

THE CREATION

Met. I. 1–88

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

5 Ante mare et terras et quod tegit omnia caelum
 unus erat toto naturae vultus in orbe,



1 **in nova:** Ovid deliberately contrasts his opening words to those of Homer’s “man of many devices” of the *Odyssey*, “wrath” of the *Iliad*, and the “arms and the man” of Vergil’s *Aeneid*. This underscores his intention to write a different kind of epic poem.

mutatas . . . formas: Ovid’s first and clever transformation. In this first line he has transformed the Greek *metamorphoses* into its Latin variant employing the same sounds as the Greek.

2 **corpora:** this exaggerated delay of the noun from its adjective, *nova*, brings emphasis and completes the expression of the poem’s main theme—forms changed into new bodies.

di: here, an invocation to the gods above for help in the poet’s enterprise, not to the Muses.

coeptis: a dative case dependent on *adspirate*, line 3.

mutastis: Ovid uses the syncopated perfect tense here as he will do often throughout this poem.

3 **adspirō, -āre, -āvī, -ātum:** *to favor, aid, inspire.*

mundus, -ī (m.): *the universe, the world, the earth.*

4 **dēducō, -ere, -dūxī, -ductum:** *to draw out, spin.* This central verb has its flanking adjectives and noun pairs spinning around it in INTERLOCKED WORD ORDER as a graphic representation of the poet’s art.

carmen, -inis (n.): *poetry, song.*

5 **mare . . . terras . . . caelum:** This TRICOLON introduces the three divisions of the universe yet to be given form and which will be Ovid’s focus in this passage.

quod: a PROLEPSIS. The relative pronoun precedes its antecedent *caelum*.

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- quem dixere chaos: rudis indigestaque moles
 nec quicquam nisi pondus iners congestaque eodem
 non bene iunctarum discordia semina rerum.
 10 nullus adhuc mundo praebebat lumina Titan,
 nec nova crescendo reparabat cornua Phoebe,
 nec circumfuso pendebat in aere tellus
 ponderibus librata suis, nec brachia longo
 margine terrarum porrexerat Amphitrite;



- 7 **dixere**: the third person plural perfect active alternate form. The subject is, presumably, the *di* of line 2 whom Ovid calls upon in his invocation.
chaos, -ī (n.): *a formless state*.
rudis, -e: *crude, rough*. The first of many words over the next two and a half lines denoting negativity.
indigestus, -a, -um: *confused, disorderly*.
- 8 **pondus, -eris (n.)**: *weight*.
- 9 **iunctarum . . . rerum**: Ovid employs a CHIASMUS here to highlight the disjointed nature of the universe at this point.
discors, -rdis: *discordant, incongruous*.
- 10 **mundus, -ī (m.)**: the heavens, dative case with the compound verb *praebebat*.
Titān, -nos (m.): an unspecified member of the race of gods preceding the array of Olympians. Ovid establishes a pattern in line 10 that he carries forward to line 12 of placing the subject at line end and splitting the verb over the 3rd and 4th foot.
- 11 **crescendo**: here, an ablative gerund denoting means. Note the similarities in structure and sound between lines 10 and 11.
reparō, -āre, -āvī, -ātum: *to renew, revive, restore*.
Phoebē, -ēs (f.): one of the race of Titans, here identified with the moon.
- 12 **circumfundō, -fundere, -fūdī, -fūsum**: *to surround, spread round, envelop*.
pendeō, -ēre, pendī: *to hang, hang down, fall*.
aēr, aēris (m.): *air*.
tellūs, -ūris (f.): *land, country*.
- 13 **librō, -āre, -āvī, -ātum**: *to hold suspended, poise*.
- 14 **margine**: ablative of place where.
porrigō, -igere, -exī, -ectum: *to stretch out, extend*.
Amphitritē, -ēs (f.): the wife of Neptune and so, by extension, a PERSONIFICATION of the sea.

- 15 utque erat et tellus illic et pontus et aer,
 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,
- 20 mollia cum duris, sine pondere, habentia pondus.
 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,



- 15 ut . . . sic: *while . . . at the same time* (implies a contrast).
 illic (adv.): *there, in that place*.
 pontus, -ī (m.): *sea*.
- 16 innabilis, -e: *not able to be swum in, unswimmable*. An adjective unique to Ovid.
- 17 egeō, -ēre, -uī: *to be without, lack*.
 nulli: dative of reference.
- 18 alius, alia, aliud: *one (thing) . . . another (thing)*.
 aliis: the dative with a compound verb.
- 19 calidis: rather than use a preposition with the adversary after *pugnabant*, Ovid here uses the dative case without a preposition, as he does with *siccis*.
 umentia, -ēre: *to be wet or moist*. Here the present participle used substantively.
- 20 duris: Ovid uses the preposition here with an ablative case noun rather than the dative case as in the previous line.
- 21 līs, litis (f.): *quarrel, dispute, disagreement*.
 dirimō, -imere, -ēmī, -emptum: *to separate, break up*.
- 22 caelo: an ablative of separation, as is *terris*.
 abscidō, -dere, -dī, -sum: *to separate, cut off*. Subject is the unspecified *deus* of line 21.
- 23 spissus, -a, -um: *thick, dense*.
 secernō, -ernere, -rēvī, -rētum: *to isolate, cut off*.
 caelum: this final word, echoing the *caelo* at the beginning of the phrase in line 22, encloses the division of the universe into three realms as set forth in line 5, in the opening of this passage.
- 24 quae: neuter plural relative pronoun referring back to the three elements—*terras* (22), *undas* (22), *caelum* (22).
 evolvō, -ere, -vī, -utum: *to free, release*.
 caecus, -a, -um: *blind*.
 acervus, -ī (m.): *a disordered mass, chaos*.

- 25 dissociata locis concordi pace ligavit:
 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
- 30 et pressa est gravitate sua; circumfluis umor
 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
- 35 parte foret, magni speciem glomeravit in orbis.
 tum freta diffundi rapidisque tumescere ventis
 iussit et ambitae circumdare litora terrae;
 addidit et fontes et stagna immensa lacusque



- 25 **dissociō, -āre, -āvī, -ātum:** *to separate, break apart.*
locis: a locative followed by *concordi pace*, an ablative of means.
- 27 **ēmicō, -āre, -uī, -ātum:** *to spring up.*
- 28 **proximus:** Ovid is leading us through a hierarchy of the creation of the universe in an ordered manner starting from the highest point, the sun.
illi: a dative case with *proximus*.
- 29 **densior . . . tellus:** supply a missing *est*.
elementum, -ī (n.): *one of the four basic substances of the universe (earth, air, water, fire), an element.*
grandis, -is, -e: *large, massive.*
- 30 **circumfluis, -a, -um:** *that flows around.*
ūmor, -ōris (m.): *moisture.*
- 31 **ultima:** modifying an understood *loca*.
coerceō, -ēre, -uī, -itum: *to bound, enclose.*
- 33 **congeriēs, -ēī (f.):** *heap, pile, mass.*
secō, -āre, -uī, -tum: *to cut, sever.*
- 34 **principiō (adv.):** *in the beginning, to start with.*
ne: here introducing a purpose clause and, combined with *non*, part of a LITOTES.
- aequalis, -is, -e:** *symmetrical, even.*
- 35 **glomerō, -āre, -āvī, -ātum:** *to form or gather into a ball.*
speciem: object of *in*. PROLEPSIS.
- 36 **diffundō, -undere, -ūdī, -ūssum:** *to spread out, diffuse.*
tumescō, -ere: *to become swollen or inflated, to swell.*
- 37 **ambiō, -īre, -uī, -itum:** *to surround, encircle.* With *circumdare* forms a PLEONASM.

- 40 fluminaque obliquis cinxit declivia ripis,
 quae, diversa locis, partim sorbentur ab ipsa,
 in mare perveniunt partim campoque recepta
 liberioris aquae pro ripis litora pulsant.
 iussit et extendi campos, subsidere valles,
 fronde tegi silvas, lapidosos surgere montes,
 45 utque duae dextra caelum totidemque sinistra
 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;
 50 nix tegit alta duas; totidem inter utramque locavit
 temperiemque dedit mixta cum frigore flamma.



- 39 **oblīquus, -a, -um:** *slanting.*
dēclīvis, -is, -e: *sloping, falling, declining.*
rīpa, -ae (f.): *river bank.*
- 40 **dīversus, -a, -um:** *set apart, separate.* Presumably modifying *flumina*, line 39.
locis: an ablative of respect.
sorbeō, -ēre, -uī, -itum: *to drink up, absorb.*
ipsa: modifying an understood *terra*.
- 41 **campo:** here, the poetic usage referring to the expanse of the sea, not of the land.
- 45 **duae:** note the HYPERBATON in the exaggerated separation of this adjective from its noun *zonae* in the next line.
totidem: *as many, the same number of.*
- 46 **secō, -āre, -āvī, -ātum:** *to cut, split up, subdivide.*
ardens, -ntis: *burning, blazing, hot.*
- 47 **onus inclusum:** this enclosed, heavy burden is the Earth.
distinguō, -ere, -nxī, -nctum: *to divide up, mark off, separate.*
- 48 **plaga, -ae (f.):** *territory, region, expanse.*
- 49 **quarum:** agrees with an understood *zonae* as does the feminine *quae*, and *duas*, and *utramque* of line 50.
- 50 **nix, nivis (f.):** *snow.*
totidem: here, *two*.
utramque: modifies an understood *zona*.
- 51 **temperiēs, -ēī (f.):** *mild climate, moderation.*
mixta . . . flamma: ablative absolute.

- Inminet his aer, qui, quanto est pondere terrae
 pondus aquae levius, tanto est onerosior igni.
 illic et nebulas, illic consistere nubes
 55 iussit et humanas motura tonitrua mentes
 et cum fulminibus facientes fulgura ventos.
 His quoque non passim mundi fabricator habendum
 aera permisit; vix nunc obsistitur illis,
 cum sua quisque regat diverso flamina tractu,
 60 quin lanient mundum; tanta est discordia fratrum.



- 52 **imineō, -ēre:** *to hang poised over.*
qui: subject of *est*, line 53.
pondus, -eris (n.): *weight.* Here an ablative of comparison with *levius*.
- 53 **pondus aquae:** subject of *est*, line 52.
igni: ablative of comparison with *onerosior*.
- 54 **nebula, -ae (f.):** *mist, fog.*
consistō, -ere, -stitī: *to settle, stand.*
nūbēs, nūbis (f.): *cloud.*
- 55 **motura:** a future active participle expressing intent. Its accusative subject is *tonitrua*. Its accusative object is *mentes*.
tonitrus, -ūs (m.): *thunder.* This noun has an alternate accusative neuter plural form that Ovid has chosen to use here.
- 56 **fulmen, -inis (n.):** *thunderbolt.*
facientes: Ovid varies his structure slightly in this line employing a present participle rather than the future participle as in line 55. This participle modifies the accusative *ventos* and its object is *fulgura*.
fulgur, -uris (n.): *lightening, lightning, flash.* Caused here by the winds, not Jupiter.
- 57 **his:** dative of agent with the future passive participle *habendum*.
passim (adv.): *here and there, scattered about.*
mundus, -ī (m.): *heavens, universe, world, earth.*
fabricator, -ōris (m.): *maker, fashioner.*
- 58 **vix (adv.):** *hardly, scarcely, barely.*
obsistō, -ere, -stitī, -stitum: *to stand in the way of, block, impede.* Here used impersonally.
- 59 **regat:** present subjunctive in a *cum* causal clause.
flāmen, -minis (n.): *wind, breeze.*
tractus, -ūs (m.): *tract, expanse, extent.*
- 60 **quīn (conj.):** *so as to prevent, so that ... not.*
laniō, -āre, -avi, -atum: *to tear, mangle.*
fratrum: these are the winds that Ovid now describes in detail.

- 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
 65 horrifer invasit Boreas; contraria tellus
 nubibus adsiduis pluviaque madescit ab Austro.
 haec super inposuit liquidum et gravitate carentem
 aethera nec quicquam terrenae faecis habentem.
 Vix ita limitibus dissaepserat omnia certis,



- 61 **Eurus, -ī (m.):** *the east wind.* Ovid begins his description of the four winds with the east wind in the nominative case and balances it with the west in the dative. He then gives us the north in the nominative and counters it with the south in the ablative. Each wind is attached to a region of the Roman world.
Aurōra, -ae (f.): *the dawn, sunrise.*
Nabataeus, -a, -um: *a people of northern Arabia.*
recēdō, -ere, -ssī, -ssum: *to withdraw, retire.*
- 62 **Persidis, -is:** *Persian.*
iugum, -ī (n.): *mountain heights.*
subditus, -a, -um: *situated beneath.*
mātūtīnus, -a, -um: *of the early morning, eastern.*
- 63 **vesper (irreg.) (m.):** *the evening, the west.*
occiduus, -a, -um: *setting, going down, western.*
tepscō, -ere, -uī: *to grow warm.*
- 64 **Zephyrus, -ī (m.):** *a west wind.*
Scythia, -ae (f.): *Scythia, a region north and east of the Black Sea.*
triōnēs, -ōnum (m. pl.): *oxen used for plowing.* When used with *septem* refers to the constellation Ursa Major and, by extension, to the north.
- 65 **horrifer, -era, -erum:** *dreadful, freezing.*
Boreās, -ae (m.): *the north wind, the north.*
- 66 **pluvia, -ae (f.):** *rain.*
madescō, -ere, -uī: *to become wet or soaking.*
Auster, -trī (m.): *the south wind, the south.*
- 68 **aethera:** a Greek accusative singular form.
quisquam, quicquam: *anyone/thing, anyone/thing whatever.*
- 69 **faex, -cis (f.):** *dregs.* Here, a partitive genitive with *quicquam.*
dissaepiō, -īre, -psī, -ptum: *to separate off*

- 70 cum, quae pressa diu fuerant caligine caeca,
sidera coeperunt toto effervescere caelo;
neu regio foret ulla suis animalibus orba,
astra tenent caeleste solum formaeque deorum,
cesserunt nitidis habitandae piscibus undae,
75 terra feras cepit, volucres agitabilis aer.
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,
80 sive recens tellus seductaque nuper ab alto
aethere cognati retinebat semina caeli.



- 70 **quae:** look to the next line for the antecedent of this pronoun—PROLEPSIS.
cāligō, -inis (f.): *darkness.*
caecus, -a, -um: *blind.*
- 71 **effervescō, -ere, efferuī:** *to become violently agitated, seethe.*
- 72 **animalibus:** here, an ablative with *orba*.
orbis, -a, -um: *bereft, deprived, destitute.*
- 73 **astrum, -ī (n.):** *star, heavenly body.*
solum, -ī (n.): *earth, soil, base, floor.*
formaeque: nominative.
- 74 **nitidus, -a, -um:** *bright, radiant, shining.*
piscis, -is (m.): *fish.*
- 75 **fera, -ae (f.):** *wild animal.*
volucris, -cris (f.): *bird.*
agitābilis, -is, -e: *mobile.*
- 76 **sanctus, -a, -um:** *sacrosanct, holy, sacred, pure.*
capax, -ācis: *capable.*
- 77 **dēsum, -esse, -fui:** *to be lacking or wanting.*
dominor, -ārī, -ātus: *to rule, be master.*
posset: subjunctive in a relative clause of purpose.
- 78 **natus homo est:** a simple, direct phrase for a profound event.
sive: *whether, or if.*
sēmen, -inis (n.): *seed, origin.*
- 79 **opifex, -ficus (m.):** *craftsman, artisan.*
origō, -inis (f.): *rise, beginnings*
- 81 **cognātus, -a, -um:** *related by birth, kindred.*
retineō, -ere, -ui, -tentum: *to hold, grasp, cling.*

quam satus Iapeto, mixtam pluviabilibus undis,
 finxit in effigiem moderantum cuncta deorum,
 pronaque cum spectent animalia cetera terram,
 85 os homini sublime dedit caelumque videre
 iussit et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus:
 sic, modo quae fuerat rudis et sine imagine, tellus
 induit ignotas hominum conversa figuras.



- 82 **quam:** looks back to *tellus*, line 80, for its antecedent.
satus, -a, -um: *sprung (from a parent).*
Iapetus, -ī (m.): one of the Titans, father of Prometheus, whom Ovid here describes as the creator of mankind.
pluviālis, -is, -e: *rainy.*
- 83 **finḡō, -ere, -nxī, -ctum:** *to make, form, fashion.*
moderor, -ārī, -ātus: *to control, manipulate.*
- 84 **cum:** introducing a concessive clause.
- 85 **sublimis, -is, -e:** *lofty, directed upwards.*
vidēre: assume a missing *hominem* as subject of this infinitive.
- 86 **ērigō, -ere, -rexī, -rectum:** *to raise oneself.*
- 88 **ignōtus, -a, -um:** *unfamiliar, unknown.*
conversus, -a, -um: *turned, changed.*



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