision to make him a go is not made in a *concilium deorum* but results from "private" lobbyin and family protection. Aeneas had now reached the suitable age for obtain ing the honour of deification, he is "ripe" for it, *tempestivus caelo* [113 and Venus had secured the active or passive support of the gods by campaign: *ambierat ... superos* [114]. Her address to Jupiter, howeve is that of a daughter to her father and recalls Callimachus and Alexandrin ism. The fact that Venus only asks for a little, even a diminutive, plac in Heaven for Aeneas reveals the relaxed and humorous tone in th apotheosis of the national *Ahnherr:*

> *Aeneae ... meo, qui te de sanguine nostro*
> *fecit avum, quamvis parvum des, optime, numen*
> *dummodo des aliquod* [115].

The purification—this time by water—and the actual transformation int a god is described rather briefly, and the scene is too idyllic to be ver awe-inspiring. This apotheosis does not seem to form an exception to th general rule, prescribed by the poet himself, that the metamorphose should not be believed:

> *in non credendos corpora versa modos* [116].

Mars' address to Jupiter on behalf of Romulus [117] is very differen from that of the delicate Venus on behalf of Aeneas. In dignified heroi verses the military god, with his helmet under his arm, reminds the Kin of gods of his promise and quotes it from Ennius. Jupiter does not gran the request by kind compliments as he did to Venus but by clouds an thunder. Mars understands this language, rushes down to the earth an takes away Romulus in the middle of his royal activity. On his way u through the air the mortal parts of Romulus are dissolved

> *ceu lata plumbea funda*
> *missa solet medio glans intabescere caelo* [118].

This technological comparison considerably deflates the ostensive gravity of the whole passage [119].

As for the Julio-Augustan finale the following observations can be made. The statement that is was not Caesar's deeds in war and peace that elevated him to divinity but his son is literally true; everybody knew that Augustus had made his father a god. Ovid prefers to represent it as the greatest of *acta Caesaris* [120] to have adopted Augustus; everybody would agree that this was one of Caesar's most far-reaching decisions [121]. And granted that Augustus was a blessing to mankind Caesar had to be made a god—that was all there was to it:

> *Ne foret hic igitur mortali semine cretus*
> *ille deus faciendus erat* [122].

These verses reveal, naively it seems, that the deification was primarily a political device. Venus realizes that Caesar must become a god for this reason, yet she is frightened by the preparations for Caesar's murder. But all attempts to prevent it by addressing the gods *ut cuique erat obvia* [123] are in vain although they show their sympathy by omens. Finally, Venus is about to have recourse to that cloud by which she had once saved Paris and Aeneas [124] but is held back by Jupiter who refers to the world archives of the *Parcae*. This invention of a *rerum tabularia* is on the same level as the *Palatia caeli* in the beginning of the poem and it should be noted that by the wording:

> *quae neque concussum caeli neque fulminis iram*
> *nec metuunt ullas tuta atque aeterna ruinas* [125]

Jupiter suggests that these tablets of destiny possess the same permanence as—works of poetry. The idea that Jupiter should obtain the necessary information for his solemn prophecy by scrutinizing these archives is extremely Ovidian; it has an intriguing blend of the grandiose and the ridiculous. The prophecy itself contains a gross falsification of history. The *bellum Mutinense* is said to be part of the revenge of Caesar's murder and the wording implies that Augustus was fighting *against* D. Brutus and *conquered* Mutina:

> *caesi . . . parentis*
> *nos in bella suos fortissimus ultor habebit.*
> *Illius auspiciis obsessae moenia pacem*
> *victa petent Mutinae; Pharsalia sentiet illum, etc.* [126].

Of course Ovid knew the truth; he happened to be born in the year o the battle and it is not at all probable that he should have managed t remain ignorant of the historical facts about that significant event. Further more, the *Metamorphoses* were written for at least tolerably well educate readers who would certainly know the truth. The participle *obsessae* seem to indicate this lack of good faith. But why does Ovid make Jupiter falsif the records of fate? Why mention Mutina at all, thus drawing attentio to one of the Emperor's skeletons in the cupboard? In the *Monumentun Ancyranum* we have an official version of the history. There Mutina is no mentioned but only alluded to in vague and misleading terms. Antony i masked as a *factio* and a reader without historical knowledge might easil be induced to believe that this *factio* was more or less identical wit Caesar's murderers. Conscious manipulation with the past is not an inven tion of modern totalitarian states. In the *Monumentum* the misinterpreta tion appears to consist in clever suppression of certain facts and discret *suggestio falsi:* We may confidently believe that it had the desired effec on the Roman *plebs* [127]. Vergil and Horace pass over Mutina i complete silence. Obviously Augustus did not want it to be remembere too well that one of his first allies was at the same time one of his father' murderers. It was best to say as little as possible about Mutina. The dis tortion here is apparently meant to put Augustus in the best light, but it i so evidently a distortion that it becomes its own corrective—and that ma be the point. The flattery goes so far that it must have had an embar rassing effect.—The same might be said about the fact that Ovid does no abstain from using the word *servire:*

> *quodcumque habitabile tellus*
> *sustinet, huius erit; pontus quoque serviet illi* [128].

Augustus' legislation and moral reform are briefly mentioned; his dynasti arrangements receive more attention and Jupiter's prophecy ends by prom ising the Emperor *Pylios annos* before apotheosis. That could easily b read as being on the verge of the ridiculous: in the *Metamorphoses* them selves Nestor is said to have completed two centuries and started on th third [129]. Vergil and Horace did not indulge in such excess, and thei wishes for Augustus' life were formulated while he was still young; at thi time the Emperor was already about seventy years old. But Ovid has no yet finished. He repeats in his own name the ideas expressed by Jupiter i his prophecy: Augustus is greater then Caesar as Agamemnon is greate than Atreus, Theseus than Aegeus, and Achilles than Peleus; flattery her becomes a wild paradox—the aged Emperor an Achilles! It seems almos

a return to conventional adulatory decency when Caesar and Augustus are compared to Saturnus and Jupiter, respectively. Ovid prays to the *di indigetes* and other gods—including Apollo—correctly but somewhat irreverently called *Phoebus domesticus* [130]—that the Emperor may outlive himself. The wish lacks sensible proportions: Ovid was almost twenty years younger than Augustus. There is, of course, a place reserved for the Emperor in Heaven. But, as noted previously [131], in the last verses of the whole poem Ovid modestly promises himself to be there, too.

The conclusion to be drawn from all this is that it seems rather unlikely that Ovid should have made a serious attempt to become an Augustan in the *Metamorphoses* and even more unlikely that his readers would have understood his poem as an attempt at Augustanism. Also in its "Augustan" passages the poem reveals the same Ovid whom readers knew from his earlier poems. He has nothing against the established government; it secures peace, stability, and wealth which are fundamental conditions for the life he wants to live and for the literature he wants to write, in other words for *cultus* in Ovid's sense of that word. He has nothing against praising the Emperor; praise, even flattery was becoming part of good manners. But Ovid thoroughly lacked any deeper understanding of true Augustanism, the hall-mark of which is a serious belief not only that the rule of Augustus was *optimus status* but also that it represented the essence of ancient Roman moral and constitutional ideals. The literary tone in the Augustan age is certainly Pompeian rather than Caesarian as well observed by Syme [132]. Both Vergil and Horace are remarkably reticent about the deified father of the *princeps*. In his great finale Ovid, with naivity or sophistication, revived the memory that Augustus was not only *divi filius* but also the heir of the dictator.

Ovid was not able to treat the traditional Graeco-Roman gods with the veneration characteristic of the earlier generation of poets; his gods are not symbolic characters or historical forces but creations of mythological fancy, admirably suited to poetic entertainment and illustration of human behaviour. The majesty and prestige that had recently been conferred upon these characters by the religious restoration a generation earlier is one of the reasons why Ovid's divine comedy was funny. In a similar way the sentimental and romantic antiquarianism of the early Augustans gave force and freshness to the "modernism" of Ovid. And his obvious dislike of moralism would not have been so pleasing if people had not lived under the pressure of the moral laws. As a literary personality Ovid was successful by apparent lack of seriousness; he had his serious predecessors to thank for that possibility. His implicit anti-Augustanism is not so much a survival

of neotericism as a reaction of his own generation against the one preceding him; his readers proved to be responsive to his play with the ideals of yesterday. It is important, however, to note that Ovid's anti-Augustanism is not political in nature; also in the *Metamorphoses* he failed to recognize the reality of the Augustan illusions because he and his generation did not realize their urgency, and he did not resist the temptation of more or less discretely poking fun at them, perhaps as a kind of psychological self-defence against the overwhelming greatness of his predecessors in poetry and the immense power of the Emperor in the state; he found his way as he had done in his previous writings—and apparently without really seeing the danger involved. The *Metamorphoses* do not bear the mark of a belated and unsuccessful conversion; they are no more a retraction than the *Remedia,* but on the contrary the *magnum opus* of a poet on the peak of his creativity. The difference in style and feeling between the *Metamorphoses* and Ovid's early elegiac poetry is not to be explained by a change in the poet's interests motivated by the political atmosphere, but results from the fact that the *Metamorphoses*—although they remain a rather unique poem—do obey the laws of an entirely different genre.

CLASSICA ET MEDIAEVALIA · DISSERTATIONES X

CHANGING FORMS

STUDIES IN THE METAMORPHOSES OF OVID

BY

OTTO STEEN DUE

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