

From *Metamorphoses*

By Ovid

Now since the sea's great surges sweep me in,
All canvas spread, hear me! In all creation
Nothing endures, all is in endless flux,
Each wandering shape a pilgrim passing by.
And time itself glides on in ceaseless flow,
A rolling stream—and streams can never stay,
Nor lightfoot hours. As wave is driven by wave
And each, pursued, pursues the wave ahead,
So time flies on and follows, flies and follows,
Always, forever now. What was before is left behind,
what never was is now;
And every passing moment is renewed.

You see how day extends as night is spent,
And this bright radiance succeeds the dark;
Nor, when the tired world lies in midnight peace,
Is the sky's sheen the same as in the hour
When on his milk-white steed the Morning Star
Rides forth, or when, bright harbinger of day,
Aurora gilds the globe to greet the sun.
The sun's round shield at morning when he climbs
From earth's abyss glows red, and when he sinks
To earth's abyss at evening red again,
And at his zenith gleaming bright, for there
The air is pure and earth's dross far away.
Nor can the queenly moon ever retain
Her shape unchanged, but always, as her orb
Waxes or wanes, tomorrow she must shine
Larger or smaller than she is today.

Again, you notice how the year in four
Seasons revolves, completing one by one
Fit illustration of our human life.
The young springtime, the tender suckling spring,
Is like a child; the swelling shoots so fresh,
So soft and fragile, fill the farmers' hearts
With hope and gladness. Flowers are everywhere;
Their colours dance across the fostering fields,
While the green leaves still lack their strength and
pride.

Spring passes, and the year, grown sturdier,
Rolls on to summer like a strong young man;
No age so sturdy, none so rich, so warm.
Then autumn follows, youth's fine fervor spent,
Mellow and ripe, a temperate time between
Youth and old age, his temples flecked with grey.
And last, with faltering footsteps, rough and wild,
His hair, if any, white, old winter comes.

Our bodies too are always, endlessly
Changing; what we have been, or are today,
We shall not be tomorrow. Years ago
We hid, mere seeds and promise, in the womb;
Nature applied her artist's hands to free
Us from our swollen mother's narrow home,
And sent us forth into the open air.
Born to the shining day, the infant lies
Strengthless, but soon on all fours like the beasts
Begins to crawl, and then by slow degrees,
Weak-kneed and wobbling, clutching for support
Some helping upright, learns at last to stand.
Then swift and strong he traverses the span
Of youth, and when the years of middle life
Have given their service too, he glides away
Down the last sunset slope of sad old age—
Old age that saps and mines and overthrows
The strength of earlier years. Milo, grown old,
Sheds tears to see how shrunk and flabby hang
Those arms on which the muscles used to swell,
Massive like Hercules; and, when her glass
Shows every time-worn wrinkle, Helen weeps
And wonders why she twice was stolen for love.
Time, the devourer, and the jealous years
With long corruption ruin all the world
And waste all things in slow mortality.