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Silver Threads Among the Gold: A Problem in the Text of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*

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In memoriam R. A. B. Mynors

In the opening scene of Book 5 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the wedding of Perseus and Andromeda is thrown into bloody confusion by the murderous attack of the bride's disappointed suitor Phineus. A vignette of the ensuing carnage describes the end of the upright old Emathion at the hands of Chromis:

> huic Chromis amplexo tremulis altaria palmis
> decutit ense caput, quod protinus incidit arae
> atque ibi semianimi uerba exsecrantia lingua   105
> edidit et medios animam exspirauit in ignes.

So the text runs in the vast majority of manuscripts. Some witnesses, however, including a later hand in the primary manuscript U, read in line 104 *demetit* for *decutit*, and this variant was adopted in the text of the great seventeenth-century editor of Ovid, Nicolaus Heinsius. Judging by his note on the passage, Heinsius opted for *demetit* primarily because *demetere* is frequently used in poetic descriptions of wounding, especially decapitation: Heinsius' collection of parallels, the earliest of which comes from Seneca's *Agamemnon* (987), included seven instances from Flavian epic alone.[1]   On the other hand, *decutere* in this sense is quite rare: the only close parallel comes from Livy's famous story of Lucius Tarquinius knocking off the heads of the tallest poppies in his garden as a message to his son to deal likewise with the chief men of Gabii: *ibi inambulans tacitus summa papauerum capita dicitur baculo decussisse* (1. 54. 6, echoed by Ovid in *F.* 2. 705 ff.

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[1] The simple verb *metere* is also so used, starting with single examples in Virgil (*Aen.* 10. 502) and Horace (*C.* 4. 14. 31) and continuing from Germanicus to Claudian; it is a particular favorite of Silius, who has six times. Ovid, however, employs *metere* only in its agricultural sense and has no certain instance of *demetere*. (Cf. *TLL* 8. 890. 35 ff.) When writing my note on *Agam.* 987 I accepted Heinsius' view of *Met.* 5. 104 and therefore cited the line as a precedent for Seneca's use of *demetere*.

illic Tarquinius . . . uirga lilia summa metit. / nuntius ut rediit decussaque lilia dixit, / filius 'agnosco iussa parentis' ait and Val. Max. 7. 4. 2 *maxima et altissima papauerum capita baculo decussit*).

The situation I have outlined occurs many times in the text of the *Metamorphoses*. The older manuscripts agree on a reading that is in itself unobjectionable, but one or more of the *recentiores*—which in this tradition means manuscripts of the twelfth century or later—offers a variant that is arguably superior on grounds of style: more elegant, more pointed, or more readily paralleled in the works of other Latin poets. Are these variants to be accepted as authentic readings that have dropped out of the earliest surviving stratum of transmission, or should they be treated as the refined interpolations of erudite ancient or medieval readers?[2]

Posed in such broad terms, the question is unanswerable. The *recentiores* of the *Metamorphoses* contain many readings that have been accepted by virtually all editors and commentators over many generations; in a discipline lacking any means of objective verification, this is as close as we can come to being confident that these readings are authentic.   As examples I would mention, taking at random the first half of Book 7, 115 *Minyae; subit ille* for *subito Minyae ille*, 234 *et iam nona dies* for *nona dies etiam*, 268 *luna pernocte* for *luna de nocte* (with traces of the genuine text preserved in M in the form *luna pernota*), 343 *cubito* for *subito*. (Some of these readings may be due to scribal conjecture, but this explanation cannot account for all good readings preserved in the *recentiores*.) On the other hand, the later MSS also teem with variants that have no chance of being correct and that are in all likelihood readers' interpolations: for example, drawing on just a small part of the same book, 16 *furoris* for *timoris*, 18 *posses . . . esses* for *possem . . . essem*, 22 *taedas* for *thalamos*, 28 *forma* for *ore*, 38 *paterna* for *parentis*, 47 *stulta* for *tuta*, 69 *uitiosaque* for *speciosaque*, 76 *fractus* for *fortis*, 78 *expalluit* for *excanduit*, 79 *resumere* for *resurgere*, 88 *detorquet* for *declinat*.[3]

The claims of any particular minority reading can thus only be properly assessed on an *ad hoc* basis. It is nevertheless useful to note recurring features of even those readings that are almost certainly not genuine, since we may thereby come to understand something of the mental habits that lie behind them; such an awareness can only improve—and on occasion may even determine—a critic's evaluation of specific textual problems. In the passage with which I began, for example, I might argue on general grounds that *decutit* should be preferred to *demetit* precisely because the latter is more widely used in such contexts and might therefore suggest itself to a cultured

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[2] The problem is not limited to the *Metamorphoses* or even to Latin poetry: Nigel Wilson has recently addressed a similar issue in the text of Sophocles in a paper from which I have greatly profited, "Variant Readings with Poor Support in the Manuscript Tradition," *Revue d'Histoire des Textes* 17 (1987) 1–13.

[3] I owe to R. A. B. Mynors the useful and evocative description of such readings as SPIV: i. e., spontaneously produced insignificant variants.

reader, whereas the substitution of the uncommon *decutit* for an original *demetit* is harder to explain.[4] (The argument is a specific form of the editorial maxim *utrum in alterum abiturum erat*?, i. e., which of two transmitted variants is more likely to have generated the other?) But I shall reach this conclusion more confidently if I know that the kind of alteration being postulated can be plausibly documented elsewhere in the same transmission.

In the following pages I shall discuss a number of passages in the *Metamorphoses* where I believe that a minority variant shows the influence of post-Ovidian diction or phraseology; in most cases the wording in question can be closely paralleled in the poets of the Neronian and Flavian periods. My provisional conclusion is that these variants illustrate a kind of learned interpolation practiced by readers who viewed Ovid with sensibilities shaped by their knowledge of subsequent Latin poetry. Interpolations of this sort are by no means limited to places where the transmitted reading is difficult or obscure; indeed they most often appear to be embellishments or "improvements" of the original, a form of *aemulatio* that expresses itself in stylistic renovation.[5]

Distinguishing authentic Ovidian matter from "Silver" interpolation is a delicate enterprise. For one thing, Ovid was unquestionably a major influence in the development of later poetic style: as Franz Bömer well put it, "Ovid spricht zu seiner Zeit schon die Sprache, die später modern wird."[6] For another, any attempt to plot the history of a particular word or combination risks being falsified by the loss of many texts from the relevant period. I hope that by examining several unrelated passages which admit a similar explanation 1 can at least establish the existence of the phenomenon I have described.

My second purpose is to further our understanding of the work of Ovid's greatest editor. Nicolaus Heinsius was a rarity among textual scholars, at once a devoted student of manuscripts and a conjectural critic of genius. His astute assessment of the manuscript evidence for the *Metamorphoses*—much of it gathered by himself—showed him that in dealing with this text an editor must proceed eclectically, alert to recognize and accept good readings

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[4] That these verbs were related in *Ovid's* mind is suggested by the *Fasti* passage cited above (2. 705 ff.), in which Tarquinius' action is described first with *metere* (*uirga lilia summa metit* 706) and then with *decutere* (*decussa . . . lilia* 707).

[5] Wilson (above, n. 2, esp. pp. 8–9) rightly stresses the influence exerted on Byzantine readers by rhetorical education, in particular by the practice of composing in the manner of a given author or period. I have offered a similar explanation for many of the interpolated verses found in the texts of classical Latin poetry, cf. "Toward a Typology of Interpolation in Latin Poetry," *TAPA* 117 (1987) 281–98; "The Reader as Author: Collaborative Interpolation in Latin Poetry," in J. N. Grant, ed. *Editing Greek and Latin Texts* (New York 1989) 121–61.

[6] Note on *Met.* 8. 254. E. J. Kenney has written in a similar vein that "[Ovid's] contribution to the subsequent development of Latin poetry may be described as the perfection of a poetic *koine*, a stylistic instrument which was freely manageable by writers of lesser genius." ("The Style of the 'Metamorphoses,'" in J. W. Binns, ed. *Ovid* [London 1973] 119).

wherever in the transmission they may appear. Heinsius' work on the text
of Ovid is of such quality and fundamental importance that it still demands
careful study by editors and critics; in the words of A. S. Hollis, "time and
time again it is a preference or conjecture of Heinsius which must be
considered."[7] My concern here is with Heinsius' preferences, and specifically
with his attraction to just those readings that I would suggest betray the
stamp of post-Ovidian poetry; in the majority of cases to be discussed the
reading in question was either commended or printed by Heinsius. If I am
right in seeing these variants as elegant interpolations, Heinsius' consistent
support for them reveals something about his sense of Ovidian style. One
might describe it as another facet of his eclectic approach: just as he was
prepared to discover true readings even in isolated late witnesses, so too did
he turn as readily to Silius or Ausonius as to Ovid himself for evidence to
guide his choices. Going a step further one could suggest that Heinsius,
like the learned readers responsible for the readings in question, viewed Ovid
through stylistic lenses shaped by a deep familiarity with poetry from
Statius to Claudian.[8] Heinsius' propensity to refined but superfluous
conjecture has often been observed; it is not surprising that a similar
fondness for elegance and point influenced his evaluation of manuscript
variants.[9] If at times the effect of Heinsius' conjectures is to render Ovid
even more perfectly "Ovidian," this study will suggest that his choice of
variants occasionally makes him even more of a precursor of Statius than he
actually was.[10]

Another of Perseus' unfortunate opponents, the Indian youth Athis, is
introduced by a brief glance at his origins:

> Erat Indus Athis, quem flumine Gange
> edita Limnaee uitreis peperisse sub undis
> crediderat.
>
> (5. 46–48)

For *undis* some of the *recentiores* (including the still unidentified
fragmentum Zulichemianum) read *antris*, a reading printed by Heinsius.
Vitrea antra would be thoroughly at home in Flavian and later poetry: the
phrase occurs in Silius 8. 191, Stat. *S*. 3. 2. 16, and Claud. *Fesc*. 2. 34 f.,
in slightly varied form (*uitreis e sedibus antri*) in Sil. 7. 413, and for *uitreus*

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[7] Commentary on *Metamorphoses* VIII (Oxford 1970) xxviii.

[8] Such a perspective is now relatively uncommon, since even among classical scholars most
Latin poetry after Ovid is usually considered secondary or marginal; this was not the case,
however, at many times between the fourth and the eighteenth centuries.

[9] "He had a weakness for those 'elegant' conjectures which seem aimed at correcting the
author rather than his copyists." (E. J. Kenney, *The Classical Text: Aspects of Editing in the
Age of the Printed Book* [Berkeley 1974] 58).

[10] I hope it will be obvious that my intent is in no way to question Heinsius' stature or to
carp at his judgments; it is only because his views deservedly remain so central that it is worth
analyzing them in such detail.

freely applied to all aspects of marine deities cf. Stat. *Th.* 9. 352 *uitrea de ualle*, S. 1. 5. 15 f. *ite deae uirides liquidosque aduertite uultus / et uitreum teneris crinem redimite corymbis*, Claud. *Rapt.* 2. 53 f. *soror uitrei libamina potat / uberis*. Ovid provides no secure instance of *uitreus* applied in this mannered way—in *Am.* 1. 6. 55 and *Her.* 10. 7 it describes dew and has the meaning "clear, translucent"—but there is Augustan precedent for the freer use in Virg. *G.* 4. 350 f. *uitreisque sedilibus omnes / obstipuere* and probably also in Hor. *C.* 1. 17. 20 *uitreae . . . Circes*.[11]

The criterion of Ovidian usage may favor *undis*, but it can hardly be decisive in the case of a relatively rare word. Some further light is cast on the question by looking at Ovid's treatment of *antra*: these serve a variety of functions—dwellings, places of confinement, *loci amoeni*, and safe retreats—but Ovid is meticulous in specifying the role played by any individual *antrum* in his text. In relation to childbirth, *antra* elsewhere provide a secure place for the infant to be raised after birth: cf. 2. 629 f. *natum flammis uteroque parentis / eripuit geminique tulit Chironis in antrum*, 3. 313 ff. *furtim illum primis Ino matertera cunis / educat; inde datum nymphae Nyseides antris / occuluere suis*, 4. 288 f. *Mercurio puerum diua Cythereide natum / Naides Idaeis enutriuere sub antris*. Before inferring that *uitreis peperisse sub antris* is questionable, however, we must consider a similar and also textually disputed passage, 5. 539 ff., relating the birth of Ascalaphus: *quem quondam dicitur Orphne, / inter Auernales haud ignotissima nymphas, / ex Acheronte suo siluis peperisse sub atris*. For *siluis . . . sub atris* several twelfth-century MSS read *furuis . . . sub antris*, a variant found by correction in U and perhaps originally in E (Palatinus 1669; the leaf is mutilated and only *antris* remains). If *furuis . . . sub antris* is accepted here, it and *uitreis . . . sub antris* in 5. 48 would lend each other mutual support. I think it more likely, however, that *furuis . . . sub antris* is another instance of the sort of refined interpolation we are considering. It may or may not be significant that *furuus* is nowhere securely attested in Ovid;[12] a stronger objection is that *antra* used to denote the Underworld—a sense which the combination with *furuus* makes virtually certain—is not attested before Seneca and Lucan. (Before this the only *antrum* mentioned in descriptions of the Underworld is Cerberus' lair, cf. Virg. *Aen.* 6. 400, 418, 8. 297, Prop. 3. 5. 43; for the looser application cf. Sen. *Pha.* 928 *ad antra Stygia descendens*, Luc. 6. 712 ff. *in Tartareo latitantem . . . antro . . . animam*, Stat. *S.* 5. 1. 255 *egressas . . . sacris ueteres heroidas antris*, Claud. *Cons. Stil.* 2. 110 *numina monstriferis quae Tartarus edidit antris*, Prud. *Symm.* 1. 356 *Eumenidum domina Stygio caput exerit antro*, etc.)

[11] Nisbet–Hubbard *ad loc.* conclude (though with reservations) that *uitrea* evokes Circe's marine associations.

[12] *Furuus* is, however, a variant worth considering only five lines later at 5. 546, describing Ascalaphus' transformation into a *bubo*: *ille sibi ablatus fuluis* [v.l. *furuis*] *amicitur in* [ab?] *alis*. For *furuis . . . alis* compare Tib. 2. 1. 89 f. *furuis circumdatus alis / Somnus*, where *furuis* has been trivialized to *fuluis* in the earliest witnesses.

I conclude that both *uitreis . . . antris* in 5. 48 and *furuis . . . antris* in 5. 541 are pieces of colorful rewriting that show the influence of post-Ovidian diction.[13]

Niobe bereft of all her children hardens into stone:

> ipsa quoque interius cum duro lingua palato
> congelat, et uenae desistunt posse moueri.
>
> (6. 306 f.)

"desistunt] dediscunt Langermanni excerpta" (Burman). Ovid has six certain instances of *dediscere*; all refer to acquired skills where the notion of "unlearning" has literal meaning, viz., speech (*uerba mihi desunt dedidicique loqui*, *Tr.* 3. 14 (15). 46, similarly 5. 5 (6). 6, 12 (13). 57) and love, which in his guise as *praeceptor amoris* Ovid treats as a technique akin to navigation or fishing (*R.A.* 503 *intrat amor mentes usu, dediscitur usu*, similarly 211, 297). Burman noted that in *R.A.* 211 and 297 some late manuscripts replaced forms of *dediscere* with their counterparts from *desistere*; he labelled those variants as probable glosses and suggested that the same might be true of *dediscunt* for *desistunt* here. It seems more probable, though, that the readers who introduced the colorful *dediscunt* were attempting to enliven Ovid's plain phrasing, and that the combination *dediscunt posse moueri*, though apparently too artificial for Ovid,would not have seemed so to someone familiar with the many pointed uses of *dediscere* in writers of the later first century: cf. Curt. 3. 2. 18 *tu quidem . . . documentum eris posteris homines, cum se permisere fortunae, etiam naturam dediscere*, Sen. *Tro.* 884 *dedisce captam*, Luc. 1. 131 (*Pompeius*) *dedidicit iam pace ducem*, Stat. *S.* 2. 5. 2, Ps-Quint. *Decl.* 6. 17, Mart. 2. 75. 3.

Niobe's downfall prompts the Thebans to recall other opponents of the gods who had been harshly punished:

> utque fit, a facto propiore priora renarrant.
>
> (6. 316)

For *renarrant* several later MSS read *retractant*, which Burman found attractive "nam non tantum sermonibus, sed et animo repetisse significat." This case is not precisely similar to the others discussed above, since *retractare* in the sense "call to mind, review in one's mind" has at least one good Ovidian parallel, cf. *Met.* 7. 714 *dum redeo mecumque deae memorata*

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[13] Börner on 5. 541 favors *furuis . . . sub antris* on the basis of *utrum in alterum?*: his argument is that *siluis . . . sub atris* could have arisen from a misreading of *antris* in abbreviated form, whereas an original *siluis . . . sub atris* cannot explain the origin of *furuis . . . sub antris*. As I have argued elsewhere with reference to larger interpolations (cf. n. 5 above), such judgments of relative probability are only persuasive if they reckon with the existence of stylistic "improvement" as a factor in generating variants.

retracto. (In *Met.* 4. 569 f. *dum prima retractant / fata domus releguntque suos sermone labores*, it is not clear whether *retractare* denotes a mental act prior to speech or is just a less specific equivalent of *sermone relegere*; *retractare* and *relegere* are similarly combined in Cic. *N.D.* 2. 72, cited below.) The passage merits inclusion, though, as another possible instance of a variant prompted by familiarity with later usage: *renarrare* is surprisingly rare (first in Virg. *Aen.* 3. 717, then *Met.* 5. 635 and the line now under consideration, afterwards to my knowledge only Stat. *Th.* 3. 400, 12. 390, Claud. *Get.* 621, Prud. *Hamart.* 855, *Perist.* 10. 612), while the relevant sense of *retractare* is found both before Ovid (cf. Cic. *N.D.* 2. 72 *qui omnia quae ad cultum deorum pertinerent diligenter retractarent et tamquam relegerent*) and at least sporadically in a wide range of later writers (cf., e.g., Curt. 10. 5. 20, Sen. *Breu. Vit.* 10. 3, *Epist.* 99. 19, Col. 1 *pr.* 13, Val. Fl. 7. 70, Sil. 3. 216, Stat. *Th.* 5. 626).[14]

Met. 3. 65 ff. appears to be a case in which Heinsius' knowledge of post-Ovidian style led him to invest a variant with more subtlety than it deserves. Cadmus' spear penetrates the dragon's back:

> at non duritia iaculum quoque uicit eadem,
> quod medio lentae spinae curuamine fixum
> constitit et totum descendit in ilia ferrum.

The variant *toto . . . ferro*, attributed by Constantius Fanensis to unnamed *bona exemplaria* and cited by Heinsius from U (a later hand) and the *codex Langermannianus*, was probably meant to smooth out the syntax by removing a change of subject (*iaculum . . . constitit, ferrum descendit*). The resulting phrase, however, happens to resemble a mannered idiom in which *descendere* is used of an attacker who "penetrates" an opponent's body and an ablative specifies the weapon: Flor. 3. 10 *Romani . . . in iugulos gladiis descendebant*, Claud. *Get.* 601 f. *altius haud umquam toto descendimus ense / in iugulum Scythiae*; it seems clear from Heinsius' note that these passages helped determine his preference for *toto . . . ferro*.

It is also evident from the passages Heinsius adduced to support *toto . . . ferro* that he was not distinguishing among several uses of *descendere* to mean "penetrate," with particular reference to wounds or other physical intrusions. Since Bömer does not get to grips with the question, and the material in *TLL* 5. 648. 15 ff. is incomplete and not fully sorted out, I append a brief further discussion. Behind all these uses may lie expressions

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[14] Pedantry might have supplied the immediate reason for "correcting" *renarrant*: Servius' note on *Aen.* 3. 717 (repeated on 4. 116 and 8. 189) shows that the force of *re-* in *renarrant* eluded commentators. Note, however, that *retractare* in another of its senses surfaces as a late variant at *Met.* 1. 746, where the no longer bovine Io cautiously resumes human speech: *timide uerba intermissa retemptat* (*retractat* "quidam codices" [Burman]); probably the work of a learned reader who recalled *Tr.* 5. 7. 63 *ipse loquor mecum desuetaque uerba retracto.* A fondness for choice, colorful language appears at work in both places.

of the type *uerba descendunt in aures, in pectus* etc., cf. Sall. *Jug.* 11. 7,
Hor. *Ars* 387, *OLD* s. v. 6b. The most straightforward use of *descendere* of
bodily penetration is also the earliest attested, of a weapon entering a body:
Livy 1. 41. 5 *ferrum haud alte in corpus descendisse* (similarly in our
passage of the *Metamorphoses*, Celsus 5. 26. 31 and 35 [a probe and a
splinter respectively], Lucan 1. 30, 6. 216, Silius 16. 543, ps-Quint. *Decl.*
10. 8). A closely related figurative use appears at the same time, in which
the subject of the verb is a disease or anxiety that "sinks into" a person's
mind or body: cf. Livy 3. 52. 3 *uideant curam in animos patrum
descensuram*, Virg. *Aen.* 5. 683 *toto descendit corpore pestis* (human
language applied to the burning Trojan ships). As the idiom evolves
further, a wound (*uel sim.*) is said to "descend" in the body: first in *Heroides*
16. 277 f. (possibly a post-Ovidian composition) *non mea sunt summa
leuiter districta sagitta / pectora; descendit uulnus ad ossa meum*, then
Celsus 5. 28. 13 (of an *ulcus*), Sen. *Cons. Helu.* 3. 1, Stat. *Th.* 12. 340.
The progression from wound to wound as subject was perhaps assisted by
the use of *uulnus* to denote the instrument that effects it; Statius plays on
the double meaning of *uulnus* in *Th.* 11. 53 *obliquo descendit ab aere
uulnus*. Finally the subject of *descendere* widens to take in the person who
inflicts the wound, in the passages of Florus and Claudian cited above.[15]

Cycnus, bosom friend of Phaethon, is transformed into a bird out of
grief for his loss:

> cum uox est tenuata uiro canaeque capillos
> dissimulant plumae collumque a pectore longe
> porrigitur digitosque ligat iunctura rubentes,
> penna latus uelat, tenet os sine acumine rostrum.
>   (2. 373–376)

In 376 for *uelat* one major manuscript (Paris 8001, P in Anderson's edition)
reads *uestit*, a variant supported by Heinsius on the basis of passages in the
Ciris (which Heinsius thought to be by Virgil) and Dracontius; one could
add that the metaphorical use of *uestire* to describe fleece or fur is already
found in Cicero (*N.D.* 2. 121 *aliae* [sc. *ferae*] *uillis uestitae*) and Virgil (*Ecl.*
4. 45 *sponte sua sandyx pascentis uestiet agnos*). On the other hand, Ovid's
only certain uses of the metaphor are in its agricultural sense, *F.* 1. 402
gramine uestitis accubuere toris, 4. 707 *incendit uestitos messibus agros* (cf.
Cic. *Arat.* 423 *Bacchica quam uiridi conuestit tegmine uitis*); at *Met.* 2. 582

[15] Burman had also cited ps-Quint. *Decl.* 8. 19 *accipit carnifex ille telum, non quo dextera
statim totum uulnus imprimeret, sed quod leuiter paulatimque descendens animam in confinio
mortis ac uitae librato dolore suspenderet*, and in his note *ad loc.* had defended *descendens* as
"propria in hac re uox" (with a reference to our passage of the *Metamorphoses*!); for *descendens*,
however, the two best manuscripts read *discindens*, which Hakanson has rightly accepted, cf.
Textkritische Studien zu den grösseren pseudoquintilianischen Deklamationen, Skrifter utgivna
av Kungl. Humanistika Vetenskapssamfundet i Lund 70 (Lund 1974) 77.

f. *reicere ex umeris uestem molibar; at illa / pluma erat* he may be flirting with while rejecting the combination *pluma uestit* found later in *Ciris* 503 *marmoreum uolucri* [or *uiridi*?] *uestiuit tegmine corpus*.[16] Furthermore, in the *Metamorphoses*, *uelare* seems virtually a *uox propria* in contexts where a human body is covered with feathers or other bestial equivalents, cf. 3. 197 *uelat maculoso uellere corpus*, 4. 45 *squamis uelantibus artus*, 7. 467 f. *mutata est in auem . . . nigris uelata monedula pennis*, 8. 252 *[illum] excepit Pallas auemque / reddidit et medio uelauit in aere pennis*, 10. 698 f. *modo leuia fuluae / colla iubae uelant*, 14. 97 f. *totaque uelatos flauenti corpora uillo / misit in has sedes*, 15. 356 f. *esse uiros fama est . . . qui soleant leuibus uelari corpora plumis*. If Ovid's emphasis in these passages is on the loss of human form, *uelare* would naturally be far more appropriate than *uestire*; such an emphasis is clearly present here, as is shown by the expressions *uox est tenuata uiro, capillos / dissimulant plumae*, and *collum . . . a pectore longe / porrigitur*. It seems likely, therefore, that *uestit* in 2. 376 is a learned interpolation, perhaps inspired by the Virgilian and pseudo-Virgilian passages cited above.[17]

    The next passage to be considered presents an even clearer link between a variant in Ovid and the text of a later writer. After the human race has been purged by the Flood, Neptune summons Triton to calm the swollen seas:

> caeruleum Tritona uocat conchaeque sonanti
> inspirare iubet fluctusque et flumina signo
> iam reuocare dato; caua bucina sumitur illi . . .
> (1. 333 ff.)

For *sonanti* early editors noted a variant *sonaci*. Heinsius printed *sonaci* and in his commentary pointed to the close parallel in Apuleius, *Met*. 4. 31: *iam passim maria persultantes Tritonum cateruae hic concha sonaci leniter bucinat, ille serico tegmine flagrantiae solis obsistit inimici . . .* The Apuleius passage is almost certainly a conscious evocation of Ovid; we must therefore decide whether (a) the rare *sonaci* originally stood in Ovid's text and was replaced by the more common *sonanti* after Apuleius imitated

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[16] Cf. also *Ciris* 484 ff. *sed tamen* †*aeternam*† *squamis uestire puellam . . . non statuit*, with Lyne's useful notes *ad loc.*

[17] Ovid's abstemiousness with regard to *uestire* is offset by his fondness for the even more precious *amicire*, cf. *Met*. 5. 546 *fuluis* [*furuis*?] *amicitur in* [*ab*?] *alis*, 10. 100 *amictae uitibus ulmi* (similarly *Pont*. 3. 8. 13), *F.* 2. 298 *ouis lana corpus amicta sua*. Setting aside the ultimately Homeric *nube amictus* of *Aen*. 1. 516 and *Hor. C.* 1. 2. 31, the only metaphorical uses of *amicire* recorded before Ovid are Cat. 63. 70 *niue amicta loca*, 64. 311 *colum molli lana . . . amictum* and Hor. *Epod*. 17. 22 *ossa pelle . . . amicta*, *Epist*. 2. 1. 270 *quidquid chartis amicitur ineptis*. After Ovid the usage disappears—except for one appearance in Florus—until Fronto. (Given the rarity of the metaphor, one wonders if Horace's *chartis amicitur ineptis* does not constitute a twofold nod toward Catullus, restating the clothing image of 95. 8 *laxas scombris saepe dabunt tunicas* in other, but still Catullan, words.).

the lines, or (b) the variant *sonaci* in Ovid is a learned interpolation either based on knowledge of Apuleius or prompted by a fondness for unusual forms.[18] Of these explanations (b) seems by far the more plausible. For stylistic reasons Apuleius could easily have altered Ovid's *conchae sonanti* to *concha sonaci*, as he has replaced Ovid's unremarkable noun *bucina* with the much rarer verb *bucinat*; both *sonax* and *bucinare* with a personal subject are in fact first attested in this very passage of Apuleius.[19] On the other hand, *concha sonax* as a piece of Ovidian diction is highly questionable, for reasons that will emerge from a review of Ovid's use of adjectives in *-ax*.

For a poet capable of almost any extravagance in coining adjectives in *-fer* and *-ger*, Ovid appears to have been remarkably sparing with adjectives in *-ax*. The following are securely attested in the *Metamorphoses*: *audax*, *capax*, *edax*, *fallax*, *ferax*, *fugax*, *loquax*, *minax*, *pugnax*, *rapax*, *sagax*, *tenax*, *vivax*, and *vorax*; all of these appear as well in the elegiacs, along with *emax*, *mordax*, *procax*, and *salax*; *sequax* and *uerax* occur once each in the double letters of the *Heroides*, which are probably late compositions if genuine but whose Ovidian authorship is not beyond doubt.[20] Virgil, though not lavish in using these adjectives, is still the probable inventor of *pellax* and *sternax*.[21] Ovid, on the other hand, has no clear example of a new adjective of this kind; all those just listed had already appeared either in prose or verse, and usually in both.[22] Perhaps formations of this kind struck him as disagreeably archaic, or else he found them stylistically inappropriate: many of the bolder experiments of this type are found in

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[18] If this case is seen in isolation it is, of course, also possible to take *sonaci* as a simple misreading of *sonanti*: in minuscule scripts *n* is conventionally represented by a superscript line that copyists occasionally overlook, and *t* and *c* are frequently confused. J. J. Moore–Blunt on *Met.* 2. 779 cites G. Giangrande for this palaeographical explanation of the variant *uigilacibus* for *uigilantibus* (on which see below); a similar observation was made by Burman in his note on *Am.* 2. 6. 23. The other instances of this phenomenon to be discussed, however, make it unlikely that palaeographical factors are entirely responsible for the variants.

[19] Apuleius' fondness for adjectives in *-ax* is noted by S. De Nigris Mores, "Sugli Aggettivi latini in -ax," *Acme* 25 (1972) 263–313, at 304. The same study (307) observes that late writers elsewhere coin such adjectives to replace existing forms, e. g., *praesagax* for *praesagus* and *lucifugax* for *lucifuga*. In the case of *sonax*, however, De Nigris Mores assumes without discussion that *sonaci* in *Met.* 1. 333 is genuine and that the word is therefore an Ovidian innovation.

[20] In *Her.* 4. 46 *sequacis* is a variant for *fugacis*. This list was compiled by searching the works of Ovid currently available on compact disk for the relevant endings (-*ax*, -*acis*, etc.) and by reading through the remaining works (*Heroides* 16–21, *Ibis*, *Tristia*, *Ex Ponto*). I am grateful to Richard Thomas for encouragement and technological guidance.

[21] Virgil seems also to have introduced *uiuax* to elevated poetry; it occurs before him only in Afranius 251 R². I am grateful to Wendell Clausen for information on Virgilian practice and for alerting me to the work of De Nigris Mores cited in n. 19.

[22] Bömer on *Met.* 8. 839 notes that *uorax* is not found in Virgil, Horace, or the elegists, but does not mention the word's prominent appearances in Republican literature, cf. Catullus 29. 2 and 10 *impudicus et uorax et aleo*, Cic. *Phil.* 2. 67 *quae Charybdis tam uorax?*; both passages appear as quotations in Quintilian, and the latter was recalled by Ovid in *Ib.* 385 *Scylla uorax Scyllaeque aduersa Charybdis*.

passages of comic abuse, such as Plautus' *procax rapax trahax* (*Pers.* 410) and *perenniserue lurco edax furax fugax* (421) or Lucilius' *manus tagax* (1031 M) or the pejorative term *linguax* attributed by Gellius to the *ueteres* along with *locutuleius* and *blatero*, while others appear in "low" (i. e., commercial or banausic) contexts, like Cato's precept *patrem familias uendacem, non emacem esse oportet* (*Agr.* 2. 7) and Gaius' description of an ideal slave as *constantem aut laboriosum aut curracem <aut> uigilacem* (*Dig.* 21. 1. 18 *pr.*).[23]

Ovid's usage makes it possible to reject with some confidence not only the variant *sonaci* at *Met.* 1. 333 but also most of the other rare or unexampled adjectives in *-ax* that turn up as minority variants in his work: *simulacior ales* in *Am.* 2. 6. 23, *fumaci . . . sulphure* in *F.* 4. 740, and *liquaces* (for *labentes*) *. . . riuos* in *R.A.* 177. Two instances call for comment since (unlike those just mentioned) they have found some favor in modern texts and discussions. (1) In *Met.* 2. 779 *uigilacibus . . . curis* was printed by Merkel and Edwards (in the *Corpus Poetarum Latinorum*) and registered as genuine by two careful students of Ovid's vocabulary, A. Draeger and E. Linse.[24] Bömer does not discuss the point; Moore–Blunt dismisses *uigilacibus*, but on the erroneous ground that *uigilax* is not attested earlier than the fifth c. A.D.: cf. Prop. 4. 7. 15 *uigilacis furta Suburae*, Columella 7. 9. 10, 8. 2. 11, Gaius *ap.* Dig. 21. 1. 18 *pr* (quoted in previous paragraph). It is rather the undignified associations of *uigilax* that rule it out here, whereas *uigilantibus curis* is a suitably high metaphorical variant of *oculis uigilantibus* in Virg. *Aen.* 5. 438 (cf. also *uigilantia lumina* in *Her.* 18. 31 and 19. 35). Furthermore, *uigilantibus excita curis* is echoed by Claudian *Eutr.* 1. 362 *uigilantibus undique curis* (not mentioned by Moore–Blunt or Bömer). (2) Even more widely accepted is *expugnacior herba* in *Met.* 14. 21.[25] There may be some reason to view this case differently from the others: the older manuscripts give the ending as *-atior*, with the form *-antior* not attested before the late twelfth century; also the fact that Ovid uses *pugnax* (and does so in an apparently novel way at 1. 432 *ignis aquae pugnax*) makes the compound somewhat easier to accept; finally, *expugnantior* would be as unparalleled as *expugnacior*. The strongest argument, though, is that Glaucus is here drawing on the technical language of pharmacy (cf. *operosus* in the sense "efficacious" in the next

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[23] Ovid's only use of *emax* (*Ars* 1. 419 f.) clearly exploits the word's commercial flavor: *institor ad dominam ueniet discinctus emacem / expediet merces teque sedente suas.*

[24] A. Draeger, *Ovid als Sprachbildner* (Progr. Aurich 1888) 17, E. Linse, *De P. Ouidio Nasone Vocabulorum Inuentore* (Diss. Leipzig 1891) 39. See also De Nigris Mores (above, n. 19) 303.

[25] Not listed by Draeger (previous note) and denounced by Usener as "ein Unding" (*Kleine Schriften* II 339 [cited by Bömer *ad loc.*]), but found in all twentieth-century editions.

line, *utere temptatis operosae uiribus herbae*), and that a departure from
Ovid's usual stylistic norms would therefore be appropriate.[26]

All the forms in *-ax* discussed above, even the most outlandish, were
eagerly adopted for Ovid's text by Heinsius, with whom adjectives of this
type were something of a King Charles's Head.[27] Here too it seems likely
that Heinsius was looking at Ovid through the stylistic filter of later usage,
since rare and new adjectives of this type begin to be revived or produced in
large numbers from about the end of the first century A.D. onward: Virgil's
sternax was echoed by Silius (1. 261, in the same combination *sternax
equus*), perhaps prompting him to introduce *spernax* (8. 463); *pellax*,
another Virgilian innovation, lay unused until Ausonius and Jerome; *furax*,
featured by Cicero in passages of Plautine invective (*Pis. fr.* 4, 74, *Off.* 3.
91), was taken up by Martial and Gellius and later used by writers of
parahistory (the *HA* and *Origo gentis Romanae*) and churchmen from
Tertullian to Avitus; *currax*, which first surfaces in a bold phrase of Grattius
(*Cyn.* 89 *curraces laquei*), reappears in Gaius (see above) and Cassiodorus
(*Hist.* 1. 20); and the last age of antique prose offered, among many other
novelties, *retinax* (Symm. *Epist.* 1. 47. 1), *olax* (Mart. Cap. 1. 82, 2. 215),
and *incursax* (Sid. Apoll. *Epist.* 8. 12) to a conspicuously unreceptive
world.

As a pendant to this disquisition on adjectives in *-ax* I raise another case
involving a member of the group, although here the issue turns on the
word's construction rather than the word itself. At *Met.* 2. 405 ff. Jupiter
tours Arcadia righting the damage done by Phaethon's brief but spectacular
career in the Sun's chariot. In the phrase *fontes et nondum audentia labi /
flumina restituit* (406 f.), one of the *Vossiani* reads *audacia* for *audentia*.
Heinsius' text follows the majority reading, but his note cites several
instances of *audax* followed by an infinitive; one of these is Augustan,
Horace's *audax omnia perpeti* (*C.* 1. 3. 25), while the others all postdate the
Metamorphoses, beginning with a possible echo of Horace in Albinovanus
Pedo's account (*ap.* Sen. *Suas.* 1. 15) of Germanicus at sea, *per non
concessas audaces ire tenebras*. (Subsequent uses in Seneca *H.F.* 457, Stat.
Th. 2. 44, Sil. 1. 409, 3. 321.) The variant can hardly be right: as used
elsewhere *audax* + infinitive almost always describes a person bold enough
to undertake some arduous or daunting enterprise; apart from Statius *Th.* 2.
44, it is never used as the context here requires, of one who does *not* dare
(out of fear or some other constraint) to behave in a normal fashion. (For

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[26] Bömer recognizes that Glaucus' diction is atypical, but his term "gekünstelt" points toward
the precious rather than the technical.

[27] See in particular his note on *Am.* 2. 6. 23. Burman, whose admiration for Heinsius knew
scarcely any limit, was here compelled to remark on this curious tic of his hero: "cupide
admodum amplectitur Heinsius uel minimam occasionem nomina illa in ax intrudendi, quorum
plurima nouae formae esse credo." I must add, though, that my remarks on the question are
largely based on this note of Heinsius, a rich (if unsorted) trove of forgotten lore.

the latter sense Ovidian idiom clearly favors forms of *audere*, cf. *Met.* 2. 265 f. *nec se super aequora curui / tollere consuetas audent delphines in auras*, 4. 681 f. *primo silet illa nec audet / appellare uirum uirgo*, 5. 223 f. *talia dicenti neque eum . . . / respicere audenti* etc.) The scribes who wrote *audacia* for *audentia* may not have been thinking of the Neronian and Flavian "parallels" cited by Heinsius—simple substitution of a synonymous form is also possible—but it was surely the later vogue of *audax* with the infinitive that led Heinsius to find the variant worthy of critical notice.

To conclude, a passage where a predominantly post-Ovidian use of language appears as the paradosis rather than as a minority variant. Niobe's sons head out for their daily exercise session:

> pars ibi de septem genitis Amphione fortes
> conscendunt in equos Tyrioque rubentia suco
> terga premunt auroque graues moderantur habenas.
>
> (6. 221 ff.)

In line 223 the reading *auroque graues . . . habenas*, accepted in several modern editions, has not so far been found in any manuscript earlier than the thirteenth century.[28] All but one of the early MSS read *auro grauidis moderantur habenis* (*grauidas . . . habenas* in Paris 8001, Anderson's P).

Anderson (1972), whose discussion is the fullest to date, gives two reasons for rejecting *auro grauidis* (or *grauidas*) in favor of *auroque graues*: (1) *auro grauidis* produces an awkward asyndeton; (2) *grauidis* is less suitable in sense: "it would be overstating the case to claim that the reins and traces were 'pregnant' or 'filled full' with gold." The first point seems valid and perhaps even sufficient in itself to decide the case: the connection between the three units of 221-23 is very close, and setting the last apart from the first two gives unwanted emphasis to the final member.[29] Anderson's second point needs qualification, since the transferred sense of *grauidus* is more varied than he allows; Bömer has cited some of the relevant texts, but the question merits a closer look.[30]

The simplest transference is to situations closely resembling pregnancy in which the ideas of enclosure, generation, and eventual emergence are all present: so, for example, the Trojan Horse with its brood of armed soldiers (*Ars* 1. 364) or the earth with its crops (*Met.* 7. 128); the latter image is varied in many ways to refer, e. g., to vines (*F.* 3. 766), olives (*Met.* 7. 281), or ears of wheat (*Met.* 1. 110), and it also lies behind such

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[28] The earliest source of *auroque graues* known to me is Vat. lat. 5859 (Anderson's W, though Anderson attributes the reading only to "Naugerii codd."); I have found it so far in two other MSS, Paris lat. 8461 (s. xiv) and Escorial T. II. 23 (1402).

[29] Heinsius tried to meet this objection by reading *grauidasque auro moderantur habenas*.

[30] I draw on the material presented in *TLL* 6², 2271. 70 ff. and in *OLD* while attempting a fuller analysis; our Ovid passage is not treated by *TLL* or *OLD* since the text of *Metamorphoses* used by both was Ehwald's 1915 Teubner, which reads *auroque graues*.

expressions as *gratia . . . grauida est bonis* (Pl. *Capt.* 358), *grauidam bellis urbem* (Virg. *Aen.* 10. 87) and *grauidam imperiis . . . Italiam* (*Aen.* 4. 229 f.).[31] Almost as close is the use of *grauidus* to describe clouds heavy with rain (*Tr.* 1. 2. 107, Sen. *Tro.* 394) or eyes heavy with tears (*Cons. Liu.* 116). In freer uses the generative notion partially or completely fades and *grauidus* describes things (more rarely persons) "laden" or "weighed down" by that which they contain or enclose: cf. Pl. *Truc.* 97 f. *neu qui manus attulerit steriles intro ad nos,* / *grauidas foras exportet,* ps-Virg. *Cat.* 9. 30, Hor. *C.* 1. 22. 3–4 *grauida sagittis . . . pharetra,* Virg. *Aen.* 7. 506 f. *hic torre armatus obusto,* / *stipitis hic grauidi nodis,*[32] Petr. 119. 3 *grauidis freta pulsa carinis, Ciris* 26 *prono grauidum . . . pondere currum.*[33] A similar sense with a non-physical enclosed object appears in Luc. 5. 735 *grauidum . . . curis* / *pectus;* with no suggestion of enclosure in *Copa* 31 f. *fessus requiesce sub umbra* / *et grauidum roseo necte caput strophio,* Val. Fl. 5. 22 *praecipiti grauidum iam sorte parentem,* Sil. 13. 542.[34] In its loosest application *grauidus* can denote a person or object weighed down by something external to itself, cf. Val. Fl. 6. 708 ff. *sanguine uultus* / *et grauidae maduere comae, quas flore Sabaeo* / *nutrierat liquidoque parens signauerat auro;* it can also be used as merely a loftier equivalent of *grauis,* cf. Val. Fl. 8. 98 *grauida nunc mole iaces,* Prud. *Psych.* 866.

In this spectrum of usage *grauidis . . . habenis* in *Met.* 6. 223 would stand near the outer limit of freedom, since *grauidus* would describe reins made heavy by an external coating of gold (presuming, that is, that the reins are in fact covered with gold rather than consisting of a golden core surrounded by leather). I know of only one place before the Flavian period where *grauidus* departs so far from its original sense: Pl. *Pseud.* 198 f. *nisi carnaria tria grauida tegoribus onere uberi hodie* / *mihi erunt, cras . . .* Even one Plautine example of the "loose" application is, of course, sufficient to show that this usage cannot simply be regarded as a late development, although this element of comic hyperbole here is so strong as to suggest deliberate distortion of normal idiom. It remains true, however, that the

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[31] A different use of the notion of pregnancy seems at work in *Ciris* 446 *grauidos penso . . . fusos;* as Lyne *ad loc.* notes, the image is the same as in Juv. 2. 55 *praegnantem stamine fusum,* the spindle "swelling" with the growing bulk of the thread.

[32] The ancient Virgilian commentators gloss *grauidus* here as equivalent to *grauis* (Servius "propter nodos scilicet") or *praegrauatus* (Tib. Cl. Donatus "stipitem . . . nodorum ponderibus praegrauatum"). I have classed this as an instance of *grauidus* referring to the weight of an internal or enclosed object, but the complex hypallage in *stipitis . . . grauidi nodis* gives the phrase a typically Virgilian uniqueness.

[33] Lyne *ad loc.* brands the use of *grauidus* in this passage "inert and unimaginative"; it might be more just to say that it marks a stage in the growing freedom with which the word is applied.

[34] It may be significant that the *Copa* features a usage otherwise known only from Neronian and later poetry; in the same passage *roseus* in the sense "made of roses" has no parallel earlier than Seneca's *Medea.* The poem is most often dated shortly after the appearance of Propertius' last book of elegies, which it echoes in several places (cf. Wilamowitz, *Hellenistische Dichtung* [Berlin 1924] II 314), but a post-Augustan date may not be out of the question.

freer uses of *grauidus* are predominantly post-Ovidian. Furthermore, Ovid's own handling of the word elsewhere is markedly conservative: of some thirty uses none ventures farther from the literal meaning than *Tr.* 1. 2. 107 *incipiunt grauidae uanescere nubes.*

I would therefore conclude, taking the evidence of usage together with the argument from sentence-shape, that *auroque graues . . . habenas* is the genuine reading and that *grauidis . . . habenis* is an interpolation reflecting the freer use of *grauidus* found in later poetry and seen most clearly in Valerius Flaccus.[35]

In the foregoing pages I have argued that some variants in the later MSS of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* exhibit a sophisticated form of stylistic renovation in which Ovidian usage has been adjusted to agree with the practice of later Latin poetry; I have also suggested that the sensibilities that prompted these elegant interpolations found a sympathetic response in the editorial work of the great Nicolaus Heinsius. These conclusions do not greatly affect the construction of Ovid's text, since almost none of the variants considered has enjoyed the favor of modern critics. The gain comes rather in greater understanding of one of the more subtle transformations undergone by Ovid's poem during its passage from Antiquity to the later Middle Ages, and in a better sense of the refinement possessed by at least some of Ovid's ancient and medieval readers. I would also hope that the detailed studies of selected words and idioms may help to distinguish Ovid's usage more clearly from that of his successors and so illustrate in miniature the formation of what we compendiously call "Silver Latin."[36]

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[35] For another instance of *grauidus* in an embellishing interpolation cf. *Ep. Sapph.* 174, where only the thirteenth-century Frankfurt MS preserves *nec lacrimas oculi continuere mei* and all other MSS, "simplices munditiis codicis antiquissimi interpolantes" (Palmer), read *nec grauidae lacrimas continuere genae*, perhaps inspired by *Cons. Liu.* 115 f. *erumpunt* (sc. *lacrimae*) *iterumque grauant gremiumque sinusque / effusae grauidis uberibusque genis.*

[36] Another possible consequence deserves more tentative mention. In several of the cases I have considered, a usage first appears in single passages of Virgil or Horace (usually the *Odes*) and is later taken up more widely by poets after Ovid. This pattern may suggest a form of later Roman Alexandrianism which noted and imitated rarities in the "classic" Augustan texts somewhat in the way Homeric *hapax legomena* had been sought out by Hellenistic scholar-poets.