

Latomus 40 (1981)

Ovid : Poet of imagined Reality (1)

In describing Ovid as a poet of imagined reality David West points to the paradox which lies at the heart of the *Metamorphoses* and is responsible for much of the wit and delight of the poem. It is the purpose of this paper to investigate in four myths the literary techniques by which Ovid unites in poetic interplay the world of the gods (2) and its supernatural events with the world of men and its everyday realities : in each passage we shall try to discover what poetic effect Ovid achieves by setting the rules, practices and expectations of normal life against the "imagined reality" he creates from his material. We shall consider the myths of Jupiter and Io : I. 588-624, Mars and Venus : IV, 167-189, Philemon and Baucis : VIII, 624-720 and Pygmalion : X, 243-297.

The myth of Jupiter and Io : I. 588-624, a story of divine rape and its consequences, focuses in lines 588-600 on the seduction of a girl by a god, a fantastic situation which is highlighted by the additional factor that she is the daughter of a river, a relationship stressed in the first line :

*viderat a patrio redeuntem (2) Iuppiter illam
flumine ...* (I, 588-9)

(1) For this description of Ovid, see *Polifemo and Galatea*, A. A. PARKER, EUP, 1977, Appendix I, p. 157, David WEST. I am grateful to Professor West for much helpful criticism.

(2) Ovid, like Homer, portrays gods in the *Metamorphoses* who enjoy human love-making and intrigue, superhuman power and knowledge ; they are also associated in a loosely Epicurean sense (the language is Lucretian) with the forces of Creation, *Metamorphoses* I, 21, 32, 57, and with the State rule, XV, 858-70. It can be argued from *A.A.*, I, 637-42, that Ovid may have believed that "religion is a useful sanction for social morality". L. P. WILKINSON, *Ovid Recalled* (CUP, 1955) ; cf. CICERO, *De div.*, I, 3 ; *De leg.*, II, 12, but in the *Met.* we must surely follow WILKINSON and HEINZE (quoted) in believing that Ovid is concerned not with belief but with myth, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

(3) BÖMER, *P. Ovidius Naso Metamorphosen Buch 1-3* (Heidelberg, 1969), I, p. 588, points out that one would expect Io to be returning to her father's house, cf. Nausicaa's returning home from the river when she meets Odysseus, HOMER, *Odyssey*, VI, 110 et seq. There are significant parallels with AESCHYLUS' *Prometheus Vincit* : Ovid follows Aeschylus in his dramatic presentation of an encounter (Io and Prometheus, Io and Jupiter) and the content of the visions, *P.V.*, 647-654, is close to *Met.* I, 589-597. However, far from returning home, in *P.V.*, Io has been driven from home because Zeus desires her and orders this. It could be argued that Ovid is fusing the story of Nausicaa with the myth in *P.V.* (cf. his fusion of versions of SCYLLA, *Amores*, II, 16, 23-24) and providing a nicely logical explanation of their encounter, while at the same time pointing the irregularity of

At the outset there is established poetic interplay between the real world and the imagined world Ovid creates : in the everyday world *a patrio ... flumine* refers to the river where she was born but in Ovid's treatment it refers to the river which begat her.

Any description of the girl and any suggestion of the onset of passion are omitted. Immediately and dramatically (4) Jupiter addresses her, and the account of the courtship of the god is all the more piquant for being conducted with a full deployment of the human techniques of flattery, cajolery, persuasion, boastfulness and appeal.

The dramatic irony of his opening address *o virgo love digna*, 589, and the apostrophic flattery *tuoque beatum / nescio quem factura toro*, 589-90, introduce the absurd and disingenuous plea to her to take shelter from the heat of the mid-day sun (5) :

*'pete ... umbras
altorum nemorum' - et nemorum monstraverat umbras -
dum calet, et medio sol est altissimus orbe!* (I, 590-2)

His apparent concern, seemingly strengthened by the matter-of-fact parenthesis, is neatly undercut by the rhetoric! the chiasitic repetition of *umbras / (altorum) nemorum* 590-1, *nemorum ... umbras* 591, is in contrast to *medio sol ... altissimus orbe* 592, and linked by the word-play *altorum* (6) *altissimus* 591, 592.

He moves from advice to cajolery :

*quodsi sola times latebras intrare ferarum,
praeside tuta deo nemorum secreta subibis ...* (I, 593-4)

The irony of *praeside tuta deo* 594 is a prelude to the vaunting of lines 595-6. Revealing his identity he boasts his high position as king of the gods, and the use

Io's behaviour, which is contrary to social convention, by retaining *redeuntem* (literary echo of Homer) and merely changing the preposition.

(4) This presentation recalls Aeschylus, *P.V.*

(5) This speech echoes with ironic variation *P.V.*, 647-654 :

| | | | |
|--------|---|--------|--|
| 589 | <i>o virgo love digna</i> | 647 | ... "Ω μέγ' εὐδαιμον κόρη |
| 589-90 | <i>tuoque beatum / nescio quem factura toro</i> | 648-9 | ... ἔξόν σοι γάμου τυχεῖν μεγίστου ... |
| 590-1 | <i>pete ... umbras / altorum nemorum</i> | 652-3 | ... ἔξελθε πρὸς Λέρνης βαθὺν λειμῶνα, ποιμένας βουστάσεως τε πρὸς πατρός |
| 594 | <i>praeside tuta deo</i> | 649-51 | ... Ζεὺς ... πρὸς σοῦ τέθαλπται ... θέλει |
| 597 | <i>ne fuge me</i> | 651-2 | ... μὴ πολακτίσῃς λέχος τὸ Ζηνός ... |

(6) *Altorum nemorum* recalls *nemora alta* VERGIL, *Georgics*, III, 393, with *ne fuge me*, *Met.* I, 597, ironically picking up *nec tu aspernata vocantem*.

of everyday social terms *plebe* 595, *sceptra* 596 in conjunction with the anaphora *sed qui* 595, 596 serves to highlight the comic absurdity of the fantastic claim :

*nec de plebe deo, sed qui caelestia magna
sceptra manu teneo, sed qui vaga fulmina mitto.* (I, 595-6)

The snobbery, typically human, is here employed by a divinity for the purpose of seduction. His final words are a direct plea : *ne fuge me!* 597. On a human level it is futile : she is already fleeing. But he is a god : the logic he applies is human but superfluous, for his divine control is supreme. Omnipotent, he envelops the earth in darkness and rapes her chastity, *pudorem* 600.

Juno now arrives on the scene ; she has had her eye on the fields below : *medios ... dispexit* (?) *in agros* 601, and her suspicions about her husband's activities are aroused by the inexplicable appearance of a widespread fog, *lata caligine* 599. A goddess, she yet reacts like any suspicious human wife, and lines 600-9 chart her actions consequent upon her suspicions. Ovid explains the phenomenon by describing the mechanics of the operation : *noctis faciem nebulas fecisse volucres* 602 (?), and stresses the strange effect by the contrast *noctis faciem, sub nitido ... die* 602, 603. Juno's surprised reaction – *mirata* 603 is placed between *sub nitido ... die* for emphasis – is followed by logical deduction, marked by balanced cola and negatives *non nec* 603, 604 : those clouds cannot be from the river nor from the damp ground :

*non fluminis illas
esse nec umenti sensit tellure remitti* (I, 603-4)

Her inevitable conclusion is that her husband is probably up to one of his intrigues, and she looks round, *circumspicit* 605, to see where he is :

*atque, suos coniunx ubi sit, circumspicit, ut quae
deprensi totiens iam nosset furta mariti.* (I, 605-6)

The stress on the possessiveness of *suos coniunx* 605 is reinforced by the positioning of *mariti* at the end of line 606, the resentful acceptance of *ut quae ... iam nosset* 605, 606, confirmed by the indefinite number of his affairs, *deprensi totiens* 606, and the juxtaposition *furta mariti* 606.

(7) *Dispexit* carries a double connotation : it is used elsewhere by Ovid to denote looking down from a height over a wide area, cf. *Met.* II, 178 ; VII, 223 ; *A.A.*, II, 87. But it carries too the sense of looking through darkness to see what is beyond, cf. *VERGIL., Aeneid.* VI, 733-4, and has application to blindness, cf. *CICERO, De finibus*, IV, 23 ; *LUCRETIVUS*, II, 741-2 ; III, 564. Both connotations are here relevant.

(8) Ovid is here describing with literary reference to cloudcover and night the phenomenon of swiftly-rising Mediterranean storms, cf. *HOMER, Odyssey*, V, 291-4 ; IX, 67-9 ; *VERGIL., Aeneid.* I, 88-9.

She fails to find him in the sky and draws the inevitable conclusion :

*'Aut ego fallor,
aut ego laedor' ait.* (I, 607-8)

She then descends to earth and with divine expertise orders the clouds to disperse. The pleasure we take in tracing the acute ratiocinations of this injured wife is heightened by the fact that she is the queen of the Olympians.

The stage is now set for a divine comedy enacted in terms of human reality in lines 610-624. The crucial factor here is the persistence of the suspicious wife which is now confronted by the scheming attitude of her deceiving husband. Jupiter knows his wife well : he had anticipated her arrival : *coniugis adventum praesenserat* 610. *Coniugis* 610 neatly picks up *coniunx* 605 to point the relationship. He resorts to metamorphosis : he changes Io into a heifer, and the absurdity is heightened by the use of the high-style patronymic *Inachidos* 611, and by the nice detail that the heifer too, like Io, is beautiful : *bos quoque formosa est* 612. A swift change of subject, *ille* 611, *bos* 612, *Saturnia* 612 accompanies the metamorphosis and points the eternal triangle :

*inque nitentem
Inachidos vultus mutaverat ille iuvencam –
bos quoque formosa est : speciem Saturnia vaccae,
quamquam invita, probat ...* (I, 610-13)

Grudgingly Juno approves the appearance of the cow, and feigning ignorance of the true situation, which as a goddess she cannot but know, she asks a series of questions rendered the more emphatic by the use of the double negative *nec uon* 613 and the three interrogative words :

*nec non, et cuius et unde
quove sit armento, veri quasi nescia, quaerit.* (I, 613-4)

Jupiter invents a lie⁽⁹⁾ and his wife calls his bluff : she asks for the heifer as a gift. He is now in a predicament : he must either betray his mistress or arouse his wife's suspicions. It is a classic situation and he has no choice. But Ovid presents the problem precisely, prefacing it with a deliberative question, *qui faciat?* 617, which is followed by a logical thought-sequence :

*crudele suos addicere amores,
non dare suspectum est, pudor⁽¹⁰⁾ est, qui suadeat illinc,
hinc dissuadet amor.* (I, 617-9)

(9) BÖMER considers this a cheap lie but Ovid is applying the logic of Lucretius' scientific argument, cf. *De rerum natura*, II, 598 ; II, 998 ; V, 795-6, 821-2 ; cf. *Met.*, 76-81, which is picked up by Prometheus' son Deucalion, I, 393.

(10) The conflict between *pudor* and *amor* is a recurrent theme in Latin love-poetry, cf. *OVID, Amores*, I, 2, 32 ; I, 6, 60 ; III, 10, 28-9.

Argument is set against argument: *crudele suos addicere amores, non dare suspectum est* 617, 618; balanced cola are reinforced with chiasmus and antithesis: (*pudor*) *qui suadeat illinc, hinc dissuadet amor* 618, 619. The language contains a note of moral conflict, but it leads only to an entirely rational conclusion: if he refused to give up the cow, it could seem that she was not, after all, a cow:

*victus pudor esset amore ;
sed, leve si mutus sociae generisque torique
vacca negaretur, poterat non vacca videri.* (I, 619-21)

Pudor 619 echoes *pudor* 618 and ironically recalls *pudor* 600. The ludicrous absurdity is underlined: Juno is indeed not only wife but – allowable in a divinity – more than a wife: *sociae generisque torique* 620, and Io's cow-identity is stressed by repetition, *vacca vacca* 621, while the argument itself is strengthened by the change (common practice though this is) from the subjunctive to the indicative *poterat* 621. The argument is conclusive: he makes her a present of the cow, *paelice donata* 622. *Paelice* 622 points the human suspicion which prompts the goddess finally to entrust the cow to the guardianship of Argos of the hundred eyes.

This episode focuses upon an "eternal triangle" situation which is itself both human and fantastic but is set on earth, and which proceeds by means of the alternating divine and human roles of the divinities. In this domestic imbroglio the couple in contention are the king and queen of the Olympian deities. In this comedy of deception the deceived is omniscient and the deceiver knows it. The structural interaction of human reality and divine fantasy within a realistic setting is reinforced by stylistic devices and by the application of the language of everyday social and moral conventions to an entirely incongruous context.

Book IV, 168-188 is similarly concerned with an "eternal triangle" situation, the love-affair of the deities Mars and Venus which is set in heaven, its exposure by the outraged husband Vulcan, and the gods' enjoyment of a scandal⁽¹¹⁾.

This myth provides the prelude to the story of the Sun's passion for Leucothoe, and it is thus nicely appropriate and suggestive that the role of the Sun is established at the beginning: it is the Sun, the first to see all things, who is thought to have been the first to witness the adultery of Mars and Venus:

*primus adulterium⁽¹²⁾ Veneris cum Marte putatur
hic vidisse deus: videt hic deus omnia primus.* (IV, 171-2)

(11) The variations from HOMER, *Odyssey*, VIII, 266-366 and OVID, *A.A.*, II, 561-94 are indicative of Ovid's main concerns in this version.

(12) Ovid omits the detail of HOMER, *Odyssey*, VIII, 266-70, and the mockery of *A.A.*, II, 563-72; his concern is not with the affair *per se*.

Distressed he reveals all to Vulcan: the language of conventional morality, *adulterium* 171, *furta* 174, *furti* 174, provides ironic comment:

*indoluit facto Iunonigenaeque marito
furta tori furtique locum monstravit.* (IV, 173-4)

Vulcan is suitably shattered: while his wife was making love, he had been working, itself an amusing genre detail⁽¹³⁾. The human reality of the situation is offset by the fantasy of its development. Vulcan stops, shocked, the effect stressed by *zeugma*:

*et mens, et quod opus fabrilis dextra tenebat,
excidit:* (IV, 175-6)

Immediately he constructs a trap for the lovers: he makes a web⁽¹⁴⁾. *Extemplo* 176 is the keyword. Ovid is carefully realistic in his description of the manufacture of the web and of its ensnaring purpose, *utque leves tactus momentaque parva sequantur* 180⁽¹⁵⁾:

*extemplo graciles ex aere catenas
retiaque et laqueos, quae lumina fallere possent,
elimat – non illud opus tenuissima vincant
stamina, non summo quae pendet aranea tigno –
efficit.* (IV, 176-81)

Elimat⁽¹⁶⁾, a rare word used primarily of filing, is precisely appropriate for the making of slender chains, and the delicacy of the construction is both heightened and undercut by the extravagant and absurd claim boasted in the parenthesis and stressed by the anaphora of *non* 178, 179.

The lovers come to bed: the reality of the triangular situation is confirmed by specific personal reference with underlying moral connotations, *coniunx adulter* 182, *viri* 184⁽¹⁷⁾, and the comic fantasy developed in the description of the enmeshing of the lovers in the net:

*ut venere torum coniunx et adulter in unum,
arte viri vinclisque nova ratione paratis
in mediis ambo deprenti amplexibus haerent.* (IV, 182-4)

(13) Cf. Jupiter's seduction of Alcmena while Amphitryo was at war, PLAUTUS' *Amphitryo*.

(14) The realistic description of the web derives from HOMER, *Odyssey*, VIII, 272-81, but Ovid's treatment alters the tone.

(15) A literary echo of VERGIL, *Aeneid*, VI, 146.

(16) Cf. CICERO, *Ad Atticum*, 16, 7, 3, where *elimes* is used by Atticus in a precise sense in the climax of his reproach to Cicero for his absence from Rome: *Velim σχολιον aliquod elimes ad me oportuisse te istuc facere*.

(17) Cf. a similar technique, I, 611-2.

Success is achieved. The swift pace of events is crucial to this version of the myth; the fact that Vulcan had feigned departure is covered merely by the epithet *Lemnius* 185, and there is no detail about the lovers⁽¹⁸⁾. What matters is their exposure: *extemplo* 185 picking up *extemplo* 176 marks the stages of revenge and triumph of the outraged husband. He opens the ivory doors, *valvas* 185, and lets in the gods⁽¹⁹⁾:

Lemnius extemplo valvas ⁽²⁰⁾ *patefecit eburnas*
inmisitque deos: (IV, 185-6)

We are now apparently in a realistic bedroom scene yet it is fantastic. The gods are delighted: Mars and Venus lie fettered, *ligati* ⁽²¹⁾. The language of morality is sustained but is totally undercut by the levity of the gods: they are merry, *dis non tristibus* 187 ⁽²²⁾, *Superi risere* 188, and one of them wishes he were making love to Venus, *aliquis ... optat / sic fieri turpis* 186-7 ⁽²³⁾:

illi iacuerunt ligati
turpiter, atque aliquis de dis non tristibus optat
sic fieri turpis: Superi risere, diuque
haec fuit in toto notissima fabula caelo. (IV, 186-9)

For a long time this was the best-known scandal in the whole of heaven!

Both the setting and the personalities within this episode are fantastic, but the love-affair and the cuckolded husband belong to the world of everyday. The wit is in the clash, in the real-life implications of the fantasy: the absurdity is pointed by the description of a god's adultery trap which is at once realistic and fantastic. Ovid applies the language of conventional morality to a situation which develops

(18) HOMER includes the details of Hephaestus' feigned departure to Lemnos, Ares' entrance to Aphrodite, the entrapping, Helios' alerting Hephaestus to return, *Odyssey*, VIII, 282-98. This is condensed (e.g. *Lemnius, ut venire torum ...*); Ovid's concern is perhaps not with the total story but with his selective treatment.

(19) Hephaestus, on seeing the lovers, utters an anguished and vengeful speech, *Odyssey*, VIII, 306-20; Ovid is uninterested in the psychology of his characters.

(20) *Valvae*, the folding-doors in a Roman house, belong also in the fantastic topography of the gods, *Met.* I, 168-76, and are carved by Vulcan, *Met.* II, 4-5. But it is the suddenness of the opening which is here dramatically important, cf. CICERO, *De div.* I, 34, 74: *valvae clausae repagulis subito se ipsae aperuerunt*; HORACE, *Satires*, II, 6, 112: *cum subito ingens / valvarum strepitus lectis excussit utrumque*. In an erotic context, Ovid's usage here ironically recalls PROPERTIUS, IV, 8, 51.

(21) Only in OVID, *A.A.*, II, 581-3, is there any reference to the lovers' behaviour at this point. Both Homer and Ovid are concerned with the reaction of the gods.

(22) The litotes *dis non tristibus*, variant of ἀσβεστος γέλως, *Odyssey*, VIII, 326, serves to heighten the ironic effect of the language of conventional morality.

(23) The god's comment occurs in all three versions: Hermes is cheerfully desirous, *Odyssey*, VIII, 339-342, and this is adapted in *A.A.*, II, 585-6. In *Met.* IV, 187-8 Ovid mockingly retains the moral tone.

fantastically, and the burlesque is heightened by the delighted reaction of the gods, the non-dispensers of virtue.

In *Metamorphoses*, VIII, 624-720 ⁽²⁴⁾, two peasants, Philemon and Baucis, entertain Jupiter and Mercury and are duly rewarded while the rest of the neighbourhood is punished for its inhospitality.

The fusion of reality and fantasy is established in the first five lines of the episode: Jupiter and Mercury descend to earth and seeking shelter are received by one homestead and that a small cottage roofed with straw and reeds:

tamen una recepit
parva quidem, stipulis et canna tecta palustri. (VIII, 629-30)

The plain description leads into the realism of the description of the owners, in which lines, 631-6, the piety and devotion of the elderly couple are spelt out: the love which unites Baucis and Philemon is carefully charted in the progression from youth through maturity to old age. Of the same age, they were married young, lived always in the same cottage and grew old together, making light of their poverty and sharing their tasks:

sed pia Baucis anus parilique aetate Philemon
illa sunt annis iuncti iuvenalibus, illa
consenuere casa, paupertatemque fatendo
effecere levem nec iniqua mente ferendo. (VIII, 631-4)

Balanced cola reinforce the unity of their shared experience: *illa sunt annis iuncti iuvenalibus* 632, *illa / consenuere casa* 632, 633; corresponding gerundive phrases, *paupertatem fatendo* 633, *nec iniqua mente ferendo* 634, convey their shared acceptance of poverty.

Finally, the alternative indirect question of 635 leads to an emphatic assertion of their twofold unity:

nec refert dominos illic famulosne requiras:
tota domus duo sunt, idem parentque iubentque. (VIII, 635-6)

Fantasy is resumed as the gods enter, and a nice incongruity marks the distinction between Jupiter and Mercury, elevated by the high-style epic compound *caelicolae* 637 ⁽²⁵⁾, and the small household gods, *parvos ... penates* 637; the wit is furthered in 638 ⁽²⁶⁾ in which the divine heads are lowered to enter the lowly household:

(24) For a detailed commentary on the myth of Philemon and Baucis see OVID, *Metamorphoses VIII*, ed. A. S. HOLLIS (OUP, 1970), pp. 106 et seq.

(25) Cf. VERGIL, *Aeneid*, II, 641; VI, 554; X, 97.

(26) The entrance and immediate hospitality echo Evander's welcome to Aeneas, VIII, 366-8; the literary echo adds to the incongruity of the scene.

summissoque humiles intrarunt vertice postes (VIII, 638)

As in 629-630 the fusion of fantasy and reality provides a natural transition to the next section, 639-678, which, with the exception of *adcuere dei* 660, is entirely realistic. Ovid describes in detail the scrupulous hospitality of Philemon and Baucis, their concern for their guests' comfort and their serving of a meal. Busy-ness is the keynote of lines 639-659. The solicitous Baucis, *sedula* 640, throws a rough covering over the seat to which the gods are invited and restores the fire. The humble care is minutely described⁽²⁷⁾, and only the final word *anili* 643 is reminder of the effort it costs the old woman:

*inque foco tepidum cinerem dimovit et ignes
suscitat hesternos foliisque et cortice sicco
nurit et ad flammam anima producit anili :* (VIII, 641-3)

The cookingpot is heated, the vegetables prepared and the pork put on to cook. We are in the world of the Italian peasant⁽²⁸⁾. The guests meanwhile are not forgotten: they are diverted with conversation and offered a wash, but Ovid conceals any intrusion of fantasy at this point. Far from it: he elaborates upon the detail of a bowl of beechwood which hangs by a nail from its curved handle, and which is taken down and filled with water for washing:

*erat alveus illic
fagineus, curva clavo suspensus ab ansa :
is tepidis impletur aquis ...* (VIII, 652-4)

The couch is spread with a coverlet brought out only for best, and the table is set. Attention is drawn by the alliteration of "v" and by litotes *non indignanda* 659 to the poverty of the cover:

*vestibus hunc velant, quas non nisi tempore festo
sternere consueverant, sed et haec vilisque vetusque
vestis erat, lecto non indignanda saligno.* (VIII, 657-9)

The only fantasy in the section occurs at line 660, *adcuere dei*, but it is momentary only, and lines 660-678 are concerned with the final preparations for the meal itself. The anxious but willing hospitality of the host and hostess marks the beginning and end of the section. Baucis tucks up her skirt and sets the table in place: she is trembling perhaps because of old age and perhaps too because she is anxious that everything should be just so. The detail is explicit: the table has an

(27) A. S. HOLLIS, *op. cit.*, stresses the Hellenistic treatment of this episode, p. 166 n. 143 et seq.; Brooks Otis is surely unjustified in rejecting the intrinsic importance of the physical details in view of the emphasis set by Ovid and strengthened by personal detail: BROOKS OTIS, *Ovid as an Epic Poet* (CUP, 1966), pp. 203, 204.

(28) The meal is typical of that of an Italian peasant, ref. A. S. HOLLIS, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

uneven leg and has to be steadied by means of a tile: she then wipes it clean with mint:

*mensam succincta tremensque
ponit anus, mensae sed erat pes tertius impar :
testa parem fecit, quae postquam subdita clivum
sustulit, aequatam mentae tersere virentes.* (VIII, 660-3)

The simplicity of the meal is pointed by literary devices: the *gustatio* is introduced with elevated periphrasis: *bicolor sinceræ baca Minervæ* 664, but the other ingredients of the hors d'œuvres are listed directly: cornel cherries, endives, radishes, cheese and eggs, all served in earthenware dishes. The plain quality of the pottery is accentuated by the ironic description of the mixing-bowl, *caelatus eodem* / ... *argento crater* 668-9, and the succeeding reference to the cups made of beechwood in order to stress the poverty of the equipment:

*post haec caelatus eodem
sistitur argento crater fabricataque fugo
pocula, qua cava sunt, flaventibus illita ceris.* (VIII, 668-70)

After a brief delay the meat is brought in: wine of only recent vintage again is served. The facts are sufficient indication of poverty and the language correspondingly plain:

nec longae rursus referuntur vinta senectae (VIII, 672)

Dessert follows: nuts, figs and dates, plums, apples and grapes: a gleaming honeycomb is in the middle. The couple have done their very best, and despite their straitened circumstances their goodwill is active and generous:

*super omnia vultus
accessere boni, nec iners pauperque voluntas.* (VIII, 677-8)

Ovid thus depicts in lines 639-678 (40 lines) a predominantly realistic episode. The fantastic movement of the story is resumed at 679 and sustained throughout the second half, 679-720 (42 lines). In contrast to the previous realism, the introduction of fantasy into the recognition scene 679-689 carries an incongruity which is the more amusing as it is neatly linked with the lack and poor quality of wine described in the previous section. This is now compensated for as the couple see the mixing-bowl replenished of its own accord, *sponte sua per se* 680, and the wine welling up:

*Interea totiens haustum cratera repleri
sponte sua per seque vident succrescere vinta :* (VIII, 679-80)

It is characteristic of their simple goodness that their response of astonishment is accompanied by prayer for forgiveness for the inadequacy of their entertainment.

Fantasy and reality now closely interact. In an attempt to make amends the elderly couple prepare to sacrifice their one goose, guardian of their tiny home, *minimae custodia villae* 684. But they cannot catch the goose: they are old and slow. Antithetical juxtaposition, *celer pinna tardos aetate* 686, and a profusion of spondees stresses their effort which is ironically wasted when the goose of its own accord seems to have fled for refuge to the very gods to whom it was to have been sacrificed:

*ille celer pinnā tardōs aetate fatigat
eluditque diu, tandemque est visus ad ipsos
confugisse deos.* (VIII, 686-8)

There is a marked shift from reality to fantasy as the flood myth is introduced. The gods reveal themselves 'di' que 'sumus ...' 689, and the majesty of their announcement is somewhat deflated by the interruption of *que*; they pronounce punishment for the neighbourhood and instruct Philemon and Baucis to go up into the hills. Fantasy is confronted by reality: the couple obey. The description of their ascent is the last representation of human action in the story.

Their difficulties are stressed: with the gods leading the way, they walk with sticks, they are slow, and it is an effort for them to struggle up the long slope: the molossus *nituntur* followed by the spondaic *longo* which with *clivo* encloses *vestigia ponere* contribute, by the postponement of *clivo* to the end of the line, to their struggle:

*membra levant baculis, tardique senilibus annis
nituntur longo vestigia ponere clivo.* (VIII, 693b-4)

As they near the summit they look back, like anyone climbing a mountain: they see everything but their home flooded; it is in keeping with their gentle characters that they are distressed by the fate of their neighbours, but, even while they are lamenting, the miraculous transformation of their cottage into a temple is taking place: the implicit smallness of the cottage, *dominis etiam casa parva duobus* 699, is in contrast to the explicit splendour of the temple with its gold and marble:

*illa vetus, dominis etiam casa parva duobus,
vertitur in templum: furcas subiere columnae,
stramina flavescunt, aurataque tecta videntur
caelataeque fores, adopertaque marmore tellus.* (VIII, 699-70)

Reality is here fused with fantasy by means of echoes from the world of everyday (29). The device is continued. With epic dignity Jupiter invites a request from the couple: his language is typical of a Roman epitaph:

(29) The description of the temple recalls Augustus' building achievement, *Res gestae*, 19, 20: cf. PROPERTIUS, II, 31, 1 ff.:

*'dicite, iuste senex et femina coniuge iusto
digna, quid optetis.'* (VIII, 704-5)

The response sustains human reality: Philemon briefly consults Baucis, and their shared decision is typical of their piety and their love:

*'esse sacerdotes delubraque vestra tueri
poscimus, et, quoniam concordēs egimus annos,
auferat hora duos eadem, nec coniugis unquam
busta meae videam, neu sim tumulandus ab illa.'* (VIII, 707-10)

Their own assertion of their unity recalls Ovid's description in lines 631-6: *concordēs egimus annos* 708 picks up *illa / conseniēre casa* 632-3, the balanced cola *nec coniugis unquam / busta meae videam* 709-10, *neu sim tumulandus ab illa* 710 structurally recall the cola *paupertatem fatendo* 633, *nec iniqua mente ferendo* 634. Their wish not to be divided, *auferat hora duos eadem* 709, the natural sequel to *tota domus duo sunt* 634, is spelt out in lines 709-10 to be fulfilled unforeseeably in lines 714-9.

Their wish is granted. For the rest of their lives they look after the temple, and the climax of the story is reached in the fantastic metamorphosis which takes place at the end of their lives, preserving their unity but not in death. One day when they are relating the events of the place, they notice each other growing leaves:

*frondere Philemona Baucis,
Baucida conpexit senior frondere Philemon.* (VIII, 714-5)

United duality is carefully maintained with Baucis and Philemon positioned respectively at the ends of lines 714, 715 and a unifying variation effected by chiasmus *frondere Philemona* 714, *Baucida frondere* 715, strengthened by a further chiasmus: *Philemona Baucis* 714, *Baucida Philemon* 715 (30).

The treetop grows over their faces. But they are not quite trees yet, and it is as devoted husband and wife that they say the same words of farewell:

*mutua, dum licuit, reddebant dicta 'vale'-que
'o coniunx' dixere simul ...* (VIII, 717-8)

| | | | |
|------------------|-----------------------|-----------|--|
| <i>Met.</i> 701: | <i>aurata tecta</i> | PROP. 1: | <i>aurēa porticus</i> |
| <i>Met.</i> 700: | <i>columnae</i> | PROP. 3: | <i>columnis</i> |
| <i>Met.</i> 702: | <i>marmore</i> | PROP. 9: | <i>marmore</i> |
| <i>Met.</i> 702: | <i>caelatae fores</i> | PROP. 12: | <i>valvae, Libyci nobile dentis opus</i> |

Adoperta marmore tellus 702 may recall the 'fine *opus quadratum* of marble used to line the concrete core'. Giuseppe LUGLI, *The Roman Forum and the Palatin* (Bardi, 1964), p. 103. On a fantastic level, the description recalls the Sun's palace, *Met.* II, 1-4.

(30) The syntactical chiasmus of nominative, accusative, recalls the balance between the two who both give and obey orders: *idem parentque iubentque* 636.

But at the same time as they speak *simul simul* 718, the bark closes over their lips. The metamorphosis is completed, and they stand, two trees growing from a double trunk.

The heart of this episode is the visitation of Jupiter, king of the gods, and his son Mercury to devout and aged peasants in their humble cottage. The gentle wit of this episode derives from the imagined reality of what would happen if gods visited peasants. Realism and fantasy are structurally balanced and the united devotion of the couple conveyed by stylistic correspondences. The delicacy of the episode is underlined by the abundant use of detail to describe first the realistic entertainment and then the fantastic rewarding of the peasants by the gods.

The myth of Pygmalion, X, 243-297, focuses upon Pygmalion's love for the statue he has carved and its fantastic coming to life.

The episode begins on a realistic note. Pygmalion, embittered by the vices of the Propoetides, lives a celibate life and carves a statue which is at once more beautiful than any woman could be and yet so like a girl that one could almost believe in its human existence and its desire to move :

*sculpsit ebur formamque dedit, qua femina nasci
nulla potest ...
virginis est verae facies, quam vivere credas
et, si non obstat reverentia, velle moveri : (31)* (X, 248-9, 250-1)

Pygmalion marvels and begins to fall in love with the figure he has carved, *simulati corporis* 253. The fantasy of his response is described in lines 252-269 (18 lines).

Acting out a fantasy he touches the statue ascertaining whether it is a body or ivory, and unwillingness to accept the reality prompts his negative conclusion :

nec adhuc ebur esse fatetur. (X, 255)

He gives kisses and thinks they are returned, he speaks and holds it, he believes that his fingers are sinking into the flesh he touches :

*oscula dat reddique putat loquiturque tenetque
et credit tactis digitos insidere membris* (X, 256-7)

His fear that he may bruise her marks a transition in his fantasy from doubts to emotion :

et metuit, pressos veniat ne livor in artus. (X, 258)

From this point he is wholly absorbed in his fantasy ; the anaphora *modo modo* 259 stresses the progression as he addresses it lovingly and bestows gifts :

(31) A pun?

*et modo blanditius adhibet, modo grata puellis
munera fert ...* (X, 259-60)

The catalogue of gifts is enumerated in lines 260-5, the ludicrous effect intensified by the mock-heroic device of the sequence of connectives *et -que* in 260-262, which is followed by the additional connective *quoque* 263 and repetition of *dat* 264. He dresses the statue, adorning it with rings, necklaces and earrings. All becomes it, *cuncta decent* 266. Only the final colon of this section provides for the reader an implicit reminder that this is no woman who is naked but a statue :

nec nuda minus formosa videtur. (X, 266)

For Pygmalion the fantasy reaches its climax when he lays his statue on a couch, addresses it as his bedfellow, *tori sociam* 268, and rests its head on a soft pillow, *mollibus* (32) *in plumis* 269. A sense of reality is only just recaptured in the phrase *tanquam sensura* 269, which precedes the final verb *reponit* 269 :

*conlocat hanc stratis concha Sidonide tinctis
adpellatque tori sociam adclinataque collu
mollibus in plumis tanquam sensura reponit.* (X, 267-9)

Reality is resumed : Venus' festival is celebrated, and it is aptly described. Pygmalion attends and prays to her with sufficient sense of reality to ask not that his statue may become his wife but that his wife may be like his statue :

*'Si, di, dare cuncta potestis,
sit coniunx, opto.' - non ausus 'eburnea virgo'
dicere Pygmalion - 'similis meae' dixit 'eburnae.'* (X, 274-6)

The prayer is hesitant, the syntax interrupted by Pygmalion's doubts : *non ausus 'eburnea virgo' dicere Pygmalion*, and finally restored by a realistic appeal : *'similis mea ... eburnae!* But Venus understands : *sensit / ... vota quid illa velint* 277-8.

He returns home, and it is in the next section, 280-289 (10 lines), that Ovid achieves a tour de force in his integration of reality and fantasy. Pygmalion's former fantastic response to the real ivory statue becomes realistic in a setting that is now fantastic, as the metamorphosis of the statue into a woman takes place. The reversal is pointed by the resumption of the lover's actions described in lines 254-269 and their application in a realistic context.

The climax of the former fantasy is the starting-point for his present behaviour and introduces the metamorphosis. In 267-269 he laid her on the couch and described her as his companion :

(32) For contrast between hard and soft in an erotic context, cf. *Met.* XIV, 709-10.

*conlocat hanc stratis concha Sidonide tinctis
adpellaque tori sociam ...* (X, 268-9)

When he returns from the festival of Venus he lies on the couch with the statue :

*ut rediit, simulacra suae petit ille puellae
incumbensque toro ...* (X, 280-1)

Conlocat hanc stratis ... adpellaque tori sociam, 268, 269, was but the preparation for the next advance, and the progression is stressed by the intrusion of the brief passage of reality 270-9 ; *incumbensque toro* 281 recalls 268, 269. In line 256, *oscula dat reddique putat*, he kissed the statue and thought his kisses were returned ; now he kisses it and she seems to be warm, *dedit oscula : visa tepere est* 281. The change of nominative marks the coming to life of the statue. At the beginning of the fantasy he had felt the statue to ascertain whether it was a body or ivory :

*saepe manus operi temptantes admovet, an sit
corpus, an illud ebur.* (X, 254-5)

Now he feels it again :

admovet os iterum, manibus quoque pectora temptat, (X, 282)

Admoveret 282 picks up *admoveret* 254, *manibus ... temptat* 282 picks up *manus ... temptantes* 254 ; but, significantly, *operi* 254 is indirectly picked up by reference to the erogenous features of a girl's anatomy, *os pectora* 282. In line 257 he imagined his fingers sinking into her flesh :

et credit tactis digitos insidere membris

Now the ivory begins to soften, the hardness yields and it gives way beneath his fingers :

*temptatum mollescit ebur positoque rigore
subsidiit digitis ...* (X, 283-4)

The reality of *subsidiit digitis* 284 recalls the fantasy of *credit ... digitos insidere* 257.

The fantasy of the metamorphosis is confirmed by an epic simile with close correspondences : ivory is compared with wax : *ebur* 283, *cera* 285 :

*temptatum mollescit ebur positoque rigore
subsidiit digitis ceditque, ut Hymettia sole
cera remollescit tractataque pollice multas
flectitur in facies ipsoque fit utilis usu.* (X, 283-6)

The parallel processes are precisely charted. The ivory fantastically, the wax realistically are softened under the influence of heat : *sole* 284 picks up *tepere* 281

in association with *remollescit* 285, which picks up *mollescit* 282 : the neatly-distanced chiasmus *mollescit ebur* 283 *cera remollescit* 285 serves to stress the fantasy of the one softening and the reality of the other. Both the ivory and the wax are manipulated : *tractataque pollice* 285 picks up *temptatum ... digitis* 283 ; they are made ready for use : *flectitur ... ipsoque fit utilis usu* 286 corresponds with *subsidiit ... ceditque* (33), the structural link strengthened by the repetition of *-que* 284, 286.

The importance of touch is central to both simile and context. The comparison with *cera* and its manipulation is a reminder of the carving of the statue, but the language of manipulation, *tractata* 285, *flectitur* 286, recalls the lover's situation : *temptatum ... ebur ... cedit* 283-4, and recurrent use of words of touch confirm its key importance (34) : *temptantes* 254, *tactis* 257, *temptat* 282, *temptatum* 283, *tractata* 285, *retractat* 288, *temptatae* 289.

Amazed and afraid lest he is mistaken he handles her again ; his urgency, communicated by the repetition of *rursus* 288 and the prefix *re-* is heightened by the idealized reference to his statue *sua vota* :

rursus amans rursusque manu sua vota retractat : (X, 288)

What he dared not pray for has come true : *corpus erat* 289. Her pulse responds to the pressure of his thumb, *saliant temptatae pollice venae* 289 ; *venae* 289, recalling *livor* 258, is a practical realization of his fantasy and fear in 258 : *et metuit, pressos veniat ne livor in artus*.

Then indeed he is convinced : the climax of *tum vero* 290 is heightened by the anticipatory adjective *Paphius* and the elevation of *heros* :

*tum vero Paphius plenissima concipit heros
verba ...* (X, 290-1)

Appropriately he composes the ritual language *concepit ... verba* 290-1 (35), with which to thank Venus ; at last he presses his lips against hers and she feels his kisses :

*oraque tandem
ore suo non falsa premit dataque oscula virgo
sensit.* (X, 291-3)

At last there is communication : in 256 he kissed and thought only that his kisses were returned, *oscula dat reddique putat* ; in 281 he kisses the statue at the

(33) For *cedo* in an erotic context, cf. *Amores*, I, 2, 9 ; *A.A.*, I, 21 ; II, 197.

(34) The importance of touch and the language recall LUCRETIIUS, II, 434-5 and, more particularly, IV, 231-8.

(35) For this formal sense of *verba concipere*, cf. VERGIL., *Aeneid*, XII, 13 ; there may be a deliberate echo of *concepit amorem* 249.

beginning of the metamorphosis. *dedit oscula* 281. But what is here important is that she is a human being and feels his kisses, *dataque oscula / ... sensit* 292-3; unlike the Propoetides, she is modest and blushes: *erubuit* 293 recalls only by total contrast *pudor cessit* 241. Raising her eyes timidly to the light she sees both the sky and her lover:

erubuit timidumque ad lumina lumen ⁽³⁶⁾
adtollens pariter cum caelo vidit amantem ⁽³⁷⁾.

The episode ends on a realistic note and with headlong haste to effect a transition to the next story. Pygmalion marries her, and nine months later she bears a baby, Paphos.

The reality of human fantasy is the springboard for the fantastic of this story. The episode begins and ends on a note of realism, and the elements of fantasy are linked by the brief description of the festival of Venus. But the fantasies of Pygmalion's love for his statue and the metamorphosis of the statue into a woman are further tightly related: the language and actions used to describe Pygmalion's fantasy as he makes advances to the statue are recreated in a fantastic setting to express his love for the woman into whom his statue is gradually transformed. It is by the subtle interrelation of reality and fantasy through application of the language of love to express first a fantastic response to reality and then a realistic response to fantasy that Ovid achieves an effect of delight and wit in this episode.

The investigation of these four myths may suffice to demonstrate the ingenuity with which Ovid creates poetic coherence out of disparate elements of reality and fantasy. In composing fantastic episodes which fuse elements both of human beings and material reality and of fantasy, Ovid establishes an imagined reality by his careful structuring, which is supported by stylistic and linguistic devices which serve to highlight the fundamental incongruity and enhance the wit.

Portsmouth Polytechnic.

Barbara E. STIRRUP.

(36) For the pun on *lumen* cf. LUCRETIVS, III, 364. See David WEST, *The Imagery and Poetry of Lucretius* (EUP, 1969), p. 120.

(37) The language suggests a parody of VERGIL, *Aeneid*, IV, 691-2.

Note sur le climat en Italie centrale au premier siècle de notre ère

Dans cette brève note, je voudrais attirer l'attention sur l'intérêt qu'il y aurait, je crois, à concevoir une étude pluri-disciplinaire des conditions climatiques dans l'antiquité. Il ne s'agit que d'un exemple limité et très partiel certes, mais encourageant. Nul n'ignore, en effet, combien les facteurs géographiques, qui influencent de manière essentielle les conditions de la vie quotidienne, sont malaisés à étudier.

Pline le Jeune, dans une lettre adressée à son ami Domitius Apollinaris, décrit ainsi le climat d'une région où il possédait une villa et où il aimait se retirer en été ⁽¹⁾: *caelum est hieme frigidum et gelidum; myrtos, oleas, quaeque alia assiduo tepore laetantur, aspernatur ac respuit; laurum tamen patitur atque etiam nitidissimam profert, interdum, sed non saepius quam sub urbe nostra, necat. Aestatis mira clementia. Semper aer spittu aliquo mouetur, frequentius tamen auras quam uentos habet*: il ajoute quelques lignes plus loin: *medios ille (Tiberis) agros secat, nauim patiens, omnisque fruges deuelit in urbem, hieme dumtaxat et uere; aestate summittitur immensisque fluminis nomen areni alueo deserit, autumnio resumit*. Nous ne connaissons pas la situation exacte de ce domaine de Pline. Toutefois, grâce à une autre lettre ⁽²⁾, nous savons que sa villa des *Tusci* était proche de *Tifernum Tiberinum*, aujourd'hui Città di Castello ⁽³⁾ ce qui, pour notre propos, est suffisamment précis. Ainsi donc, le climat, dans les environs immédiats de cette localité, comportait, selon Pline, des hivers froids avec gelées et des étés doux. Il souligne, de cette manière, l'existence d'une forte amplitude entre les deux saisons.

Dans la classification des climats italiens, F. Eredia ⁽⁴⁾ distingue quatre zones

(1) PLINE LE JEUNE, *Epist.*, V, 6, 4-5 et 12.

(2) PLINE LE JEUNE, *Epist.*, IV, 1, 4.

(3) A. M. GUILLEMIN, *Pline le Jeune: Epist.*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1927, p. 62, n. 1. — K. SCHERLING, s.v. *Tusci* dans *RE*, 2, VII, 2, 1948, col. 1459-1460 situe le domaine à 8 km au Nord de Città di Castello — cf. aussi J. KOLENDO, *La frontière orientale de l'Étrurie et la localisation de l'un des domaines de Pline le Jeune*, dans *Archeologia* (Varsovie), 20, 1969, p. 62-68.

(4) F. EREDIA, *Distribuzione della temperatura nell'aria in Italia nel decennio 1926-1933*, Rome, 1942, p. 130. — Cf. aussi H. DESPLANQUES, *Campagnes ombriennes. Contribution à l'étude des paysages ruraux en Italie centrale*, Paris, 1969, p. 61 et sq. et M. BRICCOLI BATTI, *Caratteristiche ambientali e colture agrarie nel Perugino*, Pérouse, 1962, p. 16 et s. auxquels j'ai emprunté les éléments chiffrés concernant les températures.