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Marcus Deufert und Irmgard Männlein-Robert

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**The *Metamorphoses* of Ovid:
35 Years of Research 1980–2014**

Volume II

Luis Rivero García (coord.)

Note from the authors:

The extent of the bibliography analysed in this work is vast. For this reason, the authors have been allowed to organise it in a different way to the normal standards observed in Lustrum. The references will be listed chronologically in each chapter, ordered independently. In this way, we hope to make it easier for the reader to consult the work.

Huelva, May 2021.

The *Metamorphoses* of Ovid: 35 Years of Research 1980–2014¹

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VI. Language, Style and Metre

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Ovid's Language and Style

Perhaps the most relevant paper for the scope of this chapter is that of Edward J. Kenney (34). The editor of the *Brill Companion* considered that no-one could offer a better overview and assessment than Kenney of such an extensive and evasive subject as “the language and style of Ovid”. In fact, Kenney had already published an essay on the style of the *met.* (“The Style of the *Metamorphoses*”, in J. W. Binns (ed.), *Ovid*, London-Boston 1973, 116–53), which is reproduced here (sections VI–X; 56–89) with “occasional corrections and some modest amplification”; sections I–V (27–56) on elegiac poems are new and include some valuable and “additional data relating to the *Metamorphoses*” (89). This contribution is, to put it simply, timeless and fundamental.

The introductory section (27–30) briefly presents two crucial points: the use of the pentameter, which is essential to understand Ovid's style in elegiac poetry (27–8); and the apparent facility of Ovid's writing, which applies to all his poetic corpus (29–30). Ovid, as Kenney rightly states, wrote with “seeming facility” because he had shaped “a medium of expression that [...] became second nature to him: *ars adeo latet arte sua*”. While the second section (30–6) is entirely devoted to Ovid's use of elegiac couplet, naturally some observations also apply to his hexameter *κατὰ στίχον* (e.g. its metrical fluency). The third section (36–43) examines Ovid's elegiac style, which is “simple and unaffected”, “smooth and fluent”, but not prosaic. This is exemplified (37–8) through an analysis of the usage of 4-syllable nouns in *-itas* and 5-syllable adjectives in *-iosus* (usage in *met.* is also included). Kenney also studies the creation of compounds (38–9), the employment of Greek proper names (39–41), prepositions, conjunctions and adverbs (41–3), and the preference for parataxis (41–2). The fourth section deals with syntactical features (43–8), most of which are also present in the *met.* (e.g. the particular usage of *-que* and *nec/neque* 44–5, the pervasive use of syllepsis 45–7 etc.). The fifth section (48–56) focuses on the epigrammatic nature of Ovidian couplet.

The first section about *met.* (56–61) deals with Ovid's calculated distancing from Virgil in matters of style, confronts some negative assessments aroused by this, and reflects on general aspects of Ovid's style in the *met.* Kenney's most relevant contention is, in my opinion, that Ovid did not ‘debase’ or ‘profane’ Virgil's style and diction. Instead, his adaptations of Virgil's phraseology “are best seen as deliberate vulgarization (in the strict French sense) by a poet who was himself a master-craftsman” (58–9). It also seems pertinent to observe that, regardless of the different opinions on the question of genre and the purpose of the poem (56–7), narrative has a dominant importance in the *met.* and so the reader is “always being carried on”. Again, smoothness and speed are two salient qualities of Ovid's hexameter (58). The story at hand is always present, but “the reader is constantly entertained by unexpected changes [...], all illuminated and sustained by a verbal wit that from time to time broadens into a full-scale *tour de force*” (59–61).

In section VII (61–70), Kenney offers a balanced analysis of Ovidian vocabulary in the *met.*, taking the *Aeneid* as a reference of Latin epic diction. The general conclusion is that Ovid decided to “follow a *via media* between ordinary speech and cultivated literary diction” (61) and succeeded in creating a “copious and limpid style” which he

applied with unprecedented efficiency (70). The study of compounds, a typically epic feature, deserves special mention (62–7). This shows that Ovid’s choice of vocabulary does not differ much from that of Virgil, and that he was innovative within the boundaries of tradition. His use of compounds responds both to expressiveness and metrical convenience. Other Ovidian predilections (67–9) pointed out by Kenney are intended to make his verse smooth and dactylic: e.g. adjectives in *-ilis*, neuters in *-men*, Greek proper names (and their corresponding derivatives).

Section VIII (70–4) studies Ovid’s syntactical usages. Kenney’s principal idea is that Ovid is not licentious or anomalous in his grammatical choices. On the contrary, his use of cases, hyperbaton, word order etc. is functional and efficient, as well as flexible.

Section IX (74–8) looks at rhetoric. When writing a poem like the *met.*, in order to sustain the reader’s attention, Ovid had to keep the poem moving constantly and to adapt his tone and tempo accordingly. This imposed on him the need to combine “elegiac brevity” and “flowing amplitude”, which is why he can be considered as both terse and long-winded, but never monotonous. Kenney provides a series of very interesting examples of how this could be achieved, and remarks that Ovid was able to apply an enormous range of variations to some basic resources (‘theme and variation’, tricolon, anaphora, paradox, enjambment, inclusion of *sententiae*, etc.).

In the last section (78–89), Kenney tries to illustrate some of Ovid’s techniques, commenting on some slightly longer passages which he deems correctly to be representative (7.100–19, 10.368–81, 1.325–30, 2.873–5, 2.227–34, 5.425–37). Kenney finally asserts that it was in the description of “*human* actions and emotions [...] that Ovid displayed the full range of his poetic powers” (89).

I now turn to some works that address Ovid’s language and style, but in a less systematic or comprehensive way.

Richard Tarrant (11) shows that some variant readings in the *met.* which can be defended on the basis of Silver Age parallels, though often attractive, are likely to be interpolations of readers who were familiar with Neronian and Flavian poetry. These additions were arguably embellishments or ‘improvements’ of the original, devised as exercises of *aemulatio* that attempted to adjust Ovidian language to the usages of later authors. While trying to identify these intrusions, some notes on Ovid’s style are put forward (e.g. 112–15 on adjectives in *-ax*).

Niklas Holzberg’s informative article (49) surveys Ovid’s poetic career (1–4). He contends that Ovid systematically planned his oeuvre as parallel to that of Virgil, in order to become “der Vergil der Elegie” (4). Holzberg points out that Ovid was not only original in his choice of themes and genres, but also in the use of metre and language (4–5). Holzberg emphasises the fluidity of Ovid’s lines, the epigrammatic nature of his pentameters, his ‘unpresumptuous’ diction, and agrees with Kenney in describing his style as “the perfection of a poetic koine” (5). Holzberg also mentions Ovid’s predilection for allusion and intertextuality (5, 7). In addition, he discusses Ovid’s relationship with the Augustan context (7) and singles out some elements that have guaranteed the poet’s success (7–8; e.g. his humour, his *ingenium*, his extraordinary talent as a narrator, and his insight into human nature). Finally, Holzberg reviews

Ovid's influence and reception (8–10). The inclusion of examples would have made this a memorable article.

Irene Frings' book (37) is the first extensive study on Ovid's self-imitation since Albert Lüneburg's *De Ovidio sui imitatore* (Jenae 1888). She tries to show how this procedure allows Ovid to break boundaries between texts and genres. The book is organised into three main sections: an introduction (10–64), self-imitation within individual works (65–100), and self-imitation between different works (101–262). Each section is conveniently subdivided. I shall comment briefly on several points. In the introduction, Frings tries to distinguish intentional and unintentional repetition (32–64). This is a very tricky issue. In my opinion, most repetitions or self-imitation cannot be considered as the simple result of unconscious composition patterns on Ovid's part (as Robin Nisbet once put it, "he is too clever": *MD* 26, 1991, 67). But more importantly, it is often impossible to prove it one way or the other, so the study of self-imitation should not be too concerned with this particular distinction. The useful section on self-imitation within individual works raises many interesting issues (such as verbal correspondences between single and double *Heroides* 90–100). Even more stimulating is the third section (especially the last one about the exile poetry, 210–62). For the reader of the *met.*, one chapter is worth mentioning: "Elegisches in den *Metamorphosen*" (163–210), in which allusions to elegiac compositions are sought in the episodes of Narcissus, Anaxaretes, Ibis, Byblis and Cephalus (clearly more instances could be added). Thankfully, the volume includes both an *index locorum* (278–88) and a general one (289–302). Fring's book, especially section 2, has to be consulted together with Wills' essential monograph (*Repetition in Latin Poetry: Figures of Allusion*, Oxford 1996; see on 'VI.8 Linguistic and Stylistic Details'). The data of the book was largely gathered from the concordance mentioned below (31).

I cannot end this subsection without addressing Richard Heinze's (41) immortal book. Originally published in 1919, it attempted to explain the differences between epic and elegiac diction. Heinze also wanted to contribute to the appreciation of Ovid's style and effective use of both genres through a comparison of passages from *fast.* and *met.* (e.g. he regarded Persephone's tale in *fast.* as 'elegiac' and that in *met.* as 'epic'). The "premissa" of Franco Serpa from this Italian edition reviews Heinze's influence on Virgilian and Ovidian studies. See also on 'II. Reference works' and 'V.3 Literary Genres'.

Concordance

One can certainly understand the need to reprint the Ovidian concordance (31) prepared by Deferrari, Barry and McGuire in 1968, although less so in 2000. The work, originally published in 1939, is a useful instrument for studying the language and style of Ovid (checking frequencies, precise usages of words, even *iuncturae* or making other similar inquiries). However, it has been rightly criticised for recording the specific forms under each lemma by order of appearance instead of alphabetically, which is most inconvenient. On the other hand, the text used was the Teubner edition,

available as of 1932 (i. e. Ehwald-Lenz-Levy-Vollmer), to which improvements have been made since then (furthermore, textual variants are completely ignored and accepted conjectures are not singled out). Generally speaking, I tend to regard this kind of works as superseded by online concordances (cf. the *Analytical Onomasticon to the Metamorphoses of Ovid* in ‘III. Websites’) or tools like the *Brepols Library of Latin Texts*. Still, a concordance might sometimes still be of use (plus we might draw interesting data from older works like O. Eichert, F. Fügner, *Wörterbuch zu den Verwandlungen des Publius Ovidius Naso*, Hannover – Leipzig 1904¹¹; or L. Quicherat’s *Thesaurus poeticus*, Paris 1922³¹ – both books are also reprinted by Olms Verlag in 1972 and 1967 resp.).

Understanding Ovid’s poetics

William Anderson (5) tries to free Ovid from the misunderstanding and hostility of critics, who especially since the 19th c. have rebuked him as a frivolous poet lacking commitment, as a victim of *luxuria* and *lascivia* (193–5). Anderson rightly asserts that a great artist is not necessarily obliged to deal seriously with serious and existential issues (193). He then assesses the Actaeon episode (195–203) and concludes that the traditional “opposition of *lascivia* and *gravitas*” is “fundamentally wrong”; Ovid can be both serious and playful at the same time (203). Anderson then turns to the episodes of Byblis and Myrrha (206–7) and again concludes that Ovid is, more than any other Roman writer, “a poet of scintillating imagination with wide understanding and experience of humanity” and, like life itself, he is able to entangle humour and pathos (207–9). As E. J. Kenney (*CR* 32, 1982, 276) has rightly stated, with such assessments, “Ovidian criticism has [finally] come of age”.

Similarly, Stephen Hinds (6), in this important article, confronts some “ageing generalizations” and long established views about Ovid that persisted in the late 80s and which, in part, might even survive today. Hinds first challenges the idea of Ovid as a shallow and “over-explicit” poet through an insightful analysis of *am.* 1.5 (4–11). He then defies the notion that Ovid was an “excessively literary poet”, and denies the opposition between “sincerity” and “literariness”, or allusivity (11–23). Lastly, he contends that Ovid was not a “passive panegyricist” of the emperor (when the article was published, this idea was already in decline as concerns Ovid, but it was still often extended to the Silver Age poets). Hinds analyses Caesar’s panegyric in *met.* 15.750–8 and the subsequent deification (15.760–1), and points out the subtle ironies that turn an apparently inert panegyric into a subversive rhetorical piece (23–5). Hinds claims that this might have been an important legacy to later poets (29), like Lucan (he examines Lucan. 1.45–58: 25–9).

John Kirby (9) affirms that humour is “one of the forces that unify the work” (233) and explores the *vexata quaestio*, originating in Quintilian, whether humour and playfulness are “out of place in heroic verse”. These leads to a consideration of the nature of epic compositions in Antiquity, and of the *met.* in particular (234–7). Kirby then contends that Ovid’s *lascivia* and *ingenium* are not inappropriate to *heroi*, even if this implies that we need to partially modify our notions about what was

appropriate to hexameters (237). Finally, Kirby analyses (238–51) three episodes of *met.* (1.747–2.400, 6.412–674, 11.266–748) to show that humour functions on the three narrative levels of Gérard Genette (“histoire”, “récit”, “narration”). See also on ‘VI.8 Linguistic and Stylistic Details’.

The unfocused paper of Kathleen Coleman (12) seems to explore how the choice of themes, meanings and expressions in the *met.* deliberately conveys “the nexus of opposites, tensions, and polarities in human affairs” (30). To begin with, Coleman states that the most pervasive tension is between serious, even tragic subjects and the “flippant”, “melodramatic” or “irreverent” treatment they receive (21, 23–4). Other tensions arise from the mixture of genres (21–2), from discrepancies between words and intended meaning (22), the opposition of *carmen perpetuum* and *deductum* (22–3), between the announced chronological disposition of the work and “mythological chronology” (24–7), among others. Coleman says (26) that the metamorphosis was, for Ovid, a thematic background that enables one story to be linked to another (an idea mostly outdated, by the way). In the last part of the article, she studies how some of these tensions are recorded in specific expressions (27–30).

Garth Tissol (13) discusses what kind of emotional engagement Ovid demands from his readers. First, Tissol wishes to deny that Ovid’s “disruptive and ever-shifting” style precludes the same degree of engagement one can feel when reading more sustained works (46). He then recalls the definition of Jauss’ “aesthetic distance”, which is not incompatible with “the reader’s emotional and sensuous surrender” (46–7). Tissol explains that by “disruptive” he means “the changeable character of Ovidian plot, tone, and generic reference – all closely related constituents of narrative”: Ovid tends to confuse his audience’s expectations, “introducing abrupt and surprising changes”, while moving from a serious tone to a comic one or the other way round, or introducing a “sudden change in the allusive associations” (47). This constant disruptiveness in a long poem is only possible, argues Tissol, because Ovid encourages our engagement in the story at hand, not in the “large formal schemes” (48). These important preliminary thoughts are exemplified in a close reading of Polyphemus’ episode in *met.* 13 (48–58). The main conclusion is that the disruptiveness of Ovidian narrative demands a “greater range of emotional response” than most works and this involvement offers “a perspective on the discontinuity, hazard, and imperfect comprehensibility of human affairs” (58).

Another similar point is made by José Luis Vidal (47). He argues that Ovid wanted, above all, to write an amusing poem (139), which is not, of course, incompatible with offering a penetrating insight of human nature (128). This amusement often implied taking the reader to the verge of protest, and then disarming him with an exhibition of wit (139). Vidal shows how this was achieved through irony and the irreverent subversion of the conventions of epic (and didactic) poetry. He compares some passages from book 6 to Virgil (and Accius) (132–9).

Joseph Farrell (14) regards the *met.* as a dialogue or polyphony of literary genres (238–40, 267–8) and analyses Polyphemus’ episode (*met.* 13.719–897) as a prominent example of this dialogue (240–67). He draws some conclusions that might inform the interpretation of the poem as a whole (267–8).

Similar conclusions are reached by Paolo Esposito (17), who tries to offer a definition of the *met.* through the study of intertextuality. The first half of the book focuses on the epic predecessors of Ovid, mainly Virgil and Homer. Esposito exemplifies how Ovid laid bare the conventions of the genre by adapting at his pleasure pre-existent material (11–36). This is further exemplified by his appropriation and subversion of specific conventions and *topoi* such as battles (37–49), duels (51–67) and grotesque or macabre elements (69–84). The second half of the book looks at Ovid as a model and foundation for the Silver Age poetics and style, namely Lucan (85–133). A final chapter examines Ovid’s presence in the *Commenta Bernensia* on Lucan (135–45). After that, Esposito attempts his definition of the *met.* (147–64). In broad terms, he conceives the poem as a highly sophisticated *summa* of the possibilities of all hexameter genres with occasional intrusions of other genres such as tragedy, lyric or elegy. The endless dialogue with the models makes it possible for Ovid to either distance himself from conventions or to develop them up to the paradoxical (161). Therefore, Esposito contends that it can be dangerous to take single episodes as reading keys for the whole (163).

On the other hand, Karl Galinsky (25) claims that most studies, focused on literary style, tradition and genre, are too limiting and that larger issues have been long forgotten. Thus Galinsky tries to delineate Ovid’s poetic endeavour and goals through a brief analysis of “what can be considered the major poetological passages” in the *met.*, which are placed as mimicking the poem’s pentadic structure (308). The proem sets Ovid in the traditions of archaic epic and Hellenistic poetry, in a “grand *mixtum compositum*” (306–7). The Persephone episode in book 5 is a vindication of Ovid’s innovative adaptation of his models (309–10). The episode should not be studied in terms of genre, but as the ability to *referre idem aliter* (*ars* 2.128), which is “a cornerstone in the Ovidian poetic program” (308). In book 10 Orpheus, like Ovid himself, “announces boundaries only to transgress them” (312), while Pygmalion emphasizes the importance of the reader’s reception (Ovid often presents characters and situations that might elicit varied reactions). Finally, Pythagoras’ speech is used to show that philosophy is no better way of explanation than myth, and to convey the idea that Ovid could have written a poem like *De rerum natura*, had he chosen to do so (313–14). The final *sphragis*, argues Galinsky, suggests that Ovid does not have faith in revealed truth of the *vates*, but in fiction, which tells us “more about the human condition” (314).

Florence Klein (43) studies manifestations of the *vox poetae* in the *met.* in which the ‘poet’s voice’ assumes responsibility of compositional and aesthetic choices. Klein argues that this *vox poetae* appears in intertextual allusions, and in the complex relationship that the poem establishes with its models, rather than in the subjective voice of the main narrator. This allows a more comprehensive understanding of the poem’s generic status, and of the tension between epos and Callimachean *recusatio*. Klein identifies a mirroring of the poem’s narrative discontinuity in Mercury’s flight in book 2 (340–4). Likewise, Phaethon’s frenzied race symbolises the Callimachean program (340–50). But the storm in book 11 puts an end to the ‘big digression’ that the poem has hitherto been. From that point up to the final book, traditional epic material is resumed and the poem is brought *ad mea tempora* (350–4).

Stratis Kyriakidis suggests in a very stimulating paper (50) that the temporal limits of the *met.* are deliberately left open at both ends. In other words: Ovid suggests that his poem already existed before the cosmos and that it will continue to exist *sine fine*, beyond temporal or spatial confines (12–13). The first conclusion is reached by means of analysing the catalogue at *met.* 1.5–14 (3–6), which is the very first instance of what the author calls “extratextual mirroring” (i.e. the elements in the catalogue imitate a scene or situation). Kyriakidis persuasively argues that the catalogue discloses the notion that the poet, ποιητής, is also the *fabricator mundi* (1.57) and that his poem is the model upon which the cosmos is created. He then briefly addresses *met.* 1.34–5 (6–7) and 1.45–51 (7–9). The second conclusion is reached by studying the *sphragis* (*met.* 15.875–9) in the light of *trist.* 2.63–4 and the allusions of the couplet to Verg. *Aen.* 1.279 and 7.45 (9–12).

As for Ovid’s Augustanism, Karl Galinsky has often argued, against the *communis opinio*, that Ovid is the most genuine representative of the Augustan culture. I shall comment on two of his papers (8, 24) on the topic. They both actually anticipate or complete some of Galinsky’s ideas in his famous monograph *Augustan Culture. An Interpretative Introduction*, Princeton 1996 (see on ‘II. Reference Works’). In the first paper, Galinsky (8) challenges the idea that Ovid’s poetry was the harbinger of Silver Age poetry. He contends that Ovid, especially in the *met.*, is the “truest product of the Augustan age” (71), since he had been born into the *pax Augusta* and could more freely celebrate the *otium* enabled by the new regime. He could also develop the mixture of genres or move forward an Alexandrianism already present in Horace or Virgil and in Augustan culture in general (71–3). The emphasis on individual episodes rather than on large friezes was also characteristic of Augustan art (74–6), although Ovid used that to his own poetic advantage. After briefly comparing Ovid’s favouring of mythological themes to that of the Silver epic poets (76–8), Galinsky assesses Ovid’s influence on them by studying their adaptation of two major epic motives (the sea storm 79–82 and the νέκυια 82–6). He also briefly studies the influence of Ovidian vocabulary (86–8). As a general conclusion, he points out that the Ovidian influence on Silver poets was not as important as is usually believed.

In the second paper, Galinsky (24) shows in a more detailed way the affinities between Ovid’s *met.* and what he persuasively calls “Augustan cultural thematics” (rather than “Augustan ideology”). He insists on the “typically Augustan tendency to draw on, meld, and combine all previous traditions and to creatively make them into a new whole” (107) and produces examples of this synthesis of tradition and innovation in Augustan legislation, religion, architecture, urbanism or art. The analogy with the *Metamorphoses* is quite obvious so that “Ovid’s emphasis on change” does not “contravene the concept of *Roma aeterna*” (106). Likewise, it seems just adequate that “the *Metamorphoses* is characterized by both great variety (in both content and form) and by an extraordinary amount of detailed experiment within traditional practice” (110). As in the previous paper, the Ovidian emphasis on individual episodes tied to others by multiple allusions is compared to Augustan reliefs and wall-paintings (110). Likewise, the unifying role of Ovid is associated with Augustus’ reshaping of Rome (110–11).

Much more part of traditional criticism, Theodoros Papangelis (18) looks at the poetics of the Augustan age. He understands that the *poetae novi* combined and adapted the aesthetic principles of Alexandrian poetry with Roman *gravitas*, in order to deliver a discourse that favoured the new regime. He also understands that both the *Aen.* and the *met.* illustrate this literary renovation.

On other topics, Françoise Graziani (45) reviews how *met.* were understood and interpreted by the humanists. As Michael von Albrecht puts it (*Myrtia* 29, 2014, 459), Graziani's paper demonstrates how the study of the reception can occasionally shed light onto a text. Renaissance scholars saw in the *carmen perpetuum* an example of *synthesis* in the Aristotelian sense (*poet.* 6 σύνθεσις τῶν πραγμάτων; cf. 276). They also appreciated that Ovid was able to seize and renew the traditional material at his disposal (272). The mythical material in the poem seems to be organized according to the principle of *confabulatio* (in Boccaccio's terms): the poet organises his fables in order to encode or encrypt allegorical meanings in a *concordia discors* (274). Only a true *vates*, someone who can penetrate the secrets of nature, is able to achieve this (276). The sense of the whole should surface, for instance, from the study of the symmetries and variations (273–4, 278–81), but also in details of individual episodes (282). However, this also means that Ovid is suggesting multiple ways of interpretation, which Graziani exemplifies in the contest of Minerva and Arachne (282–3).

Other general considerations

Lothar Spahlinger's book (19) is a slightly revised version of his doctoral dissertation. He analyses the proem, the *sphragis* (27–50) and every episode of the *met.* in which an artist (50–200) or a work of art (264–321) is somehow involved, as well as passages important for the “Götterbild” (201–62), particularly the cosmogony. As a coda (“Musterinterpretationen”) he also studies the episodes of Apollo and Daphne (332–40) and Byblis (340–7). Spahlinger contends that every form of art aspires to reproduce nature in a godly and idealized way, so that the artist becomes a *vates* or *creator* that obeys deities (86–7). For the scholar, this religious dimension also means that art can be an act of *pietas*, not only guaranteeing the success of an artwork, but also enabling an interpretation of the world (197–200). Thus Ovid's poem is pervaded by his aim to be a *vates* (325–6). In his interpretation of the poem, Spahlinger admittedly gets quite close to the *Ovide moralisé* (331), which is indeed surprising. With good reason, the book has been harshly reviewed by Holzberg and Galinsky.

Christopher Glover (26) studies “difficulty with communication as a recurrent theme in Ovid's poetry”. After a first chapter devoted to *am.* and *ars*, Glover turns to *met.* (48–130). To begin with, he examines the stories of Medea, Scylla, and Althaea. He then studies the narratives of Byblis and Myrrha, which are presented as manipulators of language. According to Glover, their loss of speech (through transformation) reflects their alienation. Thus the author comments on the transformation as a linguistic phenomenon, namely in the episodes of Lycaon, Philomela, Io, Callisto, and Actaeon. Glover then discusses loss of speech in the light of Pythagoras' discourse.

The chapter ends with some general considerations on communicative difficulties in the *met.*

Frank Wittchow (40) argues that cunning (“List” in German) is a more relevant element in Roman literature than had been previously recognized. The range of authors studied includes Plautus, Terence, Livy, Virgil, Tibullus, Propertius and Ovid. After dealing briefly with Ovid’s amatory elegy (274–85), Wittchow devotes a final and somewhat speculative section (287–370) to analysing deceit and cunning in *met.*, attempting to ascertain its relationship to nature, order, change and epic truth. He also explores the interaction of deception, words and violence. Wittchow understands metamorphosis as a deceitful solution to conflicts that causes instability to be the ruling principle of the world. Thus cunning, the poet’s cunning *in primis*, becomes the element that allows order and change to be encompassed (365–6). He studies in some detail the episode of Tereus and Philomela (esp. 327–49), but he also addresses, among others, those of Ulysses and Ajax (319–21, 353–4), Aegina’s plague (324–6), Hercules (355–66), and Aeneas (esp. 366–70).

In a similar way, Rosario Guarino (46) tries to show, with a selection of passages, that lies, half-truths and deception are recurrent elements in the *met.* The methodical doubt shown by the poet throughout the poem is also pervaded with irony, although the final *vivam* encapsulates the poet’s self-confidence (195).

Narrative, narrators and narrative technique

It will come as no surprise that narratology has been extremely fertile soil for Ovidian studies. I shall begin by reviewing two parallel and complementary papers of Alessandro Barchiesi (32) and Gianpiero Rosati (35). They both masterfully establish the *status quaestionis* of Ovid’s narrative technique in the *met.* in light of narratological approaches. Of course, for both of them, the main concern is the multiple voices and the constant succession of narratives. They both agree that the embedded narratives are a reflection of the main one, that the Ovidian narrators show a high degree of literary self-consciousness, and that the internal narrations provide keys for the interpretation of the main narrative. In the end, all this challenges the idea of ‘epic truth’. Furthermore, they consider to what extent, from the narratological perspective, there is an “Ovid supernarrator” that organizes the whole. They also address the double nature of the poem (unitary and fragmentary at the same time). I shall make further comments about each paper.

Barchiesi (32) claims that Ovid developed the Odyssean tradition of narrative, and that he succeeded in creating a poem that “is ‘mostly about narrative’, if we consider the strategic importance of telling stories” (181). Barchiesi observes that individual narrators usually do not produce the desired effect over their internal audience (184). However, they lay bare the conventions of the epos, while showing awareness of the shortcomings of the narrative medium. Thus, Ovid blurs the boundaries between narrative and direct speech (185–6) with the result that “belief can be renegotiated at any moment” (197). Barchiesi finally looks in some detail at Arethusa’s paradigmatic narrative (188–95).

On the whole, Rosati (35) is somewhat more straightforward. He argues that the many narrators are surrogates for the author, providing us with information about how Ovid organises the structure and meaning of the poem; on the other hand, the internal audiences are surrogates for the readers and introduce possible models of interpretation (273; cf. 286–7). Likewise, metadiegesis is a powerful instrument of literary self-consciousness (283–6). It can also point out intratextual relationships (287–9) or be used to frustrate the reader’s expectations (289–90). The analysis of the embedded narratives also shows that the narrators are often self-interested, and this makes us question the reliability of their stories, as well as the ‘epic truth’ that the main narrator should convey (290–304). In addition, Rosati comments on the double structural principle that informed *met.* (276–82): the chronological order (from chaos to the present) and the analogic one (stories linked by themes, characters, places, etc.). Rosati remembers (280–2) that the problems of time are now seen as deliberate on Ovid’s part (they disrupt the teleological structure of the Augustan Age).

As a matter of fact, Alessandro Barchiesi had already studied Ovidian narrative technique in two previous articles (7, 20). Taking up an affirmation of Solodov (“I believe there is basically a single narrator throughout, who is Ovid himself”), Barchiesi (7) tries to better define the polyphony of the *met.*: certainly there are no different stylistic voices, but there is an alternation of registers of the single narrator. Barchiesi even suggests that *polyeideia* would be a more suitable term than polyphony, and claims that it would be inadequate to deny the metadiegetic nature of internal narrators (55–6). The relationship between main narrative and embedded one is not irrelevant or casual. The reception of the story by an internal audience offers interpretative keys, or there might be an implicit connection between the narrator and the theme or style with which he or she is entrusted (56–7). Then, to show the risks of ignoring these issues and identifying all voices with that of Ovid, Barchiesi analyses the different stories narrated at the banquet of Achelous (57–64) and in the impressive narrative of Orpheus (64–73). The example of Orpheus also shows that the metadiegetic structure offers an appropriate context for Ovidian irony (73). Then, Barchiesi tries to further prove his findings through an analysis of Pythagoras’ episode (*met.* 15.60–480: 74–83). While defending the authenticity of lines 15.426–31, Barchiesi also comments on the Augustanism of the poem (84–96).

In another worth reading article, Barchiesi (20) studies the use of narratives in the *met.* as an expression of Ovid’s poetics and its relationship with epic tradition. He indicates that Ovid motivates each narration, while at the same time the aetiology of his stories is very free (121). The use of embedded narration also reveals a strong poetic self-consciousness (esp. 125–6), since intertwinement of embedded narration and issues of poetics already existed in classic epos, like *Od.* (126–30) or *Aen.* (130–5). Barchiesi points out that in traditional epic metadiegetic narrations tend to be self-motivated (135–6), while in Ovid main and secondary narratives tend to complete one another (138–9). However, Barchiesi observes, the plan of the Ovidian *carmen* (from Chaos to *mea tempora*) would not need any metadiegesis whatsoever (136), and every single analepsis reveals that the *carmen perpetuum* is actually full of narrative voids (137). Barchiesi concludes that the mass of possible narrators and

stories would be unintelligible without the poet's guidance, and therefore voids and interstices in the *met.* have a crucial and unparalleled importance (141).

Massimo Gioseffi (42) studies the importance of this very topic: voids and interstices. Although his paper deals with *met.* only peripherally, it can certainly inform our interpretation of the poem. He analyses different episodes of the *Aeneid* that were adapted to genres other than epic through the so-called 'technique of the interstices'. In other words: many Imperial Age writers identified *lacunae* in the Virgilian narrative and placed these gaps at the centre of their version, while condensing what had already been told by their predecessors and conserving the original main plot. As far as Ovid is concerned, Gioseffi studies the narration of Evander's arrival in *fast.* 1.461–586 (25–9). He also examines Caieta's brief episode in *met.* 14.157 and 441–5, not as an example of expansion but of correction (35–6). Both these techniques are certainly at work in *met.*

Many books have been written about Ovid's narrative technique, but the study by Chrysante Tsitsiou-Chelidoni (36), originating in her doctoral dissertation, is the first 'narrative commentary' on an individual book of the *met.* She examines thoroughly the inner structure and literary organization of each episode (33–361), but also includes informative comments focused on many specific passages (intertextuality, style, metre, etc.). Two shorter chapters study the structure of the book as a unit (363–89) and its role within Ovid's poem (389–418). On the whole, Tsitsiou-Chelidoni tries to highlight the continuous and coherent literary character of the *met.* A general index would have been useful.

Turning to more specific matters, Michael von Albrecht (3) looks into the narrative technique in the story of Anius' daughters. More precisely, he studies the 'objectivation' and 'verbalization' of the relationship between author and reader. Von Albrecht analyses (108–9) the careful disposition of verbal tenses in the introductory part of the tale (*met.* 13.623–39). He then turns to the tale itself (13.640–74) and illustrates how Ovid arranges the linguistic material to compose and organize his narrative (108–12), and also in relation to the poem as a whole (112–13). Von Albrecht concludes that, in this episode, the literary technique enhances the interaction between author and reader, and that the text is unexpectedly laconic and restrained for an author usually branded as loquacious (113). Not unsurprisingly, von Albrecht also argues that Ovid optimizes Latin language and the resources of epic tradition in order to obtain a vast range of expressive and touching means (112). As a coda, von Albrecht comments on the applicability of the narratological theories of Claude Bremond to other tales of the *met.* (113–15). This paper was later reused and adapted (23, 28).

In 1981 Michael von Albrecht issued another important investigation on what the Ovidian work can tell us about the reading habits of the ancient public, and about the dialogue which the author establishes with his readers, in two almost identical articles: one in French (4) and the other in German (2), discreetly expanded, and which I use as reference. To achieve his aim, von Albrecht examines some characteristics of style and narrative technique in the *met.*, in principle the most 'objective' work of Ovid, in which this interaction can be appreciated. The proceedings identified are as follows: second person with general value (225); observations which anticipate the reader's

objections (225–6); the use of allusions as a wink to the reader (226–8); changes in narrative rhythm (228–9); and use of rhetorical plays (229) which allow to capture and maintain the reader’s attention; elements which create distance between the tale and reader (229–31); insertion of similes somewhere in the episode with a specific intention (231; cf. also number 1, on which see below); use of transitions (232), as well as other means of guiding and orientating the reader (232–4), like the use of key-words or tragic irony. All this allows the reader to feel some complicity with the narrator, and to prepare for the successive stages of the story and to interpret it (von Albrecht also suggests that these distinctive features can be used for didactic purposes: 234–5). I believe that this is an important article for interpreting the *met.* (it also has some textual implications: see 234). A large part of this material was also reused in a section of another work about *met.* (22).

The primary narrator had been an aspect largely ignored by Ovidian scholarship, which has been more concerned with the internal narrators (see on ‘VI.8 Linguistic and Stylistic Details’). Von Albrecht certainly contributed to launching this area of research (see above), but this lacuna is now satisfactorily filled by the works of Wheeler (27) and Horstmann (52) and, to a lesser extent, by the contribution of Ledentu (44).

Stephen Wheeler’s book (27) is one of the best narratological approaches to the *met.* as a whole, although some chapters could have benefited from more clarity. Using rhetorical and narratological criticism as a methodological framework (4), he pursues a study on the external narrator and his audience. After an extensive analysis of the proem (10–33), chapters 2–3 show that the external narrator presents himself as a singer who repeatedly addresses the public (34–87). Thus the reader can imagine the poem as “a continuous viva-voce performance” (87; cf. 3, 86). It is interesting that Ovid attempts to silence or to play with the written character of the poem (87–93), particularly through the use of book divisions. In chapter 3, Wheeler also examines the relationship between the various narrative instances, and internal and external audiences (74–87). In chapter 4 (94–116), Wheeler studies the procedures used for addressing the audience (i. e. generalizing second person, first person plural, rhetorical questions, negation, parenthesis, apostrophe etc.; cf. also chapter 6, 140–61, for a survey on the tradition of the generalizing second person, and appendix B, 211–12, for a review of ancient and modern discussions on the generalizing second person). On the other hand, the poem can be seen as *perpetuum* because of the broadly chronological arrangement of the structure, although Ovid intentionally tampers with this order; in chapter 5, Wheeler re-examines the notion of time in the poem and contends that continuity actually lies in the poem’s own performance (117–39). Chapter 7 (162–93) argues that, as the primary narrator retreats behind secondary narrators, the audience must evaluate the truthfulness of what is being told, and is compelled to confront the internal audience’s response to its own. In the final chapter (194–205), Wheeler investigates elements devised to provide the poem with contemporary force, and to make Rome a reference for the reception of Greek myth and culture. The book includes a catalogue of internal narrators and audiences in appendix A (203–10), an *index locorum* (261–4) and a general index (265–72).

Similarly, Marie Ledentu (44) looks at the multiplicity of intradiegetic narrators in the *met.*, but she also identifies a single extradiegetic narrator that organises the whole. The authorial voice is recognized in the first person singular (162–5), apostrophes to the second person (165–8) and in “*énoncés détachés de marques de personne*” (158–62). A useful appendix offers the examples of ‘authorial manifestations’ identified by Ledentu (169–81).

After Wheeler, Henning Horstmann (52) also dealt extensively with the primary narrator (“*Primärerzähler*”). His book is a slightly reworked version of his doctoral dissertation (Göttingen 2013). In the first section (37–133), he identifies the singularity of the Ovidian primary narrator with respect to his epic predecessors (cf. 26–35), and the formal elements that characterise it. Horstmann also investigates the versatility or inconsistency of the main narrator, and claims that true consistency and continuity of an ‘author-narrator’ is only sought at the beginning and end of the poem (39–44); in the rest of the poem, there is only an illusion of an ‘author-narrator’ (45–52). After this, Horstmann analyses the different perspectives, often not omniscient like in traditional epic, that the primary narrator adopts (52–64), and how the primary narrator interferes in free indirect discourse (65–73). Finally, Horstmann studies different linguistic elements (e.g. words or sentences that imply an opinion or scepticism, rhetorical questions, similes, apostrophes) that somehow reveal to the reader the presence of the primary narrator and possible dissonances between author and narrator (74–133). In the long second section (135–324), Horstmann examines the varying attitudes that the primary narrator can assume in different episodes as a means for the author to convey meaning. These attitudes are organized into five categories (ranging from complete respect or even admiration, to harsh critique).

To end this section I shall address two works about the reception of theatre in Ovid’s poetic corpus, but which also explore elements of Ovid’s narrative technique.

Originating in his doctoral dissertation (Washington 1999), Dan Curley’s book (48) surveys tragic characters and motifs in the *Heroides* and the *met.*, but, since it relies heavily on intertextuality, it also looks into the style and narrative techniques of the *met.* In chapter one (1–18), Curley emphasizes the visual aspect of many tales and suggests that the poem can be read as a “series of spectacles, especially where supernatural change and violence are concerned” (3), as an adaptation of tragic themes, plots and characters into epic, but retaining much of their theatrical nature (17, 218). Later, in chapter 4, he studies the episodes of Hecabe (101–15), Hercules (115–21) and Medea (121–32) as illustrative examples of the adaptation of temporal and spatial aspects from the original *σκηνή* into epic. In chapter 5, he studies the monologues of these very same characters as rhetorical adaptations of their previous tragic portrayals (Medea 141–53, Hecabe 153–61, Hercules 161–76). Chapter 7 (177–216) deals with “tragic intratextuality” or “tragic *contaminatio*”, i. e. the translation of tragic aspects from one character to another thematically related one, and the allusions that the poet establishes between them (“intratextual footnotes”). See also on ‘V.3 Literary Genres’.

Rudolf Henneböhl (39) conceives the *met.* as a “großes Bühnenstück” with more than 250 pieces (56–7) and tries to illustrate Ovid’s “*szenische Erzähltechnik*” through a number of short examples (57–60). Some analogies are certainly compel-