VI

The first Book

The preface of the *Metamorphoses* consists of only four verses:

> *In nova fert animus mutatas dicere formas*
> *corpora; di, coeptis (nam vos mutastis et illas)* [1]
> *adspirate meis primaque ab origine mundi*
> *ad mea perpetuum deducite tempora carmen.*

As a matter of fact it is the shortest preface of any Roman grand-scale narrative poem known to us. As observed by Fraenkel [2] Ovid followed the established rule that an epic poem ought not to begin with a lengthy and heavy preface. But he seems to have gone rather far in observing this precept [3]. In the *Aeneid* Vergil uses seven verses to indicate the subject of the poem, four to ask the Muse about the cause of Aeneas' troubles, and twentyone to answer that question; after that, the action begins. One line and one word is enough for Ovid to state the subject-matter. The rest of the four lines is a prayer to the gods containing information about the chronological frame and an indication that the poem will be a *carmen perpetuum*. Ovid's preface clearly indicates that this *carmen perpetuum* will be different from epic poems in the Homeric tradition, and the tone of the verses is quite moderate in comparison with the dignified solemnity of Vergil's preface. Ovid says *fert animus* and this combination contains an element of arbitrariness which is absent from Vergil's *cano* [4]. Ovid might have written about other things, but, eventually, he decides to write about transformations; he does not take up Vergil's attitude as a prophet whose song is inspired by divine power and obeys laws beyond his own choice. In accordance with this moderate—but of course still epic [5]—tone Ovid says *dicere:* he decides to *tell* about transformations whereas Vergil *sings* of weapons and the man from Troy. The gods who take the place of the Muse, apparently in order to allow the witty point in the parenthesis, are not supposed to reveal anything to Ovid, as the Muse does to Vergil, but to favour his undertaking and help the poem to

arrive at its planned end. There is a not very distant echo of Vergil, not from the *Aeneid* but from the *Georgica,* where the poet addresses Caesar, a god to be, and prays for his favour:

> *da facilem cursum atque audacibus adnue coeptis* [6].

Ovid's undertaking was perhaps not less daring than Vergil's but he does not adopt Vergil's self-confident modesty implied in the use of the adjective *audax;* he proudly puts forward his own person and says *coepta mea.* And in the following line he writes *ad mea tempora* where a reverential reference to Caesar might have been expected and—as readers could learn from Ovid himself [7]—might easily have been introduced. The metaphor in *adspirate* is the same as in Vergil's *da facilem cursum* and is continued in *deducite.* I would not, however, completely rule out the possibility that some readers may have seen a point in the fact that Ovid here uses the verb *deducere* about a *carmen perpetuum,* which in normal literary terminology is exactly the opposite of a *carmen deductum* [8]. There have been some speculations concerning the fact that Ovid uses this term about his poem [9]. It is generally and correctly believed that by ἓν ἄεισμα διηνεκὲς Callimachus understood an epic poem in the Homeric tradition and conforming—at least in intention as Apollonius' *Argonautica*—with Aristotelian ideas of epic unity: epic unity requires not a single hero, or period, or place, but a single action, one that is a complete whole in itself with a beginning, middle, and end: περὶ μίαν πρᾶξιν ὅλην καὶ τελείαν ἔχουσαν καὶ μέσα καί τέλος [10]. And it seems obvious that *carmen perpetuum* is a "translation" of the Callimanchean term; but that does not mean that we can take it for granted—or that Ovid's readers would take it for granted—that the Latin expression has the same meaning as the Greek term. Herter observes that ἄεισμα διηνεκὲς cannot mean a collective poem like the *Aetia* and that διηνεκὲς implies that the poem is on a grand scale and that there is a chronological sequence [11]; he implies that refers to the "Aristotelian" principle of one plot [12] and says that by calling his poem a *carmen perpetuum* Ovid shows that his epic pretensions were going in a Homeric direction [13]. It may, however, be seriously questioned whether the expression *carmen perpetuum* was a *terminus technicus* in the vocabulary of a Roman and that it would be taken as more than the words say in themselves: that the *Metamorphoses* will be a long, connected poem. The combination *carmen perpetuum* is found only once more in Augustan literature [14], *viz.* in Horace [15], where—as admitted by Herter [16]—it does describe what Callimachus might possibly have called ἓν ἄεισμα διηνεκές [17].

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

The promises which the preface of the *Metamorphoses* gave their readers may, then, be summarized as follows: the theme will be transformations; the wording suggests literal transformations only, but few readers would probably feel surprised on discovering that the *Metamorphoses* contained transformations of a more metaphorical kind as well. The frame will be chronological and comprise all time between the creation and Ovid's own time; this very comprehensiveness would prevent readers from expecting chronological pedantry of an annalistic kind [18]. The genre will be progressive narrative poetry in epic verse; this would exclude a collection of disconnected pieces within a frame but include the hellenistic collective poem with transitions between all pieces. The reader would expect a poem of this kind. There were, however, two novelties: the chronological arrangement and the promise to write about the whole span of time from the beginning to the present day. While the choice of transformations as the subject would suggest what might be called hellenistic unity, *i. e.* an arbitrary and external principle of limitation and arrangement, the two new things would open the possibility of another, more Aristotelian unity, as it were. The life of the world, interpreted poetically in terms of mythical change, might be conceived as μία πρᾶξις ὅλη καὶ τελεία ἔχουσα ἀρχὴν καὶ μέσα καὶ τέλος.

So this short preface, clear and perspicuous as it seems at first sight, raises a number of problems to be solved only by analysis of the poem. Readers who were familiar with Ovid's peculiar elusiveness from his other works would not be surprised by the ambivalent character of the preface: the verses are heroic hexameters but the appropriate heroic solemnity is toned down; the first line suggests a collection of stories but the last promises a *perpetuum carmen,* a chronological principle is put forward as frame, but how can chronology be applied to an essentially unhistorical subject-matter? The preface, we may conclude, has the double function of giving some initial information to the reader about what Ovid intends to do and of arousing the reader's interest by leaving in the dark as to precisely how Ovid proposes to solve the apparently impossible task which he has set himself: to write a connected poem consisting of disconnected stories and a chronological poem about things mainly beyond the horizon of history.

In accordance with the preface Ovid starts with the creation or rather with a description of the situation *before* it. The reader discovers that the concept of metamorphosis is by no means limited to mythological transformation but includes changes that can be described in terms of philosophical science, and where he might have believed he was starting on a mythological poem he suddenly finds himself reading didactic philosophical poetry; suddenly, he discovers a new point in the Lucretian phrase *ab origine mundi* [19] which now proves to have the function of paving the way for the subsequent didacticism and thus to be more than just information about the poem's chronological starting-point [20].

For a moderately well educated reader there would be little or nothing new in Ovid's cosmogony; in his earlier works Ovid had revealed a considerable indifference to abstract truth, and here, too, there is no trace of any deeper interest in the scientific, philosophical, and theological aspects of the problem. Ovid accepts, without enthusiasm or remonstrance, the generally accepted views about the creation as formulated by the later Stoics, especially by Posidonius. Lucretius had been passionately involved in the message he wanted to bring to mankind and had explicitly regarded the poetic garment as a means of communicating truth and not as an aim in itself. This attitude, which, presumably, is not only characteristic of Lucretius as a man but also a constituent element in the literary physiognomy of the *De rerum natura*, was possible because the message was or was supposed to be new and controversial. The fact that in substance Ovid's cosmogony was familiar to everybody in advance and—as far as we know—generally accepted by the majority of contemporary readers, shifts the emphasis from content to form, from knowledge to art.

The scientific illusion of this first part of the poem is brought about by such means as vague reference to sources [21], accumulation of participles [22], direct translation of the philosophical *termini technici* τὰ ἀβαρῆ καὶ τὰ βάρος ἔχοντα by *sine pondere* and *habentia pondus* [23], circumstantial precision [24], and "objective" prsentation of equally plausible theories [25]. There are, however, a number of details which modify the impression of philosophical didactic poetry. It is not so much the fact that Ovid "misuses" the names of the gods, as Lucretius had said [26], although the accumulation of such metonymies—three within four lines [27]—prevents this poetical device from being passed over un-

noticed. Nor is the explanation why the Creator made the Earth a globe: *ne non aequalis ab omni parte foret* [28] likely to have disturbed the general illusion of serious didacticism, but the reader may relish the virtuosity and gusto with which Ovid manages to express in few, simple, and elegant words a thought based upon rather subtle philosophical speculations [29] that the sphere is the most perfect of all geometrical forms [30]. But towards the end of the work of creation we read:

> *neu regio foret ulla suis animalibus orba,*
> *astra tenent caeleste solum formaeque deorum,*
> *cesserunt nitidis habitandae piscibus undae,*
> *terra feras cepit, volucres agitabilis aer* [31].

The idea that each of the four elements had its own type of animate inhabitants is found frequently in antiquity [32] and would not have surprised ancient readers very much. Roman readers might know it from Cicero [33]. There would be nothing wrong with the philosophical seriousness of the Ovidian version if he had not introduced the concetto *caeleste solum*, which underscores the fact that the whole idea is based upon analogy, and had added the words *formae deorum, i. e.* the anthropomorphical gods who are going to play so prominent a part in the *Metamorphoses*. The Epicureans let the gods retain their traditional human shape, but their gods were living in complete segregation, of no use or harm to anybody, and the Epicureans seem to have been so indifferent to them that they did not even take the trouble to abolish them. More serious and acceptable philosophers like the Stoics agreed that the heavenly bodies were gods and that there were other divine inhabitants of the aether, spherical as the stars. They rejected with contempt the anthropomorphical gods of official and popular religion, to say nothing about the gods of the poets [34]. Ovid and his readers were certainly aware of the fact that philosophical science and theology were hardly reconcilable with that mythological concept without which the *Metamorphoses* could not have been written. But Ovid was never afraid of paradoxes and his readers enjoyed them. Ovid managed to write a quite acceptable synopsis of the most widespread theory of the creation; it has swiftness and a certain solemnity and the aesthetic qualities of it conceal rather effectively the lack of philosophical coherence and prevent the reader from feeling a strong need of it. Besides, and that may be an important point, from an intellectual point of view Ovid's cosmogony is not in itself essentially more unsatisfactory than most of the current popular philosophy of the time. This pays great respect to the gods in words but nevertheless reduces them

to servants of a perfectly working automatic machinery, which was probabl created for the benefit of mankind, but of which man had better mak himself as independent as possible. The gods are either very loosel attached to the outskirts of the system or dissolved into a vague and non personal spirit of the world [35]. They can be replaced at any time b "nature" or "destiny". One might say that in reality hellenistic philos ophy has but one god: the human soul. The crown of creation is nc really the gods, but man.

Ovid, naively or pseudo-naively, reveals this fact when he proceeds

> *Sanctius his animal mentisque capacius altae*
> *deerat adhuc et quod dominari in cetera posset:*
> *natus homo est.*

It might be said that *his* refers to birds, beasts, and fish only and doe not include the gods. But as the three preceding lines are obviously de signed as an integrated unity—the themating point being the parallelisn between all the four elements—*his* must inevitably include all other in habitants of the four elements; of course it is nonsense that man shoul be more sacred than the gods, but on second thoughts readers may hav realized that this nonsense is exactly what the philosophers tell them witl pomp and splendour. The paradox cannot be explained away by inter pretation of the word *sanctius* in accordance with Cicero's definition o *sanctitas* as *scientia colendorum deorum* [36]. This is a definition whicl does not cover the normal use of *sanctitas* and still less of *sanctus*. Th adjective is frequently found as an epithet about gods, but it seems ridi culous to imagine gods worshipping themselves [37], and it is obviousl a paradox to call anything more sacred than the gods. However, it mus be admitted that in the *Metamorphoses* the gods are not generally ver much more *sancti* in the moral sense of the word than the human beings In the following lines the two conflicting elements, philosophy and mythol ogy, are more openly juxtaposed. This juxtaposition is achieved by mean of a pseudo-scientific presentation of alternative theories:

> *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 effiem moderantum cuncta deorum.*

The ultimate identity of *divinum semen* and *semina caeli* shows that, i

the last analysis, the maker of man had to utilize the available material and its inherent possibilities. One might wonder how Prometheus—and his father—came into the picture. The answer is close at hand: just like the *opifex rerum* himself. With humourous and good-natured scepticism Ovid seems to hint that philosophy and mythology may after all be equally close to and equally far from the truth. Ovid refuses to make a choice between them but accepts—or rejects—both of them, and his relaxed attitude [38] allows his cosmogony to have an appearance of unity although it brings together *res diversissimas*. Whatever his origins, man is now a reality and his appearance is described by a philosophical commonplace which fits well into the didactic tone of the rest:

> *pronaque cum spectent animalia cetera terram*
> *os homini sublime dedit caelumque videre*
> *iussit et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus.*

Two lines round off this first nucleus of the *Metamorphoses:*

> *Sic, modo quae fuerat rudis et sine imagine, tellus*
> *induit ignotas hominum conversa figuras.*

The first echoes the *rudis indigestaque moles* of the beginning, and the last shows that Ovid is keeping his promise of describing metamorphoses.

The shaping of the world out of chaos and the creation of man are metamorphoses of a kind which readers would not immediately have expected after the preface but which nevertheless are covered by the definition "bodies changed into new shapes". Moreover, as we have observed, the philosophical and didactic style would produce an effect of surprise until the reader realized that he had been discretely prepared for that in the preface.

After the creation of man the text proceeds with the *Four Ages* of mankind; this seems so natural and is performed with such ease that the reader hardly realizes that he is led into a metamorphosis of a new and different nature, hardly covered by the formula of the preface; evolutionary change, it seems, is also to be recognized as metamorphosis in terms of the poem. Corresponding to this change in the concept of subject-matter, the text passes from philosophical didacticism to moral myth of Hesiodeic origin and tradition. This change of tone is prepared in a peculiar way. The work of creation had been crowned with man, *sanctius animal;* this, in connection with the phrase *mundi melioris origo,* some lines above, gives the final passage of the *Creation* a certain moral tone which is almost absent from the rest of it [39]. The *Creation* ends on a

happy note with man as good, indeed, the best of all created beings. Bu that view is suddenly reversed into the opposite: Ovid begins the descri tion of the golden age in negative terms by contrasting it to easily r cognizable contemporary conditions, and so, from the very beginning the *Four Ages* the outcome of man's evolution is anticipated: man h become the most wicked of all creatures. The *Creation* and the *Four Ag* have opposite and equally paradoxical results and Ovid makes no attem to harmonize them: the contrast and—it should be noted,—the tensic between this contrast and its presentation as a smooth and naural deve opment appears to be the important thing. The pessimistic conclusion the *Ages* is the natural artistic counterpoint to the optimistic one of t *Creation,* while philosophically it is a contradiction of it.

Chronologically, the *Ages* seem to embrace the whole span of time fro the beginning to Ovid's own time, a fact which may have puzzled son readers. I have already drawn attention to the paradoxical value of d scribing the real old golden age as the exact opposite of the recently i augurated Augustan golden age, to which the Iron Age bears an obvio resemblance [40]. The *Ages* might have been a kind of *dispositio,* b that would have made it the message of the whole poem that Ro and the restored Roman republic represented the morally most inferi stage of development. This would have been tactless and dangerou and, from an Ovidian point of view, quite untrue, too. Ovid was neith a moralist nor a rebel; very often he could not resist the temptation teasing but he was very satisfied with his own age, indeed, too satisfie and in a wrong way. Nobody would expect him to condemn seriously an consistently the present conditions of life to the advantage of an uncivilize past. The contemporization in the *Ages,* then, should be taken as a point and humourous indication of the paradox that at one and the same tim the Augustans were full of praise for the present as the summit of develo ment and nostalgic for the good old and better days. Thus the *Ages* a and are not part of the mythological chronology: the iron age is Ovid own but the race of the iron age is to be swept away by the flood. As clearcut sequence of time the *Ages* reinforce the illusion of chronolog but it is very clear that it is an illusion, contrived to please the reader, n to persuade him.

The end of the *Ages* is a climax which it may seem difficult to surpas but Ovid can do it. Wickedness did not only exist on Earth but affecte Heaven as well [41]. The Giants assailed it. The fight between Giants an Gods was a popular epic topic but of another nature than the philosop ical *Creation* and the moral myth of the *Ages.* Its introduction here unde

lines the comprehensiveness of the *Metamorphoses*. Besides, the passage has other functions in the context. It takes the reader back again to a distant mythological past, which he might have thought to have left when he read the shocking description of contemporary conditions. It establishes a closer connection between the human sphere and that of the gods; even they could not be safe and free from care; they have got troubles, too [42]. The story itself is told summarily in very few lines and is followed by the transformation of the blood of the slain Giants into men. This genesis of man is not very compatible with the first emergence of the *sanctius animal* from *divinum semen,* and the new race would naturally be expected to be much inferior to the first. But Ovid twists this the other way round: man had degenerated, a new race was made and one might hope that it was a better one, *but* they were not good either, they were just like their predecessors: they corresponded well to their origin:

> *sed et illa propago*
> *contemptrix superum saevaeque avidissima caedis*
> *et violenta fuit: scires e sanguine natos* [43].

Now the basis has been established for divine action: some measures have to be taken against all this wickedness. The first man was the zenith of creation; the *propago* of the blood of the ruthless and impious Giants represents the nadir of moral degeneration. What now?

What follows is the *concilium deorum*. The fight between giants and gods would have been enough for a whole long epic poem but is here reduced to a few lines and functions as a transitional passage; the *concilium deorum* was only one among many traditional elements of an epic poem but receives full and detailed treatment. *Variatio* as a characteristic of the *Metamorphoses* is becoming more and more evident. The reader has now been presented with both philosophical epic, Hesiodeic epic, grand-scale mythological epic in brief resumé, and now he is about to read a scene which is a typical element of heroic epic. But this scene, like everything else in the *Metamorphoses,* is more typical of Ovid than of anything else. His *concilium deorum* occurs in another context and situation than the "normal" ones, and that makes it into a different thing. Besides, it is also exploited as a frame for mythological narration of hellenistic epic scope and tradition. The usual function of a *concilium deorum* in normal epic poems is to project the human action into the sphere of the gods, who meet in order to decide what is to happen to or between the heroes; the gods may be more or less emotionally involved both as regards sympathies and antipathies, and their prestige in relation to each other

is usually a strong motivating force. But they are not affected by wha happens in the human sphere in the sense that their own welfare or posi tion as gods is at stake. But that appears to be the situation in Ovid' general assembly of gods. The question is not so much to make decision but to be or not to be [44]. This change in the background of the scen involves *e. g.* that the gods are worried, not about their relative prestige but about their normal revenues from the earth [45], that Jupiter is con cerned, not about his favourite heroes, but about the minor deities wh cannot be safe from the wicked after the *attentat* against himself. Fron the very beginning it is clear that this is not a normal meeting in the Hous of Gods. There is an obvious contrast between the calm and serene open ing of the *concilium deorum* in the tenth book of the *Aeneid:*

> *Panditur interea domus omnipotentis Olympi*
> *conciliumque vocat deorum pater atque hominum rex* [46]

and the stress laid upon Jupiter's anger in the Metamorphoses:

> *. . . ingentes animo et dignas Iove concipit iras*
> *conciliumque vocat* [47].

This is a crisis-meeting. In the Vergilian passage which would have bee a common model of reading (probably of writing, too), there is a discret contemporisation which projects the majesty and sacredness of the god on to the solemn and dignified proceedings of the Roman senate. We hav already [48] observed that Ovid goes considerably farther along this lin to the point of explicit comparison; the comic effect—very different, ir deed, from what we meet in Vergil—results partly from this exaggeratio of an element which in Vergil is tactfully kept beneath the surface [49 partly from the fact that the *illustrans* is not a normal and dignified meet ing in the Senate, but one held in a crisis of the state where emergenc measures would have to be taken. In Ovid's *concilium deorum* there is n real debate; Jupiter communicates what has happened and what decisio he has taken while the loyal gods confine themselves to more or less silen assent or, at most, to submissive questions. Again this deviation from th normal scheme results from the fact that the whole situation is differen from the usual one for divine assemblies—how could any god possibl disagree?—but it functions very well, and perhaps in a slightly mischievou way, with the sustained parallelism between the Olympus and the Senat Another important difference from other *concilia deorum* is the fact tha this one works as a frame for a story which by nature belongs to anothe kind of epic poetry than *concilia deorum* typically do. The introduction o it is carefully prepared from the beginning, where the general wickedne

of mankind is combined in Jupiter's mind with the specific outrage of Lycaon. The indication of Lycaon's crime is deliberately vague, but readers would easily understand from the context that Jupiter was *groaning* over the general depravation but became *furious* when he remembered Lycaon [50]. This is also a fine specimen of psychological humanization (or secularization) of the gods, and so the lines have preparatory force not only on the level of subject-matter, but also indicate the general attitude towards the gods in this whole passage: in Jupiter's person there is a permanently working human correlative to his divine majesty. One might easily surmise from Jupiter's exasperation that he was personally involved in the Lycaon-business, but the reader is kept in suspense as to the real nature of the outrage until the end of Jupiter's first speech to the gods, which follows after the *descriptio loci*. Jupiter starts with the statement that the situation now is more critical than it was when the giants assaulted the gods. This connects what follows intimately to the *Aetates-Gigantomachia*-complex and corroborates the impression of chronological sequence. As previously observed [51], Jupiter must face the fact that violent rebellion is after all easier to handle than moral deterioration. Some readers may have discovered a parallel. Jupiter's decision is to destroy mankind; as a matter of fact he has no choice:

> *per flumina iuro*
> *infera sub terras Stygio labentia luco!*
> *cuncta prius temptata, sed immedicabile corpus*
> *ense recidendum, ne pars sincera trahatur.*

The last lines might seem somewhat incongruous in the mouth of Jupiter; it is hardly the kind of metaphor that would normally be expected from him. It had a long history behind it, but in Roman ears of this period it would inevitably have a political ring and suggest oratory rather than poetry [52]. The words *cuncta prius temptata* fit well into this political atmosphere. Obviously Jupiter had not tried anything—what should that have been?—but the words have the rhetorical function of justifying the radical course of action to be taken and of indicating the—real or pretended—reluctance towards it. The trick is typical of political speeches and would not have shocked anybody in itself; here, however, the speaker is not a politician for whom such tricks were allowed, but the father of gods and men. The fusion of the two incongruous spheres of divine deliberation and Roman politics continues in the following lines, where Jupiter's concern about the halfgods, nymphs, *etc.* [53] is modelled on the concern of Roman orators about the *socii*, who have not Roman citizenship but

should be protected in the interest of the Roman state [54]. The argument of the speech, then, is as follows: the security of the divine commonwealth is threatened and man must be destroyed. This is regrettable, but necessary, also out of consideration for the *socii* of the gods. The whole speech is summed up in this final question:

> *An satis, o superi, tutos fore creditis illos* [55],
> *cum mihi, qui fulmen, qui vos habeoque regoque*
> *struxerit insidias notus feritate Lycaon* [56]?

This is a rather effective rhetorical point; it is a strong political argument, likely to silence in advance any possible opposition; it refers back to the introduction of the *concilium deorum* by answering the question, why Jupiter is so angry, in the first line, and so it follows up the psychological humanization of the god. These three aspects of the speech, each producing its own peculiar effect of incongruity in connection with Jupiter and a *concilium deorum*, are all present and mutually integrated in this apparently very carefully designed speech. And the attention of the reader has been guided back to Lycaon. We have already observed that the description of the gods' reaction to Jupiter's speech explicity parallels the Roman and the Olympic spheres and voiced the opinion that this parallel is likely to have been transferred to Lycaon's attempt to murder Jupiter and *e. g.* Fannius Caepio's conspiration against Augustus. In the narrative economy of the *concilium* this passage further stirs the reader's expectations with regard to Lycaon. Jupiter calms the gods, so brilliantly roused by himself, and starts to tell the story; he tells it without unnecessary prolixity but leisurely enough to arrange it with a clearly distinct beginning, middle, and end [57]. As a literary motive epiphanies of this kind, *i. e.* the gods wandering about in disguise on earth in order to test the morality of man, are not found in the Homeric poems but the idea is not quite unknown there [58]; Apollonius has an example in order to motivate Hera's predilection for Jason [59] and the stories of Philemon and Baucis in the *Metamorphoses* and of Hyrieus in the *Fasti* [60] also point to a hellenistic interest in popular legends of this type, where the gods place themselves in human surroundings; also Callimachus' famous *Hecale* has a certain relationship to these moralizing fairy-tales. In Jupiter's mouth the story retains its hellenistic character in spite of the alterations made in it [61]. Jupiter, it seems, has obeyed the convention that gods in this situation should appear disguised as men. He arrives at night just like the gods in the *Philemon and Baucis* and might be expected to ask for *locum requiemque* like them while retaining his incognito in order to test the

morality of his host. But immediately after his arrival he intimates that he is a god. This would seem to frustrate the very intention of the whole visit; the *vulgus* turns immediately to prayers, which Jupiter accepts as sincere [62]. But Lycaon—a veritable monster—is not persuaded and decides to test the divinity of his guest. Then follows the attempt to kill Jupiter, the attempt to serve him a dish of Molossan hostage [63]. Then, at last, comes the punishment. When subjected to close analysis this story does not make very good sense. Jupiter misses the point of his own mission by indicating that he is a god; he takes the adoration of the *vulgus* as seriously meant in the beginning but ends [64] by declaring that the whole human race is morally degenerated beyond hope: he either fools himself or acts unjustly in destroying the people who has piously adored him. He arrives late, and during the night Lycaon tries to kill him; he does not, apparently, react at all to that: at any rate, the following day, we must suppose, he is about to dine with the criminal. The dinner turns our rather grim. One might have expected the murder attempt and the dinner in reversed order, as belated guests are usually fed before they go to bed, especially in stories of this kind. But it is easy to see that the reversed order would have been impossible: Jupiter could not possibly have touched the dish. It is difficult enough to understand why he did not take action when he was being killed. Lycaon appears to be not only extremely criminal but also extremely stupid. Why test the god another time when the first test, the attempted murder, had shown him the true nature of his guest? Most of the trouble comes from the insertion of the murder-motive into the traditional story, for which innovation our poet seems to be responsible. What does he gain in return for the logical absurdity in which this insertion results? The answer is close at hand: rhetorical effect of a kind which does not try to persuade the audience by logical coherence and reasonable probability, but to upset them psychologically by the atrocity and monstrousity of the alleged crime committed. The crime becomes more monstrous when Lycaon attacks a god—and knows it. Objectively the murder attempt is a worse crime than the foul trick of making Jupiter eat human flesh. But in the actual context both the gods, *i. e.* Jupiter's audience, and Ovid's readers have heard about the *attentat* and so the additional perversity of Lycaon acquires the effect of a new and shocking climax. One might now conclude that Ovid here exaggerates the crime of Lycaon beyond credibility and sacrifices coherence and veracity to obtain rhetorical effect. That conclusion would, however, miss the very important point that although Ovid is indisputably the writer and writes for the reader, in the structure of this passage Jupiter is the speaker and the assembled gods are

his audience. That is to say that the rhetoric displayed by Jupiter is designed to work upon the gods and the reader is supposed to feel how it works, not upon himself, but upon the gods. The story itself was well-known and so a number of readers would catch the innovations and alterations made in it by Ovid's Jupiter in front of the gods who had never heard the story before and could not judge it. Against this background the contradictions in Jupiter's story should not be regarded as faults on the part of Ovid but as elements of Jupiter's character and his politics [65]. From the very beginning he has not, really, been the almighty father but more similar to a human ruler, with whom rests the final power of decision but who nevertheless must secure political backing for his actions and does so by political means, including rhetoric which is not necessarily measured by coherence and veracity but by its effect upon the actual audience. In fact there is little or no opposition among the gods. Jupiter's invention of an attempted murder works very well in this respect. The parallelism between Heaven and Earth is at work throughout the passage, and the wording of the lines immediately after the end of Jupiter's speech:

> *Dicta Iovis pars voce probant stimulosque frementi*
> *adiciunt, alii partes adsensibus implent* [66]

would again direct the reader's mind to the Roman senate; it can not be ruled out that some readers may have seen the similarity between the king of the gods and the *princeps* of the Roman state also in the field of inventiveness or political exploitation of attentats. Ovid says nothing, but his Jupiter speaks for himself. His florid rhetoric continues in the description of the transformation, and the propriety of the punishment is underscored by enumeration of the similarities between Lycaon's previous and present character; there is lavish use of alliteration.

This essentially hellenistic story, which unifies epiphany, theodicy, and metamorphosis, could be integrated in a grand-scale epic context in a seemingly quite natural manner because of the irony and ambiguity of both elements concerned. And one of the pleasures readers might derive from the passage would be the virtuosity with which the small-scale and the large-scale epic, in spite of the age-old and embittered fight between them, are here brought into harmony with each other. The conclusion of Jupiter's speech and the reaction among the gods, with its humour and humanization, complete the frame of the *Lycaon* [67].

Water played an important part in Jupiter's first announcement of his decision:

nunc mihi, qua totum Nereus circumsonat orbem,
perdendum est mortale genus: per flumina iuro
infera sub terras, etc. [68].

As readers knew about the flood in advance they might have believed that Jupiter had already decided on that method of exterminating mankind. But Ovid has a little surprise in store. Eventually, Jupiter is about to use his tested weapon, the thunderbolt. But remembering at the last moment his philosophical education [69] he decides on water instead [70]. The passage adds a new feature to the picture of Jupiter and is consistent with the sustained tension between the human and the divine elements in his nature. Besides, the lines provide a transition to the description of the flood.

The *Flood* reverses the pattern of the *Creation* and the two descriptions invite to comparison. They are ostensibly different. In the *Creation* Ovid—with occasional and discrete glimpses of humour and scepticism—kept up an attitude of philosophical didacticism and managed to give an account whose level of credibility was not very far below that of the philosophers. A κατακλυσμὸς also belonged to the stoic cosmology and one might have expected another scientific or pseudo-scientific description. But Ovid does nothing of the sort. His *Flood* appeals to the imagination more than to the intellect, abounds in conceits, paradoxes, and exuberant use of imagery. The attitude is not an allegedly serious demand for comprehension but an unbridled desire to display all the colours of the poetic palette. Ovid has already shown his ability as a didactic poet; now he uses a similar subject-matter to show himself as a virtuoso of description. In the *Creation* the agent is the elevated but rather vague demiurgus or the impersonal force of a "better nature". Now the operating forces are individual and personal gods of a different rank and order. The use of personification is consistently carried out in the first part of the *Flood*. Jupiter locks up all dry winds in their Aeolian caves:

emittitque Notum. Madidis Notus evolat alis,
terribilem picea tectus caligine vultum;
barba gravis nimbis, canis fluit unda capillis;
fronte sedent nebulae, rorant pennaeque sinusque.
Utque manu late pendentia nubila pressit,
fit fragor: hinc densi funduntur ab aethere nimbi [71].

Juno's messenger Iris, clad in a rainbow-coloured garment, brings water to the clouds [72]. Neptunus helps his brother by sending forth auxiliary waves: he summons the rivers to a meeting and they enter his residence [73]. They obviously belong to the divine *plebs;* in this *concilium* the president does not treat the participants with the circumspection which Jupiter felt obliged to adopt in the preceding one: the rivers receive a short and clear order from their commander. They return and open the floodgates—and themselves become water again. Neptunus hits the earth with his trident and opens up new streams. All this is science transformed into mythology. Philosophers, too, could accept the allegory without difficulty. There was not for ancient readers an insurmountable barrier between a scientific way of expression and metonymy expanded into allegory. Besides poets had their established privileges. Seneca [74] has no objections to this first part of the *Flood;* on the contrary, he refers to it and addresses Ovid with the words: *concepisti imaginem quantam debebas obrutis omnibus terris caelo ipso in terram ruente.* What scandalized him *pro magnitudine rei* is Ovid's elaboration on the realistic and paradoxical details of the catastrophe. These details tend to make the flood more domestic, as it were, and familiar. Also in antiquity Italy was plagued by inundations. And many readers would have had the opportunity of watching people in boats on flooded fields; under such conditions fish may, of course, be found among the twigs of submerged trees; and during inundations seals may actually be found where goats usually grass [75]. Ovid arrives at his paradoxes—actualized ἀδύνατα—by a realistic consideration of what would happen given the proper set of circumstances. Part of this are the operations of gods in their personal aspect; in the words:

mirantur sub aqua lucos urbesque domosque
Nereides

the levels of mythology and of realism merge into a humourous unity, a fusion of traditional poetic imagination and matter-of-fact reasoning, which is somewhat incongruous with the horror of the catastrophe. Granted the notion of impersonated gods of the elements—and that notion is fundamental in the whole passage—is not this exactly what might have happened? Is it stranger than fish in the top of a tree? Or, considering the fact that this inundation was universal, dolphins in a forest? Or wolves and sheep [76] and other animals swimming side by side, too scared by the water to be afraid of each other [77]. Seneca is not amused because he wants from Ovid's poem what it cannot give; the *Metamorphoses* are not designed to meet philosophical demands but to satisfy interest in literary art, especially in Ovid's peculiar brand of it with its ambiguous mixture or fusion of different and frequently incongruous levels and attitudes. The point here seems to be that, by the combination of expanded metonomy

in the description of the causes and realistic observation in the description of the paradoxical effects, Ovid wants to demonstrate that this universal catastrophe is not—as Seneca would have liked—over and beyond human imagination. There is a quantitative, not a qualitative difference between the flood and another inundation. The attitude is that of a fascinated spectator, not at all that of a victim. The reader is not supposed to be shocked but pleased [78].

The beginning of a new story is marked by a *descriptio loci* of the Parnasus where Deucalion and his wife landed. They worship the deities of the place and their different characters are discretely suggested [79]: he is good and just, she fears the gods. Jupiter reverses the flood, seeing that only these two good people are left [80]. The description of this reversal has again the idea of personal acting on the parts of the gods as a prominent feature [81]. Thematically and formally the two stories are so closely interlocked, that they may be regarded as two parts of one story. In the first we observed a contrast between the baroque majesty of personified, *i. e.* mythologically conceived, natural forces and realism in the description of the unique and fantastic situation brought about by these forces. In the second we would expect—if we accept, as we should not, the Senecan principle that everything should be described *pro magnitudine rei*—that the protagonists Deucalion and Pyrrha were not only morally good but also endowed with a heroic greatness which could match their huge mission of recreating the human race. They appear to be just plain people. Deucalion's address to Pyrrha concentrates on his feelings, especially on his conjugal love and from the lack of sensuality in this love the reader gets the impression that the couple is an aged one—like another pair of humble and tender believers: Philemon and Baucis [82]. Deucalion's worlds hardly rise above the strictly necessary epic minimum and are very far from the clamorous "rhetoric" that might be expected in these dramatic circumstances from a poet who is supposed not to have known how to master his own talent. Deucalion's last words show a pious submission and resignation:

> *nunc genus in nobis restat mortale duobus*
> *(sic visum superis) hominumque exempla manemus* [83].

The detailed description of their address to the oracle is quite in accordance with this attitude, and their human rather than heroic character is thrown into relief by their bewilderment when they hear the answer of the oracle and by their discussion of its meaning. Even after Prometheus' son has construed the obscure message and gently rebuked the daughter of

Epimetheus [84] for taking the oracle literally, they are both filled with doubts. But what harm in trying [85]. They do—and the metamorphosis is described in detail, developing through its successive phases with a rationalistic account for what becomes what [86]. That makes the miracle [87] appear almost a natural thing. I have already referred to the irony in the closing lines of the *Deucalion and Pyrrha* [88]. The tale of Deucalion and Pyrrha derives much of its charming effect from the contrast between their unique situation and their amiable but commonplace character. This contrast, charming and humourous in itself, may even suggest a transcendent meaning. As well observed by Fraenkel the notions of hardness and softness play a prominent part throughout the whole tale and "both stubborn anger and stubborn matter are conquered by the pious and loving couple" [89]. But Ovid does not allow himself to be caught in preaching morality without a means of escape; there are these overtones suggesting what Fraenkel optimistically calls a substantial truth: that humble and tender believers in the good are able to mollify rigidity and enliven numb coldness. But at the same time it appears from the context that Deucalion and Pyrrha are only tools: the recreation of man *origine mira* has already been promised by Jupiter [90]. Their piety makes them qualified to become agents but does not make miracles itself. Besides, the last lines contain a certain reservation against edifying symbolism: stones become men, well—but these men are still hard like stones. Ovid is here as elusive as ever and his tale an intriguing mixture of playfulness and seriousness.

The recreation of man was a miracle and the idea that different parts of the stones became corresponding parts of the human body—in the case of the *venae* even synonymous parts [91]—would underscore rather than veil this fact. What follows is not miraculous at all: the spontaneous generation of the other animals [92]. Ovid explains it in the adequate scientific terms of his time referring to the theory that moisture, fire, and time—and some *semina rerum*—may produce life [93], and proves it empirically by well-known observations from the dung of Egypt. Ovid places mythology, in which nobody believed, and science, which was the accepted truth, side by side as sharing equal rights. The concept of metamorphosis in his poem is comprehensive enough to include both. Inevitably the two things interact upon each other and their juxtaposition tends to blur the borderline between them. In terms of the poem they are equally surprising and fascinating, and this suggests that they may both be equally true or false. It is not easy to tell what Ovid himself believed in or not [94] and his interest may have been superficial. His text implies a certain scepticism

whether science provides better answers to the deepest questions than mythology, but the important thing in both cases is the construction of aesthetic values and not the proclamation of truth. How reconcilable, in spite of their basic incongruity, μῦθος and λόγος have become in the *Metamorphoses* appear from the ease and adroitness with which Ovid glides back to mythology:

> *Ergo ubi diluvio tellus lutulenta recenti*
> *solibus aetheriis altoque recanduit aestu,*
> *edidit innumeras species; partimque figuras*
> *rettulit antiquas, partim nova monstra creavit.*
> *Illa quidem nollet, sed te quoque, maxime Python,*
> *tum genuit, etc.* [95].

The effortless ease of the presentation almost conceals the underlying paradox: man, a wonderful creature but still part of the natural world, is created by a miracle while Python, a fabulous monster belonging to the world of fancy and fiction, is a product of a natural process. Mother Earth just could not help it. Apollo shoots the monster and institutes memorial games.

At first sight the transition to the following tale of Daphne is arbitrary and superficial: The prize in the games was originally a wreath of oak [96] as there was not yet any laurel [97]. Then the *Daphne* follows as an aetiology. However, it opens with lines suggesting the grand epic:

> *Primus amor Phoebi Daphne Peneia, quem non*
> *fors ignara dedit, sed saeva Cupidinis ira* [98].

The casual abruptness of this beginning underlines the first introduction of the love-motif, so important in the *Metamorphoses* [99]. However, immediately afterwards the reader finds himself back again in the *carmen perpetuum*. There appears to be a much tighter bond between the *Python* and the *Daphne* than the transition in itself would suggest. Elevated by his victory Apollo scorns Cupid and his bow, and Cupid teaches him a lesson, defeats him by his own weapon. We do not know whether the association between the Daphne-myth and Cupid's arrows was Ovid's invention [100]; the important thing to note, however, is the skill with which Ovid makes this combination work as a connection to the preceding passage; that does not prevent the scene between Apollo and Cupid from having a certain symbolic value as well, illustrating the maxim *omnia vincit amor*—or rather *Amor*. The story is also a theodicy—but between

gods. The scene between them provides the basis of the drama. Daphne is frigid and hostile to any thought of love; like the prototype of virginity, Diana, she begs her father to grant her that for ever. This is not only a play on a literary model [101] but has a definite function in the economy of the narrative, *viz.* that of preparing the reader for the role played by Peneus in the actual transformation of Daphne and for the transition between the *Daphne* and the *Io* [102]. After this Callimachean scene follows Apollo's falling in love. The tone is elegiac and when Apollo speaks to himself about the girl his language is that of a Roman dandy at the sight of a country wench [103]. Once again the mythological past and the fascination of modern life—a divine and a human level—are brought together into an Ovidian unity. Daphne flees at the sight of Apollo and he addresses her by a long speech—while pursuing her [104]. The tone is now bucolic, but all his art is wasted on Daphne. He must take recourse to swiftness, and love proves to run faster than fear. At the critical moment, however, Daphne reaches her father and attains the transformation which puts her out of her pursuer's reach. It is hardly a coincidence that in contradistinction to the preceding one this metamorphosis goes from soft to hard. In this case "the maxim that warm devotion melts frigid indifference" [105] does not hold good. Even after the transformation, when Apollo tries to kiss the wood, the wood draws back from him. He has to give up every erotic pretension before Daphne accepts the honour of becoming his sacred tree. As observed by Fraenkel [106] the ambiguous character of the ending is underlined in the subsequent transitional passage, the *fluminum conventus,* where Peneus' colleagues are in doubt whether they should condole with him or congratulate him [107]. When they arrive, Peneus is giving laws to his waves and the same playful semi-identification between the god and his element is applied to the absent Inachus who augments his waters with his tears, lamenting his daughter Io. Here again the transition may in itself be a rather superficial device: the absence of a person introduces a new story [108]. This, however, has much more in common with the preceding one than the formal transition might suggest. They invite comparison both with regard to their similarities and their differences.

The *Daphne* ended by her metamorphosis, which precluded any further participation in the action on her part. The *Io* has a much more complicated narrative structure and the part of it which is comparable to the *Daphne* in a narrower sense is only the first thirtyfive lines [109]. As we have seen both stories give the answer to an implied "why": why was there not yet any laurel? Why was Inachus distressed? In both cases, it

should be noted, the problems are artificially made up by the poet to provide him with a formal motivation for telling the stories [110]. The meeting of Jupiter and Io follows almost the same scheme as that of Apollo and Daphne. There are, however, discretely indicated differences which are due to the fact that Jupiter and Io are psychologically different characters from Apollo and Daphne [111]. Apollo was an ardent young lover who openly declared himself at once, who was deeply—though somewhat ridiculously—concerned that Daphne should not hurt herself, and who introduced himself proudly but not boastingly and admitted that he was unable to overcome his overwhelming passion. Jupiter is more like a mature seducer who—after a somewhat self-satisfied compliment, the real import of which Io would hardly understand until later—masks his erotic intentions behind a fatherly concern for the girl's comfort and offers her his own kindly protection against the dangers of the lonely forest:

Viderat a patrio redeuntem Iuppiter illam
flumine et "o virgo Iove digna tuoque beatum
nescioquem factura toro" [112], "pete" dixerat "umbras
altorum nemorum", (et nemorum monstraverat umbras)
"dum calet, et medio sol est altissimus orbe!
Quodsi sola times latebras intrare ferarum,
praeside tuta deo nemorum secreta subibis,

after which he starts at a pompous self-introduction:

nec de plebe deo, sed qui caelestia magna
sceptra manu teneo, sed qui vaga fulmina mitto— [113]

and he might have continued with this for some time if Io, once she realizes who he is, had not immediately taken to her heels. Apparently his manners were as well-known to her as they were to the readers [114]. But that is only half the point. Daphne had run at the sight of Apollo:

fugit ocior aura
illa levi neque ad haec revocantis verba resistit.

Io is not, apparently, completely alien to love as such, but scared by the name of her wooer [115]. After her flight Jupiter does not waste time by sweet words, as Apollo did. Within very few lines he runs her down and achieves his end [116]. Apollo was frustrated as a lover but did not become quite ridiculous; if his experience is not tragic, it is not comical, either. Jupiter has his way with Io but is disgracefully caught in the act by

his jealous wife. Apollo was the young man who experienced the passio of love for the first time, Jupiter is not a debutant but an experience *viveur,* afraid of his wife as another *bourgeois.* The very cloud by whic he tries to conceal the act betrays his secret to Juno [117], who quickl decides that the cloud cannot be a natural phaenomenon: as her husban is not at home, no further evidence is required. She goes down and scatte the mist. But Jupiter has felt her coming beforehand and tries to extricat himself from the trouble by changing Io into a white heifer. The trick doe not work better than his camouflage. Juno is not deceived one momen and when she accepts the joke she gradually puts him into a more an more embarrassing situation. He must parry her questions about the heife by a suitable lie: she is an autochton of otherwise unknown origin [118] By this answer Jupiter unknowingly throws himself off his guard: he nov has no legitimate excuse for his interest in the heifer; Juno immediatel pins him down and asks for Io as a present. He must now face the dilemm between *pudor* and *amor* [119]. He proves too afraid of his wife's *iu gia* [120] to be prepared to defend his mistress:

victus pudor esset amore
sed leve si munus sociae generisque torique
vacca negaretur, poterat non vacca videri.

This kind of pussillanimity in extra-matrimonial love-affairs is well-known from everyday life, but hardly what one would expect to meet with at a heroic—let alone divine—level. Having thus out-manoeuvered her husband, Juno, who has ample reason to fear another *furtum* [121], puts the heifer in the custody of Argus. Thus the intrigue between the divine couple has prepared the way for new complications. Juno has out-manoeuvered Jupiter but not defeated him completely: he has neither admitted nor excused his error. A new scene [122] is introduced by a description of Argus and the miserable situation of the transformed girl. The sympathy and sentimentality of this passage forms a contrast to the levity of the god who reduced her to that state [123]. The following meeting between Io and her old father further intensifies this, but there are two indications that the reader should not let himself be completely carried away by sentimental pity or forget that he is in a world of fancy: the fact that Io *writes* her name [124] and the desperate point made by Inachus when he deplores his own immortality [125]. Here again the illusion in Ovid is designed to be transparent, to present itself as an illusion. The reader is moved but at the same time must smile at it. Argus removes Io and sits

down watching on the top of a hill; the scene has been set for the liberation. The sufferings of Io has become too much for the king of the gods and he sends out as a special agent his son by Maia, the Pleiad [126]. With epic circumstance he puts on his winged sandals, takes his magic wand in his hand, and dons his cap, slides down to earth in two half-lines and takes off again his cap and wings, keeping only the wand. Normal epic convention from Homer onwards [127] has the description of the divine messenger's gear only in the beginning, and when he arrives it is simply stated that he appears disguised in this way or that; besides, one might expect some description of his route to match his preparations [128] or provide the repetition of his attributes with the function of a frame [129]. Ovid uses this epic element as an ornament without its normal epic function and that procedure produces the effect that the reader becomes humorously conscious of the conventionality and realizes how much these wings *etc.* have the character of gadgets. And yet the lines are not disintegrated from the economy of the narrative: the wand in Mercurius' disguise becomes a shepherd's crook and is used immediately as such [130]. The god and the monster play their parts perfectly as a couple of Vergilian shepherds: song, flute-play, beautiful landscape, no trouble with the cattle, comfortable shade and a lot of talk. But Argus nevertheless manages to keep some of his eyes open until he hears a doublet of the *Daphne, viz.* the *Syrinx* [131]. Then Mercurius deepens his slumber by his magic wand [132] and kills him with his scimitar [133]. The ensuing transposition of Argus' eyes to the feathers of Juno's bird recalls the reader's attention to the triangle. Jupiter's orders have been performed, Juno has discovered the fact, Io becomes worse off than she was before, now driven horror-striken through the whole world. She has borne everything with the melancholy patience which befits a cow. Even now, in the utmost misery, on the bank of the Nile, her wordless address to Jupiter is not the protest of a wronged and deserted woman but the submissive appeal for pity of a lone and lost creature, unable to endure any more. Her situation is in itself a complaint against Jupiter:

> *procubuit genibus resupinoque ardua collo,*
> *quos potuit solos, tollens ad sidera vultus*
> *et gemitu et lacrimis et luctisono mugitu*
> *cum Iove visa queri finemque orare malorum* [134].

To relieve her Jupiter has to swallow the bitter pill and do what he tried to avoid from the very beginning. He must admit his matrimonial misconduct, beg his wife's pardon, and promise never to do it again:

> *coniugis ille suae complexus colla lacertis,*
> *finiat ut poenas tandem, rogat "in" que "futurum*
> *pone metus" inquit: "numquam tibi causa doloris*
> *haec erit", et Stygias iubet hoc audire paludes.*

In this defeat, however, he cleverly allows himself the possibility of *reservatio mentalis.* His promise is double-tongued and his oath worthle Juno, however, accepts it and is appeased. As an immediate consequen Io regains her former shape; in the cases of Lycaon and Daphne the met morphoses were described as processes passing through successive stag When Io became a cow there was nothing of the kind—Jupiter was in hurry, and, besides, details about the transformation would divert the i terest from the dramatic situation between him and his wife—, but wh the cow becomes Io again there is a detailed description, a reversal of t "normal" pattern "man to beast".

Io's identification with Isis provides the transition to the *Phaetho* which opens with a boyish quarrel and ends with all but the conflagrati of the whole world. It begins at the end of book I and the implicatio of this fact are well explained by Wilkinson [135] when he declares th "this is partly the time-honoured device of the serial writer to whet t reader's appetite for the next instalment; but it is also an indication the continuity of the work, which should not have been divided in books at all were it not that its length necessitated a number of rolls".

It is difficult to stop at any particular place as Ovid constantly lures t reader on. But the evidence of this first book might allow some conclusio about the nature and structure of the *Metamorphoses,* the narrati technique, the spectre of presupposed attitudes, *etc.* and contribute to preciser comprehension of the terms used in the preface, *i. e.* answer little more fully the question: What kind of poem are the *Metamorphose*

There is in the first book a multifarious variety of very different elemen ranging from didactic versified philosophy in the *Creation* via Hesiod moral myth in the *Ages,* summary of mythological epic in the *Gigant machia,* heroic epicism in the *Concilium deorum,* which constitutes t frame of a hellenistic theodicy, the *Lycaon,* descriptive epic in the *Floo* genre-painting in the *Deucalion and Pyrrha,* Apollo as ἀλεξίκακος the *Python,* "Apollonian" quarrel between him and Cupido and erot "theodicy" in the *Daphne,* and, finally, the complex *Io*-"epyllion". W have observed a multitude of different stylistic levels from the grandio and allegoric to the realistic and almost conversational, from macabrism bucolism, from Lucretianism to elegy. This first book seems to be a galle

of almost every kind of narrative poetry, and if it had not actually been done one might easily have doubted that it would have been possible to bring together all these strands with any success at all—at least if some kind of internal unity was expected to come of it. Nevertheless it appears from the preceding analysis, that the *Metamorphoses* are not only a collection, not even only a framed collection; that would imply that the stories were detachable from their context, could be taken out of the frame without suffering any fundamental change; it would also imply that the removal of one story would not seriously affect the quality of the other pieces. In the case of the *Fasti* a procedure of that kind would of course ruin the astronomical framework—and that might be a regrettable but not an unbearable loss. As far as the *Metamorphoses* are concerned, some stories might well prove able to exist in their own right in isolation from the rest but their absence would profoundly affect the remainder and they would not quite be the same as they were in their original environment. There is nothing strange in the fact that a collection can include disparate objects or that these can be selected according to a certain principle of limitation and arranged according to a chosen system. In the *Aetia* Callimachus used as criterium of admission that the individual stories should answer a "why" and the arrangement was determined by his own curiosity; guided by the Muses in the first books, later by himself, he walked—and the reader with him—through the vast museum of his learning and ingenuity. There is no reason to be surprised that poems like the *Aetia* (or the *Fasti*) amass very heterogeneous material: by their own definition they are cabinets of curiosities and, like them, their unity does not so much come from within, from the individual parts, as from the outside, from the fact that they are found, as it were, in the same room. Although it is true that the *Metamorphoses* could hardly have been written if the *Aetia* had not been there, Wilkinson's reference to the latter [136] is only an inadequate answer to Nicolson's problem: the difficulty of assessing Ovid's own point of view, the perplexity we feel by our inability to define his state of mind [137]. In his attempt to drive home the thesis that "to those who are familiar with Callimachus there is nothing novel or unique about the spirit of the *Metamorphoses*" Wilkinson tells us that Callimachus decided to make his poem a *carmen perpetuum* by linking the stories with narrative passages; it may, however, be doubted that Callimachus would have endorsed the judgment that his *Aetia* was after all an ἄεισμα διηνεκές. Artificial transitions between the individual stories are by no means enough to create immanent unity; on the contrary this device may have counteracted an effect of that kind by insisting on the jerky and

arbitrary curiosity as the "principle" of arrangement. Having thus strained the—partial [138]—formal continuity of the *Aetia,* Wilkinson minimizes the difference between that poem and the *Metamorphoses:* it was "that Ovid chose to key up his whole poem to the loftier tone associated with epic objectivity whereas Callimachus, with his more homely style, could appear in his own highly individual person". A little awkwardly the decisive fact is here put aside as a matter of moderate consequence; one might maintain that the choice of epic objectivity determined the higher medium level of tone rather than *vice versa.* And in terms of hellenistic literary theory Ovid's decision to disappear behind his work in epic anonymity or objectivity while retaining an essentially Callimachean subject matter was more than a new stage in literary evolution. Ovid, who seems to have been more interested in writing poems than in stating his theoretical views, takes this step as if there was nothing to it. But actually it was a literary revolution to combine Apollonius and Callimachus, Homer and Hesiod in one poem—and to get away with it with some success. At the bottom of Nicolson's perplexity is the consequence of Ovid's decision not to appear in his own person: By leaving, as it were, his poem alone, he also left it to obtain its continuity and unity from inside, from the interplay of its single parts. A reference to Callimachus misses the point because it ignores the fact that the *Metamorphoses* are different from the *Aetia* not only in degree but in principle.

On the basis of the analysis of book I, we may conclude that the chronological scheme is not an external principle of arrangement, to be compared with *e. g.* a geographical one or one like that of the *Fasti;* at no juncture is a story introduced merely because it is *post hoc* in the—mainly fictive—chronology; in some way or other new stories are always more intimately or, at least, otherwise connected to the preceding than by a mere sequence in time. Thus chronology is in the *Metamorphoses* an underlying accompaniment to the interplay of the pieces, a necessary predicate of the poem's development, but not in itself sufficient to bring it about. The order of the *Daphne* and the *Io* is justified, not by the fact that in the chronology of the *Metamorphoses* the *Io* comes after the *Daphne.* That sequence could have been reversed by exactly the same means as that by which it is established: a gathering of rivers with one absent. The actual sequence makes itself acceptable by providing meaningful and pleasing progress, from the simple to the complicated, from the meeting between youthful erotic passion and erotic apprehension, ending in sublimation, to an erotic triangle which causes a great deal of trouble and sufferings until an "arrangement" is reached. Thus it would be

nearer to the truth to say that the temporal order of the stories and the transition between them is there because they belong together, not in order to bring them together. So it seems that the term *perpetuum carmen* has a different meaning in the preface of the *Metamorphoses* from what it has in Horace; the poem reveals that it embrace more than just connection and continuity, *viz.* coherence and organic structure. Correspondingly the concept of metamorphosis, *in nova corpora mutatae formae,* has proved not to be restricted to its most obvious meaning: actual mythological transformation, but to include change and evolution of almost every sort. It seems that what was apparently a principle of limitation has turned out to be a principle of poetic interpretation, or in other words: the poem is not primarily concerned with metamorphoses in the world but with the world as metamorphoses.

Viewed from this angle the *Metamorphoses* have not only high epic pretensions but the highest possible; they are universal, a *Weltgedicht,* to which the definition of the epos as περιοχὴ θείων τε καὶ ἡρωικῶν καὶ ἀνθρωπίνων πραγμάτων [139] can be applied in the fullest sense of the words. Ernst Zinn calls it *der am weitesten gespannte, universellste aller lateinischen Gedichten* [140].

This may be true but it may be only half the truth and if taken as the whole truth it may seriously distort the Ovidian reality. The medal has two sides. The very variety of themes and tones in the part of the poem analyzed so far makes it rather impossible for the reader to accept the idea that the *Metamorphoses* are such a *carmen perpetuum* where the single pieces are heteronomous, *i. e.* acquire their meaning from their mutual interplay and have their value only as parts of a whole.

Many of Ovid's stories have a high degree of autonomy and the *Metamorphoses* have always—and not unjustly, it seems—been a temptation for anthologists. It may very often be difficult to decide exactly where to begin and where to stop as the transitions tend to be integrated with the stories. They normally do not end with a colon, and, moreover, are not the only connective elements. But when this difficulty is overcome—usually by some few introductory remarks—the pieces generally work well in isolation. This illustrates that it is very possible "to approach the *Metamorphoses* with no preconception about what we are to get out of it, taking each episode as we find it, letting the 'most capricious poet', as Touchstone called him, lead us through romance, burlesque, splendour, horror, pathos, macabre, rhetoric, genre-painting, debate, landscape-painting, antiquarian interest, patriotic pride—wherever his own fancy leads him" [141]. This is not only a possible attitude on the part of the reader,

but a necessary attitude imposed by the poem as a condition of reading Comprehensive as the *Metamorphoses* are, it would be obvious to an reader that they represent only a certain and necessarily subjective selection of the enormous mass of transmitted mythology and the poem does not try to conceal that fact at all. The single pieces are adapted to each other but it is rather impossible to escape the impression that this could have been done in the same way with another set of pieces or in a different way with the same set. The reader discovers, when he looks back, that the sequence of pieces had a meaning, that the variety was not chaotic but tended to form a pattern, but when he looks ahead, he is not able to predict what is next but must follow the poets fancy wherever it takes him. In some way or other Ovid prepares the next piece in the preceding ones but frequently it is not until the reader has been surprised that he discovers that the preparations were there and what they were. That means that the preparations are not necessary conditions for the appreciation of the poem but additional constituents of it—as far as the single pieces are concerned. The reader would get more out of them by seeing them in their context, and in so far they are interdependent and heteronomous, but a number of them can also stand on their own feet and by virtue of their length and elaborateness they tend to make themselves more or less independent of the context. They have an "individual" aspect as well as a "social" one and the two need not be entirely coextensive. But there are other atomizing forces at work in the *Metamorphoses* apart from the tendency of the individual pieces to live their own life. The extreme variety of subject-matter counteracts that impression of unity and organic structure which we have observed. When viewed from the outside the poem deals with one πρᾶξις, the story of the world, but when viewed from the inside from amidst the details, that becomes a wild paradox. And the attitude of the poet seems to be anything but constant; that prevents monotony but augments the perplexity. Everything seems able to become everything: moral degeneration follows the work of creation, the Iron Age is the present Golden Age, a parliamentary show results from the crisis of the world, the remedy for the world's disease all but destroys the world, a tender couple creates a hard new people, nature produces monsters, the heroic slaying of which develops into a mixture of pastoral burlesque and elegiac pathos, theodicy and aetiology; finally comes the tragico-comedy of the Jupiter-Io-Juno triangle. What common denominator could be extracted from all this? What point of view could be found from which all this makes sense together? In the beginning of this chapter we observed an indication of a certain arbitrariness in the very first lin

of the poem: *fert animus*. While the analysis showed that the term *carmen perpetuum* must refer to more than chronology and formal transitions and suggest some kind of immanent unity in the whole thing, we must also admit that the *fert animus* is not an insignificant variation of *e. g.* Vergil's *cano* but harmonizes with the unpredictability of the poem. The *Metamorphoses* place their reader in a dilemma: he must both reject and accept discursiveness as a vehicle of development and realize that the *Metamorphoses* both are and are not *one* poem. Ovid's work seems to defy the reader's "either–or" and puts him into a state of surprise and perplexity; apparently there were many who did not feel frustrated and irritated but derived some satisfaction and pleasure from that suspense.

VII

The Minyeides and their Tales

Of all pieces of the *Metamorphoses* probably the *Pyramus and Thisbe* has enjoyed the greatest popularity and had the largest number of readers throughout the ages. Not all of its readers—perhaps comparatively few—have read it as a result of their own choice. *Pyramus and Thisbe* belongs to those texts which for better and for worse have been thrust upon generations of schoolboys. The present writer, too, first became acquainted with caesura, arsis, thesis, dactyls, spondees, *etc.* and of latin poetic word order, style and diction and, last but not least, with that strange and fascinating world which is Roman poetry by reading those 112 lines. At that stage, however, too many things were too new and too difficult to allow any deeper appreciation. What did catch our interest was the tragic story itself, the young and tender love, the romantic scenery with tomb, tree, and cave at midnight by moonlight, the savage lion and the passion of the death scenes. In that way we might be termed responsive readers. There were some things that caused trouble. The metamorphosis itself seemed to us irrelevant and disturbing. We were told, of course, that every story in the *Metamorphoses* had to contain some transformation as an excuse for being told at all; that seemed reasonable enough [1] and we accepted that the poet had here become a victim of his own principles. Another thing was the broken-pipe simile, which seemed to damage the tragic passion of Pyramus' death. We were told that ancient poets did not have the same concepts about what was "poetic" and what was not, and very often took their similes from what they saw around them and might suppose their readers to know as well. This explanation—which is embraced by Ehwald [2]—did not entirely satisfy us, but as we had no means of controlling it ourselves we tried not to be too much disturbed by thinking of broken radiators [3]. But on the whole it was quite possible to enjoy the story even though our very limited knowledge of Latin literature—at that time some books of Caesar's Gallic Wars and some of Catullus' short poems—did not allow us to realize the playfulness and

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CHANGING FORMS

STUDIES IN THE METAMORPHOSES OF OVID

BY

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