Ovid

Roman poet (43 BCE–16 or 17 CE). Although he lacks the perceived gravitas of Homer, Sophocles, or his fellow Roman Virgil, Ovid is perhaps the most consistently influential and popular writer of the classical tradition. His central position is suggested by the many surviving manuscripts of his works and their early publication in printed editions. *Editiones principes* of all his works were published in 1471 in Rome and Bologna. Most would agree that it is his *Metamorphoses* that has had the greatest influence, but his other major poems, the *Heroides, Tristia, Fasti,* and particularly his racier works, the *Amores, Ars amatoria,* and *Remedia amoris*, have played their part in maintaining his reputation as a writer of enduring importance and appeal.

His first significant work is thought to have been his *Amores* (ca. 1 CE), a sequence of witty verses about the poet-narrator's liaison with Corinna, generally assumed to be a fictional or composite figure. She is represented either as a challenge to be conquered or as a dominating mistress to whom the poet is in thrall, rather than as an equal partner. The *Amores,* not surprisingly, left its mark on the love poems of many later writers. Its influence is perhaps most apparent in the Renaissance. "To His Mistress Going to Bed," an erotic elegy by the Metaphysical poet John Donne (1572–1631), begins with a bawdy and typically Ovidian invocation of love as a military campaign. *Militat omnis amans,* "Every lover is a soldier," wrote Ovid (*Amores* 1.9.1), and Donne offers a lewd elaboration of the conceit: "The foe oft-times having the foe in sight,/Is tired with standing though they never fight" (3–4). The poem ends with an equally Ovidian equation between his mistress and a text:

> Like pictures, or like books' gay coverings made
> For laymen, are all women thus arrayed;
> Themselves are mystic books, which only we
> Whom their imputed grace will dignify
> Must see revealed. (39–43)

The concept of the *scripta puella,* the "written girl," has been the subject of much recent commentary on Ovid and other Roman elegists. Critics such as Maria Wyke and Alison Sharrock have identified the peculiarly textual quality of the poets' mistresses, the way in which the poetry calls attention to its constructed quality and probable fictionality. The elegiac mistress is a work of art, brought into being by the poet's stylus just as Pygmalion's statue is a product of the sculptor's skill. This motif is particularly evident in *Amores* 1.12. Here Ovid creates a clever identification between his mistress and the wax writing tablets on which she sends him her messages. Because the wax has a naturally reddish tinge, the angry narrator claims that it is blushing and goes on bitterly to assert that the tablets deserve to be neglected and, like a forsaken woman, lose their color. Although the wax and stylus were displaced in later centuries by pen and ink, the *scripta puella* remained a popular trope. Another striking Renaissance example is Philip Sidney's Stella, the unattainable heroine of his sonnet sequence *Astrophil and Stella,* written in the 1570s. In sonnet 67 Astrophil explicitly describes his beloved as a book—and one over whose meaning he has ultimate control: "Look on again, the fair text better try;/What blushing notes dost thou in margin see?"

These lines describe the narrator's attempt to "read" Stella's face. The comparison between her blushing cheeks and "notes" is ingeniously apt because the notes on the margins of early books were characteristically printed in red. But there is a further point to the simile. At this period a text's notes were usually written by a commentator rather than the original author, perhaps someone who sought to impose his own reading on the original just as Sidney, with a nearly postmodern scorn for authorial intention, explicitly chooses to read in Stella's ambiguous silence a message favorable to his own desires:

> Well, how so thou [i.e., Hope] interpret the contents
> I am resolved thy error to maintain,
> Rather than by more truth to get more pain.

A further variation on the *scripta puella* theme can be found in the *Roman Elegies* (1795) of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, when he describes how the classical surroundings of Rome, and particularly its women, encourage a spirit of artistic emulation.

> Also, am I not learning when at the shape of her
> bosom,
> Graceful lines, I can glance, guide a light hand down
> her hips?
> Only thus I appreciate marble; reflecting, comparing
> . . .
> Often too in her arms I've lain composing a poem,
> Gently with fingering hand count the hexameter's beat
> Out on her back. (no. 5, trans. Michael Hamburger)

In a sense Goethe caps Ovid by his double objectification of the woman with her "graceful lines" (*lieblichen . . . Formen*) as both statue and poem.

The *Amores*' influence was not confined to love poetry. John Milton incongruously ends his Latin "Elegia Tertia" (1626) on the death of the bishop of Winchester with an allusion to the end of *Amores* 1.5. The poem's climax is a vision of the bishop in Paradise, and Milton exclaims, *Talia contingant somnia saepe mihi,* "May I often be lucky enough to have dreams like this," thus echoing Ovid's own reflection after an impassioned daytime encounter with Corinna, *Proveniant medii sic mihi saepe dies!* "May my lot bring many a midday like to this!" In Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* (1604) the doomed Faustus repeats a line from the *Amores* (1.13.40) in a still more poignantly contrasting context: *O lente, lente currite, noctis equi,* "Oh, run slowly, slowly, you horses of the night," pleads the narrator, desirous to prolong a night of pleasure with his mistress. Faustus's anguished exclamation, on the other hand, although he repeats Ovid's line word for word, is a

response to the knowledge that when day breaks he will be damned forever.

The spirit of the *Amores* is still very much alive today. Even where there is perhaps no evidence for a direct influence at work, the sexual freedom and frankness of modern Western society encourages writers to follow in the footsteps of Ovid's real or apparent self-revelations. Western culture has a long tradition of setting first-person love lyrics to music—the troubadours' songs of 12th-century France and the productions of the Tudor court are typical—so it is not surprising that the atmosphere of the *Amores* is particularly apparent in the lyrics of modern pop songs. Pulp's "Pencil Skirt," for example, shares Ovid's coolly lubricious attitude toward sexual encounters as well as the vivid specificity of poems such as *Amores* 1.5:

> Lo! Corinna comes, draped in tunic girded round, with divided hair falling over fair, white neck—such as 'tis said was famed Semiramis when passing to her bridal chamber, and Lais loved of many men. I tore away the tunic—and yet 'twas fine, and scarcely marred her charms; but still she struggled to have the tunic shelter her. Even while she struggled, as one who would not overcome, was she overcome—and 'twas not hard—by her own betrayal. (1.5.9–16)

> When you raise your pencil skirt,
> like a veil before my eyes,
> like the look upon his face as he's zipping up his flies.
> Oh, I know that you're engaged to him.
> Oh, but I know that you want something to play with, baby.
>
> I'll be around when he's not in town,
> I'll show you how you're doing it wrong,
> I really love it when you tell me to stop.
> Oh, it's turning me on.
> ("Pencil Skirt," *Different Class*, 1995)

On one level any similarities between the two poems could be described as chance or generic. Yet many of the conventions of love poetry that we tend to take for granted and assume to be universal can be traced to the Roman elegists, and in particular to Ovid. His influence on most of today's writers and lyricists may be mediated through several degrees of separation, but that does not detract from the continuing importance of his love poetry.

Published ca. 1 BCE, the *Ars amatoria* was a mock-didactic poem in three books. The first two contain instructions for male seducers, the third, addressed to women, offers tips on how to entice men. The shorter *Remedia amoris* (ca. 1 CE) provides advice on how to overcome inappropriate or unrequited love. The solutions offered include travel, teetotalism, bucolic pursuits, and (ironically) avoidance of love poets. The *Ars amatoria* was apparently partly responsible for Ovid's exile to Tomis (modern Constanţa), on the Black Sea coast, and continued to attract controversy centuries after the poet's death. The 14th-century Latin *Antiovidianus*, written in Italy, asserted that Ovid, together with his books, deserved to burn in the fires of Hell.

Christine de Pizan (ca. 1400) was equally hostile toward Ovid, accusing him of misogyny. The equivocal status of the *Ars amatoria* is suggested by its presence in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, written in the late 14th century. Here it is the ambiguous though engaging go-between Pandarus who functions as the Ovidian *praeceptor amoris*, or teacher of love. His fluent mastery of the advice contained in the *Ars amatoria* is impressive, yet his teaching ultimately fails when Criseyde abandons Troilus. Pandarus is equally at home with the teachings of the *Remedia amoris*, yet here too Ovid proves wanting, for Troilus is not to be comforted by any of the recommended remedies.

Despite (or because of) the *Ars amatoria*'s notoriety, its influence remained strong. It was translated several times in the early modern centuries, most notably by Thomas Heywood (1600) and John Dryden (1709). Shakespeare's Juliet has apparently read the *Ars amatoria*, for she cautions Romeo that "at lovers' perjuries/They say Jove laughs" (2.2.92–93), a near translation of *Ars amatoria* 1.633, and in *The Taming of the Shrew* Bianca's suitor Lucentio has also made a special study of the poem. Like the *Amores*, the *Ars amatoria* has penetrated popular as well as literary culture. In Stanley Kubrick's film *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999) the heroine is accosted by a middle-aged admirer who asks whether she has read Ovid. He then demonstrates his own familiarity with the poet's works by drinking out of her wineglass, an intimate gesture that Ovid recommends in the *Ars amatoria* as a sure-fire seduction technique.

In some ways the modern discourse that most resembles Ovid's pick-up manual is the magazine agony column. Only in some ways of course, for such columns are not noted for their wit or allusive subtlety, and Ovid's tips seem rather tame compared to those of today's publications, even those aimed at teenage girls. But in "Void," a short story by Philip Terry, in his story collection *Ovid Metamorphosed* (2001), the central character is a journalist who has been instructed to make his copy sexier. His column, "Void's Sex Tips," is an updated version of the *Ars amatoria*. Here he adapts Ovid's own remarks about the value of sport as a dating tool: "In the case of golf, don't neglect the nineteenth hole. Like the swimming pool, it's a good place for talent-spotting, especially if older women appeal. Avoid snooker, however, darts too, and above all avoid going to the gym" (40). The Ovidian persona, urbane and opportunistic, smoothly accommodates itself to the idiom of the modern metrosexual male.

The *Heroides* (ca. 4–8 CE), a collection of letters from mythical women such as Dido and Briseis to their lovers and husbands, some of them paired with replies from their correspondents, has spawned many imitations. An early example is a further pair of letters between Paris

and Helen written by Baudri, Abbot of Bourgeuil (1045–1130). Many of Ovid's letter writers—Dido, Ariadne, and Hypsipile, for example—also feature in Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women,* which, like Ovid's poem, treats its heroines with a blend of sympathy and detachment that can prove difficult to disentangle. But Chaucer's brief tales are neither first-person nor epistolary in presentation, and we see a closer imitation of the *Heroides* in *England's Heroicall Epistles,* composed by Michael Drayton at the end of the 16th century. As the title suggests, this is an updated adaptation of Ovid rather than a translation, and the classical heroines have been replaced with English noblewomen, including Lady Jane Grey and Rosamund Clifford (Fair Rosamund, mistress of Henry II). Drayton's work is typical of Christian literary culture's love-hate relationship with Ovid. Closely modeled on the *Heroides,* the poems can yet be read as a rejection of Ovidian frivolity and immorality. Their Ovidian spirit can be seen in the following lines, taken from Rosamund's epistle:

> If yet thine eyes (Great Henry) may endure
> Those tainted Lines, drawn with a Hand impure,
> (Which faine would blush, but Feare keeps Blushes backe,
> And therefore suted in despairing Blacke)

She goes on to elaborate the typically Ovidian comparison between herself and her letter by drawing an analogy between her reputation and the paper, once pure white, now stained and blotted. But in another epistle, penned by Matilda (daughter of Henry I and for a short while in 1141 ruler of England), Ovid is explicitly rejected:

> Lascivious Poets, which abuse the Truth,
> Which oft teach Age to sinne, infecting Youth,
> For the unchaste, make Trees and Stones to mourne,
> Or as they please, to other shapes doe turne.

Perhaps closer to the spirit of Ovid than Drayton or even Chaucer is Pope, in his verse epistle *Eloisa to Abelard* (1717). Here, as in the *Heroides* itself, the poem's real pathos is undermined by our heightened awareness of the male poet's presence in the text. In the third letter of Ovid's *Heroides* Briseis' complaint that her language is barbaric and her text blotted with tears is at odds with the smooth Latin elegiacs we are reading. Similarly, Pope's Eloisa's wistful conclusion to her epistle becomes knowing and complacent when we remember who has really composed "her" letter:

> Such if there be, who loves so long, so well;
> Let him our sad, our tender story tell;
> The well-sung woes will soothe my pensive ghost;
> He best can paint 'em, who shall feel 'em most. (363–366)

The jaunty epigrammatic quality of the last line would seem to ensure that the mourning Eloisa is subsumed by her male creator. Other important examples of the female voice ventriloquized by a male writer within an epistolary context include the Vicomte de Gilleragues's *Letters of a Portuguese Nun* (1699) and Samuel Richardson's celebrated novel *Clarissa* (1748).

Responses to the *Heroides* have been composed by women as well as men. Aphra Behn contributed the translation of Oenone's letter to Paris in Dryden's 1688 edition of the poem translated by several hands. Although her lively, witty rendition demonstrates a thoroughly Ovidian spirit, the poem is lent a new edge by the translator's sex. Now that the forsaken nymph is voiced by a woman rather than ventriloquized by a man, we are encouraged to wonder whether Behn is importing her own experiences and feelings into the epistle. The freedom of the translation—it is by far the freest in the volume—contributes to such a possibility, particularly as Behn chooses to heighten Ovid's eroticism. No longer is there a knowing complicity between the male poet and his implied male readers. Instead, we are encouraged to assume an identification between Behn, a woman with an equivocal reputation attempting to make her way in a man's world, and the passionate, unfortunate Oenone.

The influence of the *Fasti* (ca. 8 CE), Ovid's poem based on the Roman calendar, has perhaps been limited by its cultural specificity, and the reception of the poem as a whole has been less than the sum of its parts. It was not translated into English until 1640, when a minor poet, John Gower, produced a version. One of the most significant episodes in the poem for later writers was the narrative of Tarquin's rape of Lucretia. Ovid's version of this story, the foundation myth of the Roman Republic, was a major source for Shakespeare's *Rape of Lucrece* (1594), although Shakespeare also seems to have been familiar with the rather different version offered by Livy. It is indicative of Ovid's massive importance for Shakespeare that *The Rape of Lucrece* also alludes to a parallel rape narrative from the *Metamorphoses,* the tale of Philomela, and draws on the tradition of female complaint exemplified in Ovid's *Heroides.* (Like Ovid's letter-writing heroines, Lucrece is disconcertingly and unconvincingly eloquent and rhetorically artful despite her appalling predicament.) Perhaps Shakespeare's oddly detached, even critical stance toward the wronged Lucrece also owes more to the *Heroides* than to the *Fasti.*

The anthropologist Sir James Frazer, whose *Golden Bough* (1890) exerted such an influence on T. S. Eliot, emphasized the importance of the *Fasti,* as did Eliot's fellow Modernist Ezra Pound. Yet few have imitated Ovid's calendar format. Spenser's *Shepheardes Calender* (1579) is a notable exception, although it owes more to Virgil's *Eclogues* than to the *Fasti.* A more clearly Ovidian calendar work is Durs Grünbein's *Das erste Jahr,* published in 2001. In this unusual response to Ovid's poem Grunbein takes the *Fasti*'s calendar format and bases his own parallel project on personal and public events in the year 2000.

Most would agree that the *Metamorphoses* (ca. 8 CE) is

Ovid's masterpiece. Ovid called it a *carmen perpetuum*, a continuous song. This is a reference to its seamless and unbroken quality but might also function as a description of its *Nachleben*, or afterlife. Ovid's reputation may have had its ups and downs, but the *Metamorphoses* has been a persistent presence in post-classical Western culture. Its central position is reflected in the quality of its many important translations, in particular those of Arthur Golding (1567), George Sandys (1632), and Samuel Garth, whose edition of the poem, prepared by several hands (including those of Dryden and Gay), appeared in 1717. The *Metamorphoses*' combination of strong, memorable narratives and striking visual appeal lent itself to a huge variety of adaptations and reinventions. Music, painting, sculpture, film, and literature are all in its debt. The poem has also had a significant influence on landscape gardening—the Villa d'Este in Italy, Nonsuch Palace in England, and Sophievka in Ukraine all allude to the distinctive settings of the *Metamorphoses*. In Sophievka we can trace a re-creation of the *Metamorphoses*' topography in miniature, for the park contains imitations of numerous Ovidian sites, including Diana's grotto, the scene of Actaeon's tragic end. Here we can also follow the path of Orpheus from his descent into the underworld to the final journey of his severed head to Lesbos.

In some ways the *Metamorphoses* was more amenable to Christianization than Ovid's other works. In the 8th century the venerable Bede's commentary on Genesis drew an implicitly approving parallel between the biblical account of the Creation and Ovid's own description of the first men in *Metamorphoses* 1. Bede's willingness to spot affinities between Ovid and the Bible was typical of a wider commentary tradition in the Middle Ages. This tradition strikes many modern readers as alien, particularly when it attempts to reconcile myths less amenable to Christianization than Ovid's account of the Creation with the teachings of Scripture. In making Ovid's often salacious stories into allegorizations of Christian doctrine, the exegetes frequently seem to be reading perversely against the grain of the original. There is often an implicit misogyny in the readings—for example, it was claimed that Jupiter's rape of Europa prefigured Christ's salvation of Mankind. Still more counterintuitive is the equation made between Myrrha, whose son Adonis was born following an incestuous liaison with her own father, and Mary, whose "father," God, is also the father of her child. But there is a paradox at work here. In their ingenious absurdity, their blatant anachronism, they may distort Ovid's original text but they do so with the effect, if not necessarily the intention, of a decidedly Ovidian *ingenium*. This commentary tradition continued to exert a powerful influence well into the 17th century. Two of the best-known examples were produced in the 14th century: the French verse treatment *Ovide moralisé* and the Latin prose *Ovidius moralizatus*.

Other responses show that it was possible for Christian writers to engage with the irreverent stories of the *Metamorphoses* without this allegorical whitewashing as long as they did so in a properly corrective spirit. For example, in the *Metamorphoses* Ovid describes the weaving competition between Minerva and Arachne: the goddess's tapestry gloried in the power and majesty of the Olympian gods, but Arachne portrayed their cruel and rapacious treatment of mortal girls (she lost the contest and was transformed into a spider). A similar *agon* is depicted by Baudri of Bourgueil in a poem (composed around 1100) addressed to William the Conqueror's daughter Adela. The poem describes the wonderful tapestries woven by Adela and her maids. On one side of her bedroom is a depiction of Old Testament heroes, on the other is a tapestry of characters from the *Metamorphoses*. Ovid's contest between gods and mortals is here reinvented as a contest between the Bible and the *Metamorphoses*. In a paradox typical of Christian Ovidianism the ecphrasis is simultaneously an homage to Ovid—the parallel is highlighted when Baudri describes Adela's tapestry as subtler than a spider's web—and a veiled reproof whose implicit message is an assertion of Christianity's triumph over Ovidian paganism. At least, that seems a reasonable assumption to make of a poem by a bishop, although perhaps Baudri (whose bisexual poetic persona suggests a certain unorthodoxy) wanted the implicit contest between his own two tapestries to retain the ambiguity of Ovid's original.

As the Middle Ages drew to a close, Neo-Latin increasingly gave way to strong vernacular traditions. But the influence of the *Metamorphoses* continued unabated. Dante's *Divina Commedia* is another telling example of a poem torn between Christianity and Ovidianism. Although the poet appears to privilege the proto-Christian shades of Virgil and Statius, it is Ovid whose more subversive presence makes itself felt in the poetic, structural, and imaginative texture of the *Commedia*. In *Inferno* 25 Dante bids Ovid be silent, asserting that the transformations of Hell are more startling than any in the *Metamorphoses;* but the poem as a whole is clearly reliant on Ovid's masterpiece, even at apparently inappropriate moments. In *Paradiso* 1 the poet compares the grace lent him to communicate his divine vision with the macabre transformation wrought on Marsyas when his skin was flayed from his body, a complex and startling moment of counterintuitive allusion.

The poems to Laura written by Dante's fellow countryman Petrarch (14th cent.) are still more Ovidian. Their form, the first-person love poem, might suggest that their biggest debt is to the *Amores*, but in fact it is the *Metamorphoses* to which Petrarch repeatedly turns for inspiration, in particular the story of Daphne, who, as the laurel, *laurus*, has a special affinity with Laura. Yet again, an absorption in an Ovidian aesthetic of transformation is countered by a sense of difference from Ovid, a consciousness of the gulf between the pagan past and the Christian present. Laura's association with a tree recalls not only Daphne but also Eve, and thus serves as a reminder of the fallen state of both poet and reader.

As we have already seen, Petrarch's younger contem-

porary Chaucer is typical of his age in combining a clear admiration for Ovid with an apparent wish to distance himself from the pagan poet. Chaucer's debts to Ovid are apparent in numerous individual allusions but also in the trajectory of Chaucer's entire oeuvre, which can be seen as a kind of recasting of Ovid's own checkered career. Chaucer rejected his own earlier love poems in favor of Christian morality, a repentant move exemplified in *The Parson's Tale* and the *Retraction*. This sequence simultaneously mirrors the development of Ovid's poetry and constitutes at least a partial rejection of his predecessor. Ovid had cause to regret his earlier licentious poetry when he composed the *Tristia* (*Sorrows*) in exile; in these poems he begged his friends to intercede with Augustus on his behalf and hoped for immortality through his poetry. Chaucer's position, although superficially similar, is transformed by his own Christian context. His repentance is presented as sincere, whereas Ovid is more concerned to persuade the reader that his verse should not be taken as a true reflection of the poet's character or life: "I assure you, my character differs from my verse (my life is moral, my muse is gay), and most of my work, unreal and fictitious, has allowed itself more licence than its author has had" (*Tristia* 2.353–356).

Although Ovid, politic for once, paints in his *Letters from the Black Sea* (ca. 10 CE) a picture of an Augustus who resembles the Christian God, "slow to punish, quick to reward, who sorrows whenever he is forced to be severe" (*Epistulae ex Ponto* 1.2.121–122), his situation is quite different from that of Chaucer. The medieval poet seeks forgiveness from a heavenly rather than an earthly ruler, and hopes for eternal salvation rather than mere literary fame. At a more local level the same kind of tension can be seen in Chaucer's frequent omissions of the climactic moment of metamorphosis from his retellings—for example, in *The Book of the Duchess* the dead King Ceyx is not revived as a bird to be reunited with his mourning wife Alcyone but remains drowned. Because the internal listener (John of Gaunt) and the poem's actual readers or audience would have known the myth, the abrupt and unexpected ending, the refusal to offer easy and indeed unchristian consolation, acts as a potent reproof. A similar dynamic is at play in the works of a later Christian Ovidian; Milton's *Paradise Lost* is full of classical allusions, especially to the *Metamorphoses*, but again and again these are undercut. A typical dismissal follows his enthralling description of the fall of Mulciber: "Thus they relate,/Erring" (1.746–747).

Central to the *Metamorphoses*' reception are the works of Shakespeare. Ovid's poem lends a decorative eroticism to Shakespeare's epyllion *Venus and Adonis* (1592–1593), brings a comic entanglement of tragedy and mirth to the Pyramus and Thisbe interlude in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and imparts a far more disturbing hybrid of beauty, violence, pain, and laughter to *Titus Andronicus*. This grotesque revenge play is underpinned by one of Ovid's most gruesome tales, that of Tereus and Philomela, but Shakespeare "improves" on the horrors of the original on several counts. Whereas Ovid's Tereus had cut out his victim's tongue to prevent her revealing her rapist's identity, Lavinia's rapists go one better and cut off her hands to stop her from sewing her story into a tapestry, as Philomela had done. (For barbarians—they are the sons of Tamora, defeated queen of the Goths—they are remarkably up on their Ovid.) By making Ovid such an explicit presence in the play—Lavinia actually brings the text onstage to help explain what has happened to her—Shakespeare compromises the tragedy of *Titus* because the audience is constantly reminded of its fictional status. Another appearance of Ovid's poem (in *Cymbeline*) has a similarly distancing effect. The unscrupulous Iachimo, spying on the sleeping Imogen, notes that she has been reading the tale of Tereus. Although he is a voyeur rather than a rapist, Iachimo's situation, his predatory role in relation to a vulnerable woman, is very similar to that of Tereus. Imogen's choice of book is almost too appropriate, and the prop functions as a kind of secret message from playwright to audience, a bridge, like a chorus, between the play world and the real world that reminds us that *Cymbeline* is itself only a story.

Some of Shakespeare's most memorable borrowings can be found in two of his very last plays. In *The Winter's Tale* Ovid's miraculous story of Pygmalion's statue is reanimated in the figure of Hermione, whose "statue" is revealed to be a real woman, kept hidden from her jealous husband for 15 years. This startling explanation cannot quite dispel a suspicion of necromancy, although the mistress of ceremonies, Hermione's lady-in-waiting Paulina, assures us that this is "art/Lawful as eating" (5.3.110–111). Necromancy also lies behind a still more obtrusive use of Ovid, Prospero's description of his magic arts in *The Tempest* (5.1.33–57), a near translation of words originally spoken by Ovid's Medea in book 7 of the *Metamorphoses*. Critics are divided as to why Shakespeare thus hints at a bond between Prospero and the notorious witch who killed her own brother and children. Is he suggesting that Prospero is a sinister or evil figure? Or is he highlighting the differences rather than the similarities between the two powerful practitioners of magic? He may of course simply have been drawn to the effectiveness of Ovid's language and not have intended his audience to import the source into *The Tempest* at all.

Although the *Metamorphoses* never completely lost its hold on Western culture, its influence declined in the 18th and 19th centuries before being revived at the beginning of the 20th century with the advent of Modernism. In Europe and America writers as different as Kafka, Rilke, T. S. Eliot, and Virginia Woolf all found inspiration once again in the *Metamorphoses*, combining sometimes startling formal innovation with a renewed enthusiasm for the classical tradition. It has been suggested that Ovid's influence has been strongest at times of transition and uncertainty, and it may thus be significant that this revival of the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid's great poem of change, synchronized with a series of radical and disruptive discoveries in science (Einstein) and human behavior (Freud). The

20th century, like the Middle Ages, was inclined to adapt Ovidian material to fit its own preoccupations, although these tended to be secular rather than religious. Freud co-opted the story of Narcissus to illustrate an aspect of his psychoanalytic theory, and Hélène Cixous used Medusa as a sign of female sexuality, simultaneously threatening and desirable. Recent literary responses to the poem are similarly marked by their readiness to update the tales of the *Metamorphoses*. In Mary Zimmerman's 1998 adaptation of the poem a very modern Phaethon, like one of Bret Easton Ellis's more vacuous heroes, floats on a yellow raft wearing sunglasses while he tells his therapist about his troubled relationship with his father. Cotta, the hero of Christoph Ransmayr's *The Last World* (1996), searches for the exiled Ovid in a Tomis that is simultaneously mythical—it is inhabited by oddly altered characters from the *Metamorphoses*—and postindustrial—its amenities include a bus station and a cinema. Ted Hughes's widely admired *Tales from Ovid* (1999) is less audaciously, programmatically modern but includes many startling contemporary details. Some of these are immediately obvious, as when Zeus is described as launching a "nuclear blast." Others are more subtle and Ovidian, such as Hughes's comparison between the swimming Hermaphroditus and "a lily in a bulb of crystal." "Bulb" translates Ovid's *vitro*, "glass" (4.355) and also functions as a metamorphic pun, invoking simultaneously the organic stem of the lily and the anachronistic technology of a light bulb. It thus yokes together two apparently unrelated substances—flowers and glass—in an elaboration of the original Latin that is thoroughly Ovidian; for Ovid too revels in ingenious, linguistic links between apparently unrelated elements, as when he points out that Myrrha's bone marrow remained the same even after her metamorphosis into a tree—the Latin *medulla* (10.492) can mean both marrow and pith.

We have seen how pagan mythology was grafted onto the quite different traditions of Judaeo-Christian teaching by medieval commentators. Perhaps today we can identify another fusion at work in the increasing interplay between Western and Japanese culture. In particular, anime, with its emphasis on the boundaries between fantasy and reality, human and nonhuman, is a medium with strong Ovidian potential; as early as 1979 Takashi's film *Hoshi No Orpheus* presented animated versions of five tales from the *Metamorphoses*. More recently Ovid has been cited as an influence on two of Hayao Miyazaki's films, *Spirited Away* (2001) and *Howl's Moving Castle* (2004). The recent novels of David Mitchell are embedded in oriental traditions, and in his highly successful *Cloud Atlas* (2004) we can perhaps see a natural interpenetration between this new idiom and Ovidianism. This book, like the *Metamorphoses*, is a complexly circular collection that might lay claim to Ovid's epithet *perpetuum*. Particularly Ovidian are the ingenious links between each story, the countless odd echoes and parallels which alert us to the curious bonds between Mitchell's six protagonists, apparently reincarnations of the same person, all of whom have a comet-shaped birthmark on the shoulder. In the chronologically penultimate tale, set in a future Korea where cloning is commonplace, we encounter Madam Ovid, a plastic surgeon with the power to completely alter one's appearance. She is in a sense an avatar of the novel's creator, who has himself refashioned his hero(ine) six times over the course of this playful and haunting fiction. Mitchell's attraction to a characteristically Ovidian aesthetic of repetition and fragmentation is shared by another contemporary novelist, Kate Atkinson, whose mythical yet very modern story collection *Not the End of the World* (2004) is still more overtly indebted to the *Metamorphoses*.

Ovid's poems from exile are attracting an increasing amount of critical attention, which reflects both their own subtle power and their ability to inspire a striking variety of creative responses. Just as Ovid's great poem of change invited aptly metamorphic treatments, his poems of exile have been in turn displaced in various ways. Ovid was writing at the height of Rome's glory, but as the power of the empire declined, the *Tristia* took on a new resonance. Rutilius Namatianus, writing in the 5th century shortly after the sack of Rome by Alaric, shared Ovid's wistful sense of distance from Rome's splendor, but as an exile in time rather than space. A few centuries later, when Rome's heyday was still more remote, poets responded to Ovid's exile poetry in the knowledge that their situation, however favorable by the debased standards of their own day, was more akin to that of Tomis than Augustan Rome. We find a different kind of misprision at work in the poems of Joachim du Bellay (1522–1560), who draws on the *Tristia* (in an ingeniously Ovidian reversal) to describe exile not *from* Rome but *to* Rome:

> France, oh France, answer me mercifully!
> But the echo only brings back my own words.
> I am left to wander among hungry wolves.
> Winter approaches, I feel its breath is cold
> —It rasps, and sends a shiver down my back.
> (Sonnet 9, trans. C. H. Sisson)

Du Bellay is somewhat uncharacteristic of *Tristia* imitators in that he presents Rome itself as cold and unwelcoming. Far more typical is a kind of barbarism anxiety whereby later poets are uneasily conscious of their failure to measure up to Ovid's standards of refined urbanity. Although Pushkin's own exile to the Black Sea was conspicuously similar to Ovid's, he was struck not by the landscape's harshness but by its softness, beauty, and warmth. In "To Ovid" (1821) he contrasts the mildness of its winters with the rigors of the Russian climate to which he is accustomed.

The *Tristia* were popular teaching texts in the Renaissance, and early translations into English were composed by Thomas Churchyard in 1572 and Wye Saltonstall in 1639. We know that Shakespeare was conscious of Ovid's exile because in *As You Like It* the clown Touchstone punningly compares his own exile in the forest of Arden

with that of Ovid: "I am here with thee and thy goats, as the most capricious poet, honest Ovid, was among the Goths" (3.3.6–9). David Slavitt ingeniously encourages us to see another, more covert allusion to the exile poetry in Shakespeare's works when, in his creative translation of the *Tristia* (1986) he makes Ovid describe his metamorphosis in a line adapted from *The Tempest:*

> Tasting my own
> Medicine of metamorphosis, I change
> Into something poor and strange.

Might Prospero, exiled on his island as Shakespeare would soon withdraw to Stratford, alienated by the uncouth barbarism of Caliban and on the point of renouncing his metamorphic power, represent the aging Ovid as well as his own aging creator? This is not the only occasion on which Slavitt seems to enrich the *Tristia*'s long *Nachleben* retrospectively, as it were. His translation of 3.8, in which Ovid describes his longing to soar up into the air on some chariot of the gods and bemoans his transformed appearance, is subtly tweaked to transform slight chance affinities with Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale"—the wish to fly, the evocation of physical decline, and the sense of death's allure—into far stronger parallels. For example, Ovid's expression of a longing for wings beginning "Oh, for" is echoed in the same construction in Keats's Ode "Oh, for a draught of vintage"; and Slavitt's Ovid (unlike the original) compares his imagined flying self with "a huge gangly bird."

Recent responses to the *Tristia* may have largely put barbarism anxiety behind them, but still they exploit the interesting effects made possible when a poem of displacement is further displaced. George McWhirter, for example, transplants the poem to the bleak Canadian prairies in *Ovid in Saskatchewan* (1998) and in "The Hotel Normandie Pool" (1981). Derek Walcott draws analogies between his own legacy of displacement and Ovid's exile from Rome. Perhaps part of Ovid's enduring appeal is the way his poetry combines themes that we sense are universal and unchanging with a dynamic of change and dislocation that reflects the geographical, temporal, and cultural distance between our world and his own.

BIBL.: Jonathan Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid* (Oxford 1993). Barbara Weiden Boyd, ed., *Brill's Companion to Ovid* (Leiden 2002). Sarah Annes Brown, *The Metamorphosis of Ovid* (London 1999). Michael Calabrese, *Chaucer's Ovidian Arts of Love* (Gainesville, Fla., 1994). Philip Hardie, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Ovid* (Cambridge 2002). Genevieve Liveley, *Ovid: Love Songs* (Bristol 2005). Raphael Lyne, *Ovid's Changing Worlds* (Oxford 2001). Charles Martindale, *Ovid Renewed: Ovidian Influences on Art and Literature from the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge 1988). Charles Martindale and Michelle Martindale, *Shakespeare and the Uses of Antiquity* (London 1990). Alison Sharrock, "Womanufacture," *Journal of Roman Studies* 81 (1991) 36–49. Madison U. Sowell, *Dante and Ovid: Studies in Intertextuality* (New York 1991). Maria Wyke, *The Roman Mistress* (Oxford 2002). Theodore Ziolkowski, *Ovid and the Moderns* (Ithaca 2004).

S.A.B.