IV

The Style of the Metamorphoses

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I

Judgments on Ovid's style have tended to exemplify something of the facility which they purport to expose. Often he has in effect been criticized for not being Virgil. So Mackail speaks of 'the tripping movement . . . into which [the hexameter] was metamorphosed . . . by the facile adroitness of Ovid'.[1] Similarly Green's verdict that Ovid's verses are 'under-enjambed' and 'over-dactylic'[2] can only mean 'compared with Virgil's'.[3] Glover called them 'often only elegiac couplets in disguise',[4] a sentence echoed by Wilkinson,[5] though with an important qualification: for having duly quoted the famous criticism of Dryden that 'Ovid with all his sweetness, has as little variety of Numbers and sound as [Claudian]: He is always as it were upon the Handgallop, and his Verse runs upon Carpet ground',[6] he goes on to add the rider 'Yet may not Ovid perhaps have been right, for the purpose in hand?'[7] That surely is the crux of the matter.

What was that purpose? Much ink has been spilt on the question whether the *Metamorphoses* is or is not an epic. von Albrecht's careful analysis of the surprisingly brief proem shows that Ovid's declared pretensions are those of an epic poet;[8] and Herter has rightly insisted on the significance of the word *perpetuum* (1. 4), with its oblique but unambiguous anti-Callimachean implication that the *Metamorphoses* was a single poem intended for continuous reading, and not merely a collection of epyllia.[9] There is of course in this attitude a touch of deliberate paradox, perhaps verging on defiance, since when all is said and done, the resemblance to the *Aetia*, metre apart, is immediately obvious; and whatever thematic architecture Ovid's ingenuity

might devise or the percipience of modern critics detect, the poem is bound to appeal to most readers as a collection of stories. It is indeed, as von Albrecht has said, 'an epos *sui generis*',[10] and that uniqueness is, as he has also said, the decisive point. In setting out to write the *Metamorphoses* Ovid was attempting something for which, as he envisaged the undertaking, no precedents existed; and those readers who instinctively sense in the first four words of the poem, *in noua fert animus*, read autonomously, a proclamation by the poet to that effect are, I think, following a hint intended by him. However that may be, precisely what was he attempting? What is the special *genus* of which the *Metamorphoses* is sole representative? To this question very various answers have been returned. One critic sees the poem as an example of 'Kollektivgedicht',[11] another as an 'anti-epic' protest,[12] another as a playful variation of epic,[13] another as an epic of love,[14] yet another as an epic of rape;[15] and I have myself elsewhere offered epic of *pathos*.[16] The search for a label may or may not be a profitable exercise; the diversity of labels suggested at all events serves to emphasize the special character of the poem. However, there is one point on which the interpreters seem to be unanimous, and that is the dominant importance of narrative in the *Metamorphoses*, its status as what has been called 'the very soul of the work'.[17] To describe Ovid's verse medium as 'a comfortable, well-sprung, well-oiled vehicle for his story'[18] is perhaps to relegate it to too subordinate and separate a role: the medium and the message can hardly be distinguished in quite the way suggested by this metaphor. Nevertheless the idea of a vehicle is helpful as a reminder of the necessity for keeping this long poem moving and for sustaining its character as a *perpetuum carmen*. The reader of the *Metamorphoses* is always being carried on; the ingenious transitions from episode to episode, abused by Quintilian and variously criticized or justified by later critics,[19] are fundamentally a functional device (whatever extravagances Ovid may have committed in the application of it) to ensure a steady progress through the poem. Smoothness and speed are likewise the salient characteristics of Ovid's hexameter. Critics who merely miss in Ovid the weight, sonority and expressiveness of Virgil are failing to recognize the great difference, not only between the two poets, but between their two undertakings.[20] The comparison with Virgil is by no

means misguided; but it is illuminating precisely as it directs attention to this difference.

The existence and instant canonization of the *Aeneid* confronted all subsequent aspirants to epic honours with a most intractable problem. Of surviving Latin epicists only Ovid and Lucan can be said to have tackled it with originality and anything approaching success. It is relevant to bring in Lucan at this point because the very different nature of his attempted solution and of the stylistic means by which he executed it helps to illustrate the originality of both the *Metamorphoses* and the *Bellum Civile*. Both poems were brilliant essays in a modern, or contemporary, style of epic which might legitimately challenge comparison with Virgil, not on his own ground (which Ovid, who obviously admired him, must have seen to be impossible),[21] but on a new and independent footing. In material, structure and intention Ovid's independence from Virgil is almost complete. In language it seems at first sight to be otherwise: for all Ovid's work is shot through and through with Virgilian reminiscences.[22] Closer analysis, however, shows that this is not a matter of straightforward borrowing and adaptation, but rather that what might be called a consistent and calculated process of denaturing has been at work. It is important to distinguish in Virgil's Latinity between its base, the 'common style', as a recent critic has called it,[23] which relates directly to the medium itself, the dactylic hexameter,[24] and what is specific and original to Virgil himself: his *callidae iuncturae*[25] and his management of the verse-period.[26] Virgil's penchant for 'coining ... expressive original phrases out of extremely elementary words',[27] as seen in lines like

sensit laeta dolis et formae conscia coniunx (*Aen.*, VIII. 393)

(his consort felt, and, smiling at her ruse, knew that she was fair)[28]

is something more than a trick of style; it is part and parcel of the allusive, ambiguous and allegorical mode in which the *Aeneid* was composed. Ovid's diction (as will be illustrated below) is on the whole no more and no less plain than Virgil's; his use of it is infinitely more straightforward, because that straightforwardness was what the mode in which he was writing called for. Bömer's careful and perceptive analysis of this problem[29]

perhaps fails to do full justice to its complexity when it speaks of the *debasement* of Virgil's diction by Ovid.[30] It would be more proper to say that Ovid restored to common currency what Virgil had temporarily taken out of general circulation. When however Bömer speaks of Ovid's 'profaning' his original[31] the term may be accepted if it is understood in the sense of making generally available. Ovid's adaptations of Virgilian diction and phraseology (which are of course not confined to the *Metamorphoses*) are best seen as a deliberate *vulgarisation* (in the strict French sense) by a poet who was himself a master-craftsman. His contribution to the subsequent development of Latin poetry may be described as the perfection of a poetic *koine*, a stylistic instrument which was freely manageable by writers of lesser genius. The Ovidian manner, as generations of clever English schoolboys have discovered, is imitable; Virgil's is not.[32]

Similar considerations apply to the management of the verse-period. The average length of Ovid's periods in the *Metamorphoses*, mechanically measured, probably does not differ significantly from that of Virgil's.[33] However, the important considerations here too are not quantitative but qualitative. Worstbrock's analyses have shown that the Virgilian sentence and period look forward to a concluding 'Schwerpunkt'.[34] The total effect is not thereby discontinuous, for Virgil always provides the necessary insurance against loss of momentum;[35] but it is (allowing for many designed variations in tempo) on the whole deliberate and measured. Ovid achieves his continuity and a markedly higher overall speed by a more even distribution of emphasis over his sentences; his periods less commonly build up in the Virgilian manner. Whereas, for instance, Virgil's 'golden' lines always have a clearly observable climactic function, occuring at pauses in the action or exposition,[36] Ovid's are more usually in the nature of casual decoration.[37] His method may perhaps be described as one of reliance on a succession of small surprises and detours: the main thread of the narrative or argument is never lost sight of, but the reader is constantly entertained by unexpected changes of subject, parentheses, adversatives, antitheses, all illuminated and sustained by a verbal wit that from time to time broadens into a full-scale *tour de force*.[38]

II

Virgil's vocabulary in the *Aeneid* has been exhaustively analysed by Cordier,[39] and whatever reservations may be necessary about particular features of his discussion, it clearly emerges from it that the poet set himself to follow a *via media* between ordinary speech and cultivated literary diction.[40] Such innovations as were made by Ovid on the stock of epic diction inherited from his great predecessor were in the main unobtrusive, but appear to be designed to adapt it to the purposes of the 'modern' epic, as I have described it, that the *Metamorphoses* was intended to be. Archaisms, of which Virgil himself had made extremely sparing use,[41] had little or no place in this type of poetry, and genuine archaisms, as distinct from poeticisms – i.e. old words that had won acceptance as part of the stock poetical vocabulary[42] – are very rare in the *Metamorphoses*. It is not always easy to decide how to classify certain isolated words or, what is more important, how to assess their intended effect. Ovid uses the word *actutum* (quickly) twice only, at *Her.*, XII. 207: *quos equidem actutum . . .* (in aposiopesis), and *Met.*, III. 557, there in conjunction with two elisions, both unusual:

> quem quidem ego actutum . . . cogam . . . fateri

(whom I myself at once . . . shall force to confess.)

As a glance at *T.L.L.* will show, *actutum* is an old word, frequent in Comedy and occurring also in the fragments of Republican Tragedy; it is used once by Virgil (*Aen.*, IX. 255). If, as is at least possible, Ovid's treatment of the Pentheus story owes something to Pacuvius,[43] *actutum* may have been intended as *color tragicus* quite as much as *color epicus*. It is difficult to guess how much impression such a single word can have made even on an alert reader, but this would not be the only instance in Ovid of such an allusion.[44] What is clear is that his use of 'poeticisms' is extremely restrained: using as a convenient basis Cordier's catalogue of what he (somewhat loosely)[45] classifies as Virgilian archaisms we find:

(1) Some obviously useful and not obtrusively 'poetic' words avoided by Ovid for no very clear reason: examples are *celero* (6 times[46] in the *Aeneid*), *fluentum* (3), *loquella**,[47] *pauperies*.[48]

(2) Some more obviously 'poetic' words not used by him: *cernuus, flictus, illuuies, intempestus, obnubo, pernix*.

(3) Some 'poetic' words used once only in *Aeneid* and *Metamorphoses* by both authors: *dius*,[49] *incanus, properus, sentus, suboles, tremebundus*; cf. *uirago* (once in *Aeneid*, twice in *Metamorphoses*).

These are no more than straws in the wind. A clearer picture of Ovid's policy as regards specifically poetic or epic diction can be obtained from studying his use of compound adjectives. That this class of word was recognized as posing a particular problem in Latin is evident from the well-known discussion of Quintilian (*Inst. Or.*, I. 5. 65–70). If Cordier's lists are again taken as a basis[50] we find:

(4) Some compounds used by both poets in *Aeneid* and *Metamorphoses*: *aeripes*,[51] *alipes* (2, 3)*, *armiger* (6, 5), *arquitenens* (1, 2), *bicolor* (2, 3), *bicornis* (1, 3)†[52]*, *biforis**, *biformis* (2, 5)*, *biiugus* (8,[53] 1), *bimembris* (1, 2)*, *caelicola* (8, 2), *corniger* (1, 6)*, *fatidicus* (3, 2)*, *fatifer* (2, 2)*, *grandaeuus* (1, 3)†*, *horrifer* (1, 3), *indigena* (2, 7)*, *laniger* (4, 4)†*, *letifer* (2, 5)*, *longaeuus* (14, 1)*, *magnanimus* (12, 4)†*, *naufragus, nubigena* (2, 2), *odorifer, pacifer, pestifer* (1, 5)*, *quadriiugus* (2,[54] 1)†*, *quadrupedans* (2, 1), *saetiger* (3, 3)*, *sagittifer, semianimis* (5, 4)*, *semifer* (2, 2), *semihomo, seminex* (5, 1)*, *semiuir* (2, 1)*, *septemplex* (1, 2)*, *somnifer* (1, 2), *soporifer, terrificus* (3, 1), *trisulcus*†*, *uulnificus* (1, 2).

(5) Some compounds used by Virgil in *Aeneid* but not by Ovid in *Metamorphoses*: *aequaeuus* (2), *aliger* (2),[55] *Appenninicola, armipotens* (5)*, *armisonus, auricomus, bellipotens, bifrons* (2), *bilinguis, bilix, bipatens* (2), *biremis* (2), *biuius*,[56] *caelifer, centumgeminus, caprigenus, conifer, cornipes* (2)*, *fumifer* (2), *Graiugena* (2), *horrificus* (3), *horrisonus* (2), *ignipotens* (7), *legifer**, *luctificus, malesuadus, malifer, mortifer**, *noctiuagus, oliuifer**, *omnigenus, omniparens, Phoebigena*,[57] *pinifer* (2)*, *primaeuus* (3), *quadrifidus*†, *regificus, septemgeminus, siluicola**, *sonipes* (3), *tergeminus* (2)*, *tricorpor, trifaux, trilix* (3), *Troiugena* (3), *turicremus**, *turriger* (2)*, *ueliuolus**, *uersicolor**, *uitisator, umbrifer, unanimus* (3).

(6) Some compounds used by Ovid in *Metamorphoses* but not by Virgil in *Aeneid* (except where otherwise noted these appear for the first time in Ovid):[58] *amnicola*‡,[59] *anguicomus, anguifer* (Propertius), *anguigena*‡, *anguipes, Appenninigena, armifer* (2)*, *aurigena, bifidus, bifurcus* (Livy), *bimaris* (4)* (Horace), *bimater, binominis** (Plautus?), *bipennifer* (2)*‡, *bisulcus* (2) (Lucretius, al.),

caducifer (2)*‡, *centimanus** (Horace), *Chimaerifer*‡, *circumfluus* (3), *circumsonus, clauiger* (3)*,[60] *colubrifer, falcifer** (Lucretius), *faticinus* (2)‡, *Faunigena, flammifer* (4)* (Ennius), *flexipes*‡, *florilegus*‡, *frugifer** (Ennius, Cicero, Livy), *frugilegus*‡, *fumificus* (Plautus), *gemellipara**‡, *glandifer* (Lucretius, Cicero), *granifer**‡, *herbifer**‡, *lanigena*‡, *ignifer* (2)[61] (Lucretius), *ignigena*‡, *imbrifer* (Virgil†), *Iunonigena*‡, *laborifer* (2), *lanificus** (Tibullus), *Latonigena*‡, *Lemnicola*‡, *lentiscifer*‡, *liniger**, *luctisonus*‡, *magniloquus, mellifer, monticola*‡, *multicauus*‡, *multifidus* (2), *multiforus, nubifer**, *opifer* (2), *palmifer** (Propertius), *papyrifer**‡, *penatiger*‡, *pinniger** (Lucretius), *portentificus, puerperus* (adj.), *racemifer* (2)*‡, *ruricola* (4)*, *rurigena*‡, *sacrificus* (3)*, *salutifer* (3)*, *saxificus**, *securifer*‡,[62] *semicaper**‡, *semicremus*‡, *semideus* (subst.) (2)‡,[63] *semilacer*‡, *semimas* (2)* (Varro), *septemfluus* (2)‡, *serpentiger*‡, *sexangulus, spumiger*[64] (Lucretius), *squamiger* (Lucretius, Cicero), *terrigena* (4)* (Lucretius), *triceps* (Cicero), *tricuspis*‡, *tridentifer*‡, *tridentiger*‡,[65] *trifidus, triformis* (3) (Horace), *uaticinus* (Livy), *uelifer* (Propertius), *uenefica* (adj.) (?),[66] *uenenifer*.

It has seemed worthwhile to reproduce these lists, since, though mildly repellent in appearance, they provide the material for some simple but enlightening deductions of general relevance to Ovid's lexical choices in the *Metamorphoses*. The proportion of identifiably 'poetic' or 'epic' words in his vocabulary does not seem to differ substantially from that in Virgil's. He does not go out of his way to avoid compounds already used in the *Aeneid* and therefore, so to say, sanctified, but he also innovates on his own account with moderate freedom. His innovations are in the main themselves traditional in so far as they conform to types already well established in poetic usage, with a predominance of verbal suffixes in -*cola*, -*gena*, -*ficus*, -*fer*, -*ger*, etc. and numerical prefixes in *bi*-, *tri*-, *centi*-, *multi*, *semi*-, etc. Formations on the model of *anguicomus, anguipes, flexipes*, etc. are in a small minority.[67] In a poem of some 12,000 verses this relatively small number of poeticisms cannot impart any very marked coloration, and (especially if one takes into account other features of Ovid's vocabulary, discussed below) it is probable that their metrical convenience was at least as important to him as their expressive value. Both prefixes and suffixes were a valuable source of short syllables and helped in the unobtrusive production of dactyls. Strategically placed, the longer compounds also contribute to

the smoothness, fluency and speed that was necessary to Ovid's narrative. Thus those of the metrical form $\smile - \smile \smile$ occur after a 'weak' (trochaic) caesura in the fourth foot, yielding a rapid rhythm affected by Ovid much more than by Virgil,[68] or, when used in oblique cases, after a trochaic caesura in the first foot, so filling out the first half of the verse and creating 'tension', i.e. the expectation of a noun in agreement to follow, and hence again contributing rapidity.

These metrical considerations are relevant to another class of compound words in the formation of which Ovid exercised some freedom, that of verbs and participles (or words of participial form).[69] For instance, the compound *defrenatus*‡ was clearly coined by Ovid to fit the verse in the scene in which Neptune unleashes the rivers to flood the earth:

> fontibus ora relaxant
> et defrenato uoluuntur in aequora cursu   (I. 281–2)

(they take the curbs from their mouths and in unbridled course roll down to the sea.)

Here however there are other factors at work besides the purely metrical: the development of an image of racing horses begun at l. 280 (*totas inmittite habenas*) and expressiveness in the spondees of *defrenato*, suggesting a pause while the mass of waters builds up before sweeping resistlessly on to the sea in the following dactyls. Even more remarkable are the double compounds, of which one perhaps deserves particular notice. Into his account of the metamorphosis of Ceyx and Alcyone, one of the most poignant passages of the poem, Ovid inserts a short *ecphrasis*, skilfully positioned so as to offer the least possible obstruction to the current of the narrative:[70]

> adiacet undis
> facta manu moles, quae primas aequoris iras[71]
> frangit et incursus quae praedelassat aquarum   (XI. 728–30)

(Right by the waves was a man-made breakwater, which took the first shock of the angry sea and wore out beforehand the oncoming waters.)

The unique *praedelasso*‡[72] is finely descriptive in itself and also contributes to the idyllic atmosphere of calm after storm in which the sufferings of the tormented pair find release:

> tum iacet unda maris: uentos custodit et arcet
> Aeolus egressu praestatque nepotibus aequor   (747–8)

(Then [sc. during the 'halcyon days'] the waves are at rest,
for Aeolus keeps the winds close, forbidding them to emerge,
and provides for his descendants a level ocean.)

The rarity of such formations in Latin (for so far as I am aware this possibility was not much exploited by later poets) must have enhanced their effect on the Roman ear.

An especially rich category of Ovidian coinages and *hapax legomena* is that of participles compounded with the negative prefix *in-*.[73] Like many of the other compound words discussed these are often long, but they do not merely serve to fill up the line: they can be used with widely differing effect. One may contrast the contributions made to the movement of the verse by *inobseruatus** and *indeuitatus*‡ in the same story. The first occurs in a piece of fast-moving, relatively colourless 'linking' narrative:

> pulchrior in tota quam Larisaea Coronis
> non fuit Haemonia: placuit tibi, Delphice, certe,
> dum uel casta fuit uel inobseruata, sed ales
> sensit adulterium Phoebeius *eqs.*   (II. 542–5)

(In the whole of Thessaly no girl was more beautiful than Coronis of Larissa: you certainly, Apollo, thought so, as long as she was faithful – or unwatched. But the bird of Phoebus discovered her infidelity . . .)

There is enjambment between ll. 542–3, 544–5, and only the lightest of pauses at the end of l. 543 (since *certe*, though pointed, is not strongly emphatic); and the placing of *inobseruata* ($\smile$ – – – $\smile$) in the penultimate position in the line is managed so as to convey a characteristically Ovidian point while not impeding the movement of the verses. That point depends for its effect, not only on the sense, but on the greater length of the word that complements *casta*; but the word itself, like the diction of the whole passage (at least as far as l. 549) is colourless, as its function in the context requires it to be. Clearly Ovid coined *inobseruatus* to

perform a specific function in this passage, which it does with extreme efficiency. The second word occurs in a narrative sequence which is also fast-moving, but in this case 'pathetic', with a more colourful vocabulary affectively deployed:

> laurea delapsa est audito crimine amantis,
> et pariter uultusque deo plectrumque colorque
> excidit, utque animus tumida feruebat ab ira,
> arma adsueta rapit[74] flexumque a cornibus arcum
> tendit et illa suo totiens cum pectore iuncta
> indeuitato traiecit pectora telo.   (II. 600–5)

(His laurel wreath slipped from the god's head as he heard of his beloved's offence,[75] and in one moment his expression changed, he dropped his plectrum, and his face went white. His heart swelling with rage, he snatched up his familiar weapon, strung his bow, and into the breast that so often had been pressed to his he sent deep the arrow that cannot miss.)

Ovid sketches in the god's reaction to the news by focusing attention on externals: and his consternation is neatly conveyed in a favourite figure, syllepsis.[76] There is enjambment between ll. 601–2, 603–4 (note the position of the verbs *excidit*, *tendit*), 604–5; and the single subordinate clause in l. 602 retards the narrative just enough, and no more, to emphasize that Apollo's consternation is instantly succeeded by a new emotion, anger. This swift period, packed with emotion and incident, is suddenly slowed down and, so to say, stopped in its tracks by the four-word[77] last verse with its enclosing word-order (cf. I. 282 quoted above):

> *indeuitato* traiecit pectora *telo.*

Apollo's precipitate action, which he is immediately to regret (612, *paenitet heu! sero poenae crudelis amantem*), is finished and irrevocable. Again, if Ovid had been content to use existing epic diction, the phrase *non euitabile telum*, which he does in fact use later in the poem (VI. 234), or some similar variant (cf. III. 301, *ineuitabile fulmen*), lay ready to hand on the model of Virgil's *ineluctabile tempus* (*Aen.*, II. 324) or *inexorabile fatum* (*G.*, II. 491).[78]

Instead he chose to coin the strong and majestic *indeuitatus* for the particular effect that he wanted.

Other features of Ovid's diction may be reviewed more briefly. In general it may be said that they were all directed to extending, within the limits of linguistic and literary propriety (i.e. without substantially trenching on either the colloquial or the archaic or the hyperpoetic resources of Latin) the poetical *koine* that in his amatory works he had already gone a long way towards establishing as what might be called a standard literary dialect of Latin.[79] Most of his predilections are obviously dictated by the desire to make his verse more smooth and dactylic: e.g. adjectives in *-ilis*, neuter nouns in *-men*,[80] and above all Greek proper names. As a source of new poetical vocabulary borrowings from Greek had been ruled out by the common consent of the Augustan poets (Horace's remarks on the subject are sufficiently well known), and in the *Metamorphoses* Ovid shows himself predictably restrained.[81] With proper names, in contrast, he is extremely lavish. This, in a poem which takes a wide sweep through Greek mythology, was of course to be expected; and Ovid was as sensitive as any of his predecessors or successors to the emotive or purely musical effects of names.[82] What particularly deserves remark is the way in which, as with the compounds already discussed, his diction is engineered to smooth and accelerate the verse. Thus his evident preference for adjectival forms in *-is*, *-idis/os* over the alternatives available must be largely due to the metrical utility of the endings *-idă*, *-idĭs/ŏs*, *-idĕ*, *-idĕs*, *-idăs*.[83] More striking than this are the variations in adjectival forms of the same name that occur purely as suits the metre: *quid Achaica dextera posset* (XII. 70), *per Achaiadas urbes* (III. 511, al.); *Acheloides unde* (V. 552), *Acheloiadumque relinquit* (XIV. 87); *Cephisidas undas* (I. 369), *Cephisias ora Procrusten* (VII. 438); *Cytherea laboras* (XV. 816, al.), *Cythereia poenam* (IV. 190), *Cythereiadasque columbas* (XV. 386), *diua Cythereide natum* (IV. 288), *Cytheriaca . . . myrto* (*Fast.*, IV. 15); *Dryopeius illa* (VIII. 751), *Dryopeida tradit* (VIII. 872);[84] *Therses Ismenius oris* (XIII. 682), *Ismenides aras* (III. 733, al.); *Latonia si non* (I. 696), *Latoides aras* (VIII. 278), *Latous harundine uictum* (VI. 384), *Latoius adstitit aruis* (XI. 196)[85] (cf. *Latonigena*, above);[86] *Maeoniaeque . . . Arachnes* (VI. 5), *Maeonis elusam* (VI. 103); *rapta Minoide Diam* (VIII. 174), *ne forte parum Minoia credar* (*Her.*, IV. 61); *Alcithoe Minyeias* (IV. 1), *Minyeides intus* (IV. 32,

al.), *Minyeia proles* (IV. 389); *Nyseides antris* (III. 314), *Nysiadas nymphas* (*Fast.*, III. 769); *Pallantius heros* (*Fast.*, V. 647), *Pallantias annos* (IX. 421), *Pallantidos ortu* (XV. 700); *cum Parrhasio Ancaeo* (VIII. 315), *Parrhasis erubuit* (II. 460); *Pelias hasta* (XIII. 109), *Peliacae . . . cuspidis ictu* (XII. 74); *Pelopeia Pittheus* (VIII. 622), *Pelopeiadesque Mycenae* (VI. 414), *Pelopeidas undas* (*Fast.*, IV. 285); *post Phaethonteos . . . ignes* (IV. 246), *Phaethontida uersum* (XII. 581); *Phinea cecidere manu* (V. 109), *Phineia mensis* (*Fast.*, VI. 131); *Schoeneia dictis* (X. 660), *Schoeneida dicam* (*Am.*, I. 7. 13); *Sidōnius hospes* (III. 129), *Sidōniae comites* (IV. 543), *Sidōnida nomine dicunt* (II. 840), *Sidōnis inque pyra* (XIV. 80);[87] *Teuthranteusque Caicus* (II. 243), *Teuthrantia turba sorores* (*Her.*, IX. 51); *Titania mota est* (I. 395, al.), *Titanidos atria Circes* (XIII. 968, al.), *Titaniacis ablata draconibus* (VII. 398); *Zanclaea classis harena* (XIII. 729), *Zancleia saxa* (XIV. 47).

In spite of this apparent profusion of forms it becomes clear when the manner of their employment is considered (which must be the justification for quoting and not merely referring to the foregoing instances) that a principle something like that of formulaic economy is here at work. The same principle can be detected in Ovid's employment of some common nouns and adjectives. Thus his favoured formations in *-men*, previously referred to, are used for choice in the ablative singular and accusative plural, where they provide a dactyl ending in an open vowel.[88] Similarly his abstract fourth declension substantive formations in *-us*, of which he is a fancier in a small way,[89] occur mostly in the dative and ablative plural, providing a dactyl ending in *-s*.[90] When variant forms of the same word are employed we have in effect a composite declension: *conamine* but *conatibus*, *hortamine* but *hortatibus*.

Such devices as these for enlarging the compass of the poet's linguistic resources were not invented by Ovid or practised only by him; what is new and peculiar to him is the unobtrusive efficiency[91] with which he applied them to the creation of the copious and limpid style – a transmitting rather than, as with Virgil, a refracting medium – which he saw as appropriate for the *Metamorphoses*. In his exploitation of these possibilities he resembles (though he is more restrained) Lucretius more closely than any of his other predecessors. This is perhaps not surprising, for Ovid, intelligent and impatient of the obscure, was temperamentally

equipped to respond to the magnificent and unequivocal clarity of the Lucretian message,[92] to appreciate the masterful handling of the language which made that clarity possible, and to adapt the lessons learned from Lucretius to his own purposes.

III

It may have been J. P. Postgate (for I cannot now trace the reference) who somewhere referred to Ovid as a 'chartered libertine' in matters of syntax. This summary judgment may be allowed to stand if by syntax be chiefly understood the ordering of words in the sentence. Ovid does not seem to me to strain the Latin language as, in their different ways, do Virgil or Propertius or Lucan: his case-usage, for instance, though flexible and versatile, cannot be called either difficult or markedly licentious.[93] So too his use of 'poetic' singulars and plurals, given that the latter especially offer an easily available source of extra short syllables, rarely amounts to abuse;[94] where it may seem to verge on doing so, the motive is plain, to assist rapidity. So within the space of three verses Hyacinthus' wound is now plural, now singular (x. 187–9). That most readers of the *Metamorphoses*, unless they happen to be grammatical lepidopterists, with net and killing-bottle at the ready as they read, do not notice such things is the best possible index of Ovid's linguistic mastery. The same is for the most part true of the dislocations of 'natural' word-order identified by grammarians as *hyperbaton*.[95] Ovid particularly affects this device, as has more than once been noted. His most striking instances, amounting to abuse, occur in the elegiac works;[96] those which are found in the *Metamorphoses* are not usually disturbing 'provided', as Postgate remarks, 'that the words are read and not simply surveyed'; indeed a reader who is moderately well accomplished in Latin is unlikely to notice, unless halted and admonished by (superfluous) editorial commas, that he is confronted with hyperbaton in

> non mihi quae duri colerent pater arua iuuenci
> lanigerosue greges, non ulla armenta reliquit   (III. 584–5)

(My father left me no land to be tilled by patient oxen, no sheep, no cattle.)

The commentators, displaying it may be unusual tact, in fact offer no remarks on the word-order, which is in a sense a compliment to the poet; but in a discussion such as this it does deserve remark for its unobtrusive functional efficiency. In their context, in which of course they must be read, the verses emphasize that the family's only resource was fishing: this is done by using the familiar technique of negative enumeration. What comes of this technique when it is used heavy-handedly can be seen in Lucan;[97] here the touch is as light as is consistent with making the point. Grammatically the sentence is articulated by the repeated *non* (anaphora = copula), and the combined effect of the word-order and the metre is that the two cola, though disparate in length, are equivalent in weight. The rapid dactyls of ll. 584–5[a] carry the reader on to the slow spondees of l. 585[b], and the first *non, pater* and *arua* all look forward to the verb *reliquit* which completes both syntax and utterance. Conversely, *ulla* is felt as qualifying the first *non* ἀπὸ κοινοῦ (see below). Dissected in this laborious way, the structure sounds complicated and difficult; but read as a single syntactical grouping[98] it offers no impediment to understanding because the relationship of the syntactical elements, which is independent of the order in which they occur, cannot be in doubt. Occasionally in the *Metamorphoses* we may encounter a hyperbaton seemingly of the forced 'elegiac' type, such as becomes habitual to Martial:

> nam graue respiciens inter duo lumina ferrum
> qua naris fronti committitur accipis imae   (XII. 314–15)

(for as you look back you receive a heavy spearpoint between the eyes, where nose and forehead join)

or (if my interpretation is correct):

> hac agit ut pastor per deuia rura capellas
> dum uenit abductas et structis cantat auenis   (I. 676–7)

(With this [i.e. the *caduceus*], disguised as a shepherd, he drove through unfrequented ways the goats which he stole as, playing on his reed pipe, he came along.)

The editor who prints these passages with commas around *accipis* and *abductas* is no doubt doing his duty as a grammarian, but the signpost that he thinks to offer the traveller is more

apt to behave as stumbling-block or stile:[99] ancient readers did not need it, nor should a modern reader who is conscious that Latin is not English or French or German and who has trained himself to go on until *the poet* tells him, by providing the awaited syntactical/rhetorical dénouement, that he may stop:

> qua naris *fronti* committitur accipis *imae*;
> dum *uenit* abductas *et* STRVCTIS *cantat* AVENIS.

But are these two instances in fact as purely 'elegiac' as they seem? It is at least worth asking the question whether the positioning of *accipis* and *abductas* is deliberate, to emphasize that the spear struck *in the middle* of the face, that the thefts were accomplished *all the while* the god strolled and played. It does not do to underrate Ovid or any other *doctus poeta* in even the smallest points of technique, and if all he had wanted was to make his verses scan he could have done so in numerous other ways.

Mention has been made of the so-called ἀπὸ κοινοῦ word-order, in which part of the second member of an utterance modifies the first member as well.[100] It becomes unnecessary to embark on an elaborate classification of this usage once it is grasped that it is essentially a special type of ellipse, the figure in which part of an utterance is suppressed for the sake of economy and effect, being readily 'understood' from the context. Not only words but cases may be treated in this way:

> per iuga chrysolithi positaeque ex ordine gemmae   (II. 109)

(along the yoke chrysolites and jewels set in fair array (F. J. Miller), i.e. 'per iuga ex ordine positi chrysolithi et (aliae) gemmae')

or

> ut limbus totumque appareat aurum   (II. 734)

(so that the whole of the golden border shall be seen, i.e. 'ut totus appareat limbus totumque aurum', or rather, since hendiadys too is at work, 'ut totus appareat aureus limbus'.)[101]

The principles that sentences should be read as wholes and that each word should be understood in relation to the entire context is fundamental to a correct reading of Latin poetry and a good

deal of Latin prose. In their light even Ovid's more apparently wilful games with syntax ought not to impede comprehension:

> fluminaque obliquis cinxit decliuia ripis   (I. 39)

(and confined the rivers within sloping banks and made them flow down [sc. to the sea].)

As has been pointed out by Börner,[102] the attributes proper to rivers and their banks have changed places. Double enallage, as this is termed, was already known to Ovid's readers from Virgil and earlier poets,[103] and both words were familiar enough in their proper senses for an accomplished reader to grasp and relish what Ovid was up to. But, once again, is this pure play? May there not be a deliberate stroke of wit, a hint of the chaos from which order was emerging and a suggestion of a period during which the rivers were still learning their place in the new order of things and in which, for the moment, stream and banks were as yet not clearly distinguished? It is at least a piquant thought. The main point to be made, however, is that identification and classification of the various syntactical figures to be found in Ovid's Latinity, though an entirely praiseworthy occupation, is not essential to intelligent comprehension of his poetry; indeed there is a danger that such exercises may encourage the disposition to see an abnormality, deserving defence or at least palliation, in what is really the acquisition by Latin of a flexibility which, compared with Greek, it lacked in its rude and inartificial state.[104]

IV

We may now turn from grammar to rhetoric, from this necessarily partial and fragmentary review of Ovid's linguistic resources and expedients to consider how he employed them in action, i.e. in the continuous utterance of the poem. That Ovid's style is 'rhetorical' his critics all agree; not all trouble to define adequately what they mean by the term. Most good Latin poetry is rhetorical in the sense that it is engineered to produce a particular effect on the reader; the artistic success of the result depends principally on whether the poet observes a due proportion between ends and means. For Ovid, writing the sort of poem that the *Metamorphoses* was intended to be, two principal ends had to be kept in

view if the reader's attention was not to flag: the need to keep the poem moving continuously, and the need to vary the tone and tempo according to the character of the episodes themselves. It is the first of these needs that dictated a fundamental characteristic of his style, the contrast between the elegiac (as one might term it) brevity and terseness of individual members (clauses, cola) and the flowing amplitude of the sentences as a whole. Professor Nims, I think, puts his finger on this point when he remarks that 'Ovid . . . has been found long-winded, even if musically so, but the general effect of his writing is one of conciseness'.[105] One of the devices by which he achieves this effect is not peculiar to him, the so-called 'theme and variation'.[106] Sometimes, it is true, this amounts to little more than saying the same thing twice:

> sed te decor iste, quod optas,
> esse uetat, uotoque tuo tua forma repugnat   (I. 488–9)

(but that beauty of yours prevents you from being what you want to be [sc. a virgin], and your prayer is thwarted by your loveliness)

differs essentially very little from

> nequitiam fugio, fugientem forma reducit;
> auersor morum crimina, corpus amo   (*Am.*, III. 11. 37–8)

(I flee from your infidelity, but as I flee your beauty brings me back; I hate your character, I love your body.)

These are indeed 'the hexameters of an elegist'; yet the emphasis on Daphne's beauty as the cause of her undoing is after all at the centre of the story. More clearly disciplined and functional is the creation of Man:

> pronaque cum spectent animalia cetera terram,
> os homini sublime dedit caelumque uidere
> iussit et erectos ad sidera tollere uultus   (I. 84–6)

(and whereas the rest of the animal creation go on all fours and look down at the earth, to man he gave an uplifted face and bade him gaze on the heavens and raise his eyes aloft to the stars.)

The contrast between man and the other animals (a commonplace of ancient thought, as Bömer's note shows) is pressed home by the tricolon structure and the progressive amplifications *sublime > caelum > sidera*: the divine element in man's composition is *en rapport* with the stars, themselves divine. The triple structure of ll. 85–6 responds to that of the opening verses of the paragraph:

> sanctius his animal mentisque capacius altae
> deerat adhuc et quod dominari in cetera posset   (76–7)

(There was as yet no animal more godlike than these, more capable of receiving lofty intelligence,[107] and such as might rule over the rest.)

A pathetic effect is evident in

> sternuntur segetes et deplorata coloni
> uota iacent, longique perit labor irritus anni   (I. 272–3)

(The crops are laid flat, the farmer's prayers lie given over for dead, and the long year's toil has gone for nothing.)

Here variation combines with imagery, diction (the effect of the stately *deplorata*) and interlocking word-order (l. 273: aBbA) to emphasize the peasants' despair. Grandeur is the note struck in

> sed regina tamen ‖ sed opaci maxima mundi ‖
> sed tamen inferni pollens matrona tyranni   (V. 507–8)

(but yet she [Proserpine] is a queen, the greatest in that dark world, powerful wife of the lord of the underworld.)

Here the tricolon structure is formally articulated and spaced by the repeated *sed*, and the splendour of Proserpine's position emphasized by the 'golden' line 508 (abBA). This technique can also be effective in narrative:

> Lydia tota fremit, Phrygiaeque per oppida facti
> rumor it et magnum sermonibus occupat orbem (VI. 146–7)

(All Lydia is in turmoil, the news of the deed goes through the towns of Phrygia and fills the whole world with rumour.)

Here variation is accompanied by extension: the words connoting rumour, *fremit*, *rumor*, *sermonibus*, act as a sort of semantic anaphora articulating the account of the spread of the news from

Lydia through Phrygia and out into the wide world. The dactyls of l. 146 and the enjambment *facti/rumor* add speed, and the enclosing word-order *magnum . . . orbem* rounds off the picture and emphasizes how completely the news filled the world, vast as it is. In the same way, on a slightly larger scale, the different phases of an action are brought out both pictorially and conceptually in

> his, ut quaeque pia est, hortatibus impia prima est
> et, ne sit scelerata, facit scelus; haud tamen ictus
> ulla suos spectare potest, oculosque reflectunt
> caecaque dant saeuis auersae uulnera dextris   (VII. 339–42)

([Pelias is murdered by his daughters at the instigation of Medea.] At her bidding each daughter, the more she loved her father, the more eagerly she struck, and to avoid the reproach of wickedness did a wicked deed. Yet none could bear to look at the blows she dealt, all averted their eyes and turning away inflicted with cruel hand wounds they could not see.)

This is a fine example of Ovid's extreme verbal dexterity in the exploitation of paradox, conveyed through a sort of double theme and variation. The idea of the first occurs more than once in the poem, varied with Ovid's habitual ease:

> incipit esse tamen melior germana parente
> et consanguineas ut sanguine leniat umbras,
> impietate pia est   (VIII. 475–7)

(However the feelings of a sister began to prevail [in Althaea] over those of a mother, and to placate with blood the ghost of a blood-relation,[108] she is undutifully dutiful)

and, more succinctly,

> ultusque parente parentem
> natus erit facto pius et sceleratus eodem   (IX. 407–8)

([Themis on the killing of Eriphyle by Alcmaeon to avenge the death of Amphiaraus] . . . and his son, avenging parent on parent, shall be by the same deed dutiful and wicked.)

This idea is then exploited in the second theme and variation by being, so to say, translated into action; as in other cases the period

is completed by a verse with interlocking word-order (ab A B; but for the position of the verb a golden line). There is a tendency here towards what in later poetry, especially in Juvenal, becomes a mannerism, the rounding off of a train of thought with a self-contained and quotable *sententia*. So in

> > nec tam
> turpe fuit uinci quam contendisse decorum est,
> magnaque dat nobis tantus solacia uictor.   (IX. 5–7)

(It was less shameful to be beaten than it is honourable to have fought, and it is a great consolation to have succumbed to so mighty a victor [Achelous on his wrestling defeat by Hercules].)

There is in fact a concealed tricolon structure here, for l. 6 falls into two portions of unequal length, linked and contrasted by the two pairs of verbs in different tenses, whereas the interlocking word-order of l. 7 welds it into a single whole:

> turpe *fuit* VINCI ‖ quam CONTENDISSE decorum *est*,
> magnaque dat nobis tantus solacia uictor.

The quality of Ovid's technical achievement in the *Metamorphoses* is not fully grasped unless the reader has trained himself to be consciously aware of the enormous range of variations which the poet imparts to these basic poetic structures. It is because of this variety that he is not monotonous as, say, Lucan is monotonous. Lucan provides an instructive contrast precisely because, though his techniques are in many respects essentially Ovidian, he lacks Ovid's versatility and flexibility in applying them.

V

It is convenient to use the device of 'theme and variation' to illustrate the application of Ovid's techniques on a small scale. To extend these illustrations and this style of analysis on a larger scale would involve the discussion of whole books and episodes, which space does not allow and which is perhaps rather the province of the commentator.[109] I shall therefore conclude the chapter by reviewing a number of slightly longer passages which seem to me to exemplify certain other aspects of Ovid's art,

without pretending to completeness or even system. In a poem of such immense variety and of a richness sometimes verging on indiscipline (though never anarchy) random, or perhaps more accurately capricious, sampling is perhaps as good an approach as any. All my examples (and the same, I suspect, would be true of any others that might be preferred) are in fact essentially making the same point: they all illustrate the (on the whole, barring certain isolated *tours de force*) unobtrusive efficiency (I have used this phrase before, but make no apology for the repetition) with which Ovid keeps his poem moving and holds continuously the attention of his readers.

I have said that Ovid is never monotonous as, for instance, Lucan is monotonous. He was aware of the need for continual slight variations in tone and tempo in such a long poem. So in the account of Jason and the fire-breathing bulls:

> postera depulerat stellas Aurora micantes;   100
> conueniunt populi sacrum Mauortis in aruum
> consistuntque iugis; medio rex ipse resedit
> agmine purpureus sceptroque insignis eburno.
> ecce adamanteis Vulcanum naribus efflant
> aeripedes tauri, tactaeque uaporibus herbae   105
> ardent; utque solent pleni resonare camini
> aut ubi terrena silices fornace soluti
> concipiunt ignem liquidarum adspergine aquarum,
> pectora sic intus clausas uoluentia flammas
> gutturaque usta sonant. tamen illis Aesone natus   110
> obuius it; uertere truces uenientis ad ora
> terribiles uultus praefixaque cornua ferro
> puluereumque solum pede pulsauere bisulco
> fumificisque locum mugitibus impleuerunt.
> deriguere metu Minyae; subit ille nec ignes   115
> sentit anhelatos (tantum medicamina possunt)
> pendulaque audaci mulcet palearia dextra
> suppositosque iugo pondus graue cogit aratri
> ducere et insuetum ferro proscindere campum   (VII. 100–19)

(As soon as next day's dawn had banished the bright stars, the people assembled at the sacred field of Mars and took their stand on the surrounding hills. In their midst sat the king, purple-clad and resplendent with his ivory sceptre. Now,

breathing fire from their adamantine nostrils came the brazen-footed bulls, and the grass shrivelled as their breath touched it. As a well-stoked furnace roars or as baked lime burns when slaked with water, so the chests of the bulls and their fiery throats roared with the flames within. Nevertheless the son of Aeson went to meet them. They menacingly swung their fearful heads and iron-tipped horns to face him as he came, pawed the dusty earth with their cloven feet, and filled the place with their smoky bellowings. The Minyans were rigid with terror, but Jason approached without feeling the fiery breath (so powerful were the charms) and with daring hand stroked their dewlaps, yoked them, and constrained them to draw the heavy plough and cleave with the share the unaccustomed soil.)

Ovid presents the scene, in contrast to his model Apollonius, as an amphitheatral set-piece,[110] with the bulls in the centre; for Jason's victory is such a walk-over as scarcely to merit description. This concentration on a particular moment of the action and the taking of the rest for granted is of course Alexandrian and characteristic of Ovid's procedure in many episodes of the poem. Down to l. 112 the narrative moves swiftly, only ll. 100 and 103 being heavily endstopped, and enjambment being frequent (102–3, 104–5, 105–6, 107–8, 109–10, 110–11, 111–12). Similarly with ll. 115–19, where enjambment (115–16, 118–19) and parenthesis[111] help to polish off the actual accomplishment of the feat in very short order. Between these lively passages intervenes the description of the bulls: static and so menacing. Their initial reaction to Jason's appearance is conveyed by the (enjambed) *uertere truces . . . uultus*, but that is the only movement in the scene. Each of the three succeeding verses is self-contained: the bulls stand staring, horns at the ready (112), pawing the ground (113; note the alliteration) and bellowing (114; note the onomatopoeic and metrical effects – slightly overdone?). All this, as the reader knows perfectly well, is a sham. The Minyans of course are not in on the secret, but Jason, as Ovid tells the story, is not called upon (or possibly lacks the wit?) even to simulate anxiety or effort.[112] This brief static interruption in the brisk current of the episode (which continues in what follows) is not an unmotivated descriptive excursus but a subtle stroke of

wit. By pausing to call attention to the appearance and behaviour of the bulls Ovid is reminding us how the whole encounter has been 'set up' by Medea – who is of course the figure that he and we are really interested in. The bulls *look* alarming – to the outsider and those not in the know – but they do not actually *do* anything; they just stand, stare, fume and bellow.

In this passage the variations in tempo are directly connected with the incidence of enjambment (among other things); and we may now recall the criticism mentioned earlier, that Ovid's hexameters are 'under-enjambed'. In the *Aeneid* it has been calculated that Virgil enjambs on an average about forty per cent of his verses, a higher proportion than in any other hexameter poetry.[113] Taking *Metamorphoses* VII as a representative book I have estimated that the corresponding figure for Ovid is in the region of thirty-five per cent: not exactly a low figure when compared even with the *Aeneid*, let alone with the twenty per cent of the *Eclogues*. But just as with Virgil,[114] considerable variations occur, especially in speeches: to look no further than the beginning of Book VII, the proportion of enjambed verses rises sharply towards the end of Medea's soliloquy, at ll. 46–71; for other examples see also ll. 159–62 (swift 'linking' narrative), 188–91 (preliminary to prayer), 406–15 (parenthetic explanation), etc. Nor do the types of enjambment used by Ovid seem to differ appreciably from those of Virgil;[115] the main and substantial difference is in overall frequency of employment.[116] In such matters Ovid's practice seems to represent an instinctive compromise. If enjambment were to exceed the Virgilian figure, more frequent and stronger pauses in the interior of the verse would be necessary to prevent it from accelerating into a breathless gallop, but too many such pauses would unbalance the relationship between hexameter and sentence. Ovid's practice represents what his ear told him suited the general narrative pace that he wished to maintain.

To illustrate the speed at which Ovid can, when he wishes, make his verses move, we may consider the description of Myrrha's sleepless night:

> noctis erat medium, curasque et corpora somnus
> soluerat; at uirgo Cinyreia peruigil igni
> carpitur indomito furiosaque uota retractat   370

> et modo desperat, modo uult temptare, pudetque,
> et cupit et quid agat non inuenit, utque securi
> saucia trabs ingens, ubi plaga nouissima restat,
> quo cadat in dubio est omnique a parte timetur:
> sic animus uario labefactus uulnere nutat   375
> huc leuis atque illuc momentaque sumit utroque.
> nec modus et requies nisi mors reperitur amoris;
> mors placet; erigitur laqueoque innectere fauces
> destinat et zona summo de poste reuincta
> 'care uale Cinyra causamque intellege mortis'   380
> dixit et aptabat pallenti uincula collo   (x. 368–81)

(It was midnight, and all around minds and bodies lay relaxed in sleep. Only Cinyras' daughter was wakeful, tormented by the flame she could not subdue, as she went over in her mind again and again her frenzied prayers. Now she despaired, now she was for the attempt; shame and lust alternated in her, but she could not tell what to do. As a great tree, mortally stricken by the axe and awaiting the final blow, inspires fear on all sides as men wait to see which way it will fall, so her purpose, undermined by conflicting assaults, wavered unsteadily now this way and now that and moved in alternate directions. The only end and rest for her passion that she could find was death, and death she decided upon. She rose, determined to hang herself, and tying her girdle to the lintel and murmuring 'Goodbye, dear Cinyras, and understand why I die', she was, deathly-pale, in the act of adjusting the noose about her neck.)

Having already in IX. 454–665 dealt very fully with the rather similar story of Byblis, Ovid had necessarily to vary his treatment of Myrrha – and no doubt embraced the opportunity of doing so.[117] Myrrha is given one, by Ovidian standards relatively brief, soliloquy (ll. 320–55), and once her state of mind has been established, the translation of her feelings into attempted action (to be thwarted by the Euripidean figure of the Nurse) is speedily accomplished in the passage under review. Ovid is here ultimately indebted, *via* Virgil (*Aen.*, IV. 522ff.), to the famous night-scene in Apollonius (III. 744–69), but his treatment is compressed and summary, representing or rather recalling (for ll. 320–55 are

still in the reader's mind) Myrrha's successive mental states by a rapid succession of verbs. It is redeemed from dryness by the effective simile,[118] which moves almost as fast as the surrounding narrative but yet manages momentarily to arrest attention by concentrating all Myrrha's vacillations into one powerful and original image.[119] Here, it may be remarked, enjambment is well up to the Virgilian norm, with six strong (ll. 368, 369, 372, 378, 379, 380) and three weaker (370, 371, 376) instances in fourteen verses. Its employment is, as already emphasized in other passages, strictly functional.

No writer on the *Metamorphoses* has failed to pay tribute to Ovid's powers of description. 'There is a plastic quality about his work. He catches the significant moment or attitude or gesture and imprints it on our mind.'[120] That there is usually more to this than embellishment for its own sake has been emphasized by recent investigation.[121] Not all Ovid's descriptions, of course, are symbolic, but very few if any are otiose. Wilkinson's pertinent comment can be illustrated best from one or two descriptions of characters in action; for a landscape, after all, is static and, given the care lavished on such technical problems in formal rhetorical instruction and the existence of good models, relatively easy to depict competently in its salient details.[122] Figures in violent motion present a less tractable assignment. Ovid's method is essentially to suggest rather than to describe,[123] as three examples will show. The first is Daphne, running from Apollo:

> plura locuturum timido Peneia cursu
> fugit cumque ipso uerba imperfecta reliquit,
> tum quoque uisa decens: nudabant corpora uenti
> obuiaque aduersas uibrabant flamina uestes
> et leuis impulsos retro dabat aura capillos,
> auctaque forma fuga est.   (I. 525–30)

(He would have continued, but the daughter of Peneus fled in alarm leaving the god alone with his unfinished speech, beautiful also in her flight. The wind bared her body, her clothes and hair streamed behind her in the breeze, and running enhanced her loveliness.)

Ovid describes the girl as she appeared in the eyes of her pursuer, with her graceful body made to seem even more desirable by her flight; his method is impressionistic, concentrating on the effects of the wind on her hair and clothes and using theme (*uenti . . . flamina . . . aura*) and variation with two golden lines of identical 'shape' (528–9 = abAB) to fix the moving picture for a short moment. If, as their construction seems to suggest they should be, these two verses are read as a combined whole, the reader receives a compound impression: the girl's clothes were partly pressed against her body (*obuia . . . aduersas*), partly waved and streamed in the breeze (*uibrabant . . . retro dabat*), as also did her hair. Ovid takes care to end his description in the middle of a verse so as to preserve narrative continuity, and to make it last for just so long a time as may allow the god to recover from his surprise (note the witty *fugit* ‖ *cumque ipso* eqs.) and take off in pursuit. The same focusing on similar details (of which Ovid was fond: see Bömer *ad loc.*) is seen in the depiction of Europa:

> pauet haec litusque ablata relictum
> respicit et dextra cornum tenet, altera dorso
> imposita est; tremulae sinuantur flamine uestes   (II. 873–5)

(In terror she looked back at the shore from which she was being carried off, holding a horn with her right hand and resting the other on the bull's back; her clothes fluttered and waved in the breeze.)

The pose is a classic one, often represented in ancient art and a favourite with poets.[124] Ovid has exercised great restraint in his depiction, singling out three features only, the turned-back head and body (implied by *respicit*), the position of the hands, and the robe fluttering in the breeze.[125] Moschus (*Europa*, 125–30) is much more elaborate and, though extremely pretty, not more effective.

The description of Europa just quoted occupies the concluding lines of Book II. When Book III opens the rape has been accomplished and the ravisher's identity disclosed. The technique is reminiscent of the cinema: a fade-out on a carefully posed shot, followed by a complete change of tempo and mood in the next scene. This 'cinematic' characteristic of Ovid's descriptive technique (which is not peculiar to him) has been acutely remarked by Mlle Viarre[126] and deserves study. A striking instance is that of Phaethon in the chariot of the Sun:

> tum uero Phaethon cunctis e partibus orbem
> adspicit accensum nec tantos sustinet aestus

feruentesque auras uelut e fornace profunda
ore trahit currusque suos candescere sentit   230
et neque iam cineres eiectatamque fauillam
ferre potest calidoque inuoluitur undique fumo
quoque eat aut ubi sit picea caligine tectus
nescit et arbitrio uolucrum raptatur equorum   (II. 227-34)

(And now Phaethon saw the world on fire everywhere, and the heat was more than he could bear. He breathed in air hot as the blast of a great furnace far below and felt the chariot growing white-hot. Now he was overcome by the shower of cinders and glowing ash and found himself enveloped in hot smoke. Shrouded in pitch-black darkness he could not see which way he was going or where he was, and he was swept along at the will of the swift horses.)

As with Daphne, the description is presented from the point of view of a protagonist – in this case *the* protagonist. The impression of overwhelming heat is conveyed by a succession of key words: *accensum, aestus, feruentes, fornace, candescere, cineres, fauillam, fumo, caligine* (a remarkable display of Ovidian *ubertas* and *copia uerborum*), with the emphasis gradually shifting from heat, *via* cinders and ash, to smoke and obscurity, as Phaethon finally loses, not only control of, but all touch with his situation. His increasing helplessness is conveyed by the verbs which provide the syntactical articulation of the picture: *adspicit, nec . . . sustinet, ore trahit, neque . . . ferre potest, inuoluitur, nescit* and finally *raptatur* (I do not think that the frequentative form is purely *metri gratia*). There is in fact very little actual description in the way of pictorial epithets and the like, and much is left to the reader's imagination to supply; but the stimulus is adroitly applied, as, for instance, in *profunda*, with its hint of the great gulfs below.[127] The effect is that of a series of shots of the flames and smoke alternating with close-ups of Phaethon's face as it registers horror, bewilderment and despair. The syntactical structure enforces rapidity of reading: even editors who habitually over-punctuate are sparing with commas in this passage, but it seems to me that Ovid's Latin here requires no punctuation at all, and I have so printed it.

A special class of descriptive problem is posed by the metamorphoses themselves. As with the transitions, variety was of

the essence, especially in the numerous cases of persons who were changed into birds. Clearly it gave Ovid pleasure to rise to this technical challenge, and he delighted to lavish on these descriptions all that cleverness which has so much annoyed some of his critics.[128] On occasions they constitute what might be called set-pieces of *enargeia*. Are they anything more? In this sort of writing Ovid has been praised by Addison and blamed by Adam Smith;[129] and in this remarkable disagreement I find myself siding with the great economist's apparently prosaic objection that these descriptions 'are so very much out of the common course of nature as to shock us by their incredibility'. However far-fetched the premisses of Ovid's *ethopoeia*, he never parts company completely with the fundamental humanity of his characters: into whatever excesses of speech and behaviour their passions may carry them, the reader is never quite out of touch with the real world, and the Callimachean rule of poetical credibility, 'so to lie as to persuade one's hearer',[130] is not broken. With what might be termed the *ethopoeia* of material phenomena Ovid is less successful. For him, this was essentially an extension of the rhetorical exercise 'Imagine the words of so-and-so in such-and-such a situation' (τίνας ἂν εἴποι λόγους ὁ δεῖνα;). He handles such themes like the great rhetorical artificer that he was, and it is impossible not to admire the versatility with which he varies the 'basic' transformations into birds, trees, rocks, etc.[131] An especially elaborate example is the metamorphosis of Cyane into a spring:

at Cyane raptamque deam contemptaque fontis   425
iura sui maerens inconsolabile uulnus
mente gerit tacita lacrimisque absumitur omnis
et quarum fuerat magnum modo numen, in illas
extenuatur aquas: molliri membra uideres,
ossa pati flexus, ungues posuisse rigorem,   430
primaque de tota tenuissima quaeque liquescunt,
caerulei crines digitique et crura pedesque
(nam breuis in gelidas membris exilibus undas
transitus est), post haec umeri tergusque latusque
pectoraque in tenues abeunt euanida riuos,   435
denique pro uiuo uitiatas sanguine uenas
lympha subit, restatque nihil quod prendere possis   (v. 425-37)

(But Cyane, as she mourned the rape of the goddess and the insult to the rights of her spring, cherishing deep in her heart a wound that could not be assuaged, dissolved away in tears and was rarefied into the very waters whose great godhead she had lately been. One could have seen her limbs softening, her bones becoming limp, her nails losing their hardness. First it was the thinnest parts of her that liquified, her blue-green hair, her fingers, toes, feet and legs (for the thinner members are easily changed into cool water); next her shoulders and back, flanks and breast melted away into liquid streams. Finally into her softened veins instead of living blood clear water flowed, and there was nothing left of her that one could grasp.)

From the purely technical aspect this is first-rate writing, able to give much intellectual pleasure to a sophisticated reader.[132] It obeys the principles of *enargeia*. The reader is invited to witness the transformation (429 *uideres*) and to test it for himself when it is complete (437 *quod prendere possis*). The introductory passage is heavily enjambed and moves fast; the start of the description proper is signalled by the molossus *molliri* (429), with alliterative reinforcement. First come theme and variation to convey the notion of softening; then the graduated list of parts of the body in order of their susceptibility and disappearance; finally the inner structures and the blood within. The articulation of the description is clear, with a hint of pedantry that is made explicit in the sly parenthesis[133] in which the order of events is explained. The whole is rounded off by antithetical responsion with chiasmus: 428–9 *magnum modo numen . . . aquas* ∼ 437 *lympha . . . nihil*. All very efficient; but we cannot suspend our disbelief so as to share emotionally in Cyane's experience in the sense that we can share the experiences of Byblis or Phaethon. The reader cannot feel sympathy with her. In the metamorphoses the method of leaving things to the reader's imagination, so effective in descriptions of the real world and of familiar phenomena, does not come off: for the imagination has nothing to work upon, nothing that it recognizes and can use as a starting-point.

We may perhaps discern in the arch semi-pedantry of this particular description the hint of a realization of this fact on the poet's part, an implicit acknowledgment that the reader's pleasure must here be, as has been said, intellectual rather than emotional. Perhaps this should be seen as in some sense a confession of failure. By that I mean that the pleasure felt by the reader of a poetical description, if it is to amount to anything at all, must be essentially emotional and sympathetic; and that by using the suggestive and impressionistic methods appropriate to real descriptions in the composition of unreal or fantastic scenes such as few, if any, sane readers could envisage, Ovid can be seen failing to relate his stylistic means successfully to his ends.[134] The distinction that I have in mind between what it is and is not reasonable to expect from a reader of poetry may emerge more clearly if we consider Ovid's great allegorical set-piece descriptions of Hunger, the Cave of Sleep, etc.;[135] there is grotesque detail and to spare in these, but the best of them succeed because what is enlarged or diminished or distorted remains fundamentally recognizable and part of human experience. It is the difference, perhaps, between Dürer and Hieronymus Bosch. If there is anything in these criticisms of Ovid's transformation-scenes, it should not be allowed to weigh heavily when set against the stylistic excellences that I have tried to illustrate and, partially, to account for. In the *Metamorphoses* descriptions of the act of metamorphosis could hardly be lacking, but unlike some recent interpreters of the poem, I do not believe that for Ovid this element had more than a formal importance. It posed a technical problem which he solved adroitly, on occasions brilliantly; but the scenes of metamorphosis are not what linger in the reader's mind. It was in the depiction of *human* actions and emotions – and what could be more human than the gods of the *Metamorphoses?* – that Ovid displayed the full range of his poetic powers.

Notes

1 J. W. Mackail, *The Aeneid edited with Introduction and Commentary* (1930), p. lxxvii. Mackail's brief but trenchant discussion of Virgil's hexameter fails to receive due acknowledgment from F. J. Worstbrock, *Elemente einer Poetik der Aeneis* (1963), who does not even cite its title correctly.
2 P. Green, *Essays in Antiquity* (1960), 130.
3 Cf. *ibid.*, 129.
4 T. R. Glover, *Greek Byways* (1932), 191.
5 L. P. Wilkinson, *Ovid Recalled* (1955), 150.
6 Now conveniently accessible, together with many other such verdicts.

in the useful and entertaining compilation of W. Stroh, *Ovid im Urteil der Nachwelt. Eine Testimoniesammlung* (1969).

7 Cf. Wilkinson's comparison of Virg. *G.*, IV. 463-9 with *Met.*, x. 11-16 and his pertinent comment: 'Virgil is concerned to create atmosphere by his rhythm, Ovid to get on with the story' (*Golden Latin Artistry* [1963], 131-2).

8 M. von Albrecht, 'Zum Metamorphosenproem Ovids', *Rheinisches Museum*, 104 (1961), 269-78.

9 H. Herter, 'Ovids Kunstprinzip in den Metamorphosen', *American Journal of Philology*, 69 (1948), 129-48 (= *Ovid*, ed. M. von Albrecht and E. Zinn [1968], 340-61). Cf. B. Otis, *Ovid as an Epic Poet*, 2nd ed. (1970), 332-4.

10 *P. Ovidius Naso Metamorphosen*, ed. M. Haupt, 10. *Auflage*, ed. M. von Albrecht, i (1966), p. 486.

11 D. Little, 'Richard Heinz: Ovids elegische Erzählung', in E. Zinn (ed.), *Ovids Ars Amatoria und Remedia Amoris. Untersuchungen zum Aufbau* (*Der altspr. Unterricht*, Reihe XIII, Beiheft 2, 1970), 72. Little may have somewhat underrated the fundamental unity of the *Metamorphoses*, but he is right to insist (69 n. 6) that the style of the poem is dictated by a 'difference of intent'.

12 R. G. G. Coleman, 'Structure and intention in the *Metamorphoses*', *Classical Quarterly*, N.S., 21 (1971), 461-77.

13 E. J. Bernbeck, *Beobachtungen zur Darstellungsart in Ovids Metamorphosen* (1967), 130: 'spielerische Abwandlung des Epos'. Bernbeck stresses (130-1) that the poem is a unity.

14 Otis, *op. cit.*, 1st ed. (1966), 334, 345; but see the new concluding ch. of 2nd ed. (1970), interpreting the poem as a blend of 'anti-epic' and 'un-epic', of 'iconoclasm and human sympathy' (374).

15 C. P. Segal, *Landscape in Ovid's Metamorphoses. A study in the transformations of a literary symbol* (*Hermes Einzelschriften*, 23 [1969]), 93: 'one may wonder if it is not rather an epic of rape. Its very subject, metamorphosis, implies violence.' This of course raises the question whether or in what sense metamorphosis *is* the subject of the poem; cf. my review of S. Viarre, *L'image et la pensée dans les 'Métamorphoses' d'Ovide* (1964), *Classical Review*, N.S., 17 (1967), 51-2, and see below, *sub fin.*

16 *C.R.* N.S., 18 (1968), 58.

17 Little, *op. cit.*, 71.

18 Wilkinson, *op. cit.* (n. 7), 202.

19 Quint., *Inst. Or.*, IV. 1. 77; Wilkinson, 'The world of the Metamorphoses', in *Ovidiana* (1958), 231-44; J. M. Frécaut, 'Les transitions dans les Métamorphoses d'Ovide', *R.E.L.*, 47 (1968), 247-63.

20 Cf. G. E. Duckworth, *Vergil and Classical Hexameter Poetry* (1969), 73, on the 'Greekness' of Ovid's metre compared with Virgil's.

21 Lucan's challenge was to this extent on Virgil's own ground, that the *Bellum Civile* best makes sense if read as in some measure an answer to the *Aeneid*, an 'anti-*Aeneid*' in fact.

22 A. R. Zingerle, *Ovidus und sein Verhältniss zu den Vorgängern und gleich zeitigen römischen Dichtern* (1869-71), *passim*.

23 See K. Quinn, *Virgil's Aeneid. A Critical Description* (1968), 375-84.

24 Cf. Worstbrock, *op. cit.*, 148: 'Die Syntax der Poesie ist eine metrische Syntax.' The remark can of course be extended to cover diction.

25 See Quinn, *op. cit.*, 384-91; Wilkinson, 'The language of Virgil and Horace', *Classical Quarterly*, N.S., 9 (1959), 181-92.

26 See Worstbrock, *op. cit.*, ch. III, 'Vers und Syntax', 122-67.

27 W. A. Camps, *An Introduction to Virgil's Aeneid* (1969), 63; cf. Quinn, *op. cit.*, 385.

28 J. Jackson (1908).

29 F. Bömer, 'Ovid und die Sprache Vergils', *Gymn.*, 66 (1959), 268-88 (= *Ovid*, 173-202).

30 'So schnell sind innerhalb einer Generation die Worte der hohen Dichtersprache abgenutzt, abgesunken' (*op. cit.*, 277 = 185).

31 *Op. cit.*, 279 = 188-9.

32 G. B. Pighi, 'La poesia delle "Metamorfosi"', *Atti del convegno internaz. Ovidiano*, i (1959), 16: 'tutta la dizione epica latina, dopo l'inimitabile Virgilio e l'imitabile Ovidio, è più ovidiana che virgiliana.' Cf. E. V. Marmorale, *Persio*, 2nd ed. (1956), 199.

33 Worstbrock, *op. cit.*, 131, gives three verses as the average in Virgil's narrative, three to four verses elsewhere. My own rather crude count of *Met.*, III (using the text of G. M. Edwards and simply counting the lines between the editor's full stops) gives an average of about 3.5 verses for the Ovidian period.

34 *Op. cit.*, 147, 150.

35 *Ibid.*, 147-8.

36 *Ibid.*, 162.

37 This is not invariably the case, as some of the examples discussed below demonstrate. In Book I the golden lines at ll. 100, 112 are both obviously functional, but by Virgilian standards this is overdoing it. Cf. I. 528, 529, discussed in the text; also 147 (not at the end of its period), 165, 265, 484, etc.

38 A good summary characterization at Bernbeck, *op. cit.*, 78.

39 A. Cordier, *Études sur le vocabulaire épique dans l' 'Énéide'* (1939).

40 Cf. Wilkinson, *op. cit.* (n. 25), 185-6.

41 Quint, *Inst. Or.*, VIII. 3. 24.

42 Such as, for instance, *extemplo*, used by Ovid ten times, only in *Met.*, and thus marginally more strictly than by Virgil, who uses the word once in the *Georgics* as well as fourteen times in the *Aeneid* (cf. R. G. Austin on *Aen.*, I. 92). Contrast Livy, with 370+ instances.

43 See G. D'Anna, 'La tragedia latina arcaica nelle "Metamorfosi"', *Atti*, ii. 220-6; Otis, *op. cit.*, 400-1.

44 See, e.g., H. Jacobson, *Phoenix*, 22 (1968), 299-303; D. G. White, *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 74 (1970), 187-91 (Ennius); *Ovid Metamorphoses Book VIII*, ed. A. S. Hollis (1970), p. xxiv (Accius).

45 F. H. Sandbach, *Classical Review*, liv (1940), 198.

46 Where no figure is given in these lists, the word occurs once only.

47 * = occurs in Ovidian corpus outside *Met.*

48 *paupertas* is not used by Virgil, three times (one in *Met.*) by Ovid.

89 Linse, *op. cit.*, 28–9; Lucretius is much less restrained (Bailey, *op. cit.*, 135, J. Perrot, *R.E.L.*, 33 [1955], 333–43).

90 Dat. *conatibus, cruciatibus, narratibus, saltatibus, uenatibus, uictibus* (+ *uictu*); abl. *adflatibus* (+ *adflatu* 3), *hortatibus* (2), *iactatibus, latratibus* (4) (+ *latratu* 3, *latratus* acc.), *suspiratibus, uenatibus* (2) (+ *uenatu* 2), *ululatibus* (5) (+ *ululatu*; and note XI. 17 *Bacchei ululatus*).

91 More material in Linse, *op. cit.*; I hope that the examples quoted here may suffice to make the point.

92 Cf. P. Boyancé, *Lucrèce et l'épicurisme* (1963), 213.

93 Cf. P. Hau, *De casuum usu Ovidiano* (diss. Münster, 1884). His usage is in general bolder in *Met.* than in his other works (Hau, 141–2). Some idea of the respective freedom of the Latin poets can be obtained from comparing entries in the index of the great museum of syntactical specimens, A. J. Bell, *The Latin dual and poetic diction* (1923).

94 Margaret W. Herr, *The additional short syllables in Ovid* (1937), 30: 'the nominative and accusative cases of neuter plural nouns are not the chief source of Ovid's . . . additional short syllables.' However, consideration of a verse such as 1. 181 *talibus inde modis ora indignantia soluit* shows that a purely mechanical approach does not reveal anything like the whole truth.

95 H. A. J. Munro on Lucret., III. 843; Postgate, *Classical Review*, 30 (1916), 145; cf. A. E. Housman, *Journal of Philology*, 18 (1890), 7.

96 Two especially distinguished by Postgate, *op. cit.*, 145–6, belong not to Ovid but to the unknown poet of the *Somnium* (*Am.*, III. 5).

97 *Bellum Civile*, II. 350–80; cf. Heitland's remarks in the edition of C. E. Haskins (1887), p. lxxii; J. Marouzeau, *Traité de stylistique latine* (1946), 259–60.

98 Cf. Postgate, *Proc. Brit. Acad.*, 3 (1908), 167.

99 In such cases as 1. 458 *qui dare certa ferae, dare uulnera possumus hosti* (copiously illustrated by Housman in his note on Manil., 1. 269–70) the anaphora dictates a comma after *ferae*, but a second after *possumus* would simply trip the reader up. With practice the ear is conditioned by the movement of the verse to accept these distributions.

100 The definition adopted by J. B. Hofmann–A. Szantyr, *Lateinische Syntax und Stilistik* (1965), 834. For further discussion see H. M. Eller, *Studies in ἀπὸ κοινοῦ in Ovid* (1938), 1–7. Cf. Kenney, *Classical Quarterly*, N.S., 8 (1958), 55; and add F. Leo, *Ausgew. Kl. Schriften*, i (1960), 77ff.

101 The following further instances have been casually culled from a single book: II. 231 *cineres eiectatamque fauillam*, 406 *fontes et non audentia labi / flumina*, 438 *odio nemus est et conscia silua*, 490 *ante domum quondamque suis errauit in agris* (this last noticed by Bömer *ad loc.*), etc.

102 F. Bömer, *Gymn.*, 74 (1967), 223–6; cf. his notes *ad loc.* and at 1. 466, and to the literature cited by him add Bell, *op. cit.*, 317ff. Both adjj. would be felt as predicative in sense.

103 E.g. Lucret., III. 972–3 *anteacta uetustas / temporis aeterni*, exactly equivalent in sense to 1. 558 *infinita aetas anteacti temporis omnis*.

104 For further discussion of certain Ovidian figures see my review of

Bömer's commentary on Books I–III, *Classical Review*, N.S., 22 (1972), 38–42.

105 *Ovid's Metamorphoses: the Arthur Golding translation (1567)*, ed. J. F. Nims (1965), p. xxii. The whole of Nims's introduction is excellent value.

106 See J. Henry, *Aeneidea*, i (1873), pp. 206–7, 745–51. For its use by Lucretius see my ed. of Book III (1971), p. 25. It is, as Henry remarked, 'almost inseparable from poetry'.

107 Bömer's suggestion that *mentis capacius altae* stands by enallage for *mentis capax altioris* seems to be mistaken. *mens alta* is an attribute of divinity, of which man was enabled, as the beasts were not, to receive a share (cf. A. G. Lee *ad loc.*).

108 'A forced and almost pointless word-play' is the comment of A. S. Hollis *ad loc.* I am not so sure. Ovid can scarcely have had in mind the old idea that a mother was not related by blood to her offspring (cf. Kenney on Lucret., III. 743). The shedding of blood called for a bloody expiation, and in this case the victim was related to both avenger and avenged: in other words *sanguine* in l. 476 is felt in the context (after *'con*sanguineas'; cf. Kenney on Lucret., III. 261) as = not merely 'blood' but 'kindred blood'. I do not know exactly what Hollis means by calling the oxymoron *impietate pia est* 'not very pleasing'. What are the criteria which an oxymoron must satisfy in order to please?

109 An attractive discussion of XIII. 750–897 (Acis, Galatea and Polyphemus) by D. West, *Individual Voices* (inaugural lecture, University of Newcastle, 1970), 8–14.

110 The bulls appear (104 *ecce*) as if released from the *caueae*; in Apollonius (III. 1288ff.) Jason has to track them down to their murky lair, and Aeetes is not formally enthroned as in Ovid but simply stands by the river (see the ed. of H. Fränkel *ad loc.* for the textual variants).

111 On Ovid's use of parenthesis see M. von Albrecht, *Die Parenthese in Ovids Metamorphosen und ihre dichterische Funktion* (1963), reviewed by me in *Gnomon*, 36 (1964), 374–7. His discussion shows that Ovid employs parenthesis for more than one effect, but one characteristic is constant: it is always so incorporated, beginning and ending with the verses themselves or their main caesuras and unambiguously signposted (cf. above, n. 70), as to interrupt the flow as little as possible. The text printed above is as punctuated by the old editors and some of the moderns; the punctuation of, e.g., Magnus and Ehwald, which begins the parenthesis at *nec*, contravenes the ambiguity principle, which requires that a parenthesis should not be deemed to begin before it has to.

112 In contrast to Apollonius' Jason, who at least braces himself for the encounter and holds a shield in front of himself (III. 1293–6), and actually has to exert himself when it comes to the yoking (1306–8). Did Emily Dickinson have Ovid in mind when she wrote 'Jason – sham – too'? (Reference due to Mr R. G. Mayer.)

113 Worstbrock, *op. cit.*, 156.

114 *Ibid.*, 157.

115 Worstbrock, 159–62.

116 To maintain comparability I have interpreted 'enjambment' in a fairly strict grammatical sense, applied to lines whose syntax is completed by what follows. Ovid makes much use of what might be called 'quasi-' or 'semi-enjambment': that is, a structure which, while it does not disallow, certainly discourages a pause at the end of the line in reading. So, for instance, in (e = strict, q = quasi-enjambment):

o cui debere salutem	(e)
confiteor, coniunx, quamquam mihi cuncta dedisti	(q)
excussit*que* fidem meritorum summa tuorum ...	(VII. 164–6);

or

constitit adueniens citra limenque foresque	(q)
et tantum caelo tegitur refugitque uiriles	(e)
contactus statuitque aras e caespite binas,	(q)
dexteriore Hecates, at laeua parte Iuuentae	(VII. 238–41).

The close connexion is very often achieved by *et* or *-que*; but other devices are used, as in the second quotation, where the unemphatic *binas* does not invite the reader to pause (as the order *binas . . . aras* would have done) and is at once picked up by *dexteriore*, which in turn looks forward to its complement in *laeua*. Examples could be multiplied; the upshot is that the overall speed of the verse is greater than the figures quoted for enjambment proper would lead one to suppose.

117 The Byblis episode contains little narrative and is mostly taken up with the soliloquies (in which her letter must be included) in which the heroine's warring states of mind are analysed. Cf. H. Tränkle, 'Elegisches in Ovids Metamorphosen', *Hermes*, 91 (1963), 459–76, stressing the similarities with the *Heroides* (but see also Otis, *op. cit.*, 221–2). With the passage quoted above compare IX. 523–8.

118 A treatment of Ovid's similes in *Met.* is outside the scope of this chapter: see J. A. Washietl, *De similitudinibus imaginibusque Ovidianis* (1883); T. F. Brunner, *Classical Journal*, 61 (1966), 354–63; E. G. Wilkins, *Classical Weekly*, 25 (1932), 73–8, 81–6; S. G. Owen, *Classical Review*, 45 (1931), 97–106.

119 The idea goes back to Homer: Sarpedon goes down like a felled tree (*Il.*, XVI. 482–4). In spite of the usual descriptive elaboration of the tree the application of the image is very simple. Virgil enlarges its scope and grandeur enormously when he compares the fall of Troy to that of a great tree (*Aen.*, II. 626–31; cf. R. G. Austin *ad loc.*). Ovid applies it differently again, to the psychology of the situation: Myrrha is not compared to the tree; it is the painful moments, that seem to last for hours, while the tree totters, that resemble her plight, always on the verge of making up her mind but not quite able to do so. But just as the tree must fall once it is cut through (cf. the wound image of l. 375), so must she decide.

120 Wilkinson, *op. cit.* (n. 5), 172. Cf. H. Stephanus, in the Preface to his *Poetae Graeci Principes* (1566): 'Poetis autem penicillum quum tribuo,

cum ad alios multos multorum poetarum locos, tum ad complures Ovidianarum metamorphose*ω*n locos respicio.' See also the literature cited by Stroh, *op. cit.*, 159.

121 Segal, *op. cit.*

122 A good example is Virgil's description of the Trojan landfall in Africa (*Aen.*, I. 159–69), which, unlike its Homeric prototypes (on which see G. Williams, *Tradition and Originality in Roman Poetry* [1968], 637–44), is clearly organized by the poet so as to lead the mind's eye of the reader from point to point in a certain order. It is also, however, organized so as to bring out the symbolism of the landscape (cf. V. Pöschl, *Die Dichtkunst Virgils* [1950], 231–5), which prefigures both the repose and the subsequent danger that the Trojans will find in Africa – and in the cave of the nymphs (l. 168) are we not intended to sense that other, more fateful cave?

123 'Un trait seul, un grand trait, abandonnez le reste à mon imagination; voilà le vrai goût, voilà le grand goût. Ovide l'a quelquefois' (Diderot, quoted by Stroh, *op. cit.*, 85).

124 See Haupt–von Albrecht *ad loc.* An especially charming instance is a Coptic bronze of the 5th–6th century A.D. (in private possession), in which the pose and the girl's robe have been reduced to a design of hieratic simplicity (D. G. Mitten and S. F. Doeringer, *Master bronzes from the classical world*, no. 316).

125 So too at *Fast.*, v. 607–9, but there the effect is more crisp than decorative.

126 Viarre, *op. cit.*, 99–100.

127 The comparison itself, as Bömer observes *ad loc.*, is conventional; it is the choice of epithet that lifts it out of the ruck.

128 'Sometimes Ovid is indeed too clever. He was told so in his own time, and his ghost has been hearing it ever since' (Nims, *op. cit.*, xxvii).

129 *Spectator*, no. 417 (28 June 1712); *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, ed. M. Lothian (1963), 61–2 (both passages quoted by Stroh, *op. cit.*, 71, 86).

130 *Hymns*, I. 65 Ψευδοίμην ἀίοντος ἅ κεν πεπίθοιεν ἀκουήν.

131 See G. Lafaye, *Les Métamorphoses d'Ovide et leurs modèles grecs* (1904), ed. M. von Albrecht (1971), 245–9; W. Quirin, *Die Kunst Ovids in der Darstellung des Verwandlungsaktes* (diss., Giessen 1930), esp. 118–19 on Ovidian *variatio*.

132 It is the first transformation into water that we encounter in *Met.*, and by far the most elaborate: cf. Quirin, *op. cit.*, 106–8.

133 Editors do not usually print *nam breuis . . . transitus est* as such, but this is obviously what Ovid intended: so, rightly, von Albrecht, *op. cit.* (n. 111), 52.

134 The poem has a rich iconographical tradition, but artists have on the whole preferred not to illustrate the actual moment of metamorphosis: cf. *Classical Review*, N.S., 17 (1967), 52.

135 Inuidia: II. 760–82; Fames: VIII. 788–808; Somnus: XI. 592–623; Fama: XII. 39–63.

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