http://www.jstor.org

INSPIRATIONAL FICTIONS: AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND GENERIC REFLEXIVITY IN OVID'S PROEMS

By INGO GILDENHARD *and* ANDREW ZISSOS

When the first edition of the *Metamorphoses* appeared in the book-shops of Rome, Ovid had already made a name for himself in the literary circles of the city. His literary début, the *Amores*, immediately established his reputation as a poetic Lothario, as it lured his tickled readers into a typically Ovidian world of free-wheeling elegiac love, light-hearted hedonism, and (more or less) adept adultery. Connoisseurs of elegiac poetry could then enjoy his *Heroides*, vicariously sharing stirring emotional turmoil with various heroines of history and mythology, who were here given a literary forum for voicing bitter feelings of loss and deprivation and expressing their strong hostility towards the epic way of life. Of more practical application for the Roman lady of the world were his verses on toiletry, the *Medicamina Faciei*, and once Ovid had discovered his talent for didactic exposition *à la mode Ovidienne*, he blithely continued in that vein. In perusing the urbane and sophisticated lessons on love which the self-proclaimed *erotodidaskalos* presented in his *Ars Amatoria*, his (male and female) audience could hone their own amatory skills, while at the same time experiencing true Barthian *jouissance* in the act of reading a work, which is, as a recent critic put it, 'a poem about poetry, and sex, and poetry as sex'.[1] And after these extensive sessions in poetic philandering, his readers, having become hopeless and desperate eros-addicts, surely welcomed the thoughtful antidote Ovid offered in the form of the therapeutic *Remedia Amoris*, a poem written with the expressed purpose of freeing the wretched lover from the baneful shackles of Cupid. In short, by the time the *Metamorphoses* were published, Ovid's devotees had had ample opportunity to revel in the *poikilia* of his literary output about the workings of Eros, and each time, the elegiac distich provided the metrical form. Publius Ovidius Naso had become, apart from a brief flirtation with the genre of tragedy, a virtual synonym for the composition of erotic-elegiac verse.

But picking up and unscrolling any one of the fifteen *volumina* that

contained the *Metamorphoses*, a reader familiar with Ovid's literary career is in for a substantial shock. A single glance at the papyrus suffices to confirm that Ovid has definitively changed poetic *métiers*. In his newest work the alternate pentameters which until now had been characteristic of Ovidian poetry have disappeared.[2] Instead, row upon row of sturdy and well-proportioned hexameters confront the incredulous reader. Ovid, the celebrated master of the distichon, the notorious *tenerorum lusor amorum*, the unrivalled champion of erotic-elegiac poetry has produced a work written in the 'ἡρωικόν' – as the epic metre was portentously called.[3]

But once the initial shock has worn off, the reader is bound to experience a sense of *déjà vu*. Ovid, while devoting his previous career to versifying things erotic, had always shown an inclination towards epic poetry. Already in the introductory elegy to his first book of the *Amores*, the poetic neophyte had announced that he was writing elegies merely by default. His true ambition lay elsewhere: he had actually meant to write an epic. And, as can be gathered from pointed allusions to the *Aeneid* at the opening of *Amores* 1.1, this would not have been a routine piece of work, but rather a poem of such martial grandeur as to directly challenge Virgil's masterpiece. Somewhat later, Ovid had told the reader about his attempt at a Gigantomachy, not exactly a topic for the weak of heart and frail of mind.[4] Yet Ovid, in striking contrast to the lyric and elegiac poets of the previous generation, had brashly proclaimed that he was up to the task:

> Ausus eram, memini, caelestia dicere bella
> centimanumque Gyen – et satis oris erat . . .
> (*Amores* 2.1.11–12)

'I had dared, I remember, to sing of gigantomachies and hundred-handed Gyas – and the power of my voice sufficed . . .'

On both these occasions Cupid impishly intervened and redirected Ovid's epic undertakings into the sphere of the erotic; but the hexametric form of the *Metamorphoses* suggests that the poet, finally, has got his way.

In short, the seasoned Ovidian approaches the *Metamorphoses* with rather mixed expectations: vivid memories of lavish amorous verse clash with awareness of the poet's latent epic ambition. Ovid, of course, has written the *Metamorphoses* with such a reader in mind, well aware of the initial puzzlement that his undertaking is bound to cause.[5] To acclimatize his reader and ease the transition to the epic world of the

Metamorphoses, he prefaced his poetic *monstrum* with a pithy introduction.[6] In the four-line proem, Ovid explicitly thematizes his switch from elegy to epic, places the current project within the wider context of his earlier literary output, and offers programmatic guidance as to how this 'epic' should be read. Surprisingly, all this information is encapsulated in the invocation of the divinities that follows upon his initial declaration of poetic intent:

> In nova fert animus mutatas dicere formas
> corpora: di, coeptis (nam vos mutastis et illa),[7]
> adspirate meis . . .
>
> (1.1–3)

'My mind carries me to sing about forms changed into new bodies: gods, inspire my poetic undertaking (for it you changed as well) . . .'

At precisely the moment Ovid makes the switch from elegiac distich to epic hexameter, namely in the parenthesis 'nam vos mutastis et illa' that concludes line two, he proffers both an explanation and a problematization of his newly found epic voice.[8] A comparison with the invocation found in *Iliad* 2, a passage that was indubitably on Ovid's mind when he composed his proem,[9] will illustrate how, at the very moment he seems to endorse the epic genre (at least metrically speaking), Ovid deviates from one of its most important norms in the definition of his authorial *persona*.

Tell me now, Muses, who dwell on Mount Olympus – for you are goddesses and are present, and know everything, whereas we hear only a rumour and know nothing – who were the leaders and commanders of the Greeks.

(*Iliad* 2.484–7)

The structure of the two invocations is analogous. Both Homer and Ovid first call upon divinities to enlist metaphysical help for their current poetic undertaking. In Homer, these are traditionally the Muses, daughters of Memory and thus primed for aiding the oral bard in his extemporaneous composition, whereas Ovid summons the entire pantheon ('di'), a gesture, we might add, of all-inclusive universalism (even though the actual invocation could hardly be shorter!) that turns out to be deeply poignant for the poetic agenda of the *Metamorphoses*. Then both authors add a parenthetical explanation of why they do so, syntactically introduced along analogous lines by the particle *gar* in Homer and *nam* in Ovid. This reverently apologetic structure of communication, which reinforces and elaborates the speech-act of the initial invocation, constitutes a conventional linguistic

feature of ancient prayers.[10] Besides the formal association with religious language both in Homer and in Ovid the parenthesis serves the additional function of contextualizing their respective epic voices and sketching out the conditions of validity and possibility. Homer states an archaic tenet, namely that the Muses possess exclusive and inalienable rights over poetic truth and knowledge. In the process of praising the Muses and disparaging human abilities, he turns himself into a mouthpiece of his divine informants, thus bestowing the desired aura of authenticity, transcendence, and panhellenic truth upon his song.[11] Ovid, on the other hand, declares that he summoned divine aid because gods were already responsible for changing the standard elegiac format of his poetry into epic hexameters, thereby linking his current poetic project with his elegiac past. Such subjective and personal concerns are a far cry indeed from Homer's rhetoric of objectivity. In a fusion of tradition and originality typical of his poetry, Ovid turns the cultural logic of the epic tradition against its own authority. By furnishing his poetic *persona* with a reference to his previous career as a poet, Ovid, at the exact point where he affirms his commitment to the epic genre, scorns one of its fundamental imperatives, i.e., that the author should, if possible, maintain strict anonymity and vanish behind his material. This surprising twist in his authorial self-fashioning does not just import a device from Callimachus and elegy into epic, casting his newly found epic voice in strikingly elegiac terms; it also links his current project tightly to his earlier literary output.

The divine intervention into Ovid's metre which he mentions at the outset of the *Metamorphoses* gestures back to similar events recounted at the outset of the *Amores*, the *Ars Amatoria*, and the *Remedia Amoris*, all works which Ovid introduced with a little poetological drama, starring himself and the very potent divinity Eros Pankrator. These openings afford crucial insights into Ovid's poetic vision, in particular his peculiar attitude towards generic composition that extends to and includes the *Metamorphoses*. An analytic flashback into Ovid's elegiac past, guided by the hermeneutic principle 'Ovidium ex Ovidio explicare' will throw some light on the nature of his epic undertaking as well.

As we already had occasion to notice, Ovid makes his first splash on Rome's literary scene by describing a generic altercation between himself and Cupid. As the poet was about to launch into an epic emulation of the *Aeneid*, Cupid flashed his charming smile and deftly intervened, changing Ovid's epic hexameters into elegiac couplets:

> Arma gravi numero violentaque bella parabam
>   edere, materia conveniente modis.
> par erat inferior versus-risisse Cupido
>   dicitur atque unum surripuisse pedem.
>   (*Amores* 1.1.1–4)

'I was getting ready to compose in the weighty hexameter about arms and violent wars. The material matched the metrical form: The second verse was of equal length to the first – but Cupid (they say) smiled and snatched away one of the feet.'

Annoyed at this interference, Ovid tells Cupid not to interfere with his lofty poetic undertakings (*Amores* 1.1.5–16) – a rebuke, we might point out, which blatantly ignores the convention of poetic piety before divine epiphanies.[12] Ovid ends his harangue against the interfering god by pointing to his lack of proper elegiac inspiration: at the moment, neither boy nor girl is arousing passions in him that might be expressed in elegiac verse (*Amores* 1.1.17–20). The point is a generic one: the elegist is conventionally both love poet and lover, and hence the principal protagonist in his own narrative.

But if Ovid thought that the god of Love would be persuaded by such an argument, repent, and restore the missing metrical foot, he was gravely mistaken. For Cupid, to the author's dismay, quickly supplies the indispensable prerequisite for amorous verse:

> Questus eram, pharetra cum protinus ille soluta
>   legit in exitium spicula facta meum,
> lunavitque genu sinuosum fortiter arcum,
>   'quod' que 'canas, vates, accipe' dixit 'opus!'
> Me miserum! certas habuit puer ille sagittas.
>   uror, et in vacuo pectore regnat Amor.
> Sex mihi surgat opus numeris, in quinque residat:
>   ferrea cum vestris bella valete modis!
>   (*Amores* 1.1.21–8)

'Thus I complained, but he at once loosened his quiver and selected an arrow designed for my destruction. Energetically, he used his knee to fasten his pliant bow and said: "Poet, receive the material for your song!" Wretched me! That boy yields sure-firing arrows. I am on fire and in my empty breast Amor rules supreme. My work rises in six feet, but falls in five: so long, steely battle narratives with your uniform metre!'

Thus the poem magnificently exposes the elegiac convention of the poet as lover even in obeying it.[13] Cupid robs the poet of epic detachment; his notorious arrow engenders a direct personal involvement. In completing the transformation of Ovid from epicist to elegist, Cupid explicitly links the figure's personal experience

('accipe', referring to erotic passion) to his subject matter ('quod canas'). The unerring arrows of Love have found their mark, Ovid has the unwanted role of elegiac lover and poet thrust upon him and, for the time being, can say good-bye to his epic ambitions. Cupid has clearly won the day.[14]

With this humorous account of the origins of his elegiac inspiration, Ovid achieves a twofold purpose in defining his poetic voice. This drawn-out poetological fiction indicates the generic tradition Ovid will continue. But by presenting his dramatic conversion to elegiac verse as a fictive encounter with the genre's patron deity Cupid, Ovid ruthlessly exposes the primary frame of reference that underpins his generic model. For the genre's original justification is based on the simple assumption that the author first catches the disease of love and then turns to writing poetry about his experiences and miserable state of being in order to voice and thereby alleviate his grief, or even to win over his unwilling beloved.[15] By flippantly subverting this generic *a priori*, Ovid defines himself first and foremost as an (epic) poet. His elegiac metre as well as the appropriate emotional distress are provided later, courtesy of Cupid. Ovid thereby resolves the paradox between emotions of existential seriousness and their expression within a highly artistic and predefined literary medium on which earlier love elegy was based.[16]

Of course, after such an impertinent start, Ovid cannot merely resort to the traditional elegiac stance and emotional solemnity of his predecessors in the following poems. That would not only be trite, boring, and repetitive, but would also completely annul the effect of his programmatic opening. And there are indeed important differences between Ovid's elegiac *persona* in the *Amores* and those of his generic predecessors Cornelius Gallus (as far as we can gather), Tibullus, and (the early) Propertius. 'One of the great pleasures of reading the *Amores* is to see how Ovid turns the deeply emotional, almost tragic *persona* of the elegiac lover into the robust and amusing character that is the hero of his poem.'[17] In other words, he replaces a purposefully naive poetic *persona* with a deliberately self-conscious one which seems constantly to be aware of and pun on the fact that it moves within a generic universe of a highly literary and topical nature. The opening poem thus sets the stage for Ovid's 'inside/outside perspective' throughout the collection, announcing that the poet will handle the genre's meaning potential in an extremely lighthearted and amusing fashion. Or, as Conte puts it, 'Ovid's poetry tries to look at elegy instead of looking with eyes of elegy.'[18]

Similar semantic operations inform his two forays into the domain of didactic verse. At the beginning of the *Ars Amatoria*, Ovid presents a situation very reminiscent of his earlier encounter with Cupid, but manages to vindicate himself for the calamity he suffered at the hands of the god in the *Amores*. Venus, so Ovid declares, has now appointed him as the teacher of *Amor* ('me Venus artificem tenero praefecit Amori', *Ars Amatoria* 1.7) and the more the unruly and savage boy rages against and inside him, the better for his poetry:

> Quo me fixit Amor, quo me violentius ussit,
>   hoc melior facti vulneris ultor ero:
> non ego, Phoebe, datas a te mihi mentiar artes,
>   nec nos aeriae voce monemur avis,
> nec mihi sunt visae Clio Cliusque sorores
>   servanti pecudes vallibus, Ascra, tuis:
> usus opus movet hoc: vati parete perito;
>   vera canam: coeptis, mater Amoris, ades!
>   (*Ars Amatoria* 1.23–30)

'The more violently Amor has pierced and torched me, the better shall I avenge the wounds that I sustained: I shall not lie about my poetry being your gift, Apollo, nor am I instructed by the voice of a lofty bird. Clio and Clio's sisters did not appear to me while I tended sheep in your valley, Ascra. This work is inspired by experience: listen to a poet with expertise: what I sing is true. Venus, mother of Love, favour my undertaking!'

Just as in the *Amores*, Ovid starts out his newest poetic endeavour by highlighting the artificial nature of his authorial stance. The slightly quaint, yet humorously adequate notion that Venus has put him in charge of the education of *Amor* (in the subjective and objective sense of the genitive) here replaces the traditional initiation scene of the didactic poet, in which Apollo or the Muses communicate the necessary knowledge and skills to their chosen author. Instead, Ovid advertises his own experiences as a lover as the best guarantee for the truth and applicability of his teachings. In Ovid, the *vates*-figure, floating in transcendental spheres of privileged religious insights only a generation ago, has become a die-hard empiricist. His opening dramaturgy thus again turns out to be a programmatic announcement of the attitude with which Ovid engages in his generic enterprise, as it evokes and perverts the original grounding experience of didactic poetry at one and the same time. An obvious commitment to the rules of the didactic game is carefully counterpoised by the strongly (self-)ironic pose Ovid assumes in and towards his erotic teachings.[19]

The series of poetological fictions continues with the *Remedia Amoris*,

at the outset of which Ovid constructs an especially intricate sequence of events. Cupid had apparently kept a watchful eye on Ovid's poetic production and, as soon as he spotted the title of the new poem, wistfully intervened with an indignant and bellicose exclamation: 'Wars, I see!, wars are in store for me!'[20] Anxious to avoid a potentially disastrous misunderstanding, Ovid implores Cupid to withhold judgement on him (*Remedia Amoris* 3: 'Parce tuum vatem sceleris damnare, Cupido . . .') and embarks upon a reassuring apology. Much to his relief, he is able to convince Cupid that his suspicions are unfounded and that no harm to him personally is intended. The god thereupon flaps his dainty wings in approval and graciously allows Ovid to resume his work:

> Haec ego: movit Amor gemmatas aureus alas
> et mihi 'propositum perfice' dixit 'opus.'
> (*Remedia Amoris* 39–40)[21]

'Thus I spoke: Golden Amor moved his bejewelled wings and told me: "Finish your set task."'

As in the *Amores* and the *Ars Amatoria*, Ovid, through his dramatic interactions with Cupid, 'frames' the following exercise in didactic poetry, clearly signalling his generic affiliations, yet also reminding the reader both of his less than serious attitude towards his material and the artificiality of his didactic voice.

Turning back to the proem of the *Metamorphoses*, it is clear that the same playful posture characterizes his take on the epic genre, since the opening of the poem constitutes a further act in his sequence of poetological dramas. Of course, as befits epic *decorum*, Ovid here keeps his histrionics in check and alludes only obliquely to the nature of the divine intervention behind his current literary practice and poetic *persona*. But the subtle hint in the parenthesis 'nam vos mutastis et illa' is all the reader really needs to reconstruct the fictional context of the work and link Ovid's present epic project to similar dramatic settings in his previous literary career. Ovid here finally announces the reversal of the events recounted at the opening of *Amores* 1.1, where Cupid mutilated his lofty hexameters. In fact, Ovid here engages in a particularly sophisticated game of self-referential intertextuality.

The proem, acting as foil to the poetological drama recounted in *Amores* 1.1, assumes by way of intertextual analogy the rhetorical structure and the thematic function of a *recusatio*, now however turned into its virtual opposite, an anti-*recusatio*.[22] Instead of the usual Apollonian injunction to stay clear of the *genus grande*, Ovid here refers

to a divine intervention into the generic identity of his metre which enables him to pursue epic poetry. Moreover, in *Amores* 1.1 Ovid had accused Cupid twice of usurping divine spheres of influence that are not his own and admonished him: gods are not supposed to interfere with each other (cf. *Amores* 1.1.6–14). In the *Metamorphoses*, the united pantheon apparently tries to set the record straight. What finally makes this inverse *recusatio* somewhat disingenuous is the fact that Ovid's earlier *recusationes* hardly conformed to the standard type, in which the poet declines to write tragedy or epic for various modest and humble reasons such as professed immaturity, lack of ability, or fear of succumbing to *hybris*. Ovid had always struck a rather different pose. As McKeown notes on *Amores* 1.1, 'Ovid's handling of the Callimachean scenario is highly original and idiosyncratic, in that he does not acknowledge the grand genre of epic to be beyond his powers. On the contrary, he protests that his epic would have been a success . . . This disarming lack of modesty is typical of Ovid.'[23] Considered from the perspective of his elegiac career, Ovid, at the opening of the *Metamorphoses*, finally lays claim to what he had always considered his poetic birthright.[24]

His outlook on epic, however, has definitively changed. Gone are the days when he prided himself on attempting a rival-*Aeneid* or a gigantomachy. Ovid's choice of the hexameter clearly signals that his newest work belongs to the genre of high epic,[25] which had always been the *ne plus ultra* in the discourse of ancient poetics – even in the poets who refused to write it. But his embrace of the genre is distinctly double-edged: the 'subjectivizing' of the epic stance and the witty reference to his elegiac past indicate that Ovid has retained his self-conscious attitude towards generic composition. We may safely assume that his take on epic will be as unconventional and amusing as his take on elegiac and didactic poetry. 'The *Metamorphoses* is perhaps Ovid's most innovative work, an epic on a majestic scale that refuses to take epic seriously.'[26] Looking back, we can see now that, while the fictional scenes which Ovid creates as a point of departure for his poetic adventures are amusing in themselves, their entertainment value is not the only reason for Ovid's repeated recourse to this rhetorical strategy. They all have a profound programmatic significance as well, in so far as they provide authorial guidance for important aspects of Ovid's conception of generic composition. His dramaturgic openings denote and illuminate the generic affiliations of Ovid's current poetic endeavour, but, in their Disney-like artificiality, also function as 'effects of alienation', exposing

and reflecting upon the genre's own preconditions, constitutive ele-
ments, and grounding premises.[27] In one and the same act of self-
representation Ovid can thus both adopt an elegiac, didactic, or epic
persona and establish an impertinently 'critical' perspective on generic
requirements. If, in addition, the poem is entitled *Metamorphoses* and
characterized from the very beginning by an intricate interrelation
between changed form and changing content,[28] there are clearly no
set boundaries for Ovid's play with genre.

It may be helpful to conclude with a brief adumbration of subsequent
programmatic developments in the first book. As the early narratives of
the *Metamorphoses* unfold, an increasingly noticeable feature of Ovid's
thematic treatment is its blanket avoidance of erotic subject matter: the
cosmogonic opening and subsequent waves of global destruction and
repopulation are all described without a hint of *amor* or sexual activity in
any context.[29] Given Ovid's status as Rome's master love poet – a writer
who previously had rarely excluded *amor* from the titles of his works, let
alone the content – this lengthy, erotically-challenged account of the
coming into being of the universe is quite remarkable. Indeed, excluding
eros from such a narrative requires some impressive mythological
gymnastics: there can be no mention of Oedipal succession sequences
as such, no story of Pandora, and the Earth must give birth to its various
inhabitants with the aid of nothing more suggestive than the blood of
dead giants.[30] Such narrative expedients are aimed at reviving Ovid's
(by now familiar) poetological drama of generic containment in a new
epic setting. Of course, as any experienced reader must realize, the
struggle to preserve the generic integrity of Ovid's *magnum opus* is
doomed to failure. The decisive elegiac rupture occurs, appropriately
enough, in the altercation between Cupid and Apollo at 1.452 ff.,
heralded by the emphatic words with which the episode opens, *primus
amor*.[31] In this scene Cupid reasserts his dominance over Ovid's poetic
materia by besting Apollo's bowmanship and compelling the humiliated
archer god to take on the role of the elegiac lover. As in the *Amores*, the
Ars Amatoria, and the *Remedia Amoris*, Ovid uses a dramatic interven-
tion by the god of love to signal the generic affiliations of his poem.[32] In
the *Metamorphoses*, however, the intervention is embedded in the
narrative proper, as epic propriety demands. Thus, it is the god of
poetry, rather than the poetic persona, who plays stooge to the
irrepressible Eros Pankrator, as Ovid's comedy of genres is given its
final, decisive rendition.

NOTES

1. A. Sharrock, *Seduction and Repetition in Ovid's Ars Amatoria 2* (Oxford, 1994), vii.

2. The relatively recent discovery of the Gallus-papyrus at Qasr Ibrîm has provided an unprecedented opportunity for a first-hand look at ancient elegiac layout technique. See the plates published in R. D. Anderson, P. J. Parsons, R. G. M. Nisbet, 'Elegiacs by Gallus from Qasr Ibrîm', *JRS* 69 (1979), 125 ff.

3. Cf. Aristotle, *Poetics* 1459b34, where the hexameter is further called 'the most stately' (στασιμώτατον) and 'the most dignified' (ὀγκωδέστατον) of metres, Horace, *Ars Poetica* 73 f., and Ovid himself (*Amores* 2.17.22: 'iungitur herous cum breviore modo'; *Fasti* 2.125 f.: 'quid volui demens elegis imponere tantum / ponderis? heroi res erat ista pedis). Ovid was very much aware of the theoretical classifications of a given metre and repeatedly exploited the comic potential of 'form alive'. Besides *Amores* 2.17 and *Fasti* 2.125 f., cf. *Amores* 1.1.1 f., *Amores* 3.1.8 ff. (the limping personification of Elegy: one of her feet is – rather charmingly – longer than the other), *Ars Amatoria* 1.264 f. (Thalia, Ovid's elegiac Muse, drives a lop-sided chariot), *Remedia Amoris* 381 ('Callimachi numeris non est dicendus Achilles'), and *Heroides* 15.5–8 (Sappho explaining her switch from lyric to elegy). Cf. also G. B. Conte, 'Empirical and Theoretical Approaches to Literary Genre' in K. Galinsky (ed.), *The Interpretation of Roman Poetry: Empiricism or Hermeneutics?* (Frankfurt am Main, 1992), 119 f. on Ovid's 'incessant consciousness of the system of genres' and the subtle discussion of A. Barchiesi, *Il poeta e il Principe, Ovidio e il Discorso Augusteo* (Rome, 1993), 12 ff. for the way in which Ovid handles the meaning potential of (epic) hexameter versus (elegiac) pentameter in the *Fasti* for special effect.

4. Cf. Sharrock, op. cit., 115: 'Gigantomachy is the theme which above all others epitomizes martial epic, which is the most daring of literary exploits and exactly that attempted by Virgil. Gigantomachy epitomizes the ultimate in poetic audacity, the most quintessential epic of epics, the polar opposite of Callimacheanism.' See also P. Hardie, *Virgil's Aeneid: Cosmos and Imperium* (Oxford, 1986), *passim*.

5. For a theoretical formulation of this fact, cf. T. Eagleton, *Literary Theory. An Introduction* (Oxford, 1983), 84: 'Every literary text is built out of a sense of its potential audience, includes an image of whom it is written for: every work encodes within itself what Iser calls an "implied reader", intimates in its every gesture the kind of "addressee" it anticipates.'

6. The curious discrepancy between the actual length of the work and its proem consisting of only four verses has often been noted. Cf., e.g., E. J. Kenney, 'Ovidius Prooemians', *PCPS* 22 (1976), 46: 'This is an astonishingly brief introduction to an epos over 12,000 lines long; and that very brevity ought to put us on our guard. We should expect that not a word will be wasted . . .'

7. After G. Luck, 'Zum Prooemium von Ovid *Metamorphosen*', *Hermes* 86 (1958), 499 f., Kenney, op. cit., R. J. Tarrant, 'Editing Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: Problems and Possibilities', *CP* 77 (1982), 342 ff., and D. Kovacs, 'Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.2', *CQ* 37 (1987), 458 ff. (although the latter's speculations about the date and purpose of the parenthesis should be resisted) there can be no doubt that *illa* (referring back to *coeptis*) is the correct reading and it has been accepted as such at least in Anglo-American scholarship. Cf. P. E. Knox, *Ovid's Metamorphoses and the Traditions of Augustan Poetry* (Cambridge, 1986), 9: 'The case for reading *illa*, a reference to Ovid's poetic endeavours, has been made elsewhere, and it ought now to be accepted into the text.' Cf. also S. Mack, *Ovid* (Yale, 1988), 99 and, above all, the palinode in W. S. Anderson, 'Form Changed: Ovid's *Metamorphoses*' in A. J. Boyle (ed.), *Roman Epic* (London/New York, 1993), 108.

8. Anderson, op. cit., 109, nicely evokes the response of an audience that had not had the chance to browse through any *volumina* of the *Metamorphoses* beforehand and first encountered the work orally, in the context of a recitation: 'What Ovid in fact made a caesura [after *coeptis*] would normally, in his elegiac couplets, have functioned as the break between the halves of the *pentameter*. Thus, as the admiring audience start to sit back to another elegant Ovidian performance in elegiacs, they suddenly hear a metrical conclusion to the line, emphasized by the many long syllables of the spondees, which transforms their expectations and the poetic form from elegiacs into hexameters.' Cf. Tarrant, op. cit., 351: 'The words "nam vos mutastis et illa",

coming at the end of the second line, mark the point at which the metre reveals itself as hexameter rather than elegiacs' and Knox, op. cit., 9: 'the parenthesis fills the second half of the second hexameter, precisely the point where the reader of a new work by Rome's most celebrated elegist will first notice that this is not an elegiac couplet.'

9. In two other places in the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid rather unexpectedly alludes to this most elaborate of invocations to the Muses: 8.532–5 and 15.622–5, i.e., the approximate middle and the very end of the poem.

10. U. Fleischer, 'Zur Zweitausendjahrfeier Ovids', *Antike und Abendland* 6 (1957), 52; cf. M. von Albrecht, 'Die Parenthese in Ovids *Metamorphosen* und ihre dichterische Funktion' (Hildesheim, 1964), 172–3.

11. Cf. G. Nagy, *Greek Mythology and Poetics* (Ithaka/London, 1990), esp. 36–82.

12. Cf. J. C. McKeown, *Ovid: Amores, II. A Commentary on Book One* (Liverpool, 1989), 8: 'It was conventional to acquiesce without demur or debate in the deity's injunction against attempting the more ambitious genres. Since, however, his epic had been progressing nicely, Ovid objects vehemently and at great length to such interference.'

13. Cf. Mack, op. cit., 56: 'Whereas Propertius' [opening] poem fuses poet and lover, Ovid separates them, wittily turning the epic poet into an elegiac poet in a whimsical and illogical little drama.'

14. A thorough victory; the second book of the *Amores* again acknowledges the dominance of Cupid over his poetic inspiration (cf. 2.1.3: 'hoc quoque iussit Amor'). Ovid continues to sing 'carmina, purpureus quae mihi dictat Amor' (2.1.38). And somewhat later, when Ovid again feels strongly inclined to try a more lofty genre, Cupid gentle but firmly disables the recidivist: 'sceptra tamen sumpsi curaque tragoedia nostra / crevit et huic operi quamlibet aptus eram / risit Amor pallamque meam pictosque cothurnos / sceptraque privata tam cito sumpta manu. / hinc quoque me dominae numen deduxit iniquae, / deque cothurnato vate triumphat Amor' (*Amores* 2.18.13–18). In the opening elegy of Book 3, Ovid has apparently accepted his *servitium Amoris* for his own benefit and prefers to write elegy instead of tragedy for his own reasons. Only at the very end of the collection (3.15) does he announce a momentary respite from erotic poetry and turns to the genre of tragedy instead.

15. For this take on the Roman love elegist, see W. Stroh, *Die römische Liebeselegie als werbende Dichtung* (Amsterdam, 1971).

16. The question of whether the previous two generations of love elegists were 'true lovers', in the sense that they expressed 'real' emotions is irrelevant. Ovid's predecessors at least pretended that this was the case, and it is this poetic stance which he contests with a fiction of his own. For the problematic of 'art' and/vs. 'life' in Roman erotic poetry see P. Veyne, *Roman Erotic Elegy* (Chicago, 1988), reviewed in M. Wyke, 'In Pursuit of Love, the Poetic Self, and a Process of Reading Augustan Elegy in the 1980's', *JRS* 79 (1989), 165 ff.; J. Griffin, *Latin Poets and Roman Life* (London, 1985), reviewed in R. Nisbet, 'Pyrrha among Roses: Real Life and Poetic Imagination in Augustan Rome', *JRS* 77 (1987), 184 ff. For a neat deconstruction of the terms of the whole debate, see D. F. Kennedy, *The Arts of Love: Five Studies in the Discourse of Roman Love Elegy* (Cambridge, 1993), chapter 1.

17. I. M. le M. Du Quesnay, 'The *Amores*' in Binn, J. W. (ed.), *Ovid* (London/Boston, 1973), 1.

18. G. B. Conte, *Genres and Readers* (Baltimore and London, 1994), 46. Conte calls this change a transformation 'from the ideology of sincerity to that of fiction' (54).

19. For Ovid's ironic self-consciousness in his erotic teachings, see Conte, op. cit. (n. 18), 35–65 and 154–63 and Sharrock, op. cit., *passim*.

20. *Remedia Amoris* 1–2: 'Legerat huius Amor titulum nomenque libelli: / "Bella mihi, video, bella parantur" ait.'

21. At *Remedia Amoris* 557–74, Cupid himself, in an apparent theophany, adds some prescriptions against love-sickness. See *Ex Ponto* 3.3 for the sad aftermath of his earlier poetological engagements with *Amor*.

22. For a list of the standard elements of the form, see W. Wimmel, *Kallimachos in Rom* (Wiesbaden, 1960), 323.

23. McKeown, op. cit., 8. McKeown compares 2.1.11 f., 2.18.13 f., and 3.1.29 f. (where the personification of Tragedy herself certifies Ovid's talents for the higher genres: 'nunc habeam per te Romana Tragoedia nomen! / implebit leges spiritus iste meas').

24. Ovid's present attempt to ascend to higher generic spheres has a precedent in his earlier poetry. In the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid to a certain extent re-enacts an earlier move from *genus tenue* to *genus grande*, recounted in *Amores* 3.1 and 3.15. In the first poem, Ovid, making the cross-roads choice of Hercules between the *nequitiae* and *nugae* of Elegy and the *genus grande* of Tragedy, still opts for postponing his go at the higher genre. Only in the last poem of the Book does he feel ready and duly says goodbye to his beloved elegies.

25. Cf. Ovid's own comments on the semantics of metrical form, above n. 3.

26. Mack, op. cit., 27.

27. Cf. the formulation of Conte, op. cit. (n. 18), 49–50: 'Once a metaliterary consciousness has been achieved, it considers the borders that demarcate the language of elegy to be mere rhetorical constraints, codifications of an ideology that claims the status of reality.'

28. That Ovid should use the verb *mutare*, obviously a *Leitmotif* in an epic on transformation, both in reference to content ('mutatas formas', line one) and form ('nam vos mutastis et illa', line two) of the work further reinforces the mutual interaction between content and form, subject matter, and poetics, in the *Metamorphoses*. Indeed, the first metamorphosis Ovid recounts in the poem concerns his literary practice, i.e., the fact that he is writing an epic. The second, as J. Henderson, 'A turn-up for the book: yes, it's . . . Ovid's *Metamorphoses*', *Omnibus* (1989), 20 points out, is the transformation of the Greek title 'Metamorphoses' into the Latin 'mutatas formas'.

29. Cf. Hesiod, *Theogony* 116 ff., where Eros is a primal element in universal creation, Lucretius 1.1 ff., and Ovid's earlier erotically-charged account of the early years of the cosmos at *Ars Amatoria* 2.467 ff.

30. We hope to examine Ovid's programme of 'erotic exclusion' in *Metamorphoses* 1 in greater detail on some other occasion.

31. The definitive treatment of the episode remains W. S. M. Nicoll, 'Cupid, Apollo and Daphne (Ovid, *Met.* 1.452 ff.)', *CQ* 30 (1980), 174ff., which we are following here.

32. Nicoll, op. cit., 176 traces the lineage of this Ovidian *praeteritio* pattern back to Callimachus' *Aitia* prologue.