ON THE NUMBER OF BOOKS IN OVID'S *METAMORPHOSES*: A POSTSCRIPT

I have no doubt that Elena Merli is right to argue that Ovid's choice of a fifteen-book structure for the *Metamorphoses* was intended to signal, to those equipped to take the hint, 'its proper distance from the traditional epic which is instead characterized by a number corresponding to a multiple of six' (*CQ* 54 [2004], 306). But that, I suggest, is only half the story. The *Metamorphoses* forms half of a literary diptych, as Philip Hardie has pointed out: 'taken together the *Fasti* and the *Metamorphoses* represent Ovid's typically indirect answer to the challenge of Virgil's epic, on the other hand a Callimachean elegy on the central subject of the *Aeneid* and on the other a hexameter epic on themes for the most part not Roman' (*MD* 26 [1991], 47). To that elegiac epic in fifteen books an epicizing elegy in twelve (as planned) is clearly complementary in both scale and structure. The number of books in the *Fasti* is dictated by the calendrical scheme: were scheme and subject suggested to Ovid by the fact that there were twelve months in the Roman year and twelve books in the *Aeneid*? As to that, one can only speculate; it was at least a happy accident, enabling a poet writing for readers alert to generic nuance to invest his monumental combined *chef d'oeuvre* in a form which signalled to the *doctus lector* its highly original—I am tempted to say subversive—character.

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AENEID 1.647–55

G. N. Knauer's great *Die Aeneis und Homer*[1] has such vast sweep and profound depth, detecting and elucidating not merely the obvious Homeric ties to the *Aeneid* but also the most subtle instances of influence, that one is almost incredulous if one thinks that he has found an example of Homeric influence on the *Aeneid* that has eluded Knauer (and, it goes without saying, all the commentators). With due incredulity, I note the following.

Aeneas dispatches Achates to bring gifts for Queen Dido. Servius already commented on the peculiar nature of the gifts: *quamuis apta nupturae reginae sint munera, tamen futurorum malorum continere omen uidentur* (1.653); *uide iam omen infelicitatis futurae, cum adulterae Dido suscipit munera.* Modern commentators follow suit, e.g. Conway, 'The origin of these gifts . . . of course carried an evil omen (especially those from Helen's wardrobe)' (at 1.650),[2] and Austin, 'The sinister character of the gift is further underlined in *inconcessos hymenaeos*' (at 1.650); 'Aeneas' gifts to Dido could scarcely have been charged with more ominous associations' (at 653).[3] Let us look at the first set of gifts: *pallam signis auroque rigentem/et circumtextum croceo uelamen acantho,/ornatus Argiuae Helenae, quos illa Mycenis,/Pergama cum peteret inconcessosque hymenaeos,/extulerat*. What do we have here? A gift of garments for a woman, at some level conceived of as wedding presents from groom to bride (as Servius observed), and deriving from none other than the paradigmatic adulteress herself, Helen. This already occurs in the *Odyssey* (15.104ff.). When Telemachus visits Menelaus in Sparta, Helen selects a lovely garment of her own

[1] Göttingen, 1964.
[2] R. S. Conway, *P. Vergili Maronis Aeneidos Liber Primus* (Cambridge, 1935), 112.
[3] R. G. Austin, *P. Vergili Maronis Aeneidos Liber Primus* (Oxford, 1971), 198.

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making, presents it to Telemachus and instructs him to give it to his bride on his wedding day. Whether Homer intended such a gift from Helen to carry ominous implications is impossible to tell,[4] but it seems safe to say that Virgil read his *Odyssey* in just this way and thus transferred the theme to the ill-fated story of Dido and Aeneas.[5]

OVID *METAMORPHOSES* 15.88–90

> Heu quantum scelus est in uiscera uiscera condi,
> Congestoque auidum pinguescere corpore corpus
> Alteriusque animantem animantis uiuere leto.

That there are Lucretian influences in Ovid's Pythagoras-episode has long been noticed.[6] Some have well observed that, in spite of the Lucretian influence, the tenor of the passage is decidedly anti-Lucretian.[7] Ovid is Lucretian and anti-Lucretian at one and the same time. This is most marked in the culmination of Pythagoras' speech, his declaration of the immortality of the soul (158–9).[8] But for the above lines (88–90), commentators remark the Lucretian side (in the style and language), but fail to see the anti-Lucretian side (in the substance). The Lucretian colour is used to condemn a Lucretian position. There is polemic in the argument that lends irony to the tone. In Lucretius' view of the workings of the universe death and life are cyclical and *alteriusque animantem animantis uiuere leto* is the working principle of the universe. *Viscera will* ultimately be transmuted into *uiscera*, *corpus will* grow fat *corpore*, as part of the natural and necessary process (see e.g. 2.72–9, 3.964–70, 5.828–36). Indeed, *alteriusque animantem animantis uiuere leto* is a rephrasing of *DRN* 1.263–4, *nec ullam/rem gigni patitur nisi morte adiuta aliena*.

FIERE

That the form *fiere* was in use as the infinitive of *fio* is well known.[9] But there is a second form *fiere* that is in use in later Latin, e.g. at Aug. *Ep*. 153.4.11, *quanto sis celsior potestate, tanto humilior fiere pietate*. It is, clearly, used as the imperative. But nowhere in the pertinent reference works does it appear to be noted and

[4] I do not know of any commentator, ancient or modern, who reads the Homeric passage as ironic, but Jasper Griffin stops just short of this, 'She [Helen] is aware that the dress will have special value because of its maker . . . Any bride will be flattered to wear what the legendary Helen made. And Helen is a legendary figure not for her great achievements, not even for her womanly virtue, like Penelope, but for her guilt and suffering' (*Homer on Life and Death* [Oxford, 1980], 97–8).

[5] Perhaps Virgil knew the story of the gruesome outcome of Telemachus' marriage to Circe (Lycophron *Alex*. 808–10).

[6] Indeed, Pythagoras is presented as an *alter Epicurus*. Thus, at 62–72 Pythagoras is represented as seeing remote realities not with his eyes but with his mind (cf. *DRN* 1. 72–4) and as teaching mankind the true nature of the world (cf. *DRN* 1.75–7); at 144–52, Pythagoras journeys high above the earth and relieves humankind of their irrational fears (cf. *DRN* 1.72–9).

[7] See e.g. L. P. Wilkinson, *Ovid Recalled* (Cambridge, 1955), 215, 217–18; K. S. Myers, *Ovid's Causes* (Ann Arbor, 1994), 137–42, 158; also, O. S. Due, *Changing Forms* (Copenhagen, 1974), 29-31.

[8] See Myers (ibid.), 144. With reference to these verses, Due remarks (ibid.), 31, 'The gospel of Pythagoras is exactly the opposite as that of Lucretius'. Contrast *Met*. 15.252–7, which is Lucretian both in language and substance.

[9] See e.g. Skutsch *ad* Ennius *Ann*. 11 (p. 165).

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documented that *fiere* is also in use as the second-person singular future.[10] Only do Neue–Wagener come close (3.269). They observe that in Augustine's quotation of *Gen*. 27:29 at *Ciu. Dei* 16.37, *et fiere dominus*, *fiere* might be taken as the future, but they decide, sensibly and correctly, to take it as the imperative.[11]

But there is at least one virtually certain instance of *fiere* as the second-person future. In the fourth-century work attributed to Philo and known as the *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, the author writes, *facies tibi idola et erunt tibi in deos et tu fiere eis sacerdos* (44.2). The fact that *fiere* is clearly parallel to *erunt* makes it highly likely that *fiere* is a future. In addition, there is a parallel textual tradition that here reads, instead of *fiere*, *eris*,[12] thus making it virtually certain that *fiere* here is the future.[13]

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JULIAN, THE HIEROPHANT OF ELEUSIS, AND THE ABOLITION OF CONSTANTIUS' TYRANNY

In his *Lives of the Philosophers and the Sophists*, Eunapius mentions the esteem in which the last Eumolpid hierophant of Eleusis was held by the future Caesar Julian, who in the final years of his private life was developing a deep interest in the gods and rituals of antiquity. Eunapius goes on to recount how Julian, after pacifying Gaul, 'summoned the hierophant from Greece and having with his aid performed certain rites known to them alone, he mustered up courage to abolish the tyranny of Constantius. His accomplices were Oribasius of Pergamon and a certain Euhemerus, a native of Libya . . . But all this has been described in fuller detail in my work on Julian' (476)—a reference to Eunapius' lost *History*. Later, in the section devoted to Oribasius, Eunapius refers again to his *History*, where he had apparently described how Oribasius' great virtues had actually made Julian emperor (498). We will come back to this ambiguous statement at the end of our discussion.[1]

As far as I am aware, all historians who have discussed these passages have linked them to the acclamation of Julian as Augustus by his troops in Paris in the spring of 360.[2] We have a number of more or less detailed accounts of that event, by Julian

[10] See e.g. *TLL* s.v. *facio*, col. 85 (with several examples in Augustine and Jerome); A. Blaise, *Dictionnaire Latin-Francais des Auteurs Chrétiens* (Paris, 1954), 354, s.v. *fio*, 'impér. *fiere*', with examples from Augustine.

[11] In so doing, they follow H. Rönsch, *Itala und Vulgata* (repr. Munich, 1965), 294.

[12] See D. J. Harrington's *apparatus criticus* ad loc., *Pseudo-Philon, Les Antiquités Bibliques* 1 (Paris, 1976).

[13] Very possibly, they are both translations of γενήσῃ.

[1] Translated by W. C. Wright, *Philostratus and Eunapius: The Lives of the Sophists* (Cambridge, MA and London, 1921), 438–41, 532–3. The fragments of Eunapius' *History* are gathered and translated in R. C. Blockley, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire: Eunapius, Olympiodorus, Priscus and Malchus* (Liverpool, 1981–3, 2 vols), 32–3 (fr. 21.1–2).

[2] For example, in B. Baldwin, 'The Career of Oribasius', *Acta Classica* 18 (1975), 85–97 at 89–93; G. W. Bowersock, *Julian the Apostate* (London, 1978), 50–1; J. F. Drinkwater, 'The "pagan underground", Constantius II's "secret service", and the survival, and the usurpation of Julian the Apostate', *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History* 3 (1983), 348–87 at 370ff., 382–3, citing other previous discussions; J. Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus* (London, 1989), 93, 115; and P. Athanassiadi, *Julian: An Intellectual Biography* (London and New York, 1992), 185–6.

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