A STUDY OF THE IMAGERY OF OVID'S POETRY

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ABSTRACT

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This study investigates the nature and function of imagery in Ovid's major works. It is divided into seven chapters, the contents of which may be summarized as follows:

Chapter I, the introduction, attempts to arrive at a working definition of the term "imagery" and contains a brief treatment of Ovid's use of simile and metaphor. Some recent critical works are considered in order to establish a frame of reference for subsequent discussion and to point out the imprecision of terminology among modern critics, particularly the confusion surrounding the terms "motif" and "symbol" as opposed to "image".

Chapter II is devoted to a consideration of Ovid's indebtedness to his Hellenistic and Roman predecessors for many of the themes and images found in his elegiac works. It is noted that although many of these traditional themes and figures can be traced directly to Propertius and Tibullus, they take on new life and reach their fullest development in Ovid's hands.

Chapter III is a study of images of light and darkness in four letters of the _Heroides_, a section of the _Tristia_ and

certain selected scenes in the Metamorphoses. Although many of the references to light and darkness are not metaphorical *per se*, they take on heightened significance from the context.

Chapter IV deals with images used to describe the physical characteristics of women and treats two extended metaphorical patterns - love envisaged as slavery and love as a disease.

Chapter V consists of an examination of images drawn from the natural world - the sea, vegetation and the animal kingdom - which are used to characterize and to describe emotions. Terminology taken from husbandry and hunting and applied metaphorically to love is also briefly discussed.

Chapter VI is a study of tactile (hardness, cold, etc.) and sound (alliteration and onomatopoeia) imagery.

The final chapter, Chapter VII, treats the Tristia and the Epistulae ex Ponto separately because these two poems were written during the poet's exile and thus form a distinct phase of the poet's career. The purpose and treatment of images here are decidedly different and when viewed in the perspective of the facts of his life often take on symbolic significance. The last two paragraphs are a summary and an assessment of Ovid's use of imagery.

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PREFACE

This year marks the 2,009th anniversary of the poet's birth and yet comparatively few critical works dealing with Ovid's poetry have appeared to date. Even less scholarship has been expended on studies of Ovid's imagery and the handful of articles that do treat the subject are far too cursory and limited in their scope.

The limitations imposed by a paper of this kind preclude a comprehensive study of all of Ovid's writings. For this reason I have had to be selective. I have omitted from my consideration works such as the *Nux*, the *Consolatio Ad Liviam*, in which Ovid's authorship is disputed, fragmentary and incomplete poems such as the *Halieuticon*, the *Medicamina Faciei*, and that prosaic and tedious collection of imprecations known as the *Ibis*. The *Fasti* are given only superficial treatment because most of the images are repetitions or echoes of those found in his early works and although there are rare moments when the poet manages to transcend his rather prosaic subject matter it is on the whole heavy and lifeless. As a work of literature it falls far short of the standard set in the *Metamorphoses* and the *Amores*. It is less of a poem than a verse almanac dealing with the yearly cycles of Roman rites and festivals, a popular handbook of astronomy and a repository of curious antiquarian lore and consequently of more interest to the professional mythographer than to the student of literature.

If at times the treatment of the imagery appears to be somewhat disjointed and arbitrary in its selection of illustrations, my excuse is that the subject itself is rather amorphous and that the modern concepts of "thematic" imagery were unknown to the Augustan elegists. There is no structural or imagistic "pattern" or substratum in any one of Ovid's works which can be treated systematically and which once laid bare will furnish a key that will unlock hitherto hidden meanings. This has to wait for the eras of Shakespeare and T. S. Eliot.

A study of the imagery of any poet is useful only in so far as it results in a better understanding and appreciation of his poetry. Although the limitations of this paper are only too obvious, I hope that in some small way it will do that.

The translations are my own; the texts I have followed are those of the Loeb Classical Library: _The Metamorphoses_ by F. J. Miller; _Heroides and Amores_ by Grant Showerman; _Tristia and Ex Ponto_ by Arthur Leslie Wheeler; _The Art of Love and Other Poems_ by J. H. Mozley; _Fasti_ by James G. Frazer. For convenience the following abbreviations have been used:

_Am._	_Amores_
_A.A._	_Ars Amatoria_
Pont.	_Epistulae ex Ponto_
Fast.	_Fasti_
Met.	_Metamorphoses_
_R.A._	_Remedia Amoris_
_Tr._	_Tristia_

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to my advisor, Dr. E. G. Berry, for his helpful advice and constructive criticisms in the preparation of this paper.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION:
IMAGERY. SIMILE. METAPHOR. SYMBOL.

The term "imagery" is derived from the Latin word _imago_, meaning "representation", "image", "conception", "form", "shape", "picture". Ever since man began to compose poetry, this picture-making faculty has been the hall-mark of the poet. Imagery is the technique of constructing word or sound pictures and weaving them subtly and unobtrusively into the fabric of the poetry in such a way as to harmonize all the other poetic elements such as metre, action, mood and atmosphere and to make the poet's feelings and emotions appeal vividly to the reader's imagination. Rhythm and imagery run together in poetic harness and in good poetry one cannot exist without the other.

Looking at it in broader terms, we may include within the province of imagery certain intensities of detail or vivid descriptions which represent something not actually present to the senses and which serve to enhance, illustrate, illuminate some notion or concept beyond the purely literal level. Figurative language which appeals to the reader's senses, be it sight, touch, taste or sound, or words and phrases which raise the reader's sensory imagination to another level of perception,

may be considered as imagery. As Stephen J. Brown defines it, "imagery is ... a using of objects belonging to one order of being to explain, represent, picture forth objects belonging to another order."[1] For the purposes of the present study, repeated word patterns, themes or verbal echoes which do not evoke any secondary mental or sensory associations in the reader's mind, even though they may permeate an entire section or book (such as, for example, stones, snakes and water in the *Metamorphoses*) will not be regarded as images but rather as motifs and will receive only cursory treatment.

There is general agreement among modern critics that under the term "imagery" may be classified any poetic figure, including simile, metaphor, metonomy, synecdoche or personification - in short, any type of description in which one thing is either implicitly or explicitly compared with another. These comparisons may be either directly or indirectly stated or implied or they may be brought out by transfer of meaning or by analogy.

The most frequently used figures are simile and metaphor. However, these tend to overlap to a certain extent and very often the distinction between simile and metaphor is blurred. Recent critics have been using the term "submerged simile" for figures which on the surface appear to be metaphorical but are in fact similes with the word "like" or "as" omitted. For example the phrase *remis ego corporis utar*, "I shall use the

oarage of my arms" (Her. XVIII, 215) may be regarded as a submerged simile because "oars" and "arms" are not primarily identified but compared and its origin as a simile ("my arms are like an oar") is readily apparent. Many similes can be quite easily converted or condensed into metaphors and metaphors expanded into similes. Only a slight alteration would be needed to change the above-mentioned phrase into a simile: velut remis ego corpore utar. However, by its nature, namely identification, the traditional classical metaphor tends to condense and compress while the simile, especially the so-called "epic" simile, through its descriptive function, often leads to diffuseness and expansion. Although no attempt will be made in this treatise to deal with simile or metaphor per se or with the niceties of distinction but rather with their function in regard to imagery and their contributions to the esthetic whole of a poem, yet in order to establish a basis for subsequent discussion, a brief look at Ovid's similes and metaphors may prove revealing.

There is a wide variety of ways of introducing a simile. Ovid's favourite method is to use introductory words such as ut, velut, quot, ceu, instar or sic; next in frequency are figurative comparative adjectives and ablatives of manner, often preceded by such words as ritu or more. There is another type of simile, found chiefly in the Ars Amatoria, Tristia, and the Epistulae ex Ponto, where a point is stated and followed by a seemingly endless series of parallel observations or practical applications without any grammatical links. All four types occur

most frequently in the Ars Amatoria and least frequently in the Fasti and the Remedia Amoris. According to several tabulations,[2] approximately forty percent of the total number of similes to be found in all the poems are limited to a single work - the Metamorphoses. However, within the various works a pronounced difference exists in the subject matter from which the similes are taken. In the Metamorphoses the images are drawn from a narrow range of subjects - farm life, navigation, warfare and physical nature. Similes from nature usually reflect its destructive elements - the fury of lightning, thunder and hail, the fierceness and instability of wind and water, the insatiability of fire and the violence inherent in the animal kingdom. The similes in the elegiac works, although also drawn from the same limited range of subjects, tend to stress the more beneficent aspects of nature - the radiance of the stars, the glimmer of twilight, the subdued light in a forest, the verdant beauty of river-banks and the shady tranquility of caves and grottoes.

As there is a marked difference in the treatment of the subject matter so there are noticeable differences in the type of simile found in the two genres. A preponderance of the long, detailed epic similes distinguishes the Metamorphoses from the other works. These "epic" comparisons are no doubt intended to give the otherwise unepic material an epic flavour. In some of these similes, recent critics have detected direct borrowings from the works of Ovid's epic predecessors, especially Homer, Apollonius of Rhodes and Vergil. Only two such elaborate

similes are to be found in the Fasti, and one each in the Ars Amatoria and the Tristia.

What is Ovid's purpose in using these extended similes in the Metamorphoses, besides to endow this pseudo-epic with an epic quality? A careful study will reveal that they serve a variety of functions. In addition to establishing the mood and setting the tone of certain episodes, they also perform the function of reinforcing and illustrating specific actions and emotions. They are generally inserted in scenes of violent passion, great excitement, fear and overwhelming grief. Thus in the Apollo-Hyacinthus episode the pathos of the situation is brought out when the young boy is accidentally killed by a quoit and his head is described as sinking on his shoulders as the withered tops of violets, poppies or lilies droop when their stems have been crushed (X, 190). Philomela trembles before the lusting Tereus like a timid lamb before the wolf or a trembling dove that has just managed to extricate itself from the claws of its attacker; when her tongue is partially torn out, the stem quivers in her throat while the remaining part writhes on the ground like a snake's severed tail (VI, 527-30; 557-9). In an extended simile that takes up six lines, Apollo's pursuit of Daphne is compared to a Gallic hound's mad chase after a hare (I, 533-8). On the death of his beloved Coronis, the outward manifestations of Apollo's grief are likened to the lowing of a heifer on seeing her unweaned calf struck by the sacrificial hammer (II, 623-5) and when Hecuba's only daughter

is sacrificed, overcome with anger and blazing with rage, she makes her way to the murderer in the same way that a lioness stalks the thief that has robbed her of her cub (XIII, 547-9).

In addition to heightening the emotional pitch of scenes and episodes, these similes are often used to characterize individuals. By implication, Orpheus' mild nature is emphasized in the simile which compares the Thracian women's attack on the poet to the assault of dogs on a doomed stag in the amphitheatre (XI, 25-7), while Achilles' violent temper and Perseus' strength and prowess are brought out by their comparisons to a bull and lioness respectively (XII, 102-4; V, 164-6). One other function of the epic simile may be mentioned: to create suspense. Because of its length it tends to interrupt the action for the moment and make the reader even more eager to learn the outcome. In the Perseus-Andromeda episode, when Perseus catches sight of the sea-monster and is about to attack it, the action is interrupted by an extended simile comparing the hero to an eagle swooping down and seizing a snake in its talons (IV, 714-20). Similar interruptions occur in the Apollo-Daphne chase (I, 533-8) and in the episode of Sipylus' vain attempt to escape Latona's arrows (VI, 231-5).

This would seem to be sufficient discussion of the function of simile; now let us turn our attention to metaphor.

All language to a greater or lesser degree is metaphorical by nature and whenever metaphorical expressions are used we are

in the realm of imagery. The poet needs metaphor in order to expand his range of reference and enrich his existing "word-hoard". He will readily increase his poetic vocabulary by constantly striving to activate and breathe new life into the so-called "dead" or stereotyped metaphor. In dealing with Latin poetry this fact presents almost insuperable difficulties because with over two thousand years separating us from the Augustan age how can we be sure that what is to us a seemingly metaphorical expression is not really a "dead" metaphor?; may not the metaphorical relation that was once implied have disappeared even by Ovid's time or at least have become so worn with use that the average Roman no longer noticed it? To take a modern parallel , how many people think of earth being undermined when they hear the expression "they won by a landslide" or a pillow when being told that someone's spirits were "bolstered up"? Another problem is inherent in the level of reference; is a certain word which to all appearances suggests an image to be taken at its face value, or, if it is metaphorical, to what does the metaphor refer? Take for example the phrase _pabula laeta_, "the happy pasturage" (_Am_. III, v, 28). This expression could be explained away as an example of a "transferred epithet", rationalized as "poetic diction", a bare-faced imitation of Vergil's _laetae segetes_ or that other common justification - the repository of all poetic aberrations - metrical convenience. On the other hand, this artificial but evocative phrase may be regarded as an image implied by derivation: the original

meaning of laetus is "fat" or "rich"[3] and is used by Ovid twice in this sense in the Fasti (laetaque humus and pascua laeta, VI, 252; IV, 476). However, the pictorial suggestion of the "smiling" field is not to be discounted. By far the most common instances of this type of metaphor are to be found in the transference of a word - whether for the sake of vividness, clarification or breadth of implication - traditionally used in reference to one occupation or sphere of human activity and its application to a completely different one (e.g. aequor arare, "to plough the sea", Tr. I, ii, 76; aquas sulcare, "to furrow the waves", Met. IV, 707) or in the transference of a word from its natural sense to another sense for which no suitable word exists.

From the twentieth-century vantage-point many of Ovid's images are what we would call artificial and insipid. When a comparison is called for, the person described is inevitably braver than a lion, more savage than a bear, more remorseless than the sea, harder than rock or iron. We are admonished to gather our rosebuds while we may because beauty is transitory: like violets, lilies or roses it will fade all too soon. Time glides imperceptibly with silent foot; the years pass like flowing water, and, like the waves, once gone can never be recalled. The sorrows that beset the poet in old age are as countless as grains of sand on the shore, flowers in spring, snowflakes in winter, fish in the sea or birds in the air. When he describes women, their hair is almost invariably golden, cheeks

rosy, complexion snow-white, eyes as lustrous as the stars. The lover, struck by Cupid's darts, "burns" with passion and, forced to join Love's camp as a soldier, wages endless wars of seduction. In later chapters, I shall discuss the means by which Ovid attempts to breathe new life into many such trite expressions.

Even a cursory reading of Ovid will reveal that there are certain practices to which the poet adheres in his use of imagery. As has been noted above in connection with epic similes in the Metamorphoses, he will use imagery in scenes of violence, of battle, carnage and violent passion. Scenes depicting the actual metamorphosis usually contain several images: in the account of Byblis' transformation into a fountain, her tears are compared to drops distilling from the bark of a gashed pine, bitumen oozing from the earth and ice melting beneath the warmth of the sun and the influence of the warm west wind (Met. ~~XI, 73-7~~ IX, 659-62); the metamorphosis of the Thracian women who had torn Orpheus apart is accompanied by a comparison of their struggles to escape to those of birds, caught in a fowler's net beating their wings and thus drawing in the nets even more tightly (Met. XI, 73-7). Images are employed in certain scenes to convey a sensuous tone or heighten the erotic mood; examples of this may be found in the Salmacis-Hermaphroditus, Echo-Narcissus and Pygmalion episodes in the Metamorphoses (Books IV, III and X respectively), in many of his love elegies and some of the letters in the Heroides. In illustrating certain

precepts or observations, Ovid's tendency is to list paratactically several images in succession; this is especially prevalent in the Ars Amatoria; advising the girls to dress their hair effectively he presents the reader with three implicit comparisons: a bull with its horn maimed is ugly; ugly is a field without grass, a shrub without leaves, or a head without hair (III, 249-50). A piling up of images is used in episodes where parody or a humorous effect is desired, such as in Polyphemus' love song to Galatea (Met. XIII); here the redundancy is used in comic exaggeration. In the Tristia and the Epistulae ex Ponto imagery is used to communicate the deeper feelings and emotions such as warmth and sincerity in order to strike more effectively a responsive chord in the hearts of his readers Two other uses may be mentioned: in situations where tact or delicacy make it imperative that the poet avoid literal language; an example of this occurs in several elegies of the Amores, especially in III, vii, 65-8, where the poet has to use metaphorical language in order to convey his embarrassment caused by the previous night's debauch; and finally, the poet has to resort to imagery in order to adequately represent certain abstract processes, such as the act of poetic creation; in this case the method is depicted by images drawn from agriculture, facing and weaving.

Some of these functions of imagery will be dealt more fully in succeeding chapters. For the moment let us take a brief look at the characteristics of Ovid's imagery as brought out in recent studies, and try to disentagle some of the perplexities which surround the term.

From one recent study[4] of the formal imagery in the Metamorphoses it would appear that, judging by modern critical standards, the author considers Ovid's use of imagery to be relatively unsophisticated. Unlike contemporary poets, Ovid "does not use imagery thematically so that it becomes exclusively pertinent to a particular tale and extends its significance beyond the immediate point of comparison",[5] and generally it is employed at irregular intervals. Often he will connect several seemingly unrelated images within the same comparison to form "image clusters"; between these concentrations there may be long sections which contain no images whatever. Yet whenever they are employed, they are not mere ornaments or displays of the poet's virtuosity, but function as an integral part of the plot or action. They serve to reinforce the effect of the preceding action by repeating and elaborating what has just been stated and to make abstractions tangible and more meaningful. Because this critic only considers images which spring from figurative comparisons, mainly similes (metaphorical language is barely touched on), she concludes that on the whole the poem is "relatively unadorned".[6]

Another writer[7] has noted that, whether consciously or unconsciously, certain images (or what the author prefers to call "symbols") are used by Ovid to provide unity within each of the books and serve as mnemonic links from one book to another. She singles out moisture and heat as "symbols" which through constant repetition lend to the apparently hetereogenous material

of Books One and Two of the Metamorphoses a semblance of unity and through its rhythmical reverberations (in modern psychological jargon this would be termed "perseveration") create a "resonance" in the reader's mind. To this writer every mention of water, river-god, naiad, fire or flame, any proper name or epithet which might possibly have any suggestion of moisture or heat is a "symbol" which ties the various episodes together. One brief quotation will suffice to show how nonsensical this train of reasoning is. Commenting on the latter half of Book Two in which Apollo plays a prominent part she writes (the italics are the author's):

> Apollo then pursued Daphne, daughter of a *river*-god. Her transformation into a tree brought condolences to her father from the other *river*-gods: all save Inachus, who was upset by the disappearance of his own daughter Io. She, transformed into a cow, was drinking from muddy *streams* (1.634) and shuddering at her horned reflection in the *water* (1.640). Her champion Mercury related the tale of a *water*-nymph, Syrinx, who had fled from the unwelcome attentions of Pan to a stream (1.700f.) ...[9]

She goes on to say that in Book Two, in the episode of Phoebus and Phaethon, "words of brightness and heat flash constantly" and "opposing moisture is found too."[10] This is undoubtedly true: the palace of the sun is described as "bright with glittering gold and fire-stone (*pyropos*) that shone like flames"; the double door on which Vulcan, the archetypal blacksmith, engraved the seas, the earth and the heavens gleamed with light (II, 1-7); the sun-god, wearing rays that flashed around his head, is sitting on a throne shining with bright emeralds

(24-5; 40-1); the four horses pulling Phaethon's chariot, neighing with "fiery whinnyings" (*hinnitibus flammiferis*, 154-5), all have evocative names: Pyrois ("fiery"), Aethon ("the blazing one"), Phlegon ("burning") and Eous ("dawn"). However, we can hardly call these descriptions (the complete list would have to include every occurrence of *urere*, *incendere* or *ardere*) "images", let along "symbols" as there are no metaphorical relationships or comparisons stated or implied and it is hardly conceivable that Ovid wished them to be taken on any other than a purely literal level. It may be quite true, as some critics maintain, that one cannot discuss imagery for long without eventually slipping into a discussion of symbolism. However, a symbol by definition has to stand for something; if rivers and river-gods, etc. are used symbolically, what, may one well ask, are their analogues? If we define a symbol as a "sign ... of something beyond the object or idea that it denotes, of another level of significance that somehow reaches forth to embrace the ... mysteries words cannot otherwise capture",[11] this author's arguments are without any validity. If we adhere to the distinctions made earlier, these conglomerations of related objects are not really "symbols" or "images" but rather themes or motifs. If we single out fire and flame, in all its metaphorical manifestations, for consideration, we would do well to begin with that stereotyped expression "to burn with love". Although Janette Richardson relegates such phrases as *urere*, *ardere*, *incalescere* and *ignes fateri* when applied to love

to the "dead" metaphor cupboard, yet they occur so frequently and are used by Ovid in such a variety of ways that one can hardly ignore this <u>bona fide</u> image in any study that pretends to some completeness. These words and phrases cannot be dismissed as examples of "poetic diction" or picturesque ways of saying <u>amare</u>; their meaning lies beyond the literal level and although, as Janette Richardson implies, the metaphorical association of actual fire with the fire of love in the Roman reader's mind may not have been as rapid as we might like to think, I can hardly concur with her statement that, like the modern "to fall in love", those phrases did not evoke any comparative images. In the <u>Metamorphoses</u> these expressions, trite though they may be, are endowed with an extra dimension and a heightened significance by the context. Whenever one person "burns" with passion for another, there is usually a concomitant descriptive simile immediately following which expands and illustrates in concrete terms this abstract process. In addition, the reader can usually observe the overt physical symptoms and deduce a particular psychological change in the person's character as indicated by his actions. For example, when Medea catches sight of Jason "she burns at the sight" (<u>specie inarsit</u>, VII, 83) and at once forgets her resolution about not helping him in his quest for the golden fleece; but before the reader comes to this phrase, he is given a description of her physical change, depicted in terms of fire, which is a direct result of her emotional "fire":

> exstinctaque flamma revixit. erubuere genae,
> totoque recanduit ore ...
>
> The flame that was quenched was rekindled: her cheeks were suffused with a crimson blush, her whole face was ablaze.
>
> (VII, 77-8)

This in turn is followed by an expanded simile which objectifies the inner psychological "fire"; through the comparison the emotion becomes so vivid that it seems to take place before our eyes:

> utque solet ventis alimenta assumere, quaeque
> parva sub inducta latuit scintilla favilla,
> crescere, et in vetere agitata resurgere vires ...
>
> As a tiny spark that lies hidden in a pile of cinders gathers sustenance and, increased by the wind's fanning regains its former strength and blazes up again ...
>
> (79-81)

Mercury, merrily soaring over Munychia and the Lyceum, looks down and sees Herse in a procession of young girls celebrating the festival of Pallas Athene. Immediately he wheels around in his tracks, like a hawk that has just seen some carrion below; he "blazes up with passion" (_exarsit_, II, 727) and unable to keep a straight course, changes direction (_vertit iter_, 730); the verb _vertere_ implies both a physical and psychological "change". His emotional change is preceded here also by a simile comparing his inner "fire" to the fiery glow of a bullet shot from a Balearic sling, growing in intensity as it passes through the air. Similarly Apollo is "turned into fire" (_in_

flammas abiit, I, 495) when he sees Daphne. *Abiit* literally means "goes into" and is synomymous with *vertere*; both a physical and psychological change are implied in the word. His power of prophecy "deceives" him and he makes a passionate assault on the girl. Here too the "flame" in Apollo's breast is objectified by being compared to that of blazing stubble or burning hedge set ablaze by a careless traveller, portraying vivdly the suddenness of the process.

Other examples of fire imagery will be dealt with in a later chapter.[12] It is hoped, however, that these few introductory pages have given us a working definition of the term "image", a better insight into the nature and function of simile and metaphor, and have helped to some extent to clear away many of the misunderstandings which surround these terms, especially the wide-spread confusion among recent writers concerning the distinctions between image and motif.

1 Stephen J. Brown, *The World of Imagery* (New York, Russel and Russel, 1966), p.17.

2 S. G. Owen, "Ovid's Use of the Simile," *CR*, XLV (1931), 99-100; E. G. Wilkins, "A Classification of the Similes of Ovid," *CW*, XXV (1932), 73. See also J. A. Washietl, *De Similitudinibus Imaginibusque Ovidianis* (Vienna, 1883).

3 cf. Alois Walde's *Lateinisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg, 1910), p.407: he defines *laetus* as *fett* ("rich", "fertile"), *üppig* ("luxurious"), *fruchtbar* ("fruitful").

4 Janette Richardson, "The Function of Formal Imagery in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*," *CJ*, LIX (1964), 161-9.

5 *Ibid.*, p.164.

6 *Ibid.*, p.162.

7 Frances Norwood, "Unity in the Diversity of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*," *CJ*, LIX (1964), 170-74.

8 *Ibid.*, p.171.

9 *Ibid.*, p.171.

10 *Ibid.*, p.171.

11 *Dictionary of World Literature*, ed. J. T. Shipley (New York, Philosophical Library, 1943), p.576.

12 Chapter III.

CHAPTER II

BORROWED THEMES: OVID'S DEBT TO HIS PREDECESSORS

Before entering upon a detailed discussion of Ovidian imagery, it would be useful to indicate Ovid's position as an heir to the already established elegiac tradition. Georg Luck states that "during the Augustan Age, certain conventions were shared by almost all poets. Certain themes, certain rhetorical figures, certain images went along with elegy ..."[1] According to many authorities on the elegy, Ovid owes a great deal to both Tibullus and Propertius but his debt to the latter seems to have been the greater. From Propertius, "Ovid did not scruple to appropriate themes, ideas and situations ..."[2]

For example, the physical appearance of each of the elegists' sweethearts is suspiciously similar. Propertius" Cynthia is tall and has delicately tapered hands and "ivory fingers". Her face is more dazzling white than lilies or Maeotian snow and her cheeks are like rose petals floating in milk or Spanish vermilion or the rosy blush of dawn. Her long golden (fulva) hair streams down her soft shoulders, her eyes sparkle like stars and burn like torches. She carries herself regally - emulating Juno and Pallas with her stately gait (II, i, 9; II, ii, 5f; II, iii, 10-14).

Unlike Propertius, Tibullus does not enumerate Delia's every charm. All he says about her is that she is beautiful, has soft youthful arms, and has long, golden (flava) hair. (I, i, 55; I, v, 43; I, iii, 91).

Ovid's portrait of Corinna[3] in the Amores is in some ways like that of Cynthia, but less vividly sketched.[4] He describes her as candida, "dazzling-white". Her snow-white cheeks are suffused with a rosy hue. She is tall, graceful, has dainty feet and her sparkling eyes gleam like stars (I, v, 10; III, iii, 5-9). If we press the comparison in the Amores I, v, 11-12 we may conclude that Corinna has the regal gait of Semiramis, the queen of Bablylon and the voluptuousness of Lais, the courtesan of Corinth.

The Augustan elegists, Gallus, Tibullus, Propertius and Ovid had as their model the love poems of Callimachus and other Alexandrian poets such as Philetas and Hermesianax. Like their Alexandrian predecessors, the Roman elegists filled their poems with Greek myth and legend, pedantically parading their erudition. Gallus' poems, in which mythology played a considerable part, seem to have set a pattern which the rest of the Roman elegists followed. This tendency to illustrate love affairs by mythological allusions is present in all these authors but especially so in Propertius. Although both Propertius and Ovid use mythology quite freely in their elegies, their aims are decidedly different.

Georg Luck admits that Propertius' mythological erudition is "heavy", but defends it on the grounds that it is not merely decoration but has a "concrete function in a given situation" and "throws light on a given theme".[5] This is correct. Propertius' mythological elements are used to form the actual statement whereas Ovid's illustrate, enhance and reinforce his argument. In Propertius they form an integral part of the fabric of his poetry; in Ovid they are often appendages and may be omitted without much loss of meaning. Two examples will suffice to illustrate these differences. In Propertius' elegy on his dream vision (_Visus eram molli_) in which the poet imagines himself lying in the delicate shade of Helicon and feels that he is ready to tackle the epic _genre_, he is addressed by the muse Calliope, who tries to convince him that the heroic genre is not his _métier_. Touching the poet she says:

> Contentus niveis semper vectabere cycnis.
>
> You will always be well-pleased, being pulled by snow-white swans.
>
> (III, iii, 39)

This statement is almost unintelligible unless the reader perceives the allusion in "swan" - Venus and love songs - for the swans since time immemorial were celebrated for their sweet-singing and were regarded as pulling Venus' chariot (cf. _A.A._, III, 809). What Calliope is saying is that Propertius will be famous for his love songs and not as an epic bard. This is just one of the many examples in which Propertius brings out his meaning not by the actual words but by the associations (mythological) connected with them.

Ovid's use of mythology is rather different. In Amores III, vi, Ovid, unable to cross a stream, berates it, saying that instead of hindering, rivers ought to aid young lovers. With this as a springboard, he proceeds to enumerate all the rivers that he knows that have fallen in love; within the space of twenty lines he mentions Inachus, Xanthus, Alpheus, Peneus, Asopus, Achelous, the Nile, Empeus, and the Anio. The last one mentioned allows him to exercise his natural gift and love of story-telling and for the next thirty-eight lines he launches into the love story of the Anio - an interesting and moving account but one with little relevance to his main theme and which could be omitted or considerably shortened without doing much harm to the esthetic integrity of the poem.

All three major Roman elegists use remarkably similar images in their attempts to describe the process of poetic composition and the act of creation of poetry itself. Since this is such an abstract, indefinable process, they have to resort to imagery and symbolism in order to come to grips with it. The three most consistently used are those of growth and fecundity on the one hand and metaphors drawn from racing and weaving[6] on the other.

Before going on to specific examples, it would be helpful to define the nature and function of poetry and the poet as seen by the elegists. Georg Luck's statement that whenever "Ovid reflects on poetry and the mission of the poet in society, he almost invariably uses the ready-made arguments and images

that he found in Propertius "[7] is only partially true because it fails to take into account Ovid's uniquely analytical approach to poetics and the sources of the poet's inspiration. Although both poets share basically the same view of the poet's role, Ovid goes far beyond Propertius both in the vocabulary and the wider range of images that he uses to describe the poetic process.

All three elegists regard the poet as a priest and a prophet; although he is not a god, yet there is a divinity (numen) in him. Bacchus, Apollo and his nine companions reveal certain mysteries to him which are denied to the vulgus profanum. To be a poet is to take part in the caelestia sacra, "heavenly mysteries" (Tr. IV, x, 19).

Propertius believes that as a poet-priest, he has a sacred mission to perform; in his role as vates he occupies a position halfway between man on the one hand and Apollo and the Muses on the other. In his elegy to Callimachus (III, i) he claims that as a sacerdos he was the first to carry from a pure fountain Italian sacred hymns (orgia). Bidding farewell to martial themes, he separates himself from the rest of mankind because he knows that through his love elegies "soaring Fame" will lift him from the earth. Not everyone can travel the road to Helicon but only those whom the Muses have prepared for the task. His verses have been brought down straight from the mount of the Muses and he asks the Pegasides to bestow on his head the delicate garland reserved for the elegist. In

III, iii, in a dream vision, Phoebus points out to Propertius the cave of the Muses where he sees their mystic emblems, tambourines. He sees the "Sacred Nine" gathering ivy for the thyrsus, composing love-songs and plaiting a garland of roses. Finally Calliope moistens his lips with the water of the Pierian spring.

Propertius, Tibullus and Ovid all look upon Phoebus, Bacchus and the Muses as their inspiration. Ovid boasts that although his family tree leaves much to be desired and his parents' means were limited, yet

Phoebus comitesque novem vitisque repertor (Am. I, iii, 11) are on his side. He refers to himself as

Musarum purus Phoebique sacerdos (Am. III, viii, 23) "the unstained priest of Phoebus and the Muses". Tibullus also speaks of Phoebus, Bacchus and the Pierides as favouring a castus poeta (III, iv, 44)

To Propertius, Bacchus (wine) is a stimulant to Phoebus (poetry). The Muses "inflame" (irritare often has the meaning of "kindle") the poet's soul and Bacchus makes Phoebus more fecund (fertilis) (IV, vi, 75-6).

Ovid claims that when his heart feels the inspired fervour of the green thyrsus (the symbolic ivy-crowned staff of Bacchus) that spirit enables him to rise above any earthly misery.

One of Propertius' favourite metaphors for the poetic process is that of the chariot race. He will often interpolate this image abruptly among several others without any transition. For example, in his elegy on Augustus' Eastern victories, feeling that the time has come to put away his love elegies, he introduces his new theme by saying that now he must guide his chariot pulled by Thessalian horses over a new field (II, i, 2). In III, i he introduces three metaphors - flying chariot, triumph and race; his Muse is triumphing behind garlanded steeds, the poet is in the chariot which is lifted by _Fama sublimis_ and a crowd of rival poets following behind. They are all running toward the temple of the Muses along a narrow path. He uses this chariot image in III, iii, to illustrate his proper sphere as a poet; the _parvae rotae_ of his poetic genius will break outside the familiar soft meadows of love lyrics.

In the _Remedia Amoris_, Ovid, addressing Envy, claims that his fame as an elegist is already great and, god willing, it will be greater still in the future. He is only at the beginning of his poetic career and plans to produce many more works.

> Principio clivi noster anhelat equus.
>
> My horse pants (after honour) at the beginning of the slope.
>
> (394)

As he improves at his craft, the vehicle of his genius will readily bear him up to the crest of Helicon, to the very abode of the Muses.

The last poem of Book III of the *Amores* is the final turning post (*ultima meta*) grazed by the wheels of his elegy (III, xv, 2). When he is ready to proceed to a more stately type of poetry, perhaps even an entirely different *genre*, he announces that

> pulsanda est magnis area maior equis.
>
> I must strike the ground with mighty horses on a greater course.
>
> (*Am* III, xv, 18)

In the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*, Ovid claims that an indefinable *fervor*, *ignis* and *calor* are present in, or affect the poet in the act of creation. He is at his happiest when writing poetry because at those times he is able to forget his misfortunes and the loneliness of his exile. In those times *crescens pectore fervet opus*, "the work grows and glows in his heart" (*Pont*. III, ix, 22) and he feels the inspired passion and heat (*calere*) of the patron of poets (*Tr*. IV, i, 43-4). On the other hand, revision to him is odious; because this task tends to be largely mechanical, the poet's mind is not permeated with that inspired ardour, he is unable to immerse himself completely in the poetic process to the exclusion of all else, with the result that the creative zeal is stifled for the moment and the task of emending "hurts the mind with a slow chill of anxiety" (*Pont*. III, ix, 25). In his banishment he feels the loss of his inspiration, that *calor* that he once possessed, and he refers to the Muses - the *Pierides* who had ruined him, as only a cold solace (*solacia frigida*, *Pont*. IV, ii, 45).

In these two works, when speaking of his or someone else's creative talent, he often employs agricultural terminology. He refers to his own poetic output as *messis*, "harvest". Writing to a fellow poet , Severus, he praises him for his *fertilis pectus* and claims that of all the bands of poets who cultivate Helicon none produce a richer crop (*uberior seges*)than he (*Pont*. IV, ii, 11-12). It would appear that Ovid considers his genius as a natural *ager* in which, given favourable conditions such as a tranquil mind, peaceful surroundings and the sympathy and encouragement of his friends, his poetical crop would luxuriate.

In his letter to Perilla (*Tr*. III, vii), his stepdaughter and a dilettante poetess, Ovid gives several interesting insights into his views on the nature and function of poetry. He imagines Perilla sitting amid her books and her beloved Pierian maidens and hopes that her step-father's *relegatio* has not trammelled the well-springs of her talent, that she is still writing and that the same fire (*ignis*) still burns in her breast. He feels deeply about this because when she was a child he was the first to recognize her ability, and as her guide and friend assumed the role of the Muses. He was the "first to lead her to Pegasus' brook so that the stream of fertile water (*fecunda aqua*) may not unfortunately be lost". This emphasis on fertility and water, its source, occurs again and again whenever he speaks of poetry.

In Tomis he became aware that he had lost his "visionary gleam" and that his present output is mediocre, compared to his previous work and that the stream of his inspiration is drying up. In the letter to Severus, he remarks that his poetry is now flowing in a "more slender vein" (vena pauperiore) and his creative faculty is stopped up by the "silt of misfortune" in the same way that mud obstructs the veins of fountains. That inspired impulse (impetus sacer) which nourishes (nutrit) the hearts of poets has vanished and he is now "plowing a barren shore with a sterile plough-share" (Pont. IV, ii, 20; 17-19; 25; 16). Writing to a friend he complains that his talent like a field of wheat has been injured by the blight of neglect (rubigine laesum). Poetic ability like a garden needs to be constantly cultivated in order for it to remain fertile; otherwise

> nil nisi cum spinis gramen habebit ager.
>
> The field will yield nothing but grass and thorns.
> (Tr. v, xiii, 21-4)

Another common theme, one that permeates the works of the three elegists, is that of love envisaged as a species of warfare. The development of this metaphorical identification of love with war can be traced back to early Greek literature, although, as Elizabeth Thomas remarks, in the 5th Century B.C. "there is no evidence of its establishment as a metaphor in the later technical sense, nor of its association with erotic themes, ...[8] It was later extensively employed by several

Alexandrian poets (examples of this theme occur in the Anthologia Palatina) and, to a lesser extent, in Roman comedy. Instances of it can also be found in Horace and Catullus. However it reached its highest development with the Roman elegists.

> Tibullus and Propertius first gave the τόπος its full significance as a literary metaphor, and treated it as a connected theme: ... But it was Ovid who really understood the metaphor and perfected it, giving it a playful connotation and divesting it of the earnestness and solemnity it had possessed in the earlier poets.[9]

In order to understand the way in which this metaphor achieved its fullest expression in Ovid it will be necessary to observe its evolution at the hands of Tibullus and Propertius.

When in his dialogue with the Babylonian soothsayer Propertius decides that he is going to be an epic poet and celebrate the founding of Rome, the former tells him that not epic but amatory verse is his proper "camp" and prophesies that the poet will do his soldiering in the "tender warfare of Venus" (IV, i, 135; 137). In reply to Tullus' invitation to accompany him to Asia, Propertius states that he is useless as a soldier: the Fates singled him out not for real warfare abroad but for love's campaign at home (I, vi, 29-30). In another elegy he writes that, although he has no military ambitions, if his sweetheart's "camp" were a real one he would have no hesitations in promptly joining it and becoming a soldier (II, vii, 15-18). In the same vein he speaks of his happiness caused by the previous night's successful amatory "campaign" as being far greater than Agamemnon's when he rejoiced in his triumph at the fall of Troy.

To him his victory over Cynthia is worth more than the conquest of Parthia; these are his spoils of war, his triumphant chariot and kings led in bonds (II, xiv, 1; 24). In Elegy II he asserts that every man should stick to whatever he can best do: let the sailor talk about storms, the soldier of his wounds; he as a poet will restrict himself to a narrower field of conflict - the bed.

Tibullus, in his introductory poem, asserts that he is a good soldier and leader in Cupid's army (I, i, 75). In his elegy to his poet-friend Aemilius Macer who is going off to the wars, Tibullus asks Cupid to bring back Macer, that "deserter" of love's camp and make him pay dearly for it. But if Cupid spares those who join the ranks of Mars, he himself will not mind fighting in Venus' battallion(II, vi, 5-10).

This theme of the amatory campaign and the concept of the lover as a soldier, epitomized in the phrase _militat omnis amans_ runs throughout Ovid's works, especially in the _Amores_ and forms what is perhaps the dominant motif, lending the potpourri of themes a semblance of unity. To quote Elizabeth Thomas again, "it is he who draws together all its various aspects which his predecessors had used only sporadically, modifying and adapting the image according to his own genius".[10] There are only two elegies (I, ix; II, xii) in which this metaphor is sustained throughout but there are several others (such as I, xi) in which it plays a considerable part. Often there will be only a passing allusion to the war-love theme, such

as in III, xi, in which Ovid complains to his sweetheart that although her door had on several occasions been barred against him, he frequently saw another lover coming out, dragging his *emeritum latus*, "worn-out frame" (i.e. from "military" service, 14). In *Amores* I, xi Ovid refers to the letters which he hopes will persuade Corinna to spend the night with him as *victrices tabellae*, "conquering tablets". Like a victorious general upon a successful campaign he will hang this "weapon" in Venus' temple as a fitting memorial to his triumph.[11] However in I, xii he renounces these love letters, because like a *fallax gladius* which has shattered in mid-combat, they have proven to be *duplices*, "treacherous" (a pun on their two "leaves"). As a sword is associated with carnage and death, in I, xii he gives them a funereal connotation, associating them with blood and pollution:

> Ite hinc, difficiles, funebria ligna, tabellae.
>
> Away from here, obstinate tablets, funeral tablets of wood. (7).

His final imprecation is that these useless tablets be eaten away by age; here he sustains the sword-letter-weapon relationship by using a word which is usually applied to metal being corroded - *rodere*.

In II, xii Ovid demands a *praecipuus triumphus*, "special triumph" for his victory over Corinna's heart, a bloodless victory, and unlike that of Agamemnon's in one way: he won it single-handedly, being himself the captain, the cavalry, the

infantry and the standard-bearer, with no one sharing the honours. It was Cupid, he says, who ordered him to take up the standards for his campaign. In I, ix the parallel between a soldier and a lover is worked out in elaborate detail. Youth is the best time for both love and war; the qualities that the general seeks in a soldier the woman demands of a lover; both must be ready and willing to undergo such hardships as long journeys and sleeping on the ground, the soldier before his general's tent, the lover in front of his lady's door; the former must take advantage of the enemy at night and the latter must ply his weapons at opportune moments, as when the husband is asleep. Both must overcome watches and sentinels and victory is never guaranteed in either campaign. There is no place for the coward in either love or battle: both demand energy and valour.

This metaphor is less pronounced although very much present in the Heroides. For example, Hero, begging Leander to attempt the crossing says

> in tua castra redi, socii desertor amoris.
>
> Return to your own camp, deserter of your ally love.
> (XIX, 157)

Paris, writing to Helen and referring not to actual weapons but to the tela amoris says: "Imagine, if you will, that a great war is breaking out ... I, also, have the strength and my weapons, too, are deadly." (XVI, 353-4).

In Propertius, whenever metaphors from warfare (such as arma sumere or dulcia arma, I, iii, 16; III, xx, 19-20) are employed, their use is almost universally limited to some form of love-making. Ovid, however, has extended them to other realms of human experience, although, of course, their application to love is still paramount. Thus in Heroides IV Phaedra speaks of her shame as leaving its standards behind (pudor sua signa reliquit, 155) and Canace, at the moment of childbirth refers to herself as a "raw recruit" (nova miles, Her., XI, 48) because she is unused to such a painful experience.

Another conventional theme closely related to this metaphor is that of the paraklausithyron or "closed-door serenade." As Elizabeth Thomas has noted, in most elegies of this particular type there is usually a military association which ties in neatly with the identification of the lover's and the soldier's world.

This literary convention, which seems to have virtually disappeared after Ovid, is to be found as far back as Aristotle and is used to a certain extent by Theocritus, Plautus, Terence and Lucretius. Among the pre-Augustan and Augustan poets there are instances of it in Catullus, Horace and even Vergil.

In describing their mistress' house door, which thanks to the alertness of the door-keeper refuses to open in spite of all their entreaties, the Roman elegists use the same stock epithets. The exclusus amator, that time-honoured, conventional

figure of comedy and epigram, inevitably addresses the door as one would a human being, heaping on it reproaches and flatteries in turn. Tibullus, Propertius and Ovid invariably refer to the "stubborn" doors as *crudeles*, *durae*, *tardae* or *rigidae*.

Tibullus' address to the "heartless door" in which he begs Delia to evade her guards and come out, asserting that Venus aids the brave (I, ii) and Propertius' *paraklausithyron* in which the door complains that it is powerless to shield its mistress from nightly brawls and, covered with ribald verses, mourns the plight of the rejected lover at its threshhold (I, xvi), are more conventional than Ovid's best example, his encouter with Corinna's *ianitor* in *Amores* I, vi.

This *paraklausithyron* is unlike those of Tibullus and Propertius in several ways. First, it is not addressed to the door itself or to the girl but to the *ianitor*. Second, although the door is personified (the door, the bolt, the posts and the threshhold are described as *surdae*, *crudeles*, *difficiles* and *immites*) it is only incidentally and its role is greatly subordinated. Only towards the end of the poem is it addressed directly. The door is regarded as merely the *ianitor*'s helper, his "fellow-slave" (*conservus*). However, much of the traditional paraphernalia is present: the lover heated with wine and wearing a garland on his perfumed locks, keeping lone vigil in the silence of the cold night with only "cruel" love for his companion, bedewing the door-posts with his tears. The military motif is here given a prominent place. Attempting to persuade

the hard-hearted *ianitor* to open the door the lover claims that he has not come with soldiers or weapons; his only "arms" are love, wine and a garland. "Surely the doorkeeper is not afraid of such weapons?" the lover asks. Becoming impatient, he threatens to attack him with real weapons - with "fire and sword" - if he does not open up immediately because night, love and wine do not counsel moderation to impassioned lovers.

In Ovid's only other *paraklausithyron*, the story of Iphis and Anaxarete (*Met*. XIV, 698-752) there is an interesting variation of the traditional themes. As in the previous one, here there is also an association of love with war, or, more specifically, the identification of the two spheres represented by the besieged door and the military triumph. When Iphis falls passionately in love with Anaxarete he supplicates her threshhold but the girl, "more cruel than the sea, harder than iron or living rock" spurns his advances and mocks him. In desperation he cries out to her

> vincis, Anaxarete, neque erunt tibi taedia tandem
> ulla ferenda mei: laetos molire triumphos
> et Paeana voca nitidaque incingere lauru.
>
> You win, Anaxarete; you will no longer have to put up with my annoyance. Celebrate your happy triumphs, sing your victory song and gird your head with shining laurel.
>
> (718-20).

He then fastens a noose to the lintel, cries "Here is a garland that will please you" and hangs himself.

In Iphis' eyes the closed door took on symbolic importance; gaining admittance represented victory to him; failure, defeat. By his suicide he himself became the wreath that elegiac lovers traditionally hung on their sweethearts' door.

We have already seen Propertius' fondness for the chariot metaphor, in describing some of his poetic aspirations and especially his conception of himself as innovator, in a poem (III, i) in which he merges the chariot race image with that of the triumphal procession. This elegy is perhaps the source of Ovid's poem (Amores I, ii) in which the poet, smitten by love, asks Cupid to bind his head with myrtle, and, yoking his mother's doves to the chariot provided by his stepfather Mars, rides in triumph through the streets. The image is expanded into a picture of Ovid walking in bonds, a fresh prize of Cupid's campaign, with other young men and girls, including Conscience, Modesty, and all the prisoners of the god of love, walking at his side. Here also the identification of love and war is made not only through the overt imagery but through the symbolic linking of doves (representing love) and Mars (representing war). Ovid has an even greater predilection for the chariot metaphor than Propertius and constantly draws on it to illustrate spheres of human activity other than poetry. The language of the track is used figuratively in the Ars Amatoria in reference to love-making. He exhorts the lover to "adjust" his speed to that of the woman when making love so that both will arrive at

the "goal" (*meta*) simultaneously (II, 727). A woman who wants to win a lover needs to be adaptable. Like a charioteer she must modify her tactics to suit circumstances. Different strategies must be employed in handling a young lover and an inexperienced colt on the one hand and a veteran roué and a horse that has won many races on the other (III, 555-6). The two rival lovers are compared to race horses. It will prove profitable for the girl to make the newly ensnared lover aware of the existence of another lover; the older one will act as "pace-setter", as it were, making the new one race better (i.e. love more passionately or give more lavish presents, III, 595-6). Chariot racing forms the backdrop of *Amores* III, ii. In it Ovid imagines himself racing at break-neck speed, deftly manipulating with the reins his flying horses:

> et modo lora dabo, modo verbere terga notabo
> nunc stringam metas interiore rota
> (11-2)

This is a felicitous example of the blending of sound and sense to present a realistic picture of the action. The speed of the dactylic line in the hexameter with its staccato disyllables effectively conveys the rapid, headlong rush of the charioteer; the spondees at the beginning of the pentameter slowing it down just slightly, long enough for the wheel, the last word in the line and the last part of the chariot to graze the turning post (the break occurs after *metas*) to make a wide arc (indicated by the length of *interiore*, a pentasyllable in the midst of two-syllable words) and then picking up speed again.

In _Heroides_ XVIII, when Leander's arms are failing him and exhausted he can hardly swim another stroke, he encourages them by reminding them of the rewards that are in store for them, that they will soon be entwined around Hero's neck.

> protinus illa valent, atque ad sua praemia tendunt
> ut celer Eleo carcere missus equus.
>
> At once they grow strong and stretch towards their prize, like the swift horse released from the Elean starting-gate.
>
> (165-6)

In _Amores_ I, iii he uses a slightly different image, a metaphor of the _desultores_, riders, each with two horses, who jump from one to the other while going at full gallop, to describe his constancy in love: _non sum desultor amoris_. (15).

In the Tristia, old, bitter and disillusioned, recalling the misfortunes that have befallen him recently, Ovid contrasts his present lot to that of a race-horse. A race-horse, after a successful career is let out to pasture so that the debilitation of old age will not cause him to disgrace himself in the middle of a race and spoil his past record. In the same way he feels that since old age is slowly diminishing his strength he should be allowed to spend his declining years in peaceful retirement, occupied with some fitting pastime in the city. But such is not the case. He feels overwhelmed by misfortune. Although the fates offered comfort to his early years, to his later ones they have brought distress. "Not far from the turning-post," he complains, "which I almost seemed to have within my grasp, my chariot has suffered a serious crash" (IV, viii, 19-20; 35-6).

From the above discussion we can see that Ovid's debt to Tibullus and Propertius for certain images and themes is heavy. However, whenever he does borrow, he handles his material in such a way that the final product is often vastly superior to that of his sources.

1 *The Latin Love Elegy* (London, Methuen, 1959), p.139.

2 Thomas W. Dickson, "Borrowed Themes in Ovid's *Amores*," *CJ*, LIX (1964), 180.

3 Of course the assumption is made that she is the same girl throughout the *Amores*, although she is mentioned by name in only twelve of the forty-nine elegies.

4 This description is no doubt based on common literary tradition rather than any specific author.

5 *The Latin Love Elegy*, p.115.

6 These are mainly limited to the metaphorical usage of the verbs *ducere* and *deducere*. To spin wool is *lanas ducere* or *lanam deducere* (Met. IV, 34). Thus in the *Epistulae ex Ponto* Ovid writes how difficult it is for him to "spin out" his verses (*luctor deducere versum*, I, v, 13) and in the *Tristia* he makes the comment that peaceful surroundings and a tranquil mind are necessary for poetic composition:

Carmina proveniunt animo deducta sereno.

Poetry comes *fine-spun* from an untroubled mind (I, i, 39).

7 *The Latin Love Elegy*, p.124.

8 "Variations on a Military Theme in Ovid's *Amores*," *G* & *R* XI (1964), 152.

9 *Ibid*., p.154.

10 *Ibid*., p.156.

11 For this particular aspect of the military metaphor Ovid was undoubtedly indebted to Propertius. In Elegy II, xiv, Propertius, addressing Venus, promises to hang an offering on one of the pillars of her temple, with an appropriate inscription under his name, thanking the goddess for successfully aiding him in his "campaign" against Cynthia.

CHAPTER III

LIGHT AND DARKNESS

The imagistic and quite often symbolic scheme of light (especially of fire) and darkness to heighten poetic expression and to set the tone and mood is as old as Homer,[1] and Ovid employs it consistently throughout his works. Love, envisioned metaphorically as fire or flame,[2] appears again and again throughout the works of the Latin elegiac poets and is the one that Ovid uses most frequently.

The adroit manner in which Ovid uses this imagery of light and fire on the one hand and that of shade and darkness on the other may be illustrated in the "Sappho to Phaon" epistle in the <u>Heroides</u> (XV). When Sappho remarks bitterly about her unrequited love;

> Uror, ut indomitis ignem exercentibus Euris
> fertilis accensis messibus ardet ager.
>
> I burn, as burns the fertile field when the harvests are ablaze, with the unrestrained east winds fanning the flames.
>
> (9-10)

or

> me calor Aetnaeo non minor igne tenet.
>
> This fiery heat no less than the fire of Aetna devours me.
>
> (12)

we are entering, as one writer put it, "one of the oldest realms

of imagery".[3] Here we find the typical Propertian and Tibullan description of the flame of love seen as fever in the blood and burning, irrational passion. Ovid uses this image to present to the reader those intangible emotional feelings in a concrete manner.

This fire and light imagery runs throughout the entire epistle and helps to establish what Theodore F. Brunner calls a "dominant motif",[4] one not unlike the leit-motif of a Wagnerian opera. This image is counter-balanced by extended descriptions of dark caves and grottoes, black impenetrable forests and shady bowers. Very often these images almost attain to the level of symbolism and in the interplay of light and darkness these rapid and constant transitions lend the action an immediacy and dramatic quality, and give the reader a glimpse of Sappho's distracted state of mind. Paradoxically fire (or light) "brightens, clarifies, reveals"[5] the heroine's character and yet at the same time stands for annihilation and self-destruction. Sappho tries to avoid the pitiless glare of the day, because light, or, more specifically, dawn, makes her think of her beloved Phaon (whose name is very appropriate here) and so she has fellen into the habit of running away at daybreak to the grottoes "hanging with rugged rock" and into the dark woods

> quae saepe cubilia nobis
> praebuit et multa texit opaca coma.
>
> which often provided us with a couch and covered us
> with a deep shade from many leaves -
>
> (143-4)

and which to her are a haven and refuge, a place of soothing tranquillity for her burning passion. Here there is darkness and peace; not a sound to disturb her reveries, except the melancholy sound of the nightingale - the Daulias ales - which warbles plaintively. Anxiety, restlessness and torment of the soul are absent here and absolute stillness prevails:

> ut media cetera nocte silent.
>
> everything else is as silent as midnight.
> (156)

The fiery rays of the sun are gone and so is the torment of the first love. The silence here has some of the aspects of the stillness of death When she lies down beside a sacred fountain:

> ... nitidus vitroque magis perlucidus omni ...
>
> glittering and more transparent than any crystal ...
> (157-8)

over which a watery lotus (aquatica lotos), suggesting Lethean oblivion, spreads its wide branches - una nemus, a shady wood in itself, - a water-nymph appears who gives Sappho instructions on how to quench her consuming passion. She is to go to the land of Ambracia and seek the high Leucadian (λευκός, "white") cliff from where Phoebus directs his gaze downwards and where once Deucalion (son of Prometheus, the fire-bringer) hurled himself in order to free himself from his fiery passion for Pyrrha (πῦρ, "fire").

Phaon had abandoned Sappho and gone off to Sicily where he now frequents the fields of Typhoean Aetna. Typhoeus, it will

be recalled, was the largest monster ever born, according to Hesiod and Hyginus. He was the symbol of fire and smoke in the interior of the earth and of their destructive forces. As Robert Graves describes him: "His brutish ass-head touched the stars, his vast wings darkened the sun, fire flashed from his eyes, and flaming rocks hurtled from his mouth."[6] According to Robert Graves the name "Typhon" means "stupefying smoke" and also "the burning Sirocco from the southern desert".[7] As punishment for his rebellion, Zeus hurled him into black Tartarus with a lightning stroke.

When towards the beginning of the epistle Sappho is rhapsodizing about Phaon's beauty, she compares him to Phoebus and Bacchus

> sume fidem et pharetram - fies manifestus Apollo,
> accedant capiti cornua - Bacchus eris:
>
> Take up the harp and quiver - you will be looked upon as Apollo; should you let horns spring on your head - you will be Bacchus.
>
> (23-4)

To her Phaon is the living embodiment of beauty and light:

> te somnia nostra reducunt -
> somnia formoso candidiora die.
>
> you bring back my dreams - dreams brighter than the fair day.
>
> (123-4)

and

> et forma et meritis tu mihi Phoebus eris.
>
> both in beauty and in benevolence you will be a Phoebus to me.
>
> (188)

Sappho had always been haunted by the fear that some day Phaon might be stolen and carried off like Cephalus by Aurora, and that once having gazed at his beauty, Phoebe (Diana), Apollo's sister, might have put him, instead of Endymion, into perpetual sleep. Had Venus seen him, she would have carried him up to the heavens in her ivory chariot (curru ... eburno), the chariot that is usually described as being pulled by white doves.

When speaking of her own attributes she says that, although nature has denied her beauty, she was compensated by the Muses through the gift of poetry:

> at mihi Pegasides[8] blandissima carmina dictant.
>
> yet for me the Muses recite the sweetest songs.
> (27)

Even though she is not candida (candidus from candeo, to "shine", "glitter") neither was Andromeda, who was fusca (and who, incidentally, was set among the stars by Athena). "If," she asks, "white doves can mate with those of different hue", why can't she and Phaon be reunited? Now she is all alone - and no one can offer her solace; neither the "maids of Pyrrha" nor candida Cydro are capable of charming her now.

The Heroides are perhaps the most dramatic poems of Ovid's entire output. The letters are similar in tone to a dramatic monologue of Browning in which one character does the talking but the reader perceives the presence of a persona and it would be a relatively easy task to adapt them for dramatic

presentation. (We must keep in mind that Ovid did write a tragedy, the Medea, which was highly praised in antiquity, but unfortunately only two lines have survived). Thus, as in any good tragedy, there has to be something which will provide unity, continuity, and a "symbolic scheme to key and clarify /the/ action".[9] This is done through the imagery of light and darkness. Through the use of irony, this 15th epistle which we are considering partakes more and more of the qualities of the tragic genre. H. W. Clarke, in speaking of Eurymachus in the Odyssey, notes the paradox inherent in fire: it "destroys and purges as well as ... warms and preserves."[10] This same ambivalence occurs in Sappho's searching out and yet avoiding the light. The more she seeks the light (personified by Phaon, whom she identifies directly in lines 23, 25, and 188 with Phoebus) the more ineluctably is she drawn to the everlasting darkness of death. As Clarke states in another connection, "Fire, like water, is both type and antitype";[11] at the closing lines of the epistle Sappho is still torn between taking her life by extinguishing the fiery passion in the Leucadian waves (ironically, a traditional epithet[12] of Apollo is Leucadius deus) or continuing to eke out her wretched existence waiting for the re-appearance of the light of her beloved Phaon. Her passion generates real warmth while Phaon's is cold and sterile - all light but no heat.

The story of Hero and Leander (Heroides XVIII, XIX) is interesting for the way in which the light-and-darkness imagery

is handled and the adroit way in which Ovid manages to breathe fresh life into this celebrated tale through imagistic and symbolic devices.

The story of Leander in love with Hero, the priestess of Aphrodite, who, guided by a beacon, swam every night to visit her in her solitary tower in Sestos, lends itself readily to such imagery. Leander looks upon the two sources of light - the moon and the beacon - as his assistants; the moon casting a tremulous light is a comes, a companion watchful over his path, the beacon is a vigil, a sentinel (implied in the phrase vigilantia lumina/ XIX 35) and the tower on which the light is situated is referred to as conscia, "a sharer in their secrets". Hero is the incarnation of light and she and the beacon are identified: as Leander makes his way along the water shimmering with the light cast by the moon overhead, the night takes on the brightness of day:

> nitor in tacita nocte diurnus erat.
>
> the splendor of day was in the silent night.
> (78)

When he catches a glimpse of the beacon light he shouts

> meus ignis in illo est:
> illa meum, ... litora lumen habent!
>
> My love is in that flame; those shores hold my light!
> (85-6)

Hero is the ethereal beauty - caelo digna - and for him she is a light far surer (lumen nulto certius, 155) than that of the stars and when it leads him through the dark, his love does not

leave its course. (155-6). Thus there is a triple association in the idea of light - the moon, the beacon, and his love.

Similarly, the contrasting motif of darkness has several levels of interpretation. At the moment, Leander says that the sky is dark and the waves threatening,

> ipsa vides caelum pice nigrius et freta ventis
> turbida ...
> You see yourself how the sky is blacker than pitch and
> the straits turbulent with winds ...
> (7-8)

The dark, stormy weather has resulted in a second type of darkness for him - he is separated from his love. Since he cannot see the light of the beacon (and by association, Hero) he is in the darkness of sorrow

> rupe sedens aliqua - specto tua litora tristis ...
>
> sitting on some rock sadly I look upon your shores ...
> (29)

and he resorts to self-delusion. He looks across the water so long and so intently that he thinks he sees the beacon. Finally near the end of Heroides XVIII, he suggests that his separation from his love may cause him to become rash and attempt to cross the waves in the storm. Perhaps death will be the end (permanent) of his love, that is, he will enter into eternal darkness:

> aut mors solliciti finis amoris erit!
>
> or death shall be the end of my troubled love!
> (196)

Thus the image of darkness too conveys three levels of interpretation.

The equation of light with love gives rise to the further idea of light symbolizing the happiness of love; it is then an easy step to expand this view to include light as symbolic of happiness in other spheres such as material prosperity, friendship, and the rewards that a virtuous life brings. For example, in the Tristia, in a verse-letter written to a loyal but otherwise unidentified friend, Ovid says that

> donec eris sospes, multos numberabis amicos:
> tempora si fuerint nubila, solus eris.
>
> As long as you are fortunate, you will count many friends;
> If your life becomes clouded, you will be alone.
> (I, ix, 5-6)

Here nubila takes on the additional connotation of "morally-clouded", because, after all, his banishment by Augustus was ostensibly due to moral grounds and because in the next distich he observes that doves frequent only "white dwellings" (candida tecta) and avoid "unclean" (sordida) ones. Sordidus has also the meaning of "vile", "base", in addition to its literal meaning of "dirty"; similarly candidus, "white" has the additional meaning of "pure", "unblemished", equivalent to integer, and is used by Ovid several times with this connotation. The "fickle throng" follows the light of good fortune, but when this light is veiled in darkness, the crowd goes on its way (13-4).

In this letter Ovid also equates poetic ability with light, as if the poetic process could only take place under the illumination provided by the Muses. He is glad, he writes, that his friend's ingenium has not been obscured (latere), but wishes that his own, which eventually proved to be his ruin,

had been hidden in the depths of darkness (<u>tenebris in imis</u>):

> expediit studio lumen abesse meo.
>
> It would have been better if light had been absent from my task.
>
> (56)

In the <u>Metamorphoses</u> the imagery of light and darkness is used in certain stories and episodes to heighten the emotional pitch and through harmony or contrast to enhance the mood, such as that of foreboding and mystery. Darkness is often associated with evil, death and grief. At the appearance of the Fury Tisiphone, that personification of evil, the sun flees in horror from his usual place in the sky (IV, 488). In the story of Myrrha and Cinyras (Book X) darkness is used to accentuate the enormity of Myrrha's incestuous passion. It is midnight when thoughts of gratifying her wish first enter her mind; everyone in the palace but she is asleep; she is lying in bed, ashamed, torn by doubts, "consumed by a fire she could not extinguish" (369-70) considering what course to take. She finally decides that her love can never be gratified and resolves to take her own life. The nurse, however, saves her just in time and offers to help her. The first opportunity presents itself when Cinyras' wife is away taking part in the annual festival of Ceres. Once again it is night when Myrrha takes her first steps to her father's bedroom. At this point the revulsion of nature is described: the moon, the stars fled from the sky, clouds covered the heavens and the constellations shielded their faces from the sight. Although aware of her act she is powerless to do anything about it for the "darkness and

shadows of night mitigated her feeling of shame" (454); the darkness outside is associated with the moral darkness inside. With the old nurse by her side, Myrrha "gropes her way along a road she could not see" (456), an ironic twist, for she is blindly ignorant of her tragic end. As darkness hides her sense of shame, darkness prevents Cinyras from killing her when he finally realizes with whom he has been sleeping: "in the darkness and concealment which the night provided, she was saved from death..." (476-7).

A similar association of darkness and evil occurs in the episode of Minyas' sacriligeous daughters who refused to take part in the festival of Bacchus. The metamorphosis of these "partners in wickedness" takes place in a ghostly semi-darkness, "when the light still lingers but the night has almost fled" (IV, 401). Just before it happens a tremor shakes the house, the oil-lamps flare up and the room glows with fire-light; the sisters immediately take shelter, creeping into dark corners, desperately trying to avoid the light. Nyctelius (one of the epithets of Bacchus) changes them into bats - vespertiliones, "creatures of night", to haunt houses and forever avoid the light of day. Because of the darkness that surrounds them they remain unaware of their transformation.

The "darkness" of bereavement can be observed in the mourning of the two sky deities for their dead sons: Apollo's grief for Phaethon and Aurora's for Memnon. When Jupiter blasted his son with a thunderbolt, Apollo, sick with grief,

veiled his face and hid it from sight; devoid of his usual brightness he looked as if he were experiencing an eclipse:

> lucemque odit seque ipse diemque.
>
> He despises the light, himself and the day.
> (II, 381-3)

At the sight of her dead son, black Memnon, Aurora's colour, "the hue that tints the rosy morning" grew pallid and she "covered the daylight with clouds" (XIII, 580-2).

In the episode of Medea's nocturnal incantations (Book VII) light and darkness are not mere ornamental appendages but a sustained motif that take on symbolic meaning; along with heightened descriptions of natural phenomena they intensify the atmosphere of foreboding and invest the action with bizarre, unearthly quality.

When Medea undertakes her incantations the moon is in full orb. As she steals out of her house in the still silence of midnight, dressed in flowing robes and with her hair dishevelled, man and nature are sunk in sleep, in harmony with the night's tranquillity; the leaves on the trees hang motionless and the misty air is stilled. Stretching her arms to the "sparkling stars" she turns around three times, three times sprinkles her head with water, three times utters a mournful wail. Kneeling on the ground she then prays to the night, addressing it as <u>arcanis fidissima</u> ("most faithful keeper of secrets" 192) and invokes the aid of Hecate and all the spirits of the groves and of night. Through them, she says, she can turn rivers upon

their source, dispel or bring on the clouds, move rocks and trees and even draw the moon from the sky. Her incantations have the power to make the sun's chariot grow pale and Aurora lose her bright hue. As she prays for herbs to restore old Aeson to his former youth immediately the stars flash more brightly and her wishes are realized. Climbing into her dragon-driven chariot she soars into the air and directs her course towards the mountains of Ossa, Pelion, Othrys and Olympus. After nine days she returns with the herbs and outside her house digs up two trenches and sets up two altars. With the blood of a black-fleeced sheep she fills the trenches and on top of it pours cups of wine and warm milk. Offering a prayer to the rex umbrarum she orders Jason to bring out his father and relaxes his body in a death-like torpor. She warns everyone to look away so that their "uninitiated" eyes might not see her magic rites. She then circles the burning altars, dips her torches in the black blood and sets them on fire. Then once again she goes through the ritual of three times cleansing the old man with fire, water and sulphur. Meanwhile the "potent poison" seethes and boils with a white froth (exultat spumisque tumentibus albet, 263). Into the bronze vessel she drops hoar-frosts gathered at night by the light of the moon, the head and beak of a crow, the flesh and wings of the owl and the entrails of the werewolf (ambigui lupi, 271). After mixing this concoction she slits Aeson's veins and refills them with it. Immediately the rejuvenation begins: his white beard and hair turn from white to black and his pallor disappears.

In the Ceyx-Alcyone episode (Boox XI) the sustained night-time setting contributes effectively to the mood of terror and pathos. The storm takes place at night. The first signs are visible at night-fall: the waves, "blacker than Stygian waters" begin to heave the ship and the winds increase in intensity; the ship's ropes creak and thunder fills the air; the darkness of the storm hides the stars and makes the darkness of the night even more intense. Occasional lightning flashes light up the ocean and momentarily dispel the gloom. As Ceyx's ship is being ripped apart by the thundering waves, he tries to take one last look in the direction of his home but is prevented by the pitch-black clouds that cover the sky. When he drowns, his father, Lucifer, through whom he swore to Alcyone to return within two months, shrouds his face with thick clouds in mourning. Ceyx met his death at night, and even though his father was the Morning Star, ironically, for him morning never came. Later in the episode there is an effective and touching description of Alcyone's restless sleep, broken by Morpheus' visitation to announce the tragic news, her terror when she awakens, the servants rushing with torches and her discovery of her husband's body the next morning.

In the Metamorphoses scenes which involve necromancy, treachery and death usually have night-time for their settings; however contrary to modern practice, rarely does Ovid develop this setting fully or exploit all its possibilities. The episodes we have been discussing are some of the exceptions in which

descriptions of darkness and light - though not metaphorical *per se* - take on heightened significance from the context and serve to intensify mood and action.

1 See Howard W. Clarke's "Fire Imagery in the *Odyssey*," *CJ*, LVII (1961), 358-60.

2 See above, pp. 18-21.

3 Peter L. Smith, "*Lentus in Umbra*: A Symbolic Pattern in Vergil's *Eclogues*," Phoenix, XIX (1965), 300.

4 Theodore F. Brunner, "The Function of the Simile in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*," *CJ*, LXI (1966), 359.

5 Clarke, p.360.

6 The Greek Myths (Pelican, 1960), p.134.

7 Ibid., pp. 143-4.

8 Pegasus was the steed of the Muses (*Pegasides*) and in some stories is regarded as the carrier of Jove's thunderbolts.

9 Clarke, p.358.

10 *Ibid*., p.358.

11 *Ibid*., p. 359.

12 Cf. *Tristia* III, i, 42:

an quia Leucadio semper amata deo est
and V, ii, 75-6.
vel rapidae flammis urar patienter in Aetnae
   vel freta Leucadii mittar in alta dei.

CHAPTER IV

ASPECTS OF LOVE

(i) Forma Amantis: The Appearance of Love

Ovid shows great facility in describing vividly the appearance and physical characteristics of women. He especially delights in delineation of texture, such as that of skin and hair. A woman may like to braid her tresses in such a way that they resemble waves (similes fluctibus, A.A. III, 148) and, although her tresses may be like golden-haired Minerva's, in time even these beautiful locks will change colour and fall like leaves shaken down by the cold North wind (A.A. III, 161-2). His sweetheart's locks, before she spoiled them by excessive dyeing, were tenues, "fine in texture", like silk (implied in the phrase Qualia Seres habent; serica, "silk", is used by Propertius) and their texture was like that of a delicately-spun spider-web (Am. I, 14, 6-7). In other places the softness of the hair is compared to down (lanuginis instar, Am. I, 14, 23) or wool (Am. II, ii, 48); when the poet laments their ruin, he recalls that they were originally neither brunette nor blonde, but a beautiful blend of both colours - like the colour of cedar when its bark has been stripped off (Am. I, 14, 10-2). In Amores II, 4 he paints a colourful contrast when describing

all the girls who can captivate his heart:

> candida me capiet, capiet me flava puella,
> est etiam in fusco grata colore Venus.
> seu pendent nivea pulli cervice capilli,
> Leda fuit nigra conspicienda coma,
> seu flavent, placuit croceis Aurora capillis,
>
> A white skin attracts me, a golden-haired girl pleases me; I could even fall in love with a dark-skinned girl. Whether black locks hang down her ivory neck - Leda with her black hair was beautiful to look upon, or whether they are golden - Aurora with her golden locks was attractive.
>
> (39-43)

A very effective image: dark tresses on a snow-white neck; the arrangement of the words gives the effect of the hair falling on each side of the neck. The implied contrast in line 41 (the triple association of Leda-swan-white and the juxtaposition of nigra coma) is even more remarkable.

The swarthy Mediterranean man was extremely fond of a white complexion in a girl (cf. Catullus' candida puella): thus Helen's breasts are described as being whiter than pure snow or milk (Her. XVI, 251); Cydippe's neck is like the colour of ivory (eburnea) and her arms shining white (candida); Acontius begs Cydippe to preserve that "gentle blush that forms on her snow-white (niveus) neck" (Her. XX, 57; 140; 120).

It would be difficult to think of a more obvious comparison than candidior nive - a comparison that is as old as Homer.[1] No doubt Ovid realized that the constant use of the simile can be quite tedious and so whenever he can he modifies and varies this basic comparison in several ways. Quite often

he will use vivid particularization in order to breathe fresh life into this commonplace. For example, the arms of the unnamed *puella* in *Amores* III, vii, are not only whiter than snow but

Sithonia candidiora nive (8)

A woman's face is not only like the colour of ivory but like Assyrian ivory (*Am*.II, v, 40).

As snow and ivory are the standards of whiteness, pitch is the archetype of blackness. In order to avoid the frequent and incessant repetition of the banal *nigrior pice* (Met. XII, 402) Ovid particularizes here also: in a girl's veins may flow blood not only blacker than pitch but

nigrior Illyrica pice (*A.A*. ii, 658)

Although Sithonian snow or Illyrian pitch may not be whiter or blacker than snow or pitch anywhere else, these epithets give the otherwise trite comparison an extra dimension, lifting it out of the realm of the nebulous into concrete reality and instilling it with an exotic and romantic aura.

Whenever Ovid does not particularize with mellifluous, exotic-sounding place names, he often makes the comparison more vivid through specific, intensely minute descriptions. For example, Cydippe's face is white, like the colour of *freshly-hewn* marble (*novi marmoris*) or that of silver at the banquet table when it pales at the cold touch of icy water or that of the apple that Acontius used to trick her into marriage

(presumably some white or neutral tint, with perhaps just a hint of colour in order to form a contrasting surface for the inscription; Her. XXI, 215-20).

Quite often the adjective niveus will modify a noun such as marmor or ebur which by itself is not sufficient to express that quintessential degree of whiteness. The statue that Circe shows Macareus was made from "snowy marble" (niveo de marmore, Met. XIV, 313); the sculpture of the woman that Pygmalion so skilfully carved was so lifelike that he was often hard put to decide whether its texture was of ivory or flesh: its colour was that of snow-white ivory (niveum ebur, Met. X, 247). Ovid sometimes uses lengthy descriptions of the tone of the human flesh in order to give a particular episode a heightened sensuousness. For example in the story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus, the appearance of the latter is painted vividly immediately after Salmacis makes her passionate appeal to the boy: "his cheeks were like the hue of ripe apples hanging down in a sunny orchard, like painted ivory, or like the moon, when in eclipse, she displays a scarlet tinge ..." (Met. IV, 331-2). When in order to escape Salmacis he dives into the water his body is described as resembling an ivory statue or white lilies encased in transparent glass (Met. IV, 354-5). These protracted comparisons, each implying a facet of his character - ivory suggesting his flawless beauty, apples his unsophisticated, wholesome nature, lilies, youthful innocence (we are told that he did not know what love was) -

unlike others of a similar nature, here have a direct bearing on the theme and effectively contribute to the erotic mood of the narrative.

When Pallas reveals herself to Arachne as a goddess, Arachne's surprise shows on her face:

> subitusque invita notavit
> ora rubor, rursusque evanuit: ut solet aër
> purpureus fieri, cum primum aurora movetur,
> et breve post tempus candescere solis ab ortu.
>
> A sudden flush suffused her unwilling cheeks and at once vanished: just as the sky crimsons when Dawn first rises, but soon brightens with the light of sunrise.
>
> (Met. VI, 46-9)

Here we have a precise description of the delicate interplay of colours at dawn. Arachne's face first turns a deep crimson just as the sky in early morning, before the sun has risen above the horizon, glows red; then the colour in the girl's face softens with suffused radiance, just as the sky brightens at the appearance of the first glimmerings of dawn and turns to saffron at its full ascent; the separation of purpureus from candescere graphically portrays this time lapse.

Although Ovid's similes and metaphors are generally vivid and precise, quite often, as if convinced that the test of success of a simile depended on its profusion, he has a tendency to pile comparison upon comparison, image upon image. For example, in Amores II, v, attempting to depict his girl's blush, he compares it to (1) the sky at dawn, (2) the face of a young maid when first gazed on by her betrothed, (3) roses

among lilies, (4) the moon, and (5) ivory. However, after all that, it appears that none of these quite describe the exact hue:

> hic erat aut alicui color ille simillimus horum ...
>
> like these, or very much like these, was her hue ...
> (41)

Sometimes a woman's appearance may be described through mythological analogy. When in a moment of madness Ovid tore his sweetheart's hair, even with her hair dishevelled she was as beautiful as ever: like Atalanta hunting wild beasts on Mt. Maenalus or Ariadne bewailing Theseus' desertion of her or Cassandra falling down on her knees in front of Minerva's temple (Am. I, vii, 13-17). Although we are not given the girl's actual appearance this particular moment, these mythological figures serve as kind of short-hand description - Atalanta suggesting a picture of attractive disarray, Ariadne symbolizing her bitterness and grief, Cassandra, her disappointment. The pictorial suggestions inherent in the words sollicitare, vittatis and procumbo, the majestic sound of the proper names Schoeneida, Maenelias which evoke a distant, legendary magnificence and act as a relief against which the enormity of the act is even further accentuated, obviate the necessity of any further elaboration.

Like those of most elegists, Ovid's descriptions of women's eyes are conventional, and by modern standards, trite. Both Ovid and Propertius use identical metaphors in describing their sweethearts' eyes: Propertius refers to Cynthia's as twin

stars or fires (geminae, sidera nostra, faces); in Amores II, xi, Ovid reminds Corinna that she once made a vow never to leave him, swearing by him and by her eyes, sidera nostra, "those stars of mine" (43-4). Most of the other comparisons scattered throughout Ovid's works are merely variations of such similes as radiant ut sidus (Am. III, iii, 9) or sideribus similes (Met. I, 499). Sometimes this obvious comparison will take on freshness by an evocative word or phrase. Acontius pictures the "fiery stars" as less dazzling than Cydippe's eyes and by a metaphysical conceit claims that they kindled the burning passion in his heart:

> tu facis hoc oculique tui, quibus ignea cedunt
> sidera, qui flammae causa fuere mihi.
> (Her. XX, 55-6)

In Amores III, 2, Corinna's eyes are described as arguti - meaning not only "bright", "lively" but with the added connotation of "expressive":

> Risit, et argutis quiddam promisit ocellis.
>
> She smiled and with speaking eyes gave me a promise. (83)

When she is happy a woman's eyes may shoot a "tremulous glimmer" (tremulo fulgore micantes, A. A. III, 721-2) like the rays of the sun reflected in clear water; when angry her eyes will flash more savagely than Medusa's (A.A. III, 504).

Although Ovid's constant references to tears as imber (imbre spargere, imbre rigante) and such stock hyperbolic similes as lacrimae fluminis instar tend to become cloying, generally his descriptions of weeping show a surprising

originality through his choice of words and models for comparison. For example, in *Amores* I,vii, there is a very effective simile: after being struck cruelly, Corinna stood dazed, her tears trickling down like water distilling from melting snow:

> suspensaeque diu lacrimae fluxere per ora,
> qualiter abiecta de nive manat aqua.
>
> her tears, long-suspended in her eyes, came flowing over her cheeks, like water distilling from cast-off snow.
>
> (57-8)

In the first four feet of this couplet, the gradual welling up of the tears in her eyes is imitated by the two spondees (foot one and foot four) and by the caesural pause which interrupts the flow of the intervening dactyls. Then the slow movement of the line is released in the swiftness of the final two feet both because of the dactyls and the profusion of vowels and liquid consonants. This is imitative of droplets of water which, when a great number have diffused, suddenly gush forth, whether it be down a window pane or a cheek. A slight variation of this image is found in Ovid's description of Laodamia's tears pouring out "like snow melting under the hot sun" (*Her*. XIII, 52). Hermione's eyes are a *fons perennis* and by weeping she "pours out" (*defundere*) her anger whenever she hears a reproach directed against Orestes and realizes that she is powerless to do anything about it.

Perhaps one of the most effective and vivid descriptions is his picture of Byblis "moistening" (*umectare*) the grass with the tears which trickle down her cheeks:

... ut secto piceae de cortice guttae,
utve tenax gravida manat tellure bitumen;
utve sub adventu spirantis lene favoni
sole remollescit quae frigore constitit unda;

... just as resin oozes from the gashed bark of the pine
or sticky bitumen from the rich earth,
or water congealed with cold, softens under the
warmth of the sun when gentle zephyrs begin to blow;
(*Met*. IX, 659-62)

Here again the comparison of weeping is made to substances that at first well up slowly and then, when the collection of droplets becomes too heavy to remain as a single unit, flow forth in a steady stream with nothing to impede them. Note the arrangement of the words in line 662. Until the caesural pause after *remollescit*, most of the syllables are long; then, the rest of the line consists of dactyls. Thus the rhythm effectively parallels the thought - the sun melts the snow (pause) and it begins to flow.

(ii) Servitium Amoris: Love's Bondage

The constant association of love with warfare found in the works of the Roman elegists has already been treated above.[2] Closely allied with this metaphor is the servitium amoris or love envisaged as a form of slavery.

This concept, which in the Middle Ages came to be called Amour Courtois or Frauendienst, is the product of an essentially aristocratic and perhaps sense-jaded society. Its view of love was that of an unsated and ever-increasing desire. Some of it manifestations were the concepts of Love as a god with absolute power over his army of lovers and of passion as being an irrational aberration almost amounting to a sickness. The woman was invariably pictured as haughty, capricious, disdainful and a cruel task-master. The lover, emaciated and pale from lack of sleep and from the physical exertion involved in endless wooing was at the beck and call of his iron-hearted mistress.

The figure of the lover as slave is seldom found in Greek erotic poetry and appears to be the creation of the Roman elegists. The view of the elegiac mistress as a cruel, imperious domina who holds her lover in bondage is found throughout the works of Tibullus, Propertius and Ovid. No doubt Ovid was influenced to a certain extent by his fellow elegists but the figure was so wide-spread in Augustan elegy that it would be next to impossible to trace his indebtedness to any one poet.

Tibullus shows a great predilection for this idea. He says that he is not averse to "whips and chains" because Venus herself has made him realize the power of love with the strokes of her lash (II, iii, 80; I, viii, 5-6). He constantly complains of his bondage to Nemesis; in one elegy, having bid farewell to his former freedom, he pictures himself being tortured by Amor and Nemesis; the pain proves to be too great, however, and he begs the _saeva puella_ to take away the torches (II, iv, 1-6). Similarly, throughout his elegies Propertius often refers to himself as the _servus amoris_ and to his love as _servitium_. Addressing his "iron-hearted" mistress he asks if ever in his wretched existence he was anything more than a slave to her (II, viii, 13-16). In an elegy written to his friend Gallus, he indirectly points out what it entails to be Cynthia's lover and bear the "heavy yoke" (_grave servitium_) of love. In another poem he asks Bassus why he insists on trying to persuade him to leave Cynthia instead of advising him to spend the rest of his life in bondage - a bondage that he is gradually getting used to (I, iv, 1-4); later in Book Three he seems to have accepted his lot completely for he refers to the "chains" of love as _dulcia vincula_ (III, xv, 10). In Elegy I, ix, we can see his almost unconscious association of love with slavery: he gloats over the fact that Ponticus, that inveterate scoffer, has finally fallen in love with some girl that he just bought the other day; already she is "bossing" (_imperat_) him, he says, and the poor wretch is abjectly performing her every whim (1-4).

In the _Ars Amatoria_, _Remedia Amoris_, _Amores_ (and to a lesser extent in the _Heroides_) there is a constant association of the lover with the slave, and the verb _servire_ is often the equivalent of _amare_. Ovid, the _praeceptor amoris_, in his self-imposed role as "liberator" (the technical term is _adsertor_, one who "asserts" that another person is free) promises to free the poor lover from his servitude by applying to him the rod of freedom (_vindicta_, _R.A._ 730). He advises the lover to strip himself of his pride (_exue fastus_, _A.A._ II, 241); in order to gain lasting love he must be willing to suffer degradations and hardships - long journeys, cold and "cruel pains" (_saevi dolores_, _A.A._ II, 235); he must endure his mistress's reproaches, her blows and perform such servile tasks as carrying her parasol, holding up her mirror, taking off her slippers - and even kissing her feet (_A.A._ II, 533-4; 209-16). In a subsequent passage he bids the lover to come in the slave's stead, should his mistress call for one after a banquet, and light her way home (II, 228). In the elegy addressed to Corinna's doorkeeper, Ovid says that he would be willing to be shackled if only he could change places with the lover whom he imagines lying by Corinna's side (_Am._ I, vi, 45-7). In _Amores_ I, vii he asks his friends to fetter his hands, the hands that so brutally struck Corinna, like a common slave's. In another passage he addresses Cupid as ruler, asking him to set up his throne in his heart and make the women, that _nimium vaga turba_, the obedient subjects of his realm (_Am._ II, ix, 53-4). He begs

the god of love to grant him his freedom; he is tired of endlessly keeping vigil, like a common slave, before Corinna's door. Surely, he says, he has earned his freedom and deserved the right to be liberated from his chains (Am. III, xi, 11; 3). Like a typical "courtly lover" Acontius pleads with Cydippe, whom he describes as imperiosa, ("tyrannical"), to allow him to stand weeping before her and stretch out his "submissive" hands like a slave fearing the harsh stroke of the lash. He will suffer any punishment or humiliation (omnia perpetiar): she can tear his hair and scratch his cheeks; his only concern is that she might bruise her own hand in striking him. However, he begs her not to bind him with shackles and chains; "unyielding" love will fetter him much more securely (Her. XX, 75-86).

Pallor, emaciation and general debilitation due to lack of sleep are the characteristics of the elegiac lover. Scolding a stream for not letting him across to see his sweetheart the lover cries

> quid properasse iuvat, quid parva dedisse quieti,
> tempora, quid nocti conseruisse diem,
> si tamen hic standum ...
>
> What was the good of hurrying; what was the advantage of hardly getting a wink of sleep and joining day to night, if I have to stay here ...
> (Am. III, vi, 9-10)

In Amores I, vi the lover tells the obdurate doorkeeper to oblige him by opening his mistress' door - just a crack will do because many years of loving have wasted away his body and made him so thin that he can easily slip in through the half-opened entrance:

quod precor, exiguum est - aditu fac ianua parvo
obliquum capiat semiadaperta latus.
longus amor tales corpus tenuavit in usus
aptaque subducto corpore membra dedit.
(3-7)

Complaining about Corinna's endless carping no matter how he treats the opposite sex, Ovid describes the appearance of the typical lover:

sive bonus color est, in te quoque frigidus esse,
seu malus, alterius dicor amore mori.

If I look well, you accuse me of giving you the cold shoulder; if badly, of falling head- over-heels in love with another woman.
(_Am_. II, vii, 9-10)

In the passage in the _Remedia Amoris_ where Ovid instructs the lover to get rid of his passion by dwelling on his former mistress' shortcomings and by turning in his mind all her charms into faults (_in peius dotes deflecte puellae_, 325), the way in which he does it reminds one of a Roman slave market: is she white? black?; are her teeth ugly?; is her vision poor?; does she have any musical talent?. He also suggests that the lover visit his mistress when she leasts expects him, preferably early in the morning when she is hard at work making up her face with all kinds of weird concoctions. On reading the lines

Pyxidas invenies et rerum mille colores,
et fluere in tepidos oesypa lapsa sinus.

You will find little boxes and a thousand colours and mixtures that dissolve and drip into her warm bosom.
(353-4)

the educated Roman would subconsciously associate this with the Gallic and British slaves who had been brought in at this time and who were notorious for their habit of dyeing their faces and bodies.

(iii) Amans Amens: The Pains of Love

According to A. W. Allen,

> miser in erotic context describes the lover whose will and reason are altogether subject to his passion. Lucretius recognized the existence of two kinds of sexual experience, a love which is madness - he called furor and rabies - and a love which is a reasonable pursuit of pleasure. One kind of love brings care and pain, the other unmixed delight ... /those men who partake of/ the former are miseri, the latter sani. Miser, thus contrasted with sanus, has an almost technical meaning, and this meaning appears very often in love poetry.[3]

In Ovid, as in the other elegists, miser in this technical sense is a recurring epithet for the lover. The type of love described is never free from pain and the word cura is often synonymous for amor[4]. "As many as are the shells on the shore, so many are the pains of love" writes Ovid in the Ars Amatoria (II, 519); here he uses the word dolor: when applied to love, it can be regarded as a pain which springs from an actual sickness and embraces both physical (dolor corporis) and mental (dolor mentis) anguish. The lover's mental sickness manifests itself in certain forms of erratic behaviour while the physical aspect is evident from the emaciation of his body and loss of colour brought about by nights of sleeplessness and days filled with anxiety.

What then are some of these clinical manifestations of love? In the Remedia Amoris we learn that it is a disease with baneful seeds (81), a sickness that must he healed (discite sanari ..., 43) and like any other contagious disease needs to

be quarantined; one sure cure is to run away from it (224) because it has savage and ruinous consequences (54; 69). The behavioural patterns of the love-struck wretch are anything but normal: if spurned the miser amans might hang or stab himself (18-19); love makes him utterly confused: at one time he may whisper sweet-nothings to his sweetheart and at the next moment utter reproaches (35); steeped in wine, he breaks down doors in nightly brawls under Cupid's directions (35). Citing exempla from mythology, Ovid describes the monstrous and unnatural acts that inevitably followed in the wake of this destructive passion. Medea slew her own children; Phaedra's incestuous love for Hippolytus ended in his destruction; Pasiphae fell in love with a bull and gave birth to the Minotaur; Scylla, the daughter of Nisus, by cutting off her father's lock of hair, betrayed a city to her lover; Myrrha committed incest with her father Cinyras.

Ovid considers himself both a poet and a physician, because after all, Apollo was the god of poetry and medicine (repertor carminis et medicae opis, R.A. 76). He therefore diagnoses the patient and prescribes certain remedies. As in all insidious diseases the seeds of love should be eradicated at their earliest stage of development; the longer the cure is withheld the more noxious the disease is likely to become. Love is a mala arbor - a pernicious tree that drives its roots deep down into the marrow. Here is what a lover must do to be cured: he should avoid drinking, gambling and over-sleeping

because too much leisure time will make him dwell on the source of his malady and rob his spirit of all its strength. An excellent cure for love is country life because there will be many things there to distract his mind. He should throw himself with gusto into such pursuits as the cultivation of fields and orchards, raising goats and sheep, gathering honey, making wine, irrigating fields and practising grafting. In a short while these interests will banish love. Hunting is also beneficial; it will occupy his mind during the day and, because it is a strenuous sport, will make him sleep soundly at night. He should force himself to take long journeys and not wait for excuses to do so. All these remedies may be unpleasant, but if he is willing to take disagreeable medicines in order to cure his bodily ills, surely he will endure hardships in order to cure his mind.

1 Cf. Iliad, X, 437: λευκότεροι χιόνος.

2 See above, Chapter II.

3 "Elegy and the Classical Attitude Towards Love," Yale Classical Studies, XI (1950), 259-60.

4 Cf. R.A. 311: Haeserat in quadam nuper mea cura puella.

CHAPTER V

THE EMOTIONS OF LOVE: LOVE AND NATURAL PHENOMENA

(i) Images of the Sea

The sea is a constant source of imagery. Its violence and restlessness are used to portray many different emotions and psychological states: indifference, futility, inconstancy, cruelty and inexorability. By means of metaphor and simile, the images are subtly manipulated in order to guide and direct the reader's attitudes and make him, almost subconsciously, either well or ill-disposed toward a character in a given emotional situation. The sea and its concomitant storms are almost personified and the adjectives used to describe their manifestations are such as one would ascribe to human beings. The sea is _crudelis_, _avidus_, _asper_, _minax_, _saevus_, _insanus_, _terribilis_. When Pyrrhus drags Hermione into his palace, her screaming is of no avail: he is _surdior freto_, "deafer than the ocean" (_Her_. VIII, 9). Dido tries to persuade Aeneas to stay by pointing out the threatening gales and waves but is forced to the admission that no matter how senseless and irrational all this violence may appear to be, how indifferent to her pain and sorrow, yet it is juster than Aeneas' callous heart (_Her_. VII, 44). In _Heroides_ XVIII, Leander compares his

anxiety and the agitation of his mind to that of the sea:

> cur ego confundor, quotiens confunditur aequor?
>
> Why must I be perplexed as often as the sea is troubled? (129)

and refers to it as if it were a human being:

> sollicitum raucis ut mare fervet aquis.
>
> when the troubled sea seethes with hoarse waters. (26)

For seven nights Leander has been trying to swim the strait separating Sestos and Abydos but the winds and the _insani freti_ (28) have prevented him. Three times he had undressed himself, entered the water and tried to swim the _grave iter_ but the swollen strait thwarted him:

> obstitit inceptis tumidum iuvenalibus aequor,
> mersit et inversis ora natantis aquis. (35-6)
>
> The swollen waters resisted my youthful attempts, and as I swam, they surged over my head and dragged me under.

Enclosed within the "enclasping" first and last words (_obstitit ... aequor_) are the abortive "attempts of the youth"; these words give a graphic touch to the restraining barrier-like nature of the waves from which no egress appears possible. This is made even more vivid in the pentameter, where the _ora natantis_ is placed right in the midst of the rolling waves. When the sea is lashed to fury by the winds, Leander's mind is also agitated (172). The sea is regarded as having an autonomous existence and many of the basic human emotions are ascribed to it. It is vacillating: nothing is more prone to change than sea and wave (185). Leander hopes that the sea will

end its anger (203) and Hero speaks of the *saevitia* of the waves (*Her*. XIX, 23) and refers to the sea as *saevus* and *minax*. At one point she speaks of the *forma profundi*, "the face of the deep" (*forma* is here equivalent to *facies* or *vultus*). In Hero's eyes the storm is jealous (*invida hiemps*, 120) because it keeps Leander back; because it is capable of jealousy, it often exacts the penalty from false lovers for their unfaithfulness (*Her*. VII, 56-8). In its moments of unrest it emits *fera murmura* (*Tr*. I, xi, 7). The palace of Rumour contains a thousand halls and countless entrances without any doors. Within the palace there is never any silence and yet there is no loud din, but only the murmured whisperings, like the far-off sound of the sea's waves:

> nec tamen est clamor, sed parvae murmura vocis,
> qualia de pelagi siquis procul audiat, undis
> esse solent. (*Met*. XII, 49-51)

Through the separation of *pelagi* and *undis*, and the caesural pause after *pelagi*, the immeasurable vastness of the ocean is evoked and the phrase *parvae murmura vocis* brings out its anthropomorphic quality.

In *Heroides* XVI there is an identification of the *pelagi aestus* with the *aestus amoris* (cf. *Am*. III, v, 36). Venus, because she arose from the foam of the sea, has always been associated with the ocean. Here Paris informs Helen that the goddess herself has been favouring his sea-voyage in quest of her, whom she had promised as his bride. Venus is his pilot and has provided a gentle breeze for his ship. He is hopeful that she

will still favour him by granting him his desire and calm the "swell" in his heart as she did that of the sea. (25). Here all the meanings and connotations of aestus are exploited: heat, fervour, boiling, heaving. Like the waves, Paris' heart at this point is seething with emotions and his hopes ebb and flow with every passing minute. Likewise in Heroides V love is associated with storms. The day on which Paris abandoned the nymph Oenone

pessima mutati coepit amoris hiemps.

The dreadful storm of changed love began. (34)

The sea forms the backdrop to the action in Heroides V, VII, X; Metamorphoses III, XI, XIII - in the stories of Ariadne and Theseus, Oenone and Paris, Dido and Aeneas, Hero and Leander, the Trojan Women, Pentheus and Bacchus and Ceyx and Alcyone. Whenever comparisons are drawn, the sea's violence is usually stressed. When the banquet is thrown into confusion the noise is like the sea's when its calm waves are lashed to fury by a wild wind (Met. V, 5). Daedalion, lamenting his dead daughter, heeds Peleus' words of consolation as much as the reefs heed the moan of the sea (Met. XI, 330). A murmuring is heard among the people like the noise made by the waves and surf (Met. XV, 604). Leander displays the instinctive fear and dread the Romans had of the sea when he prays that should he be overwhelmed by the waves, his naufraga membra, "shipwrecked limbs" might find their haven in Hero's embrace:

illic est aptum nostrae navale carinae.

There is a fitting dockyard for my keel.
(*Her*. XVIII, 198)

(ii) Animal and Vegetable Worlds

Plants and other forms of vegetation, especially trees, are another recurring source of imagery and are often used symbolically. Although it would be unwise to assert that the Roman elegists deliberately cultivated symbolism one cannot help feeling that consciously or unconsciously Ovid was aware of its possibilities as a vehicle to express very deep feelings in a succinct way.

When Paris was leaving Oenone, the former's embrace is compared to that of the vine clinging to the elm:

non sic adpositis vincitur vitibus ulmus,
ut tua sunt collo bracchia nexa meo.

The elm is not so strongly clasped by the encompassing
vine as was my neck by your embracing arms.
(*Her*. V, 47-8)

Here the interlocking word order in both lines suggests the actual weaving: vine - elm - vine - elm. Oenone like the vine needs Paris upon whom to sustain herself; without him she is helpless, vulnerable and without support. In the preceding line

miscuimus lacrimas maestus uterque suas.

Sadly, each of us mingled our tears .
(46)

the alliteration, assonance and the emphatic position of *miscuimus*

further enhances this image of uniting and intertwining. In line 25 she regards the beech-tree in symbolic terms: she hopes that the inscription that Paris once carved in its bark will get bigger as the tree grows. In her eyes the tree represents his love and as time passes she wishes that their affection will thrive in the same way:

> crescite et in titulos surgite recta meos!
>
> Grow, rise high and straight to proclaim my honours!
> (Her. V, 26)

Like Horace, Ovid uses vegetation, growth and seasonal forest imagery to depict certain aspects of human experience. He selects illustrations from nature which fall in with the emotions he is trying to express. For example, in Amores II,16 he contrasts the busy farm life around him, the fields of grape vines, the "cool breeze caressing the trees," with the loneliness and desolation in his heart:

> Ulmus amat vitem, vitis non deserit ulmum;
> separor a domina cur ego saepe mea?
>
> The elm loves the vine, the vine does not abandon the elm;
> Why am I often separated from my sweetheart?
> (41-2)

In the first line, the elm and vine are linked by chiastic word order. In the second, however, ego is separated from domina and from mea and the verb is placed at the beginning of the line in isolation; as a result the word order reinforces the meaning both of the individual lines and of the couplet as a whole.

A study of the most prevalent imagery in the Ars Amatoria will reveal that there is an extended metaphorical pattern of

animal and vegetative imagery which identifies the woman with primitive, uncultivated nature. The man's role is that of the hunter, the reaper and pruner; his task is to "hunt down", domesticate and cultivate these natural forces. Throughout the first two books the woman's savage animal instincts are emphasized:

> Sed neque fulvus aper media tam saevus in ira est
> Fulmineo rabidos cum rotat ore canes,
> Nec lea, cum catulis lactantibus ubera praebet,
> Nec brevis ignaro vipera laesa pede,
> Femina quam socii deprensa paelice lecti,
> Ardet ...
>
> But neither is the tawny boar so savage in the midst of his fury when with his lightning-quick jaw he overturns the savage hounds, nor a lioness when she is offering her udder to her suckling cubs, nor the tiny snake hurt by a careless foot, as a woman burns with anger when she discovers that a rival is sharing her bed ...
>
> (II, 373-77)

When a woman has "raged" (saevierit) enough then is the time to apply love's embrace; that will put an end to her recalcitrance. Love is the only sure medicine, the only one that will assuage her "untamed anger" (ferus dolor; II, 461-2; 489-90).

The "chase" requires skill, not misdirected violence, on the hunter's part, although women like to see force used in their own capture (II, 169-70; I, 673). The hunter should adapt his technique to circumstances and vary it as the occasion demands: a grown hind will see the snares laid out for it from further away (I, 766). If he is familiar with the natural habitat of his prey, the hunter need only spread his nets to catch his genialis praeda ("spoil for the marriage couch," I, 125). As a matter of fact, the chase is ridiculously easy, "exciting

for the hunter and hunted alike";[2] often his game will entangle itself in the nets without any effort on the hunter's part. All he has to remember, is that no matter what prize he aims for he can easily catch it. Taming it requires a little patience; but as lions and tigers can be made submissive so can a woman. Even a woman who is "more savage than wild Medusa" can be made tractable (II, 309-10).

The art of love, like the art of husbandry, is a didactic system, consisting of rules and principles which can be learned and put to practical uses. In books one and two of the Ars Amatoria the parallels between the lover's and farmer's world are worked out in elaborate detail. The farmer is familiar with the composition of the soil: he knows that certain types are best suited for growing grapes and olive trees while others lend themselves to the cultivation of wheat. For the lover, the older woman, even one who might even now be plucking her white hairs, offers a promising field for cultivation; he need only sow and it will bear crops (I, 757-61; II, 665-8). The farmer's life is geared to that of the weather; the lover's moods should be attuned to that of his sweetheart's disposition (I, 400; II, 202). During certain times of the year no farmer would think of planting or harvesting; similarly the lover must wait for the right time; the most suitable "season" is when she is in a happy mood,

> Mens erit apta capi tum, cum laetissima rerum
> Ut seges in pingui luxuriabit humo.

> Then will heart be apt for winning, when in the happiest of moods she grows extravagantly, like a wheat crop in a rich soil.
>
> (I, 359-60)

A lover should make sure that the girl he has chosen gets used to him but should not pursue her to the point of making himself obnoxious. When he is certain that he may be missed and his absence regretted, then he should by all means go away and give his sweetheart a rest: a field lying fallow will repay the owner with even better crops next year (II, 350-2).

A comparison of the images found in Ovid's elegiac works such as the Ars Amatoria and the Fasti with those in the Metamorphoses reveals that in the latter work, whenever a simile or metaphor is drawn from natural phenomena, the destructive and savage elements of nature seem to predominate. However, there appears to be no distinction among the various works as far as images of the sea are concerned: almost universally its violent nature is emphasized. This stress on violence is even more true of similes which compare human actions to those of wild animals. In the Metamorphoses the aggressive characters usually assume the role of a predatory animal. Thus Apollo complains that Daphne is fleeing from him as the lamb flees the wolf, or the deer the lion (I, 505-6). Salmacis eagerly twines herself around Hermaphroditus like a snake when being carried off by an eagle or a squid winding its tentacles around its prey (IV, 362-4). The Thracian women attack Orpheus as birds flock together to pounce on a stranger, lost bird (XI, 245). Perseus' attack on the sea-monster is compared to that of an

eagle swooping down on a serpent and sinking its talons in the snake's scaly back (IV, 714-17). In the episode of the fight at Capheus' palace, Perseus' hesitation as to which of the two warriors to attack first is likened to that of a tigress' indecision when she hears the lowings of two herds of cattle in different valleys and is unable to make up her mind which to attack first (V, 164-6).

Although the elegiac works do contain similar comparisons, (e.g. Lucretia trembles before Tarquin like a tiny lamb caught by a voracious wolf (Fast. II, 109) and the Sabine women flee from the pursuing Roman men as doves flee from eagles or like the lamb that has just caught sight of a wolf (A. A. I, 117-18)), on the whole, the accent is on the less savage and more picturesque and idyllic aspects of the animal kingdom. Formal similes which stress the gentler behaviour of birds and insects occur quite frequently. The Tyrians running frantically before the onslaught of the Moors are like bees flying aimlessly when they have lost their king (Fast. III, 555). The pains of love are as numerous as the rabbits that feed on Mt. Athos or the bees on Mt. Hybla (A.A. II, 517-19), and the pretty girls that flock to the games are as numerous as ants or the bees that flit over thyme blossoms in fragrant meadows (A.A. I, 95-7). Daedalus instructs Icarus in the art of flying in the same way that a mother-bird teaches her fledgling (A.A. II, 66).

Whereas in the Metamorphoses human emotions are very often compared to wild animals, in the Ars Amatoria, Remedia

Amoris, *Amores*, the *Fasti* and the two exilic poems Ovid prefers to use vegetative images and comparisons. In the *Metamorphoses* terror is likened to the reactions of a wild boar when surrounded by a pack of baying dogs (IV, 723), to a wounded dove trembling in fear of its recent attacker's claws (VI, 529-30) or a lamb listening to the howling of the wolves around the sheepfold (V, 626-7). In the elegiac poems, a woman shudders with fear and her body is compared to that of a field of wheat shaken by the wind (*Her*. X, 139) or the leaves of a poplar tree when stirred by the breeze or a thin reed swayed back and forth by gentle south wind (*Am*. I, vii, 54-5).

Similes taken from the vegetable world are frequently used to indicate large but indefinite quantities and are especially prevalent in the two exilic poems. The woes and misfortunes that the poet has suffered are as numerous as shrubs in a forest, blades of grass in the Campus Martius (*Tr*. V, i, 31-3), thyme plants on Hybla, wheat blades in Lybia (*Pont*. II, vii, 26-9), apples in autumn (*Tr*. IV, i, 57-9), seeds in a poppy or in a pomegranate (*Tr*. V, ii, 24-7; IV, xv, 7-8), or flowers in a rose bed (*Tr*. V, ii, 23-7). There are as many girls in Rome as there are crops on Mt. Ida or grape bunches on the island of Lesbos (*A.A*., I, 57-9); the pains of love are as numerous as the berries in an olive tree (*A.A.*, II, 518-9); the dyes that girls can use to tint their hair are as various as the flowers of spring-time (*A.A*., III, 185-7).

In the story of Galatea and the Cyclops in Book XIII of the Metamorphoses, the latter's speech in which he tries to woo the disdainful girl is filled with figurative contrasts, drawn mainly from vegetation. Galatea is whiter than the petals of the snowy columbine, more blooming than the meadows, taller and statelier than the alder, choicer than apples, fairer than the tall plane tree, more beautiful than a well-watered garden, sweeter than ripe grapes, harder than an aged oak, tougher than willow twigs or white vines and sharper than thorns (789 f.).

As we have seen in a previous chapter,[2] fruits and leaves sometimes serve as a basis for comparison in describing physical appearance. When Procris faints her skin is like the wan colour of vine leaves after the grapes have been plucked (A.A., III, 703-4) and Narcissus' chest takes on the red and purple hue of a cluster of ripening grapes (Met. III, 484-5). Burning stubble or grain is another favourite image in describing emotions. Envy is compared to a fire smothered under a pile of thorny weeds; sudden and violent passion to a blaze set in dry leaves or stores of hay (Met. II, 810-11; VI, 456-7); slow, lasting love to a smouldering pile of wet fodder (A.A. III, 573).

We can see that Ovid shows great partiality for external nature and for rural life, even though he spent most of his life in Rome. Everywhere there are comparisons to trees, crops, animals and seasonal cycles. Nowhere is this fondness more evident than in a passage in the Remedia Amoris (187-96),

Ovid's miniature *Georgics,* where he extolls the joys of farming and horticulture and the satisfaction of seeing one's labours more than repaid by the soil's bounty.

1 See above, Chapter IV.

2 L. P. Wilkinson, Ovid Recalled (Cambridge, University Press, 1955), p.121.

CHAPTER VI

IMAGES OF TOUCH AND SOUND

(i) Tactile Imagery

Imagery is not limited to figures and words that appeal only to the sense of sight. For example, there is tactile imagery which may be subdivided into images of heat, cold and textural perception. Writing on the tactile imagery in Robert Browning's poetry, J. K. Bonnell states that "by whatever means we primarily apprehend them, mass, weight, and temperature are known only through mental images that are tactual."[1] Applying this view directly to Browning's poetry, he continues: "The reader apprehends directly fine distinctions - by no means so well given in less concrete terms - of viscous tenuity, spiny rigidity and vireous fragileness."[2] It will be seen that this type of imagery is present in all of Ovid's works and may be illustrated by a study of examples drawn from the _Heroides_, particularly the tenth epistle, Ariadne's letter to Theseus.

After a few introductory lines the reader is presented with a dramatic scene: it is dusk and the grass is coated with hoar-frost. Ovid's description of the _pruina_ as _vitrea_, "crystal hoar-rime" - describing not only its coldness but also the daedal patterns traced out by the frost on the ground - is surely what

Bonnell has in mind when he speaks of the other poet's "vitreous fragileness".

The scene continues with a picture of Ariadne, half-awakened from fitful slumber, reaching out to touch Theseus:

> Thesea prensuras semisupina ... movi manus -
>
> Half-reclining, I put out my hands to clutch Theseus -
> (10)

The length of the syllables in prensuras vividly portrays the slow, searching motion of the hand. This word, coming as it does before the break in the line and separated by the penta-syllabic semisupina takes on even more important dimensions. In the next two lines we get a picture of her distracted state of mind when she suddenly discovers that Theseus is not beside her:

> nullus erat! referoque manus iterumque retempto,
> perque torum moveo bracchia - nullus erat!
>
> He was not there! I draw back my hand, trying again,
> and move my arms over the couch - he was not there!
> (11-12)

Here also the reiteration and inversion of the sound -re -er in re-fer-oque, re-tempto, er-at, it-erumque, er-at, effectively reinforces the meaning and graphically portrays the back and forth, probing movements of her hand.

Realizing that Theseus has abandoned her, she darts out of bed and in a paroxysm of fury begins to tear her hair and to beat her breast. Rushing outside she scans the horizon in the hope of catching a glimpse of him. But there is nothing in sight - nothing but the desolate shore and a cold, pallid moon,

casting its dim glow over the landscape. Not yet fully dressed she walks hurriedly across the beach:

> alta puellares tardat harena pedes.
>
> the deep sand slows down my girlish feet. (20)

By skilful juxtaposition of the words (alta - sand; puellares - girl; harena - sand; pedes - girl) and the liquid consonants "l" and "r" linking alta harena and puellares, a tactile impression of her feet sinking into the soft, deep sand is conveyed to the reader. As she climbs a nearby hill and gazes out toward the sea we get an example of a tactile image interpreted or made more graphic through an auditory image:

> Haec ego; quod voci deerat, plangore replebam;
>
> This was my cry: what my voice lacked, I filled with pommelling; the blows were mingled with my words. (37-8)

Here, not only does the reader feel her actually beating her breast but by the repetition of the sound -er in the pentameter, he also apprehends the act auditorily. This is a case where imagery is united to such poetic elements as meter and progressive repetition of certain sounds. As Northrop Frye states, "Imagery ... is either material or technique - what is being represented or how ..."[3]

Since coldness and heat can only be perceived through the sense of touch, most of the images which on first sight appear to be visual are really tactile in nature. Cold is represented mainly by rock and stone and words such as saxum, saxeus, lapis, scopulus and silex recur with regular frequency.

In addition there are the winds, described as _crudeles_ (29,113) and especially _aquilo_, the cold north wind, whose keen edge cuts through her shivering body and makes her fingers tremble so that she can scarcely trace the words on the tablet.

In lines 21-24

> interea toto clamanti litore "Theseu!"
> reddebant nomen concava saxa tuum,
> et quotiens ego te, totiens locus ipse vocabat.
> ipse locus miserae ferre volebat opem.

> Meanwhile, along the entire shore I shouted "Theseus!", and the hollow rocks re-echoed with your name; as often as I called out for you, so often did the place itself call out. The very place wanted to help me in my wretchedness.

we get the image of a craggy cliff, representing Theseus' cold indifference and cruelty and the pathetic fallacy of Ariadne projecting her feelings and instilling sentience into the bleak landscape. To her it appears that nature herself is partaking of her sorrow: "the very place wished to aid me in my distress". Another example is to be found in lines 49-50:

> aut mare prospiciens in saxo frigida sedi,
> quamque lapis sedes, tam lapis ipsa fui.

Here the important words are _saxi_, _frigida_ and _lapis_. Although _fridiga_ does not go grammatically with _saxo_, it nevertheless colours it and is coloured by it. Although _frigida_ refers to Ariadne, in the pentameter the distinction has become blurred and the stone, metaphorically, becomes the girl and the girl a stone:

> ... as much a stone myself as the stone on which I was sitting.

Like nearly all the husbands and lovers in the _Heroides_, Theseus

is cold and heartless. His parents were the flinty crags and the deep ocean and his heart is of iron:

> illic tu silices, illic adamanta tulisti,
> illic qui silices, Thesea, vincat, habes.

> There you possess flint and adamant; there you have a Theseus which surpasses flint in hardness.
> (109-10)

Words and phrases that connote coldness and rigidity are effectively contrasted by those which suggest warmth and softness. After sitting upon the hard rock looking out toward the sea, she returns to the soft couch, where just a few hours before she and her lover slept, touching the imprints left by him (vestigia tango) and running her hand over the blankets which drew their warmth from his body (54). Unable to reconcile herself to his desertion of her, she "bedews the bed with pouring tears" (55). In lines 44-5

> torpuerant molles ante dolore genae.
> quid potius facerent, quam me mea lumina flerent ...

> My tender cheeks grew numb with pain; what more could my eyes do than weep for me...

me mea lumina flerent is a bold expression in which the eyes are envisaged as having an autonomous existence, apart from the rest of the body and here the image of warm tears running down her numb cheeks is, although not directly stated, at least implied. When at one point she compares herself to a standing field of wheat violently shaken by the blustery winds and at another describes herself as frigidior glacie (139; 32) we have an example of imagery being used to explain, clarify and make an emotional situation more vivid.

Another type, closely allied with that of the preceding, is "kinaesthetic" imagery and an illustration of it is to be found in the closing lines of the letter:

> _Has_ tibi plangendo lugubria pectora _lassas_
> infelix _tendo_ trans freta longa _manus_;
>
> These hands, wearied from beating my sorrowing breast in my wretchedness I stretch towards you across the distant seas.
>
> (145-6)

Here the separation of _has_ ... _lassas_ ... _manus_ and the positioning of _tendo_ between _lassas_ and _manus_ give to the reader a vivid sensation of Ariadne actually extending her tired and swollen hands toward the sea in a futile but symbolic gesture of union.

There are numerous other occurrences of images of a predominantely tactile character, especially in the _Amores_. Some of these have already been pointed out by George Luck in his exegesis of I, 5. Commenting on such words as _apta premi_, "suited for caress" and _castigato_, "firm", which Ovid employs in reference to Corinna's natural endowments, and comparing this poem to a similar one found in the Alexandrian _Anthologia Palatina_, he states that "the luxuriant visual impressions of the Greek poet have yielded to the tactile sensations" and points out the lack of colour imagery in this particular poem:

> The only touch of colour in Ovid's poem is "white" (v.10) of Corinna's neck. He refuses to pour out a blinding wealth of visual impressions. In the chiaroscuro of a quiet room, on a hot afternoon in the south, colours and outlines blend into each other. To see something in this semidarkness, means to be close enough to touch it.
>
> quos umeros, quales vidi tetigique lacertos ...
>
> 'what shoulders, what arms did I see - and touch!
>
> (v.19)[5]

(ii) Images of Hardness

In a recent study, Douglas F. Bauer has made an exhaustive investigation of the stone motif in the *Metamorphoses*, particularly its relation to the theme of love and art. Although the article purports to treat the symbolic manifestations of this motif, it is, on the whole disappointing; it consists for the most part of a line by line summary of direct references, comparisons to stones and kindred objects and an "inventory" of all the instances of metamorphoses into stone. Very little of it is devoted to the support of his thesis that the stone motif functions as a "metaphor of physical or moral insensibility"[6]

When he writes about the Deucalion-Pyrrha episode and points out the metaphorical uses of such verbs as *remollescere*, *flectere* and *mulcere* (Deucalion begs the gods to "soften" and "bend" their anger and "allays" his wife's apprehensions, (I, 378; 391) we can at once see the figurative connotation of rigidity of will. Even such a trite metaphor as Medea's imputation to herself of a "heart of stone" (*scopulos in corde*, V, 30) if she fails to help Jason, can of course be considered an image. However, most of his "inventory" consists of a straightforward summary of all the metamorphoses into stone. Unless one has a very loose definition of the term "image", these examples will not readily lend themselves to any metaphorical or symbolic interpretation. Some of the very few exceptions that can be culled from his list belong to the general theme of "poetic

justice". Thus when Mercury asks Battus not to disclose to anyone that he had seen him driving off Apollo's cattle Battus swears

> lapis iste prius tua furta loquetur.
>
> Sooner will that stone tell of your theft than I.
> (II, 696)

Later, bribed by greater reward he divulges the theft to the disguised Mercury and is turned to hard flint. He who swore to be as silent as a stone, becomes one. In the same way Aglauros and Anaxarete, who unfeelingly deny the course of love, receive their fitting punishments: because Aglaurus refused to admit Mercury when he attempted to see her sister, she is turned to black stone; because Anaxarete spurned Iphis' advances, "the stone that had resided in her heart, took possession of her limbs", (II, 832; XIV, 757-8).

Although the Byblis episode is an excellent example of the rock motif's metaphorical function, Bauer barely devotes three lines to it and seems to miss its ironic implications. When Byblis learns her brother's reaction to her love-letter she is struck dumb by the shock; recovering her senses she chides herself for not "checking the wind before spreading her sails" (IX, 591-2). As a result of her rashness she is now "carried upon the rocks." (593). Ironically, as if foregetting what she had previously said, later on she attempts to convince herself that her brother's heart is not made of hard flint or adamant (614); obviously it is, for he turns out to be the rock upon which her hopes are eventually dashed.

According to Bauer, "although the stone image is a kaleidoscope of variety, no circumstances can be shown to occasion its play nearly as often as antipathy and passivity towards love".[7] Thus as we have seen, insensible people like Aglauros and Anaxarete are changed to a substance in keeping with their callous natures. In the same way the Propoetides, because they dared to deny the divinity of Venus, were transformed into stony flints. On the other hand there are people like Pyrrha, Deucalion and Pygmalion. Because they gave freely of their love, with the help of the gods, Pyrrha and Deucalion were able to transform stone into living flesh. As a reward for his acceptance of love Venus turned Pygmalion's marble statue into a living woman. Those who deny love become stone; those who yield themselves to it have the power to change stone to flesh.

Throughout the Metamorphoses stone and rock are a recurring basis for comparison. The fiery breath of the brazen-footed bulls of king Aeetes is like the hiss of flint in a kiln when sprinkled with water (VII, 107). A boar's charge is compared to that of a huge rock hurtling from a catapult (VIII, 357-8). Lichas is thrown by Hercules more violently than if he had been shot from a sling (IX, 219). Achelous opposes Hercules' attacks as a rock withstands the onslaught of the roaring waves (IX, 40-1).

As we have seen in the Pygmalion episode, the division between stone and living flesh is not always clearly demarcated;

the former is often imbued with sentience and the latter is sometimes given the characteristics of stone. Thus on the death of Orpheus the stones weep (XI, 45). The wolf that was changed to marble by the sea-goddess Psamathe retained its original appearance in every respect except for its white colour (XI, 404-6). The spear that struck Cygnus rebounded from his flesh as if from a wall or solid rock (XII, 124). When Caeneus was struck by a centaur the weapon bounded back from his face just like pebbles from a hollow drum and the sword-blow that fell on the latter's thigh resounded on his hardened skin as if marble had been struck (XII, 481; 487-8).

The association of stone and flesh is also connected with the theme of art. Pygmalion is the pivot around which these three major motifs revolve. With marvellous artistry he carved a snowy ivory statue and fell in love with his own creation. Even before the transformation the marble had the appearance of a real woman and seemed to be alive, so cleverly did Pygmalion's art conceal his art. Its appearance was so lifelike that even the sculptor was hard put to decide whether it was flesh or ivory. He kissed it and let his fingers sink into its limbs. He then placed the statue on a bed and propped its head on soft feathers, as if it could feel them. Having made his offering and prayer to Venus he returned home and kissed the girl. Now the first breath of life was stirring within her: at his touch the ivory lost its hardness and began to grow soft (mollescit ... posito rigore, X, 283). His fingers made an

imprint on the yielding surface, just as if it were made of wax. Then at last the transformation was complete. He pressed his lips to hers; the girl felt his kisses and blushed. The artist had liberated the living soul within the cold marble. The perfect reproduction in stone finds its parallel in their perfect love.

(iii) Sound and Rhythm

A more systematic study of sound imagery, or more specifically, onomatopoeia and alliteration, which has heretofore been treated in a more or less haphazard fashion, may not be out of place at this point. However, after reading O. J. Todd's iconoclastic views on the subject one tends to be wary of making too much of these figures. Professor Todd does not altogether believe - although he comes close to it - that "the ancients were insensible to sound effects," but insists that "they may not have been quite as sensitive as we are to _repetition_ of sound".[8] With this warning in mind we may now consider how Ovid employs onomatopoeia - the manner in which the sense of the words is matched to the sound and rhythm of the verse.

Although it is quite true, as L. P. Wilkinson maintains, that onomatopoeia and alliteration may be the result of chance rather than design and that the feeling for the former is largely subjective, nevertheless there are, I believe, certain objective standards to which the poet adheres whenever he has recourse to

them. Ovid is well aware of the possibilities of onomatopoeia in enriching the meaning by transposing a particular scene to another level of perception and investing it with a lively, three-dimensional quality. Isolated examples may or may not serve as proof but a recurring use of this device in similar contexts will show that it is not merely accidental. Before going on with specific instances we may briefly consider Wilkinson's views on the subject. Although in his rebuttal of O. J. Todd's article he presents an illuminating defence of onomatopoeia and cites copious examples from Horace and Vergil to prove his point, he states categorically that, with one or two exceptions, Ovid has dispensed with onomatopoeia in favour of such Hellenistic trappings as "graces of style, pleasing sounds, and verbal architecture."[9] In his view Ovid is perversely individualistic in this respect because whenever a certain episode particularly lends itself to onomatopoeic treatment the poet would rather concentrate on psychological motivations and character delineation. With primarily Horace and Vergil in mind he states that

> it is the part of the poet to restore the imitative quality of language, not merely by selecting such onomatopoeic words as survive, but by combining elements not in themselves onomatopoeic, letters and syllables of words of any kind, in such a way that they help to suggest the thing or action he is describing[10]

and quotes the phrase sub aqua, sub aqua (Met. VI, 376), imitative of the croaking of frogs, as being the only example of "expressiveness" that he has found in the Metamorphoses. Thirteen years later, in his study of Ovid, his views remain

unchanged for he maintains that only those poets who "concentrate on the object and try to convey it as vividly as possible to the reader" will find onomatopoeic effects useful; those who are "chiefly concerned to create beauty or convey thought will care less about it".[11] He places Vergil and Horace in the former and Ovid in the latter group of poets.

I cannot concur with Wilkinson's sentiments, especially his exclusion of Ovid from that former circle of poets, those who "concentrate on the object and try to convey it as vividly as possible". Surely Ovid cannot be accused of lack of vividness; most other critics would agree that vividness and concreteness are the prime characteristics of Ovid's poetry. One of the ways by which he makes the abstract, the intangible, realistic is through the use of onomatopoeia. Although Ovid's ear may not have been as acutely attuned to the sound of words as was Vergil's or Horace's, or those of the Greek tragedians, and even if he may have half-believed that over-reliance on onomatopoeic effects was "just a shade below the dignity of great composition"[12] yet a close examination of his poetry will reveal that there are numerous instances where he deliberately employs this figure, although perhaps not so consistently or with such consummate artistry as the other two Augustan poets. Consider for example the phrase _nemorum convicia picae_ (_Met_. V, 676) in which the long _i_'s and the _c_'s imitate the sound of mocking-birds or such special echo effects as the lowing of a cow: _mugitibus impulit auras_; the lumbering, spondaic gait of

cattle: *incustoditam lente videt ire iuvencam*; a blast of hot air blowing out of a furnace: *ferventesque auras velut e fornace profunda*; Polyphemus's scraping of his hair: *rigidos rastris capillos*; the harsh, grating sound of a snake: *terraque rasa sonat squamis* (*Met*. III, 21; 15; II, 229; XIII, 765; III, 75.); or the remarkable line

> osque cavum saxi sonat exsultantibus undis
>
> The hollow crevasse of the rock roared with leaping waters.
> (*Met*. XIII, 892)

where the stream of sibilants is emitted in intermittent spurts (suggested by the four disyllabic words and the alternate dactyl-spondee succession) and explodes in a swirling gush of *exsultantibus undis*.

As in Vergil, a series of dactyls ending in -*que* (sometimes with elision present) suggests speed and lightness, as in the graphic description of Phaethon's wild ride:

> solitaque iugum gravitate carebat.
> Utque labant curvae iusto sine pondere naves
> perque mare instabilis nimia levitate feruntur
> sic onere assueto vacuus dat in aera saltus ...
>
> The yoke lacked its usual weight. And as curved ships, without their proper balast are tossed about and, because they are too light are born unsteadily through the sea, so this chariot, lacking its normal load, leaped into the air.
> (*Met*. II, 162-5)

Similarly in the line

> sibila dant saniemque vomunt linguisque coruscant.
>
> The snakes hissed and vomited gore and flashed their tongues.
> (*Met*. IV, 494)

the repetition of -*que* combined with alliterative *s*'s suggest

the hissing and quick, writhing movements of Tisiphone's snakes. In *Metamorphoses* II, 312 this formula is used to indicate inevitability or relentless pursuit. In order to avert total destruction, Jupiter mercifully hurls his thunderbolts at Phaethon's chariot and "with one and the same blow" dashes the young boy "from his chariot and from his life" (*pariterque animaque rotisque*). In XI, 537 (the Ceyx-Alcyone episode) the -*que*'s, the short phrases, the speed of the dactyls help to portray the panic and confusion aboard the ship:

> deficit ars, animique cadunt: totidemque videntur ...
>
> Their skill deserts them, their courage sinks: and as many (deaths) appeared ...

Similarly in Book XIV, when Scylla sees her body being changed into barking monsters,

> adspicit ac primo credens non corporis illas
> esse sui partes, refugitque abigitque timetque
> ora proterva canum, sed quos fugit, attrahit una
> et corpus quaerens femorum crurumque pedumque
> Cerebereos rictus pro partibus invenit illis ...
> (61-5)

the unusual triple rhymes (*refugitque*, *abigitque*, *timetque*; *femorum*, *crurumque*, *pedumque*) the polysyndeton and the resulting broken thythm seem to suggest her terror while the futility of her attempts to escape is represented by the verbs *refugit* ... *attrahit* ... *fugit* ("she fled back ... drew on ... she shrank"); the caesuras in the third, fourth and fifth lines effectively frame the sense units and add an element of suspense; every word builds climactically towards the painful realization: "she is afraid of the mouths, the cruel mouths of the dogs ... but what she attempts to flee, she drags along with her, and seeking

the shape ... of her thighs, of her legs, of her feet ... gaping Cereberean jaws instead of her own limbs, she finds"; the juxtaposition of *pedumque* and *Cerebereos rictus* emphasizes the startling nature of the transformation: the woman and the monster are merged.

One need only compare the movement of the lines in *Metamorphoses* IV, 32-35, which vividly suggests the slow, spondaic progression of Minyas' daughters' weaving tasks with the lively exuberance of the other Theban women as they celebrate the rites of Bacchus (9 ff.), to appreciate how the contrasting rhythm "by a kind of metaphor, is made to do something analogous to the subject,"[13]. A regular, smooth succession of spondees can enhance an atmosphere of calmness, as in

> iam venti ponent, stratoque aequaliter unda ...
>
> Soon the waves will abate, and over the evenly spread waves ...
>
> (*Her*. VII, 49)

whereas in the couplet

> Nota mihi freta sunt Afrum plangentia litus;
> temporibus certis dantque negantque viam.
>
> Well known to me are the straits that beat upon the African shore; at certain times they grant and deny passage.
>
> (*Her*. VII, 169-70)

the quick, staccato rhythm and the harsh -*ang*, -*ant*, -*ant* sounds emphasize the ceaseless pounding of the waves. A series of spondaic feet can suggest great size and effort as in

> dextraque molarem
> sustulit, et magnum magno conamine misit.
>
> He lifted a great boulder in his right hand and hurled this huge weapon with tremendous force.
>
> (*Met*. III, 59-60 ~~IV, 466-7~~)

where the caesural pause after *sustulit*, the repetition in *magnum magno* and the three long o's (according to Scaliger,[14] this sound in classical literature represents greatness) portray the slow, deliberate and strenuous action involved in lifting and hurling the rock. A progression of spondees can produce an element of tedium. Wilkinson cites *Amores* I, xv, 5-6 (the elegy vindicating Ovid's choice of career) as an example where "spondaic heaviness suggests the tedium of the pedestrian pursuits to which *Livor edax* sought to bind"[15] the poet.

Alliteration, especially a succession of *p*'s and *t*'s, is frequently used by Ovid to indicate scorn and indignation and is regularly found in vituperative speeches. Juno glares fiercely at Sisyphus and other miscreants and bursts out in a vitriolic hail of pelting *p*'s:

> "Cur hic e fratribus...
> perpetuas patitur poenas" ...
> (*Met*. IV, 466-7)

Disheartened at his rejection by Anaxarete, Iphis explodes in a tirade of *t*'s:

> vincis Anaxarete, neque erunt tibi taedia tandem ...
> (*Met*. XIV, 718)

and continues his speech in a spate of unrestrained *m*'s:

> non tamen ante tui curam excessisse memento
> quam vitam geminaque simul mihi lucem carendum.
>
> Remember that I loved you as long as I lived, and
> for me the light of life and love must be extinguished
> together.
> (724-5)

A great deal more might be said on the subject of onomatopoeia and many more examples might be adduced. However,

enough have been cited to indicate that, whatever else might have been Ovid's shortcomings, an ear insensible to the cadence of words was not one of them.

1 J. K. Bonnell, "Touch Images in the Poetry of Robert Browning," *PMLA*, XXXVII (1922), 574.

2 *Ibid*., p.576.

3 "Imagery", *Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. Alex Preminger (Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1965), p.369.

4 *The Latin Love Elegy* (London, Methuen, 1959), p.155.

5 *Ibid*., p.156.

6 D. F. Bauer, "The Function of Pygmalion in the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid," *TAPA*, XCIII (1962), 2.

7 *Ibid*., p.9.

8 O. J. Todd, "Sense and Sound in Classical Poetry," *CQ*, XXVI (1942), 30-31.

9 "Onomatopoeia and the Sceptics," *CQ* XXVI (1942), 124.

10 *Ibid*., p.129.

11 *Ovid Recalled* (Cambridge, University Press, 1955), p.237.

12 Todd, p.39.

13 *CQ*, XXVI (1942), 129.

14 *Ibid*., p.128.

15 *Ibid*., p.124.

CHAPTER VII

THE POET IN EXILE

I propose to deal with the Tristia and the Epistulae ex Ponto, the works of Ovid's exile, separately. Because the two books are for the most part actual letters to his friends and family in Rome there is bound to be, and is, a great deal of repetition both of style and thought. Many of the images are repetions or echoes of those of his earlier works, especially those found in the Ars Amatoria; his usual theme in these letters is his unhappiness, loneliness at times verging on despair, his hopes of being eventually recalled to Rome and his description of the topography and climate of Pontus. For this reason there is a general sameness in the imagery that he uses to describe the bleakness, the remoteness of the land, the rigours and monotony of his existence and the debilitation of mind and body. Unlike those in the letters of the Heroides, the images here have a definite utilitarian purpose. Ovid wants to make the hardships and sorrows that have overwhelmed him in that distant, unfamiliar fringe of the empire vivid and immediately perceptible to his readers in Rome; they are meant to create a favourable and sympathetic atmosphere for the reception of the message. For this reason there is tendency to

exaggerate and over-illustrate. An example of this is to be found in *Tristia* IV, v. The theme of this fifty-line elegy is that time does not alleviate his suffering and most of the poem is taken up with its elaboration: in time the bullock learns to bear the plow, the spirited horse becomes obedient to the reins; in time the anger of the Phoenician lions is assuaged, the elephant grows obedient to the commands of the master; time causes the grape to swell and makes the seed grow into white ears of grain; time thins the plough-share and wears away rigid flint and adamant. Time with its "silent foot" lessens other people's grief but not his own; his own hardship and sorrow have even increased with time. However, throughout these two poems there are many examples of remarkably fresh images and a skilful manipulation of metaphorical language. He speaks of himself as being "wounded by the blows of Fate", of his heart being overwhelmed by the "continuous hoof-beats of misfortune" (*serie calcata malorum*) and his mind beset by a "cloud of cares" (*Pont*. II, vii, 41; 45; i, 5). He refers to the series of events that have led to his banishment as a tempest (*procella*), to his present state as a "shipwreck", to himself as a "ship-wrecked man" and compares it unfavourably with the "calm waters" and "favouring breezes" that he once enjoyed (*Pont*. II, vii, 54; vi, 11; ii, 126; 30; iii, 26). When describing his physical appearance he is vivid and precise: his face is "dry with stiffened grief" (*sicca concreto dolore*) - a bold expression, unparalleled in Latin literature; the colour of his skin is like that of fresh wax, his temples are

beginning to take on the hue of swans' feathers and white old age is bleaching his black hair (Pont. II, xi, 10; I, x, 28; Tr. IV, vii, 1). His fondness for his home and city is shown by the way he refers to them, turning them almost into personifications: he speaks of the urbis facies and the domus vultus. In one letter he writes of his grief as it it were some wasting (praeconsumptum) disease, as if he were infected by a cancerous growth that is slowly gnawing at his vitals. He refers to the "biting pangs of exile" (exilii morsus, Pont. I, iii, 43) and the "gnawing of cares" (curarum morsus):

> estur ut occulta vitiata teredine navis,
> aequorei scopulos ut cavat unda salis,
> roditur ut scabra positum robigine ferrum
> conditus ut tineae carpitur ore liber,
> sic mea perpetuos curarum pectora morsus ...
>
> as a ship is eaten away and marred by the hidden worm,
> as the waves of the salty ocean hollows out cliffs,
> as stored iron is eaten away by the destroying rust,
> as the book when laid away is gnawed by the worm's
> teeth, so my heart feels the perpetual biting sorrow ...
> (Pont. I, i, 69-73)

This marshalling of these agents of attrition is reminiscent of Horace's cohors febrium;[1] all these destructive elements - salt, rust, worms - are lumped together through alliteration: estur, roditur, carpitur, scopulos ... scabros, roditur ... robigine. No doubt Hermann Fränkel had at least some of these examples in mind when commenting on the language of the Tristia, he wrote of Ovid's gift for "recasting commonplace patterns so as to give them a specific and original complexion".[2]

Throughout the _Tristia_ and the _Epistulae ex Ponto_ there is a constant juxtaposition of past and present; the poet's fame and popularity at Rome and his sudden eclipse at Tomis; the brilliance, the excitement of his life in Italy and the wretchedness and monotony of his existence among the Geti. In _Tristia_ III, xii he pictures in his mind's eye the awakening of spring in Italy, using the harshness of the Getic spring as the backdrop. In Italy the boys and girls are now merrily plucking violets. The meadows bloom with flowers of countless colours, the chattering birds are warbling a song of spring, the swallows are beginning to build their nests and the grain-shoots are unfolding their tips. How different is the Getic spring. In this desolate land there are no budding vines; there are even no trees. In Rome there is the bustle of the forun, the excitement of games and festivals; young men are excercising with weapons and horses; all is action and gaiety. But here in Pontus there are few signs of spring - only the slowly thawing snow and ice. The repetition of _nunc_ ("now /in Italy/") and the mournful _procul_ ... _abest_, _procul_ ... _abest_ add to the mood of pathos.

Ovid dwells incessantly on the extreme coldness of the region, a chill that permeates all the seasons of the year. The appearance of the Pontic landscape is that of bleak desolation - a veritable wasteland. Whenever he speaks of autumn or winter thoughts of death are never far from his mind:

adde loci faciem nec fronde nec arbore tecti,
   et quod iners hiemi continuatur hiems.
hic me pugnantem cum frigore cumque sagittis
   cumque meo fato quarta fatigat hiems.
fine carent lacrimae, nisi cum stupor obstitit illis:
   et similis morti pectora torpor habet.
felicem Nioben, quamvis tot funera vidit,
   quae posuit sensum saxea facta malis!

Add to these the appearance of the landscape covered by neither bough or tree, and that lifeless winter runs without break into winter. Here I am struggling with cold, with arrows and with my fate and the fourth winter is tormenting me. My tears are endless except when a stupor, like that of death, takes hold of my heart. Happy Niobe, for although she saw so many deaths she lost her sense of feeling when turned to stone by her misfortunes.

(*Pont*. I, ii, 25-32)

Here many of the themes that run throughout his letters are succinctly expressed. The interminable length of the winters is brought out in the word *continuatur* and the monotony and dreariness in the repetition of *cum* and *hiems*. There is an incessant emphasis on coldness and inactivity: *hiems*, *frigor*, *stupor* ("numbness") and *torpor*, the last one being identified with the coldness of death. The word *iners* which I have translated as "lifeless" takes on additional meaning when we recall that in one of his Pontic letters he stated that "I regard idleness (*tempus iners*) as death" (I, v, 44). In *Tristia* III, viii there is a similar association; in this elegy seasonal change serves as an indicator of the passing years, the approach of old age and death. He compares his colour and physical weakness to that of the "hue of the leaves of autumn when the first chill has touched and the coming winter has hurt" (29-30). The picture of autumn with its suggestions of decay and death parallels the description of the poet in the autumn of his years,

his health failing, awaiting the "first chill" of winter (death is mentioned in line 39).

On the other hand, spring and the rebirth of nature reminds him of his former happiness in Italy. Reflecting on his previous good fortunes he writes

> nos quoque floruimus, sed flos erat ille caducus.
>
> I also thrived but the flower (of my life) was short-lived.
> (<u>Tr</u>. V, viii, 19)

At this point may be mentioned Ovid's use of mythology in these epistles. As was stated earlier,[3] in his early works he often used myth as a sort of a "purple patch" or embellishment, generally having little intrinsic relation to the theme. In the <u>Tristia</u> a marked development is noticeable. Here the figures from mythology are deliberately chosen to enhance and enrich the meaning and act as a parallel (often very subtle) to his own life. For example, in the passage quoted above (<u>Pont</u>. I, ii), the apostrophe to Niobe has a deeper significance than the obvious one of the poet wishing to be metamorphosed into a stone in order to wipe out his remembrance of former happiness, the recollection of which renders his present misfortunes unendurable. The reader who is familiar with the myth will not fail to perceive the many parallels between this hackneyed allusion and the poet's life. Like Ovid, Niobe stood in close connection with the "higher powers" and fell into misfortune through her own fault. Ironically, although changed into a stone overlooking the desolate hills of Lydia even in this form she cannot forget her sorrow, and endless tears run down her cheeks.

In *Tristia* III, viii there is a similar transformation and transcendence of some rather prosaic mythological material. There is deeper level of meaning and association than a superficial reading would indicate. A closer examination will uncover some of the subtle parallels with the poet's own life.

In the opening lines Ovid wishes that he were standing in Triptolemus' chariot or that he might hold the reins of Medea's dragons, the dragons that pulled her chariot when she escaped from Corinth, or that he might have the wings of Perseus or Daedalus. This in essence is the extent of the myth presented here; of course the obvious meaning of these allusions lies in the poet's wish to fly away from his place of exile, but outside of that no further elaboration or explanation is presented. However, going deeper into the myth, it will be recalled that Triptolemus was sent by Ceres to spread the cultivation of grain and having travelled around the world finally came to Scythia (the name by which Ovid frequently refers to the Pontus region). There king Lyncus attempted to kill him but Triptolemus managed to escape in a winged chariot. The poet juxtaposes romantic fable and stark reality, which gives greater point to the difference between these legendary figures and the facts of his own life. Medea, Daedalus and Perseus were all exiles who for different reasons were compelled to flee their homeland and thus share the same fate as Ovid; unlike Ovid they had wings to fly away from their place of banishment. As A. G. Lee states, the opening line plunges the reader into a dream-world, and

"this dreamlike opening seem to make Ovid's wife, home and friends ... as much a part of the unreal world as Triptolemus, Medea, and the others; touches them with the distant magic of fable, and thereby emphasizes the poet's sense of remoteness from all that he held most dear".[4]

It is difficult to present an over-all assessment of Ovid's imagery. Ovid did not use imagery thematically; if the reader is looking for an imagistic "pattern", he will be disappointed, for there are no recurring threads of images running throughout Ovid's works which he can pick up and follow through the maze of episodes and themes. Ovid's images are as varied as his subject matter. Although some of them are drawn from literary tradition, some borrowed from the poet's immediate predecessors, yet whenever he does borrow, he invariably stamps them with the unmistakable imprint of his genius. His use of images is determined by their function; their purpose is to emphasize, to clarify, to persuade and to stir the emotions - and this function they fulfil admirably. Ovid's handling of metaphor and simile is exceeded only by Vergil's and his ability to delineate vivid scenes through them is truly remarkable.

Ovid's poetic career spans a period of some forty years and his total output numbers almost 34,000 lines - more than the combined production of Vergil, Horace and Catullus and more than the whole body of existing Old English poetry. For this reason there is bound to be much repetition both of style and content. Critics have accused him of diffuseness, castigated

him for his lack of sincerity and profundity, and excoriated him for putting too much "rhetoric" into his poetry. Some of these criticisms are justified; however, no reader who takes the trouble to read through the *Metamorphoses* and the *Amores* can help but be impressed by the charm, and by the polished elegance of the verses. As E. G. Wilkins has stated, "the range of Ovid's imagination was as wide as his reading; whatever his poetry as a whole may lack in depth of thought, and often in genuine feeling, men will ever find an unfailing charm in its imagery, as in its grace of style."[5]

1 *Carmen* I, iii, 31.

2 *Ovid: A Poet Between Two Worlds* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1945), p.119.

3 Chapter II.

4 A. G. Lee, "An Appreciation of *Tristia* III. 8," *G & R*, XVIII (1949), 114.

5 E. G. Wilkins, "A Classification of the Similes of Ovid," *CW*, XXV (1932), 74.

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