

Ovid
Metamorphoses

Achilles Paris Callisto Phoebus Iphis

Saturn Midas Adonis Hermaphroditus

Scarus Janthe Andromeda Hercules Ulysses

Orpheus Ganymede Pyramus Thetis Philomela

Apollo Perseus Tisiphone Medea Medusa

Venus Juno Arachne Argus Bacchus Caeneus

Theseus Scylla Hesperia Calliope Vestal

Narcissus Thisbe Io Galatea Cassandra

Mercury Pluto Pan Daedalus Minerva

Daphne Diana Morpheus Priam Jupiter

Hyacinthus Sibyl Amor Diomedes Mars

Neptune Europa Iris Echo Eurydice Niobe

Ovid
Metamorphoses

The full verse in both Latin and English
Translated by David Raeburn

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The Original Latin

Publius Ovidius Naso was born in 43 BC at Sulmo (Solmona) in central Italy. Coming from a wealthy Roman family, he held some minor official posts before leaving public service to write, becoming the most distinguished poet of his time. His published works include *Amores*, a collection of short love poems; *Heroides*, verse-letters written by mythological heroines to their lovers; *Ars Amatoria*, a satirical handbook on love; *Remedia Amoris*, a sequel to the *Ars*; and *Metamorphoses*, his epic work on change. In AD 8, the emperor Augustus exiled him to Tomis on the Black Sea, far from the literary life he loved in Rome. He continued to write, notably *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*, and revised *Fasti*. He never returned to Rome, dying in exile in AD 17.

Ovid's sensuous and witty poem brings together a dazzling array of mythological tales, ingeniously linked by the idea of transformation – often as a result of love or lust – where men and women find themselves magically changed into new and sometimes extraordinary beings. Beginning with the creation of the world and ending with the deification of Augustus, Ovid interweaves many of the best-known myths and legends of ancient Greece and Rome, including the stories of Daedalus and Icarus, Pyramus and Thisbe, Pygmalion, Perseus and Andromeda, and the Fall of Troy. Erudite but light-hearted, dramatic and yet playful, the *Metamorphoses* has influenced writers and artists throughout the centuries from Shakespeare and Titian to Picasso and Ted Hughes.

The English Translation

David Raeburn was educated at Charterhouse and Christ Church, Oxford. He followed a career as a Classics Teacher and as the headmaster of two schools. On retiring from the headship of Whitgift School in 1991, he returned to Oxford where he taught Greek and Latin to the undergraduates for the Classics faculty and later for individual colleges. He is particularly interested in the performance aspects of classical poetry and is known for his productions of Greek Tragedy with school and university students, mostly in the original, but also in his own translations. Another special love is Roman Poetry of the Augustan Period.

This lively, accessible new translation by David Raeburn is in hexameter verse form, which brilliantly captures the energy and spontaneity of the original. It aims primarily to appeal to a new readership which knows little or no Latin, and may not necessarily be familiar with the classical world generally. It strives not to revamp Ovid for the twenty-first century, but rather to reflect his detailed meaning as faithfully and as clearly as possible, in a style which captures the flowing movement of his verse and the lively spirit of his story-telling for a modern audience.

Now Raeburn's fabulous translation has been placed alongside the original Latin for easy referral and to extend the scope of this book from a new crowd to also include Latin scholars as well.

Liber I

In nova fert animus mutatas dicere formas 1
 corpora; di, coeptis (nam vos mutastis et illas)
 adspirate meis primaque ab origine mundi
 ad mea perpetuum deducite tempora carmen!

Ante mare et terras et quod tegit omnia caelum 5
 unus erat toto naturae vultus in orbe,
 quem dixere chaos: rudis indigestaque moles
 nec quicquam nisi pondus iners congestaque eodem
 non bene iunctarum discordia semina rerum.
 nullus adhuc mundo praebebat lumina Titan, 10
 nec nova crescendo reparabat cornua Phoebe,
 nec circumfuso pendebat in aere tellus
 ponderibus librata suis, nec brachia longo
 margine terrarum porreixerat Amphitrite;
 utque erat et tellus illic et pontus et aer, 15
 sic erat instabilis tellus, innabilis unda,
 lucis egens aer; nulli sua forma manebat,
 obstabatque aliis aliud, quia corpore in uno
 frigida pugnabant calidis, umentia siccis,
 mollia cum duris, sine pondere, habentia pondus. 20
 Hanc deus et melior litem natura diremit.
 nam caelo terras et terris abscidit undas
 et liquidum spisso secrevit ab aere caelum.
 quae postquam evolvit caecoque exemit acervo,
 dissociata locis concordiae pace ligavit: 25
 ignea convexi vis et sine pondere caeli
 emicuit summaque locum sibi fecit in arce;
 proximus est aer illi levitate locoque;
 densior his tellus elementaque grandia traxit
 et pressa est gravitate sua; circumfluitumor 30

Book I

Changes of shape, new forms, are the theme which my spirit impels me, 1
 now to recite. Inspire me, O gods (it is you who have even transformed my art),
 and spin me a thread from the world's beginning
 down to my own lifetime, in one continuous poem.

Before the earth and the sea and the all-encompassing heaven 5
 came into being, the whole of nature displayed but a single
 face, which men have called Chaos: a crude, unstructured mass,
 nothing but weight without motion, a general conglomeration
 of matter composed of disparate, incompatible elements.
 No Titan the sun god was present to cast his rays on the universe, 10
 nor Phoebe the moon to replenish her horns and grown to her fullness;
 no earth suspended in equilibrium, wrapped in its folding
 mantle of air; nor Amphitrite, the goddess of ocean,
 to stretch her sinuous arms all round the earth's long coastline.
 Although the land and the sea and the sky were involved in the great mass, 15
 no one could stand on the land or swim in the waves of the sea,
 and the sky had no light. None of the elements kept its shape,
 and all were in conflict inside one body:
 the cold with the hot, the wet with the dry,
 the soft with the hard, and weight with the weightless. 20
 The god who is nature was kinder and brought this dispute to a settlement.
 He severed the earth from the sky and he parted the sea from the land;
 he separated translucent space from the cloudier atmosphere.
 He disentangled the elements, so as to set them free
 from the heap of darkness, then gave them their separate places and tied them 25
 down in a peaceful concordat: fire flashed out as a weightless
 force in the vaulted heaven and found its rightful place
 at the height of the firmament; air came next in position and lightness;
 earth was denser than these, attracted the larger particles
 and sank through the downward thrust of its weight; in the nether region 30

ultima possedit solidumque coercuit orbem.

Sic ubi dispositam quisquis fuit ille deorum
 congeriem secuit sectamque in membra coegit,
 principio terram, ne non aequalis ab omni
 parte foret, magni speciem glomeravit in orbis. 35
 tum freta diffundi rapidisque tumescere ventis
 iussit et ambitae circumdare litora terrae;
 addidit et fontes et stagna inmensa lacusque
 fluminaque obliquis cinxit declivia ripis,
 quae, diversa locis, partim sorbentur ab ipsa, 40
 in mare perveniunt partim campoque recepta
 liberioris aquae pro ripis litora pulsant.
 iussit et extendi campos, subsidere valles,
 fronde tegi silvas, lapidosos surgere montes,
 utque duae dextra caelum totidemque sinistra 45
 parte secant zonae, quinta est ardentior illis,
 sic onus inclusum numero distinxit eodem
 cura dei, totidemque plagae tellure premuntur.
 quarum quae media est, non est habitabilis aestu;
 nix tegit alta duas; totidem inter utramque locavit 50
 temperiemque dedit mixta cum frigore flamma.

Inminet his aer, qui, quanto est pondere terrae
 pondus aquae levius, tanto est onerosior igni.
 illic et nebulas, illic consistere nubes
 iussit et humanas motura tonitrua mentes 55
 et cum fulminibus facientes fulgura ventos.

His quoque non passim mundi fabricator habendum
 aera permittit; vix nunc obsistitur illis,
 cum sua quisque regat diverso flamina tractu,
 quin lanient mundum; tanta est discordia fratrum. 60
 Eurus ad Auroram Nabataeaeque regna recessit
 Persidaeque et radiis iuga subdita matutinis;
 vesper et occiduo quae litora sole tepescunt,
 proxima sunt Zephyro; Scythiam septemque triones
 horriferae invasit Boreas; contraria tellus 65
 nubibus adsiduis pluviaque madescit ab Austro.

came water, confining the solid disk in its liquid embrace.

When the god, whichever one of the gods, had divided the substance
of Chaos and ordered it thus in its different constituent members,
first, in order that earth should hang suspended in perfect
symmetrical balance, he moulded it into the shape of a great sphere. 35
Next he commanded the seas to scatter and swell as they fronted
the blast of the winds, surrounding the earth with its circle of shore.
To the ocean he added the springs, huge standing pools and the lakes,
and rivers to wind downstream as their sloping banks confined them.
These in their various places may be absorbed by the earth itself, 40
or travel as far as the sea, where they enter the broad expanse
of more open water and beat on the shore instead of their banks.
Then he commanded the plains to extend and the valleys to sing,
the woods to be decked in their leaves and the rock-faced mountains to soar.
And just as the sky is cut into zones, with two to northward, 45
two to the south and a fifth which burns with more heat than the others,
so with the earth which the sky encloses: the god in his wisdom
ordained five separate zones or tracts to be traced on its surface.
The central zone is too hot for men to inhabit the region;
two are buried in snow; but two he placed in between, 50
and thus he blended the heat with the cold in a temperate climate.

Hanging over the lands is the air, whose weight exceeds
that of fire by as much as the weight of earth exceeds that of water.
It was here that the god commanded the mists and the clouds to settle,
here that he posted the thunder to trouble the hearts of men, 55
with winds which cause the lightning that burns and the lightning that flashes.

Still the creator did not allow the winds dominion
over the whole wide range of air. As it is, they can scarcely
be stopped from tearing the world to pieces, though each of them governs
his blasts in a distant quarter; so angrily brothers can quarrel. 60
Eurus' retreat is the home of the dawn, from the realms of Arabia
and Persia through to the mountains that gleam in the morning sunlight;
Zephyr is close to the evening and fans the shores that are warmed
by the setting sun. Boreas, lord of the blizzard, sweeps
into Scythia, land of the frozen north; while Auster, opposite 65
drenches the soil of the south with his clouds of incessant rain.

haec super inposuit liquidum et gravitate carentem
aethera nec quicquam terrenae faecis habentem.

Vix ita limitibus dissaepserat omnia certis,
cum, quae pressa diu fuerant caligine caeca, 70
sidera coeperunt toto effervescere caelo;
neu regio foret ulla suis animalibus orba,
astra tenent caeleste solum formaeque deorum,
cesserunt nitidis habitandae piscibus undae,
terra feras cepit, volucres agitabilis aer. 75

Sanctius his animal mentisque capacius altae
deerat adhuc et quod dominari in cetera posset:
natus homo est, sive hunc divino semine fecit
ille opifex rerum, mundi melioris origo,
sive recens tellus seductaque nuper ab alto 80
aethere cognati retinebat semina caeli.
quam satus Iapeto, mixtam pluvialibus undis,
finxit in effigiem moderantum cuncta deorum,
pronaque cum spectent animalia cetera terram,
os homini sublime dedit caelumque videre 85
iussit et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus:
sic, modo quae fuerat rudis et sine imagine, tellus
induit ignotas hominum conversa figuras.

Aurea prima sata est aetas, quae vindice nullo,
sponte sua, sine lege fidem rectumque colebat. 90
poena metusque aberant, nec verba minantia fixo
aere legebantur, nec supplex turba timebat
iudicis ora sui, sed erant sine vindice tuti.
nondum caesa suis, peregrinum ut viseret orbem,
montibus in liquidas pinus descenderat undas, 95
nullaque mortales praeter sua litora norant;
nondum praecipites cingebant oppida fossae;
non tuba drecti, non aeris cornua flexi,
non galeae, non ensis erat: sine militis usu
mollia securae peragebant otia gentes. 100
ipsa quoque immunis rastroque intacta nec ullis
saucia vomeribus per se dabat omnia tellus,

Above the turbulent lower air the creator imposed
the weightless translucent ether, untained by earthly pollution.

Nature had hardly been settled within its separate compartments
when stars, which had long been hidden inside the welter of Chaos 70
began to explode with light all over the vault of the heavens.

And lest any part of the world should be wanting its own living creatures,
the floor of heaven was richly inlaid with the stars and the planets,
the waves of the sea were assigned as the realm of the glinting fishes,
the earth was the home of the beasts and the yielding air of the birds. 75

Yet a holier living creature, more able to think high thoughts,
which could hold dominion over the rest, was still to be found.
So Man coming into the world. Maybe the great artificer
made him of seed divine in a plan for a better universe.

Maybe the earth that was freshly formed and newly divorced 80
from the heavenly ether retained some seeds of its kindred element –
earth, which Prometheus, the son of Iapetus, sprinkled with raindrops
and moulded into the likeness of gods who govern the universe.

Where other animals walk on all fours and look to the ground,
man was given a towering head and commanded to stand 85
erect, with his face uplifted to gaze on the stars of heaven.

Thus clay, so lately no more than a crude and formless substance,
was metamorphosed to assume the strange new figure of Man.

First to be born was the Golden Age. Of its own free will,
without laws or enforcement, it did what was right and trust prevailed. 90
Punishment held no terrors; no threatening edicts were published
in tablets of bronze; secure with none to defend them, the crowd
never pleaded or cowered in fear in front of their stern-faced judges.

No pine tree had yet been felled from its home on the mountains and come
down into the flowing waves for journeys to land afar; 95
mortals were careful and never forsook the shores of their homeland.

No cities were yet ringed round with deep, precipitous earthworks;
long straight trumpets and curved bronze horns never summoned to battle;
swords were not carried nor helmets worn; no need for armies,
but nations were free to practise the gentle arts of peace. 100

The earth was equally free and at rest, untouched by the hoe,
unscathed by the ploughshare, supplying all needs from its natural resources.

Translation Notes

References are to lines of the translation, which follows the numbering of the original. These notes endeavor to make sense of the choice of certain words or phrasing made by Raeburn, as well as giving additional information to readers unfamiliar with the mythology behind Ovid's stories. Glosses on personal names are usually from Greek.

Book 1

- 3 **transformed my art:** The translation is based on a widely accepted emendation to the received text. At the end of line 2, Ovid is probably alluding to the (for him revolutionary) change in his verse from self-contained elegiac couplets to the flowing hexameters associated with epic in both Greek and Latin. Ovid's poetry has itself undergone a metamorphosis, which he attributes to the gods whose inspiration he is praying for.
- 21 **The god who is nature:** Ovid here reflects the stoic view that God and nature are synonymous.
- 24 **the elements:** The theory of the four elements – earth, air, fire and water – is ascribed to Empedocles of Agrigentum.
- 48 **five separate zones:** This notion, like that of the world as a sphere, is associated with the followers of Pythagoras.
- 56 **lightning that burns ... flashes:** Forked lightning or sheet lightning, both thought to be caused by collision of clouds in wind.
- 62 **the mountains:** Perhaps the Himalayas or the Hindu Kush

Achilles Paris Callisto Phoebus Iphi

Saturn Midas Adonis Hermaphroditu

Icarus Tanthe Andromeda Hercules Ulysse

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Apollo Perseus Tisiphone Medea Medus

Venus Juno Arachne Argus Bacchus Caeneu

Theseus Scylla Hesperia Calliope Vest

Narcissus Thisbe Io Galatea Cassandr

Mercury Pluto Pan Daedalus Minero

Daphne Diana Morpheus Priam Jupite

Hyacinthus Sibyl Amor Diomedes Mar

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This lively, accessible new translation by David Raeburn is in hexameter verse form, which brilliantly captures the energy and spontaneity of the original.

Newcomers to Ovid and Roman Mythology will be delighted by the tale, and Latin scholars by the easy side-by-side translation of the text, making this version of the classic tale an excellent choice for any reader.

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