

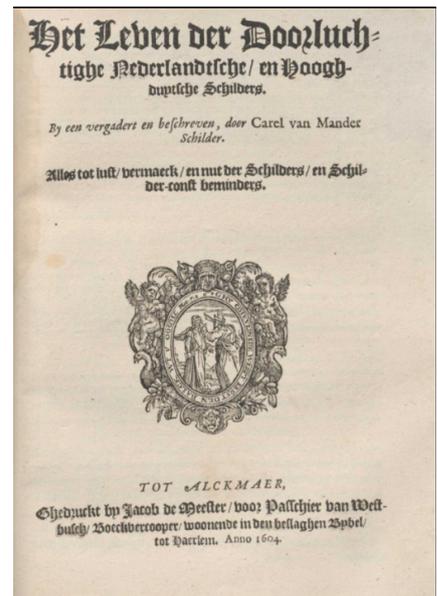
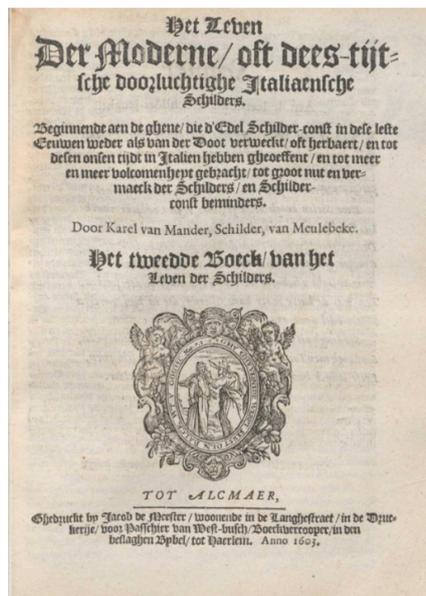
The *Wtlegginghe* and the *Wtbeeldinghe* complete Van Mander's *Schilder-boeck*, his encyclopaedic, three-part account of the intellectual, practical and historical materials of the painter's art, what he called '*Schilder-const*'.



The Schilder-boeck, in which, first of all, the foundations of the noble and liberal art of painting in its various parts are set forth for eager-to-learn youth; then, in three sections, the lives of the celebrated illustrious painters of ancient and modern times; and finally the Interpretation [Wtlegginghe] of the Metamorphoses of Ovid and also the Depiction Of Figures [Wtbeeldinghe]. By Carel van Mander, Painter.¹

The first element of the *Schilder-boeck*, *The Foundations of the Noble and Liberal Art of Painting*, [*Den Grondt der Edel vry Schilder-const*], is a fourteen book poem on the theory and technique of painting. It is a giant enterprise and it is a remarkable thing. You can read it in English on this website.

¹ 'Het schilder-boeck waer in voor eerst de leerlustighe jeught den grondt der edel vry schilderconst in verscheyden deelen wort voorghedragen. Daer nae in dry deelen 't leven der vermaerde doorluchtighe schilders des ouden, en nieuwen tyds. Eyntlyck d' wtlegginghe op den Metamorphoseon pub. Ouidij Nasonis. Oock daerbeneffens Wtbeeldinghe der figueren. Door Carel van Mander schilder.' From the titlepage in the 1604 edition of the *Schilder-boeck*, Karel Van Mander, *Het Schilder-Boeck*, Passchier van Westbusch, Haarlem, 1604, III.

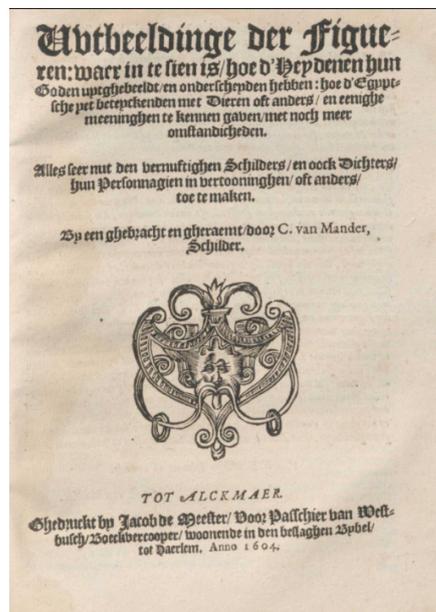


The second element, the *Lives of the Celebrated Illustrious Painters of Ancient and Modern Times*, is in three sections. The first two are made up of translations of substantially reworked and rethought texts by Pliny, Vasari and others, as well as up-to-date reports from contemporaries in Italy. It is so up-to-date that Caravaggio, at the time still resident in Rome, was included. The *Schilder-boeck* is the first printed reference to him at a time when he would hardly have been known even to Italians outside the most sophisticated circles of the Roman art world. (Van Mander only mentions Annibale Carracci, whose Farnese frescoes, principally derived from Ovidian sources, were still in the process of being painted.)² The final section of the *Lives*, the lives of the 'German' painters, represents Van Mander's own research. It is a history of northern painting, much of which had been destroyed or been made inaccessible by conflict, and which had been radically 'privatised' under several waves of protestant iconoclasm.³ Van Mander used a similar art-historical methodology to Vasari: he gathered together names and paintings; he organised and verified paintings by means of connoisseurship, visiting and identifying the works himself whenever possible, recording his own observations, coincidentally putting together a pioneering account of the history of patronage and art ownership in the Low Countries; he contacted the descendents of painters and of the commissioners of paintings (his text quotes from

² *Schilder-boeck*, 190v-191r. He tells us only that 'Caratz' was living with and working for the illustrious Cardinal Farnese; his account of 'Michael Agnolo van Caravaggio' remains a key source for contemporary estimations of Carravaggio's style, working practices and character.

³ See my chapter 'Iconoclasm, the commodity, and the art of painting' in Clay, R. & Boldrick, S., eds, *Iconoclasm, Contested Objects, Contested Terms*, Routledge, 2007, pp. 75-91.

his correspondence with them); he visited graves and recorded funerary inscriptions; and he pursued archival research in municipal and guild records. Also like Vasari, Van Mander presented the *Lives* critically. Each section has its own preface or *voor-reden* (the *Schilder-boeck* teems with prefaces) proposing a general theory of the development of art in different places and periods both in terms of techniques and skills, and in terms of intellectual and cultural developments in history generally. Within individual lives there are digressions on art, history, art in history and history in art illustrating these relations and developments.



The third element, what we have to do with here, is the *Wtlegginghe* [Interpretation], a commentary on Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and its companion, the *Wtbeeldinghe* [Depiction], a dictionary of iconographical advice to painters. It begins with a new frontispiece (in fact, the fifth frontispiece in the *Schilder-boeck*), and the pages start numbering again from fol.*1.⁴ This might encourage us to consider the Ovidian sections as a supplement to the project, but this essay and these translations are intended to discourage such a view, and to

⁴ There are frontispieces at the beginning of each section: at very the beginning of the *Schilder-boeck* on III; at the beginning of the *Antique Lives*, 58r; at the beginning of the *Italian Lives*, 91r; at the beginning of the *Northern Lives*, 196r. The *Wtlegghinghe* frontispiece is on what would have been folio 306r, renumbered as 1*, and that of the *Wtbeeldinghe* on 123r in that series. The frontispieces are variously dated: 1604, 1603, 1603, 1604, 1604, 1604. The frontispieces tell us that although all the sections were published 'for Passchier Van Westbusch of Haarlem', the three sets of lives and the *Wtbeeldinghe* were printed at Alkmaar by Jacob De Meester. Note that in these footnotes I reference either as *Schilder-boeck*, for the first series of numbers, or as *Wtlegghinghe*, for the second series.

reinstall the *Wttlegghinghe* and *Wttbeeldinghe* at the heart of the project of *Schilder-const*, to present them as completing the work. As a pair of texts they did form a separable entity, and they did indeed appear as separate publications,⁵ but it is evident from what Van Mander says in his *voor-reden* [preface] that the knowledge they contain (and represent) is essential for practitioner and amateur alike. There are a number of examples of the *Wttlegghinghe* and *Wtbeeldinghe* having been published without the rest of the *Schilder-boeck*, but I have not found any examples of the *Schilder-boeck* published without the *Wttlegghinghe* and *Wtbeeldinghe*.

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Early in his *voor-reden* to the *Wtlegginghe* Van Mander explains why Ovid's *Metamorphoses* was held to be important for painting: "*We commonly call it the Painters' Bible, because many Stories were painted from it*".⁶ Not only was it a very important source, 'the original' was now available to his contemporaries and countrymen in their own language.

*This book, divided into fifteen Books, has been published in our language in Print in prose for a few Years: many have not known what to make of it, other than to mock it and to condemn it as thing of no worth, saying, that it was all lies and not worth reading: the tough shell has proved too difficult for them, not being sharp-toothed enough to bite through to the nourishing fruit.*⁷

⁵ The *Wttlegghinghe* and *Wtbeeldinghe* were published separately in 1611, 1616, 1643 ('in beter Duits herstelt', i.e., in 'improved Dutch', by Jan Soet), 1645, 1658 and 1662. Joachim von Sandraert translated the text of the *Wttlegghinghe* and *Wtbeeldinghe* and it appeared, attributed to Karel van Mander, as part of his *Teutsche Academie* (Nürnberg, 1669 & 1679).

⁶ 'En dewijl het by ons ghemeen, en t'Schilders Bybel gheheeten was, om datter veel Historien uyt gheschildert wierden, ...' *Wtlegghingh*, *4v. As noted below, the poem was celebrated as a book of word pictures, and from the earliest manuscripts to the (then) most recent printed vernacular editions the text was most often accompanied by pictures. Antonie Vêrard in his *Bible des poètes*, published in Paris in 1493, first established (or popularised) this metaphor for the significance of Ovid as a source for poets (this is not to argue that Van Mander was borrowing or referring to Vêrard's title, the notion had doubtless become, or already was, proverbial).

⁷ 'Welck Boeck, in vijfthien Boecken vervatt, is van over eenighe Iaren in onse spraek in ondict in Druck uytghecomen: daer veel niet van hebben weten te maken, dan bespotten, en als ydel dinghen te verachten, segghende, dat het al loghenen waren, en niet weerdt te lesen: soo qualijck is hun het bolster-knaghen become, niet scherptandigh ghenoech wesende tot de voedtsaem keerne door te moghen bijten.', *Wttlegghinghe*, *4r.

The Dutch translation to which Van Mander refers had been published fifty years earlier in Antwerp, when Van Mander was a child and when the Low Countries were still a federation of small states undivided by religious war and united under the Habsburgs.⁸ The translator was a then thirty year-old theologian and humanist, Johannes Blommaerts, known by the latinised version of his name, Florianus. His translation was one event in a larger pattern of translation and publication in early-modern Europe. (There may be a story to be told of the text's passage through other European traditions, Islamic and Jewish.)⁹

The *Metamorphoses* had been translated into six modern European languages by 1604, when Van Mander published his *Schilder-boeck*. The first known manuscript translation, into middle-High German prose, was as early as c. 1200, and was attributed to Albrecht von Halberstadt. Georg Wickram published a verse adaptation of Halberstadt's translation in 1545, complete with his own woodcut illustrations.¹⁰ Van Mander noted that Ovid had long been translated into Greek.¹¹ Arrigo Simintendi's Italian translation was quoted in an early manuscript commentary on Dante, which gives us a *terminus ante quem* of c. 1330 for the earliest-known, widely-shared Italian manuscript translation. The earliest printed Italian Ovid, Giovanni Bonsignori's prose paraphrase, *Ovidio Metamorphoseos Vulgare* (Venice, 1497; see illustration of an edition produced by Lucantonio Giunta, Florence, 1501), was a direct descendant.¹² Bonsignori's text

⁸ *Metamorphosis dat is, die herscheppinghe oft veranderinghe beschreuen int Latijn vanden vermaerden ende gheleerden poeet Ouidius : en nu eerst ouerghesedt in onsen duytsche ...*, trans. Johannes Florianus (i. e., Johannes Blommaerts), *Thantwerpen 1552 by my Hans de Laet* (i. e., Hans de Laet, Antwerp, 1552). I know of two copies of the 1552 edition, one in the Library of the Museum Plantin-Moretus, Antwerp, the other in the Library of the Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven.

⁹ I am inspired to say this having read Josephine Quinn's *How the World Made the West*, Bloomsbury, London, 2024, especially 'The translation Movement', pp 349-60.

¹⁰ Wickram, G., P. *Ouidij Nasonis ... Metamorphosis, Das is von der wunderbarlicher Verenderung der Gestalten der Menschen, Thier, und anderer Creaturen : Etwan durch den Wolgelerten M. Alberechten von Halberstat inn Reime weiss verteutscht, Jetz erstlich gebessert und mit Figuren der Fabeln gezirt, durch Georg Wickram ... Epimythium, Das ist Der lüstigen Fabeln .. Auszlegung, jederman kurtzweilig, vornemlich aber allen liebhabern der Edeln Poesi stadtlich zu lesen Gerhardi Lorichij*, Mainz, 1545. Von Halberstandt's original is only known to us by means of the Wickram text.

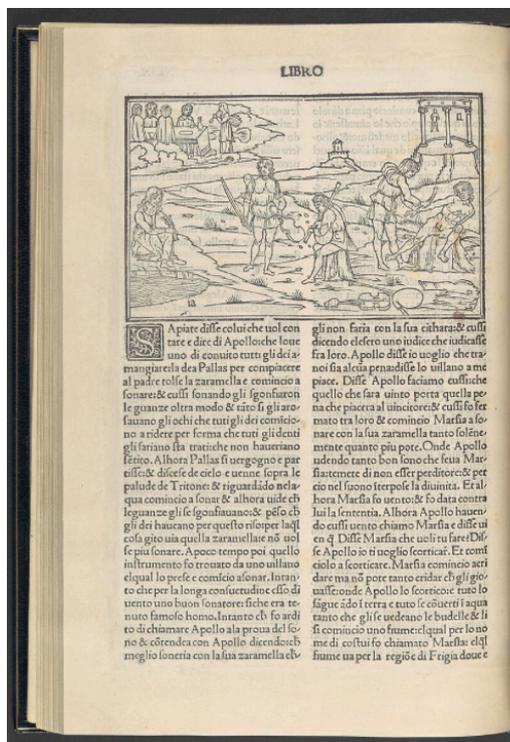
¹¹ Van Mander, *Wttlegghinghe*, *4v.; Van Manders's account is ambiguous - from what he wrote one gets the impression that (he thought that?) this had happened during antiquity rather than as recently as the end of the 13th century.

¹² A starting point for any enquiry on the *Metamorphoses* in the early-modern Dutch speaking world is Sluijter, E. J., *De "heydensche fabulen" in de Noordnederlandse schilderkunst, circa 1590-1670. Een proeve van beschrijving en interpretatie van verhalende onderwerpen uit de klassieke mythologie*, PhD dissertation, Leiden 1986, especially Appendix I 'Over de uitlegging en verantwoording van mythologische lectuur in de volkstaal, in bijzonder van de Metamorfosen, gedurende de 16de en 17de eeuw', pp 295-341. Sluijter is also good on the broader history of the work's translation, he notes (p. 297, n. 3) that Simintendi's translation without commentary was 'evidently directed at a literary elite', whereas Bonsignori's publication, enriched with moral and edifying analysis, 'was aimed at a broader literate public in Tuscany'. Further to this, having laboured over my introduction for some time I came across John Tholen's *Producing Ovid's 'Metamorphoses' in the Early Modern Low Countries*, Paratexts, Publishers, Editors, Reader, Library of the Written Word, The Handpress World, Vol. 95, Brill, 2021 (see: <https://brill.com/view/title/60113>), however this was already largely written.

followed a French prose paraphrase and commentary, 'moralised by Master Thomas Waleys', onto the market, this had been published by Colard Mansion (Bruges, 1483; see illustration).¹³ Both texts were re-printed several times: Bonsignori continued in print until 1522 and Mansion until 1531.



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A second wave of translations, several in verse, emerged in the middle of the 16th century. Wickram's 1545 verse edition in German has already been mentioned. A French verse translation was published by François Habert in 1549 and 1557.¹⁴ Lodovico Dolce's Italian verse text, *Le Trasformazioni*, was published in 1553.¹⁵ Jorge de Bustamante's edition in Spanish prose, published in Antwerp, had appeared in 1551.¹⁶ The first English edition was in verse, translated by Arthur

¹³ Mansion, C., *Cy commence Ovide, ... son livre intitulé Métamorphose, contenant XV livres particuliers moralisé par maistre Thomas Waleys, ... translaté et compilé par Colard Mansion...*, Bruges, 1484. The production of this book is said to have bankrupted Mansion. The text, variously adapted, also reappeared under various titles.

¹⁴ François Habert's translation appeared in two publications: *Six livres de la Métamorphose d'Ovide, traductz selon la phrase latine en rime françoise, sçavoir le III, IIII, V, VI, XIII et XIIIII, le tout par François Habert, ...*, Paris, M. Fezandat, in 1549, which selection of six books perhaps cried-up the market for the later complete, illustrated version: *Les 15 livres des metamorphoses d'Ovide, en rime française par François Habert*, Paris, M. Fezandat, 1557.

¹⁵ Dolce, M. L., *All' Invittiss. e Gloriosiss. Imp. Carlo Quinto. Le Trasformazioni di M.L. Dolce, etc.*, Venice, G. Giolito de Ferrari, 1553; Dolce's edition was illustrated by Giovanni Antonio Rusconi who was himself a translator of Vitruvius.

¹⁶ Jorge de Bustamante, *Las Metamorphoses, O Transformaciones Del Muy Excelente Poeta Ouidio, Repartidas En Quinze Libros Y Traduzidas En Castellano*. Amberes [i.e., Antwerp], Iuan Steelsio, 1551. See also, Antonio Perez Sigler, *Los quinze libros de los Metamorphoseos de el excelente poeta latino Ouidio*, En Salamanca : En casa de Iuan Perier mercader de libros y impressor, 1580.

Golding, in 1567.¹⁷ Thus it was among this second wave of printed translations that Florianus' Dutch version appeared. Florianus' text was re-published several times, it remained 'in print' for a century. There were further Antwerp editions of Florianus' text, the first in in 1566 (the first illustrated edition, all subsequent editions were illustrated), 1615, 1619, 1631 and 1650, there were Amsterdam editions in 1588 and 1599, and there was a Rotterdam edition in 1637 (this list is not exhaustive, these are the editions I have consulted). Every edition but the last retained Florianus' 1552 preface and therefore remained anchored to his authorship. In 1650, a hundred years later Seger van Dort produced the first Dutch verse edition, Joost van den Vondel published his Dutch verse edition in 1671.¹⁸

Dolce's *Le Trasformationi* was the first of three high-quality Italian translations (the other two were by Giovanni Andrea dell'Anguillara, and Fabio Marretti) which 'represent' the personality cults of their respective dedicatees, all three of whom competed for dominance in Italy: the Emperor Charles V, Henry II of France, and Alfonso II d'Este, Duke of Ferrara. Habert's complete French text of 1557 had also been dedicated to Henry.¹⁹ Ovid's original text had been dedicated to Caesar's ancestors and most commentators agree that it, along with his other texts written in exile, was a peace offering to the emperor as Ovid sought permission to return to Rome. Van Mander's *Schilder-boeck* is also prefaced by a dedication (there are several dedications throughout *Het*

¹⁷ Arthur Golding, *The fyrst fovver bookes of P. Ouidius Nasos worke, intituled Metamorphosis, translated oute of Latin into Englishe meter by Arthur Golding Gent. A woorke very pleasaunt and delectable* [followed by] *The .xv. bookes of P. Ouidius Naso, entytuled Metamorphosis, translated oute of Latin into English meeter, by Arthur Golding Gentleman, a worke very pleasaunt and delectable*. 1567. [Both:] Imprinted at London : By VVillyam Seres, Anno. 1565/7. We need to add a caution here for there may have been a Caxton edition in English of Mansion's text - although no printed version has been found, there is a reference to it in another Caxton publication, and a contemporary English manuscript translation exists. See Lyne, R., "Ovid in English translation" in Hardie, P. (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Ovid*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 250-51.

¹⁸ For a brief survey of the life of Florianus see Molhuysen, P. C., Blok, P. J., Knappert, L. & Kossmann, F. K. H. (eds.) *Nieuw Nederlandsch biografisch woordenboek*, Leiden, 1911-1937, vol. 4, pp. 604-6 (see https://dbnl.org/tekst/molh003nieu04_01/molh003nieu04_01_0953.php). The 1566 Antwerp edition (*Metamorphosis, dat is de herscheppinge, beschreven door den vermaerden poëet Ovidius Naso : seer nut voor poëten selversmeden beeldhouwers schilders*. Antwerpen : Hans de Laet, 1566) was illustrated with 178 woodcuts designed by Virgil Solis; see discussion in Melion, W. S., 'The Trope of Anthropomorphism In Hendrick Goltzius's Venus and Cupid (1590), Venus, Bacchus, and Ceres (1593), and Portrait of Frederick de Vries (1597)', in Melion, W. S., Woodhall, J., and Zell, M. (eds) *Ut Pictura amor. The Reflexive Imagery of Love in Artistic Theory and Practice, 1500-1700*, Emory University, Lovis Corinth Colloquium IV, Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2017, p. 181. *Den Methamorphosis, ofte Herscheppinge van P. Ovidius Naso ... Verciert met figueren. Nu eerstmael in Nederlandts-Rym gestelt, door S. [Seger] van Dort*, Antwerpen : G. van Wolsschaten, 1650. Joost van den Vondel, *Publius Ovidius Nazoos Herscheppinge*, T'Amsterdam : Voor de weduwe van Abraham de Wees, etc., 1671.

¹⁹ Giovanni Andrea dell'Anguillara, *Le Metamorfosi : di Ovidio, ridotte da Giovanni Andrea dall' Anguillara in ottava rima*. Venetia : Per G. Griffio, 1561; Fabi Maretti, *Le Metamorphosi d'Ovidio, in ottava rima, col testo latino ... nuovamente tradotte da M. Fabio Marretti, ... Venetiis : Apud B. Zalterium*, 1570. Enquiring and careful readers will soon enough discover the dedicatees of the other volumes cited above.

Schilder-boeck heading the various sections). The *Wtlegginghe* and the *Wtbeeldinghe* were dedicated to Mr. Gedeon Fallet, Public Notary and Secretary of the City of Amsterdam.

Classical texts in modern languages were a manifestation of a larger cultural and commercial development in 16th-century Europe. Printed vernacular translations of all manner of classical texts were a new commodity form, as were translations of texts translated from one modern language to another, and from the vernacular into Latin (a 'reverse flow' in this context, evidence of the continuing prestige of Latin as a language of learning).²⁰ They fed the intellectual aspirations of a lay readership in editions priced at various degrees of luxury, none were cheap. One of the most popular of these classical texts was the *Metamorphoses*. Previously such texts might have been hybridised, mediated or augmented, the *Metamorphoses* has some early manuscript versions that are little more than paraphrases-with-commentary, so-called '*Ovide moralisé*', as shall be discussed below.²¹ But it would seem that especially during the second wave of publications there was increasing curiosity about the *Metamorphoses* as a complete and original text, and as a poem (this we note in the mid-16th-century verse editions listed above). We must remember too that this second wave of translations depended upon the emergence of 'complete and original' printed Latin editions prepared by humanist editors, such as Regius, who sought to distil the purest possible version of an original.²²

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The *Metamorphoses* was not a text that had survived from antiquity, there was no original. There is no complete manuscript of it from before the 11th century,

²⁰ See <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/cultural-translation-in-early-modern-europe/6E9DF1F4D289D2BF324A3EEE360197C9>. Francois Du Jon, known as Franciscus Junius, librarian to the Earl of Arundel, published three more or less simultaneous editions of his *De Pictura Veterum* (i.e., On the Painting of the Ancients): the first, (Amsterdam, 1637) was in Latin and dedicated to Charles I; an English edition (London, 1638) dedicated to the Duchess of Arundel ("seeing your Ladiship upon the first sight of my Latine copie, was pleased to expresley desire of having it Englished"); a Dutch edition was published in Middelburgh in 1641 dedicated to Frederick Hendrick, Prince of Orange. Both the English and the Dutch texts were translated from the Latin by Junius himself.

²¹ See Dimmick, J., "Ovid in the Middle Ages: authority and poetry" in Hardie, P. (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp 264-87, esp. pp 278 ff. for bibliography on allegorical reading. The term '*L'Ovide moralisé*' dates back to the title of an anonymous French text (now attributed to Philippe de Vitry, or to Crestien li Foïs) composed between 1317 and 1328, it was dedicated to Joan II of Burgundy, wife of Philip V, King of France. This text is not to be confused with Pierre Bersuire's text discussed below.

²² Regius [Raffaele Regio], *Pvb. Ovidii Nasonis magnvm opvs Metamorphoseon libri XV. Cvm copiosissimis in singvlos libros commentariis*, first published in Venice in 1493. Most of our present-day canon of Latin texts had been recovered and was available in print by c. 1500; for a chronological table of *editiones principes* see J. E. Sandys, *A History of Classical Scholarship*, ii, Cambridge, 1908, p. 103.

only fragments survive from before.²³ We know from a multitude of citations, references and criticism that the *Metamorphoses* had long been admired.²⁴ The earliest iteration of the *Metamorphoses* in Christian Europe is among a wave of reconstituted texts produced by schoolmen, scholars working in libraries and scriptoria, in monastic foundations that anticipate our universities. With the rise of (more secular) humanist textual studies, from the middle of the 14th century, there were attempts to discover (that is to say: reconstruct), the originals of all manner of texts. Even now it is only possible to make claims for what any original might be. R. J. Tarrant enumerates the rather long list of manuscripts, and rather short list of printed sources ('*quae in hac editione laudantur*') that he used in establishing his Oxford standard text.²⁵ His/our modern methodology for establishing an original is inherited from these humanists, who in their turn inherited much from the schoolmen. It involves identifying (and gaining access to) manuscripts, reading backwards through the various versions, tracing paternities and maternities of transcription, and finally inferring an original.

Except for some rare papyrus and parchment (for example, the Dead Sea Scrolls), and inscriptions on metal and stone, there are no original classical texts.²⁶ Anything that survived did so by being transcribed, especially during the revival of Latin culture in Christian Europe during and after the Carolingian period, as well as in circles of Greek and Latin learning in the Arab world. Classical literature was not preserved and protected from history, it was continually renewed in a historical process of continuing transcription. Texts survived in scriptoria and libraries through a process of re-reading and re-writing, at which moments of transfer they might, you could say, metamorphose.

²³ For a general overview see: Richmond, J., "Manuscript tradition and the transmission of Ovid's works" in Boyd, B. W., (ed.) *Brill's Companion to Ovid*, Leiden, 2002, pp 443-483; Reynolds, L. D. (ed.), *Texts and Transmission. A Survey of the Latin Classics*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1983, esp. Introduction, pp xiii- xliii, and the section on Ovid, pp 257-282; Rossi, A., abstract of her paper "Latin and Vernacular Manuscripts of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*; Comparative Explorations about Codicological and Textual Models" delivered at "Writing in the Vernacular", APICES [Association Paléographique Internationale Culture, Écriture, Société] Session, Tenth International Medieval Congress, Leeds, 14-17 July, 2003, available at <http://www.palaeographia.org/apices/papers/rossi.htm>; Munari, F., *Catalogue of the Manuscripts of Ovid's Metamorphoses*, London, 1957 has required continuous updating, first with his own supplements in 1965 and 1970, and since with further supplements by others; Introduction to Tarrant, R. J., *P. Ovidi Nasonis Metamorphoses*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2004 (this is the most recent standard text of the poem; Tarrant worked on the Ovidian sections in Reynold's book, above); finally, but not leastly, Knox, P. E., (ed.) *A Companion to Ovid*, [Oxford, 2009] 2nd. ed., Chichester, 2013 is an invaluable recent source of material, ideas and bibliography for anyone interested in Ovid.

²⁴ See Knox, P. E., 'Commenting on Ovid', in Knox, P. E., *op. cit.*, p.328.

²⁵ Tarrant, R. J., *op. cit.*, p. xxxix, cites the following early-modern editions: Puteolanus, Bologna, 1471; Regius, Venice 1493; Naugerius, Venice, 1517; Heinsus, Amsterdam, 1652 and 1659, and Bermannus, Amsterdam, 1727.

²⁶ Our *only* ancient MS attributed to Ovid (a version of the *Epistulae ex Ponto*) was palimpsested (i.e., overwritten) during the 8th century at Luxeuil, clearly it was more valued as parchment than as Ovid; see Reynolds, L. D., *op. cit.* p. xxii and p.263.

Often they survived in forms that, during the process of their continuing survival, did not survive with them. Fragments are to be found in/under palimpsests, in compendia, and in florilegia, which forms have since been refined or purged by scholarship, leaving us alone with the originals, that is to say: reconstituted authored texts. Nowadays we live in a culture that has an ideological investment in original intentions and meanings. When we read a classical text we imagine that we are hearing a voice, reading something that speaks to us across time, something perhaps preserved from the menace of ignorance and misunderstanding, something that represents to us our own victory over ignorance and misunderstanding. In fact we are reading something that has always been in recovery, in ages Dark and Bright alike, according to the priorities of past traditions and individuals. We do not see back through time, history is not transparent. History is opaque, and the past is inscribed on its surface very much closer to our noses than we imagine.

Medieval schoolmen, excellent and enthusiastic latinists, gathered together the various fragments of Ovid's poem. They esteemed the poetry and re-assembled it as they saw fit. It may have been through them that numerous Ovidian names and stories found their way into vernacular song, fairy tale, and folklore; Ovid had, of course, engaged with a folklore that had never quite died away. There was a problem for the schoolmen, it was Ovid himself. Despite his obvious virtues as a writer he was known to have been a pagan, and even among the pagans he was known to have been a scandalous author. He had written the *Ars Amatoria*, he had been banished by Augustus, his works would be burned by Savonarola and banned by English Bishops (Ovid had apparently even tried to burn the *Metamorphoses* himself before going into exile). But despite that he was also respected both as a poet and as a moralist.²⁷ As Dimmick notes, being unable to convert him (it had been reluctantly concluded that Ovid died a pagan), his admirers converted his text. They did this by means of a 'transformatory reading method', i.e., allegorical reading.²⁸ It was under these conditions that Ovid's encyclopaedic pagan narrative attracted additional commentary from generations of Christian copyists, for example a Benedictine monk, contemporary and friend of Petrarch, Pierre Bersuire, the author, or compiler, of the *Ovidius*

²⁷ I cannot find that he was ever on the *Index librorum prohibitorum* (he was not heretical). Ovid's reputation is addressed by Van Mander in his Voor-reden. For a recent overview of Ovid's reputation see Dimmick, *op. cit.* and the texts listed in note 23, above. Ovid seems always to have been respected by some, Dante (ventriloquising Virgil) placed Ovid third among the poets after Homer and Horace (*Inferno*, 4.90). His influence is ubiquitous in the *Commedia*, in all three books. For Dante, like many medieval critics, Ovid's pagan lore offered anticipations of Christian truth. See Clay, D., 'The Metamorphosis of Ovid in Dante's *Divine Comedy*' in Miller, J. F., and Newlands, C. E. (eds), *A Handbook to the Reception of Ovid*, John Wiley & Sons, London, 2014 (<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/book/10.1002/9781118876169>)

²⁸ Dimmick, *op. cit.*, esp. pp. 273 ff.

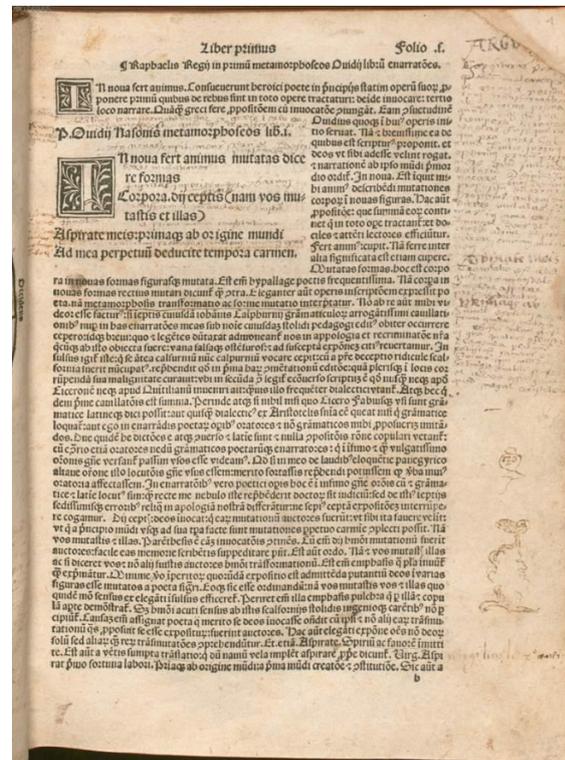
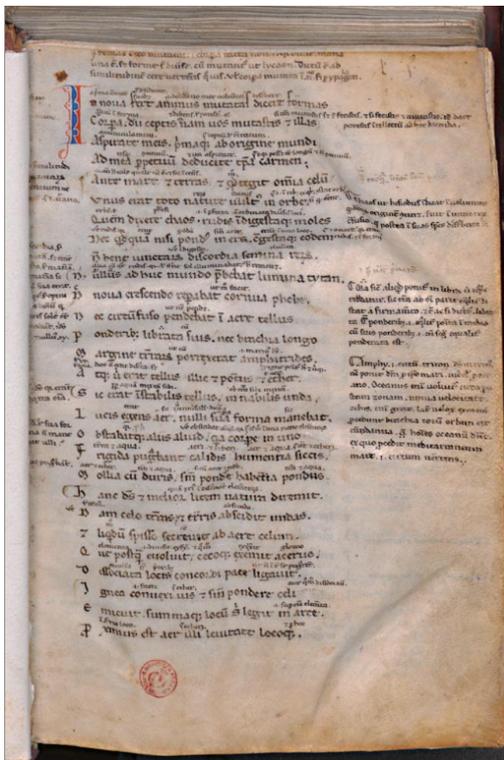
Moralizatus. Bersuire's Latin text was directly influential on the matter and form of Mansion's and Bonsignori's printed editions mentioned above. Under the schoolmen the *Metamorphoses* became a book-in-commentary, as did many other secular books of the time. Much of the commentary was concerned with Ovid's subject matter, producing historical, ethical or even theological readings of Ovid's pagan narratives, referring to other sources, providing exegesis, providing readings, making him *readable*.

There are styles of reading as there are styles of writing.²⁹ On the one hand this is a matter of technological change, classical readers read from scrolls, increasing numbers of our contemporaries read from screens, in between there was over a thousand years of the codex, the book. Medieval reading was a social, shared activity, reading was almost always done out loud.³⁰ Few manuscript pages declare only one voice readily assimilated to the modern reader's solitary, unvoiced, internal monologue. No medieval reader of the *Metamorphoses* could have felt alone with the work in manuscript, it was a thoroughfare of overlapping texts, of interlinings, commentary, marginalia, the track through it all which may be visible on the surface of the parchment as a dull, blurred line left by a tracing finger; previous reading marked the text. Reading was likely to be accompanied by writing, at the very least commonplacing (readers still take notes, although nowadays many prefer a highlighter, it can be difficult to find an un-highlighted copy of a required text in a modern-day university library). This accumulation of commentary was not only something that happened as scholasticism encountered classical, pagan texts, it was a characteristic of developments from the 8th century onwards in the reading, writing and transcription (which is to say, preservation) of numerous sacred texts, Talmudic, Islamic and Christian alike. In the process of copying, marginalia and commentary might be transcribed along with the text, in the production of a new manuscript these previously overlapped texts might coalesce into a new text, a variant or version, preparing tasks for later editors. For the humanist editor, whose arrival marks what we call 'the Renaissance', such events in transcription were objects of interest, along with ordinary errors they helped them to identify versions, to establish archetypes, and to place manuscripts into, for

²⁹ Apologies if this section looks like a lightweight pastiche of the kind of insight offered by, for example, the studies in Cavallo, G. & Chartier, R. (eds.), *A History of Reading in the West* (trans. Cochrane, L. G.), Cambridge, 1999; seek out the source. When we characterise a manner of writing ('manner', a word derived from '*manus*', the Latin word for hand) we do so using the word 'style' (a word derived from '*stylus*' the Latin word for pen). Perhaps we need also to characterise manners of reading. Maybe we could do it with a word derived from '*yad*' (Hebrew for 'hand', retaining for us the metaphor of 'manner'), the pointing stick used in reading the Torah. The *yad* directs the eye to a point in the text, its passage tracing the mind's engagement with the text, without ever contaminating the text with a human touch.

³⁰ See Alberto Manguel, *A History of Reading*, New York; Viking, 1996, Chapter 2.

example, a chronological order. Early printed books (as the typeface and illustration of Mansion's text shows) imitated the appearance of medieval manuscripts closely, facilitating the earlier manner of overlapped reading even though, being printed, they did not represent the same processes of production. But increasingly the role of the editor at the moment of humanism (in the time of the 'incunabula' book, that is in the first half century of the printed book before 1500), required if not the removal of commentary, then its *marginalisation*. In Regius' distilled, definitive edition of the original Latin, commentary and exegesis were extracted from the text, any ambiguity is avoided, all that remains is marginalia, a surrounding, dwarfing halo radiating about the now purged text. Later editions, especially in the vernacular, such as that of Florianus, might have no commentary or notes at all, and the early-modern reader (like the reformed Christian and their vernacular Bible, come to think of it) is left alone with the original.



We still use commentary, especially in prestige texts. Sometimes commentary is invisibly integral with the text, as when an editor changes spelling or punctuation to enable a modern reader read more comfortably. Sometimes it sits beside, beneath or around the text, dwarfing it, as it often had in manuscripts, or as it does in a page of Regius' *Metamorphoses* (illustrations: 13th-century MS of *Metamorphoses* with commentary, Pluteo 36.05, fol. 1r., Biblioteca Medicea-Laurenziana; a 1497 edition of Regius produced in Lyon; note the manuscript

marginalia), offering and imposing information and guidance.³¹ When we read a Great Work we consult the '*editio cum notis variorum*', that is: the 'edition with notes from various authors/editors', the Variorum Edition. There is a variorum style. It is identifiable in the structure of the book and look of the page. It involves framing devices: preface, foreword, specialist essay, appendices, footnotes, endnotes and a semaphore of alphanumerical signage in superscript. All of it defers the final reading while representing, rehearsing and feeding a desire for a final reading, or the dream of its possibility. Nowadays this 'secondary' apparatus is discussed as '*paratext*'. The 'original text' (which might include, of course, previous *paratext*) is called '*hypotext*', and the hypotext, for various reasons, might be the object of further commentary, or even a '*metatext*', as here. Being a text about the *Metamorphoses*, Van Mander's *Wtlegghinghe* was part of the commentary tradition, but one without the *hypotext*, without the original, of which there is only a trace, a paraphrase sufficient to anchor the commentary. In the *Wtlegghinghe* Ovid is a continually addressed absence while Van Mander's commentary engages with other commentary texts and sources. The *Wtlegghinghe* makes most sense when read as an adjunct to another book, say, the Florianus text. So, two new genres, or commodity forms, of book had been produced to enable each other, to make each other *readable*.

*

When reading the *Metamorphoses* early-modern readers will have recognised many stories, perhaps not realising that they were 'from' Ovid. They would have known them from song, fairy tale, folklore and the schoolroom. They may have read and understood the stories in relation to hybridised forms, perhaps even in the tradition of the *Ovide moralisé*. The *Metamorphoses* provided a remarkably complete account of classical mythology, beginning at Creation and ending in Ovid's present, the Age of Augustus. It is our best single source on such material. The stories are presented chronologically. Nearly all editions of Ovid were illustrated, as were the bulk of the manuscripts before them. Illustration is a long-established form of commentary. Association between Ovid's text and pictures from Ovid, for any historical reader or viewer, is to be assumed. Identical illustrations appeared in books produced in different centres, revealing the international relations of book publication (as well as ubiquitous piracy). The new features of the 16th-century book, the index and page numbering, enabled browsing and cross-referencing, and therefore a new kind of

³¹ It can be a shock for a student turning from, say, a Penguin Classics edition to an earlier edition of a well-known work to discover how protected they have been. Furthermore, built-in commentary (footnotes, etc.) has featured in the practice of writing from early on, defining the scholarly text and its ludic variants from Rabelais to Melville to postmodernism.

individual reading, creating new paths through the material. But editorial variations meant that different editions also offered different perspectives. For example, Bonsignori's commentary had explored general moral themes, Mansion's edition more theological interpretations, drawing parallels between Ovid's classical lore and the Old Testament. Thus it might not be so strange, if Van Mander is to be believed, that Dutch readers were confused and frustrated by Florianus' text which had presented only a bald, prose translation, with no commentary, and which, in its first edition (an object, admittedly, now very rare), did not even have any illustrations. This left readers free to recognise and understand in whatever way they might choose, like primitive Baptists with their Bibles, but would that result in a right reading? Van Mander tells a story in the life of Cornelis Ketel, in the idiom of peasant satire, which, might stand as a warning.

[T]here is a comical story to be told concerning a peasant who spotted this picture when passing by [Ketel's house] and asked Ketel's wife if he might look at the painting, since he thought he understood it and got the point of it, saying: My dear lady, you are able to produce something like that? well then, you'll make a good living; and while he stood there pontificating in this way he added: I bet I can guess what this painting is about: it is the Annunciation to Mary, where the holy angel brings Our Lady the message; and he preened animatedly at his good judgement and the insight by which he identified a flying Cupid as the angel, and Danaë, who lay naked and with her legs apart on a beautiful, rich bedstead, as Mary. And so he went away with his coarse understanding as wise as before.³²

The dedicatory poems and Van Mander's own *voor-reden*, or prefaces, make it clear that right reading was desirable, and that right reading required some knowledge, some management. Thus the *Wtlegghinghe*, or the *Interpretation*, a commentary to and for Florianus.

By the time that Van Mander wrote the *Wtlegghinghe* the *Metamorphoses* had become legion. As well as supplying many tales in the the folklores of all regions and classes, Ovid's poetry and stories nourished a diverse wisdom industry which included various commodity forms such as Emblem Books, architectural and

³² '[...] een clucht te vertellen is van eenen Boer, die dit stuck in't voorby gaen sagh, vraeghde aen d'Huysvrouw van Ketel om de schilderatie te mogen bekijken: want hy meende dat hy hem des verstondt, en hadder goeden sin aen, seggende: Vroutgen, condt ghy dit aldus maken? ghy sult den cost wel krijgen: staende aldus speculerende, seyde voort. Ick wedde ick rade wat dese schilderatie beduydt, t'is d'Enghelsche groet, daer den heylighen Engel ons lieve Vrouw de boodschap brengt, en roemde vast op zijn goet oordeel en verstandt: eenen vlieghenden *Cupido* siende voor den Enghel: en de *Danaë*, die op een schoon cierlijcke bedstede light naeck met de beenen van een, voor de *Maria*, en trock also met al zijn grof verstandt even wijs henen.' *Schilder-Boeck*, 279v-280r.

festival decoration, and stage plays and printed vernacular literature. Reference to Ovid shaped the iconography of numerous objects from the everyday to the exquisite, the writings of Ovid informed much visual, not to say material, culture. Especially in courts (and among aspiring citizen imitators) it was increasingly necessary to be able to recognise and understand Ovidian allusions. One could not hope to maintain the character of a polite reader, let alone that of a cultured artistic producer, without such knowledge. This was explicitly stated in the frontispiece.

*Interpretation of the Metamorphoses of Publius Ovidius Naso. All that pertains to the promotion of a righteous and honourable civil life. Most useful for Painters, Poets and Amateurs of Art, all bought together and arranged for instruction. By Carel van Mander Painter.*³³

One needed to be able to recognise the stories, but one also needed to know what to make of them, how 'to bite through to the nourishing fruit', as Van Mander put it in his preface.

*And since we commonly call it the Painters' Bible, because many Stories were painted from it, I had also long desired to see an explanation or interpretation of it, or to see whether the beautiful hidden lessons could be brought out of dark Chaos into the light of Phoebus, and was waiting and constantly looking about for someone learned who, being competent in our language, might be willing and capable of doing it ... Seeing this, with as good a will as possible, with all of the tools that I could discover, I took pains to reveal the valuable hidden treasures, wishing to be of service (as best I could) to our Netherlandish Readers, and noble Art-loving spirits.*³⁴

What we know of the first generation of van Mander's readers indicates that a fair number were probably already quite knowledgeable (the authors of the

³³ 'Wtlegghingh op den Metamorphosis Pub. Ouidij Nasonis. Alles streckende tot voordering des vromen en eerlijcken borgherlijcken wandels. Seer dienstich den Schilders, Dichters, en Constbeminers, oock yeghelijck wt leering by een gebracht en gheraemt. Door Carel van Mander Schilder.' *Wtlegghinghe*, *1r.

³⁴ 'En dewijl het by ons ghemeen, en t'Schilders Bybel gheheeten was, om datter veel Historien uyt gheschildert wierden, hadd' ick wel over langh ghewenscht, de verclaringhe oft uytlegginghe daer neffens te sien, oft dat die verborghen schoon leeringhen uyt den donckeren *Chaos* tot den lichten *Phoebum* opgevoert hadden moghen worden, wachtende, en vast omsiende nae yemandt, die gheleert, onse spraeck toeghedaen wesende, hier toe lustigh en bequaem mocht wesen [...] Dit siende, hebbe willigher als vermoghende, met alle reedtschap die ick vinden mocht, vlijt ghedaen, die verstopte schoon costlijcke schatten t'ontdecken, begeerigh wesende ons Nederduytsche Clercken, en Const-lievende edel geheesten (met ons selven te behelpen) dienstigh te wesen.' *Wtlegghinghe*, *4v.

commendatory poems, for example). But we can imagine there were many more, a new public, who needed as much guidance as could be provided. It must have been for them that the (at least six) subsequent editions of a separately printed *Wtlegghinghe/Wtbeeldinghe* were published.³⁵

The emergence of verse translations (in Dutch from the mid-17th century, in other literatures earlier) suggests that appreciation of poetic quality, evidence of having actually read Ovid's work as a *poem* (if not in Latin then in the vernacular) might have been desirable. Van Mander's *Wtlegghinghe* offers its reader everything but a poetic experience. For the work of a celebrated poet it is strangely unpoetic. It achieves what it achieves by means of well-organised commentary and paraphrase, by its use of headings, and by means of its index which made it a searchable handbook, a kind of dictionary (like an Emblem Book). Van Mander's footnoting is precise, the validity of the commentary is authorised by its exact reference to other texts, authority reinforces authority in a virtuous cycle. When we do hear Van Mander's voice (so to speak) he speaks with a degree of caution, even scepticism, which further increases the seeming validity of his text while undermining any sense of poetry or enchantment. We see straight away that Van Mander has consulted editions in Latin, French and Italian. As the celebratory poems that preface the *Wtlegghinghe* proclaim, Van Mander *explained* Ovid. Having read Van Mander's commentary, the Dutch reader would be equipped to return to the difficult original (i.e., Florianus' text) and bite through its tough shell to the sweet fruit. After which they would be able look at a picture of Danaë and get the point.

*

Van Mander was not only seeking to prepare readers for Ovid, or to enable them to understand pictures after Ovid. He had a broader ambitions. He had an aspiration for *Schilder-const* itself, for the Art of Painting. He wanted to elevate its place in the minds of his contemporaries from that of a trade governed by municipal bylaws and market regulations to that of a liberal art, a kind of knowledge. This ambition is represented in the organisation of the *Schilder-boeck*. In the first part, *Den Grondt der Edel vry Schilder-const*, he established a theory for painting, largely borrowed from rhetoric and poetry, as well as reflecting on the observation of nature, artists' materials and workshop practice. In *Het Leven* he defended the right of artists' lives to be

³⁵ See note 5, above. Also see Annette de Vries' chapter "Hondius meets Van Mander: The Cultural Appropriation of the First Netherlandish Book on the Visual Arts System of Knowledge in a Series of Artists' Portraits" in Damm, E., Timann, M., Zittel, C. (eds) *The Artist as Reader: On Education and Non-Education of Early Modern Artists*, Intersections 27, Leiden: Brill, 2013, especially the Appendix listing owners working the art business, pp. 300 ff., also the comments on pp. 266-8.

commemorated. He argues for a new account of history which would include painting, the Art of Painting, with its own stories and with its own heroes, as a marker of peace and creativity within the larger history of war and struggle, as a civilising force in history. Each part of *Het Leven* has its own preface, *voor-reden*, where the arguments for the prestige of painting are rehearsed. In the *voor-reden* to the Ovidian material he reaches back to a familiar debate, the 'paragone', or debate, between the arts of painting and poetry.

Thus our dumb Art of Painting is like a certain Maiden who from birth could never give expression to her feelings in speech, but who readily knew how to make herself understood, and frequently with such a profound and deep intelligence, that it would not have shamed her speaking Sister. Bearing in mind, therefore, the wholly sibling relationship between these two, I include in my Schilder-Boeck this, my Interpretation of the transformations of Ovid changes (as its appropriate companion): so that, among other things, the Painter can make sense of his own painted Ovidian narrative, and know how to explain it to others.³⁶

What poetry could do, painting could do, albeit in a different way. Silent or speaking, the sister arts drew on the same material. Their narratives required similar knowledges and analogous skills of exposition and interpretation. The word for narrative in many early-modern European languages was derived from the Latin word '*historia*', which meant far more than the mere relation of past events. Van Mander uses the Dutch word '*historien*' in the above quotation, to some extent I diminish his text by translating it as 'narrative'. Narrative, or history, was the representational form in which both poetry and painting were applied at their highest level of performance. History, or narrative, was the form within which *Schilder-boeck* itself was largely worked.

Painting, poetry and history, all three arts are commended as civilising forces in the *voor-reden*. Poetry and painting especially for the delightful, or pleasing manner in which they instruct us ('*miscuit utile dulci*'; quoting Horace from the *Ars Poetica*; i.e., 'to combine the useful and the sweet'), and not to forget history, which is both a form and a resource.

³⁶ 'Soo dat onse stomme Schilder-const gelijckt eenige Maeght, die s'ghemoedts bode de spraeck van den gheboort aen missende, haer meeninge heel behendigh weet te beduyden, en veel tijts met soo grondich en diep verstandt, datse haer sprekende Suster niet schuldigh blijft. Ick dan de heel so nae-maeghschap deser twee bedenckende, hebbe dese mijn Wtlegginghe der Ovidische herscheppinge, mijn Schilder-Boeck (als voeghlijck geselschap) benefent: op dat, onder ander oorsaken, den Schilder zijn gheschilderde Ovidij historien self verstaet, en anderen wete te beduyden.' *Wttlegghinghe*, *2r-*2v.

Van Mander's methodology in the *Wtlegginghe* follows the didactic, *moralisé* tradition. It does so by linking and cross-referencing the text into the then 'sum total of human knowledge'. He simply provides a commentary, that is to say, sufficient context for the modern reader.

I have often used the following method, first to tell the story upon which the Fable is constructed: next, {to say} what is implied in a natural sense: and finally, {to offer} didactic and edifying interpretations. And wherever I come across some name of the Gods, or any other of note, I relate their descent, their life and whatever is to be said, understood and learned about them: for I have not repeated the Poet's text, which you can read for yourself, and thereby see what is meant.³⁷

Such a commentary might have turned out to be tedious, but happily for his readers he is frequently entertaining when explaining and reflecting. His explanation and reflection follows the secular, sceptical, historical, almost proto-anthropological tendencies found in some earlier Ovid *moralisé* scholarship.

He engages, too, with the 'problem' of Ovid's obscurity, or difficulty, defending the poet's use of allegory and parable. He reminds his readers that this is nothing new to them, he reminds them of the ubiquity of similar devices in the Bible, and the passage culminates in a blazing paraphrase of Revelation followed by a hint of cultural relativism regarding monsters.

Who would believe that such things were ever to be found? Were one to include here the Theban Sphinx, the Harpies of the Strophades or the Lycean Chimera they would hardly seem so strange, nor so many-formed.³⁸

Notions of a human, universal or natural wisdom emerge at several points in the *voor-reden*.

³⁷ 'Veel hebb' ick ghevolght dese wijse, te verhalen eerst de gheschiedenis, daer de Fabel op is ghebouwt: daer nae, watter natuerlijck mede aenghewesen is: ten lesten, de leerlijcke en stichtlijcke uytlegginghen. En waer ick eenighen naem der Goden, oft ander mercklijcke, come t'ontmoeten, vertell' ick t'gheslacht, het leven, en watter mede gheseyt, verstaen, en gheleert wordt: doch verhael niet veel den Text des Poëten, die men daer neffens mach lesen, en dan sien watter mede ghemeent is.' *Wttlegghinghe*, *4v.

³⁸ 'Wie sal meenen, datmen oyt sulcke ghevonden heeft? Leght men hier by het Thebische *Sphynx*, Strophadische Harpyen, oft de Licische *Chimera*, sy sullen noch soo seldtsaem, noch soo veel-ghestaltigh nouwlijck wesen.' *Wttlegghinghe*, *4r.

It is remarkable to observe that the Almighty has proved to be a generous and kind God not only to the Jews, but also to the Pagans and all the World: in whom, without distinction, all peoples not only live, but by whom they are also wonderfully guided, so that so-called lawless and uncircumcised Men prove to have the Tables of the Law inscribed in their hearts, and are a Law unto themselves, witness their listening and attending to their feelings and thoughts both guilty and innocent, and their mastering of them, so that by means of modest and pious steps they straight away fulfill God's Law from an inborn goodwill, by Nature.³⁹

He is writing about pre-Christian pagans, of course, 'classical' pagans. But we might reflect that he was writing at the moment of European contact with an even larger world where cultures no less rational and moral than his own were being discovered to exist, and to have long existed, all over the planet. In a crescendo of reflection towards the end of the *voor-reden* he exclaims

[...] that one and all (myself included) should be so very astonished, as if struck on the head, to see the Law of God and faith set before his eyes like a bright shining mirror of instruction by a Pagan Poet who was superficially considered unchristian, obscure, blind in his understanding, estranged from the knowledge of God, and without God in the World.⁴⁰

But he by no means allows his intellectual interest in and respect for the wisdom of a classical pagan to charm him into an unqualified approval or acceptance of their work. That might lead to the error of *iconotropy*. Van Mander is firm on the limits of Ovid as a guide to Man and Man's place on Earth.

I have employed (as I believe) a somewhat deliberate caution in the interpretation of these Metamorphoses, and avoided whatever I considered

³⁹ 'Mercklijck sietmen, dat den Almachtighen hem heeft bewesen niet alleen der Ioden, maer oock der Heydenen, en al der Weerelt gaef-rijcken en milden Godt te wesen: in wien sonder onderscheydt alle volcken niet alleen en leven, maer oock wonderlijcken in beweegt worden, dat sulcke ghenoeemde onwettighe en voorhuydtsche Menschen, des herten Wet-tafelen met wercken beschreven te zijn bewesen, datse hun selven een Wet zijnde, t'ghetuyghnis huns ghemoedts en der ghedachten beschulden en ontschulden, toeluysterende ghehoor gaven, en hun onderwierpen, soo datse uyt aengheboren goedtaerdicheyt, oft van der Natuere, met bescheyden en vromen wandel daedlijck de Godlijcke Wet volbrachten.' *Wttlegghinghe*, *3v.

⁴⁰ '[...] dat een yeghelijck (mijn, ick, daer onder oock begrepen) sich soo heel verbaest, als voor t'hoofd gheslaghen mocht vinden, siende soo Gods Wet, en gheloof ghelijckigen claer glansenden spiegel der leeringhen, hem voor ooghen ghestelt van een Heydensch Poeet, die men licht rekent onchristelijck, duystersinnigh, blindt in't verstandt, vreemt van Gods kennis, en sonder Godt in de Weerelt te zijn gheweest.' *Wttlegghinghe*, *5r

(from others in other languages) to be inappropriate, that is to say, elevating these Pagan Fables in a spiritual sense and having them hint at Christ: for these things have neither any similarity nor affinity: The Poet did not know anything of Christ: nor did his fictions serve to proclaim Christ as has been written: We have not imitated these fine Fables, we proclaim to you the might and the coming of our Lord. They are most helpful (as has been said) for the improvement of morals and for guiding Mankind toward an upright, virtuous, honourable, civil life and for instruction with regard to other natural things, but they can be made to go no further.⁴¹

Pre-Christian Europeans, the Greeks and Romans (and others besides) offer examples of heroism, virtue and manliness in a secular context. As Van Mander states on his frontispiece,

All that pertains to the promotion of a righteous and honourable civil life.⁴²

The benefits of reading the *Metamorphoses* would be the cultivation of civic virtues (Van Mander uses the words '*borgherlijcken wandels*', i.e., 'citizen-like conduct').

[...] this might help and serve to soften the heart and to be an honest guide, and a former of morals, for the absolute health of the soul, so that [...] being metamorphosed into a much better shape, or being recreated, [they, i.e. his readers] could wish for no higher regard in the eyes of the World, than the life of an upright, proper, decent pious man, with a good name, honour and a praiseworthy reputation, and inwardly enjoy

⁴¹ 'Ick hebbe (soo ick meen) in dese *Metamorphosis* uytlegginghe eenichsins aendachtighe voorsichticheyt ghebruyckt, en vermijdt t'ghene my (van anderen in ander spraeck ghedaen wesende) niet docht te behooren, te weten, dese Heydensche Fabulen te trecken op eenen gheestelijcken sin, en op Christum te duyden: want dese dinghen hebben gheen overeencomste noch ghemeenschap: Den Poet kende *Christum* doch niet: zijn versieringhen dienen oock niet *Christum* te vercondighen, ghelijcker gheschreven is: Wy hebben niet ghevolgt den cloecke Fabulen, doe wy u vercondighden de cracht en toecomst ons Heeren. Dan sy zijn seer nut (als gheseyt is) om de zeden te verbeteren, en den Mensch aen te leyden tot een oprecht, deughdigh, eerlijck, borgherlijck leven, en om ander natuerlijcke dinghen te leeren kennen: verder zijn sy niet te trecken.' *Wttlegghinghe*, *4v.

⁴² 'Alles streckende tot voordering des vromen en eerlijcken borgherlijcken wandels.' *Wttlegghinghe*, *1r (frontispiece).

*the most delightful sweetness and pleasant sensations of untroubled, cheerful, good, happy and peaceful thoughts.'*⁴³

Van Mander provides scarcely any sense, and no discussion, of the *Metamorphoses* as a poem. That the material might be considered beautiful as well as useful, as in *dulce* and *utile*, might be assumed, but it is not explored. This is odd since Ovid is consistently apostrophised as "the Poet", and of course, Van Mander was himself a celebrated poet, one of the few in the period so respected that his death was marked by the publication of a '*bloemlesing*' (i.e., 'flower collection', the Dutch translation of the Greek word '*αηθολογια*', i.e., 'anthology').⁴⁴

A final point, perhaps unnecessary. Van Mander did not make a book for humanists, although the scholarly reader (now as then) would certainly approve the care taken in his marginalia and noting. Scholars and latinists were better served by a well-bound example of Regius' edition. Educated Netherlanders might have been content to combine a Latin text with, perhaps, Florianus as a crib and Van Mander's text as commentary. Then they would be able to approach any painting with confidence. Van Mander's Ovid belongs in the same historical imaginary as the light-as-air erotics of Annibale Carracci's exactly contemporary Farnese ceiling. There is a delight and there is a deep seriousness, a fantasy and a realism. Van Mander's moral and civil engagement with the core material is no less serious, nor less intellectually significant, than Bellori's celebrated neo-platonic analysis of Annibale Carracci's Farnese decorations by means of the concept of the 'Idea'.⁴⁵

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This introduction is little more than a succession of what I hope will be helpful things for a general reader approaching an unusual and exotic text. I have tried to make it flow as best I could, but it is basically just one thing

⁴³ 'nu dit mocht helpen en dienen tot gheestweckinge, oprechte weghwijsinghe, zedevorminghe, en gantsche siel-ghesontheyt, dat hy heel beter ghestaltigh ghemetamorphosijt, oft herschapen wesende, niet in hoogher achttinghe ter Weerelt wederder noch liever conde hebben, dan een recht, trefijck, degheelijck, vroom-manlijck leven, goeden naem, eere, en loflijk gherucht, en inwendigh d'alder lieflijckste soetheyt en vermaecklijckste bevoelen, van ongequetst, troostrijck, goet, vrolijck, en gherust ghemoedt,' *Wttlegghinghe*, *5r.

⁴⁴ *Epitaphien ofte grafschriften gemaect op het afsterven van Carel van Mander*, Gedruckt tot Leyden, By Marten vanden Vijver, 1606.

⁴⁵ Giovanni Pietro Bellori, in the Life of Annibale Carracci, in *Le vite de' pittori, scultori et architetti moderni*, Rome, 1672,

attached to the next, on and on like the links of a chain.⁴⁶ Writing is a trap, one writes and in writing wriggles oneself into a yet more entrapped obligation to write; one can never finish, only stop.

I try to translate Van Mander using English words and forms which, rather than closing down meaning to one 'correct' reading, produce the same multivalency and ambiguity I experience reading his text. Numerous decisions have to be made on every page. For example: something that will not be apparent in reading this translation, but which will be apparent if you look at the Dutch original, is Van Mander's reiterated use of the word '*versiering*', and words from the same root. In modern Dutch *versiering* is used to mean 'decoration', 'ornament' or 'adornment', the verb *versieren* means 'to embellish' or 'to garnish'. Van Mander uses it as a category term for the process of invention or composition of the stories used by the writers he is discussing. I cannot recollect he ever uses it to describe his own process of writing; it stands in some relation of difference to, or in contrast to, say, the word '*historien*'; sometimes one detects an undertone of disapproval. I have variously translated his use as 'elaborates', 'makes up', 'feigns', 'invents' and 'pretends', although sometimes I have translated the substansive form more neutrally as 'composition', or 'work'.⁴⁷ It is just one word among many in Van Mander's rich lexicon for creativity which overlaps the inventive benevolence (and malevolence) of the gods, the fruitfulness of nature, and the ingenuity of men. Creative transformative force is the defining feature of the Ovidian world. The *Schilder-boeck* teaches us how to negotiate and evaluate the rich variety of never-ending generation.

⁴⁶ 'Ovidius schakelende als een ketten zijn Fabulen aen den anderen ...', *Wttlegghinghe*, 13v; i.e., 'Ovid links his Fables the one to the other like a chain'.

⁴⁷ Perhaps he was alert to the etymology of the word 'poet', which when we explore its history, going back through the Latin word *poeta*, takes us to the Greek word, *poētēs*, (ποιητής, maker, author, poet), from the verb *poein*, or *poiein*, (ποιεῖν, to make, compose).