5

Ovid's *Metamorphoses*

I

> For given Man, by birth, by education,
> Imago Dei who forgot his station,
> The self-made creature who himself unmakes,
> The only creature ever made who fakes,
> With no more nature in his loving smile
> Than in his theories of a natural style,
> What but tall tales, the luck of verbal playing,
> Can trick his lying nature into saying
> That love, or truth in any serious sense,
> Like orthodoxy, is a reticence?
>
> W. H. Auden, ' "The Truest Poetry is the most Feigning" '

Ovid's *Metamorphoses* afford us something of an intermezzo. The very appearance of a chapter on this poem in a book on epic is itself an issue—a fact which the poet would no doubt have found highly diverting. From its first lines the poem continually confronts us with the problem of the extent to which, and the ways in which, it is and is not epic.[1] There is no obligation here to enter into a full account of the poem from the viewpoint of its continually destabilized generic norms, yet by taking this line as a first thread into the poem it may be possible to discover a promising starting-point for our investigation into what the poem has to say about epic and its gods. As a commentary on the epic view of the gods the poem is priceless, while it will prove to be of the highest importance for the epics which follow it, especially the *Thebaid* and *Argonautica*, where its influence on this aspect of epic form is, if anything, greater even than that of the *Aeneid*.[2] It will emerge

[1] The entire debate over the epic nature of the *Metamorphoses*, a key issue since Heinze (1919), has been set on a new footing by Hinds (1987); cf. the anticipations of Nicoll (1980).

[2] Bibliography on the gods in the *Metamorphoses* in Hofmann (1981), 2188–9; Elliott (1979–80).

that Ovid's emphases are markedly different from those of the poets we have been examining so far, for his range of mythological interest is vast, and his coverage eclectic in the extreme. For all that, his preoccupation with epic modes is pervasive, and highly enlightening.

Novelty is proclaimed in the poem's second word, and paradox follows straight after, as the proem's dense allusions, followed by the opening cosmogony, adumbrate the perspectives we will need in order to read this un-epic epic, an uncategorizable multi-form prodigy:

> In nova fert animus mutatas dicere formas
> corpora; di, coeptis (nam uos mutastis et illa)
> adspirate meis primaque ab origine mundi
> ad mea perpetuum deducite tempora carmen.

My spirit leads me to tell of shapes changed into new bodies; gods, breathe on my undertakings (for you have changed them as well), and, from the first origin of the world, spin out my poem unbroken down to my own time. (*Met.* 1. 1–4)

In the fourth line, *perpetuum* appears to distance the poet from the non-epic aesthetics of the master, Callimachus, while *deducite* draws him simultaneously nearer.[3] The ensuing cosmogony picks up this tergiversation. Certainly the cosmogony is not serious philosophy for its own sake, but it is concerned with mapping out the terrain of possibility for the poem. It is highly significant that there is a good measure of control and direction behind Ovid's evolving universe, as is very much not the case in, for example, the neoteric universe sung of by Silenus in Vergil's sixth *Eclogue*. Silenus' world is 'essentially fragmented, not ordered, fortuitous, not designed'.[4] Ovid's world, on the other hand, emerges from strife by the work of a god, or nature (21), who organizes the separate

[3] Hinds (1987), 19, with bibliography of the numerous discussions, esp. Kenney (1976): add Hofmann (1985). Such, at least, is the reading imposed by the blunt dichotomies which two generations of Latin poetry had read into the prologue to Callimachus' *Aetia*. A fascinating (as yet unpublished) interpretation by S. J. Heyworth blurs the apparent rigidity of the paradox, yielding a reading of the proem that sees it as true to the spirit of the *Aetia*; see, rather differently, Knox (1986), 9–10. For a restatement of the importance of epic to the definitions of Callimachus and Ovid, see Hinds (1989), Anderson (1988). For the latest and most thorough defence of the reading *illa* in line 2, see Kovacs (1987).

[4] Hubbard (1975), 61. Note, however, that the *Metamorphoses* begins as if it were an epic ecphrasis (compare Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 1. 496 ff.).

locations of the constituent elements (22–31). This world is more epic than neoteric in the very fact of its controlled organization—although, as we shall see shortly, the *mundi fabricator* does not act in a very epic manner. The oddness of the control is caught in a moment of comparison with Vergil's universe: Vergil's Jupiter controls the winds by putting on top of them a mass of high mountains (*Aen.* 1. 61), while Ovid's *mundi fabricator* places above them the *aether*, explicitly 'liquid and lacking weight, containing nothing of earthly sediment' (*liquidum et grauitate carentem / aethera nec quicquam terrenae faecis habentem*, 1. 67–8).

In many important ways Ovid's cosmogony is redolent of anti-epic allegiances,[5] yet the element of control (however qualified) is indispensable to Ovid's conception of the nature of metamorphosis: as Barkan points out, 'for all its emphasis upon the blurring of clear categories, metamorphosis is as much concerned with reduction and fixity as with variability or complexity'.[6] There is more involved here than acknowledging that agreed categories are necessary for representation of transition. Aristotle's discussion of change, for example, 'insists that in every change (whether movement in space or alteration in quality or size) *something remains the same*'.[7]

The story which most dramatically illustrates the poles of fixity and flux is the weaving-contest between Minerva and Arachne. This story also affords key insights into the poem's conceptions of art, into its ways of talking about the gods and divine power, and will therefore repay some attention.[8] The Arachne story follows on from Book 5, whose last portion is concerned with genre, as Minerva listens to the Muses' account of their singing competition with the mortal Pierides (5. 251–end). Since the issues there have been fully discussed by Hinds (1987), let us analyse the sequel, and follow the goddess as she changes role, becoming herself a competitor in art with a mortal.

[5] Knox (1986), 10–13.

[6] Barkan (1986), 66; cf. Coleman (1971), 462, on the cosmogony as a necessary minimum backdrop of order for the metamorphoses to follow.

[7] Ackrill (1981), 31 (his italics); cf. Anderson (1963), 4–5; Solodow (1988), 183–6.

[8] The passage is much discussed. See, above all, the extremely valuable article of Leach (1974); also Lateiner (1984); von Albrecht (1984); Hofmann (1985), 230–4; Barkan (1986), 1–18; Brown (1987).

Arachne's superlative craftsmanship is described in terms which not only establish her credentials as a mistress of neoteric art, but also (at first) align her with the *mundi fabricator*, and hence with Ovid himself. She begins with rude, unwrought material, as does the demiurge (*rudem . . . lanam*, 6. 19; cf. *rudis . . . moles*, 1. 7); this she forms into a globe (*glomerabat in orbes*, 6. 19; cf. *magni speciem glomerabat in orbis*, 1. 35). From here on she becomes more and more neoteric. She sets to work the *opus*, making it *soft* by drawing it out to a length, turning the *smooth* spindle with a *light* thumb (*mollibat, leui teretem*, 21–2).[9]

Pallas' work, however, is described first, marked out as artistically and morally weighty, symmetrical and accessible: 'the composition of the goddess' work is flawlessly Classical, perfectly centered, balanced, and framed, highly moral and didactic in content'.[10] Her competition with Neptune at Athens is the first element to be described, occupying the centre of the composition (6. 70–82): self-praise and self-vindication are therefore the subject. The Olympian gods are all there, two times six—with Jupiter in the middle of the assemblage and the line—in all their august weightiness (*augusta grauitate*, 73).[11] Each deity is recognisable by his or her distinctive attributes (73–4); appearance corresponds with actuality.[12] When Pallas 'simulates' an event on her tapestry, it is no dissimulating lie, but the event itself (80–1). Around this satisfying centre are arranged in symmetry four neat scenes showing contests 'between a rash woman and a goddess, all resulting in the metamorphosis of the mortal (83–100)'.[13] The whole is framed by a border of Pallas' own tree, the olive: this is the *modus* (102), a terminus of artistic moderation. The composition is now finished, with the word 'end' at the end in a culminating gesture of decorum (*finem*, 102).

Arachne's work is, by contrast, a neoteric masterpiece,

[9] On the loaded import of such vocabulary, see Cairns (1979), 21; Hinds (1987), 21–2. Ovid also aligns the poetic craft of Orpheus with the action of the demiurge, as they each make a concord out of discordant elements (1. 25, 10. 146–7). On the correspondence between the power of the creator and of the poet, see Lieberg (1982) and (1985).

[10] Anderson (1972), 160.

[11] We will return to the resonance of the epithet: Augustus belongs here, if we take him and the gods on their own valuation.

[12] Barkan (1986), 90 acutely remarks that only the gods can have faith in their form (*fiducia formae*, 2. 731).

[13] Anderson (1972), 160.

asymmetrical and wilful.[14] The picture it gives of the gods is, correspondingly, far from Pallas' justified order: these gods are swept pell-mell through the currents of natural flux, not static and identifiable by attribute, but bewilderingly mutating in order to work their sexual will upon helpless humans. In the goddess's work, only humans were undergoing change; in the human's work, the humans are a given, while the gods mutate. Jupiter's characteristically regal *imago* on Pallas' tapestry is now the *imago* of a bull, or a satyr (103, 110), adopted for disguise. As the humans in the tapestry are tricked, cheated, duped (*elusam*, 103; *luserit*, 113, 124; *deceperit*, 125), so the spectator is gulled by Arachne's craft: *you* would be tricked, like Europa, into thinking Jupiter's *imago* was a real bull (103–4), even though you have read the story already in the poem and know that the bull is *fallax* and *falsus* (2. 871, 3. 1). The apparently true is an illusion. As Pallas' last lines had capped her stately, measured performance, so Arachne's border is graced with the programmatic *tenui* ('slight', 127).

Pallas and Envy could not pick Arachne's work to pieces (129–30, with yet another weaving/criticism play, on *carpere*). What are *we* to make of it, and of Pallas' own work? This is, after all, a competition, with judgement invited. Most modern readers will instinctively side with Arachne's neoteric vision, and most modern readings, accordingly, offer an Arachnaean version of the poem as a whole.[15] Other important modern readings, however, adopt a Minervan perspective. Otis sees the episode (and the poem) from Minerva's point of view, while Bömer's commentary gives here, as elsewhere, a consistently Minervan reading.[16] A path through these alternatives is offered by Leach, whose fine article demonstrates that if we adhere to one antithesis or the other we will fail to do what justice we can to the complexity of the poem's perspectives.[17] Ovid's pendulum never rests in its oscillation between the poles of Minerva and Arachne, epic and neoteric canons: 'As the creator of the poem, Ovid maintains a vision embracing both points of view.'[18] The episode is a lesson in perspective, with divine and human order and flux, fixity and instability—this is why it comes at a moment which has often been marked as the transition from a predominantly divine perspective to a predominantly human one.[19] Minerva's work is an exaggerated picture of divine epic decorum, Arachne's an exaggerated picture of neoteric divine abandonment. Yet Arachne depicts nothing about the gods that was not already present, however faintly, in epic tradition. Minerva's reading is *too* epic, glossing over the difficulties of divine action which had been present in epic from the beginning.[20]

This is not to say that Arachne's craft might not be, in the end, closer to the poem's dominant mode.[21] In the last resort, Ovid is a human artist, like Arachne, and not a god.[22] Arachne corresponds to one commonly available archetype of the artist: obsessive, naïve, destroyed (like Ovid) by direct encounter with the power of the world she is trying to describe. Her metamorphosis into a spider is a sickeningly appropriate punishment for Minerva to devise. The perpetual weaver of webs that are proverbially easy to destroy,[23] her qualities of fine grace are exaggerated into parody as she becomes simply small, tiny (142), her fingers programmatically *exiles*, embodying the stylistic thinness which is the fate of failed small-scale composition (143). The celebrator of beautiful disorder is now doomed to the spider's weaving of utter symmetry.[24] Worst of all, as Seneca tells us in a fascinating disquisition on animal instinct, a spider's work is not art. All spiders produce the same, none is more skilled than the next:

> Nascitur ars ista, non discitur. itaque nullum est animal altero doctius: uidebis araneorum pares telas . . . incertum est et inaequabile quidquid ars tradit: ex aequo uenit quod natura distribuit.

[14] Anderson (1972), 164–5; Galinsky (1975), 82–3; Hofmann (1985), 230–4.

[15] e.g. Little (1970); Solodow (1988), 196–7.

[16] Otis (1970), 146; Bömer (1969–86), vol. 3. 35–6.

[17] Leach (1974); cf. Brown (1987).

[18] Leach (1974), 104. As Professor Hinds points out to me, the weaving of both contestants is described in markedly neoteric terms in 61–9 (note especially the key *deducitur* of 69: cf. Hofmann (1985), 231). As he puts it, 'the two contestants have more in common than they are prepared to admit; neotericism depends on what it subverts'.

[19] Otis (1970), 166, 315; Wilkinson (1955), 148.

[20] Ovid delights in resensitizing us to epic's evasions. It has been objected, for example, that his battle descriptions are too distant: 'Urbane hexameters and pointed conceits adorn the violence and gore of the battle of the Lapiths and Centaurs' (Lyne (1984), 13). Yet these tactics may jolt us into seeing Homer and Vergil as being themselves merchants of beautiful descriptions of the horrific and macabre.

[21] So Brown (1987), 219–20, and (one suspects) Leach (1974).

[22] Leach's discussion is extremely valuable here as well.

[23] Otto (1890), 34.

[24] Plin. *HN* 11. 80–2; Philostr. *Imag.* 2. 28.3; Plut. *Mor.* 966 e–f.

That art is innate, not learnt. And so no animal is more learned than the next: you'll see that spiders' webs are all equal . . . Whatever art bestows is uncertain and uneven; what nature distributes issues from an even source. (Sen. *Ep.* 121. 23)

At the end, it really is true that you would know she was taught by Minerva (*scires a Pallade doctam*, 23).

It becomes necessary to enquire into what the boundaries and transgressions are which constitute the *Metamorphoses*' disorderly order, and where the divine belongs in them, especially in relation to the human. How much is stable, how much in flux? What are the rules for the categories of perspective across these divisions?

The cosmogony establishes the rules of the game, the fundamental boundaries whose limits the poem's transgressions will explore. Gods, humans, and animals belong each in their own sphere (1. 69–78). From the first, the relationship between the human and divine becomes an issue. It is left unclear whether the first humans were made by the creator-god, and hence had a share in his divine nature, or else were made from the earth's new mud, and thereby gained an element of the ethereal (1. 78–88). The picture is further complicated as we go on, as we learn of the offspring of the Giants' blood (151–62), and of Deucalion and Pyrrha (313–415).[25] Since the appearance of mankind is a metamorphosis of the earth (1. 87–8), a human's transformation into a rock or tree is a reversion to origins; yet, since there may have been divine elements at man's creation, and since the celestial element may have been lingering in the primeval mud (1. 79–81), a human's elevation to deity may also be seen as a return to something cognate.

Being human is living in suspension between the divine and the inanimate or animal.[26] As inhabitants of the iron age, humans demarcate themselves off from the categories on either side by laws and conventions, so that the question of how natural it is to be a human being becomes one of the poem's main preoccupations. The Greek explanatory myths of the Ages of Men allowed a large space for sacrifice, and its associated topic of diet, as a means of

[25] Not to mention mushrooms (7. 392). See Bömer (1969–86), vol. 1. 70, on the inconsistencies of Ovid's accounts of man's origins.

[26] Detienne (1972).

showing how men are distant from, and yet close to, the gods.[27] Ovid's poem follows up its initial interest in the divine element in man's origins by likewise concentrating on the dietary relations between gods and men. The very first metamorphosis in the poem after the cosmogony shows a man becoming an animal as a result of offending divinity by an abuse of the sacrifice, by violating the alimentary norms.[28] Lycaon offers Jupiter human sacrifice, part boiled, part roasted, to test his divinity, and becomes a wolf (1. 226–39). Yet dietary relations are not Ovid's principal means for charting what is human about being human, how near humans are to the divine, or how far from it. Perhaps unsurprisingly, for his most systematic charting of the main similarities and differences across these categories, Ovid uses sex.

Three tales of aberrant sexual impulse (two adjacent) cluster in Books 9 and 10: Byblis desires her brother (9. 454–665); Iphis is in love with one of her own sex (9. 666–797); and Myrrha sleeps with her father (10. 298–502). Each of these urges provides different ways of viewing what is natural for humans, using gods and animals as the demarcations.

Iphis cannot see her desire for another female as anything but unnatural: animals do not behave like this (9. 726–34).[29] Iphis' story ends happily, as Isis transforms her into a male so that her marriage may be performed, but the incestuous Byblis and Myrrha, on either side of her, flail about in their determination to undermine any natural basis for the sexual conventions which bar fulfilment of their desires. Myrrha, like Iphis, uses the example of animals, but this time she justifies her own licence by appealing to animals' promiscuity, exploiting a style of argument which was over 400 years old by the time Ovid put it in her head.[30] Her desire, sex with her father, is clearly 'natural', argues Myrrha, since animals do it; it is only human *cura* which has created *leges* and *iura* to prevent it (10. 324–31). In a sense, of course, Myrrha is right. Sexual perversion is a concept that relates only to humans: what is 'natural' for animals cannot be 'natural' for humans. It is

[27] Vernant (1980), 168–85.

[28] Barkan (1986), 27.

[29] See McKeown (1989), on *Am.* 1. 10. 25–8, for this style of argument in philosophy and oratory.

[30] A famous fragment of Philemon already encapsulates Myrrha's line of argument (fr. 93 *CAF*); see Heinimann (1945), 145–7.

'natural' (inevitable, part of the condition) for humans to be 'unnatural' (different from creatures in Nature).[31] Morality means nothing in relation to animals: 'the [incest] taboo does not alter the violence of sexual activity, but for disciplined mankind it opens a door closed to animal nature, namely, the transgression of the law'.[32]

If Myrrha and Iphis use animals as a reference point, in the first of these three tales Byblis uses the gods as her yardstick for human behaviour. She meanders into thinking of the divine in the course of the fluctuating soliloquy which follows her dream of making love with her brother. What does this dream mean?, she asks herself (9. 495). Dreams can't have any weight—can they? Gods forbid! This last phrase is a conventional translation of *di melius*—'gods better', literally, an elliptical way of saying 'may the gods bring about a better outcome'. The mention of the gods sends her veering to their sexual practice—at which point 'gods worse!' begins to look like a more appropriate exclamation:[33] *di nempe suas habuere sorores* ('certainly the gods have had their own sisters', 497). Appealing to divine licence to justify human licence is the sophistic obverse of Myrrha's appeal to animal behaviour.[34] The nurse in Euripides' *Hippolytus*, for example, urges Phaedra to indulge her passion by pointing to the gods' examples of sexual self-gratification: 'you ought', she says, 'to acquiesce in these norms, conventions' (*νόμοι*, 451–61).

What the nurse does not know is that in her play the *νόμοι* of gods are not commensurate with the *νόμοι* of humans. Ovid's afflicted Byblis does recognize this very fact: *sunt superis sua iura. quid ad caelestia ritus / exigere humanos diuersaque foedera tempto?* ('The gods have their own codes. Why am I trying to make human ways conform to divine laws, which are quite different?', 9. 500–1). Yet within fifty lines she is writing to her brother with the gods once more as her sanction. Laws, conventions, right and wrong are for the old; we are young: *quid liceat, nescimus adhuc, et cuncta licere / credimus, et sequimur magnorum exempla deorum* ('We don't yet know what is allowed, and we believe that everything is allowed, following the examples of the great gods', 9. 554–5). After rejection from her brother, the bewildered Byblis turns to the alternative world of demarcation. How could he spurn me?—*neque enim est de tigride natus / nec rigidas silices solidumue in pectore ferrum / aut adamanta gerit, nec lac bibit ille leaenae* ('For he wasn't born of a tigress, nor does he carry hard flint or solid iron or adamant in his breast, nor did he drink the milk of a lioness', 9. 613–15). Normally this topos leads to a climax of expected human behaviour: you are not an animal, or a rock, and should therefore feel compassion or pain as a human does.[35] The handle of Byblis' argument turns in her grasp. It is precisely because he is not an animal that he is reacting as he is, as a human: rejection is what she should expect.

[31] Dover (1974), 75. The classic Latin exploration of these dilemmas is Seneca's *Phaedra*; cf. Boyle (1987), 18–24. Bataille (1962), 214, goes so far as to claim that 'man is the animal that does not just accept the facts of nature, he contradicts them.'

[32] Bataille (1962), 219. For Lévi-Strauss, the incest taboo is the definitive transition from Nature to Culture: Lévi-Strauss (1947), 28–9.

[33] Doblhofer (1960), 230.

[34] Ar. *Nub.* 1080 ff.; Eur. *HF* 1314–22; Dover (1974), 76.

We have already had cause to remark that there are centuries of tradition behind the categories of definition which Ovid is manipulating in order to test what constitutes the naturalness or conventionality of human *natura*. If we confine ourselves to the compatibility of human and divine, it is clear that the tradition offered various positions. It was, first of all, possible to claim that gods and humans were ruled by the same codes (natural or conventional).[36] From this starting-point, it was possible for a human such as Byblis, Phaedra's nurse, or Theseus (in Euripides' *Heracles*, 1314–21) to excuse human behaviour by referring it to divine. The validity of such reference could, on the other hand, be denied, by refusing to accept that the stories of the gods' behaviour were true, and hence available as a yardstick.[37] This is how Heracles responds to Theseus' attempts at consolation (*HF* 1341–6). The opposed responses to the basic dilemma which are offered by Theseus and Heracles in Euripides' play are a polarized way of getting at the problems scouted in *Bacchae* or *Hippolytus*, concerning how human the gods' ways of operation are, or ought to be, or ought to be represented as being (the *Aeneid* never succeeds in escaping from this area of difficulty, as established by its proem). Yet another response to the dilemma is that which modern

[35] Pease (1935), 314–19.

[36] Pind. fr. 169?; Thuc. 5. 105. 1–2; Eur. *Hec.* 799, *Hipp.* 98.

[37] So Xenophanes, Plato, and the other critics discussed in Chapter 1.

scholarship tends to espouse, especially in relation to the *Iliad*; namely, that the gods' norms are quite other than human ones.[38]

The *Metamorphoses*' relation to these issues is a complex one. From the viewpoint of the afflicted women in these three tales, it does appear that gods and animals can behave as they like, while intermediate humanity, hemmed about by civilization's laws and conventions, is cut off from *natura*. The gods are set off from humans by their immense *licentia*, their power for self-indulgence.[39] In this respect, Byblis' first reaction—that it is futile to use divine canons as a yardstick for human—is correct, and her subsequent impulse to follow the example of the gods is deluded.

If humans are defined by being neither gods nor animals, the problem of the compatibility of divine and human behaviour will not, however, go away. Gods may have their own *iura* ('codes'), which humans cannot claim for themselves, yet the poem does not calmly present this as an accepted fact, as we have already been warned by the Arachne episode, with Minerva's refined version of the gods' distinctive (estimable) *iura*, and Arachne's presentation of the gods acting just like, or worse than, human beings. Instead, from various angles, the poem worries away at the extent to which, and the ways in which, divine and human are compatible. As we saw above, the beginning of the poem sets up the problem of how divine humanity is; the corollary is the problem of how human divinity is. Are the gods like us, or not, and what are the implications of asking, and attempting to answer, such a question?

Ovid's exploration of these dilemmas is set by his form. It is typical of him that he should embrace the confinements of his conventions, and set about testing them to destruction. His starting-point is the starting-point of epic, that narrative representations of divinity must proceed by analogy. The poem's first episode of divine action establishes this inevitable point of departure; the first pattern of analogy suggested in the poem, and the first simile, together establish pervasive parallels between divine and human action.

The first emotion felt by a god in the poem is Jupiter's anger, a

[38] Otto (1954), 241–3; Reinhardt (1960*a*), 24–6; Kerényi (1975), 91–113 (on the marriage of Zeus and Hera); cf. the regular comments in the Iliadic scholia along these lines, a sort of watered down Stoicism (cf. Cleanthes' *Hymn*, *SVF* 1. 537. 18–21): bT 4. 4; 8. 429; 21. 465.

[39] Vernant and Vidal-Naquet (1973), 128; Little (1970), 92–6.

response to the outrage of Lycaon. Ovid's stance here is far from the questioning anxiety of Vergil's *tantaene animis caelestibus irae?* (*Aen.* 1. 11), for he introduces the sequence with the blandly unproblematic *ingentes animo et dignas Ioue concipit iras* ('he conceived in his heart vast anger, worthy of Jupiter', 1. 166). He next sets the scene for the divine council. The social organization of the gods, living in their various suburbs, is made analogous to the Roman orders: nobles, plebs, each have their own place (168–74). The climax is a bold inversion of the expected terms of comparison, as the seat of divine government is compared to the residence of Augustus: *hic locus est, quem, si uerbis audacia detur, / haud timeam magni dixisse Palatia caeli* ('this is the place, which, if I were bold enough to say it, I would not fear to call the Palatine of great heaven', 1. 175–6). The correspondence with Augustus is particularly tight at this point, since we know that Augustus held Senate meetings in the library attached to his temple of Apollo on the Palatine, which was itself intimately linked with his residence.[40]

The reaction of the assembled gods to Jupiter's story of Lycaon becomes the subject of the poem's first simile, comparing their reaction to that of the Roman Senate, hearing the news of a conspiracy against the life of Augustus:[41]

> confremuere omnes studiisque ardentibus ausum
> talia deposcunt: sic, cum manus impia saeuit
> sanguine Caesareo Romanum exstinguere nomen,
> attonitum tantae subito terrore ruinae
> humanum genus est totusque perhorruit orbis:
> nec tibi grata minus pietas, Auguste, tuorum
> quam fuit illa Ioui.

All made a noise together, and with burning zeal demanded the one who had dared to do such a thing, just as, when an impious band made their

[40] Suet. *Aug.* 29. 3; see the very interesting discussion of Thompson (1981).

[41] So first Due (1974), 71–2, against the interpretation which sees the assassination of Julius Caesar as the point of reference; Due's originality here is typical of his excellent, and oddly uninfluential, book. The correspondence of the simile is very close indeed if Thompson (1981), 339, is right in suggesting that Senate meetings in Apollo Palatinus began in 23 BCE, with Augustus' convalescence from his near-fatal illness; for it may then have been in the temple of Apollo that the news was announced of the attempt on Augustus' life by Caepio and Murena. But the whole dating of these events is most vexed: see Nisbet and Hubbard (1978), 151–7. The atmosphere of Senatorial procedure is well caught in the discussions of Wilkinson (1955), 195, and Ahl (1985), 79.

savage attempt to blot out the name of Rome with Caesar's blood, the human race was astonished with a sudden fear of complete disaster, and the whole world shuddered. Nor was the pious devotion of your people less pleasing to you, Augustus, than was this display of devotion to Jupiter. (1. 199–205)

Jupiter relates the atrocity and punishment of Lycaon, and announces his intention of destroying all mankind, ending his speech in a rant, *frementi* (209–44). As he concludes, the typically human behaviour of the gathering of gods is wittily highlighted by their reaction. Various reactions of dissent and agreement are the norm in divine councils;[42] times have changed, however, and Ovid holds back two key words to show that now the only competition is in degrees of acquiescence:

> Dicta Iouis pars uoce probant stimulosque frementi
> adiciunt, alii partes *adsensibus implent*.

One group declared their approval of Jupiter's words with speech, goading him on further as he ranted; others played their part with applause. (1. 244–5)

More deft humour follows, rerunning the old topic of the gods' anxiety over the deprivation of their sacrifice;[43] so that Jupiter promises a new race to succeed the doomed generation (246–52). His frantic mood is accentuated, however, as he vacillates over the means of destruction. He is about to throw his bolts, but is anxious over the possible celestial damage. No, flood is better: the fire next time (253–61).

The unabashedly human characterization of the whole episode is clear, and is presented by the comparison and simile as no oblique inevitability, but a prime focus of interest. The poet's bland acceptance of his convention is disconcerting: can he possibly be unaware of the fact that the divine anger which he depicts here had been a stumbling-block in epic for centuries?[44] In fact, as the poem proceeds, divine anger and its power become Ovid's principal medium for testing the donnée of epic's religion, the humanity of the divine.[45] A problem of judgement does emerge.

[42] Hom. *Il.* 4. 20–4; Verg. *Aen.* 10. 96–7; Ov. *Met.* 9. 418–21.

[43] Aristophanes' *Birds* is built around this joke; cf. Ar. *Plut.* 1113–14; Pl. *Symp.* 190 c; and Lucian's marvellous *Iuppiter Tragoedus*.

[44] According to Wilkinson (1955), 193, he is.

[45] Besides anger, his other main medium is love; cf. Wilkinson (1955), 196–9; Otis (1970), 122–4. Note that the epic theme of divine anger, in the stories of Lycaon and the flood, comes before the love theme of 1. 452 ff.

Two episodes of divine anger follow the opening tableau (2. 602, 659), before the reader encounters a case where judgement becomes overtly an issue.[46] Ovid introduces the story of Actaeon (changed to a stag by Diana after seeing her naked, and torn to death by his own dogs), with an explicit avowal that Actaeon had committed no crime, but had merely blundered through ill luck (*at bene si quaeras, Fortunae crimen in illo, / non scelus inuenies; quod enim scelus error habebat?*, 'but if you made a proper inquiry, you would find in this case the fault of Fortune, not a crime; for what was criminal about a mistake?', 3. 141–2). At the end of the episode, having announced that Diana's anger was sated only by Actaeon's death (3. 251–2), Ovid reports the varying responses to her act of vengeance:

> Rumor in ambiguo est; aliis uiolentior aequo
> uisa dea est, alii laudant dignamque seuera
> uirginitate uocant: pars inuenit utraque causas.

People's opinions went either way. To some the goddess appeared more violent than was fair; others praised her, and described her as acting in accordance with her stern virginity. Both sides found good grounds. (3. 253–5)

The only person who does not speak on one side or the other, but who feels mere joy at the disaster to the family of the hated Europa, is Juno (3. 256–9). Here at last, after the witty false start of an early reconciliation between Jupiter and Juno (1. 734–8), the Vergilian theme of Juno's vast anger is activated, with a reprise of Vergil's proem: she has here also a longer-standing and a more recent cause for her anger (3. 258–61), which now dominates until the end of Book Four. And we encounter a decided escalation: Diana can at least be sated by Actaeon's dogs being sated with their master's blood (3. 140, *canes satiatae sanguine erili*; 252, *ira . . . fertur satiata Dianae*), but *Saturnian* Juno cannot be sated (*nec sum Saturnia, si non . . .*, 271).[47]

Within eighty lines we have heard the story of Juno's treatment of Teiresias. As the only person to have been both male and female, he is asked by Jupiter and Juno to give a verdict on a playful dispute (*lite iocosa*, 3. 332): does the male or the female have

[46] Glances at the problem, though, at 2. 435, 567–8.

[47] On this wordplay in the *Aeneid*, see Anderson (1958), 523–5. Ovid's clearest play is to be found in the mouth of the dying Hercules, who calls on *Saturnia* to 'sate her bestial heart' with looking at his death (*corque ferum satia*, 9. 176, 178).

more pleasure in sex? Teiresias takes Jupiter's side, declaring for greater female joy. The result:

> grauius Saturnia iusto
> nec pro materia fertur doluisse suique
> iudicis aeterna damnauit lumina nocte.
>
> Juno is said to have felt more pain than was right—out of all proportion; she condemned the eyes of the arbitrator to eternal night. (3. 333–5)

The impersonal report leaves it unclear whether the poet is associating himself with the judgement. In the next book, the Theban women judge Juno 'insufficiently just and too savage' when she engineers revenge against Ino (*parum iustae nimiumque in paelice saeuae*, 4. 547).

The inevitability of judging divine characters in epic by human standards is, then, stressed again and again after the programmatic first simile. Yet, as we have already seen, many strands in the poem reflect on the gods as something wholly other, *sui iuris*—either as stable and consistent (as on Minerva's tapestry), or else unchallengeable in their *licentia*, the ability to indulge their mood in the self-gratifying exercise of power.[48] From here, gods are defined precisely by their incompatibility with humanity. The depth of the gap between the two species is shown in a flash by an Ovidian example of their different languages. One of the divine dream-creatures in the House of Sleep has the job of imitating wild beasts, birds, and snakes (11. 639). Humans, naturally, call him *Phobetor*, 'Terrifier'. To the gods, he is just something that looks like something else: they call him *Icelos*, 'Resembler' (640).

Gods are touched by 'human' emotions, but, in the end, they remain, as on Minerva's tapestry, for ever themselves, for ever exempt from the human standards of suffering, and the mutability of suffering. For the gods, in this most mutable of all environments, are exempt from ultimate change. They may metamorphose for the moment, but they always become again themselves. Only they, as Barkan insists, have *fiducia formae* ('reliance on, confidence in, their form', 2. 731).[49] The god Aesculapius, in one of the poem's most spectacular gestures, can even become a god

[48] See especially 6. 269–70 (Niobe, *mirantem potuisse irascentemque, quod ausi / hoc essent superi, quod tantum iuris haberent*); 5. 668, and 6. 2 (the Pierides).

[49] Barkan (1986), 90.

again after being a corpse (2. 647–8). Note that when Ovid describes the subject of his poem from exile, he encapsulates it as *mutatas hominum . . . formas*, 'the changed forms of *humans*' (*Trist.* 1. 7. 13).

This *ultimate* invulnerability[50] is emblematized by the convention that gods cannot weep: *neque enim caelestia tingui / ora licet lacrimis* ('for the faces of the heavenly ones are not allowed to be wet by tears', 2. 621–2).[51] An apparent exception confirms the rule. As Juno beholds Ino, she reflects that Bacchus was able to punish his enemies: *nil poterit Iuno nisi inultos flere dolores?* ('will Juno be able to do nothing but weep over her unavenged grievances?', 4. 426). If Juno cannot achieve revenge as Bacchus does, the contemplated loss of status is so huge as to reduce her to the level of a human, powerless to do anything but weep. It appears that humans have to be superior to gods in morality—or rather, it appears that, with gods as the point of comparison just as with animals, morality is a term that only has meaning in relation to human beings.[52] Ovid's presentation is a restless and anxious version of an insight that could be, in other contexts, regarded as 'one of the strengths of ancient spirituality', namely, 'its instinctive recognition that there are other kinds of worshipful excellence in the universe than those that meet our moral concerns or our human self-interest.'[53] In Ovid's world, for 'worshipful excellence' one must substitute simply 'power'.

By calling such explicit attention in his first simile to epic's procedure of analogy, Ovid appears to promise that divine action will be at least systematic and comprehensible. Yet judgements prompted by the poem continually lead the reader towards seeing the gods as escaping beyond human categorization—only to defeat our attempts to conceptualize that escape in any other than human terms. Minerva's tapestry would show an idealized form of divine justice, a way of conceiving divine action that does fullest justice to epic's capacity to capture both the sublime, refined power of the divine, and the meaning of human action in the light

[50] 'Ultimate' must be stressed; cf. Otto (1954), 131; Vermeule (1979), 123–6.

[51] As announced by Artemis, Eur. *Hipp.* 1396; cf. Bömer (1969–86) on Ov. *Met.* 10. 45 and (1958) on *Fast.* 4. 521–2.

[52] Vernant and Vidal-Naquet (1973), 128–9; see above, pp. 68–9, on the amoral might of Zeus in Apollonius.

[53] Armstrong (1986), 76.

(or shadow) of that power. Yet her passionate response to Arachne's craft shows her being pulled down into acting. Her vengeance can only be conceived of, and represented, humanly, and in those terms can only strike most readers as unjust, disproportionate.[54] Such a complex of reactions is itself a comment on epic, as we have seen. Ovid's competition invites us to see Minerva's version as epic, and then destabilizes that easy judgement by showing that her anger is also epic.[55]

Are the gods like us or not?—an old question, and one which is capable of carrying a heavy religious weight.[56] In the *Metamorphoses*, the diverse responses become a way of questioning the extent to which the world accommodates itself to human understanding: the question transforms into, 'Does the world make sense in human terms?'[57] Ovid's manipulation of the gods of epic exploits the power they have to inform the meaning of human experience, by continually flaunting the possibility that such will be their function—only to deny it. A common response to this denial is to see the poem as an exercise in sardonic belittlement, but we may rather view these strategies as a comprehensive manner of reflecting upon the ways in which the workings of the world are not assimilable to human norms; and the resulting dismay is something which the experience of reading the poem (like the experience of being in the world) prompts the reader to challenge and resist—always to be defeated. Ovid's poem is unique amongst ancient writings in the ruthlessness of its refusal to provide an environment which shapes the meaning of human experience.[58]

[54] The familiar issue of accommodation thus returns: cf. pp. 47, 51.

[55] A splendid comic statement of these same issues comes in Plautus' *Amphitryo* (130–2). Sosia imagines that the night is prolonged because Sun is sleeping off a hangover, and the listening Mercury indignantly remarks *ain uero, uerbero? deos esse tui similis putas?* ('indeed, you punchbag? You think the gods are just like you?'). And the god who so objects to the human's measurement proceeds to thrash his inferior with physical violence.

[56] The Stoics, for example, for all their attempts to idealize the supreme divinity, could not help, in the end, attributing to it human characteristics; it was simply that they attributed only *good* human characteristics (Cic. *Nat. D.* 2. 78–9).

[57] See Gould's powerful analysis of Greek polytheism from this viewpoint: Gould (1985).

[58] Finely argued by Segal (1969), esp. 88. Indeed, in the light of the remarks of Daiches (1984), 24, on the Book of Job, one sees how rare such a vision is in European literature altogether: 'The mind of man and principles of Nature are not intimately fitted to each other, as Wordsworth believed. There are no moral principles to be deduced from Nature, and no comfort to be derived from it, apart from the dubious comfort of realizing its mysterious otherness. This sense of the otherness of the natural world appears intermittently in later European literature; it is given splendid expression in Hugh MacDiarmid's *On a Raised Beach*; but it can hardly be said to play a central part in the European literary imagination.'

The participation of the unaccountable gods is indispensable for Ovid's creation of this *paysage démoralisé*.[59]

Ovid's use of mythology is often portrayed as straightforwardly frivolous, unburdened by any concern beyond the discrete and immediate.[60] Yet patterns of complexity and import may emerge from the poem's endlessly entertaining gymnastics (although I am gloomily aware that the critic, in delineating them, cannot help but squeeze out the inexhaustible vital zest which sustains the poem). It should not surprise that Ovid's mythology comes to be a prime thematic centre of gravity. The gods of epic, participants in a widely shared and understood tradition of great intellectual and artistic richness, provide him with a series of extremely powerful and economical strategies for communicating his vision of human experience.[61] The alternative modes of explanation, after all, science and philosophy, meet with a dusty reception in this poem.[62] The most extended piece of overt philosophy in the poem, the rant of Pythagoras (15. 75–478), has sometimes been seized on as a unifying key, to lock the poem's bewildering variety of perspectives. Arriving here (be it confessed, a little exhausted), readers understandably want a synthesis. But Pythagoras' is only another voice.[63]

II

τί θεός; τὸ κρατοῦν· 'What is a god? Wielding of power.
τί βασιλεύς; ἰσόθεος. What is a king? Like a god.'

Anon.[64]

[59] 'The Ovidian gods, or metaphors for causal principles, are neither a social class lampooned nor a superstition derided. Pictured or not, they are the carnival mirroring of a cosmic absurdity that, for the poet, is all too real', Skulsky (1981), 52; cf. Phillips (1983), 812.

[60] e.g. Solodow (1988), 108–9. An exception is the interesting discussion of Neschke (1986), who sees Ovid using the gods of myth to point to enduring realities of emotion. In general, I see Ovid as more precisely indebted to Greek mythical ways of ordering experience than she does.

[61] Skulsky (1981), 15: '. . . the virtue of fantasy is that some intimate features of the terrain of fact can be properly mapped only from the vantage point of the counter-factual.'

[62] Johnson (1970), 138–45; Coleman (1971), 473; Due (1974), 111–12, 162–3.

[63] Very good discussion in Solodow (1988), 162–8.

[64] Anonymous apophthegms on papyrus, quoted by Price (1984*a*), 234, as the motto for his final chapter (from Bilabel (1925), 339).

Of the many boundary crossings in the poem, the passage from humanity to divinity is the one which will best repay our pursuit, both for its insights into epic procedures of apotheosis, and for the light it sheds on what the poem has to say about the norms of Roman religion.

The poem's first case of a demigod undergoing apotheosis is Hercules. Already, in our discussions of Hercules in the *Aeneid* and *Argonautica*, we have seen the characteristic issues which his transgression brings into play. With his distinctive acuity, Ovid has penetrated to the kernel of the epic (and tragic)[65] picture of Hercules, and highlights his presentation of Hercules' monstrous essence by introducing him into the poem through the perspective of someone who lost a fight with him—Achelous, the river-god, contender for the hand of Deianira. The philosophers' model of self-control is dismissed at a stroke as Achelous reports Hercules' response to his taunts: *accensae non fortiter imperat irae* ('he does not exercise strong command over his kindled wrath', 9. 28). Ovid hastens on, via the story of Deianira and Nessus, to the hero's death, his apotheosis so dominating that the deeds which justify it are crowded out: *longa fuit medii mora temporis, actaque magni / Herculis implerant terras odiumque nouercae* ('the intervening period of time was a long one; the whole world, and the hatred of his stepmother, were replete with the deeds of great Hercules', 9. 134–5).[66] The deeds which filled the earth have not filled a line here; the hero himself will catalogue them as he dies, in less than twenty lines (9. 182–98). We hear more about the labours of Hercules' mother than we do about those of Hercules himself.[67]

As the fire plays around the recumbent hero, the key image of feasting is activated (9. 236–8).[68] Here Ovid introduces a second divine council, where the poem's first analogy is recapitulated. The

[65] Silk (1985); March (1987), 75.

[66] Hercules suffers the same fate from another narrator, Nestor, who leaves him out of the story of the Centaurs and Lapiths (*praeteriti Alcidae*, 12. 538).

[67] 9. 281–315. Note the plays on *labores* (289), and *laboriferi* (285).

[68] Hercules' feasting with the gods is the elevated counterpoint of his comic gluttony: Hom. *Od.* 11. 603; Theoc. 17. 22; Call. *Dian.* 144–61 (a highly comical passage, of course); Ap. Rhod. 1. 1319; Hor. *Carm.* 3. 3. 9–12. See *Lex. Icon. Myth.* 3. 1. 472, nos. 578–84, for Heracles in divine symposiastic settings with Dionysus. In many of these representations there is the same tinge of the ridiculous as in Ovid's.

new senatorial procedure of Augustan times surfaces once more, as Jupiter commends his son to the gathering, utilizing the jargon of imperial apotheosis:[69]

> nostra est timor iste uoluptas,
> o superi, totoque libens mihi pectore grator,
> quod memoris populi dicor rectorque paterque
> et mea progenies uestro quoque tuta fauore est.
> nam quamquam ipsius datis hoc immanibus actis,
> obligor ipse tamen.

This fear of yours is a pleasure to me, o gods; and I felicitate myself with all my heart that I am called ruler and father of a people who know their obligations, and that my offspring is safe under your favour as well. For although it is his own tremendous acts which you acknowledge in this way, I am beholden to you all the same. (9. 243–8)

The new member of the heavenly assembly begins to appear larger, and to become awesome in his august gravity (*maiorque uideri / coepit et augusta fieri grauitate uerendus*, 9. 269–70). He is moving into the sphere of Minerva's gods, who enjoy the same august gravity (6. 73). The divine–human analogies of both divine councils allow the adjective's force to spill over from the gods to Augustus, and back again.

The next two apotheoses, of Aeneas and Romulus, exhibit the same compound of epic action with the diction and procedures of genuine political transactions: in their case, we are explicitly in the world of Roman cult. The apotheosis of Aeneas (14. 581–608) has the trappings of epic, with due notice of the wrath and reconciliation of Juno (582, 592–3), and the supplication of Jupiter by Venus (585–95). Yet Venus 'canvasses' the gods, as does Hercules in the *Apocolocyntosis*:[70] the author of that skit knew exactly what he was about when he inserted his splendid joke on Claudius' apotheosis being added as a footnote to the *Metamorphoses*, for he thereby declares the basis of his and Ovid's procedure to be the same parody of senatorial procedure (*Apoc.* 9). The last lines of the episode show Aeneas receiving state cult, with altars and a temple (14. 607–8).

[69] See Bömer (1969–86) on 9. 247–8 for the prosaic quality of the diction, and especially on the quasi-technical force of *immanis* (cf. Vell. 2. 46. 1; Ov. *Tr.* 2. 335). Wilkinson (1955), 195 catches very well the atmosphere of the scene.

[70] After Diespiter's speech, *Apoc.* 9.

Romulus' apotheosis (14. 806–51) is similar, though linked even more closely to that of Hercules.[71] Again, there is the disconcerting eclipse of the actual deed which entitles the hero to divinity: Rome is founded in five words, in the passive, with no named agent (14. 774–5), so that we learn more about the foundation of Crotona at the beginning of the next book than we do about the foundation of the greatest city in the world (15. 9–59). In accordance with this weakness of the euhemeristic element, the epic colour is very strong, with direct quotation of father Ennius.[72] At the height of the epic moment, as Romulus is snatched heavenwards in his father's chariot, Ovid has an odd few lines which return us to the contemporary world of cult. A striking simile has Romulus' mortal body disappearing like a lead slingshot dissolving in mid-air (14. 824–6). Forthwith, after being invited to concentrate on the wondrous transformation from physical to non-physical, we read of the new god's *facies* and *forma*—in the guise which he will have at the gods' banquets, and at the *lectisternium* of Roman cult, in his role as Quirinus:

> pulchra subit facies et puluinaribus altis
> dignior, est qualis trabeati forma Quirini.

A beautiful appearance comes over him, one more worthy of the high couches, the form which Quirinus has, in his ceremonial dress. (14. 827–8)

Before we reach the climactic apotheoses which close the work, Ovid pursues the sustained interest in the state mechanisms for divinity by telling the story of how the god Aesculapius came to Rome in 292 BCE. It is the second of only two stories from the entire history of the Roman Republic which find their way into the *Metamorphoses*.[73] This tale of Republican forms for introducing new cults is the immediate precursor to the institution of the imperial ruler-cult, and occupies about the same amount of space;[74]

[71] Even to the extent that Ovid has Hercules' father snatch him away in his chariot (9. 271–2), instead of the canonical Minerva or Victory; this is done to match the traditional account of what happened to Romulus, who was taken to heaven in the chariot of *his* father, Mars (14. 819–24; cf. Skutsch (1985), 260).

[72] 14. 814; cf. Skutsch (1985), 205, and Conte (1986), 57–9, on the reminiscence of Ennius both here and at *Fast.* 2. 487.

[73] The other, immediately preceding Aesculapius, is the story of how Cipus refused to become the king of Rome (15. 565–621).

[74] Aesculapius takes 123 lines (622–744), Caesar and Augustus together 126 (745–870).

the contrast between the two forms is marked by Ovid at 15. 744–6, and the differences are indeed instructive.[75]

The story of the importation of Aesculapius' cult is a piece of Roman history (most unfortunately, Livy's eleventh book, where we would have found the historian's version, does not survive); as such, it is almost inevitable that Ovid should introduce it with his only appeal to the Muses, slyly labelled as 'bards' *ever-present* divinities' (*praesentia numina uatum*, 15. 622).[76] He refers to Aesculapius as the son of Coronis, in order to send us back to Book 2, where we had read of Coronis' death and Aesculapius' birth, and heard a prophecy of his extraordinary oscillations from semi-divinity to divinity, then to death, and back once more to divinity (2. 600–648). His move to Rome is his last metamorphosis, a token of Rome's stupendous expansion. In Book 2 he is hailed as *toto . . . salutifer orbi* ('bringer of health to the whole world', 642). When he arrives at Rome, he comes as *salutifer urbi* ('bringer of health to the city', 15. 744). The apparent descent from 'world' to 'city' is recuperated by the familiar *urbs/orbis* play: the city *is* the world.[77]

The Republican modes of operation emerge clearly, to set up what will follow. When the decision to consult the Delphic oracle is taken, and when the Roman embassy arrives there, the third person plural verbs have no subject, so that the communal nature of the decision and mission receives the highest stress (*cernunt*, 628; *petunt*, 630; *adeunt*, 631; *orant*, 633). The Senate responds to the oracle's advice (641), and they send to Epidaurus a legation (643), whose actions are, likewise, reported in the anonymous third person plural (644–6). Even when the god appears to the leader of the embassy, no name disturbs the pattern of effacement. Ovid reports that the god appeared *ante tuum, Romane, torum* ('before your bed, Roman', 654). This man was Q. Ogulnius Gallus,[78] any of whose three names will fit into the hexameter, so that his anonymity is seen as part of a comprehensive strategy. From beginning to end, no individual is named.

When the embassy is referred to collectively, they are called

[75] Although the transition from Aesculapius is normally seen as void of significance; e.g. Solodow (1988), 26.

[76] The 'gods' of the poem's second line may conceivably include the Muses, but *di* does not mean them exclusively; at 10. 148–9, the poet is not Ovid, but Orpheus.

[77] Hardie (1986), 364–6, with bibliography cited there.

[78] Broughton (1951–60), 1. 182.

Aeneadae, the descendants of Aeneas (682, 695). Nowhere else in the poem is this lofty Lucretian and Vergilian title[79] applied to Romans; we shall shortly see a new appropriation of this corporate epithet. Finally, when the new god arrives in Rome, the whole people goes to meet him, together with the Vestal Virgins (729–31). The collective nature of the idealized Roman Republic could hardly have been more strenuously asserted; the elder Cato, who supposedly suppressed the names of all Roman commanders in his *Origines*, would have understood, and approved.[80]

Some three centuries now go by, and Ovid turns to the apotheoses which will close the poem. Aesculapius came to Rome as a foreigner, a new-comer, but Caesar is a god in his own city (*Caesar in urbe sua deus est*, 15. 746). As often in Roman literature, the question is posed: which Caesar, Julius or Augustus? An elaborate sentence keeps decision poised for four lines, with a reference to quickly-won glory perhaps tilting the balance to Augustus, before the question is resolved:

> Caesar in urbe sua deus est; quem Marte togaque
> praecipuum non bella magis finita triumphis
> resque domi gestae properataque gloria rerum
> in sidus uertere nouum stellamque comantem,
> quam sua progenies; neque enim de Caesaris actis
> ullum maius opus, quam quod pater exstitit huius.

Caesar is a god in his own city. He was outstanding in war and peace, but it was not so much his triumphantly concluded wars, or his achievements at home, or his rapidly-won glory, that turned him into a new heavenly body, a comet-star; no, it was his offspring. For out of Caesar's deeds no achievement is greater than the fact that he was the father of this person. (15. 746–51)

These disconcerting lines offer the blunt interpretation (corresponding to what actually happened) that what made Julius Caesar a god was his son: it was, indeed, his son who made him a

[79] Surely it was Ennius who domesticated this Greek form. Titus Flamininus described himself in the singular and the Romans in the plural as 'descendants of Aeneas' in the (Greek) epigrams which accompanied the offerings he made to Delphic Apollo after declaring the freedom of Greece in 196 BCE (Plut. *Flam.* 12. 5–6). An epigram in the *Palatine Anthology* concerning the sack of Corinth in 146 BCE describes the Romans thus (the sack is revenge for Troy; 7. 297. 6).

[80] Plin. *HN* 8. 5. 11. Griffin (1985), 178–80, has a useful collection of ancient and modern testimonia on 'Rome as a collective state'.

god.[81] This notion is still present in the next few lines, as we are invited to reflect on the paradox that all Caesar's mighty deeds shrink to insignificance beside the fact that he was Augustus' father (750–9). These are certainly lines which it is very tempting to read ironically.[82] Is it *really* the case that none of Caesar's acts was more important, more worthy of apotheosis, than the 'begetting' of Augustus (*genuisse*, 758, is a worrying word)? Great deeds ought to be the entitlement to heaven for Hercules and his successors; such is the entire point of the euhemeristic enterprise.[83] Even in the case of Hercules and Romulus, however, we saw the actual mighty feats being oddly muted, with apotheosis being presented as the result of divine power politics. Ovid's account of how Caesar became a god is always, as it were, stumbling against the mechanics of his elevation—through his heir.

Next, as with the previous apotheoses, we veer from constitutional procedure into the plane of epic myth, with an Ennian account of Venus' concern (761–80). Even here, of course, her actions are caught by analogy, for her concern manifests itself in 'canvassing' (*ambitus* is what she is up to at 15. 764, just as at the apotheosis of Aeneas, 14. 585). Eventually she is addressed by Jupiter, in the middle of whose speech the mythical and procedural perspectives are blended: *ut deus accedat caelo templisque colatur, / tu facies natusque suus* ('that he should come to heaven a god, *and* be worshipped in temples, this you will bring about, you *and* his son', 818–19).[84] Once more we are confronted with the fact that, 'in real terms', Caesar is a god because his adopted son made him one.

The realm which provides this language of sons making their fathers gods is that of imperial panegyric.[85] Panegyric being what it is, the focus is fixed on the *laudandus*, the son, and the role of the Senate and people in the process of deification is eclipsed.[86] At

[81] Though we will soon need to qualify this statement.

[82] Hinds (1988), 24–5.

[83] White (1988), 353: 'There was an essential connection in Roman thought between apotheosis and activity in public life.'

[84] In 15. 808–15, where Jupiter speaks of his celestial archives, it is tempting to see a glance at the *tabularium* housed in Augustus' Palatine complex: for the *tabularium*, see Millar (1977), 264.

[85] Vell. 2. 126. 1, with the parallels ad loc. of Woodman (1977), esp. [Sen.] *Oct.* 528–9; Plin. *Pan.* 11. 2–3.

[86] For the importance of the roles of Senate and people in the institution of Caesar's cult, see Weinstock (1971), 389–90; Wardman (1982), 51–2.

this climactic moment in the *Metamorphoses*, the eclipse of Senate and people is not idle. The wave of popular enthusiasm after the Ides of March, culminating in the response to the appearance of the comet in July 44; the debates in the Senate on 1 January 42, and the carrying of a law to institute the cult—all missing. And not simply absent, but conspicuously and meaningfully absent, since the introduction of Caesar's cult has been presented by Ovid directly after the Republican institution of a new cult, that of Aesculapius, which serves as an introduction, and a foil.

The disparities are instructive, and the concentration on the 'constitutional' element of Caesar's deification is sharpened, even more than in the apotheoses of the other demigods. The decision to introduce the cult of Aesculapius to Rome is, of course, taken by the Senate, and welcomed by the people. Caesar's cult, on the other hand, is presented as the sole responsibility of his son and his 'mother'. The most dramatic illustration of the switch from the communal to the individual is provided by Ovid's use of the powerful language which clusters around Venus and Aeneas.[87] When the Roman Republic invites Aesculapius to the city, the representatives of the people are twice called *Aeneadae*, 'descendants of Aeneas' (15. 682, 695). Perhaps since Naevius and Ennius, and certainly since the late Republic,[88] the ancestress of the Aeneadae, the Roman people as a whole, had been Venus, hailed by Lucretius in the first line of his poem as *Aeneadum genetrix*, 'mother of the descendants of Aeneas'. When Venus first appears in Ovid's narrative of Caesar's apotheosis, she is *Aeneae genetrix*, 'the mother of *Aeneas*' (15. 762), in a return to the original personal use of the word in Ennius.[89] The disturbance of the Lucretian tag has its tally forty lines later, when Venus prepares to spirit Caesar away from his fate (804): here the collective epithet is definitively displaced, for Caesar is *Aeneaden*, in the singular. [90]

[87] It is the vital thematic importance of this language which makes it necessary for Venus to be the one who rescues Caesar's soul in the *Metamorphoses*, whereas in the *Fasti* it is Vesta (3. 701–2).

[88] See p. 110.

[89] Aeneas' daughter describes Venus as *genetrix patris nostri* (58 Skutsch). See Weinstock (1971), 23, on the relationship between Lucretius and Ennius here. At *Aen.* 12. 554, Vergil hints at the sort of move we see in Ovid, by placing *Aeneae* beside *genetrix*; this is a trick, however, for *Aeneae* is dative, not genitive (*hic mentem Aeneae genetrix pulcherrima misit . . .*). Note also the beautifully suggestive language of *Aen.* 1. 589–90: *ipsa decoram / caesariem nato genetrix . . .*

[90] Bömer (1969–86) ad loc. doubts the text, but it is guaranteed by this movement.

Not simply '*a* descendant of Aeneas', but '*the* descendant of Aeneas'. Venus Genetrix was Caesar's pre-eminent contribution to Roman cult, the objectification of claims which he had been asserting from his youth,[91] and the goddess was prominent in the funeral and cult which followed his death.[92] The title was now charged with a finely calculated ambiguity. Of whom was Venus Genetrix the ancestress? Of the gens Iulia? Of Caesar? Of the Roman people?[93] The run of Ovid's narrative splits the welding to reveal starkly the appropriation of the corporate by the individual. Ovid can even represent Venus describing Julius Caesar as 'the only thing left to me from Trojan Iulus' (*quod de Dardanio solum mihi restat Iulo*, 15. 767); the rest of the *populus Romanus* have vanished from her concern. The epic cast to the apotheosis, with the conversation between Venus and Jupiter, accentuates this privatization. When Venus spoke to Jupiter in Naevius, she was, beyond her care for her son Aeneas in mythical time, the future ancestress of the Roman race.[94] In the corresponding scene in the *Aeneid*, her familial concern returns as a motive even in historical time, by virtue of the stupendous accident which had delivered control of the world into the hands of one of the family of Aeneas' son Iulus.[95] Now the scene between Venus and Jupiter is played yet again, and the mythic concern for an individual and a family has become overwhelming, crowding out the Vergilian balance between communal and individual which emerges as one of the most striking features of the *Aeneid* scene when one returns to it after reading the *Metamorphoses*.

Ovid deftly turns the same Vergilian speech in other ways, furthering the concentration on one individual, who, as Caesar's heir, will bear the burden *alone* (15. 820). Vergil's Jupiter speaks to Venus of 'the fate of your people' (*fata tuorum*, *Aen.* 1. 257–8). Ovid's Jupiter speaks to Venus of 'the fate of your offspring' (*fata tui generis*, 15. 814), referring to Caesar alone, yet using a word for offspring which is cognate with Genetrix, and which usually

[91] Weinstock (1971), 17–18, 23–6; Horsfall in Bremmer and Horsfall (1987), 24.

[92] A model of his temple of Venus Genetrix contained his bier (Suet. *Iul.* 84. 1); in a reciprocal arrangement, Venus' temple housed a statue of Caesar while Caesar's temple housed a painting of Venus (Dio 45. 7. 1; Plin. *HN* 35. 91): Weinstock (1971), 361, 363, 393; Horsfall in Bremmer and Horsfall (1987), 24.

[93] Taylor (1931), 63; Schilling (1954), 316; Weinstock (1971), 85.

[94] Above, pp. 109–11.

[95] Above, p. 139.

refers to a race, not an individual. Vergil's Jupiter had described the Romans as '*masters* of the world' (*Aen.* 1. 282), with the subjugated Greeks held in 'slavery' (*seruitio*, 285). This startlingly blunt language is part of Republican panegyric, but Caesar first appears to have replaced the corporate *populus Romanus* with himself as lord of the earth.[96] In the mouth of Ovid's Jupiter, as he talks of Augustus, the supplanting accordingly follows: *quodcumque habitabile tellus / sustinet, huius erit: pontus quoque seruiet illi* ('the entire habitable portion of the world will be his: the sea also will be in his thrall', 15. 830–1).[97]

The climax of this process is the great prayer which closes the section on Augustus. He is compared to Jupiter (15. 857–60, lines to which we return shortly), and then the gods are asked to delay the moment when he will be called to join them (861–70). The prayer is worth setting out in full:

> Di, precor, Aeneae comites, quibus ensis et ignis
> cesserunt, dique Indigites genitorque Quirine
> urbis et inuicti genitor Gradiue Quirini
> Vestaque Caesareos inter sacrata Penates,
> et cum Caesarea tu, Phoebe domestice, Vesta,
> quique tenes altus Tarpeias Iuppiter arces,
> quosque alios uati fas appellare piumque est:
> tarda sit illa dies et nostro serior aeuo,
> qua caput Augustum, quem temperat, orbe relicto
> accedat caelo faueatque precantibus absens.

Gods, I pray—companions of Aeneas, for whom sword and fire gave way; our country's native gods; Quirinus, father of the city, and Mars, father of invincible Quirinus; Vesta, enshrined amongst Caesar's household gods, and along with Caesar's Vesta, you, Apollo, part of his household; Jupiter, you who occupy on high the Tarpeian citadel; and all the other gods whom it is allowable and pious for a bard to invoke: may that day be far removed, and later than my own time, when Augustus, leaving the world which he regulates, reaches heaven and listens to our prayers, no longer among us. (15. 861–70)

It is immediately obvious that the prayer is, so to speak, chronological, and that its focus moves from the communal to the individual. It begins with the fall of Troy, with the Lares and Penates whom Aeneas rescued and carried to Latium. Ovid knew as little as we do who the *di Indigites* were, but he took them to be ancient, and ancestral, on the basis of Vergil's words at the end of the first *Georgic*, in the great prayer which is Ovid's model throughout (*di patrii Indigites*, 1. 498). As in Vergil, Romulus/Quirinus follows, the founder of the city; next his father Mars; then we reach Vesta, the third of the deities in Vergil's prayer, whom Vergil addressed as *Vesta . . . mater, / quae Tuscum Tiberim et Romana Palatia seruas* ('Mother Vesta, you who keep Etruscan Tiber and Roman Palatine', *G.* 1. 498–9). All of Vergil's three addressees are communal, with Vesta linked to the Palatine as the home of Rome's founder, Romulus.[98] But Ovid's Vesta is now among the gods of Augustus' household[99]—and along with her, with *Caesar's* Vesta, is placed Apollo, called *domesticus*, belonging to the household of Augustus.

After the death of Lepidus in 12 BCE, when Augustus was finally able to claim the last prize and become *pontifex maximus*, he did not move into the residence of the pontifex near the temple of Vesta, but made part of his private house public land, and instituted there a cult of Vesta, linked with the domestic worship of his own Lares and Penates: 'thus the hearth and home of the state religion was localized on imperial land'.[100] It was an extraordinary transformation for *Vesta publica populi Romani Quiritium*, the guarantor of the city's identity and continuity, whose whole raison d'être consisted in remaining fixed in her *sedes*.[101] The mighty temple of Apollo on the Palatine was, likewise, linked intimately with the ruler's private residence; it was, even physically, inextricable

[96] Weinstock (1971), 52. Note that Vergil does apply this language of personal slavery to Octavian in the panegyric at the beginning of the *Georgics* (*seruiat*, 1. 30, referring to his domain after apotheosis); this is too strong for the balance between corporate and individual which the *Aeneid* strains to maintain.

[97] But it is possible that Ovid redresses the balance in his closing lines, where he talks of 'Roman power' extending over the world, not Augustus' (15. 877); it is tempting to see a rebuff to Augustus' flawed reading of Ovid's poetry in Ovid's claim there that he will be read by the lips of *the people* (*ore legar populi*, 15. 878).

[98] See Thomas (1988), on *G.* 1. 499.

[99] Contrast the language used of the cult of Vesta during the Aesculapius episode of the Republic (15. 730–1).

[100] Wardman (1982), 69; cf. Taylor (1931), 184; Latte (1960), 305–6; Liebeschuetz (1979), 70. Ovid links Vesta and Augustus intimately at *Fast.* 3. 415–28, on the anniversary of Augustus' assumption of the chief pontificate.

[101] Lacey (1986), 126, describes Vesta as 'the most basic of the city's gods, immovable'; his language highlights the extraordinary nature of Augustus' innovations.

from the residential complex.[102] The enmeshing of Vesta, Apollo, and Augustus is caught by the intricate word order of 864–5: *Vestaque Caesareos inter sacrata penates, / et cum Caesarea tu, Phoebe domestice, Vesta.* The same phenomenon is caught in the *Fasti*:

> Phoebus habet partem: Vestae pars altera cessit;
> quod superest illis, tertius ipse tenet.
> state Palatinae laurus, praetextaque quercu
> stet domus: aeternos tres habet una deos.

Phoebus has a part; another part has gone to Vesta; what is left over from them, he himself holds as a third member. Live on, you laurels of the Palatine, and may the house live on, bordered with its oak wreath: the one house has three eternal gods. (*Fast.* 4. 951–4)

These phenomena put into question the very terms 'public' and 'private';[103] the privatization of communal cult and the communalization of private cult are only one aspect of the evolution of the principate from an individual household into the state government.[104] In Ovid's presentation, this vision is part of a pattern sustained over the entire closing portion of the poem. It answers, in fact, the first divine action of the poem, which compared the gods' residence to the Palatine, and set up the poem's main lines of analogy. Following that first divine episode, Apollo came next; on rereading, we see that Apollo's first appearance in the poem looks forward to his association with the Princeps, as he predicts to the laurel (in the poem's first prophecy) that it will adorn Augustus' residence (1. 562–3).

With Apollo and Vesta thus linked in Ovid's prayer with Augustus, one may be prompted to find a more personal tie to the princeps in the case of the two gods, Mars and Jupiter, who flank the Palatine deities. Out of all Augustus' buildings, Suetonius chooses Mars Ultor, Apollo Palatinus, and Jupiter Tonans for special mention (*Aug.* 29. 1). Is Ovid's *Gradiuus* then Augustus' Mars Ultor? Is Jupiter on the Tarpeian citadel perhaps not Optimus Maximus, but a competitor, Augustus' own Jupiter Tonans?[105] A fascinating story in Suetonius reveals the extent to

[102] Zanker (1988), 51.

[103] Cf. Liebeschuetz (1979), 70, on how 'the domestic worship of Augustus' household became a public cult and citizens in general could be asked to join in'.

[104] On this process, see, above all, Millar (1977), esp. 16, 189–201. On religion in particular, the clear comments of Latte (1960), 305–6, are very valuable.

[105] It looks as if Lucan reads this Jupiter in his Ovid; cf. Caesar's appeal to *Tonans* at *BC* 1. 195–200, a prayer modelled on both the *Georgics* and *Metamorphoses* prayers, anticipating Augustus' religious reforms: Grimal (1970), 56–7; see below, p. 293.

which Augustus' new Jupiter was regarded as a rival for the established Capitoline Jupiter.[106] There is no doubt that Iuppiter Optimus Maximus lost much ground in the reign of Augustus. The pre-eminent god of the Republic, whose temple was coextensive in time with the Republican constitution, saw the Sibylline books removed from his care and entrusted to Augustus' Apollo Palatinus, while the elaborate ceremonials which inaugurated and terminated the military expeditions of Rome were now staged before Augustus' Mars Ultor.[107]

The metamorphoses of Vesta and Apollo (and perhaps of Mars and Jupiter) are almost smuggled into the poem's close, to highlight the themes concerning Roman religion which have dominated since Ovid invoked the Muses, and told the tale of the introduction of Aesculapius' cult to Rome.[108] The increasing identification of Augustus with the *res publica* is nowhere more vividly highlighted than in Ovid's treatment of state cult against a backdrop of epic (particularly Vergilian) scenes. The power of the characteristic Roman way of looking at the gods comes through very strongly: they are part of the constitution, and evolve with it. Prepared for by the apotheoses of Aeneas and Romulus, the interest in the constitutional procedures of state religion dominates the poem's climax, from the importation of Aesculapius, to the deification of Caesar by his son, and finally to the roll-call of gods, once public (in the strict sense), and now—not private, exactly, but 'Caesarian', with all the blurring of public and private which that epithet connotes. The poem's gods, so vital and mesmerizing, have indeed now become 'august', a cluster around the Princeps. These enervated creatures group together at the poem's close, like the anonymous little idols who observe Aeneas at sacrifice on the Ara Pacis.

[106] *Aug.* 91. 2: Augustus dreamt that Jupiter Capitolinus complained to him that the new Jupiter Tonans was taking away his worshippers.

[107] On the identification of Iuppiter Optimus Maximus with the Republic, see Koch (1937), 121–6; Oliver (1960), 17–18; on the whittling away of his functions under Augustus, see Latte (1960), 305–6; Zanker (1988), 108.

[108] The vital importance of having a truly Republican foil to the Principate explains why Ovid chooses Aesculapius as the deity to import rather than Apollo or Cybele, who are 'two of the most obvious migrating deities' (Coleman (1971), 473 n. 6). Apollo and Cybele are simply far too closely tied to Augustus: Wiseman (1984).

Ovid's treatment of Caesar and Augustus is usually handled as a matter of judging whether or not Ovid is sincere, whether he is praising or subverting, being enthusiastic or ironic.[109] Or else, it is claimed, this is only literature, we are dealing with topoi or adaptations, so that such questions are beside the point.[110] At its most extreme, this second view appears unconvincing. If one of Ovid's prime concerns in the last two hundred and fifty lines of the poem is precisely the state's religious ideology, it is difficult to see how the problem of praising Augustus in that context can be 'more of a literary problem than an ideological or political one'.[111] The terms of debate on the first count ('panegyric/subversion') are perhaps themselves too polarizing. It may be worth moving into the problem once again, keeping the divine theme to the forefront.

It is, at the outset, striking to observe the degree to which Ovid is concentrating on 'facts'. Otis is very precisely inaccurate when he says that 'the apotheoses—including that of Julius and prospectively that of Augustus—are all assimilated to the realm of amusing fantasy'.[112] Bömer's matter-of-fact observation is more to the point, when he remarks on Ovid's claim that Caesar was made a god by his son rather than by his mighty deeds (15. 746–50): 'sie entspricht den Tatsachen'. Of course, what Ovid gives us, in the case of Caesar as with Aeneas and Romulus, is a blend. Williams describes an antithesis between 'literature' and 'real life',[113] but both elements are present in Ovid's account, and in the context of this catalogue-poem of myth, the concentration on facts is startling and obtrusive. The concentration on Julius Caesar has itself traditionally been regarded as startling and obtrusive, in accordance with the conviction that Augustus played down the importance of his father,[114] but a new context for regarding Ovid's treatment of Julius has recently been provided by Peter White's incisive demonstration that the cult of Diuus Iulius was used by Augustus as an instructional device, a model for the honours he expected after his own demise.[115] The finale of Ovid's poem catches exactly this movement of expectation.

Outside the apotheosis, in Ovid's reflections on Augustus' religious practices, one is struck by the same revealing interest in the details of actual practice. Augustus' pre-eminent position, with the blurring of the boundaries between his *domus* and the *res publica*, is a notorious problem of definition; what is so striking about Ovid's treatment is the economical acuity with which he captures so much of what was novel about Augustus, what had changed even since Vergil's time. Again, Ovid enforces a rereading of the *Aeneid*, and makes one realize just how finely balanced that poem is between the private and the communal. In all these cases one is prompted to ask: is Ovid being too fulsome, or too frank? Readers ancient and modern have a variety of responses available to the transformations paraded here by Ovid, responses conditioned above all by their own judgement of those transformations.[116]

This emphasis on the constitutional facts of Roman cult has its corollary in the politically coloured anthropomorphism which infuses the epic descriptions of deities in action. From Hercules to Caesar, the celestial politicking which accompanies the apotheoses is drawn in terms of the power-structures which frame the world of the poet and his audience, power-structures in which the new cults of the gods participate. The preoccupation with such systems of analogy is something we have been familiar with since the actions centring on the poem's first simile, in which Jupiter was compared to Augustus, and Jupiter's council to Augustus' (1. 200–5). At the climax of the poem Ovid returns to this same analogy, now comparing Augustus to Jupiter, and he uses explicitly self-conscious language of comparison to highlight what he is doing. Popular fame, says Ovid, exalts Augustus over Caesar, his father:

> sic magnus cedit titulis Agamemnonis Atreus,
> Aegea sic Theseus, sic Pelea vincit Achilles;
> denique, ut exemplis ipsos aequantibus utar,
> sic et Saturnus minor est Ioue: Iuppiter arces

[109] See the bibliographical discussions of Bömer (1969–86) on 15. 1 ff., 871 f., 877 ff.

[110] Williams (1978), 93–5; Knox (1986), 77–80, inclines to this view.

[111] Galinsky (1975), 260–1.

[112] Otis (1970), 351; cf. Solodow (1988), 75: 'For [Ovid] all myths were the same. He does not distinguish between Greek and Roman and eastern, between historical myths and local legends and tall tales. For him myth is not related to cult, as it was still for Callimachus.'

[113] 'The apotheosis of Julius Caesar was a poetic concept, but that was literature; in real life, deification meant a temple and a ritual, not a belief or a legend,' Williams (1978), 93–4.

[114] Syme (1978), 190; Due (1974), 88.

[115] White (1988), 355–6: 'a maquette which he had liberty and time to shape in preparation for his own apotheosis' (355).

[116] On the range of audience response, see Hinds (1988), 25–6; Phillips (1983), 806–7.

> temperat aetherias et mundi regna triformis,
> terra sub Augusto est; pater est et rector uterque.

Thus does great Atreus yield to the honours of his son, Agamemnon; thus does Theseus overcome Aegeus, and Achilles, Peleus; finally, to use an example which is equal to the stature of Caesar and Augustus, thus is Saturn less than Jupiter. Jupiter regulates the heights of heaven and the three kingdoms that make up the universe; the earth is under Augustus. Each is father and ruler. (15. 855–60)

Only before the settlement of 27 BCE do we find widespread advertisement of links between Jupiter and Octavian.[117] Thereafter, while the direct public identifications on the coinage ceased (at least until after his death), it is very striking that links between Jupiter and Augustus continued to be promulgated in a more restricted circle, including those, for example, who received cameos.[118] On the Strozzi-Blacas cameo, Augustus is shown wearing Jupiter's aegis, while on the famous Gemma Augustea he is clearly the god himself, with the eagle beneath his throne.[119] Horace had spoken of Augustus as Jupiter's vice-regent;[120] Ovid here establishes an analogy rather than an identification (in the exile poetry, as we shall see shortly, he needs a different tactic).

The climactic comparison of Jupiter and Augustus exemplifies the slippery terrain of such panegyric, for the gods are not (least of all in this poem) neutral ground of praise, nor can the terms of comparison be easily fixed or controlled. The young Octavian had encountered this problem directly during the triumvirate, when he participated with eleven others (so it was alleged) in a mock *lectisternium*, dressed as the god Apollo. Famine held Rome at the time, and the next day the cry went up that, yes, he was Apollo, but Apollo the Torturer (with reference to a cult-title held by the god in one region of the city).[121] Since nothing is known about this particular cult, any extra edge to the allusion is not securely to be recovered. Perhaps the people wished to label Octavian as the

[117] Wallace-Hadrill (1986), 71; Albert (1981). Generally, on links between Augustus and Jupiter, see Ward (1933); Schwabl (1978), 1406 (chiefly on associations between Augustus and Zeus in the Greek world); Fears (1981*b*), 56–60.

[118] Burnett (1983), 564.

[119] Fine illustrations in Hannestad (1986), 79, 81; cf. Zanker (1988), 230–4.

[120] *Carm.* 1. 12. 49–60; cf. Weinstock (1971), 304–5.

[121] Suet. *Aug.* 70. The historicity of the story is denied by Weinstock (1971), 15; Fishwick (1987), 81 locates the anecdote in the Hellenistic tradition of posing as one's favoured deity.

flayer of Marsyas, whose statue was a symbol of Libertas.[122] Perhaps the point lies in the location of the temple of Apollo Tortor, which, according to one suggestion, received its name from being located by the place where whips were sold for the chastisement of slaves.[123] A parallel case of the same difficulties comes from Plutarch's sardonic comment on the favoured identification of Octavian's rival, Antonius (*Ant.* 24. 4–5). When the people of Ephesus welcomed him in 41 BCE, they hailed him as Dionysus, using the cult epithets of Joygiver and Gentle One. So he was to some, says Plutarch, but to most (here using other Dionysian epithets) he was Eater of Raw Flesh, Savage.[124]

The comparison of man with god is subject to the same plasticity as any analogy, simile, or metaphor, for the boundaries of the analogy are malleable, and its applications cannot remain rigidly fixed. If Caesar, for example, is Saturn, and Augustus is Jupiter, then we must now be in the Iron, and not the Golden, Age.[125] Augustus is indeed a great lawgiver, as befits an inhabitant of the Iron Age (15. 833); we learnt early in the first book that in the Golden Age men lived without need of laws (1. 89–93). The current era is never labelled Golden in the *Metamorphoses*, although it is in other parts of Ovid's work.[126] Again, we are here invited to contemplate and admire the temperate regulation of the universe by the celestial Jupiter, with Augustus as his terrestrial equivalent. This is the Minervan perspective on the gods' behaviour, in all their *augusta grauitas* (6. 73). Yet the first time we met Jupiter in the poem, so far from ordering the cosmos, he was instigating cataclysm (1. 262–74). In the context of the poem as a whole, this Minervan picture stands as only one element of the whole. The Arachnean tally, the god's punishing wrath, is encountered in the epilogue:

> Iamque opus exegi, quod nec Iouis ira nec ignis
> nec poterit ferrum nec edax abolere uetustas.

[122] Platnet-Ashby (1929), 449, with reference to Serv. *Aen.* 3. 20.

[123] Jordan (1870), 232.

[124] See Suet. *Nero* 39 for a similar quip against Nero's favoured identification with Apollo, in an epigram which says he should be Apollo the Archer against the Parthians, not just Apollo the Lyre-player at Rome.

[125] Johnson (1970), 146; Galinsky (1981), 199–200; Wallace-Hadrill (1982*a*), 27–8.

[126] *Ars* 2. 277; 3. 113. It need hardly be said that these references in the *Ars* are not straight-faced.

Now I have erected a work, which neither the anger of Jupiter, nor fire, nor sword, nor devouring time will be able to abolish. (15. 871–2)[127]

It is still sometimes denied that 'the anger of Jupiter' refers to the thunderbolt which descended on Ovid from the Palatine and drove him into exile.[128] Yet the pairing of Jupiter and Augustus is not simply *an* analogy available in the poem. It is the first analogy and the last.[129] Led by this circular movement, we are reminded that the very first mention of Jupiter in the poem, immediately before his residence is compared to the Palatine, shows him conceiving wrath (1. 166). The Jupiter-like status of Augustus, and especially his Jovian wrath, with full apparatus of bolt and fire, are insistent themes in the exile poetry.[130] From exile Ovid exploits the Alexandrian technique of remorselessly pursuing the implications of the claimed identification; he challenges the implacable Princeps to be like a god in more than anger, and relent by showing clemency.[131] *Clementia* is itself, naturally, a quasi-divine attribute, for it implies an untrammelled will, to be directed in favour of a person in the power of a superior. Seneca, in whose works this novel terrain, as so many others, is first explicitly charted, appeals to Nero via exactly this two-sidedness of the divine analogy; imitate the *clementia*, not the *fulmina*, of the gods.[132]

It is a god-like prerogative to be beyond the limits of human behaviour, an insight which the *Metamorphoses* explicates more systematically than any other ancient poem. Herculean demigod figures, as our analyses have repeatedly shown, share these prerogatives, in exposed and disquieting fashion. Augustus is the son of a god, and virtually a god himself, wielding divine power; the kindred nature of imperial and divine power is the entire point of

[127] Professor Wills points out to me that the architectural metaphor of *opus exegi* looks to Augustus' physical constructions, mentioned only five lines before; the reference is aided by the more explicit architectural comparisons in the Horace Ode which provides the verbal source: *exegi monumentum* . . . (*Carm.* 3. 30. 1).

[128] Bömer (1969–86), vol. 7. 489. In favour of seeing an allusion to Augustus here, Marg (1968), 511; Nisbet (1982), 54; Kovacs (1987), 463–4.

[129] Stressed by Buchheit (1966), 106–7 (though to very ameliorative ends); see rather Müller (1987).

[130] *Tr.* 1. 4. 26; 1. 5. 78, 84; 2. 179; 3. 5. 7; 3. 11. 62; 4. 3. 69; 5. 2. 46; 5. 14. 27; cf. Scott (1930), 53–6; Syme (1978), 223; Kenney (1982*b*), 444–5; Kovacs (1987), 463.

[131] Syme (1978), 223.

[132] In his *De Clementia*, 1. 7. 1–3, 26.5.

conceiving of humans as god-like. That power can be saving in epiphany, a source of manifest blessing for the threatened;[133] it can be arbitrarily and unpredictably devastating.

The overlap in attitude here towards Princeps and deity is astonishingly exact. Millar's study of imperial power stresses again and again its underlying arbitrariness, and the impossibility of predicting or averting the emperor's displeasure.[134] He cites poetic analogies between human and divine utterances, remarking that these passages 'embody literary affectations, ultimately for the purpose of flattery. But they also reflect real anxieties about the success of approaches to the emperor, and the realization that all would depend, like everything else, on his attitude at the time'.[135] One finds precisely the same apprehensive preoccupation with divine anger as a key element throughout ancient religious practice: 'Like an electric current, the power of the gods had great potential for helping and harming; unlike electricity, it was unpredictable and mortals could do no more than attempt to channel its force in advance. Any account of pagan worship which minimizes the gods' uncertain anger and mortals' fear of it is an empty account.'[136] The pages of the *Metamorphoses* contain one of the most extended encounters with this attitude that we possess.

Attempts have been made to remove the cloud of menace from Ovid's association of Jupiter and Augustus, by asserting that Roman social custom allowed for the wilful exercise of power by the mighty.[137] Yet it was precisely the conventional Roman resentment of such behaviour which put the relationship between the princeps and the higher orders under most strain, eliciting from the emperors a studied projection of their *ciuilitas*, their status as one

[133] The beneficent aspect of Augustus' power is nowhere more beautifully illustrated than in a story from his last days (Suet. *Aug.* 98. 2). As he sailed near Naples, the crew and passengers of an Alexandrian ship honoured him as a god, attributing to him the fact that they lived, sailed, and enjoyed their freedom and fortunes. Such a mentality is summed up by Pliny's aphorism, *deus est mortali iuuare mortalem* (*HN* 2. 18).

[134] Millar (1977), 9–10, 74, 112–13, 300; cf. esp. 527: 'Whatever its legal justification, if any, the emperor's power to inflict death, confiscation or exile was from the beginning an integral part of his rôle, an inheritance it seems from the summary hearings, punishments and confiscations of the civil war period. So was the informal and untrammelled procedure by which it was exercised, and . . . the immediate and drastic cruelties which could accompany it . . .'

[135] Millar (1977), 469, on Ov. *Pont.* 3. 1. 131–8 and Mart. 5. 6. 7–11.

[136] Lane Fox (1986), 38; cf. esp. 109–10.

[137] von Albrecht (1981), 2336–7, on the first divine council.

citizen among the many.[138] Ovid's Neptune attracts open censure for offending against this code; his epic and unrelenting anger against Achilles is described as going beyond the bounds of *ciuilitas* (*exercet memores plus quam ciuiliter iras*, 12. 583). From exile, Ovid can ironically refer to Augustus' decision to do no more than exile him as a 'civil exercise of his resentment' (*est odio ciuiliter usus*, *Tr.* 3. 8. 41).

With an apparent guilelessness that never entirely vanishes, Augustus' repeated assertions of his quasi-divine status are taken at face value by Ovid, and nobody—not Augustus, nor Ovid, nor any reader—can circumscribe the limits at which the implications of this status cease to register. Deeply engrained attitudes towards the power of the gods are questioned and explored by the movement of the *Metamorphoses*. At the climax, the currents of this questioning flow into the organization of the contemporary world, to cap the poem's repeated confrontation of human and divine power.[139] The princeps is as august, and as mighty, as the gods he has made his own.[140]

III

di quoque carminibus, si fas est dicere, fiunt

'Even the gods, if it is permissible to say it, are created by poetry'.

Ovid, *Ex Ponto* 4. 8. 55

[138] Wallace-Hadrill (1982*b*). The same pressures could lead even to an actual circumscribed reversal of the power relationship: see Suet. *Aug.* 91. 2 for the extraordinary story of Augustus' annual act of begging alms from the populace with outstretched hand. For the extensive ancient literature on the controlling of anger, see Rabbow (1914).

[139] One of the fundamental points of Price's indispensable book is that imperial cult is a way of conceptualizing power: Price (1984*a*), esp. 234–48; cf. Armstrong (1986), 74, on the analogous nature of divine and imperial power.

[140] In this respect, Ovid's treatment comes close to fulfilling the function of myth described in the discussion of the Dionysus revenge-myths by McGinty (1978) (although Ovid questions rather than justifies, as many would see the Dionysus myths themselves doing): 'these myths are best understood as ideology, i.e. as representing narratives which define the Greek universe as hierarchical by nature and by design and which thereby justify the asymmetrical allocation of power, privilege, and status among gods and men. I argue, then, that the most central function of the vengeance myth is as a mechanism for social control by reinforcing accepted concepts of social stratification' (79). For divine power as an image of Augustus' power in the *Metamorphoses*, see Segal (1969), 86; Otis (1970), 133, 145.

Ovid's clear vision of what the Principate was doing to Rome's religion heralds a preoccupation which will recur in our next author, Lucan. Before moving on to that topic, however, we may close the chapter on the *Metamorphoses* with a discussion of the perennial epic problems involved in the representation of the divine in narrative—problems which, as we have repeatedly seen, take the reader to the heart of any author's conception of fiction. Ovid's procedures here are not only worth investigating in their own right, but they provide illuminating commentary on the epic tradition, and themselves become normative for the following generations of Latin epicists, for whom the power of the *Metamorphoses* was to be as irresistible as that of the *Aeneid*.

Ovid's poem is a world in which anything—apart from the irreversible metamorphosis of a god—is possible. He presides over his cockpit with a mesmerizing assurance. As Solodow, who has most fully described this phenomenon, puts it, 'he calls attention to himself so that we are ever aware of his mediating presence. In the end it is he himself more than anything who holds together the world of the poem.'[141] His assurance is even more stunning for its self-sufficiency, since he does not need the Muses for aid or inspiration. His own mind leads him to undertake his task, and the undifferentiated gods are called on for favour alone (*fert animus . . .*; *di coeptis . . . adspirate meis*, 1. 1–3). Only once, as we saw in the previous section, does Ovid call on the Muses, when he treats the openly historical importation of Aesculapius' cult into Rome. Ovid's only acknowledged Muse, then, is Livy; otherwise he relies on his own resources. Accordingly, although his book is drenched with allusion to poetic predecessors, his attitude towards these forebears is, as we shall see with the house of Fama at the end of this section, remarkably unanxious.

As the (virtually) sole acknowledged originator of his fifteen-book world, Ovid sports ceaselessly with his power to command or suspend our credence in his fictions. No Latin poet shows such a systematic or inventive engagement with the issues of fiction and authentication which have preoccupied us throughout this book. Ovid had been obsessed with these issues since the start of his career. Towards the end of his *Amores*, for example, in 3. 12, Ovid had devoted a poem to the fictive power of poetry, explicitly

[141] Solodow (1988), 2; cf. 37–73 for his general discussion.

involving his audience in the problems of belief in the created world of his elegies.[142] The extreme complexity of this poem may be traced in McKeown's article.[143] The poet complains that he has created rivals for himself by making Corinna irresistibly attractive in his poems. His audience should never have believed him, he maintains. Using conventional metaphors from the lawcourt, Ovid asserts both the power of poets to invent, and the accepted lack of belief in their inventions: *nec tamen ut testes nos est audire poetas; / malueram uerbis pondus abesse meis* ('but it is not customary to listen to poets as if they were witnesses; I would have preferred that my words carried no authority', *Am.* 3. 12. 19–20).[144] He goes on to give a list of stock implausibilities from mythology, all created by 'us poets' (*per nos . . ., nos . . ., nos . . ., fecimus . . ., fecimus*, 21–31). Far from exploding the power of poetry to convince, however, his elegy ends up corroborating it. At the close of the mighty catalogue, he protests that his audience have been duped. They should have read Ovid's Corinna as another example of poetic licence, but they have been won into belief by his poetic power—with a final twist being provided by the 'fact' that Corinna actually is 'real':

> exit in immensum fecunda licentia uatum,
> obligat historica nec sua uerba fide;
> et mea debuerat falso laudata uideri
> femina; credulitas nunc mihi uestra nocet.

The fruitful licence of bards has no boundaries to its movements, and it does not bind its words by the belief that's appropriate in a work of history. My lady also should have looked as if she had been falsely praised; as it is, the credulity of all of you is doing me harm. (3. 12. 41–4)

The first example of poets' unbridled inventiveness in Ovid's catalogue is the myth of Scylla, and he highlights the licence by referring to a version which conflated two originally separate stories about two different Scyllas—the Homeric partner of Charybdis, and the daughter of Nisus, who stole her father's talismanic lock and became the bird Ciris: *per nos Scylla patri caros furata capillos / pube premit rabidos inguinibusque canes* ('we poets are responsible for Scylla robbing her father of his cherished hair, and

[142] McKeown (1979); Lieberg (1985), 26–9.
[143] One eagerly awaits the commentary.
[144] For the imagery of 'witnesses', cf. p. 40.

packing rabid dogs in her private parts and loins', 21–2).[145] Either story of Scylla is incredible enough on its own, and it is clearly even worse to be expected to believe in a composite tale which yokes together versions which any reader would have recognized as distinct.[146] These same Scyllas are in Ovid's mind when he comes to one of his most explicit treatments of these topics in the *Metamorphoses*.

The first Scylla we meet in the *Metamorphoses* is the daughter of Nisus, who transforms into Ciris according to the normal story (8. 1–151). It may appear that Ovid is muting the resonances of his elegy, until we reach the second, Homeric, Scylla, at which point the poet suddenly activates the complexity of his earlier poem:

> Scylla latus dextrum, laeuum irrequieta Charybdis
> infestat; uorat haec raptas reuomitque carinas,
> illa feris atram canibus succingitur aluum,
> uirginis ora gerens, et, *si non omnia uates*
> *ficta reliquerunt*, aliquo quoque tempore uirgo.

Scylla infests the right side, tireless Charybdis the left. Charybdis snatches boats, swallows them, and vomits them back up again; Scylla's black womb is ringed with wild dogs. She has the face of a girl, and, *if the stories handed down by the bards are not all fictions*, at one time she was indeed a girl. (13. 730–4)[147]

As Galinsky well points out, Ovid himself is now one of these very 'bards', who proceeds forthwith to narrate his fiction.[148] Yet the ironies go further, for Ovid's aside on the fictions handed down by bards takes us back to his initial treatment in *Amores* 3. 12, where the conflated Scylla stories had headed off the list of obviously incredible fictions handed down by bards. By breaking up the conflation into its constituent parts in the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid is 'correcting' his version in the *Amores* (which he had then

[145] On the conflation, which we first encounter in Vergil's sixth *Eclogue* (74–5), see Coleman (1977) ad loc., and the lengthy expostulations of the author of the *Ciris* (54–91), with Lyne (1978) on line 54.
[146] So McKeown (1979), 169.
[147] Note that the existence of the monster Scylla is not put in jeopardy by Ovid's aside, but only the question of whether or not she had changed from a previous existence.
[148] Galinsky (1975), 176. On such expressions of disbelief and scepticism, see Stinton (1976); Bömer (1969–86), on this passage, and on 3. 106.

followed in his subsequent poetry),[149] and giving us—what? The truth? Of course not, for we cannot accept as 'truth' anything which this bard tells us, coming as it does with his health warning, 'if the stories handed down by the bards are not *all* fictions'.

Just as in the elegy, however, Ovid does not stop with a simple puncturing of the fictive illusion, but toys with our credulity. The testing-point for the fiction has been identified by Ovid as the transformation from girl to dog-infested freak, and when we reach that point, some four hundred lines later, he invites us to recognize that we have committed ourselves insensibly to his strategies of involvement.[150] As Scylla wades into the pool which has been doctored by the drugs of her rival Circe, and sees her loins being made foul by the barking dog-monsters, her first reaction is one of incredulity:

> ac primo credens non corporis illas
> esse sui partes, refugitque abigitque timetque
> ora proterua canum, sed, quos fugit, attrahit una ...

But at first, not believing that those can be parts of *her* body, she shuns, rejects, and fears the dogs' thrusting mouths; but in running away from them, she drags them along with her. (14. 61–3)

So comprehensively have we been won over by Ovid's narrative, so 'real' has the character become for us, that we can be invited to share in her human disbelief—a very different variety of disbelief from the one canvassed when she was first introduced. We are incredulous, but our incredulity is in sympathy with Scylla's own characterful incredulity, not directed against her existence. She remains, however, the thing whose very existence we were at first invited to doubt, as we are reminded within a dozen lines, when Ovid blandly alludes to the standard rationalizing explanation of Scylla, as a dangerous rock, 'which is still standing today' (*qui nunc quoque saxeus exstat*, 73).[151]

[149] *Ars* 1. 331–2; *Rem.* 737; *Her.* 12. 123–4; *Fast.* 4. 500. He has his tongue in his cheek when he treats his version as gospel: see Hinds (1984), on the *Fasti* passage.

[150] Not without playing in the interim on the fictive status of his Scylla. The created character whose status has been made so problematic is brought to listen to the speech of the sea-god Glaucus, who narrates his own miraculous transformation: *res similis fictae*, he says to her, *sed quid mihi fingere prodest?* ('the event is like a fiction, but what advantage is it to me to make a fiction?', 13. 935).

[151] On this rationalization, see Bömer (1969–86), ad loc. Other rationalizations describe Scylla as a fast ship, or courtesan: Festa (1902), 28. 1–29. 2; 73. 12–74. 3.

The *Metamorphoses*' challenges to our belief in its fictions are relentless, for Ovid continually confronts us with such reminders of his work's fictional status.[152] It is, however, too easy to conclude that 'he encourages our scepticism through the expression of his own'.[153] Rather, his techniques involve a preternaturally keen awareness of the suspension of disbelief and belief which constitutes fiction. In a superb discussion of Ovid's plays on the literarity of Ariadne in the *Fasti*, Conte has elucidated the key implications of Ovid's procedures:

> Ovid is playing here with the relationship between poetry as an autonomous reality and the literary process which constructs that reality . . . Such a shattering of the artistic illusion does not imply that the poet does not believe in the power of art. On the contrary, it means that he claims to know it through and through . . .[154]

These problems receive their most explicit treatment in a discussion on belief and fiction in the context of divine action. This comes as no surprise, for, as we have repeatedly seen (most dramatically in the case of Apollonius), the gods are the hardest case for epic fiction, the sharp edge of the problem of how to represent and authenticate anything in the world of the narrative. In the very centre of his poem, Ovid removes the cover, to reveal the complicity between poet and audience which underpins his enterprise, as well as the fragile limits to that complicity. The mighty river Achelous has been telling his guests (Theseus and his companions) of wondrous transformations of local nymphs:

> Amnis ab his tacuit. factum mirabile cunctos
> mouerat: irridet credentes, utque deorum
> spretor erat mentisque ferox, Ixione natus
> 'ficta refers nimiumque putas, Acheloe, potentes
> esse deos,' dixit, 'si dant adimuntque figuras.'
> obstipuere omnes nec talia dicta probarunt,
> ante omnesque Lelex animo maturus et aeuo,
> sic ait: 'immensa est finemque potentia caeli
> non habet et, quidquid superi uoluere, peractum est ...'

[152] Doblhofer (1960), 223–7; Galinsky (1975), 173–9. Perhaps Ovid's most spectacular example comes at 10. 301–3, where we are invited by the poet Orpheus to pick and choose whether or not we will believe in the Myrrha story, or how much of the story we wish to believe.

[153] Solodow (1988), 71.

[154] Conte (1986), 63.

After this the river fell silent. The amazing event had moved all of them. The son of Ixion [Pirithous], as someone of fierce mind, who scorned the gods, laughed at them for believing: 'Your stories are fictions, Achelous,' he said, 'and you take the gods to be too powerful if they bestow and remove forms.' Everyone was stunned, not approving such words; Lelex above all, mature in mind and years, said: 'Boundless and without limit is the power of heaven; whatever the gods wish comes to pass . . .' (8. 611–19)

Two possible audience reactions to the divine stories of the *Metamorphoses* are acted out for us here.[155] Everyone except Pirithous is lulled by the persuasiveness of Achelous' speech into believing his story (*credentes*, 612), mesmerized by its convincingness into the state of trance-like acceptance which poets and critics since Homer had depicted as the ideal response to the magical powers of the poet.[156] For them, as for an element of ourselves, Achelous' account becomes a *factum*, an event, however amazing (*mirabile*). For Pirithous, however, these are *ficta*, and although an element of ourselves will agree with him as well, we must recognize that we cannot identify wholly with him, for his response is as much a critical solecism as a blasphemy. His companions may be like the theatre-goer of critical legend, who would rush onto the stage to stop Othello smothering Desdemona;[157] yet some suspension of disbelief is necessary for the narrative to proceed at all (and readers who energetically agree with Pirithous will always have to remind themselves that he too is a *fictum*). Ovid is not interested in irrevocably exploding our ability to give necessary credence to his fictions, nor is he interested in letting us forget that fictions are indeed his subject. By splitting our response up into these two polarized alternatives he is making us realize that to swim successfully in the sea of the *Metamorphoses* we must be both Lelex and Pirithous.

Readers tend to be either Lelex or Pirithous. If Solodow and Otis concentrate on Ovid's explosion of the narrative illusion,[158] Kenney necessarily and sympathetically insists on Ovid's astonishing conviction and credibility:[159] no matter how often Ovid reminds us, either through his own voice or by allusion, of the fictional status of his poem's events, we still give enough credence to these events to be impelled to keep reading, to discover what 'happened' next. The double vision that comes from being both Lelex and Pirithous may indeed be seen as a necessary condition for reading any fictions, as Newsom has recently claimed in the first systematic study of literary probability:

in entertaining fictions . . . we divide our beliefs between real and fictional worlds. . . . an essential part of reading stories or of entertaining any kind of make-believe is 'having it both ways'. It is insisting on our belief in the fictional world *even* as we insist also on our belief in the world in which the reading or make-believe takes place.[160]

This necessary knowing complicity between poet and audience is something which had exercised the first Greek theorists, and receives extended notice in Plutarch's essay 'On how the young man should study poetry':

For the element of deception in [poetry] does not gain any hold on utterly witless and foolish persons. This is the ground of Simonides' answer to the man who said to him, 'Why are the Thessalians the only people whom you do not deceive?' His answer was, 'Oh, they are too ignorant to be deceived by me'; and Gorgias called tragedy a deception wherein he who deceives is more honest than he who does not deceive, and he who is deceived is wiser than he who is not deceived. (Plut. *Quomodo Ad.* 15 c–d)[161]

What Lelex and Pirithous are talking about through their discussion of the power of the gods is the power of poets. When Pirithous accuses Achelous of 'taking the gods to be too powerful if they bestow and remove forms' (8. 614–15), he is actually opening up the possibility that we will not follow the poet in his bestowal and removal of forms. And when Lelex replies in defence of the gods, we may substitute the poet's own quasi-divine craft: 'Boundless and without limit is the power of poetry; whatever the

[155] Anticipated earlier, in the reaction of Leuconoe's sisters to her story (4. 271–3).

[156] *Od.* 11. 333–4; 13. 1–2; Walsh (1984), 14–15, 22; Thalmann (1984), 129–30. Ovid appears to be signalling a reaction to epic narrative in particular: see Hinds (1988), 19, on the way Ovid builds Achelous as a grand epic narrator.

[157] Walton (1978), 12.

[158] Solodow (1988), 68–73; Otis (1970), 361–7.

[159] Kenney (1973), 143; (1982), 436: 'probability, or at all events conviction, was paramount; all the poet's art was applied to achieve credibility (*fides*) . . .'; cf. the points made by Coleman (1973), 177, in his review of Otis (1970).

[160] Newsom (1988), 134–5 (his italics).

[161] Translation of Babbitt (1927).

poets wish comes to pass' (618–19).[162] Part of that power is the ability to make us 'believe' in the teeth of the poet's continual reminders of his poetic world's fictional status.

My interest in maintaining Ovid's interest in maintaining our belief may appear timid, especially against the background of the more radical destabilizations achieved by the master of fictional destabilization, Apollonius, and his Alexandrian colleagues.[163] There will always be readers who prefer to side with Pirithous throughout, and I am myself often one of those readers. The sense of reality in fiction is, after all, a two-edged business. While particularity of detail is vital to the authentication of any narrative,[164] there are many ways of resisting the ensuing impression of reality.[165] Readers who concentrate hard enough on the authorial manipulation involved in the provision of such particularity will always be able to talk themselves into a position of scepticism.[166]

The gods are the hardest case for Ovid's fictional power, as his character Hercules reminds us when he is (unbeknownst to himself) in the process of becoming a god, raging against the injustice of his torture: *et sunt qui credere possint / esse deos* ('and there are those who can believe that gods exist!', 9. 203–4).[167] Ovid is, of course, fully aware of the epic norms of analogy and authenticating detail in representing the divine, as he explicitly shows in his first set-piece divine scene, where he brings to the surface the inevitable narrative accommodation of divine to human action (1. 168–76).[168] Throughout the poem, the gods are given the characterful anthropomorphism which they need in order to be

[162] Cf. above, p. 191, on the 'god-like' craft of Arachne and Orpheus. On the divine creative powers of poets, see Lieberg (1982) and (1985): 'For Ovid, poets are completely free to create their own imaginary world' (1985), 27.

[163] Above, pp. 90–4; Goldhill (1986).

[164] Above, pp. 49–51.

[165] Belsey (1980), 1–36.

[166] Bayley (1987), 7–18, has a spirited attack on theories of reading which use authenticating detail as a way of undoing the illusion of authenticity. Few will follow him all the way, but his redressing of the balance is vital for understanding the polyvalent nature of fiction.

[167] An even bolder smashing of the fictive illusion than that which is sometimes read in Euripides, who notoriously attributes to Heracles the opinion that the gods' sins are 'the miserable stories of the bards' (*HF* 1346). On this very difficult passage, see now Yunis (1988), 155–66.

[168] Above, pp. 198–200; cf. Stirrup (1981), on Ovid's 'imagined reality' in depictions of the divine, building on the insights of David West in Parket (1977), 157.

able to participate. Jupiter wheedles, blusters, and rants, resembling Lucian's supreme deity more than Vergil's, or even Homer's.[169] The gods' general passions of love and hate are depicted with the minute details of expression, gait, and speech which allow these passions to make narrative sense for the reader.[170] Further, Ovid knows full well that epic moments of fantasy have a ground in verisimilitude, as is shown by the contemporary political atmosphere to his divine councils and deliberations. His Phaethon episode is a splendid example of how even the most bizarre moments can be given a colour of plausibility in this way.[171] The fantastic chariot ride across the firmament, a genuine flight of the imagination, begins like a chariot race in the circus, with the meticulously named horses beating their hooves on the starting gates (2. 153–5).

No one, however, would expect Ovid to rest at so much, and in fact he delights in driving his wedges into the lines of strain which crisscross the apparently perspicuous convention. Just as, in thematic terms, the gods' humanity is tested to the point where it breaks down as a conceptual model, so too, in representing the divine in action, Ovid pushes at epic's divine realism until it collapses: the more authenticating detail he gives, the more he undermines his fiction.

One of his favourite areas for such activity is the physicality of divinities who represent aspects of the natural world,[172] where the accumulation of authenticating detail ends in humour so marked that the aura of plausible fiction is entirely exploded. All readers of the *Metamorphoses* know and relish these marvellous moments; the best of them are collected by Galinsky.[173] Ovid particularly enjoys the tension between the anthropomorphic deity and its natural element when that element is water, so mutable and

[169] Esp. 1. 244–5, 2. 396–7. On the overtly human element in Ovid's divine characterization, see Bernbeck (1967), 80–94; Little (1970), 86–105; Otis (1970), esp. 145; Galinsky (1975), 162–73; Solodow (1988), 89–97; Kenney (1973), 145: 'what could be more human than the gods of the *Metamorphoses*?'

[170] e.g. 2. 601–2 (Apollo's aghast reaction to hearing the news of Coronis' unfaithfulness); 2. 752–5 (Pallas' anger at Aglauros). Examples are to be found throughout; cf., again, Solodow (1988), 89–97.

[171] Bernbeck (1967), 93–4.

[172] Wilkinson (1955), 201; Doblhofer (1960), 87–9; Solodow (1988), 95–6; above all, the careful study of Eggers (1984).

[173] Galinsky (1975), 171, citing 1. 583–4 (the river Inachus); 5. 574–5 (the spring Arethusa); 11. 125 (Bacchus); 2. 302–3 (Earth). The mountain Tmolus (11. 157–64) is another master-stroke, a hit at Vergil's Atlas (*Aen.* 4. 246–51).

resistant to shape. The disjuncture is already present in Homer, and is a basic habit of thought for both Greeks and Romans.[174] As Odysseus floats towards the island of Phaeacia and sees a river-mouth, he prays to the river-god, speaking as a suppliant, saying 'I come to your flow *and your knees*' (σόν τε ῥόον σά τε γούναθ' ἱκάνω, *Od.* 5. 449). When Achilles is killing the Trojans in the river Scamander, the 'deep-swirling river addressed him in anger, making himself like a man, and spoke out of the deep swirl' (χωσάμενος προσέφη ποταμὸς βαθυδίνης, / ἀνέρι εἰσάμενος, βαθέης δ' ἐκφθέγξατο δίνης, *Il.* 21. 212–13). The 'deep swirls' are first a characteristic of the river itself, and then a place from which the anthropomorphic deity of the river performs his man-like (and god-like) act of speech; the 'deep-swirling' epithet of the first line is, in the next line, split up into its constituent parts to provide an encircling bracket for the act of speech, so that we are left wondering exactly who or what the river 'is', and in what his (or its) nature consists.[175] Greek and Roman sculpture regularly represented rivers in anthropomorphic shape, with Hellenistic art in particular enjoying the challenge of having the anthropomorphic figure embody 'the property of the great river, with its cascading limbs and flowing beard'.[176] It is quite natural for Pliny, when he is describing the spring of Clitumnus, to give us half a page on the actual river, and then to mention the cult statue of the river-god with the words *stat Clitumnus ipse* ('there stands Clitumnus himself', *Ep.* 8. 8. 5).

There is precedent in Callimachus for Ovid's transformation of this double habit of mind into an arena for humour,[177] yet it is a field of display which Ovid makes all his own. His mighty river, Achelous, when he meets Theseus, 'is swollen with rain as a river, yet he talks as though he had nothing to do with the water and wished to protect Theseus from its danger'.[178] Even more elaborately, when Achelous is telling the story of how he raged at the nymphs for neglecting him in sacrifice, Ovid produces a series of splits between entities and their embodiments:

> intumui, quantusque, feror cum plurimus umquam,
> tantus eram, pariterque animis immanis et undis
> a siluis siluas et ab aruis arua reuelli
> cumque loco nymphas, memores tum denique nostri,
> in freta prouolui.

I swelled up, and I was as big as I am at my greatest rush; equally terrible in feeling and flood, I tore up the woods from the woods, the fields from the fields, and I rolled the nymphs together with their locales into the sea—they finally thought of me *then*. (8. 583–7)

The river swells with water and with anthropomorphic rage.[179] The more Achelous concentrates on the harmony between his personality and his element, however, the more difficult it becomes for the reader to overlook the split. The disjuncture is further accentuated by the other divisions in the same lines. If the water and the person are presented as one and the same, how can the woods or the fields be separated from themselves? And if these material objects are separated from their material embodiments, what of the nymphs, who find themselves swept into the sea together with the physical environments which are their habitation, and simultaneously their 'selves'?[180] A final collapse of *numen* into physicality is acted out in Book 5, where the fountain-nymph Cyane breaks through the boundary between herself and her element, dissolving through grief into the very water itself (425–37).

When he engages with the difficulties of representing the Olympians themselves, Ovid concentrates not so much on their problematic *φύσις* ('nature') as on the threat which their action poses to the norms of his narrative mode. Here, as always, he is insisting on making dominant the inherent problems of the genre. As we have seen, he makes much of his adherence to epic's necessary

[174] Eggers (1984), 67–83; see *RE* 6. 2784–90 for representation of rivers in human (that is, divine) shape.

[175] Matters are not clarified later on, when the river is described as making a sound like a bull (21. 237): see *RE* 6. 2780–2 for the common representation of rivers as bulls.

[176] Onians (1979), 137.

[177] Hollis (1970), on *Met.* 8. 549 ff., quoting Call. *Del.* 77–8, where Asopus is described as moving slowly because of injuries sustained from Zeus' thunderbolt; '*βαρύγουνος* suits the river-god, *πεπάλακτο* ("was sullied") the river-water'.

[178] Anderson (1972), on 8. 550; Anderson's points throughout this section catch Ovid's humour very acutely.

[179] Hollis (1970) and Anderson (1972) on 8. 583. Even a sceptical reader of Ahl (1985) may feel impelled to see the river (AMNIS) lurking in the most personal, anthropomorphic moment of these lines (ANIMIS IMMANIS); Achelous is called *amnis* at the opening and close of this speech (8. 577, 611).

[180] The most dramatic reflection of Ovid's techniques in later epic comes in the ninth book of Statius' *Thebaid*, where there is an extended play on the personality and physicality of the river Ismenus, as he reacts to the death of his grandson in battle (9. 404 ff.).

characterful anthropomorphism in representing the gods;[181] yet he uses this necessary norm as a backdrop for his preferred concentration on epic moments of *φαντασία*, in which the gods' stunning and unassimilable power strains to the limit the power of narrative to capture its operation, as the poet exploits to the full the characteristic *licentia* of epic.[182]

When Ovid describes Apollo's reaction to the news of Coronis' adultery, for example, he first follows the pattern of epic action established by Homer, in his description of Apollo's reaction to the prayer of Chryses in *Iliad* 1 (43–7).[183] The god's characterful gestures and emotions are minutely (and comically) captured: his wreath slips off, he loses his expression, plectrum, and facial colour all at once, he rages, he picks up his bow (2. 600–3). When he comes to Apollo's actual shooting of Coronis, however, Ovid cuts away from Homer's careful figuring of the god's movements and actions. The archery of Homer's Apollo at the Greek camp is described with meticulous detail (1. 48–52), yet Ovid capitalizes, as it were, on the eery underpinning to Apollo's involvement which is revealed by Homer's half-line in the middle of his fully-patterned action: 'and he went like night' (*ὁ δ' ἤιε νυκτὶ ἐοικώς*, 1. 47). For Ovid passes immediately from Apollo picking up his bow to the aim and the shot, with the intervening miles annihilated.[184] The deliberate eclipse of any attempt to accommodate the divine action to a human action transforms the god's peremptory deed into something unaccountable, all the more morally terrifying for being incommensurate with humanly imaginable action.

Ovid had precedent enough in Homer, let alone in Apollonius or Vergil, for his impressionistic capturing of such moments of *phantasia*; as we have seen, the monstrous and striking character of divine narrative was a constant feature of critical responses to epic.[185] The unprepared, stunning descent of Vergil's Juno to smash open the gates of war is as catastrophic a rupture of verisimilitude as anything in Ovid (*Aen.* 7. 620–2); it is itself indebted

[181] Above, p. 232.

[182] On such strands in epic divine action, see above, pp. 51–2. To some extent, of course, this is only one manifestation of the characteristically quirky and contrapuntal nature of Ovid's narrative in the *Metamorphoses*.

[183] Above, p. 50.

[184] *arma adsueta capit flexumque a cornibus arcum / tendit et illa suo totiens cum pectore iuncta / indeuitato traiecit pectora telo*, 2. 603–5.

[185] Above, pp. 51–2.

to the magnificent gesture of Apollonius' Athene, impelling Argo through the Clashing Rocks (*Arg.* 2. 588–9).[186] Ovid's use of this epic technique, however, is far more pervasive than in any of his predecessors.[187] The aberrations of his tradition become his norm; it is as if he is responding to the uneasiness of the critics, who often registered their anxiety about moments in epic where the gods' action appeared inchoate, unintegrated.[188]

In *Metamorphoses* 2, Juno notices the birth of a boy to one of Jupiter's mistresses, Callisto, and delivers a soliloquy (466–75). The reader imagines the goddess to be in heaven, or at least in a cloud, and it is a great shock to read immediately afterwards: *dixit et aduersam prensis a fronte capillis / strauit humi pronam* ('she spoke, and, facing her, took her hair by the front and laid her out flat face down on the ground', 2. 476–7). Earlier, when Callisto loses her maidenhead to Jupiter, the effortless act of rape itself is elided altogether, marked only by the epithet of *uictor* given to Jupiter as he returns to heaven (2. 437). Such ellipses become a general feature of the narrative of divine action. In Book 9, the miraculously rejuvenated Iolāus enters the room to interrupt Alcmena and Iole. In apparent parenthesis Ovid tells us the reason for Iolāus' youth, as a gift from Hebe (400–1); but the next lines verge into a narrative of the bestowal of the gift, with a prophetic speech from Themis (401–17). And at the end of this floating exchange between Hebe and Themis we find ourselves in the middle of a council of the gods, which we must now try to read back as the framework from the start: *haec ubi faticano uenturi praescia dixit / ore Themis, uario superi sermone fremebant* . . . ('when Themis, knowing the future, said this with her prophetic mouth, the gods made a hubbub, all speaking at cross purposes', 9. 418–19).

[186] Lloyd-Jones (1984), 68–9.

[187] Bernbeck (1967) is the fundamental discussion of this aspect of Ovid's technique: esp. 10–11, 17, 79.

[188] AbT *Il.* 15. 668; AT 16. 432; bT 16. 666; AT 18. 356. Such attitudes make their way into the Latin commentary tradition on the *Aeneid*: Serv. 1. 226 (congratulating Vergil on a deft introduction of divine action); 11. 532 (censuring him for an *ineptus . . . et uituperabilis transitus*). Heyne continues the tradition, with some very Servian comments on 9. 802 ff., and 9. 638 ff.: Heyne–Wagner (1830–41), ad locc. On the possibility of Ovid responding to criticisms of the *Aeneid*, see McKeown (1979), 172, with reference to Servius' comments on the metamorphosis of the ships at *Aen.* 9. 81 and 3. 46.

The Silver Latin epic poets followed Ovid's lead enthusiastically. Valerius Flaccus sets his Argonauts on their journey, and then begins his epic storm (1. 574–621). In the middle of the action, without any motivation or preparation, Neptune appears in a *cum*-clause: *undique feruent / aequora, cum subitus trifida Neptunus in hasta / caeruleum fundo caput extulit* ('everywhere the sea is raging, when all of a sudden Neptune, trident and all, bore his blue head out of the deep', 1. 640–2). The contrast with the Vergilian model scene (*Aen.* 1. 124–30) is very marked, for there Vergil had motivated Neptune's reaction as carefully as Homer had Apollo's.[189] Even more drastic is the dislocation in the story of Io. She is walking over the fields, when an *ecce* introduces from thin air Tisiphone: *ibat agris Io uictrix Iunonis, at ecce / cum facibus flagrisque et Tartareo ululatu / Tisiphonen uidet* ('Io was going over the fields, triumphant over Juno, when—look!—she sees Tisiphone with her torches, whips, and Hellish howling', 4. 392–4).[190]

Statius' splendidly precipitous narrative likewise capitalizes on Ovid's example, with a continual use of abrupt and jolting divine manifestations.[191] His goddess of war outdoes Vergil's Juno, by standing on the citadel of Argos at the beginning of *Thebaid* 4 and throwing her spear 120 kilometres to Thebes (4. 5–8). At another point, Statius shows us Jupiter sitting and watching events below, to all appearances alone (3. 218–19). Jupiter calls Mars, and in the middle of his orders to the war-god he breaks off with *uos, o superi* . . . ('you, o gods . . .', 239). Are we then in a council of the gods? It is not yet possible to be sure, for Statius' Jupiter can easily apostrophize absent personages while engaged in conversation.[192] Only at the end of his speech is the setting clarified, as the assembled gods react to his words (3. 253).

Incoherence and perfunctoriness are the main threats to poets who engage in such Ovidian practices. Statius and Valerius succeed in catching something of Ovid's drama, while Silius, as we shall see in the next chapter, demonstrates one aspect of his fundamental incompetence by his systematic inability to make any sense of Ovid's innovations in divine narrative.[193]

[189] Mehmel (1934), 68: 'Bei Valerius taucht Neptun unerwartet auf einmal auf. Man weiss nicht, woher und warum.'

[190] von Albrecht (1977), esp. 145; the pervasive importance of Ovid for such aspects of Silver Latin technique emerges very clearly from this valuable article; cf. Mehmel (1934), 67–72 ('Klarheit').

[191] On Statius' staccato narrative technique, see von Moisy (1971).

[192] Cf. 7. 20, where in a speech to Mercury he cries out to Mars.

Scarcely a single area of epic technique is left unscathed by Ovid's powerful experiments. Human emotion and divine possession, for example, become the object of Ovid's commentary. Apollonius' Medea, a victim of external and internal forces which resist being lumped together, becomes in Ovid a vehicle for extended self-analytical speech, where we can glimpse the fugitive tracks of a divine intervention without being granted the narrative means to stabilize a divine interpretation. Her falling in love is described as an act of 'conceiving powerful flames' (*concipit . . . ualidos . . . ignes*, 7. 9), yet we are shown no burning arrows. Some god or other, so she says, is making it impossible for her to resist (*nescio quis deus obstat*, 12). She speaks of herself as a victim of *cupido* (19); not only here, but also when Ovid closes her speech by saying that *cupido* was routed (73), and when she herself says to Jason that *amor* will lead her astray (92–3), there is a hesitation between seeing the name of a responsible god, or the name of a human passion.[194] Throughout, it is exceedingly difficult to know whether Ovid is forswearing, and correcting, the divine dimension of Apollonius' picture, or else inviting us to supplement his version (where Medea is the sole focalizer) with our knowledge of Apollonius' more panoramic presentation. This difficulty itself, of course, exploits the problems already present in Apollonius' own treatment.

A more direct engagement with a powerful prototype comes in Book 4, where Tisiphone's possession of Athamas and Ino takes up the challenge posed by Allecto's baffling possession of Amata in *Aeneid* 7 (346–56).[195] The indeterminate physicality of Allecto's weird snake is the strangest feature of that very strange scene, as it slides over Amata's clothes and breasts without any contact, breathing its spirit into her without her knowledge, turning itself into necklace and ribbon, still slippery. Ovid gives us four lines on Tisiphone's snakes (4. 491–4), and then blandly demolishes

[193] Below, Chapter 6, Section IV.

[194] Anderson (1972), 252: 'The "defeat" and "flight" of *cupido* can easily take place symbolically within the human soul.' Similarly Whitman (1987), 55.

[195] A very good discussion of the Ino and Athamas scene in Bernbeck (1967), 1–43; for Ovid's debts to Vergil's scene, see Bömer (1969–86), on 4. 473–511, and throughout.

Vergil's equivocations, taking us by the elbow and pointing out what is 'really' going on:

> inde duos mediis abrumpit crinibus angues
> pestiferaque manu raptos immisit, at illi
> Inoosque sinus Athamanteosque pererrant
> inspirantque graues animas; *nec uulnera membris*
> *ulla ferunt: mens est quae diros sentiat ictus.*

Then she rips away two snakes from the middle of her hair; grabbing them, she throws them with her pestilential hand. The snakes wander over the breasts of Ino and Athamas, breathing into them their grievous breaths. *Nor do they bear any wounds on their limbs; it is their minds that feel the dread impact.* (4. 495–9)

Not content with this much, Tisiphone and Ovid go further. The Fury had brought—*quoque* ('*in addition*')—a bucket of physical and metaphorical poisons, everything all ground up together (*omnia trita simul*, 500–5). This is divine machinery with a vengeance, hyperbolical, redundant, and gratuitous.

It should be more than enough to do the job, and so it appears at first, with Athamas' immediate frenzy (*protinus*, 512). Yet Ino does not react until Athamas has smashed their son's head against a rock: 'then *finally* she was roused, in her capacity as mother' (*tum denique concita mater*, 519). And Ovid goes on to opine that her madness may have been natural after all—or else the result of the poison: *seu dolor hoc fecit, seu sparsum causa uenenum* (520). In this one line, and in the larger contrast between Athamas and Ino, Ovid is splitting up Vergil's two incommensurate ways of reading Amata's madness. The hyperbolical barrage of supernatural equipment deranges Athamas, yet Ino is driven mad by the natural frenzy she feels at seeing her son's brains dashed out (or else, of course, says Ovid, by the poison . . .).[196] The zestful accumulation of Tartarean detail comes to appear more and more like a way of exploding epic narrative's distinctive manner of describing human experience. As an image Ovid's divine scene is magnificent; as a way of reflecting on human behaviour it has been turned into nothing.

[196] The split between Athamas and Ino is seen even more clearly in the *Fasti* version of this story, where Athamas is driven mad by Furies and a false vision (6. 489), while Ino remains self-possessed until the moment of her son's funeral (491–4): Bernbeck (1967), 32 n. 85.

It is in Ovid's poem that we see for the first time extended use of an alternative way of reflecting on human behaviour, one which was eventually to emerge triumphant in European verse narratives—personification allegory. We may postpone the main discussion of the problems of this mode until we reach Statius' *Thebaid*, where it attains its fullest manifestation in classical epic.[197] Here it will be enough to point to the main elements of Ovid's contribution.

First, some brief words of context. Personifications appear in classical literature from the very beginning, wholesale in Hesiod's *Theogony*, and commonly enough in Homer.[198] Yet if we concentrate on the allegorical use of personifications as we see them in Ovid, Statius, and the later medieval or Renaissance tradition, it is plain that Hesiod and Homer scarcely exploit personification allegory as such, in that their personifications are (crucially) not characterful agents who engage with human beings, occupying the same narrative space as the human characters, and interacting with them in the same way as do the gods themselves. Hesiod's personifications are ways of talking about the way the world is made; nowhere does he show us Strife, for example, or Deceit impinging on a human agent. In Homer, Phobos and Deimos are mentioned as companions of Ares (*Il.* 4. 440, 15. 119), and they appear on Agamemnon's shield (11. 37), yet the only personifications who have any mimetic character at all are Eris (*Il.* 4. 440–5) and the Litae (*Il.* 9. 502–12). Sleep and Death may carry off the corpse of Sarpedon (*Il.* 16. 681–3), but these verses, memorable as they are, do not tell us anything about the experience of being Sarpedon at that point; they form a remarkable emblem of Sarpedon's state, but reveal nothing about the man or his emotions. We are still very far from Ovid's Envy visiting Aglauros (*Met.* 2. 797–805), or Statius' Virtue visiting Menoeceus (*Theb.* 10. 632–782).

None the less, it is clear that allegorical treatment of moral issues was in large measure a response to moralizing interpretations of Homer, and narrative enactments of moral dramas may be traced back at least to Prodicus' *Choice of Heracles* in the

[197] Chapter 7, Section III.

[198] Generally, on Greek personifications: Deubner in Roscher, 2068–169; Petersen (1939); Reinhardt (1960*b*); Hamdorf (1964); Whitman (1987), 269–72 ('On the History of the Term "Personification"').

late fifth century, where we see the hero confronted with the competing appeals of personified Vice and Virtue.[199] It is impossible to establish with any certainty what sort of prototypes earlier epic may have provided to Ovid. The technique of using personifications as major actors in epic may well have been very early. The *Cypria* appears to have made extensive use of personifications.[200] We hear of Themis and Eris, Nemesis, and possibly Momus as characters,[201] and we can reconstruct the moment when 'Strife' spreads her own essence among the guests at the marriage-feast of Peleus and Thetis, but the fragmentary nature of the evidence makes it impossible for us to know what sort of characterful energy 'Strife' or her counterparts were given.[202] There are good grounds for assuming that Hellenistic literature made use of such scenes, but, again, we lack the actual texts we need for comparison.[203] Apollonius, of course, has Eros as a major character, but he does everything he can to make him a creature of epic mythology, rather than the personification which he could easily have been.[204] Vergil's techniques in the *Aeneid* are remarkably restrained in their classicism. His Fama (*Aen.* 4. 173–97) owes much to Homer's Eris;[205] his Underworld is home to a throng of Hesiodic monsters (Disease, Fear, etc.: *Aen.* 6. 273–9). Although his Fama is clearly very important for Ovid,[206] nothing in Vergil really prepares us for what we find in the *Metamorphoses*.

Ovid has four set-piece scenes in which personifications, and their

[199] Xen. *Mem.* 2. 1. 21–34; very good discussion in Whitman (1987), 20–31. Note Whitman's arguments against the eclipse of this earlier material in the important discussion of Lewis (1936): 'It is no longer possible to argue . . . that the divided will, or *bellum intestinum*, is effectively the discovery of the first century AD, or that from this division personification follows' (30). On Euripides' marvellous Lyssa in the *Hercules Furens*, see below, p. 370.

[200] Davies (1989), 35–6, 39.

[201] Themis and Eris (*EGF* p. 31. 5–8); Nemesis (*EGF* F 7–8); Momus (*EGF* F 1).

[202] Professor Powell points out to me that the story of Eris at the marriage-feast must be post-Homeric in the form we know, since its key element is the *written* inscription on the apple, 'To the most beautiful'.

[203] So Hollis (1970), 138–9, referring to the Nemesis-scene in Nonnus, *Dion.* 48. 370–470, which is very reminiscent of Ovid's Fames and Invidia in particular.

[204] In accordance with his general policy of maintaining the gods' names as titles of epic personalities, not as metonymic labels: above, p. 76.

[205] See now Hardie (1986), 273–8.

[206] Due (1974), 178–9; Braudy (1986), 140–1.

effects, are depicted at length: *Inuidia*, 'Envy' (2. 760–832); *Fames*, 'Hunger' (8. 799–822); *Somnus*, 'Sleep' (11. 592–649); and *Fama*, 'Rumour' or 'Fame' (12. 39–63).[207] Despite the alluring comprehensiveness of the term 'personification allegory', it is important to note the variety of technique which Ovid controls in these four scenes.[208] If the picture of Fama is concerned with elucidating the nature of both poetic and non-poetic reputation and authority in the world,[209] the remaining three personifications, on the other hand, involve us in what it is like to feel something—sleepy, famished, or envious. Even these three differ in the amount of mimetic character they have, in rough accordance with the differing degree to which the conditions of sleep, hunger, and envy involve interaction. Sleep is, as it were, a self-contained state, which is why the House of Sleep is a self-contained unit of narrative, with Sleep himself uninvolved in any direct engagement with the characters of the narrative; such action as he partakes in is indirect, mediated via his agent, Morpheus. In comparison, the ravening hunger which besets Erisychthon—however personal a phenomenon—is a social event, and one which mirrors the blind voraciousness of its victim's moral character; it is, therefore, fitting that he should be actually visited by the creature who embodies his affliction. The most complex case is that of the effect of Envy, for here we are dealing with a human emotion which issues from human interaction and manifests itself in human events. Ovid's use of personification is at its richest here, for he presents us with a scene in which characters act in the same realm of narrative as an entity who embodies the timeless characteristics of their particular moral failing: the characters and the personification perform together in a sequence which, taken as a whole, provides a complex set of ways of thinking about the emotion. This technique is the distinctive domain of personification allegory 'proper', as we shall see it fully realized in Statius, and as it was to rule in post-classical literature.

The possession of Aglauros by Invidia has a fairly involved context. We first meet Aglauros 200 lines earlier in Book 2 (552–61),

[207] Bömer (1969–86) has his main discussion of Ovid's personifications on 11. 592–673, with bibliography.

[208] Well marked by Zumwalt (1977), 210.

[209] Zumwalt (1977); we return to Fama at the close of this section.

when we hear the story of how Minerva entrusted the child Erichthonius, hidden in a wicker basket, to Cecrops' three daughters, Aglauros, Herse, and Pandrosos. She had told them not to look inside the basket, but Aglauros untied the bindings, and they saw the child with his snake companion. Ovid returns to the sisters when he describes Mercury falling in love with Herse, and attempting to visit her bedchamber (2. 708–39). Aglauros sees him first, and demands gold as the price for her complicity in his affair (740–51). At this juncture, Minerva looks at the girl, remembers her previous offence in uncovering Erichthonius, and visits Invidia in order to have her possess Aglauros (752–86). Invidia obeys, and infects Aglauros with bitter envy of her sister; finally, Aglauros is turned into a stone by Mercury, when, as a result of her envy of Herse, she refuses to aid him as she had promised (787–832).

The episode has attracted a certain amount of comment; the focus of attention has been the virtuoso description of the actual figure of Invidia, and of her House (760–82).[210] Important insights into Invidia's nature have emerged from these discussions,[211] but the episode as a whole needs to be the focus, with all its characterful interactions, if we are to allow Ovid's use of Invidia its full effect. The apparent plenitude of Ovid's painting of Invidia's appearance is clearly responsible for the feeling that we need look only at her in order to glean what Ovid has to say about the experience of envy—as Solodow explicitly declares: 'Ovid builds up his portraits almost solely through descriptions of appearance, that is to say, of surfaces. To understand Envy we need only to look at her. She simply is what she seems to be.'[212] One should react with caution to the suggestion that anything in the *Metamorphoses* simply is what it seems to be. 'Only looking' turns out to be an activity which is interestingly fraught with difficulty in Ovid's account of Invidia, an activity which goes via the name of the emotion to the heart of the experience.[213]

[210] Dickie (1975); Solodow (1988), 200–2; unfortunately, I have not seen the (as yet unpublished) 1988 Michigan dissertation of Alison Keith, in which Aglauros and Invidia are discussed.

[211] Dickie (1975) finds many ancient preconceptions about the nature of envy embodied in the figure and abode of Invidia.

[212] Solodow (1988), 202.

[213] Ovid's technique is striking confirmation of the power of the allegorical theory espoused by Quilligan (1979), summed up in her definition of the form as 'the generation of narrative out of wordplay' (22): 'out of a focus on the word as word, allegory generates narrative action' (33). Van Dyke (1985) has some cogent objections to accepting Quilligan's definition as a universal explanation of allegory, but the validity of Quilligan's approach in many areas of allegory is beyond dispute.

Invidia's name, after all, refers to a flawed act of vision. The act of *in-uidere* is 'to look at askance',[214] as Ovid goes out of his way to remind us when he describes Invidia's appearance: *nusquam recta acies*, he says, 'the line of her vision is never straight' (776). When Invidia looks at Minerva departing, she does so *obliquo lumine*, 'with eye askance' (787). Aglauros will be a ready victim for this creature, for, from the first moment she appears, peering into the secret basket of Minerva, she is someone who has trouble controlling her vision.[215] Her eyes lead her astray again at the beginning of the Invidia-narrative, when she sees Mercury going to her sister's bedchamber (*uenientem prima notauit*, 740), and Ovid explicitly links her two dangerous acts of sight: *adspicit hunc oculis isdem, quibus abdita nuper / uiderat Aglauros flauae secreta Mineruae* ('Aglauros looks at the god with the same eyes with which she had recently seen the hidden secrets of blonde Minerva', 748–9).

Aglauros' vision, however flawed, is not yet envious when she looks at Erichthonius and Mercury, but her wayward looking sets her up for the act of wayward looking which Ovid presents as the essence of Invidia. Before Aglauros becomes the victim of Invidia, however, Ovid presents Invidia's first victim—Minerva:

> Vertit ad hanc torui dea bellica luminis orbem
> et tanto penitus traxit suspiria motu,
> ut pariter pectus positamque in pectore forti
> aegida concuteret: subit, hanc arcana profana
> detexisse manu, tum cum sine matre creatam
> Lemnicolae stirpem contra data foedera uidit,
> et gratamque deo fore iam gratamque sorori
> et ditem sumpto, quod auara poposcerat, auro.

The warrior-goddess turned towards her the orb of her angry eye, and drew deep sighs with such force that she shook both her chest and the aegis, positioned on her brave chest. She thought of how this was the one who had uncovered the secret objects with her profane hand, when, against the given agreement, she saw the offspring of Vulcan, born without

[214] *OLD* s.v. § 1a.

[215] Note how this theme of illicit looking is reinforced by the narrative frame for the first Aglauros story. It is related by the crow, who tells of how he spied on Aglauros' act of spying (2. 557–8), and was punished by Minerva.

a mother. Now she would be welcome to the god, and welcome to her sister too—and she would be rich, with the gold which she had greedily demanded. (2. 752–9)

The goddess's act of looking at Aglauros produces the peevish sense of begrudging someone something which is one of the manifestations of the act of *inuidere*.[216] Minerva's deep sigh at the sight of Aglauros is mirrored by the sigh which Invidia later gives, when she sees the magnificent form of the goddess (774).[217] The nagging sensation of envious resentment is caught with the repetition of the maddening *gratam* in line 758, and capped by the next line ('as if that isn't bad enough, she'll be rich as well'); when Invidia is described for us later, we learn that she too finds the success of others 'unwelcome' (*ingratos*, 780).[218] When the goddess visits Invidia, the difficulty she has in looking at Invidia mimics in reverse the very obliquity of vision which Invidia embodies, by capturing the shame which the dignified person feels at having succumbed to this base vice: *uidet intus edentem / uipereas carnes, uitiorum alimenta suorum, / Inuidiam uisaque oculos auertit* ('she sees, inside, eating vipers' flesh, the nourishment of her vice, Invidia—at the sight of her, she turns away her eyes', 768–70).[219] Invidia's reciprocal difficulty in looking at Minerva (*obliquo lumine*, 787) is the quintessence of her own affliction: she must look, she cannot bear to look.

When Invidia emerges from her house and looks at the goddess, we get our chance to look at her:

> pallor in ore sedet, macies in corpore toto,
> nusquam recta acies, liuent rubigine dentes,
> pectora felle uirent, lingua est suffusa ueneno;
> risus abest, nisi quem uisi mouere dolores;
> nec fruitur somno, uigilantibus excita curis,
> sed uidet ingratos intabescitque uidendo
> successus hominum carpitque et carpitur una
> suppliciumque suum est.

Pallor sits on her face, emaciation on her whole body, the line of her vision is never straight, her teeth are discoloured with tartar, her chest

[216] *OLD* s.v. § 2.

[217] So much is certain, whatever one decides about the text of line 774.

[218] It is difficult in English to catch the rather illogical way that *gratam* in 758 and *ingratos* in 780 look to each other.

[219] At *Pont.* 3. 3. 101–2 Ovid comments on the incompatibility of snake-like envy and high character.

thrives with poison, her tongue runs with venom. Laughter is absent, unless the sight of pain moves her; nor does she enjoy sleep, stirred by watchful anxieties; rather, looking at people's success is unwelcome to her, and she wastes away through looking at them; she gnaws and is gnawed simultaneously; she is her own punishment. (2. 775–82)

The dominance of sight in defining Invidia's manner of action is immediately apparent (*uisi*, 778; *uidet . . . uidendo*, 780). Yet only the first three of these eight lines are devoted to what Invidia looks like, as if Minerva, or Ovid, finds it easier to generalize about Invidia's manner of action than to gaze steadily upon her.[220] When Invidia visits Aglauros, she works through the girl's flawed sight, placing her sister, her marriage, and the god before her eyes (*ante oculos*, 803), and distorting her vision: *cunctaque magna facit*, 'she magnifies everything' (805). So successful is she that Aglauros often wishes to die in order to be able to avoid seeing such a sight (*ne quicquam tale uideret*, 812).

The basic word-play behind Ovid's Invidia-narrative may be rather pat, but it acquires depth and resilience in its acting-out. The essence of Ovid's envy is that it comes from and feeds on 'looking', but cannot bear to look, so that it must look askance, and therefore distorts everything in its field of vision. Simply looking at Invidia is not enough. If we look at what happens to Aglauros, we gain some notion of the stupefying pain of the experience. The most interesting light on the experience of envy is, however, shed obliquely (as is fitting), by the sensations of Minerva, who is ostensibly there only to instigate the 'real' story. It is Minerva's inability to watch Aglauros' success which makes her visit Invidia, and as we watch Minerva watching Invidia eating her snakes, we catch something of the nauseated shame which a proud person feels at condescending to begrudge a lesser person her success. When we look at Invidia, after all, we see her with Minerva's averted eyes.

A glance, in conclusion, at Ovid's last set-piece personification allegory, the House of Fame (12. 39–63), returns us to the issues of poetic authority which were the subject at the beginning of this

[220] Contrast the description of Fames, likewise eight lines long (8. 801–8), where nothing but the physical appearance of the creature is given. Even the physical details of Invidia's appearance, of course, contain moral generalization: see Hollis (1970), on 8. 802, for the 'backbiting' pun contained in *rubigine* (776), and Solodow (1988), 202, for the 'envious' metaphor of *liuent* (776).

Section. As a condensation of ancient attitudes towards the plasticity of tradition and the variable nature of poetic truth, Ovid's House of Fame has no parallel:

> atria turba tenet; ueniunt, leue uulgus, euntque
> mixtaque cum ueris passim commenta uagantur
> milia rumorum confusaque uerba uolutant;
> e quibus hi uacuas implent sermonibus aures,
> hi narrata ferunt alio, mensuraque ficti
> crescit, et auditis aliquid nouus adicit auctor.

A crowd occupies the entrance-halls; a fickle mob, they come and they go; thousands of rumours wander everywhere, lies mixed with truth, and jumbled words fly about. Some of these fill empty ears with their talk, some bear the stories elsewhere; the dimensions of the fiction grow, and each new author adds something to what he has heard. (12. 53–8)

As has been shown by the fine discussion of Zumwalt (1977), Ovid immediately goes on to demonstrate what he means with his own comprehensive rewriting of Homer, and with the portrayal of Nestor's partial and misleading paradigmatic act of epic narrative, which itself supplants the Trojan war as it smothers the mighty Hercules (12. 169–541). Other poets have been nearly paralysed by this heightened awareness of their position at the receiving end of a fluid tradition, but Ovid remains confident and alert in his energetic production of a new Fama. At the end of a poem in which he has incessantly been reminding us of his dependence on Fama as a source—*fama est*, *fertur*, *ferunt*, *memorant*[221]—Ovid presents himself as a new repository for the Fama which future generations will inherit. Some of the inhabitants of the House of Fama suffer oblivion;[222] but Ovid will live, as his last lines defiantly proclaim, with the final verse containing a last ironic explosion of the doubt over the truth of his words:

> Iamque opus exegi, quod nec Iouis ira nec ignis
> nec poterit ferrum nec edax abolere uetustas.
> cum uolet, illa dies, quae nil nisi corporis huius
> ius habet, incerti spatium mihi finiat aeui:

[221] Examples are legion; one each for the words given in the text: 2. 268; 3. 318; 4. 266; 7. 430. On Ovid's use of such expressions, see Bömer (1969–86), on 3. 106.

[222] Such is the force of 12. 46, *nocte dieque patet*, which aligns Fama's House with Vergil's underworld (*noctes atque dies patet atri ianua Ditis*, *Aen.* 6. 127). Vergil's underworld is easy to enter and difficult to leave; Ovid's House of Fama is easy to enter and fatally easy to leave.

> parte tamen meliore mei super alta perennis
> astra ferar, nomenque erit indelebile nostrum,
> quaque patet domitis Romana potentia terris,
> ore legar populi, perque omnia saecula fama,
> siquid habent ueri uatum praesagia, uiuam.

Now I have erected a work, which neither the anger of Jupiter, nor fire, nor sword, nor devouring time will be able to abolish. When it wishes, let that day, which has power over nothing but this body, mark off the end of my uncertain span. Still, with the better part of my self I will be borne through the years above the high stars; my name will be indestructible; wherever Roman power extends over the conquered lands, I will be read by the lips of the people, and through all the centuries, in fame—if the prophecies of bards have any truth—will I live. (15. 871–9)

He will himself become one of the manufacturers of the slippery Fama which constructs our literary world: so he asserts, not only with the emphatic *fama* at the end of the penultimate line, but with the 'fame' word he uses to describe his astral progress, *ferar* (876).[223] Outdoing Julius Caesar, who went higher than the moon and became a star (15. 848–50), Ovid will go higher than the stars, and become a book.

[223] 'Carried', literally, but also 'borne in report, spoken of', punning on such phrases as *fertur*, *ferunt*, which he so commonly uses in the poem to describe rumour and report.