—Lucius, what book is that she tosseth so?
—Grandsire, 'tis Ovid's *Metamorphoses*;
My mother gave it me.

(*Titus Andronicus*, IV. i. 41–3)

Everything existed of old, everything happens again,
And only the moment of recognition is sweet.

(Osip Mandelstam, 'Tristia')

I

Shakespeare and the Renaissance Ovid

Ovidius, surnamed *Naso*, Borne in *Sulmo*, brought up in Rome, and dylygentlye instructed in latyne letters from his tender age, he gave most dylygente studye to the makynge of verses, from the whiche he was withdrawen by his father, and put to learne Rhetorike, wherein a while he much profyted and was in the numbre of the best oratours of that tyme, and was advaunced to sundrye authorities, and made a Senatour. Not withstandynge he chiefely dedicated himselfe to poetrie, wherein by nature he was excellent in facilitie and abundance of sentences. He was in good favour with the emperour Augustus, of whom at the laste he was exiled into Pontus, where he spente the reste of his lyfe in a towne called *Tomos*, among people most barbarous, who not withstandynge lamented his death, for his courtesie and gentle maners. The cause of his exile is uncertaine, savynge some suppose it was for abusynge Julia, daughter of the emperour Augustus, although the pretence of the emperour was for the makynge of the booke of the crafte of love, wherby yonge myndes myght be styred to wantonnes. He lyved at the tyme when Christ our saviour was conversaunt with us here on earth.[1]

I

We need stories to help us make sense of the world. Things change. Men and women are driven, powerfully if not exclusively, by sexual desire (men in more aggressive ways). Myth, metamorphosis, sexuality: doubtless Shakespeare knew something about them by instinct; as a young man who got an older woman pregnant and then

[1] Thomas Cooper, *Thesaurus Linguae Romanae et Britannicae . . . Accessit dictionarium historicum et poēticum propria vocabula* (London, 1565), sig. N2ᵛ–N3ʳ. Cooper is correct that Ovid held some minor administrative positions in his early adult life, but in fact the poet withdrew from politics shortly before he would have been due to attain senatorial rank. Technically, Ovid was relegated rather than exiled: this meant that he retained his property and his civic rights but he was banished from Rome itself—but banishment to Tomis on the Black Sea, at the distant edge of the Empire, was an unusually severe form of relegation.

married her, he must have known a good deal about one of them from experience; but much of his most profound and characteristic thinking about them was derived from his reading of Ovid.

The enchantment which the law student from Sulmona exercised over the grammar-school boy from Stratford-upon-Avon was a matter of style as well as substance. Through the mouth of Holofernes the schoolmaster, the dramatist wittily apostrophized his own favourite classical poet: 'for the elegancy, facility, and golden cadence of poesy . . . Ovidius Naso was the man: and why indeed "Naso" but for smelling out the odoriferous flowers of fancy, the jerks of invention?'[2] 'Naso' is, of course, from the Latin for 'nose'; the poet's very name is made to embody the gift for verbal play which Shakespeare inherited from him and which is exhibited to supreme effect in the drama in which Holofernes appears, *Love's Labour's Lost*. Ovid was the epitome of poetic stylishness: what better model for the ambitious young Elizabethan writer? The title-page of *Venus and Adonis*, the first work which Shakespeare saw into print, was adorned with an epigraph from the *Amores*, a proclamation of the poem's affiliation: 'Vilia miretur vulgus; mihi flavus Apollo | Pocula Castalia plena ministret aqua'—'Let what is cheap excite the marvel of the crowd; for me may golden Apollo minister full cups from the Castalian fount' (*Amores*, I. xv. 35–6). Ovid is claimed as Shakespeare's route to the Castalian spring on the side of Parnassus, which is to say as his source of inspiration and his guarantor of high cultural status, his way of rising above the 'vulgus'. The poem from which the epigraph is quoted ends with the claim that poetry is a way of cheating death— the claim which is also that of Shakespeare's Sonnets and which is borne out every time Shakespeare reanimates Ovid and every time we reanimate either of them in the act of reading.

Ovid's inspiriting of Shakespeare seems to have been recognized ever since 1598, when Francis Meres undertook an exercise in the art of simile entitled 'A Comparative Discourse of our English Poets with the Greeke, Latine, and Italian Poets'. Not all of Meres's comparisons have been borne out by literary history—William Warner is no longer thought of as 'our English Homer'—but one of them is justly famous: 'As the soule of Euphorbus was thought to live in Pythagoras: so the sweete wittie soule of Ovid lives in mellifluous and hony-tongued Shakespeare, witness his *Venus and Adonis*, his *Lucrece*, his sugred

[2] *Love's Labour's Lost*, IV. ii. 122–5.

Sonnets among his private friends, &c.' Meres went on to assert that 'As Plautus and Seneca are accounted the best for Comedy and Tragedy among the Latines: so Shakespeare among the English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage'.[3] But this was not to say that Ovid's influence was restricted to Shakespeare's non-dramatic works, for the comparison with Plautus and Seneca is simply made in terms of shared excellence, whereas that with Ovid is phrased in such a way as to imply both stylistic and spiritual resemblance. The soul that has been metamorphosed into Shakespeare is that of Ovid, the poet of metamorphosis. Pythagorean metempsychosis, as expounded in the fifteenth book of the *Metamorphoses*, becomes a figure for the translation of one poet into another.[4]

In support of Meres, one could list many points of similarity: a method of composition which involves shaping inherited stories in such a way that they are wrought completely anew; a refusal to submit to the decorums of genre, a delight in the juxtaposition of contrasting tones—the tragic and the grotesque, the comic and the pathetic, the cynical and the magnanimous; an interest above all else in human psychology, particularly the psychology of desire in its many varieties; an exploration of the transformations wrought by extremes of emotion; a delight in rhetorical ingenuity, verbal fertility, linguistic play; variety and flexibility as fundamental habits of mind and forms of expression. The Ovidian and the Shakespearian self is always in motion, always in pursuit or flight. And, bewilderingly, one can never be sure whether one is running towards what one desires or running away from it: no myth is more emblematic of the worlds of the two writers than that of Actaeon, the hunter who in punishment for his gaze upon the naked Diana becomes the hunted. When you think you've seen what you most desire, it destroys you.[5]

Recent criticism has been much concerned with 'the flexibility of the self in Renaissance literature'.[6] Such criticism has not always recognized that the flexible self has a prime classical exemplar in

[3] Meres, *Palladis Tamia*, in *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, ed. G. Gregory Smith, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1904), ii. 317–18.

[4] Dryden uses the figure in this way in the Preface to his *Fables*: 'Spenser more than once insinuates that the soul of Chaucer was transfused into his body'—*Of Dramatic Poesy and other Critical Essays*, ed. George Watson, 2 vols. (London, 1962), ii. 270.

[5] For the centrality of the Actaeon myth to the poetics of desire in the Renaissance from Petrarch onwards, see Nancy Vickers, 'Diana Described: Scattered Woman and Scattered Rhyme', *Critical Inquiry*, viii (1981–2), 265–79.

[6] The quotation is of the title of Thomas M. Greene's seminal essay, in *The Disciplines of Criticism: Essays in Literary Theory, Interpretation, and History*, ed. Peter Demetz,

Ovid.[7] There could be no better motto for the Renaissance self-fashioner than some lines in the *Ars Amatoria*, which Shakespeare's fellow-dramatist Thomas Heywood translated as follows:

> He that is apt will in himself devise
> Innumerable shapes of fit disguise,
> To shift and change like *Proteus*, whom we see,
> A Lyon first, a Boar, and then a Tree.[8]

The *Ars* is about how you fashion yourself as a lover; it recognizes that the well-fashioned lover is dextrous in the assumption of poses (you may even have to fake orgasm) and the handling of masks (Ovid also wrote a verse treatise on facial cosmetics). It also recognizes that the fashioning of the self is limited by the constraints of social convention and ultimately of state power; ironically for Ovid himself, this point was proved drastically when Augustus exiled him from Rome, partly because the poem appeared to be advocating sexual licence in general and female adultery in particular at a time when the Emperor was pursuing a programme of domestic moral reform. The specific impulse for the banishment of the poet in AD 8, a decade after the writing of the *Ars*, seems to have been connected with the adultery of the Emperor's granddaughter, Julia, who was also exiled that year. Nine years earlier, Augustus' daughter, Julia's mother, also called Julia, had committed the same offence—Renaissance commentators confused the two Julias: hence Thomas Cooper's phrase, 'for abusynge Julia, daughter of the emperour Augustus', in the biography of Ovid cited at the beginning of this chapter. The confusion between the two Julias, and the identification of them with the 'Corinna' of Ovid's *Amores*, goes back at least as far as Sidonius Apollinaris in the fifth century.[9]

What the *Ars* argues in its mock-didactics, the *Amores* exemplify in their nimble practice; the flexible self in these love elegies is the poet himself, working through a repertoire of attitudes and voices, writing as both subject and object, both poet and lover, in anticipation of the manner of Elizabethan love-poets like Sidney and Shakespeare in their sonnet sequences. Though theirs is a poetry of frustration and his of

Thomas Greene, and Lowry Nelson, Jr. (New Haven, Conn., 1968), 241–64. The definitive treatment of the subject is Stephen Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago, 1980).

[7] A notable exception is Richard A. Lanham, in his splendid study *The Motives of Eloquence: Literary Rhetoric in the Renaissance* (New Haven, Conn., 1976).

[8] *Ovid De Arte Amandi, And the Remedy of Love Englished*, trans. Heywood, quoted from edn. of 1682, p. 32 (from bk. 1, ll. 759–62).

[9] See Ronald Syme, *History in Ovid* (Oxford, 1978), 215.

consummation, Petrarch could not have created Laura or Sidney Stella without the example of Ovid's Corinna.[10] But Ovid is not only a self-dramatizer: in the *Heroides* and the *Metamorphoses*, he dramatizes others, most notably victims of desire, many of them women. The females who speak the *Heroides* and a variety of related figures in the *Metamorphoses*, for instance Myrrha and Medea, are among the models for the soliloquizing that is the distinctive activity of Shakespeare's most admired characters. The Ovidian dramatic monologue and the Shakespearian soliloquy create the illusion that a fictional being has an interior life. This illusion is achieved principally by the arts of language. The character's 'self' is both created and transformed by the very process of verbal articulation; her or his 'being' is invented rhetorically. In Shakespeare, of course, the verbal rhetoric inherited from Ovid and other classical exemplars is accompanied by a new visual rhetoric of stage gestures and actions.

To think of Shakespeare as an Elizabethan Ovid is to see him as a typical, if exceptionally gifted, product of his age. Renaissance thinkers believed passionately that the present could learn from the past; the belief was the starting-point of education and a formative influence upon writing in the period. It was the essence of what we now call Renaissance humanism. The great Spanish humanist Juan Luis Vives acknowledged that 'It is true there are those men who persuade themselves that a knowledge of antiquity is useless, because the method of living all over the world is changed, as for example in the erection of elegant dwellings, the manner of waging war, of governing people and states'. But he went on to claim that such an opinion was 'opposed to the judgement of wise men' and therefore against reason. 'To be sure,' he wrote,

no one can deny that everything has changed, and continues to change, every day, because these changes spring from our volition and industry. But similar changes do not ever take place in the essential nature of human beings, that is in the foundations of the affections of the human mind, and the results which they produce on actions and volitions. This fact has far more significance than the raising of such questions as to how the ancients built their houses or how they clothed themselves. For what greater practical wisdom is there than to know how and what the human passions are: how they are roused, how quelled?[11]

[10] For Sidney's Ovid, via Petrarch, see Paul Allen Miller, 'Sidney, Petrarch, and Ovid, or Imitation as Subversion', *ELH* lviii (1991), 499–522.

[11] *Vives on Education: A Translation of the De tradendis disciplinis of Juan Luis Vives*, trans. Foster Watson (Cambridge, 1913), 232.

The passage occurs in Vives' treatise of 1531, *De tradendis disciplinis*, 'on the transmission of knowledge'. There is no more vital humanist activity than the translation of the classics with the aim of transmitting knowledge, making the wisdom of the past available in the vernacular. Shakespeare was a product of the educational revolution in which Vives played a part: he was trained to value the classics and he was glad to use the new translations of them, such as Sir Thomas North's version of Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romanes*. As a dramatist and hence a student of what Vives calls the 'human passions', he was especially interested in the classical texts in which the extremes of emotion were explored. Among these, none was more congenial to him than Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. This, I suspect, was partly because his sceptical, dynamic temperament would have had a certain resistance to the humanist implication that 'the essential nature of human beings' does not change; what Ovid taught him was that everything changes—'In all the world there is not that that standeth at a stay', as the character of Pythagoras sums it up in Book Fifteen[12]—and this accorded with his desire as a dramatist to examine human beings at key moments of change in their lives, such as when they fall in love or make a renunciation or, most drastically, decide to kill themselves. Ovid's philosophy of instability modified the 'essentialist' premiss of humanism even as his exemplary force sustained it.

I use the word 'essentialism' to mean 'the belief that we possess some given, unalterable essence or nature in virtue of which we are human'.[13] The passage from Vives is a magisterial statement of this belief, though elsewhere, for example in his *Fabula de homine* of 1518, the same writer posits a more protean, Ovidian view of human nature: he imagines Jupiter sitting in an auditorium and watching man on a stage demonstrating his capability to become 'all things', one moment lion, wolf, boar, fox, and donkey (emblematic of the passions), the next a prudent and just civic being.[14] One reason why

[12] Golding's trans. xv. 197.

[13] Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (Brighton, 1984), 18.

[14] 'A Fable about Man', trans. Nancy Lenkeith, in *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, ed. Ernst Cassirer, Paul Oskar Kristeller, John Herman Randall, Jr. (Chicago, 1948), 385–93. Proteus is also cited in Pico della Mirandola's discussion of man's self-fashioning power in the great 'Oration on the Dignity of Man', repr. in the same collection (p. 225).

Ovid was so valuable to sceptical humanists like Vives, Montaigne, and Shakespeare was that the fifteenth book of the *Metamorphoses* provided a beautiful solution to the problem of instability and change. Change itself becomes constancy, instability a fixed principle: the humanist is thus able to retain his faith that there is an essence in both human and non-human nature, whilst acknowledging the infinite variety of human passions and actions.

Readers who have inherited John Milton's image of Shakespeare in the poem 'L'Allegro' as 'Fancy's child', 'warbling his native wood-notes wild', will be puzzled by claims that he can be read in the context of Renaissance humanism and that his plays have an especially close relationship with the work of a classical author. Didn't Ben Jonson write in his elegy 'To the Memory of My Beloved, the Author Mr William Shakespeare', 'thou hadst small Latine, and lesse Greeke'? What about John Dryden's claim in the essay *Of Dramatic Poesy* that Shakespeare 'needed not the spectacles of books to read nature'? These are, however, relative statements: Shakespeare may have been unlearned by the standards of the Jonson who furnished his play *Sejanus* with marginal notes written in Latin or the Dryden who translated the complete works of Virgil, yet the classical accomplishments of the average Elizabethan grammar-school boy were considerable indeed by the standard of most of us today. And if 'lesse Greeke' really means 'less' rather than 'no', Shakespeare would have been above average, for Greek was only studied in the upper forms of the better schools, and it was not begun until Latin had been thoroughly mastered.

In his *Essay on the Learning of Shakespeare*, published in 1767, Richard Farmer, whose standards were those of the Master of a Cambridge college, showed that Shakespeare used Sir Thomas North's translation of Plutarch, and Arthur Golding's of Ovid, and furthermore that Plautus' *Menaechmi*, the principal source for *The Comedy of Errors*, his most formally classical play, had been done into English (albeit unpublished) by Warner. Dr Johnson was impressed: 'Dr Farmer,' he said, 'you have done that which never was done before; that is, you have completely finished a controversy beyond all further doubt.'[15] But the scholarship of the subsequent two centuries has decided the question in the opposite direction: although Shakespeare used translations when he could, presumably for speed

[15] Quoted, James Northcote, *Memoirs of Sir Joshua Reynolds* (London, 1813), 90.

and convenience, he did read sources in Latin and French—in the
case of Ovid he did not rely solely on Golding's Englished *Metamor-
phoses* of 1567.

His use of both the Latin original and the early Elizabethan
translation may be demonstrated from his most powerful imitation of
Ovid, Prospero's renunciation of his rough magic. The relevant
passage in Ovid begins 'auraeque et venti montesque amnesque
lacusque, | dique omnes nemorum, dique omnes noctis adeste', of
which a literal translation might be 'ye breezes and winds and
mountains and rivers and lakes, and all ye gods of groves and of night,
draw near' (*Met.* vii. 197–8). Golding translated this as 'Ye Ayres and
windes: ye Elves of Hilles, of Brookes, of Woods alone, | Of standing
Lakes, and of the Night approche ye everychone' (Golding, vii.
265–6). The first line of Prospero's speech is 'Ye elves of hills, brooks,
standing lakes, and groves' (*Tempest*, v. i. 33). Shakespeare got his
elves from Golding (in Ovid they are 'gods' and are not associated with
the hills) and he also followed the translator in amplifying 'lacus' into
'*standing* lakes'. But later in the speech, where Ovid had 'convulsaque
robora' ('and rooted up oaks'), Golding did not specify the kind of tree
('and trees doe drawe'), so Shakespeare must have gone to the Latin
for his 'and rifted Jove's stout oak'. Again, Golding lacks an
equivalent for the ghosts actually coming out of their tombs:
Prospero's 'Graves at my command | Have waked their sleepers,
oped, *and let 'em forth*' is a version of Ovid's 'manesque *exire* sepulcris'.
Medea in Ovid says that she has made the sun go pale by means of her
song ('carmine nostro'); Golding has 'Our Sorcerie dimmes the
Morning faire'; Shakespeare neatly combines the song and the
sorcery with Prospero's climactic 'By my so potent art', the art being
that of both the sorcerer and the poet-singer. Medea's use of the noun
'carmen' allies her with Ovid himself, for he began the *Metamorphoses*
with a reference to his own unbroken song, 'perpetuum carmen'
(i. 4); in a similar way, the phrase 'my so potent art', spoken by a
character who has a little earlier put on a play, cannot but ally
Prospero's magic with the magic of Shakespeare's verbal and
theatrical arts. This is not, however, to say that Prospero's
renunciation of his magic is Shakespeare's farewell to the stage.[16]

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[16] On Shakespeare's use of both Golding and Ovid's Latin as an example of
Renaissance imitative practice, see Marion Trousdale's important article, 'Recurrence
and Renaissance: Rhetorical Imitation in Ascham and Sturm', *ELR* vi (1976), 156–79
(pp. 172–4).

The fact of Shakespeare's imitation of Ovid is beyond dispute; it is
much more difficult to be sure of its implications. Were Jacobean
audiences of *The Tempest* supposed to recognize the imitation and, if
so, were they then supposed to reflect upon Prospero's art in relation
to that of Ovid's Medea? Charles and Michelle Martindale, in their
book on *Shakespeare and the Uses of Antiquity*, think that the answer to
the first part of the question is probably 'yes', to the second part,
definitely 'no':

In this instance it should be plain that the use Shakespeare is making of Ovid is
imitative, not allusive; educated members of the audience would recognize
the presence of Ovid, but there is no question of any such complex interplay
between the divergent meanings of the two texts as our more ingenious critics
so often suppose.[17]

I believe that the Martindales are wrong about this. The distinction
between stylistic imitation and purposeful allusion would not have
been made in this way in the Renaissance. Sixteenth-century models
of reading were always purposeful: texts from the past were valued for
their applicability to present endeavour.[18] Hence the widespread habit
of extracting wise passages from their sources and transcribing them
in 'commonplace' books which built up a composite model of ideal
behaviour. In writing Prospero's speech, Shakespeare is following a
standard humanist procedure: he needed a formal invocation of
magical powers, so he imitated a famous classical example of one. To
imitate it was to assert its continuing relevance; humanist imitation
was based on the premiss that classical texts were appropriate
patterns or models because they embodied fundamental, enduring
truths. This was the point that Vives made. The act of imitation here
implies that all invocations of magical power are in some sense the
same—just as a Renaissance imitation of an Ovidian *locus amoenus*
implies that all *loci amoeni* are in some sense the same—and therefore
that Prospero and Medea are in some sense the same. This has
important critical implications for the play, as will be shown in
Chapter 6. In that chapter, further evidence will be brought forward
to suggest that the imitation is an allusion and is supposed to be

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[17] *Shakespeare and the Uses of Antiquity* (London, 1990), 23.
[18] See Anthony Grafton, 'Renaissance Readers and Ancient Texts: Comments on
some Commentaries', *RenQ* xxviii (1985), 615–49, and Lisa Jardine and Anthony
Grafton, ' "Studied for Action": How Gabriel Harvey Read his Livy', *Past and Present*,
no. 129 (Nov. 1990), 30–78.

recognized as such. What I mean by allusion is that the source text is *brought into play* (from Latin *al-ludo*, to play with); its presence does significant aesthetic work of a sort which cannot be performed by a submerged source.

It should also be pointed out that the Martindales' sneer at 'our more ingenious critics' is oddly patronizing to the Renaissance. It implies that Shakespeare and his audience were simple souls who never got beyond stylistic elegance, who lacked the ingenuity to make associations between dramatic characters and mythical archetypes. But Renaissance mythography was as inventive as anything in modern critical theory. Despite the reservations of humanists such as Erasmus, for whom myth was a repository of moral wisdom rather than a system of mystical correspondences,[19] the tradition of multiple interpretation, inherited and adapted from the Middle Ages, was still very much alive. Edmund Spenser, say, or George Sandys, author of *Ovid's Metamorphosis Englished, Mythologiz'd, and Represented in Figures*, would have had no difficulty in finding historical, moral, and allegorical meanings in a single story. Sir John Harington's reading, published in 1591, of the slaying of the Gorgon Medusa by Perseus is worth quoting at length as an example of this interpretative technique:

Perseus sonne of Jupiter is fained by the Poets to have slaine *Gorgon*, and, after that conquest atchieved, to have flown up to heaven. The Historicall sence is this, *Perseus* the sonne of *Jupiter*, by the participation of *Jupiters* vertues which were in him, or rather comming of the stock of one of the kings of Creet, or Athens so called, slew *Gorgon*, a tyrant in that countrey (*Gorgon* in Greeke signifieth earth), and was for his vertuous parts exalted by men up unto heaven. Morally it signifieth this much: *Perseus* a wise man, sonne of Jupiter, endewed with vertue from above, slayeth sinne and vice, a thing base & earthly signified by Gorgon, and so mounteth up to the skie of vertue. It signifies in one kind of Allegorie thus much: the mind of man being gotten by God, and so the childe of God killing and vanquishing the earthlinesse of this Gorgonicall nature, ascendeth up to the understanding of heavenly things, of high things, of eternal things, in which contemplacion consisteth the perfection of man: this is the naturall allegory, because man [is] one of the chiefe works of nature. It hath also a more high and heavenly Allegorie, that the heavenly nature, daughter of *Jupiter*, procuring with her continuall

[19] For humanist opposition to the reading of pagan myths as Christian allegories, see Erasmus' letter of 7 May 1518 to Maarten Lips, no. 843 in *The Correspondence of Erasmus: Letters 842 to 992, 1518 to 1519*, trans. R. A. B. Mynors and D. F. S. Thomson, vol. vi of the *Collected Works of Erasmus* (Toronto, 1982), 23–4.

motion corruption and mortality in the inferiour bodies, severed it selfe at last from these earthly bodies, and flew up on high, and there remaineth for ever. It hath also another Theological Allegorie: that the angelicall nature, daughter of the most high God the creator of all things, killing & overcomming all bodily substance, signified by *Gorgon*, ascended into heaven. The like infinite Allegories I could pike out of other Poeticall fictions, save that I would avoid tediousnes.[20]

Readers who are inclined to accuse modern critics of over-ingeniousness should keep an analysis such as this beside them as a touchstone of Renaissance ingenuity. As will be shown, even Shakespeare, whose hermeneutics were much less formal than Harington's are in this passage, frequently invoked myths as patterns within the plays, and when invoking myths sometimes also assumed knowledge of the received moral interpretation of them. When Cleopatra says that Antony is 'painted one way like a Gorgon', it is left to the audience to supply the interpretation of the simile.

Harington's interpretative strategy is premissed on the conviction that allegory shadows forth a universal interconnectedness; this enables him to pull together pagan narrative and divine revelation, and thus to defend poetry from the strictures of puritans.[21] Ultimately, both the practice of humanist imitation and Renaissance hermeneutics more generally draw strength from a belief in the readability of the world: myths, classical texts, nature itself, are books in which moral truths may be read. Thus not only are all *loci amoeni* alike, they may all be read as vestiges of the classical Golden Age, which, according to the syncretic way of thinking so much favoured in the Renaissance, is itself equivalent to Eden before the Fall.

Mythological allusion pervades Elizabethan and Jacobean writing, as I will demonstrate later in this chapter from the examples of Lyly and Marlowe. For it to have been worth its place in the drama, dramatists must have presumed that at least a proportion of their

[20] 'A Preface, or rather a Briefe Apologie of Poetrie', prefixed to Harington's 1591 trans. of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, quoted from *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, ii. 202–3.

[21] I follow Jonas Barish, *The Anti-Theatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 1981) in using 'puritan' as a convenient term for all those who attacked the English Renaissance stage on moral grounds. Stephen Gosson, the most influential anti-stage polemicist of the late 16th cent., was not in fact in sympathy with Elizabethan puritanism; he was almost certainly commissioned by the city fathers to attack the stage because of concern over 'absenteeism, law and order, public decency, infection and the danger of sedition'—Margot Heinemann, *Puritanism and Theatre* (Cambridge, 1980), 30.

auditory was capable of 'reading' it. Having described the different ways of interpreting the story of Perseus and the Gorgon, Harington anatomized Renaissance readers into three kinds: 'the weaker capacities will feede themselves with the pleasantnes of the historie and sweetnes of the verse, some that have stronger stomackes will as it were take a further taste of the Morall sence, a third sort, more high conceited then they, will digest the Allegorie' (p. 203). Ben Jonson made a similar, though twofold, distinction with regard to the audience for theatrical shows: he contrasted those with 'grounded judgements' who merely used their 'gaze' to enjoy the spectacle, and 'the sharpe and learned' who had the wit to comprehend his allegories.[22] Shakespeare's colleagues, John Heminges and Henry Condell, addressed the First Folio of 1623 'To the great Variety of Readers', who, they said, were numbered 'From the most able, to him that can but spell'. The great variety of playgoers who frequented the Rose, the Globe, and the Blackfriars in Shakespeare's lifetime covered a similar spectrum; the most able—the university and Inns of Court men—would have been intimately versed in both classical texts and the art of allegorical interpretation, while even those who had read but little would have had a rudimentary working knowledge of ancient mythology. And for Elizabethan culture, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* constituted the richest storehouse of that mythology.[23]

Shakespeare's ideal spectator would have shared the dramatist's own grammar-school education. The comic but affectionate portrayals of pedantic schoolmasters in *Love's Labour's Lost* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* suggest that Shakespeare may often have been bored at school, but they leave no room for doubt that he did go to school. John Aubrey, on the not wholly unreliable testimony of the son of a member of Shakespeare's acting company, established a tradition that in the so-called 'lost years' of the 1580s Shakespeare was himself a schoolmaster; E. A. J. Honigmann has recently proposed that those years were spent as tutor to a Catholic family in Lancashire, and that the recommendation for this post may have come from a Stratford schoolmaster with a high opinion of

[22] *Ben Jonson*, ed. C. H. Herford, Percy and Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols. (Oxford, 1925–52), vii. 91. All quotations from Jonson are from this ed.; those from the plays are followed in my text by line references.

[23] Its only possible rival was Boccaccio's *De Genealogia Deorum*, which was frequently reprinted in the period—but it was not studied in schools as Ovid was, and it did not have the 'elegancy, facility, and golden cadence of poesy' which was so highly valued by the Elizabethans.

Shakespeare's accomplishments.[24] Even if we discount these scholastic possibilities, we cannot question the competence of Shakespeare's Latin, small as it may have been by Ben Jonson's prodigious standards. Latin was the substance of the grammar-school curriculum (it is to Latin that the epithet 'grammar' applies); and within that curriculum, Ovid occupied a very special place, as will be shown in the next section of this chapter. Shakespeare got a good enough education for him to be able to base his *Lucrece* on a story in Ovid's *Fasti*, which was not published in an English translation until well after his death.

I do not suppose for a moment that any individual seventeenth-century reader of Shakespeare, still less a playgoer, would have consciously recognized, let alone reflected upon the significance of, all the Ovidian associations which I discuss in this book. Where professional critical readers pursue their theme with relentless single-mindedness, readers for pleasure and, to an even greater degree, playgoers—both Renaissance and modern—attend to many different facets of the Shakespearian text and cannot always be expected to attend to it at all (in the Elizabethan theatre there would have been a lot of distractions, what with nut-cracking neighbours and prostitutes plying their trade). A literary-historical book of this sort by its nature regularizes and gives apparent unity to connections that an ordinary reading or viewing will only make fragmentarily and spasmodically. But by picking out the figure in the carpet it becomes possible to discern that Shakespeare was an extremely intelligent and sympathetic reader of Ovid and that his readings are embedded in his own works. And I am convinced that every individual connection I make could have been perceived by an educated Elizabethan: it must be stressed again that the method of reading which this book adopts is a Renaissance method. For the Renaissance, reading meant reading with a consciousness of the classics. The author of the *Gesta Grayorum*, an account of the revels at Gray's Inn during the winter of 1594–5, considered *The Comedy of Errors* to be 'like to *Plautus* his *Menechmus*'.[25] This book imagines other educated Elizabethan playgoers returning to Shakespeare's works and again and again finding them, despite the differences of genre, like to Ovid his *Metamorphoses*.

[24] Honigmann, *Shakespeare : The 'Lost Years'* (Manchester, 1985).

[25] See the relevant extract from *Gesta Grayorum*, repr. as app. 2 of R. A. Foakes's Arden edn. of *The Comedy of Errors* (London, 1962), 116.

As I affirmed in my preface, one compelling reason for writing a study of Shakespeare and Ovid at this time is the simple fact that fewer and fewer students and playgoers are now versed in the classics as their Renaissance forebears were. Dramatists like Shakespeare and Thomas Heywood did not want the classics to be what they have now become, the preserve of a tiny intellectual élite. They took Ovid out of the academy and put him on the popular stage; in his *Golden Age*, *Silver Age*, *Brazen Age*, and *Iron Age* plays, Heywood actually dramatized a whole collection of stories from the *Metamorphoses* for the audience of the Red Bull, the most notoriously 'lowbrow' of the London theatres.[26] In the prologue to *The Silver Age*, he made a distinction regarding his audience that was similar to Jonson's: the 'learned' come to the theatre with their 'judging wits', while the 'ruder' respond only with their 'eyes'.[27] The prologue continues, 'Since what we do, we for their use compile': 'their' refers to both segments of the audience, which is to say that Heywood is compiling his mythological material for the 'use' of all kinds of theatregoer. In the epilogue to *The Brazen Age*, he addressed the 'unlettered' in the audience, asking them 'Rather to attend than judge; for more than sight | We seeke to please'.[28] Heywood was writing at a time when the morality of the theatre was under attack from puritan polemicists: there could be no better riposte than the claim that the drama could traverse 'The ground of ancient Poems' and bring edification of the kind that was the rationale of humanist educational theory.[29] Indeed, performance could evoke the substance (*res*) of ancient poems,

[26] Heywood used a copybook Renaissance method of composition: first he wrote *Troia Britanica*, a Spenserian romance epic, based on William Caxton's prose translation of Raoul Lefevre's *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*, the influential medieval repository of classical matter, much of it transmitted via Ovid; then he dramatized his own poem, but in so doing made extensive use of Ovid, in both the Latin original and Golding's translation. As well as producing the *Age* plays and translating the *Ars Amatoria*, Heywood wrote an Ovidian erotic narrative, *Oenone and Paris*, and dramatized the story of the rape of Lucrece. The shared Ovidianism of Heywood and Shakespeare is symbolically demonstrated by the implicit attribution to Shakespeare on the title-page of the third (1612) edn. of *The Passionate Pilgrim* of Heywood's imitations of the Paris and Helen letters of the *Heroides*, which were lifted from the *Troia Britanica* and included in that volume.

[27] Heywood, *The Dramatic Works*, 6 vols. (London, 1874), iii. 85–6. Subsequent references from this edn.

[28] *Dramatic Works*, iii. 256.

[29] Quotation from the closing sequence of *The Golden Age*, *Dramatic Works*, iii. 78. In his *Apology for Actors* (London, 1612), Heywood defended the drama by citing the positive and negative moral examples afforded by the classical narratives which he staged in the *Age* plays (sig. F4ᵛ–G1ᵛ).

whereas education was locked into analysis of their grammar, syntax, and rhetoric (*verba*); the drama brought the classics to life, whereas the techniques of the schoolroom killed them stone dead. In his own way, Shakespeare had anticipated Heywood in this project: my third chapter will suggest that in *Titus Andronicus* he undertook both a critique of a schoolroom education and a defence of a theatrical one. Shakespeare's Ovidianism proposes that the classics need not be only a matter of rote-learning and beatings, of Sir Hugh Evans's 'hig, hag, hog' and 'If you forget your *quis*, your *ques*, and your *quods*, you must be preeches'.[30] Elizabethan theatrical Ovidianism constitutes an exceptionally fruitful embrace between 'high' and 'low' culture; it proves that the classics can reach a popular audience, can give pleasure even as they edify, can be a source of profound vitality.

Shakespeare enjoyed Ovid hugely, but also found in him a source of disturbance. The coexistence of vitality, enjoyment, and disturbance is apparent above all in the matter for which Ovid was best known in the Renaissance, that of human desire and sexuality. Sexual behaviour is of course determined by culture as well as nature, but culture has its continuities: in the *Ars Amatoria*, Ovid associates theatregoing with sex, noting that the theatre is a good place to take a prospective lover, since 'the rows compel closeness, like it or not, and by the conditions of space your girl must be touched' (*Ars Am.* i. 141–2). This is as good a piece of advice for the young man about town in Shakespeare's time or in ours as for Ovid's implied reader. Whether Ovid is advising on such preliminaries or on the art of achieving simultaneous orgasm (*Ars Am.* ii. 719–28), he has a modernity which may be seen as testimony to literature's power to continue to work beyond its moment of production. Using the *Ars Amatoria* as a sex manual may not be quite what the learned humanists had in mind when they recommended the study of the classics, but the efficacy of doing so proves their point that we can learn from the literature of the past. Roman marriage, Elizabethan marriage, and modern marriage are very different things, but to read Ovid and Shakespeare today is to see that neither the lightness nor the darkness of sexual desire has changed so very much over two millenniums.

This continuity might seem to offer support for Vives' claim about 'the essential nature of human beings'. His grand phrase 'the

[30] *Merry Wives of Windsor*, IV. i. 38, 71–2.

foundations of the affections of the human mind, and the results which they produce on actions and volitions' could be translated into Sigmund Freud's single word, *libido*. Freud himself viewed both classical myth and Shakespearian drama as anticipations, and hence proofs, of his own 'essentialist' account of human sexuality. There has accordingly been a steady stream of books and articles translating the language of Shakespeare's plays into that of psychoanalysis—every student knows about Hamlet's Oedipus complex. I am, however, sceptical of this procedure and I have done everything I can to avoid such translation, on the grounds that it is tendentious enough to move between the languages of texts composed for particular purposes in Rome around the beginning of the Christian era and in London around the beginning of the seventeenth century without also introducing that of texts which Freud composed for particular purposes in Vienna around the beginning of the twentieth. Shakespeare's representations of sexuality may be Freudian—or Kleinian or Lacanian—but my concern is to show that they are Ovidian.

Freud notwithstanding, the fact that these representations still elicit a nod of recognition does not necessarily mean that the dynamics of sexual desire are universally constant. Their endurance may instead be a demonstration of the way in which life imitates art. That sexuality is learnt from poets as much as it is determined by biology would seem to be the view of Montaigne in the sixteenth century's wisest and most playful essay on the subject, 'Upon some Verses of Virgil': there it is argued that the 'power and might' of erotic desire 'are found more quick and lively in the shadowe of the Poesie, th[a]n in their owne essence'. For Montaigne, literature serves to educate the reader in sexual language: 'It is high time indeed for us to go studie the phrases of *Amadis*, the metaphors of *Aretine*, and eloquence of *Boccace*'—that is to say, to study erotic texts—'thereby to become more skilfull, more ready and more sufficient to confront them: surely we bestow our time wel'.[31] As one recent commentator on the mythological tradition in the French Renaissance puts it, 'When Montaigne turns to himself he finds that it is not in searching his own memory that he recovers most fully the experience of love,

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[31] *The Essayes or Morall, Politike, and Millitarie Discourses of Lo. Michaell de Montaigne*, trans. John Florio (1603), iii. 5, quoted from Modern Library edn. (New York, 1933), introd. J. I. M. Stewart, pp. 764, 771.

but in reading the stylised formulations of poetic fiction.'[32] In Shakespearian comedy, love is among other things an art learnt from Ovid.

Ovid was not of course the first poet to make sex full of both fun and anguish, but for Western culture he has been the one in whom the joy of sex has found its foremost apologist and the pain of desire one of its most skilled analysts. This is due in considerable measure to the hazards of manuscript transmission in pre-print culture: had more of Sappho survived, she might have taken the credit. Indeed, Ovid would have been the first to acknowledge the supremacy of Sappho. In the *Tristia* (ii. 365) she is cited as his precedent as a teacher of the art of love, and in the fifteenth of the *Heroides* he writes in her voice and so celebrates her poetry even as he ironically twists her lesbianism by making her the victim of heterosexual desire:

> But once I seemed beautiful enough, when I read my poems to you.
>> You swore that, alone among women, I took grace always from the words I spoke.
> I would sing, I remember—lovers remember it all—
>> As I sang, you returned me my kisses, kisses stolen while I sang.[33]

Whilst listening to Ovid's reanimation of Sappho, we should take the opportunity to acknowledge that his writing can be charged with a sexual intensity which Shakespeare was wholly incapable of reproducing (in the Elizabethan age only Donne comes near it).[34] Here, for instance, is a translation of what must be Western poetry's most stirring account of a woman's wet dream:

> My dreams bring you back to me:
>> dreams more intense and dazzling than radiant day.
> I find you in those dreams, although you are worlds away.
>> But sleep offers pleasures too brief to satisfy.
> Often it seems that your arms are holding the weight of my neck,
>> often I seem to be holding your head in my arms;

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[32] Ann Moss, *Poetry and Fable: Studies in Mythological Narrative in Sixteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, 1984), 4.

[33] *Heroides*, xv. 41–4, in the lovely trans. of Florence Verducci, in her study of the *Heroides, Ovid's Toyshop of the Heart* (Princeton, NJ, 1985). The authorship of this epistle has been contested, but it is hard to doubt it in view of Ovid's claim in the *Amores* (ii. xviii. 26) that he has spoken for Sappho.

[34] Donne's elegies are masterly exercises in the tradition of the *Amores* (Elegy xix, for instance, takes off from *Amores*, i. v) and his 'Sapho to Philaenis' is a revision of *Heroides* xv which restores Sappho to a lesbian partner.

the kisses are familiar, those kisses, tongue to tongue, I recognize them,
  the kisses you used to take and give back to me.
Sometimes I caress you, and say words that seem utterly real,
  and my lips are awake, responsive to all that I feel.
I hesitate to say what happens next, but it all happens,
  there's no choice, just joy, and I'm inundated with it.[35]

In the arena of sexuality, Ovid was both an original and an
inheritor of Sappho and others; in that of myth, he was equally both
an innovator and a rewriter of material from a vast range of earlier
writers, most notably Euripides and Callimachus. He did not invent
his stories, he just happened to have codified them and told them in an
artful and memorable way at an unusually stable moment in early
Western culture. The idea of myth presents as many theoretical
problems as that of sexuality. Again, my aim has been to present the
material in the terms of Ovid and his Renaissance readers, not to
translate it into those of some later theorist. There may be a book to be
written on Shakespeare and the *Metamorphoses* in relation to Claude
Lévi-Strauss's theory that myths encode the deep binary structures of
all cultures, but this is not it. Jacques Derrida's essay on Lévi-Strauss,
'Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences', is
one of the foundation texts of deconstruction, but my aim is to
reconstruct, not deconstruct Renaissance mythography. There is a
certain smack of Derridean hermeneutic play about Sir John
Harington's multiplication of readings of the Gorgon myth, but with a
crucial difference: for a Renaissance reader multiple readings offer
many roads to truth, whereas for Derrida reading is a circular road
going to nowhere but itself. In order to understand the work that
myth does for Shakespeare—and to try out for ourselves whether it
can do any work for us—we have to suspend our disbelief in the
possibility of words and stories referring to a reality beyond
themselves. We certainly do not have to believe that Shakespeare's
sonnets were written out of personal desire for the Earl of
Southampton or whoever, but we do have to believe that even if desire
may be read as a textual phenomenon, as Montaigne seems to imply,
love-poetry can be made to serve extra-textual ends. We do not have
to believe in gods; we do not even have to believe that Shakespeare
and Ovid believed in them. But we do have to believe in the reality of

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[35] *Heroides*, xv. 123–34, trans. Verducci. 'Inundated' for the orgasm in the final line
does not quite catch Ovid's witty use of a negative: 'et siccae non licet esse mihi' ('and I
am unable to remain dry').

the human conditions and aspirations that are storied in myth—
negatively, that desire is often blind (Cupid) or self-consuming
(Narcissus, Actaeon); positively, that a marriage might be blessed
(Hymen), a harvest might be good (Ceres), or society a fairer place (the
Golden Age). In its assumption that one of the values of literary and
dramatic creations is their capacity to speak of such conditions and
aspirations, this book is unapologetically a work of reconstructed
humanism.

II

Shakespeare was fortunate in his place of birth. In 1553 the King's
New School at Stratford-upon-Avon was chartered as a free grammar
school that would employ one master who was to be comparatively
well remunerated with twenty pounds a year and housing.[36]
Shakespeare probably entered the grammar school at the age of seven
in 1571, having already spent two or three years at an attached petty
school where, under the auspices of an usher, he would have learnt
reading, writing, and the catechism. The grammar-school master
from 1571 to 1575 was one Simon Hunt, and for the next four years
the post was held by Thomas Jenkins. They both seem to have been
able men, with Oxford degrees; Jenkins had for some years been a
fellow of St John's College. A measure of the quality of the Stratford
education is that Richard Field, a near contemporary of Shakespeare,
began an apprenticeship in London after leaving school and rapidly
became one of England's best printers of classical texts—his work
included an important annotated edition of the *Metamorphoses*
published in 1589. It was to Field that Shakespeare turned a few years
after this for the printing of his *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*.

The grammar-school curriculum was limited but intense. It
depended on learning by rote: Shakespeare and his contemporaries
had Latin words and structures ingrained upon their memories in
such a way that classical influences would inevitably shape their
verbal forms in later life. The principal aim of an Elizabethan
education was for the student to learn not merely to read Latin with

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[36] The following account makes considerable use of T. W. Baldwin, *William
Shakspere's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke*, 2 vols. (Urbana, Ill., 1944), which remains the
most comprehensive guide to the Elizabethan grammar-school curriculum and its
influence on Shakespeare.

facility, but also to write and speak it. He (girls did not attend the grammar school) would begin with William Lily's *A Shorte Introduction of Grammar* and complete his accidence and syntax in the same author's *Brevissima Institutio*, which was illustrated with examples from various Latin authors, such as the line from Horace that Chiron in *Titus Andronicus* remembers from reading in his grammar. At this early stage, he would also be required to construe and translate from collections of maxims such as Leonhardus Culmannus' *Sententiae Pueriles* and the *Disticha Moralia* (ascribed to Cato, with scholia by Erasmus). These collections provided the origin of many of the tags and *sententiae* that are found so frequently in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama. It was a favourite Renaissance practice to extract moral wisdom from the classics in the form of adages and apophthegms; the educated members of Shakespeare's audience would accordingly have been adept in the art of recognizing classical allusions, whether they were highly self-conscious, as in some of the early works, or woven more subtly into the text, as in the later plays.

At a later stage, the *sententiae* in Culmannus and Cato would provide the basis for rhetorical exercises in amplification. Thus not only the pithiness, but also the prolixity and rhetorical inventiveness of Elizabethan writers have their roots in the educational system. One of the major rhetorical texts used in schools was Erasmus' *De Copia*, which instructed in the art of using tropes and schemes to imitate classical copiousness; Ovid was seen here as the most copious of authors, his description of Hecuba in the thirteenth book of the *Metamorphoses* as the exemplary illustration of the use of extreme 'copia' to create emotion. Dramatic laments in plays from *Gorboduc* onwards make Hecuba into 'a mirror' of woefulness.[37] The player's speech in *Hamlet*, with its accumulation of figures designed to elicit sympathy for the passion of Hecuba, is a standard rhetorical set-piece. But although any grammar-school boy would have been given the training to have a stab at the exercise, few could have undertaken it with the facility of Shakespeare. His contemporaries recognized and appreciated this, praising his distinctive qualities with such epithets as 'sweet', 'honie-tong'd', 'hony-flowing Vaine', 'fine filed phrase', 'happy and copious', 'mellifluous'. These were the terms in which the

[37] 'Happy was Hecuba, the woefull'st wretch | That ever liv'd to make a mirror of': *Gorboduc*, III. i. 14–15, in *Minor Elizabethan Tragedies*, ed. T. W. Craik (London, 1974). See further, Wolfgang Clemen, *English Tragedy Before Shakespeare*, trans. T. S. Dorsch (London, 1961), 230–2.

Elizabethans also praised Ovid. Gabriel Harvey spoke of 'conceited' Ovid, Thomas Lodge of his 'promptnes' in versification; to Thomas Nashe, he was 'silver-tong'd' and 'well-tun'd' in his style.[38] The two writers offered respective Latin and English exemplars of facility, copiousness, mellifluous rhetoric, and verbal wit. In the mid-seventeenth century, Thomas Fuller would associate Shakespeare with 'Ovid, the most naturall and witty of all Poets'.[39]

Rigorous rhetorical training was undergone in the upper school, where boys were drilled in the writing of epistles, themes, and orations. The textbook for themes was Aphthonius' *Progymnasmata*, in which Shakespeare would have found Ovid's story of Venus and Adonis discussed as an example of *narratio* (and immediately followed by citation of Pyramus and Thisbe). The upper school would also have provided Shakespeare with his first exposure to the major Roman poets in themselves, rather than in extract. Ovid, being perhaps the easiest to read and to imitate in verse-writing exercises, occupied the foremost place. Extensive reading and memorizing of the *Metamorphoses* was almost universally required in sixteenth-century grammar schools. In addition, at most schools selections from one or more of Ovid's other works were studied, most frequently the *Fasti*, his poem on Roman festivals and ceremonies, the *Heroides*, his elegies in the form of imaginary letters from legendary heroines to their lovers or husbands, and *Tristia*, his laments written in exile.

Exercises in imitation were usually based on passages from collections of elegant extracts, such as Mirandula's *Illustrium Flores Poetarum*, in which Ovid was heavily represented. Little changed in the grammar-school curriculum between the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth centuries, so Shakespeare was in all probability taught in a manner similar to that recommended by John Brinsley a generation later (Brinsley explicitly based his system on the *Scholemaster* of Roger Ascham, Queen Elizabeth's tutor):

[38] The epithets commending Shakespeare are by William Covell (1595), John Weever (1595), Richard Barnfield (1598), John Webster (1612), and Thomas Heywood (1635), all cited in E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1930); for the characterization of Ovid's style, see Harvey, *Marginalia*, ed. G. C. Moore Smith (Stratford-upon-Avon, 1913), 231; Lodge (1579), cited in *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, i. 70; Nashe, *Works*, ed. R. B. McKerrow, 5 vols. (1904–10; repr. Oxford, 1958), i. 193.

[39] Fuller further suggested that Shakespeare compounded this Ovidian nature with Plautine skills in comedy and a warlike-sounding surname to compare with Martial's— *The History of the Worthies of England: Warwickshire* (London, 1662), 126.

Take *Flores Poetarum*, and in every Common place make choise of Ovids verses, or if you find any other which be pleasant and easie: and making sure, that your schollars know not the verses aforehand, use to dictate unto them as you did in prose. Cause also so many as you would have to learne together, to set downe the English as you dictate. . . . having just the same words, let them trie which of them can soonest turne them into the order of a verse . . . And then lastly, read them over the verse of Ovid, that they may see that themselves have made the very same; or wherin they missed: this shall much incourage and assure them.[40]

Thus the boys would be expected not merely to translate back into Latin, but to produce a rhetorical arrangement that corresponded to Ovid's original; the exercise is analogous to that in the training of a musician, whereby the student is given a melody and asked to harmonize it in the style of a particular composer. It is not an exaggeration to say that Shakespeare's first lessons in poetry were lessons in the imitation of Ovid. Brinsley describes the method of double translation as the pupil's 'first entrance into versifying':

By the translations of the Poets, as of Ovid, and Virgil, to have a most plain way into the first entrance into versifying, to turne the prose of the Poets into the Poets owne verse, with delight, certainty and speed, without any bodging; and so by continuall practice to grow in this facilitie, for getting the phrase and veine of the Poet.[41]

Another common exercise was to write letters in the style of the *Heroides*: in so doing, the student had to find a rhetoric appropriate to a fictional character's circumstances and passions. The dramatist's art begins here. Even as a mature playwright Shakespeare would continue to base his composition on inherited texts; in *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus*, for example, Sir Thomas North's prose originals are transformed into elegant verse, sometimes word for word, but always with a distinctive rhetorical arrangement.

The exclusive study of Latin, learning by rote, writing according to rhetorical formulas, reproducing the *sententiae* and the beauties of classical authors, the work of imitation: these fundamentals of Elizabethan education exercised a profound influence on Shakespeare's writings and the ways in which his audiences read them, whether on stage or page. It is only by an effort of historical reconstruction that we can learn to share the educated Elizabethan's *frisson* of pleasure in the recognition of a familiar sentiment, an

[40] *Ludus Literarius: or, The Grammar Schoole* (London, 1612), 193.
[41] Ibid. 107.

elegantly turned phrase, a delicate rhetorical manœuvre, a full-scale imitation.

We have no record of Shakespeare's early reading habits outside the classroom, but it is not fanciful to suppose that his experience was similar to Montaigne's (though one suspects that Shakespeare would not have been such a precocious developer, since his father would not have educated him in Latin from his very early years, as Montaigne's did): 'The first taste or feeling I had of bookes, was of the pleasure I tooke in reading the fables of *Ovids* Metamorphosies; for being but seven or eight yeares old, I would steale and sequester my selfe from all other delights, only to reade them.'[42] From his grammar-school training and his reading of Golding's translation, Shakespeare grew to know the fables extremely well. All fifteen books of the *Metamorphoses* make themselves felt in his works in the form of mythological allusions and borrowings of phrase. His range of reference may be seen from a list of the stories which we will find were of particular significance to his work: the Golden Age (Book One); Phaëthon (Book Two); Actaeon, Narcissus and Echo (Book Three); Pyramus and Thisbe, Salmacis and Hermaphroditus (Book Four); Ceres and Proserpina (Book Five); Arachne's tapestries depicting the Olympian gods as rapists and seducers, Tereus and Philomel (Book Six); Medea (Book Seven); the Calydonian boar, Baucis and Philemon (Book Eight); Hercules and the shirt of Nessus (Book Nine); Orpheus, Pygmalion, Venus and Adonis (Book Ten); Ceyx and Alcyone (Book Eleven); Ajax and Ulysses, Hecuba (Book Thirteen); the philosophy of Pythagoras, Julius Caesar (Book Fifteen). Books Twelve and Fourteen may have been the least used, but Shakespeare seems to have derived from them his knowledge of the battle of the Centaurs and Lapithae (Book Twelve, alluded to in *Titus Andronicus* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) and Circe's enchantments (Book Fourteen, importantly alluded to in *The Comedy of Errors*).

Many mythological references are of a vague character that makes it impossible to pin down a precise source for them, but the great majority of them—approximately 90 per cent—could come from Ovid, and would usually have been thought of by mythologically literate playgoers as Ovidian.[43] Where Ovid is an obvious source,

[42] 'Of the Institution and Education of Children', *Essayes*, i. 25, p. 138. For Montaigne and Ovid, see François Rigolot, *Les Métamorphoses de Montaigne* (Paris, 1988).
[43] For a comprehensive listing of Shakespeare's mythological allusions, see R. K. Root, *Classical Mythology in Shakespeare* (New York, 1903).

there is little point in making claims for more obscure sources (Pyramus and Thisbe is a classic instance: the play in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is supposed to be Quince's translation of Ovid, yet critics have insisted on relating it to such obscure works as Thomas Mouffet's poem *Of the Silkewormes, and their Flies*, which was not published and may not even have been written when the *Dream* was first performed). Since we know from his direct borrowings, both narrative and verbal, that Shakespeare was well versed in Ovid, we may assume that the bulk of his incidental mythological allusions derive from the *Metamorphoses*, unless there is proof positive of a debt to another source; the only exception to this rule is that the primary source for a particular work must take precedence, though in these cases the audience, not all of whom would have been familiar with such sources as, say, Greene's *Pandosto*, might still have thought of Ovid. A much smaller number of references derive from Virgil, who would have been the second most widely read author at school. The most celebrated Virgilian story is that of Dido and Aeneas, yet the image in *The Merchant of Venice* of 'Dido with a willow in her hand' (v. i. 10) is Ovidian rather than Virgilian—it is an adaptation of Ariadne's parting from Theseus in the tenth epistle of the *Heroides*, possibly mediated via Chaucer's version of this tale in his *Legend of Good Women*. Furthermore, as will be shown, Shakespeare's reading of *The Aeneid*, important as it was for *Antony and Cleopatra* and *The Tempest*, was contaminated by Ovid's reading of it in the *Metamorphoses* and the letter of Dido in the *Heroides*. In addition to the *Metamorphoses* and the *Heroides*, Shakespeare knew the *Fasti*—his principal direct source for *Lucrece*—and at least parts of the *Amores*, *Ars Amatoria*, and *Tristia*. As has been noted, the *Fasti* was not published in an English translation until 1640, so this was one work which Shakespeare could only read by making use of his 'small Latine'.

Texts such as the notoriously licentious *Ars Amatoria*, denounced by Stephen Gosson as 'that trumpet of Baudrie',[44] were not of course studied in school. In the sixteenth century Ovid was condemned for his 'wantonness' as frequently as he was praised for his verbal sweetness—a mark of Shakespeare's Ovidianism is William Covell's

[44] Gosson, *The Schoole of Abuse, Conteining a plesaunt invective against Poets, Pipers, Plaiers, Jesters and such like Caterpillers of a Commonwelth* (1579), ed. Edward Arber (London, 1906), 20.

juxtaposition, 'All praiseworthy. Lucrecia Sweet Shakspeare ... Wanton Adonis.'[45] Shakespeare lived during a period in which ways of reading Ovid underwent radical transformation, as a newly unapologetic delight in the poetic and erotic qualities of the *Metamorphoses* came to compete with the predominant medieval practice of moralizing and even Christianizing them. This broad shift does not, however, mean either that moral and allegorical readings disappeared in the Elizabethan period—witness Harington on Perseus and the Gorgon—or that moralization was the only medieval approach to Ovid: Chaucer provides the principal example of what might be thought of as a playful Elizabethan-style reading two hundred years before its time.[46]

The allegorizing and moralizing of Ovid's often explicitly erotic tales was an interpretative device that enabled his poetry to retain currency and escape suppression in an age when all education and most art was dominated by the precepts of Christianity. The fourth-century Latin poet Prudentius used Ovidian allusion in his poems on Christian dogma and tales of the martyrs; his *Contra Symmachum* drew together the transformation of Lot's wife into a pillar of salt and the metamorphosis of Niobe into stone, thus foreshadowing a strategy that would become common a thousand years later. Similarly, a sixth-century bishop, Venantius Fortunatus, moralized Ovid's amorous poetry by applying it to a nun's love for Christ. When John Milton in the seventeenth century converted one of Ovid's cries of post-coital bliss into the climax of a vision of Lancelot Andrewes, the late Bishop of Winchester, entering into heaven, he was doing something very traditional.[47]

There was, then, a millennium-long tradition of reading Ovid's poems as if they were allegorical and as if their sentiments were morally elevated rather than erotically charged.[48] The tradition was

[45] Marginalia by Covell, cited in Chambers, *Facts and Problems*, ii. 193.

[46] J. M. Fyler's *Chaucer and Ovid* (New Haven, Conn., 1979) is a useful starting-point. Ovid is to be found throughout Chaucer, but the relationship between the *Heroides* and the *Legend of Good Women* is especially close; the *Heroides* (the letter of Helen to Paris in particular) also gave Chaucer much for the psychology of Criseyde. For the creative use of Ovid in the Middle Ages, see also the chapter on Dante in Leonard Barkan's *The Gods Made Flesh: Metamorphosis and the Pursuit of Paganism* (New Haven, Conn., 1986) and the reading of the *Roman de la Rose* in the context of the Narcissus myth in Kenneth J. Knoespel, *Narcissus and the Invention of Personal History* (New York, 1985).

[47] 'Elegia tertia: In Obitum Praesulis Wintoniensis' ('Elegy III: On the Death of the Bishop of Winchester'), l. 68, adapting the last line of *Amores*, i. v.

[48] The best introduction to the history of the allegorical interpretation of classical

formalized and codified by the French writers of the fourteenth century who produced detailed theological elucidations of the *Metamorphoses*. The anonymous *Ovide moralisé*, a translation which introduced commentary that swelled the length of the poem to some seventy thousand lines, was the most influential work of this sort. Ovid's account of the creation was yoked to that in Genesis, Deucalion's flood to Noah's, and so on. Allegorical and biblical interpretations were set beside moral ones; thus the revolt of the giants against the Olympian gods was made to represent the building of the tower of Babel, but also the pride of any worldly human who rebels against the authority of God. Some of the interpretations of individual stories are ingenious, to say the least: Lycaon, who plotted to make Zeus eat human flesh and was turned into a wolf for his pains, is read as Herod, and his plot as the attempt on the life of the infant Jesus; his destruction of sheep is made to represent the massacre of the innocents, and his metamorphosis into a wolf, Herod's dethronement and damnation. It was this kind of reading which went into decline, though not desuetude, in the sixteenth century. In accordance with the secularization of literary texts which is one of the great characteristics of the Renaissance, allegorical translation of Ovid into biblical terms gradually became less prominent, save in the case of such powerful correspondences as the creation and the flood. George Schuler, Melanchthon's son-in-law, whose edition of 1555 (published under the name of Georgius Sabinus) was one of the most widely used, viewed *allegoresis* as a hermeneutical discipline of some value, but argued that sacred truth should not be mixed with pagan fable save when both agreed on historical fact.[49] The moral interpretation, in which Lycaon represents all oppressive and cruel men, was more readily sustainable, and indeed gained new strength from the humanist emphasis on the moral wisdom of pagan culture.

Through the *Ovide moralisé* and such commentaries as the *Metamorphosis Ovidiana moraliter . . . explanata*, ascribed to 'Thomas Walleys' but in fact by Pierre Bersuire, the medieval conception of Ovid reached the Renaissance mythological handbooks, of which the

mythology remains Jean Seznec's magisterial *The Survival of the Pagan Gods: The Mythological Tradition and its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art* (Princeton, NJ, 1953), trans. by Barbara F. Sessions from the original French of 1940.

[49] See the preface to Sabinus' edn. and the discussion in Ann Moss, *Ovid in Renaissance France: A Survey of the Latin Editions of Ovid and Commentaries printed in France before 1660* (London, 1982), 48–53.

most notable were the *Mythologiae* (1551) of Natalis Comes (otherwise known as Natale Conti) and *Le Imagini, con la Spositione de i Dei degli Antichi* (1556) of Vincenzo Cartari. Their interpretations were condensed and rendered into the vernacular in Shakespeare's lifetime, first in Thomas Cooper's comprehensive *Thesaurus* (1565, frequently reprinted), then in such texts as Stephen Batman's *Golden Booke of the Leaden Goddes* (1577) and Abraham Fraunce's *Third part of the Countesse of Pembrokes Ivychurch* (1592), which contained sixteen Ovidian tales in verse and the fullest English commentary of the sixteenth century.[50] In 1632 George Sandys published his magnificent *Ovid's Metamorphosis Englished, Mythologiz'd, and Represented in Figures*, a compendium of the previous hundred years' interpretative work.[51] Although Sandys's book was published after Shakespeare's death, it may, since it is a synthesis of earlier interpretations with many passages translated or developed from commentators such as Sabinus and Comes, be used to suggest some of the meanings which sophisticated readers and playgoers of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries would have found in Shakespeare's mythological allusions.

The plundering of the handbooks by Elizabethan writers in search of mythological elaboration is suggested by John Marston in one of his satirical poems:

> Reach me some Poets Index that will show.
> *Imagines Deorum*. Booke of Epithetes,
> *Natales Comes*, thou I know recites,
> And mak'st Anatomie of Poesie.[52]

Shakespeare, however, went directly to Ovid rather than to the mythographies. It was the more self-consciously learned and allegorical poets, George Chapman especially, who plundered Comes. Indeed, one sense in which Chapman stood in a rival tradition to that

[50] Batman was an Anglican cleric who sought to Christianize the pagan tradition; he made considerable use of Cartari. Fraunce compiled his allegorical interpretations from Cartari, Comes, Leo Hebraeus, and an annotated Ovid printed in Cambridge in 1584. For this material, see further Douglas Bush, *Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition in English Poetry* (1932; rev. edn. New York, 1963), ch. 2, and Don Cameron Allen, *Mysteriously Meant: The Rediscovery of Pagan Symbolism and Allegorical Interpretation in the Renaissance* (Baltimore, 1970), chs. 7–8.

[51] Sandys published his translation of the first five books of the poem in 1621 and the full text in 1626, but the commentary did not appear until 1632.

[52] *The Poems of John Marston*, ed. Arnold Davenport (Liverpool, 1961), 72, quoted in Bush, *Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition*, 29, and Seznec, *Survival of the Pagan Gods*, 313–14.

of Shakespeare is that his Ovidianism was far more allegorical. The way in which readings of Ovid were contested in late Elizabethan literature is a matter which I will discuss further at the end of Chapter 4.

Annotated editions, most of them deriving from one which first appeared in 1492 with a commentary by the great textual scholar Raphael Regius, contributed to the sixteenth-century knowledge of Ovid in England. There is in the Bodleian Library in Oxford a copy of the Aldine edition of 1502, bearing the signature 'Wm She' and a note by one 'T N' dated 1682, 'This little Booke of Ovid was given to me by W. Hall who sayd it was once Will. Shakesperes'. The testimony is questionable—'Hall' presumably refers to Shakespeare's son-in-law, but his name was John, and he died in 1635—but plausible, given the comparatively early date (Shakespearian forgery did not become a vogue until the mid-eighteenth century). With the exception of a Montaigne in the British Library, no other surviving book can plausibly be said to have belonged to Shakespeare; it is perhaps a little too convenient that the two which survive are copies of two of his favourite texts, the *Metamorphoses* and the *Essais*. The Aldine Ovid includes a life of the poet and an index of tales,[53] as well as a good text; even if this is not Shakespeare's, he must have owned a similar edition. It is significant for the nature of Ovid's influence on Shakespeare that sixteenth-century editions tended to eschew the more elaborately allegorical form of interpretation; Sabinus was representative in suggesting that the transformation of men into beasts should be viewed metaphorically as an image of monstrous human behaviour. This implicit internalizing, which reads metamorphosis as psychological and metaphorical instead of physical and literal, is one key to Shakespeare's use of Ovid.

As important a part of the Renaissance as the multiplication of editions was the translation, the 'Englishing', of the classics. In 1560 one Thomas Howell published *The Fable of Ovid treting of Narcissus, translated out of Latin into Englysh Mytre, with a Moral ther unto*, an accurate translation of just under two hundred lines of Book Three of the *Metamorphoses*, together with nearly seven hundred lines of moralizing on Narcissus as an emblem of pride and vanity. Also in the tradition of the *Ovide moralisé* was Thomas Peend's *The pleasant Fable*

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[53] *Ovidii Metamorphoseon libri quindecim* (Aldus, 1502), including 'Vita Ovidii ex ipsius operib.' (mainly based on autobiographical material in the *Tristia*; includes a mention of Ovid's lost play, *Medea*) and 'Index fabularum et caeterorum'.

of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis, published five years later; here Hermaphroditus represents youth and purity and Salmacis the allurements of the world. Peend intended to translate more of the *Metamorphoses*, but Arthur Golding beat him to it: his version of the first four books was published in 1565 and the whole poem two years later.

The fourteener couplet, Golding's verse form, has none of the crispness that is one of Ovid's glories. Ezra Pound exaggerated typically when he claimed that the translation is 'the most beautiful book in the language', but it was undoubtedly prized by the Elizabethans.[54] It is best when Ovid is most down to earth, as J. F. Nims implies when he writes, justly if patronizingly, of Golding 'turning the sophisticated Roman into a ruddy country gentleman with tremendous gusto, a sharp eye on the life around him, an ear for racy speech, and a gift for energetic doggerel'.[55] Mythological figures are tricked out in sixteenth-century dress, rather as they are in the tapestries of the period—when Atalanta runs in Ovid she has bare feet and ribbons fluttering at her knees, whereas Golding gives her socks and 'embroydred garters that were tyde beneathe her ham' (Golding, x. 692). The process of 'Englishing' not just the words but also the atmosphere of Ovid is an important precedent for Shakespeare's own combinations of the native and the classical. The introduction of 'elves' in the Medea passage cited earlier is typical. Golding is characterized by his robust vernacular vocabulary—he finds no indecorum in words like 'queaches', 'plash', 'skapes', 'collup', and 'codds'[56]—and his bustling narration of the stories, which was probably the main reason for the popularity of his translation (it was reprinted in 1575, 1584, 1587, twice in 1593, 1603, and 1612). If Shakespeare and his contemporaries owed their intimacy with Ovidian rhetoric to the grammar schools, their easy familiarity with Ovidian narrative was as much due to Golding.

In 1586 William Webbe, in his *Discourse of English Poetrie*, commended

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[54] For Pound's encomium, see his *ABC of Reading* (London, 1934), 127; for Golding's style, see Gordon Braden, *The Classics and English Renaissance Poetry: Three Case Studies* (New Haven, Conn., 1978), 16–54; for the influence on subsequent Elizabethans—Marlowe and Spenser as well as Shakespeare—see the articles by Anthony Brian Taylor, cited in my bibliography.

[55] Nims, introd. to *Ovid's 'Metamorphoses': The Arthur Golding Translation* (New York, 1965), p. xxxi.

[56] i. 138, i. 381, iii. 327, v. 651, x. 839. The last of these words is slang for testicles,

Master *Arthur Golding*, for hys labour in englishing *Ovids Metamorphosis*, for which Gentleman surely our Country hath for many respects greatly to gyve God thankes: as for him which hath taken infinite paynes without ceasing, travelleth as yet indefatigably, and is addicted without society by his continuall laboure to profit this nation and speeche in all kind of good learning.[57]

Webbe's emphasis on Golding's service to his country reminds us that the Elizabethan translation movement in which Golding was prominent was a significant part of a post-Reformation project to establish England as a Protestant nation with its own high culture.[58] Golding's patron was a key figure in this early Elizabethan endeavour, the Earl of Leicester.[59] The dedication to *The Fyrst Fower Bookes*, dated December 1564, praises Leicester for his encouragement of translators 'in their paynfull exercises attempted of a zeale and desyre too enryche their native language with thinges not heretoofore published in the same'.[60] The transformation of Ovid into an English country gentleman is not just a quaint aesthetic move, as J. F. Nims implies—it fulfils the humanist requirement that 'the general end' of literary creation should be 'to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline'.[61]

Golding stressed the morality and civic worth of his project in the prose dedication to Leicester. The complete translation of 1567 had a fuller verse epistle, also addressed to Leicester, which expounded Ovid's 'dark Philosophie of turned shapes' in a manner which goes back to the *Ovide moralisé*. A number of traditional interpretations are followed, as Ovid is reconciled with the Bible: 'Not only in effect he dooth with Genesis agree, | But also in the order of creation, save that hee | Makes no distinction of the dayes' (Epistle, 344–6). Golding does not commit himself as to whether Ovid is 'following of the [biblical] text aright' or unconsciously recognizing 'that there are no

used by Golding to translate Ovid's 'inguine' (x. 715, 'groin') with reference to the anatomical part where the boar gores Adonis.

[57] *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, i. 243.

[58] See C. H. Conley, *The First English Translators of the Classics* (New Haven, Conn., 1927).

[59] See Eleanor Rosenberg, *Leicester: Patron of Letters* (New York, 1955), and L. T. Golding, *An Elizabethan Puritan: Arthur Golding the Translator of Ovid's Metamorphoses and also of John Calvin's Sermons* (New York, 1937).

[60] *Shakespeare's Ovid*, ed. Rouse, p. iii.

[61] Spenser's 'A letter of the Author[']s expounding his whole intention in the course of this worke . . . To the Right noble and Valorous, Sir Walter Raleigh knight', prefixed to *The Faerie Queene* (1590).

Gods but one' (393–4). The Golden Age is compared to 'Adams tyme in Paradyse' (470) and Deucalion's flood to Noah's, but once Golding's exposition gets beyond the first book, interpretations of this kind give way to moral ones, in accordance with common sixteenth-century practice. Medieval *allegoresis* is replaced by a humanist emphasis on the ethical exemplariness of the classic text. Thus, much of the Epistle consists of select moralizations of tales from the second book onwards: Daphne is 'A myrror of virginitie' (68), Phaëthon 'ambition blynd, and youthfull wilfulnesse' (72), Narcissus 'scornfulnesse and pryde' (105), Pyramus and Thisbe 'The headie force of frentick love whose end is wo and payne' (110), and so forth.

Golding's Epistle probably constituted Shakespeare's only sustained direct confrontation with the moralizing tradition—that is, if he bothered to read it and did not skip straight to the English text of his admired Ovid. The Epistle may certainly be said to have provided a convenient embodiment of the interpretations of major myths that Shakespeare and his audience would have shared. The interpretative tradition should not, however, be over-stressed: in the second half of the sixteenth century the *Metamorphoses* was being read as much for its wit as its wisdom. Golding himself spoke in his 'Preface too the Reader' of Ovid's 'lyvely Image[s]' and 'pleasant style' (152, 179). The poem had an energetic life as a linguistic resource that could not be contained by the work of moralization.

The momentum of the translation movement was such that the Elizabethans soon tried their hand at Englishing Ovid's other works: George Turbervile's *The Heroycall Epistles of the Learned Poet P. Ovidius Naso Translated into English Verse* appeared in the same year as Golding's complete *Metamorphoses*, Thomas Underdowne translated the *Invective against Ibis* two years later, together with notes that formed a compendium of mythological reference, and in 1572 Thomas Churchyard produced a version of the first three books of the *Tristia*. Turbervile's *Heroides*, an attempt to make 'A Romaine borne to speake with English jawes',[62] went through four editions before the end of the century. It brought a further series of mythological love-stories into the vernacular, strengthened the link between the Ovidian tradition and the medieval convention of the despairing lover's 'complaint', and eventually inspired an extremely popular

[62] *The heroycall epistles of Publius Ovidius Naso, in Englishe verse: tr. G. Turbervile with A. Sabinus aunsweres* (London, 1567), 'The Translator to the captious sort of Sycophants', sig.).(iiv.

English imitation, Michael Drayton's *England's Heroicall Epistles* of 1597, which took the form of exchanges of letters between famous couples from English history. By the time Drayton was writing, another translation, Marlowe's version of the *Amores*, was circulating in manuscript and being produced in surreptitious editions. By the 1590s then, Ovid had become for many writers, readers, and playgoers a source of poetic and even licentious delight rather than moral edification. The apogee of the new Ovidianism was constituted by the genre which modern critics call epyllion, the erotic narrative poetry, influenced by both the *Heroides* and parts of the *Metamorphoses*, that flourished in the 1590s and of which Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* and Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*, discussed in my next chapter, are the pre-eminent examples. In this erotic tradition, Ovid became once again what he described himself as in the *Ars Amatoria* (ii. 497), 'lascivi praeceptor amoris', the preceptor of wanton love. And with this development, the wheel turned full circle to Augustus' proscription of the poet: in 1599 Marlowe's *Amores* were banned and burned by episcopal order. Late-Elizabethan Ovidian eroticism was distinctly difficult to reconcile with the humanist conviction that the classics should be translated because of their moral worth.

III

The theory of early sixteenth-century humanists like Erasmus and John Colet (founder of St Paul's, the model grammar school) was that the dissemination of the wisdom of the classics would produce new generations of worthy public servants. By the end of the century, the practice looked more complicated. The rigorously rhetorical basis of the educational system made its products gifted in the writing and speaking of polished Latin and English, but a stylish man was not necessarily an embodiment of civic virtue. The case of Ovid was especially acute: no education in style would have been complete without him, but his 'wanton' matter could not be tamed, despite the efforts of moralizers like Golding. Linguistic profligacy became associated with other forms of potential licentiousness. Roger Ascham saw the problem when he remarked in his *Scholemaster* that quick-wittedness—the facility associated with Ovid—was not necessarily the best preparation for public duties: 'the quickest wits commonly may prove the best poets, but not the wisest orators; ready

of tongue to speak boldly, not deep of judgment, either for good council or wise writing'.[63] It is a short step from this insight to the career of John Lyly, grandson of Lily the grammarian, in whose work verbal 'wit' is split apart from moral 'wisdom'.

Lyly's much-imitated *Euphues. The Anatomy of Wyt* (1578) is the key Elizabethan text for a consideration of the dichotomy between stylistic and moral education. Here, facility in the classics becomes a mark of *sprezzatura*, not a path to virtue. Ovid is associated with the worldliness of Naples, not the wisdom of Athens; he is set up as a counter-example to Aristotle (who stands here for education in ethics and politics, not for medieval scholasticism): 'There was all things necessary and in redinesse that myght eyther allure the minde to luste, or entice the hearte to follye, a courte more meete for an *Atheyst*, th[a]n for one of *Athens*, for *Ovid* th[a]n for *Aristotle*, for a gracelesse lover th[a]n for a godly lyver: more fitter for *Paris* th[a]n *Hector*, and meeter for *Flora* th[a]n *Diana*.'[64] We will find the opposition between Ovid and Aristotle reiterated in *The Taming of the Shrew*. *Euphues* is structured as a moral fable, in that the young man has to learn to reject erotic desire and return to the academy (*Love's Labour's Lost* is a brilliant reversal of this movement), but the book's stylistic prodigality is such that austerity doesn't really stand a chance.[65]

It was above all from Ovid that Lyly derived his technique of putting verbal wit in the service of love. Though Shakespeare did not hesitate to parody Euphuism's endless generation of phrases, he could not have written his own witty love-debates—those between Rosaline and Berowne, then Beatrice and Benedick—without the example of Lyly. *Euphues*, like Shakespeare's *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, is constructed on a principle of pairings: the friendship of Euphues and Philautus is threatened by their rivalry in love for Lucilla but briefly re-established when she rejects them both. The book consists principally of exchanges, often in the form of letters; this 'rhetoric of the divided mind'[66] is in a tradition that goes back to the *Heroides*. Indeed, Lucilla's reply to Euphues' proposal of marriage consists in

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[63] Ascham, *The Scholemaster* (written in the 1560s), ed. R. J. Schoeck (Don Mills, Ontario, 1966), 25.

[64] Lyly's *Complete Works*, ed. R. W. Bond, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1902), i. 185.

[65] On Lyly and 'prodigality', see the ch. on him in Richard Helgerson's *The Elizabethan Prodigals* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1976).

[66] G. K. Hunter's phrase, in *John Lyly : The Humanist as Courtier* (Cambridge, Mass., 1962), 51.

large measure of a paraphrase of Helen's epistle to Paris, elaborated from Turbervile's translation.[67] Again, the climax of the first part of *Euphues* is the protagonist's pamphlet of worldly-wise advice, 'A cooling Carde for Philautus and all fond lovers', much of which is adapted and expanded from Ovid's *Remedia Amoris*. It was almost certainly Lyly whom Thomas Nashe had in mind when he jibed in the preface to Greene's *Menaphon* at writers who 'in disguised array vaunt Ovids and Plutarchs plumes as their owne'.[68]

Here, for example, are three lines from the first book of the *Remedia*: 'Ad mea, decepti iuvenes, praecepta venite, | Quos suus ex omni parte fefellit amor. | Discite sanari, per quem didicistis amare' (41–3). A literal translation might be 'Come to my precepts, deceived youths, you whom your own love has cheated in every way. Learn healing from him through whom you learnt to love'; Lyly's elaboration is 'Come therefore to me all ye lovers that have bene deceived by fancie, the glasse of pestilence, or deluded by woemen the gate to perdition: be as earnest to seeke a medicine, as you wer eager to runne into a mischiefe'.[69] The insertion of additional epithets—'the glasse of pestilence', 'the gate to perdition'—is the key to the expansion. It is exactly the linguistic move that is mimicked when Holofernes and Don Armado dip into the alms-basket of words at the great feast of language in *Love's Labour's Lost*.[70]

Lyly also owed his mythological facility to Ovid. Take a typical metamorphic catalogue, which occurs a little earlier in *Euphues*:

Love knoweth no lawes: Did not Jupiter transforme himselfe into the shape of Amphitrio to imbrace Alcmoena? Into the forme of a Swan to enjoye Loeda? Into a Bull to beguyle Io? Into a showre of golde to winne Danae? Did not Neptune chaunge himselfe into a Heyfer, a Ramme, a Floude, a Dolphin, onelye for the love of those he lusted after? Did not Apollo converte himselfe into a Shepheard, into a Birde, into a Lyon, for the desire he had to heale hys disease? If the Gods thoughte no scorne to become beastes, to obtayne their best beloved, shall Euphues be so nyce in chaunging his coppie to gayne his Lady? No, no: he that cannot dissemble in love, is not worthy to live. (Lyly, i. 236)

The specific source of this is Arachne's weaving in Book Six of the

[67] See Lyly's *Complete Works*, i. 220–2, and the discussion in M. P. Tilley, '*Euphues* and Ovid's *Heroical Epistles*', MLN xlv (1930), 301–8.
[68] *Works*, ed. McKerrow, iii. 312.
[69] *Complete Works*, i. 247.
[70] See e.g. Don Armado's letter, read at I. i. 216–67, and Holofernes in the dialogue at the beginning of IV. ii.

Metamorphoses, in which all the transformations listed by Euphues are depicted (except that Jupiter becomes a bull to deceive Europa, not Io); more generally, Ovid is the *locus classicus* for the motif of dissembling in sexual pursuit. As will be seen in later chapters, Arachne's woof also attracted Shakespeare on a variety of occasions. Lyly's version of the list of divine rapes found its way, in compressed form, into Robert Greene's Euphuistic romance, *Pandosto*: 'And yet Dorastus, shame not at thy shepheards weede: the heavenly Godes have sometime earthly thoughtes: Neptune became a ram, Jupiter a Bul, Apollo a shepheard: they, Gods, and yet in love: and thou a man appointed to love' (Bullough, viii. 184). From here, it reached *The Winter's Tale*:

> The gods themselves,
> Humbling their deities to love, have taken
> The shapes of beasts upon them. Jupiter
> Became a bull, and bellowed; the green Neptune
> A ram, and bleated; and the fire-robed god,
> Golden Apollo, a poor humble swain,
> As I seem now.
>
> (IV. iv. 25–31)

This is a good example of how Shakespeare is often Ovidian even when his direct source is not Ovid: his introduction of details such as 'bellowed' and 'bleated' may be said to 'reovidianize' the passage. While the letter is that of *Pandosto*, the spirit is that of the *Metamorphoses*, where local colour is always vivid and animal forms spring to life.

Lyly did not follow Euphues back to the academic cloister; his literary style served not as a cooling card, but as a calling card with which he sought to gain entrance at court. He took his alms-basket of allusions along with him, so once he gained the opportunity to write entertainments for the Queen he became the first to introduce sustained Ovidianism into English drama.[71] He plucked from his Roman exemplar not just verbal plumes but whole plots. The fifteenth epistle of the *Heroides*, tactfully emptied of its lesbian connotations, is the principal source for *Sapho and Phao* (published in 1584). The first three acts of *Midas* (composed in 1589) closely follow the eleventh book of the *Metamorphoses*, while also satirizing Philip II of Spain by reading his colonialism in the context of Midas-like love of gold. *Love's*

[71] The other notable early mythological drama, George Peele's *The Arraignment of Paris* (performed c.1583), was also a court play.

Metamorphosis (not published till 1601, but probably acted in the 1580s) skilfully weaves together the story of Erysichthon, who in the eighth book of the *Metamorphoses* is condemned to hunger after axing a tree in which a nymph of Ceres was confined, and a number of other transformations involving three nymphs and some amorous foresters. As so frequently in Ovid and Shakespearian comedy, metamorphosis takes place in a pastoral landscape.[72] Lyly's plays also rely on Ovid for a host of incidental mythological allusions, and there is the occasional passage of sustained imitation similar to that in the 'cooling Carde'; in *Sapho and Phao*, for instance, the sybil discourses to Phao on the art of love—rather as 'Ganymede' does to Orlando in *As You Like It*—and in so doing makes extensive use of the precepts in Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*.

Gallathea, entered in the Stationers' Register in 1585, is probably Lyly's best play; it certainly gives the best sense of his creative, transformational use of Ovid. It is not an overt dramatization of a single Ovidian story, as some of the other plays are; instead, it is stuffed with a rich variety of Ovidian matter. The main plot turns on Gallathea and Phillida, two girls who are disguised as boys by their shepherd fathers so that they will not be chosen as the virgin who has to be sacrificed to Neptune (the boys playing the girls on stage thus become boys again). The two girl-boys meet in the woods and fall in love; their dilemma is finally resolved when Venus agrees to change one of them into a boy, pointing out that she has already done 'the like to Iphis and Ianthes' (v. iii. 143). The allusion is to the ninth book of the *Metamorphoses*, where a Cretan called Ligdus insists that he wants a boy, girls being less strong and more trouble—if his wife has a girl, it will be put to death. The wife is delivered of a girl but she tells her husband it's a boy, gives it the unisex name Iphis, and dresses it like a boy. At the age of thirteen, Iphis and another lovely girl, Ianthe, fall mutually in love. Iphis laments at what she takes to be the unnaturalness of her own desire: 'interque animalia cuncta | femina femineo conrepta cupidine nulla est' (ix. 733–4)—'But never man could shew | That female yit was tane in love with female kynd' (Golding, ix. 861–2). The story ends happily when Isis metamor-

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[72] On the whole question of landscape in the *Metamorphoses*, see Charles Segal, *Landscape in Ovid's Metamorphoses: A Study in the Transformation of a Literary Symbol* (Wiesbaden, 1969), and Hugh Parry, 'Ovid's Metamorphoses: Violence in a Pastoral Landscape', *TAPA* xcv (1964), 268–82.

phoses Iphis into a real boy. A patterning myth is thus explicitly invoked as a precedent for the resolution of *Gallathea*, and an Ovidian sex-change takes place within the drama. Here an important difference between Lyly and Shakespeare is apparent: the latter always resolves the apparent need for a sex-change naturalistically, he does not resort to direct divine intervention in the Ovidian manner. Shakespearian metamorphoses take place within the mind: even when they are imposed from without, as with the love-juice in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the change is psychologically purposeful.

Lyly's court drama, like the masque in its Jacobean development, actually embodies and develops divinities as characters on stage; the classical gods are brought to the banks of the Humber in a fusion of ancient and native elements which anticipates *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.[73] In the second act, Neptune speaks of his capacity to metamorphose himself in order to deceive men, just as men themselves try to deceive through the more mundane metamorphosis of disguise:

Doe sillie Sheepeheards goe about to deceive great Neptune, in putting on mans attire uppon women: and Cupid to make sport deceive them all, by using a womans apparell upon a God? then Neptune that hast taken sundrie shapes to obtaine love, stick not to practise some deceit to shew thy deitie, and having often thrust thy self into shape of beastes to deceive men, be not coy to use the shape of a Sheepehearde, to shew thy selfe a God. (II. ii. 15–21)

The link here between divine metamorphosis and mortal *dressing up* hints towards a move that will be vital in Shakespeare, namely a shift from the register of myth into that of self-conscious theatricality.

Although he is writing for the Queen, Lyly's is a boy's own world (the company for whom he wrote had no adult actors). The device of cross-dressing the female characters in the first scene enables him to confront head-on the drama's battle with puritanism over the matter of transvestism.[74] Tyterus argues that though it is

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[73] The combination of fractious deities, youthful lovers, a mischievous Cupid, and apprentice artisans in a confused forest-world makes the likelihood of direct influence considerable—see further, Leah Scragg, 'Shakespeare, Lyly and Ovid: The influence of *Gallathea* on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*', *ShS* xxx (1977), 125–34, and *The Metamorphoses of Gallathea: A Study in Creative Adaptation* (Washington DC, 1982).

[74] The scene is discussed in this context by Lisa Jardine, *Still Harping on Daughters: Women and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare* (Brighton, 1983), 21. She then cites the examples of Ganymede and Gaveston, as I do, but does not mention that Ovid is the common factor.

'an unlawfull meanes' to cross-dress his daughter, it is a necessary one in view of the threat to her life. He then appeals to divine precedent:

TYTERUS. To gaine love, the Gods have taken shape of beastes, and to save life art thou coy to take the attire of men?

GALLATHEA. They were beastly gods, that lust could make them seeme as beastes.

(I. i. 88–91)

The puritan accusation that cross-dressed boys on stage are incitements to bestiality (sodomy) is neatly displaced on to the pagan gods. But at the same time the standard sixteenth-century moralization of Ovid is written into the exchange: metamorphosis to a beast emblematizes the bestiality of sexual desire. Having established this idea by means of mythological reference, Lyly subsequently reiterates it in the form of a direct association that does not require the underpinning of allusion: 'I have heard of such a beast called love' (III. i. 39). Like so many of Ovid's tales and Shakespeare's comedies, *Gallathea* explores the ambivalences of love in terms of its shifting orientation—the homoerotic is never far away—and its double aspect as both creative and destructive, both divine and bestial.

Christopher Marlowe, the seminal figure for the translation of Ovid on to the public stage, was not afraid to depict the gods as beastly. The shining crystal pavement in *Hero and Leander* shows 'the gods in sundry shapes, | Committing heady riots, incest, rapes'.[75] 'Riots' suggests a link between political and sexual transgression, an association that is especially significant in *Edward II*, in which the barons' disdain for—and fear of—Piers Gaveston is as much to do with rank as sexuality. When Gaveston plans the wantonness, poetry, and masquing with which he will delight and thus manipulate his King and lover, the show he elaborates at greatest length is a vision of Actaeon and Diana:

> Sometime a lovely boy in Dian's shape,
> With hair that gilds the water as it glides,
> Crownets of pearl about his naked arms,
> And in his sportful hands an olive tree
> To hide those parts which men delight to see,

[75] 'Hero and Leander', i. 143–4, in Marlowe, *Complete Plays and Poems*, ed. E. D. Pendry and J. C. Maxwell (London, 1976). All subsequent Marlowe quotations are from this edn., followed in my text by line references.

> Shall bathe him in a spring; and there hard by,
> One like Actaeon peeping through the grove,
> Shall by the angry goddess be transform'd,
> And running in the likeness of an hart,
> By yelping hounds pull'd down, and seem to die.

(I. i. 60–9)

The economy of Marlowe's lines here is that they achieve at least three effects simultaneously: they evoke the opulence and decadence of a court which has Gaveston as favourite; they make explicit the homoeroticism which is latent in any reference to a boy actor; and through the image of the hunted Actaeon, they foreshadow Gaveston's own nemesis. Later, he will be pursued like Actaeon and the audience may then remember the Renaissance reading of the myth as an emblem of the fate of those who peer into the secret cabinets of princes. The *frisson* of homoeroticism also anticipates Shakespeare: in *Twelfth Night*, a lovely boy, Cesario, will be compared to Diana in a manner just as sensuous; the same play will also allude to Actaeon being hunted down by the hounds of his own desires. Gaveston has in fact begun with an image of 'surfeit', also reiterated by Orsino, behind which is an interpretation of Ovidian metamorphosis as a consequence of excess appetite.

Marlowe's iconoclasm is also exhibited in *Dido Queen of Carthage*.[76] The play is based primarily on Virgil, but it begins by denying the title's promise of epic grandeur in the style of *The Aeneid*, and displaying instead an Ovidianly randy Jupiter dandling the lovely boy Ganymede on his knee. *Dido* contaminates Virgil with Ovid in the area of female suffering as well as homoerotic passion. In Aeneas' narrative of the fate of Hecuba, such lines as 'At which the frantic queen leap'd on his face, | And in his eyelids hanging by the nails, | A little while prolong'd her husband's life' are imitations of Ovid's thirteenth book (compare Golding's phrase 'Did in the traytors face bestowe her nayles').[77] The account of Polyxena's slaughter at the hands of the rugged Pyrrhus is also an *imitatio* of Ovid, an especially interesting association in that the Player's grandiose speech on the same subject in *Hamlet* seems to be a parody of, or at least an allusion to, the Marlovian *Dido* play. If Shakespeare is playing out a contest with his deceased contemporary, he is doing so in the context of a shared Ovidianism.

[76] According to its title-page, written in collaboration with Nashe.
[77] *Dido Queen of Carthage*, II. i. 244–6; Golding, xiii. 673.

Marlowe's Ovidianism is a style as well as a passion. Brian Gibbons has shown how Golding's Englished Ovid foreshadows the dramatist in the way that he 'is lyrical and heroic, yet indulges the wilful exuberance and playful indecorous spirit in the language: he wittily elicits latent—and often unexpected—energies'.[78] Golding's version of the story of Phaëthon is characterized by imagery of the sort which Marlowe made his own a generation later:

> The Princely Pallace of the Sunne stood gorgeous to beholde
> On stately Pillars builded high of yellow burnisht golde,
> Beset with sparckling Carbuncles that like to fire did shine.
>
> .   .   .   .
>
>   *Phaëton* both yong in yeares and wit,
> Into the Chariot lightly lept, and vauncing him in it
> Was not a little proud that he the brydle gotten had.
>
> (ii. 1–3, 197–9)

The language is marked by a 'precipitation'—Coleridge applied the term to *Romeo and Juliet*, the play in which Shakespeare comes closest to this manner[79]—that corresponds to its subject-matter. The verse itself lightly leaps and vaunces with not a little pride, tumbles from line to line as Phaëthon eventually does from his chariot.

For Marlowe, the bold but foolish Phaëthon, who drives the horses of the sun to disaster, was a powerfully emblematic figure. Whether or not the brazen handling of the mighty verse line can be said to make Marlowe himself into a Phaëthon, there is no doubt that the characteristic Marlovian hero is one. Phaëthon was one of those mythical personae who continued to be moralized in the same way from the Middle Ages, through Golding, and well into the seventeenth century. He is the embodiment of ambition and pride. George Sandys interprets crisply: 'This fable to the life presents a rash and ambitious Prince, inflamed with desire of glory and dominion: who in that too powerfull, attempts what so ever is above his power; and gives no limit to his ruining ambition.'[80] As late as 1655, Thomas Hall published *Phaetons folly, or, the downfall of pride : being a translation of the second book of Ovids Metamorphosis . . . where is lively set forth the danger of pride and rashness*. Hall's title and to an even greater extent

Sandys's summary interpretation are readily applicable to Marlowe's two plays that follow Tamburlaine the Great as he is transformed from Scythian shepherd to mighty emperor and scourge of God, then brought down through his pride when he presumptuously burns the holy book. Indeed, the sight on stage of Tamburlaine in his chariot could have summoned up the image of Phaëthon, as a visual mythological allusion to parallel the verbal ones with which the text is littered.[81]

The most famous moment in *Tamburlaine* is that in Part 2 when the protagonist enters in his chariot drawn by two kings with bits in their mouths. His cry, 'Holla, ye pampered jades of Asia! | What, can ye draw but twenty miles a day[?]',[82] is parodied by Ancient Pistol in *2 Henry IV*—'hollow pamper'd jades of Asia, | Which cannot go but thirty mile a day' (II. iv. 164–5)—principally because it is magniloquent almost to the point of bombast. It is linguistically *hollow*. But it is also a target for Pistol since it is an image that had been knocking around in Elizabethan fourteeners for thirty years. Like all Pistol's quotations, it is poetic old hat. Marlowe is, as Nashe would have said, vaunting one of Golding's plumes as his own: the phrase is snatched from 'the pampred Jades of Thrace' in the latter's translation of the story of Hercules (ix. 238—'pampred' is Golding's ingenious translation of Ovid's 'pingues'). The theft may be apt in that Tamburlaine is a Herculean hero, but the phrase had become a cliché by the 1590s since it had already been appropriated by George Gascoigne in his satire of 1576, *The Steele Glas*, and by John Studley in his translation of Seneca's *Hercules Oetaeus*.[83]

Pistol's parody of the image draws attention to a kind of linguistic transmission that is habitual to Renaissance literary composition. Shakespeare himself frequently lined his own poetic nest with Golding's plumes; one of the things that he may be doing in the 'tedious brief scene of young Pyramus | And his love Thisbe' is parodying his own habit. But in the absence of parody or some other signalling device, such as the striking change of style which occurs when the Player delivers his Hecuba speech in *Hamlet*, an audience is not likely to register the intersection between text and source when

[78] Gibbons, ' "Unstable Proteus": Marlowe's "The Tragedy of Dido Queen of Carthage" ', in *Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Brian Morris, Mermaid Critical Commentaries (London, 1968), 25–46 (p. 29).

[79] See *The Romantics on Shakespeare*, ed. Jonathan Bate (London, 1992), 517.

[80] Sandys, *Ovid's Metamorphosis Englished*, 66.

[81] Such allusions often occur in groups: in pt. 1, IV. iii. 3–4, for example, the Calydonian boar is juxtaposed to Cephalus.

[82] *Tamburlaine the Great*, pt. 2, IV. iii. 1–2.

[83] Gascoigne, *The Steele Glas*, ed. Edward Arber (London, 1869), l. 366; Seneca, *His Tenne Tragedies* (London, 1581), fo. 215ʳ.

it is merely a matter of a local verbal appropriation. Sometimes, however, Marlowe alludes to a detail in Ovid that he manifestly expects his audience to recognize. And on some of these occasions, text clashes dramatically with source.

In his valuable book *The Light in Troy*, Thomas M. Greene anatomizes Renaissance imitation into four kinds.[84] Marlowe's dramatic recastings of Ovid provide good examples. Most rudimentary is 'reproductive' or 'sacramental' imitation, in which a classical original is followed with religious fidelity: thus in *The Jew of Malta*, Marlowe merely reproduces Ovid's image of Morpheus, the god of sleep.[85] More sophisticated is 'eclectic' or 'exploitative' imitation, in which heterogeneous allusions are mingled: the contamination of Virgil with Ovid makes *Dido Queen of Carthage* sustainedly eclectic. Most sophisticated is 'dialectical' imitation, in which the later text actively conflicts with and dissociates itself from its classical pre-text. There is a striking instance in *The Jew of Malta*, when Don Mathias sees Abigail dressed as a nun and alludes to the rape of Proserpine:

> The sweetest flower in Cytherea's field,
> Cropp'd from the pleasures of the fruitful earth,
> And strangely metamorphis'd nun.[86]

The image thrives on the contextual incongruity of the allusion, which adds to the incongruity of the Jewish girl wearing the nun's habit: where Proserpina's association with the earth is linked to her chastity, Abigail's is described in terms of 'pleasures', doubtless sexual; then in the second half of the image, in a twist wholly characteristic of Marlowe's seamy Malta, the nunnery is implicitly made synonymous not with heaven but with the underworld to which Proserpina was abducted.

In this instance, there is a double signal alerting the audience to the Ovidian character of the image: a mythological allusion is yoked to the word 'metamorphis'd'. Elizabethan drama is full of transformations; indeed, for an actor to assume a costume is to undergo a kind of metamorphosis, a process highlighted when—as here, and so often in Shakespeare—a character within the play becomes an actor and

[84] Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven, Conn., 1982), 39 ff.

[85] Compare *Jew* II. i. 35–7 with *Met.* xi. 635 ff.

[86] I. ii. 376–8. Shakespeare uses an analogous image in a very different context in his Marlovian-Ovidian tragedy *Romeo and Juliet*: the apparently dead Juliet is described as 'the sweetest flower of all the field' (IV. iv. 56).

assumes a new disguise or role. But a theatre audience would not consider all such changes Ovidian. A flag is needed if Ovid is to be brought into play: this might be an actual quotation, a reference to a story of which he provides the standard version, or simply the word 'metamorphosis' (or one of its cognates). Whilst the term 'metamorphosis' existed in early sixteenth-century English, its cognates first appeared after the publication of Golding's translation, and seem to originate in writers strongly influenced by Ovidian mythology. The earliest recorded user of the verb 'metamorphose' and the noun 'metamorphoser' is George Gascoigne in his *Delicate Diet for daintie mouthde Droonkards* of 1576; the verb occurs in a highly Ovidian context, 'They feigned that Medea, Circe, and such other coulde Metamorphose and transforme men into Beastes, Byrdes, Plantes, and Flowres'. The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (I. i. 66 and II. i. 30) as the earliest use of the form 'metamorphis'd', but if, as seems probable, *The Jew of Malta* antedates that play, then Shakespeare may have picked up the word from Marlowe.

William Adlington's Englishing of *The xi Bookes of the Golden Asse, conteininge the Metamorphosie of Lucius Apuleius* appeared the year before Golding published his complete translation of the *Metamorphoses*,[87] but throughout the Elizabethan period the word 'metamorphosis' was effectively synonymous with Ovid's work. This may be seen from a joke in the academic play, *The Return from Parnassus*, Part 2, when Will Kemp, the clown in Shakespeare's company, is given the lines, 'Few of the university men pen plaies well, they smell too much of that writer Ovid, and that writer Metamorphosis, and talke too much of Proserpina and Juppiter'.[88] The accusation here is that the university-educated dramatists are profligate in their love of mythological embroidery; our Shakespeare, Kemp claims, can put them down with his native wit. But the joke does not have literary historical validity: as I will show in Chapters 2 and 3, Shakespeare established his credentials as a dramatist, and a rival to the university wits, precisely by smelling of that writer Ovid (as in Holofernes' joke on 'Naso') and that writer Metamorphosis. Even at the very end of his career he would go on talking of Jupiter (in *Cymbeline*) and Proserpina (in *The Winter's Tale*).

[87] For the possibility that Shakespeare read Apuleius, see J. J. M. Tobin, *Shakespeare's Favourite Novel: A Study of The Golden Asse as Prime Source* (Lanham, Md., 1984).

[88] ll. 1766 ff., in *The Three Parnassus Plays (1598–1601)*, ed. J. B. Leishman (London, 1949).

Marlowe was the epitome of the university man. *Tamburlaine* glitters with the kind of mythological allusiveness which Kemp mocks, while *Edward II* sometimes seems to require an extremely detailed recall of Ovid's Latin. As Shakespeare would in *Antony and Cleopatra*, Marlowe makes a dramatic point by playing on the court's preoccupation with precedence, as it is manifested in the question of who sits where or who sits first.[89] Edward sits Gaveston by his side in the second Chair Royal, which would normally have been occupied by the queen; Mortimer senior is outraged, 'What man of noble birth can brook this sight? | *Quam male conveniunt!*' (I. iv. 12–13). He is quoting, or rather slightly misquoting, Ovid, 'non bene conveniunt nec in una sede morantur | maiestas et amor' (*Met.* ii. 846–7). A literal translation of this would be 'majesty and love do not go well together and cannot last long in one seat'; Golding's translation neatly incorporates the Elizabethan sense of 'state' as 'Chair of State', 'Betweene the state of Majestie and love is set such oddes, | As that they can not dwell in one' (ii. 1057–8). The listener to Marlowe's line is supposed to reconstruct the full sentence from Mortimer's three words: only then can the punning reference to the throne be understood and the opposition between majesty and love perceived. That opposition is, of course, the play's central topos. Marlowe may even be asking his ideal spectator to recall the context in the *Metamorphoses*: it refers to an undignified union between high and low, Jupiter's descent to the form of a bull in pursuit of his desire for Europa.[90]

When a writer's mind goes to an earlier writer's work, it will often remain there for a moment and undertake a second appropriation. Thus, three lines later in *Edward II*, Warwick introduces a favourite Marlovian simile, 'Ignoble vassal that like Phaeton | Aspir'st unto the guidance of the sun' (I. iv. 16–17). Both images—the king as the sun, the ambitious aspirant as Phaëthon—are conventional, but when combined in this context they are given fresh life. Mortimer replies, 'Their downfall is at hand': once the audience recognizes that Gaveston is Phaëthon-like in his ambition, they know that he will fall. Again, this is a model for the kind of dramatically economic mythological allusion at which Shakespeare subsequently becomes

[89] See the spat between Octavius and Antony at *Antony and Cleopatra*, II. ii. 27–30.
[90] Contextual recollection also undercuts Mortimer's quotation from Niobe: '*Maior sum quam cui possit fortuna nocere*' (v. iv. 69, quoting *Met.* vi. 198, 'I am too great for fortune to harm')—the pride of each character is swiftly followed by a fall.

adept. The horses of the sun recur, but without Phaëthon, after Gaveston's death. In the language of precipitation which anticipates that of *Romeo and Juliet*, Edward wills time forward to the moment of reckoning in battle, 'Gallop apace, bright Phoebus, through the sky, | And dusky night, in rusty iron car . . .' (IV. iii. 44–5—'rusty iron' is Golding's idiom). Since Phaëthon has already been brought into the consciousness of the listener, he does not have to be explicitly invoked for it to be seen that Edward is hurrying towards his own downfall.

A variant on the image of the celestial chariot constitutes perhaps the most extraordinary Ovidian allusion in Elizabethan drama. Dr Faustus in his final hour cries,

> *O lente, lente, currite noctis equi!*
> The stars move still, time runs, the clock will strike,
> The devil will come, and Faustus must be damn'd.
> (v. ii. 143–5)

The Latin-knowing and literary-minded member of the audience will recall the famous aubade in Ovid's *Amores*, where the lover calls on the horses of the night to slow down so that he may remain in his lover's arms, ' "lente currite, noctis equi!" ' (I. xiii. 40—in his *Ovids Elegies*, Marlowe translates, 'Stay night, and run not thus', omitting the image of the horses, as if he is saving it up for the drama). Faustus would no doubt have repeated the line had he been allowed a night in the arms of Helen of Troy; the final irony of his fate is that he speaks it in the face of damnation instead of love. The introduction of this pagan and erotic line in a sequence of the play in which one would expect attention to be wholly focused on Christian matter—the possibility of last-minute salvation, the descent into hell—is one of Marlowe's boldest strokes. The juxtaposition renders the relationship with both Christianity and Ovidian eroticism 'dialectical'.

Later in his final soliloquy, Faustus recognizes that he will not be allowed the release of metamorphosis,

> Ah, Pythagoras' *metempsychosis*, were that true,
> This soul should fly from me, and I be chang'd
> Unto some brutish beast.
> (v. ii. 175–7)

Although in the scene at the German Emperor's court there is a plan to use Faustus' magic to enact the myth of Actaeon, *Dr Faustus* is in

important respects un-Ovidian—the play's transformations are associated primarily with necromancy rather than classical metamorphosis. Faustus' recognition that Pythagorean metempsychosis does not apply, that he will not change but must be damned perpetually, dramatizes the difference between the Ovidian, where all things change but nothing is destroyed, and the Christian, where there is a judgement and an ending. Many major Elizabethan writers combine Ovidian allusions and analogies with a marked sense, usually determined by the Christian tradition, of difference and distance from their classical forebear. This is Thomas Greene's remaining category, 'heuristic' imitation, which in its own processes dramatizes the historical difference between the poet and his precursor—sameness is combined with difference, continuity with change. The text acknowledges its predecessor, but in so doing finds its own distinctive voice; it 'acts out its own coming into being' and in so doing 'creates a bridge' which heals the sense of estrangement from the past which was the melancholy downside of the humanist project of cultural renovation.[91]

Greene recognizes that it is not always possible to distinguish between heuristic and dialectical imitation: the difference is essentially tonal in that heuristic imitation seeks to hold together past and present, whereas dialectical imitation is a more aggressive attempt to reject the past. Edmund Spenser provides a case in point. Book 3 of *The Faerie Queene*, as originally published in 1590, offers a dazzling etiology of love that is both Ovidian and non-Ovidian. Ovid is a source when the narcissistic origins of desire are acknowledged as Britomart falls in love with an image in a glass, but thanks to her Chastity the heroine is able to rescue Love in the person of Amoret from the power of rapacious Ovidian enchantment (Busyrane's castle, with its tapestries of the Arachnean rapes of the gods), yet then the closing consummation is a return to Ovid as Amoret and Scudamore fuse in the manner of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus. The book's pervasive sexual charge is Ovidian, but what makes it different from the world of the *Metamorphoses* is that most Christian and least Ovidian virtue, Chastity. Similarly, the 'Mutabilitie' cantos begin with an Ovidian sense of 'Change, the which all mortall things doth sway',[92] but in the Faunus episode the story of Diana and Actaeon is updated and

[91] *The Light in Troy*, 41.
[92] 'Two Cantos of Mutabilitie', VI. i. 2, in Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A. C. Hamilton (London, 1977). All subsequent quotations from this edn.

reworked in such a way that what is metamorphosed is the landscape of Ireland rather than the body of the voyeur—as punishment for seeing Diana bathing, Faunus is clad in a deer-skin and pursued, but he does not actually become a deer; Diana, however, abandons her stream and the fair forests around Arlo hill, thus transforming Ireland into a wilderness ravaged by wolves and thieves. This is heuristic in that the force of Ovidian transformation is acknowledged, yet held together with a 'modern' concern—the Irish problem. The heuristic slides into the dialectical when the cantos break off with a more resounding rejection of the metamorphic spirit, as Spenser alludes to 'that great Sabbaoth God' and the time

> when no more Change shall be,
> But stedfast rest of all things firmely stayd
> Upon the pillours of Eternity,
> That is the contrayr to *Mutabilitie*.
>
> (VIII. ii. 2–5)

Ovidian fluidity is replaced by the stability of Christian faith.

Spenser's relationship with Ovid, like Milton's a generation later, was self-consciously problematic. The wit, metamorphic power, and mythological range of the Roman poet, besides being profoundly admired in themselves, were vital poetic resources; yet Ovid was both a pagan poet and an erotic one. Spenser's task was to metamorphose Ovid's poem itself, simultaneously to replicate its art and to rewrite it in Christian or at least moral terms.[93] Difference was as important as imitation. Difference, particularly of literary medium, also became increasingly important for Shakespeare in his dealings with Ovid. But before fully developing an art which dispersed the *Metamorphoses*, transposing aspects of them into dramatic form, the young poet disciplined himself as an imitator in the brilliant apprentice-works in which he modelled himself on his Roman exemplar as consciously as did any other writer of the age.

[93] Recent critical work on Spenser and Ovid, as well as Milton and Ovid, has addressed this issue in relation to theoretical questions of poetic authority and revisionary reading: see in particular John Guillory, *Poetic Authority: Spenser, Milton, and Literary History* (New York, 1983) and Richard J. DuRocher, *Milton and Ovid* (Ithaca, NY, 1985). The best treatment of Ovid and the 'Mutabilitie' cantos is M. N. Holahan, '"Iamque opus exegi": Ovid's Changes and Spenser's Brief Epic of Mutability', *ELR* vi (1976), 244–70.

Shakespeare and Ovid

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