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VI

L. P. WILKINSON

Greek Influence on the Poetry of Ovid



## GREEK INFLUENCE ON THE POETRY OF OVID

THERE is a fine saying that 'every educated man has two countries – his own and France'. In the same sense every educated Augustan had two countries, his own and Greece. Consider the experience of men like Horace and Ovid. They were taught Greek language and literature as well as Latin by the most distinguished schoolmasters of Rome – *insignes urbis ab arte viri*; they then proceeded to Athens for further study; and finally they completed the Grand Tour by visiting the famous Greek cities of Asia Minor.<sup>1</sup> In the self-consciously patriotic *Fasti*, in a passage glorifying Mars, Romulus and the primitive Romans which smacks of the rhetorical schools,<sup>2</sup> Ovid might refer contemptuously to

*Graecia, facundum sed male forte genus,*

but in general his whole attitude is very different. He had inherited with the elegiac form the individualism of Tibullus and Propertius, the championship of the things of the mind against Roman materialism and worship of power, wealth and political success. Even in the elder generation which experienced the first enthusiasm of the Augustan revival of *Romanitas* Horace had boldly spoken out, in the Epistle to the Pisos (323-4), for Greek humanism and integrity as against the worldly values of Rome:

*Grais ingenium, Grais dedit ore rotundo  
Musa loqui, praeter laudem nullius avaris;*

and Ovid, hitting back at those who bade him follow, *more patrum*, the glamour of arms and the Forum, takes up the same theme:

*Mortale est quod quaeris opus; mihi fama perennis  
quaeritur, in toto semper ut orbe canar.*<sup>3</sup>

1. Hor., S. I, 6, 76-8; Ep. II, 2, 43; S. I, 7; Ep. I, II. Ov., Tr. I, 10, 16; 2, 77-8; P. II, 10, 21-42. 2. F. III, 101-118. 3. Am. I, 15, 7-8.



The rationalism of Ovid's mentality, the Greek devotion to the *logos*, is apparent in every incidental comment he makes on religion or superstition.<sup>1</sup> Whereas Propertius' verse has a ring of desperate sincerity when he speaks of witchcraft, Ovid speaks of it, and of love-philtres, with contempt. And as for augury:

*augurium ratio est et coniectura futuri.*<sup>2</sup>

He is always on the side of the intellect. This emerges in a most interesting way in the contest between Ajax and Ulysses for the arms of Achilles in *Metamorphoses* XIII. The denigration of Ulysses as a cowardly trickster begins with Pindar's Seventh and Eight *Nemeans*, if not earlier, and thereafter the dominant tradition was against him. One can imagine where the sympathy of the average Roman would be – not with the know-all *Graeculus esuriens*. But Ovid's sympathies are unmistakably different: his stolid Ajax is the dull-witted soldier little respected by the bright elegiac poets of love, while his Ulysses is the man of *ingenium*, the clever, subtle thinker and speaker.

*Excudent alii spirantia mollius aera,*

said Roman Virgil; it was left to Ovid to conceive for his Ulysses the triumphant taunt, 'Was this the ambition of Thetis for her son, that those heavenly gifts, a work of such art, should be worn by a coarse, insensitive soldier incapable of appreciating them?'<sup>3</sup>

*Scilicet idcirco pro nato caerula mater  
ambitiosa suo fuit, ut caelestia dona,  
artis opus tantae, rudis et sine pectore miles  
indueret? neque enim clipei caelamina novit,  
Oceanum et terras cumque alto sidera caelo  
Pleidasque Hyadasque immunemque aequoris Arcton*

1. On religion, *A. A.* I, 637, cf. *F.* II, 45-6. 2. *Tr.* I, 9, 51. On witchcraft, etc., *Her.* VI, 93-4; *Med. Fac.* 35-42; *Rem. Am.* 249-90. 3. *M.* XIII, 288-295.

*diversosque orbes nitidumque Orionis ensem:  
postulat ut capiat quae non intelligit arma.*

Ovid's own appreciation of the visual arts is apparent in the vivid detail of the descriptions in his mythological narratives; he catches the significant moment, or attitude, or gesture, and imprints it indelibly on our mind. All around him in the Augustan capital he must constantly have seen Greek pictures of these subjects, analogous to those we can still see in Rome, Naples and Pompeii.<sup>1</sup> As we read, we are constantly reminded of works of art; as when Acheloüs in the *Metamorphoses*<sup>2</sup> leans on his elbow just like those colossal statues of river-gods, one of which, the celebrated 'Marforio' of the first century A.D., is to be seen in the *cortile* of the Capitoline Museum, and another, a Nile of the same period, in the Vatican.

When Ovid was a young man at Rome, studying in the rhetorical schools but reacting against the influences that would turn him into a lawyer, he fell in love with a woman named, not Corinna, but Elegeia. He met her in the circle of Messalla where, to judge from the two books of Tibullus and the third book by divers hands that has come down under his name, she was having a considerable vogue; though if anyone could claim a right to the title of being her 'vir', it was a member of Maecenas' circle, Propertius. Her forebears had migrated from Greece to Rome several generations before, but by now the strain was so interbred with Roman stock that it is difficult for us to tell how much Greek blood still flowed in her veins. M. Rostagni and M. Boyancé have dealt with the debt of Roman Elegy to the Greeks. In his *Amores*, *Ars* and *Remedia*, full as they are of Greek *loci* and *exempla*, Ovid is so much a follower presumably of Gallus, and certainly of Tibullus and Propertius, that I will spend little time on them.

1. See H. BARTHOLEMÉ, *Ovid und die antike Kunst* (1935). 2. VIII, 727.

Catullus had breathed into Roman love-elegy at its birth a spirit which Greek elegy may have lacked almost entirely, that of intense personal experience. A similar passion inspires the earlier work of Propertius, more formal though it is; in his later work, and in Tibullus, it weakens into sentiment, but is still serious and to some extent genuine. The opening poems of Ovid's *Amores* make us immediately aware that this Roman essence has evaporated. We are to be entertained, not moved.<sup>1</sup> His whole approach, like that of Horace in his love-odes, is detached and humorous. Corinna, we may be sure, is an imaginary figure. Love is symbolised by the mischievous cherub of Hellenistic baroque, and the spirit is sometimes that of the epigrammatists, from Kallimachos and the poets of the *soros* to Meleagros and Philodemos, sometimes that of the New Comedy. The whole idea of *Romanitas* is not so much absent as caricatured. Thus, whereas Propertius had assumed the role, not merely of *miles* but of *Triumphator* of love, Ovid makes Cupid himself the *Triumphator*.<sup>2</sup>

The *Ars* and *Remedia* are in the same spirit, naturally leaning more towards comedy, but also diversified with *exempla* from Greek mythology some of which are developed at length in a way that foreshadows the *Fasti* and *Metamorphoses* – Bacchus and Ariadne, Daedalus and Icarus, Cephalus and Procris.<sup>3</sup> As for the *Medicamina Faciei*, it is clear from fragments of Nicandros' *Ophiaka* that he had versified recipes,<sup>4</sup> but we also know that there were other metaphrasts at Rome in Ovid's time who had versified technical treatises in Hellenistic fashion on such subjects as dyeing fabrics.<sup>5</sup> Where Ovid probably differed from his predecessors, Greek and Roman, was in the spirit of his undertaking. In the *Ars* he clearly meant to amuse the reader by writing a didactic poem

1. See E. REITZENSTEIN, *Das neue Kunstwollen in den Amores*, Rh. Mus. 1935, pp. 67-76. 2. T. F. HIGHAM, C. R. 1934, p. 113. 3. *Ars* I, 527-64; II, 21-96; III, 687-746. 4. *Fr.* 34 and 35 (GOW and SCHOLFIELD). 5. *Tr.* II, 471-90.



on a frivolous subject, thus introducing an element of burlesque. In the *Medicamina* he probably had the same idea, cosmetics being regarded in strait-laced circles as frivolous and even improper. But the joke proved too heavy, and we may hope that it was the poet, and not merely the archetype, that stopped short after a hundred lines.

Let us turn now to a work in which we are safe in assuming, for all the influence of the Roman *suasoria* on the treatment, that we are in direct contact with Greek literature – the *Heroides*. Ovid was a great reader, using books both to stimulate his Muse and to provide her with provender; like Catullus at Verona, he was to find separation at Tomis from his library an obstacle to poetic composition.<sup>1</sup> The sources of the *Heroides* range throughout Greek and Roman literature, from Homer and Sappho to Catullus and Virgil. To study his method let us first consider a poem derived, as we may safely assume, from a single and extant Greek source in epic – the letter of Briseis to Achilles (III), supposed to have been written after the failure of the Embassy in *Iliad* IX to persuade Achilles to accept her back with a vast present as amends.

Ovid sets himself to imagine what Homer only hints at in the single word ἀέκουσα, the feelings of Briseis from the time when Agamemnon announced his intention of taking her from Achilles. She is a barbarian princess, a captive among strangers; but she has come to love her heroic captor, and goes unwillingly with the two heralds when they come to his tent and lead her away –

ἡ δ' ἀέκουσ' ἄμα τοῖσι γυνὴ κίεν.<sup>2</sup>

She cannot blame him for acting under *force majeure* – and yet, need he have surrendered her so soon, without so much as a kiss, as though she were once more being captured (5-16)? (In Homer it was *Achilles* who forebore to blame the

1. Cat. 68, 33; Ov. *Tr.* III, 14, 37. 2. I-4; *Il.* I, 348.

heralds for doing what they could not help, and bade Patroklos hand over Briseis without more ado:<sup>1</sup> Ovid uses the hint, and transfers the forgiving words to the heroine, adding a good and characteristic touch, the exchange of looks between the heralds, the ordinary human beings, amazed that he showed no indication of his old love for her:

*Alter in alterius iactantes lumina vultum  
quaerebant taciti noster ubi esset amor.)*

Often, she says, she longed to steal back to him by night, but she was afraid of being caught by some marauding Trojan (perhaps the *Doloneia* put this idea into Ovid's head), and enslaved to one of Priamos' many daughters-in-law (17-20). Besides, she expected Achilles himself to come and rescue her: had not Patroklos whispered to her as she was led away, 'You will soon be here again'? (21-4) (This idea was probably suggested by her lament over Patroklos at *Iliad* XIX, 297-300, where she recalls how, at the sack of her home, it was he who had comforted her, saying he would make her Achilles' wife.) And now Achilles is not only not coming to rescue her, but positively refusing her when her return is offered (25).<sup>2</sup>

When, in his speech in the *Iliad* rejecting the overtures of Agamemnon, Achilles comes to Briseis (336), in his first bitter words he expresses his longing for 'his beloved wife', and in the same breath brutally sneers that Agamemnon may sleep with her, for all he cares,

ἔχει δ' ἄλοχον θυμαρέα, τῇ παριούσῳ  
τερπέσθῳ,

but he adds that he loves her, captive though she be, just as Menelaos loves Helen. Ovid, the connoisseur of feminine psychology, realised that Briseis would not understand that, while she had been Achilles' beloved bed-fellow, she was

1. I, 334-8. 2. IX, 308-429.

still more his γέρας, the symbol of his honour;<sup>1</sup> that he could genuinely love her, yet sacrifice her with scarcely a qualm if he felt it would enhance the assertion of his honour. Her incomprehension increases her pathos. She enumerates the gifts offered by Agamemnon through his three ambassadors, the last straw being the women,<sup>2</sup>

*quodque supervacuum est, forma praestante puellae  
Lesbides, eversa corpora capta domo,  
cumque tot his – sed non opus est tibi coniuge – coniunx,  
ex Agamemnoniis una puella tribus.*

Could he not have accepted the other gifts, and used them to ransom her? (Not very logical, but then she's a woman.)

Next she turns to the tragedy of her home, Lyrnesos, recalled later in the *Iliad* in her lament for Patroklos; how Achilles himself had sacked the town, killed her husband and her three brothers, and taken her, a princess in her own country –

*et fueram patriae pars ego magna meae –*

to be his concubine; and how she had yet come to forget all this for his sake, having found in him what Homer's Andromache found in Hector:

*tu dominus, tu vir, tu mihi frater eras.*<sup>3</sup>

She has heard, as Odysseus reported, that he is threatening to sail home on the morrow. Anything rather than that – or at least let him take her too; she will not claim to go as his wife; she will be a slave, even a handmaid to the noble wife he has boasted that Peleus will provide for him. Nevertheless she appeals to him to lay aside his incomprehensible wrath – *vince animos iramque tuam*, which is, ἀλλ', Ἀχιλῆυ, δάμασον

1. *Il.* I, 356. 2. 27-40; *Il.* IX, 260 ff. 3. 45-52; *Il.* XIX, 291-6; VI, 429. Ovid may also have had in mind Tecmessa's speech at Soph. *Aias*, 514-9.



θυμὸν μέγαν. She still imagines that she in herself is the whole cause of it, just as Helen was of the war:

*propter me mota est, propter me desinat ira.*

And lest he be ashamed to yield to a woman, she repeats the story already told him by Homer's Phoinix, how the great Meleagros had at length yielded to the entreaties of his wife Kleopatra and gone out to fight. (Here Ovid has the advantage, for the tale is doubly effective in the mouth of the wife herself.) All this section (57-98) is based on hints from *Iliad* ix.<sup>1</sup>

Finally she swears a great oath, by the bones of her husband and brothers, by himself and his sword that killed them, that there has been no intercourse between him and her, just as Homer's Agamemnon swore a great oath to the same effect by Zeus and Earth and the Sun and the Furies, and as Homer's Priamos kissed the dread hands of Achilles that had slain so many of his sons.<sup>2</sup> Achilles, she adds, cannot boast of such fidelity: he is not even unhappy, but spends his time singing to the lyre and sleeping with a concubine (Homer relates that the embassy found him doing the former, and left him to do the latter).<sup>3</sup> She begs the Greeks to send her as ambassador; surely he will not be able to resist her kisses, her well-known touch and look (127-34).<sup>4</sup>

This is one of the most convincing Epistles. I think the reason is that the Homeric story had plenty of details which could be developed, while the epic poet had not cramped him by expressing the feelings of the heroine at all. Contrast the failure of Dido's letter to Aeneas (vii), where Virgil had worked over the ground already, expressing her feelings in

1. 682-3, cf. 356-63; 394-400; 496; 590-6. 2. 103-110; *Il.* xix, 258-65; xxiv. 3. 111-20; *Il.* ix, 186; 665. 4. There are two more Homeric references; to Peleus' spear, which even Patroklos could not throw (126, cf. *Il.* xvi, 140-3), and to Achilles' sword, with which he would have killed Agamemnon himself if Athena had not stayed his hand (147-8, cf. *Il.* i, 194).

incomparable verse. There is hardly a hint in Homer which Ovid does not turn to account. So far from admitting that this showed lack of invention, he would have claimed credit for it, as in borrowing from Virgil he was described by Gallio as 'palam mutuatus, hoc animo ut vellet agnosci'.<sup>1</sup> The recognition of the allusion was to be part of the hearer's pleasure. Yet it was not a slavish, scissors-and-paste, method of composition. It was so laborious to look up a reference in an ancient book-roll, that authors developed great powers of memory. Their very slips show how much they relied on the Mother of the Muses. Thus in the other Epistle based entirely on Homer, that of Penelope to Ulysses, there are three points which seem to indicate that he is relying on memory, for it is a slightly inaccurate memory, of the *Odyssey*.<sup>2</sup> Yet how well he uses his hearers' familiarity with Homer for his own purposes, as for charming irony when his Penelope imagines Ulysses as telling some mistress that his wife is 'rustica' and only fit to stay at home and weave, when all would know from the *Odyssey* that she was weaving with desperate trickery to preserve her loyalty to him, while he for his part was protesting to Calypso: 'Goddess and queen, I know well that Penelope is less favoured to look on than you in beauty and stature; she is mortal, whereas you know not age or death. Yet even so I long day by day to voyage homeward and to see the day of my return.'<sup>3</sup>

But more often than epic, Greek tragedy provided Ovid with his sources for the *Heroides*.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, as far as their spirit goes, the true ancestor of these outbursts, *dolor ira mixtus*,

1. Sen., *Suas.* III 7. 2. *Il.* 15, 37 and 91. Cf. *Rem. Am.* 783-4, where he attributes to Agamemnon Achilles' oath by the sceptre in *Il.* I, 234, sworn on another occasion. 3. *Her.* I, 77-8; *Od.* V, 214 ff. 4. Hermione from Sophocles, perhaps via Pacuvius, Deianeira from Sophocles *Trachiniai*; Phaedra from the lost earlier version of Euripides' *Hippolytos* also used by Seneca; Canace from Euripides' *Aiolos*, Laodameia from Euripides' *Protesilaos*; Hypermnestra partly from Aeschylus' *Danaïdes*. W. Kraus in R-E, 'Ovidius Naso' col. 1928. Ovid shows his enthusiasm for Greek Tragedy at *Tr.* II, 381-406.

is Euripides. He also had tended to see situations from the woman's point of view. An obvious case in point is the speech of his Medea when confronted with Jason (465-519), which directly influenced Ovid's treatment in *Heroides* XII.

His heroines are mainly concerned, like the rhetoricians, with scoring points, whether argumentative or emotional. Ovid does not make any attempt to imagine them in historical perspective: in so far as they are not representatives of 'Das Ewigweibliche', they are Roman women of his own day. This was not a peculiar trait, and need cause no surprise. As well expect Pinturicchio to dress his Paris and Helen in other than Florentine finery, or Shakespeare to clothe his King Lear in skins. The feelings of a woman's heart had been expressed in poetry by Sappho and Erinna and Sulpicia, and imagined by Euripides and the Comic poets; but no poet known to us had conceived them with the mixture of sympathetic understanding and detached amusement that we find in Ovid. In the *Heroides* the sympathy naturally predominates.

It may have been the study of Greek Tragedy for the *Heroides* that inspired Ovid's only drama, the lost *Medea* so much admired in the days of Tacitus and Quintilian.<sup>1</sup> At *Metamorphoses* VII, 1-424 he tells her story in full *except* for her expulsion from grace at Corinth and the murder of her children. The natural inference is that these last events had been dealt with in his tragedy, as in those of his predecessors. The Epistle (XII) is conceived at a moment just before the tragedy, at least in Euripides' version, begins. This barbaric woman, with her power of magic and her intolerable grievance, who twice had to make a terrible decision, clearly fascinated him. If the play succeeded in his day, it is surprising that he did not follow it up. So while we may accept Quintilian's statement that it was free from his besetting faults, it may not have come into its own until the rhetorical drama

1. *Dial.* 12; *Inst. Or.* x, 1, 98.



intended for reading had been established in fashion by Seneca.

Hellenistic poetry also played its part, Apollonios for Medea and Hypsipyle, an unknown source also used by Catullus for Ariadne, other unknown sources for Oenone and Phyllis. I believe that the double letters are the work of Ovid – who else could have written anything so good at that time? – perhaps composed shortly before his exile under the stimulus of Sabinus' replies for the heroes to his *Heroides*.<sup>1</sup> Of these Akontios and Cydippe, and perhaps also Hero and Leander, go back to Kallimachos, though here again we can see how the bare, unsentimental narrative in the Greek provides only the situations on which the Roman poet exercises his psychological imagination.

And now came the time when Ovid, aspiring to more serious themes than erotic elegy, undertook simultaneously the immense works of the *Fasti* and *Metamorphoses*. The literary grandparents of the *Fasti* are, on the aetiological side, the *Aitia* of Kallimachos, admired of all Roman elegists, and on the astronomical side the no less admired *Phainomena* of Aratos, which Ovid himself imitated at some time. Hellenistic great-uncles may perhaps be discerned in the lost elegiac poem of Simias of Rhodes on the months and the origins of their names, and a lost work of Eratosthenes on the origins and names of constellations. Add to these, perhaps the Greek elegiac poet Boutas, a freedman of the younger Cato, who treated Roman legends of origins in verse,<sup>2</sup> and we have a rich Greek strain already vigorous before either the Julian calendar was promulgated or the self-styled Roman Kallimachos, in his last book, wrote elegies on aetiological subjects and showed Ovid the way.

Reliance on Greeks led Ovid astray in the astronomical parts: for he repeats, sometimes from the Julian Calendar

1. *Am.* II, 18, 27-34. 2. Plutarchos (*Romulus* 21, 6) quotes a couplet about the Lupercalia.

made under the advice of Sosigenes and sometimes from an unknown source used also by Columella, information which may have been good for the latitude of Greece or Alexandria, but which was not valid for that of Rome. These errors were exposed by Ideler more than a century ago.<sup>1</sup> In the aetiological part, from a scientific point of view, there is a serious danger to which Wissowa drew attention.<sup>2</sup> Latin mythology was in itself jejune; so wherever Ovid could, he identified a Latin deity with a Greek, and at once had a fund of stories available. He was not always the first to do so: Faunus already in Horace roams Lycaeus, the mountain of Pan, and the story of Menelaos and Proteus in the *Odyssey* had probably already been adapted to Numa and Picus. On this principle Virbius becomes the Greek Hippolytos, Stimula is Semele, Mater Matuta is Ino, Libera is Ariadne. There is a revealing passage at 1, 89, where Ovid says, 'But what god am I to say you are, Janus of double shape? *For Greece has no divinity like you*'.

Hence much of the literary part of the work comes from Greek sources, and not merely from aetiological works such as that of Eratosthenes. The story of Arion seems to come straight from Herodotos,<sup>3</sup> and we are reminded of the width of Ovid's reading by his casual rendering of an epigram by Euenos (*Rode, caper, vitem*, etc).<sup>4</sup> Finally, it is ultimately to Kallimachos' example in the *Aitia* that we owe the charming personal and autobiographical element in the *Fasti*. But for all that they are Ovid's most Roman work in spirit: his most Greek is the contemporary *Metamorphoses*.

Two poetic traditions meet in the *Metamorphoses*, that of the *Eoiai* of Hesiod, the 'collective' poetry revived by the Alexandrians, and that of the early Hellenistic epyllia, descended

1. *Ueber den astronomischen Theil der Fasti des Ovid*, Abh. Berl. Akad. 1822-3, pp. 166 ff. Ovid's errors need cause no surprise: Aratos incorporated in his *Phainomena* information from Eudoxos that was already out of date.

2. *Ges. Abh. zur röm. Religions- und Stadtgeschichte* (1904), pp. 136 ff. 3. II, 82-118; cf. *Her.* I, 23-4. 4. I, 357-8; cf. *A. P.* IX, 75.

from Homer. The chief intermediaries seem to have been Nicandros' *Heteroioumena* and the recent *Metamorphoses* of Parthenios. There was also a *Metamorphoses* by one Theodoros, stated by Probus<sup>1</sup> to have been used by Ovid along with Nicandros, and the *Ornithogonia* of Boios, lately imitated by his friend Aemilius Macer. Some of the myths recounted by Nicandros and Boios are to be found summarised in the second century A.D. prose compilation of Antoninus Liberalis; and since, of the twenty-six he selects from Nicandros, twenty-one have counterparts in Ovid, we may assume that, if we had the four or five books of Nicandros complete, we should find Ovid's debt to him to be very extensive. One of Ovid's most interesting source-books, which he apparently used for Book iv, contained legends of oriental origin. To this we owe the Babylonian story of Pyramus and Thisbe, the Persian tale of Leucothoë, and perhaps that of the Carian spring Salmacis, and also the passing references to Dercetis of Babylon and to the Naiad of the Indian Ocean of whom Arrian told on the authority of Alexander's admiral Nearchos.<sup>2</sup> Perdrizet has suggested that this book may have reached Ovid by way of some Hellenistic writer of Seleucid Antioch.<sup>3</sup>

But Ovid was not the man to confine himself to slavish copying of a single source; for instance, his story of Polyphemus appears to use not only Theokritos vi and xi, but also Kallimachos' third Hymn and probably his lost *Glaukos*;<sup>4</sup> and it appears that he did not hesitate to invent if it suited his purpose.<sup>5</sup>

But however various the sources of the myths recounted in the *Metamorphoses*, both in organisation and in spirit, the work as a whole ultimately owes most to one man, Kallimachos. The first two books of the *Aitia* were *carmen perpetuum*

1. On Virg., G. i, 399. 2. M. iv, 55-166; 190-233; 285-388; 44-51. Arrian, *Ind.* xxxi. 3. *Rev. Hist. Rel.* cv (1932), pp. 192-228. 4. M. xiii, 750-897. 5. LAFAYE, p. 70.



(ἐν ἄεισμα διηγεκέες)<sup>1</sup> a continuous work with narrative links. Here is a transition from the *Metamorphoses* which might well have come from the *Aitia*:<sup>2</sup> 'Phocus led the Athenians into the inner court with its beautiful apartments and sat down there himself. He noticed that Cephalus carried in his hand a javelin with a golden head, made of some strange wood. So after some talk he suddenly interposed, "I am an expert in forests and hunting, but for a long time I have been wondering what wood that weapon you hold is made of: if it were ash, it would be dark yellow; if cornel-wood, it would have knots. I cannot tell what it comes from, but I have never set eyes on a more beautiful weapon than that". Then one of the Athenian brothers replied . . .' And now a transition from the *Aitia*, that happens to be extant:<sup>3</sup> 'When he kept the annual feast for Icaros' daughter, thy day, Eri-gone, most pitied by Attic women, he invited his friends to a feast, and among them a stranger who had recently come to visit Egypt on some private business. He was an Ician by birth, and I shared a couch with him – not by arrangement, but Homer's proverb is not false, that God ever brings like to like; for he too hated to drink the wide-mouthed Thracian draught of wine, but rejoiced in a small goblet. To him I said, as the cup went round the third time, when I had inquired his name and origin, "Surely it is a true saying that wine requires its portion not only of water but also of talk. So – since talk is not handled out in ladles, nor do you have to ask for it by catching the haughty eye of the cup-bearer, in the hour when the free must fawn on the slave – let us, Theagenes, put talk in the cup to temper the liquor, and in answer to my questions do you tell me what my mind is longing to hear from you. Why is it traditional in your country to worship Peleus?" . . .'

1. For an analysis of Ovid's debt to Kallimachos, so far as it can be traced, see M. DE COLA, *Callimaco e Ovidio* (1937). 2. VII, 670-81. It is probable that Nikandros' *Metamorphoses* were similarly linked. 3. Frr. 178-85, Pf.<sup>2</sup>

Ovid has to keep to the objectivity of the epic form, whereas Kallimachos can appear in his own garrulous person: but the use of picturesque and realistic detail is strikingly similar.

More important, however, is the influence of the Kallimachean spirit. Many readers of the *Metamorphoses* have been baffled by the shifts of mood and subject, between romance, rhetoric, burlesque, baroque, pathos, macabre, grotesque, patriotism, landscape, genre, antiquarianism; in particular they have been misled by the overall epic form into taking seriously passages that are meant to be amusing. Now this ποικιλία, this variety of mood, is thoroughly Alexandrian, and particularly characteristic of the versatile and mischievous genius of Kallimachos. If the *Aitia* had survived entire, we might have seen this more clearly; but even in an extant work such as the Hymn to Artemis we have a shift from divine comedy to pedantic lists and the splendid language of the Homeric Hymn-convention. The *Metamorphoses* is, in fact, a masterpiece of Hellenistic baroque, with its huge extent of ceaseless movement, its variety, its fantasy, its conceits and shocks, its penchant for the grotesque and abnormal, and its blend of humour and grandiosity. But it is only so in conception: it is eminently classical in expression, with its clear and simple diction and versification.

Five-sixths of the *Metamorphoses* consists of Greek legends. In considering the subject-matter, it would be more pertinent to ask, as with Plautus, not what is Greek, but what is not Greek. The geographical background is largely Greece, the Aegean and Asia Minor; many of the places mentioned must have been visited by the poet on his youthful tour, but it is an idealised, remote, romantic fairy-land over which the deities and mortals pass swiftly, and in which the action is concentrated here and there in spots whose beauty, often associated with water, recalls bucolic idyll. The form of the stories, as Heinze insisted, is that of the earlier epyllia which

were still in the objective, epic tradition. For some reason or other it was customary for such epyllia to have a story inset; perhaps Kallimachos' *Hecale*, with its inset story of Erichthonios, led the fashion. We are familiar with Catullus' *Marriage of Peleus and Thetis* into which is introduced the story of Ariadne on Naxos as embroidered on the coverlet. Of some fifty episodes in the *Metamorphoses* which are long enough to rank as epyllia, one-third have such an insertion. This convention, which Nicandros also seems to have followed, helped Ovid in his task of weaving an intricate tapestry of stories. But many of the legends must surely come from the great body of Hellenistic narrative elegy long since lost.

In a paper such as this it would be futile to attempt any detailed analysis of sources. The task was carried out nearly fifty years ago with great thoroughness by Lafaye and Castiglioni,<sup>1</sup> and only when some new material has come to light since then, as in the case of Kallimachos, has there been an opportunity for special dissertations such as that of De Cola. The work of Lafaye is admirably restrained and sensible. Castiglioni stresses, perhaps overstresses, the influence of lost Hellenistic poems.<sup>2</sup> In some cases we can make comparisons with extant works, for instance between the story of Erysichthon as told by Kallimachos in his Sixth Hymn and by Ovid at *Metamorphoses* VIII, 738-878, and we can see that the treatment of the idyllic genre-scene of Philemon and Baucis at *Metamorphoses* VIII, 616-724 probably owes much to the *Hecale*. But where so much of the evidence is missing, any conclusions are largely sheer guesswork which the next papyrus-fragment published might invalidate. What more natural,

1. G. LAFAYE, *Les Métamorphoses d'Ovide et leurs modèles grecs*, Bibliothèque de la Faculté des Lettres XIX, Paris, 1904; L. CASTIGLIONI, *Studi intorno alle Metamorfosi d'Ovidio*, Annali della R. Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa XX, 1907. 2. In a recent article (C. Q. 1952, pp. 125-6) BOWRA has shown reason to suppose that both Virgil and Ovid, in their treatment of Orpheus, were drawing on some particular Hellenistic poem.



for instance, than to suppose that in the *Ibis* Ovid followed Kallimachos' lost poem of that name. Yet the publication in 1934 of the *Διηγήσεις* has confirmed what had previously been asserted, that some at least of its details were suggested rather by the *Aitia*.<sup>1</sup>

In the *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti*, composed simultaneously, Ovid was aspiring, as Martini has pointed out,<sup>2</sup> to achieve the culmination of two different forms of poem over which the literary world of Kallimachos' day had been split. The first was a continuous poem having its roots in Homeric epic, the second a collective poem having its roots in the Hesiodic *Eoiai*. But we now know, as Martini could not, that whereas the first two books of the *Aitia* consisted of connected narrative, the last two comprised disconnected pieces, including the *Βερενίκης πλόκαμος*. The *Διηγήσεις* had made this seem probable: Oxyrhynchus Papyri nos. 2170 and 2211 have now confirmed it for Books IV and III respectively. In any case Ovid was the consummator in these works of the movement to exploit Hellenistic poetry which had been begun some sixty years before by the νεώτεροι. He was too great to have a successor, and in exile he was too forlorn to pursue the work himself.<sup>3</sup>

I said before that Ovid was Greek in his devotion to the *logos*, but I must now qualify that. He may have been a rationalist, but he was no philosopher. Indeed he sometimes displays an indifference to truth, a literary opportunism, which is characteristically Roman. We can hardly suppose that one of his temperament was a genuine Neopythagorean, yet he expounds Pythagorean doctrine at length in the last book of the *Metamorphoses*. Why? Surely because, if he wished

1. See F. LENZ in *Bursians Jahresbericht* 264 (1939), pp. 139-43. 2. *Ἐπιτύμβιον* H. Swoboda *dargebracht* (1927), pp. 165-94, esp. 190. 3. Apart from the eccentric *Ibis*. If he did indeed compose a *Haliutica*, it was probably a versified Greek treatise. But I share the view that the extant poem is not by him. See most recently B. AXELSON, *Eine Ovidische Echtheitsfrage*, *Eranos* 1945, pp. 23-35.

for literary purposes to dignify the subject of metamorphosis with a philosophic background, the doctrine of Metempsychosis, which made no distinction between human and animal forms, was the obvious one to choose. His description of the Creation is so non-committal as to justify Lafaye's comment, 'On dirait qu'Ovide est surtout jaloux de mettre tout le monde d'accord'.<sup>1</sup> His spirit was Greek indeed, but not of the classical age; it belonged to the Hellenistic culture whose seeds were sown by Euripides, and whose favourite poets were Kallimachos and Menandros. A literary Roman must have felt for Greece somewhat as a literary American feels for England; whatever he might think about it politically, or about its present inhabitants, it was the background of nearly all the good literature he read, and the nurse of his own civilisation.

And now that we have come to the end of this interesting series of talks, may I dare to raise a general consideration? What importance has the study of tradition and influences? For a century now a great part of the energy of scholars, and of the space in learned journals, has been devoted to tracing the traditional element in classical poems. This activity takes various forms. First there is the search for verbal reminiscences. A man with a remarkable verbal memory, such as must have been possessed by Zingerle, who collected the imitations in Ovid, will naturally wish to exercise his gift, though there are now electrical machines almost capable of doing the same work. I am not sure that the results are of much value, and they may even do harm. Men of similar gifts in antiquity soon applied themselves to Virgil: 'Perellius Faustus furta contraxit', says Suetonius.<sup>2</sup> *Furta* – the word indicates the danger. There are people now, as there were then, who will turn from a poet if they find that he borrows phrases, despite Virgil's own sensible remark that it would be easier to steal his club from Hercules than a line

1. *Op. cit.*, p. 256. 2. *Vit. Verg.* 44.

from Homer.<sup>1</sup> It may be said that such readers are not worth considering; but they include many promising schoolboys and young students.

Far more important is the recognition of ideas which are conventional. At *Amores* II, I, 11-18 Ovid says that he remembers embarking on a poem about the Battle of the Gods and Giants, when he was abruptly deterred by his mistress' slamming her door in his face. Now the Gigantomachy had long been treated as typical of epic subject matter,<sup>2</sup> while the intervention of someone, usually a deity, to prevent a poet from following an unsuitable line, goes back at least to the famous prologue to Kallimachos' *Aitia*; and I fully share the scepticism of Pfister and Erich Reitzenstein about Ovid's 'Gigantomachy' ever having been more than a literary fiction.<sup>3</sup> Yet S. G. Owen, in his edition of *Tristia* II, devoted a whole chapter of eighteen pages to discussing its probable bearing on the victories of Augustus. Again, with a poet like Horace, it is essential to distinguish the conventional from the personal, otherwise our modern age, obsessed with biographical criticism, may lay far too much stress, for instance, on a shield conventionally alleged to have been left behind in battle.

Sometimes the search may lead to the discovery of a particular model. In that case the reader must take into consideration the circumstances and associations of the model, as the classical poet would expect, *palam mutuatus hoc animo ut vellet agnosci*. I have already emphasised the importance of Kallimachos for the understanding of the spirit of Ovid.

Finally, there is the determination of the genus to which a poem belongs. This may be merely a matter of pedantic classification, and too much ink has been spent on trying to fit poems into a definite class when the author may have had no particular class in mind. On the other hand it

1. *Ib.* 46. 2. Prop. II, I, 19 f., 39 f.; III, 9, 48. 3. *Rh. Mus.* 1915, pp. 472-4; 1935, pp. 87-8.



may be important, particularly as regards burlesque. One may doubt whether Horace's Ode *O nata mecum consule Manlio* (III, 21) was ever rightly appreciated until Norden demonstrated that it was a parody of the regular Hymn-form. This aspect is important for Ovid, with his love of burlesque. His elegy on the death of Corinna's parrot (*Am.* II, 6) gains very much in point if it is set beside his serious elegy on the death of Tibullus (*Am.* III, 9), since we then see how closely he is following a set form of mourning for human beings which is all the more amusing as applied to an animal.

If we had available all the literature the poet had read, we should be able to determine the extent of his originality. But this is a matter of biographical rather than critical interest. Ancient poets were not themselves much interested in originality of this kind, while few modern readers of *Hamlet*, for instance, busy themselves over the extent to which Shakespeare has improved on previous treatments of the story. If you asked an Englishman which he considered to be the most original poems in his language he might well reply: 'The Ancient Mariner' and 'Kubla Khan' by Coleridge. But it happens that there exists a notebook in which Coleridge recorded the titles of all the works he was reading during the years in which those poems were conceived, and notes of passages that particularly struck him; study of this by an American critic has revealed that in those two poems there is scarcely an idea, not to mention verbal reminiscences, which cannot be traced to some passage or other in his widely varied reading.<sup>1</sup> Yet he has transfused everything, often no doubt sub-consciously, into something fresh, imaginative, original, and entirely his own.

No such study could be made of any ancient poet's creative processes: too much has been lost. Scholars with the gifts of a

1. By J. LIVINGSTONE LOWES, in *The Road to Xanadu*.

detective may deduce by comparison with analogous works what a common source *may* have contained, but the result is a phantom of little value for appreciation or practical criticism. One cannot help feeling that our energies ought now to be concentrated, first of all on the study of the poet's own environment, including the traditional element in it, which requires such an effort of historical imagination, and then on the appreciation of the poems themselves as works of art making an immediate impact on ourselves. Accumulation of irrelevant knowledge may even dull that impact. In the eighteenth century men read the classics with less knowledge than ourselves; but one has the uncomfortable feeling that they *got more out of them*. The great classical works require, and deserve, re-interpretation for every age.

Much of this talk has since been incorporated in my book "Ovid Recalled", *Cambridge University Press*, 1955. L. P. W.

## DISCUSSION

*M. Bayet*: Il est bien mélancolique d'ouvrir la dernière discussion . . .

*M. van Berchem*: N'ayant pas eu l'avantage d'entendre les exposés de MM. Rostagni et Bayet, qui encadraient tout naturellement le sujet traité par M. Wilkinson, je me sens peu qualifié pour ouvrir la discussion. J'aimerais me borner à soulever deux questions qui se posent à quiconque aborde la lecture des élégiaques. La première est celle des rapports entre l'expérience personnelle du poète et sa poésie; quelle est la part de la sincérité et celle du lieu commun? La seconde a trait à l'héritage littéraire plus ou moins assimilé par le poète. Celui-ci devait être perceptible au public contemporain d'Ovide, non seulement dans la composition générale du poème, mais aussi dans le choix de l'expression. L'élément purement verbal et sonore avait pour les Grecs et les Romains plus d'importance que pour nous. Formés à apprendre tout par cœur, ils avaient une mémoire auditive plus fine que la nôtre. Leur poésie était émaillée de réminiscences, dont nous ne pouvons toujours apprécier l'effet. Ovide en a usé, me semble-t-il, avec plus de maîtrise et d'aisance qu'aucun de ses prédécesseurs.

*M. Wilkinson*: We may say of Ovid that practically nothing he wrote before he went into exile provides certain biographical evidence. Owen, in the Introduction to his edition of *Tristia* I, tries to fit in a love-affair with Corinna between the poet's marriages. That shows, to my mind, a fundamental misconception. It seems pretty certain that Corinna is an invention. Ovid is creating objective poems, works of art. But exile changed all that. From then on everything that he wrote, however seemingly objective (unless he did write a *Halieutica*), has an ulterior purpose connected with his situation. Everything had an eye to keeping his personality before the Roman public, to exciting pity or indignation on his behalf. The salient example is his full autobiographical poem (*Tristia* IV, 10), which has no previous parallel in extant literature.

M. van Berchem is right to stress the importance of sound. Like most poetry of the time, Ovid's was meant to be read aloud; and indeed the ancients generally read aloud even when alone. The experience gained from oratory influenced poetry. Particularly important also was the interplay of ictus and accent—what Ritschl called the "Harmonious disharmony"—to secure which severe restrictions of metrical freedom were adopted, and before long universally accepted.

With regard to reminiscences of ancient poets, these were an important feature. Sometimes they were intended to import the whole atmosphere and conditions of the poem echoed; more often they were a subtle gratification for educated readers, who would pique themselves on recognising the various and often recondite allusions; as in the case of connoisseurs of the *Iliad* reading the Epistle of Briseis.

*M. Pöschl*: Der Einfluss von Euripides auf Ovid wurde mit Recht von Herrn Wilkinson stark hervorgehoben. Beiden Dichtern ist ein gewisses Interesse für das Psychologische gemeinsam, und dies vor allem konnte den griechischen Tragiker für Ovid anziehend machen. Wie Euripides würde Ovid in einer Geschichte der psychologischen Darstellungskunst, die noch zu schreiben wäre, einen wichtigen Platz einnehmen. Und diese psychologische Darstellungskunst wird bei Ovid wie bei Euripides und den hellenistischen Dichtern auf die mythologische Erzählung übertragen, die oft nur noch als eine Drapierung der Moderne wirkt. In dieser Richtung scheint mir jedenfalls noch eine grosse Aufgabe zu liegen, die ich hier nicht weiter entwickeln kann.

Besonders glücklich will mir die Charakteristik der Metamorphosen als eines «blend of humour and grandiosity» erscheinen. Diese Mischung ist gewiss bei Kallimachos da, worauf Herr Wilkinson ebenfalls aufmerksam gemacht hat. Aber beides ist bei Ovid doch erheblich gesteigert: er ist sowohl pathetischer als auch humoristischer als Kallimachos, und diesen Humor des Ovid ins rechte Licht zu setzen, ist weder Richard Heinze noch Hermann Fränkel gelungen, die für den ovidischen Humor kein



Organ haben und so eine wesentliche Seite seines Oeuvre im Dunkel lassen. Beides aber, das Pathetisch-Rhetorische und das Humoristische haben die Römer auch sonst gegenüber ihren griechischen Vorbildern gesteigert. Herr Bayet sagte geradezu, dass der Humor in der Literatur eine römische Schöpfung sei. Ein Vergleich Ciceros mit Demosthenes könnte zeigen, dass der römische Redner sowohl witziger als auch pathetischer ist als der Grieche, und wenn man Plautus mit Menander vergleicht, kann man die gleiche Feststellung machen. Die Mischung des Humoristischen und Grandiosen ist für die Römer charakteristisch, was übrigens auch durch das Nebeneinander von Satiren und Oden bei Horaz sehr gut illustriert werden kann. Der Ansatz des Kallimachos ist also bei Ovid ganz entscheidend verstärkt.

Andererseits aber steht er, worauf Sie hingewiesen haben, den hellenistischen Dichtern viel näher als die andern Augusteer. Namentlich in den *Metamorphosen* erscheint er, spielerischer als sie – ich erinnere an die Formel vom *detachment* des Ovid –, von dem Ernst und der «existenziellen Betroffenheit» der augusteischen Dichtung wie auch der früheren römischen Liebesdichtung weiter entfernt.

*M. Wilkinson:* It is difficult to distinguish between wit and humour, but I am sure it is wrong to deny humour to Ovid. I find him, with Horace, the most humorous of Roman writers. In the *Metamorphoses* this element has often gone unrecognised because the poet tells his stories in epic verse and there are serious parts as well as light—in fact the whole poem depends on changes of mood to prevent its becoming a bore. Some of the most amusing parts are about the love-affairs of the gods, and Heinze, in his well-known and otherwise penetrating article, has done harm by playing down this element to suit his thesis that the *Metamorphoses* are carefully kept solemn and epic in tone to contrast with the contemporary *Fasti*.

*M. Rostagni:* Mi compiacio della ricchezza di dati e di osservazioni che il Sig. Wilkinson è riuscito a concentrare nella sua conferenza. Le caratteristiche dell'arte ovidiana risultano illumi-

nate con esempi appropriati e persuasivi. Circa il comportamento di Ovidio verso il Mito, qualche confronto sarebbe utile col comportamento di Properzio, di Orazio e di altri di cui si è precedentemente discusso. Sembra a me che Ovidio, più di tutti, quasi volutamente, alteri e deformi il Mito secondo le tendenze del proprio spirito, trasformandolo in generale in aspetti frivoli, galanti, grotteschi. Quanto ai modelli dell'*ars amatoria*, ritengo che, oltre agli eventuali precedenti greci, siano da tenere presenti i precedenti romani, in particolare quella specie di *Ars amandorum puerorum* che è in Tibullo (I, 6).

Qualche dubbio io ho circa il significato da attribuire e alla *Medea* e alla *Gigantomachia*, che mi paiono a Ovidio dettate dall'aspirazione sua caratteristica alla poesia delle grandi dimensioni: aspirazione che in lui si manifestava durante la giovinezza col proposito di sperimentarsi nei due generi maggiori, tragico ed epico, e che si tradurrà poi, durante l'età matura, nella composizione e delle *Metamorfosi* e dei *Fasti*. Del resto anche nelle opere leggere, nelle sillogi erotiche, è evidente la tendenza di Ovidio a creare organismi e sistemi di vaste proporzioni.

Infine, non so se gli *Aitia* di Callimaco, come tipo di composizione, possano considerarsi un modello corrispondente alle *Metamorfosi* ovidiane: in quanto per l'appunto erano la negazione dell'*ἄεισμα διηνεκές* o *carmen perpetuum*, cui Ovidio tende invece a riavvicinarsi. Pur movendo, per ragioni inerenti alla sua posizione storica, da esperienze neoteriche di poesia tenue, semplice, discontinua (secondo gli insegnamenti di Callimaco, adottati dagli alessandrineggianti romani), Ovidio è portato dalla sua indole a trasgredire tali norme e ritornare quasi al tumido, al molteplice, al grandioso.

*M. Wilkinson*: I do not myself believe that Ovid ever really began a *Gigantomachy*. His pretending to have done so was playing with a conventional *locus* descended from the famous prologue to the *Aitia*. But, like most gifted poets (and musical composers) he aspired to create an important and serious work, His tragedy *Medea* was a bid for higher laurels. But fortunately



the *Metamorphoses* are not grand epic, but a most intelligent compromise between this ambition and a sure sense of what his genius was best adapted to do. It is a largely successful work, and its unsuccessful passages are often those in which an approach to grand epic is made.

With regard to the remark in the prologue to the *Aitia* that the Telchines are always reproaching Callimachus with not producing a continuous heroic epic, I do not think that this is inconsistent with the first two books of the *Aitia* itself being continuous, as they seem to have been. They are not heroic in style. And in any case the prologue was written in old age, by which time Callimachus had included two more Books which do not appear to have been continuous. So the attack may have been relevant to what had by then become his practice.

*M. Klingner:* Ich möchte Herrn Wilkinson zu der Leichtigkeit beglückwünschen, mit der er über eine erstaunliche Anzahl von Dichterstellen jederzeit frei verfügt. Das hängt wohl mit der besondern Art der klassischen Studien in England zusammen.

Zu den «Amores» wurde gesagt, der römische Ernst wirklicher Erfahrung, der von Catull bis hin zu Tibull spürbar ist, sei verflogen. Ovid näherte sich wieder der hellenistischen Spielerei. Andererseits darf man sagen, dass diese Gedichte, verglichen mit denen der erwähnten Vorgänger, weniger mit griechischen Vorbildern unmittelbar zu tun haben. Sie sind auf dem Grund erbaut, den diese lateinischen Vorgänger gelegt hatten.

Von den Metamorphosen ist gesagt, Anlage und Gehalt seien barock und hellenistisch, Ausdruck und Versbau klassisch. Mit dem Worte «klassisch» ist hier gewiss Durchsichtigkeit und Einfachheit gemeint. So mag es gelten. Doch sollte es nicht vergessen lassen, dass Ovids Dichtung nach der Kunst Virgils und Horazens, bei der sich Vollendung der Form und Bedeutung des Gehalts miteinander vereinigen, eine neue Phase einleitet.

In dem Teil des Vortrags, der den Fasti galt, ist hauptsächlich von dem griechischen Einfluss auf den Inhalt die Rede gewesen. Es lohnt sich auch, auf das Verhältnis der Form zu der der *Aitia* des

Kallimachos zu achten. Die Zwiegespräche mit Göttern, die den Dichter belehren, folgen einer kallimacheischen Form, von deren äusserster Prägnanz man sich einen Begriff nach dem Gespräch bilden kann, worin Apollon den fragenden Menschen über den Sinn der Eigenheiten eines altertümlichen Kultbildes auf Delos belehrt (fr. 114 Pf.). Ovid hat diese Prägnanz nicht erreicht, aber ein Gespräch wie jenes, das am Eingang des vierten Buches steht, mit der – zuerst schmollenden – Venus ist geistvoll und charmant genug.

Das eben genannte Beispiel führt mich zu einem Wort zu Herrn Pöschls Bemerkung über den Humor. Bei Ovid erscheint er hauptsächlich als geistvolle, anmutige Frechheit. Und eben darin besteht ein Hauptreiz der Dichtung Ovids überhaupt. Mit Herrn Bayet dürfen wir wohl hierin eine besondere Form der römischen Neigung zum Spotten und Spassen sehen.

*M. Wilkinson:* I had not much to say about the *Amores* because I do not find so much Greek influence in them. There are, it is true, elements that derive apparently from Roman comedy, and hence perhaps ultimately from Greek New Comedy; but in the presumed absence of subjective love-elegy in Greek the influence of Tibullus and Propertius was bound to be overwhelming. Ovid does not, however, follow Propertius in the bold treatment of diction and syntax we were discussing yesterday: everything is clear and bright, as in Tibullus. Similarly in the *Metamorphoses* he sacrifices all sorts of ornament for the sake of keeping the narrative moving swiftly and smoothly.

As to what M. Klingner said at the end about humour, I do not feel that I sufficiently understand the exact connotations of "grob" and "frech".

*M. Boyancé:* L'exposé de Monsieur Wilkinson a cette clarté, cette précision, cette équité de jugement qui sont des qualités si spécifiquement anglaises. Pour l'influence grecque sur les *Amours*, il est vrai de dire qu'elle est faible, s'il s'agit d'une source déterminée; ces poèmes sont plus directement en contact avec Tibulle et surtout avec Properce. Mais ne peut-on parler d'influence

grecque diffuse? Cela montre à nouveau la nécessité de préciser et de distinguer les diverses sortes d'influences. D'autre part remarquons qu'Ovide est lui aussi, comme certains de ses prédécesseurs immédiats (je pense à Virgile et à Properce): il cherche à élargir les limites des genres préexistants, c'est l'effort qui avait réussi à Virgile dans les *Bucoliques*. Dès les *Amours*, Ovide est tenté par une poésie plus haute: dans une pièce Tragédie dispute le poète à Elégie. On conçoit que dans les *Héroïdes*, il se soit adressé aux grands modèles, Homère, les Tragiques. Il le fait dans un esprit d'humanité quotidienne, mais ces modèles eux-mêmes ne lui préparent-ils pas la voie dans cette direction? Homère quelquefois et bien souvent Euripide. Pour ce qui est des Alexandrins Ovide s'oppose à la sécheresse de Callimaque par une certaine sentimentalité. Pour l'attrait exercé par la tragédie, il faut faire place aussi, même chez lui, au tempérament latin; Ovide est donc attiré par le genre et non pas simplement par un souci tout extérieur de variation; il y a même chez lui la recherche d'une poésie plus large, ayant plus de sérieux et d'humain. Quelque chose nous éclaire sur la richesse de ses curiosités: c'est sa grande admiration pour Lucrèce qu'il est le premier à avoir osé nommer en le glorifiant dans les *Amours* en vers dignes de lui. Lucrèce marquera le Chant xv des *Métamorphoses*, l'éloge de Vénus au chant iv des *Fastes*. Toujours, pour qui veut le juger équitablement, il faut mettre à son actif le sentiment aigu qu'il a de la valeur de la littérature. On le voit par ces préoccupations littéraires qui le tourmentent dans son exil et que Monsieur Galletier a si bien étudiées. Ovide a du reste senti les limites de ses moyens; sauf dans les *Métamorphoses* il restera fidèle au distique élégiaque. Mais il variera richement l'usage qu'il fait de ce mètre et l'on voit que le genre n'est pas, même chez lui, fixé, qu'il s'ouvre largement à des créations nouvelles. Créations entre lesquelles il serait vain sans doute de vouloir déceler une évolution: tout fut affaire de circonstances dans la vie du poète.

*M. Wilkinson:* As for Greek influence, of course it was all-pervading: the educated Romans lived in a half-Greek social



atmosphere, *docti sermones utriusque linguae*. It is true that there can be Greek influence without any tangible Greek source.

I agree that the thing about which Ovid was most serious was the seriousness of poetry as a pursuit. This comes out strongly in two of the most eloquent poems in the *Amores*, the epilogue to Book I and the elegy on the death of Tibullus. He constantly recurs to it in his exile, for instance in the poem to Perilla. He adopts an almost hostile attitude to the masculine virtues. There is indeed something feminine about his approach. He tends to see things from the woman's point of view, as not a few other writers have done, from Euripides to E. M. Forster. He is gentle and generous, even to other poets. (The *Ibis* was an experiment, not a very serious one, in a mood that was not naturally his – *inuita Minerva*.)

M. Bayet: La richesse, la clarté et la plénitude de l'exposé de M. Wilkinson ont réussi à rendre très simple la discussion. Chaque idée cependant mériterait un long développement. L'interprétation des textes et nos échanges de vue ont montré qu'il faut vivre avec nos auteurs pour arriver à toute clarté. Si j'osais proposer quelques impressions personnelles: Je me suis demandé comment il faut se représenter le sens classique d'Ovide? Le classicisme, comme a dit M. Wilkinson, est évidemment le résultat du temps. Ovide a été, au moyen âge le plus aimé et le plus lu des poètes latins, avec Virgile, mais pour des raisons diverses. En quoi consiste donc le classicisme d'Ovide? Il semble fait surtout de transparence intellectuelle, d'équilibre rationnel, de limpidité dans la description; à quoi se joignent l'abondance et la clarté des vérités de psychologie générale qu'il dispense avec une aisance mondaine et une grâce ironique. Ces qualités l'apparentent aux meilleurs écrivains du XVIII<sup>ème</sup> siècle français. Et sa poésie aussi participe des élégances à la fois mondaines et naturelles de cette période. Mais elle conserve aussi, spécialement dans le maniement du stock mythologique, une fantaisie plus vivante avec une pointe de baroquisme, qui signale une participation sensuelle, assez hellénique, au monde des dieux et des héros, d'ailleurs fort humanisés. A cet égard, il



mérite d'être rapproché moins encore d'André Chénier que des poètes paganisants de la Renaissance. De toute façon décor, figures, justesse du montage psychologique, tout l'ensemble bénéficie d'une attitude spirituellement équilibrée entre la réalité et la feinte. Ce classicisme est ainsi à la fois universel et d'un raffinement très subtil.

M. Wilkinson a remarqué qu'après Ovide, trop complet et trop grand, Rome n'eut plus d'élégiaques. Le phénomène n'est pas sans exemple, d'un mouvement littéraire qui se clôt dès qu'a été réalisé l'équilibre classique de ses vertus. Je me demande cependant si, dans le cas présent, il ne faut pas faire valoir des raisons très particulières. Auguste avait eu le temps d'imposer à la société dès lors alexandrinisée de Rome d'une part un décor de vie classicisant (non sans froideur en sa perfection plastique), de l'autre, un nationalisme de pensée (historique, moral et religieux) propre à contrarier le libre développement du goût hellénistique. Ovide était bien le poète-né de sa génération; mais, à mesure que d'œuvre en œuvre il poussait l'expression de son originalité, la distance s'accroissait entre les formes de son esprit et la nouvelle société à laquelle il s'adressait. De fait, dans les générations suivantes, la littérature de Rome prendra un caractère de plus en plus latin, ne gardant de l'Alexandrinisme que certains procédés, non l'esprit. Et l'exil d'Ovide, quelles qu'en soient les raisons, manifeste clairement les débuts du divorce. MM. Rostagni et Pöschl ont eu bien raison d'insister sur la mutation sociale qui encadre les efforts d'Horace et de Virgile et explique qu'avec eux la tradition élégiaque ait été élargie et adaptée à d'autres formes d'art. Les progrès de l'Augustéisme eussent exigé d'Ovide une transformation du même ordre. Il s'y est essayé avec les *Fastes* en particulier. Il y a mal réussi. Pourquoi? Je dois souscrire entièrement à la formule de M. Boyancé, que toute l'œuvre d'Ovide est élégiaque, je m'accorde à la grave sentence de M. Van Berchem, sur le rapport entre la pensée et le mot: Ovide n'a pu penser aussi différemment qu'il l'aurait dû, parce que sa facilité était trop prisonnière d'une langue poétique d'apparence frivole. On le voit bien dans les

*Tristes et les Pontiques.* La grandeur du projet des *Fastes*, leur documentation qui fait l'admiration des historiens des religions, la fraîcheur même de certaines de leurs intuitions souffrent d'un « formalisme élégiaque » – dont il faut bien dire qu'il révèle l'abus et la fin d'un genre.

*M. Wilkinson:* I was using the word "classicism" in the restricted sense as implying rational control of underlying emotion, mastery of the means of apt expression, perfection of form. Ovid had no successors partly because he had done so well in the final form to which elegy seems to have been destined to develop, but partly also for social reasons. Reaction against the orthodox Augustan movement had provided a large part of his motive force. The shock of his exile must have paralysed the section of society that shared his outlook. By the time they would recover, the moment had passed. Under Tiberius and his successors the bitterness of satire came more easily than the light mischief of Ovid.

*M. Bayet:* Je ne voudrais pas abuser de ce fauteuil présidentiel, et je ne sais si j'ai le droit de prendre la parole au nom de tous. Je parlerai en mon nom et j'espère interpréter la pensée commune. En m'adressant à celui qui est le vrai président de cette assemblée, j'aimerais dire avec quelle simplicité et avec combien d'amabilité il nous a comblés. C'était une occasion; ce fut une réalisation dont on ne pouvait pas imaginer la perfection. J'ai goûté moi-même tout particulièrement l'accueil cordial et la possibilité qui a été donnée à plusieurs collègues de se faire connaître et aimer, – des collègues qui auraient dû se connaître depuis longtemps déjà et qui ont été réunis ici par la bonne grâce personnelle de Monsieur le Baron. Je le remercie de toute sa délicatesse, de l'enrichissement qu'il a procuré au corps et à l'esprit sous une forme si gracieuse. Il est certain que nous nous quittons avec regret, mais aussi avec le plaisir de nous connaître mieux.

*M. de Hardt:* Les paroles aimables, amicales si j'ose dire, que vient de prononcer Monsieur Bayet me touchent profondément. J'en reste confus car je ne pense pas mériter des paroles aussi élogieuses ni pour l'œuvre que je m'efforce modestement de

réaliser, ni pour l'accueil tout simple que je vous ai réservé pour vous rendre notre vie commune la plus agréable possible. A mon tour, j'aimerais vous exprimer à tous ma vive reconnaissance pour l'éclat que vous avez donné aux deuxièmes Entretiens par vos exposés érudits et vos discussions animées, qui ont contribué à approfondir les problèmes de la poésie latine. Je n'oublierai pas la semaine que nous avons passée ensemble et c'est avec un sentiment de mélancolie que je vous vois partir. Hélas! tout a une fin. Toutefois j'espère que les contacts qui viennent d'être établis seront à l'origine de relations durables.