

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO

GREEK
MYTHOLOGY



Edited by

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- 69 Sappho fr. 58 Lobel-Page; cf. frs. 39, 92, 98. See Kurke (1992).
 70 See, for example, Morris (1992) 101–49.
 71 Erskine (2001) 58. Herodotus (7.98.2) recounts the Persian general Mardonius surprise at the ‘ill-advised way’ in which ‘the Hellenes are accustomed to wage war.’
 72 For Croton and Siris, see Strabo 6.1.12, 14.
 73 The *Tabula Iliaca Capitolina* (849 FGrH 6b), which associates Aeneas with the foundation of Troy, purports to illustrate Stesichorus’ narrative, though some suspect it of being a creation of Augustan propaganda. See Malkin (1998) 172 and Erskine (2001) 149.
 74 See Erskine (2001) 94.
 75 Erskine (2001) 137.
 76 DeVries (2000) 348–50.
 77 For the representation of non-Greeks in the tragedies of Euripides, see Saïd (2002). For barbarians in tragedy generally, see Hall (1989).
 78 See, generally, Hall (2002) 172–89.
 79 Erskine (2001) 62–6. The pediments may date to shortly after 480 BCE, though this is controversial.
 80 See Castriota (1992) 33–58, 76–89.
 81 Hall (2002) 199–202.
 82 Xenophon, *Hell.* 3.4.3–4.
 83 Arrian, *Anab.* 1.11.7–8.
 84 See Clogg (2003) 41–2.

12: OVID AND GREEK MYTH

A. J. Boyle



The reason for the continuous mutation of myth . . . is its cultural relevance.

F. Graf, *Greek Mythology: An Introduction*

The social, cultural, and religious milieu in which the poet Ovid moved and wrote was complex, if not chaotic. Myth was a central ingredient of that complexity and chaos. The foundational myths of Aeneas and Romulus were probably current in Rome in the sixth century BCE,¹ and other foundational myths involving the Arcadian king Evander and the Greek hero Hercules followed. But it is from the third century BCE onwards, after the ‘invention’ of Roman literature, that we witness the start of the complex, multifarious use of Greek myth that was to define the Ovidian treatment. Early Roman epic and drama and late republican poetry, architecture, sculpture, and wall-painting turned to Greek myth as a grammar of Roman experience. They used it for social, exegetic, validator, discursive, exemplary, referential, and (increasingly) overtly political purposes. Livius Andronicus’ *Odisia*, for example, seems to respond to a mid-third-century need for transcultural validation. Naevius, who introduced the historical drama, the *fabula praetexta*, seems almost self-consciously political, highlighting aspects of Rome’s religious policy in *Lucurgus*, for example, and aetiologising and possibly galvanising political sentiment in *Danae*. He and Ennius underscored national pride (and that of the Julian and Aemilian families) in *Bellum Poenicum* and *Annales* through their epics’ affirmation of the city’s descent from Venus. The second-century tragedian Accius dramatised the Atreus myth, perhaps

to attack the 'tyranny' of Tiberius Gracchus; Catullus' epyllion, *Peleus and Thetis* (poem 64), used a concatenation of myths to examine the social and moral turmoil following the civil wars of the early first century BCE.²

Signally, the civil wars of the late republic elicited several mythic responses. Virgil expressed fervid and fragile optimism in his Golden Age pastoral (*Eclogue* 4); Horace advocated flight to the Isles of the Blessed (*Epode* 16) or moralised with a gigantomachy (*Odes* 3.4); Varius presented *Thyestes* as an indictment of Mark Antony. Some mythic responses were architectural and sculptural. Most famously, the Temple of Apollo on the Palatine, dedicated in 28 BCE, used its Portico of the Danaids to transform a civil war into a triumphant conquest of Egypt. It was a more subtle continuation of the politicisation of myth already evident in Julius Caesar's Temple of Venus Genetrix (dedicated 46 BCE), which housed a statue of both Caesar and Caesar's mistress, Cleopatra, and in Octavian's Temple of Divine Julius (dedicated 29 BCE), which housed a painting of Caesar's and Rome's divine ancestress, Venus. The Augustan Forum (completed 2 BCE), with its imbrication of Mars, Venus, Aeneas, Romulus, the Divine Julius, and Augustus himself, proved a decisive moment in both politicised myth and Ovid's life. The iconic fusion of Augustus and Jupiter on cameos and gems (notably on the Gemma Augustea) made explicit what Augustan politicised myth had implied.³

Much of this discursive and political use of Greek myth was made possible by its separation from Roman ritual, its function in Roman intellectual life as an instrument of thinking. By Roman intellectuals Greek myth was generally regarded as *fabulae*, a collection of fictions. Cicero proclaimed myth to be neither true nor plausible (*De Inventione* 1.27), as did the anonymous author of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (1.13); Lucretius condemned the fictions of myth but used those fictions in his poetic argument (see, for example, *De Rerum Natura* 1.82–101); Varro objected to myth's unworthy portrayal of the gods (Cardauns fragments 6–11). More in line with myth's appeal to Roman poets was the definition of myth by Aelius Theon (first century CE) in *Progymnasmata* 3 as 'a fictitious story which illustrates the truth.' The definition, of course, recalled Plato's *eikos muthos* ('myth resembling (the truth)', *Timaeus* 29d) and gave precise formulation to a view embedded in Roman poetry's prolific use of Greek myth as a prime instrument of discourse. For Ovid myth was both good to think and to write with.

MYTH AND INTERTEXTS

It has been observed that Ovid's 'range of mythological interest is vast.'⁴ So too is Ovid's range of use. The poet is fully aware of the contemporary categorisation of myth as fiction. He refers to it as *mendacium* (*Amores* 3.6.16, *Fasti* 6.253) and *licentia* (*Am.* 3.12.41); he uses *fabula* (with its connotations of unreliability) of 'mythic' narrative (*Ars Amatoria* 3.326, *Fas.* 3.738) and acknowledges the unbelievability of his own metamorphoses (*Tristia* 2.63–4). His interest in myth is neither religious nor ritualistic, but poetic. And one of his primary poetic uses is referential. Take, for example, *Heroides*, an early work of Ovid and a self-proclaimed revolutionary one (*Ars* 3.346), in which a whole collection of poems focusses on the female voice, female memory, and female desire,⁵ expressed through the area of writing most readily open to elite Roman women, the letter. Mythical heroines, such as Penelope, Briseis, Phaedra, Hypsipyle, and Dido (to cite the 'writers' of five of the first seven epistles), are allowed to give their own 'psychological' version of legendary events. What results referentially is a dynamic, ludic interplay between Ovid's poems and several canonical texts of the Greco-Roman tradition: Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad*, Euripides' *Phaedra*, Apollonius' *Argonautica*, Virgil's *Aeneid*. The referentiality itself achieves several effects. It locates Ovid within the Greco-Roman literary system. It critiques the values of the canonical texts. It underscores the gap between the realities implied by those texts and Ovid's contemporary world. It problematises myth itself by exposing its arbitrary construction by canonical texts. And it does all these things with seriocomic wit.

Consider that Homeric paradigm of wifely beauty and virtue, Penelope, whose undeliverable epistle to the absent Ulysses begins Ovid's collection of letters. Penelope focusses on events from both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in her catalogue of anxieties, loneliness, and deprivations. But in her letter she puts to the fore her devotion to Ulysses –

haec tua Penelope lento tibi mittit, Vlix
Heroides 1.1

Your Penelope sends you this, slow Ulysses

– and the maintenance of that devotion in the midst of great difficulties and pressure (83ff.); at the same time she brings herself to articulate a fear that Ulysses may not be showing such devotion (71–80). As the

reader 'knows' from Homer, Penelope's anxiety that Ulysses' 'delay' in returning home may have erotic causes, that behind the *mora* may lie *amor* (74–6), is not as foolish as she proclaims. This gap in 'knowledge' between the Ovidian reader and the fictive writer makes irony the dominant mode of *Heroides* 1 (as it is of the whole *Heroides*) and is central to its questioning of the canonical mythic narrative, especially of Ulysses' brand of heroism and its cost. The reader is invited to view that cost in terms not only of Penelope's pain but of the un-Homeric and unhumorous reality of the wasting of a life. Throughout the letter Penelope plays the role of an elegiac *puella* or 'girl,' pining for her man, only to display that what Ulysses' absence has done is transform a girl into a crone. The final lines of *Heroides* 1 hit home – ironised by the reader's 'knowledge' that Ulysses' return is imminent:

certe ego, quae fueram te discedente puella,
protinus ut uenias, facta uidebor anus.
Heroides 1.115–16.

What's certain is that I, whom you left a girl,
Though you come now, will seem a crone.

The other heroines of these elegiac epistles play similar roles in rewriting their inherited myths. Dido, for example, in *Heroides* 7, subverts aspects of the *Aeneid*'s myth, making the latter seem a prejudicial construction.⁶ Penelope will later become an instrument of self-referentiality. In *Tristitia* 1.6 (21–34), Ovid uses a comparison between her and his wife to allude to *Heroides* itself, which he asks to be able to rewrite with his wife placed first.⁷

Complex, often multifunctional referentiality pervades Ovid's use of Greek myth throughout his *oeuvre*. No more so than in *Metamorphoses*, in which the poem's sustained reference to, and utilisation of, central works of the mythographic tradition (Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Hesiod's *Theogony* and *Works and Days*, the 'Hesiodic' *Catalogue of Women*, Nicander's *Heteroioumena*, Eratosthenes' *Katasterismoi*, Boios' *Ornithogonia*, Parthenius' *Erotica Pathemata* – and, of course, Callimachus' *Aitia*) – together with the poem's demonstrable use of more routine mythographic handbooks⁸ – ensures that the reader sees the poem as in some sense or senses mythographic epic. What those 'senses' are is perpetually in negotiation throughout Ovid's innovative masterwork, in which one of the prime metamorphoses is of myth itself,⁹ as the poet rewrites the master narratives not only of the Greeks

(as in the Erysichthon and Iphis and Dryope myths in Books 8 and 9 with their significant deviations from Callimachus and Nicander, or Achilles' fight with Cygnus in Book 12, which expands on Homer,¹⁰ or the downplaying of genealogy throughout) but of their Roman successors. Virgil's colloquy between Venus and Jupiter in *Aeneid* 1 (227–96) is rewritten at the end of Ovid's epic and this time as a colloquy over Aeneas' descendant (*Aeneaden*, *Met.* 15.804), Julius Caesar, and Augustus (*Met.* 15.761–842). Even more substantial is Ovid's rewriting of Virgil's own rewriting (*Georgic* 4. 453–527) of the Greek Orpheus myth in *Metamorphoses* 10 and 11, where Ovid's playful, self-consciously irreverent treatment transforms the fabled singer into a pompous narcissist and turns the song that moved hell into a rhetorician's prosaic and verbose set-piece with a bizarre effect upon its audience. Virgil does not give us Orpheus' song; Ovid does and it is intentionally bathetic. The Greek mythic prototype of all poets begins with language filled with qualification, exegesis, and banality, and decidedly not of the kind to make the Virgilian dead weep. Ominously, the Ovidian Orpheus, though he plucks his lyre in accompaniment to his 'song,' does not 'sing' as in Virgil (*Geo.* 4.466), but 'says.'

pulsisque ad carmina neruis
sic ait: 'o positi sub terra numina mundi,
in quem reccidimus, quicquid mortale creamur,
si licet et falsi positis ambagibus oris
uera loqui sinitis, non huc, ut opaca uiderem
Tartara, descendi, nec uti uillosa colubris
terna Medusaei uincirem guttura monstri:
causa uiae est coniunx, in quam calcata uenenum
uipera diffudit crescentesque abstulit annos.
posse pati uolui nec me temptasse negabo:
uicit Amor. supera deus hic bene notus in ora est;
an sit et hic, dubito: sed et hic tamen auguror esse,
famaque si ueteris non est mentita rapinae,
uos quoque iunxit Amor.'

Metamorphoses 10.17–26

And striking his chords for the song
He says this: 'O powers of the subterranean world,
Where we fall back, all of us created mortal things,
If it is allowed and you let me lay aside the labyrinth
Of false speech and speak the truth, I came down here

Neither to view dark Tartarus nor to enchain
 The Medusan monster's triple snake-haired necks:
 The journey's cause is my wife, in whom a trodden viper
 Spread its poison and removed her growing years.
 I wanted the strength to endure, I'll not deny I tried;
 Love conquered. This god is famed in the upper world;
 Whether he is here, I don't know; but I guess he is even here,
 And, if the story of that ancient rape is not a lie,
 Love also joined you two.'

Above is the first half of Orpheus' song of deliverance. Ovid's dead do weep; Tantalus pulls back from the disappearing water, Ixion's wheel stops, vultures cease from eating Tityus' liver, the Danaids rest from filling their unfillable urns, and Sisyphus sits on his stone in a profusion of sibilants (*Met.* 10.44). It is a Monty Pythonesque scene. The consuming passion of Virgil's Orpheus, the *dementia* and *furor* ('madness') which make him fatefully look back, are replaced by fear of failure and an eagerness to view his wife (*Met.* 10.56). It is fitting that the effect of this wordy poetaster on Eurydice is to reduce her speaking ability (*dicere*) to a single word. The plangent five lines of Virgil, filled with bewilderment, pain, and loss (*Geo.* 4. 494–8), become a single and barely audible 'farewell' (*uale*, *Met.* 10.62). That is all 'she said': *dixit* (*Met.* 10.63). When Orpheus finally betakes himself to love of young boys, enjoying the 'brief spring' (*breue uer*) and 'first flowers' (*primos flores*) of their youth (*Met.* 10.83–85), it fails to surprise. We have to wait for the opening of the next book before the Ciconian women dismember the poet. Again Ovid jettisons Virgilian restraint, this time turning his predecessor's three-line description (*Geo.* 4. 520–22) into an extended narrative of violence and death (*Met.* 11.1–43). The reader sheds no tears.

MYTH AS PARADIGM

Few cultures, if any, have been so committed to the exemplary function of the past as that of Rome. The appeal to precedent was a major form of argumentation.¹¹ Inevitably, one of the most frequent functions of Greek myth in Roman poetry was as moral or behavioural paradigm. Such paradigms could be apparently positive, as in Propertius' list of unadorned legendary beauties at 1.2.15–24 and Horace's citation of Homeric heroes in love with slave-girls at *Odes* 2.4.1–8. They could

also be ambivalent, as in Catullus' use of the Peleus and Thetis saga in poem 64, or negative, as in the use of the Iphigenia sacrifice at Lucretius 1.82–101. Ovid's employment of Greek myth as paradigm is as varied and complex as that of his poetic predecessors. Positive *exempla* of love's 'martial' spirit are provided by Achilles, Hector, Agamemnon, and Mars himself at *Amores* 1.9.33–40; at *Amores* 2.14.13–18 Thetis, Ilia, and Venus support an argument against abortion. A catalogue of negative mythical paradigms is featured at *Remedia Amoris* 55–66, where Phyllis, Dido, Tereus, Pasiphae, Phaedra, Paris, and Scylla index behaviour to be avoided and illustrate the consequences of not following the poet's healing precepts. Both these positive and negative *exempla* function in the rhetoric of their poems – like those of Propertius and Lucretius noted above – as instruments of persuasion.

Ovid's elegiac poems, erotic and exilic, are filled with mythical *exempla* designed to persuade.¹² Sometimes such persuasion is less than persuasive, as in the use of the myths of Io, Leda, and Europa at *Amores* 1.3.19–26 to argue for sexual/poetic capitulation, or in the failed attempts at self-justification using Ajax, Orestes, Atalanta, Ariadne, and Cassandra in *Amores* 1.7 (7–18)¹³ and the myth of Althaea and the Meleager-brand in *Tristitia* 1.7 (15–20) – the latter an attempt to justify Ovid's alleged burning of his *Metamorphoses*. At other times the use of mythical *exempla* is itself questioned (*Am.* 2.1.29–32). Notoriously, in the second half of the exilic curse poem, *Ibis* (251–638), an unprecedented, excessive (almost 400-line) catalogue of mythical (and historical) paradigms suggests the speaker's fury, even 'deranged *persona*,'¹⁴ not his conviction. Occasionally, too – and here the debt to Catullus and Propertius is clear – mythical paradigms combine to suggest an ideal world (of female beauty and availability, for example: *Am.* 1.10.1–8), against which sordid reality is to be judged. In some *exempla*, the reality being evaluated is political:

sed mora tuta breuis: lentescunt tempore curae,
 uanescitque absens et nouus intrat amor.
 dum Menelaus abest, Helene, ne sola iaceret,
 hospitibus est tepido nocte recepta sinu.
 quis stupor hic, Menelae, fuit? tu solus abibas,
 isdem sub tectis hospes et uxor erant.
 accipitri timidas credis, furiose, columbas?
 plenum montano credis ouile lupo?
 nil Helene peccat, nihil hic committit adulter:
 quod tu, quod faceret quilibet, ille facit.

cogis adulterium dando tempusque locumque;
 quid nisi consilio est usa puella tuo?
 quid faciat? uir abest, et adest non rusticus hospes,
 et timet in uacuo sola cubare toro.
 uiderit Atrides: Helenen ego crimine soluo:
 usa est humani commoditate uiri.

Ars Amatoria 2.357–72

A short absence is safe: passion wanes with time,
 The absent love vanishes, the new enters.
 With Menelaus absent, lest Helen lie alone,
 Her guest's warm breast welcomed her at night.
 What folly, Menelaus, was this? You went away alone,
 Guest and wife were under the same roof.
 Do you trust timid doves, madman, to a hawk?
 Trust a full sheep pen to a mountain wolf?
 Helen does no wrong, this adulterer commits no crime.
 He does what you, what anyone would do.
 You force adultery by providing time and place;
 What did the girl use except your advice?
 What could she do? The husband's not there, a charming guest is,
 And she fears to lie alone in an empty bed.
 Let Atrides see to himself; I absolve Helen of blame;
 She used her kindly husband's complaisance.

The politics of this passage need addressing.¹⁵ Released about 1 BCE, and certainly after the completion in 2 BCE of Augustus' prime ideological monument, the Augustan Forum, the *Ars Amatoria* inevitably challenged the prescribed *mores* of Augustan Rome. Its treatment here of adultery is remarkable. The social and moral legislation of 18 BCE, the *lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus* and the *lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis*, radically departed from the norms of Roman law by taking that law into the bedroom. The transformation of adultery and other forms of transgressive fornication (*stuprum*) into crimes with severe penalties imposed by a special permanent court (*quaestio perpetua*) suddenly made sexual morality and practice subject to political control.¹⁶ Prior to the *leges Iuliae* adultery was essentially left to the respective families to deal with; it was a form of social behaviour from which Roman law kept a respectful distance. The effect of the Augustan legislation was 'revolutionary',¹⁷ and signalled a shift in regulatory power from the family to the state. In 2 BCE after the opening of his great forum Augustus had to banish

his own daughter, Julia, to the island of Pandateria for her conspicuous and multiple adulteries.¹⁸ Four of her illustrious adulterers – and several less illustrious ones – met similar fates; the most prominent adulterer a worse one.¹⁹ The scale of the scandal and its attendant embarrassment are reflected in Velleius' description some thirty years later: *foeda dictu memoriaque horrenda in ipsius domo tempestas* ('a storm foul to mention and dreadful to remember fell on his house,' Vell. Pat. 2.100.2). Certainly from 2 BCE onwards, at the head of Rome was a frustrated and frustrating autocrat, as much a victim of his own ideology as its proponent, and one not given to tolerance of that ideology's breach.²⁰ Earlier, in *Ars Amatoria* (1.89–134), Ovid had 'humorously' used the Roman myth of the Sabine Rape as precedent and thus justification for erotic pursuits in the theatre.²¹ In the passage quoted above, the poet develops his subversion of Augustan sexual codes by turning to Greek myth – to the famous mythical adulteress Helen, who is chosen to exemplify the dangers of male absence. That in or around 1 BCE Ovid should have 'published' this passage not as a denunciation of adulterers but rather as a text for pontificating on the excusability, even innocence, of certain kinds of adultery, astonishes.

nil Helene peccat, nihil hic committit adulter.

Ars Amatoria 2.365

Helen does no wrong, this adulterer commits no crime.

Myth's paradigmatic function dissolves into political and social critique.

MYTH AND HUMANITAS

Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is rightly seen as (to a substantial degree) a mythic study of the human condition, a grammar of *humanitas*.²² From the Greek rationalist myth of creation in the opening book to the Augustan political settlement of its close, the fifteen-book epic structures its narrative to present the Roman reader/listener with an image of his/her world's evolution from natural chaos to political order. Within this evolution, myth regularly functions as an aetiological, explanatory force, making of the human environment (it appears) a knowable, comprehensible world. Natural and cultural phenomena alike are amenable to aetiological exegesis. Dew, thunder, earthquakes, springs, mountains, islands, trees, the foundation of cities, the source of their names, the

inauguration of religious games, the origin of religious cults at Rome – have their precise mythical explanations.²³ One prime aetiology is that of the human species itself, in which the Ovidian narrator promotes an ontological hierarchy and locates the human ‘animal’ between the divine and the rest of ‘animal’ creation, even attributing to it elements of divinity:

sanctius his animal mentisque capacius altae
deerat adhuc et quod dominari in cetera posset.
natus homo est, siue hunc diuino semine fecit
ille opifex rerum, mundi melioris origo,
siue recens tellus seductaque nuper ab alto
aethere cognati retinebat semina caeli.
quam satus Iapeto mixtam pluuiialibus undis
finxit in effigiem moderantum cuncta deorum,
pronaque cum spectent animalia cetera terram,
os homini sublime dedit caelumque uidere
iussit et erectos ad sidera tollere uultus.
sic, modo quae fuerat rudis et sine imagine, tellus
induit ignotas hominum conuersa figuras.

Metamorphoses 1.76–88

A holier animal than these and more receptive to lofty thought
Still was lacking which would have dominion over the rest.
Humankind was born: either the universe’s craftsman
Made it from divine seed, designing a better world,
Or the fresh earth, recently parted from the high
Aether, retained the seeds of its kindred sky,
And mixed by Iapetus’ son with rain water
Was moulded to an image of all-controlling gods.
And, whereas other animals gaze down upon the ground,
He gave humankind an upright face and bade it
View the sky and lift its soaring gaze to the stars.
So earth, which just now was crude and formless,
Changed, and put on unfamiliar human shapes.

This extraordinary proclamation of man’s perfection builds upon the post-Hesiodic tradition of Prometheus’ creation of man and inserts into it the Stoic theory familiar from Cleanthes’ *Hymn to Zeus* of humanity’s divine origins and imaging of god. It is followed immediately by an account of man’s fall, in which Hesiod’s myth of deteriorating races

is modified into a myth of deteriorating ages, in which humankind degenerates from a golden to an iron age. The major crime of this iron age, Lycaon’s attempt to deceive Jupiter with human sacrifice (*Met.* 1.226–31), is signally a gross breach of the alimentary codes separating divine, human, and animal. Appropriately, Lycaon’s metamorphosis into a wolf not only (as with several metamorphoses)²⁴ reveals his essential nature but also itself dissolves the boundaries Lycaon had transgressed. A massive flood follows to cleanse the world of wickedness and the human race is replenished by the two survivors, Deucalion and Pyrrha, and a new world order begins.

This post-Deucalion world – divinely remade, explained, known – is the one inhabited by the reader. It is no moral paradise. Ovid conjoins in almost seamless continuity a narrative constructed from a myriad of Greek myths illustrating various aspects of human appetite, ambition, folly, greed, jealousy, bloodlust, treachery, anger, desire, fear, vengeance, vanity, hybris, inventiveness, piety, courage, love, nobility, moderation, wisdom, hope, and disaster. The narrative’s psychological focus and the abundance of self-presentational monologues expand the techniques and insight of the earlier *Heroides* to create a *pinacoteca* of the human mind. Medea begins the sixty-one line soliloquy, in which she wrestles with her passion for Jason and her *pudor* (modesty) and *pietas* (filial duty) towards her father, thus:

‘frustra, Medea, repugnas;
nescio quis deus obstat,’ ait, ‘mirumque nisi hoc est
aut aliquid certe simile huic, quod amare uocatur.
nam cur iussa patris nimium mihi dura uidentur?
sunt quoque dura nimis. cur, quem modo denique uidi,
ne pereat, timeo? quae tanti causa timoris?
excute uirgineo conceptas pectore flammās,
si potes, infelix. si possem, sanior essem.
sed trahit inuitam noua uis aliudque cupido,
mens aliud suadet. uideo meliora proboque,
deteriora sequor.’

Metamorphoses 7.11–21

‘You struggle, Medea, in vain;
Some god thwarts you,’ she says; ‘I wonder if this isn’t –
Or something like this at least – what is called love.
Else why do father’s instructions seem to me too harsh?
They are indeed too harsh. Why do I fear for a man’s life

Whom I've just seen? What is the cause of such great fear?
Strike from your virgin breast the fires you have lit,
If you can, poor thing. If I could, I'd be back to health.
A strange force draws me against my will. Desire points one way,
Reason another. I see and approve the better course,
I follow the worse one.'

Seneca learnt much from Ovidian monologues,²⁵ as he is presumed to have done from Ovid's lost and admired tragedy, *Medea*. And, as in the later tragedian, there is a profoundly moral dimension to the preoccupation with human psychology. This extends, of course, to *Metamorphoses'* narrative preoccupations and emphases. The Ovidian myths of (*inter alios*) Phaethon, Battus, Aglauros, Cadmus, Actaeon, Tiresias, Narcissus, Pentheus, Pyramus, Perseus, Triptolemus, Marsyas, Pelops, Tereus, Medea, Theseus, Minos, Daedalus, Meleager, Philemon, Erysichthon, Hercules, Midas, Peleus, and the Trojan War seem designed to confirm the moral and existential boundaries of human aspiration and life by illustrating the disastrous consequences of their transgression and (more rarely) the rewards of their maintenance. Myths of human savagery, such as those of Tereus and Medea, set up models of the Roman Other and provide negative *exempla* of the conventions defining civilized humankind. Similarly antithetical to Roman ideals are myths exemplifying the failure to reach adulthood or adult male sexuality (Phaethon, Narcissus, Pentheus) – and the sexual perversion myths of Iphis, Biblis, and Myrrha, which reinforce the incest and homosexual taboos of Romankind.

Many problems, however, surround the narrative's implicit condemnation of human excess, prime among which is the conspicuous absence of any metaphysical framework for such condemnation in *Metamorphoses* itself. The work focusses, especially in its first third, on the arbitrary power and erotic predilections of the gods. The narrative's concern with *amor* develops, of course, the pun embedded in the poems' title and may be indebted to the pseudo-Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* with its attention to the amours of the gods and the resultant genealogies. The Ovidian 'catalogues,' however, seem very different. The attention given by Ovid to the amalgam of divine power and divine injustice makes of these amatory exploits a destabilising force that negates the narrative movement of the epic from chaos to order and ensures that, despite such a surface movement and its aetiological underpinnings, the poem supplies no laws for man's orientation. Aetiology seems to function ironically in suggesting the knowability and controllability of a

world in which the paradigmatic human status seems that of victim. The emphasis of the early books on the gods' anger, power, injustice, and rape,²⁶ beginning with Jupiter's destruction of the whole of mankind for the crime of an individual, through Apollo's attempted rape of Daphne and Jupiter's rapes of Io, Callisto, Europa, and Semele, Diana's killing of Actaeon, and Juno's blinding of Tiresias, to Pluto's rape of Proserpina, overwhelms. Resistance to divine rape is emphasised:

'ne fuge me!' fugiebat enim. iam pascua Lernae
consitaque arboribus Lyrcea reliquerat arua,
cum deus inducta latas caligine terras
occuluit tenuitque fugam rapuitque pudorem.

Metamorphoses 1.597–600

'Don't flee from me!' For she was fleeing and had left
Lerna's meadows and Lyrcean fields and thickets,
When the god concealed the wide earth in a veil
Of darkness, stopped her flight and raped her modesty.

Such resistance prevents neither rape nor ensuing punishment. Despite the narrator's moral indictment of Jupiter – 'raped her modesty,' *rapuit pudorem*, is tonally unambiguous – it is the victim of rape against whom Juno rails. When at the beginning of Book 6 Minerva weaves a tapestry illustrating the power, justice, and 'August/Augustan majesty' (*augusta grauitas*, *Met.* 6.73) of the gods, while Arachne weaves one detailing the 'crimes of heaven' (*caelestia crimina*, *Met.* 6.131), the former's separation from and the latter's connection with *Metamorphoses'* earlier narrative are patent. The hint in Arachne's tapestry of the divine rapists' vainly rebellious progeny serves to underscore the gap between justice and power. Minerva's destruction of both tapestry and weaver leaves little doubt about the moral nature of the poem's universe. What Ovid presents in *Metamorphoses* is a world of unaccountable otherness,²⁷ in which the controllers of that world and the putative guardians of its morality exemplify the vices they condemn. Ramifications of this mythic world for that of contemporary Rome and its controllers and moral protectors are patent.

MYTH AND ROMANITAS

Right from the start of *Metamorphoses* myth and political reality conjoin. Jupiter's first appearance in the poem is on a Romanised Olympus,

equipped with its own Palatine, where the powerful and 'noble' gods dwell apart from the Olympian *plebs* (*Met.* 1.163–76), and the meeting with the gods at which he complains of the sin of Lycaon resembles nothing so much as a convocation of the Roman senate,²⁸ which, as we know from Suetonius (*Augustus Diuus* 29.3), Augustus sometimes held in the Palatine library by his own house. The analogy between Jupiter and Augustus is explicitly stated (*Met.* 1. 204–06); the response of the gods mirrors that of the senate to Augustus:

dicta Iouis pars uoce probant stimulosque frementi
adiciunt, alii partes adsensibus inplent.

Metamorphoses 1.244–5

Some shout approval at Jove's words and add fuel
To his roar, others fulfil their role through assent.

A consequence of the poem's early establishment of the analogy between Jupiter and Augustus is that the reader is encouraged to view the presentation of Jupiter in the epic's narrative as reflecting, however obscurely, the realities of Augustan Rome. When the reader reaches the end of the poem the analogy is restated almost heavy-handedly:

Iuppiter arces
temperat aetherias et mundi regna triformis,
terra sub Augusto est: pater est et rector uterque.

Metamorphoses 15.858–60

Jupiter controls
Heaven's towers and the realm of the triformed world,
Earth is subject to Augustus: each is father and ruler.

When Ovid proclaims the invulnerability of his poem to the wrath of Jupiter (*Met.* 15.871), its political translation requires no effort.

A rather more subtle political use of Greek myth is evident in the poem's treatment of metamorphosis itself. Several of *Metamorphoses*' mythographic intertexts were mentioned above. It is well known that Ovid plundered catalogues of Greek mythic metamorphoses from Nicander's *Heteroiumena* and elsewhere. But what needs to be observed is that these metamorphoses are often made by Ovid to serve discursive purposes and to elicit political judgments. The Apollo–Daphne myth of *Metamorphoses* 1 (452–567), for example, is used to generate an aetiology of the laurel tree, into which Daphne is transformed. This aetiology,

however, grounded in Apollo's failure to rape, does anything but cast an admirable glow on the Roman triumphs and Augustus' house which (the poem emphasises: *Met.* 1.560–63) laurel is used to adorn. Notably, too, Ovid's 'plundered' catalogue of Greek metamorphoses climaxes in metamorphoses that are Roman, political, radical, and religious: the metamorphosis of Caesar and prospective metamorphosis of Augustus into gods. Nor is this metamorphosis of Roman religion restricted to Augustus and his adoptive father. The great public divinities, Vesta and Apollo, are revealed by the poem to have been transformed into members of Augustus' household and inhabitants of his *domus* on the Palatine.²⁹ The great goddess of the public hearth of Rome, Vesta Publica, on whose eternally burning flame the survival of Rome depended and whose sacrosanct place was at the heart of Rome itself (see Livy 5.52.7, 14), is now one of Augustus' *penates*:

Vestaque Caesareos inter sacrata penates,
et cum Caesarea tu, Phoebe domestice, Vesta.

Metamorphoses 15.864–5

And Vesta, hallowed among Caesarean *penates*,
And household Phoebus beside Caesarean Vesta.

Here recent Roman religious realities (the creation of a shrine for Vesta in Augustus' house,³⁰ which was itself connected to the Palatine Temple of Apollo, and the resulting appropriation of these two deities) are presented as a blatantly political metamorphosis of inherited traditions and as much a transformation of *romanitas* as the Greek mythic metamorphoses were a transformation of human bodies. Not that the transformation of human bodies could not also be political. In his first poem from exile (*Tr.* 1.1.117–22), Ovid asks that his own translation from Rome to Tomis be added to his epic's collection of transformed bodies (*mutata corpora*).

Clearly the metamorphosis that had the most potent ramifications for Roman politics and religion was apotheosis. Introduced in the first book of *Metamorphoses* in connection with Io (who became Isis: *Met.* 1.748), it becomes a structuring motif in the second half of the poem, in which the reader witnesses the apotheosis of Hercules (*Met.* 9.134–272) leading into those of Aeneas, Romulus, Caesar, and (prospectively) Augustus. The evolution of differences in grounds for apotheosis merits comment. In the cases of Hercules, Aeneas, and Romulus, apotheosis is merited through a combination of great deeds and divine paternity/

maternity. Hercules' accomplishments are rehearsed (*Met.* 9.183–98), his status as 'earth's protector,' *uindex terrae*, affirmed (*Met.* 9.241), and his immediate descent from Jupiter underscored at the moment of deification (*Met.* 9.265). Divine blood and worthiness are similarly emphasised in the cases of Aeneas and Romulus (*Met.* 14. 588–9, 594–5, 805–15). In the case of Julius Caesar, though great deeds are his (*Met.* 15. 746–58), and the proclaimed ancestress of the Julian line is Venus, neither provides the stated grounds for the apotheosis. Political power and political expediency deify Caesar:

ne foret hic igitur mortali semine cretus
ille deus faciendus erat.

Metamorphoses 15.760–61

Therefore, lest the one [Augustus] be born of mortal seed,
The other [Julius Caesar] had to be made a god.

The contemporary institution of divine metamorphosis is exposed as a self-serving political fiction in part through contrast with Greek mythic apotheoses. There is a double fiction here, since, as every contemporary reader of this text knew, Augustus was not born of the seed of Julius Caesar, mortal or otherwise. *Metamorphoses* began with a nongenealogical creation myth in which the universe was formed by 'a god and nobler nature' (*deus et melior natura*, *Met.* 1.21). It ends with a politically motivated and blatantly false genealogy creating a god. The emperor's biological father is as tellingly absent here as any reference to the actual political processes – the triumviral acts, senatorial decree, and vote of the comitia – that in 42 BCE made Caesar into a god.³¹

The political use of myth dominates Ovid's late masterpiece, *Fasti*. Reworked during Ovid's exile and concurrent with the first crisis of the principate (the translation of power from Augustus to Tiberius), *Fasti* contains Ovid's most mature thinking on the imperial system and on Rome. As in *Metamorphoses*, the association of Augustus with Jupiter is emphasised, but the negative implications of that association are made more explicit through striking juxtapositions. In the entry on the Nones of February, for example, Augustus is praised as a Jupiter on earth (*Fas.* 2.131–2) only to have that praise juxtaposed with allusion to Ganymede (145–6), the Trojan youth raped and abducted by Jupiter, and a detailed account of the latter's rape of Callisto (153–92), in which even the narrator intervenes to proclaim her innocence (178). *Fasti* contains a great deal of rape, much of it by Jupiter, and this mythic rape frames the

focus on mythohistorical 'foundational' rapes, such as those of Silvia, the Sabine Women, and Lucretia, all of which take place at moments of crucial political change. The one rape that is not stated in *Fasti* but that is implied by both the mythic and the mythohistorical 'foundational' rapes is the one accompanying the most momentous political change of all: that of *romanitas* by Augustus during the 'refoundation of Rome.'

Indeed, Ovid's *Fasti* seeks to undermine the political mythmaking of the Augustan regime. The myths of Augustus' descent from Venus and of his status as a second Romulus, recurring constituents of Augustan political imagery, are undermined in *Fasti* through the poem's exposure of the fictive nature of the former and the ideological inconcinnity of the latter. This deconstruction of Augustan mythmaking had occurred earlier in Ovid's poetry. *Amores* 1.2, for example, casts an irreverent eye over Augustus' Venusian ancestry by making him Cupid's relative; *Ars Amatoria* 1 (101–30), as noted above, contains a titillating account of the Romulean mass rape of Sabine women in a theatre vainly segregated along Augustan gender lines.³² In *Fasti*, the undermining of Augustan imagery permeates and structures the whole six books. Against imperial mythmaking Ovid sets a parade of myths associated with cultural figures (Evander, Hercules, Sabine Women, Anna Perenna, Remus) and institutions (Carmentalia, Lupercalia, Megalensia, Parilia, Floralia, Vestalia) that the Augustan 'restitution' had transformed, rewritten, or marginalised and that represented a different kind of Roman cultural inheritance.

Several of these seem Ovid's invention and self-consciously fictive. The authority of myth seems deliberately deconstructed in *Fasti* and its collapse is reflected in the self-induced collapse of the authority of the narrator. The narrator's own myth-making is accorded as much and as little authority as that of the *princeps* himself. Better to hand authority to the reader:

hic quoque mensis habet dubias in nomine causas:
quae placeat positis omnibus ipse leges.

Fasti 6.1–2

This month, too, has dubious causes for its name.
All will be listed. Pick the one you like.

Even as the Roman political system was removing popular suffrage from its operation, Ovid began the final book of *Fasti* by moving authority to

the individual reader. It was a courageous act of political anachronism. Though he was later to proclaim that poetry makes gods (*Epistulae ex Ponto* 4.8.55), he knew only too well that the gods that mattered were made elsewhere.

MYTH AND POETICS

Amores 3.12 is a central text of Ovidian poetics. It is entirely devoted to the issue of poetic authority and truth, both of which are disavowed. What the poem focusses upon is the power of poets to make fiction, a major paradigm of which is that of myth.

Nec tamen ut testes mos est audire poetas;
 malueram uerbis pondus abesse meis.
 per nos Scylla patri caros furata capillos
 pube premit rabidos inguinibusque canes;
 nos pedibus pinnas dedimus, nos crinibus angues;
 uictor Abantiades alite fertur equo.
 idem per spatium Tityon porreximus ingens,
 et tria uipereo fecimus ora cani;
 fecimus Enceladon iaculantem mille lacertis,
 ambiguae captos uirginis ore uiros.
 Aeolios Ithacis inclusimus utribus Euros;
 proditor in medio Tantalus amne sitit.
 de Niobe silicem, de uirgine fecimus ursam.
 concinit Odrysium Cecropis ales Ityn;
 Iuppiter aut in aues aut se transformat in aurum
 aut secat inposita uirgine taurus aquas.
 Protea quid referam Thebanaque semina, dentes;
 qui uomarent flammis ore, fuisse boues;
 flere genis electra tuas, Auriga, sorores;
 quaque rates fuerint, nunc maris esse deas;
 auersumque diem mensis furialibus Atrei,
 duraque percussam saxa secuta lyram?
 exit in inmensum fecunda licentia uatum,
 obligat historica nec sua uerba fide.

Amores 3.12.19–42

Yet no one listens to poets as if they're in court;
 I wanted my verses to lack authority.

We made Scylla steal her father's precious hair
 And crush rabid dogs in her groin and womb.
 We have given wings to feet, snakes to hair,
 Made Abas' son victorious on winged horse.
 We also stretched Tityos over a huge terrain,
 And created three mouths for the snake dog.
 We made Enceladus throw with a thousand arms
 And snared men with the doubtful virgin's voice.
 We enclosed Aeolus' Easterlies in Ithacan skins,
 Made traitor Tantalus thirst in mid-stream.
 We made a rock of Niobe, a bear of a maid;
 Cecrops' bird sings Odrysian Itys because of us,
 And Jupiter changes to a bird or gold or bull,
 Cleaving ocean with a maid on his back.
 Why mention Proteus or the teeth which sowed Thebes,
 Or the existence of flame-spewing oxen,
 Or your amber-weeping sisters, Charioteer,
 Or ships which are now sea-goddesses,
 Or the day averted from Atreus' mad feast,
 Or the hard rocks following the lyre's note?
 Fertile poetic licence extends to infinity
 And binds none of its words with history's truth.

The disavowal is more complex than it seems. For even as Ovid advertises his own products as fictive the reader is drawn into creating the very poetic realities (Perseus and Pegasus, Tantalus' thirst, Jupiter's abduction of Europa, etc.) denoted as false. This is precisely the ontological game played throughout *Metamorphoses* in Ovid's narrative of myth.³³

Right from the start of this most mediated and ludic of epics, in which the reader needs to be continually alert to narrative strategies and stratagems, Ovid uses his mythic subject matter to play several poetic games. The defeat of Apollo by Cupid in *Metamorphoses* 1 (452–73), for example, is simultaneously the triumph of elegy over epic, and replays the same god's victory over the would-be epicist, Ovid, in *Amores* 1.1. But perhaps more importantly, in this opening book, Ovid continues the ontological game of *Amores* 3.12, playing slyly but overtly with the reader's suspension of disbelief. After drawing the reader into his narrative of the great flood and its survivors, Deucalion and Pyrrha, who are to regenerate the human race, the poet pauses at the crucial

moment – the creation of humankind out of stones – to make the reader recognise the fictive nature of the world to which he/she has given credence:

saxa – quis hoc credat nisi sit pro teste uetustas? –
ponere duritiem coepere suumque rigorem,
mollirique mora mollitaque ducere formam.

Metamorphoses 1.400–402

The stones – who'd believe it without antiquity
For witness? – began to lose their hardness and stiffness
And slowly soften and softened take on form.

Similar interventions occur elsewhere in *Metamorphoses* (see, e.g., *Met.* 10. 301–3, 13. 733–4), ensuring that the reader brings to bear on the narrative a fusion of literary sophistication and a willingness to commit to the poetic fiction. Sometimes the characters themselves question the truth of the mythic subject matter (*Met.* 8.614–15, 9.203–4); sometimes the ontological game is played out through the manner of the narrative itself, as anthropomorphic features of divinities of natural phenomena are inappropriately emphasised (Tmolus sits on the mountain which is himself and shakes his ears free of his trees, *Met.* 11.157–8), mythic figures are given too contemporary a flavour (Jupiter on the Palatine, Phaethon at the circus), or the myth explodes through narrative inconcinnity (the Furies combing serpents from their hair at *Met.* 4.454) or excess (the catalogue of trees at *Met.* 10.90–105, the similes at *Met.* 13.789–807).

At other times the ontological game takes a decidedly more serious twist, where Ovid asks the question: what would happen if there were no distinction between the artist's fictions and reality itself? Pygmalion (*Met.* 10.243–97) is the paradigm case. His artefact, the statue of a beautiful woman, becomes flesh and blood; the consequence (*Met.* 10.298–502) is the birth of a son (Cinyras) who will be desired by, and have sex with, his own daughter (Myrrha). The dissolution of ontological boundaries between image and reality begets the dissolution of moral boundaries between father and daughter.

At important moments, too, in *Metamorphoses*' self-reflective use of myth the poetic and the political fuse. The end of Book 5 and the beginning of Book 6 are two such moments, where myth is used to address the issue of the relationship between art and political power. The

Musomachia of Book 5 features the description of a contest between the Olympian Muses and the Emathides, daughters of Pierus, that is, the Pierides. The Emathides, whose song is summarised (apart from a brief quotation) rather than related in full, had offered a politically subversive song praising the victory of the giants over the gods. The song of the Muses is given in full, and in it the tale of the rape of Persephone is told as part of a hymn glorifying Ceres. The Muses are declared victorious and the Emathides/Pierides are punished by being transformed into magpies. But, even so, their speech cannot be silenced, as the Muse-narrator acknowledges in her prejudicial, but revealing final image of her rivals:

nunc quoque in alitibus facundia prisca remansit
raucaeque garrulitas studiumque immane loquendi.

Metamorphoses 5.677–8

Even now as birds their verbal facility remains,
Their grating garrulity and boundless passion for speech.

If the reader remembers Ovid's first definition of himself as one of the 'poets of the Pierides' (*uates Pieridum*, *Am.* 1.1.6), this failure to silence subversive speech has ramifications for Ovid and *Metamorphoses* itself, as the following book immediately confirms. In the plebeian Arachne's competition with the Olympian Minerva (noticeable is Ovid's 'Roman' focus on Arachne's low social place: *Met.* 6.10–11) the former's tapestry exposes the 'crimes of the gods' (*caelestia crimina*, *Met.* 6.131) ignored in Minerva's ideological representation of the Olympians seated in 'august/Augustan majesty' (*augusta gravitate*, *Met.* 6.73). And the tapestry exposes these crimes by focussing on two recurring features of divine behaviour already underscored in *Metamorphoses* 1–5: deception and rape. The neoteric, asymmetrical style of Arachne's tapestry similarly mirrors Ovid's epic.³⁴ Arachne's aristocracy, like that of Ovid, is located in art, not birth. When, inevitably, she is punished by Minerva, she is allowed to live on (*uiue*, *Met.* 6.136), and as a spider continues to practise her art. Like the Pierides, her art is not destroyed, just her body; the art transcends death.

As Ovid proclaims that his art will, too, in *Metamorphoses*' allusive epilogue.³⁵ There he not only asserts the eternity of his poem and thus its *ueritas* (its poetic reality and its not simply 'poetic' truth), but claims,

too, the identity of *uates* and work, of self and poem, and the undying 'life' of both:

iamque opus exegi, quod nec Iouis ira nec ignis
nec poterit ferrum nec edax abolere uetustas.
cum uolet, illa dies, quae nil nisi corporis huius
ius habet, incerti spatium mihi finiat aevi.
parte tamen meliore mei super alta perennis
astra ferar nomenque erit indelebile nostrum,
quaue patet domitis Romana potentia terris,
ore legar populi perque omnia saecula fama,
siquid habent ueri uatum praesagia, uiuam.

Metamorphoses 15.871–9

Now my work is done, which no wrath of Jove, no fire,
No steel, no corrosion of the ages can destroy.
When it will, let that day, whose jurisdiction is
But this body, end my span of uncertain time.
I'll be borne, the finer part of me, perennial
Above the high stars, my name beyond erasure;
And where Roman might extends over mastered lands,
I'll be read with the people's voice, and through all time
In fame, if bards' prophecies are true, I shall live.

The poet had made the *uiuam* boast as early as the final line of *Amores* 1 (*Am.* 1.15.42), where he presented himself as the inheritor of the Greco-Roman poetic tradition from Homer, Hesiod, and Callimachus through to Virgil, Tibullus, and Gallus; and that claim, too, was made in the context of contemporary hostility. But there Ovid's 'enemies' were reduced to the vague figure of 'Corrosive Envy,' *Liur edax*,³⁶ and the criticisms of him made specific (adoption of an un-Roman, idle life-style and rejection of the vigorous Roman pursuits of the military, law, and politics). Here the criticisms of him are unmentioned and the opposition is embodied in a transparent mythic metaphor that makes clear the inimical relationship between the poem and the world of power. As the lines preceding this passage imply and *Tristia* 1 will clearly state, the *ira Iouis* is in part a metaphor for the wrath of his earthly counterpart on the Palatine. Ovid develops the earlier position and gives it political edge. It is neither Jupiter nor the *princeps* who guarantees immortality: it is poetry, or more specifically, the reader of poetry, who will ensure the truth value of *Metamorphoses*' final claim. The *lector* alone has power

over Ovid's life; and he has power to make that life transcend the 'stars' to which deified generals aspire and to ensure that life's survival of the empire that they ruled.

MYTH AND EXILE

In 8 CE Ovid was Rome's most distinguished living poet.³⁷ Virgil and Horace were long dead and Ovid's poetic achievement extensive, brilliant, and lauded. In the same year he was banished. In an act virtually unprecedented in Roman history the empire's major poet was removed by its political leader – and removed, in part, for his verse. Ovid was expelled to a half-Greek city called Tomis (modern Constanza), situated on the Black Sea in what today is Rumania at the extreme edge of the Roman empire. The effect on the fifty-year-old poet was devastating. Tomis was the inverse of the Rome he loved: barbarous, insecure, intemperate of climate, and spiritually and culturally barren. Its inhabitants spoke Getic, Sarmatian, hybrid Greek, and no Latin. For a man such as Ovid, separation from friends, society, the literary world, and even his own native tongue constituted a death sentence.

Ovid reached Tomis in 9 CE and immediately sent back to Rome a volume of eleven short poems composed on the outward journey, the first book of *Tristia* ('Sorrows'). It is an innovative, experimental, polyvalent book of verse, the first of a collection of five books (each composed as a separate entity), in which the poet articulates the pain and deprivations of exile and petitions for imperial clemency (for at least amelioration of the place of exile, if not return to Rome itself). In a sense *Tristia* begins a new genre. Ovid's readers were devouring the recently disseminated (allegedly unrevised) narrative epic *Metamorphoses* and awaiting completion of the narrative *Fasti*. They would have been surprised – but not disappointed. Ovid's search for the kind of poetry that would reflect his traumatic situation had led him to break with the present, to return to the past, and to rewrite both. What he did was complex and has been widely discussed. What merits attention here is Ovid's use of myth. For evaluative and ironic purposes Ovid mythologises his own situation – through analogies with his earlier epistolary heroines such as the 'stolen/raped Briseis,' *rapta Briseis* (cf. *Tr.* 1.1.13f. and *Her.* 3.3), whose tears at her abandonment become those of the banished poet; through analogies, too, with such epic figures as Ulysses, whose travails, the poet protests, pale to insignificance in comparison with his own (*Tr.* 1.5.53–84). One reason

for Ovid's greater suffering is that he suffers the wrath of a greater god:

me deus oppressit, nullo mala nostra leuante;
bellatrix illi diua ferebat opem.
cumque minor Ioue sit tumidis qui regnat in undis,
illum Neptuni, me Iouis ira premit.
adde quod illius pars maxima ficta laborum,
ponitur in nostris fabula nulla malis.

Tristia 1.5.75–80

A god persecuted me, no one soothing my pain;
The warrior goddess helped Ulysses.
Though Jove is greater than swelling ocean's king,
He's harassed by Neptune's wrath, I by Jove's.
Add that the greatest part of his toils are fiction,
But my sufferings contain no myth.

The greater god, 'Jove,' of course, is Augustus, whose identification with the storm-god Jupiter is secured early in *Tristia* 1 (1.1.69ff.) and sustained throughout (3.11ff., 4.26, 5.3, 5.75ff., 9.21); 'the wrath of Jove,' *Iouis ira* (*Tr.* 1.5.78), is the anger of the *princeps*. But, even as Ovid mythologises his own situation and uses the mythic metonym of *Metamorphoses* to achieve this, the poet plays it both ways by insisting on the nonmythological nature of his pain. And, if Ovid out-Ulysseses Ulysses, so in the next poem his wife is superior to all Homer's women, to Andromache, Laodamia, and even Penelope herself (*Tr.* 1.6.19–22).

There is also another mythic analogy – with Aeneas. It is brilliantly and subtly achieved, and its semiotics are potent. Ovid's movement into exile is a movement from Rome, but Ovid mythologises and Romanises that movement to invert its surface meaning by portraying himself as a latter day Aeneas and his putative descendant in Rome as a latter day god of *furor*. *Tristia* 1.1 focusses on Ovid persecuted by the anger of a deity; 1.2 presents Ovid buffeted by a storm; 1.3 describes Ovid's departure from a city (Rome), which is compared to fallen Troy:

si licet exemplis in paruis grandibus uti,
haec facies Troiae cum caperetur erat.

Tristia 1.3.25–6.

If one may use mighty examples in humble cases,
This was the face of Troy as she was captured.

Most readers of these three poems would have discerned Ovid's mirroring of the narrative sequence of the first two books of Virgil's *Aeneid*: Aeneas' persecution by the anger of a deity; the storm sent against the Trojan fleet; Aeneas' account of his departure from Troy. Within the context of his banishment for 'un-Roman activities,' Ovid mythologises himself as the epic paradigm of Rome.

This mythologisation of personal experience, the reality of which is insisted upon, generates a densely textured fusion in *Tristia* 1 of the literary, the mythological, and the biographical. It is a fusion that is typical of and even defines the exilic works, in which Ovid's extensive allusion to and rewriting of other poetry,³⁸ including his own, not only create an image of himself as poet, but signal the fusion for Ovid of literature and life. By showing how his own exile is a construct of experience and of myth and literature recycled and remade (the storm in *Tr.* 1.2 is both a real and a mythic/literary storm made into a new mythic/literary storm), he both indexes this fusion and injects it with compelling irony: the storm that Homer controlled at *Odyssey* 5.291ff., that Virgil controlled at *Aeneid* 1.81ff., and that he himself controlled at *Metamorphoses* 11.474ff., now controls him.

Ovid's *Tristia* are and are not personal poetry. The *persona* of the poet in the work is a manufactured one, and the work is that most public form of writing, a petition – its addressees are Augustus and the Roman people. But the poetry is grounded in history and Ovid's life in a way that had not occurred before, and its conjunction of myth, literature, and experience exemplifies that life. Appropriately for Rome's greatest mythographer, literary and mythic constructs generated by Ovid's own metamorphosis image poet and man.

FURTHER READING

Recent analyses of Ovid's poetry abound, many of which may be found in the bibliography at the end of this book. Galinsky (1975) and Solodow (1988) remain useful introductions to the *Metamorphoses*, the poetics of which are treated perceptively by Hardie (2002b); Cameron (2004), Feeney (1991), and Graf (2002) provide a gateway into Ovid and myth. Development and ramifications of the arguments of this chapter may be found in Boyle (2003). Recommended English translations of Ovid's erotic poetry and the *Metamorphoses* are Melville (1998) and Melville (1999) and of the *Fasti* Boyle and Woodard (2000).

NOTES

- 1 See Cornell (1995), 60–68.
- 2 On Livius, Naevius, Ennius, and Accius, see Boyle (2006), ch. 2–4.
- 3 On Varius, see Leigh (1996) and Boyle (2006), 161–2; on Caesarian and Augustan monuments and the Gemma Augustea, see Zanker (1988) and Boyle (2003).
- 4 Feeney (1991), 189.
- 5 Even if we include the epistles by ‘heroes’ to ‘heroines’ (*Her.* 16, 18, 20), which are commonly regarded as non-Ovidian, the main focus in the collection is still on the female voice/memory. For a Lacanian analysis of female desire in *Heroides*, see Lindheim (2003).
- 6 ‘An unjustified appropriation,’ Kennedy (2002), 226.
- 7 See Hinds (1985), 27–8.
- 8 On this, see esp. Cameron (2004), 261–303, who notes the clear use of such handbooks in Ovidian lists (e.g., Actaeon’s hounds at *Met.* 3.206–25, Jupiter’s and Neptune’s rapes at *Met.* 6.103–22, Calydonian boar hunters at *Met.* 8.300–17).
- 9 See Galinsky (1975), 4–5, who cites the Ovidian Ulysses’ frequent reformulation of the Trojan saga at *Ars* 2.128: *ille referre aliter saepe solebat idem* (‘He would often retell the same tale differently’).
- 10 See Graf (2002), 119.
- 11 See Nisbet and Hubbard (1978), 69–70.
- 12 See Graf (2002), 111–15.
- 13 On *Am.* 1.7, see Barsby (1973), *ad loc.*
- 14 Williams (1996), 126. For detailed discussion of this catalogue, see Williams, 81–111.
- 15 See the discussion of Davis (1995), 184–5.
- 16 For details of the adultery law and its penalties see Cantarella (1991), 229–34; on the *leges Iuliae* see Treggiari (1996), 886–93, who offers a more generous view of Augustus’ motivation than that presented here.
- 17 See Cohen (1991), 110.
- 18 For Julia’s adulteries and *impudicitia*: Velleius Paterculus 2.100.2–5; Tacitus *Annales* 1.10, 1.53, 3.24, 4.44; Suetonius *Augustus Divus* 65.1–5, 101.3, *Tiberius* 11.4.
- 19 This was Iullus Antonius, ‘lover’ of Julia, the son of Mark Antony and the closest of Julia’s adulterers to the imperial household – he was married to Augustus’ niece. He either committed suicide (*Vell. Pat.* 2.100.2–5) or was executed (*Tac. Ann.* 1.10.4; *Dio* 55.10.15).
- 20 As his grandson and adopted son, Agrippa Postumus, and his granddaughter Julia were to demonstrate in 7 and 8 CE, respectively. For, whatever the conspiratorial realities underlying the feuding of Augustus’ household, the charges on which his grandchildren were banished were moral: loose *mores* in the case of Agrippa Postumus, adultery in the case of the younger Julia (*Vell. Pat.* 2.112.7; *Tac. Ann.* 1.3.4, 3.24.2, 4.71.4; *Suet. Aug.* 65.1–5; *Dio* 55.32.1–2).
- 21 See Boyle (2003), 22, 260–61.
- 22 Feeney (1991), 205, sees the Ovidian gods as ‘extremely powerful and economical strategies for communicating his vision of human experience.’ Contrast Galinsky (1975), 16–19, 62–3, who restricts Ovid’s interest in myth in *Metamorphoses* to its ‘narrative and entertaining function.’
- 23 See Myers (1994), viii–ix.
- 24 For example, the metamorphosis of Arachne into a spider (6.139–45) and of the Propoetides into stone (10.238–42). Solodow (1988), 157, defines Ovidian metamorphosis as ‘a process through which the characteristics of men are only rendered visible and manifest.’ But, even if one allows ‘men’ to mean ‘men and women,’ this only applies to some metamorphoses.
- 25 With the final two lines of this soliloquy, compare Phaedra’s remarks: *quae memoras scio/ uera esse, nutrix, sed furor cogit sequi/ peiora*, ‘What you say I know/ To be true, nurse, but passion compels/The worse’ (*Phaedra* 177–9).
- 26 On the Ovidian treatment of rape, see Richlin (1992b).
- 27 Cf. Feeney (1991), 204.
- 28 Well discussed by Solodow (1988), 84–5.
- 29 See Feeney (1991), 214–17; Boyle (2003), 49–51, 184–5, 225.
- 30 On April 28 12 BCE, by decree of the senate, a statue and altar of Vesta were erected by Augustus in his house on the Palatine. See *Fasti Praenestini* and *Caeretani*: Degraffi (1963), 13.2: 66, 132f., 452.
- 31 Dessau *ILS* 72 (Aesernia); *Cic. Philippic* 1.13, 2.110; *Dio* 47.18.3–19.3; Weinstock (1971), 390.
- 32 See Hollis (1973), 105, who cites *Suet. Aug.* 44. See also Boyle (2003), 260–61.
- 33 In the discussion of myth and fiction, I draw on the excellent treatment of Feeney (1991), 224–49.
- 34 On Arachne’s style, see Feeney (1991), 191–2, who calls her tapestry ‘a neoteric masterpiece.’
- 35 On the allusivity and texture of this epilogue, see Boyle (2003), 9–11.
- 36 A figure that did not disappear from Ovid’s poetry: see also *Rem.* 369, 389, *Met.* 6.129, *Tr.* 4.10.123, *Pont.* 4.16.47.
- 37 This section rewrites material from Boyle and Sullivan (1991), 1–5, with kind permission of Penguin Books.
- 38 Especially of Catullus (cf. esp. Catullus I.1ff. and IV with *Tr.* I.1.5ff. and I.10), Horace (cf. esp. *Epistle* 1.20 with *Tr.* I.1), and Virgil.