A COMMENTARY ON OVID'S *METAMORPHOSES*

Volume 3: Books 13–15 and Indices

Comprising fifteen books and over two hundred and fifty myths, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is one of the longest extant Latin poems from the ancient world and one of the most influential works in Western culture. It is an epic on desire and transgression that became a gateway to the entire world of pagan mythology and visual imagination. This, the first complete commentary in English, covers all aspects of the text – from textual interpretation to poetics, imagination, and ideology – and will be useful as a teaching aid and an orientation for those who are interested in the text and its reception. Historically, the poem's audience includes readers interested in opera and ballet, psychology and sexuality, myth and painting, feminism and posthumanism, vegetarianism and metempsychosis (to name just a few outside the area of Classical Studies).

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Preface

Alessandro Barchiesi

This commentary on Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is a revised version of the work published in Italian by the Fondazione Lorenzo Valla (5 vols., between 2005 and 2013), with five commentators covering three books each. The original work also included a facing Italian translation by Ludovica Koch and Gioachino Chiarini and a fascinating essay by Charles Segal ('Il corpo e l'io nelle "Metamorfosi" di Ovidio'). We dedicate this publication to him (he did not live to see the publication of the Italian first volume) and to Ted Kenney, who passed away in December 2019 (the last month before the current plague). They are both, in their own different ways, examples of resilience and true humanism.

The commentaries have been revised and updated, although one of them on a limited scale: I did not dare to alter Kenney's work after his death, but his notes and introduction on books 7–9 incorporate a number of revisions he made subsequent to the publication of the Italian volume (2011). The other four commentators have engaged in a more extensive rewriting.

The Valla project was based on the important OCT critical edition by Richard Tarrant (2004): the Latin text is not included in this publication since readers may want to use our work as a companion to that widely available critical edition. At times the commentators here diverge from the text printed by Tarrant, and their choices are recorded in a 'Note on the Text' introducing every triad of books.

The goal has not changed: we hope to offer guidance on the poem as a literary work to many different readers, keeping in mind the exciting reality that many people today are coming to the *Metamorphoses* from the most diverse backgrounds and paths. Whether they are interested in the history of Latin poetry or in the lush Caribbean myths of Chris Ofili, in mutations of gender and species or the transmigration of souls, we hope to have provided some orientation.

I thank my companions on this long journey for their patience and inspiration.

Preface

Philip Hardie

The last three books of the *Metamorphoses* move the reader through legendary and historical time towards the poet's own day, *ad mea tempora*, to conclude with glances into the future beyond, the prospective apotheosis of Augustus and the poet's own continuing *post-mortem* life in an empire-wide and sky-reaching fame: *mea tempora* in the further sense of the survival of the *Metamorphoses* in an *aetas Ovidiana* of indefinite period. This is time as it is charted in the epics of Homer, Virgil and Ennius. The Trojan War marks the beginning of what was regarded in antiquity as historical, as opposed to mythological, time.[1] In Roman tradition, the Trojan War has a further importance, as the fall of Troy is the *sine qua non* for the eventual foundation of Rome. More particularly, Ovid's narrating of the Trojan War, the wanderings and toils of Aeneas, and Roman history down to the present day represents his response to Virgil's scripting of this whole sequence of events in his *Aeneid*, the epic which, on Virgil's death in 19 BC, immediately established itself as the central poetic text of Latin literature, and an inescapable challenge to any future long hexameter narrative poem.

This is not to say either that the flow of time in books 13–15 is even and continuous, or that in these books we finally arrive at a more consistently epic mode of narration. As in the previous books, time alternately expands or is concertinaed, internal narrators open out digressions into the past and into different kinds of subject matter, and ingenious transitions take the place of more mundane segues from one episode to the next.

Ovid's 'little Iliad' had begun at the beginning of book 12, with brief summaries of Paris' rape of Helen and of the gathering of the Greek army

[1] See D. Feeney, *Caesar's Calendar: Ancient Time and the Beginnings of History*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 2007, pp. 81–4.

at Aulis.[2] The following set-piece ecphrasis of the House of Fama (12.39–63) serves as a kind of frontispiece to the 'little Iliad', which stretches down to 13.622. Book 12 contains one of Ovid's large-scale exercises in epic battle narrative, but this is the hyper-, or Ur-, epic battle of the Lapiths and Centaurs, narrated in a 'flashback' analepsis in the mouth of the long-lived Nestor (12.182–535). It is not until book 13 that we are presented with a detailed reworking of the matter of the *Iliad* itself, but in the form of not one, but two re-narratings, in the mouths of two of the Greek heroes, Ajax and Ulysses. Ajax and Ulysses speak not in the traditional Homeric and Virgilian setting for internal narrators, the heroic banquet, but in the setting of a law court established to judge which hero is the worthier claimant for the arms of the dead Achilles (13.1–383). Self-evidently, neither hero can be taken as a model for the ideal of the objective and impartial epic narrator, an ideal that Ovid also puts under pressure elsewhere.

The remainder of the 'little Iliad' moves the spotlight away from macho male characters to grieving women (already a centrally Homeric theme). The account of Hecuba's intolerable grief at the deaths of her last surviving children, Polyxena and Polydorus, (13.429–575) is Ovid's closest adaptation in the *Metamorphoses* of a single surviving tragic model, Euripides' *Hecuba*.[3] It is the last major example in the poem of a generically tragic episode – a reason, perhaps, for its unusually faithful dependence on a single tragic source. It is also a literary-historical reminder of the close connection, well recognised already in antiquity, between Iliadic epic and Attic tragedy. Hecuba's lengthy tragedy is concluded with a brief account of the enraged and grief-stricken mother's metamorphosis into a rabid dog (13.567–71). The much shorter episode of Aurora's grief for her son Memnon leads into a more fantastic and complex metamorphosis (13.600–19). A colourful example of the titular phenomenon of the *Metamorphoses* thus fittingly rounds off the Ovidian 'Iliad'.

Ovid's 'Iliad' had also begun with a metamorphosis, the petrifaction of the serpent that attacked the nest of sparrows, in the omen at Aulis (*Met.* 12.22–3), a metamorphosis authorised by the *Iliad* itself (2.317–20). In the 'little Aeneid' (13.623–14.608) that follows the 'little Iliad' – as Virgil's

[2] In fact, true to Ovid's tendency to multiply boundaries and points of division, the passage to the matter of Troy had already been marked in the previous book, 11, by Apollo's crossing of the geographical boundary of the Hellespont, to view the building of the new city of Troy, 199–201 *inde nouae primum moliri moenia Troiae | Laomedonta uidet susceptaque magna labore | crescere difficili nec opes exposcere paruas*; see Barchiesi 1997b, p. 183.

[3] In general on tragedy in the *Metamorphoses*, see Curley 2013.

Aeneid presents itself as the successor to the Homeric epics – Ovid highlights some of the metamorphic moments in the *Aeneid*, tendentiously redefining Virgil's epic as already an epic of metamorphosis, comparable to the way in which, in his amatory and exilic poetry, Ovid repeatedly draws attention to the centrality in the *Aeneid* of the erotic episode of Dido and Aeneas.[4] Ovid gives detailed accounts of the maiden Scylla's transformation into Virgil's hybrid sea monster (*Aen.* 3.424–8; *Met.* 14.59–67), and of Circe's transformation of Picus into a woodpecker (*Aen.* 7.189–91; *Met.* 14.386–96). Pride of place is given to a retelling of the most striking of Virgil's metamorphoses, that of the Trojan ships into sea nymphs (*Aen.* 9.107–22; *Met.* 14.535–65).

The internal narrator Macareus' account of Circe's transformation of Ulysses' companions into beasts is included within a faithful retelling of a part of the Homeric narrative of the wanderings of Odysseus (*Met.* 14.223–307), following on Achaemenides' retelling of *Odyssey* 9's narrative of the encounter with Polyphemus (*Met.* 14.165–212). Within Ovid's 'little Aeneid' are thus contained elements of a 'little Odyssey'. Ovid's close replications of Odyssean material within his 'Aeneid' are licensed by Virgil's own placing of a retelling of the Homeric Polyphemus episode in the mouth of Achaemenides (*Aen.* 3.616–38).

Ovid repeatedly derails the teleological thrust of Virgil's *Aeneid* with inset narratives of love and metamorphosis, in particular a massive 'trio of love triangles', the stories of Acis, Galatea and Polyphemus (13.750–897); Glaucus, Scylla and Circe (13.898–14.74); and Picus, Canens and Circe (14.320–434). Ovid explores genres other than epic, most notably in the polyphony of genres in the story of Acis, Galatea and Polyphemus, which combines pastoral, elegiac and epic elements.[5] Yet this generic dialogism can be read as commentary on the encyclopedic nature of the *Aeneid* itself, an epic in which Virgil confronts the challenge of an ancient view of Homeric epic as the source of all later kinds of literature. But where the *Aeneid* contains a proliferation of other genres within a constraining epic code, the *Metamorphoses* allows the plurality of genres to blossom in less controlled ways.

Ovid's 'Aeneid' begins with the briefest of summaries of what is the chronological beginning of Virgil's main narrative, narrated in flashback

[4] Ovid draws attention to what, even from a less biased point of view, might be seen as the importance of mutability as a theme in the *Aeneid*; see P. Hardie, 'Augustan Poets on the Mutability of Rome', in A. Powell (ed.), *Roman Poetry and Propaganda in the Age of Augustus*, Bristol, 1992, pp. 59–82.

[5] See the classic discussion of Farrell 1992.

by Aeneas in *Aeneid* 2 (*Met.* 13.623–7), and reaches down to the death of Turnus, narrated even more briefly in just eight words (14.572–3). The skimpy retelling of key episodes of the *Aeneid* within Ovid's 'little Aeneid' is compensated for by major reworkings elsewhere in the *Metamorphoses*. For example, Ovid engages at much greater length with Virgil's final duel between Aeneas and Turnus in major scenes of fighting and physical struggle, in the battle between Perseus and the supporters of Andromeda's disappointed suitor, Phineus, at the beginning of book 5 of the *Metamorphoses*, and in the wrestling match between Hercules and the river god Achelous at the beginning of book 9. Elements of Virgil's story of Dido and Aeneas, summarised, notoriously, in four lines at *Met.* 14.78–81, find more expanded reflections in erotic and tragic narratives elsewhere in the poem. These examples of what might be called an Ovidian 'intertextual displacement' betoken the fact that the *Metamorphoses* as a whole, not just the 'little Aeneid', engages continuously with the Virgilian epic.

Ovid gives his 'little Aeneid' a final metamorphic stamp with two episodes that overstep the chronological limit of the main narrative of Virgil's *Aeneid*: firstly, the emergence of a heron from the ashes of Turnus' city Ardea (14.573–80), one of the numerous bird metamorphoses in the poem; and secondly, the circumstantial narrative of the apotheosis of Aeneas (14.581–608), foreshadowed briefly and proleptically in the *Aeneid*. Most metamorphoses of humans in the *Metamorphoses* are downwards in the chain of being, into animal, mineral or vegetable forms. At the end of book 13, lines 916–63, Glaucus narrates his own metamorphosis upwards, from human to divine, albeit a rather bestial form of divinity, a sea god with a fishy tail. The apotheosis of Aeneas conforms to a purifying kind of divinisation, which purges the inferior mortal parts of the human hero, first exemplified in the apotheosis of the archetypal man-god Hercules five books before (9.239–72), and to be followed, in accelerated sequence, in the remaining book and a bit by the apotheoses of Romulus, Julius Caesar and, in prospect, Augustus and the poet himself.

This is one sign that the poem is reaching its conclusion. Another kind of transition that indicates that we are coming home is the geographical passage from east to west, the passage of Aeneas from Troy to Italy, and also the passage of Homeric epic from the Greek east through its naturalisation in Virgil's Roman *Aeneid*. At the beginning of book 14, Glaucus travels from Sicily to the house of Circe in Italy, anticipating the Trojans' own approaches to Italy, thwarted at 14.76–7 when they are driven back

to Carthage by the storm, and successful in their landing at Cumae at 14.101–5. The poem's gravitation to Italy continues in book 15 with Myscelos' journey from Argos to Croton (49–57); Pythagoras' flight into exile from Samos to Croton (60–2); the Greek tragic hero Hippolytus' translation to the grove of Aricia as a minor Italian god (541–6); and Aesculapius' journey from Epidaurus to Rome (695–728). Aesculapius is a god who comes to Rome as an outsider; the subject of the poem's last narrative, Julius Caesar, becomes a god in his own city (15.745–6).

The cursory catalogue of the Alban king list (14.609–21, 772–4), invented to span the gap in time between Aeneas' arrival in Italy and the founding of Rome, is interrupted by the story of the Italian divinities Vertumnus and Pomona (14.623–771), moving us into the area of Italian-Roman aetiology. It is also the last erotic story in the poem, in the series that began with Apollo's attempted rape of Daphne in book 1, and it brings that series to a satisfying conclusion, as the possibility of yet another story of rape or attempted rape is averted through the final success of the lover in achieving the fulfilment of mutual desire, in a reversal of the pattern of the huntress-nymph impervious to male desire. The story's comfortably familiar setting of an Italian orchard is heightened by the contrast with the admonitory tale told by Vertumnus to Pomona, in his attempt at erotic persuasion, the esoteric Greek story of the suicidal *exclusus amator* Iphis' love for the stony-hearted Anaxarete, set in a geographically and culturally distant Cyprus (14.698–761).

In book 15, Greek and Roman meet in the encounter of Rome's second king, Numa, with the exiled Greek philosopher Pythagoras, whose philosophico-didactic speech takes up almost half of the book (15.75–478). While the Speech of Pythagoras does not provide a philosophical 'key' to a principle of change that could be applied to the metamorphoses in the poem as a whole, it does yield another element of closure, in that it forms a ring with the philosophically coloured cosmogony that opens the *Metamorphoses*. Both passages provide monumental examples of Ovid's engagement with Graeco-Roman philosophy, in the *Metamorphoses* and other works, an engagement that is coming to be increasingly recognised.[6]

The quirky selection of Roman stories that otherwise punctuate the temporal distance between Romulus and Augustus includes female perspectives, in Tarpeia's attempt to betray the city (14.776–7), and in the

[6] See recently the essays in G. Williams and K. Volk (eds.), *Philosophy in Ovid, Ovid as Philosopher*, Oxford, 2022.

pious grief of the wives of the first two kings of Rome, rewarded with apotheosis to match that of her husband, in the case of Romulus' widow Hersilia (14.829–51), and impervious to attempted consolation, in the case of Numa's widow Egeria (15.487–551). Like Livy, Ovid draws parallels between remoter and more recent Roman history, in the 'civil war' between Romans and Sabines (14.798–804); in the reflections on kingship, Republic and principate that glimmer through the story of Cipus (15.565–621); and in the potential of Aesculapius' salvation of Rome from the plague of 292 BC (15.626–744) to figure Augustus' salvation of Rome from the 'plague' of civil war, a potential also activated by allusions to Virgil and *Georgics* 3 and 4 in the parallel narrative of salvation from the plague on Aegina at *Met.* 7.523–657. The plague of 292 BC is the first conclusively datable event in the poem, which then jumps almost 250 years to the Ides of March, 44 BC. That also happens to be the year before the birth of Ovid – *ad mea tempora* in another sense.

Self-reference to Ovid's own times has also been detected in the fact that the temple built for Aesculapius, almost the last episode in the *Metamorphoses*, was dedicated on 1 January, and so naturally appears near the beginning of the *Fasti* (1.289–94), whose first word is *Tempora*, my, Ovid's, '*Tempora*'.[7] But Ovid's times were a-changin', and the boast in the Epilogue to the *Metamorphoses* that it is immune to the anger of Jupiter (15.871–2) is often read as post-exilic defiance. And, post-exile, it would be easy enough to see Ovid in the figure of Pythagoras, self-exiled to escape tyranny, yet free to roam the universe in flights of the mind (15.60–4).

This English version of my commentary on *Metamorphoses* 13–15 is a light revision, with bibliographical updating, of the Italian version in P. Hardie, *Ovidio Metamorfosi,* Vol. 6: *Libri XIII–XV* (Fondazione Valla, 2015).

[7] See Barchiesi 1997b, p. 188.

Note on the Latin Text

Books 13–15

Divergences from Tarrant's OCT (including punctuation, as was the case in the 2015 list of divergences)

locus	Tarrant	Hardie
13.221	*capit, dat …*	*capit? det …*
13.264	*diduxit*	*deduxit*
13.282	*timorque*	*dolorque*
13.294–5	[deleted]	[in the text]
13.294	*diuersosque orbes*	*diuersasque urbes*
13.312	*pretioque*	*praestoque*
13.377–9	[deleted]	[in the text]
13.440	*pacatum*	*pacatum* [in 2015 I read *placatum*]
13.444	*iniusto*	*infesto*
13.471	*non*	*nunc*
13.517	*annosa*	*damnosa*
13.554	*praedaeque + adsuetus + amore*	*praedaeque adsuetus amore*
13.560	[in the text]	[deleted]
13.561	*inuocat*	*inuolat*
13.602	*natas*	*lentas*
13.628	*limina*	*litora*
13.679	*dat munus*	*dat, munus*
13.684	*Lindius*	† *nileus* †
13.693	*dare*	*per*
13.711	*Samonque*	*Samenque*
13.913	*ignorans*	*ignorat*
13.921	*deditus*	*debitus*

locus	Tarrant	Hardie
13.948	*sub aequora*	*sub aequore*
13.963	*pennigero*	*pinnigero*
14.131	*caput. neu*	*caput, neu*
14.145	*acta uides*;	*acta; tamen*
14.152–3	[deleted]	[in the text]
14.158	*per*	*post*
14.196	*artus,*	*artus.*
14.201	[in the text]	[deleted]
14.202	*ipsa doloris*	*illa malorum*
14.212	*uomentem,*	*uomentem.*
14.262	*sollemni*	*sublimi*
14.281	*toto*	*prono*
14.305	*illum*	*illis*
14.323	*ueram*	*uerum*
14.339	*longa*	*prona*
14.394	*uestemque … aurum*	*uestisque … oram*
14.427	*iam longa*	*in gelida*
14.428	*ipsos … dolores*	*ipso … dolore*
14.431	*tenues*	*teneras*
14.442	*marmorea*	*marmoreo*
14.467	*Ilion*	*Ilios*
14.651	[deleted]	[in the text]
14.750	*mota tamen 'uideamus*	*mota 'tamen uideamus*
14.817	*urbem*	*orbem*
15.104	† *deorum* †	*leonum*
15.293	*Achaidas*	*Achaeidas*
15.355	*ignis*	*ignes*
15.361	*siue*	*si qua*
15.396	*ilicis … tremulaeue*	*ilicet … tremulaeque*
15.426–30	[deleted]	[in the text]
15.501	*frustra patrium … cubile,*	*frustra, patrium … cubile*
15.502	*finxit uoluisse*	*uoluisse infelix*

locus	Tarrant	Hardie
15.515	*contenta*	*intenta*
15.694	*pressa estque dei grauitate carina.*	*pressaque dei grauitate carina*[1]
15.715	*columbis*	*colubris*
15.776	*en*	*in me*
15.829	*barbariam gentesque*	*barbariae gentes*

[1] And starting a new paragraph at 697, rather than 695.

Abbreviations

Bömer	F. Bömer, *P. Ovidius Naso, Metamorphosen*, 15 vols., Heidelberg 1969–86.
CIL	*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, Berlin, 1863–.
Davies–Kathirithamby	M. Davies and J. Kathirithamby, *Greek Insects*, London, 1986.
D–K	H. Diels and W. Kranz (eds.), *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 17th ed., Berlin, 1974.
EAA	*Enciclopedia dell'arte antica, classica e orientale*, 7 vols., Rome, 1958–66.
FGrH	F. Jacoby (ed.), *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*, Berlin and Leiden, 1923–58.
GL	H. Keil (ed.), *Grammatici Latini*, 8 vols., Leipzig, 1867–70.
Haupt–Ehwald–von Albrecht	M. Haupt and R. Ehwald (eds.), *P. Ovidius Naso, Metamorphosen*, rev. M. von Albrecht, 2 vols., Zürich, 1966.
Hubaux–Leroy	J. Hubaux and M. Leroy, *Le Mythe du phénix dans les literatures grecque et latine*, Paris, 1939.
ILLRP	A. Degrassi (ed.), *Inscriptiones Latinae liberae rei publicae*, 2 vols., Göttingen, 1957–63 (vol. 1, 2nd ed. 1965).
ILS	H. Dessau (ed.), *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*, 3 vols., 2nd ed., Berlin, 1954–5.
LIMC	*Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*, Zürich and Munich, 1981–.

LLT-A	*Library of Latin Texts – Series A*
LSJ	H. Liddell, R. Scott and H. Jones (ed.), *A Greek–English Lexicon*, 9th ed., Oxford, 1940.
M–W	R. Merkelbach and M. L. West (eds.), *Fragmenta Hesiodea*, Oxford, 1967.
NLS	E. C. Woodcock, *A New Latin Syntax*, London, 1959.
PMG	*Poetae Melici Graeci*, ed. D. L. Page, Oxford, 1962.
RE	G. Wissowa, W. Kroll, K. Mittelhaus and K. Ziegler (eds.), *Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, Stuttgart, 1893–.
RVV	*Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten.*
SH	H. Lloyd-Jones and P. Parsons (eds.), *Supplementum Hellenisticum*, Berlin and New York, 1983.
TGF	*Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*: I, ed. B. Snell, Göttingen, 1971; II, ed. R. Kannicht and B. Snell, Göttingen, 1981; III (Aeschylus) ed. S. Radt, Göttingen, 1985; IV (Sophocles), ed. S. Radt, Göttingen 1977; V (Euripides, I–II), ed. R. Kannicht, Göttingen, 2004.
TLL	*Thesaurus linguae Latinae*, Leipzig, 1900–.