

Metamorphoses Books 13-15

A) Ovid v Vergil

▪ playful Ovid v serious Vergil

1) “The dolphins live and high among the branches / Dash to and fro and shake the oaks in play” (*Met.* 1.302-3)

▪ lack of order and structure compared to the *Aeneid* (where books as structural units; clear halves; sense of progression)

▪ Taking on a challenge (unnecessary): flaunting it (taking up *Aeneid* material: “little *Aeneid*” of approx 1,150 lines)

▪ pervasive engagement with *Aeneid*.

e.g. *Aen.* 1. storm cf. flood (*Met.* 1.262-312): winds now shut in

e.g. Hercules and Achelous (*Met.* 9): cf. Turnus/Aeneas conflict

e.g. *Metamorphoses* 3.1-4.603: cf. *Aeneid*

(e.g. Juno vengeful towards Semele at 3.256ff.: compare Juno at *Aen.* 1.34ff; vengeful towards Ino at 4.420ff.: compare *Aen.* 1.34ff. and *Aen.* 7.286ff. Old and new causes for anger as *Aen.* 1.23ff.)

▪ double allusion e.g. allusion to Ennius and Vergil: cf. speech of Pythagoras (Book 15) with Ennius’ dream of Homer in Ennius’ *Annals* and Anchises’ speech in *Aeneid* 6. Rome’s greatness = e.g. of Empedoclean theme of universal change.

▪ Vergil constructed as Ovid’s hesitant precursor (cf. Hinds):

i) Ovid foregrounds of Vergilian stories of metamorphosis like Diomedes’ companions into birds *Aen.* 11.271-4/*Met.* 14.484-509; cf. emphasis on Circe (one five-hundredth of the *Aeneid*; a fifth of Ovid’s *Aeneid*) and Scylla

2) “Even now I am pursued by the sight of hideous portents. My lost comrades have taken to the sky on wings. They have become birds and haunt the rivers - so cruelly have my people been punished weeping till the rocks ring with the sound of their voices” (*Aen.* 11.271-4: Diomedes’ companions changed into birds)

3) “Ovid is engaged in a tendentious poetic appropriation of his predecessor... Rather than construct himself as an epigonal reader of the *Aeneid*, Ovid is constructing Vergil as a hesitant precursor of the *Metamorphoses*. There is a *Metamorphoses* inherent in the *Aeneid*”

ii) book not as key structural unit: (unusually) in books 6 and 7 Vergil bridges two books with the Caieta episode; also delays having invocation of the Muse (new start to the second half) until 37 lines into Book 7

4) “Thus as they climbed the track the Sibyl told / Her tale, and, rising from the Underworld, / Aeneas came to Cumae. After due sacrifice he reached the coast that later [“nondum”= “not yet”] bore / His nurse’s name” (*Met.* 14.154-7)

5) “[Aeneas] steered a straight course to the harbour of Caieta. The anchors were thrown from the prows and the ships stood along the shore” (*Aen.* 6.900-901: end of book)

6) “you too, Caieta, nurse of Aeneas, have given by your death eternal fame to our shores; the honour paid you there even now protects your resting-place” (*Aen.* 7.1-3: death of nurse= origin of shore’s name)

- whole episode (*Met.* 14.158-440) inserted between the two Caieta references

7) “Then, Aeneas’ nurse / Was buried in a marble sepulchre / And on it a brief epitaph engraved: / Here me, Caieta, saved from Grecian fire, / My loyal charge burnt on a fitting pyre. / They loosed their moorings from the grassy strand” (*Met.* 14.441-5, end of Caieta references)

8) “Where Virgil had sought to close the *Aeneid*’s most obvious structural break with a virtuoso narrative bridge, Ovid ... forces back open the gap between *Aeneid* 6 and 7 and inserts almost 300 lines of poetry into it” (Hinds 1998: 111): compounds delay

B) Ovid not particularly patriotic:

- little focus on cities (except Thebes where founder eventually goes into exile). Rome: founding glossed over (5 words on walls!); Pythagoras lists cities which are now just names: will Rome be just a name?

9) “What but a name is left / Of Oedipus’ brave Thebes?” (*Met.* 15.429)

10) “Today from Trojan stock a city rises, / Rome, where the Tiber flows from the Apennines, / And with vast effort founds her destiny. Her change is increase; she one day shall reign, / The boundless world’s great empress” (*Met.* 15.431-5, Pythagoras predicts rise of Rome)

- In little *Aeneid*, Rome= frame for stories (e.g. fall of Troy); digression within the Roman parts (e.g. long account of Polyphemus, Acis and Galatea); also Scylla episode (13.730-14.74) with tales inserted

11) “On board .../ He ... left behind / The guilty homes of Thrace, the land that dripped / With Polydorus’ blood, and finding winds / That served him well and tides that favoured reached / Apollo’s city” (*Met.* 13.627-31: cf. story of Polydorus in *Aeneid* 3)

- lack of teleology and providence compared to the *Aeneid*. Arbitrary divine will

- less stress on fate/Roman gods: cf. burning of ships (Vergil’s account compressed): Jupiter and Cybele conversation omitted

- *Aeneid* 3 and 6 reworked, without those books’ focus on providence/prophecies (cf. Tissol): .e.g. no prophecy from Sibyl as in *Aeneid* 6 or promises from Aeneas of temple (site of Sibylline books). We learn how Sibyl got her prophetic power

12) “I am no goddess, nor must you believe / A mortal worthy to be honoured with / The smoke of incense” (*Met.* 14.129-31, Sibyl rejects link with divinity)

13) “Temporal priority of events increases the impact of Ovid’s thematic suggestions: that Vergil’s story is not the whole story, that arbitrary power and unintelligible suffering are more deeply embedded in the nature of things than are providential order and the working out of beneficent fate” (Tissol 1993: 75, on Ovid going back further than Vergil with the Sibyl’s story)

- Ovid’s Aeneas: less emphasis on piety: cf. arrival at Delos and hospitality of Anius (*Metamorphoses* 13.632-639): Ovidian Aeneas as tourist (Solodow)

14) “...king Anius, king of men and priest of the god, came to meet us, his forehead garlanded with ribbons and the sacred laurel. Recognizing Anchises as an old friend, he gave us his hand in hospitality and we entered his house. There I gazed in reverence at the god’s temple..”(Verg. *Aen.*

3.80-4 > prayer and response and interpretation of oracle)

15) "they rose and went to the oracle / Of Phoebus, who commanded them to seek / Their ancient mother" (*Met.* 13.677-79: oracle in 2 lines!)

C) Ovid and criticism

▪ Ovid as engaging with scholarly criticism (Serv. Dan. *Aen.* 3.85: why didn't Vergilian Aeneas sacrifice upon landing at Delos?) (was this why Anchises misinterpreted the oracle?)

16) "Scholars wonder why Aeneas, after his landing at Delos, immediately started praying without having offered any victims in sacrifice before. Many scholars, and Varro amongst them, say that at Delos, as well as in other places, there are altars both of Apollo and of his son..." (Serv. Dan. *Aen.* 3.85)

▪ Ovid as critic: cf. Polydorus (*Ov. Met.* 13.628-30): not run through with spears as *Aeneid*: Polydorus's throat cut using a sword (13.435-8). Doesn't use Vergilian metamorphosis

17) "it is blameworthy that the poet invents something so remote from the truth" (Servius on *Aen.* 3.46, criticising the metamorphosis of Polydorus in the *Aeneid*)

▪ Other voices? Alternative readings of the *Aeneid*? Aeneas' choices; Dido (*Met.* 14.78-81)

18) "Even so the Fates did not allow Troys hopes / To fall to ruins with her walls. The son / Of Venus on his shoulders bore away / Her holy images and, holy too, / His ancient father, venerable freight. / Of all his wealth that was the prize he chose / In love and loyalty, that and his son, Ascanius" (*Met.* 13.623-6)

19) "... head winds drove them to the Libyan coast. / There Dido made Aeneas welcome to / Her home and heart, her heart too ill-inured / To bear the parting from her Trojan spouse. / Feigning a holy rite, she built a pyre / And fell upon his sword and, duped herself, / Duped all" (*Met.* 14.77-81, voice of epic narrator)

20) "Is there nothing we can trust in this life? He was thrown helpless on my shores and I took him in and settled him as a partner in my kingdom" (*Aen.* 4.373-4, from viewpoint of antagonistic Dido)

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