

THE ROLE OF METAMORPHOSES IN THE CREATIVE HERITAGE OF  
CALLIMACHUS AND OVID

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*This article discusses the metamorphoses that have been formed on the basis of Greek myths and have come down to us in the works of representatives of ancient literature - Callimachus and Ovid, as well as the specific features of this phenomenon and the reasons for their formation. It also discusses the rapid development of metamorphoses, which are products of primitive thinking, in ancient times, turning into literary means, serving the socio-aesthetic goals of the creator.*

Callimachus, one of the prominent poets of Hellenistic poetry, has a four-volume collection of short stories called "Causes" that tells the story of the origin of festivals and customs, the founding of cities and temples, and other mythological stories on similar topics. For example, the poem "Berenice's Cockle" is based on a mythological reality. When the beloved husband of the beautiful and young Berenice goes to war, the beloved Berenice, who is in grief, vows to offer her cockle to the gods if she returns safely from the war, and when the time comes, she cuts off her cockle and leaves it on the altar of the temple. The

next day, her cockle disappears, and the court astrologer reports that a new star has appeared in the sky, meaning that her cockle has ascended into space with the permission of the gods.

This is how the mythological history of the star called “Berenice’s Nightingale” is told. The lyrical experiences in this story of the poet Callimachus are performed precisely in the language of this star. According to the content of the poem, this star prefers to give beauty to its owner, to be with him, rather than to shine in the sky. In the poet’s work, there is no belief in the existence of mythological heroes, gods and goddesses. He uses mythological models in his poems simply as a literary device.

Usually these legends include variations on death as a punishment from the gods or as a reward for their good deeds. In other tales, the gods take on various forms to test or deceive some person. There is a variety of transformations; from man to animal, from animal to man, from man to plant, from inanimate object to man, from one sex to another, from man to the stars. Myths about nature and its evolution provide a coherent history and provide information about the origin of the world, nature, animals, people and gods.

The most complete and most famous ancient work of Greek mythology is the epic poem “Metamorphoses” by the Roman poet Ovid. Throughout history, “Metamorphoses” has been used not only as a collection of information about ancient Greek and Roman mythology, but also as a tool for allegorical symbols, interpretations, commentaries and adaptations. In the Middle Ages, Ovid's work was the main channel for Greek myths in the West.

In general, although we can find many poets who wrote myths on the motif of evolution in Greek and Roman literature, especially in the poetry of the Hellenistic period, none of them gave such a gloss to the myths and legends on this topic, connecting them together in a coherent way, and turning them into a single work. “This massive epic, consisting of 15 large chapters and 12,000 hexameter verses, tells the stories of mythical transformations that are very common in Greek and Roman mythologies - stories about gods and goddesses, water and forest nymphs, and especially people turning into animals, plants, rocks and mountains, and even stars.” The epic contains about 250 such stories. One of the oldest myths of metamorphosis in the epic is about Phaethon, the son of the sun god, and his sisters.

According to legend, when young Phaethon went to his palace to find out if he was really the son of Helios, he heard that it was true, and when his father wanted to prove the truth of his word by making his son agree to whatever he wanted, Phaethon persuaded his father to

ride the sun chariot around the sky, even though it was dangerous, in order to show this truth to others. But unable to control the horses, he let go of the reins, and a terrible fire broke out where the sun chariot approached the earth. In order to save the earth from the fire disaster, Jupiter killed him with a lightning bolt. His lifeless body fell into the river Eris in flames. The gods, moved by the sisters' incessant tears over the death of Phaeton, turned them into poplars and their tears into amber. Since then, the poplars have been leaning on the banks of the Eridarus River, shedding tears, and their tears have turned into amber and flowed into the river.

Although by the time of Ovid, fiction had acquired a more socio-political tone, it can be seen that this metamorphosis arose on the basis of purely mythological thought, since the gods were chosen as the main characters and the process of transformation was carried out by their divine power. Also, this unrealistic reality in its content informs about the mythological thought about the first transformations associated with the creation of nature and the bodies in it. This unrealistic reality also fully reflects the belief of primitive people in the divine power of the gods.

The next metamorphosis is about the famous hunter Actaeon and the goddess Diana, according to which this handsome young man, hunting in the forest, suddenly catches sight of Diana bathing, the goddess, in a fit of rage, turns the young man into a deer, and he becomes food for her dogs, which ends in a tragic end. This myth reflects the cruelty of the gods towards mankind. Early mankind considered any misfortune that befell mankind to be caused by gods and goddesses. The next metamorphosis is also on the same topic: Niobe, who gave birth to seven daughters and seven sons, mocks Leto, who had no children except Apollo and Diana, and forbids her from making sacrifices to her, and the enraged goddess, with the help of her children, kills all her children with arrows from a rainbow. Niobe, overwhelmed with grief, turns herself into a rock from which tears flow incessantly. It is understood that most of the transformations applied to people were imposed on them by the gods as punishment.

In Ovid's time, belief in myths and metamorphoses about gods and goddesses was declining. Ovid, along with reminding his contemporaries of the past, also reminded them that behind any mistake and sin there is a catastrophic end. The example of metamorphoses used as an artistic device is a symbol of people who have lost their place and status in life.



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