·10·

After Ovid

Ovid was famous and successful before he began the *Metamorphoses,* but it is probable that in the two millennia after his death his epic of transformation not only transformed epic but exercised a greater influence over the shaping of art and literature than any other Latin work. Anyone attempting to convey the breadth and variety of this influence can only pick a small sample of works that have themselves been the subject of many books. To provide some perspective this chapter will begin and end with popular art forms from the last decade.

Like many others I saw *Metamorphoses* in New York in 2002: this was the stage presentation by Mary Zimmerman of about a dozen episodes from Ovid, enhanced by Apuleius's tale of Cupid and Psyche and Rilke's poetic evocation of the dead Eurydice's indifference to her past life and love. Zimmerman chose as setting a large shallow pool surrounded by a boardwalk and distributed the parts of narrator, gods, and mortals among about a dozen players, who alternated speech and dumb-show to enact the tales. The use of the pool had provoked a momentary hope that we might be shown Salmacis and Hermaphroditus, but naturally only episodes were chosen which did not require a scenically impossible transforma-

tion. The shipwreck and drowning of Ceyx and his final watery reunion with Alcyone could be fully represented; even Narcissus was given a minute of silent self-adoration at the poolside before he was bodily removed and replaced by a potted plant. In general, Zimmerman concentrated on love stories and alternated tragic and humorous episodes, but the scenes began and ended with the fate of the same character, Midas.

Thus, Ceyx and Alycone, Orpheus and Eurydice, and somewhat boldly Myrrha and her father, Cinyras, represented the tragic side of love; comedy was supplied by the autophagy of Erysichthon, a totally remodeled scene of Phaethon explaining his problematic relationship with his father to a therapist after the crash, and the bustling hospitality of Philemon and Baucis to the gods Jupiter and Mercury, with their reward of simultaneous transformation into trees. The descent of the gods from their elevated perch down to the stage at mortal level, and the couple's mutual farewell, pointed toward closure, sealed by the ring-composition of Midas's final return from his quest to put right the harm his golden touch had done—but more of that below.

The Visual Tradition

Ancient artists knew that you could not represent process but only the moment before or after transformation. Thus, on Greek vases Peleus and Thetis wrestle in human form, surrounded by images of Thetis's other animal shapes, and it is an exception that the Tyrrhenian pirates dive from their ship with human lower limbs and dolphin heads and breasts. The same decorum was observed for depicting Ovidian metamorphosis during the golden period of European art, which bloomed in the sixteenth century. We might start with some brilliant but isolated works: the mysterious scene painted by Piero di Cosimo variously known as *The Death of Procris* and *Satyr Mourning Over a Nymph* (figure 1) and *The Fall of Icarus* by Peter Bruegel (figure 2). Each depicts a moment following the catastrophe of Ovid's tale. Procris lies dead upon a bare headland, with the

spires of a distant city across the bay; most prominent is the dog Laelaps, which keeps a melancholy watch at her side (Piero was sentimental; he also puts the *Liebestod* of the centaurs Cyllarus and Hylonome in the foreground of his *Battle of Lapiths and Centaurs;* like his *Procris,* this is in London's National Gallery). In the lovely Bruegel land and seascape, the plowman, shepherd, and fisherman of *Metamorphoses* 8.217–18 are too busy at their tasks to notice the splash of the boy Icarus's body just sinking beneath the calm waters.

In Italy at this time Raphael's pupil Giulio Romano was decorating the Palazzo del Té, summer residence of the dukes of Mantua, with a Sala di Ovidio and other Ovidian rooms: the Sala dei Giganti depicted the fall of the giants thunderstruck by Jupiter (*Met.* 1.152–5) and a smaller chamber featured the disaster of Phaethon's fall and scenes from both Ovid's and Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*, including a Polyphemus with Acis and Galatea.

Titian's most famous mythological paintings are probably his Bacchus and Ariadne (London, National Gallery, Venice Cat. no. 3), based not on *Metamorphoses* but on book 1 of the *Art of Love,* and the sensual Danae (Naples, Capodimonte, Cat. 40), again, Ovidian in spirit but not based on *Metamorphoses*. But as an older man after 1550 we find him composing Ovidian *Poesie*, including Diana and Actaeon (figure 3). One version, with its companion piece Diana and Callisto, is in Edinburgh (Hardie CC. figs. 1 and 2); the other, showing Actaeon already transformed and assailed by his hounds, is in the National Gallery, London (Hardie CC. fig. 6). Among his other representations of scenes from the *Metamorphoses* is the *Rape of Europa* (Boston, Gardner Museum, Barkan 1990: no. 29), but the strapping lass is spread-eagled across the divine bull's back in a most un-Ovidian posture. If it was a mark of Renaissance decorum that "the integrity and dignity of the human body are to be preserved" (Allen 2002: 341), Titian has given himself amazing license. He also painted Perseus and Andromeda (London, Wallace Colln. Barkan 1990: no. 32), Venus trying to dissuade Adonis from the hunt (twice; see Venice Cat. 5 and 60), and a grim punishment of Marsyas now in Lichtenstein (Cat. 76) in which Apollo, holding his viol, observes the satyr hung and flayed in ugly shades of brown and purple (some

FIGURE 1 *The Death of Procris,* or *A Satyr Mourning Over a Nymph* by Piero di Cosimo. Used by permission of the National Gallery of London.

FIGURE 2 *The Fall of Icarus* by Pieter Brueghel. Used by permission of the Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Brussels, Belgium.

scholars see this as a very late work of the aging artist; others deny its authenticity).

Among the many Italian, French, and Flemish artists who took up these themes after Titian, Poussin deserves special mention. To quote Anthony Blunt:

> His favorite source is Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* and his themes are the loves of gods which are recounted there: Venus with Mars, Adonis or Mercury; Diana and Endymion; Apollo and Daphne; Mercury and Herse; Echo and Narcissus; Cephalus and Aurora. The theme of love is a steady undercurrent to all the paintings of the 1630's, but they are the reverse of erotic. They are indeed rather elegiac, and the burden of Poussin's song is the unhappiness of love, rather than its physical charms. (Blunt 1967: no. 163)

FIGURE 3 *Diana and Actaeon* by Titian. From the Duke of Sutherland Collection, on loan to the National Gallery of Scotland.

Of Poussin's many Ovidian scenes we might note several exquisite landscapes which dwarf the human figures: not only the two versions in which a huge Polyphemus looms over the embracing Acis and Galatea (figure 4) (Blunt 1967: nos. 31 [= Hardie 2002: no. 5], = Blunt 190) but also a Pyramus and Thisbe (Blunt 1967: no. 187), a Juno, Io, and Argus (Blunt 1967: no. 97), and a Herse, Mercury, and Aglauros (Blunt 1967: no. 19). As a landscape artist Poussin preferred images dominated by natural scenery, but some paintings, such as the pathetic Echo, half-hidden as she looks down on the recumbent Narcissus (Blunt 1967: no. 28), or Phaethon imploring Sol (no. 69) or Pan and Syrinx (no. 107), are centered on the figures of

FIGURE 4 *Acis and Galatea* by Nicolas Poussin. Used by permission of the National Gallery of Ireland.

the drama. Both his painted versions of Apollo and Daphne (nos. 32 and 251) show Daphne undergoing change, and one foregrounds her with her arms already turned to branches, but no painting has the virtuosity or passion of Bernini's sculptural masterpiece in the Villa Borghese (Hardie 2002: fig. 4). Only Bernini's earlier *Rape of Persephone* (also in the Villa Borghese) even approaches the frozen movement of Daphne in flight.

The generation of di Cosimo and Romano coincided with the first age of print, and of illustrated texts of and about *Metamorphoses*. A new wide-ranging study by Marina Warner, *Fantastic Metamorphoses, Other Worlds: Ways of Telling the Self* (Oxford 2002) illustrates vivid vignettes of metamorphosis in process from *Ovide Moralisé* (*La Bible des Poètes*: figures 1, 2, and a comical Picus transformed in plate 4) and samples later representations of Arachne "already half-spider" (figure 3, from Doré's version of Dante *Purgatorio* 12), Tithonus, Glaucus, and Io (figures 5, 7, 9). But Ovid is only Warner's

starting point for exploration of ethnographical and fictional texts interpreting the beliefs of other worlds and times about mutations of the self. Thus she leads from the running theme of Arachne's humiliation "on the ragged remnants of work that you had wrought to your own hurt" (*Purgatorio* 12, 44–45, tr. Mandelbaum) to the work of two great modern allegorists, Kafka portraying Gregor Samsa degraded into a cockroach, and Nabokov, both novelist and lepidopterist, describing empathetically the moments of natural change in the cycle from grub to butterfly, and deploying it in his fiction as a poignant symbol to contrast with human death (113–18).

The Literary Tradition

The urge to re-present and to emulate Ovid's scenes may have begun early; Seneca calls upon Ovid's flood to illustrate cataclysm in his *Natural Questions* (3.28–9), and Apuleius devotes a brilliant verbal description (ekphrasis) to a marble statue of Diana in a grotto sculpted to represent her vengeance on Actaeon in *Metamorphoses* 2.4. The poet Statius created his own Ovidian myth of a naiad in flight from Pan as a compliment to his patron Atedius Melior's sloping plane tree (*Silvae* 2.3), and two centuries later Claudian echoed the style and spirit of Ovid in his independent retelling, *The Rape of Proserpina*.

In the Middle Ages, those who could read learnt by reading Latin, and if the end of their studies was the Vulgate, Ovid lay well within their understanding: learned men composed *accessus* (introductions) to the *Metamorphoses,* especially to draw analogies between Ovid's creation and that of Genesis. It was perhaps inevitable that Ovid's text would be distorted to provide a series of morals, and the huge versified *Ovide moralisé,* followed by Pierre Bersuire's Latin commentary, dominated the outlook of the fourteenth century. Thus, Daedalus was explained as a sinner escaping from the devil Minos, or alternatively God himself, with Icarus representing a Christian worshiper; Daphne was a virgin fleeing corruption (fair enough!) or else the blessed Virgin Mary herself, but then so was Myrrha (impregnated as she was by the Father); Alcyone was the Christian soul and her beloved Ceyx was Christ. Christine de Pizan (*Livre de la cité des dames)* saw Ovid as an evil corrupter, who was first exiled, then castrated for his offenses.

Chaucer at least resisted this allegorization, and loved Ovidian narrative for itself. His earliest work, the *Book of the Duchess,* exploited the world of sleep and dreams to retell the romantic tragedy of Alcyone and Ceyx, diverging from Ovid chiefly in avoiding the final transformation; Alcyone simply dies on the third day after her vision. Another of Chaucer's works, *The Legend of Good Women,* dwells chiefly on the deserted heroines of Ovid's *Heroides*, but it also celebrates Thisbe and Philomela, showing Chaucer's familiarity with Ovid by inserting into his tale of Theseus and Ariadne a brief report of Scylla's murder of her father, Nisus—again without any hint of Ovid's transformation. *The House of Fame* explores the implications of Ovid's allegorization in *Metamorphoses* 12: in the first book Chaucer reports that he dreamed of a temple of Venus inscribed with the narrative of *Aeneid* 1–4, then calls on Ovid's Dido from *Heroides* 7 to refute the Virgilian version of her guilt ("O how a woman doth amis / to love him that unknowen is"); in the second book he dreams that Jupiter has sent his eagle to display and interpret the House of Fame, her palace "betwixen hevene, erthe and see" to which all speech soars, both "fals" and "soth." The notion of soaring leads to references not only to Scipio's dream in Cicero but to Daedalus, Phaethon, and the constellations reported in *Metamorphoses* and other works. The *Canterbury Tales* too use the *Metamorphoses* for the Manciple's tale of Apollo's crow (actually the raven) and the bird's harmful betrayal of the infidelity of the god's "wife": the wife of Bath retells the tale of Midas's ass ears, which he confessed only to his wife (not to his barber, as in Ovid), who unwittingly spread the scandal by whispering it into the earth.

Educated Englishmen such as Spencer and Sidney would have read Ovid in the original, but translations began to appear for the wider reading public in Shakespeare's youth. Oddly, the first translation was only of the Narcissus episode (by T[homas] H[owell] in 1560) and the second was "The pleasant fable of Hermaphroditus

and Salmacis" (Peend Thomas, 1565); both were beset with masses of introductory and paratextual material. Real accessibility came with Arthur Golding's translation of Ovid's first four books into English fourteen-syllable lines (1565), followed by his version of the whole poem in 1567. He too felt obliged to defend the *Metamorphoses* against accusations of immorality in his preface and accompanied his version with an explanatory verse epistle. Raphael Lyne has noted that Golding's translation represents a major break from the moralizing tradition simply "because it is what we would call a translation of Ovid . . . recognizing the right of the text to a life of its own is itself a change" (Lyne 2001: 53). It was Golding's version that opened up Ovid's poem to Shakespeare, who embraced the romance of Ovid's tales from his earliest plays.

The early *Titus Andronicus* is the most explicit in its characters' open citation of Latin authors (Seneca as well as Ovid) and goes beyond incidental references to Hecuba and Daedalus to use the grim tale of Tereus and Philomela as key to the barbarous rape by Tamora's sons. Jonathan Bate (1995: 79–88) calls it "the pivotal play in Shakespeare's early career." He notes that Shakespeare turned to poetry when the theaters were closed because of plague and found Golding's Ovid as source for his poem *Venus and Adonis*. At about the same time, rival players had actually included a dramatization of Philomela and Tereus in a work called *Four Plays in One*. Bate argues that *Titus* was both a sourceless play (as regards its main intrigue) and "composed out of a series of precedents in the dramatic repertoire and a series of patterns in Shakespeare's reading of the classics" (1995: 90). Thus, when Titus's brother Marcus finds his niece Lavinia mutilated (both tongue and hands were cut off), he interprets her state as that of Philomela:

> But sure, some Tereus hath deflowered thee,
> and lest thou shouldst detect him, cut thy tongue . . .
> . . . . . .
> fair Philomel, why she but lost her tongue,
> and in a tedious sampler sewed her mind,
> but, lovely niece, that means is cut from thee.

> A craftier Tereus, cousin, hast thou met,
> and he hath cut those pretty fingers off
> that could have better sewed than Philomel. (2.3.25–6, 37–44)

It is perhaps more remarkable that Lavinia searches mutely for Ovid's poem (4.1.42) and points to "the tragic tale of Philomel" until her uncle shows her how to write in the sand guiding a stick with her teeth and feet. This too is almost certainly inspired by the *Metamorphoses:* the raped Io only inscribes her name (blessedly short) in the sand, but Lavinia somehow spells out the crime and the criminals: "*stuprum:* Chiron, Demetrius" (4.1.79). Thus, the Ovidian text both shapes the offense and guides its detection. Ironically, Titus's retaliation by cooking and serving the rapists to their mother comes far closer to the spirit of revenge in which Seneca's Atreus fed Thyestes his own children than to the Ovidian tragedy; but then Seneca himself had deliberately echoed Ovid's tale in his *Thyestes* and has his villain gloat over preparing an act of vengeance even worse than "the Thracian evil deed." Philomela would again be the significant reading of Imogen before she escapes rape in *Cymbeline*.

On a happier note, audiences who have never tasted Ovid still feel hilarious delight in the glorious absurdity of the "most lamentable comedy and most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisby" as rehearsed and performed by the mechanicals of *Midsummer Night's Dream*. But the *Dream* also offers more indirect homage, providing parallels to the divine deceptions of Mercury in Puck's mischief, first in metamorphosing Bottom into an ass, then in making Titania dote upon him. The strange confusions of the four mismatched lovers straying through the woods, enhanced by Puck's misapplication of his love charm to the wrong lovers, follow the same pattern as the punishment of Narcissus with self-love or the various bungled affairs of Apollo. Above all, a dreamlike atmosphere of discontinuity and inconsequentiality pervades the action of lords and citizens, craftsmen and fairy folk, that echoes on a more harmless, comic scale the pursuits and flights of *Metamorphoses* 1–5.

The Winter's Tale is an awkward comedy, opening with the prolonged episode of Leontes' unwarranted jealousy and the apparent

death of his queen, Hermione. Where Shakespeare has learned most from Ovid (and diverges furthest from his Italian model, *Pandosto*) is in the "denouement" (after sixteen years) brought on when Paulina invites Leontes to admire her "Statue" of his dead queen:

> O thus she stood,
> even with such life of majesty, warm life,
> as now it coldly stands, when first I wooed her.
> I am ashamed. Doth not the stone rebuke me,
> for being more stone that it is? (5.3.34–7)

Paulina takes Venus's role, controlling the gradual revelation, until Leontes cries out to his friend Polixenes (63–8): "See, my Lord / would you not deem it breathed? And that those veins did verily bear blood? :: Masterly done; / the very life seems warm upon her lip. / :: The fixture of her eyes has motion in't, as we are mocked with art." Finally, Paulina commands a miracle: her living "statue" is to move and approach her husband, and he feels her living warmth, not daring to believe his senses, as they at last embrace. Thus, Shakespeare combines the illusion of an Ovidian transformation with the blessed reunion of an Aristotelian recognition scene.

In the introduction to his *Tales from Ovid,* Ted Hughes speaks of Shakespeare "lifting images or even whole passages nearly verbatim" (this surely goes too far) but finds "a more crucial connection . . . in their common taste for a tortured subjectivity and catastrophic extremes of passion that border on the grotesque" (1997: viii). This is perhaps what our own age seeks and so finds in all three poets, and the popularity of different episodes has varied with the tastes of a given time and place: not only their importance but the form given to them. Take Midas, whose ass's ears were celebrated by Chaucer and found their way onto Bottom's head. In the nineteenth century Nathaniel Hawthorne made Midas the theme of "The Golden Touch," one of two tales from the *Metamorphoses* included in his *Wonder Book* of moral tales for children. He specifically discards the ass's ears but gives Midas a little daughter, Mary*gold,* "whom nobody but myself ever heard of," and makes it the climax of Midas's folly when she runs to comfort her father and is turned

into lifeless gold. Her father's grief is resolved only when he finds out from the god how to reverse the effect of his touch and restore her to life. And this was the version chosen for staging the New York production of *Metamorphoses,* which made its closure Midas's return with the healing water to revive his daughter. In her version for the Anglo-American Hoffman and Lasdun collection *After Ovid: The New Metamorphoses,* the feminist poet Carol Ann Duffy reverts to the domesticity of Chaucer's tale and composes a sort of elegy for Midas's wife. She is forced first to lock her bedroom door, then drive him away from their home; as the starving Midas suffers delusions and thinks he hears the music of Pan, her final thoughts lament the loss of "his warm hands on my skin, his touch" (pp. 12–13). I first read Hawthorne's other choice, "The Miraculous Pitcher," as a child, and loved the tale, which stays true to Ovid's narrative of Baucis and Philemon but turns the poor Mediterranean peasants into teetotal New England smallholders serving the gods butter and cheese from their cow. At the bidding of "Quicksilver's" magic serpent staff, the miraculous pitcher replenishes itself with milk, and the feast is a nursery tea of brown bread and honey. But the warmth of the old couple survives even Hawthorne's Victorian moralizing.

The tale of Arachne appeals to poets as an allegory of poetic creation. John Hollander, the poet and critic of poetry, re-created Ovid's tale in twentieth-century fashion by giving a voice to the victim. "Arachne's Story" in *Figurehead and Other Poems* follows Ovid closely but adds comment reflecting the values of a committed craftswoman:

> Weaving, admittedly can be the best
> Of work; onto the warp of unsignifying strength
> Are woven the threads of imaging that
> Do their unseen work of structure too,
> But can depict even while they draw
> The warp together: my images are thus
> Truly in and of the fabric, texture itself becoming
> Text, rather than lying like painting
> Lightly upon some canvas or some wall.

It was not to challenge her,
Like some idiot warrior going up against some
Other idiot warrior; say rather
That it was to hear the simultaneous song
Of two harmonious shuttles, nosing in
And out of their warp like dolphins out
Of their one blue and into another. (pp. 12–13)

The fate of Arachne is naturally one of Ted Hughes's selections from the *Metamorphoses*. He has enriched the memorable imagery of Ovid's narrative with more of his own. Thus, "The nymphs came down from the vines on Tmolus, / as butterflies to a garden, to flock stunned / around what flowered out of the warp and the weft under her fingers," outdoes *Metamorphoses* 6.15, and Hughes converts Arachne's angry stare at Minerva (6.34) into "she reared like a cobra scowling." In general, however, his version is as true to Ovid as it is fluent, only extending the final metamorphosis to represent Arachne in terms of her old skill:

she hangs from the thread that she spins
out of her belly.
Or ceaselessly weaves it into patterned webs
on a loom of leaves and grasses.
Her touches
deft and swift and light as when they were human. (*Tales from Ovid*, p. 170)

(*Met.* 6.144–5: *cetera venter habet, de quo tamen illa remittit / stamen, et antiquas exercet aranea telas* [A stomach occupies the rest, from which she still emits a thread, and keeps her old loom busy]).

Part of Hughes's fame came to him as a poet of nature and the cruelty of wildlife: thus, it is natural that he should have chosen to translate the grim double horror of rape and mutilation, infanticide and cannibalism, that is, the story of Tereus, Philomela, and Procne. Similarly, Hollander was fascinated chiefly by the strange fusion of music and vocal melody from pain, and his *Philomel* is a complex and beautiful experiment across poetry and music: both the song-poem and the poet's own discussion add a new dimension to our understanding of Ovid. When the twelve-tone composer Milton Babbitt asked him to compose a poem for Bethany Beardsley to sing against an electronic musical text, including a tape of her own recorded voice, Hollander, perhaps recalling Philomela's threat to "fill the forest and stir the rocks as witnesses" (6.547), created a miniature dramatic scene comparable to Schoenberg's *Erwartung*. It has three movements. The first, "representing the Thracian woods initiating and then commenting in a choral way upon her singing," plays on the sounds of her name and that of Tereus, beginning with a scream that becomes the word "Feel!"

I feel
I feel a million trees
and the heat of trees.

TAPE: not true trees

I feel a million tears:
is it Tereus I feel?
Is it Tereus I feel?

TAPE: not true tears—
not true trees—

TAPE: not Tereus, not a true Tereus—

Feel a million filaments,
fear the tearing, the feeling
Trees, that are full of felony—

Trees tear,
and I hear,
Families of tears—

The second movement is "Philomel's dialogue with the birds around her, seeking their help in realizing her new identity as a bird," and Hollander describes the third as "that of song expounding itself." Philomel's song combines past and present in a sequence that alternates sets of four long lines to evoke past suffering with six short lines moving from the word "change" to her present bird existence:

Love's most hidden tongue throbbed in the barbarous
daylight;
Then all became pain in one great scream of silence, fading,

Finally, as all the voices of feeling died in the west
And pain alone remained with remembering in my breast

I screamed in change,
Now all I can do
Is bewail that chase.
For now I range (refrain)
Thrashing, through
The woods of Thrace.

This work, the only modern music I know inspired by an episode from the *Metamorphoses,* has been recorded and should be heard to convey its full and eerie power. But even without music, Ovid's text was powerful enough to inspire Seneca, Chaucer, and Shakespeare, and Hughes responds fiercely to its challenge, again adding his own imagery. Compare *Metamorphoses* 6.451–7 with

Once the two had met, there, mid-sentence,
Philomela herself—arrayed
In the wealth of a kingdom—entered:
Still unaware that her own beauty
Was the most astounding of her jewels.

She looked like one of those elfin queens
You hear about
Flitting through the depths of forests.
Tereus felt his blood alter thickly;
Suddenly he himself was like a forest,
When a drought wind explodes it into a firestorm. (*Tales from Ovid*, p. 215)

Although the notion of elfin queens seems out of place, the simile succeeds in linking Philomela's forest world to Hughes's own modified comparison of Tereus's lust to a forest fire. The thickening blood is Hughes, not Ovid, but powerful, as are his versions of Ovid's similes (6.527–9) comparing Philomela to the victim of a wolf or hawk: "Afterwards, she crouched in a heap, shuddering— / like a lamb, still clinging to life / after the wolf has savaged it /

And for some reason dropped it. Or like a dove, a bloody rag, still alive / Under the talons that stand on it." Unfortunately, his rendering of her reproaches with its short shrill lines falls short of Ovid's tragic decorum. But Hughes conveys brilliantly Procne's reaction to her sister's tapestry:

The tyrant's wife
Unrolled the tapestry and saw
The only interpretation
Was the ruin of her life.
She sat there, silent and unmoving,
As if she thought of something else entirely.

In these moments, her restraint
Was superhuman. But grief so sudden, so huge,
made mere words seem paltry. None could lift to her lips
One drop of its bitterness.
And tears were pushed aside

By the devouring single idea
Of revenge. Revenge
Had swallowed her whole being. She had plunged
Into a labyrinth of plotting
Where good and evil, right and wrong,
Forgot their differences.

Hughes does not falter throughout the climactic sequence that follows. He has proudly set this terrible narrative, which answers some barbarian streak in our present society, second to last in the sequence of twenty-four tales. And while readers may wish that Hughes had adapted other episodes (Medea, Ceyx and Alcyone, Baucis and Philemon) or regret that the poet's death prevented him from providing a complete version of the *Metamorphoses,* there is no evidence that he would have wished to fill in what he had passed over. Still, his choices deserve some comment. Golding first published only books 1–4, and these books provide ten of Hughes's choices. We have seen that Hughes includes Arachne and Tereus from book 6; he also "translates" Niobe but passes over Orpheus's

own katabasis and death scene in books 10–11, in favor of Myrrha, Pygmalion, and Venus and Adonis, with Venus's cautionary tale of Atalanta and Meleager. In an age more sympathetic to warrior epic, Dryden translated large sections of books 1, 8, and 11–13, but apart from Orpheus's song recital, Hughes goes beyond book 8 only for the birth and death of Hercules, Peleus's wooing of Thetis, Midas, and the death of Cygnus. Without any Roman material, not to mention the final invocation of divine protection for Augustus, there could be no organic closure: the stage *Metamorphoses* faced the same challenge and ended with the loving and simultaneous death of Baucis and Philemon; the Hughes collection has substituted Pyramus and Thisbe. In the most recent discussion of both the composite Hoffman and Lasdun collection and Hughes's "two dozen renewals," John Henderson (1999) regrets the triteness of ending with this *Liebestod*. It would certainly have surprised Ovid.

Ovid had ended by proudly affirming the immortality of his poem, yet in a letter from exile (*Tristia* 1.7), he claims he tried to burn the *Metamorphoses*, seeing it as unfinished and perhaps as the *carmen* that had offended Augustus. He even compares his act to infanticide, and himself to Althaea, whose destruction of the log that stood for her son's life he had vividly portrayed in *Metamorphoses* 8.451–525. Yet Ovid somehow made sure that his poetic history of divine and human folly from chaos to "my times" did survive for generations to read and for writers and artists to perpetuate through their own visions. As its readers have changed, so has their reception of the poem, and for many critics it is this capacity for growth and change that constitutes the lasting vitality of the *Metamorphoses*.

Further Reading

Charles Martindale, *Ovid Renewed: Ovidian Influences on Literature and Art from the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 1988) (see especially Helen Cooper, "Chaucer and Ovid: A Question of Authority," 71–81, and Nigel Llewellyn, "Illustrating Ovid," 157–66); C. Martindale and M. Martindale, *Shakespeare and the Uses of Antiquity: An Introductory Essay* (London, 1990); Leonard Barkan, *The Gods Made Flesh: Metamorphosis and the Pursuit of Paganism* (New Haven, 1990); Marina Warner, *Fantastic Metamorphoses, Other Worlds: Ways of Telling the Self* (Oxford, 2002); S. A. Brown, *The "Metamorphosis" of Ovid: From Chaucer to Ted Hughes* (New York, 1999); Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, Arden Shakespeare, series 3, ed. J. Bate (London, 1995); *The Winter's Tale*, Arden Shakespeare, ed. J. H. Pafford (London, 1903; repr. 1991); R. Lyne, *Ovid's Changing Worlds: English Metamorphoses, 1567–1632* (Oxford, 2001); and R. Lyne, "Ovid in English Translation," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ovid*, ed. P. R. Hardie (Cambridge, 2002), 249–63.

The *Cambridge Companion to Ovid* includes a new study, "Ovid and Art," by Christopher Allen, whose illustrations for Titian, Bernini, and Poussin are cited in this chapter. Other Titian references are given from Martindale 1988 and the catalogue of the Venice exhibition *Titian: Prince of Painters* (Venice, 1990). The Poussin illustrations and the comment on Poussin's use of *Metamorphoses* are taken from Anthony Blunt's *Nicolas Poussin: The Mellon Lectures* (Washington, D.C., 1967).

Nathaniel Hawthorne's two tales come from *A Wonder Book* (1851), reprinted in vol. 7 of the centenary edition published by Ohio State University Press, Columbus. The poems of John Hollander are cited from "A Poem for Music: Remarks on the Composition of *Philomel*," in *Vision and Resonance: Two Senses of Poetic Form* (New York, 1975), 289–306, and *Figurehead and Other Poems* (New York, 1999). Carol Ann Duffy's "Mrs. Midas" is taken from *After Ovid: The New Metamorphoses*, ed. M. Hoffman and J. Lasdun (London, 1994). The versions of Ted Hughes are from *Tales from Ovid: Twenty-four Passages from the "Metamorphoses"* (London, 1997). For John Henderson's critique of *After Ovid* and *Tales from Ovid*, see Philip R. Hardie, Alessandro Barchiesi, and Stephen Hinds, eds., *Ovidian Transformations: Essays on Ovid's "Metamorphoses" and Its Reception* (Cambridge, 1999), 301–16.

Ovid's *Metamorphoses*

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