

CHILD'S PLAY: OVID AND HIS CRITICS*

By LLEWELYN MORGAN

It is a familiar observation that Epic puts men first — from ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε to *arma uirumque*, and on to 'Man's first disobedience'. Genres are gendered, and the epic genre is emphatically masculine, foregrounding males as protagonists and male preoccupations as its proper concerns, and in general validating and glorifying masculine spheres of activity and masculine values and priorities.¹ Self-conscious commentary on this defining feature of epic is readily found within the genre — when Numanus Remulus advises the effeminate Trojans, 'sinite arma uiris et cedite ferro' (*Aen.* 9.620), the echo of *arma uirumque* has the effect of implicating the whole epic in his male chauvinism; only real men have a right to feature in the *Aeneid*, Remulus seems to suggest² — but is most familiar from confrontation between epic and lower genres, love elegy in particular. Hercules at Propertius 4.9.49–50, unmanned by his presence in the effeminate world of elegy to the extent of admitting with something like pride to a spell of cross-dressing,³ is a memorable embodiment of the gender dilemma, entailed by the generic dilemma between epic and elegy, which is so central to the programme of Propertius 4. Remulus' remarks come to haunt him when he falls victim to Ascanius' first manly exploit, but 'sinite arma uiris', like 'arma uirumque cano', is merely a restatement of influential formulations of epic thematics such as κλέα ἀνδρῶν (*Il.* 9.189; *Od.* 8.73) and 'maxima facta patrum' (Enn., *Epigr.* 45.2 Courtney), themselves closely related to the thoroughgoing patriarchy of the societies which spawned the genre, and in which epic poetry was always accorded a privileged ideological role.

The essential point of comparison between epic and the male principle lies in the power and authority which (according to stereotype, at least) preoccupy both. Epic is instinctively drawn to a variety of models of the assertive and authoritative male: the warrior, *dux*, chief god, statesman, helmsman. But Alison Keith has emphasized the crucial pedagogical role played by epic poetry in Roman life, its use for training boys to *uirtus* by example, and the mentor imparting knowledge and discipline to a receptive pupil, not coincidentally, is another figure of male authority to which epic regularly turns, not least in didactic manifestations like the *De Rerum Natura*. The father, finally, a model of masculine authority of particular prominence in Augustan discourse and poetry, has been acutely analysed by Don Fowler, for whom he constitutes the cultural embodiment *par excellence* of authority, whose 'power lies in its arbitrary nature: we cannot get behind the father's authority to question it, we must simply accept that it is so'.⁴ Philip Hardie is in related territory when he investigates the peculiarly epic preoccupation with dynastic succession from father to son, a pattern as relevant to the poet's view of himself in the epic tradition as to the hero: 'Scenes of instruction and transmission figure prominently in the *Aeneid*, and in many cases a metapoetical symbolism lies close to the surface.'⁵ Hardie's primary example here is Anchises' instruction of Aeneas in the Underworld, which reflects Homer's instruction of Ennius at the beginning of the *Annales* and thus also enacts Virgil's obedience to the epic

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¹ For a stimulating reconsideration of the masculinity of epic, best understood as a creative tension between the stereotypical definitions of epic thematics provided by Roman poets in programmatic passages, on the one hand, and their actual poetic practice, on the other, which typically honours those definitions in the breach, see S. J. Hinds, 'Essential epic: genre and gender from Macer to Statius', in M. Depew and D. Obbink, *Matrices of Genre: Authors, Canons, and Society* (2000), 221–44.

² P. R. Hardie, *Virgil, Aeneid Book IX* (1994), ad loc.: 'V.'s readers will take *sinite arma uiris* in the further sense of a command to leave the world of martial epic.'

³ J. B. Debrohun, 'Redressing elegy's *puella*: Propertius IV and the rhetoric of fashion', *JRS* 84 (1994), 41–63, at 48.

⁴ D. P. Fowler, 'God the father (himself) in Vergil', *PVS* 22 (1996), 35–52, at 41; reprinted in D. P. Fowler, *Roman Constructions: Readings in Postmodern Latin* (2000), 218–34, at 225.

⁵ P. R. Hardie, *The Epic Successors of Virgil: A Study in the Dynamics of a Tradition* (1993), 102.

tradition embodied in *pater Ennius*. Here it is the genre itself which is accredited with characteristics of masculinity and authority, and, as Hardie's terms imply, the relationship between poets in a tradition can readily be figured as either instruction or bequeathal (or both), corresponding to these two regularly conflated models of male authority, the teacher and the father. In a case like this, furthermore, the patriarchal structures of epic and of the wider culture intermingle tellingly. The information vouchsafed to Aeneas by Anchises which encourages and facilitates the pursuit of his heroic mission corresponds simultaneously to the epic tradition and to the repository of authoritative *exempla* which was Roman history. The father and the teacher (generally combined in one person) will be prominent figures in the remainder of this paper. But, as Fowler emphasizes, and as will also become relevant later, the most overtly masculine characteristic which they share with the epic is perhaps a simple tone of voice, infinitely authoritative, brooking no dissent, discouraging any response and promising unmediated access to the truth, embodying (in Fowler's Derridean terms) "'presence", real communication'.⁶ The wider culture of Rome had found its archetypal father-teacher in Cato the Elder and his uncompromising precepts *Ad filium*.⁷ These so-called *carmina*, in Alessandro Schiesaro's words, 'have the aspect and force of legal statements or sacramental formulas. Their absolute authority is unquestionable: they appear effectively impervious to questioning, let alone confutation': 'emas non quod opus est, sed quod necesse est; quod non opus est asse carum est', 'Buy not what you need but what is essential; that which you do not need is dear at a farthing' (Sen., *Ep.* 94.27).

To follow Keith's formulation, 'Roman epic, as a genre, can be said to construct a comprehensive model of "Roman Order" at home and abroad, including relations between the sexes'. 'Roman order' and male authority, in other words, are one and the same thing, and find a profound resonance in the epic genre. Keith's remark is made in the context of a discussion of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the main concern of this paper, a poem in which order of all kinds is constantly under assault, and in which more specifically, as Keith shows, the destabilization of the gender hierarchies of conventional epic is central to Ovid's amused interrogation of the epic genre as a whole. Keith's account of the Arcadian *Überhero* Ancaeus during the Calydonian boar hunt of *Metamorphoses* 8 (391–402) can stand as a useful example of Ovid's approach, and at the same time broach the core topic of this paper. As Keith argues, Ancaeus is characterized 'as an exponent of full-blown epic masculinity' whose rapid and ignominious dispatch by the boar is emblematic of the anti-heroic values of the poem.⁸ Following Horsfall, Keith goes on to consider the possibility that the precise circumstances of Ancaeus' death, gored in the groin (8.400), have a special appropriateness: 'Ancaeus is perhaps further unmanned in the mode of his death.'⁹ The latter point can in fact be made more confidently. Over and again the self-aggrandizing speech of Ancaeus which precedes his attack on the boar and death lays itself open to *double entendre* which equates the *virtus* which is the defining feature of the epic hero, in a very literal way, with possession of male genitalia. At 392–3,

'discite, femineis quid tela uirilia praestent,
o iuuenes, operique meo concedite!'

⁶ Fowler, *op. cit.* (n. 4), 41/224. Cf. A. J. Laird, *Powers of Expression, Expressions of Power: Speech Presentation and Latin Literature* (1999), 192–205.

⁷ cf. A. Schiesaro, 'Rhetoric, politics and didaxis in Lucretius', forthcoming. Schiesaro finds in the divergent models of instruction visible in the *DRN* a reflection of developments in contemporary educational practice, as the 'Catonian' paradigm of absolutely authoritative communication from father to son, which corresponds closely to Epicurus' unilateral transmission of *patria praecepta* (3.9–10) to the infinitely receptive Lucretius, began to encounter competition from a less starkly prescriptive paedagogical model where the teaching might be assessed on its

own merits by a pupil possessed of a certain degree of autonomy, the latter being a better account of the relationship between Lucretius and his pupils, Memmius and the reader. Epic in general, needless to say, clung to the older paradigm.

⁸ A. Keith, 'Versions of epic masculinity in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*', in P. R. Hardie, A. Barchiesi and S. J. Hinds (eds), *Ovidian Transformations: Essays on Ovid's Metamorphoses and its Reception*, PCPhS Supp. 23 (1999), 214–39, at 227–8.

⁹ Keith, *op. cit.* (n. 8), 228; N. Horsfall, 'Epic and burlesque in Ovid, *Met.* VIII.260 ff.,' *CJ* 74 (1979), 319–32, at 330.

'Learn how far men's weapons surpass women's,
young men, and make space for me to act!'

tela, *uirilia*, and *opus* are all terms regularly used of the penis,¹⁰ and 'there was a marked tendency for adjectives of the base *femin-* to be applied (in various combinations) to the female parts'.¹¹ Alternative translations to mine may well suggest themselves. Duncan Kennedy has shown in connection with *Amores* 1.1 how ready Ovidian language is to bear this kind of interpretation, *opus* being one of the words at issue.¹² There is an interesting parallel also between the opening description of Ancaeus on the previous line, *bipennifer Arcas*, and Petronius' obscene sotadean allegory at *Sat.* 132, where *bipennem* stands (partly by way of a pun, presumably) for Encolpius' *membrum uirile*.¹³ In the *Metamorphoses*, then, the epic ethos is epitomized by masculinity, but masculinity defined in the crudest manner imaginable. In more senses than one, we might say, Ovid's Ancaeus experiences a devastating blow to his manhood.

A puerile conceit, perhaps. But as we have already noted, it is in epic's tone of voice as much as its content that its masculinity consists. The Ancaeus episode exemplifies Ovid's subversion of heroic masculinity and the epic genre which enshrined that masculinity; but it is also typical of the tone which Ovid adopts in this unorthodox epic. Epic's proper mode of speech was masculine: grave, serious, self-important. But the mode Ovid deploys is typically its polar opposite: flippant, playful, and given to puerile sexual humour. A similar example is provided by the allusion at *Met.* 3.182 to the *Aeneid*. At this moment in the *Metamorphoses* Actaeon has unwittingly entered the grotto where Diana is bathing. Her attendant nymphs cluster around the goddess to shield her from human eyes — but she is too tall, and Actaeon sees her all the same (177–82):

qui simul intrauit rorantia fontibus antra,
sicut erant, uiso nudae sua pectora nymphae
percussere uiro subitisque ululatus omne
impleuere nemus circumfusaeque Dianam
corporibus texere suis; tamen altior illis
ipsa dea est colloque tenus supereminet omnes.

As soon as he entered the spring-drenched cave, the naked nymphs, just as they were, beat their breasts at the sight of a man and filled the grove with sudden yells, and pouring round Diana concealed her with their own bodies; but the goddess is taller than them and overtops them by head and shoulders.

The detail of Diana's height is of impeccable epic pedigree, reaching back to details of the Artemis simile at *Od.* 6.107–8,

πασάων δ' ὑπὲρ ἢ γε κάρη ἔχει ἠδὲ μέτωπα,
ῥεῖά τ' ἀριγνώτη πέλεται, καλαὶ δέ τε πάσαι:

Artemis holds her head and brow above them all, and is easily recognizable, though all are beautiful.

¹⁰ J. N. Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary* (1990), 14–22 (*telum*), 57 (*opus*), and 69–70 (*uirilis*, *uirilia*).

¹¹ Adams, *op. cit.* (n. 10), 93 n. 3.

¹² D. F. Kennedy, *The Arts of Love: Five Studies in the Discourse of Roman Love Elegy* (1993), 59–60.

¹³ M. Bettini, 'A proposito dei versi sotadei, greci e romani: con alcuni capitoli di "analisi metrica lineare"', *MD* 9 (1982), 59–105, at 85–6. In such

sexual *double entendre*, as well as in its persistent parody of epic, the *Metamorphoses* owes a lot to the sotadean tradition which is Bettini's subject. Compare Demetrius, *Eloc.* 189 on the sotadean line itself: μεταμορφωμένω ἔοικεν ὁ στίχος, ὥσπερ οἱ μυθεύόμενοι ἐξ ἀρρένων μεταβάλλειν εἰς θηλείας, 'the line is as if it has changed its shape, like those characters in stories who change from male to female'.

the second line of which we find singled out for praise by both Demetrius (*Eloc.* 129) and, subsequently, Valerius Probus (*apud* Gellius, *NA* 9.9.16–17).¹⁴ Ovid's immediate allusion is to Virgil's imitation of the Homeric simile at *Aen.* 1.498–502: 'supereminet omnes' at 182 comes directly from *Aen.* 1.501. The *Aeneid* inevitably constituted for Ovid the epic mastertext against which the *Metamorphoses* must define itself.¹⁵ This is a blow against the *Aeneid*, and indeed against the whole epic tradition. The humour is as low and physical as it was with Ancaeus,¹⁶ and both instances share an ethos of mischievous impudence, in the face of figures conventionally deserving of respect: a great man, a goddess, Virgil, Homer. But in neither case should the flippancy be dismissed as such. Rather, it precisely matches the poem's oppositional relationship with epic, the genre which Aristotle repeatedly defined as a poetry of the *serious*.¹⁷ To put it another way, and adopting a metaphor which has been hovering about the discussion for a while now, in the *Metamorphoses* the manly gravity of epic is punctured by schoolboy humour.

II

But if so, it would appear that the point of Ovid's frivolity was spectacularly missed by the many critics of his version of epic. No Latin poem, not even the *Aeneid*, attracted as much adverse comment as the *Metamorphoses*. Quintilian's terse assessment is at *Inst. Or.* 10.1.89, 'lasciuis quidem in herois quoque Ouidius', the *quoque* implying that frivolity is less reprehensible in lower genres: in his elegy Ovid is 'more playful' (*lasciuior*) than the (already playful) Tibullus and Propertius (10.1.93). A rather longer critique is delivered by Seneca at *Naturales Quaestiones* 3.27. At issue is the 'cataclysmic' flood which according to the philosopher's account recurrently ends and renews the world. But at 27.13–15 Seneca allows himself to be sidetracked into an evaluation of Ovid's account of universal flood in *Metamorphoses* 1:

Ergo insularum modo eminent
 montes et sparsas Cycladas audent,
 ut ait ille poetarum ingeniosissimus egregie. sicut illud pro magnitudine rei dixit,
 omnia pontus erat, deerant quoque litora ponto,
 ni tantum impetum ingenii et materiae ad pueriles ineptias reduxisset:
 nat lupus inter oues, fuluos uehit unda leones.
 non est res satis sobria lasciuire deuorato orbe terrarum. dixit ingentia et tantae confusionis
 imaginem cepit cum dixit:
 exspatiata ruunt per apertos flumina campos
 < cumque satis arbusta simul pecudesque uirosque
 tectaue cumque suis rapiunt pentralia sacris.
 siqua domus mansit potuitque resistere tanto
 indeiecta malo, culmen tamen altior huius
 unda tegit, > pressaeque labant sub gurgite turres.
 magnifice haec, si non curauerit quid oues et lupi faciant. natari autem in diluuiio et in illa
 rapina potest? aut non eodem impetu pecus omne quo raptum erat mersum est? concepisti

¹⁴ Demetrius identifies it as an example of *σεμνὰ ἄριστες καὶ μεγάλα*, 'charm of a dignified and impressive kind'. Valerius Probus criticizes Virgil for 'barely conveying' ('exigue secutus sit') 'the flower' of Homer's whole simile, than which 'no greater nor more comprehensive praise of beauty could be expressed' ('nulla maior cumulatorque pulcritudinis laus dici potuerit').

¹⁵ We should be clear, however, that whilst Ovid may construct the *Aeneid* as the exemplar of epic norms, it is often the case that Ovid works with tensions inherent in the epic mastertext. Here in *Aeneid* 1 the Diana simile is already generically hazardous. Philip Hardie *per litteras* suspects the influence of Cornelius Gallus on this first glimpse of a

Diana-like beauty: cf. P. R. Hardie, *Ovid's Poetics of Illusion* (2002), 44. See Hinds, *op. cit.* (n. 1), 223–4 for Roman poets' increasing tendency 'to appeal to unmixed, essentialized and unchanging conceptions of the genre in their poetological policy statements' the more they 'mix, blur and hybridize generic categories in their poetic practice'.

¹⁶ cf. D. C. Feeney, *The Gods in Epic: Poets and Critics of the Classical Tradition* (1991), 72–3 on the dangers for epic of too insistent a concentration on 'the physicality of the gods'.

¹⁷ Arist., *Poet.* 1448a26–7, 1448b34–5 (where the content of epic, τὰ σπουδαία, stands in contrast to τὸ τῆς κωμῳδίας σχῆμα), 1449b9–10.

imaginem quantam debebas, obrutis omnibus terris caelo ipso in terram ruente. perfer. scies quid deceat, si cogitaueris orbem terrarum natare.

So there rise up, like islands,

mountains, and they add to the scattered Cyclades, [*Met.* 2.264]

as that most inventive¹⁸ of poets excellently puts it. Just as in the following line he matched the grandeur of the subject:

Everything was sea, and the sea had no shores, [1.292]

if only he had not brought down such strength of inspiration and subject to childish silliness:

The wolf swims amongst the sheep, the water carries tawny lions (1.304).

It is not a sufficiently serious attitude to frolic when the whole world has been swallowed up.

His poetry was grand, and captured the impression of such great chaos when he said:

Overflowing, the rivers rush over the open plains

<and seize along with crops trees as well and livestock and men
and houses and shrines, sacred images and all.

If any house remained and could withstand so great a disaster

undemolished, its roof nevertheless is covered by a higher

wave,¹⁹ and towers totter beneath the weight of the flood. [1.285–90]

This is magnificently put, if only he had not been concerned with what the sheep and the wolves were doing. Is swimming possible in the deluge, all that destruction? Were not all the beasts carried off and drowned all at once? You conceived a picture of appropriate grandeur, the whole world overwhelmed and the sky itself falling onto the earth. Keep it up! You will know what is appropriate if you bear in mind that it is the whole world which is swimming.

Essentially Seneca is accusing Ovid of a violation of literary decorum (*quid deceat*), and this has been the core criticism of the *Metamorphoses* down the ages, perhaps most memorably formulated by John Dryden as Ovid's tendency to be 'frequently witty out of season'.²⁰ He has conceived a picture of epic grandeur, but consistently refuses to match it with the appropriate grandeur of style. We can analyse the terms of Seneca's descriptions of picture and style a little further. The picture is credited with qualities clearly characteristic of epic, size (*pro magnitudine rei, ingentia, tantae, quantam*), and universality (*deurato orbe terrarum, omnibus terris, orbem terrarum*), and the lines of

¹⁸ On this quality of *ingenium*, consistently marked as a characteristic of Ovid by the ancients, see E. J. Kenney in E. J. Kenney and W. Clausen (eds), *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature, Vol. 2: Latin Literature* (1982), 440: 'a quality which continually pervades and informs the *Metamorphoses*: what the Romans called *ingenium* and the English Augustans wit.' Cf. Sen., *Contr.* 2.2.9, 12; Quint., *Inst.* 10.1.89, 98.

¹⁹ I am assuming that what survives in our texts of the *Naturales Quaestiones* is not the full quotation as intended by Seneca but the opening and closing clauses of a longer quotation, from between which an *usque ad (vel sim.)* has fallen out in the course of the tradition. This would remove the clumsiness of the unexplained juxtaposition of 285 and 290 in the MSS (the second of which is not even a complete hexameter), and allow some grounds for Seneca's assertion that Ovid 'tantae confusionis imaginem cepit' in the quotation. It is otherwise a striking coincidence that the two lines in the MSS bracket so clearly defined a section of Ovid's account. The text has apparently suffered other corruption: Seneca's text has *labant* at 290, Ovid's *latent*.

²⁰ The quotation comes from his *Preface* to Jacob Tonson's collection of translations of the *Heroides*, *Ovid's Epistles* (1680): E. N. Hooker and H. T. Swedenberg, *The Works of Dryden, Vol. 1: Poems 1649–1680* (1961), 112. The failure to do what is fitting is an implication also of Seneca's term *ineptiae*, which are literally instances of behaviour betraying no sense of what is appropriate. M. Beck, 'Ineptia loci (Sen. Contr. I, 2, 22): ein Ovidianum?', *Hermes* 129 (2001), 95–105, has argued for a new interpretation

and reading of the supposed quotation of Ovid at Sen., *Contr.* 1.2.22, where (according to the received text) Scaurus greets a rhetorical solecism by Murredus with 'Ovidianum illud: "inepta loci"'. The expression *inepta loci* is only found at *Priap.* 3.8, in a text which is unlikely to be by Ovid. Beck's emendation, 'Ovidianum illud inepti loci', which puts the whole expression in Scaurus' mouth, and means 'That Ovid-like remark of yours is rhetorically inappropriate (belongs to an inappropriate rhetorical locus)' (104), is persuasive. It could be added that it is not only the obscenity of Murredus' remark that marks it as Ovidian (104 n. 45) but also the very fact that it is not the appropriate thing to say, something for which Ovid was notorious. Cf. Seneca the Elder's comments at *Contr.* 2.2.9 on Ovid's tendency as a declaimer to 'run through the *topoi* in no fixed order' ('sine certo ordine per locos discurrebat') and at 2.2.12 to the effect that Ovid (again when declaiming) found all *argumentatio* tiresome ('molesta illi erat omnis argumentatio'), *argumentatio* denoting a structured exposition of the case. Ordered structure, clearly, was always anathema to Ovid, but as we shall investigate later, disorder in the *Metamorphoses* is always accompanied by its opposing principle. Cf. J. B. Solodow, *The World of Ovid's Metamorphoses* (1988), 34:

The poem invites us to look for structures within it and makes a number of proposals, and then it systematically defeats them all . . . It clearly strives for order, and in many different ways, but it never consistently achieves it: the poem might claim as a motto its own phrase, *discors concordia* (1.433, 'an inharmonious harmony'). Instead it conveys a sense of dis-order, of orderings undone.

Ovid which Seneca cites with approval match the picture with 'mountains, scattered Cyclades', a universal flood (*omnia pontus erat*), 'overflowing rivers' rushing 'over the open plains', (if we can count in 286–9) total mayhem (*cumque . . . que . . . que . . . que . . . cumque . . . siqua . . .*), huge disaster (*tanto . . . malo*), waves taller than houses, in short grandeur and expansiveness of expression equivalent to that of the subject ('tantum impetum ingenii et materiae, magnifice'): in *impetum ingenii et materiae* Seneca implies an appropriately hyperbolic correlation between the forces of nature driving the flood and the poetic afflatus proper to epic composition. Where Ovid falls short of his grand conception, on the other hand, he is displaying a lack of sense and seriousness (*non satis sobria*) and persistence (*perfer*).

The core criticism is inappropriateness, then. But it is not hard to see the dominant metaphor in which the criticism is couched, and it is one which runs like a thread through assessments of Ovidian epic of all ages. Ovid is accused of childishness. Seneca's *pueriles ineptiae* and *lasciuire* (an obviously related usage) match Quintilian's *lasciuus in herois quoque*, and Quintilian uses identical terms in his discussion of Ovidian transitions at *Inst. Or.* 4.1.77: Ovid himself is said to *lasciuire in Metamorphosesin* when he manages a transition by some *sententia* and 'seeks applause for this subterfuge' ('huius uelut praestigiae plausum petat'); a similar practice amongst young orators is dismissed by Quintilian as 'frigida et puerilis adfectatio'.²¹ In more recent times Adrien Baillet was able to devote a paragraph of his compilation of critical assessments of great writers, *Jugemens des Savans* (1685–6), to the common observation that the *Metamorphoses* must have been 'un essai de jeunesse', 'l'ouvrage . . . d'un esprit qui n'était point encore parvenu à sa maturité'.²² At the dawn of literary criticism in the English language John Dryden restated the stricture in particularly memorable terms in the Preface to his *Fables Ancient and Modern* of 1700. Dryden is comparing Ovid (unfavourably) with Chaucer, whom he considered a soulmate (Dryden would be sharing Chaucer's grave in Westminster Abbey before the year was out) and Ovid's closest counterpart in English letters,²³ with particular reference to *The Knight's Tale*, which Dryden regards as an epic:²⁴

The thoughts remain to be considered: and they are to be measured only by their propriety; that is, as they flow more or less naturally from the persons described, on such and such occasions. The vulgar judges, which are nine parts in ten of all nations, who call conceits and jingles wit, who see Ovid full of them, and Chaucer altogether without them, will think me little less than mad for preferring the Englishman to the Roman. Yet, with their leave, I must presume to say, that the things they admire are only glittering trifles, and so far from being witty, that in a serious poem they are nauseous, because they are unnatural. Would any man who is ready to die for love, describe his passion like Narcissus? Would he think of *inopem me copia fecit* [*Met.* 3.466], and a dozen more of such expression, poured on the neck of one another, and signifying all the same thing? If this were wit, was this a time to be witty, when the poor wretch was in the agony of death? This is just John Littlewit in [Ben Jonson's] *Bartholomew Fair*, who had a conceit (as he tells you) left him in his misery: a miserable conceit. On these occasions the poet should endeavour to raise pity; but, instead of this, Ovid is tickling you to laugh. Virgil never made use of such machines when he was moving you to commiserate the death of Dido: he would not destroy what he was building. Chaucer makes Arcite violent in his love, and unjust in the pursuit of it; yet, when he came to die, he made him think more reasonably: he repents not of his love, for that had altered his character; but acknowledges the injustice of his proceedings, and resigns Emilia to Palamon. What would Ovid have done on this occasion? He would certainly have made Arcite witty on his death-bed. He had complain'd he was farther off from possession, by being so near

²¹ This last passage is considered in greater depth in Section VI below.

²² *Jugemens des savans sur les principaux ouvrages des auteurs, revus, corrigés, et augmentés par Mr. de la Monnoye* (1722), Vol. 4, 136–7. Cf. D. Hopkins, 'Dryden and Ovid's "Wit out of Season"', in C. Martindale (ed.), *Ovid Renewed: Ovidian Influences on Literature and Art from the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century* (1988), 167–90, at 170.

²³ J. Kinsley, *The Poems of John Dryden* (1958),

IV.1450: 'The Manners of the Poets were not unlike. Both of them were well-bred, well-natured, amorous and libertine, at least in their writings, it may be also in their lives.'

²⁴ Kinsley, op. cit. (n. 23), IV.1460: 'I prefer, in our countryman, far above all his other stories, the noble poem of Palamon and Arcite, which is of the epic kind, and perhaps not much inferior to the *Ilias*, or the *Aeneis*.'

[cf. *Met.* 10.339–40], and a thousand such boyisms, which Chaucer rejected as below the dignity of the subject.²⁵

These ‘thousand such boyisms’ of Dryden, as Hopkins remarks, ‘are the direct descendants of the younger Seneca’s *pueriles ineptiae*’. The metaphor is rather brilliantly developed, and extended to reflect the gender polarity considered earlier, some lines later when Dryden cites as a parallel for Ovid’s ‘want of judgment’ his own older contemporary Abraham Cowley:

One of our late great poets is sunk in his reputation, because he could never forgive any conceit which came in his way; but swept like a drag-net, great and small. There was plenty enough, but the dishes were ill-sorted; whole pyramids of sweetmeats, for boys and women; but little of solid meat, for men.²⁶

In his composition of the *Metamorphoses*, then, Ovid is consistently seen by his critics as pandering to puerile instincts, his own and his readers’. Elliott’s summary of the critical consensus, ‘schoolboy pyrotechnics’, with its suggestion of a child playing with fireworks, captures nicely the notion of dangerous irresponsibility.²⁷ Clearly also the metaphor is well matched to the most persistent criticism of Ovid, that he lacked a sense of what was fitting: it is characteristic of children (according to stereotype and, as it happens, in actual fact) not to possess an appreciation of the proper value of things. But perhaps this construction of the poet as *puer* is most dramatically communicated in the peculiar modulation of tone at the end of Seneca’s remarks in the *Naturales Quaestiones*. From discussion of Ovid in the third person Seneca moves in the last three sentences to a direct harangue in the second person: ‘Keep it up!’ Seneca winds up berating Ovid precisely as he would a wayward child.

Now it needs to be said that there is something a little odd about this chorus of disapproval. There is certainly more going on in the passage of *Naturales Quaestiones* than first meets the eye. Not only does Seneca artfully introduce a line (the first quoted) from the story of Phaethon, which in its original context describes quite the opposite of a flood, but something closely related to flood in Stoic thinking, the destruction of the world by fire; but in a broader sense, too, this is an extremely perceptive analysis of an Ovidian trope, leaving Seneca’s stubborn refusal to see the point of it more than a little unconvincing. Seneca the artist, at any rate, as opposed to Seneca the critic, had a lot of time for the *Metamorphoses*.²⁸ The same is notoriously true for Dryden, who, despite his condemnation of Ovid’s ‘boyisms’, in practice (that is, in his translations of the *Met.*) ‘renders them,’ as Hopkins puts it, ‘with verve, skill and uninhibited relish’.²⁹ An excellent example is Dryden’s brilliantly subversive version of *Met.* 1.175–6, ‘hic locus est, quem, si uerbis audacia detur,/ haud timeam magni dixisse Palatia caeli’, itself an interesting instance of praise so extreme as to risk absurdity.³⁰ Dryden’s most important predecessor in the translation of the *Metamorphoses* was George Sandys, whose 1626 version of the couplet offered a safely loyalist update, replacing the Palatine with the Palace of Whitehall:

This glorious Roofe I would not doubt to call,
Had I but boldnesse lent mee, Heaven’s *White-Hall*.

²⁵ Kinsley, *op. cit.* (n. 23), IV.1451; cf. Hopkins, *op. cit.* (n. 22), 169.

²⁶ Kinsley, *op. cit.* (n. 23), IV.1452.

²⁷ A. G. Elliott, ‘Ovid and the critics: Seneca, Quintilian and “seriousness”’, *Helios* 12 (1985), 9–20, at 10–11.

²⁸ cf. M. Coffey and R. Mayer, *Seneca, Phaedra* (1990), 13–14.

²⁹ Hopkins, *op. cit.* (n. 22), 170. In his version of the flood, for example, from *Examen Poeticum* (1693), Dryden out-Ovids Ovid. Seneca would have been extremely disappointed by Dryden’s embellishments

of 285–90, for example, where the superbly ironic pun on ‘household’ at Dryden 397 and the oxymoronic ‘watery wall’ threatening real masonry at 399 find no precedent in Ovid, but are in instinctive sympathy with the spirit of the Latin: ‘sapped by floods,/ Their houses fell upon their household gods,/ The solid piles, too strongly built to fall,/ High o’er their heads beheld a watery wall.’

³⁰ D. E. Hill, *Ovid, Metamorphoses I–IV* (1985), ad loc.: ‘Ovid’s deliberately crude and explicit comparison . . . pokes fun both at divine and human pretensions.’

In *his* translation of 1693 Dryden offered an exquisite revivification of the *audacia* motif from the pen of a Catholic and Jacobite in the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution:

This place, as far as Earth with Heav'n may vie,
I dare to call the *Louvre* of the Skie.

Even Joseph Addison, who in his translations from the *Metamorphoses* made efforts 'to play down or expunge Ovid's "Boyisms"',³¹ nevertheless evidently considered that the poetry deserved the effort of translating it; and also seems on at least one occasion to make a game of criticizing Ovid. For example, one of the notes to his translation of the Phaethon story playfully(?) restages Seneca's criticisms of the flood, but starting from the line of Book 2 which Seneca quoted first:³²

The image of the Cyclades is a very pretty one;
—Quos altum texerat aequor
Existunt montes, et sparsas Cycladas augent.
but to tell us that the Swans grew warm in Cäyster,
—Medio volucres caluere Cäystro.
and that the Dolphins durst not leap,
—Nec se super aequora curvi
Tollere consuetas audent Delphines in auras.
is intolerably trivial on so great a subject as the burning of the world.

Engagement with Ovid thus tends to possess a rather clandestine quality, tidily encapsulated in Norman Vance's description of Ovid's status in the nineteenth century as 'a rather raffish *éminence grise*, a valuable imaginative asset with which no one was entirely at ease'.³³ Put another way, the Ovidian tradition has a guilty conscience. Uninhibited emulation of Ovid tends always to be accompanied by criticism, and the vehemence of the criticism is in direct proportion to the exuberance of the imitation. The remainder of this paper will argue that the guilt began with Ovid himself, who anticipated and enacted in his own text the precise strictures — down to the choice of metaphor — later voiced by the Senecas, Quintilian, and Dryden.

III

Enactment in the plot of the poem's underlying poetics is regarded as a particularly characteristic feature of the *Metamorphoses*, and we have already seen one such instance in the demise of Ancaeus: the form of his death is emblematic of Ovid's emasculation of an epic genre for which masculinity constituted a fundamental defining characteristic. In that instance Ovid exploited one of the polarities by which the man, ἀνὴρ or *uir* of epic is situated and defined, the gendered polarity of masculine and feminine. But the *uir* of *arma uirumque* partakes of other defining polarities, and among the most important is one to which we have found our attention drawn in the criticism of Ovid we have been discussing, and which is prominent also in Apollo's congratulation of Ascanius after the latter's slaying of Numanus Remulus (a passage very concerned with the definition of the epic hero, as we have seen). Remulus taunts the Trojans with charges of effeminacy, but the polarity at issue in Apollo's words is somewhat different (*Aen.* 9.641–2):

macte noua uirtute, puer, sic itur ad astra,
dis genite et geniture deos.

³¹ Hopkins, *op. cit.* (n. 22), 170 and n. 12. For example Addison polishes away Ovid's non-ending to *Met.* 2 with a bizarre climax which nevertheless fails to provide the climax the reader is looking for: on the Ovidian passage see D. P. Fowler, *op. cit.* (n. 4), 96–7/259; for Addison's embellishment, A. C. Guthkelch,

The Miscellaneous Works of Joseph Addison, Vol. 1: Poems and Plays (1914), 98.

³² Guthkelch, *op. cit.* (n. 31), 138.

³³ N. Vance, 'Ovid and the nineteenth century', in Martindale, *op. cit.* (n. 22), 215–31, at 215.

Blessings on your new-found manhood, child. This is the way to the stars, descendant and ancestor of gods.

Here the heroic is defined by contrast not with effeminacy but puerility, and Ascanius' position on the very cusp of the heroic life is exquisitely captured in the juxtaposition *uirtute, puer*. (The unproblematic upward movement of *sic itur ad astra* will also stand in striking contrast to the precipitate descent from the heights which tends to be the fate of Ovid's *pueri* when they aspire to adulthood.)³⁴ Childishness, as we have seen, was identified from early on as a characteristic of Ovid's engagement with epic. I shall suggest that this governing metaphor of Ovidian criticism was fully anticipated by the poet himself, who is as conscious of and explicit about the childishness of his epic as he is of its compromised masculinity. Ovid's puerile poetics are encoded in the plot of *Metamorphoses* as clearly as his epic's emasculation in Ancaeus. Ovid's epic is irresponsibly childish, his critics carp; Ovid's anticipation of such criticism is best seen in the irresponsible minors who throng his text.

If adulthood is a metaphor readily available to characterize epic, and childishness, correspondingly, work in the lower genres, there is one child particularly suited to fulfil this role in connection with Love Elegy, and that is Love or Cupid himself, a figure simultaneously immature and erotically charged. At *Amores* 1.1, familiarly, it is the intervention of the *saeuus puer* Cupid which transforms Ovid into elegist from epicist when he steals a metrical foot and causes the poet to fall in love, and it is the restaging of this intervention in *Metamorphoses* 1 which can act as a starting point for our investigation of childish metaliterary imagery in that poem.

The broad programmatic significance of Cupid's encounter with Apollo at *Met.* 1.454–65 has been illuminated, seminally, by W. S. M. Nicoll.³⁵ The passage is, by virtue of its liberal quotation of *Amores* 1.1, 'a disguised *recusatio*' (177) which stages in Apollo's destruction of Python 'a specimen of a serious allegorizing epic with no admixture of lighter Callimachean elements' — which (Nicoll continues) 'Virgil himself might have written' (181) — only to metamorphose the conquering deity into 'the archetypal elegiac lover' (175). There is a degree of overstatement here: it takes a more ludic poet than Virgil to make Python conform quite as closely as he does to the Callimachean *bête noire*. In fact Python is to allegorizing Virgilian epic as Ancaeus is to Aeneas, the epic pushed over into absurdity. For my purposes, however, the most important observation is how easily this metaliterary drama can be analysed in terms of age. As Nicoll insists (175–6), Apollo's initial role is not so much that of an established epic hero as an aspirant to that role. Python is his first serious exploit with bow and arrow (*Met.* 1.440–1), and Daphne subsequently his *primus amor* (452). Apollo is an ephebe,³⁶ in other words, a *would-be* adult like the conventionally immature *would-be* composers of epic in the theophanies which his exchange with Cupid resembles. But whilst Apollo aspires, like the poem around him, to the seriousness, responsibility — in a word, adulthood — which is a prerequisite of epic status, his nemesis Cupid is childishness personified: mischievous, irresponsible, disobedient, impertinent. He has a childish cruelty, too, a *saeuitia* (453) which recalls his role as the *saeuus puer* of *Am.* 1.1.5,³⁷ but the new form which the latter line finds in the *Met.* is suggestive in other ways. The poet's rebuke of Cupid in the *Amores*, 'quis tibi, saeue puer, dedit hoc in carmina iuris?', surfaces at *Met.* 1.456 as Apollo's exasperated question, "'quid" que "tibi, lasciuie puer, cum fortibus armis?"', where *fortia arma* are obviously emblematic of epic, and *lasciuus* and *puer* correspond precisely to the terminology used by Quintilian and Seneca of Ovid's poetic *ineptiae*. The *Metamorphoses* takes a characteristic turn with Cupid's intervention, and it is *lasciua* and *pueritia* which constitute the poem's dynamic

³⁴ On such movement along the 'vertical axis' in the *Aeneid* see, suggestively, P. R. Hardie, *Virgil's Aeneid: Cosmos and Imperium* (1986), 267–85.

³⁵ W. S. M. Nicoll, 'Cupid, Apollo and Daphne (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.452ff.)', *CQ* 30 (1980), 174–82.

³⁶ Apollo was the archetypal ephebe, in fact, accord-

ing to Isidore (*Orig.* 11.2.10): 'ephebi, id est a Phoebodicti . . .'

³⁷ *Saeuitia* is an epic characteristic too, of course, most memorably embodied by the *saeua Iuno* of the *Aeneid*. The Cupid of the *Amores* initiates an elegiac programme of epic dimensions.

here and, according to Ovid's ancient critics, throughout. Cupid's disobedient childishness, and the way it turns epic into something less dignified, is thus another respect in which Cupid and Apollo enact the *Met.*'s poetic principles, or rather *lack* of principles. This is a poem where models of authority are topsy-turvy, and the kids are in charge.

Before we continue with Ovid, there is a telling parallel between the ephebic Apollo aspiring to, but falling short of, heroic status and Ascanius' flirtation with adulthood in *Aeneid* 9. We have already considered the exchange between Apollo and Ascanius over Numanus Remulus as a profoundly self-reflexive meditation on the defining features of the epic genre, and its kinship with Ovid's Cupid goes much further. Ovid's description of Apollo at *Met.* 1.441–2, 'hunc deus arquitepens et numquam talibus armis/ ante nisi in dammis capreisque fugacibus usus . . .', alludes to *Aen.* 9.590–2, 'tum primum bello celerem intendisse sagittam/ dicitur ante feras solitus terrere fugacis/ Ascanius', and provides some corroboration for Servius' belief that *Aen.* 9.655, 'paribus non inuidet armis', is an allusion to Apollo's own first exploit:³⁸ 'nam ut Apollo puer occiso Pythone ultus est matris iniuriam, sic Ascanius occiso Numano Troianorum castra iniuriasque defendit', 'for just as the young Apollo by killing Python avenged the assault on his mother, so Ascanius by killing Numanus warded off assaults from the Trojan camp.' But whilst we may expect radically divergent sequels, Ascanius achieving heroic status unproblematically whilst Ovid's Apollo suffers reduction to the status of an elegiac lover, the situation in the *Aeneid* is in fact much less cut and dried. In Apollo's first address to Ascanius (641–4), which we have seen, Ascanius' upward movement towards *uirtus* and epic status seems assured (*sic itur ad astra*), but the god's second address is altogether more inhibiting of the boy (653–6):

'sit satis, Aenide, telis impune Numanum
oppetiisse tuis. primam hanc tibi magnus Apollo
concedit laudem et paribus non inuidet armis;
cetera parce, puer, bello.'

'Be satisfied that Numanus has perished by your weaponry, and you escaped harm, son of Aeneas. This first taste of glory great Apollo allows you, and does not grudge you arms as successful as his own. As for the rest, child, keep your distance from warfare.'

Philip Hardie has noted the 'curious similarities to a *recusatio*' in this latter scene,³⁹ as if by imposing limitations on Ascanius' further involvement in warfare Apollo is also restricting his involvement in the epic. The addresses by Apollo are bracketed by two uses of the vocative *puer*, but, as Hardie writes, 'whereas in the first the collocation *uirtute puer* hinted at transition to manhood, here the juxtaposition with *bello* . . . seems to put Ascanius in his place; he is *just* a boy'. Ultimately, in fact, Apollo's assessment of Ascanius' position *vis-à-vis* the epic world differs little from Numanus Remulus': *arma uirum* are still beyond his reach. In *his* presentation of a veiled *recusatio* centred on the figure of a child, Ovid would thus seem to be developing a topos from the *Aeneid*, working on the revealing tensions introduced to Virgil's epic by the involvement of children.

Returning to the *Metamorphoses*, another child takes control (or attempts to do so), and in a more literal sense, when Phaethon assumes the reins of his father's cosmic chariot in *Metamorphoses* 2. The tale of the Sun's son's quest for proof of his paternity exemplifies an important aspect of the poem's relentless oscillation between continuity and discontinuity. By organizing Phaethon's story to run over from Book 1 to Book 2 without any conventional indication of closure (or aperture), Ovid initiates a trend of

³⁸ Hardie, *op. cit.* (n. 2), *ad* 654–5. Ovid's *arquitepens* is a wonderfully resonant epithet, originating in the Saturnians of Naevius' *Bellum Punicum* (frg. 30 Morel): 'dein pollens sagittis inclutus arquitepens/'

sanctus Ioue prognatus Pythius Apollo.' Naevius' terms continue to find echoes as Ovid's episode unfolds.

³⁹ Hardie, *op. cit.* (n. 2), 199.

(self-conscious) failure to observe the book division.⁴⁰ At the same time, as Robert Brown has best shown, the passage which opens Book 2, the ecphrasis of the palace of the Sun, does nevertheless succeed in marking a new departure, and one reminiscent of the (first) creation narrative of Book 1.⁴¹ As Brown writes, the depiction of the palace and its decorations — representations of the ordered universe governed by the Sun — establishes an impression of coherence and symmetry: ‘the dominant impression is of order and congruity’ (214). But ‘it is precisely the universe portrayed on the doors which Phaethon almost brings tumbling down’ (214). As with Apollo and Cupid, order is replaced by chaos, and again in a way easily emblematic of the poetics of the *Metamorphoses*. Brown sees Vulcan’s artistic representation of the universe on the doors of the Sun’s palace as implying ‘the universal, all-embracing scope of [Ovid’s own] *carmen perpetuum*’ (219). But as Brown also insists, such assertions in the *Metamorphoses* of an epic, ‘orderly’, ‘Olympian — not to say authoritarian’ (220) world-view are only ever provisional. The main emphasis of the Phaethon story is an account of how this ordered universe suffers massive disruption, the agent of this disruption being, once again, a child. The story is obviously fundamentally concerned with the relationship between son and father, since it is to refute Epaphus’ taunt that he was ‘tumidus [an ominous word] genitoris imagine falsi’ that Phaethon sets off on his perilous mission in the first place. In age Phaethon is closer to the Apollo of Book 1 than Cupid, like Apollo (or Ovid in *Am.* 1.1) a youth aspiring, prematurely and unsuccessfully, to play the grown-up. Repenting his rash promise to grant Phaethon anything he wished, the Sun insists (2.54–6),

magna petis, Phaethon, et quae nec uiribus istis
munera conueniant nec tam puerilibus annis.
sors tua mortalis; non est mortale quod optas.

It is a great favour you are asking, Phaethon, and one not fitting your strength or your boyish years. Yours is a mortal’s lot; what you desire is not for mortals.

Phaethon is defined as a *puer* again in the Sun’s desperate last-minute instructions at 127 (*parce, puer, stimulis*, another allusion to Apollo’s *cetera parce, puer, bello* to Ascanius). Here in 54–6 the adjective *puerilis* joins *magna*, the statement of inadequate strength (cf. Hor., *Serm.* 2.1.13–14) and the ‘gigantomachic’⁴² motif of mortal overambition (cf. βροντᾶν οὐκ ἐμόν, ἀλλὰ Διός; Phaethon does actually assume the role of a god, but not without paying the price) as terms eminently susceptible of application to strictly literary criticism.⁴³ It is noticeable also how readily childishness manifests itself as a violation of decorum: Sol’s *nec . . . conueniant* recalls Apollo’s remarks on *fortia arma* and who should best wield them (*ista decent umeros gestamina nostros*, 1.457). ‘Great things’ beyond the scope of youth is another ready allegory for Ovidian anti-poetics, and the same might be said of the terms involving lightness and heaviness which are used to describe Phaethon’s inadequacy as a charioteer. The horses of the Sun feel a lack (161–2):

sed leue pondus erat nec quod cognoscere possent
Solis equi, solitaque iugum grauitate carebat.

But the weight was light and not such as the horses of the Sun could recognize, and the yoke was missing its usual heaviness.

⁴⁰ On this issue see N. Holzberg, ‘Ter quinque uolumina as carmen perpetuum: the division into books in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*’, *MD* 40 (1998), 77–98.

⁴¹ R. Brown, ‘The Palace of the Sun in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*’, in M. Whitby, P. R. Hardie and M. Whitby (eds), *Homo Viator: Classical Essays for John Bramble* (1987), 211–20. On the parallels between Books 1 and 2 see especially 215–17.

⁴² For parallels see A. Sharrock, *Seduction and Repetition in Ovid’s Ars Amatoria II* (1994), 115–17.

⁴³ cf. A. Zissos and I. Gildenhard, ‘Problems of time in *Metamorphoses* 2’, in Hardie, Barchiesi and Hinds, *op. cit.* (n. 8), 31–47, at 35 n. 17 for further metapoetic terminology in Phaethon’s chariot ride.

Phaethon's shortcomings match those of his poem: the *grauitas* lacking here is readily construed in moral (cf. Seneca's 'non est res satis sobria'), or even metrical⁴⁴ terms. Phaethon, like the slayer of Python, and like the *Metamorphoses* (we are to understand), strives for but falls short of epic status.

Three of Horace's odes toy with the image of literary ambition as perilous flight, and in each case their choice of mythological analogy, Daedalus and Icarus, is suggestive for the *Metamorphoses* too. *Carm.* 1.3 lines up Prometheus, Daedalus, and Hercules as figures dangerously overshooting human limitations, alongside Virgil the author of the Homer-emulating *Aeneid*.⁴⁵ The 'latent admiration' for Virgil's project which, as Matthew Santirocco appreciates, Horace allows to show through is reflected in his concentration on Daedalus (the successful flyer) rather than Icarus in this context: 'Prometheus, Daedalus, and Hercules were not just archetypal sinners but also, and more commonly, symbols for human achievement.'⁴⁶ In *Carm.* 2.20 and 4.2, on the other hand, where the emphasis is on deflation of literary aspirations rather than the 'veiled encomium' (in Alison Sharrock's terms)⁴⁷ of 1.3, Icarus is naturally the more prominent. It is in a spirit of ironic pomposity and self-mockery that Horace claims (2.20.13–16),

iam Daedaleo notior Icaro
uisam gementis litora Bosphori
Syrtsique Gaetulas canorus
ales Hyperboreosque campos.

Already more famous than Icarus, son of Daedalus, I shall visit, a harmonious bird, the shores of the moaning Bosphorus, the Gaetulian Syrtes and the Hyperborean plains.

At 4.2.1–4, meanwhile, the dangers of literary over-extension are quite explicit, albeit still ironic and self-subverting in the context both of this poem and Horace's wider lyric production.⁴⁸

Pindarum quisquis studet aemulari,
Iule, ceratis ope Daedalea
nititur pennis uitreo daturus
nomina ponto.

Whoever aspires to rival Pindar, Iulus, relies on wings waxed by the art of Daedalus, doomed to give his name to the glassy sea.

Horace's Daedalus and Icarus bulk large in Sharrock's extensive treatment of the Daedalus and Icarus episode in *Ars Amatoria* Book 2, where the myth is interpreted once again as speaking for the poem containing it, a metaphor for the complex project of eroticized didactic.⁴⁹ For Sharrock Daedalus' cautious lower flight tends to reflect the Callimachean element of the composition, Icarus' bold higher flight the didactic ethos of the work, readily assimilable to epic. Her focus being the *Ars*, Sharrock's interpretation of Daedalus and Icarus in *Metamorphoses* 8 is limited to its potential as a metaphor for Ovid's own exile, and to the interesting generic variations it marks from the *Ars* passage. But (again) for the purposes of this paper the important point in the *Metamorphoses* passage is the failure of the exploit through Icarus' childish refusal to do as he was told (8.223–5):

⁴⁴ cf. E. J. Kenney, 'The style of the *Metamorphoses*', in J. W. Binns (ed.), *Ovid* (1973), 116–53, at 117: 'Smoothness and speed are likewise the salient characteristics of Ovid's hexameter. Critics who merely miss in *Ovid* the weight, sonority and expressiveness of Virgil are failing to recognize the great difference, not only between the two poets, but between their two undertakings' (my italics). A referee suggests that *pondus* carries a sexual innuendo as well.

⁴⁵ M. S. Santirocco, *Unity and Design in Horace's*

Odes (1986), 27–30, with further bibliography on the poem.

⁴⁶ Santirocco, op. cit. (n. 45), 29; cf. J. P. Elder, 'Horace, C., 1, 3', *AJP* 73 (1952), 140–58, at 156: 'Heroism is nobility, but is also folly, but a folly well worth the ultimate suffering.'

⁴⁷ Sharrock, op. cit. (n. 42), 114.

⁴⁸ Sharrock, op. cit. (n. 42), 123–4.

⁴⁹ Sharrock, op. cit. (n. 42), 87–195: Horace's allusions to the myth are discussed at 112–26.

cum puer audaci coepit gaudere uolatu
deseruitque ducem caelique cupidine tractus
altius egit iter.

when the boy began to enjoy his bold flight and abandoned his leader and, drawn by a desire for heaven, followed a higher course.

Many details of this episode mark it out as some kind of reflection of Ovid's own undertaking. Like Phaethon, Icarus seems to aspire, in his quest for the heights, to the status of a god,⁵⁰ and here the contrast between *Ars Am.* 2.77–8, where a witness of the flight draws no conclusions, and *Met.* 8.217–20, where he *credidit esse deos*, is particularly telling.⁵¹ Sharrock, again, traces the lineage of the grand-epic periphrasis *remigium alarum* from Virgil's version of the Daedalus story (*Aen.* 6.19) to Ovid's first version at *Ars Am.* 2.45–6:⁵²

remigium uolucrum, disponit in ordine pinnas
et leue per lini uincula nectit opus

He lays out in order feathers, the oarage of birds, and knits together the light fabric by fastenings of linen.

Sharrock finds in a tension between the high style of the hexameter and Callimachean quality of the pentameter a statement in miniature of the conflictual poetics of the *Ars Amatoria* as a whole, an amalgamation of the intrinsically centrifugal principles of didactic and love elegy. The Virgilian periphrasis of *remigium alarum* and the 'flash of a military metaphor' in *disponit in ordine* give way to 'linen, a work of delicate fragility' in the pentameter, its light sense supported by appropriately liquid sounds, and short, delicately placed words. The trajectory of *remigium* can be pursued further: when it occurs again, at *Met.* 8.228, it is only to be lost as Icarus attempts to fly too high. As Icarus comes down to earth with a thump, in other words, he explicitly loses his epic accoutrements:

remigique carens non ullas percipit auras

and lacking oarage he has no purchase on the winds at all

Ars Am. 2.45–6 comes from an account of Daedalus' creation of the wings. That act of creativity is a natural focus for metapoetical imagery regarding the creative principles of the poems describing it. The wings are also the emphasis of Horace's allusion to Icarus in the first stanza of *Odes* 4.2, for example; and Sharrock shows how the divergent accounts of the wings in *Ars Am.* 2 and *Met.* 8 exemplify generic differences. The treatment in the *Ars*, as we have seen, gestures towards elevated expression, and then 'immediately dissolves into Hellenistic delicateness'.⁵³ The *Met.* account, on the other hand (8.189–92) is not cut short by a pentameter but allowed to develop expansively through the hexametrical period, all but repeating *disponit in ordine* (*ponit in ordine*, 189), but significantly replacing *pinnas* ('feathers', also 'wings') with *pennas* ('wings', also 'feathers': *if* we can trust the MS tradition to distinguish between such similar

⁵⁰ A. S. Hollis, *Ovid, Metamorphoses Book VIII* (1970) has an excellent note at 224, 'caelique cupidine tactus', positing 'a proverb for extravagant ambition' underlying Ovid's expression, Hor., *Carm.* 1.3.38, Virg., *Geo.* 4.325, and Rhianus fr. 1.15 Powell.

⁵¹ *Ars Am.* 2.77–8: 'hos aliquis, tremula dum captat harundine pisces,/ uidit et inceptum dextra reliquit opus'; *Met.* 8.217–20: 'hos aliquis, tremula dum captat harundine pisces,/ aut pastor baculo stiuaque innixus arator/ uidit et obstipuit, quique aethera carpere possent,/ credidit esse deos'. The two versions, which the identical opening line insists that we

compare, are a brilliantly subtle exercise in metrical differentiation. The first beautifully exploits the tendency of the elegiac couplet to expend energy in the hexameter and relax in the pentameter (*Am.* 1.1.17–18, 27): in this case the fisherman acts energetically in the hexameter and is paralysed with astonishment in the pentameter. The second passage (as Sharrock, *op. cit.* (n. 42), 180–1 suggests) exploits, by contrast, the expansive possibilities of continuous hexameters.

⁵² Sharrock, *op. cit.* (n. 42), 142.

⁵³ Sharrock, *op. cit.* (n. 42), 177.

words), and the inclusion of similes effects a similar kind of amplification.⁵⁴ For the particular purposes of this paper, however, I would want to emphasize the metapoetical possibilities of the passage which follows this epic-tinged creation of the wings. Icarus is introduced, playing as Daedalus creates (195–200):

puer Icarus una
stabat et, ignarus sua se tractare pericla,
ore renidenti modo quas uaga mouerat aura
captabat plumas, flauam modo pollice ceram
mollibat lusuque suo mirabile patris
impediebat opus.

The boy Icarus was standing by him and, unaware that he was handling his own doom, with smiling face now tried to catch the feathers which the wandering breeze had moved, now softened the yellow wax with his thumb, and with his play obstructed the wondrous undertaking of his father.

'This whole description,' as Hollis writes, 'is completely life-like and charming.'⁵⁵ But such 'realism' — in actual fact a programmatic displacement of elevated style and material by the low and everyday — is itself a marker of Callimachean affiliations, a self-conscious piece of literary self-definition.⁵⁶ In addition, however, the component elements of this scene — a boy, *lusus*, and a figure representing fatherly authority whose superlative undertaking suffers interference from them — correspond point after point to the imagery for which writers instinctively reach when describing the epic genre and what Ovid's *Metamorphoses* does to it.⁵⁷

IV

Paradoxically, then, Ovid and his critics are agreed that epic has its proper thematic concerns, which in turn conform to an orthodox structure of power. More subtly, though, and as was noted in a provisional way earlier in this paper, that structure of authority embodied in epic necessarily also has its 'proper', correspondingly authoritative, modes of expression. Epic is the genre of imperatives, jussive subjunctives, rhetorical questions, all the grammatical armature of power: epic *speaks* authoritatively, too.⁵⁸ Here, as often, the masculine authority claimed by epic corresponds most closely to that possessed by the cultural symbol of the father, especially in his paedagogical role, whose unqualified discursive power is described by Fowler:⁵⁹

Power is always with the father, and in particular the speech of the father, the words of the Lord: *fatum*, what the father *says*. The words of the father, moreover, bring order and peace through this authority: meaning is settled, disputes are resolved, the forces of disorder and anarchy are kept in check.

The words of the father, he continues, promise nothing short of 'real presence', that ultimate, unmediated authority to which the super-genre of epic also aspires. But in the

⁵⁴ cf. M. W. Edwards, *Homer, Poet of the Iliad* (1987), 109: 'Fundamentally, a simile . . . is a technique of expansion', and as such, like periphrasis, a favourite mode of epic.

⁵⁵ Hollis, *op. cit.* (n. 50), ad loc.

⁵⁶ cf. G. Zanker, *Realism in Alexandrian Poetry: a Literature and its Audience* (1987), 214 on Callimachus' *Hecale*, 'realistic in a manner that we have come to regard as typical of Callimachus and of the Alexandrian movement as a whole'.

⁵⁷ See E. Oliensis, 'Return to sender: the rhetoric of nomina in Ovid's *Tristia*', *Ramus* 26 (1997), 172–93, at 182–3 and 192 n. 18 for Ovid's continued metapoet-

ical deployment of the figure of Icarus in his exile poetry.

⁵⁸ On the issue of speech in the *Aeneid* as a means of assertion of authority, see Laird, *op. cit.* (n. 6), e.g. on Ascanius (192, 'As a child, generally in the presence of his father, he is normally seen and not heard'), on the *Aeneid* in general (196, 'Hierarchy provides the principal explanation for the frequent occurrence of single, unanswered speeches'), and on epic's kinship with public discourse (204, 'epic is a discourse of power in some ways comparable to a state decree or military command').

⁵⁹ Fowler, *op. cit.* (n. 4), 42/226.

Metamorphoses, of course, it doesn't quite work like that. In all three of the episodes concentrated upon here figures of authority have attempted to assert that authority over (figures conventionally perceived as) subordinates: Apollo is an elder brother, Sol and Daedalus both fathers.⁶⁰ All three address the junior partner in a style of communication appropriate to the power structure as they perceive it. They *lecture*, in other words. Apollo's speech to Cupid, as we have seen, owes a lot to the poet's complaint to Cupid in *Amores* 1.1, but the difference is the difference between admonition of a subordinate and complaint to a superior, between the domineering tone of 'tu face nescio quos esto contentus amores/ inritare tua nec laudes adserere nostras' (*Met.* 1.461–2) and the obsequiousness of 'sunt tibi magna, puer, nimiumque potentia regna:/ cur opus adfectas ambitiose nouum?' (*Am.* 1.1.13–14). Apollo tells Cupid in no uncertain terms, and in a way which seems to preclude any response, to restrict himself to his own area of interest (1.456–62):

'quid' que 'tibi, lasciuie puer, cum fortibus armis?'
dixerat, 'ista decent umeros gestamina nostros,
qui dare certa ferae, dare uulnera possumus hosti,
qui modo pestifero tot iugera uentre prementem
strauimus innumeris tumidum Pythona sagittis.
tu face nescio quos esto contentus amores
inritare tua nec laudes adserere nostras.'

and, 'What are you doing with mighty arms, naughty boy?' he said, 'That gear befits my shoulders, I who can inflict sure wounds on beast, sure wounds on foe, I who just now laid low with countless arrows swollen Python, as it weighed down so many acres with its deadly belly. Be content to rouse up some love or other with your torch, and do not claim honours which belong to me.'

The impression of Apollo's authority in this speech is reinforced further by its kinship to the kind of aretology familiar from hymns: Apollo is promoting himself in a strikingly immoderate way.⁶¹ Sol's long admonition (*monitus*, 103) of Phaethon (2.50–102) is necessarily, in the circumstances, more emollient (Phaethon's position being bolstered by the oath), but the speaker nevertheless promotes himself, both by what he says and by the style of his delivery, as an embodiment of superior strength, wisdom, and maturity whose advice Phaethon, if he has any sense, must necessarily respect (100–2):

quid mea colla tenes blandis, ignare, lacertis?
ne dubita, dabitur (Stygias iurauimus undas),
quodcumque optaris, sed tu sapientius opta.

Why do you clutch my neck with coaxing arms, foolish one? Have no doubt, whatever you choose will be given you (I have sworn by the waters of the Styx) — but do choose more wisely.

In Daedalus' case, meanwhile, the power hierarchy has not been disrupted by an unbreakable oath, and his instructions (*monitus* again, 210) possess a more straightforwardly authoritative character, discernible in the terms used by Daedalus himself to describe his speech act (*moneo*, *iubeo*), the leadership role which he so categorically imputes to himself ('me duce carpe uiam'), his demonstration of superior knowledge ('Booten . . . Helicen . . . strictumque Orionis ensem'), not forgetting the grammatical forms, imperatives, and indirect commands, in which the instructions are couched (8.203–8):

⁶⁰ cf. S. M. Wheeler, *Narrative Dynamics in Ovid's Metamorphoses*, *Classica Monacensia* 20 (2000), 69 on 'the increasing loss of parental control over the destiny of their children' in the myth sequence of the second half of *Met.* 1, which 'complements the repeated

dissolution of cosmic order at the beginning of the *Metamorphoses*'.

⁶¹ T. Fuhrer, 'Der Götterhymnus als Prahltrede — zum Spiel mit einer literarischen Form in Ovids *Metamorphosen*', *Hermes* 127 (1999), 356–67, at 359.

instruit et natum 'medio' que 'ut limite curras,
Icare,' ait 'moneo, ne, si demissior ibis,
unda grauet pennas, si celsior, ignis adurat.
inter utrumque uola, nec te spectare Booten
aut Helicen iubeo strictumque Orionis ensem:
me duce carpe uiam.'

And he fitted out his son and said, 'I warn you, Icarus, to travel by the middle path, lest, if you go too low, the water weigh down your wings, or if too high, the fire burn them. Fly between the two, and do not, I tell you, look at Bootes or Helice or Orion's drawn sword: make your way by my guidance.'

But of course Apollo, Sol, and Daedalus may bluster, cajole, and insist as much as they like; not one of the children in question is listening. Cupid cheekily turns Apollo's braggadocio straight back on him (1.463-4):

filius huic Veneris 'figat tuus omnia, Phoebae,
te meus arcus' ait

The son of Venus said to him, 'Your bow may pierce everything, Phoebus, but mine'll get you.'

before putting his own archery into devastating practice. Phaethon is explicitly said to ignore the advice, the brevity of this detail contrasting pointedly with the inordinate length of Sol's attempts to dissuade him (2.103-4):

finierat monitus, dictis tamen ille repugnat
propositumque premit flagratque cupidine currus.

He had finished his warnings, but Phaethon resists his words and presses his resolve and blazes with desire for the chariot.⁶²

Finally, Icarus' decision to fly higher is in direct contravention of Daedalus' instructions to hold to the middle and follow his lead: the repetition of *dux* from 208 ('me duce carpe uiam') at 224 ('deseruitque ducem') marks clearly the rejection of authority.

And yet we should not forget another lecture delivered to a child (fruitlessly, again, of course) which we have encountered in this paper, the figure of authority in this case being the author-narrator of the *Naturales Quaestiones*, and the insubordinate subordinate Ovid. Seneca's critique of the *pueriles ineptiae* of the *Metamorphoses* modulates fascinatingly into a style of address fitted to the childish personality which he has attributed to the poet. From criticism of Ovid in the third person at 3.27.14 Seneca moves into a direct harangue of the poet, addressed in the second person as if present to receive the admonition: 'concepisti imaginem quantam debebas, obrutis omnibus terris caelo ipso in terram ruente. Perfer. Scies quid deceat, si cogitaueris orbem terrarum natate.' 'Keep it up!' But no matter how like a rugby coach Seneca sounds, Ovid is as unresponsive to the advice as Cupid, Phaethon, and Icarus.

If it is an epic impulse to lecture, the main difference in conventional epic is that lectures from perceived superiors tend to be respected and obeyed by their recipients. One of the longest such lectures in the *Aeneid* is that delivered (in a number of parts) to Aeneas, and by extension all Romans, by Anchises in Book 6 (679-892). There is absolutely no doubt about Aeneas' receptivity to this fatherly instruction: this is a model of authority appropriately communicated and received. It is also, not coincidentally, a model of *epic* communication. Hardie comments on the discourse of Anchises that it 'acts as a kind of miniature summary of the whole of Ennius' epic'; and continues that 'this may itself be understood as an act of piety on the part of Virgil towards his literary

⁶² We may note in passing the discreet influence which C/cupid continues to exert on events. Cf. p. 89 and n. 96 below.

“parent”, *pater Ennius*.⁶³ Once again acts of obedience or disobedience within the poem reflect obedience or disobedience to the literary tradition more widely. Anchises’ authoritative discourse embodies essential characteristics of the epic tradition itself.

Another approach may yield a similar conclusion. The style of unilateral communication which we are discussing here might go by a number of names. I have opted for ‘lecturing’ most often, but ‘haranguing’ is another (more pejorative) possibility. Yet another way again of describing epic’s characteristic mode of address might be ‘hectoring’, and before I am accused of committing an unforgivable pun it should be pointed out that this is really no pun. A ‘hector’ was once a substantive in common use describing an intimidating character or bully,⁶⁴ and the verb ‘hector’, ‘intimidate’, has survived it. How precisely the name of Troy’s greatest hero came to be so used is beyond recovery, but we can make some educated guesses. In the *Iliad* Hector’s encounters with Paris tend to feature an abrasive harangue of the feckless younger brother by the elder; but in the *Aeneid* too Hector delivers a memorably ‘rhetorical’ harangue (2.289–95) which neither acknowledges Aeneas’ words of welcome (‘ille nihil, nec me quaerentem uana moratur, sed . . .’) nor brooks any argument (Hector simply hands over the Penates and Vesta), and this is another moment where authoritative speech is identified with the genre of epic.⁶⁵ Hector’s appearance in a dream, weeping, and address to Aeneas mimics Homer’s appearance to Ennius, as the meeting of Anchises and Aeneas in Book 6 does. That Aeneas (initially) fails to register this advice, and act by it, is often seen as an instance of his failure adequately to fulfil the role demanded of him at this juncture; the story of the remainder of the poem is to a significant extent the story of Aeneas’ falling in with the instructions which Hector here delivers; which of course corresponds also to Virgil’s creation of a fitting contribution to the epic tradition. It is in this connection that Hardie talks of ‘scenes of instruction and transmission’ figuring ‘prominently in the *Aeneid*’, in many cases bearing a metapoetical symbolism: authority, whether figured as paternal, fraternal, or paedagogical, finds a natural home in epic, the most authoritative genre, and authoritative speech in particular, of which epic itself is an example. In the *Metamorphoses*, however, Ovid’s figures of authority never manage to maintain that authority convincingly for long. To put the issue confusingly, Apollo, Sol, and Daedalus make very poor hectors; and Ovid a most disruptive pupil.

v

A short diversion may be appropriate at this juncture to consider literary precedents for Ovid’s imagery, and we can start with another piece of criticism, not directed at Ovid this time, but one that will nevertheless have influenced his strategy in the *Metamorphoses*. For the child had already found a role in metaliterary symbolism in the prologue of Callimachus’ *Aetia*, a text which I have elsewhere argued should alert us to hitherto unsuspected levels of significance in the Golden Child of *Eclogue* 4. Besides all his other symbolic functions, I have suggested, Virgil’s *puer* makes an object of panegyric fitting (because small-scale, and as yet innocent of *res gestae*) for the neoteric affiliations of that collection,⁶⁶ and the imagery of childhood in *Eclogue* 4 would seem to owe a lot to Callimachus’ account of the criticisms made of his poetic style by the Τελχίνες (fr. 1.1–6 Pf.):

Ἰ μοι Τελχίνες ἐπιτρύζουσιν ἀοιδῆ,
νῆιδες οἱ Μούσης οὐκ ἐγένοντο φίλοι,
εἶνεκεν οὐχ ἔν ἄεισμα διηνεκὲς ἢ βασιλῆ

⁶³ Hardie, op. cit. (n. 34), 78.

⁶⁴ The noun is common in the seventeenth century, cf. (from 1693) Narcissus Luttrell, *A Brief Historical Relation of State Affairs, 1678–1714* (1857), III.2: ‘On Sunday night last 3 hectors came out of a tavern

in Holborn, with their swords drawn, and started to break windows.’

⁶⁵ Hardie, op. cit. (n. 5), 102–3.

⁶⁶ Ll. Morgan, ‘Quantum sat erit: epic, acne and the fourth *Eclogue*’, *LCM* 17 (1992), 76–9.

ἴας ἐν πολλαῖς ἤνυσα χιλιάσιν
ἢ ἴους ἥρωας, ἔπος δ' ἐπὶ τυτθὸν ἐλῖσσω
παῖς ἄτε, τῶν δ' ἑτέων ἢ δεκάς οὐκ ὀλίγη.

. . . the Telchines, who know nothing and are no friends of the Muse, snipe at me for my song, because it is not one continuous song that I have produced, on . . . kings or . . . heroes in many thousands of lines, but I roll forth the tale for short stretches, like a child, though the decades of my years are not few.

Youth and age are important symbols throughout Fragment 1: lines 33–8 show the poet fervently wishing to cast off old age like a cicada, old age which is assimilated to writing in the higher genres by its association with the gigantomachic image of 'the three-cornered island on deadly Enceladus' (36; cf. βροντᾶν οὐκ ἐμόν, ἀλλὰ Διός at 20), before consoling himself with recognition of what he has retained from his youth, the goodwill of the Muses. Nisetich suggests further that 'the wish to be free of old age is granted, at least momentarily, for in the dream that he goes on to describe he appears as a young man',⁶⁷ ἀῖρητιγένειος, 'newly bearded', according to the Florentine scholiast, meeting the Muses on Helicon. But at ll. 5–6 the poet is directly likened to a child, παῖς ἄτε, and, although the precise image in play in l. 5 is unclear, Hopkinson's suggested paraphrase, 'I speak in small, childlike sentences', is plausible.⁶⁸

The literary ancestry of Ovid's Cupid offers another route back to Hellenistic poetry. As Eros the god had played a pivotal role in Book 3 of Apollonius' *Argonautica*, and, as Feeney has shown, the impact on the reader of Eros' intervention derives in no small part from his generic incongruity. Eros did not belong in epic: he is rather, as Feeney puts it, a 'genuinely un-Homeric innovation' on the part of Apollonius, for whom Eros will have constituted 'a creature of lyric, epigram, and other "minor" genres'.⁶⁹ As the motive force behind a defining change of direction in the *Argonautica*, Eros cannot avoid embodying the unorthodox poem in which he features, in a manner similar to the Muse of love poetry, Erato, with whom Book 3 opens: 'the effect of the interruption is to make Eros' arrival intrusive in a formal sense before any other, as the epic of diplomacy and martial endeavour is disrupted and put off track, to become an epic of love.'⁷⁰ Here again, as in the *Metamorphoses*, there is a clear analogy between the irresponsible actions of the wild child Eros and the disrespectful treatment of accepted practice by the poet.

Apollonius' Eros reappears in a form slightly less disruptive of epic decorum in *Aeneid* 1. Damien Nelis details the profound similarities between Apollonius' Eros and Virgil's Cupid — and then a telling difference:⁷¹ 'Virgil's Cupid is no petulant child like Eros . . . He is immediately and almost chillingly obedient when approached by Venus.' The Cupid of Virgil's epic is not by any means deprived of his capacity to disrupt epic norms: he does after all, not unlike his Apollonian counterpart, motivate a major diversion (in both literal and formal, generic terms) from the destined 'plot' of Aeneas' journey: a somewhat elegiac delay at Carthage. But the relatively compliant Cupid of the *Aeneid*, divested of bow, arrow, and wings,⁷² and remoulded in the shape of Ascanius,⁷³ nevertheless displays clear signs of redefinition along the generally more decorous lines of Virgilian epic. In which case Ovid's Cupid represents a dramatic reversion to the unapologetically insubordinate love god of the *Argonautica*, with all the

⁶⁷ F. Nisetich, *The Poems of Callimachus* (2001), 234.

⁶⁸ N. Hopkinson, *A Hellenistic Anthology* (1988), ad loc.

⁶⁹ Feeney, op. cit. (n. 16), 78.

⁷⁰ Feeney, op. cit. (n. 16), 81.

⁷¹ D. Nelis, *Virgil's Aeneid and the Argonautica of Apollonius Rhodius* (2001), 94.

⁷² cf. *AP* 12.75, 76, 77, and 78 for wings, bow and arrows as the distinguishing features of Eros. Thus 76 (Meleager), 'If Love had neither bow, nor wings, nor quiver, / nor barbed arrows of desire dipped in fire, / never, I swear it by the winged one himself, could you

tell / from their appearance which was Zoilos and which Love'. In these poems, by Asclepiades and possibly Posidippus as well as Meleager, Eros can be confused with the prepubescent object of desire, and Strato's collection of pederastic epigrams, the Μοῦσα Παῖδική, suggests another application for imagery of the child, with its own set of power relations, specious and real.

⁷³ cf. S. J. Hinds, *The Metamorphosis of Persephone: Ovid and the Self-Conscious Muse* (1987), 167 n. 45 on 'Ovid's "restoration" to Cupid of the traditional bow and arrow with which he had operated in the Apollonian version, but which Virgil had suppressed'.

unfettered power (and perhaps even more) to disrupt order and epic convention of his Hellenistic counterpart. In a series of powerfully vivid scenes Apollonius had dwelt on Eros' childish capriciousness. Thus Cypris expresses her exasperation at his lack of respect for her, and Hera and Athena in their reaction register recognition of her account (*Arg.* 3.90–101):

ὥς ἄρ' ἔφη. Κύπρις δὲ μετ' ἀμφοτέρησιν ἔειπεν·
 “Ἥρη Ἀθηναίη τε, πίθοιτό κεν ὕμμι μάλιστα
 ἢ ἐμοί. ὑμείων γὰρ ἀναιδήτω περ ἔόντι
 τυτθή γ' αἰδῶς ἔσσειετ' ἐν ὄμμασιν· αὐτὰρ ἐμῆιο
 οὐκ ὀθεταί, μάλα δ' αἰὲν ἐριδμαίνων ἀθερίζει.
 καὶ δὴ οἱ μενέηνα, περισχομένη κακότητι,
 αὐτοῖσιν τόξοισι δυσηχέας ἄξει ὀιστοῦς
 ἀμφαδίην. τοῖον γὰρ ἐπηπειλήσε χαλεφθεῖς·
 εἰ μὴ τηλόθι χεῖρας, ἕως ἔτι θυμὸν ἐρύκει,
 ἕξω ἐμάς, μετέπειτά γ' ἀτεμβοίμην ἐοῖ αὐτῆ.’
 ὥς φάτο· μείδησαν δὲ θεαὶ καὶ ἐσέδρακον ἄντην
 ἀλλήλαις.

So Hera spoke, and Cypris addressed them both: ‘Hera and Athena, he will obey you rather than me. For disrespectful though he is, there will be a little respect for you in his eyes. But for me he has no regard, but is forever aggravating and belittling me. And, beset on all sides by his naughtiness, I intend to break his evil-sounding arrows, bow and all, before his very eyes. For in his anger he has threatened that if I do not restrain myself, so long as he still controls his temper, I shall have myself to blame thereafter.’ So she spoke, and the goddesses smiled and looked at each other.

Virgil’s Cupid, on the other hand, though he too seems to require a degree of flattery from his mother, is no sooner instructed (1.664–88) than he obeys (689–90), ‘paret Amor dictis carae genetricis, et alas/ exuit’, a stunning capitulation by our erstwhile *enfant terrible*. With all three authors testing the boundaries of epic propriety it is perilous to draw very clear distinctions between them, but the love gods of Apollonius, Virgil, and Ovid do seem to offer varying degrees of obedience to authority. Virgil’s responds immediately to his mother’s orders. Apollonius’ has to be bribed, and lavishly so, but nevertheless does ultimately do what his mother wishes. The Cupid of *Met.* 1, meanwhile, is not obeying any impulses beyond his own. It is obviously tempting to read these divergent accounts of the love god as guides to the epics in which they operate. Zanker is clear that the anarchic energy of Eros is deployed with the higher message of the *Argonautica* in view:⁷⁴ ‘in this section of the poem the poet uses everyday realism first for the purposes of the ironical humour that arises from its incongruity in its grand setting but secondly to undercut that superficial humour and make a serious thematic point crucial to the epic.’ It is the disjunction between the dire suffering which Eros inflicts and the kind of blithe lightheartedness he displays after firing his arrow at Medea (275–98) that gives the whole episode its peculiarly dark force, typical of the ‘complex pessimism’⁷⁵ of Apollonius’ epic. The Eros of Apollonius and Cypris is thus contained (just), his malign energy directed; when Ovid’s Cupid attacks Apollo he is entirely his own master, and the epic plot he motivates, we may suppose, correspondingly more elusive.

Rather closer to Apollonius’ Eros is the Cupid of *Met.* 5, who falls in with his mother’s *arbitrium* (380) and shoots an arrow at Dis, thereby precipitating the story of Ceres and Proserpina, but only after a speech of persuasion by Venus which represents the action suggested as a step towards universal power for them both — appeals to Cupid’s limitless egoism, in other words. Stephen Hinds has a subtle discussion of the allusion at *Met.* 5.365, ‘arma manusque meae, mea, nate, potentia’, to *Aen.* 1.664, ‘nate,

⁷⁴ Zanker, *op. cit.* (n. 56), 207.

⁷⁵ Feeney, *op. cit.* (n. 16), 89. Cf. R. L. Hunter, *Apollonius of Rhodes, Argonautica Book III* (1989), at

135 on the cosmic quality of the ball which Cypris is offering to Eros.

meae uires, mea magna potentia',⁷⁶ suggesting that our first response to the allusion ('the literary origin of the power-politics of *Met.* 5.365ff. in the first book of the *Aeneid* spells out all the more clearly their quintessentially epic character') should give way to doubt: 'Or does it? Is there not a certain element of paradox in the allusion?' The Cupid of *Met.* 5 is once again an unepic character aspiring to epic status — absolute control of the universe, no less; and Ovid is once again working on tensions already present in the Virgilian mastertext, alluding 'to precisely that turn of the *Aeneid's* divine machinery which introduces into the grand epic of *arma uirumque* an element of eroticism reminiscent not just of Apollonian epic, but also of the intimacy of personal love poetry'. Even Virgil's Cupid is a powerful and disruptive influence in the epic plot, but Ovid's Cupid dictates the character of his poem in a way ultimately denied to Cupid in the *Aeneid*; and displays an autonomy and ambition which puts even Apollonius' Eros in the shade.⁷⁷

VI

My final discussion of an ancient criticism of the *Metamorphoses* may appear only tangentially relevant to the rest of this paper, but it is designed to corroborate our impression of the *Metamorphoses* as a text which, as Sergio Casali puts it in reference to *Heroides* 14, 'exhibits its foreknowledge' of criticism;⁷⁸ the tenuous connection between this section and what precedes and follows it, furthermore, may turn out to be rather appropriate. In another article on a similar theme, this time apropos of *Ars. Am.* 2, Casali develops his point:⁷⁹

Every poet knows (or thinks he knows) in advance what critics will look for in his work. It is particularly useful to bear this fact in mind in Ovid's case. Ovid not only knows what his reader will look for in his work, and not only writes for a reader-commentator, for a reader who is interested in the ancient equivalent of a footnote; but he plays with this reader of his, anticipating the notes in the text, and preparing hermeneutic traps for him, interesting 'problems,' created only in order to be discussed. Anticipating the notes in the text means that our reaction, the reader's reaction, is, in certain cases, already in the text.

There is, as Casali appreciates, a special pleasure to be got watching critics still rising to the deliberate provocations laid by Ovid — witnessing, in other words, Ovid's undiminished capacity to ghost-write his own criticism two millennia on; though in this respect critics are only giving more formal shape to the responses elicited by the text from readers in general. A rich example is Donald Hill's note on the name *Coroneus*, given by Ovid at 2.569 for the father of the *cornix* (Gk. κορώνη) who is advising the *coruus* (Gk. κόραξ) not to inform Apollo of the infidelity of *Coronis* lest he suffer the same fate as the crow, demoted in Minerva's service below yet another bird with dark associations, the owl:

⁷⁶ Hinds, op. cit. (n. 73), 133–4; cf. R. Heinze, *Ovids elegische Erzählung* (1919), 7 and n. 2.

⁷⁷ Further evidence of Greek sources for childish metapoetical imagery is to be found in the related Latin and Greek 'game' terminology to denote poetic activity in the 'lesser' genres. *Lusus* and cognates are a regular presence in such contexts: see Catull. 50.2, Virg., *Ecl.* 6.1, *Geo.* 4.565, Ov., *Fast.* 2.6 ('cum lusit numeris prima iuuenta suis'), Plin., *Ep.* 9.25.1 ('lusus et ineptias nostras'). There is a ready parallel in Greek (and Latin) works entitled *Paegnia*, *Erotopaegnia* or *Technopaegnia*: see *RE* s.v. παίγνιον (citing, for example, Aelian, *Hist. An.* 15.19, Θεόκριτος ὁ τῶν νομειτικῶν παίγνιῶν συνθέτης); E. Courtney, *The Fragmentary Latin Poets* (1993), 119. For the interest

in children evinced in both poetry and art of the Hellenistic period see T. B. L. Webster, *Hellenistic Poetry and Art* (1964), ch. 8. In both forms it clearly represents a departure from conventional objects of artistic representation.

⁷⁸ S. Casali, 'Ovidio e la prenoscenza della critica: qualche generalizzazione a partire da *Heroides* 14', *Philologus* 142 (1998), 93–113, at 96: 'Ovidio, come tutti i poeti, sa quello che il lettore-critico andrà a cercare nella sua opera. Quello che distingue Ovidio è che lui, come non tutti i poeti, esibisce questa prenoscenza.'

⁷⁹ S. Casali, 'Apollo, Ovid and the foreknowledge of criticism (*Ars* 2.493–512)', *CJ* 93 (1997–98), 19–27, at 25.

Coroneus: not otherwise known, but the name was presumably chosen to encourage the reader to supply the Greek word for that bird, 'Corone'. Her name is certainly not 'Coronis', as in the plot summaries of some mediaeval manuscripts and renaissance editions, for that would produce intolerable confusion.

The readerly disorientation exemplified in the premodern manuscripts and editions, and no less so in Hill's determination to set it all straight ('certainly not', 'that would produce intolerable confusion'), was of course programmed into the critical tradition by the poet himself, in this case apparently building on an effect in Callimachus, *Hecale* frs. 70–7 Hollis, the difficulty of which cannot entirely derive from the state of the text.

The often labyrinthine complexity of Ovid's narrative was also a matter for comment by ancient critics. At *Inst. Or.* 4.1.76–7, a passage hitherto mentioned only in passing, Quintilian is offering instruction as to the proper way to manage the transitions between the various component parts of a speech (*Inst. Or.* 4.1.76–7). A smooth juncture between *prooemium* and whatever follows (be it *expositio* or *probatio*) is best achieved by an explicit statement of the orator's intention at the end of the *principium* (a subsection of the *prooemium*). The admonition is driven home by a counterexample:

illa uero frigida et puerilis est in scholis adfectatio, ut ipse transitus efficiat aliquam utique sententiam et huius uelut praestigiae plausum petat, ut Ouidius lasciuire in *Metamorphoses* solet, quem tamen excusare necessitas potest res diuersissimas in speciem unius corporis colligentem. oratori uero quid est necesse surripere hanc transgressionem et iudicem fallere, qui, ut ordini rerum animum intendant, etiam commonendus est?

That is a feeble and childish affectation which they employ in the schools, when the transition itself consists of some epigram and seeks applause for this, as it were, subterfuge. Ovid is given to this kind of play in the *Metamorphoses*, but in his case there is some excuse in his need to combine subjects of the greatest diversity into the appearance of one coherent body. But why is it necessary for an orator to make this transition by stealth and to deceive the judge, who actually needs to be warned to pay attention to the organization of subjects in the speech?

The metaphor of childishness is prominent again, here used of deficient orators, and such terminology has a special force for the pedagogue Quintilian, 'uagae moderator summe iuuentae' (*Mart.* 2.90.1). But the term *lasciuire* extends the metaphor and criticism to the *Metamorphoses*, and Ovid with his notorious immaturity suits Quintilian's purposes admirably. In Ovid's case, in fact, Quintilian is willing to offer some extenuation — the poet needed to find a way of combining material of very diverse kinds — but this of course misses the crucial point that the 'difficulty,' as Solodow puts it, 'was not imposed on Ovid', but actively sought by him, and furthermore advertised within the poem as a difficulty.⁸⁰ 'The humourless Quintilian'⁸¹ also betrays some awareness that such a display of oratorical perversity might be a source of pride ('ut ipse transitus . . . huius uelut praestigiae plausum petat'), but is completely out of sympathy with it and (it goes without saying) some way short of appreciating that the deliberate creation of visibly tenuous transitions was another important element of Ovid's amused interrogation of epic convention, the ground where more than anywhere else Ovid set the competing principles of the *carmen perpetuum* and *carmen deductum* to fight it out. Ovid's childish frivolity will continue to be an issue in this section, but the word I want to concentrate upon particularly in Quintilian's remark is not now *puerilis* or *lasciuire* but *corpus*. Here, as often, it denotes a 'body of writing', a literary work, but Joseph Farrell has shown how 'live' this metaphor from the physical body remains in the *Metamorphoses*.⁸² In this section we shall encounter another young man in conflict with his father, but this time the major site for conflict, for metaliterary play, and for 'preconoscenza della critica' will be his *corpus*.

⁸⁰ Solodow, *op. cit.* (n. 20), 27.

⁸¹ E. J. Kenney in Kenney and Clausen, *op. cit.* (n. 18), 432.

⁸² J. Farrell, 'The Ovidian *corpus*: poetic body and

poetic text', in Hardie, Barchiesi and Hinds, *op. cit.* (n. 8), 127–41. See especially 130–1 on literary applications of the term *corpus*.

The *Metamorphoses* is broadly divisible into three parts, gods (Books 1–6), heroes (6–11) and history (11–15), although this organizational principle, like every other in the *Metamorphoses*, is far from clear or stable. Alessandro Barchiesi has noted how the first division (between gods and men), which he locates between 6.420 and 421, is signposted by a reference to the Isthmus of Corinth, a geographical marker which possesses an equivocal status closely analogous to Ovid's transitions. In Barchiesi's terms, it 'collega due terre, divide due mari'; it is 'uno spazio che chiude (*clauduntur*) e apre (*spectantur*) la vista su realtà separate'.⁸³ The Hellespont, prominent at the heroes/history interface at 11.195, is a similarly ambiguous landmark. Together, Isthmus and Hellespont constitute 'separazioni sottili, che aiutano a definire coppie di terre e di mari, e insieme offrono facili transizioni'; they 'are demarcations, but also provide passage: they are barriers, and transitions'.⁸⁴ But Ovid's transitions generate 'transitional allusion', it seems, rather as more orthodox texts do 'closural allusion' as they conclude:⁸⁵ there are very good arguments for seeing the moment of transition in Book 6 as altogether less clear-cut, or at least for allowing that it would be unlike this poem to be too categorical as to where the point of transition falls. In his reference to the Book 6 transition Niklas Holzberg lays significant emphasis on the introductory role played by the figure of Pelops in the brief treatment he receives at 6.401–11.⁸⁶

talibus extemplo redit ad praesentia dictis
 uulgi et extinctum cum stirpe Amphion luget;
 mater in invidia est: hanc tunc quoque dicitur unus
 fesse Pelops umeroque, suas a pectore postquam
 deduxit uestes, ebur ostendisse sinistro.
 concolor hic umerus nascendi tempore dextro
 corporeusque fuit; manibus mox caesa paternis
 membra ferunt iunxisse deos, aliisque repertis,
 cui locus est iuguli medius summique lacerti
 defuit; impositum est non comparentis in usum
 partis ebur, factoque Pelops fuit integer illo.

With such words the people return immediately to contemporary concerns and mourn the death of Amphion and his offspring. The mother receives the blame, but there was one man, Pelops, who is said to have mourned her also at that time, and to have revealed, when he pulled his clothes from his breast, ivory on his left shoulder. This shoulder was at the time of his birth the same colour as his right, and made of flesh; subsequently, they say, his limbs had been chopped up at his father's hands, and reunited by the gods, but though the rest were found, that belonging to the place between the throat and the top of the arm was missing. Ivory was supplied to serve for the part that had not been found, and by that action Pelops was made whole.

Barchiesi is quite right to say that the Tereus myth which issues from the Isthmus, so to speak, is in its human focus a marked and emblematic departure from the divine machinery which preceded. But if Tereus is a representative of the World of Heroes, and a departure from the World of the Gods, Pelops is nothing less than an embodiment of the meeting of the two realms, since he is an instance of co-operation between the divine and the human, gods (re)creating a man. In 'membra ferunt iunxisse deos' (408), furthermore, we are entitled to bear in mind Farrell's remark that 'the *Metamorphoses* is . . . a literary *corpus*, a "body" of which the individual books are the limbs or members',⁸⁷

⁸³ A. Barchiesi, *Il poeta e il principe. Ovidio e il discorso Augusteo* (1994), 248. There is an English version of the relevant section of the book at 'Endgames: Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 15 and *Fasti* 6', in D. H. Roberts, F. M. Dunn and D. P. Fowler (eds), *Classical Closure: Reading the End in Greek and Latin Literature* (1997), 181–208, with the 'unclear boundaries' at 181–3.

⁸⁴ D. C. Feeney, 'Mea Tempora: patterning of time in the *Metamorphoses*', in Hardie, Barchiesi and Hinds, op. cit. (n. 8), 13–30, at 18.

⁸⁵ D. P. Fowler, 'First thoughts on closure: problems and prospects', *MD* 22 (1989), 75–122 at 81–2, and *Roman Constructions: Readings in Postmodern Latin* (2000), 239–83, at 245, citing B. H. Smith, *Poetic Closure: A Study of How Poems End* (1968), 172–82.

⁸⁶ N. Holzberg, *Ovid. Dichter und Werk* (1997), 136.

⁸⁷ Farrell, op. cit. (n. 82), 131.

in other words to interpret *membra* as the 'sections' (*OLD* 5b) of a larger literary work which is, not coincidentally, experiencing problems of articulation closely parallel to Pelops' own at this very moment. In short, the Pelops passage has a lot to say about the process of transition, because Pelops' *corpus* was itself a salient example of juncture achieved with difficulty.

At this moment of major transition Ovid arranges a particularly violent departure from what precedes.⁸⁸ It takes more than a moment to identify the relevance of Pelops to the story of Niobe (that she, like Pelops, was a child of Tantalus; the information was provided back at 6.172), and just to compound the tenuousness of the connection Ovid brackets the Pelops episode with two examples of one of his wittiest connective strategies, that by means of someone or something uniquely *unconnected* with what has gone before.⁸⁹ Pelops is the only one (*unus*, 403) to mourn Niobe, and Athens alone (*solae . . . Athenae*, 421) fails to join the other cities in consoling the Thebans for the troubles brought about by her. The reader's disorientation is fostered equally energetically within the Pelops passage, where Ovid violently drags the story away from its point of relevance (such as it was) to the preceding narrative (Pelops' kinship with Niobe), and towards its point of connection with the condition of the poem, the hero's ivory shoulder.

Fissile artefacts figure largely in the *Metamorphoses*, from the universe on down, and the reasons are not far to seek. Icarus' wings are a salient example; Pelops another. Pelops is dismembered by his father, but the gods join the dispersed limbs up again, and to that extent Ovid's text once again contrives to anticipate Quintilian's account of Ovid 'res diuersissimas in speciem unius corporis colligentem'. But the correlation between the reconstruction of Pelops and the composition of the *Metamorphoses* goes rather further than this, and here we find introduced once again that strain of self-criticism which we have identified repeatedly in the Ovidian metatext. For the recomposition of Pelops' *corpus* is problematic. A joint is missing, and the gap has to be bridged by artificial means, the shoulder made of ivory. The problem of articulation which the Pelops interlude describes, just like the one it embodies, is resolved then, but not easily, not without awkwardness, and (above all) not invisibly. Pelops' ivory shoulder, like Ovid's textual juncture, is *conspicuous*, a characteristic foregrounded in Pindar's and Virgil's accounts of it (ἐλέφαντι φαίδιμον ὄμων, *Ol.* 1.27; 'umeroque Pelops insignis eburno', *Geo.* 3.7), and brilliantly conveyed by both the sense and the awkward syntax of Ovid's 'impositum est non comparentis in usum/ partis ebur', from which (nevertheless) 'ivory' stands out.⁹⁰

The myth reflects the condition of its text, then: an uneasy integration. But the character of the myth makes a contribution here too. For the tale of Pelops' shoulder was as problematic as its topic. Ever since Pindar, who at *Ol.* 1.25–9 casts doubt on the veracity of the story that the gods had feasted on Pelops' body, the myth had had the status of a dubious narrative: in relation to the reference to Pelops in *Georgics* 3, Richard Thomas proposed an allusion to Callimachus, on the grounds that it was precisely the kind of contested story he went for: 'The matter of the shoulder, involving the possibility of cannibalism by the gods, was one which must have appealed to Callimachus, since even in Pindar it is the subject of debate (ζήτημα).'⁹¹ Between Pelops' neck and upper arm, in other words, there was also a credibility gap. We are encouraged at multiple levels to have no confidence in the junction, be it poetic or physical. 'Artificial' is the apt description here for both human joint and literary *segue*. Pelops has an artificial limb, and as Solodow insists, 'In the techniques of transition . . . we sense the presence of that

⁸⁸ 'Technisch erfolgt der Übergang zu Pelops "gewaltsam"', in F. Bömer, *P. Ovidius Naso, Metamorphosen: Kommentar, Buch VI–VII* (1976), ad 6.401–11, citing Kraus, *RE* 18.1.1942.43.

⁸⁹ Solodow's *transitio per absentem*: op. cit. (n. 20), 43–4.

⁹⁰ Ivory, with its misleading similarity to flesh (it was of course an ivory statue which deceived Pygma-

lion, *Met.* 10.243–97), might itself be considered an intrinsically dubious substance. It was the material of the gates of deception, after all (Hom., *Od.* 19.564–5; Virg., *Aen.* 6.895–6), and Homer's play on words, οἱ μὲν κ' ἔλθωσι διὰ πριστοῦ ἐλέφαντος, οἱ δ' ἐλεφαίρονται, 'those dreams that pass through sawn ivory deceive', will have been influential.

⁹¹ R. F. Thomas, *Virgil, Georgics* (1988), ad loc.

figure "behind" the poem (as we are wont to say) who is in control of it.' Ovid never lets us forget the 'artificiality' of this poem, the role in its creation of the *artifex*.⁹²

VII

My main aim in this paper, nevertheless, has been to expose the dominant metaphor of Ovidian criticism, one which, it transpires, came as naturally to Ovid himself as to Seneca, Quintilian, and Dryden. There are no doubt many other instances where the childishness of the poetic exercise finds some kind of reflection in the plot of the *Metamorphoses*. There is certainly one: the story in *Metamorphoses* 9, following incidents from the life of Hercules naturally full of references to his *labores* (the term: 9.14, 67, 180, 277, 285; the Labours enumerated: 182–98, cf. 67–76), of how Alcmene became *puerpera*, 'delivered of a child', after the truly epic, week-long labour (*labores*, 289) required to produce Hercules.⁹³ I could also connect the themes of Ovid's 'foreknowledge of criticism', exploitation of tensions in the *Aeneid*, and foregrounding of the child with Catherine Connors' excellent reading of the Cyparissus episode of *Metamorphoses* 10 (106–42) as an allusion to Virgil's narrative of the stag of Silvia and its slaying by Ascanius in *Aeneid* 7.⁹⁴ Once again Ovid's choice of Virgilian model was motivated by a recognition that the passage sat a little uncomfortably in Virgil's decorous epic, and it was not only Macrobius who found the incident 'leue nimisque puerile' (*Sat.* 5.17.2). Ovid's Apollo seems to offer a similar assessment at *Met.* 10.133 when he warns (*admonuit*) Cyparissus (ineffectually, of course) to grieve 'leuiter pro materia', archly literary-critical terms which suggest 'that Apollo in his capacity as god of poetry . . . thinks that Cyparissus' grief is a "light" matter, that is, a theme appropriate for a Hellenistic epyllion'. Cyparissus' childishness is prominent throughout the story, and operates implicitly as an explanation of his inappropriate behaviour. But in a broader sense, too, there is truth in Jean-Léon Géro me's strictly inaccurate rendering of the Pygmalion myth from *Met.* 10.243–97,⁹⁵ which gives a role to the figure of Cupid (who fires an arrow at Pygmalion and the statue as they embrace) that he does not have in the original text. Cupid, or at least the spirit of the mischievous child, is a constant presence in the *Metamorphoses*.⁹⁶ Herein lies the weakness of Karl Galinsky's attempt to find in the *Metamorphoses* a text in fundamental sympathy with the Augustan dispensation, on the grounds that both possessed 'an overall design or *auctoritas* that holds' their limitless variety 'together'.⁹⁷ But is the kind of *auctoritas* validated in the *Metamorphoses* anything

⁹² Solodow, *op. cit.* (n. 20), 46. Cf. with this reading of Ovid's Pelops D. Steiner, *Images in Mind: Statues in Archaic and Classical Greek Literature and Thought* (2001), 282–6 on the self-reflexive potential of Pindar's account of Pelops in *Olympian* 1.

⁹³ cf. Feeney, *op. cit.* (n. 16), 206.

⁹⁴ C. Connors, 'Seeing cypresses in Virgil', *CJ* 88 (1992–3), 1–17, at 4–12.

⁹⁵ For a discussion of how G ro me's representations of Pygmalion reflect on his own artistic enterprise, 'an obsessive and narcissistic concern with the nature and power of his own art', see Hardie, *op. cit.* (n. 15), 206–26.

⁹⁶ For other intimations of Cupid's agency see his *apparent* defeat by Medea's sense of 'Right, Duty and Shame' at *Met.* 7.72–3, the heedlessness which causes the Venus and Adonis episode at 10.525–6, his exculpation from responsibility for the incestuous impulse of Myrrha, 10.311–12, less than convincing after his involvement in Byblis' passion for her twin brother (9.543–4), and the confirmation at 10.26–9 that the extension of Cupid's power to the Underworld envisaged in Book 5 has been achieved. Ovid's

influence in this respect shows in Statius' *Achilleid*, a text much indebted to the *Metamorphoses*, which I interpret as a fragment 'by design', a poem which self-consciously fails to attain to epic status and gives out, not coincidentally, just as its protagonist, 'nec adhuc maturus Achilles' (1.440), threatens to reach adulthood: when the text fails at 2.167 Achilles is leaving Scyros on the way to Troy, and has just completed an account of his childhood. On the Ovidianism of the *Achilleid* see G. Rosati, 'Momenti e forme della fortuna antica di Ovidio: l'*Achilleide* di Stazio', in M. Picone and B. Zimmermann (eds), *Ovidius Redivivus* (1994), 43–62; S. J. Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext: Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman Poetry* (1998), 135–44; and Hinds, *op. cit.* (n. 1), 236–44, esp. 242–4, for a clever reading of the 'shipboard storytelling' between Achilles and Ulysses as an adumbration of 'two ways other than Statius' of beginning an Achilles epic'.

⁹⁷ K. Galinsky, 'Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Augustan cultural thematics', in Hardie, Barchiesi and Hinds, *op. cit.* (n. 8), 103–11, at 111.

with which Augustus could have identified? Somebody is in control of the *Metamorphoses*, of that there is no doubt, but the consensus of Ovid and his critics is that that somebody has the temperament of a child.

But it remains important to appreciate the implications of the fact that Ovid encodes within his heterodox poem its own criticism. Because this is not a simple case of 'rejection of Augustan classicism (especially its concept of *decorum* or "appropriateness")',⁹⁸ but a more subtle cultural phenomenon altogether. Charles Martindale talks of the 'dichotomy . . . within the same man in the case of Dryden, who criticised Ovid along familiar lines in his prose, while responding to him with instinctive sensitivity in his translations'.⁹⁹ But as I have already suggested, the 'dichotomy within the same man' was already present in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. At root, as the quotation above from Tony Boyle suggests, the problem with the *Metamorphoses* is its persistent violation of the rules of literary decorum. This is the stricture underlying Seneca's critique and much of the other critical material we have considered, but it is again one clearly acknowledged by the poet himself, most memorably in the very passage which Seneca dissects. Lines 302–3 and 305–6 of Book 1, with their dolphins up trees and boars swimming, notoriously allude to the most influential treatment of decorum in literary history, Horace's *Ars Poetica* (29–30). Ovid is not rejecting notions of decorum, then, but committing violations of decorum which demand to be seen as such. There is a difference. Ovid locates his departures from propriety clearly in relation to the ideology which generated those rules of propriety. Seneca the Elder famously put his finger on it when he remarked that Ovid 'non ignoravit uitia sua sed amavit', and 'summi ingenii uiro non iudicium defuisse ad compescendam licentiam carminum suorum sed animum' (*Contr.* 2.2.12). The *Metamorphoses* knows that what it is doing is reprehensible. Ovid's rebellion against the prevailing ideology is undertaken in full knowledge of the normative values he was transgressing, and in full awareness also that they would comfortably survive any rebellion on his part. The Elder Seneca's observations come in the context of what might at a stretch be described as Ovid's aesthetic manifesto,¹⁰⁰ 'decentior facies est in qua aliquis naeuos sit', 'a face is more becoming if it possess some flaw'. Manifesto or not, Ovid's aphorism struggles heroically (and hopelessly) against the prevailing sense of *decens*, an obviously key term in the criticism of decorum which would find Ovid's approach so wanting. To express his creed (if such it be) Ovid is driven to express himself in (necessarily self-defeating) logical impossibilities.¹⁰¹

What this means, first of all, is that the *Metamorphoses* is a counter-cultural document, and not primarily by virtue of relatively superficial gestures like the deliberately inept panegyric of the *Palatia caeli* line, or the hint of Actium in Apollo's bloated heroics against Python.¹⁰² The *Metamorphoses* is subversive because it makes a target of some of the most fundamental categories of its culture. It is the dedicated foe of order, consistency, and authority. Order, authority, seriousness, and decorum are defining characteristics of the epic genre, certainly, but they are also, self-evidently, principles claimed by any prevailing ideology, that promoted by the Augustan regime being no exception. Fowler is very clear, for example, how very close to the core both of the Principate and of Western ideology in general is the paternal model of authority, and furthermore how impossible it is to distinguish the promotion of paternal authority within the epic genre and in the wider world (of the Principate, and beyond);¹⁰³ we might add, how impossible to distinguish *assaults* on paternal authority within literature and without. Undermine the father, as the *Metamorphoses* does, and you are arguably

⁹⁸ A. J. Boyle, *The Imperial Muse: Ramus Essays on Roman Literature of the Empire, Vol. 1* (1988), 1.

⁹⁹ Martindale, op. cit. (n. 22), 2

¹⁰⁰ See M. P. Cunningham, 'Ovid's poetics', *CJ* 53 (1958), 253–9, who parallels *Controv.* 2.2.12 with *Am.* 3.1.10, where the attractiveness of Elegy's blemish makes a virtue of the imbalance of the elegiac couplet. Elegy, with this inherent flaw, always remained Ovid's dominant aesthetic.

¹⁰¹ cf. G. Tissol, *The Face of Nature: Wit, Narrative*

and *Cosmic Origins in Ovid's Metamorphoses* (1997), 11–88, on the 'transgressive language' of the poem, and 14–15 on the 'semantic short-circuit' of the self-cancelling paradox, a trope very prominent in the work, and which is a key, as Tissol argues, to Ovid's quite profound disruption of the reader's cultural expectations.

¹⁰² Nicoll, op. cit. (n. 35), 181, citing Prop. 4.6.35–6.

¹⁰³ Fowler, op. cit. (n. 4), 46–7/230–1.

undermining *everything*. No wonder Ovid expressed himself in logical impossibilities. And yet the *Metamorphoses* consistently exposes its own *nequitia* to view and to censure. This does not make the text less revolutionary, but it may make it more interesting. Ovid both stages acts of subversion and makes the case for the prosecution.

An instructive parallel might be drawn here with a more recent (and it must be said, less equivocal) act of subversion in art, this time by Willi Baumeister, a proscribed artist living in Nazi Germany, and dating to about 1941. Baumeister took a photograph of a relief in a classicizing idiom of a nude hero slaying a serpent, and added a graffito over the hero's genitalia which turned them into the features of a bow-tied bureaucrat.¹⁰⁴ The original relief was by Arno Breker, a sculptor much favoured by Albert Speer and the Nazi establishment, and was entitled *The Avenger*. Its meanings — the identity of the heroic avenger and of the serpent, the crimes which required an avenger — are not hard to fathom. The kinship of Baumeister's piece with the *Metamorphoses* (which it would be inappropriate to push too far) lies firstly in the fact of its assault on an example of High Art, a category which has in both cases suffered appropriation by the prevailing regime: epic was the *Aeneid*; High Art was the rejection of all things 'degenerate'. But there is a similarity also in the style of the assault. It is the manhood of Breker's sculpture which is singled out for defacement; and the mode of artistic expression chosen by Baumeister is the low, antisocial, juvenile mode of the graffito. His image is very funny; it is, *by the same token*, profoundly subversive, an assault on the ideals of authority, human achievement, manly virtue, ultimately of art itself. But since Nazism had managed to insinuate itself into the very fabric of German culture, and had successfully colonized the conceptual territory of seriousness, sanity, respectability, and order, Baumeister was effectively obliged to adopt for his attack the standpoint of a cultural 'degenerate', as if there was no room anymore to criticize Nazi art from the standpoint of 'respectability'. This makes his piece a very radical critique, but also one which is necessarily self-defeating. Baumeister's scurrilous graffito cannot help but corroborate the ideology of order, sanity, and purity it lampoons.

Ovid, *mutatis mutandis*, is similarly ideologically implicated. His offences against High Art carry along with them the grounds for their own denunciation. His revolution is quite futile. But not for the first time we are alerted to common ground between the most influential poem of antiquity and postmodernist thought. Fowler's comment on the inalienability of the polarities constructed about the figure of the father is true also of Ovid's engagement with fatherly authority: 'We can deconstruct these oppositions, we can flip them to subvert patriarchal authority, but we shall never be able fully to escape them.'¹⁰⁵ The Father goes deep, but the effort to displace him is valuable, even if it prove futile. As Fowler concludes his essay, 'To try even to give up *that* father in heaven is much more difficult, the implications much more radical. It may not, indeed, be possible: but, again, I am sure that it is worthwhile.'¹⁰⁶ 'Games are serious', as Elliott put it.¹⁰⁷ The frivolities of the *Metamorphoses* are of great importance. But it is no coincidence that we are driven to such Ovidian self-cancelling paradoxes when we attempt to express it.

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¹⁰⁴ Reproduction at T. Clark, *Art and Propaganda in the Twentieth Century: the Political Image in the Age of Mass Culture* (1997), 6.

¹⁰⁵ Fowler, op. cit. (n. 4), 41/225.

¹⁰⁶ Fowler, op. cit. (n. 4), 49/233-4.

¹⁰⁷ Elliott, op. cit. (n. 27), 10-11.