THE CIPUS EPISODE IN OVID'S *METAMORPHOSES* (15.565–621)

G. KARL GALINSKY
University of Texas at Austin

While scholars are in general agreement that the tone of the *Metamorphoses* changes in its final four books, the exact nature of this change has been subject to some discussion. Some critics credit Ovid with attempting seriously to raise the poem to a higher level by emphasizing philosophical, heroic, and Julio-Claudian themes,[1] although they are aware that the amatory episodes do not disappear altogether. This tendency, in their opinion, culminates with Ovid's description of Julius Caesar's apotheosis at the end of Book 15 (745–870). This very passage, however, does not bear out their interpretation and is a good example *in parvo* of Ovid's aims in Books 11–15 of the *Metamorphoses*. The flattery that is expressed in this passage is so grotesque and absurd that its implications cannot possibly be unintentional.[2] Therefore this

[1] The opinions of L. P. Wilkinson and H. Fränkel are fairly typical in this respect. Wilkinson, in *Ovid Recalled* (Cambridge 1955) 221, remarks: "It looks very much as if his delight in invention was flagging, as well it might by now, so that he made haste to his designed conclusion. . . . But this decline really began with Book XII, in which we are aware of a conscious effort to raise the poem into a 'higher' strain." Fränkel, *Ovid: A Poet between Two Worlds* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1945) also recognizes that "the quality of his poetry was, on the whole, declining" (pp. 105–6), but goes on to argue that Ovid "was striving for a greater sublimity of subject and treatment" (p. 107). Other writers, such as W. C. Stephens, R. Crahay, and Jean Hubaux, have stressed the philosophical intent of the Pythagoras and Odysseus passages; see their contributions to N. I. Herescu, ed., *Ovidiana: Recherches sur Ovide publiées à l'occasion du bimillénaire de la naissance du poète* (Paris 1958). Detailed surveys of scholarly opinions are given by W. Marg, *Gnomon* 21 (1949) 44–57, and E. Doblhofer, "Ovidius urbanus. Eine Studie zum Humor in Ovids Metamorphosen," *Philologus* 104 (1960) 63–69. To these should be added the recent article by V. Buchheit, "Mythos und Geschichte in Ovids Metamorphosen," *Hermes* 94 (1966), esp. 90–105, who likewise does not see any element of parody in Ovid's treatment of Augustus in the *Metamorphoses*.

[2] See especially the discussion of B. Otis, *Ovid as an Epic Poet* (Cambridge 1966) 303–5. The account of Caesar's deification and Augustus' achievement is rounded out

episode is perhaps the most telling indication of the lack of sincerity and seriousness in Ovid's attitude toward Augustan themes, especially in the final books of his epic. This view has been advanced most convincingly and judiciously by Professor Otis in a recent study of the *Metamorphoses*.[3] Otis rightly points out that Ovid belonged to a different generation from that of the properly Augustan poets Vergil and Horace, and that Augustan ideology held no fascination for him except in a parodic sense. In contrast to his amatory poetry, according to Otis, Ovid's anti-Augustanism in the *Metamorphoses* is only latent. Furthermore, it would be wrong to consider this Ovidian penchant, which seems to be called anti-Augustan only for lack of a better term, in a narrowly political sense. It would amount to attributing to Ovid a sense of political involvement which was alien to him, whereas his true inclination, that of the *lusor*, the poet of *nequitia*, was to play on Augustan conventions, to refuse to take them seriously, and to exploit them for his comic purposes. At times this procedure could lead to a mockery of the Princeps himself.

An episode which illustrates all these characteristics and has been virtually overlooked so far is the description of Cipus and his horns in Book 15, the book which H. Fränkel believed to be "more consistently solemn in its tone and more conventionally religious in its themes than anything the author had published before."[4] The Cipus story has often been placed into the category of "link" episodes,[5] i.e., in the polite terminology of Ovidian scholars, stories which serve as a transition between major episodes, but are not related in content to anything preceding or following, let alone make any contribution to the meaning of the general context. The mere bulk of the Cipus episode, sixty

by Ovid's defiant statement that he is impervious to *Iovis ira* (*M.* 15.871)—after he had just sung a paean on the power of Jupiter (858–60) and even invoked him as his patron god (866). Jupiter, in these passages as elsewhere in Ovid's poetry, is clearly identified with Augustus; see K. Scott, "Emperor Worship in Ovid," *TAPA* 61 (1930) 52–58.

[3] Otis (above, note 2) ix, 278–305, 308–15, 324–45, esp. 339: "Here we come to the most decisive fact of all: in sensibility and general cast of mind, Ovid was fundamentally anti-Augustan."

[4] Fränkel (above, note 1) 110.

[5] Cf. Otis (above, note 2) 293; W. Kraus, *RE* 18, cols. 1942–43, and W. Ludwig, *Struktur und Einheit der Metamorphosen Ovids* (Berlin 1965) 70 and note 84a, argue that the Asclepius episode has no connection whatsoever with the preceding episodes and view it as the beginning of the Augustan section of Book 15.

lines, cautions against this assumption; the story of Romulus and his deification, for instance, which certainly is a major episode (14.805–61), is told in fewer lines. Ovid took exceptional care to integrate the Cipus episode well into the immediate and larger context. The mention of Tages (15.552–59), the inventor of the *disciplina Etrusca*, prepares for it because the fateful prediction is given to Cipus by precisely such a *Tyrrhenae gentis haruspex* (577; 576–85). The brief reference to the *hasta Romuli* (15.560–64) serves to recall the Romulus story of Book 14 and appropriately associates the first Roman *rex* with the king-in-spite-of-himself, Cipus. Much in the Cipus story turns on his reception in Rome (*urbe receptus*, 584), and the same holds true of the subsequent episodes of Asclepius (*Romanam intraverat urbem*, 736) and Julius Caesar (746). A more detailed interpretation of the Cipus story points up additional parallels with the Trojan–Roman context of the last four books.

The quality for which Cipus, a legendary Roman praetor, became famous, was his *pietas*. Pliny mentions him in passing (*NH* 11.45.123), and his act of devotion is described briefly by Valerius Maximus (5.6.3):

> Genucio Cipo praetori paludato portam egredienti novi atque inauditi generis prodigium incidit: namque in capite eius subito veluti cornua erepserunt, responsumque est regem eum fore, si in urbem revertisset. quod ne accideret, voluntarium ac perpetuum sibimet indixit exilium. dignam pietatem quae, quod ad solidam gloriam attinet, septem regibus praeferatur. cuius testandae gratia capitis effigies aerea portae, qua excesserat, inclusa est dictaque Rauduscula: nam olim aera raudera dicebantur.

Aside from Ovid's account, this is the only known version of the Cipus story. Within his catalogue of moralistic stories about people who showed *pietas erga parentes et fratres et patriam*, Valerius is primarily concerned with singling out Cipus as an example of *pietas erga patriam*, because he voluntarily chose to go into exile rather than impose himself as king on the Romans. His attitude sharply contrasted with that of the kings: *dignam pietatem quae, quod ad solidam gloriam pertinet, septem regibus praeferatur.*

In the final books of the *Metamorphoses*, emphasis on Cipus' paradigmatic *pietas* would have been entirely apposite. It was the much

heralded quality of Aeneas whose story, at least outwardly, occupies much of Books 13 and 14, and it also was one of the cardinal virtues which Augustus strove to associate with himself.[6] Ovid's complete deflation of the distinctive and doubtless traditional aspects of Valerius' version therefore is quite remarkable. Ovid's Cipus has no desire to exile himself, he is not concerned about his *pietas*; he returns—and it is never made quite clear whether he actually enters the city—calls an assembly of the senate and the people, and finally settles outside of the city. Ovid leaves it entirely open whether Cipus himself or the *proceres* (15.616) insisted on this withdrawal. Above all, his *pietas* is not even mentioned, let alone made the moralistic point of the story.

Rather than *pietas*, the main characteristic of the episode is the continual emphasis on Cipus' horns and his laurel wreath. His horns signify that he is to be king, and therefore he covers them up with a laurel crown. In the assembly he takes off the latter, and the people now have the opportunity to accept him for what he is (15.613–14):

> atque illud meritis clarum (quis credere possit?)
> inviti videre caput.

The phrase *meritis clarum caput*, which in no way is prepared for, as well as the ironic interjection, suggest that Ovid was not thinking only of Cipus. Instead of exiling him, the people, while not tolerating that he openly show his regal insignia, nonetheless insist that he be not entirely without honor and thus crown him again with the laurel wreath (614–15):

> nec honore carere
> ulterius passi festam imposuere coronam.

In the only interpretation which it has so far received, H. Fränkel has suggested that "the story of Cipus who covered his head with a laurel wreath (591) just as Caesar used to do (Suet. *Jul.* 45.2), and who

[6] The best example is the golden shield set up in his honor in the Curia in 27 B.C. because of his *virtus*, *clementia*, *iustitia*, and *pietas* (*Mon. Anc.* 34). Even in Tacitus' terse and grudging account of Augustus' reign the mention of Augustus' *pietas* is the very first point made in the enumeration of the emperor's praiseworthy deeds (*Ann.* 1.9) and in the subsequent rebuttal (*Ann.* 1.10). Cf. N. Moseley, "Pius Aeneas," *CJ* 20 (1925) 398–400, and D. L. Drew, *The Allegory of the Aeneid* (Oxford 1927) 79: "In Augustus' life there is nothing more startling perhaps than his persistent attempt, not indeed to placate the gods—for that is comprehensible enough—but to be really thought pious."

patriotically declined the kingship of Rome when it was offered to him" might be "meant to be a parallel to Caesar's refusal of the regal diadem when it was offered him by Marc Antony (Suet. *Jul.* 79.2)."[7] We have seen, however, that Ovid's Cipus, in contrast to Valerius Maximus', does not refuse this honor outright. Besides, Ovid is intentionally ambiguous about the place of Cipus' confrontation with the senate and the people. From Valerius' account, it is quite clear that Cipus was not supposed to return to the city unless he wanted to be king: *responsum est eum regem fore, si in urbem revertisset.* The seer in the *Metamorphoses* makes the same point to Cipus (15.583–85):

> tu modo rumpe moras portasque intrare patentes
> adpropera! sic fata iubent; namque urbe receptus
> rex eris et sceptro tutus potiere perenni.

When he addresses the Romans, however, Cipus changes the wording of the oracle to (594–95)

> "est" ait "hic unus, quem vos *nisi pellitis urbe*,
> rex erit."

This either implies that Cipus actually is in the city or, more subtly, it betrays his desire to be there.[8] As if to correct Cipus, the poet finally addresses him with *muros intrare vetaris* (616).

Above all, the continual emphasis on the laurel crown, which is a detail that Ovid added to the story, is much more fitting for Augustus, who displayed a vastly greater preference for this emblem than did Caesar. In connection with Augustus' *politique Apollinienne* the laurel and laurel wreath became the personal badge of honor of the Emperor, as is attested by the copious literary, epigraphical, and artistic evidence.[9] Especially in Augustan art, the recurrence of representations of laurel branches and trees amounts to what has rightly been termed a "leitmotif."[10] A passage in the *Tristia* shows that the laurel was intended

[7] Fränkel (above, note 1) 226 note 104.

[8] *Aggeribus factis . . . insistit* (592–93) would of course be more suitable for a place outside the city than for a location within the city walls.

[9] A valuable collection of the literary and epigraphic sources, together with much of the relevant bibliography, is found in F. Bömer, *P. Ovidius Naso: Die Fasten*, vol. 2: *Kommentar* (Heidelberg 1957) 151–52 (*ad Fast.* 3.137).

[10] So E. Simon, *Die Portlandvase* (Mainz 1957) 40; cf. G. Rodenwaldt, *Berliner Winckelmannsprogramm* (1925), with a good collection of the material.

to have several significances,[11] but only the laurel wreath is of more specific interest for our investigation. Many coins show that it was habitually worn by Augustus, who thus deliberately chose to contrast himself with Julius Caesar.[12] For although Caesar refused to be crowned with the *diadema* of the Hellenistic kings, he wore, during the last months of his life, the *corona aurea* of the Etruscan kings instead of the simple laurel wreath.[13] This *corona aurea* was also the emblem of the early Roman kings (D. H. 3.61.1). Cipus' refusal to become one of these is not analogous to Caesar's action: Caesar rejected the honor of becoming a Hellenistic dynast, but in fact claimed as his own the symbol of the early Roman kings. Furthermore, Caesar exchanged the laurel wreath for the golden crown, whereas Cipus hides his horns with the laurel.

It is this *corona aurea Etrusca*, and not the diadem, that has its counterpart in the horns of Cipus. Cipus' horns signify kingship (595–96):

> rex erit. is qui sit, signo, non nomine dicam:
> cornua fronte gerit!

and he has to wear them all day just as the Roman kings wore their golden crown. The only thing one can do with so embarrassing a symbol is to cover it up.

Purposely enough, Ovid has Cipus cover his horns with laurel, the favorite tree of Augustus. Augustus' true status was well recognized by himself and his contemporaries,[14] though it was never made explicit

[11] 3.1.41–44:

> num quia perpetuos meruit domus ista triumphos?
> an quia Leucadio semper amata deo est?
> ipsane quod festa est an quod facit omnia festa?
> quam tribuit terris pacis an ista nota est?

[12] See Bömer (above, note 9) 151–52, and the works cited in the following note.

[13] See the discussions, which are based mostly on numismatic evidence, by E. Simon, "Neue Literatur zum Caesarporträt," *Gymnasium* 64 (1957) 298–99 and, with more detail, K. Kraft, *Der goldene Kranz Caesars und der Kampf um die Entlarvung des "Tyrannen,"* Sonderdruck from *Jahrb. für Numismatik und Geldgeschichte* 3–4 (1952–53); cf. Cic. *Phil.* 2.85 and Dio 44.11.2, and the remarks of H. Volkmann, "Caesars letzte Pläne im Spiegel der Münzen," *Gymnasium* 64 (1957) 304–7, and A. Alföldi, "Insignien und Tracht der römischen Kaiser," *MDAI(R)* 50 (1935) 19–22, with pls. 13.1 and 13.2.

[14] Even if only in jest, as is evident from the phrase "veniet ergo ab ista parasitica mensa ad hanc regiam" in Suet. *Vita Horati* p. 45, 11 (Reiff.). The two laurel trees that flanked the entrance to Augustus' house on the Palatine had been traditionally associated with the Regia; see the next paragraph. In Suet. *Jul.* 6.1 Caesar extols his royal lineage, and in *Pont.* 1.8.21 Ovid addresses Augustus as *rex*.

and was kept camouflaged as well as Cipus' horns in the *Metamorphoses*. The Princeps was careful to avoid the political mistakes of his adoptive father, but many of Caesar's achievements and policies reached their culmination under Augustus, even if in a less obtrusive manner. This to me seems to be the point of Ovid's grotesque eulogy of Caesar (15.750–51),

neque enim de Caesaris actis
ullum maius opus, quam quod pater extitit huius,

and, more subtly, of the Cipus episode also. As in the Cipus story, even the senate and the people were given some say in the Augustan reign.

There are further Augustan allusions in the Cipus story. The mention of *augur*, which is emphatically placed at the end of 15.596 and which occurs in a context where Cipus, as we saw earlier, at least imagines himself to be king in the city, can certainly be considered to allude to the common etymology of *augur* and *augustus*.[15] This type of reference is entirely fitting for Book 15, in which Augustus twice is alluded to even more obviously.[16] The end of the Cipus episode again suggests an even more important Augustan parallel. Whereas Valerius Maximus relates in fairly general terms that Cipus' *effigies capitis* was etched into the gate through which he had left Rome, Ovid emphasizes that the regal symbol of Cipus, his two horns, are engraved on the pillars of the gate (620–21). By decree of the senate, the gate of Augustus' palace always was to be flanked by two laurel trees. This custom dated back to the early Roman kings, and the entrance to the Regia had been adorned in such a way for centuries (Macrob. 1.12.6). They became a landmark of the Palatine; Augustus thought them worthy of mention in the *Res Gestae* (34); they were commemorated on coin issues[17] and regarded as symbols of peace

[15] As does *augur* . . . *Phoebus* in Horace's *C.S.* 61; see J. Gagé, "Observations sur le Carmen Saeculare d'Horace," *REL* 9 (1931) 295. The relation between *augur*, *augurium*, and *augustus* was known to the Romans since Ennius (Fr. 501 Vahlen) and played up in Augustan times; see Suet. *Aug.* 7 and 95, and Ovid, *Fast.* 1.609–12; cf. Ernout-Meillet, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine* (Paris 1951) 101, and Walde-Hofmann, *Lateinisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg 1938) 83.

[16] 15.869 and 15.144; cf. Crahay-Hubaux (above, note 1) 300.

[17] See M. von Bahrfeldt, *Die römische Goldmünzenprägung während der Republik und unter Augustus* (Halle 1923) pls. 11.11 and 14.7; C. H. V. Sutherland, *Coinage in Roman Imperial Policy 31 B.C.–A.D. 68* (London 1951), pl. 3.9.

(*Trist.* 3.1.44), triumph (*Trist.* 3.1.41), and Apollo (Martial 8.28.7), whose temple stood next to the house of Augustus. Ovid repeatedly refers to these two laurel trees in his poetry. Significantly enough, the reference which is paralleled most closely by the description of Cipus' horns occurs in Book 1 of the *Metamorphoses*:

"postibus Augustis eadem fidissima custos
ante fores stabis mediamque tuebere quercum . . .
tu quoque perpetuos semper gere frondis honores!" (*M.* 1.562–65)

cornuaque aeratis miram referentia formam
postibus insculpunt, longum mansura per aevum (*M.* 15.620–21).

This is an additional "Augustan" parallel between Books 1 and 15.[18] The elaborate ritual in which Cipus engages (15.572–80) also agrees well with Augustus' meticulous observance of and concern for the traditional religious practices.

Finally, a paraphrase from Vergil is used to make the identification of Cipus and Augustus even more explicit. The appearance of the twin horns on Cipus' forehead is described as a *monstrum* (571). The same term is used by Vergil (*Aeneid* 2.680) in the description of the lambent flame on Ascanius' head, which is recalled by the appearance of the twin flames springing from Augustus' temples in *Aeneid* 8. Vergil's *geminas cui tempora flammas* (*Aen.* 8.680) have their counterpart in Cipus' *gemino praesignia tempora cornu* (*M.* 15.611). *Corona*, *tempora*, and *praesignia* are also reminiscent of Vergil's description of Agrippa which follows upon that of Augustus in *Aeneid* 8 (683–84):

cui, belli *insigne* superbum
tempora navali fulgent rostrata *corona*.

The scene in *Aeneid* 8 builds up to the triple triumph of Augustus, and an allusion to a triumph, one of Ovid's favorite imperial themes, is not missing from the description of Cipus' return to Rome (*M.* 15.569):

restitit, ut victor domito veniebat ab hoste.

[18] The most obvious of these parallels is the role of Jupiter in Book 1 and Augustus in Book 15. Jupiter presides over the *concilium deorum*, which is patterned on a Senate meeting. He asks for revenge against Lykaon, just as Augustus had avenged the murder of Caesar (*M.* 1.199–205). In 15, Augustus appears as *fortissimus ultor* (821) and is identified with Jupiter (858–60). Cf. Otis (above, note 2) 97–100 and 307, and, with more detail, Buchheit (above, note 1) 85–90, and Scott (above, note 2), 52–58.

This *imitatio* of Vergil, which is enhanced by the mock-epic simile in lines 603–6, sets Ovid's attitude toward Augustan ideology into even greater relief. "Vergil was ever-present in the poetry of Ovid," who never quoted Vergil directly but drew on him in countless instances, and in imitating him interpreted him.[19] In his love poetry, Ovid's subtle mockery was not directed primarily at Vergil himself, but at the established "official" values which Ovid often deflated by placing Vergil's noble lines into an erotic context.[20] In the last books of the *Metamorphoses*, Vergil's poetry confronted Ovid more intensively than elsewhere, for Ovid now also attempted poetically to render the story of Aeneas and Augustus. Ovid, however, to use Otis' well-put phrase, refused to take the Vergilian symbols seriously;[21] his epic models are vulgarized, as in the Achaemenides episode, or treated perfunctorily—Odysseus completely eclipses Aeneas—or they serve as a frame for amatory episodes. The language of the epic is not imitated but parodied, as in the Cipus story, and the linguistic treatment only reflects the poet's parodic outlook on Augustan themes.

At the same time, Ovid's decision to restrict his Vergilian "quotations" to Vergil's description of the triumph after Actium shows that his parody of Vergil in a specific context can be more meaningful than is generally assumed. For the laurel, the symbol of Apollo, became closely associated with Augustus' victory at Actium and the ensuing triumph. Thus Propertius makes Apollo, "with laurel-bearing hand," give Augustus the signal for the attack at Actium (4.6.53–54):

> tempus adest, committe rates: ego temporis auctor
> ducam laurigera Iulia rostra manu.

Since Apollo shared in Augustus' triumph, Tibullus calls on the god who is "crowned with triumphal laurel" (2.5.5–6):

> ipse triumphali devinctus tempora lauro,
> dum cumulant aras, ad tua sacra veni.

[19] For detailed studies, see F. Bömer, "Ovid und die Sprache Vergils," *Gymnasium* 66 (1959) 268–88, from where (p. 285) the quotation in the text is taken; Rosa Lamacchia, "Ovidio interprete di Virgilio," *Maia* 12 (1960) 310–30, and E. J. Kenney, "Nequitiae poeta," in *Ovidiana* (above, note 1) 201–10.

[20] So Kenney (above, note 19) 209.

[21] Otis (above, note 2) 329.

Ovid himself gives the clearest expression to the association between Actium, the laurel, and Peace. In the *Fasti*, he summons the goddess Pax who is crowned with "Actian leaves" (1.711–12):

> frondibus Actiacis comptos redimita capillos
> Pax ades et toto mitis in orbe mane.

It is not accidental, then, that the epithet of the laurel in the Cipus episode is *pacalis* (15.591).[22]

This emphasis on the Apollonian-Augustan laurel in the Cipus story also establishes a strong link with the following episode, whose central figure is Asclepius. Both the Cipus and the Asclepius stories turn on oracles. The Romans, in their predicament, go to Delphi, *oracula Phoebi* (631), where Apollo's *laurus* is kept (634). The answer is that the Romans do not need Apollo, *sed Apolline nato* (639), who soon reveals himself frighteningly in the form of a snake (669–96) and is brought to Rome as the *Phoebeius anguis* (742), *salutifer urbi* (744). Besides expressing the idea that Rome has become the center of the civilized world,[23] the episode is entirely appropriate for the Augustan context in the light of the popular belief, which doubtless was strong at Augustus' time, that Augustus was the son of Apollo. The god, as Suetonius relates (*Aug.* 94), had fathered Octavian by approaching Atia in the guise of a snake. The Asclepius episode, at least in part, thus may well be Ovid's comment on the spreading of the worship of Augustus from Greece and the provinces to Rome herself, even though it did not lead to any outright religious practices in the capital. Augustus, however, could not be *mortali semine cretus* (15.760), and in the episode which follows that of Asclepius, Ovid refers to Augustus' divine status in less veiled and circumspect terms than Vergil or Horace.

Regardless of whether this interpretation of the Asclepius episode is accepted, it is evident that Ovid's account of Cipus was well adapted by him for his aims in the last books of the *Metamorphoses*. Far from being a trivial, haphazard link piece, the story is an excellent example

[22] Cf. *pacifera laurus* (Pliny, *NH* 15.29.133). Wreaths of laurel are worn by the participants in the sacrifice on the Ara Pacis friezes; see H. Riemann, "Pacis Ara Augustae," *RE* 18, col. 2096.

[23] So Fränkel (above, note 1) 108.

of Ovid's indifference to Augustan ideals, his gift of irreverent, comic innuendo, and the nature of his Vergilian mimesis. It is not one of the episodes which impress themselves on the reader as vividly as the story of Vertumnus and Pomona or Ulysses' debate with Ajax, but within its context it serves its subtle purpose well.