OVIDIAN SCHOLARSHIP: SOME TRENDS AND PERSPECTIVES

"It is harder to work to interpret interpretations than to interpret things." This dictum of Michel de Montaigne has not been belied ever since the sixteenth century; in our days, Umberto Eco wrote a novel on the problem of various interpretations (*Foucault's Pendulum*). If—according to Augustine—our world is a world of signs, there is small choice; we have to interpret them or resign. Interpretation, then, is part of the human condition.

I do not wish to give an exhaustive report on Ovidian scholarship: instead of talking of books we all use every day I would like to confine this paper to a very small number of recent studies on the *Metamorphoses*—most of them German—which are probably less well known. They illustrate, however, the merits and limits of a number of approaches to Ovidian texts and to Roman poetry in general. I will proceed from more general subjects to more specific ones: from history, *Zeitstil*, structure, and poetology, viewed either within the text or on a comparative scale, to metrics, grammar, and rhetoric.

As for political Augustanism, it requires either a very long or a very short discussion. The fact that Brooks Otis spent many years on reworking this subject several times—each time with a completely different result—is rather discouraging, and this impression does not seem to have been substantially changed by a more recent attempt of a Swedish scholar to find traces of a critical attitude of Ovid towards Augustus throughout the *Metamorphoses*.[1] Words are ambiguous, and under a more or less authoritarian regime ambiguity itself is part of the pleasure for the readers. Ronald Syme—a master of ambiguity himself—speaks of Ovid's "malicious frivolity or even muted defiance."[2] I would not venture to go further than that. Everything would be spoiled if we tried to change the skilful balance of words and ideas created by the poet into an unequivocal political utterance. Should we really condemn the poet to the role of a suspected person and ourselves to the role of inquisitive policemen? Elaine Fantham rightly said that for Ovid—who was not a modern democrat—Augustan themes were "a challenge to his

1 S. Lundström, *Ovids Metamorphosen und die Politik des Kaisers* (Uppsala 1980).
2 R. Syme, *History in Ovid* (Oxford 1978) 190.

professional versatility, not a threat to his private integrity,"[3] and Hartmut Froesch has perceptively concluded that—given the persistence of literary genres—labels such as propaganda, résistance, protest or opposition are inappropriate.[4]

A literary text is not necessarily a personal confession. "The poet, he nothing affirmeth" Philip Sidney said in the sixteenth century. In our days Iser went still further saying that a literary text cannot refer to realities immediately, only to patterns of reality,[5] an idea either too little known or too well known among historians of literature. Whenever they have to say something about an author's life they scrutinize the texts for facts and often finally find they have almost nothing to say.

Nonetheless it would be wrong to give up all hope to find the historical truth. It is still a fascinating task to reconstruct at least the patterns of reality which meant something to our authors and readers. And we ought to relate those patterns to all that we know from other sources about our author's times. Let us not dismiss Ronald Syme's book on *History in Ovid* as "more history than Ovid" (Sir Ronald's own words) but be grateful to him for competent guidance concerning such important subjects as patronage of letters, poetry and government, legislation and morals and, last but not least, Ovid's friends. Sometimes we tend to forget that Roman authors did not write for some anonymous public but for real people they knew.

The limits of Ovid's works as a historical source have been traced impressively by A. Podossinov who showed how much in them is due not to observation but to literary clichés.[6] Thus history itself compels us not to neglect a strictly literary interpretation. In order to understand writers and books, art and artists within their epochs we have to find out what is traditional and what is new about their works. In a recent Freiburg dissertation Martin Glatt affirmed that the Roman elegists construct a world of their own quite aloof from the Augustan state.[7] If, according to Adorno, artists by creating works of art show a sort of "negative capability," it might be tempting to use

3 E. Fantham, "Sexual Comedy in Ovid's *Fasti*: Sources and Motivation," *HSCP* 87 (1983) 185-216, esp. 210.
4 H. Froesch, *Dichter und Staatsmacht. Vergil, Horaz, Ovid und Augustus* (Frankfurt 1984) 5.
5 W. Iser, *Der Akt des Lesens* (München 1976) 118.
6 A. Podossinov, *Ovid's Dichtung als Quelle für die Geschichte des Schwarzmeergebiets* (Konstanz 1987).
7 *Die "andere Welt" der römischen Elegiker. Das Persönliche in der Liebesdichtung* (Diss. Freiburg 1990).

Glatt's view of the Roman elegists as an example. This approach helps to discover the innovative aspects of elegy. However, the elegiac poets would not be able to communicate with their reading public if they did not use traditional language: this conventional aspect can be grasped better by the reception theory of Jauss. Either theory is incomplete: negativity alone can hardly explain communication, whereas a receptionist view alone can hardly explain what is beyond convention in art, though as a foil it helps to evidence indirectly what is new in a text. And even in our elegiac poets negativity itself is not perfect: Tibullus frankly admits that he cannot escape the necessity of doing military service and earning money, whereas Propertius initially is more consistent but later on abandons elegiac love and love poetry. The sincerity of his conversion to Augustanism is disputed. In my opinion, it is hard to assess his sincerity since we do not have external evidence such as private letters. As for Ovid, he might be a good candidate for Adorno, but is he not all too communicative? Almost everyone agrees that he was not serious about anything except poetry. I would warn against even such an exclusive statement. Ovid as a person is elusive; we can study only his poetic *persona* in the context of each of his works. It is a truism that he cared for poetry, but it would be foolhardy to deny that he might have cared for love which is an all-pervading theme in his oeuvre.[8]

More promising are attempts to define Ovid's Augustanism in terms of "style of the epoch" (*Zeitstil*). Karl Galinsky has compared the elusive structure of the *Metamorphoses* to the structure of mural paintings of the same period.[9] The methodical advantages are evident: art is compared to art and structural principles to structural principles. Being based on commensurable facts the result is convincing. Both the mural painting in question and the *Metamorphoses* exhibit an unreal and phantastic architecture as far away from the *Aeneid* as is Arachne's Hellenistic tapestry from Minerva's *augusta gravitas*. This is in tune with the fact that Ovid in the *Metamorphoses* follows the Hellenistic mainstream of the historical development of literature, whereas in other poets—some of them perhaps more strictly "Augustan" than Ovid—there is a reaction which creates a new form of classicism; yet it is equally true that the "classical" aspects of Ovid's works have often been underrated.

8 For love as a theme in the *Metamorphoses* see B. Otis, *Ovid as an Epic Poet*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge 1970) *passim* and E. Fantham, "Ovid's Ceyx and Alcyone: The Metamorphosis of a Myth," *Phoenix* 33 (1979) 330-345, esp. 330.

9 K. Galinsky, *Ovid's Metamorphoses. An Introduction to the Basic Aspects* (Oxford 1975) 83 f.; for his stylistic closeness to Augustan standards: K. Galinsky, "Was Ovid a Silver Latin Poet?" *ICS* 14 (1989) 69-89.

Generally speaking, there has been too little interaction between historians of literature and archaeologists. Especially in the field of *Zeitstil* there is much to be learned from the historians of art, who have made much progress also in defining the specific style and character of other epochs (e.g., the ages of Nero, Domitian, Constantine, Justinian).

Comparative sociology of art might be equally helpful to locate the artist's position within the society of his days. When Auguste Rodin creates a big public monument representing a kiss of a loving couple he acts like Ovid, who in the venerable attire of epic poetry speaks of private love affairs. Both artists live in societies that have lost belief in religion but still believe in love, art and, to some degree, the divine genius of the artist.

Similarly, with respect to transgression of boundaries, we may mention that both Rodin and Ovid defy the limits of their respective arts.[10] Rodin consciously enriches sculpture, which by nature is spatial, to create the illusion of metamorphosis, movement, and time: some of his figures which have been left on purpose in a state of *inachevé* seem to grow out of the raw material, others seem to move because their arms are shown at a slightly different moment than their legs, others suggest the lapse of time through the contrast between the public's expectations (*la belle Heaulmière*, a beautiful young woman) and the old age and ugliness of the figure (*celle qui fut la belle Heaulmière*).[11] Conversely, Ovid tends to bestow on poetry, which by nature is a diachronic process, an almost sculptural precision of design and vision (which is new in Latin epic). In their ability to transcend the limits of their respective arts both Rodin and Ovid are reminiscent of Orpheus who stops rivers and makes rocks and trees move. Despite this primeval patron their idea of an art, which by nature is opposed to "purism," presupposes late and sophisticated societies knowing the laws of genres—otherwise there would be no point in breaking them. (There are, of course, just as many differences between the two artists—social, cultural, ideological—but that would be the subject of another paper).

In the following remarks I would like to dwell more on the wonderful fluency of Ovid's poetry than on its "sculptural" aspects. This leads us to the problem of structure, a field in which, generally speaking, scholarship has paid more heed to overall concepts than to details. Just think of Ludwig's division

10 M. von Albrecht, *Rom: Spiegel Europas* (Heidelberg 1988) ch. 13: "Metamorphose in Raum und Zeit: Vergleichende Untersuchungen zu Ovid und Rodin" (pp. 517-568).

11 Similarly Ovid has an aged Helen look into the mirror and wonder why she had been raped twice (*Met.* 15.232f.).

of the *Metamorphoses* into twelve major parts ("*Grossteile*") or Brooks Otis' panel structure. Doubtless there is some merit to their observations. I think the structure of Books 1 and 2 as well as the following Cadmus section has been firmly established; it is also evident that the Orpheus section has been planned very carefully. On the other hand, there are some strange lacunae in Ovidian scholarship: for all the care lavished on sections and major parts, the real division of the work into fifteen books has been amazingly neglected, though Ovid himself explicitly drew his readers' attention to the fact that there are *ter quinque uolumina* (*Trist.* 3.14.19). Studies of single books of the *Metamorphoses* have been rare. There are old contributions by students of the great Latinists Friedrich Leo and Eduard Norden,[12] but Richard Heinze—unsurpassed Vergilianist and slightly less felicitous Ovidianist—gave a different direction to Ovidian studies.[13] Strangely enough, but not surprisingly, Bömer's monumental commentary is particularly unhelpful in this regard.

In recent years, scholars have become increasingly aware of the importance of single books: Stephen Hinds has written an inspiring study on a considerable part of Book 5 and—in a forthcoming Heidelberg dissertation—Alexandra Bartenbach examines Books 5, 10 and 15. She wanted to consider each of these books by itself and did not presume to establish strict parallels between them. I think nobody would expect to find in the *Metamorphoses* symmetries comparable to those evident in the *Aeneid*. With these important reservations we may mention some similarities of form and content, which are peculiar to these three books, and even some parallels as to the transgression of boundaries of books. Each of them contains an unusually long section spoken by a single person, a professional speaker: the narrative of the Muse in Book 5, the song of Orpheus in Book 10, and the speech of Pythagoras in Book 15. First the goddess speaks, then her inspired son, the poet, finally the philosopher. Each of these books is followed by an epilogue which is on an

12 H. Peters, *Symbola ad Ovidii artem epicam cognoscendam*, Diss. Göttingen 1908 (student of F. Leo); A. Rohde, *De Ovidi arte epica capita duo*, Diss. Berlin 1929 (student of E. Norden). Both books were reprinted together with G. Lafaye, *Les Métamorphoses d'Ovide et leurs modèles grecs* (Paris 1904 and Hildesheim 1971); a good interpretation is H.B. Guthmüller's *Beobachtungen zum Aufbau der Metamorphosen Ovids* (Diss. Marburg 1964 supervised by C. Becker.)

13 The influence of his ideas on epic and elegiac narrative (*Ovids elegische Erzählung*, Leipzig 1919) is still considerable: see the books of S. Hinds and P.E. Knox listed in the bibliography. The fact that Ovid thinks less of separating the genres than of enriching them from one another had been seen as early as 1924 by Wilhelm Kroll in his admirable *Studien zur römischen Literatur* (Stuttgart 1924) 202-224 ("Die Kreuzung der Gattungen") esp. 215f.

artist's death: Arachne's death 6, 1 ff.; Orpheus' death 11, 1 ff. and Ovid himself defying death in his epilogue to Book 15. The Muses are mentioned only in these three books. Stephen Hinds had already pointed out that Book 5 is referred to in Book 10 and that Ovid's Orpheus, as it were, has "read" Book 5. Hinds correctly spoke of Ovid's self-conscious Muse. The relationship between Ovid's personal epilogue and the other two "epilogues" is one of increasing explicitness. Karl Galinsky had observed a similar relationship between the quasi-scientific speech of Pythagoras in Book 15 and the mythological parts of the poem (*Ovid's Metamorphoses* 104-107).

In this context, Charles Segal's idea that the Orpheus myth is the myth of the poet deserves attention. For the Eurydice narrative in Book 10 I find it difficult to accept this interpretation, since Orpheus is represented by Ovid as a lover and the love theme is made explicit by key words and other means, as we shall see later.[14] Yet the narrative opening of Book 11 (which is in fact the "epilogue" to Book 10) describing Orpheus' death is different. Here Orpheus is clearly seen as a poet. The parallel with Arachne (whose tapestry has frequently been interpreted as foreshadowing some aspects of the *Metamorphoses)* and with Ovid's personal epilogue suggests a strong possibility that the Orpheus narrative in Book 11 is to be read in a poetological context.[15] I think Mrs. Bartenbach has made a rather convincing plea for her case without forcing the texts and without perverting the fluency of Ovidian art into a rigid geometric scheme.

The study of single books has been done successfully for the *Aeneid* and the *Georgics*. Ovid's case is different. His books obey other rules, but they are conceived as reading units, and we ought not to neglect this fact. As I said long ago,[16] the interrelations between Ovid's transitional formulas, different types of thematic connections, and book limits have to be studied anew. I would encourage detailed interpretations of and literary commentaries on single books, because only then can we proceed to a comparative analysis of the

14 Orpheus in Book 10 is a lover and an orator. I would not think he is intentionally depicted as a bad orator, since his speech is shown to be effective. Within the narrative there is a continuous shift of emphasis: distance and irony prevail at the beginning and ending of the Eurydice narrative, as pathos does in the center. The change of focus between Book 10 and 11 may be compared to Tacitus and Suetonius who in various chapters portray the same persons differently: a typically Roman "additive" or "mosaic" style.

15 Boccaccio turns the tale of Orpheus' head rescued by Apollo into an allegory of the posthumous fame of the poet; see C. Segal, "Orpheus, Agamemnon, and the Anxiety of Influence", *CML* 9 (1989) 291-298, esp. 298. Did Boccaccio think of the epilogue of Book 15 as parallel?

16 *Gnomon* 37 (1965) 771-774, esp. 774.

structure of single books and perhaps to a better understanding of the work as a whole. In this area almost everything still has to be done. It may be that this desideratum applies also to some other Latin epic poets.

In this context I would like to mention studies concerning *Nachleben*; not only are they a help for the understanding of modern texts but also an additional tool for the interpretation of classical texts. Aside from literary reception aesthetics, an interesting and still almost unexplored field is a certain type of Renaissance and Baroque illustrations for the *Metamorphoses*. They represent, in a single picture, the contents of entire books, thus, in different ways, projecting time into space. In a forthcoming article I hope to show the relevance of this type of illustration to our understanding of Ovidian book structure. It is telling that after the middle of the eighteenth century this type was abandoned. In his influential translation, Johann Heinrich Voss cut the *Metamorphoses* into single epyllia. Rationalistic and romantic readers concentrated on single stories, so did the illustrators, and so, as a result, did many scholars.

Let me give another example of how we can usefully apply interpretive methods from other areas of art and literature. There is a new way of evidencing metrical facts which I learned from Russian symbolism. In a Heidelberg dissertation, Gabriele Möhler found a useful way of making visible an aspect of the metrical infrastructure—or, if you prefer, the beautiful surface—of dactylic texts: the Möhler graphs. In classics this is a completely new use of a method invented by a Russian symbolist poet, Andrey Byely, who as early as 1913 in his book on *Symbolism* found a graphic means of exactly representing and comparing the use of a certain metre by several Russian poets. Some years ago, I had tried to apply this method to a classical text (in an article on an epistle of Horace). The advantage of the graphs is that the metrical facts are not isolated (as happens in both impressionistic interpretation and abstract statistics), but visualized in their continuous flow as they reach the ear. Thus, for the first time in classical metrics, it becomes easy to observe the musical infrastructure of a text in its entirety. By paying close attention to the succession of such forms we are able to continue and develop some lines of research opened up by the important studies of G.E. Duckworth. In her graphs, Gabriele Möhler draws lines from one spondee to the next one. The resulting figures are different for each poet and characteristic of each of them. The Möhler graphs, first, can serve as a tool for authenticity criticism (she proved that the *Ilias Latina* cannot be by Silius Italicus). Secondly, the graphs can serve as a means of interpretation. Unfortunately, Gabriele Möhler, who

concentrated on the mathematical and statistical side—and through random tests proved that the resulting figures are not the product of mere chance—has not worked out the interpretative aspect. 1 will try to take some first steps in this direction.[17]

In my opinion, the Möhler graphs enable us to grasp the text as a process without any premature "logocentrism." One rhythm follows another without any semantic reference: a marvellous dance, a real deconstructionist theater unspoiled by words and meanings. The bad message to a good deconstructionist however, is that even so you do not get rid of the individual author: each rhythmic pattern, like a fingerprint, is typical of a single poet. On the other hand, if you do not suffer from logophobia but from *philologia* and try to watch your human rights, you may feel tempted to search for convergences between *logos* and rhythm, text and meaning. Let us start from studying all the occurrences of some especially characteristic metrical patterns in a given text.

The extremely high percentage of dactyls in Ovid's hexameters determines the fact that the continuity of the graph is relatively often interrupted by purely dactylic verses. This type *dddd*, which is rather frequent in Homer, is shunned by most of the Latin poets. It gives to Ovidian texts their specific touch of lightness and fast movement. In the Orpheus story (*Met.* 10.1ff.) the type *dddd* occurs for the first time in line 2, showing the swift walk of the god Hymenaeus through the air. The next instance is Orpheus' travel to Persephone through the host of bodiless souls.

Lightness and swiftness, however, do not imply lack of meaning: when speaking of the god of love and his power, Orpheus uses a sequence of two *dddd* lines which at a distance of one line is followed by a third one (26-29). Equally, in line 61 the theme of love is expressed in a *dddd* line as is Orpheus' sorrow in 75. It seems worth mentioning that the important theme of love in these lines is accompanied not by pathetic spondees,[18] but by light dactyls. Ovid uses this kind of parlando (*dddd*) for his own and Orpheus' comments, as he does for a transitional line (such as 64). Hence, in the use of *dddd* in thematic contexts there is some understatement typical of Ovid.

17 I am aware of the fact that the study of dactyls and spondees ought to be complemented by an analysis of other metrical phenomena and that convergences or contrasts between different types of analysis would be more telling (cf. my article on Horace, *Epist.* 1.4, quoted in the bibliography.)

18 The ancients assigned to the spondee the character of *gravitas* (Cic., *Orat.* 216; Iambl., *vit. Pyth.* 112).

The opposite type, a ponderous sequence of four spondees (*ssss*), is rather rare in Ovid. Its use is purposeful. In line 5 it heavily stresses the important fact that there was no joy and no good omen at Orpheus' marriage. In line 12 the four spondees dwell on Orpheus' plaint for Eurydice.

It is especially interesting to note that a type which is only slightly less heavy (*dsss*) has a special function in the Orpheus narrative of book 10. In the first ten lines it occurs no less than three times as an intentionally monotonous and weighty ending of sentence and paragraph (in line 5 we get *ssss* in the same function). The rhythmical pattern *dsss* will come back in the bard's fruitless call in lines 11 and 41. In 10.3 Orpheus invites Hymenaeus in vain in this rhythm, and in line 7 the torch is shaken unsuccessfully and does not come to a burn. In line 10 the same rhythm accompanies Eurydice's death. The analogy between the foreboding and the fulfillment is stressed by the obsessive use of the same rhythm. In the following segment, the type *dsss* keeps this leitmotif character: in Orpheus' speech we get three continuous *dsss* lines when he speaks of Eurydice's death. Thus lines 22-24 look back to line 10. Equally, when Ovid speaks of Orpheus' successful singing (line 40) there is an almost ironic rhythmic parallel to line 3 when Orpheus had sung in vain. The next time the *dsss* pattern comes back at Eurydice's appearance (line 49). Here Ovid explains the precise meaning of the rhythmical leitmotif by speaking of her slow pace caused by the wound. The last instance of *dsss* is especially telling: we get two lines of this type (58-59), when Orpheus vainly tries to embrace Eurydice. Some critics have felt that the name of Eurydice is not used frequently enough by Orpheus in this text. Our rhythmical analysis shows that the Eurydice motif, though sparingly used in the text, is clearly articulated by Ovid in the rhythmical accompaniment.

Another feature which can be easily detected in graph is the fact that Ovid prefers to begin his lines with a dactyl. At the moment, however, when Orpheus through his song changes the laws of the world (Ixion's wheel stops, Sisyphus sits on his rock, and the Eumenides weep) we get three continuous lines beginning with spondees (41-43), followed by another one two lines later (45). So the reversal of laws is mirrored in a reversal of rhythm.

These examples may suffice to show that it is not true that the Ovidian hexameter is stereotyped and mechanical. The Möhler graphs give a practical guide how to overcome both—interpretative impressionism and statistical boredom—by means of a consequent "structuralization" of metrics, i.e., regarding each line in its specific context as part of a metrical continuum. This continuum follows musical and rhythmical laws of its own. It is important to

note that metrics or rhythmics most frequently do not give a strictly onomatopoetic or symbolical image of the text. More appropriate is the notion of "accompaniment." As in a piece of vocal music, the accompaniment usually does not imitate the text slavishly but accompanies it following its own laws. Yet there are convergences, and the Möhler graphs make it easier to grasp and exploit them for a more precise understanding of the poet's intentions. For the first time, the Möhler graphs convey a palpable picture of the rhythmical flow of a text. This may facilitate a more adequate recognition that texts are not spatial phenomena but processes in time: they make visible the speed, elegance, and fluency of Ovid's verse.

Finally, some short remarks on two of my favorite concerns: the relevance of syntax and rhetoric to literary studies.

In 1959, when there was no talk yet of the "implied reader," I tried to capture an aspect of the relationship between author and reader by doing some stylistic research. I studied the literary function of parenthesis in Ovid[19] in order to understand better how the poet guides his reader's attention by remarks which psychologically prepare him for unexpected events or ironically turn the reader into the author's accomplice by having him share his disbelief in silly old stories. Moreover, a parenthesis might retrospectively comment on some strange aspect of a story, e.g., on Orpheus' motives for not touching women any more (*seu quod male cesserat illi, siue fidem dederat, Met.* 10.80f.) or on the fires caused by Phaethon: the fires gave light by night, and so, Ovid concludes edifyingly, "there was some good to that evil" (*Met.* 2.332). These comments deflate pathos and make the reader keep his distance from the events. Explicit authorial comments may provide an interpretation, if not always without irony: despite the moralizing warnings he pronounces before the Byblis and the Myrrha story, Ovid does not expect young girls to follow his advice and stop reading. It is worthwhile studying the syntactic form of such authorial comments and their position within a sentence or the narrative. Placed at the beginning, they point out the leading passion of the story or arouse expectations; in the middle of the action, they often serve to protract suspense; and when placed at the end, they unmask pathos and create a certain distance. Parenthesis is a typically Ovidian transgression of boundaries: a phenomenon on the borderline between syntax of sentences and syntax of texts.

19 *Die Parenthese in Ovids Metamorphosen und ihre dichterische Funktion* (Hildesheim 1963).

A more direct means of guiding the reader's attention is the conscious use of narrative tenses. In this area we can learn much from linguistics as developed in the departments of modern languages. Although Harald Weinrich's book *Tempus* in its details does not completely accord with the linguistic facts exhibited in Latin texts, I have found its categories very helpful for an analysis of narrative structures in Latin texts.[20] Especially the variation between perfect and historical present (the latter is the "normal" narrative tense in Latin epic—a fact noticed by G. Pasquali,[21] but frequently ignored) and other strategies (secondary clauses, participles) allows the author to view the action in different perspectives and create a kind of "scenic" narrative which gives the impression of a multiple frame and the illusion of a three-dimensional stage. This type of narrative—a product of a calculated interaction between narrative fluency and syntactic framework—is also observable in Livy, whereas it is still absent from the pre-classical Claudius Quadrigarius. In its Ovidian and Livian form it is part of the style of the Augustan epoch. Here the results of linguistic research converge with the study of *Zeitstil*. I was glad to see that my attempts were accepted by Anton Scherer in his *Lateinische Syntax* (Heidelberg 1980) and felicitously labelled as "text syntax" (*Textsyntax*). I think classicists might find it exciting to study not only the spirit, but also the body of our texts and exploit language and style for the purpose of literary interpretation; I welcome the steps done in this direction by J.B. Solodow[22] and others.

Another field which seems promising to me is rhetoric. Since about 1900 the neglect of rhetoric and Latin composition in European schools has produced ignorance of how effective speeches are constructed, a neglect which made people vulnerable to dictators and their eloquent propagandists. In practical teaching this loss of active linguistic and rhetorical competence in Latin—a training which had been the basis of independent thinking since the Renaissance[23]—was not replaced by a comparable amount of theoretical

20 *Römische Poesie* (Heidelberg 1977) *passim*; forthcoming: *Studies in Roman Epic*; cf. also: *Masters of Roman Prose, passim*.

21 "Ennio e Virgilio" (1915), rev. repr. in: *Vecchie e nuove pagine stravaganti di un filologo* (Florence 1952) 285-307, esp. 296: "In Ennio l'azione principale era narrata sempre al presente"; for Vergil: M. von Albrecht, "Zu Vergils Erzähltechnik. Beobachtungen zum Tempusgebrauch in der Aeneis," *Glotta* 48 (1970) 219-229.

22 *"Raucae, tua cura, palumbes*: A Study of a Poetic Word Order, "*HSCP* 90 (1986) 129-153.

23 Through Latin grammar students learn how to learn, how to work methodically and distinguish what they know from what they do not know. This is a basis for independent thought: grammar and rhetoric have a liberating effect (and justly were the basis for the *artes liberales*); therefore learning Latin ought to be a human right.

hermeneutic insight (which would have been a real step forward). In late antiquity, at a historical turning point, Augustine, in his *De doctrina Christiana*, had converted what had been mainly an art of writing (rhetoric) into an art of reading (hermeneutics) based on a general doctrine of signs (*De magistro*). Fortunately, in our days, the rediscovery of rhetoric has created among classicists a new awareness of how Latin texts were made. It has considerably furthered literary interpretation, especially through the refined study of generic composition.

To show the interaction of narrative, epic genre, and rhetoric let me dwell for a moment on a literary device: the epic simile.[24] In Ovid, the treatment of antithesis in the epic simile—just think of "fear and hope" (*Met*. 1.539)—is strongly influenced by rhetoric as is the very use of the simile. It guides the reader's attention in different ways according to its position in the narrative: (1) At the beginning of the narrative it underlines what will be the leading passion in the story: Apollo's falling in love with Daphne is illustrated by a fire simile (*Met*. 1.492ff.). (2) Before the turning point of a story a simile helps to enhance the reader's suspense: Apollo pursues Daphne like a hunting dog. The graphic picture of the persecution puts off the decisive event and creates suspense (1.533ff.). (3) A third place where similes are frequently found is the explanation of the final metamorphosis: thus, in the Pyramus story of the image of a jet springing forth from a small hole in a water tube helps to explain why the fruits on a high tree get the color of Pyramus' blood (4.122ff.). Consequently, some functions of the simile appeal to the reader's cognitive faculties (marking important points of the narrative and helping to grasp the principal emotion of the story) or they are pseudointellectual: making the reader believe the absurd metamorphosis. Other functions are emotional—such as prorogating suspense in the middle of the narrative—or anti-emotional: dissolving pathos through irony, creating some distance at the end of the story. On a larger scale, then, the Ovidian simile fulfills interpretative functions comparable to those of parenthesis. To Ovid, it is an intellectually and emotionally stimulating component of epic narrative which establishes contacts between author and reader: despite its epic origin, it obtains rhetorical power.

24 "Zur Funktion der Gleichnisse in Ovids *Metamorphosen*," in: *Studien zum antiken Epos*, Festschrift F. Dirlmeier and V. Pöschl (Meisenheim 1976) 280-290.

Another crossroads of poetic and rhetorical traditions is allegory. Ovid's frequent use of it shows that he does not want us to take his texts at face value. While he consciously plays on allegory, he turns it from a hermeneutic technique into a poetic one, from a method of reception into one of creation. By so doing, he prepares of the more systematic exploitation of this kind of rhetorical invention in late antiquity. The illustrative richness of brilliant descriptions such as the House of Fama (*Met.* 12.39ff.) or the House of Sleep (*Met.* 11.591ff.) prove that rhetoric did not impair his poetic genius but liberated it. In such cases he expects his readers to undo mentally the surrealistic *mixtum compositum* he presents to them and to enjoy acute reading as he had enjoyed acute writing.

By a careful analysis of style and literary technique we can hope to grasp the interaction between author and reader; in this I agree with Iser. It is true that classical scholars had done this kind of research long before Iser gave it theoretic formulation, but they will go on doing it now with fuller awareness of what they do and they will now be able to tell why careful analysis of the original and special attention an author pays to details of style and literary technique is essential to the understanding of texts.

Interpretive research on given texts is a rich and very complex field. It has to take into account text syntax, rhetoric, and generic composition. It might also be furthered by modern studies on the structure of narrative,[25] fairy tale[26] and myth, if we use those methods to understand our texts and not just use the texts to illustrate our methods. Yet there are still more elementary needs: there is for instance no comprehensive modern work on Ovid and Callimachus and none on Ovid and Homer. Both these subjects despite their seemingly modest starting point would answer important questions: they would shed light on important types of texts such as dialogue with the Muse, hymn, prayer, battle scene, assembly of gods, and others.

It might be appropriate to insert here a short excursus on teaching. I am glad that Fred Ahl alluded to reading Latin aloud and acting, which are good Texan traditions; I gratefully attended Gareth Morgan's noon readings of major Greek and Latin authors in the original. I liked G.B. Conte's idea of "dismantling" an ancient text and then composing it anew. It might be an enjoyable exercise for students to apply the structures and methods of a

25 Cf. my article "Le figlie di Anio" in: *Atti del Convegno internazionale "Letterature classiche e narratologia,"* (Brindisi) 105-115.

26 This problem was treated by the Russian classicist N. Vulikh and is the subject of a forthcoming Heidelberg dissertation by C. Endlich; cf. also *Rom: Spiegel Europas* 166 f.

Tacitean prologue to modern events or use a Ciceronian speech to prove the contrary of what Cicero meant to say: thus they will grasp immediately the power of the literary devices involved. An easy task for beginners is bringing the words of an Ovidian line into the right order. As G.B. Vico put it: you only can understand what you are able to do yourself, albeit on a modest scale. Some active mastery of Latin is not an end in itself, but, if combined with a solid interpretive training, it may produce faster and more efficient original reading, because the student gets an awareness of structures, connectors, and markers. Active linguistic competence united with hermeneutic insight would make a reader of Latin texts feel like a traveller with a good map in hand.

To sum up: methods and theories are tools, and if the use of tools is not an exclusively human privilege, the creation of new tools certainly is. Let us therefore not scorn the tools some of our colleagues created for the benefit of our progress. On the other hand, tools are not made to be collected or worshipped, but to be used. They are not an end in themselves but, as the Greek word *methodos* says, ways to get something: any method is as good as the results you obtain by using it. Each method must be controlled by others, and especially when their results converge we may feel that we are on the right track. I think our understanding of classical texts ought not to stay at a pre-theoretical stage. Rather, it ought to go through a theoretical stage and finally arrive at a phenomenological one. To our understanding—as *philologoi*—the *logos* is nothing outside history and, I may add, nothing outside language. This is why in my opinion language in its impact on literature deserves to be studied as thoroughly and as methodically and as judiciously as possible.

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